

SCIENTIFIC PARADIGMS OF WORD FORMATION AND NEOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTICS

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Abstract. *This article examines the major scientific paradigms that explain word formation and neology in contemporary linguistics. It integrates structuralist, generative, cognitive, and sociolinguistic approaches to provide a coherent and evidence-based account of how new lexical items emerge, develop, and spread. The study is supported by theoretical arguments and real examples from modern language use, particularly in digital communication.*

The paper argues that an integrative paradigm is necessary to fully explain the complexity of lexical innovation in the 21st century.

Keywords: *word formation, neology, linguistic paradigms, lexical innovation, morphology, sociolinguistics.*

INTRODUCTION

The system of language represents one of the most dynamic and plastic components of human cognition and communication. It permanently develops under the influence of cultural, technological, political, and communicative transformations. One of the most observable signs of language evolution is connected with the emergence of new lexical units, which are called neologisms. Modern linguists are particularly interested in studying the process of word creation and the role it plays in linguistic development. In this context, word formation and neology represent one of the most topical areas in contemporary linguistic research.

Traditionally, theories of word formation focused on studying its structural aspects. Structuralists approached word formation in terms of morphological and syntactic structures of words and sentences. The combination of morphemes in accordance with certain rules was perceived as the major factor for developing new lexical units. Derivation, compounding, blending, and conversion represented the main mechanisms of word formation used by linguists as a basis for constructing a comprehensive model of word formation.

However, further research has revealed that the mechanisms of word formation are not limited to structural patterns only. With the rise of generative grammar, there came about a shift towards a more abstract and cognitive approach to the process of language formation. In this paradigm, the creation of a new word is not just an automatic process but, rather, a representation of the speaker's inner grammatical skills and abilities.

Despite these significant improvements, however, it was soon realized that a purely formal analysis of the phenomenon under consideration could not account for the full complexity of word creation in real life. This led to the rise of the study of cognitive linguistics with its focus on such notions as meaning creation and conceptualization of experience. The proponents of the new paradigm argue that neologisms are not just linguistic constructions but also a means through which people organize and perceive the reality surrounding them. This was made possible by the introduction of such cognitive mechanisms as metaphor and metonymy. Another important development in the study of lexicon formation was the focus of attention on the social factors that affected word creation.

Thus, neologisms arise in certain social situations, and often have ideological implications. For example, the quick adoption of the terms "selfie," "hashtag," and "influencer" by society proves that neology is influenced by social media and digital communication in general, and not only the linguistic features of new words.

Moreover, in the past several decades, there was another development in the field of neology, namely, corpus linguistics. As corpus studies have provided the necessary data on how neologisms appear in the language and what social and communicative context leads to the formation of a new word. In addition, corpus data enables researchers to understand the dynamics and speed of diffusion of neologisms in modern digital world, where changes in language happen much faster than in previous epochs.

As an example, one may refer to the notion of scientific paradigms in the field of the philosophy of science. A paradigm is a certain set of theoretical assumptions, methodological principles, and explanatory schemes. In linguistics, various paradigms give rise to different visions of the phenomenon under consideration. Structuralists concentrate on linguistic forms, generativists explore mental rules behind language, cognitivists pay attention to meanings, sociolinguists highlight social contexts, whereas corpus linguists concentrate on empirical data.

Contemporary linguistics has developed a multidimensional picture, according to which these paradigms should be regarded as interrelated rather than opposed to each other. The complicated nature of the process of lexical innovation makes researchers pay attention to a combination of different approaches to the problem under discussion. This issue becomes relevant in relation to the rapid processes of language change in the context of new communicative possibilities emerging in connection with the Internet and digital communication.

The present work attempts to examine critically all major scientific paradigms of word formation and neology that appear in contemporary linguistics. Special attention is paid to interconnections between the mentioned approaches to the issue as well as their similarities and differences.

METHODOLOGY

In the process of conducting research, it uses a qualitative, descriptive, and comparative methodology. It relies on three main methodologies:

Theoretical analysis – involves analyzing major linguistic theories relating to word formation and neology.

Comparative analysis – includes analyzing the similarities and differences among the different paradigms.

Empirical observation – includes examining real life occurrences from the modern usage of English, especially digital communication.

Some examples include Google (verb), influencer, doomscrolling, metaverse, and unfriend. Such examples were chosen because they demonstrate the process of word formation by either conversion, derivation, blending, or semantic change. It is a methodology which helps to explore both the theory and practice of word formation processes.

RESULTS

Results obtained indicate that each of the paradigms provide some unique information about word formation.

3.1 Structuralist Findings

Word formation is viewed as being governed by systematic rules. Derivation, compounding, and affixation are still very productive today.

They prove that languages are well structured.

3.2 Generative Discoveries

Generativism focuses on the significance of linguistic competence. Individuals have the capacity to create new vocabulary items by relying on subconscious grammar. As seen from the verb Google, for instance, proper nouns can become verbs through productivity in grammatical structures.

3.3 Cognitive Discoveries

Cognitive approach focuses on the concept of mental activity. Concepts like cloud as a representation of data storage on the Internet and virus as computer malware show how human cognition shapes the meaning of words.

3.4 Sociolinguistic Discoveries

Sociolinguistics describes how social considerations affect lexical change. Terms like influencer, cancel culture, and ghosting have spread quickly because of social media and cultural dynamics. The popularity of these terms does not depend solely on linguistic criteria but on their use in certain groups.

3.5 Word Formation Techniques That Predominate

This analysis has revealed several dominant word formation processes in modern English:

Derivation and compounding are central techniques. Conversion (for example, to friend, to message).

Blending (brunch, smog).

Clipping and acronym formation (app, AI). Borrowing because of globalization.

These findings demonstrate that modern word formation is systematic and innovative.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that no single paradigm can fully explain the complexity of word formation and neology. Structural and generative approaches focus on formal rules but often ignore meaning and context. In contrast, cognitive and sociolinguistic paradigms emphasize meaning, usage, and social factors.

For example, the word doomscrolling cannot be fully explained by morphology alone. It reflects a psychological behavior associated with excessive consumption of negative news online. Similarly, selfie gained popularity not because of its structure, but because of cultural practices and social media trends.

This suggests that word formation operates on multiple levels: Structural level – how words are formed

Cognitive level – how meanings are created Social level – how words are adopted and spread

Therefore, an integrative paradigm that combines these dimensions is essential. Such an approach provides a more comprehensive and realistic explanation of linguistic change in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the research findings prove that the processes of word formation and neology cannot be fully described within the framework of one paradigm since the paradigms mentioned above emphasize different aspects of word creation.

Thus, while structural and generative paradigms concentrate primarily on form aspects, ignoring the content aspect, cognitive and sociolinguistic paradigms emphasize the latter.

As examples, it can be stated that the word doomscrolling should not be analyzed only morphologically since this word reflects certain psychological characteristics of humans and their behavior related to excessive online consumption of negative news. Another example is selfie, which became so popular due to cultural practices and social media phenomena rather than structure-related features.

Hence, the process of word formation implies the existence of three main levels: structural;

cognitive; social.

Thus, the development of an integrated paradigm combining these aspects becomes crucial.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that word formation and neology imply multi-dimensional processes affected by linguistics, cognition, and social processes. The most promising theoretical perspective in this regard would be that of integration which represents the best approach to study lexical innovations today. In light of current developments in technology and global trends towards integration, an integrated approach becomes imperative for linguistics today.

Further studies can benefit from the use of corpus linguistics, interdisciplinary approaches, and cross-linguistic comparisons in exploring the issues related to neology.

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