DOI: https://10.5281/zenodo.18108483

CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN SLANG USAGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK YOUTH SLANG

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ABSTRACT

Slang represents a dynamic and culturally marked layer of language that reflects social identity and communicative practices of youth. This article examines cross-cultural differences in slang usage through a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek youth slang. The aim of the study is to identify the lexico-semantic and pragmatic features that distinguish slang units in the two languages and to determine the cultural factors influencing their formation and use. The research is based on slang units drawn from contemporary youth communication, including social media, online discourse, and informal speech. The study employs comparative, semantic, pragmatic, and contextual analysis. The findings reveal that English youth slang is characterized by high lexical creativity, semantic compression, and global cultural influence, whereas Uzbek youth slang demonstrates stronger ties to national cultural values while integrating borrowed and hybrid forms. The study highlights both universal and culture-specific features of youth slang and contributes to cross-cultural slang research.

Keywords: slang, youth slang, cross-cultural linguistics, English and Uzbek languages, lexico-semantic features, pragmatic functions, globalization

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, slang is viewed as a dynamic and socially marked layer of vocabulary that reflects ongoing processes of linguistic innovation, identity construction, and cultural interaction. Particularly within youth communities, slang functions not only as a means of informal communication but also as a marker of group belonging, emotional expressiveness, and social differentiation. Uzbek youth slang represents an especially interesting object of study in this context. While it increasingly

incorporates English lexical items and hybrid formations, it remains closely connected to national cultural norms and indigenous expressive strategies. Despite the growing number of studies devoted to English slang and digital youth discourse, comparative research focusing on English and Uzbek youth slang remains limited. This gap highlights the need for a systematic cross-cultural analysis that addresses both universal tendencies and culture-specific features of slang usage. The present article aims to examine cross-cultural differences in English and Uzbek youth slang by analyzing their lexico-semantic and pragmatic characteristics. By adopting a comparative approach, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of slang as a linguistic phenomenon shaped by social, cultural, and communicative factors in contemporary youth discourse.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF YOUTH SLANG

In modern linguistics, slang is commonly defined as a non-standard and socially marked layer of vocabulary characterized by expressiveness, instability, and contextual dependence (Eble, 1996; Mattiello, 2008). Unlike jargon or colloquial speech, slang primarily functions as a marker of group identity and emotional evaluation rather than professional affiliation (Coleman, 2012). Youth slang, in particular, serves as a linguistic tool for self-expression, creativity, and social differentiation within peer groups, enabling young speakers to construct and negotiate social identities in both offline and digital environments. From a lexico-semantic perspective, slang units emerge through semantic shift, metaphorical extension, clipping, blending, acronymization, and borrowing (Mattiello, 2017). These processes reflect both internal linguistic mechanisms and external sociocultural factors, such as technological development, mass media influence, and changing patterns of social interaction. Semantic innovation in slang is often motivated by the need for novelty, emotional intensity, and linguistic economy, resulting in forms that are highly expressive yet frequently short-lived. Pragmatically, slang performs expressive, evaluative, phatic, and identity-marking functions, reinforcing in-group solidarity and informal communicative norms (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990). The use of slang allows speakers to reduce social distance, signal familiarity, and establish group boundaries by implicitly distinguishing insiders from outsiders. At the same time, slang may serve as a pragmatic strategy of resistance to linguistic norms and institutional authority, particularly among youth communities. Furthermore, youth slang is closely connected to discourse context and communicative setting. Its interpretation often depends on shared background knowledge, cultural references, and situational cues. In digital discourse, these features are intensified, as slang interacts with emojis, memes, abbreviations, and multimodal elements, further expanding its pragmatic potential. Consequently, youth slang should be viewed not merely as a lexical phenomenon but

as a complex sociolinguistic system shaped by semantic innovation, pragmatic intention, and cultural dynamics.

LEXICO-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH YOUTH SLANG

English youth slang demonstrates a high degree of lexical innovation and semantic flexibility. Researchers note that semantic compression and metaphorization are among its most productive features, allowing speakers to convey complex meanings through brief and expressive forms (Eble, 2012). Word-formation processes such as blending, acronymization, conversion, and affixation are particularly productive in English slang, especially in digital discourse (Crystal, 2011). The rapid circulation of slang units through social media platforms contributes to their short life cycles and frequent semantic shifts (Tagliamonte, 2016). Pragmatically, English youth slang functions as a marker of informality, emotional intensity, and shared cultural knowledge. Due to the global dominance of English, its slang vocabulary often becomes a source of borrowing for other languages, influencing youth speech worldwide (Pennycook, 2007)

LEXICO-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF UZBEK YOUTH SLANG

Uzbek youth slang shares several universal characteristics with English slang, such as expressiveness and semantic innovation, but it remains strongly influenced by national cultural norms. Many slang units arise through semantic reinterpretation of existing Uzbek lexical items, often reflecting humor, exaggeration, or evaluative attitudes grounded in everyday social experience (Rahmatullaev, 2006). Borrowings from English increasingly appear in Uzbek youth slang, particularly in online communication. These borrowed elements are often adapted phonologically and morphologically to fit the Uzbek language system, resulting in hybrid slang formations (Ismailov, 2018). However, native slang units continue to dominate youth speech, preserving cultural specificity. Pragmatically, Uzbek youth slang remains sensitive to age hierarchy and social context, reflecting traditional norms of politeness and respect (Karimov, 2015).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK YOUTH SLANG

Comparative analysis reveals both universal and culture-specific features of youth slang in English and Uzbek. In both languages, slang serves as a marker of youth identity and group solidarity and relies on semantic shift and expressive evaluation (Eckert, 2000). However, English youth slang is characterized by higher lexical productivity, faster semantic change, and broader global dissemination. In contrast, Uzbek youth slang demonstrates stronger cultural anchoring and pragmatic regulation. While English slang often emphasizes individual expression and emotional directness, Uzbek slang prioritizes social harmony and cultural continuity (Hofstede, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek youth slang reveals both universal tendencies and culture-specific features in informal linguistic communication. In both languages, slang functions as a marker of youth identity, social cohesion, and creative expression. English youth slang is distinguished by high lexical productivity, semantic flexibility, and rapid dissemination, largely driven by globalized digital communication. In contrast, Uzbek youth slang demonstrates stronger ties to national cultural norms, pragmatic sensitivity, and selective integration of borrowed lexical items, reflecting the balance between innovation and cultural continuity. The study underscores the significance of sociocultural context in shaping lexico-semantic and pragmatic characteristics of slang. While global English slang exerts influence on non-native contexts, local youth communities preserve and adapt slang in ways that align with their cultural values. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural youth communication, offering insights into how slang mediates identity, social interaction, and language change in a globalized world. Future research may expand the corpus of Uzbek slang, investigate other regional languages, and explore the interaction between slang, digital communication, and social media trends to provide a more comprehensive picture of contemporary youth language.

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