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UDC 811.111'373.46

AMERICAN SLANG VS BRITISH SLANG

The paper presents the brief analysis concerning two types of English slang – its American and British variants. In the paper the peculiarities and generalities of American slang and British slang are analysed. The paper represents rather interesting information on etymology of the word "slang", characterises different definitions of the notion "slang", determines common and distinctive features of the two types of slang, outlines the major types of word-formation of American and British slangs. It is paid particular attention to the plane of slang content as the meaning of a slang word or a slang phrase contains rich emotive component and is an active member of a stylistic opposition.

Key words: *slang, American slang, British slang, etymology of word "slang", peculiar features, slang word, slang phrase.*

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АМЕРИКАНСЬКИЙ СЛЕНГ VS БРИТАНСЬКИЙ СЛЕНГ

У статті представлено стислий аналіз стосовно двох типів англійського сленгу – його американського та британського варіантів. У статті проаналізовано особливості та загальні риси американського сленгу та британського сленгу. Автори презентують досить цікаву інформацію про етимологію слова «сленг», характеризують різні визначення поняття

«сленг», визначають загальні й відмінні риси двох типів сленгу, окреслюють основні типи словотворення американського та британського сленгів. Особлива увага приділяється площині сленгового контенту, оскільки значення сленгового слова або сленгової фрази містить багату емоційну складову і є активним членом стилістичної опозиції.

Ключові слова: сленг, американський сленг, британський сленг, етимологія слова «сленг», особливі риси, сленгове слово, сленгова фраза.

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АМЕРИКАНСКИЙ СЛЕНГ VS БРИТАНСКИЙ СЛЕНГ

В статье представлен краткий анализ в отношении двух типов английского сленга – его американского и британского вариантов. В статье проанализированы особенности и общие черты американского сленга и британского сленга. Авторы представляют довольно интересную информацию об этимологии слова «сленг», характеризуют различные определения понятия «сленг», определяют общие и отличительные черты двух типов сленга, основные типы словообразования американского и британского сленгов. Особое внимание уделяется плоскости сленгового контента, поскольку значение сленгового слова или сленговой фразы содержит богатую эмоциональную составляющую и является активным членом стилистической оппозиции.

Ключевые слова: сленг, американский сленг, британский сленг, этимология слова «сленг», особые черты, сленговое слово, сленговая фраза.

Formulation of the problem. Language is a powerful means of regulating the activities of people in various areas. Being an instrument of communication, language, like a mirror, reflects the characteristics of its representatives, their culture and history, reacts to all changes in society. The modern world is developing dynamically and language is also in constant development.

Slang, being an integral part of any language and, accordingly, of speech is one of the main and most problematic aspects of lexicology, since it reflects the linguistic and cultural aspects of that society that uses it. Slang is the layer of vocabulary that does not coincide with the literary norm. Some researchers perceive slang as something extraneous to literary language, not peculiar to the speech of an intelligent person. Nevertheless, today one can observe the so-called “expansion” of slang vocabulary in all the spheres of human activity: slang units are used on radio and television, in the press, literature, on the Internet, as well as in oral communication of people of almost all ages, social groups and classes. Thus, investigating the phenomenon of using slang in our everyday life still remains **relevant**.

Analysis of the recent investigations and publications. Nowadays, an active increase in the number of works devoted to studying slang can be

observed. General and multidimensional characteristics of investigating slang can be seen in the works of the linguists all over the world, especially in the works of American and British linguists. In the modern period, the works devoted to different problems of slang of different languagees have appeared (I. Arnold, A. Barrere, R. K. Barnhart, Ch. C. Fries, F. Grose, I. Halperin, J. C. Hotten, E. Ivanova, S. Johnson, V. Khomyakov, Ch. G. Leland, E. Partridge, A. Schweitzer, W. W. Skeat, W. Vilyuman, J. Wright).

The purpose of the paper is to analyse and present the peculiarities and generalities of American slang and British slang.

The purpose presupposes solving the following **objectives**: 1) to characterise definitions of the notion “slang” in linguistics; 2) to present different points of view concerning slang’s etymology; 3) to determine common and distinctive features of the two slangs; 4) to outline the types of forming American and British slangs.

Presentation of the basic material and interpretation of the results of the investigation. According to the Cambridge English dictionary, slang is vocabulary that is used between people who belong to the same social group and who know each other well. Slang is a very informal variant of language. It can offend people if it is used about other people or outside a group of people who know each other well. We usually use slang in speaking rather than in writing. Slang normally refers to particular words and meanings but can include longer expressions and idioms [6].

The Oxford English dictionary gives the following definition: slang is a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people [9].

As to the Collins English dictionary, it says that slang consists of words, expressions, and meanings that are informal and are used by people who know each other very well or who have the same interests [7].

According to these definitions, the following characteristics of slang can be distinguished: 1) informal; 2) mostly used in oral communication; 3) include expressions and idioms; 4) typical to a particular group of people with common interests.

Slang, unconventional words or phrases that express either something new or something old in a new way with the new meaning. It is flippant, irreverent, indecorous; it may be indecent or obscene. Its colourful metaphors are generally directed at respectability, and it is this succinct, sometimes witty, frequently impertinent social criticism that gives slang its characteristic flavour. Slang, then, includes not just words but words used in a special way in a certain social context.

Slang is an ideological framework for reasoning about language that defines a class of deviant registers of language. The ideology may exist with varying degrees of intensity, ubiquity, and institutionalized force within a language community. It is strengthened when the given speech variety comes increasingly to acquire the status of a baseline register, a standard in

relation to which others are normatively evaluated as deviant or substandard. When a baseline standard is presumed as the given one, a relatively uniform set of metadiscursive criteria on norm and deviance becomes available as intuitions to persons exposed to standard-setting institutions. The more widely the standard is presupposed in diverse social practices, the more “natural” its metadiscursive criteria appear to language users and the more they draw attention to discourses that deviate from them.

Although the term slang describes speech repertoires, its usage indexes relationships between social groups. To say that some utterance is of slang character, or contains a slang expression, is to inhabit a metapragmatic stance that evaluates its speaker as deviating from a presumed standard. Such a stance may or may not correspond to social regularities of evaluation. In its least constrained usage the term slang may be employed as a term of open pejoration for virtually any form of speech simply in order to dismiss it [5].

The etymology of the term “slang” is one of the most controversial and confusing issues in lexicology. The difficulty of disclosing the origin of the term is aggravated, as it will be shown below, by its ambiguity and various interpretations of slang by the authors of dictionaries and special studies over the past two hundred years.

It is not known when the word “slang” first appeared in oral speech. In writing, it was first recorded in England in the 18th century. Then it meant “insult”. Approximately in 1850, this term was used more widely, as a designation of “illegal” colloquial vocabulary.

The English linguist S. Johnson draws attention to the fact that “slang” (preterit) is a past tense form of the verb “to sling”. The original meaning and form of which should be considered as to those of the verb of the Anglo-Saxon origin “slingan”.

Trying to give an exact answer to the question, we have turned to the etymological dictionary of R. K. Barnhart, who admits the Scandinavian origin of such a word as “slang”; similar forms exist in Norwegian: “sleng” can be translated as “a particular style of speech and writing”; “slengenavn” (nickname), “slengord” (gibe, jeer, taunt); all the derived from the word “sleng” originate from the Old Norse word “slyngva” in the meaning of “to sling”.

The English philologist Walter Skit, a supporter of the Scandinavian point of view of the origin of the word “slang,” gives the Norwegian form of the verb “slengja” (to sling) as an example, generating a group of words with a similar word-formation meaning: “slengja kieften” – to slang, to abuse (literally “to sling the jaw”); “slengjenamn” – a slang-name, “slengjeord” – insulting word.

Francis Grose, the compiler of “A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue”, singles out a group of linguists who claim that the term “slang” is a distorted French form of the word “langue” (language).

Accordingly, the term “slang” could have been not only of the Anglo-

Saxon or Scandinavian origin, but also of the Gypsy one. The representatives of American linguistics A. Barrere and Ch. G. Leland believe that the modern English word "slang" comes from the Hindu "swangia" and was brought into Europe by Gypsies, who by the term "slang" understood the form of "theatrical performance" or "entertainment program". One more researcher in the field of slang, D. K. Hotten is also inclined to believe that the term "slang" is not an English word, but is derived from the Gypsy language in the meaning of "gipsy" (argo, secret language).

The English lexicographer Joseph Wright writes, «Modern dialect forms (especially northern ones) in English interpret the word "slang" in the meaning of "talk", "chat"» [1].

The term "slang" is of a rather complex etymological structure, therefore, it is rather difficult to establish a genuine, undoubtedly in scientific circles source of its origin. Until now, it has not been known for certain which of the above versions should be considered fundamental, since the opinion of the experts in the field of etymology is completely different. What really cannot be doubted is that the etymology of the term "slang" will have remained a subject of discussion for a long time to reveal its initial structural and semantic meaning.

General American slang is accessible to be understood by most of the citizens of the United States, it is gradually being included in the popular language of the people, which embodies the culture of the population of the country. If one removes slang vocabulary from American English, then the communication of Americans will become more unleavened and boring, devoid of imagery, emotionality, connotative shades of various kinds. Slang helps to convey the idea to the interlocutor more wittily and emotionally, which gives reasons to talk about its multifunctionality in American speech.

In the minds of many British, American English has a fairly stable negative connotation, as an abnormal, deviant language containing vulgar and inappropriate expressions that one will never hear from the British of a similar social status.

Among the English-speaking countries, slang is most common in the United States, the dictionary of American slang is one of the largest and most diverse.

American slang is also extremely rich in synonyms, the most fertile of which draw their beginnings in such topics as alcohol, drugs, money, etc. For example, in the dictionary of slang vocabulary you can find numerous synonyms for mild drunkenness: "beery" "bemused", "bosky", "buff", "corned", "elevated", "foggy" "fresh", "hazy", "kisky" and so on [2].

There are both common and distinctive features between the components of American and British slang. Being a language subsystem, slang has a fairly clear formal structure. It should be noted that in both British and American slang, the same significant portions of speech as in literary versions of the languages are distinguished: nouns, verbs, adjectives, participles and adverbs. In addition, slang includes abbreviations and stable units. The "slang sentences" are also included in the category of the stable

units. Such sentences include those that are not created every time in the process of communication, but are reproduced as ready-made components of the slang language, which allows us to consider them to be stable units [4, p. 79].

In both British and American slang, such sentences take the form of:

1) expressive utterances (addresses, exclamations, interjections, which can change their meaning depending on the context; negatively coloured vocabulary, i.e., curses, insults, taboo words):

a. slang interjections: **Hey!** can be used as a greeting, hail, reproach (AmE); **Whoa, leave it!** (expresses surprise or disgust (BrE)); **Look at you, huh?** (expresses complete confusion (BrE)).

b. swear words: **bloody** (BrE) most often used as a curse, relatively innocent, closer to the American **damn**; **crap** (AmE) (lies, something useless); **Holy crap! / Holy cow!** (AmE); **Bastard/dirty bastard** (AmE/BrE).

c. addresses: **ladies** (BrE), **dork** (AmE) syn. *nerd, geek, bro* (AmE/BrE)

d. exclamations: **Get in!** (BrE) **Blas(t)!** (AmE) literally *shock*; **Cool!** (AmE/BrE).

2) motivations for action: **Go to blazes!** (AmE); **Put a sock in it! – Shut up!** (BrE); **blab (blablabla)** (BrE/AmE) literally *idle talk*.

3) questions: **You guys bitching?** – *How are you?* (AmE); **All right (mate)?** (BrE) – *How are you?*

The formation of American and British slang can be divided into the following types:

1) word creation – the invention of new words that previously did not exist: **nerd** (AmE), **bovvered** (BrE);

2) rethinking existing words, i.e. endowing existing words or phrases with new meanings: **Bingo!** (AmE), **Footprint** (BrE);

3) formation of new words as a result of the transition from one part of speech to another (conversion): **You are so Obama** (AmE), **napster** (AmE);

4) construction of new words from existing parts, for example, the beginning of one and the end of another, or the formation of a single phrase, consisting of several words of one word (telscopy): **bromance** (brother + romance) (AmE) *strong men's friendship*, **yummilicious** (yummy + delicious) *very delicious* (AmE), **mandals** (man + sandals) *men's sandals* (BrE);

5) abbreviations: **presch** is short for *precious*; **bro** is short for *brother*; **ta** – *thanks* (AmE/BrE); **IOU** – *I owe you*; **PHAT** – *Pretty Hot and Tempting* (AmE); **TTFN** – *“ta ta for now” – goodbye!* (BrE);

6) suffixation: **Frenchy** – *a French kiss* (BrE);

7) borrowings: **chick** (AmE), **feck** (BrE) [2].

E. Partridge cites the following differences between American slang and British slang:

1) American slang vocabulary is more dynamic, constantly in the process of semantic leaching and weathering of everyday speech.

2) American slang has a more expressed “communicative brutality”.

3) American slang has a lesser degree of tolerance to denote the phenomena of the surrounding reality.

4) American slang is more frivolous and gay, while British slang is more accurate and has a high integrity of designation [10].

Redkozubova E. distinguishes the following differences between American slang and British slang. Analysing the characteristics of slang of the United States and Great Britain reveals systemic, expressive, and historical-cultural differences in the slangs of the two societies. The systemic differences are as follows: a greater synonymy of American slangism compared with the British, a broader theme of American slang compared to the British, a more developed polysemy of American slangism. The expressive differences are: greater “brutality” of American slangism compared with the “subtle irony” of the British; historical and cultural differences are due, for example, to the historicism of the slang of jazz, baseball, and the press in the USA, as well as the presence of a significant number of borrowed lexical items brought in by non-Anglo-Saxon emigrants, British slang, unlike American, is characterized by a pronounced local/territorial determinism [3, p. 201–202].

Here are some examples of words and word expressions of American and British slang. Firstly, in both languages exist such slang words which in British and American English look and sound the same but mean completely different things: **jumper** – a suicide who jumps from a great height (AmE), sweater (BrE); **trainer** – sports instructor (AmE), shoes for sports (BrE); **pants** – trousers (AmE), underwear (BrE); **bog** – swamp or marshland (AmE), restroom (BrE); **dummy** – idiot (AmE), baby’s pacifier (BrE); **boot** – high shoe (AmE), car trunk (BrE); **chaps** – cool guys in leather jackets and with motorcycles (AmE), male friends (BrE); **bum** – homeless (AmE), posterior (BrE); **flossing** – showing off; showing what you’ve got (AmE), cleaning one’s teeth with dental floss (BrE).

Also, American and British slang have in their vocabulary such slang words and word expressions that mean the same, but definition words are different. For example: tremendous – **awesome** (AmE), **wicked** (BrE); energetic – **peppy** (AmE), **full of beans** (BrE); evidently – **obvi** (AmE), **blatantly** (BrE); small child – **rug rat** (AmE), **bairn** (BrE); attractive woman – **fox** (AmE), **knockout** (BrE); cunning person – **sly dog** (AmE), **dodgy** (BrE); feeling unwell after drinking a large amount of alcohol – **hangover** (AmE), **Irish flu** (BrE); friend – **buddy** (AmE), **mate** (BrE); something outstanding or unique – **doozy** (AmE), **bee’s knees** (BrE) [8].

Conclusions. Slang is an integral part of any language, it develops and evolves with it, and, therefore, will remain an actual problem of lexicology as long as language itself exists.

In the course of this research, the different views on the concept of slang, its main features have been studied; etymology of the term “slang” has been analysed, a large number of studies in this area have been presented.

Studying slang acquires increasing relevance in the context of

expanding international contacts, helps to understand better the national-specific features of the mentality of the English and American youth. Knowledge of slang attaches learners of English to the natural language environment, contributes to developing their communicative competence. The lack of knowledge of slang leads, when implementing an act of intercultural communication, to all sorts of curiosities and speech errors, communicative “failures”, to prevent which is of special and particular attention.

Slang is used at various levels and in different spheres of life. Its nature can be numerous: innocent, cultured, vigorously racy, cheaply vulgar, healthily or disgustingly low; thoroughly – in the linguistic sense – debased; picturesque, claptrappingly repetitive, and so forth: and, for all the levels and all the kinds, the most serviceable feature of slang is the degree of dignity, or perhaps rather the degree of familiarity, casualness, impudence. Socially, slang does not belong to any particular class of words, for it is an accumulation of terms that, coming from everywhere, most people know and understand, and, in the main, “it is composed of colloquialisms everywhere current...not refined enough to be admitted into polite speech” [10, p. 10].

Many slang words, indeed, are drawn from pleasurable activities (games, sports, entertainments), from joys of life, from the gay abandon: for this reason, it has been wittily called “language on a picnic” [10, p. 17].

It is extremely difficult to define the differences between English slang and American slang, for in all their essentials they are at one. There are far more slang terms in use in the United States than in England, there are comparatively few more terms in use in New York than in London. American slang is more volatile than English ones and it tends, also, to have more synonyms, but a greater number of those synonyms are “butterflies” of the day: English synonyms are used more for variety than from weariness or a desire to startle. American slang is even more brutal than English. English slang, though slower to arise, is concerned with slightly more enduring things and therefore less quickly becomes superannuated. And yet one more thing: English slang is, in the aggregate, wittier, American one is more facetious, and facetiousness rarely survives. But the differences are comparatively small, and American slang, like general American idioms, may differ greatly in vocabulary from the English ones while it yet maintains “the English tradition of brevity, pithiness, and vivid imagery” [10, p. 299–300].

Perspectives of further investigations. So, slang can be assessed differently: it can be considered as a language-clogging layer of language, or, conversely, it can be viewed as an emphatic and expressive means in enriching the vocabulary of the language. This difference in approaches is easily explained by the heterogeneity of slang, which, along with its brightness, figurative expressions, includes vulgar and coarse words. Slang is a most interesting psycholinguistic and linguocultural phenomenon, being not only a reflection of the life of an individual linguistic person, but also of the group (society) that creates it. Therewith, we can say that, in most cases, American slang, unlike British, with a vulgar stylistic colouring, is

characterised by constant searching for novelty, volatility and carelessness due to the desire to follow the influence of fashion.

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УДК 811.161.2'06'373.7

КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНИЙ КЛАСТЕР НАРОД В СЕМАНТИЦІ ФРАЗЕОЛОГІЗОВАНИХ ОДИНИЦЬ ЯК ЧИННИК НАПОВНЕННЯ КОНЦЕПТУ ДЕРЖАВА (на матеріалі роману Ліни Костенко «Записки українського самашедшого»)

Стаття продовжує цикл публікацій авторів про шляхи наповнення концепту держава засобами фразеології. На матеріалі роману Ліни Костенко «Записки українського самашедшого» описано особливості світосприйняття головного героя, закодзовані в семантиці фразеологізованих одиниць. Подано умовну класифікацію цих образних одиниць у контексті змалювання концептуального кластеру народ.

Ключові слова: фразеологія, фразеологізована одиниця, концепт, концептуальний кластер, світосприйняття, мовленнєва діяльність.