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## Collocations and set phrases in the daily newspaper *Głos Ludu* [People's Voice] before and after the Velvet Revolution as a reflection of political transformation

The aim of this paper is to present the scope of lexical and phraseological changes in the daily newspaper *Głos Ludu* which took place as a result of the Velvet Revolution and the transformation of the political system in the former Czechoslovakia. *Głos Ludu* is the only Polish-language daily newspaper published in the Czech Republic.

The present research into the language of *Głos Ludu* covers the years 1980-2000, the ten-year period before the Velvet Revolution and a similar period after this event.

From the so defined corpus I extracted 610 word combinations and phraseologisms, which enabled me to form various thematic groups such as phrases and phraseologisms related to politics, church, economy, relations with the western countries, as well as phrases referring to the working class and businesspeople, family, military phrases, phrases connected with the Second World War, with industry, agriculture and finally with Solidarity and the political situation in Poland. A big group consisted of periphrases<sup>1</sup> and phrases which could not be allocated to any of the previously mentioned categories. Some of the word combinations proved to be bi-functional, which means that they could fall into two thematic categories (e.g. the combination *strategia inwestycyjna* [investment strategy] could fall into the economical and military categories), hence after calculating all the thematic groups I enlisted 698 collocations and set phrases.

### The statistical perspective

I will start the presentation of the analysed material from the statistical perspective. Table 1 presents all the thematic groups and their frequency.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Głowiński (among other scholars) points out the popularity of periphrase in the newspeak, see M. Głowiński, *Nowomowa i ciągi dalsze*, Kraków 2009, p. 44-53.

Table 1. Frequency of the collocations and set phrases divided into thematic groups.

Thematic group of collocations and set phrases:	Frequency in:	
	absolute numbers	%
Periphrases	64	9.2
Descriptions of working people and businesspeople	21	3.0
Family references	23	3.3
Political references	151	22.6
Military	92	13.2
Reference to the recovery of territories	15	2.1
Reference to economy	61	8.7
References to agriculture and industry	31	4.4
Church-related references	45	6.4
References to Solidarity movement and Polish issues	28	4.0
Phrases expressing attitude towards the Western countries	55	7.8
Other categories	112	16.0
TOTAL	698	100.0

As Table 1 shows, the majority of collocations and set phrases refer to the political sphere. The second group is connected with the military sphere. The third group comprises of periphrases, and the remaining categories include collocations and set phrases connected with economy and the attitude towards Western countries. Other types of phrases are represented almost evenly. Such a ranking reflects the occurrence of collocations and word phrases in the period preceding the Velvet Revolution period when home and foreign policy problems dominated. It is presented in more detail in Table 2, with specific reference to three periods: the socialist period, the Revolution period (which includes collocations and set phrases referring to the Velvet Revolution) and the democratic period.

As it can be observed in Table 2, there are considerable differences in the frequency of particular thematic groups of collocations and set phrases in the periods before and after the Velvet Revolution. In the first place it can be noted in the word combinations which express the attitude towards the Western countries, which is the theme that almost totally disappears after 1990. Similarly, the number of collocations and set phrases which refer to Solidarity and Polish issues drops by 25%. I also observed the decrease in number of word combinations and set phrases with regard to the lexical fields which refer to the recovering of territories. The first two themes disappear as a result of the change of attitudes of the newspaper: after the Velvet Revolution the editors focus on the problems of the Zaolzie region. As for the theme of recovering of territories, it does not completely disappear from *Głos Ludu*, yet the statements lose their former pomposity, e.g. they no longer glorify the victorious Red Army.

Table 2. Frequency of word combinations and phraseological collocations in particular periods.

Thematic group of collocations and set phrases:	Frequency showed in the absolute number:		
	Before the Revolution	During the Revolution	After the Revolution
Periphrases	38	0	26
Descriptions of working people and businesspeople	10	6	5
Family references	12	2	9
Political references	59	22	70
Military	43	6	43
Reference to the recovery of territories	13	0	2
Reference to economy	10	1	50
Reference to agriculture and industry	20	0	11
Church-related references	11	2	32
References to Solidarity movement and Polish issues	22	0	6
Phrases expressing the attitude towards the Western countries	54	0	1
Other categories	46	4	62
TOTAL	338	43	317

The change is also visible in the category of periphrase, which does not disappear, yet its character is modified: whereas before the Velvet Revolution most of the phrases are the lofty names of the socialist leaders, after the Revolution the periphrases mostly play the role of the replacement names of the Pope or are simply treated as ornamental devices.

Throughout the democratic period the number of collocations and set phrases referring to agriculture dropped by 50 per cent. The decline can be also observed in the phrases and collocations referring to family as well as the ones describing the everyday life in the new social and political reality. This resulted from the fact that the themes became peripheral fields of interest for the editors of *Głos Ludu*, who chose to focus rather on economy, politics and the new social situation (inter alia, parliamentary and local elections).

In the democratic period, however, the number of collocations and set phrases in the field of economy increased, which can be explained by the necessity to introduce new legis and, what follows, new word combinations connected with the new free market economy. The old set phrases and collocations were perceived as marked negatively, even though they adequately presented the social and economic reality.

The increase of the number of collocations and set phrases can be observed, yet on a smaller scale, with regard to the thematically dispersed collocations, in which replacement of set phrases and collocations takes place.

Only the field of military collocations and set phrases remains unchanged, both with regard to the pre- and post-Revolution periods. The number of word combinations and collocations connected with politics slightly increases, yet their quality changes.

The tables above also suggest that the replacement of the regime with the democratic government did not affect the total number of word combinations and collocations in use. In the communist period the total number of 338 collocations was identified, whereas the overall number of the collocations identified in the period after the Velvet Revolution is 317. The number of set phrases and word combinations which appeared during the Revolution or referring to it in the following period is 43, a rather big number if one takes into account the total length of the period.

## Characteristic collocations and set phrases before and after the Velvet Revolution

The language of the communist publications abounded in lofty, high style pompous phrases which all disappeared after the turning point in November 1989. It can be observed based periphrase which disappears from the language of the newspaper towards the end of 1989. The last periphrase which is used as a descriptive and high style name referring to an important figure of the state appears in the article describing the election of Václav Havel for a president. However, after the democratic breakthrough such periphrases refer mainly as circumlocution referring to the Pope, or they simply serve as decorative elements deprived of any former pomposity.

Pomposity disappears also from the metaphorical phrases which were used even in such untypical fields as agriculture (*czarne perły* [*black pearls*] – referring to cows) or industry (*stalowe serce kraju* [*the steel heart of the country*] – referring either to Ostrava or to Vitkovice steelworks). Pomposity is not used in the language of the democratic period because the new reality forced re-evaluation of the socio-political ideas, and pompous phrases started to have a humorous effect on the readers.

It can be noted that there is a change of attitude towards the government, both the former and the present one. Shortly after the Velvet Revolution the socialist politicians, once described in positive terms, start to be described by word combinations which are marked negatively (*mafia krajowa* [*the country's mafia*]), and in the end the socialist phraseology disappears completely. Conversely, the negative descriptions of the anti-communist groups (*grupy bandziorów* [*gangs of thugs*] – referring to Solidarity) are replaced with positive phrases (*goście z Wiejskiej* [*guests from the Wiejska Street*]).

A similar process can be observed with regard to the attitude towards Western countries. In the communist period they were always described in negative terms (*sępy kapitału* [*vultures of capitalism*], *imperium szpiegostwa* [*empire of espionage*]), which was the result of the tensions and rivalry between the Western and the Eastern blocks. However, after the democratic breakthrough the phrases previously used in connection with the Western countries started to be used to describe domestic politics, which reflected the competition among local political parties (*republikański teatrzyk* [*Republicans' theatrical show*], *kabaret polityczny* [*political cabaret*]). What follows, the set phrases are not replaced but shifted towards a different sub-field.

It is a kind of paradox that in the communist period one can observe collocations and set phrases whose one component is taken from the English language (e.g. *być "okey"* [*be okey*], *antypolskie show* [*anti-Polish show*]), nevertheless all such phrases are marked negatively. After 1989 phrases with an English component disappear and new positively marked collocations containing English components are not coined.

One of the novelties of the democratic period are word combinations which refer to the American reality and are marked positively. Examples include phrases like *coś jak w amerykańskim filmie* [*something like in an American movie*] or *hollywoodzki uśmiech* [*Hollywood smile*].

Irony, so common in the time of the communist regime (usually referring to the American reality), also disappears from the phraseology of the democratic period (*obrońcy praw człowieka*, [*human rights activists*], *adwokaci polskich praw* [*Polish rights advocates*]). In the period immediately after 1989 I could find only one set phrase which was marked with irony. It refers to the First Secretary of the communist party: *Towarzysz Pierwszy* [*Comrade the First*].

Another category which disappears from the newspaper after 1989 are the matrix-words, which were frequently used by *Głos Ludu*, and whose use was inevitable in certain contexts, like the celebration of socialist anniversaries<sup>2</sup>. In the new political reality after 1989 new matrix-words were not coined.

In the socialist period one can observe the popularity of some components of set phrases and collocations, e.g. *bratni* [*brotherly*], *postępowy* [*progressive*], *ludowy* [*people's*] or *dziejowy* [*historic*]. It is worth noticing that their semantic fields differed from the ones they have at present. *Brotherly*, *people's*, and *progressive* were the synonyms of the adjective *socialist*, whereas the word *historic* referred to the history of communism, in particular the victory of Proletariat in Russia or the victory in the Second World War. After the breakthrough of November 1989 the above mentioned components disappeared, adjectives *bratni* [*brotherly*] and *dziejowy* [*historic*] were no longer used in the articles published in *Głos Ludu*, whereas the adjective

<sup>2</sup> J. Bralczyk suggests that the frequent use of matrix-words can be explained by inertia. See J. Bralczyk, *Strategie w języku propagandy politycznej (o polskiej propagandzie partyjno państwowej w latach 1982-88, [in:] Język a kultura, vol. 4., p. 107, <http://www.lingwistyka.uni.wroc.pl/jk/>, (accessed on 17.4. 2010).*

*postępowy* [progressive] regained its primary meaning (as a synonym of *nowatorski* [innovative]). The adjective *ludowy* [people's] is used only with reference to folklore (i.e. *ludowy* [folk]), and is no longer used in its primary meaning "referring to the people of the country".

Phrases whose structure was based on the combination of words: *sily* + *czego* [forces of...] (e.g. *sily pokoju* [forces of peace], *sily reakcyjne* [reactionary forces]) retained similar popularity, yet they also disappeared from the newspaper after 1989.

In the democratic period the popularity of certain components of word combinations can be observed. For instance, numerous collocations contain the lexeme *gra* [play/game], which appeared only once before the revolution (*gra o bezpieczniejszą Europę* [a game with the safer Europe at stake]), and referred to the international politics. However, after the Revolution, besides the previously mentioned combination *gra o coś* [a game with something at stake] we can read: *coś jest w grze* [something is being played], *gra pozorów* [game of deception], *wypaść z gry* [fall out of the game]. A function similar to the word *gra* is fulfilled by the word *start* (*start czegoś* [start of something]).

At the same time, after the November democratic breakthrough, the diversification of word combinations used in the newspaper can be observed. The new word combinations use components taken from the previously ignored fields such as cuisine/cooking (*gulasz przedwyborczy* [pre-election goulash]), tailoring (*przymiarki do koalicji* [coalition fittings]), medicine (*coś jest lekarstwem na coś* [something is a cure for something]) etc. As one can observe, many components from the new fields found their place in the sphere of politics (more specifically in the election sub-field). Moreover, the change of the political system brings the change of the components of the collocations in this field. For example, as a result of the monopoly of communists in the time of their regime, no election phraseology referring to the military context appeared. It was used, however, in other fields. Words like *batalia* [battle], *walka* [fight] or *kampania* [campaign] can be found in collocations referring to agriculture or natural environment *kampania żniwna* [harvest campaign], *żniwna batalia* [harvest battle]. On the other hand, after November 1989 military vocabulary can be found in word combinations which refer to domestic policy (*stawać w szranki wyborcze* [lit. to stand in reins], *batalia o względy wyborców* [lit. a battle for voter favours], *kampania wyborcza* [election campaign]).

A similar process of the composition of collocation and set phrases can be observed in other thematic fields, e.g. the descriptive names of months used in the socialist period (*Miesiąc Przyjaźni* [A Month of Friendship] for November) disappear, yet the new ones which are not connected with the former period emerge (*miesiąc zakochanych* [a month of those in love]). Semantic changes can be observed also in the case of collocations which are supposed to create the feeling of threat (*ciemne*

*chmury wiszą nad czymś* [dark clouds hang over something], *coś toczy się ku przepaści* [something rolls towards abyss], *kraj znalazł się na rozdrożu* [the country is at the crossroads] – they are used much more often in the communist period than in the post-communist one.

The next difference in the phraseology of both periods in question is the type of collocations. As far as the communist period is concerned, fixed phrases are used more often (*zielone banknoty* [green banknotes], *żniwna batalia* [harvest battle], this, however, changes in the democratic period when more open syntactic frames, with empty lexical slots that require filling in (*apetyt na coś* [appetite for something], *ktoś/coś jest w dołku* [somebody/something is in the pit]) become much more popular. In the totalitarian period, in turn, one can observe a higher frequency of proverbs used in the newspaper.

In *Głos Ludu* one can also encounter examples of word play, yet they occur more often in the democratic period (*bezradny radny* [helpless councilor], *bankructwo banku* [bankruptcy of a bank], and they refer to the spheres such as politics and economy, whereas in the previous period they were usually used with reference to agriculture and natural environment (*zielone światło dla zieleni* [green light for the green])).

## Phraseologisms referring to the Velvet Revolution

Despite the fact that the Velvet Revolution, which followed after the student protests of 17 November 1989, lasted only for a short time, specific language emerged that was used to describe the events. Shaped between the 17 November and 29 December 1989, when Václav Havel was elected president, this language does not encompass all the typical themes which appeared either before or after the Revolution. For instance, the Revolution period language does not include themes such as: recovery of territories, agriculture and industry, Solidarity and Poland, or the Western countries. Despite this one can notice a group of phraseologisms and word combinations which name the current events.

In the first days of the Revolution the newspaper's attitude towards the November 1989 events was negative. This attitude is visible in the language of articles where the students' protests *są anarchią* [are anarchy] or are described as *chaotyczne strajki* [chaotic strikes]. From January 1990, however, we can read about the Revolution described as *aksamitna* [velvet] or *zamszowa* [suede]. Some of the word combinations were later conventionalised, and they usually describe the November changes as restless, unpredictable, dangerous etc. The journalists would often write about *burzliwe dni 1989* [turbulent days of 1989] or *burzliwy okres przemian* [turbulent time of changes], yet at the same time we can read about the period referred to as *nasza spokojna rewolucja* [our quiet revolution]. On the other

hand, during the Revolution the familiar (*ojczyzna zachorowała* [*motherland's ill*] or religious (*coś jest dla kogoś świętym* [*something is sacred for someone*], *mieć święty obowiązek* [*to have a sacred obligation*]) lexemes occur.

Alongside word combinations described above, phrases which refer to military contexts appear (*sięgać do arsenału czegoś* [*to reach to the arsenal of something*], *coś jest beczką z prochem* [*something is like a barrel with gunpowder*]). It is also the time when the lofty way of naming the political leader (*bojownik o coś* [*fighter for something*]) disappears.

In the time of the Velvet Revolution the lexical components referring to sports (*spóźniony start czegoś* [*late start of something*]) and theatre appear. One of the frequently used phrases is *żelazna kurtyna* [*iron curtain*].

On the basis of the presented analysis it is possible to state that the period of the political regime and its later overthrow was reflected in language: its lexemes, word combinations and phraseology. Some phrases and collocations disappeared, and were replaced by new ones, for example those from the field of economy. Pomposity and irony disappeared as well. The language of *Głos Ludu* after the Velvet Revolution was diversified both in terms of forms and themes and served as a more dependable form of journalism.

#### **Collocations and set phrases in the daily newspaper *Głos Ludu* [People's Voice] before and after the Velvet Revolution as a reflection of political transformation**

##### Summary

The aim of this article was to discuss the range of changes which took place in lexicon and phraseology after the fall of the Communist regime. The annual bound volumes of *Głos Ludu*, which is a Polish newspaper published in the Czech Republic, were the research material used in this thesis. The material encompasses the period of 1980-2000, which is divided into the times before and after the Velvet Revolution, which provides a reliable source of information about the changes in language of the newspaper, which were the results of the social and political revolution of 1989. In this work I presented the phraseology of the period of Communism, the phraseology developed during the political changes and the collocations used to describe the new reality, i.e. the times of democracy after the revolution. I gathered the research material by analysing the articles published in *Głos Ludu*.