

PRACA POGLĄDOWA
REVIEW ARTICLE

MEDICALIZATION IN THE MODERN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH: STRUCTURAL AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

MEDYKALIZACJA WSPÓŁCZESNEGO JĘZYKA ANGIELSKIEGO BRYTYJSKIEGO I AMERYKAŃSKIEGO: ANALIZA STRUKTURALNA I NARRACYJNA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The article focuses on the mechanisms of medicalization, i.e., the description of social phenomena, human qualities or types of behavior in terms of biomedical conditions in the modern British and American English.

The aim of the research is to provide a structural typology of “medicalized” lexical units in the modern British and American English, and to analyze the author’s pragmatic intentions and communicative strategies in each particular case.

Materials and methods: The material of the research is the corpus of articles (2002-2017) from *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Forbes* and *The New York Times*. The “medicalized” lexical units were selected by automatic search and sampling, and considered by means of structural, narrative, contextual and component analysis methods.

Review: It has been found that medicalization in the British and American mass media discourse is observed at four linguistic levels: (1) at the level of morphemes (affixation); (2) at the level of lexemes; (3) at the level of collocations; and (4) at the level of sentences. Affixation is one of the most productive tools of medicalization which leads to the formation of medical neologisms. The lexical manifestations of medicalization implement the following communicative strategies and pragmatic intentions: skepticism expression; attracting the readers’ attention; revealing and denouncing the addictive phenomena and processes of the present-day world. The affixation way of neologization provides the newly created words with a vivid stylistic shade. The use of “medicalized” headlines enables the authors to capture the readers’ attention.

Conclusions: Medicalization is a complex process involving the spreading influence of medical terminology into the communicative environment of “non-medical” areas of human life, which requires further linguistic study. Medicalization of virtually all spheres of society is an essential driving force in the formation of the linguistic world-image of the modern man, and the research of this tendency allows us to reveal the underlying processes of human thinking. By means of medicalization, authors attract the readers’ attention, focus on the burning societal problems, aiming to “diagnose” and “treat” these issues.

KEY WORDS: mass media, discourse, medical terminology, neologisms, affixation, communicative strategy

Wiad Lek 2018, 71, 6, 1250-1253

INTRODUCTION

Medicalization is a complex process of spreading influence of medical terms into the communicative environment of other, “non-medical” areas of human life [1; 2]. Over the past 50 years, the attention of sociologists, philosophers and linguists has been consistently attracted by this concept [3; 4; 5; 6]. The term “medicalization” first appeared in Michel Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic (Naissance de la clinique, 1963)*, where the philosopher described “the dogmatic “medicalization” of society, by way of a quasi-religious conversion, and the establishment of a therapeutic clergy” [7]. Irving Zola interprets medicalization as the “process whereby more and more of everyday life has come under medical dominion, influence and supervision” [1]. According to Peter Conrad, medicalization consists in defining behavior or a problem in medical terms, “using the language of medicine” and “adopting a medical framework” to describe and understand the problem, or to “treat” it [2].

One should distinguish between the uncontrolled medicalization as an information process associated with the development of a social institution of medicine since the Enlightenment era to the present time, which enables continuous introduction of new knowledge about diseases and healthy lifestyle into the communicative space of the society; and commercial medicalization as a strong pragmatic strategy aimed at the formation of the image of new pathological conditions that require medical intervention in the consciousness of the target audience [1]

Among the factors of spreading “medicalized definitions”, researchers [3; 5] mention the improved quality of life, overall expansion of technical capabilities and dissemination of information in the communication space, increased interest in physicality, active study of medicine as a social institution [4; 6].

Furthermore, we consider the phenomenon of medicalization as a manifestation of interdiscursiveness, i.e., interaction between different types of discourse, integration and

intersection of different systems of knowledge, branches of practice and cultural codes [8]. Given the rapid spread of medicalization in the society, the study of linguistic manifestations of this socio-cultural tendency in the mass media discourse is relevant.

THE AIM

The aim of the research is to demonstrate the penetration of medical language into the British and American media discourse, and analyze the authors' narrative intentions. The linguistic research of medicalization process in the areas of politics, economics and marketing, etc. offers the prospects for effective analysis of communicative expansion of medical terminology into the mass consciousness and thus promotes a better understanding of this nominative process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The medicalization tendency will be considered on the basis of the corpus of articles (2002-2017) from *The Guardian* [9], *The Daily Telegraph* [10], *Forbes* [11] and *The New York Times* [12]. The "medicalized" lexical units were selected by automatic search and sampling, and considered by means of structural, narrative, contextual and component analysis methods.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Medicalization in the British and American mass media discourse is observed at four linguistic levels: (1) at the level of morphemes (affixation); (2) at the level of lexemes; (3) at the level of collocations; and (4) at the level of sentences.

At the level of morphemes, medicalization is implemented by means of affixation, i.e., adding prefixes or suffixes to word stems, which is one of the most effective ways for creating medical neologisms. It involves the combination of root and affixal morphemes by using the standard word-formation models, rules and trends that exist in a language at present stage of its development [13]. The analysis of *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Forbes* and *The New York Times* issues revealed the following Latin and latinized Greek components of medical neologisms: "-itis" ("inflammation"); "-osis" ("a state of disease"; "destructive process"); "-ectomy" ("excision", "cutting out") [13]. The prevalence of these term elements in the medicalization process is due to the fact that approximately 95% of English terms are borrowed from or created on the basis of Latin and latinized Greek [14]. Indeed, unlike many ancient languages that are now forgotten, Latin became the language of science with a clearly focused international communicative status, particularly in medicine, and "went far beyond the territory occupied by its speakers in ancient times" [15]. As a result, such term elements as "-itis", "-osis", "-ectomy" are transparent and comprehensible for a wide audience. Therefore, they are the effective means of neologization.

The examples of neologisms with the "itis" suffix are as follows: "The world of the singer is much more afflicted by cancel-itis than any other area of classical music" (*The Guardian*, 2008); "Former press secretary reveals his warning to Tony Blair about "world-leader-itis" and his views on Cherie Blair's

pendant" (*The Guardian*, 2011); "Referendum-itis: beware the soft options" (*The Guardian*, 2011); "The alignment I am talking about is a severe case of "short-term-itis" (*Forbes*, 2012); "There is no obvious explanation for this, as X-rays and MRI scans are normal, prompting the suggestion that this might be a form of accident neurosis or "compensation-itis", for which the only cure is an injection of a large cheque into the victim's bank account" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2013); "Beware "Activity-itis" and Other Insider Tips from P&G, General Mills, Google at ANA Confab" (*Forbes*, 2014); "Stop the Spread of Meeting-itis with 2 Simple Steps" (*Forbes*, 2016). The affix "-itis" is used to criticize an overwhelming tendency, an annoying practice which becomes recurrent, an unusual condition or behavior. Hence, the communicative strategy of skepticism expression is effectively implemented.

As the condition exacerbates, the affix "-osis" becomes relevant: "Children's fiction goes down with a plague of cliff-hanger-osis" (*The Guardian*, 2009); "With a fleet of thousands cars, a hundred permutations and scenarios quickly unfold, and it becomes a cesspool of administrosis" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2009). The authors aspire to alert the readers, to focus their attention on the burning societal problems by means of "diagnosing" them.

Another widespread way to criticize the pernicious tendencies of the modern society is the use of affix "-ectomy" [13]. Quite often, these medical neologisms denote the loss of something essential for mankind: "Facade-ectomy" — there's a new word. And even if it's actually the opposite of what it means, it's a word that's been gaining some sort of currency recently. It describes the practice of retaining a building's historic facade, but building something new behind it (technically a "building-ectomy") and it's the becoming the standard technique for replacing damp, crumbling old apartments or offices with glossy, lucrative new ones" (*The Guardian*, 2007) [13]. Furthermore, the following medical neologisms serve for manifestation of national interests and self-preservation of the nation: "America needs to safeguard its tradition of effective economic and cultural integration. But as my own immigration to the United States proceeds, I tend to worry much more about Europe. For Mexicans are not Moroccans. And the US has not yet suffered a Blunkett-style History-ectomy" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2005).

Yet another widespread affix is "-aholic (-oholic) / -aholism (-oholism)" ("addicted to something" or "addiction", "overengaging"). This affix is relatively new: it was first abstracted from the word "alcoholic" in 1965 ("sugarholic"), followed by "foodholic" (sic., 1965); "workaholic" (1968), "golfaholic" (1971), "chocoholic" (1971), "shopaholic" (1984) [13] and so on. The contemporary society is in a compulsive need for certain phenomena or processes. Hence, medical neologisms are used to reveal and denounce these addictive agents: "No one but a dedicated pork-aholic would go to Cuba for the cuisine" (*The Guardian*, 2003); "No, I'm not a shopping person at all. But I am a shoe-aholic and a bag-aholic" (*The Guardian*, 2007); "Confessions of a spendaholic — and how I turned my life around ... When I lost my mother, father and brother in quick succession, I tipped over from normal spending to spendaholism" (*The Guardian*, 2010); "Geithner's Trip To Europe: Spend-aholics Shouldn't Give Advice To

Spend-aholics" (*Forbes*, 2011); "The app is free to a mega-sized country of frenetic text-a-tweet-aholics" (*Forbes*, 2013); "Although we would never call you a functioning-sleep-deficit-aholic, but that's essentially what you are" (*Forbes*, 2016); "9 Ways You're Annoying Coworkers Without Realizing: No.6. You're A Meeting-aholic" (*Forbes*, 2017); "She's quick to say that Trump is a "disaster and a danger", but Steinem, a self-professed "hope-aholic", sees a positive side to challenging times for many Americans" (*Forbes*, 2017). A relatively new neologism is "rage-aholic" which refers to a person prone to causeless anger: "The longest entry, at 30 minutes, is the German director Patrick Vollrath's emotionally loaded "Alles Wird Gut", about a divorced rage-aholic father who kidnaps his 8-year-old daughter to spirit her to Manila by way of Dubai" (*The New York Times*, 2016); "That's unfair," said Marinovich, who nonetheless refers to Marv as a onetime "rage-aholic" (*The New York Times*, 2017); "What America saw clearly in Trump's disastrous handling of the violence in Charlottesville was a Nazi/white nationalist apologist if not sympathizer, a reactionary rage-aholic, a liar, and a person who has absolutely no sense or understanding of history" (*The New York Times*, 2017).

At the level of lexemes, medicalization is implemented by means of medical terms that are used in an unusual, "non-medical" context: "But *resuscitation* of the fund – and the wider Bretton Woods system – is decidedly not good for a more stable and equitable world" (*The Guardian*, 2008); "Perhaps it's a measure of how desperate politicians are that they are portraying the EIB's lolly as vital for economic *resuscitation*" (*The Guardian*, 2008); "Of course some dedicated, tax-allergic savers fanatically fund every special account they can find in the tax code" (*Forbes*, 2010); "Even before today's news that a second top Scotland Yard official had resigned in the *metastasizing* scandal surrounding News Corporation in England, speculation was arising that Rupert Murdoch himself could ultimately lose his job. Former U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger weighed in with a similar *diagnosis*" (*Forbes*, 2011); "Ineos boss, Jim Ratcliffe, is a tax-allergic billionaire and sports fanatic who lives in Switzerland" (*The Guardian*, 2013); "The man behind the Republican party's tax-allergy, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, issued a masterpiece in political malleability in one tweet last night" (*The Guardian*, 2013); "And yet, as soon as the housing market showed signs of *resuscitation*, building began again, workers started assembling swatches of sod into lawns and suburban pioneers were, once again, happy to colonize a cul-de-sac, confident that others would follow" (*The New York Times*, 2013); "Their future domestically is dim and demand growth internationally is very robust, so it is fair to say that a *resuscitation* of the industry has to come overseas" (*The New York Times*, 2013); "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pushing forward his "third arrow" of economic *resuscitation*, this one focused on structural changes, including deregulation and obliterating protectionist policies, to spur growth" (*Forbes*, 2014); "But the prime minister would seem to be leaning against it – and seemingly for no better reason than an ideological *allergy* to taxation" (*The Guardian*, 2016); "Like a lung cancer, tobacco is also *metastasizing* as a public health issue" (*The Guardian*, 2016); "Passage of the health care bill completed a

remarkable act of political *resuscitation*" (*The New York Times*, 2017); "Residents and officials of city governments that are experiencing adversity often consider government consolidation as a *cure*. (...) Yet despite supporters' hopes, consolidation is usually not the *panacea* they envision" (*Forbes*, 2017).

It is necessary to observe that "medicalized" lexemes are often effective in constructing "catchy" headlines which immediately attract the reader's attention: "Pentagon Chief's *Diagnosis: Next-War-itis*" (*The New York Times*, 2008); "The *Cancer of Corruption*" (*Forbes*, 2009); "Beware of *Cancer Metastasizing to your Wallet*" (*Forbes*, 2013); "U.K. Politician Offers *Cure* for Housing that is Worse Than the *Disease*" (*Forbes*, 2017).

At the level of collocations, a group of "heterogeneously structured units which include proper terms and nomenclature names" [14] is used to express an idea: "The education secretary, Charles Clarke, has failed to *cure* his department's *initiative-itis*" (*The Guardian*, 2002); "The United Nations is planning a form of diplomatic *shock therapy* for world leaders this week" (*The Guardian*, 2009); "An NHS that Robert Francis QC rightly said had suffered from constant upheaval must now prepare for yet another *bout of initiative-itis*, all in the name of *patient safety*, which he identified as one of the victims of previous shakeup mania" (*The Guardian*, 2013); "We are living through the first era of *mass attention deficit*" (*The Guardian*, 2015); "The only thing she's suffering with is a *severe case* of Bone-idle-itis!" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2015); "No business is *immune* from the lure of *workaholicism*" (*The Guardian*, 2015); "Mugabe and his cronies are planning to feast instead of attending to the *resuscitation* of the *comatose economy*" (*The Guardian*, 2016); "The city of Zibo, China's ceramics capital, is undergoing environmental *shock therapy* to clear its filthy skies and transform its economy – and not everyone is happy" (*The New York Times* 2017); "*Sequel-itis* is *afflicting* not just the poorly reviewed movies like "Transformers: The Last Knight" and "The Mummy", but the well-received ones as well" (*Forbes*, 2017). By using such medical collocations, journalists aspire to emphasize the unnatural, pathologic or traumatic character of modern tendencies in the society [13].

At the level of sentences, several groups of medical terms evolve in a coherent narrative. For instance, from the article about Rufus Wainwright, the American-Canadian singer and songwriter: "I have a bad case of *Rufus-itis* ... Will today's release of *Release the Stars ease my ailment* – one that *afflicts* thousands of sufferers regardless of sex, sexuality or social class?... This *disease* quickly moved on to its *second stage*, an almost zombie-like trance wherein I would trawl the internet looking for ... the cause of my *malady*... Beatlemania has mutated into *Rufus-itis* ... If I have *Rufus-itis* and I don't want the *cure*" (*The Guardian*, 2007); "... the 2016 sample test for key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling ... *suffers* from a *severe case* of terminology-itis" (*The Guardian*, 2015); "Roma's failure to find *cure* for *draw-itis* leaves Juventus in the clear ... The *patient* is not yet *dead* but the result of Monday's *examination* suggests that their *condition* is *terminal*. Rudi Garcia had warned us for weeks that Roma were *sick*, *suffering* from "*acute draw-itis*". After failing to *find a cure* of his own, the manager hoped an *appointment* with Juventus might inspire an improbable *recovery*. Instead the champions' house-visit served only to *confirm his diagnosis*. The *disease*

had first *manifested* itself in a 2-2 with Sassuolo at the Stadio Olimpico on 6 December, soon followed by a limp 0-0 with Milan. Back then Roma's *symptoms* could still be dismissed as insignificant – the footballing equivalent of a *bothersome head cold*. Most of us presumed they would *recover*" (*The Guardian*, 2015); "The financial crisis nearly destroyed the American automotive industry, Detroit's economic *heart* (...) This strange situation has turned Detroit into an unlikely *petri dish* for *experiments* into how to kick-start a housing market that is, depending on your perspective, either slumbering or *comatose*. (...) Behind the scenes, nonprofit groups, foundations, local officials and a dozen banks including JPMorgan, Bank of America and Quicken are trying to varying degrees to *reanimate* the mortgage market in Michigan's largest city. Success, however, often comes *achingly* slow (...) As with any new program, the couple said, there were "*growing pains*" (*The New York Times*, 2017). As one can observe, "medicalized" collocations and sentences often contain neologisms made up of affixal morphemes, which indicates the prevalence of this medicalization type in the English language.

The abovementioned cases of neologization effectively implement the following communicative strategies and pragmatic intentions: skepticism expression; attracting the readers' attention; revealing and denouncing the addictive phenomena and processes of the present-day world; criticizing negative tendencies and annoying practices of the modern world, unusual conditions or ways of behavior; maintenance of national achievements. The authors aim to alert the readers, to focus their attention on the urgent societal problems by means of "diagnosing" these issues. The affixation way of neologization provides the newly created words with a vivid stylistic shade. This allows the journalists to transfer their messages to readers immediately and effectively, thus serving as an important means of time and space saving. The use of "medicalized" headlines enables the authors to capture the readers' attention and stimulate them to read the article further. The most productive medical affixes in the British and American media discourse as exemplified by *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Forbes* and *The New York Times* are "-itis", "-osis", "-ectomy" and "-aholic (-oholic) / -aholism (-oholism)". This list is by no means exhaustive – it stipulates further development and elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

Both British and American variants of modern English strongly tend to "medicalize" social phenomena, human qualities and types of behavior. The morphemes combination is the most productive way of medicalization in both groups of analyzed discourse. The socio-cultural tendency of medicalization is an essential element of the modern British and American English. Medicalization of virtually all spheres of society is an essential driving force in the formation of the linguistic world-image of the modern man, and the research of this tendency allows us to reveal the underlying processes of human thinking. The medicalization tendency reflects the fact that the modern English discourse is flexible and open to changes, which requires further linguistic study.

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Authors' contributions:

According to the order of the Authorship.

Conflict of interest:

The Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Received: 20.02.2018

Accepted: 15.07.2018