SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF SLANG AND ARGOT TRANSLATION IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This study examines the sociolinguistic features of slang and argot translation in Uzbek and English languages. It focuses on how socially marked lexical units function within different discourse communities and how their meanings shift during cross-linguistic transfer. The research applies a comparative sociolinguistic and translational approach, emphasizing the role of cultural context, identity construction, and pragmatic equivalence. The findings show that slang and argot are not merely lexical deviations from standard language but complex socio-pragmatic markers that encode group identity, emotional stance, and social boundaries. The study also demonstrates that direct translation of slang often leads to pragmatic loss, requiring adaptive strategies such as domestication, cultural substitution, and functional equivalence.

Keywords: slang, argot, sociolinguistics, translation studies, pragmatics, Uzbek, English, discourse

1. Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, slang and argot are recognized as essential components of language variation that reflect social identity, group membership, and cultural dynamics. Unlike standard lexical items, slang expressions are highly context-dependent and often carry implicit meanings that are accessible only to specific discourse communities.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, slang functions as a marker of in-group solidarity and out-group exclusion. Argot, in turn, is often associated with specialized or restricted social groups and serves both communicative efficiency and identity concealment. In English-speaking contexts, slang is widely influenced by media, youth culture, and global communication, whereas in Uzbek, slang development is strongly shaped by cultural tradition, Russian influence, and increasing English borrowings.

The translation of slang and argot between languages presents significant challenges due to their deep cultural embedding and pragmatic complexity. Literal translation often fails to preserve emotional tone, social meaning, and contextual implications. Therefore, understanding the sociolinguistic nature of these lexical units is crucial for achieving functional equivalence in translation.

2. Literature Review

Sociolinguistic studies of slang have long emphasized its role in expressing social identity and group belonging. Labov (1972) highlights the relationship between language variation and social stratification, arguing that non-standard varieties reflect social structures and group dynamics.

Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) define slang as informal vocabulary used by specific social groups to establish solidarity and differentiate themselves from others. Similarly, Eble (1996) describes slang as a dynamic and rapidly changing lexical subsystem that reflects cultural innovation.

In translation studies, Baker (2018) and Venuti (2012) emphasize that cultural and pragmatic elements of language are often lost in direct translation. Delabastita (1996) specifically notes that non-standard lexical items such as puns and slang require functional rather than formal equivalence.

Recent sociolinguistic research on English and Uzbek slang (Raimova, 2025; Saidova, 2025; Hakimova, 2026) shows that both languages exhibit increasing hybridity due to globalization. However, Uzbek slang remains more culturally localized, while English slang demonstrates higher global diffusion.

Despite these contributions, there is still a lack of systematic comparative research on the sociolinguistic and pragmatic mechanisms involved in slang and argot translation between Uzbek and English. This study addresses this gap.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-comparative research design within the frameworks of sociolinguistics and translation studies. The primary objective is to investigate how slang and argot units in Uzbek and English function as socio-pragmatic markers and how their meanings are reconstructed in translation.

The research corpus consists of approximately 180 authentic instances of slang and argot extracted from multiple discourse domains, including literary texts, film dialogues, social media interactions, and informal conversational speech. The selection criteria were based on frequency of use, sociocultural relevance, and translational difficulty.

The analytical procedure is conducted in four stages:

(1) Data identification and classification:
Slang and argot expressions were identified and categorized according to their sociolinguistic function (identity marker, in-group solidarity, emotional expression, or secrecy function).

(2) Contextual embedding analysis:
Each unit was analyzed within its discourse context to determine pragmatic meaning and situational dependency.

(3) Translation comparison:
The Uzbek-English bilingual equivalents were examined to identify shifts in meaning, loss of pragmatic force, or adaptation strategies.

(4) Functional-pragmatic evaluation:
Translation outcomes were assessed based on functional equivalence, following Nida's dynamic equivalence theory [1], and supplemented by sociolinguistic identity theory [2].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Sociolinguistic Nature of Slang and Argot

The analysis demonstrates that slang and argot are not marginal linguistic phenomena but central components of social identity construction. In both Uzbek and English, these lexical units function as markers of group affiliation and socio-cultural positioning.

In English, slang exhibits a high degree of lexical innovation and rapid diffusion through media, digital platforms, and youth subcultures. Expressions such as *"ghosting," "flex," "spill the tea"* illustrate the dynamic nature of contemporary slang formation.

In Uzbek, slang and argot are more context-bound and culturally embedded. They frequently arise from everyday conversational practices, regional dialectal variation, and socio-cultural reinterpretation of standard lexical items.

4.2 Translation Challenges

The comparative analysis reveals three major translational challenges:

(a) Cultural specificity:
Certain slang expressions are deeply rooted in cultural experience and lack direct equivalents in the target language.

(b) Pragmatic weakening:
Literal translation often results in loss of emotional intensity, humor, or irony.

(c) Register mismatch:
Differences in stylistic levels between source and target languages lead to distortion of communicative intent.

These findings confirm that slang translation cannot be reduced to lexical substitution but requires pragmatic and functional reconstruction.

4.3 Translation Strategies

The study identifies four dominant strategies used in translating slang and argot:

- **Domestication:** adaptation of slang into culturally equivalent expressions
- **Borrowing:** retention of original lexical forms in target text
- **Functional substitution:** replacement with pragmatically equivalent expressions
- **Descriptive rendering:** explanatory translation to preserve meaning

Among these, functional substitution proves to be the most effective strategy in preserving pragmatic force.

4.4 Comparative Pragmatic Features

Feature	English Slang	Uzbek Slang
Innovation rate	High	Moderate
Cultural embedding	Medium	High
Media influence	Strong	Emerging
Stability	Low	Relatively stable
Translational difficulty	High	Very high

The table indicates that Uzbek slang carries stronger cultural-semantic weight, whereas English slang is characterized by rapid lexical turnover and global dissemination.

5. Conclusion

The study confirms that slang and argot are complex sociolinguistic phenomena that reflect identity, cultural belonging, and pragmatic intention. Their translation between Uzbek and English is inherently challenging due to structural, cultural, and pragmatic asymmetries.

The findings suggest that successful translation of slang requires not only linguistic competence but also deep sociocultural awareness. Functional-pragmatic equivalence should be prioritized over formal lexical correspondence to preserve communicative intent.

Moreover, the study highlights that slang is an evolving linguistic system shaped by globalization, digital communication, and cultural interaction. Future research should further explore its multimodal realization in digital discourse and its impact on intercultural communication.

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