

THE USE OF SLANG IN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN PRESS

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the use of slang in English and American press, its peculiarities, the way the slang words are used, the way slang words are created and the distribution of slang words through different types of newspaper editorials. The subject of slang has caused much controversy for many years. Slang developed in the 16th century as a new kind of speech used by criminals but in the 18th century it started to escape the harsh criticism of being associated with criminals. All in all, it was not until the early 1920's that slang gained the interest of writers and journalists. Our research material is based on a number of English and American newspapers and magazines. The main objective of the study was to prove that slang can fulfill real communicative functions and serve communicative needs. The novelty of this research is the analysis of slang words from the perspective of their linguistic and stylistic features.

Keywords: slang; neutral word; quality press; popular press; mixed press.

Slang is actually not a language or a dialect, at all. It is more a **code** [1]. Usually the

words replaced in slang are the most common ones:

Neutral Words	Slang Words
Good	cherry, boss, phat, da bomb
Bad	icky, yucky, jankety
Crazy	nuts, bananas, crackers, bonkers
Smart	brainy, savvy, sharp

Sometimes people "adopt" the slang word or phrase without even understanding the history behind it. For example, nobody knows why these words are also called in the

following way. But most American English speakers will understand this sentence: "*I've had too many Joe's, now I need to go to the John.*"

Neutral Word	Slang Word
Coffee	"a cup of Joe"
Bathroom	"a John"

Slang fulfills at least **two different functions**. The *groups that use slang* are always in minority. For them slang is a way to make it difficult for other people to understand them, to express themselves in an individual

way, to be picturesque, striking and different from others, to demonstrate their spiritual independence, to sound "modern" and "up-to-date" and, at last, to avoid the accepted-by-everyone "common" words. But *for the*

society in general, slang is like a linguistic laboratory, where new words and forms can be tested out, applied to a variety of situations, and then either abandoned or incorporated into the regular language.

There are a lot of linguists who give slang no chance to appear on the pages of the books, there are others who remark that, possessing a strong stylistic connotation, slang cannot be excluded from the literature. If speaking about the modern press, especially about the “yellow” one, we will find slang in abundance.

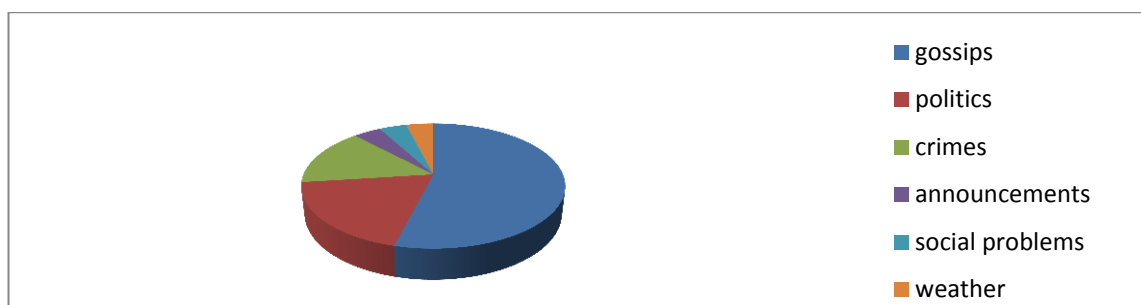
Journalists have no space and time to express themselves in literary words, and that is why they use slang words which are more expressive. So, slang words being very “strong” in meaning and in stylistic coloring

are able to influence the reader more if used in press.

The study of the number of different English-language newspapers and magazines has brought us to conclusion that the slang words and expressions are to be found practically in all kinds of newspapers, mainly in editorials, when they write about different topics (gossip, political topics, crimes, announcements, social problems/life, weather, etc.) but, of course, in different proportions.

Most of all, slang words are used in **gossip** (54 %), then comes **politics** (19 %), **crime** (15 %), **announcements** (4 %), **social life** (4 %) and **weather** (4 %).

The list of newspapers is given in the Bibliography.



The newspapermen writing about **gossip** have to use a lot of slang words. The private lives of well-known people are often widely covered there.

e.g. **Former frenemies Dan Humphrey (Penn Badgley) and Blair Waldorf (Leighton Meester), who is also juggling her royal beau and on-and-off love Chuck Bass (Ed Westwick), were snapped in a lip lock while filming the CW show in NYC on Monday [9].**

This passage is from an article about the popular CW show, “Gossip Girl”. “**Frenemies**” is the first slang word used here, which is composed of two antonyms, “*friend*” and “*enemy*”. The author of this article created this word to describe the rela-

tionships between these two characters who hadn’t realized whether they are friends or enemies for so long. The second one is “**juggling**”. In this context this verb means to *try to fit two different persons into your life*, especially with difficulty. It also has another meaning: *to make a fool out of somebody*, in this case out of Prince Luis and “**on-and-off**” love Chuck Bass. This word is used here to denote that *from time to time Blair is in love with Chuck and then she is not again*. The next “**snapped**” is a slang word for “*snapped*”. The slang combination “**lip lock**” is used metaphorically in this passage. It is used to describe how passionately the two heroes kissed each other, as if their lips were locked together.

Slang words can be used to show **the mood** and the **behavior** of a person or the situation this person is in.

e.g. One *flip* through these *bad-to-the-bone* styles should set you *straight*. Check out the *divalicious* stars who are *donning* leather, lace and skintight rubber in a new wave of *dominatrix chic*. The *dancer-turned-actress*, best known for her role as Brittany S. Pierce on 'Glee,' *rocks out* in a new video [7].

The word “**dancer-turned-actress**” clearly expresses the idea of the author (*an actress that has changed her profession becoming a dancer*) but can hardly be substituted by other words or expressions. The word “**bad-to-the-bone**” means *mean*, but if we change that word with its synonym, the sentence will lose its stylistic color and will stop being so impressive.

This passage is full of slang words such as “**flip**” (a *move, pass*), “**straight**” (*conventional*), “**divalicious**” (*luxurious*), “**to don**” (*put on, wear*), “**chic**” (*stylishness and elegance*), “**to rock out**” (*enjoy oneself in an enthusiastic and uninhibited way, esp. by dancing to rock music*).

Thanks in part to the dance floor, Kirstie Alley is on her way to rocking a slim body once again. She spends "every day" busting a move and has already dropped 50 pounds [11].

Due to dancing, K. Alley will soon “**rock**” a slim body. We have already observed the use of slang word “to rock”, while here is another meaning of this word: “rocking a slim body” means *having a slim body* or being slim. So we can conclude that “to rock” is a polysemantic word. The celebrity spends every day “**busting**” a move (*doing one and the same move many times*) due to which she “**has dropped**” (*she has lost*) 50 pounds. But this is not only because of dancing, but only “**in part to**” dance floor or partly, in *some degree*, as she is also on a diet.

e.g. **Adele may be rolling in the creep. A pal says she's worried that she has an unwanted roommate in her \$11 million West Sussex mansion — a ghost. She's also complained of hearing rattling noises in her newly rented home [8].**

This article is about Adele, who won six Grammys this year. The author tells that she is probably “**rolling in the creep.**” He means that *she is going crazy* as she thinks there is a ghost living in her mansion. The author used the word “rolling,” referring to Adele's famous song “Rolling in the Deep.” A “**pal,**” that is *a friend*, says that she is worried about some rattling noises.

Slang is not only used in the editorials about celebrities, but also in the editorials on **political topics** often for creating a humorous effect.

e.g. **BUSH'S BOOZE CRISIS [5].**

In this headline the slang word “**booze**” can be found, which means *alcohol, especially hard liquor*. It is used to create an ironical image. Here the **assonance** is used: we can find the repeating sounds [b], [u], [s] and [z], which can be heard as well as seen vividly by the reader.

e.g. **Western media 'sexed up' Georgia conflict [6].**

This article is about the Georgia-Russia conflict and how western media placed partial and biased views on this issue. Here we can notice the slang “**sexed up**”. It means “*to make something more interesting or exciting; to exaggerate*”. This is used to make this piece of writing ironical and jocular. Before reading the whole article, one may gain the general picture of its content, feel the tone of the author and notice the author's critical opinion about partial news.

The authors of the articles about the **crimes** use many slang words because they write about different crimes and people, seldom about death.

e.g. *Ex-WRKO gabber Reese Hopkins has been in the clink for nearly two years* [3].

There are several slang words within this sentence. First of all we should speak about the word “**ex-WRKO**” which is an adjective for Reese Hopkins and is used to describe him. “**Ex**” means *former* and “**WRKO**” is a *talk show station*. This word-combination shows that R. Hopkins once was working at that station. The slang “**gabber**” is also a description for Hopkins, and it has other slang synonyms such as *gas-bag*, *windbag*, *chatter-box* and means *a very talkative person*. And the last one is the “**clink**”. He “has been in the clink” means *he was put in prison or he was imprisoned*.

Slang words can be found in announcements, which must be very precise and short that is why metaphors cannot be used here.

e.g. *For a big crane-smashes-into-a-skyscraper-office scene, Howard was attached to a zip line and hoisted five stories aloft* [2].

The word “**crane-smashes-into-a-skyscraper-office**”, being an attribute to the word scene, lets the author not to write: “*The scene from the movie where a big crane smashes into a skyscraper.*” The use of words made by means of informal word-creation helps journalists to save time and

space. Moreover it adds a humorous effect and a mark of a personal style of the author.

Slang words are also found in the editorials on the social problems.

e.g. *A cancer stick shift in Paris* [4].

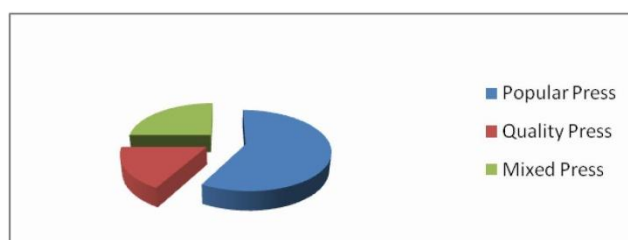
This headline is also a very interesting one. To begin with, there's the slang word “**cancer stick**”, which means a *cigarette*. But a cigarette can't shift in Paris. The whole meaning of the article can't be derived from its headline. The thing is that “cancer stick” is used as a metonymy for a restaurant which is called Smoky. The author associated the smoke with the cigarette and used its slang variant in his work.

Slang can be also used while talking about weather conditions.

e.g. *Britain trounced almost all of Europe at over 25C today as an Easter heat wave continued to sweep the UK* [11].

In this sentence the word “**trounced**” is used, which means “*to defeat heavily in a contest*”. Besides the use of slang, here with the help of “trounced” the author used personification as well: Britain and Europe are treated as people who can take part in a contest.

Thus, we came to the conclusion that most of all slang is used in the **popular press** (58 %), then in the **mixed press** (25 %) and only then in the **quality press** (17 %).



After analyzing the slang units in our research, a lot of interesting peculiarities of its use in newspapers have been singled out.

As we have observed, the attitude to slang changes with the time and its stylistic functions are appreciated by certain groups

of modern linguists. No living language is simply one set of words which can be used the same way in all situations. The nature of language is such that there are in infinite variety of different ways to arrange its elements. Slang is actually not a language or a

dialect; it is a code in which one vaguely related or unrelated word or phrase is substituted for a more common one.

Having very strong stylistic coloring, as well as being able to influence the reader, slang words are quite suitable if used in editorials. Just one word can give the reader the whole amount of information it includes. Slang is used to talk not only about gossip and crimes but also about politics, social problems, weather conditions, sport and so on. This shows the universality and necessity of slang words and underlines the concernment of slang for the newspaper functional style.

Thus, slang words are used to establish the author-reader relationship, to criticize, to express the author's opinion, to show his feelings, to add a humorous effect, to create an ironical picture, to add an implication, to save time and space, to make the article individual, to create a sarcastic tone, to make a colorful and vivid images with the use of synonyms, etc.

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