

COMPOUND NEOLOGISMS IN MODERN ENGLISH AND THEIR SEMANTIC CLASSES

Makhliyo Polvonniyozova

1st Year, MA Department, UzSWLU

Tukhtakhodjaeva Z. T.

Sc. Advisor, PhD, As. Prof.

Abstract

This article presents research on the role of compound neologisms in Modern English and their semantic classes. The study on neologisms or the new words created in a language has been gaining strength lately and has been getting the attention of linguists. Especially, it is obvious that compound neologisms produce a feeling of curiosity since they frequently appear in the vocabulary of speakers quite suddenly. For this reason, scholars have tried to explain how they are created and have also tried to classify them into different categories.

Keywords: neologisms, compound, new words, word-combinations, fixed phrases, lexical units, semantic aspect

Languages are living organisms that change over time, and the lexicon plays a vital role in this evolution. Speakers generate new terms. They serve to maintain the language current by arising in response to new events that must be addressed, such as new technologies, new political situations, and new innovations. Thus, research on neologisms is particularly interesting since it reflects the vocabulary that people use to discuss new facts and situations. Almost every term in a language has been a neologism at one point or another.

The Dutch linguist M. Janssen offers five criteria for defining a neologism:

- psychological – “a neologism is a word that is perceived as new by the language community”;
- lexicographic – “any word that does not appear in the dictionary is considered a neologism”;
- exclusive definition – “a word not appearing in a pre-determined **exclusion lexicon** is a neologism”;
- diachronic definition – “any word-form that appears in a recent general language text, and was not previously part of that language is a neologism”;
- reference corpora definition – “any word-form, which appears in a recent general language text, and does not appear in an established reference corpus of that language is a neologism” [Janssen 2005].

When dictionary writers incorporate new terms in a dictionary, they usually include the date when the neologism was originally coined as well as an explanation of how it was generated. When deciding whether or not to include a new word, dictionary writers must examine the prevalence of the neologism throughout a specific time span. After all, neologisms are part of

many speakers' everyday lexicons, and their use is rising nowadays because to media, language interaction, the Internet, and globalization [Антрушина 2004].

Compounding is a method of word production that might help to separate semantic predictability from other elements that may influence whether a word is created using whole-word retrieval mechanisms or formal composition procedures. Compounding is a completely functional grammatical construct in English by any standard. Nonetheless, the meaning of some compounds, particularly root compounds, is not always predicted from their basic parts. The meaning-to-form relation is not entirely arbitrary in most cases of English compounding (for example, the meanings of *clothes* and *pin* are not wholly unrelated to the meaning of *clothespin*), but it is typically idiosyncratic in the sense that it is not determined by the content of the word formation process. Compounds like *horse pill*, for example, can be conceived of as semantically composite in an intuitive sense, but the way the complex meaning of this form links to the meanings of *horse* and *pill* does not provide a ready guidance for interpreting other compounds (e.g., *horse latitude* or *horse jump*).

Compounds can differ in how their whole-word meaning connects to the meanings of their constituent words. Compounds are created by combining words that already exist. Compounds can be studied from three separate perspectives: structural, semantic, and lexical. There are three types of aspects from a structural standpoint: neutral, morphological, and syntactic. The pairing of two stems with no linking component, such as *tallboy and blackbird*, is known as the neutral aspect. The morphological aspect is the joining of two stems by a consonant or a vowel, as in *handicraft, craftsmanship, and spokesperson*. Finally, the syntactic aspect refers to the combination of various categories of words — such as nouns, verbs, articles, adverbs, and prepositions — that appear together and are usually linked with a hyphen, as in: *lily-of-the-valley, good-for-nothing, mother-in-law, sit-at-home, pick-me-up, know-all, know-nothing, go-between, get-together* [Ginzburg 1979].

Semantic aspect is divided into three groups: compounds in which the meanings of the two words are combined to produce a word whose meaning can be predicted, such as *classroom, bedroom, working-man, dining-room, sleeping-car, dancing-hall*; compounds in which the words have been combined to produce a word with a new meaning, such as *blackboard, blackbird, football, ladykiller, good-for-nothing, lazybones*; and compounds that have lost their meaning as in *ladybird*, which is not a bird, but an insect, *tallboy*, which does not mean a boy who is tall but a piece of furniture, 'bluestocking' an intellectual or literary woman, and 'bluebottle', which designates both a flower and an insect but never a bottle [Hendrickson 2008].

Finally, the lexical aspect distinguishes between compound words and word combinations. For example, the word combination *tall boy* differs from the compound *tallboy*, because the meaning of the latter may change from the meaning of the individual pieces that make it up, as we've already explained. *Crowdfunding* and *sadwear* are two current compound neologisms

that have been included to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the Cambridge University Press Dictionary. The term *crowdfunding* is derived from the phrases 'crowd' and 'funding,' and it refers to the practice of soliciting large sums of money (often online) in order to start a new business. *Sadwear* is a term coined by combining the words 'sad' and 'wear,' and it refers to clothing that helps people feel less melancholy [Ginzburg 1979].

All in all, the development of new meanings in existing words proves another fruitful source of new vocabulary that is being used widely. Semantic extension expresses the qualitative aspect of vocabulary growth. Traditionally there have been distinguished such semantic processes as metaphor, metonymy, extension or generalization of meaning, specialization or narrowing of meaning: pejorative words (words that have negative meaning) and melioration. Among these metaphor is predominating. Compound neologisms are constantly being formed in the English language, often through typical morphological word creation processes. The English language is continually producing complex neologisms, frequently by conventional morphological processes. They are composed of words that already exist in the language but have new meanings or are the result of form changes; in other cases, a new form is inserted right away. Some new compound words are simply adopted into the language because they are easier to say than others or because a new phrase with a particular meaning is needed.

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