

THE SPECIFIC FEATURES AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN YOUTH SPEECH

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Abstract: Youth speech in French (French: *langage des jeunes*) is considered an important sociolinguistic phenomenon in modern linguistics. This type of speech reflects young people's social identity, group belonging, and communicative needs. Youth language differs to a certain extent from the phonetic, lexical, morphological, and pragmatic norms of standard French and is characterized by its innovative and dynamic nature.

Keywords: sociolinguistic, sociolect, argot, jargon, slang, verlan, linguistic, stylistic, french youth language, anglicisms.

Introduction

A sociolect is a form of communication developed in speech practice to satisfy the linguistic needs of certain groups united by common social characteristics. These forms serve the communicative needs of socially limited or specific groups of people. From a sociolinguistic perspective, sociolect includes *argot*, *jargon*, and *slang*.

Discussion

Argot (French: *argot*) is the specific language of certain professional or social groups. It appears as a mixed form composed of elements from several languages and is often incomprehensible to outsiders. Argot is one of the main components of youth language. It consists of informal words that are often secretive or understandable only within a particular group. Speakers use common language words but assign them different meanings. Argot is a "secret" language created by a particular social group (often closed groups such as the criminal underworld or street gangs) to communicate among themselves and to conceal meaning from outsiders.

L'argent (money): *Le flouze, Le grisbi, La thune.*

Manger (to eat): *Bouffer.*

La police (the police): *Les poulets* ("chickens"), *Les flics.*

Travailler (to work): *Bosser.*

Historical example: In the Middle Ages, the language known as "*Argot des malfaiteurs*" (the argot of wrongdoers), used by beggars and thieves, is a clear illustration of this phenomenon.

Jargon (French: *jargon* — "nonsense" or "gibberish") refers to the words and expressions characteristic of communication within a particular social group. Jargon emerges in a specific social environment and differs from dialects and regional varieties. In many cases, jargon is viewed as a negative feature of a person's speech culture. It should not be confused with the well-developed and clearly defined terminology of a professional language. Jargon is unstable; it is linguistically and stylistically diverse and changes rapidly.

According to Sh. Shoabdurahmonov and M. Asqarova (1980) and others, jargon is defined as "words and expressions understandable to representatives of the upper class that indicate class

distinction. Jargon consists of native Uzbek words and, at times, borrowed words from other languages (Arabic and Tajik) used with a specific intended meaning.”¹

Jargon is the terminological language used in professional communication among representatives of a particular occupation or field (such as doctors, lawyers, or IT specialists). It may be incomprehensible to outsiders; however, it does not serve to conceal meaning but rather to facilitate and simplify professional communication.

Examples:

- **Medical jargon:** “*Le patient est en hypo*” (The patient’s blood sugar level has dropped — hypoglycemia).
- **Legal jargon:** “*C’est une clause léonine*” (This is an unfair contractual clause that benefits only one party).
- **AI jargon:** “*Il faut pousser le code*” (The code needs to be pushed/uploaded to the server).

Slang (in French often referred to as *langage familier* or *parler djeun’s*) is an informal, emotionally expressive, and free style of speech that is generally understood by everyone but is not used in formal contexts. It is especially popular among young people and within circles of friends. M. M. Mayakovsky highly praised slang and defined it as follows: “Slang is a historically developed linguistic phenomenon which, to a certain extent, functions as a linguo-social norm for representatives of all social strata. It is primarily used in oral speech and differs both genetically and functionally from jargon and other functional varieties of language”².

Ami (friend): *Pote*.

C’est génial! (That’s awesome!): *C’est top!, C’est nickel!*

Comprendre (to understand): *Piger*. “*T’as pigé ?*” (Did you understand?).

Livre (book): *Bouquin*.

Comparative Table of Differences:

Type	Purpose	Who uses it?	Example
Argot	Secrecy and group identity	Street groups, closed circles.	<i>La daronne</i> (mother)
Jargon	Professional precision	Doctors, military personnel, scientists.	<i>Un diagnostic</i> (diagnosis)
Slang	Freedom, emotional expression, fashion	Youth, teenagers, friends.	<i>Un gosse</i> (kid/child)

Verlan (Syllable Inversion in French)

Verlan is one of the most important features of French youth language. It is formed by reversing the order of syllables in a word. The term *verlan* itself comes from the inversion of the word *l’envers* (meaning “reverse”). This linguistic process is widely used in informal communication, especially among young people.

Example:

C’est channmé (verlan of *méchant*) means “*It’s awesome, impressive.*”

Other examples:

- Meuf (*Femme* → *meuf*): Girl, woman.
- Keum (*Mec* → *keum*): Boy, guy, friend.

¹ Shoabdurahmonov. Sh., Asqarova. M. va boshqalar. Hozirgi o‘zbek adabiy tili. – T.:O‘qituvchi, 1980.

² Маковский. М.М. Английские, социальные, диалекты. Онтология, структура, этимология.- М.: Высшая школа.1982.-С.22-23.

- Ouf (*Fou* → *ouf*): Crazy, unbelievable. “*C’est un truc de ouf!*” — That’s something crazy/amazing!
- Vénère (*Énervé* → *vénière*): Angry, upset.
- Reuch (*Cher* → *reuch*): Expensive. “*C’est trop reuch!*” — It’s very expensive!

Verlan, which is very popular among French speakers, originally developed as a form of argot among criminals so that the police would not understand their conversations. However, today it has evolved into a widely recognized and commonly used form of slang understood by the general public, especially among young people.

Verlan Examples (Syllable Inversion):

- *Laisse tomber* (Forget it / Let it go) → **Laisse béton**
- *C’est bizarre* (Weird / Strange) → **C’est zarbi**

Words Influenced by Arabic (North African Immigrant Culture):

The culture of North African immigrants in France has had a significant impact on youth language. These words are widely used in informal speech among young people:

- **Wesh** – “What’s up?”, “Hi”, or simply used to start a conversation. (Uzbek: *Nima gap?, Qalay?*)
- **Kiffer** – To like or enjoy something. “*Je kiffe trop cette musique*” — I really enjoy this music. (Uzbek: *Bu musiqaga kayf qilyapman / juda yoqyapti*)
- **Miskine** – Poor thing, someone to feel pity for.
- **Halla** – Chaos, loud commotion, or something impressive. “*On a mis la halla*” — We made a big scene / caused a ruckus.

These examples illustrate how French youth language is **dynamic and multicultural**, mixing traditional French with verlan transformations and Arabic-

Common street slang

Argot (French)	Original word / Meaning	Uzbek equivalent
Grave	Very / Really	Juda, daxshat, albatta.
Relou (Verlan: Lourd)	Boring / Annoying	Zerikarli, jonga teguvchi.
Balle / Balles	Francs (or Euro)	So'm (pul birligi ma'nosida).
Bouff	Food	Ovqat, yemish ("Yegulik" ma'nosida).
Caisse	Car	"Moshina", "Toychoq".
Se casser	Leave	"Surish", ketish.

Expression of Emotions (Interjections)

- **J’ai le seum** (from Arabic *Sem* — “poison”): I’m very upset, frustrated. (Uzbek: *Alam qilyapti, ichim yonyapti*)
- **Ça daronne**: Really great, awesome.
- **Chelou** (Verlan: *Louche*): Suspicious, strange. “*Ce mec est trop chelou*” — That guy is really weird.

Example from youth speech:

“*Wesh mon pote, t’as vu sa caisse ? C’est un truc de ouf, mais c’est trop reuch, j’ai le seum !*”

Translation:

“Hey buddy, did you see his car? It’s amazing, but really expensive, I’m so upset!”

Abbreviations

To communicate quickly and efficiently, young people often use shortened forms:



- **aprem** – *après-midi* (afternoon)

- **d'acc** – *d'accord* (okay)

- **info** – *information*

Reduction of sounds

In youth speech, some sounds are dropped or simplified to speed up communication: *je suis* → *chuis* ; *tu es* → *t'es* ; *il y a* → *y a*

Intonation and expressiveness

Youth speech is highly emotional and expressive, with intonation playing a key role: *C'est trop bien !* — Really great! *Grave !* — Yeah, totally!

Morphological and Syntactic Features

Grammatical simplification

Sometimes grammatical rules are simplified: *Je ne sais pas* → *Je sais pas* ; *Il ne veut pas venir* → *Il veut pas venir*

Anglicisms (English borrowings)

Due to globalization, English words are widely used in youth speech: *cool* — great, *fun* — fun, interesting, *like* — to like (especially on social media)

Sociolinguistic Aspects of Youth Language

Means of social identification

Youth language shows group belonging and helps young people differentiate themselves from adults.

Influence of social strata and environment

Youth speech depends on: Living area (city, suburbs), Ethnic background, Level of education, Cultural environment.

For example, in Parisian *banlieues*, Verlan and argot are more widely used.

Influence of media and the internet

Social networks (TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat) play a key role in the development of youth language. New words often spread rapidly through these platforms:

- **LOL**, **MDR** (*mort de rire* – died laughing), **PTDR** (*pété de rire* – extremely funny)

Pragmatic Functions

The main communicative functions of youth language are:

1. **Identification** — indicating group membership
2. **Expressive** — conveying emotions and feelings
3. **Cryptic** — hiding meaning from adults
4. **Communicative efficiency** — enabling fast and easy communication

Conclusion

There is no clear boundary between these three terms of sociolect, since there is not enough scientific research on this topic and this area has not yet been fully explored. “Jargon” is a name for a word that exists in the literary language. “Argo” has a secret meaning. French youth language constitutes a dynamic and innovative layer of contemporary French. Its main features include widespread use of argot and Verlan, phonetic reductions, grammatical simplifications, and the influence of English. Youth language is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a sociolinguistic one, reflecting social identity, cultural distinctiveness, and communicative needs. Globalization and digital communication further accelerate its development.

When this word becomes understandable to many, it gives way to another secret word. “Slang” is the secret speech of young people.



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