

WHAT IS SLANG?

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Slang is a colourful, alternative vocabulary. It bristles with humour, vituperation, prejudice, informality: the slang of English is English with its sleeves rolled up, its shirt-tails dangling, and its shoes covered in mud. [1, 3]

The first problem is to define what slang does and does not include. A multitude of possible definitions are available, ranging from "illegitimate colloquial speech" and the language of "low, illiterate or disreputable persons" to "the plain man's poetry". The 1987 Readers Digest Universal Dictionary offers "language peculiar to a group, argot or jargon". [2, 3]

Thorne Tony, the compiler of *The dictionary of contemporary slang* in the introduction to the dictionary writes that "slang is not in fact jargon, a secret code, dialect, unacceptable usage or the idiom of everyday speech, although it may contain elements of all of these. To continue defining by exclusion, slang is not catchphrases, journalese, neologisms and buzzwords, or idiolect (the private language of an individual), although examples of all of these may be found within it. Looked at from a linguist's point of view, slang is a style category within the language, which occupies an extreme position on the spectrum of formality. Slang is at the end of the line; it lies beyond mere informality or colloquialism, where language is considered too racy, raffish, novel or unsavoury for use in conversation with strangers. Slang also includes forms of language through which speakers identify with or function within social sub-groups, ranging from surfers, schoolchildren and yuppies, to criminals, drinkers and fornicators." [2, 3]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies three types of slang. The first to which the term "slang" was applied, in the mid-eighteenth century, was "the special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low and disreputable character", the thieves' cant or patter of earlier centuries. This vein of slang thrives today in the vocabulary of the underworld, street gangs, drug-trafficking. But soon after the mid-eighteenth century, the meaning of "slang" broadened to include "the special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession": printers' slang, costermongers' slang, even the slang vocabulary of doctors and lawyers. Both of these types of slang served many purposes, but the predominant one was as a private vocabulary binding together members of a subculture or social group, conferring upon them an individuality distinct from the

rest of the community. Finally, in the early years of the nineteenth century, the term “slang” came to be applied much more generally to any “language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some new special sense”. Today slang covers all three of these areas: not all colloquial or informal vocabulary is slang, but all slang is colloquial or informal. [1, 3]

Apart from the difficulty in defining the word ‘slang’ as discussed above, the history and etymology of the term is uncertain, too. When it was first used, “slang” was probably a slang word itself, and as such may have existed for many years in the spoken language before becoming more widely known or being committed to paper. Its primary meaning when it first appeared in print in the mid 18th century seems to have been “abuse”.

The origins of the word “slang” are obscure and alternative derivations are on offer. The consensus is that it is related to the standard word “*sling*” as used in picturesque archaic expressions such as “*to sling one’s jaw*”, meaning “to speak rowdily or insultingly”. A quite different theory is that the word is a corruption of the French word for language, *langue*, but this alteration goes against the normal sound patterns involved in anglicization. [2, 3]

Eric Partridge (1894-1979) was able to distinguish as many as 15 different reasons for the use of slang:

- for the fun of it
- as an exercise in wit or ingenuity
- to be different
- to be picturesque
- in be arresting
- to escape from clichés
- to enrich the language
- to add concreteness to speech
- to reduce seriousness
- to be colloquial
- for ease of social interaction
- to induce intimacy
- to show that one belongs
- to exclude others
- to be secret

But one theme recurs among all these reasons: the use of slang as a means of marking social or linguistic identity. In Partridge’s book *Slang: Today and Yesterday* (1933), the group-identifying function in fact provides the basis for most of the detailed illustrations, which come from a wide range of geographical areas and occupational activities. Slang is, by definition, a colloquial departure from standard usage; it is often imaginative, vivid, and ingenious in its construction – so much so that it has been called the “plain man’s poetry”. It thus especially attracts those who, for reasons of personality or social identity, wish to be linguistically different – to be “one of the gang”, whether the “gang” in question be soldiers, nurses, actors, footballers, prisoners, warders, linguists, gays, or pop singers. [3, 53]

Литература

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ОСОБЕННОСТИ ЯЗЫКА СМИ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПЕРЕВОДА

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Одной из важных особенностей текстов СМИ практически всех жанров является сочетание в них элементов сообщения и воздействия. Хотя главной функцией массовой коммуникации принято считать передачу информации, эта передача довольно редко бывает полностью нейтральной, т.е. абсолютно свободной от элементов воздействия на аудиторию. В большинстве случаев передача информации сопровождается прямым или завуалированным выражением оценки, языковыми средствами и речевыми приемами, побуждающими аудиторию к определенной реакции на передаваемую информацию, средствами привлечения внимания к информации или к точке зрения, выражаемой в сообщении.

Разные жанры текстов СМИ характеризуются разным соотношением и воплощением элементов сообщения и воздействия, разным удельным весом собственно информации и экспрессивных средств.

Среди собственно языковых и стилевых особенностей языка СМИ, совокупность которых отличает его от языка других функциональных стилей, можно назвать:

- Высокую степень стандартизации используемых средств: большой процент устойчивых и клишированных выражений, различные журналистские штампы, лексикализованные метафоры, стандартные термины и названия.
- Экспрессивность языка как способ привлечения внимания читателя, выражения отношения к передаваемой информации, расстановки оценочных акцентов и т.п.