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THE FORMATION AND LINGUOPRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF MODERN INTERNET SLANG IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

Annotation

The article examines how modern internet slang is formed in English and Uzbek and which linguopragmatic functions it performs in computer-mediated communication. It shows that English slang arises mainly through language-internal mechanisms, whereas Uzbek slang develops through borrowing subsequently accommodated by native agglutinative morphology. Despite this structural asymmetry, the pragmatic functions of slang converge in the two languages, which suggests that they are determined by the conditions of the medium rather than by the structure of a particular language.

Keywords: internet slang, computer-mediated communication, word formation, borrowing, linguopragmatics, English, Uzbek, digital discourse.

ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ И ЛИНГВОПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЕ ФУНКЦИИ СОВРЕМЕННОГО ИНТЕРНЕТ-СЛЕНГА В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И УЗБЕКСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается, как в английском и узбекском языках формируется современный интернет-сленг и какие лингвопрагматические функции он выполняет в компьютерно-опосредованной коммуникации. Показано, что английский сленг образуется преимущественно внутриязыковыми средствами, тогда как узбекский развивается за счёт заимствования, осваиваемого средствами родной агглютинативной морфологии. Несмотря на это структурное различие, прагматические функции сленга в обоих языках совпадают, что свидетельствует об их обусловленности условиями среды, а не строем конкретного языка.

Ключевые слова: интернет-сленг, компьютерно-опосредованная коммуникация, словообразование, заимствование, лингвопрагматика, английский язык, узбекский язык, цифровой дискурс.

INGLIZ VA O'ZBEK TILLARIDA ZAMONAVIY INTERNET-SLANG LARNING YUZAGA KELISHI VA LINGVOPRAGMATIK FUNKSIYALARI

Annotatsiya

Maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillarida zamonaviy internet slengining qanday shakllanishi va u qanday lingvopragmatik vazifalarni bajarishi tahlil qilinadi. Ingliz slengi asosan til ichidagi vositalar yordamida hosil bo'lishi, o'zbek slengi esa o'zlashtirish va uni ona tilining agglutinativ morfologiyasi vositasida o'zlashtirish yo'li bilan rivojlanishi ko'rsatiladi. Shunga qaramay, har ikkala tilda slengning pragmatik vazifalari mos keladi; bu esa ularning til qurilishi emas, balki muloqot muhiti shartlari bilan belgilanishidan dalolat beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: internet slengi, kompyuter vositasidagi muloqot, so'z yasalishi, o'zlashma; lingvopragmatika, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili, raqamli diskurs.

Introduction. Internet slang represents the most rapidly changing lexical layer of contemporary language. Unlike terminology or literary vocabulary, which accumulate slowly, slang units born in digital environments may appear, spread across millions of users and become obsolete within a single year. This velocity follows directly from the conditions in which such units are produced: online interaction is fast, informal, largely written yet speech-like, addressed to an unstable audience, and constrained by interfaces that reward brevity. Under these conditions users systematically depart from the codified norm, and the resulting departures are not random: they form recognizable patterns of word formation and serve identifiable communicative goals.

The comparison of English and Uzbek is particularly instructive here. English occupies the position of the global donor language of digital communication: the platforms and the greater part of the terminology through which online interaction is organized originate in English-speaking environments. Uzbek, by contrast, entered mass digital communication

comparatively recently, and its internet slang has developed in a situation of intensive contact not only with English but also with Russian, which has historically mediated technical vocabulary in Central Asia. The two languages therefore illustrate different routes toward the same communicative result. The aim of this article is to describe these routes and to establish which pragmatic functions the resulting units perform.

Materials and Methods. The material was collected from publicly accessible computer-mediated communication in the two languages: comment threads on YouTube and Instagram, public Telegram channels with their discussion sections, posts on X (formerly Twitter), and captions accompanying short-form video. English material was drawn from general-audience international accounts, Uzbek material from channels with predominantly domestic audiences. The observation covers the last five years, the phase of the most intensive growth of Uzbek-language content on these platforms.

The study is qualitative and interpretive rather than statistical: its purpose is not to establish the absolute frequency of individual units but to identify recurrent formation models and the pragmatic conditions of their use. Four procedures were combined. Descriptive-comparative analysis established structural correspondences and divergences between the two languages; word-formation analysis classified units according to the mechanism that produced them; contextual-pragmatic analysis related each unit to the situation of its use and to the illocutionary force of the utterance in which it occurred; and elements of computer-mediated discourse analysis in the sense proposed by Herring took into account the influence of the medium itself – character limits, ephemerality and algorithmic moderation – on linguistic choice [4]. Theoretically the work relies on the conception of language use as continuous choice-making formulated by Verschueren [9] and on the cyberpragmatic models developed by Yus [11].

Analysis. The formation of English internet slang is overwhelmingly language-internal, and its most productive mechanism is abbreviation. Initialisms condense whole propositions and even complete speech acts into a few graphemes, as in *tbh*, *ngl*, *imo*, *idk*, *ikykyk* and *fomo*; many have lost any perceptible connection with their source phrase and function as unanalysable pragmatic markers. Clipping produces *obvs*, *totes*, *sus* and *legit*, while blending yields *hangry*, *glamping* and *situationship*, in which two conceptual domains merge into a single lexeme. Affixation has become unexpectedly productive through the reanalysis of formerly bound elements: the segments *-core*, *-maxxing* and *-pilled*, extracted from earlier compounds, now attach to almost any base, producing *cottagecore*, *looksmxxing* or *blackpilled*. This confirms Mattiello's observation that slang exploits marginal and extra-grammatical word-formation models far more readily than the standard variety does [8].

Semantic shift constitutes the second major mechanism. Established words acquire new evaluative meanings: *salty* comes to denote resentment, *mid* mediocrity presented as an insult, *slay* admiration, while *ratio*, originally a quantitative term, becomes a verb denoting public defeat in an argument. A third mechanism is graphic. Respellings of the type *rn*, *pls* and *thx*, repeated letters as in *soooo*, capitals used for prosodic emphasis and deliberate misspellings such as *teh* or *sry* reproduce in writing features that properly belong to oral delivery. As Crystal has argued, these practices expand the expressive resources of written language rather than evidencing decline [1; 2], and Tagliamonte and Denis have shown that their use coexists with full command of the standard variety [5]. Emoji, finally, combine with slang units and modify their illocutionary force, often signalling that an apparently aggressive utterance is playful [10].

The Uzbek picture is structurally different. Here the primary source of internet slang is borrowing and the primary mechanism of its integration is native morphology. English units are first adapted graphically and phonetically – like *becomes* *layk*, *story* becomes *storis*, *subscribe* becomes *sabskrayb*, *content* becomes *kontent*, *hype* becomes *xayp* – and are then supplied with Uzbek verbal and case affixes: *layklamoq*, *kommmentlamoq*, *xayplamoq*, *storiga qo'ymoq*, *postni tashlamoq*. The agglutinative structure of the language accepts such stems without difficulty, so that a foreign root and a native affixal chain form a single word: *layk-la-b-man*, *kontent-chi-lar-imiz*. This hybrid derivation is the most characteristic feature of Uzbek internet slang and has no exact counterpart in English.

Three further processes accompany hybrid derivation. The first is the semantic reinterpretation of native words: *zo'r*, *qoyil* and *olov* acquire intensified evaluative meanings in

digital praise, while *gap yo'q* functions as a formulaic marker of agreement. The second is graphic compression in messenger communication: *rahmat* is reduced to *rhmt*, *xayrli tun* to *xt*, *yaxshi* to *yx*. The third is trilingual code-mixing, in which Uzbek, Russian and English elements alternate within a single utterance – *norm*, *zbs*, *kayf*, *davay*, *ok*, *best* – reflecting the actual repertoire of urban speakers. A variable specific to Uzbek is the coexistence of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, which produces parallel written forms of one and the same unit and turns the choice of script itself into a socially meaningful signal.

Discussion. The structural asymmetry described above does not entail a functional asymmetry. Examined in their contexts of use, the collected units reveal the same set of pragmatic functions in both languages. The first is economy: digital interaction imposes real costs on length – character limits, typing effort, competition for attention in fast-moving feeds – and abbreviated units reduce these costs while preserving propositional content. The second is expressive evaluation. Slang units carry an evaluative charge that neutral vocabulary lacks, allowing the speaker to convey attitude simultaneously with information, which is precisely what a medium deprived of intonation requires.

The third function is identification. Command of current slang marks the speaker as a competent member of an online community, and incorrect use marks an outsider; as Eble demonstrated for pre-digital student slang, in-group vocabulary is primarily an instrument of social belonging rather than of reference [7]. In this sense each slang choice is also an act of self-positioning. The fourth function is phatic: much online slang carries little propositional content and serves instead to open, maintain and close contact, which Zappavigna describes as ambient affiliation, where shared linguistic forms rather than shared topics hold a dispersed audience together [6].

The fifth function is mitigation. Markers such as *ngl*, *tbh*, *lowkey* and *no offense*, together with their Uzbek functional equivalents of the type *rostini aytsam* or *ochig'i*, precede potentially face-threatening statements and reduce their force, operating as hedging devices in the classical pragmatic sense. The sixth is language play: deliberate misspelling, ironic hyperbole, morphological experimentation and the recontextualization of memetic formulas demonstrate creative competence, a dimension of digital writing emphasized by Barton and Lee [12]. A seventh function has become prominent only recently: the evasion of automated moderation. So-called *algospeak* – *unalive* for *kill*, *seggs* for *sex*, and comparable substitutions in Uzbek-language content – arises because algorithmic filtering penalizes certain lexemes. Here a technological constraint directly generates new vocabulary, and the units it produces are euphemisms addressed not to a human interlocutor but to a classification system.

Two comparative observations follow. First, the functional inventory is shared, but the means of realizing it are language-specific: English realizes economy through initialism, Uzbek through graphic truncation and through the borrowing of foreign units that are already short. Second, borrowing in Uzbek is not passive: the borrowed stem is immediately subjected to native derivational processes and often develops meanings absent in the source language, so that the process is better described as appropriation than as importation. This supports the view, articulated by Androutsopoulos, that digital media do not themselves cause language change but accelerate tendencies already present in the language system [3].

Conclusion. The comparison of English and Uzbek internet slang shows that two typologically and sociolinguistically distinct languages arrive at functionally equivalent solutions by structurally different routes. English generates its digital vocabulary chiefly from internal resources

through abbreviation, blending, affixal reanalysis and semantic shift; Uzbek generates it chiefly through the adaptation of borrowed material by means of its own agglutinative morphology. The pragmatic functions performed by the resulting units – economy, expressive evaluation, group identification, phatic rapport, mitigation, language play and the evasion of automated moderation – are nevertheless essentially the same, which suggests that they are determined by the communicative conditions of the medium rather than by the structure of a particular language.

Two practical implications follow. For lexicography and language planning, internet slang requires systematic

documentation rather than prohibition, since a considerable part of it, particularly the adapted borrowings, is already entering everyday spoken Uzbek and can no longer be described as an exclusively online phenomenon. For language teaching, receptive command of this register forms a component of communicative competence: learners encounter it constantly and misread it regularly, most often by failing to recognize irony or mitigation. Further research would benefit from a comparable Uzbek digital corpus, which does not yet exist in a form suitable for quantitative work, and from reception testing able to verify whether the pragmatic effects described here are in fact perceived by users.

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