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SOME FEATURES OF SLANG COMPOUND NOUNS

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ABSTRACT

The article delves into the intricate feature of informal language by examining the formation and usage of compound nouns within slang. This exploration focuses on how these compound nouns encapsulate specific cultural and subcultural nuances, thus becoming integral to language evolution and social dynamics. By analyzing concrete examples, this article seeks to unveil the distinct characteristics of slang compound nouns and their profound implications for comprehending present-day language usage and social identity formation.

KEYWORDS

Informal speech, identity marker, urban, subcultural speech, metonymic compounds, non-transparent exocentric, endocentric, metaphoric.

INTRODUCTION

Slang compound nouns are a fascinating aspect of language, offering insight into the dynamism and creativity of informal speech. When we talk about compound nouns in slang, we're delving into how words are combined in informal settings to convey very specific meanings or nuances.

Slang compound nouns are often formed through the fusion of two or more words, and they play a significant role in capturing the essence of a culture, subculture,

or particular social group. These compound nouns are inherently tied to the context in which they are used, and they often reflect the evolving nature of language, as well as the inventiveness and adaptability of speakers in creating new expressions [2, 373].

For example, in modern slang, we might encounter compound nouns such as «haterade» (a blend of «hater» and «Gatorade» used to describe someone who is being excessively negative), «brogrammer» (a

blend of «bro» and «programmer» referring to a certain type of male programmer associated with frat-boy culture), or «hangry» (a blend of «hungry» and «angry» signifying irritability due to hunger).

It's interesting to note that the meanings of these slang compound nouns often aren't immediately obvious to those outside the specific linguistic community. This characteristic adds an element of exclusivity and cohesion within the group using the slang, serving as a form of identity marker or in-group language [18, 533].

It is worth to bring as an example the work of linguist Tony Thorne on slang and subcultural speech, particularly in urban environments. He's known for his in-depth exploration of how slang reflects social change, technological advancements, and global influences, shedding light on the rich tapestry of language evolution.

Compound nouns in slang often serve as cultural signifiers, representing nuances and idiosyncrasies within a particular community or subculture. These compounds can reflect the values, experiences, and even the humor of a group. They can also serve as linguistic artifacts that highlight the uniqueness of a social group's communication style.

For instance, in urban slang, terms like «hustlepreneur» (a blend of «hustle» and «entrepreneur» indicating a person who is simultaneously entrepreneurial and a hustler) demonstrate how compound nouns in slang encapsulate specific cultural attitudes, aspirations, and lifestyles.

Slang compound nouns have a particular flair for expressing emotions and attitudes with brevity and impact. These compounds can convey intense or

nuanced emotions, often drawing on metaphorical or evocative imagery to convey their meaning. They are adept at capturing not just a concept, but also the feelings and associations associated with it [7, 30].

For example, compound nouns like «heartbreak hotel» (used to describe a state of emotional distress following a romantic loss) reflect the capacity of slang to succinctly evoke powerful emotional states within a single term.

The most common slang compound nouns are, as in standard English, two nouns (house-man) and an adjective modifier (main man). Less common bases are provided by grammatical rather than lexical words, as in I AM or she-male, with a pronominal first member. What follows is an attempt to identify the possible combinations among base categories.

Noun-noun compounds are richly illustrated in slang. Within this pattern, the most frequent subgroup is represented by metonymic compounds, in which the syntactic head is a part of the semantic head. In particular, the syntactic head is a body part, which stands for the whole person [10, 65].

Metonymic compounds with head as the second member mainly denote 'a stupid or despicable person'. This sense is in airhead, bonehead, bubblehead, knucklehead, meat-head, mush-head, mutton-head, shithead, and, with a deverbal first member, propeller-head. They are all analysable as 'a person having a head as indicated by the first member'.

A small subgroup of metonymic compounds denotes the person through his/her clothing: e.g., droopy drawers 'an untidy, sloppy, or depressing woman', fancy pants 'a dandy; a snob', old boot 'a woman; a wife', red-cap (Brit., Military) 'a military policeman',

red-hat (Military) 'a staff officer', slyboots (mainly jocular) 'a sly, cunning, or crafty person'.

People are also denoted through non-transparent exocentric compounds whose second member is difficult to assign to the semantic head: e.g., main squeeze (N. Amer.) 'an important person; a sweetheart', oddball (orig. U.S.) 'an eccentric or odd person', old bean/fruit 'a familiar form of address', old ship 'a jocular address to a sailor', old sweat 'an experienced soldier or military pilot', pink button (Stock Market) 'a jobber's clerk', Roman Candle 'a Roman Catholic', second banana (orig. U.S., Theatre) 'a supporting comedian' (cf. top banana 'the leading comic in a burlesque entertainment'), small potatoes (orig. U.S.) 'a person or thing considered unimportant or worthless', sweetie-pie (orig. U.S.) 'a lovable person; also as a term of endearment' [11, 20].

Endocentric compounds are far less frequent. Examples include animate and inanimate terms. Compounds denoting animate beings are main guy (U.S.) 'a man of authority or importance', main man (U.S.) 'a favourite male friend', wise guy (orig. U.S.) 'a know-all'. Compounds denoting inanimate things are hot chair, liquid lunch (often jocular) 'a midday meal at which drink rather than food is consumed', mad money 'money for use in an emergency', wooden cross (Military) 'a wooden cross on a serviceman's grave'.

The type verb + noun generally refers to a person (agent) performing the action denoted by the verb, as in jitterbug (orig. U.S.) denoting 'a bug 'a person obsessed by an idea' who jitters 'acts in a nervous way' and plug-ugly (orig. and chiefly U.S.) 'an ugly 'ugly person' who plugs 'strikes'.

Within this pattern, the noun may represent an object (patient), as in sawbones 'surgeon' and slaphead (orig. and chiefly Brit., humorous or deprec.) 'a bald or shaven head'.

The type adverb + noun is found in the endocentric compound outside man (U.S.) 'a person involved in robbery', and in the exocentric, but metaphoric, compound outside job 'a crime committed by a person not connected with the building in which it took place'.

The first member is a numeral in four-eyes 'a person who habitually wears spectacles' and nineteenth hole (humorous, orig. U.S.) 'the bar room in a golf clubhouse, as reached at the end of a standard round of eighteen holes'. It is a preposition in undercover 'an undercover agent' [17, 4].

There are other possible base combinations, which however represent marginal cases. For instance, compounds with a nominal/verbal base followed by a verb (look-see 'a survey; a tour of inspection'), by an adverb (speak-easy 'an illicit liquor shop', star-back 'an expensive, reserved seat at a circus'), by a preposition (beer-off 'an off-licence', beer-up 'a drinking-bout or -party', booze-up 'a drinking-bout', going-over 'a beating'), or by a numeral (as in Military slang Section Eight). An adjective followed by an adverb is found in low-down 'the fundamental facts on (about) a person, situation, etc.'.

Some rare cases of composition have a grammatical word (gen. a pronoun) as their first base (e.g. her indoors 'one's wife or girlfriend', I AM 'a self-important person') or they may combine a word with an interjection, as in shoo-fly (U.S.) 'a policeman, usu. in plain clothes' and Hooray Henry 'a type of loud, rich,

rather ineffectual young society man', which has a proper name as its second member.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration into slang compound nouns has revealed not only the inventive and dynamic nature of informal language but also the profound role such expressions play in capturing cultural and subcultural intricacies. The findings have underscored the unique linguistic and cultural significance of slang compound nouns, serving as vital elements in the tapestry of contemporary language usage. Furthermore, the implications of this study extend to language education, intercultural communication, and the broader understanding of linguistic innovation within contemporary society. As language continues to evolve, the ongoing investigation of slang compound nouns remains crucial for unraveling the ever-changing intricacies of communicative expression and cultural identity.

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