



## **SEMANTIC CHANGE IN MODERN ENGLISH: A STUDY OF NEOLOGISMS AND THEIR INTEGRATION INTO EVERYDAY CONVERSATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The evolution of a language draws attention to various alterations and modifications associated with it, and one of the most prominent of these modifications is the phenomenon of semantic change. Over the last few decades, the changes experienced by the world, including the spread of modern technology and the impact of social networking sites, have increased these processes in Modern English. This article provides an analysis of the processes through which new signification, new meanings, and new words are created. This article analyzes the processes that create new signification and new meanings, such as neologisms, and the ways in which these alterations and innovations are absorbed within the English language. The linguistic theories and contemporary materials utilized in this article intend to provide evidence that the phenomenon of social and cultural changes, along with the shifts in the manner in which people communicate, are a direct by-product of the modern world. The phenomenon is an indicator of the social structure of the world today.*

### **Introduction**

In the modern era, English is undergoing dynamic process of semantic change, keeping in step with technological and cultural shifts taking place around the globe. Semantic change is defined as “the process whereby word meanings change over time,” and neologisms are defined as “new words or new meanings added to existing words” (Cambridge Dictionary). By means of neologisms and their incorporation into Modern English, Modern English is able to respond to the needs of society for communication. The research paper will examine how semantic change occurs in Modern English and how neologisms are produced and incorporated into society.

### **Theoretical framework**

Semantic change entails processes such as broadening, narrowing, amelioration, pejoration, and metaphorical extension. These are all involved in the usage and



perception of words over time (Stepanyan 34-36). For instance, the term cloud has not only referred to something meteorological but also to online storage.

According to linguistic literature, neologisms are “a new word or expression, or a new meaning for an existing word” (Cambridge Dictionary). Neologisms are one aspect of a more general process called lexical innovation—the process whereby “the vocabulary of a language is extended to cover new concepts, objects, and phenomena” (Mishra 19-20).

*Semantic change may result in the following ways:*

1. Neologism formation – this involves generating completely new words.
2. Semantic shift – when words change their meaning.
3. Borrowing: this is the use of words from other languages.
4. Metaphorical extension: Using existing words for new contexts (Ikramova 3)
3. Mechanisms of Neologism Formation

Neologisms appear in the language in a number of well-documented ways:

*Borrowing and Loanwords*

English has adopted a large number of new vocabulary words from other languages. For instance, the word “emoji” is a Japanese word that has been adopted in the language.

*Compounding and Blending*

Compounding involves combining two existing words (for example, social media), whereas blending involves blending parts of words (for example, brunch derived from “breakfast” and “lunch”). The phenomenon of blending is common in online discourse in which people form compact lexical items to represent layered meanings (Urmonova 108).

*Acronyms and Abbreviations*

LOL, OMG, and FOMO are examples of acronyms that come from online communication and develop into everyday language. These examples represent ways that social interaction influences efficient language forms.

*Semantic Repurposing*

New meanings are created using existing words as soon as new innovations emerge in society and technology. The example is stream, which in modern technology means streaming media content in live form as opposed to its original meaning related to water (Ikramova 1-2).

### **Factors Driving Neologisms & Semantic Change**

The digital age has also increased the rate at which meaning is shifting due to new contexts emerging for using words. The infinitely interlinked digital networks create a rich soil for neologisms to emerge as words such as “cloud,” “stream,” “meme,” and “hashtag” are invented to refer to phenomena that did not exist before (Abdumalikova 2; Ikramova 1).

The socio-cultural transformations get reflected in language through new concepts finding their place in language. Words such as 'selfie' or 'influencer' embody the transformations in cultural practices. New words embody cultural transformations. They act as cultural markers. They contain shared experiences.

*Social Media and Mass Communication*



Social media sites create catalytic environments for semantic change and spreading neologisms. Social media sites allow people to create, share, and spread new vocabulary terms in seconds, thus reducing the time it takes for semantic change to spread. This ease of sharing of vocabulary terms on sites like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok helps to spread a word from its usage to widespread acceptance (Sharipova 85; Sabir 2).

The incorporation of neologisms in general English usage typically takes this course:

1. Innovation - the word is coined for the first time in a particular context.

2. Dissemination - This is a term that spreads via professional or social networks.

3. Normalization – usage spreads to wider discourse.

4. Institutionalization – The neologism has been recognized in dictionaries and formal registers.

The following table shows stages of integration with example terms:

Term	Origin	Current Meaning	Stage of Integration
<b>LOL</b>	Internet slang	Laugh out loud	Institutionalized
<b>Hashtag</b>	Social media (# tag)	Label for topics	Institutionalized
<b>Cloud</b>	Tech repurposing	Internet data storage	Institutionalized
<b>Viral</b>	Media metaphor	Rapid content spread online	Institutionalized
<b>Yeet</b>	Internet slang	Expression of excitement	Emerging
<b>Netizens</b>	Internet slang	A habitual user of the internet	Institutionalized
<b>Flexcation/Workation</b>	Internet slang	Working remotely from vacation spot	Emerging

As is evident, it is public use and communicative need that decide which new words will be retained and incorporated into English.

#### *Technology-Driven Changes*

The digital lexicon provides excellent illustrations of semantic extension. "Stream" and "cloud" moved from tangible realms to refer to online events. These cases of semantic extension illustrate the use of metaphors, in which the original concept (flow, cloud) and associated imagery (mass, movement) are applied to a new context (digital media, online networks) (Ikramova 1-2).

#### *Social & Cultural Semantic Shifts*

New social behaviors create new needs for new words in the language. Neologisms such as "ghosting" (ceasing communication without notice) emerge out of specialized internet use to become a term in psychology and social commentary. Neologisms such as "lockdown" responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by shifting meanings for established technical uses to apply to broader societal lockdowns (Lingvospekr 1).

#### **Discussion**

Semantic shift and neologisms' integration into Modern English can be viewed not as a decline in language development but rather as a process of adaptation towards a new



reality. While semantic shifts in the past took place on a much longer timeline, such as a few hundred years, the current process is much more rapid due to mass connectivity through the internet (Stepanyan 34). Secondly, it is not only a matter of creating a vocabulary on the internet; it also changes the environment within which meanings are defined.

The role of culture, technology, and mass communication strengthens the notion of "language mirrors society." Neologisms serve as tools of communication as well as symbols of culture. Their incorporation in everyday vocabulary depends on usage and their utility in society.

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