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Elisa Mattiello

An Introduction to English Slang

A Description of its Morphology, Semantics and Sociology

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To Luca

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Abbreviations

abbrev.	abbreviation
adj	adjective, adjectival
adv	adverb(ial)
Amer.	American (English)
arch.	archaic
attrib.	attributive(ly)
Austral.	Australian
BNC	British National Corpus
Brit.	British (English)
Canad.	Canadian
cent.	century
chap.	chapter
colloq.	colloquial
COLT	Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language
deprec.	depreciatory
derog.	derogatory
dial.	dialect
E.	English
EMOs	Extra-grammatical Morphological Operations
esp.	especially
euphem.	euphemistic
F.	French
fig.	figuratively
Fig.	Figure
freq.	frequently
G.	German
gen.	generally
Gr.	Greek
int	interjection
Ir.	Irish
It.	Italian
L.	Latin
lit.	literally

ME	Middle English
MRs	Morphological Rules
n	noun, nominal
N. Amer.	North American (from U.S. and Canada)
NM	Natural Morphology
N.Z.	New Zealand
obs.	obsolete
occas.	occasionally
ODMS	Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang
OE	Old English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
offens.	offensive
orig.	origin(ally)
perh.	perhaps
phr	phrase
pl.	plural
Portug.	Portuguese
ppl	participle, participial
pred	predicative
prep	preposition
prob.	probably
pron	pronoun
R.A.F.	Royal Air Force
RHR	Righthand Head Rule
rhy.	rhyming
S. Afr.	South African
Sc.	Scottish, Scots
Sp.	Spanish
spec.	specifically
St. E.	standard English
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
usu.	usually
v	verb
vbl	verbal
WFRs	Word-formation Rules

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Foreword

Despite the amount of work that has been carried out to collect English slang data, there has been, to date, no general introductory work that has attempted to synthesize the main points of predictable relevance of slang as a linguistic phenomenon. This book aims to fill the gap.

The reasons for this constant omission are mainly to be sought in the traditional attitude of linguists and morphologists towards any linguistic fact that is dubious in terms of grammar and its recognized rules. Slang, a linguistic modality confined to spoken language, has always been difficult to locate, to explain and to grasp as a unitary phenomenon. This has discouraged overall formal accounts. Or, at most, its relevance has been explored in sociology, where it has been described as a manifestation of low-class membership, or as the secret language of restricted groups, unwilling to communicate with outsiders, or, more generically, it has been conflated with homiletic or other colloquial varieties. Slang has been preferentially described in relation to the social effects that it produces rather than as a phenomenon in itself. The linguistic comments have been mainly impressionistic and hardly descriptive or explanatory of the phenomenon.

The present work comes as the result of a dissatisfaction with such studies and as an attempt – a successful one – to fill the void of a rigorous linguistic investigation.

The book is a careful, theory-grounded description of slang and of its relevance in key areas such as morphology, semantics and socio-pragmatics. It offers a new understanding of slang formation mechanisms, of its elusive, unstable meanings and meaning relations

and, lastly, it systematically reconsiders its socio-pragmatic impact and relevance.

The main challenge for the author was to overcome widespread prejudice whereby slang is allegedly only a marginal area of the lexicon, a useless redundancy in semantics, an ‘oddity’ in word-formation and an isolated phenomenon, lacking isomorphism with syntactic relationships.

The key hypothesis of the project, by contrast, is that slang has a locus both in the lexicon and among word-formation mechanisms and that its input/output ‘rules’ are to be found within the borders of the phenomenon itself, and not in contrast with canonical grammatical rules. A comparison with grammatical morphology only provides a basis for formulating evaluation criteria, but is not the main target of the work. Slang is a widespread phenomenon deserving a space of its own in linguistic inquiry, precisely on account of its frequent independence of behaviour and extra-grammatical quality.

The author’s appropriate model of explanation within the relevant disciplines and the wealth of data systematically analysed in the book lead to reliable viewpoints on the issue and to an interesting wide-ranging description of the phenomenon.

A thorough description of slang must take into account and accommodate its frequently discrepant behaviour in terms of formation mechanisms. It often deviates from basic rules of morphological grammar, but it may also represent a violation of the more general principle of grammatical competence. Even when slang words relate to morphological structures governed by morphological competence, they may be discrepant because they are coined conscientiously rather than spontaneously. This is the case with many sophisticated coinages, like rhyming reduplicatives or blends, or also analogical formations, like *workaholic* or *Irangate*. Such forms are normally excluded by morphologists, owing to their non-predictability.

Slang may also deviate from any criterion of predictability and transparency at the level of semantics. Meaning is often a conscientious attribution, rather than the output of compositional elements. This is the case, for example, with Cockney rhyming slang, many compounds, but also with a large number of single

words, whose meaning is totally at variance with the meaning the same words have in the standard language.

The study of slang also opens up many sociological and socio-linguistic prospects, amply investigated in the literature. Slang separates society into groups along various dimensions, and this fact is certainly of great relevance in sociology and partly explains specific linguistic features of slang, such as its search for originality and secrecy. Of special interest, though, is the area of emotions and attitudes, in which the speaker's choices of slangy formations and their pragmatic effects on the addressee are carefully regulated. This book approaches the matter from a wide-ranging perspective and provides a clear account of the various motivations which lie at the basis of slang use.

Lavinia Merlini Barbaresi

1. Introduction

1.1. Basic assumptions and aims

Slang is a controversial topic nowadays, and the debate on its definition, classification and linguistic relevance is still heated. The concept of slang has been inaccurately defined by many lexicographers who tend to restrict it to colloquial or bad language, and the term has been imprecisely used by many sociolinguists who conflate it with such language varieties as cant, jargon, dialect, vernacular or accent. Besides, many formations of slang have long been neglected by morphologists dealing with the English system (Aronoff 1976, Mayerthaler 1981, Bauer 1983, Scalise 1984, Dressler *et al.* 1987 *inter alia*) since they find no room within the regular word-formation patterns of the standard language; other slang formations have been briefly dealt with since “they result from the same ordinary word-building processes that give rise to the general vocabulary” (Eble 1996: 9).

The present study is an attempt to explore English slang and reconsider it from both linguistic and sociological perspectives. The approach adopted here is synchronic, as it aims to illustrate the formations and the neo-semanticisms which characterize present-day English slang. As a more specific – and ambitious – aim, this study intends to make a contribution to the international debate on the position that slang formations occupy within the relevant morphological theories, principally, generative morphology (Aronoff 1976, Scalise 1984), natural morphology (Dressler *et al.* 1987, Kilani-Schoch 1988, Tonelli & Dressler eds 1993, Wurzel 1994, Dressler 1999, 2005), and extra-grammatical morphology

(Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Doleschal & Thornton eds 2000) or expressive morphology (Zwicky & Pullum 1987). I am indeed persuaded that the spontaneous, lively, and creative processes of a language may cast some light on the possible development of its grammar. And I am also persuaded that a qualitative approach to slang could help to explain the semantic issues of the phenomenon, its sociological impact, and the reasons why it is used or objected to within society.

Consider, for instance, the slang term *foxy*. From the morphological point of view, it is a denominal adjective produced by a rule-governed mechanism of word-formation, i.e. *fox* → *fox-y*. Grammarians classify this term among the most productive canonical derivatives of English, together with such standard adjectives as *juicy*, *sexy*, *shiny*, etc. (Marchand 1969: 352). From the semantic point of view, it instead acquires a novel sense which departs from the standard English meaning. It is frequently used among young men, who apply it to 'attractive, desirable, pretty, sexy' women.

Consider now the slang adjective *shagadelic*, which has a similar meaning to *foxy*, but an uncertain origin connected with the coarse slang verb *shag* ('copulate'). This adjective does not obey any of the standard mechanisms of formation and would therefore be marginalized by grammarians to what is called extra-grammatical (or expressive) morphology. Yet it has been genuinely coined by young men and applied to 'sexy, beautiful' women (Mattiello 2005).

Our question now is: why use the semantically indeterminate adjective *foxy* or the extra-grammatical formation *shagadelic* rather than clearer canonical forms such as *sexy* or *beautiful*? This question has both linguistic (semantic and grammatical) and sociological (speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented) explanations:

- From the semantic point of view, slangy *foxy* is more loaded than neutral *sexy* in terms of information provided. That is, for young people *foxy* means having the quality of: (1) attracting interest, attention, affection, (2) causing desire, (3) excellent or admirable in appearance, and (4) sexually provocative, exciting, etc., whereas *sexy* only refers to the quality indicated in point (4);

- From the grammatical point of view, the slangy formation *shagadelic* is less transparent than the standard derivatives *beautiful* (← *beauty*) or *sexy* (← *sex*), and its formation is difficult to assign to recognized morphological rules. This word, popularized by the film *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997), has recently been included in Dalzell & Victor (eds) (2007a) as a blend of *shag* and *psychedelic* (cf. “partial blends” in Thornton 1993: 145-148), and in the OED as a combination of *shag* and *-adelic* (a combining form originating from *psychedelic*). But whereas *psychedelic* is obtained from an established base (*psyche*), a well-known formative (*δηλον* ‘make manifest, reveal’ ← *δηλος* ‘manifest, visible’, as in *delomorphic*), and a common English suffix (*-ic*), *shagadelic* exhibits a base (*shag*) which is not attested in other derivatives, and its formation must necessarily rely, both morphologically and semantically, on the word *psychedelic*;
- The speaker-oriented explanation concerns the speaker’s social identity: *foxy* and *shagadelic* index male adolescents, who use them for multifarious reasons connected with their identity – e.g., to show their belonging to a band, to stress their virility or their age, to reinforce connection with their peer group and to exclude outsiders, to show off, etc. – while neither *sexy* nor *beautiful* say much about the speaker;
- The hearer-oriented explanation concerns rather the effects the speaker wishes to produce upon the hearer: in-group *foxy* is certainly more efficient and fresher than *sexy*, and vulgar *shagadelic* is undoubtedly playful, faddish, colourful and musical, and therefore achieves effects which could not be obtained using a comparable standard English form, such as *beautiful*.

The adjectives *foxy* and *shagadelic* are but two of the wide range of slang words. In this study I intend, first, to offer a survey of the grammatical and extra-grammatical formations of English slang in terms of their morphology, and, second, to go deeper into their semantics and social meaning. Each of these aspects will be touched upon and expanded from chapters three to five. The theoretical

framework, some provisional observations, the data, and the entire organization of the study are clarified below.

1.2. The theoretical framework

In the relevant theories, many slang formations are marginalized or even ignored on account of: (a) oddity and opacity (Aronoff 1976), (b) minor importance within word-formation (Scalise 1984), (c) lack of naturalness (Dressler 1999), and (d) extra-grammatical nature (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, 1997, Doleschal & Thornton eds 2000). On the other hand, these types of expressions are marked and therefore complex (Merlini Barbaresi 1988, ed. 2003), and may create extreme complexity in terms of lexical organization (Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci 2007). In other a-theoretical (purely descriptive) studies, the mechanisms of slang are attributed the same regularity as ordinary (morphological and semantic) processes, and it is claimed that “there is no evidence that slang is created in special or unfamiliar ways” (Eble 1996: 17; cf. Munro ed. 1997).

Since slang formations and meanings may represent issues for a theoretical debate, I will provisionally claim that ‘*there is* evidence that slang is created in special or unfamiliar ways’. Hence, an overview of the pertinent morphological and lexical semantic theories would seem to be in order here. Particularly, this overview focuses attention on the mechanisms of formation that violate the basic properties of English morphological grammar, although they have entered the standard language. It is thus meant to illustrate what morphologists analysing the English system have considered as irregular (not rule-governed), or have viewed as marked and dispreferred, and often confined to extra-grammatical morphology. The last subsection devoted to lexical semantics aims to illustrate what has recently been considered complex within the English lexis, and hence creates difficulty in cognitive processing and interpretation.

1.2.1. *Generative morphology*

Within generative grammar, many phenomena are not assigned the status of word-formation rules (WFRs), i.e. rules which specify sets of words on which they can operate. For instance, such phenomena as blends (e.g. *chunnel* \leftarrow *channel* + *tunnel*), acronyms (e.g. *NATO*), clippings (e.g. *fan* \leftarrow *fanatic*), word manufacture (e.g. *Kodak*), back-formation (e.g. *v peddle* \leftarrow *peddler*), and mixed formation (e.g. *scramjet* \leftarrow *supersonic combustion ramjet*) are classified among the “oddities” of a language, i.e. very unusual and escaping word-formation processes (Aronoff 1976: 20). They are indeed viewed as opaque and uncommon mechanisms of word-formation which have no recognizable internal structure or constituents.

In Bauer (1983: 232), these mechanisms are grouped under the label “unpredictable formations”: it is said, at least, that they cannot be predicted by the word-formation rules of generative grammar. Nonetheless, it is also said that since they are so common in English, it is misleading to consider them unusual. In spite of this, in such studies as Scalise (1984), they are relegated to a footnote, because they are marginal to the theory of generative morphology.

1.2.2. *Natural morphology*

In morphology, naturalness/markedness claims are based on many criteria which are relevant also to slang formations. Within the theory of naturalness/markedness, many formations are less natural/more marked along the semiotically-derived parameters of iconicity, indexicality, (morphosemantic and morphotactic) transparency and biuniqueness (Dressler *et al.* 1987, Dressler 1999, 2005).

As regards the parameter of iconicity (resemblance between *signans* and *signatum*), conversion (e.g. *n cut* \leftarrow *v cut*) appears to be non-iconic because addition of meaning is not paralleled by change in form. Indeed, it is less iconic than canonical derivation (e.g. *cut-t-er* \leftarrow *v cut*) or compounding (e.g. *cutthroat* \leftarrow *cut* + *throat*).

As regards the parameter of indexicality (direct reference of *signans* to *signatum*), the morphological phenomenon of infixation (e.g. *in-bloody-credible*) – infrequent in English and rare in the Indo-European languages (Bauer 1983: 18) – is more marked than

prefixation (e.g. *in-credible*) or suffixation (e.g. *credibil-ity*) because it adds something in-between an affix and its base. In connection with the same parameter, exocentric compounds, in which the head has to be inferred, as in *pick-pocket* ('a person who picks pockets'), are more marked than endocentric compounds, which have their head within the compound (e.g. *hip-pocket* is 'a type of pocket').

As regards the parameter of morphosemantic transparency, the least natural compounds are those which exhibit opacity of both members (e.g. *birdbrain* 'a stupid person'). On the other hand, *early bird* ('one who rises early'), *bird cherry* ('a wild cherry') and *birdcage* ('a cage for birds') illustrate progressive degrees of naturalness, because they respectively display transparency of modifier, head, or both constituents.

As regards the related parameter of morphotactic transparency, blends (or contaminations) and other abbreviatory operations (i.e. clippings, acronyms, etc.) are marked and marginal, because they are mere semantic alternatives of existing words, although they are recurrent in English as a result of a conscious action of economizing.

Lastly, as regards the parameter of biuniqueness (one-to-one relations), marked (unique) formations are those in which one and the same *signans*/form corresponds to two or more *signata*/functions: e.g., the suffix *-th* forming both ordinal numbers (as in *four* → *fourth*) and nouns from adjectives (as in *long* → *leng-th*). The most marked are, however, ambiguous formations, in which one form corresponds to many functions and vice versa: e.g., the suffix *-er* forming agent, instrument and local nouns, in competition with agent nouns obtained by adding the suffixes *-ist* and *-ator*.

1.2.3. Extra-grammatical, marginal and expressive morphology

Within the theory of morphopragmatics (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, 1997), many phenomena are excluded from morphological grammar: (a) sophisticated coinages like *shm*-reduplication (e.g. *variables shmvariables*), (b) blends (e.g. *smog*), (c) hypocoristics (e.g. *Liz*, *Bet* ← *Elisabeth*; cf. grammatical *Lizz-ie*, *Bett-y*, in which the hypocoristic suffix *-y* is grammatical but the bases are not), (d) acronyms (e.g. *GOP* ← *Grand Old Party*), (e) clippings (e.g. *mike* ← *microphone*), (f) echo-words (e.g. *zigzag*), (g) back-derivation (or back-formation, e.g. *v edit* ← *editor*), and (h) expletive infixations

(e.g. *abso-blooming-lutely*). These phenomena are said to violate various universal principles of English grammar: for instance, ablaut reduplicatives – i.e. echo-words of the type *tick-tock* – may be formed either from a left-hand or a right-hand base or have no existing base at all (as in *tip-top*). Hence, their marginalization to extra-grammatical morphology (see Merlini Barbaresi forthcoming) and irrelevance for morphopragmatic investigation.

In Zwicky & Pullum (1987), most such formations are similarly classified among the innovative extra-grammatical patterns of English, as part of what they call “expressive morphology”, so as to distinguish them from the ordinary formations of “plain morphology”. In their opinion, “Expressive morphology is associated with an expressive, playful, poetic, or simply ostentatious effect of some kind” (Zwicky & Pullum 1987: 335).

In Doleschal & Thornton (eds) (2000), the central role of extra-grammatical (or non-prototypical) phenomena in word-formation is likewise stressed. In particular, what is stressed is the worldwide frequency of blending, acronyms and combining forms (Bat-El, Fradin), trade names (Ronneberger-Sibold, Thornton), and toponyms (Nübling). Here a distinction is also made by Dressler between extra-grammatical and marginal morphology: the former “lies outside morphological grammar”, whereas the latter “lies at its boundaries”, that is between morphology and other levels (e.g. syntax, phonology, etc.), or within morphology (inflection, derivation and compounding) (Dressler 2000: 1). Therefore, extra-grammatical morphology includes such morphological operations as echo-words, blends, hypocoristics, abbreviations, and back-formation, which cannot be described by regular morphological rules. By contrast, marginal morphology rather includes clitics, lying between morphology and syntax, and semi-suffixes (or combining forms), lying between derivation and compounding.

1.2.4. Lexical complexity

The theory of complexity has recently entered the framework of lexical semantics (Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci 2007) via an extension from textual complexity (Merlini Barbaresi 2003). This theory paves the way for a concrete interpretation of the lexicon, viewed as a complex self-organized dynamical macro-system whose behaviour is

determined by a high number of interrelating factors and dimensions.

Within this theory, a word such as *texture* provides an instance of complexity in English because: (a) its description makes use of multiple dimensions, and (b) it covers a multifaceted, fuzzy and loosely organized semantic space spreading over multiple domains, and, specifically, it is polysemous and therefore difficult to assign to a single semantic frame in the sense of Barsalou (1992).¹

This brief overview gives rise to a debate on whether slang formations have to be marginalized, as they actually have been so far, or rather appreciated for the opportunity they offer to develop the branch of morphology and its parameters of analysis. It also offers the starting-point for a discussion of slang lexical semantics, which has received little treatment that may be called systematic, or in any way helpful, e.g. for interpreters or translators.

1.3. Provisional observations

The guiding hypotheses of this study, based on a preliminary investigation of partial data, concern both the morphotactics of slang formations and their semantic extensions (neo-semanticisms).

With reference to the morphology of slang:

- Some slang formations are regularly produced by recognized word-formation rules (as established in generative grammar), and hence provide instances of grammatical morphology (e.g. *fox* → *fox-y*);
- Others are not rule-governed, but attested in ordinary English as instances of extra-grammatical or expressive morphology (e.g. *shagadelic*);
- Still other formations are typical of English slang – the most representative phenomenon being Cockney rhyming slang, esp. in its elliptic form – but inexistent in standard English.

¹ See Bertuccelli Papi (2003), Franceschi (2007), Lorenzetti (2007) and Masi (forthcoming) for an application of the Lexical Complexity Theory to English verbs of vision. See Bertuccelli Papi & Cappelli (2007) and Cappelli (2007) for an application of the theory to verbs of cognitive attitude.

Yet they appear to exhibit regularity and set the pattern for the creation of analogous forms.

As for slang semantics:

- Slang items are far from being merely synonymous or connoted variants of standard English equivalent forms (cf. Dumas & Lighter 1978), because they are loaded with aspects of meaning which are normally absent in standard correspondents (cf. *foxy* and *sexy*);
- They are rather complex words because: (a) their semantic description requires numerous dimensions (e.g. *foxy* simultaneously entails visual perception and cognition, and also points to the dimension of affect); (b) they cover vague and disorganized semantic spaces, namely:
 - In terms of semiotic principles, they may display low transparency due to morphosemantic or morphotactic opacity (e.g. in *shagadelic* meaning is non-compositional, headedness is hardly assignable, and the internal structure or constituents are difficult to identify), or they may lack biuniqueness due to their ambiguity with common English forms (cf. slang *foxy* ‘attractive, desirable, pretty, sexy’ and St. E. ‘crafty, cunning’), or to polysemy (i.e. more than one slang meaning/function);
 - In cognitive terms, it is very difficult to assign them to a single frame, since the same element may belong to more than one, and these in turn may differ from the frame assigned to the same word in the standard language.

1.4. The data

The main difficulty in collecting slang data is discriminating between what is slang and what is not.

A clear-cut discrimination would have not been possible without a preliminary selection in dictionaries.² Corpora, film script excerpts

² Many dictionaries of English slang have been compiled so far (e.g. Partridge 1984, Ayto ed. 1998, Munro ed. 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, Dalzell & Victor eds

and questionnaires by native informants have however supported lexicographic descriptions and corroborated genuine usage of the selected expressions.

To sum up, my collection of slang data is drawn from two main sources:

- For the descriptive part, slang data has been cross-checked in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang* (ODMS), and reported together with alternative spellings (if any), etymological information, usage notes, definitions, and possible cross-references to pertinent entries. Contextualized examples have mostly been taken from the *British National Corpus* (BNC), which helped me with the semantic descriptions of the words, providing information about token frequency and preferential con- and co-texts (word sketches).
- For the empirical part, tests on slang have been carried out by submitting to informants excerpts from English films in which some slang expressions are used, as well as conversations in teenage slang recorded in COLT. The corpus-based slang data is not necessarily recorded in the OED or in any specialized dictionary of slang (e.g. ODMS). Native speakers have confirmed its authenticity, current use or disuse, and its slang nature, and have given their personal opinion about its informality, derogatory flavour, vulgarity, obscenity, privacy or regionalism.

The slang lexicon explored in this study is neither group-specific (cf. Munro ed. 1997, 2001) nor subject-specific (cf. Dalzell & Victor eds 2007b, c), since the slang of one particular group (e.g. college slang) or belonging to a precise area, such as ‘vice’ or ‘sex’, would exclude a large part of general slang items, or of the slang spoken by other groups (e.g. drug addicts, military men, rappers, etc.), and would therefore make my survey of slang formations

2007a, b, c; see also bilingual dictionaries such as Monti ed. 2003, Cagliero & Spallino eds 2007), but no specific corpora of slang are at the moment available except for the *Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language* (COLT), which however provides only an incomplete restricted illustration of the phenomenon.

incomplete. A distinction between general and specific slang is however drawn in the second chapter, and the areas preferentially covered by slang use are carefully analysed in the pertinent chapter (chap. 4).

As a final point, the slang mentioned here is only partially in current use: given the ephemeral nature of slang and its complex dynamics, today some slang items may be considered old-fashioned or obsolete. However, whenever slang is referred to as obsolete in the OED or ODMS I will indicate it.

1.5. The organization of the study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter two introduces the topic and provides a brief state of the art. It is meant to identify certain descriptive criteria which may help us recognize slang and distinguish it from other non-standard language varieties.

Chapters three and four focus on the linguistic properties of slang. Specifically, chapter three is centred on slang morphology. It classifies the word-formation processes of slang, discriminating between the types that conform to grammatical morphology and those that depart from it and rather belong to extra-grammatical (or expressive) morphology. Some subsections are devoted to the distribution of slang affixes, to their base categories, head properties and grammatical classes. Others are devoted to slang compounds, especially to the syntactic categories of their constituents and to their morphosemantic transparency vs. opacity (cf. Dressler 1999). Minor phenomena of formation, including reduplication, acronyms, initialisms, blends, clippings, elliptic rhyming slang, back-formation, reversed forms, variation, word manufacture and fanciful formations, are also dealt with, as they are frequently involved in slang formations.

Chapter four deals with the phenomenon of slang from a lexical semantic perspective. It first explores whether the slang lexical system is comparable with the standard one in terms of organization into fields and internal meaning relations. It then explores some representative semantic areas of slang – viz., drug addiction, homosexuality, alcoholism, foreigners, attractive women, body parts – with the purpose of identifying regular and predictable

behavioural patterns, e.g. in terms of meaning association and inferential mechanisms applicable to meaning disambiguation. Lastly, it examines the complexity and disorganization of some slang items due to the enormous array of information they require in semantic description and to the manifold cognitive processes they activate as contrasted with standard comparable forms (cf. Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci 2007).

Lastly, chapter five focuses on the sociological properties of slang, classified as speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented. In my classification, the speaker-oriented properties qualify the speaker as belonging to some distinct group within society, whereas the hearer-oriented properties produce some particular effect upon the hearer. This chapter is entirely based on conversations – either spontaneous, as in COLT dialogues, or planned, as in film script transcripts – since it is only in real or realistic contexts that we can perceive the functions/effects of slang.

2. Previous Studies on Slang

One of the clichés of the subject is that anyone can recognize slang, but no one can define it. The reverse may be closer to the truth. (Dumas & Lighter 1978: 10)

2.1. The definition of slang

In the pertinent literature, most definitions of slang show a tendency towards a sociological view of the phenomenon. This view is accepted, among others, by Eble (1996) and Munro (ed.) (1997), who basically regard slang as a social means of identification and cohesiveness within a group (cf. Allen 1998). A second fundamental approach is stylistic. In line with this, slang has to be arranged among the “varieties according to attitude” (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 25-27) as it “includes words that are *below the level of stylistically neutral language*” (Stenström *et al.* 2002: 67). A third relevant approach emphasizes the aspects of novelty and freshness of slang, and characterizes it as a language variety that exhibits a leaning towards lexical innovation (Dundes & Schonhorn 1963, Mencken 1967, Olesen & Whittaker 1968, Dumas & Lighter 1978, Sornig 1981).

In lexicography, most dictionaries agree that the word ‘slang’ may be defined with at least two senses. First, slang is the restricted speech of marginal or distinct subgroups in society and, second, it is a quite temporary, unconventional vocabulary characterized primarily by connotations of informality and novelty. In the OED, for instance, slang is described both as “the special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession” and as a “language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard

educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense”.

What follows is an overview of the definitions of slang from various perspectives, including the sociological, stylistic and linguistic approaches, as well as its lexicographic description.¹

2.1.1. The sociological approach

Within the sociological approach, slang is ascribed the two opposite purposes of keeping insiders together and outsiders out. On the one hand, Eble (1996: 11) stresses the social and interpersonal aspects of slang and its function “to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large”.² Accordingly, sharing the same slang vocabulary aids both to gain acceptance in a group and to preserve group solidarity (Munro ed. 1997). Speaking in more general terms, slang is a socio-cultural practice that speakers privilege for such social purposes as being on the same speech-level with one’s audience, facilitating social intercourse, and inducing friendliness or intimacy.

On the other hand, slang is said to serve antisocial purposes such as marking social differences (Allen 1998), opposing people in authority (Eble 1996), and hiding secret information or improper behaviour from them (Franklyn 1961, Andersson & Trudgill 1990, Stenström *et al.* 2002). In particular, slang is viewed as an in-group vocabulary that certain subclasses in society (e.g. criminals or drug addicts) cultivate to keep the content of their conversations private, or which such specific subgroups as adolescents or college students adopt to keep the older generation at a distance.

The two conflicting – social and antisocial – tendencies of slang are evident in the effects it may produce: if sometimes it appears playful and amusing, it may, some other times, signal the speaker’s

¹ Part of this chapter is a revision of Mattiello (2005 online).

² Actually, Eble (1996: 116) highlights three general functions of slang: “(1) Slang changes the level of discourse in the direction of informality. (2) Slang identifies members of a group. (3) Slang opposes established authority”. However, she gives greatest prominence to the group-identifying function because her study focuses on the slang used by college students. She indeed comments that slang mainly serves to demarcate smaller groups or subcultures within the college student community, and that it helps subgroups like technicians or student journalists to enhance solidarity and work together.

intention to startle his audience or even to be aggressive (Andersson & Trudgill 1990).

2.1.2. The stylistic approach

Within the stylistic approach, slang is neutrally and rather vaguely defined as a level of usage. In early studies (Partridge 1947: 287), it is claimed that slang is “the quintessence of colloquial speech”, or, as in Flexner (1960: vi), that it is “not accepted as good, formal usage by the majority”.³

In this view, slang is juxtaposed to formal language: particularly, it is below standard discourse and the neutral stylistic level (Allen 1998, Stenström *et al.* 2002), and typical of informal, relaxed speech (Quirk *et al.* 1985). On the other hand, slang is also juxtaposed to other non-standard varieties: it is neither dialect nor register, nor can it be restricted to the concepts of cant, *argot*, or jargon (Andersson & Trudgill 1990, Eble 1996). Slang can be rather viewed as a short-lived ephemeral vocabulary that is expecting either to pass into disuse or to have a more standard status (as *gay*).⁴

2.1.3. The linguistic approach

From the linguistic point of view, slang is regarded as the use of ordinary words in extraordinary senses or of extraordinary words in ordinary senses (Yust ed. 1950). Jespersen (1922: 298) pioneers this position, stating that slang “finds amusement in the creation and propagation of new words and in attaching new meanings to old words”.⁵

³ As Dumas & Lighter (1978: 7) provocatively comment, “everything is slang by this definition except formal usage and words and expressions of limited currency”.

⁴ Many studies stress the short-lived nature of slang. For instance, Andersson & Trudgill (1990: 70) point out that, as slang is subject to change over time and from place to place, “What is slang for one person, generation or situation may not be slang for another”, and Munro (ed.) (1997: 27) likewise notices that “Slang words come and go. Some slang expressions are no longer recognized by speakers just a few years later, other slang words come to be accepted as standard language, while still others persist as slang for many years”. More in Dumas & Lighter (1978), Maurer & High (1980) and Eble (1996).

⁵ See Dundes & Schonhorn (1963), Mencken (1967) and Olesen & Whittaker (1968) for related positions.

Within the linguistic approach, slang is distinguished from the standard language in both its morphology and its semantics. In morphology, it is characterized by clear insubordination as regards the standard word-formation rules, and in semantics, it not only renames everyday objects, but also enriches, qualifies and complexifies them. Hence, Sornig's (1981: 20) definition of slang:

Slang is, as it were, a language in statu nascendi, a language (or at least a lexicon) in the making. Slang is essentially an experimental language.

2.1.4. The lexicographic definition

In dictionaries, there is no unique clear-cut definition of slang because this concept has acquired different senses in different periods of time.⁶ Originally, the term was used to refer to the language of criminals, thieves and vagabonds. The OED, for instance, states that

⁶ Opinions diverge not only with regard to the definition of the concept of slang but also as regards the etymology of the word 'slang', which is presently unknown or dubious for most lexicographers. Overall, two distinct positions have developed which attribute dissimilar origins to slang. One relates slang to the Scandinavian world. In Skeat (ed.) (1910) the origin of the word 'slang' ('low, vulgar language') is traced back to the Norwegian verb *slengja kjeften* (lit. 'sling the jaw', 'use abusive language, slang') and to the Icelandic words *slyngr* or *slunginn* ('versed in a thing, cunning'). In addition, the lexicographer behind this dictionary also reminds us of the Swedish word *slanger* ('gossip'), remarking that all these terms are probably derived from the second grade of the verb *sling* ('throw, cast'). The supposition of a Scandinavian origin is also contemplated by Weekly (1921, in Mencken 1967: 703, see also Partridge 1970), who reports two Norwegian dialect words – the neologism *slengjeord* (lit. 'a slang-word') and the nickname *slengjenamn* (lit. 'a slang-name') – as its brothers. By contrast, the OED states that the date and early associations of this word make it improbable that there is any connection with certain Norwegian forms based upon the cognate verb *slenge* or *slengje*.

The alternative position – suggested in the OED – attributes a cant origin to slang. The word 'slang' may be either an argotic distortion of the French word *langue* or a blending with the English word *language* as its second member: e.g., *sling language* (Webster & McKechnie eds 1963). Cf. *beggars' language*, *rogues' language*, *thieves' language* (Mencken 1967, Eble 1996). The latter postulation is motivated by the fact that, when the word 'slang' first appeared in English, about the middle of the eighteenth century, it was employed as a synonym of 'cant', and, less than fifty years later, as a synonym of 'argot'. As observed by Skeat (ed.) (1910: 568), the word 'slang' once denoted 'a narrow piece of land', so that currently, in the language of thieves and gypsies, *to be out on the slang* means "travel about the country as a hawker, encamping by night on the roadside slangs".

in the mid-eighteenth century, it labelled “the special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character”, and Webster & McKechnie (eds) (1963) specify that in the beginning it referred to “the specialized vocabulary and idioms of criminals, tramps, etc. the purpose of which was to disguise from outsiders the meaning of what was said”. Accordingly, there seems to be an overlap between the original sense of slang and the current concept of cant (cf. F. *argot*).

But soon after the mid-eighteenth century, the term ‘slang’ gradually broadened to include the language of other subgroups, not necessarily of low culture, but rather connected by their profession, like lawyers, scientists, historians, essayists and poets (OED), or by a common way of life (Webster & McKechnie eds 1963). In this sense, the term became more specialized and nearly synonymous with jargon.

Lastly, in the early years of the nineteenth century, slang acquired the more general sense of colloquial or informal vocabulary which is outside of conventional or standard usage, and which belongs rather to familiar conversation than to written language (Webster & McKechnie eds 1963, *Longman Dictionary* 1984, OED).⁷

Today slang covers both the specific and the general sense. It typically consists of new words and novel or extended meanings, and develops from the attempt to find fresh, vigorous, colourful, pungent or humorous expressions.

2.2. The classification of slang

As an exploration of the literature shows, the classification of slang is a challenging task. On the one hand, there is a conceptual and terminological overlap which makes slang hard to distinguish from other similar language varieties (e.g. cant, jargon, dialect). On the other hand, the nature of slang is so vast and all-encompassing that a sub-distinction between specific and general slang is definitely required.

⁷ The *Longman Dictionary* (1984) mentions ‘dialect’ as a synonym of slang.

Among the numerous non-standard language varieties of English, slang finds its place both as a diastratic variety and as a diatopic variety. Nonetheless, as a diastratic variety, it diverges from both jargon and cant, whereas, as a diatopic variety, it departs from dialect as well as from vernacular and accent. Lastly, slang may also be viewed as a diaphasic variety, although it differs from colloquial language.

2.2.1. *Slang vs. jargon*

Slang is not jargon, a widely used term referring to the specialized vocabulary and phraseology of a set of people sharing a trade or profession (OED; cf. Nash 1993, Burke 1995), although slang may be a choice within jargon. For example, musicians employ specific slang terms to refer to different music styles (e.g. *funk*, *grunge*, *handbag*, *hardcore*, *house*, *jazz*, *jungle*, *ragga*, *techno*, etc.), doctors use medicine slang terms to describe the diseases or physical conditions of their patients (e.g. *O sign* orig. and chiefly U.S. ‘the open mouth of a patient who is in a coma, dying, or dead’), soldiers use such services’ slang words as *acker* (‘a piastre’) and *skunk* (‘an unidentified surface craft’) in their military life, and seamen use such nautical slang expressions as *Harry Flakers* (‘exhausted’), *Harry Flatters* (‘(of the sea) calm’) and *Harry Frees* (‘free’) – jocularly from *flaked*, *flat* and *free* – with their ship-mates.

Slang differs from jargon in its lack of prestige⁸ and pretentiousness. In fact, slang terminology is much more familiar and spontaneous than the technical jargon of science, medicine, academics, law, bureaucracy, business, etc. Slang may be used within a particular group like musicians, doctors, soldiers or seamen, but it does not exactly deal with status or reputation.

2.2.2. *Slang vs. cant*

Slang is not cant, the specialized and usually secret language of thieves, professional beggars, and other groups operating on the fringes of society (OED, see also Barisone 1989, Beier 1995, Gotti 1999). Yet many slang words arise from the language of the underworld and are

⁸ Cf. “covert prestige” in Andersson & Trudgill (1990) and Allen (1998).

used for the purposes of secrecy and conspiracy. For instance, drug dealers use such specific slang names as *Charley/-ie*, *rock*, *skag*, *skunk* and *speed* for drugs in their traffics, and criminals use a number of different in-group slang words to refer to the police (e.g. *bill*, *filth*, *fuzz*, *heat*, *pigs*) in their illicit trades.

Despite its sometimes cryptic character, slang cannot be reduced to the private language of the criminal world. It may be used by those people in society who have reason to hide from actual authority (like drug addicts and criminals), but it may also suit certain subgroups who want to keep the content of their conversations secret from adult people (like teenagers and college students), either to gain acceptance in a group or to preserve their group solidarity (Eble 1996, Munro ed. 1997, Stenström 2000).

2.2.3. *Slang vs. dialect*

Slang is not geographically restricted, like dialect (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1980, Romaine 1994, 2000, Trudgill 1999), even if it is often regional and “may vary from place to place, dialect to dialect” (Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 70). Therefore, what is slang in British English may be standard in American English, or may have a different meaning within the two regional varieties. For example, the slang word *bomb* is used in British English to refer to ‘a success (esp. in entertainment)’ (e.g. *like a bomb* ‘with considerable effectiveness or success’), but in American English, some of which is gaining currency in Britain, it is used in the exactly opposite sense of ‘a failure’. Similarly, the vulgar slang word *fanny* refers to ‘the female genitals’ in British English, but it means ‘the posterior or rump’ in American English.

Despite its local peculiarities, slang is not necessarily associated with one region or social class. Some slang words are of more general use or they happen to be understood by practically anyone within the language community: for example, this is the case with words like *nerd* (‘an insignificant or socially inept person’) or *crackers* (‘crazy, mad’), though they may not be accepted as proper British or American English words.

2.2.4. *Slang vs. vernacular*

Slang is not vernacular, the native speech of a particular country or district (OED), but it frequently includes variation of sounds or mispronunciation of words which are typical of a limited area. The expressions *bejesus*, *bollox* and *eejit* are Anglo-Irish alterations of *by Jesus*, *bollocks* ('a stupid, contemptible man or boy') and *idiot*, while *bovver* ('trouble or fighting') and *garn* are Cockney pronunciations of *bother* and *go on*.

Slang is a wider concept than vernacular (cf. Walker 1984), as it is not strictly indigenous local speech. It is instead a hybrid language and often permeated with foreign lexical material, as in the case of *smack* ('heroin'), which comes from Yiddish *schmeck*, and *ackers* ('money, cash'), which in turn is an adaptation of Arabian *fakka* ('small change, coins') via Egyptian *akka*.

2.2.5. *Slang vs. accent*

Since slang is pertinent to word form and meaning, it is not accent, which simply refers to word pronunciation (tone quality, pitch, stress, etc.) (see Simpson 1994). In actual fact, some slang words are created by changing some sounds of standard items: e.g., *Gawblimy!* and *Gor blimey!* are corruptions of the imprecation *God blind me!*, *heck* is a slang euphemistic alteration of *hell*, *lickle* ('small') is a childlike corruption of *little*, and *thang* is the Southern U.S. slang pronunciation of *thing* (originating from Black E., see Munro ed. 1989: 8).

As we will see, however, slang involves not only altered words in terms of misspelling or mispronunciation, but also new forms and novel senses (more in § 2.3.1 below).

2.2.6. *Slang vs. colloquial language*

Slang does not correspond to colloquial language, although, like familiar speech, it departs from neutral and formal styles (see Partridge 1947, Andersson & Trudgill 1990). Slang is informally used among people who belong to the same social group, or, more generally, among friends, intimates or family members, but its purposes differ from mere familiarity. Consider, for instance, the expressions *belly* and *beer belly*: the former is a colloquial term

referring to one's 'stomach', while the latter is a slang expression which refers to 'a protruding stomach caused by drinking large quantities of beer', and may also be used as a derogatory definition for people having such a stomach, as in *They described Pa as a beer-belly and said Ma was unfriendly*. Similarly, *nana* is an abbreviation of *banana* in colloquial English, but, in English slang, it rather refers to 'a foolish or silly person', as in *A frank admission that he had made a nana of himself*.

Slang displays features such as secrecy, privacy or vulgarity which are not applicable to colloquial language, and it produces various effects (e.g. humour, impertinence, offensiveness, etc.), which are not obtained by comparable familiar expressions.

2.2.7. *Specific vs. general slang*

So far, we have established that slang may be classified as a social variety characterizing a group (e.g. music slang, military slang, navy slang, drug slang, thieves' slang, teenage slang, college slang, etc.), as a regional variety distinguishing an area (e.g. British slang, American slang, Anglo-Irish slang) or a district (Cockney slang), and as an informal style of the language. It must be further subdivided into either specific or general slang.⁹

Basically, specific slang is language that speakers use to show their belonging to a group and establish solidarity or intimacy with the other group members. It is often used by speakers to create their own identity, including such aspects as social status and geographical belonging, or even age, education, occupation, lifestyle and special interests.¹⁰ It is largely used by people of similar age and experience (like teenagers or college students) to strengthen the bonds within their own peer group, keeping outsiders out (Eble 1996, Munro ed. 1997, Stenström *et al.* 2002). It is also used by people sharing the

⁹ In sociolinguistics some scholars requiring a systematic classification make a distinction between specific and general slang words. Stenström *et al.* (2002: 64), for example, distinguish between those words that are associated with a particular group or trend (e.g. *joint*, *speed*, *spliff*) and those that are not (e.g. *booze*, *fag*, *spooky*) (see also Allen 1998: 878).

¹⁰ Flexner (1960: xii-xiii): "Slang can be one of the most revealing things about a person, because our own personal slang vocabulary contains many words used by choice, words which we use to create our own image".

same occupation (like military men and computer users) to increase efficiency in communication; or by those sharing the same living conditions (like prisoners and criminals) to hide secret information from people in authority. Lastly, it is used by people sharing an attitude or a lifestyle (like drug addicts and homosexuals) to reinforce their group cohesiveness (cf. Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 158). Items like *chick* ('a girl; a young woman'), *cool* ('all right, 'OK') and *dude* ('a fellow or 'chap') can be considered specific slang words, as they are related to the young and hardly understood by adults, and *rock* ('a crystallized form of cocaine'), *smack* ('a drug, spec. heroin') and *smoke* ('opium', 'marijuana') are likewise specific, as they belong to the vocabulary of drug addicts and drug dealers, but they have a different meaning in the standard language.

General slang, on the other hand, is language that speakers deliberately use to break with the standard language and to change the level of discourse in the direction of informality. It signals the speakers' intention to refuse conventions (cf. Flexner 1960, Dumas & Lighter 1978) and their need to be fresh and startling in their expression, to ease social exchanges and induce friendliness, to reduce excessive seriousness and avoid clichés, in brief, to enrich the language (cf. Partridge 1947: 288). General slang words have a wider circulation as they are neither group- nor subject-restricted: for example, items like *bevvy* ('a drink, esp. beer'), *caff* ('a café') and *footy* ('football') are much more likely to get established as informal or colloquial English.

Yet some slang words are both specific and general, according to their pragmatic meaning and context of occurrence: e.g., the word *grass* in slang takes on both the specific sense of 'marijuana, used as a drug' (drug slang), or of 'a police informer' (criminals' slang), and the more general sense of 'green vegetables'.

2.3. The description of slang

The descriptive properties which can be ascribed to slang are heterogeneous, and vary depending on the perspective (sociological, stylistic or linguistic) from which it is investigated, or on the sense (either specific or general) that is taken into account. After a careful

examination of the relevant studies on slang, a primary distinction can be drawn between its linguistic and sociological properties.

2.3.1. *The linguistic properties of slang*

In the literature, most linguists dismiss the question of the slang locus in language by assigning it to the lexicon. Jespersen (1922: 299), for instance, argues that “slang is more productive in the lexical than in the grammatical portion of language”. Andersson & Trudgill (1990) likewise stress that slang affects above all vocabulary, and Sornig (1981: 22) lays emphasis on its “tendency towards the creation of a lexicon of its own”. I have to personally contrast this opinion in the sense that I would rather assign slang’s relevance to each level of the language.

2.3.1.1. *Phonology*

At the phonological level, slang plays with sounds and manipulates word pronunciations (Flexner 1960, Sornig 1981, Eble 1996, Allen 1998). The most common way of enlivening slang terms is onomatopoeia or echoism, which accounts for many slang terms, as in the set of synonyms for the verb ‘vomit’ (i.e. *barf*, *bolck*, *chunder*, *puke*, *ralph*, *spew*, *throw (up)*, etc.).

Another way is jocular mispronunciation of words: for instance, the slang affectionate forms of address *hinnie/-y*, *luvvie/-y* and *marra* are respectively mock pronunciations of *honey*, *lovey* and *marrow*, while the pronouns *summat* (← *somewhat*) and *nuffink* sound like and are used in the place of standard *something* and *nothing* (cf. analogical formations in COLT: e.g. *anyfink* ← *anything*, *everyfink* ← *everything*).

Assimilation is likewise recurrent in slang, especially in combination with consonant gemination. Examples proliferate in teenagers’ conversations: the interjections *innit?* (← *isn’t it?*) and *wunnit?* (← *wasn’t it?*), and such contractions as *dunno* (← *I do not/don’t know*), *gimme* (← *give (it to) me*; cf. *lemme* ← *let me*), *gonna* (← *going to*), *gotta* (← *(have) got to/a*) and *wanna* (← *want to/a*) are attested in COLT (cf. *doncher* ← *don’t you*).

Furthermore, some sounds seem to be more distinctive of slang than others (cf. Wescott 1977, 1978, in Eble 1996: 40). For instance, the vowel /u:/ is in slang variations, such as *bazoom* /bə¹zu:m/ (←

bosom /¹bʊz²m/) ‘a woman’s breast’, *booty* /¹bu:tɪ/ (← *bottom* /¹bɒtəm/, via *botty* /¹bɒtɪ/) ‘the buttocks’, *choom* /tʃu:m/ (← *chum* /tʃʌm/) ‘an English soldier’, and *shoot* /ʃu:t/ (← *shit* /ʃɪt/) ‘a coarse exclamation of annoyance or disgust’, and in copy reduplicatives, such as *boo-boo* /¹bu:bu:/ ‘a foolish mistake or blunder’, *doo-doo* /¹du:du:/ and *pooh pooh/poo poo* /₁pu:’pu:/ ‘faeces, excrement’. It may also act as a suffix, as in *smackeroo* /₁smækə’ru:/ (U.S.) (← *smacker*) ‘a coin or note of money’ (more under the suffix *-eroo*, § 3.2.3.8). The voiced consonant /z/ is likewise frequent in slang (as in *pizzazz* /pɪ’zæz/ ‘vitality or liveliness’), especially from voiceless /s/ after back-clipping, as in *spaz* /spæz/ (← *spastic* /¹spæstɪk/), and combined with suffixation, as in *Aussie* /¹ɒzi/ (← *Australian* /ɒs’treɪliən/), *mossie/mozzie* /¹mɒzi/ (← *mosquito* /mɒ’ski:təʊ/) and *prossie/-y* /¹prɒzi/ (← *prostitute* /¹prɒstɪtju:t/).

Nevertheless, the most lively phenomenon in the creation of slang terms is Cockney rhyming slang, based on rhyme. Rhyming slang is the process whereby an item is replaced by one or more words that rhyme with it (e.g. *trouble and strife* for ‘wife’). It originated in the London tradition of Cockneys, but then extended to other areas and speakers, even if it remains a private language.

Rhyming slang is extremely productive in the coining of nouns, which are normally in the form of two semantically and syntactically-related words (e.g. *dog and bone* for ‘telephone’, *five-to-two* for ‘Jew’, *God forbid* for ‘kid’, *pig’s ear* for ‘beer’, *rock of ages* for ‘wages’, etc.), or of a single word, either a simple one (e.g. *joanna* for ‘piano’) or a complex one (e.g. *boat-race* for ‘face’). Rhyming slang nouns may also be obtained from fictitious proper names (e.g. *Rosy Lee* for ‘tea’), or from the names of famous characters of sport, music, television, cinema, etc. (e.g. *Mutt and Jeff* for ‘deaf’, from the characters of a popular comic strip). Lastly, they may be obtained from the names of familiar places (e.g. *Hampstead Heath* for ‘teeth’, from a district in north London). Some such nouns rhyme with slang rather than standard words: e.g., *fiddley-did* (Austral.) rhymes with *quid* (‘one pound’), *ginger-beer*

with *queer* ('a homosexual'), *John Hop* with *cop* ('a policeman'), *macaroni* (chiefly Austral.) with *baloney* ('nonsense, rubbish'), etc.

The same forms are found – though relatively less often – in rhyming slang adjectives (e.g. *elephant's trunk* for 'drunk', *Mozart and Liszt* rhymes with *pissed* 'drunk, intoxicated'), verbs (e.g. *Adam-and-Eve* for 'believe', *cocoa* for 'say so', *rabbit-and-pork* for 'talk', also n), and clauses (e.g. *Hot beef* for 'Stop, thief!').

2.3.1.2. Morphology

At the morphological level, it is claimed that "the same ordinary word-building processes that give rise to the general vocabulary also shape slang expressions" (Eble 1996: 39). However, Eble (1996: 26-38) only mentions word-formation processes which are attested in both slang and standard English, namely compounding, affixation, conversion, shortening and blending, and completely disregards the processes which are distinctive of slang. As far as I know, the suffixes *-o* (e.g. *doggo* ← *dog*, 'quiet'; *kiddo* ← *kid*, 'a child'), *-s* (e.g. *nuts* ← *nut*, 'mad'; *bananas* ← *banana*, 'crazy'), and *-ers* (e.g. *champers* ← *champagne*, *preggers* ← *pregnant*) do not give rise to any standard English term, nor do the infixes *-bloody-* (e.g. *absolutely*) and *-fucking-* (e.g. *unfuckintouchable*).¹¹

Besides, formations obtained by back-slang (e.g. *yob* ← *boy*, 'a lout, hooligan') and rhyming slang (e.g. *dog's meat* 'feet') are not considered established WFRs by morphologists, since they typically obtain English slang words rather than standard ones. In fact, slang morphology exhibits many formation patterns which still have to be explored, and which will be in chapter 3 of this work.

2.3.1.3. Grammar

Not much attention has been devoted so far to the grammar of slang. Munro (ed.) (1997: 19) argues that "the grammar of U.C.L.A. slang is almost identical to the grammar of standard English", at least in its inflectional morphology (cf. Sornig 1981, Eble 1996). Indeed, as in standard English inflection, slang plural nouns are obtained by the addition of the *-s* suffix (e.g. *bird* 'a girl, woman' → *birds*), or of its

¹¹ Munro (ed.) (1997: 8) remarks that one frequent infix that has entered the slang vocabulary of Californian students is *-iz-*, as in *dizope* from *dope* 'trendy', and *dizark* in the *pizark* from *dark* in the *park*.

allomorphic variants (e.g. *fairy* ‘a male homosexual’ → *fairies*, *yobbo* → *yobbo(e)s*), and uncountable nouns do not have any plural form (e.g. *stuff* ‘narcotics’). Similarly, most slang verbs act regularly, with the *-ed* suffix in the past tense form (e.g. *nick* ‘steal’ → *nick-ed*), *-s* in the third person singular form (e.g. *nick-s*), and the *-ing* form (e.g. *nick-ing*). Lastly, slang adjectives have ordinary comparative and superlative forms (e.g. *daisy* U.S. ‘first-rate, charming’, *daisi-er*, *daisi-est*).

As far as syntax is concerned, three main features have been regarded as typical of slang: first, an unusual affective use of the definite article *the* as in *I have the mega headache* to mean ‘I have a mega headache’, second, the omission of copular *be* in present-tense sentences such as *You crazy* instead of *You are crazy*, and third, the special use of the adjectival word *total* with the adverbial function of ‘completely’ as in *I’m total hungry* (from Munro ed. 1989: 13-14). Actually, slang does not depart from the standard language for these syntactic aspects. Firstly, the article *the* is part of slang idiomatic expressions (e.g. *to give a person the hump* ‘annoy, depress, a person’, *to kick the bucket* ‘die’, etc.), but similar fixed forms belong to standard English (e.g. *to kick/strike the beam* ‘be greatly outweighed’, *to hold the stage* ‘command the attention of a theatre audience’, etc.). Secondly, the frequent omission of the copula in slang present-tense predicative sentences is comparable to the omission of *be* in Black usage,¹² and has entered American slang via the increased popularity of rap music. Thirdly, the construction with the adjective *total* in adverbial position is recurrent in slang, as other adjectives are in informal language and dialects (e.g. *real*).

2.3.1.4. Semantics

The semantics of slang has attracted the attention of almost all pertinent studies. In particular, Eble (1996: 61-73) and Munro (ed.) (1997: 11-12) underline the tendency of slang to name things indirectly or figuratively, especially through metaphor (e.g. *bird* ‘an aeroplane’, *double O* U.S. ‘an intense look’), metonymy (e.g. *tinnie/-y* Austral. ‘a can of beer’), synecdoche (e.g. *wheels* ‘a car’),

¹² Dalphinis (1998: 77) asserts that many grammatical features of Black English (mainly derived from Creole languages) survive in the U.K. For instance, *John go to market* is said instead of *John goes to the market*, and *it red* instead of *it is red*.

euphemism (e.g. *family jewels* ‘the male genitalia’), and irony (e.g. *a (little) bit of all right* ‘something or somebody regarded as highly satisfactory; esp. applied to a pretty woman’) (see also Gumperz 1972).

Eble (1996: 54-60) also argues that slang items often diverge from standard usage in predictable ways, especially by such opposite semantic processes as “generalization” and “specialization”, or “amelioration” and “pejoration”.¹³ For instance, the term *eppie/-y* (← *epileptic fit*) is used in slang with the more general sense of ‘a fit of temper’, whereas *grass*, which in standard English refers to ‘herbage in general’, in slang rather assumes the specialized sense of ‘marijuana, used as a drug’. Similarly, the adjective *wicked*, having bad connotations in standard English (i.e. ‘bad in moral character, disposition, or conduct’), in slang is used with positive connotations to mean ‘excellent, splendid; remarkable’ (orig. U.S.), whereas the neutral adverb *inside* (St. E. ‘on the inner side’), in slang acquires the negative sense of ‘in prison’. Actually, similar processes of pragmatic adjustment are found in standard English as well. Wilson (2003: 273-277), for instance, identifies the process of “narrowing” (e.g. *drink* used to mean ‘alcoholic drink’), and that of “broadening”, which is further subdivided into “approximation” (e.g. *square* used to mean ‘squarish’) and “metaphorical extension” (e.g. *rose* or *diamond* applied to a person).

However, it is not always possible to identify a logical connection between a word’s standard meaning and those added by slang. Indeed, what seems to be particularly relevant from my lexical semantic approach is the organization (if any) of the slang lexical system. That is, I hypothesize that the associative processes which help us identify the meaning of slang words are different from standard ones, and sometimes they are concealed, so as to make words inaccessible to outsiders. I will particularly concentrate on this aspect of slang semantics in chapter 4.

¹³ Eble (1996: 58) uses the term “pejoration” for the process opposed to amelioration. She further explains that pejoration is the process whereby the connotation associated with a slang item becomes less favourable than the meaning it normally denotes.

2.3.1.5. *Pragmatics*

The pragmatics of slang is marginally hinted at in relevant literature, or is treated indirectly through the various functions that are attributed to the phenomenon, or the effects it produces upon the hearer. These aspects, however, interface with slang sociological properties (see the section which follows and chap. 5).

2.3.2. *The sociological properties of slang*

Again in the literature, slang is associated with many sociological properties, which derive from both its varied nature and its multifunctionality. The properties are reported here below and arranged in descending order of frequency: that is, the first property (group-restriction) is the most frequent among slang definitions, whereas the thirty-first (spontaneity) is reported only in one study of all those that I have explored.¹⁴

Given the miscellaneous nature of such properties, and their often contradictory nature (cf. debasement and prestige), slang is not claimed to exhibit all of them simultaneously. However, it should exhibit at least some of the following:¹⁵

- Group-restriction: in its specific sense, slang is frequently described as an in-group vocabulary that identifies people of a common age and experience, and facilitates their group solidarity. London teenagers, for example, may be identified by their use of such slang words as *man*, *mate* and *wicked* (COLT), while drug addicts use such words as *coke*, *joint*, and *smack* to create cohesiveness within their group.
- Informality: slang (esp. general slang) is commonly viewed as a colloquial level of speech that signals the speaker's desire to soften the seriousness or formality of the dominant tone, and to assume instead a more familiar or conversational tone.

¹⁴ Most of the properties are mentioned by linguists and lexicographers as exactly reported in this section. However, as terminology varies throughout the literature, synonymous properties are included under the same label. For instance, such properties as vitality, vigour, vivacity, liveliness and exuberance fall under the label 'freshness', whereas 'informality' summarizes the slang qualities of being (highly) colloquial, conversational, familiar, popular, or not accepted as formal usage.

¹⁵ See Table 2 for a detailed report in the literature.

Instances of slang informality are the noun *bread* (orig. U.S.), used in familiar contexts to mean ‘money’, and the verb phrases *go big* (orig. U.S.) and *go it*, which are the informal counterparts of ‘be a big success, have a large sale’ and ‘go along at great speed’.

- Time-restriction: slang is temporary since it changes over time. It is typical of some generation but falls into disuse very quickly, with the taking over of the next generation and the change of trends and tastes. Thus, some slang words may have a very similar meaning, but a different temporal collocation, as shown by the near-synonymic exclamations for ‘excellent’: *wizard* (1920s), *groovy* (1930s-40s), *magic* (1950s), *fab* (← *fabulous*, 1960s), *brill* (← *brilliant*, 1980s), *sick* (2000s).
- Ephemerality: slang is an ephemeral, short-lived, ever-changing vocabulary. Novel words and special meanings crop up at very brief intervals, but generally remain in current use for a short time, and then pass away as quickly as they have been created. Thus, while some words, such as *chap*, *chum* and *grub* “have been slang for a long time” (Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 78), other words (called “vogue words” in the literature), such as *massive*, *paranoid* and *reckon*, “have become fashionable for a short period of time” (Stenström *et al.* 2002: 65). And still other words, such as *bus*, *phone* and *pub* are no longer felt as slang, but rather as colloquial language (see § 2.2.6).
- Debasement: like many other non-standard varieties, slang is considered debased, subordinate speech, characteristically dominated by reversed prestige, lack of dignity and anti-social features. At least, slang is viewed so by the conformists, who condemn many common slang words (e.g. *bloke*, *dude*, *guy*) because they lower the level of discourse to degraded language.
- Freshness: slang is often described as a fresh vital vocabulary that keeps language alive and growing. The vigour and liveliness that lie behind slang make it a language for

fashionable people, and for those who want to avoid the monotony of ordinary language. Thus, fashionable young people use such slang adverbs as *for yonks* ('a long time'), *in a mo* (← *in a moment*) and *indeedee* (← *indeed*) (COLT) to be fresh and to escape the dullness of neutral style.

- Playfulness: slang is usually playful, since it manipulates words and their meanings. The jocular use of slang is illustrated, for example, by the catch-word *Abyssinia*, which plays on the pronunciation of the parting salutation *I'll be seeing you!*, by the term *Eyetalian*, which distorts standard *Italian* (cf. offens. *Eyetic*), and by *nana* (← *banana*) and *cake*, used jocularly for 'a foolish or silly person'.
- Obscenity: slang synonyms flourish in the taboo subjects of a culture. For instance, slang vocabulary is rich in dirty words and obscenities which are related to sex, especially male and female genitalia (e.g. *cock*, *dick*, *prick*, *cunt*, *fanny*, *pussy*), sexual intercourse (e.g. *fuck*, *screw*, *shag*), oral sex (e.g. *suck*) or sexual stimulation (e.g. *wank*). Other obscenities are related to either excretion (e.g. *cack*, *crap*, *shit*), or religion: e.g., blasphemous expressions, such as *for fuck's sake*, *goddamn*, etc. (cf. Munro ed. 1997, Stenström *et al.* 2002).
- Subject-restriction: sometimes slang is described as the special, even specialized, vocabulary of some profession, occupation or activity in society. This makes slang peculiar to a set of people who are identified by their specific terminology or by the specialized terms they use with in-group members. In particular, specific slang words such as *crack* ('a potent, crystalline form of cocaine'), *junkie* ('a drug addict') and *joint* ('a marijuana cigarette') are related to the topic of drugs, and *creep* ('a stealthy robber'), *dog* ('an informer; a traitor'), and *the Family* ('the thieving fraternity') are connected with the crime topic.
- Novelty: slang is generally modern and up-to-date. The linguistic exuberance and the rapid change of the slang lexicon represent a large part of slang's originality, as they

render people's speech more creative and new. Eble (1996: 42), for instance, notices how North Carolina students enjoy creating such novel words as *emboosticated* ('embarrassed'), *matriculate* ('start a trip'), or *motorvate* ('move around socializing in a group, leave'). An original expression that has gained the approval of many young people is Black slang *phat*, esp. applied to 'sexy, attractive' women, or to 'excellent, admirable; fashionable' music.¹⁶

- Orality: slang is predominantly associated with spoken language, where it generally starts its way towards recognition and acceptance. This is amply demonstrated by what Stenström *et al.* (2002: 65) call "vague words" (e.g. *doodad*, *doofer*, *thingamajig*, *thingy*) and "smallwords" (e.g. *innit*, *yeah*, *you know*), which are typical fillers of everyday conversation and never used in formal written language.
- Unconventionality: Dumas & Lighter (1978: 13) argue that, in general, the slang lexicon is characterized by the intention of the speaker/writer "to break with established linguistic convention". Unconventionality is evident, for example, in some unusual slang expressions meaning 'crazy, mad', such as *bananas*, *bonkers*, *crackers* or *nuts* (Mattiello 2005).
- Faddishness: slang consists of an eccentric, strange vocabulary, mainly characterized by "bizarre metaphors" (Allen 1998: 878) and other "extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech" (McHenry ed. 1993: 871). For instance, *bird* and *chick* are odd metaphors for 'a girl; a young woman', while *fairy* and *pansy* bizarrely allude to 'a male homosexual'. Figurative interpretation likewise characterizes metonymy (e.g. *brain* 'a clever person'), irony (e.g. *bitching*, *killer* having the positive senses of 'excellent' and 'a formidable person or thing'), euphemism (e.g. *wacky baccy*, *wacky tobaccy*, *wacky weed* U.S. 'marijuana'), and similes (e.g. *to smoke like a chimney*

¹⁶ The OED considers *phat* a respelling of *fat*, but also provides some quotations with explanations of the term as an acronym (← *pussy hips ass and tits* or *pretty hot and tempting*; cf. *pretty hips and thighs*, Eble 1996: 175).

‘smoke a lot’, *to work like a dog* ‘work very hard’) (Mattiello 2005).

- Humour: slang is usually hilarious and as Yust (ed.) (1950: 766) states, “an element of humour is almost always present in slang, usually as humorous exaggeration”. Sometimes the humour of slang is evident (as in antiphrases that are generally accompanied by an ironic intonation), but more frequently it is implied (as in punning or intrinsic ambiguity). The humour of slang is clearly illustrated by the expressions *to dance one’s ass/tits off*, *to work one’s brains off/out* and *to work one’s guts out*, which are exaggerations of the effects produced by excessive dancing, studying or working.
- Vulgarity: slang has often been associated with bad language (see, e.g., Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 69). Slang vocabulary in effect abounds in vulgarisms, which are now used as naturally as decent language by most people.¹⁷ Examples of vulgar slang are expressions connected with the word *fuck* (e.g. *fucked-off*), esp. when used as an intensifier (e.g. *fucking bollocks*, *fucking crap*, *fucking hell*, etc.) (cf. obscenity above).
- Desire to impress: slang is deliberately used by speakers to impress or shock others. Partridge (1947: 288) supports this opinion by stating that one reason for using slang is “to be arresting, striking, or even startling”, and Andersson & Trudgill (1990: 78) likewise state that “the point of slang words is often to be startling, amusing or shocking”. The striking or shocking effects of slang are obviously related to the extravagance and taboo nature of some of its expressions, such as *fart* (‘a breaking wind’, ‘a contemptible person’) and *cunt* (‘the female external genital organs’, ‘a term of vulgar abuse for a woman’).¹⁸

¹⁷ Apte (1998: 989): “Individuals who use taboo words excessively in their speech may become insensitive to both the socially determined taboo nature of these words and the fact that such words are offensive to listeners”.

¹⁸ Apte (1998: 988): “Speakers who are aware of the potential of taboo words to arouse strong reactions may deliberately use them to shock their listeners”.

- Hybridism: slang is sometimes viewed as a hybrid language variety because some foreign words may occur in its vocabulary. Foreign lexical material can be borrowed either as direct loans, as in *ciao* ('hello; good-bye') from Italian, and *loco* (orig. U.S. 'mad, insane') from Spanish, or as loan adaptations, as in *capeesh* (chiefly U.S. 'do you understand?'), which is adapted from Italian *capisce* (cf. Polari in Jamartino 2002, Pinnavaia 2003a, b). In any case, the effect of borrowing is always that of a mixture of languages and cultures (see also Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 83-84, Munro ed. 1997: 13).
- Localism: there are many regional differences in slang. British, American and Australian slang, although they share a common language (English), are viewed as different varieties of it (cf. Brit. slang *bloke* 'man, fellow' and U.S. slang *guy*), and within each variety, other sub-varieties can be identified. For instance, American slang is often differentiated between Southern and Northern, and within British slang, Cockney is used in the London area. So, while some slang items can be found in all regions of Britain (e.g. *knackered* 'exhausted, worn out'), others, such as *whistle* (← rhym. slang *whistle and flute* for 'suit'), are restricted to Cockney.
- Colour: slang has a tendency to be colourful, or, as Andersson & Trudgill (1990: 16) suggest, "to make your speech vivid, colourful and interesting". Yust (ed.) (1950: 766) made reference to the "onomatopoeic colour" of some slang words of the period: e.g., *biff* ('a blow, whack'), *flabbergast* ('bombast') and *flummox* ('a failure'). Other instances of the onomatopoeic colour of slang are verbs for 'engage in sex' (e.g. *boff*, *bonk*, *pork*, etc.) (see Eble 1996).
- Impertinence: slang may be defined as audacious, and be accused of disrespect and impertinence.¹⁹ For instance, it disregards respect for other people with its numerous impolite appellations. Many derogatory terms are coined or used in slang to name outsiders: e.g., the term *dago* (a corruption of Sp. *Diego* 'James') is used by American people for Spaniards,

¹⁹ An additional sense of 'slang' in the OED is "abuse, impertinence".

Portuguese, Italians or any foreigner, *Chinkie/-ey/-y* and *Paki* are used by British people to indicate Chinese, Pakistani or South Asian people (see COLT), whereas *Pommie/-y* (← *pomegranate*) is used in Australia and New Zealand for immigrants from Britain, esp. from England.

- Offensiveness: as a consequence of the previous property, slang may be offensive. Many slang derogatory words characterizing certain groups of people on the basis of negative stereotypes are inherently offensive. For example, many sexist slang words refer to male or female homosexuality (*fag*, *faggot*, *lesbo*, *lezzy*), female promiscuity (*slag*, *slut*, *tart*),²⁰ or even to women as animals (*bitch*, *cat*, *cow*, *dog*). These are normally perceived as abusive words by the hearer or addressee.²¹
- Secrecy: slang may also be cryptic and exclusive when it is used by certain subgroups to hide their conversations from people in authority. Criminals, for example, use the slang verbs *nick* and *pinch* to mean ‘steal (a thing)’, and they employ the polysemous noun *stuff* (‘narcotics’, ‘money, cash’, ‘stolen goods’, ‘forbidden goods smuggled into a gaol’) to speak secretly about clandestine drug traffic and other forms of illegal behaviour.²²

²⁰ Cf. *the/his tart* (‘a wife or girl-friend’) in Australia and New Zealand, or in Scouse, the Liverpool dialect.

²¹ Chapman (1986: xxxiii, in Munro ed. 1989: 12), marks two levels of offensiveness: on the one hand, the “strongest impact” rating which indicates a taboo expression, and, on the other hand, the “lesser impact” rating which signals a vulgar expression. Munro (ed.) (1997: 17) finds this reasoning quite arbitrary, and opts for only one level of offensiveness: “Only the category of derogatory words is perceived as potentially offensive by today’s U.C.L.A. students” (cf. Apte 1998).

²² The cryptic character of slang is reminiscent of French *verlan*, which is a non-standard language formed by syllabic inversion, hence the name *verlan* (from F. *l’envers*). As Méla (1991) states, *verlan* is predominantly spoken by college students, and relates to specific semantic areas, such as drugs (e.g. *cigarette* → [garetsi] ‘cigarette’), sex (e.g. *cul* → [yk] ‘bum’), intercultural relations (e.g. *portugais* → [getypør] ‘Portuguese’), scuffle (e.g. *partouze* → [tuzpar] ‘bunch’), but also to ordinary terms, such as *métro* → *tromé* (‘underground’) and *poubelle* → *bellepou* (‘dustbin’). Méla (1991), who suggests the main patterns for the

- Musicality: another typical tendency of slang speech is to play with sounds. In particular, rhyme is the favourite sound effect of slang (see Eble 1996: 39-43), as amply illustrated by the phenomenon best known as Cockney rhyming slang (e.g. *pork-pie* ‘a lie’). Yet reduplicatives (e.g. *hotsy-totsy* ‘comfortable, satisfactory’) and alliteration (e.g. *dinky-die* Austral. and N.Z. ‘honest, genuine’, *kidvid* U.S. ‘a video made for children’) also play a role in slang musicality.
- Privacy: slang is occasionally private, obscure or nearly incomprehensible to outsiders. It generally creates a sense of intimacy among in-group members, but at the same time it may create a sense of exclusion or even rejection among those people who are not part of the group. College students, for instance, show their closeness when they talk about the other sex: e.g., young men use *fox* and *knockout* to refer to ‘attractive girls’, and young women use *babe* and *magnet* for ‘attractive boys’. But most of these college slang words would be impenetrable to outsiders, esp. parents, teachers and adults in general.
- Aggressiveness: slang is aggressive and forceful, and at times malicious or even cruel. Sornig (1981: 69) cites the aggressive and parodistic undertone of slang, and Allen (1998: 879) its “vicious and hostile verbal aggression”. In fact, slang is often used by speakers as a means of provocation or otherwise to express hostility and dislike. Verbal aggression is illustrated, for example, by the numerous slang terms referring to ‘an idiot, fool, crazy, or stupid person’ (*airhead*, *bone-head*, *cluck*, *drongo*, *dumb-dumb*, *flat-head*, *goof*, *knuckle-head*, *muggins*, *ning-nong*, *slob*, *turkey*, etc.) (cf. Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 88-89).
- Culture-restriction: slang is a marker of cultural differences. It is viewed as an anti-language that serves an anti-society (like beggars and gamblers), and generally associated with the levels of society that are culturally sub-standard. The raga

formation of *verlan*, stresses its use both in clandestine activities, as a secret code, and in peer groups like students, as a marker of belonging and alliance.

youth culture, for instance, is associated with reggae music, drugs, Jamaican or African accent and speech style, and with such expressions as *ya man* and *mash up* (Stenström *et al.* 2002: 75-76).

- Efficiency: slang is efficient in the sense that slang words may be much more direct than their standard corresponding descriptions. Among the numerous reasons for using slang that Partridge (1947: 288) identifies is “to be brief, concise”. In fact, slang terms are not always concise, but they are generally immediate and unequivocal for those who share the same slang vocabulary, since they help efficiency. As evidence, compare the slang compound *outside job* and its standard English equivalent explanation: ‘a crime committed by a person not connected or associated with the building, organization, etc., in which it took place’.
- Individuality: slang is viewed by some scholars as a marker of an individual’s identity. For example, it may be perceived as a distinguishing mark, revealing private information about someone’s age, gender, attitude, condition, education, special interests, etc. By the way, Stenström *et al.* (2002: 73-76) show the relationship between slang and gender (see also Olivares 1998, Stenström 1999), and between slang and age. As for gender, they remark that male speakers use proper slang words (e.g. *bimbo*, *freak*, *yobbo*) and dirty slang words (e.g. *bastard*, *crap*, *suck*) relatively more often than female speakers (cf. Allen 1998, Taylor 1998), whereas for age, COLT 17-19 year-olds are reported to use more slang than the other age groups.
- Prestige: slang may be used to convey a sense of prestige. In particular, sociolinguists (e.g. Andersson & Trudgill 1990, Allen 1998) identify a kind of positive value in slang use, which they call “covert prestige”. Covert prestige is often associated with toughness and strength, or with other positive qualities such as independence and naturalness. Young men, for instance, are strongly tempted to use slang swearwords (e.g. *bitch*, *bollocks*, *fuck off*, *hell*) because they serve to create their own status or reputation, and to

strengthen group affinity. Actually, Sornig (1981: 63) claims that “transgression of valid norms provides prestige”.

- Technicality: slang can sometimes be viewed as a ‘technolect’, as it behaves as terminology in terms of restricted use. For example, the verbs *bull* (‘polish (equipment, etc.) in order to meet excessive standards of neatness’) and *slot* (‘kill or injure (a person) by shooting’) belong to the slang of the army, while *bloke* (‘the ship’s commander’), *oggin* (‘the sea’) and *to clap a guy on* (‘put a stop to’) to nautical slang.
- Spontaneity: slang is a free natural speech, associated with cities and modern society. Allen (1998: 881) remarks that new experiences in the industrial city were recorded by the slang of the 1950s (e.g. *bus*, *el*, *skyscraper*, *taxi*, etc.). Furthermore, many slang terms are popular locutions aroused in spontaneous conversation or prompted by the mass media. Instances of spontaneous coins are the blends *fantabulous* (← *fantastic* and *fabulous*) ‘of almost incredible excellence’, and *ginormous* (← *gigantic* and *enormous*) ‘very large, simply enormous’, which reflect the influence of spoken language on vocabulary innovation.

Tables 1 and 2 below summarize the properties of slang illustrated above. Table 1 shows the language levels which in the relevant studies are viewed as affected by slang, whereas Table 2 shows the sociological aspects which have been associated with slang up to now.

The language levels and sociological aspects are disposed on the vertical axis of the two respective tables, while the studies considered are placed on the horizontal axis. In Table 1 the mark ✓ indicates that the language level under examination is claimed to be affected by slang innovation in the corresponding study on the horizontal line; in Table 2, it indicates that slang meets the sociological property taken into account, again in the opinion of the respective scholar(s).

Table 1. The linguistic properties of slang in the relevant studies.

Relevant Studies	Language Levels	phonology	morphology	grammar	lexis/ semantics	pragmatics
Allen (1998)						✓
Andersson & Trudgill (1990)					✓	
Dumas & Lighter (1978)					✓	✓
Dundes & Schonhorn (1963)		✓	✓		✓	✓
Eble (1996)		✓	✓		✓	✓
Flexner (1960)					✓	✓
Franklyn (1961)			✓		✓	✓
Jespersen (1922)			✓	✓	✓	✓
Longman Dictionary (1984)					✓	✓
Mathews (ed.) (1997)					✓	
McHenry (ed.) (1993)		✓	✓		✓	✓
Mencken (1967)					✓	✓
Munro (ed.) (1997)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OED					✓	
Olesen & Whittaker (1968)					✓	
Partridge (1947)					✓	
Pearsall (ed.) (1998)					✓	
Quirk et al. (1985)					✓	
Sornig (1981)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stein (ed.) (1966)					✓	✓
Stenström (2000)		✓		✓	✓	✓
Stenström et al. (2002)					✓	✓
Trudgill (1999)					✓	
Webster & McKechnie (eds) (1963)					✓	
Yust (ed.) (1950)		✓	✓		✓	

Table 2. The sociological properties of slang in the relevant studies.

Relevant Studies	Allen (1998)	Andersson & Trudgill (1990)	Dumas & Lighter (1978)	Dundes & Schonhorn (1963)	Eble (1996)	Flexner (1960)	Franklyn (1961)	Jespersen (1922)	Longman Dictionary (1984)	Matthews (ed.) (1997)	McHenry (ed.) (1993)	Mencken (1967)	Munro (ed.) (1997)	OED	Olesen & Whittaker (1968)	Partridge (1947)	Pearsall (ed.) (1998)	Quirk et al. (1985)	Sornig (1981)	Stein (ed.) (1966)	Stenström (2000)	Stenström et al. (2002)	Trudgill (1999)	Webster & McKechnie (eds) (1963)	Yust (ed.) (1950)
group-restr.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
informality	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
time-restr.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓			✓	
ephemerality	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			
debasement	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓		✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
freshness	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
playfulness	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
obscenity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓			
subject-restr.		✓			✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓				✓
novelty		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓				✓			✓		✓				✓
orality	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓		✓		✓						✓

Table 1 shows that the level of lexis/semantics is influenced by slang much more than the other language levels. Pragmatics is also significant in slang, seeing that its context of use and interlocutors play a central part in its interpretation. The remaining levels – i.e. morphology, phonology and grammar – are taken into account in this descending order of importance, but they are normally underestimated or marginalized. I rather believe that the levels of morphology, especially word-formation, and lexical semantics, constitute the core features of slang, since they exhibit qualities which allow us to discriminate slang from the standard language. Specifically, I believe that slang extra-grammaticality allows a distinction from the canonical rules of English grammar, and that some of its word-formation mechanisms are so peculiar that they can help us determine the slang status of words. In addition, I believe that the obscure relationship between some lexemes and their slang meaning(s) allows a distinction from the standard English lexicon, since it is indicative of slang lexical disorganization, and of the complicated cognitive processes that slang activates.

Table 2 shows that slang is considered both in its specific sense (as an in-group language variety) and in its general sense (as a short-lived informal vocabulary which is below the level of stylistic neutral language). It also shows that the sociological properties of slang may be classified in relation to either the speaker or the hearer.

The speaker-oriented properties of slang characterize the speaker:

- As member of a particular group (group-restriction, individuality), often an exclusive one (secrecy, privacy, culture-restriction, prestige);
- As someone with a precise occupation/activity (subject-restriction, technicality);
- As someone having a low cultural status (informality, debasement), or using low/bad language (vulgarity, obscenity);
- As an individual of a certain age or generation (time-restriction, ephemerality), or coming from a specific regional area (localism).

The hearer-oriented properties are rather meant to produce some effect upon the hearer, viz.:

- ❑ To amuse the hearer or to make him laugh (playfulness, humour);
- ❑ To release him from the monotony of neutral style (freshness, novelty, unconventionality);
- ❑ To impress the hearer (desire to impress), esp. with bizarre expressions (faddishness), or to attract his attention with colourful words (colour) and their sounds (musicality);
- ❑ To mock, offend or challenge the hearer (impertinence, offensiveness, aggressiveness).

The linguistic and sociological properties of slang may therefore be summarized and rearranged as in the schedule below, which provides an outline of chapters 3-5 of this study on slang.

SLANG		
LINGUISTIC PROPERTIES	SOCIOLOGICAL PROPERTIES	
	Speaker-oriented	Hearer-oriented
grammatical and extra-grammatical morphology	group-restriction	playfulness
	subject-restriction	humour
	secrecy	freshness
	privacy	novelty
	informality	desire to impress
	debasement	faddishness
	vulgarity	colour
	obscurity	musicality
lexical organization and disorganization	time-restriction	impertinence
	ephemerality	offensiveness
	localism	aggressiveness

Table 3. A review of the linguistic and sociological properties of slang.

3. Grammatical and Extra-grammatical Morphology

Though slang usage is characterized by rule-breaking and insubordination as regards the rules of Standard usage, this insubordination follows rules of its own, it is a partly conventionalized disregard for conventions. (Sornig 1981: 76)

The speaker always has the capacity to make up new words, which he can then add to his repertoire. It thus remains the task of a morphology to tell us what sort of new words a speaker can form. (Aronoff 1976: 19)

3.1. Slang formations

Slang formations follow different word-formation patterns. Many of them are obtained via extra-grammatical morphological operations (EMOs), i.e. word-formation mechanisms which violate various universal properties of grammatical morphology (see Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Doleschal & Thornton eds 2000; cf. Zwicky & Pullum's 1987 "expressive" vs. "plain" morphology). Yet some slang formations can be assigned to recognized grammatical morphological rules (MRs), i.e. rules which are productive in the grammatical morphology of standard English (see Bauer 2001). A third type of slang formation appears to lie in-between, since it exhibits some regularity (e.g. in the process of morphotactic concatenation), but extra-grammaticality in the base forms, or vice versa, i.e. it shows the regularity of the base, but extra-grammaticality in the mechanism of formation. For example, consider the following representative sample of contemporary use (taken from the ODMS):

1. I was **bombed out** ('under the influence of drink or drugs') – didn't know what I was doing.
2. The women thought him an eligible bachelor, if a bit of a **chaser** ('an amorous pursuer of women').
3. 'Mm, is *that* him?' said the girl, all velvet. 'He's **dishy** ('very attractive')'.
4. They even had a couple of black-clad **bagladies** ('homeless women') sitting silently on straight chairs by the door.
5. Tom needed money for drugs... pot, acid, speed, **ups** ('amphetamines'), **downs** ('tranquillizing drugs').
6. Young men exchange their uniforms for '**civvies**' ('civilian clothes').
7. Her husband got **antsy** ('agitated') and asked me to have Tom Lewis see her in consultation.
8. The local Teddies and **yobbos** (← back-slang *yob* + *-o*, 'louts') swing their dubious weight behind the strike.
9. A shambles as big as the Labour **gabfest** ('a gathering for talk').
10. 'Gee,' said Wing Commander Dewar, 'this thing'll drive me **nuts** ('crazy')'.
11. By half-past three he'll be raving **bonkers** ('mad').
12. Oh so lovely sittin' **abso-bloomin'-lutely** (emphatic, 'absolutely') still! I would never budge 'til Spring crept over me windersill.
13. If you look like a **grot** (← *grotty*, 'unpleasant person'), you'll never get a flat.
14. 'People will dance to anything now,' muses Mal. 'I blame the **E** ('ecstasy') meself!'
15. Have a **butcher's** (← rhym. slang *butcher's hook* 'look') at the *News of the World*.
16. The Bill continues to go from strength to strength because all the bobbies are completely **O.T.T.** ('outrageous').

17. She avoids ever producing her **ambi-sextrous** ('bisexual') young publisher.
18. The days of the '**des res**' ('desirable residence') that clearly isn't are set to end for estate agents.
19. 'Aving a proper **argy-bargy** ('contentious argument') in 'ere, aren't you? Losing your tempers too.
20. 'Better have some **chuddy** ('chewing gum'),' said Tom.

I can anticipate that types (1) to (5) are rule-governed, i.e. their word-formation processes conform to the canonical derivation and compounding mechanisms of standard English. Hence, they demonstrate that slang formations may conform to grammatical MRs. Types (6) to (8) are partially regular formations, in the sense that they exhibit regularity for some aspects, but extra-grammaticality for others (i.e. unrecognizable bases or irregular order of morphological processes). Type (9) (*-fest*) represents a transitional phenomenon between derivation and compounding (combining forms) and may be viewed as a case of what Dressler (2000: 6-7) considers "marginal morphology". Lastly, types (10) to (20) are clearly outside grammar, since the processes of their formation violate too many of the basic properties of morphological grammar to be considered rule-governed.

3.1.1. Grammatical formations

Slang formations conforming to regular grammar are unexpectedly numerous. In both derivation and composition, they adopt regular morphological mechanisms to obtain predictable new words, as in *dish* → *dish-y* and *bag* + *lady* → *baglady*.

Within derivation, suffixation may allow a better illustration of regular morphological patterns, since the number of suffixes largely outweighs that of prefixes in English slang. The most productive suffixes regularly forming slang nouns are:

- *-er*, attached to nominal bases (*life* → *lifer*, *weekend* → *weekender*), or to verbal bases (*chop* → *chopper*, *drop* → *dropper*), like St. E. *hat* → *hatter*, *bake* → *baker*;

- *-ing*, attached to verbs, as in *flame* → *flam-ing*, *ram-raid* → *ram-raiding*, in line with the standard *-ing* pattern.

Less productive but still regular suffixes are: *-ation/-ion* (as in *connection* ← *v connect*), *-ery* (as in *noshery* ← *nosh*), *-ette* obtaining female nouns from male ones (as in *hackette* ← *hack*), *-ful* obtaining nouns from nominal bases (as in *earful* ← *ear*), *-ish* attaching to various bases (as in *peckish* ← *v peck* and *all-overish* ← *all-over*), privative *-less* (as in *legless* ‘drunk’, though with added figurative meaning), *-ness* (as in *chestiness* ← *chesty*), and *-ster* (as in *dopester* ← *dope*, after *drugster* ← *drug*).

Regular suffixes deriving adjectives are frequent as well, as the following samples show:

- *-ed* deriving participial adjectives from verbs, as in *crack* → *cracked* and *bomb* → *bombed*, by analogy with standard forms;
- *-ed* deriving denominal adjectives, as in *pot* → *potted* and parasynthetic *moon-eye* → *moon-eyed*, which follow the standard patterns of *culture* → *cultured* and *dark-eye* → *dark-eyed*;
- *-ing* forming participial adjectives, as in *zonk* → *zonking*, by analogy with St. E. *will* → *willing*;
- *-y* attached to nouns, as in *cheese* → *cheesy*, analogous to St. E. *ice* → *icy*.

Some such adjective-forming suffixes are less recurrent in slang than in standard language, as *-able* (e.g. *ropeable* ← *v rope*).

Some adverbs are likewise formed regularly by attaching the suffix *-ly* to adjectives, as in *stinkingly* (← *stinking*), formed like St. E. *strikingly* (← *striking*).

There are also some prefixes used in slang, which act regularly, but their productivity in forming new words is low. Examples are *de-* (as in *de-bag* ← *bags*, ‘remove the trousers’), *re-* (as in *re-up* ← converted *v up*), *super-* and *un-* (as in *super-cool* and *uncool* ← *cool*), and *under-* (as in *underfug* ← *fug*).

Within composition, regularity is in terms of both morphotactics and morphosemantics. From the morphotactic point of view, some

slang compounds conform to the regular pattern forming nouns, adjectives and verbs, by combining two bases, namely a modifier (non-head) and a head. The compound noun *baglady*, for example, is similar to St. E. *bag-fox*. But also the compound adjective *pie-faced* and the verb *talk turkey* are comparable to St. E. formations (e.g. *dog-faced*, *talk sailor*).

From the morphosemantic point of view, the above slang compounds have their head within the compound (*lady*, *face(d)*, *talk*), hence, they conform to the prototypical pattern of endocentric compounds, denoting ‘a type of lady’, ‘a kind of face’ or ‘a way of talking’. However, not all of them seem to obey Frege’s principle of compositionality, according to which the global meaning of the compound can be deduced from the meaning of its constituent parts (cf. full transparency in Dressler 2005). Indeed, while *baglady* – denoting ‘a woman who carries her possessions in bags’ – is fully compositional, *pie-faced* applied to someone ‘having a round, flat face’ and *talk turkey* meaning ‘speak frankly and without reserve’ are not, though in *pie-faced* the semantic motivation by its first member (non-head) is still evident.

As regards conversion, i.e. the transfer of a lexical item to a different syntactic category with no overt marker, slang formations are assignable to widely recognized patterns (as in Marchand 1969): e.g., the transfer from a noun to a verb (n *souvenir* → v *souvenir* ‘take as a ‘souvenir’; steal’) or vice versa (v *pop* ‘inject a drug’ → n *pop* ‘an injection of a drug’), from an adjective to a verb (adj *special* → v *special* ‘work as a special correspondent’), and from a particle to a verb (prep *off* → v *off* ‘kill’). They also exhibit less frequent patterns (e.g. from a particle to a noun, as in *up*, *down*, etc.), but still attested in standard English (cf. *ups and downs* ‘vicissitudes, variations’).

Let us now turn to what is outside of standard English.

3.1.2. *Extra-grammatical formations*

Extra-grammatical phenomena are frequent slang formations. They mainly consist of:

- a) Anomalous derivations (i.e. expletive infixation and back-formation or back-derivation, see Marchand 1969);

- b) Abbreviatory morphological operations: i.e. clippings, acronyms, initialisms, blends (in the wider sense of Thornton 1993; cf. Dressler 2000: 5), and abbreviated rhyming formations;
- c) Reduplicating mechanisms: the various patterns of echo-words or reduplicatives (see Merlini Barbaresi forthcoming);
- d) Irregular and unpredictable reversed forms and variations of the base, including analogical formations, malapropisms, metathesis, letter pronunciation, extensions and a range of alterations;
- e) The combination of (b), (c) or (d) with affixes which carry no semantic but merely pragmatic meaning: e.g., the colloquial prefix *shm-/shm-*, the hypocoristic or familiar suffix *-ie/-y*, its allomorphic variants *-ey/-ee*, the (chiefly Australian slang) familiarizer *-o*, jocular *-er* and *-s*, and the composite suffixes *-ers*, *-eroo*, *-sie/-sy/-so* (cf. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Merlini Barbaresi 2001);
- f) Entirely unmotivated terms derived by word manufacture (see Bauer 1983) and fanciful formations of unknown origin.

The major grammatical MRs that appear to be violated in the aforementioned slang formations, compared with canonical formations, include:

- Whereas rules of canonical derivation are predictable in form change, affixes being added to continuous bases (*un- + touch*, *absolute + -ly*), the morphotactics of slang derivatives is often irregular, as in back-derived *grot* (\leftarrow *grotty*), or the base may be discontinuous, that is, interrupted by an infix, as in *abso-blooming-lutely*.
- Whereas subtractive MRs exhibit a tendency to delete a small (usually final) part of the base (*evacuate* \rightarrow *evacu-ee*), and, with two bases, of the first base (*Austrian-Hungarian* \rightarrow *Austr-o-Hungarian*), slang subtractive operations may delete larger and not necessarily final (non-salient) parts: i.e., the coda (*E* \leftarrow *ecstasy*, *feeb* \leftarrow *feeble-minded*), two

codas (*des res* ← *desirable residence*), the beginning (*gator* ← *alligator*, *bin* ← *loony bin*), both the coda and the beginning (*tec* ← *detective*), or the middle part, as in *B-girl* (← *bar-girl*), *ginormous* (← *gigantic* + *enormous*), *ambisextrous* (← *ambidextrous* + *sex*) (see § 3.2.10.2).

- Whereas conventional word-formation rules rely on existing stem or word bases, slang reduplicative formations often show no meaningful bases, hardly recognizable as pre-existent meaningful morphemes (*hanky-panky*, *hotsy-totsy*, *zig-zag*). In the onomatopoeic type (*bling-bling*), no independent word bases are identifiable, since the two constituents form a phonetic unit. In the rhyming and ablaut types, headedness is difficult to assign, since both syntagmatic directions are possible (cf. *easy-peasy* and *chit-chat*). The same happens with slang fanciful formations (*lallapaloosa*), whose bases are not independent words, or with those forms of unknown etymology obtained by word manufacture (*scag*).
- Whereas standard MRs mostly comply with Aronoff's (1976) Unitary Base Hypothesis, slang extra-grammatical formations exhibit various base categories for the same suffix, thus exhibiting what Zwicky & Pullum (1987: 336) call "promiscuity with regard to input category".¹ This is the case with the *-ie/-y* suffix, applied primarily to nouns (*druggie/-y*), but also to adjectives (*biggie/-y*), verbs (*clippie/-y* 'a bus-conductress'), adverbs (*downie* 'a depressant or tranquillizing drug'), etc. (see also Merlini Barbaresi 2001). The same promiscuity is found in the output (cf. Scalise's 1988 Unitary Output Hypothesis), as shown by the alternative classes of the above outputs.
- Whereas MRs form new words, slang formations often obtain connoted variants. This is the case with: (1) some reduplicative

¹ The hypothesis that input syntactic category information is not crucial to word-formation rules has been put forward by many linguists (e.g., by Plank 1981, Plag 1999, Ryder 1999, Montermini 2001), and has been systematically investigated by Plag (2004), who shows that the Unitary Base Hypothesis is untenable in derivational morphology, and rather proposes a semantic, output-oriented approach.

formations, such as *O.K.* → *okee-dokey*, sometimes with the prefix *shm-/shm-* (e.g. *moon-schmoon*); (2) some slang suffixes (e.g. *-eroo* as in *flop* → *flopperoo*, *-o* as in *yob* → *yobbo*), esp. when combined with shortened bases (e.g. *-er/-ers* in *bedder* ← *bedroom*, *preggers* ← *pregnant*, *-ie/-y* in *footie/-y* ← *football*, *-o* in *muso* ← *musician*, etc.); (3) most variations, as *champagne* → *shampoo* (humorously chosen for its assonance), *B.B.C.* → *Beeb*; (4) various abbreviatory operations, such as initialisms (*sex appeal* → *S.A.*), blending (*tabloid show* → *tab show*), and clipping (*hashish* → *hash*, *potato* → *tato*), which do not generally exhibit any semantic difference between input and output.

As the descriptive and theoretical literature on morphology shows (esp. Marchand 1969, Aronoff 1976, Bauer 1983), some of the above extra-grammatical morphological operations are not peculiar to slang. For instance, the phenomena included in (a), (c), (f) (back- and reduplicative formations and word manufacture), and subtraction (as in b), are attested in other non-standard varieties and in informal speech, but are generally excluded from morphological grammar due to their oddity and disregard of generative WFRs. On the other hand, other extra-grammatical morphological operations are restricted to slang use, viz.:

- Infixation, in which the bases are discontinuous rather than continuous morphs, as in *fantastic* → *fan-bloody-tastic* (cf. the preference for morphotactic transparency in Natural Morphology (NM), Dressler 2005).
- Abbreviated (elliptic) rhyming formations, which, like other subtractive devices, exhibit no meaning change between input and output, and also tend to lose the phonological iconicity relating onset and outset, as in *butcher's* (← *butcher's hook*), losing the element *hook* rhyming with the referent 'look' (cf. preference for iconicity in NM).
- Reversed and altered forms, as in back-slang *neves* for *seven*, *chuddy* for *chewing gum* and *flick* for *film*, in which the bases are unrecognizable as pre-existent meaningful

morphemes, and the resulting formations are therefore morphotactically opaque.

- Familiarizing suffixes (“familiarity markers” in Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1584), which do not derive new words, but rather pet forms or colloquial variants of standard English words. Examples would be:
 - The English pet suffix *-ie/-y* (or *-ey/-ee*), with a basic hypocoristic meaning, used in slang to convey the pragmatic feature [non-serious], as in denominal *shoppie/-y* (‘a shop assistant’) and deadjectival *hottie/-y* (‘a sexually attractive person’) (see Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994);
 - The British suffix *-er* (and *-ers*, from a cumulation with *-s*), introduced into Oxford University slang from sport, esp. rugby, and used to make jocular formations on nouns, by clipping or curtailing them and adding *-er(s)* to the remaining part, which is sometimes itself distorted, as in *leccer/lecker/lekker* (← *lecture*), *rugger* (← *rugby*), *spaggers/spadgers* (← *spaghetti*), etc.;
 - The American slang suffix *-eroo* (as in *pipperoo* ← *pip*), and its variants *-aroo*, *-roo*, *-oo*, conveying playfulness and jocularly to terms used in certain circles (e.g. radio, sports, advertising);
 - The Australian slang familiarizer *-o*, used to obtain informal equivalents of nouns and adjectives, as in *kiddo* (← *kid*) and *cheapo* (← *cheap*) (cf. the derivative function in *milko* ‘a milkman’).
- The suffix *-s* which, unlike the homophone and homograph inflectional suffix of standard English, derives adjectives from nominal bases, as in *nuts* and *bananas* ‘mad, crazy’, or may combine with other suffixes (e.g. *-y*, *-er*, *-o*) to obtain adjectives (*nutsy*, *bonkers* ‘crazy’) or nouns (*fatso* ‘a fat person’).

3.1.3. *Borderline cases*

In-between grammatical and extra-grammatical morphological operations, there are some partially regular slang formations, which conform to the regular patterns of word-formation, but may exhibit some violations of universal properties of English grammar. We distinguish three main tendencies:

- g) Formations which conform to the regular patterns of morphotactic concatenation, but display extra-grammaticality in the base form (cf. Bauer 1988b);
- h) Formations with regular bases, but an irregular order of morphological processes (esp. derivation after inflection);
- i) Formations which belong to marginal morphology because the processes involving them straddle the borderline between, say, derivation and compounding, or morphology and phonology.

Type (g) is the most common in slang formations. Consider, for instance, the derivatives obtained via suffixation of the slang bases *yob*, derived by back-slang (i.e. inverting the letters of *boy*), and *yuppie*, an acronym from young *urban professional*:

- From *yob*, slang obtains the adjectives *yobby* and *yobbish*, the adverb *yobbishly*, and the abstract nouns *yobbery* and *yobbishness*;
- From *yuppie*, it obtains the noun *yuppi(e)ness*, the adjective *yuppyish*, and, after the verb *yuppify*, the deverbal adjective *yuppified* and the noun *yuppification*.

While, on the one hand, these derivatives conform to the regular order of morphological concatenation (i.e. n *yob* → adj *yob-b-ish* → n *yobbish-ness*; n *yuppie* → v *yupp-ify* → adj *yuppif-i-ed* / n *yuppif-i-cation*), on the other hand, they show a basic extra-grammatical nature due to the origin of the bases (see § 3.1.2).

Type (h) is basically exemplified by inflected bases deriving new words. Indeed, one of the most common generalizations which morphologists make when distinguishing inflection from derivation is that derivational suffixes tend to occur closer to the root or stem

than inflectional suffixes, as in (v) *arrive* → (n) *arrive-al* → (pl.) *arrive-al-s*.

Compare, now, the inflected slang nouns *civvies* (shortened from *civilian clothes*) and *yobbos* (from a familiarizing suffixation of back-slang *yob*) with the slang adjectives *antsy* and *ballsy*, respectively from the inflected (plural) bases *ant-s* (also in *antsy-pantsy*) and *ball-s*. Whereas *civvies* and *yobbos* exhibit a regular inflectional morphology, though attached to extra-grammatical bases (type g), *antsy* and *ballsy* exhibit a regular derivative morphology, but attached to inflected bases (n *ant* → pl. *ant-s* → adj *ants-y*; n *ball* → pl. *ball-s* → adj *balls-y*), which makes the formatives morphotactically and morphosemantically opaque (cf. Dressler 2005). A similar example is provided by the adjective *dicey*, in which the base of the derivative is inflected – the plural of *die* – and hence irregular.

Inflected words are also universally less preferred than autonomous words as compound members. Hence, the slang nominal compound *balls-up*, with a pluralised first base, is less preferred than St. E. *ballpark*, with autonomous words in their uninflected form as bases (cf. Dressler 2005).²

Type (i) is illustrated by some slang final combining forms (e.g. *-fest* as in *gabfest* and *-burger* as in *psychoburger*), which are transitional phenomena between derivation and compounding, and therefore belong to what Dressler (2000) considers “marginal” in morphology. Indeed, final combining forms (or semi-suffixes) display the same productivity and morphosemantic regularity as derivational suffixes (see Mattiello 2007b), but often acquire an independent status (e.g. *fest* ← G. *Fest* and *burger* as a shortening of *hamburger*; cf. § 3.2.4.2), which makes them comparable to compound members.

This latter type is additionally illustrated by some slang phenomena which are marginal in the sense that they lie in-between

² An explanation for the morphological inconsistency of a derivational suffix preceding an inflectional one is found in the lexicalization process: in American slang, the noun *balls* acquires the singular sense of ‘courage, determination’, so it is treated as a simple base rather than as a complex one in the adjective derivation. The case of *antsy* is similar: the origin of this adjective is from the American English idiomatic phrase *to have ants in one’s pants* (‘fidget constantly, esp. because of extreme agitation’), hence the lexicalized noun *ants* to which the *-y* suffix is added.

morphology and, e.g., phonology, such as letter pronunciation, reproducing the pronunciation of the initial letters of a word (e.g. *gee* ← *guy*), or as an alteration, reproducing a colloquial, dialect, regional or standard word pronunciation (e.g. Cockney *lovely* /^llʌvəli/ ← *lovely* /^llʌvli/).

3.2. Slang word-formation

As seen so far, the word-formation mechanisms of slang include regular phenomena, such as compounding, affixation – mostly in the form of suffixation, but also of prefixation – and conversion, as well as extra-grammatical ones, exemplified and discussed in section 3.1.2. We will now examine each phenomenon in more detail, and describe the grammatical classes of slang formations, in addition to their base categories and head properties. As regards slang classes, I can anticipate that most slang compounds and derivatives are nouns, followed by adjectives and verbs. Interjections, adverbs and particles represent relatively minor groups within the slang lexicon, though they are attested among its formations, e.g. the exact reduplicative *hubba-hubba* is an interjection, the *-o* derivative *doggo* is an adverb, etc. Idiomatic phrases and longer expressions will not be part of this investigation with the exception of some slang idioms (e.g. *dog's breakfast*), which will be distinguished from proper slang compounds. Compounding is the first topic of my investigation.

3.2.1. Compounding

Compounding is a common morphological mechanism which obtains new words consisting of “two elements, the first of which is either a root, a word or a phrase, the second of which is either a root or a word” (Plag 2003: 135). In English and similar languages, the modifier generally precedes the head, as established by Williams’ (1981) Righthand Head Rule (RHR).³ In slang, both head and non-

³ Williams’ (1981: 248) Righthand Head Rule states: “In morphology, we define the head of a morphologically complex word to be the righthand member of that word”. By the way, Dressler (2005: 275-276) claims that “an explanation for the right-hand head preference may lie in the psycholinguistic recency effect which makes the end of a word more salient”. In semiotic terms, the compound head

head positions may be occupied by a variety of classes, the most unusual being particles (i.e. prepositions, numerals and pronouns), as in *four-eyes*, *I AM*, *Section Eight*, *she-male*, *undercover*, all forming compound nouns. On the other hand, the regular pattern of right-headed endocentric compounds, which have the head within the compound and, specifically, to the right, is found in *doss-house* ‘a lodging house’, *hot chair* ‘the electric chair’, and *outside man* denoting ‘a person involved in robbery’, which have respectively a noun, adjective and adverb as non-head. These combinations are called “attributive” or “appositional” (e.g. by Marchand 1969: 41, 61) because they are typically characterized by a determinant-determinatum relation.

Before moving on to a classification of slang compounds, an orthographic clarification may be in order here. It is well known that compounds in English are spelt variously as one word (*blackbird*), as hyphenated words (*black-face*), or as two independent words (*black eye*) (see Jespersen 1942: 136, Lieber 1992: 84). This distinction, however, is not always as clear-cut as that: some compounds are, indeed, written in different ways, as *blackboard* or *black board*, and *black-ball* or *blackball*, all perfectly acceptable in standard English. Slang compounds make no exception, as the three spellings of *red neck*, *redneck* or *red-neck* seem to confirm. Sometimes, however, spelling may affect the reading of the compound: for instance, the hyphenated compound *bad-mouth* may be both a noun and a verb. But when the compound is written as two separate words (as *bad mouth*) it has to be read as a noun, while when it is spelt as one word (as *badmouth*) it denotes a verb.

3.2.1.1. Compound nouns

Nouns constitute the most extensive syntactic class of slang compounds. The base categories of such compounds are, as anticipated, various, though the most common are, as in standard English, two nouns (*house-man*), or a head-noun and an adjective-modifier (*main man*). Less common bases are provided by grammatical rather than lexical words, as in *I AM* or *she-male*, with

represents the figure, while the non-head is the ground. However, saliency does not seem to apply to Romance languages (see Scalise 1988, 1992).

a pronominal first member. What follows is an attempt to identify the possible combinations among base categories.

3.2.1.1.1. Noun-noun compounds are richly illustrated in slang. Within this pattern, the most frequent subgroup is represented by metonymic compounds (see § 3.2.1.4.1), in which the syntactic head is a part of the semantic head. In particular, the syntactic head is a body part, which stands for the whole person.

Metonymic compounds with *head* as the second member mainly denote ‘a stupid or despicable person’. This sense is in *airhead*, *bone-head*, *bubblehead*, *knucklehead*, *meat-head*, *mush-head*, *mutton-head*, *shithead*, and, with a deverbal first member, *propellerhead*. They are all analysable as ‘a person having a head as indicated by the first member’.

Such compounds have to be distinguished from compounds in which *head* means ‘drug addict’. This latter type, indeed, does not have a metonymic nature, as the first member rather specifies the sort of substance (drug or other) the person is addicted to: e.g., *acid head* (orig. U.S.) ‘an LSD addict’, *crackhead* (orig. U.S.) ‘one who is addicted to crack cocaine’, *hophead* (U.S.) ‘an opium-smoker’, *piss-head* (chiefly Brit. and N.Z.) ‘a drunkard’, *pothead* ‘one who is addicted to marijuana’ (more in § 4.2.1.3).

Other metonymic compounds having *mouth* as the second member denote ‘a person who talks in the way denoted by the first member’ (e.g. *flannel-mouth* U.S. ‘an empty talker’, *motormouth* orig. U.S. ‘a person who talks fast and incessantly’). Similar “*pars-pro-toto* compounds” (Warren 1978: 27) are *beer belly* ‘one who has a protruding stomach caused by drinking large quantities of beer’, *cloth ears* ‘a person with a poor sense of hearing’, *guzzle-guts* ‘a glutton’, *jack-leg* (U.S.) ‘an incompetent or unskilled person’, vulgar *jive-ass* (U.S.) ‘a person who loves fun or excitement’, *lard-ass* (orig. N. Amer.) ‘a fat person’, *mossback* ‘a slow, rustic, or old-fashioned person’, and *sparrow-brain* ‘a person with a tiny brain’.

Another group of endocentric nominal compounds characterized by *man* as the second member belongs to the attributive (appositional) type: *hit-man* ‘a hired murderer’, *lurkman* (Austral.) (← *lurk* ‘a scheme, plan of action’) ‘a person who lives by sharp practice’, *matman* (orig. U.S.) (← *mat* ‘floor-covering used in

wrestling’) ‘a wrestler’, *monkey-man* (U.S.) ‘a weak or gullible man’, *muscle man* ‘a man with highly developed muscles’, *needle man* (U.S.) ‘a drug addict who takes drugs by injection’, *rodman* (← *rod* ‘a gun’) ‘a gunman’, *skyman* (Journalistic) ‘a paratrooper’. The element *man* is pronounced [mən] in slang when the word denotes a member of a specific group, as in *house-man* (U.S.) ‘a burglar’, *passman* ‘a male prisoner who is allowed to leave his cell as a special privilege’, and *streetman* (U.S.) ‘a petty criminal who works on the street’.

Within the attributive type, the following compounds have a human being as the second element: *baglady* (orig. U.S.) ‘a homeless woman, often elderly, who carries her possessions in shopping bags’, *glamour boy* ‘a member of the R.A.F.’, *homeboy* (orig. U.S.) ‘a member of one’s peer group or gang’, *Jew boy* (offens.) ‘a Jewish male’, *loony-doctor* ‘a psychiatrist’, *pavement princess* (U.S.) ‘a prostitute who seeks business on the streets’ (cf. Amer. *sidewalk*), *pen-mate* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘each of two or more shearers who shear sheep from the same pen’, *piss artist* (chiefly Brit.) ‘a drunkard’, *pox-doctor* (← *pox* ‘syphilis’) ‘a doctor specializing in the treatment of venereal disease’, *sky pilot* ‘a priest or clergyman, esp. a military or naval chaplain’, *suicide blonde* (jocular) ‘a woman with hair dyed blonde (esp. rather amateurishly)’, *witch-doctor* (Military) ‘a psychiatrist’. Some such compounds, however, are non-compositional (e.g. *pavement princess*, *sky pilot*), since they do not denote a member of the class expressed by the second member, but they have rather to be read metaphorically.

The class of endocentric compounds with a non-human head includes *blood wagon* ‘an ambulance’, *doss-house* (← *doss* ‘a bed’) ‘a common lodging-house’, *hit list* ‘a list of persons to be assassinated’, *hit squad* (orig. U.S.) ‘a group of esp. politically-motivated assassins or kidnappers’, *hock-shop* ‘a pawnshop’, *lughole* ‘the ear-hole’, *meat-wagon* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘an ambulance’, *monkey meat* (U.S., Army) ‘tinned meat’, *monkey suit* (orig. U.S.) ‘a formal, decorative, or showy uniform’, *needle beer* (U.S.) ‘near-beer mixed with ethyl alcohol’, *nut-house* ‘a home or hospital for people with mental illnesses’, *penguin suit* ‘a man’s formal evening wear’, *roadwork* (Criminals’) ‘the work of an itinerant thief’, *sack time* (orig. U.S., Forces’) ‘time spent in bed’,

sin city (often jocular) ‘a city of licentiousness and vice’. The head is unusually the left-hand member in *murder one* (U.S.) ‘a first-degree murder’.

The class of opaque exocentric compounds referring to human beings includes *dream-boat* (orig. U.S.) ‘an exceptionally attractive or pleasing person’, *face-ache* ‘a mournful-looking person’, *fruitcake* (orig. U.S.) ‘a crazy or eccentric person’, *gasbag* (← *gas* ‘empty or boastful talk’) ‘an empty talker’, *glamour puss* ‘a glamorous person’, *grease-ball* (U.S.) ‘a derogatory term for a foreigner’, *grease monkey* ‘a mechanic’, *gum-shoe* ‘a detective’, *head case* (orig. Brit.) ‘a person characterized as mentally ill or unstable’, *jail-bait* (orig. U.S.) ‘a girl who is under the legal age of consent’, *jelly bean* ‘a pimp’, *jelly-dog* ‘a harrier’, *jelly roll* ‘a lover’, *jungle bunny* ‘a derogatory term used to designate Blacks, Australian Aborigines, etc.’, *king-fish* (U.S.) ‘a leader, chief, boss’, *lounge lizard* (orig. U.S.) ‘a man who spends his time idling in fashionable society’, *mouthpiece* (chiefly Criminals’) ‘a lawyer’, *nutcase* ‘a crazy, mad, or eccentric person’, *peanut* ‘a small, unintelligent, or unimportant person’, *pork chop* (U.S., derog.) ‘a black person who is subservient to whites’, *post office* ‘a person who receives information and either transmits it or holds it for collection’, *ring-worm* (U.S.) ‘someone who regularly attends boxing-matches’, *salt horse* (Nautical) ‘a naval officer with general duties’, *screwball* (chiefly U.S.) ‘an eccentric; a madman’, *snow-bird* (U.S.) (← *snow* ‘cocaine’) ‘one who sniffs cocaine’, *stink-pot* ‘a term of abuse for a person’.

The following exocentric compounds refer to inanimate objects, things, places, and even abstract aspects: *cakehole* ‘a person’s mouth’, *cheesecake* (orig. U.S.) ‘female sexual attractiveness’, *eyewash* (Military) ‘unnecessary routine tasks or ceremonial’, *glass-house* ‘a military prison or guard-room’, *gobstick* (← *gob* ‘the mouth’) ‘a clarinet’, *God-box* ‘a church or other place of worship’, *goggle-box* ‘a television set’, *goof ball/pill* ‘(a tablet of) any of various drugs’, *gum-bucket* (Naval) ‘a smoker’s pipe’, *gum-game* (U.S.) ‘a trick or dodge’, *hash-joint* (chiefly U.S.) ‘a cheap eating-house’, *hop toy* ‘a container used for smoking opium’, *horse opera* (orig. U.S.) ‘a Western film or television series’, *jaw-bone* (N. Amer.) ‘credit’, *joy-house* ‘a brothel’, *joy/jungle juice* (U.S.) ‘alcoholic drink’, *knuckle sandwich* ‘a punch in

the mouth', *lead balloon* 'a failure', *liquorice-stick* (Jazz) 'a clarinet', *loony bin* (← *loony* 'a lunatic') 'a mental hospital', *marble orchard/town* (N. Amer.) 'a cemetery', *meat-hook* 'an arm or hand', *meat-house* (← obs. *meat* 'a prostitute') 'a brothel', *meat-market* 'a meeting-place popular among prostitutes or people in search of casual sexual partners', *mitt camp* (U.S.) (← *mitt* 'a hand') 'a palmist's or fortune-teller's booth, tent, etc.', *monkey parade* (dated) 'an evening promenade of young people', *mousetrap* 'inferior or unpalatable cheese', *neck-oil* 'an alcoholic drink, esp. beer', *nose candy* (N. Amer.) 'a drug that is inhaled through the nose; spec. cocaine', *notch house* (← coarse *notch* 'the female genitals') 'a brothel', *oil can* (Military) 'a German trench mortar shell of the First World War', *parlour-house* (U.S.) 'an expensive type of brothel', *pie-card* (U.S., dated) 'a meal ticket', *pigboat* (N. Amer., Navy) 'a submarine', *pigeon-drop* (orig. U.S., Criminals') 'a confidence trick', *pineapple* 'a bomb', *pine drape* (U.S.) 'a coffin', *prat leather* (U.S., Criminals') (← *prat* 'a hip-pocket') 'a wallet or purse kept in the hip pocket', *puppy-hole* (Eton College) (← *puppy* 'pupil') 'a pupil-room', *rat house* (Austral. and N.Z.) 'a mental hospital', *slaughter-house* 'a shop where goods are bought from small makers at very low prices', *whore-shop* 'a brothel', *wish book* (N. Amer.) 'a mail-order catalogue'.

This latter type with a plural second member is found in *family jewels* (orig. U.S.) 'the male genitals', *horse feathers* (U.S.) 'nonsense, rubbish, balderdash', *office hours* (U.S., Military) 'a disciplinary session', *road apples* (U.S.) 'horse droppings', and *snake eyes* (U.S.) 'tapioca'.

This type may also be used attributively, as in *rat-bag* (orig. Austral. and N.Z.) 'a stupid or eccentric person' (also 'stupid') and *screwball* (chiefly U.S.) 'an eccentric; a madman' (also 'eccentric, mad').

Some of the above opaque compounds have a figurative origin, and therefore meaning can be retrieved through metaphorical reading (*cakehole* 'the mouth'), euphemism (*joy-house* 'a brothel', *marble town* 'a cemetery', *pine drape* 'a coffin'), synecdoche (*prat leather* 'a wallet'), etc. The compound *peg-house*, originally endocentric and used to mean 'a public house, a tavern', is now used figuratively for 'a brothel or meeting place for male homosexuals'.

3.2.1.1.2. Adjective-noun compounds represent another widespread pattern in slang. Many metonymic compounds fall into this group. Examples are *pointy-head* (orig. U.S., derog.) ‘a stupid person’, *shrewd-head* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘a cunning person’, *sore-head* (chiefly N. Amer.) ‘a discontented, dissatisfied person’, *squarehead* ‘an honest person’; *big mouth* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘a very talkative or boastful person’, *fat-mouth* (U.S.) ‘one who talks extravagantly’, *smart mouth* (U.S.) ‘one who is good at repartee’; *red-neck* (U.S.) ‘a reactionary’, *roughneck* (orig. U.S.) ‘a person of rough habits or quarrelsome disposition’; *roundeye* ‘a European’ (cf. *slant-eye* orig. U.S. ‘a slant-eyed person, esp. an Asian’); *lame-brain* (← *lame* ‘naïve, socially inept’) ‘a dull-witted or stupid person’; *paleface* (orig. N. Amer., Black E., chiefly derog.) ‘a white person’; *pink toe* (U.S., Black E.) ‘a white woman, or a light-skinned black woman’; *red legs* (U.S., Military) ‘an artilleryman’; *yellow belly* (orig. U.S.) (← colloq. *yellow* ‘cowardly’) ‘a coward’. In *greenback* the second element refers to the *back* of an animal (i.e. ‘a frog’, see § 3.2.1.4), whereas in *bad-mouth*, *glad eye* and *glad hand* the body part respectively refers to a type of ‘talk’, ‘look’, and ‘handshake’.

A small subgroup of metonymic compounds denotes the person through his/her clothing: e.g., *droopy drawers* ‘an untidy, sloppy, or depressing woman’, *fancy pants* ‘a dandy; a snob’, *old boot* ‘a woman; a wife’, *red-cap* (Brit., Military) ‘a military policeman’, *red-hat* (Military) ‘a staff officer’, *slyboots* (mainly jocular) ‘a sly, cunning, or crafty person’.

People are also denoted through non-transparent exocentric compounds whose second member is difficult to assign to the semantic head: e.g., *main squeeze* (N. Amer.) ‘an important person; a sweetheart’, *oddball* (orig. U.S.) ‘an eccentric or odd person’, *old bean/fruit* ‘a familiar form of address’, *old ship* ‘a jocular address to a sailor’, *old sweat* ‘an experienced soldier or military pilot’, *pink button* (Stock Market) ‘a jobber’s clerk’, *Roman Candle* ‘a Roman Catholic’, *second banana* (orig. U.S., Theatre) ‘a supporting comedian’ (cf. *top banana* ‘the leading comic in a burlesque entertainment’), *small potatoes* (orig. U.S.) ‘a person or thing considered unimportant or worthless’, *sweetie-pie* (orig. U.S.) ‘a lovable person; also as a term of endearment’.

The following are non-transparent exocentric compounds with a non-human semantic head: *cold turkey* (orig. N. Amer.) ‘a method of treating drug addicts by sudden and complete withdrawal of the drug’, *dead soldier* (U.S.) ‘an empty bottle’, *good oil* (Austral.) ‘reliable information’, *greasy spoon* (orig. U.S.) ‘a cheap and inferior eating-house’, *greenhouse* (Aeronautics) ‘the glass cockpit covering over observation and similar planes’, *happy dust* ‘cocaine’, *hard cheese* (Brit.) ‘bad luck’, *hard tail* (U.S.) ‘a mule’, *heavy sugar* (U.S.) ‘big money’, *hot rod* (orig. U.S.) ‘a motor vehicle specially modified to give high power and speed’, *hot-shot* (U.S.) ‘injection of a drug that is of higher potency than the addict is accustomed to’, *idiot box* ‘a television set’, *idiot stick* (U.S.) ‘a shovel’, *inside job* ‘a crime committed in a house, etc., by a resident or servant in the building’, *inside stand* ‘the placing of a gang member incognito as one of the staff of a place to be robbed’, *Irish confetti* ‘stones used as weapons’, *lazy dog* (U.S., Military) ‘a type of fragmentation bomb’, *left field* ‘a position away from the centre of activity’, *lunatic soup* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘alcoholic drink’, *merry hell* ‘a disturbance; severe pain’, *physical torture* (humorous) ‘physical training’, *private business* (Eton College) ‘extra tuition’, *red ink* (chiefly U.S.) ‘cheap red wine’, *Redland* ‘the Soviet Union’, *red lead* (Naval) ‘tomato ketchup; tinned tomatoes’, *short time* ‘a brief sojourn in a hotel for sexual purposes’, *Spanish tummy* ‘a stomach upset of a type freq. experienced by visitors to Spain’, *tinned dog* (Austral.) ‘canned meat’.

Endocentric compounds are far less frequent. Examples include animate and inanimate terms. Compounds denoting animate beings are *main guy* (U.S.) ‘a man of authority or importance’, *main man* (U.S.) ‘a favourite male friend’, *old lady* (U.S., chiefly Prison) ‘a passive partner in a homosexual relationship’ (cf. colloq. ‘a person’s mother; a man’s wife’), *pretty-boy* ‘an effeminate man, a male homosexual’, *wise guy* (orig. U.S.) ‘a know-all’. Compounds denoting inanimate things are *hot chair*, *liquid lunch* (often jocular) ‘a midday meal at which drink rather than food is consumed’, *mad money* ‘money for use in an emergency’, *wooden cross* (Military) ‘a wooden cross on a serviceman’s grave’.

3.2.1.1.3. The type verb + noun generally refers to a person (agent) performing the action denoted by the verb, as in *jitterbug* (orig. U.S.) denoting ‘a *bug* ‘a person obsessed by an idea’ who *jitters* ‘acts in a nervous way’ and *plug-ugly* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘an *ugly* ‘ugly person’ who *plugs* ‘strikes’.

Within this pattern, the noun may represent an object (patient), as in *sawbones* ‘surgeon’ and *slaphead* (orig. and chiefly Brit., humorous or deprec.) ‘a bald or shaven head’.

3.2.1.1.4. The type adverb + noun is found in the endocentric compound *outside man* (U.S.) ‘a person involved in robbery’, and in the exocentric, but metaphoric, compound *outside job* ‘a crime committed by a person not connected with the building in which it took place’ (see efficiency in § 2.3.2).

3.2.1.1.5. The first member is a numeral in *four-eyes* ‘a person who habitually wears spectacles’ and *nineteenth hole* (humorous, orig. U.S.) ‘the bar room in a golf clubhouse, as reached at the end of a standard round of eighteen holes’. It is a preposition in *undercover* ‘an undercover agent’.

3.2.1.1.6. There are other possible base combinations, which however represent marginal cases. For instance, compounds with a nominal/verbal base followed by a verb (*look-see* ‘a survey; a tour of inspection’), by an adverb (*speak-easy* ‘an illicit liquor shop’, *star-back* ‘an expensive, reserved seat at a circus’), by a preposition (*beer-off* ‘an off-licence’, *beer-up* ‘a drinking-bout or -party’, *booze-up* ‘a drinking-bout’, *going-over* ‘a beating; a thrashing’, *leg-over* ‘sexual intercourse’), or by a numeral (as in Military slang *Section Eight*). An adjective followed by an adverb is found in *low-down* ‘the fundamental facts on (about) a person, situation, etc.’.

Some rare cases of composition have a grammatical word (gen. a pronoun) as their first base (e.g. *her indoors* ‘one’s wife or girlfriend’, *I AM* ‘a self-important person’, *she-male* ‘a passive male homosexual or transvestite’), or they may combine a word with an interjection, as in *shoo-fly* (U.S.) ‘a policeman, usu. in plain clothes’ and *Hooray Henry* ‘a type of loud, rich, rather ineffectual young society man’, which has a proper name as its second member.

3.2.1.2. Compound adjectives

Adjectives are quite frequent among slang compounds. Most of them are deverbal – that is, they are obtained via participial adjectives (*God-damn-ed*, *mind-blow-ing*) or phrasal verbs (*bomb-ed out*) – or denominal, as in *mob-hand-ed*, *mutton-head-ed*, *moon-ey(e)-ed*, etc. In my description, however, the type *moon-eyed* will be dealt with under suffixation (§ 3.2.3.5), since **eyed* does not exist as an autonomous word. On the other hand, the types *bombed out* and *mind-blowing* belong here, because the elements *bombed* and *blowing* are freestanding participial adjectives and may therefore act as independent, though complex, constituents (see Crocco Galèas 2003).⁴

3.2.1.2.1. The most common type of slang compound adjectives is the pattern obtained from phrasal verbs. The first base therefore occurs in its inflected form (as a past participle) and the second one is a preposition. The preposition is *out* in *bombed out* ‘drunk; under the influence of drugs’, *gross-out* ‘shocking, disgusting’, *skinned out* ‘having no money left, broke’, *strung out* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘addicted to drugs’.

The preposition *up* is extensively used, as in *hopped-up* (U.S.) ‘under the influence of a narcotic drug’, *hung up* ‘confused’, *lit up* (← *v light up*) ‘drunk or under the influence of a drug’, *pissed up* (chiefly Brit.) ‘drunk, intoxicated’, *pooned up* (Austral.) ‘dressed up, esp. showily or flashily’, *sexed-up* ‘sexually aroused’, *washed up* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘defeated, exhausted’. It is also present in *stove-up* (N. Amer.) ‘run-down, exhausted’, irregularly obtained from the verb *stave* (‘break up (a cask) into staves’), and in *geed-up* ‘drugged’, which has a nominal first base (*gee* ‘opium or a similar drug’) acting as a verb.

⁴ Crocco Galèas (2003: 32-33) distinguishes the type *blue-eyed* from the compounds which have a past or present participle as their second member (e.g. *easy-going*). The author claims that the former is a derivational compound adjective “which firstly undergoes a rule of compounding and secondly a rule of derivation” (*blue-eye* + *-ed*), whereas the latter is “the result of a derivational rule (*going*) followed by a compositional rule” (*easy* + *going*). Cf. Conti’s (2007) analysis of “double-base *-ed* derivatives”.

Less common prepositions are *off* (as in *pissed off* orig. U.S. ‘angry, irritated’) and *on* (as in *switched-on* ‘aware of all that is considered fashionable and up-to-date’).

3.2.1.2.2. The type with a participial adjective as its second base is not as profuse as the previous one. Examples with a past participle are *gobsmacked* or *gob-struck* (Brit.) (← *gob* ‘the mouth’) ‘flabbergasted; speechless’, blasphemous *God-damned* ‘accursed, damnable’, and coarse *shit-scared* ‘extremely frightened’; whereas *mind-blowing* ‘consciousness-altering (esp. as a result of drug use)’ shows a present participle. The interpretation is, in both subgroups, metaphorical: e.g., *mind-blowing* alludes to the fact that drugs ‘blow one’s mind’.

3.2.1.2.3. In the type *God-awful* ‘terrible; extremely awful’, the second base is an adjective and the first one (a noun) often intensifies or characterizes it. Other compounds belonging to this pattern are *shit-hot* (coarse) ‘unpleasantly enthusiastic, very skilful’, *slug-nutty* (U.S.) ‘punch-drunk’, and *stir-crazy* (chiefly U.S., Criminals’) (← *stir* ‘a prison’) ‘mentally deranged (as if) from long imprisonment’. The compound *stone-broke* ‘ruined’, with a participial as its second base, has inspired the coining of comparable adjectives (e.g. *stone crazy, drunk, mad*, etc.) (cf. St. E. *stone-dead*). This type with a verb in the non-head position is found in *slap-happy* ‘punch-drunk; dizzy (with happiness)’.

3.2.1.2.4. When the first base is an adjective, the second one may be either an adjective or a participial. The former is found in *squeaky clean* ‘above criticism, beyond reproach’, and the latter in *half-cut* (also obs. *half shaved*), *half-shot* (orig. U.S.) ‘half-drunk’, and *stony-broke* ‘ruined’ (cf. *stone-broke* above).

3.2.1.2.5. The attributive type adjective + noun is clearly exophoric (metaphoric), as the following examples seem to confirm: *half-pie* (N.Z.) ‘halfway towards, imperfect’, *punk-ass* (U.S.) ‘of a person: worthless, good-for-nothing’, *red-eye* (U.S.) ‘used attrib. to designate an aeroplane flight on which the traveller is unable to get adequate sleep’, *sad-ass* (N. Amer.) ‘poor, contemptible’, *smart-arse/-ass* (also

wise-ass ‘ostentatiously or smugly clever’, *split-arse/-ass* (Forces) ‘classy, showy’, *white-shoe* (chiefly U.S.) ‘effeminate, immature’.

3.2.1.2.6. A few unusual patterns combine a base with a particle, that is to say a preposition (*in pod* ‘pregnant’, *all-in* ‘exhausted’) or an adverb (*spark out* ‘forgotten; (completely) unconscious’), or two adverbs (as in *far-out* orig. U.S. ‘excellent, splendid’, *way-in* ‘conventional; sophisticated’, *way-out* ‘far removed from reality or from convention’).

3.2.1.3. Compound verbs

Slang compound verbs are mostly obtained by conversion, as in (v) *eyeball* ← (n) *eye-ball* and (v) *bad-mouth* ← (n) *bad mouth* (see § 3.2.1.3.4). These are considered “verbal pseudo-compounds” by Marchand (1969: 101) and are classified together with verbal compounds obtained by back-formation. Other types are relatively marginal in slang.

3.2.1.3.1. A possible combination within slang compound verbs is verb + noun. Although the first base is a verb, they generally thwart a literal reading, and are therefore exocentric: e.g., *kick ass* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘act roughly or aggressively’, *raise Cain* ‘create trouble or confusion’, *spit blood* ‘of a spy: fear exposure’, *spit chips* (Austral.) ‘feel extreme thirst’. A partial exception is *talk turkey* (orig. N. Amer.) ‘speak frankly and without reserve’, which is endocentric, but not fully-compositional (see § 3.1.1).

3.2.1.3.2. The opposite direction (noun + verb) yields more frequently endocentric compounds, as *donkey-lick* (Austral.) (← v *lick* ‘beat, thrash’) ‘defeat easily’, *pig-jump* (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) ‘of a horse: jump from all four legs without bringing them together, esp. in an attempt to unseat the rider’, and *skin-pop* (orig. U.S.) (← v *pop*) ‘inject a drug subcutaneously’.

3.2.1.3.3. A verb is followed by a numeral in *hang five, ten*, etc. (Surfing) ‘allow the specified number of toes to project over the nose of the surfboard, usu. to gain speed’, or by a grammatical word, as in *make it* ‘achieve sexual intercourse (with)’, *mix it* ‘quarrel, fight’, *snuff it* ‘die’, *stop one* (Austral.) ‘take a drink’,

strong it (Brit.) ‘behave excessively, exaggerate’. A rare possibility combines a numeral with a noun, as in *two-time* (orig. U.S.) ‘be unfaithful to (a spouse or lover)’.

3.2.1.3.4. As anticipated, many (pseudo) compound verbs are converted from nouns (see also § 3.2.6.1.1). They follow either the pattern with two noun constituents or the pattern with an adjective plus a noun. The first subgroup is illustrated by *eyeball* (U.S.) ‘look or stare at’, *pratfall* ‘fall on to the buttocks’, *sandbag* ‘underperform in a race or competition in order to gain an advantage’, *showboat* (U.S.) ‘perform or behave ostentatiously; show off’, *tear-arse/-ass* ‘drive recklessly’.

The second subgroup is exemplified by *bad-mouth* (orig. U.S.) ‘abuse (someone) verbally; criticize’, *dead-head* (chiefly U.S.) ‘drive an empty train, truck, taxi, etc.’, *highball* (U.S.) ‘go or drive at high speed’, *hot-stuff* (Army) (← *hot stuff* ‘stolen goods’) ‘scrounge, steal’, *hot-wire* (N. Amer.) ‘by-pass the ignition system of a motor vehicle’. Peculiarly, *sweetmouth* (chiefly U.S., Black E.) ‘flatter’ has no corresponding nominal compound.

3.2.1.4. Non-prototypical slang compounds

The variety of potential members of slang compounds confronts us with the problem of non-prototypical compounds. We distinguish various types of such compounds in slang, which depart from the universal preferences established within NM (see Dressler *et al.* 1987, Dressler 2005):

- Exocentric compounds, which have their head outside the compound, as in *greenback* ‘a frog’, and *lame-brain* ‘a stupid person’;
- Synthetic compounds, in which the head is a deverbal derivative, as in *block-busting* and *egg-beater* ‘a helicopter’;
- Three-member compounds, in which one of the compound members (generally the non-head) is itself a compound, as in *four-letter man* and *one-arm joint*;
- Coordinate compounds, in which the first member does not modify the first one, as in *lover man*;

- Combinations of two or more elements which may resemble compounds, but are not: e.g., *bunch of fives*, *mother's ruin*, *tired and emotional*, *to kick the bucket*, and phrasal verbs, such as *knock in*, *off*, etc.

3.2.1.4.1. In standard English, exocentric compounds were originally identified by Jespersen (1942: 142), who drew attention to *bahuvrihi*-compounds such as *red-coat*, which is not 'a kind of coat' but 'a person wearing a red coat'. Similarly, Marchand (1969) notices that the formula $AB = B$, though valid for endocentric compounds, does not apply to other types of combinations, viz. pseudo-, *bahuvrihi* or exocentric compounds (e.g. *birdbrain*, *blackout*, *pickpocket* and *showoff*).

After such pioneering studies, many scholars have highlighted the difference between endo- and exo-centric compounds: in chronological order, Downing (1977), Warren (1978), Bauer (1983), while Williams (1981: 250) suggests that exocentric compounds are not only evident exceptions to his Righthand Head Rule, but they are even derived by headless rules. Lieber (1992: 82) likewise distinguishes between endocentric compounds (i.e. "those in which both the semantic and syntactic category of the compound corresponds to that of the head") and exocentric compounds (i.e. "those in which either semantically or syntactically (or both), the compound as a whole does not bear the characteristics of its head").

In terms of naturalness/markedness (cf. Dressler *et al.* 1987), exocentric compounds are less natural/more marked than endocentric compounds, based on the parameters of indexicality and morphosemantic transparency: first, they do not allow straightforward access to the compound head, which is outside the compound or has to be inferred, and, second, they are non-compositional and opaque, i.e. their meaning is not motivated by the compound members.

In slang there are many exceptions to endocentric compounds. One such exception is illustrated by the extremely large group of metonymic nominal compounds (see §§ 3.2.1.1.1-2, also Mattiello 2003; cf. Warren's 1978: 27 "*pars-pro-toto* compounds", Plag's 2003: 146 "possessive compounds"), which have a body part as the second member, but refer to the whole person: e.g., *big mouth*,

four-eyes, lame-brain, paleface, pink toe, pointy-head, red legs, red neck, roundeye, yellow belly, etc. These compounds imply a metonymic relationship between the expressed member (the body part) and the unexpressed one (the person), which is the actual semantic head of the compound. Hence, *big mouth* alludes to ‘a very talkative person’, *four-eyes* refers to ‘a person wearing glasses’, *lame-brain* to ‘a person having a lame brain’, etc.

Another exception is illustrated by metaphoric slang compounds (*snow-bird, post office, half-cut*), in which the head has to be inferred. Thus, a *snow-bird* is ‘a person who uses snow, i.e. cocaine’, a *post office* is ‘a person who receives information’, and *half-cut* refers to someone who is partially affected by the bad effects of alcohol, that is ‘half-drunk’.

Other exceptions to fully compositional (transparent) compounds certainly exist (e.g. nominal *beer-off, her indoors*, adjectival *all-in, far-out*, or verbal *strong it, two-time*, etc.), but, as seen, they represent marginal and sometimes the only cases within the vast amount of slang compounds.

3.2.1.4.2. Synthetic compounds (also called verbal, deverbal, or verbal nexus compounds) are those in which the second member is derived from a verb. In standard English, the most productive are the types *watchmaker* and *housekeeping*, whereas *cost containment, food spoilage, load tolerance, power failure, tax-evasion* and *waste disposal* represent less productive types (see Marchand 1969, Allen 1980; cf. Roeper & Siegel 1978, Lieber 1983, 1992).

Within NM, synthetic compounds are universally less preferred on the basis of the parameter of morphotactic transparency, because one of the members is not a base word, but rather a derivative (*high-land-er, dish-wash-ing*).

In slang, we find examples of the most frequent types, as in *mitt-reader* (U.S.) ‘a palmist, a fortune-teller’ and *skin-popping* ‘the act of injecting a drug subcutaneously’. However, the *-er* type is far more productive than the *-ing* type: e.g., it is found in *dog-robber* ‘a navy or army officer’s orderly’, *easy rider* (U.S.) ‘a sexually satisfying lover’, ‘a guitar’, *egg-beater* (U.S.), *gay deceivers* ‘a padded brassière’, *gob-stopper* ‘a large, hard, freq. spherical sweet for sucking’, *gold-digger* (orig. U.S.) ‘a girl or woman who attaches

herself to a man merely for gain', *head-banger* 'a young person shaking violently to the rhythm of pop music', *head-shrinker* (orig. U.S.) 'a psychiatrist', *herring choker* (U.S.) 'a Scandinavian', *high-binder* 'a swindler, esp. a fraudulent politician', *high-roller* (U.S.) 'one who spends extravagantly or gambles for high stakes', *knee-trembler* 'an act of sexual intercourse between persons in a standing position', *man-eater* 'a sexually voracious woman', *monkey-hurdler* (U.S.) 'an organist', *oil-burner* 'a vehicle which uses an excessive amount of lubricating oil', *pork-chopper* (U.S.) 'a full-time union official', *sin-shifter* 'a clergyman', *skirt-chaser* 'one who pursues women with amorous attentions', etc. This type is also in compounds which are not deverbal but denominal, as in *left-footer* 'a Roman Catholic' and *short-timer* (U.S., Military) 'one nearing the end of his period of military service'.

From the morphosemantic point of view, most such compounds are non-compositional and require a figurative interpretation: for instance, if *gob-stopper* is a sweet which 'stops one's *gob* 'mouth', impeding talking', an *egg-beater* does not 'beat eggs', but alludes to the helicopter rotor-blades, which resemble the appliance used for beating eggs, and a *skirt-chaser* does not 'chase skirts', but, by metonymic extension, he rather chases women.

From the morphotactic point of view, synthetic compounds such as *gob-stopper* are analysable as a complex head that forms a compound together with a non-head. Therefore, [*gob* [*stop-p-er*]] is a better analysis than [[*gob stop*] -*er*] (see Oshita 1994: 201 and Plag 2003: 149 for equivalent opinions). On the other hand, the *-ing* type (as in *block-busting*) is better analysable as a derivative compound, i.e. [[*block bust*] -*ing*].

Some *-ing* combinations contain the verbal element in the modifier non-head position. The slang compounds *creeping Jesus* 'an abject or servile person', *flaming onions* (Services) 'an anti-aircraft projectile', and *knocking-shop* 'a brothel' belong to this morphological type. However, since their head (i.e. most salient) element is not a derivative, they cannot be compared to the types illustrated earlier (see Marchand 1969: 19), though they are likewise morphotactically opaque.

3.2.1.4.3. Three-member compounds are combinations whose constituents include a compound, thus called “compound-within-compounds” by Warren (1978: 10). Potentially, the modifier, the head or both may occur as compounds. Actually, results from studies on three-member compounds show that, across the various languages (esp. English and German), there is an evident preference for left-branching over right-branching compounds. Hence, the most common type is that of the modifier being a compound, as in St. E. *three-star general*, which is morphotactically less natural than *star general*, with a word as the first member (see Dressler 2005).

The following are slang three-member compounds with a compound in the non-head position: *backroom boy* ‘a person engaged in (secret) research’, *catbird seat* (U.S.) ‘a superior or advantageous position’, *five-finger discount* (U.S.) ‘the activity or proceeds of stealing’, *forty-rod whisky* (U.S.) ‘cheap, fiery whisky’, *four-letter man* (Brit.) ‘an obnoxious person’, *necktie party* (U.S.) ‘a lynching or hanging’, *ninety-day wonder* (U.S., Services, humorous) ‘a graduate of a ninety-day officers’ training course’, *one-arm bandit* (orig. U.S.) ‘a slot machine’, *one-arm joint* (U.S.) ‘a cheap restaurant where the seats have one arm wide enough to hold a plate of food’, *one-night stand* ‘a casual sexual liaison’, *peanut gallery* ‘the top gallery in a theatre or cinema’, *underground mutton* (Austral.) ‘a rabbit; rabbit meat’.

An example of a three-member compound with a composite member in the head position is *Mexican overdrive* ‘the putting of the gears of a vehicle into neutral while coasting downhill’, whereas *drug-store cowboy* (U.S.) ‘a braggart, good-for-nothing’ is rather a four-member compound, with a compound in both the head and the non-head positions.

The non-head position is covered by a phrase in *butter-and-egg man* (U.S.) ‘a wealthy, unsophisticated man who spends money freely’ and *wood-and-water joey* (Austral.) ‘an odd job man’ (cf. “phrasal compounds” in Lieber 1992: 92).

However, since grammatical relations are, like semiotic ones (Peirce 1965), preferentially binary, three- and four-member compounds can be grouped into two binary relations, i.e. [[*catbird*] [*seat*]], [[*Mexican*] [*overdrive*]], and [[*drug-store*] [*cowboy*]], where *catbird*, *overdrive*, *drug-store* and *cowboy* form intermediate units.

The case of *butter-and-egg man*, on the other hand, is analysable as [[*butter-and-egg*] [*man*]], comparable to St. E. [[*do-it-yourself*] [*movement*]] (vs. *eye movement*) (Dressler 1999: 138, 2005: 276, also Plag 2003: 133).

3.2.1.4.4. Coordinate (coordinative, copulative, additive or *dvandva*) compounds are (esp. noun-noun) combinations whose first element does not modify or characterize the second one. To describe them, Jespersen (1942: 142) uses the formula ‘AB means A plus B’, as in *Schleswig-Holstein*, which consists of two districts (*Schleswig* and *Holstein*), while Marchand (1969: 41) prefers ‘B which is also A’ (e.g. *Austria-Hungary* meaning ‘Austria is also Hungary’).

In NM, coordinate compounds are less natural/more marked than subordinate ones because they appear to have two (or more) morphosemantic heads with no clear figure-ground distinction. For instance, in *speaker-hearer* both members are of equal status, even if (pragmatically) the more important member, *speaker*, comes first.

Slang coordinate compounds similarly display members of equal status. Examples are nouns (e.g. *witch-doctor* ‘a psychiatrist’) and adjectives (e.g. *red-hot* ‘uninhibited, sexy, passionate’). Such compounds, however, are morphosemantically opaque. That is, a *witch-doctor* refers to ‘a type of doctor’, who is not ‘a witch’, but is metaphorically comparable to him for practices, skills, etc., and, similarly, *red-hot* only figuratively indicates something ‘red’ and ‘hot’ at the same time.

Coordinate compounds are therefore different from pleonastic compounds (called “subsumptive” by Marchand 1969: 40), whose second element is a logical subclass of the first element (e.g. *oak-tree*). Indeed, in pleonastic compounds (e.g. *lover boy*, *lover man* ‘a lover, a woman-chaser’, *nancy boy* ‘an effeminate man or boy’) semantic headedness is more evident, since the head is a hypernym of the non-head. Thus, a *lover boy* is ‘a boy’ and more specifically ‘a lover’, and a *nancy boy* is ‘a boy’ and more specifically ‘a nancy’ (i.e. a homosexual), representing a subgroup of the general category ‘boys’.

3.2.1.4.5. Lastly, compounds have to be distinguished from lexical phrases, which are not compounds for two reasons. First, unlike

compounds, lexical phrases exhibit syntactic markers, as in *bread and butter*, *man in the street*, *mother of pearl* (labelled “phrases” by Marchand 1969: 122-123).⁵ Second, whereas compounds, at least fully compositional ones, are motivated by their members, phrases are lexicalized, and therefore more opaque.

Lexical phrases are frequent in slang, especially as nouns. Examples include phrases marked by prepositions (e.g. *bunch of fives* ‘the fist, the hand’, *fly-by-night* ‘one who defrauds his creditors by decamping in the night’, *hill of beans* ‘a thing of little value’, *House of Lords* ‘a lavatory’, *six by six* ‘six wheel truck with six-wheel drive’), conjunctions (e.g. *slap and tickle* ‘light amorous play’, *soup-and-fish* ‘men’s evening dress’), or articles (e.g. *Jack-the-Lad* ‘(a nickname for) a troublemaker or rogue’, from Jack Sheppard, a celebrated thief).

The most frequent type is marked by the possessive case, as in *cat’s pyjamas/whiskers* (orig. U.S.) ‘the acme of excellence’, *dog’s age* (orig. U.S.) ‘a long time’, *dog’s body* ‘a junior person’, *dog’s breakfast/dinner* ‘a mess’, *donkey’s breakfast* ‘a straw mattress or hat’, *duck’s/ducks’ disease* ‘a facetious expression for shortness of leg’, *Irishman’s hurricane* (Nautical) ‘a dead calm’, *Irishman’s rise* ‘reduced wages’, *Kelly’s eye* ‘(in the game of bingo) the number one’, *magsman* (orig. Brit.) (← *mag* ‘chatter, talk’) ‘a street swindler’, *Montezuma’s revenge* (jocular) ‘diarrhoea suffered by travellers, esp. in Mexico’, *mother’s ruin* ‘gin’, *sailor’s blessing* (Nautical) ‘a curse’, *sailor’s farewell* (Nautical) ‘a parting curse’.

Slang lexical or idiomatic phrases may also be adjectives (*full as a goog*, *out-of-sight* ‘extremely well’, *tired and emotional*, *under the table* ‘drunk’, *what-the-hell* ‘casual, careless, devil-may-care’), or verbs (*to be with it* ‘be fashionable, up-to-date’, *to kick one’s heels* ‘stand waiting idly or impatiently’, *to kick the bucket* ‘die’).

With slang phrasal verbs we observe the same state of affairs as with other lexical phrases. That is, they cannot be considered actual compounds because, rather than being motivated by their members, they are lexicalized as frozen phrases, and stored as such in the mental lexicon. What follows is a partial exemplification.

⁵ Accordingly, F. *chemin de fer* is a lexicalized phrase, whereas G. *Eisen-bahn*, It. *ferro-via* and Sp. *ferro-carril* are compounds.

As in standard English, many of them have the same verbal base combining with different prepositions. Examples are *buzz in* ‘come in (quickly)’, *buzz off* ‘go off or away quickly’; *kick in* (U.S.) ‘break into (a building)’, ‘contribute (money, etc.)’, *kick off* (orig. U.S.) ‘die’; *knock down* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘spend in drink or riot’, *knock in* (University) ‘knock so as to gain admission to college after the gate is closed’, *knock off* ‘die’, ‘steal, rob’, (orig. U.S.) ‘kill; murder’, ‘seduce (a woman)’, *knock out* (Austral., N.Z. and U.S.) ‘earn’, *knock over* (Underworld) ‘rob (a person), burgle (a building); steal (from)’, *knock up* (orig. U.S.) ‘make (a woman) pregnant’; *make out* ‘succeed in seducing’, *make with* ‘bring into operation; use’; *set over* (U.S., Criminals) ‘kill or murder’, *set up* ‘lead on in order to fool, cheat, or incriminate (a person)’.

Other bases occur with only one preposition. Instances include *dry out* ‘of a drug addict or alcoholic: undergo treatment to cure addiction’, *gussy up* ‘smarten up, esp. dress smartly’, *hang out* (in early use chiefly U.S.) ‘spend or pass time’, ‘reside, live’, *kiss off* ‘dismiss, get rid of, kill’, ‘go away, die’, *lay for* (orig. U.S.) ‘(of a woman) be willing to have (extramarital) sexual intercourse’, *mix in* ‘start or join in a fight’, *pig out* (orig. N. Amer.) ‘over-indulge esp. by overeating’, *pop off* ‘die’, *race off* (Austral.) ‘seduce (a woman)’, *row in* ‘conspire’, *salt away* ‘put by, store away (money, stock)’, *scope out* (U.S.) ‘investigate or assess (a person or a state of affairs)’, *send down* (orig. U.S.) ‘dispatch or commit to prison by sentence’, *shell out* ‘pay up, hand over’, *snuff out* ‘kill, murder’, *string out* (U.S.) ‘be under the influence of a drug’, *wind up* (Racing) ‘put (a race-horse) into fit condition for running’, *wipe out* (orig. U.S.) ‘of drink: render intoxicated or senseless’.

3.2.2. Prefixation

Among slang affixes, prefixes play a marginal role. Their number is indeed small, especially if compared with that of slang suffixes. The only prefix which deserves attention is *schm-/shm-* (as in *child schmild*), since its origin is in colloquial rather than standard language. The other prefixes (*de-*, *re-*, *super-*, *un-* and *under-*), which are attested in standard English, offer no case study of slang extra-grammaticality.

3.2.2.1. *The prefix de-*

In standard English *de-* is prefixed to simple verbs to form complex verbs having the sense of ‘undoing the action of –’, or of ‘depriving (anything) of the thing or character therein expressed’ (e.g. *de-acidify* ‘undo or reverse the acidifying process’). Less frequently, verbs (and their derivatives) are formed by prefixing *de-* to a noun with the meaning ‘deprive, divest, free from, or rid of the thing in question’ (e.g. *debowel* ‘take the bowels out of, eviscerate’). This latter pattern is found in the slang verbs *debag* ‘remove the trousers from (a person) as a punishment or for a joke’, from colloquial *bag(s)* ‘trousers’, and *delouse* ‘free from something unpleasant’, figuratively from St. E. ‘clear of lice’.

3.2.2.2. *The prefix re-*

In English formations, whether on native or Latin bases (or French in line with Marchand 1969: 188), *re-* is almost exclusively employed in the sense of ‘again’, and only occasionally of ‘back’. It may be prefixed to ordinary verbs of action, chiefly transitive (as in *rearrange*) and to derivatives from these (*rearrangement*). In slang, it is prefixed to the verb *up* ‘increase or raise’ to obtain *re-up* (U.S. Services) ‘re-enlist’ (also ‘one who re-enlists’), and its derivative *re-upping*.

3.2.2.3. *The prefix schm-, shm-*

Schm- (or *shm-*) is a colloquial – chiefly American – element, derived from the numerous Yiddish words that begin with this sequence of sounds. It is fused with or replaces the initial letter(s) of a word, so as to form a nonsense-word which is added to the original word in order to convey disparagement, dismissal, or derision. The result is a reduplicative formation of the type of slang *child schmild*, *moon-schmoon*, *Oedipus Schmoedipus*, *Trotsky-Shmotsky*, etc.

3.2.2.4. *The prefix super-*

Prefixed in an adverbial relationship to adjectives, in English *super-* has the sense of ‘exceedingly, very highly, extremely, supremely, extraordinarily; over-’ (e.g. *superactive* ‘highly active’). This sense is likewise conveyed by the slang adjectives *super-cool* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘very cool, relaxed, fine’, *cool* being itself a slang

adjective with the meaning ‘restrained or relaxed in style (applied to jazz music)’, and *superfly* (U.S.) ‘very good, excellent, the best (esp. in the context of drugs)’ (cf. slang adj *fly* chiefly Black E. ‘attractive; hence, excellent’). The adjective *superfly* is also used in the sense of ‘typical of the film character Super Fly’ (from the film of the same name), with a related noun meaning ‘one who sells illegal drugs’.

3.2.2.5. *The prefix un-*

In the standard language, *un-* is freely prefixed to adjectives of all kinds to convey the basic meaning ‘not’ (e.g. *unclear* ‘not clear’, *unfair* ‘not fair’). In slang it is regularly applied to obtain the negative adjectives *uncool* ‘unrelaxed; unpleasant’, *unreal* (chiefly N. Amer. and Austral.) ‘so good or impressive as to seem incredible; remarkable, amazing’, and *untogether* ‘poorly coordinated; not in full control of one’s faculties’.

3.2.2.6. *The prefix under-*

In English the prefix *under-* is used with nouns in names of garments worn under other articles of clothing (e.g. *undershorts*). In Schoolboys’ slang it is in denominal *underfug* (Brit.) ‘an undervest; also, underpants’, from colloquial *fug* ‘a thick, close atmosphere’.

3.2.3. *Suffixation*

Suffixation is a wider phenomenon than prefixation in English slang. Yet the productivity of slang suffixes is constrained by their ephemeral character, and it is difficult to predict possible words, that is, their applicability in terms of base and suffix. It is perhaps easier to talk in terms of token frequency rather than type productivity. This is expectable, given the scarce compliance of slang words with regular morphological mechanisms.

As anticipated in the distinction between grammatical and extra-grammatical morphology, some slang suffixes behave regularly and attach to standard bases to form new words, as in (v) *chop* → *chop-p-er*, which entirely conforms to the universal patterns of the English grammar system. Such suffixes, however, may also conform to the regular mechanisms of morphological concatenation, but attach to irregular bases, as in *twocer*, from the acronym *twoc* (← taking

without owner's consent). Other suffixes are, instead, outside grammar and do not obtain new words but connote existing ones, adding nuances of jocularity, humour, playfulness, etc., as in *bedder* (← *bedroom*) and *preggers* (← *pregnant*). The latter formations, which are not governed by well-known rules of grammatical morphology, deserve more attention and scrutiny than the regular ones, since they throw light on the core suffixes of slang.

3.2.3.1. The suffix *-able*

In standard English *-able* is a suffix forming denominal and deverbal adjectives (*measure* → *measurable*, *accept* → *acceptable*), normally with a passive sense. In slang, it is found in deverbal *ropeable* (Austral. and N.Z.) 'requiring to be roped; intractable', from the verb *rope* 'tie, bind, or secure with a rope', itself obtained from a noun. It is also in colloquial *noshable* 'suitable for noshing; tasty, delicious', again from a verb (*nosh* 'eat, have a meal').

3.2.3.2. The suffix *-ation, -ion*

In English *-ion* is a suffix forming nouns of action from verbs (e.g. *pollute* → *pollution*). In slang, it is found in deverbal *connection* (orig. U.S.) 'a supplier of narcotics; the action of supplying narcotics', from *connect* 'meet in order to obtain drugs (from)'. The alternative and more frequent form *-ation* (as in St. E. *damn* → *damnation*) is in Black English *trickeration* (U.S.) (← *trickery*) 'a trick or stratagem', and in the colloquial noun *yuppification* (orig. U.S.), from the verb *yuppify* (see § 3.1.3, type g).

The alternative and more frequent form *-ation* (as in St. E. *damn* → *damnation*) is in Black English *trickeration* (U.S.) (← *trickery*) 'a trick or stratagem', and in the colloquial noun *yuppification* (orig. U.S.), from the verb *yuppify* (see § 3.1.3, type g).

3.2.3.3. The suffix *-dom*

The abstract suffix of state *-dom* was originally attached to nouns and adjectives to convey the sense of 'condition, state, dignity', as in *bishopdom* ('the dignity of a bishop'), *freedom*, *wisdom* ('the condition of being free, wise'), etc. It is now a living suffix, freely employed to form derivatives and nonce-derivatives with the main sense of 'domain, realm', as in *kingdom*, *popedom*, *sheriffdom*, etc.

In slang formations, this suffix expresses both senses in *hippiedom*, *queerdom* and *yuppiedom*, which respectively refer to 'the condition or the fact of being a hippie, queer 'homosexual', yuppie', or to 'the domains of such people'.

3.2.3.4. *The suffix -ed (deverbal type: cracked)*

In English the suffix *-ed* primarily obtains participial adjectives from verbs (e.g. *annoy* → *annoyed*, *irritate* → *irritated*). In English slang, this pattern is found in *cracked* ‘unsound in mind, slightly insane’, *crooked* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘irritable, angry’, *guttled* ‘bitterly disappointed; devastated’, *paralysed* (chiefly U.S.) ‘intoxicated; incapacitated through drink’, *plastered* ‘very drunk’, *qualified* ‘euphemistic substitute for bloody, damned, etc.’, *smashed* (orig. U.S.) ‘drunk; under the influence of drugs’.

The same pattern from slang rather than standard verbs is in *banjaxed* (Anglo-Irish) (← *banjax* ‘batter or destroy’) ‘ruined’, *blasted* (chiefly U.S.) (← *blast* ‘smoke marijuana’) ‘under the influence of drugs or alcohol’, *bombed* (← *bomb* Austral. ‘drug (a racehorse)’; cf. St. E. ‘bombard’) ‘drunk; under the influence of drugs’, *gassed* (← *gas* orig. U.S. ‘excite or thrill’) ‘drunk; intoxicated’, *knackered* ‘exhausted’, *oiled* (← *oil (up)* N. Amer. and Austral.) ‘(mildly) drunk’, *pissed* (orig. U.S.) (← *piss (off)*) ‘angry, irritated’, *plotzed* (U.S.) (← *plotz* ‘burst, esp. fig. ‘explode’ with frustration’) ‘intoxicated; drunk’, *spliced* ‘married’, *stoned* ‘drunk, extremely intoxicated’, *wiped* (orig. U.S.) (← *wipe (out)* ‘kill (a person)’) ‘exhausted, tired out’, ‘incapacitated by drugs or alcohol’, etc.

3.2.3.5. *The suffix -ed (denominal type: potted)*

The suffix *-ed* is also productively added to standard nouns to form adjectives with the sense of ‘possessing, provided with, characterized by –’, as in *cultured*, *moneyed*, *toothed*, etc., and in parasynthetic derivatives (*dark-eyed*, *lion-hearted*, *seven-hilled*, etc.). It is likewise added to slang nouns to form the respective adjectives: e.g., *loaded* (U.S.) (← *load* ‘a dose of narcotics or a large amount of alcohol’) ‘drugged or drunk’, *pipped* (now chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) (← *pip* ‘a fit of disgust, annoyance’) ‘annoyed, irritated’, *plonked* (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) (← *plonk* ‘cheap wine’) ‘intoxicated, drunk’, *potted* (N. Amer.) (← *pot* ‘marijuana’) ‘under the influence of cannabis’, etc. On the other hand, the adjective *O.D.’d* ‘having taken an overdose’ is from the initialism *O.D.*

This suffix is also productive in the formation of slang parasynthetic derivatives: e.g., *mob-handed* (Brit.) (← *mob* ‘a large crowd’) ‘that forms a large body’, *moon-eyed* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘drunk’, *mutton-headed* (orig. U.S.) ‘stupid; foolish’, *pie-faced* (orig. U.S., chiefly derog.) ‘having a round, flat face or a blank expression; stupid’, *poker-faced* ‘having a solemn or humourless expression’ (abbreviated as *po-faced*), *snake-headed* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘angry, irritable’, *sticky-fingered* ‘apt to steal, light-fingered’, *toffee-nosed* ‘snobbish, supercilious’, and numerous vulgar derivatives with a second constituent *-arsed* (Amer. *-assed*), viz. *half-arsed/assed* ‘ineffectual, inadequate’, *hard-arsed* ‘tough, uncompromising, resolute’, *raggedy-arsed* (orig. Military) ‘new and inexperienced’, *rat-arsed* ‘drunk’ (also *ratted* ← *as drunk as a rat*), *stiff-arsed/assed* ‘reserved, supercilious’, *tight-arsed/assed* ‘unable to relax and enjoy oneself’, *tin-arsed* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *tin* ‘money’) ‘very lucky’, *white-arsed* ‘contemptible, despicable’, etc.

3.2.3.6. *The suffix -er (type lifer, chancer)*

In its original use, the suffix *-er* (like L. *-arius*) was added to nouns to form derivative nouns with the general meaning ‘a man who has to do with (the thing denoted by the base)’, and hence chiefly serving to designate people according to their profession or occupation (e.g. *hatter* ‘one who makes hats’). The English words of this type not referring to profession or employment are comparatively few: examples are *bencher*, *cottager*, *outsider*, *villager*.

Slang formations conforming to the regular model are numerous. Examples include nouns formed from either standard or slang nominal bases: *gonger* (U.S.) (← *gong* ‘opium’) ‘an opium pipe’, *jocker* (N. Amer.) (← coarse *jock* ‘the male genitals’) ‘a male homosexual’, *josser* (Austral.) (← *joss* ‘a Chinese figure of a deity’) ‘a clergyman or minister of religion’, *juicer* (← *juice* ‘electricity’) ‘an electrician’, *lifer* ‘one sentenced to penal servitude for life’, *looker* (orig. U.S.) ‘a person, usu. a woman, of particularly pleasing appearance’, *mucker* ‘a heavy fall, a cropper (from falling into muck)’, *ozoner* (U.S.) (← colloq. *ozone* ‘fresh air’) ‘a drive-in cinema’, *placer* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘a sheep which remains in one place’ (cf. deverbial *placer* below), *popper* (← *pop* ‘an injection of a drug’) ‘a person who takes pills (esp. of stimulant drugs) excessively’,

rocker ‘head’, *rounder* (U.S.) ‘a transient railway worker’, *topper* (U.S., Military) ‘a first sergeant’, *whaler* (Austral.) ‘a tramp, orig. one whose route followed the course of a river’. A name → noun pattern is in *Christer* (U.S.) ‘an over-zealous or sanctimonious person’.

Some of them are from compound bases (see also § 3.2.1.4.2): e.g., *eyewasher* (← *eye-wash* ‘humbug’) ‘one who obscures actual facts’, *hot rodder* (← *hot rod*) ‘the driver of a powerful motor vehicle’, *left-footer* ‘a Roman Catholic’, *moonlighter* ‘a person who makes a hasty departure by night’, *one-lunger* ‘an engine with a single cylinder’, *one-pipper* (Military) ‘a second lieutenant (so called from this officer’s entitlement to wear one pip on the shoulder of his uniform)’, *weekender* (orig. U.S.) ‘a person who indulges in occasional drug-taking, esp. at weekends’.

A special use of the *-er* suffix in the standard language is its addition to names of places or countries to express the meaning ‘a native of’, ‘a resident of’ (e.g. *Icelander*, *Londoner*, *New Yorker*). This use is comparably illustrated by the derogatory American slang noun *Piker*, referring to ‘a poor white migrant from the southern states of the U.S.’ (orig. *Pike County*, Missouri), and by *Scouser* ‘a native or inhabitant of Liverpool’.

The most common use of this suffix is, however, as a deverbal formative of agent-nouns with the meaning ‘animate or inanimate performer of an action’ (e.g. St. E. *baker*). This is the pattern of many slang agent-nouns,⁶ namely *chancer* ‘one who takes chances or does risky things’, *chaser* (chiefly U.S.) (← *chase* ‘pursue (a member of the opposite sex) amorously’) ‘one who chases women’, *chopper* (U.S.) ‘a machine-gun or -gunner’, ‘a helicopter’, ‘a motor-cycle’, *clapper* (← *clap* ‘tinkle’) ‘the tongue of a bell, which strikes it on the inside and causes it to sound’, *crimper* (← *crimp* ‘curl’) ‘a hairdresser’, *fizzer* (← *fizz* ‘make a hissing or sputtering sound’) ‘anything excellent or first-rate’, *frightener* ‘a member of a criminal gang who intimidates the victims of its activities’, *greaser* (U.S.) (← *grease* ‘smear with grease’) ‘a native Mexican or native Spanish American’, *heater* ‘a gun’, *joker* (esp. Austral. and N.Z.) ‘man, fellow, ‘chap’’, *jumper* ‘a ticket-inspector or ticket-collector, jumping on to buses to inspect tickets’, *killer* (← hyperbolic *kill*

⁶ Also Marchand (1969: 275, 280) observes that “slang is rich in *-er* words”.

‘excite, thrill, delight’) ‘an impressive, formidable, or excellent person or thing’, *loser* (U.S.) (← *lose* ‘perish’) ‘a convicted criminal’, *owner* (Nautical) ‘the captain of a ship’, *passer* (← *pass* ‘have currency’) ‘a person who puts base or forged money into circulation’, *placer* ‘an organizer of criminal practices, esp. a dealer in stolen goods’, *roader* (Taxi-drivers’) (← Amer. *road* ‘do (a distance) on the road’) ‘a long-distance taxi fare or journey’, *shiner* ‘coin, money’, ‘a mirror’, ‘a diamond’, ‘a black eye’, *sitter* (U.S.) ‘someone employed to sit in a bar and encourage other patrons to buy drinks’, *snorer* ‘the nose’, *starrer* (← *star* ‘perform the leading part’) ‘a play or film which provides an impressive leading role for an actor or actress’, *stormer* (Brit.) (← *storm* ‘rush with violence’) ‘something of surpassing size, vigour, or excellence’, *ticker* (orig. U.S.) (← *tick* ‘beat, pulse’) ‘the heart’, etc.

Agent-nouns from non-standard verbs are extremely frequent in slang. Some instances are *crammer* (orig. University) ‘one who prepares pupils for an examination’, *copper* (← *cop* ‘capture, catch’) ‘a policeman’, *crapper* (coarse) (← *crap* ‘defecate’) ‘a privy’, *croaker* (now chiefly U.S.) (ironically ← *croak* ‘kill’) ‘a doctor, esp. a prison doctor’, *doer* (← *do* ‘cheat, swindle’) ‘one who cheats another’, *doozer* (perh. ← *douse* ‘strike, punch’) ‘something remarkable or unbelievable’, *dosser* (← *doss* ‘sleep’) ‘one who stays at a common lodging-house’, *dropper* ‘one who passes counterfeit money, cheques, etc.’, *drummer* ‘a thief, esp. one who robs an unoccupied house’, *flasher* ‘one who exposes himself indecently’, *fucker* ‘one who copulates’, *grafter* (orig. U.S.) ‘one who makes money by shady or dishonest means’, *grassser* ‘a police informer’, *hooper* ‘a (professional) dancer’, *hustler* (← *hustle* ‘engage in prostitution’) ‘a prostitute’, *minder* ‘a bodyguard employed to protect a criminal’, *mixer* (Brit.) (← colloq. *mix* ‘fight or argue vigorously’) ‘a troublemaker’, *moocher* ‘a beggar, a scrounger’, *nailer* (← *nail* ‘apprehend, incriminate (a person)’) ‘a police officer, detective’, *nobbler* (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) (← colloq. *nobble* ‘strike; stun’) ‘a small quantity of alcoholic drink’, *poisoner* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← colloq. *poison*) ‘a cook, esp. for large numbers’, *poler* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *pole* ‘take advantage of someone’) ‘a scrounger; a shirker’, *pusher* (orig. U.S.) ‘one who peddles drugs illegally’, *rager* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *rage* ‘revel’) ‘a person who enjoys having a

good time', *rapper* (U.S.) (← colloq. *rap* 'talk or chat in a discursive manner') 'a talker; a chatterer', *raver* (← *rave* 'give oneself over to enjoyment') 'a passionate enthusiast for a particular thing, idea, or cause', *renter* 'a male prostitute', *roller* (chiefly N. Amer.) (← *roll* 'rob') 'a thief; a prostitute who robs her customers', *rosiner* (← dial. *rosin* 'supply with liquor; make drunk') 'alcoholic drink', *scalper* (U.S.) 'someone who sells tickets, etc., esp. below the official rates', *scammer* (orig. U.S.) (← *scam* 'perpetrate a fraud; cheat') 'a criminal', *sender* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *send* 'enthral, delight') 'one who or that which moves or enthrals, esp. a popular musician', *singer* (Criminals') (← cant *sing* 'peach, turn informer') 'an informer', *skimmer* (U.S.) 'one who conceals some of his earnings in order to avoid paying tax on them', *yacker* (derog.) 'a chatterbox or gossip', *zapper* (orig. U.S.) (← *zap* Computing 'erase or change (an item in a program)') 'the remote-control unit for a piece of electronic equipment'.

The following nouns are from complex slang verbs: *ear-basher* (← *ear-bash* 'talk inordinately') 'a chatterer; a bore', *four-flusher* (← *four flush* 'in poker: act in a fraudulent manner') 'one who bluffs', and *panhandler* (U.S.) (← *panhandle* 'beg from or importune (a person)') 'a street beggar'.

Slang words not coined with a basic agentive meaning are *blower* 'a speaking-tube or telephone' and *smacker* (orig. U.S.) 'a dollar; a pound', whereas *cooler* 'a prison or prison cell' has an underlying agentive meaning as it metaphorically 'cools' prisoners.

There are also some class-maintaining slang nouns with the *-er* suffix: e.g., *gasser* (orig. U.S.) (← *gas*) 'something that gives enormous fun and excitement', *nutter* (← *nut* 'a mad or crazy person') 'an insane or eccentric person', *scrubber* (← *scrub* 'disreputable woman') 'a prostitute; an untidy girl or woman', *slammer* (orig. U.S.) (← *slam*) 'prison'.

As in standard English (see Marchand 1969), in slang the *-er* suffix may be tacked to almost any base: a proper name (*Jimmy Woodser* 'a solitary drinker'), an adjective (*deader* 'a dead person, a corpse', *goner* 'one who is dead or undone',⁷ *no-hoper* 'a racehorse with no prospect of winning'), a participle (*downer* 'a depressant or

⁷ Cf. St. E. *goer*, as in *theatre-goer*, with a totally different meaning.

tranquillizing drug’, *upper* ‘a drug (esp. an amphetamine)’, Public School ‘a pupil of the upper school’), an adverb (*oncer* ‘a one-pound note’), *outer* ‘the uncovered area of a racecourse or sports ground’, *twicer* ‘a crook, liar’), a converted adverbial (*up-and-downer/upper and downer* ‘an up-and-down fight or argument’), an interjection (*coo-er* ‘an exclamation expressing surprise or incredulity’), and a numeral (*ten per center* ‘a theatrical agent’).

Some slang nouns are peculiarly obtained from irregular nominal, verbal or adjectival bases. For instance, *fratter* ‘one who ‘frats’’ is from the verb *frat* (short for *fraternize*) ‘establish friendly and esp. sexual relations with German women’, *prepper* (U.S., School and College) ‘a student at a prep school’ is from the abbreviated adjective *prep* (← *preparatory*), *hotter* (Brit.) ‘a person, esp. a youth, who engages in ‘hotting’’ is from *hot*, a back-formation from the verbal noun *hotting* ‘joyriding in stolen, high-performance cars’, *ligger* ‘one who gatecrashes parties’ is from the verb *lig* ‘sponge; gatecrash or attend parties’, a dialect variation of *lie*, and *twocer* (with alternative spellings *twocker/TWOCer*) (Brit., orig. Police) ‘a car thief’ is from the acronym *twoc* (← *taking without owner’s consent*).

From abbreviated bases, the suffix also derives class-maintaining adjectives, such as *chocker* (orig. Naval) (← *chock-a-block* ‘jammed or crammed close together’) ‘fed up; extremely disgruntled’, and *upter* (Austral.) (← colloq. *up to putty*) ‘bad or worthless; no good’.

3.2.3.7. The suffix *-er, -ers* (type footer, champers)

The British slang suffix *-er* (and *-ers*, cumulated with *-s*) was originally introduced from Rugby School into Oxford University slang in 1875. Since then, it has been used to obtain colloquial or jocular forms of words and names, with curtailment and often some distortion of the root. The earliest attested examples are nouns connected with sport and university habits, actions, objects, etc.: e.g., *footer* (← *football*, 1863), *brekker* (← *breakfast*, 1889), *ekker* (← *exercise*, 1891), *rugger* (← *rugby*, 1893), *Togger* (← *Torpid*, 1897) ‘a boat rowing in the Oxford college races called ‘Torpids’’, *bonner* (← *bonfire*, 1898), *Divvers* (← *Divinity*, 1905) ‘divinity honour moderations, the first public examination in Holy Scripture’, and, unusually, from the middle of words, *toshier* (← *unattached*, 1889)

‘an ‘unattached’ or non-collegiate student at a university having residential colleges’, and *soccer/socker* (← Association, 1891) ‘the game of football as played under Association rules’.

Other familiar examples with an *-er/-ers* ending are *bedder* (← *bedroom*), *bed-sitter* (← *bed-sitting room*), *champers* (← *champagne*), *collekkers* (← *collections*) ‘an examination at the end of each term in the colleges of the University of Oxford’, *cupper* (← *cup*) ‘a series of intercollegiate matches played in competition for a cup’, *leccer/lecker/lekker* (← *lecture*) and *rudders* (← *rudiments of divinity*). Examples of proper names with the same ending are *Adders* (← *Addison’s Walk*), *Bodder* (← *Bodleian*) and *Johnners* (← *Brian Johnston*, a British cricket commentator).

The respective extended variants *-agger/-aggers* are likewise used with clipped nominal bases (e.g. *chagger* ← *changing-room*, *sensagger* ← *sensation*, *spaggers/spadgers* ← *spaghetti*, *stragger* ← *stranger*, *wagger* ← *waste-paper basket*), or with proper names (e.g. *Jaggers* ← *Jesus College* and *Quaggers* ← *Queen’s College*).

The cumulative suffix *-ers* is additionally used in Nautical slang to coin nouns pertaining to drinks or liquids, such as *pinkers* (Brit.) (← *pink* ‘a drink of pink gin’) ‘pink gin’, *sippers* (Brit.) (← *sip*) ‘a sip (of rum)’, and *strongers* (← *strong*) ‘a mixture containing caustic soda used for cleaning paintwork and woodwork on ships’ (cf. *soogee-moogee* in the same sense).

Another use of this composite suffix is in the coining of adjectives, such as *bonkers* (perh. ← *bonk* ‘a blow or punch on the head’) ‘mad, crazy’, ‘slightly drunk’, *crackers* (← *cracker*) ‘crazy, mad; infatuated’ (cf. *cracked* ‘unsound in mind, crazy’), and, after abbreviation, *preggers* (orig. Brit.) (← *pregnant*), *ravers* ‘raving mad, delirious’, *starkers* (Brit.) (← *stark naked*) ‘absolutely without clothing’.

3.2.3.8. The suffix *-eroo*, *-aroo*

The ending *-eroo* (and its variant *-aroo*, also *-roo*, *-oo*)⁸ has been defined as a “factitious slang suffix” (OED) or a “neo-pseudo-suffix” (Wentworth 1972) peculiar to American slang formations, such as

⁸ According to Wentworth (1972), there should be a further variant *-amaroo*, with an intrusive element *-am-*, as in *kissamaroo*, no longer in use.

flopperoo ‘a flop, a failure’. In fact, it can be viewed as a factitious or pseudo-suffix because it has no semantic consistency. Nevertheless, Marchand (1969: 211) suggests that it has an “endearing force”: that is to say, unlike regular slang suffixes (e.g. *-er*, as in *life* → *lifer*), it does not derive new words, but rather new connoted variants, such as *flopperoo*, which sounds like a [non-serious] (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994) jocular account of a flop.

According to Wentworth (1972), it may have originated from American dialect *buckaroo* (a corruption of Sp. *vaquero* ‘cowboy’), or from Australian *kangaroo*, after which, by analogy, many curious toy-words (e.g. *antseroo*, *bingeroo*, *bounceroo*, etc.) have been formed. Thus, although the ending of the supposed progenitors is *-aroo*, the most frequent form of the suffix is *-eroo*.

It occurs in some modern American slang nouns, such as *jerkeroo* (← *jerk*) ‘a fool, a stupid person’, *peacheroo* (← *peach*) ‘an attractive woman’ (cf. *peacherino*), *pipperoo* (← *pip*) ‘a particularly remarkable or pleasing person or thing’, *sockeroo* (← *sock*) ‘something with an overwhelming impact’, *stinkeroo* (← *stink* ‘a disgusting smell’) ‘something of a very low standard; a very bad performance’, *switcheroo* (← *switch*) ‘a change of position or an exchange, esp. one intended to surprise or deceive’. *Switcheroo* may also be used as an attribute, with the meaning ‘reversible, reversed’.

The suffix *-aroo*, with a basic vowel *a* instead of *e*, is less frequently used, and merely as an alternative to *-eroo*, as in *stinkaroo/stinkeroo*, *buckaroo/buckeroo* (also *buckayro*).

The variant *-roo* is regularly used with bases having a final vowel *e*, as in *boozeroo* (N.Z.) (← *boose/booze*) ‘a drinking spree’, whereas the *-oo* variant is added to nominal *er*-ending bases, as in *poofteroo* (derog.) (← *poofter* orig. Austral.) ‘a homosexual man; an effeminate or affected man’, *smackeroo* (← *smacker*) ‘a coin or note of money’, ‘a kiss; a blow’, *smasheroo* (← *smasher* ‘anything uncommon’) ‘a great success’.

The *-eroo* suffix (or its variant *-oo*) may be added to shortened bases as well, as in *brusheroo* (← *brush-off*) ‘a rebuff, dismissal’, *razoo* (← *raspberry*) ‘ridicule; the arousing of indignation or the like’, and *skidoo* (← *v skedaddle*) ‘leave or depart hurriedly’.

3.2.3.9. The suffix *-ery*

The suffix *-ery* occurs in many English words adopted from French (e.g. F. *batterie*, E. *battery*), and, as *-y*, in many others formed on nouns ending in *-er* (e.g. *baker* → *bakery*). The formatives in *-ery* regularly exhibit a general collective sense (*machinery*, *scenery*). They may denote classes of goods (as *pottery*, *jewelry*), actions/behaviours characteristic of, with contemptuous implication (as *knavery*, *monkery*), or the place where an employment is carried on (*brewery*, *fishery*).

The standard type *brewery* is identifiable in the English slang nouns *nightery/-erie*, *nitery/-erie* (orig. U.S.) (← *night* or its respelling *nite*) ‘a nightclub’, *noshery* (← *nosh* ‘food, a meal’) ‘a restaurant; a snack bar’, *nuttery* (U.S.) (← *nut*) ‘a mental hospital’, and in jocular *Wrennery* (Services) ‘a building used to accommodate Wrens’, from the noun *Wren* denoting ‘a member of the Women’s Royal Naval Service’ (cf. *nunnery*, obs. slang ‘a brothel’, now only St. E. ‘a convent’).

The senses expressed by *pottery* and *knavery* are less recurrent in slang: an example of the former is *ironmongery* (‘firearms’), which is obtained from a complex base (*iron* + deverbal *monger*), whereas the latter is in British slang *yobbery* ‘hooliganism’, from *yob* (see § 3.1.3, type g).

3.2.3.10. The suffix *-ette*

The suffix *-ette* – corresponding to the French diminutive suffix (e.g. F. *montagnette*, E. *mountainette*) – is productively used in English to form female nouns from male personal nouns (e.g. *suffragist* → *suffragette*). It is analogously used in English slang to form *hackette* (← *hack* ‘a journalist or reporter’) ‘a jocular or disparaging term for a female journalist’, and in colloquial British English to obtain *ladette* (← *lad* ‘a boy, youth’) ‘young woman characterized by her enjoyment of male activities’.

In slang the suffix *-ette* may also be attached to a shortened base, in which case it does not derive a new word but a connotative option, as in derogatory *bimbette* (← *bimbo*) ‘a young woman regarded as sexually attractive but thought to lack intelligence’.

3.2.3.11. *The suffix -ful*

In modern English the suffix *-ful* – which originated, as in other Germanic languages, from the syntactic group *a mouth full (of soup)* – has become a suffix forming derivatives with the general meaning ‘quantity that fills or would fill –’ (Marchand 1969: 292-293). It may therefore be freely attached to any noun denoting an object that can be regarded as holding or containing a more or less definite quantity of anything, as in *bookful*, *bottleful*, *boxful*, etc. (‘as much as a book, bottle, box, etc. will contain’).

In slang, this suffix attaches to nouns denoting parts of the human body to form novel nouns with a figurative rather than literal sense. Examples are *earful* ‘as much (talk) as one’s ears can take in at one time’, *eyeful* ‘a ‘good look’ at something’, hence, ‘a strikingly attractive woman’, *handful* ‘a five-year prison sentence’ (think of the five fingers of a hand), *mouthful* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘an utterance of notable truth or relevance’, *skinful* ‘as much as the skin can hold: as much as any one can drink’. Sometimes the variant *-full* is used (*eye-full*, *skinfull*), so that the new words are more similar to compounds (with autonomous constituents) than to derivatives.

3.2.3.12. *The suffix -ie, -y*

The suffix *-ie/-y* has a basic hypocoristic meaning/function in standard English: that is, it is used to form pet terms (terms of endearment) and familiar diminutives expressing jocularly or affection. It may be tacked either to full common nouns (*aunt* → *auntie*, *babe* → *baby*) or to shortened or endearingly modified proper names (*Edward/Edmund* → *Eddie*, *Elizabeth* → *Lizzie* or *Betty*).

The forms *-y* and *-ie* are now almost equally common in proper names as such, but in a few pet forms one or other spelling is preferred (*Annie* but *Sally*), whereas in the transferred applications of these (as in *dolly*, *jemmy*) the variant *-y* prevails. In other hypocoristic forms *-ie* seems to be the favourite choice, after Scottish usage (as in *dearie*, *laddie*).

The variants of *-ie/-y* are *-ey*, regularly used with bases with a final vowel *e* (as in *Charles* → *Charley*, *love* → *lovey*), *-ee* (as in *boot* → *bootee* ‘an infant’s wool boot’), and, after cumulation, *-sie/-sy* (often in reduplicative formations, such as *popsy-wopsy*, *tootsie-wootsie*). As

Merlini Barbaresi (2001) remarks, one of the favourite areas of use of the suffix *-ie/-y* is slang.

In slang, many proper name hypocoristics convert into the category of common nouns, though sometimes maintaining the initial capital letter. Examples are *Archie* (← *Archibald*) ‘an anti-aircraft gun’, *Charlie/-ey* (orig. U.S.) (← *Charles*) ‘cocaine’, *Hughie/Huey* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *Hugh*) ‘the ‘god’ of weather’, *Joey* (← *Joe*) ‘a threepenny bit’, *Johnnie/-y* (← *John*) ‘a policeman’, ‘a condom’, *Judy* (← *Judith*) ‘a girl, woman’, *maggie/-y* (U.S.) (← *Margaret*) ‘a prostitute’, *patsy* (orig. U.S.) (← *Patrick*) ‘someone who is the object of ridicule’, and many appellatives for cowards or effeminate men deriving from (mainly female) forenames (e.g. *gussie* ← *Augustus*, *Lizzie/lizzie* ← *Elizabeth*, *mollie/-y/-ey* ← *Mary*, *nancy* ← *Anne* or *Agnes*, *nellie/-y* ← *Eleanor* or *Helen*).

The *-ie/-y* suffix is predominantly used to form nouns with an appellative hypocoristic meaning/function (as in *duckie/-y* ‘a term of endearment’). However, it may also be used ironically or sarcastically, esp. to refer to:

- ‘A person who belongs to a different race or country’, as in *Chinkie/-y/-ey* ‘a Chinaman’, *Dutchie/-y/-ee* ‘a Dutchman or a German’, *Eyetic* (← jocular *Eye-talian*) ‘an Italian’, *Heinie/-ey* (N. Amer.) (← *Heinrich*) ‘a German (soldier)’, *homie/-ey* (N.Z.) ‘an Englishman; a British immigrant’, *Hymie* (U.S.) (← Jewish *Hyman*) ‘a Jewish person’, *Ikey/-y* (← *Isaac*) ‘a Jew’, *Sammy* (Brit.) ‘an American soldier in the war of 1914-18’, *slopy/-ey* (U.S.) ‘an oriental, a Chinese’, *Welshie/-y* ‘a Welshman or Welshwoman’, *whitie/-y/-ey* (Black E.) ‘a white person’, *yardie* (orig. West Indies) ‘a Jamaican’;
- ‘One whose behaviour is not approved’, as in *druggie/-y* ‘a drug addict’, *junkie/-y/-ey* (orig. U.S.) (← *junk* ‘any narcotic drug’) ‘a drug addict’, *queerie* (← *queer* ‘homosexual’) ‘one who is soft, effeminate, or homosexual’, *roughie/-y* ‘a rough or rowdy; a hooligan’, *rummy* (chiefly U.S.) ‘a habitual drunkard’, *sickie/-y* (N. Amer.) ‘one who is mentally ill or perverted’;
- ‘A person having a distinctive physical condition, defect or mental deficiency’, as in *gimpy* ‘a cripple’, *nully* (rare) ‘a

stupid person; a nobody’, *shortie/-y* ‘a person of short stature’, *thickie* ‘one who is dull of intellect’, *weirdie/-y* ‘an odd or unconventional person’, *wheelie/-y* (Austral.) ‘a person in or confined to a wheelchair’, *wingy* ‘a one-armed man’, *wrinklie/-y* ‘an old or middle-aged person’.

The above terms, esp. those belonging to the first two groups, are deliberately used to produce an offensive effect, and most of them undeniably have a derogatory sense.

With respect to the base categories, the *-ie/-y* suffix primarily obtains nouns from nominal or adjectival bases.

Denominal formatives with an *-ie/-y* ending mainly denote ‘people characterized by an activity, occupation, hobby, etc.’. Examples are *bikie* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘a motor-cyclist’, *chiefy* (Forces) ‘a chief or superior officer’, *gobby* ‘a coastguard, or an American sailor’, *groupie* (R.A.F.) ‘a group captain’, *groupie/-y* ‘an ardent follower of a touring pop group’, *looie/louie/looey* (← N. Amer. pronunciation /lu:/ of *lieutenant*) ‘a lieutenant’, *roadie/-y* ‘someone who organizes and supervises a touring pop group’, *schoolie* (Naval) ‘a classroom instructor’, *shoppie/-y* ‘a shop assistant’, *slushie/-y/-ey* (← *slush* ‘food’) ‘a ship’s cook’, *squaddie/-y* (Services) ‘a member of a squad; a private soldier’, *stripey* (Naval) ‘a long-service able seaman; one with good-conduct stripes’, *surfie* (chiefly Austral.) ‘a surfer or surfboarding enthusiast’.

Inanimate nouns from a nominal base refer to ‘something characterized by or having to do with what the base denotes’: e.g., *letty* (← It. *letto* ‘bed’) ‘a bed, a lodging’, *middy* (Austral.) (← *mid*) ‘a medium-sized measure of beer or other liquor’, *munchie* (← colloq. *munch* ‘something to eat’) ‘snack food’, *soupy/-ie* (U.S., Military) ‘(a summons to) a meal’, and *woodie/-y* (orig. Surfing, chiefly U.S.) ‘an estate car with timber-framed sides’.

Deadjectival formatives with this suffix generally refer to ‘people or things having the quality indicated by the adjective’. They are similarly distinguished into animate and inanimate. Animate nouns are *biggie/-y* (orig. U.S.) ‘an important person’, *cutie/-ey* (orig. U.S.) ‘a cute person; esp. an attractive young woman’, *dummie/-y/-ee* (← *dumb* ‘stupid’) ‘a deaf-mute’, *hottie/-y* (orig. U.S.) (← *hot* ‘sexually attractive’) ‘a sexually attractive

person', *nuddie/-y* (orig. Austral.) (← *nude*, as in *in the nuddy*), *smoothie* (orig. U.S.) (← *smooth* 'stylish, suave, chic') 'a person who is 'smooth'', *swiftie/-y* 'a fast-moving person: a rapid runner, a quick thinker', *weakie/-y* (chiefly Austral.) 'a person who is weak in constitution, character, or ability'.

Instances denoting inanimate nouns are *cheapie* 'something cheap', *darky/-ey* 'the night', *falsies* (orig. U.S.) 'a padded brassière', *greenie* (Surfing) 'a large wave before it breaks', *sharpie* (N. Amer.) (← *sharp* 'smart, well-equipped') 'that which is smart or in good condition, esp. of cars'.

The *-ie/-y* suffix attaches to other less common bases, such as verbs (*clippie/-y* 'a bus-conductress'), and adverbs (*downie* 'a depressant or tranquillizing drug'). It peculiarly attaches to the thieves' cant verb *chive* 'knife' to obtain the synonymous slang verb *chivvy/chivey*. But it mostly attaches to irregular shortened bases, like clippings and acronymic formations (see §§ 3.2.11, 3.2.9.1 for the base analysis).

Clippings with an additional pet suffix are particularly frequent in slang. They are mainly class-maintaining nouns which pertain to the contexts of home, clothing, food, pub, sport, television, school, military, job, etc. Examples are *bevie/bevvy* (← *beverage*), *footie/-y* (esp. Austral. and N.Z.) (← *football*), *indie* (← *independent*) 'an independent theatre, film, or recorded company', *jerry* (← *jeroboam* 'a large bowl or goblet') 'a chamber-pot', *locie/lokey* (N. Amer. and N.Z.) (← *locomotive*), *Minnie/-y* (Military) (← G. *Minenwerfer*) 'a German trench mortar', *nembie* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *Nembutal*) 'a Nembutal capsule', *Polly* (← *Apollinaris*) 'Apollinaris mineral water', *pornie* (← *porn* shortened from *pornography*) 'a pornographic film', *tatie/tattie* (← *potato*), *U-ey* (Austral.) (← *U-turn*), *wellie/-y* (← *Wellington* 'a Wellington boot') 'a kick, acceleration', and *sammie* or *sarnie/-ey* (← *sandwich*), after an alteration of the base due to natural preferences.

Some of these inanimate nouns seem to belong to a more formal area, such as the jargon of business, banking, urban planning, etc. (e.g. *chippie/-y* ← *chip-shop*; *derry* ← *derelict*, 'a derelict building'; *divvy* ← *dividend*; *offie/-y* ← *off-licence*, 'an off-licence shop'), now also extended to everyday language.

Other clippings with this suffix are hypocoristic names of places (countries or towns), or refer to their inhabitants: e.g., *Argie* (← *Argentinian/Argentine*), *Aussie* (← *Australia(n)*), and its variants *Ossie/Ozzie*, *gippy/gyppee/gyppey* (← *gipsy*) ‘an Egyptian’ (also ‘a gipsy’), *Phillie/-y* (U.S.) (← *Philadelphia*), and *Tassie/-y/-ey* (Austral.) (← *Tasmania(n)*).

Animate nouns from clipped bases denote people who have a specific job, activity, habit, political/religious belief, or physical condition. Examples are *cokie/-ey* (orig. U.S.) (← *coke* abbrev. of *cocaine*) ‘a cocaine addict’, *Commie/-y* (← *Communist*; cf. *Commo*), *flatty* (orig. U.S.) (← *flat-foot*) ‘a policeman’, *gremmie/-y* (Surfing) (← *gremlin*) ‘a young surfer’, *hostie* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *hostess*), *juvie/-ey* (U.S.) (← *juvenile*), *kriegie* (← G. *Kriegsgefangener* ‘prisoner of war’) ‘an Allied prisoner of war in Germany during the war of 1939-45’, *Lesbie* (← *lesbian*; cf. *Lesbo*), its variants *Lessie/-y/Lezzy*, *Limey* (U.S.) (← *lime-juicer*) ‘an English sailor’, *pikey/-y* (chiefly regional) (← *pike* shortened from *turnpike*) ‘a vagrant’, *polly* (orig. U.S., now chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) (← *politician*), *Proddie/-y* (chiefly Ir.) (← *Prod* shortened from *protestant* with voicing of intervocalic *-t-*), *prossie/-y* or *prostie/-y* (N. Amer.) (← *prostitute*; cf. *pross*), *statie* (U.S.) (← *state trooper*), *trannie* (← *transvestite*). A clipped word with previous alteration of the base is *patootie* (chiefly U.S.) (← *potato*) ‘a girlfriend, a sweetheart; an attractive woman’. An adjective belonging here is *preggie/-y* (← *pregnant*; cf. *preggers*, *preggo*).

A small group of (mostly American) nouns with an *-ie/-y* ending originate from acronyms: e.g., *dinkie/-y* (← *double income no kids*), *woopie/-y* (← *well-off old(er) person*), and *yumpie* (← *young upwardly mobile people*), after *yuppie/-y* (← *young urban professional*, now also frequently interpreted as young *upwardly mobile professional*), *Fannie Mae* (← *Federal National Mortgage Association*, after two female personal names), and *Naffy*, a variant from *NAAFI* (← *Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes*).

The suffix *-ie/-y* and its cumulative variants *-sie/-sy/-sey* sometimes attach to reduplicative formations, as in *footie-footie* or *footy-footy* ‘amorous play with the feet’ (also *footsie-footsie*, *footsy-footsy*, or simply *footy*), and *tootsie-wootsie* or *tootsey-wootsey* (chiefly U.S.) ‘a woman, a girl; a sweetheart’.

3.2.3.13. *The suffix -ify, -fy*

The English suffix *-ify* (and its variant *-fy* quoted in the OED) regularly forms verbs with the common meaning ‘make, convert into, bring into the state of –’, as in denominal *beautify* and deadjectival *uglify*, with the regular dropping of final *-y* before the suffix is added.

In slang, this suffix attaches to an irregular base – the acronym *yuppie/-y* – to form the verb *yuppify* (orig. U.S.) ‘subject to yuppification’ (see *-ation* § 3.2.3.2). After cumulation with the *-ed* (participial) suffix, it also attaches to the slang noun *pansy* ‘a male homosexual; an effeminate man’ and to colloquial *sissy* ‘an effeminate person; a coward’ to obtain the adjectives *pansified* ‘excessively stylized or adorned; affected’ and *sissified* ‘effeminate’.

3.2.3.14. *The suffix -ing (n type: flaming)*

In present-day English, *-ing* is a suffix forming verbal derivatives, originally abstract nouns of action (*ask* → *asking*, *learn* → *learning*), but subsequently developed in various directions, to express existence, processes, habits, etc. By later extension, formations with this suffix have been analogically made from nouns (*bedding*, *gardening*), and, by ellipsis, from adverbs (as *inning*, *offing*, *outing*); while nonce-words in *-ing* are formed freely on words or phrases of many kinds: e.g. *oh-ing*, *hear-hearing* (‘calling oh!, hear! hear!’), *how-d’ye-doing* (‘saying how do you do?’); *pinting* (‘having pints of beer’), etc.

In English slang, verbal nouns ending in *-ing* mainly express actions which have passed into a process, practice, habit: e.g., *flaming* (Computing) ‘the action or practice of sending inflammatory or abusive messages by e-mail’, *foozling* (Golf) ‘bungling’, *fratting* (← *frat*) ‘friendly relations between British and American soldiers and German women’, *mooching* (regional) ‘begging; loafing’, *phishing* (Computing) (a respelling of *fishing*) ‘fraud perpetrated on the Internet’, *ranking* (U.S., Black E.) (← *rank* ‘insult (a person)’) ‘intra-group repartee’, *steaming* ‘the action of passing rapidly through a public place robbing bystanders’.

Sometimes the notion of action may be limited to a single or particular occasion, as in *bashing* (Services) ‘any arduous task’,

doing (dial.) ‘a scolding; a thrashing; a severe monetary loss’, *shellacking* (chiefly U.S.) ‘a beating; a defeat’.

Nouns ending in *-ing* are also obtained from compound nouns or verbs, as in denominal *gender-bending* (back-formed ← *gender-bender*, see § 3.2.8.3) ‘the action of affecting an androgynous appearance’, *hot-rod* (orig. U.S.) (← *hot rod*) ‘racing powerful motor vehicles’, *jawboning* (U.S.) (← *jaw-bone* ‘credit’) ‘name applied to a policy’, and in deverbal *ram-raiding* (← *v ram-raid* ‘break into (esp. commercial premises)’) ‘a form of smash-and-grab robbery in which premises are broken into by ramming a vehicle through a window or wall’.

The *-ing* suffix may also attach to adjectives, as in *hotting* (Brit.) (← *hot* ‘stolen’ (goods)) ‘joyriding in stolen, high-performance cars’, or to nouns, as in *sledging* (Austral., Cricket) (← *sledge* ‘a large heavy hammer usually wielded with both hands’) ‘unsportsmanlike attempts by fielders to upset a batsman’s concentration by abuse, needling, etc.’. A peculiar irregular base is the acronym *sug* (Brit.) (← *sell under guise*), which originates the noun *sugging*.

3.2.3.15. The suffix *-ing* (ppl adj type: corking)

The English suffix *-ing* is used to form both adjectives of participial origin or nature (as *cunning* orig. ← *can*, *willing*), and prepositions or adverbs of participial origin (as *concerning*, *during*, *excepting*, *notwithstanding*, *pending*, *touching*).

Instances of slang participial adjectives are *corking* (chiefly U.S.) ‘unusually fine or excellent; stunning’, *happening* (← *happen* ‘be successful’) ‘currently in vogue, fashionable’, *storming* (chiefly in Sport) ‘displaying outstanding vigour, speed, or skill’, *swinging* (← *swing* ‘be promiscuous’) ‘of or pertaining to one who engages in promiscuous sexual activity’, *topping* ‘of high quality; excellent’, *zonking* (← *zonk* ‘overcome, overwhelm’) ‘impressively (large or great)’.

Most slang participial adjectives of this type are used as intensifying adverbs, or as euphemistic substitutes for strong expletives (i.e. *bloody*, *fucking*), exhibiting a phonological resemblance with the original term. Examples are *blinking*, *blooming*, *chuffing* (Brit.), *effing* (← *eff* ‘variant of *ef*, name of the letter F, representing *fuck*’), *flipping*, *fricking* (orig. U.S.), *frigging*,

naffing (Brit.), *perishing*, *pissing* (chiefly Brit.), *sodding*, *steaming*, *stonking*. Intensifiers with an *-ing* ending may also originate from nouns (as *pigging* Brit.) or from adjectives (as *hellishing* chiefly Austral. and N.Z.).

3.2.3.16. *The suffix -ish*

The adjectival suffix *-ish* has various functions and meanings in English. In OE it was used to form adjectives from national names: e.g., *British* (OE *Brittisc*), *English* (OE *Englisc*), *Scottish* (OE *Scyttisc*), etc. With the same basic meaning of appurtenance, *-ish* attaches to common nouns, as in more recent *boyish*, *girlish*, and, with a derogatory meaning, in *babyish*, *clownish*, *foolish*, etc.

The suffix is now added to adjectives denoting colour (*reddish*, *yellowish*), and, in colloquial use, to other monosyllabic adjectives with the meaning ‘of the nature of, approaching the quality of, somewhat’ (*darkish*, *poorish*, *smallish*). Further examples of this type are the colloquial *plutish* (orig. Austral., now chiefly U.S.) ‘plutocratic’, from the base *plute*, shortened from *plutocrat*, and *moreish* ‘of food or drink: that makes one want to have more’.

The suffix may attach to other head classes: verbs (as in standard *snappish* and colloq. *peckish* ‘somewhat hungry (of a person)’ ← *peck* orig. cant ‘eat, feed’), particles (as in standard *uppish*) and numerals, to denote approximate age or time (as in standard *fortyish*, *ninish*).

In slang use, it also attaches to adverbial phrases (as in *all-overish* ‘having a general sense of illness pervading the body’), nominal compounds (as in *pound-noteish/notish* Brit. ‘affected, pompous’), and to such irregular bases as altered clipped nouns (*hippish* ‘somewhat hypochondriacal’ ← *hip*, altered abbreviation of *hypochondria*), and as back-slang nouns (as in *yobbish* ← *yob*, ‘characteristic of a yob’, see § 3.1.3, type g).

3.2.3.17. *The suffix -less*

The adjectival suffix *-less*, according to Marchand (1969: 324) “the negative counterpart of *-ful*”, attaches to nominal bases to convey the privative sense ‘without, free from –’ (as in *careless*, *needless*; cf. *careful*, *needful*). This sense is in colloquial *potless* (now chiefly Brit.) ‘having no money, penniless’, obtained from the slang noun

pot ‘a large sum of money’. Added to deverbal nouns of action, the adjectival derivative takes on the sense of ‘not to be –ed’ (as in *countless*, *numberless* ‘not to be counted, numbered’).

In slang, the sense ‘without, not having –’ has to be read metaphorically, as in *legless* alluding to the physical effects of drinking too much, and therefore referring to someone who is ‘drunk, esp. too drunk to stand’. A likewise metaphorical reading applies to *motherless* (Austral.) ‘very poor, having no money’, to coarse *shitless* ‘alluding to a state of extreme fear’, and to *zipless* ‘denoting a brief and passionate sexual encounter’. Some slang derivatives with a *-less* ending are also used to intensify adjectives (as *motherless* in *motherless broke*, *drunk*, *stoney*).

3.2.3.18. The suffix *-ly*

In English *-ly* is a suffix forming adverbs of manner, mainly from adjectives, as *badly* ‘in a bad manner’. With the sense ‘in a – manner’ slang regularly obtains adverbs from slang adjectives ending in *y*, changed to *i* before *-ly*: e.g., *chestily* (U.S.) ‘in a chesty manner’, *dopily* ‘in a dopey manner’, *glitzily*, *groovily*, *hammily*, *kookily*, *raunchily*, *spookily*, *wackily*, etc. From an irregular adjectival base (*yobbish*, see the adjective-forming suffix *-ish* above), slang coins *yobbishly* ‘in a loutish manner’.

Slang adverbs may acquire the metaphorical sense ‘unusually, excessively, really, extraordinarily’ when used as intensifiers, as in *all-firedly* (← *all-fired* ‘infernal’, a euphemism for *hell-fired*), *seriously* (orig. U.S.) (esp. as *seriously rich*), *stinkingly* (e.g. *stinkingly drunk*, *pretty, rich*).

3.2.3.19. The suffix *-ness*

The English suffix *-ness* forms (mainly abstract) nouns from adjectives (*hardness*), participles (*drunkenness*, *knowingness*), adjectival phrases (*donothingness*), and (more rarely) nouns (*childness*), pronouns (*I-ness*), adverbs (*nowness*), particles (*outness*) and numerals (*oneness*). The general sense of the derivatives is ‘the condition, quality, state of being what the base denotes’.

Regularly-formed slang deadjectival nouns are *chestiness* ‘the condition or quality of being chesty’, *crumbiness* (← *crummy* ‘lousy; filthy’), *dragginess*, *glitziness*, *grunginess* (← *grungy* ‘grimy,

unpleasant'), *kookiness*, *peckishness* (← deverbal adj *peckish*), *raunchiness*, *schmal(t)ziness*, *scuzziness*, *spookiness*, *wackiness*, *yuckiness*.

Nouns ending in *-ness* from compound adjectives are, for instance, *all-overishness* (see the adj *all-overish* under *-ish* above), *bone-headedness* (← *bone-headed* 'thick-headed, stupid'), *slug-nuttiness* (← *slug-nutty* U.S. 'punch-drunk'), and *with-it-ness* (← *with-it* 'fashionable'). The noun *hotsy-totsiness* is from a reduplicative adjective (i.e. *hotsy-totsy* 'comfortable, satisfactory') and *yobbishness* 'the condition of being a hooligan' is from a denominal adjective (*yobbish*), whereas *hippi(e)ness* 'the characteristics of a hippie or hippies' is from a noun (*hippie/-y* 'a hipster; a beatnik').

3.2.3.20. *The suffix -o*

The suffix *-o* – now widespread in English-speaking countries but especially associated with Australian English – has various origins, which deserve some diachronic explanation. In the early 16th century, it mainly represented the final syllable of Romance borrowings (e.g. E. *camisado* ← Sp. *Camisada*, E. *lingo* ← Portug. *lingua*). In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, it represented the vowel that became final after the shortening of words by dropping the syllables following a medial *o*, as in *memo* (← *memorandum*), and more recent (19th cent.) *loco* (← *locomotive*). Since the late ME period, it has also represented the interjections *ho*, *O*, and *oh* attached to a word to form refrains or vocative expressions (e.g. *cheerio*, *heave-ho*, *righto*). A number of words occur in the second half of the 19th century which appear to have their origin in the attachment of one of these interjections to a noun or adjective. Some of these are normally or frequently written as hyphenated compounds (e.g. *bottle-ho*, *dead-ho*, *smoke-ho*, *daddy-o*, *rabbit-o*), while others (e.g. *milko*, *wino*) are treated in spelling as having the suffix *-o*.

The earliest example which shows a clear transition from one use to the other is *milko*, used both as a milkman's call indicating that milk is available (esp. as *Milk O*, *Milk-o*) and as a slang word for *milkman*. Further examples used as interjections as well as nouns or adjectives are *whizzo* ('an exclamation expressing delight',

‘something excellent’), and *socko* (‘an interjection imitative of the sound of a violent blow’, ‘a success’, ‘stunningly effective’).

The *-o* suffix has various uses in colloquial language and slang. In colloquial language, it is used to form exclamations by analogy with vocative expressions, as in *Whacko* ‘expressing delight or excitement’ and *Whammo* ‘suggesting a sudden violent blow or surprising event’, respectively from the onomatopoeic nouns *whack* and *wham*.

In slang, the suffix is additionally used to form personal nouns from non-personal nouns, as in *milko* (orig. Austral. and N.Z.), *plonko* (Austral.) (← *plonk* ‘cheap wine’) ‘an alcoholic’, *rabbit-o/rabbit-oh* (Austral.) ‘an itinerant seller of rabbits as food’, *wino* (orig. U.S.) (← *wine*) ‘a habitual drinker of cheap wine’.

It also forms nouns from adjectives, as in *dumbo* (orig. U.S.) (← *dumb*) ‘a slow-witted or stupid person’, *pinko* (chiefly N. Amer., freq. derog.) (← *pink* ‘tending to left-wing’) ‘a socialist’, *saddo* (Brit., deprec.) ‘a person perceived as socially inadequate or contemptible’, *scruffo* ‘a scruffy person’, *sicko* (U.S.) ‘one who is mentally ill or perverted’ (cf. *sickie*), *single-o* (U.S., chiefly Criminals’) ‘a crime perpetrated without an assistant’, *sleazo* (U.S.) ‘something sleazy, pornographic’, *weirdo* ‘an odd or unconventional person’ (cf. *weirdie*), *wrongo* (chiefly U.S.) (← Criminals’ *wrong* ‘untrustworthy, unreliable’) ‘a bad, dishonest person’. After cumulation, the suffix *-so* derives the deadjectival nouns *fatso* (humorous) ‘a fat person’ and *nutso* (← *nuts*) ‘a mad or crazy person’ (cf. *nutso* under the adjective-forming suffix *-y* below).

Less frequently, nouns are derived from verbs, as in *stingo* ‘strong ale or beer’, or from deverbal nouns, as in *stoppo* ‘a rest from work’, (Criminals’) ‘an escape, a get-away’. The adjective *stinko* (orig. U.S.) ‘of a very low standard’, ‘intoxicated, drunk’ is similarly formed from a verb (*stink*; cf. *stinkeroo*).

In criminals’ slang, there are also the in-group verb *nitto* ‘keep still or quiet; stop’, from another colloquial verb (*nit*), with the opposite sense of ‘escape, decamp’, and the adverb *doggo*, as in *to lie doggo* ‘lie quiet, remain hid’, perh. from *dog* ‘an informer; a traitor’.

Yet the most common use of the *-o* suffix is to form familiar, informal equivalents of nouns and adjectives. Familiar nouns ending in *o* are often used as forms of address: e.g., *bucko*

(Nautical) (← *buck* ‘a man’) ‘a swaggering or domineering fellow’, *daddy-o* (← *daddy*), *kiddo* (← *kid*) ‘a young child, man or woman’, *oaf* (Brit.) (← *oaf* ‘a fool’) ‘a lout, a hooligan’, *yobbo/yobo* (← *yob*, see § 3.1.2).

Examples of informal adjectives of this type are *cheapo* (← adj *cheap*, also reduplicated as *cheapo-cheapo*), and *neato* (chiefly N. Amer.) ‘that is excellent, desirable’. The adjective *wacko* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘crazy, mad; eccentric’ is from slang *wack/whack*, back-formed from *wacky*.

The suffix preferentially attaches to truncated word-forms. According to the OED, the earliest example of the addition of the suffix to a truncated word is probably *beano* (second half of 19th cent., orig. Printers’) (← *bean-feast*), followed by Australian *Salvo* (← *Salvationist*) ‘a member of the Salvation Army’, and *robbo* (← *Robinson*) ‘a horse or trap, or its driver; a poor horse’. Since the beginning of the 20th century, esp. Australian and New Zealand slang formations of this kind have become numerous: e.g., *aggro* (← *aggravation/aggression*), *ammo* (← *ammunition*), *combo* (← *combination*), *Commo* (← *Communist*), *compo* (← *compensation*), *garbo* (← *garbage*) ‘a dustman, a collector of rubbish’, *gippo/gyppe/gypo* (← *gipsy*) ‘a gipsy’, ‘an Egyptian’, *jollo* (← *jollification*), *journ* (← *journalist*), *lesbo* (← *lesbian*), *metho* (← *methyated spirits*), *muso* (← *musician*), *obbo/obo* (Military) (← *observation*) ‘an observation balloon’, *preggo* (← *pregnant*), *propho* (orig. U.S., Military) (← *prophylaxis*), *provo/Provo* (← *provisional*) ‘a member of the Provisional I.R.A.’, *reffo* (← *refugee*) ‘a European refugee’, *rego/reggo* (← *registration*) ‘motor-vehicle registration’, *speako* (U.S.) (← *speakeasy*) ‘a shop or bar where alcoholic liquor is sold illegally’, *starko* (← *stark naked*), *susso* (dated) (← *sustenance*) ‘state government relief paid to the unemployed’, *tropo* (← *tropic*) ‘mentally ill through spending too much time (orig. on war service) in the tropics’. Some such words also display alteration of the base spelling, as in *arvo* (← *afternoon*), *Nasho* (← *National Service*), *sammo* (← *sandwich*; cf. *sammie* in § 3.2.3.12), and *secko* (← *sex*) ‘a sexual pervert; a sex offender’.

3.2.3.21. *The suffix -ock*

The suffix *-ock* originally forms diminutives (as in ME *hillock* ‘a little hill’, and early ME *wretchock* ‘a diminutive person, little wretch’). Most formations since the 18th century are regional (esp. Scots), as in *bittock* ‘a little bit’, and *lassock* ‘a little girl’. Several names of animals, esp. birds and fishes, have what appears to be the same ending (e.g. *piddock*, *tarrock*), and are probably diminutive formations.

In slang, esp. the British English variety, the suffix *-ock* is no longer diminutive in nature, but is mainly used to form a number of familiar, mildly depreciative or disrespectful words for people, such as *fussock/fuzzock* ‘a fat, unwieldy woman’, *pillock* ‘a fool, an idiot’, and *wassock/wazzock* (orig. northern dial.) ‘a stupid or annoying person’.

This suffix is also present in the slang verb *ballock* (← *ball*) ‘reprimand or tell off severely’, and in the plural noun *ballocks* (and its alterations *bollocks*, *rollocks*) meaning ‘an absurdity; a mess’, also used as an interjection to mean ‘nonsense’, or as an adjective with the sense of ‘naked’.

3.2.3.22. *The suffix -s*

In English the suffix *-s* is commonly combined with other suffixes, esp. *-y* (as *-sy*), used in proper names (*Betsy*, *Patsy*), common nouns (*mopsy*, *petsy*), and reduplicatives (*popsy-wopsy*). Yet it may also be used autonomously with a hypocoristic function (as in *Babs*, *ducks*, *moms*) (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1584).

In slang the *-s* suffix is peculiarly used to form denominal adjectives with the general meaning ‘crazy, mad’, or in weakened sense, ‘eccentric; wildly enthusiastic (about something or someone)’. Examples are *bananas* (as in *to go/drive bananas*) and *nuts* (← *off one’s nut* ‘out of one’s mind, insane’), also used in British English as *to be (dead) nuts on/upon* ‘be fond of (a person); be enthusiastic about (a person or thing)’.

As remarked in section 3.1.3, the *-s* suffix may also be a reminiscence of a previous plural suffix. For instance, in *ants* (see *antsy* ‘agitated’ in § 3.2.3.24) and *bats* ‘crazy’, which originated from longer phrases (i.e. *to have ants in one’s pants*, *to have bats in the belfry*).

The suffix may also attach to nominal or adjectival bases to form nouns which refer to ‘human skills’ or ‘feelings, physical (or imaginary) mental diseases’, as in denominal *guts* ‘energy, verve; courage’ and deadjectival *smarts* (U.S.) ‘intelligence; wits’. The formatives of this type are usually preceded by a definite article *the*, as in *the all-overs* (chiefly U.S.) ‘a feeling of nervousness or unease’, *the shits* ‘diarrhoea’, *the slows* ‘an imaginary disease or ailment accounting for slowness’, and *the uglies* ‘depression, bad temper’.

3.2.3.23. *The suffix -ster*

In English the suffix *-ster* has been used in the formation of agent-nouns, derived from verbs or their corresponding nouns. According to Marchand (1969: 349), this suffix often exhibits a characteristic nuance of “shadiness”, as in *crimester* (‘organized perpetrator of crimes’, his quote), *drugster*, *gangster*, etc.

Slang formations with such a nuance are *boomster* (U.S.) ‘one who works up a ‘boom’; a speculator’, *dopester* (← *dope* ‘information’, ‘drug’) ‘one who collects information on, and forecasts the result of, sporting events, elections, etc.’, ‘one who sells or uses drugs’, and *mobster* (← *the Mob* ‘the Mafia’) ‘a member of the Mafia’. The OED states that these formations imitate those of trade designations, from which they derive the disparaging sense that we find, e.g., in *boomster* as compared to *boomer* ‘one who ‘booms’ or pushes an enterprise’.

A non-disparaging sense is found in slang *hipster/hepster* (orig. U.S.) ‘an addict of jazz, swing music, etc.’.

3.2.3.24. *The suffix -y*

The derivational suffix *-y* – which descends from the OE *-ig* suffix – is used in English to form adjectives. Originally, it only attached to nouns to provide the meaning ‘having the qualities of, full of –’ (as in *bloody*, *icy*). In the 13th century, the suffix began to be used with verb-stems to express the meaning ‘inclined or apt to do something’, or ‘giving occasion to a certain action’ (as in *choky*). Since the early years of the 19th century, it has been used still more freely in nonce-words designed to connote such characteristics of a

person or thing as call for condemnation, ridicule, or contempt (as in *beery*, *newspapery*, *piggy*, etc.).

The variant *-ey* regularly occurs when the base ends in *y* (as in *skyey*), or when the base ends in *-e* preceded by a vowel (as in *bluey*, *gluey*). When the final *-e* is preceded by a consonant, there may be variation (as in *nosey/nosy*).

Denominal derivatives are numerous in slang with the meaning ‘of, pertaining to, or characterized by –’. Instances are *cheesy* (← *cheese* ‘the right thing’) ‘fine or showy’, when found with the variant *-ey* ‘inferior, second-rate’, *crappy* (orig. U.S., coarse) (← *crap* ‘rubbish’) ‘rubbishy; worthless’, *dishy* (← *dish* ‘an attractive person’) ‘sexually attractive’, *doggy* (← *dog* ‘style’) ‘dashing, smart’, *dopy/-ey* (orig. U.S.) (← *dope* ‘drugs’) ‘sluggish or stupefied, with or as with a drug’, fig. ‘stupid’, *drippy* (orig. U.S.) (← *drip* ‘sentimental drivel’) ‘drivelling, sloppily sentimental’, *faggoty/faggy* (← *faggot/fag* U.S. ‘a (male) homosexual’) ‘homosexual’, *foxy* (U.S.) (← *fox* ‘an attractive woman’) ‘attractive, desirable, pretty, sexy’, *froggy* (← *frog* ‘a Frenchman’) ‘French’, *funky* (orig. U.S.) (← *funk*) ‘of jazz or similar music: down-to-earth and uncomplicated; emotional’, *gassy* (← *gas* ‘empty or boastful talk’) ‘characterized by empty talk’, *gimpy* (orig. U.S.) (← *gimp* ‘a lame person or leg’) ‘lame, crippled’, *groovy* (orig. U.S.) (← *groove* ‘something excellent or very satisfying’) ‘excellent, very good’, *gungy/-ey* (← *gunge* ‘any messy substance’) ‘of a sticky or messy consistency; mucky’, *hammy* (← *ham* ‘an ineffective or over-emphatic actor’) ‘characteristic of a ham actor or ham acting’, *hippy* (orig. U.S.) (← *hyppie/-y* ‘a hipster’) ‘characteristic of hippies’, *hoppy* (U.S.) (← *hop* ‘a narcotic drug; spec. opium’) ‘characterized by drugs or drug-taking’, *hunky* (orig. U.S.) (← *hunk* ‘a sexually attractive man’) ‘attractive, handsome’, *jivey/-y* (chiefly U.S.) (← *jive* ‘misleading or empty talk’) ‘phoney, pretentious’, *kooky/-ie* (← *kook* ‘a cranky or crazy person’) ‘crazy, eccentric’, *lippy* (dial.) (← *lip* ‘saucy talk, impudence’) ‘impertinent; verbose’, *lushy/-ey* (← *lush* ‘a habitual drunkard’) ‘intoxicated, drunk’, *peachy* (orig. U.S.) (← *peach* ‘an attractive young woman’) ‘attractive, desirable’, *poncy/-ey* (chiefly Brit., derog.) (← *ponce* ‘an effeminate man; a homosexual’) ‘affected; homosexual’, *queeny* (← *queen* ‘a male homosexual’) ‘effeminate’, *raunchy/rancy* (orig. U.S.) (←

raunch ‘shabbiness, grubbiness’) ‘inept; dirty’, *salty* (U.S., Nautical) (← *salt* ‘a sailor’) ‘of a sailor: hard-bitten; aggressive’, *schmaltzy* (← Yiddish *schmaltz* ‘sentimentality, emotionalism’) ‘sentimentalized, over-emotional’, *sidy/-ey* (← *side* ‘pretentiousness, conceit’) ‘conceited’, *snitty* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *snit* ‘a state of agitation’) ‘ill-tempered, sulky’, *spooky* (U.S.) (← *spook* ‘a spy’) ‘of or pertaining to spies or espionage’, *stakey/-y* (chiefly Canad.) (← *stake* ‘an amount of money’) ‘well provided with money’, *yucky* (← *yuck* ‘messy or distasteful material’) ‘nasty, unpleasant’, *zappy* (← *zap* ‘liveliness, energy’) ‘lively; striking’, *zizzy* (← *zizz* ‘gaiety, liveliness’) ‘showy; uninhibited’.

Some such adjectives are obtained from standard nouns, such as *chesty* (U.S.) ‘having one’s chest thrust out as a sign of self-importance’ and *druggy* ‘characteristic of narcotic drugs or their users’. In most of them, the connection with the nominal base is metaphoric, as in *dreamy* (orig. U.S.) ‘perfect, ideal’, *lemony* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘irritated, angry’, *mossy* (U.S.) ‘extremely conservative or reactionary; old-fashioned’, *rosy* ‘drunk, tipsy’, *smelly* ‘suspicious’, *tasty* ‘sexually attractive’. Of the same figurative type is *spooky* (Surfing) ‘of a wave: dangerous or frightening’, which originates from colloquial *spook* (‘a spectre, apparition, ghost’).

It should be stressed that the adjective-forming *-y* suffix also attaches to plural nouns, as in *antsy* ‘agitated’ (← the pl. of *ant*, also reduplicated in *antsy-pantsy*), *ballsy* ‘courageous; determined’ (← the pl. of *ball*), and *dicey* ‘risky, dangerous’ (← the pl. of *die*) (see § 3.1.3, type h, for their morphotactic analysis).

Less frequently, the suffix attaches to bases other than nouns: e.g., verbs (*scroungy* ‘shabby or dirty in appearance; inferior’), verb phrases (*screwy* ← *to have a screw loose*, ‘crazy; eccentric’; *windy* ← *to get the wind up*, ‘apt to get into a state of alarm’), adjectives (*nutsy* ‘mad; eccentric’ ← *nuts*, after a cumulation with the slangy suffix *-s*, see § 3.2.3.22), adjectival phrases (*wacky* ‘crazy; odd’ ← *out of whack* ‘disordered, malfunctioning’), and adverbs (e.g. *sometime* U.S. Black and Prison ‘variable, unstable’).

The derivational suffix *-y* is sometimes conflated with the hypocoristic *-y*. There are a number of borderline cases which seem to legitimate such a conflation, such as the adjectives *dotty*, *goofy*,

goopy ('silly, stupid') and *nutty* ('crazy') in *A person who is 'wanting in the upper storey' is: dotty, goofy or goopy*, and *You have to be a real sour square not to love the nutty, noisy, happy, handsome Beatles*. The abbreviated type may be borderline as well, since it often corresponds to a hypocoristic noun.

Abbreviated bases are mostly back-clippings: e.g., *gutty* (Jazz) (← *gut-bucket* 'a primitive, unsophisticated brand of jazz') 'earthy, primitive', *poopy* (chiefly U.S.) (← *poop* 'a stupid or ineffectual person', shortened from *nincompoop*) 'foolish; ineffectual', *specky* (← *specs* shortened from *spectacles*) 'bespectacled', *sussy* (← *suspicious/suspected*), *wiggy* (U.S.) (← *wig out* 'be overcome by extreme emotion; go mad') 'mad, crazy'.

Abbreviations with a quasi-hypocoristic -y suffix are *grotty* (← *grotesque*) 'unpleasant, dirty, ugly', *loony/-ey/lunny* (← *lunatic*), *porny* (← *porn* shortened from *pornography*) 'pornographic' (also n), *preppy* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *prep* shortened from *preparatory*) 'of or relating to a student at a prep school' (also n), *Proddy* (chiefly Ir., derog.) (← *Prod* shortened from *Protestant*; cf. *The Cats and The Proddy Dogs* 'the Catholics and the Protestants').

The base may be a blend, as in *hokey* (orig. U.S.) (← *hokum*, a blend of *hocus-pocus* and *bunkum*, U.S., Theatrical) 'sentimental, melodramatic, artificial', and *scuzzy* (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) (← *scuzz*, a blend of *scum* and *fuzz*, or a corrupted abbrev. of *disgusting*) 'disgusting in appearance, behaviour, etc.'. It may also be clipped from a reduplicative formation, as in the American adjective *zooty* '(strikingly) fashionable', from the rhyming reduplicative *zoot suit*. A reversed base is in the adjective *yobby* 'loutish', from *yob* (see § 3.1.3, type g).

3.2.4. Final combining forms

Final combining forms are traditionally viewed as pseudo- or semi-suffixes occurring in neoclassical compounds (Marchand 1969, Bauer 1983): e.g., *-logy* ('science of'), an anglicised adaptation of Gr. *logía* via French use, as in *pharmacology*, *psychology*, *sociology*, etc.⁹ In modern English there are two extra types of combining

⁹ Initial combining forms (e.g. *bio-* 'life', from Gr. *bíos*, as in *biogenetic*) are not included in this description because irrelevant for the topic under investigation.

forms, namely truncated forms of model words (e.g. *-holic* ← *alcoholic*, as in *spendaholic*), and parts of model words, which happen to be established morpheme-forms (e.g. *-gate* ← *Watergate*, as in *Yuppiegate*) (see Warren 1990, Fradin 2000, Plag 2003, Mattiello 2007b).

The modern types are found in slang as well, and, since some of them have acquired an autonomous morphological status, their formation mechanism has been compared to that of proper composition: e.g., by Dressler (2000), who classifies them as cases of marginal morphology. It remains true, however, that combining forms develop a novel meaning which is connected to, but independent from that of the original full word (cf. Amer. *-burger* and *hamburger* explained below).

3.2.4.1. *The combining form -(a)licious*

The final combining form *-licious* (← *delicious*), with a variant *-licious* (esp. after a vowel or y), is used in American slang to form adjectives with the meaning ‘embodying the qualities denoted or implied by the first element to a delightful or attractive degree’. Examples of denominal adjectives are *babelicious/babe-licious* (← *babe* ‘a girl or woman’) ‘of a woman or girl: sexually attractive, gorgeous’, *bootylicious* (← *booty* ‘the buttocks’) ‘esp. of a woman, often with reference to the buttocks: sexy; shapely’, and other nonce-words, such as *dog-licious*, *goodylicious*, *groovalicious*, *hunkalicious* and *spooklicious* (recorded in the OED).

3.2.4.2. *The combining form -burger*

The combining form *-burger*, whose origin is from the G. city of *Hamburg*, reanalysed as *ham* + *burger* by folk etymology – even if “there is no ham in the *hamburger*” (Marchand 1969: 213) – is commonly used in English as the second element in compounds denoting types of hamburgers (e.g. *beefburger*, *cheeseburger*, *fishburger*,¹⁰ *nutburger*, *vegeburger* ← *vegetable*, etc.).

Yet since the early 1980s, it has also formed American slang words with the meaning ‘people characterized by the initial element’. The progenitor is probably *mouseburger*, coined by Gurley Brown to denote ‘a person who does not have a particularly good-looking

¹⁰ See Warren (1990: 119) for the semantic analysis of *cheeseburger* vs. *fishburger*.

appearance or high I.Q., but can nevertheless achieve professional and personal success through determination'. Since then, it has been attached to various bases to obtain similar humorous formations, such as *cheerfulburger*, *nothingburger* and *psychoburger*.

3.2.4.3. *The combining form -fest*

The American English combining form *-fest* (from G. *Fest* 'festival', as in *Oktoberfest*, *Sängerfest* and *Turnfest*), is interpreted as an allomorph of E. *feast*. It attaches to nouns or verbs to denote 'a festival or special occasion', qualified by the accompanying word, as in *hen fest*, *songfest* 'an informal session of group-singing', *talk fest*, and *bookfest*, *eatfest*, *smokefest*, *stuntfest*, *walkfest* reported in Marchand (1969: 212).

This combining form is analogously used in American slang *gabfest* (← *gab* 'talk') 'a gathering for talk; a prolonged conference or conversation', and *slug-fest* (← *v slug* 'hit') 'a hard-hitting contest, spec. in boxing and baseball'.

3.2.4.4. *The combining form -ville*

The final combining form *-ville* (from F. *ville* 'town') is appended to nouns (which frequently have a plural suffix) or adjectives to form the names of fictitious places with reference to a particular (often unpleasant) quality.

In American slang, an adjectival derivative with *-ville* is *Dullsville* 'an imaginary town characterized by extreme dullness or boredom', and nominal ones are *Cubesville* denoting 'a group or set of extremely conventional or conservative persons', *Endsville/Endville* 'the imaginary home of good things or people', *Niggerville*, used in the negative sense of 'a neighbourhood with predominantly black residents' (cf. *Niggertown*), and *Squaresville*, a synonym of *Dullsville* (see also Bauerle 1960). But there are other jocular nonce-formations reported in the OED, such as *Boneheadville* (e.g. *I'm telling you you're the biggest bonehead from Boneheadville*), *Jaguar-threepointfoursville* (e.g. *It offers an enjoyable evening out in Jaguar-threepointfoursville*), etc.

3.2.5. Infixation

Infixation is the process whereby an affix (called an infix) is inserted in the middle of a word. Morphologists generally agree that English has no infixes, other than within extra-grammatical morphology of inserting expletives into words for additional emphasis, as in *absolutely* → *abso-blooming-lutely* (Aronoff 1976, Siegel 1979, Bauer 1983, Plag 2003, Dressler 2005). McCarthy (1982) relevantly observes that there are some phonological constraints on expletive infixes: first, they must precede a vowel bearing some degree of stress, and, second, they must fall to the left of the syllable-initial consonant cluster. Thus, *fan-fuckin-tastic* is correct, but **fant-fuckin-astic* and **fa-fuckin-ntastic* are not.

The infixation process is frequent in slang, its most common expletive infixes being *-bally-*, *-blessed-*, *-bloody-*, *-blooming-* and *-fucking-*, often as *-fuckin-* (pronounced [n] rather than [ŋ] after the dropping of final *g*). The infixed base may be an adjective (e.g. *fantastic* → *fan-bloody-tastic*), an adverb (e.g. *absolutely* → *abso-bally-lutely*, *perhaps* → *per-bloody-haps*), a verb (e.g. *advance* → *ad-bloody-vance*), a noun (e.g. *defence* → *de-fuckin-fence*), a pronoun (e.g. *nobody* → *no-bloody-body* in McGrath's 1978 *Yobbo Nowt*, *yourself* → *your-bloody-self*), or an exclamation (e.g. *Jesus Christ* → *Jesus-fucking-Christ* in *A Scanner Darkly* 2006). In some cases, the infix is not inserted into the word but after the prefix (e.g. *un-believable* → *un-fuckin-believable*, *un-touchable* → *un-fucking-touchable* in COLT).

The infix *-bloody-* is also in jocular *triple bloody glazing* (after *double-glazing*), in blasphemous *Christ all bloody mighty* (← *Christ Almighty*) (both from *The Full Monty* 1997), and in *Jehovah bloody Witnesses* (from *Mickey Blue Eyes* 1999).¹¹ Most such formations are anyway produced spontaneously by speakers, and often remain nonce-words,¹² such as *unfuckingtouchable*, occurring only once in COLT.

¹¹ See Wierzbicka (2002) and Biscetti (2004) for the pragmatic meaning of *bloody*.

¹² Bauer (2001: 38-39) draws a distinction between 'nonce-word' and 'neologism' according to which the former "fails to become part of the norm, and is not generally seen as part of the lexicographer's brief", but the reverse is true for the latter.

3.2.6. Conversion

Conversion (also called “zero-derivation”, “zero-affixation” or “functional shift” in the literature) is a process consisting of the syntactic change of a word without any corresponding formal change (e.g. *v run* → *n run*, *n bottle* → *v bottle*). Thus, since there is no overt marker distinguishing the base from the derivative, this process poses the problem of determining which member of the couple comes first. The question is often complicated, but at least two criteria may be used to establish the antecedence of the base over its derivative. First, the diachronic criterion, according to which the base should be the earlier word. Second, the semantic criterion, which imposes that the derivative is the word whose meaning includes the base word (cf. “directionality of conversion” in Plag 2003: 108).

Marchand (1969: 361) distinguishes the most common types of standard English conversion, namely, from noun into verb (*n bridge* → *v bridge*) or vice versa (*v look* → *n look*), from adjective into verb (*adj idle* → *v idle*), and from particle into verb (*adv out* → *v out*).

Besides the standard types, in slang we distinguish some extra types. For instance, nouns may also be obtained from adjectives (*busy*, *queer*), adverbs (*down*), proper names (*Jack*, *Jane*), numerals (*forty*), pronouns (*it*) and interjections (*wow*), adjectives may be obtained from nouns (*cuckoo*, *shoe*), prepositions (*on*), and combining forms (*mega*), and adverbs may be, in turn, obtained from prepositions (*inside*) or adjectives (*dead*). For almost any type, we also distinguish two main subtypes, according to whether the base belongs to standard English or English slang. What follows is an overview of the slang illustrative types and subtypes in the formation of verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs.

3.2.6.1. Verbs

Slang verbs derived by a zero affix are from nouns, adjectives or adverbs.

3.2.6.1.1. The pattern from nouns is extremely frequent. Some are nouns of standard English: e.g., *oil* ‘bribe’, *souvenir* (orig. Military) ‘take as a ‘souvenir’; steal’, *submarine* (U.S.) ‘put out of action in

an underhand or covert way', *word* (Austral.) 'speak to; pass word to', and, from a compound noun, *moonlight* (orig. U.S.) 'do paid work in addition to one's regular employment'.

For the most part, however, they are slang nouns, as in *chicken* (orig. U.S.) (← *chicken* 'cowardly person') 'fail to act from motives of cowardice', *chin* (U.S.) (← *chin* 'a talk; conversation') 'chat, chatter', *coke* (orig. U.S.) (← *coke* 'cocaine') 'drug oneself with cocaine', *dope* (orig. U.S.) (← *dope* 'narcotics') 'stupefy with a drug', *fag* (U.S.) (← *fag* 'a cigarette') 'smoke; supply with a cigarette', *funk* (← *funk* 'cowering fear') 'flinch or shrink through fear', *goof* (← *goof* 'a mistake') 'make a mistake', *graft* (← *graft* 'work, esp. hard work') 'work hard', *grass* (← *grass* 'a police informer') 'betray (someone); inform the police about (someone)', *heist* (orig. U.S.) (← *heist* 'a hold-up, a robbery') 'hold up, rob, steal', *jazz* (← *jazz* 'sexual intercourse') 'have sexual intercourse (with)', *jive* (orig. U.S.) (← *jive* 'talk or conversation; spec. misleading') 'mislead; talk nonsense', *jug* (← *jug* 'a prison') 'shut up in jail; imprison', *naughty* (Austral. and N.Z., rare) (← *naughty* 'an act of sexual intercourse') 'have sexual intercourse with', *pansy* (← *pansy* 'a male homosexual; an effeminate man') 'clothe or adorn in an affected or effeminate manner', *rap* (← *rap* 'a criminal accusation') 'charge, prosecute', *rocket* (orig. Military) (← *rocket* 'a severe reprimand') 'reprimand severely', *shelf* (Austral.) (← *shelf* 'a police informer') 'inform upon', *speed* (← *speed* 'an amphetamine drug') 'be under the influence of an amphetamine drug'.

Some such converted words are compound verbs derived from a complex noun, therefore considered "pseudo-compounds" by Marchand (1969: 101; cf. § 3.2.1.3.4 here). Some examples include *fat-mouth* (U.S.) (← *fat-mouth* 'one who talks extravagantly') 'talk a great deal about something', *freebase* (orig. U.S.) (← *freebase* 'cocaine purified by heating with ether') 'make a 'freebase' of (cocaine)', *king-hit* (Austral.) (← *king-hit* 'a knock-out blow') 'punch hard or knock out', *mainline* (orig. U.S.) (← *main line* 'a principal vein, into which drugs can readily be injected') 'inject a drug intravenously', *sin-bin* (orig. Austral., Sport) (← *sin-bin* 'an area set aside for players temporarily withdrawn from a game') 'send (a player) off the field'.

Verbs converted from irregular nominal bases are especially significant: e.g., *O.D.* (orig. U.S.) ‘take an *overdose* of a drug’, from the initialism *O.D.*, and *snafu* ‘mess up, play havoc with’, from the acronym *snafu* (← *situation normal: all fouled/fucked up*).

3.2.6.1.2. The patterns from adjectives and adverbs are less common. Verbs from standard adjectives are *special* ‘work as a special correspondent for a newspaper’, ‘attend continuously to (a single patient)’, and *total* (chiefly N. Amer.) ‘damage beyond repair (esp. a motor vehicle, in an accident)’, whereas *hip* (orig. U.S.) ‘inform’ is from a slang adjective (*hip* ‘well-informed’).

Verbs from adverbs are *fully* ‘commit (a person) for trial’, *off* (chiefly U.S.) ‘turn off, shut down’, ‘kill’, and *out* (Boxing) ‘knock out or defeat (an opponent)’, but also (orig. U.S.) ‘expose the undeclared homosexuality of (esp. a prominent or public figure)’.

3.2.6.2. Nouns

Converted nouns may be derived from a variety of base categories, verbs and adjectives being the most frequent.

3.2.6.2.1. The verb → noun pattern is found uniquely with slang bases: e.g., *grind/lay* (← v *grind/lay*) ‘(an act of) sexual intercourse’, and *pop* (← v *pop*) ‘an injection of a narcotic drug’. The base is complex (i.e. a phrasal verb) in *clean-up* (orig. U.S.) ‘a profit; an exceptional financial success’, *come-on* (orig. U.S.) ‘(the victim of) a swindler; an inducement’, *cut-out* ‘a person acting as a middle-man, esp. in espionage’, *drop-in* (U.S.) ‘something which is easy; easy money’, *freak-out* ‘an intense emotional experience, esp. one resulting from the use of hallucinatory drugs’, *hang-out* ‘a residence; a lodging’, (Amer. University) ‘a feast; an entertainment’, *hash-up* ‘a hastily cooked meal’, *have-on* (Farmer) ‘a swindle; a take-in’, *hop-over* (Army) ‘an assault’, *knock-down* ‘something overpowering, e.g. strong liquor’, (U.S., Austral. and N.Z.) ‘an introduction’, *knock-off* ‘a robbery’, *nosh-up* (Brit.) ‘a hearty or lavish meal’, *pay-off* (Criminals) ‘the proceeds of a criminal operation’, *pig-out* (orig. U.S.) ‘a bout of excessive eating; a feast’, *poke-out* (U.S.) ‘a parcel of food given to a tramp; a lunch’, *rave-up* ‘a lively party’, *ready-up* (Austral.) ‘a conspiracy or swindle’, *ride-out* (Jazz) ‘a final chorus’, *ring-in* (Austral.) ‘a fraudulent substitution’, *roll-up* (orig. Prisoners)

‘a hand-rolled cigarette’, *rough-up* ‘an informal encounter or contest’, *rub-out* (U.S.) ‘a murder, an assassination’, *run-in* (Criminals’) ‘a hiding place for stolen goods’, *sit-down* (N. Amer., Tramps’) ‘a free sit-down meal’, *smoke-up* (U.S.) ‘an official notice that a student’s work is not up to the required standard’, *sort-out* ‘a fight or dispute’, *wipe-out* (Surfing) ‘a fall from one’s surfboard as a result of a collision with another surfer or a wave’.

3.2.6.2.2. Nouns from standard adjectives represent a rather frequent pattern, even if the semantic relation between onset and outset is sometimes metaphorical or opaque: e.g., *busy* ‘a detective’, *frail* (chiefly U.S.) ‘a woman’, *mad* (chiefly U.S.) ‘fury, anger’, *mental* ‘a person who is mentally ill’, *moody* (Brit., orig. Criminals’) ‘flattery or lies intended to persuade or elicit compliance’, *previous* (Brit., Criminals’) ‘a criminal record’, *ready* ‘ready money, cash’, *single* (U.S.) ‘a one-dollar bill’, and *verbal* ‘insult or abuse’.

The same pattern with slang bases is found in *gaga* (← *gaga* ‘doting, exhibiting senile decay; mad’) ‘a doting or senile person; a madman’, *grey* (← *grey* ‘white-skinned’) ‘a white-skinned person’, and *queer* (← *queer* ‘homosexual’) ‘a (usu. male) homosexual’, which, by contrast, display a transparent onset-outset relation.

3.2.6.2.3. An exclusive slang pattern is provided by the shift from proper names into common nouns. The name may be a family or Christian name: e.g., *Jane/jane* (orig. U.S.) ‘a woman, girl, girlfriend’, *jasper* (U.S.) ‘a person, fellow’, *Jones* ‘a drug addict’s habit’, (U.S.) ‘symptoms of withdrawal from a drug’, ‘any intense craving or desire’, *Mary* (Austral.) ‘a woman, esp. an Aboriginal woman’, *roscoe* (U.S.) ‘a gun’, and *peter*, with a variety of meanings ranging from cant ‘portmanteau, trunk, or other piece of baggage’ to Criminals’ slang ‘a safe or cash box’, and from Australian ‘a cell in a prison’ to American slang ‘a hypnotic drug’.

The shift is from a nickname in *Jack* (← *John* or *James*) ‘a policeman or detective’ and *Joe* (Canad.) (← *Joseph*) ‘a French Canadian’ (cf. other examples with the *-ie/-y* suffix in § 3.2.3.12).

3.2.6.2.4. Another distinctive pattern is adverb → noun, as in *down* ‘a depressant or tranquillizing drug’, *in* ‘an introduction to someone of power, fame, or authority’, *out* ‘an outpatient department in a hospital’, *outside* ‘the world existing beyond a prison’, *up* ‘a stimulant drug (esp. an amphetamine)’, (U.S.) ‘a prospective customer’, and, from the comparative of *soon*, *sooner* (U.S.) ‘one who acts prematurely’, (chiefly Austral.) ‘an idler, shirker’.

3.2.6.2.5. Less frequent but equally distinctive slang bases are numerals (e.g. *forty* ‘a thief, sharper’, *thirty* chiefly Journalistic ‘the last sheet, word, or line of copy or of a despatch’), interjections (e.g. *wow* ‘a sensational success’), pronouns (e.g. *it* ‘sexual intercourse’), or prefixes (e.g. *ex* ‘a former husband, wife or lover’; cf. *ex-wife*).

3.2.6.3. *Adjectives and adverbs*

Conversions into adjectives and adverbs are quite rare but are attested in slang. Adjectives, for instance, may be obtained from nouns (e.g. *shoe* ‘conforming to the dress, behaviour, or attitudes of students at exclusive educational establishments’, *cuckoo* ‘crazy’ ← *cuckoo* ‘a silly person’), from prepositions (*on* ‘under the influence of drink or drugs’), or, unusually, from combining forms, as in *mega* ‘huge, great, substantial’, from the classical combining form *mega-* (cf. *megastar*).

Adverbs are mostly derived from adjectives, especially when conveying an intensified sense (e.g. *dead* ‘utterly, completely’, *dirty* ‘very, exceedingly’), or they may be from prepositions (e.g. *inside* ‘in prison’; cf. *outside* above).

3.2.7. *Back-formation*

Back-formation (called “backderivation” by Marchand 1969: 391) is a rather infrequent mechanism in standard English. According to Marchand (1969), this mechanism has only diachronic relevance: it is indeed through a diachronic approach that we may derive the verb *peddle* (1532) from the noun *peddler*, *pedlar* (1377) (see Aronoff 1976: 27). Bauer (1988a: 238) rather considers back-formation as a special case of clipping, and redefines it as “the

formation of words by the deletion of actual or supposed affixes in longer words”.

In line with Bauer (1988a) and Plag (2003), I consider back-formation the process of extraction of a new (simple or compound) word from a non-existent base, which, however, is recreated analogically. For example, *editor* appears to be a derivative from a non-existent base *edit*, which is created by analogy with, e.g., (v) *confess* (← *confessor*) or (v) *baby-sit* (← *baby-sitter*).

This word-formation process is quite frequent in slang. Examples mainly include verbs back-formed from nouns (*baby-snatch* ← *baby-snatcher*), or, rarely, from adjectives (*lay back* ← *laid-back*), and nouns back-derived from adjectives (with *-y*, *-ed* or *-ish* endings), as in *dill* (← *dilly*), *pea-brain* (← *pea-brained*), *Yid* (← *Yiddish*). Remarkably, slang may also delete a word part which does not correspond to any suffix, as in (v) *hoke* (← *hokum*) (see § 3.2.7.1). A wider illustration of these patterns is given below.

3.2.7.1. Verbs

Slang verbs back-formed from nouns generally delete the *-er* agentive suffix, as in *grice* (← *gricer* ‘a railway enthusiast’), *hook* (chiefly U.S.) (← *hooker* ‘a prostitute’) ‘solicit as a prostitute’, *ring* (Austral.) (← *ringer* ‘the fastest shearer in a shed’) ‘beat (a shedful of men) at sheep-shearing’, and *swamp* (Austral.) (← *swamper* ‘one who obtains a lift’) ‘make (one’s way) by obtaining a lift from a traveller’. This type is also found with compound bases, such as *baby-snatcher* and *gold-digger*, which respectively back-form *baby-snatch* ‘enter into an amorous relationship with a much younger member of the opposite sex’ and *gold-dig* ‘extract money from’.

As anticipated, the verb *hoke* (Theatrical) ‘overplay (a part)’ is obtained from *hokum* ‘speech, action, etc., on the stage, designed to make a sentimental or melodramatic appeal to an audience’. Yet there is no *-um* suffix in English, *hokum* being a blend (← *hocus-pocus* and *bunkum*) rather than a suffixed word.

Verbs from adjectives are obtained by substituting the inflected form of the verb with its uninflected equivalent form, as in *sozzle* ‘imbibe intoxicating drink’, deleting the *-ed* suffix from *sozzled*

‘intoxicated, drunk’, or in *lay back* (← *laid-back* ‘relaxed’) ‘do nothing, relax’.

3.2.7.2. Nouns

Slang nouns are usually back-formed from adjectives with an -y suffix, which is deleted in *dill* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *dilly* ‘foolish’, prob. a blend from *daft* + *silly*) ‘a fool or simpleton’, *dinge* (← *dingy*) ‘dinginess’, *drear* (← *dreary*) ‘a dreary person’, *flake* (chiefly U.S.) (← *flaky* ‘crazy; feeble-minded’) ‘one who is liable to act in an eccentric or crazy manner’, *glitz* (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) (← *glitzy* ‘extravagant’) ‘an extravagant but superficial display’, *grot* (Brit. and Austral.) (← *grotty* ‘unpleasant’, shortened from *grotesque*) ‘an unpleasant, dirty, or ugly person’, *grunge* (chiefly N. Amer.) (← *grungy* ‘unpleasant, bad’) ‘someone or something that is repugnant or odious’, *lair/lare* (Austral.) (← *lairy/leary* ‘flashily dressed; vulgar’) ‘a flashily dressed man, one who ‘shows off’’, *shonk* (Austral.) (← *shonky* ‘unreliable, dishonest’) ‘one engaged in irregular or illegal business activities’, *sleaze* (← *sleazy* ‘dilapidated; sordid’) ‘squalor; dilapidation’, *spike* (← *spiky* ‘of a particularly ritualistic or High-Church Anglican character’) ‘an Anglican who practises Anglo-Catholic ritual and observances’.

Less common types are from adjectives ending in -ed (e.g. *pea-brain* ← *pea-brained*, ‘a stupid person; a fool’), or in -ish (e.g. *Yid* ← *Yiddish*, ‘a (usu. offensive) name for a Jew’).

Sometimes slang bases back-form more than one derivative. For instance, the slang agent-noun *joy-popper* (orig. U.S.) ‘an occasional taker of illegal drugs’, back-forms, by deletion of the -er suffix, the corresponding verb *joy-pop* and also the noun *joy-pop* ‘(an inhalation or injection of) a drug’. Similarly, the slang adjective *rorty* (orig. Londoners) ‘coarse, earthy’ back-forms, by -y deletion, the noun *rort* ‘a trick; a fraud’, and the corresponding verb (‘complain loudly; shout abuse’). However, such cases may also involve conversions (v *joy-pop* → n *joy-pop*; n *rort* → v *rort*).

Some cases still remain of uncertain attribution, although, from a diachronic and semantic point of view, they seem to be classifiable as back-formations: e.g., *crumb* (1918) (← *crummy* 1859 ‘dirty,

untidy') 'a lousy or filthy person', (v) *duff* (1869, Austral., Thieves') (← *duffer* 1851) 'steal (cattle), altering the brands'.

3.2.8. Reduplicatives

In Merlini Barbaresi's (forthcoming) classification, English reduplicatives (or echo-words) belong to four main patterns:

- Ablaut (or apophonic) reduplicatives, exhibiting vowel gradation (i.e. a systematic alternation of the stressed vowel), as in *chit-chat*, *tick-tock*;
- Rhyming reduplicatives, exhibiting rhyming constituents and apophony of the initial consonant, as in *fuzzy-wuzzy*;
- Rhyming compounds, in which both bases are meaningful, as in *funny bunny*;
- Copy (or exact) reduplicatives, in which the two constituents are identical, as in *bye-bye*.

Slang reduplicatives are classifiable according to the same criteria.

3.2.8.1. Ablaut reduplicatives

English ablaut reduplicatives may be obtained from either a left-hand (*handy-dandy*) or right-hand base (*dilly-dally*), or have no existing base at all, as in *zig-zag*, with the two vowels suggesting the two different directions. The most productive vowel alternations are /ɪ/~/æ/ and /ɪ/~/ɒ/, as in *slip-slap* and *ping pong* (Marchand 1969: 429, Bauer 1983: 213). Many English ablaut reduplicatives are slang combinations.

Slang apophonic combinations based on the first element include *ding-dong* 'a heated argument; a quarrel' and *nig-nog* (← *nigger*) 'a black or dark-skinned person', whereas the elements are unexplained in *jim-jams* 'delirium tremens', *ning-nong* (Austral. and N.Z.) 'a fool, a stupid person' (cf. *nigmenog* 'a fool, an idiot'), *tick-tack* 'applied to a system of "telegraphy"', *zig-zag* (Military, chiefly U.S.) 'drunk'.

3.2.8.2. Rhyming reduplicatives

English rhyming reduplicatives are twin forms consisting of two rhyming elements, one of which reproduces the other by changing

its initial consonant. Rhyme is mainly obtained via familiarity suffixes (e.g. *-ie/-y*, *-sie/-sy*, *-ers*, *-dy* or *-ty*), which playfully extend the bases.

The largest part of slang twin forms have the first member as base: e.g., *argy-bargy* (← *argue*) ‘disputatious argument’, *arty-farty/artsy-fartsy* (← *art*) ‘pretentiously artistic’, *easy-peasy* (orig. and chiefly Brit., Children’s) ‘extremely easy, very simple’, *jeepers-creepers* (← *Jesus*) ‘an exclamation of surprise or enthusiasm’, *killer-diller* (orig. U.S.) (← *killer*) ‘an impressive, formidable, or excellent person or thing’, *pee-wee* (Children’s) ‘an act of urination’ (cf. *wee-wee*), *rumpy-pumpy* (Brit.) (← *rump*) ‘sexual intercourse’, *tootsie-wootsie* or *tootsy-wootsy* (chiefly U.S.) (← *toots* ‘a woman’) ‘a woman, a girl; a sweetheart’, *wingding* (U.S.) ‘a fit or spasm’, ‘a wild party’. The base is an initialism in *okey-dokey* (← *O.K.*).

The base is or underlies the second member only in *nitty-gritty* (U.S.) (← *gritty*) ‘the realities or practical details of a matter’, and in *zoot suit* (orig. U.S.) ‘type of man’s suit of exaggerated style popular in the 1940s’.

Twin words formed by merely fanciful sound clusters, and therefore entirely unmotivated by linguistic signs, include *hanky-panky* (prob. related to *hocus pocus*) ‘jugglery; trickery’, *heebie-jeebie(s)* (orig. U.S.) ‘a feeling of discomfort, apprehension, or depression’, *hotsy-totsy* (coined by an Amer. cartoonist) ‘comfortable, satisfactory’, *ricky-ticky* ‘of musical rhythm: repetitive, monotonous’, *soogee-moogee* (Nautical) ‘a mixture used for cleaning paintwork and woodwork on ships’.

3.2.8.3. Rhyming compounds

Rhyming compounds are distinguished from the afore-mentioned type because, rather than having one meaningful base (the other being its rhyme germination), they are motivated by two bases. On the other hand, they are also distinguished from regular compounds because the relationship between the two bases is different from that induced by canonical rules of compounding, and no syntactic paraphrase is identifiable.

Slang reduplicative rhyming compounds are illustrated, for example, by *mellow yellow* (chiefly U.S.) (← *mellow* ‘inducing a

pleasant euphoria’) ‘banana peel dried for smoking as a narcotic’, *nitwit* (orig. U.S.) ‘a stupid person’, *poppa stoppa* (U.S., Black E.) (← *poppa* ‘a father’, variant of *papa*, after *momma*, and *stopper*) ‘a person, esp. a man’, and *razzle-dazzle* ‘bewilderment or confusion’. In such reduplicative compounds, hardly any syntactic paraphrase is possible, and no headedness can be assigned to any member of the doublet, although identifiable as a meaning constituent, i.e. a *mellow yellow* is not ‘a type of yellow’.

We can compare this set of reduplicative rhyming compounds with a large number of regular slang compounds exhibiting a rhyming pattern, but which comply with grammatical rules. Examples are endocentric *chill pill* (orig. U.S.) ‘a (notional) pill used to calm or relax a person’, *cop-shop* (← *cop* ‘policeman’ and *shop* ‘place’) ‘a police station’, *gang-bang* (orig. U.S.) (← *bang* ‘an act of sexual intercourse’) ‘an occasion for multiple intercourse’, *pop shop* (← *v pop* ‘pawn’) ‘a pawnshop’, *rag-bag* (← *bag* ‘a disparaging term for a woman’) ‘a sloppily-dressed woman, a slattern’, and exocentric *culture vulture* ‘a person who is voracious for culture’, *fender-bender* (chiefly U.S.) (← *fender* ‘vehicle’s wing or mudguard’) ‘a (usu. minor) motor accident’, *gender-bender* ‘a person (esp. a pop singer) who deliberately affects an androgynous appearance’, *jelly-belly* ‘a fat person’. In cases of endocentric compounds, we have no difficulty in identifying the syntactic head – a *chill pill* is ‘a type of pill’ – but we may have difficulty in identifying the semantic head because of its slang sense, i.e. a *rag-bag* is not ‘a type of bag’, but ‘a type of woman’.

In rhyming compounds, the relationship between the bases may also be metaphoric, as in *fat cat* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) ‘a political backer’, *sin bin* (chiefly N. Amer.) ‘an area set aside for players temporarily withdrawn from a game as a penalty’, *town clown* (U.S.) ‘a policeman working in a village or small town’, and in the endocentric *toy boy* ‘the younger partner of an older woman’.

Sometimes the bases rhyme thanks to a hypocoristic *-y* suffix, as in *arsy-versy* (← *arse* and *versus*) ‘upside-down, contrariwise’, *silly billy* (Brit.) (*Billy* is a nickname from *William*) ‘a foolish or feeble-minded person’, *Wavy Navy* (Brit.) ‘the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve’. Abbreviation is another way to make the bases rhyme, as in *fave rave* ‘a special favourite piece of music, film, etc.’, in which

favourite is shortened into *fave*, or in *repple deppe* (← *replacement depot*), in which the bases are shortened (*rep dep*), and then extended (*rep-p-le dep-p-le*). These types have fuzzy boundaries, i.e. they can be located between reduplicative and canonical compounds. Their bases are actual words, but their shortening confines them to extra-grammatical morphology.

The rhyming interjection *hell's bells* ‘an expression of anger or annoyance’, with an underlying possessive form, is a rhyming phrase rather than a compound (see § 3.2.1.4.5).

3.2.8.4. Copy reduplicatives

English copy reduplicatives commonly have a basic constituent, with the second member being its exact copy. The following slang copy reduplicatives have a recognizable base: *boo-boo* (orig. U.S.) (← *boob*) ‘a foolish mistake or blunder’, *chin chin* (← *v chin* ‘chat’) ‘insolent talk’, *dumb-dumb* or *dum-dum* (N. Amer.) (← *dumb*) ‘a foolish or stupid person’, *gee-gee* (← *gee* ‘a command to a horse to go faster’) ‘a horse’, *goo-goo* (← *googly*) ‘of the eyes or glances: amorous’, *never-never* ‘the hire-purchase system’, *no-no* (orig. U.S.) ‘something which is forbidden or unacceptable’, *yen-yen* (U.S.) (← Chinese *yān* ‘opium’) ‘opium addiction’, *yum-yum* (← *yum* ‘an exclamation of pleasurable anticipation’) ‘love-making’.

The bases are extended in *footy-footy* or *footsy-footsy* (← *foot*) ‘amorous play with the feet’, *Jacky-Jacky* (Austral.) (← the pet form of *Jack*, itself from *John*) ‘a white man’s name for an Aboriginal’, *wakey-wakey* (orig. Services’) (← *v wake*) ‘reveille’, *yackety-yackety* (← *yack* ‘incessant talk’) ‘expressing the sound of incessant chatter’.

They may also be shortened, as in *ju-ju* (← *marijuana*) ‘a marijuana cigarette’ and *rah rah* (orig. U.S.) (← *rah*, aphetic for *hurrah*) ‘a shout of support or encouragement’.

Exact reduplicatives may be coined by onomatopoeic reproduction of sounds, and therefore have no identifiable base, as in *bling-bling* ‘ostentatious jewellery’, representing the visual effect of light being reflected off precious stones or metals, *hubba-hubba/haba-haba* (U.S.) ‘used to express approval or enthusiasm’, *jig-jig* (see *jig-a-jig* below) ‘sexual intercourse’, expressing reiteration of short and jerky movements, *mau-mau* (chiefly N.

Amer.) ‘intimidate, harass; terrorize’, *pip-pip* ‘goodbye’, from the sound of a motor-horn at departure, *Woop Woop* (Austral. and N.Z.) ‘the name of an imaginary place in a remote area’, and *yo-yo* (U.S.) ‘a stupid person, a fool’, from the earlier sense ‘a toy that goes up and down’.

3.2.8.5. *Marginal cases of reduplication*

A small group of less prototypical slang reduplicative forms exhibits a linking element, as in *ding-a-ling* (N. Amer.) ‘one who is crazy or insane’, *jig-a-jig* (also *jig-a-jog*) ‘sexual intercourse’, and in coordinated *odds and sods* (orig. Services) ‘miscellaneous people or articles’.

Some binomials do not conform to the above patterns of ablaut, rhyme or copy germination, but exhibit a sort of internal phonic resemblance via assonance, consonance or rhyme. Such slang binomials with a lower degree of reduplication include, for instance, *hunky-dory/-dorey* (U.S.) ‘satisfactory, fine’, *jiggery-pokery* ‘deceitful or dishonest ‘manipulation’’, *lovely jubbly* ‘money’, *ram-sammy* (orig. dial.) ‘a family quarrel’, *razzmatazz* (orig. U.S.) ‘a type of rag-time or early jazz music’ (cf. *razzle-dazzle*), *ridgy-didge* (Austral.) (← *ridge*) ‘good, all right, genuine’.

3.2.9. *Acronyms and initialisms*

Acronyms and initialisms are words coined by taking the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase (see Marchand 1969, Makkai 1972, Cannon 1989, Algeo ed. 1991, and recent studies such as López Rúa 2002 and Merlini Barbaresi 2007). Still, they represent two different word-formation processes, since acronyms are words pronounced as full words (i.e. by applying the regular reading rules), while initialisms are pronounced as sequences of letters (i.e. by naming each individual letter of the abbreviated words) (see Bauer 1983: 237).¹³ Both can be spelt with either capital or lower-case letters, but, intuitively, only initialisms can have dots (see Plag 2003: 127), though there seems to be a tendency towards avoiding them. Thus, *Nato/NATO* /nei.təʊ/ (← *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*) is

¹³ Cf. López Rúa (2002), who proposes the term ‘initialisms’ for a general category comprising acronyms (e.g. *laser*) and alphabetisms (e.g. *BBC*).

an acronym, whereas *U.S.A.* /ju.es¹eɪ/ (← *United States of America*) is an initialism. Another comment concerns the orthographic basis of acronyms, whose pronunciation depends on their orthography rather than on the phonetic value of each initial letter in the original words, i.e. the vowels in *Nato* are diphthongs, but the initial letters of *Atlantic* and *Organization* are not (see Aronoff 1976, Bauer 1983, Merlini Barbaresi 2007).

Although acronymic formations and initialisms are rather frequent in standard English and English slang, their predictability and relative productivity are still controversial issues (see Bauer 1983: 237-238). The low predictability of such formations principally stems from the fact that sometimes they may keep more than one letter in a word (cf. Aronoff's 1976: 20 "syllable words"). Hence, we may have borderline cases between acronyms and clipped compounds (see § 3.2.11.3), as in *wop* (R.A.F.) (← *wireless operator*) 'a radio operator'. Or we may have peripheral cases of initialisms which take more than one letter from the same word, as in *P.I.* (U.S.) (← *pimp*), *Q.T./q.t.* (← *quiet*), *T.B./t.b.* (U.S.) (← *tuberculosis*) 'a confidence trickster', *TV* (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) (← *transvestite*; cf. *St. E. TV* ← *television*).

Another reason for low predictability is that the phrase from which the acronym is taken is treated with a certain amount of freedom to permit the acronym to arise. For instance, the slang acronym *Wren* (← *Women's Royal Naval Service*) is made pronounceable by inserting a vowel *e*, so that it conforms to the regular phonological patterns of English (cf. *Wrac* and *Wraf* below).

Still another reason is that the initialism may include entire particles (e.g. coordinators or prepositions), as in *U.S. of A.* (← *United States of America*), or *M. and V.* (Services') (← *meat and vegetables*).

3.2.9.1. Acronyms

Slang acronyms are quite numerous. Some examples are *dink* (orig. N. Amer.) (← *double/dual income no kids*) 'either partner of a usu. professional working couple who have no children' (cf. jocular *oink/OINK* ← *one income no kids*), *DOM* (← *dirty old man*), *fubar/FUBAR* /¹fʊ:ba:/ (U.S. /¹fʊ,bar/, orig. Military) (← *fouled/fucked up beyond all recognition*) 'ruined, messed up', *Nimby/NIMBY* (← *not*

in my back yard) ‘used as a slogan objecting to the siting of something considered unpleasant in one’s locality’, *snafu/SNAFU* /snæfʊ/ (chiefly U.S., orig. Military) (← *situation normal: all fouled/fucked up, fogged* in Marchand 1969: 453) ‘confused, chaotic’ (also n), *sug* (Brit.) (← *sell under guise*) ‘(attempt to) sell (someone) a product under the guise of conducting market research’, *SWA(L)K* (← *sealed with a (loving) kiss*), *viff* (← *vectoring in forward flight*), *Wrac/WRAC* (← *Women’s Royal Army Corps*), *Wraf* (← *Women’s Royal Air Force*).

In most such examples, the acronyms arise by taking the first letter of each word in the phrase. But this is not always the case. Compare, for instance, *AWOL* /ˈeɪ.wɒl/ (← *absent without leave*) with *Tewt/TEWT* /tju:t/ (Army) (← *tactical exercise without troops*) and *twoc/Twoc/TWOC* /twɒk/ (Brit., orig. Police) (← *taking without owner’s consent*). In the former (*AWOL*), the preposition *without* provides two letters (*w, o*) for the acronym, whereas in the latter (*Tewt, twoc*), it provides only one (*w*). This leaves the question open about the underlying phrase deriving the acronym: that is to say, *twoc* may plausibly be derived from ‘*taking without consent*’ instead of ‘*without owner’s consent*’, with no semantic shift of the derivative. As anticipated, this morphotactic opacity and the irregularity governing the formation of acronyms make them good candidates for extra-grammatical morphology.

3.2.9.2. Initialisms

Initialisms (or “alphabetisms” in Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1581; cf. López Rúa 2002) are likewise free and not rule-governed in their formation. The following are slang instances: *AC/DC*, *AC-DC* (orig. U.S.) (humorously ← *alternating current, direct current*) ‘bisexual’, *A-OK* (chiefly U.S.) (← *all (systems) OK*), *BLT* (orig. U.S.) (← *bacon, lettuce, and tomato (sandwich)*), *D.T.* (vulgar) (← *delirium tremens*), *G.I.* (← *galvanized iron, used chiefly in G.I. can*), *MCP* (← *male chauvinist pig*), *m.o.* (← *modus operandi*), *OAQ* (Military) (← *one and only*), *O.K./OK/ok* (← *oll/orl correct*) ‘all right’, ‘fashionable, modish’, *O.O.* (U.S.) (← *once-over*), *O.P./O.P.’s* (chiefly U.S.) (← *other people’s (cigarettes or alcoholic drink)*), *OPM* (U.S.) (← *other people’s money*), *P.B.I./p.b.i.* (← *Poor Bloody Infantry(man)*), *P.D.Q./p.d.q.* (← *pretty damn(ed) quick*),

PFC/Pfc (U.S., chiefly Military) (← *poor foolish/forlorn civilian*), *Q.B.I.* (R.A.F.) (← *quite bloody impossible*), *S.A./s.a.* (← *sex appeal*), *S.F.A.* (← *Sweet Fanny Adams*, also *F.A.*) ‘nothing at all’, *TCB* (U.S., Black E.) (← *take care of business*), *W.P.B./w.p.b.* (← *waste-paper basket*).

As anticipated, there are several irregularities in the production of such formations. Some of these irregularities, however, appear to be particularly remarkable. First, some initialisms are not obtained from phrases but rather from complex words (e.g. *B.S.* ← *bullshit*, *DL* ← *down-low*, *O.D.* ← *overdose*). Still, they keep more than one letter of the composite, and precisely the initial letters of each underlying base. Second, they tend to keep the initial letters of function words, such as *over* and *the* in *over the top* (→ *OTT*), though these are less salient than lexical words and less preferred bases within NM. Third, they do so arbitrarily: for instance, in *S.O.B./s.o.b.* (← *son of a bitch*; cf. *sob* ‘a pound’) the initial letter of the preposition *of* is kept, but the determiner *a* is not.

3.2.10. Blending

Blending is a common derivational process in English. Blends, also called contaminations or “*portmanteau* words” (after Carroll), are formed by merging parts of words into one word, as in *smog*, from *smoke* and *fog*. Since they are made up of curtailed members, whose original bases are often unrecognizable (Bauer 1983, 1988a), they are less natural than composites (having full bases) on the basis of the parameter of morphotactic transparency. Hence, they are classified among the language “oddities” by Aronoff (1976: 20), and generally excluded from canonical morphological grammar.

Blends, like acronyms and initialisms, are not rule-governed, since they cannot be assigned a regular specific pattern and their final segmental make-up is unpredictable (Dressler 2000). For instance, we do not know exactly which part of a word is retained, nor do we know where the word is curtailed, especially when there is an overlap between the first and the second member of the blend, as in *slanguage* (← *slang* and *language*).

Yet blending exhibits some preferences. Blends are preferentially formed by taking the beginning (head) of a word and the end (tail) of

another one (as in *smog* above).¹⁴ But also less typical blends exist, which are formed by combining two heads (as in *modem* ← *modulator* + *demodulator*), or a word with a tail (as in *guesstimate* ← *guess* + *estimate*, *fanzone* ← *fan* + *magazine*) (cf. Thornton's 1993: 145-148 "partial blends"). In English slang, we distinguish prototypical from partial blends.

3.2.10.1. Prototypical blends

Some slang blends prototypically consist of the head of one word and the tail of another one. They are often adjectives formed from two standard or colloquial adjectives having a similar or related meaning, as in *dilly* (chiefly Austral.) (← *daft* + *silly*) 'foolish', *fantabulous* (← *fantastic* + *fabulous*) 'of almost incredible excellence', *ginormous* (← *gigantic* + *enormous*), *grungy* (chiefly N. Amer.) (← *grubby* + *dingy*), *mingy* (← *mean/mangy* + *stingy*) 'mean, stingy; disappointingly small' (see "pleonastic blends" in Cacchiani 2007: 109-111).

This pattern is also found in some slang nouns, as in *glob* (← *gob* + *blob*) 'a mass or lump of some liquid or semi-liquid substance' and *revusical* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *revue* + *musical*) 'a theatrical entertainment that combines elements of the revue and musical'.

3.2.10.2. Partial and less prototypical blends

Partial blends behave as typical blends, though one of the two bases remains intact. The first base is a word followed by a word head in *kidvid* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *kid* + *video*) 'a television programme or video made for children' (cf. rhyming compounds).

Examples of a word followed by a tail are to be found in *gaydar* (← *gay* + *radar*) 'an ability, attributed esp. to homosexual people, to identify a (fellow) homosexual person', *sexational* (orig. U.S.) (← *sex* + *sensational*), *sexcapade* (← *sex* + *escapade*), *squadrol*

¹⁴ Hence the German name "*Kopf-Schwanz-Wort*" (lit. 'head-tail-word', Dressler *et al.* 1987: 126, see also Thornton 1993). Dressler (in Dressler *et al.* 1987: 117) explains that "the beginning and the end of a word are more salient than what comes in between. Accordingly a general abbreviation device is to take the head of the first member of a compound/juxtaposition/phrase and the tail of the last member but never the other way round. E.g. *motor hotel* has become *motel*, but not **torhot*".

(U.S.) (← *squad* + *patrol*) ‘a small police van’, and in *shagadelic* (← *shag* + *psychedelic*) ‘sexy, esp. in a psychedelic or ‘retro’ way’, with a variant vowel *a* instead of *e*, in any case, both pronounced as a schwa, at least in Amer. E. This latter variation is commonly found across the few formations of the same type (e.g. *funkadelic*).¹⁵

The second base is a word preceded by a head in *doohickey* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *doodad* + *hickey*, also *doojigger*) ‘any small object, esp. mechanical’, *gazunder* (Brit., humorous) (← *gazump* + *under*) ‘of a buyer: lower the amount of an offer made to (the seller) for a property’, *tab show* (U.S.) (← *tabloid show*) ‘a short version of a musical’.

The word of a partial blend is inserted within another word in the humorous formation *ambisextrous* ‘bisexual’, from *sex* and *ambidextrous*, favoured by the similarity between *dex* and *sex*.

Many slang blends simply merge where the two words overlap, as in *nerk* (Brit., deprec.) (← *nerd* + *berk/jerk*) ‘a foolish or objectionable person’, *scuzz* (perh. ← *scum* + *fuzz*, but also considered a corrupted abbrev. of *disgusting*) ‘contemptible or despicable person’, *sexpert* (orig. U.S.) (← *sex* + *expert*) ‘an expert on sexual matters’, *squiz* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *squint* + *quiz*) ‘a look or glance’, *swingle* (N. Amer.) (← *swinging* + *single*) ‘a ‘swinging’ single or unaccompanied person’, *vidiot* (orig. and chiefly U.S., derog.) (← *video* + *idiot*) ‘a habitual viewer of television or player of video games’, *yatter* (orig. Sc. dialect) (← *yammer* + *chatter*) ‘talk idly and incessantly’. Sometimes the overlap is only in pronunciation, but not in orthography, as in *Sloane Ranger* (← *Sloan* (Square) + *Lone Ranger*) ‘an upper class conventional young woman in London’, and *Trustafarian* (chiefly Brit.) (← *trust* + *Rastafarian*) ‘a wealthy young (white) person who adopts aspects of the appearance and culture of Rastafarians’.

¹⁵ According to the OED, *-adelic/-edelic* (or *-delic* after a vowel or *y*) (← *psychedelic*) has become an English combining form obtaining adjectives with the meaning ‘embodying the quality denoted or implied (by the first element) in a psychedelic way’. Yet its productivity is debatable: first, it is attested in a small number of formations (e.g. *pimpadelic*, *scallydelic*, etc.) which are mere occasionalisms, and, second, it does not reinterpret *psychedelic* (secretion), but simply abbreviates it, including its meaning in the new word (see Mattiello 2007b).

Sometimes slang blends have an acronym or an initialism as one of the two members, thus originating mixed formations, as in *Amerikkka* (orig. U.S.) (← *G. Amerika* ‘America’ + the initial letters of *Ku Klux Klan*), *buppie* (orig. U.S.) (← *black* + *yuppie*), *guppie* (← *gay* + *yuppie*) ‘a homosexual yuppie’, and *guppie* (← *green* + *yuppie*) ‘a yuppie concerned about the environment’.

3.2.11. Clipping

Clipping is a process which abbreviates a word to one of its parts. The most common pattern is back-clipping, in which the beginning of a base lexeme is retained (e.g. *lab* ← *laboratory*). Other possible patterns include fore-clipping, in which the final part of the word is retained (e.g. *phone* ← *telephone*), clippings in which the middle of the word is retained (e.g. *flu* ← *influenza*), and clipped compounds (e.g. *cablegram* ← *cable telegram*), which differ from partial blends because their bases have a composite rather than independent meaning (see § 3.2.11.3).

As many present-day English colloquialisms show, clipping is a frequent process in familiar language (e.g. *auto* ← *automobile*, *bus* ← *omnibus*, *prof* ← *professor*).

It is also common in slang.¹⁶ In particular, it develops slang terms of special private groups, in which an allusion is sufficient to indicate the whole. For instance, American college students use *frat* instead of *fraternity*, Oxford or Cambridge University students call ‘an officer’ *prog*, abbreviated from *proggins* or earlier *proctor*, *pecs* is used among bodybuilders to refer to *pectoral muscles*, *post* is a medicine slang term used in the place of *post-mortem*, *prop* is used by criminals to refer to *property* (as in *prop game*, *man*, etc.), *ump* stands for *umpire* in baseball slang, *scorp* and *scram* are military slang terms for *scorpion* ‘a civil inhabitant of Gibraltar’ and *scramble* ‘depart quickly’.

Semantically, clippings do not add any new information to the original lexemes, but, pragmatically, they express a particular attitude of the speaker and lower the stylistic level of discourse to

¹⁶ Partridge (1933, in the OED), for instance, observes that “slang delights to curtail (clip, abbreviate, shorten) words” (see Jespersen 1942, Marchand 1969, Bauer 1983, 1988a for related positions).

less formal speech. This allows the standard word *criminal* and the slang word *crim* to co-exist and select different registers.

From the morphological point of view, clippings are however unpredictable, in the sense that, analysing their form, we cannot determine how much of the base word has been deleted (cf. *spec* ← *specialist* vs. *specification*). Yet we can approximately determine how much of it has been retained. Indeed, especially in back-clippings (truncations), there seems to be a certain tendency to shorten words at the end of the first (less frequently, second) syllable, which normally carries stress. Hence, most clippings are monosyllabic or disyllabic (e.g. *schiz* or *schizo* ← *schizophrenic*) (more in Plag 2003: 116-121).

On the other hand, length and stress are not helpful criteria to explain the formation of fore-clippings, which are not necessarily obtained by preserving the stressed syllable within a word, as *gator* /'gɛtə/ from *alligator* /'ælɪgɪtə/ attests.

3.2.11.1. Back-clipping

Slang back-clippings are numerous. They are primarily shortenings of nouns and adjectives: e.g., *caff* (← *café*), *coke* (orig. U.S.) (← *cocaine*), *con* (Criminals') (← *convict/conviction*, but also abbrev. of *confidant*, *conformist*, *contract*, *conundrum*), *cred* (← *credit/credibility*), *crim* (U.S. and Austral.) (← *criminal*), *ex-con* (← *ex-convict*), *fave* (orig. U.S.) (← *favourite*), *Fed* (← *federalist*) 'a federal official, esp. an FBI agent', *fla(d)ge* (← *flagellation*), *flip* (← *flippant*), *gen* (orig. Services') (← perh. abbrev. of *general* in the official phrase *for the general information of all ranks*) 'information, facts', *hyper* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *hyperactive*), *hypo* (← *hypodermic*) 'a hypodermic needle or injection', *klepto* (← *kleptomaniac*), *lat* (← *latrine*), *Merc* (← *Mercedes*, now *Mercedes-Benz*), *Mex* (← *Mexican*), *mo* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *moustache*), *narc/narco* (U.S.) (← *narcotic*), *Nip* (orig. Military, offens.) (← *Nipponese*) 'a Japanese', *nitro* (← *nitroglycerine*), *nuc/nuke* (← *nuclear*), *obs* (chiefly Military) (← *observation*; cf. *obbo* under suffix *-o*, § 3.2.3.20), *Paki* (orig. and chiefly Brit.) (← *Pakistani*), *ped* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *pedestrian*), *perp* (U.S.) (← *perpetrator*), *post* (← *postgraduate*), *pug* (← *pugilist*), *rehab* (← *rehabilitation*), *scally* (chiefly Lancashire and Liverpool) (←

scallywag ‘a roguish, self-assured male (esp. from Liverpool)’, *seg* (chiefly U.S.) (← *segregation*), *skell* (U.S.) (← *skeleton*) ‘in New York, a homeless person or derelict’, *sod* (coarse) (← *sodomite*), *spec* (orig. U.S.) (← *speculation/spectacle*), *stipe/stip* (← *stipendiary*), *terr* (Rhodesian) (← *terrorist*), *tick* (← *ticket*), *toup* (← *toupee*), *tranq/trank* (← *tranquillizer*), *trog* (← *troglodyte*) ‘a lout, an obnoxious person’, *vag* (Austral. and N. Amer.) (← *vagrancy/vagrant*), *vent* (Theatrical) (← *ventriloquist*), *vet* (← *veterinarian*) ‘a doctor of medicine’.

A few shortenings are verbs (e.g. *frat* ← *fraternize*, *prep* ← *prepare*, *psych* ← *psychoanalyse*, *veg* ← *vegetate* ‘pass the time in mindless or vacuous inactivity, esp. by watching television’), or interjections (*lor* ← *lord*).

Some back-clippings, however, stand for words belonging to different syntactic classes, with a consequent ambiguity or vagueness of the derivatives. For instance, *cert* stands for the noun *certainty*, but also for the adjective *certain*, *dif/diff* for *difference* or *different*, *fash* for *fashion* or *fashionable*, *glam* for *glamour*, *glamorous* and *glamorize*, *homo* for *homosexual* (n and adj), *(il)legit* for *(il)legitimate* (n and adj), *perv/perve* for *perversion*, *perv* or *perverted*, *psycho* for *psychopath* or *psychopathic*, *recon* (U.S., Military) for *reconnaissance* or *reconnoitre*, and *sus/suss* for *suspicion* or *suspicious*, or for *suspect* (adj and v).

Some clippings may be exclusive shortenings of slang rather than standard words, as in *boob* (orig. U.S.) (← *booby*) ‘a dull, heavy, stupid fellow’, ‘a lock-up or cell’, *dig* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *digger*) ‘an Australian or New Zealander’, *fag* (U.S.) (← *faggot*) ‘a (male) homosexual’, *flim* (← *flimsy*) ‘a bank-note’, *griff* (← *griffin*) ‘news; reliable information’, *hood* (orig. U.S.) (← *hoodlum*) ‘a youthful street rowdy’, *hum* (← *humbug*) ‘an imposition, a hoax’, *mack* (← *mackerel*) ‘a procurer or procuress; a pimp’, *mech* (N. Amer. and Austral.) (← *mechanic*) ‘a person who cheats at gambling games, spec. cards’, *mike* (← *microgram*) ‘a microgram of a drug, esp. LSD’ (cf. colloq. *mike* ← *microphone*), *mob* (← *mobile*) ‘the mob; the common people’, *mog* (Brit.) (← *moggie/-y*) ‘a cat’, *mong* (Austral.) (← *mongrel*) ‘a person of low or indeterminate status’, *mush* (← *mushroom*) ‘an umbrella, from the shape’, *nig* (derog. and offens.) (← *nigger*) ‘a dark-skinned person’,

Pape (Sc. and Ir., derog.) (← *papist*) ‘a Roman Catholic’, *peb* (Austral., now rare) (← *pebble*) ‘a tough or indomitable person or animal’, *pleb* (← *plebeian*) ‘a new cadet at a military or naval academy’, *Pom/pom* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *Pommy*) ‘an immigrant to Australia or New Zealand from Britain’, *pro* (← *professional*) ‘a prostitute’, *pud* (← coarse *pudding*) ‘the penis’, *rad* (N. Amer., orig. Surfers’) (← *radical*) ‘remarkable; amazing’, *razz* (orig. U.S.) (← *razzberry*, altered from *raspberry*) ‘a refusal; a reprimand’, *roz* (← *rozzter*) ‘a policeman or detective’, *sawn* (Austral.) (← *sawney*) ‘a simpleton, fool’, *scoot* (← *scooter*) ‘a fast vehicle, esp. a train or car’, *simp* (U.S.) (← *simpleton*) ‘a fool’, *spaz/spas* (with voiced /z/) (← *spastic*) ‘one who is uncoordinated or incompetent’, *swizz* (chiefly Schoolchildren’s) (← *swizzle*) ‘a disappointment’, *tab* (← *tablet*) ‘a tablet or pill, spec. one containing an illicit drug’, *tab* (← *tabby*) ‘an (attractive) young woman or girl’.

Many slang back-clippings are now considered part of colloquial language, due to their frequency in everyday use or among members of the same group. They include, e.g., *ag* (chiefly N. Amer.) (← *agricultural*), *arb* (← *arbitrageur*), *bi* (← *bisexual*, also in *bi-guy*), *brill* (← *brilliant*), *cat* (← *catalytic*) ‘a catalytic converter’, *dis* (← *disconnected*) ‘broken, not working’, *divi*. (← *dividend*), *ex* (← *expense*, always in pl., as *exes*), *fab* (← *fabulous*), *hash* (← *hashish*), *info* (← *information*), *Jag* (← *Jaguar*, name of a motor car), *jock* (← *jockey*), *jolly* (← *jollification*; cf. *jollo* under suffix *-o*, § 3.2.3.20), *ma* (← *mama*), *max* (chiefly U.S.) (← *maximum*), *merc* (← *mercenary*) ‘a soldier paid to serve in a foreign army’, *meth* (← *methamphetamine/Methedrine*), *Metho* (Austral.) (← *Methodist*), *mo* (← *moment*), *obit* (orig. Journalistic) (← *obituary*), *oke* (orig. U.S.) (← *okey*), *op* (← *operative/operator*) ‘a detective; esp. a private investigator’, *pen* (N. Amer.) (← *penitentiary*), *pep* (orig. U.S.) (← *pepper*) ‘energy and high spirits; liveliness’, *phenom* (← *phenomenon*), *phy* (chiefly Brit.) (← *Physeptone*) ‘the drug methadone’, *pi* (dated) (← *pious*), *plute* (chiefly U.S.) (← *plutocrat*), *pol* (N. Amer.) (← *politician*), *preg* (orig. U.S.) (← *pregnant*), *prog* (← *progressive/programme*), *pros/pross* (← *prostitute*), *Prot* (chiefly Ir.) (← *Protestant*), *rec* (← *recreation*), *seg* (U.S.) (← *segregationist*), *sov* (← *sovereign*), *spec* (← *speculative*), *specs* (← *spectacles*), *speedo* (← *speedometer*),

stew (U.S.) (← *stewardess*), *stupe* (← *stupid*), *teach* (← *teacher*), *thou* (← *thousand*), *trat/tratt* (← *trattoria*), *Uni/Univ* (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) (← *University*), *ute* (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) (← *utility*) ‘a utility vehicle’, *vis* (orig. Military) (← *visibility*), *Yank* (← *Yankee*).

A very unusual type of slang back-clipping preserves only the first letter of the base word, with a certain similarity with the word-formation pattern of acronyms and initialisms. This type is illustrated by *b/B* (← *bugger/bastard*), *D.* (← *detective*),¹⁷ *E* (← *ecstasy*), *G.* (U.S.) (← *grand*) ‘a thousand dollars’, *H.* (← *heroin*), *K* (← *ketamine*; cf. *Special K*, a punning after a proprietary name for a breakfast cereal), and, in combination with a full word, by *big C* (← *cancer*) and *big E* (Brit.) ‘a personal rejection or rebuff’, abbreviated from *elbow*.

Slang back-clippings may shorten initialisms to their first abbreviated letter, as in *W* obtained from *W.C.* (← *water-closet*) and *Y* (chiefly U.S.), from the well-known initialism *YMCA* (← *Young Men’s Christian Association*). They may also shorten reduplicative formations, as in *fud* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *rhym. reduplicative fuddy-duddy*) ‘an old-fashioned person’, and *heebies* (orig. U.S.) (← *heebie-jeebies*) ‘a state of nervous depression or anxiety’.

3.2.11.2. Fore-clipping and other marginal cases of clipping

Fore-clippings are far less numerous in slang. Examples are mostly nouns: e.g., *gator* (orig. U.S.) (← *alligator*), *loid* (Criminals’) (← *celluloid*), *Nam* (← *Vietnam*), *nana* (← *banana*) ‘a foolish or silly person’, *Scouse* (← *lobscouse*) ‘a native or inhabitant of Liverpool’, *tache/tash* (← *moustache*), *Tab* (University) (← *Cantab*) ‘a member of the University of Cambridge’, *tato* (← *potato*), *Ville* (← *Pentonville*, a Prison in London), *za* (U.S.) (← *pizza*). But there are also verbs (e.g. *niff* chiefly Brit. ← *sniff*).

The middle of the word is retained in slang *script* (orig. U.S.) (← *prescription*, esp. one for narcotic drugs) and *tec* (← *detective*).

A small group of (essentially back-)clippings not only abbreviate the original word but also alter its spelling. Yet they are

¹⁷ Cf. the drug name *D* (← *Death*) in *A Scanner Darkly* (2006) and *D* (← *LSD*) in Dalzell & Victor (eds) (2007a).

not proper altered forms (see alteration in § 3.2.14.5), since they do not vary in pronunciation. They include *chizz* /tʃɪz/ (← *chisel* /ˈtʃɪzəl/), *Jeez/Jese/Jez* or *Geez/Geeze* /dʒi:z/ (← *Jesus* /ˈdʒi:zəs/), *jelly* /ˈdʒɛli/ (← *gelignite* /ˈdʒɛlɪɡnɪt/), *mensh/mench* /menʃ/ (← *mention* /ˈmenʃən/), *natch* /nætʃ/ (U.S.) (← *natural* /ˈnætʃrəl/), *noov/noove* /nu:v/ (Brit.) (← F. *nouveau riche* /nu:vəuˈri:ʃ/; cf. clipped compounds in § 3.2.11.3 below), *nuff* /nʌf/ (orig. U.S.) (← *enough* /ɪˈnʌf/), *ork* /ɔ:k/ (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *orchestra* /ˈɔ:kɪstrə/), *pash* /pæʃ/ (← *passion* /ˈpæʃən/), *phiz* /fɪz/ (now arch.) (← *physiognomy* /fɪzɪˈɒnəmi/), *profesh* /prəˈfeʃ/ (← *profession* /prəˈfeʃən/), *sesh* /seʃ/ (orig. Services’) (← *session* /ˈseʃən/), *sheen* /ʃi:n/ (U.S.) (← *machine* /məˈʃi:n/ ‘a car’, and *siff* /sɪf/ (← *syphilis* /ˈsɪfɪlɪs/; cf. *siph*).

3.2.11.3. Clipped compounds

Slang clipped compounds (called “clipping-compounds” by Marchand 1969: 445) reduce a compound to one of its parts. They are kept separate from the usual patterns of clippings because, like blends, they are made up of two or more bases. Nevertheless, at the same time they differ from blends because, while in blends the bases have an autonomous sense, in clipped compounds they were originally compound members, with a composite meaning. Hence, *motel* (← *motor* + *hotel*) is a blend, while *pulmotor* (← *pulmonary motor*) is a clipped compound. Furthermore, clipped compounds differ from prototypical blends (but not from partial blends) because one of their bases may remain intact.

Slang clipped compounds with the first element intact are *after* (← *afternoon*), *common* (← *common sense*), *fag* (← *fag-end*) ‘the end of a cigarette’, *hard* (← *hard labour*), *jock* (N. Amer.) (← *jock-strap*) ‘an athletic man’, *moon* (U.S.) (← *moonshine*) ‘illicitly distilled liquor’, *mother* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *coarse motherfucker*) ‘an obnoxious or contemptible person’, *natural* (← *natural life*), *pay* (Navy) (← *paymaster*) ‘an official responsible for dispensing pay, settling debts, etc.’, *skin* (U.S.) (← *skinflint*) ‘one who would skin a flint to save or gain something’, or (Brit.) (←

skinhead ‘a youth (often one of a gang)’, and *speak* (← *speakeasy*) ‘a shop or bar where alcoholic liquor is sold illegally’.

The previous pattern with part of the second element retained is found in *street cred* (← *street credibility*) ‘familiarity with contemporary trends, fashions, social issues, etc.’, and *Wingco* (R.A.F.) (← *Wing Commander*).

The compound may be reduced to a part of the first element, as in *artic* (← *articulated lorry*), *choco* (Austral.) (← *chocolate soldier*) ‘a militiaman or conscripted soldier’, *lat* (orig. Bodybuilding) (← *latissimus dorsi*), *mutt* (← *mutton-head*) ‘an incompetent, a fool’, *oppo* (orig. Services) (← *opposite number*) ‘a partner, a counterpart’, *peck* (U.S., Black E.) (← *peckerwood*) ‘a white person regarded as poor’, *sub* (← *subsistence money*) ‘an advance of money’, *torp* (← *torpedo juice*) ‘intoxicating liquor extracted from torpedo fuel’. Some such abbreviated compounds also involve conversion: adj → n, as in *feeb* (U.S.) (← *feeble-minded*) ‘a feeble-minded person’, or n → v, as in *frag* (U.S., Military) (← *fragmentation grenade*) ‘throw a fragmentation grenade at one’s superior officer’.

Clipped compounds with the second element intact are less numerous, as the following examples show: *bin* (← *loony bin*) ‘a mental hospital’, *Groper* (Austral.) (← *sand groper*) ‘a jocular appellation for a native West Australian’, *jug* (orig. U.S.) (← *stone-jug*) ‘a prison, jail’, *Kraut* (← *Sauerkraut*) ‘a German’, *pike* (chiefly N. Amer.) (← *turnpike*) ‘a road on which a toll is collected at a toll gate’, *twenty* (orig. and chiefly U.S., Citizens’ Band Radio) (← *10-20*) ‘one’s location or position’ (cf. *ten-four/10-4* ‘message received’). With a shortened second element we have only *shrink* (orig. U.S.) (← *head-shrinker*) ‘a psychiatrist’.

The pattern with two shortened elements is particularly frequent when the beginning of both elements is retained, as in *des res* (← *desirable residence*), *Mespot* (chiefly Military, now arch.) (← *Mesopotamia*), *misper* (Brit., chiefly Police) (← *missing person*), *rigmo* (← *rigor mortis*), *slomo* (Cinematography, chiefly U.S.) (← *slow motion*), *spag bol* (← *spaghetti Bolognese*), *sysop* (orig. U.S., Computing) (← *system operator*; cf. acronymic *wop* § 3.2.9).

Less recurrent patterns are found in *B-girl* (U.S.) (← *bar-girl*), *greycing*, from the three-member compound *greyhound racing*, and *shouse* (Austral.) ‘a privy’, syncopated form of *shit-house*.

3.2.12. Elliptic rhyming slang

Wilson: I’m gonna ’ave a **butcher’s** round the house.

Ed Roel: Who you gonna butcher?

Wilson: **Butcher’s hook**... look.

(*The Limey* 1999, emphasis added)

Many rhyming slang formations are no longer used in their full form, but rather as elliptic forms which often drop the final element (see Kermas 2005: 134-135). For instance, in everyday conversation, the full form *butcher’s hook*, rhyming slang for ‘look’, is often reduced to its elliptic counterpart *butcher’s*, as in the above quote. The main consequence of such an ellipsis is loss of rhyme, and therefore of iconicity between onset (*hook*) and outset (the rhyming referent ‘look’). Another consequence of elliptic forms is ambiguity, since the same form may correspond to more than one referent, as in *apples*, which is obtained both from *apple(s) and pears* (rhym. slang for ‘stairs’) and, in Australian, from *apples and rice/spice* (for ‘nice’). Therefore, only after contextualizing the elliptic form may we distinguish the noun (as in *up the apples* ‘the stairs’) from the adjective (as in *she’s apples* ‘nice’).

Since back-clipping is more widespread than the other clipping patterns, elliptic forms which drop the rhyming element are the most common, as the following examples demonstrate: *barnet* (← *Barnet fair* rhym. slang for ‘hair’) ‘the head’, *boat* (← *boat-race*) ‘face’, *brass* (← *brass nail* for ‘tail’) ‘a prostitute’, *Bristols* (← *Bristol Cities* for ‘titties’) ‘the breasts’, *China* (← *china plate*) ‘mate’, *flowery* (← *flowery dell*) ‘cell’, *grumble* (← *grumble and grunt* for ‘cunt’) ‘women regarded as objects of sexual attraction’, *Hampsteads* (← *Hampstead Heath*) ‘teeth’, *iron* (← *iron hoof* for ‘poof’) ‘a homosexual’, *Khyber* (← *Khyber Pass*) ‘arse’, *lakes* (← *Lakes of Killarney* for ‘barmy’) ‘mad, crazy’, *mince* (← *mince-pie*, usu. in pl.) ‘eye’, *Moreton Bay* (chiefly Austral.) (← *Moreton Bay fig* for ‘fizgig’) ‘an informer’, *oscar* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *Oscar Asche*, the Australian actor) ‘cash’, *Pat* (chiefly Austral.) (← *Pat*

Malone ‘own’, *plates* (← *plates of meat*) ‘feet’ (cf. the full form *plate of meat* for ‘a street’), *potato* (Austral.) (← *potato peeler* for ‘sheila’) ‘a girl or woman’, *rabbit* (← *rabbit-and-pork*) ‘talk’ (n and v), *Richard* (← *Richard the Third* for ‘bird’) ‘a girl or woman’, *Sweeney* (← *Sweeney Todd* for ‘Flying Squad’) ‘a member of the Flying Squad’, *tod* (← *Tod Sloan*) ‘own’ (in *on one’s tod* ‘alone’), *turtle* (← *turtle-dove*) ‘a glove’, *twist* (chiefly U.S., often derog.) (← *twist-and-twirl*) ‘a girl’.

Ambiguous elliptic forms belonging to the above pattern include *Jack* (← *Jack Jones* for ‘alone’, or *Jack’s alive* for ‘five’) and *Jimmy* (← *Jimmy O’Goblin* for ‘sovereign’, or *Jimmy Riddle* for ‘piddle’), whereas the following forms have two different senses which developed from the same phrase: *loaf* (← *loaf of bread* for ‘dead’ or ‘head’), *raspberry* (← *raspberry tart* for ‘the heart’ or ‘a fart’), *Rory* (← *Rory O’More* for ‘the floor’ or ‘a door’).

When the full form is a single word, it may be reduced to its initial part, as in *amster* (or *ampster* with intrusive *p*) (Austral.) (← *Amsterdam* for ‘ram’) ‘a trickster’s accomplice’, *nav* (← *navigator* for ‘tater’) ‘a potato’, *tiddly* (← *tiddlywink*) ‘a drink’, *tom* (← *tomfoolery*) ‘jewellery’.

The elliptic form may undergo a slight change in spelling compared with the full phrase, as in *chiv(v)y* (← *Chevy Chase*) ‘the face’. It may also be contracted, as in *titfa/titfer/titfor* (← *tit for tat*) ‘a hat’, esp. with a possessive case becoming a sort of *-s* suffix (*cobblers* ← *cobbler’s awls* for ‘balls’, *elephants* ← *elephant’s trunk* for ‘drunk’), or it may exhibit a familiarizing suffix, as in *porky* (← *pork pie*) ‘a lie’, *rammies* (Austral. and S. Afr.) (← *round-the-houses*) ‘trousers’, *rubbedy/rubberdy/rubbidy* (Austral.) (← *rub-a-dub*) ‘pub’.

The second member is rarely kept in abbreviated rhyming slang. An example would be *kelly* (← *Derby/Darby Kelly*) ‘belly’.

3.2.13. Reversed forms

Reversed forms in slang may appear similar to cases of semordnilap. This latter is a term coined in recent years (from a reverse spelling of *palindromes*) to refer to words and phrases which make sense when read backwards: e.g., the term *live* is a semordnilap of *evil*. However, unlike semordnilap, which has a different meaning from

when it is read forwards, in slang the word obtained is created on purpose, and is only a different connoted variant of the original word. Hence, *yob* was initially used in the sense of ‘a boy, a youth’, but, in modern use, it has also taken on the derogatory sense of ‘a lout, a hooligan’.

Slang reversed forms are typical of back-slang, i.e. “a kind of slang in which every word is pronounced backwards; as *ynnep* for *penny*” (OED; cf. French *verlan* in Méla 1991). Back-slang words primarily belong to the language of criminals and are especially used for reasons of secrecy: e.g. *neves* /^lnevis/ for *seven* ‘a prison sentence of seven years’, and *rouf* /rəuf/ for *four* ‘four shillings or pounds; a four-year prison sentence’.

3.2.14. Variation

By ‘variation’ I mean the slang formation mechanism which modifies a word base by varying (part of) its spelling. It is an umbrella term for different processes, viz. analogy (e.g. *Bananaland* ← *Queensland*), malapropism (e.g. *basket* ← *bastard*), metathesis (e.g. *prad* ← Dutch *paard*), letter pronunciation (e.g. *gee* ← the initial letter of *guy*), alteration (e.g. *Canuck* ← *Canada*), extension (e.g. *nope* ← *no*), and, sometimes, their combination (e.g. *jeepers*, altered and extended from *Jesus*). The difference between malapropism and alteration is that the former relies on existing words (*basket* is an autonomous word of English), whereas the latter does not (*Canuck* does not correspond to any standard English word).

Variation covers a range of processes that are not merely morphological, but also pertain to the phonological system of English (hence “marginal” in morphology, Dressler 2000). For instance, letter pronunciation is based on the pronunciation of word letters, which are reproduced at the written level, as in *Beeb* (← *B.B.C.*). Alteration likewise reproduces dialect variants of words (as in *loverly*, from a Cockney pronunciation of *lovely*), or contractions which are made in spoken English (as in *wotcher* ← *what cheer?*), or otherwise reinterprets borrowings from foreign languages (as in *vamoose* ← Sp. *Vamos*). But let us now explore each process.

3.2.14.1. Analogical formation

Analogical formation refers to the creation of a new word using constructive processes which resemble existing ones. Such formations are often humorous, as in *Bananaland* (Austral.) (after and to designate *Queensland*), *glitterati* (orig. U.S.) (← *glitter*, after *literati*) ‘the celebrities or ‘glittering’ stars of fashionable society’, *humongous* (orig. U.S.) (after *hugeous* and *monstrous*) ‘extremely large, huge’, *jigaboo* (U.S., coarse) (← *jig*, after *bugaboo*) ‘a Black person’, *Jixi* (dated) (← *Jix*, nickname of *Joyson-Hicks*, after *taxi*) ‘a two-seated taxi-cab licensed in 1926’, *neatnik* (chiefly N. Amer.) (after *beatnik*) ‘a person who is (excessively) neat in personal habits’, *orthopod* (Medicine) (← *orthopaedic*, after taxonomic words in *-pod* ‘foot’, such as *epipod*) ‘an orthopaedic surgeon’, *prex* (U.S., now rare) (← *president* with subsequent alteration after *rex* ‘a king’), *Randlord* (after *landlord*) ‘the owner or manager of a gold-mine on the Rand in South Africa’, *squillionaire/zillionaire* ‘a multimillionaire’, from two altered bases (*squillion/zillion*), after *millionaire* (see § 3.2.14.5).

3.2.14.2. Malapropism

Malapropism is the ludicrous and often deliberate misuse of words, esp. in mistaking a word for another resembling it (cf. folk etymology in Aronoff & Fudeman 2005). Some English slang examples are *basket* (euphem.) (← *bastard*), *dick* (← *detective*), *Jumble* (← *John Bull*) ‘a Black man’s nickname for a white man’, *me-and-you*, a facetious adaptation of colloquial pronunciation /mi:nju:/ of *menu*, *pencil* (← *penis*), and jocular *shampoo* (← *champagne*), *trick cyclist* (← *psychiatrist*). The word to be adapted may be one of foreign origin, as in *matlow/matlo* (Nautical) (← F. *matelot*) ‘a sailor’ and *olive oil* (← F. *au revoir*) ‘good-bye’.

The new word is a fictitious personal name or a name of place in *Adam* (orig. U.S.) (← *MDMA*), (*sweet*) *Fanny Adams* (← (*sweet*) *fuck all*) ‘nothing at all’, *Gordon Bennett* (← *Gor blimey*), *jake* (orig. U.S.) (← *Jamaica ginger*) ‘an alcoholic beverage made from Jamaica ginger’, *Jerry* (orig. Military) (← *German*), *Maggie Ann* (Brit., Army) (← *margarine*), *Mary Ann/J/Jane* or *Mary Warner* (← *marijuana*) ‘marijuana; a marijuana cigarette’, *Pompey* (← *Portsmouth*) ‘Portsmouth (Football Club)’, *Sam Hill* (N. Amer.) (←

Hell), *toc emma* (Military) (← *T.M.*, an initialism from trench mortar), *Victor Charlie* (U.S., Services') (← *Viet Cong*) 'a Vietcong soldier'. Such formations usually have a euphemistic character (e.g. *Fanny Adams*, *Gordon Bennett*), or they are used for cryptic reasons (e.g. *Adam*, *Mary Ann* and other drug names).

3.2.14.3. Metathesis

Metathesis is the process that transposes sounds or letters in a word, or, occasionally, whole words or syllables. Some examples are *prad* (now chiefly Austral.) (← Dutch *paard*) 'a horse', *rass* (Jamaican, coarse) (← *arse*), and *yok* (derog.) (← Yiddish *goy*, with unvoicing of the final consonant) 'a pejorative Jewish term for a non-Jew'.

3.2.14.4. Letter pronunciation

Letter pronunciation is the process which reproduces the pronunciation of the initial letters of a word to represent the whole word, as in *eff* (← *fuck*), *gee* (U.S.) (← *guy*), *key* (U.S.) (← *kilo*) 'a kilogram of a drug', *pee* (← *v piss*) 'urinate' (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1582).

This process is common after abbreviation. For instance, it occurs after initialisms (e.g. *Beeb* ← *B.B.C.* 'British Broadcasting Corporation', *veejay* ← *V.J.* 'video jockey', by analogy with *D.J.*, *veep* ← *V.P.* 'vice-president'), acronymic formation (e.g. *okay/okey* ← *O.K.* 'oll/orl korrekt', also reversed as *kayo*), or clippings (e.g. *dee* ← *D* 'detective').

3.2.14.5. Alteration

Alteration is the respelling of a word, whereby a novel item which alliterates or rhymes with it is formed. Slang amply instances this type of variation process: e.g., *Canuck* (← *Canada*) 'a Canadian; spec. a French Canadian', *Chink* (derog.) (← *China*) 'a Chinaman', *clobber* (← *clothes*), *crickey/cricky/crikey* (← *Christ*) 'an exclamation of astonishment', *cripes* (← *Christ*, in the exclamation (*by*) *cripes!*), *def* (orig. U.S.) (← *death*) 'excellent; fashionable', *dodger* (Austral.) (← *snodger* 'excellent') 'good, excellent', *doozy/-ie* (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) (← *daisy*) 'remarkable; amazing', *flick* (← *film*) 'a film', pl. 'the cinema', *git* (← *get* 'a fool, idiot') 'a worthless person', *Gorblimy/-ey* (← *God blind me!*), *grift* (U.S.) (← *graft*) 'the obtaining of profit or advantage by dishonest means', *groise* (Public School) (← *grease*) 'a hard worker, a swot' (also *v*), *hep* (orig. U.S.)

(← *hip* ‘fully informed or aware’) ‘well-informed, knowledgeable’, *innards* (← *inwards*) ‘intestines’, *jiggered* (← *buggered*) ‘used in mild oaths’, *juggins* (dated) (← *muggins*) ‘a fool, simpleton’, *lawk* (← *lack/lord*) ‘Lord!’, *leaf/leef* (Services’) (← *leave*) ‘leave of absence, furlough’, *lummy* (← (*Lord*) *love me*, via *lumme*), *luvvy* (Brit.) (← *lovey*) ‘an actor or actress’, *mush* (← *mouth*), *nerts* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← *nuts*), *nurd* (← *nerd*) ‘an insignificant or socially inept person’, *pecker* (chiefly U.S.) or *pego* (← *penis*), *pod* (← *pot*) ‘marijuana’, *rookie* (← *recruit*) ‘a raw recruit’, *ruddy* (← *bloody*) ‘damnable, blasted’, *scarf* (U.S.) (← *scoff*) ‘food’, *shov(v)er* (← *chauffeur*), *smack* (orig. U.S.) (← Yiddish *schmeck*) ‘a drug, esp. heroin’, *squillion/zillion* (← *million*) ‘a very large number of millions’, *tarnation* (chiefly U.S.) (← *damnation*), *tits* (← *teat*) ‘a woman’s breasts’.

Alteration is often accompanied by shortening of the base or contraction, e.g. of a phrase or composite word: e.g., *chutty/chuddy* (Austral. and N.Z.) (← *chewing gum*), *frosh* (N. Amer.) (← *freshman*), *gaffer* (← *godfather*) ‘a foreman or boss’, *grody* (U.S.) (← *grotesque*) ‘disgusting, revolting’, *guv* (← *governor*) ‘used as a term of address to a man’, *jaundy/jaunty* (Nautical) (← *gendarme*) ‘the master-at-arms on board ship’, *click* (orig. U.S., Army) (← *kilometre*), *kook* (← *cuckoo*) ‘a cranky or crazy person’, *moffie* (S. Afr.) (← *hermaphrodite*) ‘a male transvestite’, *nabe* (← *neighbourhood*), *preem* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← F. *première*) ‘a first showing or performance, esp. of a film’, *Prod* (chiefly Ir. and Sc., derog.) (← *Protestant*), *recce/recco* (Military) (← *reconnaissance*), *skeeter* (chiefly U.S. and Austral.) (← *mosquito*), *sob* (← *sovereign*; cf. *sov*) ‘a pound’, *strides* (← *trousers*), *wotcher* (← *what cheer?*) ‘a familiar greeting’.

The altered form often represents a colloquial, dialect, regional or standard word pronunciation, as in *Jock* ‘a Scottish sailor; any Scotsman’, representing the Scotch equivalent of *Jack*, *ho* /həʊ/ (chiefly U.S.) ‘a sexually promiscuous woman’, reflecting a pronunciation of *whore* /hɔːr/ frequent in African-American usage, *larn* ‘teach; give (a person) a lesson’, from a dialect form of *learn*, *loverly/lovally*, from a Cockney pronunciation of *lovely*, *meeja* (chiefly Brit.) ‘the mass media’, from a colloquial pronunciation of *media*, *missus* (regional) ‘a wife’ or ‘used as a form of address to any woman’,

representing a spoken form of the abbreviation *Mrs*, *nah* (Brit.), representing a colloquial pronunciation of *no/now*, *nigra* /^hnɪgrə/ ‘a Black person’, from a colloquial Southern U.S. pronunciation of *Negro*, *plurry* (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.), from an Australian pronunciation of *bloody*, *polis* (Sc. and Ir.), from a regional pronunciation of *police*, *sez* from *says*, vulg. *shaddup* from *shut up!*, *Taffy* ‘a Welshman’, from a supposed Welsh pronunciation of the name *David*, *zac* (Austral.) ‘a sixpence’, from Scottish dialect *saxpence*.

The altered form is an adaptation of a foreign word in *au reservoir* (← F. *au revoir*), *johndarm* (← F. *gendarme*) ‘a policeman’, *kaput* (← G. *kaputt*) ‘finished; dead or destroyed’, *nix* (← G. and Dutch *nichts*) ‘nothing’, *O.D.V.* (← F. *eau-de-vie*) ‘brandy’, *omee/omie* (Polari slang) (← It. *uomo* ‘man’) ‘a landlord; a man’, *potzer* (Chess) (← G. *Patzer* ‘inveterate bungler’) ‘a poor player, a novice’, *san fairy ann* (← F. *ça ne fait rien* ‘it doesn’t matter’) ‘an expression of indifference or resigned acceptance’, *scarper* (← It. *scappare* ‘escape’) ‘depart quickly’, *simoleon* (U.S.) (← F. *napoleon* ‘a French coin’) ‘a dollar’, *swy* (Austral.) (← G. *zwei* ‘two’) ‘a two-shilling coin or a two-year prison sentence’, *trey* (← Anglo-Norman *trei*, F. *trois*, Sp. *tres*, It. *tre*) ‘three’, *vamoose* (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (← Sp. *vamos* ‘let us go’) ‘depart’.

3.2.14.6. Extension

Extension designates the addition of one or more syllables to a word, which do not correspond to any existing suffix. Examples of possible slang extensions are *-bie/-bee/-by* (as in *freebie/freebee/freeby* ← *free*) and *-pe* (as in *nope* ← *no*; cf. *yep*). Extensions with previously modified bases are found in *jazzbo/jasbo* (← *Jasper*) ‘a person; spec. a Black person’, and *jeepers* (orig. U.S.) (← *Jesus*) ‘a mild expression of surprise, delight, etc.’, but the latter cases remind us of the respective suffixes *-o* and *-ers* illustrated in sections 3.2.3.20 and 3.2.3.7.

3.2.15. Word manufacture and fanciful formations

“Word manufacture” (a term used by Bauer 1983: 239, after Marchand’s 1969: 452 “word-manufacturing”) consists in creating words *ex nihilo*, with no morphological motivation, as in *Kodak*, an

arbitrary word invented by Mr. G. Eastman for trade-mark purposes. In ordinary English, this process is commonly used in the formation of brand names and scientific words. A slang example illustrating this process is *scag/skag* (U.S.) ‘a cigarette (stub)’, ‘heroin’, which is neither an acronym nor a blend, but a term of unknown origin.

The origin of fanciful formations is likewise unknown. They have no recognizable base, in fact, but a fantastic odd shape, which mostly reproduces a blurred indistinct meaning, as in Amer. *whang-doodle* denoting ‘something unspecified’. Fanciful formations are mainly nouns: e.g., *lallapaloosa* (U.S.) ‘something outstandingly good of its kind’, *skeezicks* (U.S., dated) ‘a good-for-nothing’, *slumgullion* (chiefly U.S.) ‘muddy deposit in a mining sluice’, *spondulicks* (orig. U.S.) ‘money, cash’, *whifflo* (Nautical) ‘an unnamed gadget’. But some such formations may also belong to a different syntactic category, such as verbs (e.g. *skedaddle* ‘go away or depart hurriedly’), or adverbs (e.g. *lickety-split* ‘at full speed’).

3.3. Conclusion

This investigation on slang word-formation mechanisms and patterns has confirmed my expectations about the grammaticality of the phenomenon. On the one hand, some slang formations appear to exploit and re-activate many canonical derivational and compounding patterns of standard English. They can be assigned to conventional morphological rules and conform to many of the universal preferences on naturalness parameters established within NM (Dressler 2005). On the other hand, many slang formations expand the potential of word-formation means, developing new patterns that exhibit various violations of basic properties of morphological grammar and fail to correspond to many of the parameters on which traditional derivation and compounding are based, becoming less preferred choices within NM.

In defence of my claims we have explored the preferential suffixes of slang (i.e. *-ie/-y*, Brit. *-er/-ers*, rarely *-ock*, Amer. *-eroo/-aroo*, Austral. *-o*), with a familiarizing rather than derivational function. Such suffixes are in fact used to convey morphopragmatic meanings (see

Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, 1997). We have also seen slang expletive infixes (e.g. *-bally-*, *-blessed-*, *-bloody-*, *-blooming-* and *-fuckin(g)-*), used for additional emphasis, and a set of abbreviatory operations (acronyms, initialisms, blending, clipping, elliptic rhyming slang) and other extra-grammatical mechanisms (reversed forms, variation) which create colloquial or in-group variants, but no new words.

In relation to the structural properties of slang formations, the patterns so far observed seem to validate the various generalizations made on the extra-grammaticality of slang (see § 3.1.2). For example, the variability of the base category and of the derivatives/compounds is abundantly confirmed, and it is in fact much larger than admitted for standard English. Virtually all grammatical classes of words (including particles, proper names and interjections) can be bases of slang formations, and a majority can be outputs. Aronoff's (1976) Unitary Base Hypothesis is clearly contradicted by this "promiscuity with regard to input category" (Zwicky & Pullum 1987: 336; cf. Plag 2004), and so is Scalise's (1988) Unitary Output Hypothesis.

Furthermore, slang provides exceptions to the Word-based Hypothesis (Bauer 1979), due to the irregularity of the bases, which are often smaller (abbreviated), or larger (combined or inflected) word forms rather than autonomous words, with a consequent morphotactic opacity and obstruction for the output perception or interpretation.

These irregularities are counterbalanced by slang uniformity in functions and effects, which are mostly familiarity or intimacy, if not irony, sarcastic opposition, or exclusion. My conviction is indeed that slang uses new morphological patterns – patterns which I have tried to categorize, since they represented descriptive gaps in morphology (cf. Bauer 1988b) – to serve a cryptic function. Newly coined words formed by means of unproductive irregular morphological mechanisms obstruct ease of perception, and therefore word access to outsiders (see Aronoff & Anshen 1998). They are therefore deliberately used by speakers to stop people other than in-group members from understanding their private speech.

4. Lexical Organization and Disorganization

It has been stated over and over again that slang, much more so than other language variants, has a tendency towards the creation of a lexicon of its own. (Sornig 1981: 22)

4.1. The slang lexicon: hypotheses and aims

The main aim of this chapter is to establish whether the slang lexicon organizes conceptual material in accordance with the factors and dimensions of the lexicon of standard English, and can hence be viewed as one of its sub-systems, rather than an autonomous dynamical system, with its own internal organization, or, more plausibly, disorganization.

My investigation therefore aims to determine whether the slang lexical system exhibits a certain regularity (in terms of schemata, regular patterns, rules, structures, etc. which act as constraints for the system behaviour), or whether there is no rational logic that can predict the system dynamics. After a closer investigation on this topic, I would like to give an answer to the following questions:

- ❑ Is there any organization within the slang lexicon?
- ❑ If so, is this organization the same as found in standard English? Or is it rather an independent self-regulating organization?
- ❑ If not, what else?

I can anticipate that no generalizations are possible for the whole slang lexicon, but tendencies can be identified within specific areas of slang and for certain slang terms.

My core hypothesis is that slang refuses the standard organization, and either develops a different one, with its own forms, dimensions and interactions among the system components, or substitutes it with disorganization, showing a tendency towards randomness and unpredictability.

A finer-grained analysis is in order now.

4.2. Lexical organization

The key question from which my research starts is ‘How are words, meanings and concepts organized within the slang lexicon?’.

Semantic theories develop various approaches to meaning description and lexical organization. Two approaches which appear particularly relevant to our semantic description view the lexicon as structured into either semantic fields or conceptual frames. Within semantic field theories (e.g. Grandy 1992, Kittay 1992), words applicable to a common conceptual domain are organized within semantic fields by paradigmatic relationships (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, etc.), called ‘meaning (or sense) relations’. Meaning relations connect members of selected sets of lexical items: e.g., the names of the days of the week (*Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday*, etc.) can be defined by means of the ‘part of’ relationship (meronymy) that they hold to the word naming the entire cycle of seven days, i.e. *week*.

By contrast, within frame semantics (Fillmore 1985, Fillmore & Atkins 1992), words are not related to each other directly, but by way of their links to common background frames (also called ‘domains’ or ‘knowledge schemata’). That is, in a frame-based description, the above terms would be related to the more complete system of Calendric Terms, including common nouns (*day, week*), as well as the names of the days (*Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday*, etc.), special categories such as *fortnight* and *week-end*, and wider categories (*month, year*).

Barsalou (1992) provides a further development of the fillmorean notion of frame as consisting of attribute-value sets, structural invariants and constraints. In his view, frames are not rigid configurations of independent attributes, but they are rather dynamic relational structures whose form is flexible and context-dependent.

In line with Barsalou's (1992) model, Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci (2007) describe the frame as a dynamic structure whose format is the emerging result of external pressures, not built in relation to some pre-established intention, but rather resulting from the interplay of different sorts of constraints, both intra-linguistic (syntactic, morphological, textual) and extra-linguistic (encyclopedic knowledge, contextual input, cognition).

In Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci's (2007) approach, organization therefore entails the existence of redundancies, i.e. schemata, regular patterns and rules that act as constraints for the system behaviour, allowing us to capture the spectrum of word meaning modulations, and to reduce the amount of information necessary to describe the system itself:

Organization enables the system to stay away from total randomness, makes some states impossible or highly improbable given certain constraints, and reduces the overall complexity of the system. (Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci 2007: 18)

Let us now investigate whether the slang lexical system accepts this type of structural organization, and, if so, whether its behaviour is in any way predictable and describable in terms of established meaning relations and regular patterns.

4.2.1. Organization via meaning relations

Within an organized lexical area, each lexeme (or micro-system) can be first of all described in terms of its relations with the other system components. Moving from Croft & Cruse (2004), the primary paradigmatic relations that I have found useful for my research include:

- Relation of identity, similarity or synonymy (*X equals Y*, as in *happy = glad*);

- Relation of opposition or exclusion (*X is the opposite of Y*), in which *X* and *Y* may be:
 - Simple antonyms or complementaries, bisecting a domain into two subdomains (*dead/alive, girl/boy*);
 - Gradable antonyms, denoting different degrees of some property (*long/short, good/bad*);
 - Reversives or directional opposites, denoting changes in opposite directions (*rise/fall, up/down*);
 - Converses: describing a relation between two entities from alternative viewpoints (*employer/employee, parent/child*);
- Relation of inclusion: hyponymy (*X is a kind of/type of Y*, as in *daffodil > flower*), and meronymy or partonymy (*X is a part of Y*, as in *arm > body*).

4.2.1.1. Synonymy

Synonymy is a relation of affinity which links two phonologically different words having a very similar meaning. In English slang synonymy is a profuse phenomenon. Consider, for instance, examples (21)-(24), all drawn from BNC:

21. Heroin (**smack, horse, H, Chinese** – when combined with cocaine it is called a snowball). May be sniffed, or burned and then inhaled (chasing the dragon) or injected.
22. Cocaine (**coke, snow, freebase, crack**). Psychologically addictive.
23. LSD (**acid, trips, blotters, blue, smileys**). A powerful hallucinogen. Few try it more than once.
24. From left to right: amphetamines (or **speed**); cannabis (**grass, marijuana or pot**); hashish resin (which is derived from the Indian hemp plant like cannabis) and ecstasy tabs.

Following Lyons (1977), the meaning of an expression (sense) is a property of language, and is not to be equated with the object or concept the expression may be used by speakers to refer to

(reference): i.e., *the Morning Star* and *the Evening Star* have different meanings (senses) but both refer to the planet Venus. Similarly, the slang expressions *smack* and *horse* have different senses, but both refer to heroin, i.e. denote heroin in the real world.¹

Extracts (21)-(24) above show that each standard drug name (i.e. *amphetamines*, *cannabis*, *cocaine*, *heroin*, *LSD*) corresponds to a set of slang terms. For instance, *heroin* is called *Chinese*, *H*, *horse* or *smack* by drug addicts, *cocaine* is often referred to as *coke*, *freebase* or *snow*,² and *cannabis* as *grass* or *pot*. Such slang terms can be considered exact, absolute or perfect synonyms because they have the same referent in the real world, belong to the same syntactic category, and are therefore mutually substitutable, or, more precisely, they are interchangeably used in drug addicts' conversations.³ On the other hand, they are not exact synonyms to the comparable standard English words. Cf.:

25. Tests were being carried out on suspected drugs thought to include **heroin**, ecstasy, **cocaine**, LSD and **cannabis**. (BNC)

In effect, none of the standard drug names in (25) can be substituted by a slang co-referent without making the sentence appear anomalous, as in *Tests were being carried out on suspected drugs thought to include heroin, ecstasy, *snow, LSD and cannabis*.⁴

Nor are the afore-mentioned slang terms exact synonyms for other slang words used in a different context, which may highlight different shades of meaning. For example, *junk*, a slang word referring to drugs in general or heroin in particular, assumes negative connotations which are not present in *H* or *smack*, and it is in fact used by non-addicts, as in (26):

¹ Lyons (1977: 207) defines the denotation of a lexeme as "the relationship that holds between that lexeme and persons, things, places, properties, processes and activities external to the language-system".

² See hyponymy (§ 4.2.1.3) for *crack*.

³ According to Lyons (1977: 202), two expressions are fully synonymous over a certain range of utterances iff "they are substitutable in the utterances without affecting their descriptive meaning".

⁴ With regard to this, Partridge (1947: 289) claims that "most slang words are unconventional synonyms of conventional words".

26. ‘It’s an article on **junk**,’ he said. ‘**Junk?**’ ‘Drugs. It’s for the features department.’ (BNC)

Synonymy in slang is a rather intricate sense relation, and many factors may enter at play when establishing whether or not two slang words are totally synonymous. For instance, the geographical collocation or the origin of the words under examination may determine their perfect (vs. partial, near or quasi) synonymy. In fact, two different regional variants are not mutually substitutable. Compare *furphy* with *scuttlebutt* in (27)-(28) below:

27. The persistent rumour that they were introduced to check ragwort is a **furphy**. (OED)
28. The **scuttlebutt** says their contracts were not yet signed and that the pair were holding out for better terms and conditions. (BNC)

Both terms have the same meaning/referent – i.e. ‘a false report or rumour’ – but *furphy* is Australian slang, while *scuttlebutt* is American slang, or at least, it was originally. Hence, the two words are not perfect but partial synonyms.

On the other hand, *motormouth* and *big mouth*, which both originated and are used in American English to mean ‘a very talkative or boastful person’, are perfect synonyms, as (29)-(30) show:

29. ‘Stow it, **motormouth**,’ she said, smiling sheepishly, ‘and drink your coffee.’ (BNC)
30. ‘You **big mouth**! Get out! Get out of here!’ (BNC)

Another crucial criterion which may determine perfect synonymy is the morphological form of the words. For instance, the two adjectives *fubar* and *snafu* meaning ‘confused, messed up’ are both American acronymic formations (see § 3.2.9.1), and therefore perfect synonyms:

31. This was my grandfather's and it works just fine... My wristwatch, on the other hand, is still **FUBAR**. (OED)
32. Last week U.S. citizens knew that gasoline rationing and rubber requisitioning were **snafu**. (OED)

Following the same criterion, the lexical phrases *dog's breakfast* and *dog's dinner* meaning 'a mess' are likewise synonymous:

33. He can't make head or tail of it... It's a complete **dog's breakfast**. (OED)
34. The influential Georgian Group described the main frontage of the scheme as a **dog's dinner** yesterday. (ODMS)

and so are the exocentric compounds *oddball* and *screwball* used as nouns to denote 'an eccentric or odd person' or, attributively, to mean 'eccentric, strange':

35. Bernie was seen as a bit of an **oddball** – although not by me. (BNC)
36. He was a scientist, but whether brilliant or a **screwball** nobody ever knew. (OED)

4.2.1.2. Antonymy

Antonymy is a relation of sense oppositeness between two words. In English slang, however, this oppositeness relation is not always between two phonologically different words, but may also be between two different uses of the same word. That is, the same slang term can assume two opposite senses depending on the context: e.g., the slang adjective *chuffed*, commonly used with the positive meaning 'pleased, satisfied', is sometimes used in the contrary negative sense of 'displeased, disgruntled', as respectively in (37) and (38):

37. I'm really **chuffed** ('pleased') because this is the third goal I've scored in half an hour as a striker this season. (BNC)

38. Don't let on they're after you, see, or she'll be dead **chuffed** ('displeased'), see? She don't like the law. (OED)

But, clearly, these two pragmatically distinct uses of the same slang word cannot illustrate prototypical antonymy.

Another remarkable aspect concerns the relationship between the standard and the slang sense. In fact, the slang sense of a word may turn out to be diametrically opposite to the standard sense of the same word. Thus, if *bad* in standard English means 'lacking good or favourable qualities', and is therefore the contrary of *good*, as in (39):

39. There were **bad** times as well as good. (BNC)

in English slang it is assigned the opposed meaning 'possessing an abundance of favourable qualities', as in (40):

40. I say *read* these poets of the Seventies. They got something **bad** ('good') to say. (OED)

More prototypical slang antonyms are complementaries, expressing two alternatives that exhaust the possibilities in some given domain, as male and female counterparts of the same concept. The following pairs of excerpts show this opposition type:

41. 'And the other **homeboy** ('group member')?' Boyle asked. 'He got a gun and shot himself right in the head.' (BNC)
42. **Homegirls** (a form of address), for once forget you got class, See a guy you like... (from the song *Doowutchyalike*, OED)
43. It's not his fault. It's that Paula Bristow – **Lady Muck** ('pompous woman') herself. Who does she think she is? (BNC)

44. Hey, **Lord Muck** ('pompous man')! May we have the honour of introducing ourselves! (OED)
45. The other rumour she heard was that she was a **drag queen** ('a male homosexual transvestite'). (BNC)
46. [She] had experimented once with a **drag-king** friend ('a woman dressed up as a man'), passing as a man on the street. (OED)
47. For all those for whom Baywatch just isn't enough, 7 Sport's World Beach Volleyball Championship in Rio de Janeiro features sun and sand, bronzed babes and beachboy **beefcake** ('display of sturdy masculine physique'), and occasionally a little sport. (BNC)
48. In flickering torchlight the scenes probably appeared to move. Some of them clearly included **cheese-cake** ('display of attractive females') and leg shows. (OED)

It is perhaps interesting to observe that one term of each couple is coined first, and the other is formed, often humorously, as an antonym.

Slang adjectives can also be complementaries, as *way-out* 'far removed from convention' and, after it, *way-in* 'conventional':

49. Many artists have sought refuge in **way-in** or **way-out** religious conversions. (OED)

Reverse terms, expressing the same for opposite directions on some axis, are exemplified in (50) by the slang verbs *gazump* 'of a seller: raise the price of a property after having accepted an offer by (an intending buyer)' and *gazunder* 'of a buyer: lower the amount of an offer made to (the seller) for a property':

50. The risk of disappointment through being **gazumped**, or in the current property slump, **gazundered**. (OED)

4.2.1.3. *Hyponymy*

Hyponymy is a relation of inclusion, say, X is a hyponym of Y iff the meaning of Y is part of the meaning of X and X is a logical subordinate of Y. The more general term (Y), called superordinate or hypernym, may be the head of a compound, and the modifier may determine the kind of Y the whole compound represents, as in St. E. *apple juice* (X) is a type of *juice* (Y) (see Löbner 2002: 85-87).

This hyponymic relation is illustrated by the slang *head*, taking on the meaning of ‘a drug addict’, and its subordinate terms, with the modifier specifying the type of drug or substance one is addicted to, namely:

- *acid head* ‘an LSD addict’
- *coke-head* ‘a cocaine addict’
- *crackhead* ‘one who is addicted to crack cocaine’
- *hophead* ‘an opium-smoker’
- *meth head* ‘a habitual user of methamphetamine’
- *pill-head* ‘a person addicted to pills’
- *pothead*, *tea-head* or *weedhead* ‘one who is addicted to marijuana’.

Of the subordinate terms above, some stand in a relation of co-hyponymy (e.g. *acid head* and *meth head*). Others are themselves in a hypernym-hyponym relation (e.g. *coke-head* and *crackhead*), because *crack* is a type of *coke*. Still others are in an identity relation (e.g. *pothead*, *tea-head*, *weedhead*), because *pot*, *tea* and *weed* are three synonymous drug names for ‘marijuana’.

The resulting semantic networks form a logical hierarchy or taxonomy which, moving from Lyons’ (1977: 295) model, we can represent schematically:

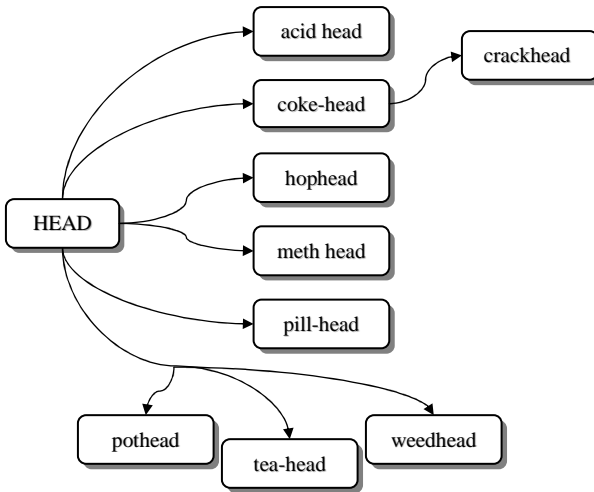


Figure 1. A taxonomy of drug addict slang terms.

This does not imply that every slang compound with *head* as its second element belongs to the taxonomy illustrated in Fig. 1. Compare *acid head* with the offensive term *dickhead* in (51) below:

51. If you go down to the woods today, make sure it's not the Forest Of Dean. Because every angel-dust dealer, **acid head**, mushroom freak, rugby player and total **dickhead** in the world lives there, apparently. (BNC)

in which *dickhead* is not 'a type of drug addict', but 'a type of person', even if the general category 'person' includes the subcategory 'drug addict'.

The case of *head* is not isolated in slang. Some analogous examples include *closet queen* 'a secret male homosexual' and *drag queen* 'a male homosexual transvestite', which specify the type of *queen* 'male homosexual' one is referring to, or *muscle Mary* 'a muscular homosexual', which is from the hypernym *Mary* 'a

homosexual’, or else *rag-bag* ‘a sloppily-dressed woman’, from *bag* ‘a woman’.

4.2.1.4. Meronymy

Meronymy (or paronymy) describes a part-whole relationship between lexical items. Starting from Löbner’s (2002: 97) meronymy of standard body part terms, I have constructed a similar meronymy of slang body part terms. However, since some standard items have no slang comparable form (e.g. *body* or *trunk*), I have organized the slang meronymy as follows, with some items remaining unnamed (hence, indicated by variables Y and X):

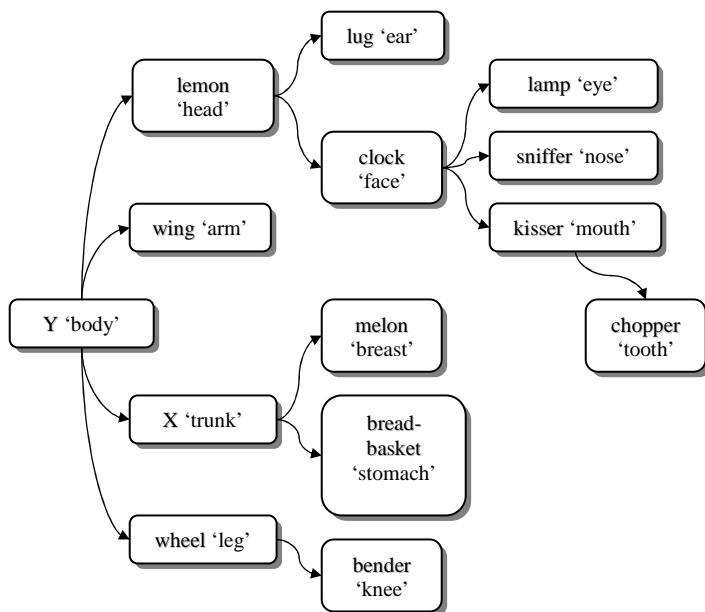


Figure 2. A meronymy of body part slang terms.

The incomplete meronymy in Fig. 2 shows that, although the slang lexicon lacks some lexemes that the standard lexicon owns (cf. “lexical gaps” in Lyons 1977: 301), meronymic relations can be established with other co-meronyms and subordinate terms (e.g. *lamp-sniffer-kisser* > *clock*), which are mutually interrelated and

therefore give organization and stability to the system. The same terms are also relevant from a cognitive perspective. Indeed, they activate a series of metaphors (e.g. *lamp* = eye of a lighthouse, *wheel* = leg of a car, *wing* = arm of a bird) or metonymies (e.g. *bender*, *chopper*, *sniffer*, etc.) which can help us identify additional patterns of organization (this aspect will be expanded in § 4.2.2.7).

Let us inspect more closely how meaning is assigned to slang terms, and which cognitive operations are necessary to retrieve it.

4.2.2. Organization via regular patterns

Words denote concepts. In line with Fillmore's (1982, 1985) frame semantics model, some such concepts are related by human experience into frames. Hence, words index or evoke a frame (in the speaker/hearer's mind), and the interpreter invokes that frame to understand the underlying concept.⁵

This is, per se, a very naïve simplistic view. In fact, a person who encounters a slang word for the first time and invokes its standard frame of reference, will not necessarily understand the word meaning, since the concept conventionally associated to that word does not correspond to the concept that slang associates to it. For instance, if the word *bread* is traditionally related to the Food Frame, in slang it would be rather related to the Commercial Transactional Frame (cf. Petruck 1996), since the concept it denotes is 'money'. Conversely, it is possible to retrieve the actual slang meaning via explicatures, calling upon complementary (co- and con-textual) information, and inferences, calling upon supplementary information, e.g. derived by metaphorical and figurative extensions (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1986). Inferences may indeed activate a sequence of cognitive operations allowing our mind to associate the slang item

⁵ Croft & Cruse (2004) propose a dynamic construal approach to conceptual categories. Since the idea of fixity of meaning seems to be a mere illusion, they formulate the Dynamic Meaning Construal Hypothesis, according to which meaning is not steady but context-sensitive, and each lexical item is associated with a body of conceptual content (a non-semantic entity called "purport") transformed into contextualized meaning by means of a series of processes ("construal operations"). As a result, the categories are inherently variable, and created on-line as and when needed.

bread with its slang meaning ‘money’. For instance, a proportion such as:

bread stands for < physical survival >

LIKE

money stands for < economic survival >

which implies that slang meaning is not, at least not always, assigned arbitrarily. As a corollary, slang words are not randomly chosen to denote such meaning.

What I expect to find from a closer examination of the slang lexicon is a set of regular associative patterns which will enable us to reduce the complexity of the system, imposing structures and levels of organization, and to enhance the predictability of its dynamics. In particular, I expect that some slang items (*signantia*) pertaining to the same conceptual domain will exhibit some stability in their association to implicated meaning (*signata*).

The lexemes that I have identified and selected to verify such hypotheses include items referring to animate and inanimate concepts, namely:

- ❑ drug addicts;
- ❑ homosexuals;
- ❑ foreign people;
- ❑ attractive women;
- ❑ drugs and narcotics;
- ❑ alcoholic drinks;
- ❑ body parts.

They have primarily been chosen on the basis of their relevance in terms of frequency and productivity within the English slang lexicon.

Let us now proceed with the examination of these lexical sets.

4.2.2.1. *Terms for drug addicts*

Terms used to name drug addicts appear to exhibit three main stable associative patterns, specifically:

- ❑ The Object Pattern: drug addicts are named after the drug or substance they are addicted to;
- ❑ The Action Pattern: they are named after the precise action they perform when taking the drug, substance, etc.;
- ❑ The Instrument Pattern: or after the instrument used to perform the action.

4.2.2.1.1. The Object Pattern is itself distinguished into two sub-patterns. The first includes terms derived from general names for drugs and narcotics:

- ❑ *dopester* (← *dope* ‘drug which is not specifically named’) ‘one who uses or is addicted to drugs’,
- ❑ *druggie/-y* ‘one who takes or experiments with illegal drugs, a drug addict’,
- ❑ *junkie/-y/junker* (← *junk* ‘any narcotic drug’) ‘a drug addict’,
- ❑ *narco* (← *narcotics*) ‘a drug addict’.

Access to the above terms is clearly more direct when the object is a standard word (e.g. *drug*, *narcotics*, though abbreviated into *narco*) than when it is a slang word, such as *dope* or *junk*. This statement is likewise valid for terms derived from specific drug names:

- ❑ *cokey/-ie* ‘a cocaine addict’,
- ❑ *hoppy* ‘an opium addict’,
- ❑ *mugger* (← *muggle* ‘marijuana’) ‘a person who smokes marijuana’,
- ❑ *reefer* (← *reefer* ‘marijuana’) ‘one who smokes marijuana’,
- ❑ *schmecker* (← *schmeck* ‘heroin’) ‘a heroin addict’,
- ❑ *snow-bird* (← *snow* ‘cocaine’) ‘one who sniffs cocaine’,
- ❑ *speed freak* (← *speed* ‘an amphetamine drug’) ‘a person addicted to an amphetamine drug’,
- ❑ *teaman* (← *tea* ‘marijuana’) ‘one who smokes marijuana’.

For the respective drug names, see also § 4.2.2.5.

4.2.2.1.2. The Action Pattern is primarily based on actions performed by drug addicts when they inject or inhale the object (drug):

- ❑ *popper/joy-popper* (← v *pop* ‘swallow or inject (a narcotic drug)’ ‘a drug-taker’),
- ❑ *sniffer* (← v *sniff* ‘inhale cocaine through the nose’) ‘one who sniffs a drug’.

In-between terms which, besides to the action, allude to the object are:

- ❑ *glue-sniffer* ‘a person who inhales the fumes of plastic cement for their narcotic effects’,
- ❑ *snifter* (← *snifter* ‘a small quantity of cocaine inhaled through the nose’) ‘a cocaine addict’.

The following terms allude to actions connected to the experience of drug-taking:

- ❑ *freak* (← v *freak out* ‘undergo an intense emotional experience, esp. under the influence of hallucinatory drugs’) ‘a drug addict’,
- ❑ *tripper* (← v *trip (out)*) ‘one who experiences hallucinations induced by a drug, esp. LSD’ (cf. (*down*) *trip* ‘the experience’).

4.2.2.1.3. The Instrument Pattern associates the drug addict to the tools used for the injection, especially the hypodermic needle of the syringe:

- ❑ *hypo* (← *hypo* ‘a hypodermic needle or injection’) ‘a drug addict’,
- ❑ *needle man* ‘a drug addict who takes drugs by injection’ (cf. St. E. *needlewoman*).

4.2.2.2. Terms for homosexuals

Terms used to name homosexual people likewise exhibit some regularity. They are indeed coined after three preferential semantic patterns:

- ❑ The Attitude Pattern: which concerns the ways and manners that characterize the homosexual behaviour;

- ❑ The Action Pattern: concerning the homosexual practices and acts;
- ❑ The Instrument Pattern: concerning the sexual organs involved in homosexual intercourses.

4.2.2.2.1. The Attitude Pattern is the most productive in associative slang relations. The predominance of homosexuals over lesbians and their natural distinction from heterosexuals makes their attitude be characterized by the features of effeminacy, delicacy and anomaly.

The effeminacy feature associates ‘male homosexuals’ or ‘effeminate men’ to female proper names, especially nicknames (see also § 3.2.3.12):

- ❑ *Jessie/-y, Lizzie, Mary, molly, nancy, nelly,*

or to general appellations normally used in slang for women or girls, which however presuppose previous knowledge of their slang use:

- ❑ *quean* (cf. slang ‘a woman, a female’),
- ❑ *queen* ‘the effeminate partner in a homosexual relationship’ (cf. slang ‘an attractive woman; a girl-friend’),
- ❑ *tart* ‘the young homosexual companion of an older man’ (cf. slang ‘a wife or girl-friend’),
- ❑ *weeny* (cf. slang ‘a girl’).

The association of homosexuals’ names to standard (pro)nouns denoting female gender is more explicit:

- ❑ *queenie/-y,*
- ❑ *she-male* ‘a passive male homosexual or transvestite’ (cf. colloq. ‘female’),
- ❑ *sister* ‘used by homosexual men to denote a fellow homosexual’ (cf. St. E. *brother* used between friends or fellows),
- ❑ *wife* ‘the passive member of a homosexual partnership’.

The delicacy feature associates homosexuals to terms which exhibit the same feature, such as names of flowers, or of breath, food, etc. that is light or soft in character:

- ❑ *flit* (cf. ‘a light touch’),
- ❑ *pansy/pansy boy* (derog.) (cf. the flower),
- ❑ *puff* or its variant *poof* (cf. *puff* ‘a short impulsive blast of breath or wind’),
- ❑ *pretty-boy* (cf. *pretty* ‘good-looking, esp. in a delicate way’),
- ❑ *twinkie/-y* (cf. *Twinkie* ‘a brand of cup-cake with a creamy filling’).

The feature of anomaly rather connects homosexuals to terms which are intrinsically or extrinsically related to strangeness, such as supernatural beings, deities, unexplainable events, or to adjectives denoting something strange, peculiar, etc.:

- ❑ *fairy* (cf. ‘one of a class of supernatural beings, in popular belief supposed to possess magical powers’),
- ❑ *freak* (cf. ‘a sudden causeless change or turn of the mind’),
- ❑ *moffie* (← *hermaphrodite* ‘a human being in which parts characteristic of both sexes are to some extent combined’) ‘a male transvestite’,
- ❑ *queer/-ie* (cf. *queer* ‘strange, peculiar, eccentric’).

4.2.2.2.2. A less widespread pattern, the Action one, relates homosexuals to their usual acts and behaviour, commonly viewed as out of the ordinary by heterosexuals. This pattern originates such words as:

- ❑ *pronk* (← v *prank* ‘dress in a smart, bright, or ostentatious manner’) ‘an ineffectual or effeminate person’,
- ❑ *shirtlifter*,
- ❑ *sod* (← *sodomite*) ‘one who practises sodomy’ (cf. *sodomy* ‘an unnatural form of sexual intercourse, esp. that of one male with another’).

4.2.2.2.3. Similarly infrequent is the Instrument Pattern, alluding to the sexual organs involved in homosexual intercourses:

- ❑ *bum-boy* (← *bum* ‘the buttocks’) ‘a young male homosexual, esp. a prostitute’,
- ❑ *jocker* (← *jock* ‘the male genitals’),
- ❑ *pussy* (cf. ‘the external female organs’).

4.2.2.3. Terms for foreigners

Foreign people are mostly renamed with critical or offensive intentions. The slang terms used to obtain such effects pertain to the following patterns:

- ❑ The Product Pattern: which is related to the product (e.g. food) typically consumed or used by foreigners;
- ❑ The Name Pattern: related to their most common Christian names;
- ❑ The Appearance Pattern: related to some distinctive feature of their physical appearance.

4.2.2.3.1. In accordance with the Product Pattern, foreign people are associated with terms for food or similar goods which they habitually use, or are reputed to use:

- ❑ *frog/froggy/frog-eater* (offens.) ‘a Frenchman’,
- ❑ *herring choker* ‘a native or inhabitant of the Maritime Provinces’, ‘a Scandinavian’,
- ❑ *Kraut/Sauerkraut, sausage* ‘a German’,
- ❑ *macaroni, spaghetti* ‘an Italian’,
- ❑ *pea-soup* ‘a French Canadian’,
- ❑ *Spud Islander* (← *spud* ‘potato’) ‘a native or inhabitant of Prince Edward Island, which is noted for its fine potatoes’,
- ❑ *Woodbine* ‘an Englishman, esp. a soldier, considered as a habitual smoker of Woodbine cigarettes’.

4.2.2.3.2. Another quite recurrent association, which I have called the Name Pattern, correlates foreign people with their most frequent male proper names, especially in their hypocoristic or pet forms:

- ❑ *dago* (← Sp. *Diego*) ‘a Spaniard, a Portuguese, an Italian’,
- ❑ *Fritz* (← *Friedrich*) ‘a German’,
- ❑ *Heinie* (← *Heinrich*) ‘a German (soldier)’,
- ❑ *Hymie* (← Jewish *Hyman*) ‘a Jewish person’,
- ❑ *Ikey* (← *Isaac*) ‘a Jew’,
- ❑ *Pat* (← *Patrick*) ‘an Irishman’,
- ❑ *Sammy* ‘an American soldier’.

4.2.2.3.3. The Appearance Pattern is based on some of the most salient physical features of foreign people, e.g., the colour of their skin:

- ❑ *blacky* ‘a Black, a Negro’,
- ❑ *smoke* (offens.) ‘a Black’,
- ❑ *whity/-ie/-ey* ‘a white person’,

the shape of their body:

- ❑ *grease-ball* (derog.) ‘a foreigner, esp. one of Mediterranean or Latin American origin’,

or the form of their eyes:

- ❑ *roundeye* ‘a European’,
- ❑ *slant-eye* ‘a slant-eyed person, esp. an Asian’,
- ❑ *slope/slopy/slopehead* ‘an oriental; spec. a Vietnamese’ (from Asians’ stereotypically slanting eyes).

4.2.2.4. *Terms for attractive (young) women*

Attractive women are often called by bizarre, curious names, esp. in young people’s slang (or “slanguage”, see Stenström 2000, Mattiello 2005, forthcoming b). The terms used by young men to define a woman’s attractiveness mainly belong to:

- ❑ The Appearance Pattern: connected to some feature of attractive women's physical appearance;
- ❑ The Attitude Pattern: connected to some feature of their behaviour;
- ❑ The Effect Pattern: connected to the effects they can produce upon men.

4.2.2.4.1. Following the Appearance Pattern, attractive women are named after their good-looking aspect:

- ❑ *beaut* (← *beauty*) 'a beautiful or outstanding person or thing',
- ❑ *doll* 'a very beautiful or attractive woman',
- ❑ *dolly/dolly-bird* 'an attractive and stylish young woman' (cf. *bird* 'girl').

4.2.2.4.2. A far more common association is found between attractive women and their attitude, hence, the Attitude Pattern. According to people of the opposite sex, beautiful women often show a puerile, immature attitude, as in:

- ❑ *babe* 'an attractive young woman',
- ❑ *bimbo/bim/bimbette* 'a young woman considered to be sexually attractive but of limited intelligence'.

They are generally weak, frail, and may love cuddles:

- ❑ *jelly* 'a pretty girl',
- ❑ *snuggle-pup/snuggle-puppy/snuggle-pupper* 'an attractive young girl'.

They may be supple or sensual:

- ❑ *fox* 'an attractive woman' (cf. *foxy*),

elegant:

- ❑ *queen* 'an attractive woman',

sometimes even clever, acute:

- ❑ *cutie/-ey* 'an attractive young woman'.

But they normally attract men by their sexy attitude:

- *sex kitten* ‘a young woman who exploits her sex appeal’.

4.2.2.4.3. The Effect Pattern associates attractive women with the effects they produce upon men. For instance, they commonly rouse men’s sexual desire, hence the names:

- *hottie/-y* ‘a sexually attractive person’ (cf. *hot* ‘of a person (originally a woman): sexually attractive’),
- *sexboat/sex-bomb/sexpot* ‘a sexually exciting person, esp. a woman’.

Metaphorically, they also tempt men’s appetite, and are therefore comparable to tasty, delicious food, e.g.:

- *cookie* ‘a woman, esp. an attractive girl’,
- *dish* ‘an attractive person, esp. a woman’ (cf. *dishy* ‘very attractive’),
- *peach* ‘an attractive young woman’ (cf. *peachy* ‘attractive, desirable’),
- *pippin* ‘an excellent, pleasing, or beautiful person’ (from the name of the apple),
- *tomato* ‘an attractive girl’.

Lastly, they may have strong, negative and destructive effects on men, who also use the following labels:

- *purler* ‘a beauty’ (cf. earlier sense ‘a knock-down blow’),
- *ripper* ‘an attractive young woman’,
- *smasher* ‘a very pretty or attractive woman’.

4.2.2.5. *Terms for drugs and narcotics*

Drug names, as anticipated, represent one of the richest lexical areas of slang. Many associative patterns can therefore be identified relating terms to their referents, the most stable being:

- The Appearance Pattern: concerning the prominent features which characterize the external aspect of the drug;

- ❑ The Constituent Pattern: concerning the constitutive elements of the drug;
- ❑ The Way/Instrument Pattern: related to the way the drug is taken or to the instrument used for its taking;
- ❑ The Effect Pattern: related to the effects produced upon the drug addict by the drug inhalation or injection.

4.2.2.5.1. The Appearance Pattern associates the drug with some feature of its aspect, such as colour, consistency/texture, quantity/weight or shape. The following terms evoke the drug colour:

- ❑ *Acapulco gold* ‘a variety of marijuana grown in the vicinity of Acapulco’,
- ❑ *black bomber* ‘an amphetamine tablet’ (see also § 4.2.2.5.4),
- ❑ *black tar* ‘a pure form of heroin originating in Mexico’,
- ❑ *brown sugar* ‘a drug consisting of heroin diluted with caffeine’,
- ❑ *French blue* ‘the name for a non-proprietary mixture of amphetamine and a barbiturate’,
- ❑ *grass* ‘marijuana’,
- ❑ *green* ‘marijuana of poor quality’,
- ❑ *ice* ‘a potent, crystalline form of the drug methamphetamine’ (from the drug’s colourless, crystalline appearance (like crushed ice) during the manufacturing process),
- ❑ *mellow yellow* ‘banana peel dried for smoking as a narcotic’ (from the colour of the peel),
- ❑ *minstrel* ‘a tablet containing amphetamine, coloured black and white’ (from its black-and-white colour, with reference to the *Black and White Minstrels*, a troupe of British variety entertainers of the 1960s-70s),
- ❑ *mud* ‘opium; heroin’ (cf. slang ‘coffee, esp. strong or black coffee’),
- ❑ *pink lady* ‘a barbiturate’,

- *purple/purple haze* ‘LSD’,
- *purple heart* ‘a tablet of the stimulant Drinamyl’,
- *rainbow* ‘a capsule containing the barbiturates Amytal and Seconal, one end of which is red and the other blue’,
- *red/red bird/red devil* ‘the drug Seconal; also, a tablet of this drug (coloured red)’,
- *snow* ‘cocaine; occas. heroin or morphine’,
- *white* ‘morphine’, ‘an amphetamine tablet’,
- *white stuff* ‘morphine, heroin, or cocaine’,
- *yellow jacket* ‘a pentobarbitone capsule’.

In some such terms, the colour of the drug is included in its name (e.g. *green*, *red*, *white*), so there is an overt association with its aspect. In others, the association is instead covert, mediated by an object having the same colour as the drug: e.g., *grass* and *marijuana* have the same green colour, and *snow* is as white as *cocaine* is.

The following names more or less explicitly allude to the drug consistency or texture:

- *angel dust* ‘the drug phencyclidine used as a hallucinogen’,
- *grass* ‘marijuana’ (cf. the leaves of marijuana with herbage in general),
- *Indian hay* ‘marijuana’ (cf. *hay* ‘grass cut or mown’),
- *rock* ‘a crystallized form of cocaine’,
- *sugar* ‘a narcotic drug, esp. heroin’,
- *weed* ‘marijuana; a marijuana cigarette’.

The quantity or weight of the drug is instead evoked by:

- *charge* ‘a dose or injection of a drug; marijuana’,
- *load* ‘a dose of narcotics’,
- *mike* ‘a microgram of a drug, esp. LSD’,

- ❑ *nickel* ‘five dollars’ worth of a drug’ (cf. ‘a five-cent piece’ and U.S. slang *trey* ‘a three-dollar packet of a narcotic’),
- ❑ *piece* ‘a quantity of a drug approximately equal to an ounce in weight’,
- ❑ *weight* ‘an illegal drug’ (cf. slang ‘a measure of an illegal drug’).

Lastly, the drug shape is suggested by:

- ❑ *crack* ‘a potent, crystalline form of cocaine broken into small pieces’ (cf. ‘a break or breaking of various kinds’),
- ❑ *crystal* ‘any of various narcotic drugs in crystalline form’,
- ❑ *line* ‘a dose of a powdered narcotic, esp. cocaine, laid out in a thin line for inhalation’,
- ❑ *pill* ‘a pill of a drug, spec. a barbiturate or amphetamine’,
- ❑ *purple heart* ‘a tablet of the stimulant Drinamyl’,
- ❑ *rope* ‘marijuana’ (cf. ‘a quantity of some material twisted together in the form of a rope’),
- ❑ *stick* ‘a cigarette made with marijuana’,
- ❑ *tab* (← *tablet*) ‘a tablet containing LSD or another illicit drug’.

4.2.2.5.2. The Constituent Pattern is relatively less productive. It associates the drug with one of its constitutive elements, generally the chief one, as in:

- ❑ *acid* ‘the hallucinogenic drug LSD’ (cf. *LSD* ‘Lysergic acid diethylamide’),
- ❑ *bromo* ‘a dose of a sedative drug containing a bromide mixture’,
- ❑ *coke* ‘cocaine’ (from the leaves of coca plants),
- ❑ *dex/-ie* ‘the drug Dexedrine’,
- ❑ *meth* ‘methamphetamine/Methedrine taken as a stimulant drug’,

- *morph* ‘morphine’,
- *poppy* ‘opium’ (cf. the opium *poppy* or its extract used as a medicine, from the flower).

4.2.2.5.3. The Way/Instrument pattern creates an association between the drug and the drug-taking process, alluding to the instrument used (*needle*), the action performed (*snifter*, *snort*), the passage of the injection (*main line*) or of the inhalation (*nose candy*). A more complete list includes:

- *main line* ‘an intravenous injection of drugs’ (cf. slang ‘a principal vein, into which drugs can readily be injected’),
- *needle* ‘a measure of a drug for injecting’ (cf. ‘a hypodermic injection of an illegal drug’),
- *nose candy* ‘a drug that is inhaled through the nose; spec. cocaine’,
- *schmeck* (← Yiddish *schmeck* ‘sniff’) ‘a drug, esp. heroin’,
- *snifter* ‘small quantity of cocaine inhaled through the nose’ (cf. v *snifter* ‘sniff’),
- *snort* ‘a dose of cocaine or heroin which is taken by inhalation’,
- *spike* ‘a drug injected’ (cf. slang ‘a hypodermic needle or syringe used for the injection of an intoxicating drug’),
- *sugar* ‘LSD (taken on a lump of sugar)’,
- *tea* ‘marijuana brewed in hot water to make a drink’,
- *toot* ‘cocaine’ (cf. slang ‘inhale cocaine’).

4.2.2.5.4. The Effect Pattern is a profuse one, as a result of the variety of effects that a drug can produce upon its addict, and also of the speaker’s point of view. Drug users tend to stress the immediate – stimulant or tranquillizing – effects that a drug has, while non-users rather focus their attention on the negative aspects of drug-taking, mainly destruction, intoxication and dependence.

The destructive effects of drugs motivate many slang adjectives meaning ‘intoxicated’, as frequently observed in the literature (see Eble 1996, Munro ed. 1997), but also many drug names, such as:

- ❑ *bang* ‘a ‘shot’ (of cocaine, etc.)’ (cf. St. E. ‘a nuclear explosion’, slang ‘excitement, pleasure’),
- ❑ *black bomber* ‘an amphetamine tablet’,
- ❑ *bomber* ‘a marijuana cigarette’, ‘a barbiturate drug’,
- ❑ *dynamite* ‘heroin or a similar narcotic’ (cf. ‘a high explosive prepared from nitro-glycerine’),
- ❑ *hit* ‘a dose of a narcotic drug’ (cf. ‘a blow given to something aimed at’),
- ❑ *jolt* ‘a quantity of a drug in the form of a cigarette, tablet, etc.’ (cf. ‘an abrupt shock or jerk’),
- ❑ *pop* ‘an injection of a narcotic drug’ (cf. ‘a blow, a knock’).

Other negative effects of narcotics are a sort of foolishness, which is hinted at in:

- ❑ *goof ball/goof pill* ‘(a tablet of) any of various drugs, spec. marijuana’ (cf. slang ‘a silly or stupid person’),
- ❑ *loco weed* ‘marijuana’ (cf. Sp. *loco* ‘mad, crazy’),

but, above all, intoxication and inevitable dependence, as in:

- ❑ *junk* ‘any narcotic drug, esp. heroin’ (cf. ‘rubbish’),
- ❑ *fix/fix-up* ‘a dose of a narcotic drug’ (cf. ‘a position from which it is difficult to escape’),
- ❑ *scat* ‘heroin’,
- ❑ *shit/shite* ‘an intoxicating or euphoriant drug’.

As expected, the positive effects of drugs (e.g. euphoria, happiness, liveliness, vigour) are alluded to in a number of terms typically used by insiders:

- ❑ *ecstasy* ‘a powerful synthetic hallucinogenic drug’ (cf. ‘the state of being ‘beside oneself’, thrown into a frenzy or a stupor’),

- *happy dust* ‘cocaine’,
- *joy-pop* ‘(an inhalation or injection of) a drug’,
- *pep-pill* ‘a pill containing a stimulant drug, taken to increase a person’s energy or enthusiasm’ (cf. *pep* ← *pepper* ‘energy; liveliness’),
- *speed* ‘an amphetamine drug freq. taken intravenously’,
- *speedball* ‘a dose of a drug, esp. a mixture of cocaine and morphine (or heroin)’),
- *up/upper* ‘a drug which has a stimulant or euphoric effect’.

We can imply information about the depressant or tranquillizing effects of some drugs in:

- *down/downer* ‘a depressant or tranquillizing drug’,
- *mojo* ‘any narcotic drug, esp. morphine’ (cf. ‘magical power’ and the use of morphine as a narcotic analgesic).

4.2.2.6. *Terms for alcoholic drinks*

Alcoholic drinks represent another prolific lexical area of slang. Many of the associative patterns established for drug names are actually suitable for this area as well (e.g. appearance, constituent, effect), while other patterns are developed specifically to name drinks. Overall, we distinguish the following patterns:

- The Nature Pattern: connected with the main features which characterize the intrinsic nature of the drink;
- The Appearance Pattern: connected with the features characterizing the external aspect of the drink;
- The Constituent Pattern: connected with the constitutive elements of the drink;
- The Effect Pattern: involving the effects upon the alcoholic or drunkard after too much drinking;
- The Container Pattern: involving a container-for-contained (metonymic) relationship.

4.2.2.6.1. The Nature Pattern focuses on the intrinsic nature of drinks. For instance, some drinks are characterized by their unlawfulness:

- *Sneaky Pete* ‘an illicit or cheap intoxicating beverage’ (cf. *sneak* ‘one who robs or steals in a sneaking manner’);

by their poor quality:

- *lunatic soup* ‘alcoholic drink of poor quality’ (cf. *lunatic* ‘insane’),
- *scrap iron* ‘an alcoholic drink of poor quality’ (cf. ‘iron which has already been wrought and broken up or cast aside for re-casting or re-working’),
- *smoke* ‘cheap whisky’,
- *tarantula-juice* ‘inferior whisky’;

by their strength:

- *alky* ‘(illicit) alcoholic liquor’,
- *heavy-wet* ‘malt liquor’ (see also here below),
- *jolt* ‘a drink of liquor’ (cf. ‘a blow in boxing’),
- *King Kong* ‘cheap alcohol’ (cf. the ape-like monster’s strength),
- *panther juice* ‘strong, esp. bootleg, liquor’;

or by their wetness:

- *heavy-wet* ‘malt liquor’,
- *wet* ‘liquor, drink’.

4.2.2.6.2. The Appearance Pattern focuses on the external aspect of drinks, especially on their colour, quantity, and, less frequently, on their consistency. As in drug names, colour may be included in the name of the alcoholic drink (as in *pink lady*, *red ink*), or it may be implicitly referred to by calling the drink by the name of an object or thing having the implied colour (as in *neck-oil* ‘beer’ having the same colour as oil) (see Bertuccelli Papi 2000). Only rarely does the colour refer to the reddening of the nose caused by excessive

drinking (as in *nose paint* ‘intoxicating liquor’). A list of drink names centred on colour includes:

- ❑ *amber fluid/liquid/nectar* ‘an alcoholic drink of an amber colour, spec. lager’,
- ❑ *black and tan* ‘a drink composed of porter (or stout) and ale’,
- ❑ *neck-oil* ‘an alcoholic drink, esp. beer’,
- ❑ *pinkers* ‘pink gin’,
- ❑ *pink-eye* ‘cheap or home-made alcoholic drink’ (cf. *red-eye* ‘coarse fiery whisky’),
- ❑ *pink lady* ‘a cocktail usually consisting of gin, egg white, and grenadine’,
- ❑ *red biddy* ‘a drink consisting of methylated spirits and cheap red wine’,
- ❑ *red ink* ‘cheap red wine’,
- ❑ *Red Ned* ‘inferior red wine or other similar drink’,
- ❑ *rosiner* (← *rosin* ‘resin’) ‘a drink of spirits; a stiff drink’ (from the colour of resin, gen. yellow or brown),
- ❑ *tincture* ‘an alcoholic drink’,
- ❑ *turps* ‘intoxicating liquor, esp. beer’ (cf. the colour of oil of turpentine),
- ❑ *white lady* ‘a drink of methylated spirits’,
- ❑ *white lightning* ‘inferior or illicitly distilled whisky’,
- ❑ *white line* ‘alcohol as a drink’,
- ❑ *white mule* ‘a potent colourless alcoholic drink’.

The following names, on the contrary, are centred on the quantity or size of the alcoholic drink, generally a small one:

- ❑ *middy* ‘a medium-sized measure of beer or other liquor’,
- ❑ *shortie/-y* ‘a short drink’,

- *sippers* (← *sip* ‘a small quantity of some liquid’) ‘a sip (of rum)’,
- *spot* ‘a drop of liquor’ (cf. ‘a small quantity; a drop’),
- *stubby* ‘a short, squat beer-bottle’ (cf. the adj ‘of the nature of a stub; short and thick’),
- *taste* ‘an alcoholic drink; alcohol’ (cf. ‘a very small quantity, a sip’).

Drink names may also allude to the drink consistency, as in:

- *sauce* ‘alcoholic liquor’,
- *slop* ‘beer’ (cf. ‘liquid or semi-liquid food’),
- *suds* ‘beer’ (cf. soapy water and the beer froth).

4.2.2.6.3. The Constituent Pattern associates drinks with one of their basic constitutive elements. This pattern is not very productive in English slang, but some examples can illustrate it:

- *hop* ‘beer’ (cf. ‘a plant used for giving a bitter flavour to malt liquors’),
- *pine-top* ‘cheap or illicit whisky, formerly flavoured with the new shoots of a pine tree’,
- *torpedo juice* ‘intoxicating liquor extracted from torpedo fuel’.

4.2.2.6.4. By contrast, the Effect Pattern appears much more prolific. As previously remarked for drugs, the effects of alcohol are distinguished into positive and negative. The positive effects of drinks range from stimulant and euphoric to fortifying:

- *giggle-water* ‘intoxicating liquor’ (cf. ‘a giggling laugh’),
- *joy-juice* ‘alcoholic drink’,
- *lightning* ‘gin; any strong alcoholic spirit’ (cf. ‘enlightenment, illumination’),
- *moonshine* ‘illicitly distilled liquor, esp. whisky’ (cf. ‘pleasant distraction’),

- *O.D.V.* (← *eau-de-vie*, lit. ‘water of life’) ‘brandy’,
- *popskull* ‘inferior whisky’ (cf. colloq. v *pop* ‘give birth’),
- *speedball* ‘a glass of wine, spec. when strengthened by additional alcohol or spirits’,
- *stiffener* ‘a fortifying or reviving alcoholic drink’ (cf. v *stiffen* ‘make stiff or rigid, e.g. by means of starch’).

The opposite negative effects amount to destruction and risk, as exemplified by:

- *jollop* ‘strong liquor, or a drink of this’ (cf. slang *jalap* ‘type of purgative obtained from a Mexican plant’),
- *mother’s ruin* ‘gin’,
- *poison* ‘alcoholic liquor (or drink)’,
- *shooter* ‘a measure or drink of spirit, esp. whisky’ (cf. slang ‘a shooting instrument, a gun or pistol’),
- *snake juice/poison* ‘whisky; any alcoholic drink’,
- *sting* ‘strong drink’ (cf. ‘the wound inflicted by the *aculeus* of an insect’),
- *wallop* ‘alcohol, esp. beer; alcoholic drink’ (cf. colloq. v *wallop* ‘beat soundly’).

4.2.2.6.5. The Container Pattern establishes a metonymic relationship between the container (e.g. the bottle, glass, etc.) and the contained (i.e. the alcoholic drink inside it), as in:

- *jar* ‘a drink of beer’,
- *long-sleever* (← *long-sleever* ‘a tall glass’) ‘a drink contained in a tall glass’,
- *shant* ‘a drink’ (cf. ‘a pot of drink’),
- *tank* ‘a drink (usu. of beer)’ (cf. ‘an artificial receptacle used for storing liquids in large quantities’),
- *tube* ‘a bottle or can of beer’ (cf. ‘a cylindrical body used to contain a liquid or fluid’).

4.2.2.7. *Terms for body parts*

The body part area, as observed in section 4.2.1.4, consists of many slang lexemes which are related to their referents via figurative meaning. The privileged associative patterns of this area are:

- The Appearance Pattern: which concerns the distinctive features of the body part aspect;
- The Function Pattern: concerning the typical function(s) of the body part;
- The Action Pattern: concerning the acts which are habitually performed by the possessor via the body part involved.

Additional (less frequent) patterns regulating this area include:

- The Substance Pattern: making allusion to the material of which the body part is made;
- The Location Pattern: alluding to the spatial position of the part in relation to the other parts, or to the whole body;
- The Covering Pattern: alluding to the covering (kind of cloth) standing for the covered body part.

4.2.2.7.1. The Appearance Pattern evokes some attribute of the body part aspect. However, since the aspect of the various body parts displays different peculiarities, the attributes evoking them are heterogeneous. Body part terms are chiefly classifiable in relation to colour:

- *pearlies/pearly whites* 'teeth';

to roundness:

- *bean, crumpet, lemon, melon, nut, onion* 'the head',
- *clock* 'the face',
- *melons* 'large breasts',
- *moon* 'the buttocks',
- *nuts* (coarse), *pills* 'the testicles';

to hardness:

- ❑ *block* ‘the head’ (cf. ‘a solid piece of wood’);

to sharpness:

- ❑ *pegs* ‘teeth’ (cf. ‘a short pin or bolt used to plug a hole’);

to flatness:

- ❑ *pocketbook* ‘the female genitals’,
- ❑ *tabs* ‘the ears’ (cf. ‘a short broad strap or flat loop attached by one end to an object’);

to length/thinness:

- ❑ *length* ‘the penis’,
- ❑ *pin* ‘a leg’,
- ❑ *shaft* ‘a leg’ (cf. ‘the long slender rod forming the body of a lance or spear’),
- ❑ *stems* ‘the legs’ (cf. ‘a trunk, stock’);

to hook-shape:

- ❑ *hooks* ‘the fingers or hands’,
- ❑ *meat-hook* ‘a hand or arm’,
- ❑ *mud-hook* ‘a hand or foot’ (cf. slang ‘an anchor’).

4.2.2.7.2. Similarly, the Function Pattern is varied, each body part having one or more specific functions which distinguish them from the others. Among the pivotal functions we can identify the bearing function:

- ❑ *hat-rack* ‘the head’;

the identifying function:

- ❑ *map* ‘the face’;

the visual function:

- ❑ *lamps* ‘the eyes’;

the passage-way function:

- *hole/cake-hole* ‘the mouth’;

the containing function:

- *bread-basket* ‘the stomach’;

the opening/closing function:

- *gate* ‘the mouth’;

the entrapping function:

- *trap* ‘the mouth’ (with reference to food);

the protective or defensive function:

- *wing* ‘an arm’ (cf. a bird’s wings);

the motor function:

- *wheels* ‘the legs’ (cf. a car’s wheels);

the instrumental function:

- *tool* ‘the male generative organ’,
- *weapon* (coarse) ‘the penis’.

4.2.2.7.3. Needless to say, the Action Pattern is likewise varied, due to the diversity of actions performed by the possessor through the body parts alluded to. English slang words belonging to this pattern include:

- *bender* (← v *bend* ‘assume or receive a curved form’) ‘a leg or knee’,
- *choppers* (← v *chop* ‘cut into pieces’) ‘teeth’,
- *kisser* ‘the mouth or face’,
- *snappers* (← v *snap* ‘make a quick or sudden bite at something’) ‘teeth’,
- *sniffer* (← v *sniff* ‘inhale cocaine, etc.’) ‘the nose’,
- *snorer* (← v *snore* ‘make harsh or noisy sounds in sleep’) ‘the nose’,
- *yap* (← v *yap* ‘talk idly or loquaciously’) ‘the mouth’.

4.2.2.7.4. A marginal pattern uses synecdoche to associate the body part with the material, the substance it is made of, hence, the Substance Pattern, e.g.:

- *ivory* ‘teeth’,
- *meat-hook* ‘a hand or arm’.

4.2.2.7.5. Equally marginal is the pattern which associates the body part to its spatial position relative to the other parts or to the entire body. The Location Pattern is mostly used for euphemistic reasons, as illustrated by some of the following terms:

- *heinie* (← *behind*) ‘the buttocks’,
- *middle leg* ‘the penis’,
- *snoot* ‘the nose’ (cf. ‘the nose of an aircraft, a car, etc.’).

4.2.2.7.6. The Covering Pattern, on the other hand, establishes a metonymic relationship between the type of clothing which covers the body part and the body part itself, as in:

- *lug* ‘the ears’ (cf. earlier sense ‘one of the flaps or lappets of a cap or bonnet, covering the ears’, and *lughole* ‘ear-hole’),
- *mitt* ‘a hand’ (cf. boxing sense ‘a boxing glove’).

The above patterns appear to set up correspondences and correlations between different conceptual domains via such cognitive phenomena as categorization, metaphor, metonymy, inference, analogy, etc., which have been amply discussed in the literature on meaning construal (e.g. Ruiz de Mendoza & Santibáñez 2003, Croft & Cruse 2004) and blending (e.g. Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

Yet some of them seem to exhibit asymmetries and irregularities, due to the intricate network of conceptual connections activated. The concept of ‘alcoholic drink’ is, for instance, much more rapidly activated by the slang expression *amber fluid* – by way of such salient features as bright colour and full-bodied consistency – than by *smoke*, whose association to ‘cheap whisky’ requires much more complicated cognitive operations triggering less salient features, such as darkish colour, lack of density, etc. In fact, Croft & Cruse

(2004) state that meaning is something that we construe, on-line, using the properties of linguistic elements as partial clues, alongside linguistic knowledge and information available from the context.

Many of the afore-mentioned slang words provide only partial clues to their meanings, since they foreground components which may be latent in the corresponding standard words (cf. *fox* St. E. 'cunning animal/person' and slang 'attractive person'). However, other slang words are even more difficult to disambiguate, since there are no logical connections between the standard and the slang frames of reference of the words. That is, the same *signans* appears to belong to two completely different conceptual domains, with no evident shared attributes relating the two. Expectably, such words are the source of lexical disorganization.

4.3. Lexical disorganization

[...] slang semantics is a kind of secondary semiotics which is motivated by the wish to distinguish itself from the 'ordinary' use of words and consequently might be interpreted from both its semantic distance from its object and from the 'ordinary' semantic function of a certain word. (Sornig 1981: 21)

In this section, I wish to validate the opening assumption that in slang, lexical organization via regular connections and logical patterns is sometimes substituted by disorganization. I also wish to explain the modalities in accordance with which such disorganization thwarts meaning access and conceptualization, and to investigate whether or not there are different degrees of disorganization.

At this stage of the survey, I can hypothesize that lexical disorganization is the result of irrational word-meaning associations. Indeed, the associative patterns identified hitherto are not applicable to any slang word, because sometimes there is no logic assigning *signantia* to slang *signata*, and inferential work turns out to be unsuccessful in facilitating meaning access. This latter hypothesis appears to be extremely interesting from our point of view, as its verification would effectively distinguish slang from the standard lexical system.

An additional hypothesis concerns the degree of the disorganization. Indeed, I hypothesize that, in slang, there are cases of: (a) partial disorganization, with some meanings assigned arbitrarily to words and others still motivated by regularity and logic, and (b) total disorganization, with no actual possibility to identify connections with the corresponding standard meanings. Total disorganization entails overall randomness, prevents the macro-system from finding any stable configuration, and sometimes brings it to the edge of chaos, or, in Bertuccelli & Lenci's (2007) terms, to the highest degrees of complexity. The aim of my research is to verify the validity of these hypotheses.

For this research, I have selected a set of polysemous slang terms which provide challenging cases of meaning reconstruction, and which, therefore, seem to be functional to investigate both partial and total disorganization.

4.3.1. Partial disorganization

Partial disorganization involves a redefinition of words on the basis of some semantic features which were not in the standard meaning(s), but which are acquired in slang. Slang preserves some of the original standard features and confers new ones on words. Hence, words are loaded in terms of information provided, their conceptual representation is complexified, and their interpretation is made much more complicated.

Let us examine a few tricky cases.

4.3.1.1. The case of bird

In standard English, the term *bird* is normally used to refer to:

- ‘the young of the feathered tribes’.

Another St. E. meaning of this term fore-grounds the role of birds in hunting:

- ‘prey, object of attack’.

Slang adds an extra meaning to this word, but the association with the standard meaning is still evident:

- ‘an aeroplane’ (Appearance Pattern: a bird has wings, tail; Action Pattern: a bird flies).

However, it also adds a variety of meanings which have no evident connection with the original one:

- ❑ ‘a girl, woman’;
- ❑ ‘an exceptionally smart or accomplished person’;
- ❑ ‘a prison sentence; prison’;
- ❑ ‘an obscene gesture of contempt’.

In fact, the association of a *bird* to the meanings ‘woman’ or ‘smart person’ is hard, and its association to inanimate objects (prison, obscene gesture) or even abstract entities (a prison sentence) has no tenable explanation. Hence, slang meanings integrate the semantic description of *bird* with new semantic features, which are sometimes in contradiction with previous ones (e.g. animate vs. inanimate, non-human vs. human, concrete vs. abstract).

4.3.1.2. *The case of bomb*

Another case of difficult interpretation is provided by *bomb*. This term is commonly used to refer to:

- ❑ ‘an explosive projectile’.

Hence, by means of the Effect Pattern discussed above, we can explain the following slang meanings of *bomb*:

- ❑ ‘a failure’ (destructive effect; cf. the opposite Brit. sense of ‘a success’);
- ❑ ‘a large sum of money’ (dangerous effect);
- ❑ ‘a (large) marijuana cigarette’ (destructive and dangerous effect).

On the other hand, there are no patterns which can explain why slang associates the word *bomb* with:

- ❑ ‘an old car’,

or can help us associate the word with this concept.

4.3.1.3. *The case of dog*

The case of *dog* is even more complicated, since in slang it acquires specific features which blatantly clash with the standard ones. As

everybody knows, in the standard language *dog* refers to:

- ‘a quadruped of the genus *Canis*; a hound’.

In slang, it acquires an extra meaning which is explainable in terms of the Attitude Pattern:

- ‘a gay or jovial man; a fellow’ (see the joyful and playful attitude of a dog),

but also an array of incomprehensible meanings:

- ‘a worthless, despicable, or cowardly fellow’ (cf. guard dogs, police dogs, rescue dogs, watch-dogs);
- ‘an informer; a traitor; esp. one who betrays fellow criminals’ (cf. a dog’s fidelity to its owner);
- ‘an unattractive woman, girl or man’;
- ‘something poor or mediocre; a failure’ (cf. guide dogs, dogs kept for company);
- ‘a horse that is slow, difficult to handle, etc.’ (cf. a dog’s agility, obedience, etc.).

When the word is used in the plural form, it takes on the sense of:

- ‘sausages’ (see *hot dog* ‘a hot sausage enclosed in a bread roll’);
- ‘feet’.

This latter sense is explainable by way of the rhyme between the original full form *dog’s meat* and the *signatum* ‘feet’, but this phonic similarity is lost in the elliptic form, thus obstructing meaning access.

4.3.1.4. *The case of fish*

Generally-speaking, the term *fish* refers to:

- ‘any animal living exclusively in the water’.

In nautical slang, the term also takes on more specific senses:

- ‘a torpedo’;
- ‘a submarine’,

the former of which is a hyponym of the general category, whereas the latter is a metaphorical extension based on a similarity in form and location.

However, a less transparent slang sense also exists, i.e.:

- ‘a dollar’,

which implies a semantic shift from animate to inanimate.

4.3.1.5. *The case of gas*

A different case is found in *gas*, which in standard language refers to a concrete entity:

- ‘any aeriform or completely elastic fluid’,

but in slang refers to abstract entities, as in:

- ‘empty or boastful talk’;
- ‘showy pretence’;
- ‘humbug, nonsense’ (see the insubstantiality, triviality, intangibility of gas);
- ‘fun; a joke’,

and, intriguingly, to animate ones:

- ‘someone who is very pleasing, exciting, admirable, etc.’.

4.3.1.6. *The case of ice*

In standard English, *ice* has a literal interpretation:

- ‘frozen water’,

and a figurative one:

- ‘a congelation or crystalline appearance resembling ice’ (with allusion to the slippery, cold nature of ice).

In criminals’ slang, it has a transparent meaning, which alludes to the clearness and brittle nature of ice:

- ‘diamonds; jewellery’ (see also the drug name in § 4.2.2.5.1),

but also opaque meanings, which are disambiguable only via slang itself, e.g. referring to the preciousness of jewellery:

- ❑ ‘profit from the illegal sale of theatre, cinema, etc., tickets’;
- ❑ ‘protection money’.

4.3.1.7. *The case of iron*

Another polysemous English word is *iron*, which in standard use refers to:

- ❑ ‘a metal’,

to a mixture or object containing this:

- ❑ ‘a preparation of iron, used in medicine as a tonic’;
- ❑ ‘any meteorite which contains a high proportion of iron’,

to a thing made of this:

- ❑ ‘an instrument, appliance, tool, utensil, etc. made of the metal’,

or, metaphorically, to the hard, strong nature of iron itself:

- ❑ ‘a type of extreme hardness or strength’.

In criminals’ and general slang, we find meanings which are easily explainable by means of the Material Pattern:

- ❑ ‘a portable fire-arm; a pistol’;
- ❑ ‘a jemmy used in housebreaking’;
- ❑ ‘an old motor vehicle’.

On the other hand, we also find meanings which are obscure, e.g.:

- ❑ ‘money’,

or accessible only in terms of the original rhyme, lost in the elliptic form:

- ❑ ‘a homosexual’ (see *iron hoof*, rhyming slang for ‘poof’; cf. a homosexual’s delicacy).

4.3.1.8. *The case of joint*

The term *joint* is unambiguous in standard English:

- ❑ ‘a junction’,

but polysemous in slang. Some slang meanings are traced back to the standard one by way of regular associative patterns:

- ❑ ‘a partnership or union, or a place of meeting or resort, esp. of persons engaged in some illicit occupation’ (see joining function);
- ❑ ‘a stall, tent, etc., in a circus or fair’ (see joining function);
- ❑ ‘a song, a recording; an album’ (see the American film director Spike Lee’s use of *joint* to mean ‘New York street talk’, hence, the substance (words) songs are made of).

However, other slang meanings exhibit no connection with the original sense:

- ❑ ‘a marijuana cigarette’;
- ❑ ‘prison’.

4.3.1.9. *The case of kick*

In standard English, *kick* is used to refer to both:

- ❑ ‘a blow or knock with the foot’,

and:

- ❑ ‘opposition, objection, repugnance’ (see the function of kicks to show hostility, aggression, etc.).

Similarly, in slang, it refers to an action which evokes the function of removal of kicks:

- ❑ ‘discharge, dismissal’.

Yet slang adds a range of “senses of which the relationship is obscure” (OED):

- ❑ ‘the fashion, the newest style’;
- ❑ ‘a sixpence’;
- ❑ ‘a pocket’;
- ❑ ‘breeches, trousers’ (pl.);
- ❑ ‘shoes’ (pl.),

which, as a result, contribute to the lexical disorganization of the concept.

4.3.1.10. *The case of nut*

The standard meanings of *nut*, viz.:

- ❑ ‘a fruit or seed with a hard or leathery shell’;
- ❑ ‘something of trifling value’;
- ❑ ‘a difficult question or problem; a person hard to deal with, conciliate, etc.’ (with allusion to the difficulty of cracking hard-shelled nuts),

display features (e.g. roundness, smallness, hardness) which are reproduced in the following slang meanings:

- ❑ ‘the head’;
- ❑ ‘a testicle’.

On the other hand, these features are not retained by other slang meanings:

- ❑ ‘a source of pleasure or delight’ (pl.);
- ❑ ‘an excellent or first-rate person or thing’ (pl.);
- ❑ ‘a person’;
- ❑ ‘a fashionable or showy young man’;
- ❑ ‘a mad or crazy person; an eccentric, a crank’;
- ❑ ‘the amount of money required for a venture’;
- ❑ ‘any sum of money; a bribe or payoff’.

Such meanings inevitably add new traits (e.g. pleasure, excellence, fashion, craziness) to the semantic description of the word, and are, again, a source of partial disorganization.

4.3.1.11. *The case of skin*

The last example of partial disorganization I propose is *skin*, i.e.:

- ❑ ‘the integument of an animal stripped from the body’.

Slang assigns a variety of new meanings to this label, which are justifiable on the basis of the Material Pattern:

- ❑ ‘a purse, a money bag, a wallet’ (see an animal’s skin; cf. leather);
- ❑ ‘a drum’;
- ❑ ‘the skin of the palm of the hand, as making contact in slapping hands in friendship or solidarity’;

of the Function Pattern, esp. protective function:

- ❑ ‘a paper for rolling cigarettes (esp. in smoking marijuana)’;
- ❑ ‘a condom’;

of the Action Pattern:

- ❑ ‘an avaricious; a miser’ (see one who would skin a flint to save or gain something);

of the Appearance Pattern:

- ❑ ‘a youth (often one of a gang), a skinhead’ (from his having a bald head);

or of a part-whole relationship:

- ❑ ‘a horse or mule’.

Again, slang also adds meanings which are not explainable using the above criteria:

- ❑ ‘a dollar’;
- ❑ ‘a tyre’.

This survey shows that the slang lexicon is not entirely organized in terms of meaning relations and regular patterns, but exhibits a tendency towards arbitrariness: words acquire new meanings which are not connected with the standard one(s), and which cannot be inferred by making reference to ordinary features. Slang meanings often entail new features which are added to existing ones, increasing the amount of information necessary for semantic description.

New slang semantic features may even clash with standard ones (as in *dog*), and entail inconsistencies between the standard system and the slang system. This is symptomatic of an independence of the

latter from the former, and from what is conventional, predictable and stable.

4.3.2. Total disorganization

Total disorganization occurs when none of the regular features of a word are preserved in slang, and no rational pattern can activate the slang concept in our mind using universal processes, such as metaphor, metonymy, etc., or using traditional inferential work (see Grice's 1989 notion of implicature, Sperber & Wilson's 1986 expectations of relevance, etc.).

Total disorganization does not imply an expansion and reorganization of the standard domain to include slang meanings, but rather a shift to a completely different domain, with a range of features which depart from the standard ones, which make conceptualization and interpretation challenging tasks.

Let us observe a few relevant examples.

4.3.2.1. The case of bag

The features that we normally confer on the term *bag* come from its standard meaning:

- 'a receptacle made of some flexible material closed in on all sides except at the top'.

The form and function of a *bag* justify the additional meanings that the word has in standard:

- 'an udder, a dug';
- 'a sac (in the animal body) containing honey, poison, etc.';
- 'a fold of loose skin beneath the (human) eyes';
- 'the stomach, entrails'.

On the other hand, such salient features do not justify the following slang meanings:

- 'a preoccupation, mode of behaviour or experience';
- 'a characteristic manner of playing jazz or similar music';
- 'an unattractive or elderly woman'.

These meanings imply a shift from concrete to abstract entities (a preoccupation, a music style), and from inanimate to human ones (a woman), and also the acquisition of new traits (e.g. anxiety, old age) which are not present in the standard meanings. Here slang imposes a totally new set of features.

4.3.2.2. *The case of bottle*

In the case of *bottle*, the semantic shift is, again, from concrete standard entities:

- ‘a vessel with a narrow neck for holding liquids’;
- ‘the quantity (of liquor) which a bottle can hold’ (container-for-contained),

to abstract slang ones:

- ‘a reprimand’;
- ‘courage, spirit’,

and back to concreteness, but with completely new features (e.g. value) and a different frame of reference (Commercial Transaction Frame):

- ‘a collection or share of money’.

4.3.2.3. *The case of cat*

Semantic shift also intervenes in the polysemic word *cat*,⁶ which in standard English refers to an animal:

- ‘a well-known carnivorous quadruped (*Felis domesticus*)’ (also short for *catfish*, *cat-o’-nine-tails*),

or to concrete objects, such as:

- ‘a double tripod with six legs’;
- ‘a small piece of wood tapering at each end, used in the game of tip-cat’.

By contrast, in slang, the word *cat* applies to human beings, e.g.:

- ‘an itinerant worker’;

⁶ See Iamartino (2006: 112-114) for the polysemy of *cat* and its difficult translation.

- ❑ ‘a fellow, man’;
- ❑ ‘a spiteful or backbiting woman’;
- ❑ ‘a prostitute’;
- ❑ ‘an expert in jazz’,

and, as such, it entails features (e.g. instability, professionalism, expertise, etc.) which are not in its standard meaning.

4.3.2.4. *The case of monkey*

Another polysemous word, *monkey*, is used in standard English for the animal:

- ❑ ‘the primate’,

as well as for humans who, as a result of their attitude or nature, are comparable to the animal:

- ❑ ‘a child; a junior; a foolish person’;
- ❑ ‘a person who acts comically’;
- ❑ ‘a person performing a task which involves physical agility’ (see a monkey’s vivacity, nimbleness, etc.).

Slang adds some extra meanings which are not motivated by the standard features. New meanings curiously refer to humans:

- ❑ ‘an associate’;
- ❑ ‘a chorus girl’,

to non-human, concrete entities:

- ❑ ‘500 pounds sterling; 500 dollars’;
- ❑ ‘the male or female sexual organs’,

and, finally, to abstract entities:

- ❑ ‘addiction to, or habitual use of, a drug’.

4.3.2.5. *The case of mug*

The word *mug* is not polysemous in the standard language:

- ❑ ‘a (usually large) earthenware vessel or bowl; a pot’,

but it is in slang, in which it is used to denote:

- ❑ ‘a face, esp. an unattractive one’;
- ❑ ‘a grotesque or exaggerated facial expression’;
- ❑ ‘a photograph of a person’s face, esp. in police records’;
- ❑ ‘the mouth’.

Thus, slang meanings are related to one another by similar features, but they are distant from the original meaning, and from its salient features.

4.3.2.6. *The case of potato*

Another common term which in slang is loaded with new meanings is *potato*. Indeed, while in standard language it is used for a type of vegetable:

- ❑ ‘the edible, usually oval tuberous root of the plant *Ipomoea batatas*’,

or, given its little value, for:

- ❑ ‘something insignificant’,

in slang, it is rather used for:

- ❑ ‘the (very, real, or proper) thing’;
- ❑ ‘money; spec. dollars’ (pl.);
- ❑ ‘a girl or woman’ (from *potato peeler*, rhyming slang for *sheila*).

Here slang not only adds new meanings, but also meanings which are in blatant contradiction with standard ones (cf. the value of money).

4.3.2.7. *The case of rabbit*

Again, a common word of English, *rabbit*, designates an animal in standard use:

- ❑ ‘a burrowing rodent of the hare-family’,

but takes on various meanings in slang, where it designates a human being:

- ‘a poor performer at any game; a novice’,

an inanimate, but concrete entity:

- ‘liquor; a bottle of beer’;
- ‘a smuggled or stolen article’,

or even an abstract entity:

- ‘a conversation, a talk; a lingo’ (from *rabbit-and-pork*, rhyming slang for ‘talk’).

As in earlier instances, the addition of new slang meanings goes along with the addition of novel salient features, ranging from inexperience to strength and danger. Such features appear to belong to a different lexical system, in competition with the standard one and with the standard rules.

This analysis of representative cases of polysemy and low or no transparency seems to support our thesis, and to provide evidence for prior expectations that the slang lexicon often exhibits disorganization in terms of meaning associations and predictable patterns. That is to say, it appears to refuse the standard rules and organizatory criteria, and to prefer unconventionality and arbitrariness. Hence, while the content of a standard word is normally constructed on-line, in an *ad hoc* context-specific way, using encyclopedic information which varies in accessibility from individual to individual (Barsalou 1992), the content of a slang word “is heavily dependent on shared background knowledge” (Gumperz 1972: 220), and may thus remain inaccessible to those individuals who are not familiar with its slang meaning(s).

Disorganization is a gradable notion. Total disorganization does not rely on rational inferential processes or predictable behavioural patterns, but rather on the memory of use of individual speakers. It leads the system to the highest degrees of randomness and ensuing complexity, where no constraints are given to make some states impossible or highly improbable, and no prediction can be made, since, paradoxically, the only certainty is chaos.

4.4. Conclusion

The three fundamental questions which motivated the lexical semantic analysis conducted in this chapter were:

- Is there any organization within the slang lexicon?
- If so, is this organization the same as found in standard English? Or is it rather an independent self-regulating organization?
- If not, what else?

Our investigation has shown that, in slang, some organization is identifiable, but it is not always the case, and disorganization often intervenes to destroy existing rules and favour system instability.

Like the standard lexical system, the slang system has shown a tendency to organize words into lexical fields, in which they can be interrelated by means of paradigmatic meaning relations, esp. synonymy. We have drawn a distinction between perfect synonyms – i.e. words that denote the same concept and are interchangeable in the same context (e.g. *H*, *horse*, *smack* for ‘heroin’) – and partial or near synonyms exhibiting different shades of meanings (cf. *smack* and *junk*). Other factors have proved to be crucial to discriminate perfect from partial synonymy among co-referents, viz. in-group usage, word origin and morphological form.

The slang system has also shown a tendency to organize sets of items pertaining to the same conceptual domain into predictable behavioural patterns. Accordingly, we observe that non-users employ names for drug terms which allude to their destructive effects (e.g. *bomber*, *dynamite*, *hit*), but users choose names which rather allude to their opposite (stimulant or euphoric) effects (e.g. *ecstasy*, *happy dust*, *joy-pop*). We likewise observe that body parts are named after their function (e.g. *cake-hole*, *gate*, *trap* for ‘the mouth’), or after the action they perform (e.g. *kisser* ‘the mouth’, *snorer* ‘the nose’, *choppers* ‘the teeth’). The recurrence of rational associative patterns such as Effect, Function, Action, etc. are symptomatic of the system attempt to find an autonomous stability, and to maintain integrity via the development of new forms of (self-)organization, emerging out of the interactions with the environment (the context and the

speakers), as well as among the system components (the micro-systems which make up the domain at issue).

On the other hand, slang has shown a tendency towards disorganization and irrationality when words are used in senses which totally depart from the standard ones, and which share no semantic features with them. Disorganization has turned out to be a gradable notion, in the sense that some of the original features may be kept by slang, and therefore impose only a reshuffle and integration of the standard domain to include slang meanings. This happens with the word *nut*. In standard English, this word denotes a definite concept evoking the Food Frame, belongs to a distinct area (i.e., Dried Fruit, itself part of the area of Fruit), and is defined by specific features, such as roundness, smallness, hardness, etc. Such salient features can help us associate the word with some slang meanings (e.g. ‘the head’, ‘a testicle’), but are useless with others (e.g. ‘an excellent person’, ‘a fashionable young man’, ‘a mad or crazy person’, etc.). Slang therefore adds new traits (e.g. excellence, fashion, craziness) to the semantic description of the word, which create partial disorganization, and complexify the word’s conceptual representation.

When no standard feature is maintained by slang, and randomness prevails over predictability, disorganization becomes total, and the entire macro-system collapses, thus excluding any possibility of a correct decoding by interpreters reasoning on the basis of the standard lexicon and applying traditional inferential processes. This happens with a polysemous word such as *monkey*. In slang, this word acquires a variety of extra meanings which are inaccessible by making reference to its standard features. It indeed implies a semantic shift from a non-human to a human entity (‘an associate’, ‘a chorus girl’), or even to an abstract one (‘addiction to a drug’).

A well-grounded theory of Lexical Complexity, as recently expounded in Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci (2007), can help us interpret slang data from a dynamical system perspective (cf. Elman 1995, 1998). Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci (2007) view language and the lexicon as a complex dynamical system, in which lexical items are themselves conceived as micro-systems which organize conceptual material in multiple ways depending on the task at issue.

When new semantic features are added to a micro-system, a larger amount of information is necessary for its semantic description. Additional information thus complexifies the system itself, increasing the number of its possible states at different times (t_n), and simultaneously decreasing the extent of predictability of its dynamics.

Moreover, when a micro-system is given features which totally depart from those commonly ascribed to the standard lexical item, it becomes completely unstable, and its dynamics unpredictable, to the point of chaos. This represents the highest degree of lexical disorganization, in which meaning is (perhaps deliberately) obscured, hidden or concealed to exclude outsiders, and to establish a secret linguistic code shared only with insiders.

5. Sociological Properties

[...] slang is indicative not only of man's earthiness but of his indomitable spirit: it sets him in his proper place: relates a man to his fellows, to his world and the world, and to the universe. (Partridge 1947: 291)

5.1. Slang sociology

As the state of the art on slang shows (see chap. 2), slang sociology is a widely discussed topic and the aspects which play a role in its sociological characterization have turned out to be as various as the phenomenon itself. I here wish to give my contribution to the sociological description of slang by selecting and reorganizing properties highlighted so far, in order to offer a more systematic classification.¹

The classification I propose, as anticipated at the end of chapter 2, distinguishes slang sociological properties into speaker- and hearer-oriented ones:

- Speaker-oriented properties, which qualify the speaker as belonging to some distinct group, include: group- and subject-restriction, secrecy and privacy, informality and debasement, vulgarity and obscenity, time-restriction, ephemerality and localism;
- Hearer-oriented properties, which produce some effect upon the hearer, are: playfulness and humour, freshness and novelty,

¹ In Mattiello (2007a and forthcoming a) some of the slang sociological properties have been studied in a contrastive (English-Italian) perspective.

desire to impress and faddishness, colour and musicality, impertinence, offensiveness and aggressiveness.

As many of the foregoing criteria are mutually exclusive, slang words do not meet all of them simultaneously. However, they should meet at least some of them, as my assumptions are that an English slang expression should reveal something about its user, and at the same time achieve some pragmatic effect upon its hearer.

Contextualized excerpts from film dialogues and COLT conversations can clarify these points:

52. Renton: I'm **cookin' up** ('preparing drug for use').
Allison: **Cook** one for me, Renton. I need a **hit** ('dose').
(*Trainspotting* 1996)
53. Man: A **cop** ('policeman') in the twentieth precinct **tipped** ('informed, alerted') us. (*Mickey Blue Eyes* 1999)
54. Boss (wearing Uncle Vito's glasses): My God, these things are making me **squiffy** ('drunk'). (*Mickey Blue Eyes* 1999)
55. Jack: Good. Keep your **snake** ('penis') in its cage for seventy-two hours.
Greg: Okay. (*Meet the Parents* 2000)
56. Chris: He's being <unclear> **unfuckintouchable** ('absolutely untouchable') [...]. (COLT)
57. Chuck: Hey, you the new kid? I'm talkin' to you. Where'd your tie go? I thought only **pansies** ('homosexuals') wore neckties.
Ren: Oh, yeah? See that? I thought only **assholes** ('idiots') used the word '**pansy**'. (*Footloose* 1984)
58. Kenickie: Hey Danny, what's up, do you still think about that **chick** ('girl')?
Danny: What are you, **nuts** ('mad')? (*Grease* 1978)
59. Jo: you know, telling him to sit and he was stubbing all the cigarettes out, drinking all the drinks on the table. He was a right **yobbo** ('lout')! (COLT)

60. Renton (voice over): Got no money: can't get **pished** ('drunk'). Got money: drinking too much. Can't get a **bird** ('girl-friend'): no chance of a **ride** ('act of sexual intercourse'). Got a **bird**: too much hassle. (*Trainspotting* 1996)
61. Boy: Rizzo's been **knocked up** ('made pregnant'). (*Grease* 1978)

As expected, the slang expressions in (52)-(61) above can be discriminated on the basis of their different functions and heterogeneous effects.

As for functions, some of them are used by the speaker to identify with a specific group, be it on the basis of age or gender (*bird*, *chick*, *nuts*), habits (*cook (up)*, *hit*, *pished*), or origin (*asshole*). Others rather denote the speaker's vulgarity (*knock up*) or obscenity (*ride*), or his intention to hide private information (*cop*, *tip*).

As for effects, some of the above expressions may appear fresh and unconventional (*yobbo*), playful (*squiffy*), or humorous (*snake*) to the hearer, or may rather impress, offend or challenge him (*asshole*, *pansy*, *unfuckintouchable*).

Sociological criteria are however more fluctuating and controversial than linguistic ones. For instance, it is indisputable that the slang word *yobbo* is obtained from a cumulation of two extra-grammatical mechanisms – i.e. back-slang plus familiar suffix *-o* – and it is equally unquestionable that *hit* is a complex English word due to its polysemy and, hence, to the large quantity of information necessary for its semantic description. On the other hand, it is questionable whether *yobbo* is a colourful or an offensive word, and whether *hit* is simply a faddish expression, or it is rather an opaque word used to exclude outsiders.

English native speakers are naturally facilitated in the sociological reading of such slang expressions. But they often turn out to be unhelpful, since their opinions about the slang functions/effects are at times conflicting, and their use/perception of slang words is dissimilar, though they all seem to agree that most slang is inappropriate for use in 'polite company'.

Let us first consider each of the selected criteria and then discuss experimental data drawn from questionnaires submitted to native informants.

5.2. Speaker-oriented properties

By choosing the right words you show which group you belong to. (Andersson & Trudgill 1990: 79)

Many slang expressions are in fact deliberately used by speakers to show their affiliation to a group. Choosing the ‘right words’ therefore implies using the specific vocabulary of the group affiliates, first, to maintain a bond and solidarity with them, and, second, not to conform to people who do not belong there.

The speaker’s purpose is not always that of keeping information secret, though, since most users of slang wish to be understood and want other people to recognize, through it, their age, origin, lifestyle, and their manifest need to escape common neutral vocabulary.

Let us see in greater detail how slang can be indexical of speakers’ characters, attitudes and intentions.

5.2.1. Group- and subject-restriction

Group- and subject-restriction go hand in hand, since speakers who adhere to a specific group certainly share the other members’ interests, concerns, values, pastimes and habits, which presuppose similar conversational topics and related areas for discussion.

For instance, the preferential topics of young men are sexuality and attraction for the opposite sex, as in this exchange drawn from *Grease* (1978):

62. Kenickie: How was the action at the beach?
 Danny: It was **flipping**.
 Sonny: Yeah, crazy, huh?
 Danny: I did meet this one **chick**, she was sort of **cool**.
 Sonny: You mean she **puts out**?
 Danny: Come on, Sonny, is that all you ever think about?

This extract shows that the interactants – three high school students at the Rydell High – are close friends, who are familiar with the respective summer holiday programmes and curious about their realization. They share not only such general characteristics as age and gender, but also socio-cultural traits, such as education and belonging to the same gang, the ‘T-birds’. Hence, they use slang or, as I prefer to call it, “slanguage” (Mattiello 2005), as a marker of social identity and group exclusiveness, and as a means of expressing the values and experiences of their peer group members.

In (62) in-group distinctiveness and cohesion are proclaimed by derogatory taboo words (e.g. *flipping* ‘a substitute for a strong expletive’, *put out* ‘offer oneself for sexual intercourse’), as well as by creative meaning associations (e.g. *chick* ‘girl’, *cool* ‘excellent’), which express the boys’ need for differentiation from adult society and vocabulary. They indeed develop their own terminology to show off and gain status within society.

Other intriguing topics which are normally favoured in young men’s conversations are drinking and drugs, as the following extracts from COLT show:

63. Aaron: Oh look **wicked, wicked, wicked** I’ve got a **wicked** campaign, do a **dope** campaign yeah, and like the logo is **dope** may d= **dope** may be dear but you pay through the nose for **coke**.

Dan: <laugh> ... Where did you **nick** that from?

64. Jay: But you’re too young to go for girls. We’re drinking beer, [getting **pissed**]

Wayne: [No I’m not.]

Jay: **out of our nut**.

65. Chris: You just said you wanted to get **wasted**.

Julian: I don’t wanna get **wasted**, I wanna get, [merry.]

In young men’s terminology, ‘drug’ is called *dope*, ‘cocaine’ becomes *coke*, and ‘completely drunk’ is expressed through such metaphorical expressions as *pissed* and *wasted*. Other expressions dominating their slanguage are *nick* (‘steal’), *out of one’s nut*

(‘insane’) and *wicked* (‘excellent’), which in some way confirm their intimacy with the other group members and their need for a common creative vocabulary.

5.2.2. *Secrecy and privacy*

Secrecy and privacy are especially peculiar to criminals and drug dealers, who tend to use secret slang words in their clandestine traffic. Yet private slang words are also used by (young) drug addicts, who exploit them to minimize the potential intrusion of non-users, esp. to hide confidential information from public or parental authority.

Illustrative examples of covert slang expressions are offered in the dialogues below, (66)-(68) taken from *Trainspotting* (1996) and (69)-(72) from *A Scanner Darkly* (2006):

66. Sick Boy: There’s a mate of Swanney’s. Mikey Forrester – you know the guy. He’s come into some **gear**. A lot of **gear**.
Renton: How much?
Sick Boy: About four kilos.
67. Renton: So we’ve just come from Tommy’s funeral and you’re telling me about a **skag** deal?
Bebbie: Yeah.
Renton: What was your price?
Sick Boy: Four Grand.
68. Diane: Are you **clean**?
Renton: Yes.
Diane: Is that a promise, then?
Renton: Yes, as a matter of fact, it is.
Diane: Calm down, I’m just asking. Is that **hash** I can smell?
69. Jim: Donna **does coke**, all right?
Charles: Three dollars doesn’t get you a **line of coke**.
70. Charles: I heard you have to **cold turkey**.
Jim: **Cold turkey** doesn’t even apply to **Substance D**. Unlike the legacy of inherited predisposition to addictive behaviour of substances this needs no genetic assistance.

There's no weekend warriors on the **D**. You're either **on it** or you haven't tried it.

71. Donna: Hey, do you have that money for the **stuff**? I need it tonight.

Bob: Yeah. I have it.

72. Bob: How much do you **do**?

Donna: Not that much. And I don't **shoot up**. I never have and I never will, I – Once you start **shooting**, you got like six months, maybe. And even tap water. You get a **habit**.

Bob: You have a **habit**.

Marginal or isolated subgroups in society – esp. drug dealers/takers – use specific slang terms to name 'drug' (*gear, stuff, (Substance) D* ← *Death*) or types of drugs (*(line of) coke* '(dose of) cocaine', *hash* 'hashish', *skag* 'heroin'), and also rename the actions connected with drugs (*be on it, do, do coke*), e.g. 'injecting oneself with them' (*shoot up*), 'the practice of taking addictive drugs' (*habit*), and the state of being 'free from', or 'the giving up of' them (*clean, cold turkey*). In this way, they intend to create a new restricted language code which assumes a high degree of shared contextual experience between speaker and listener, but at the same time preserves secret talks from being decoded by outsiders.

5.2.3. Informality and debasement

Informality and debasement are chiefly evident in general slang words, which are deliberately used by speakers to break with the neutral standard language and to reduce the level of discourse to familiar or low speech. They signal the speakers' intention to refuse conventions and their need to be informal, to ease social exchanges and induce friendliness.

Consider, for instance, the welcome salutations between old friends in (73), taken from *There's Something about Mary* (1998):

73. Sully: Healy, you **dog**.

Healy: Sully. Look at you.

Sully: You hot **shit**. You look **fucking piss**.

The speakers adopt an informal debased vocabulary to express their closeness and equality. In particular, Sully uses the polysemous slang words *dog* and *shit* as familiar epithets, and then adds that his friend looks *fucking pisser*, that is, ‘particularly fine or impressive’.

A similar informality is shown in the conversations below, (74) taken from *The Full Monty* (1997) and (75)-(76) from *Notting Hill* (1999):

74. Horse: Hey, you get some fit **birds** in there.
Lomper: Nah, her **tits** are too big.
75. Spike: There’s something wrong with the goggles, though.
William: No, they were, um... prescription.
Spike: **Groovy**.
76. Max: Wine?
Tessa: Oh, yes, please. Come on, Willie, let’s get **sloshed**.

Here slang terminology ranges from debased (*tits* ‘breasts’) to familiar (*groovy* ‘excellent’), to intimate friendly language (*birds* ‘girls’, *sloshed* ‘drunk’). It is the vocabulary which people use in common relaxed conversations, in such contexts as home, pub or general free time, in which an educated formal register would be situationally inappropriate and unconventional language is instead privileged.

5.2.4. *Vulgarity and obscenity*

Andrew: Are you allowed to swear?

Josie: Yes, that’s the whole point. Give me some of your slang.
(COLT 132902: 19-20)

Vulgarity and obscenity spread through the language of adolescents, known and referred to as “pubilect” (see Taylor 1998 and the literature therein). Adolescents in fact use dirty, swear or taboo words to exhibit their strength, power and virility (in the case of boys), or, in general, to boast with their peers, and to show that, when parents or teachers are not there, they are free to go to excesses in their language.

COLT dialogues are the widest collection of improper and unmentionable slang words. When adolescents are asked to provide their favourite swear word, they provide a list of options selected from their repertoire:

77. Josie: Like you, Shell, what's your favourite swear word.
 Saira: Do we want to [read then?]
 Shelley: [**bastard**]
 Josie: I like **cunt**. I like the way it comes out. **Cunt!** And **up your bum!** ... And **cock off!** And **bloody, bastard, buggery, bum and balls and holes.** <laugh> Oh! That stupid girl. **Up your bum!**
78. Josie: We come to an agreement and that's our biggest word, **fuck**. I've got everyone's, oi, Mohammed! What's your favourite swear word? ...
 ?: **Bollocks!** [...]
 Josie: Mine's like, **cunt** and things like that.
 Peter: <unclear> this or not?
 Alice: Usually **shit** and **fuck**, I think are my vocabulary.
 Josie: Yeah, or **oh shit, you cunt!**
 Alice: Or **shite** is also another one.
 Josie: Yeah, or, or, or, **budging hell** cos your mum's in front of you.

Predictably, most of the impolite slang words and expressions above have sexual connotations (*balls and holes, bollocks, (up your) bum, cock off, cunt, fuck*). Others have scatological connotations (*shit, shite*), and still others are coarse terms of abuse used to insult or express irritation or anger (*bastard, bloody, budging hell, buggery*).

COLT adolescents often turn out to be obscene when they make use of such words to refer to various types of sexual intercourses:

79. Andrew: Thelma and Louise. That was a good bit when he **fucked her up the arse.**
 Josie: <laugh> Like when he goes, [**suck my cock!**]
80. Leanne: [...] your Mum **sucks** a black **knob.**

Craig: A black **knob**?

Leanne: Yeah.

Craig: Your Mum **sucks Chinky knobs**. Your Mum's got a **fanny** with a split the wrong way. ... You know [your Mu=]

Leanne: [Yours **sucks**] her own **boobs**.

These recordings show the speakers' naivety, their call for slang "four-letter words" (*arse*, *boob(s)*, *cock*, *fuck*, *knob*, *suck*) (Apte 1998: 987) to appear older than they are, or, for girls, to appear as wordy-wise as the boys are supposed to be.

5.2.5. *Time-restriction, ephemerality and localism*

Time-restriction, ephemerality and localism are properties which deal with the collocation of slang expressions in time or space. Some slang words are indeed typical of a certain time period, which may be associated with the speaker's age. Others disappear as quickly as they have been created, but they show the speakers' effort to be novel in his speech. Still others are typical of a region, normally connected to the speaker's origin.

As for time-restriction, some slang words are typical of a generation or age group. Hence, when a person grows older and no longer belongs to this age group, (s)he generally stops using them.

Consider Mr. De Leon's words in this excerpt from *Frankie and Johnny* (1991):

81. Mr. De Leon: ... In my time, I said... **tooties, dolls, gals, chicks, babes**... sometimes even **broads**. That's when I was a young man...

As for ephemerality, some words have been slang for a very long period of time. For instance, the word *quid*, which was firstly attested in 1688 with the sense of 'a guinea', continues to be used now, as in COLT below, though in the slightly different sense of 'one pound sterling':

82. Matt: How much do you get an hour?
 Claire: Three **quid**. How much [do you get?]
 Craig: [Ah no!] He's been working his time man. Ah! That's out of order. Ah nah! <laughing> Ah ha ah!
 Jo: Three pound [is right.]

Conversely, other slang words are ephemeral, and they are not recorded in dictionaries, though their slangy flavour is evident. Observe, for instance, the following insulting occasionalisms ending in *-head*:

83. Selum: What you doing? **Peanut head**.
 Elee: Shut up.
 Selum: **Peanut head. Bean head**.
 Elee: No.
 Selum: [**Boil head**.]

As for localism, some slang is associated with a specific region. The conversations which follow, respectively from *Grease* (1978) and *Footloose* (1984), show examples of regional slang:

84. Boy: What are the Scorpions doing here? This ain't their **turf**.
 Danny: Think they wanna **rumble**? Well, if they do, we're gonna be ready for it.
85. Willard: Oh, shit, really?
 Ren: No. Yeah, but we did dance. We **danced our asses off!**

The noun *turf*, denoting the streets controlled by a juvenile street-gang and regarded by them as 'their territory', and the verb *rumble* ('have a gang fight') are American English slang, and so is the expression *to dance one's ass off* ('dance a lot'), which we distinguish from British slang *to dance one's arse off*.

Another example of local slang is provided by Cockney rhyming slang, which occurs in its elliptic form in the example below, drawn from *The Limey* (1999):

86. Wilson: Eddy... yeah, he's me new **china**.
 Elaine: What?
 Wilson: **China plate**... mate.

5.3. Hearer-oriented properties

Slang words may be distinguished from the standard language vocabulary because they normally produce some effect upon the hearer which the neutral comparable forms would not generate.

The effects of slang words range from positive to negative and depend to a large extent on the interactants and the context of use. They may vary in accordance with the participants' relationship and their mutual knowledge, or with the situation and the prosody intervening in the word pronunciation. All these factors guide the hearer's interpretation of the slang words and his feeling about them.

Some slang words can, for instance, cause the hearer's laughter or amuse him. Others may convey liveliness and vivacity by way of novel forms, or impress the hearer via creative meaning associations, or else attract his attention via captivating sounds. But others may shock the hearer, especially when they sound impudent or rude, and they may make him feel authorised to adopt the same language to accept the speaker's challenge.

The different, even divergent, effects that slang words can produce motivate the proliferation of slang co-referents, none of which are actually redundant, but are rather necessary to arouse some specific reaction on the hearer's part.

5.3.1. *Playfulness and humour*

Playfulness and humour are typical features of metaphorical slang words. Generally, people find a slang word amusing when the association with its referent sounds unfamiliar, odd, and therefore out of the ordinary.

For instance, the metaphor *snake* referring to ‘the male sexual organ’ sounds rather comical in this extract from *Meet the Parents* (2000):

87. Greg: I forgot. I’m not supposed to let the **snake** out of my cage.
 Pam: You what?
 Greg: I told your dad I wouldn’t touch you for seventy-two hours.

Similarly, the metaphorical expression *a bun in the oven* for ‘a child conceived’ would be funny to the reader of this secret dialogue drawn from *Grease* (1978):

88. Sonny: Hey Marty, what’s up?
 Marty: Rizzo’s pregnant, don’t tell anybody.
 Sonny: Rizzo got a **bun in the oven**.

The humour and playfulness of such expressions are mainly obtained by means of a subtle play of metaphorical extensions, which presupposes the hearer’s knowledge of the circumstances to identify the actual meanings implied.

People also find a slang word funny when it is used across generation boundaries: e.g., by a speaker who is younger or older than expected. Consider the word *fox* used by a child in (89) (from *Footloose* 1984), and *chick* used by an adult in (90) (from *Notting Hill* 1999):

89. Wes: Ethel, you sure you’re not too tired?
 Ethel: No, Ren did most of the driving.
 Amy: If you ask me, Ren is a total **fox**.
 Lulu: Amy!
 Wes: Where did you hear that?
90. William: Um, I wouldn’t go outside.
 Spike: Why not?

William: Just take a word for it.

Spike: Oh. How did I look? Not bad. Not at all bad. Well-chosen briefs, I'd say. **Chicks** love grey. Nice firm buttocks.

In both cases, the terms used sound anomalous or bizarre, as they give the impression of being an emulation of teenage language. Hence, their comical effect upon the hearer.

Furthermore, a slang word may sound humorous when it is felt as outdated. Consequently, people who continue using it may appear ridiculous. An example is the old-fashioned word *ninny* ('a simpleton; a fool') contextualized in this extract from *Mickey Blue Eyes* (1999):

91. Michael: I'm sorry, Phillip. Uncle Vito!

Boss: Oh, Michael, I'm a **ninny**! I quite forgot to tell you the good news.

5.3.2. *Freshness and novelty*

Freshness and novelty are distinctive features of slangage, since teenagers, and young people in general, tend to be up-to-date and innovative in their speech.

Consider some original expressions – all from COLT – used by London teenagers to refer to 'crazy (people)':

92. Robert: He's bloody mad, bloody potty, **off his rocker**. (into microphone)

Amanda: Where did you get it?

93. Kath: She's allergic to alcohol, she ge = she gets really pissed on like one, two glasses of wine.

Lizzie: Yeah but allergic means you come up in something.

Kath: No I mean, basically it means that, it gets to her head really quickly, like one, two glasses of wine, and she's **off her trolley**.

94. Orgady: <laugh>

Charlotte: You could go a bit **nutty** with it.

Obina: What are you two arguing for?

95. Sabrina: Oh he's such a **nutter** isn't he.
 Caroline: Oh right.
 Sabrina: God he's such a **nutcase**.
96. Charitra: yeah, he's gonna go **bonkers**.
 Sarah: <laugh>

Teenagers' efforts to invent new words and to modify the form or meaning of existing ones are evident from the above slang nouns (*nutcase*, *nutter*), and adjectives/phrases (*bonkers*, *nutty*, *off her trolley*, *off his rocker*). The young are indeed creative and continually in search of novel expressions which show that they are fashionable. They change their way of speaking as quickly as they change their clothing, hairstyle or make-up, in line with the trends of modern society (cf. Milroy 1998).

Slanguage originality and inventiveness are confirmed by Josie's lesson (again from COLT) on the sense of some words of her own creation:

97. Josie: Hi Sam! ... I was taping, Sam. ... <speaking quietly just for the tape> **battyman** means you're gay. And **Lezzypal** means you're a lesbian. Okay? <unclear> (break in tape)

But often modern slanguage runs the risk of appearing obscure to the hearer who, though perceiving the freshness of a slang word, may not be able to catch its meaning, as in (98) below:

98. Peter: <unclear> any **fags**? Got any **fags**?
 Liam: Pardon? ...

The word *fag* being here used in the place of standard English 'cigarette'.

5.3.3. *Desire to impress and faddishness*

Some slang words show the speaker's desire to impress the hearer,

and they actually do, because of their faddishness. The extravagance of the numerous expressions coined for ‘homosexual male or female’ can illustrate this aspect of slang.

We can draw from COLT useful exemplifications:

99. Danny: He’s a bender.
Matthew: Hong Kong and he’s gay **bent** bastard.
100. Leanne: Your Dad, is a fucking **lesy**.
Craig: How can my Dad be a **lesy**? Your Mum’s a **lesy**. And your Dad’s gay, so shut up! That’s the end.
101. Josh: Jonathan’s a dancing **queen**.
Jonathan: <laughing> Yeah, <unclear> you dickhead.
Rob: Jonathan’s a **queen**, period.
102. Kath: **Queer** bastard.
Claire: Who’s a que= me?
Kath: Mm.
Claire: I’m not **queer**!

Bent, lesy, queen, queer (n and adj) and many other unconventional slang words can strike the hearer, because of their eccentric character and/or figurative sense.

Another teenage slang word which may shock the hearer is *cow*. A small sample from COLT conversations is enough to understand its use in context:

103. Josie: [Yeah, yeah, yeah] like your mum goes, you stupid **cow**!
104. Josie: ... what you laughing at you flat chested **cow**? I was laughing and you were getting the hump with it ... cos I knew I had it all on tape.
Wesley: I didn’t call you a flat chested **cow**.
105. Owain: You’re a fucking flaming **cow**.
Leon: <laughing> You’re so bad </> beat him up.
106. Sabrina: Good. Ain’t that <name> a big **cow**.

Caroline: <laugh>

Sabrina: Bloody right **cow**! And you know yesterday she had the nerve, to ask me if she could sit, at the end of our table.

As these extracts show, *cow* is not properly an offensive slang word, but it is rather used in jest (as in 103, 104), or to impress the hearer (as in 105, 106). What is faddish about this word is that it collocates with unpleasant or intensifying adjectives (*big, bloody right, flaming, flat chested, fucking stupid*) and, in spite of this, it is not necessarily an insulting bad word.

5.3.4. Colour and musicality

Slang words often play with sounds or may display an onomatopoeic colour. Musicality may be obtained by way of reduplicative formations or rhyming phrases.

In the following conversation taken from *Grease* (1978), Marty uses a copy reduplicative to express her disappointment:

107. Marty: Oh, double **doo doo**.

Betty: Please.

Jan: What was that?

Marty: One of my diamonds just fell in the macaroni!

and the musicality of *doo-doo* ('faeces') is further reinforced by the alliterative adjective *double*.

Other instances of exact reduplication are in the extracts from COLT reported below:

108. Samantha: a **boo boo**, got my voice, too big.

Dawn: You're telling me.

109. Joanne: <whine> <mimicking> pinky **boo boo**. Oh. Oh I mean, Lynn, you always...

Lynn: <unclear> cow's **poo poo**.

in which the words *boo-boo* ('a foolish mistake or blunder') and *poo-poo* ('faeces') exhibit only an internal echo.

Rhyme is another common source of musicality, as the excerpts below, respectively from *Grease* (1978), *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) and *Notting Hill* (1999), illustrate:

110. Betty: Okay. So you guys think this is a **gang-bang**?
Doody: You wish!
111. Harry: [...] A 'Sheldon' can do you income taxes. If you need a root canal, Sheldon is your man. But **humping and pumping** is not Sheldon's strong suit. It's the name. [...]
112. William: Oh. Well, great. Fantastic. That's er... Oh... **shittity brickitty**. It's my sister's birthday. Shit. We're meant to be having dinner.
Anna: Okay, that's fine.

The compound *gang-bang* ('a sexual orgy'), the phrase *humping and pumping*, from two vulgar verbs (*hump*, *pump*) meaning 'having sexual intercourse', and the interjection *shittity brickitty*, from *shit a brick* ('expressing surprise or amazement'), make the hearer aware of slang echoic character, which mostly emerges when the speaker modulates (aggravating or mitigating) the force of his speech act.

An additional source of musicality is onomatopoeia. Consider the dialogue below, drawn from *There's Something about Mary* (1998):

113. Detective Stabler: First tell us why you did it.
Ted: Why I did it? Um, I don't know. Boredom? The guy turns out to be a **blabbermouth**. Just would not shut up. I mean with the, just...

Blabbermouth used here is a colourful expression indicating 'one who blabs; a tell-tale', thus evoking the sound one produces when 'blabbing' via the /b/ consonant reiteration.

The consonant cluster /ʃm/ rather denotes someone or something unpleasant, as in (114) below:

114. Josie: Karen! What are you going to be when you grow up?
Karen! Oi! You ugly **schmuck!**

Indeed, *schmuck* ('idiot') belongs to a set of slang words of Yiddish origin which normally have bad connotations (e.g. *schmeck* 'heroin', *schmooze* 'a chat or gossip', *schmutz* 'filth, dirt', etc.).

5.3.5. *Impertinence, offensiveness and aggressiveness*

The impertinence and aggressiveness of some slang words have offensiveness as an inevitable consequence. Insolent terms of address, or strong, even cruel slang expressions may be used to insult other people, in impolite conversations, or to show one's disapproval and condemnation of the hearer's behaviour, way of life, etc.

People sometimes address their friends using impudent expressions. Below is a series of contextualized examples, some (115, 116) drawn from *The Full Monty* (1997), and the others from COLT:

115. Dave: I try dieting. I do try. Seems I've spent most of my fuckin' life on a diet. The less I eat, the fatter I get.
Lomper: So stuff yourself and get thin.
Guy: Oh, shut up, **saggy tits!**
116. Gaz: Dave. Oi, you **deaf twat!**
Dave: Oh, what d'you want now? I've told you, I'm finished with it.
117. Ian: <unclear> You **lard arse**. He's got <unclear> ...
Grace: <laugh> ...
Ian: He's an **old cunt**.
Grace: <laugh> So <unclear> as you boy.
118. Vicki: Fuck you **arsehole!**
Jay: <laugh> ... <laughing> No fuck you **arsehole!**

119. Terry: <mimicking cry> I d=, oh no. <whistle> See how much money you got. <shouting> You fool! You **dumb arse!**
 Mother: <unclear>
 Terry: <shouting> I don't care! **Bloody prick** <unclear>!
 <sigh>

These brief excerpts show that most slang uncouth expressions collocate with vulgar taboo words related to male or female genitals (*arse, arsehole, cunt, prick, tits, twat*).

Other aggressive nasty slang words are rather related to female promiscuity. Below are some instances from COLT:

120. Shelley: Shut up you old **tart!**
 Josie: Ooh ooh! Language please!
121. Jay: Your Mum's a **slut**.
 Craig: Ah! Your Mum's a **slut**.
122. Anthony: <mimicking> Now to=, for some fucking dirty swear! Woooooh! You fucking bitch! You Irish bastard! Aden and Mandy have it in bed! Wo oh! Bed squeaking! Ah ha, ah ha, ah ha, ah ah! Fucking **slag!** Dirty whore!

Still others are related to the animal kingdom:

123. Shelley: [<unclear>] ... <screaming> You rotten bastard!
 Josie: <shouting> You ... Shelley ... are a sick fat **bitch!**
124. Leon: I really hate anybody who's being horrible to other people, it makes me feel bad.
 Casey: Oh, stuff it **pig head**.

Notice, finally, how the slang word *dog* varies across different regional varieties and turns out to be offensive in British slang (cf. Amer. slang in 73 above):

125. Samantha: You're dirty **dog**.
 Romax: You're dirty **dog**. [Get lost.]

5.4. The opinion of native speakers

The opinion of native speakers of English² has been crucial to confirm our expectations about the sociological factors characterizing slang. Results from experiments conducted on native informants aged between 17 and 54, though not relevant statistically, have for the most part confirmed that the functions/effects of English slang amount to the speaker-/hearer-oriented criteria just examined. For instance, in the questionnaires they filled in, natives offered the following comments about the words/expressions highlighted in (52)-(61):

□ *Cook up, hit*

The verb *cook up* and the noun *hit* turned out to be hardly comprehensible for most English speakers. Hence, none would use them, and the majority declared that they consider them faddish private words essentially used to communicate efficiently among insiders, and, simultaneously, to exclude outsiders.

The informants who understood the sense of *cook up* provided such definitions as ‘prepare a dose/shot of heroin’ or ‘heat heroin’, describing it as a novel word.

They did not always succeed in disambiguating the sense of *hit* either. They attempted such descriptions as ‘a heroin dose’, ‘a shot of heroin’, or, with a few uncertainties, ‘a dose of drugs’. Interestingly, a woman from Leicester described *hit* through another slang term – i.e. *fix* – which was probably more familiar to her.

By contrast, an erroneous description of *hit* was ‘the effect of heroin’, which however confirmed that this word can be associated with a drug dose via the negative effects a drug can produce on its addict (see Effect Pattern in § 4.2.2.5.4).

□ *Cop, tip*

The noun *cop* was understood by all informants, who provided definitions such as ‘a policeman’ or ‘a police officer’. A 17-year-old girl from Liverpool defined it an American English word, but

² The informants were all speakers from the U.K., but their regional origins were various, viz. from South East (London) to East Midlands (Leicester), from Northern England (Liverpool, Manchester) to Scotland (Edinburgh).

most of the informants affirmed that they would use it in informal or familiar British English as well.

On the other hand, the verb *tip* was heterogeneously defined as ‘give some money’, ‘help’, ‘warn; give advice’, ‘tell; give information’, but this latter is the most appropriate slang interpretation, as illustrated in (53).

□ *Squiffy*

The adjective *squiffy* was not clear to many informants, who consequently would not use it in their everyday speech. Some speakers interpreted the word sense as ‘dizzy’ or ‘feel sick’, and only a few provided the more precise definition ‘feel tipsy’ or ‘drunk’.

The adjective was generally described as humorous and playful at the same time, chiefly because it was regarded as an old-fashioned colourful expression.

□ *Snake*

The euphemism *snake* for ‘penis’ was familiar to nearly all informants, who however stated that they would not use this word.

They generally agreed about the word playfulness and humorous effect. Some (chiefly young or middle-aged women) also added comments on the word’s vulgarity/obscenity.

□ *Unfuckingtouchable*

The novel adjective *unfuckingtouchable* (an occasionalism from COLT) had never heard before by the informants. Hence, some were not able to recover the word meaning from the context. Others asserted that they would not use this word, but tried to find out its meaning (e.g. ‘refusing contact with others’, ‘aloof’, ‘stand offish’).

As regards the word’s functions/effects, interpretations ranged from vulgarity and obscenity to playfulness and faddishness.

□ *Pansy, asshole*

The noun *pansy* was not recognizable to young informants, whereas middle-aged speakers provided the correct definition (i.e. ‘homosexual man’, ‘effeminate man’, ‘effeminate gay man’, ‘gay’), though some of them specified that the word is felt as out-dated.

On the other hand, the noun *asshole* was clear to everyone. Most speakers gave the definition ‘idiot’ or ‘stupid person’, though some others tried to be more precise (‘a person with an exaggerated idea of his own importance’).

Both words were viewed as offensive and aggressive expressions which are now part of derogatory vocabulary, but *asshole* was additionally felt as a vulgar/obscene swear word of American use.

□ *Chick, nuts*

There is discrepancy between the perceptions of the various informants, who rated as out-dated words like *chick* and *nuts*.

The noun *chick* for ‘girl, woman’ was known by the informants but not used by them for different reasons. Some claimed it is a playful/humorous faddish word, but colourful and offensive to the addressee. Others claimed it is American English, and therefore not used in Britain. Still other people claimed that *chick* is late 1960s/70s slang, so, when it is used by adult people who were young in that period, it produces comical effects.

The adjective *nuts* was similarly viewed as a humorous/playful but offensive term for ‘crazy’ or ‘mad’, which has now become dated slang or has entered into informal language.

□ *Yobbo*

The noun *yobbo* seemed familiar to most British English speakers. With a few exceptions – e.g. some did not provide any definition for the word and one interpreted it as ‘homeless alcoholic’ – speakers considered *yobbo* a colourful efficient word for ‘thug’ or ‘brainless aggressive person’, an informal British English term for ‘aggressive man’ or ‘uncouth person’, and some would even use it in such senses.

□ *Pished, bird, ride*

The adjective *pished* – from *pissed*, some informants remark – would be used as a playful/humorous term for ‘drunk’, or avoided as a result of its colourful character.

Also the noun *bird* for ‘girlfriend’, ‘girl’ or ‘woman’ was considered colourful, and by some people offensive. Others felt it is now informal British English.

The verb *ride* was described as a private word for ‘carried/lift’, a vulgar American slang term for ‘having sex’, a colourful term for ‘sexual intercourse’, or an offensive word for ‘sex’.

□ *Knocked up*

The participle *knocked up* was plain to most informants, with the exception of some young ones. The sense indicated was ‘made pregnant’, ‘left pregnant’, ‘got pregnant’, and the word’s characteristics dealt with vulgarity, offensiveness and localism (i.e. Amer. slang).

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has confirmed that the functions and effects of slang are numerous, sometimes divergent, but more often interrelated and hard to keep separate. They may indeed merge to characterize the same slang expression and to suggest its different facets, depending on the conversation participants and situation of occurrence.

Some slang words have turned out to index different speakers or to generate dissimilar effects in relation to the context. For instance, in American English the word *dog* can be viewed as an indicator of informal or low level discourse, thus implying the speaker’s effort to establish a close intimate relationship with his hearer. But it can also be an indicator of the participants’ place of origin, since British speakers would rather use it as a colourful word for ‘bastard’, hence, as a means to challenge their hearers.

Similarly, such words as *bird* for ‘a girl’ and *fox* for ‘an attractive woman’ can signal the speaker’s age and gender, since they are generally used by young men as verbal means of group cohesion and distinctiveness. Yet when they are used across generation boundaries – e.g. by adult men – they give the impression of being bad imitations of teenage slang, with a consequent humorous effect upon the hearer.

An audio-visual context – as in the case of film dialogues – or a specific data collection with clues about the speakers’ origin, age, occupation, and interpersonal relations – as drawn from COLT conversations – has helped us associate sociological properties to the slang words/expressions investigated.

In addition, experiments on British English native speakers have wholly confirmed our expectations about slang functions/effects. Predictably, the only divergencies among the results obtained originated from the different speakers' ages, genders and cities of origin, which are variables we took into account in our sociological survey.

Hence, it is ultimately in the speaker's intentionality and in the hearer's acceptability that slang acquires its socio-cultural value, and it is in the speakers' mutual behaviour and respect that we can perceive the authentic function that a slang word fulfils, or the actual effect it produces.

Final Remarks

Is *slang* a word for linguistics? (Dumas & Lighter 1978, article title)

Thirty years after Dumas & Lighter's article, this study has tried to provide confirmation that slang can truly be considered 'a word for linguistics'. First of all, it is a word for morphologists who analyse the word-formation phenomena violating universal principles of English grammar, hitherto marginalized to extra-grammatical morphology. Secondly, it is a word for semanticists who study the organization of the English lexical system, and, particularly, the behavioural tendencies of items departing from such organization and generating complexity. Thirdly, slang is a word for sociolinguists who investigate the interrelations among participants in a conversation, and wish to identify the linguistic means qualifying the speakers and/or producing some effect upon the hearers.

The morphological inspection conducted in this study has given significant results pertaining to the grammaticality vs. extra-grammaticality of slang formations. We have established that some of them conform to the canonical derivation and compounding mechanisms of standard English, including noun-forming suffixes, e.g., *-er* (*chancer*) and *-ing* (*ranking*), adjective-forming suffixes, e.g., *-ed* (*potted*), *-ing* (*happening*) and *-y* (*foxy*), compound nouns (*baglady*), adjectives (*pie-faced*), and verbs (*talk turkey*), and conversions (adv *out* → v *out* 'knock out or defeat (an opponent)'). Other formations are extra-grammatical because:

- Rather than creating new words, they obtain connoted variants, as in the case of some slang suffixes, e.g., *-eroo* (*flopperoo*), *-ie/-y* (*bikie*, *chiefy*), *-er/-ers* (*brekker*,

champers), *-o* (*kiddo*), and of numerous abbreviatory operations, such as initialisms (*once-over* → *O.O.*), blending (*sex* + *sensational* → *sexational*), and clipping (*fabulous* → *fab*, *banana* → *nana*);

- In blatant contradiction with Aronoff's (1976) Unitary Base Hypothesis and Scalise's (1988) Unitary Output Hypothesis, they apply to various base categories and display output promiscuity: e.g., the *-ie/-y* suffix is indiscriminately applied to nouns (*druggie/-y*), adjectives (*biggie/-y*), verbs (*clippie/-y*), and adverbs (*downie*);
- Rather than exhibiting predictable form change, they are irregularly formed from discontinuous bases, as in infixation (*abso-bloody-lutely*), with consequent morphotactic and morphosemantic opacity (Dressler 1999, 2005);
- Rather than relying on existing stem or word bases, they may show no meaningful bases, as in rhyming or copy reduplication (*hotsy-totsy*, *bling-bling*) or word manufacture (*scag*).

Still other formations lie between grammatical and extra-grammatical morphology. On the one hand, they may conform to the regular patterns of morphotactic concatenation, but display extra-grammaticality in the base forms (*yobby* ← *yob*), or, on the other hand, they may display regular bases, but irregular order of morphological processes (*dicey* ← pl. of *die*).

Lastly, some rare slang formations belong to marginal morphology because their processes stand across the margin between derivation and compounding (*-fest* in *gabfest*), or between morphology and phonology (*gee* ← *guy*, *Beeb* ← *B.B.C.*).

Interestingly, while some idiomatically combining expressions of Standard English (e.g. *to take advantage of*) are compositional, slang idiomatic phrases (e.g. *to kick the bucket*) are non-compositional, and therefore lexicalized as such, or, at least, metaphorical (e.g. *to work one's guts out*) (see Nunberg *et al.* 1994; cf. Mateu & Espinal 2007).

The semantic inspection has shown that most regular (rule-governed) slang formations exhibit irregularity in meaning association, and therefore generate disorganization within the lexical system.

The way slang words organize the lexicon into semantic areas is sometimes predictable on the basis of meaning relations (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy), or of regular patterns which may help recreate the correlation between slang words and their meaning. Yet slang organization has often turned out to be unpredictable, and the cognitive operations linking slang words to the correlated concepts have appeared hard, if not impossible, to identify. For this reason we have explored slang disorganization.

Lexical disorganization is pertinent to items such as *nut*, which in slang maintains some of its standard semantic features but also acquires new ones. Standard features (e.g. roundness, smallness, hardness) are useful to disambiguate such slang meanings as ‘the head’ or ‘a testicle’, but they are useless with other slang meanings. Hence, we have made use of new features (e.g. excellence, fashion, craziness) to interpret such meanings as ‘an excellent person’, ‘a fashionable young man’, or ‘a mad or crazy person’.

Lexical disorganization is total when no standard feature is maintained by slang, as in *monkey*. We have seen that, in slang, this word implies a semantic shift from a non-human to a human entity (‘an associate’, ‘a chorus girl’), or even to an abstract one (‘addiction to a drug’). Here, slang meanings have turned out to be inaccessible using our common knowledge of standard English, and, in such conditions, the micro-system has turned out to be unstable, and its dynamics unpredictable.

These findings are in line with a recently-developed theory of Lexical Complexity (Bertuccelli Papi & Lenci 2007), grounded on the notions of dynamicity and complexity. Accordingly, we can claim that the slang macro-system is complex due to: (a) the high number of dimensions and related states of the system, and, in particular, (b) the irregularity and unpredictability of its dynamics.

Lastly, the sociological inspection has illustrated the possible functions/effects of slang in free conversation. This inspection starts from the crucial distinction we have made between speaker- and hearer-oriented criteria. The former – including group-restriction, secrecy, vulgarity and others – index the speakers’ characters, attitudes and intentions, while the latter include a set of effects, such as humour or offensiveness, which slang words and phrases can produce upon the hearer/addressee.

As for functions, we have identified words which qualify the speaker as a member of a particular group, such as young men chatting about sex, alcohol, drugs (*chick, dope, pissed, wasted*), or criminals talking about drug traffic (*gear, hash, skag, stuff*). We have also observed that certain slang words can ease social exchanges and encourage friendliness (*bird, dog, groovy, sloshed*), but they may become offensive in a different regional context (cf. *dog* Amer. ‘mate’ vs. Brit. ‘idiot’). We have likewise observed the vulgarity or even obscenity of many adolescents’ swear words (*cunt, fuck, knob, suck*), and the restriction of other words to age groups: e.g., *babes, broads, dolls* and *gals* belong to the young generation, so their use is limited to that generation and not to the next one.

As for effects, we have distinguished humorous or playful words/expressions (*a bun in the oven, snake*) from offensive or aggressive ones (*fat bitch, lard arse, old tart, saggy tits*). We have also focused on the freshness of slanguage and on the creative expressions that teenagers use, for instance, to express craziness (*bonkers, nutcase, nutter, nutty, off one’s trolley/rocker*), or on their faddish options for ‘homosexual’ (*bent, lesy, queen, queer*), sometimes mere occasionalisms (*battyman, lezzypal*). Lastly, we have commented on the musicality of such slang words as *boo-boo* and *poo-poo*, or the colour of such expressions as *gang-bang* and *humping and pumping*.

However, we have also drawn attention to the subjectivity and questionableness of some such sociological properties, compared with the objectivity of linguistic peculiarities, which can indiscriminately assign the label ‘slang’ to new words. I am referring here to the EMOs discussed in section 3.1.2, viz. infixation, abbreviated (elliptic) rhyming formations, inverted and altered forms, and familiarity markers such as the English suffix *-ie/-y, -ers* (Brit.), *-eroo* (Amer.), *-o* (Austral.), and *-s*. But I am also referring to the polysemy or semantic indeterminacy of the terms discussed in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, i.e. highly complex micro-systems which have no internal equilibrium among fluctuating meanings, and consequently menace the stability of the whole macro-system and hinder prediction of its dynamics.

In this study, I have re-examined slang from different perspectives, and shown new directions of analysis. In this way, I hope to have demonstrated that slang is not marginal, but a basic linguistic phenomenon which offers the occasion for intriguing considerations about the evolution of the English grammar system, and is the starting-point of lively discussions on the complexity of the English lexical system. Slang is, we might say, a ‘foxy’ topic.

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Glossary

abso-bloody-lutely (adv) Used as a considerably more emphatic version of *absolutely*.

Other infixed forms of the word are *abso-bally-lutely*, *abso-blessed-lutely*, *abso-blooming-lutely* and *abso-fuckin(g)-lutely*.

Abyssinia (int) (jocular) From the parting salutation *I'll be seeing you*.

Acapulco gold (n) A variety of marijuana grown in the vicinity of Acapulco.

AC/DC (adj) (orig. U.S.) Also *AC-DC*. Bisexual. Humorously from *alternating current*, *direct current*.

acid (n) (orig. U.S.) The hallucinogenic drug LSD.

acid head (n) (orig. U.S.) Someone who habitually takes the LSD drug.

acker (n) (orig. Services' slang) (1) A piaster. (2) pl. Money, cash; coins or bank-notes.

Adam (n) (orig. U.S.) The hallucinogenic drug MDMA.

Adam-and-Eve (v) Rhyming slang for 'believe'.

after (n) Afternoon.

ag (adj) (chiefly N. Amer.) Agricultural.

aggro (n) (1) Aggravation. (2) Aggression; deliberate trouble-making or harassment.

airhead (n) (chiefly N. Amer.) Someone who is foolish, simple-minded, or stupid.

alky (n) Alcohol; spec. (illicit) alcoholic liquor.

all-firedly (adv) Unusually, excessively.

all-in (adj) Exhausted.

all-over (n) (chiefly U.S.) pl. As *the all-overs*, a feeling of nervousness or unease (occas. of annoyance).

all-overish (adj) Having a general and indefinite sense of illness pervading the body.

amber fluid (n) Also *amber liquid* (or *nectar*). A liquid or (alcoholic) drink of an amber colour, spec. lager.

ambisextrous (adj) (humorous) Bisexual. From *sex* and *ambidextrous*.

Amerikkka (n) (orig. U.S.) American society viewed as racist, fascist, or oppressive, esp. by Black consciousness. From *G. Amerika*, *America*, and the initial letters of *Ku Klux Klan*.

ammo (n) Ammunition (esp. for small arms).

amster (n) (Austral.) Also *ampster*. From *Amsterdam*, rhyming slang for *ram*, a trickster's accomplice.

angel dust (n) (orig. U.S.) The drug phencyclidine used as a hallucinogen.

- ant* (n) (orig. U.S.) pl. Esp. in *to have ants in one's pants*, to fidget constantly, esp. because of extreme agitation, excitement, nervousness, etc.
- antsy* (adj) (chiefly U.S.) Also *antsy-pantsy*. Agitated, impatient, restless; also, sexually eager.
- A-OK* (adj/adv phr) (chiefly U.S.) In perfect order or condition. From *all* (systems) *OK*.
- apple* (n) pl. From *apple(s) and pears*, rhyming slang for 'stairs'. (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) From *apples and rice* (or *spice*) for 'nice'.
- arb* (n) Arbitrageur.
- Archie* (n) An anti-aircraft gun.
- Argie* (n, adj) (1) Argentine. (2) Argentinian.
- argy-bargy* (n) Contentious argument.
- arse* (n) (1) The buttocks, posterior. (2) (Brit.) A stupid, unpleasant, or contemptible person. (3) As *my arse!* (chiefly Brit. and Ir.), Nonsense!, You must be joking!
- arsehole* (n) (coarse) Amer. *asshole*. (1) The anus. (2) A stupid, irritating, or despicable person.
- arsy-versy* (adv) Upside-down, contrariwise.
- artic* (n) Articulated lorry.
- arty-farty* (adj) Also *artsy-fartsy*. Pretentiously artistic.
- arvo* (n) Afternoon.
- ass* (n) (U.S.) Used casually in various phrases as an intensifier, esp. to indicate strength of feeling, action, etc.: *to dance one's ass off*, to dance to the point of exhaustion; *to work* (run, etc.) *one's ass off*; *to chew ass*, to reprimand severely; *to tear ass*, to move fast, to hurry.
- au reservoir* (int) A malapropism from F. *au revoir*.
- Aussie* (n, adj) Also *Ossie*, *Ozzie*. (1) Australia. (2) (An) Australian.
- AWOL* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Absent without leave.
- b* (n) Also *B*. (1) Bugger. (2) Bastard.
- babe* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A girl or woman (often as a form of address).
- babelicious* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Also *babe-alicious*. Of a woman or girl: sexually attractive, gorgeous.
- baby-snatch* (v) To enter into an amorous relationship with a much younger member of the opposite sex.
- backroom boy* (n) A person engaged in (secret) research.
- bad* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S., esp. Jazz and Black E.) Possessing an abundance of favourable qualities; of a musical performance or player: going to the limits of free improvisation; of a lover: extravagantly loving.
- bad mouth* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *bad-mouth*. (1) A curse or spell. (2) Evil or slanderous talk; malicious gossip; severe criticism.
- bad-mouth* (v) (orig. U.S.) Also *badmouth*. To abuse (someone) verbally; to criticize, slander, or gossip maliciously about (a person or thing).
- bag* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A disparaging term for a woman, esp. one who is unattractive or elderly. (2) A preoccupation, mode of behaviour or experience. (3) A characteristic manner of playing jazz or similar music.
- baglady* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *bag-lady*, *bag lady*. A homeless woman, often elderly, who carries her possessions in shopping bags.

- ball* (n) pl. (1) Testicles. (2) Nonsense. (3) (chiefly U.S.) Courage, determination; (manly) power or strength; masculinity.
- ballock* (v) To reprimand or tell off severely.
- ballsy* (adj) (1) (rare) Nonsensical, ridiculous. (2) Courageous; determined; also, powerful, masculine.
- Bananaland* (n) (Austral.) Queensland.
- bananas* (adj) Crazy, mad, wild.
- bang* (n) (1) (U.S.) Excitement, pleasure. (2) An act of sexual intercourse. (3) A 'shot' (of cocaine, etc.).
- banjaxed* (ppl adj) (Anglo-Irish) Ruined, stymied.
- barf* (v) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) To vomit or retch.
- barnet* (n) From *Barnet fair*, rhyming slang for 'hair'; hence, the head.
- bashing* (vbl n) (Services' slang) Any arduous task.
- basket* (n) Euphemistic alteration of *bastard*.
- bastard* (n) Used vulgarly as a term of abuse for a man or boy, and, with weakened force, as the equivalent of 'fellow', 'chap'; also trivially for 'thing', esp. something bad or annoying.
- bats* (adj) Crazy, mad; in weakened sense, eccentric.
- bazoom* (n) pl. A woman's breast.
- bean* (n) (orig. U.S.) The head.
- beano* (n) (orig. Printers' slang) Bean-feast.
- beaut* (n) (chiefly U.S., Austral. and N.Z.) A beautiful or outstanding person or thing. From *beauty*.
- bedder* (n) (University slang) A bedroom.
- bed-sitter* (n) (orig. University slang) Bedsitting room.
- Beeb* (n) A contraction of *B.B.C.*, British Broadcasting Corporation.
- beefcake* (n) (humorous) After *cheesecake*. (A display of) sturdy masculine physique.
- beer belly* (n) (1) One who has a protruding stomach or paunch caused by drinking large quantities of beer. (2) Such a stomach.
- beer-off* (n) An off-licence.
- beer-up* (n) A drinking-bout or -party.
- bejesus* (int) An alteration of the oath by *Jesus*.
- bender* (n) (orig. U.S.) A leg or knee.
- bent* (ppl adj) (1) Dishonest, criminal. (2) Illegal, stolen. (3) Of things: out of order; of persons: eccentric, spec. homosexual.
- bevviéd* (adj) Drunk, intoxicated.
- bevy* (n) Also *bevie*, *bevy*. A drink, esp. beer. (v) To drink.
- B-girl* (n) (U.S.) A bar-girl, a woman employed to encourage customers to buy drinks at a bar.
- bi* (n, adj) Bisexual.
- big C* (n) (orig. U.S.) Cancer.
- big E* (n) (Brit.) As *the big E*, a personal rejection or rebuff, esp. insensitively or unceremoniously conveyed; the abrupt breaking off of a (romantic) relationship.
- biggie* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *biggy*. (1) An important person. (2) Anything impressively large or influential.

- big mouth* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A very talkative or boastful person; also, loquacity, boastful talk.
- bikie* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A motor-cyclist; spec. a member of a gang of motor-cyclists, notorious for disturbing civil order.
- Bill* (n) (1) The police-force. (2) A policeman. Freq. preceded by *the*.
- bimbo* (n) (1) (derog.) Also *bim*, *bimbette*. A young woman or adolescent girl, esp. one regarded as sexually attractive but thought to lack intelligence or distinctive personality. (2) A fellow, 'chap'; usu. contemptuous. (3) A woman; esp. a whore.
- bin* (n) A mental hospital.
- bird* (n) (1) A girl, woman. (2) An aeroplane. (3) (U.S., freq. ironical) An exceptionally smart or accomplished person; a first-rate animal or thing. (4) (U.S.) An obscene gesture of contempt. (5) A prison sentence; prison.
- bit* (n) In phr *a (little) bit of all right*, something or somebody regarded as highly satisfactory, esp. applied to a pretty or obliging woman.
- bitch* (n) (1) Something outstandingly difficult or unpleasant. (2) A malicious or treacherous woman.
- bitching* (adj, int) (1) Expressing anger, frustration, or contempt: unpleasant, despicable. (2) Expressing admiration, approval, or enthusiasm: great, excellent; very attractive or appealing. (adv) As an intensifier, very, extremely.
- blabbermouth* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *blabber-mouth*. One who blabs; one who reveals secrets, a tell-tale.
- black and tan* (n) A drink composed of porter (or stout) and ale.
- black bomber* (n) An amphetamine tablet.
- black tar* (n) (U.S.) Heroin, esp. in a potent black form.
- blacky* (n) A Black, a Negro.
- blasted* (ppl adj) (chiefly U.S.) Under the influence of drugs or alcohol, intoxicated.
- bling-bling* (n) (A piece of) ostentatious jewellery. Hence: wealth; conspicuous consumption.
- block* (n) The head, esp. in *to knock one's block off*. So *off one's block*: angry, insane.
- bloke* (n) (1) (Brit.) Man, fellow. (2) (Naval slang) The ship's commander.
- blood wagon* (n) An ambulance.
- bloody* (adj, adv) A vague epithet expressing anger, resentment, detestation; but often a mere intensive.
- blower* (n) A speaking-tube or telephone.
- BLT* (n) (orig. U.S.) Bacon, lettuce, and tomato (sandwich).
- boat* (n) From *boat-race*, rhyming slang for 'face'.
- boff* (n) (1) A blow, a punch. (2) In the entertainment industry: a great success, a hit. (3) Sexual intercourse. (v) (1) To hit, strike. (2) (orig. U.S.) To have sexual intercourse (with).
- bolk* (v) To vomit; to retch.
- bollock* (n) pl. (1) Also *ballocks* or *rollocks*. An absurdity; a mess, a muddle. (2) (Ir.) Also *bollox*. A stupid, contemptible, or blundering man or boy. (adj) pl. Naked. (int) pl. (1) Nonsense. (2) Expressing frustration, regret, or annoyance.
- bomb* (n) (1) A success (esp. in entertainment). (2) (U.S.) A failure. (3) A large sum of money. (4) A (large) marijuana cigarette. (5) (Austral. and N.Z.) An old car.
- bombed* (ppl adj) Drunk; under the influence of drugs. Freq. with *out*.

- bomber* (n) (1) (U.S.) A marijuana cigarette. (2) A barbiturate drug.
- bone-head* (n) (orig. U.S.) A stupid person.
- bone-headed* (adj) Thick-headed, stupid.
- bonk* (v) To have sexual intercourse (with).
- bonkers* (adj) (1) Mad, crazy. (2) Slightly drunk.
- bommer* (n) (University slang) Bonfire.
- boob* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A dull, heavy, stupid fellow. (2) A lock-up or cell. (3) pl. The breasts.
- boo-boo* (n) (orig. U.S.) A foolish mistake or blunder.
- boomster* (n) (U.S.) One who works up a 'boom'; a speculator.
- booty* (n) (1) Sexual intercourse; a person (esp. a woman) regarded as an object of sexual desire. Also (occas.): the female genitals. (2) The buttocks. From *botty*.
- bootylicious* (adj) (1) Esp. of a woman, often with reference to the buttocks: sexually attractive, sexy; shapely. (2) (rare) Of rap lyrics: bad, weak.
- boozeroo* (n) (N.Z.) A drinking spree.
- booze-up* (n) A drinking bout.
- bottle* (n) (1) (Naval slang) A reprimand. (2) Courage, spirit. (3) Collection or share of money.
- bovver* (n) Trouble, disturbance, or fighting, esp. caused by skinhead gangs.
- brain* (n) A clever person.
- brass* (n) From *brass nail*, rhyming slang for *tail*, a prostitute.
- bread* (n) (orig. U.S.) Money.
- bread-basket* (n) (1) The stomach. (2) A large bomb containing smaller bombs.
- brekker* (n) (University slang) Breakfast.
- brill* (adj) Brilliant, amazing, fantastic.
- Bristols* (n) From *Bristol Cities*, rhyming slang for *titties*, the breasts.
- broad* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A woman, esp. a prostitute.
- bromo* (n) (A dose of) one of the proprietary sedatives containing a bromide mixture.
- brown sugar* (n) A drug consisting of heroin diluted with caffeine.
- brusheroo* (n) A rebuff, dismissal.
- B.S.* (n) (chiefly N. Amer.) Bullshit.
- bubblehead* (n) (orig. U.S.) An empty-headed or stupid person.
- bucko* (n) (Nautical slang) A blustering, swaggering, or domineering fellow.
- bugger* (n) Hell, perdition.
- bull* (v) (1) (Army slang) To polish (equipment, etc.) in order to meet excessive standards of neatness. (2) (U.S.) To behave or move like a bull.
- bum* (n) The buttocks; the posterior.
- bum-boy* (n) A young male homosexual, esp. a prostitute.
- bun* (n) In phr (*a bun in the oven*, a child conceived. Also in *to do one's bun* (N.Z.), to lose one's temper.
- bunch of fives* (n) The fist, the hand.
- buppie* (n) (orig. U.S.) A member of a socio-economic group comprising young black professional people working in cities. From *black* and *yuppie*.
- busy* (n) A detective.
- butcher's* (n) From *butcher's hook*, rhyming slang for 'look'.

- butter-and-egg man* (n) (U.S.) A wealthy, unsophisticated man who spends money freely.
- buzz* (v) To go (quickly). As *buzz off*, to go off or away quickly. As *buzz in*, to come in (quickly), to enter.
- cack* (v) (obs. and dial.) To void excrement.
- caff* (n) A café.
- cake* (n) (jocular) A foolish or stupid fellow.
- cakehole* (n) A person's mouth.
- Canuck* (n) A Canadian; spec. a French Canadian.
- capeesh* (v) (chiefly U.S.) Also *capisce*. To understand. Chiefly used in interrogative: 'Do you understand?'
- cat* (n) (1) (U.S.) A spiteful or backbiting woman. (2) (obs.) A prostitute. (3) (U.S.) An itinerant worker. (4) (orig. U.S.) An expert in jazz. (5) A fellow, man. (6) A catalytic converter.
- catbird seat* (n) (U.S.) As *the catbird seat*, a superior or advantageous position.
- cat's pyjamas* (n) (orig. U.S.) As *the cat's pyjamas* (or *whiskers*), the acme of excellence.
- cert* (n) Certainty; spec. in horse-racing, a horse that is considered certain to win.
- chagger* (n) (University slang) A changing-room.
- champers* (n) Champagne.
- chancer* (n) One who takes chances or does risky things.
- charge* (n) (1) A dose or injection of a drug; marijuana, esp. a marijuana cigarette. (2) (U.S.) A thrill; a feeling of excitement or satisfaction.
- Charley* (n) Also *Charlie*. (1) A fool, simpleton, esp. as *proper* (or *right*) *Charley*. (2) (U.S., Black E.) A white man. (3) (U.S., Services' slang) A North Vietnamese or Vietcong soldier. (4) (orig. U.S.) Cocaine. (5) pl. A woman's breasts. (adj) Afraid, cowardly, esp. in *to turn Charlie*.
- chase* (v) To pursue (a member of the opposite sex) amorously. Also with *after*.
- chaser* (n) (chiefly U.S.) One who chases women, a woman-chaser.
- cheapie* (n) Also *cheapo*, *cheapo-cheapo*. Something cheap; a thing of little value or of poor quality. (adj) Rather cheap, and often of inferior quality; produced or sold at a low price. Freq. of films.
- cheesecake* (n) (orig. U.S.) Display of the female form, esp. in photographs, advertisements, etc., in the interest of sex-appeal; female sexual attractiveness.
- cheesy* (adj) (1) Fine or showy. (2) Also *cheesey*. Inferior, second-rate, cheap and nasty.
- chesty* (adj) (U.S.) Conceited and self-assertive; having one's chest thrust out as a sign of self-importance. Hence, *chestily* (adv), *chestiness* (n).
- chick* (n) (orig. U.S.) A girl; a young woman.
- chicken* (n) (1) A cowardly person. (2) (chiefly U.S.) A girl or young woman. (v) (orig. U.S.) To fail to act, or to back down, from motives of cowardice.
- chiefy* (n) (Forces' slang) A chief or superior officer.
- chill pill* (n) (orig. U.S.) A (notional) pill used to calm or relax a person.
- chin* (n) Also *chin chin*. A talk; conversation; spec. insolent talk. (v) (U.S.) To chat, chatter.
- China* (n) From *china plate*, rhyming slang for 'mate'.
- Chink* (n) (derog.) Also *Chinke*, *Chinkie*, *Chinky*. A Chinaman.

- chippie* (n) Also *chippy*. (1) (usu. derog.) A young woman; a promiscuous or delinquent girl or young woman; a prostitute. (2) A chip-shop.
- chivvy* (n) Also *chivy*. From *Chevy Chase*, rhyming slang for 'the face'.
- chivvy* (v) Also *chivey*. To knife.
- chizz* (n) (School slang) Also *chiz*. A swindle; a nuisance.
- chock-a-block* (adj) Jammed or crammed close together; also crammed with, chock-full of.
- chocker* (adj) (orig. Naval slang) 'Fed up'; extremely disgruntled.
- choco* (n) (Austral.) Also *chocko*. A militiaman or conscripted soldier.
- choom* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) An English soldier; an Englishman.
- chopper* (n) (U.S.) (1) A machine-gun or -gunner. (2) A helicopter. (3) A motor-cycle. (4) (orig. U.S.) pl. Teeth; esp. (a set of) false teeth.
- Christer* (n) (U.S.) An over-zealous or sanctimonious person.
- chuffed* (adj) (orig. Military slang) (1) Pleased, satisfied. (2) Displeased, disgruntled.
- chunder* (v) (Austral.) To vomit.
- chutty* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Also *chuddy*. Chewing gum.
- ciao* (int) An informal Italian greeting or farewell, hello; good-bye.
- civvy* (n) pl. Civilian clothes, mufti.
- clap a guy on* (phr) (Nautical slang) To put a stop to; to 'stow'.
- clapper* (n) The tongue of a bell, which strikes it on the inside and causes it to sound. As *like the clappers*, very fast or very hard.
- clean* (adj) Free from suspicion of criminal or treacherous intent or involvement; not carrying incriminating material (as drugs, weapons, etc.).
- clean-up* (n) (orig. U.S.) A profit; an exceptional financial success; also, a robbery or its proceeds.
- clippie* (n) Also *clippy*. A bus-conductress.
- clobber* (n) Clothes.
- clock* (n) (1) The human face. (2) A punch (on the face).
- closet queen* (n) A secret male homosexual.
- cloth ears* (n) A person with a poor sense of hearing.
- cluck* (n) (U.S.) A dull or unintelligent person, a fool.
- cobblers* (n) From *cobbler's* (or *cobblers'*) *awls*, rhyming slang for *balls*, testicles; nonsense, rubbish.
- cock* (n) (1) The penis. (2) Used as a form of address to a man. (3) Short for *cock-and-bull story*, a fictitious narrative. Hence (esp. spoken) nonsense, an unfounded statement. (v) With *up*: to bungle or mess up (a situation, task, etc.); to spoil, to ruin.
- cocoa* (v) Also *coco*. Rhyming slang for 'say so'. Freq. used ironically.
- coke* (n) (orig. U.S.) Cocaine. (v) To drug oneself with cocaine.
- coke-head* (n) (orig. U.S.) An addict or habitual user of cocaine.
- cokey* (n) (U.S.) Also *cokie*. A cocaine addict.
- cold turkey* (n) (orig. N. Amer.) A method of treating drug addicts by sudden and complete withdrawal of the drug, instead of by a gradual process.
- cold-turkey* (v) To cure of drug addiction by 'cold turkey' treatment.
- collekkers* (n) (University slang) An examination at the end of each term in the colleges of the University of Oxford.

- combo* (n) (1) Combination, partnership. (2) (Austral.) A white man who lives with an Aboriginal woman.
- come-on* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) (The victim of) a swindler. (2) An inducement; an invitation to approach.
- Commie* (n) Also *Commy*, (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) *Commo*. A communist.
- common* (n) Common sense.
- compo* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Compensation, esp. that paid for an injury received while working.
- con* (n) (1) (Criminals' slang) Convict, conviction. (2) Confidant. (3) Conundrum. (4) Conformist. (5) Contract.
- connect* (v) (1) To meet in order to obtain drugs (from). (2) (U.S.) To succeed in obtaining something (e.g. in a burglary).
- connection* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A supplier of narcotics. (2) The action of supplying narcotics.
- coo-er* (int) An exclamation expressing surprise or incredulity.
- cook* (v) Also followed by *up*. To prepare opium for use by the application of heat.
- cookie* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A woman; esp. an attractive girl. (2) A man, often with defining word. (3) (Air Force slang) A bomb.
- cool* (adj) (orig. U.S., in African-American usage) As a general term of approval, admirable, excellent.
- cooler* (n) A prison or prison cell.
- cop* (n) (1) A policeman. (2) Capture; used chiefly in *a fair cop*. (v) (Schoolboys', Criminals', Policemen's slang) (1) To capture, catch. (2) To steal.
- copper* (n) A policeman or police informant.
- cop-shop* (n) A police station.
- cocking* (ppl adj) (chiefly U.S.) Unusually fine, large, or excellent; stunning.
- cow* (n) (1) Applied to a coarse or degraded woman. Also, loosely, any woman, used esp. as a coarse form of address. (2) (Austral. and N.Z.) An objectionable person or thing, a distasteful situation, etc.
- crack* (n) (1) (Thieves' slang) House-breaking. (2) A burglar. (3) (orig. U.S.) A potent, crystalline form of cocaine broken into small pieces.
- cracked* (ppl adj) Unsound in mind, slightly insane, crazy.
- crackers* (pred adj) Crazy, mad; infatuated.
- crackhead* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person who habitually takes or is addicted to crack cocaine.
- crammer* (n) (1) (orig. University slang) One who prepares pupils for an examination. (2) A lie.
- crap* (n) (1) (coarse) Excrement; defecation. (2) Rubbish, nonsense. (v) (1) To defecate. (2) (U.S.) To talk nonsense to; to act or speak deceitfully to.
- crapper* (n) (coarse) A privy.
- crappy* (adj) (orig. U.S., coarse) Rubbishy; worthless; disgusting.
- cred* (n) Credibility; reputation or status among one's peers. (adj) Credible; fashionable, trendy.
- creep* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A despicable, worthless, stupid, or tiresome person. (2) (Criminals' slang) A stealthy robber; a sneak thief.
- creeping Jesus* (n) An abject, sycophantic, or servile person.

- crikey* (int) Also *crickey*, *cricky*. An exclamation of astonishment. From *Christ*.
- crim* (n) (U.S. and Austral.) A criminal.
- crimper* (n) A hairdresser.
- cripes* (int) In the exclamation (*by*) *cripes!*, vulgar perversion of *Christ*.
- croaker* (n) (now chiefly U.S.) A doctor, esp. a prison doctor.
- crooked* (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) Irritable, bad-tempered, angry.
- crumb* (n) (1) (U.S.) A body-louse. (2) (orig. U.S.) A lousy or filthy person.
- crumby* (adj) Lousy; filthy.
- crumpet* (n) The head.
- crystal* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Any of various narcotic drugs in crystalline or powdered form, esp. an amphetamine in crystalline form.
- Cubenville* (n) (U.S.) A group or set of extremely conventional or conservative persons.
- cuckoo* (n) A silly person. (adj) (orig. U.S.) Crazy, out of one's wits.
- culture vulture* (n) A person who is voracious for culture.
- cunt* (n) (1) The female external genital organs. (2) Applied to a person, esp. a woman, as a term of vulgar abuse.
- cupper* (n) (Oxford University slang) A series of intercollegiate matches played in competition for a cup. Freq. in pl.
- cutie* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *cutey*. A cute person; esp. an attractive young woman.
- cut-out* (n) A person acting as a middle-man, esp. in espionage.
- D.* (n) (1) A detective. (2) LSD. (3) Narcotics.
- daddy-o* (n) Daddy.
- dago* (n) (orig. U.S.) A name given to Spaniards, Portuguese, and Italians in general, or used as a disparaging term for any foreigner. From Spanish *Diego*, James.
- daisy* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A first-rate thing or person. (adj) First-rate, charming.
- darky* (n) Also *darkey*. (1) The night. (2) A dark-lantern.
- dead* (adv) Utterly, completely. As in *dead to rights*, completely, certainly.
- deader* (n) A dead person, a corpse.
- dead-head* (v) (chiefly U.S.) To drive an empty train, truck, taxi, etc.
- dead soldier* (n) (U.S.) An empty bottle.
- debag* (v) To remove the trousers from (a person) as a punishment or for a joke.
- dee* (n) A detective.
- def* (adj) (orig. U.S., esp. in African-American usage) Excellent, outstanding; fashionable.
- delouse* (v) To free from something unpleasant.
- derry* (n) A derelict building.
- des res* (n) (Estate-agents' jargon) A house or other dwelling-place presented as a highly desirable purchase. From *desirable residence*.
- dex* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *dexie*. (A tablet of) the drug Dexedrine.
- dicey* (adj) (Air Force slang) Risky, dangerous; uncertain, unreliable.
- dick* (n) (1) A riding whip. (2) (coarse) The penis. (3) A detective, a policeman. (4) A dictionary.
- dick-head* (n) Also *dickhead*. A stupid person.
- dif* (n) Also *diff*. Difference. (adj) Different.
- dig* (n) (1) (Austral. and N.Z.) An Australian or New Zealander. (2) (U.S., Students' slang) A diligent or plodding student.

- dill* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Also *dil*. A fool or simpleton; spec. one who is duped by a trickster.
- dilly* (adj) (chiefly Austral.) Foolish, stupid, mad. From *daft* and *silly*.
- ding-a-ling* (n) (1) (N. Amer.) One who is crazy or insane; an eccentric. (2) The penis.
- ding-dong* (n) A heated argument; a quarrel.
- dinge* (n) Dinginess.
- dink* (n) (orig. N. Amer.) Also *dinkie*, *dinky*. Either partner of a usu. professional working couple who have no children. From *double* (also *dual*) *income no kids*.
- dinky-die* (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) Honest, genuine, real.
- dirty* (adv) As an intensive, very, exceedingly.
- dis* (adj) Broken, not working.
- dish* (n) An attractive person, esp. a woman.
- dishy* (adj) Very attractive, esp. sexually.
- divvy* (n) Also *divi*. A dividend.
- Divvers* (n) (Oxford University slang) Divinity honour moderations, the first public examination in Holy Scripture.
- DL* (n) (orig. in African-American usage) From *down-low* in *on the down-low*: quiet, low-profile; in secret; (in later use) spec. (of a man) secretly engaging in homosexual activity.
- do* (v) (1) To arrest; to charge; to convict. (2) (chiefly U.S.) To take (a hallucinogenic or other drug); to smoke (marijuana). (3) To break into; to burgle or rob. (4) With *in*, to bring disaster upon, do a great injury to, ruin; often, to murder, kill.
- dodger* (adj) (Austral.) Good, excellent.
- doer* (n) One who cheats another.
- dog* (n) (1) A gay or jovial man; a fellow, 'chap'. (2) A worthless, despicable, surly, or cowardly fellow. (3) (U.S. and Austral.) An informer; a traitor; esp. one who betrays fellow criminals. (4) (U.S.) Something poor or mediocre; a failure. (5) A horse that is slow, difficult to handle, etc. (6) pl. From *dog's meat*, rhyming slang for 'feet'. (7) pl. Sausages. (8) (orig. U.S., derog., usu. considered offens.) An unattractive woman, girl, or man.
- dog and bone* (n) (Brit.) Rhyming slang for 'telephone'.
- doggo* (adv) As *to lie doggo*, to lie quiet, to remain hid.
- doggy* (adj) Dashing, stylish, smart.
- dog-robber* (n) (1) A navy or army officer's orderly. (2) pl. Civilian clothes worn by a naval officer on shore leave.
- dog's age* (n) (orig. U.S.) A long time.
- dog's body* (n) A junior person, esp. one to whom a variety of menial tasks is given.
- dog's breakfast* (n) Also *dog's dinner*. A mess.
- dog's meat* (n) Rhyming slang for 'feet'.
- doing* (vbl n) (dial.) A scolding; a thrashing, beating-up; a severe monetary loss.
- doll* (n) A woman; a girl; esp. a very beautiful or attractive woman; also occas., a pleasant or attractive man.
- dolly-bird* (n) Also *dolly*. An attractive and stylish young woman.
- DOM* (n) Dirty old man.
- donkey-lick* (v) (Austral.) To defeat easily (e.g. in a horse-race).
- donkey's breakfast* (n) (1) A straw mattress. (2) A straw hat.

- doo-doo* (n) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer., euphem.) (1) Faeces, excrement. (2) Nonsense, rubbish.
- dooickey* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Also *doojigger*. Any small object, esp. mechanical. From *doodad* and *hickey*.
- doozer* (n) (N. Amer.) Something remarkable, amazing, or unbelievable.
- doozy* (adj) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) Also *doozie*. Remarkable, excellent; also, amazing, incredible.
- dope* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A preparation, mixture, or drug which is not specifically named. (2) A person under the influence of, or addicted to, some drug. (3) Information, a statement, etc., designed to gloss over or disguise facts. (v) (1) To administer dope to (a person, a horse); to stupefy with a drug; to drug. (2) To take or be addicted to drugs.
- dopester* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) One who collects information on, and forecasts the result of, sporting events, elections, etc. (2) One who sells, uses, or is addicted to, drugs.
- dopey* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Also *dopy*. (1) Sluggish or stupefied, with or as with a drug. (2) Stupid.
- dopily* (adv) In a 'dopey' manner.
- dosser* (n) One who stays at a common lodging-house.
- doss-house* (n) A common lodging-house.
- dotty* (adj) Silly, stupid.
- double O* (n) (U.S.) An intense look.
- down* (n) Also *downer* or *downie*. Freq. in pl. A drug (esp. a barbiturate) that has a depressant or tranquillizing effect.
- drag king* (n) (orig. in gay and lesbian usage) After *drag queen*. A woman who dresses up as a man; a male impersonator.
- drag queen* (n) A male homosexual transvestite.
- dream-boat* (n) (orig. U.S.) An exceptionally attractive or pleasing person or thing.
- dreamy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Perfect, ideal; delightful, beautiful.
- drear* (n) A dreary person.
- drippy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Drivelling, sloppily sentimental.
- drongo* (n) (Austral.) A simpleton, a stupid person. (adj) Silly, foolish.
- droopy drawers* (n) An untidy, sloppy, or depressing woman (occas., such a man).
- drop-in* (n) (U.S.) Something which is easy; easy money.
- dropper* (n) One who passes counterfeit money, cheques, etc.
- druggie* (n) Also *druggy*. One who takes or experiments with illegal drugs, a drug addict.
- druggy* (adj) Characteristic of narcotic drugs or their users.
- drug-store cowboy* (n) (U.S.) A braggart, loafer, or good-for-nothing.
- drummer* (n) (1) A thief, esp. one who robs an unoccupied house. (2) (Austral. and N.Z.) A swagman or tramp.
- dry out* (v) Of a drug addict, alcoholic, etc.: to undergo treatment to cure addiction.
- D.T.* (n) (vulgar) Delirium tremens.
- duck's disease* (n) Also *ducks' disease*. A facetious expression for shortness of leg.
- ducky* (n) Also *duckie*. A term of endearment.
- dude* (n) A fellow or 'chap', a 'guy'. Hence also approvingly, esp. (through Black E.) applied to a member of one's own circle or group.

- duff* (v) (1) To dress or manipulate (a thing) fraudulently. (2) (Austral., Thieves' slang) To steal (cattle), altering the brands.
- duffer* (n) (1) One who sells trashy goods as valuable, upon false pretences, e.g. pretending that they are smuggled or stolen, and offered as bargains. (2) (Austral.) One who 'duffs' cattle.
- Dullsville* (n) (U.S.) An imaginary town characterized by extreme dullness or boredom.
- dumb-dumb* (n) (N. Amer.) Also *dum-dum*. A foolish or stupid person.
- dumbo* (n) (orig. U.S.) A slow-witted or stupid person.
- dummie* (n) Also *dummee*, *dummy*. A deaf-mute.
- Dutchie* (n) Also *Dutchee*, *Dutchy*. A Dutchman or a German.
- dynamite* (n) (orig. U.S.) Heroin or a similar narcotic.
- E* (n) The hallucinogenic drug 'Ecstasy'.
- ear-basher* (n) (chiefly Austral.) A chatterer; a bore.
- earful* (n) As much (talk) as one's ears can take in at one time; a large quantity (of talk, gossip, etc.).
- easy-peasy* (adj) (orig. and chiefly Brit., Children's slang) Extremely easy, very simple.
- easy rider* (n) (U.S.) (1) A sexually satisfying lover. (2) A guitar.
- ecstasy* (n) Also *Ecstasy*. A powerful synthetic hallucinogenic drug.
- eejit* (n) (chiefly Anglo-Irish) Idiot.
- eff* (v) To 'fuck'.
- egg-beater* (n) (U.S.) A helicopter.
- ekker* (n) (University or School slang) Exercise.
- elephants* (adj) From *elephant's trunk*, rhyming slang for 'drunk'.
- Endsville* (n) (U.S.) Also *Endville*. The greatest, the best; the imaginary home of good things or people.
- eppie* (n) (Brit.) Also *eppy*. A fit of temper or a tantrum, likened hyperbolically to an epileptic fit.
- ex* (n) (1) A former husband, wife or lover. (2) pl. Expenses.
- ex-con* (n) A former convict.
- eyeball* (v) (U.S.) Also *eye-ball*. To look or stare (at).
- eyeful* (n) (1) A 'good look' at something; an exhilarating or remarkable sight. (2) A strikingly attractive woman.
- Eyetalian* (n) An Italian. Cf. (offens.) *Eyetic*.
- eyewash* (n) (Military slang) Also *eye-wash*. (1) Unnecessary routine tasks or ceremonial. (2) Humbug, blarney; nonsense.
- eyewasher* (n) One who obscures or conceals actual facts or motives.
- fab* (adj) Fabulous: marvellous, terrific.
- face-ache* (n) A mournful-looking person; also as a term of address.
- fag* (n) (1) (U.S.) A cigarette. (2) The fag-end of a cigarette. (3) (U.S.) A (male) homosexual. (v) To smoke; to supply with a cigarette.
- faggot* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A (male) homosexual.
- faggoty* (adj) Also *faggy*. Homosexual.
- fairy* (n) A male homosexual.
- falsies* (n pl.) (orig. U.S.) A padded brassière; breast-pads.
- Family* (n) (1) Usu. with *the*. The thieving fraternity. (2) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (The members of) a local organizational unit of the Mafia.

- family jewels* (n pl.) (orig. U.S.) The male genitals, esp. the testicles.
- fancy pants* (n) A dandy; a snob. (adj) As *fancy-pants*, overly fancy; posh; snobbish, pretentious.
- Fannie Mae* (n) Federal National Mortgage Association.
- fanny* (n) (1) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) The posterior or rump. (2) (chiefly Brit.) The female genitals.
- Fanny Adams* (n) Also *sweet Fanny Adams*. Nothing at all.
- fantabulous* (adj) Of almost incredible excellence. From *fantastic* and *fabulous*.
- far-out* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Excellent, splendid.
- fart* (n) (1) A breaking wind. (2) A contemptible person.
- dash* (n) Fashion. (adj) Fashionable.
- fat cat* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A political backer.
- fat-mouth* (n) (U.S.) One who talks extravagantly. (v) To talk a great deal about something, with little or no action or result.
- fatso* (n) Used humorously or derisively as a nickname for a fat person.
- fave* (n, adj) (orig. U.S.) Favourite.
- fave rave* (n) A special favourite piece of music, film, musician, etc.
- Fed* (n) A federalist, a federal official, esp. an FBI agent.
- feeb* (n) (U.S.) A feeble-minded person.
- fender* (n) Vehicle's wing or mudguard.
- fender-bender* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A (usu. minor) motor accident.
- fiddle-did* (n) (Austral.) Rhyming slang for *quid*, one pound; a pound note.
- filth* (n) (Criminals' slang) The police.
- fish* (n) (1) (U.S.) A dollar. (2) (Nautical slang) A torpedo; also, a submarine.
- five-finger discount* (n) (U.S.) The activity or proceeds of stealing or of shop-lifting.
- fiveer* (n) (Thieves' slang) A fifth (term of imprisonment).
- five-to-two* (n) Rhyming slang for 'Jew'.
- fix* (n) Also *fix-up*. A dose of a narcotic drug.
- fizzer* (n) Anything excellent or first-rate.
- flage* (n) Also *fladge*. Flagellation, esp. as a means of sexual gratification.
- flake* (n) (chiefly U.S.) One who is 'flaky' or liable to act in an eccentric or crazy manner.
- flaky* (adj) Crazy; feeble-minded, stupid.
- flaming* (vbl n) (Computing) The action or practice of sending inflammatory or abusive messages by e-mail.
- flaming onions* (n) (Services' slang) An anti-aircraft projectile consisting of about ten balls of fire shot upwards in succession.
- flannel-mouth* (n) (U.S.) An empty talker.
- flasher* (n) One who exposes himself indecently.
- flat-head* (n) A fool, simpleton.
- flatty* (n) (orig. U.S.) A 'flat-foot', a policeman, a plain-clothes man.
- flick* (n) A film; also in pl., the cinema.
- flim* (n) A bank-note.
- flip* (adj) Flippant.
- flipping* (adj, adv) (usu. derog.) Used as a substitute for a strong expletive.
- flit* (n) A male homosexual.

- flowery* (n) From *flowery dell*, rhyming slang for 'a prison cell'.
- fly* (adj) (1) (U.S.) Stylish, sophisticated; fashionable. (2) (chiefly Black E.) Attractive, good-looking; hence, excellent, fabulous.
- fly-by-night* (n) One who defrauds his creditors by decamping in the night.
- footer* (n) Football.
- footy* (n) (1) Also *footie*, *footie-footie*, *footsie-footsie*, *footsy-footsy*, *footy-footy*. Amorous play with the feet. (2) (esp. Austral. and N.Z.) Football.
- foozling* (n) Bungling.
- forty* (n) (Austral.) A 'crook', thief, sharper.
- forty-rod whisky* (n) (U.S.) Cheap, fiery whisky.
- four-eyes* (n) A person who habitually wears spectacles.
- four-flusher* (n) One who bluffs, a pretender, braggart, humbug.
- four-letter man* (n) (Brit.) An obnoxious person.
- fox* (n) (U.S.) An attractive woman.
- foxy* (adj) (U.S.) Of a woman: attractive, desirable, pretty, sexy.
- frag* (v) (U.S., Military slang) To throw a fragmentation grenade at one's superior officer.
- frail* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A woman.
- frat* (n) (U.S., College slang) (1) Fraternity. (2) A member of fraternity. (v) To fraternize, esp. to cultivate friendly relations with (troops of an opposing army).
- frater* (n) One who establishes friendly and esp. sexual relations with German women.
- fratting* (vbl n) Friendly relations between British and American soldiers and German women in the occupied parts of Western Germany after the war of 1939-45.
- freak* (n) (1) A drug addict. (2) A gay man or a lesbian. (3) A person who enjoys unorthodox sexual practices; a fetishist. (4) (U.S., esp. in African-American usage) An attractive young woman or (rare) man.
- freak-out* (n) An intense emotional experience, esp. one resulting from the use of hallucinatory drugs.
- freak out* (v) To undergo an intense emotional experience, to become stimulated, esp. under the influence of hallucinatory drugs.
- freebase* (n) (orig. U.S.) Cocaine purified by heating with ether, and taken (illegally) by inhaling the fumes or smoking the residue. (v) To make a 'freebase' of (cocaine).
- freebie* (n) (U.S.) Also *freebee*, *freeby*. Something that is provided free. (adj) Free, without charge.
- French blue* (n) The name for a non-proprietary mixture of amphetamine and a barbiturate.
- frightener* (n) A member of a criminal gang who intimidates the victims of its activities.
- Fritz* (n) A German, esp. a German soldier.
- froggy* (n) Also *frog*, *froggee* or *frog-eater*. A term of contempt for a Frenchman, from their reputed habit of eating frogs. (adj) French.
- frosh* (n) (N. Amer.) A college freshman; a member of a freshman sports team.
- fruitcake* (n) (orig. U.S.) A crazy or eccentric person.
- fubar* (adj) (U.S., orig. Military slang) Also *FUBAR*. Bungled, ruined, messed up. From *fouled* (or *fucked*) *up beyond all recognition*.
- fuck* (v) To copulate (with); to have sexual connection with.
- fucker* (n) One who copulates. Also in extended use as a general term of abuse.

- ful* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) An old-fashioned person. From *fuddy-duddy*.
- full as a goog* (adj phr) Drunk. From Austral. slang *goog*, egg.
- fully* (v) To commit (a person) for trial.
- funk* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Music that is 'funky'. (2) Cowering fear; a state of panic or shrinking terror. (3) One who funks; a coward. (v) (1) To flinch or shrink through fear. (2) To blow smoke upon (a person); to annoy with smoke.
- funky* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Of jazz or similar music: down-to-earth and uncomplicated; emotional.
- furphy* (n) (Austral.) A false report or rumour; an absurd story.
- fussock* (n) Also *fuzzock*. A fat, unwieldy woman.
- fuzz* (n) (orig. U.S.) A policeman or detective; freq. collect., the police.
- G.* (n) (U.S.) 'Grand', a thousand dollars.
- gabfest* (n) (U.S.) A gathering for talk; a spell of talking; a prolonged conference or conversation.
- gaffer* (n) A foreman or boss.
- gaga* (n) A doting or senile person; a madman. (adj) Doting, exhibiting senile decay; mad; fatuous.
- gal* (n) (chiefly N. Amer.) Vulgar and dialect pronunciation of *girl*.
- gang-bang* (n) (orig. U.S.) An act of or occasion for multiple intercourse; a sexual orgy.
- garbo* (n) (Austral.) A dustman, a collector of rubbish.
- gam* (int) Cockney pronunciation of *go on*, often used to express disbelief or ridicule of a statement.
- gas* (n) (1) Empty or boastful talk; showy pretence; humbug, nonsense. (2) (Anglo-Irish) Fun; a joke. (3) Someone who is very pleasing, exciting, impressive, admirable, etc.
- gasbag* (n) An empty talker.
- gassed* (ppl adj) Drunk; intoxicated.
- gasser* (n) (orig. U.S.) Something or someone that is very pleasing, exciting, impressive, admirable, etc.
- gassy* (adj) Characterized by empty talk.
- gate* (n) The mouth.
- gator* (n) (orig. U.S.) Alligator.
- gaydar* (n) An ability, attributed esp. to homosexual people, to identify a (fellow) homosexual person. From *gay* and *radar*.
- gay deceivers* (n pl.) A padded brassière; breast-pads.
- gazump* (v) Of a seller: to raise the price of a property after having accepted an offer by (an intending buyer).
- gazunder* (v) (Brit., humorous) Of a buyer: to lower the amount of an offer made to (the seller) for a property. From *gazump* and *under*.
- gear* (n) (1) (U.S.) Marijuana; heroin; drugs in general. (2) The organs of generation.
- gee* (n) (U.S.) A man, fellow. From *guy*.
- geed-up* (adj) Drugged.
- gee-gee* (n) A horse.
- gen* (n) (orig. Services' slang) Information, facts. Perhaps abbreviation of *general* in the official phr for *the general information of all ranks*.

- gender-bender* (n) A person (esp. a pop singer or follower of a pop cult) who deliberately affects an androgynous appearance by wearing sexually ambiguous clothing, make-up, etc.
- get* (n) A fool, idiot.
- G.I.* (n) A German artillery shell. Chiefly in *G.I. can*. From galvanized iron.
- giggle-water* (n) Intoxicating liquor.
- gimp* (n) A cripple; a lame person or leg; a limp.
- gimpy* (n) (orig. U.S.) A cripple. (adj) Lame, crippled.
- ginger-beer* (n) Also *ginger*. Rhyming slang for *queer*, a homosexual.
- ginormous* (adj) Very large, simply enormous; excessive in size, amount, etc. From *gigantic* and *enormous*.
- gippy* (n) Also *gyppie*, *gyppy* or *gippo*, *gyppo*, *gyppo*. (1) An Egyptian, esp. a native Egyptian soldier. (2) A gipsy.
- git* (n) In contemptuous use: a worthless person.
- give (a person) the hump* (phr) To annoy, depress, a person.
- glad eye* (n) A look or movement of the eyes designed to attract a person of the opposite sex.
- glad hand* (n) Hand of welcome; a cordial handshake or greeting.
- glam* (n) Glamour. (adj) Glamorous. (v) To glamorize.
- glamour boy* (n) A member of the R.A.F.
- glamour puss* (n) A glamorous person.
- glass-house* (n) A military prison or guard-room.
- glitterati* (n) (orig. U.S.) The celebrities or 'glittering' stars of fashionable society, or of the literary and show-business world.
- glitz* (n) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) An extravagant but superficial display; showiness, ostentation.
- glitzy* (adj) Characterized by glitter or extravagant show; ostentatious.
- glob* (n) A mass or lump of some liquid or semi-liquid substance. From *gob* and *blob*.
- glue-sniffer* (n) A person who inhales the fumes of plastic cement for their narcotic effects.
- gobby* (n) A coastguard, or an American sailor.
- go big* (v phr) (orig. U.S.) To be a big success, have a large sale.
- gobsmacked* (ppl adj) (Brit.) Also *gob-struck*. Flabbergasted, astounded; speechless or incoherent with amazement.
- gobstick* (n) A clarinet.
- gob-stopper* (n) A large, hard, freq. spherical sweet for sucking.
- God-awful* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Terrible; extremely awful.
- God-box* (n) A church or other place of worship.
- God-damned* (adj) Accursed, damnable.
- God forbid* (n) Rhyming slang for 'kid'.
- goggle-box* (n) A television set.
- going-over* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *going over*. A beating; a thrashing.
- go it* (v phr) To go along at great speed.
- gold-dig* (v) To extract money from.
- gold-digger* (n) (orig. U.S.) A girl or woman who attaches herself to a man merely for gain.

- goner* (n) One who is dead or undone; something which is doomed or ended.
- gonger* (n) (U.S.) (1) Opium. (2) An opium pipe.
- good oil* (n) (Austral.) Reliable information.
- goof* (n) (1) A foolish or stupid person. (2) A mistake. (v) (1) To dawdle, to spend time idly or foolishly. (2) To make a mistake.
- goof ball* (n) (1) Also *goof pill*. (A tablet of) any of various drugs, spec. marijuana. (2) A silly, stupid, or 'daft' person.
- goofy* (adj) Stupid, silly.
- goo-goo* (adj) Of the eyes or glances: amorous.
- goopy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Fatuous, esp. fatuously amorous; stupid.
- Gor blimey!* (int) Also *Gawblimy*, *Gorblimey*, *Gorblimy*. Vulgar corruption of the imprecation *God blind me*.
- Gordon Bennett* (int) An exclamation of astonishment or exasperation. From *Gor blimey*.
- graft* (n) (1) Work, esp. hard work. (2) A trade, craft. (v) To work hard.
- grafter* (n) (orig. U.S.) One who makes money by shady or dishonest means; a thief; a swindler.
- grass* (n) (1) Green vegetables. (2) (orig. U.S.) Marijuana, used as a drug. (3) The ground. (4) (Criminals' slang) A police informer. (v) (1) To knock or throw (an adversary) down; to fell. (2) To betray (someone); to inform the police about (someone).
- grease-ball* (n) (U.S.) A derogatory term for a foreigner, esp. applied to one of Mediterranean or Latin American origin.
- grease monkey* (n) A mechanic.
- greaser* (n) (U.S.) A native Mexican or native Spanish American.
- greasy spoon (restaurant)* (n) (orig. U.S.) A cheap and inferior eating-house.
- green* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Marijuana of poor quality. (2) pl. Money.
- greenback* (n) A frog.
- greenhouse* (n) (Aeronautical slang) The glass cockpit covering over observation and similar planes.
- greenie* (n) (Surfing slang) A large wave before it breaks.
- gremmie* (n) (Surfing slang) Also *gremmy*. (1) A young surfer. (2) A trouble-maker who spends most of his time on the beaches but does not surf.
- grey* (n) (U.S., Black E.) A white-skinned person. (adj) Of a person: white-skinned.
- greycing* (n) Greyhound racing, a sport in which a dummy hare propelled mechanically round a set track is pursued by greyhounds.
- gricer* (n) A railway enthusiast; loosely, a train-spotter.
- griff* (n) News; reliable information.
- grift* (n) (U.S.) The obtaining of profit or advantage by dishonest or shady means.
- grind* (n) (1) A hard student. (2) (An act of) sexual intercourse. (v) To have sexual intercourse with (a woman).
- grody* (adj) (U.S.) Disgusting, revolting.
- groise* (n) (Public School slang) (1) A hard worker, a swot; one who curries favour. (2) Hard work. (v) To work hard, to swot; to curry favour.
- groovy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) A general term of commendation: excellent, very good.

- Groper* (n) (1) (Austral.) A jocular appellation for a native West Australian. (2) A blind man.
- gross-out* (n) (chiefly U.S.) An instance of (deliberately) crude or disgusting behaviour; a repellent or shocking person or thing. (adj) Shocking, repellent, disgusting.
- grot* (n) (Brit. and Austral.) An unpleasant, dirty, or ugly person. (adj) Also *grotty*. Unpleasant, dirty, nasty, ugly.
- groupie* (n) (1) (R.A.F. slang) A group captain. (2) Also *groupy*. An ardent follower of a touring pop group.
- grumble* (n) From *grumble and grunt*, rhyming slang for *cunt*, a woman or women regarded collectively as a means of sexual gratification.
- grunge* (n) (1) (U.S.) A style of rock music. (2) (chiefly N. Amer.) Someone or something that is repugnant or odious, unpleasant, or dull.
- grungy* (adj) (chiefly N. Amer.) Grimy, unpleasant. From *grubby* and *dingy*.
- gum-bucket* (n) (Naval slang) A smoker's pipe.
- gum-game* (n) (U.S.) A trick or dodge.
- gum-shoe* (n) A detective.
- gungy* (adj) Also *gungey*. Of a sticky or messy consistency; mucky, greasy, slimy.
- guppie* (n) (1) A homosexual 'yuppie'. From *gay* and *yuppie*. (2) A 'yuppie' concerned about the environment and ecological issues. From *green* and *yuppie*.
- gussie* (n) (Austral.) An effeminate man.
- gussy* (v) With *up*: to smarten up, esp. to dress smartly.
- gut* (n) pl. Energy, verve, staying power; courage, force of character.
- gutted* (adj) Bitterly disappointed; devastated.
- gutty* (adj) (Jazz slang) Earthy, primitive.
- guv* (n) Used as a term of address to a man.
- guzzle-guts* (n) A glutton.
- H* (n) Heroin.
- habit* (n) (orig. U.S.) The practice of taking addictive drugs.
- hack* (n) (1) (orig. disparaging, now chiefly jocular) A journalist or reporter, esp. a staff newspaper writer. (2) A prostitute; a bawd.
- hackette* (n) A jocular or disparaging term for a female journalist.
- half-arsed* (adj) Amer. *-assed*. Ineffectual, inadequate, mediocre; stupid, inexperienced.
- half-cut* (adj) Half-drunk.
- half-pie* (adj) (N.Z.) Halfway towards, imperfect, mediocre.
- half-shaved* (ppl adj) (obs.) Also *half shaved*. Partly intoxicated, drunk.
- half-shot* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Half-drunk.
- hammy* (adj) Characteristic of a ham actor or ham acting.
- Hampsteads* (n) From *Hampstead Heath*, rhyming slang for 'teeth'.
- handbag* (*house*) (n) A form of electronic dance music.
- handful* (n) A five-year prison sentence.
- hang five* (v) (Surfing slang) Also *hang ten*, etc. To allow the specified number of toes to project over the nose of the surfboard, usu. to gain speed.
- hang-out* (n) (1) A residence; a lodging. (2) (Amer. University slang) A feast; an entertainment.
- hang out* (v) (1) (in early use chiefly U.S.) To spend or pass time, esp. habitually, idly, or at leisure. (2) To reside, live.

- hanky-panky* (n) (1) Jugglery, legerdemain; trickery, double dealing, underhand dealing.
(2) Sexual activity or dalliance, esp. of a surreptitious nature.
- happening* (ppl adj) (orig. U.S.) Currently in vogue, fashionable, trendy.
- happy dust* (n) Cocaine.
- hard* (n) Hard labour.
- hard-assed* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Tough, uncompromising, resolute.
- hard cheese* (n) (Brit.) Bad luck.
- hardcore* (n) A form of popular music regarded as particularly extreme, aggressive, or experimental.
- hard tail* (n) (U.S.) A mule.
- Harry* (in phr) In arbitrary appositive uses of which a few have emerged as set expressions, e.g., *Harry Flakers* (Nautical slang), exhausted; *Harry Flatters* (Nautical slang), (of the sea) calm; *Harry Frees* (chiefly Nautical slang), free; *Harry James*, nose.
- hash* (n) Hashish.
- hash-joint* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A cheap eating-house, boarding house.
- hash-up* (n) A hastily cooked meal.
- hat-rack* (n) (1) The head. (2) A scraggy animal.
- have-on* (n) (Farmer slang) A swindle; a take-in; a do.
- head* (n) (orig. U.S.) A drug addict or drug-taker.
- head-banger* (n) A young person shaking violently to the rhythm of pop music.
- head case* (n) (orig. Brit.) A person characterized as mentally ill or unstable.
- head-shrinker* (n) (orig. U.S.) A psychiatrist.
- heat* (n) (1) Also *heater*. A gun. (2) Involvement with or pursuit by the police; a police officer, the police. (3) A state of intoxication caused by alcohol or drugs, esp. in *to have a heat on*.
- heavy sugar* (n) (U.S.) Big money.
- heavy-wet* (n) Malt liquor.
- heck* (int) Euphemistic alteration of *hell*.
- heebie-jeebie(s)* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *heebies*. A feeling of discomfort, apprehension, or depression.
- heinie* (n) The buttocks.
- Heinie* (n) (N. Amer.) Also *Heiney*. A German (soldier).
- heist* (n) (orig. U.S.) A hold-up, a robbery. (v) To hold up, rob, steal.
- hell's bells* (int) An expression of anger or annoyance.
- hep* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Well-informed, knowledgeable, up-to-date; smart, stylish.
- her indoors* (n) (Brit.) One's wife or girlfriend.
- herring choker* (n) (1) (Canad.) A native or inhabitant of the Maritime Provinces. (2) (U.S.) A Scandinavian.
- highball* (v) (U.S.) To go or drive at high speed.
- high-binder* (n) (U.S.) (1) A rowdy; one of a gang which commits outrages on persons and property. (2) One of a secret society or gang said to exist among the Chinese in California and other parts of the United States for the purpose of blackmailing and even of assassination. (3) A swindler, esp. a fraudulent politician.
- high-roller* (n) (U.S.) One who spends extravagantly; one who gambles for high stakes.
- hill* (n) As *hill of beans* (orig. U.S.), a thing of little value.

- hinny* (n) Also *hinnie*. A term of endearment: sweet one, sweetheart, darling. From *honey*.
- hip* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Well-informed, knowledgeable. From *hep*. (v) To inform.
- hippie* (n) Also *hippy*. A hipster; a person, usually exotically dressed, who is given to the use of hallucinogenic drugs; a beatnik.
- hippieness* (n) Also *hippiness*. The quality or characteristics of a 'hippie' or 'hippies'.
- hippish* (adj) Somewhat hypochondriacal; low-spirited.
- hippy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Characteristic of 'hippies'.
- hipster* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *hepster*. An addict of jazz, swing music, etc.
- hit* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A dose of a narcotic drug; the action of obtaining or administering such a dose. (2) A killing; a robbery.
- hit list* (n) A list of persons to be assassinated.
- hit-man* (n) A hired murderer.
- hit squad* (n) (orig. U.S.) A group of esp. politically-motivated assassins or kidnappers.
- ho* (n) (chiefly U.S., orig. in African-American usage) (1) A sexually promiscuous woman. (2) A prostitute. From *whore*.
- hock-shop* (n) A pawnshop.
- hoke* (v) (Theatrical slang) To overplay (a part), to act (a part) in an insincere, sentimental, or melodramatic manner.
- hokey* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Sentimental, melodramatic, artificial.
- hokum* (n) (orig. U.S., Theatrical slang) Speech, action, properties, etc., on the stage, designed to make a sentimental or melodramatic appeal to an audience.
- hole* (n) (1) Also *cake-hole*. The mouth. (2) The anus, or the female external genital organs.
- homeboy* (n) (orig. U.S., esp. Black E.) A member of one's peer group or gang. Sometimes used as a term of address.
- homegirl* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S., esp. Black E.) A woman or girl from one's home town, region, or neighbourhood; hence, a member of one's peer group.
- homey* (n) (N.Z.) Also *homie*. An Englishman; a British immigrant, esp. one newly arrived.
- homo* (n, adj) (A) homosexual.
- hood* (n) (chiefly U.S., esp. in African-American usage) A youthful street rowdy.
- hooper* (n) A (professional) dancer.
- hook* (n) pl. The fingers or hands.
- hook* (v) (1) To solicit as a prostitute. (2) To move with a sudden turn or twist.
- hooker* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A prostitute.
- Hooray Henry* (n) A type of loud, rich, rather ineffectual or foolish young society man.
- hop* (n) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) Beer.
- hophead* (n) (1) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) An opium-smoker; a drug-addict. (2) (N.Z.) A drunkard, a tippler.
- hop-over* (n) (Army slang) An assault.
- hopped-up* (adj) (U.S.) (1) Stimulated by, or under the influence of a narcotic drug. (2) Excited, enthusiastic. (3) Of a motor vehicle: having its engine altered to give improved performance.
- hoppy* (n) (U.S.) An opium addict. (adj) Characterized by drugs or drug-taking.
- hop toy* (n) A container used for smoking opium.

- horse* (n) (orig. U.S.) Heroin.
- horse feathers* (n) (U.S.) Nonsense, rubbish, balderdash.
- horse opera* (n) (orig. U.S.) A Western film or television series.
- hostie* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) An air hostess.
- hot* (n) pl. Strong sexual desire. (adj) (1) Of a person (originally a woman): sexually attractive. (2) Of goods: stolen. As *hot stuff*, stolen goods.
- Hot beef* (int) Rhyming slang for 'Stop, thief!'.
hot chair (n) The electric chair.
- hot rod* (n) (orig. U.S.) A motor vehicle specially modified to give high power and speed.
- hot rodder* (n) The driver of a 'hot rod'.
hot-rodding (orig. U.S.) Racing 'hot rods'.
hot-shot (n) (U.S.) Injection of a drug that is of higher potency than the addict is accustomed to.
- hot-stuff* (v) (Army slang) To scrounge, steal.
- hotsy-totsy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Comfortable, satisfactory, just right.
- hotter* (n) (Brit.) A joyrider.
- hottie* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *hotty*. A sexually attractive person.
- hotting* (vbl n) (Brit.) Joyriding in stolen, high-performance cars, esp. dangerously and for display.
- hot-wire* (v) (N. Amer.) To by-pass the ignition system of a motor vehicle (as a preliminary to stealing the vehicle).
- house* (n) (orig. U.S.) A type of popular music.
- house-man* (n) (U.S.) Also *houseman*. A burglar.
- House of Lords* (n) A lavatory.
- hubba-hubba* (int) (U.S.) Also *haba-haba*. Used to express approval, excitement, or enthusiasm.
- Hughie* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Also *Huey*. The 'god' of weather.
- hum* (n) (1) A piece of humbug; an imposition, a hoax. (2) (Austral.) A persistent borrower, a scrounger.
- humongous* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Extremely large; huge, enormous.
- hump* (v) (coarse) To have a sexual intercourse with.
- hung up* (adj) Confused, bewildered, mixed-up.
- hunk* (n) (orig. U.S.) A sexually attractive, ruggedly handsome man.
- hunky* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Sexually attractive, ruggedly handsome.
- hunky-dory* (adj) (U.S.) Also *hunky-dorey*. Satisfactory, fine.
- hustler* (n) A prostitute.
- Hymie* (n) (U.S., derog. and offens.) A Jewish person.
- hyper* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Hyperactive, excitable, highly-strung; extraordinarily energetic.
- hypo* (n) (1) A drug-addict. (2) A hypodermic needle or injection.
- I AM* (n) A (self-)important person.
- ice* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Diamonds; jewellery. (2) (U.S.) Profit from the illegal sale of theatre, cinema, etc., tickets. (3) Protection money. (4) (orig. U.S.) A potent, crystalline form of the drug methamphetamine, smoked (illegally) as a stimulant.
- idiot box* (n) A television set.

- idiot stick* (n) (U.S.) A shovel.
- Ikey* (n) Also *Iky*. A Jew or someone taken to be a Jew.
- illegit* (n) An illegitimate actor, child, etc. (adj) Illegitimate.
- in* (n) (orig. U.S.) An introduction to someone of power, fame, or authority; influence with such a person.
- indeedee* (adv) Also *indeedy*. Indeed.
- Indian hay* (n) (U.S.) Marijuana.
- indie* (n) An independent theatre, film, or recorded company.
- info* (n) Information.
- imards* (n) pl. Intestines.
- in pod* (adj) Pregnant.
- inside* (adv) In prison.
- inside job* (n) A crime committed in a house, etc., by, or with the help of, a resident or servant in the building.
- inside stand* (n) The placing of a gang member incognito as one of the staff of a place to be robbed, in order to facilitate the robbery.
- Irish confetti* (n) pl. Stones, bricks, etc., esp. when used as weapons.
- Irishman's hurricane* (n) (Nautical slang) A dead calm.
- Irishman's rise* (n) Reduced wages.
- iron* (n) (1) A portable fire-arm; a pistol. (2) Money. (3) An old motor vehicle. (4) A jemmy used in housebreaking. (5) From *iron hoof*, rhyming slang for *poof*, a homosexual.
- ironmongery* (n) Firearms.
- it* (n) Sexual intercourse.
- ivories* (n) pl. Teeth.
- Jack* (n) A policeman or detective; a military policeman.
- Jack* (n) From *Jack's alive*, rhyming slang for 'five'; also, a five-pound note. (adj) From *Jack Jones*, rhyming slang for 'alone', usu. in *on one's Jack Jones*, on one's own; alone.
- jack-leg* (n) (U.S.) An incompetent or unskilled or unprincipled person.
- Jack-the-Lad* (n) (A nickname for) a troublemaker or rogue.
- Jacky-Jacky* (n) (Austral.) A white man's name for an Aboriginal.
- Jag* (n) A Jaguar, the proprietary name of a make of motor car.
- Jagers* (n) (Brit., Oxford University slang) Jesus College.
- jail-bait* (n) (orig. U.S.) A girl who is under the legal age of consent.
- jake* (n) (orig. U.S.) An alcoholic beverage made from Jamaica ginger.
- jalap* (n) Type of purgative obtained from a Mexican plant.
- Jane* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *jane*. A woman, girl, girlfriend.
- jar* (n) A drink (of beer, etc.).
- jasper* (n) (U.S.) A person, fellow, usu. with contemptuous overtones; spec. a rustic simpleton.
- jaunty* (n) (Nautical slang) Also *jaundy*. The master-at-arms on board ship.
- jaw-bone* (n) (N. Amer., orig. Canad.) Credit.
- jawboning* (n) (U.S.) Name applied to a policy of urging management and union leaders to adopt a policy of restraint in wage and price negotiations.

- jazz* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A type of music originating among American Negroes. (2) Sexual intercourse. (v) To have sexual intercourse (with).
- jazzbo* (n) (U.S.) Also *jasbo*. A person; spec. a Black person.
- jeepers* (int) (orig. U.S.) Also *jeepers-creepers*. A mild expression of surprise, delight, etc.
- Jeez* (int) (orig. U.S.) Also *Jese*, *Jez* or *Geez(e)*. An exclamation of surprise or enthusiasm; also used simply for emphasis.
- jelly* (n) (1) A pretty girl; a girl-friend. (2) Gelignite.
- jelly bean* (n) An unpleasant, weak, or dishonest person; spec. a pimp.
- jelly-belly* (n) A fat person.
- jelly-dog* (n) A harrier.
- jelly roll* (n) (1) A lover. (2) Sexual intercourse. (3) The female genitalia.
- jerkeroo* (n) (U.S.) A fool, a stupid person.
- Jerry* (n) (orig. Military slang) A German; spec. a German soldier; a German aircraft.
- jerry* (n) A chamber-pot.
- Jessie* (n) Also *Jessy*. A cowardly or effeminate man; a male homosexual.
- Jew boy* (n) (offens.) A Jewish male.
- jigaboo* (n) (U.S., coarse) A Black person, a Negro.
- jig-a-jig* (n) Also *jig-jig* or *jig-a-jog*. Sexual intercourse. (v) To copulate.
- jigger* (v) Used in mild oaths, as in *I'm jiggered, I'll be jiggered*.
- jiggery-pokery* (n) Deceitful or dishonest 'manipulation'.
- jim-jam* (n) pl. Delirium tremens.
- Jimmy* (n) (1) From *Jimmy O'Goblin*, rhyming slang for 'sovereign', twenty shillings. (2) From *Jimmy Riddle*, rhyming slang for 'piddle'.
- Jimmy Woodser* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A solitary drinker.
- jitterbug* (n) (orig. U.S.) A jittery or nervous person; an alarmist.
- jive* (n) (orig. U.S.) Talk or conversation; spec. misleading. (v) To mislead; to talk nonsense.
- jive-ass* (n) (U.S.) A person who loves fun or excitement.
- jivey* (adj) (chiefly U.S.) Also *jivy*. Misleading, phoney, pretentious.
- Jixi* (n) (dated) Also *Jixie*. A two-seated taxi-cab licensed in 1926.
- joanna* (n) Rhyming slang for 'piano'.
- Jock* (n) A Scottish sailor; any Scotsman.
- jock* (n) (1) Jockey. (2) (coarse) The genitals of a man. (3) Food. (4) (N. Amer.) From *jock-strap*, an athletic man.
- jocker* (n) (N. Amer.) (1) A tramp who is accompanied by a youth who begs for him or acts as his catamite. (2) A male homosexual.
- Joe* (n) (Canad.) A French Canadian.
- Joey* (n) (1) A threepenny bit. (2) A fourpenny piece.
- John Hop* (n) Rhyming slang for *cop*, a policeman.
- john darm* (n) A policeman.
- Johnnie* (n) Also *Johnny*. (1) A policeman. (2) A condom.
- joint* (n) (chiefly U.S.) (1) A marijuana cigarette; also, hypodermic equipment used by drug addicts. (2) A partnership or union, or a place of meeting or resort. (3) (Fairground slang) A stall, tent, etc., in a circus or fair. (4) Prison. (5) (Music slang) A song, a recording; an album.

- joker* (n) (esp. Austral. and N.Z.) Man, fellow, 'chap'.
- jollo* (n) (Austral.) A party, esp. one at which liquor is drunk.
- jollop* (n) (1) Strong liquor, or a drink of this. (2) A purgative, a medicine.
- jolly* (n) Jollification; so, a thrill of enjoyment or excitement.
- jolt* (n) (chiefly U.S.) (1) A drink of liquor. (2) A quantity of a drug in the form of a cigarette, tablet, etc. (3) A prison sentence.
- Jones* (n) (1) A drug addict's habit. (2) (U.S.) Symptoms of withdrawal from heroin or another drug. (3) (U.S.) Any intense craving or desire.
- josser* (n) (1) (Austral.) A clergyman or minister of religion. (2) A simpleton; a soft or silly fellow.
- journo* (n) (orig. Austral.) A journalist, esp. a newspaper journalist.
- joy-house* (n) A brothel.
- joy juice* (n) (U.S.) Also *joy-juice*. Alcoholic drink.
- joy-pop* (n) (An inhalation or injection of) a drug.
- joy-popper* (n) (orig. U.S.) An occasional taker of illegal drugs.
- Judy* (n) A girl, woman.
- jug* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A prison, jail. (2) A bank. (v) To shut up in jail; to imprison.
- juggins* (n) (dated) A fool, simpleton.
- juicer* (n) (1) An electrician. (2) (U.S.) An alcoholic.
- ju-ju* (n) A marijuana cigarette.
- Jumble* (n) A Black man's nickname for a white man.
- juniper* (n) A ticket-inspector or ticket-collector, jumping on to buses to inspect tickets.
- jungle* (n) A genre of dance music, originating in Britain in the early 1990s, which incorporates elements of ragga, hip-hop, and techno.
- jungle bunny* (n) A derogatory term used by some white people to designate Blacks, Australian Aborigines, etc.
- jungle juice* (n) Alcoholic liquor, esp. liquor that is either very powerful or that has been prepared illicitly or amateurishly.
- junk* (n) (orig. U.S.) Any narcotic drug; also, such drugs collectively.
- junkie* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *junkey*, *junky* or *junker*. A drug-addict; a drug-peddler.
- juvie* (n) (U.S.) Also *juvey*. A juvenile or juvenile delinquent.
- K* (n) Also *Special K*. Ketamine, used as a recreational drug.
- kaput* (adj) Also *kaputt*. (1) Finished, worn out; dead or destroyed. (2) Rendered useless or unable to function.
- kelly* (n) (1) From *Derby* (or *Darby*) *Kelly*, rhyming slang for 'belly'. (2) (chiefly U.S.) A man's hat; spec. a derby hat.
- Kelly's eye* (n) (In the game of bingo) the number one.
- key* (n) (U.S.) A kilogram of a drug.
- Khyber* (n) From *Khyber Pass*, rhyming slang for *arse*, the buttocks.
- kick* (n) (1) As *the kick*, discharge, dismissal. (2) As *the kick*, the fashion, the newest style. (3) A sixpence. (4) A pocket. (5) pl. Breeches, trousers. (6) (orig. U.S.) pl. Shoes.
- kick ass* (v) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) To act roughly or aggressively; to be powerful or assertive. (adj) Rough, aggressive, powerful.
- kick in* (v) (U.S.) (1) To break into (a building). (2) To contribute (money, etc.); to pay (one's share).

- kick off* (v) (orig. U.S.) To die.
- kick one's heels* (phr) To stand waiting idly or impatiently.
- kick the bucket* (phr) To die.
- kidvid* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A television programme or video made for children.
From *kid* and *video*.
- kiddo* (n) A young child, man or woman. From *kid*.
- killer* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *killer-diller*. An impressive, formidable, or excellent person or thing.
- king-fish* (n) (U.S.) A leader, chief, boss.
- king-hit* (n) (Austral.) A knock-out blow; a hard punch. (v) To punch hard or knock out.
- King Kong* (n) Cheap alcohol.
- kisser* (n) (orig. Boxing slang) The mouth; the face.
- kiss off* (v) (1) To dismiss, get rid of, kill. (2) To go away, die.
- klepto* (n) A kleptomaniac.
- klick* (n) (orig. U.S., Army slang) A kilometre.
- knackered* (ppl adj) Exhausted, worn out.
- knee-trembler* (n) An act of sexual intercourse between persons in a standing position.
- knob* (n) (1) The penis. (2) The head.
- knock-down* (n) (1) Something that knocks one down; something overpowering; e.g. strong liquor. (2) (U.S., Austral. and N.Z.) An introduction.
- knock down* (v) (1) (Austral. and N.Z.) To spend in drink or riot. (2) (U.S.) To appropriate or embezzle (esp. passengers' fares).
- knock in* (v) (University slang) To knock so as to gain admission to college after the gate is closed.
- knocking-shop* (n) A brothel.
- knock-off* (n) A robbery.
- knock off* (v) (1) To die. (2) To steal, to rob. (3) (orig. U.S.) To kill; to murder. (4) (Underworld slang) To arrest (a person); to raid (an establishment). (5) To copulate with, to seduce (a woman).
- knock out* (v) (Austral., N.Z. and U.S.) To earn.
- knock over* (v) (Underworld slang) To rob (a person), to burgle (a building); to steal (from).
- knock up* (v) (orig. U.S.) (1) To make (a woman) pregnant. (2) To have sexual intercourse with (a woman).
- knucklehead* (n) Also *knuckle-head*. A slow-witted or stupid person.
- knuckle sandwich* (n) A punch in the mouth.
- kook* (n) A cranky, crazy, or eccentric person.
- kooky* (adj) Also *kookie*. Cranky, crazy, eccentric.
- Kraut* (n) A German, esp. a German soldier.
- kriegie* (n) An Allied prisoner of war in Germany during the war of 1939-45.
- lad* (n) A boy, youth; a young man, young fellow.
- ladette* (n) (Brit.) A young woman characterized by her enjoyment of social drinking, sport, or other activities typically considered to be male-oriented.
- Lady Muck* (n) (orig. Austral.) Also *Lord Muck*. A self-important, pompous, or pretentious woman (or man).

- laid-back* (ppl adj) Of music: mellow, subdued; of a person, etc.: casually unperturbed, relaxed.
- lair* (n) (Austral.) Also *lare*. A flashily dressed man, one who 'shows off'.
- lairy* (adj) (1) Also *leary*, *leery*. Flashily dressed; vulgar. (2) (Cockney) Knowing, conceited.
- lakes* (adj) From *Lakes of Killarney*, rhyming slang for *barmy*, mad, crazy.
- lallapalooza* (n) (U.S.) Something outstandingly good of its kind.
- lame-brain* (n) A dull-witted or stupid person.
- lamps* (n) pl. The eyes.
- lard-ass* (n) (orig. N. Amer.) (A term of abuse for) a person who has large buttocks or is fat.
- larn* (v) To teach; to give (a person) a lesson.
- lat* (n) (1) (orig. Bodybuilding) *Latissimus dorsi*. (2) Latrine.
- lawk* (int) Also *lawks*. Lord!
- lay* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A woman who is readily available for sexual intercourse; an act of sexual intercourse. (2) A line or plan of business, occupation, adventure, etc. (v) (orig. U.S.) To have sexual intercourse with (a woman).
- lay back* (v) To do nothing, relax.
- lay for* (v) (orig. U.S.) (Of a woman) to be willing to have (extramarital) sexual intercourse.
- lazy dog* (n) (U.S., Military slang) A type of fragmentation bomb designed to explode in mid-air and scatter steel pellets at high velocity over the target area.
- lead balloon* (n) A failure, an unsuccessful venture.
- leaf* (n) (Services' slang) Also *leaf*. Leave of absence, furlough.
- leccer* (n) (University slang) Also *lecker*, *lekker*. A lecture.
- left field* (n) A position away from the centre of activity or interest.
- left-footer* (n) A Roman Catholic.
- legit* (n) A legitimate actor, child, etc. (adj) Legitimate.
- legless* (adj) Drunk, esp. too drunk to stand.
- leg-over* (n) (Brit.) (An act of) sexual intercourse.
- lemon* (n) (1) The head. (2) A simpleton, a loser. (3) (orig. U.S.) Something which is bad or undesirable or which fails to meet one's expectations. (4) (U.S.) An informer.
- lemony* (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) Irritated, angry.
- length* (n) A penis; sexual intercourse.
- Les* (n, adj) Also *Lessie*, *Lessy*, *Lezzy*. (A) lesbian.
- Lesbie* (n) Also *Lesbo*, *lesbo*. A lesbian.
- letty* (n) A bed, a lodging.
- lickety-split* (adv) (chiefly U.S.) At full speed; headlong.
- lickle* (adj) Childlike corruption of *little*.
- lifer* (n) (1) One sentenced to penal servitude (or earlier, transportation) for life. (2) A sentence for life.
- ligger* (n) One who gatecrashes parties.
- lightning* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Gin; also, any strong, freq. low-quality, alcoholic spirit.
- Limey* (n) (1) (esp. Austral., N.Z. and S. Afr.) An English immigrant. (2) (U.S.) An English ship; an English (or British) sailor.

- limo* (n) (U.S.) A limousine.
- line* (n) A dose of a powdered narcotic, esp. cocaine, laid out in a thin line for inhalation.
- lippy* (adj) (dial.) Impertinent, insolent; talkative, verbose.
- liquid lunch* (n) (often jocular) A midday meal at which drink rather than food is consumed.
- liquorice-stick* (n) (Jazz slang) A clarinet.
- lit up* (ppl adj) Drunk or under the influence of a drug.
- Lizzie* (n) Also *lizzie*. (1) A lesbian. Also, an effeminate young man. (2) A motor car, esp. an early model of a 'Ford'.
- load* (n) (1) An occurrence of venereal disease. (2) (U.S.) A dose of narcotics or large amount of alcohol. (3) (orig. U.S., coarse) An ejaculation of semen.
- loaded* (ppl adj) (U.S.) (1) Drunk. (2) Drugged; under the influence of drugs; containing a drug. (3) (orig. U.S.) Rich; extremely wealthy.
- loaf* (n, adj) From *loaf of bread*, rhyming slang for 'head' or 'dead'.
- locie* (n) (N. Amer. and N.Z.) Also *lokey*. A locomotive.
- loco* (orig. U.S.) Mad, insane.
- loco weed* (n) Marijuana.
- loid* (n) (Criminals' slang) A celluloid strip used by thieves to force open a spring lock.
- long-sleever* (n) (Austral.) (1) A tall glass. (2) Drink contained in a tall glass.
- loolie* (n) Also *looe* or *louie*. A lieutenant.
- looker* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person, usu. a woman, of particularly pleasing appearance.
- look-see* (n) Also *looksee*. A survey; a tour of inspection, a reconnaissance; an investigation.
- loony* (adj) Also *looney* or *luny*. Lunatic, crazed, dazed, foolish, silly.
- loony bin* (n) A mental hospital.
- loony-doctor* (n) A doctor who treats mental illnesses, a psychiatrist.
- lor* (int) (vulgar) Also *lor'*. Lord.
- loser* (n) (U.S.) A convicted criminal, a person who has served a sentence in prison.
- lounge lizard* (n) (orig. U.S.) A man who spends his time idling in fashionable society, esp. in search of a wealthy patroness.
- lovely jubbly* (n) Money.
- lover boy* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *lover man*. A lover, an attractive man, a woman-chaser; also used as a form of address.
- lovely* (adj) Also *lovally*. Cockney pronunciation of *lovely*.
- low-down* (n) (orig. U.S.) The fundamental, though not generally known, facts on (about) a person, situation, etc.
- lug* (n) (jocular) Ear.
- lughole* (n) Ear-hole.
- lummy* (int) Also *lumme*. A corruption of (*Lord*) *love me*.
- lunatic soup* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Alcoholic drink of poor quality.
- lurkman* (n) (Austral.) A person who lives by sharp practice.
- lush* (n) (1) Liquor, drink. (2) A habitual drunkard.
- lushy* (adj) Also *lushey*. Intoxicated, drunk.
- luvvy* (n) (Brit.) Also *luvvie*. (1) An actor or actress. (2) As a term of address, lovey.
- ma* (n) Mother. Chiefly as a form of address. From *mama*.

- M. and V.* (n) (Services' slang) Meat and vegetable(s).
- macaroni* (n) (1) (derog.) An Italian. (2) (chiefly Austral.) Rhyming slang for *baloney*, nonsense, meaningless talk.
- mack* (n) (1) A pimp. (2) (U.S., chiefly in African-American usage) A deceptive and convincing speaker.
- mad* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Fury, anger; a fit of anger.
- mad money* (n) Money for use in an emergency or in any unexpected eventuality.
- maggie* (n) (U.S.) Also *maggy*. A prostitute.
- Maggie Ann* (n) (Brit., Army slang) Margarine.
- magic* (adj, int) Superlatively good, excellent, fantastic.
- magsman* (n) (orig. Brit.) A street swindler, a confidence trickster.
- main guy* (n) (U.S.) A man of authority or importance; a leader, a chief.
- main line* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *main-line*. (1) A principal vein, into which drugs can readily be injected. (2) An intravenous injection of drugs.
- mainline* (v) (orig. U.S.) To inject (heroin or a similar drug) intravenously, esp. illicitly.
- main man* (n) (U.S.) A favourite male friend; a man admired for his achievements.
- main squeeze* (n) (N. Amer.) (1) An important person; the person in charge. (2) A sweetheart, a lover.
- make it* (v phr) To achieve sexual intercourse (with).
- make out* (v) To succeed in seducing, gain sexual satisfaction, have sexual intercourse (with).
- make with* (v) To bring into operation; to use; to concern oneself with.
- man-eater* (n) A sexually voracious woman.
- map* (n) A person's face.
- marble orchard* (n) (N. Amer.) Also *marble town*. A cemetery.
- marra* (n) A companion, partner. From *marrow*.
- Mary* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Used humorously as a form of address among male homosexuals. (2) (Austral.) A woman, esp. an Aboriginal woman.
- Mary Ann* (n) (1) An effeminate man, or one who takes a female role; a male homosexual. (2) (U.S.) Also *Mary J* (or *Mary Jane/Warner*). Marijuana; a marijuana cigarette.
- matlow* (n) (Nautical slang) Also *matlo*. A sailor.
- matman* (n) (orig. U.S.) A wrestler.
- mau-mau* (v) (chiefly N. Amer.) To intimidate, harass; to terrorize.
- max* (n) (U.S.) A maximum score or achievement, esp. in an examination.
- MCP* (n) Male chauvinist pig.
- me-and-you* (n) Menu.
- meat-head* (n) (orig. U.S., derog.) A stupid person; a person (esp. a man) who has a large or muscular physique but who is unintelligent or uncouth.
- meat-hook* (n) An arm; a hand, esp. one which is large and clumsy.
- meat-house* (n) A brothel.
- meat-market* (n) A meeting-place, bar, nightclub, etc., popular among prostitutes or people in search of casual sexual partners.
- meat-wagon* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (1) An ambulance. (2) A police car or van.
- mech* (n) (N. Amer. and Austral.) A person who cheats at gambling games, spec. cards. From *mechanic*.

- meeja* (n) (chiefly Brit.) The mass media.
- mega* (adj) Huge, great, substantial; excellent. (adv) Chiefly as an intensifier, very, hugely.
- mellow yellow* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Banana peel dried for smoking as a narcotic.
- melon* (n) (1) (Austral. and U.S.) A person's head. (2) pl. Large breasts.
- mentsh* (n) Also *mench*. Mention.
- mental* (n) A person who is mentally ill; a mental patient.
- merc* (n) A mercenary, a soldier paid to serve in a foreign army.
- merc* (n) A vehicle of the Mercedes-Benz make.
- merry hell* (n) A disturbance, great trouble; severe pain.
- Mespot* (n) (chiefly Military slang, now arch.) Mesopotamia.
- meth* (n) Methamphetamine or Methedrine taken as a stimulant drug.
- meth head* (n) A habitual user of methamphetamine.
- metho* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Methylated spirits, esp. as an alcoholic drink.
- Metho* (n) (Austral.) A member of the Methodist Church.
- Mex* (n) (1) A Mexican. (2) (U.S., orig. Services' slang) Mexican money.
- Mexican overdrive* (n) The putting of the gears of a vehicle, esp. a truck, into neutral while coasting downhill.
- middle leg* (n) A man's penis.
- middy* (n) (Austral.) A medium-sized measure of beer or other liquor.
- mike* (n) A microgram of a drug, esp. LSD.
- milko* (n) (orig. Austral. and N.Z.) A milkman. (int) (chiefly Brit. and Austral.) A milkman's call indicating that milk is available.
- mince* (n) From *mince-pie*, rhyming slang for 'eye'. Usu. in pl.
- mind-blowing* (adj) Astonishing, overwhelming; consciousness-altering (esp. as a result of drug use).
- minder* (n) A bodyguard, esp. one employed to protect a criminal.
- mingy* (adj) Mean, stingy, niggardly; disappointingly or ungenerously small.
- Minnie* (n) (Military slang) Also *Mimny*. A German trench mortar.
- minstrel* (n) A tablet containing amphetamine, coloured black or black and white.
- misper* (n) (Brit., chiefly Police slang) Missing person.
- missus* (n) (regional) (1) A wife. (2) Used as a form of address to any woman.
- mitt* (n) A hand or fist. Usu. in pl.
- mitt camp* (n) (U.S.) A palmist's or fortune-teller's booth, tent, etc.
- mixer* (n) (Brit.) A troublemaker.
- mix in* (v) To start or join in a fight.
- mix it* (v) To quarrel, fight; to start fighting; to cause trouble.
- mo* (n) (1) (Brit.) A moment, a very short time. (2) (Austral. and N.Z.) A moustache.
- m.o.* (n) Modus operandi.
- mob* (n) The common people, the populace. From *mobile*.
- mob-handed* (adj) (Brit.) That forms a large body; present in considerable numbers.
- mobster* (n) A member of a gang of criminals; spec. a member of the Mafia.
- moffie* (n) (S. Afr.) A male transvestite; a man perceived to be effeminate; a male homosexual.
- mog* (n) (Brit.) A cat.
- mojo* (n) (U.S.) Any narcotic drug, esp. (formerly) morphine.

- molly* (n) Also *molley*, *mollie*. An effeminate man or boy; a male homosexual.
- mong* (n) (Austral., derog.) (1) A person of low or indeterminate status. (2) A mongrel; any dog.
- monkey* (n) (1) (Criminals' slang) An associate. (2) (U.S.) A chorus girl. (3) (Brit. and Austral.) 500 pounds sterling; (Austral.) 500 dollars. (4) (chiefly U.S.) The male or female sexual organs. (5) Addiction to, or habitual use of, a drug.
- monkey-hurdler* (n) (U.S.) An organist.
- monkey-man* (n) (U.S.) A weak or gullible man, esp. one subservient to his wife or lover, or to women generally.
- monkey meat* (n) (U.S., Army slang) Tinned meat.
- monkey parade* (n) (dated) An evening promenade of young people, esp. for the purpose of meeting members of the opposite sex.
- monkey suit* (n) (orig. U.S., freq. deprec.) A uniform, esp. a formal, decorative, or showy one, as a baseball or military uniform.
- Montezuma's revenge* (n) (jocular) Diarrhoea suffered by travellers, esp. in Mexico.
- moocher* (n) A beggar, a scrounger.
- mooching* (n) (regional) Begging, scrounging; loafing, loitering.
- moody* (n) (Brit., orig. Criminals' slang) Flattery or lies intended to persuade or elicit compliance; nonsense, rubbish.
- moon* (n) (1) (U.S.) Illicitly distilled liquor. From *moonshine*. (2) The buttocks.
- moon-eyed* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Drunk.
- moonlight* (v) (orig. U.S.) To do paid work in addition to one's regular employment.
- moonlighter* (n) A person who makes a hasty departure by night.
- moonshine* (n) Illicitly distilled liquor, esp. whisky.
- Moreton Bay* (n) (chiefly Austral.) From *Moreton Bay fig*, rhyming slang for *fizgig*, an informer.
- morph* (n) (U.S.) Morphine.
- mossback* (n) A slow, rustic, or old-fashioned person.
- mossie* (n) (orig. and chiefly Austral.) Also *mozzie*. A mosquito.
- mossy* (adj) (U.S.) Extremely conservative or reactionary; old-fashioned, out-of-date.
- mother* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) An obnoxious, despicable, or contemptible person. From coarse *motherfucker*.
- motherless* (adj) (1) (Austral.) Very poor, having no money. (2) (S. Afr.) Drunk; intoxicated.
- mother's ruin* (n) Gin.
- motormouth* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person who talks fast and incessantly, usually to little purpose.
- mouseburger* (n) (chiefly U.S., humorous) A person who does not have a particularly good-looking appearance or high I.Q., but can nevertheless achieve professional and personal success through determination.
- mousetrap* (n) Inferior or unpalatable cheese.
- mouthful* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) An utterance of notable truth or relevance.
- mouthpiece* (n) (chiefly Criminals' slang) A lawyer, esp. one appearing as counsel for the defence in a criminal case.
- Mozart and Liszt* (adj) Rhyming slang for *pissed*, drunk, intoxicated.
- mucker* (n) A heavy fall, a cropper.

mud (n) Opium; also, heroin.

mud-hook (n) (1) A foot (esp. one which is large or clumsy); (similarly) a hand. (2) An anchor.

mug (n) (1) A face, esp. an unattractive one. (2) A grotesque or exaggerated facial expression. (3) A photograph of a person's face, esp. in police records. (4) The mouth.

muggins (n) A fool, a simpleton.

mugger (n) A person who smokes marijuana.

munchie (n) Food; esp. snack food.

murder one (n) (U.S.) (A charge of) first-degree murder.

muscle man (n) A man with highly developed muscles; esp. a wrestler, a bodybuilder.

muscle Mary (n) (chiefly Brit.) A muscular homosexual man regarded as being obsessed with fitness.

mush (n) (1) An umbrella. From *mushroom*. (2) (orig. U.S.) The face; the mouth.

mush-head (n) (U.S.) A person who is weak, ineffectual, or easily influenced.

muso (n) (1) (Austral.) A musician; esp. a classical one. (2) (Brit.) A musician or music enthusiast.

mutt (n) (1) An incompetent, a fool. (2) (derog.) An unattractive woman. (3) A racehorse, esp. a slow one.

Mutt and Jeff (adj) Rhyming slang for 'deaf'.

mutton-head (n) (orig. U.S.) A dull or stupid person.

mutton-headed (adj) (orig. U.S.) Dull, stupid; silly, foolish.

nabe (n) (U.S.) A neighbourhood.

Naffy (n) A variant of *NAAFI*: Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes.

nah (adv) (1) No. (2) (Brit.) Now.

nailer (n) (1) A police officer, detective. (2) A very efficient or effective person or thing.

Nam (n) Vietnam.

nana (n) A foolish or silly person; an idiot.

nancy (n) (1) The buttocks. (2) (derog.) An effeminate man or boy; a male homosexual. (adj) (derog.) Characteristic of, or involving homosexual men; affected, effeminate.

nancy boy (n) An effeminate man or boy; a male homosexual.

narco (n) (1) (U.S.) A drug addict. (2) Also *narc*. A police agent or investigator concerned with narcotics.

Nasho (n) A person doing national service. Also: national service itself.

natch (n) (U.S.) In *on the natch*: not on drugs; without taking narcotics. From *natural*.

natural (n) Natural life.

naughty (n) (orig. and chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) An act of sexual intercourse. (v) (Austral. and N.Z., rare) To have sexual intercourse with (someone).

nav (n) From *navigator*, rhyming slang for *tater*, a potato.

neatnik (n) (chiefly N. Amer.) A person who is (excessively) neat in personal habits.

neato (adj, int) (chiefly N. Amer.) (That is) excellent, desirable; wonderful, fantastic.

neck-oil (n) An alcoholic drink, esp. beer.

necktie party (n) (U.S.) A lynching or hanging.

needle (n) (1) A hypodermic injection, esp. of an illegal drug. (2) A measure of a drug for injecting. (3) The penis.

- needle beer* (n) (U.S.) Near-beer mixed with ethyl alcohol or an alcoholic drink.
- needle man* (n) (U.S.) A drug addict who takes drugs by injection.
- nellie* (n) Also *nelly*. (1) (derog.) An effeminate or homosexual man. (2) A silly, ineffectual, or fussy person. (3) (Austral.) A cheap wine.
- nembie* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A Nembutal capsule.
- nerd* (n) (orig. U.S., derog.) An insignificant, foolish, or socially inept person.
- nerk* (n) (Brit., deprec.) A foolish, objectionable, or insignificant person. From *nerd* and *berk* (or *jerk*).
- nerts* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) 'Nuts', crazy.
- never-never* (n) (orig. Austral.) The hire-purchase system.
- neves* (n) (Brit., orig. London, Criminals' slang) Back-slang for *seven*, a prison sentence of seven years.
- nick* (v) (1) To steal (a thing); to defraud. (2) (Of the police) to arrest, take into custody.
- nickel* (n) (U.S.) (1) Five dollars' worth of a drug (originally marijuana). (2) A five-year prison sentence.
- niff* (v) (chiefly Brit.) To smell or sniff out (esp. something unpleasant).
- nig* (n) (derog. and offens.) A dark-skinned person. From *nigger*.
- Niggerville* (n) (U.S.) A neighbourhood with predominantly black residents.
- nightery* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *nighterie*, *niterie*, *nitery*. A nightclub.
- nig-nog* (n) (1) (derog. and offens.) A black or dark-skinned person. (2) (mildly derog.) A new or unskilled recruit; a novice; a foolish or naive person.
- nigra* (n) (Southern U.S.) A Black person. (adj) Dark-skinned.
- Nimby* (n) Also *NIMBY*. Used as a slogan objecting to the siting of something considered unpleasant, such as nuclear waste, in one's locality. From *not in my back yard*.
- nineteenth hole* (n) (humorous, orig. U.S.) The bar room in a golf clubhouse, as reached at the end of a standard round of eighteen holes.
- ninety-day wonder* (n) (U.S., Services' slang, humorous) A graduate of a ninety-day officers' training course.
- ning-nong* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A fool, a stupid person. Cf. *nig-nog* (sense 2).
- ninny* (adj) A simpleton; a fool.
- Nip* (n) (orig. Military, offens.) A Japanese person. (adj) Japanese.
- nitro* (n) Nitroglycerine.
- nitto* (v) (Criminals' slang) To keep still or quiet; to stop.
- nitty-gritty* (n) (U.S.) The realities or practical details of a matter. (adj) Basic, fundamental; down-to-earth, practical.
- nitwit* (n) (orig. U.S.) A stupid, silly, or foolish person. (adj) Stupid, foolish, idiotic.
- nix* (n) Nothing; nobody.
- nobbler* (n) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) A small quantity of alcoholic drink.
- no-hoper* (n) (orig. Austral.) A racehorse with no prospect of winning.
- no-no* (n) (orig. U.S.) Something which is forbidden, unwise, impossible, or unacceptable. (adj) Forbidden, unacceptable.
- noov* (n) (Brit.) Also *noove*. Nouveau riche.
- nope* (adv) (orig. U.S.) No.
- nose candy* (n) (N. Amer.) A drug that is inhaled through the nose; spec. cocaine.
- noshable* (adj) Suitable for noshing; tasty, delicious.

- noshery* (n) A restaurant; a snack bar.
- nosh-up* (n) (Brit.) A hearty or lavish meal.
- notch house* (n) Also *notch-house*. A brothel.
- nuddy* (n) (orig. Austral.) Also *nuddie*. Only in *in the nuddy*, in the nude, naked, unclothed.
- nuff* (adj, adv, pron) (orig. U.S.) Enough.
- nuke* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Also *nuc*. A nuclear bomb, weapon, or warhead. From *nuclear*.
- nully* (n) (rare) A fool, a stupid person; a nobody.
- nurd* (n) (orig. U.S., derog.) An insignificant, foolish, or socially inept person.
- nut* (n) (1) The head. As in *out of one's nut*, out of one's mind; insane. (2) (orig. U.S., coarse) Usu. in pl. The testicles. (3) pl. A source of pleasure or delight. (4) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) pl. As *the nuts*, an excellent or first-rate person or thing. (5) (chiefly U.S.) A person. (6) (Brit.) A fashionable or showy young man. (7) (orig. U.S.) A mad or crazy person; an eccentric, a crank. (8) (U.S.) The amount of money required for a venture. (9) (U.S.) Any sum of money; a bribe or payoff.
- nutcase* (n) A crazy, mad, or mentally disturbed person; an eccentric.
- nut-house* (n) (orig. U.S.) A home or hospital for people with mental illnesses.
- nuts* (adj) (1) (chiefly Brit.) In *to be (dead) nuts (up)on*, to be infatuated with or fond of (a person); to be enthusiastic about (a person or thing). (2) (orig. U.S.) Mad (in various senses); esp. crazy, deranged.
- nutso* (n) A mad or crazy person. (adj) Mad, crazy.
- nutsy* (adj) Also *nutty*. Mad, insane; crazy, eccentric.
- nutter* (n) An insane person; a deranged or unstable person; an eccentric person.
- nuttery* (n) (U.S.) A mental hospital.
- oaf* (n) (Brit.) A lout, a hooligan.
- OAO* (n) (Military slang) One and only.
- obbo* (n) (Military slang) Also *obo*. An observation balloon.
- obit* (n) (orig. Journalistic slang) An obituary, esp. in a newspaper.
- obs* (n) (chiefly Military slang) Observation.
- O.D.* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *OD*. An overdose of a drug, esp. when fatal. (v) To take an overdose of a drug.
- O.D.'d* (adj) Having taken an overdose; dead of an overdose.
- oddball* (n) (orig. U.S.) An eccentric or odd person; a person of unconventional views or habits. (adj) Eccentric, strange; bizarre, peculiar.
- odds and sods* (n) (Brit., orig. Services' slang) Miscellaneous people or articles.
- O.D.V.* (n) (humorous) Brandy. From *eau-de-vie*.
- off* (v) (1) (U.S.) To turn off, shut down. (2) (chiefly U.S.) To kill.
- office hours* (n) (U.S., Military slang) A disciplinary session.
- offie* (n) Also *offy*. An off-licence shop.
- oggin* (n) (Nautical slang) The sea.
- oil* (n) (1) (U.S. and Ir.) Alcohol, esp. whisky. (2) (U.S.) Money; spec. money given in order to bribe or corrupt. (3) (Austral. and N.Z.) Information, news, the true facts. (v) To bribe.

- oil-burner* (n) (1) A vehicle which uses an excessive amount of lubricating oil, usually on account of its poor condition. (2) (U.S.) A serious addiction to a drug, esp. heroin.
- oil can* (n) (Military slang) A German trench mortar shell of the First World War.
- oiled* (adj) Drunk; mildly drunk, tipsy, usu. *well oiled*.
- oink* (n) Also *OINK*. A couple with no children, living on a single (esp. large) salary. From one income, *no kids*.
- O.K.* (adj) Also *OK*, *ok*. All right, fashionable, modish. From *oll* (or *orl*) correct.
- okay* (adj) Also *oke*, *okey*, *okey-dokey*, or reversed as *kayo*. 'O.K.'
- old bean* (n) Also *old fruit*. A familiar form of address.
- old boot* (n) A woman; a wife.
- old lady* (n) (U.S., chiefly Prison slang) A passive or unwilling (usually male) partner in a homosexual relationship.
- old ship* (n) A jocular address to a sailor.
- old sweat* (n) An experienced soldier or military pilot.
- olive oil* (int) A humorous mispronunciation of *au revoir*.
- omee* (n) (Polar slang) Also *omie*. A landlord, a master; a man.
- on* (adv) Under the influence of drink or (orig. U.S.) drugs. (prep) (orig. U.S.) As in *on the stuff*, addicted to drugs.
- oncer* (n) (Brit.) A one-pound note; (occas.) one pound sterling.
- one-arm bandit* (n) (orig. U.S.) A slot machine or similar gaming machine operated by pulling down an arm-like handle.
- one-arm joint* (n) (U.S.) A cheap restaurant where the seats have one arm wide enough to hold a plate of food, etc.
- one-lunger* (n) An engine with a single cylinder; a vehicle or boat driven by such an engine.
- one-night stand* (n) A casual sexual liaison or encounter lasting only one night.
- one-pipper* (n) (Military slang) A second lieutenant (so called from this officer's entitlement to wear one pip on the shoulder of his or her uniform).
- onion* (n) The head. Esp. in *off one's onion*, mad, crazy.
- O.O.* (n) (U.S.) Once-over.
- op* (n) (1) (U.S.) A detective; esp. a private investigator. (2) A radio or telegraph operator. From *operative* or *operator*.
- O.P.* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Also *O.P.*'s. From *other people's* (cigarettes or alcoholic drink).
- OPM* (n) (U.S.) Other people's money.
- oppo* (n) (orig. Services' slang) A partner, a counterpart.
- ork* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) An orchestra; spec. a jazz or dance band.
- orthopod* (n) (Medicine slang) An orthopaedic surgeon.
- oscar* (Austral. and N.Z.) From *Oscar Asche*, rhyming slang for 'cash'.
- O sign* (n) (Medicine slang, orig. and chiefly U.S.) The persistently gaping, open mouth of a patient who is in a coma, dying, or dead.
- OTT* (adj) Also *O.T.T.* Over the top, outrageous.
- out* (n) pl. An outpatient department in a hospital.
- out* (v) (1) (Boxing slang) To knock out or defeat (an opponent). (2) To kill, esp. by a blow. (3) (orig. U.S.) To expose the undeclared homosexuality of (esp. a prominent or public figure).

- outer* (n) (Austral.) The uncovered area of a racecourse or sports ground.
- out-of-sight* (adv) (orig. U.S.) (1) Extremely well; beyond all comparison. (2) To a great degree; to the limit of endurance.
- outside* (n) The world existing beyond a prison or other institution.
- outside job* (n) A crime committed by a person not connected or associated with the building, organization, etc., in which it took place.
- outside man* (n) (U.S.) A person involved in any of various special roles in a confidence trick or robbery.
- owner* (n) (Nautical slang) The captain of a ship, boat, etc.
- ozoner* (n) (U.S.) A drive-in cinema.
- Paki* (n) (orig. and chiefly Brit., usu. derog.) A person of Pakistani; (also more gen., South Asian) birth or descent, esp. one living in Britain.
- paleface* (n) (orig. N. Amer., Black E., chiefly derog.) A white person. Also as a form of address.
- panhandler* (n) (U.S.) A street beggar.
- pansified* (adj) Excessively stylized or adorned; affected; effeminate.
- pansy* (n) (freq. derog.) Also *pansy boy*. A male homosexual; an effeminate man; a weakling. (v) To clothe or adorn in an affected or effeminate manner.
- panther juice* (n) (U.S.) Strong, esp. bootleg, liquor.
- Pape* (n) (Sc. and Ir., usu. derog.) A Roman Catholic.
- paralysed* (adj) (chiefly U.S.) Intoxicated; incapacitated through drink.
- parlour-house* (n) (U.S.) An expensive type of brothel.
- pash* (n) Passion, amorous feeling.
- passer* (n) (1) A person who puts base or forged money into circulation. (2) A drug dealer.
- passman* (n) A male prisoner who is allowed to leave his cell as a special privilege, esp. in order to perform certain duties.
- Pat* (n) (freq. derog.) An Irish person.
- Pat* (pron, adj) (chiefly Austral.) From *Pat Malone*, rhyming slang for 'own', 'alone'.
- patootie* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A girlfriend, a sweetheart; an attractive woman.
- patsy* (n) (orig. U.S.) Someone who is the object of ridicule.
- pavement princess* (n) (U.S.) A prostitute who seeks business on the streets.
- pay* (Navy slang) An officer responsible for keeping a ship's accounts and for overseeing the supply and distribution of provisions and stores.
- pay-off* (Criminals' slang) The proceeds of a fraud, robbery, or other criminal operation. Also in *pay-off man*.
- P.B.I.* (n) Also *p.b.i.* Poor Bloody Infantry(man).
- P.D.Q.* (adv) Also *p.d.q.* Petty damn(ed) quick.
- pea-brain* (n) (derog.) A stupid or empty-headed person; a fool.
- pea-brained* (adj) (derog.) Stupid, dull-witted, foolish.
- peach* (n) An attractive young woman.
- peacheroo* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A particularly fine or desirable person or thing, esp. an attractive woman.
- peachy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) (Of a woman) attractive, desirable.
- peanut* (n) (orig. U.S.) A small, unintelligent, or unimportant person.
- peanut gallery* (n) (freq. deprec.) The top gallery in a theatre or cinema.

- pearlies* (n) pl. A person's teeth. From *pearly whites*.
- pea-soup* (n) (N. Amer., derog.) A French Canadian.
- peb* (n) (Austral., now rare) A tough or indomitable person or animal. From *pebble*.
- pec* (n) (Bodybuilders' slang) A pectoral muscle. Usu. in pl.
- peck* (n) (U.S., Black E., deprec.) A white person regarded as poor, rustic, or unsophisticated.
- pecker* (n) (chiefly U.S.) The penis.
- ped* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A pedestrian; a walker.
- pee* (v) To urinate in or on (something).
- pee-wee* (n) (Children's slang) An act of urination.
- peg* (n) A tooth; esp. a child's tooth.
- pego* (n) The penis.
- pen* (n) (N. Amer.) A penitentiary.
- pencil* (n) (1) The penis. (2) (Journalistic slang) A reporter.
- penguin suit* (n) (humorous) A man's formal evening wear.
- pen-mate* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) Each of two or more shearers who shear sheep from the same pen.
- pep* (n) (orig. U.S.) Energy; liveliness, vigour, power. From *pepper*.
- pep-pill* (n) (orig. U.S.) A pill containing a stimulant drug, taken to increase or restore a person's alertness, energy, or enthusiasm.
- perp* (n) (U.S.) The perpetrator of a crime.
- perv* (n) (orig. Austral.) Also *perve*. A sexual pervert. From *perversion* or *pervert*. (adj) Of or relating to pornography. From *perverted*.
- peter* (n) (1) (orig. cant) Portmanteau, trunk, or other piece of baggage. (2) (Criminals' slang) A safe or cash box. (3) (orig. Austral.) A cell in a prison, police station, etc. (4) (chiefly U.S.) The penis. (5) (U.S.) A hypnotic drug, esp. chloral hydrate.
- PFC* (n) (U.S., chiefly Military) Also *Pfc*. Poor foolish (or forlorn, etc.) civilian.
- phat* (adj) (orig. U.S., esp. in African-American usage) (1) Of a woman: sexy, attractive. (2) Of music: excellent, admirable; fashionable.
- phenom* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A phenomenon.
- Phillie* (n) (U.S.) Also *Philly*. The city of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania.
- phishing* (n) (Computing) Fraud perpetrated on the Internet.
- phiz* (n) (now arch.) A face or facial expression; countenance. From *physiognomy*.
- phy* (n) (chiefly Brit.) Physeptone, the drug methadone.
- physical torture* (n) (humorous) Physical training.
- pi* (adj) (now arch.) Pious, devout.
- P.I.* (n) (U.S.) Pimp.
- pie-card* (n) (U.S., dated) Also *pie card*. A card entitling the holder to free meals or lodging; a meal ticket.
- piece* (n) (1) A quantity of a drug (esp. morphine, heroin, or cocaine) approximately equal to an ounce in weight. (2) (orig. U.S.) A spray-painted graffiti mural. (3) (derog.) A woman or girl.
- pie-faced* (adj) (orig. U.S., chiefly derog.) Having a round, flat face or a blank expression; stupid.
- pig* (n) (1) (derog.) A police officer. (2) (chiefly U.S.) An informer.
- pigboat* (n) (N. Amer., Navy slang) A submarine.

- pigeon-drop* (n) (orig. U.S., Criminals' slang) A confidence trick.
- pig-jump* (v) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) Of a horse, mule, etc.: to jump from all four legs without bringing them together, esp. in an attempt to unseat the rider.
- pig-out* (n) (orig. U.S.) A bout of excessive eating; a feast.
- pig out* (v) (orig. N. Amer.) To over-indulge esp. by overeating; to gorge oneself on food.
- pig's ear* (n) Rhyming slang for 'beer'.
- pike* (n) (chiefly N. Amer.) A road on which a toll is collected at a toll gate.
- Piker* (n) (U.S., derog.) In California and other Pacific states of the U.S.: a member of a perceived class of poor white migrants from the southern states of the U.S.
- pikey* (n) (chiefly regional, offens.) Also *piky*. A vagrant, a tramp; a traveller, a gypsy.
- pill* (n) A pill or tablet of a recreational or non-medicinal drug, spec. a barbiturate or amphetamine. (2) pl. The testicles. (3) A bullet; a shell, grenade, or bomb. (4) A ball used in a sport or game. (5) (orig. U.S.) A cigarette. (6) (chiefly Military slang) A doctor, a surgeon.
- pill-head* (n) A person addicted to pills.
- pillock* (n) (chiefly Brit., mildly derog.) A stupid person; a fool, an idiot.
- pin* (n) A leg.
- pinch* (v) To steal (a thing).
- pineapple* (n) A bomb; a hand-grenade, a light trench mortar. From *pineapple bomb*.
- pine drape* (n) (U.S.) A coffin.
- pine-top* (n) (U.S.) Cheap or illicit whisky, formerly flavoured with the new shoots of a pine tree.
- pink button* (n) (Stock Market) A jobber's clerk.
- pinkers* (n) (Brit., orig. and chiefly Navy slang) Pink gin.
- pink-eye* (n) (chiefly Austral.) Cheap or home-made alcoholic drink.
- pink lady* (n) (1) A barbiturate. (2) A cocktail usually consisting of gin, egg white, and grenadine.
- pinko* (n) (chiefly N. Amer., freq. derog.) A person with (somewhat) left-wing or liberal views; a socialist.
- pink toe* (n) (U.S., Black E.) A white woman, or a light-skinned black woman.
- pipped* (adj) (now chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) Annoyed, irritated; depressed.
- pipperoo* (n) (U.S.) A particularly remarkable or pleasing person or thing.
- pippin* (orig. U.S.) An excellent, pleasing, or beautiful person or thing.
- pip-pip* (int) Goodbye.
- piss artist* (n) (chiefly Brit.) A drunkard; a person who fools about.
- pissed* (adj) (1) (chiefly Brit.) Drunk, intoxicated. Also with *up*. (2) (orig. U.S.) Angry, irritated; depressed. Freq. (esp. in Brit. use) as *pissed off*.
- pisser* (n) (1) A person who urinates. (2) (coarse) The penis. (3) (orig. U.S.) A particularly fine or impressive person or thing; something remarkable or formidable.
- piss-head* (n) (chiefly Brit. and N.Z.) A drunkard.
- pizzazz* (n) (orig. U.S.) Zest, vitality, or liveliness; showiness.
- placer* (n) (1) (Austral. and N.Z.) A sheep which remains in one place. (2) An organizer of criminal practices, esp. a dealer in stolen goods.
- plastered* (adj) Very drunk. Chiefly in predicative use.

- plate of meat* (n) (1) Rhyming slang for 'a street'. (2) pl. Also elliptically, as *plates*.
Rhyming slang for 'feet'.
- pleb* (n) (U.S.) A new cadet at a military or naval academy.
- plonked* (adj) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) Intoxicated, drunk; also with *up*.
- plonko* (n) (Austral.) An alcoholic.
- plotzed* (adj) (U.S.) Intoxicated; drunk.
- plug-ugly* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) (1) A member of a gang of ruffians in Baltimore and some other American cities. (2) A very ugly person or (occas.) animal.
- plurry* (adv) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) As an intensifier, very, extremely, damnably.
From *bloody*.
- plute* (n) (chiefly U.S.) A plutocrat; a very wealthy person, esp. an industrialist.
- pocketbook* (n) (U.S.) The female external genitals.
- pod* (n) Marijuana.
- pointy-head* (n) (orig. U.S., derog.) A stupid person.
- poison* (n) (orig. U.S.) Alcoholic liquor; an alcoholic drink.
- poisoner* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A cook, esp. for large numbers.
- poke-out* (n) (U.S.) A parcel of food given to a tramp, etc.; a lunch.
- poker-faced* (adj) Also *po-faced*. Having a solemn or humourless expression.
- pol* (n) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) A politician.
- poler* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A scrounger, a sponger; a shirker.
- polis* (n) (Sc. and Ir.) The police; a police officer.
- polly* (n) (orig. U.S., now chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) A politician.
- Polly* (n) Apollinaris mineral water; a bottle or glass of this.
- Pom* (n) (Austral. and N.Z., usu. derog.) Also *Pommie*, *Pommy*. An immigrant (usually a recent one) to Australia or New Zealand from Britain; a British (esp. an English) person.
- Pompey* (n) (1) A nickname for the town and dockyard of Portsmouth, in Hampshire.
(2) Portsmouth Football Club.
- poncy* (adj) (chiefly Brit., derog.) Also *poncey*. Affected, pretentious, self-consciously refined or superior; effeminate, homosexual.
- poofteroo* (n) (derog.) A homosexual man; an effeminate or affected man. From *poofter*.
- pooh pooh* (n) Also *poo poo*. Faeces, excrement.
- poon* (v) (Austral.) To dress up, esp. flashily.
- poopy* (adj) (chiefly U.S.) Foolish, dull-witted; ineffectual, weak.
- pop* (n) An injection of a narcotic drug. (v) To take (a drug or pill); spec. to swallow or inject (a narcotic drug).
- pop off* (v) To die.
- poppa stoppa* (n) (U.S., Black E.) A person, esp. a man.
- popper* (n) (1) A person who takes pills (esp. of stimulant drugs) freely or excessively; any drug-taker.
- poppy* (n) Opium.
- pop shop* (n) A pawnshop.
- popskull* (n) (N. Amer.) A powerful, harsh, or low quality (esp. home-made) alcoholic drink; inferior whisky.
- pork* (v) (orig. U.S.) To engage in sex.

- pork chop* (n) (U.S., derog.) A black person who is subservient to whites.
- pork-chopper* (U.S.) A full-time union official.
- porky* (n) From *pork pie*, rhyming slang for 'a lie'.
- pornie* (n) A pornographic film.
- porny* (adj) Pornographic.
- post* (n) (1) (Medicine slang, chiefly U.S.) An autopsy, a post-mortem. (2) (U.S.) Postgraduate.
- post office* (n) Esp. in espionage: a person who receives information and either transmits it or holds it for collection.
- pot* (n) Cannabis.
- potato* (n) (1) As *the potato*, the (very, real, or proper) thing. (2) pl. Money; spec. dollars. (3) (Austral.) From *potato peeler*, rhyming slang for *sheila*, a girl or woman.
- pothead* (n) A habitual user of cannabis.
- potted* (adj) (1) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) Under the influence of alcohol; drunk. (2) (N. Amer.) Under the influence of cannabis.
- potzer* (n) (Chess slang) Also *patzer*. A poor player, a novice.
- pound-noteish* (adj) (Brit.) Also *pound-notish*. Affected, pompous.
- pox-doctor* (n) A doctor specializing in the treatment of venereal disease.
- prad* (n) (now chiefly Austral.) A horse.
- prat leather* (n) A wallet or purse kept in the hip pocket.
- pratfall* (n) A fall on to the buttocks. (v) To fall on to the buttocks.
- preem* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A première; a first showing or performance, esp. of a film.
- preg* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Of a woman: pregnant.
- preggers* (adj) (orig. Brit.) Also *preggie*, *preggy* or *preggo*. Of a woman: pregnant.
- prep* (v) (orig. U.S.) To train (a sportsman, team, etc.) in preparation for any sporting event.
- prepper* (n) (U.S., School and College slang) A student at a prep school, esp. one who is a member of a sports team.
- preppy* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Of or relating to a student at a prep school.
- pretty-boy* (n) A man who is attractive in a feminine way; an effeminate or narcissistic man; (also) a male homosexual.
- previous* (n) (Brit., Criminals' slang) A criminal record; previous convictions.
- prex* (n) (U.S., now rare) (A title for) the president of a college. Hence: any president, as of America, a society, etc.
- prick* (n) (coarse) (1) The penis. (2) A term of contempt or abuse for a man; a fool.
- private business* (n) (Eton College slang) Extra tuition.
- pro* (n) A prostitute.
- Prod* (n, adj) (chiefly Ir. and Sc., derog.) Also *Proddie*, *Proddy*. (A) protestant.
- profesh* (n) A profession, esp. the theatrical profession.
- prog* (n) (1) (Oxford or Cambridge University slang) An officer elected periodically and having mainly disciplinary and administrative duties. From *proggins* or earlier *proctor*. (2) A programme. (adj) Of music: experimental, innovative; avant-garde, modern. From *progressive*.
- pronk* (n) (Brit., derog.) A fool, an idiot; (also) an ineffectual or effeminate person.

- prop* (n) (orig. Theatrical slang) A property in a theatre, film set, or similar location; a stage property. (2) (chiefly Criminals' slang) A diamond; a valuable piece of jewellery.
- propellerhead* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person who is extremely knowledgeable about or devoted to a subject, esp. a technological subject.
- propho* (n) (orig. U.S., Military) Prophylaxis of venereal disease; (also) a prophylactic device, spec. a condom.
- pross* (n) (N. Amer.) Also *prossie*, *prossy*, *prostie*, *prosty*. A prostitute.
- Prot* (n) (chiefly Ir.) A protestant.
- provo* (n) Also *Provo*. A member of the Provisional I.R.A.
- psych* (v) To psychoanalyse.
- psycho* (n) (orig. U.S.) A psychopath; (more generally) any person exhibiting odd or deranged behaviour. (adj) Of a person: psychopathic.
- pud* (n) (coarse) The penis.
- puff* (n) (1) (U.S., Criminals' slang) Dynamite or other explosive material. (2) (Brit.) Marijuana. (3) (usu. deprec.) Also *poof*. A male homosexual; an effeminate man.
- pug* (n) A pugilist.
- puke* (v) To eject by vomiting; to vomit (something). Freq. with *up*.
- pump* (v) (coarse) To copulate.
- punk-ass* (adj) (U.S.) Of a person: worthless, good-for-nothing.
- puppy-hole* (n) (Eton College) A pupil-room.
- purler* (n) (orig. and chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) Something of surpassing excellence or quality; a beauty.
- purple* (n) Also *purple haze*. LSD, used as a recreational drug.
- purple heart* (n) (Brit.) A tablet of the drug Drinamyl.
- pusher* (n) (1) (chiefly Services' slang) A girl or young woman. (2) (orig. U.S.) One who peddles drugs illegally.
- pussy* (n) (1) (coarse) The vulva; the external female sexual organs. (2) (chiefly N. Amer.) Effeminate boy or man; a homosexual.
- put out* (v) (orig. U.S.) Chiefly of a woman: to offer oneself for sexual intercourse.
- Q.B.I.* (adj) (R.A.F. slang) (Of flying conditions): quite bloody impossible.
- q.t.* (n) Also *Q.T.* Quiet. Chiefly in *on the (strict) q.t.*, on the quiet, in secret, in confidence.
- Quaggers* (n) (University slang) Queen's College.
- qualified* (adj) Used as a euphemism for 'bloody', 'damned', etc.
- queen* (n) (1) Also *quean*. A male homosexual, esp. the effeminate partner in a homosexual relationship. (2) An attractive woman; a girl-friend.
- queenie* (n) An effeminate male, a homosexual.
- queeny* (adj) (Of a man): effeminate, esp. ostentatiously so; camp.
- queer* (n) (freq. derog.) A (usu. male) homosexual; one who is soft, effeminate, or homosexual. (adj) Homosexual.
- queerie* (n) (usu. derog.) A (usu. male) homosexual; an effeminate man.
- quid* (n) (chiefly Brit., Austral. and N.Z.) A sovereign; one pound sterling.
- rabbit* (n) (1) A poor performer at any game; a novice. (2) (Austral.) Liquor; a bottle of beer. (3) (Austral. and Nautical slang) A smuggled or stolen article. (4) (also v) From *rabbit-and-pork*, rhyming slang for 'a talk', 'to talk'.

- rabbit-o* (n) (Austral.) Also *rabbit-oh*. An itinerant seller of rabbits as food.
- race off* (v) (Austral.) To seduce (a woman); to hurry (a woman) away in order to seduce her.
- rad* (adj) (N. Amer., orig. Surfers' slang) At or exceeding the limits of control and safety; hence remarkable; amazing.
- rag-bag* (n) A sloppily-dressed woman, a slattern.
- rager* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A person who enjoys having a good time; a dedicated party-goer.
- ragga* (n) An up-tempo style of popular music derived from dancehall reggae. Also: a performer or fan of this music.
- raggedy-assed* (adj) (orig. Military slang) Of a person: raw; new and inexperienced.
- rah rah* (n) (orig. U.S.) A shout of support or encouragement, as for a college team. Also used attrib.
- rainbow* (n) (orig. U.S.) A capsule containing the barbiturates Amytal and Seconal, one end of which is red and the other blue.
- raise Cain* (v) (orig. U.S.) To create trouble, uproar, or confusion.
- ralph* (v) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) To vomit or gag. Freq. with *up*.
- rammies* (n) (Austral. and S. Afr.) pl. From *round-the-houses*, rhyming slang for 'trousers'.
- ram-raiding* (n) A form of smash-and-grab robbery in which premises are broken into by ramming a vehicle through a window or wall.
- ram-sammy* (n) (orig. dial.) A family quarrel; a noisy gathering.
- Randlord* (n) The owner or manager of a gold-mine on the Rand in South Africa.
- ranking* (vbl n) (U.S., Black E.) Intra-group repartee.
- rap* (n) A criminal accusation, charge. (v) To charge, prosecute; to apprehend with a view to prosecution.
- rapper* (n) (U.S.) (1) A talker; a chatterer. (2) A complainant, plaintiff; a prosecutor.
- raspberry* (n) From *raspberry tart*, rhyming slang for 'the heart' or 'a fart'.
- rass* (n) (Jamaican, coarse) The buttocks, the arse.
- rat-arsed* (adj) Also *ratted*. Drunk.
- rat-bag* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A stupid or eccentric person, a fool; an unpleasant person, a trouble-maker. (adj) Stupid, idiotic, uncouth.
- rat house* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A mental hospital.
- raunchy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Also *ramcy*. Inept, incompetent; dirty, grubby.
- raver* (n) A passionate enthusiast for a particular thing, idea, or cause; a fanatic.
- ravers* (pred adj) Raving mad, delirious. Also, in weakened sense, furious, angry.
- rave-up* (n) A lively party; a rowdy gathering.
- razoo* (n) (N. Amer.) Ridicule; the arousing of indignation or the like.
- razz* (n) (orig. U.S.) A refusal; a reprimand.
- razzle-dazzle* (n) Bewilderment or confusion; also, deception, fraud; extravagant publicity.
- razzmatazz* (n) (orig. U.S.) A type of rag-time or early jazz music.
- ready* (n) Also *reddy*. Ready money, cash. Usu. with *the*.
- ready-up* (n) (Austral.) A conspiracy or swindle; a case of fraudulent manipulation; a fake.
- ready up* (v) To prepare or manipulate in an improper way for some end.

rec (n) Recreation.

recon (n) (U.S., Military slang) Also *recce*, *recco*. A reconnaissance unit. (v) (Military slang) To reconnoitre.

red (n) Also *red bird*, *red devil*. The drug secobarbital (Seconal); also, a tablet of this drug (coloured red).

red biddy (n) A drink consisting of methylated spirits and cheap red wine; also, inferior red wine.

red-cap (n) (Brit., Military slang) A military policeman.

red-eye (n) (1) (U.S.) Used attrib. to designate an aeroplane flight on which the traveller is unable to get adequate sleep because of the hour of arrival or because of differences in time zones. (2) (U.S.) Coarse fiery whisky. (3) (U.S.) Tomato ketchup.

red-hat (n) (Military slang) A staff officer.

red-hot (adj) (1) Uninhibited, sexy, passionate. (2) (Austral.) Unfair, unreasonable.

red ink (n) (chiefly U.S.) Cheap red wine; also applied to some other inferior alcoholic drinks.

Redland (n) The Soviet Union. (adj) Russian.

red lead (n) (Naval slang) Tomato ketchup; tinned tomatoes.

red legs (n) (U.S., Military slang) An artilleryman.

red-neck (n) (U.S.) Also *red neck*, *redneck*. A reactionary.

Red Ned (n) Inferior red wine or other similar drink.

refer (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) Marijuana. (2) One who smokes marijuana.

reffo (n) (Austral.) A European refugee.

rego (n) (Austral.) Also *reggo*. Motor-vehicle registration.

rehab (n) Rehabilitation.

renter (n) A male prostitute.

repple depple (n) (U.S., Military slang) Replacement depot.

re-up (n) (U.S. Services' slang) One who re-enlists. (v) To re-enlist.

revusical (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A theatrical entertainment that combines elements of the revue and musical.

Richard (n) From *Richard the Third*, rhyming slang for *bird*, a girl or woman.

ricky-ticky (adj) (chiefly U.S.) Of musical rhythm or tempo: even, repetitive, monotonous.

ride (n) An act of sexual intercourse.

ride-out (n) (Jazz slang) Also *rideout*. A final chorus.

ridgy-didge (adj) (Austral.) Good, all right, genuine.

rigmo (n) Rigor mortis.

ring (v) (Austral.) To beat (a shedful of men) at sheep-shearing.

ringer (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) The fastest shearer in a shed.

ring-in (n) (Austral.) A fraudulent substitution.

ring-worm (n) (U.S.) Someone who regularly attends boxing-matches.

ripper (n) (1) (chiefly Austral.) An attractive young woman. (2) (Criminals' slang) A tool for opening safes.

road apples (n) (N. Amer.) pl. Horse droppings.

roader (n) (Taxi-drivers' slang) A long-distance taxi fare or journey.

roadie (n) Also *roady*. Someone who organizes and supervises a touring pop group.

- roadwork* (n) (Criminals' slang) The work of an itinerant thief.
- robbo* (n) (Austral.) A horse or trap, or its driver; a poor horse.
- rock* (n) (1) (U.S.) A piece of money, spec. a dollar. (2) (orig. U.S.) A precious stone, spec. a diamond. (3) pl. The testicles. (4) (U.S. Baseball slang) An error. (5) (orig. U.S. West Coast) A crystallized form of cocaine which is smoked for its stimulating effect.
- rocker* (n) Head, esp. in *off one's rocker*, mad, crazy.
- rocket* (n) (orig. Military slang) A severe reprimand. (v) To reprimand severely.
- rock of ages* (n) Rhyming slang for 'wages'.
- rodman* (n) One who handles a gun; a gunman.
- roller* (n) (1) (chiefly N. Amer.) A thief; one who steals from drunken persons; a prostitute who robs her customers. (2) (U.S.) A policeman.
- roll-up* (n) (orig. Prisoners' slang) A hand-rolled cigarette.
- Roman Candle* (n) (1) A Roman Catholic. (2) An unsatisfactory landing by an aircraft. From *Roman candle landing*.
- rookie* (n) A raw recruit.
- rope* (n) (1) Marijuana. (2) (U.S.) A cigar.
- ropeable* (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) Requiring to be roped; intractable, wild; violently angry.
- rort* (n) (Austral.) A trick; a fraud or dishonest practice. (v) To shout, complain loudly; to shout abuse.
- rorty* (adj) (orig. Londoners' slang, coarse) Fine, splendid, jolly, etc.; (of persons and things) boisterous, rowdy, noisy; (of drinks) intoxicating; (of behaviour, speech, etc.) coarse, earthy, of dubious propriety.
- Rory* (n) From *Rory O'More*, rhyming slang for 'the floor' or 'a door'.
- roscoe* (n) (U.S.) A gun, usu. a pistol or revolver.
- rosiner* (n) (Ir. and Austral.) A drink of spirits; a stiff drink.
- rosy* (adj) Drunk, tipsy.
- Rosy Lee* (n) Also *Rosie (Lee)*. Rhyming slang for 'tea'.
- rouf* (n) Back-slang for *four*, four shillings, four pounds; a four-year prison sentence.
- roughie* (n) Also *roughy*. A rough or rowdy; a brawler; a hooligan.
- roughneck* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person of rough habits or quarrelsome disposition.
- rough-up* (n) (1) An informal encounter or contest. (2) A trial race. (3) A fight; a brawl.
- rounder* (n) (U.S.) A transient railway worker.
- roundeye* (n) A European.
- row in* (v) To conspire.
- roz* (n) A policeman, a detective. From *rozzer*.
- rubbedy* (n) (Austral.) Also *rubberdy*, *rubbidy*. From *rub-a-dub*, rhyming slang for 'a pub'.
- rub-out* (n) (U.S.) Also *rubout*. A murder, an assassination, esp. of one gangster by another.
- rudders* (n) Rudiments of divinity.
- ruddy* (adj) Damnable, blasted, confounded.
- rugger* (n) (University slang) Rugby football.
- rumble* (v) (chiefly U.S.) To have a gang fight.
- rummy* (n) (1) (chiefly U.S.) A habitual drunkard. (2) (U.S.) A stupid person.

- rumpy-pumpy* (n) (orig. Brit.) Sexual intercourse.
- run-in* (n) (Criminals' slang) A hiding place for stolen goods.
- S.A.* (n) Also *s.a.* Sex appeal.
- sack time* (n) (orig. U.S., Forces' slang) Time spent in bed.
- sad-ass* (adj) (N. Amer.) Poor, contemptible.
- saddo* (n) (Brit., deprec.) A person perceived as socially inadequate, unfashionable, or otherwise contemptible.
- sailor's blessing* (n) (Nautical slang) Also *sailor's farewell*. A (parting) curse.
- salt away* (v) To put by, store away (money, stock).
- salt horse* (n) (Nautical slang, jocular) A naval officer with general duties.
- salty* (adj) (U.S., Nautical slang) Of a sailor: tough; hard-bitten; aggressive.
- Salvo* (n) (Austral.) A member of the Salvation Army.
- Sam Hill* (int) (N. Amer.) A euphemism for *hell*.
- sammie* (n) Also *sammo* or *sarney*, *sarnie*. A sandwich.
- Sammy* (n) (Brit.) Also *Sammie*. An American soldier in the war of 1914-18.
- sandbag* (v) To underperform in a race or competition in order to gain an unfair handicap or other advantage.
- san fairy ann* (int) An expression of indifference or resigned acceptance.
- sauce* (n) Alcoholic liquor; occas., a narcotic drug.
- Sauerkraut* (n) (U.S.) Also *Kraut*. A German, esp. a German soldier.
- sausage* (n) A German.
- sawbones* (n) A surgeon.
- sawn* (n) (Austral.) A simpleton, fool.
- scag* (n) (U.S.) Also *skag*. (1) A cigarette (stub). (2) Heroin. (3) (U.S., orig. in African-American usage, derog.) An unattractive woman. (4) (Brit.) A poor, scruffy person.
- scally* (n) (chiefly Lancashire and Liverpool) A roguish, self-assured male (esp. from Liverpool).
- scalper* (n) (U.S.) Someone who sells tickets, etc., esp. below the official rates.
- scammer* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *skammer*. A criminal, esp. a petty crook or swindler; one who lives outside the law by his or her wits.
- scarf* (n) (U.S.) Food; also a meal.
- scarper* (v) To depart quickly.
- scat* (n) (1) (U.S.) Whisky. (2) Heroin.
- schiz* (n) Also *schizo*. A schizophrenic person; spec. one who experiences a drug-induced hallucination. (adj) Schizophrenic.
- schmaltzy* (adj) Sentimentalized, over-emotional.
- schmeck* (n) A drug, esp. heroin.
- schmecker* (n) A drug-addict, esp. one who takes heroin.
- schmooze* (n) (U.S.) A chat or gossip.
- schmuck* (n) A contemptible or objectionable person, an idiot.
- schmutz* (n) Filth, dirt.
- schoolie* (n) (Naval slang) A classroom instructor.
- scoot* (n) A fast vehicle, esp. a train or car.
- scope out* (v) (U.S.) To investigate or assess (a person or a state of affairs); to examine; to check out.
- scorp* (n) (Military slang) A civil inhabitant of Gibraltar. From *scorpion*.

- Scouse* (n) Also *Scouser*. A native or inhabitant of Liverpool.
- scram* (v) (orig. U.S.) To depart quickly. From *scramble*.
- scrap iron* (n) (U.S.) An alcoholic drink of poor quality.
- screw* (v) (1) (U.S., College slang) To examine rigorously. (2) (chiefly N. Amer.) To defraud (a person, esp. of money), to cheat; to deceive. (3) (coarse) To copulate, have sexual intercourse with.
- screwball* (n) (chiefly U.S.) An eccentric; a madman; a fool. (adj) Eccentric; mad, crazy.
- screwy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Mad, crazy; eccentric; foolish.
- script* (n) (orig. U.S.) Prescription, esp. one for narcotic drugs.
- scroungy* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Shabby or dirty in appearance; more gen., of poor quality, inferior.
- scrubber* (n) A prostitute, a tart; an untidy, slatternly girl or woman.
- scruffo* (n) A scruffy person; a contemptible or inferior person.
- scuttlebutt* (n) (U.S., orig. Navy slang) Rumour, idle gossip, unfounded report.
- scuzz* (n) A contemptible or despicable person. From *scum* and *fuzz*.
- scuzzy* (adj) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) Disgusting in appearance, behaviour, etc.
- secko* (n) (Austral.) A sexual pervert; a sex offender.
- second banana* (n) (orig. U.S., Theatrical slang) A supporting comedian.
- Section Eight* (n) (U.S., Military slang) Discharge from the Army under section eight of Army Regulations 615-360 on the grounds of insanity or inability to adjust to Army life.
- seg* (n) (1) (chiefly U.S.) Segregation. (2) (U.S.) Segregationist.
- send down* (v) (orig. U.S.) To dispatch or commit to prison by sentence.
- sender* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) One who or that which moves or enthrals, esp. a popular musician.
- sensagger* (n) Sensation.
- seriously* (adv) (orig. U.S.) Esp. as *seriously rich*, really, extraordinarily rich.
- sesh* (n) (orig. Services' slang) A session or bout, esp. of drinking.
- set over* (v) (U.S., Criminals' slang) To kill or murder.
- set up* (v) To lead on in order to fool, cheat, or incriminate (a person).
- sexational* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Sexually sensational.
- sexboat* (n) Also *sex-bomb*, *sexpot*. A sexually exciting person, esp. a woman.
- sexcapade* (n) A sexual escapade.
- sexed-up* (adj) Sexually aroused.
- sex kitten* (n) A young woman who exploits her sex appeal.
- sexpert* (n) (orig. U.S.) An expert on sexual matters.
- sez* (v) Jocular spelling of *says*.
- S.F.A.* (n) Also *F.A.* Nothing at all. From Sweet Fanny Adams.
- shaddup* (int) An alteration of *Shut up*.
- shaft* (n) (1) (U.S.) A human leg. (2) The penis.
- shag* (v) (coarse) To copulate (with).
- shagadelic* (adj) Sexy, esp. in a psychedelic or 'retro' way. Also as a general term of approval.
- shampoo* (n) Arbitrary alteration of *champagne*.
- shant* (n) A quart, a pot; a pot of drink.

- sharpie* (n) (N. Amer.) That which is smart or in good condition, esp. of cars.
- sheen* (n) (1) Base coin. (2) (U.S.) A car; an automobile.
- shelf* (n) (Austral.) A police informer. (v) To inform upon.
- shellacking* (vbl n) (chiefly U.S.) A beating or thrashing; a defeat.
- shell out* (v) To pay up, hand over.
- she-male* (n) A passive male homosexual or transvestite.
- shiner* (n) (1) Coin, money. (2) A mirror. (3) Usu. pl. Diamonds or other jewels. (4) A black eye.
- shirtlifter* (n) (Austral.) A male homosexual.
- shit* (n) (coarse) Also *shite*. (1) An intoxicating or euphoriant drug, spec. cannabis, heroin, or marijuana. (2) A contemptuous epithet applied to a person.
- shit a brick* (int) Expressing surprise or amazement.
- shithead* (n) A despicable person.
- shit-hot* (adj) (coarse) Unpleasantly enthusiastic, very skilful, cunning, knowledgeable.
- shit-house* (n) (coarse) A term of disgust or contempt. (adj) Disgusting, despicable.
- shitless* (adj) (coarse) Alluding to a state of extreme fear or physical distress.
- shits* (n) As *the shits*, diarrhoea.
- shit-scared* (adj) (coarse) Extremely frightened.
- shoe* (adj) (U.S.) Conforming to the dress, behaviour, or attitudes of students at exclusive educational establishments.
- shonk* (n) (1) An offensive name for a Jew. (2) (Austral.) One engaged in irregular or illegal business activities.
- shonky* (adj) Unreliable, dishonest.
- shoo-fly* (n) (U.S.) A policeman, usu. in plain clothes, whose duty is to watch and report on other policemen.
- shoot* (int) (U.S.) An arbitrary alteration of *shit*, a coarse exclamation of annoyance or disgust.
- shoot* (v) (orig. U.S.) To inject esp. oneself with (a drug); often followed by *up*.
- shooter* (n) (1) (U.S.) A measure or drink of spirit, esp. whisky. (2) A shooting instrument, a gun or pistol.
- shoppy* (n) Also *shoppie*. A shop assistant.
- short time* (n) A brief visit to a prostitute; a brief sojourn in a hotel for sexual purposes.
- short-timer* (n) (1) (U.S., Military slang) One nearing the end of his period of military service. (2) One who makes a brief sojourn in a hotel for sexual purposes; one who visits a prostitute.
- shorty* (n) Also *shortie*. (1) A person of short stature. (2) (orig. U.S.) A short drink.
- shouse* (n) (Austral.) A privy.
- shover* (n) (1) Also *shover*. Jocular alteration of *chauffeur*. (2) One who passes base coin.
- showboat* (v) (U.S.) To perform or behave ostentatiously; to show off.
- shrewd-head* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A cunning person.
- shrink* (n) (orig. U.S.) A psychiatrist.
- sick* (adj) (1) (now esp. Skateboarding and Surfing) Excellent, impressive; risky. (2) (orig. U.S.) Of a drug addict: craving for a dose of a drug, suffering from withdrawal symptoms. (3) Disgusted, mortified, chagrined.
- sickie* (n) (N. Amer.) Also *sicky* or *sicko*. One who is mentally ill or perverted.

- sidy* (adj) Also *sidey*. Inclined to 'put on side'; conceited.
- silly billy* (n) (Brit.) A foolish or feeble-minded person.
- simoleon* (n) (U.S.) A dollar.
- simp* (n) (U.S.) A fool, a simpleton.
- sin-bin* (n) (chiefly N. Amer.) An area set aside for players temporarily withdrawn from a game as a penalty and for match officials. (v) (orig. Austral., Sport) To send (a player) off the field.
- sin city* (n) (often jocular) A city of licentiousness and vice.
- singer* (n) (Criminals' slang) An informer.
- single* (n) (U.S.) A one-dollar bill.
- single-o* (n) (U.S., chiefly Criminals' slang) (1) A crime perpetrated without an assistant. (2) A criminal who works alone.
- sin-shifter* (n) A clergyman.
- sippers* (n) (Brit., Nautical slang) A sip (of rum), esp. taken from another's tot, as a reward for some service or in celebration.
- sissified* (adj) Effeminate.
- sister* (n) (orig. U.S.) Used by homosexual men to denote a fellow homosexual, esp. one who is a friend rather than a lover; a male homosexual.
- sit-down* (n) (N. Amer., Tramps' slang) A free sit-down meal.
- sitter* (n) (U.S.) Someone employed to sit in a bar and encourage other patrons to buy drinks.
- six by six* (n) Six wheel truck with six-wheel drive.
- skedaddle* (v) To go away, leave, or depart hurriedly.
- skeeter* (n) (chiefly U.S. and Austral.) Mosquito.
- skeezicks* (n) (U.S., dated) A good-for-nothing.
- skell* (n) (U.S.) In New York, a homeless person or derelict.
- skidoo* (v) (N. Amer.) To go away, leave, or depart hurriedly.
- skimmer* (n) (U.S.) One who conceals or diverts some of his earnings or takings in order to avoid paying tax on them.
- skin* (n) (1) A tyre. (2) A horse or mule. (3) (U.S.) A dollar. (4) (U.S.) An avaricious; a miser. (5) (Brit.) A youth (often one of a gang), a skinhead. (6) (orig. U.S.) A condom. (7) (orig. U.S.) A paper for rolling cigarettes (esp. in smoking marijuana). (8) A purse, a money bag, a wallet. (9) (Jazz) Usu. pl. A drum. (10) (U.S., Black E.) The skin of the palm of the hand, as making contact in slapping hands in friendship or solidarity.
- skinful* (n) As much as the skin can hold: as much as any one can drink.
- skinned out* (ppl adj) Having no money left, broke.
- skin-pop* (v) (orig. U.S.) To inject a drug subcutaneously.
- skirt-chaser* (n) One who pursues women with amorous attentions.
- skunk* (n) (1) (U.S., Military slang) An unidentified surface craft. (2) A variety of marijuana having a pungent smell.
- skyman* (n) (Journalistic slang) A paratrooper.
- sky pilot* (n) A priest or clergyman, esp. a military or naval chaplain.
- slag* (n) (1) An objectionable or contemptible person. (2) A prostitute or promiscuous woman.
- slammer* (n) (orig. U.S.) Prison.

- slant-eye* (n) (orig. U.S.) A slant-eyed person, esp. an Asian.
- slap and tickle* (n) Light amorous play.
- slap-happy* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Also *slaphappy*. Dazed, punch-drunk; dizzy (with happiness).
- slaphead* (n) (orig. and chiefly Brit., humorous or deprec.) A bald or shaven head.
- slaughter-house* (n) (1) A shop where goods are bought from small makers at very low prices. (2) A cheap brothel.
- sleaze* (n) Squalor; sordidness, sleaziness; dilapidation; (something of) inferior quality or low moral standards.
- sleazo* (n) (U.S.) Something 'sleazy', pornographic.
- sleazy* (adj) Dilapidated, filthy; sordid, disreputable, worthless.
- sledging* (vbl n) (Austral., Cricket slang) Unsportsmanlike attempts by fielders to upset a batsman's concentration by abuse, needling, etc.
- Sloane Ranger* (n) An upper class and fashionable but conventional young woman in London. From *Sloan* (Square) and *Lone Ranger*, a hero of western stories and films.
- slob* (n) A fool; a person of little account.
- slomo* (n) (Cinematography, chiefly U.S.) Slow motion.
- slop* (n) (U.S. and Austral.) Beer. Usu. pl.
- slope* (n) Also *slopy*, *slopy* or *slopehead*. An oriental; spec. a Vietnamese.
- sloshed* (ppl adj) Drunk, tipsy.
- slot* (v) (Army slang) To kill or injure (a person) by shooting.
- slows* (n) As *the slows*, an imaginary disease or ailment accounting for slowness.
- slug-fest* (n) (U.S.) A hard-hitting contest, spec. in boxing and baseball.
- slug-nutty* (adj) (U.S.) Punch-drunk.
- slungullion* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Muddy deposit in a mining sluice.
- slushie* (n) Also *slushey*, *slushy*. A ship's cook.
- slut* (n) A promiscuous girl or woman; a prostitute.
- slyboots* (n) (mainly jocular) Also *sly-boots*. A sly, cunning, or crafty person.
- smack* (n) (orig. U.S.) A drug, esp. heroin.
- smacker* (n) Also *smackeroo*. (1) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A coin or note of money; spec. a dollar; a pound. (2) A kiss; a blow.
- small potatoes* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person or thing considered unimportant, insignificant, or worthless.
- smart* (n) (U.S.) Usu. pl. Intelligence, cleverness; wits.
- smart-arse* (n) Amer. -*ass*. Also *wise-ass*. A would-be clever person; a 'know-all'; occas., a man who is ostentatiously smart in dress or manner. (adj) Ostentatiously or smugly clever.
- smart mouth* (n) (U.S.) One who is good at repartee, one who gives cheek.
- smart-mouth* (v) To be cheeky to, to be witty at the expense of.
- smashed* (ppl adj) (orig. U.S.) Intoxicated, drunk; under the influence of drugs.
- smasher* (n) (1) Anything uncommon, extraordinary, or unusual, esp. unusually large or excellent. (2) A very pretty or attractive woman; an attractive man.
- smasheroo* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A great success.
- smelly* (adj) Suspicious.

- smoke* (n) (1) (U.S.) An abusive and offensive term for a Black. (2) (N. Amer.) Cheap whisky. (3) Opium, marijuana.
- smoke-up* (n) (U.S.) An official notice that a student's work is not up to the required standard.
- smoothie* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person who is stylish, suave, chic.
- snafu* (n) (chiefly U.S., orig. Military slang) Also *SNAFU*. A confusion or mix-up. (adj) Confused, chaotic. (v) To mess up, to play havoc with. From situation *normal*: *all fouled* (or *fucked*) *up*.
- snake* (n) (1) (coarse) The penis (recorded earliest in *one-eyed trouser snake*). (2) (Austral., Military slang) A sergeant.
- snake eyes* (n) (1) (U.S.) Tapioca. (2) (N. Amer.) A throw of two ones with a pair of dice.
- snake-headed* (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) Angry, irritable.
- snake juice* (n) Whisky; any alcoholic drink.
- snake poison* (n) (U.S. and Austral.) Whisky.
- snapper* (n) pl. Teeth; a set of false teeth.
- Sneaky Pete* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Also *sneaky pete*. A name given to any of various illicit or cheap intoxicating beverages.
- sniffer* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) One who sniffs a drug or toxic substance. (2) The nose.
- snifter* (n) (U.S.) (1) A cocaine addict. (2) A small quantity of cocaine inhaled through the nose. (3) A portable radio direction-finder.
- snitty* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Ill-tempered, sulky.
- snoot* (n) The nose, esp. when large or badly shaped.
- snorer* (n) The nose.
- snort* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) A dose or measure of cocaine or heroin which is taken by inhalation. (2) An alcoholic drink; a measure of spirits.
- snow* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Cocaine; occas. heroin or morphine. (2) (Silver) money.
- snow-bird* (n) (U.S.) One who sniffs cocaine; gen. a drug addict.
- snuff it* (v) To die.
- snuff out* (v) To kill, to murder.
- snuggle-pup* (n) (U.S., obs.) Also *snuggle-puppy*, *snuggle-pupper*. An attractive young girl.
- sob* (n) A pound.
- S.O.B.* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Also *s.o.b.* Son of a bitch; also silly old bastard, etc.
- soccer* (n) Also *socker*. The game of football as played under Association rules.
- sockeroo* (n) (orig. U.S.) Something with an overwhelming impact.
- socko* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) A success. (adj) Stunningly effective or successful. (int) An interjection imitative of the sound of a violent blow.
- sod* (n) (1) (coarse) One who practises or commits sodomy; a male homosexual. (2) Something difficult; a great nuisance.
- sometimey* (adj) (U.S., Black and Prison slang) Variable, unstable.
- soogee-moogee* (n) (Nautical slang) A mixture containing caustic soda used for cleaning paintwork and woodwork on ships and boats.
- sooner* (n) (1) (U.S.) One who acts prematurely. (2) (chiefly Austral.) An idler, shirker.
- sore-head* (n) (1) (U.S., Political slang) A dissatisfied or disappointed politician. (2) (chiefly N. Amer.) A discontented, dissatisfied person.

- sort-out* (n) A fight or dispute.
- soup-and-fish* (n) Men's evening dress, a dinner suit.
- soupy* (n) (U.S., Military slang) Also *soupie*. (A summons to) a meal.
- souvenir* (v) (orig. Military slang) To take as a 'souvenir'; to appropriate; to steal.
- sov* (n) A sovereign.
- sozzle* (v) To imbibe intoxicating drink.
- sozzled* (ppl adj) Intoxicated, drunk.
- spag bol* (n) Spaghetti Bolognese.
- spaggers* (n) Also *spadgers*. Spaghetti.
- spaghetti* (n) An Italian: usu. contemptuous.
- Spanish tummy* (n) A stomach upset of a type freq. experienced by visitors to Spain.
- spark out* (pred adj) Forgotten; (completely) unconscious.
- sparrow-brain* (n) A person with a tiny brain.
- spaz* (n) Also *spas*. One who is uncoordinated or incompetent; a fool. From *spastic*.
(adj) Uncoordinated, incompetent; foolish, stupid.
- speak* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Also *speako*. A shop or bar where alcoholic liquor is sold illegally. From *speakeasy* or *speak-easy*.
- spec* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A commercial speculation or venture. (2) (U.S.) In a circus: the opening spectacle. (3) (U.S.) A specialist. (4) A detailed working description. From *specification*. (adj) Of or pertaining to the practice of building houses without prior guarantee of sale, esp. in estate developments. From *speculative*.
- special* (v) (1) To work as a special correspondent for a newspaper. (2) To attend continuously to (a single patient).
- specky* (adj) Bespectacled.
- specs* (n) Also *specks*. Spectacles for the eyes.
- speed* (n) An amphetamine drug, esp. methamphetamine, freq. taken intravenously. (v)
To be under the influence of an amphetamine drug.
- speedball* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A dose of a drug, esp. a mixture of cocaine and morphine or of cocaine and heroin. (2) (U.S.) A glass of wine, spec. when strengthened by additional alcohol or spirits.
- speed freak* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person addicted to an amphetamine drug.
- speedo* (n) A speedometer.
- spew* (v) To vomit.
- spike* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) A hypodermic needle or syringe used for the injection of an intoxicating drug; hence, the drug itself or an injection of this. (2) (U.S.) A quantity of alcohol, esp. spirits, added to a drink. (3) The workhouse. (4) An Anglican who advocates or practises Anglo-Catholic ritual and observances.
- spiky* (n) Of a particularly ritualistic or High-Church Anglican character.
- spit blood* (v) Of a spy: to fear exposure.
- spit chips* (v) (Austral.) (1) To feel extreme thirst. (2) To manifest acute anger or vexation.
- spliced* (ppl adj) Married.
- split-arse* (adj) (Forces' slang) Amer. -ass. Classy, showy.
- spondulicks* (n) (orig. U.S.) Money, cash.

- spooky* (adj) (1) (Surfing slang) Of a wave: dangerous or frightening. (2) (N. Amer.) Of a person (or animal): nervous; easily frightened; superstitious. (3) (U.S.) Of or pertaining to spies or espionage.
- spot* (n) A drop of liquor.
- Spud Islander* (n) (Canad.) A native or inhabitant of Prince Edward Island, which is noted for its fine potatoes.
- squaddie* (n) (Services' slang) Also *squaddy*. A member of a squad; a private soldier; a recruit.
- squadrol* (n) (U.S.) A small police van. From *squad* and *patrol*.
- squarehead* (n) Also *square-head*. (1) An honest person. (2) (Army slang) A foreigner of Germanic extraction, esp. a German or Scandinavian.
- squeaky clean* (adj) Above criticism, beyond reproach.
- squiffy* (adj) Intoxicated; drunk.
- squillion* (n) Also *zillion*. A very large number of millions.
- squillionaire* (n) Also *zillionaire*. One who is extraordinarily wealthy; a multimillionaire.
- squint* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) A look or glance. From *squint* and *quiz*.
- stakey* (adj) (chiefly Canad.) Also *staky*. Well provided with money.
- star-back* (n) An expensive, reserved seat at a circus.
- starkers* (adj) Also *starko*. Of a person: absolutely without clothing. From *stark naked*.
- starrer* (n) A play or film which provides an impressive leading role for an actor or actress.
- statie* (n) (U.S.) A state trooper.
- steaming* (vbl n) The action, by a gang, of passing rapidly through a public place (or train, etc.) robbing bystanders (or passengers).
- stem* (n) pl. The legs.
- stew* (n) (U.S.) A stewardess.
- stick* (n) (1) A pistol. (2) (Thieves' slang) A jemmy or crowbar. (3) A cigarette made with marijuana.
- sticky-fingered* (adj) Apt to steal, light-fingered.
- stiff-arsed* (adj) Amer. *-assed*. Reserved, supercilious, stand-offish.
- stiffener* (n) A fortifying or reviving drink, spec. an alcoholic one.
- sting* (n) (Austral.) (1) Strong drink. (2) A drug, spec. one administered to a racehorse in the form of an injection.
- stingo* (n) Strong ale or beer.
- stinkeroo* (n) (orig. U.S.) Also *stinkaroo*. Something of a very low standard; a very bad performance.
- stinko* (pred adj) (orig. U.S.) (1) Of a very low standard; very bad. (2) Intoxicated; blind drunk.
- stink-pot* (n) A term of abuse for a person or (rarely) a thing.
- stipe* (n) Also *stip*. A stipendiary magistrate.
- stir-crazy* (adj) (chiefly U.S., Criminals' slang) Mentally deranged (as if) from long imprisonment.
- stone-broke* (adj) Also *stony-broke*. Ruined.
- stoned* (adj) (orig. U.S.) (1) Drunk, extremely intoxicated. (2) In a state of drug-induced euphoria.

- stop one* (phr) (Austral.) To take a drink.
- stoppo* (n) (1) A rest from work. (2) (Criminals' slang) An escape, a get-away.
- stormer* (n) (Brit.) Something of surpassing size, vigour, or excellence.
- storming* (ppl adj) (chiefly in Sport) Displaying outstanding vigour, speed, or skill.
- stove-up* (adj) (N. Amer.) Run-down, exhausted; worn out.
- stragger* (n) Stranger.
- street cred* (n) (Apparent) familiarity with contemporary trends, fashions, social issues, etc. From *street credibility*.
- streetman* (n) (U.S.) A petty criminal who works 'on the street', esp. as a pickpocket or drug pedlar.
- stride* (n) pl. Trousers. Also occas. jeans.
- string out* (v) (U.S.) To be under the influence of a drug.
- stripey* (n) (Naval slang) A long-service able seaman; one with good-conduct stripes.
- strongers* (n) (1) A mixture containing caustic soda used for cleaning paintwork and woodwork on ships and boats. (2) Intoxicating liquor.
- strong it* (v) To behave excessively, to exaggerate.
- strung out* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Weak or ill, esp. as a result of drug addiction; hence, addicted to drugs.
- stubby* (n) (1) (Austral.) A short, squat beer-bottle. (2) pl. Shorts.
- stuff* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Narcotics, esp. in *on the stuff*, addicted to drugs, on drugs. (2) Chiefly as *the stuff*, money, cash. (3) Stolen goods. (4) Forbidden goods smuggled into a gaol.
- stupe* (n) A stupid person, a fool.
- sub* (n) An advance of money. From *subsistence money*.
- submarine* (v) (U.S.) To put out of action in an underhand or covert way; to sabotage.
- suck* (v) (coarse) To perform cunnilingus or, esp., fellatio.
- suds* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Beer.
- sug* (v) (Brit.) To (attempt to) sell (someone) a product under the guise of conducting market research. From *sell under guise*.
- sugar* (n) (1) Money. (2) A narcotic drug, esp. heroin. (3) LSD (taken on a lump of sugar).
- suicide blonde* (n) (jocular) A woman with hair dyed blonde (esp. rather amateurishly).
- super-cool* (adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Very 'cool', relaxed, fine.
- superfly* (n) One who sells illegal drugs, a 'pusher'. (adj) (U.S.) (1) Very good, excellent, the best (esp. in the context of drugs). (2) Typical of the film character Super Fly.
- surfie* (n) (chiefly Austral.) A surfer or surfboarding enthusiast.
- sus* (n) Also *suss*. Suspicion of having committed a crime; suspicious behaviour, esp. loitering. (adj) Suspect, suspicious; of questionable provenance or condition. (v) To suspect (a person) of a crime.
- susso* (n) (Austral., dated) State government relief paid to the unemployed.
- sussy* (adj) Suspicious, suspect, suspected.
- SWA(L)K* (phr) Sealed with a (loving) kiss.
- swamp* (v) (Austral.) To make (one's way) by obtaining a lift from a traveller.
- swamper* (n) (Austral.) One who travels on foot but has his swag carried on a wagon; hence, one who obtains a lift.

- Sweeney* (n) From *Sweeney Todd*, rhyming slang for 'Flying Squad', a member of the Flying Squad.
- sweetie-pie* (n) (orig. U.S.) A lovable person; also as a term of endearment.
- sweetmouth* (v) (chiefly U.S., Black E.) To flatter.
- swiftie* (n) Also *swiftly*. A fast-moving person: a rapid runner, a quick thinker.
- swinging* (ppl adj) Of or pertaining to one who engages in promiscuous sexual activity.
- swingle* (n) (N. Amer.) A 'swinging' single or unaccompanied person; spec. one in search of a sexual partner.
- switched-on* (ppl adj) Aware of all that is considered fashionable and up-to-date.
- switcheroo* (n) (U.S.) A change of position or an exchange, esp. one intended to surprise or deceive. Also attrib., reversible, reversed.
- swizz* (n) (chiefly Schoolchildren's slang) A disappointment.
- swy* (n) (Austral.) Two, spec. a two-shilling coin or a two-year prison sentence.
- syph* (n) Also *siff*. Syphilis.
- sysop* (n) (orig. U.S., Computing slang) System operator.
- tab* (n) (1) A tablet or pill, spec. one containing LSD or another illicit drug. (2) A cigarette. (3) An ear. (4) (Austral.) An (attractive) young woman or girl.
- Tab* (n) (University slang) A member of the University of Cambridge. From *Cantab*.
- tab show* (n) (U.S.) A short version of a musical, esp. one performed by a travelling company. From *tabloid show*.
- tache* (n) Also *tash*. Moustache.
- Taffy* (n) A familiar nickname for a Welshman.
- talk turkey* (v) (orig. N. Amer.) To speak frankly and without reserve; to talk hard facts.
- tank* (n) (1) A drink (usu. of beer). (2) (U.S.) A cell in a police station, spec. one in which several prisoners (esp. drunks) are held.
- tarantula-juice* (n) (U.S.) Inferior whisky.
- tarnation* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Damnation, used as an imprecation, or exclamation of emphatic objurgation.
- tart* (n) (1) A female of immoral character; a prostitute. (2) (Austral. and N.Z., Liverpool dial.) As *the tart, his tart*, a wife or girl-friend. (3) The young homosexual companion of an older man.
- Tassie* (n) (Austral.) Also *Tassey, Tassy*. (1) Tasmania. (2) A Tasmanian.
- taste* (n) (U.S.) An alcoholic drink; alcohol.
- tasty* (adj) Attractive, esp. sexually; pleasant.
- tato* (n) Also *tatie, tattie*. Potato.
- T.B.* (n) (U.S.) Also *t.b.* A confidence trickster. From *tuberculosis*.
- TCB* (phr) (U.S., Black E.) To take care of business.
- tea* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) Marijuana; spec. marijuana brewed in hot water to make a drink. (2) Spirituous or intoxicating liquor.
- teach* (n) A teacher.
- tea-head* (n) (orig. U.S.) A habitual user of marijuana.
- teaman* (n) (U.S., Criminals' slang) One who smokes or sells marijuana.
- tear-arse* (n) A very active busy person. (v) Amer. -ass. To drive recklessly.
- tec* (n) Detective.
- techno* (n) A type of popular music having a fast, insistent dance beat.

- ten-four* (int) Also *10-4*. The radio code phr for 'message received'; used loosely as an expression of affirmation.
- ten per center* (n) (U.S., Theatrical slang) A theatrical agent.
- terr* (n) (Rhodesian slang) A terrorist.
- Tewt* (n) (Army slang) Also *TEWT*. An exercise used in the training of junior officers. From tactical exercise without troops.
- thang* (n) Representing a Southern U.S. pronunciation of *thing*.
- thickie* (n) One who is dull of intellect.
- thirty* (n) (chiefly Journalistic slang) The last sheet, word, or line of copy or of a despatch.
- thou* (n) Thousand.
- throw* (v) To vomit. Usu. with *up*.
- tick* (n) Credit; trust; reputation of solvency and probity. From *ticket*.
- ticker* (n) (1) (orig. U.S.) The heart. (2) (U.S. and Austral.) Courage, spirit.
- tick-tack* (n) Applied to a system of 'telegraphy' or signalling used by bookmakers at race-meetings. Used attrib.
- tiddly* (n) From *tiddlywink*, rhyming slang for 'a drink'.
- tight-arsed* (adj) Amer. *-assed*. Full of inhibition, unable to relax and enjoy oneself.
- tin-arsed* (adj) (Austral. and N.Z.) Very lucky.
- tincture* (n) An alcoholic drink.
- tinned dog* (n) (Austral.) Canned meat.
- tinnie* (n) (Austral.) Also *tinny*. A can of beer.
- tip* (n) A piece of useful private or special information communicated by an expert. (v) (orig. U.S.) To furnish (a person) with private information as to the chances of some event; to warn, alert, or inform (a person). Freq. with *off*.
- tired and emotional* (adj) (jocular) Drunk.
- tit* (n) (orig. U.S.) pl. A woman's breasts. Also in *to get on one's tits* (or occas. *tit*), to irritate intensely, get on the nerves of.
- tifter* (n) Also *tiffa*, *tiffor*. From *tit for tat*, rhyming slang for 'a hat'.
- toc emma* (n) (Military slang) A trench mortar.
- tod* (pron) From *Tod Sloan*, rhyming slang for 'own' in *on one's tod*, alone, on one's own.
- toffee-nosed* (adj) Snobbish, supercilious.
- Togger* (n) (University slang) A boat rowing in the Oxford college races called 'Torpids'.
- tom* (n) From *tomfoolery*, rhyming slang for 'jewellery'.
- tomato* (n) (orig. U.S.) An attractive girl.
- tool* (n) (1) The male generative organ. (2) (Criminals' slang) Any weapon.
- toot* (n) (U.S.) Also *tout*. Cocaine; a 'snort' of cocaine. (v) To inhale cocaine.
- tootsy* (n) Also *tootsie*, *tootsey-wootsey*, *tootsie-wootsie*, *tootsy-wootsy*. (1) (chiefly U.S.) A woman, a girl; a sweetheart. (2) A playful or endearing name for a child's or a woman's small foot.
- topper* (n) (U.S., Military slang) A first sergeant.
- topping* (ppl adj) Of high quality; excellent; first-rate.
- torpedo juice* (n) Also *torp*. Intoxicating liquor extracted from torpedo fuel; any strong home-made alcoholic liquor.

- tosher* (n) (Undergraduates' slang) An 'unattached' or non-collegiate student at a university having residential colleges.
- total* (v) (chiefly N. Amer.) To damage beyond repair (esp. a motor vehicle, in an accident).
- toup* (n) Toupee.
- town clown* (n) (U.S.) A policeman working in a village or small town.
- toy boy* (n) The younger partner of an older woman.
- trannie* (n) A transvestite.
- tranq* (n) Also *trank*. Tranquillizer.
- trap* (n) The mouth.
- trat* (n) Also *tratt*. Trattoria.
- trey* (n) The number three; a set of three; a threepenny piece; spec. in the U.S., a three-dollar packet of a narcotic.
- trick cyclist* (n) (humorous) A psychiatrist.
- trickeration* (n) (U.S., Black E.) A trick or stratagem.
- trip* (v) (orig. U.S.) To experience hallucinations induced by a drug, esp. LSD. Also with *out*.
- tripper* (n) (orig. U.S.) One who experiences hallucinations induced by a drug, esp. LSD.
- trog* (n) A lout, a boor, a hooligan, an obnoxious person.
- trolley* (n) In *off one's trolley*, crazy.
- tropo* (adj) (Austral.) Mentally ill through spending too much time (orig. on war service) in the tropics.
- trouble and strife* (n) Rhyming slang for 'wife' or 'life' (rare).
- Trustafarian* (n) (chiefly Brit.) A wealthy young (white) person who adopts aspects of the appearance and culture of Rastafarians. From *trust* and *Rastafarian*.
- tube* (n) (1) A cigarette. (2) The penis. (3) (Austral.) A bottle or can of beer.
- turf* (n) (1) The road or street as the milieu of prostitutes, tramps, etc. (2) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) The streets controlled by a juvenile street-gang and regarded by them as their territory.
- turkey* (n) (U.S.) (1) A stupid, slow, inept, or otherwise worthless person. (2) An inferior or unsuccessful cinematographic or theatrical production, a flop; hence, anything disappointing or of little value.
- turps* (n) (Austral.) Intoxicating liquor, esp. beer.
- turtle* (n) From *turtle-dove*, rhyming slang for 'a glove'. Usu. in pl.
- TV* (n) (orig. and chiefly N. Amer.) A transvestite.
- twat* (n) (low slang) (1) The female genitals. (2) A fool; a stupid or ineffectual person.
- twenty* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S., Citizens' Band Radio slang) One's location or position. From *10-20*.
- twicer* (n) A crook, liar, cheat; a deceitful or cunning individual.
- twinkie* (n) Also *twinky*. A male homosexual, an effeminate man; also, a child or youth regarded as an object of homosexual desire.
- twist* (n) (chiefly U.S., freq. deprec.) From *twist-and-twirl*, rhyming slang for 'a girl'.
- twoc* (n) (Brit., orig. Police slang) Also *Twoc*, *TWOC*. A car theft. From taking without owner's consent. (v) To steal (a car), esp. for the purpose of joy-riding.

- twocer* (n) (Brit., orig. Police slang) Also *twocker*, *TWOCer*. A car thief, esp. one who steals for the purpose of joy-riding.
- two-time* (v) (orig. U.S.) To deceive (esp. a person to whom one owes loyalty); to be unfaithful to (a spouse or lover).
- U-ey* (n) (Austral.) Also *youee*. A U-turn.
- uglies* (n) As *the uglies*, depression, bad temper.
- ump* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Umpire, spec. in baseball.
- uncool* (adj) Unrelaxed; unpleasant.
- under the table* (phr) As (*to put*) *under the table*, (to make) drunk to the point of insensibility.
- undercover* (n) An undercover agent.
- underfug* (n) (Brit., Schoolboys' slang) An undervest; also, underpants.
- underground mutton* (n) (Austral.) A rabbit; rabbit meat.
- unfuckintouchable* (adj) A more emphatic version of *untouchable*.
- Uni* (n) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) Also *Univ*. University.
- unreal* (adj) (chiefly N. Amer. and Austral.) So good or impressive as to seem incredible; remarkable, amazing.
- untogether* (adj) Poorly coordinated; not in full control of one's faculties.
- up* (n) (1) A drug (esp. an amphetamine), often in the form of a pill, which has a stimulant or euphoric effect. (2) (U.S.) A prospective customer.
- up-and-downer* (n) Also *upper and downer*. An up-and-down fight or argument; a violent quarrel.
- upper* (n) (1) A drug (esp. an amphetamine). (2) (Public School slang) A pupil of the upper school.
- upter* (pred adj) (Austral.) Bad or worthless; no good.
- use* (v) To take drugs.
- U.S. of A.* (n) United States of America.
- ute* (n) (chiefly Austral. and N.Z.) A utility vehicle.
- vag* (n) (Austral. and N. Amer.) (1) Vagrant. (2) Vagrancy.
- vamoose* (v) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) To depart.
- veejay* (n) (chiefly U.S.) One who presents a programme of (popular music) videos, esp. on television. From *V.J.*, video jockey.
- veep* (n) A vice-president.
- veg* (v) (orig. U.S.) To pass the time in mindless or vacuous inactivity, esp. by watching television. Often with *out*.
- vent* (n) (Theatrical slang) A ventriloquist.
- verbal* (n) Insult or abuse.
- vet* (n) A doctor of medicine. From *veterinarian*.
- Victor Charlie* (n) (U.S., Services' slang) A Vietcong soldier.
- vidiot* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S., derog.) A habitual, indiscriminating viewer of television or player of video games. From *video* and *idiot*.
- viff* (n) An aircraft that changes direction abruptly as a result of a change in the direction of thrust of its engine(s). From *vectoring in forward flight*.
- Ville* (n) As *the Ville*, Pentonville Prison in London.
- vis* (n) (orig. Military slang) Visibility.
- W* (n) A lavatory or water-closet.

- wacko* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) An eccentric or crazy person. (adj) Crazy, mad; eccentric.
- wacky* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Crazy, mad; odd, peculiar.
- wacky baccy* (n) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Also *wacky tobaccy* or *wacky weed*. Marijuana.
- wagger* (n) (orig. Oxford University) A waste-paper basket.
- wakey-wakey* (n) (orig. Services' slang) Reveille.
- wallop* (n) Alcohol, esp. beer; alcoholic drink.
- wank* (n) An act of (male) masturbation. (v) Of a male: to masturbate. Freq. with *off*.
- washed up* (ppl adj) (orig. and chiefly U.S.) Defeated, exhausted, finished.
- wassock* (n) (Brit., orig. northern dial.) Also *wazzock*. A stupid or annoying person; an idiot.
- wasted* (ppl adj) Intoxicated (from drink or drug).
- Wavy Navy* (n) (Brit.) The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.
- way-in* (adj) Conventional; fashionable, sophisticated.
- way-out* (adj) Far removed from reality or from convention; extreme; progressive.
- weakie* (n) (chiefly Austral.) Also *weaky*. A person who is weak in constitution, character, or ability.
- weapon* (n) (coarse) The penis.
- weed* (n) (orig. U.S.) Marijuana; a marijuana cigarette.
- weedhead* (n) (chiefly U.S.) One who is addicted to marijuana; a marijuana smoker.
- weekender* (n) (orig. U.S.) A person who indulges in occasional drug-taking, esp. at weekends.
- weeny* (n) (U.S.) Also *weenie*. (1) A girl; an effeminate man. (2) An objectionable person.
- weight* (n) A measure of an illegal drug; hence, the drug.
- weirdie* (n) Also *weirdy* or *weirdo*. An odd or unconventional person.
- wellie* (n) Also *welly*. A kick, acceleration.
- Welshie* (n) Also *Welshy*. A Welshman or Welshwoman.
- wet* (n) (1) Liquor, drink. (2) (rare) Urination, the act of urinating; urine.
- Whacko* (int) Also *Wacko*. An exclamation of delight or excitement: Splendid! Excellent! Hurrah!
- whaler* (n) (Austral.) A tramp, orig. one whose route followed the course of a river.
- Whammo* (int) Also *Whamo*. An exclamation suggesting a sudden violent blow or surprising event.
- whang-doodle* (n) (N. Amer.) Something unspecified.
- what-the-hell* (adj phr) Casual, careless, devil-may-care.
- wheel* (n) (1) (U.S.) A dollar. (2) (U.S., orig. Criminals' slang) Chiefly in pl. The legs. (3) pl. A car.
- wheelie* (n) (Austral.) Also *wheely*. A person in or confined to a wheelchair.
- whifflo* (n) (Nautical slang) An unnamed gadget.
- whistle* (n) From *whistle and flute*, rhyming slang for 'suit'.
- white* (n) (1) Morphine. (2) An amphetamine tablet.
- white-arsed* (adj) Contemptible, despicable.
- white lady* (n) (Austral.) A drink of methylated spirits, sometimes mixed with another ingredient.

- white lightning* (n) (orig. U.S.) (1) Inferior or illicitly distilled whisky. (2) A kind of LSD.
- white line* (n) (U.S.) Alcohol as a drink; also, one who drinks alcohol.
- white mule* (n) (U.S.) A potent colourless alcoholic drink; spec. illicitly distilled whisky.
- white-shoe* (adj) (chiefly U.S.) Effeminate, immature.
- white stuff* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Morphine, heroin, or cocaine.
- whitie* (n) (Black E.) Also *whitey*, *whity*. A white person.
- whizzo* (n) Also *whizz*. Something very remarkable. (adj) Excellent, wonderful. (int) An exclamation expressing delight.
- whore-shop* (n) A brothel.
- wicked* (adj) (orig. U.S.) Excellent, splendid; remarkable.
- wife* (n) The passive member of a homosexual partnership.
- wigg* (adj) (U.S.) Mad, crazy.
- wind up* (v) (Racing slang) To put (a race-horse) into fit condition for running.
- windy* (adj) Apt to get into a state of alarm; nervous, frightened.
- wing* (n) An arm.
- Wingco* (n) (R.A.F. slang) Wing Commander.
- wingding* (n) (U.S.) (1) A fit or spasm, esp. as simulated by a drug addict. (2) A wild party; a celebration or social gathering.
- wingy* (n) A one-armed man.
- wino* (n) (orig. U.S.) A habitual drinker of cheap wine; an alcoholic or drunkard.
- wiped* (ppl adj) (orig. U.S.) Chiefly with *out*. (1) Reduced to a state of physical incapacity; exhausted, tired out. (2) Intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol.
- wipe-out* (n) (1) (Surfing slang) A fall from one's surfboard as a result of a collision with another surfer or a wave. (2) (orig. U.S.) Destruction; a killing; a crushing defeat; an overwhelming experience.
- wipe out* (v) (1) To be knocked from one's surfboard. (2) (orig. U.S.) Of drink, etc.: to render intoxicated or senseless; to overwhelm. (3) To kill (a person).
- wise guy* (n) (orig. U.S.) A know-all, a wiseacre; someone who makes sarcastic or annoying remarks.
- wish book* (n) (N. Amer.) A mail-order catalogue.
- witch-doctor* (n) (Military slang) A psychiatrist.
- with-it* (adj) Fashionable, up-to-date.
- wizard* (adj) Excellent, marvellous, very good.
- wood-and-water joey* (n) (Austral.) An odd job man.
- Woodbine* (n) An Englishman, esp. a soldier, considered as a habitual smoker of Woodbine cigarettes.
- wooden cross* (n) (Military slang) A wooden cross on a serviceman's grave; hence, death in action.
- woody* (n) (1) (orig. Surfing slang, chiefly U.S.) Also *woodie*. An estate car with timber-framed sides. (2) An erection of the penis.
- woopie* (n) (orig. N. Amer.) Also *woopy*. A well-off older person.
- Woop Woop* (n) (Austral. and N.Z.) The name of an imaginary place in a remote area.

- wop* (n) (1) (R.A.F. slang) A radio operator. From *wireless operator*. (2) (orig. U.S., offens.) An Italian or other southern European, esp. as an immigrant or foreign visitor. (adj) Italian.
- word* (v) (Austral.) To speak to, accost; to tell, pass word to.
- wotcher* (int) A corruption of *What cheer?*, a familiar greeting.
- wow* (n) (orig. U.S.) A sensational success. (adj) Exciting or expressing admiration and delight.
- W.P.B.* (n) Also *w.p.b.* Waste-paper basket.
- Wrac* (n) Also *WRAC*. The Women's Royal Army Corps.
- Wraf* (n) Also *WRAF*. The Women's Royal Air Force.
- Wren* (n) A member of the Women's Royal Naval Service.
- Wrennery* (n) (Services' slang, jocular) A building used to accommodate Wrens.
- wrinkly* (n) Also *wrinklie*. An old or middle-aged person.
- wrongo* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Also *wronggo*. A bad, dishonest, or untrustworthy person.
- Y* (n) (chiefly U.S.) Young Men's Christian Association.
- yack* (n) Incessant talk of a trivial or boring nature.
- yacker* (n) (1) (derog.) A chatterbox or gossip. (2) (Austral.) Talk, conversation, chatter.
- yackety-yackety* (n) Incessant talk. (int) Expressing the sound of incessant chatter.
- Yank* (n) A Yankee.
- yap* (n) (1) (U.S.) The mouth. (2) Idle or loquacious talk; a chat. (v) To talk idly or loquaciously; to chatter.
- yardie* (n) (orig. West Indies) A Jamaican.
- yatter* (v) (orig. Sc. dial.) To talk idly and incessantly; to chatter. From *yammer* and *chatter*.
- yellow belly* (n) (orig. U.S.) A coward.
- yellow jacket* (n) A pentobarbitone capsule.
- yen-yen* (n) (U.S.) A craving for opium, opium addiction.
- Yid* (n) (usu. offens.) A name for a Jew.
- yob* (n) Back-slang for *boy*. Orig. simply, a boy, a youth; in mod. use, a lout, a hooligan.
- yobbery* (n) (Brit.) Hooliganism.
- yobbish* (adj) Characteristic of a 'yob'.
- yobbo* (n) Also *yobo*. A lout, a hooligan. Extended from *yob*.
- yobby* (adj) Loutish.
- yok* (n) (derog.) A pejorative Jewish term for a non-Jew, a Gentile. From Yiddish *goy*.
- yonks* (n) A long time, chiefly in *for yonks*.
- yo-yo* (n) (U.S.) A stupid person, a fool.
- yucky* (adj) Also *yukky*. Nasty, unpleasant; sickly sentimental.
- yumpie* (n) (orig. U.S.) Young upwardly mobile people.
- yum-yum* (n) An action providing a pleasurable or delicious sensation; love-making.
- yuppie* (n) Also *yuppy*. Young urban professional, now also freq. interpreted as young upwardly mobile professional.
- yuppification* (n) (orig. U.S.) The action or process by which an area, building, clothing, etc., becomes or is rendered suitable for 'yuppies'.
- yuppify* (v) (orig. U.S.) To subject to 'yuppification'.
- za* (n) (U.S.) Pizza.
- zac* (n) (Austral.) Also *zack*, *zak*. A sixpence.

zapper (n) (orig. U.S.) The remote-control unit for a piece of electronic equipment, esp. a television or video recorder.

zappy (adj) Lively, amusing, energetic; striking.

zig-zag (adj) (chiefly U.S., Military slang) Drunk.

zipless (adj) (coarse) Denoting a brief and passionate sexual encounter.

zizzy (adj) Showy, spectacular; lively, uninhibited.

zonk (v) (1) To hit, strike, or knock. (2) To fail; to lose consciousness, to die.

zonking (ppl adj, adv) Impressively (large or great).

zoot suit (n) (orig. U.S.) A type of man's suit of exaggerated style popular in the 1940s.

zooty (adj) (U.S.) (Strikingly) fashionable.