

**A Butcher's at Chitty Chitty Bang Bang:
Some Linguistic Aspects of Cockney Dialect and Rhyming Slang**

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English Philology
Pro Gradu Thesis
March 2003
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Tampereen yliopisto

Filologia I

Englantilainen filologia

HELEVUO, TERHI: A Butcher's at Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: Some Linguistic Aspects of Cockney Rhyming Slang

Pro Gradu -tutkielma, 84 sivua, 1 liite.

Maaliskuu 2003

Tutkielman aiheena on Lontoon murteen, cockneyn, erityispiirre loppusoinnullinen slangi (*Cockney rhyming slang*). Tutkielman teoreettisessa osuudessa käsitellään aluksi slangin käsitettä yleisemmin. Tarkoituksena on kuvailla ja määrittellä slangia ja sen erityispiirteitä erilaisten kielitieteellisten kirjojen ja artikkeleiden sekä sanakirjojen avulla. Määrittelyssä käytetään apuna vertailua slangiin läheisesti liittyvien käsitteiden, varkaiden ja kerjäläisten salakielten (*argot, cant*), ammattikielen (*jargon*) ja murteen kanssa.

Teoreettisen osuuden keskimäinen osa muodostuu katsauksesta cockneyn murteen historiaan sekä murteen kieliopillisiin, ääntämyksellisiin ja sanastollisiin erityispiirteisiin. Viimeinen osa käsittelee loppusoinnullisen slangin riimejä. Tarkoituksena on kuvailla riimien syntyhistoriaa, rakennetta ja muodostumista. Riimin ja sen englanninkielisen vastineen suhde on usein sattumanvarainen, joten riimien alkuperä jää monissa tapauksissa hämärän peittoon. Joidenkin riimien alkuperä on kuitenkin dokumentoitu aihetta käsittelevään kirjallisuuteen. Näitä tapauksia esitellään lyhyesti teoreettisen osuuden lopussa. Samoin luodaan lyhyt katsaus cockneyn nykytilanteeseen; loppusoinnullinen slangi elää eräänlaista nousukautta, osin Internetin ansiosta.

Tutkimusosa muodostuu riimien tilastollisesta analyysistä, jonka pohjana on Butcherin ja Gnutzmannin (1977) suorittaman analyysin malli. Tutkimusmateriaalina on yhteensä 2412 riimiä, jotka on koottu Gordon Daniel Smithin Internetissä ylläpitämästä sanastosta ja Ray Puxleyn teoksesta *Cockney Rabbit. A Dick'n'Arry of Contemporary Rhyming Slang* (1992). Riimit on jaettu sanaluokittain ryhmiin: 81,80% niistä viittasi substantiiveihin, 8,21% verbeihin, 7,55% adjektiiveihin ja 1,82% numeraaleihin. 0,62% lausekkeisiin viitannutta riimiä jätettiin analyysin ulkopuolelle. Kunkin sanaluokan riimit jaettiin rakenteen perusteella kymmeneen eri ryhmään. Tulosten perusteella suurin osa substantiiveihin, verbeihin ja adjektiiveihin viittaavista riimeistä muodostuu erisnimistä, kun taas numeraaleihin viittaavat riimit koostuvat yleisimmin yhdestä sanasta.

Johtopäätöksenä tutkimusosassa todetaan, että substantiiveihin ja verbeihin viittaavat riimit noudattavat samoja kaavoja, adjektiiveihin ja numeraaleihin viittaavat riimit eroavat yleisimpien kaavojen kohdalla kahdesta ensin mainitusta.

Tutkimusosan lopuksi kolmen eri aikaan tehdyn analyysin kesken tehty vertailu osoittaa, että suurin osa cockneyn riimeistä viittaa substantiiveihin, ja että riimit muodostuvat yleisimmin erisnimistä. Vertailu osoitti myös, että riimien muodostustavat ovat säilyneet melko muuttumattomina 1900-luvun loppupuolelta näihin päiviin.

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1. Introduction

My mind has been intrigued by Cockney rhyming slang ever since I first heard about it from a Londoner in a bar over ten years ago. The rhymes, with all the word play involved, keep amusing me, especially as I constantly encounter new ones. The question of origin also evokes many questions – for example, how did *Rosie Lee* become to mean *tea*? Writing this thesis on Cockney slang and trying to answer some of the questions that have come up during the years seems to me an ideal way for combining business and pleasure.

The first chapter of the work in hand concentrates on the concept of *slang* in general. The main aim is to explore the characteristics of the phenomenon, and in the end, find a satisfactory definition for the concept of slang. A number of terms, such as *jargon*, *cant* and its virtual synonym *argot*, are closely related to slang. Section 2.1.1 comprises of a discussion of the differences and similarities between these four concepts and section 2.1.2 explores the discrepancies between slang and *dialect*. Section 2.3 closes this chapter by briefly introducing different kinds of slang.

Chapter 3 deals with some general features of Cockney dialect and slang. The first section is a brief introduction to the history and origins of Cockney and in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, some aspects of Cockney grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary are discussed.

The aim in chapter 4 is to study the formation and main characteristics of the rhymes. Section 4.1 is a brief introduction to the history of rhyming slang. The formation and the denotations of the rhymes are dealt with in section 4.2. The origins of the rhymes are discussed in section 4.2.2 and the final section of chapter 4 comprises of a brief discussion on the present-day situation of Cockney rhyming slang.

Chapter 5 comprises of a statistical analysis of Cockney rhyming slang. The aim of the study is to find out whether the rhymes follow the patterns introduced by Butcher and Gnutzmann (1977). For the analysis, the rhymes are organised into four categories according to the word class they denote. In the analysis, the rhymes are divided into four major categories according to the way they are formed; (1) Forms with General Lexemes, (2) Forms with Proper Nouns, (3) Adjective + Noun and (3) Genitive Constructions. These categories, the third one excluded, were further divided into patterns (1) Noun and Noun, Other Coordinations and Compound nouns (2) Specific Proper Nouns, General Proper Nouns, Place Names, (4) Genitive constructions with *of* and Inflected Genitive Constructions. Before the introduction of the methods used, the data for the analysis in hand will be introduced. The results of the analysis for rhymes denoting nouns, verbs, adjectives and numerals, are presented in sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and 5.2.4, respectively. Section 5.3 consists of a concluding discussion of the analysis.

The present analysis is compared with two earlier studies (Butcher and Gnutzmann, 1977 and Helevuo, 1999) in section 5.4. The aim of the comparison is to find out whether the patterns for forming rhyming slang expressions have remained the same or whether any significant changes have taken place during the years.

Chapter 6, Conclusions, closes the discussion on Cockney rhyming slang.

2. Slang

The main aim in this chapter is to find a satisfactory definition for the concept of *slang*. First, different kinds of characterisations and definitions for slang are discussed. *Slang* will be compared with *argot*, *cant* and *jargon* as well as with *dialect*.

Second, in section 2.2, the aim is to draw conclusions from the preceding discussion and thus provide a suggestion for a concise definition of the linguistic phenomenon *slang*. Section 2.3 closes this chapter by briefly introducing different kinds of slang. The discussion here is based on lexical, rather than sociolinguistic aspects.

It must be noted here that the discussion in hand is by no means an exhaustive one, as the main point in this thesis is not slang in general, but Cockney rhyming slang in particular. The whole concept of slang is, however, such an intrinsic one in terms of Cockney that it deserves some attention.

2.1 Some Aspects of Slang

Slang is a difficult concept to define because it tends to change over time even more quickly than language in general and because it is mostly used in informal conversation situations that do not leave permanent data for the linguists to study as the more formal types of language found in writing. If one was to ask a group of linguists to define the term *slang*, the result would be as many different definitions as there were linguists in the group. The same occurs when one consults dictionaries; each one of them defines the concept of *slang* differently. The entries also differ in the way the dictionaries relate slang to concepts closely related to it, like *argot*, *cant*, *jargon* and *dialect*. These discrepancies are dealt with in more detail in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.

The entry for *slang* in *The New Penguin English Dictionary* (*Penguin* for short in what follows) states that slang consists of “informal vocabulary that is composed

typically of new words or meanings, impolite or vulgar references etc. and that belongs to familiar conversation rather than written language.” *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (Random)* describes *slang* more vividly; it states that slang involves “very informal usage in vocabulary and idiom that is characteristically more metaphorical, playful, elliptical, vivid and ephemeral than ordinary language.” The entry in *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines slang as follows:

1. a. The special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character; language of a low and vulgar type (now merged in c.)
- c. Language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or current words employed in some special sense.

All these definitions are valid, but the whole concept of slang is even more versatile than the dictionary entries imply. This is evident from the different definitions of slang found in works on linguistics.

Quirk et al. (1985, 27) use the term, *slang*, “to denote the frequently vivid or playful lexical usage typical of casual discourse”, The use of slang, according to them, usually indicates “membership in a particular social group.”

The term *informal situation*, to which slang is generally attached, can also cause difficulties in defining slang. As Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 71) point out, there is no automatic relationship between language and the situation; a situation that begins as a formal one may end as an informal one and the change is usually so gradual that it is not possible to say exactly when the situation has changed from formal to informal. Despite the vagueness of the term, *informal situation* is useful in defining the essence of slang.

Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 71) also point out that the style used in speech between two people can change gradually from formal to casual over a longer period of time. This kind of a change is known as *metaphorical shift*. A metaphorical shift can take place, for example, at work, where two people, who are not vocationally or socially equal, gradually become more equal and begin to talk more informally rather than exchanging formal comments.

Quirk et al. (1985, 27) list a five-term scale on which different styles of language can be placed. The scale goes from *very formal* to *formal*, *neutral*, *informal* and *very informal*. Public speeches given by politicians, for example, represent the very formal style, discussions at meetings are generally formal and dialogues between two people who do not know each other could be characterised as neutral. Those who know each other well, usually use the two styles from the other end of the scale; informal and very informal.

Slang belongs to the latter category, as Tony Thorne (1990, iii), aptly states in his Introduction to *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Contemporary Slang*:

Looked from a linguist's point of view slang is a style category within the language, which occupies an extreme position on the spectrum of formality. Slang is at the end of the line; it lies beyond mere informality or colloquialism, where language is considered too racy, raffish, novel or unsavoury for use in conversation with strangers. Slang also forms of language through which speakers identify with or function within social sub-groups, ranging from surfers, schoolchildren and yuppies, to criminals, drinkers and fornicators.

Sidney Landau (1991, 189) states in his discussion on labelling procedures in dictionaries that *slang* is labelled either with the style label *informal* or with the status label *non-standard*. But, unlike other words from the formal – informal index, slang can not be adopted to suit different social situations. In fact, if a slang expression is acceptable in a more formal situation, it is most likely about to lose its status as slang

and becoming part of standard vocabulary. As Landau puts it, “slang is deliberately non-standard.”

The consultation of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (*Heritage*), *Random*, *Penguin* and *The New Oxford English Dictionary* (*New OED*) indicates that Landau is at least partly right. The slang words *ace*, *brill*, *fab* and *wizard* were labelled as *slang* in *Heritage* and *Random* and as *informal* in *Penguin* and *New OED*. The first two dictionaries did not list the meaning *admirable*, *excellent* for *brill* and there was no label for *wizard*. Thus, the style label *informal* is consistently used in British English dictionaries (*Penguin* and *New OED*) whereas the American dictionaries use the label *slang* instead. A more comprehensive survey of the labelling policies would be in order but it would require more space than is appropriate in the present context.

As noted above, one of the characteristics closely related to slang is that it is group related; different social groups use different kinds of slang. Teenagers’ slang differs from the slang used by drug addicts, for example. Slang also differs from group to group on the stylistic level. Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 80) use members of Parliament as an example: “Among a group of members of Parliament, even rather weak slang words may be used with some kind of audible quotation marks around them, This ‘hm-heavy’ movie.” A group of teenagers, on the other hand, is more likely to use more coarse expressions with no quotation marks in order to intensify the message.

Karl Sornig (1981, 61–62) lists criteria by which slang can be defined as a group language; first, different age groups as well as different social classes use slang differently and second, people do not feel the same way about the slang they use as they do about their native language; it ties one more closely to a certain group of language

users than slang. Sornig concludes “slang is a language variant open to be used by anybody who might choose it as a specific stylistic variant.”

Thus, slang appears to be very relative by nature; what is shockingly vulgar language to one can be neutral to another. Also changes in the overall linguistic atmosphere affect the status of certain expressions; what was considered slang in the past decades, may now be regarded as ‘proper’ language. Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 70) provide examples of such words; *bike*, *bus*, and *pub* have become neutral. The original neutral words *bicycle*, *omnibus* and *public house* would sound overtly correct in neutral speech today. They also point out (pp. 16–17) that different generations have had different ways of expressing that something is admirable; *top-hole* was used in this sense before the second world war, *wizard* meant the same in the 1940s, *fab* in the 1960s, *ace* in the 1970s and *brill* in the 1980s. *Cool* was the expression, to my knowledge, in the 1990s. The entry in *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang* confirms my supposition:

excellent, admirable, acceptable. One of the key items in the vocabulary of jazz musicians, hipsters, beatniks and hippies, cool, with its original suggestion of calm disinterested serenity, is a word which has not dated. It is as much in vogue with teenagers in the late 1980s as it was among the 1930s jazz musicians who probably coined it (to denote gentler progressive jazz, as opposed to 'hot' jazz).

General dictionaries, such as *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, *The New OED*, *Heritage* and *Random*, do list at least one of the expressions *wizard*, *brill*, *fab* or *ace*, but they do not, in all cases, indicate the decade of origin. *Penguin* labels *ace*, *brill* and *wizard* as informal but only the entry for *wizard* includes the additional information *dated*. *The New OED* lists *ace* as an informal term, originating from the 1980s but the other words in question are not listed with the sense of admiration.

Landau (1991, 189) states that although slang is usually fresh in its expressions, it can also be archaic or out of date. *Longhair* and *egghead* were, according to him, widely used slang terms for intellectuals in the early 1950s. In the same way, saying that something is *top-hole* or even *brill* today would sound archaic rather than fresh.

Hudson (1995, 46) discusses the reasons for people using slang. He states that by using slang expressions instead of the ordinary words, for example saying *kick the bucket* instead of *die* one adds colour to the everyday conversation, and as Hudson points out, using slang is also a way of showing our independence from the written standard language.

According to Eric Partridge (1991, 69), slang is “an essentially personal thing, a carefree mode of self-expression.” In *Slang Today and Yesterday* (1972, 6–7) Partridge lists different reasons for using slang. Slang is used, among other things in the list, just for fun, to exercise of one’s wit and sense of humour and to stand out from the others. By choosing to use slang people can make their speech more concise and enriched. Slang is also used to strengthen the bonds between members of a certain group.

Usually, as Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 79), people make a conscious choice to use slang. As Partridge noted in his list, slang functions as a strengthening element between group members. In addition, say Andersson and Trudgill, slang also forms a barrier between those who belong to that particular group and those who do not.

Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 69) include colloquial and vulgar language as parts of slang. Slang, according to them, “is language use below the level of stylistically neutral language usage.” They see slang (p. 16) as a highly informal way of using fashionable, short-lived words, either new ones or common words used in a special

sense. A word may become fashionable rapidly and, after a while, become obsolete. According to Eric Partridge (1991, 69), slang expressions are replaced by new ones in a decade or within a generation, and sometimes even within years. Some slang words, like *bus* mentioned above, continue to exist as parts of the general vocabulary.

Temporal variation affects slang as well as any other category of language, as Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 70) point out. I have a first-hand experience of this. I was visiting my British cousins in Windsor in the mid 1990s, and listening to their teenage slang, I noticed that everything was *well funny*, *well good* and so forth, that is, the overextended use of the adverbial *well* was a fashionable thing. When we met again a couple of years later, however, none of my cousins used that construction any more.

Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 73) define one of the most important characteristics of slang by saying that slang “is first and foremost a question of vocabulary.” They also state that there are only a few grammatical features that could be classified as peculiar to slang. Such features are, for example, the double negative and the omission of subject – verb agreement. All this, Andersson and Trudgill conclude, can be proven by the fact that there are no slang grammar books available.

Sornig (1981, 23) finds good grounds for the lack of grammar in slang. Grammar, according to him, follows arbitrary rules and is therefore not readily open to innovative modifications. Vocabulary, on the other hand, can easily be modified. There is, however, one restriction; function words, such as prepositions and auxiliary verbs, can not be modified. It is the infinite list of content words that offer the slang user a vast source for innovations and modifications of meaning. As Sornig neatly puts it; “the lexicon is where the speaker’s freedom lies.”

Although many slang expressions, as Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 74–75) note, denote lexical items referring to neutral areas of life like sports or housing, it is

often mistakenly seen as automatically vulgar and taboo. The reason for this common opinion may be that several slang words bear close reference to the areas of sex and bodily functions and many of the English swearing words come from the same source too. However, as Landau (1991, 189) points out, “taboo words are not necessarily slang and most slang words are not taboo.”

Relating to this, the compilers of *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* make a very good point on the Explanatory Notes pages (p. 18): “There is, no satisfactory objective test for slang, especially with reference to a word out of context. No word, in fact, is invariably slang, and many standard words can be given slang applications.”

There are three main origins of slang. According to Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 82), new words are made up, existing lexical items are used in different, new senses or loaned either directly or by translation from other languages. Andersson and Trudgill’s (1990, 82–83) of these are, respectively, *yuppie* (a young, upwardly mobile professional), *high* or *stoned* (intoxicated) and *nark* (police informer, from Romany *nak*, meaning *nose*).

In the process of inventing new words, as Sornig (1981, 62) puts it, “familiar objects seen from a different angle.” This is a good indication of the creativity of slang, which, according to Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 78), is one of the most important characteristics of the whole concept. Sornig (1980, 62) further states that slang expressions are often invented in situations where the speakers feel somehow ill at ease. “New experiences demand new expressive means”, he concludes.

Partridge (1991, 71) argues that slang is “either good or bad.” Good slang, according to him, “says clearly, briefly, vigorously, what too much literary language says obscurely, diffusely, feebly.” It is also “both expressive and idiomatic.” Bad slang,

according to Partridge, means slang that perhaps sounds nice but has, in the worst case, no meaning at all.

Slang expressions are, in many cases, metaphors when they are first used. Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 84–85) note that widely used slangisms gradually lose their freshness and become frozen metaphors, expressions quite similar to common lexical items. For example, the well known phrase *get to first base*, that is, *to make headway* is metaphorical in origin. The phrase originates most probably from a game, such as baseball, where the players move from base to base in the course of the game.

Furthermore, as Sornig (1981, 66–67) points out, metaphors are useful because they function in two ways. First, a metaphor forms a gap between the object and the word referring to it by omitting the original lexeme. Second, a metaphor also functions as a tool for overcoming the gap by including in itself a hint of the original meaning and thus enabling the listener to understand the meaning intended by the speaker. Words relating to human sexuality, for example, are often felt to be too embarrassing to be uttered aloud, so one might want to replace the word *penis* with a metaphorical substitution *willy*. Someone's death may also be a difficult subject, so the speaker may ease the situation by saying that someone *passed away* instead of saying that someone *died*.

Since slang is rich in metaphors, it enables people to talk about subjects that would otherwise be too embarrassing or difficult to deal with. For instance, objects that are taboo can be discussed by transforming the original word into a metaphor.

2.1.1 Slang Compared with Argot, Cant and Jargon

In his discussion on slang Eric Partridge (1991, 69) remarks very saliently that although a number of terms, such as *jargon*, *cant* and its virtual synonym *argot*, are closely

related to slang, they should be distinguished from it. However, many dictionaries list these as synonyms or near synonyms for *slang*.

For instance, in *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (*Collins* for short in what follows) *argot* is marked as a synonym to *slang* and *The Concise English Dictionary* (*Concise*) defines it as “thieves’ slang, the phraseology of a class; slang generally.” Based on the entries in *The New Penguin English Dictionary* (*Penguin*) *cant* is synonymous to *jargon* and *argot* to both *jargon* and *slang*. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) *argot* is “the jargon, slang or peculiar phraseology of a class, originally that of thieves and beggars.” Furthermore, the entry for *slang* in the *OED* includes the following statement:

- b. The special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession; the cant or jargon of a certain period.

The entry for *slang* in *Concise* states that slang is “words or language used colloquially but not regarded as correct English; the special language or dialect of a particular class, cant; jargon.” Based on these dictionaries, slang is then, broadly speaking, the same as argot, cant and jargon.

The distinction between argot, cant and jargon is not always made clear either; the entry in *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (*Random*) links *argot* closely to *jargon*. Argot is defined in the second meaning as “the special vocabulary and idiom of a particular profession or social group.” According to the first meaning, however, argot is more closely related to the language used in the communication of the underworld.

Cant, according to the *OED* refers to “the speech or phraseology of beggars etc. and senses connected therewith.” These senses, according to the entry, include

- a) the peculiar language or jargon of a class: the secret language or jargon used by gypsies, thieves, professional beggars etc.; transferred sense: any jargon used for the purpose of secrecy
- b) the special phraseology of a particular class of persons, or belonging to a particular subject; professional or technical jargon

Random defines cant as “the private language of the underworld” and “the phraseology peculiar to class, party, profession, etc.” and *Concise* as “the peculiar dialect or jargon of beggars, gypsies, and thieves; slang.”

Thus, the terms argot, cant and jargon seem to be inseparable, although some slight differences in meaning can be noted. Jargon can perhaps best be defined without referring to the other concepts. This is evident in the dictionary entries as well as in other texts dealing with these concepts.

According to the definition in *Random*, *jargon* is “a language, especially the vocabulary, peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group.” The entry in the *OED* states that *jargon* is used in a contemptuous way to refer to language containing uncommon vocabulary and terminology, such as expressions from the fields of philosophy, science or art. *Concise* offers a more straightforward definition; *jargon* is stated to refer to “any professional, technical, or specialised language.”

Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 17) remark that jargon is, seen by an outsider, “technical, in-group language.” What is unintelligible gibberish to one, is a useful part of other person’s language. Jonathon Green’s editorial note in *Penguin* illustrates this nicely:

Based on the French for ‘the twittering of birds’, jargon works on two levels: the deliberate obfuscations of governments, business and similar institutions, and what might be described as ‘professional slang’, the ‘in’ vocabularies of given occupations. Such jargons confer twin benefits: the affirmation of the group identity and the exclusion of those outside the initiated.

George Yule (1985, 191) gives an excellent example of jargon; a waitress' way of saying "a chocolate ice cream and a coffee without milk" to another is "bucket of mud, draw one, hold the cow."

Jargon, as a term, is usually used pejoratively by those who do not belong to the occupational in-group. For instance, medical language is often characterised as jargon because it contains a great deal of Latin words. According to Walter Nash (1993, 3) jargon is often characterised by adjectives like *incomprehensible*, *pretentious* or *dreary*.

Although slang, argot, cant and jargon are closely related to one another, there are, however, certain differences between them, as Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 77–78) point out. According to them the British underworld first used the term *slang* for the language peculiar to them whereas the outsiders used the term *cant* when referring to the underworld language. *Argot*, a term of French origin, on the other hand, can be classified as a synonym for *cant*. Partridge (1991, 71) neatly clarifies the distinction between slang and cant. He states that strictly speaking, "cant is not slang at all, but a secret language." He also quotes John Farmer, who states that "Slang is universal [...] whilst cant is restricted in usage to the underworld."

Jargon differs from argot and cant because it does not refer to the underworld. It is, like Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 78) note, similar to them in the sense that it is used by outsiders to refer to vocabulary used by a certain group, most often related to a particular profession. Quirk et al. (1985, 24) provide a concise and straightforward definition of jargon: "when learned or technical language is used too obtrusively or (to all appearances) unnecessarily, it is often pejoratively referred to as jargon."

Thus, argot, cant, jargon and slang are best seen as different kinds of language that share certain features; they are first and foremost characterised by lexical items that

differ from the neutral vocabulary. Each one of these language variants is group-related, i.e. they are used to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Finally, argot, cant, jargon and slang all represent substandard language.

There are, however, differences between these four variants; argot and cant both refer to underworld languages whereas jargon and slang are mainly used to refer to the more respectable in-groups, though certain types of slang are also used by drug-users and other criminals. Jargon is often used pejoratively by the outsiders, the three other terms appear to be slightly more neutral. Furthermore, they are commonly used by the in-groups as well as by the outsiders.

2.1.2 Slang Compared with Dialect

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *dialect* as “one of the subordinate forms or varieties of a language arising from local peculiarities of vocabulary, pronunciation, and idiom.” The entry in *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*

adds to this definition that dialect is typically used by a “group of speakers who are set off from others geographically or socially.”

K. M. Petyt (1980, 12–13) examines the difficulties that one comes across when defining dialect. The second problem he deals with, is the difficulty in defining how different two variants of the same language should be in order them to be categorised as different languages rather than different dialects. Petyt concludes that the answer to this problem is mutual intelligibility. He defines dialects as “different but mutually intelligible forms of speech.”

According to Peter Trudgill (1995, 5) *dialects* are different kinds of language that differ from each other in vocabulary, grammar as well as in pronunciation. Giuliano

Bonfante (1991, 179) adds to this definition that dialects are characterised by certain sounds, words or expressions that are not, as a rule, as prominent in other dialects. He also points out that there are no sharp borderlines between two different dialects, for instance, it is not clear when English in the border area between England and Scotland becomes Scottish and vice versa.

Frans van Coetsem (1992, 16) quotes Wells, who has noted that *dialect* is applied, in linguistics, “often in a rather vague way, to any speech variety which is more than an idiolect¹ but less than a language.”

Coetsem goes on by quoting Haugen, who has considered differences between *dialect* and *standard* language. Haugen, as reported by Coetsem, states that “One man’s dialect is another’s language.” Coetsem also notes that the difference between standard language and dialect arises from the fact that more prestige is being given to the standard language and the dialects are viewed inferior to it. Thus, *dialect* appears to be just as relative a concept as *slang*; the more they are studied the more opinions and definitions are formed.

The lack of grammar in slang might be the greatest discrepancy between *slang* and *dialect* – the latter does include some grammar as well as vocabulary whereas slang is essentially concentrated around vocabulary. Furthermore, slang is a spoken variant, rather than written – dialect can be used in writing as well as in speech.

Slang and *dialect* are, however, in some respects similar. Temporal variation affects both slang and dialect, the vocabulary being in a constant state of flux as new expressions and new meanings to old words are invented. Both can be defined as in-group languages since they can be used to show outsiders that they are not a part of that particular group, but in a way slang is easier to avoid than dialect because dialect is

¹ Trudgill (1995, 25) defines the term *idiolect* as “the speech of one person at one time in one style [...]”

closer to the standard variety of language and it includes more linguistic features than slang.

Slang and dialect can be placed as superordinate terms to various regional varieties; for example the rhyming *Cockney* slang is spoken in London and the *Geordie* dialect around Newcastle. The boundaries between any of the regional varieties are by no means clear and absolute; as Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 70) point out, a word can be categorised as slang in one area and as a dialectal word in another. Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 70) use the word *lad* as an example of this. In the Southern parts of Great Britain, according to them, *lad* is a slang term referring to an adult man with the additional meaning 'one of the gang' whereas *lad* in the North is a dialectal word for son.

Dialects are more bound both socially and regionally than slang. Some regional and social differences can be detected in slang too, as the following examples provided by Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 73) indicate:

There are many regional and social differences in slang. Some slang items, such as *whistle* (suit) in Cockney, are restricted to a regional dialect, while others are confined to a social class: *tosh* (nonsense), for instance, is probably mostly used by upper-class people. Other slang items, such as *knackered* (tired) in Britain, can be found in all regions.

Both dialect and slang, as noted above, show some variation from area to area, but the differences more clear in dialects than in slang because slang is conditioned more socially than regionally. Youth slang, for instance, is rapidly spread all over the world via mass media.

All in all, there are more differences than similarities between the concepts *dialect* and *slang*. A dialect includes features of vocabulary, grammar as well as pronunciation whereas slang is mainly characterised by features of vocabulary. However, *dialect* appears to be just as relative a concept as *slang* and they do have some

common characteristics. Slang and dialect are both affected by temporal variation; the vocabulary is, on the whole, in a constant state of flux. Slang and dialect can be placed as superordinate terms to various regional varieties and they can both be defined as in-group languages.

2.2 A Definition of Slang

Slang is a non-standard language variant that is typically used in informal speech rather than in writing. Slang is in-group language, it is used to show that one belongs to a particular group; teenagers are a typical group of slang users. Slang is, by nature, vivid and colourful because new words or new meanings for old words are constantly invented. The most decisive characteristic feature of slang is vocabulary; it consists of fashionable expressions and words that are often metaphorical in origin. Slang words are typically short-lived but sometimes a word stays in use longer and becomes a part of the general vocabulary.

Slang is not the same as *argot*, *cant* and *jargon*, although they often function as sources for new slang words. Slang also differs from *dialect* – the latter involves grammar and pronunciation as well as vocabulary.

In conclusion, *slang*, *argot*, *cant*, *jargon* and *dialect* could all be defined as subordinate terms to the superordinate term *language*.

2.3 Different Kinds of Slang

Eric Partridge (1972, 273–278) introduces different kinds of slang, which are not so much defined by the group of people using them but by the word-formation processes

employed in coining new slang words. Partridge's list includes *back*, *central* and *rhyming slang*.

2.3.1 Back Slang

Back slang, as Partridge (1972, 276) defines the process, merely means pronouncing words backwards. It is mainly used by butchers and other dealers of raw foodstuff, and the most common words to be inverted are the numerals, e.g. *eno*, *owt*, *erth* (*one*, *two*, *three*). Manfred Görlach (2000, 5) reports that the first records of back slang are from the 1850s London. Partridge (1972, 276) provides us with the example *top o'reeb* - *a pot of beer*. Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 83) add *yob* - *boy* and *kool toul* - *look out* and Görlach completes the list of examples with *yennep* - *penny*.

2.3.2 Central Slang

Central slang is, according to Partridge, only applicable with the words bearing significance. The process of forming central slang words is not a very simple one.

Partridge (1972, 277) explains the process as follows:

[...] the sole vowel [of the word], the former vowel of two, or the middle vowel of three – or a double vowel sounding as one in any of these positions – becomes the initial letter; that initial vowel is followed by the consonant that originally followed it, thus forming the first syllable of the new word; then one or two syllables, e.g. *-mer*, *-erfer* or *-ee*, are added.

Thus *mug* becomes *ugmer*, *fool* becomes *oolfer* and *thief* in central slang would be *evethee*.

2.3.3 Rhyming Slang

The last kind of slang in Partridge's list is *rhyming slang*. *Cockney rhyming slang* is probably the most widely known example of this type. To put it briefly, rhyming slang involves replacing one word by a phrase that rhymes with the original word. *Apples and Pears* for *stairs* is one of the most classic examples of this slang.

Manfred Görlach (2000, 5) makes an interesting point about rhyming slang; according to him, no traces of rhyming slang have been found in other languages than English. The rhymes have, as Görlach (2000, 7) remarks, spread from England to Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, although sociohistorical conditions may in some cases prove that a rhyme was invented outside London. Obviously, some rhyming slang expressions have been taken into use in informal British English overall.

Although rhyming slang is commonly connected with London only, it has spread to other parts of the world too. According to Antonio Lillo (1996, 234), rhyming slang arrived to Australia with several convicts who emigrated there from different parts of England. First, as Lillo explains, rhyming slang was used within the prison walls, and once the prisoners were free, rhyming slang spread to other social groups among the English immigrants. Görlach (2000, 16) dates the first boom of rhyming slang in Australia between the years 1895 and 1915.

Görlach (2000, 11–12) describes the spread of rhyming slang to Ireland. He states, based on the sociological study by Mayhew (conducted in 1849), that the majority of the lower class people in London in the 1850s were Irish. As people kept in touch with relatives back home, it is natural that rhyming slang expressions travelled to Dublin. But, as Görlach points out, no waterproof evidence of this exists, as 19th century Irish English lexis is not systematically recorded.

Rhyming slang has also landed into the United States. According to Julian Franklyn (1961, 17–18), during the California Gold Rush (1849–50) rhyming slang expressions were introduced to the Americans by Australians who joined the gold rush. Lillo (1996, 235) points out that rhyming slang has remained almost exclusively as a marginal phenomenon in America, it has mainly been used in prison talk.

3. Cockney Dialect and Slang

This chapter deals with some general features of Cockney dialect and slang. The first section is a brief introduction to the history and origins of Cockney and in the following sections, some aspects of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary are discussed.

3.1 A Brief History of Cockney Dialect

To begin with, it is interesting to see how the etymology of the word *Cockney* itself reflects the changing status of the dialect. According to Wright (1981, 11) the word *Cockney* comes from the Middle English *cock's egg* which in those days meant a small, misshapen egg and was also used for anything odd. The meaning of the word seems to have, in some ways, retained a part of its original meaning if one takes odd to equal 'interesting' or 'fascinating'; the rhymes that are characteristic of Cockney still amuse most people.

The etymology of the word *cockney* presented in *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* nicely reflects the way the word is used even today:

Middle English *cockeney*, probably from a North French dialect from Old French *acoquine* (French *acoquiné*), 'greatly attached to', pp. of *acoquiner*, 'to make fond of', formed from *a*, 'to' and *coquier*, 'to play the knave', from *coquin*, 'knave, rascal, rogue', which probably derives from *coq*, 'cock' (compare French *coquard*, 'ridiculous old beau') and other derivatives of *coq* with a depreciatory sense).

The word *Cockney* has referred to the citizens of London since the 16th century. Partridge (1972, 46) adds two steps to the way in which *Cockney* became to mean Londoners, it was first used for a 'spoilt child' and by the beginning of the 16th century, for a 'pampered citizen'. Tom McArthur (Internet²) confirms what Partridge states. According to McArthur, two definitions of the term *Cockney* were formed in the beginning of the 17th century, both defining *Cockney* as a city-bred young of London:

A Cockney or Cockny, applied only to one borne within the sound of Bow-bell, that is, within the City of London, which tearme came first out of this tale: That a Citizens sonne riding with his father into the Country asked, when he heard a horse neigh, what the horse did his father answered, the horse doth neigh; riding farther he heard a cocke crow, and said doth the cocke neigh too? and therefore Cockney or Cocknie, by inuersion thus: incock, q. incoctus i. raw or vnripe in Country-mens affaires (John Minsheu, Ductor in linguas: The guide into tongues). Londiners, and all within the sound of Bow-bell, are in reproch called Cocknies (Fynes Moryson, An Itinerary).

A succession of stigmas has therefore been associated with the name from the start: odd egg, milksop, young city slicker, and street-wise Londoner. At the same time, the reference of *Cockney* moved from something new or young (an egg, a child) to a spoiled adolescent (city youth) to anyone of any age born in London within the sound of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow Church. With 'our *Cockney* of London', the other usages were forgotten and a stereotype developed of a breed with no interest in life beyond the capital: 'That Synods Geography was as ridiculous as a Cockneys (to whom all is Barbary beyond Brainford; and Christendome endeth at Greenwich)' (Richard Whitlock, *Zootomia, or observations on the present manners of the English*, 1654).

The entry for *cockney* in *The Oxford English Dictionary* confirms these statements:

- 4 a. One born in the City of London: strictly (according to Minsheu) 'one born within the sound of Bow Bells'. Always more or less contemptuous or bantering, and particularly used to connote the characteristics in which the born Londoner is supposed to be inferior to other Englishmen.
- c. The dialect or accent of the London cockney or of those from the East End of London generally.

² <http://www.xrefer.com/entry/441508>, available 29th January 2003.

During the eighteenth century, people in the surrounding villages also began to use the term Cockney to refer to Londoners to ridicule the silly townspeople. Wright's (1981, 11–12) quotation from Pierce Egan's *Life in London* from 1821, illustrates the situation nicely: "Everyone knew Cockney to mean 'an uneducated native of London... pert and conceited, truly ignorant.'"

The traditional way of defining a true Cockney is nearly as old as the dialect itself. Wright (1981, 11) defines a true Cockney as a person who was born within the sound of the bells of the church of St. Mary Le-Bow in Eastern London.

Leonard R. N. Ashley (1977, 124) provides a nice anecdote about the church itself:

Bow Church (St. Mary-le-Bow, that is beau) was destroyed in the Great Fire of London (1666), rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren, badly damaged in World War II by air raids, one of eight Wren churches in "The City" so hit. The tower is repaired but weak and the Bow Bells ring out over Cockney London no more.

These days the definition of a Cockney is somewhat looser, sometimes the term is used as a general term for anyone living in the area of London. More strictly speaking, as Wright (1981, 11) lists, Cockneys come from the rougher working class areas such as Whitechapel, Wapping, and Stepney in Eastern London. According to McArthur (Internet³) Cockneys also reside in the areas of Aldgate, Bethnal Green, Bow, Hackney, Limehouse, Mile End, Old Ford, Poplar and Shoreditch.

As noted in section 2.1.2, Cockney is a regional dialect. It is, however, also a social dialect. As Wright (1981, 142) states, "Cockney is one [dialect] spoken in a

³ <http://www.xrefer.com/entry/441508>, available 29th January 2003.

particular society.” He further maintains (p. 142) that life in East End is all but easy and that the rough living conditions are reflected in the way Londoners there speak. There are, as Wright points out, great social differences between London’s East and West Ends. According to him, the upper class Westenders despise Cockney, they claim that it is, in Wright’s words, “monotonous, ugly, horrible, harsh, and seem to equate it with the dreadful sameness of the housing projects and towering office blocks in London.”

Wright (1981, 144–145) also points out that it is interesting how the status of Cockney dialect is reflected in the so called pecking order of British dialects. According to Wright, Cockney is rated more pleasant than Scouse spoken in Liverpool and Birmingham’s Brum, but less attractive than the languages of Bristol and Exeter. John Honey’s (1989, 59) comment is in agreement with Wright’s statement:

With depressing regularity, four accents compete for bottom place:
London (Cockney), Liverpool (Scouse), Galaswegian, and the West
Midlands especially associated with Birmingham.

The history of Cockney dialect goes hand in hand with the history of the City of London. The development of standard English is also closely linked to the history of Cockney. In fact, as William Matthews (1972, xiv) states, “it is impossible to write a satisfactory history of standard English without understanding the history of Cockney.”

As Wright (1981, 12–13) points out, London has been the main City of the British Isles ever since it was founded by William the Conqueror in 1066. The importance of London grew even more as it became the administrative and ecclesiastical centre after the Norman Conquest. Whereas the English used by the representatives of the church and the state was greatly influenced by French and Latin for over 300 years, Londoners did not adopt these foreign vocabulary elements.

In the fourteenth century, according to Wright (1981, 13), the Norman influence gave way to the growing importance of London. The records from those times

show that London received new inhabitants from the South-Midland areas of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire. Wright also points out that during the following 100 years the speech of these new Londoners formed the base for modern standard English.

Charles V. J. Russ (1984, 12) describes the birth of modern English in his article. According to him, as London grew and became the national capital, the English spoken there gained the most prestige and it was used as a model for spelling when it was standardised as printing was introduced in England in 1475 by William Caxton.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, according to Wright (1981, 13), Cockney did not yet differ much from standard English. The way in which people spoke in London became the standard as people who moved into the city from other parts of the country adapted both their vocabulary and pronunciation to the London variety. The development of printing in the 17th century also strengthened the status of the early standard. The population was concentrated in the area of London and thus it was only natural that the upper class London English became accepted as the standard.

William Matthews (1972, 38) states that during the 18th century the gap between Cockney and standard English widened and class distinctions could be detected in people's speech more easily, the dialectal forms used by the lower class members being considered bad and vulgar by many upper class people.

By 1880 the pronunciation had, according to Matthews (1972, 65), reached its modern form and thus this year can be taken as the starting point of present-day Cockney. Slang, and rhyming slang in particular, says Matthews (1972, 61), had become the major characteristic feature of Cockney by the end of the 19th century. Partridge (1972, 273) remarks that the origins of rhyming slang are obscure, but he suggests that the rhymes have first been used by the London underworld.

Matthews (1972, 76–77) describes 20th century Cockney succinctly as follows:

The Cockney at the present time is extremely varied, for many reasons. The London area is too, large and the population too mixed for any uniform pronunciation to exist, and such social factors as education have produced many modifications of even the characteristic sounds. But broad Cockney, the speech of the slums and the poorer districts, is as uniform as can be expected in a dialect.

If this was the situation in the 1970s, one can only imagine how much more difficult and complex it would be to make a field study of Cockney thirty years later; London is bound to be even bigger and more varied in population. The situation in the 21st century is discussed briefly in connection with the rhymes in section 4.3.

Matthews (1972, 19–21) describes some of the features typical of early Cockney dialect. He begins his description by lamenting the fact that “the material for the study of Cockney in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is far from being what one would wish” (p. 1). Some studies of English pronunciation were already conducted at the time, but the phoneticians concentrated on accepted speech only. Thus, as Matthews concludes:

In default of the comments of authorities, we have to fall back on the Cockney dialogue in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays and on documents written in a colloquial style by Londoners of the time (p.1).

Matthews (1971, 4–7), bearing in mind that literature does not offer a completely reliable source for studying a language, bases his discussion on William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet* and *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour*, *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. He concludes (pp. 10–11) that as the writers did not use a definite Cockney dialect, some people have argued that there was no Cockney dialect in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. “If Cockneys used such a distinctive pronunciation and idiom as they do now, it is argued, the playwrights would surely have seized upon it” states Matthews. He is not convinced by the argument as it

does not, according to him, take into account that pronunciation was usually left to the actors and performers in the case of music hall songs – dialects presented in the texts are, as Matthews puts it, “at most symbolic.”

Although Cockney pronunciation is not explicitly present in the plays, they are, according to Matthews (1972, 11) rich in other markers of vulgar speech and Cockney mannerisms. Cockney idioms and grammatical features typical of the dialect are used consistently in the texts as markers of realism and for comic effect.

One of the most famous portrayers of Cockney dialect was, as Wright (1981, 19) points out, George Bernard Shaw who wrote plays like *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1899), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *Pygmalion* (1912). In his plays Shaw makes many accurate observations of Cockney dialect and his writing was quite detailed although he did not employ phonetic spelling. Shaw's characters' speech included several features typical of Cockney, for instance, as N. F. Blake (1981, 165–166) points out, he has “put special effort into Cockney diphthongs and triphthongs, though his representation of *yourself* as *yseeawf* might cause difficulties to many readers.” Other features present in Shaw's plays are, according to Blake, the omission of initial *hs* and word-final *gs*.

Matthews (1972, 11) quotes some examples of pronunciations from plays that were, according to him, typical in vulgar London speech in the 16th and 17th centuries. The following words represent phonetic spelling: *ance'try* (*ancestry*), *moe* (*more*), *Isbel* (*Isabel*), *exion* (*action*) and *aligant* (*elegant*).

Other characteristics of early Cockney can be detected in the writings of Londoners and in the parish records from that time. Matthews (1972, 12–14) argues that the diary kept by Henry Machyn in the latter half of the 16th century “is the best single guide to the vulgar pronunciation of London in the sixteenth century.” The diaries

contain a number of words that reflect the writer's pronunciation. For example, many London place names are written using phonetic spelling: *Vestmynster*, *Kynsbynshe*, *Lumbarstrett* and *Mynsyon lane*.

Matthews (1972, 18) states that the parish records are valuable for the deviations from standard grammar of the time and the phonetic spelling. To illustrate this, Matthews quotes the following passages from the St. Bartholomew minutes:

we shuld be carffull for the greyt playge and inffecyon dallye *growyth* in thys cyttye and ys by greytt *necklygence* of our pyssheners that thooyes that *be* infectyyd ys not beytter scane vntoo *then* they ar, our streyts and kenylles ys not clensseyd nor well keypt as they *hawght* to bee. (1593)

Att this vestrey it was *ffurder* menshoned whether the parishe would be pleased to *Accept of* mr Gardener *for to bee* a Lecterrer in this Parishe every Wensday in the morninge through the yeare. And whether they would alow him *for* itt and so many as *was* there gaue there Consentte to *Accepte of* hime and to Alow him means and to this pourpose every man *seased* hime selfe. (1623)

In conclusion, Matthews (1972, 19–22) lists some features of pronunciation typical of Cockney speech in the 16th and 17th centuries. Some of these features are still present in the speech of Londoners today, as section 3.3 will show.

The replacement of short *i* by a short *e* was, according to Matthews (1972, 19–22), the most widely spread Cockneyism. Machyn's texts include the following examples: *tell* (*till*), *ef* (*if*) and *consperacy* (*conspiracy*). Short *a* often appears in the place of short *o*: *marow* (*morrow*) and *caffen* (*coffin*), for example. The writers also tended to use *i* or *y* instead of the diphthong *ai*; *chynes* (*chains*). In the case of consonants, Machyn as well as the churchwardens dropped the initial *h* in many words, for example *Amton* (*Hampton*) and replaced *th* with *f* like in *frust* (*thrust*).

From the 1750s onwards linguists begin to notice Cockney. As Matthews (1972, 32) points out, the earliest comments were brief remarks criticising London pronunciations which did not follow the accepted rules. Matthews (1972, 34) mentions

two studies that are, according to him, significant; James Elphinston's (1721–1809) orthoepical works and John Walker's *Pronouncing Dictionary*, which was published in 1791 (p. 36).

According to Matthews (1972, 37) Walker's remarks on Cockney are not as condemning than those made by Elphinston. Walker lists four errors of pronunciation that were, in his opinion, characteristic of Cockney speakers:

the interchange of *w* and *v* in *weal* (*veal*), *winegar*, *vine* (*wine*), *vind*, etc., the loss and addition of initial *h*, *art* (*heart*), *harm* (*arm*), etc., the pronunciation of initial *wh* as *w*, *wet* (*whet*), *wile* (*while*), etc., and the introduction of a vowel before the plural of words ending in *-st*, *postes*, *fistes*, *mistes*, etc.

All these pronunciations were, as Matthews points out, typical of Cockney already in the earlier centuries.

Samuel Pegge deals with Cockney in his *Ancestors of the English Language* (1803). According to Matthews (1972, 38–39), Pegge did not condemn Cockney as the other writers had done. In addition to pronunciation, Pegge discusses the peculiarities of Cockney grammar. As Matthews states, Pegge “had little difficulty in showing that most of the Cockney variations in verbal forms were due to the principle of analogy.” For example, weak past tenses and past participles were used in strong verbs such as *know'd* and *throw'd* because of analogy with *sowed* and *mowed*. Analogy lies, according to Pegge, behind many other grammatical forms too. For instance, as Matthews (1972, 39) puts it, “the possessive pronouns *ourn*, *yourn*, *hern*, and *hisn* were modelled on *mine* and *thine*, and the reflexives *his-self* and *their-selves* were analogous to *thyself* and *myself*.” The peculiarities of present day Cockney grammar are discussed in section 3.2.

3.2. Some Aspects of Cockney Grammar

As noted in the section on history, Cockney refers to the dialect of London as well as to the slang that originates from the East End of the City. This section deals with some of the grammatical features in Cockney that the dialect shares with other English dialects but that differ from standard English.

As Wright (1981, 114–115) points out, word order is more important in English than in languages that use inflections like Finnish for example. In Cockney, however, says Wright, the important words may occasionally be placed first for the sake of emphasis. Wright provides the following example: *A ree-u (real) beauty it was*. Most of the time the Cockneys follow the standard rules of word order. Wright also maintains that in some cases emphasising causes the main verb to vanish and the subject to appear instead of it, in a different wording. He exemplifies the situation with an example: *A fair stunner, that drink what yer made* – i.e. *you made a marvellous drink* (p. 115).

According to Matthews (1972, 189), the double negative, common in many dialects of English, is in Cockney mainly used as emphasising device, e.g. *She didn't take no notice* or *Y don't know nuffink abaht it*. *Ain't* is a widely used all-purpose tag, and perhaps the best known of the features of bad grammar that the Cockneys are prone to, as Baltrop and Wolveridge (1980, 106) point out.

Wright (1981, 118) lists a number of features typical of Cockney verbs. First, verbs in present tense may end in the third person singular *-s* in all persons, for example *I says*, is a common expression in Cockney. The opposite also takes place occasionally; the plural form is used with a subject in the singular as in *As I were sayin'*. Cockneys also tend to, by analogy, form weak preterites for the strong verbs; thus *knowed* instead of *knew* or *growed* instead of *grew* are correct in Cockney speech.

Baltrop and Wolveridge (1980, 107) as well as Wright (1981, 120) state that the use of the present tense in descriptions of past events is a common and persistent habit among the Cockneys. Baltrop and Wolveridge also say that the narrator is prone to switch tenses from past to present in the middle of a story like in the example they provide (my emphasis):

We *went* down the club last night. It *was* a bit foggy, so we *didn't leave* it late *coming* home. We've just *got* outside when a fellow *walks* up to us and *says*...

In the case of nouns, according to Matthews (1972, 191), some Cockney speakers have a tendency to use the ordinary indefinite article *a* before words with an initial vowel. Examples like *a apple* or *a orange* are, as Matthews puts it “age-old.” The *s* marking regular plural nouns is also commonly omitted in Cockney; one can hear people asking for *three pound of potatoes* at the vegetable stall. On the other hand, however, Cockney speakers may add the plural *s* to words that have an irregular plural, so *sheep* and *deer* become *sheeps* or *deers*.

Matthews (1972, 190–191) discusses the use of adjectives. According to him, double comparatives, e.g. *more safer* and superlative forms like *littlest*, which would be ungrammatical in the standard variety, are commonly used in Cockney. Adjectives are also used as adverbs without the *-ly* ending: *It was done quick* or *it must be done proper*.

In the use of pronouns, says Matthews (1972, 192–193), the accusative form is preferred to the nominative one, *I'm* and *'er look like 'avin' a bust-up!* Possessive pronouns differ from the standard too; *mine* is used as the model formula for *ourn* and *yourn* among others. *This here* and *that there* are commonly used instead of the normal demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that*. The relative pronouns *who*, *which* and *that* are replaced by *as* or *what*, as in for example *The money what I earns* being common instead of *The money that I earn*. In addition to these, as Wright (1981, 117) points out,

the form of the pronouns ending in *self* also differs from the standard. Forms like *hisself* and *theirselves* are, as Wright puts it, “modelled on *myself* and older English *thysself* because the elements *his*, *their*, *my* and *thy* are all genitives.” These forms have, according to Wright (1981, 117), two main uses; as emphatic (A) and reflexive (B) pronouns:

- A I did it all myself.
 E couldn't do it 'isself.
 She told me so 'erself.
 They should try it theirsells (themselves).
- B Yer've cut yerself shavin'.
 E killed 'isself.
 They sat theirsells (i.e. sat) dahn.

Finally, as Matthews (1972, 198) points out, a Cockney tends to use prepositions differently from the standard as well; *on* is used where *of* normally appears, e.g. *three on us*, *take hold on it*.

3.3 Some Aspects of Cockney Pronunciation

Generally speaking, Cockney speech tends to be faster than the speech of other English speakers. According to Wright (1981, 139), the speech is speeded up by the well-known glottal stop and the Cockneys' tendency to drop initial unstressed syllables, e.g. '*cos* for *because* and omission of medial vowels, *s'pose* for *suppose*. The glottal stop also causes the speech to sound clipped or fragmented to an outsider ear.

Nasalisation is, according to Wright (1981, 138), another feature which is easy to spot in the speech of a Cockney, especially in vowels preceding the nasal consonants *n* and *m*, as in '*ammer*, *a fine mornin*'. The nasalisation is due to the overall economy in pronouncing vowels by moving the lips and the jaw as little as possible, preserving the

lips in a roughly half-open position even when pronouncing vowels requiring a full opening for a standard pronunciation.

The vowels are otherwise pronounced roughly in the same way as in other major dialects of English. There are, however, some differences. Matthews (1972, 169–170) points out that in some cases the Cockney pronounces a short *i* instead of a short *e*, e.g. *cimetry* instead of *cemetery*. On the other hand, the opposite can happen too; *miracle* can be realised as *meracle*. This feature was documented by Machyn already in the 16th century, as was noted in section 3.1.

All in all, the vowels in Cockney have remained quite stable throughout the decades. The only more recent change mentioned by Matthews (1972, 179) is the diphthongisation of long *oo* and *ee* at the beginning of the 20th century.

Cockney consonants share several features with other dialects. According to Matthews (1972, 177) the intrusive *r* as in *I have no idear of it* is used to facilitate pronunciation as well as the dropping of the *g* in the *-ing* ending, though some Cockneys replace the *g* with *k*, specially in words like *nothing*, *anything* and *something*.

Wright (1981, 134) points out that voiced *th* sounds are commonly replaced by *d* as in the definite article *the*. The voiceless *th* tends to be replaced by either *v* or *f* by some speakers, thus *three* becomes *free*.

According to Wright (1981, 134), the dark *l* is used rather than the clear one, although sometimes the *l* becomes so dark as to transform into the vowel *u*, e.g. *We-u, we aw-u fe-u on de baw-u as it row-ud dahn de i-u* i.e. *Well, we all fell on the ball as it rolled down the hill*. It is very common for the final *ls* to become *us* as well; *poo-u* for *pool*, for instance.

The initial *h* is often neglected, as Wright (1981, 134) points out. Thus *hit him hard* becomes *'it 'im 'ard*. In formal Cockney, however, *hs* are placed hypercorrectly

before words which do not have it – the Cockney follows the general assumed knowledge that more *hs* are written than pronounced even in standard English. This, as is shown by the example provided by Wright (1981, 134), can result in a humorous sounding sentence: *Hi ham 'ere to hopen this hexcellent 'all*. David Rosewarne (1994, 6) also exemplifies this feature; *our* becomes *hour* and *every* *hevery* in formal Cockney speech.

The glottal stop occurs instead of *t*, *p* and *k* when they occur between vowels, as in *butter*, or, as stated by Matthews (1972, 80) in the sentence *What a lot of little bottles*, which would sound like [wɔʔ ə lɔʔ ə liʔu bɔʔuz] if pronounced by a Cockney. The intervocalic *t* can also be replaced by *r* instead of the glottal stop thus making the normal word division blurred. Wright (1981, 139) gives a few good examples of this feature:

<i>Yerlattergerrwf.</i>	You will have to get off.
<i>Lerrinfirrit.</i>	Let him fit it.
<i>Gerrahravit.</i>	Get out of it. (i.e. Go away.)
<i>Itsgorralorravoles.</i>	It has got a lot of holes.

Wright (1981, 136) states that the younger Cockney generations use more glottal stops in their speech than the older speakers. According to Wright, glottal stops generally appear between vowels, but sometimes even in the end of a word as in *Gi' u' 'ere* and *Tha' blo' wants some bra'ets* – that is, *Get up here* and *That bloke wants some brackets*.

Matthews (1972, 14) provides interesting examples of how London place names have been pronounced by Cockneys over the years. These examples contain several features of pronunciation mentioned above. The first set is from Henry Machyn's diary which he kept from 1550 to 1563, using phonetic spelling: *Vestmynster*, *Kyn bynshe*, *Tames* and *Bushops Gate*. The more modern versions are used chiefly by

cabdrivers and railwaymen. Matthews' (1972, 66) list of examples includes, among others, *Nottin' Ill Gite*, *Edge-wer Rowd*, *Chairin' Krauss* and *S'n Jimes-iz Pawk*.

3.4 Some Aspects of Cockney Vocabulary

As Cockney went hand in hand with standard English in the past, it is hardly surprising that over 90 per cent of the vocabulary is of Anglo-Saxon origin, as Wright (1981, 25–28) points out. The remaining ten per cent are loan words from several different areas of life. Some words have been conventionally borrowed from foreign languages. Wright (1981, 39) mentions words like *skipper* (Dutch), *spaghetti* (Italian) and Yiddish *bubbler*, a Yiddish term used affectionately for babies.

According to Matthews (1972, 146–149) cant, the secret language of thieves, has been mentioned as one of the chief origins of Cockney, and words like *doss*, *snooze*, *pinch* and *bloke* have become widely used as slang terms by others than Cockneys too. Gypsies and pugilists have provided Cockney with terms like *pal* and *knock-out*. Nautical terminology, on the other hand, has had less of an impact on the vocabulary than could be expected from the frequent contacts between Londoners and sailors in the East End Docklands, but *shove your oar in* and some other expressions have been established as parts of Cockney and English more generally.

Matthews (1972, 147–149) maintains that during the First World War many new words were coined, but only a few of them, such as *muck in* and *shove off* have survived since. Cockneys revived the popularity of many old English slang words, e.g. *swell* and *skirt* (meaning a girl) by adopting them from American movies, together with some American slang like *boyfriend*.

Music halls also enriched Cockney vocabulary. According Matthews (1972, 83), they became popular entertainment places in London in the 1850s. The major one,

the Canterbury Music Hall, was built in 1848 and in 1870 *The Music Hall Critic* listed over 30 of them. According to Wright (1981, 20), the songs have contributed several catch phrases to Cockney dialect, some of them becoming popular in other dialects as well – indeed, one can still hear people exclaiming “*Cor blimey!*” or advising someone to stay calm by saying “*Keep yer ‘air on!*” Some of the linguistic features present in the songs cannot be found in literature and all in all the slang used in them was more up to date and innovative than in the novels. As the shows became more popular, says more people were needed to perform. Music hall songs were in the end true folk songs; sung by Londoners to Londoners.

The vocabulary of Cockney proves the point made about slang earlier in this work; slang is characteristically a question of vocabulary. Although the vocabulary of Cockney dialect mainly consists of general English lexemes, the slang words and rhyming slang expressions in particular, form a characteristic part of the London dialect. The following two chapters of the work in hand deals with the formation and characteristics of the rhymes.

4. Cockney Rhyming Slang

The aim in this chapter is to study the formation and main characteristics of the rhymes. The first section is a brief introduction to the history of rhyming slang. The formation and the denotations of the rhymes are dealt with in section 4.2. The origins of the rhymes are discussed in section 4.2.2 and the final section of this chapter comprises of a brief discussion on the present-day situation of Cockney rhyming slang.

4.1 Some Historical Aspects of Rhyming Slang

According to Matthews (1972, 132), rhyming slang was originally developed by the Cockneys in the 1840s as a secret language. It was first used by ballad-sellers and costermongers, but as the rhymes become a part of music hall songs and writings in sporting journals, they gradually spread among Londoners and became more widely used.

Julian Franklyn (1961, 16) states that rhyming slang originates from the secret language of thieves. Wright (1981, 94), on the other hand, suggests that rhyming slang originates from several different sources; beggars, bricklayers and Cockney navvies who worked at the East End Docks. Baltrop and Wolveridge (1980, 31–32) do not agree with these explanations:

The theory that it was a secret language used by costermongers and criminals does not hold water. [...] But the fact is that there has never been sufficient usable rhyming slang to form a language or code. It has not related to any special subject or activity, and is simply a miscellaneous collection of phrases based on words which lent themselves to the treatment. The popularisation of it in the last forty years has given the impression that Cockneys have a full vocabulary of it. Nothing of the kind has never existed.

Baltrop and Wolveridge (1980, 32) also claim that the Cockneys did not invent rhyming slang but merely kept some of the expressions alive. Whatever the case, new rhymes are constantly invented and many of the old ones are still widely used.

4.2 The Rhymes

According to Antonio Lillo (2000, 145), rhyming slang in its basic form is quite straightforward: “the target word that conveys the intended meaning is replaced by another word or phrase rhyming with it, the rhyming element being sometimes dropped.” The following sections deal with the rhymes in more detail.

4.2.1 The Formation of the Rhymes

According to Partridge (1972, 276) rhyming slang expressions are formed of two or more rarely, of one or three words, of which the last one rhymes or nearly rhymes with the target word; for example *China Plate* means *mate*. In an ideal situation, says Wright (1981, 98), a rhyme consists of two words and only contains two stressed syllables, for example *Dáisy Roóts* (*boots*). Brian Murdoch (1983, 28) defines a rhyme as follows: “the basic form is a genuine two-beat phrase in various permutations, standing for a rhyming word probably of one or two syllables.” The rhyme can, in many cases, be longer than the target word, as Leonard R. N. Ashley (1977, 126) points out.

Murdoch (1983, 24) appropriately remarks that “the rhymes upon which the slang is based apply to London pronunciation.” For example, *Round the Houses* (*trousers*) does not rhyme in standard pronunciation, but a Londoner, according to Murdoch (1983, 24), pronounces *Round the Houses* as [ra:ni ‘a:ziz] and *trousers* as [tra:ziz]. Some of the rhymes do not rhyme at all, even if pronounced by a Cockney, for

example *Jack Jones (alone)* or the single lexemes used to denote amounts of money: *Monkey (£500)*, *Pony (£25)* and *Score (£20)*.

The economical nature of language shortens certain rhymes. According to Wright (1981, 104–107), when a rhyme is shortened, the rhyming word is omitted and the first one is always retained. Thus *feet* become *Plates*, short for *Plates of Meat*. In some cases the shortened form may cause embarrassing situations if the speaker does not know the original meaning since the rhymes are very rarely transparent. *Raspberry Tart*, for example, can become *Raspberry* or even just *Ra* – from those two letters alone it is nearly impossible to derive the original meaning of the rhyme, *fart*, especially if out of context.

Ashley (1978, 116) provides an illustrative example of the abbreviation of rhymes:

On BBC television on October 1975 they [the comedy team of Morecambe and Wise] gave us this little exchange:
I grew spices for a man in India.
Ginger?
No, he was married.
 Got it? No? Well, *Ginger Beer = queer.*

According to Wright (1981, 107), abbreviation is not always possible. If the two words in the rhyme are both stressed and form together a personal name, e.g. *Uncle Ned (bed)*, the rhyme can not be abbreviated. If the rhyme contains three words or more, and if two of them are significant, then the first two words are retained as in *Take a Butchers (Hook) (look)*. Sometimes the shortening occurs through blending, e.g. *God Forbids (kids)* becomes *Godfer*. Murdoch (1983, 29) provides two examples of blended abbreviations: *Rub-a-Dub-Dub – pub* becomes *Rubbidy* and *Tit for Tat (hat)* is frequently used in the shorter form *Tifter*.

As Murdoch (1983, 28–29) points out, a rhyme can be used in three different ways. The whole rhyme, including the rhyming part, can be used, or only the abbreviated form. In some cases either the full or the abbreviated form is equally used. For example, as Murdoch says, *Elephant and Castle (arse)* is always used in the full form in order to avoid confusion with the rhyme *Elephant's Trunk (drunk)*. On the other hand, as Wright (1981, 105) and Franklyn (1961, 11) state, the latter is frequently used in the abbreviated form; if someone is heavily under the influence of alcohol, he or she is simply *Elephants*. Rhymes like *Apples and Pears (stairs)* or *Plates of Meat (feet)* are most often used in the abbreviated forms *Apples* and *Plates*. According to Murdoch (1983, 28), *Mince Pies (eyes)* and *Hampstead Heath (teeth)* are examples of rhymes that appear both in the full form and as abbreviations *Minces* and *Hampsteads*. He also points out that the speakers do know the whole rhyme even if only the abbreviated form is used.

Buthcer and Gnutzamann (1977) introduce four main categories for forming rhyming slang expressions. They divide rhymes into (1) Forms with General Lexemes, (2) Forms with Proper Nouns, (3) Adjective + Noun and (4) Genitive Constructions. The first category consists of two lexemes joined by *and*, for example *Rattle and Clank (bank)* and compound nouns, e.g. *Cheese Grater (waiter)*. The second category includes specific proper nouns like *John Prescott (waistcoat)*, general proper nouns, e.g. *Uncle Ben (ten)* and place names like *Milton Keynes (beans)*. The third category, Adjective + Noun, includes rhymes like *Sticky Toffee (coffee)* and the fourth category of genitive constructions with either *of* or the inflection with *'s*: *Joy of my Life (wife)* and *Jagger's Lips (chips)*⁴.

⁴ All examples are from Ray Puxley's *Fresh Rabbit. A Dick'n'Arry of Contemporary Rhyming Slang* (1998).

There are several other constructions among the rhymes listed in different rhyming slang dictionaries. These are further introduced in chapter 5 of the work in hand.

4.2.2 The Rhymes and Their Denotations

Wright (1981, 94–113) gives an interesting insight to the rhyming part of Cockney slang. It is, according to Wright, far more inventive and variable than the main body of the general vocabulary, although the rhymes mainly concentrate on relatively restricted areas of human life. Most of the rhymes are associated with drink, parts of the body and its function, clothing and some general household objects and pets. Murdoch (1983, 25) summarises the contents of rhyming slang nicely:

For the most part the most striking thing about rhyming slang is the very ordinariness of the objects for which there is a slang term, nearly all such as would not require or benefit from concealment.

Antonio Lillo (2000, 146) states that the target word of a certain rhyme is not always obvious because

- (a) The underlying word may itself be a slang term: *French Loaf* ‘£4’ (*rouf*, London back-slang for *four*).
- (b) The expression may be based on dialectal or Cockney rhyme. *Covent Garden* ‘*a farthing*’, for example, relies on the broad Cockney pronunciation of farthing as [‘fa:dm].
- (c) The expression may be based on an imperfect rhyme: *Jimmy O’Goblin* ‘*sovereign*’, pronounced [‘sovryn]; *I Should Coco* ‘*I should say so.*’
- (d) The expression sometimes rhymes with a word that is itself the short form for another phrase. *Old Bubble* ‘*wife*’ has been arrived at like this: *Old Bubble* ‘*trouble*’, short for *Trouble and Strife* ‘*wife.*’
[My emphasis]

As the analysis in chapter 5 will show, most of the rhymes denote nouns.

Nouns prevail because they are easy to modify and common in general everyday

vocabulary. There are, however, several rhymes denoting verbs, adjectives and numerals as well.

One particular area of rhyming slang expressions are rhymes referring to money. As Baltrop and Wolveridge (1980, 16) point out, the lack of money has ruled the life in the East End. The following examples are included in Lillo's (2000, 153–166) glossary:

Abraham's willing	shilling
Arthur Ashe	cash
Ayrton Senna	tenner (£10)
Big Ben	ten (£10)
Bugs Bunny	money
Charlie Core	score (£20)
Clodhopper	copper (a penny)
Deep Sea Diver	fiver (£5)
Hole in the Ground	one pound
Orange Squash	dosh (money)
Oxford Scholar	a dollar
Rogue and Villain	shilling
Top Gun	ton (£100)

As can be noted from the examples above, more than one rhyme can refer to the same target word. On the other hand, one rhyme may have many meanings, as in the case of *Finger and Thumb* for example – the rhyme stands for *drum*, *mun*, *rum* and *chum*.

According to Ashley (1977, 133–148), there are various sources behind the rhymes. His list comprises of (examples of each in brackets) music hall songs and performers (*Jenny Hills – pills*), theatre, cinema (*Beattie & Babs – crabs*, from the 1930s entertainers) and musicals (*Vera Lynn – gin*). Place names (*Barnet Fair – hair*, *Isle of France – dance*) and proper nouns, both real (*Conan Doyle – boil*) and invented (*Charlie Howard – coward*, *Jerry McGin – chin*, *Mrs Chant – aunt*) have produced many long-lived rhymes. Invented proper nouns were, according to Ashley (1977, 148), taken into use only because they rhyme with the target word. Ashley's list goes on with names of

department stores (*C&A – gay, homosexual*), companies (*Bryant and Mays – stays*⁵), products (*Gordon and Scotch – watch*) and trade names (*Oxo Cube – tube, the underground*). To complete the list, Ashley mentions literature; from the Bible come *Adam and Eve (believe)* and *Cain and Abel (table)*, *Oliver Twist (fist)* and *Robinson Crusoe (do so)* are examples from the more earthy literary tradition.

4.2.3 The Origins of the Rhymes

The origins of each individual rhyme are obscure and often impossible to trace. Some of the origins have, however, been documented.

Usually the connection between the names of people in the rhymes and the objects they denote is purely a matter of chance, as in the case of *Derby Kelly (belly)*, which, according to Wright (1981, 99–100) “comes from two founder members of the Plymouth Brethren in the early nineteenth century, although how the working-class originators of rhyming slang came to know the names of two otherwise obscure middle-class men remains a mystery.”

There is certainly something mysterious about *Kate Carney*, too, as Matthews (1972, 98) points out. Why is the name of an old music hall singer used to denote *army*? The case of *Rosy Lee*, discussed by Wright (1981, 97–98), on the other hand, is more straightforward. *Rosie Lee* is used for *tea* because of the Gypsy who predicted the futures of the fine ladies from tea leaves.

Matthews (1972, 102) cites an old song sung by girls playing a skipping game:

Eight o'clock bells are ringing.
 Mother may I go out?
 My young man's awaiting
 For to take me out.
 First he buys me *apples*,

⁵ Ashley (1977, 142) explains: “formerly useful to refer to corset stays, manufacturers of matches.”

Then he buys me *pears*,
 Then he gives me sixpence
 To kiss him on the *stairs*.
 I don't want your *apples*,
 I don't want your *pears*,
 I don't want your sixpence
 To kiss me on the *stairs*.
 [My emphasis]

This song could explain why stairs are still *Apples and Pears*. Many other rhymes, *Dickory Dock (clock)* among others, have been adopted from children's chants.

Lillo (2001a, 342) suggests that *Front Wheel Skid for Yid*, which has been in use since the 1920s, "originated as a humorous allusion to Jewish cab-drivers." Ashley (1977, 141) provides a couple of explanations, too. According to him, *Hobson's Choice (voice)* comes from a livery stable owner, who gave the client no choice but to take the next available horse from the stable.

Ashley (1977, 129) can not explain why *cold* is *Potatoes in the Mould*, but he finds a source for *Elephant and Castle (arse)*. According to him, the rhyme originates from the lines of the song below:

Oh, my sister's name is Tilly,
 She's a whore in Piccadilly,
 And my mother is another in The Strand.
 And my brother peddles *arsehole*
 At the *Elephant and Castle*.
 [My emphasis]

It would be an interesting, though nearly impossible, task to try and find out the origins of each individual rhyme. As Ashley (1977, 130) remarks, the origins are often obscure even to the users of Cockney rhyming slang.

4.3 Cockney Rhyming Slang Today

Betty Kirkpatrick (2001, 5) summarises the current situation of Cockney rhyming slang in the Introduction to her booklet:

[...] rhyming slang has not only survived the decades, but it is currently enjoying something of a revival; a revival seemingly helped by the Internet. This is particularly true among young people who may feel attracted to its inventiveness and its irreverence. Cockney rhyming slang tends to be at the opposite end of the spectrum from politically correct language.

Lillo (2001b) discusses word-formation and innovativeness amongst drug-users. He provides the reader with a couple of recent examples of recent rhyming slang: *Niki Lauda*⁶ for *powder*, *Damon Hill* for *pill* and *Lou Reed* for *speed* which, according to Lillo (2001b, 40) “shows us that rhyming slang is just as innovative and responsive to popular culture as any other form of slang.”

The popularity of rhyming slang is also proven by the many pocketbook-sized glossaries available on Cockney rhyming slang. The most recent of these is *The Little Book on Cockney Rhyming Slang* by Betty Kirkpatrick (2001). As the name suggests, the book is small, only some three inches by four, but comprising of nearly a hundred pages. Kirkpatrick’s work includes translations from rhyming slang to English as well as from English to rhyming slang. In the brief introductory chapter Kirkpatrick gives a very succinct account of Cockney rhyming slang. Some of the rhymes included are briefly explained, but there are no actual examples of the usage of the rhymes.

However, the explanations are interesting, for instance the entry for *Barnet Fair* meaning *hair* (p. 9) is followed by “a major horse fair held in Barnet, Greater London,

⁶ Lillo (2001b, 40) explains the origins of the rhymes: “Niki Lauda, Australian motor-racing driver, born 1960, Damon Hill, Great Britain, motor-racing driver and Lou Reed, American rockstar, born 1944.”

from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries”. *Plymouth Argyll* meaning *file*, (the tool) is explained to be an English football team (p. 47).

Jack Jones’ *Rhyming Cockney Slang* was first published in 1971 and the twenty-second impression of this “portable Cockney kit”, as the author introduces his work, was published in 1994. The booklet only contains some 35 pages, but the rhymes included are good representatives of rhyming slang. The glossary consists of two parts; the first is Cockney to English and the second English to Cockney. Some of the rhymes included are illustrated with an example of the rhyme used in a sentence. In many cases, however, the rhyme has been abbreviated in the example sentence and no explanations for the abbreviation are offered. For instance, the rhyme (p. 17) *God Forbids*, meaning *kids*, is followed by the clause “They’re noisy Godfors”.

Bob Aylwin’s *A Load of Cockney Cobblers* appeared in 1973. Aylwin introduces the rhymes grouped according to the field of life they belong to. Thus, he has chapters like “Parts of the Body”, “Money”, “Vulgarity”, “Wearing Apparel”, “Relations” and “Racing”. Aylwin has included in his glossary commonly known rhymes like *Almond Rocks (socks)*, *Daisy Roots (boots)* and *Tit for tat (hat)*. The booklet contains, in addition to the glossaries from slang to English and English to slang, illustrative passages in which the rhymes are used, but otherwise no examples or explanations are given. But as Ashley (1977, 125) puts it, “Aylwin’s popular little paperback [...] is an amusing introduction to the subject”.

Ray Puxley has published two dictionaries on rhyming slang. The first one, *Cockney Rabbit. A Dick’n’Arry of Contemporary Rhyming Slang*, appeared in 1992. It is used as a source for data in the analysis in chapter 5 of the work in hand. The second one, *Fresh Rabbit. A Dick’n’Arry of Contemporary Rhyming Slang* could be seen as an appendix to Puxley’s earlier dictionary. It mainly comprises of rhymes that Puxley has

collected after the publication of *Cockney Rabbit* but it also contains some rhymes, such as *Five to Two (Jew)* and *Garden Gate (eight)* that were also included in his first book. *Fresh Rabbit*, in spite of its name, contains some rhymes that Puxley has defined obsolete. For example, *Cabman's Rest (breasts)* is listed, although the entry states that it is “an old, obsolete piece which shows that cabbies of the past weren't just interested in tips” (p. 17). All in all, however, Puxley's dictionary contains many rhymes that have been coined recently, like *Brad Pitt (shit)*, after the American actor or *Saddam Hussein (pain)*, based on the notorious Iraqi leader.

Glossaries on Cockney rhyming slang are widely available on the Internet. As these glossaries are necessarily not, due to the nature of the Internet as a medium, permanently available, the discussion here will be on general level only. Entering “Cockney rhyming slang” as the search word in the Internet search engine resulted into a list of hundreds of links, some more relevant than others. The contents of the web pages varied from tourist information to discussion groups and encyclopaedic entries on Cockney, from people's home pages to glossaries and translators of different kinds and sizes. Briefest glossaries only listed about ten of the most common rhymes, but many glossaries reach up to hundreds of examples of rhyming slang.

The two first sites in the list of search results were the most extensive and informative of the sites. Jeremy Alderton's site⁷ includes, in addition to the glossary, a brief introduction to Cockney and rhyming slang. Gordon Daniel Smith's glossary includes over a thousand rhyming slang expressions. This site will be used as a source for data in the following analysis (chapter 5) and its contents will be dealt with in more detail then. Also the site on London slang by Rob (see footnote) is recommendable.

⁷ Alderton's site: <http://www.albertons.com/>, Smith's site: <http://cockneyrhymingslang.co.uk/> and Rob's site: <http://www.london slang.com/Rob>, all available 10th December 2002.

Some examples of recent rhyming slang from Smith's glossary are worth mentioning here. You can ask your friend to send you a text message, or a *T-Rex* on your *Uncle Toby* (*Moby, a mobile phone*), your operator in Great Britain is likely to be *Whiskey and Soda* (*Voda*). You can also send your friend *British Rail* (*e-mail*) on your *Car and Scooter* (*computer*) while surfing on a *Wind and Kite* (*website*).

As the examples above indicate, Cockney rhyming slang is still, after decades, used exercise both the speaker's and the listener's minds and to make everyday speech more colourful and lively. Cockney rhyming slang seems to keep up with the developments in other areas of life; new rhymes are invented as new technological innovations appear.

5. A Concise Statistical Analysis of Cockney Rhyming Slang

This chapter comprises of a statistical study of the rhymes used in Cockney rhyming slang.

5.1 The Data for the Present Analysis

The form of the following statistical analysis is based on the analysis conducted by Andrew Butcher and Klaus Gnutzmann (1977). Before the introduction of the methods used, the data for the analysis in hand will be introduced.

The data, 2324 rhymes, originates from two sources, Gordon Daniel Smith's glossary "Cockney Rhyming Slang"⁸ which is available on the Internet and Ray Puxley's dictionary *Cockney Rabbit. A Dick'n'Arry of Rhyming Slang* (1992).

Gordon Daniel Smith's dictionary includes over 1200 entries of rhyming slang. According to the Disclaimer on his site, the material is gathered from public domain sources, slang users in particular. Smith has been running the site for two years (personal communication⁹).

Smith has, living near London, always been interested in rhyming slang. At college he discovered that lots of people from all over the country and all over the world are also fascinated by rhyming slang. Thus, he decided to put up a site on the Internet for rhyming slang. The glossary is based on enthusiasm, according to his own words Smith has "no qualifications at all" (personal communication, see previous footnote).

⁸ Address: <http://www.cockneyrhymingslang.co.uk>, available 10th December 2002.

⁹ This introduction is based on our e-mail exchange, 20th and 21st October 2002.

According to Smith (personal communication, see previous footnote), all rhymes submitted to the glossary go through a fairly rigorous review process before they are published. About 50 percent of the rhymes submitted are rejected, usually because they already are in the dictionary, but also because they represent general, not rhyming, slang. Some rhymes are rejected because they have been obviously made up or are of very low quality.

“If I have heard a rhyme on television or radio or in the pub, then I will almost certainly include it. Rhyming slang is being created all the time, and if it does rhyme and is topical there are no real grounds to reject it”, Smith defines the qualifications for accepting a new rhyme into the glossary.

The other source for data, Ray Puxley’s *Cockney Rabbit: A Dick’n’Arry of Rhyming Slang*, was published in 1992. According to the Introduction to *Cockney Rabbit* (p. iii), Puxley’s aim in compiling the dictionary was not to examine the history of Cockney but rather record terms that he has heard and used himself, being a native Londoner.

Puxley’s dictionary includes both old and more recent examples of rhyming slang. Some of the rhymes are defined as archaic or obsolete, for example, *Jem Mace* for *face* is, according to the entry (p. 99), “An archaic piece based on the name of a 19th century bare knuckle boxing champion (1831–1910).” *Wanstead Flats* for *spats* (p. 198) is defined as “An obsolete term for a long departed fashion.”

Each entry includes a translation into English, a brief comment on the usage of the rhyme and in some cases, explanation of the origins as well as information of the abbreviation of the term in question. The book also includes a reverse dictionary.

Of the 2324 rhymes included in the analysis, 1134 come from Gordon Daniel Smith’s glossary and the remaining 1190 from Ray Puxley’s dictionary. The data was

first collected from Smith's glossary and after that, rhymes that were not already in the list were added from Puxley's dictionary.

5.2 Analysis and Results

The study conducted by Butcher and Gnutzmann (1977, 1–10) only included rhymes denoting nouns. In what follows, the analysis is expanded to include three other word categories, verbs, adjectives and numerals, as well.

Butcher and Gnutzmann (1977, 7–8) used Julian Franklyn's *A Dictionary of Rhyming Slang* (1960) and Bob Aylwin's *A Load of Cockney Cobblers. London Rhyming Slang Interpreted* (1973) as the sources of their study material. Their data consisted of 624 rhymes that were still in use at the time of their study. In the analysis, they studied 581 rhymes denoting nouns by dividing them into four major categories; (1) Forms with General Lexemes, (2) Forms with Proper Nouns, (3) Adjective + Noun and (3) Genitive Constructions. These categories, the third one excluded, were further divided into patterns (examples in brackets) (1) Noun and Noun (*Cow and Calf – laugh*), Other Coordinations (*Here and There – chair*) and Compound nouns (*Currant Bun – sun*), (2) Specific Proper Nouns (*Harvey Nichols – pickles*), General Proper Nouns (*Uncle Ned – bed*), Place Names (*Colney Hatches – matches*), (4) Genitive constructions with *of* (*Field of Wheat – street*) and Inflected Genitive Constructions (*Fisherman's Daughter – water*). The third category, Adjective + Noun included forms like *Flowerly Dell (cell)*. The data also included some rhymes that did not follow any of the patterns.

The categories are slightly modified for the following analysis; the pattern Other Coordinations is omitted and the pattern Genitive Constructions with *of* is expanded to include all constructions with *of*. In addition, the analysis includes two new

patterns; Forms with One Lexeme (for instance, *Battleships – lips*) and Forms with Three Lexemes (*Queens Park Ranger – stranger*). Again, there are several rhymes that do not follow any of the patterns above.

The categorisation was not always a straightforward process since some of the rhymes contain words which are not listed in English language dictionaries, e.g. *Khyber Pass (ass)*, *Roath (four)* and *Nig Nog (wog)*.

In order to enable comparison with the analysis conducted by Butcher and Gnutzmann, the rhymes with no patterns were further divided into eleven categories: 1) Verbal Phrase, 2) Phrase, 3) Verb and Verb, 4) Adjective and Adjective, 5) Pronoun and Pronoun, 6) Noun + Adjective, Numerals Included, 7) Rhymes with Adverbs, 9) Onomatopoeia, 10) Invented Lexemes and 11) Others. Examples of each will be provided together with the discussion on the results of each word category.

As noted above, the data for the analysis originally consisted of 2324 different rhymes. Several of the rhymes denote more than one lexeme in English. Some of these lexemes belong to different word groups, and it was not possible, based on the information given in the glossaries used as data, to define them into one word group only. Thus, such rhymes were analysed in more than one category and hence counted twice. Some rhymes were marked, for example, as both noun and verb in the word lists. These were also analysed in both categories. For instance, *Crocodile (smile)* can mean either a smile on a person's face or the act of smiling and *George Michael (cycle)*, according to the examples provided by Smith (on the Internet), denotes both the act of driving a bicycle and women's menstrual cycle. Some rhymes also denoted both a noun and an adjective (*Sugar and Spice – ice, nice*) and a noun and a numeral (*Garden Gate – magistrate, mate and eight*). This double categorisation, as rhymes denoting two different word categories were counted twice, resulted into 2412 rhymes as the total

number of items analysed. Rhymes that had more than one meaning were only counted twice if the meanings belonged to different word categories, for example *Bubble and Squeak* (see below) was counted twice (meanings include nouns and adjectives), not four times (the total number of meanings).

There were altogether 22 rhymes in the data that had only one meaning listed in English and that could be listed as both a noun and a verb. 148 rhymes had two unrelated meanings, for example *Mother Kelly* for *jelly* and *telly*, *Lilley and Skinner* for *dinner* and *beginner*, 24 rhymes denoted three unrelated words of English. These included for example *Finger and Thumb* with the meanings *rum*, *drum* and *mum* and *This and That* for *cat*, *hat* and *bat*. Six rhymes were listed with four different meanings and three had as many as five meanings in English:

Bubble and Squeak	beak (magistrate) Greek weak week
Hot Cross Bun	gun nun son sun
Jack and Jill	bill (statement) hill pill till
Nanny Goat	boat coat throat tote
Noah's Ark	dark nark park shark

Tommy Dodd	God odd rod (gun) sod
Currant Bun	nun run son sun The Sun (newspaper)
Duke of York	chalk cork fist fork talk
Harry Tate	eight late mate plate state

Of the 2412 rhymes the majority, 81,80% (1973) denoted nouns, rhymes denoting verbs and adjectives were the next largest groups; 8,21% (198) and 7,55% (182), respectively. 1,82% (44) of the rhymes listed denoted numerals and the remaining 0,62% (15) phrases, which were excluded from the analysis. Ten of the rhymes listed denoting adverbs were included in the list of adjectives in the analysis.

The results of the analysis are summarised in numbers and in percentages in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Appendix.

5.2.1 Rhymes Denoting Nouns

The data, 2412 rhymes, contained 1973 (81,80%) rhymes denoting nouns. The rhymes fell into the patterns as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Noun & Noun	<i>(Thimble and Thumb – rum)</i>	14,60%	(288)
Compound Nouns	<i>(Hay Stack – back)</i>	21,49%	(424)
Proper Nouns	<i>(John Cleese – cheese)</i>	24,48%	(483)
General Proper Nouns	<i>(Uncle Sam – lamb)</i>	1,22%	(24)
Place Names	<i>(New Delhi – belly)</i>	2,18%	(43)
Adjective + Noun	<i>(Blue Moon – spoon)</i>	8,26%	(163)
Constructions with of	<i>(Gates of Rome – home)</i>	4,87%	(96)
Genitive ('s)	<i>(Pig's Ear – beer)</i>	3,19%	(63)
One Lexeme	<i>(Pineapple – chapel)</i>	4,56%	(90)
Three Lexemes	<i>(Deep Sea Glider – cider)</i>	3,50%	(69)
No Pattern	<i>(Swiftly Flowing – going)</i>	11,66%	(320)

The analysis shows that most of the rhymes denoting nouns follow the patterns; 88,36% fell into the categories. The most common pattern, 24,48%, is Proper Nouns followed by Compound Nouns, 21,49%. All in all, patterns containing nouns prove to be more common than those containing adjectives are. Only the category of General Proper Nouns forms an exception to this; only 1,22% of the rhymes denoting nouns follow this pattern. Constructions with *of*, Inflected Genitives and patterns with One or Three Lexemes appear to be roughly equally important ways of forming rhyming slang expressions.

Further analysis shows that the 230 rhymes (11,66% of the total) that do not follow the original patterns can be categorised as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Verbal Phrase	<i>(Don't Be Rude – food)</i>	19,57%	(45)
Phrase	<i>(Down the Drains – brains)</i>	20,43%	(47)
Verb and Verb	<i>(Talk and Mutter – butter)</i>	24,35%	(56)
Adjective and Adjective	<i>(Blue and Grey – day)</i>	13,04%	(30)
Pronoun and Pronoun	<i>(Me and You – menu)</i>	2,17%	(5)
Noun + Adjective	<i>(Cherry Ripe – pipe)</i>	4,35%	(10)
Numerals Included	<i>(Eighteen Pence – sense)</i>	4,35%	(10)
Rhymes with Adverbs	<i>(Far and Near – beer)</i>	5,22%	(12)
Onomatopoeia	<i>(Hey Diddle Diddle – fiddle)</i>	1,30%	(3)
Invented Lexemes	<i>(Riff Raff – Taff¹⁰)</i>	2,61%	(6)
Others	<i>(To and Fro – snow)</i>	2,61%	(6)

¹⁰ *Taff* means a Welsh person.

The category Others here included rhymes formed by four lexemes (*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang – Cockney rhyming slang*), preposition and preposition (*To and Fro–snow*), among others.

The most common pattern among the forms not following the original patterns is Verb and Verb; 24,35% of the rhymes were formed in this way. The second largest group, by 20,34%, is formed of phrases followed by patterns Verbal Phrase, 19,57% and Adjective and Adjective, 13,04%. Onomatopoeia is not, based on this study, a productive pattern; only 1,30% of the 230 rhymes were onomatopoetical.

Before concentrating on the analysis of rhymes denoting verbs, a couple of remarks on rhymes of special interest in the list of rhymes denoting nouns are in order.

The rhymes included in the analysis in hand included all in all two instances of double rhyme; that is, both of the lexemes in the rhyme rhyme with the target words: *Balloon Car (saloon bar)* and *Billy Hunt (silly cunt)*.

The other interesting notion is the effect of singular versus plural in the rhymes. The data included pairs of rhymes where adding the plural -s changed the meaning of the rhyme, for instance, *Greengage* denotes *stage*, but *Greengages* denotes *wages*. Similarly, *Housemaid's Knee* means *sea*, but *Housemaid's Knees* means *keys*, *Jellied Eel* denotes *deal* but *Jellied Eels* means *wheels* and *Jockey's Whip* stands for *kip* but *Jockey's Whips* means *chips*.

Several English nouns had more than one rhyme referring to them; the list, for instance, included three rhymes referring to the noun *bar* (*Bazaar, Near and Far* and *Jack Tar*), four rhymes denoting *nose* (*I Suppose, Irish Rose, Garden Hose* and *Bugle*), five rhymes for *butter* (*Stammer and Stutter, Talk and Mutter, Johnnie Rutter, Pull down the Shutter* and *Mutter and Stutter*) and finally, six rhymes for *car* (*Jam Jar,*

Kareem Abdul Jabbar, La-Di-Dah, Near and Far, Yo Yo Ma and Danny Marr), amongst others.

5.2.2 Rhymes Denoting Verbs

In the analysis in hand rhymes denoting verbs formed the second largest group after the rhymes denoting nouns. The list of 2412 rhymes included 198 (8,21%) that denote verbs. The rhymes fell into the patterns as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets)

Noun and Noun	<i>(Fruit and Nut – cut)</i>	11,11%	(22)
Compound Nouns	<i>(Brussel Sprout – shout)</i>	17,86%	(35)
Proper Nouns	<i>(Steffi Graf – laugh)</i>	30,80%	(61)
General Proper Nouns	<i>(Uncle Mac – smack)</i>	1,01%	(2)
Place Names	<i>(Southend-on-Sea – pee)</i>	0,51%	(1)
Adjective + Noun	<i>(Rotten Row – blow)</i>	6,06%	(12)
Constructions with of	<i>(Bottle of Fizz – whizz¹¹)</i>	4,04%	(8)
Genitive ('s)	<i>(Star's Nap – tap¹²)</i>	3,54%	(7)
One Lexeme	<i>(Beehive – dive)</i>	4,04%	(8)
Three Lexemes	<i>(All Night Rave – shave)</i>	2,02%	(4)
No Pattern	<i>(Bo Peep – sleep)</i>	19,19%	(38)

The analysis shows that the rhymes denoting verbs follow the patterns nearly as often as the rhymes denoting nouns; 80,99% fell into the categories. The most common pattern, 30,80%, is Proper Nouns followed by Compound Nouns, 17,86%. All in all, patterns containing verbs prove to be the most common process of forming rhymes denoting verbs. Only the category of General Proper Nouns forms an exception to this; only 1,01% of the rhymes follow this pattern. Constructions with *of*, Inflected Genitives and patterns with One Lexeme appear to be roughly equally important ways of forming rhyming slang expressions denoting verbs. Place Names are, on the basis of

¹¹ *Whizz* means *to steal*.

¹² *Tap* means *to borrow*.

this analysis, not commonly used as rhymes denoting verbs; only 0,51% of the rhymes following the patterns fell into this category.

Further analysis shows that the 38 rhymes (19,19% of the total) that do not follow the original patterns can be categorised as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Verbal Phrase	(<i>Chew that Fat – chat</i>)	23,68%	(9)
Phrase	(<i>Penny a Mile – smile</i>)	13,16%	(5)
Verb and Verb	(<i>Snoop and Pry – cry</i>)	39,47%	(15)
Adjective & Adjective	(<i>Tidy and Neat – eat</i>)	2,63%	(1)
Pronoun and Pronoun	(<i>That and This – piss</i>)	2,63%	(1)
Noun + Adjective	(<i>Chicken Hearted – farted</i>)	2,63%	(1)
Numerals Included		0%	(–)
Rhymes with Adverbs	(<i>Swiftly Flowing – going</i>)	2,63%	(1)
Onomatopoeia		0%	(–)
Invented Lexemes		0%	(–)
Others	(<i>Bob and Weave – leave</i>)	13,16%	(5)

The category Others here included rhymes consisting of an adjective; *Drip Dry* for *cry*, one noun-verb compound, where the first part of the rhyme could be understood as a proper noun; *Bo Peep (sleep)*, one instance of a pattern verb and noun; *Struggle and Strain (train)*, one example of noun and verb; *Bob and Weave (leave)* and finally, one rhyme consisting of a compound of an adjective and a verb; *Hard Hit (shit)*.

The most common pattern among the forms not following the original patterns is Verb and Verb; 39,47% of the rhymes were formed in this way. The second largest group, by 23,68%, is formed of verbal phrases followed by patterns Phrase and the category of Others, both resulting into 13,16%. The patterns Adjective and Adjective, Pronoun and Pronoun, Noun + Adjective and Rhymes with Adverbs were each represented by one rhyme, i.e. 2,36%, in this study. None of the rhymes denoting verbs included numerals, nor were any formed by onomatopoeia or invented lexemes.

The list of rhymes denoting both verbs and nouns included rhymes like *Jack Palance (dance)*, *Dynamite (fight)*, *Penny a Mile (smile)*, *Hit and Miss (kiss)*, *Salvador Dalí (drink)* and *Natter (chat)*.

Several English verbs had more than one rhyme referring to them; the list included two rhymes referring to the verbs *chat (Natter and Top Hat)*, *drink (Salvador Dalí and Tumble down the Sink)*, *smile (Crocodile and Penny a Mile)* and *wash (Bob Squash, Lemon Squash)*. Five rhymes refer to the verb *shave (All Night Rave, Chas and Dave, Dig in the Grave, Misbehave and Ocean Wave)* and eight to the verb *laugh (Bird Bath, Bubble Bath, Cow's Calf, Giraffe, Jimmy Giraffe, Steffi Graf, Tin Bath and Turkish Bath)*.

The act of urinating has, according to the data, inspired many users of Cockney rhyming slang; there were altogether 31 rhymes, 15,57% of the data, that refer to that particular bodily function. The list included English verbs *burst, leak, pee, piddle, piss, slash, sprinkle* and *wee*. Ten of the rhymes, like *French Kiss* and *That and This* rhymed with *piss*, eight with *slash*, for instance *Mark Ramprakash* and *Pie and Smash*. There were five rhymes that referred to *pee* and *wee*; *Cup of Tea*, *Fiddler's Three* and *Riddle me ree*, for example. *Ken Smee* was only translated as *pee*, although it also rhymes with *wee*. The verb *piddle* had four rhymes, like *Pig in the Middle* and *dicky Diddle*, in the list. *Burst, leak* and *sprinkle* had one rhyme each; *Geoff Hurst, Zorba the Greek* and *Rip van Winkle*, respectively.

Rhymes referring to sex-related acts formed roughly as large a group as rhymes referring to the act of urinating. The data included 30 such rhymes, 15,15% of the 198 rhymes referring to verbs. The English words mainly refer to masturbation; 13 of the rhymes refer to the verb *wank*. The notorious f-word *fuck* had 11 different rhymes. Examples of these are, respectively, *J. Arthur Rank* and *Push in the Truck*. Other

rhymes referring to sexual acts were, for instance *Melvyn Bragg (shag)*, *Hat with a Bobble (gobble, oral sex)*, *Pedigree Chum (come)*, *Polish and Gloss (toss)* and *Whip and Throp (strop)*.

5.2.3 Rhymes Denoting Adjectives

In this analysis rhymes denoting adjectives formed the third largest group after the rhymes denoting nouns and verbs. The list of 2412 rhymes included 182 (7,55%) rhymes denoting adjectives. Together with the rhymes denoting adjectives, ten rhymes denoting adverbs were also analysed. These rhymes were included in the analysis because the two word groups, adjectives and adverbs resemble each other a great deal and a data of only ten items¹³ would have been too small to be analysed on its own.

The rhymes fell into the patterns as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Noun and Noun	<i>(Mum and Dad – mad)</i>	17,58%	(32)
Compound Nouns	<i>(Mother Goose – loose)</i>	6,59%	(12)
Proper Nouns	<i>(Tommy Dodd – odd)</i>	23,08%	(42)
General Proper Nouns	<i>(Uncle Billy – chilly)</i>	5,49%	(10)
Place Names	<i>(Piccadilly – silly)</i>	2,75%	(5)
Adjective + Noun	<i>(Brown Bread – dead)</i>	7,14%	(13)
Constructions with of	<i>(Eyes of Blue – true)</i>	1,10%	(2)
Genitive ('s)	<i>(Magistrate's Court – short)</i>	6,04%	(11)
One Lexeme	<i>(Alligator – later)</i>	3,85%	(7)
Three Lexemes	<i>(Tom, Harry and Dick – sick)</i>	1,10%	(2)
No Pattern	<i>(Sorry and Sad – bad)</i>	25,27%	(46)

The analysis shows that, although the number of rhymes following the patterns is somewhat smaller than in the case of rhymes denoting nouns and verbs, the majority of rhymes denoting adjectives still follow the patterns; 74,72% fell into the categories.

¹³ The ten adverbs: *Alligator (later)*, *Black Bess (yes)*, *Brown Joe (no)*, *Christian Slater (later)*, *Frank Bough (off)*, *Darby and Joan*, *Jack Jones*, *Jack Malone*, *Pat Malone* and *Todd Sloane* (all meaning alone).

The most common pattern, 23,08%, is Proper Nouns followed by Noun and Noun, 17,58%. The third most productive pattern is Adjective + Noun, 7,14%. The least productive patterns in the case of rhymes denoting adjectives appear to be Constructions with Of and Three Lexemes, both by 1,10% of the total. Place Names, 2,75% and One Lexeme, 3,85% also prove to be less productive sources for rhymes in this category.

Further analysis shows that the 46 rhymes (25,27% of the total) that do not follow the original patterns can be categorised as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Verbal Phrase	<i>(Gone to Bed – dead)</i>	6,25%	(3)
Phrase	<i>(Oh my God – bald)</i>	17,39%	(8)
Verb and Verb	<i>(Hit and Run – done)</i>	6,52%	(3)
Adjective and Adjective	<i>(Black and White – tight)</i>	28,26%	(13)
Pronoun and Pronoun		0%	(–)
Noun + Adjective	<i>(Chicken Oriental – mental)</i>	15,22%	(7)
Numerals Included	<i>(Two-Thirty – dirty)</i>	4,35%	(2)
Rhymes with Adverbs	<i>(Fore and Aft – daft)</i>	4,35%	(2)
Onomatopoeia	<i>(Rinky Dink – pink)</i>	4,35%	(2)
Invented Lexemes	<i>(Housey Housey – lousey)</i>	4,35%	(2)
Others	<i>(Ham and Cheesy – easy)</i>	8,70%	(4)

The category Others here included rhymes consisting of three examples of Noun and Adjective (*Cash and Carried – married*) and one instance of Proper Noun and Noun (*Naughton and Gold – cold*).

The most common pattern among the forms not following the original patterns is Adjective and Adjective; 28,26% of the rhymes were formed in this way. The second largest group, by 17,39%, is formed of phrases followed by patterns Noun + Adjective, 15,22% and the category of Others, resulting into 8,70%. Verbal Phrase and Verb and Verb both were represented by three rhymes, that is 6,25%. The patterns Numerals Included, Rhymes with Adverbs, Onomatopoeia and Invented Lexemes were all represented by two examples, i.e. 4,35%, in this study. None of the rhymes denoting adjectives were formed by the pattern Pronoun and Pronoun.

Before concentrating on the last category, the numerals, some points of interest in this category will be pointed out. As in the categories of nouns and verbs, some English adjectives have more than one equivalent in Cockney. For example, *bald*, *chilly*, *knackered* and *rotten* all have two rhymes: *Cyril Lord* and *Oh my God* meaning *bald*, *Uncle Billy* or *Uncle Willy* for *chilly*, *Christmas Crakered* and *Kerry Packer* for *knackered* and for *rotten*, *Needle and Cotton* or *Nick Cotton*. The adjective *dead* had three different rhymes in the list analysed: *Brown Bread*, *Father Ted* and *Gone to Bed*. A person, who is *sick*, has four different ways of expressing his or her state in Cockney: *Tom and Dick*, *Tom*, *Harry and Dick*, *Spotted Dick* or *Uncle Dick*.

Two adjectives in the list have five equivalent rhymes; *silly* (*Daffadown Dilly*, *Harry and Billy*, *Piccadilly* and *Uncle Willy*) and the synonyms for being out of money, *skint* and *broke* (*Boracic Lint*, *Larry Flint*, *Murray Mint*, *Pink Lint* and *Coals and Coke*). Perhaps due to the climate in London, the adjective *cold* has inspired seven different rhymes, *Brave and Bold*, *Warrior Bold* and *Potatoes in the Mold* among them.

The list of 182 rhymes denoting to adjectives included 12, that is 6,63%, ones that refer to the state of intoxication, namely the adjectives *drunk* and *pissed*. Examples of the list include rhymes like *Elephant's Trunk*, *Salt Junk*, *Brahms and Liszt* and *Schindler's List*.

5.2.4 Rhymes Denoting Numerals

Of the 2412 rhymes 44 (1,82%) denote numerals. The rhymes fell into the patterns as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Noun and Noun	<i>(Bed and Breakfast – 26)</i>	6,82%	(3)
Compound Nouns	<i>(Chop Sticks –six)</i>	9,09%	(4)
Proper Nouns	<i>(Harry Tate – eight)</i>	6,82%	(3)
General Proper Nouns		0%	(–)
Place Names		0%	(–)
Adjective + Noun	<i>(Dirty Whore – four)</i>	2,27%	(1)
Constructions with of	<i>(Bottle of Glue – two)</i>	2,27%	(1)
Genitive ('s)	<i>(Day's Work –a hundred)</i>	4,55%	(2)
One Lexeme	<i>(Pony – twenty-five)</i>	36,36%	(16)
Three Lexemes	<i>(Dirty Old Jew – two)</i>	11,36%	(5)
No Pattern	<i>(Dearie Mee – three)</i>	20,45	(9)

According to the analysis, the majority of rhymes denoting numerals also follow the patterns; 79,54% of the 44 rhymes analysed fell into the original categories. The category of One Lexeme proved to be the most productive one in this category, 36,36% of the rhymes fell into it. The second largest group was Three Lexemes by 11,36%, followed by Compound Nouns, 9,09%. None of the rhymes followed the patterns General Proper Nouns and Place Names and both Adjective + Noun and Constructions with of only included one rhyme, i.e. 2,27% of the total.

Further analysis shows that the nine rhymes (20,45% of the total) that do not follow the original patterns can be categorised as follows (examples of each pattern and the number of forms following the pattern are given in brackets):

Verbal Phrase	<i>(Jack's Alive – five)</i>	22,22%	(2)
Phrase	<i>(Knock on the Door – four)</i>	22,22%	(2)
Verb and Verb		0%	(–)
Adjective and Adjective		0%	(–)
Pronoun and Pronoun		0%	(–)
Noun + Adjective		0%	(–)
Numerals Included	<i>(Long Un – a hundred)</i>	11,11%	(1)
Rhymes with Adverbs		0%	(–)
Onomatopoeia	<i>(Clickety Click sixty-six)</i>	22,22%	(2)
Invented Lexemes	<i>(Rouf Cinque – forty-five)</i>	11,11%	(1)
Others	<i>(Feel Fine – nine)</i>	11,11%	(1)

Three of the patterns were equally productive; Verbal Phrase, Phrase and Onomatopoeia produced two rhymes, 22,22%, denoting numerals each. As the list above indicates, no examples of the patterns Verb and Verb, Adjective and Adjective, Pronoun and Pronoun, Noun + Adjective and Rhymes with Adverbs could be found in the data. The only rhyme left without a pattern, *Feel Fine* can be analysed as Verb + Adjective.

All in all, the list of rhymes denoting numerals included rhymes referring to 24 different numerals. The numerals from one to eleven each have at least one equivalent in Cockney:

One	Penny Bun
Two	Bottle of Glue Dirty Old Jew Doctor Who
Three	Carpet Dearie Mee
Four	Dirty Whore Knock on the Door Roath
Five	Beefive Ching Jack's Alive Man Alive

Six	Chop Sticks (Bingo usage) Pick up Sticks Tom Mix
Seven	Neves
Eight	Garden Gate Harry Tate T and H
Nine	Feel Fine Nervo
Ten	Big Ben Cock and Hen Cockle Cock and Hen
Eleven	Legs

Other rhymes mainly refer to round figures like *Score (20)*, *Nifty (50 , pounds)*, *Day's Work (100)*, *Monkey (500)*, *Grand (1000)* and *Archer (2000)*.

One amusing rhyme deserves to be mentioned before the concluding remarks on this analysis. The number eighty-eight (88) is, quite figuratively, *Two Fat Ladies* in Cockney Rhyming Slang.

5.3 Concluding Remarks on the Analysis

To conclude the statistical analysis on Cockney rhyming slang, the results of each word group will be compared with each other in order to see whether there are any differences in the formation of rhymes denoting the four different word groups in the analysis.

The largest group, rhymes denoting nouns, formed 81,80% (1973) of the total, 2412 rhymes. Rhymes denoting verbs and adjectives were the next largest groups; 8,21% (198) and 7,55% (182), respectively. 1,82% (44) of the rhymes listed denoted numerals and the remaining 0,62% (15) phrases, which were excluded from the

analysis. Ten of the rhymes listed denoting adverbs were included in the list of adjectives in the analysis.

The pattern Proper Noun is, according to the analysis in hand, the most common in rhymes denoting word categories noun (24,48% of the total), verb (30,80%) and adjective (23,08%). In the case of rhymes denoting numerals, the most common pattern was One Lexeme (36,36% of the total).

Compound Nouns forms the second most common pattern in rhymes denoting nouns (21,49% of the total) and verbs (17,86%), the pattern Noun and Noun in the category of adjectives (17,58%) and Three Lexemes (11,36%) in the case of rhymes denoting numerals. Compound Nouns only forms 6,69% of rhymes denoting adjectives.

The third most common pattern is Noun and Noun in the cases of rhymes denoting nouns (14,60%) and verbs (11,11%). Adjectival Compounds (7,14%) and Compound Nouns (9,09%) were the third most common patterns in the categories of adjectives and numerals.

Thus, rhymes denoting nouns and verbs follow similar patterns whereas the rhymes denoting adjectives and numerals differ from the other two word groups if the three most common patterns are taken into account.

Comparing the three least common patterns shows that in the categories of nouns and numerals the least common pattern is General Proper Nouns with 1,22% and 0%, respectively. In the category of verbs, the least common pattern is Place Name (0,51%) and in adjectives, Constructions with *of* and Three Lexemes, 1,10% both. Place Names is the second least common pattern in nouns (2,18%) and adjectives (2,75%), whereas General Proper Nouns with 1,01% forms this group in verbs and Adjectival Compounds and Constructions with *of*, both with 2,27%, in the case of rhymes denoting numerals. Genitive 's is the third least common pattern in the categories of nouns

(3,19%) and numerals (4,55%) and Three Lexemes (2,02%) in the category of verbs and One Lexeme (3,85%) in the category of adjectives. Thus, in this respect, rhymes denoting nouns and numerals share some features, as do rhymes denoting nouns and adjectives.

Comparison of the rhymes that did not follow the original patterns shows that rhymes denoting nouns and verbs are similar in this respect too; the most common patterns were in both categories Verb and Verb, 24,35% (nouns) and 39,47% (verbs). Also the second and third most common categories were the same, although in reverse order. In the category of rhymes denoting nouns Phrase (20,43%) was more common pattern than Verbal Phrase (19,57%) whereas in the case of verbs, Verbal Phrases (23,68%) formed more rhymes than Phrases (13,16%).

The results in the categories of rhymes denoting adjectives and numerals differ from the results above as well as from each other. In the case of adjectives, the three most common patterns were Adjective and Adjective (28,26%), Phrase (17,39%) and Noun + Adjective together with Other (13,04%). In the case of numerals, the patterns Verbal Phrase, Phrase and Onomatopoeia were equally common; each resulting into 22,22% of the rhymes that did not follow any of the original patterns.

Comparing the three least common patterns in the group of rhymes not following the original patterns reveals that Onomatopoeia and Invented Lexemes are among the three least common patterns in rhymes denoting nouns (1,30%), verbs (0%) and adjectives (4,35%). The pattern Pronoun and Pronoun was the second least common in nouns (2,17%) and verbs (2,63%). In the case of verbs patterns Adjective and Adjective, Noun + Adjective and Rhymes with Adverbs also formed 2,63% of the rhymes each.

The category of rhymes denoting numerals differs from the others in this respect because there were less rhymes included in the analysis, thus the analysis did not include any instances of rhymes formed by the following five patterns: Verb and Verb, Adjective and Adjective, Pronoun and Pronoun, Noun + Adjective and Rhymes with Adverbs. The results in this category can not be compared very effectively since the rhymes fell into the patterns evenly; either the result was 22,22% (Verbal Phrase, Phrase and Onomatopoeia) or 11,11% (Numerals Included, Invented Lexemes and Others).

The analysis in hand indicates that the majority of rhymes in Cockney rhyming slang denote nouns, the number of rhymes denoting verbs and adjectives is significantly smaller and only a fraction of the rhymes denote numerals.

Nouns prevail because they are easy to modify and common in the vocabulary used denoting objects that are most often used in rhyming slang. Verbs and adjectives can not be modified as freely as nouns and thus the number of rhymes referring to these word groups is lower. The number of rhymes denoting numerals is lower by nature because there is, to begin with, a limited number of lexemes to be translated into rhyming slang.

More than one rhyme refer to several common words in English, and on the other hand, one rhyme may have up to eleven different translations into English. The range of word to which the rhymes refer to is widest in the case of rhymes denoting nouns and smallest, as has been noted in 5.2.4, in the rhymes denoting numerals where the majority of the rhymes denoted numerals from one to eleven and round figures. Also the rhymes denoting verbs refer to a rather limited set of words, the most common ones being related to bodily functions and different verbs relating to sexual acts. In the case of rhymes denoting adjectives, the state of intoxication proved to be the most fruitful

source for rhyming slang expressions, the other rhymes referring to weather or characteristics in people. Rhymes denoting nouns mainly include words that relate to everyday life; household objects, relatives and food.

All in all, rhymes in Cockney rhyming slang are formed following a limited set of patterns, the pattern Proper Noun being, according to the analysis in hand, the most common one and the least productive pattern being Pronoun and Pronoun.

5.4 Comparisons with Earlier Studies

The aim in this section is to compare three statistical analysis conducted on Cockney rhyming slang rhymes denoting nouns in order to see whether the rhymes are continually formed by the same patterns or whether the patterns used have changed during the past thirty decades. First, the results from the analysis conducted by Butcher and Gnutzmann (1977) will be compared with the results of an analysis conducted in an essay for a course in contemporary English at the University of Tampere (1999) and second, these two studies will be compared with the analysis in hand. Before concentrating on the actual results, the data will be compared and discussed briefly.

5.4.1 Comparison of the Data with Earlier Studies

Butcher and Gnutzmann (1977, 7–8) used Julian Franklyn's *A Dictionary of Rhyming Slang* (1960) and *A Load of Cockney Cobblers. London Rhyming Slang Interpreted* (1973) by Bob Aylwin as the sources of their study material. They analysed 624 rhymes that were still in use at the time of their study.

I conducted a similar study in my essay “Cockney – a General Study of the

Dialect and Slang of London¹⁴” (1999). My study material, 272 rhymes, came from two glossaries on the Internet¹⁵; “The Slang!” by Tony Byrne and the anonymous “The Cockney / English Dictionary” (Virtual London site). Since the rhymes were listed on these sites in May 1999, I assumed that they were currently used at the time.

The data for the analysis in this thesis comprised of 1973 rhymes denoting nouns and it was collected from Gordon Daniel Smith’s glossary of Cockney Rhyming Slang on the Internet and Ray Puxley’s *Cockney Rabbit: A Dick’n’Arry of Rhyming Slang* (1992). Most of the rhymes included in these two sources are still used, although, as mentioned previously, some of the rhymes in Puxley’s dictionary are obsolete.

A reliable comparison of the data between Butcher and Gnutzmann’s study and the study in the essay proved impossible, since Butcher and Gnutzmann do not list their data or indicate which of the over a thousand rhymes listed in Franklyn’s *Dictionary of Rhyming Slang* (1960) were left out. As Brian Murdoch (1983, 21–22) points out, “Up to a point, indication of usage is provided, but it is still occasionally unclear as to whether a rhyming slang example belongs to London (rather than to Australia or America)” – thus excluding the rhymes indicated Australian and American in origin would not be sufficient a tactic in trying to select the 624 rhymes included in their study. To complicate things further, Bob Aylwin’s *A Load of Cockney Cobblers. London Rhyming Slang Interpreted* (1973) partly comprises of rhymes listed in Franklyn’s dictionary. It can be assumed that the list of rhymes analysed in the essay included some new material since the data was collected from different sources some twenty years after Butcher and Gnutzmann had completed their work. The main body of the data, however, can be assumed to consist of the same rhymes in both studies since the difference between the data used in the essay and in this thesis does not differ

¹⁴ Varieties of Contemporary English, course at the University of Tampere, spring term 1999.

¹⁵ Neither of these sites were no longer available in January 2003.

significantly; only seven of the 272 rhymes in the essay were not in the data of the analysis in this thesis. Furthermore, a great deal of the rhymes included in this work can be read in Franklyn's and Aylwin's dictionaries too.

In Butcher and Gnutzmann's study, 90,5 % (581) of the forms denoted nouns, 3,1% (20) verbs, 5,0% (32) adjectives and the remaining 1,4% (9) adverbs and numerals. In the essay, 82,0% (223) of the forms were nouns, 7,0% (19) verbs, 8,1% (22) adjectives, 2,6% (7) numerals and 0,1% (3) adverbs and one imperative construction.

In the analysis conducted for this thesis, 81,80% (1973) of the rhymes denoted nouns, 8,21% (198) verbs, 7,55% (182) adjectives, 1,82% (44) numerals and the remaining 0,62% (15) phrases.

Thus, rhymes denoting nouns seem to prevail regardless of the amount of rhymes included in the data. The amount of numerals shows the greatest difference between the three studies under discussion; the largest amount of rhymes also includes the largest number of rhymes referring to numerals (although not percentually), but on the other hand, the data for the essay was significantly smaller than the one in Butcher and Gnutzmann's study and yet included 1,2% more rhymes denoting numerals.

5.4.2 Comparison of the Results with Earlier Studies

Comparing Butcher and Gnutzmann's study with the one conducted in the essay shows that rhymes denoting nouns formed the majority, but the study in the essay showed a larger number of adjectives, verbs and numerals. The aim in the essay was to see whether the rhymes denoting nouns followed the same patterns of formation as in the study of Butcher and Gnutzmann.

There were four major categories in both studies, and the nouns fell into them

as follows. Butcher and Gnutzmann's results (581 nouns studied) are listed before the results of the essay (223 nouns studied). Examples of each category are also given below. Some of the rhymes did not fit into any of the categories defined; forms of only one word or three word together with some verbal constructions were categorised as Other Constructions in the studies.

1.	Forms with General Lexemes	25,0% (total)	23,3% (total)
	(A) Two Lexemes joined by and		
	Noun and Noun		
	<i>Cow and Calf (laugh)</i>	17,9%	
	<i>Cat and Mouse (house)</i>	17,0%	
	Other Coordinations		
	<i>Here and There (chair)</i>	7,1%	
	<i>Gay and Frisky (whisky)</i>	6,3%	
	(B) Compound Nouns		
	<i>Currant Bun (sun, son)</i>	13,1%	
	<i>Tea Leaf (thief)</i>	24,2%	
2.	Forms with Proper Nouns	29,0% (total)	24,9% (total)
	(A) Specific Proper Nouns		
	<i>Harvey Nichols (pickles)</i>	12,9%	
	<i>Gregory Peck (neck)</i>	11,0%	
	(B) General Proper Nouns		
	<i>Uncle Ned (bed)</i>	8,8%	
	<i>Tom Thumb (rum)</i>	7,2%	
	(C) Place Names		
	<i>Colney Hatches (matches)</i>	7,7%	
	<i>Burton on Trent (rent)</i>	6,7%	
3.	Adjective + Noun		
	<i>Flowery Dell (cell)</i>	11,0%	
	<i>Holy Ghost (toast)</i>	8,1%	
4.	Genitive Constructions	10,2% (total)	9,0% (total)
	(A) With of		
	<i>Field of Wheat (street)</i>	5,5%	
	<i>Plates of Meat (feet)</i>	5,4%	
	(B) Inflected		
	<i>Fisherman's Daughter (water)</i>	4,7%	
	<i>Monkey's Tails (nails)</i>	3,6%	
	Forms following the patterns:	88,3%	and 89,5% ¹⁶

¹⁶ There is an error of calculation in Butcher and Gnutzmann's article; they state that 79,3% of the rhymes follow the patterns but the correct sum is actually 88,3%.

In Butcher and Gnutzmann's study (1977, 8) the remaining 11,7% of the forms were Clauses (e.g. *I'm Afloat – boat, coat*), Verbal Phrases (*Buckle my Shoe – Jew*), Prepositional constructions (*Potatoes in the Mould – cold*), and Adverb + Adjective constructions (*All Forlorn – horn*).

The remaining 10,5% of the rhymes in the essay were rhymes consisting only of one word (e.g. *Cockroach – coach*) or three words (*Little White Mice – dice*), some Verbal Phrases (*Do me Good – wood*) and Prepositional constructions (*Tit for Tat – hat*). No Adverb + Adjective constructions were among the rhymes included in the study.

Broadly speaking both studies showed similar results. Significant differences can, however, be detected in two of the major categories and in one subcategory. The total number of constructions with Proper Nouns, both Specific and General, and Place Names was 4,1 % higher in Butcher and Gnutzmann's study, and their number of Adjective + Noun constructions was also higher by 2,9%.

The greatest difference in the results was in the number of Compound Noun constructions; the study result in the essay was 11,1 % higher than that of Butcher and Gnutzmann. The initial assumption was that the material analysed in the essay contained more modern vulgar slang, but no evidence supporting this theory was to be found in the list of rhymes. Indeed, most of the vulgar rhymes were verbs, and thus did not affect the result in any way. Perhaps the new rhymes invented during the twenty years between these two studies happen to be mostly Compound Noun constructions and therefore there were so many more of them. Also, the study in the essay originally comprised of a smaller number of rhymes, which is why the statistical result may differ, and because of possible differences in categorisation too.

In order to enable comparison between the three studies, the results of the study conducted for this thesis (1973 rhymes analysed) were rearranged so that the number of rhymes following the patterns One Lexeme (90) and Three Lexemes (69) were added to the number of rhymes with no pattern (230).

In addition, the number of patterns following the category Other Coordinations in Butcher and Gnutzmann's study from the analysis conducted on the rhymes not following the original patterns were added together. This number includes rhymes from categories Verb and Verb (56), Adjective and Adjective (30), Pronoun and Pronoun (5), Adverb and Adverb (5), Noun and Adjective (1), Preposition and Preposition (1) and Verb and Noun (1). Thus, the category Other Coordinations consists of 99 rhymes (5,01%). This number was naturally extracted from the number forming the category Others, making it 290 (14,70%) after the addition of the 159 rhymes consisting of one lexeme and three lexemes.

Thus, following the model set by Butcher and Gnutzmann, 83,02 % of the rhymes denoting nouns followed the patterns and the remaining 14,70% included phrases (*Hole in the Ground – pound*), onomatopoeia (*Hey Diddle Diddle – fiddle*) and rhymes with numerals (*Eighteen Pence – sense*). These results can also be seen in Tables 5 and 6 in the Appendix.

The results of the three studies were nearly the same in four of the categories; Noun and Noun, Other Coordinations, Adjective + Noun and Genitive Construction with *of*.

The results in the categories Proper Noun, General Proper Noun and Place Names were similar in Butcher and Gnutzmann and in the essay, but the analysis in this thesis showed a significantly larger number of rhymes following the pattern Proper

Noun, whereas the number of rhymes in categories General Proper Noun and Place Names were significantly smaller than in the other two studies.

The number of Compound Nouns was significantly smaller in the Butcher and Gnutzmann study than in the essay and thesis. The patterns Genitive 's and Compound nouns also showed similar results in the essay and the thesis; the percentual amounts of rhymes following these patterns were larger in Butcher and Gnutzmann. Finally, the number of rhymes falling into the category Others was bigger in the thesis than in the essay and in Butcher and Gnutzmann.

In conclusion, the biggest difference between the three studies concerns rhymes following the pattern Proper Nouns. Two main reasons for this difference can be suggested. First, the amount of rhymes analysed was significantly different in each of the studies under discussion. Thus the amount of rhymes analysed directly affects the percentual results of the analysis. There may also be slight differences in the categorisation of the rhymes as not all of them straightforwardly fall into the patterns. Second, the developments in the media have produced more and more celebrities during the past few decades. Their names can easily be adopted into rhyming slang especially if they have some distinctive characteristics or if they become known for something scandalous, for example. The availability of ready-made rhymes in the form of proper nouns has made this pattern more popular than the compounding of two nouns by *and* which was the most common pattern among the rhymes Butcher and Gnutzmann analysed in the late 1970s.

It can be postulated that the overall structure of the rhymes in Cockney has, nevertheless, remained quite stable during the latter part of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century; most common patterns in forming rhyming slang expressions have remained the same, although the analysis show slight differences in

the order of popularity. Also the less productive patterns have remained the same during the past decades.

6. Conclusions

To conclude, it can be said that slang is a colourful variety of language that has as many definitions as there are definers. Slang as a concept is a difficult one to define because it mainly involves vocabulary used in informal conversation situations.

Slang differs from dialect in that it does not include features of grammar and pronunciation. Slang and dialect are similar in the sense that both involve vocabulary peculiar to them. The vocabulary peculiar to slang characteristically consists of new, invented words and of the existing lexemes used in an innovative way.

Slang is, especially in dictionaries, often closely associated with concepts like argot, cant and jargon that are, in some respects, similar to it. Argot and cant are best defined as sources for slang, whereas jargon forms a type of slang itself.

People use slang for various different reasons and in various different situations without necessarily being aware of it. A particular type of slang is often used by a certain group of people to make it explicit to outsiders that they do not belong to that particular group. In this respect dialect is, in some cases, similar to slang – it can also function as a kind of glue between members of a linguistic community.

People's attitudes towards slang vary; what sounds rather neutral to one, can be interpreted as very offensive by another speaker. The difficulty to define slang is reflected in the dictionary entries; the entries for a slang word in different dictionaries are labelled differently. Slang can also be categorised according to the word-formation processes used.

All in all, slang can be defined as a colourful variant of any language which adds humour to everyday speech. As slang is often metaphorical, it enables people to discuss difficult subjects because the embarrassing original word can be omitted by using a slang word instead.

The history of Cockney dialect reaches into the 14th century. The dialect did not differ much from the standard English of the time. By the middle of the 18th century, however, Cockney dialect had separated it of the standard and became a working class dialect, associated especially with the East End of London. Slang, and rhyming slang in particular become the major characteristic feature of Cockney by the end of the 19th century. The origins of rhyming slang are obscure, but it has been suggested that the rhymes have first been used by the London underworld from the 1840s onwards.

Cockney dialect is still widely used in the area of London. The grammar of a Cockney is characterised by dialectal features, especially by the all-purpose tag *ain't*. Cockney speech tends to be faster than the speech of other English speakers because of the tendency to drop initial unstressed syllables and the use of the well-known glottal stop. Rhyming slang expressions are formed by replacing one word by a phrase that rhymes with the original word. The rhymes mainly refer to concepts associated with everyday life. There are various sources behind the rhymes; music hall songs and performers, place names, proper nouns, both real and invented have produced many long-lived rhymes. The origins of each individual rhyme are obscure and often impossible to trace. Some of the origins have, however, been documented.

Cockney rhyming slang is still popular, as the appearance of various new booklets, dictionaries and Internet sites indicates. The slang, true to its character, keeps changing with the time.

In the analysis the largest group, rhymes denoting nouns, formed 81,80% of the total 2412 rhymes analysed. Rhymes denoting verbs and adjectives were the next largest groups; 8,21% and 7,55%, respectively. 1,82% of the rhymes listed denoted numerals and the remaining 0,62% phrases, which were excluded from the analysis.

The pattern Proper Noun is, according to the analysis in hand, the most common in rhymes denoting word categories noun, verb and adjective. In the case of rhymes denoting numerals, the most common pattern was One Lexeme. Compound Nouns forms the second most common pattern in rhymes denoting nouns and verbs, the pattern Noun and Noun in the category of adjectives and Three Lexemes in the case of rhymes denoting numerals. The third most common pattern is Noun and Noun in the cases of rhymes denoting nouns and verbs. Adjectival Compounds and Compound Nouns are the third most common patterns in the categories of adjectives and numerals.

Thus, rhymes denoting nouns and verbs follow similar patterns whereas the rhymes denoting adjectives and numerals differ from the other two word groups if the three most common patterns are taken into account. The majority of rhymes in Cockney rhyming slang denote nouns, the number of rhymes denoting verbs and adjectives is significantly smaller and only a fraction of the rhymes denote numerals.

In conclusion, rhymes in Cockney rhyming slang are formed following a limited set of patterns, the pattern Proper Noun being, according to the analysis in hand, the most common one. It can be postulated, based on the comparison between the three studies, that the overall structure of the rhymes in Cockney has remained quite stable during the latter part of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century; most common patterns in forming rhyming slang expressions have remained the same, although the analysis show slight differences in the order of popularity.

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Appendix: Results of the Analysis

Table 1

Results of the Analysis in Numbers (Total Number of Rhymes Analysed 2412)

Pattern	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Numerals
Noun and Noun	288	22	32	3
Compound Nouns	424	35	12	4
Proper Nouns	483	61	42	3
General Proper Nouns	24	2	10	–
Place Names	43	1	5	–
Adjective + Noun	163	12	13	1
Constructions with of	96	8	2	1
Genitive ('s)	63	7	11	2
One Lexeme	90	8	7	16
Three Lexemes	69	4	2	5
No Pattern	230	38	46	9
Total Number	1973	198	182	44

Table 2

Results of the Analysis in Percentages

Pattern	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Numerals
Noun and Noun	14,60	11,11	17,58	6,82
Compound Nouns	21,49	17,86	6,59	9,09
Proper Nouns	24,48	30,80	23,08	6,82
General Proper Nouns	1,22	1,01	5,49	–
Place Names	2,18	0,51	2,75	–
Adjective + Noun	8,26	6,06	7,14	2,27
Constructions with of	4,87	4,04	1,10	2,27
Genitive ('s)	3,19	3,54	6,04	4,55
One Lexeme	4,56	4,04	3,85	36,36
Three Lexemes	3,50	2,02	1,10	11,36
No Pattern	11,66	19,19	25,27	20,45

Table 3

Rhymes with no Patterns in Numbers

Pattern	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Numerals
Verbal Phrase	45	9	3	2
Phrase	47	5	8	2
Verb and Verb	56	15	3	–
Adjective and Adjective	30	1	13	–
Pronoun and Pronoun	5	1	–	–
Noun + Adjective	10	1	7	–
Numerals Included	10	–	2	1
Rhymes with Adverbs	12	1	2	–
Onomatopoeia	3	–	2	2
Invented Lexemes	6	–	2	1
Others	6	5	4	1
Total Number	230	38	46	9

Table 4

Rhymes with no Patterns in Percentages

Pattern	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Numerals
Verbal Phrase	19,57	23,68	6,25	22,22
Phrase	20,43	13,16	17,39	22,22
Verb and Verb	24,35	39,47	6,52	–
Adjective and Adjective	13,04	2,63	28,26	–
Pronoun and Pronoun	2,17	2,63	–	–
Noun + Adjective	4,35	2,63	15,22	–
Numerals Included	4,35	–	4,35	11,11
Rhymes with Adverbs	5,22	2,63	4,35	–
Onomatopoeia	1,30	–	4,35	22,22
Invented Lexemes	2,61	–	4,35	11,11
Others	2,61	13,16	8,70	11,11

Table 5

Results of the Analysis Conducted by Butcher and Gnutzmann (B&G) Compared with the Results of the Nouns Analysed in the Essay and in the Thesis in Numbers.

(Total Number of Rhymes Analysed 581, 223 and 1973)

Pattern	B&G	Essay	Thesis
Noun and Noun	104	38	288
Other Coordinations	41	14	99
Compound Nouns	76	54	424
Proper Nouns	75	25	483
General Proper Nouns	49	16	24
Place Names	45	15	43
Adjective + Noun	64	18	163
Genitive Construction with of	32	12	96
Genitive ('s)	27	8	63
Others	68	23	290
Total Number	581	223	1973

Table 6

Results of the Analysis Conducted by Butcher and Gnutzmann (B&G) Compared with the Results of the Nouns Analysed in the Essay and in the Thesis in Numbers.

(Total Number of Rhymes Analysed 581, 223 and 1973)

Pattern	B&G	Essay	Thesis
Noun and Noun	17,9	17,0	14,6
Other Coordinations	7,1	6,3	5,0
Compound Nouns	13,1	24,2	21,5
Proper Nouns	12,9	11,0	24,3
General Proper Nouns	8,4	7,4	1,2
Place Names	7,7	6,7	2,2
Adjective + Noun	11,0	8,1	8,3
Genitive Construction with of	5,5	5,4	4,9
Genitive ('s)	4,7	3,6	3,2
Others	11,7	10,5	14,7
Total Number	100	100	100