

## STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF GERMAN YOUTH SLANG

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**Abstract:** The article deals with lexical processes of slang composition replenishment and 3 main directions: borrowings, semantic modifications of words, word-formation processes and lexico-semantic analysis of the actual material.

**Keywords:** Language of youth, lexical formation, borrowings, semantic modifications of words, word-formation processes, lexico-semantic analysis.

The language of German youth is in constant development, with the passage of time it is updated and replenished. The big push in the process of replenishment of modern German youth slang with new units took place at the end of the 20th - beginning of the 21st century. It is connected with the socio-historical background of German language development.

German linguist Eva Neuland proposes to distinguish several periods in the formation of German youth slang. According to her periodisation, the first period of youth language formation was the post-war years in Germany, when the social changes that were taking place led to a protest against the social conventions of the adult world among young people. The youth of this time were called "die Halbstarken". They were influenced by American entertainment music, rock and jazz music. However, as Eva Neuland notes, there is no comprehensive linguistic evidence of the existence of the "Halbstarken" direction [Neuland, 2008, p. 112]. At the same time, some examples of language units of this group of young people are known, for example, such positive evaluative expressions as *pfundig*, *wichtig* or swear words like *trübe Tasse*, *Gewitterziege*, *zweibeiniger Ascheneimer*.

The second period of youth language formation in Germany took place in the 1960s of the 20th century. According to Eva Neuland, the youth cultural background was changing decisively, particularly under the influence of the mass media and the economy, which by creating a new consumer class promoted the commercialisation of adolescents and young people [Neuland, 2008, p. 116]. In the early 60s of the 20th century, the first dictionaries of teenagers' language were published, which consisted of such topics as positive and negative evaluation, characterisation of girls' and boys' appearance, clothing and free time, parents and educators.

The next period is marked by the 70s of the 20th century, which are associated with the development of the student movement and extra-parliamentary opposition against social rules and protest against the authoritarian structures that have taken over the power [Neuland, 2008, p. 121].

The fourth period of youth language formation in Germany took place in the 80s of the 20th century. It is associated with the influence of the political "Sponti movement", whose members were left-wing radicals. The so-called Sponti language (*die Sponti-Sprache*) was characterised by a greater degree of emotionality and simplified speech, which did not use strict scientific terminology [Ibid., p. 127]. The last period, according to Eva Neuland, falls on the modern stage of slang expansion in the late 20th and early 21st century, influenced by various music and dance styles, new ways of free pastime, such as skateboarding and snowboarding [Ibid., p. 127].

The language of young people, unlike, for example, professional languages (doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc.) or the languages of social strata (criminal world, homeless people, etc.) changes rapidly. This is explained by the fact that children grow up quickly, first coming into the "world of youth" and acquiring the status of young people, and then leaving it for adulthood. This process is accompanied by a constant renewal of youth slang. The language of youth absorbs words from

different languages (from English - baggy (extreme weite Hose), chillen (sich ausruhen); French - das Filet (hübsches Mädchen)) and dialects - urst (sehr).

The main source of formation of the youth slang lexicon, however, is the literary language. The ways of formation of slangisms are different: 1) changing the meaning of a literary language word; 2) using word-forming means; 3) borrowing from foreign languages; 4) creating an absolute neologism; 5) using two or more of the above-mentioned ways simultaneously.

According to E.M. Beregovskaya, the sources and means of formation of slangisms do not differ much from the word-forming methods of the national language. The difference between the formation of slang units and word formation in the language as a whole is only in proportions and combinations [Beregovskaya, 1996, p. 33].

When considering lexical processes of slang composition replenishment, we can distinguish 3 main directions: borrowings, semantic modifications of words, word-formation processes.

Borrowings in their turn can be intralingual (from other social jargons and argot, from professional lexicon) or interlingual (from other languages). Interlingual borrowings are most often represented by borrowings from English (anglicisms/americanisms); they can be grammatically unlearned or learnt. Semantic changes can include metaphorical reinterpretation of words of literary and other forms of language. It is worth noting that there can be metaphorisation not only of nouns, but also of verbs and adjective names.

The group of word-formation changes includes affixation, contraction and abbreviation. Affixation is a frequent way of forming units of youth slang, as it helps to form whole series of homonymic words. In youth slang there are both prefixal models of forming new words and suffixal models.

Abbreviations among slangisms are quite rare. Abbreviation techniques are used in youth slang in the formation of lexemes related to the nomination of specific phenomena of reality, which, as a rule, have more than two words, which serves to save speech effort.

If we consider these processes of replenishment of youth slang in more detail, we can identify 15 word-formation methods: foreign language borrowings, affixation, metaphorisation, borrowing of blatty argotisms, development of polysemy, antonomasia (using a proper name as a noun), synonymic and antonymic derivation, apokopa (root truncation), root addition, telescoping, abbreviation, contraction, pun substitution and phonetic techniques. These methods have different degrees of productivity, but all of them occupy an important place in the system of word formation. In each language, one or another word-forming method prevails.

To determine the most frequent ways of formation of lexical units of German youth slang from the dictionaries of youth language: Endgeil. Das voll korrekte Lexikon der Jugendsprache, Hermann Ehmann (2008); Wörterbuch der Jugendsprache, Pons (2008); Wörterbuch der Jugendsprache: das Original, Pons (2013); Wörterbuch der Jugendsprache: der Sammelband: das Beste aus 15 Jahren, Pons (2016); Dictionary of Youth Slang, eds. N.L. Shamne, L.N. Rebrina (2017) - we selected and described 561 lexemes. These slangisms were also used by us for lexico-semantic analysis of German youth slang. German youth slang represents a very interesting stratum of the language. It functions among urban and rural youth in closed reference groups. The lexical composition of youth slang forms a set of lexical-semantic and thematic fields, by means of which the commonality of lexical meaning and belonging to a certain thematic group are united. In youth slang different strata are distinguished depending on the sphere of its distribution (school, university, profession, youth associations, music, sport, crime, etc.).

Lexical and semantic analysis of the actual material allowed us to identify 24 thematic groups of youth slangisms: study, work, finance, free time, means of transport, relations between the sexes, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, human characteristics (character traits, mental abilities, appearance, manner of speaking, manner of behaviour), law, expression of emotions (positive emotions, negative emotions), body parts, relations between people, actions, life/death, everyday objects, designation of



parents/children The basis for this classification was the commonality of the central, nuclear component in the semantic structure of the lexical unit of youth slang. For the convenience of description and analysis, the thematic groups identified by us were united into 6 larger thematic blocks: spheres of activity and hobbies, bad habits and offences, characteristic of a person, expression of emotions and evaluation, human relationships and human activity. Each of the thematic blocks thus includes 3-6 thematic groups.

1. The thematic cluster "Emotional expression and evaluation". The most significant for German youth are the themes of the groups included in the thematic block "Expression of emotions and evaluation". This block includes 140 lexical units of youth slang-German, which is 25% of the total number of slangisms we selected. The lexemes are distributed into three thematic groups as follows: "Positive emotions" - 3.5%, "Negative emotions" - 9%, "Evaluative concepts" - 12.5%. One of the main functions of youth slang is expressive, i.e. with the help of slangisms young people try to express everything that they experience, every reaction to the surrounding phenomenon of reality. That is why the language of young people has so many lexemes describing feelings, emotions and attitudes to objects and phenomena of the surrounding reality.
2. The thematic block "Characteristics of a person". 109 slangisms (20% of the total number of analysed slangisms) are part of the thematic block "Characteristics of a person", which combines 5 thematic groups: "Appearance" (5%), "Character traits" (4%), "Mental abilities" (4%), "Manner of speaking" (3.5%), "Manner of behaviour" (3.5%). These thematic groups are important for young people because young people encounter many people every day about whom they form their own opinions and share them with others using the lexemes of the above groups.
3. The Thematic Block "Human Life Activity". 16% of the lexical units of youth slang in German entered the thematic block "Human Life Activity", which combines the following thematic groups: "Actions" (5%), "Means of transport" (3.5%), "Body parts" (3%), "Finances" (2%), "Life/death" (1.5%), "Household items" (1%). The large number of slangisms in this block is explained by the fact that its thematic groups include lexemes describing everyday human life, those objects and phenomena without which human existence in society is impossible.
4. The thematic block "Human Relations". Since life is impossible outside society, young people are constantly in contact with other people and need language tools that facilitate communication and expression of their own opinions. In this connection, a large number of lexical units appear in such thematic groups as "Relations between people" (3.5%), "Parents/children designation" (1.5%). We combined these groups into the block "Human relations". It contains 77 slangisms (14%).
5. Thematic block "Harmful habits and offences". In young years people are eager to try everything, and especially that which is considered illegal or harmful to health. These are bad habits and addictions such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Due to their taboo character, lexemes describing these actions need to be more hidden, isolated from the outside world. Therefore, a large number of synonyms are allocated in the corresponding thematic groups.
6. Thematic block "Spheres of activity and hobbies". This block includes 11% of lexical units of German youth slang, which are distributed in 3 thematic groups as follows: "Study" and "Work" - 3% each, "Free time" - 5% (from the total number of lexical units of youth slang selected by us). If we consider thematic groups outside the thematic blocks, we can see that the most filled with lexical units is the thematic group "Evaluative notions" (13.5%), which is explained by the desire of young people to give their assessment to everything, thus showing their formed life position. The groups "Negative emotions" (9%) and "Relations between the sexes" (9%) are the next most filled with slangisms. Most likely, this fact is connected with the fact that both negative emotions and relations with the other sex are multifaceted phenomena with many shades, which young people try to reflect more accurately in lexical units.

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