

## WORD-BUILDING FEATURES OF GERMAN SUBCULTURAL VOCABULARY

### ОСОБЛИВОСТІ СЛОВОТВОРУ НІМЕЦЬКОГО СУБКУЛЬТУРНОГО ВОКАБУЛЯРУ

**Pozdniakov O.V.,**

*orcid.org/0000-0001-7525-7108*

*Candidate of Philological Sciences,*

*Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages and Country Studies  
Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University*

The article provides a structural and semantic description of word-building processes in German subcultural vocabulary, revealing their key features and determining factors. This language subcode is constantly gaining popularity due to the growing impact of global media and social networks. Most of the subcultures, which are common among representatives of German-speaking community, are of American origin. Thus, only an insignificant part of the studied lexical units are formed by means of word-building and transference of meaning on the basis of German roots, while more than 90% are borrowed from American English. The given data differ from the percentages provided on the ways of making vocabulary of standard and colloquial German, where word-building is predominant. Adopting foreign subcultures, German youth also borrows new verbal means and communication patterns. These words can be regarded as a convenient tool to satisfy the need for verbal originality and self-identification.

In the studied language subcode, there are a small number of root words featured by orthographic changes in order to show the difference from standard German. At making compound nouns, the model «Noun+Noun» is the most productive, satisfying the need for primary nomination. Semi-prefixation is the most frequent type of semi-affixation, while suffixation prevails over prefixation. The use of word-building formants is usually accompanied by changing the root morpheme semantics. Shortening has been identified as the most preferred type of abbreviation. Transferring the meaning on the basis of similarity of an external feature is a frequent type of metaphorization. These lexical units denote key concepts of value system typical for subcultural group members.

Borrowings from American English have different morphological structure, including root words, compounds, results of derivational processes, abbreviations. In this part of German subcultural vocabulary, a lot of root morphemes are semantically modified compared to the corresponding lexical units of the source language, which is caused by the factor that representatives of subcultures try to stand out among others, hiding the true sense of the message from outgroup surroundings. In order to keep the pragmatic value of subcultural vocabulary, phonetic assimilation is not characteristic for the given language subcode.

**Key words:** subcultural vocabulary, language subcode, morphological structure, meaning transference, borrowings, assimilation.

У статті подано структурно-семантичну характеристику словотворчих процесів у німецькій субкультурній лексиці, з'ясовано їх ключові особливості та детермінуючі чинники. Зазначений мовний субкод постійно набирає популярності через зростання впливу глобальних медіа та соціальних мереж. Більшість субкультур, поширених серед представників німецькомовної спільноти, мають американське походження. Таким чином, лише незначна частина досліджуваних лексичних одиниць утворена за допомогою словотвору та перенесення значення на базі німецьких твірних основ, тоді як понад 90% є запозиченнями з американського варіанту англійської мови. Такі дані відрізняються від співвідношень шляхів утворення лексики літературної та розмовної німецької мови, де переважає словотвір. Переймаючи іноземні субкультури, німецька молодь запозичує також нові вербальні засоби та комунікативні зразки. Ці слова можна розглядати як зручний інструмент для задоволення потреби мовної оригінальності та самоідентифікації.

У досліджуваному мовному субкоді зафіксовано незначну кількість кореневих слів. Останнім притаманна орфографічна трансформація для демонстрації відмінності від літературної німецької мови. При утворенні іменників способом словоскладання найпродуктивнішою є модель «іменник+іменник», що задовольняє потребу первинної номінації. Напівафіксація є найпоширенішим видом напівафіксації, водночас суфіксація переважає над префіксацією. Вживання словотвірних формантів зазвичай супроводжується зміною семантики кореневих морфем. Для процесів аббревіації перевага надається скороченням. Перенесення значення за подібністю зовнішньої ознаки є частотним видом метафоризації. Ці лексичні одиниці позначають ключові поняття системи цінностей, типової для представників субкультурних груп.

Запозичення з американського варіанту англійської мови мають різну морфологічну структуру, включаючи кореневі слова, композити, лексичні деривати, аббревіатури. У цій частині німецького субкультурного вокабуляру чимало кореневих морфем є семантично модифікованими у порівнянні з відповідними лексичними одиницями мови-джерела. Це зумовлено тим, що представники субкультур намагаються виокремитися з-поміж інших, приховуючи справжній зміст повідомлень від не-членів групи. З міркувань збереження прагматичної цінності субкультурної лексики, для даного мовного субкоду фонетична асиміляція не є характерною.

**Ключові слова:** субкультурний вокабуляр, мовний субкод, морфологічна структура, перенесення значення, запозичення, асиміляція.

**Formulation of the problem.** The vocabulary system of modern German language is a complex of various language subcodes. It includes words and collocations created and primarily used by representatives of different social, age, and professional groups. Being an integral part of communication in a particular circle of speakers, the above-mentioned lexical units become a specific language subcode, which is regarded as a potential source of enrichment of standard German vocabulary. The latter occurs as a result of synthesising components at different language levels.

Subcultural vocabulary is one of the structural elements determining the development of German vocabulary system at the present stage. In our research, we use the definition of subculture as «a part of general culture, a system of values, traditions and customs typical for a large social group» [4].

In this context, it should be noted that at the current stage of the development of society, communication process is characterized by the growing role of global media and intensification of using internet technologies. Thanks to this, a lot of words and collocations, which originally belonged to active vocabulary within particular subcultural surroundings, are widely used on internet pages with a broad target audience, in various types of electronic and printed media, TV programmes, radio broadcasts. Such popularization of these specific language units creates prerequisites for their further evolution to elements of colloquial and standard vocabulary, which determines the relevance of our article.

**The analysis of recent research and publications** has shown that the study of subcultures and their vocabulary is considered to be an important issue in modern German studies. In particular, this is confirmed by the works of N. Boese [5], O. Feser [9], and P. Schlobinski [11].

Based on the analysis of the above-mentioned scientific papers, it should be noted that modern society has reached a new development phase, which is called the age of information. Therefore, it is quite obvious that the role of media is growing constantly. In addition to their main function of sharing information, they influence the formation of people's worldview, system of values, and beliefs. Internet, television, social networks, advertising and other media types not only reflect crucial social processes, but are also a powerful means of affecting their development. First of all, it concerns representatives of the younger generation. As consequence, young people's vocabulary is becoming more dependent on the media impact. Words and collocations frequently used on internet channels, in online-chats, commercials, songs, and

movies are now an integral part of everyday communication among the German-speaking community.

Commercialization of subcultures is a dynamic process taking place in accordance with basic principles of market economy. The advertising industry explores the needs and aspirations of its target audience, offering relevant content to achieve certain market goals. Thus, global subcultures have been created. The majority of young people identify themselves with these forms of leisure and communication activities.

**The purpose of our research** is to give a quantitative description of the ways in which German subcultural vocabulary is formed, as well as to establish key morphological and semantic features of these lexemes. On the other hand, the role of communication surroundings has been taken into consideration.

The research material is represented by over 1000 lexical units of three parts of speech (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) taken from the dictionary «Duden – Das neue Wörterbuch der Szenesprachen» [7] complemented by the data provided on the web portal «jugendszenen.com». For an objective description of the processes of meaning transference in the studied language subcode, we have used the vocabulary entries of the following lexicographic sources: «Duden – Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache» [6] and «Duden-Oxford – Großwörterbuch Deutsch-Englisch / Englisch-Deutsch» [8].

**Scientific novelty of the article.** In our research, we have provided a structural and semantic description of German subcultural vocabulary. We have also analyzed the peculiarities of word-building processes in the given language subcode taking into account the impact of extralingual factors and certain communication needs of subcultural activities' participants. To achieve these goals, we have applied a set of both general scientific and linguistic methods, such as: descriptive method, inductive method, analysis and synthesis, lexicographic analysis of dictionary definitions, method of quantitative estimation.

**Results and discussions.** At present, several classifications of subcultures in Germany have been established. In our research, we use data from the web portal «jugendszenen.com», where the following subcultures are listed and described: 1) Twerk; 2) Rap; 3) Beauty Gurus; 4) Hipster; 5) Fixie; 6) Antifa; 7) Metal; 8) Cosplay; 9) Demos; 10) Gothic; 11) Graffiti; 12) Hardcore; 13) Hip Hop; 14) Indie; 15) LAN-Gaming; 16) Parkour; 17) Punk; 18) Role Players; 19) Skateboarding; 20) Skinheads; 21) Sport Climbing; 22) Techno; 23) Ultras; 24) Vegans; 25) Warez [12]. Most of these subcultures are of American origin (which is

clearly seen by their names), having become popular in Germany because of the influence of global media, web resources, and social networks.

Having analyzed the ways of forming the studied lexical units, we can say that only an insignificant part of them (approximately 10%) are the result of word-building processes on the basis of German roots. In particular, 7% of all the analyzed vocabulary is formed by adding derivational morphemes, while about 3% of these words are created by means of meaning transference. At the same time, more than 90% of subcultural vocabulary is represented by borrowings from English language, namely from its American version.

The above-mentioned data differ significantly from the percentages indicated in the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers on lexicographic sources of standard and colloquial German. According to O.D. Oguy, who has analyzed the DUDEN-Universal and Moskalskaja dictionaries, the share of lexical units formed by means of word-building is 85%, semantic derivatives – 5%, and borrowings – 10% [1, p. 181]. Similar data can be found in the work of I.G. Olshanskyi and A.Ye. Gusieva, who have established the approximate proportion of lexemes formed by means of word-building processes, transference of meaning, and borrowings as 75%, 10%, and 15%, respectively [2, p. 98].

In our opinion, the given difference can be explained by the previously mentioned American origin of most subcultures. Thus, German-speaking participants of subcultural activities adopt these words and collocations, including them into their active vocabulary and using them in a range of communicative situations.

Among the subcultural vocabulary formed by means of word-building, there are a small number of root words (lexemes that can not be decomposed into smaller components – morphemes and are not formed from other language units) [3, p. 103]. In the studied language subcode, these lexemes are characterized by orthographic changes in order to show the difference from standard German (*Wax – Wachs*).

At creating compounds, the most productive model is «Noun+Noun» (*Aufrisszone – Flirtareal*). Given the specificity of subcultures and their constituents, a lot of these words satisfy the needs of primary nomination (*Alphazeichen*). On the other hand, verbal creativity inherent to participants of subcultural activities leads to the use of semantic transformations of root morphemes in the process of creating their vocabulary. The latter results in existence of homonyms of lexical units, which are components of standard and colloquial German (*Bierdeckel – CD-Rom*).

As for using word-building morphemes, most productive of them belong to semi-prefixes, which are defined as a separate type of derivation elements in modern German studies [3]. The semi-prefix *ab-* is a relatively frequent formant to make German subcultural vocabulary (*abfassen – Geldnot und eine pralle Wunschliste bewirken*). Prefixation is less productive, while prefixes are used in a limited number of their word-forming meanings (*verstrahlt – unter Drogen*). Both semi-affixation and affixation processes are accompanied by changes in the semantics of root morphemes (*zuföhnen – viel auf jemanden einreden*).

In the analyzed lexicographic material, there are a number of lexemes formed by means of suffixation. This way of word-building is typical for making lexical units of all three studied parts of speech: nouns (*Problemiker – Person, die ständig Probleme mit sich herumschleppt*), verbs (*ballern – brutale Spiele spielen*), and adjectives (*knarzig – grob*). As can be seen from the examples, most suffixes are featured by being added to root morphemes with a negative coloring of meaning.

Sometimes making compound nouns occurs simultaneously with affixation. As a rule, these units of German subcultural vocabulary express dismissive attitude to referred people or things (*Warmduscher – Schwächling*).

A relatively productive way of word-building in the studied language subcode is abbreviation. By means of abbreviation, words and collocations already existing in the language are shortened to a single complex [13, p. 3]. Shortenings are a dominant type of abbreviation (*Hete – heterosexuelle Person*), being used to designate both people (*Eso – Esoteriker*) and other objects of the surrounding milieu (*Deko – Dekoration*). There are also lexical units formed by means of combining abbreviation with adding word-building morphemes, which are mainly used to show an ironic attitude towards referred people and things (*dissen – missachten; Assel – asozialer Mensch*).

According to the logical principle of classifying the ways of meaning transference [10], there is predominance of metaphorization over metonymization. For this processes of semantic derivation, a frequent type of transferring the meaning is its changing on the basis of similarity of an external feature (*Anzug – Ganzkörpertätowierung*). A number of such lexemes are used to denote concepts of a sexual nature, which indirectly points to the key fields of value system typical for subcultural group members (*Hupen – Brüste; Saft – Sperma*).

The results of the research show that metonymy is not considered to be a productive way of enrich-

ing the German subcultural vocabulary. In our opinion, a small number of such lexical units can be explained by search for unusual morphological structures in the need for self-identification among other representatives of German-speaking community (*Mützen – Polizei*).

According to the quantitative data of the analysis, the lion's share of the studied vocabulary is borrowed from American English. These words belong to different lexico-semantic fields, being used to designate members of subcultural groups (*B-Boy – Breakdancer*), items of clothing, appearance, hairstyle (*Boot-Cunt – Hosenform; Dreads – Haarsträhne*), traditional activities of a respective type of subculture (*Party-Line – Kommunikation zwischen Gruppen; Rave – Fest*).

We have singled out the largest groups of borrowings in the given language subcode in terms of the morphological structure:

- root words, most of which are used to designate specific concepts within subcultural activities (*Bank – Möbelstück der Skate- und Snowboardparks*);
- compounds made by the «Noun+Noun» word-formation model (*Bookmark – Lesezeichen*);
- results of derivational processes (*chatten – im Internet plaudern*). These words are formed by means of both German (*canceln – stornieren*) and borrowed word-building morphemes (*touchy – berührend*);
- abbreviations with the prevalence of initial abbreviations (*VJ – Videojockey*) and shortenings (*Pic – Bild*).

At the same time, the meaning transference of the studied lexical units in comparison with their definitions in the dictionary «Duden-Oxford – Großwörterbuch Deutsch-Englisch / Englisch-Deutsch» [8] has been detected (*Flame – zornige Nachrichten*). In this case, a significant role is played by the wish of subculture members to hide the true sense of the message from outgroup surroundings (*Paper – Drogen*). Another reason for semantic changes of borrowings is the

try to achieve verbal originality. On the other hand, some borrowings are used in subcultural vocabulary without the meaning transference as opposed to their German equivalents, which are regarded as stylistically neutral and less communicatively efficient language units (*Visit – Besuch*).

The phonetic assimilation of borrowings, the essence of which is to adapt the words to phonetic patterns of the target language, is not characteristic for subcultural vocabulary. We consider that it is because of the pragmatic value of this vocabulary, which can be lost in case of assimilation.

Polysemy is not frequent for the studied language subcode as well. Only a few examples of polysemous words have been found in the research material (*Crack – 1. Prachtkerl; 2. Mischung aus Kokain und Natrium-Bicarbonat*).

**Conclusions.** The results of the performed analysis have contributed to establishing the following features of word-building processes in German subcultural vocabulary. In the studied research material, there is dominance of borrowings from American English over lexemes formed by means of compounding, affixation, and transference of meaning. On the one hand, it is determined by the non-German origin of most subcultures. On the other hand, it is an expression of young people's need for verbal originality and self-identification. A significant part of root morphemes are semantically changed compared to the corresponding lexical units of the source language. The latter is caused by the factor that representatives of subcultures try to stand out among others, hiding the true sense of the message from outgroup surroundings. Due to the importance of preserving the originality of subcultural vocabulary, assimilation processes are not typical for this language subcode.

We see the prospects of further linguistic research in this field in establishing the peculiarities of contextual use of the studied vocabulary.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Огуй О.Д. Лексикологія німецької мови : навч. посібник для студентів вищих навч. закладів. Вінниця : Нова книга, 2003. 416 с.
2. Ольшанский И.Г., Гусева А.Е. Лексикология. Современный немецкий язык. М. : Академия, 2005. 416 с.
3. Степанова М.Д. Словообразование современного немецкого языка / под ред. Т.В. Строевой. 2-е изд., испр. М. : КомКнига, 2007. 376 с.
4. Танчин І.З. Соціологія : навч. посібник для студентів ВНЗ, аспірантів, викладачів [3-тє вид., перероб. і доп.]. К. : Знання, 2008. 351 с.
5. Boese N. Graffiti. Universität GH Essen, Fachbereich 3, FuB 6 : LINSE, 2003.
6. Duden – Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache (10 Bände). Mannheim : Bibliographisches Institut & F. A. Brockhaus, 2005.
7. Duden – Das neue Wörterbuch der Szenesprachen. Mannheim : Bibliographisches Institut, 2009. 208 S.
8. Duden-Oxford – Großwörterbuch Deutsch-Englisch / Englisch-Deutsch. Oxford University Press, 1999. v300.
9. Feser O., Hillebrand D., Macke Ch., Schlobinski A. Musik- und Sprachstile. Hiphop, Death Metal und Hard Rock. *Jugendliche und «ihre» Sprache : Sprachregister, Jugendkulturen und Wertesysteme; empirische Studien* / P. Schlobinski, H.-Ch. Heinz. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998. S. 63–100.

10. Rehbock H. Bedeutungswandel [veränd. Neuaufl.]. *Metzler-Lexikon Sprache* / hrsg. von H. Glück. Berlin : Directmedia Publ., 2000. 1 CD-ROM. (Digitale Bibliothek ; 34).
11. Schlobinski P., Heinz H.-Ch. Jugendliche und «ihre» Sprache: Sprachregister, Jugendkulturen und Wertesysteme; empirische Studien. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998. 236 S.
12. Szenen im Überblick : Das Portal für Jugendszenen. URL : <http://www.jugendszenen.com> (дата звернення: 25.01. 2023).
13. Turtshyn M.M. Handreichung zum Problem der Abkürzung im modernen Deutsch. Iwano-Frankiwsk : Ей Пі Пі Україна, Лтд, 1997. 23 S.