
NEW TERMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS REFLECTED IN SLOVAK MEDIA

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Abstract

The company Oxford Dictionaries annually releases a list of the Words of the Year - thus a list of most commonly used words in the respective year. Usually, these are widely used neologisms that can be found in the field of media, while characterizing in a certain way the times we live in and the topical issues that media provide coverage on. Since media popularize new terms, these gradually occur in every-day communication situations. As modern English currently plays the role of the so-called *Lingua Franca* - thus language used for global communication, many (if not all) of these words gradually penetrate also into the Slovak language. In the paper, the author describes Words of the Year 2016 as reflected in Slovak media, while adding her own comments to their meanings and problems when translating them into the Slovak language.

Keywords: words, neologisms, post-truth, translation, meaning

1. Introduction

Current languages are nowadays influenced mainly by onset of communication technologies (and thus by the English language), but also by topics that surround us and that media cover. In this context, an important role is played especially by the phenomenon of the so-called political correctness, whose aim is - to put it simply - to avoid (mainly in the media) terms that could be considered as offensive to a certain group of people.

2. English language as *Lingua Franca*

Today English may be considered as the so-called *Lingua Franca* (as synonyms are also used terms like trade language, contact language, international language or global language - that is the language used for communication at international level) [R. Nordquist, *Lingua franca. Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical terms*, <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-lingua-franca-1691237>, accessed on 25 March 2017]. It means that it is used by people whose mother tongues are usually different. In the course of time many

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(if not all) of new English terms find their place also in other languages, including the Slovak language. The field of media is no exception at all. If we like it or not, English neologisms penetrate also into the Slovak language and Slovak media – sometimes slower, sometimes faster, sometimes nearly immediately. One of typical features of media is the fact that they bring along and popularize different terms (very often neologisms) that gradually become commonly understood and used in everyday communication. The language of media characterizes the time, when exploring language of the press from the past we learn a lot about the given time from the language and the topics covered. The neologisms that enjoyed high occurrence in 2016 in English and American media will be discussed in this paper, while taking into account their reflection in Slovak media.

3. Words of the Year 2016 according to Oxford Dictionaries

It has been a long tradition that the company Oxford Dictionaries annually releases the list of the words that dominate the language in the given year. It happens rather often that these are not completely new words that were created in the respective year. These words have usually been a part of vocabulary for several years or maybe decades, however were not widely used and belonged rather to the language periphery. In the given year there usually happens something important that fundamentally changes their usage in the media and consequently in everyday communication. It is clear that the time we live in has a significant impact on the origin of new terms and that they very often closely characterize our time.

3.1. *The term post-truth*

The winner in the list of the Words of the Year 2016 according to Oxford Dictionaries is the term **post-truth** [*Words of the Year 2016*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>, accessed on 12 March 2017]. This expression is also an example of a word that has existed in the English language for several years. However, originally it meant ‘period after the truth was known’, which fully corresponded to the meaning of a rather productive prefix post- (meaning after). In English there are many terms that include it, while meaning of the words is clear, e.g. post-modern, post-gradual, post-operative, post-mortem, post-millennial, post-war, etc. Nevertheless, recently the prefix post- has acquired a new nuance in its meaning in English. Using it, there started to be created new words whose meaning can be generally characterized in a way that they do not point out to the period when something is over any more (for example, post-war means time following after the end of the war), but rather time when something (meaning of the word standing after the prefix post-) loses its importance, its meaning. Such neologisms in contemporary English include words, such as for example an adjective **post-national** – meaning period when identity of the nation is not

important any more, it does not play an important role any more. At present, it is mainly Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, who states that Canada is “the first post-national state in the world” [D. Todd, *The dangers of a ‘postnational’ Canada*, <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/douglas+todd+dangers+postnational+canada/11779069/story.html>, accessed on 20 March 2017]. In other words, he means a state, where nation does not play any role any more, which is in line with Canada that is often presented as an example of a country open to immigration. However, in case of European states, nation not being the core of any state is a hardly imaginable idea. Similarly, another neologism with a similar meaning of the prefix post- is again a rather new expression **post-racial** – meaning time or society without any racial discrimination or prejudices [*English Oxford Dictionaries*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/post-racial>, accessed on 25 March 2017]. In this context we would like to state that this term is often used mainly in American media, where many politicians long for some post-racial America. Both terms can be translated into Slovak literally; however their meaning would have to be explained because they have not been used much in Slovak language and Slovak media yet.

Let us get back to the word of the year 2016 – **post-truth**. This expression with the new meaning of the prefix post- appeared for the first time in 1992 in an essay about the Gulf War. Its author Steve Tesich lamented in the magazine *The Nation* that “we live in some post-truth world” [<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>]. Thus, that we live in a world where the truth has already lost its meaning, where it is not important any more. The usage of the term post-truth grew rapidly – even in 2000% in 2016 mainly due to two globally important political events – the referendum on Brexit (leaving the EU) in the UK and the presidential election in the USA [*Anglickým slovom roka 2016 sa stalo prídavné meno post-truth*, <http://www.teraz.sk/magazin/anglickym-slovom-roka-2016-sa-stalo-pr/228669-clanok.html>, accessed on 19 March 2017]. This term was most often used as an adjective in pre-position in expressions such as post-truth politics, or post-truth world.

Slovak media have already responded to this English neologism. For instance, the magazine Teraz translated it as ‘postpravdivý’ [<http://www.teraz.sk/magazin/anglickym-slovom-roka-2016-sa-stalo-pr/228669-clanok.html>], which is something we cannot simply agree with. The word ‘pravdivý’ does not exist in any dictionary of the Slovak language and there is no need to create such a new word. In Slovak language the related adjective to the noun ‘pravda’ (truth) is ‘pravdivý’ (truth as an adjective), meaning “expressing the truth, including the truth” [*Krátky slovník slovenského jazyka*, <http://slovniky.juls.savba.sk/?w=pravdiv%C3%BD&s=exact&c=Qa66&d=kssj4&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8>, accessed on 26 March 2017]. In a quality daily newspaper Pravda the term post-truth was translated as ‘post-pravdivý’ and they also used a noun ‘post-pravdivost’ [*Slovom roka sa stal výraz post-pravdivý*, <https://zurnal.pravda.sk/spolocnost/clanok/411239-slovom-roka-sa-stal-vyraz-post-pravdivy>, accessed on 29 March 2017]. However, another quality daily

Hospodárske noviny translated the term post-truth as ‘postpravdivý, postfaktuálny’ [K. Wolf, *Slovo roka 2016: Postfaktuálny*, <http://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/875089-slovo-roka-2016-postfaktualny>, accessed on 15 March 2017]. The author of the article Karol Wolf was extremely critical to this new expression, saying that it is another euphemism in the line of political correctness and could be replaced by much more understandable words such as “misinforming, fooling and in worst case simply a pure lie. Choose whichever you like.” Here, we wish to state that also the word ‘faktuálny’ (factual) exists in the Slovak language and the Dictionary of foreign words defines it as “such, in which only on the basis of fact can be found out if it is true” [K. Steinmetz, *This is What ‘Adulging’ means*, <http://time.com/4361866/adulging-definition-meaning>, accessed on 8 June 2017]. In my opinion, this foreign word is not clear to the general public and therefore I would recommend using the word ‘postpravdivý’ in the Slovak media, as it seems to be more understandable to the general public.

3.2. Other words of the year 2016

Although the term post-truth was selected to be the word of the year 2016, we believe that other words of the year 2016 deserve our attention. We offer them in alphabetical order with our own comments, including their reflection in Slovak media.

Adulging (from to adult – behave as an adult) expresses “behaviour typical for a responsible adult person, especially carrying out mundane, but necessary tasks” [<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>]. We have noticed its occurrence mainly on the Internet and social networks so far. According to the lexicographer Jane Solomon, creation of this term may be related to the fact that contemporary youth ‘gets adult’ later than their parents and grandparents. They get married later and have children later, later search for their own living, with mortgage and so on [<http://time.com/4361866/adulging-definition-meaning>]. In this context we may often come across the terms Generation Z with its typical features rather distinguishing from previous generations [1]. We have not noticed any attempts to translate it into Slovak. In Slovak it means ‘dospeláctvo’, however there is no real need to translate it. The meaning of the word adult is generally known, as it is usually acquired at early stages of learning English.

Alt-right was formed by shortening the term ‘alternative right’ and is used both as a noun and adjective. It denotes “ideological groups with ultraconservative or reactionary opinions, refusing the mainstream politics and using social networks to purposeful dissemination of controversial content” [<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>]. Increased usage was noticed in 2016, although it was noted first already in 2008 and it is used mostly in American media.

Brexiter is a person supporting the so-called Brexit – UK’s withdrawal from the EU. By the way, the term Brexit was the Word of the Year 2015. In this context interesting tendencies in English language may be observed. For

instance, the Macmillan Dictionary gives the term *Brexiter* and the Collins Dictionary the term *Brexit* [*English Language and Usage*, <https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/334270/is-it-brexit-or-brexiter>, accessed on 28 March 2017]. We may state that in current English and American media both terms occur without any change in meaning or geographic preference. Nevertheless, as these are neologisms and they might get accustomed in the course of time with a more specific meaning. It is true that the suffix *-er* often has a pejorative nuance in modern English. This term is hardly translatable into Slovak with one word and as in case of *Brexit*, in our opinion, there is actually no need to find Slovak equivalents for them. However, according to the rules of the grammar in Slovak language, they should not be written with a capital letter at the beginning, so in Slovak media there usually appear ‘*brexit*’ and similarly ‘*brexiter*’.

Chatbot was formed from chat robot, whereas robot is often shortened to bot in present-day English. This term may be included into the area of information technologies. It is a computer programme simulating human conversation. The IT specialists can see its implementation mainly in different applications, call centres, online games and so on [IT slovník, <https://it-slovník.cz/pojem/chatbot>, accessed on 19 March 2017]. Again, we do not think that it is necessary to find a Slovak equivalent for it. Similarly to other terms in the field of IT, it will surely keep its original English form and become part of specialist terminology.

Coulrophobia means “extreme or irrational fear from clowns” [<https://zurnal.pravda.sk/spolocnost/clanok/411239-slovom-roka-sa-stal-vyraz-post-pravdivy>]. This is a term from the field of psychology. Its high occurrence was caused by the fact that in 2016 there were many incidents in different parts of the world when people dressed as clowns threatened or even attacked by-passers. In Slovak media this term was translated as ‘*coulrofóbia/koulrofóbia*’ [I. Mitrenga, *Bojíte sa klaunov? V tomto desivom moteli by ste nezaspali*, <https://fici.sme.sk/c/20431476/bojite-sa-klaunov-v-tomto-desivom-moteli-by-ste-nezaspali.html>, accessed on 21 March 2017]. Thus the English phobia was transformed into Slovak *fóbia*, which clearly indicates that it is certain type of fear. It is a professional term, so experts understand it and when used in newspapers it is explained.

Glass cliff denotes situations when a representative of a certain minority, or disabled group of people (e.g. also woman in prevailing male team) gets into a top position in time of a crisis when there is high possibility of failure [<https://zurnal.pravda.sk/spolocnost/clanok/411239-slovom-roka-sa-stal-vyraz-post-pravdivy>]. In our opinion this term was influenced by the term glass ceiling, which means “unofficial burden in career ladder, mainly in relation to women and other minority groups” [The Phrase Finder, <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/glass-ceiling.html>, accessed on 22 March 2017]. Naturally, in present-day English it may also denote an actual ceiling made out of glass. In this figurative sense it appeared for the first time in 1980s in relation to women who in their endeavour to progress in their career ladder hit some kind of a glass

ceiling, which did not allow them to go further. It was hardly visible, but still there. In present-day English it can be used while meaning any burden for any group or individual in any area or situation [<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/glass-ceiling.html>].

Hygge comes from Danish language and can be freely translated as ‘cosiness’ being related to the way of living in Denmark. This unusual word even in English has already penetrated into Slovak language. When introducing a book by Louise Thomsen Brits, Milan Buno describes new trend of hygge as “enjoying every single day and every single minute, enjoying the moments that are worth it, fully and without remorse” [M. Buno, *Fenomén hygge. Vychutnávajte si život*, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/409418/fenomen-hygge-vychutnavajte-si-zivot/>, accessed on 21 March 2017]. The English has taken this word in its original form and we suppose that it will stay in its original form also in Slovak (and probably in other languages).

Latinx denotes a person coming from Latin America regardless of their gender [<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>]. In English there is a word Latino (a man) and Latina (a woman). Creating of the new term Latinx is fully in compliance with current trends in modern English to avoid terms that explicitly denote gender (e.g. instead of postman or postwoman, rather the term postperson). Slovak language has great difficulties when translating these terms, as in Slovak language gender is perceived as a grammatical category and is not necessarily related to sex. Masculine versions of words are considered as gender neutral. It is thus impossible to translate the term Latinx into Slovak as somewhat gender neutral. Teachers of English have to explain their students the differences between Latinx, Latino and Latina, so that their students would use these terms properly in English. In Slovak we have to make do with a masculine form of the word when talking in general.

Woke is an adjective in non-formal American English meaning “awake, alert towards injustice in society, especially towards racism” [<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>]. The term woke has been a part of English for a long time. Originally it is past tense from the irregular verb wake (meaning be alert, awake). Later it started to be used as an adjective and on social networks it can often be seen in the form StayWoke.

4. Conclusions

Language is an organism that is still in movement, dynamic. What changes faster is the vocabulary, many words change, gain new meanings or slowly get to the periphery. In our paper we dealt with the Words of the Year 2016 by Oxford Dictionaries. These neologisms are textbook examples of the time we live in, topics important for current society. They copy topical tendencies in modern English (phenomenon of political correctness, shortening of words, acquiring new meanings, news nuances, creating new words by blending etc.). Present-day journalists face a lot of problems when working with

the text, including translating new terms and incorporating them into their outputs [2]. Since modern English can be undoubtedly considered as Lingua Franca – thus language serving for global communication, these English neologisms penetrate into many other languages, including Slovak language – and we can add really fast after becoming important in English and in English-language media. In our paper we tried to characterize them more in detail, to explain their meanings, to show their reflection in Slovak media and to comment their translation into Slovak.

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