

Polkovsky V.,

The company "East European Opportunities" (St. Albert, Canada), Ostroh Academy National University (Ostroh, Ukraine)

LEXICAL CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE OF THE 21 ST CENTURY (REGIONAL VARIANTS) AND THE PROBLEM OF ITS TEACHING IN UKRAINE

У статті представлено огляд сучасних англомовних видань, присвячених проблемі лексичних змін в сучасній англійській мові у 21-ому столітті. Звернено увагу на важливість регіональних варіантів та неологічного буму для викладання цієї мови в Україні.

Ключові слова: зміна, лексичне значення, мова політики та бізнесу, регіональний варіант.

В статье представлен обзор современных англоязычных изданий, посвященных проблеме лексических изменений в современном английском языке 21-го столетия. Внимание уделяется значению региональных вариантов и неологического бума для преподавания этого языка в Украине.

Ключевые слова: изменение, лексическое значение, язык политики и бизнеса, региональный вариант.

A brief overview of contemporary English publications devoted to the problem of lexical changes in Contemporary English of the 21st century has been presented in the article. Attention has been paid to importance of regional variants of English and neological growth for teaching this language in Ukraine.

Key words: change, lexical meaning, language of politics and business, regional variant.

Dynamics of the English Language and the Problem of Teaching

The English language in the 21st century can be characterized as extremely dynamic and versatile. The role of its regional variants has been growing exponentially. Polysemy of the words, nuances and shades of meaning of common words (especially commonly used colloquial words) create a serious problem for understanding the language. Translators and interpreters of other languages are faced with dubious meanings, innuendos, uncommon connotations, unusual acronyms/abbreviations. Linguists in many countries draw attention to this phenomenon (see, for example, ВиссонЛинн. *Слова-метаморфозы в современном английском языке*. Москва: Р. Валент, 2010. 160 с.). Stylistic nuances of the meaning of the word (like *geek* and *nerd*, Виссон 2010: 52-53, where *geek* mostly lost its negative connotation, and *nerd* still keeps it) take center stage. The influx of shortenings or shortened words in English can present a real challenge for instructor/translator/interpreter (very popular in Canada words like *docs*, *Libs*, *Dems*, *rev*). Lynn Visson warns that

it is a “dangerous process with unforeseen consequences” (Виссон 2010: 57). One can mention an interesting article by Kevin O’Donnell “*Lux brandsface tough balancing act*” // Marketing News. 02. 15. 09: 18.

“There is a fundamental change taking place in the role of technology in business and society. This profoundly affects virtually everything – the economy, business, families, and social existence” – remarks Don Tapscott in his book “*Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*” – New York: McGraw – Hill, 1998. 339 pp: 17).

“A knowledge-based economy” (Tapscott 1998: 127) has already been created in the leading English-speaking countries.

The influx of neologisms is amazing. Jonathon Keats (who writes for Jargon Watch column for *Wired* magazine) remarks: ‘For Jargon Watch each month I sort through a vast number of newspapers, magazines, and blogs, both mass-media and specialized publications, finding as many as one hundred notable words from which I select the four that seem most characteristic of the moment or most likely to have a future’ (Keats Jonathon. *Virtual Words: Language on the Edge of Science and Technology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 177 pp. : vii-ix). We cannot better characterize the society we live in than Jonathon Keats did: “... the interplay between words and ideas in our fast-paced tech-driven use-it-or-lose-it society” (Keats 2011: front cover of the book). He adds: “We live in an age of specialization” (Keats 2011: vii).

In Edmonton newspaper “Metro”’s (April 28/2009: 1) article “*Animal health body disputes ‘swine’ flu tag*” the author mentions: “The flu virus spreading around the world should not be called “swine flu” as it also contains avian and human components and no pig was found ill with the disease so far, the World Animal Health body said yesterday.

A more logical name for it would be “North American influenza,” a name based on its geographic origin just like the Spanish influenza, another human flu pandemic with animal origin that killed more than 50 million people in 1918-1919.”

The discussion has been going on in North American Universities again regarding what to teach and how to teach. Commonly accepted notions and criteria crave for rethinking and reevaluation (see, for example, the article Полковський В. П., Семенчук Ю. О. *Проблеми викладання іноземних мов у Північній Америці* // Наукові записки. Серія “Філологічна”. Випуск 11. Острог: Видавництво Національного університету “Острозька академія”, 2009. 684 с., сс. 513-516).

Buzzwords (Catchy words and phrases). The 21st century has been characterized by many catchy words and phrases. “Whenever I pick up a trade journal, receive a notice for a seminar or conference, or visit a trade show, big headlines, banners and blaring videos tell me “out of the box” is critical for today’s or tomorrow’s success, growth or even survival! It does not seem to matter

whether that "out of the box" is thinking, doing, implementing or managing. Clearly, to some, it's the most important thing anyone can be doing today.

"Out of the box" is in, "in the box" is out.

Seems like *authentic*, "*out of the box*" and *innovation* are the three magic terms to get us out of the present economic malaise" – notices Don Schultz in his article "*Insidethe box*"//Marketing News. 01. 30. 09. : 46.

Many Canadian newspapers and magazines have a special column called *Buzzwords*.

Digitization, Use of Computers and Internet.

"Computing is not about computers any more. It is about living" – mentions Nicholas Negroponte in his book "*Being Digital*" – New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001. 244 pp: 6).

The economy the Western world lives in is considered by many as "digital economy" (see, for example, the book by Don Tapscott "*The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril inthe Age of Networked Intelligence*"– New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996). People talk about *digital era*, *digital generation*, *digital homeless*, *digital young*, *fulldigital fluency*, *digital impoverishment*, *online world vs. offline world*, and even *techno-peasant* (all examples are from Tapscott 1998. *Growing Up Digital...*) as well as *digitalplanet*, *digital age*, *digital neighborhoods*, *digital individual*, and even *digital sisters-in-law* (all examples are from Negroponte 2001).

As it is obvious from the aforementioned examples, students can know the meaning of a separate word, but word combination sounds unusual and quite often unfamiliar. Examples with *cyber*– can prove this point as well: *cyber home*, *cyber gurus*, *cyber sex*, *cyber dating*, *cyber girlfriend* [*C-girlfriend*], *cyber rights*, *cyberarts*, "*cyberarts teacher*, *c-guys or gals*, *C-dating*, *C-names*, *cyberbro*, *C-world* (all examples are from Tapscott 1998. *Growing Up Digital...*). In this respect the book by Herschell Gordon Lewis and Jamie Murphy. *Cybertalk that Sells: The Ultimate Source of Words, Phrases, Banners, and Buzzwords for Selling Your Products, Services, and Ideas Throughthe New Digital and Interactive Media*. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1998. 133 pp. is very interesting (see, for example, *E-literates*, *E-illiterates*, *e-bots*).

Business English. "In the *Digital Economy* I discussed the issue of a digital divide. If left purely to the market forces, the digital economy could foster a two-tiered society, creating a major gulf between information haves and have-nots – those who can communicate with the world and those who can't. As information technology becomes more important for economic success and societal well-being, the possibility of "information apartheid" becomes increasingly real. Such a 'digital divide' may mean that for many children *N-Gen* means *Not-Generation*" – remarks Don Tapscott (1998: 11).

According to Don Tapscott, "Have-nots become know-nots and do-nots" (1998: 11).

BusinessEnglish becomes more and more complicated. Many branches and subdivisions appear that drastically complicate understanding. Marketing quite often becomes digimarketing, for example (see, Weber Larry. *Marketing to the Social Web: How Digital Customer Communities Build Your Business. Second Edition.* New Jersey: Wiley and Sons, 2009. 246 pp. ; Wertime Kent and Fenwick Ian. *DigiMarketing: TheEssential Guide to New Media & Digital Marketing.* Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asia), Ltd., 2008. 406 pp.).

“In the new economy, wealth is increasingly created by knowledge work – brain rather than brawn. There have always been people who have worked with their minds rather than their hands. In the new economy, they are the majority of the work force. Already, almost 60 percent of American workers are knowledge workers and 8 of 10 new jobs are in information-intensive sections of the economy” – remarks Don Tapscott (1998: 127).

The field of branding is becoming trickier. (see, for example, Ries Al and Laura Ries. *The Origin of Brands: Discover the Natural Laws of Product Innovation and Business Survival.* New York: HarperBusiness, 2004. 308 pp.) Al Ries and Laura Ries remark in the section “Upgrading Language and Downgrading Meaning”: “We are not in the beer business,” said Coors’s executive vice president of marketing. “We are in the social mood amelioration business”.

An impediment to clear thinking is this constant upgrading of the language. No aspect of life is left untouched by the upgrade police.

- Doctors are now physicians.
- Lawyers are now attorneys-in-law.
- Policemen and policewomen are now law enforcement officers.
- Maintenance people are now physical plant managers.
- Janitors are now custodial engineers.
- Garbage collectors are now sanitary engineers.
- Business strategies are now business models.
- Numbers are now metrics.
- Accounting firms are now professional service firms.
- Purchasing departments are now procurement departments.
- Personnel departments are now human relations departments.
- Fireworks are now pyrotechnics.
- Jails are now correctional facilities.

“Anyone setting off pyrotechnics will be taken into custody by a law enforcement officer and sent to a correctional facility” (Ries and Ries 2004: 213-214).

“Branding is tricky business. And half the challenge is trying to break through the language barrier that can exist between brand owners and branding experts. Sit in on a strategy meeting and you might feel the need to grab a jargon-to-English dictionary. The branding field is rife with confusing

terminology, with definitions that seem to vary from company to company – if not from person to person” – remarks Elisabeth Sullivan in the article “*Branding lexicon: Learn how to talk the talk*”// Marketing News. 01. 30. 09: 14.

Bruce Parkinson in “*Travel as a Second Language: A Glossary of Key Terms for Bewildered Travellers*”// Maclean’s. March 23, 2009. : 68 mentions: “The world of travel is complex. Unfortunately, so is the lingo. The travel industry playbook is filled with acronyms, jargon, even the odd exaggerated or completely misleading definition (see Direct Flight).

The following glossary of key travel terms is here to help you become a better-informed shopper: *advertised price, lead-in price, lowest available fare, plus taxes, off-peak, direct flight, non-stop flight, carry-on, airport codes, open jaw, bricks & mortar, rack rate.*”

“The Net is beginning to affect all of us – the way we create wealth, the enterprise, the nature of commerce and marketing, the delivery system for entertainment, the role and dynamics of learning in the economy, the nature of government and governance, our culture, and arguably the role of the nation-state in the body politic” – remarks Don Tapscott (1998: 3). “The new formula will be N-Gen + the Net = electronic commerce. The Net is becoming a new medium for sales, support, and services of virtually anything, as tens of millions of Net-savvy purchasers come of age” – continues Don Tapscott (1998: 11).

Language of politics. Language of politics is very complex (see, for example, *Political Language and Metaphore: Interpreting and changing the world*/ Edited by Terrel Carver and Jernej Pikalo. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. 293 pp. ; Freedon Michael. *Thinking politically and thinking about politics: language, interpretation, and ideology*// Political Theory : Methods and Approaches/ Edited by David Leopold and Mac Stears. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. pp. 196 – 215). The authors talk about extreme semantic flexibility. “... a polysemic capacity becomes a tool of immense innovative force, serving human imagination and political vision. Consider the ways in which ‘power’ as the positive ‘empowering’ of women has developed in feminist discourse” (Freedon 2008: 202).

Political discourse is tightly connected with business discourse. Actually business lexicon is quite often dominating in political discourse recently (see, for example, Godwin Jack. *Clintonomics: How Bill Clinton Reengineered the Reagan Revolution*. New York: AMACOM, 2009. 290 pp.) The growing use of nicknames in politics (as well as in sports, cinema, business and commerce and other fields) is a very peculiar phenomenon (see an amazing book by Andrew Delahunty. *Goldenballs and the IronLady: A Little Book of Nicknames*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 254 pp).

Canadian English. Canadian English has been developing fast and

research on it is extensive. We could mention here books like Casselman Bill. *Casselmania: More Wacky Canadian Words and Sayings*. Boston-Toronto-London: Little, Brown and Company (Canada) Ltd, 1996. 298 pp. ; Telfer Gordie. *Dictionary of Canadianisms: How to Speak Canadian, eh!* – N/a: Folklore Publishing, 2009. 352 pp.

Do we have to include into teaching English in Ukraine Canadian things like *double-double*: at Tim Hortons, coffee with two creams and two sugars; *two-four*: a case of beer containing 24 bottles or cans (back cover of Telfer's dictionary)?

Text messaging. “Lacking facial expression, body language, tone of voice, clothing, physical surroundings, and other contextual information, the N-Gen has had to innovate within the limitations of the ASCII keyboard. As a result of this, a new script is emerging with new combinations of characters, new abbreviations, new acronyms, and neologisms to add contextual information, subtleties, and emotion to communications” – remarks Don Tapscott (1998: 64).

David. Crystal in his article “*Txting: frNd or foe?*” // *The Linguist*. December 2008 – /January 2009: 8-11 mentions: “The popular belief is that texting (or SMS, the “short-messaging service”) has evolved as a 21-st century phenomenon, with a highly individual graphic style full of abbreviations, used by a young generation that does not care about standards. ... These logograms – or rebuses – go back centuries. Some people dislike texting. Some are bemused by it. Some love it. I am fascinated by it, for it is the latest manifestation of the human ability to be linguistically creative and to adapt language to suit the demands of diverse settings. In texting, what we are seeing in a small way, is language in evolution.” And this language in evolution has to be taught, and not conservative and quite often immobile or dead English.

Social media. “Social media spans Internet and mobile devices.

Blogs, video sharing sites, social networking sites, consumer opinion and review sites and discussion forums all form parts of the array of tools used by those engaging in social media” – remarks Simon Salt in his article “*Track your success: Emerging applications make it easier to compute your results in social media marketing*” // *Marketing News*. 02. 15. 09. : 20.

Blogs. Blogs are becoming really an explosive phenomenon in numbers and in quality. “Monthly blog readers grew from 25% to 37% of online consumers last year. Social network visitors went from 24% to 34%” – states Josh Bernoff in the article “*Blogs, marketing and trust*” // *Marketing News*. 02. 15. 09: 17.

Susan Purcell in the article “*Blog standard*” // *The Linguist*. February/ March 2009: 20-21 presents a short glossary of blogosphere: *blogroll*, *post* (*verb and noun*), *spam*, *spammer*. She provides the impressive statistical data: “More than 130 million blogs have been started on the web and around a million blog posts are written every day. Some bloggers like sharing their knowledge,

if they've spent ages over a particular word or know of a good teaching activity, they may blog about it with the aim of helping other translators or teachers. Teachers often blog to ensure pupils know what the homework is, or to help students to catch up when they miss a class." She presents the list of top language blogs (among them you can find [www. lexicophiles. com](http://www.lexicophiles.com): multilingual blog with links to the "Top 100 Language Blogs", [www. david-crystal. blogspot. com](http://www.david-crystal.blogspot.com); professor David Crystal's blog, etc. (see Purcell 2009: 21). Susan Purcell's blog is at [www. virtuallinguist. typepad. com](http://www.virtuallinguist.typepad.com)

The recent literature on blogs is extensive (see, for example, Perlmutter David D. *Blogwars*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. 246 pp. ; Warren Michelle. *Blogger Knows Best // Marketing*. April 6, 2009. : 23, 26-27; *A lot of people are talking about Facebook. But who's Facebook talking about? / Marketing*. April 6, 2009. : 24-25. ("When we started 8 years ago, there was a lot of what we like to call "hoopla" but others might have called "raised eyebrows" (2009: 24)); *Skew media: How to deal with blogospherebacklash // Marketing*. April 6, 2009. : 30.

"And according to a survey by Compass Partners in the U. S., 40% of women consider blogs a reliable source of advice and information; 50 % say blogs influence their purchasing decision and 24 % say they watch less TV because of blogs" – states Michelle Warren (2009: 23). Language has been constantly updating its expressive means and devices.

Slang, jargon. Do Ukrainian students have to know the meaning of *raves* – "huge warehouse and field parties featuring enormous numbers of people dancing to technopop and accompanying laser light shows" (Tapscott 1998: 205). Any North American student knows precisely the meaning of this word.

"Many N-Geners have seen their parents lose jobs through reengineering, downsizing, rightsizing, smartizing (as business strategist Gary Hamel says, "smart" and "right" always seem to be down" – states Don. Tapscott (1998: 285).

"People were held within the walls of a given department – in management jargon, "organizational stove pipes" (Tapscott 1998: 290).

Among the recent dictionaries on contemporary slang one can mention Ayto John and Simpson John. *Stone the Crows: Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang. Second Edition*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. 408 pp.

An example from Jonathon. Gatehouse's short article "*You, Sir, are nothing but abanker: In politics and in pop culture, money men are the new pariahs*" // Maclean's. March 23, 2009. : 44 is provided: "At soccer games in Ireland, crowds are reacting to bad calls by labeling the ref "a banker", instead of the rhyming w-word.

Booing – or better still, laughing – at the plutocrats who have left investments and retirement savings scraping bottom might be the only relief consumers get" (Gatehouse 2009: 44).

Vulgar words. The article "Roberts drops the f-bomb on Hanks"//

Edmonton newspaper “24 hours”, April 29/2009: 8 is brilliant: “Julia Roberts got everyone’s attention Monday night when she dropped a colourful curse word, according to people. com.

The night was billed as a salute to Tom Hanks, but it was she who stole the show.

Keeping her tribute as brief as possible, Roberts told Hanks, “So, everybody f-ing likes you”.

Short and sweet?”

Role of an Instructor/Teacher.

“The very concept of education is also changing as we move from the paradigm of teacher as transmitter of information to students learning through discovery and through new media. The teacher’s role is still critical, but changing – to structure the learning experience, motivate, provide context, and integrate disciplines” – remarks Don Tapscott (1998: 290).

While teaching English in Ukraine instructors have to pay crucial attention to a) neological growth (boom) in the 21st century, b) regional variants of English.