

LINGUISTICS

UDC 81'373.45

DOI: 10.17223/24109266/10/1

MODERN SLANG IN BRITISH ENGLISH

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Abstract. This article deals with such a phenomenon in Modern British English as slang, also there are adduced the reasons and motives for it. A definition of the term "slang" is given. The relevance and importance of slang in modern language is explained. A brief explanation of the main characteristic of slang is given. Different slang expressions and explanation are given with the aid of particular examples of using slang expressions in speech. The presence of rhyming slang in Modern British English is explained. A description of rhyming slang and its examples are given. Shortened variants of rhyming slang are described and explained. A conclusion is made on the importance of acknowledging such a phenomenon as slang words. The relevance and importance of slang in Modern British English is confirmed.

Keywords: British English, modern, slang, language, informal.

Introduction

Language has always been flexible and versatile. Its main purpose is communication. Humanity uses language in all activities: professional, domestic, religious, etc. Language also helps people to express themselves, to make their speech unusual, unable to be understood by others. That is why slang words exist.

Slang is a very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people [1]. For instance, there exists teen slang, which is the most dynamic and emotionally saturated part of English vocabulary. Nowadays slang surrounds us every day and British English is not an exception. If you are off on holiday to Britain, you will be surprised to see how handy certain British slang definitions are. It is always nice to know what the locals are saying, and it makes it a lot easier to have a conversation [2].

Methodology

As mentioned before, slang words surround us at every turn, so there we have a vast field for research. One more interesting point about them is that you hardly meet slang words in textbook, as well as in newspaper, book etc. The only way to discover them is to dive into the language environment,

what is a fascinating and useful deal. In order to analyse slang words, we often need to have the context in which they are used. If it is not enough, we might need to ask a native speaker to explain slang word's meaning in a more detailed way, so we get a precise result.

Slang is continuously connected with the history and the culture of a country. There are many possible slang sources exist. Some of them are:

- Immigrants;
- Literary movements, subculture;
- Underworld;
- Army;
- Business;
- Sports;

Slang words for this article were found by investigating modern news, books, daily conversations of native speakers etc.

For example, in 2001 the London Evening Standard published an article named "Britain's biggest supergrass" by Paul Cheston: "Not only did he inform on some of the most dangerous criminals operating today, he turned in his own mother, brother, wife, mistress and the madam who ran his brothels. And, it was to emerge, he had been "grassing up" his criminal colleagues for years. At his trial he accepted the suggestion he was a "polished liar" and offered the jury this explanation: "Yes, I had to lie, even to my family. It is in the business of informing and dealing ... being disloyal comes with the territory. My friends, family and lover are all awaiting trial because of me" [3].

Talking about modern British slang, we need to clarify a feature of it. In Eric Partridge's opinion, the main characteristic of British slang is diachronic stability. Many British slang words have been living a long life in language, they are still used, that is why they do not become obsolete or forgotten, but stay modern so far: "...in London and correspondingly in England as a whole the vocabulary will not notably (unless a cataclysm supervenes) have changed" [4].

Results and analysis

Here are presented some expressions and collocations from British slang [5, 6]. Short descriptions are provided.

1) DO – the basic meaning of the word is to do – perform an action, but in slang it will be "a party". For instance, "Are you going to Lizzie's birthday do next week?"

2) KNACKERED – phrase meaning "extremely tired," often uttered after a long, exhausting day.

3) SKIVE – a British slang term used to indicate when someone has failed to turn up for work or an obligation due to pretending to fake illness. Most commonly used with schoolchildren trying to get out of school, or dissatisfied office workers trying to pull a sick day.

4) SCRUMMY – one of the more delightful British slang terms in this list, “scrummy” is used as a wonderfully effusive term for when something is truly delicious and mouth-wateringly good.

5) DIG – like “dig the ground”, but in modern slang it means «catch a buzz», “describe something you really like”. “Hey, I dig your new style. Where did you buy that T-shirt?”

6) GUTTED – a British slang term that is one of the saddest on the lists in terms of pure contextual emotion. To be “gutted” about a situation means to be devastated and saddened.

7) CHUNDER – not a wonderfully melodic word, “chunder” is part and parcel of British slang terms. Meaning “to vomit” or “to be sick”, “chunder” is usually used in correlation with drunken nights, or being hugely ill and sick. “I ate a bad pizza last night after too many drinks and chundered in the street”.

8) PROPS – expresses respect, recognition. Comes from “proper recognition” или “proper respect”. “I know he failed the test, but you’ve got to give him props for trying”.

9) CRAM – the act of attempting to learn large amounts of information in a short period, esp. for a test in high school or college. “I was so busy with my family before the exam, that I only had three days to cram for it!”

10) GOBSMACKED – a truly British expression meaning to be shocked and surprised beyond belief. The expression is believed by some to come literally from “gob” (a British expression for mouth), and the look of shock that comes from someone hitting it. For example. “I was gobsmacked when she told me she was pregnant with triplets.”

11) FAM, MATE – a very close friend, or a group of very close friends.

12) BOLLOCKS – perhaps one of the most internationally famous British slang terms, “bollocks” has a multitude of uses, although its top ones including being a curse word used to indicate dismay, e.g. “Oh, bollocks”. It can also be used to express derision and mocking disbelief, e.g., “You slept with Kate Upton last night? Bollocks...” and, of course, it also refers to the scrotum and testicles.

13) TAKING THE PISS – given the British tendency to mock and satirise anything and everything possible, “taking the piss” is in fact one of the most popular and widely used British slang terms. To “take the piss” means to mock something, parody something, or generally be sarcastic and derisive towards something. For example, “The guys on TV last night were taking the piss out of the government again.”

14) GRASS – a person in a group of criminals, who tells the police about other criminals’ activities. A snitch. “How come we got caught by the police? I knew Sean is a grass!”

15) SHAG – an offensive term related to sexual intercourse. This term also exists in American English meaning “a dance”, “to dance”. Do not ever try to invite a lady from Britain to dance using the next phrase. “Hey, very cool music out there! How about shagging?”

Modern British slang also has such a phenomenon as rhyming slang. By “rhyming slang” we mean a special British slang, where the implied word has its rhyme equivalent. This equivalent has nothing in common with the meaning of the implied word.

See the examples below [7]:

“Finish off your brandy and we’ll go and join the string of pearls”. Instead of girls, we use here the rhyme “string of pearls”.

“I had a very pretty horse guard from Malta this morning”. Instead of post card, the rhyme “horse guard” is used.

PORKIES. False. Contraction of «porky pies», which rhymes with “lies”. “Don’t listen to her, she’s telling porkies!”

Abbreviated versions of Cockney rhyming slang are often used in speech. For example, butcher’s hook (look): Take a butcher’s at that! – (Look at that! Instead of Take a butcher’s hook at that!). And also: Let’s go for a Ruby! – Let’s eat curry! (Instead of Ruby Murray = curry – Ruby Murray, an Irish singer = curry); Hello me old China – Hello, mate (instead of China and plate = mate) [8]. Another important source of modern English slang is military slang, which has constantly developed over the course of a century [9, 10].

Conclusion

Analyzing different expressions and collocations, we can see that British slang is a vast part of the language. Many native speakers in UK are likely to use such phrases instead of Standard English, therefore it would be very useful for people who learn English to know the definitions of them and be able to deal with slang words in order to avoid situations of misunderstanding and embarrassment.

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Resived 12.12.2017