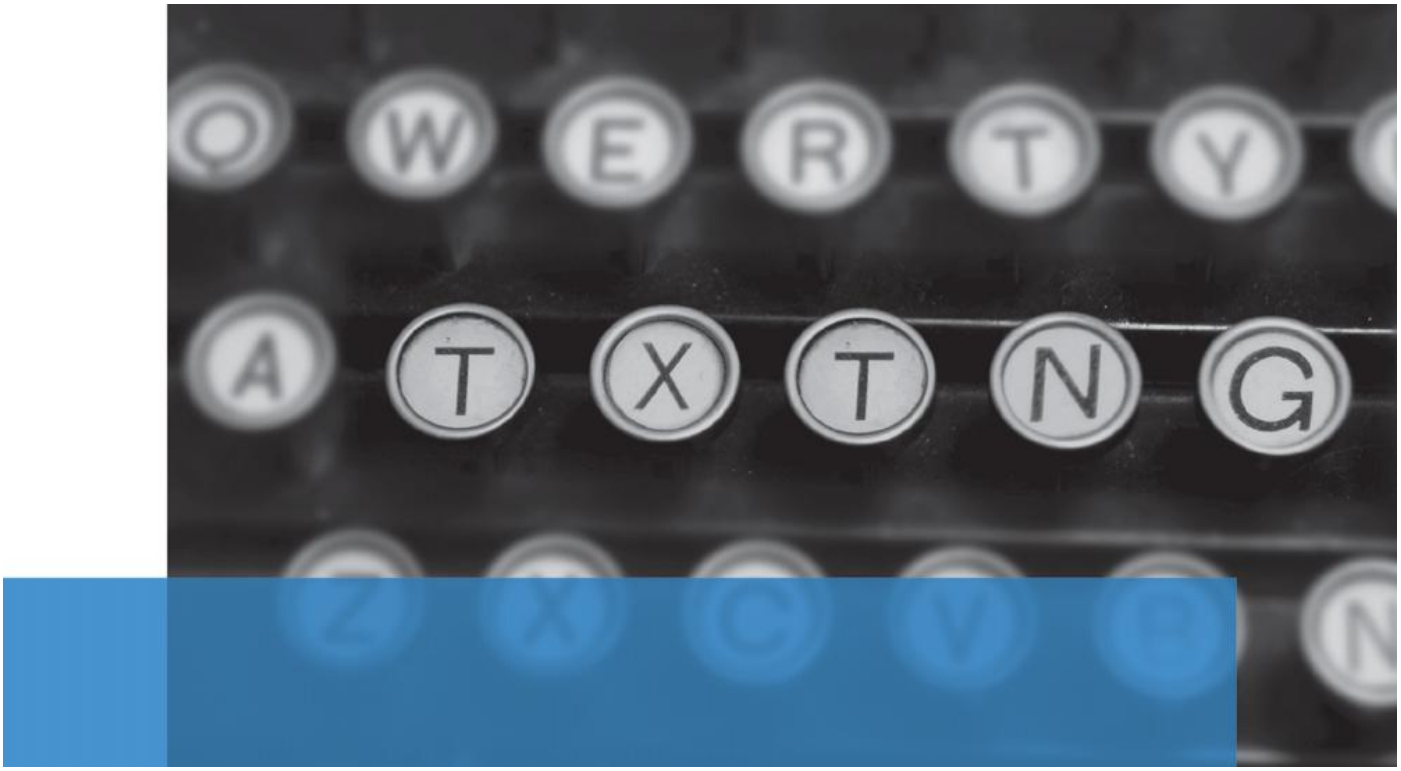

Though the Dutch were only a passing political presence in America, their linguistic legacy is immense. From their earliest days of contact, Americans freely appropriated Dutch terms blunderbuss (literally "thunder gun") as early as 1654, scow in 1660, sleigh in 1703. By the mid eighteenth century Dutch words flooded into American English: stoop, span, coleslaw, boss, pit in the sense of the stone of a fruit, bedpan, bedspread (previously known as a counterpane), cookie, waffle, nitwit (from the colloquial Dutch Ik niet weet, meaning "I don't know"), the distinctive American interrogative how come? (a literal translation of the Dutch hoekom), poppycock (from pappekak, "soft dung"), dunderhead, and probably the caboodle in kit and caboodle.

Two particularly durable Americanisms that emanate from Dutch are Santa Claus (out of Sinter Klaas, a familiar form of St Nicholas), first recorded in American English in 1773, and Yankee (probably from either Janke, a diminutive equivalent to the English Johnny, or Jan Kaas, "John Cheese," intended originally as a mild insult). Bryson (1994)

Around 1900, in New Berlin, Ohio, a department-store worker named J. Murray Spangler invented a device which he called an electric suction sweeper. This device eventually became very popular and could have been known as a spangler. People could have been spanglering their floors or theymight even have spanglered their rugs and curtains. The use could have extended to a type of person who droned on and on (and really sucked), described as spanglerish, or toawholestyleofbehaviorcalledspanglerism.However, none of that happened.

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Instead, Mr. Spangler sold his new invention to a local businessman called WilliamH. Hoover, whose Hoover Suction Sweeper Company produced the firstmachine called a “Hoover.” Not only did the word hoover (without a capital letter) become as familiar as vacuum cleaner all over the world, but in Britain, people still talk about hoovering (and not spanglering) their carpets. The point of this small tale is that, although we had never heard of Mr. Spangler before, we really had no difficulty coping with the new words: spangler, spanglerish, spanglerism, spanglering or spanglered. That is, we can very quickly understand a new word in our language (a **neologism**) and accept the use of different forms of that new word. This ability must derive in part from the fact that there is a lot of regularity in the word-formation processes in a language. In this chapter, we will explore some of the basic processes by which new words are created.

Etymology

The study of the origin and history of a word is known as its **etymology**, a term which, like many of our technical words, comes to us through Latin, but has its origins in Greek (e´tymon “original form” + logia “study of”), and is not to be confused with entomology, also from Greek (e´ntomon “insect”). When we look closely at the etymologies of less technical words, we soon discover that there are many different ways in which new words can enter the language. We should keep in mind that these processes have been at work in the language for some time and a lot of words in daily use today were, at one time, considered barbaric misuses of the language. It is difficult now to understand the views expressed in the early nineteenth century over the “tasteless innovation” of a word like handbook, or the horror expressed by a London newspaper in 1909 over the use of the newly coined word aviation. Yet many new words can cause similar outcries as they come into use today. Rather than act as if the language is being debased, we might prefer to view the constant evolution of new words and new uses of old words as a reassuring sign of vitality and creativeness in the way a language is shaped by the needs of its users.

Coinage

One of the least common processes of word formation in English is **coinage**, that is, the invention of totally new terms. The most typical sources are invented trade names for commercial products that become general terms (usually without capital letters) for any version of that product. Older examples are aspirin, nylon, vaseline and zipper;

more recent examples are granola, kleenex, teflon and xerox. It may be that there is an obscure technical origin (e.g. te(tra)-fl(uor)-on) for some of these invented terms, but after their first coinage, they tend to become everyday words in the language.
The most salient contemporary example of coinage is the word google. Originally a misspelling for the word googol (= the number 1 followed by 100 zeros), in the creation of the word Googleplex, which later became the name of a company (Google), the term google (without a capital letter) has become a widely used expression meaning “to use the internet to find information.” New products and concepts (ebay) and new activities (“Have you tried ebaying it?”) are the usual sources of coinage.
New words based on the name of a person or a place are called **eponyms**. When we talked about a hoover (or even a spangler), we were using an eponym. Other common eponyms are sandwich (from the eighteenth-century Earl of Sandwich who first insisted on having his bread and meat together while gambling) and jeans (from the Italian city of Genoa where the type of cloth was first made). Some eponyms are technical terms, based on the names of those who first discovered or invented things,

such as fahrenheit (from the German, Gabriel Fahrenheit), volt (from the Italian, Alessandro Volta) and watt (from the Scottish inventor, James Watt).

Borrowing

As Bill Bryson observed in the quotation presented earlier, one of the most common sources of new words in English is the process simply labeled **borrowing**, that is, the taking over of words from other languages. (Technically, it's more than just borrowing because English doesn't give them back.) Throughout its history, the English language has adopted a vast number of words from other languages, including croissant (French), dope (Dutch), lilac (Persian), piano (Italian), pretzel (German), sofa (Arabic), tattoo (Tahitian), tycoon (Japanese), yogurt (Turkish) and zebra (Bantu).

Other languages, of course, borrow terms from English, as in the Japanese use of suupaa or suupaamaaketto ("supermarket") and taipuraitaa ("typewriter"), Hungarians talking about sport, klub and futbal, or the French discussing problems of le stress, over a glass of le whisky, during le weekend. In some cases, the borrowed words may be used with quite different meanings, as in the contemporary German use of the English words partner and look in the phrase im Partnerlook to describe two people who are together and are wearing similar clothing. There is no equivalent use of this expression in English.

A special type of borrowing is described as **loan-translation** or **calque** (/kælk/). In this process, there is a direct translation of the elements of a word into the

borrowing language. Interesting examples are the French term gratte-ciel, which literally translates as "scrape-sky," the Dutch wolkenkrabber ("cloud scratcher") or the German Wolkenkratzer ("cloud scraper"), all of which were calques for the English skyscraper. The English word superman is thought to be a loan-translation of the German U¨ bermensch, and the term loan-word itself is believed to have come from the German Lehnwort. The English expression moment of truth is believed to be a calque from the Spanish phrase el momento de la verdad, though not restricted to the original use as the final thrust of the sword to end a bullfight. Nowadays, some Spanish speakers eat perros calientes (literally "dogs hot") or hot dogs. The American concept of "boyfriend" was a borrowing, with sound modification, into Japanese as boyifurendo, but as a calque into Chinese as "male friend" or nan pengyu.

Compounding

In some of the examples we have just considered, there is a joining of two separate words to produce a single form. Thus, Lehn and Wort are combined to produce Lehnwort in German. This combining process, technically known as **compounding**, is very common in languages such as German and English, but much less common in languages such as French and Spanish. Common English compounds are bookcase, doorknob, fingerprint, sunburn, textbook, wallpaper, wastebasket and waterbed. All these examples are nouns, but we can also create compound adjectives (good-looking, low-paid) and compounds of adjective (fast) plus noun (food) as in a fast-food restaurant or a full-time job.

This very productive source of new terms has been well documented in English and German, but can also be found in totally unrelated languages, such as Hmong (spoken in South East Asia), which combines hwj ("pot") and kais ("spout") to produce hwjkais ("kettle"). Recent creations are paj ("flower") plus kws ("corn") for pajkws ("popcorn") and hnab ("bag") + rau ("put") + ntawv ("paper" or "book") for hnabrauntawv ("schoolbag").

Blending

The combination of two separate forms to produce a single new term is also present in the process called **blending**. However, blending is typically accomplished by taking only the beginning of one word and joining it to the end of the other word. In some parts of the USA, there's a product that is used like gasoline, but is made from alcohol, so the "blended" word for referring to this product is gasohol. To talk about the combined

effects of smoke and fog, we can use the word smog. In places where they have a lot of this stuff, they can jokingly make a distinction between smog, smaze (smoke + haze) and smurk (smoke + murk). In Hawai'i, near the active volcano, they have problems with vog. Some other commonly used examples of blending are bit (binary/digit), brunch (breakfast/lunch), motel (motor/hotel) and telecast (television/broadcast).
The activity of fund-raising on television that feels like a marathon is typically called a telethon, while infotainment (information/entertainment) and simulcast (simultaneous/ broadcast) are other new blends from life with television. To describe the mixing of languages, some people talk about Franglais (French/Anglais) and Spanglish (Spanish/English). In a few blends, we combine the beginnings of both words, as in terms from information technology, such as telex (teleprinter/exchange) or modem (modulator/demodulator). There is also the word fax, but that is not a blend. It's an example of our next category.

Clipping

The element of reduction that is noticeable in blending is even more apparent in the process described as **clipping**. This occurs when a word of more than one syllable (facsimile) is reduced to a shorter form (fax), usually beginning in casual speech. The term gasoline is still used, but most people talk about gas, using the clipped form. Other common examples are ad (advertisement), bra (brassiere), cab (cabriolet), condo (condominium), fan (fanatic), flu (influenza), perm (permanent wave), phone, plane and pub (public house). English speakers also like to clip each other's names, as in Al, Ed, Liz, Mike, Ron, Sam, Sue and Tom.
There must be something about educational environments that encourages clipping because so many words get reduced, as in chem, exam, gym, lab, math, phys-ed, polysci, prof and typo.
A particular type of reduction, favored in Australian and British English, produces forms technically known as **hypocorisms**. In this process, a longer word is reduced to a single syllable, then -y or -ie is added to the end. This is the process that results in movie ("moving pictures") and telly ("television"). It has also produced Aussie ("Australian"), barbie ("barbecue"), bookie ("bookmaker"), brekky ("breakfast") and hankie ("handkerchief"). You can probably guess what Chrissy pressies are.

Backformation

A very specialized type of reduction process is known as **backformation**. Typically, a word of one type (usually a noun) is reduced to form a word of another type (usually a

verb). A good example of backformation is the process whereby the noun television first came into use and then the verb televise was created from it. Other examples of words created by this process are: donate (from "donation"), emote (from"emotion"), enthuse (from "enthusiasm"), liaise (from "liaison") and babysit (from "babysitter"). Indeed, when we use the verb backform (Did you know that "opt"was backformed from

"option"?), we are using a backformation.
One very regular source of backformed verbs in English is based on the common pattern worker – work. The assumption seems to have been that if there is a noun ending in -er (or something close in sound), then we can create a verb for what that noun -er does. Hence, an editor will edit, a sculptor will sculpt and burglars, peddlers and swindlers will burgle, peddle and swindle.

Conversion

A change in the function of a word, as for example when a noun comes to be used as a verb (without any reduction), is generally known as conversion. Other labels for this very common process are "category change" and "functional shift." A number of nouns such as bottle, butter, chair and vacation have come to be used, through conversion, as verbs: We bottled the home-brew last night; Have you buttered the toast?; Someone has to chair the meeting; They're vacationing in Florida. These conversions are readily accepted, but some examples, such as the noun impact being used as a verb, seem to impact some people's sensibilities rather negatively.
The conversion process is particularly productive in Modern English, with new uses occurring frequently. The conversion can involve verbs becoming nouns, with guess, must and spy as the sources of a guess, a must and a spy. Phrasal verbs (to print out, to take over) also become nouns (a printout, a takeover). One complex verb combination (want to be) has become a new noun, as in He isn't in the group, he's just a wannabe.
Verbs (see through, stand up) also become adjectives, as in see-through material or a stand-up comedian. Or adjectives, as in a dirty floor, an empty room, some crazy ideas and those nasty people, can become the verbs to dirty and to empty, or the nouns a crazy and the nasty.
Some compound nouns have assumed adjectival or verbal functions, exemplified by the ball park appearing in a ball-park figure or asking someone to ball-park an estimate of the cost. Other nouns of this type are carpool, mastermind, microwave and quarterback, which are all regularly used as verbs. Other forms, such as up and down, can also become verbs, as in They're going to up the price of oil or We downed a few beers at the Chimes.

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It is worth noting that some words can shift substantially in meaning when they change category through conversion. The verb to doctor often has a negative sense, not normally associated with the source noun a doctor. A similar kind of reanalysis of meaning is taking place with respect to the noun total and the verb run around, which do not have negative meanings. However, after conversion, if you total (= verb) your car, and your insurance company gives you the runaround (= noun), then you will have a double sense of the negative.

Acronyms

Acronyms are new words formed from the initial letters of a set of other words. These can be forms such as CD ("compact disk") or VCR ("video cassette recorder") where the pronunciation consists of saying each separate letter. More typically, acronyms are pronounced as new single words, as in NATO, NASA or UNESCO. These examples have kept their capital letters, but many acronyms simply become everyday terms such as laser ("light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation"), radar ("radio detecting and ranging"), scuba ("self-contained underwater breathing apparatus") and zip ("zone improvement plan") code. You might even hear talk of a snafu, which is reputed to have its origins in "situation normal, all fouled up," though there is some dispute about the appropriate f-word in there.

Names for organizations are often designed to have their acronym represent an appropriate term, as in “mothers against drunk driving” (MADD) and “women against rape” (WAR). Some new acronyms come into general use so quickly that many speakers do not think of their component meanings. Innovations such as the ATM (“automatic teller machine”) and the required PIN (“personal identification number”) are regularly used with one of their elements repeated, as in I sometimes forget my PIN number when I go to the ATM machine.

Derivation

In our list so far, we have not dealt with what is by far the most common wordformation process to be found in the production of new English words. This process is called **derivation** and it is accomplished by means of a large number of small “bits” of the English language which are not usually given separate listings in dictionaries. These small “bits” are generally described as affixes. Some familiar examples are the elements un-, mis-, pre-, -ful, -less, -ish, -ism and -ness which appear in words like unhappy, misrepresent, prejudge, joyful, careless, boyish, terrorism and sadness.

The words Fire Department make it sound like they're the ones who are starting fires, doesn't it? It should be called the "Extinguishing Department." We don't call the police the "Crime Department." Also, the "Bomb Squad" sounds like a terrorist gang. The same is true of wrinkle cream. Doesn't it sound like it causes wrinkles? And why would a doctor prescribe pain pills? I already have pain! I need relief pills! Carlin (1997)

Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. In semantic analysis, there is always an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean, rather than on what an individual speaker (like George Carlin) might want them to mean on a particular occasion. This approach is concerned with objective or general meaning and avoids trying to account for subjective or local meaning. Doing semantics is attempting to spell out what it is we all know when we behave as if we share knowledge of the meaning of a word, a phrase, or a sentence in a language.

Meaning

While semantics is the study of meaning in language, there is more interest in certain aspects of meaning than in others. We have already ruled out special meanings that one individual might attach to words. We can go further and make a broad distinction between **conceptual meaning** and **associative meaning**. Conceptual meaning covers those basic, essential components of meaning that are conveyed by the literal use of a word. It is the type of meaning that dictionaries are designed to describe. Some of the basic components of a word like needle in English might include "thin, sharp, steel instrument." These components would be part of the conceptual meaning of needle. However, different people might have different associations or connotations attached to a word like needle. They might associate it with "pain," or "illness," or "blood," or "drugs," or "thread," or "knitting," or "hard to find" (especially in a haystack), and these associations may differ from one person to the next. These types of associations are not treated as part of the word's conceptual meaning.

In a similar way, some people may associate the expression low-calorie, when used to describe a product, with "healthy," but this is not part of the basic conceptual meaning of the expression (i.e. "producing a small amount of heat or energy").

Poets, song-writers, novelists, literary critics, advertisers and lovers may all be interested in how words can evoke certain aspects of associative meaning, but in linguistic semantics we're more concerned with trying to analyze conceptual meaning.

Semantic features

One way in which the study of basic conceptual meaning might be helpful would be as a means of accounting for the "oddness" we experience when we read sentences such as the following:

The hamburger ate the boy.

The table listens to the radio.

The horse is reading the newspaper.

We should first note that the oddness of these sentences does not derive from their syntactic structure. According to the basic syntactic rules for forming English sentences (as presented in **Chapter 8**), we have well-formed structures.

NP	V	NP
The hamburger	ate	the boy