

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNET SLANG IN MODERN ENGLISH

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Анотація

У роботі проведено огляд сучасних наукових досліджень щодо особливостей мовних змін у середовищі цифрового спілкування. Проаналізовано основні механізми творення нових слів та скорочень, характерних для онлайн-комунікації. Досліджено відмінності у розумінні та застосуванні нової лексики між представниками різних поколінь. Виявлено, що молодші користувачі значно краще орієнтуються у нових мовних формах, тоді як старші учасники комунікації часто стикаються з труднощами у їх розумінні. Встановлено, що потреба у швидкому обміні повідомленнями та технічні обмеження платформ є основними рушіями мовних інновацій.

Ключові слова: інтернет-сленг, цифрова комунікація, словотворення, неологізми, соціальні мережі, міжпоколінна комунікація, мовні зміни, англійська мова.

Abstract

The paper provides an overview of contemporary research on the peculiarities of language change in digital communication environments. The main mechanisms of new word and abbreviation formation characteristic of online communication are analyzed. Differences in the comprehension and use of new vocabulary among representatives of different generations are examined. It is revealed that younger users demonstrate significantly better proficiency in new linguistic forms, while older communication participants often face difficulties in understanding them. It is established that the need for rapid message exchange and technical limitations of platforms are the main drivers of linguistic innovation.

Keywords: internet slang, digital communication, word formation, neologisms, social media, intergenerational communication, language change, English language.

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies and social media platforms has fundamentally transformed English language communication. Internet slang, characterized by abbreviations, acronyms, and non-standard spellings, has emerged as a distinct linguistic phenomenon reflecting the creative nature of language in digital spaces. The rise of platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook has accelerated the creation of new linguistic forms, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z. This study examines the mechanisms of internet slang evolution, its impact on intergenerational communication, and the broader implications for the English language, drawing upon recent sociolinguistic research.

Research Results

The analysis of contemporary research reveals several key findings regarding the evolution of internet slang. Studies demonstrate that Generation Z exhibits significantly higher proficiency in recognizing and utilizing internet slang compared to previous generations. A quantitative study involving 100 respondents found a positive correlation coefficient of 0.90 between Millennials and Generation Z regarding modern-day net slang comprehension. However, Generation Z demonstrated superior understanding of metathesis forms of words used to conceal syntactical features during discourse.

The study employed the Krishnamurthy Model of Neologism, which categorizes internet slang into three main types: word formation, borrowing, and lexical deviation. The findings indicated that Generation Z achieved an average intelligibility score of 11.48, interpreted as high intelligibility, while Millennials scored 6.74, indicating average intelligibility [1]. This generational divide is further evidenced by research showing that 78% of Millennial and Generation Z participants frequently use contemporary slang terminology, compared to only 34% of Baby Boomers and Generation X who are familiar with such vocabulary [2].

The mechanisms of word formation in internet slang have been extensively documented across multiple studies. Research analyzing the linguistic processes underlying Generation Z slang identified eight distinct types of word formation: fanciful formation, compounding, blending, clipping, acronyms, abbreviations,

semantic shift, and borrowing. The study surveyed 52 English as a Foreign Language students and found that the majority were familiar with most contemporary slang terms found on social media platforms. The research emphasized that internet writing is not a sign of language decay but rather a sign of language evolution and innovation [3, 4].

Another study analyzed 30 neologisms collected from TikTok between 2020 and 2023. The findings indicated that compounding was the predominant word formation process, followed by abbreviation, blending, and multiple processes. The etymological analysis revealed significant influences from Old English, Middle English, Modern English, Latin, Old French, and Spanish, underscoring the complex linguistic heritage of contemporary internet slang [5].

The platform-specific nature of linguistic innovation has emerged as a significant finding. Research examining female Generation Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter employed content analysis using a framework of slang categories. The study identified eight out of ten slang types proposed in the framework, with shortening emerging as the most frequently used type, appearing 416 times across analyzed posts, followed by compounding with 181 instances [6].

A systematic review confirms that linguistic simplification is primarily motivated by the need for speed and character limitations inherent in digital communication platforms. The analysis of 250 text samples from five digital platforms revealed that social networks serve as an effective mechanism for linguistic innovation, creating novel communication models.

The standardization and cross-linguistic spread of internet slang has also been documented. A comprehensive analysis of language across 12 different social media platforms demonstrates that social media facilitates linguistic experimentation and identity expression. The research indicates that younger generations increasingly use abbreviated forms in academic and professional settings, suggesting that these changes may contribute to long-term shifts in linguistic norms [7, 8].

Research involving interviews with twenty participants and thematic analysis of primary linguistic phenomena revealed that while younger generations quickly adopt new terminology, older generations experience difficulty navigating this linguistic environment. The evolution of emojis has added another dimension to digital communication, with semantic shifts varying significantly across generations. The research found that 62% of older participants reported difficulties understanding new acronyms, contributing to miscommunication in intergenerational digital interactions [2].

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that internet slang represents a significant evolution in the English language, driven by the communicative demands of digital platforms and creative linguistic practices of younger generations. The findings reveal that social media actively shapes language in real-time. The generational divide in slang comprehension highlights the need for enhanced digital literacy. The predominance of shortening and compounding reflects efficiency-driven communication norms, while platform-specific innovation underscores technological influence on language change. Future research should monitor internet slang evolution and its impact on language education.

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