



THE ROLE OF SEMANTIC SHIFT AND LEXICAL CHANGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ENGLISH

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ANNOTATSIYA: Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili leksikasining rivojlanishidagi semantik siljish va leksik o'zgarishlarning o'rni tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot davomida tashqi o'zlashmalar, ichki so'z yasash mexanizmlari va ma'no ko'chishining turli ko'rinishlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, raqamli texnologiyalar va ijtimoiy tarmoqlarning zamonaviy neologizmlar integratsiyasiga ta'siri o'rganiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: semantik siljish, neologizm, leksik o'zgarish, o'zlashma, raqamli til, subyektivlashuv.

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the role of semantic shift and lexical change in the development of the English lexicon. The study examines external borrowings, internal word-formation mechanisms, and various forms of meaning shift. Furthermore, the impact of digital technologies and social media on the integration of modern neologisms is explored.

Keywords: semantic shift, neologism, lexical change, borrowing, digital language, subjectification.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье анализируется роль семантического сдвига и лексических изменений в развитии английского лексикона. В ходе исследования рассматриваются внешние заимствования, внутренние механизмы словообразования и различные формы изменения значения. Кроме того, исследуется влияние цифровых технологий и социальных сетей на интеграцию современных неологизмов.

Ключевые слова: семантический сдвиг, неологизм, лексическое изменение, заимствование, цифровой язык, субъективизация.



INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic organism that constantly evolves to mirror the complexities of the society that speaks it. In the context of Modern English, this evolution is predominantly driven by two forces: lexical change (the addition of new words) and semantic shift (the alteration of existing meanings). Historically, English has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for absorption, transitioning from a Germanic dialect to a global lingua franca through massive external influences, such as the Norman Conquest. However, in the 21st century, the pace of change has accelerated exponentially due to the digital revolution. Today, the development of English is not just about adopting foreign terms but also about "semantic repurposing"—where old words are given new lives in a virtual context. This introduction explores how linguistic structures adapt to technological and cultural shifts, setting the stage for a deeper analysis of the mechanisms that govern these transformations.

Mechanisms of Lexical Change and Word Formation

The first mechanism of linguistic development is lexical change, which occurs through both external contact and internal innovation. According to Hollmann (2006), external lexical change often involves "prestige borrowing," where words from a dominant culture are integrated into the native vocabulary, as seen in the legal and administrative terminology inherited from French. Internally, English expands via "conversion" and "back-formation," processes where words change their grammatical category or are reconstructed based on perceived affixes. Modern examples include the transformation of the noun *access* into a verb, or the creation of *edit* from *editor*. These processes ensure that the language remains flexible and functional for its users.

Typology of Semantic Shifts and Subjectification

Secondly, semantic shift plays a critical role by altering the internal map of a word's meaning without changing its form. This can occur through broadening (generalization), narrowing (specialization), or shifts in social value like amelioration and pejoration. As noted in recent studies on digital linguistics, the word



cloud has undergone a dramatic semantic extension from a meteorological phenomenon to a tech-specific term for online storage. This reflects the principle of "subjectification," where meanings become increasingly situated in the speaker's subjective context and belief systems. Such shifts demonstrate that language mirrors the psychological and technological state of society.

Neologisms and the Influence of the Digital Age

The third aspect involves the integration of neologisms, particularly those born in the digital age. The process of a new word becoming a permanent part of the English lexicon follows a trajectory from innovation and dissemination to normalization and, finally, institutionalization in formal dictionaries. Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram act as catalytic environments for this integration, allowing terms like viral, ghosting, and influencer to spread globally within seconds. As Anarbekova (2026) suggests, these neologisms act as cultural markers that contain shared experiences, moving from internet slang to formal registers through frequent and widespread usage.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of Modern English is an ongoing process of adaptation, where lexical and semantic changes work in tandem to meet the communicative needs of a globalized society. While historical borrowings from French and Latin laid the foundation for its rich vocabulary, contemporary changes are primarily driven by the rapid demands of the digital age. The shift from objective physical descriptions to subjective digital metaphors—such as streaming or tagging—proves that the language is not declining, but rather evolving into a more efficient tool for modern expression. Understanding these shifts is essential for linguists and educators alike, as it provides insight into the cultural and technological trajectory of humanity. As we move forward, the blurring lines between formal and informal discourse will likely continue to reshape the English language in ways we have yet to fully comprehend.



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