BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

WORD-FORMATION PATTERNS OF NEOLOGISMS IN ENGLISH LEXICOLOGY AND THEIR SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES

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Abstract. This article examines the ways in which new lexical units — neologisms — emerge in present-day English. The study analyses the role of affixation, compounding, conversion, shortening and semantic shift as productive word-formation mechanisms in modern language development. Particular attention is paid to the semantic features of coinages that have appeared under the influence of digital technologies and social media, illustrated with authentic examples.

Key words: neologism, lexicology, word-formation, affixation, conversion, blending, semantic development, present-day English.

Introduction Language is inseparably connected with the life of society: every social, economic or technological change is reflected first of all in the vocabulary. As the leading medium of international communication, English is currently enriching its word-stock at a faster pace than most other languages. Linguistic sources record thousands of new lexical items every year, a certain proportion of which eventually find their way into standard dictionaries.

A neologism is generally understood as a word or expression that has recently entered the language, has not yet been fully assimilated and still retains a flavour of novelty. The study of such units is one of the topical directions of lexicology, since they make it possible to observe the living process of language development directly. Over the last few decades the flow of new words in English has intensified considerably under the influence of information technology, social networking and globalisation.

The purpose of the present article is to systematise the principal word-formation patterns of contemporary English neologisms and to reveal their semantic peculiarities on the basis of concrete examples. Descriptive, componential and comparative methods were employed in the research.

Main part

Several productive mechanisms are involved in the formation of neologisms. Among them, affixation — the creation of a new word by adding a prefix or suffix to an existing stem — remains the most active. In present-day English the prefixes cyber-, e-, un-, de- and the suffixes -ize, -ism, -able demonstrate particularly high productivity. Such items as cyberbullying (harassment carried out online) and detox (a unit reactivated in the sense of cleansing from harmful substances or habits) came into being precisely in this way.

Compounding is likewise a convenient means of naming new concepts. The combination of two independent stems has produced units such as smartphone, crowdfunding (collective financing of a project) and clickbait (a headline deliberately designed to attract clicks). The meaning of such words usually results from the interaction of the semantics of their components, although in some cases an entirely new, idiomatic sense may develop.

Conversion, that is, the transfer of a word to another part of speech without any change of form, is explained by the analytical character of English. The transformation of the proper name Google into the verb to google (to search the internet) and of the noun friend into the verb to friend (to add somebody as a friend on a social network) provides vivid evidence of this. The advantage of the pattern is that it allows the language to express new meanings without additional morphological devices.

Blending, the fusion of parts of two words into a single unit, has also become noticeably more active in recent years. Brexit (Britain + exit), infotainment (information + entertainment) and glamping (glamorous + camping) are especially characteristic of media discourse. Owing to their compactness and expressiveness, such coinages spread rapidly.

Shortening (abbreviation and acronymy) is a product of the need for speed in communication. Units like FOMO (fear of missing out), ASAP and DIY were first used in written internet communication but have by now penetrated deeply into spoken discourse. Some acronyms are even acquiring the ability to take grammatical inflections as independent words.

Semantic shift, whereby existing words acquire new meanings, is another important manifestation of neologisation. The use of cloud in the sense of a data-storage technology and of viral in the sense of spreading quickly on the internet is based on metaphorical transfer. This process expands the semantic volume of a lexical unit while preserving its form, thus ensuring the growth of the vocabulary at the expense of internal resources.

Borrowing continues to serve as an external source of vocabulary growth. Although English is itself a major donor language today, it readily adopts items that name culture-specific realities: hygge (a Danish concept of cosy well-being), emoji (from Japanese), barista and latte (from Italian) illustrate the trend. Once borrowed, such units quickly enter derivational processes of the recipient language, which testifies to their assimilation.

Back-formation, the creation of a new word by removing a supposed affix from an existing one, deserves attention as well. Verbs such as to enthuse (from enthusiasm), to liaise (from liaison) and to curate in its modern media sense (from curator) arose in this manner. Though less productive than affixation, the pattern is favoured in professional and journalistic registers because of its brevity.

Extralinguistic factors can trigger sudden bursts of word-creation. The global pandemic of the early 2020s, for instance, brought into everyday use dozens of coinages — lockdown and superspreader acquired mass currency, while covidiot (COVID + idiot) and infodemic (information + epidemic) demonstrate how blending responds instantly to social events. This confirms that neologisation is not a smooth process but one that accelerates at moments of social upheaval.

A distinction should also be drawn between occasional (nonce) words and neologisms proper. Occasionalisms are created for a single communicative situation, often for stylistic effect, and usually disappear together with their context, whereas genuine neologisms answer a stable nominative need of the language community. The decisive criterion of the transition is regular reproduction in speech and subsequent fixation in authoritative dictionaries such as the Oxford English Dictionary, which adds several hundred new entries every year.

The analysis shows that the majority of present-day neologisms denote concepts connected with technology, ecology, social life and the economy. One of their characteristic semantic features is that the meaning first takes shape within a narrow, specialised sphere and subsequently broadens. Moreover, many new words carry an expressive-evaluative colouring and thus convey the speaker's attitude towards reality.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis confirm that affixation, compounding, conversion, blending, shortening and semantic shift occupy the leading position in the enrichment of the English word-stock. Each pattern possesses its own degree of productivity, and its activity is directly conditioned by the communicative needs of society.

The study of neologisms is of practical value not only for theoretical lexicology but also for translation studies, lexicography and language-teaching methodology. Knowledge of the

regularities of word-formation helps foreign-language learners to work out the meaning of unfamiliar units independently. In further research it would be expedient to investigate the specific problems of rendering English neologisms into Uzbek.

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