

# General Trends in Change and Development of English Vocabulary

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The great leader Comrade **Kim Jong Il** said as follows.

**“Language, which is the product of labour and mirrors social life, changes and grows richer as times change and society progresses.”** (“ON THE ART OF THE CINEMA” P. 93)

The vocabulary of a language undergoes constant change and development. That neologisms are created is a natural process of the development of a language, particularly, of the change and development of vocabulary, and consequently, the vocabulary of a language becomes enriched with the development of a society and the increased awareness of ideological consciousness of the popular masses.

The rise of the anti-imperialist independent forces, the emergence of the socialist camp in Eastern Europe and the Cold War were a source of lexical innovation in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; *non-alignment, the East, the Warsaw Pact, Summit, domino theory (effect), McCarthyism, Cold War, superpower, non-proliferation, SALT, doves, hawks, surgical strike, flexible response* and so on.

Neologisms of the 1960s reflected the way of life and culture of the corrupt capitalist society. There emerged the new words naming the kinds of dance and music such as the *twist, frug, hully gully, ska, acid rock* and those related with many new kinds of drugs like *poppers, tabs, speed, acid, purple hearts angel dust* and so on. These new words are a vivid reflection of the corrupt life style and reactionary culture of the capitalist society.

In case of English, the use of Latin and Greek languages as a means of communication in evangelization and academic discussions and the linguistic contacts and intimate relations in political, economic and cultural fields due to many other historical events in which the British colonialists invaded and plundered many countries accelerated the process of foreign borrowings, thus enriching the English language.

In particular, the Renaissance is characterized by extensive borrowing of foreign words compared to other historical periods, together with the rapid development in education, science, art and literature.

Typical examples of foreign words borrowed in this period are as follows.

Words from Latin and Greek languages; *absurdity, adapt, agile, alienate, allusion anachronism, autography, benefit, capsule, catastrophe, chaos, climax, denunciation, disability, disrespect, emancipate, exist, utopian, vacuum, virus, ...*

From French; *alloy, anatomy, battery, bayonet, bigot, bizarre, chocolate, colonel, comrade, detail, docility, duel, entrance, equip, ticket, tomato, vase, vogue, volunteer, ...*

From Italian; *argosy, balcony, ballot, cameo, concerto, cupola, design, rocket, solo, sonata, sonnet, soprano, stanza, stucco, trill, violin, volcano ...*

From Spanish and Portuguese; *alligator, anchovy, apricot, armada, banana, barricade, bravado, cannibal, canoe, cockroach, cocoa, coral, desperado, yam ...*

From Dutch; *cruise, easel, knapsack, landscape, yacht*

From Turkish; *coffee, kiosk, yoghurt*

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From Persian; *bazaar, caravan, turban*  
From Malayan; *bamboo, ketchup*  
From Arabic; *harem, sheikh*  
From other languages; *shekel*(Hebraic), *shogun*(Japanese), *troll*(Norwegian), *trousers*(Gaelic), *guru*(Hindi) ...

Most of these words are still in use now and show the process of enrichment of the English language.

In this way, the change and development of society play an important role in developing and enriching the vocabulary of a language.

The enrichment of vocabulary is also related to the increased ideological awareness and creative ability of the popular masses.

Developing ideological awareness of the people accelerates the change and development of vocabulary in various aspects. This is well evidenced by the new words created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The development of cognition enables people to understand the new objective things, which results in new words.

For example, *black hole, quasar, singularity* in the 1960s; *global warming, reflexology* in the 1970s; *Aids, HIV, BSE, technostress* in the 1980s; *Millennium bug, human BSE, shaken-baby syndrome* in the 1990s have found their places in English vocabulary.

In the final analysis, the vocabulary of a language is enriched through the processes of the change of existing words, creation of new words and the extinction of outdated words.

Firstly, existing words undergo changes and development.

All words are a mixture of sound and meaning. A change of a word means the change in its sound or meaning.

*Mosh* newly minted in the 1980s was originated from *mash*, and this is a typical example of the change both in sound and meaning.

Secondly, vocabulary is enriched by the creation of new words.

New objects, phenomena and concepts give birth to new words like *bioethics, human shield* and so on.

Objects and phenomena of the past period have new names, thus creating new words such as *Walkman, garage sale* etc.

Different evaluations of a social group on one object become a source of neologisms; *argie, parki*

Some lexicographers say that the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the period of euphemism. There is no doubt that there are so many areas which English speakers have become embarrassed to talk about in this period; *challenged, tired and emotional, ...*

As mentioned above, neologisms are created or existing words acquire new usage for several reasons.

Thirdly, exchanges and cooperation in different fields between countries and nations are attributable to the creation of new words. In some cases foreign words are translated in English language like *ethnic cleansing, velvet revolution, ...*

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In many cases, however, words of foreign origin are used as they are, which explain the existence of borrowed words in the vocabulary of a language. *Annus horribilis*, *ciabatta* and *Contra* are typical examples borrowed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Fourthly, the use of dialects, jargons and technical terms in the standard language is a major source of enriching vocabulary.

A considerable number of dialects, jargons and technical terms have found their places in the vocabulary of Standard English since 1970s. Once they are used in the standard language, they no longer have their inherent characteristics of region or field. Examples are *gobsmacked*, *mouthfeel*, *user-friendly*, *on the bone*, etc.

Wide use of these words is largely related to the fact that they appeared in mass media in one or other occasions in 1990s. It is also attributable to the necessity that the new concepts or phenomena of social life should be named promptly.

Fifthly, vocabulary undergoes changes and development through the extinction of words. In the course of change and development of vocabulary, some words are no longer used and, therefore, disappear gradually. The reason is different and accordingly, the degree of their disappearance varies according to words.

*Dragon* and *Lymeswold* were created in the 1980s and used in small scale for several years, but finally disappeared for some reasons.

We should have a correct understanding of neologism reflecting the social reality and activate in use of it in the practice.