

Female Students' Slang and the Factors Leading to its Use :A Case Study

اللغة العامية للطالبات والعوامل المؤدية إلى استخدامها:
دراسة حالة

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Abstract:

The present research revolves around study of Female students' language at the present day. It looks at how females come to use slang language that was impractical according to some linguists, taking female students of English at Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities. It seeks to highlight to the factors that lead females to use it. Throughout this research, the qualitative and quantitative methods are opted for.

Data are gathered through interviewing different female students of English from both Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities. The participants are interviewed to draw out slang linguistic features that female students of English tend to use as well as to highlight the factors leading to its use. The interviews are also opted for to pick out the most recurrent function for which female students of English employ slang. Results show that female students use different slang constructions for multiple functions.

Keywords: *Slang; Female Students; English; University; functions*

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ملخص:

يدور البحث الحالي حول دراسة لغة الطالبات في يومنا هذا. حيث يبحث في كيفية استخدام الإناث للغة العامية التي كانت غير عملية وفقاً لبعض اللغويين، مع أخذ طالبات في جامعتي في مستغانم خميس مليانة كدراسة حالة. كما يسعى إلى تسليط الضوء على العوامل التي تدفع الإناث لاستخدام. خلال هذا البحث، تم اختيار الطرق النوعية والكمية تم جمع البيانات من خلال إجراء مقابلات مع طالبات مختلفات من جامعتي مستغانم و خميس مليانة. تم إجراء مقابلات مع المشاركين لاستخلاص الميزات اللغوية التي تميز الإناث إلى استخدامها وكذلك لتسليط الضوء على العوامل التي تؤدي إلى استخدامها. تم اختيار المقابلات أيضاً لاختيار الوظيفة الأكثر تكراراً التي من أجلها يستخدم طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية العامية. أظهرت النتائج أن الإناث يستخدمن اللغة العامية في وظائف متعددة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: عامية؛ طالبات؛ الإنجليزية؛ الجامعة؛ المهام

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is tightly related to society in a way that makes it impossible to understand one without the other. Gender is one of the constituents that are manifested through language. The relation between gender and language use was the devotion of many sociolinguists for which various theories emerged. For example; the proponents of the deficit approach argue that women speech style is subordinate to that of men. They also claim the infeasibility of some language features for women that men can use. Slang is one of the varieties that are considered as a male domain which is unsuitable for female to be used (Jesperson: 1992). In this connection the present research falls within the sociolinguistic sphere, revolving around women's development of their linguistic code. The latter can be instantiated by the use of slang by female students.

The idea of investigating the previous mentioned issue springs from a link made between the gender theories and my personal observation. More deeply, slang is considered by many scholars as a male domain and females are eschewers. However, through my participation in female conversations, I noticed that there is a big

change in women's language nowadays; they tend to use some features that were considered infeasible for them. More importantly, the research on the use of slang by females in Algeria is bypassed. These are the motivating factors of this study.

The present study is undertaken to accomplish the retrospective objectives. It draws out the language features that Algerian women tend to use nowadays. It uncovers the hidden themes for which women use slang in Algeria. In addition, it seeks to highlight the factors that lead women to use slang that was impractical throughout history. According to these objectives, the research questions are formed.

The following research questions become prominent to probe in the present study:

1-What are the language features used by female students, especially, female students of English at both Mostaganem Khemis Miliana Universities?

2-What are the functions of slang use according to female students of English at Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities?

3-What is the recurrent function for which slang is used according to female students of English at Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities?

So as to inquire the above- mentioned research questions, the following hypotheses are put before hand:

1-Female students, at Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities, use various slang constructions in their everyday interactions.

2-Female students of English in both Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities use slang for multiple functions.

3- slang is mostly used for breaking the standard norms.

Data is collected and analyzed through a set of techniques. Semi-structured interviews are organized with 30 female students from Mostaganem University and 25 female students from Khemis Miliana university to draw out the slang words they use in their everyday interaction. Data are analyzed through using qualitative and quantitative research methods to describe the slang words features and the frequency of the factors of the variety's use, respectively.

Since this research revolves around female students' slang, it behoves us to highlight slang variety.

2. Slang

Slang is a variety which has gone through various definitions according to several sociolinguists that it is difficult to be determined. It is a controversial concept for which many researchers provide various definitions). In line with the central concern of the present study, which is women slang and the factors of its use, it is of a paramount significance to display some slang features that aid one to draw out its types. Eble (1996, p11) puts:

Slang is an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group with a trend or fashion in society at large (Eble 1996,p11)

In the above quotation, Eble shows that slang is informal (colloquial) which its terms are in the ongoing process of making. In other words, she stresses the novelty and the ephemeral characteristic of slang. Since slang is part of language, it is used for interpersonal matters as establishing social bonds between its participants. However, she also argues that "slang exploits existing words and their current meanings in various ways, drawing on and often mixing resources from the sound system..." (P26). More deeply, slang words are firstly created through the process of transformation or morphological process which extends the vocabulary by derivation, compounding, or the process of abbreviation. Secondly, the other process is the so-called semantic process or transposition. It is rendering the neutral meaning of a word to a figurative meaning through metonymy, metaphor according to Andersson and Trudgill(1992) (cited in Barkman Anna ,2004: 2) . In addition, slang terms are constructed through word's invention (Andersson and Trudgill, 1992). Moreover, slang expressions are used for various functions.

2. Functions of Slang Use:

Slang is considered as a means whereby people accomplish a certain function. According to Partridge (1935), people resort to slang seeking for novelty and newness. It is also employed to startle

and impress people, especially, through the occurrence of taboo terms, and figures of speech. This idea is asserted by Anderson and Trudgill (1990:78).The latter stresses Adams' statement "slang asserts our everyday poetic prowess" (2009:6) since we give shapes to our words through the selection of sounds so as to produce effects, or aestheticism. In the same line of thought, humour is an aspect for which it is utilized. Snobbing is also a reason for which slang occurs. It is also used for communication easiness because of its straightforwardness. People resort to this variety to identify themselves within a group and create certain harmony in their groups as Rajimwale states: "the use of slang establishes immediate affinity reinforces social identity" (2006:205). Taking into account the intimacy factor, its employment reduces the formality or the seriousness of a discourse (Dumas and Lighter, 1978). These are the functions of slang use.

3. Methods and Materials:

Semi-structured interviews are designed .They are selected among other types to be expanded throughout the interview by probes to get in depth idea about the construction of slang terms provided by students. The interview consists of various questions. It starts with two introductory questions to include female students in the interview as well as to assure that they belong to the specialty of the English language. Questions three and four revolve around the expressions that female students use to stand for happiness and sadness. The fifth and the sixth question target the linguistic forms that they employ to refer to their females and males respectively. The penultimate question requires from the female students to provide other slang terms they create in other situations they might take part in. The last question is about the functions for which slang is created and used by female students of English in both Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities.

The data collected from the interviews are analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The former is opted for to describe the slang terms that the female students employ in multiple situations by providing their linguistic formation types. Being concerned with providing

statistical references, the latter is resorted to for providing the frequency of slang function among female students, learning English, in both Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities. More importantly, it helps to draw out the prominent function for which female students employ slang.

IV. Results and Discussions:

IV.a. Slang Terms Used by Female Participants in Algeria:

As the female participants are interviewed, the following table represents slang terms used:

Terms	Types	The meaning
<i>Tbahdilation</i>	<i>Affixed word :tbahdilation</i>	<i>A scandal</i>
<i>Hellacious</i>	<i>Created expression</i>	<i>Angry</i>
<i>Shit! And Damn!</i>	<i>expletives</i>	<i>Angry</i>
<i>Horrendous</i>	<i>Blending(horrible, stupendous)</i>	<i>Angry</i>
<i>Second heart</i>	<i>metonymy</i>	<i>To call men</i>
<i>blue</i>	<i>Meaning shift</i>	<i>Narrow- minded</i>
<i>Go one one</i>	<i>Created expression</i>	<i>Walk slowly</i>
<i>Jacket</i>	<i>personification</i>	<i>protection</i>
<i>Bless in less</i>	<i>Created expression</i>	<i>satisfaction</i>
<i>Liquidation</i> <i>/likɪdaɪfn/</i>	<i>Mispronounced word</i>	<i>Avoiding someone</i>
<i>God yellow you face</i>	<i>Created expression</i>	<i>reproaching</i>
<i>America</i> <i>/mæɪrɪkən/</i>	<i>A metonymy</i>	<i>Man in terms of power</i>
<i>/ læsqə/</i>	<i>Meaning shift</i>	<i>happy</i>
<i>/kɪ nɜːbed 'ɪk lɹəbɑːr jɔːkrɛʒ mən fɔːmɪ/</i>	<i>Created expression</i>	<i>You are out-dated</i>

Female Students' Slang and the Factors Leading to its Use :A Case Study

<i>/wæf qptɪli tæmek/</i>	<i>Created expression</i>	<i>How are you? Or what is new?</i>
<i>Cow, gorilla</i>	<i>A metaphor</i>	<i>A fat women</i>
<i>haslation</i>	<i>Affixed word</i>	<i>A problem</i>
<i>/maaskri/</i>	<i>A metonymy</i>	<i>Narrow-minded</i>
<i>/li gɒlnə/</i>	<i>Function shift</i>	<i>' what is said' to hide the identity of the person spoken about</i>

Table 1: Slang Words that Female students of English use in Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities

some expletives and borrowed swear words to stand for their happy and angry situations. They also shift the pronunciation of some words as Liquidation /likɪdaɪfn/. In addition, they associate some Algerian Colloquial terms with English suffixes. In addition, they translate some Algerian Colloquial expressions into English. In comparison with slang characteristics, all the terms used by the female participants confirm to its aspects. These features are used for a function.

IV. b. Function of Slang:

it for the easiness of communication, and deviation from the standard norms of the language. In this connection, through the data collected from the participants' responses, some common themes seem to emerge according to which categories have been established. They have various views for the purpose of opting for slang. Some of them employ it for the purpose of playfulness within their groups .Some other female students argue that they utilise it for group-exclusion and to prevent outsiders to decipher their conversations. Other ones tell that they use to break both the norms of language and society at large since it enables them manipulates their language the way they wish, through either creating words or symbols which have no existence in the Standard norms.

Relating students' claims to the various studies tackled previously, the following chart shows the functions of slang used by female participants:

Functions	The number of students
<i>Exclusion/ inclusion</i>	9
<i>Creativity</i>	5
<i>Break the rules</i>	13
<i>Solidarity</i>	8
<i>Easiness of Communication</i>	12
<i>Humour</i>	8

Table 2: *The Number of Females Who opted for the Various Slang Functions*

The present study reveals that female participants use slang for many reasons such as: solidarity, exclusion, breaking the standard norms, easiness of communication, humour, and creativity. Breaking the standard rules which is the most outstanding function of slang use occurs through distinctive ways. They may choose using some affixed words through associating some colloquial Algerian Arabic and English suffixes. In addition, they create some expressions which are either in the English language having an Arabic meaning or in the Algerian Colloquial Arabic with some eccentric meaning. They may also use borrowed swear words to afford euphemism. Mispronounced words are also a manifestation of rules' breaking.

V. Conclusion:

Female students, especially the case of female students at both Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities, use slang variety .More deeply, when compared to the features of slang; there is a correlation between female participants' language characteristics and the aspects of slang. More interestingly, they resort to various types of slang formations as figures of speech (personification, metaphor, metonymy), function shift, meaning shift, affixation, borrowed words, in different situations they engage in. In addition, they have multiple functions for which they resort to slang in their interactions as: humour, exclusion, showing identity and solidarity, easiness of communication, breaking standard norms, and creativity. The majority of female students are for

Female Students' Slang and the Factors Leading to its Use :A Case Study

the function of breaking the standard norms as they use some mispronounced constructions affixed words, and borrowed swear words that have no room in the standard norms of any society. However, the rest of them opt for the remaining ones. Thus, it may be concluded that female students at both Mostaganem and Khemis Miliana Universities utilize slang mostly for breaking the standard norms. As a result, all hypotheses are confirmed.

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Appendix:

Interview:

1- Hello! Are students of English?

- 2- I am conducting a research on a given topic, I have some questions. Would you answer them?
 - 3- To communicate with you with your female counterparts, you tend to use particular linguistic forms which do not belong to the standard language. What are some of the expressions you use in happy situations?
 - 4- What are the expressions you use in sad situations?
 - 5- How do you refer to you female mates?
 - 6- How do you refer to males?
 - 7- If you have some other situations in which you use some special expressions that have no room in the standard language?
 - 8- For which function you resort to these expressions?
-