

## ARTICLE

# Problems of Linguistic Ecology in Media and Online Information Spaces

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the analysis of invective means increasingly used in the language of contemporary newspapers and magazines within the media space. The transformations taking place in the language of mass media are closely linked to the broader changes in the world and culture under the influence of digital culture and globalization. These transformations primarily concern communicative processes in the media sphere, which have evolved from mere acts of transmitting and receiving information into mechanisms that determine the nature of social interaction, ranging from manipulative to benevolent. An examination of media discourse reveals a growing prevalence of negative linguistic phenomena associated with verbal aggression directed at the audience. The aim of the study is therefore to identify and describe the essence of invective linguistic means, to classify them into distinct groups, to distinguish them from non-normative vocabulary, and to consider the role of juridical linguistics and media ecology in preventing linguistic violence in interpersonal and virtual communication. The research employs empirical methods (associative and sociolinguistic experiments) and theoretical methods (lexico-stylistic, lexico-semantic, communicative-pragmatic, and corrective analyses). The study produced several

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key results: the notion of invective linguistic means is defined; their classification is outlined; distinguishing features separating invective from non-normative vocabulary are identified; the legal foundations of uncontrolled use of invective means are analyzed; and attention is drawn to the necessity, from a media-ecolinguistic perspective, of protecting the communicative space of mass media from the use of invective expressions that cause harm to the addressee.

**Keywords:** Invectives; Colloquial Speech; Media Ecolinguistics; Internet Discourse; Slang; Insult; Jurilinguistics

## 1. Introduction

The contemporary media space, encompassing diverse communicative environments such as mass media and hypertext, is continuously engaged in the search for expressive, evaluative, and creative linguistic means aimed at influencing the reader. This influence, however, is inherently ambivalent: on the one hand, it serves to align readers with the value orientations of society and to foster an optimistic worldview. In such contexts, the instruments of linguistic influence are lexical units marked by positive evaluative semantics.

On the other hand, media discourse exerts a toxic influence on its recipients because of the increasingly hostile emotional colouring of texts. V. I. Shakhovsky observes that “media communication is becoming ever more unfriendly, intolerant, and hostile”<sup>[1]</sup>. The following factors may be regarded as ecologically problematic phenomena of the media space: a) the formation of catastrophic thinking under the avalanche of aggressive news information; b) the impermissible intrusion into the intimate sphere of the individual; c) the unrestrained use of linguistic mechanisms that manipulate the linguistic consciousness of recipients – readers, viewers, listeners, and internet users<sup>[2]</sup>. Transformations like communication within the online environment – from acts of message transmission and reception to interactive exchange – have contributed to the emergence of online interaction<sup>[3]</sup>, which is frequently characterized by anonymity. Online anonymity can at times facilitate the spread of toxic linguistic practices or misinformation<sup>[4]</sup>. Lee and Barton note that the digital sphere is not free from sociolinguistic biases and prejudices. Online platforms are often saturated with language of hostility, discrimination, or microaggression, all of which can influence individuals’ linguistic behaviour and their overall communicative experience<sup>[5]</sup>. The nature of media communication is changing: various forms of hate speech – including incitement to violence, justification of historical acts of violence and discrimination, or assertions

of inferiority, criminality, and moral deficiency of ethnic or religious groups – serve to construct an image of enmity<sup>[6]</sup>. I. Ya. Murzina draws attention to communicative technologies that cause harm to the addressee, such as psychological manipulation and communicative violence<sup>[7]</sup>. Such communicative technologies include both lexical and pragmatic means—invective vocabulary and speech acts (menasives), insults, and expressions of humiliation that damage an individual’s psychosphere as manifested in communication. It is precisely within the processes of interaction in the internet and media spaces that “the language of hatred, aggression, and hostility functions as a catalyst for the cultivation of destructiveness in the human being”<sup>[1]</sup>.

Accordingly, communicative mechanisms that contribute to the generation of hate and aggressive language in the media sphere are of particular interest. Media ecolinguistics draws attention to the threats posed to human well-being by linguistic violence – that is, the use of offensive lexical items in the media space that exert harmful psychological effects on the recipient. However, the question of which linguistic means pose communicative risks within the media sphere has not been sufficiently clarified in the scholarly literature. In this regard, the present study aims to investigate invective vocabulary and invective communicative means – that is, speech acts that exert a negative influence on the individual. To achieve this goal, the following research objectives have been set: 1) to identify and describe linguistic means that harm media audiences; 2) to determine and analyse the strategies governing their use; 3) to examine evaluative lexical items and to explore the mechanisms of their word formation.

## 2. Literature Review

Despite numerous discussions in scholarly literature concerning linguistic violence, invective vocabulary, and verbal insult, there remains a lack of conceptual clarity re-

garding these terms. The shifting use of these designations is evidenced by definitions that equate such phenomena with offensive vocabulary. R. G. Apresyan classifies invective linguistic means as slang and non-normative words that have entered the sphere of public communication<sup>[8]</sup>. The term invective is generally understood to denote offensive or degrading words directed at a participant in a communicative act. V. I. Zhel'vis defines invective as a form of insulting speech that serves specific pragmatic purposes – namely, the intent to diminish the social status of the addressee<sup>[9]</sup>. V. V. Posidelova, in turn, includes within invective vocabulary “the indecent means of the Russian language – words and expressions that are tabooed in all types of discourse, including obscene lexemes and speech patterns carrying indecent meanings”<sup>[10]</sup>.

Researchers classify invective linguistic means in various ways. D. K. Vahitova's classification of invectives is based on several criteria: 1) by ethnic criterion (*Jew, blackie, Moskaly, Khokhol*); 2) by gender criterion (*guy, broad, chick*); 3) by professional criterion (*butcher, bureaucrat, quack*); 4) by age criterion (*snot-nose, greenhorn, old geezer*); 5) by social origin (*boor, blue blood, commoner, spoiled rich kid, low-born*); 6) by income level (*pauper, fat cat, moneybag*); 7) by political orientation (*commie, democrap, renegade*); 8) by membership in a social group (*peasant, rabble, vagrant*); 9) by comparison with animals (*zoomorphic metaphors: pig, donkey, sheep, elk*)<sup>[11]</sup>.

A. Y. Pozolotin distinguishes the following groups of invective linguistic means: 1) negative character traits (*Russophobe, miser, hypocrite, bitch*); 2) diseases and nonstandard appearance (*cross-eyed, bald, hunchbacked, lame*); 3) intellectual deficiencies (*stupid, slow-witted, dull*); 4) negative behavioral traits (*fascist, racist, womanizer, swindler*); 5) negative characteristics of lifestyle (*loose woman, gangster, drunkard, thief*); 6) derogatory designations of a person (*despicable type, scum, fool, reptile*); 7) harmful habits (*alcoholic, drug addict, informer*); 8) lack of life experience (*greenhorn, immature*); 9) emotional state (*furious, hysterical, lunatic*)<sup>[12]</sup>.

Invective linguistic means should be distinguished from non-normative vocabulary. Such vocabulary includes words formed in violation of linguistic norms – phonetic, lexical, or stylistic. These words are typically used in such forms of language as slang, colloquial speech, and professional

sociolects. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, they began to penetrate literary language as well, since they are marked by expressiveness; therefore, speakers may incorporate them into their speech to enhance its emotional or stylistic vividness.

### 3. Methodology

The materials for this study comprised 300 verbal invective units selected from newspapers such as *Vremya*, *Krymskie Izvestiya*, *Nasha Gazeta*, *Argumenty i Fakty*, *Sovershenno Sekretno*, *Masa Media*, *Arbat Media*, *The New York Times*, *Karavan*, and *Krymskaya Gazeta*, as well as from user comments on online forums including *sprahivai.ru*, *vkontakte.ru*, *politforums.ru*, *nn.ru/community*, and others (published between 2022 and 2023). The criteria for selecting the research material were based on its relevance to the topic; specifically, lexical items exhibiting signs of invectiveness were chosen. The analysis employed sociolinguistic and associative experiments, as well as various methods and strategies for examining groups of invective linguistic means and speech acts, including lexico-stylistic, lexico-semantic, psycho-emotional, and correlational analyses.

### 4. Results and Discussion

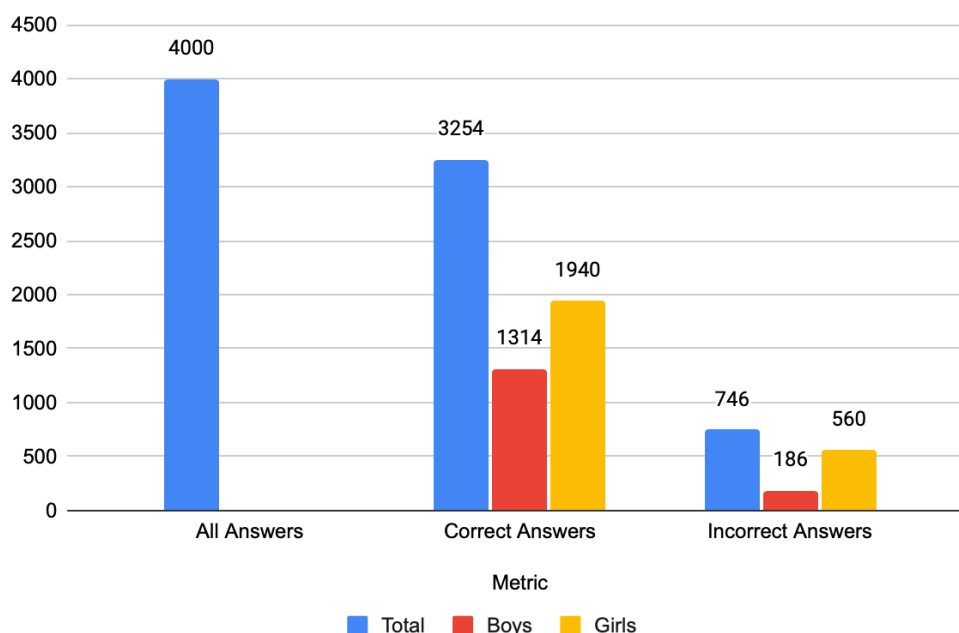
To differentiate between groups of non-normative and invective vocabulary, a sociolinguistic experiment was conducted. The experiment involved 200 respondents, of whom 124 were female and 76 were male. The study was carried out at Nazarbayev University and also included residents of Astana representing various social strata (speakers of business jargon, youth slang, criminal argot, and colloquial speech).

The respondents were asked 20 questions, some of which are presented in **Table 1**. The questions were of a closed type, offering alternative responses to the items posed.

A total of 4000 responses were collected. Of these, 746 were incorrect and 3254 were correct. Among the proper reactions, male participants gave 1314, and female participants gave 1940. Of the total number of correct answers, 2054 referred to substandard vocabulary, and 1200 to invective vocabulary (**Figure 1**).

**Table 1.** Questionnaire Items of the Sociolinguistic Experiment.

| № | Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Groups of Non-Normative Words and Injunctive Vocabulary |    |             |    |                   |    |                               |    |             |    |                           |     |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------|----|-------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------|----|---------------------------|-----|
|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Norm                                                    |    |             |    |                   |    | Norm of the Literary Language |    |             |    |                           |     |
|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Professional Jargon                                     |    | Youth Slang |    | Vernacular Speech |    | Argot                         |    | Injunctives |    | Definition of Injunctives |     |
|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | yes                                                     | no | yes         | no | yes               | no | yes                           | no | yes         | no | yes                       | нет |
| 1 | Which group do the following words belong to: <i>bydlo</i> ("rabble"), <i>svin'ya</i> ("pig"), <i>zvezdu</i> ("show-off"), <i>puzan</i> ("fatty"), <i>tvar'</i> ("creature"), <i>podonok</i> ("scoundrel"), <i>skotina</i> ("brute"), <i>buival</i> , <i>gadina</i> , <i>gnida</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | +                                                       |    |             |    | +                 |    |                               |    |             |    |                           |     |
| 2 | Identify the group to which the following lexical items belong: <i>lokh</i> ("dupe"), <i>medved'</i> ("bear"), <i>byk</i> ("bull"), <i>chelnok</i> ("shuttle trader"), <i>stakanist</i> ("glassware dealer"), <i>tolkach</i> ("middleman")                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                         |    |             |    |                   |    | +                             |    |             |    |                           |     |
| 3 | Determine which sociolect the following words belong to: <i>meshok</i> ("moneybag"), <i>baldokha</i> ("fool"), <i>lapsha</i> ("noodle"), <i>sunduk</i> ("chest"), <i>sazan</i> ("carp"), <i>lepeshnik</i> ("flatbread vendor"), <i>musor</i> ("police officer"), <i>uryuk</i> ("dried apricot"), <i>balda</i> ("simpleton").                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                         |    | +           |    |                   |    |                               |    |             |    |                           |     |
| 4 | Identify and determine which lexical group the following words belong to: <i>gopota</i> ("street gang"), <i>perets</i> ("guy", "fellow"), <i>chuvak</i> ("dude"), <i>prankery</i> ("pranksters"), <i>kulebyaka</i> ("pie", "pastry"), <i>krutoi</i> ("cool", "tough"), <i>vstrechki</i> ("oncoming lane"), <i>kochumat'</i> ("to wander", "to roam aimlessly").                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                         |    | +           |    |                   |    |                               |    |             |    |                           |     |
| 5 | Determine the group to which the following words belong: <i>narik</i> ("drug addict"), <i>lokh</i> ("dupe"), <i>mrav'</i> ("scum"), <i>fashist</i> ("fascist"), <i>rasist</i> ("racist"), <i>bydlo-sosedi</i> ("boorish neighbours"), <i>sotsiopat</i> ("sociopath"), <i>oligarshata</i> ("children of oligarchs"), <i>eksportnitsa</i> , <i>tadzhikizatsiya</i> ("Tajikization"), <i>pokupanty</i> ("buyers", ironic pejorative), <i>demokritinizm</i> ("democritinism"), <i>maidan</i> ("pejorative reference to Maidan supporters"). |                                                         |    |             |    |                   |    |                               |    | +           |    |                           |     |
| 6 | Which of the following definitions of injunctive vocabulary is correct?<br>a) Injunctive vocabulary refers to non-normative language.<br>b) Injunctive vocabulary includes words that humiliate or insult a person; it is a means of verbal aggression that violates ethical taboos.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                         |    |             |    |                   |    |                               |    |             |    | +                         |     |



**Figure 1.** Distribution of female and male respondents' answers to the questionnaire items.

To verify the assumption that verbal invective also includes speech acts of insult and humiliation, we analyzed a total of 50 speech acts. The analysis focused on speech acts of insult and verbal discreditation of another person, consisting of such components as illocution (the transmission of communicative intent), locution (the act of reference and predication), and perlocution (the effect exerted on the interlocutor).

K. I. Brinev describes the speech act of insult as follows: “Participants: Participant 1 – the invector; Participant 2 – the invectum; Participant 3 – the observer. The first two participants are obligatory, while the latter (the observer) is an optional participant”<sup>[13]</sup>.

A speech act is viewed as an expression of the communicator’s intention. It represents a single act performed by the speaker, during which the speaker insults another person using invectives. In the following context, a court case was initiated on the grounds of personal insult, as the first communicator used tabooed words directed at another individual.

According to the case materials, a conflict arose between two men over a financial debt. On 2 January, the defendant apparently decided to remind his acquaintance that it was improper to begin the new year with unpaid debts. One word led to another, and the fatal expletive “*bl...*” was uttered (Vremya, 20.01.2022). The same newspaper also recorded the following verbal exchange: “*You’re not adequate! Go and smash your head against the wall – maybe your brain will start working. I have no idea how to get it through your tiny brain, you [expletive], that Ira and I will never be together, you [expletive]!*” (Vremya, 20.01.2022).

The use of tabooed vocabulary in print media was previously prohibited by censorship. But now freedom of speech has been granted. At present, therefore, obscene language has become de-tabooed. It is used for the expressivization of speech. Thus, in an interview between a journalist and a professor advocating for the purity of language, the discussion concerns the vulgarization of the language:

*What has the language become? It is entirely obscene vocabulary—swear words, profanity; in other words, people are constantly sending one another somewhere. But when profane language is added, as they say, to express one’s emotions, that is already completely unaccept-*

*able!*

*Yet people cursed before as well!*

*Previously, obscene language was typically associated with builders or plumbers.*

*The intelligentsia did not use such words openly. But now everyone swears.*

*Then advise us how it is better to express “indignation”? Should one say blin (“darn”) or chert poberi (“damn it”)?*

*Yolki-palki, instead of blin (or something even more substantial), one can say that! (Vremya, 27.01.2022).*

Speech aggression is also manifested using the following strategies: 1) defamation – the public dissemination of information that discredits someone; 2) verbal discreditation – the undermining of another person’s authority; 3) verbal insinuation – the creation of preconditions for a negative perception of someone’s social image<sup>[14]</sup>.

Thus, in the following speech act of insult, the strategy of verbal behavior realized is that of verbal discreditation, understood as the undermining of authority and the diminishing of the social significance of Decl (Kirill Tolmatsky). In 2016, the rapper Basta (Vasiliy Vakulenko) twice referred to Decl on the social network Twitter as a “shaggy scum”<sup>[15]</sup>. The following strategy is the strategy of humiliation. The use of invective vocabulary within media communication allows it to be viewed as “toxic,” that is, as a form of communication leading to the destruction of interpersonal relationships (reproaches, ridicule, displays of contempt, etc.)<sup>[16]</sup>.

Toxic media communication can be represented as follows:

Communicant No. 1 (the speaker). This participant sends a toxic message and expresses an intention to produce an offensive speech act – to humiliate someone, to show contempt, ridicule, or other forms of verbal aggression. For instance, in the following utterance by George Bush, the obscene word *shit* is used: *George Bush and Condi Rice need to realize that Syria on its own is not going to press. Hezbollah, in Mr. Bush’s immortal words, to stop doing this shit*<sup>[17]</sup>. Following the example, “*One tweet argues that “African Americans” killed 81% of white homicide victims. This tweet is just one example of the many racially-motivated and inaccurate tweets that Trump posted during his presidency. The tweet caused other Twitter users and voters to*

view *Black Americans with negative stereotypes, such as the myth that Black people are generally violent criminals. Many may engage in racist actions and practices due to the misinformation that Trump's racial tweets perpetuate*"<sup>[18]</sup>.

Communicant No. 2 (a representative of the political party Hezbollah –the recipient of the message). Communicants 1 and 2 constitute the first component of communication, representing the toxicity factor of the communicant.

The second component is interaction, which facilitates the implementation of the communicative act.

The third component is the sign code (verbal), which enables the use of the invective word shit.

The fourth component comprises functions – the communicative and invective functions are realized here, contributing to the expression of an aggressive attitude toward the situation.

The fifth component is the result of communication – the text, which serves as a factor of the toxic context.

Another strategy of linguistic violence is verbal insinuation, in which the text creates conditions for a negative perception of someone's social image (cf.); for example, zoometaphors are used to insult a person (cf.); *Others say: "We did not think on Maidan that it would turn out this way; but we knew and told you that joining NATO would exacerbate the conflict. Look –you sheep are being armed and trained so that you will go to war."* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 29, 2023).

Metaphorical invectives are also used to undermine the authority of professionals: *"Or has Darimova forgotten how she called medical workers rats and jackals?"* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, 2023).

In these situations, linguistic violence is employed to discredit the interlocutor. The speech acts occurring in such contexts are interpreted as explicit (open) verbal influence on the addressee, intended to undermine and discredit the interlocutor.

One of the notable strategies for realizing the speech act of insult is verbal discrimination. In this case, verbal ethnic labels are used to humiliate representatives of other ethnic groups. Such labels are understood as stable lexical designations assigned to members of different ethnicities to express prejudice and to offend them on racial or ethnic grounds.

In blogs of youth groups adhering to extremist ideolo-

gies (such as skinheads who share neo-Nazi beliefs), invective vocabulary is frequently encountered: *papuas* (a derogatory term for people from southern regions), *khach*, *khachik*, *cheburek* (used pejoratively for people from the Caucasus), *yellow* (for Chinese), *yellow-faced* (for Japanese), *niggers*, and others.

In the online space, offensive remarks have also been directed toward Kazakhs. For instance, the well-known Ukrainian comedian and TV host Ihor Lastochkin recorded a public video apology to the people of Kazakhstan for using the phrase "Kazakh bydlo" ("Kazakh scum") in reference to Nurlan Saburov (Arbat Media).

A synonym for the word "bydlo" in this context is "mambet." In Kazakhstani society, the once-neutral word "mambet" has acquired a derogatory connotation. Some use it to refer to people who have moved from rural areas (auls), others – to those who behave uncivilly in public, and still others – to people holding conservative views (masa.media).

Unfortunately, the pejorative use of "mambet" has become firmly entrenched in the vocabulary of Russian-speaking Kazakhstanis. It is used everywhere – even in the Parliament: *"Frankly, the very name 'college of world level' strongly reminds me of the well-known 'New Vasyuki' project by the respected Ostap Bender. This expression 'of world level' – it's pure kolkhoz and mambetism, honestly," stated Dariga Nazarbayeva, then a deputy of the Mazhilis* (masa.media).

In the online media space, insults toward Kazakhs from Russian-speaking residents of Kazakhstan are also not uncommon: *"The Kazakhs are f...ing annoying, they've started jumping like the Khokhols (a derogatory term for Ukrainians). Here come the Kazakhs – paid Nazis. Now Russia will kick Ukraine's a... – and the cowardly Kazakhs, oops... will sit on their a... too. Glory to Russia, and Vladimir Putin is just great," said one woman* (arbat.media).

Racially based insults also belong to the category of invective expressions, as they convey ethnic prejudice against representatives of other races. According to T.A. van Dijk, ethnic prejudice refers to the dominant negative attitudes in society toward an ethnic minority and toward its individual members<sup>[19]</sup>.

Examples of invective racial nominations include: *mambet*, *beshbarmachnik* (a derogatory term derived from the traditional Kazakh dish beshbarmak), *zhid* (a slur for

Jews), chernyi (“black”), makaronnik and spaghetnitsa (for Italians), as well as arbi, arbicot, bic, bicot, and crouille (for Arabs).

As V.N. Aristova notes, “invective designations also exist for Germans (boches, aibohe, chleu). Americans are referred to as ameriogoue, ricain. For the English, terms such as anglish, bitteck, rosbif are used; for the Chinese – chinetoque; for the Italians – italboche, macaroni, rital, spaghetti.”<sup>[20]</sup>

The speech act is also regarded as a means of expressing invectiveness. Among speech acts, particular attention is given to acts of insult and threat (memanives).

Based on the questionnaire data and analysis of speech acts, several key findings were obtained: 1) the features of invective means that distinguish them from ordinary non-normative vocabulary were identified; 2) the main groups of invective words were classified.

In our view, invective vocabulary includes words and expressions used to humiliate or insult a person, to express aggression or a negative attitude toward them, and to diminish another’s social status.

The analysis of invective expressions used in the media space has made it possible to identify the following groups of invective vocabulary:

1. Invectives and obscene words expressing disrespectful or aggressive attitudes toward another person;
2. Invectives that demean the addressee’s dignity and demonstrate disregard for their social status;
3. Invectives as ethnic labels, reflecting prejudice against members of other ethnic groups;
4. Invectives that provide a derogatory characterization of the interlocutor or another person;
5. Invectives expressing an emotionally charged, negative evaluation of an individual;
6. Swear words.

The verbal means of expressing invectiveness include:

1) invective vocabulary; 2) speech acts of insult, humiliation, defamation, verbal insinuation, and discreditation; 3) lexical units expressing ethnic prejudice toward representatives of other nationalities.

In addition to invective vocabulary, the media space makes active use of a vast layer of substandard lexis, which includes non-normative words and expressions characterized by expressiveness, a strong connotative component, and

affiliation with subsystems of substandard speech.

The substandard subsystem of the national language encompasses colloquial speech, criminal jargon, slang, and professional argot.

Colloquial vocabulary and phraseology consist of expressive, stylistically lowered words that differ from neutral conversational words by their coarseness and familiarity, cf.: *“Indeed, you’ll say anything to distract attention from yet another failed attempt to launch a storm sewer system in the capital city.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, 2023); *“We keep on drumming the same thing – that personnel decide everything, and that most of ours are absolutely useless.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, 2023). In the following context, a colloquial verb is used, where the connotation arises through metaphorical transfer of the word’s meaning – from the sound made by a crow to a human speech act: *“I’m not croaking at all! It’s just that in our country, at our time, one can expect anything.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, 2023). Colloquial verbs in Russian are often formed through prefixation, particularly with the prefix pro: *“...that the officials will once again ignore, sabotage, and drag out the president’s orders –as they so masterfully know how to do.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, 2023); colloquial participles are frequently used as well: *“Why don’t the riches greedily grabbed by the functionaries of the old Kazakhstan ever return from abroad?”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, 2023).

Of interest is the use of colloquial words formed through the lexico-semantic method, that is, by developing a new meaning based on a word belonging to the literary language. For example, the verb vydavit’ (“to squeeze out [juice]”), originally literary in origin, acquires in colloquial speech a figurative meaning – “to expel someone by force” Cf.: *“Pro-Russian mercenaries began to ‘squeeze out’ French and Canadian companies engaged in gold and diamond mining.”* (Sovershenno Sekretno, No. 15 (522), August 2023).

Journalists frequently employ colloquial phraseological units to enhance the emotional expressiveness of newspaper articles. For this purpose, they are often transformed or modified: *“The Taliban has arrived –so, to speak, open your pocket a little wider.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, 2023); *“Everywhere you look, there are imitators skilled at throwing beautiful dust into everyone’s eyes – starting with the president himself.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, 2023).

Words from criminal jargon are also frequently employed by journalists to convey an emotional attitude toward the events being described. The lexis of this jargon is stylistically lowered and is rich in words and expressions that clearly reflect a sharply negative attitude toward society, people, and accepted behavioral norms. In argot, new words are typically formed through metaphorical or metonymic transfer. The basis of such secondary nomination often lies in a specific, concrete feature, for example: *“And inside the purse there was no bomb, but a ‘cutlet’. In criminal slang, this term refers to a bundle of banknotes. A thick stack of 3,000-tenge bills and several 2000s were held together with a rubber band.”* (Sovershenno Sekretno, No. 15 (522), August 2023). In this context, the metonymic transfer is based on the feature of compression: just as a cutlet is formed by pressing and shaping, the bundle of money is also compressed and bound together.

The verb *‘bazarili’* (*‘were chatting’*) is derived from the noun *bazar*, which in colloquial Russian means not *‘market,’* but *‘talk’* or *‘conversation.’* Cf.: *“The lack of political competition in the political ‘market’ is most clearly evidenced by the first year of the new parliament’s work, which we have talked ‘bazarili’ about more than once.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 29, 2023); a synonym of *‘bazarit’* is *‘boltát’* (*‘to chatter, to talk idly’*): *“All right, stop chattering and messing with my head about those so-called ‘smart solutions’ – just take a shovel and start digging.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 29, 2023). In this context, both literary and criminally colored expressions are employed: *smart-resheniya* (*‘smart solutions’*) and the colloquial-argot phrases *morochit’ golovu* (*‘to mess with someone’s head’*) and *boltát’* (*‘to chatter’*).

In the media space, one also finds denominations of people based on their psychological characteristics. For example: *“I didn’t like him. There’s something repulsive, slipperiness about him. His eyes keep darting around. So serious. How serious he is. Just a phony.”* (Sovershenno Sekretno, No. 15 (522), August 2023).

In youth slang, lexical items often carry connotative and pragmatic meanings, while the speech of young people is characterized by a high degree of expressivity and evaluativeness. Words with such meanings are used to express disapproval of official ideology, to signal youth cultural attitudes, and to convey the speaker’s subjective stance toward the object of thought. Cf.: *“Just remember Kairat Kelimbetov – what a fine reformer-illusionist he was. One of his ‘national plan’*

*schemes alone is worth mentioning. They promised a gigantic amount of ‘bablo’ (slang for ‘money’, ‘cash’) from the state budget.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, August 2023); *“As our old friend Pyotr rightly noted, there are simply no domestic investors in the country with that kind of ‘bablo’ (‘money’).”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, August 2023).

Notably, recent coinages in youth slang have been formed through the compounding of word stems. For example: *At the beginning of August, during a period of political lull (‘polit-shtil’), Zhenis Makhmudovich clearly managed to stir up a wave.* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, August 2023) *“...the guarantee of success in an Eastern country lies not only – and not even primarily – in the support of the so-called ‘broad national masses’ (shirnatmass) you mentioned, but rather in gratitude and loyalty.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, August 2023).

Word-formation in youth and media slang also occurs through truncation and borrowing. For example: *“The label ‘DSP’ (‘For Official Use Only’) is a wonderful government trick that conceals a complete – well, almost complete – disregard for the president’s instructions.”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 33, August 2023); *“How do you like that tough ‘trolling’ performed by the akim (regional governor)?”* (Argumenty i Fakty, No. 32, August 2023).

To test the assumption that students can distinguish evaluative words from substandard varieties of the language (such as youth slang, argot, professional slang, and colloquial speech), we conducted an associative experiment.

The procedure of the associative experiment was as follows: the participants were presented with stimulus words. They were instructed to respond with the first word or several words that came to mind.

We conducted a directed associative experiment, based on semantic constraints imposed on the choice of responses (e.g., only synonyms or only phraseological units semantically related to the stimulus word).

This directed experiment was also chain-based, meaning that participants were asked to produce several associative responses to a single stimulus. In the present experiment, respondents were instructed to provide response chains according to paradigmatic relations – where the stimulus word belonged to the literary standard of the language, and the responses were synonyms drawn from sociolects (including substandard varieties) – and according to syntagmatic rela-

tions, where the stimulus word (from the literary standard) elicited phraseological responses from sociolects.

- a) youth slang: *bratan* (“brother,” “bro”), *chuvak* (“guy,” “dude”), *kent* (“mate,” “buddy”), *dzhgentlemen* (“gentleman”), *boyfriend*, etc.
- b) professional slang: *parnukha* (from *paren*’, “guy; fellow”), *muzhik* (“man”), *gavrik* (“chap; bloke”), *zelyonyi* (“rookie; inexperienced one”), etc.
- c) argot: *bratok* (“pal; buddy”), *perchik* (“smart guy; sly fellow”), *parya* (“mate; guy”), *shket* (“kid; small fry”), *balbes* (“blockhead; fool”), *malyavka* (“little one; brat”), *dylida* (“lanky person; beanpole”), *shchuryonok* (“squinty-eyed kid; small fry”), *miloy* (“sweetheart; darling”), etc.
- d) colloquial (non-standard) vocabulary: *khakhal*’ (“lover; sweetheart”), *malets* (“lad; young fellow”), *khlopets* (“country lad; guy”), *parnisha* (“young guy; fellow”), *detinushka* (“big lad; burly fellow”), *otrok* (“adolescent; youth”).

III. Stimulus word “bad person” – responses (invective words):

- a) youth slang: *skuf* (“old-fashioned person”), *boomer* (“representative of the older generation, conservative person”), *dushnilo* (“boring, overly serious or tedious person”), *heiter* (“hater”), *chiter* (“cheater”), *nub* (“newbie; inexperienced user or player”).
- b) professional slang: *bober* (“sycophant; conformist employee who curries favor with superiors”), *autsaider* (“outsider”), *matyugal’nik* (“megaphone; loud-speaker”)
- c) argot: *lapsha* (“lies; deception”), *utyug* (“slow-witted or awkward person,” literally “iron”), *baldokha* (“blockhead; fool”), *musor* (“trash”), *bugayshchik* (“thug; physically strong and aggressive man”), *terpila* (“victim; passive sufferer”), *lokh* (“dupe; gullible person”), *fuflomet* (“liar; fraudster; someone who talks nonsense”), *tolkach* (“fixer”), *debil* (“idiot; moron”).;
- d) colloquial (non-standard) vocabulary: *bychara* (“brute; bully,” literally “big bull”), *krysa* (“rat; informer, traitor”), *durak* (“fool; idiot”), *prostofilya* (“simpleton”).

The moral traits of a “bad person” make it possible to

judge his ethical behavior<sup>[21]</sup>; however, in this case, there is a clear intention on the part of the communicant to point out character flaws and to express irony.

Stimulus word “bad guy” – responses: phraseological units used to insult a person:

- a) youth slang: *kryshu snosit* (“to lose one’s mind; to go crazy,” literally “the roof is being blown off”), *sin-dromito daunito* (a “Down-syndrome person”), *glaza v puchok* (“eyes bulging,” shock or overexcitement), *dokhlyi bobik* (“dead mutt,” a worthless, exhausted person).
- b) professional slang: *volosatye ruki* (“hairy hands,” idiom meaning “connections in high places; influence through corruption”), *sinie vorotnichki* (“blue-collar workers”), *khromaya utka* (“lame duck”);
- c) argot: *uryuk plantovyi* (“plant-dried apricot,” naïve person), *veshat’ lapshu na ushi* (“to hang noodles on someone’s ears,” “to deceive; to tell lies”), *gnat’ tyul’ku* (“to talk nonsense; to bluff”);
- d) colloquial (non-standard) expressions: *pritukhshaya kotletka* (“wilted cutlet”), *kozyol vonyuchii* (“stinking goat”), *mukha iz navoznoy kuchi* (“fly from a dung heap”), *durak nabityi* (“complete fool; thick-headed person”).

According to the results of the associative experiment (Table 2), the participants were able to distinguish between the following types of associates: 1) words from sociolects that are non-standard in form yet characterized by high expressivity, evaluativeness, and predominantly positive connotation; 2) associates representing invective words, whose formation reflects a harmful communicative intention –to insult or humiliate someone. These lexical items are marked by heightened negative emotionality.

The respondents demonstrated the ability to differentiate between these categories. Accordingly, the associative fields identified in the experiment were classified into the following groups: “substandard words,” “invective vocabulary,” and “phraseological units.”

In jurilinguistics, invectives are examined as a legal category in terms of their violation of juridical norms. In many countries – including Kazakhstan – laws have been enacted establishing administrative liability for the use of obscene or offensive language in public spaces and in the mass media.

**Table 2.** Associative fields compiled from the results of the experiment.

| Stimulus Word – “Guy.” Substandard Lexical and Phraseological Responses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Stimulus Word – “Invectives.” Invective Vocabulary and Phraseological Units                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>bratan (“brother; bro; close male friend”),<br/> chuvak (“guy; dude”),<br/> kent (“mate; buddy”),<br/> muzhik (“man; bloke; ordinary guy”),<br/> gavrik (“chap; fellow,” mildly ironic),<br/> dylda (“beanpole; lanky person”),<br/> bratok (“pal; buddy,” often with criminal or ironic undertone),<br/> parya (“guy; mate”),<br/> khakhal’ (“lover; boyfriend,” often used ironically or disapprovingly),<br/> detinushka (“big lad; burly fellow,” colloquial-archaic),<br/> otrok (“adolescent; youth,” archaic, sometimes ironic),<br/> svoi paren’ (“one of us; trustworthy person”),<br/> uma palata (“extremely smart,” literally “a whole chamber of mind”),<br/> zadnim umom krepk (“wise after the event; hindsight is strong”),<br/> ni uma, ni zakliuki (“utterly foolish; lacking any sense”),<br/> kent klugovyi (“naïve or gullible friend; rustic mate”),<br/> golova varit (“has a good head on one’s shoulders; clever, quick-witted”).</p> | <p>bober (“sycophant”),<br/> autsaider (“outsider”),<br/> matyugal’nik (“megaphone; loudspeaker”),<br/> musor (“cop; police officer,” literally “trash”),<br/> terpila (“victim”),<br/> lapsha (“lies; deception,” literally “noodles,” from the idiom veshat’ lapshu na ushi – “to hang noodles on someone’s ears”),<br/> fuflomet (“liar; fraud; someone who talks nonsense”),<br/> prostofilya (“simpleton; naïve person”),<br/> bychara (“brute; bully,” literally “big bull,” used as an insult toward an aggressive man),<br/> krysa (“rat; traitor; informer”),<br/> volosatye ruki (“hairy hands,” idiom meaning “connections in high places; corruption or nepotism”),<br/> sinie vorotnichki (“blue-collar workers”),<br/> mukha iz navoznoy kuchi (“fly from a dung heap,” vivid metaphor for a worthless or disgusting person),<br/> durak nabityi (“complete fool; thick-headed person”),<br/> protukhshaya kotletka (“rotten cutlet”),<br/> kozyol vonyuchii (“stinking goat”),<br/> Uriuk plantovyi (“plant-dried apricot,” used ironically to describe a simple, naïve, or uncultured person),<br/> khromaya utka (“lame duck”).</p> |

In jurilinguistics, when addressing cases of personal insult, the expert correlates the conflictual speech situation with the relevant legal norms. In doing so, the expert must resolve the question of the subjectivity of perception – whether the alleged victim (the invectum) perceives the utterance as insulting. In other words, the listener must determine for themselves whether they feel offended.

As V.I. Zhel’vis expresses his opinion on this issue as follows: “A young girl has every right to feel insulted if, in her presence, words such as *govno* [‘shit’] or *zhopa* [‘ass’] are used, whereas a frequent visitor to a beerhouse might not be affected even by the coarsest obscenities” [22].

In connection with this, N.D. Golev proposes the development of a universal scale of evaluativeness (invectiveness), since “what is humiliating and offensive to one communicant may not necessarily be perceived as such by another” [23].

Thus, in the article “Watch Your Lips”, it is reported that the Administrative Code has been amended to include Article 434, “Minor hooliganism.” But how do judges resolve this issue in practice? How do they determine whether a person has, in fact, been insulted or not? As one journalist notes, “Since then, obscene language has been officially recognized as swearing in public places. This innovation has

shocked many, because, truth be told, some Kazakhstanis have a weakness for strong language.”

In connection with the recent legislative amendment, several questions have arisen for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including how the evidentiary basis will be established. In criminal proceedings concerning insults, courts typically rely on the opinions of linguistic experts, who determine whether a given word is offensive or not.

But what about administrative proceedings? Will judges rely on their own linguistic competence, or keep explanatory dictionaries at hand? (Vremya, August 24, 2023).

In jurilinguistics, an insult is classified as a linguistic offence. The term “insult” is defined within this discipline as follows: in the logical formula of the speech act of insult, a thesis concerning the social inadequacy of an individual is presented uncompromisingly, and it is precisely this feature that creates the illocutionary effect of the speech act of insult.

From this perspective, an insult constitutes a direct-action speech act aimed at suppressing the intellectual component of an individual’s consciousness to deny their social significance [24].

In contemporary society, proving the fact of linguistic aggression in court proceedings is difficult but possible,

provided that during linguistic expertise, commissioned by the court, the forensic linguist can reconstruct and logically demonstrate the sequence of the speech event through argumentation: 1) by identifying the author's intentions in the analyzed text, by determining their communicative strategy and the corresponding choice of speech tactics, by revealing how these tactics are realized in recognizable invective genres, and by tracing their linguistic embodiment in specific invective lexical units. The conclusion must also be clearly articulated and substantiated<sup>[25]</sup>.

Acts of linguistic violence and verbal insult are treated differently in the legal systems of various countries. In domestic jurilinguistic theory, the speech act of insult is understood to comprise the following components: 1) purpose – to humiliate or demean someone; 2) content – information that negatively characterizes the individual; 3) form of verbal expression – the obligatory presence of an indecent or obscene linguistic form; 4) participants – the addresser, the addressee, or a third party.

In the United Kingdom, a different structural model is applied: 1) participants, whose presence is mandatory – the utterance of the invector must be directed toward the invectum; 2) purpose, which encompasses a broad range of actions of an insulting or aggressive nature; 3) means of realizing the intended purpose.

The diversity of interpretations of the speech act of insult across different countries and among various scholars affects the work of jurilinguists, who seek to clearly substantiate the provisions of criminal law articles dealing with verbal insult.

Therefore, comparative and contrastive studies in forensic expertology should be conducted to develop a more precise methodology for analyzing acts of linguistic violence and determining the appropriate legal qualification and sanction. Although computational linguistics is one of the fastest-growing areas of modern linguistics, the study of the Kazakh language in this field lags. To this end, the Kazakh Corpus can be utilized as part of our efforts to analyze the ecology of any discourse field<sup>[26]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the use of invective means in the media space has shown that within the media sphere, the toxic

impact on communicants is becoming increasingly stronger due to the negative emotional coloring of texts and the use of the language of hatred and violence in them. This is directly connected with the use in media language of groups of invective vocabulary and communicative-pragmatic means aimed at the humiliation and insult of a person.

The results of the sociolinguistic experiment have shown that invective vocabulary should not be conflated with non-normative vocabulary used in the substandard varieties of language – in its sociolects such as youth slang, professional slang, argot, and colloquial speech.

Non-normative vocabulary includes words formed in violation of the linguistic norm, as opposed to the standard (literary) language, whose linguistic means follow established norms. Invective vocabulary may, in some instances, also be non-normative; however, its principal distinguishing feature lies in its intensified negative emotionality, aimed explicitly at insulting or humiliating a person. For this purpose, tabooed linguistic means may also be employed. Invective means further include communicative-pragmatic strategies expressing the speaker's intention to humiliate or offend the addressee, such as strategies of verbal discreditation, defamation, insinuation, and verbal discrimination.

The results of the associative experiment have shown that the respondents distinguish substandard words created in violation of language norms but characterized by heightened positive expressivity. Their evaluative component is associated with irony, mockery, or mild censure. In contrast, the evaluativeness of invective vocabulary is directed toward expressing contempt, humiliation, and ridicule of another person. Non-normative and invective vocabulary differ in the following features: 1) non-normative vocabulary: a) lexical items formed in violation of language norms; b) positively pejorative evaluativeness; c) increased expressivity (substandard words). 2) Invective vocabulary: a) partial non-normativity and tabooed character; b) negative evaluativeness; c) heightened emotionality; d) explicit intention to humiliate or insult another person; e) manifestation of prejudice and verbal aggression toward another individual.

The use of invective vocabulary and speech acts of insult and humiliation is regarded as a linguistic offence within jurilinguistics. In media ecology, such practices are interpreted as a violation of human communicative safety

resulting from the use of invective language. Therefore, it seems necessary to implement preventive measures aimed at protecting human well-being through maintaining the ecological balance of the communicative environment. In the current context, the most effective measures appear to be legal mechanisms that suppress acts of linguistic violence directed at insulting individuals.

## Author Contributions

G.A.O. has written the introduction section and collected the data. Z.D.B. has written the literature review. D.A.N. has analyzed the data, and A.B.D. has reviewed the paper and come up with the conclusion part. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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We confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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