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AFFIXATION AS A MEANS OF FORMATION OF MEMBERS OF LINGUOPRAGMATIC OPPOSITIONS

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Abstract. Nowadays, the communication tools (computers, smartphones, the Internet, etc.) constitute an inseparable part of the life of society. Their emergence caused the transition of many traditional mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) to the digital format. It became a prerequisite for the breakthrough development of media discourse, which, due to its spread, is one of the most influential types of discourse, often determining the language policy of not only media but also the state as a whole. It was language policy that stimulated the interest of researchers in linguopragmatic neutralization which is a significant socio-cultural and linguistic phenomenon facilitating effective communication and achievement of social balance. Despite the fact that the language means of media discourse quite often represent occasional and artificially formed utterances, scholars often register their usualization and transition from the media discourse sphere to the spheres of official and everyday communication. Nevertheless, the typology of analysis of the lexical units in the context of the phenomenon of linguopragmatic neutralization is insufficiently represented and is a promising and poorly studied problem, since there are practically no tools for their classification in modern linguistics. The aim of this study is to identify the most productive ways of forming oppositions of linguopragmatic neutralization of modern English-language media discourse. The practical research material incorporates a corpus of 2021–2024 media texts, formed via continuous sampling and analyzed by methods of definitional, functional and contextual analysis, critical discourse analysis and semantic interpretation. The analysis has revealed the most productive ways of forming lexical units that make up oppositions in the context of the phenomenon of linguopragmatic neutralization of modern English-language media discourse. It should be noted that such lexical units contribute to solving issues related to the systematization of the typological characteristics of this phenomenon. The author believes that the results of the study make a definite contribution to the investigation of linguopragmatic neutralization, and also allow predicting with a certain degree of probability the appearance of new lexical units that can be used in media discourse.

Key words: journalism; mass media; media discourse; media texts; linguistic means; English language; English lexicology; lexical units; linguopragmatics; linguopragmatic opposition; linguopragmatic neutralization; discrimination; discrimination marking

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АФФИКСАЛЬНЫЙ СПОСОБ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ЧЛЕНОВ ЛИНГВОПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИХ ОППОЗИЦИЙ

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Аннотация. Современное общество невозможно представить без использования средств осуществления коммуникации (компьютеры, смартфоны, Интернет и др.). Их появление стало причиной перехода многих традиционных источников информации (газеты, журналы и др.) в цифровой формат, что стало предпосылкой прорывного развития медиадискурса, который, в силу своего распространения, становится одним из самых влиятельных видов дискурса, часто определяя языковую политику не только средств массовой информации, но и государства в целом. Именно языковая политика обусловила интерес исследователей к лингвопрагматической нейтрализации, которая является значимым социокультурным и лингвистическим феноменом, способствующим эффективному общению и достижению равновесия в обществе. Несмотря на то, что языковые средства медиадискурса довольно часто представляют собой окказиональные и искусственно сформированные речевые единицы, наблюдаются их узуализация и переход из медиадискурсивной сферы в сферы официального и бытового общения. Тем не менее типология анализа лексических единиц в контексте явления лингвопрагматической нейтрализации представлена недостаточно и является перспективной и малоизученной проблемой, поскольку в современном языкознании практически отсутствуют инструменты для их классификации. Целью данного исследования является попытка определения наиболее продуктивных способов образования оппозиций лингвопрагматической нейтрализации современного англоязычного медиадискурса. Материалом исследования послужил корпус медиаконтекстов 2021–2024 гг., сформированный методом сплошной выборки и проанализированный методами дефиниционного, функционального и контекстуального анализа, методом критического дискурс-анализа и семантической интерпретации. В ходе анализа определены наиболее продуктивные способы образования лексических единиц, составляющих оппозиции в контексте явления лингвопрагматической нейтрализации современного англоязычного медиадискурса. Отметим, что такие лексические единицы способствуют решению вопросов, связанных с систематизацией типологических характеристик явления. Полагаем, что результаты исследования вносят определенный вклад в исследование лингвопрагматической нейтрализации, а также позволяют с определенной долей вероятности прогнозировать появление новых лексических единиц, которые могут быть использованы в медиадискурсе.

Ключевые слова: журналистика; СМИ; средства массовой информации; медиадискурс; медиатексты; языковые средства; английский язык; лексикология английского языка; лексические единицы; лингвопрагматика; лингвопрагматическая оппозиция; лингвопрагматическая нейтрализация; дискриминация; дискриминационная маркированность

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Introduction

Currently, communication is one of the fundamental trends in the development of modern society. However, communicative success largely depends on the choice of lexical units used by its participants¹. Since the development of modern means of communication has reached a high level; media discourse is becoming “one of the most widespread and influential types of discourse” [Mamontova 2022: 170]. It largely determines the trends of modern linguistics [Dobrosklonskaya 2020: 46]. Indeed, many scientists study media discourse; they are as follows [Babayan 2024; Borbotko 2020; Cognitive aspects... 2021; Melnikova 2025; Stepanov 2022; Ukhova 2021; Fowler 1991; O'Halloran 2011; White 1997; Willis 1991], etc. Nowadays, linguopragmatic neutralisation is one of the trends in modern language development. Generally, it acts as a “replacement, reduction or exclusion of lexemes with a negative meaning (invective) from the communicative use”².

The conflict-free linguistic communication becomes especially important in modern socio-political situations [Boldyrev 2025: 19]. The linguopragmatic neutralisation of discriminatory marked linguistic units is an understudied linguistic phenomenon. The significant markers of the phenomenon are linguopragmatic oppositions. They are opposed in terms of their semantic, connotational, and discursive realisation. Marking or unmarking of opposition members of a particular social group is determined in accordance with discursive factors and political correctness³. Indeed, linguopragmatic oppositions of discriminatory marked linguistic units have semantic or discursive opposition. It occurs due to changing the connotative component of a lexical unit from negative to neutral or

positive one. The presence of linguopragmatic opposition is a marker of neutralisation process.

In accordance with Article 136 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, discrimination is “a violation of the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of a person and citizen, depending on their gender, race, skin colour, nationality, language, origin, property, family, social and official status, age, place of residence, attitude to religion, beliefs, membership or non-membership in public associations or any social groups”⁴. Based on it, we identified the main nominative areas of discrimination (racial, ethnic, gender, social inequality, and discrimination based on physical and mental condition). According to those, we selected the media texts for this particular study from 2021–2024 US media sources.

Problem statement

The phenomenon of linguopragmatic neutralisation exists in the media discourse for quite a long time. However, there are still no typological aspects allowing its comprehensive analysis. Within the framework of this study, we consider the most productive ways of opposition members formation in linguopragmatic neutralisation in the modern English-speaking media discourse.

Materials and methods

The analysis of the corpus of mediadiscursive contexts identify the most productive ways of forming lexical units in the linguopragmatic oppositions. We considered 330 media texts from US media containing linguopragmatic oppositions. Generally, those media concern with the news and entertainment. The choice of these media was provided by the specifics of the lexical units since they are occasional ones and often not reflected lexicographically. However, they show an actual use of language in media discourse. The statistical data obtained are presented in the Figure 1.

¹ Тюкина Л. А. Лингвопрагматические особенности юмористического диалогического дискурса (на материале англоязычного, немецкоязычного и русскоязычного анекдота): дис. ... канд. филол. наук: 10.02.19. Ярославль, 2022. С. 23.

² Мельникова К. А. Лингвопрагматическая нейтрализация дискриминационно маркированных языковых средств в медиадискурсе (на материале англо- и русскоязычных источников): дис. ... канд. филол. наук: 5.9.8. Ярославль, 2024. С. 165.

³ Там же. С. 52–54.

⁴ The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 No. 63-FZ (amended on 08.08.2024). URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_10699/67c198feca5202f893460246a15f884f72173c28/ (mode of access: 10.05.2024).

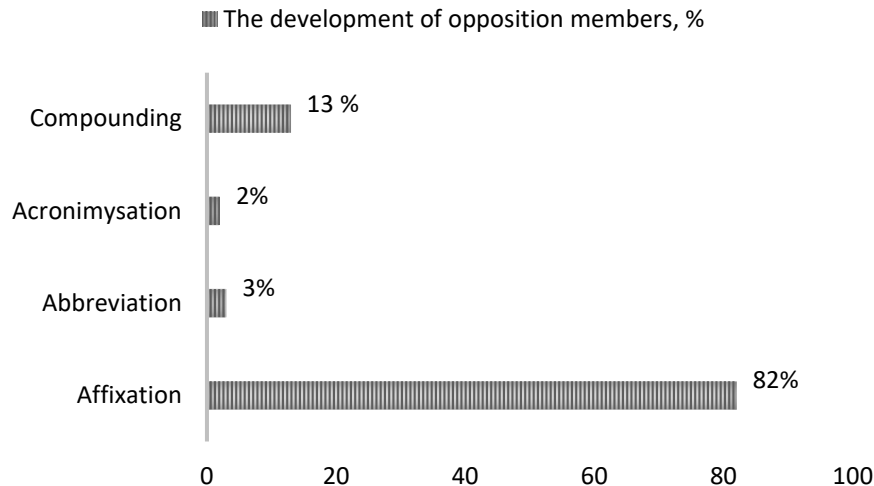


Fig. 1. The frequency of using affixes to develop the members of linguopragmatic oppositions in media discourse

According to the analysis, there are several ways of formation of discriminatory marked and neutralised linguistic units. For instance, 272 (82%) of the media texts under study contained linguistic units formed by affixation (82%); the linguistic units formed through abbreviation (3%), acronyms (2%), and compounding (13%) amounted to only 58 media texts. As a

result, affixation is the most-used method to form the members of linguopragmatic oppositions in media discourse.

We have attempted to identify the shares of particular affixes in terms of their participation in the development of in linguopragmatic mediadiscursive oppositions.

Affixes

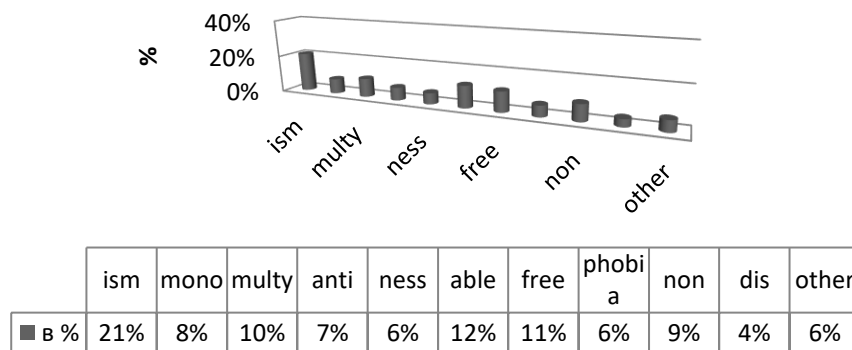


Fig. 2. The shares of affixes in formation of the members of linguopragmatic oppositions in media discourse

According to the Figure 2, the shares of particular affixes to develop discriminatory marked and neutralised linguistic units are significant. To form the members of linguopragmatic mediadiscursive oppositions, the affix **-ism** (21%) is the most widely used; the use of affixes **-able**, **-free**, and **multy-** is 12%, 11%, and 10%, respectively; the frequency of use of affixes **non-**, **mono-**, **anti-** is 9%, 8%, and 7%, respectively; **-ness**, **-fobia** and other affixes account for 6%, respectively.

Results and Discussion

We believe affix **-ism** is a productive model of linguopragmatic mediadiscursive oppositions devel-

opment (discriminatory marked / unmarked units). It agrees with the modern doctrine of Western society concerning equality and diversity of any society member and provides it with a special terminology – new phenomena and the active struggle of society with inequality require their own nomination¹. The affix **-ism** is the most widely used to denote types of discrimination: *Afrocentrism*, *ableism*, *biocentrism*, *lookism*, *sexism*, *heterosexism*, etc. Recently, new desig-

¹ Шляхтина Е. В. Языковой аспект политкорректности в англо-язычной и русской культурах: дис. ... канд. филол. наук: 10.02.19. Ярославль, 2009. С. 64.

nations of discrimination areas appeared. The lexical unit *classism* is discrimination against of working professions; the opinion on a person's social or economic position determines his or her value in the society. For instance,

The show explores classism and white privilege by comparing how school administrators treat him, as a rich white boy from a family with Ivy League pedigree, versus how they treat Latina and working-class Moe¹. The series shows the division of society into classes and the privileged position of the white population. There is also comparing the attitude of school administration to him – a rich white boy from a family whose members all studied at Ivy League Universities and a Latino man from the working-class Moe.

This media source uses *-ism* to form a lexical unit *classism* and linguopragmatic opposition *classism* – *white privilege*. The linguopragmatic opposition shows the process of linguopragmatic neutralisation itself. In this particular media text it realises through using the lexical unit *classism* as a *division of people into classes*. Indeed, modern Western society condemns this kind of division. The media text concerns with *Latina and working-class Moe* – a representative of the working class, an American of Latin descent, and a boy from a rich family, as evidenced by both direct *a rich white boy* and indirect in formation *from a family with Ivy League pedigree*. Ivy League universities are extremely prestigious educational institutions; studying in these institutions implies exclusivity in the quality of education, electability in admission, and belonging to the social elite

Currently, body positivity enjoys widespread popularity across the globe. This concept entails the acknowledgment that a body's value does not depend on its perfection. Regardless of size, race, ability, gender, or appearance, all bodies are inherently deserving of love and acceptance. Promoting positive perceptions of one's body and appreciating its capabilities are considered healthy practices. As a prominent social movement, body positivity challenges prevalent narratives – often propagated by advertising and social media – that idealise a body type characterized by thinness and whiteness. However, embracing body positivity does not condone behaviours such as shaming individuals for their body sizes. Rather, it advocates for the acceptance of diverse body types while critically addressing harmful beauty standards rooted in racist or ableist ideologies. On the contrary, *sizeism* is discrimination of overweight people by other people (i.e. lookism). For instance,

"I opened up this store because I felt that there was a need to avoid sizeism. We cater to the plus-size female, the curvy female, the full-figured woman," Coleman said².

The media source uses the *-ism* affix and forms a lexical unit *sizeism*. We can see a linguopragmatic op-

position – *sizeism* (discrimination based on overweight) – *plus size, curvy, the full-figured woman (alternative body woman)*. The neutralised members of the opposition *plus-size female, the curvy female, the full-figured woman* supposed to neutralise the discriminatory marked indirect reference of the concept "fat". However, the concept "fat" is still in use in speech but out of the modern English media discourse.

Class discrimination, also known as *elitism*, involves differential treatment, prejudice, or discriminatory practices directed toward individuals or groups based on their social class or perceived social class. Social class is defined as the hierarchical grouping of individuals determined by various socio-economic factors, including wealth, income, education, occupation, and social networks. This form of discrimination perpetuates social inequalities by marginalising those situated in lower or marginalised classes, thereby reinforcing systemic disparities within society. An *elitism* is the discriminatory attitude or behaviour of privileged social groups over others. For instance,

The Kevins need saving, basically, from elitism and even social discrimination³.

The media source uses the *-ism* affix to form the lexical unit *elitism*; we can see a linguopragmatic opposition *elitism* – *social discrimination* occurring through affixation. The lexical unit *elitism* is intended to neutralise a discriminatory marked concept "better than others". However, the concept is still in use in speech but out of the modern English media discourse

An *alphabetism* is a type of discrimination based on the order of letters in the alphabet and ranking (cataloging) of documentation in accordance with this rule. Discrimination is in the advantage in hiring the people whose names begin with letters located at the beginning of the alphabet over those whose names begin with letters located further in the alphabet. According to *alphabetism*, job applicant resumes are sorted alphabetically; those whose names begin with the letters of the alphabet at the beginning have an advantage because they are reviewed by employers sooner than those begin with letters in the middle or end of the alphabet. Thereby, the first applicants have a better chance of being hired than the second ones [Crystal 2003: 177].

Additionally, the use of the affix *-able* is quite frequent: *available* (persons who are not in sexual or romantic relationships); *affordable* (inexpensive); *certifiable* (persons officially recognised as mentally ill), *educable* (persons with a mild degree of mental retardation, capable of learning).

The productive affixes for formation of mediadiscursive linguopragmatic oppositions members is *-free*; it usually indicates the absence of a neutralisable component in a newly formed lexical unit expressed by a noun in a preposition. For instance, *gender-free* – *free of gender*; or *not having or not attaching relevance to gender*; *cruelty-free* – *products manufactured or developed by methods which do not involve cruelty to animals*; *childfree* – *used to refer to people who choose not to have children, or a place or*

¹ Variety. URL: <https://variety.com/2021/film/awards/latino-movies-in-2021-hollywood-oscars-representation-1234946882/> (mode of access: 10.06.2024).

² FOX6 News. URL: <https://www.fox6now.com/news/covid-rules-partially-lifted-racine-businesses-welcome-wine-walk> (mode of access: 10.05.2024).

³ Telos Press Publishing. URL: <https://www.telospress.com/telos-204-fall-2023-quandaries> (mode of access: 10.05.2024).

situation without children.

The practice of using affixes to form discriminatory marked / unmarked lexical units is quite common in media discourse. The affix **non-** served to form the following discriminatory neutral lexical units: **non-waged** in the meaning of *unemployed*; **nonwhite** in the meaning of *coloured*, i.e. *blacks, Latinos, Asians, Indians*, etc.

The affix **multi-** is the linguopragmatic opposition to the affix **mono-**. For instance, **multicultural**, **multinational**, **multiethnic**, **multi-racial**, **multifaith** and **monocultural**, **mononational**, **mono-ethnic**, **mono-racial**.

The use of such affixes mainly serves the integrative purposes of media discourse, emphasising tolerant integration of people of different nationalities and races living in the same territory. For instance,

*They underlined that Kosovo was committed to a **multiethnic** State whose goal would be integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. This struggle exploits pre-existing ethnic and regional divisions and is based on the **mono-ethnic** character of the armies of the country. This struggle is based on the ethnic and regional divisions previously experienced, based on the **mono-ethnic** nature of the country's defences¹.*

The media source uses affixes **mono-** and **multi-** as oppositional in meaning: **multi-** serves to form a positively marked lexical unit **multiethnic**, oppositional in meaning to **mono-ethnic**. We can see a linguopragmatic opposition of **mono-** and **multi** through affixation. According to the analysis, mediadiscursive source opposes a discriminatory marked **mono-ethnic** to a discriminatory unmarked **multiethnic**; based on the meaning of the media text, the **mono-ethnic** composition of the armed forces caused disunity in the state (negatively marked connotative component); the **multi-ethnic** composition of the state and the army will avoid conflicts (positively marked connotative component). The connotations of the positive and negative components can change within a discourse.

An affix **anti-** is used to form members of linguopragmatic oppositions in media discourse. For instance,

*Mallory Rusch, executive director of the **anti-poverty** advocacy group Empower Missouri, said the previous HIV criminalization laws left open a great deal of opportunity for **HIV-positive** people to be abused by **HIV-negative** people².*

The source uses affix **-anti** to form a discriminatory marked lexical unit **anti-poverty**. It causes the occurrence of linguopragmatic opposition **poverty – anti-poverty**. The presence of linguopragmatic opposition is also evidenced by the negative attitude (explicit or implicit one) of ordinary people towards **HIV-positive people to be abused by HIV-negative people**. Additionally, there is the linguopragmatic opposition **HIV-positive people** and **HIV-negative people**. The source reduces the invective concept semes a person infected with the **immunodeficiency virus** “disease”, “death”.

An affix **-anti** on the one hand, usually serves to

form lexical units with a negative connotation. On the other hand, it becomes a component neutralising the discriminatory marked semes “alcoholism”, “crime”, “unemployment”, etc. The lexeme *antisocial* formed with the help of this affix has an ambivalent nature, simultaneously denoting a negative semantic structure and a neutralised lexical unit [Raskin 1985: 56].

The use of the affix **-ness** is also quite frequent. Through this particular affix, lexical units designed to exclude discrimination against race and nationality: **colorblindness**, **colordeafness** – *racial neutrality* – the action or practice of treating all people equally, regardless of their race. For instance,

*For Justice John Harlan, **colorblindness** forbade the state from creating invidious **racial** categories; for Rehnquist (and Reagan and Steele), **colorblindness** means **racial neutrality** – as if we live in a world where wishing makes prejudice go away³.*

The media source uses the affix **-ness** to form a lexical unit – **colorblindness** in the linguopragmatic opposition **colorblindness – race**. The **colorblindness** in this fragment serves to form a discriminatory unmarked lexical unit designed to neutralise the discriminatory marked concept “race”. It is still in use in speech but out of the modern English media discourse.

The semantic component of lexical units formed by the affix **-phobia** is represented by the semes “disgust”, “fear”, “horror”, “intolerance”, etc. to the concept in the preposition. For instance, **xenophobia** is *dislike or prejudice against people from other countries*; **islamophobia** is *a collective concept meaning a negative attitude towards those professing the Islamist religion and related social phenomena*; **homo phobia** – *fear, hatred, dislike or distrust of people with sexual preferences other than those generally accepted*; **geronto phobia** – *negative attitude, rejection of old age, the elderly, as well as related social phenomena*; **negro phobia** – *negative attitude and rejection of people with dark skin colour*, etc.

There are a lot of other affixes forming the members of linguopragmatic oppositions. According to the research, their share is 6%. Since each affix is not significantly represented individually in the language material under study we combine them into a single group. Analysis results show those affixes are as follows: **-ty**, **-ist**, **-ed**, **-ful**, **-ing**, **-less**.

Concepts formed through the affix **-ty**, as a rule, relate to the spheres of equality and sensitivity to representatives of all social groups and even animals – **animality**; the affix **-ist** helps to form denoting adherents of discrimination areas: **racist**, **feminist**, **sexist**, etc. The members of linguopragmatic oppositions are also formed through the use of the affix **-ed** (Participle II). For instance, **disturbed** or **distressed** is *a person with behavioral abnormalities instead of mentally ill*; **deprived**, **depleted** or **excluded** is *socially unprotected instead of poor*.

The affixes forming members of linguopragmatic oppositions are as follows: **-ful**: **ageful** – *adult* instead of *old*; **-ing**: **a bit missing** – *forgetful* instead of *stupid*; **-less**: **houseless** or **homeless** – *homeless* instead of *a tramp*.

¹ United Nations Security Council. URL: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/pro/no7/328/17/pdf/no732817.pdf> (mode of access: 10.05.2024).

² The Missouri Independent. URL: <https://missouriindependent.com/2021/08/05/after-30-years-missouri-reforms-hiv-transmission-criminalization-law/> (mode of access: 10.05.2024).

³ Denver7. URL: <https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/national/diversity-in-tech-an-issue-but-industry-trying-to-change-with-training-programs> (mode of access: 10.05.2024).

The affixes *dis-* and *under-* traditionally indicate the opposite of some quality expressed by the component in the postposition. For instance, *disadvantaged*, *disabled* (or *disability*) in the meaning of *people with disabilities*; *underdeveloped* or *underprivileged* – as a *poor person*; *underhoused* – as a *homeless person*; *underachiever* – as a *stupid person* (usually about a child), etc.

Conclusions

According to analysis results, affixation is the most productive way of forming the members of mediadiscursive oppositions in terms of linguopragmatic neutralisation. This way of word combining expands the semantic field of lexical units. On the contrary,

those have the higher level of abstraction from the semantic field of the original concept. Moreover, neutralisation of invective connotative component, neutral or positive form of the lexical unit becomes its essential component. The neutralised members of the oppositions are quite tolerant, in non-judgemental manner. It is a marker of linguopragmatic neutralisation process. However, the dynamic nature of the phenomenon makes it difficult to understand the content of the media text. Neutralised lexical units complicate the processes of analysis, translation and lexicographic classification. Therefore, a recipient needs extra-linguistic knowledge to understand neutralised lexical units and use it correctly.

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