

## New Material Nouns in the Russian Argot

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### Abstract

*Relevance of the problem under study is determined by the necessity of research of new slangy words that call different narcotic substances. They illustrate the facts of criminal life and cognition about them may help to fight against illegal drug trafficking in Russia. The purpose of the research is to identify the semantic, word-formative and grammatical peculiarities of those material nouns that are non-fixed in the dictionaries of the Russian argot till now. The specifics of slangy vocabulary is studied by using the method of linguistic observation and description, in some cases the features of the argotic words are revealed by context analysis. The result of the research was a composition of new vocabulary of the slangy material nouns in which linguists can find all lexical and grammatical characteristics of the words. The article can be useful for language experts, who study substandard forms of Russian language, and for the law enforcement officials.*

**Keywords:** material nouns, the Russian argot, slang, semantic and word-formative peculiarities, social dialect.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Actualizing the problem

Nowadays the Russian argot strongly influences to the standard language. Therefore many linguists study the interaction and relationships of Russian substandard speech and literary standard.

At present time in Russian linguistics there is an opinion that the social dialects (for example argot, youth slang, computer jargon) differ from the literary standard with their lexical and word-formative systems, and in the field of morphology they don't have their own specific nature. That's why almost all the works devoted to the study of Russian argot are connected to the research of lexical, phraseological and word-formative peculiarities of this social dialect.

Really the study of semantic specifics of the argotic words and its explanation for Russian-speaking persons is very important. It allows to protect lexical standards of the literary speech. But in the same time there are only a few remarks concerning morphological features in the scientific literature.

The material nouns became the object of study understandably. In recent years in Russia can be seen intensification of illegal synthetic drug trafficking. Consequently a large number of substandard names calling different narcotic substances appeared in the Russian language. They are not yet fixed in the slangy dictionaries, but some of them are well known to Russian-speaking people through the speech of the media (Tonkova, 2014). It's necessary to review the semantic, word-formative and grammatical peculiarities of new argotic names and describe them in the special dictionaries intended for language experts, who study substandard forms of Russian language, and for the law enforcement officials.

### 1.2 Status of a problem

At present about 300 slangy names of drugs can be found in published linguistic and special dictionaries (Grachev, 2003; Kamyshnikov & Lukashin, 2011; Zugumov, 2014). And now about 50 new slangy words are used by drug sellers and addicts but these lexical units are unrecorded in reliable linguistic sources. In our opinion, sociolinguists have to add them to the slangy and argotic vocabularies as soon as possible. It's necessary to explain the causes of appearance of such nouns and also to find out why the number of these words is steadily increasing.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 The tasks of the research

The tasks of our research are: 1) To collect new material nouns calling drugs from the live speech, from the language of mass media and from fiction. 2) To identify the semantic, word-formative and grammatical peculiarities of those material nouns.

### 2.2 Theoretical and empirical methods

The following methods were used during the study:

- theoretical: analysis of linguistic and journalistic literature on the problem;
- empirical: observation and description, context analysis, method of quantitative calculation.

## 3. Results

A number of slangy names of drugs increased for objective reasons. The Russian illicit market abounds with varieties of synthetic drugs. Very often they come to Russia from China. Especially a lot of them are smoking mixtures and they have not legal names. The mixtures have a different chemical composition that constantly changes. In Russia they were named "спайсы" [spájsy] (it was derived from English 'spice'). Usually Russian slangy material nouns don't have grammatical plural forms. In this case plural form means 'different blends'.

In general we have found 5 new slangy material nouns with the same meaning that have plural forms: "миксы" [míksy] (it was derived from English 'mix'), "соли" [sóli] (it was derived by semantic transformation of Russian literary word 'соль', English equivalent 'salt'; some on-line shops for masking their activity offer 'bath salts'), "спиды" [spidy] (it was derived from English 'speed', in this case the sense is associated with rapid action of a drug), "легалки" [legálki] (it was derived from Russian adjective 'легальный' by suffix method; the name means 'legal mixtures which are not prohibited while'). For example, *Наркодилеры свой товар шифруют терминами «спайс», «соль», «микс», «спиды», «шоколад» и «снег»* (Российская газета, 2014) – *The drug dealers mask their goods under the names «spice, «salt», «mix», «speeds», «chocolate» and «snow»*; *Миксы, соли* (Illegal advertising on the wall of a house, 2015) – *Mixes, salts*.

Besides, there are 3 slangy names of marihuana that have plural forms only (they don't have singular forms in a context): "бошки" [bóški] (it was derived by semantic transformation of Russian colloquial word 'башка', English equivalents are 'noddle', 'think-tank'), "головы" [gólovy] (it was a result of semantic transformation of Russian literary word 'голова', English equivalent is 'head'), "шишки" [šyški] (it was derived by semantic transformation of Russian literary word 'шишка', English equivalent is 'cone'). All words are the synonyms, and they have general meaning 'inflorescences of female plants of marihuana having the strongest effect'. Their names are result of metaphor: inflorescences of female plants look like cones, and their form is like a head.

The most of new slangy material nouns (80 %) is appeared as a result of metaphorisation of literary words. The metaphor can base on different signs: color, quality, properties, etc. For example, often drugs are dry and white substances therefore in substandard speech can be found such names as «сухой» [suhó] (it's a name of narcotic smoking mix; English equivalent for Russian literary word is 'dry'), «мягкий» [m'agkij] (one of the names of narcotic smoking mix; English equivalent for Russian literary word is 'soft'), «сахар» [sáchar] (it means 'heroin'; English equivalent for Russian literary word is 'sugar'), «соль» [sol] (it means also 'heroin'; English equivalent for Russian literary word is 'salt'), etc. E.g. *Сахаром или солью в наркоманской среде называют героин* (Комсомольская правда, 2014). – *Among drug users heroin is called sugar or salt*.

Often words for naming are borrowed from English (10%): «стафф» [staff] (narcotic smoking mix; derived from English 'stuff'), «спайс», «спид», «микс» (their origin was previously discussed).

Another slangy words were derived from Russian literary words by suffix method (10 %): «курёха» [kur'oha] (narcotic smoking mix; was derived from Russian verb 'курить' – English 'to smoke'), «химка» [himka] (chemical drugs; it was derived from Russian noun 'химия' – English 'chemistry'), «легалка» [legálka] (it was derived from Russian adjective 'легальный' – English 'legal'), etc.

## 4. Discussions

The obtained results show that new material nouns originate in the Russian argot as a result of a tense criminal situation.

Appearance of various types of drugs entails changes in the argotic vocabulary. Russian argot has many synonyms calling narcotic smoking mixtures, heroin, marihuana. In our opinion, the collected factual material indicates interesting word-formative specifics of the slangy words. Contrary to popular belief Russian argot has a number of morphological peculiarities distinguishing it from a standard language. During our study were found those material nouns, that freely have plural forms, and slangy words that don't have singular forms in a context. It does not conform literary (standard) grammar.

## 5. Conclusion

Russian argot is a peculiar language phenomenon. Its vocabulary constantly changes. The system of argot is not isolated from literary grammatical standards only theoretically. In practice Russian argot has a number of the interesting morphological features distinguishing it from a standard language, but they studied insufficiently now. Their further study can broaden our knowledge about Russian language, in particular about its lexical and grammatical system.

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