

Секція 3. Романські, германські та інші мови

**SEMANTIC CHANGES RELATED TO THE ASSIMILATION OF
SLENGISMS AND JARGONISMS IN
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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In the process of borrowing and assimilating in the literary language, slangisms and jargonisms, as a rule, sustain meaningful changes. Researchers consider historical-social and communicative-pragmatic conditions as the main factors influencing changes in value. In the study of changes in meaning, the problem of differentiation of new lexemes and new lexical-semantic variants appear.

The process of assimilating slang and jargon units in the literary norm in many cases is accompanied by semantic shifts, the consequences of which are expansion, narrowing of meaning and its transfer. The change in meaning, the "semantic movement" borrowed from the literary language of slangisms or

jargonisms, testifies to their semantic development in the literary language, which often copies the semantic development of these words in non-literary varieties of speech. Therefore, it is not always possible to determine if it was a new (more often rethought) meaning of the word borrowed from spoken varieties of speech or it appeared as a result of the identical semantic development of the word in the linguistic "standard". The semantic development of slangism or jargonisms in the literary language can be, to a certain extent, called its semantic activity.

Analyzing the transfer processes that accompany the assimilation of slang units and social dialects in the language "standard", one should first of all point out the leading role of the metaphor as a mechanism for the creation of figurative values. Figurative use of words (especially metaphorical), researchers consider one of the means of development of polysemy and one of the most important means of enriching the vocabulary in general.

For example, the verb *to zone out* (in the slang "to be under the influence of drugs") in the literary language gained a figurative meaning "to lose conscience, to get tired" and an adjective *zoned-out* "exhausted" was formed from it.

Slengism *gridlock*, which was created to denote the complete stop of the traffic, is widely used in the literary language in the figurative meaning of "hopeless situation, the destruction of the system, organization" [5, p. 1060]: *He also blamed the United States for a lagging economy for an uncooperative and spendthrift Congress responsible for Washington's gridlock* (The New York Times, February 19, 2005).

Recently, this word also means "stopping or breaking down of the computer system": *After recent crashes knocked out America Online there were widespread fears that ever-spiraling Internet use would create network gridlock in the United States* (The New York Times, May, 27, 1999).

Semantic changes in many cases also predetermine certain word-formation processes, leading to the emergence of new units, that is, they contribute to the formation of lexical innovations. Consequently, some slangisms and jargonisms in the process of assimilation in the literary language combine the semantic development with the elements of the word-formation and phraseological paradigm.

The former slogan *ambulance-chaser*, denoting a lawyer specializing in accidents in slang, was rethought in literary language and used to refer to a person trying to profit from others' misfortunes [4, p. 12], and his substantivized derivative *ambulance-chasing* denotes the desire for quick gain: *A source close to the company dismissed the claims as ambulance-chasing* (The Times, July, 19, 2005).

As linguists point out, the more semantic components are included into the meaning, the more active its polysemantic abilities is. In the direct meaning of many linguistic units, there are potential sems, which allow the figurative, metaphorical use of this unit. The same applies to the units in which the metaphoric element (or metaphoricity in general) is present originally and which are used, in fact, not in the direct meaning. In such cases, there are possibilities for expanding the range of this metaphor, including the mechanism of re-metaphorization, hyperbolization. Sometimes semantic changes are based on repeated transitions.

This applies, for example, to the figurative word *basket case*, which was borrowed from slang in the sense of "crippled, disabled, physically or emotionally disfigured person"[1, p. 12]: *The pop world's other reigning basket case Courtney Love, shed more tears over dead husband than can be found in the Demi Moore oeuvre* (Newsweek, December, 25, 2005). In the literary language as a result of repeated metaphorization, it gained the meaning of "destroyed country, economy".

Phrases *hard money*, *soft money* were also under repeated metaphorization. They functioned as phraseological units in the field of economics and finance, and have recently begun to be used in the policy area to indicate donations, contributions to the personal name of some politicians (*hard money*), and donations to political parties in general (soft money).

From semantic slangism *mule* "drug courier" a verb was converted, which in the literary language expanded its meaning and began to denote "the transportation of illegal goods using special clients": *But they also mule it* (J.Grisham. *The Firm*, NY, 1992, P 376).

Assimilation of slangisms is often accompanied by several semantic processes. For example, the phrase *boot camp*, which in the slang of servicemen denoted the recruitment center [1, p. 24], in the literary language acquired a figurative meaning "a prison for juvenile offenders", as well as in a more general sense, the "center for training experts": *Mr. Howard has been attracted to the idea of boot camps since he visited one in Texas in 1994* (The Economist, September, 23, 2005).

Some slangisms in the process of assimilation can acquire expanded meaning. For example, the phrase *junk food* that emerged as a colloquial sign of high-calorie but non-sustainable food: ... *American "junk food" is beneath local health standards* (Newsweek, September 25, 2005).

Recently, this phrase has expanded its meaning and began to denote also something which does not have a valid value, corresponds to primitive tastes: *Everyone knows television generates great pop-cultural junk tood: look no farther than the live broadcasts* (Newsweek, October, 9, 2005).

It is possible that the phrase *junk food* in a new sense has become a pattern for the formation of phraseological neologisms *junk state* "low-quality television", *junk television* "a country with uncertain prospects for the future" [2, p. 1231].

An interesting semantic evolution has the word *bimbo* ("little child, baby"), which was borrowed to the American slang from the Italian language at the beginning of the XX century as an ironic image of a young person, especially a young man [3, p. 259].

At the end of 20s, it gained a more specific meaning of "a stupid woman, a whore", possibly under the influence of slangism *dumbo* "a fool", as well as in connection with the widespread use of the word *baby* to refer to the girlfriend. In the literary language, the word *bimbo* is used in the meaning of "a very attractive, but intellectually limited person, especially a girl, a young woman" [6, p. 33].

Thus, the assimilation of jargon-slang elements in the literary English proves their regular wide use outside the original "narrow" context. "Breaking away" from the context and the transition of sub-standard units and elements from the periphery of the language to its core is usually accompanied by certain semantic changes as denotations (expansion, figurative use), and connotations (full or partial "erasing" of the expressive and estimated color, estimated reorientation).

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