

A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF QUEEN ELIZABETH CHRISTMAS SPEECHES

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In British reality the Christmas Message is a broadcast made by the sovereign of the Commonwealth realms to the Commonwealth of Nations each Christmas. The Christmas Broadcast is an intrinsic part of Christmas Day festivities for many people in the UK and across the Commonwealth. The first Christmas Broadcast was delivered by George V on the British Broadcasting Corporation Empire Service in 1932 and since then it has evolved into an important part of the Christmas Day celebrations for many in Britain and around the world (Harding 2004). Today, the message is read by Elizabeth II and broadcast on television, radio and the Internet via various providers.

I am speaking to you from my own home, where I am spending Christmas with my family. Each Christmas, at this time my beloved father broadcast a message to his people in all parts of the world. Today I am doing this to you, who are now my people... (1952)

In 1952 on December 25 at 3.00 p.m. Queen Elizabeth broadcast her first Christmas message from Buckingham Palace Music Hall. She spoke of carrying on the tradition passed on her by the late King and she even used the same desk and chair as her father King George VI and his father King George V had done. Over the years, the Christmas Broadcast has acted as a chronicle of global, national and personal events which have affected the Queen and her audience. Each Broadcast carefully reflects current issues and concerns, and shares the Queen's reflections on what Christmas means to her and to many of her listeners. The message typically combines a chronicle of that year's major events, with specific focus on the British Empire originally. The Broadcast is one of the rare occasions when the Queen does not speak on Government advice, instead, she gives her own views on events and developments in the UK and around the world. For The Queen, the Broadcast is not only a duty to be fulfilled, it is an opportunity to speak directly to the public, to react to their concerns and to thank and reassure them. In this way, the Christmas Broadcast helps to reinforce The Queen's role as a focus for national unity.

The present paper aims at investigating linguistic peculiarities of Queen's Christmas speeches. According to linguistic approach, a Christmas speech is a type of discourse. The term "discourse" has taken various, sometimes very broad, meanings. Originally the word "discourse" comes from Latin "discursus" which denoted "conversation", "speech". There is no agreement among linguists as to the use of the term in that some use it in reference to texts, while others claim it denotes speech. According to Brown and Yule discourse can be defined as "a dynamic process in which language was used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker/writer to express meaning and achieve intentions" (Brown and Yule 1983:26). The same description can be found in Cook who defines discourse as a language that "has been used to communicate something and is felt to be coherent" as opposed to language that has been "abstracted in order to teach a language or literacy, or to study how the rules of language work" (Cook 1989:6). D. Crystal in his "The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language" (1995) introduces the concept of mixed medium which is based on an implication that there is no strict line that would separate some dis-

courses into written or spoken. Thus, we may conclude that there are discourses that are typically written or spoken, but, especially with the implementation of media into everyday life, there is a growing tendency for mixed media. Public or ceremonial speeches are examples of such a mixed medium as they are written to be read aloud. This means that both written and spoken aspects influence the language used throughout these speeches. The Queen Christmas Broadcast can be considered an example of mixed media.

The analysis carried out within the scope of our study includes an investigation of different linguistic features available within the Christmas speeches. The graphical analysis of the broadcast messages shows that each speech is organized into several short paragraphs, a new paragraph introducing a new idea. It can be observed that there are certain topics that reoccur in Christmas speeches. These topics are closely connected with the Christmas time. Christmas is a time when believers commemorate the birth of Jesus and thus allusions to his birth with the connection of the start of new life and hope for a better future are frequent. To the most frequent topics can also belong the enumeration of the royal commitments or celebration of the anniversaries. The Queen also comments on current home and international issues. In this way the speeches can be also seen as a memory of things that happened in the world and monarchy, of course, in a generalized way.

The vocabulary used in Christmas broadcast messages consists of polysyllabic, classical expressions i.e. expressions of Greek, Latin or French origin. When looking at the text closely, a classical vocabulary both of Latin and French origin may be observed. The examples of polysyllabic vocabulary of Latin origin are: *voyage, significant, endow, disaster, fatigue, spectacular, illuminate, remember, united, ultimate, celebrate, accessible, separate, exceptional, acute, ultimate, indifferent, recognize, imagine, amicable, prosperous, enormous, accumulated, affection*. Of French origin are such polysyllabic words as *embrace, envelop, develop, abandon, encourage*. The examples of the words of French or Latin origin are frequently present in the noun heads as pre-modifiers. However, the Queen also employs monosyllabic words of Anglo-Saxon origin. This tendency may result from the intention to avoid too formal language and to make the speech easily comprehensible for a broader audience. Examples of monosyllabic words can be found especially among verbs: *have, make, know, work, live, give, see, come, look*.

We have observed that the Queen avoids using specialized terminology in her speeches; this contributes to the general comprehensibility of the speech. Some expressions may be more difficult for a non-native speaker as their knowledge requires a higher level of cultural awareness. However, it can be said that a common listener with a general knowledge of the current issues would not have problems understanding the text. All in all the words used in of Her Majesty's speeches may be described as aimed at people. Even if the long polysyllabic words are quite frequent, these are combined with words of Anglo-Saxon origin of everyday use and this enables lucidity. The speeches are easy to follow and Her Majesty, who sometimes watches the speech herself in order to check comprehension, may reassure herself that the message of Christmas speeches does "come across".

Analyzing the vocabulary of the Queen Christmas speeches more carefully, we notice that some words (nouns) are formed by adding different suffixes, which are unusual in both formation and usage, for example: *betterment (1952), unbridgeable (1984), unthinkable (1995)*. However, we come to the conclusion that *-ness* is the most frequently used word (noun) – forming suffix in the Christmas speeches: *togetherness (2012), dreariness (1964), kindness (1968), lawlessness (1972), gladness (1972), sickness (1975), happiness (1975),*

sadness (1975), goodness (1985), selflessness (1981), illness (1981), joblessness (1981), eagerness (1981), readiness (1984), forgiveness (1987), willingness (1987), suddenness (1988), helplessness (1989), unselfishness (1991), cheerfulness (1992), awareness (1993), bitterness (1994), fairness (1999). The words mentioned above can be read and heard throughout many Christmas speeches. Thus we can state that the unusual word-formation and the usage of such words are peculiar features characteristic to the Queen's individual style.

To the most striking characteristics of the grammatical structure in Christmas speeches certainly belongs the length of sentences. These are often very long, one sentence spreading over the whole paragraph i.e. over three to four lines. The sentences are usually complex or compound. The sentences are longer but, opposite to spoken language, their boundaries, the beginning and the end are clearly marked. Linking expressions are used whose main function is to bind and divide an utterance. These linking expressions make the speech more comprehensible for the listener and help the listener to get orientated in the text better. The example below shows how linking expressions are employed to make the comprehension easier.

Nevertheless, to all of us there is nothing quite like the family gathering in familiar surroundings, centered on the children whose Festival this truly is, in the traditional atmosphere of love and happiness that springs from the enjoyment of simple well-tried things. (1954)

When speaking about the prospects for the future, the Queen uses the future simple tense. For royal commitments planned for future the formal form of *shall* is preserved.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and I hope that we shall all try to make some good news in the coming year. (1985)

The analysis we have carried out necessarily involves "doing pragmatics". First, it is important to realize that the object of investigation here is the use of language in context by a speaker or writer (Brown 1983). Second, according to Yule, a pragmatic approach to the study of discourse is more specialized as it focuses specifically on those aspects which are unsaid or unwritten (yet communicated) (Yule 1996). The pragmatics of discourse goes "beyond the primarily social concerns of interaction and conversation analysis ... behind the forms and structures present in the text" and pays "much more attention to psychological concepts such as background knowledge, beliefs and expectations. When creating a speech the author has some intent of what the speech should express on mind.

The original intent of the first Christmas speech was to promote a new broadcasting corporation. For this purpose, the speech by a leading monarch, namely George V, was chosen. This was because the King represented a respectable and trustworthy authority. Times have changed since the reign of George the V, however, the Christmas message has remained as the opportunity for the monarch to keep in contact with his/her citizens and speak to millions of people around the world. The basic intention of the Christmas speech can be seen in this social contact of the monarch with the people. It is the opportunity to remind the crown as a formal head of the state. It is also the opportunity to show the monarch as a person "from flesh and bones" who speaks from the privacy of her own home. By making a Christmas speech the monarch shows that he/she is not indifferent to his/her

subjects - the wishes of goodwill and happiness for the future shows the concern about the people. The Christmas speech further creates an opportunity to present the monarch as a stable pillar of the monarchical system. The principles of the monarchy are defended and its ideals are presented. For example the idea of Commonwealth is being mentioned very frequently.

Analyzing Queen Christmas messages, we have observed that there are many diachronic changes of linguistic peculiarities. It has been detected that the length of sentences shows measurable differences. It has been described that the sentences of Christmas speeches tend to be complex and long. However, over the first two decades there is a tendency of the shortening of the sentences. This phenomenon may be ascribed to the fact that the speeches were under development and it took some time until the appropriate length of a speech was found.

The vocabulary used by the Queen in her Christmas broadcasts has undergone diachronic changes as well. According to the results of our investigation the words and word-expressions which are used by the Queen during a particular period of time are not repeated or are rarely used in other decades. Consequently, the diachronic changes of Queen Elizabeth Christmas speeches can be divided into three periods: from 1952 up to 1973 the Queen uses the following words and word-expressions which cannot be found in her Christmas broadcast messages in coming decades: *lot, affectionate greetings, goodwill, hearth, solemn, creed, cheer, staunch friends, halt, dispel, thread, to owe, to preach, to grow stale*. From 1973 up to 1991, because of political, economic and cultural changes in the world and especially within the Commonwealth, the words and word expressions used in the Christmas broadcasts strictly differ from the words mentioned above. Many of the first period words are not used by the Queen in her coming Christmas speeches at all. The second period words are: *tolerance, comradeship, reconciliation, co-operation, optimism, refugee* (used for the first time in the 1979 Christmas speech), *perseverance, multi-rational, multi-religious, satellite, vaccine, victims of treatment and neglect, inn, foibles of human nature, upheavals, bigotry*. From 1991 up to 2012 the vocabulary of the Christmas speeches has changed a lot. Such words and expressions as *terrorism (1991), dictatorship, autocracy, democracy, millennium, wanton acts, cultural diversity, discrimination, global economy, challenge, maritime nation (2012), individualism* are very frequently observed in Christmas speeches of this period.

It can be concluded that the Christmas speeches are created with the listener on mind. We may state that Her Majesty has created her unique style while broadcasting Christmas messages. The speeches are written in a clear and accessible style. The Queen employs different linguistic devices which result in the uniqueness and richness of the messages. The choice of those devices plays an undisputable role in making the Christmas broadcast comprehensible and appealing to Her listeners. This can be explained by the effort to make the speeches more intelligible, direct and personal. Overall, the Christmas speeches show a complexity of expression – they combine pragmatic issues, morale as well as the expression of solidarity with people. To the features that can be most stressed belongs Her Majesty's tenacity with which she keeps presenting the values in which she believes – the system based on democracy and tolerance, the behavior based on love and unselfish help and the constant hope for goodness in people and better future. Christmas speeches are examples of preserving the multifarious aspects of British heritage.

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Թագուհի Ելիզավետայի ամանորյա ուղերձների լեզվական առանձնահատկությունների ուսումնասիրություն

Մեծ Բրիտանիայում թագուհի Ելիզավետա II-ի սուրբ ծննդյան ուղերձը ամանորյա տոնակատարությունների առանձնահատուկ ավանդույթներից մեկն է: 1952 թ.-ից մինչ այժմ, ամեն տարի դեկտեմբերի 25-ի երեկոյան թագուհին հղում է իր սուրբ ծննդյան ուղերձը, որը վերաբերում է ՄԲ-ում և ամբողջ աշխարհում այդ տարի տեղի ունեցած կարևորագույն իրադարձություններին և զարգացումներին: Սույն հոդվածն անդրադառնում է Թագուհու սուրբ ծննդյան ուղերձի լեզվաբանական առանձնահատկություններին. թեմայի ընտրություն, բառապաշար, հատուկ տերմինների կիրառում, համատեքստ, լեզվաբանական առանձնահատկությունների տարածամանակյա փոփոխություններ և այլն:

Лингвистическое исследование рождественского послания Королевы Елизаветы

В Великобритании рождественское послание Королевы Елизаветы II является уникальной традицией рождественских праздников. С 1952 года до наших дней, каждый год 25 декабря, Королева Елизавета II вещает свое рождественское послание, в котором она говорит об основных и значимых событиях прошедшего года, произошедших в Великобритании и во всем мире. В статье изучаются лингвистические особенности рождественского послания Королевы. Изучались темы, озвученные Королевой, словарный состав, грамматические особенности, специфические термины, а также, контекст посланий, и диахронические изменения лингвистических особенностей.