

An Investigation into the Nature and Mode of Word-formation Processes in Adolescent Iranians' Slang: The Case of Vocabulary of Tarafdari Media Users

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Abstract

Due to dynamicity, short-livedness, and malleability of slang, investigations into this register could provide linguists with invaluable information. Despite its significance, the study of slang, especially the type used by adolescent Iranians, has not met with a warm reception. Drawing on a linguistic approach and identifying slang words employed by young adults, this study delved into the salient word-formation processes involved and the in-group formation function fulfilled by the register in the data collected. To this end, initially 119 informal words were spotted in the user comments of the news of Tarafdari sports online media within 1400-1401. To determine whether they can be counted slang, a continuous informal-formal scale was developed and distributed among a sample of 385 male and female native speakers within the age range of 15-29. The judgment based on the native speaker linguistic hunch subsequently yielded 63 words, which were then exposed to word-formation analysis. It was found, as far as the data of this study is concerned, slang used in the aforementioned social arena essentially fulfills an othering function through euphemism/weak dysphemism. In addition, Persian slang words are created through such word-formation processes as borrowing, analogy, and some types of reduction, including initialism and backformation.

Key Words: slang, adolescent Iranians, word-formation processes, continuous scale, Tarafdari online media

1. Introduction

Providing a strict definition of slang in the form of a cut and dried simple statement is no easy task. Accordingly, it may be more appropriate to refer to its characteristic features to understand it accurately. Its first property is that the register is a reflection of casual and informal spoken interactions. The next characteristic is its low distribution and transient life so that it gives way to other words and expressions after a while. Slang words are also generally

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inconceivable and not easy to pigeonhole. Finally, the register places emphasis on taboo aspects of life.

If we consider language as an organism which is constantly in the process of change and growth, its study helps linguists to better understand its nature and mode with regard to word-formation processes and semantic developments. Additionally, since such a register is closely entwined with the community and its problems and is in a way a reflection of the issues of the contemporary society which we inhabit, sociologists, and preferably sociolinguists, are able to discover, analyze, and record specific linguistic and cultural patterns through its study.

The overarching questions advanced in this case study include:

- What salient word-formation processes have been employed in the slang words and expressions of the field of soccer in Persian online media?
- How do the aforementioned words and expressions fulfill an in-group formation function?

In keeping with this and with regard to the scant attention linguists have paid to the Persian slang and especially the register used in sports, the present research has sought to examine the slang words and expressions employed in discussions on soccer in online media in terms of word-formation processes so that it could, in its own turn, expose how the register functions. The main purpose of the investigation was initially identifying a list of the most significant word-formation processes in the comments posted under the sports news and reports of Tarafdari online media containing slang expressions and subsequently illuminating the strategies of in-group inclusion and out-group exclusion.

2. Theoretical Framework

The word-formation processes, which support the productivity feature in human linguistic system telling it apart from other animals' communication system, is one of the major issues and sub-disciplines within the science of linguistics posing two basic questions: What new linguistic forms, being previously absent in a language, come to be used to express certain (new) concepts? and, what old forms, being used in a language, are employed to communicate new ideas? Some of the most salient word-formation processes in language include: borrowing, calque, blending, compounding, initialism, clipping, derivation, backformation, and analogy.

One of the properties of the slang register, about whose functioning little information is available and, in this respect, warrants conducting more scientific and systematic research into, is the ideological role played by that linguistic variety in interactions. Such a role played by slang in text and talk, especially of the sort used by the youth, indicates the discursive function of foregrounding a range of identity types based on gender, age, ethnicity, etc. It is realized through

reinforcing and highlighting in-group membership and excluding the other and positive self-presentation and negative other-representation with regard to actions and achievements.

3. Methodology

To carry out this research, initially 119 informal words were spotted in the user comments of the news of Tarafdari sports online media within 2021-2022. To determine whether they can be counted slang, a continuous informal-formal scale was developed and distributed among a sample of 385 male and female native speakers within the age range of 15-29. The judgment based on the native speaker linguistic hunch subsequently yielded 63 words, which were then exposed to word-formation analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Examination and analysis of the words and expressions selected by the youth participating in the research attested to the existence and role of a range of word-formation processes in the creation of Persian slang in the domain of soccer. The processes, which encompass borrowing, analogy as well as reduction ones such as initialism/abbreviation and backformation, were scrutinized in the present research and were accompanied by instances extracted from the data. A point worth noting was that, as far as the present small-scale study is concerned, such common processes in Persian as compounding, derivation, and reduplication were almost non-existent. This might show that the Persian slang deviates in some ways from the standard Persian.

With respect to the most important semantic strategies of inclusion and in-group membership and, by extension out-group exclusion, the data revealed that the slang words and expressions, arrived at in the course of the investigation, were involved in the othering of sports rivals via the functions of terminating a discussion in one's favor, using vocative in a derogatory way to address the other groups, and reducing the force of dysphemistic expressions.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

It seems that English is the source of a considerable number of slang words and expressions used by the contemporary Iranian youth. It might appear to some extent natural and even inevitable; however, overlooking this phenomenon could pose a threat to the Persian language which is currently being flooded by the surprises of globalization.

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