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Понятие CHALLENGE: от ложных обвинений к новым возможностям

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается специфика осмысления концепта CHALLENGE в англоязычной культуре. На материале британских и американских СМИ были проанализированы актуальные значения и особенности функционирования центральной лексемы номинативного поля концепта. Использованные в ходе работы этимологические словари и исторические тексты помогли проследить изменения в значении слова и тем самым продемонстрировать процесс наращивания смысла концепта. Особое внимание было уделено анализу данных различных англоязычных корпусов, что позволило сделать выводы о содержании рассматриваемого концепта на основании большого объема аутентичных текстов.

Ключевые слова: концепт **CHALLENGE,** корпусные исследования, политический дискурс, журналистский дискурс, концептуальная метафора

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The Concept CHALLENGE: From *Slander* to *Opportunity*

Abstract: The paper follows specific features of the concept CHALLENGE and its comprehension in terms of the English-speaking culture. Present-day meanings and uses of the target lexeme are analyzed on the basis of British and American mass media. Etymology dictionaries and historical texts used within the framework of the present article are aimed at discovering shifts in the word's meaning and demonstrating the building of the word meaning process. The major focus of the research is the analysis of various English corpora, which makes it possible to come to conclusions concerning the semantics of the target lexeme on the basis of large sets of original English texts.

Key words: the concept CHALLENGE, corpus-based research, political discourse, mass media discourse, conceptual metaphor

INTRODUCTION

The study of concepts alongside discourse analysis is among the basic tenets of cognitive linguistics – the most rapidly developing sphere of linguistic investigation at present. This project aims at combining these two methods of linguistic studies. Using corpus linguistics strategies, we analyzed various uses of the lexeme CHALLENGE in order to reconstruct the underlying concepts, which motivate the shifts in the word's

meaning in British and American newspaper *media*, i. e. texts on political topics created by journalists and disseminated through the press, television, radio, and the Internet [Чудинов 2006: 37]. The reason for choosing the material comes from the fact that in a certain way such texts influence human values and opinions even more than those created by political figures because for one politician's text there are a large number of journalists' texts.

Starting from the very origins, we have made an attempt to follow the process of building up the meaning of the target word. The main goal is to bring the structure of the concept CHALLENGE to light relying upon its nominations and considering them as tokens. The use of the corpus-based approach gives us the opportunity to make conclusions on the basis of 'real' language, i. e. examples which actually emerge in texts produced by native speakers in contrast to artificially designed ones. This enables us to gain new insights into well-known and accepted dictionary definitions [Гвишиани 2007: 15]. Studying various contexts, one can actualize the word's dictionary meaning, which may not provide full information on the understanding of the target word or the concept behind it.

MEANING DEVELOPMENT AND ITS ACTUALIZATION

To begin with, it is worth to have a look at the very origins of the target word in order to trace its meaning development. According to Etymology dictionary, the nearest ancestor of the noun *challenge* is Middle English *chalengen*, a variant with palatalization of Middle English *kalange*, which means "a false or malicious accusation or charge"; "something that one can be properly accused of or charged with; a fault or blemish". Here is an example of one of the first registered uses from Wycliffe's Bible (the end of the 14th century, 1384): "He dredde lest..he..schulde suffre *chalenge*, as he were to takinge money" [Wycliffe's Bible. New Testament: 601].

The false accusation attributed to Apostle Paul is described as his *chalengen*. Accusations, especially false ones, require a lot of effort from a man to get rid of them. It is some sort of a stimulus, which requires obligatory reaction from the addressee otherwise it may lead to poor consequences. What is more, we may notice that the word's meaning possesses the nuance of human's inability to control or influence the situation which is described as *chalengen*. The source of *chalengen* is away from its object, it comes from somewhere else. As a verb, *chalengen* is also used in the meaning "to accuse". The word has other forms, such as: *chala(u)nge, caleng, kalange, kallenge, chalence* [Skeat: 102].

Some centuries later, the word *challenge* got another meaning – "a calling to fight". The first registered uses in the Corpus of American Historical English (COHA) illustrate this particular meaning. For example: "*He thought it his duty to send the challenge and meet the foe, rather than permit Robert to fight*". This is a quote taken from the «Sketches of American character» written by Sarah Josepha Buell Hale in 1829. Another interesting example is not from fiction but from the public discourse – "Discourses delivered in the College of New Jersey: addressed chiefly to candidates for the first degree in the arts" published in 1822: "*But the gospel will have taught him that forgiveness is sweet; that it is a duty which he who refuses to perform, forfeits his hope of salvation; that he is not to return evil for evil; that he is to love and pray for his enemies; and that' * vengeance belongeth unto God. He will, therefore, never be a duellist, whatever may be the consequences of refusing a challenge*" [Green 1822: 113].

In these examples, we can see that the target word, despite shifts in meaning, continues to save the above-mentioned seme of being a stimulus for action, the seme of something that presupposes reaction. Moreover, this example illustrates the meaning, which the Russian

word *вызов* originally has. Besides its very first meaning of a call ("вызов врача, ответить на телефонный вызов"), the word *вызов* as "a calling to fight" is associated with duels.

Later, in the 20th century, the word *challenge* developed still another meaning, which is also registered in dictionaries – a "difficult task". The analysis of contexts of different years shows that this particular meaning, as it was acquired, has become the most frequent one starting from the 20th century. This brings us to the conclusion that the target word, despite shifts in meaning, continues to save the above-mentioned nuance of being a stimulus for action, the seme of something that presupposes reaction.

In most contemporary English dictionaries this meaning is mentioned as the first one: "Something that tests strength, skill, or ability, especially in a way that is interesting" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). To illustrate the point, the following examples can be considered: "*Martins now faces the biggest challenge of his career*"; "*The company is ready to meet the challenges of the next few years*". So we can see that *challenge* has adopted the meaning of something that makes someone dare, strive to overcome. We may see that *challenge* is somehow on its way to minor its negative connotations. The clarification "especially in a way that is interesting" in the Longman Dictionary is evidence of it.

WHAT *CHALLENGES* ARE THERE: THE NOW CORPUS DATA ANALYSIS

The target lexeme is now on the increase in terms of frequency of usage. According to the Corpus of Historical American English, which contains 115.000 texts from the 1820s to the 2010, the overall frequency of the word *challenge* has risen from 202 in 1830s up to 2372 in 2010. Nowadays the lexeme *challenge* is used in a great variety of contexts with reference to very different things in our life. Today one comes across *health challenges, millennium challenges, business challenges, climate challenges, justice challenges* and many others. The reason for such a wide spread of this notion comes from its general productivity and present-day relevance: the concept CHALLENGE includes meanings, which turn out to be of significance in different spheres and with regard to many things around us.

Figure 1. The list of most frequent collocations, where *challenge* is the head noun being modified by other nouns in the attributive function (according to the data from the NOW Corpus)

Let us have a look at the data from the News on the Web Corpus (NOW) featuring the most frequent collocations, where *challenge* is the head Noun being modified by other nouns in the attributive function (Figure 1). By putting these combinations under

analysis we may discover the main spheres, where the notion of *challenge* turns out to be most common and relevant. With regard to *political discourse* analysis, it is interesting to observe where the world of politics has inherited this concept from since *political discourse* is mastered from metaphors and hidden meanings.

The first two most frequent combinations – *court challenge* and *title challenge* – are terms, which occur in the following contexts: "*The Home Office said that it could not comment on the case while the court challenge was continuing*" (Sunday Times, 2007). "*'We are ready' – Nemanja Matic gives verdict on Manchester United title challenge next season*" (Manchester Evening News, 2022). *Court challenge* is a legal term, which stands for the process of appealing any judgment, claim or decision. In the law sphere, the word *challenge* is also used as part of a compound term *Batson challenge,* which stands for an objection in which one party argues that the other has used the peremptory challenge to strike prospective jurors from the panel for a discriminatory purpose. The term's origins go back to trial of James Kirkland Batson for burglary and receipt of stolen goods conducted by The Kentucky Circuit Court. All the participating jurors were white and J. Batson appealed his conviction on the basis that there was the dismissal of black jurors without stating a valid cause for doing so. The Kentucky Supreme Court ruled in Batson's favour.

Title challenge is a sport term, used in football to define a request made to the holder of a competitive title for a match between champion and challenger, the winner of which will acquire or retain the title. Surprising or not, sport and politics are the two spheres of life most rich in challenges. In sport sphere, the word *challenge* can be used as a term on its own. It stands for a situation when a player requests an official review on where specifically the ball has landed in case of disagreement over a ball mark. This meaning correlates with the law term definition keeping the main seme of "judgment appealing".

Security challenge is a word combination, used independently to describe threats and risks for one's safety. It is commonly used in military discourse: "*President Clinton has also spearheaded efforts to ensure that NATO meets the new security challenges of the next century, forging agreement on a new Strategic Concept*" (Clinton White House Website, 2000). In such contexts, *challenge* is mostly associated with threats to state borders. This collocation has been borrowed from the military sphere and actively spread over the IT domain with much the same meaning of "defending borders" – not physical but cyber ones, in this case. Likewise, the word *security* could be replaced by the word *cybersecurity,* as in the following context: "*The cybersecurity skills gap and rapidly evolving cyber threats come at the top of most cybersecurity challenges lists*" (Rackspace Technology Website, 2021).

Health challenge as a fixed expression, on the one hand, stands for a process of adopting a number of habits which bring benefit to one's health. Usually, it is presented as a 'competition with yourself', since starting healthy habits instead of familiar harmful ones is rather difficult. It occurs in contexts, such as: "*A 30-day Health Challenge has two ingredients: nutrition & fitness… For this 30 Day Health Challenge try to stay away from foods that harbor large amounts of sugar*" (Shape scale, 2019). In this meaning, the expression is used mostly as a proper name and is spelled with capital letters. On the other hand, *health challenge* stands for personal health problems, for such diseases that badly affect one's health: "*Robin, as you know, announced yesterday that she has another health challenge, that she's going to have a bone marrow transplant*" (CBS Mornings, 2012). Another example contains enumeration of homogeneous parts

of the sentence including *health challenge,* so it makes it possible to observe a semantic group which embraces *health challenge* as an undivided notion: "*For instance, if your child is gifted or has autism, behavioral problems or a health challenge, then you need a unique school that can provide an education*" (Caller Times, 2017). Thus, *health challenge* denotes something that depraves one's proper, good health status as, for example, autism or bone transplant.

Next comes the collocation *world challenge,* which is used to describe problems and difficulties that influence the whole world. It occurs in the following contexts: "*In Tipperary, as it is all over the world, we are all trying to come to terms with the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a world challenge of enormous proportions for everyone, from the greatest to the most ordinary, to try and get our lives back to some sense of normality, our businesses, our jobs, our schools*" (The Nationalist, 2020).

Moving further to *leadership challenge,* it is worth mentioning that surprising or not this collocation has nothing to do with sport sphere – it is not used as a synonym to *title challenge,* which has been already discussed. This collocation unites other two types of discourse – political and business ones. For example, in 1987 there was published a book called "The Leadership Challenge". It was written by James Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. The book has turned to be award-winning and best-selling and the 6th edition of it was released in 2017. On the front cover just under the title there was the following phrase, which illustrates the main purport of the book: "*How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*". The book provides information on how to become a leader of a company in the world of business, how to develop leadership skills. The description of the book is the following: "*(It) focuses on the toughest organizational challenges leaders face today*". So it can be noted that the word *challenge* in the target collocation is treated, on the one hand, as a problem, a difficult situation in business, but on the other, as a problem which is doomed to be solved. Such a nuance of meaning explains the wide spread of the word *challenge* in a motivating self-help book. The editors intentionally avoid such words, as *problem* and *difficulty* and replace them with the word *challenge* as a euphemism. In the world of politics, the collocation *leadership challenge* is used in contexts, such as the following: "*Mr Corbyn last night appeared to concede that MPs will mount a leadership challenge in the coming months, saying 'we will have an election' in the event of a coup*" (The Daily Telegraph, 2016). Jeremy Corbyn is a controversial figure in British political history: he left the post of the leader of the Labour Party and the Opposition and now sits as an independent member. This means that *leadership challenge* in political discourse stands for the contest of becoming a leader. And the type of contest which can be called *challenge* is the contest of high social importance, of great scale.

Next comes *innovation challenge,* which draws another type of professional discourse and another sphere where the concept CHALLENGE is in demand. This is the sphere of science and technology. The most obvious meaning of the analyzed collocation is that of a competition (usually between undergraduates), in which the main goal is to develop or discover something new in one's sphere of interest, as in the following example: "*Engineers' body plans schools' innovation challenge competition. Moved to ensure the growth of young engineers, the Lagos State chapter of the Nigerian Institution of Mechanical Engineering (NIMechE) has concluded plans to host an innovative challenge in engineering*" (The Guardian, 2017). In order to support the discovery of new ideas and solutions in engineering it was decided to apply to the Royal Academy of Engineering (UK) and engage tertiary institutions in holding a special education program so that in a form of a competition encourage students to learn more in a target area.

The collocation *bucket challenge* delivers another widely used nuance of meaning of the word *challenge*. *Bucket challenge* as a fixed expression rapidly became a very common one in 2014, when an American amyotrophic lateral sclerosis activist Patrick Quinn organized a social media campaign called "The Ice Bucket Challenge" in order to promote awareness of such a disease as Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Together with Peter Frates, captain of the Boston College baseball team, they organized a trial which presupposed one's pouring of a bucket of ice water over his or her head. This activity has become very popular among celebrities, political figures and ordinary people all over the world. At the same time, *bucket challenge* has become, on the one hand, a symbol of mass obsession with health problems in social media which can be illustrated by the following examples: "*Access to websites like WebMD and others pulled up in Google searches have probably contributed to the rise in illness-related anxiety – take as an example, this graph showing the spike in ALS-related searches coinciding with the bucket challenge – but are they really the cause of our growing obsession with health?*" (The Guardian, 2015). On the other hand, it has become a symbol of a self-trial which has gained great popularity in mass media: "*…and 'what is our ice bucket challenge?' While these stand as good examples of branding and marketing, they do not classify as a breakthrough innovation*" (Memphis Daily News, 2015). In terms of the present investigation it is important to point out this widely spread meaning of a positive *trial* in the word *challenge*, which is also revealed in *health challenge,* for example.

As long as a commonly used word becomes a term, its meaning gets specified, and one of the nuances of the original meaning begins to prevail [Анисимова 2010: 40]. When becoming a term, different aspects of complex meaning of the word *challenge* are emphasized, which brings us to the conclusion that the word's whole volume of meaning is worthwhile to discover.

WHAT ARE *CHALLENGES* LIKE IN POLITICAL MASS MEDIA: BRITISH AND AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS ANALYSIS

With the focus on political mass media in the course of the present investigation, we analyzed the corpus of texts taken from English Newspapers – both British and American ones – published during the period from 1993 to 2013. The corpus includes articles from British and American most popular newspapers – both quality and popular press тире, а не дефис Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, New York Times, Sunday Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Sunday Telegraph, The Times and Washington Times. The whole corpus amounts to 550 million words.

In order to characterize the target concepts, the analysis of collocates of the word *challenge* being used as a noun has been run. Among most frequent attributes, there are adjectives of size with the meaning "Big size" – *big, huge, formidable*. They appear in such contexts, as: "*As the shape of the new Government finally took shape, there were plenty of reminders that getting the economy back on track remains a big challenge*" (The Times, 2015). No evidence of *small* or *tiny challenges* was observed, which makes it possible to assume that *challenge* can only be volume in terms of *political mass media discourse*. Moreover, it was discovered that *challenge* can be treated as a substance since it is relatively often used with the adjective *tough* as in the following context: "*The filing also said that Shell replaced only about half the oil it extracted last year, illustrating the tough challenge the company faces to discover a new barrel of oil for every one sold*" (The Daily Telegraph, 2005). At the same time, *challenge* can be treated by a particular author as a precedent, a special case or a situation which is *real*. In

this respect, one can come across such contexts, as: "*The real challenge facing national leadership today is to combine equally valid insights about culture and economics, collective and individual responsibility, in a new strategy for building ladders out of poverty and dependence*" (The Guardian, 1993).

The next level of analysis is the study of the noun *challenge* being used as an object. Among most frequent collocates, there are verbs, such as: *to face, to meet, to accept*: "*Its conclusion is that Boston has faced a monumental demographic challenge, that it is coping and that a lot of local complaints are unfounded*" (Daily Mail, 2013); "*The governor noted that the state in the last one year was confronted by security challenges, but promised that government in collaboration with the security agencies was able to overcome the challenge*" (The Times, 2010). The following example illustrates that the noun *challenge* can function as a subject in the target discourse as well. Along with the verb *to confront*, *challenge* is frequently used as a subject with the verb *to excite*, as in the following example: "*Mr. DeWitt said he was excited by the challenge of overseeing the city's finances and hoped to build on the District's successes both by upgrading the agency's technology and continuing to maintain its current high bond rating*" (Washington Times, 2013). In terms of contexts with the focus on verbs being used with the noun *challenge*, there are a number of metonymic personifications which strike the eye. It is generally accepted that *political discourse* is rather metaphorical, so metonymic personification in the case of the target lexeme's function is another evidence of it. Moreover, this leads to the conclusion that *challenge* as an abstract noun can be conceptualized as a notion of a living nature: "*The most serious challenge comes from the countryside where, in some areas, official corruption and exploitation are epidemic*" (The Daily Telegraph, 1993).

In order to understand what the notion *challenge* is associated with in the target discourse, we analyzed its *distributional synonyms*. The theory of *distributional semantics* says that words which frequently appear in the same context are similar in meaning. In corpus analysis, this means that words, which keep similar collocations are similar or close in meaning. Using *Sketch Engine* software, we have collected information on the most frequent distributional synonyms of the word *challenge*, which is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Distributional synonyms of the noun *challenge*
generated with the help of *Sketch Engine* for texts
from the target corpus

As we can see, the closest synonyms to the core are *problem, opportunity, change, issue* and *threat*. *Problem* and *opportunity* are two synonyms of particular interest. There are a number of contexts, which illustrate the idea of *challenge* as a notion being both *a problem* and *an opportunity*. It possesses the features of these two notions of opposite meanings. At the same time, these two notions can be opposed, which means that the prevailing meanings of *challenge* and *opportunity*, and *challenge* and *problem* are different. For example: "*In an increasingly competitive global economy the UK faces new opportunities and challenges*" (The Times, 2005); "*We have to use the problems, the challenges, the incompatibilities to teach us to become more loving people*" (The Times, 2005). The last example illustrates that the prevailing connotative (hidden) meaning of *challenge* is rather positive. It (*challenge*) leads to affirmative changes towards its owner.

CONCLUSION

As the study has shown, it is impossible to judge about the word's meaning exclusively by its dictionary definition. While taking into account dictionary data, it is always worth to explore contextual diversity of the target word. Dictionary data reflect shifts in meaning but there is no purpose to fix all the existing nuances of meaning in a dictionary. By contrast, it is essential to spot and digest even new-born actual nuances of meaning for an advanced foreign language user. Otherwise, words one has learnt would not suit actual language usage, which makes it impossible to use foreign language adequately: to understand others and be understood away from the artificial classroom. The word *challenge* has turned out to be a good example of such a notion when investigating different contexts leads to unexpected meaning peculiarities allowing to understand texts properly. In terms of political mass media, this is particularly important due to its ambiguity. Moreover, the word *challenge* names a concept which is now spreading wide into different spheres. The study of contexts helps to discover its peculiarities, which make the concept productive for modern society. Nuances of meaning are implicit but worthwhile, and it is big data which can shed light on them. Among such illuminated features, the current research suggests that *challenge* is a notion of changing nature. Throughout the ages the word has been altering its meanings in accordance to changes in society. Having started as *slander, it* has become a more general notion. Its negative connotation has been blurred and was replaced by a positive one. It is worth mentioning that there is fertile soil for further investigation in terms of contrastive analysis since the target concept has been borrowed by other cultures and we are curious to observe what features and peculiarities come to the fore among the first.

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