

## Word-formation processes in English slang

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*This article examines the word-formation processes which are used in English slang. It does so by analysing a sample of words selected from the online Urban Dictionary. The article first of all briefly describes slang from the point of view of its word-formation. Subsequently, the methodological outline is presented, followed by the analysis of the sample of words. The analysis is focused on finding out which word-formation processes are used to coin the selected words. Another objective is to compare the use of word-formation processes in slang and in Standard English. The results propose an overview of the individual word-formation processes occurring in the sample. They also suggest that, to some extent, slang uses word-formation processes in the same way as Standard English, however, in certain cases, it diverges from the language's traditional use.*

**Keywords:** *slang, word-formation processes, Standard English, comparison*

### 1 Introduction

“Slang is easy enough to use, but very hard to write about with the facile convincingness that a subject apparently so simple would, at first sight, seem to demand” (Partridge, 1933: 1). Partridge forethoughtfully called the issue of slang “that prize-problem word” (ibid.: 2), and it is often highlighted that “annoyance and frustration await anyone who searches the professional literature for a definition or even a conception of slang that can stand up to scrutiny” (Green, 2015: 15). The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) understands slang as a “language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense”. As far as the users of slang are concerned, Lighter (2001: 220) proposes the following: “it is often associated with youthful, raffish, or undignified persons and groups; and it conveys often striking connotations of impertinence or irreverence, especially for established attitudes and values within the prevailing culture”. To compare, Green (2015: 6) argues that even though slang was and still is “linked to the lower depths, the criminal, the marginal, the unwanted or even persecuted members of society” it is at the same time also “vibrant, creative, witty, and open to seemingly infinite re-invention”. Throughout the publications about slang the opinions towards it vary: as it is obvious, there are those who argue in favour of slang’s use, and there are also those “champions of Standard English” (StE) who hold the opposite view (Coleman, 2012: 1). Interestingly, the majority of authors focus on the sociological properties of slang and the description of its history and the etymology of the word itself, while its word-formation characteristics remain discussed only marginally. Therefore, apart from analysing the available data on slang and aiming at a balanced description of it, much more attention should be paid to its word-formation aspects.

“Slang exploits existing forms and their current meanings in various ways, drawing on and often mixing resources from the sound system, the word-building processes, paradigms and the speakers’ knowledge of the culture” (Eble, 1996: 26). The word-building processes used in slang are described, *inter alia*, by Eble (1996), Mattiello (2008, 2013), and Kularni and Wang (2018). Partridge (1933), Adams (2009), Coleman (2012), and Green (2015) mention this topic in passing. The word-formation processes of slang that recur in the mentioned works

comprise compounding, affixation, conversion, shortening, blending, reduplication and back-formation.

Compounding represents a major source of new words in slang (Eble, 1996: 29). Partridge (1933: 16) highlights the ability of compounds to express irony and points to the fact that “compounds [...] have qualities that cannot – to the same high degree, at least – belong to the single words”. In slang, “both head and non-head positions may be occupied by a variety of classes, the most unusual being particles (i.e. prepositions, numerals and pronouns)” (Mattiello, 2008: 73). The largest group of slang compounds are compound nouns (ibid.: 74). There are various patterns that are combined to form a compound noun, but the N + N combination is the most richly represented, for instance the endocentric *doss house* (← *doss* ‘a bed’) ‘a common lodging-house’ or the exocentric *gobstick* (← *gob* ‘the mouth’) ‘a clarinet’ (ibid.: 76). Compound verbs can be represented by combinations such as V + N, as in the exocentric *kick ass* ‘act roughly or aggressively’, or N + V, which are usually endocentric, for instance *skin-pop* ‘inject a drug subcutaneously’ (ibid.: 83). Within compound adjectives, of interest are the unusual combinations, which include prepositions, such as *in pod* ‘pregnant’, or two adverbs, such as *way-in* ‘conventional; sophisticated’ (ibid.).

As for affixation, Eble (1996: 32-33) mentions suffixation and prefixation as occurring the most frequently within English slang. Additionally, Adams (2009), Coleman (2012) and Mattiello (2013) also describe various types of infixation which recur in English slang. In the case of prefixation, “slang uses many of the same prefixes [...] as general-purpose English does but sometimes with greater freedom and slightly different meanings or grammatical consequences” (Eble, 1996: 32). Prefixes that recur in slang include *de-* (*delouse* ‘free from something unpleasant’), *re-* (*reup* ‘re-enlist’), *schm-/shm-* (*child schmild*), *un-* (*uncool* ‘unrelaxed; unpleasant’) and *under-* (*underfug* ‘an undervest; also, underpants’) (Mattiello, 2008: 91), while Coleman (2012: 37) also mentions *super-* (*superfly* ‘very good; excellent’) and Eble discusses *mega-* (*meganap*) and *perma-* (*permanerve*) as being recurrently used in college slang. Notice that these last two are rather combining forms, used also in StE. The first one is associated with the meaning ‘very large’ while the second one is forming nouns with the sense ‘permanent –’ or adjectives with the sense ‘permanently –’ (OED). As visible on the examples above (*meganap*, *permanerve*), the same meanings are applied within college slang. From the list of the prefixes mentioned above, Mattiello (2008: 91) emphasizes that it is only the prefix *schm-/shm-* which deserves to be mentioned individually because it is the only one which cannot be found in StE; it originated in colloquial speech and is used to convey deprecatory meaning, as in reduplicatives like *child – schmild*, *Trotsky – Schmotsky*. Other prefixes “offer no case study of slang extra-grammaticality” (ibid.).

Suffixation is represented more richly in slang, and the suffixes which recur in slang are *-able*, *-ation*, *-dom*, *-ed*, *-er*, *-eroo/-aroo*, *-ette*, *-ful*, *-ie/-y*, *-ify/-fy*, *-ing*, *-ish*, *-less*, *-ly*, *-ness*, *-o*, *-ock*, *-s* and *-ster* (Mattiello, 2008). Adams (2009) also discusses the suffixes *-age* and *-y*, Coleman (2012) mentions *-aroonie*, *-ati*, *-io* and *-tard*, and Eble (1996) adds *-aholic* and *-fest*. Among the mentioned suffixes, some of them “behave regularly and attach to standard bases to form new words” (Mattiello, 2008: 93). For instance, there is the suffix *-ation/-ion* which in StE forms nouns of action from verbs (*pollute* > *pollution*) (Mattiello, 2008: 94). In slang, it can be used in the same way, for instance *connection* ‘a supplier of narcotics; the action of supplying narcotics’, derived from the verb *connect* ‘meet in order to obtain drugs’ (ibid.).

But there are also suffixes that attach to irregular bases of slang origin, as in *ear-basher* ‘a chatterer; a bore’ (from *ear-bash* ‘talk inordinately’) (ibid: 99). Then there is also a special group of suffixes which do not create new words in slang “but connote existing ones by adding

nuances of jocularly, humour, playfulness, etc.” (ibid.: 94). For example, *-age*, as in *aceage* (← *ace*) ‘excellent’, or *drinkage* ‘drink/drinking’ (Coleman, 2012: 35).

As far as infixation is concerned, there are no clear instances of infixation in StE, but in slang there is “a marginal process which comes very close to infixation” (Szymanek, 1989: 65) and which is called expletive infixation. Notice that Zwicky and Pullum (1987) also mention expletive infixation, as the phenomenon belonging to what they call *expressive morphology*. One of the crucial characteristics of Zwicky and Pullum’s expressive morphology is its pragmatic effect (ibid., p. 335). “Expressive morphology is associated with an expressive, playful, poetic or simply ostentatious effect of some kind [which is] lacking in plain derivational morphology” (ibid.). This pragmatic effect is definitely observable in slang expletive coinages. Expletive infixation includes the insertion of an infix “before the syllable of the base that bears the lexical stress” (Bauer, 1983: 90). To exemplify, *handi-bloody-cap* or *im-f\*\*\*ing-possible* (ibid.). Aside from this expletive infixation, Mattiello (2013: 189) also explicitly distinguishes between other types of infixation, namely Homeric/ma-infixation (*saxo-ma-phone*), diddly-infixation (*wel-diddly-elcome*) and hip-hop/iz infixation (*h-iz-ouse*). The last one is also mentioned by Coleman (2012: 37), who adds that the infix *-iz-* may occasionally include the nasal *n*, as in *-iz(n)-*, exemplified by *biznatch* ‘bitch: an unpleasant person’ or *shiznit* ‘shit’.

In Eble (1996: 33), the term *functional shift* is preferred, in Coleman (2012: 33), it is *change in function*, and Mattiello (2008: 124) calls the same process *conversion*, which is going to be used here, as well. Mattiello explicitly distinguishes between converted verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs (ibid.), and some concrete examples will be mentioned to exemplify the various patterns of conversion. For instance, the N>V *scope* ‘look for members of the opposite sex’ (Eble, 1996: 34), the V>N *skips* ‘tennis shoes’ (ibid.), the N>A *cuckoo* ‘crazy’ (from *cuckoo* ‘a silly person’) (Mattiello, 2008: 128), and the A>Adv *dead* ‘utterly, completely’ (ibid.). Rather infrequent patterns of conversion that occur in slang are more peculiar, such as numeral>N *forty* ‘a thief, sharper’, prefix>N *ex* ‘a former husband, wife or lover’, or combining form>A *mega* ‘huge, great, substantial’ (ibid.).

Within shortening in slang, there are distinctions between clippings, acronyms and initialisms (Kulkarni & Wang, 2018: 1425), which are also mentioned by Mattiello (2008) and Eble (1996). In this case it is necessary to bring up the issue of different viewpoints on the regularity or rather irregularity of these formations. For instance, Aronoff (1976: 20) calls them *oddities* and points that they have “no recognizable internal structure or constituents” which makes them opaque (ibid.). On the other hand, Bauer (1983: 232) highlights that in English, they are very common and therefore cannot be considered “out of the ordinary”. However, he acknowledges that “it is by no means clear that the forms of these words can be predicted by rules without appealing to such ill-understood notions as euphony” (ibid.). Moreover, for instance Štekauer (1998: 33) mentions that a process like clipping cannot be considered as word-formation process because it does not create new meaning and “for a unit to be included in word-formation it must differ from the motivating unit both in its semantics and form” (ibid.: 23). Within slang, Mattiello (2008: 65) classifies them as “extra-grammatical formations” and despite their irregularity, they deserve to be mentioned here because “extra grammatical phenomena are frequent slang formations” (ibid.).

In the case of clipping, the distinctions are between back-clipping (*brill* ‘brilliant’), fore-clipping (*choke* ‘artichoke’), and compound clipping (*adman* ‘advertisement man’) (Kulkarni & Wang, 2018: 1425). Mattiello (2008: 145) also mentions an unusual type of slang back-clipping where only the first letter of the base word is retained, as in *H.* (← *heroin*).

Interestingly, this phenomenon surely lies on the borderline between clipping and the formation of initialisms, since it is only one letter which represents the whole word. Additionally, there is the so-called middle-clipping, exemplified by *script* (← *prescription*, esp. one for narcotic drugs) (ibid.). The formation of initialisms may be represented by examples such as *DHC* ‘deep, heavy conversation’ (Eble, 1996: 36), while *YOLO* ‘you only live once’ is an example of acronymization (Kulkarni & Wang, 2018: 1425).

Finally, the formation of blends can be divided into prototypical blends and partial blends. Within prototypical blending, the blends “consist of the head of one word and the tail of another one” (Mattiello, 2008: 139), as in *glumpy* (← *gloomy* + *grumpy*) (Partridge, 1993: 281). As far as partial blends are concerned, they are instances where one of the bases remains unchanged, such as *fugly* (← *f\*\*\*ing* + *ugly*) (Coleman, 2012: 37).

Following this short description of the data which are available in the literature on slang word-formation, it is now possible to move the discussion forward and to present the research on which this paper is based.

## 2 Methodological outline and sample

The main goal of this research is to examine which word-formation processes were used in the coining of the words chosen from the online Urban Dictionary (UD) and to provide a detailed analysis of those words. Next objective is to consider possible differences between how slang uses word-formation processes and how StE uses them. Similarly, like previous works on this topic, this one also concentrates on the examination of words from particular semantic groups, namely the semantic groups COLLEGE, FOOD and DRUGS. To compare, Eble (1996) primarily analyses slang spoken in the college environment, while Mattiello (2008) covers a broader range of semantic groups.

The process of attaining the goals set out above was divided into three steps. The first step was based on the selection of slang words from Urban Dictionary (UD), an online dictionary of slang words and phrases which can be freely added to by laypeople. The words and phrases in UD may be searched by first letter, by semantic group (COLLEGE, DRUGS, FOOD, INTERNET, MUSIC, NAME, RELIGION, SEX, SPORTS, WORK), or by entry. Our research concentrates on the first three of these semantic groups, namely COLLEGE, DRUGS and FOOD. The number of words that appear in UD per group is 140, which means that in the first step, the total number of words from the three selected groups was 420.

As far as the material from UD is concerned, it was chosen on purpose mostly because of its authentic character. There is no doubt that UD is compiled by lay users of language, however, in this case it may be considered as an advantage, since slang thrives in informal settings. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the scientific unreliability of UD, the presence of slang formations from UD was checked in Green’s online Dictionary of Slang (GDS). The words which were listed also in GDS can be considered as attested examples of slang, while those which were not present in GDS and appeared only in UD should be taken with caution.

The second step was based on sorting out the 420 words. This was necessary because, as mentioned above, UD is freely editable by laypeople and there was a high probability of finding words that were not relevant for further analysis within the framework of slang word-formation. Therefore, the 420 words were filtered with the aim of eliminating irrelevant cases. These were grouped into seven non-inclusive groups:

- Words representing idiolect – this group includes words which were in UD listed only once within the respective semantic group, for instance *sushilize* ‘to socialize over sushi’.
- StE words with changed meaning – this group includes words which were coined in StE and in slang they only acquired new additional meaning, while there was no change of the word class, as in *rails* ‘lines of the drug cocaine, which are then snorted’.
- Tokens – this group includes all words occurring more than once in the sample of 420 words. To exemplify, in the semantic group FOOD, the word *brunch* appears two times on the list of words occurring in this group.
- Words whose meaning is not related to the semantic group – this group includes all the words whose meanings are not related to the semantic group within which they are listed in UD. For example, *pizza face* was listed in the semantic group FOOD, however, its meaning: ‘an offensive term telling people that they have bad acne’ is in no way related to food.
- Phrases – are not relevant for the study of word-formation because they are basic units of syntactic analysis. To exemplify, *Smoke a Bowl* ‘the act of smoking a bud of marijuana in either a bong or a pipe’.
- Monemes – are not included because they are not created by productive word-formative processes. Here, the group of monemes consists mostly of words which are of foreign origin and in UD they all appeared within the semantic group DRUGS, for instance *pakalolo* ‘Hawaiian slang for marijuana or weed’.
- Words that are unanalysable for anything other than the above-listed reasons – this group of unanalysable words includes numerals (*424/7* ‘smoking Weed 24/7 (420)’), misspelled constructions (*cheif* ‘when smoking weed, taking more than an appropriate number of hits of a blunt), and StE words with standard meaning (*legalization* ‘to make something legal’).

As a result, the number of words decreased considerably from 420 to 65. What remained were slang formations not belonging to any of the above-mentioned non-inclusive groups from the second step.

The third step was an analysis of the word-formation processes underlying the remaining sample words.

### 2.1 Word-formation processes in the sample

Table 1 lists all the word-formation processes used in the coining of the words from the sample.

Table 1: Word-formation processes used in the sample

Word-formation process	Number of words	Percentages
Compounding	30	46%
Shortening	12	19%
Suffixation	11	17%
Blending	6	9%
Conversion	6	9%

In order to examine the selected sample of slang formations in detail, concrete examples representing each word-formation process occurring in the sample will be provided in the

following sub-sections. The words occurring in the tables below are always listed in alphabetic order, in orthographic form, and with the definition provided in UD. In some cases, more than one definition per one word is provided in UD. To exemplify, the word *brenner* listed within the semantic group FOOD includes 6 definitions, out of which only 3 are related to food. Naturally, the unrelated meanings are ignored, while the related ones are taken into consideration. It is focused on whether the meanings are identical or there are some differences between them. If they are identical, the meaning which is the shortest and the most coherent is chosen as a representative. If there are, for example, two different meanings, these are mentioned in the text and subsequently analysed.

It is also important to mention here that in the upcoming analysis, the use of word-formation processes in slang will be compared with their use in StE, and the focus will be on possible similarities or differences between the two. However, it should be emphasized that the observations and findings presented below are based on a sample of 65 slang words. Given the limited size of the sample, any conclusions on the trends in English slang word-formation must be taken with caution and will have to be verified and/or completed by future studies.

### 2.1.1 Compounding

As indicated in Table 1 above, compounds represent the largest group with 30 words. It is a well-known fact that “there is hardly any universally accepted definition which unambiguously defines this word-formation process” (Kavka & Štekauer, 2006: 53). Nevertheless, it was necessary to apply some criteria for the delimitation of compounds in order to sort out the sample of slang formations. The three main criteria which were used in this case are syntactic ones, as described in Lieber and Štekauer (2009: 13): “inseparability, the inability to modify the first element of the compound, and the inability to replace the second noun of a nominal compound with a pro-form such as *one*”. Table 2 provides a list of all compounds occurring in the sample of 65 slang formations.

Table 2: Compounds

DRUGS	FOOD	COLLEGE
bongload	death burger	College night
booze jockey	food box	dorm storm
cannabis club	Gay bacon	hallway hobo
Cocoa Puffin	pizza daddy	
coke fiend	Pizza Pillows	
Coke Nails	pizza slap	
Generation Blunt	Pizza Time	
Giggle Smoke	See food diet	
Green day	stoner pizza	
hobo hash	Texas Breakfast	
Jungle Joint		
Nosebag		
rolling stoned		
Stoner Steve		
trip out		
weed snob		
Weed Whacker		

The majority of compounds are compound nouns. There is only one case of a compound adjective, *rolling stoned* ‘on ecstasy and weed’, and one case of compound verb: *trip out* ‘to lose your mind on drugs’ (UD).

As for the word classes of the individual constituents of compounds, the majority of them are N + N constructions. There is one case of V + N (*Giggle smoke* ‘another word for marijuana’), one example of A + N (*Green day* ‘a day spent smoking marijuana’), one example of A + A (above-mentioned *rolling stoned*) and one example of V + Particle (above-mentioned *trip out*). Finally, there is also one example of a three-member compound, *see food diet* ‘a see food diet is where you see food and then eat it’, which is a combination of V + N + N.

In some cases, the individual constituents of compounds are themselves derivatives. For instance, there are several examples where the second element of a compound is derived from a verb by suffixation. To exemplify, *Cocoa Puffin* ‘smoking marijuana that is laced with cocaine’, where the second constituent *puffin* is coined by adding the suffix *-ing* to the verb *puff* ‘smoke a pipe, cigarette, or cigar’. It is a similar case for the synthetic compound *weed whacker* ‘a person who tends to smoke a lot of marijuana’, where it is again the second constituent which is derived from the verb *whack* by *-er* suffixation.

Subsequently, there is a group of compounds where the first constituent is a derivative, such as *Stoner Steve* ‘a male who sells or smokes cannabis’ and *stoner pizza* ‘small pizzas in which several can be eaten in one sitting’. There is also an example of a compound where both constituents are derivatives; in this case, it is the suffixes *-ing* and *-ed* used in *rolling stoned* ‘on ecstasy and weed’.

Finally, clippings are also used as constituents of compounds in the sample. For instance, *dorm storm* ‘the raiding of one college residence hall by a large group of students from another residence hall’ where one of the two constituents represents a clipping: *dorm* ‘dormitory’.

Bases of compounds may also differ in terms of their origin, whether they come from StE or from slang. There are three possible combinations occurring in the sample. The first one is when all constituents are StE words, as in *College night* ‘Thursday night partying because most college students don’t have class on Friday’. The second possible combination is slang word + StE word, as in *booze jockey* ‘a bar tender’ or *weed snob* ‘someone who insists their weed is superior to all others’. The third possible combination is slang word + slang word, as in *hobo hash* ‘slang for marijuana resin’.

Within this sample of slang compounds, it is also possible to spot the use of metaphor. Metaphor-based compounds are described in Benczes (2006) who highlights that “the fact that metaphor is a driving force behind compounds is no news” (ibid., p. 89). Benczes mentions several features of conceptual metaphor, one of them is that “it is based upon two entities that resemble one another” (ibid., p. 48). This may be perceived within compound *rolling stoned* ‘on ecstasy and weed’ which was coined after the name of the British rock group, the Rolling Stones. Similarly, there is *pizza daddy* ‘a sugar daddy who just gives you pizza’ coined after the already-existing *sugar daddy*. Another example is *weed snob* ‘someone who insists their weed is superior to all others’ where the second constituent of the compound is used metaphorically. Additionally, except the presence of metaphor, rhyme is also used to form slang compounds. For instance, Bauer (1983: 213) recognizes rhyme motivated compounds where “the rhyme between the two elements is the major motivating factor in the formation”. He mentions *brain-drain*, *culture-vulture* or *flower-power* while in this slang sample there is *dorm storm*.

The results of this research may be compared with the general tendencies in English word-formation by focusing on the research done by Körtvélyessy, Štekauer and Zimmermann (2018), in which they evaluate word-formation in European languages using 100 word-formation features representing 12 word-formation processes. The process of compounding is evaluated by its types and features. The types are as follows: recursive, determinative, copulative, exocentric, synthetic, phrasal, and compounds with linking elements. To compare this with the results of the present research in slang, there are no recursive, copulative, or phrasal compounds and no compounds with linking elements among these selected slang compounds. On the other hand, the types which are present in this sample are determinative (*coke fiend* ‘someone who is addicted to cocaine’), exocentric (*food box* ‘belly’), and synthetic (*weed whacker* ‘a person who tends to smoke a lot of marijuana’).

Additionally, taking into consideration the fact that the UD is freely editable by laypeople the presence of the selected slang words from UD may be also compared with their presence or absence in attested slang dictionary such as Jonathon Green’s *Dictionary of Slang* (GDS) available online. As far as the present sample of compounds from UD is concerned, four compounds from this sample are also attested by GDS. Namely, *coke fiend* ‘a cocaine user’, *nosebag* ‘cocaine’, *to trip out* ‘to experience a hallucinogenic drug or a simulacrum thereof’, and *foodbox* ‘the stomach’. When comparing the meanings of the individual words, all four of them coincide.

To conclude, it was exemplified that slang uses the same mechanism of compounding as StE. In terms of the word classes, most of the compounds occurring in this sample are compound nouns which also prevail in StE, as mentioned by Bauer (1983: 202), Plag (2016: 2412) or Lieber (2005: 378). The same may be said about the word classes of the individual constituents of compounds, which are also mostly nouns. However, it was exemplified that there are also some differences between StE compounding and slang compounding, mostly in terms of the bases which are used. In some cases, slang uses chiefly slang bases to coin compounds; additionally, those bases may themselves be derivatives or clippings.

### 2.1.2 Shortening

Shortening was used to coin 12 words. Various types of shortening appear in the sample, and a list of them is provided below, in Table 3, followed by their examination.

Table 3: Shortenings

COLLEGE	DRUGS	FOOD
CKA	acid	bae
dorm	cap	
Furman	meth	
gml	mid	
uni	scrip	
YOCO		

The shortenings in the semantic group COLLEGE are of various types. The majority of them are instances of initialisms, such as *CKA*, which had two different definitions in UD: (1) ‘commonly known as’, (2) ‘Cool Kid Alley’. Here, it is interesting to notice that in the first definition, ‘commonly known as’, a letter from a function word (*as*) is used to form an initialism. “Initialisms tend to omit function words in their output since they are semantically less salient” (Mattiello, 2013: 103). However, in this case it was preserved, probably because

“in initialisms, the preferential output length is three letters” (ibid., 102). The next initialism is *gml*, which also had various definitions, the first two being (1) ‘get on my level’ and (2) ‘got much love’. In the first definition the function word *on* is omitted in the output form, probably because of the above-mentioned preferential length of initialisms.

In the semantic group COLLEGE, there are also examples of clippings, such as *dorm* ‘a bedroom, living room, and kitchen in a space about the size of most walk-in closets. Roommate included free of charge’, *Furman* ‘Furman University - a private, liberal arts college in Greenville, South Carolina’, and *uni* ‘university’, which are all examples of back-clipping.

The next type of shortening occurring in the semantic group COLLEGE is the acronym, represented by only one example, *YOCO*, which has two definitions related to the semantic group COLLEGE: (1) ‘You’re Only Cute Online’, (2) ‘You Only College Once’.

The types of shortenings in the semantic group DRUGS are more consistent: they are all instances of clippings, for example *acid* ‘Lysergic acid diethylamide’, which represents the type of clipping where the middle part is retained. Then there is *cap* ‘Aussie slang for mdma (ecstasy), often in Australia mdma is snorted and placed in capsules for distribution’, *meth* ‘abbreviation for methamphetamine’ and *mid* ‘mid-grade marijuana’, which are all examples of back-clipping. Finally, *scrip* ‘prescription - a note from a doctor to obtain controlled medicines (usually narcotics) from a pharmacist’ is another example of the type where the middle part is retained.

The last semantic group, FOOD, includes only one shortening, *bae*, which is an example of an acronym. This word had many various definitions in UD, but the one related to food and occurring the most often was ‘bacon and eggs’.

In this case, the results of slang shortening in this sample cannot be compared with the previously mentioned research by Körtvélyessy, Štekauer and Zimmermann (2018) since in this research they are not examining shortening. The reason for this was already outlined above, that some scholars do not consider shortening as a word-formation process because it does not create new meaning. But the presence of the selected slang words from UD may be compared with their inclusion in GDS, as was done above with compounds. To compare, the words which occur also in GDS are: *uni* ‘university’, *acid* ‘LSD, i.e. d-lysergic acid diethylamide-25’, *cap* ‘a capsule containing a narcotic, usu. heroin’, *meth* ‘a methamphetamine’, and *scrip* ‘a prescription for narcotics’. As far as the meanings of these words are concerned, those in GDS match with the meanings listed in UD.

In conclusion, it was exemplified that in this sample, slang words were coined by the use of various types of shortening, such as initialisms, acronyms and clippings which are also used in StE, as described in Bauer (1983: 232-237). The principles on which the coining of these types of shortenings is based appear to be the same as in StE, and the majority of these slang shortenings were the instances of clipping.

### 2.1.3 Suffixation

Suffixation was used to coin 11 words, representing 17% of the 65 slang formations. Table 4 lists the words coined by suffixation.

Table 4: Suffixation

DRUGS	FOOD	COLLEGE
baggie	baconcy	mutching
bottle-o	brekky	
Cheefing	Munchies	

Flipping
reefer
toked
Ziggy

The suffix which occurs in the sample the most frequently is the diminutive *-ie/-y*. In StE, it has mostly connotative function and it conveys hypocoristic meaning: “it is used to form pet terms (terms of endearment) and familiar diminutives expressing jocularity or affection” (Mattiello, 2008: 104). Plag (2016: 2419) also highlights that in StE it is the most productive suffix from the group of diminutive suffixes, and it attaches mostly to nouns. In slang, it is “predominantly used to form nouns with an appellative hypocoristic meaning” but it should be noted that except the hypocoristic function, in slang “it may be also used ironically or sarcastically” (Mattiello, 2008: 105).

In this sample, suffix *-ie/-y* attached mostly to nominal bases, which were sometimes clipped and its function was hypocoristic, as well as in StE. To exemplify, in the semantic group DRUGS, there is the word *baggie* ‘a little plastic bag used to carry weed [...]’, where the noun *bag* serves as a base for suffixation by *-ie*. Notice that in this case the suffix *-ie* does not add only connotative meaning but also denotative.

The next example is demonstrated by *ziggy* ‘Spliff, Zoot, Joint, Cannabis Cigarette’. One possible analysis of the word *ziggy* is that it was coined from *cigarette*, which, firstly, underwent the process of clipping and subsequently suffixation by *-y* to coin *ciggy*. The initial consonant in *ciggy* was voiced from /s/ to /z/ which probably influenced the orthography and changed into *ziggy*.

In the semantic group FOOD, there is *brekky* ‘synonym for breakfast’. The base for the coining of *brekky* was *breakfast*, which underwent clipping and subsequently suffixation by *-y*. Notice that Mattiello (2008: 100) also mentions *brekkers* which has identical meaning but it is coined by attaching the suffix *-er/-ers* introduced within university slang to form colloquial words.

Another example of derivation by *-ie* is represented by *munchies* ‘when you get hungry after smoking weed. Usually, people will eat a lot of junk food’. The base for this word is the verb *munch* ‘to eat snack foods’. The diminutive suffix *-ie* is added to this to form the noun *munchie*, which is followed by adding the plural morpheme *-s* to form *munchies*. This example is also attested in GDS with identical meaning and it is mentioned there that it usually occurs in plural, which is also supported by OED.

Subsequently, the next most frequent suffix appearing in the sample is *-ing*, also a productive one. In StE, it is mostly listed within suffixes which derive event, state and result nouns (Bauer et al., 2013: 195). As far as the base preferences are concerned, this suffix attaches in StE to “all non-auxiliary verbs in English, regardless of their origin” (ibid., p. 202). This function and base preference was also found in the examined sample. To exemplify, in the semantic group DRUGS, there is *cheefing* ‘the act of smoking marijuana with a group of two or more and holding on to the joint/blunt/bong/bowl etc for a longer time than the set rhythm of rotation’. This noun is an example of derivation by adding *-ing* to the slang verbal base *cheef* with identical meaning.

Similarly, there is *flipping* with 3 various meanings related to drugs (1) ‘using LSD and Ecstasy together’, (2) ‘the act of selling drugs’ (3) ‘a mild curse word’. In the first two cases, the words are verbal present participles created by attaching the suffix *-ing* to the verbal base *flip*. In the third case it is an adjective which is derived by attaching *-ing* to the verbal base *flip*

‘an alternative to f\*\*k.’ Notice that this word is also attested in GDS, however, only as an adjective or an adverb with the meaning ‘euph. for f\*\*\*ing’ as in *flipping heck*.

Additionally, in the semantic group COLLEGE, there is *mutching* ‘not attending school’. This word only had one definition in UD, and therefore it was further investigated in the Free Dictionary (FD), where the following definition is found: ‘another word for mitch’. The mentioned word *mitch* has the meaning ‘to play truant from school’, which comes “probably from Old French *muchier, mucier* ‘to hide, lurk’” (FD). Therefore, the verb *mitch* /mɪtʃ/ firstly underwent vowel modification into *mutch* /mʌtʃ/ and, subsequently, the suffix *-ing* was added to form the noun *mutching*.

The suffix *-er* only occurs in the sample once, which is quite surprising since it is highly productive in StE, mostly in deriving agentive and instrumental nominalisations from verbs (Szymanek, 1989: 176). Nevertheless, this pattern was preserved in the sample; in the semantic group DRUGS, there is the noun *reefer* ‘slang for marijuana; refers to a joint, bowl, plant, or sac of marijuana’. In OED it is mentioned that the origin of this word is uncertain and there are various possible analyses proposed. One analysis suggests the comparison with Mexican Spanish *grifa* ‘cannabis, marijuana’, Central American Spanish *grifo/grifa* ‘person who smokes cannabis’. “It is possible that the initial *g-* was either not perceived by speakers of English, or the word was borrowed the other way, hypercorrectly added by Spanish speakers” (OED). Another analysis proposes that *reefer* was derived either from *reef* <sub>N</sub> ‘a section of a sail, frequently each of three or four bands or strips, which can be taken in or rolled up to reduce the area exposed to the wind’ or from *reef* <sub>V</sub> ‘to take in or roll up part of (a sail) in order to reduce the area exposed to the wind’ (OED). This second analysis points to the suffixation by *-er*, therefore, the word *reefer* was included in the sample of derived slang words. What is interesting here is the metaphorical link between a rolled sail and a rolled cigarette containing marijuana. To compare, within slang we can also find the suffix *-er* and its variant *-ers* which are not present in StE and which are used to “obtain colloquial or jocular forms of words and names, with curtailment and often some distortion of the root” (Matiello, 2008: 100). To exemplify, there is *footer* ‘football’, *brekker* ‘breakfast’, or *champers* ‘champagne’ (ibid.).

Another suffix that also occurs only once within the sample is the suffix *-ed*. In StE, it is productive in coining adjectives from nouns (*bearded*) (Bauer et al., 2013: 304) or past participles which function as adjectives (*bored*) (Plag, 2016: 2419). In the semantic group DRUGS, there is the word *toked* ‘being high, particularly from marijuana’, which represents the verbal past participle functioning as an adjective. The base for suffixation by *-ed* is the verb *toke* ‘to inhale marijuana smoke’, which probably comes from the Spanish *tocar*, meaning ‘touch, tap, hit’ or ‘get a share or part’ (OETD).

The next suffix occurring in the sample only once is the less productive and rather infrequent suffix *-cy*, which in StE usually attaches to adjectives in order to form nouns (Bauer, 1983: 222). OED also adds that *-cy* can be attached to nouns ending in *-n*, as in *chaplaincy*, *captaincy*, or *aldermancy*. The second base preference was found in this slang sample where the suffix *-cy* attached to the noun *bacon* in order to derive *baconcy*, meaning (1) ‘the availability and/or presence of bacon’ or (2) ‘that horrible feeling when you thought you had bacon but you just realized that you had already run out, you are now bacon-less’. However, in this case, the suffix *-cy* does not change the word class of the base *bacon* to which it is attached.

Finally, the suffix *-o* in the semantic group DRUGS represents a special example of formative used only within slang. It occurs in the word *bottle-o* ‘Australian abbreviation of bottle shop - which is a shop that sells alcohol and is often attached to a pub’. As is shown, the author of this definition explains that the second constituent is an abbreviation from *shop*.

However, further investigation of this word pointed to a slightly different interpretation. The second element of this construction rather represents the slang suffix *-o*, which is used in “forming familiar, informal equivalents of nouns and adjectives” (OED). This word may also have a variant, *bottle-oh* (ibid.).

In comparison to the results of Körtvélyessy, Štekauer and Zimmermann (2018), in this slang sample, there is a lack of certain suffixation patterns. For instance, within class-maintaining suffixation, there is no A>A pattern, only the N>N pattern, as in *bag<sub>N</sub>* > *baggie<sub>N</sub>*. As for class-changing prefixation, the following patterns were not found in this slang sample: A>N, A>V, N>V, N>A, V>A, N>Adv, A>Adv. The only patterns present are V>N, exemplified by *reef<sub>V</sub>* > *reefer<sub>N</sub>*, and V>A, as in *toke<sub>V</sub>* > *toked<sub>A</sub>*. The reason for the absence of particular patterns of suffixation in this sample of slang words was already outlined above, where the limited size of sample was reminded.

As far as the comparison with GDS is concerned, the words which occur also in GDS are: *baggie* ‘a small plastic bag used popularly for holding small amounts of marijuana or powdered drugs’, *bottle-o* ‘an off-licence (attached to a public house), a liquor store’, *brekky* ‘breakfast’, *munchies* ‘the craving for food, often sweet or in an otherwise unlikely combination of flavours, that afflicts smokers of hashish or marijuana.’, *reefer* ‘a marijuana cigarette’, and *ziggy* ‘a cannabis cigarette’. The mentioned meanings from GDS match the meanings listed in UD.

To summarize, the majority of suffixes used in the sample of slang words are suffixes that come from StE (*-ie/-y*, *-ing*, *-er*, *-ed*, *-cy*). Moreover, it was exemplified that the functions of these suffixes in slang are, in the majority of cases, similar to how they function in StE. As for the differences between the use of suffixation in slang and StE, slight irregularities were exemplified by bases that are of slang origin, such as *munch*, *cheef*, *mutch* or *toke* and which cannot be found in StE. Additionally, there was an example in the sample of a suffix that is not used in StE and which can be considered as chiefly slang (*-o/-oh*).

#### 2.1.4 Blending

Blending was used to coin 6 words from the selected list, representing 9% of the 65 slang coinages. Table 5 exemplifies the instances of blending that occurred in the sample.

Table 5: Blending

FOOD	COLLEGE	DRUGS
bizza	journicle	tokemon
Brenner		
Brinner		
Brunch		

The first semantic group FOOD is the largest one. The majority of the blends occurring in this group are examples of the most frequent types of blends that also appear in StE, where the parts used in blending are the peripheral fragments of the original words (Szymanek, 1989: 100). In Plag’s (2003: 123) words, “it is always the first part of the first element that is combined with the second part of the second element”. This corresponds to Plag’s blending rule: AB + CD → AD, where the letters represent the respective parts of the elements involved in blending (ibid.). For instance, in this sample we find *big/beer* + *pizza* = *bizza*, *breakfast* + *dinner* = *brenner/brinner*, *breakfast* + *lunch* = *brunch*. Notice that *brenner/brinner* was probably created analogically after the model of *brunch*.

The second semantic group COLLEGE includes only one example: *journal* + *article* = *journicle*. The third semantic group DRUGS also has only one example: *toke* ‘to inhale marijuana smoke’ + *pokemon* = *tokemon*, meaning (1) ‘the act of smoking weed and playing the game Pokemon all in one’ or (2) ‘the drug-smoking version of the popular kids’ program Pokemon’. This is that type of blending, where only one word is shortened while the other one is present entirely. Relating this to Plag’s blending rule ( $AB + CD \rightarrow AD$ ), B is null here because one of the two base forms (*toke*) appears in its full form. Another possible analysis of *tokemon* is that it is only the letter *t* which is taken from *toke* and *pokemon* without the initial *p*. In this case that would represent that type of blending where the peripheral parts are taken to form the blend.

To recapitulate, within this sample, slang makes use of the same patterns of blending as StE. This was supported by applying Plag’s blending rule to examine the slang blends. The pattern  $AB + CD \rightarrow AD$  appeared the most frequently, as in *bizza*, *brenner*, *brinner*, *brunch* and *journicle*. The pattern  $A(B) + CD \rightarrow AD$  where B is null appeared as well, but only in one example. Moreover, sometimes the bases used for blending were chiefly of slang origin, such as *toke* in *tokemon*. As far as the comparison of the presence of blends in UD and in GDS is concerned, none of the presented blends are attested by GDS.

### 2.1.5 Conversion

Converted words represent the last group from the overall sample. Conversion was used to coin 6 words, representing 9% of the 65 slang formations. The converted words are exemplified in the following Table 6.

Table 6: Conversion

DRUGS
chief <sub>v</sub>
peezo <sub>N</sub>
piff <sub>N</sub>
primo <sub>N</sub>
smoke <sub>N</sub>
toke <sub>N</sub>

The first word *chief* occurs in UD either as a verb or as a noun. As for the verb, it has either the general meaning (1) ‘to smoke marijuana’ (UD) or the more specified meaning (2) ‘to take an additional hit of marijuana, against the rules of the group, if smoked in a circle’. In this case of the verb, it can be considered as a conversion from the StE noun *chief* ‘a leader or ruler of a people or clan’ (OED). Additionally, as mentioned above, the word *chief* also appears in UD as a noun with the meaning ‘someone who hogs the marijuana when passing a bowl, joint, or bong’. However, since there is no change in the word class of the base, it is an example of semantic change from the StE noun *chief* rather than an example of conversion. Within the numerous definitions of this word in UD, there are some explanations of its possible origin. It is explained that if there was a group of Indians smoking a peace pipe, it was always their chief who got the first drag (UD). What is interesting is the word’s semantic derogation which occurs in the second meaning of the verb mentioned above. The positive implications of respect linked

with an Indian chief are completely changed in the second meaning of the verb *chief*, which denotes an act evaluated rather negatively.

The next word is *peezo* ‘glass pipe used to smoke crystal meth’. It has the same meaning as the word *piezo* ‘a pipe used for smoking freebase crystal methamphetamine’, which also occurs in UD. In StE, *piezo-* represents a combining form with the meaning ‘pressure’ from Greek *piezein* ‘to press tight, squeeze’ (OETD). It usually occurs in words such as *piezoceramic* or *piezomagnetic*. One possible interpretation of the slang word *piezo/peezo* is that it represents a conversion from the StE combining form *piezo*, which is usually attached to bases and cannot stand on its own, to a free nominal lexeme denoting a special type of pipe. This may be compared to StE nouns *ism* and *ade* which were also, at first, used as bound forms, as in *agonism* or *orangeade* (OED). However, subsequently they developed into independent lexemes with the meanings *ism* ‘a form of doctrine, theory, or practice having, or claiming to have, a distinctive character or relation’, and *ade* ‘a drink composed of fruit juice diluted with water and sweetened with sugar’ (OED).

Another converted word is the noun *piff* ‘high quality marijuana’. This is again an interesting example, where an onomatopoeic word serves as the basis for further derivation. In Körtvélyessy (2020: 11) it is highlighted that derivations from onomatopoeia cannot be treated as onomatopoeic words anymore. Therefore, in this case, we are dealing with a conversion from the StE onomatopoeic *piff* ‘representing the sound of a short, abrupt displacement or passage of air as caused by the flight of a bullet, a small explosion, an expression of contempt’ (OED) to the slang noun *piff* denoting marijuana. Notice also the metaphorical allusion to the destructive effects of drugs which are linked with the destructive effect of explosions and guns present in the original onomatopoeic meaning.

The next example is *primo*. In StE, this word is used in the context of music, as an adjective with the meaning ‘of a musician, performer, role, etc.: first, principal, chief; of highest quality or importance’ and it represents a borrowing from Italian or Spanish (OED). As far as slang is concerned, in UD *primo* appears either as an adjective (1) ‘of the best quality’ or as a noun (2) ‘a joint or blunt containing both marijuana and cocaine’. The case of adjective is not of interest, since we are focusing here on conversion. On the other hand, the case of noun is of interest because it was coined by conversion from the already-exemplified earlier adjective *primo*. In this case, there is again the metaphorical link between the original meaning of the adjective and the slang meaning of the noun. Apparently, in the context of drugs a cigarette containing both marijuana and cocaine has a positive connotation and is evaluated as being of high quality.

The following word *smoke* appears in UD either as a verb or as a noun. In the case of the verb, it has the following definition: ‘to light up a rolled up cigarette or similar instrument, usually packed with drugs, then stick it in your mouth and inhale’. In this situation, the verb is not an example of conversion because the word class of the slang word remains the same, as in StE; it only represents a mere extension of the meaning. However, in the case of the noun, it occurs with the following definition: ‘drugs that are smoked, or something to smoke, generally weed’. In such a situation, it may be considered as a conversion from StE verb *to smoke* to the noun *a smoke*. This analysis can be supported by Marchand’s (1964: 10) criterion of semantic dependence of a derivative on the content of the other pair member. In this case, the definition of the noun *smoke* ‘drugs that are smoked, or something to smoke, generally weed’ includes the verb *to smoke* and depends on it. Therefore, *a smoke* denoting ‘weed’ is the derivative, while *to smoke* is its base.

The last example *toke* occurs in UD either as a noun or as a verb. In the case of the noun, its meaning is ‘an inhalation or draw of marijuana smoke’, and it represents a conversion from the earlier verb *toke* ‘to inhale marijuana smoke’. In the case of the verb, it can be considered as a borrowed moneme because the origin of the verb is probably from the Spanish word *tocar*, meaning (1) ‘touch, tap, hit’ or (2) ‘get a share or part’ (OETD). This analysis was already mentioned above in the discussion about *toked* in §2.1.3.

As far as the results of Körtvélyessy, Štekauer and Zimmermann (2018) are concerned, there are some patterns of conversion that appear there and which are missing in this particular slang sample. For instance, the patterns N>A, N>Adv, A>V, A>Adv, V>A, V>Adv, Adv>N, Adv>A and Adv>V are all missing in our slang sample. On the other hand, there is also the reverse situation; two patterns (onomatopoeia>N, combining form>N) occur in this slang sample, while they are not mentioned in *Word-formation in European Languages*. The samples which occur in both are N>V, V>N and A>N.

Additionally, to compare the results with the GDS, the words which also appear there are: *chief* ‘to smoke (a cannabis cigarette)’, *piff* ‘marijuana; thus as adj. strong’, *primo* ‘a marijuana cigarette laced with cocaine and/or heroin’, *smoke* ‘anything smokeable, a cigar, a pipe, a cigarette, tobacco’, and *toke* ‘a puff or drag of any kind of cigarette (usu. cannabis), or a pipe’. As exemplified, the meanings of the words proposed by UD were also found to be attested by GDS.

### 3 Conclusions

By examining this sample of slang words, it was found that slang mostly exploits regularity within word-formation. It uses the same word-formation processes as StE, and it usually uses them in the same way as well. The word-formation processes found in this sample of words were compounding, shortening, suffixation, blending and conversion.

Even though the majority of words were coined in a regular way, within each word-formation process, there also appeared some irregularities, probably chiefly used in slang. As for suffixation, it is worth mentioning the suffix *-o/-oh* (*bottle-oh*), which comes from slang and is used to derive “familiar, informal equivalents of nouns and adjectives” (OED). Within conversion, worthy of mention are the patterns of conversion such as onomatopoeia>N (*piff*) and combining form>N (*piezo/peezo*). Finally, it is also necessary to remark the bases of slang origin used to derive slang formations, such as *munch*, *cheef*, *mutch* or *toke*, which do not occur in StE at all.

As far as the individual semantic groups examined are concerned, the most fruitful was the semantic group DRUGS, which provided the largest number of slang formations for the word-formation analysis. The reason why this group included such a high number of slang formations may be interconnected with the sociological properties of slang, such as restriction to social sub-groups (Coleman, 2009: 2). It is presumable that the social sub-groups using slang terminology for drugs care about the secrecy and restrictiveness of their conversations much more than the users of slang terminology dedicated to food or college. This implies that it is important for these drug communities to show, as Partridge (1933: 7) notes, that they are “in the swim” while others are not.

In the case of the respective word-formation processes, compounding, derivation and conversion were the most highly represented in the semantic group DRUGS. The highest number of shortenings appeared in the semantic group COLLEGE, probably because young people tend

to avoid long constructions and prefer economy of expression in their conversations. Finally, the largest proportion of blends occurred in the semantic group FOOD. This is probably because blends are usually iconic in a way that they represent the “concept of [their] two base words, and [their] meaning is thus contingent on the semantic relation between the two base words” (Bat-El, 2006: 66). In the context of food, this is crucial since food ingredients are often combined together to create the contingent of taste.

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