

**INVECTIVE VOCABULARY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21st CENTURY:  
A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ASPECT**

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**Abstract.** The article draws on a broad interpretation of the invective as a non-standard (non-literary) vocabulary known in linguistics as *jargonisms, expletives, vulgarisms; foul, pejorative, negatively coloured, disparaging, slang, obscene, coarse, abusive, taboo words* and other lexical units that contain the meaning of an insult in their semic structure; less often the invective is understood as a codified (literary) vocabulary which acquires the insulting meaning in a context as an expression of the speaker's communicative intention and pragmatic tactics of consciously offering a public affront to a specific addressee of communication. The aim of the research is to find out lexical and semantic, communicative and pragmatic features of the invective vocabulary in the modern Ukrainian media discourse and social networks as a specific verbal means of a psychological impact on the consciousness of the recipients. By resorting to the method of free word association test, the authors have studied a conscious and/or subconscious reaction of Ukrainian females and males to pejorative by-words that stir up a feeling of insult. 100 people have been selected as respondents (50 people of each gender). All of them were Ukrainian native speakers including female and male lecturers and students of Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University (Ukraine) and Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi Hryhorii Skovoroda State Pedagogical University (Ukraine); choosing the stimuli, the authors proceeded from the frequency of their use in the texts of modern mass media (out of 300 detected nominations the authors used 100 units). According to the extent of the insult caused by the given words they were rated on a scale of 1 to 4 which made it possible to combine the analyzed stimuli into four groups with the following scores: 1) 2.65–2.93; 2) 1.67–2.31; 3) 1.03–1.54; 4) 0 (zero). The experiment gave a clear structure of the invective – a psycholinguistic category including a communicative-pragmatic intention of the insult.

**Keywords:** *invective vocabulary, psychological impact, insult, jargon, recipient, addressee, addresser.*

**Межов Олександр, Навальна Марина, Костусяк Наталія. Інвективна лексика в медійному дискурсі початку XXI ст.: психолінгвістичний аспект.**

**Анотація.** У статті представлено широке тлумачення інвективи як ненормативної (позалітературної) лексики, номінованої в лінгвістиці термінами *пейоративна, зневажлива, жаргонна, сленгова, обценна, лайлива, згрубіла*, що містить у семній структурі значення образи, та рідше – кодифікованої (літературної), яка набуває його контекстуально, виражаючи комунікативну інтенцію й прагматичну тактику мовця свідомого нанесення публічної образи конкретному адресатові мовлення. За мету дослідження обрано лексико-семантичні та комунікативно-прагматичні параметри інвективної лексики в сучасному українському медійному дискурсі та соціальних мережах як специфічного вербального засобу психологічного впливу на свідомість реципієнтів. За допомогою методики вільного асоціативного експерименту виявлено свідомо-підсвідому реакцію українських жінок і чоловіків на негативно марковані слова-символи, які викликають почуття образи. Респондентами обрано 100 людей (по 50 осіб обох статей) – носіїв української мови, серед яких викладачі та студенти Східноєвропейського національного університету імені Лесі Українки і Переяслав-Хмельницького державного педагогічного університету імені Григорія Сковороди. Слова-стимули дібрано з огляду на частотність їхнього використання в сучасних масмедіа (із 300 виявлених залучено 100 номінацій). Відповідно до ступеня викликаного гніву їх оцінювали за 4-бальною шкалою, що послугувало основою для об'єднання номінацій у чотири групи із такими оцінками: 1) 2,65–2,93; 2) 1,67–2,31; 3) 1,03–1,54; 4) 0 балів. Указаний експеримент посприяв чіткішому окресленню структури інвективи – психолінгвістичної категорії, що містить комунікативно-прагматичну інтенцію образи, дав змогу глибше з'ясувати її семантичну та психологічну природу.

**Ключові слова:** *інвективна лексика, психологічний вплив, образа, жаргон, реципієнт, адресат, адресант.*

## 1. Introduction

In a modern scientific paradigm (psychology, psycholinguistics, communicative linguistics, linguo-pragmatics, cognitive science, socio-linguistics), one of the basic interdisciplinary categories is the category of impact, in general, and a psychological impact, in particular. There are a lot of definitions of this concept. Among them is the definition offered by Sidorenko (1997) in which, in addition to semantic characteristics, emphasis is placed on the markers of their implementation. Thus, the psychological impact is the effect produced on the mental state, thoughts, feelings and actions of another human by using purely psychological means (verbal, paralinguistic or non-verbal) and providing him or her with the right and time to respond to this impact (Sidorenko, 1997, p. 123–142). The psychologists and linguists have repeatedly proved that of all linguistic and non-linguistic means it is just the word that has the greatest psychological impact on an addressee, both positive and negative. An effective means of negative verbal impact is the invective. It serves as a speech implementer of such a tool of psychological impact as a destructive critique – i.e. derogatory or offensive judgments on the personality of an opponent; a rude and sometimes aggressive denunciation, vilification or jeering at human flaws and doings (Sidorenko 1997, p. 129–131).

Linguistic literature suggests different interpretations of the term *invective*, its narrow and broad meaning, differences in classifications, a lack of clearly defined

boundaries of this category. The invective is most often associated with an insult, swearing, profanity, obscenity, vulgarity, jargon, slang, etc. The study presents a broad interpretation of the invective as non-standard (non-literary) vocabulary, referred to in linguistics as *low colloquialisms, jargonisms, slang, vulgarisms; pejorative, negatively coloured, insulting, obscene, foul, disparaging, scornful, taboo* words that contain a some of insult in their component structure. Less often the invective is understood as a codified (literary) vocabulary which acquires an insulting seme in a context, expressing the speaker's communicative intention and pragmatic tactics to consciously offer a public affront to a particular communicative addressee. These can be "lexical items which, outside the context, are deprived of a pejorative component of the utterance but, under certain conditions, they acquire the meaning of an insult. The invective can also be the words whose semantics incorporates an invective characterization of an individual by the use of distinctly negative means of expression" (Topchy, 2018, p. 99). Therefore, the key concept closely related to the invective is an insult.

The eleven-volume explanatory "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language" gives two interrelated meanings of a lexical entry "insult": 1. A derogatory remark or a coarse act, etc., directed against someone and making him/her feel bitter, emotionally hurt. 2. Someone's feelings of bitterness and annoyance caused by someone else's offensive word or an unsightly act. (Slovnyk Ukrainskoi Movy, 1974, p. 561). Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish two aspects of this concept: an intentional, goal-oriented (rarely unintentional) physical or verbal action of the addresser (a person, a group of people) on the addressee (a specific person) and the recipient's psycho-emotional state (feelings, emotions, emotional turmoil). An insult as a certain unpleasant experience or a situation may or may not stir up an appropriate emotion, depending on its effect on the so-called human "sore spots" as well as on the mentality and psycho-type of an individual. Unjust disparagement of the individual status and dignity has an extremely strong abusive effect, although sometimes a legitimate critique may also have an insulting effect on an individual and may inflict deep moral suffering on him or her. (For example, a person who is aware of his/her physical, mental, moral, and psychological or other flaws is being reminded of them).

In terms of the psychology of a wronged person, the insult is accompanied, on the one hand, by feelings of anger at the offender, and, on the other hand, by a profound self-pity. Depending on the intensity and scale of the insult, a wronged person can overcome this stressful situation without exterior help. He or she may consult a psychologist or go to court. As a result, the insult acquires a legal status as a conscious, improper act of disrespect to an individual and as "a negative characterization of a person which, being expressed in an indecent form, degrades his/her honor and dignity" (Shevchenko, Derhach, Syzonov, & Shmatko, 2015, p. 99). Therefore, the insult entails an administrative or even criminal liability.

In general, an insult as an action or as an activity becomes a crime if it harms the mental health, honor, dignity and business reputation. The extent of this harm should be established by a linguistic (forensic) appraisal, the results of which serve

as an expert evidence during the trial. From a legal standpoint an insult “is subject to criminal law regulations as a verbal act that contradicts cultural traditions and rules of conduct accepted in society, ...and aims to place emphasis upon the negative traits of a person, often upon the recipient’s inferiority or unfitness for performing his or her official responsibilities or for enjoying his or her social status, etc.” (Shevchenko et al., 2015, p. 99).

The object of psycholinguistics is a verbal insult caused by a derogatory statement, which has a pejorative component, primarily, an invective. In other words, the insult of the addressee is a consequence of the addresser’s use of the invective vocabulary. Not all types of a pejorative vocabulary can stir up the feelings of insult; this holds true essentially for the vocabulary related to the semantic domain “Human” (his/her appearance, inner world, behavior, activities, etc.) and targeted at derogating his/her social status.

The relevance of the research is accounted for by the fact that an insult as a multifaceted category requires an interdisciplinary in-depth study in the realms of various sciences, such as psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, communicative linguistics, linguo-pragmatics, discourse study, legal psychology, legal (forensic) linguistics, law science. The invectives (insulting words) are studied by a lot of linguists, sociologists, political scientists and lawyers. Linguistics provides mostly lexical, lexicographical, linguo-stylistic, sociolinguistic, communicative-pragmatic and discursive-cognitive approaches to various types of invectives (Bilokonko, 2012; Voitsekhivska, 2014; Makarenko, 2013; Stavytska, 2018; Topchyi, 2018; Formanova, 2013). Though a psycholinguistic analysis of a variety of linguistic units and categories has already been undertaken by a number of scholars (Kostusiak & Mezhev, 2018; Mamych, 2019; Navalna, 2017; Pryshchepa, 2017; Kholod, 2017; Giles, 2003; Novick, Kim & Trueswell, 2003; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010), a psycholinguistic aspect of the invective vocabulary as a means of psychological impact on the recipients’ consciousness is still staying beyond a scholarly vision.

The goal of the research is to study the lexico-semantic and communicative-pragmatic characteristics of the invective vocabulary of modern media discourse and social networks, to find out its role in exerting a psychological impact on the consciousness of recipients. Attaining this goal involves the accomplishment of the following objectives: 1) to outline the structure of the invective as a psycholinguistic category that contains a communicative-pragmatic intention of the insult and to account for its semantic and psychological nature; 2) to determine the linguistic and extralinguistic factors of the intensity of a negative impact of the invective on individual’s psychology and mass consciousness; 3) to identify the thematic groups of the invective vocabulary of the semantic field (domain) “Human” and to appraise their psycholinguistic potential and pragmatic effect; 4) to analyze codified and non-codified pejorative lexical items with their both inherent and contextually acquired negative connotation and to explore their contribution to an invective continuum of Ukrainian media texts. The invectives registered in the Ukrainian online media and social networks within recent years served as a source base of the research.

## 2. Methods

The following methods made it possible to implement the goal and objectives of the research: a *descriptive method* with its own ways of external and internal interpretation allowed for the inventorying, systematizing and classifying the invective vocabulary borrowed from the media texts; a method of *comprehensive analysis* contributed to the study of the analyzed components in terms of their lexico-semantic, communicative-pragmatic and psycholinguistic characteristics with due regard to an intimate linkage between mental and language processes; a method of *contextual-semantic analysis* enabled studying the invectives in a contextual environment and highlighting their psycholinguistic specificity with a greater accuracy; a method of *component analysis* provided a means of studying the component characteristics of the analyzed language units. In order to identify the ethno-psychological features of pejorative language units, a method of *free word association test* was employed. This approach offered a prospect of revealing a conscious-subconscious reaction of Ukrainian males and females to pejorative by-words and describing their feelings triggered by these words.

Of great importance for the accuracy of the results is the need to consistently stick to the following criteria: 100 people have been selected as respondents (50 people of each gender). All of them were Ukrainian native speakers including female and male lecturers and students of Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University, Ukraine and Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi Hryhorii Skovoroda State Pedagogical University, Ukraine; choosing the stimuli, we proceeded from the frequency of their use in the texts of modern mass media (out of 300 detected nominations we used 100 units); the part of speech they belong to (preference was given to the nouns) and the lack of their clear-cut lexical and gender markers. We are aware that the words *задрипанка, клуша, профура* will sound much more insulting to females, whereas the words *альфонс, тюхтій, мудақ* will be more abusive to males. Though by parenthesized endings and suffixes of “feminine” or “masculine” gender we actually indicated the respective gender-marked nominations expressed through grammatical forms.

All respondents received a *Questionnaire* with *The Explanatory Note* and a list of stimuli hierarchized considering their descending frequency in media texts. Each of the linguistic units was relatively proportional to their “affiliation” with a certain lexico-semantic group (see below). The participants of the experiment had to determine the extent of the insult caused by the given words: 0 points had to be given to the lexical items which, in the opinion of female or male respondents, do not affect their emotional balance; 1 point was given to the lexical items that caused a slight insult, that is, an insult under certain circumstances and conditions of communication; 2 points – to the linguistic units that cause the average degree of an insult; 3 points – to the stimuli that cause a disruptive reaction of fury, hatred, etc. to a potential opponent who, addressing the respondents, used these nominations. Of course, we are realistic about a possible error in the results because of a unique psycho-type of each individual. We believe, however, that this error is insignificant,

because the focal point of the experiment is the associative reactions of the Ukrainians as a separate ethnic group.

### 3. Results

The results made it possible to combine the analyzed stimuli into four groups. The females estimated 56.8% of nominations at the highest average score (2.65–2.93). Among them are such words as *курва, лахудра, підстилка, сука, шльондра, паскудниця, нехлюйда, шельма, негідниця, наволоч, сволота, бидло, скотина, тварюка, потвора, whereas* the men estimated 51.2% of lexical items (such as *ганчірка, лох, нездара, негідник, непотріб, нікчема, падло, чмо (чмошник), доходяга, виродок, дебіл, наволоч, недоумок, сволота, бидло, каліка, потвора*) at the same score.

The females gave the score of 1.67–2.31 to the words *свиня, жаба, жирафа, змія, гадюка, качка підсадна, мавпа, гієна, коняка, ропуха* and others (34.6% of nominations), whereas the men gave the same score to the words *барига, бовдур, відморозок, гальмо, даун, жлоб, холуй, олень, свиня, скотина, хохол, жид*, etc. (33.4% of nominations).

The third group is made up of the words with the score of 1.03–1.54. From the perspective of the female respondents the linguistic units with this score (*жадняга, нахаба, злodyга, морда, пика, рило, баньки, шнобель*, etc.) comprise 7.7 % of the words offered to them; whereas, according to the respondents of the opposite gender, this amount of words reaches 11.9%. Among them are such nouns as *алкаш, ботан, вискочка, жаднюга, злodyга, гультай, пияка, шахрай, дятел, осел, морда, пика, рило, баньки, копита, шнобель*, etc.

The female respondents gave 0 (zero) points to the words *собака, макітра, фізія, диня, селючка, хохолка, вискочка*, etc., which constitutes 0.9% of all proposed stimuli, while the male respondents gave the same score to the linguistic units *ділок, піжон, селюк, бомж, наркоман, бик, кабан, кріт, собака, клешні, граблі, ласти*, etc., which makes up 3.5% of the words demonstrated to them.

In the framework of our research we focused attention on the amount of those nominations that each of the respondents rated as the highest, and found out which lexico-semantic group they belong to. According to our estimates, the highest percentage is characteristic of the words of lexico-semantic groups A and B (see below) because their considerable portion was rated as the highest by the representatives of both genders. At the same time, a peripheral zone is made up of lexico-semantic groups C and D rated by the female and male respondents almost commensurately.

The experiment allowed analyzing the emotional reaction of males and females to pejorative by-words. As evident from the results of the experiment, females are getting insulted by a larger bulk of the analyzed nominations than males.

### 4. Discussion

In terms of communicative linguistics, the pragmatic goal of the invective speech tactics is to achieve a perlocutionary effect of the insult (to evoke the

addressee's feelings of emotional pain, bitterness, anxiety by humiliating him/her in front of a community, colleagues, friends, family) owing to intolerant interaction, imbalance of relations between interlocutors during a conflict discourse. As Issers states, the tactics of the insult reflects the state of strong emotional intensity of communicators; it is employed mostly at the climatic point of the conflict, therefore, the emotional statements serve as the major means of its implementation. The addresser sees his/her communicative mission in humiliating and ridiculing the target of the insult (Issers, 2008, p. 164–165). The dominant marker of insulting tactics is the invective vocabulary. The latter performs its appropriate pragmatic function either directly, through its own lexical meaning or indirectly, through a contextual environment. There are occasions where, depending on the communicative intentions of the speaker, the lexical items of a normative type can acquire an insulting meaning.

The invective vocabulary of the semantic field (domain) “Human” is employed extensively in modern mass media and social networks. It provides a negatively coloured appraisal of human appearance, inner world, behavior, activities, etc. Being multifaceted the invective vocabulary can be arbitrarily divided into two large groups, each containing a number of thematic subgroups:

1. The vocabulary made up of the words with a pejorative and insulting (invective) seme in their lexical meaning:

– non-taboo colloquial, derogatory, familiar (off-handed, informal, non-official), swear and jargon words marked in dictionaries with specific labels (pejor., derog., fam., invest., colloq., jarg.), e.g.: *Краще людина без досвіду, ніж сволота: Гордон зробив неочікувану заяву* (a headline) ([www.volynnews.com](http://www.volynnews.com), 3.01.2019); *Президент Бразилії ... назвав 16-річну еко-активістку зі Швеції Грету Тунберг **наскудницею** після того, як вона написала текст у мережі...* ([www.nizhyn.in.ua](http://www.nizhyn.in.ua), 11.12.2019); *«Шльондра!»: український політик «розніс» топ-пропагандистку Кремля у ПАРЄ* ([www.vgholos.com.ua](http://www.vgholos.com.ua), 29.01.2020);

– taboo obscene words, jargonisms, etc. For example: *... якщо нормальних зарплат у лікарів немає, яка це **на фіг** реформа?* ([www.zik.ua](http://www.zik.ua), 21.04.2020);

– the vocabulary that acquires a pejorative and insulting (invective) connotation due to a metaphorical transfer based on associations with wildlife, inanimate objects and environmental phenomena. For example: *«Всі «**кроти**» з російськими чи іншими паспортами мають бути вичищені звідси»* ([www.umoloda.kiev.ua](http://www.umoloda.kiev.ua), 24.02.2017); *Обранець до парламенту від «Слуги народу» назвав журналістку «Нового времени» «**тупою вівцею**»* ([www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com), 31.05.2020); *Поводився, як породиста **кобила** на вигоні, – сказав чоловік* ([www.ivankivzosh1.at.ua](http://www.ivankivzosh1.at.ua), 29.05.2020).

2. The vocabulary (codified, normative) made up of words deprived of a pejorative and insulting (invective) seme in their basic lexical meanings, though they can acquire it in the context as a result of re-conceptualization. As Topchy pointed out, “...the semantics of a codified neutral lexical item, depending on the author's intention and on a language environment can acquire specific invective connotations” (Topchy, 2018, p. 98).

The invective vocabulary characterized by a varying intensity of the insulting effect is targeted at someone's external and internal features. First and foremost, these are:

A) human psychology, mental deviations, moral qualities, intellectual development, experience, headwork, character traits, standard of social behaviour. For example: *Така наволоч прийшла до влади на крові Майдану...* (www.uk-ua.facebook.com, 28.05.2020). The lexical item *наволоч* means: 1. collect., derog. Mean, worthless people harmful to society; rabble (Slovník ukraïnskoi movy, vol. 5, 1974, p. 39); *Промосковська профура* (www.stopcor.org, 27.02.2020). The lexical item *профура* has the following meanings (marked by the labels): 1. crim., derog., invest. Woman. 2. yng; derog. Woman of easy virtue (Ukrainskyi Zhargon, p. 279); «*один радикальний політик*» дозволив собі принизити людей з синдромом Дауна, коли публічно кричав що «в уряді – дауни», через що виник скандал (www.pravda.com.ua, 5.04.2019). The lexical item *даун* means: yng; pejor., iron. stupid, ignorant person. Derived from the medical term Down's syndrome (Ukrainskyi Zhargon, p. 116);

B) human behaviors, lifestyle, actions, habits, abilities, activities, occupations, professional, and business qualities. For example: *Ковелем керує «банда нікчем», – депутат Ковельської міськради* (www.kowel.rayon.in.ua, 21.02.2019); *Під Києвом ділок підрубив документи та привласнив понад 35 га землі...* (www.glavcom.ua, 28.05.2020);

C) human appearance, physical qualities and flaws associated, in particular, with pejorative nominations of body parts (somatism). For example: «*У нього квадратна «морда лица» і великий трудовий мозоль у вигляді живота*»... (www.gazeta.ua, 12.10.2018); «*Кому треба ці вибори, якщо вони все одно нічого не поміняють. Хіба рил журних у Верховній Раді стане більше*» (www.gazeta.ua, 23.07.2019); «*Бодай би в тебе репнула макітра!*» (www.gazeta.ua, 05.02.2019);

D) human social set-up and status, financial situation, age; ethnic, national, race, gender, religious, professional affiliation; political views, anti-social (deviant) groups. The invective vocabulary is one of the most common means of expressing verbal aggression against the members of specific ethnic groups, races, religions, sexual minorities, etc.

The invectives are frequently used in various types of discourse, specifically, in a political conflict discourse. Their function is to demoralize, humiliate, discredit the opponent, to downgrade a person, thereby asserting oneself and/or exhibiting one's strengths. However, an excessive manifesting of such strategies can discredit none other than the addresser. The negative impact of the invective in this case is bilateral, because it is targeted not only at the addressee, but also at the addresser of communication. By solidifying the destructive tendencies (profanity is one of them) in one's behavior, a person distorts his/her own personality and inflicts a moral and psychological damage on it. In addition, the invective stuns a person who uses it. Resorting to the invective is, in fact, a recognition of one's psychological bankruptcy, a surrender to the situation (Makarenko, 2013, p. 336–347).

The invective vocabulary is also employed as a means of moral and psychological pressure on the addressee (as a tool of extortion, threat and blackmail). It serves as a lever of psychological violence, in particular, during the cases of bullying and mobbing behaviour (mostly in schools, institutions and organizations) affecting the honor and dignity of the individual and causing his or her feeling of insult. The invective of any verbal form is characterized by a varying intensity of a psycho-traumatic action on the recipient, stirring up, literally, a chain reaction: protracted mental sufferings, depression and, as an after-effect, deterioration of health. The extent of such an impact is directly associated with a number of extralingual factors: diminished or lost social and business reputation, undermined life and professional prospects of the individual, financial straits, etc. Under the law, the victim has the right to apply to court and claim compensation for moral or material damage caused by the offender.

The intensity of a psychological impact of the invective varies and is determined, on the one hand, by a semantic content and a target of an insulting expression and, on the other hand, by the recipient's age and his or her individual and psychological characteristics, the level of his/her social manners, mentality, temperament, stress resistance and a status in a society. Sneering at the representatives of Jewish community, for example, is definitely a profound insult to them; a resident of an African country can be deeply insulted by the sneers at his or her race; a male will be insulted by derisive remarks on his gender, physical condition, strength and performance efficiency; a similar effect for a female would have the insulting comments on her appearance, dignity, moral qualities, motherhood and age; a qualified doctor or an architect would be insulted by an attempt to downgrade his or her standard of professional competence; a scientist would be insulted if somebody tried to deride his or her scientific accomplishments; an artist would be deeply wounded by someone's insulting assessment of his or her talent and oeuvre; for a military person an insulting effect would be caused by somebody's jeering at his or her service to the Motherland; equally insulting for a physically challenged person would be an offensive word to the effect of his or her physical or mental affliction.

A special pragmatic function of expressing the insult is performed by jargonisms and slang words and phrases which fall into several groups in compliance with the social strata they belong to. That's why this vocabulary is described by means of the following attributives: criminal, youth (student, school), military, professional (i.e. used by IT specialists, athletes, motorists, musicians, businessmen, representatives of informal groups). Some linguists identify jargonisms and slang with the invectives, others differentiate them. Stavvytska (2005, p. 37) makes a distinction between the concepts of "jargon" and "invective". The dominant aim of jargon as a group of words is to separate a certain social group from the other social groups. The role of the invectives, by contrast, is merely a function. We believe that the invectives should include only those jargonisms that are employed in the communicative acts of insult and associated with the semantic field "Human".

A criminal jargon marked by a high level of expressivity (similar to that of swear and vulgar words) may have an extremely negative and even hazardous psychological effect. More often than not, this effect goes beyond the boundaries of this or that criminal group and spreads rapidly in a society sweeping across mostly the teenage and young adults' population (in order to stand out and assert themselves among their peers the young people tend to emulate the manners of certain "criminal bosses"). In due course, via the mass media, fiction, movies, radio stations the wave of a harmful influence of the criminal jargon comes up in everyday life. According to the researchers of this sociolect, "...harm inflicted by criminal jargon lies in teaching a person to think in criminal terms as well as in instilling perverted views and beliefs in his or her mind, such as aversion to labour, cruelty and barbarity, glorification of the criminal lifestyle, thievish ingenuity, the cult of power and contempt for global human values and morality." Criminal jargon "subverts and falsifies the legal consciousness of an individual". Moreover, "in criminal jargon there is hardly a neutrally colored lexical unit". The words of this non-literary layer are usually "pronounced caustically, with an explicit disdain". Those who use them seek to stun, to sting, to discredit, and downgrade a person (Pirozhkov, 1994).

Therefore, this variety of jargon has an unambiguously invective connotation, and, consequently, even if it is not targeted at a specific recipient, it causes a lot of people (especially those who were reared with a respect for a language culture and the rules of etiquette, for example, such community groups as intellectuals, seniors) to feel the insult and emotional discomfort. The invectives as expressive linguistic means may exert some negative action not only on the mental health of the individual, but also on the mass consciousness. Through the use of specific linguistic means and techniques, we can put and store some information in the individual's subconscious so that it (the information) should become an integral part of human psychic essence (Formanova, 2013, p. 126). The invectives, no matter how differently they are verbalized, can be effective tools of a suggestive impact on a society. Suggestion is understood as a premeditated conscious effect on the subconscious of a person or a group of people in order to change their (physical or mental) state or attitude to the issue, as well as to generate a disposition toward specific actions, and an inclination to emulate, that is to evoke in the other person's mind a desire to become a copy of the anchorage (Sidorenko, 1997, p. 129–131).

The unreasonable expansion of insulting and swear vocabulary can be accounted for, first, by the fact that the young people trying to enhance the expressiveness of their speech want to show off their antics, to attract the others' attention or to distinguish themselves from "the crowd"; second, by the jargonization and criminalization of the language in modern fiction and in various communication media (online media outlets, TV programs, including political talk shows), and, finally, by the language used by the speakers in high-profile state institutions (in the abode of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, including). All these tendencies not only downplay the intellectual values, but also impress on the recipients the idea of profanity as a social communicative standard worthy of

imitation and dissemination among the people of different ages and social strata, especially the youth. According to Voitsekhivska, the wide spread occurrence of the criminal, thieves' and prison jargon stems primarily from criminalization of public life and social mind as well as from a desire to emulate a fake "figure of authority" (Voitsekhivska, 2014, p. 330). Unlike the young people who use the invectives and jargonisms purely during their oral communication with their peers, the people of specific professions or occupations resort to this layer of vocabulary when talking to their colleagues; at the same time, the invectives used by the criminals and substance abusers can be heard predominantly in their criminal (deviant) groups; the authors of the mass media and writers of fiction, however, can affect the consciousness or subconscious of the people of all generations and all socio-professional communities by making an excessive and sometimes stylistically unjustifiable use of the words and phrases of this layer of the vocabulary.

To a lot of segments of the population, especially, to the senior citizens, the accumulation of such a vocabulary (associated with the growth of verbal aggression) in a society, in general, and in mass media, in particular, is a cause of a number of negative psycho-emotional states, a psychological intenseness and even the feeling of insult (bitterness, emotional pain, depression, humiliation), and de-personalization. After all, an extensively used pejorative invective vocabulary is a reflection of the destructive consciousness of society; this tendency produces the impression of a dominant role of vulgarity, aggression, hatred, world's brutality, elimination the basic standards of morality and language etiquette, which points to symptoms of social deterioration and regression.

Thus, the use of invective vocabulary in the mass media and fiction can be justified only if it serves a specific communicative and stylistic function (to provide a negative stance on the characters and their behavior; to represent the specificity of the character's manner of speech; to achieve an ironic or satirical effect). An aggressive insulting profanity in a public space is unacceptable because it promotes violence, cruelty, disparagement of another person's honour and dignity, downplays intellectual and spiritual values, and recklessly affects the assimilation of the invectives into a society and their dissemination primarily among young people. To completely get rid of profanity is not an easy endeavour. The possibility exists, though, of reducing its intensity through the use of modern methods and training workshops as the modalities of individual psychological impact. The procedure is described, for example, in the paper by Makarenko (2013).

## **5. Conclusions**

Despite their negative impact on the minds of recipients, the invectives make up a dynamic share of the lexical space of the Ukrainian language, in general, and mass communicative tools, in particular. On the one hand, they add expressiveness and eccentricity to the language; on the other hand, they vulgarize various types of discourse, impart an aggressive and insulting tone to a discourse and inflict a profound affront upon a person. The anthropocentric invective vocabulary covers a large and diverse range of colloquial, pejorative, derogatory, jargon, slang, obscene,

swear, rude, vulgar, contemptuous lexical units. They either acquire an insulting meaning contextually or incorporate it in their component structures. A thematic scope of the invectives reflects an individual's physical, psycho-emotional, moral and ethical qualities as well as her or his ethnic, socio-professional, gender, religious, and political affiliation. Such a vocabulary is targeted at providing an insulting characterization of external and internal features of the addressee with a varying intensity of a psychological impact. The latter depends, for one thing, on a semantic content and a target of the insulting expression and, for another, on recipient's age, individual and psychological characteristics, level of civility, mind-set, temperament, stress resistance and social status.

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