

Neologism

In the previous presentation about wordplay, we examined how people toy with language. But that process turns out to be not just for pure pleasure. Paronomasia can change a language, and in good ways. As we've seen throughout this course, many words start as jokes of some sort. A new term or turn of phrase first catches our attention because it's funny. We repeat it, and eventually some of them catch on and enter the popular discourse. Later, the joke underlying the new expression is often forgotten, but the term itself lives on. This is a very common phenomenon.

With that in mind, let's have our own sort of fun with words and participate in the very process of language change we've been studying. In other words, let's follow in our ancestors' footsteps and leave some linguistic tracks that prove we've been here.

Here's how we'll proceed. First, find something that doesn't have a word for it and needs one. You say there are already words for everything? Of course, there aren't. Have a look at these, a few suggested neologisms I found in the Washington Post:

- *Intaxication*: the euphoria you feel after getting a tax refund, which lasts only until you realize it was your money to start with
- *Reintarnation*: coming back to life as a hillbilly
- *Bozone*: the substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating their airspace
- *Foreploy*: any self-misrepresentation perpetrated in order to have sex
- *Cashtration*: the act of buying a house, which renders the victim financially impotent for an indefinite period of time
- *Giraffiti*: spray-paint vandalism which is very, very high up on a building
- *Sarchasm*: the time interval between the delivery of a sarcastic comment and its victim's perception of the insult
- *Inoculatte*: to take coffee intravenously when you're running late
- *Hipatitis*: terminal coolness
- *Osteopornosis*: a degenerate disease
- *Karmageddon*: it's like when you're getting these vibes, you know, like, from everywhere, and then like the earth blows up and it's a total bummer, dude
- *Glibido*: all talk and no action
- *Dopeler effect*: the tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they're coming at you rapidly
- *Beelzebug*: Satan in the form of a mosquito that gets into your bedroom at the three in the morning and cannot be cast out
- *Caterpallor*: the color you turn after finding half a grub in the apple you're eating
- *Ignoranus*: a person who's both a moron and a . . . jerk

Fun words, no? But in this class I insist that your new words conform with the rules of etymology we've been studying all term. On the course website you'll find a handout for rules in creating a proper neologism: <http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/handouts/neologs.pdf>. Here are the basics:

- All words must be composed of elements from Latin or Greek.

- NO hybrids! NO mixing Latin and Greek together like ignoranuses!
- Follow these steps in presenting your neologism:
 - cite the word
 - define it
 - explain why you think this word should be created
 - and finally use it in a sentence
- Please provide me with a copy of your newly coined word by sending it to me in an email with your name on it. If you wish, I'll post your neologism on the course website.
- Finally, make up as many words as you like!

I would never dream of asking students to do something I wouldn't do myself, so here are a few of my own neologisms. You may detect a certain theme here, a frustration with the habits of other people, particularly as they attempt to interact with each other, or more specifically, me. I especially deplore people's habits as they attempt to drive or walk in public. Accent on the word "attempt"!

- *gerontauthodism* ("old/self/road/belief in"): which is my conviction that, if old people want to drive that slow, they should have their own roads
- *polyurhodic* ("many/urine/road/p.t."): when a traveling companion has to urinate the second we get in the car and every fifteen minutes thereafter — this is not a reference to anyone I know or am married to
- *pyrrhypertachy* ("red/over/speed/act of"): the tendency of many drivers to accelerate when the light turns red
- *ornithorrhoeous* ("bird/discharge/full of"): when you find your car covered with bird droppings, usually because of ...
- *hypodendrostasia* ("under/tree/park/act of"): you figure it out!
- *amphiparabasy* ("around/sideways/walk/state of"): that situation in which you run into a stranger head-on in public and you both step to one side, then both step to the other, and continue going back and forth until one of you finally manages to flank the other
- *ochlobradypatetic* ("crowd/slow/walk around/p.t."): p.t. people who walk slowly in a crowded hall, usually in large cholesterol-like clumps, and block the way of people who have some real sense of purpose in life (like me)
- *cacologolatriy* ("bad/word/worship/state of"): the overuse of "bad" words in discourse, usually because the person had a critically small vocabulary
- *anticacologolatriy* ("against/bad/word/worship/state of"): the rejection of any "bad" word on principle, usually because of a critical small-mindedness
- *philodysangelical* ("love/bad/message/p.t."): characterized by the love of telling bad news — you know what I'm talking about: people who rush into the room with a sad look on their face but you can see they're really smiling, and they say, "You should sit down before I tell you this," and you can tell they're loving it
- *ultimoverbite* ("last/word/having"): this is a reference to people who always need to get the last word in a conversation — you say "Goodbye!"; they say "See you later!"; you say, "Sure!"; they say, "You know it."; you say, "Well, so long!"; they say, "You too"; and you say ... nothing because that makes no sense since you're not long. They just had to get in the last word!

- *neogerontoid* (“young/old/like”): acting much older than one’s age — you’re young. Youth is your chance to be an idiot. Don’t waste it! If you try to do it later in life, you’ll look really stupid, and you’ll have no excuse.
- *gemiculosimilinvestiture* (“twin/little/similar/in/garment/act of”): the habit of dressing twins in identical clothing — as if there were only one of them and you’re seeing two because you need glasses or you’re drunk, or both. Look! I know there are two children there. Stop messing with my head!

Students from past etymology classes have left me with some wonderful neologisms. Here is just a sampling. Let them be an inspiration to your own creativity.

- *pantautonomatacronymic* (“all/same/name/first letter/word/p.t.”): pertaining to people who give all their children names beginning with the same letter — “This is Jonah, Jacob, Jillian, Jeffrey, Jimmy, Josey and Jonah. We ran out J’s so we ended up with two Jonahs. That’s one more than the Bible has.”
- *inscicurulous* (“not/know/care/little/full of”): not knowing or caring about in the least — I dated her.
- *myophrenic* (“muscle/mind/p.t.”): having muscles for brains — and that’s who she married.
- *polyalgogametopathy* (“much/pain/marriage/diseased condition of”): the condition of suffering much pain because of a spouse or ex-spouse — and that’s what I wish on her.
- *meterototelephilophobia* (“after/sex/end/love/fear of”): the fear that after sex the love will end — which is why there’s chocolate.
- *perantactor* (“wrongly/in front of/drive/one who does”): a driver who pulls out in front of another driver inconsiderately — nice word but no good for yelling out the window: “Hey you! You perant... I can’t remember the rest of the word.”

And that’s it for this video presentation about neologism. Next you should ... go live a life rich and resplendent in complicated vocabulary, some of which you made up, all of which you teach to your children, your friends and hapless strangers on the street. And that way you can make everyone ... Happy etymologizing!