

A LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH SLANG

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Abstract: *This study explores the phenomenon of slang in the English language from a lexicological and lexical-semantic perspective. Slang, as a dynamic and expressive component of vocabulary, has historically developed through various social, cultural, and linguistic factors. The research aims to investigate slang's typological, stylistic, structural, and semantic features, focusing on its classification, origins, and usage. Slang is broadly categorized into general slang, used across all social groups, and specific slang, restricted to particular communities such as teenagers, students, journalists, or military personnel. The study also highlights the linguistic creativity involved in slang formation through metaphor, abbreviation, blending, and phonetic play. English slang has been analyzed by linguists such as E. Partridge and I. Galperin, but it remains underexplored in Azerbaijani linguistics. The novelty of the research lies in its systematic, linguocultural analysis of slang terms from literary texts. Slang functions to convey emotional and stylistic nuances, often serving communicative, nominative, cognitive, and ideological roles. The etymology of "slang" is debated, but its usage has grown from marginal to mainstream. Overall, slang reflects the evolution of language and society and enriches the expressive capacity of English, making it a valuable resource for linguistic studies and language education.*

Keywords: *social groups, etymology, slang, linguocultural, English lexicon*

Introduction

Language is a social phenomenon. As a means of communication, language reflects the characteristics of its speakers, their culture, and their history. All changes that occur in society are mirrored in the language. Speech is the primary means of communication and follows the cultural changes happening in our lives. All the words that exist in a language collectively form its vocabulary. The richness of a language depends on the diversity of its vocabulary. The richer the vocabulary, the richer the language itself.

The vocabulary of the English language is generally divided into formal (literary), informal (colloquial), and neutral layers. Informal vocabulary includes colloquial words, jargon, professional and occupational vocabulary, slang, vulgarisms, and dialectal words. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (6th Edition), slang is defined as "a very informal language used especially by particular groups of people." [7, p. 78]

Slang is an inseparable part of language. It is studied by several branches of linguistics, including philology, lexicology, and socio-psycholinguistics. Researchers analyze slang comparatively, examining its structural and semantic features, word-formation processes, and functions within sentences. Linguists differ in their opinions about the role of slang in language. Some believe slang consists of vulgar words not used by educated speakers, while others argue that slang is commonly used in spoken language and even appears in literary texts.

I part (Analysis of slang)

The branch of linguistics that studies the vocabulary of a language is called lexicology. Lexicology is one of the oldest branches of linguistic science, having undergone a significant historical development. Studying slang based on the materials of the English language provides opportunities to achieve scientifically interesting results from a lexical-semantic perspective, and these findings enrich Germanic linguistics with theoretical insights. A comparative linguistic

analysis of slangs used in English and clarifying their usage features in spoken and written language are among the most important issues. The analysis of slang reveals a number of specific characteristics. In this respect, the lexical-semantic study of slang in the English language is particularly relevant. The basis of the research lies in investigating the sources of slang and their usage characteristics through ancient written and modern sources of the English language, as well as through the materials of languages from different systems, and systematically analyzing slangs used in English from ancient to modern times. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the significant linguistic features expressed by slang from a typological perspective;
- To characterize the lexical-semantic features of slang;
- To reveal the stylistic features of slang;
- To clarify the structural grammatical models of slang in English;
- To determine and systematize how slang is formed in an inseparable unity with the development of language and social life.

The object of the study is slang in the English language, and the subject of the research is to collect these slangs, determine their place in the lexical system of the language, study their etymology, origin, structure, classify them by origin, and characterize them from a word-formation and semantic-structural perspective.

At different times, linguists such as E. Partridge, I. Galperin, and I. Arnold have analyzed English slang and its semantic and stylistic features from various perspectives. However, in Azerbaijani linguistics, the semantic and stylistic features of slang have not been thoroughly studied. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the extensive and systematic scientific analysis of slang based on artistic materials from the English language. For the first time, English slangs have been thematically classified and analyzed from a linguocultural perspective. [11, p.32]

The theoretical provisions of the study can serve as a source for investigating general theoretical issues of slang and its sociolinguistic aspects. The fact that slang is extremely expressive, vivid, and concise can be considered a motivational factor in teaching the English lexicon. This motivation is further supported by the fact that slang vocabulary is currently not only used in daily communication but also enriches the translation of texts across all fields of culture – artistic, journalistic, and political – thus allowing the results of this dissertation to be used in preparing special courses and teaching materials for students of philology faculties, as well as in lectures and seminar classes.

In the research, comparative-historical methods, synchronic and diachronic approaches, theoretical analysis, and descriptive methods were used. Modern English literary works and explanatory dictionaries in which slang is used are the main sources of the study.

II part (Classification of slang)

There is a distinct classification of lexical-stylistic expression tools in the English language. Many linguists such as A. Warner, I. Arnold, I. Galperin, V. Kukhareno, A. Vorokhovsky, M. Kuznets, and Y. Skrebnev have discussed the classification of English vocabulary. The renowned linguist I. Galperin divided word groups used in English according to their area of use into three parts: neutral, special literary vocabulary, and special colloquial vocabulary. M. Kuznets and Y. Skrebnev divided English vocabulary into four groups:

1. Archaisms, poetic words, and foreign words;
2. Words used by the lower class: colloquial words, argot, jargons, slangs, and vulgarisms;
3. Neutral words: professional-technical words, dialectisms;
4. Special words: specific jargons, i.e., cants.

Arnold, however, did not divide vocabulary into special groups but categorized it into three general parts: a) emotional; b) expressive; and c) stylistic nuance. He noted that every word group distinguished by its area of use is nourished by these three categories. Slang refers to words and expressions that carry meanings outside the norm of the English language. There are various opinions about slang. C.B. Greenough and S.L. Kittredge said, "Slang is the language spoken by

loafers, and it always circulates around the edge of legitimate language.” Another interesting view on slang comes from L. Skvortsova: “By nature, slang is stronger than jargon because any jargon can easily turn into slang and from there gain the right to become a new unit of colloquial language.” A slang term that cannot be paraphrased with a synonym is considered a significant slang expression. [1, p.7]

Slangs are categorized into general and specific slangs based on their usage. General slangs are used by all social groups. Words that are synonyms of literary language, distinguished by emotionality, widely used in spoken language, and outside the literary norm are considered general slang. Specific slangs are words and expressions used by certain social groups and are further divided into subgroups:

1. Teen slang: *brush, hangry*
2. University slang: *flunk, frosh*
3. School slang: *all-nighter, hw*
4. Journalistic slang: *nutgraph, wikijism*
5. Football slang: *back heel, dead ball*
6. Sailor slang: *galley, gig*
7. Prison slang: *shank, snuffed*
8. Military slang: *bunduk, stripey*
9. Internet slang: *bcoz, G2G*
10. Rhyming Cockney slang: *apples & pears* (stairs) [5, p.134]

Based on our research on the socio-thematic classification of English slang, we can conclude the following:

- The emergence of expressive forms known as slang is the result of the emotional and expressive perception of concepts related to all areas of English culture, the specific characteristics of its speakers, their various activities and occupations, the mutual relations of members of different social groups, and aspects of English everyday life. These expressions are distinguished by their conciseness, vividness, and high expressiveness.

- Slang plays a significant role within the stylistic vocabulary of the English language as an emotional means of expressing concepts that cover a wide range of areas – from customs to personal traits, from music and dance to various types of gatherings, and from the perceptions and interests of different social groups to their affections and relationships.

III part (Function of slang)

Currently, there is no unified opinion among linguists regarding the function of slang in English. Slang serves various purposes, but one of the main goals is to convey the emotionality of the meaning expressed by a word. Some linguists identify communicative, nominative, and cognitive functions of slang, while others add ideological functions to the communicative-emotional and nominative ones.

One of the most complex and debated issues in lexicology is the etymology of the term “slang.” It is unknown when this term was first used in spoken language. It first appeared in written form in the 18th century in England. At that time, the word meant “insult.” In 1850, the term began to be widely used, and its meaning shifted to “illegal.” E. Partridge noted that from the mid-19th century, the term slang was used to mean “illegitimate speech,” whereas before 1850, it referred to “vulgar language.” Alongside “slang,” other synonyms like *lingo*, *argot*, and *cant* were also used. In 1785, F. Grose, in his dictionary of the “lower class,” used *slang* as a synonym for *cant*. In the introduction to his dictionary, he divided the vocabulary of the lower class into two parts and named the first part *cant* or *slang*. Later, other linguists distinguished between *cant* and *slang*, although they noted that a complete separation between the two is not always possible. [2, p. 123]

IV part (Formation of slang)

The formation process of new slang is quite rich. New slang emerges in various ways:

1. Metaphorically: *mental yawn* – an unbelievably boring person, *blood wagon* – ambulance wagon

2. Hyperbolically: *all-fired hot* – very hot
3. Using suffixes: *You are a hummer!* – you are a respectable person
4. Lexical abbreviation: *biz* = business
5. Acronyms: *I've killed 40 Japs, not to mention that wog* (WOG = Wily Oriental Gentleman – referring to an Indian person)
6. Reversal of word spelling: *top of reeb* = *pot of beer*
7. Word blending: *stinkodora* – cheap cigarette
8. Rhyming, assonance, alliteration: *apples & pears* – stairs [4, p. 138]

Thus, the conclusions we reached in the fourth part of the research can be summarized as follows:

- Slangs used in spoken English are linguistic units employed to create a new effect in speech, bringing expressiveness, vividness, imagery, and conciseness to the language;
- Slang consists of linguistic units used by specific social groups, mostly understood only by the members of those groups, serving to maintain secrecy among them, and in many cases eventually becoming part of general public usage;
- The main distinction between slang and other figurative expressions is that slang is relatively coarse, humorous, lively, dynamic, and evokes laughter—its usage is considered normal only among members of certain social groups;
- Slangs appear in simple, derivative, compound, and sentence-like forms, and can also emerge through phonetic and semantic changes, as well as abbreviations.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were reached at the end of the research:

- Slang is a figurative expression belonging to spoken language, used to create an emotional and vivid effect in speech;
- Originating in the speech of specific social groups, slang is generally understood only by group members and is often used to maintain secrecy. At the same time, slang serves to uplift the mood, provoke laughter, and express thoughts in a concise and humorous way within the group;
- Slang is divided into two main categories: specific and general. Specific slang is used only within particular social groups, whereas general slang goes beyond group boundaries and enters the general spoken language;
- Slangs are formed using simple, derivational, compound, semantic change, and abbreviation methods, and sometimes appear in the form of full sentences;
- Slangs reflect all areas of English lifestyle, social structure, and culture, emotionally expressing unique human traits, social relationships, professions, activities, music, dance, cuisine, and ceremonies;
- As a linguocultural phenomenon, slang mirrors all extra-linguistic realities like a mirror. Like other figurative expressions, slangs are rooted in cultural and sociological backgrounds, without which their formation is impossible;
- A large group of slangs express the mentality, way of thinking, and ethnic traits of English society emotionally and expressively;
- Slangs demonstrate lexical and stylistic-emotional variability: synonyms differing in lexicon and structure, and also in stylistic-emotional intensity;
- The widespread use of slang in intercultural communication highlights the relevance of its translation into other languages;
- In communication, the transformation of English slang into another language is possible either descriptively or by finding an equivalent that retains its original emotional, vivid, and dynamic tone;
- The wide representation of slang in English enhances the importance of acquiring practical skills about its specific linguistic features in the context of modern globalization. [1, p.24]

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İNGİLİS DİLİNDƏ SLƏNQLƏRİN LİŊVOKULTUROLOJİ CƏHƏTDƏN TƏHLİLİ

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Xülasə: Bu tədqiqatda ingilis dilindəki slənq fenomeni leksikologiya və leksik-semantik baxımdan araşdırılır. Slənq dinamik və ifadəli bir lüğət komponenti kimi müxtəlif sosial, mədəni və dil amilləri əsasında tarixi inkişaf yolu keçmişdir. Tədqiqatın məqsədi slənqin tipoloji, üslubi, struktur və semantik xüsusiyyətlərini öyrənmək, onun təsnifatı, mənşəyi və istifadəsi üzərində dayanmaqdır. Slənq ümumi və spesifik slənq olmaqla iki əsas qrupa bölünür. Ümumi slənq bütün sosial qruplar arasında istifadə olunur, spesifik slənq isə yalnız müəyyən sosial qruplara xasdır: məsələn, yeniyetmələr, tələbələr, jurnalistlər və ya hərbiçilər. Tədqiqatda, həmçinin, metafora, ixtisar, söz birləşməsi və fonetik oyun kimi üsullarla slənqin necə yaradıldığına diqqət yetirilir. İngilis slənqi E.Partridge və İ.Galperin kimi dilçilər tərəfindən araşdırılmışdır, lakin Azərbaycan dilçiliyində bu mövzu kifayət qədər öyrənilməyib. Tədqiqatın elmi yeniliyi bədii mətnlər əsasında slənq sözlərin sistemli və lingvomədəni təhlilindədir. Slənq sözlər emosional və üslubi çalarları çatdırmaq, kommunikativ, nomitativ, idrak və ideoloji funksiyalar daşımaq üçün istifadə olunur.

“Slang” termininin etimologiyası mübahisəli olsa da, onun istifadəsi zamanla kənar dairələrdən əsas ünsiyyət vasitələrinə keçmişdir. Nəticə etibarilə, slənq həm dilin, həm də cəmiyyətin inkişafını əks etdirir və ingilis dilinin ifadə imkanlarını zənginləşdirən dəyərli bir leksik qaynaqdır.

Açar sözlər: sosial qruplar, etimologiya, slenq, linqvokulturoloji, ingilis leksikonu

ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ СЛЕНГА В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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Резюме: В данном исследовании рассматривается феномен сленга в английском языке с точки зрения лексикологии и лексико-семантического анализа. Сленг, как динамичный и выразительный элемент лексики, развивался на протяжении истории под влиянием различных социальных, культурных и языковых факторов. Цель исследования — изучить типологические, стилистические, структурные и семантические особенности сленга, а также его классификацию, происхождение и особенности употребления. Сленг делится на две основные группы: общий, используемый всеми социальными слоями, и специфический — присущий отдельным группам, таким как подростки, студенты, журналисты или военные. Особое внимание уделяется способам образования сленга — через метафору, сокращения, словослияние и фонетическую игру. Английский сленг изучался лингвистами, такими как Э.Партридж и И.Гальперин, однако в азербайджанском языкознании эта тема остается малоизученной. Научная новизна работы заключается в систематическом лингвокультурном анализе сленга на материале художественных текстов. Сленг выполняет эмоциональные, коммуникативные, номинативные, когнитивные и идеологические функции. Хотя этимология слова «slang» остается спорной, его употребление со временем перешло из маргинальной в общепринятую лексику. В целом, сленг отражает развитие языка и общества, обогащая выразительные средства английского языка.

Ключевые слова: социальные группы, этимология, сленг, лингвокультурология, английская лексика

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