
Comparative Socio-Political Processes and Their Reflection in Legal Linguistics in English and French

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Abstract

There is a close relationship between linguistics and law, and one of these links can be legal stylistics, which is clearly needed in research. By analogy, legal linguistics is a science that monitors the performance of all branches of linguistics such as phonetics in identifying identity, techniques of writing legal texts, semantics, analysis of words and text, in law-related purposes in judicial courts. The scope of legal linguistics research is linguistic knowledge on the one hand and the needs of legal and legal societies such as courts on the other hand. This article is devoted to a very relevant topic – socio-political processes and their reflection in English and French languages and especially how new words indicate these changes. The research is made on the basis of the list of new words that were fixed in the Oxford dictionary and Petit Larousse in 2020. Neologisms were analyzed according to the reality they denote and types of language units they belong to. Special attention was paid to the new words belonging to medicine and coronavirus area as 2020 was remarkable for giving birth to a big amount of new words of this group. In addition each language acquired a lot of words connected with the changes of people's lifestyle caused by coronavirus restriction and the new rules of life. The research showed that both languages, English and French, are very sensitive to changes happening in each society. Neologisms reveal these changes and show the areas of society that has undergone the biggest transformations in a particular period of time.

Key words: law-related purposes, legal linguistics, social changes, political changes, coronavirus, neologism, language enrichment, dictionary.

Introduction

Socio-political changes are always reflected in language. English and French are not exceptions. English today is one of the fastest growing languages in the world. This can be seen from the constantly changing vocabulary of the English language. Every year hundreds of new words, expressions, meanings come to replace hundreds of obsolete words. All these new words "enter first into the passive, and then into the active vocabulary. They are included in the dictionaries of the literary language" [1, c. 388].

French is also notable for its international role. It would not be an exaggeration to call French the second most popular language in the world. It is spoken by at least 500 million people. French is the official language of a significant number of international organizations and one of the most studied foreign languages in the world. Like any other language, French is a reflection of changes in society. Any significant event, innovation, invention, etc. influence it. This is clearly demonstrated by the emergence of numerous neologisms and their further integration into the language. A significant number of borrowings of English origin penetrate into French due to the inevitable process of globalization. And if a third of these neologisms are purely Anglicisms, two-thirds, undergoing grammatical assimilation, continue their integration into the linguistic space.

Many philologists around the world are studying the origins of English neologisms. Over the past 20 years, many studies by Russian and foreign scientists have been devoted to this topic. Yumshanova E.V. studied the principles of selection and lexicographic processing of neologisms in dictionaries of new words in the English language [2], Avdeeva Yu.A. was engaged in the analysis of new words in the English language [3], Mkrtychan devoted her research to the methods of the formation of the latest neologisms in the English language [4]. In addition some scientists conducted interdisciplinary researches on the boundary between communication, linguistics and education. The problem of language and communication was studied for example in the work devoted to the formation of sociolinguistic competence during language lessons [5], some neologisms were studied as parts of media representatives' speech [6]. In another research the use of communication channels in teaching languages was investigated [7].

As for French, the most significant are the works of French scientists P. Gilbert, C. Balli, A. Doza and A. Cuiglioli. In Russian linguistics, a huge contribution to the study of French neology was made by A.A. Reformatsky, A.I. Sobolevsky, V.G. Gak, L.V. Shcherba, L.P. Ratin and others.

Our study continues the above mentioned studies and aims to analyze the neologisms that appeared as a result of socio-political changes in 2020 and were fixed in the Oxford English Dictionary and Little Larousse.

Methodological Framework

The main objectives of the research are: 1) to study French and English neologisms, their meanings and function; 2) divide these neologisms into groups according to their meaning; 3) examine the new words related to COVID-19 sphere.

In the research the authors used the following methods. First of all, theoretical analysis of the studies devoted to the same linguistic process – appearance of new words in two languages. Secondly, the authors used dictionaries to collect a list of new French and English words that appeared in 2020 and then analyzed them.

Results and Discussion

The Oxford English Dictionary is one of the most famous English dictionaries, it has been published by the Oxford University Press since 1888. The dictionary contains words that have been in use in English language since 1150, and nowadays includes about 600 thousand vocabulary units. The dictionary database is constantly updated and the lists of words that have been added to the dictionary base since the last update are published on the dictionary website every three months. The last update (when the article was being written) was released in September 2021 [8]. The update contains over 800 new words, new sub-units and refined meanings of the words that already exist in the dictionary.

Small Larousse or Small Illustrated Larousse is a French encyclopedic dictionary of the Larousse publishing house. It was first published in 1905.

Since that time, there has been an annual update of its content, neologisms are added and obsolete concepts are removed. The 116th edition of 2021 has 2044 pages. The dictionary is divided into two parts. The first part contains 63,500 common names while the second one includes 28,000 proper names (people, place names, etc.). In addition it includes 18 pages of Latin and Greek expressions and idioms, as well as French proverbs. It also contains brief grammar information and a timeline of the world history.

The annual edition of the dictionary usually carries out on

ly updating of data (emerging neologisms, new technologies, reflection of significant events, etc.).

In our article, we would like to analyze 121 French neologisms and 712 English neologisms included in the 2020 editions of both dictionaries. Since the neologisms that entered the language last year most vividly illustrate how both languages reacted to the unprecedented challenges that changed our perception of everyday life, how the socio-political processes taking place in society are reflected in the vocabulary of the language.

All neologisms 2020 of both dictionaries can be divided according to their meaning into the following groups:

1. Words connected with COVID-19 pandemic
2. Ecology
3. Psychology and sociology
4. Transformations in society
5. Political and military spheres
6. Digital and technological transformations
7. Changes in the economic, legal and financial spheres
8. Medicine and science
9. Problems of modern society
10. Regionalisms

The main challenge for humanity in 2020 was the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused serious socio-political changes in society. Society not only experienced a deep shock, but it had to struggle for survival, and was forced to overcome and adapt to existence in the context of a long-term, global crisis. Nowadays consequences associated with this serious disease are called the coronacrisis. It is obvious that these new social processes were supposed to be reflected in the language. With the emergence of new reality, due to socio-economic and political changes, people had to find terms to call new phenomena, reality, sometimes with the help of foreign language borrowings [9].

The vocabulary of the French and English languages has also been enriched with neologisms reflecting these changes.

The range of topics new words belong to is very broad. We can see a large number of neologisms related to medical terminology. For example, such as the French dyspnée (dyspnea – a change in the frequency, rhythm and depth of breathing) or ageusie (ageusia – loss of gustatory sensitivity, often accompanied by lack of air). In English, this is CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure), i.e. mode of artificial ventilation of the lungs with constant positive pressure.

Some words are associated with the things brought into our daily life by the coronavirus pandemic, for example, the French neologism that appeared in 2020 and that was used very frequently, confinement (self-isolation – a set of restrictive measures to self-isolate the population or individuals in order to prevent the spread of an infectious disease). The list of English neologisms includes its counterparts – self-isolation, self-quarantine. And based on them a big number of derivatives were formed: self-isolate, self-isolated / self-isolating; self-quarantine (put yourself in self-isolation or self-quarantine), self-quarantined (placed in self-isolation or self-quarantine).

Another French neologism that appeared in 2020 is associated with the use of exceptional measures during emergencies, that allows you to quickly deploy adequate human and material resources, blanc (white complex of measures taken in public and private health care facilities). Among the English neologisms, we can find R0 (reproduction index, which characterizes the contagiousness of an infectious disease).

As for the name of the disease itself, it was also fixed in the dictionaries in 2020. In the Oxford English Dictionary, the disease has the following names: C-19, corona, Covid, CV, CV-19. In the French dictionary Larousse, we met one name that was fixed as a neologism, it is coronavirus. However, in numerous written sources you can find variants of the name CoV, Covid-19, corona. It can be said that these neologisms will be probably included in the next edition of the dictionary.

Usually, according to the type of reality they denote, neologisms are divided into 3 groups [10, p. 34-35]:

1. neologisms denoting a new reality – the most numerous subgroup of neologisms. For example, the French frugalisme, meaning a lifestyle that consists in living below one's means and saving, in order to retire long before reaching retirement age (about 35 years), in order to evade the consumer society. Or the English verb to zoom, formed by conversion from the name of a video conferencing program and denoting communication with the use of this program.

2. neologisms denoting the old reality, when the old name is substituted with a new one due to some processes. An example would be the French word brouteur, which means “scammer working on the Internet (in particular on social networks”).

3. neologisms denoting a non-existent reality. French nananeounananne is something designed to seduce someone, flatter him, deceive him.

In addition all neologisms can be divided into three groups according to the type of linguistic units they represent.

The first group is neolexemes, words that are the result of borrowing or word formation processes [11].

An example of a borrowed word is the French sports term of Spanish origin remontada (unexpected score increase allowing the losing team to win a football match when there was a large point gap between the two teams; as a result, an unexpected team or player wins). Among the neologisms of the English language, an example is the neologism bakfiets, which came from the Netherlands and denotes a bicycle capable of carrying heavy things, deliver goods.

An example of a neolexeme that was created with the help of the word-formation process is a French gréviculture, meaning the tendency to almost systematically resort to strikes during social conflicts, using strike as a preamble to any dialogue and negotiation. This denomination, which has a negative connotative meaning, is formed by adding the two words grève (strike) and culture (culture). In English, we can mention the word de-extinction as an example. It was fixed in 2020 and is formed by adding the prefix de- (departure, elimination of any phenomena) and the basis of extinction and meaning the process of resurrection of extinct species.

The second group – neophrasemes, new phraseological units and set phrases with emerging idiomatic semantics, or analytical combinations [12].

The second group includes the French phrase "aplatir la courbe". The phrase is literally translated as “flatten the curve” and refers to the implementation of a public health strategy used to reduce the spread of disease during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This phrase became widespread at the beginning of the pandemic. Its authorship is attributed to Canadian physician Horacio Arruda, Director of National Public Health and Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Human Services in the province of Quebec, Canada [13].

The third group is neosememes, new meanings of old words and phraseological units.

For example, the French word bulle means "bubble", "ball", "blister", etc. has acquired a new meaning, denoting the process of filtering information using algorithms that select the content intended for the user from the collected data about the person, his preferences and interests.

In the Oxford English Dictionary, neosememes are placed in a separate category called "newsenses", which is not considered in this article. In the group of new words that we are considering, you can also find an example of neosem. The adverb and the preposition even have long existed in the English language. But it continues to acquire new meanings. So, in the last couple of decades, it acquired the meaning of the verb, expressing the excessive excitement of the speaker, preventing him from ending the phrase with a verb that is required by the meaning. I can't even – I just can't.

Summary

To sum up we can say that changes in the society are quite visible in any language. Speaking about English and French we can see that the English neologisms were more numerous (800) than the French ones (121). It can be explained by the role English language plays as a universal and international language. In addition English language is the language of science so all scientific advances find their ways to express themselves in English.

As for the main notions the neologisms denote, the new words of both languages could be divided roughly into 10 groups including stable areas that has existed for decades like ecology or political sphere and up to the new areas that have just emerged, as the pandemic. The fastest growing areas were science, transformations in society and medicine.

Having a look at the areas that were mostly enriched by new words we can conclude that these areas of society are the most fast-growing and rapidly-developing nowadays. Language being a mirror of society reflects even the tiniest processes happening inside it.

Conclusions

Thus, from the above, the following conclusions can be drawn. English and French are two dynamic languages that regularly update their composition, with more than 500 new words recorded in their dictionaries every year. This huge number shows that both languages are greatly influenced by the changes happening in the society. Fixing a new word in both languages takes quite a long time. Finally, a word becomes part of the lexical composition of the language only when it is recorded in the dictionary. The appearance of neologisms in the dictionary reflects the main trends in the development of the language, demonstrates changes in semantics and stylistics, shows the current models of word formation. Therefore, any dictionary of the national language can be viewed as a mirror of the development of the language and the society.

It can also be concluded that neologisms can be classified according to several characteristics. Neologisms can be divided according to the types of realities that they denote into neologisms denoting an absolutely new things, neologisms denoting an already existing thing, as well as neologisms denoting a non-existent reality. In addition, neologisms can be classified according to the type of linguistic units they belong to. It is possible to single out neolexemes created with the use of the process of word formation, neophrasemes, new phraseological units and stable combinations of words, neosememes, new meanings of already existing words and phraseological units.

Anything happening in the society is reflected in the language. By studying neologisms we can study these changes at the same time. This work shows how two languages reacted to unprecedented events such as a new disease and a new lifestyle caused by this disease. The appearance of not only medical terminology but some everyday words and phrases show how deeply our society was influenced by the pandemic. And we expect that our language as well as our life will be influenced by it in the nearest years as well.

Acknowledgements

This paper has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program

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