

Artículo de investigación

Language representation of the concept “britishness” in the post-brexit british media discourse

Representación del lenguaje del concepto "británico" en el discurso de medios
británicos post-brexit

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyze the concept “Britishness”, peculiarities of its language representation in the situation of the post Brexit policy in the modern British media discourse. It can be presented by a number of semantic meanings which find their expression in specific contexts determined by the basic task of Media language, i.e. to transfer information not only objectively but in accordance with particular attitudes and beliefs. In today’s British society the concept “Britishness” is a key element in the system of British cultural values.

Keywords: concept, “Britishness”, modern British media discourse, peculiarities of the language representation, multiculturalism, post multiculturalism policy, Brexit.

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es analizar el concepto "británico", peculiaridades de su representación del lenguaje en la situación de la política post-Brexit en el discurso mediático británico moderno. Puede presentarse mediante varios significados semánticos que encuentran su expresión en contextos específicos determinados por la tarea básica del lenguaje de los medios, es decir, transferir información no solo objetivamente sino de acuerdo con actitudes y creencias particulares. En la sociedad británica actual, el concepto "británico" es un elemento clave en el sistema de valores culturales británicos.

Palabras claves: concepto, "británica", discurso moderno de los medios de comunicación británicos, peculiaridades de la representación del lenguaje, multiculturalismo, política de post multiculturalismo, Brexit.

Resumo

O objetivo do artigo é analisar o conceito "britânico", peculiaridades de sua representação da linguagem na situação da política pós-Brexit no discurso moderno da mídia britânica. Pode ser apresentado através de vários significados semânticos que encontram expressão em contextos específicos determinados pela tarefa básica da linguagem da mídia, isto é, a transferência de informações não apenas objetivamente, mas

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de acordo com atitudes e crenças particulares. Na sociedade britânica de hoje, o conceito "britânico" é um elemento-chave no sistema britânico de valores culturais.

Palavras-chave: conceito, "britânico", discurso moderno da mídia britânica, peculiaridades da representação da linguagem, multiculturalismo, política do pós-multiculturalismo, Brexit.

Introduction

The article presents the modern interpretation of the concept "Britishness", its characteristics and ways of its language representation in the post-Brexit British media. The main characteristic feature of the modern British society is integration. This process is vividly reflected in the language which provides a possibility of representing conceptual structures (in traditional terminology - "notions") in a verbal form (Vishnyakova, 2008). Considering a problem of concepts or notions within a certain system, we will note that special role is given to a factor of dynamics of conceptual structures, on the one hand, and also to factors of transformation of the system - on the other.

The UK's referendum on leaving the European Union was marked by an increasingly toxic discourse on citizenship and belonging and the rights that pertain as a consequence. This discourse provided at least part of the context for the brutal killing before the vote of a socialist and progressive MP Jo Cox and was followed by increasing racist and xenophobic attacks on migrants and minorities after the decision for Brexit (Bhambra & Gurminder, 2017).

The material of political journalism, undoubtedly, presents a fertile area for review of realizations of concepts "Britishness" in various ideological contexts. T. van Dijk found that "unlike most other discourse forms, political discourse may be relevant for all citizens. This power derives both from this scope and from its various degrees of legitimacy. Few forms of oral discourse are as well known, routinely quoted, or distributed as widely through the mass media as that of top politicians, such as the president or prime minister" (Dijk van, 1989).

Materials and Methods

The research of this complex phenomenon is being made on the basis of functional cognitive analyses.

Results and discussion

The problem of determining evaluated attitude to the category of "Britishness" is relevant not only for linguists but also for the wider community of scientists, as well as political and public figures. This example contains a direct reference to the ambiguity of the formation and explanation of its meaning: "There is a rather more pressing need for a definition of a concept which transcends party politics and political philosophy" (Leith, 2011).

On BBCI's Question Time programme broadcast on 15 June an audience member pleaded "I want my country back... we're all just so frustrated". This single plea symbolised a referendum which has been dominated not by sober analysis and evidence-based reason, but by hysteria, hatred, savage emotions, and the sinister monster of exclusionary, ethnic nationalism. The three phases of Brexit – campaign, referendum, aftermath – have revealed three urgent problems. First, the lack of public faith in establishment politics. Second, the emotional deficit of the EU. Third, the return of a particularly ugly English nationalism. All of these were intimately connected in a campaign whose nature was fundamentally emotional (Foster, 2016).

There is some reason to suppose that this new and rising English nationalism is anti-immigration in its orientation, and even worse – given that England is a highly diverse country – anti-multiculturalist. While it is worrying that the Brexit result seems to have led to an uptick in racial abuse and harassment, there is no reason to suppose that English nationalism and multiculturalism must be opposed to each other (Modood, 2016).

Leaving aside the fact that surveys consistently suggest people of non-white backgrounds are more likely to identify as British than 'White British' people, there is an issue here with the vague nature of the concept of cohesion, and related expressions such as 'what unites us', and

'bringing our country together'(Andreouli, 2014).

"I take it as a given (by polls) that the most influential reason why people voted Brexit was not to restore British sovereignty in the abstract but more precisely to "take it back" in order to stop more of "them" coming over. I also take it as understood that this statement does not infer that all who voted for Brexit are racists. Structural racism does not make of every individual a racist but implicates every individual, variously, in the reproduction and/or contestation of racial structures" (Shilliam, 2016).

The most visceral attacks came in relation to a sense of that national community having been betrayed by a metropolitan elite that appeared to care more for the situation of "non-British" others than it did for the "legitimate" citizens of Britain (Mason, 2016).

It is striking that 70% of the people of England ticked the "English" box and the vast majority of them did not also tick the "British" box, even though they were invited to tick more than one. This was much more the case with white people than non-whites, who were more likely to be "British" only or combined with English. Multiculturalism, then, may actually have succeeded in fostering a British national identity among ethnic minorities.

Multiculturalism in this case, then, offers not only the plea that English national consciousness should be developed in a context of a broad, differentiated British identity, but also, ethnic minorities can be seen as an important bridging group between those who think of themselves as only English, and those who consider themselves English and British.

Paradoxically, a supposedly out-of-date political multiculturalism becomes a source of how to think about not just integration of minorities but about how to conceive of our plural nationality and of how to give expression to dual identities such as English-British. It is no small irony that minority groups who are all too often seen as harbingers of fragmentation could prove to be exemplars of the union.

As Modood emphasizes the minimum he would wish to urge upon a centre-left that is taking English consciousness seriously is that it should not be simply nostalgic and should avoid ethnic

nationalism, such as talk of Anglo-Saxonism. More positively, multiculturalism, with its central focus on equal citizenship and diverse identities and on the renewing and reforging of nationality to make it inclusive of contemporary diversity, can help strengthen an appreciation of the emotional charge of belonging together (Modood, 2016).

The analyzed material is characterized by emergence of a significant amount of the examples reflecting a negative assessment of a new strategy and its consequences in connection with the promotion of the new doctrine. For example: hysteria, hatred, savage emotions, and the sinister monster of exclusionary, ethnic nationalism, racial abuse and harassment vividly illustrate the atmosphere in today's British society and imply the tension within the country.

But English nationalism has become the hallmark of angry, disillusioned sections of English society that feel left behind in the modern world and modern Britain. When mixed with unease at immigration, we have a combination that British politicians have been loath to go near. Instead they have been more comfortable with being "British," fearing English nationalism is racist, causes tensions with Scotland and is an outlook of the working class and football supporters (Olive, 2016).

"Britishness" is also understood in the British society as tolerance, but at the same time has certain limitations associated with the attempt to overcome the blurring of such phenomenon of entity as "nationalism". For example: "English nationalism is a more slippery concept than might be imagined. As Kumar persuasively argues, for the English, presiding over an empire, there was no distinction made between being English and being British. In the global world of the British Empire, to be British was sufficient. It also enabled the Scots and Welsh to be co-opted into the British identity and to play key roles in imperial Britain (Lloyd, 2016).

English nationalism is necessarily postimperial and necessarily has a racialized – white – dimension to it (Shilliam, 2016). On the political right and the left, white commentators use 'British' or 'English' or 'the working class' always to mean 'white British', 'white English' and the 'white working class'. They don't even need to think of having to qualify what it is to be British; it is such the common-sense position that to be British or English is to be white. Those who argue

for a class analysis on this basis are, in fact, offering the most racialized of identity politics, albeit one that is unconscious to itself. The mobilization of 'Churchillian' values and freedoms by Boris Johnson and the use of the iconography of spitfires by Nigel Farage's UKIP, aligns with the discourse of the far-right across the EU that sees Europe itself as white and under threat from the darker subjects it had previously subjugated. This mythology of a white Europe or a historically white Britain seriously misrepresents the multiracial political formations that were the context for the emergence and development of many European countries, including Britain, as they are today (Bhambra & Gurminder, 2016). The author of this statement characterizes the problem of patriotism associated with the situation in the UK as a tragedy. The estimated characteristic is conveyed with the expression "white British". The noun "patriotism" is defined here as synonymous units for a phrase "white English".

Cosmopolitan, multicultural Britain still thrives in London, even while English working class pride in the Cross of St George flourishes in the North and East of England, and the Saltire flies high in Scotland. In other words, the post-referendum situation within the United Kingdom is complex. A simple xenophobic nationalism type argument cannot do it justice. Nationalism is an ideology that asserts that humanity is divided into nations, and that nations ought properly to form the basis of independent sovereign states. Whether the nation itself is ethnic or civic, inclusive or exclusive, a creation of modernity or something deeply rooted in a distant past is much debated, and not just in academia. There are many such nationalisms active in Britain today, running across the full spectrum of possibilities from cosmopolitan, tolerant and outward looking to parochial, intolerant and inward looking. The Leave campaign's 'take back control' rhetoric does not encompass them all.

What we see in the United Kingdom post EU referendum is more than just a power vacuum, more than just political and economic uncertainty; it is a country in existential crisis. The crucial question that must now be answered is what kind of a country this shall be. The EU referendum has laid bare several different Britains, each seeking different futures. It is far from clear how, or even if, all of these different futures will be reconciled (Jackson-Preece, 2016).

To summarize, as the research shows, in some cases conceptual frameworks "Britishness" and "Englishness" are implemented in contexts that have ideologically conditioned positive or extremely negative evaluation, which is represented through the implementation of linguistic meanings at different levels.

Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of the texts of the British political press allows to conclude that the concept "Britishness" is implemented in contextual pin with such units as: the return of a particularly ugly English nationalism, rising nationalism, anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism, an uptick in racial abuse and harassment, ticked the "English", English national consciousness, talk of Anglo-Saxonism, the hallmark of angry, disillusioned sections of English society no distinction made between being English and being 'British' or 'English' or 'the working class' always to mean 'white British', 'white English' and the 'white working class', the mobilization of 'Churchillian' values and freedoms by Boris Johnson and the use of the iconography of spitfires by Nigel Farage's UKIP historically white Britain. In Britain the very category of "British identity" is closely connected with the problem of heterogeneity of society.

What we see in the United Kingdom post EU referendum is more than just a power vacuum, more than just political and economic uncertainty; it is a country in existential crisis. The EU referendum has laid bare several different Britains, each seeking different futures. It is far from clear how, or even if, all of these different futures will be reconciled (Jackson-Preece, 2016).

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