GENERAL AND METAPHORIC EXPRESSIVENESS OF ENGLISH SLANG

Constantin Manea
University of Piteşti

Abstract

The author of the present paper believes that a case study of the rich display of metaphor and expressivness, i.e. lexical novelty, which slang and slangy terms substantiate in English (be they part of *slang* proper, or else of *cant*, *jargon*, *argot*, *highly colloquial speech*) can prove highly instructive. Actually, it is the follow-up to a series of papers that tried to delineate some of the most characteristic qualities of Romanian slang and slangy terms. (The main premiss of those papers was that the slang (or *argot*) terms do renew the lexicon of contemporary Romanian, mainly through their connotative-imaginative contribution, essentially based on the analogy between the two terms in contact). The referential domain of the terms selected was identified, then the more conspicuous word-formation mechanisms (viz. reduplication, blending, back-formation, acronymy, compounds, clipping, etc.) were illustrated. Synonymy was also dealt with in the context, as well as polysemy. Incidentally, some etymological issues were addressed. In a future contribution, the slang metaphors in English and Romanian will be given due attention.

Key words: *slang terms*, *metaphor*, *expressiveness*, *connotation*, *meaning*

Résumé

Le présent article est né par suite à la conviction de son auteur du fait qu'une étude cas par cas des constructions argotiques ou quasi-argotiques de l'anglais, prenant en considération leur potentiel d'innovation lexicale et sémantique, pourrait s'avérer aussi bien intéressante qu'instructive (fut-ce le cas du *slang* proprement-dit ou bien pourrions-nous discuter du *cant*, *jargon*, *argot*, même du *highly colloquial speech*). Le présent article est, en fait, la continuation d'une série d'études entreprises dans le but d'établir le contour de certains traits définitoires des termes argotiques ou quasi-argotiques existants en roumain. Ces articles sont fondés sur l'hypothèse que, pour le roumain actuel, les termes du *slang* ou de l'*argot* se constituent en une source de renouvellement, de par leur potentiel d'imagination active et leurs connotations créatrices de sens nouveaux. De telles évolutions sont, essentiellement, possibles grâce à la découverte d'analogies qui existent entre les termes qui se trouvent en contact. Dans le présent article, nous avons identifié les domaines de référece des termes que nous avions choisis pour notre analyse. Nous y avons illustré les mécanismes de la formation des mots le plus souvent rencontrés: itération, combinaisons diverses, dérivation régressive, acronymie, composition, abréviations. Dans le contexte qui nous concerne, nous avons aussi abordé la question des synonymes et celle des sens multiples (polysémie). Le cas échéant, nous y avons aussi discuté de l'étymologie de certains termes. Dans des articles à venir, nous avons l'intention d'analyser comparativement les métaphores du *slang*, en anglais et en roumain.

Mots-clés: *argot*, *métaphore*, *expressivité*, *connotation*, *sens*

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

We have to admit that demarcating the very definitions of the core concepts of the research field of the present paper was a rather difficult undertaking. The definitions of the Romanian term *argou*, as well as those of the English word *slang*, can challenge both the linguist and the non-linguist. The status and definition of the terms *argot* and *slang* (i.e. *argou*, *păsărească*, etc.) by Romanian linguists are still rather vaguely or tentatively dealt with. It is true that *slang* (and *argot*) form a quite representastive element of the diastratic structure of language itself, as an idiom and a special vocabulary/ terminology of a prevalently vulgar and taboo character, which essentially runs counter the authority of standard language, being mainly used by people belonging to the debased social classes (and also, marginally, to some other social sections willing to single themselves out from the mass of the speakers).

Here is a dictionary definition as provided by a popular dictionary: "An argot is a special vocabulary used by a particular group of people, which other people find difficult to understand" (Collins COBUILD, p. 76), paralleled by a Romanian counterpart: "limbaj convențional folosit mai ales de vagabonzi, răufăcători etc., pentru a nu fi înțeleși de restul societății" (DEX, p. 50). The definition actually covers what the speakers of English understand by *cant* or *underworld lingo*.

In defining *slang*, the basic concept is deviancy from, and inappropriateness to, the standard form of a language (in comparison to which slang/ *argot* is a sociolect), starting from the way of speaking characteristic of lawless or homeless people, meant to dissimulate the meaning of the message conveyed, lest the latter should be understood by the common speakers, seen as *outsiders*. That sense of the term, identical to that of Fr. *argot*, is currently shifted, through specialization, to the word *cant* ("specialized vocabulary of a particular group, such as thieves, journalists, or lawyers; jargon" (Collins). Unfortunately, the picture of its semantics in English is further complicated through the fact that several terms co-exist which designate the idiom and the special vocabulary employed by people sharing the same way of life or profession/ occupation: in addition to *cant*, English also uses, for the above-mentioned sense, the terms *shoptalk*, *argot* and *jargon* (which, incidentally, represent as many patent *False Friends* for the native speakers of Romanian). Furthermore, in association with the term *jargon*, the word *slang* may also designate an idiom characterized by affected/ mannered syntax, vocabulary or semantics, and also a kind of *gibberish*, or even *pidgin* (the mixed language or idiom – including lexical and grammar elements taken over from several distinct idioms – which is quite similar to the creole variants of western European languages, and is used, mainly in trading intercourse, by the speakers of local languages).

Obviously, the feature implying deviance from the linguistic standard tends to be very popular especially with teenagers, an age when there is a significant effort towards using and coining new terms and expressions, rather than generating an encrypted language (or an *anti-language*), which should keep the other speakers out of the conversation. The *cryptic* character of slang generally works for a short period of time (in Romanian, it hardly ever does that) – and only incidentally, which actually also occurs in the specialized idiom, or "shoptalk" typical of certain professions or callings; however, what remains is the novelty, as well as the colloquial, colourful, jocular expression. The displacement of the older term (which is perceived as being conventional and humdrum) occurs as a rule out of a defence reflex directed against

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

the negative perceptions that are associated, within the respective (sub)group, with the use of conventional(ized) words. Additionally, the idea of distinguishing oneself from the rest of the speakers is often referred to by most linguists: J. Marouzeau noticed the existence of a "langue spéciale pourvue d'un vocabulaire parasite qu'emploient les membres d'un groupe ou d'une catégorie sociale avec la préoccupation de se distinguer de la masse des sujets parlants. Le terme [*argot*] a désigné à l'origine le parler des gens de la mauvaise vie dans les bas-fonds de la société, mais, on en a étendu le sens, et l'argot n'est même pas nécessairement une forme de la langue vulgaire; il y a des argots des gens cultivés: artistes, savants, étudiants". It is true that, in Romanian, the milieux generating such original, fresh terms and phrases are much more restricted than in the U.S., where Stuart Flexner identified at least ten distinct social and professional categories, viz. sportsmen (especially baseball players), highschool and college students, jazz fans, railway workers, showbiz professionals, the military, drug addicts, finance and bank clerks, immigrants, sailors, the underworld, health service wirkers and computer buffs (apud Volceanov, Doca, p. 13).

Consequently, such diastratic variants of a national language characterized by social and non-dialectal selection represent, beyond the shadow of a doubt, effective ways of lexical enrichment. The semantic rejuvenation of the lexicon that slang can secure fundamentally appertains to its primarily being open to novelty (through the fact that it can constantly coin fresh terms and meanings, while also importing foreign terms), and also to its immense *connotative and stylistic imaginativeness*. This exuberant fantasy is an expression of the slang speakers' attempt to find new, colourful, vigorous ways of linguistic expression that are, more often than not, risqué and/ or humorous (e.g., for the concept of "drink", Romanian slang uses such words as *sirop*, *medicament*, *calmant*, *dezinfectant*, *adormire*, *streptomicină*, *flanelă de Drăgăşani/ Odobeşti*, *stropeală*, *liniştire*, *împărtăşanie*, *închinare*, *valeriană*, *vanilie*, *sfințenie*). So, one can talk about a real synonymic plethora of slang and slangy terms (for instance, for the idea of "prison/ jail" the following Romanian terms are used: *bordei*, *bortă*, *arcan*, *preventoriu*, *locație*, *obor*, *întreprindere*, *labirint*, *răcoare*, *pension* (*pentru femei*), *recluziune*, *incintă*, *incubator*, *groapă*, *hrubă*, *grotă*, *văgăună*, *pripon*, *templu*, *başcă*, *ostrov*, *cofă*, *pârnaie*, *staționar*, *colegiu*, *sălaş*, *sechestru*, *dubă*, *ospiciu*, *fermă* (*de stat*), *tabără*, *universitate*, *pivniță*, *cuşcă*, *colivie*, *cotlon*, *copcă*). A "policeman" is variously called: *ienicer*, *hingher*, *răpitor*, *caschetar*, *presar*, *acolist*, *acvilar*, *legist*, *gardist*, *maur*, *nănaş*, *balaur* (also meaning "şef cu funcție mare"), *pițigoi*, *sticlete*, *şacal*, *rechin* (also used for "procuror"), *erete*, *curcan*, etc. Conversely, polysemy is also rich in this area, e.g. *ras* ("omorât", "arestat", "păgubit", "furat", "fără nici un ban", "destituit din funcție"), *grangur* ("om foarte bogat", "persoană cu poziție socială înaltă, "mare şef", "şeful poliției"), *a raşcheta* ("a desfigura", "a proba toate faptele penale", "a aresta", "a închide"; "a se rade în cap"), *a tămâia* ("a înşela", "a bate", "a se îmbăta", "a minți", "a se lăuda"), *a înşuruba* ("a aresta, a închide", "a prinde în capcană, "a bate zdravăn"), etc.

From a different perspective, this enumeration can also illustrate the transitoriness and perishability of slang and slangy vocabulary: more often than not, such terms come into disuse, or, if they are still used, they are no longer associated with the idea of "colourful or (sub)colloquial speech".

It is only natural that English – a language boasting, one could say, a hyperabundant vocabulary – should possess extremely rich slang(y) synonymic series,

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

especially for common, or taboo concepts, such as *money*, *drunk(en)*, *drink*, *food*, *prison*, *pudenda*, etc. Using the *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* in order to conduct a "live" study of the profusion and variety of the linguistic material English can provide, hoping that we will be thus able to draw[1] a parallel between the form-, and stylistic and semantic typologies in that language and those in Romanian, we have selected several thousands of words and phrases having to do with slang, slangy and (sub)colloquial speech. Out of those lexical units, the following are apt to give an image of the (really plethoric) synonymic series that English can supply: ■ MONEY *the bite*, *bread*, *coin*, *dough*, *gelt*, *(long / folding) green*, *lolly* (Brit.), *mazuma* (esp. U.S.), *moola(h)*, *poke*, *pot*, *rhino* (Brit.), *roll*, *scratch*, *shekel*, *spondulix*, *sugar*, *tin* (old slang), *take*, *wad*, *wampum;* (paper money) *cabbage*, *kale*, *lettuce;* (piece of money) *ducat*, *spot;* (money easily or illegally obtained) *gravy;* (money paid in bribes or graft) *ice;* (colloq.) *loot*, *readies*, *the ready;* (jocular) *filthy lucre;* (contemptuous) *pelf*. ■ FOOD *eatables*, *eats*, *grub*, *nosh*, *scoff;* (colloq.) *chow*. ■ DRINK (1. verb) *to pub-crawl* (esp. Brit.); (colloq.) *to booze*, *to go on a binge/ bender*, *to hit the bottle*; (2. noun) *hooch;* (colloq.) *booze*. ■ DRUNK(EN) *canned*, *fu'* (Scot.), *loaded*, *pie-eyed*, *plastered*, *sloshed*, *stewed*, *stinko*, *stoned*, *tiddly*, *well-oiled;* (colloq.) *half seas over*, *merry*, *soaked*, *tight*, *under the influence;* (euphemistic) *tired and emotional*. ■ DRUNK(ARD) *lush*, *soak*, *wino;* (colloq.) *boozer*. ■ PRISON *brig* (esp. U.S.), *can*, *clink*, *cooler*, *hoosegow/ hoosgow*, *inside*, *jailhouse* (Southern U.S.), *jug*, *nick*, *quod*, *stir*. ■ RICH, WELL-OFF *loaded*, *rolling*, *well-heeled;* (colloq.) *in the money*, *flush*, *in clover*, *on Easy Street*. ■ PENIS *cock*, *dick*, *dong*, *dork*, *jock*, *pecker*, *peter*, *prick*, *putz*, *weenie*. ■ POSTERIOR *ass*, *bucket*, *bum* (Brit.), *buns*, *butt*, *can*, *duff*, *fanny*, *heinie*, *keister/ keester*, *prat*, *rear (end)*, *slat*, *tail*.

Enhancing the expressive or graphical effect is ensured, for most of those newfangled terms, by the *metaphoric bent*. In this respect, we have verified, for the slang(y) vocabulary of Romanian as well (in an article entitled *Termeni argotici*, (*sub-*)*colocviali şi familiari proveniţi din limbajele* "*de atelier*" *şi din vocabularele meşteşugurilor tradiţionale*[2]), the fact that the increased expressiveness of such terms is in direct proportion to: the distinctive traits of the direct word, and those of its figurative use being part of remote semantic spheres, the figurative term originating in a lexical group of a more restricted semantic description, the terms coming from registers as far as possible from the colloquial/highly informal/slangy area (e.g. Rom. *segment* "leg"). In this connection, the fact is noticeable that, in both Romanian and English, a large number of learned, technical and scientific/specialized terms have made their way into the slang, slangy or highly colloquial idiom, e.g. Rom. *acciz*, *acut*, *a anestezia*, *antene*, *boxe*, *brand*, *clişeu*, *colimator*, *a degresa*, *ecologist*, *ecran*, *falset*, *flanc*, *flotă*, *a glisa*, *hamlet*, *hemogramă*, *incintă*, *labirint*, *laminor*, *ludovici*, *luxat*, *malaxoare*, *mufă*, *mulaj*, *orbită*, *oxidat*, *paralel*, *parapantă*, *perfuzie*, *polizor*, *profundor*, *recital*, *a se reseta*, *satelit*, *scenariu*, *a skipa*, *solvabil*, *stronţişor*, *tandem*, *a teleporta*, *torpilat*, *tranzistor*, *a trotila*, *umoare*, *vernisaj*.

[1] In a future contribution devoted to slang terms, which will further our preoccupations in that field.

[2] English translation: *Slang, slangy and* (*sub*)*colloquial terms originating in the "shoptalk" and traditional handicraft vocabularies*

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

As far as the domain inclusion of the English terms selected is concerned (and, consequently, their strict register association), a number of typical fields of activity seem to be placed in the foreground, with the respective slang(y) terms and variants: ■ Army and navy slang, e.g. **brig*[2] *n.* "the guardhouse; prison" (cf. Rom. *țuhau(s), bahau(s), țambal*); *dog biscuit* ***2**. "an army field-ration biscuit" (cf. Rom. *conducte* "macaronis", *balast(ru)* "rice", etc.); *sundowner* "*Naut.* an officer who is a strict disciplinarian [from requiring return from shore leave by sundown]". ■ Horse racing slang, e.g. *boot*[1] "*vt.* **5**. *Horse Racing* to ride (a horse) in a race"; *chalk* "*adj.* ***2**. *Horse Racing a*) favored to win, place, or show *b*) betting on favorites only". ■ Prize fighters' slang, e.g. *beezer* "*n.* the nose". ■ Baseball and football players' slang, e.g. *ballhawk* "*n.***1.** *Baseball* a skillful outfielder; **2**. *Football a*) a defensive player adept at intercepting passes and recovering fumbles *b*) a skillful pass receiver". ■ Underworld and drug-users' slang, e.g. *acid* "*n.* **2.** LSD"; *acidhead* "*n.* a habitual user of LSD". ■ Other categories of slang (hackers' slang, astronauts' slang, etc.), e.g. **no-go* "*adj*. not functioning properly or not ready to go [orig. astronauts' jargon]"[3]. (Another prolific field, which we did not mean to include in this contribution, is that represented by such racist, derogatory, offensive slang words as *abo* "aborigine, native", *Dago* "a member of a Latin race, esp. a Spaniard or Portuguese", *jig* "Negro", Nigger "Negro; a member of any dark-skinned race", *spic/ spick* "a person from a Spanish-speaking country in South or Central America or a Spanish-speaking community in the U.S", *wop* "a member of a Latin people, esp. an Italian", *wog* "a foreigner, esp. one who is not White", etc.).

Moreover, a distinction we considered to be operational in the present contribution is that between the *exclusively slang terms* and the *slang(y) meanings* of a number of common words (e.g. *red*, *sugar*, *sweet*, *snow*, etc. – which, as a rule, did not prove very numerous: *red* "a red capsule of secobarbital, a barbiturate", *sugar* "money", *sweet* "good, delightful, etc. (a generalized epithet of approval)", *to sweeten* "*Poker* to add further stakes to (a pot) before opening", *snow* "*n.* cocaine or heroin; *vt.* **3**. to deceive, mislead, or win over by glib talk, flattery, etc."). The remarkable expressiveness of the slang(y) coinages is visible in both categories, but its conspicousness is really overwhelming with the terms belonging to the latter class. Out of the *metaphoric* images circulated by slang speech, some are rather "transparent", while others are harder to decipher (in which case we can, more often than not, have recourse to the lexical and semantic gloss, or to the etymological notes provided by monolingual dictionaries – although, there as well, the dictum *Grammatici certant* proves true); at times though, we have had the opportunity to detect even "international metaphors or images". To illustrate the first category mentioned above – the slang words whose meaning is relatively easy to deduce/ grasp (and remember) –, we list below a few of the many slang terms coined through the semantic mechanism of metaphor: *alphabet soup* "a jumble of initials, as of government agencies or other organizations"; *angel* "*vt.* to support with money"; **antsy* "*adj*. fidgety, nervous, impatient, etc."; **barfly n.* a person who spends much time drinking in barrooms"; **bat around* "**1**. to travel or roam about. **2**. to consider or

[3] In the articles and studies dealing with slang that we have consulted, we have often come across such subtle, strict distinctions between, on the one hand, *slang*, *jargon* and *techspeak*, and, on the other hand, the various *subcultures* those idoms represent (e.g. bikers, surfers, rock fans, hackers, etc.).

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

discuss (an idea, plan, etc.) freely and informally"; **bat out*"to create or compose quickly or hastily"; *bay window* "***2.** a large, protruding belly"; **canned* "*adj*. **2**. *a*) recorded for reproduction, as on radio or TV [*canned* commercials] *b*) prepared for publication in a number of newspapers simultaneously [a *canned* editorial]"; *cat burglar* "a burglar who enters buildings by climbing up to openings in upper stories, roofs, etc."; *daylight* "*n.* **5**. [*pl.*] orig., the eyes; hence, consciousness: often used hyperbolically, as in *scare* (or *beat* or *knock*, etc.**)** *the daylights out of*"; *dead duck/dead pigeon* "* a person or thing that is ruined or certain to suffer ruin, failure, or death; goner"; **dead soldier* "an empty beer, wine, or whiskey bottle"[4]; **ding-a-ling* "*n.* a crazy, stupid, or eccentric person [< the ringing in the head of a punch-drunk boxer]"; *ink* "*n.* **3**. publicity, esp. in newspapers; *vt.* to sign one's name to"; *kicker* "*n.* **3**. *a*) a surprise ending, ironic twist, etc. *b*) a hidden, unsuspected point or difficulty"; *nose job* "a cosmetic alteration of a person's nose by plastic surgery"; *pickled* "*adj.* intoxicated; drunk"; **shoot'em-up* "*n.* **1.** a book, film, TV show, video game, etc. characterized by much violent content, gunplay, etc., esp. one in the western, crime, or war genres; **2**. GUNPLAY"; **shooting iron* "any firearm"; **short fuse* "a tendency to become angry readily; quick temper"; **soft touch* "a person who is easily persuaded, esp. to give or lend money". Not surprisingly, there are terms that start from the same referential images as those underlying the Romanian terms, e.g. *rubber*[1] "*n.* **3.** something made of this substance; specif., […] *c*) a condom" – cf. Rom. *cauciuc* "condom". Similarly, many common words or phrases were shifted into the slang(y) register, with a predictable meaning, e.g. *all-right* "*adj*. honest, honorable, good, excellent, etc.: used before the noun it modifies"; *almighty adv*.extremely; *baby* "***5**. darling; honey: often a casual term of address; ***6**. any person or thing [this car is a tough *baby* to drive]".

Here are some slang(y) words and phrases, loaded with special (imaginal and metaphoric) expressivity, which belong to the latter category: **apple polisher* "a person who curries favor by gifts, flattery, etc., as a child bringing his teacher an apple"; *AC/DC* or *A.C./D.C.* "*adj*. BISEXUAL (*adj*. 3) [by analogy with a device that works on either alternating current or direct current]; *ax*/*axe* "*n.* ***3**. a musical instrument"; **badger game* "the blackmailing of a man by maneuvering him into a compromising situation with a woman"; *banana oil* "[Old Slang] insincere talk; *bad*[1] "***14**. very good, stylish, effective, etc."; *bang*[1] "*vt.* **4** [Vulgar Slang] to engage in sexual intercourse with; *n.* ***3** *b*) a thrill; excitement. *n.* [Vulgar Slang] the act or an instance of sexual intercourse"; *banger* "*n.* [Brit. Slang] a sausage [BANG[1] + -ER:? from resemblance to a thick club used for banging]"; *black-bag* "*adj*. designating or of a secret illegal break-in made by a government agency in pursuit of suspected criminals, enemy agents, etc. Etymology [in allusion to a burglar's bag of tools]"; **duck soup* "something that is easy to do; cinch"; *flatfoot* "*n.* **2**. a policeman: so called from the notion that flat feet result from walking a beat"; **gravy train* "a sinecure, subsidy, etc. that allows one to live luxuriously without much work"; **greenie* "*n.* an amphetamine pill, used as a stimulant. [after the color of a common type]"; *honey bucket* "a bucket or container for human body waste, used where a toilet is not available"; **one-armed bandit* "SLOT MACHINE"; *reefer* "*n.* ***3**. a marijuana cigarette

[4] Similar expressions are currently used in Romanian, too, e.g. "Ia *morții* (ăştia) de-aici / de pe masă!" – in the selfsame sense as that of the Anglo-American slang item mentioned.

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

[from the rolled appearance of a *reef* (of a sail)]"; **rubber check* "a check that is worthless because of insufficient funds in the drawer's account [from the notion that it bounces: see BOUNCE (*vi.* 3)]"; **Saturday night special* "any small, cheap, short-barreled handgun that is readily available [from their use in weekend crimes]"; *shooting gallery* "***2**. a place, as an apartment, where a narcotics addict can prepare and inject an illicit drug, as heroin, with equipment usually provided on the premises"; **short snort* "a quick drink of liquor"; **showboat* "*n.* **2**. a showoff; exhibitionist. *vi.* to show off"; *put* (or *get*) *the show on the road* "to set things in operation; start an activity, venture, etc."; **snake eyes* "a throw of two ones (two) in craps"; **squirrelly* or *squirrely* "*adj.* odd, crazy, etc. [in allusion to a squirrel's diet of nuts]".

The fact that many slang(y) coinages have an obvious humorous and jocular value (and, on most occasions, also such an intentionality) is extremely easy to demonstrate – as can show, we believe convincingly, examples like: *battle-ax* / *battle-axe* "*n.* ***2**.a woman who is harsh, domineering, etc."; **battlewagon* "*n.* a battleship; *beam* "*n.* **10**. the width of the hips"; **bent out of shape* "very angry, upset, or agitated"; **big house, the* "a penitentiary"; *blink *on the blink* "not working right; out of order"; *boo*^{2} "*n.* MARIJUANA"; *breadbasket* "*n.* **2**. the stomach or abdomen"; **Bronx cheer* "RASPBERRY (sense 3)"; *give* (or *get*) *the bum's rush* "to eject (or be ejected) forcibly"; *cartwheel* "*n.* ***2**. a large coin, esp. a silver dollar"; *chassis* "*n.* ***5**. the body or figure, esp. of a woman"; **cheaters* "*n.pl.* eyeglasses, esp. dark glasses"; **chicken colonel* "[Mil. Slang] a full colonel [from the eagle insignia worn on the shoulders]"; *chopper* "*n.* **3**. [*pl.*] a set of teeth, esp. false teeth"; **church key* "a device for opening cans, esp. originally beer cans, by punching a V-shaped hole in the top"; **coffin nail* "[Old Slang] a cigarette"; *out to lunch* "crazy; insane"; **motormouth n.* "a person who talks incessantly: also *motor-mouth* or *motor mouth*"; **tanglefoot* "*n.* [West Slang] cheap whiskey". There are also jocular / humorous variants such as *bazooms* "*n.pl.* a woman's breasts; bosom".

It is perfectly true that lots of turns of phrase having a clear expressive and imaginal value have remained mere "fossilized" slang terms – which can be proved, in the first place, by studying their etymology[5]. Here is a random list of words that were originally (as the specialised dictionaries can testify) slang/ slangy terms: *banter* "[17th-c. slang < ?]"; **bogus* "*adj.* not genuine"; spurious. [orig. (slang), counterfeiter's apparatus: < ?]"; *boondocks* "*n.pl.* [Colloq.] **1**. a jungle or a wild, heavily wooded area; wilderness; ***2**. any remote rural or provincial region; hinterland. Used with *the* [orig. World War II military slang < Tagalog *bundok*, mountain]"; *chum* "[late 17th-c. slang; prob. altered sp. of *cham*, clipped form of *chamber (fellow)*, *chamber (mate)*]"; *conundrum* "*n.* [16th-c. Oxford University Lat. slang for pedant, whim, etc.; early sp. *quonundrum*]"; *cully* "*n.* [Old Slang] **1**. a dupe. **2**. a fellow; companion; mate. *vt.*[Old Slang] to trick; deceive; cheat [17th-c. thieves' slang, prob. contr. of CULLION]"; *dicky*^{2} "*adj.* [Brit. Colloq.] diseased; unsound [late 18th-c. Brit slang < ?]"; *fuss* "[17th-c. slang, prob. echoic]"; *jiggery-pokery* "*n.* [Colloq., Chiefly Brit.] trickery or deception; hanky-panky [altered < Scot *joukery-paukery*, rhyming slang < IE **joukerie*, trickery < **joukere*, a cheater < **jouk*, a dodge, dart < ?]"; *nab*

[5] The demonstration fails to include, for understandable reasons, very old terms. For the sake of comparison, let us say that lots of words belonging to the basic lexicon of the Romance languages were originally slang(y) terms, e.g. *testa* "head", *bello* "beautiful/ handsome", etc.

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

"*vt.* [Colloq.] **1**. to seize suddenly; snatch or steal. **2**. to arrest or catch (a felon or wrongdoer) [< thieves' slang (16th-17th c.) prob. var. of dial. *nap*, to snatch < Scand, as in Dan *nappe*, Swed *nappa*, to snatch]".

Even if it can be argued that this is a case of what may be called "latent expressivity" (of a cultural / learned type), or of "lost images", the slang terms which contain allusions to cultural, historical, literary, etc. facts represent – in a rather paradoxical way, we have to admit – a (hidden) asset of the language. A few examples would suffice, we think, to calliper – be it partially – the actual size of that phenomenon, which we think should be studied more thoroughly (even in conjunction with the quite similar phenomenon of urban *graffiti*): **boll weevil* "**2**. a conservative Democratic politician from a State of the southern U.S." [because the larvae of that insect, *Anthonomus grandis*, living in the southern U.S. and Mexico, consume cotton bolls]; **-fest* "*combining form* an occasion of much or many (of the thing specified): often used to form colloquial or slang words [*songfest, slugfest*] [< Ger *fest*, a celebration < Lat. *festum*: see FEAST]"; **gandy dancer* "[Old Slang] a worker in a railroad section gang [prob. so named because of movements while using tools from the *Gandy* Manufacturing Co. (Chicago)]"; **Montezuma's revenge* "acute infectious diarrhea, esp. when contracted in Mexico"; *sheik*/*sheikh* "*n.* **3**. [Old Slang] a masterful man to whom women are irresistibly attracted [after E. M. Hull's novel, *The Sheik* (1921)]"; **zap* "*vt., vi.*to move, strike, stun, smash, kill, defeat, etc. suddenly and with great speed and force. *n.* energy, verve, pep, zip, etc. *interj.* an exclamation used to express sudden, swift action or change [echoic blend < ? Z(IP) and (SL)AP, popularized in comic-strip use]".

Sometimes, expressive terms are the result of personal coinages, e.g. **palooka* "*n.* [Old Slang] a clumsy or oafish fellow, esp. an inept athlete [< ?: popularized by Jack Conway (died 1928), U.S. baseball player and sportswriter]"; **gobbledygook* "*n.* talk or writing, esp. of officialdom, that is pompous, wordy, involved, and full of long, Latinized words Also *gobbledegook*. [first used in current sense by Maury Maverick (1895-1954), U.S. Representative: ? echoic of turkey cries]; **goon n.***2**. a person who is awkward, grotesque, stupid, etc. [after Alice the *Goon*, grotesque comic-strip figure created by E. C. Segar (1894-1938), U.S. cartoonist]"; **heebie-jeebies* "*n.pl.* [Old Slang] a state of nervousness; jitters: with *the*. [coined by W. B. De Beck (1890-1942) in his comic strip *Barney Google*]"; **hot dog* "**2**. an exclamation expressing delight [orig. (?) so called (*c.* 1900) by T. A. Dorgan, U.S. cartoonist (died 1929), prob. in allusion to pop. notion that the sausage was made of dog meat]".

A similar status is held by the proper names used in making up the slang(y) terms, or detectable as part of their etymological bases, e.g. **Annie Oakley* "a free ticket; pass [after woman rifle expert (1860-1926): ? because her small targets resembled punched tickets]"; **rube* "*n.* a person from a rural region who lacks polish and sophistication; rustic [< *Rube*, nickname of REUBEN]"; **brannigan* "*n.* a noisy quarrel or fight; brawl [prob. after surname *Brannigan*]"; *Lulu*/*lulu* "*n.* ***1**. any person or thing outstanding for some quality, as a beautiful girl, a difficult task, etc.; ***2**. a fixed allowance given in lieu of payment for itemized expenses"; *murphy* "*n.* [Old Slang] a potato [after *Murphy*, Irish surname]"; *gussy* / *gussie* "*vt., vi.*to dress (*up*) or decorate in a fine or showy way [after *Gussie*, nickname for AUGUSTA]"; *Joe* "**n.* **1**. [*often j-*] fellow; guy; **2**. [*j-*] coffee; *Joe Blow* **1**. *personification of* an average, ordinary man; **2**. a name used to refer to a man whose name is not known or whose

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

typicalness is being emphasized"; **nervous Nellie* "a timid person who is easily upset and is hesitant to act [orig. used of high-strung racehorses: in ref. to *old Nell*, jocular name for a nag]"; *Jane* "*n.* *[*j*-]a girl or woman"; **fancy dan* "a flashy, ostentatious person, often one who lacks real skill, stamina, etc.; [fancy + (prob.) *Dan*, nickname for DANIEL]"; **sneaky Pete* "very cheap wine, often the dregs". In much the same way can be analyzed the terms derived from trademark names, e.g. **moxie* "*n.* courage, pluck, perseverance, etc.; guts. [after *Moxie*, trademark for a soft drink]".

With respect to the sense of the slang(y) terms examined, in addition to the semantic developments resulting in extension or adding new shades of meaning (e.g. **jive*[1] "*vt.*, *vi.* to speak (to) in a way that is exaggerated, insincere, flippant, etc., esp. in trying to fool or mislead; *n.* **1**. talk used in jiving someone. *adj.* insincere, misleading, fake, fraudulent, etc. [altered < JIBE[2]: sense development, to taunt, banter, improvise, swing (music)]"), what is highly remarkable is the very numerous polysemous terms and phrases, e.g. *basket case* "**1**. a person lacking all four limbs **2**. a person unable to function, esp. because of emotional disturbance. **3**. anything that does not function properly"; **bazoo* "*n.* **1**. the mouth **2**. the nose. **3**. loud or boastful talk"; **bimbo* "*n.* **1**. [Old Slang] a guy, fellow; **2**. a silly or stupid person: used esp. of a woman. **3**. a sexually promiscuous woman"; *bird* "*n.* **6**. a sound of disapproval made by vibrating the lips. **7**. a rocket or guided missile; [Brit.] a young woman"; *bitch* "*n.* **3**. anything especially unpleasant or difficult; ***4**. a complaint; *vi.* *to complain; *vt.***1**. to bungle: usually with *up*; **2**. to behave spitefully or angrily toward"; *blast* "*n.* ***8**. *Sports* a strong, driving hit, as of a baseball; ***9**. a pleasurable, exciting event or experience, as a wild party. *vt.* ***4**. *Sports* to drive (a ball) far with a sharp blow of the bat or club"; *blow*[1] "*vi.* ***11**. to go away; leave. **12**. *Jazz* to improvise. **13**. to cease functioning, esp. by overuse: said of an engine, etc.; *vt.* ***16.** to go away from; leave [he *blew* town]; ***17.** to bungle and fail in [we had our chance and *blew* it]; **18**. *pp. blowed* to damn: used in euphemistic oaths; **19**. to inhale (cocaine, marijuana, etc.); **20**. to reveal or disclose, esp. so as to compromise [they *blew* our cover]; **21**. [Vulgar Slang] to perform fellatio on; **22**. to cause (an engine, transmission, etc.) to cease functioning, esp. by overuse; *n.* **6**. COCAINE": *bounce* "*vt.* ***3**. to put (an undesirable person) out by force; ***4**. to discharge from employment; *vi.* ***3**. to be returned to the payee by a bank as a worthless check, because of insufficient funds in the drawer's account"; *bug*[1] "*n.* ***6**. *a*) an enthusiast or devotee (often used in combination) [a *shutterbug* pursues photography as a hobby] *b*) a particular enthusiasm or obsession; ***7**. a small, compact automobile; **8**. the weight allowance (5 pounds, or 2.3 kg) granted to an apprentice jockey for one year after; *vt.* **2**. *a*) to annoy, bother, anger, etc. *b*) to confuse or puzzle. *vi.* to bulge or open wide, as in amazement: said of the eyes"; *bump* "*vt.* ***2**. to displace, as from a job or plane reservation; ***3**. to raise (a price, a salary, a bet in poker, etc.); *n.* ***4**. a thrusting movement forward of the lower part of the torso, as in striptease dancing: see also GRIND (*n.* 5)"; *burn*[1] "*vt.* ***14**. to electrocute; **15**.*a*) to cheat, swindle, or rob *b*) to cause to suffer through misplaced trust or confidence (usually used in the passive); *vi.* ***9**. to be electrocuted"; *chicken* "*n.* **5**. *a*) a timid or cowardly person *b*) a young male homosexual; **6**. [Mil. Slang] petty insistence on rules[< CHICKENSHIT]; *adj.* **3**. timid or cowardly; ***4**. [Mil. Slang] characterized by unnecessary discipline or pettiness [cf. *n.* 6]; **vi.* to lose courage and abandon a plan or action: usually with *out*"; **cold turkey* "**1**. by abruptly and totally withdrawing from an addiction to drugs, tobacco, etc. **2.** in a frank, blunt, or matter-of-fact way [to talk

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

cold turkey about our chances]. **3**. without preparation or preliminaries [to approach a sales prospect *cold turkey*]"; **come-on* "*n.***1.** an inviting look or gesture. **2.** something offered as an inducement. **3.** a swindler, esp. a shill"; *kicky* "*adj.***1**. fashionable; stylish. **2**. stimulating; exciting"; *pig* "*n.* **5**. **a*) a slatternly or sluttish woman *b*) a rude or arrogant person *c*) a police officer (a derogatory term)"; *yap* "*vi.* **1**. to make a sharp, shrill bark or yelp. **2**. to talk noisily and stupidly; jabber; *n.* **2.** noisy, stupid talk; jabber; **3**. a crude, noisy, or contemptible person. **4**. the mouth [echoic]". The following terms are absolutely remarkable, we think, through their incredibly extended polysemy: *bag* "***10**. one's special sphere of interest, milieu, talent, obsession, etc. ***11**. an unattractive woman [< BAGGAGE, sense 3*a*]; **5**. to obtain or collect"; *ball*[1] "*n.* **7** [*pl.*]*a*) [Vulgar] the testicles *b*) daring or courage; *vi., vt.* **2** [Vulgar Slang] to have sexual intercourse (with); *interj.* [*pl.*] nonsense!; **bazoo n.***1**. the mouth. **2**. the nose. **3.** loud or boastful talk"; *sleaze* "*n.***1**. the quality or condition of being sleazy; sleaziness. **2**. anything cheap, vulgar, shoddy, etc. **3**. a shady, coarse, or immoral person".

As far as the mechanisms of word-formation are concerned, we could form the opinion that the terms made up by compounding / composition supply a large number of highly expressive constructs, as can be proved by the words glossed below: *angel dust* "PCP, or phencyclidine; a depressant drug used illegally as a hallucinogen"; **bad-mouth vt., vi*.to find fault (with); criticize or disparage"; **bug-eyed* "*adj*. with bulging eyes"; **beat-up* "*adj*. in a worn-out condition; dilapidated, battered, shabby, etc."; *bumboat* "*n.* a small boat used in a port or anchorage to peddle goods to ships' crews [BUM[2] + BOAT; orig. (17th c.), sailors' slang for garbage boat]"; **candy-ass* "*n.* a weak, hesitant, or ineffectual person; wimp; sissy"; *half-assed* "*adj*. having or showing little thought, care, or foresight"; *pop-off* "*n.* a person who talks carelessly, emotionally, or angrily, esp. in a sudden outburst"; *rave-up* "*n.***1**. [Brit.] a wild party; 2. an exciting, energetic musical performance, esp. in popular music"; **red-eye* "*adj*. designating a late-night or all-night commercial airline flight; *n.* such a flight [from the bloodshot eyes of someone who has not slept]"; *rotgut* "*n.* *raw, low-grade whiskey or other liquor [ROT + GUT]"; *scaredy-cat* "*n.* a person who is unreasonably afraid"; *shut-eye* "*n.* sleep; **shutterbug n.* a person whose hobby is photography [SHUTTER (*n.* 4) + BUG[1]]"; **stir-crazy* "*adj*. neurotically affected by long, close confinement, specif. in prison"; *stone-broke* "*adj*. having no money at all; penniless [STONE- + BROKE]"; **teeny-bopper* "*n.* a young teenager, esp. a girl, following the latest fads in fashion, popular music, etc. [< TEEN[1] + -Y[1] + BOP[2] + -ER]"; **with-it* "*adj.* **1**. sophisticated, aware, up-to-date, etc. **2**. fashionable; stylish". A special category of compound words, which are expressive *par excellence*, comprises the (not very numerous) terms that contain the word *ville* as a combining form, e.g. *dullsville*/ *Dulsville* "*n.* a person, condition, etc. that is very dull or boring; *adj*. very dull, boring, tedious, etc.", *squaresville*.

Reduplication (either total, or partial) seems to be a lexical / WF device very popular within the slang(y) vocabulary, e.g. **buddy-buddy* "*adj*. friendly or chummy, often in an effusive or insincere way"; **dum-dum* "*n.* a stupid person; dumbbell"; **razzle-dazzle* "*n.* a flashy display intended to confuse, bewilder, or deceive [redupl. of DAZZLE]"; *ricky-tick* "*adj.***1**. designating, producing, or of popular music, as of the 1920's, with a mechanical, regular beat and fast tempo. **2**. old-fashioned; corny; Also *ricky-ticky* [echoic]"; **super-duper* "*adj*. extremely great, large, impressive, etc.

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

[redupl. of SUPER]"; *_wheeler-dealer_ "_n._ a person who wheels and deals".

A fair proportion of the lexical and metaphoric expressivity furnished by the English slang(y) terms is attributable to such rhyming compounds as: *_boob tube_ "television or a television set"; *_culture vulture_ "a person who professes great interest in culture and the arts; *_eager beaver_ "a person characterized by much, or too much, industry, initiative, or enthusiasm"; *_fag hag_ "a heterosexual woman who prefers the company of and socializes with homosexual men: usually a term of derision or contempt"; _lovey-dovey_ "_adj_. very affectionate, amorous, or sentimental [LOVE + -Y^2 + DOVE + -Y^2]"; *_nitty-gritty_ "_n._ the actual, basic facts, elements, issues, etc. [orig. black scatological slang: rhyming euphemism]".

The examples of _blends_ or _portmanteau words_ (which illustrate the compounding mechanism that Romanians and the French call "cuvinte-sandviş" and "mots-sandwich", respectively) were not very numerous within the corpus studied, e.g. *_gues(s)timate_ "_n._ an estimate based on a guess or conjecture; _vt._ to form a guesstimate [guess + (ES)TIMATE]"; *_slurb_ "_n._ a suburb with poorly planned, cheaply built housing developments [SL(UM) + (SUB)URB]"; (diachronically): _flabbergast_ "_vt._ to make speechless with amazement; astonish [18th-c. slang < ? flab + AGHAST]"; *_grungy_ "_adj_. dirty, messy, disreputable, etc.; unpleasant in any way [? a blend of GRIMY, DINGY & _grunt_, childish euphemism for defecate]".

Affixation by means of suffixes and suffix-like elements/ combining forms is fairly well represented in the lexical corpus under study, e.g. *_baddie/ baddy n._a bad or wicked person, esp. such a character in a play, movie, etc.; *_bananas_ "_adj_.**1.** crazy or eccentric **2.** wildly enthusiastic, excited, etc."; *_mixologist_ "_n._ a bartender [MIX + -_ologist_, as in _biologist_]"; _popper_ "_n._ *__3__. a capsule containing amyl nitrite or, now more commonly, butyl nitrite, used as a stimulant". Unlike suffixation, the words made up with prefixes and prefix-like combining forms do not occur massively in the corpus analyzed, e.g. *_re-up_ "_vi._ [Mil. Slang] to reenlist [RE- + (SIGN) UP]", _megabuck_ "a large, indefinite amount of money". A special, highly expressive category, represented by large numbers in the slang(y) vocabulary of English, is formed by the terms ending in the sui-generis suffix -_o_, e.g. *_boffo_, _cheapo_, _doggo_, _freako_, _pinko_, _sicko_, _sleazo_, _stinko_, *_wacko_, _weirdo_, etc.

Conversion (or change of grammatical class) is not, however, as well represented within the lexical section under study, e.g. _bellyache_ "_vi._ to complain or grumble"; _brain_ "_vt._ **2**. to hit hard on the head". Unlike conversion, the mechanisms of abbreviation and phonetic contraction are very well substantiated in the English slang idiom, e.g. _bumf_ / _bumph_ "_n._ [Brit.] official documents, regarded disparagingly [contr. < _bumfodder_, lit., toilet paper < BUM^2 + FODDER]"; *_bun_^{2} "_n._ a drunken spree; _get a bun on_ to become drunk [prob. contr. < colloq. (Scot) _bung_, drunk (short for _bung-full_, filled to the bung)]"; _scatty_ "_adj_. [Brit. Slang] silly, foolish, or crazy [contr. < ? SCATTERBRAINED]"; *_scram_ "_vi._ to leave or get out, esp. in a hurry: often used in the imperative [contr. of _scramble_]"; *_whosis_ "_n._ any person or thing: jocular substitute for a name forgotten or not known [contr. < _who is this_]".

As a rule, English uses the mechanism of apocope (i.e. the omission of the final sound or sounds of a word), e.g. _abo_ "_n._ [Austral. Slang] an Aborigine: an offensive term"; *_bach_ "_n._ a bachelor; *_beaut_ "_n._ one that is beautiful or superlative: often used ironically [his alibi was a _beaut_]"; *_biz_ "_n._ business [show _biz_]"; *_boob_^{1} "_n._ a stupid or

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

foolish person; *vi.* [Brit. Slang] to make a stupid mistake [< BOOBY]"; **bud*[2] "*n. short for* BUDDY (*n.* 1): used in addressing a man or boy"; **bunk*[2] "*n. short for* BUNKUM"; **coke*[2] "*n.* cocaine [short for COCAINE]"; **con*[5] "*n. short for* CONVICT; *do*[3] "*n. short for* HAIRDO"; **fin*[2] "*n.* a five-dollar bill [shortened < W Yidd *finef*, five (cf. E Yidd *finf*)]"; *grid* "*n. *adj.* having to do with football [a *grid* score]; [short for GRIDIRON]"; *hash*[2] "*n. short for* HASHISH"; *hetero* "*n. short for* HETEROSEXUAL"; *homo*[2] "*n. short for* HOMOSEXUAL"; **hood*[2] "*n. short for* HOODLUM"; *info* "*n. short for* INFORMATION"; *intro* "*n. short for* INTRODUCTION"; *lolly* "*n.* [Brit. Slang] **1**. money. **2**. piece of hard candy [contr. < LOLLYPOP]"; *mitt* "*n.* ***4**. a hand [contr. < MITTEN]"; *mag* "*n. short for* MAGAZINE"; **nabe* "*n.* a neighborhood movie theater [altered < NEIGHB(ORHOOD)]"; *Paki* "*n.* [Brit. & Cdn. Slang] any East Indian person or any dark-skinned person thought to be an East Indian: a term of hostility and contempt [shortened < PAKISTANI]"; *pash*[2] "*n.* an ardent, usually shallow enthusiasm or affection; infatuation. [short for PASSION]"; *prelim* "*n. short for* PRELIMINARY"; *reg* "*n. short for* REGULATION"; **simp* "*n. short for* SIMPLETON"; *stew*[2] "*n. short for* STEWARDESS"; *suss* "*vt.* [Slang, Chiefly Brit., etc. (exc. Cdn)] to figure out; grasp, as a result of investigation, study, or intuition: often with *out* [shortened < SUSPECT]"; *trank* / *tranq* "*n. short for* TRANQUILIZER".

Like shortening through aphesis (e.g. *lude* "*n.* a methaqualone pill [< QUAALUDE]"), syncope is a relatively unproductive WF mechanism, e.g. *bloomer*[1] *n.* [Slang, Chiefly Brit.] a foolish or stupid mistake [short for *blooming error*]; **pix*[2] *n.pl.***1**. motion pictures. **2**. Photographs. [shortened < *pictures*]. Similarly, the acronyms are relatively scarce in the corpus under research, e.g. *bs*, *BS* "[Vulgar Slang] bullshit"; *DA* or *D.A.* "*n.* DUCKTAIL [< *d(uck's) a(ss)*]"; *d.t.'s* "*n.pl.* delirium tremens: usually preceded by *the*: often *D.T.'s*"; *H* "*abbrev.* **6**. heroin"; *OD* "***n.*** an overdose, esp. of a narcotic; *vi.* to take an overdose, esp. a fatal overdose of a narcotic"; *OJ*/*oj* "*n.* orange juice"; *sa/SA* "sex appeal"; *snafu* "(*s(ituation) n(ormal), a(ll) f(ucked) u(p)*)". Interestingly enough, there can occur words formed through false or jocular acronymy, e.g. **yippie* "*n.* any of a group of young people in the U.S. loosely organized in 1968 as radical activists [< *Y(outh) I(nternational) P(arty)*, a supposed, but nonexistent group + (HIP)PIE]".

Things are radically different when it comes to the phonetic alteration/ corruption of the words etymologically related to some of the slang(y) terms analyzed – which is another characteristic feature of English slang, e.g. *all-fired* "*adj.* extreme; complete. *adv.* extremely; completely. [altered < *hell-fired*]"; **baloney* "*n.* **2**. foolish or exaggerated talk or behavior; nonsense *interj.* nonsense! how absurd! [altered < *bologna*, sausage]"; *Chink* "*n.* a Chinese person: a vulgar term of hostility and contempt [prob. altered < CHINA or CHINESE]"; *dago* "*n.* [*also Dago*] a person, often dark-skinned, of Spanish, Portuguese, or, now esp., Italian descent: a vulgar term of hostility and contempt [prob. altered < earlier *diego* < Sp *Diego*, James]"; *dyke*[2] "*n.* a lesbian, esp. one with physical characteristics traditionally thought of as belonging to men: a term of contempt and hostility [contr. < *morphodyke*, *morphodite*, altered < HERMAPHRODITE]"; **foofaraw* "*n.***1**. unnecessary things added for show; frills. **2**. stir or fuss over something trivial [altered < Fr. *fanfaron*, a swaggering < Sp *fanfarrón*: see FANFARONADE]"; *gawp* "*vi.* to stare open-mouthed; gawk or gape [dial., altered < ME *galpen*, to yawn, gape]"; *hunky* "a person from EC Europe; esp., a person of

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

Hungarian extraction: a vulgar term of hostility and contempt: also Sp. *hunkie*, *hunkey* [? altered < HUNGARIAN]"; **razzmatazz* "*n.***1**. lively spirit; excitement. **2**. flashy quality or display; showiness [prob. altered < *razzle-dazzle*]".

Back(-)formation (also called by some *reverse / false derivation*) failed to provide our research with many examples, e.g. **ditz* "*n.* a person thought of as being flighty, eccentric, silly, etc. [back-form. < *ditsy / ditzy* "silly, inane, disorganized, eccentric, etc.]"; *rear*[1] "*n.* ***4.** the buttocks [prob. back-form. < REAR(WARD) [1], REAR (GUARD)]"; *sleaze* "[back-form. < *sleazy* "**1**. flimsy or thin in texture or substance; lacking firmness. **2**. shoddy, shabby, cheap, morally low, etc."]"; *wonk* "*n.***1**. a student who studies very hard; grind; ***2**. any very studious or hard-working person, often, specif., one preoccupied with a particular subject or field [back-form. < *wonky* "shaky, tottery, feeble, etc.".

Such echoic and onomatopoeic formations as the ones listed below proved to be clear, indubitable sources of expressiveness as far as the form of the slang(y) terms belonging to the corpus studied is concerned: *barf vi., vt.*to vomit; **pizazz* or *pizzazz n.* [Colloq.] **1**. energy, vigor, vitality, spirit, etc. **2**. smartness, style, flair, etc. *pizazzy* or *pizzazzy adj*. [orig. echoic of engine roar]; **blooper n.* **1**. a foolish or stupid mistake; blunder. [*bloop*, echoic + -ER]; **chug vt. / *chug-a-lug vt., vi*.to drink in continuous gulps or in a single, long gulp; swill; guzzle [echoic]; *clunk n.* **3**. a dull or stupid person [echoic]; **guff n.***1*. foolish talk; nonsense. **2**. brash or insolent talk [echoic]; **hooey interj., n.* nonsense; bunk [echoic]; *jimjams n.pl.* **1**. delirium tremens. **2**. a nervous feeling; jitters: usually with *the* [arbitrary echoic formation]; **oomph n.***1*. sex appeal. **2**. vigor; energy [echoic of involuntary expression of approval]; *prang vt., vi.* [Slang, Chiefly Brit., etc.]. **1**. to cause (an aircraft, vehicle, etc.) to crash. **2**. to collide with. **3**. to bomb heavily; *n.* [Slang, Chiefly Brit., etc.] **1**. a collision. **2**. a bombing raid [echoic]; **ring-a-ding adj*.wildly exciting; lively. *n.***1**. wild excitement; razzle-dazzle. **2**. a wildly exciting person or thing [echoic]; *whiz* or *whizz vi.* **3**.to urinate. *n.* ***2**. [see WIZ] *a*)a person who is very quick, adroit, or skilled at something; expert [a *whiz* at football] *b*) [Old Slang] something strikingly excellent, attractive, etc. [a *whiz* of a car]. **3**. the act of urinating: often in the phrase *take a whiz* [echoic]; **yuk* "*n.* a loud laugh of amusement, or something causing it".

Similarly, we have come across a number of absolutely remarkable "exotic"/ picturesque forms, e.g. *buttinsky/ buttinski* "*n.* a person who is constantly butting in or meddling in the affairs of other people"; **lollapalooza/ lollapaloosa* "*n.* something or someone very striking or exceptional". Other (notable) picturesque, graphical sound effects are supplied by the terms that begin with the clusters *sch-*, *schm-*, *sl-*, *sn-* (e.g. **schlock*; *schlump*; **schmaltz/ shmaltz*; **schmuck/ shmuck*; **schnook/ shnook*, etc.).

Such words as the ones listed below can be said to be extreme coinages in point of make-up picturesqueness; their fanciful graphicality endows them with obvious expressive powers: **wisenheimer* "*n.* [Slang] a wiseacre or wise guy. Etymology [WIS(E)[1] + *-enheimer*, as in German family names, e.g., *Oppenheimer*, *Altenheimer*]"; **hellacious* "*adj*. [Slang] very great, bad, unbearable, etc. Etymology [prob. fanciful formation from HELL OF A (see HELL) + -ACIOUS]"; **hornswoggle* "*vt.* [Slang] to swindle or hoax; trick Etymology [fanciful coinage]"; **humdinger* "*n.* [Slang] a person or thing considered excellent of its kind Etymology [fanciful coinage]". Even nonsensical words or phonetic segments were used to coin highly expressive terms, e.g. **zilch* "*n.* [Slang] nothing; zero Etymology [nonsense syllable, orig. used in the

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

1930's as name of a character in the magazine *Ballyhoo*]".

The overall conclusion of our modest contribution, based on the above-mentioned analysis, is that, in an absolute manner, but also compared (be it tentatively and rather cursorily) with the situation typical of Romanian, the slang(y) vocabulary of English has a really remarkable typological and semantic-stylistic richness. In a future contribution, we would like to undertake a comparison between English and Romanian as far as the typology of the metaphors involved in the semantic-stylistic "redesignation" effected by the expressive slangy vocabulary, starting from the metaphoric relationship/opposition between the literal and the figurative meanings. The two terms which form the new semantic acceptation can assume such relationships as: *inanimate for animate*, e.g. *aguridă*, *mandarină*, *lăptucă* ("teenage girl"); *smalț*, *tencuială*, *șorici* ("skin"); *inanimate* for *inanimate* e.g. *torță*, *feștilă*, *bomboană*, *funingină* ("țigară"); *animate for animate* e.g. *jandarm* "soție, nevastă"; *animate for inanimate*, e.g. *maimuță* "valiză, servietă"; *concrete for concrete*, e.g. *moară* "ceas", *bicicletă* "ochelari"; *concrete for abstract*, e.g. *chiflă* "greșeală, păcăleală"; *abstract for abstract*, e.g. *reciclare intervenție* "furt, spargere", *interviu* "declarație"; *abstract for concrete*, e.g. *paranteze* "picioare strâmbe", *a boteza* "a lovi"; *positive for positive*, e.g. *senat* "restaurant de lux"; *positive for neutral*, e.g. *sfeștanie* "rugăminte"; *positive for negative*, e.g. *trofeu* "condamnare", *a mirui* "a lovi în cap", *a îmbrățișa* "a fura"; *negative for positive*, e.g. *pieritori* "bani"; *negative for neutral*, e.g. *înhămat* "căsătorit", *coteț* "garsonieră", "locuință"; *negative for negative*, e.g. *sfârtecar* "criminal, asasin"; *neutral for positive*, e.g. *supapă* "șansă", *reflux* "grațiere"; *neutral for neutral*, e.g. *secretar* "complice", *vizionare* "reconstruction"; *prăvălie* "police station/ department"; *neutral for negative*, e.g. *maioneză* "pericol", *termometru* "baston de cauciuc", etc. Therefore, in the near future we intend to conduct a more detailed study of the word-formation mechanisms, the semantic and expressive/metaphoric load, and the stylistic contextualization of the slang terms in the two languages.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Astaloș, George, *Miniglosar argotic*, in *Luceafărul*, 27/1993, p. 8-10.

Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela, Forăscu, Narcisa, *Cuvinte și sensuri*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988.

Collins COBUILD English Dictionary, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1997.

Croitoru-Bobârniche, Nina, *Dicționar de argou al limbii române*, Slobozia, Editura *Armina*, 1996.

Dimitrescu, Florica, *Dicționar de cuvinte recente* (DCR_2), București, Editura Logos, 1997.

Dorcescu, Eugen, *Metafora poetică*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1975.

François-Geiger, Denise, Goudaillier, Jean-Pierre, *Parlures argotiques*, in *Langue francaise*, Larousse, 90/1991, p. 5-10.

Lewin, Esther, & Albert E., *The Wordsworth Thesaurus of Slang*, Cumberland House, 1995.

Lupu, Coman, *Observații asupra argoului studenților*, in LL, 3 /1972, p. 349-354.

Manea, Constantin, Manea, Maria-Camelia, *Termeni argotici*, (*sub*-)*colocviali și familiari proveniți din limbajele "de atelier" și din vocabularele meșteșugurilor tradiționale*, in „Analele Universității din Craiova (Seria științe filologice.

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech

Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)

Limbi străine aplicate)“, Anul III, no. 1-2/2007, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, p. 100-108.
Marouzeau, J., *Lexique de la terminologie linguistique*, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1951.
Moise, Ion, *Studii de lingvistică generală*, Piteşti, Editura Tip-Naste, 1994.
Pană-Dindelegan, Gabriela (coord.), *Aspecte ale dinamicii limbii române actuale*, Bucureşti, Editura Universității din Bucureşti, 2001.
Partridge, Eric, *The Wordsworth Dictionary of the Underworld*, Cumberland House, 1995.
Slave, Elena, *Expresivitatea metaforei lingvistice*, in LR, 4/1966, p. 329-332.
Stoichițoiu-Ichim, Adriana, *Vocabularul limbii române actuale*. *Dinamică, creativitate, influențe*, Bucureşti, Editura *ALL*, 2001.
Tandin, Traian, *Limbajul infractorilor*, Bucureşti, Editura *Paco*, 1993.
Volceanov, George, Doca, Ana-Dolores, *Dicționar de argou al limbii engleze*, Bucureşti, Editura Nemira, 1993.
Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language © Zane Publishing, Inc., 1995, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1994, 1991, 1988

BDD-A3902 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:34 UTC)