Criminal slang in TV series Peaky Blinders and Prison Break

Maglica, Marija

SVEUČILIŠTE U SPLITU

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Marija Maglica

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UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT
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Department of English Language and Literature

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Student: Marija Maglica

Supervisor: Mirjana Semren, Assistant Professor

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to Dumas and Lighter (1978), slang is a form of informal language characterized by its deviation from standard grammatical and vocabulary rules, primarily used in spoken rather than written contexts. From a linguistic and sociological perspective, slang exhibits unique processes and features that differentiate it from standard language. Precisely because of its informal nature, it plays a significant role in everyday communication, providing a way for people to communicate in a casual and relaxed manner while also signaling group membership and identity. In popular media, such as in the television series *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*, slang is crucial tool for signaling social belonging, conveying covert information, and often asserting power dynamics through the usage of derogatory terms. By using slang, speakers often exclude those who are unfamiliar with its meanings, creating boundaries between insiders and outsiders. These specific TV series utilize distinct criminal slang to enhance the authenticity of their characters and settings. For instance, in *Peaky Blinders*, the use of early 20th century British criminal slang not only reinforces social bonds among the gang members, but also transports the audience to this historical period. Similarly, *Prison Break* employs modern American prison slang to illustrate the harsh realities of prison life and establish a sense of hierarchy among inmates. The main reason I chose this topic for my BA thesis is that I am a huge fan of crime movies and TV series. Having watched both *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break* several times, I noticed the frequent use of criminal slang, which immediately caught my attention. Additionally, I wanted to explore in more detail how these expressions contribute to the overall storytelling, and I also find the connection between popular media and linguistics very interesting.

The first part of the paper addresses the theoretical aspects of slang, focusing on its definitions (chapter 2), classification (chapter 3), origin (chapter 4), as well as its sociological and linguistic features. The second part of the paper is devoted to the analysis of criminal slang in two selected TV series, *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*. A particular number of slang examples from each series are analyzed in detail (subchapter 7.2.), with emphasis on their meaning and function from both sociological and linguistic perspectives. At the end, the results of the analysis, along with a discussion (subchapter 7.3.) in relation to the similarities and differences in the use of criminal slang in these two series, are presented.

2. DEFINING SLANG

As Sabbagh (2018) claims, we come across slang every day, whether it is in conversations, text messages, social media updates,or throughout the slang-rich Internet. The presence of slang in our daily discussions and interactions is undeniable. However, it can be quite challenging to define slang itself. That is why, linguists Dumas and Lighter (1978) proposed four criteria for defining slang, suggesting that an expression should be considered "true slang" if it meets at least two of the four presented criteria which focus on the use of slang in formal contexts, its association with specific subcultures, its taboo nature in mainstream discourse, and its function as a substitute for conventional terms.

The first criterion underscores that when a slang term is used in a context that is typically formal or serious, it introduces a level of informality that can undermine the professionalism of that context. An illustrative example Dumas and Lighter (1978: 14) proposed was *Though their dissent was not always noisy or dramatic, many Americans felt the President was a jerk for continuing the war*. The main point was that usage of *jerk* in this context reduces the dignity of formal or serious speech, making it inappropriate for formal settings, in this case political discussion.

Furthermore, the use of slang implies how speaker or writer is not only familiar with the meaning of the term slang itself but also with the specific context or group that commonly uses it. For instance, by saying *College students in the 1960s blew more grass than ever before,* instead of saying *smoked marijuana,* Dumas and Ligher (1978: 14) highlighted how slang words originate within subcultures or among younger generations and are used to express ideas or concepts in ways that may disregard conventional standards of language.

Additionally, slang terms often fall into categories that are considered taboo in mainstream conversation, especially when interacting with individuals of higher social status or responsibility such as*I'd like this job, sir, because the one I have now is shit; Bullshit, your honour* (Dumas and Lighter, 1978: 15). By third criterion, Dumas and Lighter (1978) concluded how slang, especially when it involves taboo topics, can function as a deliberate act of defiance or rebellion against societal norms, particularly in formal or hierarchical contexts, as in the example above. Moreover, the two authors claim how such slang terms are similar to those described in the first criterion, lowering the formality and dignity of speech.

Finally, the last criterion states that slang often substitutes well-known conventional terms, either to protect the speaker or writer from the discomfort associated with the conventional term, or to avoid the annoyance of providing further explanation. For instance, instead of saying *His uncle died*, milder option could be used, *His uncle croaked.* Dumas and Lighter (1978: 15) emphasize how slang term *croaked* serves as a euphemism that softens the directness of death in a way. Another example would be *How was the movie? Super!* In this exchange *Super!* simplifies the response, avoiding more elaborate explanation (Dumas and Lighter, 1978: 15).

The informality of slang, as highlighted by Dumas and Lighter's criteria, often emerges as a counterpoint to the standard lexicon, offering alternative expressions for familiar concepts. By examining the informal nature of slang we get a better insight into its role in group identity, its creative and innovative nature, as well as its ephimerality and vulgarirty.

The Oxford English Dictionary[1] understands slang as a *language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or current words employed in some special sense*. This definition highlights the informal, inventive, and context-specific nature of slang, setting it apart from the rigidity and formality of standard language. In a similar vein, Partrige (1933: 4) refers to slang as *the quintessence of colloquial speech*, highlighting how slang contrasts sharply with formal language which adheres to accepted standards of grammar and usage.

According to Mattiello (2008), Andersson and Trudgill (1990) and Stenström et al. (2002), slang is characterized by its temporary and ephemeral nature, often either falling into obscurity or gaining acceptance as part of standard language. For instance, slang terms like *chum*, *chup*, and *grub*, discussed by Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 78), have persisted as slang for an extended period. In contrast, Stenström et al. (2002: 65) lay emphasis on "vogue words" such as *massive*, *paranoid*, and *reckon*, which were popular for a brief period and then quickly fell out of usage. Additionally, Mattiello (2008: 47) notes that words like *bus*, *phone*, and *pub* are no longer perceived as slang but are considered part of colloquial language. Similarly, *gay*, originally used in slang to mean homosexual in the 1930s, has since transitioned into standard usage and is no longer classified as slang (Ayto and Simpson, 1992).

[1] https://www.oed.com/dictionary/slang_n4?tab=meaning_and_use#22470345

Eble (2004: 375) emphasizes how *slang is usually deliberately chosen over more conventional vocabulary to send a social signal, to mark informality, irreverence, or defiance; to add humor; or to mark one's inclusion in, admiration for, or identification with a social group, often a non-mainstream group*. By using specific slang terms, individuals signal their belonging to a particular social group, subculture, or community. Yule (2010) similarily focuses on importance of social cohesion regarding slang. He highlights how slang is often used by members of a group who share similar ideas and attitudes to set themselves apart from others. By employing slang, individuals not only assert their membership within particular groups or subcultures but also contribute to the reinforcement of social cohesion and group identity.

Mattiello (2008: 32) states how one of the most important features of slang is to *keep insiders together and outsiders out*. It is considered an in-group language used by certain social subclasses, like criminals or drug addicts, to keep their conversations private. Maurer (2023) lists many other types of subcultures that supply slang. These include sexual deviants, narcotic addicts, ghetto groups, institutional populations, agricultural subsocieties, political organizations, the armed forces, Gypsies, and sports groups of many varieties. Similarly, specific subgroups, such as adolescents or college students, use slang to distance themselves from the older generation.

On the other hand, Green (2014: 5) characterizes slang as the *language of the streets*, portraying it as *irreverent, mocking, and skeptical of rules, regulations, and ideologies*. In the past, as Green (2014) claims, slang has been linked to individuals of low or disreputable character, as well as to marginalized, criminal, unwanted, or even persecuted members of society. However, while slang has been linked to these subcultures, it is also admired for its wit, creativity, and constant evolution. Slang is not static because it continually adapts with new terms emerging, and existing ones undergoing shifts in meaning (Green, 2014). One of the key processes driving the evolution of slang is semantic shift, or semantic change. As Yule (2010) explains, two important mechanisms shaping word meanings are broadening and narrowing. Broadening, a process where a word's meaning expands to cover a wider range of things than it originally did, is especially evident in slang, as terms constantly evolve and adapt to fit new social and cultural contexts.

Understanding slang and its properties is crucial for human communication because it serves as a tool for expressing group identity and social cohesion, acts as a marker of informality and rebellion, showcasing the innovative and ephemeral nature of language. Recognizing slang

helps us understand how dynamic language actually is, highlighting how speakers creatively adapt their expressions to reflect their cultural and social environments. Mattiello (2008) closely links the definition of slang with its classification, highlighting how slang's classification is quite challenging due to its overlap with other language varieties such as the specific and general slang, as well as the jargon, colloquialisms, cant, taboo terms, vulgarisms, dialect, vernacular, accent which will all be discussed and examplified in the upcoming chapters.

3. CLASSIFICATION OF SLANG

In this chapter, slang will be classified into several categories to better understand its different forms and functions. First, a distinction between specific and general slang will be analyzed, each serving distinct purposes depending on the social group or context. Following that, other related concepts, including jargon, colloquialisms, cant, taboo terms, vulgarisms, dialect, vernacular, and accent will also be examined.

When it comes to specific slang, it serves several purposes. One of them is to connect individuals with similar experiences and interests, such as teenagers or college students. It is also employed by people sharing the same occupation (like military personnel and computer users) to enhance communication efficiency, or by those sharing similar living conditions (such as prisoners and criminals) to conceal information from authorities. Specific slang is also used by people sharing an attitude or lifestyle (like drug addicts and homosexuals) to reinforce group cohesion. Mattiello (2008: 40) provides some examples of specific slang: *chick*, meaning "a girl or a young woman"; *cool,* meaning "all right, OK"; *dude*, meaning "a fellow or chap", which are associated with youth and are often not understood by adults. Similarly, *rock* "a crystallized form of cocaine"; or *smoke* "opium, marijuana" are specific to the drug community and have different meanings in standard language.

General slang, on the other hand, is used by speakers to depart from standard language and move towards informality. It reflects speakers' intention to reject norms, aiming for freshness and surprise in expression, fostering social ease and friendliness, reducing excessive seriousness, avoiding clichés, and ultimately enriching language. General slang words are more widely used and are not restricted to specific groups or subjects. For instance, *bevvy* refers to a drink, especially beer, then *caff* with meaning of "a café" and *footy*, meaning "football" (Mattiello, 2008: 40).

However, some slang words can be both specific and general in their meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. For instance, the slang term *grass* can refer specifically to "marijuana used as a drug" (drug slang) or to "a police informer" (criminal slang), while in a more general sense, it can simply mean "green vegetables" (Mattiello, 2008: 40).

3.1. Jargon

When it comes to difference between slang and jargon, Mattiello (2008) states how jargon refers to specialized vocabulary used within specific professions or groups. For instance, musicians have their own jargon for music styles e.g. *funk, grunge, jungle, ragga, techno* etc. Doctors use medical jargon for physical conditions of patients, e.g. *O sign* for a patient who is in coma, dying or dead, soldiers have military jargon, e.g. *acker* for a currency unit or *skunk*, which denotes an unidentified surface craft, whereas sailors use nautical jargon, e.g. *Harry Flakers* for exhausted (Mattiello, 2008: 36).

Unlike jargon, slang lacks the formal prestige and seriousness associated with specialized professional terminology. It is more informal, spontaneous, and often used in everyday communication rather than in formal contexts like science, medicine or academia. While slang can be specific to certain groups like musicians or soldiers, it does not carry the same connotations of status or specialized knowledge that jargon does.

3.2. Colloquialisms

While both slang and colloquial language depart from neutral and formal styles, slang is characterized by its informal use among members of the same social group, friends or family, serving purposes beyond mere familiarity. For example, *belly* is colloquial for "stomach," whereas *beer belly* is slang referring to a protruding stomach from excessive beer consumption, often used derogatorily (Mattiello, 2008: 38-39). Similarly, *nana* is colloquial for "banana," but in slang, it refers to a foolish person, as in someone making a fool of themselves (Mattiello, 2008: 38-39). Eble (2004: 378) further discusses the distinction between slang and colloquial expressions providing examples such as *poor as Job's turkey* or *scarcer than hen's teeth,* along with commonly used expressions like *Shut up!* for "be quiet" or *That is incredible*! These phrases are colloquialisms but not slang.

It could be said that unlike slang, colloquialisms do not typically introduce new, inventive, or unconventional language. They are established phrases or idioms that are widely understood and used within their cultural or linguistic context. Slang, on the other hand, includes elements of secrecy, privacy, or vulgarity not typically found in colloquial language. It often aims to evoke

humor, impertinence, or even offense, effects that colloquial expressions seldom achieve to the same extent (Mattiello, 2008).

3.3. Cant

As Mattiello (2008) explains, many slang words arise from underworld and are used by criminals, in order to conceal information. For instance, drug dealers use specific slang names such as: *Charley/-ie, rock, skag, skunk* and *speed* for drugs in their traffics, whereas criminals use a number of different in-group slang words to refer to the police (e.g. *bill, filth, fuzz, heat, pigs*) in their illicit trades (Mattiello, 2008: 37). Similarly, cant is closely related to the idea of secrecy and deception as well, referring to secret language of thieves and professional beggars. Although the concept of slang was originally tied to the specialized vocabulary of criminals only (chapter 4), these two terms are still not equivalent. Unlike cant, slang is not exclusively confined to criminal groups. It is also used by other subgroups, such as teenagers or college students, who may use slang to keep their conversations private from adults or to build group solidarity. This broader use highlights that slang is not just about secrecy but also about social identity and group belonging (Mattiello, 2008).

3.4. Taboo terms and vulgarisms

Slang often intersects with taboo language, encompassing terms and expressions considered vulgar, offensive, or socially inappropriate in polite discourse. As Yule (2010) explains, taboo terms are expressions that individuals refrain from using due to considerations of religion, politeness and prohibited behavior. According to Yule (2010: 260) they are often *swear words, typically "bleeped" in public broadcasting,* e.g. *What the bleep are you doing, you little bleep! or "starred" in print You stupid f***ing a**hole*. In addition to this, Mattiello (2008) claims how slang is closely associated with vulgarity and has historically been linked to coarse language as well. Since the vocabulary of slang is rich in vulgarisms, they have become so commonly used that they are now employed naturally as more polite or formal language by the majority of speakers. For instance, expressions like *f***-off* or intensifiers using this term illustrate how vulgar slang serves various communicative functions, from emphasis to expressing frustration or intensity (Mattiello, 2008: 50).

3.5. Dialect

According to Mattiello (2008), slang is not confined to specific geographic regions like dialect, despite often showing regional variations and differences between various dialects and locations. For example, what qualifies as slang in British English may be considered standard or have different meanings in American English. In British English, the slang term *bomb* denotes success, as in "went down like a bomb", whereas in American English, it signifies failure (Mattiello, 2008: 37). Additionally, some slang words have broader usage and are widely understood within the language community, even though they may not be formally recognized as standard British or American English words. They are not strictly tied to one specific region or social class but are widely understood and used, such as *nerd*, term used for a socially inept person or *crackers*, referring to someone considered crazy (Mattiello, 2008: 37).

3.6. Vernacular

The Oxford English Dictionary [2] defines vernacular as *the language or dialect naturally spoken by people of a particular country or district.* However, slang is distinct from vernacular, because it often includes variations in sounds or mispronunciations typical of certain areas. For instance, Anglo-Irish slang terms like *bejesus*, *bollox*, and *eejit* are actually alterations, "bejesus" being by Jesus, "bollocks", meaning a stupid or contemptible man or boy, and "eejit" meaning idiot. Similarly, Cockney slang includes words like *bovver* for "bother" and *garn* for "go on" (Mattiello, 2008: 38).

Slang encompasses a broader range of language than vernacular because it is not limited to the local speech of a specific area. Instead, it incorporates words and phrases from multiple languages, creating a blend that reflects diverse linguistic influences. For instance, *smack*, meaning heroin, is derived from the Yiddish "schmeck" (Mattiello, 2008: 38). Another example would be *ackers*, meaning money or cash, which originates from the Arabic word "fakka", meaning small change, coins (Mattiello, 2008: 38).

[2] https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=vernacular

3.7. Accent

When it comes to difference between slang and accent, slang pertains to changes in word form and meaning, whereas accent refers to word pronunciation (such as tone quality, pitch, and stress). However, slang terms may originate from altering sounds in standard words*: Gawblimy!* and *Gor blimey*! which are variations of "God blind me!", *heck* is a slang euphemistic alteration of "hell"; *lickle* is a childlike version of "little," and *thang* represents the Southern U.S. pronunciation of "thing" (Mattiello, 2008: 38).

4. RISE OF SLANG

It was observed earlier that defining slang is quite challenging, but determining its exact origin is no simpler task. Many linguists such as Partridge (1933), Crystal (2004) and Green (2014) find the origin of the word slang itself quite obscure and uncertain. However, Oxford philologist Skeat in his Etymological Dictionary of the English Language (appeared between 1879 and 1882) suggests that the word slang has Scandinavian roots, possibly originating from the Icelandic word *slyngva* meaning "to sling", or from the Norwegian verb *slengja,* which translates to "to sling the jaw" and refers to using abusive language (Fasola, 2012). Other implications of the term slang indicate that its use was once a sign and cause of mental atrophy (Partrige, 1933). Ayto and Simpson (1992) write that the first to which the term slang was applied were actually those people of disputable and low character.

However, it was in in the 1740s when the term slang began to take on a precise meaning, primarily appearing in descriptions of the language used by a lower class of thieves, beggars, and itinerants who frequently interacted and shared much of their vocabulary (Dent, 2023). According to Green (2016), criminal beggars developed a unique code to facilitate covert communication among their fellow group members. Fasola (2012) writes about other perspectives suggesting that slang is not an English word but rather Gipsy term for their secret language. Fasola (2012) also points out how slang actually appeared before it was labeled as such, under the name of Thieves' Cant or previously referred to as "Pedlar's French". In the 1750s, the term "slang" emerged and was later defined by Francis Grose in 1785 as synonymous with cant or vulgar language. Criminal Cant in English is seen as the origin of slang.

After the 1750s, slang expanded to include specialized vocabulary used within specific professions such as printers' slang, costermongers' slang or even slang used by doctors or lawyers (Ayto and Simpson, 1992). This type of slang helped unite members of these subcultures, giving them a distinct identity within their communities. By the early 19th century, slang was defined as highly informal language considered below the level of standard educated speech, consisting of either new words or existing words used in a new way. This definition remains accepted today, highlighting that while all slang is informal and colloquial, not all informal or colloquial terms qualify as slang (Ayto and Simpson, 1992). In the 19th century, terms like "slang," "slangish," and

"slangy" were used to describe people as flashy, vulgar, or unconventional, which was possibly linked to the word's underworld origins (Dent, 2023).

Nowadays slang is not associated with criminals. It acquires its form and is influenced by different cultures and the innovations of technology, which has left the society a variety of slang extremes from Street slang to Afro-American slang. In addition to that, the rise of Internet and social media has introduced a plethora of new slang terms such as[3]: *GOAT* "The Greatest Of All Time" (used often for stellar musicians and athletes); *lit* "awesome or very enjoyable"; *on point "*modern way of saying cool, similar to *"on fleek"*; *throw the shade* "insult or say something unkind about someone"; *savage* "a savage person isn't afraid of hurting others' feelings with their insults"; *spill the tea "*telling someone the juiciest or most dramatic gossip".

Some may condemn the use of slang, viewing it as a deviation from formal or standard language norms and perhaps consider it sloppy, vulgar or lazy. However, it denotes an integral part of vocabulary and plays a vital role in communication by allowing for expression, creativity and social connection. The development of slang has progressed from its obscure origins to a widely used form of expression. Throughout its historical evolution, certain sociological and linguistic aspects of slang have become crucial for a deeper understanding of this concept.

In the following chapters, sociological and linguistic features of slang will be analyzed in detail. First, the sociological features will be discussed, focusing on how slang serves as a tool for group identity, social connections, and the differentiation between insiders and outsiders. Following this, the linguistic features of slang will be further analyzed as well, with particular attention given to the word formation processes that contribute to dynamic nature of slang.

[3] Examples were taken from: https://www.yourdictionary.com/articles/slang-words-examples-meanings

5. SOCIOLOGICAL FEATURES OF SLANG

Mattiello (2008) examines the sociological characteristics of slang, categorized into speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented properties. In that classification, speaker-oriented properties identify the speaker as part of a specific social group, while hearer-oriented properties aim to create a particular effect on the listener.

Speaker-oriented properties of slang serve to characterize the speaker in several distinct ways. Firstly, slang can identify the speaker as a member of a particular group, often one that is exclusive, marked by elements such as group-restriction, individuality, secrecy, privacy, culture-restriction, and prestige. Secondly, it can indicate that the speaker has a specific occupation or engages in a particular activity, evidenced by subject-restriction and technicality. Furthermore, slang often reflects the speaker's cultural status, frequently aligning with a lower cultural position through informality, and the use of low or bad language, including vulgarity and obscenity. Lastly, slang can signal the speaker's age or generational identity, depicting time-restriction and ephemerality, or highlight their origin from a specific regional area, as seen through the use of localisms.

However, besides speaker-oriented properties, Mattiello (2008) then further writes about hearer-oriented properties of slang as well. These include entertaining the hearer through playfulness and humor, breaking the monotony of a neutral style with freshness and novelty, impressing the hearer with bizarre expressions, often characterized by faddishness or colorful words and musicality. Additionally, slang can be used to mock, offend, or challenge the hearer, employing impertinence, offensiveness, and aggressiveness to provoke a response. All of these properties are further explained below.

Playfulness and humor are common characteristics of metaphorical slang words. Generally, people find a slang word amusing when its association with its referent is unfamiliar, odd, and thus out of the ordinary. Slang words also seem funny when used across generational boundaries, such as a younger or older speaker using terms typical of another age group. For example, a child using the word *fox* to describe "an attractive person" (as in the film *Footloose*, 1984) or an adult using the word *chick* to refer to "a young woman" (as in the film *Notting Hill,* 1999). In both cases, the terms sound strange or bizarre, mimicking teenage language and creating a comical effect for the listener (Mattiello, 2008: 223-224).

Freshness and novelty are additional key features of slang, as teenagers and young people typically aim to stay current and innovative in their speech. For instance, some unique slang expressions used by London teenagers referring to "crazy (people)" include: *off one's rocker, off one's trolley, go nutty about something* (Mattiello, 2008: 224-225). Young people are quite creative and continually seek novel expressions to demonstrate their trendiness. They change their way of speaking as quickly as they change their clothing, hairstyle, or makeup, in line with modern society's trends.

Some slang words demonstrate the speaker's desire to impress the listener, often through their trendiness or faddishness. For instance, *Good. Ain't that <name> a big cow. Bloody right cow! And you know yesterday she had the nerve to ask me if she could sit at the end of our table* (Mattiello, 2008: 226-227). Here, the usage of slang expression *cow* does not necessarily signify offensiveness but rather desire to impress the listener. The word *cow* exhibits a faddish quality because it often appears alongside negative or strongly emphasizing adjectives (such as "big," "bloody right," "flaming," "flat chested," etc.). Yet it does not inherently carry a deeply offensive or derogatory meaning.

Slang often utilizes sound play and onomatopoeic qualities to enhance their expressiveness. For instance, in the movie *Grease* (1978), the character Marty exclaims: *Marty: Oh, double doo doo! Betty: Please. Jan: What was that? Marty: One of my diamonds just fell in the macaroni!* This instance includes *doo-doo,* which amplifies the meaning with repetition, as seen in example "double doo doo" expressing disappointment. Moreover, using rhyming phrases, e.g. *shittity brickitty*, also contribute to slang's musicality, emphasizing surprise. In addition to that, slang may incorporate onomatopoeia, e.g. *blabbermouth*, which vividly describes someone who talks excessively, using repeated consonant sounds for emphasis (Mattiello, 2008: 228).

Some slang words are inherently impertinent, offensive, or aggressive, often used to insult or express disapproval towards others. It is emphasized how these expressions mostly include vulgar and taboo words related to genitals, e.g., *arse, cunt, prick, tits, twat* etc. They may also target female promiscuity, such as *slut* or *whore,* or invoke animal-related insults like *pig head* or *dog*, which can vary in offensiveness depending on regional slang variations (Mattiello, 2008: 229-230). These slang terms are frequently used in impolite conversations to maintain dominance or to provoke reactions.

6. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF SLANG

Slang exhibits distinctive linguistic characteristics in its morphology, syntax, and semantics, often involving the creation of new words or meanings within specific social groups. Precisely because of its dynamic nature, it undergoes various word formation processes. According to Mattiello (2008) these word formation processes include *compounding*, *affixation*, *conversion*, *clipping*, *acronymy*, *initialization* and *blending*. As Yule (2010) explains, the dynamism of language is further exemplified by process of semantic change, specifically broadening. For instance, the term *holiday*, which originally referred to a religious feast day, has expanded to mean any break from work (Yule, 2010: 223). In the following sections, the most frequent word formation processes that contribute to the formation of slang will be discussed.

Compounding

Compounding is a word formation process that involves joining two separate words to create a single form. According to Mattiello (2008), this is one of the most frequently used processes in the formation of slang expressions, particularly in the creation of compound nouns, which are especially prevalent. In addition to that, slang is often formed by compound verbs, along with compound adjectives.

One of the most common patterns is the N+ N combination, where two nouns are combined to form a compound noun. For instance, *doss house* specifies the type of house or lodging; *meat-wagon,* "an ambulance"; *roadwork*, "the work of an itinerant thief"; *penguin suit* "a man's formal evening wear"; *hock-shop* "a pawnshop"; *fruitcake* "a crazy or eccentric person"; *grease-ball* "derogatory term for foreigner"; *gum-shoe* "a detective"; *king-fish* "a leader, chief, boss"; *mouthpiece* "a lawyer" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 73-76).

Compound verbs in slang, such as V + N or N + V combinations, also play a significant role. For instance, V + N combinations include *raise Cain* "to create confusion or trouble"; *spit chips* "feel extreme thirst", *talk turkey* "speak frankly and without reserve"; *spit blood* of a spy "fear exposure" etc. Examples for N+V combinations would be: *donkey-lick* "defeat easily" *skin-pop* "inject a drug subcutaneously"; *pig-jump* of a horse "jump from all four legs without bringing them together, esp. in an attempt to unseat the rider" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 83).

When it comes to compound adjectives, slang often employs unusual combinations where one element is an adjective, combined with other types of words, for descriptive purposes. For instance, *skinned out* "having no money left, broke"; *washed up* "defeated, exhausted"; *gobsmacked* "speechless"; *half-shot* "half drunk"; *white-shoe* "immature"; *stir-crazy* "mentally deranged (as if) from long imprisonment" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 82-83).

Affixation

Affixation involves adding prefixes or suffixes to existing words to create new words or alter their meanings. As Mattielloo (2008) claims, prefixes are not commonly used in slang. Their occurrence is quite limited, particularly when compared to the more frequently used slang suffixes.

Prefixation includes adding letters or group of letters to the beginning of a word to form new word. Examples of prefixation would include *delouse* "free from something unpleasant"; *untogether* "poorly coordinated; not in full control of one's faculties"; *superfly* "very good, excellent, the best" (esp. in the context of drugs); *underfug* "underpants" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 92-93).

Suffixation includes adding letters or group of letters to the end of a word to form new word. It is evident, especially suffix *-er,* in examples such as; *juicer* "an electrician"; *lifer* "one sentenced to penal servitude for life"; *heater* "a gun"; *placer* "an organizer of criminal practices"; *minder* "bodyguard employed to protect a criminal"; *copper* "policeman"; *moocher* "a beggar, a scrounger"; *drummer* "a thief, esp. one who robs an unoccupied house", *flasher* "one who exposes himself indecently"; *rapper* "a talker, a chatter" ; *crooked* "irritable, angry", *plastered* "very drunk" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 95).

Conversion

Conversion is the process of forming words without changing the form of the input word that functions as base, as when a noun comes to be used as a verb, without any reduction. Other labels for this very common process are "zero-derivation", "zero-affixation" or "functional shift" (Mattiello, 2008: 124).

One of the most common patterns is the n.→ v. conversion. Examples are: *chin/to chin* meaning "a talk, conversation/chatter"; *fag/to fag* "cigarette/smoke"; *grass/to grass sb"*police informer/to inform police about somebody"; *heist/to heist* "robbery/to hold up, rob or steal; *coke/to coke* "drug oneself with cocaine". Mattiello (2008) writes how verbs converted from irregular nominal bases are especially significant in the formation of slang. For example, *O.D.*, originally an initialism for "overdose", has been converted into a verb meaning "to take an overdose of a drug." (Mattiello, 2008: 126). There is also v.→n. conversion. For instance, *to clean up/clean up* "a profit; an exceptional financial success"; *to knock off/a knock off* "robbery"; *to rub out/ a rub out* "a murder or assassination"; *to rave up/* a *rave-up* "a lively party"; *to ring in/a ring in* "fraudulent substitution" (Mattiello, 2008: 124-127).

Clipping

Clipping is the process of reducing a word of more than one syllable to a shorter form, usually used in casual speech. It makes slang terms specific to particular private groups, where a mere hint is enough to convey the entire meaning. For instance, American college students use *frat* instead of "fraternity", *post* is a medicine slang term used for "post-mortem", *prop* is used by criminals to refer to "property" (as in prop game, man, etc.), *ump* stands for "umpire" in baseball slang, *scorp* and *scram* are military slang terms for "scorpion" (a civil inhabitant of Gibraltar) (Mattiello, 2008: 141). Another differentiation is made between fore-clipping, back clipping and clipping compounds.

In the process of fore clipping, the first few syllables of the word are removed. For instance, *Ville* from "Pentonville" (a Prison in London), *Nam* from "Vietnam", Tab from "Cantab" (member of the University of Cambridge), *tato* from potato (Mattiello, 2008: 145).

When it comes to back-clipping, the last syllables of the word are left out. For instance, *ex-con* from "ex-convict"; *Fed from "Federalist" (federal officer), Mex* from "Mexican", *rehab* from "rehabilitation"; *tranq/trank* from "tranquillizer"; *sawn* from "sawney" (a simpleton, fool)*; mong* from "mongrel" (person of low or indeterminate status) (Mattiello, 2008: 142-144).

Clipping compounds are words which are result of reducing a compound to one of its parts. They involve two or more bases and can retain one of their original bases intact. For instance,

common from common sense, *street cred* from "street credibility" (familiarity with contemporary trends, fashions, social issues); *jug* from "stone jug" (a prison, jail); *misper* from "missing person"; *oppo* from "opposite number"; *bin* from "loony bin" (mental hospital); *shrink* from "head-shrinker" (psychiatrist) (Mattiello, 2008: 146-147).

Acronyms and initialisms

Acronyms are new words formed from the initial letters of a set of other words, pronounced as a word, not as list of letters. Examples of aconyms are *NIMBY* "not in my back yard" (used as a slogan objecting to the siting of something considered unpleasant in one's locality); *WRAC "*Women's Royal Army Corps"; *AWOL* "absent without leave"; *TEWT* "tactical exercise without troops"; *TWOC* "taking without owner's consent" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 137).

Initialization is another reduction process where each letter of the word is pronounced. For example: *OAO* "one and only; *O.P./O.P.'s* "other people's"; *PFC/Pfc* "poor foolish/forlorn civilian"; *O.D.* "overdose"; *OTT* "over the top" etc. (Mattiello, 2008: 137-138).

Blending

Bledning includes combining two separate forms to produce a single new term. For instance: *squadrol* (squad+patrol) "a small police van"; *squiz* (squint + quiz) "a look or glance"; *yatter* (yammer + chatter) "talk idly and incessantly"; *scuzz* (scum+fuzz) "contemptible or despicable person"; *gazunder* (gazump+under) of a buyer "lower the amount of an offer made to the seller for a property" (Mattiello, 2008: 139-140).

The theoretical part of the thesis is followed by the empirical research. The next chapter explains the research methodology and provides information about the TV series *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*, along with an analysis of the criminal slang used in both series. Finally, the results and discussion of the analysis are presented, followed by a concluding chapter.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1. The sample

Slang is widespread in series like these because it reflects the socio-cultural settings of their distinct time periods. Although *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break* both revolve around crime, they differ significantly in their American-British contexts. *Peaky Blinders* is set in the early 20th century, which means it uses historical slang that offers a glimpse into post-World War I Birmingham, highlighting class distinctions and regional dialects of the time. In contrast, *Prison Break* is a modern TV series that incorporates contemporary slang, reflecting current societal trends and technological advancements of the 21st century. Therefore, these series serve as the starting point of the analysis revealing the ways in which slang reflects the social and political contexts of their respective eras. A total of 10 episodes from both *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break* were analyzed.

Peaky Blinders is a British historical crime drama series created by Steven Knight, airing from 2013 until 2022. This TV series consists of six seasons and each season has six episodes. However, seasons one and two, which aired from 2013 to 2014, were analyzed. Season one has six episodes, all of which will be included in the analysis. Season two also comprises six episodes, but only four of these will be examined in detail. The main reason for choosing the first two seasons for the analysis is that these seasons also introduce the audience to the illegal activities Peaky Blinders are involved in. The prevalent use of criminal slang terms reflects their world of violence, crime, and secrecy, including phrases related to gambling, violence, and criminal enterprises, giving viewers an immersive experience of the language and culture of the time.

Prison Break is a gripping American drama which was created by Paul T. Scheuring, airing from 2005 until 2017. This TV series consists of five seasons. Season one and two consist of twenty-two episodes, season three has thirteen episodes, season four twenty-four episodes and the final season five consists of nine episodes. The first season of *Prison Break* aired from 2005 to 2006 and consists of twenty-two episodes, but only ten episodes from this season were analyzed. The first season brings viewers closer to prison setting and introduces terms specific to prison context only, thus providing a rich context for analyzing prison and criminal slang, prevalent throughout the episodes. This is why episodes from this particular season were chosen for the analysis.

The main focus of the analysis is to examine the role of criminal slang in these TV series from both sociological and linguistic perspectives, specifically in terms of word formation processes. Episodes were rewatched multiple times, paying close attention to the dialogues in order to identify instances of slang in each scene. Upon close observation, the use of slang expressions occurring within short intervals was recorded. As a result, the scenes analyzed in the following study are typically brief, lasting from a few seconds to almost a minute.

7.1.1. TV series Peaky Blinders

Set in Birmingham, England, in the aftermath of World War I, *Peaky Blinders* [4] follows the Shelby crime family, known for their distinctive flat caps adorned with razor blades, the "Peaky Blinders". Throughout the series, the Peaky Blinders navigate a world full of political conflicts, economic instability, and violent rivalries with other criminal groups, including the police. Thomas Shelby is the main character, a war hero with a complex personality and strategic mind, who is known for his daring plans to expand the family's empire while grappling with his traumatic war experiences.

Season one introduces us to Birmingham's criminal underworld. The family's illegal activities attract the attention of Chief Inspector Chester Campbell, ruthless detective tasked with cleaning up the city. Thomas faces challenges not only from Campbell but also within his own family, including his older brother Arthur and his younger brothers John and Finn Shelby. They also have a sister called Ada Thorne, who is in a secret romantic relationship with a known communist and Thomas's ex-best friend, Freddie Thorne. Another important member of Shelby family is aunt Polly Gray, who is the true matriarch of the family. The season delves into Thomas's complex relationships, his post-traumatic stress disorder, and conflicts with rival gangs. The main adversary, Billy Kimber, runs most of the legal tracks outside of London, leading to tensions between him and the Peaky Blinders, as they seek to expand their control into inner-city London. Continuing the story, season two probes into expanding criminal empire of the Shelby family. Thomas navigates alliances with powerful figures while dealing with internal power struggles and betrayals within the family. The arrival of Italian mobster Sabini slows down Thomas's ideas for

[4] Plot description was taken from: https://peaky-blinders.fandom.com/wiki/Peaky_Blinders_Wiki

the family, leading to intense confrontations. Meanwhile, Inspector Campbell remains a formidable adversary, determined to bring down the Peaky Blinders by any means.

Season three begins with Thomas's wedding to Grace, but their happiness does not last very long because Grace gets killed by an assassin. The season ends with Thomas betraying his family to secure their safety through a deal with the British government. Season four follows Shelbys' reuniting when Luca Changretta, a New York mobster, who arrives in Birmingham seeking revenge for his family's death. Season five is set during the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Thomas Shelby, now a Member of Parliament, becomes involved with Oswald Mosley, a rising fascist leader in Britain. After a failed assassination attempt on Mosley, season six follows Thomas as he faces new enemies, the threat of fascism, and his deteriorating mental health.

7.1.2. TV series Prison Break

Prison Break [5] revolves around two brothers, Michael Scofield and Lincoln Burrows. Lincoln has been wrongfully convicted of murdering the vice president's brother and is about to be executed. To save him, Michael, a smart structural engineer, deliberately gets himself imprisoned in the same prison, Fox River Penitentiary, to help his brother escape.

Season one focuses on Michael navigating the dangerous world of prison, dealing with tough inmates and prison politics. He faces dangerous enemies while trying to carry out his escape plan and uncover the conspiracy that framed his brother, Lincoln. To fully understand the analysis of criminal slang below, it is important to highlight the other characters, aside from Michael and his brother, who employ criminal slang. These include Fernando Sucre, Haywire, T-Bag, Charles Westmoreland, C-Note, John Abruzzi, Philly Falzone, Otto Fibonacci and police officer Brad Bellick.

Fernando Sucre is Michael's loyal cellmate and one of his best friends within prison. Charles Patoshik, also known as "Haywire", temporarily becomes Michael's cellmate after Sucre requests a transfer. Haywire, who suffers from mental illness, becomes obsessed with Michael's tattoos, suspecting they conceal something. Theodore "T-Bag" Bagwell is a dangerous inmate with a history of serious crimes who becomes entangled in the escape plan. Charles Westmoreland, Fox

[5] Plot description was taken from: https://prisonbreak.fandom.com/wiki/Main_Page

River's longest-serving inmate, is a mysterious figure rumored to be linked to D.B. Cooper. Benjamin Miles "C-Note" Franklin, known as the "prison pharmacist," is skilled at procuring items for inmates. C-Note later gains respect within the team by resolving critical issues that nearly derail the escape. Then there is John Abruzzi, a former Italian mob boss, who provides crucial resources and influence within the prison. Closely related to Abruzzi are Philly Falzone and Otto Fibonacci. Falzone becomes the boss of the Italian Abruzzi Mafia Family after John is imprisoned and strongly supports Abruzzi's prison gang, making it the most powerful in Fox River. Falzone pressures Abruzzi to locate Otto Fibonacci, whose testimony led to John's conviction. Falzone is eventually tricked by Michael and Abruzzi into going to Canada to find Fibonacci and is subsequently arrested. Lastly, officer Brad Bellick is one of the most prominent prison officials, notorious for his abuse of prisoners, misconduct, and accepting bribes.

Season two focuses on the aftermath of the prison escape from Fox River State Penitentiary. The eight prisoners, led by Michael Scofield, are now on the run, pursued by FBI agent Alexander Mahone. The second half of the season shifts its focus to unraveling the series' central conspiracy. In season three, Michael finds himself imprisoned in Sona, a brutal and lawless prison. The Company, a secret organization that controls many governmental decisions, forces Michael to devise a new escape plan for James Whistler, a man important to them. Season four centers on Michael and Lincoln's efforts to bring down The Company by attempting to steal Scylla, a data card containing The Company's most guarded secrets. Finally, season five reveals that Michael is imprisoned in Ogygia, a prison in war-torn Yemen. This season follows Lincoln, dr. Sara Tancredi and other allies as they work to rescue Michael from the prison and the dangers of the region. It concludes with Michael finally being reunited with his family, free from his past life.

7.2. Data analysis

Each selected episode from both series contains one or more scenes, which will be briefly explained in terms of their plot and context. The analysis will then focus on identifying and listing the criminal slang present in each scene. Firstly, the primary meaning of the slang terms will be presented by using resources such as the *The Cambridge Dictionary*[6], *Green's Dictionary of Slang*[7] *and The*

[6] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/
[7] https://greensdictofslang.com/

Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang and Unconventional English (Dalzell, 2009). These dictionaries were chosen for their extensive coverage of both modern and historical slang. For example, *The Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang and Unconventional English (2009)* is particularly relevant due to its focus on contemporary American slang, aligning well with the setting of *Prison Break*. Meanwhile, *Green's Dictionary of Slang* is an excellent resource for analyzing slang from the UK, USA, and other English-speaking regions, making it useful for both *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*. In addition to that, all of the three selected dictionaries provide definitions focusing on slang associated with criminal activity, prison life, gangster speak, and general terminology used in the context of organized crime which is essential for the analysis. In addition to that, specific *web sources* like Luftman's discussion on Special Housing Units (SHUs) from the *Federal Criminal Defense Attorneys site* and the *Prison Break Wiki* page on Prison Industries were used. These sources provide detailed explanations of prison and criminal vocabulary used in *Prison Break*, making them particularly valuable for the analysis.

Secondly, the function of the slang will be thoroughly examined through its sociological features (see chapter 5) and linguistic features (see chapter 6), with particular attention given to word formation processes where applicable.

7.2.1. TV series Peaky Blinders

In season one, 6 episodes were analyzed (one, two, three, four, five, six). Episode 1 consists of six scenes, Episode 2 of one scene, Episode 3 of one scene, Episode 4 of three scenes, Episode 5 of two scenes, Episode 6 of 1 scene. In season two, 4 episodes were analyzed (one, two, three, six). Episode 1 consists of two scenes, Episode 2 of three scenes, Episode 3 of two scenes, Episode 6 of one scene.

Season 1 (Episode 1) introduces six scenes containing twelve slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 1 [8]
Set in Birmingham shortly after the Great War, the series follows Thomas Shelby, a war veteran who leads his gang, called the Peaky Blinders, as they make money through illegal betting and the black market. Thomas, by mistake, appropriates a consignment of guns which have been stolen from the local arms factory. Therefore, Chief Inspector Campbell, a tough lawman from Ireland, is sent by war minister Winston Churchill to retrieve the weapons. Thomas's aunt Polly urges him to return it, but he sees the opportunity to use it to his advantage. Thomas also quarrels with his older brother Arthur as Thomas has devised the "powder trick", a means of fixing horse races. Arthur is nervous as Thomas has not involved Billy Kimber, English gangster who runs the race-courses and their rackets. Moreover, Thomas's sister Ada is in love with Freddie Thorne, communist who saved her brother's life in the war, and is now a Marxist, encouraging workers to strike over a pay cut.

SCENE 1 (05:56-6:12)

In this dialogue, Thomas and his older brother Arthur are discussing the challenges they face in their gambling operation:

> THOMAS: Times are hard. People need a reason to lay a bet.
>
> ARTHUR: There was a Chinese.
>
> THOMAS: The *washerwomen* say she's a witch. It helps them believe.
>
> ARTHUR: We don't mess with Chinese.
>
> THOMAS: Look at the board...
>
> ARTHUR: Chinese have *cutters* of their own.
>
> THOMAS: We agreed. I'm taking charge of *drumming up* new *money*.
>
> ARTHUR: When did we agree that? What if Monaghan Boy wins? You *fixing races* now Thomas?

There are four slang expressions in this scene: *washerwoman* (n.), *cutters* (n.), *to drum up money* (verb phrase) and *to fix races* (verb phrase).

Accoriding to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 1039) *wash* means to *give money obtained illegally the appearance of legitimacy through accounting and banking schemes.* Although *washer*

[8] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2471500/?ref_=ttep_ep1

is someone whose occupation is washing clothes, in criminal slang, *washer* implies someone who washes or launders money. Therefore, the function of this slang expression is to signify criminal act of money laundering. Green's Dictionary of Slang[9] associates *cutters* with *a thug who uses a knife or razor in fights*. Moreover, according to the same dictionary *to drum up money* implies *stealing from an empty or unoccupied house*. All of the listed four slang expressions function not only to provide deeper understanding of criminal activites *Peaky Blinders* are involved in, but also to higlight the insider knowledge they hold, which identifies them as members of the criminal underworld and excludes them from those who are not part of illegal dealings. That is why characters communicate in a way that is not easily understood by those outside their group, maintaining the secrecy of their illegal and criminal actions.

From the linguistic aspect, *washerwoman* is an example of both compounding and affixation. The compound noun *washerwoman* is formed by combining nouns *washer* and *woman*. The component *washer* itself is created through affixation, specifically suffixation by adding the suffix *-er* to the verb *wash*. Moreover, *cutters* is an example of affixation as well. It involves adding the suffix *-er* to the verb *cut* thorugh the process of suffixation.

SCENE 2 (11:24-12:05)

In this scene, Freddie is talking to Thomas Shelby:

> FREDDIE: One of my Union comrades has a sister who works in the telegraph office at the BSA factory. She says in the past week there's been messages coming from London to the *brass*. From Winston Churchill himself. Something about a robbery… Now what kind of list would have the name of a Communist and the name of a *bookmaker* side-by-side?

There are two slang expressions in this scene: *brass* (n.) and *bookmaker* (n.)

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[10] the term *brass* denotes *a superior figure, usually in an institution* or *any variety of senior official, e.g. a politician.* The function of this term is to convey the idea that Freddie has insider knowledge and access to secretive information typically reserved for those in authority. Although this term is not directly criminal, Freddie's reference to *brass* suggests a connection between legitimate authority figures and the criminal

[9] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/zfytisi
[10] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/723xp7a

underworld, implying that someone like Thomas Shelby, a *bookmaker*, could be connected to political or criminal individuals. Green's Dictionary of Slang[11] defines *bookmaker* as *a person who accepts and pays out amounts of money risked on a particular result, especially of horse races.* The function of this term is to denote someone who holds a specific role or status within the gambling community, often associated with authority and control. Using the term in conversation can signal membership or familiarity with criminal subculture, creating a sense of belonging among those who share this knowledge.

In terms of word formation process, *bookmaker* in this scene is an example of both compounding and affixation. The compound noun *bookmaker* is formed by combining the nouns *book* and *maker*. The component *maker* itself is created through affixation, specifically suffixation by adding the suffix *-er* to the verb *make*.

SCENE 3 (15:46-16:03)

In this scene, Arthur calls a family meeting and warns about the policeman who is looking for the Shelby family:

> ARTHUR: Right! I've called this family meeting because I've got some very important news. Scudboat and Lovelock got back from Belfast last night. They were buying a stallio to cover their mares.They were in a pub on the Shankhill Road yesterday, and in that pub there was a *copper*.

There is one slang expression in this scene and that is *copper* (n.). According to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 235) the term *copper* is a *colloquial term for a police officer*. This slang expression reflects the everyday language of the Shelby family and serves to emphasize how these informal terms are a common way of their communication. Moreovoer, it functions to denote Shelby's view of the police as their opponents, referring to them with informal language and defiant attitude.

In terms of word formation process, the noun *copper* is an example of affixation, specifically suffixation, where the suffix *-er* is added to the verb *cop*.

[11] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bookmaker

SCENE 4 (32:07-32:13)

In this scene, Arthur has been brutally beaten and his face is covered in blood and bruises. Two officers shove him into a rigid chair, and Chief Inspector Campbell walks in:

> CAMPBELL: Did he have a gun?
> MOSS: No gun. Knife in his sock. *Cosh* in his belt.

In this scene, there is one slang expression and that is *cosh* (n.). According to Green' Dictionary of Slang[12] *cosh* refers to *a short, heavy stick made of metal or rubber, used as a weapon.* It is an example of a localism in British English. As *Peaky Blinders* is a British TV series, the use of this specific slang term instead of a more general term for *weapon* carries historical significance, reflecting the language of the time. This choice of words functions to enhance the realism of the story, making it more authentic to its setting. The function of this term is also to portray the language of 20th century British criminal subcultures, as depicted in *Peaky Blinders.*

SCENE 5 (17:02-17:13)

In this scene, Shelby brothers discuss potential threats from the police:

> JOHN: But we ain't IRA. We bloody fought for the King**.** Anyway, we're *Peaky Blinders.* We're not scared of *coppers.*
> ARTHUR: He's right.
> JOHN: If they come for us, we'll *cut them a smile* each.

There are three slang expressions in this scene: *Peaky Blinder* (n.), *copper* (n.), which has already been explained, and *to cut one's smile* (verb phrase).

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[13] *Peaky Blinders* is probably one of the most common criminal slang expressions throughout the series. It denotes a youth gang, based in Birmingham, known for their smart dress, tailored jackets, a lapel overcoat, button waistcoats, silk scarves, bell-bottom trousers, topped off with a cap, into the peak of which were sewn razor blades, used as an offensive weapon. The function of this term is to emphasize a gang's cohesion extending to all activities, including criminal and illegal ones. It implies loyalty, belonging, commitment and

[12] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cosh
[13] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/onmyw3i

mutual support as well as collective defiance against external threats, such as the police. Additionaly, this term also serves to higlight the control and enormous influence this gang has over their city of Birmingham. The slang expression *to cut one's smile* is only partially defined in the previously mentioned dictionaries. However, the fact is that it carries threatening connotation. It refers to a violent act where the corners of a person's mouth are cut to create a permanent "smile," often known as a Glasgow smile or Chelsea smile. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[14] this involves two knife slashes extending from each corner of the mouth to the ears. *To cut one's smile* serves as a symbol of ruthless and brutal character of the Peaky Blinders, signaling their readiness to inflict severe harm on anyone who opposes them, including the police. Moreover, this slang could also shock the hearer due to the violent image associated with *cutting one's smile*, and the brutal reality it conveys.

SCENE 6 (05:28-05:39)

This scene is taking place in the room where Shelby family plan their activities and meet.

JOHN: Thomas, look at the book. Just look. All on Monaghan Boy.

THOMAS: Good work, John.

ARTHUR: Thomas! Get in here. Now.

BOOKIE: That'll be six pennies, *nipper*.

There is one slang expression in this scene and that is *nipper* (n.), which implies *a baby or young child* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 696). The use of *nipper* functions to downgrade, offend and derogatorily address the customer in this scene. By implying youth or inexperience, the bookie subtly asserts dominance and dismissiveness towards the younger person. Additionally, this slang term serves to address someone in a familiar or informal manner, indicating a more casual and colloquial interaction.

As far as the word formation process is in question, *nipper* is an example of affixation, specifically suffixation, where the suffix *-er* added to the verb *nip*.

[14] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/rcgxi6q#gjjda2y

Season 1 (Episode 2) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 2 [15]
Thomas starts dating Grace, barmaid at the Garrison pub, unaware that she has been planted by Campbell to spy on his activities. At a country fair outside the city Thomas gets into a fight with the Lees, a violent family of travellers, who later sends him a bullet with his name on, giving him another adversary to rank alongside Billy Kimber. Campbell sends a message to Thomas via Aunt Polly and they meet on neutral ground at a hotel.

SCENE 1 (11:05-11:14)

In this scene, Polly is talking to Shelby brothers:

> POLLY: So go on. Drink your beers. Get out. You better show people you'll still the *cocks of the walk.*

There is one slang expressions in this scene and that is *cock of the walk* (noun phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[16] *cock of the walk* implies *a person who is perceived as the most important or dominant, often characterized by confidence and assertiveness.* The function of this term is to highlight social hierarchy, where the dominance and status are key. It underscores the importance of leadership within Shelby's social group, suggesting that Shelby brothers have a reputation that must be continuously maintained. Moreover, this slang is a metaphorical expression which is used in playful and humorous way, thus functioning to break monotony of language and amuse the listener. However, it also serves as a subtle provocation, challenging Shelby brother to prove that they still hold their place at the top.

[15] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2471502/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[16] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/3rvitbi#o7c2hza

Season 1 (Episode 3) introduces one scene containing two slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 3 [17]
In this episode, Thomas takes Grace to Cheltenham races, where he warns Billy Kimber that the Lees are out to rob him. Additionally, Thomas emphasizes how Lee family will be present at the Cheltenham races and plans to target Kimber's betting shops for a robbery.

SCENE 1 (18:53-19:10)

In this scene, Thomas is talking to Billy Kimber:

> BILLY KIMBER: How the bloody hell do you know?
>
> THOMAS: I know a lot of things, Mr Kimber. And as I told you before, I know the Lee brothers. And I know they're gonna be at the Cheltenham races as well.
>
> BILLY KIMBER: Yes, well they're gonna lose a lot of money on fast women and slow *nags*.
>
> THOMAS: No. They're planning on showing up in numbers and robbing your bookies, running *chalk and rafflers*.

There are two slang expressions in this scene. They include *nag* (n.), *to run chalk and rafflers* (verb phrase).

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[18], *nag* is used in context of horseracing and refers to horses. This slang serves two functions. Firstly, it is a very informal expression that reflects the casual, colloquial speech typical in discussions related to gambling and horseracing. Secondly, it illustrates familiarity of the characters with the concept of horse racing and betting. Therefore, its function is to signify speaker's inclusion in a specific social group familiar with terminology of horseracing. The expression *run chalk and rafflers* refers to specific activities related to betting and gambling. In sports betting, *chalk* refers to the *contestant or team favored to win* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 179). In this exhange, according to Green's Dictionary of Slang[19], *to run chalk*

[17] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2471506/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[18] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/rn7eh7y
[19] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/gkuvpxq

implies setting bets, especially with the intention of manipulating the outcome of the bets. In addition to that, according to Cambridge Dictionary[20] *raffle* is *an activity in which people buy tickets with different numbers, some of which are later chosen to win prizes, and is organized in order to make money for a good social purpose*. So, *rafflers* would include people who engage in raffles or similar gambling activities. Therefore, by *running rafflers*, Shelby brothers intend to organize fraudulent gambling activities to swindle money from the bookmakers. It it evident that slang expression *run chalk and rafflers* directly refers to the illegal or deceptive activities related to gambling. That is why, the function of this term is to identify Shelbys as members of criminal side in the gambling world, characterized by manipulation and fraud.

Season 1 (Episode 4) introduces three scenes containing four slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 4 [21]
Thomas now has a legitimate betting licence and, although he is suspicious that she is not what she seems to be, employs Grace as his secretary. Inspector Campbell threatens Thomas and his entire family, demanding that he returns the stolen guns before Campbell loses his job.

SCENE 1 (16:20 -16:30)

In this scene, inspector Campbell threatens Thomas:

> CAMPBELL:Your message said you have an address for me?
> THOMAS: Anonymous *tip off*.

In this scene, there is one slang expression *tip off* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[22], this expression refers *to a piece of information provided anonymously or discreetly to inform someone*. Thomas's use of *tip off* positions him as someone who has strong connections to the criminal underworld and those who operate within it. The function of this informal slang term is to highlight Thomas's alignment with this group and his familiarity with its operations.

[20] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/raffle
[21] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2461634/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[22] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/6rpiiri

SCENE 2 (31:43-31:54)

In this scene, Thomas is talking to Grace:

> THOMAS: Arthur tells me you've been asking questions. About how we run our business and how we get our *booze* and where we keep it.
> GRACE: I'm just trying to help.

There is one slang expression here, and that is *booze* (n.) which refers *to alcoholic drink of any kind* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 113). The function of this term is to indirectly highlight Thomas's involvement in activities like smuggling and illegal trade. Moreover, the term underscores his role in managing these activities, as well as contributing to the informality of the interaction between Thomas and Grace. Its function is to highlight a relaxed, conversational tone, contrasting with more formal expressions.

SCENE 3 (40:12-40:29)

In this scene, Campbell and Grace meet up again to update each other about Shelbys:

> GRACE: He has promoted me. He wants me to be his bookkeeper and secretary.
> CAMPBELL: A *cut-throat gangster* with a secretary. The pretensions of these *hoodlums* are quite breathtaking. Are they not?
> GRACE: Yes, quite breathtaking.

There are two slang expressions in this scene. They include *cut-throat gangster* (noun phrase) and *hoodlums* (n.)

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[23] *cut-throat* refers to *someone showing no care or consideration for the harm done to others with whom you are in competition*. The function of the slang term is to convey Campbell's deep disdain for the Shelbys, as well as his desire to influence Grace, by warning her about the dangerous and ruthless nature of the man she's dealing with. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[24] *hoodlum* is a slang term *for thug or gangster*. This slang term is used deragotorily in order to undermine Shelbys. Also, the usage of insulting

[23] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cutthroat
[24] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/dohqtvy

language higlights Campbell's contempt and hostility, as he dismisses the Shelbys as of lower class and unworthy of any respect.

Linguistically speaking, the expression *cut-throat gangster* is a noun phrase formed by process of compounding. The adjective *cut-throat* is a compound adjective created by combining the verb *cut* and the noun *throat*, modifying the noun *gangster*.

Season 1 (Episode 5) introduces two scenes containing two slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 5 [25]
The episode begins with Thomas Shelby visiting the false grave of Danny Whizz-Bang, who was Thomas's ex friend and loyal member of Peaky Blinders. Later on, Thomas comes into The Garrison Pub at midnight and tells Grace trouble is coming. He gives her a gun and tells her to hide in a back room until he signals for her to come out. Two IRA men enter, Malacki Byrne and Maguire. Thomas gives them the location of the stolen guns in exchange for money. However, they get into a fight. Grace loses control and shoots Maguire, whereas Thomas overcomes Byrne and viciously beats him to death.

SCENE 1 (08:57-09:05)

In this scene, Arthur Shelby visits Grace who is working on some paperwork:

GRACE: I thought Danny Whizz-Bang was dead?
ARTHUR: Then you thought wrong, didn't you?
GRACE: But I've seen his grave. He was shot.
ARTHUR: That was a show to satisfy the *wops*.

In this scene there is one slang term, and that is *wop* (n.), which is a *a derogatory term for an Italian immigrant or Italian-American* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 1063). The use of this slang term functions to assert the Shelbys' dominance and power over the Italians by employing offensive language, thus reflecting their view of Italians as outsiders. This term underscores the animosity between different ethnic groups within the criminal underworld depicted in the series.

[25] Plot description was taken from: https://peaky-blinders.fandom.com/wiki/Episode_1.5

SCENE 2 (24:50-24:54)

This scene is taking place at Garrison pub. Two IRA members get into a fight with Thomas:

> THOMAS: You're gonna need a shovel.
> MAGUIRE: You thick fucking *tinker*. Do you think we'd let you live?

Slang expression present in this exchange is *tinker (n.)*. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[26] *tinker* is *Scottish and Irish name for Gypsy*. The function of this insult is to undermine Thomas Shelby's authority by representing him as someone of lower status, based solely on his ethnicity and to assert dominance through derogatory language.

Season 1 (Episode 6) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 6 [27]
Peaky Blinders and Billy Kimber's gang confront each other on Garrison Lane. Kimber opens fire, killing Danny and injuring Thomas, who shoots Kimber dead.

SCENE 1 (38:55-39:04)

In this scene, Peaky Blinders and Billy Kimber's gang confront each other:

> BILLY KIMBER: You've bit off more than you can chew, you little *toe-rag*, and now I'm going to take over this shithole.
> THOMAS: Well... If we have to use guns...Let's use proper guns!

In this scene, the slang expression present is *toe-rag* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[28] it implies *worthless, insignificant or objectionable person.* This term is very informal and its function is to show impertinence, offense and strong disapproval of Thomas. By referring

[26] https://greensdictofslang.com/
[27] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2461638/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[28] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/ocgrn4i

deragotorily to him it also serves to undeserstimate his authority, reflecting the struggle for power, dominance, and respect in a world where one's reputation is crucial.

From a linguistic aspect, *toe-rag* is an example of compounding. The compound noun *toe-rag* is formed by combining the nouns *toe* and *rag*.

Season 2 (Episode 1) introduces two scenes containing two slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 2
Episode 1 [29]
The episode jumps two years forward in time, putting the series in Small Heath, Birmingham, 1922. In an effort to find out who blew up his pub, Thomas heads over to the Black Lion. There, he's led away by a young boy to another building, patted down, hooded, then taken into a back room where he's threatened into murdering an Irishman by two members of the IRA, a woman named Irene O'Donnell and another man. Later, Thomas calls a family meeting, and tells them that he plans to expand his bookies' business to London.

SCENE 1 (12:04-12:20)

In this scene, Thomas is talking to two members of the IRA, Irene O'Donnell and a man:

> IRENE: In all the world, violent men are the easiest to deal with.
> THOMAS: So tell me, which brand of rebel are you, eh? I read somewhere that you *Paddies* started fighting amongst yourselves, now.

In this scene, there is one slang term and that is *Paddies* (n.). The term *Paddies* is in fact *British slang term for Irish* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 696). It is used by Thomas to refer to the Irish in a dismissive and derogatory manner. The function of this term is to highlight the tensions and animosity between the British and the Irish, reinforcing the notion of British superiority over the Irish.

[29] Plot description was taken from: https://peaky-blinders.fandom.com/wiki/Episode_2.1

SCENE 2 (22:45-22:51)

In this scene, Thomas calls a family meeting:

> JOHN: We haven't even set foot in London yet and they've already blown up our fucking pub.
> ARTHUR: Who said anything about *cockneys*?
> ESME: Who else?
> POLLY: Do you know who did it, do you?

There is one slang expression here and that is *cockney* (n.). According to the Green's Dictionary of Slang[30] *cockney* is *a generic nickname for any English immigrant.* This term is used deragotorily as well, just as in the previous example. Its function is to establish group cohesion within the Shelby family by making clear distinction between outsiders or enemies, in this case Londoners, and insiders, the Shelby family.

Season 2 (Episode 2) introduces three scenes containing four slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 2
Episode 2 [31]
Inspector Campbell visits Thomas in hospital, aware that he killed Eamonn Duggan, Irishman whom Thomas murders for Irene O'Donnell of Irish Republican Army. Later, Thomas discharges himself from the hospital and announces that he bought Ada a house in London as a means of laundering money. Soon after, he brings Aunt Polly to another house in Birmingham, which he purchased for her as a birthday present.

[30] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/2t75phi
[31] Plot description was taken from: https://peaky-blinders.fandom.com/wiki/Episode_2.2

SCENE 1 (02:38-02:48)

In this scene, Campbell visits Thomas at the hospital:

> CAMPBELL: The *racketeering business* must be booming. Are you not going to thank me for saving your life?

There is one slang expression here and that is *racketeering business* (noun phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[32] this term denotes *the practice of making money from organized illegal activities*. The function of *racketeering* is to underscore the nature of the activities the Peaky Blinders are involved in, particularly their engagement in criminal enterprises. Moreover, the function of this expression is to depict a clear distinction between insiders, represented by legal authorities like Inspector Campbell, and outsiders, such as Thomas Shelby, who are involved in criminal activities. This term not only emphasizes the distinction between those who operate within the law and those outside it, but also reflects Inspector Campbell's strong disapproval and contempt for Thomas by labeling him as part of a group that is excluded and rejected by the society.

Linguistically, the noun phrase *racketeering business* undergoes the process of compounding and affixation. The compound noun phrase *racketeering business* is formed by combining the adjective *racketeering* and the noun *business*. Moreover, the component *racketeering* is created through affixation, specifically suffixation, because the noun *racket* takes the suffix *-eer* to form the word *racketeer*, and then the suffix *-ing* is added to create *racketeering*.

SCENE 2 (05:10-05:19)

This scene is still taking place at the hospital:

> CAMPBELL: And as a result of the information in my possession, I can charge you with murder at any time and provide two impeccable Crown witnesses whose testimony will lead you directly to the *gallows*. You are *on my hook*, Mr Shelby. And from this moment forward...you belong to me.

[32] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/racketeering

This scene contains two slang expressions. These expressions are: *gallows* (n.) and *on the hook* (prepostional phrase).

According to the Green's Dictionary of Slang [33] the term *gallow* refers *to a wooden structure used, especially in the past, to hang criminals from as a form of execution, that is killing as a punishment*. Here, Campbell speaks in a rather threatening tone, so its function is to instill fear in Thomas, due to of the information he possesses and could potentially harm Thomas. The function of this slang term is also to emphasize punishment used in this period for those who don't obey the law. The use of *gallow* functions to depict the concept of past practices, reflecting the harsh realities of justice during that period. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[34] *on the hook* means *to be under someone's control or influence.* Similarly, the function of the term is to emphasize the power Campbell holds over Thomas, implying that Thomas is now trapped and must comply with his demands. These two slang expressions additionally emphasize Campbell's role as an enforcer of the law, positioning him as someone who wields power and authority.

SCENE 3 (25:43-25:52)

In this scene, Thomas is talking to his aunt Polly in a new house in Birmingham and he promises to find her lost children:

THOMAS: Now, with your permission, I'd like to *grease* a few *palms* and take a look at the records they never showed you.

Here, the slang expression present in this scene is *to grease palms* (verb phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[35] *to grease palms* means *secretly give someone money in order to persuade them to do something for you.* Its function is to emphasize the secret tactics Thomas is ready to use to get what he wants and how these practices are often present in the world of crime.

[33] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gallows
[34] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/ldvvffa
[35] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/grease-palm

Season 2 (Episode 3) introduces two scenes containing two slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 2
Episode 3 [36]
Sabini, a British-Italian gangster based in London and one of England's wealthiest horse-racing tycoons, had his men kill the Digbeth Kid, a member of the Shelby gang. The Digbeth Kid, currently in jail for illegal bookmaking, is actually just a naive boy who dreams of being a gangster. This was his first time being arrested.

SCENE 1 (35:26-35:38)

In this scene, Digbeth Kid is arrested for the first time:

> POLICE OFFICER: You were found in possession of *betting slips*, race cards and ticker tape. Any explanation?
> DIGBETH KID: No.

There is one slang expression in this scene and that is *betting slips* (noun phrase). According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*[37], the literal meaning of (*betting) slips* is a small piece of paper used to record bets. However, in criminal slang, as defined by Green's Dictionary of Slang[38], *betting slips* denote *counterfeit coins.* The use of this slang term marks Digbeth Kid as someone involved in, or aspiring to be part of, the gambling underworld. Moreover, this slang has novel function because it demonstrates how everyday words take on coded meanings within specific subcultures, identifying individuals through their association with illicit behavior.

From a linguistic perspective, the slang expression *betting slips* undergoes the processes of compounding and affixation. The compound noun phrase *betting slips* is formed by combing adjective *betting* and noun *slips*. The component *betting* itself is created through the process of affixation, specifically suffixation by adding suffix *-ing* to the verb *bet*.

[36] Plot description was taken from: https://peaky-blinders.fandom.com/wiki/Episode_2.3
[37] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/slip?q=slips
[38] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/amd2sxi

SCENE 2 (37:31-37:40)

In this scene, Sabini expresses his hatred for the Shelby family and devises ways to eliminate them:

> SABINI: Gypsy stuff. Herbs, potions. And he's tipping off our big *punters*, so they know who's going to win.

There is one slang expression in this scene and that is *punter* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[39] *punter* denotes *a gambler, on cards, dice, horses, dogs.* The function of this term is to emphasize familiarity with a particular social group, specifically the gambling community. It also serves as a discreet way to address someone involved in gambling and possibly to discuss illegal activities, such as gambling without drawing too much attention.

Season 2 (Episode 6) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 2
Episode 6 [40]
Thomas explains to the Peaky Blinders and their Gypsy allies that they must take over Darby Sabini's race track licenses, and that he will be creating a diversion to distract the police from their actions. Thomas enlists the help of his secretary and ex-prostitute Lizzie Stark to help him carry out his plan. Thomas's plan does not exactly turn out as he hoped. He is delayed in getting to Lizzie, who is sexually assaulted by Henry Russell, Field Marshal. When Thomas arrives, his gun jams, but he grabs his target's own pistol and shoots Russell, killing him.

SCENE 1 (49:58-50:11)

In this scene, John comforts Lizzie after a series of preceding events:

> JOHN: It is gotta stop, Thomas's already told you. *Toffs* at the races are the worst, you know
>
> that. Hey, come here, come here. Look at me. Cheer up. We won.

[39] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/tgnyf4y
[40] Plot description was taken from: https://peaky-blinders.fandom.com/wiki/Henry_Russell

There is one slang expression in this scene and that is *toff* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[41] *toff* implies *an aristocrat, an upper-class person in general or anyone considered to be posing as a superior person*. In this context it is used derogatorily and functions to convey disdain for the upper class, emphasizing the social division and resentment that characters like John feel. Moreover, by referring to aristocrats as *toffs*, John distances himself from the upper class, reinforcing his own identity and solidarity with those who share his social background and values.

7.2.2. TV series Prison Break

In season one, 10 episodes were analyzed (one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, ten and thirteen). Episode 1 consists of six scenes, Episode 2 of three scenes, Episode 3 of one scene, Episode 4 of four scenes, Episode 5 of one scene, Episode 6 of two scenes, Episode 7 of one scene, Episode 8 of one scene, Episode 10 of two scenes and Episode 13 of one scene.

Season 1 (Episode 1) introduces six scenes containing nine slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 1 - "The Pilot" [42]
After getting an elaborate full-body tattoo and destroying all the notes in his office, Michael Scofield calmly walks into a bank and holds it up. At trial, he raises no defense and seems to voluntarily be going to prison. Inside, he reveals that he's the brother of a fellow inmate, one on death row for the murder of the vice president's brother. He also hints that he has a plan of some sort, which involves pretending he has diabetes. By faking diabetes, Michael ensured that he would need frequent medical check-ups and insulin shots, giving him a legitimate reason to be in the infirmary. The prison infirmary was a crucial part of Michael's escape plan.

[41] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/4to3o7q
[42] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678483/?ref_=tt_ep_pr

SCENE 1 (06:54-07:09)

In this scene, Michael is in his prison cell with his cell roommate Sucre, thinking about his plan to escape alongside with his brother Lincoln. Right from the start, we are introduced to Michael's prison nickname, which is also a prison slang term:

> INMATE: Yo, *Fish*! What you looking at? You look kind of pretty to be in here, man. *Fish*!
> SUCRE: I suggest you take a seat, *Fish*. Ain't nothing to do up in here but serve time. Ain't nobody gonna serve it for you.

In this exchange, there is the slang term *fish* (n.) which signifies *a prisoner who has recently arrived in prison*. (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009:367). Here, the function of the slang term *fish* is to differentiate Michael from the established group of inmates. By marking him as *fish*, the term underscores Michael's status as a newcomer, distinguishing him from those who are more familiar with the prison environment.

SCENE 2 (09:15-09:25)

In this scene, Michael and Sucre are walking in the Fox River prison yard, when they encounter one of the other inmates:

> INMATE*:* What you doing with this *fish* man?
> SUCRE: He's my new *cellie*.
> INMATE: Huh.
> SUCRE: Wholesale's got it wired up at the commissary. Anything you want, he can get it for you.
> INMATE: You keep handing out my jacket, I swear I'm gonna *bust your grape.*

Besides aforementioned slang *fish*, there are two more slang expressions in this scene. They include *cellie* (n.) and *to bust your grape* (verb phrase).

According to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 177) *cellie* refers to a *cellmate in jail or prison.* Sucre uses this term not only to describe Michael as his cellmate but also to demonstrate the bond between them. The function of this slang is to emphasize group solidarity and foster friendliness, particularly between Sucre and Michael, who share similar habits, lifestyles, and

values inside of prison walls. The expression *to bust your grape* refers to *committing a foolish act as a result of a sense of intense desperation in prison* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 151). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[43] it implies *losing emotional control; hitting someone*. This slang functions as a way to assert dominance or to provoke a reaction through threats and aggression. *To bust your grape* also falls into the category of slang that employs aggressive language to insult or express disapproval.

SCENE 3 (10:16-10:22)

In this scene, Michael and Sucre are talking about a man sentenced to death as they look at him over the fence. The man they are discussing is actually Lincoln:

> SUCRE: Man killed the Vice President's brother. In a month, he's getting the *chair*, which means no one up this river is more dangerous than him, because he has nothing to lose now.

There is one slang expression in this scene and that is *chair* (n). According to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 179) *electric chair* typically refers to *the death penalty*. The term *chair* is quite informal and, in this example, denotes casual conversation between Michael and Sucre. However, the full expression *electric chair* is not used because it would probably be too formal for prison setting. Furthermore, slang expression *chair* is used within prison environment and not that easily understood outside of it, which means it functions as marker of in-group identity. This in-group usage enables shared understanding among those who are familiar with the slang, in this case inmates. Moreover, the usage of *chair* highlights the harsh and bleak reality within prison. For the listener, especially within the prison context, it may evoke a strong emotional response and shock, given its association with death, further emphasizing the seriousness of Lincoln's situation.

[43] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/v3i7ksa

SCENE 4 (15:18-15:25)

This scene is situated outside of prison and involves two members of Abruzzi's crew. In their conversation, they are referring to Otto Fibonnaci:

> SMALLHOUSE: That is the son of a bitch that *fingered* Abruzzi.
>
> MAGGIO: That is Fibonnaci? I thought that the *punk* was gone forever.

In the scene, there are two slang terms: *to finger* (v.) and *punk* (n.). Green's Dictionary of Slang[44] defines the slang expression *to finger* as *to betray or inform on, to identify someone to the police*. This term reflects the speaker's familiarity with criminal slang and the activities associated with it. Its function is to distinguish insiders, who adhere to world of crime from outsiders, who are seen as threats due to their cooperation with authorities. It also functions so as to emphasize to the hearer that betrayal is strictly offensive in the world of crime, and possibly to evoke feelings of anger and disapproval for the act. Green [45] provides definition for the slang expression *punk* as well, such as *a person, irrespective of character; a young criminal or street gang member*. According to Cambridge Dictionary [46] *punk* is *a young man who fights and is involved in criminal activities.* As a slang term, *punk* captures the hearer's attention with its aggressive and offensive tone. It does not just express a low opinion of someone but also serves to provoke a reaction from the listener. Depending on the listener, some may find this slang harsh and insulting, while others might agree with its meaning and even find it humorous.

SCENE 5 (38:48-38:58)

This scene is taking place at the prison yard. Michael is talking to C-Note who could provide him with "PUGNAc":

> C-NOTE: You can get that at medical then.
>
> MICHAEL: I can't get it at medical.
>
> C-NOTE: Why not?
>
> MICHAEL: Because they're already giving me insulin shots.
>
> C-NOTE: You're one mixed-up *cracker*, you know that?

[44] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/r6qhjty
[45] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/nai3f4q
[46] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/punk

There is only one slang expression in this scene and that is *cracker* (n.) which denotes *a poor, uneducated, racist white from the southern US.* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 242). As evident from the definition, this term carries a negative connotation, as it is used derogatorily to refer to a white person. However, in the context of this scene, its function is not to degrade or insult someone, but rather to serve as an informal nickname within the prison environment. The tone, the inmate's non-verbal communication, and Michael's reaction all indicate that the term is being used more casually and informally, rather than offensively. By using this term casually, C-Note might be acknowledging Michael as part of the group, despite the racial and cultural differences that *cracker* typically indicates.

SCENE 6 (40:01-40:03)

This scene is taking place inside the prison, where prisoners are painting the walls, as one of the activities which was assigned to them. Also, there are police officers supervising them:

POLICE OFFICER: All right *cons*, break it down!

In this scene, there is one slang expression and that is a *con* (n.) which refers to *a convict or ex-convict* (The Routledge Dictionary, 2009: 226). This use of slang highlights the social boundaries between the police officers and the inmates, making a clear distinction between the authorities and the inmates, and emphasizing the officer's control and the inmates' status as convicted criminals. The function of this term is to indicate a certain level of dismissiveness or aggression, reflecting the power dynamics within the prison, while also contributing to the informal tone of communication typical in such environments.

As far as the word formation process is in question, *con* is an example of clipping, specifically back-clipping where the last syllables of the word are left out. The word *convict* is shortened to *con*, retaining the beginning of the word and dropping the final syllable.

Season 1 (Episode 2) introduces three scenes containing eleven slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 2 - "Allen" [47]
As Michael begins executing his plan, he searches for a bolt in one of the yard bleachers. His supplier for PUGNAc, the drug he uses to simulate diabetes, is a African-American inmate who refuses to assist him if he gets into a confrontation with the white supremacists. The Italian mob boss John Abruzzi, meanwhile, is growing more impatient for the whereabouts of the informant Michael tracked down, and is threatening to take the information by force.

SCENE 1 (01:27-01:37)

In this scene Michael is talking to Charles Westmoreland:

> CHARLES: I'm a 60-year-old man with 60 years left on my *ticket***.** What do you think?
>
> MICHAEL: I'm thinking about going.
>
> CHARLES: Now, there's going and there's "going". Which one do you mean?
>
> MICHAEL: The one you think I mean.
>
> CHARLES: Three days inside and he's already thinking about *turning rabbit*. It'll pass, it always does.

There are two slang expressions in this scene. These refer to *ticket* (n.) and *to turn rabbit* (verb phrase).

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[48], *ticket* denotes *a prison sentence*. It is a unique slang expression typical for prison environment whose function is to foster a sense of shared understanding among inmates. Furthermore, using *ticket* instead of more formal terms like *prison sentence* reflects inmates' need to adapt their language to prison environment, where informality and coded language are valued. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[49] the slang expression *to turn rabbit* implies *leaving quickly, running away.* In this context, it means a sudden departure or escape. This metaphorical expression has a humorous function, as the idea of "turning into a

[47] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678475/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[48] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/kz5dhfi
[49] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/xvrvyma

rabbit" to describe escaping or running away adds a playful and amusing element to the conversation. Reference to a rabbit is quite unusual and novel, which is why it entertains listeners.

Linguistically speaking, the verb phrase *to turn rabbit* exemplifies the linguistic process of compounding, where the verb *turn* and the noun *rabbit* are joined to form a verb phrase *to turn rabbit.*

SCENE 2 (03:16-03:57)

In this scene, officer Bellick confronts Michael and Sucre, sarcastically inquiring if they are arming themselves for anticipated race riot:

> OFFICER BELLICK: So, *tooling up for* the race riot, are we? Hand it over. *Rughead* and the *billies*. Which side are you on, anyhow, *Fish?*
> MICHAEL: That would be neither, *Boss.*
> OFFICER BELLICK: Maybe, you're gonna go extracurricular with it, then. Stick a *C.O.* maybe?
> WARDEN POPE: Is there a problem here, Deputy?
> OFFICER BELLICK: Got a *shank* in here.
> WARDEN POPE: Is this yours? You're not a good liar. Come on, Sucre. You're going to the *SHU.*

Besides the previously explained slang expression *fish*, there are seven more slang expressions in this scene*: to tool up for* (verb phrase), *rughead* (n.), *billy (n.), boss* (n.), *C.O.* (abbr.), *shank* (n.) and *SHU* (abbr.*)*.

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[50] *to tool up for* means *to arm oneself; to shoot someone*. This slang expression is an informal way of implying that Michael is preparing for a race riot. By using this term, officer Bellick aligns with the prison's harsh reality, where violence and conflicts are very frequent. Green's Dictionary of Slang[51] defines *rughead* as a *derogatory name for a black person,* whereas *billy* implies *a white ma*n, which is according to Green[52], term *often used in US prisons*. *Rughead* and *billies* are used derogatorily and as noticeable from this scene,

[50] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/el7hqna
[51] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/suz27ta#chci7xi
[52] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/6b6okda#sn3

inmates and police officers may adopt derogatory slang terms as a form of subcultural identity within the prison environment. That is why slang expressions are a good source to align with certain groups or to distinguish themselves from others. Both terms, *rughead* and *billies* are exclusionary and provocative, reinforcing racial divisions within the prison. The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 114) defines *boss* as *a prison guard or official,* whereas *C.O.*, according to Green's Dictionary of Slang[53], stands for a *correctional officer*. Slang expressions *boss* and *C.O.* serve as a form of address within prison and denote authority, as well as the hierarchical structure within the prison setting. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[54] s*hank* is *a stiletto-like weapon, similar to a screwdriver, used by street gangs, prisoners; any form of knife.* This slang term functions as a form of concealment, allowing inmates to talk about weapons without being overly explicit, which is crucial for maintaining secrecy in their escape plan. Finally, as detailed on Federal Criminal Defense Attorneys' website[55] *SHU* stands for *Special Housing Unit* and denotes a solitary confinement for prisoners. It indicates punishment and isolation from the general prison population. The abbreviation *SHU* simplifies the very formal *Special Housing Unit*, making it easier for both inmates and staff to refer to these specific prison conditions. This informal usage reflects the prisoners' need for simplified communication. However, this slang is challenging for people outside the prison system to understand, as it is primarily used by professionals within the prison environment. As a result, the term also implies the speaker's awareness of these conditions and their impact on inmates.

When it comes to word formation processes present in the formation of slang in this scene, the noun *rughead* serves as an example of compounding. It is created by combining the nouns *rug* and *head* to form the compound noun *rughead*. Morevoer, *billy*, is an example of clipping, specifically fore clipping where the initial syllables are left out. Therefore, the word *hillbilly* is clipped to *billy***,** dropping the *hill* part and retaining only *billy*. As for other word formation processes, *C.O.* is an example of initialism, standing for *correctional officer*, whereas *SHU* is acronym which stands for *Special Housing Unit*.

[53] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/zfvxeka
[54] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/opzdvaq
[55] https://federalcriminaldefenseattorney.com/prison-life/special-housing-units-shus/

SCENE 3 (22:57-23:00)

In this scene, Sucre is locked inside a prison cell, urgently trying to get the attention of a police officer because he wants to make a call to his fiancée, Maricruz:

> SUCRE: *Badge*, *Badge*, open up! *Badge*!
> POLICE OFFICER: You talking again?

There is one slang term in this scene and that is *badge* (n.). According to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 35) this slang expression refers to *a warden, a guard, anyone in authority*. Here, it is evident that *badge* functions as symbol of officer's position of power and the uniform he wears, which includes a badge. It highlights the officer's identity in the prison hierarchy. In addition to that, its function is to separate those who have control and authority, such as the police, from the group that must obey them and follow the rules, like the inmates.

Season 1 (Episode 3) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 3 - "Cell Test" [56]
Michael convinces John Abruzzi that he won't talk after a torture session produces no information on the whereabouts of Fibonacci. For the next stage of his plan, Michael needs to put his cell-mate Sucre to the test to ensure his trustworthiness. However, Sucre wants to settle down with his fiancée after he gets paroled and can't risk it by helping a prison break, so he requests a transfer. The new cell-mate, a murderer named Haywire, is far too unstable to be trusted.

[56] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678477/?ref_=tt_ep_nx

SCENE 1 (16:23-16:37)

In this scene, Lincoln is seeking additional time outdoors, which is typically limited in a prison environment. Officer Bellick, replies rather dismissively, implying Lincoln's request is unreasonable or unlikely to be granted:

> LINCOLN: Bellick.
> BELLICK: Hey, what's up, Lincoln?
> LINCOLN: I want some extra time outside for the next couple of weeks.
> BELLICK: Paint fumes in *P.I.* must be getting to you.

In this exchange, there is only one slang expression and that is *P.I.* (abbr.). This term is actually not precisely defined in any of the previously mentioned dictionaries. However, some web pages[57] provide definition and explanation of this slang term. *P.I.* stands for *Prison Industries* and it refers to prisoners in Fox River who do jobs around the prison that the prison itself does not have the resources to fix. Jobs include painting, cleaning and repairing damaged rooms. This slang expression functions to introduce the viewers to world of *Prison Break*, where specific slang terms in form of acronyms and initialisms are ordinary and understood by those within the system. Moreover, officer Bellick's use of *P.I.* in a quite cynical and dismissive manner portrays the restriction between the prison staff and the inmates. Bellick's casual reference to *P.I.* highlights his familiarity with the system and his control over it, undermining Lincoln.

In terms of word formation process, *P.I* in an example of initialization, because it is an abbreviated form, standing for *Prison Industries*.

[57] https://prisonbreak.fandom.com/wiki/Prison_Industries#:~:text=Prison%20Industries%20(PI)%20is%20a,cleaning%20and%20repairing%20damaged%20rooms.

Season 1 (Episode 4) introduces four scenes containing eight slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 4 - "Cute poison"[58]
Michael is able to obtain some of the supplies he needs. What he lacks, however, is a cell-mate he can trust to let him do his work. Haywire has become obsessed with Michael's tattoos and comes dangerously close to realizing their meaning, so Michael uses this to his advantage to provoke a confrontation and get his room-mate removed.

SCENE 1 (03:42-4:01)

In this scene Michael is talking to Haywire:

MICHAEL: Haywire, you ever thought of breaking out?

HAYWIRE: [Sniggers] What the hell would I do out there?

MICHAEL: Not be here.

HAYWIRE: *Halfway houses*, *psych* visits, *meds*, checking in with a *P.O.*, urine tests, keeping a job. No. Why do you ask?

Here, there are four slang expressions. This scene contains the following slang *halfway house* (noun phrase), *psych* (n.), *meds* (n.) and *P.O.* (abbr.).

According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[59] *halfway house* refers to *the volume of mentally disturbed inmates, making it "half-way house to Broadmoor" (the UK's main prison for the criminally insane).* The function of this slang is hard to determine because it is not directly criminal. However, it could be said that it serves as an informal way of highlighting the reality of inmates with mental health issues, placing them in a transitional space between the regular prison environment and more extreme institutions like Broadmoor. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[60] *psych* stands for a *psychiatrist*., *meds* refer to *medicines*, whereas *P.O.* stands for *a parole or probation officer. Psych*, *meds and P.O.*, as abbreviated forms which function to make communication more suited to the prison setting, where informality, clipped forms, and casual conversation are typical.

[58] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678478/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[59] https://greensdictofslang.com/
[60] https://greensdictofslang.com/

As far as the word formation processes are in question, *halfway house* is an example of compounding. Adverb *halfway* modifies the noun *house* and together they form a single noun phrase *halfway house*. Furthermore, *psych* and *meds* are examples of clipping. The term *psych* is an example of back-clipping because the last syllables of the word *psychiatrist* are cut off, retaining only the initial part, *psych*. Similarly, *meds* is back-clipping of *medicine*, where the final syllables are omitted, leaving only *meds*. Lastly, *P.O.* is an example of initialization because it is a shortened form of *parole/probation officer.*

SCENE 2 (4:32-4:56)

In this scene, the prison guard is addressing Haywire, during a medication distribution or scheduled check-in:

PRISON GUARD: *Candy* time, Haywire.

HAYWIRE: They think I have schizoaffective disorder with bipolar tendencies.

PRISON GUARD: Think you got it?

HAYWIRE: Whatever…I take the pills to keep the *quacks* off my back.

Here, there are two slang expressions: *candy* (n.) *and quack* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[61] *candy* refers *to any drug, esp. in capsule form*. This slang term euphemizes the seriousness of Haywire's state by associating it with candies. That is why, slang *candy* has playful, humorous and even ironic function. Certainly, the usage of slang makes the whole scene less serious and rather amusing for the listeners. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang [62] *quack* is a slang term for *a doctor, irrespective of their abilities.* Here, *quack* is used derogatorily and its function is to show Haywire's disapproval and mistrust for doctors treating him.

[61] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/5oktpvq
[62] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/e4tplaq

SCENE 3 (06:56-7:02)

In this scene, Michael is talking with John Abruzzi. They are discussing his plan to dig a hole in his prison cell, as a part of Michael's plan to escape:

> ABRUZZI: So, when you dig?
> MICHAEL: I don't.
> ABRUZZI: Hey, you and I are *in bed* now.

There is one slang expression in this scene: *in bed* (prepositional phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang [63] *in bed (with)* implies *allied or associated with, usu. implying nefarious activities.* This slang expression is used informally to highlight strong partnership between Michael and Abruzzi and how they are involved into dangerous activity, which is common in prison setting. It also reflects a sense of secrecy and danger because very small number of people know about their escape plan.

SCENE 4 (34:06-34:18)

In this scene, Michael deliberately strikes himself against the prison door bars, framing Haywire for the act and shouting for police officers to come. Meanwhile, Haywire observes that Michael's tattoos form a maze, hinting at a deeper purpose or plan:

> HAYWIRE: He's got a pathway on his body. It leads somewhere.
> POLICE OFFICER: Back off, Haywire.
> HAYWIRE: No, look. Look at his tattoos. It is a pathway.
> POLICE OFFICER: Haywire, I said back off. You want a *hot shot*?

There is only one slang expression present in this exchange and that is *hot shot* (noun phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[64] *hot shot* denotes *a mix of drugs, a lethal injection that causes death and is used to execute prisoners in certain US states.* The function of this slang term is to shock the listener because it indicates what will happen in case of Haywire's opposition and rebellion of other inmates in general, that is death.

[63] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/74gxksy
[64] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/igywg7i

From the linguistic aspect, *hot shot* is an example of compounding. This compound noun *hot shot* is formed by joining the adjective *hot* with the noun *shot*.

Season 1 (Episode 5) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 5 "English, Fitz or Percy" [65]
This episode revolves around Michael's potential transfer from Fox River to another prison. However, he needs another piece of information for his plan to go forward, and he makes an extended trip behind the walls to answer his question: English, Fitz or Percy, which street he needs to choose in order to escape?

SCENE 1 (11:34-11:43)

In this scene, John Abruzzi found out that Michael is going to be transferred to other prison:

> ABRUZZI: Seems we need to have a *pow-wow*. There's been a talk about you packing your bags.
>
> MICHAEL: Don't believe everything you hear. I'm not going anywhere.

The slang expression in this scene is *pow-wow* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[66] *pow-wow* refers to *a chat or conversation.* This slang is very informal, which makes the interaction between Michael and John Abruzzi seem more relaxed and less serious, even though the reason for their conversation is actually quite important (as explained above, Michael is not going to be situated in Fox River Penitentiary anymore). This expression has cultural reference as well, because it originates from the Algonquian language[67], specifically from the word "pau wau," which referred to a healing or spiritual gathering. It was later adopted into English, where its meaning shifted. According to Encyclopedia Britanica [68] *it was initially used to describe Native American ceremonies, but over time, it evolved to refer to any informal meeting or discussion*. As evident from the above explanation of this term, *pow-wow* has shifted from its original, specific cultural

[65] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678480/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[66] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/xhfv7ma
[67] major group of North American Indian languages
[68] https://www.britannica.com/topic/powwow

context to a more general usage, now commonly referring to any informal meeting or conversation. That is why it is an example of semantic shift. More precisely, it means that the term *pow-wow* no longer carries the formal or ceremonial connotations it once did. Instead, it has become a slang expression that conveys a sense of casualness and informality, just like Abruzzi uses *pow-wow* to suggest a quick, informal discussion with Michael.

Season 1 (Episode 6) introduces two scenes containing three slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 6 - "Riots, Drills and the Devil: part 1" [69]
Sucre tells Michael that the guards don't bother with counts when there's a lock-down, so he disables the air conditioner circuits on his next trip out. With the temperature rising, the cons start causing trouble, and a lock-down is announced. Unfortunately, tempers have already flared past the boiling point, and a riot breaks out before the cells can be closed.

SCENE 1 (07:51-8:12)

In this scene, Sucre is explaining Michael how to get a lockdown, which will help them achieve their goal, and that is to escape:

> SUCRE: A lockdown. We get the Gen Pop locked down for a day, you will have all the time you need.
>
> MICHAEL: And no count?
>
> SUCRE: *Bulls* don't even come by.
>
> MICHAEL: Only one problem. How do we get a lockdown?
>
> SUCRE: Can you get to the prison *A.C. unit*?
>
> MICHAEL: Maybe.
>
> SUCRE: You want a lockdown, you got to get the inmates riled up. And if you want to piss off the meat in concrete... Turn up the heat.

[69] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678484/?ref_=tt_ep_nx

There are two slang expressions in this scene: *bull* (n.) and *A.C. unit* (noun phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[70] *bull* refers to *a prison warden*, whereas *A.C. unit* stands for *Air Conditioning unit.* The use of slang term *bull* is a typical informal way of addressing police officers in this series. The term is more concise and direct than saying *prison guard or warden*, which makes the whole communication quicker and more suitable to prison environment. *A.C.* is derived from *Air Conditioning*. This slang also reflects the informal, insider language used among inmates, creating a tone of familiarity and shared knowledge of prison rules. The use of slang abbreviations, such as *A.C.* depicts one of the most important functions of slang, which is creating a sense of belonging among prisoners who use slang and sets them apart from outsiders who might not instantly recognize the term.

Linguistically speaking, *A.C. unit* is an example of compounding, as it combines the abbreviation *A.C.* with the noun *unit* to form a new noun phrase. Meanwhile, *A.C.* itself is an example of initialism, standing for *Air Conditioning*, where the first letters of the words are used to create the abbreviation.

SCENE 2 (28:08-28:14)

In this scene, prisoners rush up the staircase from where Lincoln and police officers came, but are halted by the gate, remaining noisy and agitated:

T BAG: Rules just changed.

INMATE: Get that *pig.*

There is only one slang expression in this scene, and that is *pig* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[71] *pig* is *an authority figure, a police officer*. Here, the term *pig* is used derogatorily by the inmates to refer to the prison guard, reflecting their hostility and anger towards the authority figures within the prison. By using the slang word *pig*, inmates not only express their anger but also show group identity and sense of opposition against the prison staff.

[70] https://greensdictofslang.com/
[71] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/g7ksbva

Season 1 (Episode 7) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 7 - "Riots, Drills and the Devil: Part 2" [72]
As the riot rages out of control, Michael makes his way behind the walls to the infirmary to save Dr. Sara Tancredi. Sucre and Abruzzi continue the drilling work on the wall separating general population from the old sewer line. Lincoln tries to make his way back to general to find Michael, but is ambushed by a killer hired to ensure he dies in prison one way or another.

SCENE 1 (13:15-13:55)

This scene takes place in Michael's cell, where a wounded police officer is lying, while T-Bag takes his wallet and looks at a photo of the officer's daughter:

> ABRUZZI: Hey hey hey hey hey...What the hell are you doing?
> T-BAG: I'm just kicking with deputy *dawg*... you know, talking women.
> ABRUZZI: I'll be very clear here, because you and I face an evolutionary gap.

There is only one slang expression in this scene, and that is *dawg* (n.). According to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 272) *dawg* implies *a dog*. However, Green's Dictionary of Slang[73] provides additional meanings for *dawg* in a prison setting: *a guard; police officer; a notably brutal police officer or prison officer or an untrustworthy, treacherous, completely venal man*. Here, slang functions as a tool for expressing derogatory attitudes, as demonstrated in the previous instances where prisoners address prison employees. Referring to police officers as *dawgs* not only conveys the inmates' hostility and contempt but also reinforces the deep division between the inmates, who view themselves as insiders, and the police authorities, seen as outsiders.

[72] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678482/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[73] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/vksmubi

Season 1 (Episode 8) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 8 - "The Old Head" [74]
When it comes to Michael's escape plan, a snag is hit when the team realizes they need the help of Westmoreland to get them access to a restricted room that happens to be right over the sewer pipe.

SCENE 1 (11:55-12:04)

In this scene, Michael and other prisoners, involved into his escape plan, are looking at Charles Westmoreland:

> SUCRE: I don't get it. How come they let him in?
> LINCOLN: He's *a trustee*. Ones with high security clearance.
> SUCRE: Why him?
> LINCOLN: He can be trusted.
> MICHAEL: How does one become *a trustee*?
> LINCOLN: Have a spotless record for the last 30 years.

In this scene there is one slang expression and that is *trustee* (n.) According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[75] *trustee* refers to *a convict who, due to good behavior and trustworthiness, is given a privileged position in the jail.* This person may also act as an informer on other prisoners. The use of this slang depicts how certain terms are unique to prison culture and are understood within that context only. The function of this slang is to note the special division and complex social hierarchies among the prisoners, marking a *trustee* as separate from the general inmate population, due to good behavior and therefore privileged position.

[74] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678486/?ref_=tt_ep_nx
[75] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/r5o5tey

Season 1 (Episode 10) introduces two scenes containing three slang expressions that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 10 -"Sleight of Hand" [76]
After John Abruzzi loses his power to control the P.I. when Philly Falzone ceases to pay, officer Bellick, Michael and the other escape team inmates watch helplessly as P.I. is taken over. Moreover, Abruzzi's Mobsters goes after Fibonacci, who they believe is in Canada. However, the police cracks them before the assault.

SCENE 1 (02:38-02:52)

In this scene, officer Bellick is talking to John Abruzzi:

> BELLICK: You think I like getting piss thrown at me? Spit on? These other *chumps* might do it for the 40 grand a year and the little blue uniform, but I'm not that dumb. Falzone's *envelope* is the only reason I come through that fence every day, and it is the only reason I'm gonna keep coming through that fence.

In this scene, there are two slang expressions: *chump* (n.) and *envelope* (n.) According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[77] *chump* implies a *fool; anyone gullible or easily taken in.* The term *chump* has derogatory meaning and its function is to show contempt and strong disapproval for the other officers. Bellick distances himself from the other policemen, labelling them as inferior and as outsiders, because he does not share same values or motivations with them. Furthermore, according to The Routledge Dictionary (2009: 343) *envelope* refers to *a cash bribe*. Its function is to highlight a secretive activity that the general population does not know about, but is understood only by those who are involved. It also notes how corruption is a norm within prison environment, kept hidden from those not in the know.

[76] Plot description was taken from: https://prisonbreak.fandom.com/wiki/Sleight_of_Hand_(episode)
[77] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/fmvg6ri

SCENE 2 (34:35-34:42)

In this scene, Abruzzi gets a call informing him that Falzone, high-ranking member of the Chicago Mafia was arrested:

> ABRUZZI: Hi, it is John. You wanted to talk to me?
>
> MAGGIO: Yeah. You hear the news? Falzone got *popped* last night. Up in Canada. International g*n charges, parole violation...he's in deep.

Here, there is one slang expression and that is *to get popped* (verb phrase). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[78] *to get popped* means *to get arrested*. Using the slang term *popped* instead of *arrested* reflects informal nature of slang and insider language, common in underworld contexts.

Season 1 (Episode 13) introduces one scene containing one slang expression that will be further analyzed below.

SEASON 1
Episode 13 - "End of the Tunnel" [79]
In this episode it is time for prisoners to escape. However, Michael wants to delay it in order to free Lincoln, but the others insist on leaving immediately. Under pressure, Michael agrees to escape at 9 pm. Michael retrieves a black pill from his arm and hides it in Sucre's crucifix. He asks a priest to give the crucifix to Lincoln, who takes the pill and becomes ill, leading to his transfer to the infirmary. Dr. Sara Tancredi diagnoses food poisoning. The five inmates use the tunnels to reach the infirmary, but the corroded pipe has been replaced and can't be removed. Their escape plan fails.

SCENE 1 (22:09-22:21)

In scene, T-BAG is approaching Michael with question about their further step regarding plan to escape:

> T-BAG: So, Mr. Pied Piper, what's the *play*?
>
> MICHAEL: We do what we always do. Pretend to be working. Be model citizens, till the time comes.

[78] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/rmknf4i
[79] Plot description was taken from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0678479/

Slang expression present in this dialogue is *play* (n.). According to Green's Dictionary of Slang[80] *play* means *any form of action, plan or scheme.* This slang term functions to denote informal communication between inmates and carries an element of secrecy. It implies that the plan needs to be executed carefully and covertly, known only to those directly involved.

7.3. Results and discussion

This thesis examined two series, *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*, specifically 10 episodes selected from each series. In *Peaky Blinders*, 10 episodes from the first and second season were examined (six episodes from the first season and four episodes from the second season), with 22 scenes containing a total of 31 instances of slang. In season one, Episode 1 and 4 had the most scenes and the most occurrences of slang, with 6 scenes and 12 instances of slang in Episode 1, and 3 scenes with 4 instances of slang in Episode 4. Episodes 2 and 6 each had 1 scene with 1 instance of slang. Episode 3 had 1 scene with 2 instances of slang, while Episode 5 had 2 scenes with 2 instances of slang. In season two, Episodes 1 and 3 each had 2 scenes with 2 instances of slang. Episode 2 had 3 scenes with 4 instances of slang. Finally, the last episode, Episode 6, had 1 scene with 1 instance of slang.

As for *Prison Break,* 10 episodes from the first season, also containing 22 scenes, were analyzed, and a total of 39 instances of slang were recorded. Episodes 1, 2 and 4 had the highest number of scenes and, at the same time, the most occurrences of slang. Episode 1 had 6 scenes with 9 slang expressions. It is followed by Episode 2, which had 3 scenes and 11 instances of slang, whereas Episode 4 had 4 scenes and 8 slang examples. Episode 3 had 1 scene with 1 instance of slang, as did Episodes 5, 7, 8 and 13. Finally, Episodes 6 and 10 both had 2 scenes and 3 instances of slang.

The data obtained from the two series was analyzed from the sociological and linguistic perspective with a closer insight into the word formation processes observed in slang expressions. When addressing the sociological functions of slang in *Peaky Blinders*, most examples were related to speaker-oriented properties. The two most prevalent, intertwined functions served to highlight criminal group membership and the various illegal activities the speakers were engaged in. This was represented in 14 examples (see Season 1: scene 1,2 and 5; Episode 3: scene 1; Episode 4,

[80] https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/yxi7a2q

scene 2; Season 2: Episode 2, scenes 1 and 3; Episode 3, scene 1). Moreover, the usage of informal slang expressions in *Peaky Blinders* functioned to assert dominance, signal familiarity with criminal practices and to create a casual, colloquial atmosphere in key interactions. There were 6 such instances (see Season 1: Episode 1, scene 3, scene 6: Episode 3, scene 1; Episode 4, scenes 1 and 2; Episode 6, scene 1). Some expressions directly reflected the British post-war language of Birmingham, through the use of localisms such as *cosh* (see Season 1: Episode 1, scene 4), references to dominant criminal subcultures of that period (see Season 1: Episode 2, scene 1) or through the portrayal of practices related to criminal activities and the justice system for those judged based on these activities, such as *gallows* and *on the hook*.

On the other hand, in relation to the hearer-oriented properties of slang, 9 examples (2 occurring in Season 1: Episode 4, scene 3) were recorded where slang was used to provoke a response from the hearer through offensive and aggressive language (see Season 1: Episode 1, scene 6; Episode 4, scene 3; Episode 5, scenes 1 and 2; Episode 6, scene 1; Season 2: Episode 1, scenes 1 and 2; Episode 6, scene 1). Additionally, 1 example of slang emphasized its playful and humorous function, such as *cock of the walk* (see Season 1: Episode 2, scene 1) and 1 example served to shock the hearer with its graphic nature, illustrating the violent and threatening aspects of criminal slang, as in *cut one's smile* (see Season 1: Episode 1, scene 5). Moreover, *Peaky Blinders* featured another hearer-oriented property, specifically the novel function of slang, as in *betting slips* (see Season 2: Episode 3, scene 1).

From the linguistic perspective, the most frequent word formation processes observed were compounding and affixation. In 4 instances, compounding occurred alongside affixation, specifically suffixation, as seen in examples like *washerwoman*, *bookmaker*, *racketeering business and betting slips*. The most common elements combined were nouns, often paired with other nouns, verbs, or adjectives. Additionally, there were 2 cases of compounding without affixation (see Season 1: Episode 4, scene 3; Episode 6, scene 1) and 3 instances of affixation alone, specifically suffixation, by adding the addition of the suffix *-er* to verbs (see Season 1: Episode 1, scenes 1, 3, and 6).

Proceeding to the sociological function of slang presented in TV series *Prison Break*, the most frequent one was also related to the speaker-oriented properties thus functioning to denote membership with a particular group, such as prisoners, police officers or other prison staff. There

were 15 such examples (see Episode 1, scenes 1, 2, 4 and 6; Episode 2, scenes 2 and 3; Episode 4, scenes 2 and 3; Episode 6, scenes 1 and 2; Episode 7, scene 1; Episode 10, scene 1). Some of the mentioned expressions additionally functioned to portray authority figures in prison, such as *con, boss, C.O., badge, P.O., bull,* as well as the specific prison hierarchy, as evident in *trustee* (see Episode 8, scene 1). In addition to that 3 slang examples emphasized various activities in which the prisoners were involved, as well as the means used to survive in prison (see Episode 1, scene 2; Episode 2, scene 2; Episode 10, scene 1). The next function was the one expressing informal nature of communication, with 13 examples (see Episode 1, scenes 3, 5 and 6; Episode 2, scenes 1 and 2; Episode 4, scene 1; Episode 5, scene 1; Episode 6, scene 1; Episode 10, scene 3; Episode 13, scene 1). Moreover, it was difficult to determine the function of some slang expressions, since their meaning was not found in any of the sources consulted, including *The Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang and Unconventional English; Green's Dictionary of Slang and Cambridge Dictionary* due to the fact that they are specifically prison slang terminology, such as *SHU* (see Episode 2, scene 2) and *P.I* (see Episode 3 scene, 1).

The hearer-oriented property of slang included 7 examples of offensive and aggressive language (see Episode 1, scene 4; Episode 2, scene 2; Episode 4, scene 3; Episode 6, scene 2; Episode 7, scene 1; Episode 10, scene 1), 2 examples whose function was to shock the listener, for instance *chair* (see Episode 1, scene 3) and *hot shot* (see Episode 4, scene 4), as well as the 2 examples where slang functioned to create a humorous effect such as *turn rabbit* (see Episode 2, scene 1) and *candy time* (see Episode 4, scene 2).

In relation to word formation processes, the use of compounding, clipping, initialization and acronymy was spotted. There were 5 instances of compounding (see Episode 2, scenes 1 and 2; Episode 4, scene 1; Episode 4, scene 4; Episode 5, scene 1). Moreover, there were 4 instances of clipping (see Episode 1, scene 6; Episode 2, scene 2; Episode 4, scene 1). As for initialisms, 4 examples were recorded as well (see Episode 2, scene 2; Episode 3, scene 1; Episode 4, scene 1; Episode 6, scene 1) and 1 example of acronymy (see Episode 2, scene 2). There was also one example of semantic shift/change (see Episode 5, scene 1).

The comparison of slang expressions in *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break* was based on the analysis of 10 episodes from each series. Although both series had an equal number of scenes analyzed (22 scenes per series), *Prison Break* showed slightly higher frequency of slang, with 39

instances compared to 31 instances of slang in *Peaky Blinders*. In both series, the majority of slang was associated with speaker-oriented properties. As for the function of group membership, it occurred in both series, but with different focus. In *Peaky Blinders*, this function was closely related to certain activities characters were engaging in. Therefore, 14 instances of slang functioned to highlight the Peaky Blinders' affiliation to the criminal underworld and to indicate the specific illegal activities they were involved in, i.e. gambling, illegal horseracing, fraud. Similarly, in *Prison Break* there were 15 examples of slang, denoting membership in groups like police officers or prisoners. In addition to that, 3 slang terms functioned to illustrate certain activities prisoners were involve in, such as bribery, different schemes, but also activities specific for prison setting, not immediately understood. These activities actually refer to prison terminology known only to insiders, inmates or staff within prison setting which are therefore hard to understand. *Peaky Blinders* had 6 examples where slang was used to create an informal tone, while *Prison Break* had a higher number, with 13 instances.

The use of slang with hearer-oriented properties was also prominent in both series, though the emphasis differed. Both series used slang to provoke and challenge the hearer, often through offensive and aggressive language. *Peaky Blinders* had 9 such instances, while *Prison Break* had 7. These terms were used to express contempt and disrespect, highlighting the adversarial relationships between the characters. In addition to that, it also served to establish power and assert dominance among the characters. In *Peaky Blinders* this was often depicted through hostility between Peaky Blinders gang and other criminal groups, whereas in *Prison Break*, between prisoners and police officers.

The occurrence of slang with humorous or playful function was less frequent in both series, with *Peaky Blinders* having 1 instance of humorous slang expressions, while *Prison Break* had 2 such instances. *Prison Break* employed slang to shock the listener in 2 instances of slang usage, whereas Peaky Blinders had 1 such instance. Additionally, *Peaky Blinders* featured slang that served a function of novelty, a function absent in *Prison Break*.

With regard to the linguistic features of slang *Peaky Blinders* predominantly utilized compounding and affixation as its key word formation processes, *Prison Break* was significant for its usage of shortened forms such as clipping, acronymy, and initialization. Additionally, *Prison Break* featured a process of semantic change, which was not recorded in *Peaky Blinders*

8. CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the use of criminal slang in two popular TV series: *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*. The analysis focused on both the meanings of these slang expressions and the sociological and linguistic features that define them. These elements were examined within the distinct settings and sociopolitical contexts of American and British dramas.

Slang was a frequent occurrence in both series, though it appeared more prevalently in *Prison Break* than in *Peaky Blinders*. A total of 39 examples of slang were analyzed in *Prison Break*, compared to 31 in *Peaky Blinders*. Similarities in the function of slang in these series are primarily driven by sociological factors, more specifically speaker-oriented properties, such as emphasis of group membership, informal speech between characters and the use of derogatory and offensive language. Both series also utilize slang in humorous, playful and shocking ways, though these instances are fewer compared to speaker-oriented uses. Other hearer-oriented property included function of freshness and novelty, present only in *Peaky Blinders* but not in *Prison Break*. Functions that were absent in both series include those that emphasize the desire to impress the listener through trendiness or faddishness, as well as those that enhance expressiveness through sound play and onomatopoeic qualities. Linguistically, the two series differ in their word formation processes. *Peaky Blinders* predominantly uses compounding and affixation, reflecting a British tendency to innovate within established linguistic structures. While *Prison Break* also features examples of compounding, it places greater emphasis on clipping, initialization, and acronymy, highlighting a shift towards brevity and efficiency in communication. This shift is particularly important in environments like the prison setting, where rapid communication is essential. These differences mirror broader societal trends, illustrating how language evolves to meet the growing need for efficient and concise communication.

Finally, although their settings and eras differ, both series reflect broader patterns in the use of slang to establish group membership, create informal and playful interactions, and reflect the evolving and nature of language in response to social environments. The analysis of these series demonstrates how slang remains a lively and ever-evolving component of language, adapting to speakers' needs while pushing the boundaries of linguistic conventions and societal structures.

SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis was to analyze the use of criminal slang in two TV series, *Peaky Blinders* and *Prison Break*, focusing on its meaning and function based on sociological and linguistic features within the distinct contexts of an American prison and the British criminal underworld. The thesis begins with a theoretical section that examines the origins, classification, and sociological and linguistic functions of slang. Following the theoretical part, small research was carried out by analyzing 10 episodes from each series. A total of 31 examples from *Peaky Blinders* and 39 examples from *Prison Break* were analyzed. Despite the different time periods and settings of the two series, the analysis revealed similarities in the function of slang, such as the use of slang to signal group membership, using informal and offensive slang terms as well as the incorporating playful, humorous and shocking connotations. Besides similarities, the research also uncovered main difference in these two series, regarding different word formation processes prevalent in each series.

Key words: criminal slang, function, *Peaky Blinders, Prison Break*

SAŽETAK

Cilj ovog završnog rada bio je analizirati uporabu kriminalnog slenga u dvije TV serije, *Peaky Blinders i Prison Break*, fokusirajući se na njihovo značenje i funkciju, temeljenu na sociološkim i lingvističkim obilježjima, u različitim kontekstima američkog zatvora te britanskog kriminalnog podzemlja. Rad započinje teorijskim dijelom koji ispituje podrijetlo, klasifikaciju te sociološke i lingvističke funkcije slenga. Nakon teorijskog dijela provedeno je manje istraživanje analizom 10 epizoda iz svake serije. Analiziran je ukupno 31 primjer slenga iz serije *Peaky Blinders* i 39 primjera iz serije *Prison Break*. Unatoč različitim vremenskim razdobljima i okruženjima ove dvije serije, analiza je pokazala sličnosti u funkciji slenga, poput korištenja slenga kako bi se označila pripadnost određenoj grupi, korištenje neformalnih i uvredljivih izraza, kao i uključivanje razigranih, humorističnih i šokirajućih konotacija. Osim sličnosti, istraživanje je također otkrilo glavnu razliku između ove dvije serije, a tiče se različitih procesa tvorbe riječi koji prevladavaju u svakoj od njih.

Ključne riječi: kriminalni sleng, funkcija, *Peaky Blinders, Prison Break*

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Obrazac A.Č.

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FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET

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doc.dr. sc. Mirjana Semren

Komentor/ica rada (ime i prezime, akad. stupanj i zvanje):

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