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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION:** a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – London, England, 2025. Issue 5

**Languages of publication: Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish**

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference «**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION**». Which took place in London , 2025.

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## AGE-SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LANGUAGE SPEAKERS AND YOUTH SLANG

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**Abstract.** The article examines the age-related characteristics of youth slang usage and the specific features of linguistic behavior among speakers of different age groups. Special attention is given to the process of maturation and its influence on linguistic habits. The study analyzes the age boundaries of youth jargon competence and compares data from domestic and international sociolinguistic research.

**Keywords:** *youth slang, age-related features, sociolinguistics, speech behavior, language and age.*

The issue of age differences in the use of youth slang is of considerable interest to sociolinguistics, as language reflects not only social but also age-based stratification within society. Researchers note that a person's speech behavior changes throughout their life, which naturally raises the question of the specificity of youth jargon and the age boundaries of its functioning [10, p. 54; 15, p. 61].

As is well known, growing up is an integral part of human life. With age, not only one's worldview changes, but also the nature of one's speech behavior. Even to non-specialists, it is obvious that an individual's language does not remain stable throughout their entire life [12, p. 88].

Sociolinguistic studies show that when examining age-related differences in language, it is necessary to take into account a person's biological age, social roles, and professional-educational status [4, p. 33; 18, p. 45]. Age groups may be viewed as 15–20, 20–25, 25–30 years, and so on [15, p. 57; 18, p. 48].

Innovative tendencies dominate in the speech behavior of young people, whereas linguistic conservatism is characteristic of middle-aged and older speakers [10, p. 102; 15, p. 64].

The acquisition of youth slang typically begins in the prepubertal period — from about 12 to 14 years of age, when adolescents spend a significant amount of time at school and among their peers [4, p. 52]. During this period, skills of informal communication are formed, and young people search for self-identity and independence from adults.

Adolescents' desire for self-expression is reflected in their language behavior, including the use of slang as a means of group identification. Thus, slang performs not only a communicative function but also a sociocultural one [3, p. 27; 8, p. 19].

By the ages of 23–30, with the completion of education, the start of professional activity, and the formation of a family, significant changes in language behavior are observed [10, p. 65; 7, p. 93]. People begin to strive for speech standardization, avoiding excessive use of jargon.





This is explained by several factors:

1. the necessity of adhering to language norms in the professional environment;
2. the influence of the speech community;
3. the focus on correct use of the literary language in raising children [10, p. 71].

Research shows that people over the age of 30 exhibit a tendency toward linguistic conservatism, which diminishes after retirement [10, p. 85].

The age boundaries for proficiency in youth slang are interpreted differently by researchers.

M. Kopylenko associates slang users with the age category of 14–25 years, linking the upper limit to ideological maturation [8, p. 42]. E. Uzdinskaya defines youth jargon as a sublanguage used by people from 14 to 25 years old [16, p. 29]. E. G. Borisova-Lukashenets expands the age category up to 30 years [2, p. 38].

A. Marochkin indicates an age range of 12–30 years [14, p. 17], while L. P. Krysyn includes individuals up to 33–35 years in the group of youth jargon users [9, p. 22]. The broadest boundaries are proposed by M. A. Grachev, who defines slang speakers as ranging from 6–7 to 35 years old [6, p. 48]. Thus, the age limits of youth slang are conditional and depend on sociocultural and professional factors.

Foreign studies confirm similar trends.

For example, K. Eble limits the age of his informants to university years — 18–22 — but notes that many continue to use slang in the following years of their studies [3, p. 24].

In the study of French *verlan*, differences are also observed: N. Lefkovitz associates it with adolescents aged 13–17 [13, p. 36]; K. Bachman and L. Bazié link *verlan* to the university environment [1, p. 19]; J. Georges defines the age category as 13–25 years [5, p. 28].

Thus, there is no universal age boundary for proficiency in youth slang: it varies depending on the cultural and social characteristics of society.

The issue of age boundaries in youth slang remains unresolved, as language is subject to constant change. Slang, reflecting social and age-based self-identification, gradually fades as an individual matures. However, elements of “conserved” speech habits persist among older generations, confirming the complex relationship between language and age [6, p. 59; 10, p. 96].

Age is one of the key factors determining the dynamics of youth slang development and the specific features of language behavior in general.

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