

SOME REGIONAL FEATURES OF UZBEK YOUTH SLANG

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes certain regional differences in slang units found in the speech of Uzbek youth. During the study, slang expressions used by young people from different regions were compared both lexically and functionally. According to the findings, while foreign borrowings dominate in central areas, local dialectal slang is more frequently encountered in peripheral regions. The regional differentiation of slang reflects the correlation between youth linguistic culture and the social environment in which they live.

Keywords: Slang, group identification, differential features, regional vocabulary, social identity, group speech, dialectology, urbanization, language

INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistics, the issue of slang is considered one of the complex and pressing problems analyzed from various theoretical perspectives. Slang is an informal layer of language, consisting of lexical units primarily used in informal communication by certain social groups—particularly by youth—which are rich in emotional and expressive content, frequently renewed, and often deviate from standard language norms. According to the definition by linguist E.V. Kuznetsova, slang is "a socially defined, group-specific, and often expressively rich layer of speech" [Kuznetsova, 2004].

Especially widespread among youth, slang units are formed directly in connection with their social experience, aspiration for modernity, group identification, and individual aesthetic expression styles. Through these units, young people not only express interpersonal closeness but also demonstrate their affiliation with a certain social status or contemporary culture. By using slang, they communicate their modernity, familiarity with internet culture, and sense of belonging to a particular group. At the same time, this phenomenon reflects a unique linguistic fashion. These slang units are not only related to social strata but also differ in terms of regional, cultural, socio-psychological, gender, and communicative characteristics. Moreover, as a dynamic linguistic system, slang is shaped and constantly renewed under the strong influence of information technologies, social media, popular culture (pop culture), film, and music. Therefore, slang units are not linguistically stable; rather, they are highly changeable and temporary in nature. They serve as important indicators in analyzing social processes, values, and trends among youth.

These slang expressions do not merely reflect social group affiliation; they also vary based on region, culture, socio-psychological context, gender, and communication style. For instance, in the speech of urban youth, slang units borrowed from English and Russian such as "trend," "like," "zato," and "karochi" are frequently used. Meanwhile, young people in rural areas tend to use more local expressions that reflect regional linguistic diversity. This situation clearly

illustrates the regional nature of slang (i.e., its territorial specificity) and highlights existing linguocultural differences.

The concept of regionality in slang corresponds to what is known in linguistics as regiolect or regional linguistic identity. Typically, regiolects manifest at phonetic, lexical, and morphosyntactic levels; in the language of youth, these features appear in the form of slang. In this sense, the youth of each province, city, or district create their own slang units or employ existing ones with renewed semantic or functional meaning.

On one hand, this phenomenon reflects the dynamic development of language and linguistic shifts across social layers. On the other hand, it reveals how regional language differences are manifested in the speech practices of young people. This is especially evident in a multilingual and culturally rich country like Uzbekistan. For example, in Tashkent city, modern slang borrowed from English and Russian—such as “trend,” “flex,” “like,” “red flag,” and others—is widely used. In contrast, in regions like Karakalpakstan, Khorezm, Andijan, and Surkhandarya, local slang formed on the basis of regional dialectal units prevails, with examples including “cho’qmor” (tough guy), “samalot” (fast person or flashy), “aqltoy” (smart one), “g’isht” (rich;bragging) and more.

These distinctions, in turn, affect communication among youth, cultural identification, and the selection of linguistic tools. In conversational contexts, linguistic choices serve not only communicative purposes but also function as markers reflecting the linguistic culture specific to a given region. Therefore, it is important to study slang not merely as a generalized lexical system, but as a regional sociopragmatic phenomenon.

In Uzbekistan, youth slang and its regional features remain among the underexplored research topics. Referring to the experiences of foreign scholars, one can observe that many of them have investigated the regional characteristics of slang, emphasizing its unique aspects. For example:

B. Trudgill analyzes the regional variants of slang from the perspective of social and regional dialectology.

M. Halliday regards slang as an "anti-language" and emphasizes how it reflects social stratification and group boundaries within society.

V.Yu. Zemskaya systematically studies the regional elements of Russian youth slang, arguing that such expressions serve as indicators of a speaker’s cultural, social, and territorial identity. In Uzbek linguistics, this issue is still insufficiently examined; existing research primarily focuses on general lexical change or slang within specific social groups. However, regionality—i.e., the territorial factor—plays a highly significant role in the formation and use of slang among youth.

From this perspective, studying the geolinguistic features of youth slang serves not only to identify lexically differentiated units, but also to reveal their sociolinguistic meaning, communicative function, and cultural significance. This approach provides a relevant analytical method that helps illuminate the multifaceted nature of language within linguistics.

METHODS

This study applied a sociolinguistic methodology using an empirical, survey-based approach. An online questionnaire was disseminated via social media platforms. A total of 121 respondents participated, including 52 from urban areas and 69 from rural areas. The collected data were categorized and analyzed according to regional and social variables.

RESULTS

Accordingly, this study pays particular attention to this aspect and includes empirical research aimed at identifying the regional peculiarities of slang among youth. Specifically, a variety of trials and surveys were conducted via online platforms and social networks. As of today, 121 respondents have participated in the online survey:

Urban youth: 52 participants (43%)

Rural youth: 69 participants (57%)

These results show that young people living in rural areas participated more actively in the survey. Nevertheless, when asked "In your opinion, which regional group of youth uses slang more?", the respondents' answers revealed the following pattern:

According to survey participants, the use of slang is significantly higher among urban youth. This is directly related to factors such as urbanization, the level of education, and access to modern technologies. As such, the urban–rural contrast is considered one of the key sociopragmatic criteria in regional slang analysis.

When the responses were analyzed as percentages, the data revealed the following distribution of opinions regarding the regional spread of slang. Each opinion group is based on distinct sociolinguistic motivations, shedding light on the attitudes and cognitive perspectives of young people toward language phenomena.

The issue of the regional specificity of slang units in youth speech has become particularly relevant in the context of contemporary sociolinguistic research. Based on the results of the conducted survey, it can be concluded that language is not only a means of communication but also a cultural and social code that expresses both individual and group identity. Especially among youth, the emergence and spread of slang expressions are strongly influenced by the place of residence—that is, whether one lives in an urban or rural environment—serving as a significant sociopragmatic factor.

More than 70% of survey respondents indicated that urban youth use slang more actively. This tendency is directly linked to such factors as urbanization processes, openness to information technologies, and integration into global culture through social media. Urban youth perceive slang not only as a communication tool but also as a marker of modernity, individual style, and group belonging. As a result, slang is not viewed solely as a linguistic phenomenon, but also as a cultural-aesthetic one.

However, rural youth are not passive in their use of slang either. Among them, the process often involves imitation of urban speech styles, adoption of new linguistic forms, and a desire to keep up with modern trends. This demonstrates that slang is not merely an "urban phenomenon" but is gradually evolving into a nationwide, mass, and digital generational phenomenon.

It is also noteworthy that 23% of respondents believe slang usage is not necessarily linked to regional factors, but rather to the adoption of a shared global youth language. This reflects the formation of a post-regional or post-territorial linguistic identity, wherein youth—regardless of where they live—are shaped within the same social media environment and communicate using the same linguistic models. These global trends are gradually turning Uzbek slang into a distinct segment of modern communication.

Furthermore, those respondents who selected “I don’t know” as an answer must also be considered a significant indicator group. This likely reflects a level of indifference to slang and language phenomena or a lack of sufficient linguistic observation skills. This, in turn, suggests that social awareness and perception of slang vary across individuals, forming at different levels.

DISCUSSION

In general, the research conducted shows that slang units in youth language are shaped not only by regional boundaries, but also by social technologies, patterns of cultural consumption, communication tools, and generational identity. Therefore, studying the regional characteristics of youth slang allows us not only to examine lexical variation, but also to analyze broader processes of sociocultural dynamics, digital equity, and linguistic socialization in society.

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