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ОСВІТА, НАУКА ТА ВИРОБНИЦТВО: РОЗВИТОК І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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SHAKESPEAREAN IMPACT ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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During the sixteenth century, the English language grew exponentially as it coined new words and imported many others from other languages. As David Crystal in “The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language” tells us, word borrowing is at a peak during Shakespeare’s lifetime: from Latin and Greek English borrows technical words like *virus*, *catastrophe*, *encyclopedia*, *fact*, *species*; from or via Spanish it borrows *tobacco*, *port (wine)*, *cannibal*, *canoe*, *mulatto*, *hurricane*; words are also borrowed from Italian and French. Both foreign words to fill linguistic gaps, and foreign words as synonyms for extant English words come into the language, stimulated by increased learning, exploration, printing, and trade [1].

Rapidly expanding English was developing as a foreign language to its own native speakers. It was hard for people to keep up. English was becoming a language which had to be learned – and one of the means by which this learning was promoted was the theatre [2, p. 73].

William Shakespeare is considered the greatest writer of plays. He expressed his understanding of human nature in extraordinarily rich language in his plays and poems. He had the largest vocabulary of any English writer and made lots of new words and a large number of expressions which are now part of Modern English. His success and fame during his lifetime meant that his plays had a great effect on English.

His greatest contribution was coinage – neologisms. Oxford online dictionary defines a neologism as “a newly coined word or expression” [3]. Shakespeare created words by changing nouns into verbs, changing verbs into adjectives, connecting words never before used together, adding prefixes and suffixes, and devising words wholly original.

The full version of the Oxford English Dictionary lists around 2,200 words for which the earliest citation is in the works of Shakespeare. The linguist David Crystal claims about 1,700 of these can plausibly be claimed to have been invented by the Bard. According to Crystal, about half of that number are still in the language today and so would be easily understood by anyone watching his plays being performed today by modern companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company. Of the 17,677 words in his collected writings, around 10% are first recorded by Shakespeare and thus can be argued to have been coined by him. These include words such as: *courtship*, *extract*, *accommodation*, *horrid*, *premeditated*, *excellent*, *obscene*, *lonely*, *frugal*, *reliance*, *critical*, *majestic* [4, p. 9].

Some reasons for creating so many new words by Shakespeare were as follows: he didn’t have a word that would fit exactly what he wanted to say, or he had a word, but it didn’t fit in iambic pentameter (a type of meter of poetry).

Not all of Shakespeare's neologisms caught the popular imagination and entered usage, for example, *anthropophaginian*, which he used to mean “cannibal”. There are many other words first recorded in Shakespeare which have not survived. About a third of his Latinate neologisms fall into this category. Some examples are: *appertainments*, *cadent*, *exsufflicate*, *protractive*, *questrist*, *soilure*, *tortive*, *ugenitured*, *unplausive* etc. [1, p. 63].

It must also be remembered that just because a word is first recorded in one of Shakespeare's writings does not necessarily mean that he invented it. The word could have been in popular usage already, whether as a common word or a dialect word but not previously recorded in writing. Alternatively, it could have been written in documents which have either not survived to the present day or which have not yet been studied by scholars.

That said, the sheer number of words which are first recorded in Shakespeare means that surely he must have coined a great many of them.

As well as inventing wholly new words, Shakespeare also had something of a disregard for the usual rules of written English, which enabled him to play with grammar. He used the *un-* prefix to create a number of new words such as *unlock*, *unveil* and *unhand* as well as more than 300 others. He also combined existing words to make new compound words, such as *blood-stained* and *bare-faced*.

Furthermore, he sometimes took existing nouns and made them verbs and vice-versa. A good example of this is the word *shudder*. Before Shakespeare, it is only recorded as a verb, but in “Timon of Athens” he used it as a noun. There are 200 similar examples in his works. He also used words that were already known, but added a new meaning. For example, the word *angel* in its religious sense dates back to Anglo-Saxon but in the sense of a lovely person it makes its first recorded appearance in the pages of “Romeo and Juliet”. Shakespeare is responsible for making far more new senses for existing words than he is for inventing words outright.

In addition to the number of words Shakespeare invented, he is also responsible for a large number of phrases which are still in common usage today. Some of these, such as *once more unto the breach*, *dear friends* may be recognized as of Shakespearean origin, but most people would be surprised which everyday phrases flowed from the Bard's quill: *the milk of human kindness* (Macbeth), *vanish into thin air* (Othello), *cold comfort* (The Taming of the Shrew), *in a pickle* (The Tempest), *flesh and blood* (Hamlet), *foregone conclusion* (Othello), *in my mind's eye* (Hamlet), *a laughing stock* (The Merry Wives of Windsor), *one fell swoop* (Macbeth), *lie low* (Much Ado About Nothing), *a sorry sight* (Macbeth), *be cruel to be kind* (Hamlet).

William Shakespeare lived during an era when the English language was loose, spontaneous, and relatively unregulated. A non-standardized, free-wheeling, madly expanding language is a source of difficulty, but also a great source of verbal liberty and enjoyment [2, p. 77]. The theater was a constant two way exchange between learned and the popular; it was a two way process in which literary language gained ascendancy in the process toward standardization and descriptive popular speech enriched the literary language. Shakespeare added hundreds words and phrases to it, and that is the sign of an unmatched genius.

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