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## **AN INQUIRY INTO THE PROCESSES OF LEXICAL EXPANSION IN CURRENT ENGLISH**

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*The current paper focuses on the study of novel lexical items, i. e. the processes involved in the making of new words, in order to discover which methods contribute to the expansion of the current English lexicon. The research is based on the new words coined since 2004 which are included in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online (ensuring that the items in the sample cover various semantic fields, are of diverse origins, and all are already accepted into the working vocabulary). Two objectives are completed to explore the subject and achieve its aim: 1) to establish the concept of new words and to overview the processes of lexical expansion in the English language, and 2) to determine which methods are employed and which are absent in the creation of new words in current English by analyzing the novel lexical items retrieved from the OED Online. Quantitative and qualitative methods are applied in this study. The results indicate that the concept of new words is not straightforward in the English language. More often than not, the terms neologisms and new words are used synonymously to refer to recent, novel lexical items recognized and used by the language community. English has an extensive inventory of word-forming tools classified into these distinct categories: word-formation, semantic change, borrowing, and other; each further subdivided into various processes. Overall, the subtypes of word-formation – derivation, shortening and compounding – are used the most in the creation of recent additions to the lexicon. Predominantly, the findings are consistent with the tendencies of lexical expansion observed in previous studies.*

*KEY WORDS: lexical expansion, word formation, neologisms, new words.*

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### **Introduction**

Lexical expansion is a simultaneously fascinating and frustrating topic in linguistics. On the one hand, it can reveal a wealth of insights into the language and its speakers, since new words reflect the situation, mindset, attitudes and patterns in a language community. Not surprisingly, the subject is of interest to a variety of branches of language study, e. g. lexicology, lexicography, morphology, stylistics, socio- and psycholinguistics, anthropological and historical linguistics, and many more. On the other hand, it is virtually impossible

to produce an exhaustive account of up-to-date changes to the lexicon. New words come and go, some are embraced, some fail, old ones disappear or re-emerge: the changes are either too gradual or too quick to be fully covered. Despite this challenging aspect, the study of novel lexical items is worthwhile because they are a crucial component of any living language.

The current paper focuses on a more technical side of new words (i. e. the processes involved in their making) in hopes to discover which methods contribute to the expansion of the current English lexicon and to what degree. Despite the fact that a position challenging the novelty aspect of neologisms<sup>1</sup> exists in the literature<sup>2</sup>, and despite the perspective one adopts regarding what counts as novel in the context of new word creation, it is undeniable that the English language possesses many diverse and productive patterns that enable the successful expansion of its lexicon. In general, it is a widespread view that the majority of neologisms are created “by some innovative manipulation of an already existing word” (Harley 2006, p. 91).

The formation processes of new lexical items in English is a highly popular subject in linguistic research. Nevertheless, previous studies deal mainly with the analysis of new lexical items in specific contexts, e. g. journalism or sciences, and/or only focus on one process or type of processes, e.g. blending or derivation. The downside of this approach is that their findings cannot be applied outside that particular context. *Chronicling the Times: Productive Lexical Innovations in an English Newspaper* (Baayen and Renouf 1996) is an example of such circumstances: although impressive in scope, it is restricted to affixation and represents only newspaper language. The authors claim, however, that it is a viable way of studying morphological productivity. Another related difficulty that stands out in previous research is collecting a sample representative of the language as a whole (novel formations in specialized contexts are likely to be jargon or instances of nonce-words). A few authors have managed to avoid this problem by choosing a dictionary or database of neologisms as the sample source, and then exploring how the ways of lexical creation are distributed among the collected instances. In *Where Do All the New Words Come From?* Algeo (1980) analyzes a thousand randomly selected words from the *Barnhart Dictionary of New English since 1963* to determine what kind of word-creation processes are being used and with what frequency. Jesenská follows the lead in 2014 by investigating 637 cases of novel lexical creations recorded in *The Rice University Neologisms Database* (the author intends to extend this initial research to cover all the neologisms available in the database).

In order to prevent the limitations discussed above, the present inquiry will be based on the new words coined since 2004 which are included in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online* (ensuring that the items in the sample cover various semantic fields, are

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the paper, the term *neologisms* is used synonymously alongside *new words*, *new* or *novel lexical items*, *new* or *novel lexical formations*.

<sup>2</sup> Maurer and High (1980) argue in *New Words: Where Do They Come from and Where Do They Go?* that new formations emerge rarely, and mostly have transparent origins. Instead, more often than not, new words are actually neosemanticisms, e. g. words drifting in and out of usage throughout history, or words altering their meaning throughout time.

of diverse origins, and are all already accepted into the working vocabulary). It appears that an analysis of word creation methods centred on these parameters has not yet been conducted; therefore, by filling this research gap, it is expected to contribute to our understanding of the ways of vocabulary expansion in current English.

**The aim** of the current study is to explore the ways of new lexical item formation in recent English as recorded in the OED *Online*. **The objectives** of the study are:

1. To establish the concept of new words in the English language.
2. To determine which methods are employed and which are absent in the creation of new words in current English by analyzing the novel lexical items retrieved from the OED *Online*.

## Methodology and description of the empirical data

The paper will focus on the various resources available in the English language which underlie the creation of new simple and complex lexemes. The typology of these means is an open question in that their grouping is not strictly defined. The system laid out by Koch (2014) will be used as a reference frame for this research paper. It distinguishes three major categories involved in the lexical innovation and expansion of current English: word-formation, semantic change, and borrowing.<sup>3</sup> In contemporary English, *word-formation* is the biggest and most significant group of the three. It encompasses derivation (affixation, conversion), compounding (root compounds, combining forms, reduplication), and shortening (blending, clipping, back-formation, letter-based). The second way of expanding the lexicon is through *semantic change*. It is closely related to changes in society, technology, etc., and happens when a word's meaning alters its scope (generalization, specialization, branching) or when a word's status changes (amelioration, pejoration). The third category, *borrowing* (loanwords, loan translations), is a historically extremely productive method in the English vocabulary expansion. Although its capacity is more modest in the present-day English, it remains an important element in lexical innovation. Several processes insubordinate to any single category mentioned above include *coining de novo*, *eponymy* and *analogical formations*. The current paper will provide the analysis of the empirical data in connection with the first category of expanding the lexicon, i.e. word-formation.

The source of the materials for the empirical analysis was the OED *Online*, available at [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com). Besides being an authoritative account of the English language, it also boasts of regular quarterly revisions. The OED is a historical dictionary, which gives it an advantage over the synchronic ones: it is more representative of the language as a whole and of the current English, because it maintains a fully rounded account of both past and present forms and meanings. These reasons, among others, render the OED an excellent source for the current research. The sample was compiled by using the service available

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<sup>3</sup> The subsequently provided descriptions are a combination of prior personal linguistic knowledge, the studies mentioned up to this point, and a number of other pieces of literature (Adams 1973; Cannon 1987; Booi 2005; Hurch 2005; Katamba 2005; Lieber 2009; Štekauer and Lieber 2005; Jarvie 2007; Brinton and Brinton 2010; Haspelmath and Sims 2010; Payne 2011; Arnaud 2013; Rainer *et al.* 2014), unless otherwise indicated/specified.

at the OED *Online* which lets you browse the whole dictionary. Based on the query variable (date of first citation 2004-2016), a total of 127 instances was returned. Of those, 96 lexical items were selected: all sub-entries, unless listed under affixes, combining forms or alphabet letters, were rejected.

The main methods applied to this study are *quantitative* and *qualitative*. First, the words were compiled in a table containing the following information: part of speech (PoS), meaning and year of first recorded occurrence. Then, each word was segmented into its major meaning-bearing constituents. For example, rather than segmenting *retweeting* into three parts (*re-* + *tweet.v* + *-ing*), it is reconstructed into two parts (*retweet.v* + *-ing*). A full morphemic breakdown was deemed unnecessary since it is not the intention of this paper to track all the changes in the development of each word, only the most recent ones. The illustrated approach reveals sufficient information about the word-formation method in use. Once the formative elements had been identified, the method of formation was determined. This stage posed a potential problem because the process used in creating a new word was not always straightforward (e. g. there might be several possibilities, a combination of different methods, a lack of definite records, etc.). Should such instances arise (for instance, in conversion), the etymological information provided in the OED and the date of coinage was consulted to rule which word appeared first and which was coined upon the basis of the former. Moreover, where the conclusion still remains uncertain, an informed, although subjective, decision was made. The next step in the research was the process of grouping the neologisms by the mode of coinage which facilitated their description.

## Theoretical background of the research

Before tackling the technicalities of the coinage of new lexical items in English, it is important to establish a general background to new words and their treatment. The term *neologism* (often used synonymously with simply *new word*) came into English in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century from the French *néologisme*, which derives from the Ancient Greek *νέος* (*néos*, “new”) and *λόγος* (*lógos*, “word”) (*Chambers Concise Dictionary* 2004, p. 796). The origins of the term are quite explicative; it was coined to denote additions to the lexicon. On the other hand, new words and neologisms are not exactly the same: the former refer to neologisms that have recently been institutionalized, while the latter encompass new recurring words that may or may not become a part of the established vocabulary. These terms are notational, hence the lack of definite boundaries or definitions.

Despite the lack of a clear line between *neologisms* and *new words*, there seems to be no major controversy as to what their referents are. Simonini (1966, p. 753), for example, defines neologisms simply as “new words or old words with new meanings”. He also provides a more specific grouping of such words based on the mode of their coinage. Baayen and Renouf (1996) add to such a straightforward definition by emphasizing that a neologism has to be a lexical novelty to a particular language community. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias contribute similar meanings. For instance, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*

of *Linguistics* (Matthews 2014, p. 261) says that a neologism is “any new word which is introduced into a language, by whatever process”. A slightly different perspective can be found in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* where Janssen (2013, p. 3339) suggests that neologisms are “words that until recently were lexical gaps [i. e. potential but non-existent words] and have recently been “promoted” to lexical words”. He later goes on to make the definition more concise: “new lexicalized words” (2013, p. 3341).

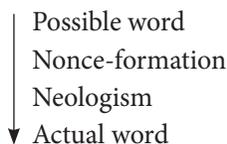
For the sake of accuracy, it is important to distinguish a couple of other linguistic phenomena that are closely related to neology, but are not the main interest of this particular study. The first one is nonce words. As early as 1908, Fowler stated in *The King's English* that a speaker who constructs a nonce expression “is not seriously putting forward his word as one that is for the future to have an independent existence; he merely has a fancy to it for this once”. This view proves to be accurate as it is supported after almost a century by *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (2003), which claims that the major difference separating neologisms and nonce words is their intended purpose, i. e. the former fulfil a certain continuous lexical need while the latter are just isolated occurrences. Moreover, Crystal (2008, p. 315) expanded this idea more recently by defining nonce-formations as a “linguistic form which a speaker consciously invents or accidentally uses on a single occasion”. It should be made explicit that the second is neology in the clinical context<sup>4</sup>. Some mental disorders affect the language system negatively, resulting in odd or unusual speech displays. Unlike neologisms in the mainstream, the newly created words in the clinical setting have no apparent meaning to an outsider, only to the patient uttering them. Medical professionals regard neologisms as symptomatic principally of formal thought disorder, schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorders, and specific types of aphasia.

## The appearance and role of new words in a language

Languages are constantly renewing themselves; new words are one of the many end products encompassed by this process. In fact, it is claimed that only less than 20 percent of the English vocabulary used a millennium ago has remained: the rest has been substituted with coinages and borrowings (Minkova and Stockwell 2009). A thought-provoking analogy between language and an ecological system is sometimes applied to explain this perpetual change. As Wendel (2005, pp. 59-60) puts it: “Just as the environment favors certain features over others producing an organism better adapted to its environment, so does the physical and cultural environment interact with and favor characteristics in languages”. Namely, the concepts of selection and adaptation are used by scholars (e.g. Croft 2000; Mufwene 2001; Wendel 2005) to account for the changes in lexicon or grammar. Alternatively, cultural, societal and historical influences are listed as the major forces behind language change (e.g. Harley 2006; Halliday and Yallop 2007; Gladkova 2015). The vocabulary of a language is by far the most susceptible to any developments inside or outside the language community; thus, words, especially new ones, reflect the world they are used in (Bolinger 1979;

<sup>4</sup> Based on the following research: Casey and Kelly 2007; Whitaker 2010.

Halliday and Yallop 2007; Kecskes 2015). The emergence of a new lexical item comprises several stages that can be roughly summarised as follows:



The initial stage represents the concept of word potentiality, which is necessary for a complete understanding of how words come to be. It refers to the infinite number of lexical forms that a language could create at any given moment and is closely related to productivity.<sup>5</sup> Thus, all nonce-formations and neologisms have at some point been promoted from possible to actual words. However, a random cluster of vowels and consonants is not necessarily a possible word. Besides, only some of the words that could exist in a language do (or will) actually enter it. In *Potential Words* Kjellmer (2000, p. 206) proposes the following criteria for assessing the likelihood of a potential word entering the working English lexicon: semantic, phonological, morphological, graphematic and other.

S1. Parallels in the language.

S2. Transparency.

Ph1. Parallels in the language.

Ph2. Easy pronunciation.

M1. Parallels in the language.

M2. Accordance with morphological principles in the language.

M3. Highly productive derivative affix.

M4. Derivative affix that is etymologically compatible with the stem.

G1. Parallels in the language.

G2. Agreement between the spelling and pronunciation.

O1. Prestigious and/or exotic connotations.

O2. Conciseness.

O3. Humorous connotations.

The more of these conditions a hypothetical lexical item fulfils, the better chance it has of being realized in the language as a nonce-formation or a neologism. Essentially then, the appearance of a word entails that a member of a language community had conceptualized an apt potential word to satisfy their or the community's needs, and, in the case of neologisms, it has been activated more than once. Still, only some of all the recently coined words get adopted; even fewer get acknowledged with a traditional dictionary entry.

There are several factors presented by linguists that determine the success or failure of neologisms. If we applied the same ecology analogy to this context, the general principle would dictate that as with living things, the fittest for survival are not the flashiest but

<sup>5</sup> Bauer (2001) and Plag (2003) survey these concepts and their derivative problems.

“those best able to camouflage themselves” (Metcalf 2002, p. 2). In other words, generic formations have a better chance at integration (Hohenhaus 2005). Additionally, the longevity of new words depends on their appeal, convenience and usefulness to the public. This assertion concurs with the findings of a recent publication *A Web of New Words: A Corpus-Based Study of the Conventionalization Process of English Neologisms* (Kerremans 2015), which explores what linguistic and extralinguistic factors may determine the success of integration of new lexical items into the established vocabulary. Another notable work that deals with the same question is Metcalf’s (2002) *Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success*. Although the current study does not aim to investigate how and why some neologisms blend into the working vocabulary of a language community while others do not, their research is significant as it overlaps with the question of what makes a neologism an actual word. Finally, Kjellmer (2000) emphasizes semantic need and media incitement as being a factor in the acceptance by the language community, along with contemporary word-formation trends.

If a newly coined item gains wider recognition and acceptance by the language community, enough to be used “without thinking” (Crystal 1995, p. 132), it can be said to have been lexicalized or institutionalized. There is, however, no consensus in the academia neither about what the phenomena are, nor what the distinction between them is (Lipka, Handl and Falkner 2004; Brinton and Traugott 2005). For the purposes of this paper, it may be settled that lexicalization is “the process of establishing a new unit in any specific lexicon” (Bakken 2006, p. 106), and institutionalization is the process of embracing a word as a “norm of the community”, “generally known to most [of its] members” (Miller 2014, p. 23). In a way then, these processes are a bridge between neologisms and actual words.

### Empirical data research analysis: overview of the ways of lexical expansion in the recent English

In order to explore the ways of vocabulary expansion in current English, lexical items listed in the OED Online with first recorded occurrences spanning the last twelve years have been processed (Fig. 1).

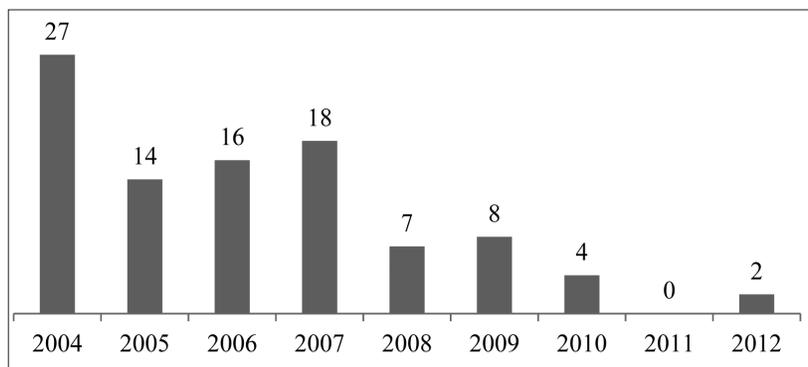


Fig. 1. Number of lexical items in the OED by year of first quoted occurrence

Overall, 96 lexical items have been analyzed. The figure reveals that the amount of words first used from 2004 to 2007 and recorded in the dictionary is higher than during the remaining years (78% versus 22%); also, the OED has not yet included any neologisms coined past 2012, and no entries with first quotations from 2011 are documented either. This uneven distribution is most likely due to the OED compilation guidelines regarding the inclusion of new words. Obviously, novel lexical creations enter the language every day, but it is up to the dictionary editors to observe, investigate and decide which of those are likely to become established, and which are merely transitory. Being a historical dictionary, it is less prone to include random neologisms, as the entries are normally permanent (Paton, 1995). Therefore, the selection of new words to include in the OED is a careful process requiring years to ascertain a word's relevance to the language as a whole. Therefore, the limited number of entries to analyze does not diminish the value of the present inquiry; if anything, the fact that these lexical innovations have already been approved by one of the most authoritative institutions of the English language adds a subtle insight into the trends of lexical expansion in contemporary English.

The following figure (Fig. 2) demonstrates the distribution of the analyzed novel lexical items in regards to their word class.

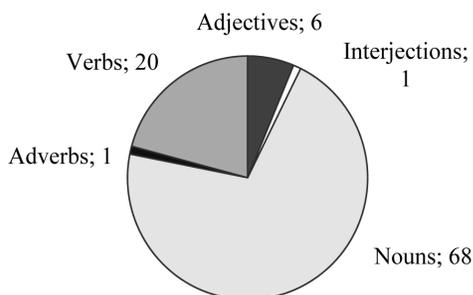


Fig. 2. Number of new lexical items per part of speech

As evidenced by the figure, a substantial majority of the words coined and institutionalized since 2004 are nouns (71%), the abundance of which can be explained by the fact that the primary function of neologisms is the denomination of new concepts. The rest are either verbs (21%) or adjectives (6%); except for a single adverb (1%) and an interjection (1%). Such distribution is in accord with the principles of English which make a distinction between open word classes (likely to acquire new members) and closed ones (unlikely to expand significantly).

The figure below (Fig. 3) depicts how the major processes involved in the expansion of the English lexicon divide to cover the 96 new formations found in the OED.

The new formations are shown to fall into five general groups based on their coinage. Word-formation processes account for the bigger part of the cases (63%), which is to be expected since this category comprises many productive subtypes. Almost a third of the

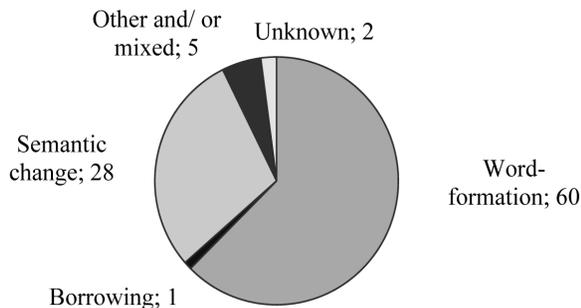


Fig. 3. Distribution of major categories of lexical expansion in English in the analyzed words

formations (29%) is the result of processes associated with semantic change. The other three categories are considerably smaller (other and/or mixed (5%), unknown (2%), and borrowing (1%)). Examples of new lexical items pertaining to each group are surveyed in more detail in the subsequent segments.

### 1. Word-formation

The next figure (Fig. 4) deals with the contribution of each word-formation subtype in the production of the presently studied words.

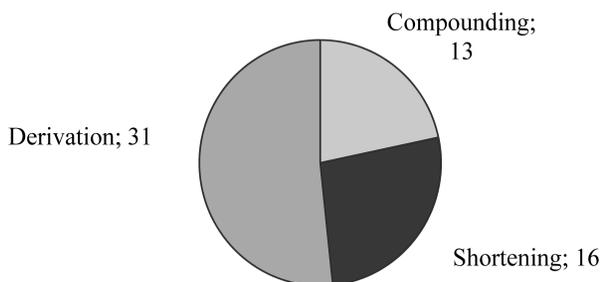


Fig. 4. Distribution of word-formation types in the analyzed words

According to the data in the figure, derivation is the principal word-formation method in the present-day English (32%). The processes of compounding and shortening are used in 14% and 17% of cases respectively.

Derivation includes affixation and conversion, both used in more or less the same number of cases (16% each). Instances of affixation may be further split into prefixation (6%) and suffixation (10%). The slight but observable preference for employing suffixes in contemporary word-formation supports the argument for this tendency expressed throughout literature. Unsurprisingly, no products of infixation have been institutionalized during the period of inquiry. New words formed on the basis of prefixation are given in Table 1.

Table 1. New lexical items in the OED coined by prefixation since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	cissexism	n.	<i>cis-</i> + <i>sexism.n</i>
2.	defriend	v.	<i>de-</i> + <i>friend.v</i>
3.	pregame	v.	<i>pre-</i> + <i>game.v</i>
4.	pregaming	n.	<i>pre-</i> + <i>gaming.n</i>
5.	retweet	v.	<i>re-</i> + <i>tweet.v</i>
6.	supercut	n.	<i>super-</i> + <i>cut.n</i>

Five prefixes are found in the neologisms forming an equal number of nouns and verbs: *cis-* (“on this side of”) and *super-* (“surpassing others”) are used to form nouns; *de-* (“undoing”) and *re-* (“again”) are used to form verbs; *pre-* (“before”) is used to form both. Likewise, the products of suffixation are given in Table 2.

Table 2. New lexical items in the OED coined by suffixation since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	happy slapper	n.	<i>happy slap.n</i> + <i>-er</i>
2.	live-blogging	n.	<i>live-blog.n</i> + <i>-ing</i>
3.	photobomber	n.	<i>photobomb.n</i> + <i>-er</i>
4.	podcaster	n.	<i>podcast.v</i> + <i>-er</i>
5.	retweeting	n.	<i>retweet.v</i> + <i>-ing</i>
6.	sexting	n.	<i>sext.n</i> + <i>-ing</i>
7.	tweeting	n.	<i>tweet.v</i> + <i>-ing</i>
8.	twerking	adj.	<i>twerk.v</i> + <i>-ing</i>
9.	vlogger	n.	<i>vlog.n</i> + <i>-er</i>
10.	yarn bombing	n.	<i>yarn bomb.v</i> + <i>-ing</i>

All but one of these neologisms are nouns, derived either with the suffix *-er* for agent nouns or *-ing* for action nouns. The suffix *-ing* is used with a different function (present participle) in *twerking*, since the resultant word is an adjective.

The instances of conversion are given in Table 3.

Conversion is clearly an important word-formation method in the English language. To understand its workings, the directionality patterns should be observed. The most common type of conversion appears to be from *noun to verb* (*to happy slap*, *to live-blog*, *to photobomb*, *to podcast*, *to sext*, *to ship*, *to waterboard*), which is consistent with observations in the literature (e.g. Lieber 2009; Brinton and Brinton 2010). The opposite process, conversion from *verb to noun* (*retweet*, *yarn bomb*, *yarnstorm*), is less frequent. The rest of the cases are sporadic: from *adjective to noun* (*cisgender*, *hyphy*), from *noun to adjective* (*flexitarian*), from *interjection to adjective* (*meh*), and from *adverb to interjection* (*totes*).

Table 3. New lexical items in the OED coined by conversion since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	cisgender	n.	<i>cisgender</i> .adj
2.	flexitarian	adj.	<i>flexitarian</i> .n
3.	happy slap	v.	<i>happy slap</i> .n
4.	hyphy	n.	<i>hyphy</i> .adj
5.	live-blog	v.	<i>live-blog</i> .n
6.	meh	adj.	<i>meh</i> .int
7.	photobomb	v.	<i>photobomb</i> .n
8.	podcast	v.	<i>podcast</i> .n
9.	retweet	n.	<i>retweet</i> .v
10.	sext	v.	<i>sext</i> .n
11.	ship	v.	<i>ship</i> .n
12.	totes	int.	<i>totes</i> .adv
13.	waterboard	v.	<i>water board</i> .n
14.	yarn bomb	n.	<i>yarn bomb</i> .v
15.	yarnstorm	n.	<i>yarnstorm</i> .v

Another word-formation type, compounding, includes cases with regular constituents as well as combining forms. Reduplication, on the other hand, is not represented in the collected batch of 96 recent additions to the English lexicon. All instances of compounding are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. New lexical items in the OED coined by compounding since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	bioprinting	n.	<i>bio-</i> + <i>printing</i> .n
2.	crowdfunded	adj.	<i>crowd</i> .n + <i>funded</i> .adj
3.	crowdfunding	n.	<i>crowd</i> .n + <i>funding</i> .n
4.	crowdsourcing	n.	<i>crowd</i> .n + <i>sourcing</i> .n
5.	e-cigarette	n.	<i>e-</i> + <i>cigarette</i> .n
6.	e-skin	n.	<i>e-</i> + <i>skin</i> .n
7.	happy slapping	n.	<i>happy</i> .adj + <i>slapping</i> .n
8.	locavore	n.	<i>loca(l)</i> .adj + <i>-(i)vore</i>
9.	paywall	n.	<i>pay</i> .v + <i>wall</i> .n
10.	photobombing	n.	<i>photo</i> .n + <i>bombing</i> .n
11.	podcasting	n.	<i>pod</i> .n + <i>-casting</i>
12.	yarn bomb	v.	<i>yarn</i> .n + <i>bomb</i> .v
13.	yarnstorm	v.	<i>yarn</i> .n + <i>storm</i> .v

As can be seen from the table, most of the newly coined compounds are nouns (10); there are also two verbs and an adjective. The identification of constituent elements of each compound indicates that eight formations are simple two independent-word combinations. Three of those are endocentric (*crowdfunded*, *crowdfunding*, *crowdsourcing*), copulative ones do not appear at all, and the other five can be argued to be exocentric (*happy slapping*, *paywall*, *photobombing*, *yarn bomb*, *yarnstorm*). The five remaining compounds are different in that one of the constituents is a so-called combining form. The formatives *-casting* (“referring to a particular type of broadcasting”) in *podcasting* and *e-* (“electronic”) in *e-cigarette* and *e-skin* are of native origin and deal with folk etymology. *Bio-* (“relating to living organisms”) in *bioprinting* and *-vore* (“referring to a particular diet”) in *locavore* are of Latin origin; thus, the corresponding neologisms are neo-classical compounds.

The third word-formation type, shortening, is recognizable in 16 of the 96 analyzed lexical items. The examples are spread over four word-forming processes attributed to shortening. Instances of back-formation are given in Table 5.

Table 5. New lexical items in the OED coined by back-formation since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	crowdfund	v.	<i>crowdfunding</i> .n
2.	crowdsource	v.	<i>crowdsourcing</i> .n
3.	happy slap	n.	<i>happy slapping</i> .n
4.	photobomb	n.	<i>photobombing</i> .n
5.	podcast	n.	<i>podcasting</i> .n

All of the neologisms listed in the table are made by subtracting the suffix *-ing* from a noun denoting an action. Three words maintain their precursor’s word class (from noun to noun), while two change it (from noun to verb). Interestingly, the latter pattern is normally more frequent in current English (Szymanek 2005; Staskova 2013). Unfortunately, the limited size of the actual sample prevents from offering any viable inferences on the matter.

Next, instances of clipping are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. New lexical items in the OED coined by clipping since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	e-cig	n.	<i>e-cigarette</i> .n
2.	Rg	n.	<i>roentgenium</i> .n
3.	sportive	n.	<i>cyclo-sportive</i> .n

Although there are only three cases of clipping that have been recently added to the English vocabulary, each of them corresponds to a different type of this method. *E-cig* is formed by removing the syllables to its right, *-arette*, which makes it back clipping. *Sportive*, however, is the result of a reduction in the opposite direction, eliminating *cyclo-*, hence

the name fore-clipping. The formation of *Rg* is a bit more complicated: complex clipping involves deleting internal (and possibly marginal) syllables of a compound word. Consequently, in this case, *-oent* and *-enium* are removed in order to form a comprehensible shortened version of *roentgenium*.

The next table (Table 7) includes cases of blending.

Table 7. New lexical items in the OED coined by blending since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	jeggings	n.	<i>jeans.n + leggings.n</i>
2.	phablet	n.	<i>phone.n + tablet.n</i>
3.	tenderpreneur	n.	<i>tender.n + entrepreneur.n</i>

Blending is an immensely creative word-formation process; the resultant items listed in the table are not exceptions. All of them are nouns, each composed by merging two separate nominal items. The extralinguistic referents of the blends feature the same impression of fusion as does their form: *jeggings* refers to leggings styled to resemble a pair of jeans; *phablet* is a smartphone the size of which approaches that of a tablet; and *tenderpreneur* describes a person of power who exploits his influence to secure government tenders or contracts.

The last set of shortenings is displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. New lexical items in the OED coined by letter-based shortening since 2004

	Word	Part of speech	Constituent elements
1.	BYOD	n.	<i>Bring Your Own Device</i>
2.	FOMO	n.	<i>Fear Of Missing Out</i>
3.	Mamil	n.	<i>Middle-Aged Man In Lycra</i>
4.	MOOC	n.	<i>Massive Open Online Course</i>
5.	QE	n.	<i>Quantitative Easing</i>

Both types of letter-based shortening are evident from the table. *FOMO*, *Mamil*, and *MOOC* are acronyms because they are pronounced as a regular word. *BYOD* and *QE*, on the other hand, are alphabetisms since their pronunciation requires that each constituent letter be spelt. All of them are nouns.

## Conclusions

The empirical inquiry into the formation processes of new words in contemporary English being completed, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. Despite being a crucial part of language change, the concept of new words is not straightforward in the English language. The understanding of how new words appear (the formation methods aside) is important and facilitating to its description. First, a lexical gap in the vocabulary of a language community prompts the

conception of a new, *possible word*, which has to adhere to the language norms in its form. Once expressed, it becomes a *nonce-formation*; many words do not leave this stage. Assuming the word spreads, it is labelled a *neologism*. It is impossible, however, to objectively determine when a neologism becomes a *new word*; thus, the two are often perceived as synonymous. New words may also be characterized by *institutionalization*, while *lexicalization* would be fitting to neologisms.

2. Overall, the subtypes of word-formation – derivation, shortening and compounding – are used the most in the creation of recent additions to the lexicon (60 cases out of 96). Among those, the following processes are encountered: conversion (15 instances), suffixation (10 instances), root compounding (8 instances), prefixation (6 instances), back-formation (5 instances), folk etymology (3 instances), clipping (3 instances), blending (3 instances), acronymy (3 instances), alphabetism (2 instances), and neo-classical compounding (2 instances). The processed empirical data indicates the absence of these processes in the creation of new words: infixation, reduplication, loan translation, status change and coining *de novo*.

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## **AN INQUIRY INTO THE PROCESSES OF LEXICAL EXPANSION IN CURRENT ENGLISH**

### **Summary**

Lexical expansion is a simultaneously fascinating and frustrating topic in linguistics. On the one hand, it can reveal a wealth of insights into the language and its speakers, since new words reflect the situation, mindset, attitudes and patterns in a language community. On the other hand, it is virtually impossible to produce an exhaustive account of up-to-date changes to the lexicon. Despite this challenging aspect, the study of novel lexical items is worthwhile because they are a crucial component of any living language, including their study and teaching. The inquiry is based on the new words coined since 2004 which are included in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online (ensuring that the items in the sample cover various semantic fields, are of diverse origins, and are all already accepted into the working vocabulary). The current paper focuses on a more technical side of these words (i. e. the processes involved in their making) in hopes to discover which methods contribute to the expansion of the current English lexicon and to what degree. Two objectives are completed to explore the subject and achieve its aim: 1) to establish the concept of new words and to overview the processes of lexical expansion in the English language; 2) to determine which methods

are employed and which are absent in the creation of new words in current English by analyzing the novel lexical items retrieved from the OED Online. Quantitative and qualitative methods are applied in this study. The results indicate that the concept of new words is not straightforward in the English language. More often than not, the terms neologisms and new words are used synonymously to refer to recent, novel lexical items recognized and used by the language community. Overall, derivation, shortening and compounding are used the most in the creation of recent additions to the lexicon. Semantic change contributes significantly to the current vocabulary expansion as well. Moreover, analogy is marked as overlaying the creation of a number of novel words. Other methods are used rarely or not at all. Predominantly, the findings are consistent with the tendencies of lexical expansion observed in previous studies.

KEY WORDS: lexical expansion, word formation, neologisms, new words.

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## **ŠIUOLAIKINĖS ANGLŲ KALBOS LEKSINĖS EKSPANSIJOS PROCESŲ TYRIMAS**

### **Santrauka**

Leksinė ekspansija yra ir labai patraukli, bet taip pat ir greitai nuvilianti lingvistikos tyrinėjimų sritis. Viena vertus, ji gali atskleisti daug turiningų išvalgų apie kalbą ir jos vartotojus, nes nauji žodžiai atspindi kalbinę tam tikros bendruomenės situaciją, jos mąstyseną, pažiūras, naujų žodžių vartosenos modelius. Kita vertus, beveik neįmanoma išsamiai pateikti pačių naujausių leksikos pokyčių. Nepaisant tokių tyrimų sudėtingumo, jie yra vertingi, nes nauji žodžiai yra esminis bet kurios gyvosios kalbos studijų ir mokymo bei mokymosi elementas. Tyrimas grindžiamas naujų, nuo 2004 metų įtrauktų į Oksfordo anglų kalbos žodyno (OED) elektroninę versiją (į imtį įeina įvairių semantinių laukų bei skirtingos kilmės nauji, jau pripažintos vartosenos žodžiai) analize. Šiame straipsnyje dėmesys yra skiriamas šių žodžių darybos procesams, tikintis atrasti, kurie darybos būdai prisideda prie dabartinės anglų leksikos plėtros ir kurie iš jų yra dažniausiai vartojami. Tikslui pasiekti yra keliami šie uždaviniai: 1) naujų žodžių sampratos apibrėžtis ir anglų kalbos leksikos plėtros procesų apžvalga; 2) naujų šiuolaikinės anglų kalbos žodžių, pateikiamų Oksfordo anglų kalbos žodyno (OED) elektroninėje versijoje, darybos būdų nustatymas. Šiame tyrime taikyti kiekybiniai ir kokybiniai tyrimo metodai. Rezultatai rodo, kad naujų žodžių sąvoka nėra paprasta anglų kalboje. Naujausiai kalbinėje bendruomenėje pripažinti ir vartojamai leksikai apibūdinti sinonimiškai yra naudojami tiek terminas „naujadaras“, tiek sąvoka „naujas žodis“. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad derivacija, trumpiniai ir dūriniai yra dažniausiai naudojami žodžių darybos būdai naujos leksikos kūrimo procesuose. Semantinė kaita taip pat reikšmingai prisideda prie dabartinio žodyno plėtros. Pažymėtina, kad analogijos pagrindu sudaroma daugybė naujų žodžių. Kiti žodžių darybos būdai yra naudojami retai arba visai nenaudojami. Tyrimo rezultatai atitinka ankstesniuose tyrimuose pastebėtas leksikos plėtros tendencijas.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Leksinė ekspansija, žodžių daryba, neologizmai, nauji žodžiai.