

Oberemko Kateryna Oleksandrivna

The 2nd year of student of Higher Education,
Faculty of Economics, Management and Psychology
State University of Trade and Economics, Ukraine

Zhurkova Olha Leonidivna 

PhD in Philology, Associate Professor of the Department
of Foreign Philology and Translation
State University of Trade and Economics, Ukraine

INTERNET SLANG AS A NEW LINGUISTIC NORM IN ENGLISH

The rapid digitalization of communication has led to profound changes in the structure and functioning of modern English. The Internet has created a communicative space in which language is used under conditions of speed, informality, constant interaction, and multimodality. Within this environment, Internet slang has emerged not as a random collection of informal expressions, but as a stable and productive linguistic phenomenon with its own rules, patterns of formation, and pragmatic functions. Today, Internet slang plays an essential role in everyday English communication and increasingly functions as a new linguistic norm within digital contexts.

In this regard, the relevance of the study lies in the need to understand the impact of digital communication on the transformation of linguistic norms in modern English. Accordingly, the aim of the work is to study Internet slang as a modern linguistic phenomenon and to analyze its structural features, as well as the methods of its formation and functioning in the English language. In this case, the object of the research is modern English in the conditions of digital communication, and the subject is Internet slang, including its lexical, grammatical, graphic, and pragmatic features, as well as the mechanisms of its formation and functioning in the online environment.

Internet slang refers to a range of lexical, grammatical, and graphic forms that are characteristic of online interaction. These include abbreviations, acronyms, phonetic spellings, clipped words, blends, semantic shifts, expressive spellings, and multimodal elements such as emojis.

One of the most productive mechanisms of Internet slang formation is acronymization. Acronyms such as *LOL* (laughing out loud), *BRB* (be right back), *IDK* (I don't know), *IMO* (in my opinion), *TBH* (to be honest), *FYI* (for your information), and *NSFW* (not safe for work) are widely used across platforms,

including instant messaging, social networks, and online forums. These forms initially emerged as time-saving devices but have gradually acquired additional pragmatic meanings. For example, *LOL* is frequently used as a discourse marker to soften statements, express irony, or signal friendliness rather than to indicate actual laughter [5].

This pragmatic reanalysis demonstrates that Internet slang items often move beyond their literal meanings and become interactional tools. Another important group of Internet slang consists of clipped forms. Clipping involves shortening longer words without changing their core meaning. Common examples include *app* (application), *pic* (picture), *vid* (video), *bio* (biography), *stats* (statistics), and *admin* (administrator). These forms are now so deeply embedded in digital communication that many of them are used even in semi-formal and professional contexts. Their widespread acceptance illustrates how Internet slang can move toward normalization and blur the boundary between informal and standard language use [3].

Phonetic spelling is another characteristic feature of Internet slang. Some words, such as *u* (you), *ur* (your/you're), *tho* (though), *cuz* or *bc* (because), *gonna* (going to), *wanna* (want to), and *kinda* (kind of) reflect spoken pronunciation and create an informal, conversational tone in written communication. These spellings are not the result of ignorance of standard norms but are deliberate stylistic choices. Research shows that users who actively employ phonetic spellings online are fully capable of using standard orthography in academic or professional writing, which indicates conscious register switching rather than linguistic decline [2]. Blending is another productive word-formation process in Internet slang. Blends such as *bromance* (brother + romance), *hangry* (hungry + angry), *mansplain* (man + explain), *staycation* (stay + vacation), and *infotainment* (information + entertainment) demonstrate how new meanings are created by combining existing lexical elements. These words often carry expressive or evaluative meanings and reflect social attitudes and cultural trends. Their rapid diffusion through social media platforms highlights the Internet's role as a catalyst for lexical innovation in English [4].

Semantic shift also plays a crucial role in the development of Internet slang. Many common English words have acquired new meanings in digital contexts. For instance, *friend* has become a verb meaning "to add someone to a social network," while *follow*, *like*, *share*, *mute*, and *block* have developed platform-specific meanings that differ significantly from their traditional uses. Similarly, the adjective *viral* is now primarily associated with online content that spreads rapidly rather than with biological processes. These semantic changes demonstrate how

digital communication reshapes conceptual categories in language [3].

Internet slang is also characterized by expressive spelling and graphic emphasis. Users frequently employ letter repetition (*soooo funny, noooo way*), capitalization (*THIS, OMG*), and excessive punctuation (*!!!, ???*) to convey emotion, emphasis, or irony. These features compensate for the absence of prosody and facial expression in written online communication. According to David Crystal, such expressive strategies increase the emotional richness of digital discourse and function as substitutes for non-verbal cues [3]. In addition to textual forms, Internet slang operates in close interaction with emojis and other visual symbols. Emojis often replace or reinforce verbal expressions to describe emotions, such as amusement or disbelief. In many cases, emojis function as pragmatic markers that guide interpretation and reduce ambiguity. Their integration with textual slang forms creates a multimodal system of meaning-making that is characteristic of contemporary online communication [1].

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Internet slang plays a significant role in identity construction and group affiliation. Expressions such as *cringe*, *flex*, *ghosting*, *low-key*, *spill the tea*, *simp*, and *stan* originated in specific online communities and later entered mainstream usage. The use of such expressions signals familiarity with digital culture and shared knowledge of online discourse practices. Jannis Androutsopoulos notes that linguistic choices in online environments function as markers of social belonging and cultural alignment, distinguishing insiders from outsiders [1]. Importantly, Internet slang demonstrates regularity and predictability, which are essential features of linguistic norms. Users generally share an implicit understanding of when and where certain slang forms are appropriate. While expressions such as *idk* or *brb* are acceptable in chats or comments, they are usually avoided in formal writing. This ability to alternate between registers indicates that Internet slang does not replace standard English but coexists with it as a context-specific norm. Baron emphasizes that digital communication encourages linguistic flexibility and heightened awareness of situational appropriateness rather than linguistic simplification [2].

Thus, Internet slang should not be viewed as a chaotic or degrading force in language. On the contrary, the presence of stable word-formation patterns, pragmatic functions, and shared usage conventions indicates that Internet slang constitutes a structured and evolving subsystem of English. Its widespread use, communicative efficiency, and social significance support the argument that Internet slang functions as a new linguistic norm within digital communication, reflecting broader processes of language change in the contemporary world.

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