

# СЕКЦІЯ ГЕРМАНСЬКОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ ТА ПЕРЕКЛАДУ

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## ENGLISH DRILLING SLANG: ETIMOLOGY AND SEMANTICS

1. The starting point for collecting the words used in drilling industry in the USA can be referred to the publishing of two articles by Clarke S. Northup, professor at the Cornell University, in the *Dialect Notes*, the periodical journal of American Dialect Society (Northup C. [3]). The fact itself is telling of how the drilling slang went out of the fields where it was used and became a point of interest for academicians. American Dialect Society was founded in 1889 for the purpose of studying different aspects of use of English and other languages in North America and has since developed into a number of research papers conducted by philologists all over the world (Langenkamp R. [2], Partridge E. [4], Tsymbal N. [7]).

2. It was only evident that the publications introduced petroleum to linguists and bridged the gap between the terms from the other adjoining industries, such as chemistry and geology, where formation of terminological units followed more established models, and that the down-to-earth words used by drilling teams or push gangs in the process of operations often lacked any professional linguistic guidance. The most important part of the empirical collection for the present study is exactly the words and usages, in authors' words, that designate mechanisms, professions, names for oil, jobs and operations in the industry.

3. A note should be made about whether the oil jargon of the time was included in the that contemporary slang in the United States. So far, only few words spring up in the relevant glossaries and with explanations that defy our imagination. As *derrick* is known from the analyzed collection, it is 'resembling the frame of an old-fashioned church steeple'. In the eyes of modern oilmen, it has more business-like definition of 'a wooden or steel structure built over a wellsite to provide support for drilling equipment and a tall mast for raising and lowering drill pipes and casing'. The dictionary of slang issued in 1891, interpreted it as 'this word, now in common use in the United States, means scaffold-like construction to support a crane, derived from the name of an English hangman, who "flourished" early in 17<sup>th</sup> century', thus giving an impression that common man knew something about drilling – and actually giving quite factual explanation.

There are also some similarities showing that oil jargon was developing in line with general slang: *whale*, the same as *gusher*, meaning the well with huge

production rates for the time, in the slang dictionary is posed as ‘something improbable’. *Wildcat* or *wildcat well*, which from the earliest days until now would define ‘a well first drilled in the territory with no proven reserves’.

4. Out of the lexemes under analysis taken from [5] and [6], most of drilling slangisms are formed by lexico-semantic means, in particular by metaphoric or metonymic transfer as well as the narrowing of meaning (Дорошенко С. [1]).

4.1. Metaphors singled out in the empirical material under consideration are as follows: the so called “household” metaphors, e.g. *belt* ‘the district including the supposed course of subterranean rivers of oil’ (similarity of shape), *jar* ‘a drilling tool, made of a couple of elongated and flattened links on a chain constructed to slide freely within each other’ (similarity of shape); zoomorphic metaphors, e.g. *claw* ‘a device to be used with a hydraulic jack in pulling pipe’ (similarity of shape and functioning), *whale* ‘a well which yields large amount of oil’; anthropomorphic metaphors, e.g. *arm* ‘a part of different drilling equipment such as band-wheel etc.’ (similarity of shape and functioning); *bone-coal* ‘hard, black slate’ from *bone* which is ‘one of the hard parts of the skeleton of a vertebrate’ (similarity by the quality – ‘being hard’); “profession” metaphors, presupposing similarity of functioning, e.g. *traveler* ‘a part of the jack used for wrenching and unwrenching tools’, *fisherman* ‘an expert who gives his time to recovering stuck tools that cannot be taken out of the well in the course of the conventional drilling operation’.

4.2. The narrowing of meaning is present in the following examples: *cap* ‘the top of the rock’ ← ‘a head covering or a natural cover or top’; *pool* ‘a hypothetical oil lake’ ← ‘a small and rather deep body of usually fresh water’.

4.3. Metonymic transfer is perhaps the least used of the three means, but a few words can be discovered in the collection of drilling terms here, particularly in the process of transforming verbs into nouns, as, for instance, the noun *run-in* can attest. As a verb it means ‘to run the pipe into the hole’, and as a noun it is defined as ‘a return of the drill pipe to the hole’.

#### References

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