

ФИЛОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ

TRANSPARENCY OF SOME NEWLY COINED CULTURAL ITEMS

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Abstract. It is highlighted in the article the importance of different ways to coin metaphorically and structurally new lexical items. Some sources of innovation are given in the article including metaphORIZATION, shift of meaning, human technology and some others. The peculiarities of neologisms are analyzed with the help of semantic and conceptual representation in intercultural discourse. The transparency of their meaning is verified within wide and different contexts.

Key words: ambiguity, concept, connotation, culture, emotive meaning, innovation, lexical items, metaphor, neologisms, pragmatics

Some challenges of innovation in Russian and English might be of some interest to demonstrate how new lexical units are coined as consequences of the relationship between humans and technology [Warner]:

A *worm*- originally means a long thin creature with no bones, no legs that lives in soil; the new meaning is related to the sphere of **technology and computers** – a type of *computer virus* that can make copies of itself and destroy information on computers that are connected to each other.

The example given above proves the fact that sometimes it is enough to compare the meaning of the word with those that already exist in the language – a metaphorical origin of linguistic innovation. In order to understand such lexical units it is necessary to investigate their systematicity as one comprehends them in terms of existing rules. For that one can analyze some metaphors to indicate the shift of meaning in political discourse:

Consider e.g. *worth the costs*

The New York Times, on November 12, 1990, ran a front-page story announcing that “a national debate has begun as to whether the United States should go to war in the Persian Gulf”. The Times described the debate as defined by the metaphorical seeing war in terms of political objectives, and war may best serve those objectives. The political ‘gains’ are to be weighed against acceptable ‘costs’: When the *costs* of war exceed the political *gains*, the war should cease.

The primary criterion by means of which the newly formed metaphorical usage or meanings are tested is that it provides conditions which encourage the appropriate evidence of the process of metaphORIZATION. The newly- formed meaning may be assigned to a number of categories or groups so that each separate item can be replaced with a major concept.

The concept “IT technology” is one of them. As it comprises equally important lexical units such as *worm*, or *computer virus*, one expects the existence of some choice intercultural. Therefore, in Russian it is likely to find the term *virus* rather than *worm*, though in writing you can hardly come across with the latter.

Structurally such lexical items might be different. Some of them are phraseological units which current meanings of constituent words build up a certain

picture, but the actual meaning of the whole creates an entirely new image:

The lexical unit *put me in coach* [1] has nothing to do with traveling by coach, but indicates what you say to the coach when you are warming the bench, but you want to go in so you can win the game. As is seen, its transparency is revealed due to the lexeme *coach* and from the whole context. And in the target language it is presented literally as there is no corresponding idiom in Russian.

Another word or abbreviation is KGB. The new meaning of KGB would be especially interesting to a Russian language speaker to whom the word definitely rings the bell in the meaning ‘the secret police of the former USSR’. The new meaning of the word appeared on the basis of abbreviation KB (kind bud); KGB could mean kind good bud, but actually means marijuana with a high THC content.

As is well-known, culture and society are shaped following the pattern of human nature. From anthropological point of view, on the one hand, culture is a product of individual humans, on the other - human nature is created by culture and is determined by it. Pragmatically it can be rendered like that: what the purpose of a human’s activity is; what everything is created for.

Consider the word *fragment*. Originally it comes from Latin ‘fragmentum’ which means ‘a fragment, a remnant’. The verb ‘frag’ was first attested in 1970 as the US military slang [5]:

1. Fragging is a macabre ritual to murder their superiors ...

[Saturday Review, January 8, 1972]

The change of meaning of the word happened due to the development of computerization. It has been extended and applied to the field of computer games. It is now used both as a noun and a verb to kill someone’s character in any fashion or with a fragmentation grenade.

As we can see emotive connotation associated with the word *frag* brings the observer back to the experience suggesting a direct mapping of similarities between a bomb when it explodes and a fragmentation grenade or exactly its “consequences” in the video game. The importance of the relationship between the two notions (bomb, grenade) cannot be overstressed,

and is actually in direct correlation with the fact that the source of information is outside the world which has to be processed and made sense of .

The example given above proves the fact that sometimes it is enough to compare the meaning of the word with those that already exist in the language – a metaphorical origin of linguistic innovation. As for emotions they are also created by the metaphor and by including the observer in the process who will be able not only to indicate its direction and symmetry but also identify the difference. Pert argues: “This is a very important concept in information theory, because including the observer in the equation admits a new level of intelligence to the system. In the old metaphor, we ignored the observer in an attempt to avoid any taint of subjective interference in determining reality. In the new metaphor, the observer plays an important role in defining the reality, because it is the observer’s participation that makes the difference!” [Pert , p.257]. As for the target language, the novelty of the corresponding lexeme remains stable and intact there. So does the transparency of its meaning in the computer game.

Focusing attention on a human being as a central element of relationship between language and culture[1] one can say what is important for a human being to exist, to survive, and to socialize .The connection between its integral parts and its pragmatic essence is getting much more evident if we analyze the following example:

2.... business activities that involve the crossing of national boundaries, these include: *import* and *export* of commodities and manufactured goods; *investment* of capital in manufacturing, extractive, agricultural, transportation and communications assets; *supervision* of employees in different countries; *investment* in international services ...; *transactions* involving copyrights, patents, trademarks and process technology [Taggart, McDermott, p. 4]

Lexical items like *business*, *import*, *export*, *investment* and others making the concept ‘international business’ belong to the “converged” lexical entries by their essence as they serve to show not only how different languages encode a particular experience of the world but also what fosters their cultures to be levelled. The words *trade*, *capital movement*, *direct investment* coming up to the same concept are considered to be attributes or various properties experienced by human beings from different cultures.

The pragmatic essence of the unit *trade* is precise. As for its cultural component it can be also retrieved from the mental map (concept) of its historical background. The concept “trade” includes the idea of getting profit from international business since the earliest times: over 2,000 years B.C. from Mesopotamia, Greece and Phoenicia and Italy (the Roman Empire) to England, France, Holland, Spain and Portugal. The dominance of the United Kingdom and the United States in international capital movement and investment portfolio of the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries decreased and since the twentieth century firms from Europe, and Asian

countries have become an important source of direct foreign investment [Taggart, McDermott, pp. 1-3]

3.All of First State’s *investment* teams include people with ESG expertise and responsibilities [The Financial Times, January,2011]

Transparency of the meaning of other lexemes is due to their non-equivalence. Those items emerge as there is no lexical unit in the target language to translate a culture specific referent. This is usually the case not only with non-equivalent lexemes but also with idioms. Some of them create cultural problems especially when there is a great distance between cultures. The only thing to be done is to find an adequate strategy to identify the unknown lexical item or to find, if possible, its equivalent. The necessity of conceptual metaphor which can be viewed as the mechanism through which non-metaphorical essence of some idioms in different languages is revealed is viewed from the following. Based on some lexicographical items as well as on the examples taken from different sources, the idioms in question should be evaluated by their importance and their predominant position in the language worldview. It is discovered what significant concepts are not shared by the target side.

Come to Jesus. This is an emotional expression (life changes), it has evoked to mean a serious argument, one that better result in a change of actions or else.

Da ladno. This is also a kind of expression in Russian; its meaning depends on the context whether you agree or disagree with your interlocutor.

3.He comes from Italy. *Da ladno*, we were born and finished school together in Siberia.

This is because the nature of language is such that words have ‘blurred edges’, their meanings are negotiable and are only realized in specific contexts.

These are emotions that bring ‘life’ to the experience of those who hear or receive some lexical innovation. If the sound form of a neologism does exist in the language it fosters people to identify and compare its meaning with those familiar to them. Its improper context gives rise to the ambiguity of the innovation which in its turn requires, first, its wider context and then its conceptualization.

E.g.: *under the rose* implies “not to be mentioned; strictly between ourselves”. The concept includes not only the custom of the Germans at a feast to suspend “a rose from the ceiling as a reminder that whatever might be said about people at the feast should not be repeated” [Radford, p.206] but also the legend, giving rise to the custom that the rose was the flower of the Venus which Cupid consecrated to Hippocrates, the God of Silence and it became the emblem of silence [Radford, p.206]. The set of pragmatic rules which are given in the lexical unit seems to be all embracing, interpersonal and cultural as well. It proves the fact that being originated from the sources of different cultures some lexemes implicitly level off their peculiarities and enter the word stock of another language (culture). It also brings into being how language reflects an impact of one culture over another.

E.g. *baller*. The meaning of the noun ‘baller’ registered in dictionaries is ‘a basketball player’. But no

longer than several years ago it also used to be a neologism, coined by clipping. The original form of the word was 'basketballer', which simply meant 'a particularly talented basketball player'. For the sake of convenience the word was probably shortened, and later its meaning was shifted and appeared to be applied to a wider variety of talented people.

Thus the context of the 'baller' and, the words 'real' and 'chemistry' in particular, helps the reader to understand that in the sentence: 'He is a real baller when it comes to chemistry' the baller implies something different. This is quite understandable since the perceiver experiences a change when something new appears on his emotional and mental horizon, and he subsequently goes from a state of unawareness (ambiguity) to awareness, relating the neologism to what seems to be interpreted first of all emotionally (slang, jargons, nonce words) and then sensibly. To quote W. Warner, it looks absolutely the same as we try to use the twentieth-century innovative terms 'interface', 'network', etc. in another context:

"My use of the terms in an eighteenth-century historical context will open me to various charges: that I am using anachronistic jargon; engaging in an over-loose expansion of terms that have a rigorous but restrictive sense in contemporary computing, and finally, developing an overly abstract formalization of specific Enlightenment era communication practices"[Warner,17]

As for ambiguity it produces different effects on the communicator. On the one hand, it might be misleading, especially when old meaning 'coexists' with the new meaning and the latter not only doubles his attention but also lures him to look into the context, and helps to relate the new word to a specific field. On the other hand, it enriches his perception, and shows whether he has enough knowledge and linguistic awareness to understand the true sense of a new word or expression. Neologisms may also belong to something less comprehensive, therefore their origin cannot be processed without a wide context or without consulting special dictionaries.

Consider the following examples: *a frog hair* (money spent on election campaign) and *a walking corpse* (a loser). This kind of neologisms leads us to argue that innovation does not always evoke or invoke an immediate experience of the world, but reinvents imagination by breaking down intuitions and giving it a new order. That kind of "reconciliation" of the contraries (a 'frog' and 'hair', on the one side, and 'walking' and 'corpse', on the other) produces some images independently and making the observer through the displacement of one opposition by another express a new idea, which is not as it is, at first, the property of the external world until it enters the word-stock of the language. Moreover, in different languages they may correspond to different ideas, images.

The exact translation of the unit *a walking corpse* into Russian is *khodjatchy trup, khodyatchaya ten'*. As it is shown, they do not correspond to each other. In Russian it does not mean 'a political or any other loser' but 'a very sick or thin person'. [1] Although, it is important to see that in both languages the units are

emotionally colored, and their difference lies in the experience.

The observation of this kind enhances sensitivity to language and its users and can give insights into such issues as national stereotypes and cultural identity. It is a well-known fact that different cultures put different emphasis on values and their worldviews are diverse in many respects.

Therefore, one must be cautious while trying to define the origin of new borrowings or non-equivalent items like *perezagruzka* (resetting): Hillary Clinton – Sergei Lavrov). It means that no one simultaneous existence of the same neologism in different languages (Russian, American, English) will be postulated as a necessary condition for the fusion of some cultures. They would rather be explained by similarity of their political conditions, customs, traditions, i.e. by identity of some separate elements of culture.

E.g. the Russian innovation *prostavljatjsya* (to give money for a drink to celebrate something) does not completely correspond to the English one *to pay your footing* (to give entry money for being allowed to put your foot in the premises occupied by fellow-craftsmen). The difference lies in different customs, traditions (cultures). You can hardly imagine the Russians *going Dutch* when they invite their guests to their festivity. In dealing with these cases one can operate on the assumption that native speakers (observers) are aware of their basic cultural peculiarities which cannot be changed because of the appearance of something new in their language. If source and target cultures diverge, communicators have to decide depending on the function of interpretation if the cultural reference or implication can be left as it is or has to be explained, changed or replaced by a target culture equivalent. [2]

As for non-equivalence, this phenomenon proves that language is only a rich source of foreign culture information. The task is to evaluate its role in the lexicon. The semantic and emotional 'weight' of the non-equivalent neologisms signals that they are predominant in the world view at that moment.

The non-equivalent unit *feng shui* indicates that Chinese geomancy has become very popular in the world today because of most people's ambition to live in harmony with nature.

The same concerns the neologisms *liquidity, derivatives, default* connected with finance. Various claims have been made to the effect that for the sake of convenience and to be more precise, it is more preferable to preserve these words intact in different languages than translate them. But when it comes to education or teaching they have to be explained or translated by means of periphrasis or with the help of dictionaries.

4. Banks were particularly ill prepared for the abrupt change in global *liquidity* conditions that took place last year [The FinancialTimes, January, 20, 2009]

As for *narcoterrorism* it is coined of two separate words narcotic (illegal drugs that affect the mind in a harmful way) and terrorism (the use of violence such as bombing, shooting or kidnapping to obtain political

demands). Therefore narcoterrorism is associated with a violent crime carried out as a by-product of the illicit manufacture trafficking, or sale of drugs, especially against any individual or institution attempting to enforce anti-drug laws[5].

This neologism has entered the word-stock of different languages, because of the assumption that this crime has spread all over the world and only joint measures might help to cure nations of the vice.

Being emotional by its essence the new word *narcoterrorism* is characterized by negative connotation that doubles its emotive effect. This is just one of the reasons why this neologism appeared as non-equivalent in many languages. Its emotional coloring expresses the situation while its meaning interprets the situation.

To begin with it is necessary to mention some methods which are based on the theories uncovering some systematic character of a linguistic unit.

E.g.: *under the rose* implies “not to be mentioned; strictly between ourselves”. The concept includes not only the custom of the Germans at a feast to suspend “a rose from the ceiling as a reminder that whatever might be said about people at the feast should not be repeated” but also the legend, giving rise to the custom that the rose was the flower of the Venus which Cupid consecrated to Hippocrates, the God of Silence and it became the emblem of silence [Radford,p.206]. The set of pragmatic rules which are given in the lexical unit seems to be all embracing, interpersonal and cultural as well. It proves the fact that being originated from the sources of different cultures some lexemes implicitly level off their peculiarities and enter the word stock of another language (culture). It also brings into being how language reflects an impact of one culture over another.

It is possible to say that concepts appear to be accompanied by various properties or attributes experienced by human beings. Lexical units which designate such concepts have a very clear pragmatic component while those that imply some relation to the life of society, its history are in most cases culturally specified.

Thus, as has been stated above, some words appear first of all due to “human technology” through emotions when people “confer upon technology a merely instrumental role by understanding ... face to face communication” [Warner, p. 2]. These are emotions that bring ‘life’ to the experience of those who hear or receive some lexical innovation. If the sound form of a new word does exist in the language it fosters

communicators to identify and compare its meaning with those familiar to them. Its improper context gives rise to the ambiguity of the innovation which in its turn requires, first, its wider context and then its conceptualization. It is acknowledged that extra linguistic reality knows only imperceptible gradations. Language is what creates distinctions within a reality that has no boundaries, each in its own way. Nevertheless, there exists some ambiguity, requirement of wider context and then conceptualization. Ambiguity produces different effects on the communicator. On the one hand, it might be misleading, especially when old meaning ‘coexists’ with the new meaning. On the other hand, it enriches his perception, and shows whether he has enough knowledge and linguistic awareness to understand the true sense of a new word or expression. The observation of this kind enhances sensitivity to language and its users and can give insights into such issues as national stereotypes and cultural identity, revealed by different sort of correlation: pragmatic, cultural or even emphatic.

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