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## YOUTH SLANG IN MODERN STUDENTS' SPEECH

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In the article the peculiarities of speech of modern Ukrainian students as well as problems of using elements of such non-standard language phenomena as youth slang are revealed. It is stressed that youngsters find it difficult to form the system of values in the situation of constant uncertainty. The important task of higher education is to create the national-linguistic personality, able not only to master language competencies, but also to resist the leveling of national interests and to preserve the identity of the Ukrainian nation.

The essence of such non-standard lingual phenomenon as youth slang is revealed. The authors observe slang as means of self-affirmation of the young person in the adult world, and also a specific way to avoid control of older people by rejecting language norms and engaging in sublanguage, accompanied by association with peer groups with common interests and lifestyle. Among the reasons for the use of slang are such as insufficient vocabulary of young people, protesting against the norms and rules of the surrounding reality, secrecy of speech for misunderstanding by adults, diversification, expressiveness and originality of young people's speech as well as reduction of the cultural level of youngsters due to the simultaneous crisis of spiritual, social and material life of the majority of the Ukrainians.

Considerable attention is paid to the causes of deviations in students' speech. The decline in the level of spiritual culture and social uncertainty affects the speech etiquette of students, which is rich in slang and borrowings from the other languages. It is argued that there is a clear correlation and dependence between the level of education, general culture and human speech, and therefore low language culture is a sign of limited and poor inner world of the younger generation. There are such factors having a great impact on the culture level in general and speech level in particular as person's environment during the childhood, social environment, information space and education. Youngsters often use the information products of bad quality and become similar to the national anti-heroes. Youth slang and surzhyk as signs of low speech culture are typical for the modern students' speech. Specificity of the national and lingual personality of the students' education lies in the consolidation of the teachers' attempts.

*Key words:* slang, borrowings, surzhyk, youngsters, national-linguistic personality, speech deviations, culture of speech.

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**Introduction.** The processes of transformation of the Ukrainian society, reassessment of values (both spiritual and material), changes in priorities in life guidelines affect primarily such most dynamic socio-demographic group as youth. Young people are the potential of any society and they determine its future, therefore their role in building of the civil society with democratic values is difficult to be underestimated. Youth is one of the most important hidden spiritual resources for the renewal of the Ukrainian society. Actually, this fact explains the special attention of scientists in various fields (sociologists, psychologists, teachers, linguists) to study the characteristics and problems of the younger generation at the present stage of the development of the society.

It's most difficult for the young people to form their own system of values in the situation of constant uncertainty. There are their own ideas about authorities, norms of behavior, priorities for the various categories of youngsters. This is especially noticeable in the young people's attitude to their native language, which is the universal means of the individual's inner world expressing as well as the component of universal values.

**General Background of Research.** It is important that the identification of a young person with an ethnic group takes place by means of the native language. This inseparable connection was pointed out by W. Humboldt and O. Potebnia. Language is the embodiment of the folk soul and worldview, a sign of separateness and uniqueness of the nation. Modern linguists try to reveal the deep connection between the cognitive structures of human consciousness and language forms. They also make attempts to reconstruct the lingual ethnic consciousness, to reveal cultural-linguistic national stereotypes and to determine the interaction of language and spiritual culture. Thus, one may definitely say about the diversity of the use of strategies for finding "man through language" [2 : 8].

In Ukraine, where the population has experienced a period of linguistic and cultural assimilation, the role of language has never been reduced to a mere means of everyday communication. "Remaining the most enduring phenomenon of succession of generations and traditions as well as the degree of moral, spiritual, aesthetic and mental development of the individual, society and nation, language serves as the basis for the formation and establishment of such a worldview, political and ideological coordinate system that allows not only internal communication, but also the perception of the universal, general civilization through the prism of their own national culture" [7 : 56].

The influence of language on the self-consciousness, worldview and behavior of young people is undeniable, but it's necessary to understand the role of language as one of the most important factors of the personality's formation in higher education. According to O. Cheremskya, the process of such issues' awareness in the Ukrainian society is hampered by the following objective factors as instability of the economic and political situation, significant restriction of the Ukrainian language functioning in all spheres of life in some Ukrainian regions and frequent manipulation of language problems [12 : 64].

These factors partially offset the influence of the Ukrainian-language education, as the gap between the everyday language and the language of education is quite large, and the national-linguistic consciousness develops primarily in its linguistic and cultural environment. If earlier cultural and educational figures faced the task of the Ukrainian language preserving, now this task is more difficult. It requires the transformation of the linguistic and psychological attitudes of the people-representants of the different social strata and educational levels.

The young Ukrainian generation born in the independent state needs special attention because their souls should be saturated with the new worldview of pro-Ukrainian meaning. Overcoming of national nihilism and the inferiority complex will contribute to the expansion of the Ukrainian language use [5].

The task of higher education is to create the national-linguistic personality, able not only to master language competencies, but also to resist the leveling of national interests and to preserve the identity of the Ukrainian nation [3].

Various aspects of young people's language culture forming have been studied by the Ukrainian scientists. **Analyse of latest researches and publications shows** that works of such scientists as L. Palamar, O. Semenoh, L. Matsko, P. Seligei, O. Tkachenko,

M. Penteliuk and others are devoted to the formation of language personality in the educational process. Problems of vulgarization of language and youth slang were considered in the works of O. Serbenska, L. Matsko, L. Stavvytska, V. Yegorova and others [9–10]. Attempts to study surzhyk as a sign of modern youngster's speech are found in the works of V. Radchuk, O. Ruda, V. Truba, T. Kuznetsova, L. Masenko and others [5–6, 8].

Despite a fairly wide range of research on the basic principles of modern youth speech culture, the problems of speech of students of higher educational institutions are not sufficiently disclosed. Last circumstances led to the choice of research.

The **objective of the study** is to determine the peculiarities of speech of modern youth, including students, to characterize its shortcomings, deviations from the norms of the modern Ukrainian language and to identify the ways to improve the speech situation in the student's environment.

**Results of Research.** Now we'd like to proceed to the description of the basic material of the investigation. According to I. Vykhoanets, from early childhood to old age a person is inextricably linked with language. Language is an ideal unified system and the main means of communication which is realized in speech. And the national language seems to be means and evidence of the commonality of the nation. It covers all the diversity of social and territorial dialects, and also includes literary language as a higher, exemplary, standardized form of the national language.

The formal substance of language is manifested in the specifics of phonetic, lexical and grammatical systems. In other terms, it's manifested in speech as the process and result of communication. Language is practically used in speech, which in turn is individual. One of the characteristics of speech is its connection with the situation. So, it depends on the conditions of realization.

It is from this point of view the students' speech to be considered, because the social roles played by a student for even one day determine the choice of certain language means. In other words, these are the factors which influence on the literary language and youth slang as a socio-dialect, professional slang or surzhyk use. While learning students usually use common vocabulary and adhere to the norms of the modern Ukrainian language but during breaks and leisure time, they use the vocabulary of informal communication.

Undoubtedly, the main task of language education in universities is to increase the level of general language training, language literacy, communicative competence of students and deeper acquaintance with the norms of the Ukrainian literary language (spelling, punctuation, lexical, morphological, syntactic, stylistic) in professional communication.

Obviously, it is said first of all about the study of modern Ukrainian literary language, but observations of students' speech, manner of their expressing give grounds to claim that the student's environment is characterized by such linguistic phenomena as slang, surzhyk and dominance of foreign lexemes. Therefore, the issue arises about the nature of these linguistic phenomena, their features, examples and reasons for use.

One of the features of young people's speech is slang. There isn't any consensus on the need to cover this problem in modern linguistics. Some scientists believe that slang is not worth considering, because this linguistic phenomenon goes beyond the literary language. To our mind, this reason isn't entirely correct because literary language is fueled by the colloquial which ensures its development. In general, the line between spoken language and slang is mobile and blurred. According to E. Irklii, "the status of the word is changing, and some lexeme which was considered slang in the 60-80s of the twentieth

century has now become part of everyday vocabulary” [4 : 35]. So, slang occupies a borderline position on the scale of possible means of linguistic communication. We suppose the nature of its existence to be examined more thoroughly.

Slang is a means of communication for a large number of people of the same age. Its bearers are mostly adolescents and young people under 30. Although, the existence of slang is limited not only by certain age limits, but also “social, psychological, temporal and spatial conditions of existence” [1 : 123].

Slang – urban sociolect, emotionally colored vocabulary of low and familiar style, “street language”, “obscene language” [12 : 630]. In modern dictionaries there are at least two main interpretations of the word *slang*: first, the special language of social subgroups or subcultures; secondly, vocabulary of wide use for informal communication. Thus, by slang we mean a set of language units that go beyond the norms of the modern Ukrainian language, are characterized by their emotionality and used by the young people.

On the one hand, slang is a means of self-affirmation of the young person in the adult world, and on the other – a way to avoid control of older people by rejecting language norms and engaging in sublanguage, accompanied by association with peer groups with common interests and lifestyle. In part, slang attracts young people as something forbidden, secret, and therefore – interesting and sometimes incomprehensible to others. Slang covers all spheres of life, describes almost all situations, “it is a constant word formation, which is based on the principle of language game” [4 : 35].

Thus, among the reasons for the use of slang are the following:

- insufficient vocabulary of young people;
- desire to identify with the youth environment, to become like it;
- protesting against the norms and rules of the surrounding reality;
- secrecy of one’s own speech for misunderstanding by adults;
- diversification of young people’s speech, giving expressiveness and originality to it;
- reduction of the cultural level of young people due to the deepening of the crisis at the same time in three spheres of life – spiritual, social and material.

We’d like to note that urban youth is different from the rural one: urban youth slang is more diverse because they have more opportunities for leisure time. In some ways, urban youngsters are more relaxed and “advanced”. It isn’t surprising due to the amount of information young people have to deal with in their daily life. If we take into account the student environment, it is obvious that young people from rural areas, entering the university, are actively trying to fill the “gaps” in their knowledge of youth slang. And then such lexemes as *tusniak* ‘hangout’, *zavysalovo* ‘hanginly’, *kapets* ‘fuck-up’ are actively used in their speech. Of course, this has its own explanation: rural youth try to adapt to the urban environment as soon as possible.

Characterizing slang as a linguistic phenomenon, it’s important to emphasize its following features:

1. Youth language is prone to hyperbole, for example: *klasnyi* ‘great’, *ofihennyi* ‘kickass’, *kliovyi* ‘super’, *kruty* ‘cool’.
2. Slang reveals the realities of the youth world, for example: *kovbasytys* ‘to sauce, to dance’, *party* ‘a party’, *prykol* ‘a joke, prank’.
3. Youth sublanguage is prone to vulgarization, for example: *loh* ‘sucker, loser’, *diatel* ‘numb nuts, a limited person’.

4. Youth slang is territorially differentiated, for example: *kadr* 'a human' – Eastern Ukrainian, *hytsel* 'knacker, a guy' – Western Ukrainian.

5. Ukrainian youth slang reflects a clear social stratification, for example: *byk* 'steer, a man from the village', *shket* 'kid, lad, child', *shpana* 'dime a dozen, boppers, street rabble'.

6. The speech of young people is prone to word abbreviations, for example: *comp* 'computer', *klava* 'keyboard', *Inet* 'internet', *phyzra* 'physical education'.

The layer of slang youth vocabulary is largely formed by neologisms which appear and change along with social changes. According to L. Stavytska, "modern youth slang is like a mediator between inter jargon and folk language practice, the colloquial language of the general population, which has used the ability of the Ukrainian language to produce stylistically reduced, ironic, grotesque lexical units". Such units appear to be adequate to slang nominations in modern conditions of democratization of communicative styles [10]. Here are some examples of student slang: *para* 'fails', *zasypatysia* 'don't pass the exam', *zdyraty* 'write off, cheat', *shpora* 'a cheat sheet', *hivist* 'academic debt', *istorychka* 'history teacher', *akademka* 'academic debt', *botan* 'nerd, geek', *hendelyk* 'diner, eatery', *ekvator* 'third-year session', *kosyty* 'miss classes', *laba* 'laboratory work', *obshchaha* 'dormitory', *stipuha* 'scholarship'.

Another technique to be used in youth speech is the replacement of words with their semantic synonyms. Such words have inappropriate semantic nuance. For example, instead of the phrase "come here" such phrases as "travel here", "migrate here" are used.

Youth speech is also characterized by a large number of introductory words which convey the emotions of the narrator: *bliaha-muha* 'fucking', *blin* 'wow, freaking', *jo-ma-jo* 'Uh-oh'. The semantics of these words is understood only in oral speech and is expressed only through intonation.

Suffixes of underestimated emotional labeling are actively used, such as: -ha – *depresuha* 'depression', *klasuha* 'class teacher'; -juk – *sydiuk* 'CD'; -lo – *failo* 'file', *havallo* 'first-hole', *fuflo* 'bullshit', *hleballo* 'pie hole, mouth'. There are also diminutive suffixes used in such words as: *telyk* 'TV', *velyk* 'bicycle', *homjachok* 'hamster' for *computer mouse*, *tazyk* 'basin' for *computer*.

The specificity of youth slang is that it constantly receives new, "fresh" words that reflect changes in our lives. This is a kind of "landfill" for testing neologisms. The paradox, however, is that as soon as the word-jargon becomes well-known (as, for example, happened with the word *tusovka* 'party, crowd'), young people quickly lose interest in it and replace it with another one.

Students' vocabulary, especially in recent years, tends to activate the "reduced" lexical means, which communicate without any restriction with all their stylistic opponents: youth, criminal, business jargon, music or computer slang. For example: *shuher* 'nix, panic', *zapadlo* 'spoiler, shameful'. But can this always be explained by the fact that jargon acts as a means of expressive nomination of professional denotations? The interpenetration of slang of various argot groups, especially criminal ones, into student slang can probably be explained by the intensification of the criminogenic situation and the excessive romanticization of the criminal world's life by some students.

This is due to the use of such lexemes as *halimy* 'galizable', *vidstiiny* 'sucky', *bezshabashny* 'reckless', *hlamurny* 'glamorous', *stylny* 'stylish', *fuflo* 'bullshit', *fartovy* 'lucky'. The attitude to parents and elderly people deserves special attention, for example,

the words *rodaky* ‘folks’, *predky* ‘ancestors’, *oldy* ‘old people’, *pensionery* ‘pensioners’, *cherepy* ‘skulls’ are used to denote parents; the words *prepod* ‘lect’, *uchylka* ‘schoolmarm’ are used to denote a university teacher; *dedulia* ‘grandpa’, *babulia* ‘grandma’ – for an old person and *tiolka* ‘chick, piece of ass’, *chuviha* ‘dude’ – to denote a young woman.

No less interesting is the question about the sources of origin and spread of youth slang. First of all, we are talking about the media and advertising. According to O. Biletska, “in order to make media texts more accessible and understandable to the mass audience, they are made as close as possible to the language level of listeners and viewers, which is expressed in “averaging”, “massification” of speech” [1 : 126].

One of the interesting features of youth slang is change of the meaning of literary words, which adds an ironic color to the speech. For example, the word *bazar* ‘market’ in the literary language means trade outside, but in youth speech this word has a completely different meaning, namely – speech. Same situation with the verbs *hruzyty* ‘load’, *striliaty* ‘shoot’, *zavysaty* ‘hover’, *nayizhdzhaty* ‘run into’ and *dohaniaty* ‘catch up’. They have quite different meanings in literary and slang languages such as *pile on* for *hruzyty*, *beg* for *striliaty*, *hang out* for *zavysaty*, *rant* for *nayizhdzhaty*. Rethinking the meaning of words well-known in the literary language is a source of youth speech replenishment, for example: *tapky* ‘slippers’ for *branded sneakers*, *protezy* ‘prostheses’ for *limbs*, *kanistra* ‘canister’ for *fool*. Also, some words of professional terminology become the elements of youth jargon, for example: *reanimatsiia* ‘resuscitation’ for *beer bar*, *kantser* ‘cancer’ for a *disease*.

Foreign language borrowing is also a source of youth slang. We are mainly talking about anglicisms as far as English is the language of international communication. “English slang emergence is a consequence not only of the English expansion itself (through the study of the foreign language at school, spread of literature in English, fascination with music culture and intensification of international relations), but also the result of Western life popularization. Youngsters want to look like the heroes of popular movies or TV shows”, that is why they use the slang words of English origin [4 : 36].

The following anglicisms are popular among students: *ticher* ‘teacher’, *breik* ‘break’, *ok* ‘okay’, *yuzer* ‘computer technology user’, *senks* ‘thank you’, *hai* ‘hello, hi’, *kamin pliz* ‘come in please’, *koment* ‘comment’, *luzer* ‘loser’.

Y. Irlkii proposes classification of anglicisms in modern youth slang of her own:

1. Words to denote everyday life nominations (clothes, shoes, food, etc.): *fast-fud* ‘fast food’, *mani* ‘money’, *baksy* ‘bucks, US dollars’.

2. Computer technologies: *chatyts* ‘to chat’, *on-lain* ‘on-line’, *komp* ‘computer’, *heimer* ‘gamer’. Computer slang is widely used in modern world, and the most common users of the Internet and social networks are young people. Knowledge of slang helps young people to avoid misunderstandings when communicating on social networks.

3. Emotions, reactions and assessment of reality: *okei* ‘okay’, *nou problem* ‘no problem’, *sorri* ‘sorry’, *super, fain* ‘super, fine’, *kreizi* ‘crazy’. These anglicisms are used in everyday life.

4. Age groups: *boi* ‘a boy, a guy’, *piply* ‘people’, *men* ‘a man’, *giornl* ‘a girl’, *beibi* ‘a child, a baby’.

5. Culture (styles of music, cinema, fashion): *popsa* ‘pop music’, *shou-biz* ‘show business’, *super star* (same in Ukrainian and English), *selebritiz* ‘celebrity’. These anglicisms are associated with youth music culture, which promotes the media, cinema and show business.

Thus, the vocabulary of modern youth is full of borrowings from other languages. Such process is constantly occurring as a result of globalization and also as a result of scientific and technological progress.

Therefore, it can be argued that modern youth slang is a specific form of reflection of reality under the rapid social changes. Such changes are also connected with youth values shift. Students' slang is an important constituent of the national language although it is not an element of literary one. That is why its use is situational: it may be used actively in a youth environment and almost completely missing in the educational process.

The study has led us to the following **conclusions**:

1. There is a clear correlation between the person's educational level, general culture and speech. That is why a low speech culture is a sign of poor inner world of the young generation.

2. There are such factors having a great impact on the culture level in general and speech level in particular as person's environment during the childhood (parents' and relatives' impact), social environment (friends and acquaintances), information space (media and advertising) and education. Prerogative to nationally-conscious personality development obviously belongs to the school education. However, value orientations and world-view formation and development are held during the student years.

3. Culture of speech as a national cultural value is replaced by the systematic stereotypes such as mass culture patterns. Youngsters often use the information products of bad quality and become similar (also in speech) to the national anti-heroes.

4. Youth slang and surzhyk as signs of low speech culture are typical for the modern students' speech.

5. Modern students' speech is mainly situational and diverse. In other words, it corresponds to the communicative role as far as youth slang and surzhyk are used more actively among the peers unlike the teaching process. Functioning of these specific speech units during the educational process is unacceptable.

6. As a rule, slang is a sign of the youth environment. That is why commitment to these words' usage may disappear with age. We suppose surzhyk to be worsen phenomenon because a person may use it during all the lifetime.

7. Use of the surzhyk in the students' speech is caused by the Russification, bilingualism, weak Ukrainian language policy, inferiority complex of the Ukrainians as well as the processes of the urbanisation.

8. Cultural degradation and social relativism also have a significant impact on the students' etiquette. The latter becomes rich in the slang words and borrowings from the other languages. Students use these words with great enthusiasm because of their novelty and unusualness. Young people like such things much more than the seniors.

9. One of the main tasks of the Ukrainian society in the whole and the higher education in particular is the reorientation to the national values and the Ukrainian language as the basic feature of the originality of the Ukrainian nation.

10. Specificity of the national and lingual personality of the students' education lies in the consolidation of the teachers' attempts. We mean the personal example, professional orientation and understanding the language literacy as a value.

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## МОЛОДІЖНИЙ СЛЕНГ У МОВЛЕННІ СУЧАСНИХ СТУДЕНТІВ

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У статті розкриваються особливості мовлення сучасного українського студентства, а також проблеми використання елементів такого нестандартного мовного явища, як молодіжний сленг. Наголошується, що в ситуації постійної невизначеності молоді важко сформувати систему цінностей. Розкрито сутність такого ненормативного мовного явища, як молодіжний сленг. Автори розглядають сленг як засіб самоствердження молодої людини у дорослому світі, а також специфічний спосіб уникнути контролю літніх людей шляхом відмови від мовних норм і залучення до субмови, котрою відбувається спілкування з групами однолітків, які мають спільні інтереси та спосіб життя. Серед причин використання сленгу можна виділити такі, як недостатній словниковий запас молоді, протест проти норм і правил навколишньої дійсності, утаємниченість мови, її незрозуміння дорослими, урізноманітнення, виразність і оригінальність мовлення молоді, а також зниження загального мовно-культурного рівня молоді внаслідок одночасної кризи духовного, соціального та матеріального життя більшості українців. Значну увагу приділено причинам відхилень у мовленні учнів. Зниження рівня духовної культури та соціальна невизначеність позначаються на мовленнєвому етикеті студентів, насиченому сленгом та іншомовними запозиченнями. Стверджується, що між рівнем освіти, загальною культурою та мовленням людини існує чіткий взаємозв'язок і залежність, а тому низька мовна культура є ознакою обмеженості та бідності внутрішнього світу підростаючого покоління. Існують такі чинники, які володіють значним впливом на рівень культури загалом і рівень мовлення зокрема, наприклад, оточення людини в дитинстві, соціальне середовище, інформаційний простір і освіта. Для мовлення сучасного студентства характерні молодіжний сленг і суржик як ознаки низької культури мовлення. Специфіка національно-мовної особистості виховання учнів полягає в консолідації спроб педагогів, спрямованих на подолання окреслених проблем.

*Ключові слова:* жаргон, запозичення, суржик, молодь, національно-мовна особистість, відхилення у мовленні, культура мовлення.

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