

Assignment 3: New expressions

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Objective

This assignment explores how new expressions emerge, how speakers create language, and why some expressions spread while others never catch on. You will find existing slang expressions, create expressions of your own, and use course concepts to analyze both.

Overview

You will write six mini-dictionary entries (Part 1) and a short reflection (Part 2). The six entries come from two sources:

- **Found:** three slang expressions you find online, for example on social media, forums, or other online communities. Slang from a language other than English is welcome; include an English translation. Choose expressions that were not already discussed in class and do not appear in the sample entries.
- **Created:** three new English expressions you create yourself.

Part 1. Mini-dictionary entries

Write each of the six entries using the template at the end of these instructions. Each entry has four parts.

1. **Expression.** The word or phrase. For non-English slang, add an English translation.
2. **Definition.** What it means. If the meaning shifts with context, explain how.
3. **Origin** of *Found expressions* or **formation** of *Created expressions*.
 - o *Found expressions:* Trace where the expression came from, including its linguistic roots and any influence from other languages. Label your account as *documented* (a source supports it), *possible* (plausible but unconfirmed), or *uncertain*. Do not present a guess as fact. You do not need to find the first-ever use of an expression.
 - o *Created expressions:* Name the word-formation process(es) you used, such as compounding, blending, clipping, affixation, initialism, conversion, semantic shift, or borrowing (check class slides and textbooks if you are not sure). Then explain what meaning gap the expression fills.
4. **Three examples of use.** Label the context of each, such as text message, spoken conversation with friends, or formal email.
 - o *Found expressions:* Use real examples where possible, and mark each example as empirical (real usage) or constructed (written by you). For empirical examples, give the URL and the date you accessed it if applicable.
 - o *Created expressions:* Write your own examples to show how you imagine the expression being used.

Part 2. Reflection (about 300 words)

Compare the three expressions you found with the three you created. Address question 1; questions 2-4 are optional.

1. What did you find interesting or challenging about finding and creating these expressions?
2. What linguistic patterns did you draw on to create your expressions? How do they compare with the found slang in how they are formed?
3. Who uses, or might use, your expressions, and in what situations? What might using them signal about a speaker's identity or group membership?
4. Which expressions are more likely to spread beyond their original community, and why? How might their meanings or connotations shift over time?

Connect your discussion to at least one concept from class, such as language variation, language change, word formation, language contact, or language and identity. There is no single correct answer; you are graded on your reasoning.

Grading criteria (10 points)

Criterion	Points	What I look for
Completeness	1	All six entries, each with all four parts, plus the reflection
Clarity and organization	2	Entries follow the template; definitions, examples, and the reflection are clear and well structured
Linguistic analysis and course concepts	3	Accurately explains each expression's meaning, origin or formation, and use in context, citing sources and acknowledging uncertainty. The reflection applies at least one course concept accurately to your own examples.
Creativity	4	Created expressions use word-formation patterns deliberately, and the choices are explained; each fills a plausible meaning gap and is shown convincingly across contexts. Cleverness or popularity is not graded.

Useful recourses

Oxford word of the year <https://corp.oup.com/word-of-the-year/#our-approach>

Oxford English Dictionary via UB libraries <https://research.lib.buffalo.edu/OED>

Google Books Ngram Viewer <https://books.google.com/ngrams/>

Class mini-dictionary and guidelines

After submission, I will compile everyone's entries into a LIN 207 mini-dictionary, shared only with this class and without contributor names.

- Opting out: If you do not want your entries included, write "Do not include in class dictionary" at the top of your submission. This does not affect your grade.
- Privacy: Do not include private conversations or anyone's identifying information.
- Content: Do not choose slurs or sexually explicit expressions. Pick expressions you can discuss respectfully, and avoid presenting any social group as speaking in one uniform way.
- AI use: Your expressions, definitions, examples, and reflection must be your own work, not generated by AI tools based on generative LLMs.

Entry template

Copy this block for each of your six entries.

Entry [1–6] · [Found / Created]

Expression:

Translation (non-English slang only):

Definition:

Origin or formation:

(Found) [Account] + label: [documented / possible / uncertain]

(Created) [Word-formation process(es) + meaning gap it fills]

Examples:

1. [Context] [Example use] — (Found) [empirical: URL, date accessed / constructed]
2. [Context] [Example use] — (Found) [empirical: URL, date accessed / constructed]
3. [Context] [Example use] — (Found) [empirical: URL, date accessed / constructed]

Sample entries

For your reference (You may not use *rizz* or *draftlock* in your own submission.)

Entry 1 · Found

Expression: rizz (also rizzed, rizz up)

Translation (non-English slang only): N/A

Definition: Charm or skill at attracting someone romantically; as a verb, "rizz (someone) up" means to flirt with someone successfully. Often used jokingly, and sometimes for charm in general ("the professor has rizz").

Origin or formation:

(Found) A clipping of "charisma" that keeps the middle syllable, which is unusual for English clippings (compare "info," "phone"). Popularized around 2021 by streamer Kai Cenat and spread through Twitch, TikTok, and gaming communities; later converted from noun to verb ("rizz up"). Named Oxford University Press's 2023 Word of the Year .

Label: documented (Oxford Languages, Word of the Year 2023 announcement)

Examples:

1. [Spoken, celebrity to audience] "have no rizz whatsoever, I have limited rizz." — empirical: [<https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year-2023/>], accessed [2026-10-16]
2. [Spoken, among friends] "Don't even try, you have zero rizz." — constructed
3. [Social media caption] "my dog has more rizz than me" — constructed

Entry 2 · Created

Expression: draftlock (noun; verb: to draftlock)

Translation (non-English slang only): N/A

Definition: Getting stuck rewriting a message so many times that you never send it, or send it far too late.

Origin or formation:

(Created) Compounding: draft + lock, following the "-lock" pattern in "gridlock" and "deadlock," where "lock" means a stuck state. Right-headed (a kind of lock, caused by drafts); also usable as a verb through conversion ("I draftlocked").

Meaning gap: English has "writer's block" for not writing and "ghosting" for ignoring messages, but no word for anxious over-editing that looks like ghosting from the outside.

Examples:

1. [Group chat] "sorry for the late reply, I was in full draftlock" — constructed
2. [Spoken, to a roommate] "Just send it. You've been draftlocking that text for an hour." — constructed
3. [Semi-formal email to a coworker] "Apologies for the delayed response; I'm afraid I draftlocked this email over the weekend." — constructed