

# On the Inclusion of Neologisms in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (10th edition)

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**Abstract:** Adding neologisms to a dictionary in its revision helps keep it abreast of time, which applies to a learner's one like *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (10th edition) (henceforth OALD 10), its latest edition. English Learner's dictionaries like OALD 10 get revised regularly. In this article, the neologisms included in OALD 10 have been approached from different perspectives. In terms of the part of speech, 71.1% of the neologisms are nouns, which could speak for the nouny nature of English. Content words like nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs make up almost 96% of the neologisms. Judging by the word-formation, the top three ways to form the neologisms are compounding, derivation and blending in decreasing order. According to the form the compounds take, which are mostly nouns, the open, hyphenated and tight ones come in decreasing order. 623 compounds make up more than half of the neologisms, which provides strong evidence for compounding to be the most frequently used way of creating neologisms. For neologisms formed by derivation, most of them are also nouns. However, 170 out of 300 neologisms formed by derivation have already appeared as derivatives of headwords in OALD 9. For 34 blends, 75% of them are partial in nature, which means at least one word in making a blend is in its full form. When it comes to the new words with regional labels, nearly 80% are labeled as belonging to British and North American usages, a sign of the hidden Anglo-centrism. The status of some words counted as neologisms is questionable, as they have been in use for a very long time. The impact of science and technology on the inclusion of neologisms in OALD 10 is quite visible. There are still many opportunities for further exploration concerning OALD 10.

**Keywords:** NEOLOGISM, OALD 10, PART-OF-SPEECH, WORD-FORMATION, REGIONAL LABEL, ANGLO-CENTRISM, DICTIONARY REVISION, SCI-TECH INFLUENCE

**Opsomming:** Oor die insluiting van neologiesmes in die *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (10de uitgawe). Om neologiesmes by te voeg by 'n woordeboek in die hersiening daarvan, help om die woordeboek bygewerk te hou, wat relevant is vir 'n aanleerderswoordeboek soos *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (10de uitgawe) (voortaan OALD 10), die jongste uitgawe. Engelse aanleerderswoordeboeke soos OALD 10 word gereeld hersien. In hierdie artikel word die neologiesmes wat in OALD 10 ingesluit is, vanuit verskillende perspektiewe benader. Betreffende die woordsoort is 71.1% van die neologiesmes selfstandige naamwoorde, wat die naamwoordelike aard van Engels bevestig. Inhoudswoorde soos selfstandige naamwoorde, adjektiewe,

bywoorde en werkwoorde beslaan ongeveer 96% van die neologiesmes. Te oordeel na woordvorming is, in dalende volgorde, die drie belangrikste metodes waarmee neologiesmes gevorm word samestelling, afleiding en samesmelting. Volgens die vorm wat die samestellings, wat meestal selfstandige naamwoorde is, aanneem, is hulle in dalende volgorde oop, koppelteken- en geslote samestellings. 623 samestellings vorm meer as die helfte van die neologiesmes wat kragtige bewys bied dat samestelling die mees frekwente metode is wat gebruik word om neologiesmes te vorm. Betreffende neologiesmes wat deur afleiding gevorm is, is die meeste ook selfstandige naamwoorde. 170 uit 300 neologiesmes wat deur afleiding gevorm is, het reeds as afleidings van trefwoorde in OALD 9 verskyn. Rakende 34 samesmeltings is 75% van hulle gedeeltelik van aard, wat daarop dui dat ten minste een woord tydens die skep van 'n samesmelting in sy volledige vorm is. Betreffende die nuwe woorde met streeketikette is byna 80% geëtiketteer as behorende tot Britse en Noord-Amerikaanse gebruike, 'n aanduiding van die verskuilde Anglo-sentrisiteit. Die status van sommige woorde wat as neologiesmes beskou word, is betwisbaar, aangesien hulle lank reeds gebruik word. Die impak van die wetenskap en tegnologie op die insluiting van neologiesmes in OALD 10 is taamlik duidelik. Daar is steeds heelwat ruimte vir verdere navorsing rakende OALD 10.

**Slutelwoorde:** NEOLOGISME, OALD 10, WOORDSOORT, WOORDVORMING, STREEKETIKET, ANGLO-SENTRISITEIT, WOORDEBOEKHERSIENING, WETENSKAPLIKE EN TEGNIESE INVLOED

## 1. Introduction

Neologisms almost spring up on a daily basis. So do new senses of the current words. As the record of a language, dictionaries need to reflect such a trend as timely as possible. In doing so, neologisms and new senses will be included in dictionaries, while those obsolete or outdated words and senses will be deleted. This is also true of learner's dictionaries. English learner's dictionaries, including the "Big Five", have had a history of timely revision. This is due to the fact that their compilers are well aware that dictionary contents start to become outdated the moment they come to print (Cheng and Liu 2019: 62). Timely revision can help make a dictionary up to date, thus helping attract the potential buyers and boost the sales of dictionaries.

The revision of the 10th edition of the printed *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (henceforth OALD 10) can be a case in point. In recent years, the frequency of its revision spans about 5 years. For example, OALD 9 was published in 2015 while OALD 10 in 2020. The compilers of OALD 10 added 1204 neologisms, among other things, in revising OALD 9. Technically speaking, a neologism is "a new word or expression, or a new meaning of a word" (Lea and Bradbery 2020: 1044). However, in this article, it only refers to the words or expressions newly added to the headword list of OALD 10. The inclusion of neologisms will be discussed in terms of their part-of-speech labeling, word-building, regional labeling, and so on. Doing so can also shed light on how to revise a dictionary of similar or other types in terms of integrating neologisms. Neologisms or new words will be used interchangeably below to refer to those newly added words or expressions in OALD 10 hereafter.

## 2. On the inclusion of neologisms in OALD 10

In the following subsections, the inclusion of neologisms will be discussed from the perspectives of part-of-speech labeling, word-formation, and regional labeling respectively.

### 2.1 Part-of-speech analysis of neologisms

All the 1204 new words included have been classified in terms of their part of speech as presented in Table 1. They are arranged, percentagewise, in the decreasing order. It needs to be explained here that "suffix", "idiom", "combining form" and "abbreviation" cannot be labeled with parts of speech. However, to present a holistic picture of part-of-speech labeling of the neologisms included in OALD 10 to readers, they are still included in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Part of speech analysis of neologisms

Part of speech	Total	Percentage
noun	891	71.1%
adjective	175	14%
adverb	46	3.7%
abbreviation	42	3.4%
verb	20	1.6%
noun & adjective	10	0.8%
exclamation	7	0.6%
noun & verb	6	0.5%
adjective & adverb	2	0.2%
preposition	1	0.08%
interjection	1	0.08%
suffix	1	0.08%
idioms	1	0.08%
combining form	1	0.08%

The fact that nouns figure predominantly among 1204 neologisms integrated into OALD 10 could help speak for the preference of English of using nouns (cf. Lian 1993: 105, and Liu 2010: 3, on the nouny nature of English). According to Table 1,

nouns add up to 891, and account for over 71.1% of the total neologisms. Heterosemy, with a word serving more than one part of speech, is common in many languages, including English. Among the neologisms, 10 words are both nouns and adjectives, while 6 are nouns and verbs simultaneously. If the 16 nouns are added to 891, the percentage of nouns will be further increased. The strikingly low percentage of verbs among the neologisms could also help support such nature. In other words, the large percentage of nouns among the neologisms helps demonstrate the static rather than the dynamic nature of English.

Several other simple facts regarding the part-of-speech labeling of the neologisms need to be noted as well. The percentages of adjective, adverbs and verbs are larger than 1%, coming in the decreasing order. Nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs account for almost 96% of the neologisms included. In other words, the over-majority of neologisms are content words rather than functional ones. As for exclamations, interjections and prepositions, judging by their percentage, they are so few, and are almost negligible. In the meantime, in addition to 42 abbreviations, there are also other lexical items included therein, including one "suffix" (-es), one "idiom" (betcha), and one "combining form" (-oriented). However, all those items can hardly qualify as a "word" in its traditional sense, even if they are included in the headword list in OALD 10. It is almost impossible to analyze them in terms of part-of-speech. However, the relatively high percentage of abbreviations proves that since the beginning of this century, abbreviations have increased greatly with the wide use of internet (Gao 2022).

## 2.2 Classifications of neologisms according to word-formation

All the neologisms included in OALD 10, except "-es" and "-oriented", can be analyzed in terms of their word-formation. Generally speaking, the main methods for creating a new word are compounding and derivation. Shifting or conversion, one of the three major word-formations, is an important way to generate a new sense of a neologism (Gao 2020: 52). In the following section, discussions will center on the neologisms formed through compounding, derivation and blending, since the neologisms formed in the three ways make up nearly 80% of those included in OALD 10. As for other ones formed in other ways, they are simply mentioned in passing.

### 2.2.1 Compounding

Compounds constitute more than half of the neologisms included in OALD 10, which can appear as open, tight or hyphenated ones. 623 neologisms are compounds, accounting for 51.7% of the total. This provides strong evidence for compounding to be "the most frequently used way of creating neologisms" (Gao 2021: 25). According to OALD 10, a compound refers to "a noun, an adjective or

a verb made of two or more words [...] written as one or more words, or joined by a hyphen. Travel agent, dark-haired and bathroom are all compounds" (Lea and Bradbery 2020: 311). Comparatively speaking, a compound creates less cognitive load for a language user than a newly coined word, which helps to explain why compounds figure so prominently among the neologisms in OALD 10.

Compounds, as suggested by Lea and Bradbery (2020), can consist of multiword forms, hyphenated words or two or more words combined to orthographically form one word. Words like "angel investor", "attitude problem", "family values", can serve as multiword forms. These compounds add up to 513, accounting for 82.3% of the total compounds in OALD 10. Hyphenated compounds, like "cash-rich" and "nail-biter" total to 62, which accounts for 10% in OALD 10. Compounds consisting of two or more words spelt as one, such as "wingsuit" and "upvote", total 48 altogether, which takes up 7.7% in OALD 10. Just like nouns figure prominently in the neologisms included, the over-majority of compounds are nouns. The total adjective and adverbial compounds are so few, thus negligible.

### 2.2.2 Derivation

Derivation is one of the major ways by which the neologisms in OALD 10 are coined. It is also a major way of creating a new word, which attaches an affix to an existing word. According to Table 2, it can be seen that 300 words are coined by derivation, accounting for almost 24.9% of all new words incorporated into OALD 10. However, it needs to be pointed out that 170 neologisms are already listed as derivatives in OALD 9, accounting for 56.7% of all derivatives. They are counted as neologisms for the reason that they are listed among the headwords. Meanwhile, 130 neologisms are not, which accounts for 43.3% of all derivatives. Among the derivatives, the suffixes used most are "-ly", "-ed" and "-ing". The former is mostly used to make an adverb, while the latter two are for making adjectives. The top three prefixes for coining the neologisms are "un-", "self-" and "non-".

**Table 2:** Analysis of neologisms using derivation

Neologisms appearing as derivatives in OALD 9	Neologisms not appearing as derivatives in OALD 9
170	130
56.7%	43.3%

### 2.2.3 Blending

Apart from compounding and derivation, the third major way to make the neologisms in OALD 10 is blending. In total, 34 new words are coined by blending, summarized in Table 3. In Table 3, beginning and end refer to the beginning and the end of a word respectively.

**Table 3:** Analysis of the neologisms formed by blending

How a blend is formed	Total	Percentage
<b>Word+end</b>	5	14.7%
<b>Word+beginning</b>	5	14.7%
<b>Beginning+word</b>	16	47.1%
<b>Beginning+beginning</b>	7	20.6%
<b>Beginning+end</b>	1	2.9%

According to Table 3, five ways have been adopted to coin a blend in OALD 10. Nearly half of the blends are coined with the beginning part of a word mixing with a word, such as "Brexit", "e-publishing" and "alter-right". 5 blends are made up of a word mixing with the ending part of another one, including "mansplain", "hackathon", and so on, while another 5 a word mixing with the beginning part of another one, such as "Big Pharma" and "sales rep". In the meantime, 7 blends are made up of the beginnings of two words, like "prelim". Only one blend, "vlog", is made up of the beginning of "video" and the end of "blog". It can be seen clearly that over 75% of the blends above are partial in nature. That is, at least one word to make a blend is in its full form.

### 2.3 Classification of neologisms in terms of regional labels

Neologisms with regional labels in OALD 10, in terms of their distribution, clearly displays the trace of Anglo-centrism. That is, the majority of the new words with regional labels belong to British and North American usages, while those from other English-speaking regions make up less than 20% of the total with such labels. Altogether, there are 278 words with regional labels in OALD 10, accounting for 24.6% of the total neologisms. Table 4 shows the distribution of those neologisms with the regional labels.

**Table 4:** The distribution of neologisms with regional labels

Regional label	Total	Percentage
<b><i>NAmE</i> (including 16 US and 2 Canadian usages)</b>	168	60.4%
<i>BrE</i>	50	18%
<i>AustralE</i>	4	1.4%
<i>AfrE</i> (including 11, 18 and 7 East, South and West African English usages)	36	12.9%
<i>AsianE</i> (including 16 Indian and 4 East-Asian English usages)	20	7.3%

According to Table 4, 150 words belong to North American English (*NAmE*), making up 54% of those with regional labels. However, there are another 16 words labeled US usages and 2 Canadian ones. Therefore, the total neologisms belonging to North American usages add up to 168, accounting for 60.4% of those with regional labels. Besides, another 50 neologisms are labeled British English (*BrE*), accounting for 18%. There are another 4 from Australian English. 11, 18 and 7 neologisms are labeled as belonging to East, South and West African English respectively. Those labeled with *AfrE* constitute 12.9% of the total with regional labels. 16 Indian English neologisms account for 5.8% of those with regional labels, while 4 South-East Asian ones account for 1.5% of the total. It can be seen that among the neologisms with regional labels, the over-majority of them are from countries with English as the first language, predominantly British and North American English.

It is true that dictionary compilers should stay as neutral as possible and should not show personal bias in compiling a dictionary. This is also true of the compilers of learner's dictionaries like OALD 10. Even if the compilers of OALD 10 may claim to be unbiased in the inclusion of new words with regional labels, a closer look at those words has revealed a different picture to us. This is quite similar to the fact that Dr. Johnson's definition of oats as "A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people" (Johnson 1755, cited in Tian 2017), which reveals him to be quite biased. Therefore, it can be argued that in the selection of the neologisms to be included in OALD 10, the socio-economic impact of a country or region may have played a very important role. The distribution of the neologisms with regional labels in Table 4 could reveal the hidden Anglo-centrism in integrating neologisms into OALD 10. This could have something to do with the socio-economic development and political power of those countries with English as their mother tongue. However, it can still be argued that the inclusion of Asian and African English neologisms can be further increased so as to reveal English to be true "world English".

### 3. Two more points worthy of being noted

#### 3.1 Should those words be counted as neologisms?

As has been pointed out in the beginning of the article, quite a number of words or expressions newly integrated into the headword list of OALD 10 are not neologisms in their true sense. A closer look reveals that actually a lot of the words or expressions have been in use for a very long time and are not new at all. They make the study objects of the present study simply because they are integrated into the headword list for the first time in OALD 10. For example, "Achoo", an interjection, according to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/achoo>), has been coined between 1800 and 1900. This also applies to "-es", plural or third person singular marker, which has long been in use. Combining form "-oriented", meaning "directed towards something or made or adapted for a particular purpose" (Lea and Bradbery 2020), may have been used by people for a long time as well, since there are more than 20 compounds relevant to it.

Therefore, when dictionary compilers claim they have integrated a certain number of new words and senses into a dictionary in revising it, the potential buyers may need to take a second thought. The reason is that the compilers and the buyers stand on different grounds. For the compilers, they may stand with publishers. Therefore, the exaggerated neologisms integrated could make the biggest selling point to attract the potential buyers. However, for dictionary buyers, one of the main reasons to draw them to buying the revised edition of a dictionary could be the neologisms in their true sense. For them, it is such neologisms that keep the dictionary up to date.

Meanwhile, some words have not been counted as new words, since they are just the minor modifications of those already present in the headword list in OALD 9. Such words add up to 50. In this study, they are excluded from analysis. The modifications mainly include the deletion or addition of "the", "hyphen", plural marker like "s" or "es", etc. For example, in OALD 10, "Top ten" merely deletes "the", while "the" is added to "Med", the clipping of the Mediterranean Sea, thus making "The Med". "rough-and-ready" removes the hyphens to be "rough and ready", but a hyphen is added to "roommate" to make "room-mate". The plural form "school days" in OALD 9 is changed into "school day" in OALD 10. And "luvvy" in OALD 9 is changed into "luvvie" in OALD 10. Words like them can hardly justify themselves as neologisms newly integrated into OALD 10, thus excluded from analysis.

#### 3.2 The influence of the sci-tech on the coinage of neologisms

It is understandable that with the development of human society and the advances in science and technology, esp. internet technology, a lot of words are coined, including "EdTech" (education technology), "e-business" (electronic business),



"vlog" (video blog) and so on. This is well reflected in the coverage of neologisms in OALD 10.

One of the features that people are influenced by technology, especially Internet technology, is that abbreviations or informal words or phrases are used, thus introduced into OALD 10 accordingly. For example, *thanx* (thanks), *plz* (please), and *BFF* (best friend forever) are all informal form of their original ones and are often used in email or online social platforms. One of the possible reasons that people use such writing is that they want to communicate casually with their online pals. And this writing would be fast by using abbreviations and even emoji(s) to express their feeling. Anyway, such neologisms find their way into the list of headwords.

There are also other neologisms which are more evidently relevant to technological advances, "live stream" and "live feed" can serve as cases in point. The former means "a live broadcast of an event over the internet" (Lea and Bradbery 2020: 920), while the latter means "the broadcast of sound or video over the internet from a live (not recorded) source, for example a concert or sports event" (Lea and Bradbery 2020: 920). The inclusion of such words in the headword list implies the potential impact of technology on people, especially internet culture.

The impact of science and technology on neologisms can also be reflected in the conversion of part of speech in newly added words. Google and WhatsApp™ can help illustrate the view very well. People begin to add the verb usage to the name of IT companies or apps. For example, Google, a well-known search engine for netizens, derives its verb usage of using Google to search for someone or something. And WhatsApp™, an app that allows people to chat through texting messages, sending photos or short videos, also develops its own verb usage, i.e., to use WhatsApp to chat with someone.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article, the neologisms included in OALD 10 have been approached from different perspectives. In terms of the part of speech, the over-majority are nouns, which could speak for the nouny nature of English. Judging by the word-formation, the top three ways to form the neologisms are compounding, derivation and blending. Compounds consisting of more than one word seem to take precedent over the hyphenated or one-word forms. Most derivatives are also nouns. However, more than half of the neologisms formed by derivation have appeared as derivatives in OALD 9. For blends, most of them are partial in nature, which means they include one full word. When it comes to the new words with regional labels, over 80% are labeled as belonging to British and North American usages, a sign for the hidden Anglo-centrism in integrating such words. Actually, the status of some words as "new words" is questionable since they have been in use for quite some time. In addition, the impact of science and technology on the inclusion of neologisms in OALD 10 is quite great.

The present study can be expanded in different ways. One can conduct a comparative study of the inclusion of neologisms in OALD 10 and other English learner's dictionaries to see what similarities or differences may surface in terms of their principles for guiding the inclusion of the neologisms. In addition, most neologisms are furnished with examples. It would be interesting to investigate to see if the principles for providing examples for the neologisms are the same as those for the existing words in the dictionary. Besides, apart from neologisms, various other aspects regarding the revision of OALD 10 also deserve our attention, such as definition, examples, outside matter.

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