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YOUTH SLANG IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE: LINGUISTIC, SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the specific features of youth slang in English-language journalistic discourse from linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives. The study aims to identify the structural, semantic and functional characteristics of youth slang and investigate its role in contemporary media communication. Particular attention is paid to the lexical formation of slang expressions, including abbreviation, clipping, compounding, semantic shift, borrowing and word formation. The article also explores how digital communication, social media and popular culture influence the incorporation of youth slang into journalistic texts. The findings suggest that youth slang functions not only as a marker of age-related identity and group solidarity but also as an effective stylistic resource for attracting readers' attention, creating an informal tone and expressing social attitudes. Its use in journalistic discourse reflects broader linguistic changes and the increasing interaction between colloquial language and contemporary media communication.

Keywords: youth slang, journalistic discourse, English language, sociolinguistics, media language, lexical innovation, semantic change, pragmatic function, language variation, digital communication.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic social phenomenon that continuously develops under the influence of cultural, technological and communicative changes. One of the most noticeable manifestations of this development is slang, which reflects the linguistic creativity, social identity and communicative preferences of particular social groups. Among different varieties of slang, youth slang occupies a significant position because young people are often active participants in linguistic innovation and the dissemination of new lexical expressions. In contemporary English, youth slang has become increasingly visible beyond informal interpersonal communication. Expressions that initially emerge in peer-group conversations, online platforms and digital communities frequently enter newspapers, magazines, online news portals and other forms of journalistic discourse. This process demonstrates the gradual movement of informal vocabulary into institutional media communication. Journalistic discourse represents a particularly interesting environment for examining youth slang because it combines informational, persuasive, evaluative and expressive functions. Journalists may employ slang to establish a closer relationship with younger audiences, reproduce authentic speech, communicate social trends or create a particular emotional effect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of slang has attracted considerable attention in sociolinguistics, lexicology and discourse analysis. Scholars have examined slang as a form of informal vocabulary associated with social identity, group membership and linguistic creativity. According to Connie Eble (1996), slang is closely connected with group identity and social interaction. It enables speakers to establish solidarity, distinguish themselves from other social groups and express shared experiences. This perspective is particularly relevant to youth slang, as young speakers frequently use innovative expressions to demonstrate belonging to particular social communities. Mattiello (2008) considers English slang from a morphological, semantic and pragmatic perspective,

emphasizing its structural diversity and expressive potential. Her research demonstrates that slang vocabulary is characterized by various word-formation processes, including clipping, compounding, conversion and semantic innovation. Coleman (2012) provides a historical account of slang development and demonstrates that slang is not merely a temporary or marginal linguistic phenomenon. Rather, it constitutes an important component of lexical development and reflects broader transformations in society. The relationship between language and media discourse has also been investigated by Fairclough (1995), who emphasizes the role of language in constructing social meanings and representing social relationships. From this perspective, the use of youth slang in journalistic texts can be interpreted as a discourse strategy through which media institutions reproduce contemporary social identities and cultural tendencies. Richardson (2007) further demonstrates that newspaper language should be examined not only as a means of transmitting information but also as a form of social representation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employs a combination of descriptive, comparative, contextual and discourse-analytical methods. The descriptive method is used to identify the principal characteristics of youth slang and explain its linguistic features. The structural analysis examines the formation of slang expressions through abbreviation, clipping, compounding, derivation and other lexical processes. The semantic analysis focuses on changes in meaning that occur when informal expressions are transferred from everyday communication into journalistic contexts. Contextual analysis is applied to investigate how the meaning and communicative function of slang expressions depend on their immediate linguistic environment. Finally, discourse analysis is employed to determine how journalists use youth slang to construct particular social identities, express attitudes and influence audience perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Youth slang represents a socially marked variety of informal vocabulary commonly associated with younger speakers and their communicative environments. Its development is closely related to social identity, cultural preferences, technological innovation and interpersonal interaction. One of its most distinctive characteristics is rapid lexical renewal. New expressions emerge in response to changing social realities, technological developments, entertainment trends and popular culture. Some expressions remain limited to particular communities, whereas others become widely recognized and eventually enter mainstream English. For example, expressions such as lit, vibe, cringe, ghosting and flex illustrate different aspects of contemporary informal vocabulary. Lit – excellent, exciting or particularly enjoyable. Vibe – an atmosphere, feeling or general emotional impression. Cringe – something embarrassing, awkward or uncomfortable. Ghosting – suddenly ending communication with someone without explanation. Flex – showing off possessions, achievements or personal qualities. These lexical units demonstrate how youth slang reflects contemporary social experiences and provides speakers with concise and expressive ways of communicating attitudes and emotions.

Structural and Word-Formation Features of Youth Slang - demonstrate the flexibility and productivity of English word formation. Several processes are particularly prominent. Clipping involves shortening existing words while retaining their essential meaning. This process is particularly common in informal communication. Examples: Bro – brother. Fam – family or close friends. Tbh – to be honest. IDK – I don't know.

Semantic shift occurs when an existing word acquires a new meaning in a particular social or communicative context. Examples: Sick – excellent or impressive. Savage – bold, uncompromising or impressively confident. Salty – annoyed, resentful or bitter. These examples illustrate how familiar lexical units can develop additional meanings within youth communication.

Compounding combines two or more lexical elements to create a new expression, while derivation involves the formation of new words through affixation or other morphological

processes. Examples include: Clickbait – online content designed to attract clicks through sensationalized headlines. Influencer – a person who affects the opinions or purchasing decisions of an online audience.

Borrowing and digital lexical innovation: Youth slang is also influenced by international communication, online communities and popular culture. Words and expressions originating in different linguistic and cultural environments may become part of contemporary English informal vocabulary. This process demonstrates that youth slang is not an isolated linguistic phenomenon but a product of continuous interaction between languages, cultures and communication technologies. Pragmatic function. The selection of slang depends on the communicative purpose of a particular text. In interviews and feature articles, slang may reproduce authentic speech, while in headlines it may create immediacy and a conversational tone.

CONCLUSION

The analysis demonstrates that youth slang constitutes an important and continuously developing component of contemporary English-language communication. Its linguistic characteristics are determined by lexical innovation, semantic flexibility, morphological productivity and the influence of social and technological transformations. The study identifies several major processes involved in the formation of youth slang, including clipping, abbreviation, compounding, derivation, borrowing and semantic shift. These processes demonstrate the capacity of informal vocabulary to respond to changing communicative needs and cultural developments. At the same time, the incorporation of slang into journalistic texts requires consideration of stylistic appropriateness, audience expectations and communicative objectives.

Overall, youth slang should be regarded not simply as an informal or marginal form of vocabulary but as a significant linguistic resource that reflects the interaction between language, society and modern media culture. Further research based on a systematically compiled corpus of English-language journalistic publications would provide opportunities to investigate the frequency, distribution and contextual functions of youth slang in greater detail.

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