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ON CLARIFICATION OF THE TERM “LANGUAGE GAME” IN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract. The paper presents an overview of the most popular approaches to the phenomenon of “language game” in contemporary linguistics. Though the term “language game” is broadly used in today’s academic publications, it has so far remained ambiguous. It is mostly correlated with the poetic function of language (the function of impact) and so a limited number of written varieties of speech restricts its functioning. The author argues that “language game” has a far greater sphere of functioning - in fact, the communicative space as a whole. Hence, “language game” should be actually considered as a self-sufficient, “gamely” function of language.

Keywords: language game; word humour; humour of situation; intentional deviations from language norms; communicative space; inventory of word-formation means; the function of impact (poetic function of language); “game-ly” function of language.

In the mentality of language speakers, language game is associated with deliberate playful use of language in the broadest sense of the word, with multiform flippant misuse of words and sounds, with play based on attaching new unexpected and therefore jocular meanings to words, with all sorts of puns and witty jokes and popular humorous aphorisms. Every language speaker has got an idea of the games with language from the beginning of his language acquisition and they occupy a considerable place in his everyday experience throughout his life [1: 63-64, 249]. In childhood, all of us were fond of putting in extra syllables into words to make our utterance secretive to strangers and just for fun, as for example, ab-let’s -ab-go ab-for -ab-walk. By the by, a few days ago the author of this paper happened to hear the following conversation of the two young girls:

“A - Do you know there is such a funny new language?

B - What sort of language?

A - A very simple one, but nobody will make out what you say...

You merely pronounce ordinary words but leave out the first letter in each word.

B - It sounds like this:

-iza, -ive -e -e -ed -encil, -lease. Sounds funny. And what's this to be done for?

A - Just for fun".

That laconic is the children's explanation of the phenomenon of "language games".

Linguists assume "language games" include a whole list of various imaginable deviations from what is viewed as language and speech norms. They include into this list all sorts of puns and witticisms, humorous play on words and their hidden meanings, flippant parodying [2: 1-4], secretive childish types of speech, gibberish, encoded slangs of criminals [1: 58-59, 62-65]. Language game may take various shapes.

Scholars also refer to language game the cases of play upon complete texts, which are made deliberately meaningless and devoid of logic just for fun. The examples of these are tongue twisters, roundelays, funny riddles, and childish gobbledygook nursery rhymes well known in any culture. Humorous types of popular folklore and popular playful ritual speeches (crooked language) are also instances of language games [Ibid: 41].

Such playful folklore texts as humorous sayings, cock-and-bull stories, zaigryshes, popular aphorisms are referred to by philologists as special variety of texts - non-coherent texts [3: 121-126].

Every English child knows fairly well the nonsensical gobbledygook nursery rhymes, as the following:



Oh, the grand old Duke of York,
He had ten thousand men;
He marched them up to the top of the hill,
And he marched them down again.

And when they were up, they were up,
And when they were down, they were down,
And when they were only half-way up,
They were neither up nor down.



Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.



Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.



There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children, she didn't know what to do;
She gave them some broth without any bread;
Then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed [4].

Language game as both language and cultural phenomenon has attracted the attention of home scholars relatively recently. Nevertheless, its popularity is gaining force.

Philosophers and specialists in cultural studies were the first to make attempts of scientific explication of the phenomenon of “language games”. The term itself, *Sprachspiel* dates back to L. Wittgenstein’s classical paper “Philosophical Investigations” (1945). The work became known to a wide range of Russian specialists after it had been translated into Russian and published in the 16th issue of the series “The News of Foreign Linguistics” in 1985. Later on, the work has been re-published in separate issues in Russia several times [5]. Wittgenstein, as is known, elaborated a theory of communication by means of language and language evolution resulting from language functioning in speech. He believed the practical implementation of language in actual speech in a variety of situations, the linguistic behaviour of the speakers in the process of speaking, which he termed “the language game”, makes up the core of language and its subsequent evolution. In his theory Wittgenstein likened any speech act to a specific “language game” of the speakers with meanings of words, word combinations and phrases which are subject to changes and transformations in a new situationa bound speech act. The existing inventory of language units, models and structures is not fixed. New language forms and structures emerge because of the interaction of speech and situation in which it occurs. Thus, new language units and models supersede the former ones. Wittgenstein terms the situation in which communication takes place “language game”.

It was shortly after the issue of Wittgenstein’s paper in this country when the work “Language game”. Russian everyday speech: Phonetics. Morphology. Vocabulary. Gesture by the Russian scholars E.A. Zemskaya, M.V. Kitaigorodskaya and N.I. Rozanova was published [6]. This work initiated the settling of the term “language game” in home linguistics for a full

due. The authors suggested that the term "language game" should denote those cases of intentional deviations from the language norms "which take place when the speaker plays on a language form, when the speaker's free attitude to a language norm is motivated by his desire to produce aesthetic impact, however small the impact may be. This play may take shape of a plain joke, a well-turned witticism, a pun and all sorts of tropes (metaphors, similes, periphrases etc.)" [6: 175]. Thus, on the one hand the authors quite justly concluded that language game takes place in everyday speech, but on the other hand, they inconsistently argued that language game is, in fact, realization of the poetic function of language. They seem to have overlooked the fact that from the time immemorial poetic function of language was viewed as inherent to a restricted variety of speech acts - initially to the oral epic genres and subsequently to the written texts of folklore epos and finally to verbal art. Thus, having equated "language game" and poetic function of language the authors unintentionally created a contradiction: they implicitly restricted "language game" by a certain limited variety of written texts - works of verbal art aimed to realize the function of aesthetic impact. The term "the function of impact" dates back to the acad. Vinogradov's classical work "Stylistics. Theory of poetic speech. Poetics" [7: 6-14].

Following in his steps, the majority of Russian scholars correlate the function of impact with poetic function of works of verbal art. It is clear that the linguists in question have not added something on principle new to the notion of "language game" that had not already been in the notion "poetic function" of language. In fact, in their theory they did not draw difference between the two notions: "the poetic function of language" and "language game". The more so the argue that the arsenal of devices employed both in poetic works and in "language games" is basically the same. They failed to explain the difference between the use of a set of stylistic devices (tropes) and figures of speech in literary works where they realize the function of impact and "language game" phenomenon. In fact, they automatically transferred the sonorous term "language game" from Wittgenstein's philosophical theory and employed it to the description of language facts. The term naturally lost its primary philosophical meaning in the new linguistic context, but it has failed to acquire any new linguistic meaning. Having ignored the primary philosophical meaning of the term the authors, in fact, gave to it no coherent linguistic substantiation. Thus, the term "language game" entered linguistic usage but it did not receive any new meaning that might differ it from the traditional linguistic term "stylistically marked use" of language units...

In the course of time, the term has become habitual in home linguistics. However, from time to time there emerged researches aimed to clarify the term "language game". The work "Russian language in the mirror of language game" by the Russian scholar V.Z. Sannikov [8] deserves special

mentioning as the one marked by the new details related to the notion of “language game”. In his paper, Sannikov draws difference between the “language jokes” employing the inventory of language models as such i.e. all sorts of intentional deviations from language norms for the sake of fun that the terms word humour and humour of situation contained in the so-called situational jokes. The latter are based on the harping of real life situations for the sake of humour. Life situations, which are deliberately forced to lose sense or logic, frequently result in humorous effect. Sannikov warns against confusing of these two types of humour [8: 108-114]. Popular nonsense folklore as cock-and-bull stories, all sorts of malarkeys, nonsensical nursery rhymes, English gobbledygook and Russian gobbledygook stories adduced above in the present paper, are, in his opinion the instances of the humour of situation.

It follows from Sannikov’s reasoning that “language jokes” are based on the deliberate misuse of the units of the basic language inventory, on the intentional breach of grammatical patterns and rules for the purpose of producing comic effect. Like previous researchers Sannikov, however, also insists that the process of gaming with language inventory is inspired wholly by creative impulse of the select few - authors of written texts. Again he restricted the “language game” phenomenon by creative use of language units within written variety of texts. Situational jokes, in his view, are beyond the scope of linguistic research. What Sannikov overlooked was the fact that in reality both situational jokes and verbal humour are sometimes so closely interrelated that it is not always easy to draw hard and fast distinction between them. Everyday experience of ordinary language speakers is full of both language jokes and situational humour. Let us consider a few instances where the two types of humour seem to be inseparably connected (the examples were heard by the author of this paper “in the street”):

1. “- Have you heard that the offices’ keys will since now on be given to the employees through the electronic card-file only? It won’t be possible to come back to the office after the lunch late... In addition, it won’t be possible to go home before the working day is over... We will be clocked in and clocked out in the file.

- However... Nothing doing. There’s no place to leave this submarine for...”

Actually, the joke is not a situation based one. It is the instance of a language joke in the true sense of the word. It is based on metaphor: the meaning “life” is transferred to the word “submarine”, thus the two notions are likened: our life is made the equivalent of being present on a submarine.

2. “- Oh! The frost has been - 30 degrees already longer than a fortnight. When will it end at last?

- We will hardly live to it... Russia is cold to us, you know”.

The play on the nominative and transferred meanings of the word "cold" in this case results in the stylistic device known as pun.

The two above instances are cases of word humour.

Unlike them, the following example is ambiguous.

3. A young man in a worn padded jacket gets on the bus. There is an inscription in big letters on the back of his padded jacket "sheepskin coat".

On the one hand, we deal here with the metaphoric transference of the name from one object to another (from a sheepskin coat to the worn padded jacket). On the other hand, visualization of the scene of action, of the situation, of the characters and objects involved in the situation is a necessary condition for the emergence of the metaphor and for its adequate interpretation by the addressees. In this respect, the example under consideration is undoubtedly a situational joke (humour of situation in Sannikov's classification). The last example differs from the previous two by the fact that in a situational joke a metaphor is not created in speech alone. It is created by the addresser (the young man in a worn padded jacket) and can be adequately interpreted by the addressee only in a certain situation - events that are really going on, people and things involved in the situation. This interpretation is in keeping with Sannikov's classification of humour into word humour and situational one. Language jokes are facts of speech alone, whereas situational jokes result from the play with events and require a progressing action.

Nowadays the vast majority of linguists concerned with "language game" are largely concerned with accumulation of new data about the arsenal of linguistic devices employed in language games. True, they elaborated a rather vast list of language devices used in language games at all levels of language including phonetic, lexical, morphological, syntactic, graphic devices [2-14]. However, the notion itself "language game" has not been so far clearly defined. The linguists keep on identifying it with poetic function of language (the function of impact) without reasonable grounds. Such misinterpretation of the language phenomenon in question unduly restricts sphere of its functioning in language. Moreover, in keeping with the long lasting linguistic tradition the data about the phenomenon in question are collected exclusively in written sources: printed media materials, publicist prose, and fiction, written advertisement texts. Thus, only a limited number of speakers is implicitly supposed to be able to "play" with the inventory of language units within a limited number of speech contexts and with the only aim of special artistic impact.

The author of the most recent paper still more impoverishes the notion of "language game" asserting that it is a purposeful manipulation with expressive resources of language, aimed at achieving comic effect [14: 3]. Respectively she draws a conclusion that language game can be either an attribute of the individual style of a writer, or a genre-relevant mark. The latter argument completely ties the phenomenon of "language game" to certain

genres of written texts exclusively. Thus the linguists have so far failed to overcome the contradiction: the term “language game” cannot evidently be a doublet to mean exactly the same as the artistic function of language means, whose meaning incorporates noncanonical use of language resources for extra expressivity, or for the special artistic impact.

The linguists evidently overlook that clarification the term “language game” as a linguistic term should take into consideration the space which “language game” occupies within the complete communicative space. The outstanding British linguist D. Crystal had every reason to state that the space taken by “language game” in a language is practically as unlimited, as is the whole space occupied by language as a tool of human communication. The following is his characteristic of “language game” (in Crystal’s terminology “verbal game”) which we find in one of his fundamental works “The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language”: Playing with words is a universal human activity... People delight in pulling words and reconstituting them in a novel guise, arranging them into clever patterns, finding hidden meanings inside them, and trying to use them according to specially invented rules in enormous diversity.” [1: 64]. He defines “language game” as “intonational, rhythmic, phonetic, lexical, morphological et.al. modifications of language norms which use the same principle, of deviating from language norms.” [Ibid: 62]. The encyclopedia contains abundant illustrations of “language game” in different languages and in various spheres of communication: in children’s speech, in criminals’ argots, in ritual religious hymns of some Indian tribes, in public speeches, oratory and ceremonial debates of some folks of the North Philippines, in congratulatory speeches of wedding rites of some folks of Malaysia [Ibid: 41, 58, 62-64]. This is where the obvious difference between the artistic (poetic) function of language and “language game” clears up.

Since the phenomenon understudy is viewed as sort of the game, we consider it of utmost importance to define the essence of “game” among other types of human activity. What we mean is the semantics of the word “game” itself can in no way be ignored since we aim at clarification of the term “language game”. With this in view we performed semantic analysis of the meaning of the word “game” both in Russian and English monolingual explanatory dictionaries. In the fundamental Russian explanatory Dictionary by V. Dal “game” is defined as «забава, установленная по правилам и вещи для того служащие (игра в горелки, в кости, в бабки, в карты...)». «Играть – шутить, тешиться, забавляться, веселиться от скуки, безделья» [15: 7]. In S. Ozhegov’s “Dictionary of Russian Language”, the definition runs as follows: «Играть – резвись, забавляться, развлекаться, проводить время в каком-нибудь занятии, служащем для развлечения, отдыха» [16: 193]. In the Oxford explanatory Dictionary the noun “game” is defined as “what is done for amusement, recreation” [17: 649]. Longman

Dictionary of English Language and Culture defines "game" as "activity for amusement only" [1: 1025].

The comparative analysis of the adduced definitions proves that all definitions have the common core meaning of the word "game" and it is the nuclear semantic component of the word "game". "Game" - is a specific human activity whose chief purpose is pleasure. To be more precise, it is a pastime, which has no other purpose but making fun just for its own sake. Besides, all the definitions we analyzed mention some other qualities of "game" as a specific type of activity. Gaming requires a certain set of instruments and certain rules of their implementation. Some definitions point out the necessity of certain skills for gaming.

Pursuit of pleasure had been an inherent quality of man since the time he was a biological something. However, the deliberate pursuit of pleasure by means of special instruments and tools, and which is more the one requiring special skills is solely the characteristics of the so-called Homo sapiens. J. Huizinga undertook etymological analysis of the verbs denoting "game" in some European languages [19]. As a result, he concluded that "game" had settled in the Man's experience and consequently in his mentality as far back as in mythological pre-Christian period. Pleasure is one of the Man's mind most persistent qualities. Persistent settling of "game" in the man's experience is accounted for by its most essential quality - to be an instrument for obtaining pleasure. Therefore, games accompanied Man throughout the whole history of his existence. Man's mind grew more and more complicated, so did the games.

The inventory of games was increasing alongside.

We agreed that game - is a purposeful pursuit of fun and pleasure. It presupposes a playing somebody, a certain set of tools for playing and a set of certain rules. The language units can obviously become the tools of "language games". It cannot be known when exactly language units and models became the tools of "language games". Formally, it was a transition from certain already existent types of games to other, yet new types. Language game was obviously one of the new types. Essentially this was the process of formation of the principally new quality of mind - conscious use of language (its units and structures) as a tool for the pursuit of pleasure through fun. A set of certain rules for "language games" is a necessary condition [1: 62].

If we look as far back as Aristotle's "Poetics", we will see that his theory of metaphor is based upon the thesis that the chief aim of metaphor is - entertainment and fun [20: 162]. Poets seem to have been the first and most vigorous "gamers" with the units of language. Perhaps, they were the first to join the two indispensable properties of mind - language and pursuit of pleasure through play with language. They seem to be among the first to find that language component units could easily become tools of a game of a special type - language game. Thus, it is not surprising that since times im-

memorial everything that might look like deliberate play with language units was included into the specific spheres of study - poetics, rhetoric, stylistics.

For centuries, linguists viewed all sorts of deviations from language norms as being motivated exclusively by writers' artistic or aesthetic considerations. Thence such deviations were considered part and parcel either of written texts or at least of high oratory and public speeches, were picked up predominantly in them and further on studied, analyzed and classified by linguists. In keeping with the centuries-old logic of the construct all deliberate deviations from what was considered the norm of lexical or grammatical usage were included into the inventory of stylistic devices: tropes and figures of speech. The complete inventory of the stylistic devices in question was traditionally attributed to the variety of speech termed as poetic language [21]. Any actualization of language units [22: 353-356] was limited uniquely by the frames of works of verbal art. In other words, viewed as such "language game" was recognized an elitist property of the "Men-of letters". Such concept of game with language units eliminated its very essence - fun achieved through playing with language units. It was about when and how ordinary language speakers were excluded from the potential "language gamers". It was largely owing to the fact that linguistics had for centuries remained a text-oriented science.

Does that mean that "gaming with language" takes place exclusively in written varieties of speech (texts) and in public speeches? The analysis of current reference books and dictionaries of new words, dictionaries of slang yields every reason to state that "language games" are deeply rooted into the speakers' everyday experience, into the communicative space of ordinary language speakers. Moreover, it had been rooted in everyday life of speakers much before it walked into written varieties of speech and he more so into works of verbal art. D. Crystal, for example, detects the remains of ancient language games in various ritual talks of some tribes of Malaysia and North Philippines [1: 41]. Only a small portion of "prizes" i.e. successful cases of "language game" becomes accessible for linguistic study. That portion are new words or new meanings that get into written texts and later on find a lodgment in printed dictionaries and hence in Lexicon. However, as the analysis of reference books in Vocabulary evolution and of Dictionaries of new words proves this portion is a rather voluminous one [23-26]. With this in mind, we set the task ahead to reveal instances of "language game" of unknown authors, ordinary language speakers on the lexical level - in word-formation and in semantic development of word meanings. Our sources were both Russian and English reference books and Dictionaries of new words.

The conducted research allows to conclude that large arrays of modern slang, slang in general use, youth slang, political slang, journalists' slang - are, so to speak, products of language game" which in many cases does not aim at filling in lexical lacunas (katahrezae) [20: 162]. We found out that

modern dictionaries of new words are full of such instances: *грузить* (излагать информацию, которая заставляет задумываться о неприятных вещах), *провисать* (не принимать участия в разговоре), *прикид* (модная одежда), *прикинутый* (модно одетый), *подкрученный* (не очень состоятельный молодой человек), *туз*, *крутой* (очень богатый молодой человек), *фуфло* (ерунда, что-то некачественное), *чмо* (урод, негодяй), *нормалёк* (нормально), *попса* (пренебрежительное название представителей шоу-бизнеса), *жесть* (что-то «жестокое»), *наезжать* (предъявлять претензии кому-то), *баиши* (деньги), *баилять* (зарабатывать деньги), *напряг* (что-либо, требующее усилий), *мобила* (мобильный телефон), *кранты* (конец чему-либо), *офигенный* / *офигительный* (потрясающий), *тупить* (1. говорить что-либо глупое, непонятное; 2. не понимать того, что говорят), *глючить* (видеть то, чего нет, галлюцинировать), *глюк* (что-то кажущееся), *потрясный* (потрясающий), *отпад(ный)* (нечто потрясающее), *пилл* (люди, народ), *непыльный* (нетрудный, не связанный с приложением усилий), *неуют* (неуютно), *прибабах* (что-либо ненормальное в психике), *наворот* (нечто вызывающее, кричащее, как правило во внешнем виде человека), *пофигизм* (наплевательское отношение), *движняк* (предпринимаемые скрыто действия), *папик* (богатый любовник преклонных лет), *понты* (наигранность, притворство, вранье), *гнуть* (врать, выдумывать, говорить неправду), *рукопашник* (драка), *точняк* (точно), *ништяк* (очень хорошо), *фишка* (преимущество в чем-то), *одуриТЕЛЬный* (потрясающий), *стыбзинг* (мелкое воровство), *хипстерский* (как у хиппи), *кипеж* (скандал) and many alike [24].

It should be mentioned that new words, the products of language game do not always have pejorative, rude or ameliorative connotations. Not infrequently they acquire adherent ironic connotations, as for example in the following cases: *адвокатесса*, *прокурорша*, *трудоголик*, *априорно*, *физик* (физическое лицо), *позиционировать* (представлять), *провокативный* (провоцирующий), *инжиниринг* (открытый список всего, что может относиться к инженерной деятельности), *паркинг* (парковка), *процессинг* (процесс), *маскулинность* (мужественность), *феминность* (женственность), *феминный* (женственный), *депрессивный* (находящийся в депрессивном состоянии), *брутальный* (загадочный, таинственный), *континуальный* (длительный), *культуральный* (связанный с культурой), *парфюм* (духи), *мэм* (мадам), *вариабельность* (вариативность), *комфортность* (вместо комфорт), *уютность* (вместо уют), *ложноположительный* (кажущийся положительным, или выдающий себя за положительного), *интенциональность* (намерение), *послевкусие* (?), *полуактивный* (?), *подписант* (подписавшийся), *вительность* (жизненность?), *гипердействительный* (очень (!) действительный) etc. [Ibid].

Much has been written about the unpredictability of language game among computer programmers, their originality in language games seems to have no borders: *думер* (человек, играющий в игру "Doom"), *батон*, *жмать батоны* (работать на компьютере от английского *button*), *Егор* (от английского *error*), *шаровары* (англ. *shareware*), *лазарь* (англ. *laserprinter*), *заплатка* (англ. *patchfile*), *форточка* (англ. *Windows*), *живность* (англ. *virus*), *сидюк* (англ. *CD*), *програмить* (англ. *to program*), *писюк* (PC), *кликать* (от англ. *to click*), *ромка* (ROM), *виндовоз* (англ. *Windows*), *автогад* (англ. *AUTOCAD*), *банить* (англ. *ban* запрещать доступ к какому-либо ресурсу), *реал* (реальная жизнь) and the like [27: 21-27].

There is an axiom in linguistics that Vocabulary changes in the language are called forth either by linguistic or by social factors [28: 44]. But not infrequently deliberate flippant playing with words, their component parts or with their meanings just for fun of it calls forth the emergence of new words which enrich Vocabulary. Currently this tendency is gaining marked strength.

The book "The Language report" [26] by an outstanding modern British linguist S. Dent devoted to the evolution of the English Vocabulary is full of new words with jocular connotations. They are evidently the products of language game with inventory of word-formation models - derivation, compounding, blending, abbreviation and semantic development of word meanings.

It follows from the analysis of the book that the most productive model of word-formation game in English is currently blending. Blending based on the potential possibility of combining unpredictable and often semantically incompatible components - is a grateful field for language game:

farmageddon (food + *armageddon*) - the conflict over genetically or otherwise modified food; *bloglish* - the hyperbolic and inventive language used in online weblogs or diaries; *guyliner* - eyeliner for men; *quillow* (quilt + pillow) - a pillow that unfolds into a quilt [26: 12-13]; *chugger* (charity + mugger) - a canvasser for charity who stops passers-by [Ibid: 143]; *Jafaikan* - Jamaikan + African + Asian - multicultural London English [Ibid: 73]; *fobbit* - a soldier or other military employee at a forward operating base; a person who is reluctant to move from a military base. The word is a blend of the acronym "FOB" (forward operating base) and "Tolkien's hole dwelling "hobbit" [Ibid: 22]. *Alterpreneurs* (alternative + entrepreneurs) - those who place more importance on their quality of life than on profit-making is one more recent instance of blending [Ibid: 36].

Suffix of Greek origin - *ism* which some time ago served to coin new words with the meaning "some doctrine", as for example, Byronism, Carlylism, and was also used to coin new medical terms as alcoholism, deafmutism, was quite recently used to coin a witty facetious neologism *lookism* - attaching too much importance to person's appearance.

Highly popular in today's English is language game based on abbreviation. By the way, language game in principle exploits more willingly the most productive for the period models of word-formation. We detected some interesting newly coined initial abbreviations. They are: *Plu* / *p.l.u.* - an abbreviation of "*people like us*". This snobbish phrase is used by the upper society people to stress status relations: "I am afraid they're not really plu". [29: 406]. The phrase "*P's and q's*" as part of a fixed word-combination "*to mind one's p's and q's*" means "be cautious and discreet in one's speech or behavior": "You'd better mind your p's and q's with him". The expression was coined by metaphoric transference from the phrase addressed to English pupils who are learning writing and reading not to mix up the letters "p" and "q" [Ibid: 418]. One cannot but mention a highly original neologism which was coined in scientific usage "*iff*" - is the result of bold and original abbreviation of the clichéd phrase "*if and only if*" - "only under the given circumstances" [30: 16].

Special mention should be made of the so-called creolized abbreviations, which are gaining more and more popularity among all language speakers nowadays. They are sort of hybrid graphic complexes in which a new word is made up either of a queer mess of the letters of the English alphabet or of mess of the letters with characters: *ANY1* (*anyone*); *4U* (*for you*); *B4U* (*before you*); *U1* (*You Won*); *IOU* (*I owe you*); *U2* (*you too*); *R* (*are*); *8* (*Ate*); *2B* (*to be*); *YU?* - (*Why you?*); *B4* (*before*); *U1* (*you won*); *F2f* (*face-to-face*); *ICQ* (*I seek you*); *4X* - *FOREX* (*foreign exchange*); *T +* (*think positive*) etc. Such facetious abbreviations are especially broadly used in virtual environment to substitute both words and complete phrases.

It was in the bowels of offices where facetious semantic innovation "to bake into" came into being. The new meaning it acquired was "to include": "An idea may be baked into a strategy" [26: 35]. By strange ways, the compound word "the third space" came to mean, "leisure values away from home and office" [Ibid: 36]. "Chairplug" has come to mean "a person present at the business meeting who does not participate in the discussion". "Square-headed girlfriend" has come to mean "a computer". "Kissing one's sister" is a phrase that acquired metaphoric meaning "unpromising enterprise". "Long tail" is used to denote "goods having small but steady demand on them". It is evident that facetious newly coined words or phrases, which received new meaning through metaphoric shift, have not always come into being in order to fill in lexical lacunas. Sometimes new words or phrases with new meanings were created just for fun of it. The authors of these new coinages were motivated by the stimulus to play with words or their component parts (potential meanings) and as a result, they produced witty or jocular coinages. Particularly illustrative in this respect is the flippant phrase of teenage slang "yeah-but-no-but". This phrase is a specific emblem of their careless attitude to life [Ibid: 144]. It presents a bold experiment with lan-

guage units from the point of view of word-formation. The author of the funny eponym “Pavlova” was most unlikely a professional writer or a poet. However, he is evidently a gifted “language gamer” and an admirer of the outstanding Russian ballet dancer A. Pavlova. He employed a bold metaphoric shift to immortalize A. Pavlova. He used the ballet dancer’s name to call by it merengue with fruit [1: 155].

Being a bold experiment with language units and models just for fun of it language game is in fact getting more and more involved in the processes of word formation - derivation, abbreviation, compounding, and in the processes of semantic changes of word meanings. It thus is an important factor of language system evolution.

Language game is flippant experimenting with language units and elements is scattered everywhere in everyday speech experience of language speakers: in the streets, in supermarkets and cafes, in restaurants and in public transportation, in the bowels of offices etc. Language game as we view it - in an attribute of everyday speech communication. The underlying stimulus of language game is conscious and deliberate playing with language units, elements and models. Its sole aim and purpose is gaming for the sake of gaming, for the sake of getting pleasure from the process of gaming itself. It is not always within the reach of observation of linguists because ordinary language gamers have no special aim to fix the “products” of their game in written sources. Moreover, the “products” of language game are predominantly “one use” ones. This makes up the principle difference between “language game” and poetic function of language.

Impact-oriented manipulation with imaginative resources of language within written forms of speech is an indispensable attribute of imaginative writing. “Language game” in contrast is some activity for pleasure and fun. Viewed this way “language game” is present anywhere in the communicative space: it is to be found in everyday speech and may as well get from oral communication into written varieties of speech. However, one should keep in mind that primarily “language games” had arisen in oral, not in written forms of language, and it had existed quite long before written forms of speech appeared. It is testified by the wide use of various language games by children who cannot yet write [Ibid: 249]. Everyday speech has remained its main area of functioning. However, some of its “products”, as we were trying to prove above, may not infrequently linger in the language and become common property of language speakers at large. “Language game” cannot be a relevant feature of style or genre - it is the property of both oral varieties of speech, including argots and slang and of the refined samples of artistic prose, or of popular ads. It may either produce or do not comic or humorous effect. It may be random, but it may equally take shape of fixed speech codes, which were formed as such because of long lasting regular use in certain communicative situations. The instance is crooked language of ritual

rites of the Filipinos and of the Malaysians wholly based on the language game [Ibid]. Language game is potentially or actually everywhere where there is speech. If we assume that there is a certain set of language functions within which language is employed [31: 14-27], “language game” should be naturally recognized as a self-sufficient “gamely” function of language as a whole. Any language resources, units, models, structures can be involved into it. In our paper, we have attempted to briefly describe how “language game” works on the lexical level.

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