

UNIQUE FEATURES OF TOPONYMIC SLANGS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the concept of "slang" is explored, revealing its elusive nature and the diverse perspectives amongst linguists. As we delve deeper, it becomes apparent that there are three distinct camps of linguists, each with contrasting opinions on the impact of slang on language. The first group applauds slang as a vibrant and enriching addition, while the second group deems it a violation of linguistic norms and a disregard for language. Somewhat surprisingly, the third group maintains a neutral stance, neither condemning nor praising slang. Notable linguists, including John C. Hodges and Norman Foerster, raise valid concerns about the potential laziness in cognition and vocabulary that may arise from the use of slang. Additionally, the text delves into sociolinguistic aspects, exploring the effectiveness of slang in communication and its potential behavioral repercussions. As we shift gears to discuss toponymic slang, the text underscores its unconventional nature.

Key words: *Slang, linguists, sociolinguistic perspective, toponymic slang, cultural identity, informality, familiarity, memorability, promotion, community bonding, emotional connection, simplicity and accessibility, cultural and historical references, variations.*

Despite many efforts, linguists haven't been able to define the exact meaning of the word "slang" yet. There are also contrasting views about the term's usage and its purpose. Mainly, there exists three classes of linguists. First group of researchers think of slangs as a positive aspect of any language which can make it more interesting and colorful, however, on the other hand, another group of linguists look at it as a complete violation of linguistic rules and an utter disrespect for the language. There is also the third group who refuses to call slangs as a bad influence or a good one to linguistics.

We are going to start by looking at the opinion of the first group of linguists. John C. Hodges disagrees with the usage of slangs as he stated "slang is a sluggard's way of avoiding the search for the exact, meaningful word." in the Harbrace College Handbook. Although he wasn't the first linguist to express that kind of point of view. Norman Foerster and J.M.Steadman said that slangs demonstrate "laziness in thought and poverty of vocabulary"

In 1920 Greenhough and Kittridge published their book named "Word and their way in English Speech" in which they defined slang as "A peculiar kind of vagabond language, always hanging on the outskirts of legitimate speech, but continually straying or forcing its way into the most respectable company". They say that slangs are not often controlled by the morality of propriety.

Other views similar to this belong to linguists such as John Camden Hotten and Mr. Earl Welby. Mr. Hotten says that slangs are usually born from the desire to express "grotesque" and "oddity" in our speech which may lead us to a conclusion that the use of slang may be a great source of literary language violation.

Rickford stated the affects of slangs to people in sociolinguistic sense. He says: "It could be clear that slang helps in sending the message quickly among speakers. However, the use of slang in all contexts and occasions may lead to the spoil of the individuals' behavior."

Slang can also be described as a kind of "anti-language," to use Halliday's term, or, in Morgan's revision of Halliday, a "counterlanguage," through which a shared youth identity is reproduced against a dominant norm.

Slang is said to serve antisocial purposes such as marking social differences, opposing people in authority, and hiding secret information or improper behaviour from them.

Mish mentions, "Slang is an informal non-standard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech."

More recently the French writer Daniel Pennac dismissed it all as no more than a second-rate lexis of the disempowered: Slang isn't a language, it's merely vocabulary. The under-dog's lexicon is so poor that most of these words are quickly carried off by the winds of history: they're twigs, just twigs, too little thought to weigh them down.

From modern research in Ukrainian linguistics, the definition of slang belonging to L. A. Stavitskaya deserves attention: "Slang is an almost open language subsystem of profanity, stylistically reduced lexical and phraseological units that perform expressive, evaluative (usually negative) and euphemistic functions".

Toponymic slang words, also referred to as slang toponyms, are linguistic entities characterized by their distinct regional identity, cultural references, linguistic diversity, historical influences, and in-group bonding mechanisms. They not only serve as a reflection of the local culture and community from which they originate, but also contribute to their evolution and identity formation.

One of the most defining features of toponymic slang words is their strong attachment to a specific geographical location. They act as linguistic markers that identify the regional identity of the speakers. For instance, terms like "wicked" in Boston, USA, or "chuffed" in the UK, are not just popular slang words in these regions, but also linguistic insignias of these places.

Furthermore, toponymic slang often encapsulates and reflects cultural elements, local customs, or societal aspects of a region. This is evident in how the British slang term "brolly" for an umbrella not only denotes a common item but also subtly refers to the UK's frequently rainy weather.

Moreover, the use of local slang creates a sense of camaraderie and belonging among residents of a particular area. This unique feature transforms these words into a "linguistic code" that distinguishes insiders from outsiders, fostering a sense of unity within the community.

Toponymic slangs often involve the creation of new words, word forms, or meanings. They can incorporate elements from the standard language but modify them in a unique way. Those types of slangs may also involve the shortening of words or phrases. This can make communication more efficient and often lends a casual, informal tone to the toponyms. They can include changes in pronunciation or spelling. These alterations can be influenced by regional accents or simply serve to distinguish the slang from standard language. Slangs often employ metaphors or analogies to convey meanings in a memorable way. These comparisons can create vivid imagery and are central to the understanding of the slang. Slangs frequently function as markers of group identity. They are used by specific communities or subcultures, creating a sense of belonging and exclusion based on who understands and uses the slang. The use of slang is often shaped by sociolinguistic factors like age, social status, and group membership. Different groups may have their own unique slangs. Slangs tend to be more expressive and informal in tone. They often convey emotions, attitudes, or social bonds more directly than standard language. Slangs can evolve and change quickly. What is popular slang today may be outdated in a short period. This adaptability keeps the language fresh and relevant to its users. The intended purpose and context of the slang can vary widely. Slangs can be humorous, derogatory, affectionate, secretive, or even serve as a form of coded language for certain communities. Slangs often involve wordplay, puns, and humor. Users of slang may enjoy the creativity and playfulness in crafting and interpreting

these non-standard terms. Slangs are often used alongside standard language. They coexist and interact, with speakers switching between slang and standard language as needed.

Toponymic slangs, or nicknames for places, serve several important purposes and provide various benefits:

Cultural and Local Identity. Toponymic slangs often reflect the unique cultural, historical, or geographical aspects of a place. They help reinforce a sense of local identity and pride. These slangs can symbolize the values, history, and characteristics that make a place distinct.

Differentiation. In cases where multiple places share similar or identical names, toponymic slangs help distinguish one from the other. This differentiation is especially useful in conversation and navigation.

Informality and Familiarity. Slangs make place names more approachable and relatable. They create a friendly and casual atmosphere in conversation, making it easier for people to connect with a place on a personal level.

Memorability. Toponymic slangs are often memorable and catchy, making them easier to recall than official names. This can be beneficial for tourism, marketing, and everyday communication.

Promotion and Tourism. Some places adopt toponymic slangs as part of their marketing and tourism strategies. These playful or evocative nicknames can attract tourists, boost local economies, and create a distinct brand image.

Community Bonding. Using a toponymic slang can foster a sense of community and shared identity among the people who live in or identify with a particular place. It can create a sense of belonging and pride.

Emotional Connection. Slangs can evoke emotions associated with a place, which is particularly meaningful for residents. They become a source of affection and nostalgia.

Simplicity and Accessibility. Slangs often simplify long or complex official place names, making them more accessible to a wider audience, including those who may not be familiar with the local language or dialect.

Cultural and Historical References. Some toponymic slangs draw upon cultural, historical, or geographical references that hold significance for the place. This can add layers of meaning and depth to the slang.

In the case of toponymic slangs, these informal nicknames for places incorporate the same structural elements but focus on modifying place names in unique, culturally meaningful, or playful ways.

Toponymic slangs are the words and phrases the components of which are toponyms. Toponymic slangs, or nicknames for places, possess unique features that distinguish them from standard place names or official terms. Toponymic slangs are often informal and familiar, they are often used in casual conversations. They create a sense of familiarity and can make a place seem more approachable. New Orleans is playfully called The Big Easy because of the relaxed and easy-going atmosphere of the city. Boston city is also referred to as Beantown, although the origin of the slang is unknown it makes the place sound warm and inviting.

Toponymic slangs also reflect local culture, many of them are deeply rooted in the culture, history, or characteristics of the place they refer to. They often reflect the local identity and pride. For instance, Ireland is also called The Emerald Isle highlighting the significance of the colour green in Irish culture or we can take Japan's name amongst people: The Land of The Rising Sun, it reflects Japan's cultural association with the sunrise.

Memorable and playful: These nicknames are typically memorable and may have a playful or whimsical quality. They often evoke imagery or emotions associated with the place. The Entertainment Capital of the World - a playful and boastful moniker for Las Vegas, Nevada, underlining its reputation for entertainment. The Concrete Jungle - a somewhat cheeky way to refer to New York City, emphasizing its tall buildings and bustling city life.

Historical or symbolic significance: Some toponymic slangs have historical significance or allude to historical events or figures. Others may be tied to prominent landmarks or symbols associated with the place. The Big Tomato - informally used for Sacramento, California, in a playful reference to its agricultural history. The City of Saints - a whimsical nickname for Salt Lake City, Utah, reflecting its historical association with the Mormon faith.

Regional variations: Different regions or communities may have their own unique toponymic slangs for the same place, highlighting the diversity of local culture and perspectives.

Purpose of differentiation: These nicknames often serve to distinguish one place from another with a similar name or to highlight specific features or qualities that set it apart. The Twin Cities: This nickname is used to refer to Minneapolis and St. Paul, two major cities in the state of Minnesota, USA. The term is used to differentiate between the two cities and emphasize their close proximity, cultural differences, and unique characteristics. While both cities share a common metropolitan area, they each have their own distinct identities and histories. "The Twin Cities" helps distinguish them from one another and recognizes the individual qualities and attractions of each city within the same urban region.

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