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IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AND LEXICAL CHANGE: A CORPUS-ASSISTED STUDY OF CULTURE-WAR NEOLOGISMS IN ENGLISH

Background. *The article explores English lexical and semantic neologisms related to culture wars, i.e., the ideological confrontation between conservative and liberal sets of values and beliefs. While such neologisms mostly appear in the US context, they have also permeated the political and media discourse in other Western countries. The purpose of the study is to trace the functional and semantic patterns of the key culture-war neologisms based on the corpus NOW, one of the largest and continuously updated online English corpora.*

Methods. *The study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. The key methods were diachronic frequency analysis, collocation analysis and concordance analysis, which helped to reveal semantic connections of terms under study, resemanticization processes, as well as the extent of their entrenchment in the media. Corpus findings were further analyzed from the perspective of critical discourse analysis with regard to stance-making and social polarization they simultaneously reflect and perpetuate.*

Results. *Culture-war neologisms manifest a particularly contested and fluid semantics, which reacts to power and ideological shifts in the society. The key semantic processes we have traced in their emergence and development are broadening ("deplatforming", "cancel culture", "microaggression"), metaphorization ("snowflake", "safe space"), and pejoration ("woke"). Moreover, these neologisms often undergo the reversal of ideological attribution between the left and the right in the process of mutual targeting.*

Conclusions. *The findings show that culture-war neologisms do not simply mirror political polarization but actively contribute to the weaponization of language, transforming lexical choice itself into a marker of ideological alignment in contemporary public discourse. Our study thus highlights an important role of neologisms as linguistic markers of ideological conflict. Further research might focus on cross-linguistic investigation of culture-war lexicon or explore its changing semantics from the viewpoint of psycholinguistics.*

Keywords: *culture war, neologism, mass media, corpus, NOW, collocation.*

Background

Rapid lexical expansion in modern English is largely attributable to sociopolitical factors such as intensification of military conflicts, struggle for gender and racial equality, LGBTQ+ accommodation, incessant urbanization, etc. Ideological division and increasing polarization also contribute to the formation of new vocabulary and acquisition of new meanings by existing words. One of the most dynamic clusters of lexical innovations in modern English is related to the so-called 'culture wars', which can be broadly defined as a set of ideological conflicts centered around morality, identity and political alignment (Oxford University Press ELT, 2023). The term is most commonly used in relation to such widely contested issues as abortion, same-sex marriages, transgender rights; however, these issues usually signal divisions on a more profound worldview level.

The expression "culture war" is basically a calque from the German Kulturkampf, which refers to the opposition between the Prussian state and the Catholic Church in 19th-century Germany. However, the modern English term "culture wars" was brought into usage only in the late 20th century, popularized by James Davison Hunter in his 1991 book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (Hunter, 1991). The scholar supplied the theoretical foundation for this concept, framing it as a deep ideological conflict between orthodoxy and progressivism, entangling a wide array of crucial social aspects, namely morality, religion, sexuality, free speech and education. Since then, it has become a common staple in political commentary and academic studies. Culture wars are interpreted as symbolic

battles for meanings, waged over how truth should be defined. They are highly polarizing, dividing the society into antagonistic camps. Moreover, they are currently mediatized, spreading mostly via mass media and social networks. It is important to note that, while the concept of culture wars emerged and developed chiefly on the US ground, it has become internationalized and adapted to different sociopolitical contexts.

Culture wars, which have been ongoing since the 1980s but increased in intensity since 2010, have a significant impact on language. Over the last two decades, we have witnessed the formation and proliferation of such neologisms as *woke*, *cancel culture*, *deplatforming*, *trigger warning*, etc., which both reflect and construct the social confrontation discourse. These terms often have contested semantics, which are subject to change and pejoration. Serving as linguistic markers of ideological conflict, such neologisms merit a profound linguistic analysis.

Given their importance for social dynamics, novel political terms and labels in English are increasingly becoming a focus of linguistic research. Particularly, abundant attention has been paid to political neologisms related to Brexit as a crucial turning point in British and international politics. In her 2017 paper, L. Fontaine uses lexicogrammatical approach to trace the semantics and evolving conceptualization of the term BREXIT from its inception in 2012 up to the 2015 UK general election (Fontaine, 2017). G. Lalić-Krstin & N. Silaški examined the word-formational patterns and creativity in a cluster of neologisms derived from Brexit (such as *brexiteer*, *regrexit*,

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bregret, etc.) (Lalić-Krstin, & Silaški, 2018). In their subsequent study, these researchers focused on the ludic aspects of such coinages and the social implications of wordplay around Brexit (Lalić-Krstin, & Silaški, 2019).

In the American context, authorial neologisms used by Donald Trump during his first tenure were investigated by Holubnycha et al. (2020). More recently, scholars have examined the discourse of anti-woke movements in Europe and the US (Cammaerts, 2022; Duffy et al., 2023; Samaras, 2025). It has been noted that the word *woke* is undergoing politicized pejoration through the influence of the political right (Bleich et al., 2025; Filmer, & Vignozzi, 2022). This semantic shift is also demonstrated in Duffy et al. (2023): based on a large-scale UK survey, they reveal that, from 2020 to 2022, all age groups in the UK became more likely to treat *woke* as an insult as compared to the previous periods.

The overarching concept of "culture wars" was studied in depth by Hartman (2019) and Bonnet & Kitty (2024). Political constructs with the modifier *alt* (Alt-Right, Alt-Lite, and Alt-Left) are analyzed in B. Moffitt (Moffitt, 2023). The author notes that *alt* in these controversial terms signals a break from convention and mainstream, instead promulgating vulgarity and an adversarial approach to opponents. Having traced the emergence and gradual decline of these terms in American politics, he notably emphasizes that their legacy is very much alive in diverse political strands, especially after D. Trump's second coming to power in the US. The controversial construct of cancel culture received scrutiny with regard to its effect on university campuses in the study by Norris (2023).

While numerous studies examine individual terms related to the culture wars, they typically employ political or sociological frameworks. Linguistic research in this field remains relatively limited. Specifically, there is a need to investigate the semantic evolution and institutionalization patterns of these terms based on corpus data. The present study seeks to address this gap. The purpose of our article is therefore to reveal the discursive mechanisms that shape the formation, diffusion and institutionalization of English culture-war neologisms, relying on diachronic corpus data. We believe that our study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of fueling polarization in public discourse and the phenomenon of language weaponization in political context.

Methods

The study is based on data from the News on the Web (NOW) corpus (Davies, 2016), one of the largest corpora of English-language online newspapers and magazines. Being daily updated, the NOW corpus is particularly well-suited for tracking the emergence and evolution of neologisms that stem from real-time socio-political events (flashpoints). The timeframe selected for the analysis is 2010–2025, which captures the intensification of culture-war debates in the mid-2010s and enables the observation of longer-term processes of diffusion, entrenchment and (for some items) decline.

The analysis focuses on a cluster of neologisms that have gained prominence in modern English media discourse in the context of ideological conflict between the left and the right. In particular, they include new political labels for right-wing movements (*alt-right*, *alt-lite*), terms related to platform management and censorship (*cancel culture*, *deplatforming*), terms signaling a progressive stance and its critique (*woke*, *wokeness*, *wokeism*, *wokery*, *virtue signalling*, *trigger warning*, *safe space*, *microaggression*), as well as a range of derivative, often metaphorical coinages built around *woke* (e.g., *woke capitalism*, *wokefishing*, *wokelash*, etc.). The selection of

lexical items was based on their media salience and frequency in the corpus.

The methodological approach integrates quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse interpretation. The primary methods include diachronic frequency analysis (used to trace temporal patterns of spike and decline) and collocation analysis (employed to trace the lexical valency of target terms as indicative of their evaluative potential). The corpus queries were conducted for all spelling variants of the target terms (e.g. *deplatforming* / *de-platforming*). In the case of *woke*, part-of-speech filtering was used to disambiguate its political meaning from the homonymous past-tense form of *wake*. Concordance analysis was additionally employed to reveal discursive patterns of pejoration, metaphorization, semantic broadening and ideological reattribution. The findings were further interpreted within the discourse-analytic framework, focusing on how lexical choices serve as markers of ideological alignment and as instruments of polarization. This holistic approach allowed us to illuminate not only the linguistic processes of neologization and resemanticization but also the broader sociolinguistic dynamics through which political conflict shapes the language itself.

Results

The evolution of English "culture war" lexicon indicates that the classic dichotomy of right and left wings has become more nuanced since the mid-2010s. Within the right movement, various deviating strands have received the labels *alt-right* and *alt-light*. *Alt-right* (formed by clipping and compounding from "alternative right") refers to far-right groups marked with white-nationalist, anti-immigration, and antifeminist stance. First coined in 2008, it gained media visibility around the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Its discursive role has largely evolved from a self-designation and a badge of identity to a rather stigmatized label that many previous participants now prefer to distance themselves from. The corpus data demonstrates a spike in the use of this word in 2017 (5197 occurrences), followed by a steady year-on-year decline (only 420 occurrences in 2024). Some of the common collocates of *alt-right* in the NOW are *racist*, *nationalist*, *supremacist*, vividly reflecting the negative connotations it gained in the media.

The designation *alt-lite* / *alt lite* (alternative spelling – *alt-light*) emerged to refer to a faction within the right-wing movement that abstains from supremacist ideology and is allegedly more moderate in its views. However, as emphasized by ADL, the detrimental impact of this strand is still high, as "the alt lite embraces misogyny and xenophobia, and abhors "political correctness" and the left" (ADL, 2017). Corpus data reveals the trend of usage that is similar to *alt-right*: taking into consideration all its possible spellings, *alt-lite* gained media currency around 2017 (56 occurrences), afterwards declining consistently until it was barely used in 2023–2024. Therefore, both *alt-right* and *alt-light* labels were tightly related to the particular episode in US history (the 2016 election campaign and the beginning of D. Trump's first administration), during which they were spreading quickly via online platforms. However, by 2020 they became irrelevant and failed to institutionalize as valid political categories. One of the reasons why the term *alt-light* came out of usage is the wider establishment of the political term *right-wing populism*, which captured largely the same set of ideologies. Thus, both *alt-right* and *alt-lite* can be considered transient neologisms that fade into obsolescence after the respective political development is over.

Another term related to the right-wing movement also features the modifier *alt* – *alt-tech* (from *alternative*

technology). Originally, it was coined in the 1970s by Peter Harper to denote eco-friendly technologies. However, in 2017 it acquired another meaning – alternative digital platforms that operate outside the mainstream, lack censorship and are often used to proliferate extreme right ideas (hence its re-emergence in the resemantized form coincided with the intense media discussion of alt-right movement). The corpus data show that its usage peaked in 2022 (56 occurrences), spurred by the rise of Truth Social, the banning of Parler, and public attention to Covid-19 disinformation on social media. Though its usage in the NOW decreased subsequently as the novelty wore off, alt-tech has been widely taken up in academic and political discourse. Thus, Google Scholar yields 809 academic papers featuring *alt-tech* / *alt tech*, published after 2021.

Collocational analysis proves that it is currently used almost exclusively in its political rather than ecological meaning (key collocates – *platform*, *social*, *Gab*, *Parler*, *sites*, *Trump*). Therefore, in contrast to *alt-right* and *alt-light*, *alt-tech* can be regarded as a political neologism that succeeded in entrenching and is on the path toward institutionalization. We believe that the major factor in its persistence is the relative neutrality of this term and functional grounding: it captures an ongoing and tangible phenomenon of unmoderated digital infrastructure with transnational scope rather than fleeting political coalitions and fringe groups.

The rise of alt-tech is closely connected to the process of *deplatforming* (alternative spelling – *de-platforming*), which has become another key neologism of the right-left confrontation. First used in 2014, this term denotes preventing a person or group from expressing their opinions at a public venue, either offline (conference, live meeting) or online (forum, social media). Though in principle it is politically neutral (since any political actor can be denied a platform when considered as violating rules), in practice this process has been mostly applied to right-wing representatives. Thus, *deplatforming* is strongly implicated in the right-left discussions of culture wars, cancel culture and extremism.

The NOW corpus data show that the use of *deplatforming* / *de-platforming* in the media began in 2017 and reached its peak in 2021 (887 occurrences), when Donald Trump and many of his supporters were banned from a number of social media platforms after the US Capitol storming. Since then, the discussion of this phenomenon has been subsiding but not vanishing completely (still over 100 occurrences in 2024). Among the key collocates of this term are *ensorship*, *censoring* and *cancel culture*, which demonstrate how the right purports to position deplatforming as proof of the left's authoritarianism and prejudice. At the same time, the left typically advocates deplatforming as an effective measure to counter right-wing radicalization and hate speech. The effectiveness of deplatforming and its legal regulation are actively debated in scholarly and political forums (more than 4000 results retrieved in Google Scholar as of October 2025). Picked up by both the media and academic establishment, this neologism has been successfully entrenched and institutionalized, as attested by its inclusion in the Oxford English Dictionary in September 2025¹.

When discussed broadly, deplatforming is usually interpreted as a type and a particular mechanism of *cancel culture*, i.e., the practice of boycotting a person or group that is considered to have voiced an unacceptable opinion. It

often involves celebrities being ostracized from social media websites or professional venues. Introduced in 2016 (according to OED), this word has undoubtedly become one of the most emblematic neologisms of the last decade. According to the NOW corpus data, the use of *cancel culture* was rising from 2018 until it peaked in 2021, gradually falling from then on, though in 2025 the raw frequency jumped again (2154 occurrences as of October 6). Besides its trendiness in the media, it remains a highly relevant culture reference frame for political and academic discussions. In 2021, a spike in interest in cancel culture was linked to attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential elections, aftermath of #MeToo movement, and the widely covered case of Republican Senator Josh Hawley's book being withdrawn from publication by Simon & Schuster publishing house. Cancel culture has revived as a discursive focus in 2025, driven by a few high-profile controversies, notably backlash against Sidney Sweeney's ad campaign with the play on words "jeans" and "genes" and, more recently, late-night host Jimmy Kimmel's temporary withdrawal from air due to critical remarks about Charlie Kirk, Trump's close ally, after his assassination. Both incidents have reignited debates about accountability and the legitimacy of censorship in both left and right wings.

In the NOW corpus, *cancel culture* is often featured as part of the phrase *left-wing cancel culture*, thus showing its common use by the right-wing representatives to accuse the left of irrational and disproportionate reactions. However, as Jimmy Kimmel's case demonstrates, the right is appropriating cancel culture for their own purposes (see more on this in (Chatterton Williams, 2025b; Stanton, 2025)). In this respect, former President Barack Obama's X post has been widely quoted and discussed: "After years of complaining about cancel culture, the current administration has taken it to a new and dangerous level by routinely threatening regulatory action against media companies unless they muzzle or fire reporters and commentators it doesn't like"². Thus, the term *cancel culture* gained new relevance and significance in 2025. Moreover, it is undergoing semantic broadening, being currently applied to any social or institutional backlash or disagreements about free speech.

Some of the most notable collocates of *cancel culture* in the NOW are *woke* and *wokeness*, revealing a close connection between these ideological constructs. The word *woke*, pinpointed by Filmer & Vignozzi (2022, p. 8) as the "word of our era", arose in African American Vernacular (AAVE) and originally meant "alert to racial prejudice". Gradually, however, it underwent semantic broadening and acquired the meaning "alert to manifestations of injustice in general". Aligned with the leftist ideology, it was propelled to prominence in the mid-2010s, after George Floyd's death and the rise of Black Lives Matter movement. In 2017, the political meaning of *woke* was added to the Oxford English Dictionary, and in 2019 it was named the top word of the year by Global Language Monitor, which signals a high degree of institutionalization.

Based on the corpus search, we revealed that *woke* in the meaning "alert to injustice" has been rising gradually since 2018 and reached its peak in 2022 (828 occurrences). After a slight decline, it was brought again into the limelight in 2025 (801 occurrences as of December 12). This resurgence is clearly linked to Donald Trump's return to power in 2025 and his proclamation of the "war on woke" as part of the new social and educational agenda. This political

¹ Oxford English Dictionary. <https://www.oed.com>

² Obama post on X. 18 Sept. 2025. <https://x.com/BarackObama/status/1968679167286763678>

emphasis has contributed to the pejoration of this label – a process already underway since 2020 as the right wing intensely mocked the woke discourse as a manifestation of self-righteousness or performative activism. The rising derogatory use of this term is apparent even in its collocation patterns in the corpus: apart from the expected collocates *left*, *political*, *liberal*, *social*, it is frequently combined with *mob*. Used by conservative circles, the phrase *woke mob* sarcastically depicts the woke movement as aggressive and threatening for society.

Apart from *woke* and *wokeness* becoming more negative over time, other derogatory terms have been coined on their basis, namely – *wokery* and *wokeism* (both emerged in the mid-2010s and were listed in the OED in 2023). The OED provides almost identical explanation for both terms, marking them as disparaging and chiefly British: "Progressive or left-wing attitudes or practices, esp. those opposing social injustice or discrimination, that are viewed as doctrinaire, self-righteous, pernicious, or insincere" (OED, n.d.). According to the NOW corpus data, *wokeism* is used much more widely than *wokery* (by a factor of ten). Moreover, this form spiked drastically in 2024 and 2025.

From the linguistic viewpoint, it is especially remarkable that the concept of *woke* gave rise to an unprecedented number of playful coinages, represented by puns, blends, or compounds. The most popular of them are listed below, in order of their decreasing frequency in the NOW corpus, with comments on their pragmatic role:

- *woke capitalism* (coined by Ross Douthat, intended as an oxymoron) – critiques the adoption of left-wing causes for the sake of profit. The concept is discussed at length in the book *Woke Capitalism: How Corporate Morality is Sabotaging Democracy* by Rhodes (2022);
- "*Great Awakening*" (a pun on "Great Awakening", religious revival movement in the US in the 18th and 19th centuries) – casts the surge in progressive activism as a quasi-religious moral crusade;
- *woke-washing* (patterned on *greenwashing*, *blackwashing*, etc.) – criticizes performative activism by brands, i.e., progressive actions solely for PR purposes;
- *wokedom* (by analogy to *kingdom*, *fandom*, etc.) – used humorously for the ideological territory of woke culture;
- *wokefishing* (a play on *cattfishing*) – refers to a person's pretending to hold progressive political beliefs and values to attract their prospective partner (especially on dating apps); this term vividly captures the entanglement of politics and romance.
- *woketopia* (blend of *woke* + *utopia*) – frames social ideas of the progressive movement as unrealistic;
- *wokelash* (blend of *woke* + *backlash*) – initially denoted backlash against ideas seen as retrograde and anti-woke, but after 2020 the evaluative direction shifted: currently, it is primarily used to imply opposition to progressive ideas (Mollard, 2021);
- *woke-industrial complex* (patterned on *military-industrial complex*) – mocks the institutionalization of social justice rhetoric, referring to the whole ecosystem of media and academia that advanced woke ideas.

Occasionally, right-wing sources also use the verb *wokify*, meaning "to make something or somebody more woke" and its opposite *dewokify*, e.g., "*The sense was strong that Trump is not dictating to Europe to dewokify the Old Continent*" (Gonzales, 2025). Moreover, a broad range of pejorative nouns have proliferated to refer to a person holding and defending progressive views, namely *wokester*, *wokie*, *wokescold*, *woketard*, *wokeling*. Viewed broadly, they

now serve as a substitute for the memetic insult social justice warrior, which has existed since 2014. Another overlapping label is (*woke*) *snowflake*, used mockingly in relation to an extremely sensitive and easily offended individual with progressive views. It represents the ongoing politicization of the snowflake metaphor, related to the wider context of "Generation Snowflake" discussions. *Generation Snowflake* is an informal label for people who reached maturity in the 2010s, viewed as entitled and overly sensitive. In 2016-2017 the alt-right community appropriated this label to refer to young people protesting the Republican agenda and, specifically, to Donald Trump, who was elected President for his first tenure (January 2017). However, the left wing has often reversed the insult, targeting it at the president himself (Case, 2025).

Similarly sarcastic is the well-established expression "go woke, go broke" (coined around 2018) – a rhyming parallelism implying that embracing wokeness by corporations or institutions inevitably entails their financial losses. The origin and entrenchment of this political catchphrase in the US sources has been analyzed by Villers (2025). According to the NOW corpus data, the expression reached peak usage in 2023, especially against the backdrop of one major culture-war flashpoint involving Disney. As the company publicly opposed Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law (which restricts classroom discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity), it encountered large-scale online criticism and boycotts from the conservatives. As a result, it suffered significant financial losses. This case received wide coverage as illustrative of the truthfulness of the phrase "go woke, go broke". Remarkably, in 2025, conservative sources have again wielded this expression in relation to Disney, this time using the low performance of their film *Snow White* as a pretext (New York Post, 2025, March 12). In the last two years, however, the phrase has mostly featured in the context of its analysis and criticism. It is increasingly debunked as a myth since such correlation rarely takes place. A recent article in *The Conversation* is eloquently entitled: "'Go woke, go broke' is no longer true. Socially aware capitalism is the future of corporate responsibility" (Underwood, 2025). It emphasizes that socially aware capitalism, or *woke capitalism* (the term mentioned above) has largely reversed the situation in terms of ethics and economics dichotomy.

The concept of *woke capitalism* is close to *virtue signalling* – another political neologism that points to the hypocrisy allegedly underlying progressive and liberal ideas. *Virtue signalling* (also spelled as *virtue signaling*), coined in 2013, refers to the practice of expressing one's views or performing seemingly useful actions with the goal of demonstrating one's political convictions and moral superiority. This clearly disparaging phrase has been mostly used by the right wing to criticize the left. The NOW corpus data show that *virtue signalling* has been intensively used in the media since 2015, with a peak in 2022 (1020 occurrences), when polarization was especially high due to post-COVID-19 tension, the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, corporations massively taking stance on social justice issues, etc. Collocation analysis reveals that it often features in broader combinations such as *woke virtue signalling* and *corporate virtue signalling*. Both serve to highlight its association with performative progressivism and marketing exploitation. *Virtue signalling* is now firmly entrenched in political and media discourse, being included in all authoritative English dictionaries. More recently, its ironic counterpart *vice signaling* (also retaining religious overtones) has emerged to refer to the display of socially

unacceptable behavior or views as part of identity performance. Thus, an article in *The Atlantic* discusses Kanye West's describing himself as a "nazi" on social media, reaching the following conclusion: "Virtue be damned: Now we are living in an era of relentless, unapologetic vice signaling" (Chatterton Williams, 2025a). It serves to demonstrate the linguistic creativity that permeates the culture war discourse, where each lexical item brings forth a host of derivative words or expressions that play on it, often expanding the underlying metaphors.

Controversial sociopolitical neologisms that spark heated debates between conservative and liberal camps also include *trigger warning* and *safe space*. Originally, *trigger warning* emerged in the late 1990s in the discourse of trauma support groups to signalize upcoming themes or words that could trigger painful memories in trauma sufferers. However, by the mid-2010s its meaning broadened significantly to a protective notice that precedes potentially distressing content (e.g., self-harm, sexism). In this meaning, it spread in the academic environment and liberal media, being attached to course materials, articles, entertaining or educational videos. According to the NOW corpus data, the phrase *trigger warning* has been rising in popularity since 2014, reaching its peak in 2024 (1021 occurrences). Most of these occurrences are actual notices on left-leaning resources that warn readers of stressful topics raised.

The term *safe space* spiked in use in the 2020s (especially 2022) due to its increasing integration into woke discourse. It emerged in 1970 in feminist and LGBTQ+ communities to refer to discrimination-free environments. Since the 2010s, academic institutions have used this label more broadly to indicate any zone of emotional safety where offensive speech is forbidden. Both trigger warnings and safe spaces are deeply controversial nowadays as they raise the concerns of free speech and censorship (Bagus, Daumann, & Follert, 2022). Moreover, scholars have criticized them for driving the culture of "safetyism", i.e., overprotection from challenging ideas, which harms the students' resilience and intellectual development (Lukianoff, & Haidt, 2018).

Safe spaces and trigger warnings serve as shibboleths in the culture wars, as they clearly divide the two camps. For supporters of these concepts (typically representing the left wing), they symbolize empathy and compassion, while the opponents (aligned with the right wing) often use the terms ironically or pejoratively to taunt the alleged hypersensitivity and fragility of modern young people. From the viewpoint of linguistics, *trigger warning* and *safe space* are examples of successfully entrenched semantic neologisms, which were registered in the OED in 2022 and 2019, respectively. Collocation analysis demonstrates that *trigger warning* frequently co-occurs with *suicide*, *sexual assault*, *rape* (indicating the specific traumatizing topics in the content), while *safe space* (when used in its political meaning) goes together with *queer*, *LGBTQ+*, *trans* (indicating the marginalized groups it purports to protect).

Collocation analysis also highlights their common use in conjunction with one more ideologically polarized term – *microaggression*. Coined in the 1970s by the American psychiatrist Chester Pierce, it initially described subtle insults aimed at Black people, which represent a systemic bias. By the 2010s, the term was commonly used to mean an insult to basically any marginalized group (i.e., it underwent semantic broadening pattern similar to *safe space*). University diversity training and social media activism were key in propelling it towards the mainstream in public discourse. In 2015, *microaggression* was chosen as

word of the year by the Global Language Monitor, and in 2018, it was registered in the Oxford English Dictionary (with a note "chiefly US"). Based on the NOW corpus data, we observe the peak of its use in 2020-22, with a decline thereafter. In comparison to other woke-related terms, it is generally less frequent in the media (only 258 occurrences). Its typical collocates in the corpus include *traumatic*, *discrimination*, *racist*, *black*, which suggests that *microaggression* still applies most of all to racial bias. The term is extremely ideologically charged as the left-wing representatives typically use it straightforwardly to expose bias, while the right wing criticizes it as a buzzword that lacks evidence and reinforces fragility. Many scholars also consider it as detrimental as far as free speech is concerned (Cantu, & Jussim, 2021). The concept of microaggression received its most profound and well-known criticism from sociologists B. Campbell and J. Manning (Campbell, & Manning, 2018), who place it in the context of the confrontation between the developing "victimhood culture" and the traditional "culture of dignity". Therefore, rather than just manifestations of the age-long clash between Republicans and Democrats, the terms *trigger warning*, *safe space* and *microaggression* serve as stance-making devices signaling vastly different systems of values and cultural orientations.

Discussion and conclusions

Since 2000 the intensification of culture wars, polarization, and digital media politics has produced a rich set of neologisms and resemantized labels that convey the *left vs. right* confrontation. Based on the data of a reliable modern corpus of English news – NOW – we have traced the linguistic trajectory of the most representative novel words and phrases that decode the clash between progressive and conservative ideology. While they are chiefly related to the US political landscape, they are also increasingly being applied to divisions in Europe, thus having critical relevance to global English.

One of the most deeply entrenched culture war neologisms is *woke*, which vividly demonstrates how the semantics of sociopolitical labels are subject to broadening and pejoration in response to changing power dynamics in society. The emergence of numerous derived words and playful coinages based on *woke* (*wokery*, *wokedom*, *woketopia*, etc.) further cements its current status as a derogatory term and testifies to the weaponization of language that is central to culture wars.

Neologisms *cancel culture* and *deplatforming* are representative of the frequent reversal of agency in political terminology. While previously they were commonly associated with the progressive ideology, nowadays the left wing increasingly accuses the right wing of adopting the same techniques. Moreover, these neologisms manifest the trend of excessive semantic generalization, as they are now applied in the media to any disagreement on the limits of free speech.

Collocation analysis in the corpus proved instrumental for establishing the interrelation of culture war vocabulary, as well as the patterns of pejoration and appropriation by the political left or right, which reflect large-scale shifts in political identity and branding. Our study contributes to several intersecting academic foci: the study of neologism formation and lexical innovation, the sociolinguistics of political discourse and corpus-based approaches to semantic change. Moreover, by delving into the mutually constitutive relationship between political polarization and linguistic practice, this research demonstrates how the culture wars have not merely generated new vocabulary but have fundamentally altered the pragmatic conditions under which

speakers deploy language in the public sphere, transforming everyday words into ideological weapons and making linguistic choice itself an unavoidable political act.

Further research could focus on the cross-linguistic borrowing and semantic adaptation of culture-war neologisms into languages other than English. While our study is limited to media discourse, a logical extension would involve investigating platform-based variation, particularly through comparisons of mainstream media, social media, and parliamentary debates. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the role of culture-war neologisms as ideological markers could be explored through experimental studies examining processing bias triggered by these items in comparison with neutral terms. Reaction-time and priming paradigms represent especially promising methodological approaches in this regard.

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ІДЕОЛОГІЧНИЙ КОНФЛІКТ І ЛЕКСИЧНІ ЗМІНИ: КОРПУСНИЙ АНАЛІЗ НЕОЛОГІЗМІВ КУЛЬТУРНИХ ВОЄН В АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ

В с т у п . У статті досліджуються англійські лексичні та семантичні неологізми, пов'язані з культурними війнами, тобто ідеологічним протистоянням між консервативними та ліберальними системами цінностей і переконань. Хоча такі неологізми переважно виникають у контексті США, вони також проникли в політичний і медійний дискурс інших західних країн. Метою дослідження є виявлення функціональних і семантичних моделей ключових неологізмів культурних воєн на матеріалі корпусу NOW – одного з найбільших і постійно оновлюваних онлайн-корпусів англійської мови.

Методи. Дослідження ґрунтується на поєднанні якісних і кількісних підходів. Основними методами є діахронний частотний аналіз, колокаційний аналіз і аналіз конкордансів, що дало змогу виявити семантичні зв'язки між досліджуваними термінами, процеси їхньої ресемантизації та ступінь їх закріплення в медійному дискурсі. Отримані корпусні дані також було проаналізовано з позицій критичного дискурс-аналізу з урахуванням процесів формування позиційності та соціальної поляризації, які ці неологізми водночас відображають і відтворюють.

Результати. Неологізми культурних воєн характеризуються особливо спірною та плинною семантикою, чутливою до змін владних і ідеологічних співвідношень у суспільстві. Ключовими семантичними процесами, простеженими в їхньому виникненні та розвитку, є семантичне розширення (*deplatforming, cancel culture, microaggression*), метафоризація (*snowflake, safe space*) та пейорація (*woke*). Крім того, ці неологізми часто зазнають реверсії ідеологічної атрибуції між лівими та правими політичними колами в процесі взаємного дискурсивного протистояння.

Висновки. Результати дослідження свідчать, що неологізми культурних воєн не лише відображають політичну поляризацію, а й активно сприяють "озброюванню" мови (*language weaponization*), перетворюючи сам лексичний вибір на маркер ідеологічної позиції в сучасному публічному дискурсі. Таким чином, у статті підкреслюється важлива роль неологізмів як лінгвістичних маркерів ідеологічного конфлікту. Подальші дослідження можуть бути спрямовані на міжмовний аналіз лексики культурних воєн або на вивчення її семантичної динаміки з погляду психолінгвістики.

Ключові слова: культурні війни, неологізм, масмедіа, корпус, NOW, колокація

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