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Reflexive Possibilities of a Language During the Selection of the Word of the Year

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ABSTRACT

“Word of the Year” as a linguistic and sociological research is carried out in many countries of the world and has been very popular for many years, moreover, it attracts more and more attention every year. This partly explains the **relevance** of this study. The “Word of the Year” campaign is usually attended by professional philologists, who can involve the general public in the discussion, but the final choice is made by experts. Yet, the average native speaker gets a chance to evaluate the result. The **aim** of the article is to describe the reflexive possibilities of “Words of the Year” as seen by a Russian-speaking observer, who carries out linguistic reflection. The **material** for analysis includes lists of “Words of the Year” for different years in different countries; **sources** of material are Internet publications, designed for a wide range of Russian-speaking readers; the main **methods** encompass observation, description, component and conceptual analysis. The article formulates the **definition** of “Word of the Year” as a linguistic unit that due to its significance and frequency of use, has become a nominal linguistic marker of one calendar year. “Word of the Year” helps to trace current social sentiments, problematic topics and topical issues of concern to the social majority. “Word of the Year” allows us to summarize a brief verbal summary of the period and consolidate these generalisations for the next generations. The analysis of the material led to **conclusions** that the reflexive possibilities of the “Word of the Year” can comprise frequency as an indicator of a surge of attention to the word; selection of a language unit from a number of words that are to some extent related to the current and significant “key situation”; and competition between several lists of “Words of the Year” compiled by different expert groups, whose existence allows a native speaker, first, to compare different approaches to the choice made and to juxtapose them to their own linguistic instinct.

Keywords: word of the year; language reflection; linguosociological procedures; meta-linguistic indicators; Russian sector of the Internet (Runet)

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ОРИГИНАЛЬНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

Рефлексивные возможности языка при выборе «слова года»

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Выбор «слова года» как лингвосоциологическая процедура осуществляется во многих странах мира и является весьма популярной на протяжении многих лет, более того — с каждым годом привлекает к себе все больше и больше внимания. Этим частично объясняется **актуальность** проведенного исследования. В акции «слово года» принимают участие, как правило, профессиональные филологи, которые могут привлечь к обсуждению широкие слои населения, но окончательный выбор делают эксперты. При этом рядовой носитель языка получает возможность оценить полученный результат. **Целью** статьи является описание рефлектирующих возможностей «слов года», какими их видит русскоязычный наблюдатель, который и осуществляет языковую рефлекссию. **Материал** для анализа — списки «слов года» за разные годы в различных странах, **источники** материала — интернет-публикации, рассчитанные на широкий круг русскоязычных читателей, основные **методы** — наблюдение,

описание, компонентный и концептуальный анализ. В статье сформулировано **определение** «слова года» как языковой единицы, которая по причине своей значимости и по частоте употребления стала номинативным лингвистическим маркером одного календарного года. «Слово года» помогает отследить текущие социальные настроения, проблемные темы и актуальные вопросы, волнующие социальное большинство. «Слово года» позволяет подвести краткий вербальный итог периода и закрепить эти выводы для следующих поколений. Анализ материала позволил прийти к **выводам**, что к рефлексивным возможностям «слова года» можно отнести: частотность как показатель всплеска внимания к слову; выбор языковой единицы из ряда слов, которые в той или иной степени связаны с актуальной и значимой «ключевой ситуацией»; и конкуренцию нескольких списков «слов года», составленных разными экспертными группами, наличие которых позволяет носителю языка, во-первых, сопоставить разные подходы к выбору «слова года» и, во-вторых, опереться на собственную интуицию, на свое языковое чутье.

Ключевые слова: слово года; языковая рефлексия; лингвосоциологические процедуры; металингвистические индикаторы; русский сектор интернета (Рунет)

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Introduction

The procedure of choosing the “Word of the Year” is widespread in a large number of countries around the world. It is difficult to explain the interest that this action arouses in the general population by a single reason, but obviously the main one is heuristic, or cognitive interest. Since reflexivity in general is characteristic of mankind, it is understandable that a person would like to characterize this or that period of public life in a succinct and concise form, literally in *one word*, to mark the year lived, to summarize its results (cf. summing up the year’s results in various spheres). Public life is always manifested in some events or processes for which there is already an existing or newly created designation, a verbal sign. Thus, the life of modern man is saturated with both experienced events and information about them. Besides, the modern information age, which is marked by a shift toward a digitized, computerized industry, is more than ever filled with verbal signs. And thus, reflection on one’s own actions (although this is not the point discussed here) and on the facts of social life, which are most interesting to us, turns out to be closely connected with the linguistic unit that names this fact. This is why the action “Word of the Year”, which simultaneously aims at reflection about socially significant events and reflection about their verbal expression, is the focus of people’s attention.

“Words of the Year” are not full-fledged *reflections*, meaning “relatively complete metalanguage utterances containing a commentary on the word or expression being used” [1, p. 3]. However, there is no doubt that linguistic reflection is present both in

the choice of the word of the year and in the word of the year itself, if linguistic reflection is understood broadly as a *meaningful* use of language and as a metalinguistic response to everything that has any relation to the language and to its use.¹ Moreover, T.V. Bulygina and A.D. Shmelev have shown that in some statements, judgments about language are not always clearly distinguished from judgments about extra-linguistic reality [2, p. 150].

The task of providing a brief and accurate picture of a particular time period is not unique. It is well known and widespread in Russian literary and journalistic discourse. Let us recall such nominatives as “thaw” (from the eponymous title of Ilya Ehrenburg’s novel written in 1954–1956), “fateful forties” (from a poem by D. Samoilov in 1961), “vegetarian times” (A. Akhmatova about the 1920s), “dashing nineties”, and so on (see about the individual interpretation of periods of time [3]).

Materials

Words of the year are certainly drawing attention in this respect because they are discursive units (see about the characteristics of words of the year as units of language and discourse in [4]) and represent a phenomenon relating to the functioning of language in a certain period of time. The change of the main linguistic markers of one year, prescribed by the rules of the game, provides linguists with unique material for observing the diachronicity of language as well. The words of the year arranged

¹ Shmeleva T. V. Language reflection: Teoreticheskie i prikladnye aspekty rechevogo obshheniya: Vestnik Rossijskoj ritoricheskoy associacii. Issue 1 (8). Krasnoyarsk; Achinsk: KSU Publishing House; 1999:108–109. (In Russ.).

in a list testify, among other things, to linguistic tastes and habits.

However, we will concentrate on another feature of these units. The procedure of choosing the word of the year is carried out mainly by professionals, who should become the main experts in choosing the linguistic unit. It is in the activity of selecting the words of the year that, in our opinion, the most crucial reflexive possibilities of these units appear. Therefore, the **aim** of this article is to describe the reflexive possibilities of the words of the year as they are seen by the average Russian-speaking speaker. It is the position of an observer that makes it possible to carry out linguistic reflection. The **material** for the analysis is based on lists of words of the year and selections from publicly available Internet sources. The **sources** of the material are web publications intended for a wide range of Russian-speaking readers. The main **methods** are determined by the specifics of the subject of study. This work uses traditional methods of linguistic research, namely observation, description, component and conceptual analysis.

It may seem strange, but there are almost no definitions of the “Word of the Year” in the academic literature, let alone a generally accepted definition. There is a rough understanding of what this phenomenon is and quite a few metaphorical descriptions: *semantic milestones, the shortest verbal and conceptual summary of the past, the linguistic portrait of the current moment, the linguistic concentrate of the calendar year*, etc. Nevertheless, we need to work not with a metaphor but with a definition if possible, so we propose the following interpretation: “Word of the Year” is a linguistic unit that because of its significance and frequency of use, has become a nominative linguistic marker of one calendar year.

Results

1. The fact that the frequency criterion is not in the first place is important, because considering only the frequency of use does not seem to be a sufficient reason to consider a unit as a “Word of the Year”. This criterion is the main one for determining the “most frequent word of the year”. Nonetheless, some expert communities also consider this as the leading criterion for the selection of the “Word of the Year”. Here, for example, is how the material about “Word of the Year 2021” is presented (I have made all the emphasis in bold in the citations): “*THE PUSHKIN INSTITUTE HAS AN-*

NOUNCED THE WORD OF THE YEAR. The most popular word of the year 2021 in #Russia has been announced.

The press service of A. S. Pushkin State Institute of Russian Language has announced this to the TASS news agency.

The press service said that according to the results of the Institute’s research the word ‘sputnik’ came out on top. It was used 9 times more often in 2021 than before”.²

The frequency of word usage, or the number of hits when searching for a word on the internet, is the most easily traceable and outwardly convincing argument: “*The staff of the Pushkin State Institute of the Russian Language named the word of the outgoing [2022] year. It was the word ‘heritage’. It has been published 1,071,509 times on the Internet, the university’s press service reports*”³; “*Washington, 28 November — RIA Novosti. The American dictionary Merriam-Webster chose ‘gaslighting’ as the word of the year 2022.*

...According to the site, in 2022, the number of enquiries about gaslighting increased by 1,740%, and the high interest continued throughout the year”⁴. From the comment in the last example, we can see that the experts did not just note the frequency alone, but also the interest in the word throughout the year.

“*Moscow, Dec 3 — RIA Novosti. The Online Dictionary of the English Language dictionary.com has chosen the adjective ‘existential’ as the word of 2019; it was often used when discussing climate change, gun violence and democratic institutions, the resource said on its website... According to the dictionary, Internet users often searched for the meaning of the word ‘existential’ in 2019 after it was extensively used by politicians. For example, after US presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said in February that climate change ‘poses an existential threat’, searches for the word increased by 179%. And when former US Vice President Joe Biden called White House leader Donald Trump an ‘existential threat to America’, Internet users’ interest in the word increased by 1,000%*”⁵. From this example, we can

² URL: <https://ia-centr.ru/publications/institut-pushkina-ob-yavil-slovo-goda> (accessed on 09.02.2023).

³ URL: <https://rg.ru/2022/12/22/lingvisty-pushkinskogo-instituta-nazvali-slovo-uhodiashchego-goda-nasledie.html>

⁴ URL: <https://ria.ru/20221128/slovo-1834704210.html> (accessed on 09.02.2023).

⁵ URL: <https://ria.ru/20191203/1561916740.html#:~:text=Как%20отмечает%20словарь%2C%20в%202019,этого%20слова%20увеличилось%20на%20179%25> (accessed on 11.02.2023).

conclude that the frequency is always due to extralinguistic reasons, which is an external factor in the social life of the public.

And yet, it is the frequency of word usage that is the first indication of the reflexive possibilities of the “Word of the Year”. A sharp increase in the number of uses of a word is always a sign that it is entering the sphere of “hot interest”, the speaker’s close attention to the phenomenon denoted by the word. In this respect, “Words of the Year” are close to *fashionable words* and *“key words of the current moment”* (on the latter concept, see: [5]).

2. The second reflective indicator of the “Word of the Year” is the choice of linguistic unit itself. In the vast majority of cases, a single word is chosen as the “Word of the Year”, rarely it is a phrase, and even more rarely a graphic image (smile). What are the reflexive possibilities in the choice of one nominative unit? The point is that the actual event, the sign of which should be a “Word of the Year”, as a rule, is connected with a larger in context situation. In [6], we propose to take advantage of the notion of “key situation of the year”, which is convenient because it allows us to group topical words characterizing this situation. “As a rule, a situation includes several events, to denote or characterize which certain neologisms are created, some new words appear or well-established vocabulary is actualized” [6, p. 102]. This was clearly demonstrated by the situation of 2020, when an avalanche of words and expressions emerged to reflect the events. It became a difficult task to single out one word from the “coronavirus” lexicon as a topical one. The core zone of the semantic field of newsworthy words associated with the key pandemic situation included so many words describing multifaceted events within the situation that selecting the “Word of the Year” was very problematic. For example, *“the compilers of the Oxford Dictionary were unable to select a single key word for 2020. Therefore, they have published a selection of ‘Words of the Unprecedented Year’. The words included in the final report, according to the authors’ intention, should have reflected ‘the spirit, mood and concerns of the year 2020’ as much as possible. The final list includes the following lexemes: bushfire, COVID-19, WFH, lockdown, remote, key workers (people who cannot work remotely: doctors, couriers, salespeople, etc.), Black Lives Matter and Belarusian”*.⁶

⁶ URL: <https://polit.ru/news/2020/11/23/oxford/print> (accessed on 10.02.2023).

But other expert groups have traditionally suggested just one word⁷: “Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary has chosen the noun **‘pandemic’** as the word of 2020, according to this reference publication’s website. “Sometimes one word defines an entire era, and this is true for this **exceptional and exceptionally challenging year**” the dictionary editors wrote. They remarked that the word “‘pandemic’ has come to the fore in 2020”⁸. To quote, using auto-translation, the Israeli data: “The word for 2020, according to viewer voting, is שוטב (swab stick—author’s note). In second place is the word ‘mask’ and in third place the word ‘isolation’. Not particularly kind words, but certainly words we will particularly remember from last year. 5 Jan. 2021 (Hebrew Language Academy)”⁹. A few more examples: “In Japan, they have traditionally chosen a hieroglyph of the year, which symbolises the world situation of the year. This year’s chosen hieroglyph is **‘crowded’** because of recommendations to avoid crowded spaces and close contact with people due to the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. This was reported on Monday, December 14, by Japan’s NHK”¹⁰; “**‘People’** and **‘epidemic’** have become the hieroglyphs for 2020 in the People’s Republic of China. This was announced on December 21 as the result of an annual poll sponsored by the China State Linguistic Monitoring and Research Centre. According to RIA Novosti, the hieroglyph **‘people’** (民min) or **‘nation’** has been chosen as the domestic notion of the year. Experts admit that in 2020, the whole country helped each other and an entire nation took part in the fight against the coronavirus infection. In turn, the character for ‘epidemic’ (疫yi) turned out to be the notion of the year for international topics. Experts believe that in 2020, the world is facing various complexities and crises, and the coronavirus epidemic has changed the way people live all around the world”¹¹.

In the Russian-speaking environment, the choice of “words of 2020” is as follows: “In search queries of Yandex users in 2020 **‘quarantine’**, **‘pass’** and **‘constitution’** became the most popular words”¹²;

⁷ As a reminder, the list of “words of the year” is not usually limited to one word; the experts select the top three, five or ten, but the most significant word, in their opinion, comes first on the list.

⁸ URL: <https://polit.ru/news/2020/11/30/pandemia/print/> (accessed on 10.02.2023).

⁹ URL: <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/837073> (accessed on 10.02.2023).

¹⁰ URL: <https://iz.ru/1099595/2020-12-14/iapontcy-vybrali-simvolom-2020-goda-ieroglif-tesnyi> (accessed on 10.02.2023).

¹¹ URL: <https://iz.ru/1102475/2020-12-21/epidemiia-i-narodstali-ieroglifami-2020-goda-v-kitae> (accessed on 10.02.2023).

¹² URL: <https://iz.ru/1101572/2020-12-18/iandeks-nazval-samyepopuliarnye-poiskovye-zaprosy-v-2020-godu> (accessed on 12.02.2023).

*“Experts of the Pushkin State Institute of the Russian Language named ‘self-isolation’ and ‘nullification’ as words of 2020. Mikhail Osadchy, Doctor of Philological Sciences and scientific supervisor of the ‘Word of the Year’ project, talked about it. According to the results of observation of the most discussed topics of the year, the leaders were the coronavirus pandemic and the amendments to the Constitution. The experts analysed texts on these topics and spotted **key words** that were frequently encountered and at the same time had the most significance and semantic capacity. Thus, **two indisputable leaders** were determined”¹³; “Chairman of the Expert Council of the competition, philosopher and linguist Michael Epstein said: ‘This year the voting lists were longer than in the previous ones. But as a result, everyone was surprised by the voting results, including the experts themselves. The winner, the word of the year, is not connected with the quarantine, but **‘nullification’**... However, the following prize-winning words cumulatively catch up with the current agenda: ‘coronavirus’, ‘Covid’, ‘self-isolation’, ‘remote’, ‘pandemic’...”¹⁴*

Let us take one illustrative example of how difficult it is for experts to make their choices: *“The editors of the Collins Dictionary have chosen ‘lockdown’ as the word of the year, according to their official announcement. **Many other words on the Collins Word of the Year 2020 shortlist also focus on the coronavirus pandemic.** ‘Something that has changed everyone’s lives so dramatically, leaving no country or continent untouched, was bound to have a momentous impact on our language,” the dictionary authors said. “The use of the word ‘coronavirus’ has increased 35,000 times year during a year. **But these are the restrictions that have had the biggest impact on the language**”¹⁵*

Thus, choosing a “Word of the Year” sometimes implies not only choosing an event or phenomenon that experts would like to mark the past year with but also a lexeme that would reflect this event or phenomenon with all its connotations and meaningful contextual word usage.

3. Finally, another reflective indicator of the “Word of the Year” is the choice of that weighty and topical event or phenomenon, whose lexical designation will become the “Word of the Year”, since the main

task of “Words of the Year” is to reflect situations that are **significant** for society. The question of who determines this relevance will lead us to believe that there is a need for a council of experts with such power granted by the social majority. As a rule, in most countries, the selection of the “Word of the Year” is made by professional philologists (scientists, writers, journalists, etc.) and authoritative social institutions (research centres, universities, large publishing houses, etc.).¹⁶ Different countries and varied professional communities in the same country have their own traditions of defining the “Word of the Year”.¹⁷ The expert group tries to be as convincing as possible when justifying its choice of the “Word of the Year” to attract more members of the social group to its side. This is why the information part is always accompanied by an explanation, e.g.: *“In 2016, the lexeme **réfugiés** (n, refugees) was declared word of the year in France: The word ‘refugees’ is **the most symbolic, the most significant, the most exciting, it is the word that most illustrates the gravity and the essential problems of the contemporary world, according to the president of the jury, political scientist Roland Queiroz**” (quoted from: [7, p. 102]).*

Choosing the “Word of the Year” is not a rigid and fixed procedure; experts may change it slightly: *“The British Oxford Dictionary has chosen the slang term ‘goblin mode’ as the word of the year 2022. For **the first time ever**, the British Oxford Dictionary has chosen a word of the year **in a public vote**. The winner was ‘goblin mode’, a slang term that has gained popularity on TikTok, according to The New York Times”¹⁸*

¹⁶ In Germany, where the world’s first Word of the Year was chosen in 1971, the selection is made by linguists from the Gesellschaft für Deutsche Sprache (GfdS). The English-language Word of the year (WOTY) campaign took shape in the 1990s and early 2000s. It is carried out by the American Dialect Society (ADS); the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), which prepares the British and American versions of the rankings; The Global Language Monitor; Merriam-Webster, the oldest American dictionary; and The New York Times Press. In Russia, these are the Expert Council led by philologist and cultural studies scholar Mikhail Epstein (since 2007); the Pushkin State Institute of Russian Language (since 2017); and the Yandex search engine. In China, the Beijing language and culture university and the National Centre for Language Resources Monitoring and Research (国家语言资源监测研究中心). In Japan, the Hieroglyphic Literacy Verification Association. And so forth.

¹⁷ Traditionally, Oxford Dictionaries, the lexicographic division of Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press, names the “Word of the Year”. “The Oxford word of the year reflects the spirit, mood or concerns of the past 12 months, with potentially lasting cultural significance,” its representatives said. URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/12/05/goblinmode/>

¹⁸ URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/12/05/goblinmode/> (accessed on 02.02.2023).

¹³ URL: <https://rg.ru/2020/11/11/v-institute-pushkina-nazvali-glavnye-slova-2020-goda.html> (accessed on 12.02.2023).

¹⁴ URL: <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/12/18/88429-udalilis-na-obnulenie> (accessed on 12.02.2023).

¹⁵ URL: <https://polit.ru/news/2020/11/10/lockdown/print/> (accessed on 10.02.2023)

Discussion

The presence of different expert teams allows the native speaker to compare different approaches to choosing the “Word of the Year”, while the expert team needs to justify its method of choosing the “Word of the Year” and explain its position to preserve the “credibility” of the social majority: **“Scholars set out to find a word that sounds positive and has public support, and have intentionally excluded words with political and military connotations from their search. In this way, the humanitarian mission of the Pushkin Institute was aligned with the humanitarian nature of the chosen word. “We relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods in assessing the lexicon. We used among the sources providing statistical information Wordstat.yandex, the Medialogy analytics system and the Integrum database. According to Medialogy, 1,071,509 messages containing the unit ‘heritage’ were published in 2022,” the researchers say. “Wordstat shows such queries as ‘cultural heritage’, ‘heritage site’, ‘heritage of Russia’, ‘world heritage’, ‘heritage year’ in the first positions”.**¹⁹

In this way, the group of experts offers the general public undoubtedly valuable material in the form of lists of “words of the year”, while their work on linguistic reflection remains “behind the scenes” for native speakers. However, society intuitively feels the need for a linguistic fixation of lived experience, because the analysis of what has happened and its revelation in words is both a way to “understand oneself”, a way to preserve the memory of problematic or significant situations of the year, and an opportunity to transmit in concise form one’s knowledge to subsequent generations. On the basis of the “words of the year”, as cultural scientist E.V. Nikolaeva believes, “a system of ideas about extra-linguistic reality relevant to the representatives of this culture is formed and transmitted in the national culture” [8, p. 155]. A comparison of the “words of the year” of different countries shows both the diversity of social attitudes and points of their sudden coincidence. For example, in 2016 these words were: *post-truth* (Oxford English Dictionary, USA, UK), *paranoid* (Cambridge Dictionary), *surreal* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), *Brexit* (Collins English Dictionary), *dumpster fire* (American Dialect Society), *xenophobia* (Dictionary.com, USA), *fake*

news (Macquarie Dictionary, Australia), *postfaktisch* (Gesellschaft für Deutsche Sprache, Germany), *Brexit* (Word of the Year Expert Council, led by M. Epstein, Russia).

The situation in 2021 gives the following picture: *vax*, that is a shortened form of both verb, noun and adjective (Oxford English Dictionary, USA, UK); *vaccine* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), *vaccination* (the word was mentioned in 33.5 million messages) (Brand Analytics, which analyzed 874 billion words in 52.2 billion public Russian-language messages in social media from January 1, 2020 to November 30, 2021), *vaccine* — 16 million queries and *vaccination* — 10 million queries (Yandex Word Selection resource), *vaccine* and *vaccination* (Expert Council under the guidance of M. Epstein), *Sputnik*, i.e. the name of the vaccine (Pushkin Institute of Russian Language), *Wellenbreche*, i.e. wave cutter — a metaphor referring to measures that have been and will be taken to stop the fourth wave of the pandemic (Gesellschaft für Deutsche Sprache, Germany).²⁰

The idea of a linguistic reflection on the year is so popular that it has become a way of attracting the attention of the public. For example, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* publishes an “alphabet of the main words of the year”: “30 December 2022 11:57. From A to Z: The **top words** of 2022 have been named. It has been **the toughest** year for the country in probably the last 80 years. **Heroic and tragic, with nerves over skin.** *Komsomolskaya Pravda* compiles **an alphabet of its key words** at the end of each year. But in 2022, undoubtedly, the main word is one that overshadows everything: **special operation**. And yet we shall remember the others. So that **this fiery year** flashed before our eyes once more, like in fast motion. To see it gone”.²¹

Conclusions

The procedure of choosing the “Words of the Year” is related to the professional activity of philologists, but its result attracts the attention of a far wider range of people. The interest of an ordinary native speaker in the results of this dictionaries’ chiming in can be explained by the human desire to make sense of what is happening in general and of the linguistic life of society in particular. The linguistic

¹⁹ URL: <https://rg.ru/2022/12/22/lingvist-y-pushkinskogo-institut-a-nazvali-slovo-uhodiashchego-goda-nasledie.html> (accessed on 09.02.2023).

²⁰ Retrieved from <https://www.svoboda.org/a/vaktsinatsiya-i-volnerez-v-mire-vybrali-slova-goda/31618212.html> (accessed on 12.02.2023).

²¹ URL: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27490/4700648/> (accessed on 12.02.2023).

unit chosen by the experts, which gets the status of a verbal marker of the year lived, becomes for society the material for linguistic reflection and, besides, not a scientific but rather a commonplace manifestation. The everyday metalanguage consciousness unites, according to N.D. Golev, different systems: “the mental, linguistic and social life of a person”, which are connected with linguistic activity [9, p. 5]. Thus, the “Word of the Year” evidence combines social and linguistic reflection. It was shown that the reflexive possibilities of the “Word of the Year” can include the following: frequency as an indicator of a surge of attention to the word; the choice of a linguistic unit from a number of words, which to this

or that extent are connected to the actual and significant “key situation”; and finally, the competition of several lists of “Words of the Year” compiled by different expert groups, the presence of which allows a native speaker, first, to compare different approaches to choosing the “Word of the Year” and, second, to rely on his /her own intuition, on his /her linguistic flair.

In the future, this topic can be continued by studying common, “naïve” reactions to the experts’ choice of the “Word of the Year”, which will make it possible to see the difference or unity of assessments between the two communities — the professional one and the collective majority.

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