

The study of occasional words: theoretical aspect

Elena Smirnova, Aida Sadykova, Diana Davletbaeva

Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kremliovskaya str., 18, 420008, Kazan, Russian Federation
E-mail: s_elen_a_84@mail.ru, tel.: +79033130050

Abstract. The notion ‘occasional word’ or ‘nonce word’ has a very disputable character in linguistics. Language creativity is a peculiar feature of spoken communication and fiction works, which are a great source for enriching vocabulary of a certain language. The article is devoted to the problem of defining the notion of occasional words in Russian and Western linguistic schools, dealing with the typological peculiarities of author’s or speaker’s creativity in language. The research is a part of a great work on studying morphological, derivational, semantic, idiomatic, syntactic transformations, aiming to find a unified approach to the study of occasional words and phrases typical to almost all known languages.

[Smirnova E., Sadykova A., Davletbaeva D. **The study of occasional words: theoretical aspect.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(11):532-535] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 92

Keywords: the occasional word, the nonce word, the neologism, the occasional novelty

Introduction

Though various author’s neologisms always attract attention of researchers, an active study of occasional words has started its development quite recently. The base for the researches, in most cases, is fiction, because individual word formation is a peculiarity of the language of literature.

The study of the scientific literature and researches on the topic shows that there are a lot of various views on the point of occasional word in modern linguistics. First of all, it should be noted that every speech unit that appears for the first time is occasional. But at the same time, it is difficult to single out occasional words from the great range of similar linguistic units (e.g. neologisms). Therefore, it is necessary to explain the notion “occasional word” (“nonce word”) and present different points of view on this problem.

Studying the question

This term was first used in the H. Paul’s work “Principles of the history of language” [1]. He explained the notion “occasional word” as a departure in individual use from the usual meanings of the words. He considered that a usual word is polysemantic and an occasional word is always monosemantic but at the same time it is always brighter and more expressive than a usual one.

In his article N. Feldman wrote not about an occasional meaning but about an occasional word. In his opinion, such words that act as a result of an unusual combination – word-building elements or the words that were created relying on the unusual word-building models – are the occasional words [2]. E. Khanpira classified occasional words on syntactical, phraseological, word-formative, lexical and semantical bases [3]. L. Terentyeva singled out the

following signs that allow distinguishing an occasional word from a usual one: absence of occasional words in dictionaries; violation of the norm of usage; absence of a system of meaning; irreproducibility in the act of communication (i.e. every occasional word belongs to its author); appreciable novelty of perception of a word; singularity of usage; figurative sense; invariable expressivity of meaning; dependence on a context, unpredictability in a context; optional character of nomination; nonce words are graphically marked with quotation marks [4]

However, some of these signs cannot be the distinctive features only of occasional words. For example, recent borrowings or neologisms may also be not recorded in dictionaries.

According to E. Pozdeeva, it is an occasional word that can fully express creative strength of a language and its possibility to built new words. Also the linguist has a doubt about appreciable novelty of perception of a word and explains that novelty disappears in the course of time [5].

Some researchers support this point of view considering that appreciable novelty of a word is logically impossible and linguistically groundless. We also adhere to this opinion and do not consider this sign as relevant. A distinctive feature of occasional words is that they can be created by any native speaker and this act can happen simultaneously, repeatedly and independently. O. Revzina noted that occasional words have an exceptional peculiarity to help a person to overcome language barrier, actualizing individual meaning [6].

Occasional words are actively studied nowadays and as a result we have a great number of researches on this topic, especially, in the field of the

Russian linguistics on the base of literary works. I. Lyakhovich studied occasional derivation on the base of the poetry of V. Khlebnikov and discovered that occasional derivation acts as implementation of a playing potential of a language that in turn bears a universal character. In the linguist's point of view, intentional or intuitive usage of the specific creative methods by the author allows him to create and reflect personal emotive picture of the world in a text [7]. L. Metlikina, presents the typology and structure of adjectival, verbal, substantive, adverbial occasional words and tells about the peculiarities of their functioning in the texts by B. Pilnyak. One of the reasons of word-building in prose is a search for sparing but at the same time capacious form of creating an image [8].

Also there are some works devoted to the analysis of translation of occasional words from a source language into target one. R. Arkhipov studied occasional innovations in the original and translated texts of the drama "Mother Courage and Her Children" by B. Brecht. His research showed that translators try to preserve a form and meaning of an occasional word in the process of interpretation resorting to the usage of the models of word-building. But there are some translations where explanation of a meaning plays the main role but not occasional [9].

E. Pozdeeva wrote about a certain "mental formation" that appears in an author's mind in the process of creating a text and occasional units. The success of translation of occasional words depends on that fact whether so-called "mental formations" of an author and a translator agree with each other or not and if a translator can choose the right method of translating [10].

E. Pulina notices that "the use of the methods of interlingual translation (creating an occasional word in a target language, translation with a usual word, transcription/transliteration, and omission) allows achieving different degrees of translation of an initial unit. The first method helps to preserve structural features of initial occasional units and the last one leads to the loss of an occasional word and it is necessary to compensate it with the help of stylistic devices. In the researcher's point of view, the choice of the method of translation depends not only on a translator but also on the method of creating an occasional word of a source text [11].

As for the foreign researchers most of them consider a phenomenon of occasional words according to their role and position in a language, their functions, a purpose of usage. Also they try to find strict distinctive features that would help to define the moment when an occasional word becomes a neologism or a usual one. L. Bauer defined a nonce word as "a new complex word

created by a speaker/writer on the spur of the moment to cover some immediate need" [12]. R. Benczes asks a question "when can we say that a word 'exists' in a language? From its first coinage or when it becomes an established word used and understood by the majority of a language community?" Then he gives a classification by L. Bauer:

1) an existing word: from the moment a word is coined;

2) an item-familiar word: a word may be familiar to individual speakers, without having become a part of the norm of the language;

3) an established word: once a word is item-familiar to a large enough sub-set of the speech community to make it worth listing in reference work [13].

Then the linguist continues with the idea "whether a coinage should be considered as an 'existing' word of a language: not all of the words of a language are listed in reference work. One is left with the classes of item-familiar and new words, but the former exhibits a somewhat similar problem as the class of established words: just because a newly coined word is not as familiar as cat or mat for instance, it does not directly follow that the word in question should not be considered as an existing word of a given language. What follows from all this is that a word should be taken as an existing word of a language from the moment it is coined, whether or not it will become established later on" [ibid].

In our point of view this approach is quite liberal and does not coincide with Russian linguists' points of view.

D.G. Velasco wrote in his article that many nonce word-formations will die in a few minutes, but others will make their way through the language to become neologisms first and fully conventional lexemes later [14].

J. Munat calls nonce words "style markers", especially for science fiction and children's literature. She also admits that occasional words are heavily context-dependent, they may or may not be deviant with respect to productive word-formation rules, but they are not coined for permanence, they are not stored in lexicon. The linguist says that only with repeated occurrences in different contexts in a relatively brief span of time may we begin to consider them as neologisms. She also defines nonce formations as words which cannot enter the lexicon, not because of their structural properties, but due to their heavy context dependence and lack of referential utility in the world at large [15].

Thus many researchers have similar points of view that occasional words are unique and can be used only within the bounds of one context.

The study of the research works on the typology of occasional words helped to group them into:

- **Phonetic occasional words.** They are absolutely new words in the form of any sound combination created by an author with the idea that this combination bears a certain semantics that depends on phonetic meanings of sounds the word consists of. The bright example is the poem "Jabberwocky":

Twas bryllyg, and ye slythy toves
Did gyre and gymblye in ye wabe:
All mimsy were ye borogoves;
And ye mome raths outgrabe [16].

In most cases, phonetic occasional words can be compared to the effect of onomatopoeia. This type of occasional words is typical of the language of poetry and can be rarely seen in prose [17].

- **Lexical occasional words.** The present type of occasional words is often created with the help of combination various usual stems and affixation according to the rules of word-buildings or even contradicting them. Every new occasional unit is formed out of morphemes that already exist in a language. This type of occasional words is a dominant one in fiction and, especially, in prose. Some authors use a considerable quantity of occasional words in their works and it defines the idiolect and style of an author [18].

- **Grammatical (morphological) occasional words.** They are the words the grammatical form and semantics of which contradict each other from the usual point of view [19].

- **Semantic occasional words.** Occasional words of this type are the result of appearance of new meanings that considerably transform their semantics of an initial usual lexeme that was used in a text. It is more difficult to outline the range of semantic occasional words than lexical or grammatical ones because nearly each stylistically marked word of a text is characterized with appearance of new meanings. The problem of study of semantic occasional words is closely connected with the study of tropes, such as metaphor, symbol and metonymy that are three main types of figurative meaning of a word.

- **The occasional (unusual) combination of words.** Such kind of combinations presents a confluence of lexemes and compatibility of these lexemes is impossible in customary usage since it contradicts the law of semantic agreement in consequence of the absence of common semes in their lexical meanings.

Some authors consider phraseological occasional words to be characterized with partial capability of reproducing when the connection with

the original unit is saved. For example, if an author substitutes lexical components the structure and a part of a lexical composition remain the same [20, 21].

There are some points of view according to which it is also necessary to study syntactical occasional words that are created breaking the rules of forming and using syntactical units. We can relate to this group and constructions with occasional word order [22], stylistic occasional words, metaphorical occasional words, occasional epithets and oxymoron.

Conclusion

All mentioned above draws to the conclusion that the problem of occasional words is rather disputable both in the Russian and western schools. Some linguists consider the characteristic features of an occasional word to be a sign of novelty and context-dependent. Other scientists are sure that occasional words and neologisms are the same linguistic units since every word tends to lose its novelty and ability to function freely in a language. Every unit of speech that appears for the first time is occasional. Occasional word is a divergence from the language norms, it is unique and, as a rule, not fixed in dictionaries and closely connected with a context the word was used in. The difference of an occasional word from a usual one is in its monosemantic structure, but at the same time in the expressivity of its meaning. Moreover, an occasional word contains more information than a usual word. One of the main features of occasional words is that every native speaker can create them, and they can do it simultaneously, repeatedly, irrespectively of each other. Creation of occasional words is an absolutely individual process that appears as a result of intentional violation of language standards. There are many classifications of the types of occasional words. Some linguists single out syntactical, stylistic, metaphorical and other types of occasional words, but we suppose that grammatical, lexical, semantic, phonetic occasional words and word combinations should be considered as the basic ones as well.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Smirnova Elena
Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University
Kremliovskaya str., 18, 420008, Kazan, Russian Federation
E-mail: s_elena_84@mail.ru, tel.: +79033130050

References

1. Paul, H., 1960. Principles of the history of language. pp: 93-139.
2. Feldman, N.I., 1957. Occasional words and lexicography. Moscow, pp: 63-71.

3. Khanpira, E.I., 1972. Occasional elements in modern speech. Moscow, pp: 245-317.
4. Terenteva, L.P., 1983. Semantics and pragmatics of lexical occasional words. Thesis. Moscow, pp: 92.
5. Pozdeeva, E.V., 2002. Occasional word: perception and translation based on the material taken from novels by the Russian and English writers. Thesis. Perm, pp: 203.
6. Revzina, O.G., 1996. Poetics of an occasional word. Language as creativity. Saint Petersburg, pp: 34-41.
7. Lyakhovich, I.V., 2003. Occasional derivation as a tool and means of creating linguistic view of the world (on the material of the language of poetic texts by V. Khlebnikov). Thesis. Krasnodar, pp: 186.
8. Metlikina, L.S., 2010. Occasional word-creativity in prose of B.A. Pilnyaka. Thesis. Moscow, pp: 247.
9. Arkhipov, R.N., 2001. Occasional novelty in the original text and the translations of the drama by B. Brecht 'Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder'. Thesis. Krasnodar, pp: 226.
10. Pozdeeva, E.V., 2002. Occasional word: perception and translation based on the material taken from novels by the Russian and English writers. Thesis. Perm, pp: 203.
11. Pulina, E.A., 2008. Occasional word in fiction text: ways of creation and interlanguage translation: on the material of 'Ulysses' by J. Joyce and its translation into Russian and German. Thesis. Perm, pp: 223.
12. Bauer, L., 2001. Morphological productivity. Cambridge studies in linguistics, vol. 95. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, pp: 245.
13. Benczes, R., 2006. Creative compounding in English: The semantics of metaphorical and metonymical Noun-Noun Combinations. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp: 223.
14. Velasco, D.G., 2009. Innovative coinage. Deconstructing Constructions. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp: 3-24.
15. Munat, J., 2007. Lexical creativity as a marker of style in science fiction and children's literature. Lexical creativity, texts and contexts. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp: 163-185.
16. Carrol, L., 2003. Through the looking-glass and what Alice found there. USA: Lerner publications company, pp: 130.
17. Hephaestus Books, 2011. Articles on nonce words, including: Jabberwocky, Bokononism, the Meaning of Liff, Sniglet, Vorpall Sword, Granfalloon, Supercalifragilisticexpialidocio. Hephaestus Books, pp: 40.
18. Lehrer, A., 2007. Blendacious. Lexical creativity, texts and contexts. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp: 116-133.
19. Muehleisen, S., 2010. Heterogeneity in word-formation patterns: A corpus-based analysis of suffixation with-ee and its productivity in English. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp: 245.
20. Gizatova, G.K., 2010. Structural-typological approach to comparative study in phraseology: on the material of Tatar, Russian and English. Thesis. Kazan, pp: 35.
21. Davletbaeva, D., A. Sadykova and E. Smirnova, 2013. The aspects of modern phraseology modeling. World Applied Sciences Journal (Education, Law, Economics, Language and Communication), 27. IDOSI, pp: 58-62.
22. Babenko, N.G., 1997. Occasional word in fiction text. Structural-semantic analysis: course book. Kaliningr. Univ., pp: 84.

7/4/2014