

DOES A SLINGSHOT SLING SHOTS?

DIFFICULTIES IN IDENTIFYING ENGLISH
CUTTHROAT COMPOUNDS

Brianne Hughes
IHS Lunch & Learn
April 15, 2015

DSNA-20 & SHEL-9 DUAL CONFERENCE

5-7 June 2015

Pre-Conference Excursion 4 June

University of British Columbia

**20th Biennial Dictionary
Society of North
America
Meeting (DSNA-20)**

&

**9th Studies in the
History of the English
Language
Conference (SHEL-9)**



WHAT AM I TALKING ABOUT?

An introduction to linguistics

An introduction to English compounding

An introduction to cutthroat compounds

Problems finding cutthroats and how to overcome them

Where I am now

WHAT IS LINGUISTICS?

It is the systematic study of how language is put together and how it functions.

The basic units are:

SOUNDS

phonetics

WORDS

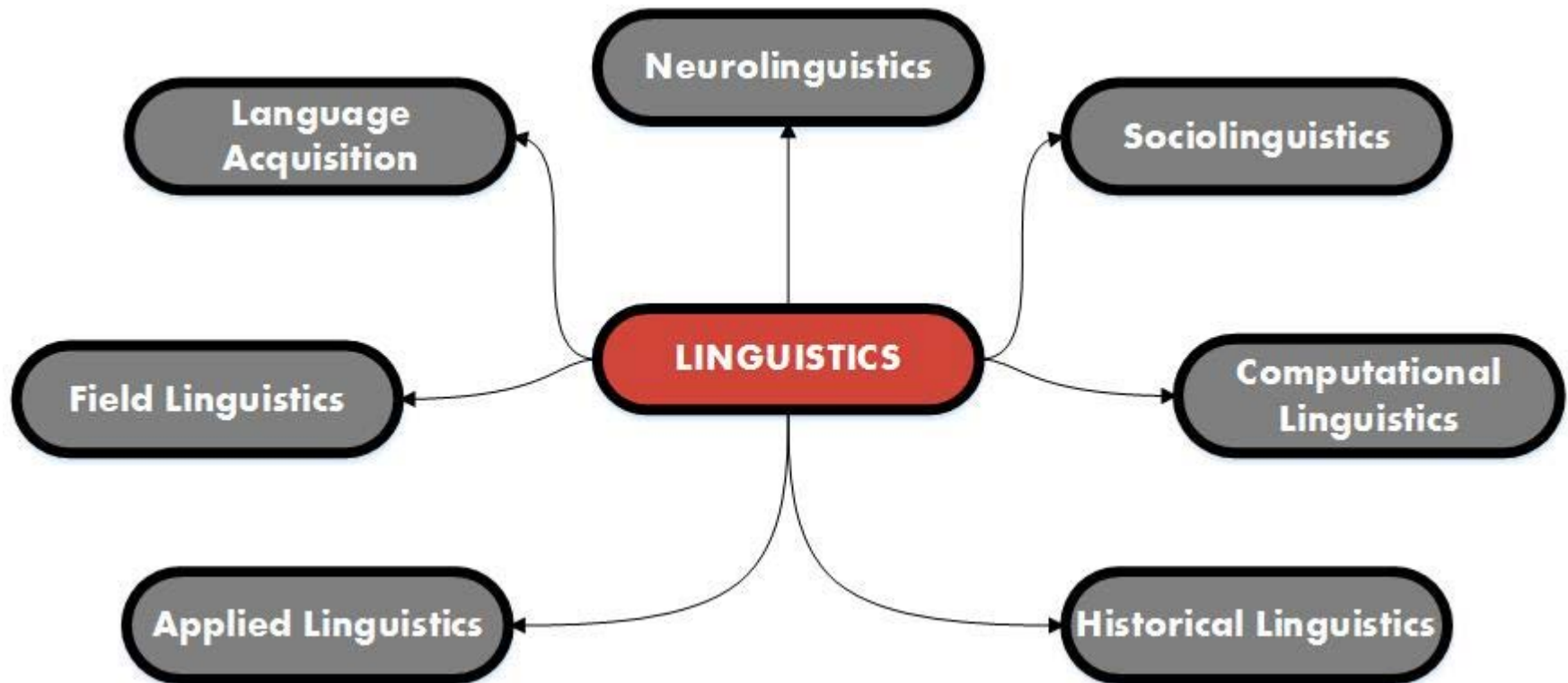
semantics & morphology

SENTENCES

syntax

Linguistics covers a broad range of disciplines and interests.

BRANCHES OF LINGUISTICS



BRANCHES OF LINGUISTICS

B208

*Sketch Engine
Workshop*

Presenter: Orin
Hargraves

B209

Word-formation

Mark Davies and
Jesse Egbert

*A large corpus-based
study of the historical
development of
[Noun+Noun] sequences
in American English*

Brianne Hughes

*Does a Slingshot Sling
Shots? Difficulties in
Identifying English
Cutthroat Compounds*

Emily Furner

*Definitions and Meaning:
An Exploration of When
Words Become
"Accepted" Into American
English*

B210

Varieties

Sandra Clarke

*Initial /n/ in the History of
English: New Perspectives
from an Enclave Variety*

Helene
Steigertahl

*English in Namibia:
Preliminary Results on
Language Use and
Attitudes in Five Namibian
Communities*

Amanda Sladek

*"The Great Type and
Pattern of Negro
Excellence": Genre,
Audience, and Text
Construction in J.R.
Beard's 1863 Translation
of The Memoir of General
Toussaint L'Ouverture*

B211

Old English

Lynn D. Sims

*Change and Continuity:
The Development of
Burial Language in Early
English*

Javier Martín
Arista and Ana
Elvira Ojanguren
López

*Grammaticalization in
progress and word-
formation: Mismatches in
the derivation of Old
English strong verbs*

BRI AS A LINGUIST vs A COPY EDITOR

COPY EDITING:

What is the core message of the text and how can I amplify that?

What can I eliminate to communicate that message more effectively?

LINGUISTICS:

Why was this choice made?

How can I best describe this phenomenon?

What similar choices have been made in other times and other languages?



NOUN+NOUN COMPOUNDS

FIRE HOUSE

HOUSE FIRE

PARTY HOUSE

HOUSE PARTY

BOAT HOUSE

HOUSE BOAT

GUEST HOUSE

HOUSE GUEST

RIGHT-HEADEDNESS

NOUN+NOUN

rabbit **hole**

oil **field**

ADJ+NOUN

citric **acid**

green **thumb**

VERB+NOUN

dump**truck**

hover**craft**

ADJ+ADJ

light-**blue**

orange-**yellow**

NOUN+ADJ

ice **cold**

brick **red**

VERB+VERB

to kick**start**

to stir-**fry**

NOUN+VERB

to bicycle **kick**

to day**dream**

NOUN+VERB+ER COMPOUNDS

fire + fight + er

FIREFIGHTER

soccer + play + er

SOCCER PLAYER

dish + wash + er

DISHWASHER

rice + cook + er

RICE COOKER

nut + crack + er

NUTCRACKER

NORMAL COMPOUNDS vs CUTTHROAT COMPOUNDS

sore **throat** = a **throat**

vest **pocket** = a **pocket**

rain **coat** = a **coat**

VERB+NOUN = different NOUN

cutthroat = a **criminal** who cuts throats

pickpocket = a **criminal** who picks pockets

turncoat = a **traitor** who changes sides

COMMON CUTTHROATS

PEOPLE

CUTPURSE
CUTTHROAT
DAREDEVIL
FUSSBUDGET
KILLJOY
PICKPOCKET
PINCHPENNY
PRODNOSE
SAWBONES
SKINFLINT
SPENDTHRIFT
SPITFIRE
SPOILSPORT
SWASHBUCKLER
TATTLETALE
TURNCOAT

GAMES

HOPSCOTCH

TOOLS

ARMOR ALL
BREAKWATER
CATCH-ALL
DREADNAUGHT
PARASOL
PASSPORT
PASTIME
PICKWICK
SCARECROW

ADJECTIVES

BREAKNECK
DO-NOTHING
KNOW-NOTHING
LACKLUSTER
MAKESHIFT
TELL-ALL

SURNAMES

DR. DO-LITTLE
DUDLEY DO-RIGHT
JOHN LACKLAND
ASA LOVEJOY
LUNA LOVEGOOD
ADA LOVELACE
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

FOOD & DRINK

BREAKFAST
KILLDEVIL
ROTGUT

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BREAK+noun cutthroats

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FOOD & DRINK

BREAKFAST
KILLDEVIL
ROTGUT

Petty criminal cutthroats

COMMON CUTTHROATS

PEOPLE

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CUTTHROAT
DAREDEVIL
FUSSBUDGET
KILLJOY
PICKPOCKET
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FOOD & DRINK

BREAKFAST
KILLDEVIL
ROTGUT

Money-focused cutthroats

COMMON CUTTHROATS

PEOPLE

CUTPURSE
CUTTHROAT
DAREDEVIL
FUSSBUDGET
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FOOD & DRINK

BREAKFAST
KILLDEVIL
ROTGUT

Fictional surname cutthroats

UNCOMMON CUTTHROATS

- 1600** **LACKBEARD** a young man without a beard
- 1605** **WATCH-BIRTH** a midwife
- 1608** **EAT-BEE** a bird that eats bees
- 1610** **SPOIL-PAPER** a bad writer
- 1736** **CATCHFART** a servant who walks closely behind
their master
- 1896** **KICK-SHINS** a children's game

BREECHES

† swingebreech, *n.*

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View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)

Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#)

Etymology: ? < *swinge*, [SWING](#) *v.*¹ + [BREECH](#) *n.* 4.

Obs. nonce-wd.

? One who struts or flaunts about.

[Thesaurus](#) »

[Categories](#) »

1581 A. GILBY *Pleasaunt Dialogue* sig. M3, Their [sc. the bishops'] pompous trayne of proud idle swingebreeches, in the steede of Preachers & Schollers.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

MEND-BREECH 1570

QUAKE-BREECH 1584

SHUFFLE-BREECHES 1822

CUTTHROATS CAME FROM FRENCH

Romance languages produces cutthroats as often as English makes NOUN+VERB+ERS.

French was the language of power in England for a long time, and the lower class spoke English.

COUPE-GORGE **1400**

CUTTHROAT **1535**

THROAT-CUTTER **1535**

GAIN-PAIN **1430**

WIN-BREAD **1800**

BREADWINNER **1819**

WHY ARE THEY HARD TO FIND?

They are slang!

- Not in standard dictionaries.
- Slang dictionaries are written casually with no quotations.
- Not well-preserved by an institution like law, religion and medicine texts.
- Spoken by uneducated people or criminals, and only sometimes written down.

Cutthroats are found from 1050 to 2015—1000 years to search!

SLANG DICTIONARIES

gripe-money 1611 ←

→ **scrape-good** 1611

silver-hider 1611

gripe 1621–a1700 slang

→ **scrape-pelf** 1626

scrapeling 1629

clutch 1630

volpone 1672–1710

→ **spare-penny** 1707

bagger 1740

accumulator 1748–

→ **save(-)jall** 1785–1820 now dial.

→ **spare-thrift** 1803

money-codger 1818

hunger-rot 1828 dial.

→ **muck-thrift** 1852 fig.

gripe-penny 1860 ←

hugger-mugger 1862

muck-rake 1870 fig.

BRAIN-RACKING	50	BREASTPLATE
brain-racking†	brandy-snap	breakdown, n.
brainsand	brantail (a bird)	breakfast
brain-sick	brant-fox	breakfast-cap
brainstone	brant-geese	breakfast-dishes
brainstone coral	brass blacking	breakfast-set
brain-throb	brass band	breakfast-table
brain-tumor	brass bass	breakfast-time
brain-wave	brass-color	break-in
brain-work	brass-finisher†	breaking-diameter
brain-worm	brass-foil	breaking-engine
brake-band	brass-founder†	breaking-frame
brake-bar	brass-furnace	breaking-weight
brake-beam	brass-leaf	break-iron
brake-block	brass-paved, etc.	break-lathe
brake-hanger	brass-powder	breakneck, a. and n.
brake-head	brass-smith	break-off
brake-hopper	brass-wind	breakpromise (a person)
brakeman	brattice-cloth	breakshare
brake-shaft	brawn-fallen	break-signal
brake-shoe	brazen-browed, etc.	breakstaff
brake-sieve	brazenface (a person)	breakstone (a plant)
brakesman	brazil-cock	break-up
brake-spool	Brazil-nut	break-van
brake-strap	Brazil-root	breakwater
brake-van	brazil-wood	breamflat (a fish)
brake-wheel	brazing-tongs	breast-backstay
braking-machine	breaching-battery	breast-band
brambleberry	bread-barge	breast-beam
bramble-bond	bread-basket	breast-board
bramble-bush	breadberry	breast-bone
bramble-finch	bread-corn	breast-chains
bramble-net	bread-crum	breast-collar
bramble-rose	breadfruit	breast-deep
bramble-worm	breadfruit-tree	breast-drill
bran bread	bread-knife	breast-fast
branch chuck	bread-making†	breast-gasket
branch-leaf	breadmeal (berghmehl)	breast-harness
branch-pilot	bread-rasp	breast-height
branch-point	breadroot (a plant)	breast-high
brand-geese	bread-slicer†	breast-hook
branding-iron	breadstuff	breasting-knife
brand-iron	breadth-line	breast-knee
brand-mark	bread-tray	breast-knot
brand-new	bread-tree	breast-line
brand-spore	bread-weight	breast-moulding
bran-duster†	breadwinner†	breast-pain
brandy-bottle	breakax	breast-pang
brandy-fruit	breakbones	breastpin
brandy-pawnee	breakcircuit	breastplate

SLANG DICTIONARIES

*Sluggards,
Unintellec-
tual Persons.*

The verbal stem **Lack**, which is used to denote a deficiency in various respects, occurs in several formations indicating a want of intellectual gifts, e. g.,

Lack-brain: 1596. Shakesp. *1 Hen.* IV. II. iii. 17:
What a lacke-braine is this?

Lack-mind (1887), **Lack-sense** (1881), **Lack-wit** (1667).

Synonymous with **Lackwit** is †**Wantwit**, 'one destitute of wit or sense; a fool.'

'Such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself.'

Shakesp. *M. of V.* V. i. 1. 6.

Suck egg is a popular term for a silly person. (Barrère and Leland.)

*Ignorant
Persons.*

Know-nothing (1739) literally denotes 'one who knows nothing, a very ignorant person, an ignoramus'; further 'one who holds that nothing can be known, an agnostic'; thirdly it meant a member of a political party in U. S.,

SLANG DICTIONARIES

WINFARTHING. A parish in Norfolk.
Thomas de Wynneferthyn. H.R.

WINFIELD. Probably the same as
Wingfield.

WING. Parishes in the shires of Buck-
ingham and Rutland.

WINGATE. A chapelry in co. Dur-
ham.

WINGET. See Wingate.

WINGFIELD. "The Wingfields of
Wingfield and Letheringham, both in
Suffolk, a distinguished family of the four-
teenth and fifteenth centuries, are traced
nearly to the Conquest, though they do not
appear to have been lords of the manor or
castle of Wingfield before the reign of
Edward II." Shirley's Noble and Gentle

3 c

WINMILL. See Windmill.

WINN. See Wynne.

WINNEY. Whinney, a place in Nor-
thumberland.

WINNINGTON. An ancient family of
"that seed-plot of gentry," Cheshire. The
paternal name was De Croxton, but in the
reign of Edward I., Robert, son of Lidulfus
de Croxton, marrying the heiress of Win-
nington of Winnington, took the surname
of his wife's family. Shirley's Noble and
Gentle Men.

WINPENNY. May relate to the acqui-
sitive habits of the founder of the family.
It may, however, be local. There is a parish
of *Win-farthing* in Norfolk.

WINSER. A corruption of Windsor.



WHY ARE THEY HARD TO IDENTIFY?

HOMONYMS!

TEAR vs TEAR

to cry OR water from your eye

to rip OR a rip

ZERO DERIVATION!

Changing the part of speech
without changing the outside.

to **google**, to **friend**

tear-away
'tear-brain
tear-brass
tear-bridge
tear-cat
tear-down
tear-down
tear-mouth
tear-off
tear-out
tear-placket
tear-rogue
tear-sheet
tear-throat
tear-thumb
tear-up

tear, n.1	971
tear, n.2	1611
tear, adj. and n.3	c1400
tear, v.1	a1000
tear, v.2	c950
tear-, comb. form	1605
tearable, adj.	1859
tear-bottle, n.	1658
tearer, n.	a1550
tearful, adj.	a1586
tearing, n.1	c1460
tearing, adj.1	a1616
tearing, adj.2 and n.2	c1000
tear-jerker, n.	1921
tearless, adj.	1603
tearlet, n.	1858

SO HOW DO I COLLECT THEM?

ACCUMULATING VERBS

- synonyms
- similar concepts
- keep track of hits and misses →

JUMPING AROUND

- from verb to noun to concept
- from dictionary to surname database to criminal dictionary to lists of slang

K	KEEP	KIDNAP
	KICK	KNIFE
	KILL	
	KINDLE	
	KNIT	
	KNOCK	
	KNOW	
L	LACK	LASH
	LEAP	LAUNCH
	LET	LEAK
	LICK	LEAVE
	LIFT	LINK
	LOCK	LOAD
	LOOSE	LOOK
	LOVE	LURE
		LURK
M	MAKE	MANGLE
	MANGE	MASTER
	MAR	MESS
	MEND	MOOCH
	MIX	MUFFLE
	MOCK	MUG
	MOVE	MUMP
	MUCK	MUSS
	MUDDLE	MUTTER
	MUMBLE	MUZZLE

WHAT ABOUT SLINGSHOT?

I DON'T KNOW.

It could be a cutthroat,
but there's not enough
evidence either way.

Keep it on the list for now,
check again later.

'slingshot, *n.*

Text size: [A](#) [A](#)

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Forms: Also **sling-shot**.

orig. *U.S.*

1.

a. A catapult.

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1849 N. KINGSLEY *Diary* 23 Oct. (1914) 77 Many are getting up sling-shots,..but I hope we shall never have occasion to use them, but we must all do something to pass away the time.
- 1895 *Outing* 27 51/1 The natives, who now and then throw stones from a sling-shot at the bolder birds.
- 1901 *Daily Colonist* (Victoria, Brit. Columbia) 15 Oct. 5/2 The police have started a crusade against the use of slingshots and air and pea guns by boys.
- 1966 *Economist* 2 July 28/2 In peasant style, they placed women and children to the fore, and used slingshots with shepherds' accuracy to defend themselves against the detachment of police cavalry.
- 1977 C. McCULLOUGH *Thorn Birds* i. 3 She played happily with the whistles and slingshots..her brothers discarded.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

WHERE I CURRENTLY STAND

About **950** compounds

About **60** of them are questionable
(including SLINGSHOT)

Some will become obvious members as the net of commonly used verbs, nouns, and topics widens.

Some do not have enough evidence to ever be proven with certainty.

1775	tumble-dung	ANIMAL: a beetle
1776	kill joy	PERSON: a spoilsport
1782	move-all	THING: a game
1785	burne-win	PERSON: a blacksmith
1785	hang-gallows	PERSON: a person likely to be hanged
1785	nipcheese	PERSON: the purser (treasurer) of a ship
1785	save-all	PERSON: a miserly person
1785	slip-gibbet	PERSON: a person likely to be hanged
1785	squeezecrab	PERSON: a shrunken, shrivelled person
1785	squeezewax	PERSON: a good natured but gullible person
1785	tame-poison	PLANT: a healing plant
1785	tickle-text	PERSON: a parson
1788	breakteeth	ADJ: difficult to pronounce
1788	say-grace	PERSON: one who says grace at meals
1788	spoil-pudding	PERSON: a long-winded preacher
1790	draw-breech	PERSON: an untidy woman
1790	twitch-bell	ANIMAL: an earwig
1794	daredevil	PERSON: a daring or foolish person
1796	swish-tail	ANIMAL: a pheasant or a horse with an undocked tail
1799	catch-water	THING: a drain leading to the main drain
1799	scape-gallows	PERSON: a person likely to be hanged
1800	stay-stomach	THING: a snack
1800	steal-clothes	THING: a game
1801	pick-point	THING: a game
1801	spoilsport	PERSON: a wet blanket
1801	turn-screw	THING: a screwdriver
1803	lockjaw	THING: a variety of tetanus when jaws clamp shut
1803	spare-thrift	PERSON: a miserly person
1806	dreadnought	THING: a jacket or ship
1807	smellfungus	PERSON: a fault finder
1809	scapegrace	PERSON: a reprobate
1811	bang-straw	PERSON: a farm servant
1811	buss beggar	PERSON: a useless old person
1811	kill-priest	THING: port wine
1811	mix-metal	PERSON: a silver smith
1811	puzzle-cause	PERSON: a lawyer
1811	split-cause	PERSON: a lawyer
1815	tell-fare	THING: a recording device or gauge
1816	shack-bag	ANIMAL: a bird, a large breed of fowl
1816	steal-coat	THING: a game
1817	lackgrace	PERSON: a reprobate
1819	lackstock	PERSON: one who has no money in stocks
1821	mar-feast	PERSON: a parasite
1821	pinch-commons	PERSON: a miserly person
1823	break-wind	THING: a disease of sheep
1823	snap-apple	THING: a game
1824	turnpenny	THING: a game
1825	pick-cheese	ANIMAL: a bird, the great and blue tits
1825	prick-bill	PERSON: a student who checks off an attendance list
1825	wash-dish	PERSON: a dishwasher, also ANIMAL: bird, a wagtail
1827	thump-cushion	PERSON: a boisterous preacher
1829	shuffle-wing	ANIMAL: the hedge-sparrow
1829	stick-jaw	THING: sweetmeat

WHY DO I DO THIS?

First of all: it's fun, so why not?

Second, linguistics can answer many questions:

- How do we know what English sounded like before the phonograph was invented?
- How do you catch a kidnapper just from reading their ransom note?

I don't know how my project will be useful yet, and that's okay.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Present at SHEL/DSNA Conference – June 5-7

Receive insight and direction from academics

Analyze patterns in my 840ish cutthroats

Do more research

Digital and paper dictionaries, surname databases, etc.

Educate

Every day, someone realizes that **breakfast** is when you **break** your **fast**. Bring a little language joy into their lives by telling them about another cutthroat.

LANGUAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

WORDNIK.com



Youtube

“Brienne Hughes”

“Mysteries of Vernacular”



ETYMONLINE.com



ONELOOK.com



Podcasts

WORD GANG

SLATE LEXICON VALLEY

POETRY OFF THE SHELF



A CUTTHROAT QUOTE

“One Mend-fault is worth two Findfaults, but one Findfault is better than two Makefaults.”

Poor Richard's Almanack, 1735