

Title: Imperial Words Return to New Year Addresses  
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Abstract:

This paper investigates how the language of the New Year addresses in Russia and Soviet Union reflects the political situation of each relevant year and demonstrates that words that were characteristic for the Soviet period recently started to appear again in the New Year addresses.

Following Fidler and Cvrček (2015), I use keyword analysis and compare the distribution of words in the corpus of New Year addresses with the distribution of the same words in a larger corpus, the Russian National Corpus (RNC). The corpus of New Year addresses is a new dataset, which I collected from various sources, such as “Pravda” newspaper, Yeltsin’s archive fund and official websites of Russian government. It ranges from the first address in 1970 to the most recent address in year 2015 and contains 24,000 words. Information on words’ frequency in the RNC is based on the frequency dictionary by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009). Calculation of keywords is performed in MySQL.

A set of keywords is associated with the Soviet period and with the neo-imperial period that arose soon after Putin’s appearance on the political stage. These words are found in New Year addresses during both of these periods, but never during Russia’s short democracy. Such words can be characterized as *imperial*, because they are specific to both the Soviet imperium and more recent Russian neo-imperial ideology. These words can be exemplified by *narod* ‘people’, which appears almost every year between 1970 and 1993, but then disappears altogether from the New Year addresses until 2003, and then reappears after the year 2003. The paper will present a list of imperial keywords and discuss why those words from Soviet newspapers return to discourse.

Thus, political changes are correlated with word attestations. We can trace the development of new ideas through words used in the addresses.

Fidler, Masako, and Václav Cvrček. A Data-Driven Analysis of Reader Viewpoints: Reconstructing the Historical Reader Using Keyword Analysis. *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 23.2 (2015): 197-239.

Lyashevskaya, Olga N. & Sergey A. Sharoff. 2009. *Častotnyj slovar’ sovremennogo russkogo jazyka (na materialax Nacional’nogo korpusa russkogo jazyka)*. Moscow: Azbukovnik.