

# A STUDY ON SLANG

—As seen in Newspaper Headlines—

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- I. Definition of Slang
- II. Slang and Journalism
- III. The Slang in Newspaper Headlines  
— Classification of the Different Forms of Slang—
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## I. Definition of Slang

It is not easy to define slang, for it seems to cover a wide range of words and phrases used among the cultured and educated, as well as those among the uncultured and uneducated. Eric Patridge<sup>1)</sup> states that slang ranks below colloquialism, yet above cant (the language of the underworld). He goes on to say that, in addition to standard slang, current among users of standard English and standard American, there are many class slangs and vocational slangs, the latter including for instance, the slang employed by players of games and sportsmen, and by those who watch them.

Webster's New World Dictionary gives the following definition of slang.

Colloquial language that is outside of conventional or standard usage and consists of both coined words (blurb, whoopee) and those with new or extended meanings (rubberneck, sap): slang develops from the attempt to find fresh and vigorous, colorful, pungent, or humorous expression, and generally either passes into disuse or comes to have a more formal status.

Another good definition is that of the O E D.

Language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current new words employed in some special sense.

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1) Eric Patridge: "Slang", Encyclopedia Americana, 1963.

Webster's New International Dictionary explains further :

Language comprising of certain widely current but usually ephemeral terms (especially coined or clipped words, or words in special senses, or phrases, usually metaphors or similies) having a forced, fantastic, or grotesque meaning, or exhibiting eccentric or extravagant humor or fancy.

From the definitions above, we come to a general conclusion that (1) slang comprises of such words or expressions used in some special sense, the spirit of which may be defined by such adjectives as fresh, vigorous, colorful, pungent, humorous, forced, fantastic and grotesque, (2) slang is a language of a highly colloquial type, widely current and outside of conventional or standard usage, (3) slang either passes into disuse or is retained in the language by acquiring a more formal status. Perhaps, slang may be considered a reservoir of active words in wide current use, reflecting the people and culture of a nation, from which words are borrowed freely into the colloquial and literary languages.

Eric Partridge gives 18 reasons which account for nearly all the slang we find,<sup>2)</sup> which helps us to better understand the nature and character of slang.

1. In exuberance of spirit and the sheer joy of living, or the exhilaration of the moment : "just for the hell of it"; playfully or waggishly.
2. Either as a conscious exercise, or as a wholly or mainly spontaneous expression of ingenuity, of wit, of humor.
3. To show, perhaps to prove, that one is "different"; to be novel.
4. To be picturesque, either positively and creatively or, as in the natural desire to avoid insipidity, negatively.
5. To achieve an arresting, even a startling or rather shocking, effect.
6. To escape from clichés, an intention usually arising from impatience with existing words.
7. To be brief, terse, concise.
8. To enrich the language. Such deliberate originality is common only among the educated; .....
9. To invest the abstract with concreteness, the idealistic with realism and earthiness, the remote with aptness and immediacy.
10. Either to mitigate or, on the other hand, to render unmistakable a refusal or rejection or, rarely, a recantation.
11. To reduce or, better, to dispel the solemnity or the pomposity of a conversation or conference, an essay or article.
12. To alleviate the starkness and soften the tragedy of death or madness, to mask the ugliness of rank ingratitude or treachery, .....

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2) *ibid.*

13. To entertain and amuse a superior public: to speak down, or write down, to what one conceives to be an inferior public; or merely to speak or write on equal terms, to one's public.
14. For ease of social intercourse. ....
15. To induce or to promote a deep or lasting friendliness or intimacy.
16. To intimate, maybe to prove, that one belongs or has belonged to a certain school or university, trade or profession, or social class; .....
17. Conversely to intimate, maybe to prove, that someone else does not "belong".
18. To avoid being understood by one's companions or the standers-by. (Children, lovers, students, criminals and near-criminals, and innocent persons in prison are the chief exponents of slang used for secrecy. ....)

## II. Slang and Journalism

In the Dictionary of American Slang,<sup>3)</sup> we find that, while in the past, writers were the major coiners of new words, since the late nineteenth century, new words and expressions have been coined and popularized almost exclusively by scientists, politicians, celebrities, newspaper, radio and television commentators; and more recently by comic-strip cartoonists and television comedians.

Thus, journalism along with other sources, has come to be considered one of the major coiners of new words. It also plays a big role in promoting the spread of slang, and in popularizing the specialized vocabulary of those from different walks of life.

In recent years, because of the effectiveness of mass communication, coinages are popular as synthetic slang. Writers and commentators often create neologisms and catch phrases for the sake of adding color and individuality to their columns. In the American newsmagazines *Time* and *Newsweek*, the use of slang is striking. Especially in *Time*, besides the use of already existing slang, we find a great number of synthetic slang, which has come to be called *Timestyle* or *Timesese*. To give an example, we have a series of words beginning with the prefix, *cine-*;<sup>4)</sup>

cinemactor—play actor

cinemactress—play actress

cinemadapt—adapt for a play, dramatize

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3) Wentworth & Flexner: Dictionary of American Slang, Individual Coinages, p. 603.

4) as listed by K. Horiuchi: "Slang", 時事英語概説, April, 1967.

cinemaddict—someone addicted to the play

cinemagpie—play reviewer

(magpie—a person who chatters, from the bird magpie)

cinemansion—play theatre

cinemanufacture—play producer (manufacturer)

cinemogul—play king

(mogul—a powerful or important person, from the sovereign Mughul of ancient Mongolia)

cinemaelstrom—difficulty in play management.

(maelstrom—a violently confused state of affairs)

cinemarmful—a beautiful actress

It must be noted, however, that these words are seldom used elsewhere, unless perhaps with conscious reference to *Time*. It may also be interesting to note that, in the English-Japanese dictionaries, we find *cinemactor* and *cinemaddict* classified as American slang, whereas, neither appear in Webster's New World dictionary. From the theatrical trade paper *Variety*, we have the popular '*Stix Nix Hix Pix*', the traditional headline of the paper, which was a hit and "a triumph of slang usage".<sup>5)</sup> All four words have entries in the Dictionary of Slang, and *nix* and *pix* are found in the headlines, dealt with later in this paper, in more than one instance.

stick—n. a dull, boring person with no interests or enthusiasms. One who sits like a stick.

stix—apparently the plural form.

nix—v.t. to veto; to reject; to cancel; to avoid.

hick—adj. rural; countrified; ignorant, unsophisticated. hix—probably made to rhyme with the others.

pix—n. pl. photographs, especially the photographs used to illustrate a specific article or feature in a newspaper or magazine; illustrations; artwork.

Again, Walter Winchell, columnist and newscaster, has given us such words as *infanticipate* (meaning to anticipate a baby, pregnant), and *renovate* (meaning to renew one's single status in the divorce center of Reno, Nev.)

Thus it may be seen how much of the slang quickly comes, or has come, into fashion and enjoys wide current usage, and then fades, or has faded, away, while still others have remained as colloquial language or literary slang. It is most likely that the slang popularized by journalism has a fairer chance of remaining as part of

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5) Wentworth & Flexner: op.cit., see nix.

the English language.

We have thus far discussed the role of journalism in originating and popularizing slang, but would here like to take a moment to consider the role of slang in journalism. The abundant use of slang in journalism may be accounted for by looking briefly into the elements of what might be considered 'good news', and by considering the function of the newspaper as such. Can it not be said that slang also plays a big role in journalism by contributing force and energy, effect and appeal to the news items and columns? Much slang, no doubt, is originated and used in journalism for the sake of their brevity and freshness. The style or spirit of slang seems to have something in common with the style or news-value of a newspaper, which lies in bringing to its reader the current news, reflecting the times, accurately and attractively, and with brevity and immediacy.

### **III. The Slang in Newspaper Headlines**

This paper deals specifically with slang words or expressions found in the headlines in the Asahi Evening News during the month of September, 1967. The choice of the Newspaper has been optional. The purpose of this study does not lie in attempting to draw any new conclusion about slang, or in acquiring any statistical data, etc.; the study has been made to better enable us to glimpse into the nature of 'slang at work'.

In the following examples, words already classified as slang, and new words of a more recent coinage and not entered in the dictionaries, have been cited. The examples do not limit themselves to slang, but include some colloquial terms and a few perhaps close-to-standard terms, to enhance the various processes by which new words are formed. Webster's New World Dictionary and the Dictionary of American Slang (Wentworth & Flexner) have been consulted for information in describing the words and expressions dealt with in this paper. Where no information was available, the writer has drawn her own conclusions when possible from already understood facts, or has added her own comments when necessary.

The headlines cited, cover all pages of the newspaper. The numbers which are found at the end of each headline indicate the day and page, respectively. The words have been roughly classified, not according to the different news categories

or to the different groups which have contributed to slang, but rather according to the form of slang or the method by which the word has been formed. Where there have been more possibilities than one, the word has been listed but once.

## CLASSIFICATION

### I. Changes in Form

#### a) Lengthening

Much slang is formed by lengthening old words by making compounds, and by affixing suffixes.

Compounds may be formed by combining any two parts of speech. Such combinations may be made from two standard or slang words, or a standard and a slang word, resulting in either a standard or slang word. Examples of this sort were few in the headlines collected.

1. Yank Seaman, 52, Admits Being Tokyo's 'Pearl-Lifter' (8-3)
2. Cease-Fire Goes Into Effect (13-1)
3. Romney's Brainwashing Charge Is Vigorously Denied by Lodge (19-1)

v.t. (journalese c1951) colloq. to indoctrinate so intensely and thoroughly as to effect a radical transformation of beliefs and mental attitudes. (Webster's)

v.t. to induce an attitudinal change in a person, usually a captive, by means of psycho-educational methods, sometimes supplemented by drugs and physical coercion. 1953: "This red label makes us feel like criminals. We are all completely innocent. I never even heard the term 'brainwash' before I got back home." A.U.S. prisoner of war in Korea, after his release, quoted by AP, May 4. (Dictionary of American Slang)

4. Dramatic Jailbreak Staged by Hoodlums (26-3)
5. Japan Enters 8 Matmen In Amateur Championship (28-16)  
(referring to wrestlers)
6. PTA Funds Hire Subs For Ill-Leave Teachers (29-4)

All, except example 3, do not have entries in either Webster's or the Dictionary of American Slang. However, in Webster's we do find *shop-lifter*, *lawbreaker* and *sick-leave*, which would account for the words, *pearl-lifter*, *jailbreak* and *ill-leave*. Among these, perhaps 'pearl-lifter' would be closest recognized as slang, 'lift' itself having a slang meaning 'to steal'. No doubt, it has been used deliberately for effect by the headline writer, and hence the quotations in the headline.

Slang has certain words which frequently recur in compound formations. These are called suffix words in the Dictionary of American Slang, since they are added and have the influence of suffixes and prefixes. Such suffix words which appear in the headlines cited below are out, down, up, and in, (in order of frequency), added to verbs, and will here be called the verb-adverb combination for convenience' sake.

Hereafter, Webster's New World Dictionary and the Dictionary of American Slang (Wentworth & Flexner) will be indicated by W and S, respectively, and placed before the definitions cited from each. The writer's own comments will be enclosed in parentheses.

1. 6 Tons of Gravel, Lazy Driver Snuff Out Life of 2-Year-Old Boy (4-3)
  - W - 1. to extinguish.
  2. to bring to an end suddenly or violently; destroy.
2. Agostini Cops 500-CC; Noses Out Mike Hailwood (5-8)
  - S - to win, succeed or be chosen over another in a close contest or by a small margin.
  - W - to win by a nose; nose - v.t. to defeat by a very small margin (with out)
3. N.Y. Teacher Set For Walkout (9-2)
  - S - n. colloq. a strike of workers.
  - W - n. colloq. a strike by union employees against an employer.
4. Small Turnout Seen for OAU Summit (12-1)
  - S - n. colloq. a crowd or audience, especially a large one; spectators, guests.
  - W - no entry.
5. Red Ants Knock Out 1st Div. 's Telecomm (15-2)
6. Gov't Moves To Cool Down Economy Here (2-1)
  - S - no entry. However, cool off - to become calmer; and cool out - to appease.
  - W - no entry.
7. Hyogo Cops Crack Down On Real Estate Dealers (7-3)
 

FTC to Crack Down On Price-Fixing Deals (14-6)

  - S - to take admonitory or punitive action against someone; to censure. 1952: "Representative Robert W. Kean..... warned the House at that time. It cracked down." N.Y. Daily News, Aug. 13.
  - W - colloq. to become strict or stricter (with).
8. Sweden Clamps Down On Speeding Drivers (9-2)
 

Business Leaders Hoping Clampdown Will Be Short (2-6)

Conflicting Views Given On Effects of Clampdown (12-6)

S - to become stricter as in the enforcement of regulations; to strengthen authority; to increase supervision. 1957; "If you (employees) don't start coming in on time, I'm going to clamp down. I can always get a time clock, you know." Oral, N.Y.C. office.

W - colloq. to become more strict (with).

9. Expert Snarls Up Traffic (13-2)

W - snarl - v.t. to make disordered or confused; as, the traffic is snarled.

10. Intrepid Routs Dame Pattie Again; About Wraps Up America's Cup (16-12)

S - wrap it up - to conclude any task or operation successfully; to strike the winning blow, fig., in a contest or competition.

W - no entry.

11. 2 Men Moling In To Rescue Trapped South Korean Miners (6-2)

(This combination is somewhat different from the ones listed above in that the use of the word *mole* as a verb is not found in either of the Dictionaries. Thus, the word may be thought of as having undergone a change in the part of speech from the noun, *mole* - any of a number of small burrowing, insect-eating mammals which live mainly underground: and hence, *mole in*, meaning to burrow into the ground like a mole.)

Example 5 has been included in this category, because it is a verb-adverb combination, but it would seem more proper to classify the word *knock out* in this use, separately, as a generalization of its former meaning. Besides the examples above, another word which often forms slang compounds of this sort is *off*, in such words as, *brushoff*, *goof off*, *knock off*, *payoff*, *tip-off*, etc., with which we are familiar. The new word created by this verb-adverb combination is either a verb, when the two words are not joined, or a noun or an adjective, when the two words are hyphenated or joined into one word without a hyphen.

New words are readily formed by adding a suffix or a prefix to a full word. Words formed in such a way are called derivations. The following are headlines with derivations (including those with no entries in the Dictionaries, and which might not be considered slang).

1. Japanese Prepsters Beat Gardena IX 6-1 (7-8)

S - n. a preparatory school student; one who is preparing to enter college. c1880.

W - prep - adj. colloq. preparatory, as a prep school.

n. colloq. a preparatory school.

2. Daiei Announces Lower Movie Fees for Oldsters (14-3)

Nine Oldsters Commit Suicide on Their Day (18-3)

W - colloq. a person who is no longer a youngster; old or elderly person.  
(Youngster has an entry as standard.)

3. Another Walker Cupper To Join Pro Ranks (11-8)

Japan Cuppers Selected For Matches With India (14-8)

4. Swedish Kickers Plan Tour of Japan in March (22-8)

(referring to soccer members)

5. Three Soviet Netters Invited to Asahi Meet (28-16)

(referring to tennis members)

6. French Bobbysoxers Told To Ditch Minis (8-2)

S - an adolescent girl. From the bobby socks which most such girls wore as part of the fashionable high-school costume during the early 1940s.

W - colloq. a girl in her teens, especially one regarded as conforming to current fads.

7. Bad News for 'Sake' Sippers (16-11)8. 100 Sumoists to Tour Okinawa in December (22-8)9. Young Firebug (14-1)

S - n. an arsonist; a pyromaniac. 1953: "A firebug's tryin' to burn this warehouse!" L. Turner, synd. comic strip, "Wash Tubbs", Feb. 10. Since c1870.

W - n. colloq. a person who deliberately sets fire to buildings. etc.; pyromaniac; incendiary.

10. N.Y. Filmfest Set (2-1)

(referring to film festival)

11. Chionoi Retains Crown In Bloody Slugfest (21-8)

S - a vicious or exciting prize fight. Since c1920.

W - no entry.

12. Trigger-Happy North Koreans Warned by U.S. (18-2)13. Beatle-Maned Intruder Ties Girl, Rifles Home (19-3)

(referring to man with a beetle haircut)

The suffix *-ster* and *-er* is quite popularly used to form new nouns of agency, and is seen in examples 1 to 7 above. It is difficult, however, to draw any conclusion as to which of the newer derivations, if any, would be considered slang, although *slugger* and *cager* from sports, are listed as slang.<sup>6)</sup> As slang expressions with *-er*,

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6) K. Horiuchi, op. cit., p. 211.

we have such words as, *goner*, *looker*, *moonlighter*, *stinker*, etc., and with *-ster*, *bangster*, *gangster*, *hipster*, *mobster*, etc. Recently, we encounter the suffix *-nik* of Russian origin, made popular with the appearance of the word *Sputnik* (1957), in such words as *beautnik*, *peacenik*, *Vietnik* and *quitnik*. The suffix words *-happy* and *-fest* found in examples 10, 11 & 12, also call to mind such words as *car-happy* and *glamour-happy*, *talkfest* and *songfest*.

b) Shortening

The tendency in slang being toward short informal speech, shortenings are common. A word may be shortened by back clipping, front clipping, middle clipping, or abbreviation. In any shortening, the short form usually has the same denotation as the original full word or term. In standard use, the short form may convey an official, less personal connotation than the full expression; in slang, on the contrary, the short form may connote less formality and respect than the full form. Following are examples of clipped words:

1. Acupuncture Being Studied by Medics (2-2)

Most Hippies Suffer From VD, Medic Says (15-2)

S - a physician; a member of the Army Medical Corps. 1952: "Medics rushed into the tent, picked up the first stretcher and lashed it to the outside of the helicopter" AP, Aug. 21. Most common during and since W.W. II.

W - colloq. a physician or surgeon; a medical student or intern.

2. Many Docs Reported Ignorant About Sex (19-2)

Drink, But Don't Smoke, Doc Warns (28-2)

S - a doctor; specifically, a physician. 1952: "Docs find he's schizo." Photo Caption, N.Y. Daily News, Aug. 13.

W - slang. doctor: often used as a general term of address as Mac, Bud, Jack, etc.

3. Stanford's Youngest Prof Is Teen-Ager (25-2)

S - a college or university professor. 1914: "I met a prof, there." S. Lewis, *Our Mr. Wrenn*, 149.

W - colloq. a professor.

4. Hoods Use Public Park For Leader's Funeral (8-3)

S - n. a hoodlum, thief, criminal, gangster; especially one who applies physical violence. 1930: "Those St. Louis hoods....." *Amer. Mercury*, 456.

W - n. slang, a hoodlum; gangster.

hoodlum - colloq. a young rowdy, often a member of a gang; originally used in San Francisco of gangs of toughs employed to beat up the Chinese, said to be < huddle 'em, as used by gangs.

5. Vag Tries To Steal Pistol From Cop 'for Blackmail' (19-3)

S - A vagrant, a tramp, a jobless person. 1894: "America can almost compete with England in the number of her 'city vags'." J. Flynt. 1947: "The police..... at once bagged her as a 'vag'." John Bruce, San Fran. Murders, 206.

6. Jesse Has the Potential To Become Grand Champ (18-12)

S - a sports champion, especially in boxing. 1957: "Who will be the new champ.....?" A.P. March 23.

W - slang, a champion.

7. Fukuoka Woman, Quads Doing Well (26-3)

(Supposedly, the clipped form of *quadruplets*: found in neither of the Dictionaries.)

8. Yank Seaman, 52, Admits Being Tokyo 'Pearl-Lifter' (8-3)

Yank Official Told "Money or Fire" (9-3)

S - n. 1. a citizen of the U.S. c1847. 1956: ".....With half a dozen young men, inquiring after the 'Yank' and swearing to have his life....." Samuel E. Chamberlain, "My Confession," Life, July 23. From the now standard "Yankee". 2. a. U.S. soldier. Originally W.W. II use from British slang, yank.

9. FLOSY Clashes With Tommies (9-2)

S - a British soldier. Very common W.W. I use. From Tommy Atkins - a British soldier. 1943: "The British 'Tommy Atkins' got his nickname from the Tommy Atkins on the sample recruiting form." A. Ostrow. "Tommy Atkins" is the British equivalent of our "John Doe" or wartime "G.I. Joe". The full term was used early in W.W. I, but was quickly reduced to "Tommy".

10. First Pix Taken by Surveyor-5 (12-1)

S - n. pl. photographs, especially the photographs used to illustrate a specific article or feature in a newspaper or magazine; illustrations; artwork. Wide newspaper use c1950.

11. Illegal Pep Dealer Arrested (8-3)

S - energy, vim; enthusiasm, spirit, zest; initiative, the energy and enthusiasm that comes from health and high spirits. 1920: "Lot of pep." Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, 44. 1925: "Roosevelt had pep." Eng. Jour., Nov 7. Since c1915; wide slang use during mid-1920s. Common enough since 1930 to be considered colloq.

W - n. slang. energy; briskness; vigor; spirit.

v.t. slang. to fill with pep; invigorate.

- (can be thought of as a shortening of the slang word *pepper*, meaning vitality, vigor enthusiasm, stamina.)
12. New Scottish Pop Group Trying to Make ‘Top 20’ (26-5)  
S - a concert of popular music played by a fairly large orchestra and featuring a mixture of “Tin Pan Alley” songs and light classics; a piece of popular music.  
W - pop concert - a popular concert, chiefly of semiclassical and light classical music.
13. Pro Grid Results (26-8)  
S - a football playing field; since c1915. From gridiron.  
W - adj. slang. of football.
14. First Swiss Auto In 20 Yrs. Unvield (15-6)  
S - automobile. 1930: “Frowned upon by the elegant..... are auto, gent, ad, rep, exam, memo.....” Word Study, Dec. 4. 1934: colloq. in Webster’s.
15. PTA Funds Hire Subs For Ill-Leave Teachers (27-3)  
S - a substitute of any kind.  
W - colloq. substitute.
16. Governor’ Confab Opened in Tokyo (2-3)  
S - a talk, conversation, or conference. 1901: Greenough & Kittridge, 62. 1945: “The infamous Munich confab.” W. Winchell, synd. newsp. col., Nov. 13.  
W - colloq. a confabulation.
17. Prefab 21-Story Hotel (8-6)  
(supposedly the clipped form of *perfabricated house*: no entry in either of the Dictionaries.)
18. Calcined Coke Plant To Be Built in Japan (14-6)  
S - 1. cocaine. 2. any soft drink — makers of Coca-Cola or Coke have copywrited both the full and shortened name.  
W - slang. 1. cocaine. 2. a variety of soft drink containing cocaine: a trade-mark (Coke).
19. Suzuki Bike Betters Lap (4-8)  
S - colloq. for bicycle since c1880.
20. USSR Jumps Into ‘Psywar’ In Vietnam (12-2)  
(supposedly the clipped form of *psychological war*: no entry in either of the Dictionaries.)
21. Red Ants Knock Out 1st Div.’s Telecomm (15-2)  
(article refers to telephone communications)
22. U.K. Models in Minis Excite Moscovites (4-2)  
Worry About Ministaff, Striking Minis Say (23-2)

Slain Miniskirted French Model Sparks London-Wide Hunt (25-2)

(No entries in the Dictionary. *mini* here is apparently the clipped form of *miniskirt*; thus, *minis* to refer to miniskirts or people who wear miniskirts, *ministaff* to refer to those who make miniskirts, and *miniskirted* to form the adjective.)

23. Aussie Minister Bares Talks on Big Ore Deal (5-6)

(referring to Australian)

24. Frisco Rocks (9-2)

(referring to San Francisco)

25. Chisox Beat Yanks 5-3 (7-8)

(referring to Chicago White Sox Baseball Team)

26. Bosox Nip Nats 4-2 (15-8)

(referring to Boston Red Sox Baseball Team)

In the headlines cited here, we find examples of back clipping (examples 1 to 18), and of middle clipping (examples 19 & 24). *Asusie* is an example of back clipping plus the ending *-ie*. Other examples of this sort are *Phillie* and *commie*. *Chi* may be classified as a slang nickname, along with *Frisco*, *Phillie*, *Pennsy*, *Minnie*, etc., and hence the nickname *Chisox* and *Bosox*.

In front clipping, the original word is harder to identify by the initiated, but we have slang words such as *coon* (raccoon), *dozer* (bulldozer), *vert* (convert), etc. *Chute* (parachute), *mum* (chrysanthemum), and *phone* (telephone) have come to be considered as colloquial. Cases of front clipping were not found in the headlines collected, except for one interesting case:

The Wrong 'Cide' (12-4),

probably made to rhyme with "The wrong side", and most probably to be considered a nonce word. The item refers to a father being arrested for trying to kill his daughter with "frustrated patricide", while such a crime is correctly called "filicide".

A great number of abbreviations are used in the headlines, perhaps more for economy of space than for effect. Common abbreviations for standard words and place names are not slang. Examples which might be considered slang were few.

1. New NWA Veep Arrives in Tokyo (6-6)

S - a vice president. First popularly applied to U.S. Vice president Alben Barkley. From

the standard abbreviation, “V.P.” 1951: Three members of the Dodgers’ official family feel very happy. They are Veep Fresco Thompson, Coach Jake Pitler, and Manager Charley Dressen.” AP, Sept. 22.

2. Kinsey Report Help G-Man Who Was Fired (23-3)

W - colloq. an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Government-Man.

3. Sam Sites Quadrupled By N. Viets (6-1)

White Africa Turning Into Another Viet (19-2)

(Viets referring to VietNameese, and Viet to VietNam.)

Interesting abbreviations found were *H’shima* (Hiroshima), *S’hai* (Shanghai), *S’pore* (Singapore), and *R’feller* (Rockefeller Center), for place names, and the headline “H H H Hurt”, referring to the U.S. Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey.

II. Changes in the Part of Speech (Functional Shift)

Creating new words by functional shift usually results in shorter forms, and such forms are often originated or popularized by newspaper headline writers. A standard word which undergoes a functional change does not necessarily become slang, but many standard words used in a grammatical function different from the expected could be considered slang.

1. French Bobbysoxers Told to Ditch Minis (8-2)

S - v. t. to abandon or run away from a person or thing. 1934: “We’ll ditch this Greek and blow.” Cain, Postman.

W - slang. to desert, to get rid of.

2. Winstone, Saldivar Ink Title Contract (25-8)

S - v. t. to sign a contract.

3. Chicago Edges Mets 2-1 In 7-Game Series Opener (2-8)

S - edge on (someone) to have an advantage over another person, esp. to have an advantage that will enable one to best beat another in a contest of strength.

W - colloq. n. advantage, as, you have the edge on me. No verb form.

4. Chionoi Floors Sparmate In Warmup Session (7-8)

S - v. t. to knock someone down.

W - v. t. colloq. to defeat

5. Roger Maris Powers Cards’ 9-2 Victory (11-8)

W - v.t. colloq. to make one's way with force.

6. Air-Freights Self To Wedding

7. Pair Suicides After Crash Disables Son (8-3)

W - v.i. colloq. to commit suicide.

8. Johnson Will Host Lunch For U.S.-Japan Committee (14-6)

Taipei to Host 2nd Asian Keg Contest (14-8)

9. Mentally-Ill Kyushu Man 'Shanghaied' for 5 Months (16-3)

S - v.t. to abduct a man, usu. a sailor, and force him to work as a sailor on one's own ship. 1954: "You were most likely to be slugged and shanghaied out to sea." W.R. & F.K. Simpson, Hockshop, 35.

W - slang. to induce (another) to do something through force or underhanded methods. Orig. said of soldiers thus kidnapped for crew duty on the China run.

10. Rice Price Hike Set for Oct. 1 (9-3)

Hike in Transport Charges (Editorial) (9-4)

S - n. an increase. 1949: ".....Hike in wages from 40 cents to 75." AP, Oct. 19.

W - only entered as verb - to raise (prices, etc.) colloq.

11. Solomons Trying to Spike Winstone-Saldivar Go (8-8)

S - n. a prize fight 1896. 1930: "A ripsnorting go." Burnett, Iron Man.

12. Soviet Mum, U.K. Hits U.S. ABM Decision (21-1)

Rusk, White House Mum On Resignation Report (25-1)

W - adj. silent, not speaking.

mum's the word - say nothing, remain secretive.

13. Crash Labor Program Launched by Toyota (26-7)

W - adj. colloq. characterized by the use of all possible resources, effort, and speed: as, a crash program to build highways.

14. Embracing Dips Sought By Aichi Pref. Policemen (12-3)

S - n. a pickpocket. 1926: "The dip who slid with the ticktock." N.Y. Times, May 30. Common underworld use, universally known. Lit., one who "dips" his hand into other people's pockets.

W - n. slang. a pickpocket.

15. Osaka Court Nixes Firm's Liquidation (15-3)

S - v.t. to veto; to reject; to cancel; to avoid. 1945: ".....The blue-penciler nixed the

story." W. Winchell, synd. newsp. col., Nov. 13. Popularized by "Variety"; that paper's traditional headline, "Stix nix hix pix", was a triumph of slang usage.

W - interj. an exclamation meaning: stop! I forbid, refuse, disagree, etc.  
adv. slang. nothing; no; not at all.

### III. Generalization and Specialization

Many slang words are formed by changing the meaning of old words, either by generalizing or by specializing their original meanings. In generalization, a single word comes to have more than one meaning, while in specialization, a word loses some of its various meanings and retains only one concept. Slang often generalizes from old words by using metaphors, and by giving inanimate objects living characteristics. In sports, many verbs are used metaphorically, and may be considered as having been generalized in their meanings. All the examples in the following, are headlines found on the Sports' page. The closest meaning has been cited from Webster's.

1. Japan Sweeps Gymnastics Events (5-8)  
S - to win a tournament without losing a game or contest.  
W - colloq. to win all the games or events of (a series).
2. U.S. Thumps Brazil for Cage Title (5-8)  
W - to thrash, beat severely.
3. Curtain Drops on Universiade; Japan Steals Show on Final Day (6-8)  
W - 3. to take or gain insidiously or artfully: as, the costs of lobbying stole his profits, he stole her heart.
4. Aberdeen Whips Iceland In Cup Winners' Match (8-8)  
W - colloq. to defeat or outdo, as in a contest.
5. Graebner, Mrs. King Slam Way Into Quarterfinals (8-8)  
S - v.t. in baseball, to hit the ball  
W - v.i. to go into place, etc. with force and noise.
6. Yorkshire Clinches English Cricket Title (9-8)  
S - v.t., v.i. to embrace; to determine conclusively, to compete.  
W - slang. to embrace; to settle definitely, close conclusively.
7. AL Pennant Race Sizzles, 4 Clubs Fight for Lead (9-8)  
W - v.i. to make a hissing sound when in contact with heat. adj. that sizzles; extremely hot.

8. Dean Chance Hurls Twins Back Into AL First Place (11-8)
  - S - in baseball, to pitch a game or inning.
  - W - slang. in baseball, to pitch.
9. Bosox Nip Nats (15-8)
  - W - v.t. to check the growth or development of.
  - v.t. slang. to steal, snatch.
10. Japan Nat'l Soccer Team Trounces PI XI 15-0 (29-8)
  - W - colloq. to defeat.
11. Arimitsu Wins Diving Gold Medal; Stops U.S. Sweep of Tank Events (2-8)
  - W - a swimming tank (any large container for liquid or gas).

## IV. Others.

1. Efficient 'Traffic Cop' Wore the Wrong Cap (6-2)
  - S - a policeman. From the copper buttons once used on police uniforms, reinforced by the Italo-Amer. "coppo"; now by far the most common word for "policeman".
  - W - slang. a policeman.
2. 'Saucers' Throw U.K. Into Tizzy (6-2)
  - S - a fit or period of nervousness, anxiety or confusion.
  - W - slang. a state of frenzied excitement or distraction, especially over some trivial matter.
3. Hippie Who Ate \$ Bill Living on City Money (9-2)
  - W - hipped - adj. colloq. in low spirits, melancholy, depressed, offended: obsessed (with, on).
  - hippish - colloq. somewhat melancholy or depressed.
4. N.Y. Manufacturer Tries To Sell Bugging Devices (12-6)
  - S - bug - n. a dictaphone or other such recording device concealed to record conversations without the speaker's knowledge; any wire-tapping device. 1950: "We can't talk because the phone has a bug on it." Starnes, Another Mug.
  - v.t. to conceal a microphone-recording device in a room or other location in order to record conversation surreptitiously.
5. Sinatra Is Injured In Week-End Ruckus (14-2)
  - S - an uproar; a fight; a rowdy or boisterous celebration. Since before c1890; dialect.
  - W - dial. or colloq. noisy confusion; uproar; row; disturbance.
6. 'U.S. Agent' Gets Life Rap in Peking (15-2)
  - S - a rebuke or reprimand; blame, responsibility. 1949: "The quarrel was not of making, but he had to take the rap." Ithaca (N.Y.) Journal, Nov. 3.
  - an instance of being identified, arrested, charged, tried, sentenced, punished, or put in

prison as a lawbreaker.

W - slang. blame or punishment, specifically, a judicial sentence, as to a prison term.

7. Asian Regional Keg Meet To Be Held in Hongkong (25-8)

(can be thought of as a back formation from *kegler*, referring to bowling)

W - *kegler* - colloq. bowler, a person who bowls.

8. PII. ROK Pace Field In Asian Cage Tourney (28-16)

(can be thought of as a back formation from *cager*, referring to basketball)

S - *cager* - a basketball player. Some use since c1925.

W - *cager* - colloq. basketball player.

9. Miss Takeda Cops Gold Medal In Women's High Jump Event (4-8)

S - v.t. to steal. to obtain, to deprive; to win, to carry off a prize. 1941: "(In a race) pace in the pinches is what cops or kills." J. Lilienthal, *Horse Crazy*. 1950: "Green Pastures copped the Pulitzer Prize....." *N.Y. Times*, Sept. 3.

W - slang. to seize, steal.

10. Swindler Nabbed in Tokyo (6-3)

S - to catch or arrest.

W - thieves' slang (16th-17thc) probably variant of dialect nap, to snatch. colloq. to snatch or seize suddenly; to arrest or catch.

11. Snotty Taxi Drivers (12-4)

W - adj. slang. offensive, contemptible; impudent, haughty, etc. (perhaps from the vulgar term *snot*, meaning nasal mucous)

12. Yum Yums From a Japanese Kitchen (11-6)

S - n. food, baby talk; sweets, used by young children. yummy - adj. delicious. Orig. baby talk, in vogue c1930 and again c1955.

13. Judge: Go-Go Window Entertainment OK (15-2)

S - exclamation, go-man-go. An expression of encouragement.

W - go - n. colloq. fashion; vogue (with the).

#### IV. Final Remarks

We have seen in Chapter III, that many coinages which appear in the English language belong to the category of slang. However, among the many newer coinages, it is difficult to determine whether the new word be slang or colloquial, (or perhaps even standard). Even the various dictionaries are divided in their views, making

the borderline for slang quite close. In *Word Study*, Dec. 4, 1930, we find, "Frowned upon by the elegant..... are auto, gent, ad, rep, exam, memo....." In recent years, *auto*, *ad*, *exam*, and *memo* have come to take a colloquial status, while *gent* is classified as slang (humorous or vulgar term) in Webster's, and *rep* (without a period) does not have an entry. The word *movie* is another example, formerly classified as slang in Webster's, then as colloquial, although Wentworth & Flexner state that it has been in standard use since c1915. Perhaps, when slang has come to lose its special flavor or color, it becomes colloquial. Again, the process for forming words gives unlimited opportunity to coin nonce words, fad words, and unimportant neologisms, making us cautious in drawing any borderline for slang at an early date. At any rate, all coinages, perhaps, which are used in a sense unexpected or surprising, or perhaps arresting, and which have seen some lasting popularity, may be considered slang.

In the *Asahi Evening News*, during the month of September, 1967, there was one item concerning slang, which I would like to introduce here, for it may throw some light on how slang is accepted by society at this present date.

#### Ban on Bible Stories In Slang Criticized (26-2)

UPI - East London, South Africa, Sept. 24-

Clergyman protested Saturday against a government ban on a book entitled "God Is for Real, Man", a collection of Bible stories and psalms including the ten commandments in slang.

One clergyman Rev. Donald Howard, said in a parish newsletter that the author, U.S. prison chaplain, Carl Burles, had realized the Bible was not getting across among slum youths.

In this present age, when mass communication has rendered it possible for slang to acquire a status hitherto unseen, to regard slang a language to be looked down and frowned upon, would be quite out-of-date. As newspapers, magazines, and books have multiplied and enlarged their influence, slang has tended to base more and more of its language upon news items, and newspaper theories and cartoons, making a knowledge of slang almost indispensable in reading newspapers and in keeping up with the time.

As has been seen in the preceding chapters, slang today, has, more or less, lost its class distinction, and is no longer necessarily the language of the uneducated and uncultured. Rather, it portrays the character and liking of individuals. It is a language, 'living' and 'working' among a people in a sense filled with imagination and

humor, vigor and force, reflecting the individuals and the culture of the nation of the time. And as Eric Partridge has said, “The more polished, cultured and sophisticated a nation, the more, proportionately, does it tend to slang.”