

PAPER

OCCASIONALISMS AS A DYNAMIC ELEMENT OF LEXICAL INNOVATION

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of occasionalisms as a dynamic element of language development. It explores their linguistic nature, formation mechanisms, and stylistic functions, highlighting the distinction between occasionalisms and neologisms. The study emphasizes that occasional words arise within specific communicative contexts and reflect the creative potential of speakers. Special attention is given to theoretical interpretations proposed by leading linguists and to the role of occasionalisms in expressing semantic and stylistic nuance. The research demonstrates that occasionalisms function as context-bound speech units that reveal the evolving character of language.

Key words: language development; occasionalism; neologism; lexical innovation; word formation; stylistic expression; linguistic creativity; speech phenomenon; vocabulary dynamics

Introduction

Language is a living and constantly evolving system that reflects social, cultural, and cognitive changes within a speech community. One of the most visible indicators of linguistic development is the enrichment of vocabulary through the emergence of new lexical units. Among such innovations, occasionalisms occupy a special place as individually created words that arise in specific communicative situations.

Unlike neologisms, which may become part

of the language system, occasionalisms remain context-dependent and stylistically marked. The study of occasionalisms is important for understanding the mechanisms of word formation, the boundaries between language and speech, and the creative potential inherent in linguistic expression. Scholars have long debated the definition and classification of occasional words, emphasizing their connection to stylistic intent and contextual meaning. This article aims to analyze the linguistic characteristics of occasionalisms, their formation patterns, and their functional role

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in discourse, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of lexical innovation and language dynamics.

Materials and Methods

Language is a highly unique phenomenon, and its study can never be considered complete. One of the main drivers of language development is the continuous enrichment of its vocabulary with new lexical units. The cultural wealth of any nation and its distinctive traditions find expression in its language. The more actively different spheres of life develop, the new words and expressions emerge in the language.

Language serves as a tool for understanding and reflecting the world. To represent reality as fully and accurately as possible, language must remain in constant development. Linguistic development occurs on several levels: phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic. The dynamics of change and all phenomena related to language evolution primarily concern the lexical system, since vocabulary is the most open and change-sensitive subsystem of language. Each historical period brings social innovations and demands that inevitably influence linguistic change.

Approximately 400 new words appear in the Uzbek language annually. However, not all newly formed words are regarded as stable lexical units. Words invented and used by individuals but not adopted into common usage are called occasionalisms. Linguists provide broad definitions of occasionalism. A.I.Smirnitsky emphasizes that such words may be formed according to productive word-formation patterns and may exist as created but not yet fully integrated lexical items. G.O.Vinokur considers potential words to be those that arise when communicative necessity demands them. O.S.Akhmanova defines occasionalism as a word not yet used in living speech but capable of being formed through productive linguistic mechanisms.

The term occasionalism is therefore used to denote a word absent from the standard language system but capable of entering literary usage under certain linguistic and extralinguistic conditions. There is no universally accepted definition of an

“occasional word,” which explains the diversity of scholarly opinions regarding the relationship between new words and occasionalisms. It is important to distinguish between neologisms and occasionalisms.

Several criteria help differentiate these concepts:

1. Belonging to language vs. speech. Following F. de Saussure’s distinction between language and speech, a neologism is considered a phenomenon of the language system, whereas occasional words belong to speech and are not yet institutionalized.

2. Word-formation productivity. Neologisms may arise through productive derivational processes or through borrowing. Occasionalisms are often analyzed through lexical or derivational approaches. From a derivational perspective, occasional forms are created according to word-formation laws but are shaped situationally by speakers.

3. Compliance with system norms. Neologisms are generally formed through highly productive patterns, whereas occasionalisms may deviate from normative models.

4. Degree of stabilization. Neologisms may become integrated into the lexicon, while occasionalisms remain author-bound and context-dependent. In modern languages with developed word-formation systems, thousands of neologisms appear annually. Social innovation generates new naming needs, yet only some formations survive: certain words fade quickly, while others stabilize and become an integral part of communication.

The term occasionalism was first introduced by I. Feldman, who described it as an individually created form used to convey ideas or artistic imagery. Such words exist only within context and function as speech phenomena rather than elements of the language system.

According to N. D. Golev, each occasional usage presupposes an author who intentionally selects or creates a linguistic form. Occasionalisms often diverge from conventional word-formation norms and exhibit distinctive features: they are context-bound, non-normative, stylistically expressive, and highly individual. They function as unique, non-reproducible speech units that exist solely within a specific communicative environment. Occasional words are characterized by their

exclusive use within individual texts, contrasting with widely circulated lexical items. They may arise either through normative derivational patterns or through deliberate deviation from them. Their analysis is inherently contextual and involves lexical, morphological, grammatical, and derivational examination.

Results and Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that occasionalisms represent a productive and expressive layer of vocabulary that reflects the creative potential of speakers within specific communicative contexts. Unlike neologisms, which tend to undergo processes of normalization and integration into the language system, occasionalisms remain closely tied to individual authorship and situational usage. This distinction confirms the theoretical assumption that occasionalisms belong primarily to the sphere of speech rather than to the stable structure of language.

The findings indicate that occasional word formation is governed by both adherence to and deviation from established linguistic norms. In many cases, occasionalisms are constructed using productive derivational models, which ensures their interpretability. However, deliberate violation of morphological or semantic conventions often serves stylistic purposes, enhancing expressiveness and emotional impact. Such formations illustrate how speakers manipulate linguistic resources to achieve communicative precision and aesthetic effect.

The discussion also reveals that occasionalisms function as markers of contextual meaning. Their interpretation depends heavily on textual environment, cultural background, and pragmatic intent. This context-dependency distinguishes occasionalisms from standardized lexical units and underscores their role in creative discourse. Literary texts, media language, and everyday communication provide fertile ground for such innovations, demonstrating the dynamic interplay between language system and speech practice.

Furthermore, the persistence or disappearance of occasional formations reflects broader tendencies in lexical evolution. While most occasionalisms remain transient, some may influence future

word formation or contribute to semantic shifts. This phenomenon highlights the continuum between individual creativity and collective linguistic change. From a theoretical perspective, occasionalisms reveal the flexibility of language structures and the capacity of speakers to expand expressive possibilities. Overall, the results confirm that occasionalisms are not merely marginal linguistic curiosities but significant indicators of language vitality. Their study deepens our understanding of lexical dynamics, stylistic variation, and the relationship between linguistic norms and creative expression.

Key principles of occasional usage emphasize their situational, individual, and non-standard nature. As described in Akhmanova's dictionary, such forms do not belong to common usage and reflect personal stylistic intent. Although occasionalisms are speech phenomena, they mirror the semantic, grammatical, and derivational potential of the language system. They function as indicators of linguistic creativity, transforming latent possibilities into actual expression. While ordinary words rely on recurring contexts, occasionalisms require creative environments for interpretation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of occasional words is inseparable from the stylistic properties of the texts in which they appear. Due to their expressive and semantic density, occasionalisms may be more contextually appropriate than conventional vocabulary. However, they are not intended for universal adoption. Unlike neologisms, whose novelty gradually diminishes through repeated use, occasionalisms retain a sense of innovation regardless of time.

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