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NEOLOGISMS IN BRITISH NEWSPAPERS

Abstract

Neologisms stand for innovation in every language. New words are created every day and their number in English is growing fast. Thus it is important to analyze the reasons for appearance of neologisms in a language. Newspapers are one of the media which has a significant role in creating and spreading neologisms by using these new words in their articles. It is significant to learn how these words are created, because neologisms undergo certain linguistic processes, the so-called word formation processes, and to try to find out to what structural-semantic types neologisms belong and in which sphere of life they are used more frequently. The theoretical findings of the research allow putting forth the following hypothesis: mass media is one of the main discourses in the framework of which neologisms are created, and the most frequently used structural-semantic types of neologisms to be encountered in the newspaper language are the neologisms with new form and already existing meaning.

Key words: Neologisms, newspaper language, analysis, classification.

Neologisms have been allotted a lot of different definitions. In dictionaries, *neologism* is generally defined as ‘a new word or a new meaning for an established word’. To be more specific, Peter Newmark defines neologisms as “newly come lexical or existing units that acquire a new sense” (Newmark 1988: 140). According to Oxford Dictionary of English (2003: 1179) a *neologism* is “a newly coined word or expression that may be in the process of entering common use, but has not yet been accepted into mainstream language. Neologisms are often directly attributable to a specific person, publication, period, or event. The term *neologism* is not used only in linguistics, it can also be found in other sciences. And if we take some science in particular, we may see that all of them reflect the essence of the notion, as there is “always something new”. It is possible to create a new definition using all the above-mentioned ones. This definition might be as follows: a *neologism* is a word, a term, or a phrase that has been recently created (or coined) often to apply to new concepts, to synthesize pre-existing concepts, or to make older terminology sound more contemporary. Neologisms are especially useful in denominating inventions, new phenomena, or old ideas that have taken on a new cultural context. In the present research we will stick to this definition, as it seems to include all the main characteristic features of neologisms.

As it has already been mentioned the term *neologism* was coined in English in 1803. But the English variant of this term was not new because French, Italian and German had their respective terms, which were invented in the previous 65 years (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2003). The critics of the time conceived of *neologism* in literature as analogous to the continuous creation and introduction of new lexical units into the language, and they thought of language change in general as the process of decay. Thus *neologism* was condemned on

both aesthetic and linguistic grounds and the term was used pejoratively only. This older meaning of *neologism*, and the attitude it reflects, are still alive today.

However, as early as the second half of the 18th century, it became obvious that the vocabulary of literary expression should and perhaps could not be fully limited. Thus pejorative *neologism* was given an ameliorative doublet, *neology* which meant the introduction of “*approved*” or “*correct*” new words into language (Петрашевский 1846:234).

The old meaning of *neologism* is synonymous to that of *barbarism*, *gallicism* (in English), *anglicism* (in French), and even *archaism*. It is opposed to *purism* (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition, 2000).

Such word characteristics as being an archaism or a neologism are historically relative. To value the level of word topicality, to ascribe to neologism the features of archaism is possible only by looking at a certain period of social existence of a language.

Words such as *cable television* (1966), *CD-Rom* (1988), *flashback* (1966), *environment* (1972), *hip-hop* (1985), or *piña colada* (1967) were new words in their times; today, however, they are all familiar to the general public.

There are a lot of different viewpoints concerning neologisms and their age. The main problem is to state when the new word becomes a neologism. Some scholars think that if you feel that the word is a neologism – it is a neologism. Some scholars claim that the word should not be older than 25 years so that it could be considered a neologism.

One of the methods used by scholars in any science is the classification of the phenomena under investigation. For instance, in linguistics we study different parts of speech; we know the functions of words in sentences. What concerns neologisms, we have to state that the question of classification of neologisms has not been settled yet; there is no single way of classifying them. In different classifications worked out by scholars different aspects of neologism have been taken into account.

The Russian linguist L.A.Haham classifies neologisms taking into account their semantics and structure, therefore this classification of neologisms can be named the structural-semantic classification of neologisms (In: Заботкина 1989: 7):

1. A word in which both the form and the meaning are new,
2. The form is new, but the meaning has already existed in some other word,
3. The meaning is new but the form has existed before.

E.V.Rosen, famous Russian linguist who studies neologisms and cultural aspects of lexicology, classifies neologisms according to their structure, so it can be considered the structural classification of neologisms (In: Заботкина 1989: 7):

1. Neologisms are words, which can occur in isolation, but they can also be parts of new words,
2. New morphemes, which have appeared in the language,
3. A word that consists of already existing morphemes but in a new combination.

The difference between Rosen's and Haham's approaches is obvious – it is semantics, the meaning of a neologism. Rosen takes into account only the structure of a new word, whereas Haham considers both its structure and meaning. It is also possible to take into account *the way the neologisms are formed* [Заботкина 1989: 8], thus it is possible to distinguish such groups as phonological, semantic, syntactic neologisms or borrowings. It is possible as well to divide all neologisms according to the topic they belong to thus getting a number of *thematic groups*: science, politics, etc.

Neologisms stand for innovation in every language. New words are created every day and their number in English is growing fast. Neologisms generally draw on traditional word-formation devices such as affixation and compounding. Compounds can be headed by any major lexical class, and all the types of combinations are found in neologisms: skinhead, red-hot, over-quick. *Girdom* and *marketer* are the examples of affixation. It is also possible to form neologisms through *blending* (*Spanglish*, *Slanguage*, *vodkatini*) and *acronymization* (RAM – random access memory). Acronyms are similar to *clippings* (*vet*, *lab*, *flu*). Sometimes neologisms are made up through *conversion* (*to network*, *to nurse*).

Mass media such as television, newspapers, magazines, and radio are the means of communication that reach large numbers of people in a short time. The mass media produce great influence on the English language, and in this respect especially newspapers and broadcasting should be mentioned because it is their duty to report things as they happen and thus they are often in need of new terms to describe new happenings, ideas and inventions. Therefore journalists are those who play an important role in creating and spreading neologisms.

Considering the history of the English newspaper writing, we find out that it dates back to the 17th century. The first newspapers carried only news, without comments, as commenting was considered to be against the principles of journalism. By the 19th century, newspaper language was recognized as a particular variety of style, characterized by a specific communicative purpose and its own system of language means (Morrison, 1932).

Mass media is not only the source of information; it is also, as it has been mentioned before, spreading neologisms. If a word wants to 'stay alive', it has to be admitted widely in public speech and used by mass media, and/or personalities, such as politicians, authors etc. (Barnhart, 1995). Depending on the editor and on what kind of dictionary a coinage should

enter, one factor might be more of a value than another. Of the many thousands of new words created every year, about 200 new words fulfill the above-mentioned conditions and make their way into a standard dictionary.

During the investigation I have analyzed neologisms from the popular British newspaper *The Guardian*. I have chosen the editions from the years 2001 and 2008. It was done intentionally as I wanted to find out whether there are any similarities or differences in the use of different patterns of formation (which patterns prevail) and topics they belong to.

Then I classified the examples of neologisms using different *types of classifications*: structural, structural-semantic, classification according to their belonging to particular parts of speech, according to thematic groups they belong to or have been used in.

The most often encountered structural type of neologisms according to Rosen's classification is the first one; it contains neologisms consisting of morphemes which can occur in isolation and be parts of new words: *apathy-inducing*, *car-music*. As it has been stated before the compounding is one of possible ways of creating neologisms, and it is very productive. So, it has been proved in practice.

Considering the results of my attempt to classify the collected data according to the structural-semantic classification of neologisms I can say that the majority of neologisms belong to the second type. Their characteristic feature is the new form and already existing meaning: *over-tested*, *people-spot*. People try to explain the old ideas using new combinations of existing words in the result creating neologisms and enriching the lexicon.

In the classification of neologisms according to their belonging to a particular part of speech, *nouns* make up the most numerous group: *chubsters*, *campus-visit*, *office-fodder*. A noun is a part of speech that is used to name a person, place, thing, quality, or action. People create neologisms denominating new things, inventions, phenomena, and their qualities, and this actually is the role of nouns in the language.

In analysis of neologisms according to thematic groups they belong to or have been used in many neologisms belong to the group united by the topic of *description*, in which I included the words which describe characteristic features of things or people, name some quality: *fuzzy-minded*, *overtapped*, *half-pretending*. If we look at the definition of neologisms it would become clear that they denote and describe new things. The authors of articles try to create and use more expressive epithets to describe some phenomena and sometimes create new ones.

I have to say that the idea to choose neologisms from the editions of *The Guardian* dating back to years 2001 and 2008 was useless because during the analysis I found out that neologisms have similar patterns of formation and belong to same topics. Hopefully, the

present research will be useful for every person who is interested in neologisms and the English language in general. For obtaining more reliable data more British newspapers should be studied. The theme has a broad perspective of research.

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