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Headedness in contemporary English slang blends

Gorica Tomić

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Introduction

The importance of investigating minor word-formation processes (e.g. acronyms, blends, clippings, etc.) in various registers, of which slang with its great potential for morphological, lexical, and semantic innovation seems to be constantly shaping the standard language, as well as a number of non-standard ‘lects’ [Mattiello 2005: 7], has been emphasized more than once in the relevant literature [Mattiello 2008: 43, 59; Müller *et al.* 2015: 213].¹ Furthermore, slang and informal register in general have often been considered a rich source of blends (cf. Pound [1914: 2]; Adams [1973: 157]; Ralli and Xydopoulos [2012: 47–48]; Ronneberger-Sibold [2012: 124]; Mattiello [2008: 65–66]; Mattiello [2013: 232]. Therefore, the primary motivation for the present research is found in the works by Müller *et al.* [2015: 213], where the importance of systematically exploring different registers for their specificities in the context of word-formation is stressed, and Mattiello [2008], in which the focus of attention is, *inter alia*, on a description of slang morphology and its peculiarity.

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper for the analysis of a number of contemporary English slang blends is the one of Extra-grammatical Morphology (EM). According to Dressler [2000: 1], EM “is the antonym of morphological grammar”, in that various extra-grammatical operations it includes (e.g. abbreviation, blending, clipping, etc.) “are not clearly identifiable and their input does not allow a prediction of a regular output” [Mattiello 2013: 1].² That is,

From a morphological point of view, these processes are considered unpredictable, in the sense that we cannot predetermine how much of the original lexeme will be retained in the new formation [...]. [Mattiello 2013: 4]

Within EM a blend can therefore be defined as

a deliberate creation of a new word out of two (or rarely more) previously existing ones in a way which differs from the rules or patterns of regular compounding. [Ronneberger-Sibold 2006: 157; cf. also Dressler 2000: 5]

Blends are also referred to as “unpredictable formations”, i.e. the products of a creative technique which deviates from productive rules of grammatical morphology and are thus less natural than, for instance, compounds [Marchand 1969: 451; Bauer 1983: 232; Dressler 2005: 268; Mattiello 2008: 16, 25, 138; Gries 2012: 145; Körtvélyessy 2014: 296]. Although blends represent “non-rule governed morphological innovation”, there are, however, certain regularities or preferences in their formation, as well as similarities between them and some grammatical morphological processes, such as compounds [Marchand 1969: 451; Thornton 1993: 147; Plag 2003: 122, 125; Ronneberger-Sibold 2006: 155; Lehrer 2007: 116; Mattiello 2008: 138–139; 2013: 5–6, 14, 131; Gries 2012: 146; Bauer *et al.* 2013: 458, 462; Olsen 2014: 46; Renner 2015: 123; 2019: 36]. Furthermore, Ronneberger-Sibold [2010: 206] claims that such “creative techniques” are highly motivated by the reduction of the transparency of the output while retaining an optimal form for it. She [Ronneberger-Sibold 2010: 206] also states that there are “certain [...] communicative contexts which favor totally or partially opaque words labelling their referents, rather than transparent ones describing them [...]”. Such contexts include, *inter alia*, “all secret languages” [Ronneberger-Sibold 2010: 206], among which, as we will see shortly, slang holds an important position.

Similarly to blends, slang is more often than not considered of minor importance, compared to standard language, “created and [...] used by those beyond the social, and by extension linguistic, pale” [Green 2016: 9]. Slang has also been rather incorrectly conceptualized by many lexicographers as necessarily “informal or bad language” [Mattiello 2005: 7, 10–11; 2008: 31, 32]. However, there are authors (cf. Mattiello [2005; 2008]) who have quite successfully managed to capture and demonstrate not only the pervasiveness of the phenomenon of slang across speech, but also its (creative) value, i.e. the originality of its forms and meanings (the quality I also endeavor to explore and demonstrate in this paper). According to Mattiello [2005: 9], one of the two main reasons (the other being its ephemerality) why the concept of slang is almost impossible to define, at least not properly, is its “rather wide, all-encompassing nature”. Namely, it has been this very nature that has led many sociolinguists to consider slang equivalent to such non-standard language varieties as cant, jargon, dialect, vernacular, or even accent [Mattiello 2005: 7, 9, 11]. With regard to the nature of slang, Green [2016: 24] believes that one of the most prominent characteristics of slang is its subversive nature. That is, the greater part of its lexis

is based on the recycling of terms that are well established in standard use. Slang takes them over, turns and twists them, and offers them up in new combinations and senses. [Green 2016: 27; cf. also Mattiello 2005: 8, 12; 2008: 59, 156]

Another important characteristic of slang is its secrecy [Bareš 1974: 183; Mattiello 2005: 13, 27]. Even though the etymology of the word *slang* as a blend of *secret* and *language* has been abandoned [Green 2016: 29], one cannot de-emphasize “conscious secrecy in the formation and use of slang” or its resulting semantic indeterminacy [Mattiello 2005: 17, 23, 25; 2008: 16–17]. For instance, referring to the semantics of slang

in general, Mattiello [2008: 44–45] reports that there is a tendency in slang to “name things indirectly or figuratively, especially through metaphor [...], metonymy [...], synecdoche [...], euphemism [...], and irony [...]” (cf. also Sornig [1981: 61]). Furthermore, slang words are, similarly to blend words, often characterized as ephemeral and/or trendy [Lehrer 2003: 369; Mattiello 2005: 9; 2008: 47; 2013: 8; Green 2016: 30, 85].

Considering all the above, and especially the fact that both blends and slang are still controversial issues, the aim of the present paper is to investigate some of the formal and semantic characteristics of blends in contemporary English slang, or more specifically the patterns by which they are formed, their morphosyntactic (i.e. grammatical) and semantic headedness, as well as the relationship between the two types of head. Accordingly, the paper is structured as follows: Section 1 gives a brief account of some of the formal and semantic characteristics of English blends in general and slang blends in particular. It also provides some definitions and considerations of the notions of ‘head’ and ‘headedness’ in morphology. Section 2 explains the data collection and methodology. Section 3, which is divided into three subsections, presents a thorough qualitative and, to a lesser degree, quantitative analysis of the patterns employed in the formation of the slang blends, as well as the analysis of their morphosyntactic and semantic headedness. Conclusion offers some general remarks on the analyzed slang blends, including the relationship between the two types of head.

1. On some formal and semantic characteristics of blends in English

According to Pinker [2007: 297], by far the most common source of new words is the use of existing ones, either in their full or clipped form. In producing these new words, each language has its own more or less predictable mechanisms. One such, but rather unpredictable mechanism which has become particularly fashionable in English over the last few decades is most often referred to by linguists as *blending*. The lexical phenomenon of blending is said to have been popularized by Lewis Carroll in his nonsense poem *Jabberwocky* (1871) [Pound 1914: 1]. Ever since then, many attempts to define blending and its products – *blends* have been made. For instance, under one of the well-known and oft-cited definitions, a blend is defined as “a new lexeme formed from parts of two (or possibly more) other words in such a way that there is no transparent analysis into morphs” [Bauer 1983: 234].

On the basis of one other definition, blends are complex words whose formation “involves two or (rarely) more base words” in such a way that these base words lose some of their phonetic (or orthographic) material and are thus “best described in terms of prosodic categories” [Plag 2003: 121]. Similarly, Bauer [2003: 225] claims that in a blend the first part of one word is combined with the last part of another, in such a way that it

is usually no longer (in terms of number of syllables) than the longer of the two base words. What is more, the switch point between the two words seems to be determined by the phonology of the bases, so that, in *slang + language > slanguage*, we avoid the phonological repetition of /læŋ/.

The influence of prosody on the formation of blends is also mentioned by Olsen [2014: 46] who states that

in blending, two lexemes are combined, but at the same time they are superimposed upon one another leading to a shortening of one or both constituents. Nevertheless, the meaning of each constituent lexeme flows into the meaning of the blend in the same manner as with compounds [...]. The shortened forms of the blend's constituents are subject to prosodic factors.³

A somewhat more elaborate definition of blends is provided by Mattiello [2013: 6]. She defines blends as words

obtained by fusing parts of at least two source words, at least one of which is curtailed and/or there is a graphemic/phonemic overlap between them. Hence, they exhibit some sort of structural fusion, which is reflected in their semantics [...].

Finally, “the principles of maximization and economy of effort”, which seem to be crucial for the creation of blends too, are emphasized by Balteiro [2013: 886]. In other words, blends “allow the creator to express in a single word what otherwise would formally take at least two words” [Balteiro 2013: 886]. Blends also meet “the brain's need for a denser information load by shortening certain very familiar concepts which require a shorter processing time” [Chung 2009, as cited in Balteiro 2013: 886].

Regarding slang blends in particular, Mattiello [2005: 22] claims that they “may exhibit some anomalies”, in that certain slang blends are formed by some non-prototypical patterns. Therefore, she [Mattiello 2005: 22; 2008: 139–141] distinguishes prototypical from partial (and less typical) blends. In prototypical slang blends, the first part of one word and the end of another are fused, whereas in partial slang blends, one of the input words is retained in its entirety, or one word is inserted within another one, or the two words simply overlap, as in *kidvid*, *gaydar*, *gazunder*, *dirty-mac*, *ambisextrous*, *nerk*, or *boolivan*. Some slang blends represent a mix of an acronym or an initialism and (part of) a regular word, such as *Amerikkka* or *buppie*. Also, most of prototypical slang blends belong to the syntactic class of adjectives and are formed from other (non-)standard adjectives which are similar or related in meaning. The pattern is repeated in some prototypical slang nominal blends as well.

Besides the above-mentioned semantic similarity, there is another significant characteristic on the basis of which blends are comparable to compounds. It is the notion of a ‘head’ [Kubozono 1990: 1]. Namely, the notion of a ‘head’ is used in morphology to distinguish between endo- and exocentric compounds [Halupka-Rešetar and Lalić-Krstin 2009: 119]. Endocentric compounds are considered hyponyms of one of their members, whereas exocentric ones are not hyponyms of either of their members (e.g. names of people, animals, and plants) [Bauer 2003: 42, 177; Plag 2003: 146].⁴ According to Williams' *Righthand Head Rule* (RHR), “the head of a morphologically complex word” in English is “the righthand member of that word” [Williams 1981: 248].⁵ This claim, however, has proved to be rather problematic, especially in the context of compounds, given the number of exceptions which include not only exocentric compounds, but also those that have their head on the left or those whose members equally contribute to the resultant meaning and can thus be said to be double-headed [Marchand 1969: 13–14; Bauer 2003: 179, 182; 2008; Plag 2003: 147, 183; Bauer *et al.* 2013: 28, 635]. It is also noteworthy that there are numerous exceptions to endocentric compounds in slang and that the notion of ‘headedness’ is a controversial issue in blends too, since the head may be either the right-hand or the left-hand member, or they may even be termed “headless” [Mattiello 2008: 85; 2013: 60, 129–130]. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to say that the head of an endocentric compound (and by

extension an endocentric blend) is the member which transfers its grammatical or semantic information to the compound or blend as a whole [Bauer 2003: 177].

With regard to the semantic headedness of blends, Bat-El [2006: 66] claims that “a blend is one word that delivers the concept of its two base words and its meaning is thus contingent on the semantic relation between the two base words”. She [Bat-El 2006: 66] illustrates the aforesaid by the blend *skinoe* which is made up of *ski* and *canoe*, where the latter “functions as the semantic head, since *skinoe* is a type of *canoe*”. But, in *snazzy*, “neither *snazzy* nor *jazzy* functions as a head and the meaning of the blend is thus a hybrid of the meaning of the two (sometimes near-synonymous) base words”. Bat-El [2006: 67] further remarks that blends in English “do not show preference for endo- or exocentric relation, whereas compounds are mostly endocentric”, but that endocentric blends, similarly to endocentric compounds, are largely right-headed (cf. also Gries [2012: 164]). In exocentric blends, however, the base words are of equal semantic status [Bat-El 2006: 67].⁶ Finally, Bat-El [2006: 67] mentions that for some blends such as *smog* or *brunch* it is not quite clear which semantic relation exists between its base words.⁷

In their analysis of the semantics of blends, Bauer *et al.* [2013: 485] also mention a small group of blends “that is difficult to characterize”, in that some of those blends are rather opaque (e.g. *Boyzilian*, *Internot*, *transwestite*) and thus require extra semantic information to be properly interpreted. The authors [Bauer *et al.* 2013: 483–484] also claim that blends are semantically remarkably similar to non-argumental attributive and coordinative compounds, that is,

in semantically attributive blends, as in attributive compounds, the blend as a whole is a hyponym of the second blended element, and the first element bears some contextually plausible relationship to the second. [...] For blends that have coordinative interpretations, we find both appositive and compromise types. [...] As with compounds of this sort, the appositives denote the intersection of two types of entity or action. [...] The compromise coordinatives denote hybrid entities or concepts.

Another extremely useful typology of blends is proposed by Ronneberger-Sibold [2006: 168–169]. This typology, which is based on the analysis of the transparency of German blends in satirical texts and brand names, includes: *complete blends*, *contour blends*, *semi-complete blends*, and *fragment blends* (given from most to least transparent). Complete and contour blends involve two subtypes each. I will return to this typology in Subsection 3.1. and Conclusion, since one of the aims of the present paper is to investigate the slang blends’ morphotactics.

2. Data collection and methodology

The examples of contemporary English slang blends, in which two input words are combined in such a way that at least one of them is shortened and/or there is a phonemic and/or graphemic overlap between them or their parts [Mattiello 2013: 6], are collected from the online version of *Green’s Dictionary of Slang* (GDoS).⁸ The primary reason why I decided to make use of a dictionary in collecting the data for the present research is the fact that most dictionaries (along with definitions) readily provide valuable information about the date of first use of a word, its origin, examples of use, etc. The reason why I decided to use an online version of a dictionary of slang instead of a printed one is the fact that it is updated more regularly than the printed version, thus providing its users with an invaluable insight into contemporary language use,

especially if a language is as dynamic as English is and all the more so if the research is aimed at a chameleon-like register like slang.

I chose to use this specific online dictionary of slang among many other similar dictionaries available primarily because, at least to my knowledge, it seems not to have been exploited extensively in slang research thus far and also because it offers some exceptionally advanced search tools.⁹ These, for instance, include search not only by word history, meaning, and usage, but also by the time period the word is actively used in. Once the search term is selected, users can further refine the search by choosing one of the following: period of use, date of first use (word), or date of first use (sense). Since I am interested in analyzing certain slang blends only, i.e. those whose date of first use is recorded between 2000 and 2019, this tool proved to be a great help. Actually, the original idea was to include only the blends from the 21st century, but their number was unsatisfactorily low that I had to extend the search period for an additional year, i.e. 2000. This way, I managed to create a data set consisting of 60 blends (61 senses). It is noteworthy that within this time period (2000–2019) the most prolific years, in terms of the number of the blends extracted, are 2000, 2001, and 2003. The actual use of these slang blends is authenticated by fully-referenced citations in GDoS. In those rare cases where there were no such attestations available, I searched other online dictionaries of the English language such as the *Urban Dictionary* (UD), the *Collins English Dictionary* (CED), the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (MWD), and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), as well as Google for examples of their use in authentic text stretches.

3. Data analysis and discussion

3.1. Formal characteristics of the slang blends

The collected slang blends are first analyzed as regards the patterns employed in their formation. Namely, 9 formation patterns (a)–(i), given below from most to least frequent, are identified. The blends within each formation pattern are given in alphabetical order. The (parts of the) input words the blends are made up of are italicized and annotated for the syntactic category they belong to. If there is an overlap involved in the blend, the overlapping segments are indicated by being underlined.¹⁰ The meanings of the slang blends, as well as some examples of their contextual usage, will be provided in Subsections 3.2. and 3.3., in which I intend to investigate blends' morphosyntactic and semantic headedness in detail. All examples of the blends' use in context, as well as their meanings are from GDoS, unless otherwise specified.

(a) The first part of the first word is blended with the second part of the second word, with a possible (often minimal) phonemic and/or graphemic overlap between the fragments – 26 blends. Blends which manifest a phonemic overlap are (03), (12), (17), and (23); those which manifest a graphemic overlap are (06), (15), and (16); and those which manifest a phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap are (01), (04), and (11). In Ronneberger-Sibold's typology [2006: 169], this type of blend where only fragments of input words are employed in its formation is appropriately termed *fragment blends*. The term also applies to the patterns in (d) (only the first blend and the third one, though), (f), and (i). It is the most opaque type in her classification. Examples are:

- (1) *basticle*¹¹ n. [*bastard* n. + SE¹² *testicle* n.]
- (2) *blamps* n. [SE *big* adj. + *headlamps* n.]
- (3) *bonerific*¹³ adj. [*bonaroo* adj. + SE *terrific* adj.]
- (4) *chunt* n. [*chump* n. + *cunt* n.]
- (5) *Crentley*¹⁴ n. [*Chrysler* n. + *Bentley* n.]
- (6) *darty* n. [*daytime* n. + *party* n.]
- (7) *Datto* n. [*Datsun* n. + *auto* n.]
- (8) *datty* adj. [*dotty* adj. + *batty* adj.]
- (9) *dopalicious*¹⁵ adj. [*dope* n. + -a- + SE *delicious* adj.]
- (10) *faburrific* adj. [SE *fabulous* adj. + *terrific* adj.]
- (11) *fratastic* adj. [*fraternity* n. + *fantastic* adj.]
- (12) *hunty* n. [*hone* n. + *cunty* n.]
- (13) *knack*¹⁶ adj. [*naff* adj. + *wack* adj.]
- (14) *Koreegro* n. [SE *Korea* n. + *negro* n.]
- (15) *neek* n. [*nerd* n. + *geek* n.]
- (16) *nugger* n. [*nugget* n. + *nigger* n.]
- (17) *pootenanny* n. [*punaany* n. + *hootenanny* n.]
- (18) *shart* v. [*shit* v. + *fart* v.]
- (19) *slore*¹⁷ n. [SE *slut* n. + *whore* n.]
- (20) *spleefer* n. [*spliff* n. + *reefer* n.]
- (21) *spum* v. [SE *sperm* n. + *cum* v.]
- (22) *spuzz*¹⁸ n. [SE *sperm* n. + *jizz* n.]
- (23) *stray*¹⁹ n. [*straight* adj. + *gay* n.]
- (24) *wanksta*²⁰ n. [*wannabe* adj. + *gangsta* n.]
- (25) *wegro* n. [SE *white* n. + *negro* n.]
- (26) *widdle* n. [*wee* n. + *piddle* n.]

(b) The entire first word is blended with the second part of the second word, with a possible (often minimal) phonemic (and graphemic) overlap – 14 blends. A phonemic overlap is attested in blends (27), (30), (35), and (40), while a phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap is attested in those in (29), (34), and (37). In Ronneberger-Sibold's typology [2006: 169], this type, as well as the ones in (c), (g), and (h) are appropriately termed *semi-complete blends*, since they contain one full word in the output. These are, therefore, less opaque than the ones in (a), (d), (f), and (i), containing no full words. Examples are:

- (27) *Blaxican*²¹ n. [SE *B/black* n. + *Mexican* n.]
- (28) *budiquette* n. [*bud* n. + SE *etiquette* n.]
- (29) *cashish* n. [SE *cash* n. + *hashish* n.]
- (30) *chillax* v. [*chill* (out) v. + SE *relax* v.]
- (31) *crapageous* adj. [*crap* adj. + *advantageous*?²² adj.]
- (32) *crapard* n. [*crap* n. + *retard* n.]
- (33) *crapstastic* adj. [*crap* adj. + *fantastic* adj.]
- (34) *friendscape*²³ v. [*friend* n. + *landscape* v.]
- (35) *Jailic*²⁴ n. [SE *jail* n. + *Gaelic* n.]
- (36) *jerkitude* n. [*jerk* n. + *attitude* n.]
- (37) *kidult* n. [*kid* n. + SE *adult* n.]
- (38) *mackadelic*²⁵ adj. [*mack* n. + -a- + *psychedelic*]
- (39) *mangina* n. [SE *man* n. + *vagina* n.]
- (40) *twoonie* n. [SE *two* number + *loonie* n.]

(c) The first part of the first word is blended with the entire second word, with a possible (phonemic and) graphemic overlap – 9 blends. The overlapping blends include

cases which manifest a graphemic overlap, as in (42) and (49) or a phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap, as in (41) and (45). Examples are:

- (41) *buffugly*²⁶ adj. [*butt* n. + *fugly* adj.]
- (42) *cramazing* adj. [*crazy* adj. + SE *amazing* adj.]
- (43) *gertoss*²⁷ n. [SE *girl* n. + *toss* (off) v.]
- (44) *grape* n. [*gang* n. + *rape* n.]
- (45) *mexicoon* n. [SE *Mexican* n. + *coon* n.]
- (46) *schmiddy* n. [SAusE²⁸ *schooner* n. + *middy* n.]
- (47) *shwasted* adj. [*shitfaced* adj. + *wasted* adj.]
- (48) *sororowhore* n. [SE *sorority* n. + -o- + *whore* n.]
- (49) *twasted* adj. [*twatted* adj. + *wasted* adj.]

(d) (The initial or final part of) the second word is inserted within the part of the first one, with the possibility of a phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap, as in (51) and (53) or a discontinuous graphemic overlap, as in (52) – 4 blends. Examples are:

- (50) *cadazy* adj. [SE *crazy* adj. + *mad* adj.]
- (51) *hangry* adj. [*hungry* adj. + *angry* adj.]
- (52) *scrav* v. [SE *scavenge* v. + *scrape* up v.]
- (53) *yestergay* n. [SE *yesterday* n. + *gay* n.]

(e) Both input words survive due to an obligatory phonemic overlap (54) or an obligatory phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap, as in (55) and (56) – 3 blends. This type of blend is referred to by Ronneberger-Sibold [2006: 168] as *complete blends*, or more specifically, its subtype *telescope blends*. It is the most transparent one in her typology. As evidenced by only three examples below, this type is one of the least frequent in my data set. This may be due to the slang register the blends originated in, i.e. slang's preference for indeterminacy.

- (54) *Blinglish* n. [*bling* n. + SE *English* n.]
- (55) *bromance* n. [*bro* n. + SE *romance* n.]
- (56) *requestion* n. [*request* n. + *question* n.]

(f) The first part of the first word is blended with the first part of the second word – 1 blend:

- (57) *smim*²⁹ n. [*spastic* n. + *mimic* n.]

(g) The entire first word is blended with a medial part of the second word – 1 blend:

- (58) *shegarry* n. [*sheg* v. + *carry-on* n.]

(h) The first part of the second word is inserted within the entire first word, with a minimal phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap – 1 blend:

- (59) *slock* v. [SE *sock* n. + *slug* v.]

(i) The second part of the first word is blended with the second part of the second word – 1 blend:

- (60) *Vaalie* n. [Transvaal n. + *japie* n.]

3.2. Morphosyntactic headedness of the slang blends

The analysis of morphosyntactic headedness of 60 slang blends, for the purpose of which I also consulted *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* [Huddleston and Pullum 2002], as well as some of the online dictionaries mentioned in the previous section, shows that over half of them (i.e. 33) inherit their grammatical properties from the right-hand member, while only 6 blends, namely *basticle*, *cadazy*, *gertoss*, *hunty*, *pootenanny*, and *shart* have these properties determined by the left-hand member. There are also 21 blends that may be considered morphosyntactically double-headed owing to the fact that they inherit grammatical features from both of their input words.

Consider first the morphosyntactically left-headed blends, such as the common, countable, and animate noun *basticle*³⁰. Its input words (*bastard* and *testicle*) are also common and countable nouns. They, however, differ from each other, in that the former belongs to the subclass of animate nouns (the same way that the blend does), whereas the latter is part of the subclass of inanimate ones.³¹ Another blend that lends itself to a convincing analysis as morphosyntactically left-headed is the noun *gertoss*, for it is the left-hand member (*girl*) that is also a noun; the right-hand one being a verb (*toss (off)*). Unlike *basticle* and *gertoss*, the nominal blend *hunty*, used as a term of (sarcastic) endearment³², seems to evade such a straightforward left-headed interpretation, since it is made up of two other countable nouns, an endearment *honey* and *cunty* ('(offensive) a woman considered sexually' (CED)). However, if their distribution in a sentence is considered, the former normally realizes a vocative function [Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 522], the same way that the blend as a whole does, while the latter, based on the examples of its use provided in GDoS, does not.³³ Slightly less problematic to analyze is the nominal blend *pootenanny*, used to refer to the female genitals. Although both of its input words are nouns, only the first one (*punaany*) is inanimate, whereas the second one (*hootenanny*) is utilized as 'a general term of abuse'.

Regarding the adjective *cadazy*, it involves blending of the two other adjectives (*crazy* and *mad*). However, if this adjectival blend is inflected for degree, it behaves the same way that *crazy* does, since its comparative and superlative forms require a formal change from *y* into *i* before being marked by the inflections *-er* and *-est*, respectively. This little nuance seems to allow us to categorize the resulting blend as grammatically left-headed. Finally, the verb *shart* is considered grammatically left-headed because, like its left-hand member (*shit*), it can be used not only intransitively (e.g. 'He sharted at the party *last night*' (Google)), but also as a reflexive verb (e.g. 'Wyatt sharted himself' (Google)).

The slang blends whose both members can be taken to more or less equally contribute to the grammatical properties of the output, i.e. morphosyntactically double-headed blends, include: *cashish*, *chillax*, *chunt*, *Crentley*, *datty*, *hangry*, *kidult*, *knack*, *neek*, *nugger*, *requestion*, *scrav*, *shwasted*, *slore*, *smim*, *spleefer*, *spuzz*, *twasted*, *Vaalie*, *wegro*, and *widdle*. For instance, the blend *Crentley*, which belongs to the class of countable and inanimate nouns, is taken to be grammatically double-headed because both of its input words, namely *Chrysler* and *Bentley* are also countable and inanimate nouns. The blends *cashish*, *spuzz*, and *widdle* are, like their members, uncountable and inanimate nouns. Similarly, *spleefer* is an inanimate, but countable noun whose both input words (*spliff* and *reefer*)

are also inanimate and countable nouns. The countable, but abstract nominal blend *requestion* can be said to inherit these two characteristics from either of its input words, since both *request* and *question* are abstract and countable nouns. Another, highly representative example of a morphosyntactically double-headed blend is *kidult*. Namely, the blend as a whole is, like its members (*kid* and *adult*), a common, countable, and animate noun. The same applies to the following nominal blends: *chunt*, *neek*, *nugger*, *slore*, *smim*, *Vaalie*, and *wegro*.

With regard to the adjectives *datty*, *hangry*, *knack*, *shwasted*, and *twasted*, they are as gradable as the adjectives they are made up of, namely *dotty* and *batty*, *hungry* and *angry*, *naff* and *wack*, *shitfaced* and *wasted*, *twatted* and *wasted*, respectively. Finally, the intransitive blended verb *chillax* is interpreted as grammatically double-headed, since its input words are also intransitive verbs, namely *chill (out)* and *relax*.³⁴ Another verbal blend that is taken to be grammatically double-headed here is *scrav* '(UK juv.) to borrow or steal (usu. money)', since it is made up of the other two transitive verbs *scavenge* and *scrape up*.

As already pointed out, the majority of the blends in my data set are morphosyntactically right-headed. Such examples include: *blamps*, *Blaxican*, *Blinglish*, *bonerific*, *bromance*, *budiquette*, *buffugly*, *cramazing*, *craptard*, *craptastic*, *craptageous*, *darty*, *Datto*, *dopalicious*, *faburrific*, *fratastic*, *friendscape*, *grape*, *Jailic*, *jerkitude*, *Koreegro*, *mackadelic*, *mangina*, *mexicoon*, *schmidddy*, *shegarry*, *slock*, *sororowhore*, *spum*, *stray*, *twoonie*, *wanksta*, and *yestergay*. Now, consider first the nominal blend *bromance*. Both of its input words are also nouns, but unlike the noun on the left (*bro*), the one on the right (*romance*) is abstract the same way that the blend as a whole is. The abstract nominal blends *Blinglish*, *budiquette*, *Jailic*, *grape*, and *jerkitude* can all be interpreted in more or less the same manner, since their right-hand input words, namely *English*, *etiquette*, *Gaelic*, *rape*, and *attitude* are all abstract nouns, too. Their left-hand members, however, belong to various subclasses, notably uncountable nouns (*bud*, *jewelry*), common and countable nouns (*jail*), or countable and animate nouns (*gang*, *jerk*). The other nominal slang blends, such as *craptard*, *Koreegro*, *sororowhore*, and *yestergay* are all animate, the same way that their right-hand input words *retard*, *negro*, *whore*, and *gay* are. The opposite is, however, true of the noun *mangina* ('(gay) anus'), whose right-hand member is inanimate the same way the blend as a whole is, whereas the left-hand one is animate. Slightly more problematic to characterize from the perspective of morphosyntactic headedness is the nominal blend *Datto*. Although its left-hand member (*Datsun*) is a proper noun (i.e. the Datsun Motor Company), the common right-hand one (*automobile*) appears to be grammatically more dominant, since the whole blend is simply a common noun denoting a kind of automobile (e.g. "Then I reckon you left the Datto at the station, caught the first train to the city.") [cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 522]. On the other hand, the nominal blend *shegarry* lends itself to a straightforward analysis as morphosyntactically right-headed, since only its right-hand member is a noun (*carry-on*); the left-hand one being a verb (*sheg*). Similarly, the verb *friendscape* inherits its grammatical properties from the right-hand member (i.e. the verb *landscape*), the left-hand one being a noun (*friend*). Examples of right-headed blends in which the two input words also differ from each other categorially are: *blamps*, *buffugly*, *dopalicious*, *fratastic*, *slock*, *spum*, *stray*, *twoonie*, and *wanksta*.

The nominal slang blend *mexicoon* is, like its right-hand member (*coon*), a common noun; the left-hand one (*Mexican*) being a proper noun. In the noun *Blaxican*, both input

words – *B/black* and *Mexican* – are animate and countable nouns, as is the blend. However, unlike its left-hand member, which can be used either as a proper or a common noun (cf. OED), the blend as a whole is part of the subclass of common nouns, as is its right-hand member. A useful factor in determining the grammatical head of the blend can be its plural form, more precisely the suffix it is marked by when pluralized. For instance, when inflected for plural, the noun *schmiddy* behaves like its right-hand input word *middy*, in that there is an obligatory formal change from *y* into *i* when *-es* is to be added. Finally, the adjective *cramazing* is categorized as morphosyntactically right-headed, since its comparative and superlative forms are periphrastic or analytic, i.e. marked by *more* and *most*, as is the case with *amazing*, but not with *crazy*.

An interesting case is the blended adjective *bonerific*, since both of its input words (*bonaroo* and *terrific*) are also adjectives.³⁵ What makes the morphosyntactic head of this blend all the more difficult to ascertain is the fact that *bonerific* is gradable and is used in either of two functions, attributive and predicative, the same way both of its inputs are. However, when an adverb is to be formed, *bonerific* behaves like its right-hand member *terrific*, in that it takes *-ally* (not *-ly*). This seems to render the whole blend closer to *terrific* and thus grammatically right-headed.³⁶ This also seems to be the case with the adjective – *faburrific* (**faburrificly*).

3.3. Semantic headedness of the slang blends

Despite being equally (if not more) demanding to determine, semantic headedness of the slang blends seems to provide far more illuminating insights into their rather complex nature. On the basis of the semantic analysis of 61 senses, all the slang blends in my data set are divided into endocentric (55) and exocentric (6). The endocentricity and exocentricity of the slang blends are established by applying a less restrictive hyponymy test [Bauer 2008; Mattiello 2008: 160, 166; Renner 2019: 36–37]. Among the endocentrics, 32 are single-headed (21 right- and 11 left-headed) and 23 are double-headed or semantically coordinate. Apparently, the exocentric blends are in the sizeable minority, which is to be expected when a less restrictive test of hyponymy is applied. In what follows, I will first analyze and discuss the dominant, endocentric group of the slang blends and then a small group of exocentric ones. Also, the following analysis of semantic headedness of the slang blends is primarily qualitative, since my data counts only 61 senses. However, some quantitative analysis is still done and presented here for the sake of completeness, but also as an attempt to learn if there are any tendencies regarding semantic headedness of blends in this specific register.

Within the endocentrics, a further distinction can be made between those with the semantic head on the right (21 blends) and those with the semantic head on the left (11 blends). Semantically right-headed examples include: *blamps*, *Blinglish*, *budiquette*, *buffugly*, *darty*, *Datto*, *dopalicious*, *fratastic*, *friendscape*, *grape*, *Jailic*, *jerkitude*, *kidult*, *mackadelic*, *mexicoon*, *shegarry*, *slock*, *sororowhore*, *spum*, *twoonie*, and *wanksta*. Consider first the nominal blend *Blinglish*.³⁷ Namely, based on its meaning ‘(UK black/teen) Jamaican patois as adopted by white English youth’³⁸, *Blinglish* is a form of spoken English and not of *bling(-bling)*, which is used to denote ‘expensive, ostentatious clothing and jewellery’ (OED). The noun *bling(-bling)*, therefore, acts as a kind of modifier here. Other examples such as: *budiquette* (‘(US drugs) the etiquette that governs the smoking of marijuana’)³⁹, *buffugly* (‘(US black) extremely unattractive’), *darty* (‘(US campus) a daytime party’)⁴⁰, *Datto* (‘(Aus.) a Datsun automobile’), *dopalicious* (‘(US black)

wonderful')⁴¹, *fratastic* ('(US campus) pertaining to fashions as espoused by a member of a fraternity')⁴², *grape* ('(N.Z.) gang rape'), *Jailic* ('(Irish) Irish as learned while imprisoned in the prison at Long Kesh, Belfast')⁴³, *jerkitude* ('social ineptitude, gaucherie'), *kidult* ('an adult person who indulges in entertainment, usu. film, videotape or television, geared to attract both child and adult audiences'), *mackadelic* ('self-promoting, parading the qualities of a pimp'), *slock* ('(US prison) to hit someone with a heavy padlock concealed in a sock')⁴⁴, *twoonie* ('(Can.) a two-dollar coin'), and *wanksta* ('a person who acts or dresses like a gangster but who is not involved in crime' (CED)) can be interpreted the same way, since their left-hand members closely modify the (non-)figurative meaning(s) of their right-hand members or the heads. In a similar way, the noun *shegarry* ('(UK black) annoyance, irritation')⁴⁵ and a verbal blend *spum* ('(US black) to ejaculate') are interpreted as semantically right-headed, owing to the fact that they are synonymous with their right-hand input words, *carry-on* and *cum*, respectively. The two blends, however, slightly differ regarding the relationship that exists between their heads and non-heads. Specifically, in *shegarry*, the non-head (*sheg* 'to annoy, to provoke') seems to amplify the meaning of the head, whereas in *spum*, the non-head receives an object interpretation.

The noun *blamps* ('large breasts'), on the other hand, does not lend itself to such an undemanding endocentric analysis, since the interpreter has to be familiar with the figurative, i.e. metaphoric slang meaning of the right-hand input word *headlamps* - 'the female breasts'. Only in this way is it possible to consider the blend under discussion semantically endocentric in nature. Similarly, *mexicoon* ('(US black) a black man who pursues Hispanic women' is taken here to be a hyponym of its right-hand member *coon* which is used figuratively to mean 'a black person'. Yet another blend that appears somewhat more difficult to characterize as semantically right-headed is the noun *sororowhore*, glossed as '(US campus) a derog. term for a female student who enjoys an active social life'. Based on its meaning, as well as the meaning of the noun *whore* - 'derogatory a prostitute; A woman who has many casual sexual encounters or relationships' (OED), the blend cannot unambiguously be interpreted as semantically right-headed, since an active social life does not necessarily involve 'having or characterized by many transient sexual relationships' (OED). But considering the semantic feature 'promiscuous, or consisting of a wide range of different things' (OED) the noun *whore* transfers to the output, *sororowhore* may be taken to be the semantic head of the whole blend. Similarly, if one applies the standard hyponymy test to the blended verb *friendscape* meaning '(US) to amend one's circle of friends as listed on social media'⁴⁶, the blend can't be said to be semantically right-headed, since *to friendscape* is not a hyponym of *to landscape*. However, considering the above meaning of the blend, the right-hand member (i.e. the verb *to landscape*) has obviously transferred one of its semantic features, namely the seme 'modify' (MWD) to the output, thus rendering the blend's right-headed analysis possible. All in all, the previous few examples of slang blends support the claims made in the literature about "the obscure relationship between some lexemes and their slang meaning(s)" which activates "the complicated cognitive processes" on the part of the interpreter [Mattiello 2008: 59].

More or less the same is true of the following semantically left-headed slang blends. Examples include: *basticle*, *cashish*, *craptastic*, *craptageous*, *Crentley*, *gertoss*, *hunty*, *pootenanny*, *scrav*, *stray*, and *wegro*. Take, for instance, the nominal blend *basticle* which, according to the *Urban Dictionary* (UD), is used to refer to 'a jerk'. Considering the meaning of the blend's right-hand input word *testicle* 'a typically paired male

reproductive gland that produces sperm and secretes testosterone [...]’ (MWD), as well as the fact that the left-hand member *bastard* refers to ‘a contemptible, objectionable person’, the blend as a whole lends itself to a convincing analysis as semantically left-headed. On the other hand, the nominal blend *cashish* meaning ‘money’ requires a somewhat closer semantic analysis.⁴⁷ Although the blend is not a hyponym of either of the two input words, but rather a hypernym of the left-hand noun, it still receives a semantically left-headed interpretation, with the right-hand member *hashish* (seen ‘as a desirable/valuable commodity’) serving an emphasizing function. An interesting example is the blend *Crentley* which is used in US black slang somewhat humorously to designate ‘a Chrysler 300 automobile that looks like a fake-ss Bentley’. Accordingly, it is the left-hand member *Chrysler* that is the semantic head proper of the blend. In other words, *Crentley* is a type of Chrysler automobile which at the same time happens to resemble a Bentley, perhaps due to some adjustments made to the car. The synonymous adjectival blends *craptastic* and *craptageous* ‘(US) exceptionally mediocre’ are also considered left-headed because their meaning primarily depends on the almost identical meaning of the left-hand input word, i.e. the vulgar slang adjective *crap* ‘extremely poor in quality’ (OED).⁴⁸ Their respective right-hand input words, *fantastic* and the presumed *advantageous* appear to be utilized here for emphasizing and ironic effects.⁴⁹

In the blend *wegro*, used to denote ‘(US black) a white person who takes on black culture and style’, it is quite obvious that the left-hand input word *white* ‘(also White) A member of a light-skinned people, especially one of European extraction’ (OED) is semantically dominant. It is also noteworthy that the right-hand member *negro* itself involves some sort of meaning specialization here, since it is used in reference not only to ‘a member of a dark-skinned group of peoples [...]’ (OED), but more specifically to their lifestyle. The same kind of interpretation seems to be relevant in the case of the blends *gertoss* meaning ‘(N.Z. teen) a young woman’, *hunty* which is used as ‘(US gay) a term of supposed endearment, with sarcastic overtones’, *pootenanny* meaning ‘(US black) the vagina’, and *scrav* ‘(UK juv.) to borrow or steal (usu. money)’. The decision to list *hunty* here is due to the fact that it is still considered an endearment, although its primarily positive connotation is no longer that prominent, but somewhat negatively modified by the noun *cunty*, especially outside gay community. The meanings of the input words of the blend *pootenanny* ‘the vagina’, namely *punaany* ‘the female genitals’ and *hootenanny* ‘a general term of abuse’ clearly indicate that the left-hand member is the semantic head. In the nominal blend *stray* denoting ‘a heterosexual man with homosexual tendencies’, the noun ‘person’ must be added to interpret it as semantically left-headed. As regards the semantic headedness of the verb *scrav*, although GDoS states that its left-hand input word *scavenge* is to be understood as belonging to Standard English, it seems more reasonable to consider it part of slang semantics, where the meaning of *scavenge* is ‘(Aus.) to pilfer’. This way, the blend as a whole is synonymous with its left-hand input word and thus taken to be semantically left-headed.

By definition, double-headed or semantically coordinate blends include two members that carry equal semantic weight [Mattiello 2008: 89; 2013: 25]. In my data set these include: *Blaxican*, *bonerific*, *cadazy*, *chillax*, *chunt*, *cramazing*, *craptard*, *datty*, *faburrific*, *hangry*, *knack*, *neek* (sense 1), *nugger*, *requestion*, *shart*, *shwasted*, *slore*, *smim*, *spleefer*, *spuzz*, *twasted*, *Vaalie*, and *widdle*. However, among these blends, some appear to be closer to what I would term ‘true coordinate blends’, i.e. the blends in which a hybrid form

imitates a hybrid concept [Thornton 1993: 148, 150–151; Renner 2019: 38]. Such examples are: *Blaxican* ‘(US black) one who is of mixed black and Mexican blood’, *craptard* ‘(US) one who is both foolish and an advocate of stupidity’, *hangry* ‘(teen) hungry and angry’, *neek* (sense 1) ‘a dull or unpopular person, esp. one who is interested in technology’ (CED), *nugger*⁵⁰ ‘(US) an African American quadriplegic’, *requestion* ‘(teen) a request and a question’⁵¹, *shart* ‘to expel faecal matter unintentionally when breaking wind’, *smim* ‘(UK juv.) one who is both highly conformist and physically unco-ordinated’, *Vaalie* ‘(S.Afr.) a native of the Transvaal, considered a peasant, a rustic, an unsophisticated person and generally looked down upon by the citizens of Cape Town, esp. when they appear there on holiday’.⁵²

Unlike them, the blends such as: *bonerific*⁵³, *cadazy*, *chillax*, *chunt*, *cramazing*⁵⁴, *datty*, *faburrific*, *knack*, *shwasted*, *slore*, *spleefer*, *spuzz*, *twasted*, and *widdle* all represent combinations of two input words which happen to be (near-)synonyms.⁵⁵ Consider, for instance, the noun *slore* in which the derogatory terms *slut* and *whore* are fused to produce an equally disparaging meaning, i.e. ‘(US campus) a derog. term for a sexually active woman’, or the noun *widdle* which is used to mean exactly the same as its two informal input words (*wee* and *piddle*), i.e. ‘(mainly juv.) an act of urination’.⁵⁶ Consequently, blends like these are often considered “mere semantic alternatives of existing words” [Mattiello 2008: 24, 161; see also Green [2016: 12] for slang being composed of “novel-sounding synonyms (and near synonyms) for standard words and phrases”]. Furthermore, such blends seem to reflect the fact that “synonymy blocking is overridden by individual creativity, and appears to be irrelevant in clips [...] and slang [...]” [Miller 2014: 30]. This being the case, the following question arises: “Why do word blends with near-synonymous composites exist and persist?” [Evans & Steptoe-Warren 2015]. One possible explanation for the existence and persistence of such blend words in language is their “use in different sentence constructions”, as well as “very subtle semantic differences or identity implicature” [Evans & Steptoe-Warren 2015: 19, 25–26].

Finally, the exocentrics or those (slang) blends in which the semantic head is outside the blend [Mattiello 2008: 24; Bauer *et al.* 2013: 485] constitute a visible minority in my data set, since I identified only 6 such examples. These slang blends are used primarily to refer to people or their body parts, inanimate objects, and some abstract concepts such as: *bromance*, *Koreegro*, *mangina*, *neek* (sense 2), *schmiddy*, and *yestergay*. Consider first the blend *bromance* which is used to denote ‘a non-sexual relationship between males’. Namely, its second member (SE *romance*) is highly unlikely to represent the semantic head, since *bromance* is definitely not a kind of *romance*. That is, it seems rather difficult to treat it in some figurative manner or generalize the meaning of *romance* to the extent it excludes a feeling of romantic love that happens to be inherent in it (cf. the definitions of *romance* in the OED or MWD). Similarly, *Koreegro* is neither *Korea* nor a *negro*, but ‘(US black) an Asian person pretending to be a gangasta’. An alternative endocentric (i.e. left-headed) reading of *Koreegro*, whereby a transfer of metonymic, or more precisely synechdochic (*pars pro toto*) meaning occurs, seems less plausible, however. Put differently, it is rather difficult to conceive of a criterion by which *Korea*, and not, for instance, *Japan* or *China*, is representative of Asia or Asian people. Thus, one cannot but ask how entrenched figurative meanings have to be in language to account for an endocentric reading in cases such as the previous two (cf. Halupka-Rešetar & Lalić-Krstin [2009: 121]). The blend *yestergay* appears to present the hearer/reader with a similar interpretation problem, since it is neither (a hyponym of)

yesterday, nor (of) *gay*, but ‘a former homosexual man who has (re-)adopted heterosexuality’. Also, no dictionary consulted for the purposes of this paper provides *yesterday* with a figurative (adjectival) meaning of ‘former’, which (if existed) would probably lend the blend as a whole to a fairly simple endocentric analysis, i.e. ‘an ex-gay’. However, although the noun *gay* “in its modern sense typically refers to men [...] in some contexts it can be used of both men and women” (see the OED’s entry for *gay*). That is to say, even if there were such a figurative (adjectival) meaning of *yesterday*, one might also come to interpret *yestergay* as a former homosexual woman (who is not necessarily in a heterosexual relationship). On the basis of the evidence presented, *yestergay* is perhaps best described as exocentric. The other three examples, namely *mangina* ‘(gay) anus’, *neek* ‘(UK teen) a drug dealer’, and *schmiddy* ‘(Aus.) a beer glass that is smaller than a schooner but larger than a middy’⁵⁷ are, however, far more representative examples of exocentric blends.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above analysis of some of the slang blends in contemporary English, several conclusions can be reached (see also Table 1 below for a summary of the parameters used in the analysis of every single unit). Somewhat surprisingly, although the patterns used in the formation of these slang blends are quite diverse, almost half of them rise through what is considered to be a preference among English blends in general, i.e. by merging the initial part of the first word and the final part of the second one. This diversity of blending patterns is mainly due to the violation of many rules of morphological grammar, which is why blends are disfavored from the domain of Natural Morphology (NM) and more readily described as manifestations of EM. In addition, most of these 60 creations are nouns, regardless of the word classes of their inputs, with only few adjectives and verbs attested. With regard to the blends’ morphotactics, half of them (see Section 3.1. (a), (d) (*cadazy* and *scrav*), (f), and (i)) are formed from two shortened rather than whole words, which results in their greater morphotactic opacity and is perhaps best explained by the very register (i.e. slang) they are created in. If the semi-complete blends are added to this number, then it seems safe to say that there is an inclination for the obscuration of blend words in slang. That is to say, certain blending formation patterns serve quite well the communicative functions of slang, “in which outsiders of a group are not meant to understand what is communicated to insiders” [Ronneberger-Sibold 2010: 206; but cf. also Mattiello 2008: 15]. Interpretation in such cases is greatly facilitated by an overlap, which is identified in as many as 28 slang blends. Namely, 13 of these blends manifest a phonemic-cum-graphemic overlap, 9 blends manifest a phonemic overlap, whereas a graphemic overlap is identified in only 6 blends (cf. Renner [2019: 34] for similar results).

Regarding the morphosyntactic headedness of the slang blends, in over half of them it is the right-hand input word that transfers its grammatical properties to the output and is thus considered grammatically dominant. On the other hand, the preference of the slang blends for the semantic right-headedness is not that salient, since only 21 out of 61 examples can be taken to be right-headed, which may also be attributed to the cryptic and elusive character of slang. Furthermore, a frequent use of figurative (slang) meanings of the input words makes the interpretation of these blends cognitively more

demanding. It should also be borne in mind that, although I have classified all the slang blends from my data set into either endocentric or exocentric in nature, not all of them represent (proto)typical examples of endocentricity and exocentricity. Thus, it is perhaps more appropriate to conceive of the semantic headedness of these blends as a continuum of cases, with endocentric slang blends in which the head is immediately identifiable, as in *budiquette*, *dopalicious*, or *cashish* at one end of the continuum and exocentric slang blends in which the head is not identifiable from either of the input words, as in *neek* (sense 2) or *Koreegro* at the other [Halupka-Rešetar & Lalić-Krstin 2009: 121–122]. In between the two ends, but closer to the endocentrics are those blends whose heads acquire this status via metaphoric and metonymic transfers of meaning (e.g. *blamps*) [Bauer 2008].⁵⁸ Another observation that might be said to complement a rather peculiar nature of these slang blends concerns the length (in terms of syllables) of the semantic head. Namely, only 15 out of 32 endocentrics have the longer of the two input words as the semantic head. These are: *blamps*, *Blinglish*, *budiquette*, *buffugly*, *darty*, *Datto*, *dopalicious*, *friendscape*, *Jailic*, *jerkitude*, *kidult*, *mackadelic*, *scrav*, *shegarry*, and *twoonie*.

The ways in which the non-head modifies the semantic head in these slang blends are manifold. Some of the possible readings of the modifiers are: quality (e.g. *blamps*, *buffugly*, *cashish*, *dopalicious*, *fratastic*, *jerkitude*, etc.), quantity or worth (e.g. *twoonie*), concerned with (e.g. *budiquette*), membership (e.g. *sororowhore*, *Datto*), time (e.g. *darty*), location (e.g. *Jailic*), the instrument (e.g. *slock*), subject (e.g. *grape*), object (e.g. *friendscape*, *gertoss*, *spum*). There is also a small number of the slang blends, such as *basticle*, *craptastic*, *craptageous*, *shegarry*, etc. in which the modifier-head relationship is perhaps best described as the one where the modifier acts as an amplifier. Concerning the already mentioned observation that many of the slangy formations here represent no more than semantic alternatives to the existing standard words and phrases, they nonetheless increase the potential of a language, as well as the area of word-formation research [Mattiello 2005: 18]. With regard to the relationship between the morphosyntactic and the semantic head(s) of the slang blends, in more than half of them the two types of head coincide. I consider the two types of head to coincide if the blend has two morphosyntactic and two semantic heads, as in: *chillax*, *chunt*, *datty*, *hangry*, *knack*, *neek* (sense 1), *nugger*, *requestion*, *shwasted*, *slore*, *smim*, *spleefer*, *spuzz*, *twasted*, *Vaalie*, and *widdle*.

Table 1: Parameters used in the morphological and semantic analysis of contemporary English slang blends

Parameter		Number of blends in the data set
Formation pattern	the first part of w1 ⁵⁹ + the second part of w2 ⁶⁰ , with a possible overlap	26
	w1 + the second part of w2, with a possible overlap	14
	the first part of w1 + w2, with a possible overlap	9
	(the initial or final part of) w2 is inserted within the part of w1	4

	w1 + w2, with an obligatory overlap	3	
	the first part of w1 + the first part of w2	1	
	w1 + a medial part of w2	1	
	the first part of w2 is inserted within w1	1	
	the second part of w1 + the second part of w2	1	
Overlapping		28	
Non-overlapping		32	
Morphosyntactic headedness	right-headedness	33	
	left-headedness	6	
	double-headedness	21	
Semantic headedness	Endocentricity	right-headedness	21
		left-headedness	11
		double-headedness	23
	Exocentricity	6	

Last but not least, I hope some of the above conclusions have shed more light on the issue of headedness in slang blends, as well as on the variety of mechanisms that are exploited in the creation of blends in this specific register. It is also my hope that this contribution will act as a stimulus for further research into extra-grammatical phenomena (in different registers), and especially blending as a popular way of adding new words to the English lexicon.

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NOTES

1. For a discussion on slang as a linguistic register, see Green [2016: 9–12].
2. Marchand [1969: 451] also claims that blends do not have a grammatical, but a stylistic status only.
3. That "blends are generally interpreted in the same way that compounds are, though not necessarily in the same proportions" was also recognized by Bauer *et al.* [2013: 485].
4. See Renner [2019: 36–37] for a discussion about the restrictions of the hyponymy test.
5. Regarding exocentric compounds, Williams [1981: 250, 261] claims "that they are derived by headless rules".
6. Note that this claim seems to be in sharp contrast with what many authors categorize under exocentric blends (cf., for instance, Mattiello [2013: 124–125, 130]; Renner [2019: 37–38]).
7. But see Gries's [2012: 154–155] classification of English blends into synonymic, co-hyponymic, contractive, frame relation, and other (e.g., antonymy, derivation, etc.), based on the semantic relation between the two source words.
8. Since GDoS is not designed to automatically extract products of blending and hence does not make use of the term 'blend', I had to decide on the working definition of a blend first and then manually extract the examples whose etymology meets the criteria in the above definition. It (GDoS) can, however, automatically extract the products of some other word-formation patterns such as abbreviation. It is also worth noting that there is sometimes a question mark used next to one (or rarely both) of the input words in GDoS, signalling that it is just a possible input word, but also confirming the statements made elsewhere in the relevant literature that in some blends it is extremely difficult or almost impossible to unambiguously determine their input words. There are also few cases in my data set in which I had to presume the second input word (e.g. *craptastic*, *craptageous*), since no etymology was provided.
9. Cf. Mattiello [2005; 2008] for the sources she used in her slang-related research.

10. According to Kemmer [2003: 80], “of all blends, overlap blends are the type that exhibits perhaps the most striking creativity of usage”.

11. Although the lemma in GDoS reads ‘basticles’, the example of its use (“Surround the sorry basticles and wipe them all out but do it from the perimeter of the base please.”), as well as its definition (‘a general term of annoyance, abuse etc.’) seem to suggest it should be ‘basticle’ instead (cf. also the entry in the UD).

12. Standard English.

13. Note that the double *-r-* from *terrific* has been reduced to only one *-r-* in *bonerific*.

14. Here the blend coiner decided to employ the phonological rather than the orthographic form of the first fragment. The reason behind such decision may be the fact that slang “is predominantly associated with spoken language” [Mattiello 2008: 49].

15. Instead of retaining the vowel *-e-* from *dope* or *delicious*, which would result in exactly the same pronunciation with a schwa, the two fragments are blended by means of the vowel *-a-* (cf. Mattiello [2008: 140]).

16. The addition of *-k-* to the resultant combination of the two fragments does not influence the phonological form of the blend, but it seems to indicate the tendency of slang creators to make its lexis more obscure.

17. This blend, as well as some other (e.g. *Crentley*, *spleefer*, *spum*, *stray*, *wanksta*, *wegro*, and *widdle*) seem to suggest the tendency of slang blends to rhyme with the second input word.

18. The insertion of *-u-* also complicates the recoverability of the input words.

19. It seems not to be unusual for a slang blend to represent a homograph and/or a homophone of the standard term (but cf. Aronoff [1976: 43]). See also *grape* below.

20. Yet another blend in the creation of which the phonetic rendering (of the word *gangsta*) is employed (cf. also the entry for *wanksta* in the CED).

21. The blend may as well be interpreted as an example of fragment blend, i.e. in such a way that the fragment *bla-* is blended with the fragment *-ixican*. My decision to consider it the result of the second rather than the first formation pattern is influenced by the already mentioned slang’s identification with speech primarily (cf. footnote 14).

22. See footnote 8.

23. Although it says in GDoS that *friendscape* is a noun, the definition and the example of its use clearly indicate it should be labelled as a verb.

24. The word *Gaelic* can also be pronounced with a schwa, in which case the overlap would be reduced to the phoneme or the letter *-l-*.

25. Although the etymology of *mackadelic* in GDoS reads ‘[mack n.2 (1) + SE sfx *-delic*’], it seems to me that the formation of *mackadelic* here crucially depends on the word *psychedelic*, both morphologically and semantically [cf. Mattiello 2008: 21 for the interpretation of *shagadelic*]. Considering the semantics of *mackadelic* ‘self-promoting, parading the qualities of a pimp’, but also the fact that pimps are known for their flashy attire, the adjective *psychedelic* is most probably used with the meaning ‘having intense, vivid colours or a swirling abstract pattern’ (OED).

26. Not only is the consonant *-f-* doubled, but also the second input word *fugly* represents a blend itself, which makes this neof ormation all the more complex and difficult to interpret.

27. The output word is further obscured by the substitution of the letter *-i-* with the letter *-e-*. The alteration of the spelling of *girl* may in fact be attributed to the proclivity of slang creators to manipulate word pronunciations [Mattiello 2008: 41].

28. Standard Australian English.

29. Although its etymology in GDoS reads ‘[? SE spastic + mimic]’, there seems to be no reason why *spastic* should not be interpreted as part of slang lexis, where it is used to mean ‘(offensive, slang) a clumsy, incapable, or incompetent person’ (CED), especially if one considers the meaning of the blend as a whole ‘(UK juv.) one who is both highly conformist and physically unco-

ordinated'. Also, since no part of speech labelling is provided for the inputs, I take *mimic* to be a noun too, in the sense of 'a person who adopts the attitudes, behaviour, dress, etc of the group to which he or she belongs' (cf. the entry for *conformist* in the CED), or of one who simply mimics what other people do.

30. E.g. "Salman! Don't be a basticle!" (UD).

31. (In)animacy, abstractness, and similar features are considered here to be syntactic rather than semantic or, in the words of Bauer [1990: 24], syntactic features based in semantics.

32. E.g. "Oh, hunty, let me tell you something." Cf. also the three entries for 'hunty' in the *Rice University Neologisms Database*, available at: <https://neologisms.rice.edu/>

33. Due to a rather limited number of examples of the word's use in GDoS, the suggestion made here is rather tentative.

34. E.g. "I ended up chillaxing at Mike's place last night."

35. E.g. "When a girl has a bonerific body, but then a face that would make Mother Theresa cry for mercy."; "Woah, that chick was bonerific!" (UD).

36. E.g. "Hot as in bonerifically grrrrrrrrrrreat!" (Google). Also, when I entered 'bonarooly' on Google (using double quotation marks), I did not find any examples of its use.

37. This blend seems to have firmly established itself in some of the leading dictionaries of General English (e.g. CED).

38. "Jamaican Patois [...] is an English-based creole language [...] spoken primarily in Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora [...]", available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaican_Patois

39. E.g. "He has no *budiquette*, he completely skipped me in the rotation." (Google).

40. E.g. "We're going to black out while it's light out at the darty!"

41. E.g. "Stankonia packs more dopalicious jams onto one album than any hip-hop (or not) album in a long time." It is noteworthy that *delicious* "is used in American slang to form adjectives with the meaning 'embodying the qualities denoted or implied by the first element to a delightful or attractive degree'" [Mattiello 2008: 121].

42. E.g. "He's so fratastic in his silk bowtie and pastel shorts [...]."

43. E.g. "Those on the H-Blocks created 'Jailic' to counter the Crown's repression."

44. E.g. "Someone woulda put a couple of padlocks in a sock and *sloked* your dome."

45. E.g. "I've 'ad nuff of dese *shegarries!*"

46. E.g. "Sorry, I accidentally deleted you when I was friendscaping."

47. E.g. "In the safe they found [...] bundles of *cashish* – pounds, euros and dollars."

48. E.g. "Readers suggested bad products henceforth be described as: *craptastic*, *craptageous*, [...]."

49. Note also that this ironic use of the adjective *fantastic* (in blends) seems not to be uncommon [<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/explore/patterns-of-word-formation/>]. On the other hand, the very few blends containing the fragment *-tageous* (e.g. *fun-tageous* or *Eventageous* (Google)) show no such tendency in the case of *advantageous*.

50. Its left-hand member *nugget* is used in US slang to mean 'a quadriplegic'.

51. It is basically a request made in the form of a question (cf. UD).

52. This slightly modified definition is taken from GDoS.

53. E.g. "Beautiful Cameron Diaz Looks *Bonerific* In Her Redhead Version" (Google).

54. According to GDoS, the adjective *crazy* is used in the blend with the meaning '(US *black/beatnik*) a general intensifier, wonderful, amazing, weird, bizarre, according to context.'

55. Note, however, that if one adopts the semantic characterization of blends as proposed in Bauer *et al.* [2013: 483–485], both these groups belong to what they call "compromise coordinative blends" (e.g. *avoision*, *puggle*).

56. E.g. "Riddle of where to have a *widdle*" (Google).

57. E.g. "he thought the *schmiddy* – a 355ml-size glass, between the middy and the schooner – was 'overpriced'".

58. Note that Halupka-Rešetar & Lalić-Krstin [2009: 121–122] suggest that blends which involve metaphoric transfer of meaning are “more readily classified as endocentric” than those metonymy-based blends.

59. The first word.

60. The second word.

ABSTRACTS

The present paper aims at investigating both morphosyntactic and semantic headedness of 60 (61 senses) contemporary English slang blends, as well as some of the blends’ formal properties, namely the patterns by which they are formed and the syntactic categories they and their input words belong to. The blends whose first use was recorded between 2000 and 2019 are excerpted from the online version of *Green’s Dictionary of Slang*. The reason why *slanguage* is chosen for blend excerption is the fact that slangy formations are conscious rather than spontaneous [Mattiello 2008: 16], the same way that blends are, and also because slang, like blending, has a tendency for clipping words [Mattiello 2008: 141]. Among 9 formation patterns identified, half of the blends are formed from two shortened rather than whole words, which results in their greater morphotactic opacity. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of morphosyntactic headedness of the slang blends shows that in most cases it is the right-hand member that functions as the head. On the other hand, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of semantic headedness shows that the preference of the slang blends for the semantic right-headedness is not that prominent, since only 21 out of 61 examples can be said to be semantically right-headed, which may in part be explained by the cryptic character of the slang register. Also, only 15 out of 32 endocentric slang blends appear to have the longer of the two words as the semantic head. Finally, although the slang blends analyzed here are for the most part no more than the semantic alternatives to the existing standard words and phrases, they nonetheless increase the potential of a language, as well as the area of word-formation research [Mattiello 2005: 18].

L’objectif de ce travail est d’examiner la centricité morphosynthaxique et sémantique de 60 mots-valises (61 sens) dans l’argot de l’anglais moderne, ainsi que certaines de leurs caractéristiques fonctionnelles, telles que les modèles selon lesquels ils ont été créés, et le type de mots auxquels ils appartiennent, ainsi que leurs constituant. Le corpus de recherche est constitué de mots apparus entre 2000 et 2019, extraits de l’édition électronique du dictionnaire *Green’s Dictionary of Slang*. La raison pour laquelle l’argot a été choisi comme source du corpus est que les termes utilisés en argot, tout comme les mots-valises, sont des créations délibérées [Mattiello 2008 : 16], mais aussi parce que dans l’argot, de même que dans la fusion des mots-valises, existe une tendance à raccourcir les mots [Mattiello 2008 : 141]. Ainsi, en analysant les aspects structurels de 60 mots-valises, nous avons identifié 9 types de formations différentes. Dans la moitié des cas, le mot-valise est formé par fusion de deux mots abrégés, ce qui a pour conséquence une transparence morphotactique plus faible. Une analyse qualitative et quantitative de la centricité morphosynthaxique dans nos mots-valises montre que, dans la plupart des cas, le terme de droite est un centre morphosyntaxique. D’autre part, l’analyse qualitative et quantitative de la centricité sémantique dans nos mots-valises a révélé que leurs créateurs n’ont pas tendance à placer le centre sémantique dans le terme de droite, car seuls 21 exemples sur 61 ont un centre sémantique dans le terme de droite, ce qui, du moins en partie,

peut s'expliquer par le mystère du registre dans lequel ces mots-valises sont formés, à savoir l'argot. De plus, dans seulement 15 des 32 mots-valises endocentriques du corpus, constitués de plus de deux mots, le terme central est simultanément le centre sémantique du mot-valise. En fin de compte, bien que les mots-valises de l'argot analysés ici sont principalement des synonymes de mots et d'expressions standard existants, ils contribuent au développement du potentiel d'une langue, en l'occurrence de l'anglais, ainsi qu'au développement de la recherche dans le domaine de la formation de mots [Mattiello 2005 : 18].

INDEX

Keywords: blends, slang, contemporary English, morphosyntactic headedness, semantic headedness, formal characteristics

Mots-clés: mots-valises, argot, langue anglaise moderne, centricité morphosyntaxique, centricité sémantique, caractéristiques formelles des mots-valises

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