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COGNITIVE NATURE OF OCCASIONALISMS IN POSTFEMINIST FICTION

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The overall objective of the paper is to define types of occasional word-formation that are frequently used in chick-lit fiction and interpret them through the prism of cognitive semantics. The article suggests a new integrative approach to the analysis of cognitive nature of occasionalisms by describing cognitive mechanisms, operations and procedures underlying occasional word-formation.

Key words: occasional word-formation, cognitive semantics, quantum of knowledge, postfeminism, chick lit.

Никитченко К. П. Когнітивна природа оказіоналізмів у постфеміністичній прозі. Статтю присвячено визначенню способів оказіонального словотворення, які часто використовуються у творах жанру чік-літ, та їх інтерпретації через призму когнітивної семантики. У статті запропоновано новий комплексний підхід до аналізу когнітивної природи оказіоналізмів шляхом опису когнітивних механізмів, операцій і процедур, що лежать в основі оказіонального словотворення.

Ключові слова: оказіональне словотворення, когнітивна семантика, квант знання, постфемінізм, чік-літ.

Никитченко Е. П. Когнитивная природа окказионализмов в постфеминистской прозе. Статья посвящена определению способов окказионального словообразования, которые часто используются в произведениях жанра чик-лит, и их интерпретации через призму когнитивной семантики. В статье предложен новый комплексный подход к анализу когнитивной природы окказионализмов путем описания когнитивных механизмов, операций и процедур, лежащих в основе окказионального словообразования.

Ключевые слова: окказиональное словообразование, когнитивная семантика, квант знания, постфеминизм, чик-лит.

„People do some creative, even bizarre things with vocabulary, from time to time, and a fascinating topic in lexicology is to examine just what they get up to”

(David Crystal, 2003)

Problem definition. The desire of writers for finding their own stylistic devices causes the appearance of one of the neologic notions – individual author's formations: occasionalisms or nonce words. Sometimes they are spontaneous and sometimes the result of a lot of thought; but what unites them is that they are unique as made up for a particular occasion and once a time. Occasionalisms are the result of development and progress of language, which in its “present state can never recapture all the immensity of human experience, the immensity of the world” [5, 126].

The problem of word-formation remains actual in modern linguistics [8], among which occasional word-formation which has its own set of ways and means of creating nominations holds an important place.

The goal of this study came from the growing popularity of cognitive linguistics among other branches of linguistics. Over the last few decades cognition researches have expanded and resulted in multiple disciplines, including psychology, phi-

losophy, neuroscience, artificial intelligence and, of course, linguistics. With the appearance of cognitive paradigm of linguistic studies, which considers functioning of language to be a kind of cognitive activity and explores cognitive mechanisms and structures of human mind through language phenomenon and aims to “acquire knowledge about knowledge” [7, 41], the issue of occasional word-formation acquires modern vision, interpretation and understanding through this cognitive prism. This causes the relevance of this study.

So, in this context occasionalism is a source of knowledge; it performs artistic and nominative functions and is the key to the author's culture, which open the essence of its values, traditions, customs and thus gives the reader some hidden information [14]. It is created in the author's consciousness and gets its linguistic representation through new words which are individual author's formations. Many linguistic resources used to form new words are influenced by different cognitive mechanisms.

Surprisingly little research has been done on the burning deeply-seated problem of cognitive nature of occasionalisms, which comes up in cognitive linguistics. Traditionally, word-formation is interpreted as an individual author's process of creating new words with new lexical meaning. From the standpoint of this approach the enumerated studies on word-formation (based mainly on the morphemic and derivational analysis) concern largely semantic and structural

descriptions of occasionalisms [16; 21], singling out derivational types and models, refining the classification of ways of word-formation [2; 6; 11] together with the nature of the notion and its main features. Due to the development of cognitive semantics some researchers [3; 4; 7; 12] took up in their papers the problems of cognitive word-formation. However, it is difficult to find an experimental set which results in a new kind of non-described cognitive potential of occasionalisms in modern English. Findings of existing works focus in depth on a narrow range of issues placing an overall emphasis on a particular word-formation type or certain patterns, such as cognitive approach to prefixes of spatiality [15]. This study seeks to address the issue under scrutiny constituting a new integrative approach to the generalized analysis of cognitive nature of occasionalisms by describing cognitive mechanisms and procedures underlying occasional word-formation.

As a representative of postfeminism, chick lit genre is marked as chimerical phenomenon of our time [1], as esthetic self-will postulating everything new and heuristic. This certainly dictates and determines the functional properties of occasionalisms that are considered to be a dominant of modern poetic language [10]. Hence the types of word-formation in English postmodern literary text acquire new specific features.

Recent researches and publications. Cognitive approach to language brings to the fore the idea that “language is an integral part of cognition and therefore it should be understood in the context of conceptualization and mental processing” [19, 9]. Today cognitive linguistics is constantly shifting focus from systems aspects on the human factor in language, that is on how a person perceives and interprets phenomena of the world. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, which explores the cognition and related to it processes and structures, the cognition itself serves as a knowledge going beyond the limits of the observed, displaying the world not “as it is”, but the world “projected” in our consciousness [17, 62]. The results of cognition and understanding of objects and subjects of reality are reproduced by different language means and means of word formation as well. Of particular note is individual / occasional word-formation.

Linguistics faces an array of perennial problems which concern the origin of nonceness. The arguments raised in the discussion are contradictory. Some authors bolster the idea of the origin of nonceness in the perception of individual language as a new concept construal, while others baffle this point of view, insisting on the systemic aspects of nonceness and positing an occasionalism as an unprecedented form coinage. A consensus can be found between these lucid arguments as they are both in line with the account: an occasionalism is invented *ad hoc* and is recognizable by its new unexpected ‘appearance’, though it is not all up to the form what makes an occasionalism gain its status. Probably the most

significant issue to be settled is that occasionalisms transfer individual knowledge; they are produced in order to share the speaker’s experience, thoughts and feelings importing tacit knowledge into explicit one. Thus, the form of the occasionalism serves as a shell for knowledge.

At this point the speaker acts like a generator of the meanings of occasionalisms, he chooses his own way of interpreting reality and his own way of presenting the results of cognition, that is manifested in the ways of occasional word-formation, which is a means of access to the mental processes that occur in the human brain.

Therefore, cognitive semantics (after R. Shepard) can be defined as a science of general principles which control mental processes [20, 45], and studies the ways of world cognition and the role of language in their application [9, 109].

The importance of a cognitive perspective on processes of word formation has been implied in Plag’s discussion on the role of mental lexicon in the word storage and productivity [18]. The study of the academic literature and researches on the topic shows that the purpose of cognitive processes of word formation can be characterized as “connection of our previous experience with the new one” [3, 45] or as “the way of categorizing reality and practical human activity” [4, 228], or as cognitive outcomes of understanding the world which are reflected in derivational terms. Mainly on the basis of previous experience and knowledge of the world the process of categorization happens, where, for example, affixes, according to M. Polyuzhyn, serve as “categorizators” [9]. So, in word-formation affixes or derivational formants are those special cognitive rods that assist including the words to a certain class and their correct interpretation and then the derivational act itself is an act of categorization.

Furthermore, in the light of cognitive linguistics should be also elaborated such property of the derived word as a double reference. At this point let us give some thought to the notion which seems to be of utmost importance. The commonly held proposal of understanding double reference attaches itself to “human ability to characterize new knowledge through already known, combine ready and worked out structures of knowledge in order to express new, use the knowledge of word-formation models as ready forms of representation knowledge of the world” [7, 407].

It follows that cognitive linguistics “concedes closely to the self-organizing nature of humans and their language” [12, 5] while structural perspectives represent external boundaries.

From the mentioned above it can be concluded that the central in cognitive approach is the idea that the derived word is “the unit of storage, extracting, obtaining and systematization of new knowledge” [7, 56]. In the context of cognitive approach to the ways of occasional word-formation the meaning of the derived occasional word is not always possible

to deduce from the primary one. Transparency of the internal form of occasionalisms in most cases does not lead directly to its understanding, and therefore, we can state that the use of the traditional approach to word formation is not sufficiently effective and requires a search for new solutions of the problem.

The purpose of this article is in systematic grounding of scientific achievements regarding the nature of cognitive ways of occasional word formation in modern cognitive semantics. To achieve this goal it is necessary to perform the following tasks: to differentiate traditional and cognitive principles of occasional word formation and to reveal the nature of cognitive approach to occasional word formation.

Main body. Vindicating the cognitive nature of occasional word-formation I take the same stance as O. Kubryakova and V. Byalyk do, who tinker with the idea that cognitive word-formation operates knowledge or its part – “quantum of knowledge” [7; 4] eclipsing the semantics of linguistic units (in the light of traditional understanding of word-formation).

So occasionalism turns out to be a carrier of *quantum* of relevant *information* resulting from taxonomy of human knowledge through categorization and conceptualization; it is the quintessence of emotions and impressions. Therefore, it is important to dwell on the basic types of knowledge (aggregated, condensed and modified), pointed out by V. Byalyk [4]. According to

this typology we distinguish three types of occasional word-formation. *Figure 1* provides the model regarding knowledge transfer and word-making processes.

This schema is relevant for any literary text of any epoch, and it can be regarded as a virtual model that structures cognitive processes from knowledge to occasionalism. As mentioned already, dwelling on the cognitive nature of occasional word-formation we suggest three types: aggregated, condensed and modified word-formation. In order to determine where the difference lies, let us compare.

(1) Aggregated knowledge is understood as the process of adding the meanings explicitly represented by the structural elements of a new lexical unit [4], which is directly related to *cognitive procedure of combination*. The manifestation of aggregated knowledge occur through the **aggregated occasional word-formation**, which includes affixation and compounding. They are based on cognitive mechanisms that can be described in the following way:

(2) **Condensed word-formation** represents occasionalisms transmitting condensed knowledge which is perceived as the “concentration of meanings in the folding process of the word-building structure” [4], as implicit representation of some information or experience by means of word-formation.

(3) With the help of **modified word-formation** modified knowledge is manifested. The last can be

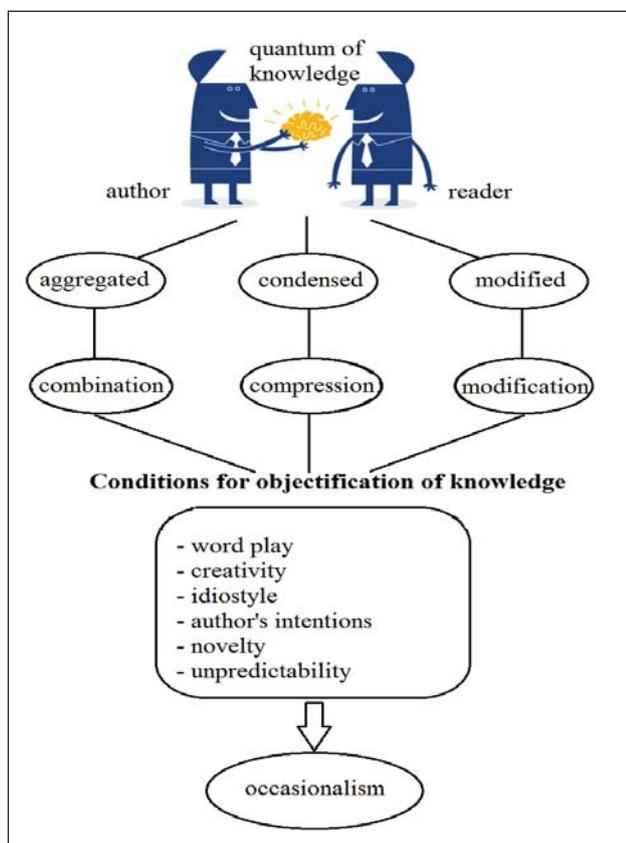


Figure 1. Knowledge transfer and word-making processes

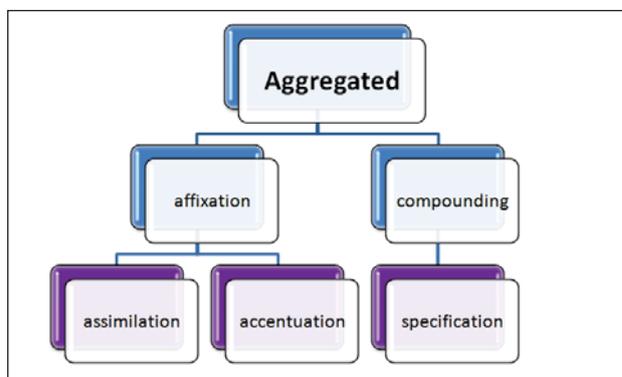


Figure 2. Aggregated type of occasional word-formation

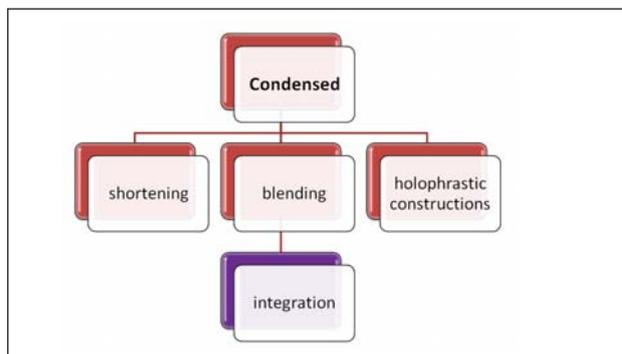


Figure 3. Condensed type of occasional word-formation

interpreted as the process of information modification, semantic modification which results in the emergence of new features of the object.

We have looked at cognitive mechanisms to explain what happens in mind during the course of the creative process. The findings confirm the hypothesis that the cognitive change (combination, compression, modification) occurs as the creative process proceeds.

We come finally to accept that the data constitute different productivity of types of occasional

word-formation and the difference is significant. The obtained results are provided in Figure 5.

As the quantitative data further support (Figure 6), the totals of 48% signify that in order to manifest new ideas or thoughts aggregated occasionalisms are the most commonly used.

Postmodern characteristics of Chick Lit and their influence on occasionalisms. In order to examine what is special about occasionalisms of chick lit fiction and what differs them from others created by other authors, the typical chick lit char-

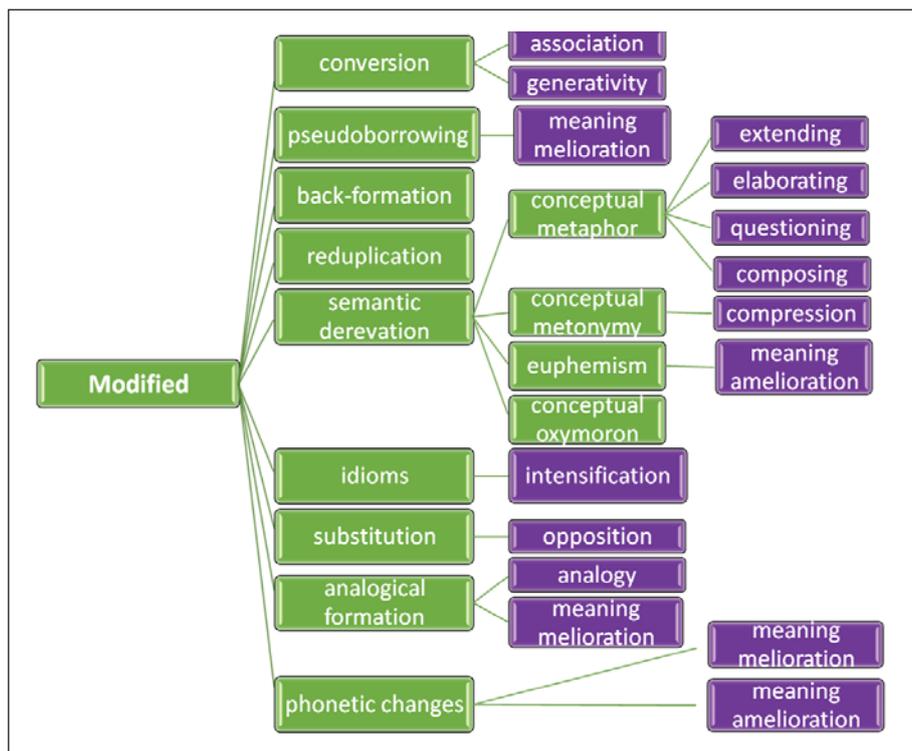


Figure 4. Modified type of occasional word-formation

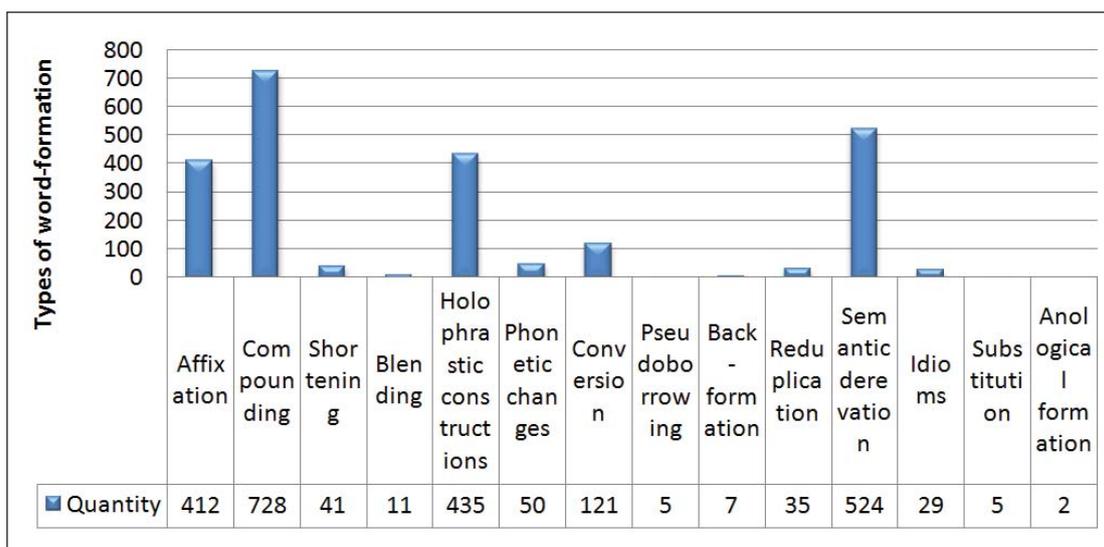


Figure 5. Quantitative characteristics of types of occasional word-formation

acteristics as a representative of postmodernism were studied.

The results indicate that typical chick lit characteristics are represented in different types of occasional word-formation processes: 1) intertextuality – precedent phenomena as a display of the theory of intertext become a basis for occasional word-formation (e.g. *Charlie's Angels* replaced by *Charlie's Eejits*; *Kate Moss-skinny*; *Cro-Magnon lady*); 2) hybridity is represented by hybrid word-formation (e.g. *überbloke*; *uber-escapism*); 3) ambivalence – phonetic occasionalisms as a result of ambivalent feelings and emotions (e.g. *Mwahdoz zhee mlook mlike*); 4) language game – language game as a tactic of introducing and explicating a new word (e.g. ... *the Irish matriarch. The Mickriarch*); 5) the effect of defeated expectancy – occasionalism together with the context causes the effect of defeated expectancy (e.g. ... *she Don Corleoned*); 6) emotionally coloured words, low-colloquial vocabulary and slang words are one of the constituents of occasionalisms (e.g. *The fuck!-I'm-thirty-one-and-not-married! syndrome*; *tediarseity*); 7) irony / self-irony is reflected in an ironic occasionalism (e.g. *The blonde leading the blonde*); 8) postmodern sensibility – postmodernity has economized sensibility as such; perception of a chaotic world (e.g. *Shespokerealfast. Firingquestionsfromamachinemouth. How'swork? Whenareyougettinglisted?*); 9) author's (feminine) consciousness – occasionalisms are the visualizations of the author's flashback and mental images (e.g. *Mr Peel-an-orange-in-his-pocket, mulchie*); 10) postmodernism realism, naturalness (e.g. *my BARR (Belly Attachment Reducing Regime), carb-phobic times*); 11) postmodern corporeality – unlocking the "pure" potentialities of the body; fearlessness to talk about the body and sexuality (e.g. *lady-sideburns; kiss-and-make-up sex; three-bonk-a-week arrangement*).

As we can see, occasionalisms are reflections of the postmodern mentality; they are the result of the need

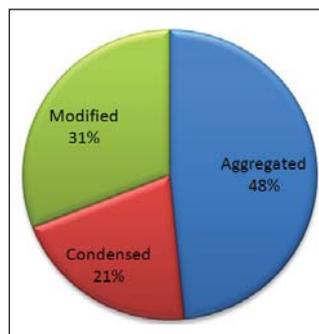


Figure 6. Quantitative characteristics of types of occasional word-formation according to the type of knowledge

to write in a new way keeping up with the times, with the evolution of the whole world, the speaker himself/herself and a new way of perception of the world.

Conclusion. All along, we have stressed cognitive nature of occasionalisms, which transmit knowledge with the help of different means of word-formation. The results constitute a comprehension of the fact that the type of word-formation and cognitive procedure underlying it differs in accordance with the kind of knowledge an occasionalism manifests. So it is worth distinguishing three types of occasional word-formation according to the type of knowledge: aggregated, condensed and modified, and corresponding cognitive procedures: combination, compression and modification.

In this study we opted for chick lit genre as a representative of postmodern fiction which is very rich in individual-author's words. We pointed out that exactly the characteristics of chick lit are represented in different types of occasional word-formation processes. The results of this study are applicable in the theoretical field of neology and the development of theoretical aspects of lexicology and cognitive semantics.

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