



SLANG KNOWLEDGE AMONG NON-NATIVE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH

MASTER'S DEGREE ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING



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ABSTRACT

Defining and studying slang has always been a difficult task because of its oral use and limited written records. It is a lexicon known and used by native communities of speakers but it is unknown the knowledge that non-native speakers have on it, since very few studies have focused on the topic (Namvar, 2014; Kim, 2004; Grossman & Tucker, 1997; Charkova, 2007). Therefore, the aims of this paper are to examine the knowledge of L2 learners of English and Spanish and to analyse the effect of study-abroad period on the first group. In order to do so, two questionnaires of slang words and expressions were used to collect data about students' level of slang knowledge. In the first part of the study, the participants were 20 undergraduate students in the fourth year of English Studies degree. As for the second, 11 students of Spanish in the C1 level were asked. The study shows how Spanish students of English have limitations when they deal with isolated slang terms and how they can deduce slang lexicon when it is contextualized. Regarding L2 Spanish students, the ignorance of argot is even higher. Besides, although some slang is known, it is barely used by students when they communicate in the L2. In order to show the importance that slang has nowadays in our society, several examples of slang on social media are presented. Finally, we propose the implementation of a subject in any degree involving language which covers all the colloquial features that students can find in a native speaking environment.

KEY WORDS: slang, argot, colloquial language, study-abroad variable, L2 learners, English as a Foreign Language, Spanish as a Foreign Language, slang in media

INTRODUCTION

Language changes at the same time that slang creates new vocabulary, which indeed is increasingly becoming a greater part of any language sphere. Although Standard English and Standard Spanish varieties have a huge amount of different lexicon, slang keeps expanding due to the specific cultural situation of persons and groups, establishing and reinforcing social identity and cohesiveness. The purpose of this study is to find out the level of familiarity on slang among Spanish students of English Studies and foreign students of Spanish in a public university in Castellón, Spain. Also, the fact of studying abroad in the first group will be taken into consideration in order to discover if there are any differences on slang knowledge between those who have studied abroad and those who have not. After the analysis of both groups, a comparison will be made in order to discover the similarities and differences. Besides, some material from the Internet will be selected in order to study how significant is slang in media nowadays.

This study is divided into five different sections: first, we will examine the theoretical background on the topic. Secondly, the study itself will be presented. We will comment on the research questions, the participants selected, the instrument used and the procedure followed. Section Three will present the results and discussion derived from the study and Section Four will show the final conclusions. Finally, in the fifth part of the study, we will include the limitations we faced during the research and we will comment on further research.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Language varies according to the use and user, being a diversity unit. First of all, it is important to develop the concept *linguistic variety* in order to understand the concept *slang*. Linguistic varieties are different ways of speaking or types of language that the speaker can choose between in order to get used to the characteristics of each communicative context. As Catford (1965) states, depending on the society and situation in which the speaker is involved, he or she will select one particular language variety, or what is the same, a subgroup of specific formal and semantic features.

Therefore, the way in which speakers use a language is not uniform but varies according to the personal circumstances, the type of communication, and the moment when it takes place. According to Briz (1996), language may be different depending on the kind

of user that employs it and the use given to it. The user variation originates dialects that indicate the temporal or geographic origin and the social class of the subject, while the use variation gives room to registers, which are different types of language appropriate to each communicative context (Halliday, McIntosh, & Stevens, 1964). Thus, different linguistic varieties exist.

Focusing on registers, traditionally two of them have been distinguished, the formal and the informal-colloquial one. When the latter one is used, slang may appear. In the following quote, Eriksen (2010: 16-17) explains greatly the relationship between slang and informal register:

With regards to tenor, in connection to slang, the use of slang implies a relaxed and informal relationship between producer and receiver. [...] With regards to mode, slang is largely a colloquial phenomenon, and while it may be used in writing today, especially in modern day internet blogs, Facebook and Twitter messages, or in books/newspaper articles, typically in the shape of direct quotes, slang's main priority is to work within the framework of spoken interaction. With regards to field, [...] the informality proposed by slang suggests that slang is not to be used within a field such as nuclear physics. Rather, slang will appear in colloquial conversation about events in people's everyday lives, because this is where the informality of slang is at home.

Therefore, the suitability of the use of slang will not only rely on the social group, race or age but especially on the communicative situation in which the exchange is achieved (Tamayo, 2011). As Briz (2002: 17) explains, “lo coloquial es un registro o nivel de habla [...] no vinculado a un nivel de lengua determinado”, so it uses language regardless of the speakers' status and occupation, in an everyday spontaneous situation. Also, it is important to consider that the limits in the analysis of the language are not always clear enough. This means that language is not a determined subject of study, so sometimes it is difficult to investigate it because of its vagueness and changes, particularly in spoken language, and thus, we must understand slang as a type of linguistic variety which is constantly changing (Tamayo, 2011).

According to Ainaud, Espunya & Pujol (2003: 133-134), “la llengua col·loquial presenta una sèrie de desviacions respecte a l'estàndard, tant a nivell fonètic, morfològic i sintàctic, com a nivell lèxic”. Nevertheless, this paper will be just focused on the lexical level since slang is only related to a specific vocabulary of a language.

1.1 SLANG

1.1.1 DEFINITION

Slang is a very complex and controversial field since it is difficult to identify and classify it, and thus, it makes difficult to define it too. Moreover, the approach to this phenomenon is quite subjective in many occasions (Tamayo, 2011). Slang has its origin in the society and its individuals; it is directly linked to certain stereotypes, classes or social groups, and even races or ages. It shows the creativity of the language as well as the expressive wealth among social groups that employ it. It also allows creating narrow linguistic bonds between its participants giving identity in front of other external groups (Calvo-Ferrer, 2010).

Defining slang is also complex due to its ephemeral nature. It is short-lived since a lot of words and expressions that once were slang, now have disappeared. According to Hill, Merino & Hill (1997: 3), “slang is vast. Some expressions are coined, enter the language and then fall out of use within a short space of time”. This happens because of two reasons: sometimes these colloquial words are simply not used anymore, or they are integrated to the standard language because of its daily and common use, not being anymore slang.

In the past, slang was related to the underworld, criminals and beggars, as it can be observed in the definition that Partridge’s (1972: 854) dictionary of historical slang gives: “Slang is the special vocabulary of low, illiterate, or disreputable persons; low illiterate language”. Actually, it is said that the word slang comes from the abbreviation *beggars’ language* taking the final ‘s’ of beggars and the first letters of the word language, although it has never been proved. Also, another popular belief is that the ‘s’ from the word *slang* comes from the word *secret*, meaning secret language, used by robbers so many years ago to avoid cops and not being understood.

We consider that it is highly important to obtain different points of view. Thus, in order to compare and develop a specific contemporary definition of slang, the term has been looked up in some of the most standing dictionaries, as shown in *Table 1*.

| | |
|--|--|
| Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary | Very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people |
| Collins English Dictionary | Vocabulary, idiom, etc. that is not appropriate to the standard form of a language or to formal contexts, may be restricted as to social status or distribution, and is characteristically more metaphorical and transitory than standard language |
| Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English | Very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people, for example, children, criminals, soldiers, etc. |
| Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English | Very informal, sometimes offensive, that is used especially by people who belong to a particular group, such as young people or language criminals |
| Merriam-Webster's Dictionary | Words that are not considered part of the standard vocabulary of a language and that are used very informally in speech especially by a particular group of people |
| Macmillan Dictionary | Words or expressions that are very informal and are not considered suitable for more formal situations. Some slang is used only by a particular group of people |
| Oxford Dictionaries: Language matters | A type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people |

Table 1: Slang definitions

Besides, the Spanish translation of slang, argot, has also been searched in online and paper dictionaries in order to analyse its main characteristics and compare them to the English term ones.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Diccionario de la Real Academia (DRAE)</p> | <p>1. Jerga, jerigonza. 2. Lenguaje especial entre personas de un mismo oficio o actividad.</p> <hr/> <p>1. Lenguaje especial y no formal que usan entre sí los individuos de ciertas profesiones y oficios. 2. Lenguaje especial utilizado originalmente con propósitos crípticos por determinados grupos, que a veces se extiende al uso general; p. ej., la jerga de los maleantes.</p> |
| <p>Diccionario de uso del español de María Moliner (argot dirige a jerga)</p> | <p>1. Conjunto de expresiones que emplean en lenguaje informal las personas de una misma clase o de una misma profesión; como los estudiantes o toreros. SIN. Argot. 2. Lenguaje difícil de entender. Jerigonza</p> |
| <p>CLAVE: diccionario de uso del español actual</p> | <p>Variedad de lengua que usan entre sí las personas pertenecientes a un mismo grupo profesional o social; jerga. Argot se prefiere para el lenguaje de grupos sociales usado con intención de no ser entendidos por los demás o diferenciarse de ellos, frente a jerga, que se aplica especialmente al lenguaje de grupos profesionales.</p> |
| <p>Nuevo diccionario esencial de la lengua española</p> | <p>Lenguaje especial y característico de un grupo social o profesional, p. ej. El de los delincuentes, el futbolístico, el teatral, etc. SIN. Jerga</p> |

Table 2: Argot definitions

As it can be observed, the definition of *argot*¹ in Spanish focuses on its use in specific professional groups, but there is not a clear differentiation between it and the concept *jerga*. The only dictionary that tries to clarify both concepts is CLAVE, which gives argot a definition closer to the term slang: “lenguaje de grupos sociales usado con intención de diferenciarse”. Thus, the clearest definition among the ones given would be that one, since it is the only one that makes a distinction between professional and social groups. The DRAE also makes a distinction, but it is necessary to look up the terms into

¹ From here, we are going to use the term *argot* to refer to the Spanish colloquial vocabulary while *slang* will define just the English colloquial lexicon

two different entries of the dictionary. Aguilar, Tello & Flores (2013: 341) differentiate both terms by saying that “mientras la jerga se especializa en el vocabulario usado por aquellos dentro de un grupo establecido, a menudo definido por un status profesional, el slang es más comúnmente usado por aquellos que se encuentran fuera del establecido grupo de status mayor”. Considering that we are not going to talk about professional language, we will just have in mind the argot social characteristics.

Regarding slang definitions, having observed the ones given by the dictionaries of English, it is noticeable that all agree that slang refers to a type of informal language. Besides, all of them point out that slang is used by a particular group of people, so it is important to have these two main characteristics in mind. Although Oxford and Longman dictionaries specify that the groups that use slang are young people and criminals, it should not be attributed to specific demographic groups as Eriksen (2010: 20) states:

We saw that young people, soldiers, and criminals were mentioned as the people who typically use slang. However, young people, soldiers and criminals seem to be three very diverse groups of people. Does this mean that non-youngsters, non-soldiers and non-criminals cannot employ the use of slang? Adams (2009: 88) says no and that no matter whether you are young, old, black, urban, suburban, male or female, everybody uses slang to some extent.

It is also important to highlight that Oxford, Cambridge and Merriam-Webster's dictionaries assert that slang is used mainly in spoken language, which is another essential feature, even though we will confirm later on that this fact is changing due to mass media. Moreover, some of them such as Oxford Dictionaries, Longman and Cambridge consider that slang is a type of language, while the rest say that it is just a compilation of words and expressions.

It is also possible to observe how some of these definitions allude to the dark side of the slang, such as Collins, which affirms that “it is not appropriate to the standard form” and Longman's, which states “it is sometimes offensive”. Nevertheless, this could be a subjective view as Eriksen (2010) says, since it depends on the interpretation given by the listener.

Thus, it could be difficult to understand the concept slang if we only use dictionaries that simply give a broad definition of the term. Moreover, the social factor of slang is not taken into account in the dictionaries' definitions. For that reason, a concise

definition has to be found outside dictionaries. Eriksen (2010: 12) proposes the definition given by Eble (1996: 11): “An ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness in society at large”, in which is reflected the linguistic aspect as well as the social one. Therefore, the point of slang not only consists of using and creating certain words and expressions, the real essence is the impact that its use may have in the society and in the interpersonal relationship. Slang is, then, connected to the culture which creates it, although it is increasingly used across nations, culture and borders because of the role and influence of mass media.

1.1.2 CHARACTERISTICS

Taking into consideration the definitions previously mentioned, slang is a lexicon which is continuously evolving and changing. New words and expressions are coined and used by specific social groups as a distinguishing mark. However, slang is not only used by these groups, but it is also employed on an almost daily basis by ordinary people in order to achieve informality and relaxation. Thus, it is a colloquial alternative vocabulary that transmits a message and at the same time informs about the speaker’s characteristics or about the values of his or her social group. Colloquial vocabulary then, reflects the experiences, beliefs and principles of the speakers who use it.

It is commonly characterised because of its poverty and wealth simultaneously. Slang is considered poor if the ambiguous words and repeated terms are taken into account. The word *stuff*, for instance, is imprecise and people use it repeatedly for everything. However, slang is rich with regard to originality and expressiveness, when humoristic comparisons, euphemisms and invented words are employed in the speech.

As previously mentioned, its origin is unknown. It seems it appeared as a secret language between certain social groups such as criminals, drug addicts, army, police and teenagers. Nowadays, speakers use slang to establish social groups, therefore it can be employed by any person who wants to create group identity and be against the authority established (Eriksen, 2010). From this perspective, slang is a kind of *anti-language*, to use Halliday’s (1976) term, through which a shared identity community is against a dominant norm. Slang creates relationship of trust among the users, contributing to do more effective the communication.

Talking about social groups, teenage slang is the most common one, as Eriksen (2010) argues, because of the creativeness of the youth, who create constantly new colloquial words and expressions. Some of the reasons why teenagers tend to create slang are the interest of creating a code different to the adults' one, the elaboration of a language in order to identify themselves and the intention of speaking funnily and originally. In effect, "los jóvenes de casi todas las sociedades tienen tendencia a hablar de forma diferente a la de sus mayores, a adoptar fácilmente las novedades, incluido el argot que es una marca distintiva de su grupo, y a rechazar todo lo que suene a anticuado" (Nida, 1982: 127). An example is the term *brother* which has a fixed meaning in Standard English, but in its slang use it can mean many different things, such as comrade, companion or friend. Speakers tend to abandon this type of slang as they grow and mature.

In addition, Briz (1996) argues that colloquial language is used in communicative situations in which exist a proximity relationship between the participants, who have in common a shared knowledge. It is not exactly true because, although slang is used mostly in social groups, with friends and acquaintances, it is also employed between strangers. The important thing is how the speaker wants the listener feels. If he or she wants to be close to the listener sharing the way he or she speaks and thinks, an informal style with colloquial words will be used, no matter the relationship they have (Eriksen, 2010).

In this way, an important characteristic of slang is that it has a communicative context assumed and shared by all the interlocutors. Thus, slang is descriptive and encoded. The selection of the vocabulary used, and specially the words and expressions that are kept, creates the real identity of a group: "Sharing and maintaining a constantly changing in-group vocabulary aids group solidarity and serves to include and exclude members" (Eble, 1996: 119). Thus, the members of the social group will understand the word selected but also the meaning of it, and the intention why it is used (Eriksen, 2010). The type of slang used will be determined by the communicative context and situation, achieving the interlocutors' communicative expectations and producing a successful communication (Tamayo, 2011). Mencken (1970: 557) adds that "the best slang is not only ingenious and amusing; it also embodies a kind of social criticism. It not only provides new names for a series of everyday concepts, some new and some old; it also says something about them".

Moreover, according to Eriksen (2010), slang can have several pragmatic aspects depending on the communicative situation: funny, disrespectful, obscene, etc. For that reason, non-native speakers of English and Spanish should not use these words if they are not sure about the real function and meaning of them, since they can be used inappropriately in erroneous contexts and people could be easily feel shocked and offended. It is a style that sometimes is not acceptable, as said by Hudson (2000), who believes that slang arises as a clever alternative way of saying things that could be expressed more politely. On the other hand, Allan & Burridge (2009) argue that the politeness of slang is attributed to context, time and place.

Therefore, slang has a sociological aspect which shows us that the main difference between standard and slang language is not only the specific words and expressions chosen but the effect that the speaker expects to get using these words (Eriksen, 2010).

1.1.3 EVOLUTION, FORMATION AND FUNCTION

Before the arrival of the mass media, slang was transmitted slowly and orally in the dominant culture. Today, anyone who appears on a TV program, radio show or even in social networks can spread any concept becoming famous immediately. For example, the American animated sitcom *The Simpsons* coined the word *craptacular*, which means *spectacular crappy*, invented by Bart Simpson to describe the defective Christmas lights that his dad Homer purchased in one of the episodes.

Therefore, there are some mechanisms which are responsible for language to change and update. Slang is one of those mechanisms since it is mostly constituted by new words, called neologisms. According to Cabré (2006: 60), “la justificació més freqüent de la neologia espontània és la cerca de l’expressivitat o l’originalitat en el discurs”. Slang is also composed of homonymous words which are written and pronounced in the same way in standard and slang language, but they are semantically different. For example, the word *do*, meaning *event* in slang, is a verb in the standard language. The patterns for creating a word in slang are wider and more original than in the standard language. Some of the techniques followed when a word is created are listed in the following table:

| | SLANG | ARGOT |
|---|---|---|
| Acronyms | AF (as fuck), TBH (to be honest) | DPM (de puta madre), ATPC (a tomar por culo) |
| Abbreviation forms | Favy (favourite) | Psico (psicópata), piti (cigarro) |
| Creation of new words for new concepts | Hangry (hungry + angry) | Viejoven (viejo + joven), currar (trabajar) |
| Euphemisms for taboo words | Man juice (semen) | Verga (pene) |
| Phonetic adaptations | Gonna (going to) | Pa' (para), pos' (pues) |
| Emotional diminutive ending with -y and -i | Honey (darling) | Guapi (guapo/a) |
| Metaphors, metonyms and comparisons | Face like a wet weekend (miserable appearance) | Estar forrado (tener mucho dinero) |
| Ambivalent terms (show positive or negative attitude depending on the use) | Shit / the shit | Hostia / la hostia |
| An accepted word becomes vulgar | Screw (to fasten vs to have sex) | Trajinar (ir de un sitio a otro vs tener sexo) |

Table 3: Slang creation techniques

Having in mind everything explained so far, the functions of slang could be summarised in the following way:

- It tries to cause an effect through the vocabulary selected
- It is against the standard language, creating new, fresh and satirical concepts and realities, employing them for concepts already established
- It changes the linguistic register in order to provoke empathy
- It determines the belonging or disassociation to a social group
- It also establish social relationships inside the group itself
- It expresses complex concepts using few words or inventing them

1.2 STUDIES ON THE TOPIC

As studied so far, colloquial language is used in normal day-to-day conversations and it is well-known in native areas where English and Spanish are spoken as a first language (L1). Acquisition of slang in L1 happens naturally, governed by various motives such as “a person's desire to identify with a particular group of people or a faddish trend or to express oneself in a less conventional way” (Charkova, 2007: 371). However, there are few studies that investigate the process of slang acquisition and knowledge among second language learners (L2) (Namvar, 2014; Kim, 2004; Grossman & Tucker, 1997; Charkova, 2007). This occurs because, as it is mainly transmitted orally, written records are limited. Therefore, the present study focuses on the knowledge of slang and argot among students who speak English and Spanish respectively as an L2 or foreign language.

To highlight some, Namvar (2014) conducted a research in which the use of slang amongst undergraduate students of a Malaysian public university was tested. This study was mainly focused on 60 students of English. They were asked about teenage slang, throughout a test of 20 slang items. The results showed that their slang awareness was a consequence of electronic communications, since the data displayed that internet slang was used frequently by youth generation.

Another study carried by Kim (2004) examined questions related to knowledge, attitude, and context of use of non-vulgar slang lexicon and concluded that some differences between genders exist. Male international students knew more slang terms than female and were more positive toward slang than female students. This study showed that international students were very interested in knowing and using English slang in everyday casual communication.

Grossman & Tucker (1997) also investigated gender differences and sexism in the knowledge and use of slang through a study of 60 participants. However, their study did not reveal any significant gender differences in the knowledge and use of slang. Two possible explanations were given by the authors. First of all, it could be attributed to changes in female roles in society. Women are trying to break the stereotypes of *lady-like* behaviour by using more slang than before (Grossman & Tucker, 1997: 108). Then, by incorporating more slang expressions in their own speech, women “are trying to *take*

back and disempower the words that men use to derogate them” (Grossman & Tucker, 1997: 108).

Finally, another study was conducted by Charkova (2007) who investigated the knowledge and acquisition of slang among EFL learners in Bulgaria. She studied 101 Bulgarian learners of English, 58 high school students and 43 university students. Charkova took into consideration the age and gender and the interaction between those two in determining the amount of slang words and expressions that learners know and use. The study combined qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection instrument was developed with the help of native speakers of English. The results of the study revealed some differences regarding age; in particular, the older group of students had better results on the two knowledge tasks. In terms of gender differences, no significant results were found. Another aspect that Charkova investigated was the sources of slang acquisition. These were categorized into two groups: the first one included movies, songs, Internet, specialized slang websites and English classes, while the second one was comprised of friends, mates, chatrooms and e-mail.

After summarising the studies that have dealt with the topic under investigation, the next section will present all the details regarding the present study.

2. THE STUDY

2.1 AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As far as I know, since specific studies on knowledge of slang among Spanish students of English have not been found, one of the aims of this research is to examine if Spanish students of English know and use the colloquial lexicon of English, which differs widely from the standard and formal vocabulary learnt in English schools and universities. In addition, as some of the Spanish participants have studied abroad, their results will be compared to those who have not studied in an English-speaking environment. Therefore, the second aim is to explore the effect of a stay-abroad period on our student’s knowledge of slang. The third goal is to discover if L2 students of Spanish know and use the Spanish argot, which is also a lexicon that is not learnt in formal settings. Thus, the fourth aim is to compare both surveys in order to find out which group knows more about their respective L2 slang knowledge.

The final aim of this paper is to explore the importance that slang has nowadays in communication throughout music, printed, visual and social mediums. Taking into account those aims, the present paper addresses the following research questions:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1): do Spanish students of English know and use English slang words and expressions?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): does the study-abroad variable play an important role in the acquisition and use of slang?
- Research Question 3 (RQ3): do L2 Spanish learners know and use Spanish colloquial words and expressions?
- Research Question 4 (RQ4): are there any similarities and/or differences between non-native speakers regarding their knowledge of slang?
- Research Question 5 (RQ5): is slang present and important in today's media?

2.2 METHOD

In the following subsections, the participants of the study, the instrument employed and the procedure followed will be explained.

2.2.1 PARTICIPANTS

The respondents of the RQ1 of the study were 20 undergraduate students enrolled in the 4th year of the English Studies degree at the Universitat Jaume I in Castellón, Spain. The participants comprised both male and female students, although the percentage of male respondents was 15% (n=3) and the percentage of female was 85% (n=17). The participants' age range went from 21 to 25 years old. All of them were Spanish native speakers, with a C1 level of language proficiency in English. As shown in *Table 4*, 50% of the participants (n=10) had studied in English-speaking countries for more than six months. This variable was taken into consideration in order to find out if studying abroad affected students' slang knowledge.

| | Group 1 Study-abroad period | Group 2 No study-abroad period |
|---------------|--|---|
| Male | 0 | 3 |
| Female | 10 | 7 |

Table 4: Number of Spanish students of English

The respondents regarding the RQ3 were 11 undergraduate students doing their Erasmus+ studies at the University Jaume I in Castellón, Spain. The participants also comprised both male and female students and their age range went from 20 to 45 years old. All of them were non-native Spanish speakers with a C1 level of proficiency in this language. They were from different countries² such as Ireland, Belgium, South Korea, China, Italy, Germany, France and Greece. Since all the students were already studying abroad, this variable was not taken into consideration in this questionnaire.

| | Erasmus+ students |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Male | 4 |
| Female | 7 |

Table 5: Number of L2 Spanish students

2.2.2 INSTRUMENT

The instrument used to gather information to answer the RQ1 and RQ2 was a questionnaire which included thirty slang³ words such as abbreviations, phrasal verbs and idioms: *unreal, props, to dig, ace, all right?, to cram, do, mate, porkies, naff, posh, dago, as right as rain, face like a wet weekend, vibe, take a chill pill, bird, to twig, deffo, hang out, dunno, bollocks, no joy!, high, packed out, fuck-all, cuppa, pig-out, joint, dogs are barking*. Due to the changeable character of this linguistic variety, it was considered not to use a slang paper dictionary since digital resources would be more updated. Slang items for this study were collected from one of the most complete slang dictionaries found on the Internet, which is <http://www.peevish.co.uk/slang/index.htm>.

Then, the selected items were checked with the online edition of The Urban Dictionary in order to be sure about the meaning accuracy of the slang element. The election of the slang words and expressions in the questionnaire was merely personal, just having in mind their popularity and use among society. It has not been included concepts that are coined, enter the language and then disappear within a short space of time, nor have we included terms used only by specific areas or special groups of people. Only one of the

² One of the students did not specify where he is from; however, it was deduced by his name and surname that he is from an Asian country.

³ The translation of these slang terms is available in the appendices at the end of the main text.

most used cockney slang items (*porkies*) was selected in order to know if the respondents knew about this unusual type of slang.

Regarding RQ3, we have considered that the best option for gathering colloquial words and expressions in Spanish is to propose the ones that we use and hear daily in order to be reliable and show real data. Therefore, thirty Spanish colloquial terms (*molar, estar rayado, piti, potar, estar hecho polvo, segurata empollar, currar, pasota, poner verde a alguien, ir/estar pedo, mangar, estar cachas, ¡qué guay!, estar pelado, morreo, ser el puto amo, cornudo, enrollarse, ni de coña, estar forrado, picarse, dar por culo, napia, pachanga, peluco, estar hasta los cojones, botellón, estar cañón, colocado*) have been selected, the same number as the previous questionnaire, in order to have the same amount of lexicon and to be easier to compare both results. None of the terms are regional argot, so every native speaker of Spanish would know the meaning of them.

Both questionnaires follow the same structure and are divided into three different parts. The slang items are situated in the first column of each of the parts. The *Section 1* of the questionnaires comprises the slang words and expressions isolated. So, the first empty column is to indicate if the students know or do not know the item. In the next one, only if they have recognised to know the slang term, they must mark if they use it or not.

If at first sight the students have no idea about the slang terms selected, they are straightaway directed to *Section 2* of the questionnaire. Here, an example of the slang term appears contextualised to discover if they are able to obtain the meaning of the word by the situation or context in which it is used. If, even so, they do not have a clue about the concept, it is indicated in the final empty column. Finally, the *Section 3* of the questionnaire gives the meaning of the slang items requested.

The sections will be asked and showed gradually and following the order explained to avoid errors and to obtain unbiased results. The person who answers the questionnaire will have the solutions⁴, which could be checked once the questionnaire has been answered. In this way, respondents will be able to check if they were right or not.

⁴ Respondents will be able to check if they were correct or not, but also they will be able to modify their answers; that is to say, if they thought they were right and realise they were not, they will come back to that slang word and will mark it as an *unknown word*.

An extract from the table has been taken in order to clarify graphically the order⁵ that should be followed:

Section 1:

| ISOLATED SLANG | “I know the term” | “I use the term” |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| PROPS | | |

- a) *If the student knows what prop means, an X will be written in the first column and the student should say if he or she uses the term. Then, the solution will be checked in section 3.*
- b) *If the student doesn't know the meaning of the term, he or she shall be forwarded directly to Section 2, where the term will be put in context.*

Section 2:

| WORD | Slang in context | “I know the term after reading it in context” | “I still do not know it” |
|-------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| PROPS | Props for organising this party. It's brilliant! | | |

The student will mark one of the two columns depending if he or she knows the slang word after reading it in context or not.

Section 3:

| WORD | MEANING |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| PROPS | <i>Respect or recognition</i> |

The last section is useful for students to check if they were right or not and to learn the new slang term in case they did not know it.

In order to study slang in media, all the theoretical framework has been taken into account as well as the criteria proposed by Dumas & Lighter to identify slang (1978: 14-16):

⁵ To obtain a more complete vision, the appendices can be consulted at the end of the dissertation.

1. Its presence will markedly lower, at least for the moment, the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing.
2. Its use implies the user's familiarity either with the referent or with that less statusful or less responsible class of people who have such special familiarity and use the term.
3. It is a tabooed term in ordinary discourse with persons of higher social rank or greater responsibility.
4. It is used in place of the well-known conventional synonym, especially in order (a) to protect the user from the discomfort caused by the conventional item or (b) to protect the user from the discomfort or annoyance of further elaboration.

As these criteria could seem subjective, the slang terms analysed have been checked in specialised dictionaries, primarily in the Urban Dictionary. This dictionary is only available online and it is collaborative, so the users themselves are the ones who add the definitions of the different colloquial words and expressions. Besides, they use a voting system for the readers to decide positively or negatively if the definition is appropriate or not. Thanks to this voting system, we know for sure that the definition of the word consulted is suitable and used in today's society.

So, in order to answer the RQ5, some material has been taken from the Internet: the lyrics of The Weeknd's song *Reminder*, a front page from the tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, a Youtube video of the American youtubers *Kian* and *Jc* and a couple of social networks' posts. Everything will be analysed to test the presence and importance of slang in media nowadays.

2.2.3 PROCEDURE AND DATA ANALYSIS

The main part of the study took place between 2016 and 2017 at the Universitat Jaume I, in Castellón. All the participants responded to the questionnaire within a maximum time period of 30 minutes after listening to the instructions given by the researcher. Questionnaires were then collected by the latter and the answers codified for analysis with the Excel programme.

The second part of the study was carried out taking the material previously mentioned from different sources on the Internet. The lyrics of the song, the front page of the tabloid and the tweets were printed while the Youtube video was transcribed in order to work easily and properly.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO RQ1

With reference to the first research question, we wondered whether Spanish students of English would know and use slang language. *Table 6* shows the total number of slang words and expressions and their corresponding percentages.

| | Knowledge of isolated slang (without context) | Knowledge of contextualised slang | Ignorance of slang (even contextualised) | Use of slang |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Number of slang words and expressions | 194 | 210 | 196 | 79 |
| Percentage | 32% | 35% | 33% | 13% |

Table 6: Number and percentage of slang terms

In general terms, we can observe how students are only aware of the 32% of the isolated slang words asked, even though they are in the last year of their university degree and therefore should have a high level regarding lexicon. If the slang term is contextualised, students could understand an additional 35% of the vocabulary. Nevertheless, even in context, still the 33% of the sample is answered wrongly or simply they did not answer because they have no idea. These early findings give an idea of how slang is a mostly unknown language among Spanish students of English.

As illustrated in *Table 6*, it can be observed the importance of providing a context in slang studies, since those respondents who had deductively known the word or expression asked was due to the example in which it appeared. According to the results, only 32% of the slang lexicon was responded properly without using the word or expression in a specific situation. We believe that the participants are aware of the existence of those items because of three factors:

First of all, as the language continuously changes, slang also does through the standardisation, so concepts that were purely slang before, are increasingly present in standard language nowadays. For instance, *all right?* (how are you?), *mate* (friend),

posh (fancy person), *hang out* (spend time) or *high* (drugged) are slang terms which the participants knew because of the standardisation that has been produced during the last years. These concepts are commonly used today, and they appear as substitutes of existing words, as oral expressions and fillers, or simply are created to refer to new concepts. The awareness of the concepts mentioned is dramatically high if compared with that of the remaining items of the study. For instance, all the students that took part in the study knew the meaning of the word *mate*.

Secondly, the analysis of data showed that students know abbreviations such as *dunno* (do not know) or *cuppa* (cup of tea) and characteristic vocabulary used by the youth in specific environments such as *high* (drugged), *unreal* (amazing) or *joint* (marijuana cigarette). This could be explained because of the electronic devices and the mass media respectively, since even though slang is language and culture specific, it can be transmitted from one culture and language to another, being the current electronic communication what contributes a lot in this process.

The last possible reason is because of simply intuition. Most of the respondents admitted that they knew the slang word or expression because it was similar to a Spanish one or just pure logic. Expressions such as *face like a wet weekend* (to have a miserable appearance), *take a chill pill* (to relax) or *as right as rain* (satisfactory) are easily to deduce because of the literal proximity with the Spanish language. However, they are not used by the learners, which reinforce the fact that this type of lexicon does not appear in the daily life of the students since they have not had access to it, because as mentioned before, slang it is not learnt in formal contexts nor in schools.

Moving to the amount of ignorance, the 33% of the terms were not known by the respondents. Although the context can be a deciding factor when we try to find the meaning of a word, it is not always possible to figure it out. The main problem here is the high presence of neologisms. For example, the word *dago*⁶, which is a new way of referring to a foreigner from the south of Europe, was not answered properly by anyone, and only two figured it out thanks to the context. Another reason could be the use that slang does of words that exist in both, standard and slang English but they actually mean something completely different.

⁶ Originally it was used to describe Spanish sailors in the 18th and 19th century by the British navy. It is now, a derogatory term used in the US to refer to Italians or Italian Americans, especially those recently immigrated and not yet assimilated to American culture. Nevertheless, in current British English, the term still refers to Spanish or Hispanic people. (*UrbanDictionary*)

In the study, there are some examples of these as *unreal* (amazing), *do* (party), *to dig* (to like) or *bird* (young girl). Although the participants knew the topic of the research, most of them gave the meaning of these words as if the standard language was being studied. As shown in *Figure 1*, just one participant knew that *do* is an event or party, and only three knew that the verb *to dig* also means *to like* when interlocutors speak slang. However, the word *posh* (fancy person) is mostly known by the respondents because of its later standardisation.

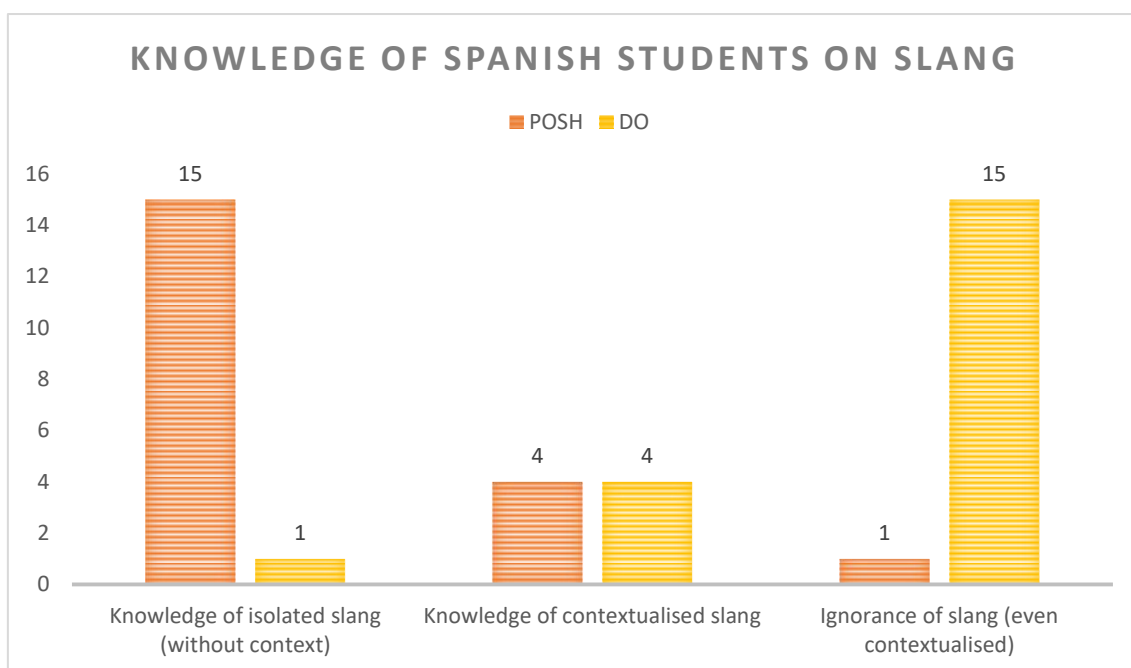


Figure 1: Knowledge of Spanish students on the slang words "do" and "posh"

Finally, only 13% of the slang lexicon appearing in the questionnaire was used by the future English philologists. It implies that even though slang is known by them, it is not much employed when they communicate in English. The most used terms were *mate*, *high*, *hang out*, *posh* and *all right?*. For example, *mate* is employed mainly in spoken conversation because of the resemblance between Spanish and English. In Spanish, the use of the word *tío* as a filler, or in order to address someone, is very colloquially common as well as in English. Most of them also argued that they use frequently *posh* because of the precision of the word, since it is used on a daily basis and there is no other term to refer to the same concept with all the characteristics that it implies.

3.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO RQ2

In order to find out if studying abroad affects the knowledge of slang in Spanish students of English, we divided the sample into two different groups as illustrated in *Table 7*. Group 1 makes reference to the students who have studied in a foreign country where English is spoken. Group 2 then, alludes to those students who have only studied in Spain and no immersion in an English-speaking country has taken place.

| | Knowledge of isolated slang (without context) | Knowledge of contextualised slang | Ignorance of slang (even contextualised) | Use of slang |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Group 1 | 96 (16%) | 108 (18%) | 96 (16%) | 49 (8'2%) |
| Group 2 | 98 (16'3%) | 102 (17%) | 100 (16'7%) | 30 (5%) |
| TOTAL | 194 (32'3%) | 210 (35%) | 196 (32'7%) | 79 (13'2%) |

Table 7: Number and percentage of slang terms divided into groups

As can be seen in *Table 7*, there are not significant differences on slang awareness between participants who have been studying abroad and those who have always been studying English in Spain. Moreover, there are more number of isolated slang terms known by those who have not been abroad to those who have, although it is a small difference. Regarding to contextualised slang, Group 1 has a moderately greater knowledge about it than Group 2; and talking about ignorance, respondents who have not studied abroad have slightly less awareness than Group 1. The difference, however, does exist in the use of the slang lexicon. Those who have studied English in an environment where English is spoken as a L1, use slang more frequently than Group 2.

Being in contact with English during a specific period of time could have increased the frequency in which participants use slang words. Even so, the results are more or less equal as previously mentioned. Thus, in this research, studying abroad is not necessarily associated with the acquisition of slang language. It seems to depend more on the habit of people to use slang language on a daily basis.

3.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO RQ3

With reference to the third research question, we wondered whether L2 Spanish students would know and use colloquial language. *Table 8* shows the total number of argot words and expressions and their corresponding percentages.

| | Knowledge of isolated argot (without context) | Knowledge of contextualised argot | Ignorance of argot (even contextualised) | Use of argot |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Number of argot words and expressions | 78 | 111 | 141 | 27 |
| Percentage | 24% | 34% | 42% | 8% |

Table 8: Number and percentage of argot terms

In general terms, we can notice how students are only aware of the 24% of the isolated argot terms asked even though they have a C1 level of language proficiency in Spanish, therefore they should have a high level regarding lexicon in this language. If the colloquial words and expressions are contextualised, students could understand an additional 34% of the vocabulary; but even in context, still the 42% is not known. These early findings give an idea of how Spanish argot is an unknown language variety among L2 Spanish students.

It is remarkable the fact that only 24% of the lexicon asked is known at the first instance by the students. The majority of the L2 Spanish learners know some popular terms such as *ni de coña* (no way!), *dar por culo* (to bother) or *cornudo* (cheated on) and all of them know *¡qué guay!* (great!) and *botellón* (drinking in the street). The knowledge of the last word could be explained because of the unique meaning the term *botellón* has, since there is no other concept that implies all the aspects of drinking in the street. In fact, some users of other languages are nowadays increasingly using this word as a loan because of its specificity. Regarding contextualised argot, it is observable how context has a powerful function in order to let us understand some terms we don't really know when they are found isolated. 34% of the words asked in the questionnaire have been

deduced thanks to the examples where they appeared, such as *currar* (to work), *segurata* (doorman) and *peluco* (fancy watch).

In relation to the amount of ignorance, the 42% of the argot words and expressions are not known by the respondents. It is obvious, then, that the context it is not always a deciding factor when we try to find the meaning of a word. The high presence of neologisms in the survey might be one of the reasons why students do not know colloquial vocabulary in Spanish. Some examples that have not been known by anyone are *potar* (throw up), *pasota* (apathetic) or *mangar* (to steal). Besides, there are some expressions that could be misunderstood because of their double meaning, such as *cornudo* (cheated on), *enrollarse* (have sex), *estar rayado* (to be crazy/worried) or *poner verde a alguien* (criticise). Although most of the L2 Spanish students know the standard meaning of these words, it is difficult for them to find the appropriate meaning in their argot form.

Finally, it is surprising the small percentage of argot used by the respondents. It means that, even they know few colloquial words and expressions, these are practically not used when they speak Spanish. With these results, it becomes clear the gap that exists in language teaching since only formal language is taught in schools. Real life uses and practices are avoided in formal contexts even though it is the vocabulary employed daily in the street.

3.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO RQ4

Although the amount of participants in the two questionnaires is not the same, the number of words asked to each participant is, so a comparison of both results is going to be made taking into account the percentages showed before.

In general terms, as shown in *Figure 2*, it is noticeable that Spanish students of English know and use more colloquial words and expressions than those Erasmus+ L2 Spanish students. The largest difference between both results appears in the sections ‘knowledge’ and ‘ignorance’, while the slang and argot deduced by context is roughly the same, both English and Spanish students. As regards the use of it, it is proved that the respondents do not use this type of vocabulary even if they know it. Some of the words used are the ones that are being standardised in the last years, such as *mate* or *botellón*. These

colloquial words are so unique and employed by L1 speakers that non-native speakers increasingly tend to use them.

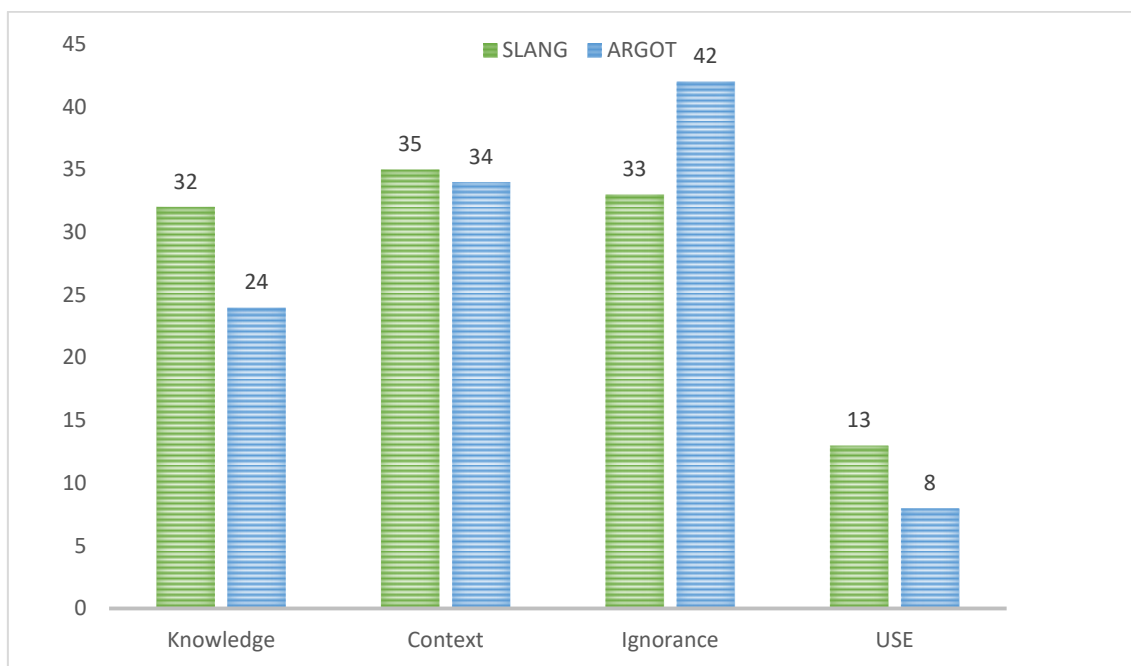


Figure 2: Comparison between slang and argot knowledge and use

The fact that English slang is more well-known than Spanish argot in our survey could be explained because of the following reason. English language is spoken all over the world, in some territories as a first and official language, but also as a second language or lingua franca in many other areas. Consequently, English is more present in Spain than Spanish is in the countries where the respondents of RQ3 are from. Besides, the all-powerful USA media in the form of films, series, music, etc. affects in a way the English influence we receive daily in Spain.

3.5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO RQ5

The first medium selected to explore the importance of slang in communication is music. Music is a powerful communication tool because of its immediate diffusion, since everybody everywhere can appreciate, can listen to and dance to it. In order to be sure of the songs' relevance, one of the most best-selling albums of 2016 and 2017 has been selected. This is the album *Starboy*, of the Canadian singer Abel Makkonen Tesfaye, worldwide known as The Weeknd. Released on November 25, 2016, *Starboy* debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 with 348,000 album-equivalent units, of which

209,000 were pure album sales. In the US, it was the third-largest debut sales week of 2016, the second-biggest week for album streams ever (behind Drake's *Views*), and it is also The Weeknd's second number one album. The song that is going to be analysed is *Reminder*, the album's fourth single.

First of all, a clear characteristic from slang lexicon that is appreciated through all the lyrics of the song is the presence of contractions. Some examples of them are *I'mma* (I am going to), *'bout* (about), *'round* (around), *some'* (something), *tryna* (trying to) and *none* (nothing). With the purpose of highlighting just the most interesting content, some sentences have been taken into consideration:

"Talking 'bout a face-numbing off a bag a blow (...)

Goddamn bitch I am not a bleach boy

Whip game, make a nigga understand though (...)

Got a sweet Asian chick she go low mane."

The first line starts with the interjection *talk about* which expresses disgust or emphasis in colloquial English. It also appears the word *blow* referring to cocaine. When the singer says *I'm not a bleach boy* he is trying to say that he does not follow a healthy lifestyle. Although the verb *to bleach* means *to clean* or *to whiten*, he is using it as an adjective, which is also another common feature of slang word formation. *Whip* is also a slang term to refer to an expensive car, so *to have whip game* would mean to drive a luxurious car. In the last line, The Weeknd refers to a girl with the slang word *chick* and he creates a pun saying that *she go low mane*. Lo Mein is a Chinese dish with wheat flour noodles, but it rhymes with *low mane*, which is a slang term that means pubic hair. So, the meaning of the whole sentence in Standard English would be: *I go out with a sweet Asian girl and she goes down*. Some other sentences where slang appears are:

"All I wanna do is make that money and make dope shit

It just seem like niggas tryna sound like all my old shit (...)

I'mma keep on singing while I'm burning up that OG

Rock a chain around they neck making sure I'm getting home."

Here, the singer uses the word *shit* twice to refer to his music. It is a very vague word since it is used as a slang synonym for any noun. The colloquial word *dope* is usually used to describe how good something is. Moreover, the acronym *OG* stands for *Original Gangster* and *burn up* in slang means make somebody very angry, so he is saying that he is going to anger the other old school original singers. Finally, the verb *rock* means to wear something stylishly.

When analysing the lyrics, we found that a type of language variety, which uses slang, clearly predominates in *Remainder*. It is the Black Vernacular English, and some of its characteristics (Mateo, 1990: 98-99) are illustrated with examples in the following table:

| Black English syntactic peculiarities | Examples |
|---|--|
| Incorrect use of the verbal system | She go(es) low mane, All these RnB niggas <u>be</u> (are) so lame |
| Zero copula | You (are) too busy trying to find that blue-eyed soul |
| Use of “ain’t” (not be) | If it <u>ain't</u> XO then it gotta go |
| Possessive adjectives become personal pronouns | Rock a chain around <u>they</u> (their) neck |
| Dummy pronoun working as a subject | <u>It</u> just seem like niggas tryna sound like all my old shit |
| Relaxed pronoun system | We gone let <u>them</u> hits fly |
| Use of double negation | <u>Don't</u> you hurt <u>nothing</u> |

Table 9: Black English peculiarities in *The Keeknd's* song *Reminder*

As it has been shown, slang abounds in the song previously examined. This is just an example of the multiple songs in which colloquial language appears, so it can be deduced that in the music industry slang words and expressions may appear frequently. This fact implies that people who listen to music will be listening to slang too, thus, in a way, people's daily lexicon choices are being influenced by communication.

Secondly, in order to study slang closely on printed medium, we have chosen a front page of the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, from March 25, 2013. It is important to bear in mind that British red top tabloids employ a form of writing known as tabloid journalism; this style emphasizes features such as sensational crime stories, astrology,

gossip columns about the personal lives of celebrities and sports stars, and junk food news. They tend to be written with a simplistic, straightforward vocabulary and grammar, so slang lexicon may be accepted. The newspaper's headline says:

“Flapjack whack rap claptrap”

As it is noticeable, the headline uses a rhyme to catch people's attention. The first words employed are not slang terms but contribute to the concordance of sounds and catchy melody. The last two words are very colloquial and could have been used to get closer to the audience and feel part of them. Each word appearing in the headline is explained in the following table:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| FLAPJACK | A sort of sweet oat bar |
| WHACK | To strike or hit with or as if with a strong, loud blow |
| RAP | An act of criticising or blaming someone |
| CLAPTRAP | Conduct or action that is senseless or foolish |

Table 10: The Sun's headline analysis

Therefore, a Standard English interpretation putting everything together, and having in mind all the additional information that the front page's header gives to us, would be that "(a school has made) a stupid decision to ban flapjacks because someone (probably a pupil) was hit by one." Thus, even in printed media, slang may appear as a strategy to get people's attention and to ensure a close relationship with the reader.

Thirdly, a video from Youtube has been chosen for the purpose of testing the amount of slang appearing on visual medium. The film recording selected lasts 9:19 minutes and has more than 1.100.000 views, so it is obvious that it has had a great spread throughout the Internet. It is from the channel account *KianAndJc*, edited by two young American youtubers with about 2.600.000 subscribers and roughly 318.000.000 total number views. On the video, one of the owners of the channel, Jc, gets his wisdom teeth removed so his friends go to the dentist to pick him up since he was anaesthetised before the surgery and did not feel well.

Totally, 45 slang words and expressions have been retrieved from the video, which have been classified into five different sections depending on their meaning and function. Therefore, the following table only shows the most interesting and valuable data in order to avoid the conversations parts where slang does not appear.

| | AMOUNT | EXAMPLES |
|---|--------|--|
| Words used to address someone | 14 | Dude, fuckers, bitch, man |
| Swear words and intensifiers | 10 | Fuck, shit, fucking, freaking, so bad |
| Contractions | 9 | Gotta, gonna, wanna, lil |
| Slang words to describe concepts already set up | 9 | Cool, to be on the dot, drop top, ass, to be down to, high |
| Vague words | 3 | Stuff, shit |

Table 11: Slang terms retrieved from KianAndJc's Youtube video

As it can be observed in *Table 11*, the video analysed is full of slang words used to address people. For example, the word *dude* is pronounced 8 times by the youtubers who appear on the video to address each other colloquially. They also use the terms *bitch* and *fucker* among them, which literally describe despicable people, as friendly concepts. Moreover, the word *man* is also employed as a filler in order to address friends as in *I don't think it's a bad idea, man*. Non-specific words are commonly used in informal language as can be seen in the sample. For instance, some examples of vague words are *stuff* and *shit*, which refer to *drugs* and *text* respectively on the video.

Also, *fuck* and *shit* are examples of swear words used on the video to express anger or annoyance. Besides, there are some other swear words which function as adverbs to intensify the nouns and adjectives they go with. Some examples are *where's fucking Kian?*, *he's a fucking ass*, *stop zooming my fucking lips*, *I feel freaking cool* and *that's fucking easy*. Another intensifier expression found is *so bad* that stands for *many*, *a lot* colloquially, even though it means *evil* or *harmful* in Standard English.

As regards contractions, they are commonly used in oral language and it can be proved, since 9 examples have been found in the sample: *gonna* (going to), *gotta* (got to), *wanna* (want to) and *lil* (little). Moreover, there are several slang expressions employed to describe concepts already established in standard language. For instance, *to be on the dot* means *precisely* and *to be down*, in *I'm down to do a lot of things right now*, is an expression of interest and approval of an idea that one has not considered before. Other synonyms for established standard words are *cool* (great), *ass* (person's bottom), *high* (drugged) and *drop top* (convertible).

Therefore, by analysing a video from Youtube, it has been proved that slang may be present in one of the most powerful visual medium of today. Moreover, the fact that the main characters are young people contributes to the high number of words and expressions that appear on the video.

Finally, social media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Some examples of these networks are Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, which have become the voice of the people on the Internet, where users express themselves freely, communicate with one another and share information. For that reason, a couple of posts found on Twitter have been selected in order to analyse the vocabulary employed.

The first one is a tweet written by a British girl who tells a friend about Turtle Bay, a Caribbean restaurant in the UK. As it can be seen in *Figure 3*, the user employs 5 different slang terms in just a tweet (*deffo*, *serious*, *wicked*, *vibe* and *hang out*).

To begin with, she uses the contraction *deffo* that stands for *definitely*, in order to show that the restaurant meets her approval. Then, two slang words with certain standard meanings are used to describe the flavours and the atmosphere: *serious*, which means *earnest* in Standard English, stands for *intense*, while *wicked*, which means *evil* or *mean* in standard language, stands for *great* in colloquial English. The term *vibe* is also considered informal and it means *ambiance*. Finally, the phrasal verb *hang out* is employed as a noun, and it suggests a *place to spend time idly*. Thus, the standard translation of this tweet would be: "Definitively Liam. There are intense savours going on and a great atmosphere. It is the new place to spend time idly for me and the girls."



Figure 3: First tweet written in colloquial English

The second tweet analysed is from a Jamaican girl who lives in Detroit. She uses colloquial language to show her emotions and to tell what is going on in her life at that moment. As it can be seen in Figure 4, she chooses 7 slang terms in just one tweet (*dunno*, *to hoe*, *high*, *ain't*, *shit*, *to phase* and *fr*). Among the slang terms, three contractions can be highlighted: as mentioned above, *dunno* is a word that means *I do not know*, *fr* stands for *for real* (genuinely) and *ain't* is the contraction of *am not*, *is not* or/and *are not*, even though in the example is replacing the adjective *no*. Moreover, there are two verbs with similar meaning: to be *hoed* means to be insulted by a person either playfully or maliciously; *to phase* signifies to disturb, perturb, deter or intimidate. The user also employs the term *high*, which can stand for *drugged* or *in ecstasy* in slang. Finally, she uses the vague word *shit* to refer to insults.

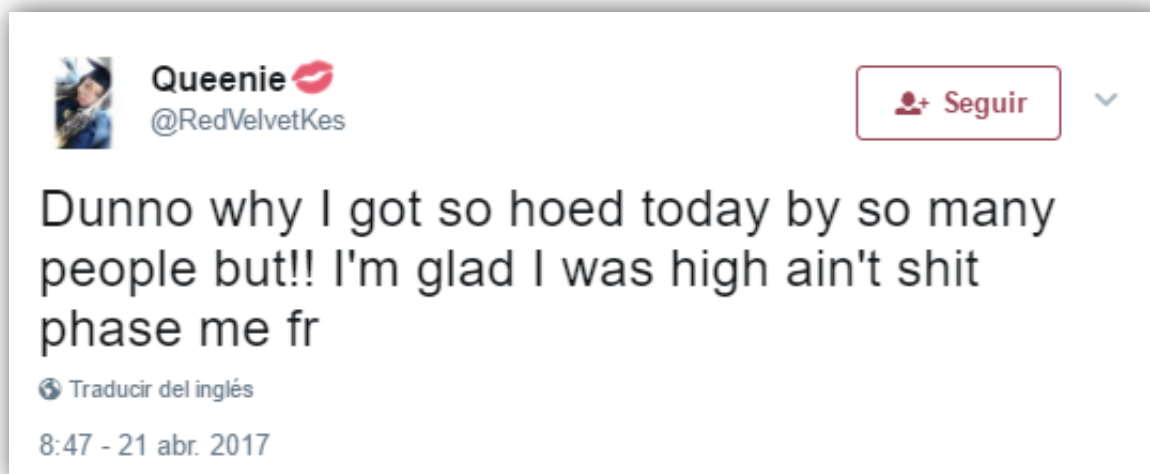


Figure 4: Second tweet written in colloquial English

Therefore, a proper standard translation would be: “I do not know why I was insulted today by so many people but I’m glad, I was in ecstasy, so sincerely, no insults disturb me.”

As it has been proved in the samples, social networks such as Twitter may be full of slang words and expressions. These are just some examples of the huge amount of slang lexicon found, since it would be repetitive and unnecessary to show a long list of the colloquial terms encountered. Gradually, slang has become present in written usage, since some year ago was only used orally. Social networks and the Internet are changing the way we speak and also the way we relate to each other. Thus, slang is used in the samples showed as a technique to create narrow linguistic bonds between its participants and to construct identities in interaction.

4. CONCLUSION

Slang is a set of colloquial linguistic resources used by specific groups, being identity marker the most important function of it. It is vocabulary and (to a lesser extent) grammar that is continuously evolving and changing, as all languages do, at the same time that society, cultural values and norms change according to the needs of each time.

In this study, we have seen how when slang appears isolated, it is mostly unknown among Spanish students of English, unless it is a word or expression that is increasingly

being used in Standard English. And the same happens with L2 Spanish students: only a small number of argot vocabulary is known by the learners. Nevertheless, it has also been proved that if slang appears contextualised, both groups tend to figure out the meaning of the term. L2 students of English and Spanish do not use slang, and this is the most evident fact that can be highlighted in this study. In addition, it is shown in the first group, that the factor of having studied in a foreign country where English is spoken, it is not necessarily associated to a high level of slang knowledge. Instead, the idiosyncratic habit of the youngsters themselves to use slang in their own languages, seems to be the main reason for using these colloquial resources when expressing in other languages.

In respect of slang in media, it has been totally proved that colloquial language is continuously around us, even in contexts that we never think it would. Slang is highly present in the lyrics of the song analysed as well as in the tabloid's front page. Slang appears in these situations in order to catch people's attention and to establish a closer relationship with the listener or reader respectively. Besides, slang is also present on visual mediums from the Internet such as Youtube, since users employ this lexicon as a strategy to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness in society. Lastly, slang vocabulary is used in social networks as a technique to create narrow bonds between users and to construct identity among them.

As a pedagogical implication, we propose to include a subject about slang and argot in the English Studies degree and in the Spanish lessons at the UJI respectively, because it is a good way for students to learn it in an academic context. Students, then, will discover this lexicon which is essential in order to learn a language thoroughly. However, the problem not only resides in how students are learning a language or the methodology followed in schools. It is also a matter of cultural identity. If students want to learn the language which is spoken colloquially in the streets, another possible pedagogical implication could be to use authentic materials in the Foreign Language classroom from a very early age. As we have seen, it is important to know how slang works because students will surely have to face colloquial situations in the future, and having awareness of slang will allow them a better understanding of the language.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This research presents some limitations regarding the material selected and the number of participants. As the study has been focused on a specific 4th-year class of English Studies degree and an Erasmus+ L2 Spanish students class, only a small amount of participants has been possible to study. It is important to consider the difficulty of the topic, since it is complicated to assess the level of slang that the participants have with just two questionnaires. Nevertheless, this is one of the few ways to do it, as we are working with vocabulary. Moreover, just one sample of each medium has been taken into consideration for the analysis, so some variations could exist if more than one sample is studied in the future.

Therefore, further research could cover slang on more different mediums in order to verify its importance and analyse in which of them slang has a stronger presence. Besides, it would be interesting to study slang translation and the difficulty that it entails. When translation takes place, part of the original message loses its meaning because of the social and contextual factors that are implied. If slang has to be translated, the difficulty is even higher because we will have to choose the appropriate term that is colloquial and has the same characteristics in both languages.

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APPENDICES

Translation into Spanish of the slang terms found in the Questionnaire A:

1. Unreal: increíble, genial, estupendo
2. Props: felicitaciones
3. To dig: gustar
4. Ace: bien, ¡toma!
5. All right?: ¿cómo estás?
6. To cram: estudiar, empollar
7. Do: fiesta, evento
8. Mate: colega, amigo
9. Porkies: mentiras
10. Naff: pasado de moda, anticuado
11. Posh: pijo, elegante
12. Dago: persona española o del sud de Europa
13. As right as rain: bien, saludable
14. Face like a wet weekend: apariencia miserable, infeliz
15. Vibe: ambiente, atmósfera, vibraciones
16. Take a chill pill: relajarse
17. Bird: chica joven
18. To twig: entender, darse cuenta
19. Deffo: definitivamente
20. Hang out: pasar el rato, quedar con alguien
21. Dunno: desconocer
22. Bollocks: mierda, mugre
23. No joy!: ¡fatal!
24. High: colocado
25. Packed out: lleno, abarrotado
26. Fuck-all: nada
27. Cuppa: taza de té
28. Pig-out: comer con exceso
29. Joint: porro
30. Dogs are barking: tener dolor de pies

QUESTIONNAIRE A: SECTION 1

Name:

Gender:

Have you ever studied abroad? If so, where? For how long?

Answer (X) only if you know and/or use the slang concept isolated:

| ISOLATED SLANG | "I know the term" | "I use the term" |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| UNREAL | | |
| PROPS | | |
| TO DIG | | |
| ACE | | |
| ALL RIGHT? | | |
| TO CRAM | | |
| DO | | |
| MATE | | |
| PORKIES | | |
| NAFF | | |
| POSH | | |
| DAGO | | |
| AS RIGHT AS RAIN | | |
| FACE LIKE A WET WEEKEND | | |
| VIBE | | |
| TAKE A CHILL PILL | | |
| BIRD | | |
| TO TWIG | | |
| DEFFO | | |
| HANG OUT | | |
| DUNNO | | |
| BOLLOCKS | | |
| NO JOY! | | |
| HIGH | | |
| PACKED OUT | | |
| FUCK-ALL | | |
| CUPPA | | |
| PIG-OUT | | |
| JOINT | | |
| DOGS ARE BARKING | | |

QUESTIONNAIRE A: SECTION 2

Answer (X) only if you did not know the slang concept isolated:

| WORD | Slang in context | “I know the term after reading it in context” | “I still do not know it” |
|-------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| UNREAL | I love this car, it’s just unreal! | | |
| PROPS | Props for organising this party. It’s brilliant! | | |
| TO DIG | Hey, I dig your new style. Where did you buy that amazing T-shirt? | | |
| ACE | Ace! I just got a promotion at work! | | |
| ALL RIGHT? | All right mate? Yes, everything’s fine. | | |
| TO CRAM | I only had three days to cram for the final exam. | | |
| DO | Are you going to Lizzie’s birthday do next week? | | |
| MATE | I’m going to the cinema with my mates. | | |
| PORKIES | Don’t listen to her, she’s telling porkies! | | |
| NAFF | These shoes are naff. I would never buy them. | | |
| POSH | He is so posh wearing those expensive clothes. | | |
| DAGO | This Spanish restaurant is good. I heard that it is run by a group of dagos. | | |
| AS RIGHT AS RAIN | I’ll be as right as rain as soon as I take my pills. | | |
| FACE LIKE A WET WEEKEND | What’s up with you? You’ve got a face like a wet weekend. | | |
| VIBE | What was the vibe like at the match? | | |
| TAKE A CHILL PILL | Stop screaming and take a chill pill. | | |
| BIRD | Look at the beautiful bird who is inside the shop. | | |
| TO TWIG | Once I saw the look on her face I twigged it was a joke. | | |
| DEFFO | She goes to the party so we must deffo go too. | | |
| HANG OUT | I’m gonna hang out with my best friend tomorrow night. | | |
| DUNNO | I dunno which is your favourite food. | | |
| BOLLOCKS | That film was bollocks. I didn’t enjoy it. | | |
| NO JOY! | How was your drivin’ exam? No joy! | | |
| HIGH | He was so high after smoking 3 marihuana cigarettes. | | |
| PACKED OUT | The bar was so packed out; it took us 30 minutes to get served. | | |
| FUCK-ALL | I had fuck-all to do, so I watched the TV instead. | | |
| CUPPA | Do you fancy a cuppa? Yes, please. | | |
| PIG-OUT | I was starving so I started to pig out until feeling sick. | | |
| JOINT | The police caught him smoking a joint. | | |
| DOGS ARE BARKING | Do you mind if I sit down, my dogs are barking! | | |

QUESTIONNAIRE A: SECTION 3

Once the questionnaire has been finished, you can look at the solutions:

| WORD | MEANING |
|-------------------------|--|
| UNREAL | <i>Cool or brilliant</i> |
| PROPS | <i>Respect or recognition</i> |
| TO DIG | <i>To really like something</i> |
| ACE | <i>Awesome, really cool</i> |
| ALL RIGHT? | <i>How are you? Everything is okay?</i> |
| TO CRAM | <i>Study hard in a very short period of time</i> |
| DO | <i>Party or event</i> |
| MATE | <i>Friend, pal</i> |
| PORKIES (Cockney) | <i>Lies</i> |
| NAFF | <i>Unfashionable, not cool</i> |
| POSH | <i>High class</i> |
| DAGO | <i>A foreigner, usually applied to Italians, Spanish and Portuguese.</i> |
| AS RIGHT AS RAIN | <i>Satisfactory, comfortable, well</i> |
| FACE LIKE A WET WEEKEND | <i>A miserable, sad appearance</i> |
| VIBE | <i>Atmosphere or feelings in a situation</i> |
| TAKE A CHILL PILL | <i>To relax</i> |
| BIRD | <i>A female, a girl</i> |
| TO TWIG | <i>To understand, to realise</i> |
| DEFFO | <i>Abbreviation of "definitely"</i> |
| HANG OUT | <i>Spend time with someone</i> |
| DUNNO | <i>Abbreviation of "I don't know"</i> |
| BOLLOCKS | <i>Rubbish, nonsense</i> |
| NO JOY! | <i>Expressing failure or dissatisfaction</i> |
| HIGH | <i>Intoxicated, drugged</i> |
| PACKED OUT | <i>Very crowded</i> |
| FUCK-ALL | <i>Nothing</i> |
| CUPPA | <i>Cup of tea</i> |
| PIG-OUT | <i>To eat fully and enthusiastically</i> |
| JOINT | <i>A cannabis or marijuana cigarette.</i> |
| DOGS ARE BARKING | <i>Expression to refer that feet are tired</i> |

CUESTIONARIO B: SECCIÓN 1

Nombre:

Edad:

Responde con una "X" solo si conoces y/o utilizas el término en español coloquial:

| Término español coloquial | "Conozco el término" | "Utilizo el término" |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| MOLAR | | |
| ESTAR RAYADO | | |
| PITI | | |
| POTAR | | |
| ESTAR HECHO POLVO | | |
| SEGURATA | | |
| EMPOLLAR | | |
| CURRAR | | |
| PASOTA | | |
| PONER VERDE A ALGUIEN | | |
| IR/ESTAR PEDO | | |
| MANGAR | | |
| ESTAR CACHAS | | |
| ¡QUÉ GUAY! | | |
| ESTAR PELADO | | |
| MORREO | | |
| SER EL PUTO AMO | | |
| CORNUDO | | |
| ENROLLARSE | | |
| NI DE COÑA | | |
| ESTAR FORRADO | | |
| PICARSE | | |
| DAR POR CULO | | |
| NAPIA | | |
| PACHANGA | | |
| PELUCO | | |
| ESTAR HASTA LOS COJONES | | |
| BOTELLÓN | | |
| ESTAR CAÑÓN | | |
| COLOCADO | | |

CUESTIONARIO B: SECCIÓN 2

Responde con una “X” solo en las casillas de las palabras que no supiste anteriormente:

| Término español coloquial | Español coloquial en contexto | “Conozco el término después de leerlo en contexto” | “Sigo sin conocerlo” |
|---------------------------|---|--|----------------------|
| MOLAR | <i>Me mola mucho tu nueva chaqueta.</i> | | |
| ESTAR RAYADO | <i>He discutido con mi novia y ahora estoy rayado.</i> | | |
| PITI | <i>¿Tienes un piti? Necesito fumar.</i> | | |
| POTAR | <i>Me ha sentado mal la cena. Voy a potar.</i> | | |
| ESTAR HECHO POLVO | <i>Estoy hecho polvo después de dos horas de ejercicio.</i> | | |
| SEGURATA | <i>El segurata me echó de la discoteca.</i> | | |
| EMPOLLAR | <i>Tengo que empollar para el examen de mañana.</i> | | |
| CURRAR | <i>Mi tía curra en un hotel de lujo de Madrid.</i> | | |
| PASOTA | <i>A tu hermano no le importa nada, es un pasota.</i> | | |
| PONER VERDE A ALGUIEN | <i>No entiendo a las personas que ponen verde a sus amigos.</i> | | |
| IR PEDO | <i>Bebí demasiado ayer, iba muy pedo.</i> | | |
| MANGAR | <i>Mangó en la tienda y le pillaron.</i> | | |
| ESTAR CACHAS | <i>Mi primo está muy cachas porque va mucho al gimnasio.</i> | | |
| ¡QUÉ GUAY! | <i>Es viernes, ¡qué guay!</i> | | |
| ESTAR PELADO | <i>No he cobrado aún y estoy pelado.</i> | | |
| MORREO | <i>Iker le dio un morreo a Sara ante millones de espectadores.</i> | | |
| SER EL PUTO AMO | <i>Siempre consigue lo que se propone, es el puto amo.</i> | | |
| CORNUDO | <i>Esa pareja no es leal, ambos son unos cuernudos.</i> | | |
| ENROLLARSE | <i>Mi amigo se enrolló anoche con una de mi clase.</i> | | |
| NI DE COÑA | <i>+ ¿Me prestas dinero? - Ni de coña</i> | | |
| ESTAR FORRADO | <i>A la alcaldesa de mi pueblo le tocó la lotería. Está forrada.</i> | | |
| PICARSE | <i>Mi hermana está picada con su amiga. Pronto lo solucionarán.</i> | | |
| DAR POR CULO | <i>¡Cállate y no des tanto por culo!</i> | | |
| NAPIA | <i>Me he dado un golpe en la napia.</i> | | |
| PACHANGA | <i>¿Os apetece una pachanga esta tarde?</i> | | |
| PELUCO | <i>Me he comprado un peluco Rolex.</i> | | |
| ESTAR HASTA LOS COJONES | <i>Estoy hasta los cojones de las obras de mi calle. No puedo aparcar mi coche en ningún sitio.</i> | | |
| BOTELLÓN | <i>Esta noche haremos botellón en el parque antes de entrar a la discoteca.</i> | | |
| ESTAR CAÑÓN | <i>Tu primo está muy cañón, tiene todo lo que me gusta.</i> | | |
| COLOCADO | <i>El cantante estaba muy colocado. Seguro que se fumó un par de porros antes de la actuación.</i> | | |

CUESTIONARIO B: SECCIÓN 3

Una vez hayas finalizado la encuesta, podrás ver las soluciones:

| Término español coloquial | Significado |
|----------------------------------|---|
| MOLAR | Gustar |
| ESTAR RAYADO | Estar loco, preocupado por algo |
| PITI | Cigarrillo, pitillo |
| POTAR | Vomitarse |
| ESTAR HECHO POLVO | Estar muy cansado |
| SEGURATA | Portero de bar o discoteca |
| EMPOLLAR | Estudiar mucho |
| CURRAR | Trabajar |
| PASOTA | Persona apática, que no se preocupa por nada ni nadie |
| PONER VERDE A ALGUIEN | Criticar a alguien |
| IR/ESTAR PEDO | Ir, estar borracho |
| MANGAR | Robar |
| ESTAR CACHAS | Estar fuerte, musculoso |
| ¡QUÉ GUAY! | Expresión que muestra alegría |
| ESTAR PELADO | No tener dinero |
| MORREO | Beso en la boca apasionado |
| SER EL PUTO AMO | Ser el que domina, manda, popular |
| CORNUDO | Persona engañada en una relación sentimental |
| ENROLLARSE | Tener relaciones |
| NI DE COÑA | De ninguna manera |
| ESTAR FORRADO | Tener mucho dinero |
| PICARSE | Enfadarse, molestarse |
| DAR POR CULO | Incordiar, molestar |
| NAPIA | Nariz |
| PACHANGA | Partido amistoso |
| PELUCO | Reloj |
| ESTAR HASTA LOS COJONES | Estar harto, encabronado |
| BOTELLÓN | Beber en vía pública |
| ESTAR CAÑÓN | Estar en forma, ser muy bello |
| COLOCADO | Drogado |

SONG ANALYSED: REMINDER BY THE WEEKND

Recommend play my song on the radio
You too busy trying to find that blue-eyed soul
I let my black hair grow and my weed smoke
And I swear too much on the regular
We gone let them hits fly, we gone let her go
If it ain't XO then it gotta go
I just won a new award for a kids show
Talking 'bout a face-numbing off a bag a blow

I'm like goddamn bitch I am not a Teen Choice
Goddamn bitch I am not a bleach boy
Whip game, make a nigga understand though
Got that Hannibal, Silence of the Lambo
Hit the gas so hard make it rotate
All my niggas blew up like a propane
All these RnB niggas be so lame
Got a sweet Asian chick she go low mane

You know me, you know me, you know me
Every time you try to forget who I am
I'll be right there to remind you again
You know me (pow! pow!), you know me

Said I'm just tryna swim in something wetter than the ocean
Faded off a double cup, I'm mixing up the potion
All I wanna do is make that money and make dope shit
It just seem like niggas tryna sound like all my old shit
Everybody knows it, all these niggas know me
Platinum off a mixtape, sipping on that codeine

Pour it in my trophies, roll until my nose bleed
I'mma keep on singing while I'm burning up that OG

All my niggas get it they make money all alone
Rock a chain around they neck making sure I'm getting home
When I travel 'round the globe, make a couple mil a show
And I come back to my city, I fuck every girl I know
Used to walk around with a slouch, had a mattress on the floor
Now my shit straight eating all day, tryna lose weight
That good sex, we'll sweat it out, hotel bedsprings we'll wear it out

I ain't gotta tell you 'cause

You know me, you know me
You know me, you know me
Every time you try to forget who I am
I'll be right there to remind you again
You know me (pow! pow!), you know me

Why don't you shake some', shake some' for the Don?
Don't you break none, break none
Baby girl, won't you work some', work some' for the Don?
Don't you hurt none, hurt none
Baby girl, won't you work some', work some' for the Don?
Don't you hurt none, hurt none
Baby girl, won't you work some', work some' for the Don?
Don't you hurt none, hurt none

'Cause you know me, they know me
You ain't know me now you know me

THE Sun
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Secrets... Doctor's Tardis
AN ex-BBC editor has told how he was sexually abused by one guy Doctor Who boss - and guaranteed by another. The claims come after The Sun revealed cops are probing a historic unproven adult paedophilia ring within EastEnders.
Full Story - Page Six

PICTURE EXCLUSIVE
My, look who's done a Halle
SEE PAGE 9

EXCLUSIVE: ELF 'N SAFETY NONSENSE

FLAPJACK WHACK RAP CLAPTRAP

Alert... school ban on triangular flapjack snacks

By **MATT WILKINSON**
DINNER ladies have been banned from baking triangular flapjacks after a school branded them **DANGEROUS**. Kitchen staff were ordered to cook rectangular or square snacks instead after a pupil was hit in the face by a flying oval morsel. One insider said of the ban on **Cooney Island, Essex**: "It's just ludicrous."
Full Story - Page five

School ban on 'dangerous' triangle oat snacks