

APPROACHES TO THE INTERPRETATION OF SLANG AS A SUBSYSTEM OF THE LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with studying slang in Modern English. It specifically presents the several interpretation given in dictionaries like Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus of Current English” Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English” and also by well-known linguistic scholars E. Partridge, Arnold I.V, M.M. Makovsky, V.A. Khomyakov.

Keywords: Colloquial words, informal speech, non- standard language, secret language, societies, social group, vocabulary.

In modern linguistics there is no single definition for the notion of "slang", on the contrary, a large number of interpretations of this concept contradict each other. It is not terminologically accurate, and various linguists use it to refer to various notions. This theoretical uncertainty regarding its definition has also an impact on lexicography in practice which means the term slang is defined differently in various dictionaries. For example:

“Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus of Current English” represents following definition “ a variety of language that is considered to particularly informal, more frequently used in speech than in writing and usually only used in certain situations or with certain persons” (oxforddictionaries.com).

“Cambridge Advanced Learner’s dictionary” gives following explanation for the term slang:” Slang is terminology that is only used among the individuals who know one another well and members of the same social group. The language of slang is quite informal. If it is employed in relation to someone else or outside of a close-knit group of people, it may insult them. Slang is more frequently applied in speaking rather than written interaction”. (dictionary.cambridge.org)

In Britannica “slang” is defined as “Unusual words or expressions that convey something novel or familiar in a unique way. It is irreverent, flippant, and impolite; it could even be lewd or obscene. The aim of its vivid metaphors is typically respectability, and it is this concise, occasionally witty, and frequently impertinent social criticism that gives slang its distinctive flavor.” (britannica.com).

“Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English” offer another interpretation " very informal, occasionally abusive language that is specifically employed by members of a certain group, such young people or criminals. " (ldoceonline.com).

“The Collins student’s Dictionary” interpret it in the following way: casual terminology and idioms with informal meanings ” (CCSD, 1990, p. 527).

In another well-known English dictionary compiled by C. Anandale, "slang" is defined as follows: “the language spoken by a particular class or classes of people, both educated and illiterate, that is not widely used and is frequently seen as being crude, inaccurate, or even vulgar ”.

“Webster’s Third New International Dictionary" explains what the term "slang" means as follows:

Language employed just by a particular class or subgroup as:

- a) special or frequently secret language of certain classes such as criminals or beggars that is regarded as offensive words or beneath them: argot;
- b) the language being used or associated with a particular trade, profession, or area of interest(www.merriam-webster.com).

In the encyclopedic dictionary of D. Crystal, he gave following explanation to the term slang that it is informal type of words or phrases which is understood to specific class of individuals and is also a jargon used in society and the workplace (informal, nonstandard vocabulary, usually intelligible only to people from a particular region or social groups; also the jargon of special group, such as doctors, cricketers, or sailors”) (An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages, 1992p. 252). According to D. Crystal the main misinterpretations about the slang by people is that they look at this layer of vocabulary condescendingly, but can hardly avoid using it (Crystal, 1995, p.21).

An analysis of English and American explanatory dictionaries, as well as slang dictionaries, made it possible to identify the following categories of words and phrases, combined under the term "slang".

1. Words related to thieves’ jargon, for example, to chant (from French chanter) meaning "praise a horse when selling"; cheese meaning "cool thing"; the words father and fence - both meaning "dealer of stolen goods."

2. Various professionalisms, for example: plunger from the verb to plunge "to rush forward" (to attack) "cavalryman" (from military vocabulary); length "forty-two lines of drama" (from theatrical vocabulary); a noser (from nose) "punch on the nose" (from boxing vocabulary); to be ploughed (from plough) “fail the exam” (from student vocabulary), etc

The phenomenon of slang was also studied by many linguistic scholars such as E. Partridge, V. Freeman, A. Barrere, V.J. Burke, C. Leland, S.B. Flexner, I.R. Galperin,

M.M. Makovsky, V.A. Khomyakov, I.V. Arnold, T.A. Soloviev, A.S. Bo, G. Bradley, O. Espersen, J. Greenock, and K.I. Kittridge, G.L. Menken, J. Murray, W. Labov, L. Sudek, M. Lehnert, J. Lighter and the concept of slang is one of the subject matters of these linguistic researchers' debate.

According to linguistic researcher I.V. Arnold, slang includes only "colloquial words and expressions with a rude or comic emotional coloring" that are not accepted in literary language. (Arnold, 2012, p. 284).

Another prominent linguistic scholar Eric Partridge (1894-1979), who throughout his life collected numerous materials and published a number of works, including dictionaries on the notion of slang, define it as completely random collections of lexemes existing in the colloquial sphere, very fragile, unstable, not codified in any way that reflect the public consciousness of people belonging to a certain social or professional environment. Slang is considered as a conscious, deliberate use of elements of a general literary dictionary in colloquial speech for purely stylistic purposes: to create the effect of novelty, unusualness, difference from recognized samples, to convey a certain mood of the speaker, to give the statement concreteness, liveliness, expressiveness, visibility, accuracy, brevity, figurativeness, as well as to avoid cliches. This involves the use of such stylistic means as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, euphemism.

An interesting interpretation of "slang" from a scientific point of view can be found in the writings by Stuart B. Flexner, one of the authors of the Dictionary of American Slang. In the preface to this dictionary, Stuart B. Flexner writes: " 'Slang is the words and expressions that are employed by a relatively large parts of the society of the American people, or that are understandable to them, but, according to opinion of the majority their official use in speech are not suitable for "good"(Flexner, 1967).

J.B. Greenock and K.I. Kittridge, in his famous work, figuratively describes slang as a "tramp tongue" that wanders around literary speech and constantly tries to make its way into the most refined society.

The uncertainty of theoretical concepts about slang has not been eliminated in some linguistic studies. M.M. Makovsky believes that slang is "a linguo-social norm that has historically developed on the basis of English territorial dialects of various regions and other most ancient language elements and is more or less common to all native speakers, which, being realized at the level of colloquial speech (phonetics, grammar, vocabulary), genetically and functionally different from the jargon and professional components or elements of the language" (Makovsky, 1982,p. 102).

Among the foreign linguistics, the greatest contribution to the development of slang problems was made by V.A. Khomyakov. For many years, studying English vernacular and, in particular, slang as its main component, V.A. Khomyakov examined

the etymology of the term "slang" (Khomyakov, 1969, p. 68), presented its detailed definition (Khomyakov, 1971, p.103), revealed the structural-semantic and socio-stylistic features of English slang (Khomyakov, 1970, p. 63-103).

Slang, according to V. Khomyakov, is “a special peripheral lexical layer that lies both outside the limits of literary colloquial speech and outside the borders of dialects of the national English language, which includes, on the one hand, a layer of specific vocabulary and phraseology of professional dialects, social jargons and argot of the underworld, and, on the other hand, a layer of widespread and commonly understood emotionally expressive vocabulary and phraseology of non-literary speech” (Khomyakov, 1970, p. 111).

The above definitions indicate the lack of a common point of view of lexicographers regarding the problem of determining the essence of slang. However, one can understand that slang is a social type of language used more than by a less limited number of people and differing in its structure (phonetics, grammar, lexical composition and semantics) from linguistic standard.

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