

Corpolect – corporate language analysis. Perspective of communication in management

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Abstract

The article deals with the subject of corporate language. It presents the results of the author's own empirical research conducted among employees of corporations. The analysis and description of the corpolect characteristics were made basing on its most common words and phrases: acronyms, neologisms and neosemantisms, and work titles borrowed from English. Examples of phrases from the specialist language of selected industries, as well as the results of industry and universal word choices of the year were given. Research conclusions were presented from the perspective of communication in management. The article is the effect of the part of the research entitled: "The manifestations, conditions and implications of the non-routine character of a word and image - work performers, organisations".

Key words

corpolect, corporate language, communication, management

Introduction

The article was written as part of the research conducted by the Department of Organisation Management of the University of Economics in Katowice, Poland, entitled: "The study of imitation and inventive adaptation of products of work in creative professions". It is part of the third stage of the research, entitled: "The manifestations, conditions and implications of the non-routine character of word and image - work performers, organisations" and focuses on the analysis of the corporate language from the perspective of communication in management.

It refers to the results of previous studies included in the following publications: "Linguistic creativity in economics and management. Selected problems" [Lipka et al., 2019]. "Word aesthetics and linguistic courtesy of products of work. The perspective of employee assessment" [Lipka, 2020]. "Linguistic efficiency and political correctness in creative professions" [Król and Winnicka-Wejs, 2020].

1. Literature review

The analysis of the Polish literature on the subject has shown that there are few studies on the corporate language. It is especially discussed by linguists, sociolinguists [see Cierpich, 2017, 2019; Kochan, 2010; 2016; Zahaczewska, 2018, Konopko-Urbaniak, 2013]. The publishing market is dominated by books – handbooks, describing life in corporations with advice on how to survive in them [e.g. Sroczyńska (ed.), 2015]. The theme of common corporate language (CCL), on the other hand, is present in foreign publications and discussed in the context of communication management in international organisations [see: Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, 1999; Simonsen, 2009; Sanden, 2015, 2020; Szydło, 2018].

What deserves mentioning in Poland is the book by A. Cierpich entitled: *English borrowings in corporate Polish* [2019] and the author's introduction of the term *corpolect* instead of *corpotalk* - "the language used inside Polish international subsidiaries, the type of slang used by the employees of these companies on a daily basis". [Kochan, 2016, p. 47], 'relatively the youngest environmental and professional variety of the Polish language - the language of people employed in corporations' [Zahaczewska, 2018, p. 166].

The subject of this article is the analysis of *corpolect* from the perspective of management communication. The article is aimed at providing answers to the following research questions:

- What words and phrases appear most frequently in corporate communication?
- What job titles borrowed from the English language occur?
- What acronyms, neologisms and neosemantisms are currently used by corporate employees?
- What is the industry-specific and universal word of the year?
- What words and phrases should the available *corpolect* mini-dictionaries be supplemented with?

For the purposes of the article, a critical analysis of the literature on the subject and an analysis of the results of my own empirical study were applied.

2. Research methodology

The study was conducted between 02/12/2020 and 10/12/2020 among 303 students attending the Author's classes in the winter term of the academic year 2020/2021. An author's survey questionnaire was developed for the purposes of the study.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions (including: 3 metric ones). The survey itself was preceded by a pilot in order to improve the technical and content-related aspects of the tool. The electronic survey was placed on the Google platform (in the tab: forms), and information about the survey addressed to corporate employees along with a link to the survey was saved in G-Classroom. The survey was completed by 25 people. Tab. 1 presents the characteristics of the research sample.

Tab. 1. Structure of the research sample (number of indications)

Sex	Female	19
	Male	6
Age	Up to 29 years	11
	30-39 years	8
	40-49 years	6
	50-59 years	0
	60 years and over	0
Position	Managerial	12
	Specialist	13
Industry - section presented according to Polish Classification of Activities (PKD 2007)	Finance and Insurance	6
	Industrial processing	4
	Administrative and support service activities	3
	Information and communication	3
	Professional, scientific and technical activities	2
	Health care and social work	2
	Transport and storage	2
	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorbikes	1
	Extra-territorial organisations and bodies	1
	Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing (section A)	1

Source: own study.

3. Characteristics of the corpolect – results of the study

3.1. Words with the Polish prefix „korpo” (Eng. "corpo")

The respondents indicated words with the prefix "korpo" (with explanations), which in their opinion often appear in corporate communication (cf. Tab. 2). These lacked such words as: korpostartup (*Eng. korpostartup*) [see Drewczynski, 2019; Viki, Toma, Gons, 2019, the title], korporanci (*Eng. corporants*) [see Łuczowska, 2018], korporażka (*Eng. corpofailure*) [Ratajczak, 2018], korpoświat (*Eng. corpoworld*) [Lyons, 2019; Misztal, 2020, the title], korpodżungla, korpogula (*Eng. korpodjungle, corpogulag*) [Zahaczewska, 2018, p. 172], korpopolszczyzna (*Eng. corpo-Polish*) [Krzyżaniak-Gumowska, 2013].

Tab. 2. Words with the prefix "korpo" used in corporate communication

Word with the prefix "korpo"	Explanation by respondents
<i>Korpo (Eng. "Corpo")</i>	"It's corpo - about all kinds of rules/tasks whose meaning and purpose are not known, but they are there and you have to do them"
<i>Korpo (Eng. "Corpo")</i>	"Commonly used abbreviation for corporations"
<i>Korporacja (Eng. "Corporation")</i>	Lack of explanation
<i>Korpo budka (Eng. "Corpobooth")</i>	"About the company"
<i>Korpomowa (Eng. "Corpospeak")</i>	"Language used in corporations"
<i>Korpo bełkot (Eng. "Corpogibberish")</i>	"Information chaos, inadequate communication"
<i>Korpo gadka (Eng. "Corpobabble")</i>	"Used by new employees or those disliking corporate language"
<i>Korpo kawa (Eng. "Corpocoffee")</i>	Lack of explanation
<i>Korposzczur (Eng. "Corporat")</i>	"Corporate employee without ambition" "Corporate employee, not very bright, but dedicated to the organization" "Person employed by a corporation"
<i>Korposzczury (Eng. "Corporats")</i>	"Employees, who often stay after hours, have no life outside the corporation."
<i>Korpoludy, korpoludki / korpolud/korpoludek (Eng. "Corpopeople, corpodwarves/ a corpoguy/corpodwarf")</i>	"Employees of corporations" / "Corporate employee", "Man employed by a corporation"
<i>Korposhit (Eng. "Corposhit")</i>	"A task that only exists in a corporation, is boring, tedious and nobody wants to do it"
<i>Korporacyjne działania (Eng. "Corporate activities")</i>	"Integrated activities according to specific principles in a given organisation"

Source: own study based on research.

3.2. Borrowed English job titles

In the companies of the respondents, job titles borrowed from English, especially those related to the management function, at both the lowest and highest levels of the organisation, are frequently referred to in everyday communication (cf. Tab. 3).

Tab. 3. Borrowed English job titles

Borrowed English job titles	Explanations in Polish by respondents
<i>Account Manager</i>	<i>"Kierownik księgowości"</i>
<i>Advisor</i>	<i>„Doradca"</i>
<i>Agent</i>	<i>„Doradca"</i>
<i>Buyer</i>	<i>"Kupiec", "Zakupowiec"</i>
<i>CEO (Chief Executive Officer)</i>	<i>„Prezes"</i>
<i>CFO (Chief Financial Officer)</i>	<i>„Dyrektor działu finansowego"</i>
<i>Change Agent</i>	<i>"Agent zmiany"</i>
<i>Client Coordinator</i>	<i>„Koordynator ds. klientów"</i>
<i>Coach, Agile Coach</i>	<i>„Trener", „Opiekun"</i>
<i>Coordinator</i>	<i>„Koordynator"</i>
<i>DAF (Director of Administration and Finance)</i>	<i>"Dyrektor administracyjno-finansowy"</i>
<i>Department Manager</i>	<i>„Kierownik działu"</i>
<i>GM (General Manager)</i>	<i>"Dyrektor kilku zakładów"</i>
<i>Group Leader / Leader</i>	<i>„Lider zespołu pracowników", "Lider w zespole"</i>
<i>Head</i>	<i>"Szeź"</i>
<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>"Kierownik działu personalnego"</i>
<i>HRBP (HR Business Partner)</i>	<i>„Konsultant ds. Zarządzania Zasobami Ludzkimi"</i>
<i>HRowiec</i>	<i>„Pracownik działu Human Resources"</i>
<i>IT Manager</i>	<i>"Kierownik ds. IT"</i>
<i>Junior Buyer</i>	<i>"Młodszy zakupowiec"</i>
<i>Junior Specialist</i>	<i>"Młodszy Specjalista"</i>
<i>Knowledge Master</i>	<i>"Mistrz wiedzy"</i>
<i>Manager</i>	<i>„Kierownik"</i>
<i>Operations Supervisor</i>	<i>„Koordynator, kierownik działu operacji"</i>
<i>Plant Manager</i>	<i>"Dyrektor zakładu"</i>
<i>PM (Project Manager)</i>	<i>"Kierownik projektu"</i>
<i>Process Champion</i>	<i>"Mistrz procesu"</i>
<i>Process Leader/Champion</i>	<i>„Osoba odpowiedzialna za dany proces, ma uprawnienia do dokonywania zmian w procesie i ustalania tzw. best practice"</i>
<i>Product Manager</i>	<i>"Kierownik produktu"</i>
<i>Product Owner (PO)</i>	<i>"Właściciel produktu"</i>
<i>Purchasing Manager</i>	<i>„Kierownik w dziale zakupów"</i>

Borrowed English job titles	Explanations in Polish by respondents
<i>Sales Manager</i>	“Kierownik sprzedaży”
<i>Senior Specialist</i>	“Starszy Specjalista”
<i>Service Integration Leader</i>	„Kierownik ds. integracji usług”
<i>Service Manager</i>	„Kierownik ds. usług”
<i>Service Quality Specialist</i>	„Specjalista ds. doskonalenia jakości”
<i>Shift Leader</i>	„Kierownik zmiany”
<i>Squad Leader</i>	„Kierownik działu/zespołu”
<i>Supervisor</i>	„Z reguły nadzoruje ludzi lub proces”, „Kierownik”
<i>TL (Team Leader)</i>	„Kierownik zespołu”, „Szef zespołu”, „Przełożony zespołu”, „Kierownik”
<i>VP (Vice President)</i>	“Wiceprezes”

Source: own study based on research.

The aforementioned job titles are used on a daily bases by Polish employees speaking Polish, however they adopt Polish endings such as – owie “managerowie” (plural form), - owiec “HR-owiec” (masculin form), - em “supervisorem” (instrumental case). It is to be emphasized that Polish equivalents are rarely used.

3.3. Neologism in the form of English acronyms

Corporate communication is full of neologisms in the form of English acronyms. This is confirmed, among other things, by the author's earlier study, which showed that managers and specialists of various industries - when identifying manifestations of linguistic creativity - most often notice abbreviated forms and foreign words and phrases [Król and Winnicka-Wejs, 2020, p. 105].

Tab. 4 includes the acronyms cited by respondents in the current exploration. In practice, these occur primarily in emails.

Tab. 4. Neologisms in the form of English acronyms

Acronym	Explanations by respondents
ACK	“acknowledgment”
ASAP	“as soon as possible”
BOM	“bill of materials”
BTW	„by the way”
COB	“close of business day”
DDL, ITBs	no explanation
EOD	“end of the day”
ETR	“estimated time of return”
FB	“feedback”
FYA	„for your action”
FYI	„for your information”

Acronym	Explanations by respondents
HO	"home office"
HR	"human resources"
IMHO	„in my humble opinion"
KPI	"key performance indicator"
N/A	"not applicable"
OEE	"overall equipment efficiency"
OT	"over time"
PSA	"pilot series approval"
RFQ	"request for quotation"
RR	"roles and responsibilities"
SA	"scheduling agreement"
SCR	"service call rate"
SLA	"service level agreement"
SOP	"start of production"
SQA	"supplier quality assurance"
TBA	"to be announced"
TBD	"to be determined"
THX	"thanks"
TH	"Town Hall meeting"
TO	"time off"
WOW	"way of working"
1to1	"meeting superior – employee"

Source: own study based on research.

3.4. Neologisms in the form of words or phrases created directly from English

In the corporate communication of the respondents' companies, there also appear words or phrases created directly from English, which have the character of polonised and phonetically transcribed English. These are the so-called "neoplastics" (Ponglish) - language creations created at the intersection of English (lexical core) and Polish (declension, conjugation, spelling) [Konopko-Urbaniak, 2013]. The words listed in this category are presented in Tab. 5.

Tab. 5. "Neoplastics" present in the respondents' corporations

Neoplastic	Explanations by respondents
Azcziwment	"achievement"
Agriment	"agreement"
Apdejtować	"update"

Neoplastic	Explanations by respondents
Approvdnij	“approve”
Czelendź	“challenge”
Czilować / wyczulować	“chill out, relax”
Daily	“daily 15 minute long meetings with the team”
Deadlinowanie	“approaching the deadline”
Dedlajn	“deadline”
Dejta	“data”
Dizaster	“disaster”
Dżobik	“I have a job to do”
Ekszyn pointy	“action points”
Engejdźment	“engagement”
Fakap	“fuck-up”, “failure”, „setback”, “not too good”
Fidbek	“feedback”
Fokusować się na czymś	“focus on something”
Forwardowanie / forwardnij/ sforwardować	from the word „forward”, “forward an email”
Gole	“goals”
Hardkor, mes	“hardcore” “mess”
Ipoweruje się	“I’m entering my working hours into the iPower system”
Kajzen	“kaizen”
Kejsy/kejs	“case/s”
Koll/ na kollu	“call”
Looknij	“have a look”
Mam holydaja	“I’m on holiday”
Mam prajsmismacza	from the expression “price mismatch”
Mieć telko	“have a teleconference”
Miting	“meeting”
Na asapie	“do something as soon as possible”
Nego	“negotiations”
Nie było paymentu	“there was no payment”
Obrendować coś	“put a visible logo or information about the company/brand”
Performans	“performance”
Prinskrin	“print screen”
Progres	“progress”
Puszowanie	From the English word “push”, “asking persistently or requesting some action”
Re	“referring to”
Saport	“support”
Skancelować	“cancel”
Spełnianie targetów	“meeting targets”
Submitować	“submit a form”
Taski	“tasks”,
Tikety	“tickets”, “applications”

Neoplastic	Explanations by respondents
To się nie castuje	"it doesn't sum up"
Wartościowanie KPI	"Key Performance Indicators" "in other words cost-effectiveness of particular variables of employee performance"
Workflow	„how you feel at work, the atmosphere at work"
Zarequestuj	"request"
Zeskrapować	"scrap"
Zredzektować	"reject"
Ztargetować	"set a target"
Zwracanie uwagi na kipiaje	"paying attention to key indicators"

Source: own study based on research.

Some respondents also wrote down sample phrases: "Idę na lancz" (*Eng. I'm off to lunch*); "Zbreachowałem/am SLA" (*Eng. I've breached a SLA - Service Level Agreement*); "Muszę kancelować tego kejsa" (*Eng. I must cancel that case*); "Mam dziś calla/jestem na callu" (*Eng. I have a call today/ I'm on call*); "Umówmy się na calla" (*Eng. Let's have a call later*); "Calnąć do kogoś" (*Eng. Call somebody up*); "Jestem pod deadline" (*Eng. I've missed a deadline*); "Musimy dotrzymać targetów" (*Eng. We must meet our targets*); "Nie dostałem żadnego feedbacku" (*Eng. I haven't received any feedback*), "White board/zapisz to na white boardzie, zapisz na teamowej tablicy" (*Eng. Whiteboard/ write it down on the whiteboard/ write this on the team board*); "Coaching session/skołczuje mnie" (*Eng. He will coach me.*); "Muszę reskedzulować ten meeting - muszę przełożyć spotkanie" (*Eng. I must reschedule the meeting*); "Dać komuś kudosa - wyrazić uznanie" (*Eng. Give somebody kudos - show appreciation*); "Nasza grupa obstawiała już wszystkie holideje (urlopy)" (*Eng. Our group has already fixed all holidays (holiday leaves)*).

3.5. Neosemantisms and other word examples

In the survey sheet, when asked to identify neosemantisms (existing words that have acquired a new meaning), an example was given of the word "smart", which is now increasingly used to describe devices that work autonomously without human intervention. Only 7 respondents identified this type of lexical unit:

- "Problem – now 'a challenge'",
- "'A learning organisation'. 'Lider' and 'lidować' (*Eng. a leader/to lead*) instead of manager and to manage",
- "Clever boy - about a processing robot (algorithm), program się wysypał (*Eng. the program is messed up*), program jest zmęczony (*Eng. the program is tired*), ma dość (*Eng. the program's had it*), SAP się zasapał (*Eng. SAP is out of breath - it's frozen*)",

- „Ograny - (*Eng. overused*) - in this case someone did their best to break the topic down”,
- „Agile, smart”,
- „A disciplined, good worker = ogarnięty (*Eng. savvy*), do a task = ogarnąć temat (got to grips with it”,
- „Multitasking, drafty maili” (*Eng. multitasking, mail drafts*).

Other words (not mentioned in the previous categories) included English words used in everyday corporate life: *annual performance summary, promotion/upgrade, challenge, deadline, incident, case, ticket, feedback, meeting, standup/huddle, checkpoint, target, call, open space*.

It follows that corporations use both 'Ponglish' expressions and the original, English expressions.

3.6. Professional terminology

Respondents were also asked about the professional jargon used in the corporation. They were asked to list examples of words and phrases from a specialist terminology (understood only by a group of specialists employed in a particular field in their company). Tab. 6 contains the aforementioned examples with the indication of the specific industry.

Tab. 6. Specialist terminology in selected industries

Example	Industry
“Dobijać przesyłkę - add status to a letter of consignment, zetzetka - order completed, zetped - return of documents” “Slot (loading slot) precisely determined date and time of loading/unloading”	Transportation and storage
„Approval requestora na pricemismatch - <i>Eng. requestor’s approval of price mismatch</i> , zrób reversal - <i>Eng. reverse the payment/book the opposite document</i> , solobot/sidebot - process robots (odpal solobota - <i>Eng. launch the solobot</i>)” „Ordery (<i>Eng.orders</i>), kwoty (<i>Eng. offers</i>), rikwesty (<i>Eng.requests</i>), inwojs gryfy (<i>Eng.invoice grieifs - price differences on invoices</i>)” “Rlmy - User inquiries”	Administrative and support service activities
“Pingnij, łącze leży - (<i>Eng. Send a ping, the link is broken.</i>)”	Information and communication
“Blue staff - newly employed workers (for the colour of their working clothes)”	Industrial processing

Example	Industry
<p>“Strap, delivery, flow, plinth, hoob” “Mancia - stain, retorno - return weight, rekuperado - recuperated glaze, faciado - casting stage - emptying the moulds, pikado - type of defect. All from Spanish, other: zamek wodny (<i>Eng. water lock</i>) - level of water in the siphon trap, kielbaski (<i>Eng. sausages</i>) - samples used for research, ostropak - abrasive sponge”</p>	
„Cyber – cyber security”	Professional, scientific and technical activities
<p>„Rating” „Vendor - supplier, po req. - person addressed with an order”</p>	Insurance and finance
<p>„Ten interoffice bill ma wyjść w KPI czyli ASAP, trzeba sprawdzić treaty zanim zadraftujesz maila” - (<i>Eng. That interoffice bill is to go in KPI, that is ASAP, you need to check the treaty before you draft an email</i>)”</p>	Organisations and exterritorial teams
„Agile, robust”	Health care and social welfare

Source: own study based on research.

3.7. Industry – specific and universal word of the year

Unfortunately, during the survey it was not possible to select a single word, either industry-specific or universal. Fig. 1 shows the 'industry-specific word cloud' and Fig. 2 the 'universal word cloud', listing the words which the respondents identified as the word of the year.

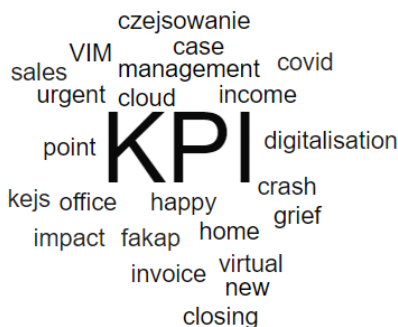


Fig. 1. Cloud of industry-specific words of the year as perceived by respondents

Source: own study based on research.

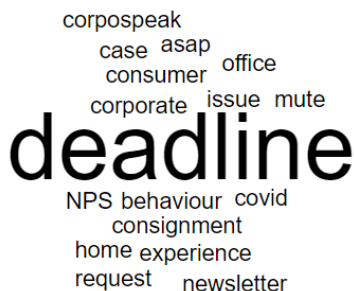


Fig. 2. Cloud of universal words of the year as perceived by respondents

Source: own study based on research.

The words which stand out from the figures are: KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), deadline, which may suggest that in the corporations where the respondents are employed there is an emphasis on achieving the organisation's goals and their measurement. One of the respondents wrote that in his corporation the word 'reporting' appears most often. It seems that the language used in corporations may be one of the prerequisites for increasing organisational effectiveness.

4. Conclusions from the perspective of communication in management

Language is an important part of organisational culture at the level of symbols – artefacts, visible, conscious but requiring appropriate interpretation [Schein, 1990, p. 56]. Linguistic symbols are disseminated in a given corporation and perceived in the same way by all employees. Individuals entering the organisation should, if possible, quickly learn this "corporate code" [cf. Łuczkowska, 2018, p. 62] (for example, by participating in a socio-professional adaptation programme) in order to be able to effectively and efficiently communicate with others and to achieve specific goals and objectives. Knowledge of corpospeak is essential to be able to communicate with colleagues and perform the tasks assigned to you, while at the same time contributing to the company community.

It is important to remember that organisational culture, along with the language present in it, occupies a special place as a component of the human resource management context [Pocztowski, 2018, pp. 42-43] and may affect its change and the prevailing paradigms [cf. Pocztowski, 2018, p. 144]. It determines the activity of corporations, both in relation to internal integration and external adaptation,

performing integrative, cognitive and informational as well as adaptive functions [cf. Jamka, 2014, pp. 55-56].

Author's own analysis of the corpolect showed that the available mini-dictionaries [cf. Słownik zapożyczeń w korpolectcie in: Cierpich, 2019, pp. 225-238; 18 najważniejszych pojęć korpomowy in: BusinessInsider, 2020; Słownik korpomowy in: Ratajczak, 2018, pp. 314-322] should be supplemented with new neologisms and acronyms. As we can see, communicating in a corporation is a creative process of building new concepts and acquiring knowledge about the surrounding world [cf. Walecka, 2020, p. 446].

The research also shows that in corporations English borrowings apply to job titles, especially managerial and executive ones. Everyday communication is dominated by abbreviated forms, English phrases and the so-called "neoplastics". The analysis of the obtained research material allowed also to indicate a pro-efficiency model of management in corporations. The language used by employees (e.g. KPI, asap, deadline, report) may indicate that the concepts of management by objectives (MBO), time management (TBM), etc., are implemented in organisations.

Due to the fact that the research sample was readily available (circumstantial) and is not representative, the results cannot be generalised, however this procedure was used for exploratory purposes. This study may be the beginning of further in-depth research in this area. Who knows, maybe in the nearest future we will live to see not a mini-size but a large corpolect dictionary?

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Korpolekt – analiza języka korporacji. Perspektywa komunikacji w zarządzaniu

Streszczenie

W artykule podjęto tematykę języka korporacji. Przedstawiono wyniki własnych badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych wśród pracowników zatrudnionych w korporacjach. Dokonano analizy i charakterystyki korpolektu pod względem najczęściej występujących słów i zwrotów: akronimów, neologizmów i neosemantyzmów oraz zapożyczonych z języka angielskiego nazw stanowisk. Podano przykłady zwrotów z języka specjalistycznego wybranych branż oraz wyniki wyborów branżowego i uniwersalnego słowa roku. Wnioski z badań ujęto z perspektywy komunikacji w zarządzaniu. Artykuł stanowi efekt części badań pt.: „Przejawy, uwarunkowania i implikacje nierutynowości słowa oraz obrazu – wykonawcy pracy, organizacje”.

Kluczowe słowa

korpolekt, język korporacji, komunikacja, zarządzanie