

POLITICAL SEMIOTICS: LEXICAL INNOVATIONS IN MASS-MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the analysis of English political neologisms in mass-media discourse. Language functions in the society which develops and evolves as a system. The society constantly needs support in the language and the reflections in the changes which stimulates linguistic processes. The significant peculiarity of vocabulary is its inherent direction to the phenomena of reality, that's why it is the vocabulary that reflects all the changes happening in the public life, which inevitably leads to the formation of new nominations. New vocabulary in mass-media is of peculiar interest to scholars as a word in this sphere of life should possess expressiveness, draw the attention of the audience. So lexical units capable of fulfilling a certain communicative task are formed. And it is the mass-media that spreads these new words and is the means of their popularization. It is noted that by means of verbal evaluations the reflection of a language personality in a lexico-semantic system takes place. The most frequent ways of creating evaluation are proper names, precedent names and a derogatory component of connotation of the words relating to politics. The article underlines that the analysis of English political new words contributes to the understanding of typical and specific peculiarities of a people by a language personality, and as a result of a description of cultural interpretation of a basis of the analysed units conceptual values of the people based on their mentality, typical traits of an ethnos can be singled out.*

Keywords: *political semiotics; lexical innovations; mass-media discourse; structure; semantics*

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is often called the mirror of time in which it lives: words reflect the state and development of public life. Modern life cannot be perceived without the qualitative and quantitative growth of discoveries in the most diverse spheres of human activity and there are many opportunities to replenish lexical systems of languages. This gives a powerful impetus for describing and systematizing a large stream of neologisms, idioms, phrases and meanings that cause the emergence of an independent sphere of research in lexicology.

We live in a society that constantly develops. New objects in different spheres arise and they need to be named. That is why no science can exist without neologisms, new words. Though the neologisms dominate in the field of knowledge, other people, not only scholars, can also feel the necessity to express and interpret reality by new ways and create new words that would reflect it.

David Crystal defines neologisms as

the creation of new lexical items as a response to change circumstances in the external world, which achieves some currency within a speech community

at a particular time. ... New words in the language are constantly entering the lexicon to describe new concepts and technologies and what they mean to us" (Crystal, 1992:264).

Some scholars (see the works of S. S. Guseva (2017), V.V. Katermina (2016), M.V. Moskaleva (2008), L.V. Ratsiburskaya (2007), M. E. Rut (1992), etc.) emphasize that the process of the emergence of a lexical innovation begins with practices and usage since the historically formed, socially conditioned, political, economic and cultural conditions of the language community affect the lexico-nominative speech activity. Given that a large number of nominative structures supply economic, social, scientific, technical, political and cultural discursive areas, at the present stage of the development of linguistics the understanding of the need for a comprehensive study of linguistic and sociocultural processes in their functional-semantic interaction becomes increasingly clear (Golets, 2015).

The aim of the study is to analyze English political neologisms in the discourse of mass-media in the interconnection of language, person and culture.

Language functions in the society which develops and evolves as a system, so it constantly needs support in the language and the reflections in the changes which in its turn stimulates linguistic processes.

The significant peculiarity of vocabulary is its inherent direction to the phenomena of reality, that's why it is the vocabulary that reflects all the changes happening in the public life, which inevitably leads to the formation of new nominations (Katermina, 2017:618).

2. LEXICAL INNOVATIONS IN MASS-MEDIA DISCOURSE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Neology as no other area of linguistic knowledge is most intertwined with the world outlook and culture of a person. The tendency to changeability and renewal is a global property of the language system. Without this understanding it is impossible to truly understand the dynamics of the language picture of the world from the point of view of cognitive-discursive conditions and factors of neologization. Renewal of the language is influenced by two incentives: one of them is related to the cognitive and communicative needs of society, the other is to the peculiarities of the internal structure of the language. Therefore, an important task of modern neology is the creation of a cognitive-discursive theory of a new word. The formation of new words, the emergence of new meanings happens because of the creative work of human consciousness, the endless cognitive process determined by the practical and intellectual activity of a person. L. Kasyanova states that the

emergence of new nominations is a kind of response to the social demand, the result of cognitive-discursive mastery and interpretation of reality (Kasyanova, 2009:4).

The goal of any speaker is to construct a meaningful statement as a complete communicative unit. Acts of nomination play an important role in the process of generation of this communicative unit. In the implementation of these acts any language uses either existing nominative units or creates new ones. Word meaning (internal form of the word) recognized by the speaker is considered to be one of the main characteristic features of the nomination. To form a lexical unit one uses various ways and, therefore, the originally internal form of the word is the basis of any individual re-creation (Antyufeeva, 2004).

Each thing, every phenomenon gets its name. The designation of objects and phenomena in their universality or in a generalized form encompasses their essential characteristics as if their inner universality is nothing but the nomination of objects and events in the corresponding linguistic units. Language captures conceptual world of a person. It is believed that all the nominative activity of a person is based on ready-made signs which are known from the previous experience. Nevertheless, the features of human nature are manifested in the so-called selective interest, that is, the isolation of certain objects (or some properties, attributes, qualities, objects) in comparison with others.

In processes of name formation there are three heterogeneous entities. One of them is the world of reality including the mental activity of a person (the sphere of denotation). The second is the image (in the epistemological sense) of the component of reality – its conceptual reflection in which human consciousness is able to combine a qualitatively-evaluative vision of the world. This image is embodied in the linguistic naming in the conceptual-linguistic form of the reflection of the reality (the sphere of signification). The third entity is the name that is the linguistic means of expressing the significative content assigned to the name in order to identify what is being indicated. The naming relation correlates it with the designated reality (Kolshanskij, 1977).

Lexical innovations in the media are of particular interest to researchers, since it is in this sphere that the word should have expressiveness, draw the attention of the audience. At the same time it is the media that is the distributor of these innovations, the means of their popularization.

The purpose of the mass media is to “convey to the audience the reflection of the real world” (Dubskikh, 2014:133). Various forms of presentation of information motivate the selection of the following functions implemented by the discourse of the media: 1) informative; 2) regulative, including the ideological function and functions of social control and manipulation of public consciousness; 3) educational; 4) entertaining (Dubskikh, 2014).

On the one hand, mass media responds to the public's request; on the other hand, it forms these requests as well as the attitude of society to various spheres of life which can be indirectly judged by the correlation of various topics presented in the press, the selection of a specific material as well as the language tools used to represent it. It can be rightly argued that the discourse of the media is a condition of the linguistic and cultural situation of

the society because by its nature it reflects both the linguistic and cultural status quo of the society.

3. LEXICAL INNOVATIONS IN MASS-MEDIA DISCOURSE AS UNITS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

A word is not the only means but it is the most available and effective one used by politicians. How and what politicians speak is of great interest of scientific and social character.

3.1 Politicians and supporters. The first group of the analyzed units covers new units denoting people belonging to a party or being adherent to some political views as well as naming the leading figures of the USA.

It is easy to note the current tendency to name this ideology in honor of its political representatives usually by adding suffix *-ism*, ex.: *Blairism* – the political ideology of the former leader of the Labor Party and Prime Minister Tony Blair. It reflects the commitment of someone to its centrist politics. In our opinion, this neologism does not have any constant connotation which means the presence of the archiseme ‘adherence to certain political views’ as well as the differential seme ‘commitment to Tony Blair’s policy’. Another example is the neologism *trumpism* – the views and cultural and political statements of Donald Trump. A neologism *bushism* formed the same way means however funny or absurd words, phrases, pronunciations, and semantic or linguistic errors that occur in the public speaking of former President of the United States. We have noticed that because of the president’s repeated absurd statements, he became the subject of jokes both of the residents of his country and beyond. Besides, *bushism* produces a significant comic (ironic, and often sarcastic) effect. Among the most used bushisms are as follows:

“I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully.”

“Make no mistake about it, I understand how tough it is, sir. I talk to families who die.”

“I think that the vice president is a person reflecting a half-glass-full mentality.”

“You’re working hard to put food on your family.”

“They underestimated ...”.

“There’s an old saying in Tennessee – I know it’s in Texas, probably in Tennessee – that says: fool me once, shame on ... (long pause) shame on you? (long pause) Fool me – you can’t get fooled again”.

“You teach a child to read, and he or her will be able to pass a literacy test.” (Bushism, n.d., para. 4).

It should be mentioned that among the neologisms with the name of American President Barack Obama – *Obamaphoria*, *Obamanation*, *Obamarama*, *Obamanos*, *Obamatopia*, *Obamalujah*, *Obamatrons*, *Obamascope*, *Obamanator*, *Obamalicious*, *Obamaloha*, *Obabama*, *Bamelot*, *Obamerika*, *Barackstar* – there is not a single lexical innovation reflecting adherence to certain political views put forward by a politician or political party. Recent American elections have led to the creation of neologisms among which we can single out the following: *trumpalist* – a person supporting Donald Trump as candidate to President of the USA; *trumper* – a person who is a supporter of politician Donald Trump; *trumpertantrum* – angry early-morning tweeting laced with innuendo and falsehood; *trumpflation* – the expected increase in inflation as a result of economic policies of Trump.

Shortened words being one of the main ways of word-formation in English also influenced the process of creating political new words. Based on analogy of the already existing *POTUS* – President of the United States of America and *Flotus* – First lady of the United States such new words like *PEOTUS* – President Elect of the United States and *Slotus* – second lady of the United States – the wife of the vice-president appeared in English.

And now, the PEOTUS (President-Elect of the United States), even before officially taking charge, reiterated his promise of bringing jobs back to the States by slamming General Motors over the production of Cruze sedan in Mexico via his official Twitter account (PEOTUS Donald Trump Warns General Motors Over Mexican Imports (January 4, 2017), para. 1).

3.2 Types of government. Another group of political neologisms names types of government. Among them are: *narcissocracy* – government by the excessively self-centered; *ineptocracy* – a system of government whose main characteristic is incompetence in all areas; *idiocracy* – rule, government or control exercised by foolish people; *kludgeocracy* – government that is over-complex and ineffective. Observations indicate that all the units of a given group are formed by blending. Scholars believe that in the modern English language, the word-formation method called blending is gaining more and more strength:

with the help of this method, the formation of new lexical units occurs with impressive dynamism, but corresponding changes are introduced into

dictionaries with delay and caution (Murzakov, 2013:1-2).

Negative evaluation of the meaning of these new words should also be taken into consideration: *narcissism* – an extreme interest in your own life and problems that prevents you from caring about other people; *kludge* – a clumsy or inelegant solution to a problem; *ineptness* – the quality of having the wrong properties for a specific purpose; *idiocy* – very stupid ideas or behavior.

The study of the concept of linguistic evaluation makes it possible to assume that the cognitive-classifying activity of a person is reflected in linguistic units; the evaluation component acts as an obligatory semantic component of the lexical meaning. In the first case (*narcissocracy*), a negative evaluation is achieved by using a precedent name *Narcissus* – via Latin from Greek Early 19th century: via Latin from the Greek name *Narkissos* (*narkissos*, perhaps from *narkē* ‘numbness’, with reference to its narcotic effects). In the next three units (*kludgeocracy*, *ineptocracy*, *idiocracy*) the evaluation component is achieved by the following words containing in their meaning an emotional-evaluative component: *clumsy* – expressed without enough skill or thought, and often in a way that is likely to upset people, inelegant – not attractive, graceful, or polite, wrong – not accurate or correct, stupid – not intelligent, or not able to consider or judge things carefully. Steven M. Teles starts his article “Kludgeocracy in America” with the following words:

In recent decades, American politics has been dominated, at least rhetorically, by a battle over the size of government. But that is not what the next few decades of our politics will be about. With the frontiers of the state roughly fixed, the issues that will define our major debates will concern the complexity of government, rather than its sheer scope (Teles, 2018).

He uses such evaluative expressions like the size of government, complexity of government to draw the readers’ attention to the problems in American government. He is concerned that kludgeocracy poses a significant threat to the quality of American democracy.

The evaluation component, in our opinion, is the main one in the connotative meaning of the lexical unit due to its sociolinguistic nature. The subjective-valued element of meaning can be explained by the differentiated response of people to positive and negative phenomena and it acts as

an integral one in the semantic structure of the nomination.

3.3 Political events. The next group includes neologisms devoted to political processes. It is necessary to take into consideration a lexeme *Article 50* – article of the Lisbon Treaty that sets out the process by which member states can withdraw from the European Union being the so-called prophecy of the process itself. Jennifer Rankin, Julian Borger and Mark Rice-Oxley reveal in their article in an expressive way the importance of this neologism:

Rarely have 250 words been so important – five short, obscure paragraphs in a European treaty that have suddenly become valuable political currency in the aftermath of Britain’s decision to leave the EU (Rankin, Borger, Rice-Oxley, 2016).

Being formed on analogy with the already existing neologism *grexit* – the (as yet hypothetical) Greek exit from the Eurozone, some new words began to appear among which we should point out the following: *Brexit* – the British exit from the Eurozone:

SIX months ago the chances of “Brexit”— Britain departing from the European Union—seemed remote. Today, largely because of Europe’s migration crisis and the interminable euro mess, the polls have narrowed. Some recent surveys even find a majority of Britons wanting to leave (A background guide to ‘Brexit’ from the European Union (February, 2016), para. 1).

Calexit – an exit by the state if California from the United States of America:

Californians would need to pass an amendment to the US Constitution, which requires the blessings of the other 49 states. The measure would also survey voters on whether a “Calexit” is something that interests them (Robinson 2016).

Clexit – an exit by the country from international climate treaties.

First there was Brexit [...]. Now a movement is building that would further stun the supranationalists: an exit from the United Nations climate change protocol, dubbed “Clexit.” Brexit happened, and Clexit could be next. (As Earth swelters, global warming target in danger of being missed (August, 13, 2016), para. 1).

Due to these words a new suffix was brought into existence: -exit (*suffix*) – added to the first letters of the name of a country or state to indicate that it may leave a union or federation. Any political process has its own supporters and opponents. The following neologisms are the confirmation of that: *regrexit* – someone who regrets the vote to leave the EU; *bremoaner* – someone who complains about Britain's exit from the European Union; *brexiter/brexit* – one who favours Brexit. It is interesting to note that in the first case the structure “a complex word + suffix” contains in its composition the seme “regret” while the lexeme naming the supporters of this process is formed by the direct addition of suffixes -er or -eer, in connection with which the assumption can be made that this word, being the base, indicates a more positive perception of this process by the British. We should single out a lexical innovation *brexistence* – the fact or state of living or continued survival of Britain (UK) or the British after the BREXIT event. One should also note such new lexical units like *bremorse*, *breturn*, *breversal*:

First Brexit, then Bremorse... is Breturn possible? (First Brexit, then Bremorse... is Breturn possible? (July 2, 2016), para. 1).

Breversal: there may be a way to reverse the decision to leave the European Union. (Nsubuga, 2016).

The consequences of Brexit can be shown in the lexical innovation *vassal state* – a term used by some Brexiters to refer to the UK if it stays in the customs union or single market during a transition period following departure from the EU. Since the appearance of this neologism there have been many articles devoted to this topic. The titles of the articles emotionally express their attitude to this issue:

David Davis rejects ‘vassal state’ claim over Brexit transition (Stewart, Mason, 2018).

Boris Johnson: Brexit mustn't leave us a ‘vassal state’ (Shipman, 2017).

May Signed UK Up to Be ‘Vassal State for Next 2 Years’ – MEP on PM's Brexit Plan (May Signed UK Up to Be ‘Vassal State for Next 2 Years’ – MEP on PM's Brexit Plan (April 1, 2018), para. 1).

The UK is a ‘vassal state’ – Rees-Mogg and David Davis go to war over Brexit (The UK is a ‘vassal state’ – Rees-Mogg and David Davis go to war over Brexit (January 25, 2018), para. 1).

4. CONCLUSION

Political sphere is very active in the formation of neologisms, and, due to its constant development and actual nature, its productivity will grow. Through mass communication, people structure and substantiate their own beliefs and experiences. Mass media is predetermined not only by information awareness but also by everyday life and the picture of the world. Mass communication can be considered the space where people create and share life experience, values and knowledge.

The analysis of the material allows us to consider the changes of the information paradigm in the XXIst century: the addressee is no longer a passive participant in communication, on the contrary, they introduce their interpretation of the event by enriching knowledge of the world. Being nationally specific, neologisms through their space realize those categories that are thought by representatives of a particular people, and the boundaries into which they are put to perceive and analyze the world around them.

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