

NEOLOGY, NEONYMY, NEOSEMY: TERMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**Inga DRUȚĂ, PhD, The Philology Institute of the Moldavian Science Academy**

Abstract: In the paper we can see the analysis of the concepts of neology, neonymy and neosemy in relation with the terminological theory and practice. It is talked about the distinction between the primary and the translated neology, emphasizing the role of the translation as a “strategic zone” for the neology. We can examine the notion of “feeling of the neology” which is present in the language of the speakers regarding the new created lexems or those borrowed recently from other languages. We can observe the acceptance criteria and the formation processes of neonyms and neosemes.

Keywords: neology, neonymy, neosemy, relation, terminological theory

1. Neology. Terminology as a social practice and discipline is inseparable of *neology*. The term *neology* is not yet unanimously recognized with the same meaning. In *Dicționarul de științe ale limbii* (*The Dictionary of language sciences*), the neology is defined as “the sum of the internal and external processes of enrichment of the vocabulary [...] with new words and meanings” (DSL 2005: 343), being circumscribed to the lexicon. In the same source it’s mentioned that this term is frequently used in the French linguistics and not very well known and used in the Romanian linguistics, the term *creativity* being preferred (a suggestive reference: *Creativitate lexicală în româna actuală* by Adriana Stoichițoiu-Ichim).

In the French linguistics, classic lexicologists as Luis Guilbert or Guy Rondeau were considering neology as a discipline for the relative aspects of the new phenomena which appear in the languages, aspect which may refer to phonetics, morphology, syntax or lexicon. The beginnings of neology as a science is associated with the apparition of the reference monograph *La créativité lexicale* by Louis Guilbert (Larousse, 1975), one of the most valuable papers regarding the neologisms of the French language. The Author analyzes the causes of the lexicon mobility and its relation *use – creativity – norm*, getting to the conclusion that the most important role in the creation of neologisms is taken by the linguistic system.

The paper in discussion is followed by other semnificative contributions, like *La néologie française aujourd’hui: observations et réflexions* by André Goosse (1975), *Néologie et lexicologie* by RosineAdda et alia (1979), *Le management par les mots. Étude sociolinguistique de la néologie* by Fabienne Cusin-Berche (1998), *La néologie en français contemporain: examen du concept et analyse de productions néologiques récentes* by Jean-François Sablayrolles (2000), **Les neologisms** by Jean Pruvost and Jean-François Sablayrolles (2003) and the multiple studies signed by Alain Rey, Louis Déroy, Jacques Boissy, Danielle Candel, Bernard Quemada, Jean-Claude Boulanger, Adrien Hermans, Marie-Françoise Mortureux. With time passing by, the radius of investigation of the neology is narrowed to the lexical inovations, the activity of neology being defined as “a scientific study of new words and its motivated use” (Quemada 2007: 5).

Confronting various definitions and approaches of neology, we can state that it includes more activities: practical processes of creation of new lexical units and current mechanisms of lexical creativity of a language; the theoretical and applied study of the lexical creativity, ways of formation of words, identification criteria, the acceptance and the distribution of neologisms, their social and cultural aspects; the systematically organized institutional activity, focused on the recognition, registration, spread, implantation of neologisms in a concrete context of a linguistic politics; the identification of the specialized segments where we can find gaps in the terminological field which require interventions; the analysis in terms of novelty of the dictionaries regarding its use as filters of recognition of neologisms and the neological comparison of dictionaries (Boulanger 1989; Cabré 1998).

Specialists can make a distinction between *general and terminological neology* or *neonymy* (Kocourek 1982; Rondeau 1984; Quemada 2007). Another observed distinction by the specialists is the one between the *primary and translated neology* (Hermans, Vansteelandt 1999: 37): it is considered a *primary neology* the situation in which a new term is created once with the apparition of a new concept, while a translated neology is regarded to the situation when the term and the concept already exist in a language and are equalized in another language under the form of a term which didn't exist till then in the target language. Most frequently, we can talk about the primary neology in the cases of scientific discoveries, of some research laboratories, manufacture of new products etc. (cf. *smartphone*, *iPad*, *eReader*).

Community terminology is also a case of primary neology, because the foundation of the European Union has determined the creation of a new conceptual device, for which also had to be invented new terms: *Ombudsman*, *acquis communautar*, *guvernanță* and so on (Busuioc 2006). However, in the EU states and in their neighbourhood, the primary community neology (in English and/or in French) generates various forms of translated neology in the languages of the states involved in this discussion. Actually, the most common and natural environment of the translated neology is the translation.

The translators are the first ones to face the new terms from the source language and also the new concepts, for which they create equivalents in the target language. In the process of transposition, the translators need neologisms in order to assure the translated text the same functionality as to the text in the source language. However, a disadvantage of the translated neology is starting the use of multiple denominations for the same concept or of some wrong-formed terms. An example of a multiple denomination for the same notion, in the Romanian language, would be the existence of three syntagms-synonyms, which came from the translation of some European directives: *colectare selectivă*, *colectare diferențiată*, *colectare separată* (a deșeurilor) (Bara 2011).

Adrien Hermans and Andrée Vansteelandt call the translation a “strategic zone” for neology, since the neologisms created by the translators immediately appear in a real context of communication, especially in an area which encourages the natural distribution of new terms. The neologisms that are proposed by the linguists are transmitted in a written form (documents, laws, manuals, instructions, mandates), which is, for the scientific and technical terms, the main way of distribution of neologisms, with the biggest potential of acceptability in a linguistic community, assuring all at once legitimacy, valorification and consecration of new terms. However, almost always being pressured by time, the translators do not have the

necessary energy to find an adequate equivalent. Also, more frequently than wanted, they choose to use loans or circumlocutions.

The distinction between the primary and translated neology is very important in the case of the Romanian language, in which most of the terminological units are coming from the translation/equivalency of terms from other languages (cultures), phenomenon in which are trained all the resources of linguistic creativity for obtaining of the most adequate and transparent terms. However, in relation to the English language, all the languages in the world are finding themselves in front of pseudosystematic translations (Hermans, *Vansteelandt* 1999: 42), which they have to handle. On the other hand, professionals admit that “in the international communication, scientists (including the technicians) interrelate in English, a genuine *lingua franca* of modern sciences” (Gaudin 2003: 198).

1.1. Neologism. The mark “new”, from the syntagma “new word” – *neologism* – is interpretable. The discussion on neology and neologisms still remains open in the European linguistics, as well as in the Romanian one. There are different opinions regarding the meaning, as well as the term called neologism.

From an etymological point of view, the term *neologism* (< fr. *néologisme*, cf. gr. *neos* and *logos*), designates a new word introduced in a language. The result of the comparison of definitions which exist in Romanian and European lexicographical papers, we can observe differences at the level of the semantic analysis of notion. Dictionnaires such as *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, *Larousse*, *Il Vocabolario Treccani* (1997), *Webster* etc. present the *neologism* as a polysemantic notion (usually having three meanings: 1. A new word, loaned from another language; 2. A word that already exists in a language and it is given a new meaning; 3. Invented word that is understood only by the its speaker, which appears usually as a symptom of schizophrenia).

In the Romanian dictionnaires the concept in discussion is treated as an unique definition: “*neologism* n.n. New word, loaned or formed recently in a language from its own resources and methods” (DLR). *Dicționarul de neologisme*, after a French example, provides more details to its definition, completing it with a secondary meaning: “*neologism* n.n. New word, loaned from a foreign language or formed from its own resources and methods in the target language; (p. restr.) recent lexical loan. • New acceptance of a word”. According to the *Robert* dictionary, the term *neologism* was used for the first time in the 18th century with the following acceptances: “1. Emploi d’un mot ou d’une expression dont la forme est soit créée de toutes pièces, soit obtenue par déformation, dérivation, composition, emprunt etc. – *Par ext.* Emploi d’un mot ou d’une expression dont on conserve la forme, mais qu’on détourne de son sens habituel pour lui donner un sens nouveau. 2. Le mot nouveau, l’expression nouvelle qu’on forme ou qu’on détourne ainsi de son sens”.

In the 19th century, the term was accepted in the international terminology (fr. *néologisme*, engl. *neologism*, germ. *Neologismus*) as a lexical unity which has recently entered in a particular language (DSL 2005: 343). However, the ambiguity of the feature of “recent term” from the definition of the neologism has created fervent philological disputes. One of the specialists that emphasized the difficulty of delimitation of the lexical units which recently appeared in a language was Gheorghe Adamescu, saying that “assuming neologisms as new is relative” (Adamescu 1936-1938: 50), loans being considered new in a language just

for a period of time. Their frequent use and passing from the cultural and scientifical registre of the language in the ordinary one determines pe speakers to accomodate them in the current vocabulary.

Iorgu Iordan also emphasizes the relativity of the feature “new term”, declaring that neologisms are “the words loaned in the period of time covered by the concept of contemporan Romanian language and of which speakers are sure they are new words. A word is a neologism as much time as it is felt as something new. As soon as a word is getting old and is being used regularly, then it loses its aspect of inovation” (Iordan, Robu 1978: 310).

The idea about the relative character of “new” given to neologisms was also expressed in the French linguistics, especially by Jean-François Sablayrolles (2000) and Jean Pruvost (Pruvost, Sablayrolles 2003), they also talk about a “feeling of neology”, characteristic to the speakers, more fluctuating each day (that means that the duration of distribution and assimilation of neologism is reduced more and more, and neologists “age” faster and faster). This is why, specialists ask themselves: why and when do we know we have a new word? How long does the neological (*néologicité*) nature of a new-born or loaned lexeme from another language last?

According to an opinion, a word is new from the moment of its creation until it is approved in a general dictionary. Marie-Françoise Mortureux considers that the neologism is “a word recognized as a new and susceptible word ready for the lexicalizaton” (Mortureux 1997: 105). Maria Teresa Cabré also believes that a term loses its neological nature as soon as it is introduced in a dictionary, as it passes through a few steps of adaption in the target language: at first it appears as an individual act, but then through the help of repeated acts, it settles in the language and finally it gets lexicalized, becoming a fully approved word in the receiving language (Cabré 2002: 18). We care to mention that if in some linguistic schools the neology is considered to be a synchronic concept (it is not longer considered to be a neologism as soon as the lexeme finds her way into the general dictionaries of that language), in the Romanian linguistics, as it was noticed by Ioana Vintilă-Rădulescu, “the label of a neologism is definitely connected to these particular words” (Vintilă-Rădulescu 2006: 443).

Actually, the lexicalization is not enough to test a “neologicity”. The Dictionary, through the insertion of these new lexical units, attests, in a certain way, that they are new, but the duration of the neological nature can not be recognized in each case. Usually, the word is not being added to a dictionary in the same year it got attested, especially if it also got created that year. On its turn, dating, the objective mark based on recording news, isn’talways precise. It works perfectly only for “voluntary” neologisms, in the case of terminologies. With the exception of terminological creations (neonyms), you can not state the exact date of appearance of a new lexical unit or of a new meaning (Hermans, Vansteelandt 1999: 38). In this order of ideas, we can mention that Boubakeur Bouzidi, in an excellent study (*Néologicité et temporalité dans le processus néologique*, 2010), focuses on the conditions and elements which determine the neological nature of the new lexemes.

This is why, the author is asking himself: would the recording in the dictionaries be the beginning or the end of the period of “neologicity”? However dictionaries do not create new words and also do not invent unused meanings. They “present the neologism, legitimate it and put it in circulation” (Bouzidi 2010: 32). Some neologisms are generalized in a

language in a very short period of time (cf. *clip*, *webcam*, *laptop* etc.) and start to lose their “feeling of neology” which usually comes together with neologisms. Other lexical creations can remain inactive for a long time, but after all they get to the

common use (after more years from its appearance): this is the case of some terms which migrate beyond their fields of application and “find” their way to the general language, sometimes called repeated neologisms, or of some stylistic creations by some writers, as *Novlangue* (registered in *Petit Larousse* in 2000), word appearing in the novel *1984* by George Orwell, published in 1949. “The Success” of a neologism (distribution, attestation in dictionaries) depends of more elements, such as “the deficiency” or the lexical void, the absence of competing forms, the adaptation degree to the linguistic system.

However, the attestation of a new lexeme, at a certain date, is nothing more than just an occurrence, insufficient to record the appearance of a neologism. A neologism has to impose itself: the society needs to accept it and the language (the dictionary) to admit and attest it. Therefore, besides dating, an important criterion in the establishment of the neological nature of a lexeme is *frequency*. On the other hand, the use frequency can be as well as an element of consolidation, one of destruction of the neological nature of a lexical unit (Bouzidi 2010: 33). In conclusion, Boubakeur Bouzidi states that the duration of the neological nature remains fluid, and the feeling of neology is relative.

In this context, it is very important what was mentioned in *Dicționarul de științe ale limbii* regarding the status of the neologism: “the neologism can be identified only in a certain synchronic cut and it is operable, especially, in relation with the standard language or with some special languages (technical), seen from the same synchronic perspective” (DSL 2005: 343).

Making a synthesis, we can state that for the establishment of the neological nature of a lexeme there are considered the following criteria: *diachrony*, *lexicography* (the existence/the absence of some lexical units in the dictionnaires of an era); *incertitude* (morphological, graphical, phonetic or semantic); *psycho-sociology*: the perception of the new word by the speakers and their acceptance of it (Cabré 1998; Pavel, Rucăreanu 2001: 52; Busuioc 2006: 2-3; Clim 2012).

2. Neonymy and neonyms. Neology and the necessity to name things, phenomena, processes etc. do not over overlap in a precise way. On the other hand, the wordplay, the intention of inducement or the search for expressiveness can generate neologisms without the concomitant appearance of new realities which need to be designated. On the other hand, a denomination isn't necessarily a neologism, a new word: usually states the extension and the semantic specialization of some existing terms in new contexts, which denote the viability of linguistic signs for new realities (Sablayrolles 2007: 12). Finally, there are various cases of renaming and of multiple denominations for the same concept (*ibid.*).

In the specialty literature we can see the distinction between the common language neologisms and the neologisms of specialized and terminological languages, called neonyms (new denominations) and neosemes (new meanings) (Kocourek 1982; Rondeau 1984; Quemada 2007; Bălan Mihailovici 2003: 102). Neonyms appear as a denominative necessity and have a bigger stability then the common language neologisms (Pavel, Rucăreanu 2001: 53). Therefore, neonymy works in the case of the terminological void (Busuioc 2006: 2).

A big amount of papers show that, from the strictly formal point of view, neologism and neonyms share a series of characteristics. Despite the variousity of existing typologies, it is accepted that more or less neologisms and neonyms are formed almost the same way, through methods present in any language.

However, Bruno de Bessé signals some differences in the formation of lexical unites (words), in the French general language, where it is usually used the morphological creation – derivation (prefixation and suffixation), and in the process of term formation prevale the syntagmatic lexical creations. Bessé emphasizes the fact that the lexical neologism from the general language is born spontaneously, does not cancel the synonyms and often is referred to a certain social group, to a certain level of the language. A new term appears in a specialty language in a moment in which, after a discovery, a new concept is created, designated in a conscious way by its author, in his language. The new concept passes initially in the scientific environments, and only then imposes its designation in other languages. From this reason, term creators, most of the times specialists in the field, aspire to the transparency of the terminological unit. Therefore, we can state that the term formation is a conscious process (Bessé 1992: 60-64).

In the same order of ideas, Adrien Hermans and Andrée Vansteelandt claim that terms need to be created in conformity to the lexical or terminological matrices of the language in which they appear and with the matrices specific to the field of application. The notion of lexical/terminological matrix is explainable through the fact that every language and every field can select certain methods and instruments of formation of the new lexical/terminological units (Hermans, *Vansteelandt* 1999: 39). In some languages, as English and German, we can find preferences for derivation or composition (most of the terms are composed, unified, with a strict order, different from that of the romanic languages: determinative – determined), for suffixation earlier than for prefixation; in the case of the fields of application, in the neonyms from certain disciplines the elements of formation of greek and latin origin (medicine) are dominating, while in others the modern elements like *eco-* (environment terminology) or *euro-* (community terminology).

Neonyms are formed through various methods like: procedures of morphological nature (derivation, composition), syntagmatic (abbreviation, ellipse, truncation, contamination or recombination, labelling), semantics (metaphor or metonymy), loan (direct and indirect – calque) (Busuioc 2006: 5).

Greek and Latin, called “dead languages”, are present even today in terminology and mark in a visible way the European vocabulary either by the terms taken entirely, or by the fact that they attest methods of formation of neonyms. According to a statistics, these 2 languages supply the modern terminology with over 10.000 elements of formation (with a different degree of productivity) (Bălan-Mihailovici 2003:89). Therefore, the term creation with the help of the elements of formation of greek and latin origin may be considered one of the methods of internationalization of terminologies.

Terms, intended in the first place for the use of the specialists, are mostly elaborated with a lot of care and rigour. There are many terms of which can be said with exactity who has invented them or when they were created. A famous example is the neonym *ordinateur*, created in 1955 at the request of the IBM company by a well known latinist, professor Jacques Perret. The term *ecosistem* was proposed in 1935 by the English botanist and ecologist Arthur Tansley. The above mentioned examples are the happy cases. More frequently, the author of the terms is unknown, but can be determined, with a more or less precision, the moment of appearance of a term in a language, by confronting various sources: specialized texts, manuals, press articles, dictionaries etc.

A special kind of neonyms are product names. The importance of “brand” terminology is more and more important nowadays, cf. new terms created by Windows, starting with the famous *window*, but also with: *(dialogue) room, file, workbook, macro* etc.

3. Neosemy. A neologism is not necessary a word or a phrase that is unknown until a certain moment. A neologism can be an existing word, which is given a new meaning, and then we observe a semantical neologism or a *neosem*: *virus, pirate* or *icon* in informatics, *personalization* in the automotive industry, *niche* in economy etc.

A living language is a dynamic system. Any word can evolve from a semantic point of view. A term may exceed a field of application through a more general use, in contexts that are less specialized. Sometimes the new use can be caused by certain events. Therefore, before the tragedy in December 2004 from South-East Asia, the usage of the term *tsunami* was pretty rare and it was limited exclusively to geology in order to mark a phenomenon or a natural disaster.

After the tragedy, *tsunami* is used massively in order to designate major changes. For example, in the French zone, Coralie Reutenaer has observed the syntagm *tsunami bleu*, referred to the electoral victory of UMP ([Union pour un mouvement populaire](#)) at the parliament elections in 2007, and also *tsunami financier*, a metaphorical name of the financial crisis (Reutenaer 2012). The usage of the term *tsunami* in the economic field is also observed in the Romanian language: *tsunami financiar, tsunami valutar, tsunami al creditelor*.

The meaning of *tsunami* in the mentioned contexts is not one of a “natural phenomenon”, but that of “(financial) crisis” or of “(devastating) force”. So, the semantic innovation exists if it distinguishes of a well known, traditional meaning.

Semantic neology or neosemy is characterized through the appearance of a new signified for an existing significant. In linguistics, semantic neology is considered to be a *process*, depending of time. In function of the prospects and the objectives of the research, neosemy can be delimited in a manner which is more or less ample, taking in consideration the fact that the distribution step which is connected to it varies: from *hapax*, where the element of innovation is well marked, but the distribution is not very significant, until a big number of uses, when the new meaning becomes obvious, but the nature of the innovation is losing its clarity. Semantic neology is also associated to a feeling of rupture, being perceived as a gap between an existing meaning and the new significances from the speech (*ibid.*).

The gap between the known meaning and the new one can be established according to a linguistic body based on a certain period of time, which, on one hand, will provide data

regarding the significance before of the semantic evolution, and on the other hand, will allow the capture of the new meaning given to this new use. Therefore, the news will be described through the distance between a codified meaning in a source reference, usually a dictionary of general language, and the uses from the discussional resources stocked in the textual body. The repeated presence during a period of time and a big amount of uses can confirm the implantation of a new meaning and can lead to the integration of the semantic change in the significance of a term.

In terminology, the most frequently used methods of creating neosemes are *specialization* or *terminologization*, *semantic transfer*, *interdisciplinary transfer*.

Terminologization is the method through which a word or a phrase from the general language gets a new specialized meaning, through analogy (report of contiguity) or with the help of metaphors: *mouse* (fr. *souris*), *fereastră* (fr. *fenêtre*, engl. *window*), *bombă logică* (fr. *bombe logique*, engl. *logic bomb*), *poartă* (fr. *passerelle*, engl. *gateway*), *punte* (fr. *pont*, engl. *bridge*) in informatics; *cămașă de cilindru* (fr. *chemise de cylindre*, engl. *cylinder liner*), *piston cu fustă despicate* (fr. *piston a jupe fendue*, engl. *split-skirt piston*), *coajă de portocală* (fr. *peau d'orange*, engl. *orange peel*), *dans al conductoarelor* (fr. *galop des conducteurs*, engl. *conductor galloping*) in the technical terminology etc. The process of terminologization is a generous source of terminology formation.

Semantic transfer is the process through which a term that already exists is used in order to designate another concept with the help of a *logical extension*. For example, a term which designates a concept which is related to a concrete object can be extended to an abstract object, the name of one part can be extended, metonymically, naming the whole, naming one container with the name of its content etc. Thereby, in informatics, engl. *screen*, with the concrete meaning of „component part of the display where the information is processed”, obtains with the help of metonymy and the abstract meaning of “the information presented on the screen of the computer”. In the sports field, metonymy stand at the base of some meanings that appeared in the language of sports commentators: *eleven* “football team”, *three-coloured* “members of the national team”, *cap* “hitting the ball with the help of the head” and so on.

Interdisciplinary loan is regarded to the situation when a term from a field of activity is assigned to a new concept from another field, these two concepts being connected through analogy, cf. *memory* (psychology) “capacity of the human brain” and *memory* (informatics) “computer’s provisional capacity to store information”; *virus* (medicine) “pathogen agent that causes infectious diseases” and *virus* (informatics) “an unauthorized program that inserts itself into a computer system and then propagates itself to other computers via networks or disks; when activated it interferes with the operation of the computer”; *segment* (geometry) “The portion of a line between any two points on the line” and *segment* (economy) “one of the parts into which something is divided; a division, portion, or section” (*sales segment*, *market segment*) etc.

In this context, Theodor Hristea states that words that change their meanings represent the central theme of the diachronic semantics and one of the fundamental parts of the modern etymological research (Hristea 1981: 258), but Paul Miclău claims that between the common language and the specialized languages exist indissoluble relations of complementarity: “it’s been a very long time since this neverending dispute has started between the specialized and

the common language; the result is the crystallization of some omonymies or of some polysemies, this is where we can observe the development of several technical meanings, along with the current one", that's why "the semantic analysis of the specialized languages will take in consideration every technical and scientific manifestation of a lexeme, leaving aside the common level, especially the figurative one" (Miclău 1981: 68-69).

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