

Abstract of thesis entitled

A Sociolinguistic Study of Youth Slang of Hong Kong Adolescents

submitted by

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This thesis investigates different aspects of Cantonese youth slang of Hong Kong adolescents from a sociolinguistic perspective. The study attempts to find out the interrelationship among social variables such as age, gender, acquaintance, and frequency of using slang of Hong Kong adolescents. Other issues this study explores include sources through which adolescents learn new slang expressions and motives for which they use slang during communication; distributions of topic focus of youth slang between male and female adolescents; and a diversity of slang formation processes.

The study first explores the concept of slang and proposes some new slang identifying criteria in addition to the conventional ones. It then provides justification why the present study focuses particularly on youth slang in Hong Kong and outlines the distinctions between slang and its affiliated concepts. Data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative approaches which include questionnaire survey, face-to-face interviews, and direct observation. Additional written data were gathered from a variety of sources as supplement.



The research suggests that age and acquaintance of youth slang are negatively correlated, which means that the younger a teenager is, the better acquaintance of youth slang s/he will enjoy. And male adolescents tend to have a slightly high familiarity with youth slang than their female counterparts. However, no significant interaction between age and gender affecting the acquaintance of youth slang of adolescents was discovered. In terms of frequency of using slang, both male and female adolescents are almost at par. However, female adolescents may indeed supersede the males with regard to the frequency of actual slang use in some extreme conditions, e.g. disputes.

Furthermore, the research proposes that male and female adolescents acquire new slang expressions through different sources and they share different motives for using slang. The same situation applies to distributions of topic focus of youth slang. The language of male adolescents tends to be concentrated more on *evaluations of people, things, or events* and *appearance and style*, whereas that of females is concentrated on *sex* and *leisure and fun*. Finally, this thesis discusses slang formation processes. It proposes nine major methods through which slang expressions are produced.

It is hoped that this research study on Cantonese slang in the context of Hong Kong youth communities will draw more attention and arouse serious research interest in slanguage studies. And it is also hoped that this study has contributed to an in-depth understanding of slang.

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