



YOUTH SLANG AND COMPUTER JARGON

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ABSTRACT

In the anthropocentric paradigm, which analyzes language through the perspectives of individuals, social environments, and cultural contexts, modern linguistics particularly emphasizes the study of sociolects, including youth slang. This layer of speech is primarily expressed at the lexical level, requiring an examination of its origins, development mechanisms, and functioning. In recent decades, youth slang has significantly expanded to include vocabulary borrowed from computer jargon. This type of speech is characterized by a relaxed, colloquial style that conveys a sense of familiarity, making it comparable to other social jargons. Anglicisms play a crucial role in computer slang, with many such terms becoming firmly established in the active vocabulary of young people. A noteworthy feature of borrowed vocabulary in youth slang is that neutral terms derived from English often take on a casual, familiar connotation within computer jargon. Additionally, some names for computer components illustrate a tendency to shift in meaning and usage.

KEYWORDS: Sociolect, Youth Speech, Youth Slang, Jargon, Computer Jargon, Argot.

INTRODUCTION

Modern linguistics is increasingly focusing on linguistic phenomena related to individuals, society, and the cultural environment through an anthropocentric approach. There is a growing scholarly interest in socially distinct speech varieties, known as sociolects. One prominent example of this group is **youth slang**, also known as **youth speech** or **youth language**. Numerous studies highlight the importance of researching this linguistic phenomenon due to its fragmented body of research and dynamic nature. There is still no consensus in the scientific community regarding whether youth slang should be viewed as an independent and uncodified form of informal speech. The question of whether it constitutes a systematic linguistic entity remains unresolved. Additionally, the appropriate terminology for youth slang, as well as the identification of sources from which its vocabulary is derived, is still being explored.

The importance of this study arises from the significant changes that the Russian language has experienced in its vocabulary over recent decades. Linguistic analysis indicates that the key factors driving this transformation include the rapid development of journalistic styles, the accelerated democratization of language, and the intensification of word-formation processes that challenge traditional and formulaic language models. These changes have led to the widespread adoption of non-standard vocabulary – once confined to specialized and marginal social groups – into everyday speech. Elements such as slang, jargon, and argot are increasingly being integrated into more prestigious language subsystems, reaching a literary level and even appearing in respected lexicographic sources.

Despite the ongoing trend, there is still a crucial need for a scientific justification to study the so-called "lower" layers of vocabulary. Similar sentiments were expressed in the past; as early as 1968, K. Kostsinskii ironically noted that "the problem

with our lexicology continues to be that it primarily studies 'good' words and, with the disdain of a schoolmistress at an institute for noblewomen, raises her starched skirts and overlooks 'bad' words." [4: 181-191].

The aim of this work is to identify and describe the characteristics of borrowed vocabulary that has entered youth language from computer slang.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological framework of the research includes a linguistic description based on observation and comparative analysis, which enables the identification of the structural and semantic features of the units being studied.

The study of sociolects, which represent forms of socially marked language, has its origins in the scientific contributions of notable linguists such as E.D. Polivanov and V.M. Zhirmunsky. Their ideas were further developed by E.M. Beregovskaya, A.D. Schweitzer, and L.B. Nikolsky. In their theoretical approaches, social dialects are understood as a generalized category that encompasses the linguistic variants characteristic of specific professional or social communities. A sociolect is distinctly contrasted with both literary language and territorial dialects, occupying an intermediate yet functionally significant position within the linguistic system [3: 99-112; 7: 39].

The contemporary cultural and historical context places significant emphasis on the socio-demographic category of youth. Their position is somewhat ambiguous: on one hand, they are no longer children; on the other, they are not yet fully fledged adults within society and do not bear the full range of social responsibilities. This transitional phase encourages the emergence of distinctive forms of social self-organization, such



as youth subcultures. These subcultures create a unique communicative space where individuals of similar age, social status, interests, and activities can express themselves and establish their social identities.

RESULTS

Sociolinguistic analysis has demonstrated that specific speech forms actively develop within subcultures. These forms are referred to by various terms in the scientific literature, including *youth jargon*, *youth language*, *youth slang*, and *social dialect (sociolect)*. Among these, the term "*youth slang*" is the most widely recognized and accepted in the academic community, as it best captures the nature and functions of this linguistic phenomenon. According to the definition provided in the "Dictionary and Reference Book of Linguistic Terms" by D.E. Rosenthal and M.A. Telenkova, slang encompasses lexical units and expressions used by members of certain social or professional groups, such as artists' slang or sailors' slang. [8: 287]. The purpose of using such vocabulary is to strengthen the boundaries between "us" and "them," creating a symbolic barrier that promotes internal group cohesion. It is important to differentiate between slang and argot. While they share some similarities, youth slang is more open and accessible than argot. In contrast, argot is considered "the special language of a specific, limited social group" [5: 43], characterized by isolation and encryption, while slang used by young people, on the other hand, shows a tendency to expand and spread beyond the confines of narrow group usage.

Language is a fundamental aspect of culture, acting as both a means of representation and a factor in its transformation. Culture, as a dynamic and evolving system, significantly influences linguistic development; as culture changes, so does language. In modern society, characterized by a fluid social structure, we see the emergence of various subcultures defined by professional, geographical, age-related, and other distinctions.

Importantly, these subcultures are not completely isolated; they interact with each other and with established literary norms, which can enrich or undermine the lexical and stylistic structure of language.

Some scholars argue that the emergence of youth culture, marked by a persistent divide between generations – often described as a barrier between "fathers" and "sons" – is a response to the rapid changes seen in industrial and post-industrial societies. In the West, the interest in youth subcultures peaked in the 1960s, a time marked by sexual and psychological revolutions as well as the rise of the hippie movement. It was during this period that the term "subculture" became commonly used in academic discussions, referring to the unique systems of social self-realization developed by young people. Among these elements, graffiti (from Italian *graffiti* < *graffito* – «scribbled») held a significant place, originating from ancient everyday inscriptions and drawings found on walls and household items. [6: 136]. Graffiti, which emerged on walls to capture attention, evolved into a form of visual self-expression, allowing teenagers to establish their identities and distinguish themselves from their peers.

Other key features of youth subculture include breakdancing and rap. Rap is a rhythmically organized form of verbal expression that has deep historical and cultural roots, tracing back to the traditions of African verbal culture.

Slang is a crucial aspect of youth subculture, primarily operating at the lexical and phraseological level. It represents an informal and uncodified use of the Russian language within the ethnic community. Research into the informal speech behavior of young people began to gain significant attention in the late 20th century. This period saw important contributions from scholars such as T.V. Zaykovskaya, E.N. Guts, A.T. Lipatov, V. Elistratov, E.G. Borisova, L.I. Skvortsov, and others, who advanced the study of socially marginalized forms of linguistic communication.

Despite this interest, studies of youth speech practices face specific challenges, particularly methodological ones. A primary issue is the absence of uniform and clearly defined terminological boundaries; the academic community has yet to reach consensus on key concepts related to youth speech. Nevertheless, within modern linguistics, slang is increasingly recognized as an independent research field, possessing its own patterns and internal logic.

Lexicographic and sociolinguistic analyses indicate that the vocabulary of youth slang is rapidly expanding from various sources. These include borrowing from foreign languages, internal word formation, semantic reinterpretation of common language lexemes, adaptation from other slang systems, and the active use of word-formation resources from existing units. The influence of English, driven by globalization and the pervasiveness of English-language discourse – especially in the digital realm – plays a significant role in this evolution [1: 66].

In recent decades, youth slang has rapidly evolved to include vocabulary borrowed from computer jargon. This type of speech features a casual and colloquial style, resembling other forms of social jargon. Anglicisms play a significant role in this computer slang, with many terms becoming firmly established in the everyday vocabulary of young people. Interestingly, some of these terms have migrated from other professional communities. For example, the word "*chainik*," which refers to an inexperienced computer user, was originally used among motorists to describe a novice driver.

Metaphorization is a highly effective method for creating new lexical units. Observations indicate that visual or associative analogies often serve as sources of lexical innovation. For example, issues and disruptions in terminal networks have been likened to *garbage* or *trash*, resulting in the emergence of the term "*musor*" to describe such failures. Similarly, verb metaphors that express psychophysiological states or behaviors are also prevalent in youth slang. One example is the verb "*tormozit*" (*to slow down*), which has taken on the meaning of "*to think slowly*," "*to have difficulty thinking*," or "*to spend time passively at the computer*." The process of word formation is also significant, particularly through the addition of suffixes to verb stems. For instance, the term "*brodilka*," which refers to a type of computer game where the character moves through



locations to search for objects or complete missions, is derived from the verb "brodit'" (to wander) by adding the suffix -k-.

A notable feature of borrowed vocabulary in youth slang is that neutral terms derived from English often take on a more casual or familiar connotation within computer jargon. For instance, the word "server" is colloquially transformed into "sterver," showcasing the stylistic play and ironic reinterpretation typical of the youth linguistic environment.

Many slang terms borrowed from computer jargon are related to names of computer components. In youth speech, a "keyboard" may be referred to as «klava» or «pedal'», while a computer "mouse" can be called a "mysha", "myshka", "krysa", or "khvostataya". Similarly, mousepad might be designated as "podmyshka" or "kover". These designations not only reflect a tendency to simplify and shorten technical terms but also indicate a preference for metaphorical and imaginative expressions.

In addition, slang related to computer operations is commonly used. For instance, the verb "kvakat'" (to croak) means "to play computer games like Quake," while the phrase "klikat'" (to click on icons) refers to the action of using a mouse. Elements from computer games also influence youth slang; for example, the term "gamover" (derived from "game over") is used to signify the end of a game.

Another important aspect of slang includes the names of programs, commands, and nicknames for individuals who play various roles in the digital space.

For example:

aibolit - slang for an antivirus program;

nasil'nik - an ironic term for a programmer who uses C language;

khaker - a specialist in breaking into systems;

chainik - an inexperienced user;

sisop - a system administrator.

Even equipment manufacturers have not escaped rethinking: for example, IBM is referred to as "Bima", and Hewlett Packard as "Khulet Platskart". This illustrates the clever wordplay characteristic of youth slang and a desire to distance themselves from formal terminology, demonstrating the play on words characteristic of youth slang and a desire for stylistic distancing from official terminology.

Within each sociolinguistic stratum, we can observe the emergence of microlanguages – distinct codes of communication used within specific professional or age groups, each with its own unique lexical system.

The study of slang vocabulary is particularly significant as it can influence the development of literary language. Traditionally, slang has been seen mainly as an expressive layer of vocabulary that reflects the cultural and communicative characteristics of particular communities. However, this study emphasizes living speech practices rather than merely dictionary definitions. By analyzing the actual use of slang terms, we can identify the dynamics of their integration into the

national linguistic system and evaluate their influence on literary norms.

CONCLUSIONS

Youth slang should be regarded as an independent, historically established, and non-standardized subsystem of the Russian language, primarily evolving at the lexical level. Its most active usage occurs in the informal spoken language of urban society. From a sociolinguistic perspective, youth slang differs from professional jargon in its openness and accessibility. While speakers of argot and professional jargon tend to form closed, socially restricted groups, youth slang is widespread among a diverse age range and demonstrates significant linguistic and socio-communicative fluidity. Over time, youth slang has begun to emerge as a distinct field of study, complete with its own system of patterns and internal logic. This uniqueness allows us to view youth slang as a flexible linguistic entity that reflects the processes of language democratization and the cultural transformation of society.

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