THE SEMANTICS OF NADSAT. A STUDY ON LANGUAGE AND ITS FUNCTIONS IN DEFINING CHARACTER – A CLOCKWORK ORANGE BY ANTHONY BURGESS

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Abstract: Having on its background the topic of youth culture and its language, social disorder and its criticism, the general disruption in society and the pitfalls of social and technological progress in the age of modernism, the present article critically looks at Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) with a view to analysing character, language and its functions. After a brief introduction to the context of the book's publication, its genre, and some general remarks on the novelty of the language created in the novel, the article progresses to the presentation of the major sources of this language. The central part of the paper originally approaches Nadsat from a semantic perspective with the aim of testing and validating the functions of Nadsat already identified and further investigating (individual and group) character portrayal as unfolded by the language used. The analysis is based on a quantitative and qualitative research of the Nadsat code/(anti-)language of the novel.

Keywords: anti-language; Nadsat; functions of Nadsat; character development through language.

1. Introduction

A Clockwork Orange, published in 1962, was a book that stirred interest in the age for more reasons than one: it brought to the foreground youth culture and it did so, first and foremost, by introducing extreme behaviour (violent, immoral, etc.) on the part on the youngsters in the novel; it thus signalled an abrupt, violent breakdown of the social order while also trying to teach a moral lesson (built on the background of the struggle of choosing between right and wrong and controlling the 'badness' within one's self); it introduced addiction as a scourge of the 20th century; it invented (at least partially) a new language based on the Russian vernacular to suit

communicational purposes exclusively of the youth appearing in the novel; it used music so as to complete the main character's portrait in a rather paradoxical manner (as the ultra-violent Alex loves classical music).

Genrewise, the author places his own novel within the frame of horror comedy and fable: "the book can be read as a straight horror comedy or, on a deeper level, as a fable of good and evil and the importance of human choice" while also enjoying "an easily digestible feast of picaresque villainy and social satire" (*id.*) (Burgess 2011: 1). Geoffrey Aggeler (1979: 172) calls the novel "one of the most devastating pieces of multipronged social satire" while Roger Lewis (2003: 286) validates its existence as "a period piece: the white plastic modernism of the sixties; the cynicism of moneyed louts looking for thrills; the drugs." Andrew Hammond (2013: 27) circumscribes the novel to "a wider twentieth-century shift in speculative fiction from utopianism to dystopianism, stimulated by the loss of faith in social and technological progress that began in the age of modernism and was consolidated during the Cold War."

One of the most striking and long lasting effects of the novel that remains in the minds of the readers is connected to the creation of the special language that the group of young men forming the main characters (or orbiting around the most important character, Alex) use as a brand of their communicational existence and not only. Burgess himself called it "a group dialect", "a mixture of Russian and demotic English, seasoned with rhyming slang and the gipsy bolo", "a new lingo", "a weird patois" (Burgess 2011a: 141, 133).

One of the first explanations is given in the very novel by two characters speaking and trying to understand what special language Alex uses – thus, we are presented a discussion between Dr. Branom and Dr. Brodsky about Nadsat: "Quaint," said Dr. Brodsky, like smiling, "the dialect of the tribe. Do you know anything of its provenance, Branom?" "Odd bits of old rhyming slang," said Dr. Branom, who did not look quite so much like a friend any more. "A bit of gipsy talk, too. But most of the roots are Slav. Propaganda. Subliminal penetration" (Burgess 2011b: 86).

Critics have called "Nadsat" – the language invented by Burgess as the characters' instrument of communication – sociolect, register (Kohn 2008: 8) or slang (Bogic 2017: 5), some others have distinguished it from idioglossia and called it teenage argot (Bradbury 1962 *apud* Burgess 2013: 278, Beauchamp 1974: 475), "deviant social dialect" (Fowler 1979: 259) or lingo, "comparable to the 19th century thieves' cant or the 1950 teddy boys' slang" (Nixon 2009: 4). Seen by

some as mere gibberish, or as verbiage (Evans 1971: 408), by others as “a unique medley of demotic English and Russian loanwords” (Hammond 2013: 28, Jeannin 2017: 216), or “ferocious and coarse, partly archaic, partly mod, neologic” (Morris 1979: 57), it has been unequivocally admitted more than once that Nadsat is “the work’s dystopic backbone” (Sisk 1997: 58) with even the greater quality of not ever becoming outdated. Its artistic qualities are undeniable, making some researchers call it “artistic (anti-)language” or ‘artlang’, a subtype of “constructed languages” or “conlangs” (Vincent & Clarke 2017: 247). Also extensively discussed as anti-language (Fowler 1979, Kohn 2008), Nadsat is what gives the novel an intriguing quality, linguistic and literary force, increasing its originality. But it equally creates controversies on more levels than one.

Sometimes placed under the heading of ergodic literature (Aarseth 1997: 1) (literature which requires supplementary effort to understand), it is clear with *A Clockwork Orange* that Burgess has more than one purposes in mind when creating Nadsat and this work intends to identify these purposes in order to better understand the work and its characters and then interpret this language from the perspective of cultural and linguistic determinism while identifying some of its roles and functions. In this undertaking we will be conducting quantitative research using statistical instruments for data collection based on inventorying the number of occurrences of Nadsat lemmas in the novel, as well as qualitative research based on textual analysis of the novel analyzing the code in connection with its users.

2. Nadsat – sources

One of the most challenging aspects of the novel is the newly created language – “a mannerism to exclude the adults” (Head 2002: 24) and one very ‘adhesive’ way of uniting Alex and his *droogs* (“friends”) in the gang. Nadsat (etymologically the Russian suffix for “-teen”) is a “Russo-Anglo-American patois” (cf. Blake Morrison in Head 2002: 24), a medley which comprises, according to the critics’ estimates, between 3% and 5% foreign words (Evans 1971: 406, Adams 2011: 67). There are just a few other words from German and several English coinages (Evans 1971: 408). Others identify even gipsy and cockney (or at least the cockney rhyme technique of forming words) or Malay influences: “Romany; Cockney rhyming slang; the language of the criminal underworld; the English of Shakespeare and the

Elizabethans; armed forms slang; and the Malay language specific to Burgess”¹.

In this “inverted utopia” (Claeys 2017: 462) the behaviour of the youth is not necessarily historically contextualized. Rather it comes from a constant desire and tendency of the young people to create a closed circle for themselves, a mini-universe in which they coexist, manifest freely and speak in an almost exclusive manner.

Among the sources of this slang, critics have identified Burgess’s preference for music (“a language which reflects both Alex’s violent energy and the stylishness which appears in his fastidious love and elegance and preference for classical music” (Stevenson 1993: 224–225)), or the author’s search for the perfect word, the perfect language (see his studies on the language of James Joyce). The novel’s verbal inventiveness was also related to “the multilingual facility its author developed as a teacher in Malaya” (Stevenson 1993: 224–225). But one of the main reasons for introducing Nadsat was the fact that the author wanted to create an idiolect that would synchronize with the futuristic society presented in the book. A world of the future could not possibly be supported by a language of the past, it had to stand the test of not having been considered outmoded because of it being a historically determined slang. It is at this point that we could actually declare that Nadsat can be considered atemporal. Jim Clarke (2017: 102) remarks the “stunning achievement of Nadsat” of remaining “linguistically intriguing and stylistically fresh and innovative over a half-century on from its first appearance”, but also that of making of Alex a memorable character.

3. Nadsat – roles and functions

a. One of the most frequent questions in the analysis of the novel regards the reason(s) for which Nadsat was created and the way in which it functions for readers in the act of reading. Being circumscribed to the tradition of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948) and his creation of Newspeak, Nadsat had the primary purpose of introducing a slang that would be atemporal – it would become a permanent, pertinent possibility at any time in the future. Burgess confesses the intensive search through which he went in order to find a proper language which would go beyond the ephemerality of any slang of any age – the “sixties slang clearly would not do” (Burgess

¹ <https://www.anthonymburgess.org/a-clockwork-orange/a-clockwork-orange-and-nadsat/>, accessed May 23, 2019.

2011a: 132) and found an inspiration for his “space-age hooligans” (*idem*: 133) in a visit to Russia.

In the basic understanding of this slang it is clear that “the teenage patois or nadsat talk spoken by the gang members (the ‘droogs’) is a mannerism designed to exclude adults” (Head 2002: 24). This fact helps Alex and his ‘droogs’ to increase “a sense of solidarity among the nadsats that contributes to their resistance to the rule of official authority” (Booker 1994a: 96). While also increasing the generational and social gap, and being materialized or taking extreme forms of verbal violence in assaults upon the elderly, this grants the gang members linguistic advantage and increases their unity/“adhesiveness” within the group.

Liberty Kohn (2008: 1) posits that the teens escape their surroundings and build a community exclusively through language: “This teen-language functions as a means to separate themselves from the novel’s hegemonic dystopian culture”. The novel gives us and its characters what Masters (2017: 3) calls “a fallen language for a fallen world, whereby the language is not merely a symptom or reflection of this fallen reality, but an intervention; a means of existing in and through moral uncertainty”. But paradoxically enough, the Nadsat slang also alienates “Burgess’s delinquents from mainstream of the British society” (Booker 1994a: 97), a fact which makes Alex a character generically acknowledged as negative.

Therefore, one can easily posit that Nadsat becomes a manner of better outlining a social category, of giving them individuality. But just as Alex manages to repel readers through his verbal or physical violence, so does Nadsat bear the double and contradictory function of standing the boundaries of time as long as it is perpetuated, transmitted by a group of users, and yet being replaced by another slang as long as a new group of users emerges deciding to create and use their own linguistic code – Alex clearly observes that he cannot understand the slang of the rising generation of the twelve-year-olds.

b. According to another interpretation, this slang manages simultaneously to create cohesion within the social group, but also to introduce an emotional distancing, to create a technical barrier that would save readers from extreme emotions caused by a direct exposure to horrific speech, thoughts and acts (“a buffer against the horrific acts of violence”, Nixon 2009: 5). Thus, “the stylized language keeps the appalling acts that are described in it at a certain aesthetic distance, and protects us from being too revolted by them – or too excited” (Lodge 1992: 200). Nadsat functions as a filtering screen, or a downtoning

tuning fork, a sieve through which the larger pieces of verbal and physical violence are granulated into digestible bits. Randall Stevenson seems to follow the same hermeneutic line in identifying the functions of Nadsat: “Alex’s teenage language is also sufficiently peculiar to keep readers distanced from the immediate impact of horrors which follow from his choice of ‘the bad’” (Stevenson 1993: 224–225).

c. Anna Bogic continues the same line of interpretation and she asserts that this “invented teenage dialect (sociolect)” has the role of “masking content and numbing the reader”, but she also sees a symbolism behind the merging of English and Russian which she labels as “two official and ideological languages at the time” (Bogic 2017: 1). This symbolism, Bogic argues, creates a meeting point between the East and the West at the height of the Cold War. Evans (1971: 409), too, is of the opinion that for the Anglo-American reader, the Slavic words lead to the idea of communist dictatorship. Burgess must have meant something in introducing an argot of Slavic origins and not something resembling the argot of the Beat generation, for instance. He himself says that though “the lesson of the *Orange* has nothing to do with the ideology or repressive techniques of Russia, it is [...] concerned with what could happen to any of us in the West, if we do not keep on our guard” (Burgess 2011a: 142). What the author signals might be the fact that together with the exposure to this Slavic (Eastern) words, the young generation may have been subliminally subjected to a kind of propaganda associated with abusive authority, extreme violence and censorship – all these being combined in the Ludovico technique. Alex is forced into changing by force, through a form of violence and in a manner that does not make him understand the essence of wrong, but by repressing this side of his personality through conditioning. However, while a certain angle could allow us to introduce determinism into discussion because there are aspects that could lead to some traces in the Slavic context, Burgess also extensively transforms these in a manner that makes them universally possible. This is the point at which another function of Nadsat could be introduced as the new lingo delves into the same aspect as Orwell and Aldous Huxley did before him (in *A Brave New World*, 1932) – that of control of the humans’ thoughts and behaviour through a process of conditioning (see Huxley’s genetic programming, childhood indoctrination, and drug consumption, Orwell’s linguistic conditioning through the introduction of Newspeak and Burgess’s violent film watching under the effect of nausea-inducing drugs as a part of the so-called Ludovico technique) – by the use of the body of words that form

Nadsat the *droogs* seem to be forced towards the aspects that the words cover in their meanings and functions: violence, contempt, abuse, indulging in the physical aspects of life, etc.

d. Booker (1994a: 95–96) sees in it “a form of linguistic rebellion, a way of rejecting the official ideology of the society around them by rejecting the language of that society and replacing it with one strongly informed by the language of a feared enemy.” Alex and his droogs reject (part of the) conventional language and come with lexical replacements as a signal of rejecting the ideology of a decade, the social order of a type of society, the group organization of a community, the possibilities of individual shaping. Nadsat is for the members of Alex’s gang a way of asserting their identity/individuality, of rendering their belongingness to a new group with an existence of its own.

e. Fifthly, the idea of experimenting with language as a way of intriguing the readers, or as a way of challenging them to engage in a “game” of decoding falls right into the pattern of late modernity and early postmodernity. Some other critics (Connell in Bray et al. 2012: 226) posit that this “lexical inventiveness is a characteristic of science fictional texts throughout the twentieth century”, because, by introducing a new language, the author manages to create a tone of mystery. By extrapolating the analysis to the case of dystopia, which is as close as it gets to sci-fi, we can say that the author creating such a language manages to distance the story into a future that would make the work valid for a longer period. Therefore, we consider that we can actually acknowledge this quality of lexical inventiveness not only of science fictional texts, but also of a series of texts that intended to use language as a manner of introducing original characters and groups of characters. At the same time, the text increases its appeal to the readers as they are passively engaged in decoding Alex’s play with words, but also actively involved in using part of this slang as a sign of showing their belonging to the community (/gang) of readers of *A Clockwork Orange*. At the same time, the novel can be seen as a ludic (or, in fact, very serious) challenge addressed to the readers to see how quickly they can learn the basic vocabulary of a new language (such experiments were made by linguists – see Pitts et al. 1989).

f. This last idea leads us to another purpose of creating Nadsat, as specified by Burgess himself – the author saw the novel as “a brainwashing primer” (2011a: 142). His intended purpose was to make

his readers be exposed to a “shower” of Russian words which would (1) make them learn, remember or rediscover these words in their adapted forms and (2) be witnesses on their own of the way in which some form of manipulation through language works (though, of course, not at the level at which Alex and the other users are exposed to). The author boldly declares that “it will take the reader no more than fifteen pages to master and revel in the expressive language of ‘nadsat’” (Burgess 2011a: 1). Thus, the readers would experience on themselves the process of *linguistic conditioning* and observe how exposure to a corpus of words does not only lead to the acquiring of new vocabulary, but it also makes readers be predisposed to using this vocabulary, if not also engage in the acts that could be triggered on a perlocutionary level.

g. Furthermore, the reclusion into this slang by Alex’s *droogs* seems especially useful when they want to communicate unhindered about the horrific acts they are about to commit. At the same time, they use this as an act of intimidation upon the others, and this achieves a direct connection between this language/sociolect and the violence that its users engage in. That is why, for some interpreters, the novel was regarded, on one level of interpretation, as a social critique against a certain category of abusers determined ethnically and largely identified as the communist world.

h. But one of the most important aspects in creating the Nadsat language is the fact that Burgess also creates a unique character. The use of Nadsat individualizes Alex to the highest degree in the novel and endows him with a vivid individuality (Booker 1994a: 97). It is one way of building verisimilitude and building a character that would last in the history of literature. This narrative choice of Burgess’s reveals him as one the finest novelists, one the boldest plungers into the human mind, and one of the most exquisite composers/musicians, all of these allowing him to connect the building of characters with the analysis of the depths of the human (sub)consciousness and the musicality of language.

4. A semantic approach to character presentation

We do not intend to make a linguistic analysis of groups in terms of word formation or of classes of words from a morphological and stylistic viewpoint, as analyses of this kind have already been made (Evans 1971; Sisk 1997; Goh 2000; Adams 2011; Bogic 2017). Other studies of Nadsat on a linguistic level have also been made by Janák (2015) who performs a study of the transformations of Nadsat lemmas

in translation and Vincent & Clarke (2017) who divide Nadsat into seven categories according to the way in which they were formed: Core Nadsat, archaisms, baby talk, rhyming slang, truncations, compound words and creative morphology². But at the level of grouping the vocabulary of Nadsat semantically and trying to extract its functions from the observation of the lemmas in terms of lexical variety and actual occurrence in the text we found no studies. Studies on the semantic analysis approach to culture render obvious the way in which a culture can be mirrored in language (Sagi et al. 2009). They manage to prove how language does not offer only a “semantic distance” from one age to another, but it also functions as a way of defining an age, similarly to how, we venture to say, Nadsat is a mirror of Britain during the 1960s and it defines Alex and his droogs. At the same time, through its fictional nature (which grants it atemporality) it becomes more obvious that Nadsat could be the idiolect of any group in any age and it also becomes obvious after analyzing it that the author did not simply hail (the) cultural change (of modernity) through Nadsat, but he also warned against and satirized the side-slips that could occur at the level of both culture and the individual.

Therefore, our main methodology consists in identifying the functions of such a language as Nadsat, starting from a grouping of the words used by Alex and the members of his gang in such a way as to identify the semantic areas to which the lexical items belong but also to register the number of occurrences (the occurrences have been counted as their primary form, but they register all derived forms – nouns in the plural, variations in suffixes, various participial forms of verbs, etc.). In compiling this list, we have used the glossaries published in the Norton edition (Burgess 2011a) and the Penguin restored edition (Burgess 2013), and our own list compiled manually as a result of reading the novel. We have only eliminated around 30 lemmas from the total of 356 identified, which occurred only once or twice, and could not be circumscribed to any important semantic group. Such examples of lemmas used only once or twice and with no clearly distinguishable group are included in group 17 under the heading “miscellaneous”.

² Also see the complete inventory of the 356 lemmas of Nadsat made by Vincent and Clarke and available at <https://ponyingtheslovos.wordpress.com/2017/04/20/breaking-down-nadsat-into-categories/> (a blog-project of *A Clockwork Orange*) by accessing each of the seven categories, accessed on June 14, 2019.

Character portrayal is achieved at this particular level through a special use of language which can be semantically grouped. The preference for certain semantic groups ultimately uncovers, as we shall see, the way of thinking, way of being and worldview of the group using them, with oftentimes deeper intentions at the authorial level.

Semantic group		Nadsat words used	Meaning in English	Occurrence
	subcategory			
1. people	1.1. man/guy	chelloveck/veck	creature, human being, individual, person	48/191
		moodge	man, husband, peasant	9
	1.2. young man	malchicks/malchickies/malchiwicks	youngsters, boys	51/1/4
		nadsat	teen, teenage, youngster	15
	1.3. friends	droog, droogie	friend	73/21
		bratty	brother	3
	1.4. young woman	ptitsa	girl, woman	55
	1.5. girl	devotchka	little girl	47
	1.6. old woman	baboochka	grandma; granny	15
		forella	"trout", annoying elderly woman	5
		lighter	crone, hag	2
		soomka	hag, "bag"	1
	1.7. woman	sharp	woman	13
		cheena	lady	7
		dama		1
	1.8. spouse	zheena	wife	1
	1.9. old man	ded	grandfather	1
	1.10. generic term for people	lewdies	people	24
		litsos	synecdoche for people ("face")	1
	1.11. parents	pee and em	papa and mama	9
	1.12. police forces	millicent	policeman	47
		rozz		26
		chasso	guard, sentinel, sentry	24
	1.13. delinquents	prestoopnik	criminal, offender	13
		plenny/ies	prisoner/s, convicts	9/9
		baddiwad	mischievous/naughty/bad people; scoundrel	1
	1.14. superior folk	sophisto(es)	sophisticated person	2
	1.15. drunkards	pyahnitsa	drunkard	1
	1.16. drugged people	in-the-lander	person who is high on drugs	1
	1.17. social groups	banda	gang	1
		gruppa		1
		shaika		1
	1.18. derogatory/offensive forms of address	bratchny	bastard	20
		gloopy	stupid, fool, simpleton	14
		bruiseboy	yob, thug	2
		skitebird	some sort of offensive term	1
		merzky get	filthy bastard	1
		decreps	decrepit person	1

2. violence (physical)	2.1. verbs connected to fighting/act s of violence/ aggression/ criminal acts	tolchock(ed/ing)	to hit, to push	36
		fist	to punch	10
		razrez	to slash, to rip, to cut, to gash, to slit	5
		crast	to steal, to rob	4
		drat(s)	to fight, to tear, to flog, to thrash	2
		skvat	to snatch	1
		vred	to harm, to damage, to injure	1
		oobivat	to kill	1
	2.2. nouns connected to violence acts and or offensive gestures	krovvy	blood	37
		tolchock	push, blow, jerk, jolt, beating	30
		dratsing	fight(ing)	16
		ultra-violence	extreme violence	12
		crasting	stealing, robbery	10
		razrez	rip, slash	3
		twenty-to-one	violence	3
		bitva	battle; fight	2
		chain	hit with a chain	1
		boot-crush	the act of crushing with one's boot	1
		twist-arm	arm twisting	1
		up-you-piping	making an obscene gesture	1
	2.3. white weapons	britva	razor	25
		nozh	knife	14
		oocy	chain	6
	2.4. fire arms	pooshoka	gun, pistol	2
2'. violence (verbal)	2'.1. generic vulgar word	cal	excrement, shit	45
	2'.2. vulgar labelling, cursing acts	cally	shitty, dirty	20
3. body and parts of the body	3.1. generic term	plott	body, flesh, corpse	30
	3.2. torso area	rook(er)	hand, arm	88
		glaz(z), glazzy	nipple	70/1 /1 (1)
		zoobies	teeth	22
		pletcho(es)	shoulder(s)	17
		sharries	buttocks	7
		keeshkas	guts, intestines	5
		groody	breast, chest, bosom	2
		tick-tocker	heart	2
		brookoko	abdomen, paunch, stomach	1
		shiyah	neck	1
		rot	mouth	90
		litso	face	76
		gulliver	head	70
		glaz(z)/glazzy/my mind's	eye(s), look	70/1

	3.3. head area	glazzy		/1
		ooko	ear	7
		goober	lip	5
		voloss	hair	4
		yahzick	tongue	4
		gorlo	throat	2
		mozg	brain	2
		cluve	beak, bill (referring to the mouth)	1
		morder	muzzle, snout, ugly face	1
	3.4. lower body	noga	foot, leg	34
		yarbles/yarblockos	testicles/bollocks	13/2
4. clothing and footwear	4.1. generic term	platties	clothes	40
	4.2. items of clothing/parts of clothing	carman	pocket	19
		toofles	slippers	6
		sabog	shoe	3
		neezhnies	panties, underpants, underwear	1
		kick-boots	boots for kicking	1
		shlapa	hat	1
5. finance	5.1. money	pretty polly	money, currency	14
		cutter		13
		deng		7
6. food	6.1. basic foods	pishcha	food	13
		eggiweg	egg	5
		kleb	bread	5
		jammiwem	jam, jelly	1
		sakar	sugar	1
		maslo	butter	1
		mounch	snack	1
7. drink	7.1. basic drinks	moloko	milk	20
		chai	tea	26
	7.2. alcoholic drinks	firegold	whiskey or similar alcoholic drink	1
		alc	Alcohol	1
	7.3. effects of drinking	beer-vomit	vomit from drinking beer	1
8. drugs	8.1. substances	synthemesc	synthetic mescaline	6
		milk plus/moloko plus	mixture of milk and drugs	4
		drencrom	adrenochrome	3
		vellocet	amphetamines	2
	8.2. tobacco	cancer	cigarette	17
		snoutie	tobacco	1
	8.3. under the influence of drugs	in-the-land	high on drugs	1
9. sex	9.1. sexual acts	in-out(-in-out)	sex; copulation	10
		pol		1
		spat		1
	9.2. sexually transmitted diseases	gon	gonorrhoea	1
		syph	syphilis	1
		gleet	a symptom of an STD	1

10. space	10.1. semi-public	mesto	place	31
	10.2. coercive	Staja	prison, jail	16
	10.3. private	domy	house	6
11. time	11.1. nocturnal time	nochy	night	18
	11.2. hour time	minoota	minute	6
	11.3. time	raz	time	2
12. religion	12.1. supreme authority	Bog	God	31
13. animals	13.1. felines	koshka	cat	14
		pusspots	cats	2
		kot	tomcat	10
	13.2. generic term	scoteena	beast, brute	3
14. adjectives designating	14.1. age	starry	old, ancient	105
	14.2. size	malenky	little, small, tiny	99
		bolshy	bulky, great, large	50
	14.3. traits/states / condition/appearance / behaviour	bezoomny	crazy; frantic; mad	44
		vonny	smelly, stinking	35
		oddy knocky	lonely, lonesome	19
		nagoy	naked	15
		razdraz	upset, angry	10
		poogly	frightened	4
		Nadsat fashion	teenage style	3
		bolnoy	ill, sick	2
		interessovatted	interested	2
		spoogy	terrified	1
		oomny	intelligent, brainy	1
		cancery (goloss)	showing the presence of tobacco; worn by smoking	1
	14.4. appreciation of something	horrorshow	good, well; all right, very well	108
		choodessny	wonderful	1
		zammechat	remarkable	1
		dorogoy	valuable, expensive, darling, dear	1
		oozhassny	terrible, horrid, ghastly, dreadful	1
	14.5. social status	bugatty	rich	2
15. verbs designating	15.1. (basic) human actions	viddy	to see	230
		sloosh(y)	to hear, to listen	77
		smeck	to laugh	51
		itty	to go	50
		govoreet	to say, to speak, to tell, to talk	48
		peet	to drink	30
		rabbit	to work	6
		pony	to understand	7

		kupet	to buy	4
		smot	to look	3
		kopat	to understand, to “dig”	2
		gooly	to go, to walk	2
		skazat	to say, to tell	1
		toast crunch	eat toast	1
		crunk	eat, chomp	1
		egging	eating an egg	1
		dung	defecate	1
	15.2. corrective measures	get loved	get caught	5
16. nouns connected to	16.1. speech	goloss	voice, tone	69
		slova	word, speech	45
		Nadsat talk	teenage talk	2
	16.2. olfactory images	von	smell	25
	16.3. positive attitudes	smeck	laughter	24
	16.4. generic abstract nouns	jeezny	life	15
		radosty	joy	1
	16.5. negative states	strack	fear, terror, horror	2
	16.6. abstract nouns connected to reason/psyc he	rassodock	mind, sense, understanding	2
		sneety	dream	2
		messel	idea, thought, reflection, conception	1
17. miscellaneous		skorry	rapid, quick, fast	50
		shoom	noise, clatter, riot	19
		lomtck	piece, slice, bit	12
		otchkies/ochkies	eye glasses, spectacles	6
		skolliwoll	school	3
		appy polly loggies	apologies	2
		chepooka	nonsense	1
		collocoll	(door)bell	2
		darkmans	night	2
		knopka	button	2
		eemya	name	3
		klootch	key	3
		nazz	name	1
		raskazz	story	1

Table 1. Semantic grouping and inventory of Nadsat vocabulary

Group 1. By far the most numerous categories of lemmas that Alex and the members of his gang use comprises the ones through which they distinguish categories of people with 38 distinct lemmas. The distinctions are made between gender, age, marital status, family, criminal, social group categories or the lemmas are used to address others through derogatory generic terms. When referring to his group, Alex distinctively distinguishes his “banda”, “gruppa”, “shaika” (“gang”) (notice the overlexicalization) from the rest of the “lewdies” (“people”) by “chellovek” (48 occurrences), or “veck” (“person”, “individual”, 191 occurrences), “droogs”/“droogies” (“friend(s)”, 73, respectively 21 occurrences), or “bratty” (“brother”) and “malchick”/“malchiwicks”/“malchickies” (“youngsters”, “boys”, 51/4/1 occurrences) or “nadsat” (“teen, teenager, youngster”) 9 occurrences³). He also uses the English word “brothers” 260 times either to address his peers, or, more rarely, his readers, in the same attempt of creating a bondage, adhesiveness, and cohesion between followers of the same group and the community of readers, but also of attracting the understanding or compassion of the latter category.

There is also a series of terms designating the category of delinquents that Alex distinguishes himself from (“prestoopnik”, “criminal, offender”, 13 occurrences, “plenny/ies”, “prisoner(s)/convict(s)”, 9 occurrences, “baddiwad”, “scoundrel”, 1 occurrence) or derogatory terms addressing the male category of the old (“ded”, “gradfather”, 1 occurrence), or generic offensive terms: 6 different lemmas with 36 occurrences (“bratchny”, “bastard”, 20 occurrences; “gloopy”, “stupid, fool, simpleton”, 14 occurrences; “merzky get”, “filthy bastard”, 1 occurrence). These, together with three other lemmas (see subgroup 1.18.) which are presented in the Table 2, also reveal the gang’s contempt for and verbal violence against other categories of people outside their group who are only perceived as powerless, useless, weak, etc.

When referring to women, the teenagers use 10 different terms (with no less than 147 occurrences) to distinguish between young and old, married and unmarried, family and non-family. The references to young women, in almost equal proportion with the ones to girls, clearly designate them as objects of high interest and these references are almost always accompanied by sexual allusions, desires

³ Other studies record 14 entries for “nadsat”, but we have distinguished between “nadsat” as “teenager”, 9 occurrences, and “Nadsat fashion”, designating their style in doing something (3 occurrences) and “Nadsat talk” (2 occurrences).

or acts. The marking of increased interest is not only marked by number of occurrences, but also by the process of overlexicalization, Burgess using 4 different lemmas for the same word: “(young) woman” is rendered in Nadsat by “ptitsa” (55 occurrences), “sharp” (13 occurrences), “cheena” (7 occurrences), “dama” (1 occurrence). There are also numerous derogatory lemmas for old women – “baboochka” (“grandmother”), but especially “forella” (“trout”), “lighter” (“crone, “hag”), “soomka” (“bag”) – rendering obvious the fact that as long as they are not sexually appealing, women fall into disgrace in the eyes of the young “droogs” and are treated with contempt and humiliation.

Family life is treated with a high level of disconsideration by Alex and his droogs: there is only one term for wife – “zheena” – used only one time (the English term wife is used especially towards the end of the novel (from section 19 onwards) when Alex’s recovery is supposed to take place. As for the term for husband, “moodge”, it is used 9 times, but it also means “peasant” and is also used generically as “man”.

A special case is that of the lemmas for parents: from “papa” and “mamma”, the terms suffer a truncation and become simply “pee and em” (9 occurrences), the reduction simply to the acoustic representation of the words’ initial letters being a sign of reduction of importance and of rejection of their influence.

A well-known practice in the case of any slang, the gang have their own terms for the police forces: thus, three lemmas – “millicent”, “rozz” (recorded only in the glossary of the English version of the book) and “chasso” – sum up to 97 occurrences in total, and have most of the time the function of secrecy (secret communication between gang members) so as to be able to emit a warning understood only by the members of the gang.

Group 2. The second semantic group is the one in which we identified the lemmas which were connected to physical and verbal acts of violence. Thus, we included in this group three subgroup recording lemmas from the morphological groups of verbs and nouns connected to acts of violence, aggression, criminal acts, and white weapons and fire arms. Amounting to a total of 24 lemmas, the group comprising paradigms connected to physical violence registers one of the most interesting phenomena in Nadsat employment, which is the extensive use of both nouns and verbs derived from the same root. Thus, “tolhock”, “(to)hit/push/jolt” is used both as a verb and as a noun (35, respectively 30 occurrences), as are “razrez”, “(to)rip/cut/slash”, “drat(s)(ing)”, “(to) fight”, “crast(ing)”, “(to) steal(ing)/rob(bbery)” (we

have marked them in similar colours in Table 2 in their verbal and nominal forms). The high frequency in their use (only the above-mentioned paradigms amount to a total number of 106 occurrences), plus the lexical variation (as mentioned, there are 24 different lemmas connected to violence), add to the completion of a strong visual image when it comes to making reference to violence acts of any kind. These lemmas marking physical violence, combined with the ones marking verbal violence (“cal”, “shit” and “cally”, “shitty” record together 65 occurrences), to which we could also add the records we grouped in offensive lemmas for people, render one other function of Nadsat which is that of diminishing the abrupt effect of so many paradigms marking violence upon the reader. The masking behind Nadsat terms diminishes the abhorrence of the acts, creates a buffer against the direct and quick mental representation and emotional reception of such acts. At the same time, the group also frames violence as a strong coordinate in the gang’s life. Only when we finish the book do we realize, of course, that the purpose is that of condemning such atrocities and amending such behaviours. Burgess mentioned in numerous interviews that *A Clockwork Orange* is not about violence – violence is just a means of introducing the topic of good vs. evil and choosing, out of one’s free will, and not by coercion, the good vs the evil.

Groups 3 and 4. The third group we have formed is the one in which Nadsat words are used to designate parts of the human body. A strange coincidence records an equal number in the lemmas in the group (24) as the one in the group recording terms connected to violence. And we record the strange coincidence because this group of the body and body parts is strongly connected to violence. The lemmas appear in the novel only to record violence acts done upon them or with them. Thus, “rot” (“mouth”, 90 occurrences), “litso” (“face”, 76 occurrences), “gulliver” (“head”, 70 occurrences), “glazz(y)/ies” (“eye(s), 70 occurrences), “rook(er)” (“hand, arm”, 88 occurrences), or “zoobies” (“teeth”, 22 occurrences), and “pletcho(es)” (“shoulder(s)”, 17 occurrences) are hit upon or are used to hit with. Therefore, they perform the same function of buffering, downtoning the effect of the violence acts committed with or upon them. At the same time, we consider that such lemmas give powerful individuality to the characters: strongly identifying the identity of the individual’s body they help create a full physical portrait of the droogs. This is closely connected to group 4, designating items of clothing. The rich representation at the level of Nadsat terms introducing clothes and

footwear is one other way of individualizing Alex and gang members. The author presents at the very beginning of the novel (2011b: 4) their special outfits (“The four of us were dressed in the height of fashion”, *id.*) with the special “fitting on the crotch underneath the tights” (*id.*) bearing a symbol for each of them. Apart from a generic reference to clothes (“platties”, 40 occurrences), the lemma “carmans” (“pockets”) with 19 occurrences designates one of the main functions of the gang members which is accumulation. The idea is completed by group 5 registering the lemmas for money and currency in which Burgess makes use of the process of overlexicalization and uses three Nadsat words to replace the English “money”: “pretty polly”, “cutter”, “deng” (amounting to 30 occurrences in total).

Burgess draws a sketch of a new type of character who strongly stands out as a new individual of the new times. At the same time, the strongly outlined physicality of the individual, the thick brushes of the physical to the detriment of the mental (an idea supported by groups 6 to 9 designating the semantic categories of food, drink, drugs and sex; also see groups 15.4. and 15.6. to identify the highly limited number of abstract nouns in Nadsat), could certify the proclivity of the new individual for the physicality of life (with a stress on physical and sexual power) and the waning (if not disappearance) of emotion and affect (to borrow Fredric Jameson’s words).

Groups 10 and 11 recording lemmas from the semantic areas of space and time are meant to draw the spatial and temporal coordinates of the movement of the gang. The lemma “mesto” (“place”) marks a triangulation of Alex’s location between the bar in which he and his gang “hang” (with the majority of occurrences out of a total of 31), his home and the jail. The jail is referenced by “Staja” (16 occurrences), while “domy” (“home”) only records 6 occurrences. The lemmas referring to the temporal dimension register the time of unlawful doing – “nochy” (“night”, 18 occurrences). We could deduce from here Burgess’s warning against a type of behaviour which could lead to the loss of the comfort, safety and love of one’s home if an amoral, unlawful behaviour is adopted.

Group 12 recording the only religious term in Nadsat, with 30 occurrences, could be one way of introducing religion in the controversial age of secularization as the paradigm is used both in malediction and benediction formulas, both in invocation and in

euphemistic phrases introducing an action in the superlative (even when it is a negative one).

Group 13, comprising animals from the category of felines, records 3 lemmas with 26 occurrences. The cat, through its association with equally the good and the evil omen (according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996: 162–163) may be a way of showing Alex's double nature – with a bad side and, at least a potential for a good side, with a negative perception of readers upon him, but also a sympathetic view upon a troubled nature.

The table below makes a synthesis of the main semantic groups identified in Nadsat – a quick glance at it allows readers to observe the lexical inventory with which Alex and his friends operate and, according to neurolinguists (see Greenfield 2009), allows interpreters to understand the type of actantial universe that they define for themselves. In a universe in which they clearly delineate themselves through the language they use, the first semantic group, recording the richest array and number of lemmas, makes reference to their way of individualizing themselves in relation to the other groups of people in terms of gender, age, degrees of closeness. The next two groups, recording words connected to both physical and verbal violence, render Alex and his gang's frequent engaging in violent, abhorrent, illogical acts against the weak. The victims are many times reduced to body parts to be abused (see group 3) or are reduced to "rags" which clad a meagre body, unlike his group whose members wear specific clothes as a sign of identification and differentiation from others. The lemmas from the next semantic group reduce the group of youngsters to primitive needs and instincts or to equally pragmatic and destructive drives (see the matter of money or drugs).

Table 2. Graphic interpretation of the number of occurrences of Nadsat lemmas designating main semantic groups

Group 14, recording a series of adjectives, comprises some of the most important (in terms of occurrence) words of Nadsat. Thus, subgroup 14.1. registers the frequent use of “starry” (“old, ancient”, 105 occurrences”) as a means of signalling the generational gap, of ushering in the laws and values of a new age (postmodernity) while discarding the ones associated to tradition or older times. Adjectives designating size (subgroup 14.2.) seem to function as one way of diminishing Alex’s and his buddies’ misdeeds (misdemeanours, felonies, or criminal acts) – “malenky” (“little, small, tiny”) appears 99 times. As if intended to augment the grotesque elements of an abusive, dysfunctional society around, “bolshy”, with 50 occurrences, introduces most of the times references to the authorities. Subgroup 14.3. comprises adjectives which express a general portrait of the society as viewed by Alex and of their lives in it: “bezoomny” (“crazy, mad”, 44 occurrences), but also “oddy nocky” (“lonesome”, 19 occurrences), “razdraz” (“angry”), or “poogly” (“frightened”, 4 occurrences). This existence in between contrasting states is what makes Alex controversial – hated and sympathized at the same time. It is this type of authorial design which allows Burgess to introduce the star-adjective of the book – “horrorshow”, “good, well”, 108 occurrences – which hides the paradoxical nature of things in such a world: all is far from being “xopoшo” [horofo] (the Russian word from which the Nadsat term is derived) and becomes a “horror-show” (we have hyphenated it so that the transformation is even clearer) in which values are upturned or lost, power is many times in the hands of the

wrong people, groups of people become decision-makers and resort to abuse and paint a grotesque reality. The other three lemmas in subgroup 14.4. recording positive appreciation of something (“choodessny”, “wonderful”; “zammechat”, “remarkable”; “dorogoy”, “valuable”) occur only once each in the entire novel, obviously because there is little to admire in the depicted world.

Group 15, inventorying the most important verbs of Nadsat, comprises at its top two verbs designating two of the five senses – “viddy” (“to see”, 230 occurrences) and “slosh(y)” (“to hear, to listen”, 77 occurrences) – as a sign of marking again Alex’s strong physicality, but also sense of observation. Two other verbs from the category designating human senses are inventively reshaped and transferred: “to feel” is, in fact, moved to the category of lemmas designating violence acts, and “to smell” is used only after having its morphological class changed into a noun – “von” (“stench”, 25 occurrences) and an adjective – “vonny” (“smelly”, 35 occurrences) rendering a portrait of the putrid society they lived in. The next two verbs in subgroup 15.1. (designating basic human actions) – “smeck” (“to laugh”, 51 occurrences) (also appearing in group 16.3. in its nominal form “smeck”, “laughter”, 24 occurrences) and “itty” (“to go”, 50 occurrences) seem to mark the attitude of the young generation who, firstly, laughs (sneers) at the society of the present and its constraints and secondly, walks away from it, differentiates from it, rebukes it, turn its back on it, shaping its new order. The validity of this new order is a matter of morality and individual choice and it constitutes itself in a different area of research from the present paper. “Peet” (“to drink”) is an important lemma in the subgroup, with 30 occurrences, representing perhaps not only the first step to debauchery for Alex and his droogs, but also one way of benumbing the senses and preventing them from seeing reality as it was.

Group 16, listing the main nouns the droogs use, gives an important role to the act of speaking and language. This is the way in which we can round our discussion by underlining one last time the importance of “goloss” (“voice, tone”, 69 occurrences) and “slova” (“word, speech”, 45 occurrences) in a person’s/group’s existence – it is what identifies them, what individualizes them, what gives them uniqueness. Burgess’s fine ear of a composer put voice/tone and speech together so as signal the way in which Nadsat individuates Alex, the Nadsats, and, ultimately, *A Clockwork Orange*.

Table 3. Graphic interpretation of the number of occurrences of Nadsat lemmas designating secondary semantic groups

The table above represents a graphical interpretation of another series of words whose frequency is very high, but which could not be subsumed to any of the large semantic categories in the first 13 groups. The last four groups record important lemmas (adjectives, nouns and verbs, but also adverbs in the miscellaneous group) almost obsessively used by Alec and the members of his gang among which “starry” is the first with 105 occurrences standing as a proof of the rejection by Alec and his droogs of everything which is old, from a past generation and not in line with their line of thought and behaviour.

These graphs are supposed to demonstrate quantitatively how Alex and his gang members’ behaviour is supported linguistically – some would say determined linguistically – and how Nadsat can stand alone as a means of understanding them and analysing them, as language itself becomes a clear means of character portrayal.

Conclusions – Nadsat – an authorial/characterial trademark

The purpose of the present paper was that of identifying the functions of Nadsat and supporting their identification by a semantic grouping of the lemmas of this anti-language. The semantic grouping is doubled by a quantitative research through which we aimed to more clearly isolate the code and then put it into connection with its users – Alex and his group mates. The fact that they use words predominantly from the semantic fields of violence, or that they label categories of

people in so many ways demonstrates their propensities in life and delineates a perspective upon the world. Other semantic categories designating finance, footwear and clothing, food, drink or religion outline other aspects through which the characters stand out as unique individuals. In terms of language use exclusively, we can assert that it makes Alex a generally acknowledged controversial hero. But whether he is simply a villain or, more complexly an anti-hero, is another discussion altogether (see Suciu & Culea 2017 and Culea & Suciu 2017). And whether the language is so invested because the characters that use it behave in a lustful, violent manner, or whether they behave violently because the language is so invested has been debated by critics. But any form of determinism is a direction towards another research, and we conclude by bringing as evidence for the understanding of *A Clockwork Orange* Burgess's own words when saying that violence gives "a sense of power" (Burgess 2013: 305).

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**SEMANTIKA NADSATA. STUDIJA JEZIKA I NJEGOVE FUNKCIJE U
DEFINISANJU KARAKTERA – PAKLENA POMORANDŽA
ENTONIJA BARDŽISA**

Imajući u vidu tematizovanje mladalačke kulture i jezika na kojem ona nastaje, društvene poremećaje i kritiku tih pojava, temu načelne društvene podvojenosti i zamki društvenog i tehnološkog napretka u eri modernizma, ovaj rad kritički razmatra roman Entonija Bardžisa *Paklena pomorandža* (1962) s namjerom da analizira karakter, jezik i njegove funkcije u romanu. Nakon kratkog kontekstualnog uvoda u okolnosti objavljivanja knjige, žanr i nekih načelnih opaski o novinama u jeziku kojim je roman napisan, rad prezentuje glavne izvore jezike. U centralnom dijelu rada autorke na originalan način pristupaju nadsatu iz semantičke perspektive sa ciljem testiranja i potvrđivanja već utrdene funkcije nadsata i daljeg proučavanja (individualnog i grupnog) modelovanja karaktera kao razvojnih upotrebom jezika. Analiza je zasnovana na kvalitativnom i kvantitativnom istraživanju nadsata kao koda odnosno (anti)jezika romana.

Ključne riječi: (anti)jezik; nadsat; funkcija nadsata; modelovanje karaktera posredstvom jezika.