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ON SOME COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS
OF ENGLISH NEOLOGISMS

The paper touches upon some issues connected with cognitive characteristics of English neologisms with special reference to the processes of generating a new linguistic sign. Some factors (such as different associations, folk etymology) which precondition the outer sound form of a newly emerging word are examined. Associations play a great role in the processes when a proper noun becomes a common noun – a phenomenon which is illustrated with the help of the descriptivist and the causal theories. Special attention is paid to blending as one of the most productive word-formation means in contemporary English in the light of conceptual blending theory, suggested by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.

Key words: *neologism, onomasiology, cognitive approach, folk etymology, association, blending, conceptual blending theory*

Cognitive linguistics is a relatively new school of linguistics, and one of the most innovative and exciting approaches to the study of language and thought that has emerged within the modern field of interdisciplinary study known as cognitive science /Evans, Green, 2006: 5/. It is an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics and is concerned with the issues how language interacts with cognition and the interrelation of language and thought. Cognitive linguistics is strongly connected to onomasiology, the branch of lexicology that concerns itself with finding the linguistic forms or the words that can stand for a given concept/idea/object /Grzega, Schöner, 2007: 7/.

There are several stages that a speaker goes through when creating a new word. The investigation of these stages is of great importance while analyzing the cognitive peculiarities of neologisms. In the first stage the particular referent is identified in a particular context. In the second (perceptual) level the speaker tries to differentiate between more basic, "global" and more specific, "local" features of the referent and a comparison between the overall image of that particular referent and other images already existent in the speaker's mind is carried out. In case of being able to classify that particular referent as a member of a familiar concept, the speaker can choose an already existing word or even to coin a new designation. This choice would be based on cost-benefit analysis. Hence, the speaker should clarify his/her aim, i. e. maybe s/he wants to sound just like the interlocutor or to speak somehow differently as compared with others, maybe s/he wants to be more precise than the already known word would enable him/her to be, or s/he wants to sound vulgar or sophisticated or polite. When the decision of coining a new word is

made the speaker has to pass several levels of word-finding and name-giving. The first step will once again be the "feature analysis" but this time more attention is paid to local features. This level can be spared if an already existing lexical unit in that language is chosen and somehow violated (often shortened) or a word from a foreign language is used. The next level, termed as onomasiological level, also as "naming in a more abstract sense" is the selection of one or two features that will serve as a basis for designation. The motives for the designation are called iconemes which are found on the basis of similarity, contrast, partiality or contiguity of relations. In this level also the factor of extralinguistic context is of vital importance. In the onomatological level (also called "naming in a more concrete sense") particular morphemes are selected. If the speaker does not violate an already known word but decides to coin a new one, s/he can choose from several types of processes but in any case the speaker has an already existing model in a language. It can be based on a model of the speaker's mother tongue or of a foreign language known to him/her. In the next level the word is given certain form-content relation and grammatical features, which means that a new sign is born. Finally the sign is phonetically realized. The coinage of a new designation can be affected by various forces (the want of abolition of forms that can sound more or less ambiguous, avoidance of words that can sound similar to already existing and negatively associated words, desire for illustrative names for a thing, changes in the world, deletion of irregularity, existence of taboos, the culturally bound values, prestige/fashion) /Grzega, Schöner, 2007: 17-20/.

While dealing with new words entering the system of the language a question can arise why some sound clusters or some morphemes are given prominence while coining these words. In this connection the phenomenon of folk or false etymology is worth considering. This is connected with the people's incorrect perception of the composition of this or that word. For example, the emergence of the suffix -*gate* in English is conditioned by folk etymology. In fact, English did not have such a suffix and its origin is connected with the Watergate scandal. Actually, in the word *Watergate* the part *gate* is not a suffix, but it remained in the people's minds as a constituent part of a word connected with a scandal and now it is perceived as a suffix and can easily be added to different words in order to create neologisms that are connected with scandals. The application of this suffix can serve as a manipulation tool by many journalists who are using it more and more widely in order to catch the audience's attention and to evoke controversial feelings in the society. This phenomenon is criticized by many commentators who think that these uses can be misleading for the audience /https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-06-16/watergate-scandal-changed-political-landscape/55639974/1/. This suffix gives the impression of a far-reaching scandal as was the Watergate scandal, but in fact not every phenomenon that is referred to by a word containing this suffix is so crucial and worth considering. Here are a few examples of newly coined words containing this suffix:

Antennagate (2010) - the name the media applied to the controversy over the iPhone 4's antenna after initial users complained of dropped calls and Consumer Reports would not recommend it,

Crashgate (2008) - the allegations of race fixing at the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix, where Renault team bosses allegedly ordered Nelson Piquet to crash, handing an advantage to his teammate, Fernando Alonso,

Elsagate (2017) - a scandal and phenomenon referring to thousands of inappropriate YouTube videos targeted towards young children (Elsa is a character from the 2013 Disney animated film "Frozen" who is frequently depicted in such videos),

FIFA-gate (2015) - a case of corruption and money laundering by officials and associates connected with FIFA, the governing body of association football, futsal and beach soccer,

Gamergate (2014) - the Gamergate controversy concerns issues of sexism and progressivism in video game culture, stemming from a harassment campaign conducted primarily through the use of the Twitter hashtag #GamerGate.

A similar development can be found in case of the suffix *-punk* which comes from the word *cyberpunk* coined by Bruce Bethke as the title of a 1983 short story. Here are some examples of the words containing this suffix:

biopunk - a subgenre of science fiction that focuses on biotechnology,

nanopunk - an emerging subgenre of science fiction still very much in its infancy in comparison to its ancestor-genre cyberpunk,

nowpunk - a term invented by Bruce Sterling, which he applied to contemporary fiction set in the time period (particularly in the post-Cold War 1990s to the present) in which the fiction is being published, i.e. all contemporary fiction,

postcyberpunk - a fiction genre arising from cyberpunk and other science fiction, without the presence of dystopia associated with cyberpunk,

steampunk - a subgenre of science fiction or science fantasy that incorporates technology and aesthetic designs inspired by 19th-century industrial steam-powered machinery.

Similarly, one can observe new words containing the suffix *-gasm* which can also be considered to be a neologism that came into existence again by false etymology. Speakers thought that the word *orgasm* is composed of the constituent parts *or-* + *-gasm* and started to use the part *-gasm* for coining new words. Some examples are:

braingasm - an overpowering mental sensation of joy, excitement, etc. resembling an orgasm,

cargasm - an intense excitement or pleasure caused by looking at, sitting in, or driving a car,

coregasm - a pleasurable sensation during contractions of the muscles after or during exercise,

eargasm - *a sense of pleasure derived from listening to something, particularly music,*

eyegasm - *a feeling of pleasure derived from a sight.*

Another example to illustrate the above mentioned phenomenon is the use of the suffix *-thon* or *-athon* that comes from the Ancient Greek word *μάραθον* (*marathon*). In fact the sound cluster *athon* in case of *marathon* is not a suffix but many speakers of English considered it to be a suffix and started to coin words with this sound cluster:

chatathon - *a long period of chatting,*

hackathon - *an event where programmers and others meet for collaborative software development,*

jogathon - *a charity event in which participants jog a long distance,*

shopathon - *a long session of shopping,*

walkathon - *a long-distance walk, either as a race or in aid of charity.*

In the same way, the word *cultureshed* was coined on the analogy of *watershed* which is a calque of German *Wasserscheide*, a compound of *Wasser* (*water*) + *scheiden* (*divide*).

Another aspect to look at connected with false etymology is back-formation. As David Crystal mentions in his "A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics" back-formation is "a term used in historical studies of morphology to refer to an abnormal type of word-formation where a shorter word is derived by deleting an imagined affix from a longer form already present in the language" /Crystal, 2008: 46/. Among English neologisms there are words coined through back-formation, like *sensical* and *staycation*. The word *sensical* is derived from *nonsensical*, *staycate* is derived from *staycation*.

A very vivid example of how a word can completely change its meaning connected with the associations it has is the word *brokeback* which is now used as an adjective and means *of or pertaining to homosexuality*. This word in fact comes from Annie Proulx's 1997 short story entitled "Brokeback Mountain." The story is about two homosexual guys, and the name Brokeback is just the name of the mountain, but in the speakers' minds this name provokes the memory of these two guys that's why the name of the mountain is now applied in connection with the people who tend to homosexuality.

Another feature of neologisms which can be viewed in the light of cognitive characteristics is that scientific terms are composed of constituent parts of Greek or Latin origin whereas words for everyday usage are made up of elements which are either of English origin or are assimilated into the system of the English language to such an extent that their foreign origin is not realized any longer. Thus, we can see that the traces of the phenomenon existent in the minds of the native speakers of English in the Medieval period when most of the philosophical and scientific literature was written in Latin is expressed even today. We can verify the above mentioned by just taking a brief look at some of the neologisms containing a

constituent part of Greek or Latin origin: *acephobia* (*-φοβία (-phobía)* from Ancient Greek), *agender* (*ἀ- (a-)* from Ancient Greek), *aquafaba* (both *aqua* and *faba* coming from Latin), *austerian* (*αὐστηρότης (austērótēs)* from Ancient Greek), *autograt* (*auto* coming from Ancient Greek *αὐτός (autós)*, *grat* coming from Latin *gratuitas*), *bioconformatics, biofraud* (*βίο- (bío-)* from Ancient Greek), *blognoscenti* (*cognoscente* coming from Latin), *cellomics* (*-ωμα (-ōma)* and *-ικός (-ikós)* from Ancient Greek), *Corbynmania* (*μανία (mania)* from Ancient Greek), *demiromantic* (*dīmidium* from Latin), *ecoanxiety, ecospace* (*οἶκος (oîkos)* from Ancient Greek), *infoganda* (*īnfōrmātiō* and *propaganda* coming from Latin), *megagift, megamenu* (*μέγας (mégas)* from Ancient Greek), *metablog* (*μετα- (meta-)* from Ancient Greek), *multishirk, multitexting* (*multī* from Latin), *policide* (*πόλις (polis)* coming from Ancient Greek and *-cīda* coming from Latin).

While analyzing English neologisms from the point of view of their cognitive characteristics we cannot but take a close look at the newly coined words or expressions containing a proper noun. Examples include:

bye, Felicia - *used as an abrupt sarcastic dismissal of somebody who is present*,

Cavuto - *a question mark used at the end of an unsubstantiated news headline*,

cheshirization - *one or several sound changes which preserve a phonological distinction in a re-expressed form*,

edisonade - *a genre of science fiction and adventure fiction featuring a brilliant robust inventor, engineer or scientist hero who has an adventure in the wilds of the world, created from the mid-19th century to early 20th century, mostly American*,

Friedman unit - *a period of six months*,

Liefeldian - *of, related to, or characteristic of the comics artist Rob Liefeld*,

Milifandom - *an Internet-based youth movement in support of Ed Miliband, then leader of the British Labour Party*,

neo-McCarthyism - *the actions of Senator Joseph McCarthy in trying to "root out" communists in the United States of America during the 1950s*,

Sorkinism - *the characteristic style of Aaron Sorkin (born 1961), American screenwriter, producer, and playwright, known for rapid-fire dialogue and extended monologues.*

In this connection we find it necessary to mention the descriptivist and the causal theories of proper names.

The descriptivist theory which was formulated by Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege and that's why is sometimes called the Frege-Russell theory, holds the view that the semantic content of a proper name is the same as the descriptions associated with that name by the speakers which are preconditioned by the characteristics of the person who bears that name. So, in the sentence where we come across a personal name, we can substitute that name with the description of the bearer of that name /Russell: https://www.uvm.edu/~lderosse/courses/lang/Russell (1905). pdf /.

The other theory holds the view that every object bears the name which was fixed by an original act of naming. That name becomes a rigid designator of that object. This theory is named causal as it holds that later uses of a name are linked to and preconditioned by the original act of naming through a causal chain. This theory was founded by Saul Kripke who wanted to oppose the descriptivist theory saying that for using a name of a particular object it is not necessary to be acquainted with the characteristic features or the description of that object /Kripke, 2001/.

While dealing with neologisms we can come across phenomena when a person's name has been generalized and is now used to refer to other persons bearing a similar feature or even to name a particular characteristic feature distinguishing the person bearing that name. Here we can turn our look to both theories and see that they both can be applied in this case. At the first stage the causal theory works when a person is given a name through the original naming by his/her parents. Later this name is used by different people for referring to that person. This stage, though present, does not present interest for our study. We are more interested in how a person's name can be used as a synonym for characteristic features of that person. Hence, in this case we deal with the descriptivist theory of names. However criticized the descriptivist theory is, we can see how successfully it can be applied here. For example, the expression *Bye, Felicia* is taken from the comedy film "Friday" (1995), where Felisha irritates people in the neighbourhood by begging and borrowing. So, in this particular case the characteristic feature that is taken into account and considered to be more important than the others is irritating people. The name *Cavuto* comes from Fox News Channel correspondent Neil Cavuto who likes to put a question mark at the end of an unsubstantiated news headline. *Cheshirization* originates from the name of a fictional cat with a broad grin which disappeared leaving its smile. Thomas Edison was a great inventor that's why his name is chosen for the whole genre which features a brilliant inventor, namely *Edisonade*. Rob Liefeld has a unique style and is one of the most controversial figures of the comic industry, so his name is used to express the characteristic features of that particular style. *Friedman unit* comes from the phrase *the next six months* frequently used by Thomas Friedman. According to him this was the time needed for the final resolution of the Iraqian conflict. *Milifandom* comes from the name of Ed Miliband. There was a hashtag with this word on Twitter. The first person who started this campaign announced that she did this in order to "show how powerful young people are" /https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Milifandom/. So, in this case Miliband becomes a kind of a hero for the people and they try to show the power of the youth by the image of Ed Miliband. *Neo-McCarthyism* comes from the name of Senator Joseph McCarthy who struggled very severely against the communists in the USA in the 1950s. *Sorkinism* originates from the name of *Aaron Sorkin* whose works are characterized by a very unique style.

In contemporary English neologisms are widely coined by means of blending and while studying neologisms one should pay a close attention to them, as they mark a new way of thinking that the English speaking society is adopting. The principal reason why blendings are coined so often is the need to save time. The use of blendings becomes more often, as the life gets faster. Besides, in case of blendings we have various notions that are combined within the limits of one word – a thing which needs a more thorough investigation by cognitive linguists. And this is where the conceptual blending theory suggested by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner can be applied.

Conceptual blending is a basic mental operation that leads to new meaning, global insight, and conceptual compressions useful for memory and manipulation of otherwise diffuse ranges of meaning. This operation is carried out by constructing a partial match between two input mental spaces and thus projecting a novel blended mental space.

Generic space

Input space 1

cross-space mapping

selective projection

Input space 2
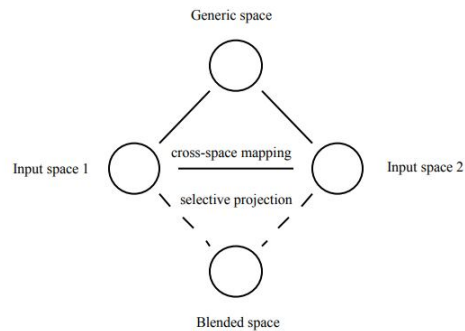
Blended space

While studying the conceptual blending we deal with 4 connected mental spaces: 2 partially matched input spaces, a generic space constituted by structure common to the inputs, and the blended space. The authors of this theory claim that we establish mental spaces because they give us global insight, a larger scale understanding and new meaning. One of the most important aspects of our efficiency and creativity is the compression achieved through blending /Fauconnier, Turner: http://tecfa.unige.ch/tecfa/maltt/cofor-1/textes/Fauconnier-Turner03.pdf/. Blends are formed by means of fusing two already existing lexemes into a new one where the stems of the initial lexemes have often been shortened /http://www.llf.cnrs.fr/sites/llf.cnrs.fr/files/biblio/22.Blending50.pdf/. Blends are very interesting phenomena in case of which the speaker in fact incorporates 2 or more words within the limits of one word. It is interesting to note that blends are more recent phenomena and are more characteristic to the newly coined part of the vocabulary. Their appearance is partially conditioned by the fact that our lives are becoming faster and faster and the time-saving principle works everywhere, even in word-formation processes. Another reason for their appearance can be sought in

this theory. People try to draw parallels between two different domains and construct matches between them. All these operations take place subconsciously that is why we are not very well aware of them.

For example, in case of the newly coined words which indicate the emerging literary genres, such as *crimance (crime + romance), docufiction (documentary + fiction), dramystery (drama + mystery), romaction (romance + action),* the generic space consists of various literary genres, the two input spaces will be the already known genres which are being merged in a particular case (*crime* and *romance* in case of *crimance*, *documentary* and *fiction* in case of *docufiction* and so on), and the blended space is represented by the newly emerging genres (*crimance, docufiction,* etc.).

So, to conclude, one can observe how the outer sound form of a newly coined word can be preconditioned by people's incorrect perception of the composition of words (folk etymology) and in some cases also by the associations people have with the previous contexts in which the words were used. This is also connected with the phenomenon that Ancient Greek and Latin morphemes are still being used more in scientific contexts, whereas morphemes of English origin or those which have been assimilated into the system of the English language to the extent that their foreign origin is not realized any more are used in colloquial style. Here we see the reflections of the phenomenon that in Medieval period scientific and philosophical writing was done mainly in Latin, and English was left to the use of ordinary people in everyday life. As far as associations are concerned, the process when a proper noun becomes a common noun is worth considering. In this paper the investigation of these processes is carried out in the light of the descriptivist and the causal theories. We also made an attempt to view the neologisms coined by means of blending in the scope of conceptual blending theory suggested by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.

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Ա. ՍՏԵՓԱՆՅԱՆ – *Անգլերենի նորաբանությունների որոշ ճանաչողական առանձնահատկությունների շուրջ.* – Սույն հոդվածում քննության են առնվում որոշակի խնդիրներ՝ կապված անգլերենի նորաբանությունների ճանաչողական առանձնահատկությունների հետ: Ժամանակակից անգլերենում կան բազմաթիվ նորաբանություններ՝ ստեղծված տարբեր տեսակի մտացիգործումների, ինչպես նաև ժողովրդական ստուգաբանության հիմունքով: Մտացիգործումների հիմունքով ստեղծված նորաբանությունների շրջանակներում հետաքրքրական է այն իրողությունը, երբ հատուկ անունը վերածվում է հասարակ անվան և սկսում գործածվել որպես հասարակ գոյական: Անգլերենի զարգացման ժամանակակից փուլում բառախառնուրդը բառաստեղծման ամենագործուն միջոցներից է: Հոդվածում փորձ է արվում դիտարկելու նորաստեղծ բառախառնուրդները հասկացության միաձուլման տեսության լույսի ներքո:

Բանալի բառեր. նորաբանություն, անվանաբանություն, ճանաչողական մոտեցում, ժողովրդական ստուգաբանություն, մտացիգործում, բառախառնուրդ, հասկացության միաձուլման տեսություն

А. СТЕПАНЯН – *О некоторых когнитивных особенностях неологизмов в английском языке.* – В данной статье выявляются основные когнитивные процессы формирования значения новых слов и их внешней звуковой формы (например, ассоциации, народная этимология). В частности, особое внимание уделяется ассоциациям, которые играют большую роль в процессе перехода собственного имени в нарицательное. Исследуются также особенности неологизмов, образованных на основе контаминации, которые рассматриваются в свете теории концептуальной интеграции.

Ключевые слова: неологизм, ономасиология, когнитивный подход, народная этимология, ассоциация, контаминация, теория концептуальной интеграции