

# **Current Topics in Social Sciences, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofia**

## **Chapter 55**

### **Puns and Neologism in *õL'Écume Des Joursö* by Boris Vian**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The word neologism, which is created by joining two Greek words *neos* (meaning new) and *logos* (meaning word), can be translated as new word or made-up words into Turkish and is known as one of the study subject of Lexicology, which is one of the sub-branches of Linguistics. It is also called puns and made up words in literature, and it is possible to see the use of puns and producing new words by various authors. Generally, the term neologism, which represents the new words entering the language can be defined as joining some words in the language by producing new words with a new meaning. It can be used in producing new words that belong to a social group or a discipline. These new words can be useful as well as temporary. In other words, new words can replace them. Apart from that, making up new words is a method used by authors because of their aesthetic and stylistic concerns.

The neologism method used by many authors and is a part of puns, refers to a technique which contributes to the authors' writing styles in terms of fluency and authenticity. Considering the fact that language has a vivid structure and has the necessity to renew itself in time, it is inevitable that new words emerge. The reflections of this can be seen in literary works of many authors. This study analyses the neologism and puns used in *õ L'Écume des joursö* written by well-known French author Boris Vian, who created tens of novels, stories, compilations, poems, books, theatre and opera plays, essays, translations and 500 lyrics in seventeen years of his 39 year- old- life.

Born in 1920, Boris Vian signals a new and different writing style even in his early novels which he wrote with a false name, Vernon Sullivan. He adopted using a unique metalanguage as a principle while expressing the social turmoil, tendencies and troubles of that era and aimed at expressing his thoughts more freely and addressing the society in a better way. He pioneered the formation of modern novel style by leaving the traditional novel stereotypes. In this study, the new words and the message the author wishes to convey in his novel called *õL'Écume des joursö* will be analysed by using linguistic analysis method.

#### **A General View Of Neologisme**

In Encarta Encyclopedia, two types can be mentioned about making up a new word. These are subjective word production and objective word production. Objective type includes the words created for

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naming a new object or concept. For example, the naming of these words, which has been made by each country's official institutions in order to name a new launched technological device, are included in the objective word production type. The second group- subjective production type- are the words produced by mostly writers, poets and artists so that they can create a peculiar style, get rid of monotony, and make an authentic language system. In this study, the focus will be upon the second type of production- words produced through subjective production.

As Sar,ca states in 2013 in a quotation from Ventura 2010, the new words production method used by many writers in French Literature as well as in world literature, is an indication of the writer's skill and the capacity to use the language because it requires a great care and attention. It is possible to produce a new and different word without spoiling the structure of the language. The parts of speech of the new produced word, its function and meaning indicates a different dimension of this subject.

If the subject of Neologism is handled within the puns, it has to date back to Gargantua, the first samples of French Literature. As one of the masterpieces of this period, this work is filled with puns including the writer's name. Ventura, who has widely studied puns says that puns are comprised of acrostic, which means writing the initial letters of the name (acrostiche), shearing or spoonerie (contrepètrie), using words that do not include some certain sounds (lipogramme) and a different explanation mostly seen in poems and based on the sound similitude of the second line with the first line (holorime); and says that this is a kind of sleight of mouth. (Ventura, 2010). The definitions of the puns mentioned here have been obtained from a little dictionary titled "Dictionary Words Rare and Alumni French " prepared by Didier Méral. (Méral, 2006) The use of puns, which has started with Rabelais and has peaked, has gained currency together with the contemporary representatives of French Literature such as Queneau and Vian. These writers have made up a narrative system which is on the one hand obscure, on the other hand rich and mysterious through the different puns they use. As Jacques Bens, who is known for the studies he has made on Vian's works, states each work makes a different language system and in this system "words become God" (Bens, 1963) Statement governs and influences everything. As the reader reads the book, s/he penetrates into this system, but mostly s/he cannot help being amazed because s/he is worried about being able to understand the message writer wants to convey through the puns. Since the words sometimes gain abstract meanings beyond their real meanings, this may be deceptive for the reader to realize the message.

### **Vian And *L'Écume des Jours***

One of Vian's four great novels, *L'Écume des jours* (The Foam of Days) , is defined as "the most influencing modern romance" by Raymond Queneau and it is a remarkable novel worth analyzing the language system it has. In fact, it is a work much beyond the known novel genre. The first striking thing is the really influencing love of two protagonists, Colin and Chloé. Perhaps the writer emphasizes the fact that the only feeling that the modern era could not spoil, damage and destroy so profoundly that all the other events instantly lose their meanings. However, each time the reader reads the novel, a new dimension is explored. For instance, the obsessive passions of people in the post-war period and their habits for which

they can give up everything are stated in the novel. The disorders of social institutions and weaknesses of the government are described. The reader is left with how the religious beliefs are misused, the sacred things are ignored and discredited; the fact that it is paralleled with people's addiction with the material; that the intellectual movement of the period put the society into an inextricable chaos and a fictional world in which the problems get worse rather than being solved. Things are not explained in a clear-cut and explicit language; however, there is both a deep aliveness and fluency and an equally harsh critical view.

Each writer creates a new world of his/her own through his/her works. S/he tries to achieve the things in this fictional world s/he cannot create or not capable of doing in the real world. This new fictional world that might sometimes be related to the reality turns into an unbelievably imaginary and incredible thing. In *Le Temps des jours*, the writer turns such a fiction into reality. As he also states himself in the foreword of the book "it is not fiction. It is reality because I have thought all of them on my mind and have written. I have transferred them all from opinion to reality." (Vian, 1963) According to the writer, the act of writing is a way of conveying all the events in the novel to the reality. Thus, the words gain a different dimension. Just like a magic stick, writing becomes a tool for embodying the fictional world on the writer's mind and makes it visible and tangible; therefore, each statement, each word gains a god-like power. Thanks to this power, the heroes of the fictional world exist with people like us in their consistent world in harmony like we do in our own world although they have surrealistic features. The words which transform their existence from fiction to reality symbolize the divine power. As Vian stated in 1963, *Le Verbe est bien devenu Dieu*, which means the word has replaced the God. A novel is made up of a language universe and all the events become real in this universe thanks to language. Vian is said to use three different methods in order to discover the language that transfers the novel from fiction to reality. The first one is to use the words with their original meanings rather than the use of rhetoric. The second method consists of producing new words. In this method, known words are renewed by replacing the letters in the word, or completely new words are produced. The third method consists of producing made up words created by the author himself. In addition, it is seen that the author uses other types of puns throughout the novel as well because in the language universe created the novel has a different and impressive narrative forms and techniques. Through the use of puns and new words, the reader is faced with a mysterious narration which is difficult to understand although the narration may not be classified appropriately.

While Vian's style is quite impressive thanks to the language universe which surrounds the novel, another interesting aspect of Vian's narrative technique is to narrate serious matters in a humorous way to make people think but amuse in some way. His competence in using language and generating and analyzing the use of puns by using various techniques supports the humour that the author uses in his style. As Rouayrenc states, the use of humor, which is a sign of going beyond the rules of traditional novels, is a sign of leaving classical realism behind (Rouayrenc, 2012).

While Vian expresses the serious problems of his period in a humorous way, he thinks that the things that make people laugh are not taken seriously. Therefore, he deals with all the unpleasant issues of his

period without being noticed. His humor style is in fact black humour. It has a harsh critical humour style. It enables the reader to think while they laugh and make them question whether the situation is funny or not. The novel sometimes astonishes the reader by presenting examples from the people's own statements in the story or their experience, and the society they live in. What's more, he describes the bishops who represents religion and their sacred ceremonies in a humorous way. Working and doing something intellectual are funny and insignificant things. (Rouayrenc, 2012). To him, working prevents people from living and workers must make machines which enables people to work less, but they do not have the capacity to think about it because this is something they are taught and cannot be changed. By using humour, he tries to display the reality from a different perspective and thanks to the potential facilities of language, he tries to show all the problems that everyone knows but prefers to ignore in a funny frame.

### **Puns In *Le Écume Des Jours***

The method which Vian use the most and enables him to be called Rabelais of modern time is called anagram. In other words, it is a method in which a new word is made by changing the order of the letters or syllables. For instance, *Jean Sol Partre* represents Jean Paul Sartre, one of his contemporaries, in the novel. Likewise, *portecuir en feuilles de Russie* is an anagram of *portefeuille en cuir*. The words used in the novel go beyond the limits of French and give the author the freedom of a unique usage. As stated at the beginning of the study, it is a subjective production technique. According to Gauthier, Vian plays with words, and this is the way he utters the words bu onun söz söyleme biçimidir, but it is a unique style which belongs to a person who is intelligent, wise but pessimistic as him. (Gautier, 1973). Vian's ability to make up new words is easily recognized throughout the novel because he makes the reader think and suddenly gives rises to thoughts on reader's minds while reading. Gauthier classifies these neologisms into different categories such as neologisms related to daily conversations or English, the ones with audio features and word- based or idiom-based neologisms. Some examples of these new words related to Gauthier's classification are shown below. The Turkish equivalents of the words are cited from the translation by Bahir Güran. (Güran, 1987).

Neologisms related to daily conversations: *touillez* (s.31. mixing without harassment ), *piton* (s.31. a swollen part on the skin), *amerlaud* (3.72. American style), *sacristoche* (s.79. sacristy), *bousillé* (s.116. full of holes), *les au courants* (s.116. the ones who are informed), *gondolance* (s.151. ache in the caused by laughing groin), *frigiploque* (s.193. freezer).

Neologism of English origin : *flique*, *tue-flique* (s.264. cop), *relatifs* (s.67. relatives), *baise-bol* (s. 256. baseball), *alcools doux* (s.256. *alcoholic beverages*), *biglemoi* (s.33, *biglemoi* dance)

New words based on acoustic features:: *Ponteauzanne* (s.27. the only surname used in the novel, criticizes false nobility and is comprised of the words *pont+eau+anne*), *la scène où ils se noyaient* (s.116. the use of homophone (meaning stage) instead of the river Seine), *cheveche* (s.79. a bishop, the last syllable of the word changes and another sound with a more sarcastic meaning is added.), *chuiche*( s.79. changes in sound Suisse).

Word and idiomatic anagrams: Economisez vos chaussures (s.61, lengthen use of your shoes), pédéraste d'honneur (s.73, produced out of the word bridesmaid, wedding homosexuals), agents d'armes (s.264, gendarmes,)

Besides, there are made up words which are difficult to understand.: calmand (dressing gown), sapote (s.100, cocunut), opoponax (s.171, a type of odour), panouilles (s.192, corn), pianocktail (s. 206, in addition to making music, a piano to make a different type of alcohol), doublezon (s.210, currency)

The most noticeable ones among these new words are bishops, church, ceremony related words. As mentioned above, chevêche instead of l'archevêque, **miskopos** instead of **piskopos**, boîte noir meaning black box instead of cercueil meaning coffin, croque mort (dead destroyer) instead of porteur meaning the ones who carries the coffin, besides, words such as Cépédéiste, députodrome, cinématographiste, prior, nutritionner, zonzonner, sœtriquer undergoes some grammatical changes or are renewed by changing the syllables in the sounds such as émouvoir /émotionner, nourrir /nutritionner, médiéval/moyenâgeux

The language universe, which includes the novel, changes the ordinary looking love story into a trap. Readers are in such a maze that they get confused by the puns that they come across in any road they take so they get stuck in it. The novel- at the beginning- equipped with well-being concepts such as clearness, peace, love, wealth and comfort turns into a novel that upsets, worries and even turns into a suffocating novel towards the end. Vian uses the words skilfully and enriches the content with the new words, which provides this transformation. The fluency at the beginning of the novel slows down along with the protagonist Chloë's illness and involves the reader into the depression.

## **Evaluation And Conclusion**

Vian's sensitivity to language is recognized with his early works. Also, his interest in language becomes an impulse to make him write. In order to change old-fashioned words and idioms and to add new meanings to them and to put them in use, the author applies the process of regeneration, production and making up of new words. Being a musician contributes to his writing career. Some parts of his novel are like lyrics of a song and read like a song. In *l'Écume des jours* which is a complete language universe like Jacques Ben said, the author is sometimes the one who renews, changes or explore the words but sometimes he is the one who makes up or creates a brand new word. He attempts to put the words that are not used anymore into use making them usable again. He attributes new meanings to the ones that are used in order to prevent them from being worn. In a newspaper article, he says "I have tried to write stories that no one has ever read before, people like the stories that they know about but I don't like the things that are known by everyone. The things that are not known gives pleasure to me, in fact I'm telling stories to them. If only I could read them in others' books." In fact, It is possible to come across these mysterious and unexpected events in his story. On every page, there is a new pun or a new neologism for readers. The strikingly critical plot of the book becomes integrated with the writer's expression style that the reader begins to explore the novel from beginning to end as if s/he is solving a puzzle.

The method of producing new words and puns which constitutes the base for Vian's writing style has been a significant discovery to express the problems of the period he lived in, in an ironic way because as Queneau states, people do not react to funny things, but, if these are for serious things, then their anger turns into thoughts or solutions. (Rouayrenc, 2012). Throughout the novel, a simple but fascinating love story dominates the story but it could have drawn many reactions if the words had been used directly to criticise the social institutions and personalities, politics and politicians, and philosophy and philosophers harshly. However, at first glance, a man who is throttling a child in an organisation to introduce a company founded to protect abandoned children might seem odd, make people smile but make them think as well because they question whether the children are safe or not. Instead of saying *piskopos* when talking about a bishop who got a large sum of money in a wedding ceremony, he created a new word *miskopos* to make him look nicer. This new word is still a bit ironic, though. It draws the attention to the greediness of the bishops. As the same bishop doesn't get enough money, he refuses to attend the funeral so the ones who carry the funeral are dead. The word, coffin, was used once and then named as *black box*. The author wishes the reader to visualize disgusting images due to the lack of hygiene while he describes the clinics. Chloe's doctor's name is *Mangemanche*. This made-up word shows the greediness of doctors. Everyone who goes to the clinics returns home, feeling sick and broke.

As for Philosophy and the philosophers, Existentialism is one of the most significant movements of thought in the post-war period and Jean Paul Sartre, the pioneer of the movement, is a close friend of Vian. In *L'Écume des jours*, Chick, who is a close friend of Colin, is a great admirer of Jean Sol Partre and in the novel *Jean Sol Partre*, the philosopher, represents Jean Paul Sartre. By doing so, he not only honors his friend, but criticizes the people who stick to the movements of thoughts of that period and even lose themselves for them. Chick spends all his money on Partre's books and his time taking part in his meetings and even dies for it. The girl whom he is in love with departs her life in order not to lose him. The intense passions cannot end in happiness.

The author, who loves jazz music very much, reflects his love of jazz on his novel. The name of the main character, Chloe, in the novel is named after a song by a famous jazz singer Ellington. Moreover, new words produced by the words that are of English origin are a sign of the author's interest in the language. *Biglemoi* is the name given for a type of dance in which the body moves with the rhythm in harmony and the dimension change. The policemen, who caught Chick are called *flique* and the author made up the word, *tue-flique*, for gun.

The analysis shows that the author uses new words while narrating every event in the novel. His unique technique indicates his desire to give his novel a completely new identity rather than making it a traditional one. The thoughts that he forms in his mind are put down on paper through words, becomes real and the characters emerge. The plot which started in a positive way goes through a negative process. The happiness of the six characters in the novel turns into misery unexpectedly. Known words change in a mysterious way and depending on the purpose of the author and the messages he wishes to convey, old

words are renewed, current ones undergoes some changes in sound and syllable, more than one words are joined and a new word is formed. Language surrounds the whole novel. It encourages the reader to understand and discover the meaning. The author insists that people, being defeated by the depression of their time, never sacrifice love. Even if the story does not finish with a happy ending, the light at the beginning turns into darkness, optimism becomes pessimism, the battle between life and death is in vain, the story expresses human despair against death, the statement "Singing songs, eleven blind girls in Saint Jules Orphanage were coming." seems to signal a new hope.

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