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The differences between teenagers (age 10-14) and students in the use of slang

Les différences entre l'argot des adolescents et celui des étudiants se manifestent avant tout dans les thématiques, et notamment dans les noms donnés aux différents départements, aux professeurs ou à des passions telles l'alcool, la drogue, la sexualité (y compris les noms des parties génitales), le jeu, etc.

Le style du sociolecte étudiantin est plus grossier mais également plus spirituel que celui de l'argot des adolescents.

1. Some antecedents

In 1996 I published the first and richest collection of synonyms of Hungarian student slang – with the title *Mini-tini-szótár* (Dictionary of Little Teenagers). It contains the slang use of a synchronical period (1975–1990) of a homogeneous age group (age 10-14). Data were collected in all counties and beyond the Hungarian borders with the help of pupils and teachers. (Naturally we sent them photocopied lists of subscriptions.)

The “corpus” they collected brought a quarter of a million lexical elements. Our thesaurus contains a sample of more than 30,000 of these words and expressions grouped around 23 themes, arranged in 1,760 entries in clustered forms, ranging from school life to all other walks of life. More than 2,600 words and expressions from over 40 languages are accompanied by interpretations and etymological explanations.

Towards the turn of the millennia I ran a language course on slang for university students for 10 years. The students had to collect slang words and expressions from the fields of education and various topics of life. Approximately 15,000 words and expressions proved to be useful for a future thesaurus with the title ‘The slang of Pécs University Students of Art’.

In my lecture I would like to give a brief survey of the differences between the two age groups in the use of slang. The main differences are in the topics – the ones mentioned occur rarely if at all in the younger teenagers' vocabulary.

2.1.1.

What do the students call the different year groups of university? They are mainly given animal names which suggest symbolic meanings. First year students have been called *storks*,¹ *freshers*, *freshmen* for ages; nowadays they are also *little squirrels*, *rabbits*, *frightened fawns*, *mugs*, *garden dwarfs*. Other year groups are referred to by bird names: *daw*, *noble crane*, *proud falcon*, *wise owl*, *old eagle*.

2.1.2.

Different faculties and their students are given humorous, ironic and derogatory names, most of them are metaphors or puns.

The students of the Faculty of Arts are named *Bedouins* or *rucksack carriers*. Those studying psychology are titled as *brain searchers/browsers*, law students are called *fiscalis* (*lawyer*), those who study ethnography and romology, are named *a big peasant and a gipsy together*. The largest number of negative names was given to the students of an Institute for Adult Education: *buffet*, *camp*, *warming* or *cloakroom majors*. A mining engineer is named a *mole*, the civil engineer is a *giraffe* or *tower crane*, a medical student is a *butcher* or *murderer*.

2.1.3.

There are some interesting names for different types of students, e.g. the student of another faculty is called a *foreigner/alien*, the *dictator* is someone who looks after his own interest, the *humanist* is someone who wants to help everyone, the *Legionnaire* is the one who sleeps illegally in the hall of residence. The hard-working student *studies his ass off*, the group consisting of girls only is a *henhouse*.

¹ The author gives Hungarian slang terms in English translation (the editor's remark).

2.1.4.

Teachers' names also provide a wide range of examples. It may originate in the fact that good is considered natural, while bad is disapproved of, and numerous synonyms are created to express our views on it. The classical example for this in Hungarian linguistics is the survey by Albert Lehr, who, just in Western Hungary, collected 3,000 words for a drunken man, while there are only a few for a sober one. As a literary example I would refer to Shakespeare, who in Julius Caesar – recited by Marcus Antonius – says:

The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones...

Let us see what the students call us, teachers. The young lady teacher is a *school chicken*, the elderly woman is a *moustached auntie*, the nervous teacher is a *red puffball*, the patient one is a *vanilla pudding*, the naive one is a *vacuum cleaner* because he swallows everything, the cruel teacher is a *jackal*, the strict one is a *smiling murderer*. The dull lecturer '*knows so much that it is hard for him to express*'.

There are a lot of 'talking names': a wicked woman is a *dragon*, the malevolent is a *tumour* (see malevolent cancer), the shouting teacher is *Terror Theresa*, the sour-faced is *Vinegar Yolanda*, the small one is *Mini Mary*. The grey-haired teacher is the *Big White Chief*, the red-haired is *Smöre* (see the Swedish novel Nils Holgersson), the waddling man is a *penguin*.

2.2. Bad habits, passions

A great deal of students' vocabulary is concerned with bad habits such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, sexuality, gambling. Stylistically they are rude but very witty.

2.2.1. Smoking

Unfortunately, smoking is rather frequent with young teenagers, as they imitate adults – a large number of students are heavy smokers. The most frequently used words come from argot or from foreign languages. Hungarian *bagó* (= cigarette), *bagózni* (= to smoke), *bagózás* (= smoking) are widely used words, as well as *cigi* which is an abbreviation of cigarette. You can also hear *bagaretta*, which sounds Italian and is a contamination of *bagó* and *cigaretta*.

There are also words of foreign origin: *bláz* which comes from German *blasen* (= blow), *staub* which means dust, *hamed* is of English origin (deformed *hand-made*), going back to 'rolled by hand'. There are several metaphors like *vitamin stick*, *signal flare*. The words *coffin nail* or *cancer stick* refer to the lethal effects of smoking and also *feeds his cancer*, *wallpapers his lungs*. Other concepts related to smoking are also mainly negative: a smoking site is called *stinking cave* or *gas chamber*, the smoker girl is *piro* (piromania) or *sucker*, a heavy smoker is a *tobacco factory*, a *factory chimney* and *subscribes to death*.

2.2.2 Alcohol

It has an amazing vocabulary as drinking is very popular with most students.

The mildest drink is beer, and referring to a slogan in the 1950s, it is called *liquid bread*. You also hear a *litre of bread*, *clear soup*, *lab report*.

Wine is less frequently mentioned, but we should not forget about bad quality wines called *croucher* or *fence breaker*.

Pálinka, which is a strong alcoholic drink in Hungary, has a large vocabulary of humorous terms, e.g. *ampulla*, *father's milk* (by analogy from mother's milk), *elixir* = *water of life*.

The influence of this drink can be traced in the expressions *liquid overcoat*, *trouser-teaser*, *speed*, *ignition feed*, *hand-grenade*, *instant killer*. *Firewater* reminds us of western films. Ironically it can be *ink*, *thorn* or *tü-tü*. The last word comes from the language of small children.

Liqueurs are considered to be women's drinks so they call them *nail polish* or *horse spittle*. Whiskey is called *jacket* which is a pun coming from Jack Daniels' Whiskey.

Cognac which has Napoleon's portrait on its label can be *Tummy Warrior* or *Napcsi*.

Students are very creative in mixing alcoholic drinks e.g. the strong drink is put into the beer pot which is then filled up with beer. This mixture is called *submarine*. Red wine and coke make the *hunter* or *caretaker*. White wine and coke make the *frog*. Pale and brown ale mixed together give the so-called *sliced beer*. If you mix vodka, red wine, rum and fruit juice, you get a *student's cocktail*.

An alcoholic has quite pejorative names, e.g. in the folk dialect: *Alkohol Pista*. There are more derogative metaphors, too: *wine jug*, *spirit boiler*, *spiritual brother*, *gut-builder* (referring to beer gut).

The teetotaler is called *dry drinker* or *loop of water*.

The one who desires alcohol has a *tottering throat* or a *dusty kidney* or *liver*, *spits cotton-wool*.

The alcoholic *drinks coffee*, *strengthens his arms*, *feels his tank*, *feels his hump* (see camels). Some argot words are also known like gipsy *dzsuvázik* (*dzsuvel* = live), *piál* (drink), Slovak *szlopál* (*slopat'* = drink).

For drunks we have more than 200 words and expressions, most of them referring to restricted motion and bad physical condition. Many of them are rude, e.g. *stands like a grandfather clock*, *he is arse holes*, *he knocked himself out*, *he isn't drunk but dancing samba*, *he is reading* (lying on the table), *bone dead*, *soaked*.

If somebody is unconscious, they say he is *stoned out*, *totally paralytic*, *torn film*, *no picture*, *no sound*.

Having drunk too much, people may vomit, which is expressed in various ways: *sacrifice to the china god* (toilet bowl), *talk into the toilet bowl*, *drive the china bus* (holding on the toilet bowl), *drive a truck*, *hunt fox*.

A funny idea is IHB = *Iszunk*, *hányunk*, *belefekszünk* = *we drink*, *vomit then lie in it*; or *lunch wants fresh air*; *stomach exercise*, *throw up*, *let up the boa*, *yawn colours*.

Another consequence is hangover. Traditionally it is expressed by the German *blau Montag*, English *blue Monday*. Otherwise: *rumbling monkeys*, *burning hell*, *feeling like a soaked rag*; *as if he had been thrown into the washing-machine*; *got creased like a piece of paper*.

2.3 Drugs

As using drugs is illegal, it is obvious that speaking about them suggests a vocabulary of secrecy. Students know the types, the effects and the activities connected with them very well. Whether they use drugs or not, I have no information.

2.3.1

The word drug is often substituted by a neutral word or phrase, e.g.: *material, goods, stamp, stuff, chocolate, energy, gesenk* (German *gift, present*), *my best friend, parcel, powder, cookie, green T-shirt*, etc.

Hashish is nicknamed as *baby drug, chocolate, haska* or *mariska* (nickname for Mary) or is given neutral names like *brick* or *flintstone*.

Heroin is characterized by colours or paronyms: *brown, brown sugar, Harry, Hera, slow*.

Cocaine comes from coca leaves; the drug is characterized by its white colour and paronyms: *white, white substance, snow, caster sugar, coke, coco, coal*. To its effect they refer with the word *crack* or German *big Ringelspiel* (= *merry-go-round*); *Charlie and choco*.

LSD is also a dangerous drug made from ergot, and has various names: *Buddha, Gorbachev, polar bear, dragon*. The illegally and secretly spread drug is hidden in the names *stamp, lolly pop, paper, strip*. Other strange terms are: *amfesz, Jolly Joker, vest and universe*.

Marijuana is a popular drug. Some dictionaries consider it a Spanish word, the drug coming from a Mexican plant, others state that it is dried from the leaves of the Indian hemp. The names come mainly from the green colour of the plant: *bush, grass, lawn, greens*.

Other words come from proper names: *Marcса, Mariska, Mary Jane, Miguel*. It is also called *CD, night cap* or *trumpet* (referring to the shape of the cigarette).

The one who is going to smoke it, *rolls up a trumpet*, the one who gives it around, *starts the spangli* (German *Spange* = *snap, staple*), the one who smokes it, *explodes a jo* (joint), or *chews grass*.

Morphine is a very dangerous drug. Paronyms refer to it: *monyó, morfi, morfó*, and a very mild expression: *make tea*.

Speed is an amphetamine descent which is sold in the form of white powder: *energy, swift, speeding, rock'n'roll, Speedy Gonzalez, white engine, snowing, hovering* or *walking down the street* (sniffing powder).

2.3.2

Drug addiction has a large vocabulary mostly derived from the names of drugs: *stuffy, dependent, stamp licker, junkie, fixer, grassy, sniffer*. There are talking names like *Jankó* (junkie), *cocolino bear* (advertisement), *Narkó Iván* and animal names: *bat, l'aba* (Croatian frog).

The effect of drugs is also very vividly described: *had a trip, had a shot, is spaced out, is switched on, has a flash, is happy, is junked up, has a program, is stoned, and Red Bull, Turkey*.

2.3.3

The activity and the means of taking drugs are very realistic: *sniffing, injection, pricking, shot*. Overdosing is expressed by the *Gold Shot* while *smoking* or *piping* are milder expressions.

The tools (syringe and needle) are named after weapons: *cannon, tool, sling, gun, pump, revolver, stukker* (German name), *instrument*.

There are some expressions reflecting to fear or anxiety: *I feel horror/ paralysed, I am overdosed/filled*.

2.3.4

You rarely come across expressions of withdrawal: *K.O., gas, come off the drug/stuff*.

2.3.5

Drug dealers are called by various names: *substance seller, stuff man, dealer, druggist, pusher, magic grass seller, nepper*.

A question to a drug dealer: *Got some syndrome?*

2.4

Gambling: an amusement for young teenagers can be a destructive passion for students.

Playing cards are called *the Bible of the devil*, so playing them is a *Bible lesson* or *dl'ukel* (Gipsy word for dog). They often play with *marked cards* (cheat).

The gambling hall is called a *den of vice*, the person involved is a *vidiotic* (video-idiotic).

2.5

Sex is taboo and has an incredible vocabulary. A sexually active man is described by names of opera heroes: *Donjózsi* (Don Juan), *Casanova*, mythological names like *satyr* or Spanish *macho*. You frequently hear *bull male*, *wolf*; *female flesh for lunch*, *Bekő Tóni*, *Benkő Hanni* (witty talking names in Hungarian dialect; they look like innocent proper names, but their meaning is rude).

A sexually active woman is described as *throwing herself at somebody*, *wearing tarty dresses*, *making slinky movements*, *having straw burning eyes*. The woman pretending to be innocent is *Snow White*, the one who has a regular partner is a *snow drop*, the ill-famed is *someone whom all the students had had*.

2.5.2

Male genitals have about 150 synonyms in the students' collection. Most of them are rude metaphors: *best friend*, *nuns' milking cow*, *clown*, *sausage*, *tail*, *cue*, *stick*, *cobra*, *lollipop*, *magic flute*, *baggy microphone*, *Johnny*, *diamond*.

The female genitals are called *purse*, *pussy*, *small pot*, *bunny*, *flower*, *Suzy*, *nookie*.

The clitoris is called *screamer*.

2.5.3

The expressions of making love also form a rich vocabulary: *stealing apples*, *watering flowers*, *to bunny*, *coming together for a throw*, *putting together what they have*, *sewing*, *altering trousers by 20 cm*. There are also technical terms like: *they are welding/turning/jeeping* (on the back seat of a car).

Coitus interruptus: *get off before the terminal/at Redfern* (Australia), group sex is called *gruppen* (German).

2.6

Fashion: platform shoes have more than 100 different names: *mine-stepper*, *cockroach-stamper*, *disco huff*, *storied lass*, *fuck-me-shoes*, *caterpillar sandals*,

moon craft, IQ-shoes, khoturnus, inferiority therapy, high-stand, plaza scooter, whore-roller, giraffe-feeder.

This type of shoes can be rather dangerous, so the following joke should stand as an illustration to this:

'How can a female student commit suicide?'
'She throws herself off her shoes.'

3.

All in all, the differences in the use of slang between the two age groups are in the vocabulary of the above mentioned topics. In other fields of life the differences are more moderate.

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