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Linguistic research

The Anti-language in the English as a Foreign Language Curriculum

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to raise awareness of the significance of slang in educating well-rounded EFL learners. The study, first, uncovers the most salient features of slang, distinguishing it from jargon, argot, cant, etc. It also discusses the reasons why slang springs to life; the users of slang and functions it performs, as well as the word-formation processes employed in its creation.
The paper further investigates the familiarity of Macedonian undergraduate students of English with currently relevant English and American slang, the main hypothesis being that they lack knowledge of slang due to insufficient exposure and instruction. The instruments used are a questionnaire and a quiz comprising 60 slang terms, intended to inspect informants' knowledge of slang.
The results obtained from this research confirm that slang is disregarded in EFL acquisition, and that no steady progress is made in the students' knowledge of slang in the course of their university studies.
Keywords: slang, ESL, English majors.

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Introduction

Slang, the part of the English language often considered as bad, highly informal and corrupt, associated with criminals and other groups of people who want to shun authority, is, in fact, still a hotly debated issue. Although all researchers seem to agree that slang is different from the standard language, some view it as a separate register or even a separate language – 'slanguage', which has its own specific pronunciation, spelling, grammatical constructions and word order (Coleman 2012). For other researchers, however, slang is merely an alternative vocabulary for terms that already exist in the standard variety, i.e. slang terms are optional terms that comply entirely with the grammatical rules of the standard language (e.g. *idiot box* for 'television') (Eble 1996, Coleman 2012, etc.). Even though not all standard language terms have slang counterparts, those that do are used, first, as they make it possible to say more or less the same thing in a variety of ways, and, second, because they provide information about ourselves and our relationships and interests (Coleman 2012).

In an attempt to cast light on this complex linguistic phenomenon, Coleman (2012) uses some extraordinary witty metaphors, comparing slang terms with weeds that invade what should be the well-tended pastures of English; or, with a fungus growing on the stem of the flower of English; and, on a more positive note, with flowers from among which the English language plucks only the best for decoration. Even

more interestingly, Coleman tries to elucidate the relationship between standard English and slang in human terms, depicting slang terms as low-born, illegitimate or orphan children without parentage that live outside the brotherhood of words, always trying to creep into use.

Being labeled as a deviation from the standard language, slang is no wonder greatly overlooked in the process of English language teaching (González 1994, Senefonte 2014). In other words, due to 'its informal status and unstable nature, slang is usually not taught at school, neither in native (first) languages (L1s) nor in second language learning' (Charkova 2007). However, native speakers acquire slang naturally and spontaneously, being governed by the desire to identify with a particular group of people or to express themselves in a less conventional way (Coleman 2012). On the other hand, the lack of deliberate and purposeful study of slang in the EFL classroom, bereaves EFL students of the possibility to grasp and master the English language fully. This, in turn, very frequently leads to difficulties in understanding and communicating with native speakers of English.

Bearing this in mind, it becomes clear why the calls for the integration of slang into EFL curriculum are becoming increasingly more vocal, urging teachers to overcome their bias that slang distorts the acquisition of standard English and that it places students into a disadvantageous position (Dinçay 2012). On the contrary, the advocates of slang emphasize that students' familiarity with slang helps them not only to develop more native-like speech (Flores 2009 in Homuth, Piippo 2011); but also to adapt more quickly in a predominately English-speaking environment and to establish social networks outside the classroom more easily (Preece 2009 in Homuth, Piippo 2011).

Having established that slang is a salient part of English, inevitable in the creation of well-rounded English language learners, the aim of this paper is to inspect how Macedonian students majoring in English fare in understanding and using English slang, considering the fact that the curriculum in that respect almost entirely leaves them to their own devices.

1. Theoretical background

Literature overview discloses that slang is a complex and multifarious linguistic phenomenon. Consequently, any serious attempt to deal with it must include a discussion of the definitions of slang, its functions, users as well as the word-formation processes that are at play in its creation.

A) Definitions of slang

A straightforward definition of the term slang is difficult to provide due to the complexity of the sociolinguistic factors underlying its formation and use (Eble 1996: 11). Some definitions describe slang in a positive way, whereas others describe it rather negatively (de Klerk 1990). A thorough

examination of all these definitions of slang reveals that the most frequent adjectives used to describe slang include the following: colloquial, short-lived, vivid, playful, faddish, vulgar, taboo, and racy (Akmajian et al. 2001, O'Grady et al. 2001, etc.) (in Charkova 2007).

Analyzing numerous definitions of slang, Mattiello (2008) notes that defining slang can be approached from several different perspectives. Most definitions of slang show a tendency towards the so-called *sociological view of the phenomenon which* basically regards slang as a social means of identification and cohesiveness within a group (Eble 1996, Allen 1998). Thus, for instance, Eble (1996) argues that slang is an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness in society at large. According to the *stylistic approach*, slang includes words that are below the level of the standard discourse and the stylistically neutral language (Allen 1998). The third approach emphasizes the aspects of *novelty* and *freshness of slang*, and characterizes it as a language variety that exhibits a leaning towards lexical innovation (Dumas, Lighter 1978). From the perspective of *lexicography*, most dictionaries present slang as the restricted speech of marginal or distinct subgroups in society and as temporary and unconventional vocabulary, characterized primarily by connotations of informality and novelty. [1]

An attempt to combine all these aspects of slang can be perceived in Dumas and Lighter's (1978) proposal that for a word or a phrase to qualify as slang, it has to meet at least 2 out of 4 requirements: a) slang reduces formality (lowers the register of the discourse in which it is used); b) it demonstrates a group familiarity (usually with a lower-class/status group); c) it is a taboo term (with people of higher status); and d) it replaces a word that would cause discomfort to the speaker if he or she used the word instead (euphemism).

Similar combinations of the different features of slang can be pinned down in Grossman and Tucker's (1997) definition, where slang is depicted as a nonstandard vocabulary belonging to a particular culture or subculture and consisting of raw and unrefined expressions many of which are considered taboo, vulgar and derogatory. The view expressed by Grossman and Tucker is re-echoed by Prendergast and Prendergast (2000) (in Terna-Abah 2016) who depict slang as the unconventional, hard-hitting, metaphorical language that is colloquial, sometimes vulgar but always innovative.

All these definitions help in delimiting the contours of slang, but slang still remains somewhat elusive. According to Coleman (2012), it is only possible to determine whether something is slang or not by considering who was speaking, whom they were speaking to, where they were, what they were doing, when they were speaking, and what they meant.

That is why in the next two sections, some light is shed on the users of slang and the functions slang terms perform.

B) Users of slang

In its earliest occurrences in the 18th century, the word slang referred to the specialized vocabulary of people involved in the criminal underworld, hooligans, bandits (McKnight 1923: 37–28 in Eble 1996). In other words, slang was initially associated with uneducated or unintelligent people who had a limited vocabulary and who did not know any better words (Coleman 2012) to use in the attempt to conceal their illegal dealings from the authorities.

However, slang has evolved substantially, and, nowadays, has become the speech of many different groups of people (e.g. army forces, artists, politicians, prisoners, students, etc.) (Adams 2009) who use it as an alternate vocabulary encoding their communal values (Terna-Abah 2016).

A number of studies point to the fact that young people, i.e. teenagers and adolescents, are the most fervent users and creators of slang (González 1994, Eble 1996, Eriksen 2010, etc.). The fact that they exhibit great social dynamism, are receptive to changes and have little political power, instigates them to use slang as an arms against established authority and conventions (Gonzalez 1994), and as an opposition to the standard language, conveying "a sense of irreverence and special delicacy" (Eble 1996: 128). An important function of the slang used by the youth is to create an identity which is distinct from the general adult world (Hudson 1996). That is why the slang terms used by the previous generations quickly grow old and are replaced by new ones (e.g. *super, groovy* and *hip* all of which mean "really good" have been replaced by *dope, kickass* and *phat*) (Yule 2006: 211). Another reason why young people's slang changes rapidly is because they are teenagers and adolescents for a limited period of time; when they become adults, they also become outsiders and gradually forget the group words. Interestingly, some of these slang terms in the course of time become so widespread, that they, eventually, turn into mainstream vocabulary.

Since the emergence of slang is closely related to urbanization, mass communication, big city life, and the development of the oral and written modes of communication (Dinçay 2012) apart from the young people, many different individuals use slang as a way of defining who they are and what group they belong to in the contemporary society. The groups that operate on the periphery of society, such as con artists and drug dealers, even nowadays, seem particularly adept at creating and using slang (Eble 1996).

Also, traditionally, slang has been a male-dominated area. This is particularly visible, in the fact that there exist "220 expressions for a promiscuous woman compared to merely 22 expressions to describe the male counterpart" (Grossman, Tucker 1997: 102). Recent studies, however, show that the gap in slang used by males and females is closing and that it becomes more legitimate for females to use slang terms and expressions much more frequently in their everyday conversations (Grossman, Tucker 1997: 108).

Finally, Americans are deemed to be much fonder of using informal and unconventional language than the British (Mencken 2009). Also, slang from the UK is significantly different from American slang. For example, *hang a right/left* meaning 'turn right/left' is colloquial in the United States, but slang in Britain. *Brilliant*, whose standard counterpart is 'excellent' may be colloquial in Britain, but it appears to be slang in the United States (Coleman 2012). Also, just because the American popular culture is so widespread, with American music, Hollywood films and American sitcoms being seen in other countries on a regular basis, and because the political, economic, and technological developments that have made the United States one of the world's biggest powers, English learners worldwide are much more exposed to, and, consequently, more familiar with American than with British slang (Coleman 2012).

C) Slang versus jargon, argon and cant

The concept of slang is very often unrightfully conflated with other language varieties such as cant, jargon, dialect, argot, etc. (Eble 1996, Mattiello 2008, etc.).

According to Eriksen (2010), jargon is related to slang because it is also an in-group language. However, jargon and slang differ because of their intended function. Jargon is used to facilitate communication between people who share the same profession (e.g. doctors use the slang term *deep fry* for 'chemotherapy' and the jargon term *hypertension* for 'high blood pressure'), whereas slang is meant to show speaker's attitude towards what they are saying (Adams 2009: 8).

Cant (American English) and *argot* (British English), the specialized and usually secret language of thieves, professional beggars, and other groups operating on the fringes of society are also not synonymous with slang (Eble 1996: 21, Adams 2009: 9). Although many slang words arise from the language of the underworld and have a cryptic nature (e.g. *junkie* for 'addict'; *stool pigeon* for 'informer'), slang cannot be reduced to the private language of the criminal world (Maurer 1981, 195–233 in Eble 1996). While for the most part, the function of cant/argot is to deceive, to defraud, and to conceal (Adams 2009: 9), the same cannot be said about slang (Eriksen 2010).

D) The functions of slang

The distribution of slang is particularly notable in areas of life which are or have been taboo: sex, death, excrement, drunkenness and intoxication, racism, homophobia, drugs, violence, ethnicity, etc. (Pederson 2007; Terna-Abah 2016). In other words, slang provides users with words for emotional highs and lows, succeeding and failing, expressing approval and disapproval; terms for judging others; derogatory terms for outsiders and women picturing them as objects or as animals, etc.

Many researchers have dealt with slang from the perspective of identifying its uses, i.e. functions. A great deal of the identified functions of slang are quite positive (e.g. to identify group members; to show solidarity and high involvement in a particular group; to create humor, etc.), but many of them are rather negative and serve a variety of antisocial purposes (e.g. marking social differences; excluding someone from membership of the group; trying to shock; to offend; to irritate, etc.) (Coleman 2012).

E) The word-formation processes employed in the creation of slang

What further adds to the complexity of slang is its capacity to exploit in its creation the existing word-building processes employed in the creation of the standard language vocabulary. This implies that new slang springs to life due to the creation of neologisms, meaning extensions of already existing words, compounds, acronym, clipping, back-formation, abbreviation, blends, etc. (Eble 1996, Shahraki, Rasekh 2011, Coleman 2012).

Although many slang terms are, in fact, a product of coining new words such as, for instance, *gay buffer* which refers to somebody who "in a movie theatre leaves an extra seat between themselves and a person of the same sex so as not to appear gay" (Urbandictionary.com); still, researchers confirm that slang is not so much about the invention of new words as it is about coming up with *new meanings for already existing words* (e.g. *hot* originally was used to describe temperature, but now has different meanings – "sexy", "stolen", "wanted by the police" or "popular") (Partridge 1979: 22, Andersson, Trudgill 1990: 81) (in Pedersen 2007).

Compounding is used in the creation of slang and, as Eble (1996) explains, consists of parts that are themselves words of the same or of different parts of speech. The predominant type of compounds in English slang is noun + noun pattern (e.g. 'batcave' for 'sleep', 'couch potato' for an idle person).

Blending, the process of combining two or more words to create a new word with parts of the words that are combined being deleted, is frequently employed in creating new slang (e.g. *buel* from 'body' and 'fuel'; *droned* from 'drunk' and 'stoned'). The same is the case with *acronyms* where the word is derived from the initial letters of several words (e.g. *ASAP* for 'as soon as possible'; *OMG* for 'Oh, my God'). *Shortening* or *clipping*, or the process of omitting sounds from a word without loss of meaning, is also one of the word-formation processes used in producing slang (e.g. *bod* for 'body'; *boheme* or *boho* for 'bohemian') (Eble 1996).

Slang is sometimes created by adding *suffixes* (e.g. *dog* + . = *doggo for* 'quiet'; *kid* + o, *kiddo* for 'a child'); *infixes* (e.g. *abso-bloody-lutely, un-fucking-touchable*), and *prefixes* (e.g. *megabeach* from 'mega' (from Greek for 'great') + *beach*) (Eble 1996).

Manipulating sounds for fun is consistent with the flippant, venturesome spirit of slang and very frequently gives rise to new slang

terms (e.g. *screws me or exsqueeze me* for 'excuse me') (Eble 1996). *Onomatopoeia*, or echoism or imitation of sounds account for many slang terms too (e.g. *barf, buick, earl, ralph*, and *yuke* are all used instead of 'vomit') (Eble 1996).

2. Research methodology

Given the prominence of slang in the English language, on the one hand, and the fact that slang is not part of the EFL curriculum in primary, secondary and even tertiary education, on the other hand, the major aim of this study was to investigate how Macedonian students majoring in English fare when it comes to using and comprehending slang.

The study was based on the following three hypotheses:

H1. Macedonian majors of English demonstrate a serious lack of familiarity with English slang.

H2. Macedonian majors of English are more familiar with American than with British slang.

H3. Senior majors' knowledge of slang is considerably greater than junior majors'.

The informants who accepted to partake in the study at hand were 40 Macedonian majors of English at the Faculty of Education in Bitola; ten per academic year, from Year 1 to Year 4.

Two instruments were employed for the purposes of this research: a questionnaire and a quiz. Jointly, the questionnaire and the quiz were tailor-made to either confirm or refute the above mentioned hypotheses. More precisely, the questionnaire which was intended to inspect students' general familiarity with and attitude towards slang, featured the following five open-ended questions:

Q1. Are you familiar with the term slang?

Q2. Do you deal with slang during your university studies?

Q3. Should slang be taught in a planned and systematic way?

Q4. Do you use slang in your (oral and written) communication and, if yes, with whom?

Q5. What are your favorite English slang terms?

The quiz, on the other hand, comprised two sections with 60 slang terms in total – 30 British English slang terms in Section 1, and 30 American English slang terms in Section 2. The quiz was intended to test students' knowledge of slang and to establish whether they are more familiar with British or American slang. It also sought to determine to what extent the interviewed students are confident with British or American slang, respectively. Consequently, the students were given two options regarding the selected slang terms – they could either explain their meaning in English or translate them into their mother tongue – Macedonian (see Appendix).

All of the slang terms in the quiz were extracted from domains considered to be well known to the student population (e.g. studying for an exam; talking about a girlfriend/boyfriend/friend; going to parties and having fun; getting drunk; staying fit, etc.). The more vulgar slang terms referring to the more sensitive topics such as sex, sexual orientation, excretion, etc. were avoided, so as not to put the students in an uncomfortable position to explain taboo and vulgar expressions to their teacher who in this case assumed the role of a researcher too. The selected slang terms were extracted from various websites (e. g. *Urban Online Dictionary, American slang words and phrases*, etc.), and in the final phase of the selection they were sent to native speakers of British and American English whose task was to confirm their appropriacy and currency. Finally, the slang terms included in the quiz were a product of a variety of different word-formation processes ranging from affixation (e.g. *absobloodylutely, legless*), to extension of meaning (e.g. *bird, sick, savage, wicked*), metaphorical expression (e.g. *down to earth, hit the road*), shortening or clipping (e.g. *Uni, bro*), acronyms (e.g. *bae*), to neologisms (e.g. *dude*), etc.

3. Results

The analysis of the answers that the Macedonian majors of English provided to the questions in the questionnaire show that the students in all four academic years are familiar with the term slang and that all of them associate it with highly informal and colloquial speech (100%). In fact, many of the students even dub it 'street language'. All the students state that they do not normally deal with slang in the course of their university studies, as the focus of their studies is placed on mastering the standard variety of the English language. Nonetheless, some of the third and fourth-year students underline that slang was one of the topics that they had discussed within their courses on Lexicology and Sociolinguistic, but that the coverage of slang was somewhat limited and the instances provided were far from sufficient to gain a thorough understanding of English slang.

Students' opinions are divided with respect to whether they should study slang at University or not. Half of them opine that such informal language has no place in an academic setting (52%), whereas, the other half (48%) claim that studying slang should be made an integral part of their curriculum as it will help them master the English language completely.

The interviewed students almost unanimously acknowledge that they acquire slang mostly by listening to music, watching movies, surfing the net and communicating with their peers via social media. Also, almost all of them claim they too use slang but only in their communication with their friends which is for the greater part conducted online, rather than face-to-face. The majority of students avoid specifying their preferred slang terms. However, in the answers of those who do that, the following

slang terms kept recurring: lit ('excellent'), dude ('a man/a guy'), LOL ('laughing out loud'), whatever ('it doesn't matter'), etc.

The analysis of the students' responses (i.e. the explanations and translation of the British and American slang terms) in the quiz, on the other hand, secured the answers to the following questions: "Are Macedonian majors of English more familiar with British or American English?", "To what extent are the students familiar with British and American slang, respectively?" and "Which slang terms cause the greatest and which ones the least difficulties to the students?".

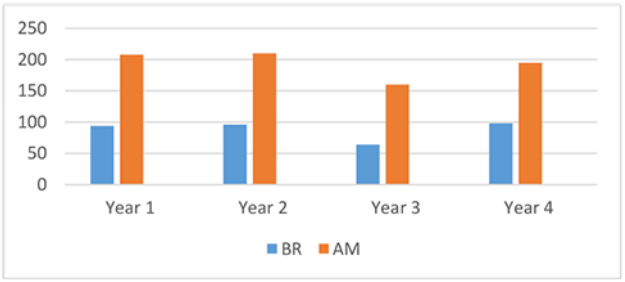

Fig. 1.
Year 1–4 students' familiarity with American slang than with British slang.
(Created by author)

With respect to the first question, the results unequivocally show that the interviewed students in all four academic years display a significantly better familiarity with American slang than with British slang (Fig. 1).

As to the second question, depending on the number of correct answers the students provided in Section 1 and Section 2 of the quiz, respectively, the students were grouped into three categories (Fig. 2):

1. Students with low knowledge of British/American slang (1–10 correct answers out of 30);
2. Students with average knowledge of British/American slang (11–20 correct answers out of 30), and
3. Students with solid knowledge of British/American slang (21–30 correct answers out of 30).

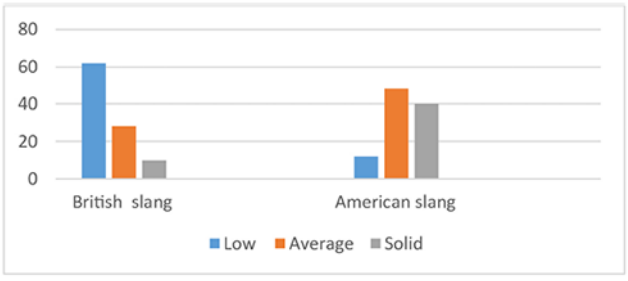

Fig. 2.
Students' knowledge of British and American slang.
(Created by author)

As shown in Fig. 2, the majority of the students (62%) display a very low familiarity with British slang; somewhat less than a third (28%) have an average familiarity with British slang, and the knowledge

of British slang of only 10% of students could be qualified as solid. As to students' familiarity with American slang, the results show an opposite trend. Almost half of the students (48%) display an average knowledge of American slang terms and expressions; a significant 40% of them demonstrate solid knowledge, and only 12% of all the interviewed students seem to have meagre knowledge of American slang.

Given that the students' knowledge of American slang is quite satisfactory and considerably greater than their knowledge of British slang, it can be inferred that these findings only partly confirm our first hypothesis that students lack familiarity with English slang. The validity of the second hypothesis according to which students are more familiar with American than with British slang, however, is proven unequivocally and without any doubt. The finding that the students are much more familiar with American slang than with British slang is, in fact, completely in line with the claims that "the Internet has propelled American slang to the global stage, giving it unprecedented opportunities for diffusion across boundaries of geography, age, gender, education, occupation, and so forth" (Eble 2003: 155) and that American slang has become 'a shared code by young people all over the world" (Androutsopoulos 2005 in Charkova 2007).

Another interesting observation that can be made in this context is that there seems to be no tendency towards an increasingly progressive upsurge in the students' knowledge of slang in each successive academic year (see Fig. 1). In other words, although it might seem reasonable to expect that the longer the students hold the status of English majors, the greater their familiarity with English slang is, these findings seriously dispute this supposition. More precisely, Year 1 and Year 2 students have almost identical results regarding their familiarity with both British and American slang. Surprisingly, Year 4 students are even slightly lagging behind but still approximating very closely their Year 1 and Year 2 counterparts. Finally, Year 3 students demonstrate slightly lower results in comparison with their fellow students in the rest of the academic years.

This practically means that our third hypothesis that senior students' knowledge of slang is greater than junior students' knowledge was proven completely wrong. The lack of steady progress in each successive academic year can be attributed to the fact that the acquisition of slang is not related to students' academic studies, i.e. it is not part of their formal education. On the contrary, as students themselves acknowledge in the questionnaire, they learn slang in a completely structureless way, mostly, outside the

Table 1
British slang Created by author

WELL KNOWN ST	No of Ss	SOMEWHAT KNOWN ST	No of Ss	LEAST KNOWN ST	No of Ss
whatever 'it does not matter'	40	scum 'villain'	24	sod off 'get out of here'	11
tube 'underground'	37	give a bell 'give a call'	23	have a row 'have a fight/argument'	9
Absobloodylutely 'absolutely'	36	wicked 'great'	20	snog 'to make out'	8
easy peasy 'easy'	36	uni 'University'	19	loo 'toilet'	8
cop 'policeman'	35	chap 'friend/brother'	16	to know one's onions 'expert'	8
		bollocks 'nonsense'	16	buzzing 'happy/excited'	7
		nutter 'mad person'	14	plastered 'drunk'	7
				dodgy 'suspicious'	7
				dough 'money'	6
				quid 'pound'	6
				dishy 'very attractive man'	5
				shambles 'mess'	4
				bird 'a girl'	4
				cheesed off 'upset, angry'	3
				poofy 'gay'	2
				grub 'food'	2
				jot down 'take notes'	2
				legless 'drunk'	0

classroom, and via alternative means – films, music, and social media. As a consequence, one can safely conclude that the acquisition of slang for Macedonian majors of English is, mostly, a matter of personal propensity or preference.

In the final stage of the research, the analysis was aimed at disclosing which of the British and American English slang terms included in the quiz cause the greatest and which ones the least difficulties for the students. In that respect, as presented in Table 1 (British slang) and Table 2 (American slang) below, the following three categories of slang terms emerged:

a) Well known slang terms (31–40 students provided correct explanation/translation);
b) Somewhat known slang terms (16–30 students provided correct explanation/translation), and
c) Least known slang terms (1–15 students provided correct explanation/translation).

Table 2.
American slang.

WELL KNOWN ST	No of Ss	SOMEWHAT KNOWN ST	No of Ss	LEAST KNOWN ST	No of Ss
dead serious 'very serious'	40	bromance 'male friendship'	28	wired 'full of energy / nervous'	11
LOL 'laugh out loud'	39	savage 'smart but aggressive'	28	ripped 'well shaped'	10
piece of cake 'easy'	39	you bet 'have no doubt'	27	Let's go Dutch 'everyone pays for himself'	7
chill out 'relax'	37	couch potato 'lazy'	23	crammed 'study hard the night before an exam'	4
I am all ears 'I am listening attentively'	37	lame 'stupid'	21		
blew it 'to fail'	36	can 'toilet'	14		
to ace 'to pass an exam with distinction'	36	Jock 'athlete'	14		
bae 'sweetheart'	35	cheesy 'of a low quality'	12		
bro 'friend'	34				
crash 'to sleep'	33				
my bad 'my mistake'	32				
keeper 'someone who deserves to be kept'	31				
sup 'what's up'	31				
hit the road 'start the journey'	31				
down to earth 'reasonable person'	31				
have a blast 'to enjoy'	31				
hit the books 'to start studying for an exam'	30				

(Created by author)

As can be seen in Table 1, the list of British slang terms subsumed under *the least known slang terms* category is the longest. This means that the majority of these terms cause difficulties to the majority of the interviewed students. The other two categories of slang terms in British English (*somewhat known* and *well known slang terms*) comprise relatively short lists, i.e. they contain only several slang items. This finding implies that only a small number of the selected British slang terms were known to the informants.

As to the selected American slang terms, as mentioned earlier, the findings indicate a reverse tendency. The majority of the students from all four academic years very successfully deal with the greatest number of the American slang terms, and only some of the slang terms seem to present some kind of an obstacle or hardship for the majority of the students (Table 2).

A close inspection of the selected British and American slang terms in the above mentioned three categories (*least known, somewhat known* and *well known*) also reveals that slang terms that are products of the same word formation processes (e.g. meaning extension, affixation, etc.) are detected in all three categories. This finding suggests that students' familiarity with slang is not dependent on or conditioned by the word-formation processes employed in the creation of slang terms.

Conclusion

Slang is a reality and a living phenomenon; its existence and prevalence in the English language are indisputable. However, the results obtained from this research, whose aim is to raise the awareness of the importance of studying slang by exploring some major aspects of slang and how

Macedonian students majoring in English fare in understanding English slang, confirm the well-known fact that slang is disregarded in EFL acquisition. Hence, there is little wonder that Macedonian students majoring in English included in this study demonstrate a lack of familiarity, especially with British slang. Their knowledge of American slang terms is considerably better, though, due to the fact that, in general, they are much more frequently and profusely exposed to American slang terms via films, music, social media, etc. Moreover, given that the Macedonian students majoring in English do not deal with slang in any well-planned, guided and structured way, the results of this research clearly show that no steady progress is made in the students' knowledge of slang in the course of their studies.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the research at hand might have yielded slightly or even completely different results if a larger number of students had been included in the study; or, if students from different departments of English language and literature at various universities in our country had been invited to participate in it; and even if completely different sets of English and American slang terms had been selected and presented in the quiz.

In any case, even though a more elaborate and comprehensive follow-up study is needed to confirm the validity of present findings, still they are quite indicative and the general conclusion that can be drawn from them is that the treatment slang receives within EFL teaching must be considerably improved, and this should be done for several key reasons. First, students majoring in EFL are intended to become the English teachers of the future generations of students, who thanks to the advanced computer technology and the Internet will be even more heavily exposed to English. Thus, the inclusion of slang in their English curriculum becomes vital as it will enable future EFL teachers to meet their potential students' needs more efficiently. Moreover, as future teachers of English, in their private and professional communication with native English speakers they will be expected to demonstrate a complete or almost complete mastery of English. In other words, a lack of knowledge of slang terms might not only significantly hinder their communication with English native speakers but also lead to embarrassing and uncomfortable situations.

Considering these salient reasons in favour of studying slang, undoubtedly, this paper lends an unequivocal support to Homuth & Piippo's (2011) proposal that students ought to deal with slang in a guided way in the classroom, or at least be encouraged to do that on their own, and that it is their teachers' obligation to provide their students with reasons, resources and encouragement in that respect.

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Appendix

Quiz

I am a female/male, first/second/third/fourth year student of English at the Faculty of Education – Bitola. (Circle the option that applies to you!)

Section 1 British English	**Explain the slang words and phrases in English or translate them in Macedonian!**
I'll give you a bell.	
Nutter	
Scum	
Chap	
Easy Peasy	
He is plastered.	
Absobloodylootely!	
Wicked!	
Bollocks	
He is buzzing!	
They had a row.	
Sod off!	
Loo	
Grub/nosh	
I got no dough!	
Whatever!	
Shambles	
Poofy	
Uni	
Jot down	
Bird	
Cop	
Tube	
Cheesed off	
Dishy	
Dodgy	
You surely **know your onions!**	
Legless	
Quid	
To snog	
Section 2 American English	**Explain the slang words and phrases in English or translate them in Macedonian!**
He aced his physics exam.	
I am all ears.	
Bro/Bruh	
He crammed all night.	
Cheesy/Corny	
Let's go Dutch!	
I'm having a blast!	
LOL	
Hit the books!	
They blew it!	
Can I crash here tonight?	
Couch potato	
My bad!	
You bet!	
Sup?	
Lame	
He is totally ripped.	
Wired	
I need to use the can.	
Hit the road!	
Bromance	
Jock	
Down to earth	
Peace of cake!	
Chill out!	
"Your boyfriend isn't jealous. He's a **keeper**."	
"Your new snowboard is so **sick**!"	
Savage	
"I'm going to go see **Bae**."	
Dead serious	

Notes

1 Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines slang as "very informal, sometimes offensive language that is used especially by people who belong to a particular group, such as young people or criminals". Merriam-Webster's online dictionary characterizes slang as "nonstandard vocabulary of extreme informality, usually not limited to any region which includes newly

coined words, shortened forms, and standard words used playfully out of their usual context".