

# **FINNISH DRUG SLANG AND THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ON ITS FORMATION**

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Slangi toimii tärkeänä "sosiaalisena murteena" eri yhteisöille, heijastaen niiden kokemuksia ja kulttuurisia piirteitä. Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee suomenkielistä huumeslangia, joka on pitkälti alituttu ilmiö kansallisella sekä kansainvälisellä tasolla. Tutkimus analysoi suomalaisen huumeslangin muodostumista, englannin kielen vaikutusta termien luomisessa sekä eroavaisuuksia viihdekäyttöön tarkoitettujen huumeiden ja lääkeaineiden slangin välillä. Analyysi pohjautuu korpukseen, joka sisältää Tor-verkon Torilauta (2017–2020) sivulla julkaistuja viestejä, josta slangitermit jaettiin viiteen pääryhmään: kannabis, stimulantit, psykedeelit, MDMA &amp; ekstaasi sekä lääkevalmisteet.</p> <p>Tuloksien mukaan suomalainen huumeslangi ottaa pääasiallisesti vaikutteita Yhdysvaltojen huume kulttuurista. Monet termit ovat lainasanoja tai käännöslainoja, joita mukautetaan suomen kieleen esimerkiksi "-i"-päätteellä. Viihdekäytön huumeslangi on usein kuvailevampaa ja ironisempaa, kun taas lääkeaineiden slangitermit nojaavat enemmän niiden kaupan nimiin tai geneeriseen nimeen, joka kertoo sen, mitä vaikuttavaa ainetta lääke on. Tulokset viittaavat myös alueellisten variaatioiden vähäisyyteen, mikä voi johtua internetin vaikutuksesta huume kaupan sekä kieliyhteisöihin.</p> <p>Tutkimus tarjoaa uutta tietoa suomalaisen huumeslangin kielellisistä ja kulttuurisista ulottuvuuksista. Se korostaa globaalin kulttuurivaihdon ja digitaalisen ajan merkitystä slangin muotoutumisessa. Slangi on elävää ja muuttuu nopeasti, joten tämä tutkimus toimii myös aikakapselina aikansa yleisille huumeille ja niiden termeille. Huumeslangi ei ole vain sanoja, vaan sen taustalla on monisyinen yhteisöllinen ja kulttuurinen verkko. Vaikka aineisto rajoittui huume kauppailmoituksiin, jatkotutkimus voisi hyödyntää keskustelufoorumeita ja tarkastella myös Helsingin slangin ja suomalaisen huumeslangin yhtäläisyyksiä.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus ei ainoastaan edistä slangin tieteellistä ymmärrystä, vaan tarjoaa myös hyödyllistä tietoa huumeiden käyttäjien parissa työskenteleville ammattilaisille, auttaen haittojen ehkäisyssä sekä yksilö- että yhteiskuntatasolla.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

When it comes to defining slang, it can be hard to pin it down to one single definition due to the unofficial nature of it. Slang is unconventional words and phrases expressed in a new way. It can be flippant, obscene, witty, and full of colorful metaphors, which gives slang its characteristic flavor (Maurer, 2020). Slang, as a linguistic phenomenon, evokes polarized reactions within our society. Some individuals embrace slang positively, ensuring they use the latest terms accurately, while others disdain it as an inferior form of formal language (Coleman, 2012).

However, one might argue that slang is a spontaneous verbal art form – akin to poetry – produced in the moment (Adams, 2012). Regardless of one's perspective, slang serves as a "social dialect" for specific groups and communities, differing from the general language in vocabulary and style. These groups and communities might include age groups or communities based around a mutual hobby. In Finland, notable forms of slang include Helsinki slang, army slang, religious slang, youth slang, and drug slang, with this thesis focusing on the latter.

Slang evolves rapidly as its speakers and their environments change (Kalliokoski, 2002), which inspired my research into Finnish drug slang. Slang related specifically to drugs has been left largely unresearched, despite the fact that the history of narcotic substances is long and multi-generational. They have been used as medicines since prehistoric times, and the recreational or intoxicating use of drugs is also a phenomenon that is over a thousand years old.

This thesis aims to provide an exploration into the contemporary use of drug slang in Finland. It explores its descriptive and ironic nature (Heino, 2019) and the influence that English language has on contemporary slang terms and their formation. This thesis will analyze slang terms for a range of substances, from recreational drugs to medicinal products, to uncover the influences shaping slang formation.

Through this study, I seek to understand the formation of drug slang terms in Finnish, the role of English in this process, and the differences between slang terms for drugs and medicinal products. This analysis contributes to the limited research on drug slang in Finland, offering insights into both linguistic and social dimensions. As

my primary source for slang, I will be using the The Finnish Dark Web Marketplace Corpus (Harviainen, 2021), which contains 3,104,515 messages exchanged on the Torilauta discussion forum within the dark web during the years 2017–2020.

The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How are different terms of drug slang formed in Finnish, and what role does English play in this process?
2. What kind of differences are there in slang terms between drugs and medicinal products?

The structure of this paper is as follows: it begins with a review of relevant literature on slang and its sociolinguistic functions, providing a foundation for understanding the context of Finnish drug slang. This is followed by an introduction to the data and methods used to analyze Finnish drug slang, specifically focusing on the influence of English. The subsequent sections analyze and discuss different drugs, categorized into five groups: Cannabis, Stimulants, Psychedelics, MDMA & Ecstasy, and Medicinal products. Within each category, the paper will highlight prevalent slang terms, exploring their formation, as well as their semantic and phonetic aspects.

Additionally, it will address the implications of this linguistic interplay for both drug users and professionals. Through this research, the aim is to shed light on an underexplored area of linguistic study, contributing valuable insights into the dynamic nature of language in the context of drug use in Finland.

## 2 BACKGROUND

Finnish is a Finno-Ugric, synthetic language, with morphology largely relying on suffixes. Word formation is predominantly based on derivational morphemes and compounding (Laalo, 2021, p. 1).

This study employs Language Contact Theory to explore the impact of English loanwords on Finnish drug slang. Language contact occurs when speakers of different languages interact, leading to borrowing and lexical innovation (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). In Finnish, the influence of English is evident in slang, where foreign terms are borrowed, calqued, or phonetically adapted. This study will examine how Finnish drug slang incorporates terms of English-origin while adapting them to Finnish morphology, such as by adding suffixes or altering pronunciation.

Slang terms examined in this study were analyzed to identify its formation process. The terms were divided into categories such as native Finnish words, direct borrowings from English, calques, phonetic adaptations, abbreviations and clippings, as well as names motivated by semantic associations. Direct loans are terms borrowed directly from English, retaining their original form and meaning, while calques involve a direct translation of English phrases into Finnish, preserving the underlying concept while adapting it linguistically. Phonetic adaptations refer to slang terms that have been modified to fit the phonetic patterns or pronunciation rules of Finnish, facilitating their integration into everyday speech. Meanwhile, abbreviations and clippings are formed by shortening longer words or phrases, either through abbreviation or by cutting off parts of a word to create a shorter version, making them more concise and easier to use. Finally, semantically motivated names rely on metaphorical or symbolic language, using semantic associations to create terms that are contextually relevant and resonant with users.

Internationally research on drug slang has been limited (Cromwell, 1970; Ghounane, 2020). In Finland, drug slang has not been widely researched, apart from the works of Harviainen, Haasio, and Hämäläinen, (2020) and Hämäläinen and Ruokolainen (2021) and a few Master's theses (Rasilainen, 1992; Siirtola, 2003; Heino, 2019). Due to the lack of comprehensive research on drug slang at national and

international levels, this study on contemporary Finnish drug slang is necessary to address this gap in the existing literature. Finnish drug slang has been recorded in different slang dictionaries (Lipsonen, 1990; Paunonen, 2000 & 2016; Karttunen, 1979). For example, Paunonen (2000; 2016) has studied Helsinki slang, which is also relevant from the point of view of drug slang, as different substances are popular topics in Helsinki slang. Drug communities are also often concentrated in larger cities, especially in the Helsinki capital region (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen 2021, p. 132).

By building on these studies and focusing specifically on the impact of English on Finnish drug slang, this research aims to fill a gap in the literature, providing a detailed examination of how Finnish speakers adapt and nativize foreign terms within a subcultural lexicon. This approach not only adds to the body of Finnish linguistic research but also contributes to a broader understanding of how language contact shapes slang within specific social groups.

Other forms of slang that have been studied in Finland are, for example, army slang, (Hautalahti, 2006) student slang, (Kuivaniemi, 1998), and prison slang (Lipsonen, 1990), the latter of which is quite relevant for the current study because drugs often have a significant role in the language used by prisoners. Drugs are also a common cause of incarceration and are used and dealt even while in prison (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 132).

Previous research on Finnish drug slang has primarily focused on uncovering the wide variety of slang terms, their prevalence (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021) and the methods used to form these slang terms (Heino, 2019). These studies provide initial insights but lack a comprehensive analysis of English influence on Finnish drug slang, leaving a notable gap in understanding how Finnish speakers incorporate foreign terms into their slang lexicon. By building on these studies and focusing specifically on the impact of English on Finnish drug slang, this research aims to fill a gap in the literature, providing a detailed examination of how Finnish speakers adapt and nativize foreign terms within a subcultural lexicon. This approach not only adds to the body of Finnish linguistic research but also contributes to a broader understanding of how language contact shapes slang within specific social groups.

Even though using, selling, and possessing drugs is still illegal, their usage has increased in Finland in recent years (THL, 2019). National wastewater surveys indicate a significant rise in the combined use of amphetamine and methamphetamine, as well as ecstasy (MDMA) and cocaine, at the population level in Finland during the survey period. Amphetamine usage reached record levels in 2018. Additionally, from 2012 to 2018, cocaine use has seen a dramatic increase. (THL, 2019, p. 31). Thus, it can be stated that the use of drugs affects a considerable number of Finnish people, at least indirectly.

Despite the illegality or possibly because of it, drug users have also formed a communal spirit, of which slang is a possible sign (Heino, 2019, p. 4). Similar to other groups, drug users have also developed their own language and expressions to remain hidden from outsiders (Ghounane, 2020, p. 420). This sense of community and

slang usage is also apparent in research done by Hämäläinen and Ruokolainen (2021), who found that the style of language used in discussions among individuals who buy and sell drugs was generally informal, featuring numerous slang terms, characteristics of spoken language, and deviations from the orthography of formal language.

Before the 1960's drugs arrived in Finland mainly for medical purposes and they were imported and forwarded by pharmacies. The imported drugs were mainly opium, morphine, heroin, cocaine, and cannabis (Kemppainen, 2021, p. 10). The first wave of recreational drug use hit the capital region of Finland at the end of the 1960's and in the early 1970's. During that time, cannabis and various medicinal products, such as barbiturates, were the most commonly tried substances by students in Helsinki (Parhi, 2023). Finnish drug slang dates back to the same period, although general terms for criminality might have prevailed and taken influence from the drug slang of the United States as early as 1950's (Rasilainen, 1992, p. 2).

Nowadays English is the primary foreign language from which Helsinki slang borrows words. One of the reasons why the youth in Helsinki has adopted English into the Helsinki slang is the fact that there was a crux in the slang during the 1950's. At that time a new youth culture landed in Finland, which drew its inspiration from the United States, which caused a wave of new English vocabulary getting added to Helsinki slang (Uusi-Hallila, 2006). A plethora of terms from this cultural shift formed the earliest version of Finnish drug slang, especially in Helsinki, but most likely in some other urban areas as well.

The culture of the drug trade is mainly dominated by the United States. Most of the drug slang is born in the U.S., and it spreads to the rest of the Western world via the internet, television, radio, cinema, books, magazines, and music (Rasilainen 1992, p. 20). This influence is also evident in the Finnish drug slang, where a myriad of terms are directly loaned from their English counterpart via a calque or altered to be more in line with the phonological rules of the grammar.

When dealing with drugs and people associated with drug culture, drug slang, is in fact, a cover for lack of knowledge, which can be dangerous to the user. There is no uniformity in drug slang. For example, the term Dope (douppi) may refer to a few different drugs such as Amphetamine, Cocaine, or Cannabis. This is why the word douppi is used as an umbrella term nowadays to refer to drugs in general. The orthography of douppi reflects the English pronunciation but with the -i at the end, which is added clearly to fit the phonological rules of Finnish grammar. The same idea of umbrella terms goes for words, such as *juttu*, *setti*, and *kama* (*thing*, *set*, *stuff*), often referring to the more popular drugs like cannabis and stimulants. Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen (2021) note that, although these slang terms generally refer to the same substance, not all of them are fully synonymous. Some terms carry additional connotations related to the quality of the substance, for example, terms like *priima* and *putsi* (*first-class* and *clean*).



### 3 DATA AND METHODS

This study aims to examine the influence of English, particularly American English, on Finnish drug slang by addressing two research questions: how are different slang terms formed, and what role does English play in this process? Additionally, are there differences in slang terms between drugs and medicinal products? To achieve this, the Finnish Dark Web Marketplace Corpus (Harviainen, 2021) was analyzed, utilizing a descriptive approach to investigate the terminology employed by the Finnish drug community.

The primary data source for this study is the Finnish Dark Web Marketplace Corpus (Harviainen, 2021), which comprises 3,104,515 messages collected from the Torilauta forum, which operated on the dark web between 2017 and 2020. The Torilauta discussion board featured various drug-related topics, including the sale, purchase, and trade of different drugs. While there were areas dedicated to non-drug-related discussions, the overwhelming majority of the site's activity focused on drug trade: approximately 97% of the messages were posted in sections designated for buying and selling announcements. (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 133). Due to ethical concerns and privacy issues, this corpus is not publicly accessible. The corpus was selected due to its wide variety of contemporary Finnish drug slang used in an authentic context.

The analysis involves taking a descriptive approach to examining the formation of Finnish drug slang terms, the influence of English on these terms, and the distinction between slang terms for drugs and medicinal products. Messages from the corpus were reviewed to identify slang terms related to various substances. Terms were categorized based on the type of substance they refer to, such as cannabis, stimulants, psychedelics, MDMA/ecstasy, and medicinal products like benzodiazepines and opiates. It can be difficult to differentiate between drug slang and general slang, as many drug-related terms overlap with slang associated with other aspects of life, such as violence, armaments, sickness, death, and law enforcement (Rasilainen, 1992, p. 4-5). Therefore, this thesis will focus only on slang terms directly referring to substances. Slang related to equipment for drug use, the

feelings evoked by drug use, withdrawal symptoms, and methods of ingestion will be excluded from the study, unless they are necessary for contextual support.

Each slang term identified in the study underwent analysis to determine its method of formation, categorized into indigenous Finnish terms, direct loans and calques from English, phonetic adaptations, abbreviations and clippings, and semantically motivated names. Indigenous Finnish terms originate within the Finnish language, reflecting native linguistic creativity and cultural specificity without foreign influence. This analysis provides concrete examples that underscore the substantial impact of English on the evolution of Finnish drug slang, highlighting how foreign linguistic elements have integrated into the local vernacular to shape the terminology used within drug-related discourse.

Given the sensitive nature of the data and the ethical implications of researching topics related to illegal activities, all analyses were conducted strictly following ethical guidelines. Personal identifiers were removed from the corpus to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals involved.

## 4 ANALYSIS

In this section, I will analyze the various slang terms associated with different types of drugs used in Finland, focusing on their methods of formation and linguistic characteristics. The analysis is divided into five subsections, each dedicated to a specific category of drugs: Cannabis, Stimulants, Psychedelics, MDMA & Ecstasy, and Medicinal Products. These subsections are organized to examine the prevalence of slang terms within each category, their linguistic origins, including native Finnish terms, direct loans, and calques from English, as well as phonetic adaptations, abbreviations, and semantically motivated names. This structured approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic landscape of contemporary Finnish drug slang.

### 4.1 Cannabis

Cannabis is by far the most commonly used illegal drug in Finland (Rönkä & Markkula, 2020, p. 20). Cannabis products represent two main types: the flowering of the cannabis plant, often called marijuana and the pulp processed from cannabis resin called hashish (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 138). The starting point of the spread of cannabis, especially the hashish variety, in Finland, can be placed in Swedish jazz musicians, who brought drugs with them when they visited Finland during the 1960's (Kemppainen, 2021, p. 12).

Nowadays the flower variety of the cannabis plant is more commonly used compared to hashish (Rönkä & Markkula, 2020, p. 23) often smoked, vaporized, or used in edibles. This shift in popularity is also noticeable in slang, where there are noticeably more terms denoted to marijuana as opposed to hashish. Since cannabis is the most used illegal drug in Finland, it is expected that there is a considerable number/an abundance of slang terms for the substance. Some of the terms are native to Finnish, such as *poltto* (*burning*), *pilvi* (*cloud*), *pajari* and *paja*, where the original meaning is unknown. While some terms are clearly influenced by the drug slang of

the United States via calques and loan words. Examples of these are *kukka*, *kukinto*, *nappu* (flower); *dänkki* (dank); *savu*, *sauhu* (smoke); *nugetti* (nugget); and *ruoho* (grass) (See example 1.). The influence of English is also present through anglicism, for example *weedi* (weed) is a clear example of this. Also, abbreviations are noticeable in the terms for cannabis, such as *QQ/qq*, referring to the word *kukka* (See example 1.), and *mari*, the clipped version of the word *marijuana*. American influence shows itself also in some humorous slang terms such as *jazzi tupakka* (jazz cigarette) for Cannabis as seen on Example 1.

#### Example 1.

"*Savua dänkkiä qq hatsia pajaria polttoo hittii dädää jazztupakkia rairai ruohoo haaberoo*"

"Smoke dank qq puff weed burns hits dadaa jazz cigarettes rairai grass haaberoo"

It could be noted that the trend of adding -i at the end of the Finnish slang word influenced by its American counterpart is quite common (*budi*, *dänkki*, *weedi*). The same trend is apparent in terms for cannabis cigarettes: *joint* (*jointti*) and *spliff* (*spliffi*) have been adapted to the Finnish language by adding -i at the end. The word "*budi*" can with good reason be deemed the foreign equivalent of the slang term "*bud*", which refers to the name for the part of the cannabis plant that is smoked (See Example 2.)

#### Example 2.

"*Tarjolla priimaa nappuisaa budia. Lajikkeesta ei tietoa, kolisee tosi hyvin päivittäispolttajallakin.*"

"first-class knobby bud available. No information about the strain, it works really well even for a daily smoker"

Hashish is relatively uncommon nowadays compared to cannabis plant, and hence there are only two common terms for it: *hasis* and *hasa*. (See Example 3.) Both derive from the English term and have been adapted to fit Finnish orthography.

#### Example 3.

"*Hasaa hasista helsinki keskusta kamppi kallio sörnäinen*"

"Hash hashish in Helsinki city centre kamppi kallio sörnäinen"

One of the more recent terms adopted by the Finnish drug community to describe cannabis is *zaza*. The term has been a part of the internet, hip-hop, and meme culture since mid-2019 when rappers from Atlanta, Georgia first introduced it (Know your meme s.v. Zaza). Through the internet, the term has spread to Finnish drug slang as

a loan word, where the meaning has remained the same. The term is so recently established in the slang that it cannot be found in the Finnish Dark Web Marketplace Corpus. Still, it was logged to the Finnish Urban Dictionary in April 2023 (Urbaani sanakirja s.v. zaza). The term serves both as a testament to the English language as being a lingua franca in Western society and American drug slang being the biggest influence and a source for new terms for speakers of Finnish drug slang.

## 4.2 Stimulants

The most commonly used stimulants in Finland are Amphetamine and Cocaine. With stimulants, most of the slang terms seem to be derived from the stimulating effect of the substance. *Piri* is one of the most common slang terms for amphetamine (See Example 4.) The term *piri* can be seen as a clipping from the word *piriste* (stimulant). Also, as seen in Example 4, the term *amfe* can be seen as a clipped version of *amfetamiini* (amphetamine).

Example 4.

"Täältäpä iltaan ehtaa pirteää piriä amfea alista... Mukavasti lämmittää ja eipä uneta ei"

"Here you can get cheery piri amfe alis for your evening... warms you up nicely and won't make you sleepy"

The terms *speedi*, *speedy*, and *spiidi* are all direct loans from the slang term *speed*, adapted to Finnish grammar by adding the -i at the end. In addition, they reflect the English pronunciation.

There is also a clear calque referring to amphetamines: the term *vauhti* is also loaned from the term *speed* (See Example 5.). These terms reveal the ironic and descriptive nature of drug slang, as seen in Example 6., *piiska* (whip), which can be seen as a similar metaphor for the words *speed* and *vauhti*, where the stimulating effect of the drug works for the user like a whiplash for a horse.

Example 5.

"noniin nyt ois vaudille tarve. ei mitää blandattua paskaa spiidiä vaan jotain toimivaa."

"Alright I need some speed now. not some blended crap speed, but something that works."

Example 6.

"Löytyy muutama keila kohtuu tiukkaa piiskaa joka toimii."

"I have few grams of semi tight whip that works."

With cocaine, a plethora of shortened terms seems to be the most prevalent. Terms are quite similar with different spellings, such as *coca*, *cola*, *koka*, *kola*, and *koksu*. In spoken slang, the term "kouk" seems to be also popular, with the term being a direct loan of *Coke*, the orthography reflecting the English pronunciation. With the slang terms *cola/kola* (See example 7.) the word formation is partly derived phonetically and partly from the fact that Coca-Cola the soda drink used to contain cocaine instead of caffeine.

Interestingly, two other word formation strategies stand out in this category. First, the status of the drug, when it comes to stimulants, such as Cocaine and Amphetamine, Finnish drug slang has adopted the word upper and added their own spin to it with the terms *yläkerta* (*Upper floor*) and *alakerta* (*Bottom floor*). The term *yläkerta* and the clipped *ylis* are based on cocaine's prestigious position in Finnish drug circles - their counterparts *alakerta* and *alis* are used for the more common and cheaper stimulant, amphetamine (See Examples 4 and 7). In online discussions, the emojis of thumbs up and thumbs down can also act as a differentiating factor between Cocaine and Amphetamine. Second, the appearance, the white color of cocaine has caused it to be compared to snow in both Finnish and US drug slang. *Lumi* (*Snow*) is a loan translation denoting cocaine as seen in Example 8. This also highlights the fact that Finnish drug slang can be quite descriptive by taking into account the status, effects, and appearance of the said drug.

#### Example 7.

">Laadukasta ylistä tarjolla ei mitään katujauhoa! Vahva kolan maku ja tuoksu minkä kauppojen yhteydessä tulet huomaamaan. Tuotetta saa haistaa maistaa kunhan rahat minulla panttina! Nopeat ja reilut kaupat tiedossa :)"

">high-quality ylis for sale that's not your average street flour! There is a strong taste and smell of coke, which you will notice when buying. You can smell and taste the product as long as I have the money as a collateral! Fast and fair deals :)"

#### Example 8.

"Puotiin putkahti muutama gramma vitivalkoista lunta =)"

"A few grams of pure white snow came into my boutique =)"

A compelling case is to be made about the influence of the US culture outside of the English language. An example of this could be the term "yayo." Yayo was originally used as slang for cocaine in Latin America, although it is not clear how the term came

into being (Dictionary.com, 2018). The term was made popular by Al Pacino in the movie *Scarface*. The term is also widely used in American Hip-hop culture, where it has spread to the vocabulary of drug users outside of the USA. In Finnish drug slang, speakers have taken the term and pronounced it the same, although some speakers have altered the term to better fit the Finnish lexicon with the term "jeppe" (see Example 9).

Example 9.

*"Vielä löytyisi jeppee! Laadukas, sekä puhdas pohjainen yayo. Voittaa lautasotkut 100-0. Maku + tuoksu ehta vahva perunakellari. Ei sisällä kofeiinia, efedriiniä yms. Paskaa."*

"Still have some jeppe left! High-quality, clean-based yayo. Beats marketplaces products 100-0. The taste + aroma is a strong potato cellar. Does not contain caffeine, ephedrine, etc. Crap."

### 4.3 Psychedelics

In the drug slang of the United States, LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) is often referred to either with the abbreviation LSD or simply *Acid*. In Finnish drug slang, users have opted to use either the term *LSD* with Finnish orthography or the direct loan-translation *happo* as seen in Example 10.

It has to be noted, however, that with LSD the slang term used might be determined by the form of the drug, whether it be in a sugar cube (*sokeripala*) (see Example 10) or a piece of blotting paper (*lappu*), as seen in Example 11, in which the vendor makes a note that the blotting paper has a Doctor Seuss graphic printed on it.

Example 10.

*"Iltaa lauta Vielä löytyy erittäin pätevä erä White fluff nimistä happoo tiputettu sokeripaloihin. 150-170ug per pala, joten yhdellä kannattaa aloittaa jos tolei ei löydy."*

"Good evening marketplace There is still a very competent batch acid named White fluff dribbled on sugar cubes. 150-170ug per piece, so it's worth starting with one if you don't have a tolerance."

Example 11.

*"Uudessakaupungissa Golden Teacher sienii 10e/g 30e minimini, sekä 200ug dr seuss LSD lappuja"*

"In Uusikaupunki, Golden Teacher mushrooms 10e/g 30e minimum, and 200ug dr Seuss LSD blotting papers"

With psilocybin mushrooms, the direct loan-translation *sieni/sienet* (*mushroom/mushrooms*) as seen in Example 11 is the most common term used to describe psychedelic mushrooms. In the drug slang of the United States, the term *magic mushrooms* is used often, and consequently, Finnish drug slang has loan-translated the term, and psychedelic mushrooms are sometimes called *taikasieni/taikasienet* (See Example 12). Also, the term *silokki* (See Example 13) is sometimes used when describing psilocybin mushrooms. The term derives from *Psilocybe semilanceata* (*Suippumadonlakki*), a type of psychedelic mushroom that grows on the northern hemisphere, including Finland, often called *silokki*.

Example 12.

*"Myynnissä pieni määrä taikasieniä metroradan varrella määrittämässäni paikassa."*

"A small amount of magic mushrooms for sale at the location I specify along the metro line"

Example 13.

*"Olis tossa ainakin yks setti silokki kapsleita, jokaisessa kapselissa on 0,1g murskattuja silokkeja."*

"I have at least one batch of psilocybin capsules, each capsule contains 0.1g of crushed psilocybin's"

#### 4.4 MDMA & Ecstasy

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine is most of the time called either MDMA or Ecstasy. The substance appears on the drug market in two different forms: crystalline powder and tablets. The powder is referred to as MDMA and slang terms related to it, and tablets are called ecstasy and similar terms.

In Finland, the most common slang term for MDMA is *mämmi* (see Example 14.) The term is most likely derived from the phonetic similarity to the abbreviation of MDMA when pronounced the Finnish way. *Mämmi* also refers to a Finnish desert made of water and rye malt, usually eaten around the easter. This further strengthens the point of Finnish drug slang being ironic in nature when a desert known to most of the population is synonymized with an illegal substance. Some other popular terms for MDMA are *madame* (*madam*), *mässy* (*munchie*), *mäiske* (*loud hammering noise*), and *mände*, which does not seem to have any other meaning in Finnish language. These terms are most likely inspired by the pronunciation of the abbreviation (MDMA) that the drug is commonly referred to.



#### Example 14.

"Mämmiä, madamea, eli ekstaasia puhtaimmassa muodossaan! 0.1- 0.2g laittaa kenet tahansa erittäin letkeisiin euforioihin!"

"Rye pudding, madame, so ecstasy in its purest form! 0.1- 0.2g will put anyone in very care-free euphoria"

With ecstasy tablets, the most common slang term is *esso*, which could be considered as a phonetic adaptation of the word ecstasy, although its popularity could also have been affected by a gas station chain of the same name (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 16). The rest of the slang terms relating to ecstasy tablets are mostly equated to candy, such as *nami*, *naksu*, *mässy*, *karkki* (*yummy*, *nibble*, *delicacy*, *candy*). The color of the tablet and the print on it are commonly expressed when selling. In Example 15., for instance, the seller references that the ecstasy pills have Phillip Plein's luxury goods company logo printed on them. The only slang term that overlaps between the ecstasy pills and the powdery form of MDMA seems to be *mässy*, with it being phonetically similar to MDMA and the equation of ecstasy tablets to sweets.

#### Example 15.

"moro! eli myyntiin saapunut erä Phillip Plein XTC essoja tuote sisältää 190-200mg MDMA:ta"

"Hey! So, a batch of Phillip Plein XTC tablets has arrived for sale, product contains 190-200mg of MDMA"

## 4.5 Medicinal Products

For this section, I have chosen to use a variety of different medicinal products, including two kinds of opiates (Buprenorphine and Oxycodone) and three kinds of Benzodiazepines (Alprazolam, Clonazepam, and Diazepam). These products were chosen due to their common use in Finland and consequently, the large selection of data in the corpus.

There are two key slang names for buprenorphine (*bupre* and *subu*). Both words were formed by clipping. The base word for *Bupre* is the name of the drug *buprenorphine*, and *subu* is clipped from the drug brand name Subutex (Heino, 2019, p. 49). As seen in Example 16, the descriptive nature of Finnish drug slang extends to medicinal products, as one common term for buprenorphine is *kasipallo* (*eight ball*), which comes from the round shape of the tablet and the figure B8 printed on it (to indicate that the medicine contains 8 milligrams of buprenorphine). Interestingly, in this instance the drug slang of the USA and Finland have the same word with different

meanings, as in the United States *eight ball* refers to approximately an eighth of an ounce (ranging from 3 to 3.5 grams) of an illegal drug, most often cocaine (Merriam-Webster, 2024). This shows us that even though loan words often keep the meaning of their American counterpart, users of Finnish drug slang can alter terms to create new meanings.

Example 16.

*"Sitten og subu kasipallo 30e kipale"*

"Then original subu eightball 30e per piece"

Oxycodone also has two main slang names, which both have the original language material, and the localized version adapted to Finnish orthography, (*Oxy/oksy*) and (*contti/kontti*) Both are clippings whose root word is the brand name of oxycodone, Oxycontin. The word "Kontti" (*Container*) can also be considered an example of a common language word that has received a new meaning in drug slang (Heino, 2019, p. 51).

Example 17.

*"Varastoon tuli 40mg oxyjä lisää!"*

"40mg oxys came into stock!"

The only slang name for clonazepam in the discussion messages of the material is *riva*. It is a derivative formed by clipping the term Rivatril, the brand name under which the drug is sold (Heino, 2019, p. 64). The same can be said about the word *pami*, which is a clipping of the name diazepam from the benzodiazepine brand name Diapam.

With alprazolam, the most common terms used are related to the brand names Xanor and Ksalol, under which the medicine is sold. It is usually imported from Eastern European countries under the brand name Ksalol. The brand in question is also banned in Finland. However, it is usually manufactured in homemade laboratories under the name of the brand (Lehtokari & Karppi, 2022).

Medicinal products are typically referred to by their brand names (e.g., Ksalol, Subutex, Diapam), but the most common ones have also developed widely recognized slang terms (e.g., *loli*, *subu*, *pami*) (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 130). While most slang terms are derived from phonetic similarities to the original brand names, semantically motivated names, which reflect the characteristics of the narcotics, are also frequently used (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 130).

Example 18.

*"Maksetaan hyvä hinta jos joltain löytyy Xanoreita tai Rivatril bentsoja, rinnakkaisvalmisteita voi myös ehdottaa."*

"A good price will be paid if someone has Xanor or Rivatril benzos, parallel products can also be suggested."

Example 19.

*"Oxyt loppu. Rivoja riittää eli tulkaa hakemaan! Ja vaihtoja voi ehdottaa! :)"*

"Out of Oxy. There are plenty of Rivo's left so come and get them! And you can suggest trades! :)"

## 5 DISCUSSION

The analysis of Finnish drug slang reveals a complex interplay between local linguistic creativity and external influences, hailing particularly from the drug culture of the United States. This interplay is evident across all the major categories of drugs examined and to a lesser degree with medicinal products, where product names and the names of chemical compounds seem to be the main language material where medicinal products get their slang terms from.

Cannabis, the most used illegal drug in Finland, exhibits a rich variety of slang terms, highlighting its popularity and cultural penetration. The shift from hashish to the flower variety of cannabis is reflected in the numerous Finnish and loan-translated terms associated with cannabis. Indigenous terms (*poltto*, *pilvi*, *pajari*, and *paja*) coexist with American-influenced terms (*kukka*, *budi*, and *dänkki*.) The adaptation of American slang by adding the suffix "-i" (e.g., *budi*, *dänkki*, *weedi*) underscores the influence of English on Finnish drug slang. A concrete example of the ever-present influence of the United States is the term *zaza*, which could not be found in the Finnish Dark Web Marketplace Corpus since the Corpus has only messages archived between 2017-2020, and the term started to gain traction in the US in the mid-2019. The recency of the adoption of the terms proves to us that the drug culture of the United States remains a very influential. This linguistic evolution highlights the dynamic nature of slang, shaped by both domestic trends and global influences.

The stimulant category, including amphetamine and cocaine, shows a clear trend of deriving slang from the effects and characteristics of the drugs. For amphetamines, terms like *piri* (from *piriste* meaning *stimulant*), *speedi*, and *vauhti* (a calque of "speed") are prevalent. The metaphorical term *piiska* (*whip*) further exemplifies the descriptive nature of Finnish drug slang. Cocaine slang, such as *coca*, *cola*, *koka*, *kola*, and *koksu*, often borrows phonetically from English, while terms like *lumi* (*snow*) and *jauho* (*flour*) highlight the drug's appearance. The hierarchical distinction between *yläkerta* (*upper floor*) for cocaine and *alakerta* (*bottom floor*) for amphetamine illustrates the social layering within drug slang. The adoption of terms like *yayo* from American hip-hop culture signifies the global diffusion of drug-related terminology.

Psychedelics, particularly LSD and psilocybin mushrooms, exhibit a blend of direct loan-translations and descriptive Finnish terms. LSD is often referred to by its chemical abbreviation or as *happo* (*acid*), reflecting a straightforward borrowing from English. The form of LSD, whether on sugar cubes (*sokeripala*) or blotting paper (*lappu*), influences the specific slang used, demonstrating the drug's varied modes of consumption. Psilocybin mushrooms are mostly called by the calques loaned from English: *sieni* (*mushroom*) or *taikasieni* (*magic mushroom*).

Slang names for MDMA and ecstasy demonstrate the phonetic and ironic nature of Finnish drug slang. The term *mämmi* for MDMA is derived from its phonetic similarity to the drug's abbreviation in Finnish, while also referring to a traditional Finnish dessert. This dual meaning reflects the ironic and humorous tendencies in Finnish slang. Other terms like *mände*, *madame*, *mässy*, and *mäiske* similarly derive from the pronunciation of MDMA, highlighting the phonetic influence. This category seems to be the only outlier along with the medicinal products, as the term MDMA is the only one directly derived from the drug slang of the United States. Terms like *mämmi* and *mässy*, while influenced by the abbreviation of MDMA have their synonyms in Finnish, hence they cannot be considered as influenced by the English language but as rather indigenous slang terms.

For ecstasy tablets, the term *esso* stands out as a phonetic adaptation of "ecstasy." Other common slang terms for the drug are *nami* (*sweet*), *naksu* (*nibble*), *mässy* (*munchie*), and *karkki* (*candy*). This equates the tablets to candy, emphasizing their appearance and appeal. The overlapping use of *mässy* for both MDMA and ecstasy tablets illustrates the fluid nature of slang, where terms can cross categories based on phonetic similarity and contextual usage. Descriptive language in sales announcements, such as references to color and prints on the tablets further highlight the detailed and consumer-oriented aspect of drug slang and the drug trade overall.

Drug slang frequently employs letter abbreviations, which often stem from the chemical names of the substances. These abbreviations simplify complex and difficult-to-pronounce chemical names, making communication more efficient. For example, "LSD" stands for Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, "MDMA" for Methylenedioxymethamphetamine, "THC" for Tetrahydrocannabinol, and "DMT" for Dimethyltryptamine. Additionally, abbreviations can enhance the coded nature of drug slang, as seen in terms like "XTC" for Ecstasy and "QQ" or "qq" for Cannabis. More generalized terms like "420" (pronounced "four-twenty") are also used to refer to cannabis culture. Word abbreviations are also prevalent in drug slang. Their use underscores the colloquial and informal nature of this language. Commonly used words are often shortened for ease, as in the cases of "*pami*" (Diapam), "*subu*" (Subutex), and "*oxy*" (Oxycodone) The term *kasipallo* (eight ball) for buprenorphine tablets highlights a semantic shift unique to Finnish slang. Clipping is also popular in Finnish drug slang it can be seen as enforcing the relaxed colloquial nature of drug slang. Terms like *Amfe*, *koka*, and *mari* are examples of clippings in Finnish drug slang, in which the first lexeme is retained (Rasilainen, 1992, p. 95).

As to the formation of the slang terms, this study has illustrated, that Finnish drug slang consists of a rich mix of indigenous and foreign terms that together create a descriptive and ironic form of slang unknown to most people. Finnish drug slang includes terms created locally that reflect the cultural context and characteristics of the drug. Examples include "*poltto*" and "*pajari*" for cannabis, and "*piri*" for amphetamine, derived from "*piriste*" (stimulant). These terms are often descriptive or metaphorical, reflecting the drug's effects or physical attributes. Many of these trends, such as calques, abbreviations, and clippings, may be used to reinforce the secretive nature of this slang variety. All things considered, drug slang is a fairly new phenomenon, but in the context of drug use, slang serves as a crucial form of communication among users and dealers, offering a sense of identity and secrecy. Drug users and dealers form communities among themselves, one characteristic feature of which is a form of language that deviates from ordinary colloquial speech (Cromwell, 1970).

If one is not part of or at least familiar with the drug user subculture, it may be difficult to understand drug slang (Harviainen, Haasio & Hämäläinen, 2020, p. 5). Finnish drug slang is characterized by creativity and a focus on the effects, appearance, or cultural significance of the substances. Slang terms describing medicinal products often maintain closer ties to the drug's official names or branding and are more straightforward and utilitarian. Overall, Finnish drug slang illustrates a dynamic interplay between local innovation and global influences, while slang for medicinal products tends to be more directly linked to commercial and pharmaceutical contexts.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This study set out to answer the following research questions: what role does English play in the formation of different terms in Finnish drug slang and what kind of differences are there in slang terms between recreational drugs and medicinal products. The findings indicate that the primary influence on Finnish drug slang comes from U.S. drug culture, with many terms borrowed through loanwords, calques, and abbreviations of them. A common adaptation in Finnish is adding the suffix "-i" to these borrowed words. This adaptation demonstrates how Finnish speakers modify borrowed terms to align with local linguistic patterns. The widespread influence of American drug culture is also evident in the adoption of specific terms and expressions. Terms like "yayo" and "zaza" have been incorporated into Finnish drug slang, showcasing the cross-cultural exchange. Additionally, there is a clear distinction between slang for recreational drugs and medicinal products. Recreational drug slang tends to be more descriptive and sometimes ironic, reflecting the effects or cultural associations of the drug. In contrast, slang for medicinal products is more straightforward, often derived from the brand name or the chemical compound used in the medication. This type of slang often retains a closer connection to the drug's pharmaceutical origins and may be less descriptive of the drug's effects.

The results of this study suggest relatively little regional variation within drug slang since messages used in this thesis were posted from different cities across Finland. A possible explanation for this could be the digitalized era we currently inhabit, where internet serves as a tool for generalized language within different communities. This also acts as a testament for the place of English being a lingua franca across western society.

However, it should be noted that the data studied for this thesis mainly consists of drug sales announcements, which possibly can cause the vendor to aim for a more official and formal style of writing (Hämäläinen and Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 150-151). Because of this, drug slang should also be investigated with other types of materials. There are relatively many drug-related discussion boards these days easily available on both encrypted and open web forums. Despite the limitations, the study's strengths

lie in the contemporary nature of the data used. The thesis thus offers insights into contemporary Finnish drug slang at the time of the publication. Future research could build on these findings by comparing Finnish drug slang and Helsinki slang and attempting to trace the similarities between the two and answer the question of how Helsinki slang has influenced Finnish drug slang.

Overall, Finnish drug slang is characterized by a rich array of terms reflecting local linguistic practices and global influences. The prevalence of American-derived terms highlights the cultural impact of the United States, while indigenous terms and creative adaptations underscore the unique aspects of Finnish slang. The descriptive nature of drug slang, often highlighting the effects and characteristics of substances, provides insight into the social and cultural dimensions of drug use in Finland. This study contributes to our understanding of how language evolves in response to social phenomena and underscores the importance of cultural exchange in shaping contemporary slang. Research into drug slang should continue, as such research is not only academically but also socially impactful. It helps professional groups working with drug users and their families in their work to become familiar with the vocabulary of drug slang (Hämäläinen & Ruokolainen, 2021, p. 23). Such information can help prevent the harm caused by drugs to both individuals and society.

The amount of drug slang is likely rising rather than falling in societies worldwide. Mainstream media will increasingly present examples of this slang to us. Drug slang symbolizes a community of suffering hedonists within our society. This group largely remains invisible to most people except when the negative effects of drug use become apparent to us via crime or homelessness. Examining the language of this community could offer insight into the individuals behind the slang. These words reveal the character and life of a drug user, who is, ultimately, a human being, just like us.



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