

## Linguistic Democratization of the Modern English Language: Functional Parameters of English Youth Slang Neologisms

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Due to the extraordinary speed of globalization and technologization, lexical innovations appear anywhere on the planet and almost immediately (if not virally) are used by the entire Internet audience of *homo imitans* as defined by L. Herrero (Herrero, 2011, p.129), they are often augmented by the I-parameter, accurately proving the anthropological dominance of linguistic studies.

Both intralingual and extralingual factors cause the dynamics of the neologism appearance in the language. Being socially and historically determined, innovations can reflect the level of culture, economy, science, education, social differentiation of society, and the dominant ideological trends and views. In contrast, innovations can be indicators of the general psychological state of society and the interaction of ethnic groups. Extralingualism in enriching vocabulary reflects the need to nominate new, relevant concepts of a nation's time or cultural period. A collection of innovations of a particular era of human existence distinguishes the picture of the world of native speakers. Internet (*r*)-evolution in the first 20 years of the 21st century is replete with “infoneologisms” (Zatsny, 1998, p.174), and “cyberneologisms” (Makhachashvili, 2010, p.217), which cover almost all spheres of life.

Having conducted a quantitative analysis of neologisms recorded by Paul McFedries (McFedries, n.d.) for the last 18 years, namely on August 25, 2013, their number is 5452 units, which are divided into eight spheres of life, we can see that the new units to define society and culture created the most, together this figure is 42% of all neologisms. After conducting a quantitative analysis of neologisms, we found that the newest units for the definition of society and culture created this figure is 42% of all neologisms. The result of dynamics and qualitative changes in synchrony: the first group (8%) comprises terms, jargon, and reactivated lexical units with remarks of size, dialectic vocabulary, the third (6.5) - reactivated lexis and rarely used units, the fourth (15.5%) - lexicalized phrases, as well as established verbal complexes.

N-Gram Viewer can visually show case the peaks of the democratization processes unfolding in humankind's history (Figure 1). The linguistic democratization of the Ukrainian and English languages has been the scope of our research interest since 2006 and 2013, respectively. The linguistic democratization of English influences the processes of word formation in the cultural sphere of life, and perception of the world is studied (Shtaltovna, 2014) with the focus on lexical and semantic processes are distinguished and quantitative

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analysis of English-language neologisms of the cultural-linguistic sphere of modern life (Shtaltovna, 2015). Quantitative analysis of the English derivation processes (2000-2015) in the cultural life sphere is reported in further publications (Shtaltovna, 2015b). Epistemology and parametric features of the «DEMOCRATIZATION» concept in English studies as well as the analysis of the definitional models and conceptual substrate of the «DEMOCRATIZATION» concept were published in 2018 (Shtaltovna, 2015c) as well as separating the use of the concept in the political and social discourses. As of 2016, the Use of the concept “Democratization” in Higher Education continued the research and its application in strategy writing and road mapping for Universities development (Shtaltovna, 2016).

Neology and sociolinguistics are at the crossroads of analysis for the democratization processes and need an integral approach combined with the concept studies to understand linguistic democratization dynamics fully. The research of the English neologisms being driven by sociolinguistic factors, especially after 2000 and the “Y2K Millenium bug”, amplified number of the linguistic innovations and neologisms (Crystall, McFedries, Zatsnyi, Makhachashvili, Yenikeeva) as the signs of highly dynamic development of the English language system.

In this previously unpublished research, we will focus on sociolinguistics and pragmatics of the English-speaking youth dialect neologisms that can be illustrations for the four functional parameters of the language.

## Functional parameters of contemporary English democratization

The study of the functional linguistic parameters one can find within the competence of pragmalinguistics. It distinguishes the following functions of language, according to Arnold (2002, p.8): **cognitive-communicative** function of language and **pragmatic** with all other sub-functions, namely:

- **emotive** function, i.e. with the transfer of feelings of the speaker,
- **voluntative** function, i.e. with the expression of will and motivation of the addressee to the desired action,
- **appellative** function, i.e. attracting the listener's attention, encouraging him to perceive the message,
- **vocative function**, in situations where utterances are not the transmission of messages but only a manifestation of attention to the presence of another person (for example, in the formulas of politeness),
- **aesthetic** function, i.e. with an impact on aesthetic sense.

The democratization of language includes the emancipation of language. It aims at changing hierarchical structures to establish a new, more democratic structure that aims at eradicating the dominance of one group over another to make legitimacy, equality, and the right to use language accessible to all. A sign of democratization is the expansion of the language field, which speakers perceive as acceptable for language use and which includes variability in contrast to the strict and well-defined rules of the standard language. Another sign of democratization of language is the use of variant and non-standard forms in various

official sources and areas to raise the latter's status as valuable media resources for modern, democratic society (Huss and Lindgren 2011, p.2-3, 7-8).

The democratization of the literary language of the late XX-early XXI centuries is characterized by the active expansion of the functional linguo-sphere of English-speaking life - technological, social, socio-political, cultural, and scientific. The Internet provided personal access to the world's information heritage and introduced the possibility of having a private platform (s) for self-expression, self-identification, creation, and formation of personal information flows. The growth of practical individual needs in the nomination of new realities caused by the information-technical and technological development of the logosphere, as well as the openness of society, provoked changes in the development / of society; we observe the formation and functioning of sociolects.

The natural consequence of the shift from the canonized artistic language was the movement and mixing of linguistic and stylistic layers, intensification of the elements of colloquial style, dialectal variations, vernacular and dialectal language, reduced, vulgar, slang vocabulary, stylistic and genre syncretism, and interstitialism. It is evident that the new patterns of nominations, in turn, provide a continuous intensive creation of neological phrases and lexemes.

The peculiarities of neologisms' use are determined not only by the semantic competence of the speaker. It is not only responsible for the correlation of the sign and the word but also the pragmatic one, which provides a permanent connection between the speaker and the sign. Pragmatic parameters of neologisms most fully manifest in Internet discourse, characterized by constantly updating lexical vocabulary. This feature is since Internet discourse is inherently a heterogeneous phenomenon that integrates the characteristics of other types of discourse and covers all spheres of society. Therefore, functional analysis of discursive neologisms is an essential aspect of studying neologisms.

The linguistic concept of "neologism" covers a wide range of phenomena at the lexical-semantic level of language, and the problems of studying neology become especially important following new trends in the development of modern English. The emergence of new lexical units is a complex, multifaceted process that indicates the dynamics of language development. The variety of lexical and semantic neoplasms creates significant difficulties in determining the most characteristic features of neologisms, which would help to distinguish them from other innovations because the linguistic literature uses a variety of terms to denote lexical neoplasms: new vocabulary, lexical innovation, new word, neologism, neologism innovation, occasionalism, uncodified vocabulary, potential word, actual derivative, etc.

We will consider neologisms as new words, phrases, and meanings of words and phrases that have arisen in a certain period, are perceived as new units by the collective linguistic consciousness of native speakers and are gradually integrated into the language system. Neological pragmatic parameters most deeply manifest in media discourse, characterized by attempts to deepen and clarify information and give the semantic-pragmatic content greater efficiency and expressiveness, leading to the constant development of lexical vocabulary.

Lexical stylistics studies the components of the contextual meanings of words, especially their expressive, emotional, and evaluative potential and their relation to different func-

tional and stylistic layers. Dialect words, terms, slang words, colloquial words and expressions, neologisms, archaisms, foreign words, expressive potential of some word-formation models, some types of abbreviations, and word-formation models (Arnold 2002, p.14) are studied in terms of their interaction with different conditions of the context, in our research in the context of democratization impact on the language system – reducing the stylistic distance between oral and spoken and written areas of its functioning; expanding the range of speakers and public use of literary language; expanding opportunities for linguistic self-expression of the individual; active search for new means of expression and expression in the conditions of competition between different media to win the readership and audience (Tararenko, p. 33). Democratization of language is described as an “opportunity for representatives of the people to create and put into circulation words and phrases that might be incorrectly spelled, may be dialectal, borrowed or highly specialized and not be socially condemned for their use in public, including in the media or Internet communication” (Shtaltovna, 2014).

Pragmatic parameters of neologisms are most fully manifested in Internet discourse, characterized by constantly updating lexical vocabulary. Linguists assign words to stylistically marked vocabulary, considering their dialectal nature, terminology, emotional colouring, and socially limited use. Stylistically marked words outnumber neutral vocabulary. That is, the sign of stylistic labelling of vocabulary is directly related to particular layers of vocabulary – dialectisms, professionalisms, terms, jargon, slang, and emotionally coloured words.

Yuri Zatsny notes that recently there has been a tendency towards “a certain democratization even of the British literary norm”, and social dialects, which in English are often combined under the term “slang” are essential “internal sources of enrichment for the English language, and dictionaries still include slang to various categories of “standard” vocabulary and phraseology, especially neologisms (Zatsny, p.5). Zatsny also speaks of the current trend of “augmenting the stylistic status” for new language units: “In the 2003 edition of Collins' dictionary, more than 70 words that were considered taboo, vulgarisms in the previous edition (2000), were already marked as units of slang and colloquial vocabulary.”

Among social dialects, the youth dialect (slang) stands out the most, a lexicon within the English language. The purpose of youth slang is to oppose oneself to the “system”; therefore, such features as colloquial and often familiar colouring, conformism, decentralization, personification, and individualization, as components of democratization, become signs of this linguistic phenomenon. Youth slang mainly aims at the following elements: a person, his clothes, appearance, leisure, housing, and other categories. This type of slang is “unstable” (i.e. changeable) compared to others due to the change in generations and the history and culture of each country.

The high level of dynamism and mobility of lexical and semantic composition in youth slang focuses on specific conceptual models of the low register, satirical, evaluative, pejorative type of high level of expressiveness. Nominative neologisms as the product of spontaneous, sometimes primitive word formation define new concepts for adolescents. Expressive neologisms denote already known phenomena and concepts. Language game involves manipulating the actual language to create a specific effect (comic, exposing, conceptual, protective).

Functional parameters of the democratization of the English language can be also categorized according to 4 **functions of identification, nomination, description, and differentiation**, as presented below (Figure 2), with examples of the innovative dialectisms in the youth dialect of contemporary English. This research illustrates these functions by youth dialectal neologisms extracted from the list of 5,452 English-language neologisms selected by continuous sampling from journalistic sources (The New York Times, The Guardian, The Times, The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, etc.) and Internet resources (word-spy.com, very-clever.com, Readersheds.co.uk) for the period 1990-2015.

**Identifying function** as distinguishing ‘us vs. them’, seen as archetypal for adolescents who are discovering the world and enables a group of people with shared aims, beliefs, ideas, and interests to create a community, an English-speaking youth community in this case:

**nico-teen** (n. A teenager who smokes cigarettes.)

**alpha-girl** (n. The dominant member in a group of girls; a girl who bullies other girls.)

**promzilla** (n. A high school girl who, while planning for her prom, becomes exceptionally selfish, difficult, and obnoxious.)

**screenager** (n. A young person who has grown up with, and is therefore entirely comfortable with, a world of screens, particularly televisions, computers, ATMs, cell phones, and so on.)

**Potterhead** (n. A person who is a big fan of the Harry Potter series of books.)

**parachute kids** (n. Children sent to a new country to live alone or with a caregiver while their parents remain in their home country.)

**The nominative function** is expressed through the need to name new or specific phenomena in the life of teenagers. The name given allows youth to fix everything already cognizable and remain in consciousness:

**Promposal** (n. An invitation to a prom, particularly one that is elaborate, unusual, or performed in a public place.)

**Scratchiti** (n. A form of graffiti in marks are etched into windows and other glass surfaces.)

**bullycide** (n. The suicide of a child that occurs after that child has been bullied or harassed.)

**shoegaze** (v. To play an instrument, especially a guitar, with one’s head down, as though gazing at one’s shoes.)

**social networking fatigue** (n. Mental exhaustion and stress caused by creating and maintaining an excessive number of accounts on social networking sites.)

**hurried child syndrome** (n. A condition in which parents overschedule their children’s lives, push them hard for academic success, and expect them to behave and react as miniature adults.)

**The descriptive function** is expressed by giving extra details defining and distinguishing a noun from a group of such and in the youth can be illustrated by the following dialectical innovations:

**junk sleep** (n. Low-quality sleep caused by disruptions from nearby electronic devices such as cell phones, computers, and TVs.),

**Pubilect** (n. A dialect unique to teenagers.);

**antilanguage** (n. A collection of words and phrases used to exclude outsiders from a particular group and to disguise the group's activities);

**zitcom** (n. A television sitcom aimed at or featuring teenagers),

**Juvenoia** (n. The baseless and exaggerated fear that the Internet and current social trends are having negative effects on children),

**404** (adj. Out of touch or ignorant.),

**lad lit** (n. A literary genre that features books written by men and focusing on young, male characters, particularly those who are selfish, insensitive, and afraid of commitment),

**grey-sky thinking** (n. Negative or pessimistic thoughts, ideas, or solutions).

**Differential function**, the function of distinguishing other people who do not belong to a group like them, involves evaluation, and is therefore inseparable from the evaluative function:

**Twilight mom** (n. A mother who is a fan of the "Twilight" series of vampire novels.),

**askable parent** (n. A parent who is willing to answer their child's questions and who encourages their child to ask questions, particularly about sex.),

**Millennial Generation** (n. The generation born in 1978 or later),

**Camgirl** (n. A girl or young woman who broadcasts live pictures of herself over the web),

**kidult** (n. A middle-aged person who continues to participate in and enjoy youth culture),

**Himbo** (n. A man who is good-looking, but unintelligent or superficial),

**digital native** (n. A person who grew up in a world with computers, mobile phones, and other digital devices.),

**wombat** (adj. Profoundly uninteresting or useless - Waste Of Money, Brains And Time).

Having analyzed the chosen material, we conclude that all lexical-semantic and functional features and word-formation models of neologisms work in the slang layer, as explained by the high role of neologization with a high degree of expression as well as the tendency to individualization and originality, belonging to other age or social groups.

In summary, it should be noted that youth slang arises from the need for verbal self-identification, while increasing linguistic expression significantly expands the expression of the English language system, acting as a way of verbal communication, i.e. performing differential, descriptive, nominative, communicative and identifiable.

## Discussion

Recently more research on linguistic democratization especially in the English language is being published and seen from different perspectives, as Hiltunen & Loureiro-Porto (2020) are reviewing previous synchronic and diachronic work studies on democratization in different varieties of English, especially vividly described in phenomenological neoanglistics (Makhachashvili, 2016). The corpus-based study considers differences between the more personal, more spoken-like, and more colloquial blogs component (Kranich, Hampel, & Bruns, 2020) and the study of the evidence of conversationalization and democratization

within the changing contextual environment of the radio shows. A DemLang project focuses on diachronic research of the Democratization, Mediatization and Language Practices in Britain, 1700–1950 (Palander-Collin et al., 2020) and proceeds to sociohistorical contextualization of British English is seen as a sign of the democratization (Palander-Collin & Nevala, 2020). Democratization of the Italian linguistic loans is studied as a demonstration of democratization of the Italian language (Moskalenko, 2017) and Processes of Language Democratization in Contemporary Ukraine examines Presidential Speeches (Nedashkivska, 2006). Even though the Natural Language interfaces are now studied to be democratized, the research goes towards Democratizing Data Science with Natural Language Interfaces (Su, 2018). Looking forward to the Metaverse and Internet 5.0 democratization, once we bridge the digital divide and bring open access to scientific achievements to be able to make a meta-analysis including all the linguistic democratization studies of the Modern Languages.

## Conclusions

Democratization and liberalization as common causes and engines of the linguistic and literary processes shape the fashion for new words and phrases and intensify the personal search for new tools for the formation of expression. Democratization of the language standard, essentially the goal of restandardization, includes the idea of democratization of language norms.

New patterns of nominations, in turn, provide a continuous intensive creation of neological phrases and tokens, which grow into texts and intertexts, creating a new linguistic discourse, which in turn intensifies the search for new means of expression, which is a partial manifestation of the general laws of the modern linguistic system, in particular tendencies to democratization, intellectualization, the actualization of nominations.

The democratization of language can be reflected in the extension of standards and the inclusion of oral and written invariants and neologisms at different levels of language use, as well as in official sources. The limits of what is (or is not) acceptable, or part of a standard, are greatly expanded to include dialectal, sociolectal, borrowed, newly created elements, or elements of narrow, particular use.

Every native speaker in a democratic society has the right to an equal contribution to the development of language at both formal and informal levels, so the involvement of a broader base of linguistic variations ensures sustainable and successful development and expansion of standard language and includes bilateral vertical cooperation of all national representatives, regional and local language community. Democratization of language is the process of reaching the broader opportunity to create and put lexical items that are not orthographically correct, can be dialectal, borrowed, or highly specialized, and not be condemned or stigmatized for their use, including in the media or Internet communication.

English-language innovations of the 21st century are the means of expression of democratization processes through such trends as the tendency to complicate, enrich the language structure, condensation, abbreviation, the tendency to use stylistically different language forms with different emotional and expressive meanings. Having analyzed the

stylistic marking and functional parameters of the postmodern period's English abbreviations, acronyms, terminological innovations, dialectisms, pejorative neologisms, and euphemisms of neologic vocabulary, we subset the youth slang and its functional parameters. We can note that youth slang arises from the need for verbal self-identification and expression as a way of verbal communication, i.e. performing differential, descriptive, nominative, and identifying functions.

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Dr. **Yuliya Shtaltovna** has presently been working as an Associate Lecturer at ISM International School of Management GmbH, Berlin, Germany. She has studied the Democratization of the Modern Ukrainian Language since 2006 and wrote a Master's thesis on the Ukrainian Language. At present, too, she is engaged with her study of the Democratization of the English Language within the Zaporizka School of Neology (ZNU) under the supervision of Prof. Rusudan Makhachashvili. Her focus of study is the concept of Studies and the Linguistic Parameters of the Democratization of the Contemporary English (2015).

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Dr. Yuliya Shtaltovna has 30+ research articles, several monograph chapters to her credit in at national as well as international level. She also got published two books: Enhancing students' digital competencies within the Employability module of the University of Europe's skills-based curricula (2021), Can a Skill be Measured or Assessed? 6-Level Skills Development Approach to Skill Assessment (2021).