

The Study of New Words from an Ecolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract. *The article deals with the issues of neology and ecolinguistics. The authors specify the criteria of ecolinguistic approach to studying neologisms based on ecolinguistic monitoring which helps to elicit factors that influence the formation of new words, spheres in which they function in language as well as to define the type of new words and number of loanwords among them.*

Key words: *ecolinguistic approach, neologism, ecolinguistic monitoring, loanword, language ecology.*

INTRODUCTION

Every year lexicographers register hundreds of new words. According to the survey carried out by Global Language Monitor, the English language obtains a new word every 98 minutes [4, 34]. The electronic revolution in the second half of the twentieth century caused the scientific and technical progress to speed up, and these processes were immediately reflected in language.

We define neologisms as “words or word combinations which are innovative in their form or meaning in a fixed moment in time and carrying a new social and cultural reference” [6, 68].

The diversity of opinions about the nature, functions and classification of neologisms gives opportunities and material for new lines of linguistic research of the neonomination process.

One of such new lines of research is the study of neologisms from the perspective of ecolinguistics which we interpret as “a new research area of studying the linguistic habitat of an individual and the society aimed at eliciting the laws, principles and rules common for both the ecology and language development” [7, 143]. The idea that neolinguistic and ecolinguistic research works share is understanding a language as an ecosystem which can change or generate new words, alter the meanings of existing words or regulate itself. We agree with the linguist S.V. Ionova who thinks that the growing ecological crisis has served as one of the reasons for the formation of the ecolinguistic scientific paradigm: the philosophy of nature protection came to contradiction to the dominating anthropocentric ideology [3].

The ecolinguistic approach in neology should definitely include the analysis of the factors that influence the language ecosystem and give rise to new words as well as the analysis of the language spheres where these new words function. This approach also implies the type identification of new words and estimation of the number of loanwords among them. Thus, the ecolinguistic approach in neology will help to find the “unhealthy” tendencies or trends in language usage, avoid its potential contamination by neologisms-loanwords and its vulgarisation.

The ecolinguistic approach in neology can be based on ecolinguistic monitoring which we define as “a continuously functioning system of collecting and analysing extralinguistic and intralinguistic data, conducting additional information and analytical surveys (opinion polls) and estimating

(detecting) the language situation and the tendencies of its further development” [8, 154]. The analysis of the findings will help to draw up the necessary measures for keeping or rehabilitating the ecolinguistic language balance.

In the course of our research 3 000 new words that appeared in Dutch and English in the last three decades were selected with the help of the continuous sampling method from the following resources: the dictionaries of new words, lists of neologisms registered annually in such leading dictionaries as Oxford Dictionary and Vandeale Woordenboek, collections of new words on web portals and “words of the year” (between the years 1990–2013). Having studied the material we revealed the cardinal changes that the Dutch language experienced in view of the active promotion of global English.

Among intralinguistic changes in the Dutch language ecology we revealed the changes on the phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic levels of the language system [9].

1. Changes on the phonetic level.

Until the second half of the twentieth century most anglicisms coined by Dutch conformed to the laws and orthoepic norms of the Dutch language. Yet our research showed that since the last three decades English words have been inclined to keep their phonetic properties in the Dutch language: Dutch *show* (from English *show*) ‘performance’, Dutch *joggen* (from English *jog*) ‘to run as a form of physical exercise’, Dutch *database* (from English *database*) ‘a structured set of data’ etc.

Another change on the phonetic level found in the course of our research is the change in the characteristics of some Dutch phonemes. For example, the forelingual sonorant trill Dutch consonant [r] is becoming backlingual and losing its vibration under the influence of the English language. Besides, the sound [r] is often not pronounced now in the final position in a syllable: [ˈamstedam] ‘Amsterdam’.

Loanwords bring along new sounds to the Dutch language. For example, the letter *w* of the Dutch alphabet corresponds to the sound [v]: *weekend* [ˈvikent] ‘Saturday and Sunday’ but our research showed that the neologisms that appeared in the Dutch language in the last three decades keep the English pronunciation of this sound: *Windows* [ˈwindous] ‘operating system (computer terminology)’, *website* [ˈwebsait] ‘an Internet location with one or more web pages’ and other examples.

2. Changes on the morphological level.

Some Dutch grammatical categories have also undergone considerable changes and modified their features with the advance of the English language. Traditionally Dutch nouns acquire the plural form by adding the morpheme *-en* to their stem. In spite of that, the morpheme *-s* is also used to form plural. The ending *-s* can be found in the first place in neologisms borrowed from the English language:

budgets ‘financial plans, *tests* ‘sets of questions, *coaches* ‘a comfortable bus’ etc.

Our research showed that adoption of English words with the suffixes *-able* and *-wise* led to the increase in productivity of the similar morphemes *-baar*, *-gewijs* in the Dutch language: *opbelbaar* ‘in a working order’, *prestatiegewijs* ‘performance-wise’ etc.

3. Changes on the lexical level.

The vocabulary of each language is one of the most mobile and flexible elements of the language system, that is why the process of penetration and borrowing of foreign words is natural especially in the era of active intercultural communication. Nevertheless some Dutch linguists express a great concern about the growing number of direct unassimilated anglicisms in the Dutch language. The fact of such sharp increase is also verified by our research. We found that the corpus of Dutch neologisms under our analysis contains 40 % of anglicisms, 20 % out of which are direct borrowings from English [5, 150]. According to the linguist N. van der Sijs, English poses a major threat to the Dutch language in a way that the latter may lose its ability to adjust the imported elements [9, 358].

4. Changes on the syntactic level.

Our research showed that in comparison with other language levels the syntactic level of Dutch is the least subject to changes. The linguist L. Koenen singles out the strengthening of the economy principle which leads to modifications in the structure of the nominal group inside the Dutch sentence. The example of such changes can be the transformation of the word combination *het in werking treden* into *de inwerkingtreding* ‘entering into force’ [3, 136]. The effect of English can be found when analysing the set phrases that were borrowed from English by the Dutch language in the last three decades. Among these borrowings are such syntactic calques as *ik ben bang dat* (derived from English *I’m afraid*); *de...-ste ooit* (from English *the...ever*): *de warmest decembermaand ooit* ‘the warmest December ever’; *als regel* (from English *as a rule*) etc.

Despite the fact that ecolinguistics is aimed at protecting the health of the

language it should not turn into linguistic purism which is focused on fighting against the ‘language corruption’. Linguistic purism originated in the nineteenth century in response to the massive expansion of foreign vocabulary. In the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War, the purist movement in the Netherlands turned against English. Main concern was raised over anglicisms which were understood by purists as words, expressions or constructions which conflict with Dutch structural principles: *frontpagina* ‘front page’, *onderlijnen* ‘underline’, *pijplijn* ‘pipeline’. Some words were only rejected because their meaning expanded under English influence, like *conservatief* ‘careful’, *typisch* ‘representative’ and *uitvinden* ‘choose’.

Among the intralinguistic factors that motivate the formation of neologisms we elicited the following tendencies towards 1) linguistic economy; 2) enhancement of the expressiveness of linguistic means; 3) systematisation of the vocabulary; 4) unification of linguistic signs; 5) conversion and the shift in stylistic usage of the words.

Our research showed that the intralinguistic factors that have the greatest impact on the language vocabulary modification are the tendencies towards strengthening the economy principle and enhancing the expressiveness of linguistic means. Moreover the study of these factors in relation to English and Dutch proved there are no new words from a purist point of view. Most of them originate from the resources of each language or are borrowed from other languages.

Full-scale studies of neologisms from the perspective of ecolinguistics are vital nowadays in view of the threat that globalisation and other extralinguistic factors pose to the safety of modern national languages. Our research showed that together with a number of negative changes on all language levels neologisms also cause destandardisation of the language. Since many of them are loanwords neologisms lead to orthographic variability in the Dutch language that might have a negative effect on lexicographic, didactic or publishing activities: *personeelsdirecteur*, *personeel directeur* ‘human resources manager’ etc.

Metaphorically speaking neologisms are often referred to as “barometers” of the changes that happen in the society and the shifts in popular social tendencies [1, 15]. On the one hand, new words reflect public consciousness but on the other hand, they influence its development. This contradiction explains the relevance of our research work.

Summing up of all what has just been said, it should be stressed:

The details of how they function, further development of the ecolinguistic approach in neology and methods of ecolinguistic monitoring will allow to minimize the negative influence of globalization processes on the national language.

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up of all what has just been said, it should be stressed:

New vocabulary is the most important material for embodied by means of language concepts, as it reflects the characteristic features of the worldview of the people. Neologism due to its ability not only to reflect, but also to “absorb” the culture of native speakers of the language to which it belongs in recent decades, became a powerful linguistic and social mediator serving to enrich both the language itself and the social environment as a whole.

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