

Written by Truly Almendo
Lecturer of English Language
Education Study Program
Sanata Dharma University

Play of

Language is a reflection of our creativity. We can create new utterances to express our thoughts and feelings whenever we want to. The language we use constantly evolves to better conceptualize our social reality—or our conception of it. Over time we use novel words that express particular ideas. We label them as neologisms, codified by Oxford Dictionary as “words that have been recently invented or borrowed, or as new meanings for existing words.”

Although many English words remained consistent through the rest of time, the language grows dynamically by adding new words at the rate of around 1000 words a year. Shakespeare is widely famous not only for his classic narratives, but also for being a father of neologism. He added at least 1600 new English words through his classics, such as lonely, hint, and swagger.

In more recent years, the use of a great number of new words is widely influenced by media. The development of online media triggers the creative process of forming new words. Say, neologism can be found in Twitter which limits its users to post 140 characters in each tweet. Users can use the word tweetheart which means sweetheart in Twitter. Likewise, offline media like novels also contribute new words to English Dictionary. We can find new words, like muggle, snitch, bludger, and galleons in Oxford dictionaries—these words made their first appearance in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

HOW NEW WORDS ARE BORN

Neologisms can be catchy and widely used because we are somehow familiar with them. They follow certain rules that govern their formations. Let's take a closer look at some common word formation processes by which neologisms are produced:

1. Compounding

A straightforward way to refer to a new concept is by simply combining existing words into one phrase. The process is called compounding or a word formation process that takes existing words and uses them to create words with a new meaning.

Words	Usage in Sentence	Meaning
Spinach-cinema	If you haven't seen it because it sounded too much like spinach cinema, I'm here to tell you not to miss out.	films that are not very exciting but educational or informative
Egosurfer	After three hours of egosurfing, I'm having a headache.	people who often search their names on the internet

2. Blending

As the name suggest, blending is a word formation process where two or more separate forms are produced to create a single new word. It is a process accomplished by taking some parts of the old words to create a new word. In compounding we simply combine two whole words, while in blending, we blend two words into a unique entity.

Words	Usage in Sentence	Meaning
Clearty	Although I wore these pants to work yesterday, they are clearty.	not very clean, not very dirty
Staycation	If you are tight on funds, consider taking a staycation.	vacation in which one stays at home

3. Conversion

What is easier than blending or compounding? Of course, using the whole new words by giving them new meaning. Conversion is the process of using a word from one word class to create another for a different word class. It is also the process of giving new senses to existing words, such as mouse, bug, virus, surf, or net.

Words	Usage in Sentence	Meaning
Vague Up	I vaged up certain parts of the story.	(from adj. to verb) to make something less clear
Zombie	This is how you destroy the zombie pages creeping on your website.	insecure web server

Words

4. Abbreviations

Abbreviations are processes which have been a rich source of novel lexicons. We all now know what a DVD or LOL is. Abbreviation can be broken down into two sub groups: initialisations and acronyms. DVD is an example of initialisations, where words that are pronounced letter by letter. On the other hand, acronyms are pronounced as regular words because they have a plausible sequence of phonemes to be pronounced as words, such as LOL (laugh out loud).

Words	Usage in Sentence	Meaning
CMIW	CMIW, but I think you need to send that text to the manager.	Correct Me If I'm Wrong
BOGOF	BOGOF, now!	Buy One Get One Free

5. Borrowing

Borrowing is a direct process of creating new words--simply by grabbing words from other languages. In other words, no new word is created, even though the lexicon of the target language is expanded. With borrowing, the word keeps the meaning that it has in the source language.

Words	Usage in Sentence	Meaning
Batik (Indonesian)	Men wear a long-sleeved batik shirt or a fitted, embroidered jacket.	a method of printing patterns on cloth, in which wax is put on the cloth before it is put in the dye
Chuddies (Hindi)	I can't believe they bought overpriced chuddies!	underpants

6. Coinage

Coinage is the formation of totally new words. The most typical sources are invented trade names which become a general term. Brand names have led to the creation of completely novel words. Google, Twitter, and Whatsapp are created through this process.

Words	Usage in Sentence	Meaning
Google	Almost all of us were told, "Don't Google it!"	to search on the internet
WhatsApp	You can WhatsApp us on XXXXX XXX XXX.	to text a message using WhatsApp

The majority of new words are created based on creative plays of lexical building blocks, which might fall into these word-formation patterns. The words, which may stay or stray, are the reflection of the society. Some examples above show that the new words are tied to social and technical concepts tied in particular era. With the advent of technology in the 21st century, English words have the potential to grow even more significantly.

Glossary:

Swagger (n)	: cara berjalan yang angkuh
Remain (v)	: tetap pada posisi yang sama
Plausible (adj)	: masuk akal
Straightforward (adj)	: terus terang, langsung pada intinya

Exercise:

Find other example of words that are born from these formation processes!

Source: Oxford Dictionaries, Macmillan Dictionaries