

# Comparative Remarks Concerning the Technical and Slang Terms in English and Romanian

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**REZUMAT: Observații comparative privind termenii tehnici și de argou în engleză și în română**

Lucrarea de față își propune să compare și să ilustreze pe scurt o serie de aspecte ale vocabularelor tehnice și de argou din limba engleză, însoțite de remarci contrastive privitoare la situația argoului românesc. În esență, comunicarea de față susține faptul că există o relație invers proporțională între argou sau *slang* și vocabularele tehnice (și științifice) în ceea ce privește expresivitatea și opacitatea, atunci când comparăm situația din limba engleză și cea din română.

Calitatea metaforică a celor mai mulți dintre termenii tehnici, precum și a termenilor de argou ori a celor subcolocviali este strâns legată de analizabilitatea sau referențialitatea termenilor respectivi, iar termenii tehnici propriu-ziși ar trebui să fie caracterizați prin sens propriu și prin transparență/analizabilitate.

Cea mai mare parte a materialului analizat a fost selectată din bazele de date *online* ce înregistrează termeni din tehnica informaticii și a calculatorului, care formează, se poate spune, un tip modern de argou sau jargon. S-a analizat și ilustrat tipologia acestora. S-a făcut și o trimitere comparativă la acel lexic, relativ opac (fiind tehnic), constituit din adjectivele culte (din limbile latină și greacă), asociate unor cuvinte neoașe ale limbii engleze.

Caracteristica cea mai frapantă a termenilor tehnici propriu-ziși, manifestată de lexicul românesc, stă în faptul că, spre deosebire de împrumuturile din engleză incluse în vocabularele tehnice mai recente (de exemplu, *chip/chip, software/soft*), aceste cuvinte sunt opace din punct de vedere semantic, deoarece provin, în majoritate, din termeni și rădăcini lexicale eline sau latinești. Concluzia finală a lucrării este că în limba română argoul este slab reprezentat, în comparație cu vocabularele pletorice de argou din limba engleză.

**CUVINTE-CHEIE:** *vocabular tehnic, argou, limba engleză, limba română, opac(itate), expresivitate, tehnică a calculatorului și informatică, termeni culti*



**ABSTRACT**

The aim of the present paper is to briefly compare and illustrate a number of aspects of the technical and slang vocabularies in English, with contrastive glimpses at the situation of Romanian slang. The main contention of the present contribution goes to the effect that there is a reverse relation between slang or argot and technical (and scientific) vocabularies in point of expressiveness and opaqueness, when the situation in English and Romanian is compared. The metaphor-related quality of most technical, as well as slang or subcolloquial terms is closely related to the analysability or referentiality of the respective terms, as technical terms proper should be characterized by direct meaning and transparency. The bulk of the material analysed was selected from online databases that gloss computer technology terms, which allegedly form a modern type of slang. Their typology was analysed and illustrated. A comparative reference was made to the type of relatively opaque (because technical) lexicon formed by the learned (Latin and Greek) adjectives associated with various vernacular words of the English language. The most conspicuous feature of the technical terms proper evinced by Romanian lexicon is that, unlike the English terms included by more recent technical vocabularies (e.g. chip, software), they are semantically opaque, originating, for their major part, in Greek or Latin terms and lexical roots. The final conclusion of the paper is that Romanian slang is under-represented if compared to the plethoric slang vocabularies of the English language.

**KEYWORDS:** *technical and slang vocabulary, English, Romanian, opaque, expressiveness, computer technology, learned terms*



**RÉSUMÉ : Remarques comparatives concernant les termes techniques et d'argot en anglais et en roumain**

Le présent ouvrage a pour but de comparer et d'illustrer brièvement certains aspects des vocabulaires techniques et de l'argot en anglais, accompagnés de remarques contrastives concernant la situation de l'argot roumain. Pour l'essentiel, l'étude affirme qu'il existe une relation inverse entre l'argot ou *slang* et les vocabulaires techniques (et scientifiques) en termes d'expressivité et d'opacité, lorsque l'on compare la situation en anglais et en roumain. La qualité métaphorique de la plupart des termes techniques et des termes d'argot ou de ceux familiers est étroitement liée à l'analysabilité ou à la référentialité des respectifs termes, et les termes techniques devraient être caractérisés par le sens propre et par la transparence / l'analysabilité. La plupart du matériau analysé a été sélectionné à partir de bases de données en ligne qui enregistrent les termes de l'informatique et de l'ordinateur, qui constituent, on peut dire, un argot ou un jargon moderne. On a analysé et illustré

leur typologie. On a fait aussi une référence comparative à ce vocabulaire, relativement opaque (étant technique), composé des adjectifs cultes (latins et grecs), associés à des mots véritablement anglais. La caractéristique la plus frappante des termes techniques proprement-dits, se manifestant dans le lexique roumain, c'est que, à la différence des emprunts de l'anglais inclus dans les derniers vocabulaires techniques (par exemple, *cip/chip* 'puce', *software/soft* 'logiciel'), ces mots sont opaques du point de vue sémantique, car ils proviennent, pour la plupart, des termes et des racines lexicales helléniques ou latines. La conclusion finale de cet ouvrage est qu'en roumain l'argot est faiblement représenté, par rapport à la pléthore de vocabulaires argotiques de l'anglais.

**MOTS-CLEFS :** *vocabulaire technique, argot, langue anglaise, langue roumaine, opaque, expressivité, technologie de l'ordinateur, termes cultes*



## 1. Introductory



**VERY MUCH LIKE OTHER**, more or less extensive, sections of the lexicon of natural languages, slang terms, no less than technical (and scientific) terms, constantly press for recognition in the realm of general linguistic usage – with changing odds, of course.

There is an older, yet still valid, remark that, in English, the metaphor-related description, i.e. quality, of most (technical as well as slang or sub-colloquial) terms is closely related to the (relative) analysability/referentiality of the terms in question. Let us just think of such technical words, now widely recognized and used internationally, as *chip, hardware, mouse, software, worm*.

**1.1.** In fact, scores of such terms date back to the early period of computer technology, when they were coined based on semantic (i.e. **metaphorical** or **metonymical**) transfer, which was, more often than not, underlain by objective, concrete, direct similarity or congruence.

To substantiate that claim, we started by making a selection of computer technology terms derived from everyday life, which we culled from the *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus. Electronic version, WordPerfect*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1993 (COLL):

*boot* "short for *bootstrap* (sense 4a): a technique for loading the first few program instructions into a computer main store to enable the rest of the program to be introduced from an input device";

*branch* "Also called: *jump*. a departure from the normal sequence of programmed instructions into a separate program area";

*bubble memory* “a method of storing high volumes of data by the use of minute pockets of magnetism (bubbles) in a semiconducting material: the bubbles may be caused to migrate past a read head or to a buffer area for storage”;

*bucket* “a unit of storage on a direct-access device from which data can be retrieved”;

*buffer* “a memory device for temporarily storing data”; *core* “a. a ferrite ring used in a computer memory to store one bit of information. b. the whole memory of a computer when made up of a number of such rings; (as modifier): core memory”;

*daisywheel* “a component of a computer printer in the shape of a wheel with many spokes that prints characters using a disk with characters around the circumference as the print element. Also called: *printwheel*”;

*deck* “Also called: *pack*. a collection of punched cards relevant to a particular program”;

*drum* “a rotating cylindrical device on which data may be stored for later retrieval: now mostly superseded by disks. See *disk* (sense 2)”;

*garbage* “invalid data”;

*handshaking* “communication between a computer system and an external device, by which each tells the other that data is ready to be transferred, and that the receiver is ready to accept it”;

*hopper* “a device for holding punched cards and feeding them to a card punch or card reader”;

*hot zone* “a variable area towards the end of a line of text that informs the operator that a decision must be taken as to whether to hyphenate or begin a new line”;

*infect* “to affect or become affected with a computer virus”;

*joystick* “a lever by means of which the movement of a cursor on a screen may be controlled”;

*logic bomb* “an unauthorized program that is inserted into a computer system; when activated it interferes with the operation of the computer”;

*loop* “a series of instructions in a program, performed repeatedly until some specified condition is satisfied”;

*mouse* “a hand-held device used to control the cursor movement and select computing functions without keying”;

*neurochip* “a semiconductor chip designed for use in an electronic neural network. Also called: *neural chip*”;

*number crunching* “the large-scale processing of numerical data”;

*overflow* “a condition that occurs when numeric operations produce results too large to store in the register available”;

*patch* “to correct or improve (a program) by adding a small set of instructions”;

*scratch file* "a temporary store for use during the execution of a program";

*sentinel* "a character used to indicate the beginning or end of a particular block of information";

*single thread* "the execution of an entire task from beginning to end without interruption";

*tractorfeed* "the automatic movement of a continuous roll of edge-perforated paper through the platen of the printer";

*Trojan Horse* "a bug inserted into a program or system designed to be activated after a certain time or a certain number of operations";

*unbundle* "to separate (hardware from software) for sales purposes";

*vaccine* "a piece of software designed to detect and remove computer viruses from a system";

*virus* "an unauthorized program that inserts itself into a computer system and then propagates itself to other computers via networks or disks; when activated it interferes with the operation of the computer";

*volatile* " (of a memory) not retaining stored information when the power supply is cut off";

*worm* "a program that duplicates itself many times and prevents its destruction. It often carries a logic bomb or virus" (COLL).

It will be useful to note that, among the terms we have selected, only *one* is recognized and glossed by (COLL) as a slang term (having to do with the world of computers and IT), i.e. *vanilla* "*Computer technol. slang. ordinary.*" One may conclude that the rest of the above terms make up a specialized lingo (or jargon "slang or jargon peculiar to a particular group, esp. (formerly) a group of thieves" - COLL) rather than slang or argot, since their technicality as well as in-mate sense qualify them for the status of *techspeak*, or *shoptalk* (i.e. terms of "workshop talk"). Incidentally, some Anglo-American lexicological sources paradoxically include such *shoptalk* terms in the class of *argot*.

**1.2.** If we briefly analyse the situation one comes across in Romanian, the most salient feature we can note will be that, unlike English, technical terms are (semantically) opaque, hence unanalysable. In a majority of cases, they originate in Greek or Latin terms or lexical roots and stems. It should be added that those source terms originally had a clear metaphorical tinge about them, thus aptly illustrating the dictum that, as a rule, *learned words have become popular* (see the study by the same title by James B. Greenough & George Lyman Kittredge, in *Words and their Ways in English Speech*, Macmillan, 1901, *apud* William C Doster (ed.), *First Perspectives on Language*, American Book Company, New York, 1963), e.g. *element* (cf. Greek *stoicheia*

“letters of the alphabet”, translated into Latin by the word *elementa* “letters”, sing. *elementum*), *influence* (from Medieval Latin *influentia* “emanation of power from the stars” < Latin *influere* “to flow into” < *fluere* “to flow”), *passive* (< Latin *passivus* “susceptible of suffering” < *pati* “to undergo”), *photograph*, *photography* (< *photo-*, supposed stem of Greek *φως*, *phos* “light”, + *-graph* < Greek *γραφειν* (*graphein*) “to write”), *quantity* (< Old French *quantité* < Latin *quantitas* “extent, amount” < *quantus* “how much”), *spirit* (< Old French *esperit* < Latin *spiritus* “breath, spirit” < *spirare* “to breathe”), *temperament* (< Latin *temperamentum* “a mixing in proportion” < *temperare* “to temper”), etc.

1.2.1. Similarly, though rather collaterally, we can refer to specialized/ technical terms (in English, to start with). Let us then address the quite bulky category of the learned terms, representing the related adjectives forming the semantic counterparts of various nouns (or, rarely, verbs). Such terms largely belong to an internationalized lexicon of a cultural (and arguably technical) type, e.g. *alimentary* – cf. *food*, *animate* – cf. *life*, *annual* – cf. *year*, *aquiline* – cf. *eagle*, *belligerent* – cf. *war*, *cardiac* – cf. *heart*, *citric*, *citrine*, *citrous* – cf. *lemon*, *corporeal* – cf. *body*, *culinary* – cf. *to cook*, *dental* – cf. *tooth*, *digital* – cf. *finger*, *earthquake* – cf. *seismic*, *ecclesiastical* – cf. *church*, *episcopal* – cf. *bishop*, *filial* – cf. *child*, *floral* – cf. *flower*, *fraternal* – cf. *brother*, *frontal* – cf. *forehead*, *horticultural* – cf. *garden*, *insular* – cf. *island*, *lingual* – cf. *tongue*, *littoral* – cf. *beach/coast/shore*, *manual* – cf. *hand*, *mental* – cf. *mind*, *mural*, *parietal* – cf. *wall*, *natal* – cf. *birth*, *nominal* – cf. *name*, *oriental* – cf. *east*, *Paschal* – cf. *Easter*, *pastoral*, *rural* – cf. *country(side)*, *pectoral* – cf. *chest*, *pharmaceutical* – cf. *drug*, *renal* – cf. *kidney*, *solar* – cf. *sun*, *spatial* – cf. *space*, *tactile* – cf. *touch*, *temporal* – cf. *time*, *terrestrial* – cf. *land*, *teutonic* – cf. *German*, *Germany*, *Venetian* – cf. *Venice*, *visual* – cf. *sight*, *voluntary* – cf. *will*. Any native speaker of English (or Romanian) having a decent level of education will normally understand them.

However, there are a fair number of learned terms that are impossible to “decode” for the average English speaking layman (e.g. *butyraceous* – cf. *butter*, *capitular* – cf. *chapter* “meeting, congregation, body”, *ferial* – cf. *holiday*, *gluteal* – cf. *buttock*, *ligneous* – cf. *wood* “substance”, *papyraceous* – cf. *paper*, *pavonine* – cf. *peacock*, *pedal* – cf. *foot*, *percoid* – cf. *perch*, *piceous* – cf. *pitch* “heavy dark viscid substance”, *psittacine* – cf. *parrot*, *sartorial* – cf. *tailor*, *Sinitic* – cf. *China*, *tumescens* – cf. *swelling*, *uxorial* – cf. *wife*, *vulpine/vulpecular* – cf. *fox*, *xanthous* – cf. *yellow*).

Most of such terms evince Greek or Latin origin, e.g. *fenestral* – cf. *window*, *hebdomadal* – cf. *week*, *lupine* – cf. *wolf*, *sagacious* – cf. *wisdom*, *sylovan* – cf. *wood/forest*; there are but very few exceptions to the above rule, e.g. *nacre*, *tsunami*. Naturally, a native speaker of Romanian will find a fair proportion

of such Latinate words quite transparent from a semantic standpoint (e.g. *fenestral, lupine, vulpine*).

Again naturally, the native speaker of English will meet considerable semantic opaqueness, e.g. *alvine* – cf. *intestine*, *anserine* – cf. *goose*, *aural* – cf. *ear*, *auroral* – cf. *dawn*, *aurous*, *auric* – cf. *gold*, *avian* – cf. *bird*, *brachial* – cf. *arm*, *Cartesian* – cf. *Descartes*, *cervine* – cf. *deer*, *corvine* – cf. *crow*, *decanal* – cf. *dean*, *diurnal* – cf. *day*, *fascicular* – cf. *bundle*, *leporine* – cf. *hare*, *mendacious* – cf. *lie*, *Monegasque* – cf. *Monaco*, *taurine* – cf. *bull*; or even absolute semantic opaqueness, e.g. most of the above-mentioned terms (*butyraceous, gluteal, pavonine, pedal, piceous, psittacine, uxorial*), as well as terms related to proper names such as *Galwegian* – cf. *Galloway*, *Glaswegian* – cf. *Glasgow*, *Lucan* – cf. *Luke*, etc.

The occurrence rate of such terms in the actual usage of the English language is very low, e.g. *arboreal* – cf. *tree*, *argent* – cf. *silver*, *avuncular* – cf. *uncle*, *carnal* – cf. *flesh*, *caudal* – cf. *tail*, *crepuscular* – cf. *twilight/dusk*, *cryptic* – cf. *secret*, *custodial* – cf. *guard*, *diluvial* – cf. *flood*, *duodecimal* – cf. *twelve*, *fiduciary* – cf. *trust*, *filial* – cf. *son*, *fortuitous* – cf. *chance*, *Gallic* – cf. *France*, *gubernatorial* – cf. *governor*, *Hellenic* – cf. *Greece*, *inimical* – cf. *enemy*, *itinerant* – cf. *travel*, *monastic* – cf. *monk*, *onerous* – cf. *burden*, *ovine* – cf. *sheep*, *parochial* – cf. *parish*, *putrid* – cf. *rot*, *seminal* – cf. *seed*, *sepulchral* – cf. *grave*, *sinuous* – cf. *curve*, *spousal* – cf. *spouse*, *verdant* – cf. *grass*, *verdant* – cf. *green*, *vesical* – cf. *bladder*, *viceregal* – cf. *viceroy*.

Typically and indisputably, they are (highly) specialized terms, which the general public is not supposed to be acquainted with, e.g. *aestival* – cf. *summer*, *aqueous* – cf. *water*, *campestral* – cf. *field*, *cephalic* – cf. *head*, *contrapuntal* – cf. *counterpoint*, *corneous* – cf. *horn*, *cupric*, *cuprous* – cf. *copper*, *decimal* – cf. *ten*, *equine* – cf. *horse*, *febrile* – *fever*, *fluvial* – cf. *river*, *gastric* – cf. *stomach*, *gingival* – cf. *gum*, *glacial* – cf. *ice*, *hair* – cf. *pileous*, *hepatic* – cf. *liver*, *labial* – cf. *lip*, *leonine* – cf. *lion*, *lumbar* – cf. *loin*, *millenary* – cf. *thousand*, *nasal* – cf. *nose*, *nocturnal* – cf. *night*, *nominal* – cf. *noun*, *olfactory* – cf. *smell*, *paludal* – cf. *marsh*, *piscine* – cf. *fish*, *porcine* – cf. *pig*, *prandial* – cf. *meal*, *radical* – cf. *root*, *saccharine* – cf. *sugar*, *spectral* – cf. *ghost*, *testimonial* – cf. *witness*, *tonorial* – cf. *hairdresser*, *umbilical* – cf. *navel*, *ungular* – cf. *hoof*, *vernal* – cf. *spring*, *visceral* – cf. *gut*, *vitreous* – cf. *glass*. Such terms can be said to bring about the need for intralingual translation: we can even imagine lexical drills or rephrasing exercises being contrived by teachers for more advanced pupils or groups, e.g. “If something happens in springtime, it can be referred to as a(n) \_\_\_\_ event” [(a) *vernal*, (b) *aestival*, (c) *hibernal*, (d) *crepuscular*], “If a treatment is post-prandial, it means you have to take that drug \_\_\_\_” [(a) *by mouth*, (b) *at one draught*, (c) *after lunch*, (d) *after sleep*, (e) *before lunch*], or “Rephrase the following sentence so that its meaning stays the same: *That incredibly ugly man looked like a pig*. ↔ *That incredibly ugly man had a p\_\_ face*” [*porcine*].

Actually, our own translating experience faced us with cases of such (highly or strictly) specialized related adjectives, when only a rare etymological hunch could help us out of the trouble: specifically, the adjective *murinic* (*cells*), which is derived from Latin *mus, muris* “mouse”.

## 2. Technical vs. slang terms

In the present contribution, we intend to compare, be it cursorily, some aspects of the technical and slang vocabularies in English, while taking contrastive glimpses at the situation of Romanian slang. It is the main contention of the present paper that the connection holding between slang or *argot* (with the associated metaphorical, expressive load, which seems to represent its very essence), and technical (and scientific) vocabularies occurs in reverse proportion in English and Romanian. In Anglo-American usage, the technical, specialized domains tend to generate inmate codes that closely resemble slang/*argot* proper (codes that naturally and essentially involve “untranslatability”, i.e. incomprehensibility for outsiders).

Contrarily, in Romanian many such technical terms have been recently borrowed from the English speaking area (e.g. *soft, chip, a buta, butare*) and have gradually ceased to be “incomprehensible” for the public at large. On the other hand, and interestingly enough, terms that were originally part of the various specialized vocabularies, as well as a number of associated word formation mechanisms/rules, procedures and patterns have come to be used as lexical materials and “casting dies”, respectively, for coining new slang or *argot* terms (e.g. *cimitirol, popaverină*, etc.).

The slang (and slangy) vocabulary of Romanian does contain technical terms, no less than terms derived from “shoptalk” and traditional handicraft vocabularies (see Manea & Manea, 2007, Eng. ‘Slang, slangy and (sub)colloquial terms originating in the “shoptalk” and traditional handicraft vocabularies’), whose obvious, undeniable expressiveness is generated by the graphicality of the source terms, used in their figurative (vs. direct) meaning. In the above-mentioned contribution, we stated that “*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.*” Such examples were provided as *acut, a anestezia, antene, boxe, brand, colimator, a degresa, ecologist, ecran, falset, flotă, a glisa, hemogramă, incintă, labirint, laminor, luxat, malaxoare, mufă, mulaj, orbită, oxidat, paralel, parapantă, perfuzie, profundor, recital, a se reseta, satelit, scenariu, a skipa, solvabil, stronțisor, a teleporta, torpilat, tranzistor, a trotila, vernisaj*. In that paper we concluded that the typological, semantic and stylistic richness of the slang, slangy and (sub)colloquial vocabulary of the English language is

absolutely remarkable, and Romanian can hardly find a match to it. It is quite apparent that intrinsic expressiveness is a by-product of the amazing *metaphoric bent* of slang terms, mainly in English, which, it should be added, presents a far richer variety, with “hyper-specialized distinctions between, on the one hand, *slang*, *jargon* and *techspeak*, and, on the other hand, the various *subcultures* those idioms represent (e.g. bikers, surfers, rock fans, hackers, etc.).” (*Ibidem*)

### 3. Remarks on the typology of IT slang

Here are the main remarks addressing various matters of form noticeable in the lexical batch of technical (slang or jargon) terms (viz. slang words having to do with computers, electronics, technology) selected from <<http://online.slangdictionary.com>>, which we have analyzed from various lexicological perspectives.

To begin with, we should note that the data base we consulted includes, in addition to individual terms, items which come as whole phrases, and may be of the coordinating type, e.g. *bondage and discipline*, *flame bait*, *smoke and mirrors*, or of the subordinating type, e.g. *architecture astronaut*, *bit bucket*, *brain dump*, *bread crumb*, *brute force*, *dead air*, *Easter egg*, *in the background*, *Real Soon Now*, as well as whole (VP) syntagms, e.g. *considered harmful*, or else whole sentences, e.g. *look and feel*, *tickle a bug*, *reinvent the wheel*, *phase of the moon*, *your mileage may vary* (“a disclaimer given along with advice, meaning roughly, “It worked for me, but may not work in all cases.”), etc. In addition, there are quite numerous phrasal verbs, e.g. *blow away*, *blow up*, *geek out*, *hack on*, *hack together*, *page in*, *page out*, *pound on*, *spec out* “to write a *spec* (specification).” The main, or most remarkable **Word Formation Rules** at work in the terminological set analyzed were noticed to be:

#### I. **Compounding**; compounds may come either as:

(1) solid-spelt coinages, e.g. *abandonware*, *adware*, *bloatware*, *blogosphere*, *blogroll*, *careware*, *charityware*, *crippleware*, *dogfood*, *doorstop*, *egosurf*, *Evercrack*, *footprint* “the typical amount of computing resources taken up by a computer program” [From the amount of floor or desk area taken up by a piece of equipment], *freeware*, *handwave*, *guiltware*, *malware*, *meatspace*, *postcardware*, *rathole*, *shareware*, *shelfware*, *shovelware*, *spyware* “software that lets third parties monitor a user’s activities and personal data” [From *spy* + *software*], *webspeak* “the words and phrases that are (mostly) unique to communication on the world wide web. (*LOL*, *ROFL*, *fail*, *win*, etc.),” *work-around* “a method of accomplishing something that is otherwise prevented due to a bug; a “fix” for a bug that actually just hides it”;

(2) hyphenated terms, e.g. *bug-for-bug compatible*, *click-bait*, *fat-finger*, *signal-to-noise ratio*, *special-case*;

(3) terms spelt in isolation, i.e. with an intermediate blank, e.g. *eye candy*, *feature creep*, *fencepost error*, *fudge factor*, *guerilla testing*, *gorilla arm*, *link farm*, *link rot*, *real estate*, *script kiddie*, *smoke test*, *sock puppet*, *software rot*, *spaghetti code*, *spam account*, *splash screen*, *swap space* "temporary storage space used then moving or reconfiguring a room", *television bum* "a person without cable television", *walled garden* "a set of information services available to subscribers only. In the past, content available only via America Online was used as a prominent example," *wall time* "the "real world" time of day – i.e. the time of day displayed by the clock on the wall – rather than other measures of time, such as a computer's current uptime; the amount of time taken for some task to be completed, as measured in normal human time. (This is different than some measures of time in computing)." (<<http://onlineslangdictionary.com>>)

Here are some other types of compounds which we could note:

- **Rhyming** compounds, e.g. *gender bender* also called "gender mender" and "sex changer"." – *gender mender*.
- Compounds based on **acronyms**, e.g. *E-bling*.
- **Blends/portmanteau** words, e.g. *automagically*, *backronym*, *beer mat*, *celebrity*, *craplet/crapplet*, *hacktivism*, *heisenbug*, *Itanic*, *nastygram*, *netiquette*, *sneakernet*, *spamvertize*, *technotard*, *Twittequette* "rules governing socially acceptable behavior on Twitter. From "Twitter" + "etiquette"," *widget* "a single element in a graphical user interface. For example: a button, tab, or text entry box. Possibly from "WIndow gaDGET."; a thing. Used to stand in for a real object, which may or may not have a name."
- Additionally, there are a number of rather special, very interesting blends/portmanteau words, e.g. *vlog* "video log, running series of short videos posted online; to upload short video clips to a personal or news site."

**II.** Words formed by means of **derivation**, i.e either by: (1) **suffixation**, e.g. *ad-hockery*, *griever*, *hacker*, *lapper* "laptop", *lossy*, *lurker*, *screamer*, *showstopper*, *spoiler*, *toaster*, or by (2) **prefixation**, e.g. *Astroturfing*, *defriend* See also *unfriend*, *dehose*.

- A special subcategory is represented by the terms formed by means of the suffix *-o*. *aggro*, *algo*, *modulo* "except for" (cf. older, colloquial terms of more general use such as *medico* "Informal. a doctor or medical student," *wino* "drunkard," etc.).

**III.** The number of the terms coined by various **abbreviative** mechanisms is really astonishing in the so-called slang of computer technology and science, and IT.

● **Acronyms proper**, e.g. *BFFL*, *DL*, *GLHF*, *GTFO*, *GTG*, *IANAL*, *IFLY*, *IKR*, *IYDLIGTFO*, *LMAO*, *LMBO*, *MMORPG*, *MYOB*, *NBD*, *NOYB*, *pip*, *ROFLMAO*, *ROTFL*, *ROTFLMFAO*, *RTFM*, *RTM*, *SCNR*, *SFSG*, *SFW*, *SMDH* "acronym for "shaking my damn head." See also *SMH*, *SMFH*," *SMFH* "acronym for "shaking my fucking head." See also *SMH*, *SMDH*," *SMH* "acronym for "shaking my head"," *STFU* "acronym for "shut the fuck up"." Used mainly in computer-based conversation (instant messaging, email, text messaging, etc.), *STFW* "acronym for "search the fucking web"." An aggravated response to someone asking a question that can easily be answered by a web search. Also see *RTFM*, *sth* "something," *SYAU*, *TAY* "acronym for "talk amongst yourselves"." *TBH* "to be honest," *TBQH* "to be quite honest," *TIA*, *TMK*, *TOS*, *TTBOMK* "acronym for "to the best of my knowledge"," *TTFN* "acronym for "ta-ta for now" (i.e. "goodbye for now"). Used mainly in computer-based conversation (instant messaging, email, text messaging, etc.)," *TTYL* "acronym for "talk to you later." Used in text-based communication (text messaging, IM, etc.)," *TW* "acronym for "trigger warning." Used in web-based forum titles as a warning that the contents of a post may trigger people's compulsions, for example: overeating, bulimia, and cutting; to include a "trigger warning" in the subject of a post.", *TY* "acronym for "thank you," *UL*, *WAYD* "what are you doing," *WDYT* "what do you think," *WHYD* "acronym for "what have you done"," *WTF* "acronym for "what the fuck?" Originally used exclusively in text-based communication (text messaging, online chat, etc.) this term is now also spoken." *WTG* "acronym for "way to go"," *WTMI* "Way TMI = way too much information, when something is really disgusting," *YANAL* "acronym for "you are not a lawyer." Derived from *IANAL*," *YHBT* "acronym for "you have been trolled," i.e. you have fallen victim to an internet troll.", *YKWIM* "acronym for "you know what I mean.,"" *YMMV* "Acronym for "your mileage may vary." Used mainly in computer-based conversation (instant messaging, email, text messaging, etc.)," *yt?* ""You there?" i.e. "Are you there?" An instant messaging acronym," *YW* "acronym for "you're welcome," *zomfg* ""Oh my fucking God." Expresses a greater level of amazement or elation than the standard *OMFG*," *zomg* ""Oh my God." Expresses a greater level of amazement or elation than the standard *OMG*. Like all words, can be used either sincerely or not sincerely."

● **Phonetic** (i.e. sound-to-spelling) acronyms: *biffle*.

- More special acronyms: *NIH syndrome* "a "syndrome" involving a company's hesitance or refusal to use any idea or product it didn't invent or create. *NIH* is an acronym for "not invented here"."
- Abbreviation of whole phrases, or even whole sentences, e.g. *shmup* "abbreviated form of "shoot 'em up"."
- Graphic/spelling-to-sound abbreviations, e.g. *dr, srsly* "seriously," *txt* "text; to "text" - i.e. send a text message," *fldr, tl*.
- Graphical sound-to-spelling forms (in mock-imitation of would-be foreign pronunciations): *warez* "pirated commercial software" - *warez d00d* "a member of the computer subculture which trades in illegal copies of copyrighted software."
- **Clipping** (mainly apocope), e.g. *gig* "a gigabyte", *monte, nuke, vid* "video."
- A special case of phonetic transposition is represented by phonetically allusive coinages: *upboat* "'upvote." From Reddit."

#### IV. Other WF mechanisms noticeable in the batch under analysis:

- **Metathesis**, e.g. *pron* "porn."
- **Eponymy**, e.g. *Godwin's Law, MacGyver, nerf* "in an update or sequel to a video game, to make a weapon weak or weaker, such that it's like a Nerf gun," *pointy-haired, rick roll/Rick roll, Rick roll* "When you click on a link on the web and the link takes you to a site other than where you had anticipated it to go.; to trick people into clicking a link on the World Wide Web that (unexpectedly) directs to a page that plays Rick Astley's "Never Gonna Give You Up" music video."
- Coining false, imaginative proper names, e.g. *Slashdot*.
- **Onomatopoeic** coinage, e.g. *Blargh, ping, whiz-bang* "impressive or flashy. Typically used to refer to new technology."
- Coined, or (relatively) fresh, novel onomatopoeas, e.g. *woot* "an expression of excitement or joy, used mostly by computer aficionados. Also spelled *w00t*. (That is - using zeroes rather than oh's.) Typically the "w" is written in lower case. Though the term was originally limited to use on the Internet, it is now used in speech." (Origin: Among other etymologies, in "Dungeons and Dragons" and similar games, *woot* may be a contraction of *wow*"), *yow* "a general exclamation."
- Terms **coined analogically** *prepend* "to add something to the beginning; "prefix." The computing variant of "append"."
- **Punning analogy**, e.g. *write-only code* "source code that is extremely difficult to understand." (Origin: This term is a play on "read-only memory.")

- **Personal** coinages, e.g. *meme* "something that spreads through the internet in the same way that a virus spreads between organisms" [Coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. A "meme," like a "gene," spreads between people within a culture.]

- **Arbitrary** coinage, e.g. *pwn* "Alternate spelling of own."

- Terms coined based on (describing) gestures, e.g. *three-finger salute* "the pressing of the "Alt" key + the "Ctrl" key + the "Del" key to reboot or unfreeze a PC computer."

- Highly **imaginative** coinages, for which it is very difficult to establish a clear etymology, e.g. *cruft*, *dongle* "an electronic device that accompanies a software item to prevent the unauthorized copying of programs," *foo*, *grep*, *hack*, *horked* "broken; ruined," *kludge/kluge*, *munge* "to transform data in an irreversible way," *own*, *tweep* "a Twitter user.", *punt* "to delay solving a problem or implementing a feature until later; to hand off responsibility for fulfilling a work-item to another person, group, portion of a computer system, etc.; to kick someone off of a network connection. For example: a chat room," *spoof* "to falsify electronic communication."

A case apart is represented by the term *to zap* "to empower, excite or electrify; zapping someone is cussing them out.; to erase, to damage ("fry") an electronic component with electricity; to shock with electricity; to microwave; to write "zap" on someone's hand as a part of a game that has many variants," *zap* "(tr) Computer technol to clear from the screen; to erase"; the etymology of the term as given by COLL is: "[of imitative origin]."

There are several problems with the **etymology** of such terms as *spam* "unsolicited advertisements sent in bulk via e-mail; advertisements posted in any inappropriate place on the internet (blog comments, discussion forums, etc.); multiple copies of an identical or nearly-identical message sent to a large number of internet discussion groups; off-topic messages posted to an internet forum; multiple copies of a message sent to a discussion forum; to send or post "spam" as described in the noun senses" (Origin: From a Monty Python sketch about Spam. Some Vikings are singing a song about Spam so loudly that no one else can communicate).

V. We could also note some interesting issues of **semantics**:

- Coinages **based on metaphor**: *avatar*, *barf*, *batch mode*, *batch up*, *bells and whistles*, *boot*, *brick*, *bug*, *burner*, *chrome*, *clobber*, *coaster*, *cracker*, *crash*, *flame*, *hosed*, *leech*, *loot* ("Loot" is valuable items that defeated monsters leave behind), *offline*, *out-of-band*, *pathological*, *plumbing*, *power*, *surface* "in a computing user interface, to present something to the user. Often used in reference to settings," *thrash*, *time sink* "a project that is capable of consuming a prac-

tically unlimited amount of time," *troll* "a person who posts to an internet discussion group or chat room with the sole purpose of disrupting it.; a post to a computer discussion made only to disrupt it," *twiddle*, *under the hood*, *wart* "a small piece of a design that doesn't work as well as the rest of the design," *wedged* "of a piece of software, stuck and unable to proceed without human intervention," *zombie* "a computer whose security has been compromised, and is then used to perform computer misdeeds, such as sending spam or performing denial-of-service attacks."

- Examples of multiple WF mechanisms/rules and semantic shift, occurring among the different meanings of the same words, e.g. *wow* "(1) "World of Warcraft." A video-game; (2) to impress."

- Semantic transfer from the class of the **learned** (i.e. Latinate or Hellenic) terms, e.g. *pessimial* "as bad as possible. The opposite of "optimal"."

- Terms of **general** referentiality, e.g. *system* "a computer system.; a stereo system."

- **Synonyms**, more often than not forming synonymic series, e.g. *sex changer*. Also called "gender bender" and "gender mender," *nagware*. Also see *annoyware* and *crippleware*," *interweb* "'internet," *propeller head* "a geek," *swap* – *swap out* "see *swap*"; synonyms sharing virtually the same form: *S/N ratio* "abbreviated form of *signal-to-noise ratio*. "SNR" is also used."

VI. In point of **expressiveness**, we were able to note:

- **Jocular** terms, e.g. *bogometer*, *bogosity*, *bogon*, *code monkey*, *Google juice*.

- **Phonetically** jocular terms, e.g. *compooter* "a computer that malfunctions frequently. See *poo*" (Based on *computer*).

- Jocular terms that mockingly allude to (would-be) **theorems**, e.g. *Infinite-Monkey Theorem*, *KISS Principle*, etc.

- **Ironical** coinages: *suitably small* "used for commentary on something that has been overstated," *Swiss-Army chainsaw* "a tool that is very versatile but isn't easy to use (Note: The programming language Perl is often called a Swiss-Army chainsaw)"; allusive irony: *vaporware* "product(s) announced far before any release (even beta) has been made. There is usually additional suspicion that the product will never be released, for example: the company having a history of announcing products that are never released," *Winblows* "pejorative name for Microsoft Windows," etc.

- **Highly imaginative** coinages, e.g. *wetware* "The human nervous system, as opposed to computer hardware or software", *whack-a-mole* "the practice of repeatedly getting rid of something, only to have more of that thing appear. For example, deleting spammers' e-mail accounts, closing pop-up windows

in a web browser, etc.” (Origin: From the carnival/arcade game that involves hitting mechanical moles with a mallet as they pop up from their holes.)

- Imaginative **interjections**, e.g. *wizard* “interjection used to indicate that something is *cool*. Originated in Britain. Popularized in modern slang by the movie *Juno*; used with a subject matter to refer to a person with deep, expert knowledge of that subject matter.”

#### 4. Expressiveness

Comparatively, there is a lower yet noticeable degree of inherent expressiveness that (older) terms of technical jargon/slang (which, in fact, COLL glosses as mere “technical names”) can be said to evince:

- **barber’s itch** or **rash** “any of various fungal infections of the bearded portion of the neck and face. Technical name: **tinea barbae**” (COLL).

- **cauliflower ear** “permanent swelling and distortion of the external ear as the result of ruptures of the blood vessels: usually caused by blows received in boxing. Also called: **boxer’s ear**. Technical name: **aural haematoma**.”

- **club foot** “a congenital deformity of the foot, esp. one in which the foot is twisted so that most of the weight rests on the heel. Technical name: **talipes**.”

- **cold sore** “a cluster of blisters at the margin of the lips that sometimes accompanies the common cold, caused by a viral infection. Technical name: **herpes labialis**.”

- **cot death** “the unexplained sudden death of an infant during sleep. Technical name: **sudden infant death syndrome**. Also called (U.S. and Canadian): **crib death**.”

- **housemaid’s knee** “inflammation and swelling of the bursa in front of the kneecap, caused esp. by constant kneeling on a hard surface. Technical name: **prepatellar bursitis**.” (Incidentally, the lay term *housemaid’s knee* occurs in Jerome K. Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat*).

- **milk leg** “inflammation and thrombosis of the femoral vein following childbirth, characterized by painful swelling of the leg. Also called: **white leg**. Technical name: **phlegmasia alba dolens**.”

- **phantom pregnancy** “the occurrence of signs of pregnancy, such as enlarged abdomen and absence of menstruation, when no embryo is present, due to hormonal imbalance. Also called: **false pregnancy**. Technical name: **pseudocyesis**.”

- **strawberry mark** “a soft vascular red birthmark. Technical name: **haemangioma simplex**. Also called: **strawberry**.”

Coming back to the situation of (allegedly) technical terms – or at least more recent, neologistic terms – that migrated into the field of slang (or

slangy and subcolloquial speech) in Romanian, a very succinct sketchy typology can be traced starting from examples like:

“(a fi) beat *crup*,” i.e. “(to be) as drunk as a lord”, an older slang(y)/ subcolloquial term (as in “cei beți *crup*” – in Petre Pandrea, *Germania hitleristă*, București, Editura “Adevărul”, 1937, p. 33);

“*hard*” (“Nu-l prea ajută *hardu’*,” i.e. “He’s slow on the uptake”);

“*zoom*” (“privire; vedere” – as an example of recent, youthful slang);

“*bidon*,” as in “a-l duce (pe cineva) *bidonu’*,” i.e. “to be quick on the uptake”;

“a *pompa* (pe cineva),” i.e. “to have sexual intercourse with smb.”;

“a *composta* (pe cineva/un obiect al cuiva),” i.e. “a mușca”;

“a-și pune *termopane*(le),” i.e. “a-și pune dinți(i)/dinți falși”);

“(a fi) tare-n *pix*,” i.e. “to boss around”;

“a avea sânge în *instalație*,” i.e. “to be virile or brawny”;

“a *filma* (pe cineva),” “a-i lua (cuiva) *numărul*,” i.e. “to spot smb.”;

“a se ține de *jargoane*” (cf. the older idiom “a se ține de *tromboane*”);

“*mufarină*,” “*pifometru*” (urban argot/imaginative youthful slangy speech), as in “I-a dat la *mufarină* și la *pifometru*” (on radio KissFM; actually, the word *pif* seems to have been derived from French *pif* “(big/bulbous) nose”);

“(a fi) crimă și pedeapsă,” “(a fi/a fi în) agonie și extaz” (two rather interesting cases of cultural quotation, based on what Eugeniu Coșeriu called *vorbire repetată*), etc.

As can be noted, the linguistic material that research can set out from is sufficiently rich for useful observations and extrapolations to emerge.

## 5. Conclusions

We can conclude by stating that Romanian slang, compared with slang vocabularies in English, represents technical (and specialized) words rather poorly; the first reason seems to be its being much less developed from a strictly numerical angle. On the other hand, the so-called *slang* of computer (very much like the slang or argot of several other technical fields) can hardly be called slang proper; it is at best a type of jargon, mainly through its in-mate, insider quality.

The *expressiveness* of the terms is, in both cases, often fairly pregnant; so, we think that their valencies, subtypes and issues of detail should be studied more thoroughly by Romanian linguists (and, hopefully, better glossed by lexicographers). Although appearing later and occurring in a smaller number, the terms of technical and scientific derivation that are now part of Romanian slang and subcolloquial vocabulary are interesting enough to justify such an effort of research and documentation.

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