

SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH NEOLOGISMS

“Turan” university

The present article is devoted to semantic and structural peculiarities of English neologisms.

Key words: neologisms, semantics, compounding, affixation, affix, blending, abbreviations, acronyms.

The English language as any language in the world is developing and changing due to the processes taking place in economical, social, political, cultural and scientific life. These changes occur in many different spheres: grammar, pronunciation and mainly in vocabulary as words are represented as building blocks of the communication process. The words which have recently appeared in any language are called “neologisms”. They mainly represent the evolving nature of the English language. By the term “neologism” different scholars understand different notions like the process of creating completely new words, giving new meanings for existing words or developing new senses in existing words.

The process of coining new words has been widely studied by both native and foreign linguists. The Ukrainian philologist professor M.I. Mostovy states that “there are no clear criteria of defining neologism as a linguistic phenomenon” [1, p. 174]. However, the Dutch prominent linguist M.Janssen distinguishes five main criteria for defining the notion “neologism” a) psychological - “a neologism is a word that is perceived as new by the language community”; b) lexicographic - “any word that does not appear in the dictionary ” ; c) exclusive definition - “a word not appearing in a pre-determined exclusion lexicon ” d) diachronic definition - “any word-form that appears in a recent general language text, and was

not previously a part of that language e) reference corpora definition – “any word that in a recent general language text and does not appear in an established reference corpus of that language” [2, 83].

Many different viewpoints concerning neologisms and their age exist. The number of problems that linguists are trying to solve include such as the process which takes place when the new word becomes a neologism. Some scholars tend to think that it is the matter of personal decision, while others claim that the word should be less than 25 years so that it could be considered a neologism.

Another problem is the question of classification of neologisms. Unfortunately it has not been settled yet; there is no single way of classifying them. Various classifications worked out by scientists are based on different aspects of neologism.

The Russian linguist L.A.Haham classifies neologisms on their semantic and structural peculiarities. As a result his classification is named as the structural-semantic classification of neologisms:

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 [3,56].

The appearance of neologisms is a constant and regular process in any language shows the language has specific, dynamic existence. The word stock of the English language easily adopts new words and notions as a result of social and linguistic changes, innovations and development. The language is rapidly reacting to the emergence of new social phenomena, objects and activities which immediately undergo the process of nomination. The modern life is full of inventions and innovations in every sphere of human activity - scientific, political, commercial and others. New objects, devices, types of equipment and machinery penetrate into everyday life of many people. And it is not a problem for the linguist to identify the origin of the neologism. The great majority of neologisms come into the language according to the following order – at first a new object / phenomenon is introduced, then it is nominated by a word, chiefly a newly created

one. For example, a widely-used nowadays word “blog” which stands for a web page consisting of frequently updated, chronological entries on a particular topic and a form of free publishing that is typically updated daily.

The present state and role of the English language is of great interest due to the fact that the English language has become the language of international business and communication. Moreover, it has a big influence on other world languages. This fact can clarify the question why the neologisms appear mainly with the help of word building - conversion, derivation, composition - and not through the process of borrowing. However the existence of neologisms which are borrowings is evident. So, the neologisms in modern English are created first of all with the help of its own resources what makes the English language different from other languages.

One of the most widespread ways of creating new words is compounding (composition) i.e. the process of making new words by means of the words already existing in the language. Compounding has always been included into the group of main ways of word formation in the English language. All the types of combinations are found in neologisms: Obamamania (a term that denotes national obsession with the president-elect Barack Obama) , skinhead, redhot, over-quick, moon-basing. Usually these words possess a meaning that is different from their components. And the stress usually falls on the first syllable in compounds: a 'greenhouse = place where we grow plants (compound noun) and a green 'house = house painted green (adjective and noun).

Two biggest groups of compounds are endocentric and exocentric. The term “endocentric” defines the compound consisting of a head which conveys the basic meaning of the whole compound, and modifier the role of which is to restrict the meaning. For example, the English compound homepage, where page is the head and home is the modifier, is understood as a the first page of a website, which often contains LINKS to other pages on that website . Endocentric compounds are usually of the same part of speech (word class) as their head, as in the case of homepage. While the second group of compounds called exocentric are

represented as hyponyms of unexpressed semantic head and their meaning often cannot be transparently guessed from its constituent parts. A good example is the compound blue-collar is neither a kind of collar nor a blue thing. In an exocentric compound, the part of speech is determined lexically, disregarding the class of the parts. For example, a must-have is not a verb but a noun. The given examples show that both endocentric and exocentric compounds are associated with headedness either syntactic or semantic. For many years linguists have been reporting that there are many right-headed compounds and a few left-headed. However, such linguists as Laurie Bauer and Antoinette Renouf in their studies claim that the idea of limited number of left-headed compounds is misleading. The most widely known neologisms formed by compounding and which are left-headed are singles-only (frequently met in karaoke bars) and dry-clean-only [4,146].

The second source of creating neologisms in the English language is affixation that involves the addition of affixes to create new words. Affixation has always been one of the most productive ways of forming new words. The process itself can be divided into two subgroups: prefixation (adding prefixes) and suffixation (adding suffix). And the number of neologisms formed by affixation entering our everyday language is increasing day by day. A great number of neologisms formed by affixation can be illustrated by the following examples: non-friend (false friend, enemy), preschooler (children at the age of 5-6 and not going to school) and quarkonics (studies of quark). Moreover, such affixes as multi-, mini-, macro-, intra-, -nik, , -phobia- and others are considered to be very productive.

The third group of neologisms can be represented by words called differently in various sources as blends, blendings, fusions or portmanteau words. The process involves making new words by joining two already existing ones and combining their meanings. Four main types of creating blends are distinguished: 1) the beginning of one words in joined to the end of the other (smart + sassy= smassy, Chinese + English = Chinglish); 2) the beginning of two words are joined

(cyborg = cybernetic + organism); 3) Two words are blended around a common sequence of sounds (Californication is a blend of California and fornication); 4) Multiple sounds from two component words are blended, while mostly preserving the sounds' order (slithy, a blend of lithe and slimy). The blends are not numerous, but they seem to be on rise in such spheres as terminology and advertisement, e.g. infomercial (from information and commercial), edutainment (from education and entertainment), cafetorium (from cafeteria and auditorium), netiquette (from network etiquette), trashware (from trash and software), and bit (from binary and digit) and etc.

Another way of forming neologisms is shortening which involves the dropping of the latter part of a word so as to produce a new and shorter word of the same meaning. In the English language, shortenings may be present in written and spoken forms. The term “shortening” is quite wide as such ways of forming new words like clipping, abbreviation, acronymization are considered to be types of shortenings. However, investigating the matter deeply one can notice that there are several distinctions between them.

Clipping or curtailment goes back to the 15th c. It has become even more productive ever since. Newly shortened words appear continuously; what is proved by numerous neologisms, such as demo - ‘a demonstration’. Cannon G. in his work “Change and English Word-Formation” states the clipping as a word-formation type among neologisms constitutes 4.6 % and actually outnumbers abbreviations[4, 138] . Clipping is especially popular in spoken English and among the youth which is open for neologisms and in many cases become the main source of neologisms appearance, e.g. econ from economics, psyhed for physical education. Clipping mainly affects nouns. However, some examples of verbs that are used in the clipped forms, e.g. rev for revolve, prep for prepare and even less adjectives comfy- comfortable, mizzy- miserable.

Abbreviations and acronyms have always been the most common type of neologisms in the English language. Their appearance in the vocabulary stock of any language is determined by some factors like spread of computer technology all

over the world. However, the main source of abbreviations is that internet what means that their usage is restricted to informal writing. A number of newest neologisms abbreviations and acronyms can be represented by the following examples: CHF (computer furniture), HDW (hardware), URL (Uniform Resource Locator) and etc.

Neologisms mainly enter our everyday language through media and usually they become accepted as inseparable parts of the language. On the other hand there are some cases when they disappear from common use easily. The main reason of disappearing is the fact that the new word is not accepted by the people. All the words from the modern English language some time ago were neologisms, so it the matter of time for the words to pass from “neologism” to “obsolete” word.

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