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NEOLOGISM AS A LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON

According to Global Language Monitor, around 5,400 new words are created every year; it's only the 1,000 or so deemed to be in sufficiently widespread use that make it into print [1].

Oxford Dictionary of English defines neologism as “a newly coined word or expression that may be in the process of entering common use but has not yet been accepted into mainstream language” [2]. Neologisms are often directly attributable to a specific person, publication, period, or event. There is no criterion for judging how long the neologism takes to be accepted by the public. If it does, it is not the point though, because the reason why it becomes recognized is of more importance. Different ways of creation of neologisms are distinguished in Modern English:

1. Derivation is adding a prefix or suffix to an existing word (for example, *realisation, monogamish*).

2. Back formation is the inverse of the above. The noun *sleaze*, for example, was back-formed from “*sleazy*” in about 1967. A similar process brought about *pea, liaison, enthuse, aggress and donate*.

3. Compounding is the juxtaposition of two existing words. Typically, compound words begin life as separate entities, then get hitched with a hyphen, and eventually become a single unit (*fiddlestick, claptrap*).

4. Repurposing is taking a word from one context and applying it to another. Thus, *the crane*, meaning *lifting machine*, got its name from the long-necked bird, and *the computer mouse* was named after the long-tailed animal.

5. Conversion is taking a word from one-word class and transplanting it to another. The word “*giant*” was for a long time just a noun, meaning *a creature of enormous size*, until the 15th century, when people began using it as an adjective.

6. Eponyms are words named after a person or place. You may recognise *Alzheimer’s*, *atlas*, *cheddar*, *diesel*, *sandwich*, *mentor*, *wellington* and *boycott* as eponyms – but did you know that *gun*, *dunce*, *bigot*, *bugger*, *cretin*, *currant*, *hooligan*, *marmalade*, *maudlin*, *maverick*, *panic* are too?

7. Abbreviations are some words that you might not have known started out longer are *taxi/cab* (both from *taximeter cabriolet*), *goodbye* (God be with you).

8. Onomatopoeia is the creation of a word by imitation of the sound it is supposed to make. Plop, barf, cuckoo, bunch all originated this way.

9. Reduplication is the repetition, or near-repetition, of a word or sound. To this method we owe the likes of *flip-flop*, *goody-goody*, *boo-boo*, *helter-skelter*, *picnic*, *claptrap*, *hanky-panky*, *hurly-burly*, *love-dovey*, *higgledy-piggledy*.

10. Error. Misspellings, mishearings, mispronunciations and mistranscriptions often lead to new forms in conjunction with other mechanisms. *Scramble*, for example, seems to have originated as a variant of *scrabble*; but over time, the two forms have taken on different meanings, so one word has now become two [1].

So, neologisms are newly coined terms, words, or phrases, that may be commonly used in everyday life but have yet to be formally accepted as constituting mainstream language. Neologisms represent the evolving nature of the English language [3].

References

1. Bodle A. How new words are born / A. Bodle // The Guardian [Electronic resource] – Mode of access: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/feb/04/english-neologisms-new-words> – Date of access: 18.03.2018
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