

The Evolution of English Slang among Georgian Youth: A Study of Linguistic Hybridity and Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the development of English slang among speakers in Georgia from 1990 to the present. The study examines the sociolinguistic aspects of the use of English slang among Georgian youths and the process of incorporation of slang into the Georgian youth culture, with special reference to the distinction between slang and barbarisms. This paper also incorporates issues related to globalization, the use of digital media, recent educational interventions, and the effect of Gen Z in bringing slang into mainstream usage. Quantitative questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and social media content analysis are employed to investigate the patterns of slang usage, frequently used slang, and the social-cultural factors that enable its use. It is established that informal Georgian speech is experiencing further Anglicization, especially regarding the usage of English slang by younger generations of Georgians, particularly urbanites. The study touches on language policy and conservation.

Keywords: English slang, Georgian language, linguistic hybridity, globalization, digital media, Gen Z, barbarisms, sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

The use and adoption of English slang in non-English speaking societies are best seen in terms of globalization and culture, as well as media interaction. Regarding Georgia as a post-Soviet country occupying a rather geopolitically sensitive position between Europe and Asia, the usage of English slang can, therefore, be seen as a rather peculiar example of a language and culture contact. Despite the growth in importance of the English language following Georgia's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, what dominates the Georgian youth populace and the Georgian way of life is informal English, specifically slang.

English slang used in Georgia is sometimes mistaken for barbarisms, which are called words of another language that do not meet the phonetic, morphological, or syntactic norms of the receiving language. While barbarisms are considered to be a negative factor corrupting a language, slang is a rather young informal register that constantly changes and is employed for building up identity, joking, or rebellious actions. Slang terms such as *dope*, *slay*, *woke*, and *ghosting* have found their way into Georgian vernacular, often through digital media and cultural interactions. This article is an attempt to discuss these differences and the reasons why English slang enters Georgian society with a focus on Generation Z (Gen Z).

This article also discusses these differences and the reasons for the penetration of English slang into Georgian society, attributing the process to Gen Z. The study aims to achieve three primary objectives: (1) to compare English slang and barbarisms with the linguistic background of the Georgian language; (2) to pinpoint the sociocultural, digital and educational factors contributing to the spread of English slang in Georgian community; (3) to determine the influence of the Gen Z age group on popularizing the English slang as the feature of modern

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Georgian culture. In doing so, the study furthers the knowledge of linguistic hybridity and the consequences of language policy in a globalized context.

2. Methodology

To answer these questions, this research uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure that the phenomenon is well understood.

2.1 Quantitative Data Collection

Data were collected through surveys distributed to 500 participants across five major cities in Georgia: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Rustavi, and Zugdidi. The participants were 16 to 35 years old and were chosen as the target group most likely to use English slang. This age group was chosen because it includes Generation Z and younger Millennials, who are most exposed to the global digital culture and are most active users of social media platforms where English slang is often met and used. The purpose of selecting the cities was to include the variety of social, economic, and cultural settings of different cities in the state of Georgia. These cities were selected because of the high level of Internet usage and cultural diversity, which allows observing the process of the distribution of English slang among young people.

Some of the questions covered in the survey were: frequency of exposure to English slang, frequency of use of English slang, and perception of English slang when used in social media, with friends, and at school. The participants were also required to indicate their level of English, the channels through which they got to learn English slang, and whether they considered slang to have a positive or negative impact on the Georgian language.

2.2 Qualitative Data Collection

In addition, 30 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were held with English teachers, language experts, students, and culture critics to understand sociocultural reasons for the use of English slang. Interviews singled out several themes such as the perceived prestige of English, whether the language of media and popular culture matters, the generation gap, and the conflict between the standard language, on the one hand, and the modernizing tendency, on the other hand, were highlighted. The interviews were conducted and transcribed; then, the data was analyzed through thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

2.3 Social Media Content Analysis

To examine the spontaneous incorporation of English slang in the posts, an additional study was carried out on Georgian FB, Instagram, and TikTok accounts. This analysis sought to determine how slang terms are incorporated, altered, or integrated into Georgian language structures and present the actual examples of the processes taking place in digital environments.

3. Results

According to the survey findings, 78% of respondents often come across slang phrases in English on a daily basis, mainly on social media platforms and various discussion forums. Among these, 62% said they frequently used English slang in interaction with peers, particularly in the informal setting. The most adopted English slang terms were dope, vibe check, period, boujee, side eye, bombastic side eye, slay queen, ghosting, woke, fam, sis, simp, extra, cringe, slay, glow up, main character, CEO, ok boomer, say less, and I'm weak.

These terms differ in terms of their usage; that is, some of them are more popular than others. Chart 1 below shows Georgian respondents' perception of different English slang terms. Among the ten most popular terms there is such as 'Dope,' 'Ghosting,' and 'Cringe.' Such terms were used more often by respondents belonging to the 16-25 age group and those living in urban areas. This is elaborated in Chart 2, which illustrates the percentage of respondents who use English slang by age. It also reveals that the first two age groups (16-20 and 21-25) use slang more often than the latter groups.

A mixed method of English slang was identified using content analysis in collaboration with Facebook posts in the Georgian language. For example, such expressions as "ეს ფილმი არის ძალოან cringe" ("This movie is very cringe") or "იმ ბიჭმა flex გააკეთა" ("That guy did a flex") are good examples. Such a mix of Georgian and English words is suggestive of the process of translation of phatic expressions and English slang in particular since speakers of Georgian adapt the ubiquitous slang and translate it to fit the linguistic environment they belong to.

3.1 Slang Use by Age and Region

Based on the data, it is also established that there was a geographical variation in the use of slang. Socioeconomic status also played an important role; more participants from the urban area reported coming across English slang, probably because more people in the urban area get involved with digital media and people speaking English.

The last chart, Chart 3, shows a similar pattern to the previous two – the respondents from urban areas use more English slang than their rural counterparts.

3.2 Differentiation Between Slang and Barbarisms

Although slang and barbarisms involve the use of loanwords, the roles and attitudes toward them in Georgian society are quite distinct. Barbarisms are considered unnecessary interferences of foreign words into the Georgian language and its flow. They are regarded as "interference" to the purity of the language.

For example, replacing the Georgian word "მოწონება" (mozoneba) with "ლაიკი" (laiki) for 'like' is considered as barbarism. On the other hand, slang is a way of creating new linguistic means to encode new concepts, feelings, or social roles that the first language does not provide. Phrases like 'woke' (ვოკე), 'cringe' (კრინჯი), and 'fam' (ფამ) are perfect examples of English slang words that have been phonetically translated into Georgian and do not have meanings that can be fully translated back into English due to the users' complete integration into the youth international subculture.

3.3 Causes of the Flow of English Slang in Georgia

Among the key factors that have led to the rapid adoption of English slang in Georgia are several sociocultural and technological factors, such as:

- **Globalization and Media Exposure:** The main reasons are the global spread of the English language and the penetration of Western culture in Georgia. Watching TV programs, films, listening to music, and other products of popular Internet sites such as Netflix, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok introduce Georgian young people to the Anglo-U.S. slang. This is important because 'Alternative' media often introduce new terms and brands them through context and repeatability; terms such as 'dope,' 'ghosting,' and 'slay queen' that circulate in Georgian media are well understood within these contexts.
- **Digital and Social Media Influence:** It should be noted that Georgian youth actively use social networks, and the main language in these networks is English slang. Such words as "period," "woke," and "fam" are also made popular and 'georgianized' in these digital platforms where users mix them with Georgian to form a particular variety. The recent use of "slay queen" to describe President Salome Zourabichvili when she supported Gen Z demonstrators against the "Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence" shows how English slang can be politically and culturally translated.
- **Educational Reforms and English Proficiency:** The other reason is education. English is now on the list of obligatory subjects in Georgia schools, with more focus on communication than memorizing. This has exposed the learners to more informal English and, therefore, more slang. English teachers report that students are increasingly interested in learning slang to understand popular culture and communicate more effectively with their peers and on digital platforms (Respondent B, Batumi, 2024).
- **Sociocultural Identity and Peer Pressure:** English slang is often used as a marker of modernity, sophistication, and alignment with global youth culture. For Georgian Gen Z, the use of the terms 'woke' or the choice not to use terms that might be considered 'cringe' are not simply matters of language but of identity. Terms like 'main character' or 'vibe check' appeal to this generation of 'it's all about me' spirit.

3.4 Role of Gen Z in Slang Usage

Generation Z, the ones born between the late nineties and early 2000s, has caused Georgia to accept and incorporate English slang. English slang has been adopted at a faster pace in this generation due to their ease in using technologies, their experience with cross-border content, and their skills in demanding new forms of communication. For Gen Z, using terms like "simp," "extra," "cringe," and "glow up" is not just a matter of following trends; it is a way to assert their identities and communicate within their peer groups. A 19-year-old respondent from Tbilisi said, "I think it is cooler [to use English slang such as 'woke' or 'lit']. It is like a badge that indicates that we are on the same

page with what is going on around the globe. This is in line with the function of slang as an index of the contemporary and inclusion into the Georgian young generation.

Likewise, a 23-year-old university student from Kutaisi said, "When I say 'ghosting' or 'main character,' I do it because these words describe feelings and situations better than Georgian ones. Also, my friends and I often employ all of them while using Instagram and TikTok." This research applies the insight to argue that Gen Z prefers English slang because it is easier to relate to and express particular feelings or circumstances through social media networking sites.

Slang is another area where Gen Z's presence is most apparent; in particular, they have recontextualized them. For example, "simp" has been translated to "სიმპიონა" in Georgian, meaning a person who goes out of their way to please someone they like. A 21-year-old respondent from Batumi also said, "Simping is a whole vibe here now; everyone knows what it means. It is just another way we incorporate English into our everyday conversation." The use of English slang by Gen Z in this way shows that they are the language creators of Georgian society.

Another interviewee, a 20-year-old digital marketing student from Rustavi, commented on the fluid nature of slang: "Slang changes so fast. Today, it's 'slay', tomorrow, it's something else. But that's the fun part. It is never stagnant, just like us." This quote emphasizes the unpredictability of slang as the latter shifts according to culture, at which Gen Z agrees with how language is not rigid but rather fluid.

Through the integrated usage of English slang and Georgian language, Generation Z reshapes how the language is used on social and digital platforms. It is not simply that this generation takes on these terms, but it takes them on in a creative way, thereby shaping the modern Georgian culture and language.

4. Discussion

This study's findings indicate that the use of English slang in the Georgian language and culture is a complex process that has linkages to media, education, and sociocultural motivation. The fact that Georgian youth tend to use more and more English slang corresponds to the modern tendencies of the globalization of language contact, where English can act as the media of informal and intercultural communication (Pennycook, 2007).

However, there are some difficulties in using English slang in Georgia as well. English understanding and use of different media varies from generation to generation, thus making the use of slang a communication barrier and bringing disparity among generations. Furthermore, the biggest issue among today's linguists and educators who aim to preserve the Georgian language from foreign influence is raising an argument within society. In the words of one linguist, 'Such tendencies like, for instance, the use of the English slang in Georgia can result in the loss of the specific features of the Georgian language, its cultural and language identity' (Respondent D, Tbilisi, 2024).

The result of the study also has implications for language policy in Georgia. Government and school stakeholders or policymakers must bow to the need to, on the one hand, adopt the English language but, on the other, retain the Georgian language. This entails being able to understand aspects like the breaking down of dual linguistic borders and ethnicity and then finding means to endorse these aspects of language.

5. Conclusion

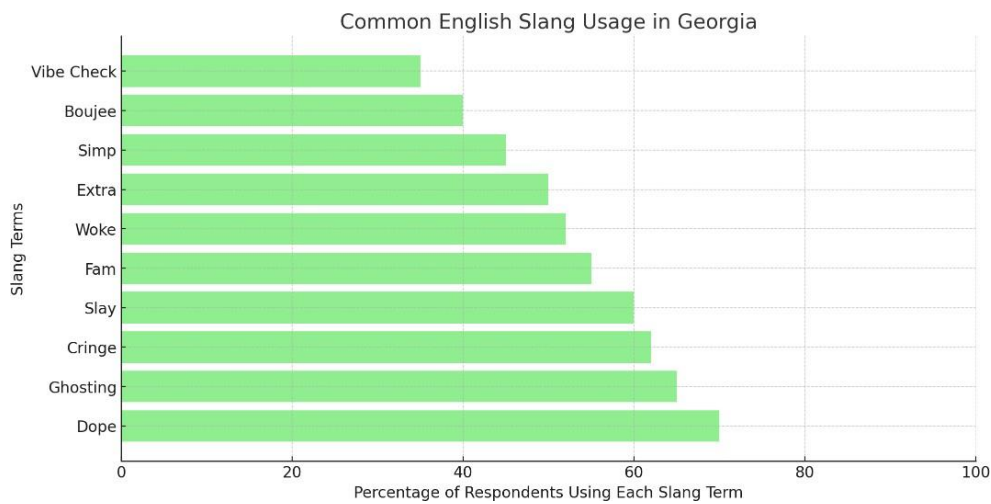
This paper shows the dynamic process of language in the context of globalization and the process of slang, which is an integral part of popular culture, including the Georgian one. The use of English slang practices among the Georgian youth is not only to imitate some popular films or games among young people but also to be concerned with their sociocultural identity. The implications of the research are that language policies should not be rigid since language use is dynamic in the context of the new media. Future studies could relate to the effect of English slang on the Georgian language and its influence on Georgian grammar and, thus, on the linguistic purism issues in the region.

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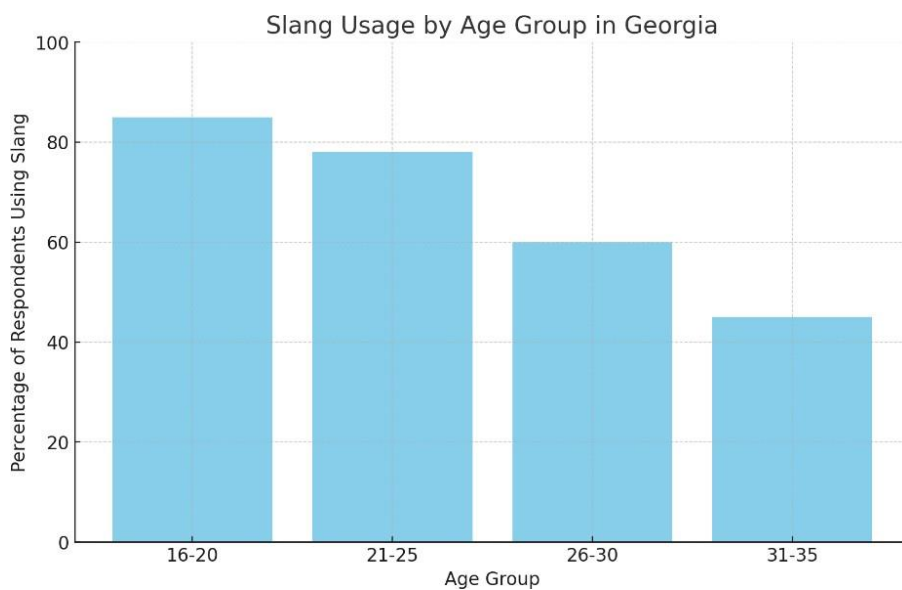
Figures

Chart 1: Common English Slang Usage in Georgia.



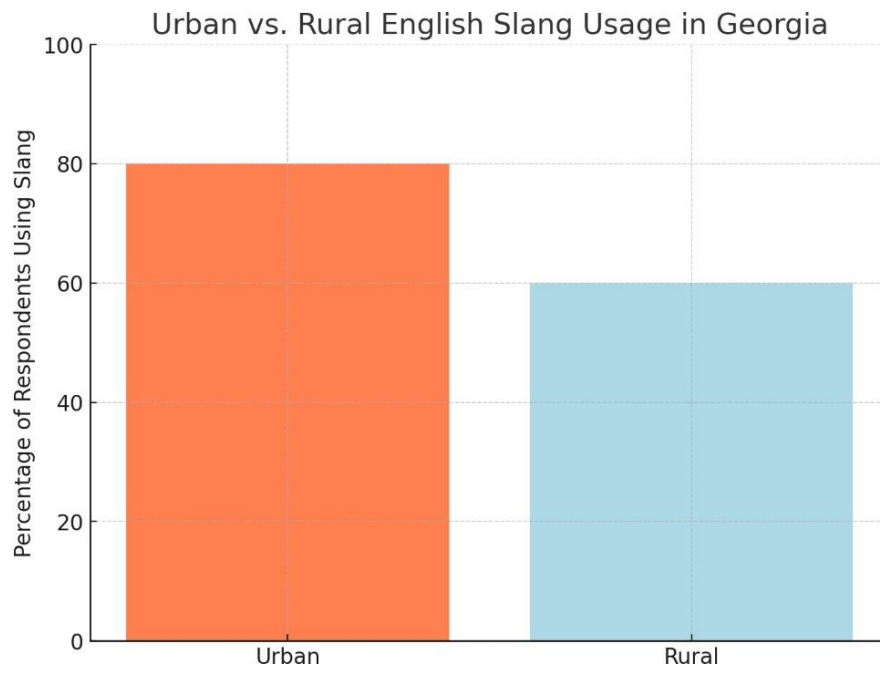
Common English Slang Usage in Georgia: The following horizontal bar chart shows how often the Georgian respondents used English slang terms. It identifies among the most popular terms as "Dope," "Ghosting," and "Cringe."

Chart2: Slang Usage by Age Group in Georgia



Slang Usage by Age Group in Georgia: The following bar chart illustrates the percentage of the respondents who use English slang with reference to their age. This shows that the two groups of young people (16-20 and 21-25) use slang more often than the older groups of people.

Chart 3: Urban vs. Rural English Slang Usage in Georgia



Urban vs. Rural English Slang Usage in Georgia: In this bar chart, urban and rural slang usage has been highlighted, and from the above, it is clear that slang is used more in urban settings.