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Productive lexical processes in present-day English

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1. Introduction

The theme of lexical change in present-day English is a fruitful field of study. Examining such change reveals many aspects of the lexicology of English, the kinds of processes which are to be found there, the internal organisation of the vocabulary of the language and, significantly, it reflects the contemporary society which uses the language. Lexical change also tells us about the typological options available in the language and how these are used creatively by its speakers. In order to illuminate these various aspects of the subject, the present study will consider a representative amount of lexical material which illustrates on-going changes of recent years.[1]

The material presented here is part of a corpus of present-day English usage which the author has gathered over the past four years, largely from sources in the print and spoken media. These sources come mainly from British and Irish English, with some American English attestations considered for the purpose of comparison. All the phrases quoted in this paper come from this corpus, while individual words may well do. If not, they have been taken from the lexicographical sources which have been consulted (see references). It should be said that the concern here is not so much with determining the first attestation of a phrase or structure but with the analysis of its usage in contemporary forms of English. However, to ensure that the items in question are indeed present-day in their use and normally recent in their origin as well, the first attestations, as listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* or such dictionaries of new words as Ayto (1999), are given in most cases. It should be noted that first or earlier attestations do not always reflect the currency of a word. In the case of ***serendipity*** (see 2.1 below) one finds attestations here and there since the first one of 1754, but the great increase of currency for this word is a specifically late 20th century phenomenon.

The samples given in this paper are nearly all of spontaneous speech, some are premeditated speech. The latter consist, in the main, of reports by journalists or

[1] The awareness of this lexical change is not as great as one might imagine. Works on English from a sociolinguistic perspective, which one would expect to be sensitive to the theme, deal rather cursorily with lexical change, usually under a heading such as ***neologisms***, as does Fennell (2001: 176-8) for instance. Other works, such as Graddol, Leith and Swann (eds. 1996), do not deal with current lexical change at all. The dedicated study of English lexis, Hughes (2000), in the chapter on ***Changes in Lexical Structure*** (Hughes 2000: 358-402) is more concerned with borrowings and the globalisation of English than with any of the issues dealt with in the present study. The same applies in principle to Algeo (1992), Room (1986) and the older Groom (1966) and Bliss (1966). For movement in the opposite direction, see Görlach (2001).

documentaries by individuals in the media. Many of these items are registered in recent lexicographical works, especially books on idioms in English, such as Speake (1999), *The Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (1998), or on new words such as Phythian (1996) or Ayto (1999) or general dictionaries such as Sinclair et al. (1987), Thompson (1992) or Robinson and Davidson (1996).[2]

To ensure that the samples are representative, a deliberate selection of the author's corpus material has been made. Where a phrase or sentence seems too regionally bound, it has not been included. Equally, where samples are too obviously embedded in a written context, they have been avoided, going on the general assumption that it is the spoken word in which innovations in language are first to be observed.

This study will also look at structural aspects of productivity and seek to uncover semantic regularities which enable speakers to readily interpret new formations correctly. For instance, the use of the prepositions *out* or *away* to create new phrasal verbs is based on the interpretation of *out* to mean 'completely absorbed, frequently passively' and *away* to mean 'fully engaged in an activity', as is clearly demonstrated by forms such as *blissed out, freaked out, spaced out, let it all hang out* 'be uninhibited or relaxed', *to veg out* 'pass one's time in inane activities' or *shouting away, screaming away, pinting away*.

2. Productive affixes

There are many affixes which can be used freely in present-day English. One need only think of such frequent cases as *mega-*, *hyper-* or *giga-*, which are so common in computing and in general speech today that one linguist was prompted to speak of a "hyperinflation of lexical mega-monsters" (Fischer 1994). Such affixes are part of the store of neoclassical lexical material found in most European languages today. In this respect English is no different from other European languages which equally avail themselves of these possibilities.

Older affixes can retain their productivity and not be the subject of a passing fashion. For instance, the Romance verbal prefixes are an integral part of English word formation and have retained their productivity to this day, as is evident from the productive use of *de-* as in *detox* (1970),[3] *dehire* (1970) 'sack from one's job', *deselect* (1968).

These neoclassical prefixes are also abundant in new formations, e.g. *biodiversity* (Ayto 1999: 523 [1980s]). Their productivity is proven by the fact that one

[2] A full-length study of current lexical change which, however, in approach and analysis is different from the present article, is Fischer (1998), see also Fischer (1997). Hohenhaus (1996) is also in this vein, though more theoretically aware. Bauer (1994) also contains some remarks on lexis. See Algeo (2006) for differences between mainstream varieties of British and American English and Algeo (1998) for developments in the later modern period. There are of course many diachronic studies such as Flavell and Flavell (1999). A major treatment of processes and structure, with consideration of the historical background, is Stockwell and Minkova (2001).

[3] In the following a year in brackets after a word indicates the earliest attestation as found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (CD-ROM, Version 3.0, OUP 2002).

formation frequently spawns a series. For instance *biosecurity*, a term now often heard in the wake of the foot-and-mouth crisis in Britain, is a recent formation[4] which makes use of the prefix *bio-*.

Established suffixes are continually co-opted into new formations (Aitchison 1987: 152-62), many of them nonce-formations, many more or less established. One need only think of the productive use of *-wise* (Dalton-Puffer and Plag 2001) as in *Flatwise London is a disaster* or the ease with which *-ish* can be attached to elements of different word class, e.g. *morish* 'something you like more of'.

Not all new words are genuine innovations. A word of caution does need to be sounded here and there. Indeed a closer look at the new words shows that occasionally one can find cases of revivals. A good example of this is the word *serendipity* for *fortunate, felicitous development.* This word first appeared in 1754: it was coined by Horace Walpole, suggested by *The Three Princes of Serendip*, the title of a fairy tale in which the heroes were always making fortunate discoveries. The OED comments under the relevant noun headword: "Formerly rare, this word and its derivatives have had wide currency in the 20th century." The attestations for the adjective *serendipitious* are all from the latter half of the 20th century.

Other new words are in fact continuations of established formational processes which, however, need not be obvious to speakers. The productive use of *-ery* in *dotcomery, theme-parkery*, for instance, actually has a long precedent: words of some vintage, like *trickery* (1800), *skulduggery* (1867), show that the ending has been around for some time, and indeed that it has the connotation of *dishonesty* and *gimmickry*, something which may arise through phonetic association.

3. Analogical formations

The following three types of word formation are quite similar in kind. Each is involved in the formation of a new word from an existing word or words. These patterns have long pertained in English so that these types are clearly continuations of established processes.

(1)	*outro* (Ayto 1999: 491 [1970s])	<	*intro(duction)*
	tug of love (Ayto 1999: 511 [1970s])	<	*tug of war*
	veg(i)eburger (Ayto 1999: 513 [1970s])	<	*hamburger*
	abortuary (Ayto 1999: 520 [1980s])	<	*mortuary*
	boxercise (Ayto 1999: 525 [1980s])	<	*excercise*
	presenteeism (Ayto 1999: 556 [1980s])	<	*absenteeism*
	VJ (videojockey) (Ayto 1999: 568 [1980s])	<	*DJ* (discjockey)
	sleazebuster (Ayto 1999: 599 [1990s])	<	*dambuster*

[4] This compound is not found in the *OED* or in Ayto (1999), a fact which most likely points to the productivity of such formations.

buppie (black) (Ayto 1999: 526 [1980s]) < *yuppie*

sword opera (Ayto 1999: 601 [1990s]) < *soap opera*

Analogical formations are always transparent. Indeed transparency would seem to be a necessary precondition for their acceptance. As they are synchronically derived by a productive process of compounding, they are readily understandable to speakers when heard for the first time. A particular feature of new analogical formations is that they may at first sound jocular but later come to be accepted as largely neutral, as in the following examples. The second instance is interesting in that it shows that there is a semantic re-interpretation of the element *broad-* in the sense of 'liberal, open-minded'. The third instance is neither in OED, 3 or Ayto (1999) but used jocularly in English vernaculars and on internet websites (as an ironic nod to political correctness).

(2) *underwhelm* (OED: 1956) (< *overwhelm*)

not broadcasting but narrowcasting

chapess (< *chap* + *-ess* 'feminine ending')

4. Blends and clippings

A consideration of present-day blends (Pyles and Algeo 1993: 277-9) shows that more than one process may be involved. A case like *docusoap* is actually derived from a clipping of *documentation* to *docu* and then the combination with *soap*, itself a clipping from *soap opera*. Such blends may have a considerable vintage as the following selection illustrates.

(3) *guestimate* (Ayto 1999: 211 [1930s]) < *guess* + *estimate*

slumpflation (Ayto 1999: 504 [1970s]) < *slump* + *inflation*

babelicious (Ayto 1999: 577 [1990s]) < *babe* + *delicious*

screenager (Ayto 1999: 598 [1990s]) < *screen* + *teenager*

palimony (Ayto 1999: 491 [1970s]) < *pal* + *alimony*

twigloo (Ayto 1999: 602 [1990s]) < *twig* + *igloo*

glitterati (Ayto 1999: 342 [1950s]) < *glitter* + *literati*

It is a moot point whether all such blends are established words in current English (even within a single country like Britain). For instance, the term *netizen* 'a citizen of the internet' (Knowles and Elliott 1997: 208) may not be part of the active vocabulary of the majority of English users. It is probably more appropriate to view blends as a fluid group of words which come and go and whose acceptance in the wider community depends on their lexical transparency.

Clippings are a well-established phenomenon in the lexicology of English. As with other continental languages, such as German, English partakes in the clipping of longer neo-classical words, such as *info* from *information*, *exam* from *examination*, *uni* from *university* and the like. More recent examples may show a double clipping motivated in part at least by the resulting rhyme, as in the second of the following instances.

(4) *decaff* < *decaffeinated* (OED: 1927)
des-res (Ayto 1999: 532 [1980s]) < *desirable residence*

5. Compound adjectives

The compounding of adjectives is a process typical of synthetic languages like German. However, it is increasingly common in English and provides evidence of the increasing compaction of lexical structures. Certainly, such usage is widespread in official parlance (the first two examples below). The semantic interpretation of compound adjectives offers no difficulties where the structure is of the type Prepositional Phrase + Verb, e.g. *part-financed* < 'financed in part' or Prepositional Phrase + Adjective, e.g. *time-rich* < 'rich in time'. The case of *tamper-evident* is more difficult as it is derived from something like 'evidently tampered with' or 'showing evident tampering', i.e. it is not a case of a noun followed by verb or adjective.

(5) *The building of this road was part-financed by an EU grant.*
The service is grant-maintained.
If you are time-rich but cash-poor.
I just wanted to say that I am work-ready in case anything turns up.
The parcels were tamper-evident.

6. Phonaesthetic formations

The sound /z/ as part of a lexical stem is unusual in English and is traditionally recorded in initial position only in classical loans (e.g. *zoo, zodiac*) or a few words of uncertain etymological origin (*zinc*). This lexically peripheral status of /z/, although it is the standard plural inflection after voiced segments, has meant that it lends itself to semi-onomatopoeic formations, like *zip* 'slide fastener', an attempt at an acoustic rendering (Baugh and Cable 1993: 299). There is some vintage to this, for instance the word *zany* for 'amusing and unconventional' is actually quite old (stemming from 16th century Venetian Italian and imported via French, Hoad 1986: 551, see also OED entry for *zany*). The other formations which employ /z/, either initially or medially, have general diffuse meanings suggesting 'oddness, eccentricity, liveliness, colourfulness' or more negatively 'weakness, dullness', especially if combined with /b/ at the end of the syllable starting with /z/ (see examples in Ayto and Simpson 1992: 297-9).

(6) *zippy, zappy* 'lively, amusing', *zazzy* 'colourful, vivid', *zonky* 'weird, freaky' *pizzazz, snazzy, gonzo* 'wild, eccentric'; *zob* 'weak person', *zombie* 'dull apathetic individual'

7. New words by class shift

The history of conversion is closely connected with the story of English since at least the Early Modern English period and abundant use of it has been made for stylistic purposes, most notably by Shakespeare. In that respect the present-day examples

represent a continuation of a process which is clearly established in the language (Pyles and Algeo 1993: 281f.; Barber 1976: 193f.). The purpose of the present section is to offer a taxonomy of contemporary conversions.

7.1 Noun to verb

This is undoubtedly the most common type and, given the lack of verbal morphology in English, the simple occurrence of a noun in a verbal slot establishes its use. Clear proof that one is dealing here with conversion can be seen in cases like *to mailshot*, where of course the simple verb **to shot* is not attested. Some of these conversions can result in phrasal verbs, as with *to cone off* (Ayto 1999: 581 [1990s]) 'cordon off using traffic cones'. On occasion the noun which provides the input is broken up into a verb and direct object – as with *text message* (on a mobile phone), which appears as *to text s.o. a message*.

(7) *The plant has been mothballed since the very beginning.* 'neglected, not taken into service'

Can you fax me the form?

to mailshot the electorate

to resource them better

Can you pause the machine?

We overnighted in Athlone.

We need to ring-fence the funding of arms to the rebels.

I'll text her a message when I get home.

She bikes to the department every day.

We towelled after the swim.

There is no evidence that Al-Qaida is headquartered in that country.

We must be properly resourced for the job.

There may well be a certain pathway for the shift from noun to verb. In the case of the verb *to holiday*, the gerund/ participle would appear to be longer and better established than either the infinitive or the finite forms, and indeed, given its hybrid character as noun and verb, the gerund acts as a natural bridge in the shift from the former to the latter.

(8) Noun → Gerund → Finite Verb

vacation, holiday → vacationing, holidaying →

It will change the way we holiday/ vacation in future

At least this path of development is corroborated by the OED evidence for these two intransitive verbs, as the two earliest instances of the verbal uses recorded (1869/ 1871 for *to holiday*, and 1896/ 1926 for *to vacation*) involve participles (e.g. *Despite hard times people will go vacationing*).

7.2 Verbal phrase to noun or adjective

These conversions are well established in English. Most of them result in nouns but in a few cases there is an adjectival use (as in the first example below). In some instances there are lexicalised structures are seen in *The police gave him the once-over* (OED: 1915) where one is dealing with an elliptical construction deriving from something like 'to examine once all over'. There are cases where the verb, from which the conversion can be taken to derive, is not an alternative in the context in question, e.g. there is a *run-up* but one cannot *run up to something* in the same sense. One can also have a switch from phrasal verb to prefixed verbs without change in meaning: *This train will only stop to outlet passengers* (← *let out*). This type has recently been popularised by a number of common terms in the domains of computing and information technology (*input, output, upload, download …*- see Scheible 2005).

(9) *It's a must-have item.*

It was such a put-down.

There'll be no let-up in the fight against terrorism.

the planned Israeli pull-out

a pull-up for our company

the run-up to the election

There was time for a run-through that afternoon.

a get-out clause

a push-over, several lay-offs

joined-up action/thinking

Similar to these cases are the many recent compound verbs, e.g. *flame-grill, stir-fry, blow-dry, fire-bomb, shock-freeze, blister-pack*, most of which do not have an analytic equivalent. For example *to blow your hair dry* is not the same as *to blow-dry your hair*, so that these compounds are clearly lexicalised. Among these various types of compound verbs, the V-V pattern (*stir-fry*) is the one which seems to be exclusively 20th century in origin, as has been shown in the excellent study by Wald and Besserman (2002).

7.3 Adjective from verbal, prepositional or adverbial phrase

A process which is particularly striking in present-day English is the derivation of a single adjective from a verbal, prepositional or adverbial phrase, as can be seen in the following two instances.

(10) *The better suburbs constitute a gated community.* ←

The better suburbs constitute a community which lives behind gates.

You´re dealing with receipted childminders. ←

You´re dealing with childminders who issue receipts.

You see, I'm a separated father. ←

You see, I'm a father separated from his children.

The dress she had on was very last season.

That's really up-front of him.

7.4 Nouns in the adjective slot

If the test for conversion is the occurrence of an item from one word class in the syntactic environments typical of another, then there are many cases of conversion from noun to adjective in present-day English. However, on closer inspection one sees that the shift to a new class is not as straightforward as might be imagined. Perhaps the most common position for nouns to occur in is attributive, as seen in the following cases.

(11) *the welfare consequences of this new legislation*

the key issues discussed in the debate

a fun book to read

a quality service

a shock win

single-issue democracy

The real test for a permanent change in word class is whether the shifted element can occur in predicative position. It would appear to be true for *fun* as an adjective, cf. a sentence like *The party was really fun*. With *key* the shift may not have taken its full course for all speakers. Something like *The issues are really key* is not always acceptable, though interestingly if something follows then the acceptability increases immediately: consider *The issues which are really key to the matter*, in which *key* is treated as synonymous with *central* in taking a prepositional complement with *to*. Another point about the predicative position is that it is one of high prosodic prominence, and the generalisation that conversion first appears in contexts of low prominence, i.e. in attributive position, may well hold.

7.5 The development of new bare adjectives

The current heading refers to cases where an adjective arises from a fuller phrase. Consider the following instance.

(12) *Most of the kids are unstructured during the summer holidays.* ←

Most of the kids have no structure to their lives during the summer holidays.

This is a case of predicative adjective use from an attested attributive use, cf. *They lead very structured lives in the old people´s home.* In addition the noun which is qualified has now been deleted. From this and similar cases one can postulate a cline in the development of bare adjectives which looks like the following. There is a semantic extension from an object (here: *lives*) to an animate noun (here: *they*) which is associated with of the former.

a) Attributive Adj + Noun →

They lead unstructured lives.

b) Noun + Predicative Adj →

Their lives are unstructured.

c) Predicative Adj only

They are unstructured.

8. New phrases

8.1 Alliterative constructions

The rapid rise of new alliterative constructions continues a tradition already quite established in English (cf. the common binomial type *bed and breakfast*).[5] The present-day language is very productive in this sphere, with new formations occurring frequently more or less spontaneously. For example, in a comment on the high number of Caesarian births among middle class English women, one radio commentator complained that they were 'too posh to push'.

(13) *bail bandit, gas-guzzler, gender gap* (orthographic alliteration), *loony left, mean machine* 'high-performance sports team', *canteen culture, cardboard city* (orthographic), *drop-dead, lager lout, lollipop ladies* 'wardens guiding children across roads', *mattress money, ram raid, road rage, trailer trash, cold calling* 'unsolicited calls on prospective customers', *lava lamp* 'lamp with transparent viscous liquid', *carry the can* 'take responsibility' (OED: 1929)

The desire to use an alliterative construction can mean that in some instances the semantics is bent somewhat to fit the phonetics as in *reformers and wreckers* 'supporters and opponents of change'. A more common situation is where the exact interpretation of the alliterative construction must be known to the hearer or derivable from the speech context. The following offers some examples of such structures.

web-wise 'able to use the internet', *free and fair elections, meeting of minds, from plough to plate, pension pot* 'the money accrued in a pension fund', *metric martyrs* 'people who suffer legal consequences from their refusal to use metric measurements', *pay with plastic, flexible friends* 'credit cards', *rural rebels* 'people opposed to the hunting ban', *digital divide* 'gap between individuals/sections of society with regard to access to informational technology'

[5] Alliterative binomials are by no means of exclusively English provenance. They are particularly common in German and have a long history here, as seen in the following expressions: *mit Kind und Kegel, Tür und Tor öffnen, bei Wind und Wetter, über Stock und Stein gehen, Roß und Reiter nennen, Kopf und Kragen verlieren.*

Binomials are two nouns which are treated as a pair in a phrase and linked by the conjunction *and*. By and large they are alliterative or rhyming as in *meeter and greeter*. Instances of two nouns together such as *canteen culture, lager lout* or *road rage* are not binomials but juxtaposed nouns in which the first is a qualifier, i.e. has the function of an adjective or the first element of a compound.

8.2 Rhyming constructions

Second only to alliteration is the use of rhyme as a device for achieving a prosodic link between two words in a phrase.

(14) *dream team, easy peasy* 'ridiculously simple', *pay and display, name and blame/name and shame, pooper-scooper* 'shovel for gathering dogs' excrement', *pub-grub, sagbag* 'large beanbag used as seat', *happy-clappy* 'show emotion at church services' (Ayto 1999: 587 [1990s]), *gender-bender* 'person who adopts manners and dress of opposite sex', *snail-mail, toy-boy, barmy army* 'eccentric group of older individuals', *no gain without pain*

Occasionally, adaptations of existing rhyming constructions are made as in the example of *more spinned against that spinning* (with reference to the dismissal of a well-known spin doctor in the English government) on the analogy of *more sinned against than sinning*. A few of the phrases to be found are not full rhymes but assonances, for instance where only the vowel is common to the two words of the couplet as in *squeaky clean*.

8.3 Productivity of alliteration and rhyme

Alliterative or rhyming combinations are common in contemporary English and indeed extend to nonce formations as in the following case: *Vouchers will go, but they will probably just be replaced by some funny money scheme.* As with all nonce creations, the essential requirement is that they be readily interpretable to hearers. This sets bounds on productivity here but the range within these limits is nonetheless considerable.

8.4 Residue

There is also a small residue of formations, functional compounds or binomials which are neither rhyming nor alliterating. The following list shows some common examples.

(15) *kiss and tell* 'sexually engaging someone and then betraying him (her?)'

movers and shakers 'people who get things done efficiently'

park and ride 'splitting a journey into a city between a car and a bus or a train'

empty nester 'a parent whose children are grown up and left home'

gap year 'practice of taking a year off between school and university or more generally in one's professional life'

soundbite, whispering campaign, mission creep, donor fatigue, information management, grumble shop

9. Types of semantic change

The purpose of the present section is to offer a classification of types of change in the semantics of present-day English. Some of these are what one would expect from any language: expansions and contractions in meanings, shifts in word-fields and the like.

Others have to do with the typology of the English lexicon, such as the shifts in animacy, made permissible no doubt by the analytic nature of English and the flexibility with which it treats word classes and subcategorisation rules. Still other changes have to do with long-term lexical processes which are continued to this day. It is with just such a change that this section opens.

9.1 Shift to direct object

The matter at issue here is a change in the object requirement of verbs from a prepositional to a direct type. Consider the following examples in which the prepositions in brackets were not used in the sentences of the present corpus but which would have been in former usage.

(16) *He reported (to) me the following day.*

To appeal (against) this decision.

The first to protest (about) the idea were the LibDems.

He recommended (to) me reporting it to the police.

The frequency of the shift from prepositional to direct object throws up the question of the motivation for this. The reason would seem to be to increase the directness and immediacy of the action denoted by the verb. This is particularly common in narration, where of course any increase in such directness is welcome as it helps to maintain the attention of the hearer. An established example is *talk* with or without a preposition, cf. *They talked about the new book* and *We're talking big money now* (where the latter use has the approximate meaning of 'refer to').

There is also a tradition of such shifts in the history of English. For instance, the verb *scold* originally took a prepositional object much like *scream*, i.e. one scolded **at** someone, as is shown by the following attestations from the OED: 1673 *I told her I came to be merry and not to be scolded* ***at.*** 1722 *I scolded heartily* ***at*** *him when he came back.* 1822 *All women love to be married, were it only for the sake of having somebody to scold at.* But the preposition was dropped during the 19th century, perhaps to increase the directness and sense of confrontation which of course this verb implies.

9.2 Noun duplication

A feature of contemporary English is the duplication of a noun to suggest that one is dealing with a genuine instance of something; this may be modelled on structures like *He's a linguist's linguist.*

(17) *It's a job job* 'It's a full-time job'

He's like a man man 'He is a real man'

The first thought on encountering such forms may well be to regard them as not really rule-governed, as marginal instances of lexical creativity, or even as nonce-formations – notions which will need to be reconsidered in view of Hohenhaus' (2004) detailed corpus-based study of the phenomenon in contemporary English.

9.3 The X-ing public

At any one time a language will have a set of particularly topical words and expressions, e.g. *spin* (OED: 1978), *cherry-pick* (Ayto 1999: 465 [1970s]), *the leading edge* (Ayto 1999: 484 [1970s]), *the cutting edge* (Ayto 1999: 531 [1980s]). Some of these provide a pattern for a number of expressions, and one which is currently common is the structure *the X-ing public,* in which the deverbal adjective can be filled by a number of options, e.g. *the voting public, the queueing public, the spending public.*

9.4 Increase in semantic range

One means of increasing the semantic range of words is to remove specific connotations and use them in a more general sense. There are many examples of this process in modern English (Hickey 2003), as the following examples attest. The chronological progression in the spread of such words is well documented in Ayto (1999). For instance, he has two entries for *golden* from the 1980s (*golden parachute, golden hello*) and he records the further extension seen in *golden goal* in his section on the 1990s. Dictionaries vary in their inclusion of such uses. Robinson (1996) is quite comprehensive and has three entries for *golden.* The *Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary* (1987), on the other hand, has only one entry, namely *golden handshake*, a fact which may well serve to confirm the increased popularity of this use of the adjective in the 1990s, i.e. after the dictionary was compiled.

(i) *golden* ('financially rewarding; decisive')

golden handshake (original); *golden handcuffs, golden hello, golden parachute; golden goal*

(ii) *granny* ('referring to senior citizens')

granny dumping, granny flat

(iii) *designer* ('referring to film and fashion; made-to-measure')

designer suits, designer stubble, designer drug, designer baby

(iv) *potato* ('someone passive and lacking in energy')

couch potato, mouse potato 'someone excessively engaged in computing'

(v) *rogue* ('potentially dangerous')[6]

rogue states, rogue asteroid, a rogue missile (altered connotation from 'harmless, playful' to 'threatening, sinister')

(vi) *creative* ('not bound to the truth')

a creative approach to reporting, creative accounting (Ayto 1999: 467 [1970s])

[6] The OED has attestations for this usage from the 1960s when, however, quotation marks were used to indicate the relative newness of this sense. Later instances, from the 1980s, do not show these. Ayto (1999) curiously has no examples of this usage. The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2003) interestingly puts the meaning being discussed here at the top of the entry, quoting *rogue state, rogue cells*, and regards the meaning of 'badly behaved, but still likeable' as old-fashioned.

9.5 Motivated semantic shifts

Semantic shifts come in various guises. Nonetheless, some recurrent patterns can be recognised and these would seem to be connected with the manner in which human cognition works. Take, for instance, the close connection between process and result, a metonymic relationship (Lyons 1995: 136). Something is done and something is achieved. This connection is what links the meanings of *chase* and *catch* in English, both ultimately from a Latin root *captāre* 'to (try) to take' but via Central French and Anglo-Norman respectively. Another type of motivated semantic shift is embodied in the relationship between an action and the instrument for performing it and can be seen in present-day English. Consider the sentence: *This is the 3.45 service to Cambridge.* What one can see here is that a service, an action performed for the benefit of others, is so closely connected with an instrument for carrying it out, here the train, that the word *service* is used for the instrument itself. Closely related to metonymic shifts are meronomies (Cruse 1986: 157-80), i.e. part-whole relationships, where the designation of the part comes to be used for the whole.

9.6 Sources of metaphor

Metaphors figure prominently in any language and are manipulated in public usage in particular. Consider, for example, the metaphor of motion in political language: *We have to move on from here. It is interesting to consider what flows from this decision.* The sources of metaphor are often areas or activities in society which figure prominently in public consciousness. This can of course change over time. A clear instance of this is the shift from the military arena to sport. Such sentences as *She spearheaded the movement to eliminate the power of the unions* illustrate military metaphor but these appear to be on the wane and images from sport are on the increase in contemporary English. Consider the word *play,* which has spawned a number of common expressions: *global player, how does the government play this?, a level playing field.* A small list of other metaphorical expressions helps to show how sport is a significant source of metaphor in present-day English.

(18)

kick into touch	*shifting the goalposts*
the race was thrown open again	*he was caught offside*
touch down a goal	*a few more laps to go*
this is where we kick in	*on the home run*
first past the post	*to start from pole position*

10. External factors in semantic change

Any examination of the lexicon of a language must consider the society which uses it and reflect the developments to be found there. Expressions may alter because of external changes. A trivial example is provided by *best before*, which with a change in the marking of the expiry date on products in Britain has now become *sell-by date*, not just in the literal sense but more importantly in the figurative sense, e.g. *I'm afraid X has passed his/her sell-by date.*

The lexicon of English is naturally subject to trends and movements in public discourse and this can be seen clearly in the renaming found in public life in the English-speaking world as elsewhere.[7] One now has *protection officers*, previously called *body guards*. *Air hostesses* are now *flight attendants* (this has the advantage of gender neutrality), *prostitutes* are referred to as *sex workers*.

Political correctness demands that anything referring to ageing or decay or social/political inequality be renamed, hence one has *senior citizen* for *old-age pensioner*, *sanitation engineer* for *dustmen*, *economic co-operation* for *developmental aid*, etc. This may be seen as a tendency to a circumlocutionary and inflated style in official language, e.g. *We don't have the human and hardware resources to deal effectively with the matter*. Linked to this is the use of 'hype', augmenting what one has to say in an effort to add punch to one's language. Nothing is *good* any longer, it is *super;* nothing is *big*, but it is *gigantic*. Of course, what is hype to one generation is normal to the next. Furthermore, phrases based on hyperbole may attain meanings of their own. For instance, in the academic world, good departments came to label themselves *centres of excellence*, but this term now implies external assessment and special funding given to institutions which are often set apart from others.

Regular complaints about change in the English language refer to a perceived increase in redundancy and verbosity. To support such views, expressions like the following have been quoted.

(19) *in close proximity* *at this point in time*

surrounded on all sides *completely exhausted*

It is a moot point whether such expressions are on the increase. But more importantly one should understand that what are strictly speaking tautologies serve the function of pragmatic emphasis. Seen from this perspective the examples just given are no different from such established features as double negation or adverbial augmentation as in *You are absolutely right*.

11. Conclusions

Examining change in the vocabulary of present-day English reveals dynamic processes in the lexicon of the language. It shows how general patterns can be recognised and abstracted from the many instances of change. The following are some of the aspects which such study of change can uncover.

- an expansion in directness and immediacy due to the increasing number of direct object constructions and the reduction of phrases to single words, as with the rise of new adjectival patterns;
- an increase in semantic range due to the metaphorical extension of certain key words such as *golden, rogue, creative, designer*, etc.;

[7] The following remarks refer first and foremost to the public usage of English. It is not any different from other western languages in that certain trendy words are used again and again to lend one's language a generally positive aura. In political jargon this is 'putting a spin' on something, the person who does this as his/her profession being a 'spin doctor'. For instance, you can put a positive spin on a matter by making *upbeat remarks*, referring to *robust solutions* which will then result in *sustained growth*.

- a tendency towards the prosodic association of words in phrases via the devices of alliteration and rhyming.

Lexical change also shows how internal and external forces operate in the vocabulary of a language. The relative value which society accords certain spheres of activity, e.g. sports versus the military arena, is reflected in the type of metaphors which are tapped as a source for expressions in everyday usage. The study of lexical change also affords a clearer understanding of processes which are recorded in history and which repeat themselves in the present. For instance, the expansion and contraction of relative space in word-fields can be seen in operation in many cases of change in contemporary English.

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