

Slang



The definition of Slang

- Slang is the use of informal words and expressions that are not considered standard in the speaker's language or dialect but are considered acceptable in certain social settings. Slang expressions may act as euphemisms and may be used as a means of identifying with one's peers.
- As to the author's words "all slang is metaphor", it is a true observation, though the second part of the statement "all metaphor is poetry" is difficult to accept, especially if we consider the following examples: *mug* (for *face*), *saucers*, *blinkers* (for *eyes*), *trap* (for *mouth*, e. g. *Keep your trap shut*), *dogs* (for *feet*), *to leg* (*it*) (for *to walk*).

Defining slang

- Few linguists have endeavoured to clearly define what constitutes slang. Attempting to remedy this, Bethany K. Dumas and Jonathan Lighter argue that an expression should be considered "true slang" if it meets at least two of the following criteria:

- It lowers, if temporarily, "the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing"; in other words, it is likely to be considered in those contexts a "glaring misuse of register."

- Its use implies that the user is familiar with whatever is referred to, or with a group of people who are familiar with it and use the term.

- "It's a taboo term in ordinary discourse with people of a higher social status or greater responsibility."

- It replaces "a well-known conventional synonym". This is done primarily to avoid discomfort caused by conventional phrases or by further elaboration.

Difference between Jargon and slang

- Slang is different from jargon, which is the technical vocabulary of a particular profession, and which meets only the second of the criteria given above. Jargon, like many examples of slang, may be used to exclude non-group members from the conversation, but in general has the function of allowing its users to talk precisely about technical issues in any given field.

Extent and origins of slang

- 1) Slang can be regional (that is, used only in a particular territory) as cool and jive, fella, fruit, but slang terms are often particular instead to a certain subculture, such as music or video gaming (Leet-cracking video game).
- 2) One use of slang is to circumvent social taboos, as mainstream language tends to shy away from evoking certain realities. For this reason, slang vocabularies are particularly rich in certain domains, such as violence, crime, drugs, and sex. (Candyman-торговец наркотиками, a fire line-нюхать кокаин, fried-пьяный, meth freak-наркоман, peddy wagon-тюремный фургон, ride the rods-ездить «зайцем»).

- 3) Even within a single language community, slang, and the extent to which it is used, tends to vary widely across social, ethnic, economic, and geographic strata. Slang may fall into disuse over time; sometimes, however, it grows more and more common until it becomes the dominant way of saying something, at which time it usually comes to be regarded as mainstream, acceptable language , although in the case of taboo words there may not be an expression which is considered mainstream or acceptable. Numerous slang terms pass into informal mainstream speech, and sometimes into formal speech, though this may involve a change in meaning or usage.

- 4) Other types of slang include SMS language used on mobile phones, and "chatspeak," (e.g., "LOL", an acronym meaning "laughing out loud" or "laugh out loud" or ROFL, "rolling on the floor laughing", OMG meaning "Oh my God"), which used to be widely used in instant messaging on the Internet in the early 2000s.



General and special slang

- General slang includes words that are not specific for any social or professional group, whereas special slang is peculiar for some such group: teenager slang, university slang, public school slang, Air Force slang, football slang, sport slang, sea slang, and so on. This second group is heterogeneous.
- Examples of general slang: make one's bones-убивать кого-нибудь, old flame-старая любовь, burpwater-газировка.
- Sport slang: zebra-рефери.

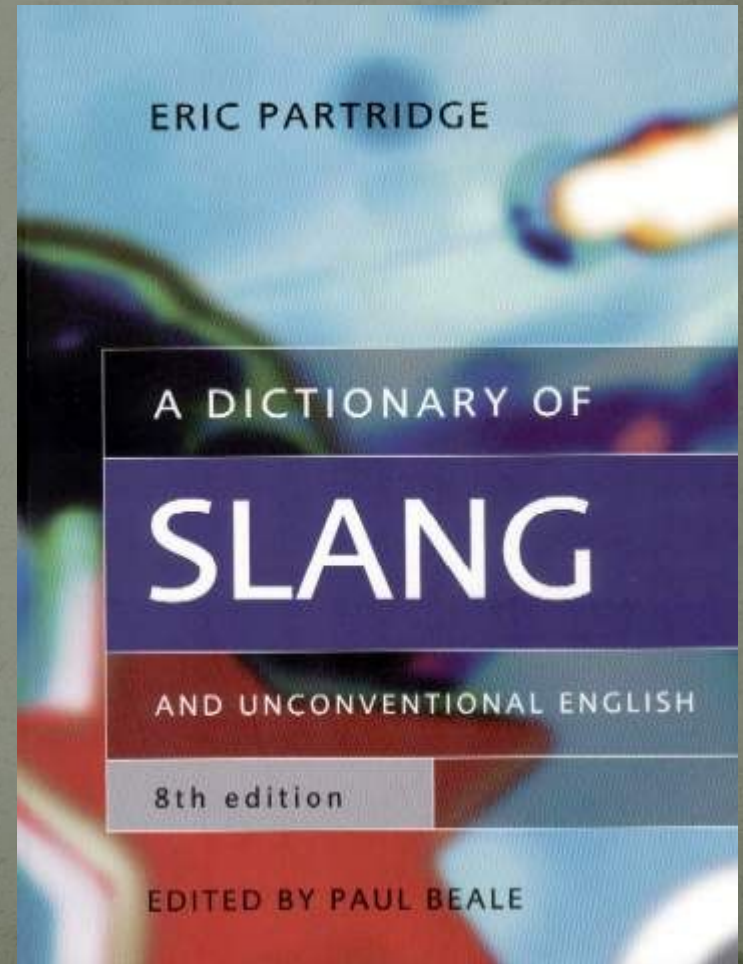


Etymology

- The origin of the word slang is uncertain. It has a connection with Thieves' cant, and the earliest attested use (1756) refers to the vocabulary of "low or disreputable" people. Beyond that, however, its origin is unclear. A Scandinavian origin has been proposed (compare, for example, Norwegian slengenamn, which means "nickname"), but is discounted by the Oxford English Dictionary based on "date and early associations"

Slang dictionaries

- Dictionaries of slang contain elements from areas of substandard speech such as vulgarisms, jargonisms, taboo words, curse-words, colloquialisms, etc.

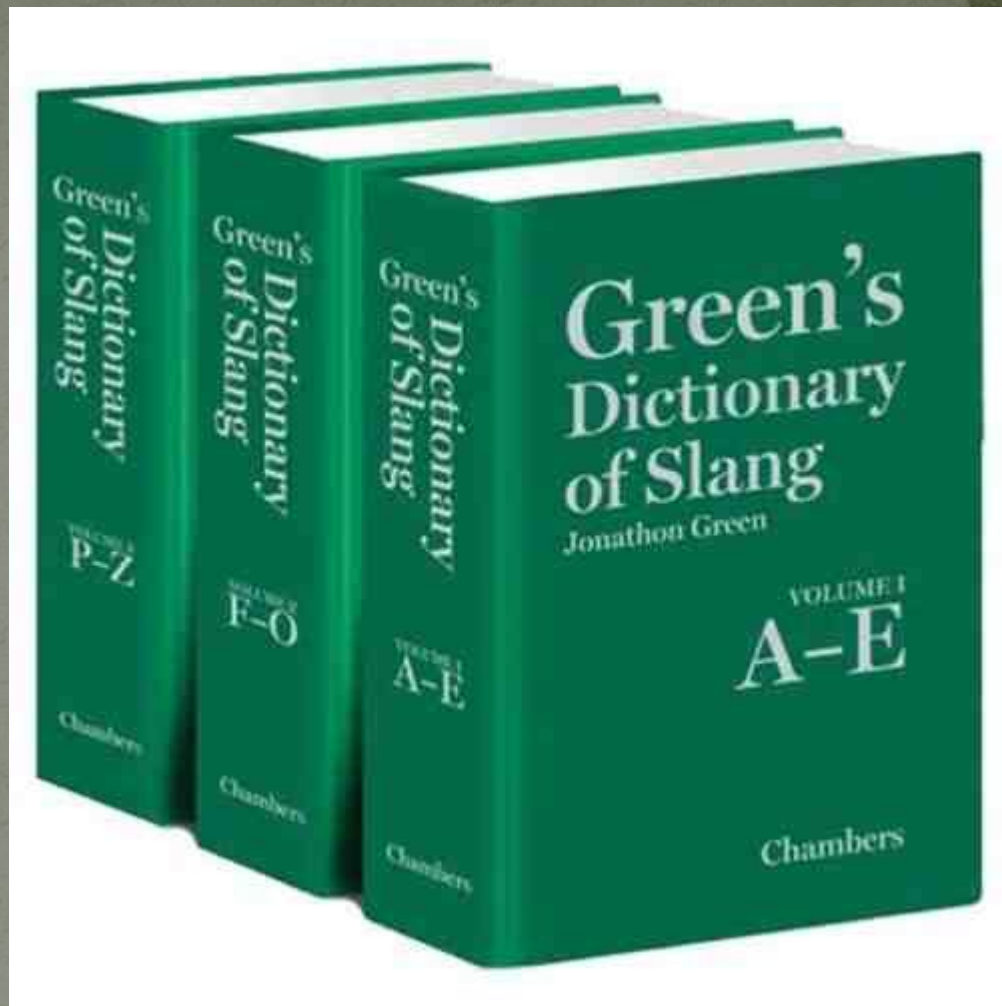


- The first work to record English slang was published as B.E.'s *Dictionary of the Canting Crew* in 1699. Modern works include Eric Partridge's famous *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (1937; most recently edited by Paul Beale, 2002), *The Oxford Dictionary of Slang* (edited by John Ayto, 1998), *The Slang Thesaurus* (2nd edition, edited by Jonathon Green, 1999), and the *Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (also edited by Jonathon Green, 2000).

Chambers Slang Dictionary

Jonathon Green

zooty turn the corner
pancoot of Bolt Street
clout work a give someone a
slap what's popping?
mufugly nang houghmugandy
quiddish face like slip
yesterday a gear
boodle bag boogoyagga
n innyhammer



Why do people use it?

- For a number of reasons. To be picturesque, arresting, striking and, above all, different from others. To avoid the tedium of outmoded hackneyed "common" words. To demonstrate one's spiritual independence and daring. To sound "modern" and "up-to-date".
- It doesn't mean that all these aims are achieved by using slang. Nor are they put in so many words by those using slang on the con-scious level. But these are the main reasons for using slang as explained by modern psychologists and linguists.

- The circle of users of slang is more narrow than that of colloquialisms. It is mainly used by the young and uneducated. Yet, slang's colourful and humorous quality makes it catching, so that a considerable part of slang may become accepted by nearly all the groups of speakers.

Thank you for your attention!