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RESEARCH ON SLANG IN WORLD LINGUISTICS

Khalmenova Tamara Zaripboyevna
Lecturer, Asia International University
E-mail: tamaraxolmenova@gmail.com

Abstract. : This article examines the theoretical foundations of slang studies in world linguistics and analyzes various scholarly approaches to the concept of slang. The study discusses the linguistic nature, sociolinguistic functions, and semantic characteristics of slang units, as well as their role in communication. Special attention is paid to the differences between Western and traditional Uzbek linguistic approaches to slang. The article also highlights the significance of studying slang within regional dialects, particularly in the Khorezm dialects of the Uzbek language. The findings demonstrate that slang constitutes an important component of the lexical system and reflects social, cultural, and communicative changes within society.

Keywords: slang, sociolinguistics, lexical units, non-standard vocabulary, dialect, Khorezm dialects, linguistic variation, communication, semantic features, language development.

In world linguistics, the term slang has been widely used since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The spread and development of this term have been greatly influenced by English-speaking communities. There are various and sometimes conflicting views regarding the concept of slang. It should be noted that in many scholarly sources, the term slang partially overlaps with such notions as jargon, vulgarisms, colloquial speech, and street language, which has led to certain debates concerning its definition and classification. In our view, there are specific reasons why the term slang has not traditionally been employed in Uzbek linguistics. Until recently, linguistic units that correspond to what is now referred to as slang were generally studied under categories such as dialectisms, jargonisms, vulgarisms, professionalisms, or other related linguistic phenomena. In other words, the investigation of these units as a distinct category of slang has been more characteristic of the traditions of European linguistics.

In the dictionary compiled by Akhmanova, the term slang is defined as follows: “Slang, derived from the English word slang, is a speech element used by a particular sphere of activity or social group; it represents a speech variant of a literary language unit.” According to this source, slang units perform specific linguistic functions and possess distinctive emotional and expressive connotations. Modern linguistics increasingly requires a more comprehensive investigation of such elements, as they demonstrate unique characteristics that justify their classification as a separate category of linguistic units, namely slang. Another issue that may provoke debate concerns the question of which branch of linguistics slang should be associated with. For instance, within the category of restricted lexical units in lexicology, a particular item may simultaneously function as a dialectal expression, a professional term, a jargonism, a taboo word, or belong to other lexical categories, thereby giving rise to various scholarly discussions. Another important aspect is that slang may occur in the form of a single word, a phrase, or even a complete sentence. From this perspective, it is difficult to assign slang exclusively to any one of the aforementioned categories. Therefore, it appears appropriate to regard slang as a distinct linguistic term within Uzbek linguistics. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that slang is closely related to the field of lexicology. Among the branches of modern linguistics, slang can most appropriately be studied within the framework of sociolinguistics, as it reflects the interaction between language and social groups and

serves important communicative and expressive functions. It should be noted that slang is a relatively new concept in Uzbek linguistics. For this reason, its study is based on emerging theoretical perspectives, and it is expected that in the near future slang will reveal its full linguistic nature and establish its proper place within the lexical system of the Uzbek language. In conclusion, the identification and investigation of the diverse forms of slang found in the Uzbek language and its dialects will undoubtedly contribute valuable insights to the further development of modern Uzbek linguistics. At this point, a legitimate question arises: have such linguistic elements not been studied within the framework of traditional Uzbek linguistics, and to which branch or level of linguistic analysis should slang be assigned? Existing linguistic literature demonstrates that, within lexicology, words are generally classified according to whether their usage is restricted or unrestricted. According to this and many other scholarly sources, such units are considered restricted in their sphere of usage and are often categorized on a territorial basis, being interpreted as dialectal elements. This approach has long remained the dominant perspective in traditional linguistic studies. Today, one of the terms widely used in European linguistics is the concept of slang. In Western linguistic scholarship, this term is regarded as an independent lexical layer, and its semantic scope, stylistic role, and communicative functions have been examined on a well-established theoretical basis. Nevertheless, in traditional Uzbek linguistics, particularly in scholarly publications, dictionaries, and methodological manuals published throughout the twentieth century, the term slang is rarely encountered. It is important to note that this difference can be attributed to two major linguistic approaches that dominated the previous century. Specifically, there were significant methodological differences between Western linguistic schools and those of the former Soviet Union in the study and interpretation of language. In Western linguistics, approaches such as structuralism, functionalism, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics occupied a leading position. These schools recognized the study of non-standard linguistic units—including slang, jargon, and argot—as an important indicator of the natural development and evolution of language. On the other hand, linguistic schools that developed within the former Soviet Union were primarily oriented toward normativity, literary language standards, and syntactic-morphological order, promoting the concept of a standardized language. As a result, the scientific analysis of non-standard, socially marked, emotional, and expressive linguistic elements was considerably limited. For this reason, approaches to the study of slang did not gain widespread recognition in Soviet linguistics and were, in some cases, largely overlooked. Among the scholars who contributed to the study of slang, Likhachyov traced the origins of colloquial and non-standard speech to forms of primitive linguistic expression. Likewise, Khomyakov examined English slang as a distinct linguistic phenomenon and provided a detailed discussion of its structure and functions. In recent decades, the scope of research in Uzbek linguistics has expanded considerably, and a number of linguistic issues have been investigated through comprehensive monographic studies. While slang has been extensively analyzed within the fields of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, stylistics, and even language policy in European and Anglo-American linguistic traditions, in Uzbek linguistics this concept has only recently begun to be regarded as an independent object of scientific inquiry under the influence of global linguistic approaches. This situation is largely the result of historical and theoretical divisions within linguistic scholarship. It also explains why certain European linguistic terms and concepts have not yet become fully established in Uzbek lexicography and stylistics. Modern Uzbek linguistics has increasingly begun to adopt advanced theories from Western linguistic scholarship and adapt them to the national language system. As a result, non-standard lexical phenomena such as slang are gradually becoming important objects of linguistic research. This trend broadens the scope of sociolinguistic, cultural, and psycholinguistic studies of language development. Although the term

slang is relatively new in Uzbek linguistics, many of the linguistic elements associated with it have been examined previously under different classifications. Such units were often described as colloquialisms, argot, jargon, professional vocabulary, or elements of folk speech rather than as a distinct category of slang. Therefore, slang should be viewed as a complex lexical phenomenon that shares features with several linguistic categories. Previous studies have highlighted its general characteristics as well as its functional and stylistic properties, providing a foundation for further research in this field. The present study focuses on the analysis of slang expressions found in the Khorezm dialects of the Uzbek language. Particular attention is given to their formation within the dialectal environment, their use among different social groups, and their phonetic, morphological, and semantic characteristics. It is important to note that slang should not be examined solely within the framework of the standard literary language. Such linguistic units can also be identified in regional dialects, where they often occur more naturally and abundantly. Since this research adopts a regional perspective, it specifically investigates slang expressions within the linguistic system of the Khorezm dialects. The richness and flexibility of dialectal speech provide a favorable environment for the emergence and development of slang. Therefore, the study primarily concentrates on non-standard, expressive, and figurative lexical units used in local dialectal communication. One of the defining characteristics of slang is its ability to convey multiple meanings. In this respect, slang expressions may also be regarded as polysemous linguistic units. Their meanings often vary depending on the communicative context and the social group in which they are used. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is closely connected with society and its patterns of interaction. Sociolinguistics examines how social groups influence language use in different communicative situations. Language is not a static or fixed phenomenon; rather, it continuously evolves alongside social and cultural changes. As members of society adapt to new environments and modes of interaction, they create and adopt new linguistic forms to enhance communication and strengthen group identity. Consequently, linguistic innovations, including slang, emerge as a natural outcome of social interaction and cultural development. Slang expressions are often polysemous, meaning that they can convey more than one meaning. This characteristic stems from the fact that slang commonly develops by assigning new meanings to existing words and phrases. Researchers have noted that many slang expressions emerge through the process of adding new semantic interpretations to ordinary words. As a result, semantic flexibility becomes one of the defining features of slang, allowing a single lexical item to acquire different meanings in different contexts. For example, the English word cool literally means “moderately cold,” yet in informal speech it is widely used to express the meaning “excellent” or “impressive.” Similarly, the word lit, which originally meant “illuminated” or “set on fire,” has acquired the slang meaning of “exciting,” “entertaining,” or “excellent.” Such examples demonstrate the dynamic nature of slang and its ability to adapt meanings according to communicative context and social usage. Several linguistic factors contribute to the polysemous nature of slang vocabulary. One of the most important of these is the use of semantic transfer, particularly through metaphor and metonymy. In slang, existing words are often assigned new figurative meanings, thereby expanding their semantic range. For example, during the Second World War, the English expression flying coffin was used as a slang metaphor for an aircraft, emphasizing its perceived danger. Another example is the acronym NATO, which normally refers to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In informal American usage, however Another important linguistic feature of slang is its tendency toward linguistic economy and expressiveness. Slang often replaces lengthy descriptive expressions with shorter, more concise forms that retain rich semantic content. This characteristic makes slang an effective and natural means of everyday communication. Researchers have noted that slang functions as a mechanism

for linguistic economy, the creation of new concepts, and emotional expression. Through processes such as abbreviation, semantic shift, and wordplay, speakers generate innovative lexical forms that facilitate efficient communication within specific social groups. Consequently, slang not only enriches the vocabulary of a language but also reflects the creativity and communicative needs of its users. As a result of these lexical processes, slang expressions often become polysemous, allowing a single linguistic unit to convey multiple meanings. This enriches their semantic structure and enhances both the stylistic diversity and communicative potential of speech. Recent linguistic research has increasingly focused on the social dimensions of language. Consequently, non-standard lexical categories such as argot, jargon, vulgarisms, and slang have attracted growing scholarly attention. Although the term slang is relatively new in Uzbek linguistics, the phenomenon itself has long existed and remains actively used in everyday communication. However, studies devoted specifically to slang in Uzbek are still limited and are often confined to stylistic observations or brief references in translation-related works.

Slang expressions generally deviate from the norms of the standard literary language, yet they remain readily understandable within particular social groups. Their primary functions are to convey emotional meaning, ensure brevity, and create a sense of distinctiveness. For this reason, slang is especially common in informal spoken communication, where speakers use it to express emotions, group identity, and communicative intentions in a concise and often figurative manner. Such slang-related lexical units can also be found in regional dialects. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Khorezm dialects, where speakers of different age groups, professions, and social backgrounds actively employ expressive non-standard forms. These expressions serve important social functions, including strengthening group identity, facilitating communication, and adding emotional and stylistic richness to speech. The linguistic analysis of these expressions contributes to a better understanding of their lexical-semantic and stylistic characteristics, while also helping to determine the place of slang within the national language system. The presence of slang in regional dialects reflects the internal dynamics of the Uzbek language, particularly processes of lexical innovation and change. Such innovations often emerge in the speech of younger generations before gradually spreading to wider social groups.

Therefore, slang should be studied not only as a phenomenon associated with foreign languages but also as a sociolinguistic feature of regional Uzbek dialects. Investigating slang enables researchers to examine not only non-standard vocabulary but also broader processes of language development, adaptation, and social identity formation. From this perspective, slang represents an important component of linguistic change and serves as a valuable source for understanding the relationship between language, society, and culture. Every language relies on its dialects and regional varieties as fundamental sources of development and enrichment. In general, the growth of a language is supported by both internal and external resources; however, internal resources play a particularly significant role in expanding its lexical system. These resources primarily include dialectal and regional linguistic elements, which contribute to the vitality and diversity of the national language. Folk dialects serve as an important source of lexical enrichment by preserving and expressing concepts that may not be fully represented in the standard language. Therefore, the comprehensive study of dialects using modern linguistic approaches has become an increasingly important task. Such research not only contributes to a deeper understanding of language development but also helps reveal the linguistic and cultural richness embedded within regional speech varieties. Among the dialect groups of the Uzbek language, the Oghuz and Kipchak dialects spoken in the Khorezm region have received considerable scholarly attention. Significant contributions to the study of these dialects have been made by such scholars as F. Abdullayev, O.

Madrahimov, Y. Jumanazarov, X. Boboniyozov, and Y. Bobojonov. Their research examined the dialects of Khorezm in relation to the linguistic traditions, speech patterns, and social conditions of their respective periods. As a result, these studies have provided valuable insights into the linguistic characteristics and historical development of the region's dialects.

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