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## NEW WORDS IN ENGLISH: TAKING A CLOSE LOOK AT WINNERS OF THE WORD OF THE YEAR

**Summary.** The article explores current innovational processes on the lexical level in the English language. It focuses on studying the peculiarities of the formation of neologisms that have been announced the winners of the Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionary since 2009, i.e. in the last decade of the 21st century. The findings of the present research show that the vocabulary of the English language develops both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative changes result in an increase in the number of words, while qualitative development is evident in new meanings and functions of 'old' affixes, new derivational patterns and redistribution of the activity of the available derivational types in the formation of new words.

**Key words:** neologism, word-formation, derivation, word-formation type, derivational base, derivational pattern, affix.

**Statement of the Research Problem.** It is an obvious truism to say that language is always changing, evolving and adapting to the needs of its users. Language change results from the dynamic nature of language and, in R. Hickey's words, 'is ever present' and 'continual' [1, p. 2]. Research into the domain of language change can tell us about the way language is organized, functions and is used in society as well as it can reveal a wealth of information about the intricate interrelation between language and its speakers. Whatever the reason for language change is, all aspects of language are subject to changes over time – albeit at different rates. Yet, it is common knowledge that, of all the language components, vocabulary is the area where we most often notice the way language changes, because each year hundreds of new words arrive in a language.

English constantly updates its vocabulary by coining and borrowing new words, developing new meanings and combining words to keep up with new developments and ideas. The unprecedented growth of English vocabulary was first recorded in the last decade of the 20th century, until when as Sue Engineer claims the process had never been more apparent [2, p. 2]. According to the Oxford English Dictionary records about 185,000 new words, and new meanings of old words came into the English language between 1900 and 1999. Even leaving out of account the so-called lexical 'dark matter' (words which failed to catch the lexicographers' attention) those 185,000 on their own represent a 25 per cent growth in English vocabulary over the century [3]. The calculations of the scientists at Harvard University are even more impressive. In their analysis of the database comprising more than 5m books – both fiction and non-fiction – published between 1800 and 2000, Harvard University team found that around 8,500 new words enter the English language every year and the lexicon grew by 70% between 1950 and 2000 [cited in: 4]. But most of these words never make into dictionaries creating a gap between dictionaries and the lexicon. They wrote: '... we estimated that 52% of the English lexicon – the majority of words used in English books – consist of lexical 'dark matter' undocumented in standard references' [5, p. 177]. Accord-

ing to the estimates, over the past decades the English language has been experiencing the period of most vigorous expansion since that of the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Studying new words is linguistically important: taken as a whole they show the ways the English language develops and behaves. In this connection reasons for and results of qualitative changes in ways, means and modes of enriching the English vocabulary are of utmost importance.

The present paper **aims** at examining the new words that have been the winners of the Word of the Year since the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, namely from 2009 to 2016, in order to reveal the tendencies of enriching the 21st-century vocabulary of the English language.

The study of new words has been the domain of neology for over half a century and yet the very notion of neology, its scope, subject-matter and terminology continue to be problematic. The rise of neology as a separate linguistic discipline is attributed, first, to the unprecedented growth of vocabularies in different European languages in the 60-es – 70-es of the 20th century; and, second, to the intensification of linguistic research into the innovative processes. At an early stage of its development the main issues of the new linguistic branch were outlined as 'the consideration of the ways new words and meanings are created, the analysis of linguistic and extra-linguistic causes of their appearance, and the study of derivational patterns and elaboration of principles of their selection and inclusion in dictionaries' [6, p. 37].

Since then neology seems to have considerably expanded the range of its main interests. Some of the most important issues neology is currently exploring are put forward in A. Metcalf's 'Predicting New Words':

Why are prominent new words often just a flash in the pan?

Why are not-so-prominent new words often the most successful?

Why do successful new words often turn out to be older than we thought? and

How can one pick the winners? What are the qualities that make for success? [7, p. 23–24].

The greatest contribution to the elaboration of the theory of neology was made by lexicographers. A considerable number of studies in neology resulted in the development of neography which is claimed to underpin neology [8, p. 3]. The main areas of research focus of neography are the following: 1) the inclusion of new words into the revised editions of explanatory dictionaries; 2) the compiling of supplements to explanatory dictionaries; and 3) the compiling of special dictionaries of new words [9, p. 486].

In contemporary linguistics, neologists try to trace the major changes in the naming ways and means a language possesses as every period of language development has its own different set of naming types and naming processes. Apart from dealing with linguistic change, modern neology also implies a survey of cultural

changes in a respective language community [10, p. 221]. In other words, modern neology is believed to have two sides: purely linguistic and cultural. However, the scope of interest of neology is not confined to the phenomena of only one language. A contrastive study of neologisms in different languages with the aim of defining both general and specific tendencies of language development has become one of the main issues of today's neology. Therefore, neology is believed to be of twofold nature: on the one hand, it is of international character, on the other – it possesses national specific nature.

**Results.** The present paper focuses on 8 new words that have been announced the winners of the Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionaries since 2009 [11]. According to the editors of *Oxford Dictionaries* the nominees for the Word of the Year are selected on the basis of the information gathered from the Oxford English Corpus comprising 150 million words. Although winning candidates have to enjoy a considerable popularity and prominence over 12 months, their victory is not a prerequisite of their inclusion into *en.oxford-dictionaries.com*. [Ibid]. The time period for the present research has been selected arbitrary. According to the estimates made by different scholars, 1000 new words enrich the English language every year. In view of this, 8 words serving as the basis for the present research represent just a tiny part of changes in the vocabulary of the English language. Yet, they are suggestive of the current tendencies of the language enrichment. Let us consider the words in more detail.

The *Word of the year 2016* is **post-truth** 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' [12]. The word is a prefixal derivative, i.e. it is formed by prefixation. The Latin prefix *post-* has a long history in English being used as a prefix of time with nouns, adjectives and verbs. However, as *Oxford Dictionaries* claims, the prefix has developed a new more specified meaning 'belonging to a time in which the specified concept has become unimportant or irrelevant' [Ibid]. In other words, apart from temporal feature, the prefix has acquired another characteristic – that of irrelevance or unimportance – thus narrowing its meaning.

The prefix *post-* is currently used to form new words in both senses. The following neologisms illustrate its traditional broad temporal use: *post-mortem divorce* (2003) *n* 'a stipulation that one must be buried separately from one's deceased spouse' [13], i.e. referring to a situation after death; *post-Potter adj* 'relating to or occurring in the time after the last Harry Potter book or movie' [Ibid]. The new meaning of the prefix *post-* is evident in quite old coinages like *postnational* (1945) and *post-racial* (1971) and more recent ones like *post-gay* (1994) and *post-truth*. More specifically, the adjectives *postnational* and *post-racial* are defined respectively as 'of or relating to a time or society in which national identity has become less important' and 'denoting or relating to a period or society in which racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist' [11]; the adjective *post-gay* rendering the meaning 'when homosexuals define their identity by something other than their sexual preference' refers to a homosexual identity in which sexual behavior is no longer important and fails to define one's life [13].

The *Word of the Year 2015* is a loanword **emoji n.** It was borrowed from Japanese to denote 'a small digital image or icon used to express an idea or emotion in electronic communication' [14].

The *Word of the Year 2014* is **vape**. It is used both as a noun and a verb. Etymologically, the word comes from *vapour* or *vaporize* being their clipped form. According to the *OxfordDictionaries.com*

definition the verb means 'to inhale and exhale the vapour produced by an electronic cigarette or similar device', while the noun refers both to the device itself and to the action associated with it [15].

The *Word of the Year 2013* is **selfie** denoting 'a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media' [16]. Derivationally, the word is a suffixal derivative where the suffix *-ie* was added to the clipped derivational base *self-portrait*. In other words, the word is derived by combining two word-formation processes: suffixation and clipping.

The *Word of the Year 2012* is the verb **GIF** rendering the meaning 'to create a GIF file of (an image or video sequence, especially relating to an event)'. The word is formed by means of conversion from the noun GIF 'a compressed file format for images that can be used to create simple, looping animations' [17]. According to the information provided by the *OxfordDictionaries.com* the noun **GIF** turned 25 years in 2012 [Ibid]. Although historically conversion has been present as one of the most productive types of word-formation in the English language for centuries, the Word of the Year 2012 is suggestive of a growing importance of different types of shortenings in English (abbreviations, acronyms, blends and clippings). The verb **GIF** is based on the noun which itself is an acronym for 'Graphics Interchange Format'.

The *Word of the Year 2011* **squeezed middle** originally referred to the section of society regarded as particularly affected by inflation, wage freezes, and cuts in public spending during a time of economic difficulty, consisting principally of those people on low or middle incomes [18]. Structurally, the word is a compound of two derivational bases: the past participle *squeezed* and the noun *middle* (PII + N → N). It is based on the phrases squeezing the middle class and a squeeze on the middle class, which were often used by financial analysts. Interestingly, the evidence suggests that the word has developed a new broader meaning to refer to the concept in the middle of two extremes and has transcended its original financial use to be found in a variety of other contexts like 'a squeezed middle of universities', relating to institutions balancing between two extremes of attracting the best-performing students and offering the lowest fees [19].

The *Word of the Year 2010* **refudiate v** meaning 'to reject' is a blend of *refute* and *repudiate* [20]. The word is interesting from the structural point of view: it is blended around a common sequence of sounds. In other words, the fragments of the two derivational bases partially overlap: *refudiate* → *refu-* + *-udiate*.

The word of the Year 2009 is **unfriend v** that means 'to remove someone as a 'friend' on a social networking site such as Facebook' [21]. The prefix *un-* combines with adjectives, adverbs and nouns in order to form words with the opposite meaning. However, adding the negative prefix *un-* to nouns has its limitations: it can combine only with nouns that already have a suffix like *un-* + happiness [22, p. 51]. Therefore, being used with the noun *friend* to form the verb *unfriend* breaks the morphological rules of the language. Moreover, the prefix has been traditionally viewed as non-convertive, i.e. it changes the meaning of the word serving as a derivational base without changing its part-of-speech status. In other words, it is added to adjectives to form adjectives, to nouns to form nouns, etc. The neologism *unfriend* is suggestive of a new convertive function of the prefix.

**Conclusions.** The findings of the present study show that the vocabulary of the English language changes both in quantity and in quality. While quantitative changes deal with an increase in the number of

words the language stores, qualitative changes refer to the development of the word-formation tools and mechanisms. The findings of the research indicate that the creation of new words involves both available language resources (words, derivational morphemes, patterns, etc.) and new ones such as the development of new meanings of 'old' affixes, new functions of affixes, new derivational patterns, etc. The English language keeps borrowing words from other languages. The role of minor types of derivation, shortening in particular, is growing. The combination of different derivational processes such as suffixation and clipping and the development of unconventional derivational patterns within the existing word-building types show that creativity extends the language system and contributes to its qualitative change.

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#### Андрусяк І. В. Нові слова англійської мови: дослідження переможців Слова року

**Анотація.** Стаття присвячена вивченню інноваційних процесів у сучасній англійській мові. Основна увага зосереджена на дослідженні особливостей утворення неологізмів, які стали переможцями Слова року за версією Оксфордського словника в другій декаді XIX століття. Результати проведеного аналізу свідчать про розвиток словникового складу сучасної англійської мови в кількісному та якісному аспектах. Кількісні зміни виявляються у збільшенні кількості слів у мові, а якісний розвиток лексичного рівня призводить до нових значень і функцій «старих» афіксів, нових дериваційних моделей і перерозподілу активності наявних словотворчих механізмів в утворенні нових слів.

**Ключові слова:** неологізм, словотворення, деривація, спосіб словотворення, дериваційна основа, словотвірна модель, афікс.

#### Андрусяк І. В. Новые слова английского языка: исследование победителей Слова года

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена изучению инновационных процессов в современном английском языке. Основное внимание сосредоточено на исследовании особенностей образования неологизмов, которые стали победителями Слова года по версии Оксфордского словаря во втором десятилетии XIX века. Результаты проведённого анализа свидетельствуют о развитии словарного состава современного английского языка в количественном и качественном аспектах. Количественные изменения очевидны в увеличении числа слов в языке, а качественное развитие лексического уровня языка приводит к новым значениям и функциям «старых» аффиксов, новым деривационным моделям и перераспределению активности словообразовательных механизмов в образовании новых слов.

**Ключевые слова:** неологизм, словообразование, деривация, способ словообразования, деривационная основа, словообразовательная модель, аффикс.