The Associative Patterns of *drug* in Modern Dictionary
of American Slang Words

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Abstract

Slang words have been exercised by people in every day communication, particularly in informal speaking. The understanding of slang word meanings is beneficial for language users to maintain smooth communication with others. One of the alternatives to study word meanings is utilized by semantic analysis. Drug is one of the most common referent of slang words in English. There are many synonymous words referring to drug, yet this paper displayed some of those words. The data were collected in a purposive sample method. The slang words taken as the data were restricted to those which were produced in 1990s and the 2000s. Three key words referring to drug were involved to sort the data: amphetamine or nervous stimulant, ecstasy, and cocaine. The slang words analyzed were focused on the forms of exocentric compounding. There are two main objectives presented in this paper: to figure out what slang words referring to drugs and describe the associative patterns of the words. The data then were analyzed in terms of their associative patterns adopting Mattielo's theory (2008). The result shows that most of slang words referring to drug have appearance and effect patterns.

Keywords: slang, drug, semantics, associative patterns

INTRODUCTION

Language is an inseparable part of human beings' lives. The use of language varieties can indicate certain meanings which can be understood by particular groups of community. Slang is one of language varieties found in every day's communication. People who do not belong to those who use particular slang expression may not get the point of speaking. Slang is defined as informal vocabulary, usually stigmatized that often serves to mark out a subculture (Llamas, Mullany, & Stockwell, 2007, p. 229). Slang is also more typically used among those who are outside established higher-status groups, thus it describes words or phrases that are used instead of more every day terms among groups with special interest (Yule, 2006, p. 211).

New terminologies referring to particular reference are found in certain period of time. In 1990s, drug in America was highly abused. The government reported that drugs were still highly consumed. Drugs abused during 1990s involved LSD, heroin, marijuana, crack cocaine, and amphetamines (www.serenityrecovery.com). In 1990s, Americans used nearly 20 tons of amphetamines (Burazin, 2002). The type of drug abused by American changed in 2000s as they used cocaine the most, spent in $36 billion a year (Burazin, 2002). The high number of drug consumption also affects language use among people in America. To talk about drug directly is regarded taboo, thus they create new terms referring to drug. That kind of term is called as slang.

Drug is one of social factors which influences American slang (Zhou & Fan, 2013, p. 2211). Slang expressions referring to drugs also develop as the types of drug abused by people in America also experience changes. A sociological view regards slang as "a social means of identification and cohesiveness within a group" (Mattiello, 2008, p. 31). The previous statement emphasizes that slang words are only recognized by certain community as a means of referring to certain referent acknowledged by its own members. Slang expressions also embody attitudes and values of group members. Therefore, slang words can show group's identity and the speaker's background (Fasola, 2014).

In lexicography study, slang may be defined with two senses. The first sense mentions that slang is the restricted speech of marginal or distinct sub groups in society, while the second sense mentions that slang is quite temporary, unconventional vocabulary characterized primarily by connotation of informality and novelty (Mattiello, 2008, p. 31). Yust regards slang as the use of ordinary words in extraordinary senses or of extraordinary words in ordinary senses (Mattiello, 2008, p. 33). On the other hand, sociolinguists regard slang as specific types of linguistic variables such as structural unit and its correlation with social parameters (Androutosopoulus, 2000, p. 109).

Some people assume that slang is the same as jargon. In fact, it is not. Mattielo argues that slang is different from jargon "in its lack of prestige and pretentiousness" (2008, p. 36). She further argues that slang is much more familiar and spontaneous than the technical jargon of science, medicine, academics, law etc. slang may be used within a particular group like musicians, doctors, soldiers, or seamen, but it does not exactly deal with status or reputation. Thus, musicians can use *funk, grunge, handbag, house, etc* to refer to different types of music genres. Slang is also different from cant. Cant is

the secret language of thieves, professional beggars, and other groups operating on the fringes of society (OED in Mattielo, 2008, p. 37). Otherwise, slang arises from language of the underworld and are used for the purposes of secrecy and conspiracy. For instance, the term *skunk* refers to drug. The previous term is used by drug dealers.

Slang is also different from dialect. Dialect is geographically restricted language. Nevertheless, slang is not necessarily associated with one region or social class (Mattielo, 2008, p. 37). What is slang in British can be standard in America or may have a different meaning within the two regional varieties. An example is the word *bomb* which is used in British to refer to a success, particularly in entertainment. However, in America the word *bomb* is used to refer to failure. Eble (1996) and Munro (1997) underline the tendency of slang to name things indirectly or figuratively, especially through metaphor (Mattielo, 2008: 44). For example, the word *bird* refers to an aero plane. Metonymy also appears in slang such as tinnie/ tinny to refer to a can of beer, synecdoche (wheels refer to car), euphemism (family jewels 'the man genitalia'), and irony (a little bit of all right 'something or somebody regarded as highly satisfactory, especially applied to a pretty woman (Mattielo, 2008, pp. 44-45).

There are two kinds of equivalence condition in slang expressions: referential equivalence and functional equivalence (Androutosopoulus, 2000, p. 113). Referential equivalence refers to the two lexical items which have the same referential meaning, but a different expressive and/or social meaning. On the other hand, functional equivalence refers to the same communicative function in a specific context, all by having a different expressive or social meaning (Androutosopoulus, 2000, p. 113). Referent equivalence, is thus, the same as synonymy. It is the relation of "affinity which links two phonologically different words having a very similar meaning" (Mattielo, 2008,

p. 160). There are different slang terms which refer to the same referent. For examples are *horse* and *smack* which refer to *heroine;* and *Coke* and *freebase* refer to cocaine. Such slang terms can be considered exact, absolute or perfect synonyms because they have the same referent in the real world (p. 161). They also belong to the same syntactic category and are mutually substitutable or they are interchangeably used in drug addicts' conversation.

Studies on slang expressions have been exercised by some scholars. Suryanto & Setiawan observe slang words used by gamers in game online, *Clash of Clans*. They found some slang patterns used by the gamers: blending, acronym, abbreviation, and swearing words. The use of those pattern was due to their quick writing in gaming. Slang words also mark the virtual community in online game. Thus, the expressions such as *watcha, LemeBz, Enuff* and *STFU* are only understood by gamers of *Clash of Clans* (Suryanto & Setiawan). Wahyuni & Rosa (2013) observed types of word formation of slang words in TV advertisement. They chose TV advertisement as it promotes certain products or services by certain strategies, including slang expressions. In the advertisement, some forms of slang expressions were found: coinage and borrowing were mostly found in the data (Wahyuni & Rosa, 2013). Jimmi conducted analysis on slang used in *Grown Ups 2* movie. In his research, Jimmi divides the analysis into types of slang according to Chapman (1998): primary and secondary slang. The first kind of slang refers to the expressions which are generally used among people, such as terms used by urban street gangs. The second type of slang refers to terminologies used in a secret way to refer to drug, gamble, or other crimes.

The reviews of studies prove that slang expressions are delicate data to analyze. However, those studies applied morphological and sociolinguistic approaches. The research on slang is common to those interested in how slang terms are formed, the internal structure of the words. Sociolinguist also takes slang expressions as fruitful data to observe as the community background using slang can be described further. The causes and effects of using slang also interest sociolinguists. This paper attempts at observing slang expressions from another angle, semantics. As the study of meanings, semantics offers an approach to observe slang expressions and their associative patterns.

There are four associative patterns of slang expressions referring to drug: the appearance, constituent, instrument, and effect patterns (Mattiello, 2008, pp. 178-179). The first pattern concerns the primary features which characterize the external of the drugs, such as *back tar* and *brown sugar.* The appearance pattern involves the texture, quantity, and shape. The constituent pattern concerns the constitutive element of the drug, such as *coke, acid, bromo,* and *meth.* The instrument pattern is related to the way drug is taken or the instrument used for taking, such as *main line, needle,* and *sugar.* The last pattern, effect, is related to the effects produced upon the drug addict inhalation or injection, such as *dynamite, black bomber,* and *happy dust.*

METHODOLOGY

This paper applied semantic analysis as it deals with how slang words are associated to their meanings by adopting Mattielo's theory (2008). To limit the analysis, this paper observed slang words with the referent *drug.* There are a lot of slang words referring to drug, yet this paper focuses on slang words which mean "amphetamine capsule or tablet", "ecstasy", and "cocaine ". Those three meanings are chosen as they are the drugs mostly abused during 1990s and 2000s. The data were taken from Dictionary of Modern American Slang. The slang words collected are then categorized based on their associative

patterns. Each slang word associates to certain pattern proven by how the semantic properties of both slang words and their literal meanings are connected.

This paper applied purposive sampling research as the writer picked some words with certain referent in order to figure out the associative patterns used in slang words. Purposive sampling was chosen as the data collection method as it suits the nature research project which requires specific result justifications (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005, p. 101). The slang words analyzed were also restricted in the form of exocentric compounding nominal groups. Compounding creates a new, multiword item that behaves like a single part of speech (Harley, 2006, p. 99). To be specific, exocentric compounding contains of two or more words whose meanings are not related to the head. In other words, exocentric
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compounding are compounds which do not have a head. The plural nominal constituents do not function as the head (Boij, 2007). Compounding occurs when two independently meaningful roots are directly combined to form a new, complex word, usually a noun or adjective, such as *headstrong* and high school.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part is divided into two sub-categories. The first part displays the number of associative patterns of the referent *drug,* while the second part displays the categories associative patterns of the slang words. From the research, there were found 132 words referring to drug. The table below displays the summary of the number of words

Table 1 Summary of the Occurrence of *drug* Slang Words

No	Types of Associative Patterns	Number	Percentage	Slang Words
1	Appearance	74	56%	*Black deck, big brownies, bird egg, black beauty, blackbird, black Cadillac, black gold, black molly, black tar, black whack, black widow, brain pill, green burger, head drug, pink heart, roaring twenty, snow seal, baby slit, banana split, Bart Simpson, big brownies, blue almonds, booty juicy, candy flip, coke biscuit, coke burger, Dennis and the Menace, disco biscuit, disco burger, double stacked, double stacks, Fido dido, green burger, green triangle, herbal bliss, Chocolate chip cookies, chocolate ecstasy, beak lunch, chocolate rock*
2	Effect	58	44%	*Brain burner, brain tickler, energy powder, fast stuff, go-fast, Hitler's drug, little bomb, Lou Reed, Oliver Reed, red devil, stay-awake, Cali dreamers, California sunrise, cloud nine, dead road, happy pill, heavy sent, Ebeneezer Goode, flower flipping, Gary Albert, dime special, devil drug, chocolate rocket, breath of God, breakfast of champion, Bob Marley, beautiful boulders, atom bomb, Woody Woodpecker, rave energy, power pill, pit bull, lover's*

speed, love potion

	Total	132	100%

The research shows that there are only two kinds of associative patterns found in the data. Most of slang words referring to drug have appearance pattern, shown by 74 words or in 56%. The effect pattern is shown in 58 words or represented in 44%.

From each associative pattern above, there is a similarity from the slang words seen from their semantic properties. In the appearance pattern, semantic properties [+shape] and [+texture] are found in the data. In the effect pattern, three semantic properties are found: [+pleasure], [+popularity] and [+energy]. The table below displays the overview of semantic properties of the associative patterns of *drug* along with examples.

Table 2 Summary of the Semantic Properties of *drug* Slang Words

No	Types of Associative Patters	Semantic Properties	Examples
1	Appearance	[+shape]	*Bird egg, black Cadillac, coke biscuit, black deck*
		[+texture]	*White Robin, big brownies, green burger, blue almond*
2	Effect	[+pleasure]	*Cloud nine, happy pill, dime special*
		[+popularity]	*Gary Albert, Bob Marley, Lou Reed*
		[+energy]	*Energy powder, fast stuff, lover's speed, rave energy*

In table 2 above, each associative pattern can be identified through some semantic properties. In the appearance pattern, the properties of shape and texture are found in the data. The examples of slang words having [+shape] property are *bird egg, black Cadillac, coke biscuit,* and *black deck.* The appearance pattern is also identified by [+texture] as seen in the words *white Robin, big brownies, green burger,* and *blue almond.* The effect pattern can be identified by the three semantic properties: [+pleasure], [+popularity], and [+energy]. Pleasure is shown in the words *cloud nine, happy pill,* and dime special. The next property, popularity, is shown by the famous characters such as Gary Albert, Bob Marley, and Lou Reed. Energy is the last property of the effect pattern shown in the words energy powder, fast stuff, and rave energy.

In the slang word black Cadillac, which means an amphetamine capsule, the appearance of the head Cadillac can be compared to its literal meaning. Based on Oxford Advanced Dictionary (OAD), Cadillac means a large and expensive US make of car. The similar pattern observed in the literal and non-literal meanings of the words is on the quality of the referent. Cadillac is categorized as a luxurious type of car in the US. Compared to amphetamine, it is a type of drug popular in the US during 1990s. Based on the Journal of Addictive Disorders, Americans spent $5.4 billion on amphetamine. That number of money is proven by the distribution of amphetamine in drug user markets, which was represented in 37%. Thus, the word Cadillac used in the slang word can be

compared to its quantity compared to the literal meaning.

Talking about the appearance pattern, shape is one of the markers appeared in slang words. In the word *bird egg,* the head *egg* is defined as a small oval object with a thin hard shell produced by female bird (OAD). In non-literal meaning, *bird egg* means an amphetamine tablet. From the two description, both words have the similar shape to compare. The tablet and egg are compared to have similar shape, which is tiny. The occurrence of *bird* in the slang word is also on purpose. Compared to poultry, bird has smaller size of egg. Thus, the slang word and its literal meaning are connected in terms of its shape.

Texture is another marker in the appearance pattern of slang words. An example of slang word having the similar texture to its literal meaning is big brownies. The head brownies can be defined as thick soft flat cakes made with chocolate and sometimes with nuts and served in small squares. The texture of brownies is soft and delicious when tasted. The texture in brownies can be compared to the recreational drug known as ecstasy. When drug addicts consume ecstasy, it is associated to tasting a delicious cake. This comparison is based on the texture of brownies and ecstasy. Similar analysis can be applied to the slang word white Robin. However, the texture is not found in the head, but the modifier white. The texture of color is the same as in ecstasy. The presence of Robin as the embossed character is related to the popularity of the character. It is compared to the popularity of the drug itself. There were 58% of drug related Emergence department admission which are in the forms of ecstasy.

Another example of slang word having appearance pattern is white Robin. White Robin refers to the recreational drug known as ecstasy. Robin is a character in movie familiar in the US. The character is described as a thief who steals money from rich people and gives it to poor people (OAD). The use of embossed character in drug slang word refers to the popularity of the character which is in line with the drug popularity. The appearance pattern here is seen from the word *white* whose texture is the same as ecstasy.

The other associative pattern of *drug* found in the dictionary is the effect pattern. It is related to the effects produced upon the drug addict inhalation or injection, such as *brain burner* and *brain tickler*. The effect shown in the word *brain burner* is shown by the head, *burner.* In that word, drug is associated to a substance giving heat to the addict's brain. This effect can create to being drunk and insanity. Similar effect is shown in the word brain tickler. The head of the previous word reveals that drug can produce uncomfortable feeling in sensitive part of the body (OAD), particularly brain. Those two examples give negative effects of drug. Those who abuse drugs can create negative effects towards others as their brain, or sanity, can be broken because of them.

The effect pattern is also associated to famous people, for instance Lou Reed, Oliver Reed, Gary Albert, Ebeneezer Goode, and Bob Marley. Lou Reed produces an album entitled ecstasy in 2000s. Its popularity is associated to drug by particular society. People tend to mention Lou Reed to refer to ecstasy rather than mention the kind of drug directly. Oliver Reed is another popular figure known for his alcoholism and binge drinking. His addiction once led him to a fatal heart attack which caused his absence on a movie (www.thedailybeast.com). Ebeneezer Goode is a song by The Shamen, a British band, which is associated to drug since its singer was an ecstasy addict even when he was on stage. The singer mentioned that he enjoyed the effect of drug to boost his feelings and energy. The

popularity of the song is used as a slang word referring to ecstasy.

The effect is found in other words, such as *energy powder* and *happy pill.* In energy powder, the effect is shown in the modifier. Drug is associated to energy. Thus, drug is abused in order to give its abusers more energy. It is not neglected that some famous people abused drugs to boost their energy. Drug is also associated with happiness, such as in the word *happy pill.* The modifier shows the effect of drugs. Drug is associated to pleasure. The addicts can feel pleasure when abusing drugs. Those two examples are associated to positive effects felt by the addicts. *Rave energy* is another slang word which has effect pattern. The modifier *rave* is related to illegal drugs (OAD). The head *energy* is related to the enthusiasm held in the party. Thus, *rave energy* has effect pattern as it gives enthusiasm and power to join the party. Other words having similar effects are *go fast, stay-awake, fast stuff,* and *pit bull.*

The discussion above reveals that *drug* is mostly associated to its appearance in terms of shape and texture. The shape of *drug* is utilized by community to call it in different words. The shape associated to *drug* is in the forms of size and color. The texture of *drug* is found in the form of noun head which refer to the material in which drug is formed. In the effect pattern, the slang words also convey a pattern. *Drug* is associated with pleasure, popularity and energy. The slang words are

formed in a pattern of compounding with can created the feeling of pleased and happy. The popularity effect is often related to famous figures or things which are attached to drug addict. On the other hand, the property of energy is built in the society to leave such sensation to its addicts when they consume drugs.

CONCLUSION

Slang words are chosen by particular community to communicate in informal speaking. The replacement of one word to another due to its being taboo is found in English, including when they talk about drug. This study proves that slang words referring to *drug* have particular pattern, particularly seen from its associative patterns. Slang words referring to *drug* has two associative patterns: appearance and effect. The appearance pattern is found more in the dictionary, which are presented in semantic properties [+shape] and [+texture]. The effect pattern is found in the dictionary and represented in semantic properties [+pleasure], [+popularity] and [+energy]. In sum, slang words are kinds of language variety which have consistency in their associative patterns, proven by their semantic properties. However, further research observing slang words in different word formation can be done to figure out whether the consistency still occurs in different word formation.

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