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Research Article

THE LEXICAL-SEMANTIC METHOD OF FORMING SLANG UNITS

Musayev Abduvali

Associate Professor at the Methodology of Teaching Uzbek Language Department at JSPU, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article explores the lexical-semantic method of forming slang units, highlighting its relevance and contribution to linguistic studies. Slang, as a dynamic and open linguistic system, is enriched through constant interaction with external social and cultural factors. The focus of this research is on the mechanisms of metonymy and metaphor, which serve as primary tools in slang formation. Metonymy facilitates meaning transfer based on contextual associations, while metaphor introduces figurative interpretations grounded in similarity or analogy. Examples from the Uzbek language illustrate how these mechanisms contribute to the creation of new slang units. The study also incorporates cross-linguistic comparisons, particularly with Russian and English, to identify universal and language-specific tendencies in slang development. The findings underscore the role of slang as a reflection of cultural and social identity, as well as its influence on the evolution of language.

KEYWORDS

Slang formation, lexical-semantic method, metonymy, metaphor, uzbek language, linguistic creativity, sociolinguistics.

INTRODUCTION

The vocabulary of a language is an open system, qualitatively unlimited and quantitatively and functionally variable, consisting of lexemes. The emergence of new units in a language is inevitably accompanied by cultural and material production, religious worldviews, fashion, state influences, and even the communication within social groups. The language system is constantly in motion, enriched with new linguistic units. In response to the continuous changes in external factors and their effects, the

meanings and forms of linguistic units also evolve. As a result, this leads to the movement and development of linguistic materials. Similarly, our research object, the slang system, emerges in the language under the influence of external factors.

Slang, as an independent linguistic phenomenon, represents a communicative-pragmatic aspect, expressing people's metaphorical perceptions of the world. The emergence of slang is a creative process connected to simplifying speech, expressing thoughts quickly and concisely, and replacing units with suitable alternatives based on the context and process. This phenomenon, tied to the culture of speech, the art of words, and rhetorical skill, has intrigued scholars and philosophers since ancient times. In particular, philosophers such as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian paid special attention to this issue. Since those times, the critical requirements for speech—accuracy, precision, logical consistency, unambiguity, variety, clarity, harmony, imagery, conciseness, brevity, and authenticity—have retained their value to this day.

For example, Aristotle, in his work *Rhetoric*, noted: "Among the four types of metaphors, those based on analogy deserve special attention." According to Aristotle, the language of poetry demands a unique use of words so that the chosen words ensure both clarity and distinction from everyday speech. While commonly used words provide clarity to poetic language, "glosses, metaphors, and embellishments… make it noble and grand" and differentiate it from everyday language. Furthermore, "a metaphor possesses a high degree of precision, pleasantness, and harmonious charm," and its appropriate and knowledgeable use decorates speech. In Aristotle's view, "unusual words," including metaphors, are defining features of poetic language.

At this point, we would like to emphasize that unusual words, i.e., metaphors derived from condensed comparisons, produce aesthetic effects. Such unusual words also align with the characteristics of slang units.

In Russian linguistics, scholars such as M.A. Grachev, V.S. Elistratov, L.P. Krysin, and V.V. Khimik have expressed various views on the formation of slang, considering it a complex system of word formation that incorporates multiple types of word creation.

G. Eman emphasizes that youth slang, with its distinctive features that set it apart from other linguistic units, deserves to be a separate object of study. He notes that colloquial speech carries a social load and highlights the methods of formation for youth slang: semantic variation, narrowing and broadening of meaning, semantic paradox, lexical mutation, neologism, phonological Germanization, verbalization, economy, wordplay, and superlativization.

Similarly, N.N. Grankova includes phenomena such as neologization, broadening and transformation of meaning, borrowing, verbalization of nouns, superlativization, phonetic Germanization, simplification, wordplay, and narrowing of meaning among the methods of youth slang formation. She also provides a frequency-based comparison of these word formation phenomena.Y.M.Kazachkova esa yoshlar slengini shakllantiruvchi quyidagi usullarni sanab o'tgan : desemantizatsiya; o'zlashmalar; mavjud model va formantlar asosida so'zyasash.

Additionally, A.M. Kolesnichenko identified two models of slang formation: the lexical-semantic model and the word-formation model. He outlines four types within the lexical-semantic model:

1.   Pejoration (transition of a term from a generic noun to a proper noun);

2.   Transition of a term from one proper noun to another;

3.   Transition of a term from a proper noun to a generic noun;

4.   Transition of a term from one generic noun to another.

The word-formation model includes methods such as affixation, root reduction, conversion, suffixless formation, addition, and supplementation.

T.E. Zakharchenko, after studying the slang system in Russian and English lexicons, lists the following word-formation methods: sound imitation, metaphor, word compounding, affixation, abbreviation, conversion, reduction, and borrowing.

Ye.V. Lyubiskaya, in her study of youth slang, emphasizes that slang formation primarily occurs through wordplay and borrowing methods.

Russian linguist A.F. Zhuravlev classifies the system of nomination methods in the Russian language as follows: Creating an unmotivated arbitrary sign (word); Using an existing nominative unit in a new semantic function; Lexical-semantic transformation of a word; Broadening and narrowing of meaning; Metaphor; Synecdoche; Semantic compression; Metonymy; Creating a formally new nominative unit (word formation); Word formation based on phonetic combinations; Compositional word formation; Lexicalization of word combinations; Abbreviation; Phrase formation; Borrowing; Calquing, among others.

The researcher also provides a detailed analysis of the diverse specific manifestations of these methods.

Our observations show that the classification of slang formation methods is also reflected in Y.E. Matyushenko's research. He emphasizes that slang phenomena are typically formed based on figurative meanings and categorizes them as follows: lexical-semantic, morphological, morpho-syntactic, lexico-syntactic, and borrowing. Matyushenko highlights that the most frequent methods of slang formation are affixation, metaphorization, and borrowing from foreign languages.

Thus, slang is an open system, continuously interacting with external and environmental factors. As a result of this interaction, new lexical units emerge. All these new lexical units arise through one of the slang formation methods, and their use and acceptance by members of a linguistic community grant them the status of slang vocabulary. In texts and speech, slang serves as a lexical tool that influences the reader, shapes their worldview and behavior, and affects their perception and evaluation of the surrounding environment (at lexical and morpho-syntactic language levels). From this perspective, two opposing processes occur within the slang system: it either fades into complete obsolescence or transitions to a higher linguistic level, becoming part of the literary norm.

Based on these studies and the characteristics of the Uzbek language, it becomes possible to identify the methods and tools for the formation of slang units in Uzbek.

Lexical-Semantic Method:

d)   Slang Units Based on Metonymy

The existence of such slang units in the Uzbek language is confirmed by the following examples:

a) The name of a plant is transferred to a product made from its fruit or another part of the plant:

- (The juice of grapes – grape juice as the primary meaning; vodka as the derived meaning):

"The juice of grapes cures many things. It will heal your illness too, drink it, you wretch!"* (MS. 1,170).

- (Coffee – a tropical plant from whose seeds a special drink is prepared, coffee tree as the primary meaning; powdered or granulated drink as the derived meaning):

"Until then, I'll prepare the coffee,"* she thought to herself (MS. 1, 148).

b) The name of one of two (or several) objects that are typically associated in time and space is transferred to the other:

- "Brighten up with Fanta!" (Zo'r TV).

- "Stay in tune with Pepsi!" (Zo'r TV).

- "Adrenaline Classic: The new taste!" (Sevimli).

c) The name of one object is transferred to another object or phenomenon associated with it:

- "In Samarkand, a collision between a Jiguli and a Spark resulted in the death of one of the drivers" (Daryo.uz official channel, July 19, 2021).

- "A 27-year-old citizen in Namangan was charged with stealing a Karcher apparatus from a car wash" (Daryo.uz official channel, July 19, 2021).

d) The name of a quality is transferred to an object possessing that quality:

- "It won't be done without forty 'blues'," he said (MS. 1,169).

- "Four 'bald' ones will suffice," he said (from spoken language).

Such transfers can lead to the creation of new words through the lexical-semantic method.

e) The name of a place can be used in speech to mean an "institution":

- "That place doesn't seem quite suitable. How about we book 'Pekin'?" (Sh. 4, 198).

- "They're guests. The table was ordered at 'Orchidea.' The restaurant owner looked at him as if to say, 'Don't you even know that?'" (Sh. 4, 200).

In the examples, Pekin and Orchidea are names of restaurants in Moscow as mentioned in the text.

- "'You already know what kind of 'resort' it is,' Halimjon said, then explained in response to Asadbek's look, which seemed to say, 'How should I know? Have I been imprisoned a few times?': 'They abruptly stopped the investigation and transferred him to a mental hospital.'" (Sh. 4,256).

The term resort [German kurort < kur – treatment + ort – place] typically refers to a place with natural therapeutic features (e.g., springs, muds) for rest and treatment or a facility in such a location (O'TIL, 2, 505). In the example, however, in the slang of criminals, it is used to mean "prison."

Thus, metonymy is present here as well, but it is not linguistic metonymy; rather, it is speech metonymy. Metonymy is the use of one expression for another based on their mutual connection or association, which gives rise to slang units. Conversational slang arises in spoken language based on the relationships between events, phenomena, and objects.

2. Slang Units Formed Based on Metaphor

In the Uzbek language, the most common type of slang units, in terms of their formation method, is those created through metaphor. A metaphor is the use of a lexeme, based on a similarity in the essence of objects or phenomena, to designate other objects and phenomena beyond its typical meaning.

O.V. Fomenko emphasizes that one of the primary means of slang formation is metaphor. He notes that slang metaphors differ from literary and poetic metaphors due to their distinctiveness and emergence within cognitive processes. Slang units, as metaphors, establish evaluative-expressive relationships with objects and are distinguished by their national-cultural functions.

M.M. Makovsky repeatedly highlights: "Language is a unique graveyard of metaphors: a word that once existed as a metaphor eventually loses its metaphorical quality over time and is often reshaped into a new form that no longer resembles its original metaphorical nature."

According to the scholar Sh. Maxmaraimova, "Metaphorical terms, due to their attributive nature, are primarily formed based on comparisons with household items and objects related to nature. For example, in the Uzbek language, the word 'kuchukcha' (@) represents a user's email address, and this term is

also used as 'sobachka' in Russian. Due to its social integration within the linguistic community, this word should be regarded not as a technical term but as a designation. This is because the word 'sobachka' originates from the native layer of the Russian language through the influence of metaphorical transfer. The reason for considering this word as a designation is that the word 'sobachka' serves to denote one specific object from another specific object through metaphor. Taking into account that this word has been transferred to other languages through calquing, the term 'kuchukcha' (sobachka) in its essence proves that the Russian designation has also become a designation in the Uzbek language."

Russian linguist Aminova points out that metaphors hold a primary place in the lexical-semantic enrichment of the slang system (constituting 28% in English and 19.2% in French). Metaphorization revitalizes the slang system by introducing new semantic nuances into the structure of existing words.

In conversational speech, and generally in other functional styles of language, slang units formed based on metaphors are frequently used. The models of slang formation through metaphors are as follows

e) Human Body Parts → Humans:

"Burun" (nose – primary lexical meaning: a person's nose; derived meaning: high-ranking individuals):

"If they had served the 'nose men,' they wouldn't have lived in such disgrace." (MS. 1,190).

"Ofatijon" (disaster – primary lexical meaning: someone bothersome; tormenting lover; derived meaning: a stunningly beautiful woman who captivates and overwhelms):

"Honestly, it's hard to believe someone as stunning as you hasn't been to a restaurant." (MS. 1,155).

"Popuk" (tassel – primary lexical meaning: a bundle of threads, feathers, or strings used as decoration; derived meaning: to bring someone down, deflate their arrogance):

"I wanted to lower his 'tassel' a bit." (MS. 1,170).

"Go'dak" (infant – primary lexical meaning: a nursing child, usually under one year old; derived meaning: inexperienced, immature person):

"Can you imagine these 'infants' trampling on his pride?!" (MS. 1,173).

b) Animals → Humans:

"Ko'rsichqon" (mole – derived meaning: a person who works with documents).

"Tulki" (fox – derived meaning: a cunning person).

"Ilon" (snake – derived meaning: someone who speaks maliciously).

R. Abdullaeva, in her study of the use of the zoonym "tulki" (fox) to refer to human characteristics, highlights the following conclusions based on dictionary definitions:

1.	In both Uzbek and Russian, the zoonym "tulki" is used metaphorically to denote cunning, deceit, and falsehood, and it refers to individuals with such traits.

2.	In both languages, the zoonym "tulki" can be used in speech independently to express its metaphorical meaning. From this perspective, this metaphorical meaning is utilized in the use of slang units.

c) «Food» → Humans:

•	"Kadi" (pumpkin – refers to a person of Tajik ethnicity).

•	"Gilos" (cherry – refers to a person of Iranian ethnicity).

•	"Bodring" (cucumber – refers to someone with a long, narrow head).

•	"Chalpak" (flatbread – refers to a person living in a village).

•	"Ayron" (a yogurt-based drink – refers to a lethargic or passive person).

Z. Jumayev notes:

"The diverse linguistic associations connected to culinary practices are rooted in the working process of culinary professionals and the specific characteristics of the dishes they prepare, forming certain images. Many idiomatic expressions are shaped by this imagery. For instance, the idiom 'zuvalasi pishiq' (well-kneaded dough) originates from the metaphorical representation of dough kneading. The more thoroughly the dough is kneaded and processed, the higher its quality, and the resulting portions (zuvalalar) are firmer. This phenomenon, when applied to people, generates the metaphorical meaning of 'physically strong and robust, unusually fit for their age' [O'TIL.II.162]."

d) «Specific Object» → Humans:

•	"Kunda" (beam – refers to a student staring blankly without understanding).

•	"Devor" (wall – refers to a shameless person).

Thus, these examples from conversational speech are slang units formed through metaphorical means, confirming that slang in the Uzbek language is often created based on metaphors.

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