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# CLIPPING IN ENGLISH SLANG NEOLOGISMS

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**Abstract:** The research is concerned with the phonotactic, morphotactic, graphic, logical, derivational, and syntactic features of clipped English slang neologisms coined in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main preconceptions concerning clipping per se are revisited and critically rethought upon novel slang material. An innovative three-level taxonomy of clippings is outlined. The common and distinctive features of diverse types of clipping are identified and systemized.

**Key words:** clipping, slang neologism, back-clipping, mid-clipping, fore-clipping, edge-clipping.

## 1. Introduction

Redundancy ubiquitously permeates human life. According to Cherry, "redundancy is built into the structural forms of different languages in diverse ways" (1957: 18-19, 118). In linguistics, it accounts for adaptability as one of the driving factors of language longevity and sustainability. In lexicology, redundancy underlies the cognitive process of conceptualization (Eysenck & Keane 2000: 306-307); constitutes a prerequisite for secondary nomination and semantic shifting; contributes to assimilation of borrowings; nurtures the global trend in all-pervasive word structure simplification, affecting lexicon and beyond. In word formation, the type of redundancy involved is dimensional redundancy, which is defined as "the redundancy rate of information dimensions" (Hsia 1973: 8), as opposed to between-channel, distributional, sequential, process-memory, and semiotic redundancies (ibid., 8-9). Dimensional redundancy is conclusively

evident in subtractive processes presupposing word segmentation (which in this study shall be referred to as *shortening*, or *abbreviation*) and resulting in the emergence of new lexemes or, occasionally, morphemes.

*Shortening*, or *abbreviation* (Lančarič 2009a; 2009b; 2011a), is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of word formation processes that result in the decomposition of the original unit and include the conventional *acronymy* (Арнольд 1986: 142; Algeo & Algeo 1993: 9; Brinton & Brinton 2010: 108; Faiß 2004: 1678; Fandrych 2008: 116; Fischer 1998: 64; Kreidler 1979: 24; Lančarič 2000: 32; Mattiello 2013: 64; OCEL 1992: 3; Whitley 2002: 303), *alphabetism* (Algeo & Algeo 1993: 9), *back formation* (Algeo & Algeo 1993: 10; Kreidler 1979: 24), *blending* (Арнольд 1986: 141; Faiß 2004: 1678; Fandrych 2008: 116; Fischer 1998: 64; Kreidler 1979: 25; Lančarič 2000: 32; OCEL 1992: 3), *clipping* (Арнольд 1986: 134; Algeo & Algeo 1993: 8; Brinton & Brinton 2010: 108; Faiß 2004: 1678; Fandrych 2008: 116; Fischer 1998: 64; Kreidler 1979: 24; Lančarič 2000: 32; Mattiello 2013: 64; OCEL 1992: 3; Whitley 2002: 303), *ellipsis* (Арнольд 1986: 139), *graphical abbreviation* (Арнольд 1986: 142), *initialism* (Brinton & Brinton 2010: 108; Mattiello 2013: 64; OCEL 1992: 3), *phonetic elision* (Algeo & Algeo 1993: 10), as well as the novel *alphanumericy*, *emoticon formation*, *frame abbreviation*, *skeleton abbreviation* (Lančarič 2011b: 11-12, 16), et cetera. This research is aimed at investigating clipping in English slang neologisms that were coined in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 2. Defining clipping

Notwithstanding the extensive coverage of clipping in academic literature, its delimitation from other shortening processes still poses a stern challenge to scholars. For instance, Arnold identifies clipping as "the reduction of a word to one of its parts (whether or not this part has previously been a morpheme), as a result of which the new form acquires some linguistic value of its own" (Арнольд 1986: 135). The definition appears incontrovertible, and all clippings perfectly match it. However, this is equally true of several other types of shortening, namely alphabetisms (e.g., *ATC* 'in gambling,

a type of conditional bet, in which all or part of a winning is returned on another bet' (CNPDSUE 2008: 14) from *any-to-come*), elliptical transforms (e.g., *China* 'heroin' (ibid., 135) from *China white* with the original unit being viewed as a compound, not a phrase), and blendings (e.g., *decknician* 'a disc jockey who is admired for skilful manipulation and mixing of music on turntables' (ibid., 192) from *deck* and *technician*).

In this study, clipping shall be investigated in the light of its seven attributed characteristics examined critically and validated upon novel slang material.

A. Clippings retain the same meaning as their original units (Bauer 1983: 233; Brinton & Brinton 2010: 108).

Objection 1: albeit not fairly common, semantic change is possible in clippings, which is confirmed by the following slang neologisms resulting from restriction of meaning: *collabo* 'an artistic collaboration' in hip-hop (CNPDSUE 2008: 154) from *collaboration*; *newb* 'a new user of the Internet; a newcomer to an Internet discussion group or multi-player game' (ibid., 455) from *newbie*; *noob* 'in snowboarding, a beginner' (ibid., 461) from *newbie*. Thus, the possibility of semantic change refutes Mattiello's statement that clipping obtains only connoted variants, as opposed to back formation that obtains new words (2013: 71).

Objection 2: in certain cases, the immediate original unit is nonexistent in language (marked hereinafter with an asterisk\*) and may be reconstructed through derivational analysis only, as are the cases of the recent coinages '*clavaed up* 'used when a balaclava helmet is worn' (CNPDSUE 2008: 145) from *balaclavaed up*\* or *roidhead* 'a habitual user of steroids' (VS 2008: 157) from *steroidhead*\*.

B. Clipping is the process by which a word of two or more syllables is shortened without a change in its function taking place (Adams 1987: 135).

Objection 1: monosyllabic words may also be subject to clipping, with the minimum phonic and / or graphic material deleted, as in *du* 'used as a term of address in male-to-male greetings' (CNPDSUE 2008: 223) from *dude* and *mo* 'more' (ibid., 434) from *more*.

Objection 2: functional change in clippings is of syntactical nature and manifests itself in clippings formally compatible with truncated words but semantically equivalent to sentences, as is the case of *wagwon?* 'what's going on?' (ibid., 684) from *what's going on?* and *whapp'n* 'used as a greeting' (ibid., 693) from *what's happening?*.

C. Clipping results from lopping off a portion of the original lexical item, reducing it to a monosyllabic or disyllabic rump (Katamba 2005: 180).

Objection: trisyllabic rumps are uncommon but not impossible, as is the slang neologism *huntsabber* 'a hunt saboteur' (CNPDSUE 2008: 349) from *hunt saboteur*. This, however, confirms Jamet's statement that only compounds can form three- and four-syllable clippings (Jamet 2009: 25).

D. Clippings need to remain long enough to signify something (Jamet 2009: 30).

Objection: the structure of clippings is by default less predictable than that of acronyms, graphic abbreviations, or back-formations. It is more or less clear that in the sentence *Cudja len' me ya scoot?*, *scoot* stands for *scooter*. However, a sentence like *They're goin' to Van t'night* devoid of context would leave the outsider perplexed and likely to inquire about further details. Potential guesses of an educated person would probably include *Van* (a city in Turkey), *Vanadzor* (a city in Armenia), *Vancouver* (a city in Canada; a city in the USA), *Vantaa* (a city in Finland), or *Vanuatu* (a republic in the Pacific). For users of Canadian slang, however, the immediate guess would be that *Van* refers to Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada, which corresponds to the institutionalized meaning of *Van* listed in the dictionary (CNPDSUE 2008: 679). What

complicates the matter even further is the availability of clippings with multiple denotation, like the slang neologism *Aber* that is capable of designating "Aberdare, Abergavenny, Aberystwyth or any town so constructed" (ibid., 1). In view of this, a sentence like *They're goin' to Aber t'night* will remain semantically obscure, even if it is used by a Welsh slang user who resides in Wales.

E. Clipping "designates an abbreviated lexical form, that is, a shortened form of a lexeme resulting from the retention of just one part of its full form" (Sánchez 2017: 23).

Objection: in the given definition, the notion of a part retained in its full form appears ambiguous and, therefore, generates controversy. On the one hand, if the aforementioned part equals a graphic symbol as the shortest salient graphic element to which a word can be reduced, as in *V* 'sildenafil citrate marketed as Viagra™, an anti-impotence drug taken recreationally for performance enhancement, in combination with other chemicals that stimulate the sexual appetites' (CNPDSUE 2008: 679), then this leads to identification of initialisms with clippings. On the other hand, if the aforementioned part is equivalent to the smallest morphologically desintegratable part, i.e. a morpheme, then the majority of clippings would be neglected, since they result from the loss of sublexical non-morphemic elements and "cannot be straightforwardly handled by 'regular morphology' " (Hamans 2012: 31).

F. The part of the original word retained in the clipping does not change phonetically (Арнольд 1986: 135).

Objection: phonetic change is indeed a rare occurrence in clippings. Nonetheless, in certain cases the resulting unit acquires an utterly unpredictable structure, as in the slang neologisms *amp* 'amphetamine' (CNPDSUE 2008: 11) from *amphetamine*, with the substitution of /f/ with /p/; *Cav and Pag* 'the short operas *Cavalleria Rusticana*, by Pietro Mascagni, and *Pagliacci*, by Ruggero Leoncavallo, when paired as a double bill'

(ibid., 124) from *Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci*, with the substitution of /ʌ/ with /g/); *Manc* 'Manchester' (ibid., 418) from *Manchester*, with the substitution of /tʃ/ with /k/; *spongs* 'a pair of metal tongs for lifting a hot cooking utensil off a fire' (ibid., 611) from *spondonics*, with the substitution of /n/ with /ŋ/; *toe up* 'drunk' (ibid., 656) from *torn up*, with the substitution of the long monophthong /ɔ:/ with the diphthong /əʊ/. An exceptional factor contributing to phonetic changes in clippings is morphological assimilation of borrowings, as is the case of *paps* 'press photographers who specialise in the sensational and the celebrated' (ibid., 482) from *paparazzi*, with the emergence of -s that is unattested in the original unit. In this example, the implicit plurality of the original unit *paparazzi* that, notwithstanding its Italian origin, has become quite popular with English speakers is made explicit in the resulting unit, with the Italian plurality marker -i being replaced with its English counterpart -s.

G. The specific stylistic character of the clipped form as compared to the original unit greatly limits the possibilities of its usage (Арнольд 1986: 137).

Objection: if the original unit belongs to a neutral or formal register, then its clipped form is informal by default, which would undoubtedly narrow its scope of use. However, if the original unit is informal per se, there are high chances that the derivative will be nearly equivalent to it, e.g., *boo* 'in contemporary dance culture, to give an unlexicalized verbalisation of approval' (CNPDSUE 2008: 79) from *boohoo* 'to cry loudly' (ibid., 80); *nod* 'the head' (ibid., 460) from *noddle* 'the head' (ibid., 460). A liminal case of virtually absolute interchangeability of the original unit and its derivative includes clipped taboo words, e.g., *hoots* 'the female breasts' (RDMASUE 2009: 523) from *hooters* 'female breasts' (CNPDSUE 2008: 341); *'kin(g)* 'used as an intensifier' (ibid., 382) from *fucking* 'used as an attention-getting intensifier' (ibid., 274); *towns* 'the testicles' (ibid., 662) from *town halls* 'the testicles' (ibid., 662); *wink* 'the penis' (ibid., 703) from *winky* 'the penis' (ibid., 703).

Concluding the above, clipping shall be defined as a non-concatenative (Klégr 2015) mechanism of word formation that is characterized by the deletion of a single segment / multiple segments of a word form with a prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit.

### 3. Database and methodology

The 162 slang neologisms analyzed in this paper have been selected from three explanatory dictionaries of English slang, namely *The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English* (2008), *Vice slang* (2008), and *The Routledge dictionary of modern American slang and unconventional English* (2009). The key commonality that they all share is dating each sememe (i.e. lexico-semantic variant, or separate meaning) of every single listeme by year. It is by virtue of addressing these data that I managed to segregate the sememes whose dating ranged from 2000 to 2008 inclusive, into a separate group and, consequently, labeled them as slang neologisms.

The perspective on neologisms used in this paper is linguosemiotic and traces its origins to Saussure's ideas that words as language signs constitute dual entities, uniting signal with signification (2013: xvii), or, using the terminology that is more conventional nowadays, uniting form with meaning. It is Tournier (1985) who first applied Saussure's theoretical framework to studying neologisms, dividing the latter according to the novelty of their component(s) into morphological, semantic and morphosemantic (ibid., 51). The same criterion has been used by other scholars in their classifications, namely Zabotkina (Заботкина 1989), who differentiates neologisms proper, transnominations, and semantic transforms (ibid., 16); Harmash (Гармаш 2009), who discriminates between total innovations, partial formo-innovations, and partial semo-innovations (ibid., 44-45); Holovko (Головко 2009), who juxtaposes neoverbs, neophrases, neomorphs, and neosems (ibid., 236). In this paper, neologisms will, therefore, be treated as words or phrases characterized by unilateral or bilateral

semiotic novelty (Борис 2017: 6), with three potential form-and-meaning combinations, i.e. "new form + original meaning", "original form + new meaning", or "new form + new meaning".

Focusing my attention on slang neologisms is, seemingly, an attempt at compensating for an insufficient coverage of these units alongside the phenomenon they represent in modern word studies. Although colloquial neologisms have already been addressed by Dalzell (CNPDSUE 2008; VS 2008; RDMASUE 2009), Klymenko (Клименко 2000), Sornig (1981), Spilioti (2009), Yaghan (2008), Zatsnyj & Yankov (Зацний & Янков 2010), the only investigations dealing with English slang neologisms per se include those by Dzyubina (Дзюбіна 2016) and Borys (Борис 2017). Exploring the derivational patterns of slang neologisms as opposed to those of already existing slang words will disclose new perspectives, allowing for the identification of the most recent linguistic trends which may be unheard-of or still "budding" in standard English but already "in full swing" in slang and which, therefore, will present great interest for scholars.

The analysis of clipped English slang neologisms includes four stages:

- a) selection of material for linguistic investigation through continuous sampling of lexical items coined in 2000 through 2008, the sources being the aforementioned explanatory dictionaries of English slang;
- b) application of derivational and morphemic analyses of the form alterations within the clipped slang neologisms;
- c) implementation of definitional and componential analyses to identify potential cases, if any, of semantic shift within the clipped slang neologisms;
- d) linguistic interpretation and generalization of the research findings.



#### 4. Taxonomy of clippings

As far as typology of clippings is concerned, the most complete one is provided by Mattiello, who differentiates between back-clippings, edge-clippings, fore-clippings, mid-clippings, random clippings, and suffixed clippings (2013: 82). However, the delimitation of the first four groups is based on the position of the deleted segment; the fifth group is characterized by the simultaneous deletion of multiple segments within the same word; the sixth group results from the interplay of two word formation mechanisms – clipping and suffixation. To iron out these inconsistencies, I propose a three-level taxonomy (see Fig. 1 below) based on the following three criteria:

- 1) the number of the word formation mechanisms involved: *pure clipping* (one, i.e. shortening) and *expanded clipping* (two, i.e. shortening and suffixation, as in suffixed clippings);
- 2) the structure of the deleted segment: *sequential clipping* (the eliminated element is uninteruptible and is removed in (a) specific position(s) in the word, as in back-clippings, edge-clippings, fore-clippings, and mid-clippings) and *non-sequential clipping* (the eliminated element is interruptible and multiple, as in random clippings);
- 3) the number of the deleted segments: *monoclipping* (one, as in back-clippings, fore-clippings, and mid-clippings) and *ambiclipping* (two, as in edge-clippings).



Figure 1. Taxonomy of clippings

#### 4.1 Back-clipping

Back-clipping involves the deletion of a word-final segment with prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit. Although the term *back-clipping* proves to be favoured by the majority of linguists (Faiß 2004: 1678; Fandrych 2008: 116; Hauptman 1993: 21; Jamet 2009: 17; Mattiello 2013: 72; OCEL 1992: 223), some scholars prefer to use alternative denominations of the process / resulting unit, which include *apocopation* (Jamet 2009: 17), *apocope* (Арнольд 1986: 138; Hauptman 1993: 21; Jamet 2009: 17), *final clipping* (Арнольд 1986: 138), *head word* (Bussmann 2006: 189), *hind clipping* (Algeo & Algeo 1993: 8), or *terminal clipping* (Cannon 1989: 108).

Being the most productive clipping pattern, as exemplified by 120 neologisms detected in English slang, deletion of a word-final segment shall be regarded in three aspects: phonotactic, morphotactic, and graphic.

The phonotactic structure of back-clipped slang neologisms is indicative of two features: 1) preservation of a single consonant or a consonant cluster in the final position of the word; 2) loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism.

The vast majority of apocopated slang neologisms (86 out of 120) preserve a single consonant in the final position, e.g., *cam* /-m/ 'a camera' (CNPDSUE 2008: 114) from *camera*, *pov* /-v/ 'a person who is judged to be less well off than the speaker' (ibid., 512) from *poverty*; *tam* /-m/ 'a knitted hat used by a Rastafarian to contain his dreadlocks' (ibid., 639) from *tam o'shanter*; *tech* /-k/ 'a technical college, an institution that provides further and higher education' (ibid., 643) from *technical college*. The preponderance of word-final consonants in these clippings neatly correlates with both universal and specifically English syllable structure trends. Universally speaking, as noted by Akmajian et al., "across the world's languages the most common type of syllable has the structure CV(C), that is, a single consonant C followed by a single vowel V, followed in turn (optionally) by a single consonant" (2001: 126). Meanwhile, according to Moats (2009), closed syllables are among the most common spelling units in English and make up almost 50 % of the syllables with texts. These findings account for Pearson et al. referring to English as a "closed-syllable language" (2010: 77).

Consonant clusters prove to be a rare occurrence in the word-final position, as exemplified by only five clippings of this type identified in our study. Amongst consonant clusters, two-consonant codas predominate, as in *dex* /-ks/ 'dextromethorphan (DXM), an active ingredient in non-prescription cold and cough medication, often abused for non-medicinal purposes' (RDMASUE 2009: 282) from *dextromethorphan*; *gorge* /-dʒ/ 'used for expressing approbation' (CNPDSUE 2008: 301) from *gorgeous*; *Manc* /-ŋk/ 'Mancunian, of Manchester' (ibid., 418) from *Mancunian*. The only instance of apocope featuring a three-consonant coda is *Manch* /-ntʃ/ 'Manchester' (ibid., 418) from *Manchester*. These findings conform to existing

English syllable structure constraints, whereby the maximum number of consonants in the coda should not exceed four, such as in *glimpsed* /-mpst/ (Schreier 2008: 205).

Loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism involves reduction of the number of syllables of the original word as well as violability of its syllable boundaries.

As a result of decomposition, 118 out of the 120 slang neologisms under study have lost from one to three syllables, as is the case of *art* 'artillery' (RDMASUE 2009: 22), whose number of syllables decreased from four in the original form *artillery* /ɑ:-'tɪ-lə-ri/ to one in the derivative /ɑ:t/. The two exceptions whose syllable structure remains unchanged are neologisms *du* 'used as a term of address in male-to-male greetings' (CNPDSUE 2008: 223) from *dude* and *mo'* 'more' (ibid., 434) from *more*. Neither of the two has lost its single syllable, which, if happened, would completely obscure the original meaning. However, the decomposition has stripped the original forms of their final consonants: *dude* → *du* and *more* → *mo'* respectively.

Violability of syllable boundaries of the original lexical item is evidenced in the slang neologisms *dep* 'in the theatre, a company representative of Equity (the actors' union)' (CNPDSUE 2008: 194) from *de-pu-ty*; *perf* 'a performance' (ibid., 490) from *per-for-mance*; and *scav* 'to scavenge; to scrounge' (ibid., 560) from *sca-venge*. In all the examples above, the initial consonant phoneme of the second syllable is attached as a coda to the first syllable, i.e. /de-/ + /-p-/, /pə-/ + /-f-/, and /skæ-/ + /-v-/ respectively.

A liminal case of apocope with the violation of the original syllable boundaries is the decomposition of digraphs in the word-final position, resulting in the emergence of a new consonant, unattested within the original lexical item, e.g.: (1) *amp* 'amphetamine' (ibid., 11) with the digraph *ph* of the original form *amphetamine* being split /f/ → /p/; (2) *Cav and Pag* 'the short operas *Cavalleria Rusticana*, by Pietro Mascagni, and *Pagliacci*, by Ruggero Leoncavallo, when paired as a double bill' (ibid., 124) with the

digraph *gl* of the original form *Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci* being split /ʎ/ → /g/); (3) *Manc* 'Manchester' (ibid., 418) with the digraph *ch* of the original form *Manchester* being split /tʃ/ → /k/).

In (1), the transformation of *amphetamine* into *amp*, notwithstanding a variety of homonymous meanings expressed by the latter form that is capable of denoting 1) an ampoule; 2) an ampoule of methadone, used to break a heroin addiction; 3) an amplifier, especially one for electric instruments; 4) an amputation; 5) an amputee (CNPDSUE 2008: 11), is due to the occurrence of the root *amp-* bearing the meaning 'amphetamine' in the existing words *amped* 'under the influence of a central nervous system stimulant, usually amphetamines or methamphetamine' (ibid., 11) and *amp joint* 'marijuana and amphetamine (or possibly another drug) mixed and rolled for smoking in a cigarette' (ibid., 11).

In (2), the emergence of /g/ in *Cav* and *Pag* as a result of the decomposition of the Italian digraph *gl* /ʎ/ in *Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci* owes to the unattestedness of this alveolo-palatal lateral approximant in English. Since the phoneme /ʎ/ does not have an exact English counterpart (Goleeke 2012: 32), Italian borrowings featuring /ʎ/ are most commonly phoneticized in English with /li/ or /lj/, as in *imbroglio* /ɪm'brəʊliəʊ/ (CEPD 2007: 254) and *tagliatelle* /ˌtæljə'teli/ (ibid., 495) respectively. However, the choice of the final consonant in the clipped neologism under question is not based on the Italo-English transcription tradition but relies completely on its graphic form. Interestingly, according to Italian phonological constraints, *gl* /ʎ/ occurs exceptionally in the word-medial or, in the case of clitics, – in the word-initial – positions (Vogel 2010: 146), but never in the word-final position.

In (3), the split of the digraph *ch* /tʃ/ in *Manchester* into /k/ in *Manc* is explained by the occurrence of the segment *Manc-* conveying the meaning 'related to Manchester' in the detoponymic adjective *Mancunian*. The synchronic coexistence of the two semantic correlates – *Manchester* alongside *Mancunian* – has its roots in the history of the

English language and results from the process of palatalization, which accounts for the transformation of the word-initial /k/ of the Old English *ceastre* originating, in its turn, from Latin *castrum* 'a camp' into the /tʃ/ of the well-known onymic English suffixoid *-chester* conveying the sense 'town' (LE 1849: 63-64).

The morphotactic structure of back-clipped slang neologisms evinces two features: 1) loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism; 2) lexicalization of prefixes and prefixoids.

Loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism presupposes violability of morphemic boundaries of the derivational base, which is perfectly obvious in the following examples: *boyf* 'a boyfriend' (CNPDSUE 2008: 87) from *boyfriend*, *girlf* 'a girlfriend' (ibid., 290) from *girlfriend*, and *rep* 'in prison, a written representation' (ibid., 537) from *representation*. In the first two examples, the complete root of the first compound component incorporates the initial consonant of the root of the second compound component, i.e. *boy|friend* → *boyf* and *girl|friend* → *girlf* respectively. In the third neologism, the prefix of the derivative associates itself with the initial consonant of the subsequent root, i.e. *re|present|at|ion* → *rep*. (It should be noted that the morpheme segmentation of the example is purely synchronic, since the word *present* has been adopted by Middle English via Old French *present* from Latin *praesentem* with the further decomposition to *prae* and *esse* being restrained to Latin (CEDEL 1966: 1238).) Thus, back-clipping as a result of a merger of the initial morphemic constituent with the first segment of the second morphemic constituent reveals the progressive nature of apocope in English slang neologisms.

Lexicalization of prefixes and prefixoids (i.e. word-initial combining forms) as a result of apocope has contributed to the formation of seven neologisms in the aggregate. The three deprefixal back-clippings include *mal* 'in parachuting, a malfunction' (CNPDSUE 2008: 417) from *malfunction*; *poly* 'a person who loves and has sex with multiple

partners' (RDMASUE 2009: 766) from *polyamorous*; and *pre* 'to drink before going to an event where there will be drinking' (CNPDSUE 2008: 513) from *pre-game* or *pre-party*. The four deprefixoid back-clippings are *oxy* 'the synthetic opiate oxycodone used recreationally; a capsule of OxyContin' (VS 2008: 135) from *OxyContin*; *paedo* 'used as a short form of paedophilia, paedophile and related terms' (CNPDSUE 2008: 480) from *paedophilia* or *paedophile*; *retro* 'to return something or someone from Antarctica to the country of origin' (ibid., 537) from *retrograde*; and *zoo* 'a zoophile, a person with a sexual interest in animals' (ibid., 719) from *zoophile*. All the deprefixoid back-clippings belong to special slangs, namely sex slang (*paedo* and *zoo*), drug slang (*oxy*), and Antarctica slang (*retro*), which roughly correlates with Menzel and Degaetano-Ortlieb's findings that utilization of combining forms is "a word formation strategy that is particularly important for informational texts from scientific and technical domains" (2017: 186).

What distinguishes the named deprefixal and deprefixoid clippings from the rest of apocopated slang units is their homonymous status. Six out of the seven forms under analysis are familiar to English speakers: *mal* also designates a disease or disorder; *oxy* means 'having a second-hand or dated appearance' (CNPDSUE 2008: 478); *poly* equally refers to 'marijuana of a supposedly Polynesian origin' or 'a surfboard manufactured with polyurethane' (ibid., 506); *pre* bears the sense of pre-ejaculate; *retro* conventionally designates the style of an earlier time; *zoo* denotes a parklike area in which live animals are kept in cages. Consequently, the novelty of the slang words above lies in the association of original forms with new meanings, which results in homonymy. It should be noted that deprefixal and deprefixoid formations have exceptional homonymic potential, since virtually every word containing a prefix(oid) may be clipped to its initial morphemic segment. Nevertheless, the maximum number of homonyms in a language at a given stage of its evolution is bound to comply with 'the *prophylactic* tendency to prevent the rise of an excessive number of homonyms' (DPSL 2003: 87). One of its manifestations is the association of several new forms with the original meaning, which may involve other types of shortening, as exemplified

in Brinton (2017: 271): *whatever* → *wev*, *whatev*, *whatevs*, *wever*, *wevz*, *evs*, *w/e*, *w/ev*, *w/ever*. As a result, with language viewed as a homeostatic system that at any one time is being regulated by the two opposing principles – that of 'least effort' and 'the desire to be understood' (Lyons 1968: 90) – the formation of homonyms is, on the one hand, facilitated by the tendency to minimize the syntagmatic length of words and utterances (Lančarič & Pavlík 2016), but, on the other hand, constrained by the necessity to make the final meaning retrievable from the context.

The graphic aspect of back-clipped slang neologisms testifies to two features: 1) phonetization of orthograms; 2) spelling anomalies.

It is common knowledge that when borrowings enter the recipient language, they are subject to phonetic interference, which means that they are either altered in order to conform to native sounds and phonetic constraints (a process known as *adaptation / phoneme substitution*), or modified to fit the phonological combinations which are permitted in the borrowing language (a process known as *accommodation*) (Campbell 2004: 66). Once a loanword has been fully assimilated, it acquires its own phonological form, graphics, and meaning in the recipient language. It is this conventional graphic representation that enters explanatory dictionaries as an orthogram, or, otherwise speaking, established spelling standard. Sometimes, however, a previously standardized orthogram suddenly develops new graphic forms, which in our case has been triggered by clipping (or derivation – in a broader sense). Seven of the eight neologisms in this group are borrowings stemming from the existing orthograms adopted earlier from: 1) French, e.g., *Bolly* 'Bollinger, a branded champagne' (CNPDSUE 2008: 76) from *Bollinger*; *croop* 'a croupier' (ibid., 174) from *croupier*; *treas(h)* 'a term of affectionate address' (ibid., 664) from *treasure*; 2) Latin, e.g., *canab* 'marijuana' (ibid., 115) from *cannabis*; *quoz* 'a disabled or deformed person' (ibid., 525) from *Quasimodo*; *spaz* 'a person with spastic paralysis; a person who has any disability' (ibid., 607) from *spastic*.



In most of the cases above, the emergence of a new graphic form is quite relevant and even long overdue, since it makes the spelling-to-sound correspondences more transparent for a native speaker of English, thus contributing to the enhanced word memorability. Such are the cases featuring the substitution of the digraph *ou* of French origin with the English digraph *oo* in *croop*; degemination of *nn* to *n* in *canab*, since "consonant length is not distinctive in English" (Blevins 2004: 169), the only exception being false gemination found across words and across morphemes with sequences of identical short segments (ibid., 169); revisitation of the phonetic structure of the derivational base *spasm* /'spæzəm/, whence first *spastic* and subsequently *spaz* were formed; an attempt at the phonetization of the neologism *treas* /treɜ/ – from *treasure* /'treɜə/ – by virtue of altering the unpalatalized word-final *-s* /s/ in the clipped word to the palatalized *-sh* /ʃ/ in order to partially converge the pronunciation and the spelling. Although /ɜ/ and /ʃ/ generally form the phonetic opposition "voiced palato-alveolar fricative – voiceless palato-alveolar fricative", instances of their phonetic interchangeability are being registered in modern English, as exemplified by parallel pronunciation variants, e.g., *Asian* as /'eɪʃən/ and /'eɪɜən/, *version* as /'vɜ:ʃən/ and /'vɜ:rɜən/, et cetera. It is noteworthy that this /ʃ/-/ɜ/ interchangeability involves instances of yod-coalescence with the assimilation of only /sj/ to /ʃ/ or /ɜ/, thus going beyond the conventional understanding of yod-coalescence as "the type of assimilation whereby /tj/ becomes /tʃ/ and /dj/ becomes /dʒ/" (Ryfa 2013: 64). Having said that, I propose terming this process a "palatalization-induced spelling change".

However, in *Bollinger* being reduced to *Bolly* 'Bollinger, a branded champagne' so as to fit the English spelling tradition, the substitution appears unnecessary, since modern English possesses a wide variety of standardized borrowings featuring *-i* in the word-final position, e.g., *alibi* (from Latin), *borzoi* (from Russian), *indri* (from Malagasy), *kaki* (from Japanese), *kepi* (from French), *litchi* (from Chinese), *mufti* (from Arabic), *Nazi* (from German), *okapi* (from Mvuba), *rabbi* (from Hebrew), *tutti* (from Italian), *yogi* (from Hindi) to name but a few. The word-final *-i* is not uncommon in substandard English too, as in *baparazzi* 'press photographers who specialise in catching their

subjects topless' (CNPDSUE 2008: 33); *cardi* 'a cardigan knitted woolen jacket' (ibid., 119); *dakhi* 'a black person' (ibid., 185); *femmi* 'feminist' (ibid., 247); '*Ghini* 'a Lamborghini car' (ibid., 288); *harami* 'a shrewd or cunning person' (ibid., 321); *idi* 'cruel' (ibid., 352); *Jedi* 'a member of an exclusive and influential group' (ibid., 364); *kai* 'food; also, drink' (ibid., 377); *lakanuki* 'a prolonged period of sexual abstinence' (ibid., 391); *Masarati* 'an improvised pipe for smoking crack cocaine, made from a plastic bottle' (ibid., 422); *Naafi* 'a military organisation that operates shops and canteens for military personnel; any shop or canteen within that organisation' (ibid., 450); *occi* 'an octopus' (ibid., 467); *pi* 'pious' (ibid., 492); *raggastani* 'a member of a British Indian (Hindi) urban youth gang or subculture' (ibid., 528). Therefore, from all these facts put together an observation can be made that phonetization of *-i* to *-y* in the word-final position of apocopated English slang units is of random nature and is consistent with the irregularity of slang spelling, resulting from both the poor level of literacy of many slang users as well as the urge to assert oneself, which is deemed indispensable for affiliating oneself with a "high-profile" social group.

The three spelling anomalies traceable within the apocopated slang neologisms under study include: 1) decapitalization of derivatives from proper names; 2) use of upper and lower case in the word-initial position within the same onymic constituent of a compound; 3) irregularity of spelling resulting in the form-and-meaning split of the original lexical item.

Decapitalization of derivatives from proper names consists in the substitution of an upper case letter with a lower case one in a word-initial position, which is exemplified in this study by three deonymic formations: *lib* 'Librium<sup>TM</sup>, a branded depressant' (CNPDSUE 2008: 399) from *Librium*; *oxy* 'a capsule of OxyContin' (RDMASUE 2009: 721) from *OxyContin*; and *sub-Z* 'a Sub-Zero freezer' (CNPDSUE 2008: 629) from *Sub-Zero*. Overall, clipped proper names tend to preserve the original capital letter, as in:

- 1) slang pragmatonyms, e.g., *Ac* 'an Acura car' (ibid., 2) from *Acura*; *Bud* 'Budweiser beer; a Budweiser beer' (ibid., 97) from *Budweiser*; *DomP* 'Dom Perignon champagne' (ibid., 210) from *Dom Pérignon*; *Mitzi* 'a Mitsubishi car' (ibid., 434) from *Mitsubishi*; *Strat* 'a Fender 'Stratocaster' guitar, first manufactured in 1954' (ibid., 625) from *Stratocaster*;
- 2) slang toponyms, e.g., *Glasto* 'the Glastonbury Festival; to a lesser extent, the town of Glastonbury' (ibid., 292) from *Glastonbury*; *Pak* 'Pakistan' (ibid., 480) from *Pakistan*; *Van* 'the city of Vancouver, British Columbia' (ibid., 679) from *Vancouver*;
- 3) slang ethnonyms, e.g., *Bangla* 'a Bangladeshi' (ibid., 32) from *Bangladeshi*.

However, the loss of initial capitalization in these examples is caused by extralinguistic factors, namely the increasing availability and extensive use of various consumer goods, including medications (*lib*, *ocs*) and home appliances (*sub-Z*), in modern society. Linguistically speaking, the process involved is eponymic metonymy with the member of a category used for the whole category (according to Kövecses 2010: 181), whereby the name of a trademark transfers to the commodity unit it produces, in our case a pill or an appliance. Eponymic metonymization is fairly common in English and accounts for the coinage of such words as, for instance, *hoover*. Yule offers a graphic description of how eponymic metonymization (potential and real) works:

*Around 1990, in New Berlin, Ohio, a department-store worker named J. Murray Spangler invented a device which he called an **electric suction sweeper**. The device eventually became very popular and could have been known as a **spangler**. People could have been **spanglering** their floors or they might even have **spanglered** their rugs and curtains. The use could have extended to a type of person who droned on and on (and really sucked), described as **spanglerish**, or to a whole style of behavior called **spanglerism**. However, none of that happened. Instead, Mr. Spangler sold his new invention to a local businessman called William H. Hoover, whose Hoover Suction Sweeper Company produced the first machine called a "Hoover." Not only did the word **hoover** (without a capital letter) become as familiar as **vacuum cleaner** all over the world, but in Britain, people still talk about **hoovering** (and not **spanglering**) their carpets. (2010: 52-53).*

However, denotationally, every single of the three decapitalized deonymic slang neologisms is exclusively associated with its trademark. *Lib* does not refer to all depressants but to the specific brand Librium. *Oxy* does not designate synthetic opiates in general but denotes either OxyContin, or oxycodone as its key ingredient. What complicates the matter even further is that these findings run afoul of the effective rules of capitalization in the medical field, whereby "the brand or trade name of a drug is a capitalized proper noun, but the generic or common name of the drug is not; for example, aspirin or Bayer® aspirin, and meperidine or Demerol®" (Oberg & Villemare 2018: 5). *Sub-Z* might have become a generic name for freezers but is still reserved exclusively for ones produced under the brand name of Sub-Zero. Nevertheless, the afore-mentioned capitalized slang pragmatonyms *Ac* 'an Acura car', *Bud* 'Budweiser beer; a Budweiser beer', *DomP* 'Dom Perignon champagne', *Mitzi* 'a Mitsubishi car', and *Strat* 'a Fender 'Stratocaster' guitar' are also indelibly associated with their brand names but, in the meanwhile, retain the initial capital letter. All in all, the only explanation that appears to be cogent is that the conventional use of capitalization in English does not fully apply to slang, which proves to be rather permissive of random decapitalization within derivatives from proper names.

The use of upper and lower case in word-initial position within the same onymic constituent of a compound is detectable in the slang neologisms *red Leb* 'hashish with a reddish colour produced in the Lebanon' (CNPDSUE 2008: 535) from *red Lebanese* and *gold leb* 'golden-hued cannabis resin from the Middle East' (ibid., 396) from *gold Lebanese*. Both examples are formed according to the identical pattern – "colour name + ethnonym → colour name + initial segment of ethnonym"; decomposition affects the identical second component – *Lebanese* → *Leb* / *leb*; both neologisms are characterized by semantic affinity, denoting marijuana products. However, in *red Leb* the initial grapheme of the second, truncated, component *Leb* is capitalized, whilst in *gold leb* it is not. The reason for this anomaly lies in the spelling irregularity of English slang that is produced and reproduced first and foremost orally, is highly dynamic and variable, and is often put into writing by members of marginalized and disadvantaged groups of

people, often with poor literacy skills and, therefore, incapable of confronting the considerable mismatch between English pronunciation and orthography. Whilst spelling irregularities bestride the boundaries of slang and permeate the whole of the English language, as exemplified by Crystal's "Though the rough cough and hiccough plough me through, I ought to cross the lough" (2007: 131), Venezky has it that "standard spelling, in spite of the efforts of spelling reformers, remains as a mark of education and general competence, although its true value varies with social class" (2005: 350).

Irregularity of spelling resulting in the form-and-meaning split of the original lexical item is retrievable in two pairs of slang neologisms: (1a) *collabo* 'an artistic collaboration' in hip-hop (CNPDSUE 2008: 154) and (1b) *callabo* 'a collaboration' (ibid., 114) from *collaboration*; as well as (2a) *newb* 'a new user of the Internet; a newcomer to an Internet discussion group or multi-player game' (ibid., 455) and (2b) *noob* 'in snowboarding, a beginner' (ibid., 461) from *newbie*. As can be seen from the examples above, the original graphic form of *collaboration* and *newbie* remains unchanged only in (1a) *collabo* and (2a) *newb*, being violated in (1b) *callabo* and (2b) *noob* where the historically motivated grapheme *-o-* in *collaboration* (as a constituent of the Latin prefix *col-*) and the letter combination *-ew-* in *new* (from the Latin root *nov-*) are replaced by the monograph *-a-* and the digraph *-oo-* respectively. At a closer examination, however, the choice of substitutes in both cases proves to be based on the phonetic principle. When in an unstressed position, the graphemes *-o-* in (1a) and *-a-* in (1b) represent the schwa /ə/ (as in *polite* /pə'laɪt/ and *saliva* /sə'laɪvə/), which explains the homophony of *collabo* and *callabo*. Since the letter combination *-ew-* corresponds to the diphthong /ju:/, which is reduced to /u:/ in American English, the neologisms *newb* and *noob* are also pronounced identically. Furthermore, three out of the four neologisms under consideration are also subject to a semantic shift, triggering restriction of meaning, as in *collaboration* → *collabo* 'an artistic collaboration' (in hip hop); *newbie* → *newb* 'a new user of the Internet; a newcomer to an Internet discussion group or multi-player game'; *newbie* → *noob* 'in snowboarding, a beginner'. Therefore,

the irregularity of spelling that causes the original lexical item to alter its form and meaning, and results in the emergence of etymological doublets in slang is based upon phonetization of historically determined orthograms.

#### 4.2 *Mid-clipping*

Mid-clipping involves the deletion of a word-medial segment with prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit. The process / resulting unit is also referred to as the *elliptical word* (Bussmann 2006: 189), *internal clipping* (Algeo & Algeo 1993: 9), *medial clipping* (Арнольд 1986: 138; Cannon 1989: 108), *median clipping* (Jamet 2009: 18), or *syncope* (Арнольд 1986: 138; Hauptman 1993: 21).

The deletion of a word-final segment, identified in 25 neologisms, shall be regarded in five aspects: phonotactic, morphotactic, logical, derivational, and syntactic.

The phonotactic structure of mid-clipped slang neologisms is testimonial of the loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism. This process manifests itself in the reduction of the number of syllables in the original word as well as the violability of its syllable boundaries.

As a result of decomposition, all the syncopated slang neologisms have lost one or more syllables of the original lexical unit, the maximum number equaling four, as in the monosyllable *comms* 'communications' (CNPDSUE 2008: 157), derivative from the pentasyllable *com-mu-ni-ca-tions*. In 24 examples, the nuclei of the eliminated syllables are represented by vowels, e.g., in *brer* 'a fellow black man' (ibid., 90) from *broth-er*. One remaining exception, *Mapes* 'the Maples Inn, a popular bar and music venue in Pointe Claire, Quebec' (ibid., 420) from *Ma-ples Inn*, has retained its original diphthong nucleus /ei/, the eliminated syllable being formed by the syllabic consonant /l/.

Violability of the syllable boundaries of the original lexical unit is best illustrated by the slang neologism *ign'ant* 'ignorant' (ibid., 352) from *ig-no-rant*, where the eliminated segment comprises a vowel coda of the second syllable, associated with the consonant onset of the third syllable, i.e. /'ɪɡ-n|ə-r|ənt/.

The morphotactic structure of mid-clipped slang neologisms is characterized by the loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism. Consequently, the morphemic boundaries of the derivational base may be violated, as is the case with *bull derm* 'any low grade of tobacco issued by the state to prisoners' (ibid., 100) from *Bull|Dur|ham* or *scan'lous* 'mean-spirited' (ibid., 559) from *scandal|ous*. In the first example, the original pragmatonym designating a cigarette brand consists of two lexemic components: *Bull*, which has been fully retained in the clipping, and *Durham*, which has been subject to syncopation. The primary meaning of *Durham* is a historic city and the county town of County Durham in North East England, its etymon being *Dunholm* – from Old English *dūn* 'a hill' and Old Scandinavian *holmr* 'a small island in a river; a river meadow' (DBPN 2011: 166). As can be seen, the original morphemic segmentation of *Dur|ham* has not been preserved in *derm* since the final segment of morpheme 1 and the initial segment of morpheme 2 have been eliminated. In the second example, the original lexical item *scandalous* contains two morphemes – the root *scandal-* and the suffix *-ous*. It is the root morpheme that has been reduced by virtue of the deletion of its medial segment *-da-*.

Albeit discrimination between different types of clippings habitually relies on clearcut delimitation criteria, there exists a group of seemingly syncopated words whose derivational pattern remains ambiguous. The neologisms in question form two subgroups:

1) clipped pluralia tantum nouns, e.g., *comms* 'communications' (CNPDSUE 2008: 157) from *communications*; *garms* 'clothes' (ibid., 281) from *garments*; *mams* 'the female

breasts' (RDMASUE 2009: 644) from *mammaries*; *Mapes* 'the Maples Inn, a popular bar and music venue in Pointe Claire, Quebec' (CNPDSUE 2008: 420); *papes* 'money' (RDMASUE 2009: 728) from *paper*; *rads* 'the police' (CNPDSUE 2008: 527) from *radics*; *spongs* 'a pair of metal tongs for lifting a hot cooking utensil off a fire' (ibid., 611) from *spondonicles*;

2) clipped phrasal verbs, e.g., *charge up* 'excited; drunk' (ibid., 127) from *charged up*; *dan up* 'to spruce up' (ibid., 186) from *dandy up*; *toe up* 'drunk' (ibid., 656) from *torn up*.

The common feature of these grammatically distinct subgroups of clippings is that their logical and derivational analyses supply conflicting data concerning their taxonomic status. The problem has been previously addressed by Arnold (Арнольд 1986) who proposed dividing all syncopated words into two groups: 1) words with a final-clipped stem retaining the functional morpheme, e.g., *maths* from *mathematics*; 2) contractions due to a gradual process of elision under the influence of rhythm and context, e.g., *fancy* from *fantasy* (ibid., 139). The cited classification, albeit not contributive to establishing the ambiguous nature of mid-clipped pluralia tantum nouns, has, nevertheless, signaled the problem of their distinctiveness as compared to other syncopated lexical units.

On the one hand, the use of logical analysis points to the syncopic status of the lexical items under question. Since in dialectic logic the beginning, the middle, and the end constitute the three stages of development, and, by extension, any thing or thought moves from its beginning through its middle to its end (Wells 1972: 7), the elimination of the indisputably medial segment, as in *radics* → *radies*, with the suffix *-ic-*, preceded by the root *rad-* and followed by the ending *-s*, being removed, is testimonial of the syncopic nature of clipped pluralia tantum nouns and phrasal verbs. It is noteworthy that the succession of derivation steps is of no consequence to the logical identification



of syncope. In view of this, it follows that logical analysis offers a synchronic perspective on clipping.

On the other hand, application of derivational analysis reveals that formation of a syncopated neologism on the basis of its original unit constitutes a sequence of three mandatory steps:

1) decomposition of the original unit into (A) a stem and a flexion – for clipped pluralia tantum nouns, as in *garments* → *garment-* and *-s*; (B) a verbal constituent and a prepositional constituent – for clipped phrasal verbs, as in *charged up* → *charged* and *up*;

2) decomposition of the (A) stem / (B) verbal constituent by deleting its final segment, as in (A) *garment-* → *garm-* and ~~*-ent*~~; (B) *charged* → *charge-* and ~~*-d*~~;

3) complementation of the clipped (A) stem / (B) verbal constituent through the re-attachment of the (A) plural flexion / (B) prepositional constituent, both isolated in the first derivation step, as in (A) *garm-* and *-s* → *garms*; (B) *charge-* and *up* → *charge up*.

The fact that the flexion / prepositional constituent re-emerges after the clipping process and not prior to or during it approximates the discussed examples of syncope with apocope, since the connection between the segments of a stem as equivalent elements of the lower level is always closer than that existing between a root morpheme and a flexion as equivalent elements of the higher level. Consequently, it is safe to say that derivational analysis engenders a diachronic perspective on clipping.

The syntactic aspect of syncope consists in its contribution to the process of univerbation, that is "the unification of two or more autonomous words to form a third" (Brinton & Traugott 2005: 68). In this study, I have detected two slang neologisms

whose original units are not words but fully-fledged sentences instead: *wagwon?* 'what's going on?' (CNPDSUE 2008: 684) from *what's going on?* and *whapp'n* 'used as a greeting' (ibid., 693) from *what's happening?*. Both clippings conform to the conventional characteristics attributed to words (according to Арнольд 1986: 30), including positional mobility within a sentence, morphological uninterruptability, and semantic integrity. However, in defiance of traditional lexical semantics with its assumption that "words name things or objects in the real world" (Brinton & Brinton 2010: 145), neither of the two neologisms performs the nominative function. On the contrary, they both express propositions, which is typical of sentences and not words. Since a prototypical proposition consists of a predicate and its arguments (ibid., 295), the two examples also feature one-place predicates, expressed by the intransitive phrasal verb *to go on* and the intransitive verb *to happen* respectively, as well as the argument *what*. All in all, the amalgamation of word and sentence properties in *wagwon?* and *whapp'n* approximates them with univerbalisms, the notion first introduced by Epstein (Эпштейн 2006) in order to designate a new word created as the shortest literature genre and functioning as a complete work of fiction with its own theme, idea, author's image, and intertextuality. Thus, it follows that the clearcut boundaries that were once proposed by scholars with a view to distinguishing lexemes from superordinate units are becoming irregular and, in some cases, ill-defined.

### 4.3 Fore-clipping

Fore-clipping involves the deletion of a word-initial segment with prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit. The term *fore(-)clipping*, if most conventional (Algeo & Algeo 1993: 8; Faiß 2004: 1678; Fandrych 2008: 116; Hauptman 1993: 21; Jamet 2009: 18; Mattiello 2013: 74; OCEL 1992: 223), may occasionally be replaced with the synonymous denominations *apheresis* (Hauptman 1993: 21; Jamet 2009: 18), *end word* (Bussmann 2006: 189), or *initial clipping* (Арнольд 1986: 138; Cannon 1989: 108). Albeit Arnold complements the synonymic row above with the term *aphesis* as an equivalent of *apheresis* (Арнольд 1986: 138), aphasis possesses a

narrower meaning, referring to the omission of a single unstressed vowel at the beginning of a word (Algeo 2010: 237). Since the phenomenon has been recurrent throughout the history of English and contributed to the formation of such words as *cute* from *acute*, *squire* from *esquire*, or *lone* from *alone* (ibid., 237), it is also referred to as *historical apheresis* (Garner 2009: 882). Consequently, apheresis is a variety of apheresis.

Deletion of a word-initial segment, identified in 13 slang neologisms, shall be regarded in four aspects: phonotactic, morphotactic, derivational, and graphic.

The phonotactic structure of fore-clipped slang neologisms is characterized by the loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism, involving the reduction of the number of syllables of the original word as well as the violability of its syllable boundaries.

The reduction of the number of syllables of the original word is clearly identifiable in the overwhelming majority of the fore-clipped units under investigation. 12 out of 13 slang neologisms have been stripped of one or two syllables, as in *gar* 'marijuana rolled in cigar leaf' (CNPDSUE 2008: 280) from *cigar* and *rhoids* 'hemorrhoids' (RDMASUE 2009: 813) from *hemorrhoids* respectively. The only exception that has fully retained its original syllable count is *tardust* 'cocaine' (CNPDSUE 2008: 640) from *stardust*: *star-dust* → *tar-dust*. However, the syllable structure of the first, clipped, syllable has altered, with the initial consonant being removed: CCV-CVCC → CV-CVCC.

Arguably the most marked apheretic example of the violability of the syllable boundaries of the original lexical item is the slang neologism *shroomer* 'a person who gathers wild mushrooms' (VS 2008: 167) from *mushroomer*, where the decomposition resulted in the final consonant phoneme /ʃ/ of the first – eliminated – syllable *mush-* being attached as an onset to the second syllable *-room-*.

The morphotactic structure of fore-clipped slang neologisms evinces the loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism. Whilst the original morphemic boundaries are retained in some of the apheretic units under study, e.g., *doo* 'a skidoo, used for transport over ice and snow' (CNPDSUE 2008: 212) from *ski|doo* or *teenth* 'a sixteenth of an ounce (of drugs)' (VS 2008: 184) from *six|teen|th*, they may equally be transgressed in others, as in *shroomer* 'a person who gathers wild mushrooms' (ibid., 167) from *mush|room|er*. Therefore, the disruptibility of the morphemic structure of certain fore-clippings as a concomitant of their decomposition refutes Plag's statement that clipping constitutes "the process of deleting material itself which is the morph" (2003: 22), since the operational units of clipping include not only morphs but also morph segments.

Derivationally, one third (four out of 13) of the fore-clipped neologisms under study are formed by means of defective derivation, presupposing the emergence of a form that is logically predictable and deducible in the given derivational chain but unattested in the language in question. The four examples arising from such "gapped" derivation include '*clavaed up* 'used when a balaclava helmet is worn' (CNPDSUE 2008: 145) from *balaclavaed up\**; '*ped boy* 'a young, male moped rider; a younger, male BMX cyclist' (ibid., 487) from *moped boy\**; '*ped-head* 'a motor-scooter enthusiast' (ibid., 487) from *moped-head\**; and *roidhead* 'a habitual user of steroids' (VS 2008: 157) from *steroidhead\**. Since none of the hypothetical original forms is registered in lexicographic sources, their reconstruction is made possible exclusively through the application of the derivational analysis fitting the model "original lexical unit → hypothetical intermediate lexical unit\* → final lexical unit": *balaclava* → *balaclavaed up\** → '*clavaed up*; *moped* → *moped boy\** → '*ped boy*; *moped* → *moped-head\** → '*ped-head*; *steroid* → *steroidhead\** → *roidhead*.

The graphic aspect of fore-clipped slang neologisms testifies to two features: 1) phonetization of orthograms; 2) decapitalization of a derivative from a proper name.

Since, compared to apocopated units, the sum total of apheretic neologisms is fairly limited, phonetization of orthograms is identified in only two words: *boo* 'a C-7 Caribou aircraft' (RDMASUE 2009: 105) from *Caribou* and *toot* 'a prostitute' (ibid., 998) from *prostitute*. Both cases are borrowings. The initial clipping of *Caribou* resulted in the replacement of the digraph *ou* of French origin with its native counterpart *oo* in *boo*. The apheresis of the word *prostitute*, of Latin origin, was accompanied by the substitution of the original grapheme *u*, capable of representing several phonemes, most commonly /ʊ/, /u:/, /ʌ/, and /ə/, as well as the diphthong /ju:/, with the more phonetically transparent digraph *oo* to match the American English pronunciation /u:/.

The decapitalization of a derivative from a proper name is exemplified by the fore-clipping *boo* 'a C-7 Caribou aircraft' (RDMASUE 2009: 105) from *Caribou*. A brief analysis of other existing aeronautonyms, i.e. proper names of aircraft (Room 1996: 3), enables us to formulate several ground rules of capitalization / decapitalization in English aviation slang, based on both novel and non-novel empirical data.

The capitalization of the initial letter is mandatory when the slang unit:

1) fully or partially preserves the original root, as in *Connie* 'a Constellation airliner' (CNPDSUE 2008: 159); *Herk* 'the Hercules C-130 medium cargo transport aircraft manufactured by Lockheed' (ibid., 330); *T-bird* 'a T-33 jet trainer aircraft' (ibid., 642);

2) is of periphrastic nature with at least one onymic component, as in *(Flying) Edsel* 'the US Air Force F-111 aircraft' (ibid., 232); *Grumann Greyhound* 'the C-2A aircraft' (ibid., 310); *Puff (the Magic Dragon)* 'a C-47 aircraft modified as a gunship and redesignated an AC47, heavily used by the US Air Force in Vietnam' (ibid., 517-518); *Smoky Joe* 'a military aircraft that marks targets for bomber aircraft with smoke bombs' (ibid., 596);

3) is the result of transonymic transfer of meaning, i.e. proper name 1 → proper name 2, as in *Timmy* 'a Tristar aircraft' (ibid., 653); *Trojan* 'an AT-28 aircraft, used as a ground-attack aircraft and then a fighter bomber in the Vietnam war' (ibid., 666).

The capitalization of the initial letter is uncommon when the slang unit is:

1) the result of onymization, i.e. common name → proper name, as in *aardvark* 'an F-111 combat aircraft or any aircraft that is awkward-looking or difficult to fly' (ibid., 1); *albatross* 'a Grumman HU-16 amphibian aircraft, best known as a rescue aircraft during the Korean and Vietnam wars' (ibid., 7); *buffalo* 'the CV-7, a military transport aircraft built by DeHavilland Aircraft of Canada' (ibid., 98); *dog* 'an F86-DC aircraft' (ibid., 207); *dragonfly* 'an A-37 aircraft, used in the Vietnam war largely as a close air-support fighter for ground forces' (ibid., 218); *lead-sled* 'a Boeing 727 aircraft' (ibid., 395); *thud* 'an F-105 Thunderchief aircraft' (ibid., 650);

2) a compound, either pure, as in *droop-snoot* 'the supersonic airliner Concorde' (ibid., 221), or prefixal, as in *sundowner* 'a VF-111 combat aircraft' (ibid., 631); *three-holer* 'an aircraft with three engines, especially the Boeing 727' (ibid., 648).

Periphrastic slang denominations comprised of appellative components, i.e. where both lexemes are common nouns, tend to preserve the original lower case initial letter, as in *aluminium crow* 'a CF-100 Canuck jet fighter aircraft' (ibid., 10); *big-ass bird* 'the Boeing B-17 military aircraft' (ibid., 51); *big eye* 'a Lockheed EC-121 Warning Star aircraft' (ibid., 53); *blind bat* 'an AC-130 aircraft used for night flare missions in Vietnam between 1964 and 1970' (ibid., 65); *deuce* 'the Delta Dagger fighter aircraft' (ibid., 195); *flaming coffin* 'a DH-4 bomber aircraft' (ibid., 255); *flying gas station* 'a KC-135 aircraft used for inflight refuelling of jet aircraft' (ibid., 262); *flying prostitute* 'a B-26 bomber aircraft' (ibid., 262); *gozohomey bird* 'an aircraft that returns you home' (ibid., 302); *old shaky* 'a C-124 long-range transport aircraft' (ibid., 471); *vomit comet* 'the modified KC-135A reduced-gravity aircraft' (ibid., 682). However, capitalization

is standardized in *College Eye* 'a Lockheed EC-121 Warning Star aircraft' (ibid., 155); *Ranch Hand* 'a C-123 aircraft equipped with tanks filled with defoliants used on the Vietnam jungle' (ibid., 529); and *Yellow Peril* 'in Canadian military aviation, the Harvard training aircraft' (ibid., 713).

So, the fore-clipping *boo* 'a C-7 Caribou aircraft', albeit partially preserving the original phoneticized root *Caribou*, has undergone decapitalization. It may be argued that the neologism under scrutiny nevertheless complies with the capitalization rule presupposing the full or partial preservation of the original root, since technically *-bou* in *Caribou* is lower case, but, even more importantly, it is not word-initial. Therefore, the rule formulated above must be finalized with the observation that if a clipped slang unit partially retains the original root, capitalization is mandatory only if the initial root segment is preserved.

#### 4.4 Edge-clipping

Edge-clipping involves the simultaneous deletion of a word-initial and word-final segments with prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit. The phenomenon is equally known as *ambiclipping* (Mattiello 2013: 75), *anti-etclipsis* (Иванова 2011: 181; Fedulenkova 2005), or *fore-and-aft clipping* (OCEL 1992: 223). In this sense, Jamet also employs the term *syncope* (2009: 18), which, however, runs afoul of the aforementioned conventional comprehension of syncope as the deletion of a word-medial segment.

As the least productive clipping pattern in English slang formation (with only four examples detected), the deletion of both a word-initial and word-final segments shall be regarded in three aspects: phonotactic, morphotactic, and graphic.

The phonotactic structure of edge-clipped slang neologisms testifies to two features: 1) preservation of a single consonant in the word-initial and word-final positions;

2) loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism.

It is characteristic of edge-clippings to preserve a single consonant in the word-initial and word-final positions. In the two of the examples under analysis – *biff* 'a person deformed to some degree by spina bifida' (CNPDSUE 2008: 51) from *spina bifida*; and *mersh* 'marijuana that is commercially produced for a mass-market' (VS 2008: 119) from *commercial* – the resulting syllable structure is CVC: /bɪf/ and /mɜːʃ/ respectively. In the neologism *donk* 'large, protruding buttocks' (CNPDSUE 2008: 211) from *badonkadonk*, the onset is comprised of the single consonant /d-/, while the coda contains the consonant cluster /-ŋk/, thus conforming to the CVCC pattern: /dɒŋk/. Finally, the clipping *dro* 'marijuana grown hydroponically' (RDMASUE 2009: 320) from *hydroponic* is represented by a combination of a consonant cluster and a vowel, matching the CCV pattern: /drəʊ/.

The loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism involves the reduction of the number of syllables of the original word as well as the violability of its syllable boundaries. The reduction of the number of syllables affects all the identified edge-clippings, ranging from the minimum of two syllables, as in *com-mer-cial* → *mersh*, to the maximum of four, as in *spi-na bi-fi-da* → *biff*. Notwithstanding the structure of the original unit, the resulting one is always a monosyllable. The two neologisms above also lucidly exemplify the violability of the syllable boundaries of the original lexical item, with the initial consonant phoneme of the second eliminated segment being attached as a coda to the retained segment, i.e. /mɜː/ + /-ʃ-/ and /bɪ-/ + /-f-/ respectively.

The morphotactic structure of edge-clipped slang neologisms indicates the loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of its derivative. The resulting violability of the morphemic boundaries of the derivational base is observable, for instance, in *biff*, which constitutes a combination of the whole



prefixal morpheme *bi-* with the initial consonant /f-/ of the root morpheme *-fid-*, or in *mersh*, which is subject to regressive intermorphemic assimilation, with the initial vowel *i* of the subsequent suffixal morpheme *-ial* palatalizing the final consonant /-k/ of the preceding root morpheme, whence the new phoneme /ʃ/ unattested in either of the two original constituent morphemes.

The graphic aspect of edge-clipped slang neologisms reveals phonetization of orthograms. Similarly to the back-clipping discussed earlier, edge-clipping leads to the previously standardized orthograms of foreign origin, i.e. *spina bifida* directly from Latin and *commercial* via French from Latin, developing each a new graphic form: *biff* and *mersh* respectively.

In the first example, the novelty of spelling is due to the graphic gemination of the original grapheme *f* that switches its position from the word-medial in the original unit to the word-final in the resulting one. In the meantime, albeit uncommon in English, the word-final single grapheme *f* preceded by a single vowel grapheme is preserved in the spelling of certain borrowings, originating predominantly from Arabic, e.g., *alif* 'the first letter of the Arabic alphabet consisting of a simple vertical stroke' (MWD), *calif* / *khalif* 'a successor of Muhammad as temporal and spiritual head of Islam – used as a title' (ibid.), *kef* / *kif* 'a state of dreamy tranquility' (ibid.), *shaduf* 'a counterbalanced sweep used since ancient times especially in Egypt for raising water (as for irrigation)' (ibid.), *sharif* / *sherif* 'one of noble ancestry or political preeminence in predominantly Islamic countries' (ibid.); French, e.g., *chef* 'a skilled cook who manages the kitchen (as of a restaurant)' (ibid.), *fixatif* 'fixative' (ibid.), *motif* 'a usually recurring salient thematic element (as in the arts)' (ibid.), *sportif* 'sporty' (ibid.); Dutch, e.g., *serif* 'any of the short line stemming from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the strokes of a letter' (ibid.); Hebrew, e.g., *kaf* 'the eleventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet' (ibid.); Persian, e.g., *kenaf* 'an African hibiscus (*Hibiscus cannabinus*) widely cultivated for its fiber' (ibid.). In slang, however, the combination of a single vowel grapheme with the single word-final consonant grapheme *f* is prevalent in clippings, e.g., *decaf*

'decaffeinated coffee' (CNPDSUE 2008: 191), *def* 'definitely' (ibid., 192), *graf* 'graffiti' (ibid., 302), *Hef* 'Hugh Hefner (b. 1926), founding publisher of Playboy magazine, which first appeared in December 1953' (ibid., 329), *nut graf* 'in journalism, the key paragraph in an article' (ibid., 466), *prof* 'a professor' (ibid., 515), *ref* 'in a sporting contest, a referee' (ibid., 536), *terrif* 'terrific' (ibid., 644). The combination also occurs in borrowings, e.g., *finif* 'a five-dollar note' (ibid., 251) and *gon(n)if* / *ganef* 'a thief; a crook' (ibid., 297) from Yiddish; back slang formations, e.g., *ecaf* 'face' (ibid., 231) or *traf* 'to fart' (ibid., 663); zero derivatives, e.g., the verbified neologism *clef* 'to compose a tune or song' (ibid., 146) originating from the noun *clef*. Therefore, the fact that *f* ended up geminated in the word-final position of *biff* implies that the clipped neologism has been fully assimilated by the English language.

In the second example, it is the convergence of pronunciation and spelling that accounts for the discrepancy in the spelling of the original unit *commercial* and that of its derivative *mersh*. Once the sound form was clipped, i.e. /kə'mɜːʃl/ became /mɜːʃ/, the necessity arose to provide it with an adequate and transparent spelling, whence the substitution of the letter combination *ci*, which represents the phoneme /ʃ/ only in an unstressed pre-vowel position, with the more conventional digraph *sh*.

## 5. Conclusions

Clipping, as opposed to other word formation processes representing manifestations of dimensional redundancy and resulting in the decomposition of the original unit, constitutes a non-concatenative mechanism of word formation that is characterized by the deletion of a single segment / multiple segments of a word form with prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit.

The three-level taxonomy of clippings I have proposed in this paper is based on 1) the number of the word formation mechanisms involved, with the discrimination between *pure clipping* and *expanded clipping*; 2) the structure of the deleted segment, with the

delimitation of *sequential clipping* and *non-sequential clipping*; 3) the number of the deleted segments, with the juxtaposition of *monoclipping* and *ambiclipping*.

Among the subtypes of pure sequential clipping, back-clipping proves to be the most productive, accounting for 74.1 % of all clippings. Mid-clippings make up 15.4 %, whilst fore-clippings comprise 8 % of all the decomposed words under study. The least productive type is edge-clippings that constitute no more than 2.5 % of all clippings.

The common features of all slang clippings include 1) loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism, involving the reduction of the number of syllables of the original word as well as the violability of its syllable boundaries; 2) loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of its derivative; 3) phonetization of orthograms.

The distinctive features of slang back-clippings are 1) preservation of a single consonant or a consonant cluster in the final position of the word; 2) lexicalization of prefixes and prefixoids; 3) spelling anomalies, namely decapitalization of derivatives from proper names; use of upper and lower case in the word-initial position within the same onymic constituent of a compound; irregularity of spelling resulting in the form-and-meaning split of the original lexical item. Slang mid-clippings are notable for 1) the ambiguous taxonomic status of clipped pluralia tantum nouns and phrasal verbs, which, depending on the criterion of the analysis applied, may be regarded either as complying with the syncopic pattern, or as matching the apocopic pattern; 2) (in case of univerbalisms) balancing formal correlation with lexical items and semantic correlation with sentences. Slang fore-clippings are characterized by: 1) formation by means of "gapped" derivation, identified in 1/3 of the studied units; 2) decapitalization of a derivative from a proper name. The idiosyncrasy of slang edge-clippings is the preservation of a single consonant in the word-initial and word-final positions.

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## Abbreviations

CEDEL – A comprehensive etymological dictionary of the English language

CEPD – Cambridge English pronouncing dictionary

CNPDSUE – The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English

DBPN – A dictionary of British place names

DPSL – Dictionary of the Prague school of linguistics

LE – Local etymology; or names of places in the British isles and in other parts of the world (*dictionary*)

MWD – Merriam-Webster dictionary

OCEL – The Oxford companion to the English language

RDMA SUE – The Routledge dictionary of modern American slang and unconventional English

VS – Vice slang

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## Résumé

The paper addresses the issue of clipping in contemporary English slang formation. My primary concern has been to identify the phonotactic, morphotactic, graphic, logical, derivational, and syntactic features of clipped English slang neologisms coined in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The analyzed data have been collected from three explanatory dictionaries of English slang and cover the period from 2000 to 2008. The major findings based on the novel slang material refer to the redefinition of the term *clipping*, elaboration of a new three-level taxonomy of clippings, and establishing common and distinctive features of the diverse types of pure clipping under investigation. Clipping is treated as a non-concatenative mechanism of word formation that is characterized by the deletion of a single segment / multiple segments of a word form with a prototypically complete or non-prototypically partial semantic condensation and the informalization of the resulting unit. The taxonomy of clippings presupposes the distinction between pure and expanded clipping, with the pure clipping being split into sequential and non-sequential, the former being further subdivided into monoclipping and ambiclipping; finally, monoclipping embraces back-clipping, fore-clipping, and mid-clipping, whereas ambiclipping is represented by edge-clipping. The common

features inherent to all slang clippings involve the loss of correlation between the syllable structure of the original lexical item and that of the resulting neologism, the loss of correlation between the morphemic structure of the original lexical item and that of its derivative, and the phonetization of orthograms. Whilst the first two characteristics stem from the very nature of shortening per se, the third one is connected with the sociolect background (i.e. slang), in which clipped words are produced and subsequently employed. The distinctive features primarily rely on the position of the eliminated segment in the word and refer to the processes of alternation, lexicalization, (de)capitalization, "gapped" derivation, as well as shed light upon the graphic anomalies.

**Key words:** clipping, English slang, slang neologism, pure clipping, sequential clipping, monoclipping, back-clipping, mid-clipping, fore-clipping, ambiclipping.

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