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TO THE PROBLEM OF THE TEEN SLANG

One cannot keep up with slang, especially
the slang of the young, which is designed
to be unintelligible to adults, and, once
decoded, since today's young reject history,
has turned into vapour or unspeak.

Anthony Burgess writing in London
Times Literary supplement

Slang, being one of the non-standard language variants, is quite popular, and the investigation of this colourful, alternative vocabulary has been of great interest to many home and foreign linguists for a long time. The new stage in the study of the slang has become the close research of its categories, one of which is the sociolect of the teenagers.

The actuality of the research is based on the fact that the lexical peculiarities of the teen slang are obviously connected with the topic «Language and Society» which is of great concern to the linguists nowadays. Rather important is the question of impulses leading to the creation of slang and slang and the problem of 'naming' things and phenomena in the outside world.

Taking into consideration the fact that the linguistic processes displayed in the slang of teenagers are obviously transient, which marks it as the natural experimental laboratory for the investigation and the fact that theoretical bases of the problem have not been worked out, *the object* of the research is the teen slang.

The subject of the investigation is the linguistic peculiarities of the language of the youth and the motives for its creation.

The aim of the investigation is to analyze the specific nature of the teen sociolect, its origins and creation.

The main aim and the subject determine the following *tasks*:

- 1) to define the place of the teen slang among the non-standard language variants;
- 2) to specify the main impulses leading to the creation of the teen slang;
- 3) to determine the linguistic peculiarities of the teen slang;
- 4) to specify the main ways of word formation in the slang of teenagers.

Methods applied in the research are conditioned by the aim and the nature of the investigation, viz. descriptive-analytical, structurally-semantic, comparative.

The main *sources* of the research are slang dictionaries of the latest publications, thesauri and encyclopedias; textbooks on stylistics and lexicology, theses of Russian and Ukrainian linguists, the information received from the Internet.

The reasons of slanging are very numerous and they all can be considered universal ones, no matter who does the slanging: school children, doctors, soldiers, etc. However, we want to define three reasons that seem to prevail in the slang of teenagers. As teenagers state themselves, they slang because it is **cool**.

Slang is cool in several different ways. First, it is cool in the sense of being **hip** and in style. When we speak, we are communicating not only a message about the content of what we are saying but also a message about who we are, our identity. Using slang artfully is a kind of performance and shows that the speaker is in tune with the times. Slanging says: *I'm a cool dude!*

Second, slang is cool in the sense of being acceptable. Children do not slang all the time. Rather, the use of slang is reserved for circumstances and communication partners that accept the use of slang. Children almost always deny that they use slang intentionally, but they do intentionally slang in the sense that they assess the circumstances and people involved in the communication and choose to use slang or not to do so. Typically, slang is used in informal environments and avoided in formal settings (like work or the classroom). This is because the use of slang in such circumstances could result in the speaker being evaluated negatively and the desire to avoid negative evaluation is high among the teen slang speakers.

School slang speakers also consider their communication partners when choosing to use or avoid slang. Slang is usually not used to exclude people who do not understand it (as **pig latin** is with small children). However, slang is most often spoken only among friends and close peers. To use slang with mere acquaintances or strangers could result in disapproval and so is avoided. Excessive use of slang by non-friends is almost always viewed unfavourably.

Slang is also the most effective when used among friends because it draws upon common social and emotional experiences to give meaning to the terms, something beyond what a mere dictionary definition can provide. Slang terms can be efficient shorthand ways to express concepts. To say, «*That party was da bomb*» is more than merely saying it was a very good party. It shares the emotional experience that might otherwise take several sentences to explain. Not only does this make their communication more efficient, but also it reinforces their friendship. Using slang sends the unstated message that we are friends, a kind of relational identity.

Third, slang is cool in the sense that it is fun. Slanging is creative and often humorous. Slanging can be a form of play. Slang may be entertaining and amusing to both the speaker and the listener.

As any language, slang reflects the experiences, beliefs and values of its speakers. Yet, the slang of teenagers is not a complete language. It does not contain terms for everything the young man discusses. However, items that are frequently encountered by a teenager or are important to his life are often given symbols.

The slang of the young as an open, lexical system that contains words belonging to a wide range of range of topics occupies a distinct position on the 'language world map'. Therefore, we should define the main sets of notions that are used by young

people in the process of their intercourse. It is interesting to note that what links generations and cultures is that much teen slang tends to be about the same things.

All lexical units of the teen slang are classified into two large groups:

- 1) units belonging to school work and activities – **academic slang**;
- 2) units referring to the out-of-school life – **social slang**.

Each group consists of two thematic groups. Thus, academic slang includes the following ones:

- educational process: *aced* – did very well on a test; *got reamed, bombed* – did very poorly on an exam; *to powertool* – to cram or study intensely; *to bail, to punt, to roll* – to cut class; *завалиться, засыпаться* – to fail an exam; *зубарить, сухарить, грызть* – to cram;
- the names of institutions, subjects, professions: *Underwater Basketweaving* – a mythical course that often comes up jokingly in conversation; *organ recital* – sex education class; *hardcores* – tough courses; *slider* – an easy course in college; *сам, шеф, барон, босс, дирлик* – a principal of school.

Social slang includes the following groups:

- daily round: *bank, iron, duckets, spent* – money, cash; *rags* – clothes; *load, ride* – car; *crib* – home; *шмотки, манатки, тряпки* – clothes; *тачки, мотор* – car;
- types of personality: *roll, loaf, tubby* – a fat person; *lame, hubba* – stupid; *дубарь, тупак, пень, валенок* – a stupid person; *тумба, куб, пончик* – a fat person.

The further classification takes place on the level of subgroups and nominative lines. Each group contains 3-12 subgroups, which at their turn consist of nominative lines. A nominative line is viewed as the whole total of the lexical units, which are used to denote one notion.

The analysis of the nominative lines shows that more than a half of the slang units is condensed in these lines. Thus, the nominative line «*итарганка*» in the American school and college slang includes 16 members: *cheat sheet, crib, cold copy, bug out, animal, beast, horse, pony, mule, trot, bicycle, jack, plug, gauge, growl, rack*; the nominative line «*провалиться на экзамене*» consists of 20 members: *be sent spinning, get a spin, spin, ship, post, plough, pip, pill, hit the ceiling, gravel, flub, flub up, flub the dub, come down, duck, bottle, boss, stump, floor, throw down, cane*.

The fact, that such big amount of slangisms has different equivalents within the slang, suggests the idea that the level of the language redundancy in slang is very high.

The systematic analysis of the lexical units of the teen slang can not be considered to be a full one without the close investigation of the semantic structure of the slangisms. It gives the actual value of each word and tells its meaning. The meaning is in some form or another connected with the referent, i.e. meaning is defined as an object, relationship, or a class of objects or relationships in the outside world. Thus, by analyzing the semantic structure of the lexical units that belong to the teen slang

we will see the most common and typical features of the different objects and phenomena of the world reflected in the language of the youth.

The Russian linguist, Gandgy-Kasimova, having analyzed the semantic structure of the slangisms, arrived at the conclusion that qualificative semes are the most frequent ones (Гаджи-Касимова, 1990: 5). They carry both rational and empirical qualitative characteristics. The first ones (*rational*) seem to prevail in the units of teen slang. Thus, the following qualities can be traced in the teen slang:

- moral qualities (*ace* – honest and reliable person; *fink* – deceitful or untrustworthy person; *player* – the person who flirts);
- intellectual qualities (*cob, dodo* – stupid or inapt person; *wizard* – intelligent person);
- mental qualities (*bluenose* – gloomy or irritable person; *dough-ball* – any boring person; *spark* – cheerful person; *agro, flaming* – mad);
- qualities, connected with the social prestige (*big cheese* – principal or important person; *wash-out* – failure);
- volitional qualities (*cool cucumber* – brave or plucky person; *Joe-boy* – effeminate man);
- qualities, characterizing the attitude to the material welfare (*church mouse* – poor person; *doughboy* – wealthy person; *piker* – stingy person);
- qualities, characterizing the attitude to work, labour (*bum* – idler; *bone* – hardworking person; *tool* – one who studies a lot);
- language based qualities (*bagpipe* – loquacious person; *blabber* – a very talkative person);
- qualities of appearance (*baby doll* – cute girl; *double bagger* – person so ugly he or she needs two bags over his or her head instead of just one; *nectar* – a good-looking girl; *pug-ugly* – ugly man).

Empirical qualitative characteristics mostly refer to the following qualities:

- parameters of size (*lamppost* – a tall, lanky person; *peanut* – small person);
- stoutness (*beconbelly* – fat person; *hat-rack* – any skinny person);
- forms of parts of the body (*conky* – a person with a long nose; *moose-face* – a long-faced person);
- parts of the body characterized by colour properties (*carrottop* – a red-haired person; *mourner* – a person with black eyes) (Гаджи-Касимова, 1990:5).

The predominance of the qualitative rational peculiarities over the qualitative empirical ones in the meaning of the teen slangisms and the nomenclature of the rational characteristics testify that the mostly detailed person's characteristics in the language of teenagers are socially meaningful ones.

Another peculiar feature of the teen slang semantics is the high frequency of the evaluative semes, which is the evidence of the specific character of the teen slang words. The evaluative semes include both the semes of objectively logical evaluation

and of emotional evaluation. The first ones carry the denotative meaning, they are ontologically rational and conceptual. The latter are also conceptual, but mediated because in the long run they aim at the conceptual reality and ascend to the evaluation which is significant in its nature, i.e. to the objectively logical evaluation.

The main distinctive feature of the evaluative semantics of the teen slang is its negative orientation. The bigger part of the slang units is concentrated on the negative terms, which, as a rule, express the qualificative characteristics of a person: *bag-pocket* – stingy, niggardly person; *hog* – selfish or greedy; *satch* – idle chatter; *gumby*, *cob*, *wooden-head* – a stupid person; *dipstick* – loser.

Intensifying semes are also frequently met in the slang words. They represent the intensity level of this or than distinctive feature: *short pint* – any extremely short person; *ear bender* – an over-talkative person; *fetus* – a real loser.

Besides, the lexical units of the teen slang are characterized by semantic richness, and polysemy, conditioned by the presence of several qualificative features in their meaning: *duffer* – any elderly man who is somewhat senile, eccentric or mischievous for his age; *glitterbag* – a flashy female given to shiny clothes, hair piled high with Aqua Net, and gum chewing.

Thus, the teen slang is characterized by a well-developed polysemy. How frequently a word is used and how long a word lasts are both indications of how hard a word works. The number of meaning given to a word is the other indicator. When one considers the diversity of words that can be replaced by a particular slang term, two terms come out on top as the hardest working in school and college slang. The results of the latest slang research made through Internet indicate that these are: *TRIP* and *DOG*.

Trip is a chameleon. It was first recorded in 1972 to mean a very good or very bad experience. However, it probably made its appearance in college vocabulary in the 1960's associated with LSD experiences. The most common use of *trip* these days involves a characterization of something as unusual/strange or extreme, e.g.

That dude is a *trip* [strange]. My rents started to *trip* [to overact] when I said I needed more money to get my books.

Beyond that *trip* can indicate actual outrage or raging, e.g.: He *tripped* when I told him the concert was gonna be two hundred dollars.

Trip can also imply that someone is acting out of character, e.g.: Dr. Smith is always on time but today he was *tripping* and came to class ten minutes late.

Trip can signify not making sense, e.g.: I know I'm going to fail the test because I was *tripping* when I was writing me essays.

Trip can be used to indicate disagreement, e.g.: Why are you *tripping* about my idea?

It can also imply a common state for college students of being overwhelmed, e.g.: I've got four midterms this week, so I'm *tripping*.

Trip can refer to a state of excitement and craziness, e.g.: I always *trip out* when I see «Star Wars».

It can be used to describe someone who has the characteristics of being intoxicated (on drugs or alcohol), e.g.: Everybody at the party was *tripping*.

Thus, main reasons seem to prevail in the teenagers' slanging. Firstly, the teenagers use slang in order to be different from others, to be striking and even startling. The young people consider those who speak slang forceful and pleasing individuals. Secondly, the chief use of slang is to show that you are «one of the gang». In other words, slang is great in the sense of being acceptable by the peers and acquaintances. And thirdly, slang is used by the teenagers for the pure joy of making sounds, it is very creative and often humorous.

Literature:

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**СПЕЦИФИКА ДИПЛОМАТИЧЕСКОГО ДИСКУРСА
КАК ОСОБОЙ ФОРМЫ НАУЧНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ**

В докладе характеризуется специфика научного аспекта дипломатического дискурса, выявляются сходства и различия данного типа дискурсивной практики и научного общения.

Анализ определений дипломатии показывает, что специфика данного вида коммуникации определяется, прежде всего, особенностями ее агента. В коллективном агенте дипломатического дискурса выделяется две категории людей, деятельность которых, являясь по своей сути, дипломатической, направлена на разную аудиторию и преследует различные цели.

Прежде всего, это публичные фигуры – руководители государств и дипломаты высшего ранга (министры, послы, специальные представители т.д.), выражающие в своих выступлениях, предназначенных для широкой аудитории, позицию своей страны. В силу того, что предметом таких выступлений являются те же события, темы и люди, которые обсуждаются политиками и освещаются в СМИ, их часто относят к политическому либо дискурсу масс медиа. Однако анализ показывает, что стиль этих документов значительно отличается от политического и медийного стилей, а поэтому выступления такого рода, как представляется, относятся к полю дипломатического дискурса, который мы обозначаем как публичный аспект дипломатической коммуникации.

Однако в большей своей части дипломатическое общение является закрытым для публики и представляет собой процесс переговоров и бесед, участниками которых являются равные партнеры. Другими словами, главной специфи-