Lecture – 12
Introduction to Neologism

We just learned two new things in morphology. One is the infixation which is not really widely available in many of the world's languages. And the second one is bound base. Those who have studied linguistics before you might be aware about it; and if you are a newcomer and this is the first course that you are registered for in the discipline called linguistics then obviously, these two are the new things.

Taking this newness forward, let us explore what are the possible new things available in morphology, I am going to talk about or we are going to discuss a phenomenon called neologism.

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Neologism as a word means creation of new words. So, broadly it covers the domain of creation of new words, but eventually you may also consider the changing of meaning of words, that also comes under the category of neologism. So, two things: either you are adding new words or you are changing the meaning of the already existing words. In both ways, the

process is called as neologism. I am sure if you think about it for a while, in your own language, you might have noticed that new words have been a part of it; old words have been deleted, and there are certain words whose meanings have been broadened or narrowed down. So, that is what we understand when I say neologism.

How many of you have heard the term like the new generation words like lit? Lit as a word, for me, probably it will be the past tense of light, but then when you consider lit as a word for a new generation user, lit means something great, some wonderful, something fantastic.

This is not a new word that has been entered into the English lexicon, rather an existing word, the past tense of light, has been changed to lit. Lit is no more just the past tense of the word, rather it has been broadened, the scope of the meaning of lit has been broadened to include quite a few other meanings too. For example, I have already told the things like great, wonderful, fantastic and words like that.

So now, I am going to talk about a couple of phenomena, which are always a part of neologism. When I say neologism, our concern is to figure out what are the different ways by which new words are being created or the existing words change their meaning. Let us start it from the first point that is the *coined words*. There are certain words which have been coined, which have been newly framed or formulated.

One such word is geek. How many of you think you know the meaning of the word geek? And what kind of interpretation do you have when you utter the word like geek? If you check the dictionary, the meaning of geek is somebody who just reads, who has only been interested in reading academic stuff. He or she is not really a fun-loving person, quite boring. And then does not like to socialize with people, he or she does not like to be found with friends. All the time the only favorite work that he or she has, is reading. And primarily the geeky type people are good in academia and they are also considered to be brilliant.

This is a word which was not a part of English lexicon. This is a new word which has been introduced to English lexicon in the late 18th century I think. So, geek is a coined word. Somebody who is less attractive, only into his reading books and academic stuff, does not

socialize, also does not have many friends; this kind of a person would be known as geek. So, words like this, have been recently added to the lexicon.

Then another way by which new words are formed is *acronymization*. The second way by which we create or we consider neologism as a part, is acronyms. Acronyms are formed by a process called acronymization.

When you say acronymization, that means you are primarily taking the first letter of each word and you are producing it as a unit. Let me give you an example like LAN. So, LAN is a word this is an acronym of a bigger word Local Area Network. When you say local area network, instead of saying L A N, we call it LAN. Similar is the case with WAN. WAN would be Wide Area Network. Then we have words like let us say AIIMS. AIIMS is an institute, a medical institute and what is the full form of it? All India Institute of Medical Sciences. So, that will be AIIMS.

All these words AIIMS or LAN or WAN or let us say words like Brexit for that matter. These are the ones which are considered to be acronymization. Why? What are we doing? We are picking up the first letter from each word in a bigger one. So, instead of saying local we have taken L, area we have taken A and network we have taken N.

What are we doing here? We are reading it as a unit, we are not reading it independently. We are not saying L A N. Instead of that, we are saying LAN. When you consider LAN as a whole unit, as one unit, then it will be considered as acronym. But instead of reading it as a unit, if you are using it as letter by letter, then it will be alphabetic abbreviation. So, the next category check the slides here.

The next category is *alphabetic abbreviation*. Alphabetic abbreviation means you are actually pronouncing each letter given over there. The example that I have given here is HTML. What is HTML? Hypertext markup language. That is a computer-related word. So, instead of reading the entire hypertext markup language, we are simply saying HTML. But we do not read HTML as a whole unit, we utter each letter H T M and L.That is why this will be alphabetic abbreviation.

On the other hand, local area network read as LAN, would be an acronym. But remember in both cases, the new words, whether it is acronymization or abbreviation, the new words have been made a part of the English lexicon by kind of shortening it. The first shortening is acronymization, where you are reading the word as a unit. The second one is also shortening, but you are not reading it as a unit, rather you are reading it as distinct letters, then it is going to be HTML.

The next method by which we create new words is *clippings*. When you say clippings, what you are doing? You are basically trying to cut it; it is a bigger word and you are taking just a part of it, then you call it clipping. The example given here is doctor. When you say doctor, we are not writing d o c t o r, rather we are just using a clipping of it and we will simply just put Dr. Similar is the casewhen you address a professor as prof. When you say prof, that means, here the full spelling is p r o f e s s o r, but instead of writing the entire word, you are just cutting it and keeping one part over there, so prof. Professor to prof, prof is an instance of clipping, doctor to Dr is also an instance of clipping. Think about more instances of clippings in English as well as in your language.

Then I am going to talk about a very interesting phenomenon called *blending* or blends. Blending you can also call it as a process. So, when you say blending, what should it mean? What does the word blending tell you? As a hearer, when you hear the word blend, what kind of information do you get? Blending means mixing things together.

All of us use blenders at our respective houses. When we put a lot of things together and we are blending it or we are mixing it, we call it blending. Something similar is also happening in morphology. So, what happens in morphology, you take half of one word, half of the other word and you put it together and you make it a new word. The example is infotainment. What is the meaning of infotainment? All of us, those who have the TV channel like the smart TVs at home, you must have the infotainment channels.

Infotainment is a word which contents information as well as entertainment. Part of information is taken, that is info, then the rest the part of entertainment that is tainment. So, keeping both information plus entertainment we have got a blend or blended word rather that

is infotainment. So, this is also a new way by which we can add new words to English lexicon; for that matter we can add words to any given language.

Then we have *generified words*. Generified words is also a very interesting phenomenon in neologism. The best example of generified words that I can give is Xerox. Tell me how many of you actually say that I am going to photocopy my document? We do not say that; we say I am going to Xerox my document. But do you know Xerox is the name of a photocopier machine that became a generified term? This brand became so popular that people associated it with photocopying. This has become synonymous to photocopying. So, if you want to say I want to photocopy my document, instead of that you can simply say I want to Xerox my document. So, Xerox has become a generified word.

Then there is another phenomenon by which we can have neologism, that is *proper nouns*. In the proper nouns sometimes what happens a particular thing, which has been named after a particular person, becomes generified like becomes a common noun. The example given here is guillotine. Guillotine is a machine, which was used during the French revolution for the execution of the French royal family.

Guillotine was invented by Dr. Guillotine. Dr. Guillotine is the inventor of this machine. However, this particular execution machine has been named after its inventor. Instead of giving it a name or calling it an execution machine, people started calling it as guillotine. Guillotine has been named after its inventor, but it became a new word in the English lexicon. So, a proper noun which is guillotine has been converted into a common noun.

Then considering language is dynamic and language is interesting, we can also see a lot of borrowing from other languages. So, when you borrow either you borrow it directly or you do it indirectly. *Direct borrowing* is something when you are just getting the word from the other language and you are using it as it is. For example, kindergarten. Kindergarten is a German word; that means primary school like the pre primary schools or nursery schools you can say.

So, the Britishers or the English people they got it from the German lexicon, but what they did, they did not try to change it; they used it the way they got it from the Germans. So,

kindergarten, though it is not an English word to begin with, it became a part of the English lexicon gradually. This is called direct borrowing.

Then there is something called *indirect borrowing*. In case of indirect borrowing, a word like alcohol, alcohol literally means firewater. Water which has fire, that is going to be called as alcohol. Tthese are the native American words. Railroad, railroad literally means iron horse in the native American languages and it gradually became a part of the English lexicon also.

So, alcohol meaning firewater and railroad meaning iron horse, these are all instances of indirect borrowing. What the English people have done, they have not really directly used words from other languages, rather what they have done they have borrowed the words. But instead of using it as it is, they have tried to tweak it for their own benefit.

These are some of the ways but that does not mean that these are the only ways available for the creation of new words. These are just a few processes, some of the words, which you should notice when you are trying to understand neologism.

Let us just scan through what all we have discussed to wind up this particular subunit called neologism, It is a process by which new words can be added to the lexicon or the meaning of already existing words can be changed. I hope all of you remember this. So, there are two ways; one you are adding new words, the other you are changing the meaning.

I am primarily going to talk about the addition of new words here; what are the different processes by which new words get be added to the English lexicon. These are a few instances: by coining, by acronymizing, by abbreviating, by clipping, by blending, by generifying words, by making proper nouns, like by using proper nouns as common common noun based words, by direct borrowing and by indirect borrowing. Then the examples I have already discussed. My suggestion for the participants would be, please make sure you understand the processes well and try to add as many other English words as possible plus try to extend it to your own first language.

 Do you think all the processes that I have discussed here are available in your language? What do you think about it? Do you think this is how our languages work, this is how we also add words or we also change the meanings of our words in our own first language? Think

about it and then you might get assignments to do on the basis of such such processes of neologism.

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Changing the meaning of a word

- Change in grammatical category: 'to ponytail her hair'
- Domain extension of vocabulary/ Metaphorical extension: 'ship', 'captain'
- Broadening: 'cool'
- Narrowing: 'girl' 'art'
- Semantic drift: 'lady' = 'half' / 'bread' + 'dighe'/'kneader'
- Reversals: 'square deal' (1930's and 40's) vs. 'square one' (1950's)

Now let us have a look at it how the meaning of the words have changed. The previous discussion was primarily about how new words are created and now we are going to talk about how the meaning has been changed. The change might happen at different levels. The change might happen at the grammatical category level, it might happen at the vocabulary level and I was also talking about semantic broadening and also narrowing. Then there is semantic drift and then there is reversal. These are the different ways by which the meaning of an existing word might change.

Let us go about it one by one. What is the first one? The first one is *change in the grammatical category*. I would like you to to look at this word ponytail. Generally this is used as a noun, the little ponytail that the little girls have. It is a particular kind of hairstyle which is known as ponytail, but you should notice that this particular word has also been used as a verb here. When I say I wanted to ponytail her hair; that means, this is working as an infinitival form. The 'to' infinitival form which is actually treated like a verb.

I can also say I ponytailed her hair, which sounds a little weird, but you will be surprised to know that such kind of usages are not impossible and they are not rare to find. There are quite

a few instances where people do use such constructions I ponytailed her hair. So, the grammatical category of the word ponytail which used to be a noun, has become changed to a verb. This is one way by which the meaning of the word changes.

Then we come to the domain *extension of a vocabulary*. Vocabulary which used to be a part of one domain, now it has become a part of the other domain. In this case, we will check ship and captain. Ship and captain were used to be related to only limited domains. There was a time when captain means it was only related to the domain of ship. A captain can only belong to a ship. You cannot say the captain of the team. That was not really a word which was used before. But now, a team also has a captain, a flight also has a captain, a ship also has a captain. Sometimes we can also say my father is the captain of our family. So, this is a metaphorical extension.

The word captain has broadened its domain as a vocabulary. The extension of the domain as a vocabulary also comes under the category of changing the meaning of a word. So, ship and captain are not exclusively available to each other, rather the word captain has been used in multiple dimensions nowadays, so as the examples just given. House captain is also a familiar term that we encounter nowadays.

Then the third form is *broadening*. When you say broadening, the meaning of a particular word has become so wide that it can actually accommodate a lot of other submeanings. Let us say cool. Cool is a word which is almost like a pet word among the new generation speakers. Everything they find good, everything they find interesting, easy, wonderful, they are going to use the word cool; this dress is cool, this subject is cool, I hope this subject is cool. I do not know. The participants would let me know later. They can also say this place is cool, let us say this classroom is cool.

So, cool as a word, it is not related to only temperature anymore. In the olden days, cool would only restrict itself to the temperature, with temperature-related information. If the temperature is a little low, then we are going to call it cool. But now cool means it can actually include any kind of things. And I just gave you the examples how it can extend to a classroom, to a course, to a dress, to a place, to a building, to literally everything.

Then, the other example I am going to give which is just diametrically opposite from cool. In case of cool, it has shifted from a narrow to a broader domain. But in case of *narrowing*, the meaning used to be quite wide, but now it has become narrow.

For example, girl used to include all the women, anybody who is a female gender could be considered as a girl. But now girl as a word is generally restricted to the younger girls. We do not really associate the word girl with a senior citizen for that matter. But there was a time if she is a senior citizen too, she might be addressed as a girl. But now, the meaning of girl has been narrowed down. From any female gender, it has come back to younger females. Basically the younger females are going to be called as girl now.

Similar is the case with art. Art used to include all kinds of disciplines. Science was also an art. Mathematics was also an art. But now art has its limited semantic interpretation. It does not include all the science subjects anymore. So, art has narrowed down to the meaning of only art.

The next process is *semantic drift*. Semantic drift means the meaning of a particular word has been drifted to or has been shifted to another domain. Let us look at the word lady. When it is lady, this has mainly come from two words; one is half, which is bread, half means bread and dighe, which means kneader. So, somebody who would knead bread or somebody whose work is kneading bread would be known as lady. But see now how the semantic drift has happened. Now, lady means somebody who belongs to maybe an elite society or an aristocratic family, who belongs to a well off family for that matter.

Lady does not associate itself with bread kneaders anymore, rather its form has been elevated. Lady has a certain context of address and generally it refers to women from the well off, educated, aristocrat families. So, there has been a shift and what kind of a shift? There is a semantic drift or semantic shift from kneading bread to may be participating in the boardroom discussion. That is how it has become semantic drift.

Then there is the final process here in the changing of the word, what we call reversals. Reversals means there are two different words, which were used in one form in the earlier days and another form in the recent days.

Square deal as a word. It was used in 1930s and 40s, but the same word has been reversed to square one in 1950. The meaning basically remains the same, but then the form of the word had changed. It used to be considered square deal and now it is considered as square one. These are a few instances of changing the meaning of a word. In the previous slide we saw how the new words are introduced and in this slide we saw how the meanings are changed.

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Now, I will try to give you some idea about what are the different processes by which you actually create or you actually form new words and also how you change the existing words. So, there are two different processes by which, the words are formed. That is what we call word formation rules.

Words can be formed by adding two different nouns. These are the different formula. Have a look at it. When you have noun plus noun, you would basically get words like landlord. So, when you say land and lord, both are nouns.

There could be word derivation rules something like adjective plus noun. In this case, the adjective is high and chair is the noun. So, high chair is an adjective plus noun word. Then you have overdose. What is the formula? Preposition plus noun. Over is the preposition, dose is the noun. Then you have verb plus noun, go-karting. When you say go-kart, go is the verb and kart could be the noun.

Then the next rule is adjective plus adjective redhot, when you say oh that is a redhot show. So, when you say redhot, it is very attractive, smart, both are objectives. You also have red which is an adjective then there is hot that is also an adjective. Then you have noun plus objective; that means, sky blue, sky is a noun and blue is the adjective. Finally, derivational rule or the word formation rule would be preposition plus verb oversee, over is the preposition and see is the verb.

These are the different ways by which you can actually create new words. When you create new words like these, we will find out whether these are complex words or these are compound words. If you remember what we discussed before, complex words are going to be one free morpheme and one bound morpheme and compound words are going to be the combination of two free morphemes.

Considering all these words landlord, highchair, overdose, go-kart, red hot, sky blue and oversee, all the morphemes found here are free morphemes and because of the free morphemes that they are here, these words are compound words. But my question for you would be do you think compound words are limited to two words or it can be more than that? Think about it you might get it as an assignment later. The other question that I want you to think about or to figure out is, is there any word which does not have a head? Let us say whether it is a complex word or a compound word, there must be a head word.

This head word would eventually be considered as the most important part of the word. So, when you say let us a teacher. There must be a head word. Can you tell me what is the head word here? The head word is teach. Er is the morpheme. So, in this case when you say landlord, there must be a head word. What do you think which one is the head word and which one is the tail word for that matter? High chair, which is the head word, which is maybe the tail word.

So, when you say high chair, the chair is mainly the head word because you are talking about a chair; whether it is high, whether it is low, whether it is whether it is tall or short that will decide the nature of the chair. So the head word is chair. Landlord, lord of what? Lord of the land. So, lord is the head word.

Overdose, dose is the head word; go-kart, it is a little tricky to find out which one is head which one is not the head. Redhot, the same thing, which one is the head word which one is not the head word, that is also a little tricky to understand. I want you to remember these questions and to think about them, not only from the context of English, but also from the context of your own first language.

So, what are the questions? First, do you think compound words are limited to only two words or you can add more than that? Second, do you think all compound words will have a head or there are instances where there is no head in a compound word? Think about it and we will meet again in the next session of morphology until then, thank you.