

WORD FORMATION PROCESSES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Ivan Atrakhimovich

Secondary School № 21 named after V.A. Demidov, Vitebsk, Belarus

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Language is at the center of human life. We use it to express our love or our hatred, to achieve our goals and further our careers, to gain artistic satisfaction or simple pleasure. Through language we plan our lives and remember our past; we exchange ideas, experiences; we form our social and individual identities.

In the 21st century, English vocabulary has changed continually over more than 1,500 years of development and this attracts many prominent dictionary-publishing companies to produce dictionaries [1]. Hundreds of new lexical items are coined or borrowed every year. The aim of our research is to analyze the ways of lexical enrichment of the English language. Our work deals with how new items are created, with possible reasons why they may have appeared, the purposes and fields of their usage.

We have determined and analyzed the most popular ways of formation of new words in the English language nowadays and have also studied the new words that have been added to the Oxford English dictionary in the years from 2019 to 2022.

Material and methods. To gain the aforementioned aim we have used theoretical methods (the study of scientific literature, data collection, systematization of the material) and empirical methods (synthesis and analysis of the information found). The research work deals with the formation of new lexical units in English. The study was conducted to determine the ways new words appear in the English language.

Findings and their discussion. Adding new words to a language, especially English, has recently become very common. The Internet, television, commerce, new industrial products or services have provided a fertile soil for blending of a vast amount of new lexical items. The English language is unbelievably fast in adjusting to the changes happening in the world. New expressions from everyday life representing the latest changes are becoming common.

Despite the fact that sometimes words appear without any apparent etymology, there are a number of word formation processes typical of the English language. The most popular ways of word formation are the following:

- 1) by adoption or borrowing, e.g. “gesundheit” (from German) meaning “bless you”;
- 2) by adding prefixes and suffixes, e.g. “delexical” meaning “having little or no meaning in itself”;
- 3) by truncation or clipping, e.g. “quasar” from “quasi-stellar radio source”;
- 4) by fusing or compounding existing words, e.g. “self-isolation” meaning “self-imposed isolation to prevent catching or transmitting an infectious disease”;
- 5) by changing the meaning of existing words, e.g., “they” referring to “a single person whose gender identity is non-binary”;
- 6) by errors, e.g. “shamefaced” from the original “shamefast”;
- 7) by back-formation, e.g. “laze” originating from “lazy”;
- 8) by imitation of sounds, e.g. “boo”, “tweet”, “boom”, “tinkle”, “rattle”, “buzz” etc.;

9) by transfer of proper nouns (when a brand name becomes a generalized description, e.g. “Kleenex”, “Xerox”, “Google”).

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is widely regarded as the accepted authority on the English language. It is an unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history and pronunciation of 600,000 words – past and present – from across the English-speaking world. While carrying out our research we have found out that the Oxford English Dictionary lexicographers publish four updates of new entries a year consisting of new words (entirely new headword entries appearing in OED for the first time), new sub-entries (compounds or phrases integrated in to the body of newly or recently updated entries), new senses (new senses integrated in to the body of newly or recently updated entries) and additions to unrevised entries (new senses, compounds, or phrases appended to the end of existing OED entries which have not yet been updated).

Around 400 or 500 new entries are published in the Oxford English Dictionary quarterly. After analyzing the meanings of the new words, we can say that they can often fall into certain categories such as branches of science (e.g., medicine - angiosarcoma), geography (e.g. angishore), religion (e.g. Simonite), positive and negative features of a person’s character, behaviour or appearance (e.g. angel-faced, angried), cuisine (e.g. arancini), terms connected with latest technologies (e.g. nomophobia), sci-fi films (e.g. Jedi, Padawan) [2] etc.

Although some of the words may not receive sustained usage we have picked and compiled them into a glossary of words that are or can become widespread in native speakers’ everyday speech. For example, the word “cryptocurrency” meaning “an informal, substitute currency” [2] has recently been talked about in the media and gained popularity. New terms often refer to situations a vast number of people can relate to in their everyday life, such as the word “nomophobic” meaning “suffering from anxiety about not having access to a mobile phone or mobile phone services” [2].

We have also taken notice of the fact that some of the new words refer to certain phenomena that have a great impact on humankind. Global major processes taking place around the world often influence the development of a language. Any new and widespread phenomenon always brings with it the development of new language to describe it. [3] The impact of Covid-19 on the English language has been huge. This word has become widely used as the spread of the disease has changed the lives of billions of people. As a result, a number of terms such as “WFH” (working from home), “self-isolation” and “personal protective equipment” have become widely used [3].

Conclusion. From the above, we can say that the English language undergoes constant change. Social, economic, political and other processes happening around the world often lead to appearance of new words since any new and widespread phenomenon brings with it the necessity of the language to define it.

1. Wilking, A.K. How new words come into the language / A.K. Wilking [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://www.grin.com/document/177150>. – Date of access: 16.09.2022

2. The Oxford English Dictionary. New Word Entries List – October 2019 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://public.oed.com/updates/new-words-list-october-2019/>. – Date of access: 16.09.2022

3. The Oxford English Dictionary. Social change and linguistic change: the language of Covid-19 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://public.oed.com/blog/the-language-of-covid-19/>. – Date of access: 16.09.2022.