Linguocultural Characteristics of English Mass-Media Neologisms

Veronika Katermina

Kuban State University, Krasnodar, Russia

The article is devoted to the analysis of linguocultural characteristics of English mass-media neologisms. The significant peculiarity of vocabulary is its inherent direction to the phenomena of reality and that is 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 the mass media is of a peculiar interest to scholars since mass-media neologisms should possess expressiveness and draw the attention of the audience. And it is the mass media that spread these new words and are the means of their popularisation. The most frequent thematic groups analysed are music, literature, and cinematography. The article underlines that the analysis of English mass-media 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: culture, language, neologism, globalization, mass media

Introduction

English is the world's most important language. It is certainly the world's most widely used language. It has "official status in over 600 countries. English is the language of international air traffic control, and the chief language of world publishing, science and technology" (Crystal, 2003, p. 3). The hunger of learning the language is simply insatiable.

The need for a global language is particularly appreciated by the international academic and business communities and it is here that the adoption of a single lingua franca is most in evidence, both in lecture-rooms and board-rooms, as well as in thousands of individual contacts being made daily all over the globe.

With the growing importance of English in the contemporary world, there is an increasing urgency to the question of whether there is an irreconcilable conflict between, on the one hand, the view that English is shared by people belonging to many different cultural traditions and, on the other hand, the notion that English itself—like any other language—is likely to have certain cultural assumptions and values embedded in it.

No one doubts the importance of a language in our lives. In fact, it would be hard to imagine our life without the ability to communicate. Yet, because a language has always been present—for as long as we can remember—we seldom consider the role and impact of the specific system of symbols that we use on a daily basis.

Veronika Katermina, professor, Ph.D., English Philology Department, Kuban State University, Krasnodar, Russia.

This is true for our native language system and it is just as true when dealing with people across different language-culture backgrounds (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 2001; Kluckhohn, 1951; Wardhaugh, 1977).

The 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 stimulate linguistic processes. The significant peculiarity of vocabulary is its inherent direction to the phenomena of reality and that is why it is the vocabulary that reflects all the changes happening in the public life, which inevitably leads to the formation of new nominations.

The Material of Research and Methods

The material of research consists of English mass-media neologisms taken from the following electronic dictionaries: Wordspy, Macmillan Buzzword Dictionary, Urban Dictionary, and Cambridge Dictionaries Online Blog. In view of the importance of language as a communication device in everyday human interaction, the need for new words arises perpetually "as they are required" (Aitchison, 1991, p. 118). Most conspicuously, this need emerges when new objects or concepts are introduced in society or when objects or concepts change and their original names have become inept (cf. Aitchison, 1991, p. 118). The analysis of English 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.

For achievement of a goal of research, we use the linguocultural approach to the study of the role neologisms play in mass-media discourse. The modern approach to the study of the language, and in particular of its vocabulary, involves the analysis of lexical units as elements of a linguistic space in the conditions of a culturological space, which gives a new dimension to the study of language. The interaction of the linguistic and cultural aspects is most clearly traced in the new vocabulary, since new words reflect the changing needs, interests, opportunities of people, and the integration of old linguistic forms with new concepts and concepts.

The significant peculiarity of vocabulary is its inherent direction to the phenomena of reality and that is why it is the vocabulary that reflects all the changes happening in the public life, which inevitably leads to the formation of new nominations. And it is the mass media that spread these new words and are the means of their popularisation.

Analysis

To support our thesis on the mutual influence of the culture of national unity and the media, we would like to emphasize that the neologisms used in the mass media texts are not only "born" thanks to the creative thinking of authors and editors, that is, come from the media and influence the reader, but often neologisms are found in the texts already in the active language of the native speakers.

Musical neologisms in the English mass-media discourse are mainly represented by genres and styles. In their definitions along with the naming of a genre, there exist additional connotations which will be described later.

Musical discourse is a complex multi-perspective and multidimensional phenomenon and the exploration of professional genres within musical discourse is a matter of integrating textual and contextual analysis, as the

work of genre is to "mediate between social situations and the texts that respond strategically to the exigencies of those situations" (Swales, 2009, p. 14). Semiosis, social context, social agents, social relations, and text in their diverse aspects in concert determine both text-internal and external features of musical discourse and act as reliable criteria in distinguishing between its genres.

The new word *popsical*—a musical genre that combines elements of both pop and classical music—denotes a genre of music connecting in itself elements of pop music and classical music. This neologism was formed with the help of blending—a compound consisting of one word and a splinter (part of a morpheme) or two splinters. A lexical blend takes two lexemes which overlap in form and welds them together to make one. Enough of each lexeme is usually retained so that the elements are recognizable. As David Crystal noted, blending seems to have increased in popularity in the 1980s, being increasingly used in commercial and advertising contexts… The forms are felt to be eye-catching and exciting (Crystal, 1995, p. 130).

The connotation of the next units includes both the lyrics and the sounding of melodies: *conscientious rap*—rap music with lyrics that emphasize responsibility and morality; *emo*—a music genre that features a heavy, guitar-based sound and melodic, emotional tunes; *yacht rock*—a form of soft rock music with a smooth, melodious sound, often with nautically themed lyrics.

> The increasing interest in conscientious rap is likely the result of teenage fans—who cross all ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries—being savvier today about world events and the differences between art and life, said Quincy Newell, president and CEO of Newell Media Group, a California-based urban music and marketing company.
>
> "Consumers gravitate toward sensationalism", Newell said. "But what has been fascinating is that in spite of the corporate dollars that have pushed gangsta rap all these years, conscientious rap has survived. Now it's thriving". (James H. Burnett III, "New generation tilts to more poetic rap", *The Miami Herald*, November 23, 2005)

The themes are represented by the lexemes responsibility and morality; nautically themed lyrics while the tunes can be expressed by the following words: *a heavy, guitar-based sound and melodic, emotional tunes; a smooth, melodious sound*. These semes are also included in the components of the neologisms: *conscientious*—guided by or in accordance with conscience or sense of right and wrong; *emo* (emotional)—causing strong emotions such as sadness and anger; yacht.

In the English new words belonging to the musical topic, one can single out the *personality* of the performer (gay and lesbian artists, DJs) and the *location* (mall, restaurant, other public location): *homo-hop*—hip-hop music as performed, played, or promoted by gay and lesbian artists, DJs; *mallternative*—rock music labeled as "alternative", but that is bland enough to be piped into a mall, restaurant, or other public location. These units as well as the majority of the analysed neologisms are formed with the help of blending one of the components of which indicates the connotative seme: *homo* (*homosexual*), *mall*.

The English language is constantly changing and new words are being coined all the time. Some of the new English words come from cultural trends, others are combinations of two existing words, and others are new meanings for old words. Such extralinguistic factors as social, political, economic ones, level of culture, and world outlook play the main role in the emergence of new words. So the unit *chip music*—a type of music using the sound chips of game systems as instruments (*chiptune*—another name for chip music) denotes a type of music which is reproduced with the help of chips of gaming systems functioning as instruments.

This kind of blend of straightforward rock with the chip music—is that unusual on the chiptune scene? (*WNYC: Soundcheck*—new music radio broadcast, 10 November, 2011)

Haeyoung Kim, who performs under the name Bubblyfish, makes chiptune music using a pair of Gameboys. (*WNYC: Soundchec*—new music radio broadcast, 20 October, 2011)

The neologism *chap hop*—a style of music which combines hip-hop (a style of African-American urban music) with themes, words, and pronunciation based on upper-class English stereotypes is formed on the analogy from hip hop. *Chap hop* made its debut in 2007 as the invention of rap musician Jim Burke (aka Mr B Gentleman Rhymer). The expression *chap hop* derives from a combination of *hip hop*, the term for the African-American urban musical genre, and *chappism*, a nostalgic subculture founded by Gustav Temple in the late 1990s which celebrates British masculinity in a previous era. *Chappist* concepts, such as dressing with panache (think tailored suits with sharply pressed trousers), behaving courteously, pipe-smoking, and drinking fine beverages, are advocated through *The Chap*, the movement's bi-monthly magazine and related books.

Opposing this musical style, we can give an example of a subgenre of country style used by white young people: *bro-country*—a sub-genre of country music sung by young white men, featuring songs with macho themes, such as trucks, drinking, and partying.

[A] Celebration of […] life that features trucks, beer and scantily clad women as the must-have accessories. The young country duo Maddie & Tae aren't fans of the third element in the "bro-country" trinity. (*NPR: All Things Considered*—news, politics and culture, 25 July, 2014)

One more neologism naming a genre is *country-and-eastern*—a music genre that combines elements of both North American country-and-western music and eastern, middle-eastern, or Asian music. The lexeme has an indication to the musical style as well as mentioning of geographical peculiarities—the combination of Western style country and eastern, Asian music. It is interesting to note that it is the name of the style—*country*, which is the primary element, and this explicitly shows the geographical parameter of this style while the second element is a geographical nomination—*eastern*.

The next neologisms indicating the origin of music are formed with the help of shortening: *J-pop*—pop music from Japan; *K-pop*—pop music from Korea; *Scandipop*—pop music from Scandinavia.

K-Pop's increasing popularity in the U.S. is putting more scrutiny on its acts. (now.msn.com, 2 March, 2012)

Japanese teens and twentysomethings who once had ears only for J-pop are now transfixed by K-pop, a phenomenon from South Korea that is taking the world's second biggest music market by storm. (*The Guardian*—UK broadsheet, 1 October, 2011)

The unit *filk*—a genre of folk music that is inspired by science fiction—is a blending of folk music genre and science fiction.

Nowt so queer as filk—world sci-fi festival beams into London. (*The Guardian*—UK broadsheet, 16 August, 2014)

We should mention that the reference to science fiction can be met in the English neologisms naming TV programmes and genres of literature and cinematography: *lab lit*—literature that includes some detailed scientific information as part of the story; *cli-fi*—a literary or movie genre featuring dystopian stories of Earth affected by extreme climate change; *decopunk*—books, films, or games that apply science fiction or fantasy elements to historical settings that display an Art Deco aesthetic; *nerdku*—a haiku that has a scientific or technical theme, or

that relates to a work of science fiction or fantasy.

Nomination of a programmae or a film by defining its genre or characteristic features is also of great importance in the system of English neologisms. We should state the popularity and spreading of television content nomination based on their genre or mixture of genres. The most common example is a new word with neutral connotation: *dramedy*—dramatic comedy; *romcom*—romantic comedy.

As for a new word *warmedy*—a comedy with a family-oriented content—it means some mixture of genres and also has some connotative charge, namely, a positive emotional attitude expressed in the component *warm* (*kind and friendly in a way that makes other people feel comfortable*), which is connected by association with family comfort and warmth.

> I realized the L.A. Times call must have been prompted by my recent column attacking Roberto Benigni's Holocaust warmedy Life Is Beautiful... which I characterized as a "feel-good fable about the Holocaust". (Ron Rosenbaum, "Dear Albert Brooks: Please Don't Go Warm", *New York Observer*, 30 August, 1999)

A special attention should be drawn to the neologism docusoap which also has in its meaning a mixture of genres, but denotes a television documentary series in which the lives of the people filmed are presented in soap-opera style. Surely this neologism "borrows" a critical connotative attitude from the original word soap opera shown in the definition through the component in soap-opera style and in the word docusoap itself. As a rule, people regard such films as superficial and shallow.

We should also mention the new words denoting TV programmes—reality shows popular in Western countries and representing one of the realias of their cultural life: *celebreality*—of or relating to reality TV shows that feature celebrities rather than ordinary people; *reality soap*—a TV show which features a cast who are not professional actors, but who are shown in stage-managed situations; *structured reality*—reality TV in which the location and scenario is contrived by the producer but the interaction between the participants is unscripted.

> These "celebreality" shows are never as interesting as they first sound. (*The Guardian*—UK broadsheet, 2 April, 2001)

> Daran Little, one of the show's series producers said: "I actually think structured reality is here to stay and it doesn't have to be highbrow". (www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat, 23 May, 2011)

> Hoboken, New Jersey, the Garden State city best known as the birthplace of Frank Sinatra, drew the ire of fans of the vodka-soaked reality soap Jersey Shore this week. (www.sheknows.com, 3 February, 2012)

These words help to explain the peculiarities of a modern Western cinematography—such as the description of lives of celebrities (*celebreality*) or the participation of amateurs (*reality soap*).

We consider the new word *structured reality* to be rather interesting as it denotes a programme where the location and scenario is contrived by the producer but the interaction between the participants is unscripted.

It has been observed in recent years that the term "gender" has been in popular use so as to recognize the social and cultural differences that are usually associated with men and women in society. Since gender is socially constructed and not innate, we learn gender norms through interactions with people and cultural texts and objects. Socialization is the lifelong process whereby people learn the norms and values of the society they live in. Part of this process is gender socialization. The major agents of socialization—family, peers, education, religion, and media—teach us gender norms and the potential consequences if these norms are challenged (Leavy &

Trier-Bieniek, 2014, p. 4). Gender roles dictate what is considered acceptable for men and women in terms of behavior, career, parenting, style of dress, and so on. So it is not surprising that even among new words denoting cinematography, we were able to trace a neologism possessing a gender component: *guy-cry*—of or relating to a film that often moves male viewers to tears.

Before starting an analysis of the neologisms connected with literary phenomena, we believe it is vital to mention one more new word of a "transitionary" character: *lit flick*—a film adapted from a novel of some literary merit.

> Classic lit flick: Stanley Kubrick's one-time banned A Clockwork Orange starring Malcolm McDowell. (www.metro.co.uk, 8 November, 2011)

The literature genres represented by English neologisms are: *chick lit*—a genre of novels designed to appeal to women, usually written by women and with female protagonists; *lad lit*—a genre of novels designed to appeal to men, usually written by men and with male protagonists; *gran-lit*—literature that appeals to older women.

> So far, however, booksellers say, none of these books have lived up to their industry buzz, and some publishers and book industry watchers question whether "lad lit", as the genre has come to be called, will ever have a natural readership. (Kate Zernike, "Oh, to Write A 'Bridget Jones' For Men", *The New York Times*, 22 February, 2004)

> Simultaneously Quercus launched Thursdays in the Park as an e-book. No one was paying much attention to the Kindle audience for gran-lit. (www.guardian.co.uk, 11 November, 2012)

All these new words are connected by a gender component: This type of literature is aimed at women, men, and older women. In the first case, the component indicating gender is a lexeme *chick*—a woman (this word is usually considered offensive). Unfortunately, such a negative connotation can be traced on all the levels of the language and is shown even in the neologisms with the literary topic. In the other cases, gender seme is neutral: *lad*—a boy or a young man and gran (*om grandmother*)—the mother of one of your parents.

The following neologisms were also put to the units denoting genres of literature: *lab lit*—literature that includes some detailed scientific information as part of the story; *cli-fi*—a literary or movie genre featuring dystopian stories of Earth affected by extreme climate change; *slash fiction* (also *slash*)—fiction, usually published online, based around a same-sex sexual relationship between two existing characters who are not sexually linked in the original works, for example, Captain Kirk and Mr Spock from Star Trek; *chick noir*—a style of literature written for women which has a crime or other serious and compelling theme. In these units, the attention is drawn not on the reader by singling out a gender component but on the characterstic feature of a genre (*lab lit*, *cli-fi*), sexual character (*slash fiction*), detective manner (*chick noir*), etc.

Let us analyse the neologism *chick noir* since it comprises both a gender component and a genre specific features:

> I'd define "chick noir" as psychological thrillers that explore the fears and anxieties experienced by many women. They deal in the dark side of relationships, intimate danger, the idea that you can never really know your husband or partner... (Lucie Whitehouse, novelist, *The Independent*)

This new word appeared on the analogy of a word *chick lit*—a genre of novels designed to appeal to women, usually written by women and with female protagonists. The word *noir* refers to the type of literature in which one can come across bold and cruel characters and mystical and/or criminal actions. This concept in its

turn refers to the term *film noir*. The word *noir* relates to a type of film or literature in which strong, sometimes violent characters are involved in mysterious and/or criminal events. It often stands as an abbreviated reference to *film noir*, a cinematic genre of crime drama which dated back to the 1940s. The term is a translation of French "black film" and its coinage is often attributed to Nino Frank, a French film critic active in the 1930s and 40s!

On a similar theme, *Nordic noir* is a term (*crime fiction or TV programmes that come from Scandinavian countries, with dark stories and realistic social settings*) and now sometimes used to describe an increasingly popular genre of crime fiction emanating from Scandinavia, which has a realistic style and a characteristically dark, morally complex mood. Examples include Stieg Larsson's novel *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* and a number of Danish/Swedish television dramas, such as *The Killing* or *The Bridge*, sometimes popularly described as *Scandi dramas*.

Conclusion

By studying national character, linguists underline mostly the importance of vocabulary. Vocabulary is the Everest of a language. There is no larger task than to look for order among the hundreds of thousands of words which comprise the lexicon. There may be many *greater* tasks—working out a coherent grammatical system is certainly one—but nothing beats lexical study for sheer quantity and range (Crystal, 1995, p. 117). Being nationally-specific, neologisms realize their categories by means of which the representatives of a certain people contemplate through their space and their borders in which they are put to perceive and analyze the surrounding world.

The interdisciplinary research in the study of the discursive formations typology is very important in contemporary linguistics. The methodological basis of the study includes the principal propositions on the language as a system of interrelated elements, on the dichotomy of language and speech, on the inextricable link of language and thinking, on language and reality, on the form and content unity, and on the relationship of theoretical and empirical knowledge in philosophy and language.

References

Aitchison, J. (1991). *Language change: Progress or decay* (2nd ed.)? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (1995). *Encyclopedia of the English language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hall, E. (1959). *The silent language*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions and organizations across nations*. London: SAGE Publications.

Kluckhohn, C. (1951). Values and value orientations in the theory of action. In T. Parsons and E. Shils (Eds.), *Toward a general theory of action*. Cambridge: CUP.

Leavy, P., & Trier-Bieniek, A. (2014). *Introduction to gender & pop culture*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Swales, J. M. (2009). Worlds of genre-metaphors of genre. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, and D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 1-16). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearing House.

Wardhaugh, R. (1997). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Oxford: OUP. Retrieved from http://dictionaryblog.cambridge.org/tag/neologisms

Appendix: Cited newspapers

BBC <www.bbc.co.uk>

Metro <www.metro.co.uk>

MSN <now.msn.com>

National Public Radio: All Things Considered <https://wn.com/npr_all_things_considered>

New York Observer <http://observer.com/>

Sheknows <www.sheknows.com>

The Guardian <www.guardian.co.uk>

The Miami Herald <www.miamiherald.com/>

The New York Times <www.nytimes.com/>

WNYC: Soundcheck <www.wnyc.org/>