

## TALKING LIKE A PONGO

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**Abstract:** As a well-defined and limited group, the Armed Forces personnel uses slang in their every day activities. Working for the Military, we deal with slang vocabulary, and as linguists, we find this semi-standard semi-informal way of speaking both very intriguing and resourceful. By its continual and ever-changing use and definition of words in informal conversation, slang is a gold mine for us, teachers dealing with vocabulary for specific purposes. The present paper deals with this particular segment of military way of speaking, hoping to be an X-Ray for this continuous re-invention and re-evaluation of language.

**Key-words:** slang, military, words and expressions

Slang is a continual and ever-changing use and definition of words in informal conversation. Use of slang is frequently ridiculed by culturally-ignorant people who feel it is the product of insufficient education and believe it to be counter-evolutionary; of course, they couldn't be farther from the truth. [UD, 3] Slang is, in fact, a facet of language evolution, it is a way different social groups thumb-print their speaking. Slang words and expressions often use references as a means of comparison. Slang is such a vivid part of language that some words has endured over the decades since its inception (i.e. cool, Pongo, rundown) and some will only last a few years before being rendered obsolete or outdated (i.e. bling bling, gum up, thumbnail sketch).

Military personnel is a mixture of people of different ages, cultures, types and levels of education, therefore these people's language is a Petri dish for slang. The examples we took in consideration for illustrating military slang are based on our personal experience with the military and we consider them representative for this category of language.

About the size of the situation – approximately right  
*We found that your appraisal of the situation is just about the size of it.*

Ahead of the game – surpass

*We had already determined our requirements, so we were ahead of the game.*

All for it – to agree entirely

*It is a good plan and I'm all for it.*

All yours – It is your problem

*I have no interest in the matter, therefore it is all yours.*

Around the clock- 24 hours a day; 3 consecutive 8-hour work periods

*The staff worked around the clock to finish in time.*

Back up- to support

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion backed up the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.*

Bad time – reprimand

*The commander gave me a bad time for having a late report.*

Bank on- to rely on

*I can always bank on his doing a good job.*

Big stick- powerful force

*The carrier force provided him with a big stick.*

Bilge- to fail a test

*He bilged the test because he hadn't studied.*

Bird colonel – a full colonel

*He was promoted from lieutenant colonel to bird colonel.*

Bird dog- to supervise closely

*He went there o bird dog the night march.*

Blow one's stack – to become angry or excited

*He blew his stack when he heard the full details.*

Boner- a mistake

*Attempting to withdraw was a real boner.*

Bottleneck – an obstacle to progress

*The wreck was a bottleneck to the flow of traffic.*

Bucket of worms – confused solution or situation

*The situation really looked like a bucket of worms.*

Cap Buster- team shooter

*The Sergeant was a cap buster for 10 years.*

Caught short- not to have enough

*We'll need extra ammunition; we don't want to get caught short.*

Chaser- an escort for a prisoner

*The chaser fired at him.*

Chopper – helicopter

*The chopper was above our heads.*

Chow hound- one who likes to eat

*What a chow hound!*

Close shave- just barely successful

*The enemy air attack failed to destroy the bridge, but it was a close shave.*

Clutch up- to become tense or nervous

*The platoon leader clutched up and the enemy escaped.*

Cook up- to prepare or make a plan

*Try to cook up a move to surprise the enemy.*

Crackup- an accident

*Three fighter planes had crackups on landing.*

Deck- to knock down

*He decked him.*

Doggie- army personnel

*The doggies are drunk again.*

Dope- information

*The battalion commander officer put out the dope to his assembled staff.*

Do or die- to make a last great effort

*Execute Attack Plan Able; it's do or die for us now.*

Down the home stretch- in the final phase

*We'll be going down the home stretch in Phase 1 about 3 March.*

Duck- to avoid

*We ducked in the building to get away from sniper fire.*

Eager beaver- very ambitious person

*Our S-3 is really an eager beaver.*

Fair-haired- those considered to be liked by the superiors  
*After the last inspection, our platoon can be considered as the fair-haired boys in the company.*

Fan out- to deploy

*The leading battalion fanned out to cover our advance.*

Fill the bill- meet the requirements

*That's exactly what we need to fill the bill.*

Fine tooth comb- very careful search

*Search through the valley with a fine tooth comb!*

## CONCLUSIONS

Slang is a perpetual changing part of vocabulary, particularly influenced by the category of people using it. It functions as a mark for language used for specific purposes.

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