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English phonaesthemes: phonosemantic fields of the *br-* and *cr-* groups

Iconicity in language may be regarded within the frames of the phenomenon of sound symbolism. *Phonaesthemes* are two or three phonemes in a contact position (e.g., *br-*, *gl-*) demonstrating a recurring association with semantically related meanings. The term was first introduced by Firth (1935). Since then, it has received an instrument of credible study (Voronin, 2006), and a number of researches appeared describing different languages (Sadowski, 2001; Smith, 2016; Kwon & Round, 2015; Abelin, 2015; Joo & Liu, 2020; Willemsen & Miltersen, 2020). The issues of the status and the origin of phonaestheme remain contradictory. The notion *phonosemantic field* (Mikhalev, 1995) appears to be an effective instrument for the phonaesthemic group studying. The present research arises the problem of the origin of phonaesthemic sound symbolism in English and the semantic development of the phonaesthemic groups.

For the moment, the phonaesthemic groups *br-* and *cr-* are being analysed. The research **material** is gathered by the method of continuous sampling from the Oxford English Dictionary (3 ed.). Altogether, around 300 words are analysed. Historical-comparative **method** is applied together with phonosemantic analysis and other methods of etymology. The study **aims** to trace the semantic change of the words, to identify the phonosemantic fields of the phonaesthemes in question.

It occurs that there is a connection between the core of the phonosemantic field with the ancient roots of the words that used to form a major part of the group of words with the same onset. For instance, *br-* group is much influenced by PIE roots **bhreg-* 'to break' and **bhreu-* 'to boil, bubble, effervesce, burn'. Still, a further semantic development and the semantic shift to the consequences of breaking (sharpness, the sound of breaking) resulted in a greater number of the words with the semes *'something sharp and thorny, loud and irritating, sudden'* (Flaksman, 2016). The seme *'something broken'* though presumably remains in the semantic core, while the other semes remain on the periphery.

The *cr-* phonaesthemic group is characterised as *'something rigid, inflexible and rough'* (Flaksman, 2016). In the meantime, a significant number of the words analysed have a seme *'broken'*, *'broken with a crackling noise'*, *'twisted by force'*, *'forceful'* or *'a fissure'*. The word *craft*, which is registered since the OE period, might be particularly important to understand the development of the group. OED states that it was used in its original sense *'strength, might, power'*, traced in other Germanic languages, until the 16th century (OED). The examples of its use in the contemporary language demonstrate the shift to meanings of *'skill, ability, and related senses'* making it the interconnections within this group hardly visible.

Among the **conclusions** we reached were the following:

- the phonosemantic field is influenced by the etymology of the oldest words as well as the growing number of words with a semantic shift;

- the semantic development of the group may cause the attraction of the words that are not etymologically connected with the core of the phonosemantic field to the satellite positions;

- initial reason for forming a phonaestheme group may become obscure once the words of the core of the phonosemantic field change their major meaning greatly.

The research focuses on the present and other conclusions about nature and history of phonaesthemes of the English language.

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