

## Week 2- Unit 2 Lexical change

**Lexical change**, that is additions and losses to the vocabulary of a language, takes place in all periods in order to adapt language to society.

Materials for the exercises → DICTIONARIES you may use the following OED, OALD, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Urban Dictionary...

1. Consider the following (relatively) recent additions to the vocabulary of English (neologisms). Identify and describe the processes giving rise to these forms.

*elbow bump* (noun)

compounding N[N+N] determinative (*bump* is the semantic head). Alternative → *elbump*, blend.

This compound is still spelt as two different orthographic words.

*Elbow bump* is recorded in OALD; Cambridge Dictionary and also in the OED:

### DRAFT ADDITIONS APRIL 2020 (see OED s.v. *elbow*, n.)

**elbow bump** *n.* (a) a blow with or to the elbow; an injury resulting from this; (b) a gesture (usually of greeting or farewell) in which two people lightly tap their elbows together as an alternative to a handshake or embrace, **esp. in order to reduce the risk of spreading or catching an infectious disease.**

1902 Buffalo (N.Y.) Courier 15 Mar. (Carriers' ed.) 11/1 An elbow bump sent blood spurting from Tom's nose.

1956 Hammond (Indiana) Times 8 Aug. a12/1 Although an occasional elbow bump and stubbed toe are unavoidable at the pool, serious accidents are few.

1981 Miami News 13 Feb. (Home ed.) c1/2 Gene Banks of the Duke basketball team speaks of the hand slap, high five,...elbow bump and other varieties of shakin'.

2006 N.Y. Times 12 Feb. iv. 1/3 (caption) **When the avian flu comes, if it comes, do the 'elbow bump' and don't be a straphanger.**

2020 Evening Times (Glasgow) (Nexis) 28 Mar. 9 **Before strict social distancing rules came into force, Abby and her mother Joanne visited her grandmother, great-grandmother and aunty to share some birthday cake and greet them with a safe elbow bump.**

*selfie* (noun)

derivation N + *-ie* > noun; *-ie* is a suffix, class-maintaining. Quoted in the OALD, Cambridge Dictionary Online...also OED (earliest recorded example 2002)

*ish* (adverb)

conversion/zero derivation; < suffix *-ish*. 'approximate'

Quoted in the main dictionaries, also in the OED, which provides examples going back to 1986.

*LOL* (interjection)

'laughing out loud' initialism /ˌel əʊ 'el/ or acronym /lɒl/. This word originates in the written language (computer mediated communication)

Recorded in the main dictionaries, also in the OED. First recorded example 1989.

*covidiot* (noun)

blend of covid and idiot. Recorded in OALD, not in Cambridge Dictionary Online or the OED. Far too recent.

*unfriend* (verb)

derivation prefix un- appended to the verb friend ('to invite someone to be your friend on Facebook, etc.'). The prefix is reversative (it reverses the action) and class-maintaining.

The word has an alternative *defriend*; it is recorded in the main dictionaries, also in the OED. Even though the word already appears in the 17th (only one example in the OED; no later examples recorded), it has a different meaning now.

#### **DRAFT ADDITIONS MARCH 2013 (see OED s.v. *unfriend*, v.)**

*transitive*. To remove (a person) from a list of friends or contacts on a social networking website. Cf. [FRIEND v. 6](#), [DEFRIEND v.](#)

2003 Woo-hoo in alt.support.depression.flame (Usenet newsgroup) 16 Feb. I have been 'unfriended' by somebody in the LJ world today... Being turfed from somebody's LJ 'friends' list is small peanuts in comparison to losing elections.

2007 D. Fono & K. Raynes-Goldie in Internet Res. Ann. 4 102 I didn't unfriend her.

2008 USA Today (Electronic ed.) 18 Jan. a1 If you are not comfortable with the exposure that being a Facebook friend of mine brings to your profile, 'unfriend' me—I won't feel slighted.

2012 M. Miller Facebook for Grown-ups (ed. 2) vii. 98 The person you unfriend doesn't even know he's been ditched; you just get rid of them and that's that.

2012 Sunday Times (Nexis) 16 Dec. 5 I wrote 'your' instead of 'you're' on a post and she corrected that so I unfriended her.

and one not so recent (OED: 17th century)

*china* (noun)

Commonization. This noun goes back to the name of the country, *China*, well-known for its high quality porcelain.

2. Hidden processes: Sometimes old compounds are no longer apprehended as composite forms (amalgamated compounds), and suffixes were originally independent words. Use the OED to discover the origin of the following forms:

*garlic*: *gare* 'spear' + *leek*. Amalgamated compound. It has become opaque because the first element has long been obsolete and the composite form has been affected by phonological change.

*filth*: this is an abstract noun derived from an adjective (*foul*) + *-th*. This process is no longer productive in English, and this particular form is opaque. The suffix was once *\*-iþu*; the /i/ causing i-mutation.

*nostril*: *nose* + *thirl* 'hole'. Amalgamated compound. It has become opaque because of sound change.

*-ly* as in *kingly*, *friendly*, *manly*...can you think of a near equivalent in PDE? *-ly* goes back to an independent word meaning 'body, appearance'. The composite forms were originally compounds: *freond* 'friend' + *lice* 'appearance' > *freondlice* 'with the appearance of a friend'. Later on *lice* became obsolete, and *-ly* becomes a bound morpheme (an affix).

3. Check the meaning of these words in the OED. When did they become obsolete? Can you think of a reason why they may have disappeared?

*assate* (verb) 1657. Lost because it was not needed? Cf. more frequent alternatives like *roast*. It was introduced in the EModE period, which is known by its experimentation in language.

*eme* (noun) obsolescent; still retained in some regional dialects. Replaced by French *uncle*. Competition between synonyms; too short?

*coutere* (noun) 'a piece of armour to protect the elbow' 1400. No longer used because no longer necessary! Change in the world.