THE SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTIC OF SLANG AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Summary. The article considers the role of slang as a social and linguistic phenomenon. The author considers the peculiarities of slang use, their morphological characteristics. The vocabulary of natural language is in constant motion, in dynamics, and it is constantly replenished with new lexical and phraseological units. The same thing happens at the non-standard level of modern English. The main method of replenishing the vocabulary of the language with non-standard vocabulary is semantic derivation, which results in the expansion of the semantic volume of words, the literary standard due to the appearance in it of a colloquial lexical-semantic variant. We are talking about metaphorical and metonymic transfer of meaning, narrowing and expanding the meanings of words, generalization and concretization, deterioration and improvement of meaning. Thus, the vocabulary of English slang is a dynamic system, it is constantly replenished with new slangisms and new meanings, both literary words and units of slang. In modern English, slang is an important component of colloquial language and represents a significant part of its vocabulary. English slang is one of the subsystems of the English language, which is realized in a certain language group. Slang is recognized as the antithesis of literary language and is identified in part with the psychological direction of linguistics, is highlighted in the sociolinguistic literature, in connection with which the borrowed terms “linguistic community” and “language community” are often used. In this regard, AD Schweizer formulates important definitions: “linguistic team – a set of socially interacting individuals who show a certain unity in linguistic features, and the language team – a community that differs from others not by the presence of certain linguistic units, and their use in language” [5, p. 71].

The relevance of the study is not in doubt, because slang is one of the most commonly used phenomena of language among young people and other categories of society. Thus, language in all its manifestations and varieties (including slang) appears as a purely social phenomenon: it would be wrong to assume that the main factors governing the existence and development of language are only “intralinguistic”, or that language represents a certain “self-regulating system”, and social factors are only “peripheral influences”. Man and his language are inseparable from each other. This determines the purpose of our study, which is a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of slang as a social and linguistic phenomenon.


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Under the concept of “slang” often summed up a variety of lexical and stylistic phenomena. Note a few different concepts of English slang.

Analysis of research and publications. Research of foreign linguists is devoted to the study of slang. Let’s name only a few names of scientists, to varying degrees associated with the study of slang: A.S. Because, G. Bradley, O. Espersen, J. Greenock and K.I. Kitgridge, G.L. Menken, J. Murray, W. Labow, L. Soudek, M. Lehnert, J. Leiter, and others.

The most characteristic theoretical and linguistic understanding of slang, which has its roots in the psychological direction of linguistics, is highlighted in the following position of O. Espersen: “slang is a form of language that owes its origin to the human desire to deviate from ordinary language imposed by society”. The main impulse in slang, it is perceived as “correct” and universally binding, and which is opposed to dialects and colloquialisms.

Slang is used to make the language of a social group incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Slang is characterized not only by the distortion of existing words of the language, but also by numerous borrowings, the appearance of which is often modified in such a way that they do not differ from other tokens of a particular language.

Note that the slang is realized in a particular language group. In the sociolinguistic literature, the language group is considered as part of sociolinguistic analysis, in connection with which the borrowed terms “linguistic community” and “language community” are often used. In this regard, AD Schweizer formulates important definitions: “linguistic team – a set of socially interacting individuals who show a certain unity in linguistic features, and the language team – a community that differs from others not by the presence of certain linguistic units, and their use in language” [5, p. 71].

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a “sense of mental superiority”. Slang is the result of the inherent
humanity “desire to play” [5, p. 81].

Most English lexicologists to one degree or another share
the point of view of O. Espersen on slang. Espersen’s position is
also common, which boils down to the fact that slang by its nature
requires continuous renewal [4, p. 24].

A significant contribution to the study of the phenomenon
of slang was made by Eric Partridge (1894–1979), who throughout
his life collected a huge amount of factual material and published
many works, including dictionaries. E. Partridge and his followers
(for example, J. Greenock and K1 Kittridge) consider slang as a
conscious, deliberate use of elements of literary vocabulary
in colloquial language for stylistic purposes: to create the effect
of novelty, uniqueness, differences from recognized patterns,
to convey a certain mood of the speaker, to give the expression
specificity, liveliness, expressiveness, visibility, accuracy, brevity,
imagery, as well as to avoid clichés. This is achieved through the use
of such stylistic means as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, litota,
euphemism. E. Partridge also notes that slang is used by a person
in a cheerful mood, young in age or state of mind, for fun [3 p. 45].

“The main motive for the use of slang, researchers call
the expression of a sense of emotional community among members
of social groups or subcultures, their commitment to certain values
and attitudes” [3, p. 61].

Some authors view slang as a vulgar, thieves’ language that
should be avoided and doomed to rapid extinction; others, on
the contrary, consider slang a sign of life, renewal and progressive
development of language. Thus, FJ Wilstek wrote: “Pedantism
in language – is nonsense ..., slang is often an expression
of the concentrated life force of language” [1 p. 81].

Thus, analyzing the above statements, we can point the lack
of a common point of view of lexicographers on the problem
of determining the essence of slang. This is due to the fact
that the term “slang” in English lexicography combines words
and phrases that are completely different in terms of their stylistic
characteristics and areas of use. Thus, in various dictionaries
marked with slang, the following categories of words and phrases
are given, for example:

1. Words used in thieves’ jargon, for example: to chant (from
the French Chanter) meaning “to praise a horse when selling”;
cheese meaning “good thing”; the words father and fence are both
meanings: 1) despair, 2) white fever. Then on the basis of this phrase
language there was a phrase blue devils, which had the following
meanings also play an important role in the development of word
meanings and the addition of new units to slang. Thus the same
word can name a part and the whole, a subject and its maintenance,
a subject and a place of its finding or manufacturing, action and its
result, the tool and result of its application, etc. For example, the unit
of literal language derby – men’s hat in metonymic transfer in
slang means “head”, chill “cool”, in slang means “kill”, duds –
“rag” in metonymic transfer is meaning in slang “cloth” and so on.

The development of new meanings in existing words is one of
the sources of replenishment of the vocabulary of the language.
In connection with the deepening of human cognitive activity,
the accumulation of knowledge about the environment and cultural
and social changes, there is a change and development of the semantic
structure of the word. This is probably because the concept underlying
the lexical meaning of the word is characterized by blurred boundaries:
it has a clear core, which ensures the stability of the lexical meaning
of the word and mutual understanding, but at the same time it has
a vague periphery. Due to this “blur”, the lexical meaning of the word
can be “stretched”, i.e., increase in coverage, which allows you to use
words to denote objects that do not have a special designation [4, p. 58].

For example, the word general slang heat has gradually expanded
its meaning. Initially, it meant “state of intoxication from alcohol
consumption”, then acquired the meaning of “state of arousal”,
then “strong physical attractiveness”, then came the meaning
of “condemnation”, hence the meaning of “ridicule, insult”. The
next step in the dynamics of development of this vocabulary unit
was the meaning of “law enforcement agencies”.

An example of a specialization in slang is a unit such as
the chair meaning electric chair. The word blues is an example
of generalizing the meaning of a word. Previously, in the standard
language there was a phrase blue devils, which had the following
meanings: 1) despair, 2) white fever. Then on the basis of this phrase
there was a unit of the blues – meaning “melancholy”.

The generalization of the lexical meaning of a word, or
the expansion of volume or generalization, occurs in slang much
time. Such units as pad and egghead ennobled their meanings: egghead meant “bald man”,
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time. Such units as pad and egghead ennobled their meanings: egghead meant “bald man”,

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then acquired the meaning of “thinking person, intellectual”, and pad meant “opium smokers”, now – “room, apartment”.

Conclusions. The process of emergence of new meanings in old words is a continuous process that takes place in language constantly, does not stop for any, the shortest time, because otherwise the language will not be able to perform its main communicative function and cease to be an adequate means of human communication. It should also be remembered that with the suppression of any seven in the semantic structure of the word and the emergence of a new seven, cognitive processes go hand in hand with increasing emotional load of the slang word, which in general slang often significantly exceeds the denominator component of lexical meaning. This is quite natural due to the nature of non-standard vocabulary. It should also be noted that all age groups of native speakers use slang in their daily activities, young people and students – to a greater extent than the older generation, busy with their careers, where the standard language is one of the conditions for promotion. But when it comes to communication in everyday life, there are no restrictions or any obstacles to the use of slang. In addition, it should be borne in mind that, along with general slang, native speakers use special slang units in their daily activities and communication, namely, narrowly professional, along with general slang.

References: