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NEOLOGISMS AS A LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF WAR

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This study examines the emergence and functioning of neologisms in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, with particular attention to the role of armed conflict as a catalyst for linguistic change. Periods of military confrontation significantly influence language development, necessitating new lexical units to name previously unknown political, military, and social phenomena. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and especially Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, has resulted in the formation of a distinct stratum of war-related vocabulary that reflects ongoing sociopolitical transformations and communicative demands.

The research is based on the analysis of contemporary media texts, online discourse, and social network communication. Within this corpus, newly formed lexical units are identified and classified according to their structural formation patterns and semantic characteristics. The study focuses on dominant word-formation mechanisms, including derivation, compounding, semantic extension, and borrowing, as well as on the main thematic groups represented by the identified neologisms. In addition, the paper examines the role of emotional-evaluative and pragmatic meanings in shaping the perception and dissemination of these neologisms within public discourse. Particular attention is paid to their practical and evaluative functions in discourse.

The results indicate that wartime linguistic innovation performs not only an informational function but also reflects processes of social consolidation, identity construction, and ideological positioning. The findings confirm that neologisms serve as indicators of collective experience and societal response to crises.

Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of the interaction between sociopolitical upheaval and linguistic evolution, demonstrating how language responds to and conceptualises armed conflict in contemporary discourse.

Key words: neologisms, Russian-Ukrainian war, linguistic innovation, lexical change, cultural identity, wartime discourse.

Опир Мар'яна, Панчишин Світлана, Мироненко Наталія. Неологізми як лінгвістичне відображення війни

У статті досліджується виникнення та функціонування неологізмів у контексті війни Росії проти України, де збройний конфлікт постає каталізатором динамічних мовних трансформацій. Періоди воєнного протистояння суттєво впливають на розвиток мови, оскільки зумовлюють потребу в нових лексичних одиницях для позначення раніше невідомих політичних, військових і соціальних явищ. Російсько-український конфлікт, а передусім російська агресія проти України, спричинив формування окремого шару воєнно маркованої лексики, що відображає актуальні соціально-політичні трансформації та комунікативні потреби суспільства.

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Дослідження ґрунтується на аналізі сучасних медіатекстів, онлайн-дискурсу та комунікації в соціальних мережах. У межах зібраного корпусу ідентифіковано та класифіковано нові лексичні одиниці відповідно до їх структурних моделей творення та семантичних характеристик. Основну увагу зосереджено на домінантних словотвірних механізмах, зокрема деривації, словоскладанні, семантичному розширенні та запозиченні, а також на тематичних групах, до яких належать виявлені неологізми. Окремо проаналізовано їхні прагматичні та оцінні функції в дискурсі.

Результати дослідження свідчать, що мовні інновації воєнного часу виконують не лише інформативну функцію, а й відображають процеси соціальної консолідації, конструювання ідентичності та ідеологічного позиціонування. Отримані висновки підтверджують, що неологізми є індикаторами колективного досвіду та суспільної реакції на кризові явища.

Загалом, дослідження поглиблює розуміння взаємозв'язку між соціополітичними подіями та мовною еволюцією, демонструючи, як мова реагує на збройний конфлікт і концептуалізує його в сучасному дискурсі.

Ключові слова: *неологізми, російсько-українська війна, мовна інновація, лексичні зміни, культурна ідентичність, воєнний дискурс.*

Introduction. Each era, along with advancements in socio-technical aspects, leaves its mark by creating new words that often replace older ones. The emergence of neologisms is a crucial part of any language's development. These new words arise in response to changes in social, political, or cultural contexts. War, a tragic yet significant phenomenon, often gives rise to new terms that reflect the emotions, events, and realities of the time. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia has acted as a catalyst for the creation of numerous neologisms in Ukrainian and other languages. These words not only describe new realities but also help shape narratives that influence public consciousness.

Neologisms can be found in nearly all areas of modern society. While they are commonly referred to as “neologisms”, they may also be called “novelties”, “new lexical units”, “innovative vocabulary”, “temporal lexical units”, “occasionalisms”, and more. The definition of “neologism” is flexible; any word can be considered a neologism as long as it is perceived as new by the collective linguistic consciousness. Changes in human experience lead to the emergence of new terms and the expansion of existing concepts, necessitating their representation on the “linguistic” map of the world.

Although research on neologisms exists, this topic remains pertinent, as languages worldwide are continually enriched with new terms across various domains. Advancements in science and technology, significant historical events, and political phenomena drive this linguistic evolution.

The relevance of this topic is determined by the need to identify and describe new, updated, and actualised words and meanings [1, p. 55–68].

The concept of “neologism” has been the object of the studies of numerous scholars, such as: D. Crystal, D. Mazuryk, P. Newmark, O. Selivanova, Yu. Zatsnyi and others. However, the fact that many new words constantly appear in various languages as “a direct reflection of the preoccupations of a society at any particular time in history” proves the necessity of carrying out further research in this area.

The **aim of this article** is to investigate the characteristics of neologisms in English that have emerged during the war in Ukraine and to analyze their structural and semantic features. The analysis is based on materials from contemporary Ukrainian media, internet resources, and social networks.

The emergence of neologisms is closely tied to the characteristics of specific historical periods. War, a significant aspect of human history, notably affects language by altering its vocabulary and creating new words. As the national language in many countries, English reflects the lives of its speakers and captures the events, emotions, and trends in society. The war initiated by Russia against Ukraine has far-reaching consequences for the world across political, economic, and social spheres, which is also reflected in the lexicon of the English language. This conflict has led to the continual emergence of neologisms warranting linguistic examination. Changes in socio-political dynamics, economic conditions, and technological advancements are mirrored in language, primarily at the level of vocabulary. Hrytsenko [2, p. 9–13] states that “language serves not only as a generator of new expressions but also as a vital means of expressing patriotism. It is key to understanding culture, history, and traditions, ultimately acting as a cre-

ator of culture and a representative of the Ukrainian people on the global stage, embodying the essence of the nation and its cultural identity". Language is a dynamic phenomenon that continually evolves, influenced by advancements in science and technology, historical events, and the expansion of human activities. This process gives rise to neologisms as new words that reflect contemporary culture and trends during specific periods of societal development. Neologisms serve to name new objects, scientific discoveries, realities, facts, and events, thereby enhancing communication. They help eliminate potential language barriers in cross-cultural dialogue and enrich speakers from different languages and cultures [3, p. 33–36]. New formations are constantly emerging, and mass media strive to capture the evolving landscape of folk word creation, particularly within social networks. However, the lifespan of neologisms is often brief; some may vanish as quickly as they emerge. Therefore, contemporary lexicological and lexicographic research is crucial for documenting the linguistic situation during the war and for further examining the dynamic processes of the modern language.

In linguistic literature, according to Styshov [4, p. 32], neologisms are defined as “words, phrases, idioms, or individual meanings that emerge at a particular stage of language development to represent new realities. They often arise from social and geographical factors influencing the use of literary language. This category includes occasionalisms, which are unique innovations introduced by an individual author and used only once in a specific context, such as a particular publication or text. Although these terms are novel, they remain recognized by speakers and are considered part of the passive vocabulary”. It is worth emphasizing that in defining the essence of this linguistic concept, two components are combined: objective (time of appearance, attachment to specific time boundaries) and subjective (psychological feeling of novelty) [5, p. 38–40].

Observations of the form and semantics allowed scholars to classify neolexemes into the following varieties: 1) proper neologisms – units characterized by absolute novelty of form and content, mostly foreign borrowings; 2) new formations – lexemes created according to word-formation models with existing words in Ukrainian, distinguished by novelty of form

and meaning; 3) transformations – units where a new form is combined with semantics previously conveyed by other lexical means; 4) semantic neologisms – lexemes where new semantics are conveyed by a word form already known and established in the language, i.e., another lexico-semantic variant appears in its semantic structure; 5) functional neologisms – revived words and expressions from the past, some of which have undergone semantic and stylistic modifications [6].

Thus, summarizing, two main types of neologisms can be distinguished: nominatives, which explicate phenomena and concepts appearing for the first time; and transnominatives, used to denote already known realities under different names.

It is important to note that many of the terms originated in Ukrainian and were assimilated into English according to its grammatical and lexical conventions. Among the most popular neologisms related to the Russian-Ukrainian war, this topic has been partially discussed in the context of their emergence and dissemination in the media [2, p. 9–13], while the specifics of translating neologisms have not yet been the subject of scientific analysis.

Modern war neologisms can be divided into such semantic groups: new formations for describing and characterizing the enemy; neologisms derived from the surnames of political figures; neologisms with a toponymic component; new words for designating military equipment and weapons; other newly created lexical units related to combat operations. This last group consists of various terms that do not fit neatly into the other categories and are too few in number to warrant their own distinct group. Due to the diversity of themes within this last category, a separate group has been created to encompass these unique neologisms.

The conflict generates a new lexicon. Some words and phrases that have entered wider use in Ukrainian society belong to the beginning of the war in 2014, others to military usage during Soviet times, military slang that has become popular again, and others are entirely new formations.

During the creation of neologisms for describing and characterizing the enemy, the Ukrainian people embodied in them all their negative emotions, hatred, anger, and contempt. Specifically, for describing Russian military personnel

and supporters of the Russian president, such new formations are used: *rashysty* (a word composed of *rasha* and *fashyst*), *rusnia*, *chmoni*, *vanky* or *mobiky* - to denote mobilized Russians; *orky* (from the fictional creatures depicted by J.R.R. Tolkien as barbaric beings prone to war and violence), *putlerivtsi*; *TikTok-army*; *z-occupants*; *putleriugend*; *svynosobaky*; *ruso-natsysto*; *niash-miash*; *konservy* (canned goods), and others. A derivative of these terms is the concept of *rashyzm*, interpreted in the Dictionary of Ukrainian Neologisms as “a criminal chauvinistic ideology of *ruskii mir*” [7].

In the Ukrainian context during the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022, the term *orky* was borrowed from J.R.R. Tolkien’s famous work, “The Hobbit”, where orcs are depicted as monstrous, barbaric creatures prone to war, violence, and meanness. These fictional beings are characterised as short, stocky, and possessing animal-like features, embodying evil and lacking human emotions other than hatred and rage. In Tolkien’s portrayal, orcs derived pleasure from torturing prisoners and desecrating the corpses of their enemies. The orcs also had their own incoherent language, filled with curses and repetition. In the Old English epic “Beowulf”, orcs are mentioned as descendants of Cain and as enemies of the human race. This lexeme has gained profound semantic and emotional weight for Ukrainians, encapsulating the rage, disdain, and contempt they feel toward the invaders. Moreover, the term *Orkistan* has been used to refer to the aggressor country, Russia, along with the label *Mordor*, which is the fictional homeland of the orcs, and the neologism *terrasha*.

The second group of neologisms encompasses new formations motivated by the surnames of prominent political figures or well-known public figures. In particular:

Naarakhamyty – meaning “to fail to reach any agreement during negotiations”, derived from the surname of Ukraine’s negotiator with Russia, David Arakhamia.

Makronyty, translating to “to do a Macron”, is a term gaining traction on Telegram. It describes appearing concerned about a situation without making any meaningful impact on improvement. Coined during the early stages of the war, it references Emmanuel Macron, the French President, who expressed concern but did not take a clear stance on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This behaviour sparked the use of the term

among Ukrainians, symbolizing the indecisiveness of European political leaders in critical matters affecting the continent [8].

Shoiguvaty means “to pretend everything is fine and under control when it is not”. This term arose from Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu’s behaviour at the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war. It has also come to signify “when a person disappears without a trace while others act as if nothing happened”. Shoigu publicly claimed there were no conscripts in Ukraine, dismissing discussions about their deaths or disappearances [7].

Kadyryty means “to pretend to be someone you are not”. Derived from the name of Chechen political figure Ramzan Kadyrov, it reflects the tactics of the “elite Kadyrovites” in places like Hostomel, Bucha, and Irpin in Ukraine.

Kimyty means “to maintain a high level of optimism regardless of the situation”. This term comes from Vitalii Kim, head of the Mykolaiv Regional Military-Civil Administration, who inspires Ukrainians to believe in their army’s victory and resilience.

Sholtsyty, derived from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s name, means “to constantly promise but fail to fulfil those promises”. This term has spawned variants such as *sholtsuvaty* and *sholtsyk*. Additionally, it appears in the phrase *valiaty Sholtsa*, meaning “to promise but deliver nothing”, created by modifying the phrase *valiaty durnia* (to do nothing).

Prytulyty – meaning “to donate money to the Ukrainian army”, synonymous with “donate”. This term is derived from the name of journalist, public figure, and volunteer Serhii Prytula.

Arestovlennia means “soothing message” and is inspired by Oleksii Arestovych, an advisor to the head of the Office of the President of Ukraine on strategic communications. He became popular for his optimistic and often sarcastic videos that reassured anxious Ukrainian audiences [8].

Baidentherapy – meaning “argumentative persuasion and coaxing to one’s side”. This compound neologism is inspired by U.S. President Joe Biden. Immediately after taking office, President Biden signed 17 executive orders that revoked over 100 decisions made by his predecessor, Donald Trump.

The term *Putinversteh*, meaning “one who understands Putin”, refers to those who explain or justify the Russian president’s policies. Coined in Germany, it combines *Putin* and *Versteh*,

the latter adding an ironic twist. The term has gained traction in other languages and is now included in the English Wikipedia. It is similar to the German *Frauenverstehher*, which describes a man who claims to have a strong understanding of women.

These neologisms reflect not only linguistic innovation but also the socio-political context in which they were created, encapsulating public sentiment and attitudes towards key figures involved in the ongoing conflict.

Certainly, when discussing the word formation among Ukrainians regarding the surnames of specific individuals, one cannot overlook the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, whose support was crucial and highly effective for Ukraine. In informal Ukrainian speech, he is often referred to as *Borys Johnsoniuk*, adapting his surname into a Ukrainian form to indicate that this person is not foreign to Ukraine but rather familiar and supportive.

This group of neologisms is complemented by mocking nicknames and periphrastic expressions used to refer to the leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin. The basis for these names stems from various dominant traits or characteristics attributed to the individual in question, including

- **height:** terms like *zlisnyi kurdupel* (malicious shorty), *liliputin* (liliputian), *nedomirok* (dwarf), *nedopalok* (stub);

- **distrust of surroundings:** nicknames such as *bunkernyi khrobak* (bunker worm), *kadebistskyi maniak* (KGB maniac);

- **mental state:** expressions like *bozhevilnyi z yadernoiu knopkoiu* (madman with a nuclear button);

- **cruel management style and disrespect for others' rights:** terms such as *kremlivskiy teroryst* (Kremlin terrorist), *rashytskyi fiurer* (Rashist Führer), *hebist-rashyst* (KGB Rashist), *putinochet*, *putler*, *laptentfiurer*, *khaputin*, *kaputin*, *piterskyi hopnyk* (Petersburg thug);

- **physical condition:** nicknames like *staryi kabaiev* (old Kabaev), *blida mil* (pale moth);

- **cognitive abilities:** terms such as *holomozyi vozhd* (bald leader).

Among the neologisms arising from the war, those with toponymic components have emerged in the Ukrainian language to express the resilience, steadfastness, and courage of the Ukrainian people. These lexemes denote actions such as “to fight” or “to destroy the enemy”, including *vidirpinyty* – derived from the name of the

city Irpin, meaning “to act decisively against the enemy”; *perehostomelyty* (originating from the name of the town Hostomel); *ukrainyty* – meaning “to give a strong response to unjust actions”; *chornobaity* (derived from the name of the village Chornobaivka) – meaning “to repeat the same mistake” [7].

It is noteworthy that the neologism *ukrainyty* or *zaukrainyty* first appeared in English as “Ukrained” (to be Ukrained) and was later translated into Ukrainian. This lexical unit was first encountered in the online Urban Dictionary, defined as “when you are Russia and encroach upon a country, and in response, you receive humiliation on a global scale” [9].

The war inevitably leads to casualties among both military personnel and civilians. The combat losses of the aggressor and the process itself have been designated in Ukrainian with terms such as: *zadvukhsotyty* – meaning “to inflict losses on the enemy”; *zatriokhsotyty* – meaning “to inflict casualties”; *e-mohyla* – referring to a Ukrainian state program aimed at eliminating Russian invaders. These neologisms not only reflect linguistic innovation but also embody Ukrainians’ emotional and cultural responses to their ongoing struggle against aggression. They serve as tools for expressing resilience and solidarity in times of conflict.

The next group of neologisms for military equipment and weaponry is quite extensive. This includes new formations such as: *ptashka* (bird) – referring to a drone; *ochi* (eyes) – another term for a drone; *banderomobil* (Bander car) – a combat vehicle of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [10], *arta* – meaning artillery; *kalashmat* – referring to the Kalashnikov assault rifle; *pokémon* – denoting a modernised Kalashnikov machine gun; *shaitan-truba* – meaning a handheld anti-tank grenade launcher; *sushka* – used to refer to various types of fighter aircraft, among others.

At the outset of the full-scale invasion, every Ukrainian was aware of the tactical advantages offered by Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, named after Haluk Bayraktar, the CEO of Baykar Defence. Another weapon that has gained prominence is the Javelin anti-tank missile system, which Ukrainian fighters have used since 2018. Developed in the United States in the 1980s, the Javelin was specifically designed to destroy Soviet tanks, taking into account their characteristics, tactics, and the terrain where the

system would be deployed. The name “Javelin” derives from the English word meaning “dart”. The effectiveness of Javelins in combat has been so pronounced that Ukrainians began naming newborns after them. For instance, on April 4, the Ministry of Justice reported that a boy was named Yan Javelin in the Vinnytsia region, while a girl was named Javelina in Kyiv.

Among other newly coined lexical units related to combat operations, the Dictionary of Neologisms in the Ukrainian Language includes terms such as: *debakhnulo* – a person whose interest or concern can cause significant harm; *zadvokhsotyty* – to destroy an opponent; *navolonteryty* – to obtain something necessary for the military; *ity za rosiiskym korablem* – to suffer defeat; *bavovna* – an explosion on enemy territory; *nuli* – the line of contact with the enemy; *peredok* – the first line of defence for the troops [7].

Other neologisms include *zabairaktaryty*, *zaenloity*, *zastinheryty*, and *zadjavelinyty*, which mean “to burn enemy equipment using specific types of weapons”. In reference to missile attacks, the neologism *bliedina* has become commonly used in the Ukrainian segment of Twitter; it means “to announce an air alert”. It should be noted that this last innovation is a calque from English “bledina”, interpreted as “a mortally ugly bitch”, according to the international slang dictionary Urban Dictionary.

These neologisms not only reflect linguistic creativity but also serve as cultural markers that encapsulate public sentiment regarding military actions and experiences during the ongoing conflict. It is important to note that lexemes denoting “military equipment” have also undergone changes, as the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022 facilitated the introduction of modern foreign equipment, weaponry, and means of self-defence into Ukraine. In particular, our defenders wear *multicam* – military clothing (multicam MTR pants), *ubaks* – combat shirts, *nomex* – fire-resistant, waterproof jackets, *parka* – a specific style of jacket, *norgi* – military sweaters, *pixel* – military field uniforms, *hirka alpha* – military uniforms, *tsyfra / termukha* – modern military clothing, *kaver* – helmet covers, *pedali* – a generalized term for military footwear, *OMON boots* – breathable textile boots with 3D lining and a blind flap, *POLYGON boots* – boots with high tops, *TITAN boots* – sturdy boots with thick soles.

Additionally, the neologism *moped* has emerged to refer to Iranian kamikaze drones. This derogatory term was adopted due to the distinctive sound these drones make while flying. At the same time, Ukrainian drones are referred to as *ptashky*, symbolising the fight against evil and the protection of the Ukrainian people. The collective image of pilots has been named “the Ghost of Kyiv”, reflecting skilful and effective work in defending the skies over the capital of Ukraine.

Among other neologisms related to combat operations are *bayraktaryty*, *javelinyty*, and *haimarsyty*, which denote the act of destroying an opponent depending on the type of weapon used. The term *banderivske smuzi* refers to the Ukrainian equivalent of a “Molotov cocktail”.

Thus, the analysis of wartime neologisms demonstrates that the lexico-semantic system of the Ukrainian language exhibits a high degree of dynamism and sensitivity to extralinguistic factors, particularly the socio-political transformations brought about by the war. Newly formed lexical units and processes of semantic reconfiguration not only document the realities of the wartime experience but also perform significant ideological functions, contributing to the construction of collective identity, the articulation of value orientations, and the linguistic conceptualisation of contemporary events. In this context, neology emerges as a key interpretive mechanism through which language mediates social change and historical memory, thereby establishing a foundation for further theoretical generalisation and cross-linguistic comparison in subsequent research.

Conclusions. Neologisms are an essential part of modern language development, reflecting contemporary life and events across various domains, including the economic, military, cultural, and technological.

Language, as an open system, is marked by the continual emergence of new words while others fall into disuse. Our time is characterised by the rapid evolution of the Ukrainian language, heavily influenced by the war initiated by Russia. Unfortunately, neologisms related to this tragic chapter in our history will persist until the war concludes, as each new day brings fresh events, emotions, and experiences – both negative and positive – necessitating new forms of expression.

Future research on wartime neologisms should focus on their linguocultural analy-

sis and on comparing English and Ukrainian worldviews during the Russian-Ukrainian war. The relationship between new words and historical epochs raises intriguing questions about whether language shapes history or vice versa. Significant political and social changes have

transformed language, particularly vocabulary, which is highly responsive to its environment. The ongoing nature of military actions means that the creation of new lexemes, meanings, and combinations will continue, necessitating further study.

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