

# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF *CYBERSTALKING* AND ITS MACEDONIAN LEXICAL EQUIVALENTS

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**Abstract:** The development of new technologies and the growth of Internet users have opened various possibilities for the occurrence of certain types of behaviors in the cyber world, which may be socially inappropriate and unacceptable, or may even be considered criminal offences. The increase in this type of behavior has been fuelled by the mass use of the social media. They enable direct interaction among users, thus increasing the likelihood of them becoming victims in the virtual space.

The emergence of new practices in the cyber world is accompanied by the need for their appropriate lexical representations in different languages. This paper will focus on *cyberstalking* which falls within the category of newly developed concepts which require lexicalization in many languages, including Macedonian. The authors will provide semantic analysis of the English term *cyberstalking*, its origin and contexts of use, and will discuss its appropriate lexical equivalents in Macedonian which would reflect its semantic peculiarities.

**Keywords:** *cyberstalking, English, Macedonian, translation, meaning*

## INTRODUCTION

Our lives today are remarkably different from the lives of the previous generations, and that is not a surprise at all, if we ignore the very fact that the generations in question are not the ones that lived hundred or more years, but only a few decades ago. The world has transformed at such a rapid pace, with some social and technological changes happening so fast, that humanity cannot develop adequate ways of adaptation. The society in which we live, dubbed by many scholars as globalized, postmodern

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or even risk society, undergoes transformation that was hard to imagine and predict. Speaking from security point of view, this society could be most appropriately described as Ulrich Beck alluded, as risk society (Bek, 2001). That is a society which constantly produces new and more risks with every passing day, a society where risks are more and more difficult to define and predict, and a society that manufactures risks everywhere in the world, most of them being latent and hard to pinpoint.

In such uncertain, precarious societal environment, technological risks, threats and endangerments are amongst the most worrisome ones. Technology that was supposed to help people and ease their lives, has turned against the society, has alienated from man and has become a kind of adversary force, and most of social scientists knew of that fact long before risk society was acknowledged. However, what most of the scholars did not know and could not have known was the character of these technological risks. Namely, their character is mostly latent, hard to define, even not risky and dangerous at first glance. That is because of the sheer fact that modern, and, later postmodern world, has not recognized them as being dangerous. On the contrary, it disguised them into something desirable and good, making it almost impossible to define them in their essence.

One of the few social scientists that warned the humankind of this detrimental process was Erich From. Even more than half a century ago, he boldly stated that “our civilization offers many opportunities which intentionally help people not to be aware of their loneliness” (Фром, 2011: 81). What he said was to a great extent prophetic. He said that our civilization intentionally made people lonely, and at the same time developed many ways of overcoming that state of loneliness, usually through technology. And that is what Internet and contemporary virtual, cyber era are actually doing to people. Since they are virtual, they are more superficial connections than deep relations, and as such, they are presented to people as fun, desirable, socially acceptable through many tempting and seductive ways, as Zygmunt Bauman rightly noted (Бауман, 2013: 91). They created intimidated and insecure human beings that are easy to manipulate by the cyber era inventions, most notably seen in the so called social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Some scholars referred to all these manifestations of societal pathology related to cyber era as Internetmania or Internet addictions, due to their association with Internet (Арнаудовски и Велкова, 2017: 634; Griffiths, 2000: 537). In actual fact, *cyberstalking* could be regarded as a sophisticated form of victimization (Герасимоски, Бачановиќ, Аслимоски, 2019: 193).

In this paper, we shall focus on one of the phenomena within the wide sociopathological concept of Internetmania or Internet addiction. Namely, we shall elaborate *cyberstalking* as a relatively new, widespread and very detrimental sociopathological phenomenon which often turns into crime. But, primarily and mostly, our focus in this paper will be on elucidating the linguistic aspects of the notion of *cyberstalking* viewed as a sociopathological phenomenon. Therefore, the main interest and goal of the paper in the lines to follow will be to analyze the meaning and translational equivalents of the term *cyberstalking* comparatively, in English and Macedonian.

## SOCIOPATHOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC ASPECTS OF CYBERSTALKING

It is unusually difficult to differentiate clearly whether cyberstalking as a sort of Internet addiction is a sociopathological phenomenon or a criminal act. That is because the differentiation and definition of *cyberstalking* is primarily dependent on the very complex and tangled relationships between the cyberstalker as offender and the person who is the target of cyberstalking as a victim. In most of the cases



it is very hard to define and prove whether one person is the stalker and the other one is being stalked, since it primarily hinges upon the mutual consent or refusal of interpersonal Internet communication, although, in some cases, there should not be any consent from the potential victim. However, in most cases, as long as two people communicate on their own will, it is extremely difficult to find elements of cyber harassment and stalking, let alone proving it as a sociopathological phenomenon or crime. Therefore, before defining *cyberstalking* as sociopathological phenomenon and crime, we must point out the difference between them. Also, we must mention that some authors equate the terms *cyberstalking* and *cyberbullying*, since they both refer to maltreatment of a person by means of cyber communication (Rohini, Lovish, Shivam & Poonam, 2019: 367). Some authors consider cyberstalking within the so called cyberviolence or digital violence (Кузмановић, Лајовић, Грујић и Меденица, 2016).

In sociology and social pathology cyberstalking as a form of Internet addiction is most appropriately described and explained within the interactionist theories which view the relationship between a potential offender and a potential victim of cyberstalking as dynamic, open and in most cases reciprocal. It means that the stalker is not an absolute culprit, and the stalked one is not an absolute victim, thus overcoming the traditional and obsolete black and white picture of offender-victim relationship (Nikolić-Ristanović i Konstantinović-Vilić, 2018: 443). Cyberstalking is a very complex, open and two-sided process. Characteristic of cyberstalking is that most of the victims did not know each other previously, but established the stalker-stalked relation simply by means of virtual communication.

Cyberstalking could be seen as a form of societal deviance, but in which case it will be considered as sociopathological phenomenon and in which case as crime mostly depends on the societal standards that are being violated. Thus, if the societal standards that are being violated are informal societal norms and values (moral, religious, customary etc.), then we speak about cyberstalking as a sociopathological phenomenon, while, if the societal standards that are being violated imply breaking the formal societal norms (laws), then we speak about cyberstalking as a crime. For cyberstalking to be defined as a sociopathological phenomenon, a distortion of normal interpersonal communication in virtual space has to take place. It means that distorted societal communication should be a communication of offender and victim, or, one party should take any kind of action, open or covert, towards abuse, intimidation, stalking, haunting, disturbing, harassment, threat and alike towards the other party. In other words, the potential offender (the stalker) should try to use some predispositions, features or actions of the other side (the stalked) to make it become real victim. This is especially important for children and women, since practice so far has shown that usually they are victims of cyberstalking. The most common form of cyberstalking proved to be sending disturbing e-messages from a cyberstalker to a cyberstalked person (Vujović, 2012: 49).

In general, there is a serious lack of scientific research on cyberstalking phenomenon. That is why there is very little known about cyberstalking, but what is accepted is that cyberstalking behaviors can vary from a non-threatening e-mail to a potentially deadly encounter between the stalker and the targeted victim (Pitarro, 2007: 181). The very anonymity of cyber communication makes preventing, detecting and proving of cyberstalking pretty challenging. It is the anonymity of the stalker that complexes the situation and threatens the victim to a greater extent, thus making it more vulnerable (Shambhavee, 2019: 350). Also, cyberstalking as a sociopathological phenomenon can mean different kinds of intimidation, stalking, threat and harassment, which can vary between verbal, psychological, sexual and even lead to physical ones. The offenders use social media platforms, e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, or any other online media to harass the victim (Bhasin & Mehta, 2018: 1). Usually, the stalkers are found to be unstable, amoral and ill-socialized persons, persons who lack self-respect, alienated persons, or persons who have difficulties in establishing normal face-to-face human communication. In general, they are considered as sociopaths and in some cases even as psychopaths.



## ON THE MACEDONIAN LEXICAL EQUIVALENTS OF *CYBERSTALKING*

The elaboration presented in the sections above makes it clear that *cyberstalking* is a complex phenomenon whose semantic boundaries cannot easily be determined. Morphologically speaking, *cyberstalking* is comprised of the prefix *cyber-* and the noun *stalking*. The prefix *cyber-*, derived from *cybernetics*, is used as a combining word that is attached to many nouns in English, meaning “computers, computing”<sup>3</sup> or more specifically “electronic communication networks, especially the internet”<sup>4</sup>. As far as *stalking* is concerned, in general English dictionaries it is usually defined as “the act or crime of pursuing or following someone persistently or threateningly”<sup>5</sup>. When joined together, they actually refer to the activities carried out by the act of stalking, but by means of computers, or via electronic communication networks, i.e. in the virtual world. This dictionary definition suggests that stalking can either be considered an activity that is not perceived as illegal, or an activity that may be incriminated in some countries, which corresponds to our explanation of the difficulties in distinguishing the (il)legality of the activities carried out by the stalker.

The concept of *stalking* in the “traditional” sense has found its way to the lexical corpora of various languages other than English, but the newly coined form *cyberstalking* has not achieved the same level of lexicalization. To our knowledge, Macedonian is one of the languages lacking an official translational equivalent of *cyberstalking*. As far as *stalking* is concerned, in Zoze Murgoski’s English-Macedonian Dictionary, it is classified as a legal term and is translated as “скришно следење (на жена – потенцијална жртва на силување/убиство) (*skrišno sledenje (na žena – potencijalna žrtva na siluvanje/ubistvo)*)” (Murgoski, 2001:1336). Instead of a single lexical equivalent, the quoted dictionary uses a descriptive translation of *stalking* which is literally translated into English as *covert monitoring (of a woman – a possible victim of rape/murder)*. What makes this translation interesting is the emphasis on women as possible victims of rape or murder, which comes as the additional explanation of the expression. This is probably due to the assumption that women are most likely to become victims of such acts. However, men can also appear as victims of stalking, though not as frequently as women.

So far *stalking* and *cyberstalking* have not been incriminated in the Macedonian Penal Code, but it is interesting to note that our country is bound to incriminate *stalking*, both in real world and in cyberspace based on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence from 2011, known as the Istanbul Convention. One can easily notice that in this document, too, the emphasis is on women as possible victims. Although the Macedonian Penal Code has not yet recognized *stalking/cyberstalking* as a separate crime, in legal context the Macedonian official equivalent for *stalking* was introduced in 2014 in the Law on Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence. In this Law, the notion of *stalking* is translated as *демнење (demnenje)* and is defined in Article 4, as “intentional conduct of repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety” (Закон за спречување и заштита од семејно насилство, 2011). This definition is copied from the definition of *stalking* in the text of the Convention<sup>6</sup>, but what caught our attention was the fact that the Macedonian lawmaker introduced a single lexical equivalent – *демнење (demnenje)* instead of a descriptive expression. In our opinion,

3 <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/cyber>

4 <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/cyber?q=cyber>

5 <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/stalking>

6 For more information on the insertion of stalking in the quoted law, see in Ристеска, М. & Цеков, А. (2019). *Анализа на потребите од усогласување на кривичниот законик со истанбулската конвенција во Република Северна Македонија*



this was a good lexical choice, taking into consideration the semantic features of *демнење* (*demnenje*) in Macedonian and the actions carried out by stalkers, online or in the real world. Etymologically, the Macedonian equivalent *демнење* (*demnenje*) is derived from the verb *демне* (*demne*), which is primarily defined as “wait and observe from ambush” (Конески et al., 2003:425), or “wait in ambush; sneak, especially with bad intentions” (Мурроски, 2011:227). Obviously, these definitions of Macedonian *демне* (*demne*) and the action of *демнење* (*demnenje*) to a great degree overlap semantically with the general English definition of *stalking*. It contains the key semantic features of monitoring/following somebody and the bad intention hidden behind that act.

As far as the compound form *cyberstalking* is concerned, it would be logical to expect that in choosing the appropriate official translation, the Macedonian lawmakers and translators will follow the analogy with *stalking*. The only difference would be the addition of the Macedonian equivalent of the prefix *cyber* – in a prepositive position. This prefix was already introduced into the Macedonian lexical corpus several decades ago as *кибер-* (*kiber-*), like in the noun *кибернетика* (*kibernetika*) which is the Macedonian lexical counterpart of *cybernetics*. However, with the development of the Internet and the mass use of computers especially among the younger population, *кибер-* (*kiber-*) is gradually being replaced by the anglicism *сајбер* (*sajber*), not only in colloquial use, but in formal documents as well. Thus, in official documents issued by Macedonian institutions one may easily come across expressions such as *сајбер безбедност* (*sajber bezbednost*) for *cybersecurity*, *сајбер закана* (*sajber zakana*) for *cyberthreat*, *сајбер простор* (*sajber prostor*) for *cyberspace*, *сајбер напад* (*sajber napad*) for *cyberattack*, *сајбер криминал* (*sajber kriminal*) for *cybercrime* etc<sup>7</sup>. All these examples show that the English prefix *cyber-* is usually translated into Macedonian as a separate word with adjectival function. They also show that even in cases with already established lexical solutions where *cyber-* is translated differently, in more recent texts it is not uncommon to encounter the newly imported form *сајбер* (*sajber*). To illustrate this, we will take the example with *cybercrime*, where *cyber-* is officially translated with the adjective *компјутерски* (*kompjuterski*) in the expression *компјутерски криминал* (*kompjuterski kriminal*) as the Macedonian equivalent of *cybercrime*<sup>8</sup>, but in the quoted document we found it as *сајбер криминал* (*sajber kriminal*). Therefore, taking into account the existence of the already accepted form *kiber-*, but also the widespread use of *sajber* in recent years, we can agree that both forms, *кибер демнење* (*kiber demnenje*) or *сајбер демнење* (*sajber demnenje*) can be taken into consideration as acceptable Macedonian equivalents of *cyberstalking*.

Although the notion of *cyberstalking* as a form of stalking has not been introduced in official legal texts, scholars and experts in the fields related to this notion use certain lexical solutions when discussing this phenomenon. Thus, for instance, in the textbook on Social Pathology that is used at the Faculty of Security in Skopje, the authors used the term *сајбер демнење* (*демнење преку компјутер*) (*sajber demnenje (demnenje preku kompjuter)*) (Герасимоски, Бачановиќ & Аслимоски, 2019: 193) defined as “covert monitoring of potential victims, most commonly via Internet or social networks, accompanied by harassment and even real endangerment of the victim” (ibid). On the other hand, in a paper addressing this issue we came across the expression *виртуелно демнење* (*virtuelno demnenje*) (Тупанчевски & Деаноска, 2018). The same expression was also used in the Guide to Gender-Based Violence Terminology for Journalists and Media Workers (Димушевска, Саит & Доковска, 2016:17)

7 These terms were extracted from the National Cybersecurity Strategy (2018-2022) of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, available at: [https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl\\_files/documents/strategies/ns\\_sajber\\_bezbednost\\_2018-2022.pdf](https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/ns_sajber_bezbednost_2018-2022.pdf)

8 For many years there has been a separate sector within the Macedonian Ministry of Interior called *Sector for Cybercrime and Digital Forensics* whose official name in Macedonian is *Сектор за компјутерски криминал и дигитална форензика* (*Sektor za kompjuterski kriminal i digitalna forenzika*). Source: Organogram of the Ministry of Interior, available at: <https://mvr.gov.mk/page/organogram>



when explaining *cyberstalking* as a type of stalking, specifically focusing on stalking using the social media. This option can also be considered acceptable, since the adjective *виртуелно* (*virtuelno*) is used as a counterpart of the English adjective *virtual*, meaning “of, pertaining to, or taking place in cyberspace or in virtual reality” and the cyberspace is actually the “space” where cyberstalking activities take place. This meaning of *виртуелен* (*virtuelen*) is also included in Zoze Murgoski’s Interpretative Dictionary of Contemporary Macedonian Language, where, within the context of computers *виртуелен* (*virtuelen*) is defined as something “which does not exist physically as such, rather, has been software-designed to appear or function so” (Мургоски, 2011: 137).

Finally, when discussing the appropriate equivalent of *cyber-* we may also take into consideration adopting the approach of “domesticating” this anglicism, i.e. replacing it with a word of Slavic origin. This can be achieved by choosing the Macedonian root noun *мрежа* (*mreža*), as a counterpart of the English noun *web* which is contained in the abbreviation *WWW* (World Wide Web), often referred to simply as *web*. The same noun is used as an equivalent of the English word *net*, which is the shortened form of *Internet*. Therefore, the derived adjectival form *мрежно* (*mrežno*) can also be used when coining the official Macedonian translation of *cyberstalking*. In other words, we might translate *cyberstalking* as *мрежно демнење*, thus avoiding the importation of a foreignism in the Macedonian equivalent of the English *cyberstalking*. The choice of *мрежен* (*mrežen*) could also be interesting from another perspective. The Macedonian noun *мрежа* (*mreža*) in one of its meanings is used when referring to *network*, and *cyberstalking* is usually carried out online, most typically via social networks. Therefore, taking into consideration the fact that the expression *social network* is typically translated into Macedonian as *социјална мрежа* (*socijalna mreža*), choosing the expression *мрежно демнење* (*mrežno demnenje*) could also be viewed as an acceptable translational equivalent.

## CONCLUSION

The semantic analysis provided in the paper confirmed the authors’ claim regarding the complexity of the term *cyberstalking* as a hyponym of *stalking*, denoting specific types of sociopathological or criminal behaviours through the medium of the Internet.

*Cyberstalking* has not been officially translated into Macedonian, but the examples presented in the paper show that it can be encountered in texts written by scholars and experts dealing with that issue, not necessarily lexicalized identically.

The Macedonian lexical counterparts of *cyberstalking* presented in the paper may serve as possible lexical solutions when deciding on its official translation and inclusion into the Macedonian lexicon. Both the hybrid form consisting of an Anglicism and a Macedonian word, or the widely spread one presented in the paper, cover the semantic features of the concept of *cyberstalking* and can be chosen as official equivalents, in accordance with the approach that will be adopted when addressing the issue of its lexicalization into Macedonian.

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