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CRIMINOLOGICAL, CRIMINALISTIC AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF DRUG ADDICTS' SLANG ^{2*}

Abstract

This paper presents criminological, criminalistics and linguistic properties of slang used by drug addicts. The knowledge and understanding of this linguistic variety may facilitate the detection of criminal offenders involved in narcotics abuse and contribute to prevention of drug abuse. In particular, this paper focuses on semantic and syntactic characteristics of drug-addicts' slang, considering their importance in Criminology and Criminalistics. The aim of this paper is to underscore the need for a multidisciplinary approach in combating drug addiction as well as the need to ensure active participation of criminologists, criminal investigators and forensic linguists in this process. Unity of criminological, criminalistic and linguistic aspects of slang is also very important for explanation of crime.

Keywords: *forensic/criminal linguistics, slang, drug addiction, criminology.*

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^{2*} Author has presented his first results of theoretical research of drug addicts' slang in the paper Mirić Filip, 'Drug Addicts' Slang Through Prism of Forensic Linguistics', Thematic conference proceedings of international significance', Archibald Reiss Days, Academy of Criminalistic and Police Studies, Vol. 2, Belgrade, 2016, pp. 556-561 and in the paper 'The Application of Forensic Linguistics in Criminalistics', Thematic conference proceedings of international significance', Archibald Reiss Days, Academy of Criminalistic and Police Studies, Vol. 1, Belgrade, 2017, 489-495. The paper 'Criminological, criminalistic and linguistic aspects of drug addicts' slang contains, except earlier presented results, additional exploration and explanation of this complex phenomenon and it is essentially connected with the scientific papers from 2016. and 2017.

INTRODUCTION

Forensic linguistics is a branch of applied linguistics which deals with analyzing linguistic issues relevant to judicial/court proceedings. (Forensic linguistics, 2020). Forensic linguistics includes a special discipline of criminal linguistics which studies the language of criminal groups and individuals demonstrating different forms of delinquent behavior with an aim to facilitate the detection of crimes and their perpetrators. Criminal linguistics is a distinct criminological discipline aimed at identifying, studying and interpreting the language and script used by criminal offenders; it focuses on the interpretation of specific linguistic terms and expressions for the purpose of ensuring a more efficient detection of deliberately planned criminal offences and/or providing evidence for committed criminal offences (Jovašević, 2006: 263). In a nutshell, forensic linguistics involves the application of linguistic knowledge, methods and techniques in uncovering those criminal acts that are committed exclusively by using language. Forensics linguists can help solve all those cases involving a disputable meaning of words, sentences or text, or the author identification, regardless of the type of dispute (criminal or civil), judicial procedure (pre-trial, criminal trial or appeal proceedings), or the party (prosecution or defense) seeking such expertise (Manojlović, Nikolić-Novaković, 2009: 109-128).

Exploring of slang of addicts and prisoner is very important during the process of executing of criminal sanctions and in process of exploring causes of crime. It is a link between linguistics, criminology and penology.

Unfortunately, the potential of this scientific discipline has been insufficiently recognized and used in criminal proceedings in the Republic of Serbia. The reasons are many but the most significant one is certainly the fact that Serbia has very few experts in this area; according to the available information, forensic linguistics is neither taught as a separate course of study nor included in the university curricula at any higher education institution in Serbia. The fact that forensic linguistics still is still underdeveloped and ill-positioned in legal theory and practice, particularly those pertaining to criminal and police law in Serbia, speaks for itself. The lack of forensic linguistic specialists in the police is a consequence of inability to resolve the enduring problem of job specification, which is a great challenge in the development of contemporary police activities. The introduction of modern methods for combating crime imposes the need to recruit specialists in this field. The process

of transcribing, analyzing and transferring an intercepted piece of communication from electronic devices into written form by experts of other professional profiles, rather than forensic linguists, is not conducive to the efficiency of either criminal investigation or criminal justice proceedings (Manojlović and Nikolić-Novaković, 2009: 126). In all these areas, the work of forensic linguists is essential as they assist the police, the prosecution office and the courts in combating increasingly sophisticated types of crimes, such as various forms of organized crime and cybercrime (Mirić, 2017: 491; Mirić, 2016: 557).

Inter alia, a subject matter of study in criminal linguistics is slang used by criminal offenders. By definition, slang is a colloquial deviation from the standard linguistic usage, which is often imaginative, lively and inventive in its construction. It especially appeals to those who want to be different from others linguistically. Criminal slang is a direct result of this desire as it makes it impossible or at least difficult to detect the crime and prosecute criminal offenders (Crystal, 1987: 53).

Development of forensic linguistics was very slow. There are many interesting examples from history of development of forensic linguistics. Forty years ago Jan Svartvik published *The Evans Statements: A Case for Forensic Linguistics*. In it he demonstrated that disputed and incriminating parts of a series of four statements which had been made to police officers by Timothy Evans about the deaths of his wife and baby daughter, had a grammatical style measurably different from that of uncontested parts of the statements and thus a new area of forensic expertise was born. Interestingly, almost 20 years earlier, the term forensic English was used by Philbrick (1949) in the title of his book on legal English, *Language and the Law: the Semantics of Forensic English*, but the phrase was never taken up (Coulthard, Johnson, 2010: 5).

In the Anglo-Saxon legal system, linguistics has a prominent place in shedding light on criminal matters and the knowledge of forensic linguistics is a valuable instrument of truth-finding. This is demonstrated by the abovementioned case of Timothy Evans, who was found guilty of murdering his wife and child, and sentenced to death in 1950. The punishment was death by hanging. The main evidence against Evans was his testimony given to the London Police on 2 December 1949, in which he confessed to the murder of his child and wife. As Evans was almost illiterate, the statement was given orally and taken by police officers on the record. During the trial, the defense was based on his allegations that he had nothing to do with the murders, that he was not aware of what he was saying,

and that he was afraid of being subjected to police torture if he did not confess to the murder. The case triggered public debate and subsequent inquiry. Linguistic analysis showed that the part of the statement pertaining to the murder confession significantly differed both linguistically and stylistically from the other parts of Evans's testimony. As the forensic findings confirmed the defense claims, Evans was posthumously pardoned in 1966 (Crystal, 1987: 69; Mirić, 2017: 491-492). To our knowledge, it is the first case, which has been solved by using a knowledge of forensic linguistics, as a scientific discipline.

An important task of criminal linguistics is to the study of slang used by criminal offenders. Slang is a non-standard, non-literary linguistic form. As such, it has its own linguistic features that make it distinct from the standard language. From the standpoint of criminal procedure, the analysis of criminal slang in each specific criminal case entails the expertise of a criminal linguistics specialist. The expertise implies procedural evidence-finding activities regulated by the criminal procedure legislation, the results of which may be the factual grounds for the offender's conviction. The expertise is required when the establishment or assessment of relevant facts call for obtaining an expert opinion from a competent person who has the necessary professional knowledge or skills in this area (Đurđić, 2012: 103). When it comes to providing the expertise in the slang or jargon used by the perpetrators of certain crimes, forensic/criminal linguists are the experts who have this kind of professional knowledge and skills. In developed countries, such as the United States, the knowledge in the field of criminal linguistics is extensively used in the process of crime detection and prosecution of criminal offenders involved in the commission of diverse criminal offences. In Serbia, criminal linguistics is still at the beginning of its development and practical application (Mirić, 2016: 557).

The paper provides an overview of linguistic features of slang used by drug addicts. The knowledge and understanding of this linguistic variety may facilitate the detection of criminal offenders involved in the abuse of narcotics and contribute to the prevention of drug abuse. Given the fact that criminal offences involving narcotics abuse are on the rise, the focal point of social reaction should be an effort to combat this type of crime. In particular, this paper focuses on the the semantic and syntactic characteristics of drug-addicts' slang, considering their importance in Criminology and Criminalistics. The primary aim of this article is to highlight the need for a multidisciplinary approach in combating drug addiction as well as the need to ensure active participation criminologist, criminal investigators and

forensic linguist in this process. It is particularly important given that the positive potential and developments in forensic linguistics as a whole, and the linguistic analysis of slang used by perpetrators of certain crimes in particular, have been insufficiently explored in theoretical studies and applied in criminological practice (Mirić, 2016: 557-558).

DRUG ADDICTS' SLANG THROUGH CRIMINOLOGICAL, CRIMINALISTIC AND LINGUISTIC PRISM

One of the significant features of membership in criminal organizations is a special language (slang, argot, jargon) used by the group members. Slang is actually a feature of the specific criminal subculture. It means that identity is expressed through a specific subculture featuring a specific linguistic style, which becomes an external manifestation of identity; thus, the interaction of these two factors contributes to the development of a subculture featuring a number of distinctive characteristics arising from cultural patterns of minority groups: mindset, standpoints, values, beliefs, norms, rules of conduct, aptitude, sensibilities, preferences, symbolism, temper, specific sensitivities and linguistic peculiarities (Božilović, 2006; Mirić, 2016: 559).

Criminal slang, and particularly the slang used by drug addicts, has not been subject to an extensive study in Serbia. The author's examination of criminological and linguistic literature shows that there is a lack of research on this topic. All the data available to the Serbian criminological scientific community in the field of criminal slang and jargon is restricted to citing and explaining the meaning of individual slang terms used by drug addicts. Whereas the understanding of these terms may actually facilitate crime detection of offenses against public health involving the abuse of narcotics as well as the prosecution of these criminal offenders, the general overview of the obtained data and a scientific analysis of the results calls for a further examination of the syntactic and morphological characteristics of criminal jargon in general and the slang used by drug addicts in particular. Such studies are in extremely short supply in Serbia. Unfortunately, the criminal linguistics studies conducted in other countries are quite useful to Serbian linguists and criminologists because each language has its own peculiarities, which are clearly reflected in different use of slang or jargon. Therefore, this issue should be given greater attention, especially because the study of criminal slang, including

the slang used by drug-addicts, is a highly significant subject matter in the area of criminalistics, criminology and criminal law policy.

An example of slang may be the slang pertaining to the non-medical use of drugs, which developed in the USSR in the early 1980s as a result of a spreading use of drugs and psychoactive substances. The major creators and users of slang were young people interested in using these illegal substances. A significant part of these slang terms was related to the purchase and cheap methods of synthesizing drugs and toxic substances in pharmacies or stores selling household chemicals. Some slang words were borrowed from the slang in English speaking countries. The use of slang was also quite common in literature, music and film (Сленг наркоманов, 2020).

Drug addicts use a special language, junkie slang or jargon, a linguistic variety which significantly differs from the standard language. Due to the illegal drug-related activities they are involved in, drug addicts have to keep away from the public eye, which certainly contributes to the need to develop a special language that can be understood only by the members of that social group. Given the fact that slang is prevalent among the youngest drug addicts, the understanding of its linguistic characteristics is an important tool in combating drug abuse among minors. Junkie slang plays a significant role in the process of identification with the drug-addicts' subculture; it is a kind of a "passport" into this social group or a "hallmark" for distinguishing group members from outsiders. Thus, upon being initiated into the world of drug addiction, a prospective drug-addict gradually acquires the drug-addicts' slang, which ultimately becomes their communication "safe-haven" because it conveniently provides secrecy and confidentiality in all kinds of communication in front of other people, particularly in telephone conversations which may be tapped.

Junkie slang is based on general slang rules, some of which are: secret codes (e.g. "white" is a slang word for cocaine); ambiguity (e.g. "You got a Vespa?" – *Vespa* is "*vesparasketa*", a sleep-inducing drug causing stupor), associations and derogatory words (e.g. a postman is a "*kangaroo*"), surrealist collocation and compounds (e.g. "*stroke-hit cactus*" or "*acid-head*" are slang words for "overdosed"), nonsensical phrases (e.g. "*rape by negligence*" – forced injection of drugs into the vein), resonance and onomatopoeia (e.g. "*džidžibudžiti*" – to get high), vivid imagery (e.g. "*red wine*" – strong opium), contrast (e.g. "awesome" or "bloody" are slang words for "wonderful, delightful"), etc (Milosavljević, 2000; Mirić, 2016: 559).

As compared to the standard language, slang words often have a completely different meaning. Thus, the secrecy of information among drug-addicts in Serbia is secured by using words like: “*piggy*” (the measuring scales); “*horse-meat*” (heroin); “*jack-up*” (inject drug into a vein); “*housewife*” (home-grown marijuana); “get fixed” (take drugs intravenously); “*healing*” (drug use); “*thyme*”, “*milfoil*”, “*Maria*” and “*weed*” are slang words for marijuana; “*aunt*” and “*blonde*” are slang words for the vein where the drug is injected (Stevanović, 2014). Drug addicts often communicate by using very short elliptic sentences with the purpose of conveying the message quickly and reducing the chance of being detected by the police.

The jargon in one language is often influenced by the jargon in other foreign languages. The examples are numerous but here is the most notable one which illustrates the impact of German language on the Serbian jargon. Namely, the Serbian word “*bitanga*” (scoundrel, rascal, rogue) originates from World War II, when the citizens of occupied Yugoslavia coined this word from two German words “*bitte*” and “*danke*” (which were repeatedly encountered in daily communication); the two German words joined together (“*bittedanke*”) were subject to further phonetic changes, ultimately resulting in the word “*bitange*” in Serbian. In Germany, the real supra-regional, sub-cultural jargon comes from traditional sources and social institutions (such as: criminal environment, prisons, school, family) and, lately, from the language of computers and the Internet. Generally speaking, it is quite difficult to describe the exact dissemination of jargon. Everyday language and tabloids comprise ample examples of criminal law terminology. For example, in tabloids, the Serbian word “*zaseda*” (an ambush) is often replaced by the slang word “*sačekuša*” (a guerilla-style “bushwhack”). The German variant of the Serbian jargon term “*propevati*” (to start singing) is the jargon word “*singen*”, which is equivalent to the Serbian word “*pevati*” (sing). Yet, the German word “*singen*” has a synonym: it is the word “*zinken*”, which has been used for centuries to indicate communication in a secret language; this synonym became part of the Serbian slang in the 20th century, upon adopting not only its original meaning but also the original German sound: “*zinken*” meaning “*cinkariti*” (to rat on somebody). Such examples are the subject matter of comparative jargonistics a new scientific discipline, whose study contributes to a better understanding of criminal slang used by criminal groups in different countries (Bojić, 2008; Mirić, 2016: 559-560). This is especially important at present times, when crime and criminals virtually recognize no borders; hence, there are cases where a criminal offence is committed

in one country whereas the consequence of the act occurs in a different part of the world.

The knowledge of slang may help both children and parents, and other interested parties interested in detecting the crime and identifying drug addicts or drug dealers, because it provides an insight into the drug-addict's behavior (Anti-Drugs Association, 2003). The conspiracy of drug addicts' communications and incomprehensible slang may significantly impair and aggravate the police work aimed at detecting the criminal offenders and crimes against public health involving illicit drug-trafficking. As an informal and non-standard linguistic variety, slang is susceptible to rapid changes, just like all other forms of non-standard language (Mirić, 2014: 234-235).

CONCLUSION

Combating crime is one of the most important tasks in any society. In this regard, the work of criminologists and criminal investigators is supported by the expertise provided by forensic linguists. One of the most important areas of forensic linguistics is certainly criminal linguistics. The study of slang used by drug users is of great importance in the process of detecting crimes involving narcotics abuse. The main purpose of drug-addicts' slang is to ensure secrecy and thus preclude the prosecution of criminal offenders involved in drug abuse. For this purpose, drug addicts and drug dealers develop a criminal jargon featuring a range of distinctive linguistic properties: a greater use of onomatopoeia and resonance; altering the original meaning of words; using contrasting, senseless and surrealistic compounds; a different sentence structure; etc.

The available data show that the Serbian criminal investigation and criminological literature does not include examples of extensive scientific research on the subject matter of criminal slang or jargon in general or the drug addicts' slang in particular. Such studies would significantly contribute not only to a more successful process of combating crime, as a socially dangerous phenomenon, but also to the development of criminal linguistics, as a new scientific discipline which is still underdeveloped and insufficiently applied in practice. (Mirić, 2016: 560) One of the possible courses of development of forensic linguistics in Serbia certainly implies expanding the jurisdiction of the technical forensic centers and the application of

forensic linguistics in court expertise. The necessary prerequisite is to provide relevant education and training for forensic staff and experts. Therefore, in addition to the existing educational profiles in the field of linguistics, it is essential to introduce new educational profiles in the field of forensic sciences. The introduction of forensic linguistics in Serbian law schools would contribute to a wider and more comprehensive education of future lawyers, and improve their professional capacities to actively participate in crime detection and prevention (Mirić, 2017: 494).

Forensic linguistics is underrepresented in the university and faculty curricula in Serbia. To our knowledge, forensic linguistics is taught as a subject only at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, as an elective course in the third year of academic study (Filološki fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 2020).

Finally, it can be concluded that forensic linguistics is very perspective branch of general linguistics. Its knowledge can be use in many purposes of criminalistics and criminology especially in pre-trial and trial procedure.

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KRIMINOLOŠKI, KRIMINALISTIČKI I LINGVISTIČKI ASPEKTI SLENGA NARKOMANA

Apstrakt

U radu su prikazane kriminološke, kriminlističke i lingvističke karakteristike slenga narkomana, čije poznavanje može olakšati otkrivanje učinilaca krivičnih dela u vezi sa zloupotrebom opojnih droga i doprineti sprečavanju narkomanije. Posebna pažnja je posvećena semantičkim i sintaksičkim karakteristikama slenga narkomana, imajući u vidu njihov značaj u kriminologiji i kriminalistici. Cilj rada je da se istakne neophodnost multidisciplinarnog pristupa u borbi protiv narkomanije i neophodnost aktivnog učešća kriminologa, kriminalista, forenzičkih lingvista u tom procesu. Jedinstvo ovih triju aspekata slenga mogu doprineti boljem objašnjenju zločina.

Ključne reči: forenzička/kriminalna lingvistika, sleng, narkomanija, kriminologija.

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