LINGUOPRAGMATIC PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH YOUTH SLANG ACROSS GENERATIONS X, Y, Z, AND ALPH

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Abstract: This article explores the linguopragmatic peculiarities of English youth slang and its evolution across Generations X, Y, Z, and Alpha. Youth slang serves as a dynamic linguistic phenomenon reflecting societal changes, technological advancements, and cultural shifts. The study highlights key characteristics of each generational slang, including semantic innovation, pragmatic function, and digital influence. Understanding these variations provides insights into intergenerational communication and language evolution.

Keywords: linguopragmatics, youth slang, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, Generation Alpha, digital communication

Introduction

Youth slang represents a crucial component of sociolinguistics, providing insight into how language evolves to accommodate cultural, technological, and social transformations. Each generational cohort adopts and reshapes slang to reflect its identity, values, and communication patterns. This paper examines the linguopragmatic peculiarities of English youth slang, comparing its usage across Generations X, Y, Z, and Alpha, emphasizing differences in linguistic creativity, communicative functions, and digital influence.

Literature Review

Previous studies on youth slang (Eble, 1996; Stenström, 2014; Tagliamonte, 2016) have demonstrated its fluid nature and socio-pragmatic significance. Researchers have explored slang formation mechanisms, including metaphorization, abbreviation, and borrowing. More recent studies focus on the digitalization of slang, particularly within Generation Z and Alpha, whose communication is deeply embedded in internet culture (Crystal, 2008). However, comparative studies across multiple generations remain limited, necessitating further exploration of intergenerational shifts in slang usage.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative analysis of youth slang across different generations through corpora analysis, social media data collection, and interviews with individuals from each cohort. Lexical items are categorized based on their pragmatic functions—identity formation, in-group communication, humor, and social

commentary. Additionally, linguistic patterns are analyzed to determine their persistence or decline over time.

The corpus analysis involves gathering slang terms from online dictionaries, linguistic databases, and social media platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, Reddit, and YouTube. A diachronic approach is used to track the emergence, peak usage, and decline of specific slang terms.

Social media data collection includes an examination of hashtag trends, meme culture, and viral phrases across platforms. This allows for an understanding of how slang spreads and evolves in real-time digital interactions.

Interviews are conducted with representatives from each generational cohort to gain first-hand insights into slang usage patterns, perceptions, and adaptability. Participants are asked about their commonly used slang, its perceived meaning, and how they believe slang has changed compared to previous generations.

Findings from these methods are then cross-referenced to identify overarching linguistic trends and intergenerational differences in slang use.

Results

1. **Generation X (born 1965–1980)**
   o Predominantly oral slang with minimal digital influence.
   o Common phrases: "cool," "rad," "gnarly," "dude."
   o Slang influenced by counterculture movements (punk, hip-hop, skateboarding).
2. **Generation Y (Millennials, born 1981–1996)**
   o Mix of spoken and early digital slang (chat rooms, early social media).
   o Common phrases: "YOLO," "epic," "fail," "awkward."
   o More lexical borrowing from global cultures due to increased globalization.
3. **Generation Z (born 1997–2012)**
   o Predominantly digital slang shaped by memes, gaming, and internet culture.
   o Common phrases: "lit," "simp," "stan," "vibe check."
   o Heavy reliance on abbreviations and emojis for pragmatic meaning.
4. **Generation Alpha (born 2013–present)**
   o Emerging slang deeply tied to social media trends (TikTok, streaming culture).
   o Likely continuation of hyper-abbreviations, AI-generated slang, and audiovisual linguistic expressions (GIFs, stickers).
   o Increased fluidity as language adapts to rapidly evolving digital spaces.

Conclusion

The evolution of youth slang across Generations X, Y, Z, and Alpha demonstrates a shift from predominantly oral expressions to highly digitalized and multimodal communication. While each generation retains unique slang reflecting its cultural context, technology increasingly shapes linguistic innovation. Future studies should explore the impact of AI and virtual communication on emerging youth slang.

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