

CONTEMPORARY STUDENT SLANG AS A SOCIAL DIALECT

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This article studies student slang as a contemporary sociocultural phenomenon manifesting itself in the language of a specific social group being the students. This allows characterizing the student slang as a social dialect. The authors hereof have identified key essentials of the students slang analyzed on actual speech material (the article studies over 100 lexemes) during communication processes of Russian students as well as by interviews taken from representatives of student community of a specific Russian higher education institution, Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University. The analysis of word use within the student community allowed the authors hereof to compile a brief glossary of common and professional student slang words and identify the reasons of use thereof in student communications. The subject hereof includes also word coining process within slang lexis of students, which allows considering specific peculiarities of such processes in contemporary Russian language overall.

Keywords: student slang, lexis, word use, speech, speech situation.

INTRODUCTION

The tutor's work in contemporary student environment provides abundant material to study students' speech. The analysis thereof is required due to many reasons. First, it allows establishing deeper understanding of the youth culture being a special world unlike anything else (Maleko, 2015). Second, studying and adequately evaluating student slang allows understanding psychological and emotional status of its carrier, which is especially important for formation of the university corporate culture on a democratic partner basis (Krivoshlykova *et al.*, 2014). This very circumstance should result into absence of material conflicts between tutors and students. Third, orienteering in the youth slang allows the tutor to control linguistic behavior of students where it goes beyond generally accepted moral norms or, in its extremes, becomes asocial one (Kurban, 2011).

Word use in the student environment was analyzed in a specific Russian university, Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University. The research material included everyday student communications and speech situations occurring within the student community. The living language of student communications allowed us to analyze not only the lexical composition of student audience (the authors hereof have considered over hundred lexemes) but also frequency of use

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of some word and concepts most fixed in the students' speech. It allowed the research team to create a brief student slang glossary and identify mobility of its lexical compositions subject to students acquiring professional skills within the framework of their selected majors (Pitko, 2015 (B)).

In the course of research, the authors hereof used the method of interviewing students. Thus, the informers were a hundred students of Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University answering questions developed by the authors hereof. Answers to the above questions allowed identifying the dependency of word use upon the speech situation and the stage of education the student is at during a specific period and determining the lexical compositions of the speech of students from different professional training spheres.

The linguistic material collected allowed the authors hereof to trace the slang word coining ways within the student community, identify the means and reasons of their active penetration into the living everyday communications of students.

METHODOLOGY

Student Slang as Social Dialect in Contemporary Sociocultural Environment

Sources of this linguistic phenomenon can be traced quite clearly. Thus, the term "slang" has entered the Russian linguistic tradition relatively recently. It is a loan word from English where it was initially interpreted as the "special liquid and smooth language of the poor and rogues" and later as "somebody's language". The term was first recorded in 1750 as the "street language". Contemporary dictionaries provide at least two main interpretation thereof. First, it is a special language of subgroups or subcultures of the society, and second, it is widely used lexis for informal communication while current lexicography is dominated by the latter meaning over the former one.

One should note that some researchers (Desheriev, 1977; Krysin, 2001; Belikov, 2001, etc.) tend to consider the student slang a social dialect (where the dialect (Greek "**dialektos**" meaning parlance or jargon) should mean a variety of the common people's language used by a comparatively limited number of people within a common territory, community or profession). We believe that this viewpoint is quite substantiated. Thus, social dialects are subjects of social dialectology being a component of social linguistic. Social linguistic is a scientific discipline developing at the junction of linguistics, sociology, social psychology and ethnography and studying a wide range of problems in connection with social nature of language, its social functions, the mechanism of social factors influence on the language and the part the language plays in social life. That is why we clearly realize that the student slang is a stratum of language created by a small social group representatives whereof share the same activity, age, linguistic training level and speech situation arising in their everyday communications. Undoubtedly, the student slang is a

special form of a social dialect that, in the course of its existence, materially affects the status of corporate culture of any university.

One should note that social linguistics pays special attention to the issue of connection and interaction between the language and the culture (Humboldt, 1985; Elistratov, 1995, etc.), and the researcher emphasize that social dialects' influence on literary language is constantly growing. Scientists note active penetration of colloquialisms, jargonisms (Volkova, 2010a,b) and vocationalisms (Valgina, 2001) into the neutral commonly used lexicon and emphasize that “deflated lexis sees wide use not only in informal communications and artistic speech but also gains a never-seen-before access to periodicals and oral public speech (Shmelyov, Zemskaya, 1988); modern Russian language is infected with the “destruction virus”, the “linguistic taste” of speakers has changed visibly (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1980).

When studying students' communication environment, the authors hereof interviewed one hundred students and tutors from different departments of Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University. Interviewed students were asked three questions.

- 1) They had to select a lexical group (see Table 1) for:
 - communicating with their parents;
 - communicating with their fellow students;
 - communicating with their tutors

TABLE 1: THE GROUPS OF LEXICON REFLECTING A COMMUNICATION SITUATION

<i>Lexical Group 1</i>	<i>Lexical Group 1</i>	<i>Lexical Group 1</i>
Exam	swamp	Exam
Uni	dorm	please
answer	hangout	question
preparation	Uni	answer
dorm	fail	preparation

- 2) What is your attitude to the student's slang?
- 3) Are you going to use slangs, as you grow older?

The answers to the questions are as follows.

100% of respondents gave the following unanimous answer to the first question:

- words from lexical group 1 may be used for communication with parents as such communication allows using slangisms comprehensible to different age groups in combination with neutral lexis;
- words from lexical group 2 belong to lexis used for communications with fellow students. The interviewed respondents have defined without errors

that such lexis includes samples of the student slang and suits the student community where it is quite comprehensible and is an integral part of everyday communications.

- respondents considered words from lexical group 3 suitable for communication with tutors as it is formal business communication where student slang must not be used.

76% of respondents (76 students) have answered the second question that they are positive about student slang, use it and will use it in their communications with their friends. In their opinion, the student slang allows liberalizing students' communications. It is lexis coined by students and therefore an integral part of their culture.

24% respondents (24 students) note that, although they are negative about it. They note that the student slang is very rude and very often, words coined by students lack sense.

Students could not give a clear answer to the third question. 82% of respondents (82 students) answered that they could not say for sure if they would stop using student slang in their adult lives. They may stop using student slang as they mature. 12% of respondents answered that they used student slang only during their study at the university. On their graduation, they will try using no slangisms at all, as speech characterizes the person and may affect its perception by others.

Thus at this stage of the research, we concluded that student slang was a lexical basis for students' communications. It somewhat liberalizes the student community and makes communications between students comprehensible. Not all students are positive about slang. Some of them believe that slang contaminates Russian language penetrating the regular lexis. Summarizing the interviewed students' opinions, we note that student slang has been existing, is existing and will be existing exclusively as a form of oral communication within a specific social group. After graduating and abandoning the student community, the student slang stops being relevant to speakers.

Key Essentials of Student Slang

What are the general social and linguistic specifications of student slang? Many researchers (Grachev, 2007; Rakhmanova, Suzdaltseva 1997, etc.) believe that it differs with expressive, even abrupt and rude manner of expressing thoughts and feelings. Student slang includes a degree of linguistic absurdity (for example, "to chivvy" means "to understand quickly and easily) understandable only to young men who often are negative about the elder generation (for example, "rents split" means "parents left home" or "feeling gravity's pull" applies to elderly persons, tutors, etc.), the system and are creating their unique linguistic world. A characteristic feature making the student slang different from other types of slang is its rapid changeability due to generation shifts. In this connection, the student

slang, just like any other one, is only a lexicon on a phonetical and grammatical basis of a national language with a colloquial and sometimes rude or avuncular outlook.

The analysis of contemporary linguistic student environment shows that the fate of slang words and expressions is different. We can identify three distinct fates of slang words and expressions.

The first progress thereof in time is quite smooth for their existence that they become so customary among speakers that become a part of the commonly used language. For example, initially slang words “to fluster” (to get embarrassed), “to shelve” (to make someone wait for a decision or action), “to mask” (to hide someone or something), “to witticize” (to joke) have become commonly used ones, and we rarely think of their slang origins.

Moving along the second way, student slang words and expression exist only for some time with their carriers and are later forgotten even by them without surviving until death of their carriers. One should note that such slang words of the second half of the 20th century as “guest workers”, “hoods”, “slackers” (idlers) and others are falling out of use although used sometimes.

The third fate of student slang words and expressions results into their remaining slang ones for a long time and for many generations without becoming a part of the commonly used language and being forgotten. Commonly used words such as “jeer”, “rip”, or “be high” remain slang ones for several decades but hardly can become commonly used.

It is believed nowadays that contemporary student slang was forming mostly in major cities, but gradually started being used in remoter areas. Generally, students easily and quickly pick up funny words. They become a kind of a marker, a password for those in the know. Knowledge of slang words frequently used in companies makes it easier for young people to become a part of the group, learn the ropes and break the ice. In this connection, representatives of different subcultures use multitudinous slang words meaning that a student can easily understand what a biker or a punk tells him. Another essential of the student slang is being designed to be comprehensible not by anyone.

We believe that one should note that excessive emotionality, expressiveness, evaluativity and figurativeness are some of key features of the student slang. Young people invent many words to broadcast their concerns unfamiliar to adults who pay no heed to them. Such words are simply untranslatable. Young people are restrained in expressing their feelings through deeds while they are very emotional and ironic in speech situations. Consider some slangisms identified in the course of observations of the students’ communications in Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University.

- “to blow one’s mind” to fascinate;
- “to coin money” to earn much money easily;

- “to hang around” to frequent some places communicating with their visitors;
- “wanker” a person with whom one should not make friends as it does not understand many things;
- “whatever” it does not matter.

Based on our linguistic examples, we can conclude that the student slang combines certain rudeness, emotional estrangement and sometimes, untranslatable word play. These features make it a peculiar social dialect marking carriers of the lexis within the framework of the unified communicative aggregate, the students.

Brief Glossary of Common Student Slang

Slang words and expressions listed below and provided to us by our informers are used by students especially frequently based on which we may conclude that there is a common student slang comprehensible to all students with no exceptions. Still, this student slang group lacks any more or less stable composition. This linguistic material is mobile and changeable even despite its perceived stability and frequency of use in speech situation. The linguistic material we analyzed allowed including the following slangisms into this group:

- “apples” (“grads”) applicants;
- “automaton” a credit granted on general grades for a specific period;
- “academic” academic leave;
- “banana” a negative grade;
- “geek” (“nerd”) a student spending all its time studying;
- “to geek” to study diligently;
- “nerd” see “geek”;
- “runner” a document given to a student for individual taking of a credit or exam in a subject and replacing a score inventory or a clearance leave;
- “bible” a library;
- “bomb” a large cheat sheet;
- “to bomb” to make a large cheat sheet;
- “seminary” a vocational training institution;
- “war” military department;
- “gallery” the deck farthest from the tutor;
- “globe” (“bald skull”) a follicular-challenged tutor;
- “stupid book” a textbook;
- “fail” (“tail”) an exam not taken during an exam session;
- “to bend” (“to idle”) to miss classes without good reasons;

- “to blow” to fail several exams and credits;
- “to bungle” to ask too many questions to a student when taking a credit or exam;
- “credit” a credit book, a document for recording grades for credits and exams taken by a student;
- “to be swamped” to study intensively and have no time for anything;
- “to mangle” to copy from someone;
- “super” dormitory supervisor;
- “commerce” a student studying on a fee basis;
- “inspection” an inspection test;
- “term” a term thesis;
- “lab” a laboratory class;
- “labster” a laboratory class guidebook;
- “grave” the dean or director’s office;
- “window” an intermission between classes;
- “practice” a rollout;
- “delivery” a summons to the dean’s office for disciplinary offenses;
- “north” a winter exam session;
- “grid” an exam session or time schedule;
- “scholar” a scholarship;
- “to leg” to miss classes or disclose secrets of fellow students to tutors;
- “third-years” third-year students;
- “quiz” a test with optional answers;
- “uni” a university where a student studies;
- “schoolers” schoolchildren;
- “cheat” a cheat sheet;
- “equator” a summer exam session of second-year bachelors.

The lexical composition of the student glossary will be comprehensible to anyone with no exceptions from former students to relatives of actual students. It is the traditional universal student slang passed on from generation to generation. The student slang lexis we have selected is quite stable but cannot be considered the commonly used one. It has a specific environmental and social relevance being only an organic part of Russian students’ discourse. Such lexis is connotative, figurative and frequently results from word coining not lacking irony and self-irony of the speakers. These very qualities of student slang make it virtually untranslatable into foreign language.

Brief Glossary of Vocational Student Slang

The speakers within the student community are gradually accumulating vocational slang lexis used by representatives of different professions. In Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University, there are both technical and artistic bachelor and master departments forming a very narrow specialized slang linguistic environment. They form the specific student slang lexicon, the lexis whereof is less prone to becoming outdated due to its connection with scientific disciplines that undergo no material changes for prolonged periods. The current student environment of Magnitogorsk G. I. Nosov State Technical University allows identifying a whole range of such slangisms.

1) Technical slangisms in connection with sciences and vocational disciplines:

- “biochem” biochemistry;
- “compumath” computing mathematics;
- “advance” advanced math;
- “engineering” engineering drawing;
- “quantum” quantum theory;
- “lineal” (“line”) linear algebra;
- “lineq” linear equation;
- “mathan” mathematical analysis;
- “math sup” mathematical support;
- “apple” a student of applied mathematics;
- “ACT” automatic control theory;
- “SLT” state and law theory;
- “probe theory” probability theory (used in mathematics);
- “theory mech” theoretical mechanics;
- “PE” physical education;
- “chimera” a chemistry tutor;
- “numbers” numerical methods;
- “nuke” nuclear physics

2) Art slangs:

- “artists” some students of arts department;
- “journal deputy” a student of journalism department;
- “foreigners” foreign literature;
- “English” English language;
- “letters” literature history disciplines;

- “muse” music;
- “Russian” a tutor of Russian;
- “Russisch” Russian language;
- “logo philia” philology;

The above slangism mark specific subgroups within the student community separating “scientists” from “artists” and narrowing the circle of communication due to specificity of the lexicon, peculiarities of thinking and use of vocational lexis (Pitko, 2015 (A)).

In this connection, we have found that students may simultaneously be members of several social groups or subcultures with their own modes of communication and specific slangs. Students assist slang lexis in migrating from one social group to another one. Students’ social dialect is constantly being enriched with new slangisms. It makes the student slang alive until the social group disappears.

Possible Means of Word Coining in Student Slang

The lexical material analyzed allowed us to identify some most frequent means of word coining in the student slang.

- 1) the most popular of word coining means is non-morphological affixless word coining being abbreviation or syncopation of the generating basis as in abbreviations:
 - “lineal” (“line”) coined from the expression “linear algebra”;
 - “lineq” (“line”) coined from the expression “linear equation”;
 - “mathan” coined from the expression “mathematical analysis”;
 - “math sup» coined from the expression “mathematical support”;
 - “compumath” coined from the expression “computing mathematics”;
 - “ACT» coined from the expression “automatic control theory”;
 - “SLT” coined from the expression “state and law theory”;
 - “probe theory” coined from the expression “probability theory” (used in mathematics);
 - “theory mech” coined from the expression “theoretical mechanics”;
 - “PE” coined from the expression “physical education”.

Student slangisms formed as shown above mostly belong to the vocational student slang and are comprehensible to students of specific departments.

- 2) Another widely used means of coining student slangisms is non-morphological suffix-based word coining. Consider the following examples:
 - “academic” academic leave;
 - “advance” advanced math;

- “engineering” engineering drawing;
- “credit” a credit book, a document for recording grades for credits and exams taken by a student;
- “nuke” nuclear physics;

and other slangisms coined as described above.

- 3) One should also note that the lexical and semantical means of coining new words is also used to coin student slangisms by giving words new meanings:
- “apple” a student of applied mathematics;
 - “grave” the dean or director’s office;
 - “window” an intermission between classes;
 - “north” a winter exam session;
 - “grid” an exam session or time schedule;

The lexical material analyzed allows us to agree with the student of Russian language, Ms. E. M. Beregovskaya (1996) who believes that the lexical and semantical means is the most widely used one for coining student slangisms. The mechanism of coining slangisms using the lexical and semantical means is similar to that of creating any tropes. It is the so-called mechanism of sameness and otherness. Sameness allows approximating two concepts that are removed from each other. Sameness provides the basis for figurative naming of objects and phenomena of reality. Otherness of approximated objects and phenomena ensure unusualness of word use that characterizes the linguistic expressiveness. Therefore, all slangisms are expressive.

RESULTS

Thus, the data obtained in the course of research confirms that the current student linguistic environment is on a trend towards increasing significance of slang. Based on the results obtained, we can formulate the reasons of increasing proportion of slang in communications of contemporary young people:

- 1) Social factors play an important part. Students consider themselves a special social group sharing a common commitment to get higher education and a profession. That is why the special language based on slang and used by students increases markedness of this social community.
- 2) Significance of their own (slang) language for communication with other students (desire to hunker among one’s own peers and in one’s own eyes).

CONCLUSION

Young people encounter indifference, rudeness, and anger more and more frequently. In its turn, it results into protest sentiments that manifest themselves in

increased slang use in communications. Oral speech of contemporary young men is undoubtedly under the influence of mass media (newspapers, magazines, and TV). We may say that students doublespeak. They have communicative standards for institutions, universities and communications with tutors and adults but also may neglect such standards. Slang communication is a standard within the students' community. Therefore, the communicative behavior culture under specific circumstances does not depend on the general culture, development or literacy of its users. The student slang may be considered a social dialect in its own right possessing, on par with common, its own vocational lexis and phraseology. Both inside the student jargon and in its contacts with other social dialects, the literary language is actively developing lexical and semantical relations inherent in the Russian national language overall.

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