YOUTH LEXIS IN MODERN JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE: LINGUISTIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSIONS

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Abstract

The language of modern journalism is undergoing rapid transformation under the influence of digital communication, globalization, and generational change. One of the most noticeable tendencies is the increasing presence of youth lexis in media discourse. This article examines the linguistic characteristics, functions, and sociocultural implications of youth vocabulary in contemporary journalistic texts. The study analyzes how slang expressions, colloquial forms, borrowings, and expressive innovations contribute to shaping the tone, accessibility, and persuasive power of media communication. Special attention is paid to the role of youth language in constructing identity, engaging audiences, and reflecting social dynamics. The research is based on descriptive and discourse-analytical methods applied to selected journalistic materials from online media sources. The findings demonstrate that youth lexis is not merely a stylistic embellishment but a significant communicative tool that influences perception, credibility, and emotional resonance. At the same time, excessive use of such language may lead to the erosion of traditional norms of journalistic style and raise concerns about linguistic standardization. The article concludes that balanced integration of youth vocabulary can enhance media effectiveness while preserving professional standards.

Keywords: youth language, journalistic discourse, slang, media language, sociolinguistics, communication, digital media

Introduction

Language is a dynamic system that continuously evolves under social, cultural, and technological influences. Journalism, as a reflection of public discourse, often becomes a testing ground for linguistic innovation. In recent decades, the rapid development of digital platforms and social networks has accelerated the spread of informal communication styles into traditionally formal domains, including news reporting and analytical writing.

Youth lexis—comprising slang, colloquial expressions, abbreviations, and creative neologisms—has become increasingly visible in journalistic texts. This phenomenon is closely connected with the growing dominance of younger audiences in online media consumption. Media organizations seek to remain relevant and competitive by adopting language that resonates with their readers.

However, the incorporation of youth vocabulary raises important questions. Does it enrich journalistic expression or undermine professional standards? How does it affect comprehension across different age groups? What sociocultural meanings does it convey? These questions form the basis of the present study.

Youth language has long been a subject of sociolinguistic research. It is commonly viewed as a marker of group identity, creativity, and resistance to established norms. Unlike standardized language, youth lexis is highly dynamic, context-dependent, and often ephemeral. New expressions emerge rapidly, spread through peer networks and digital media, and may disappear just as quickly.

From a linguistic perspective, youth vocabulary demonstrates several distinctive features:

1. **Expressiveness and emotional intensity**
2. **Metaphorical and humorous creativity**
3. **Borrowings from foreign languages, especially English**
4. **Abbreviations and phonetic simplification**
5. **Semantic shifts of existing words**

In journalistic discourse, these features can serve various communicative purposes. They may create a sense of immediacy, authenticity, or informality, making texts appear closer to everyday speech. At the same time, they can blur the boundary between professional reporting and entertainment content.

Youth Lexis in Digital Journalism

The rise of online journalism has fundamentally changed the conditions of media production and consumption. Speed, competition for attention, and algorithm-driven visibility encourage concise and engaging language. Headlines, in particular, often incorporate slang or conversational expressions to attract clicks.

Youth lexis appears most frequently in the following contexts:

- Lifestyle and entertainment sections
- Technology and social media coverage
- Opinion columns and blogs
- Interviews with young public figures
- Informal news commentary

For example, journalists may use trendy expressions to summarize complex situations in a relatable way. Such usage can reduce the perceived distance between the media outlet and its audience. Readers may feel that the publication understands their cultural environment and communication style.

Nevertheless, this strategy carries risks. Overuse of informal language may reduce the perceived seriousness of the content or alienate older readers. Moreover, slang expressions may quickly become outdated, making texts seem obsolete.

Overall, the use of youth lexis in journalism represents a complex and ambivalent phenomenon. On the one hand, slang, neologisms, and internet jargon make media discourse more dynamic, relatable, and engaging for younger audiences, reflecting real communicative practices in the digital era. On the other hand, excessive reliance on informal language may threaten clarity, credibility, inclusiveness, and adherence to established linguistic norms. Therefore, the integration of youth language into journalistic discourse should be guided by balance: it can

enhance communication when used appropriately, but it should not compromise the fundamental principles of professional journalism — accuracy, accessibility, and responsibility.

Sociocultural Functions

Beyond stylistic considerations, youth lexis performs important sociocultural functions in journalistic discourse.

Identity Construction

Language choices signal affiliation with particular social groups. By adopting youth vocabulary, journalists implicitly position themselves as part of a modern, progressive community. This can strengthen brand identity and audience loyalty.

Democratization of Media Language

Traditional journalistic style often emphasizes objectivity and neutrality. The inclusion of colloquial elements reflects a broader shift toward conversational communication, reducing hierarchical distance between media producers and consumers.

Emotional Engagement

Slang expressions tend to be vivid and emotionally charged. They can intensify readers' reactions, making texts more memorable and shareable. In the context of digital media, emotional engagement directly influences visibility and reach.

Cultural Reflection

Youth language captures emerging social trends, technological innovations, and cultural references. Its presence in journalism documents ongoing societal change and provides insight into generational values.

Linguistic Challenges and Criticism

Despite its communicative advantages, the use of youth lexis in journalism has been criticized by linguists and media scholars. First, it may compromise clarity. Slang expressions are often opaque to those outside the relevant social group. This can hinder comprehension and limit the accessibility of information. Second, it may undermine credibility. Readers may question the professionalism of a publication that relies heavily on informal language, particularly in serious topics such as politics or economics. Third, it raises concerns about linguistic degradation. Some scholars argue that the spread of colloquial forms erodes the norms of standard language and reduces stylistic diversity. Finally, the transient nature of youth vocabulary creates archival problems. Texts containing outdated slang may become difficult to interpret in the future.

Balancing Innovation and Norms

Effective journalistic communication requires a balance between innovation and adherence to professional standards. Youth lexis can be beneficial when used strategically:

- In headlines to capture attention

- In quotations to preserve authenticity
- In explanatory contexts where meaning is clarified
- In audience-specific publications targeting young readers

However, core informational sections should maintain clarity, neutrality, and linguistic stability. Editorial guidelines can help regulate the appropriate level of informality. Training programs for journalists may also address the sociolinguistic aspects of language choice, emphasizing audience awareness and ethical responsibility.

Conclusion

The increasing presence of youth lexis in modern journalistic discourse reflects broader transformations in society, technology, and communication practices. Far from being a superficial trend, this phenomenon reveals how language adapts to changing audience expectations and media environments.

Youth vocabulary enhances expressiveness, relatability, and emotional impact, contributing to the effectiveness of contemporary journalism. At the same time, uncontrolled use may compromise clarity, credibility, and linguistic norms.

Therefore, the key challenge for media professionals is not whether to use youth lexis, but how to integrate it responsibly. A balanced approach allows journalism to remain both accessible and authoritative, reflecting the dynamism of language while preserving its informative function.

Future research may explore cross-cultural differences in youth language usage, the role of artificial intelligence in shaping media language, and the long-term impact of digital communication on linguistic standards.

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