

## Lexical innovations in social discourse

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### Abstract

The article studies an important social project "Word of the Year", which originated in Germany in 1971, and has been held regularly since 1977. The relevance of this study is due to the growing interest in sociolinguistics and the increasing influence of socio-political changes on the enrichment of the composition of the language. An attempt is made to analyze social discourse of recent years based on the words selected by the German Language Society and Oxford Languages as Word of the Year in 2015-2020. The criteria for selecting the words of the year are discussed. A comparative analysis of the social discourse of Germany and Great Britain was carried out and the most relevant topics reflecting the mood of society were selected, as well as the manifestation of these moods in lexical innovations. The main thematic word clusters are given, similarities and differences of German and British social discourse are discussed. Specific attention is paid to the analysis of lexical innovations reflecting the most sensitive topics of the year gone by, which has determined the social and political discourse. A comparative analysis of the innovations of German and English dictionaries showed that the most common topics for the two language communities were politics, ecology, and legal issues. The most significant topic of 2020 was the coronavirus pandemic, which was reflected in the appearance of lexical innovations nominating a new reality. A hypothesis was also put forward about which lexical units could take a firm place in the language, and which appeared only occasionally.

**Key words:** word of the Year, social discourse, common topics, Corona Pandemic, climate crisis, environment

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### Introduction

Modern culture is characterized by increasing rates of social and economic development, globalization processes, and constant enhancement of digital technologies (Krainiukov, Spiridonova, 2020). The rapid changes taking place in all spheres of modern society cause the appearance of words in a language that serve to nominate new concepts. Lexical innovations may become part of the spoken language for many years, and may become obsolete and lose their relevance after a short period of time (Fedorova, Tsyguleva, Vinnikova, Sishchuk, 2018). Lexical innovations are reflected and studied in many projects, one of them being "Word of the Year". The project "Word of the Year" started in 1971 in Germany. Words of the Year are selected by independent linguists, dictionary-publishing companies, language societies of many other countries: Germany, the USA, the UK, Austria, Switzerland, Russia, etc. For instance, in 1991 The American Dialect Society carried on the German tradition of selecting the most important English words or expressions in the public sphere during a specific year. The list determined by a vote of independent linguists over the years 2015 – 2019 included:

Singular they (as a gender-neutral pronoun) in 2015;

Dumpster fire (an exceedingly disastrous or chaotic situation) in 2016;

Fake news (disinformation or falsehoods presented as real news or actual news that is claimed to be untrue) in 2017;

Tender age shelter (a euphemism for facilities in which children of illegal immigrants are detained by government officials) in 2018);

“(My) pronouns” was recognized for its use as an introduction for sharing one’s set of personal pronouns (as in “pronouns: she/her”) in 2019.

In this article we are looking at words that were considered particularly relevant and topical in Germany and Britain in 2015 - 2020, starting with the most popular. The emphasis is made on lexical innovations in modern social discourse. The aim is to reveal specific features and patterns of their emergence. For this purpose Words of the Year named by the German Language Society and Oxford Languages 2015 – 2020 are analyzed. The list of Words of the Year in Germany is published by the German Language Society (Bär, 2017). In Britain three most popular and recognized dictionaries – Cambridge, Oxford and Collins - choose their words based on the strong resonance and interest it has attracted. Words of the year are words that have become communicatively relevant in the current year, or reflecting subjects and situations that have played a significant role in social and political discourse. [1: 3]. The selected words best describe important events of the year, turning points in political, economic, cultural and technical development (Timralieva, 2013). These words serve as indicators of social progress reflecting visions and moods in society as well as assessment of certain episodes (Timralieva, Novikova, 2019).

Nowadays mass-media make a great impact on society (Beck, 2010; Burkhart, 2002). It means that mass-media cover most events of the social life and therefore can be regarded to be an essential part of the present communicative structure (Hepp, Höhn, 2013). Mass-media globalization due to the wide spread of Internet communication resulted in sparking a massive public outcry even if the event happened in a remote place and does not seem to have any direct consequences for the country. German mass-media have always been under influence of political events. The words chosen as Words of the Year illustrate this trend. More than a half of them are connected with the current political situation in the country, European Union, and the world.

### **Literature review**

Word of the Year in Germany was first named in 1971, and since 1977 this project has become annual. A professional jury composed of board members and researchers of the German Language Society selects words from several thousand (there were 2,300 in 2014) media texts, and, having analyzed them at the end of each year, the jury selects 10 words that played a decisive role in the public discourse of the current year; these words characterize especially important topics, “even if we are talking about words which are well-known, perhaps already forgotten, but which acquire a new meaning, or about so-called one-day words” (Bär, 2000). The decisive factor for selection is not so much the frequency of use of the word, as its significance and resonance, which caused the event associated with its appearance in the discourse.

The Word of the Year 2019 in Germany was Pension of respect referring to a decent state payment to elderly men and women who have low pension despite long employed service. The idea proposed by the Federal Minister of Labour Hubertus Heil to respect work experience was largely supported. The topic was widely discussed which resulted in choosing Pension of respect as Word of the Year.

Oxford Languages was among the first institutions to have a Word of the Year. The Oxford Word of the Year is a word or expression that we can see has attracted a great deal of interest over the last 12 months. Every year, candidates for Word of the Year are debated and one is eventually chosen that is judged to reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of that particular year and to have lasting potential as a word of cultural significance. The shortlist is compiled with the use of various language research programs, including the Oxford Corpus. It accounts for about 150 million words of modern English used in web-based publications. Dictionary editors also take part in searching for new and emerging words. Having sophisticated software at hand Oxford Languages team analyses and select the final Word of the Year on the basis of all available information. It should be noted that the Word of the Year need not have

been coined within the past twelve months but it does need to have become prominent or notable during that time.

The Oxford Word of the Year 2019 is climate emergency. Climate emergency is defined as ‘a situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it’. The climate issues have become a global concern and they are so widely discussed that the UN Secretary-General has called them ‘the defining issue of our time’. Oxford Languages claim that usage of the phrase climate emergency increased steeply over the course of 2019, and by September it was more than 100 times as common as it had been the previous year.

Along with Oxford Languages a number of other dictionaries put together a list of notable words. To choose the Word of the Year the Cambridge Dictionary editors use data from the website, blogs, and social media. The main goal is to identify and prioritize new additions to the Dictionary. Speaking about the words selected as markers of the year, we often deal with new meanings, use cases, therefore in most cases we are talking about lexical innovations (Rosen, 2000). One of the examples is the word upcycle, which became Cambridge Dictionary’s Word of the Year 2019. The word is defined as the activity of making new furniture, objects, etc. out of old or used things or waste material. One of the reasons why it has become popular is because of the positive idea behind it. At times it may seem impossible to stop the progression of climate change. Yet, upcycling is an easy-to-do thing that everyone can do to start making a difference. Upcycling was first added to the online dictionary in 2011, and searches have doubled in 2019. According to the opinion expressed by Cambridge Dictionary, lookups of upcycling reflect the momentum around individual actions to combat climate change. Youth activist Greta Thunberg gave a tremendous impetus to environmental protection. Vegan, flexitarian and plant-based diets are becoming more popular, her handbook *There is No Planet B* is read and followed all over the world, fashion designers upcycle clothes to create their latest collections.

Collins English Dictionary relies on online dictionary and reference resources using corpora – vast databases of language. It collaborates with many mass-media. For instance, the Collins announced climate strike its Word of the Year 2019. The term was first recorded in 2015 when pupils skipped school to protest over global warming - but the movement has grown significantly over 2019. BBC News first appeared to use the term on its website in February 2019, and used it again the following day when covering the wave of protests in the UK.

It is difficult to predict whether the Word will make into dictionaries or not and whether they will retain. It mostly depends not on the word itself but on the relevance of the topic or event that made it emerge.

### Methodology

The Words of the Year by the German Language Society and Oxford Languages are given and discussed below. It should be noted that they describe events and processes that were important for both, the countries (Germany and Britain) and the European Union. Some of the Words had a global outreach.

The top three Words of the Year chosen by the German Language Society 2015-2020 look as follows:

**Table 1 – Word of the Year**

	<b>Word of the Year 2015</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Flüchtlinge	refugees
2.	Je suis Charlie	(I am Charlie) - the words that residents of France and other states took to the streets after the terrorist

		attacks in Paris
3.	Grexit	– said about possible exit of Greece from the European Union
	<b>Word of the Year 2016</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	postfaktisch	(post-factual) – derived from the English term post-truth, means the predominance of emotions over facts in political and public discussions. In the post-factual era, the truth itself does not lead to success, but its reflection, “the truth passed through the prism of the senses”
2.	Brexit	A portmanteau word (Britain + Exit)
3.	Silvesternacht	(Sylvester night, New Year's Eve). In 2016, this phrase acquired a negative meaning in connection with the attacks on women and other acts that were committed on the night of January 1, 2016 in Cologne by groups of young migrants from North Africa and Arab countries.
	<b>Word of the Year 2017</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Jamaika-Aus	(the end of the Jamaica coalition) – used to talk about the about the black-yellow-green coalition negotiations failure.
2.	Ehe für alle	(marriage for all) - marriage license for same-sex couples.
3.	#MeToo	In German, this hashtag sounds ›ichhauch‹. Since October 2017, a campaign against sexual harassment has been launched under the #MeToohashtag. Millions of women shared their own traumatic experiences in social networks.
	<b>Word of the Year 2018</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Heißzeit	(Hot period) - the word is formed by analogy with Eiszeit (Ice Age) and is a reflection of public concern about climate change in the early 21st century. The comparison with the ice age in the derivational model gives this phenomenon an epoch-making and global character.
2.	Funklochrepublik	(Republic with blind spots in cellular communication) - we are talking about poor cellular coverage, especially in rural areas. This issue was seriously debated during the parliamentary elections.
3.	Ankerzentren	(Anchor centers) - through the establishment of anchor centers, the Big Coalition tried to solve the problem of uncontrolled migration. The first root of this portmanteau word anchor not only symbolizes strong fixation, but is also an acronym for the words Ankunft - arrival, Entscheidung - decision making, Rückführung - sending back. In the anchor center, the refugees were planned to be housed until a decision was made on their future fate.
	<b>Word of the Year 2019</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Respektrente	(Pension of respect) – pension for men and women who have work experience of many years but do not get a decent financial support from the state. The Federal Minister of Labour Hubertus Heil suggested

		a motto “Life-long employed service deserves respect” and coined a term “pension of respect” that refers to basic payment.
2.	Rollerchaos	(Chaos because of electric scooters) – electric scooters have become an issue in many German towns as their owners do not always follow safety rules and park them in inappropriate places.
3.	Fridays for Future	The loanword reflects moods and trends of the rebellious youth that are ready to fight for their future in protest meetings.
	<b>Word of the Year 2020</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Corona-Pandemie	Coronavirus pandemic, an epidemic of a new virus that quickly turned into a pandemic– the most expected word of the year, it concerns the subject people were thinking about all the year 2020.
2.	Lockdown	(Lockdown) – state measures to restrict social contacts.
3.	Verschwörungs- erzählung	(The story of the conspiracy) - the statement of former US President Donald Trump that he allegedly became the victim of a major fraud during the election.

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The usual Flüchtlinge was quite expectedly chosen Word of the Year 2015, acquiring a different connotation in the situation of the current crisis. The topic of refugees is presented by such lexical innovations as durchwinken, the ironically used quotation “Wir schaffen das”, Armutseinwanderung, as well as a positive semantics compound word - Willkommenskultur - due to the sincere desire of German society to promote the integration of migrants.

Words of the Year also include lexical units that nominate the processes taking place in world politics. Certainly, the terrorist threat could not but be reflected in Words of the Year: this was the alliteration of Terror-Tourismus, and the borrowing of Je suis Charlie, which did not require translation into other languages, the whole world was then in solidarity with the Parisians. Contamination Grexit - the main theme of 2015 - whether Greece will withdraw from the Eurozone due to a large debt. The fusion of Greek and Exit became a model for a number of neologisms (Brexit, which we will surely see among Words of the Year 2016, Schwexit, etc.). A sensitive and debatable topic - Putin’s policy towards Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea - could not but find its reflection in the political discourse. Rußlandverstehler is used to speak about the citizens of Germany, supporting the current policy of Russia.

The topic of espionage was debated a lot in German society in those years - in 2015 it was represented by the neologism Selektorenliste, and in 2013, due to the scandals associated with personal data bases collected by the US National Security Agency

(NSA), Word of the Year was Big Data. The disclosure and subsequent scandals lead to the appearance of another neologism - "Freund hört mit" - a modification of the Third Reich slogan "Feind hört mit", which was used ironically in the GDR for the Stasi.

High-profile scandals related to financial fraud and deception, which were condemned by German society, also generated lexical innovations: Protz-Bischof - in connection with the construction of a bishopric, which cost a huge amount of money, as well as the Mogel-Motor alliteration about the scandal that became known all over the world, associated with the Volkswagen engine manufacturing.

The topic of football is always relevant and discussed in German society. For example, in 2014, the year of the world football championship, two new words were coined, which were selected by experts as Words of the Year: Götzseidank and Freistosspray. The resulting neologism is an interesting wordplay, based on the original expression Gottseidank (thank God) and the surname of football player Mario Goetze, who scored the decisive goal in the 113th minute in the finals of the World Cup 2014. Thanks to this goal, Germany became the winner of the world championship once again, hence the neologism's third place in 2014.

The year 2016 was characterized by major changes in the world political arena related to the presidential elections in the United States. All year long, the press covered the election campaign, the result of which came as a surprise to many. "Postfaktisch" rates first in Words of the Year, characterizing the distorted attitude to the truth in our era. The unexpected result of the election was reflected in the expression Trump-Effekt. The scandal connected with the attacks of refugees on the night of Sylvester caused a huge public outcry; in connection with it the word "Silvesternacht", which earlier meant a merry celebration of the New Year, acquired social relevance and became one of the most significant arguments in the discussion on the problem of refugees. In general, the whole year was characterized by significant political events and their coverage in the media, and most of Words of the Year are associated with the analysis of these political events.

In 2017 the word that reflects the current political situation, "Jamaikaaus", rated first. Negotiations on the creation of a black and yellow-green coalition were not successful, and the media immediately responded with ironic: "Ja-majka? "Nein-majka!" However, it should be noted that the main focus of Words of the Year 2017 shifted from the political to the social area. The words Ehefüralle, #MeToo, Echokammer, hyggelig reflect phenomena that also concern people who are otherwise far from being interested in politics. It is revealing that among the sensitive social concepts that caused lively debates in the media and social networks, Words of the Year 2017 included the word "hyggelig", denoting the Scandinavian way of life with its inherent comfort and slow pace.

In 2018 Word of the Year was Heißzeit, which characterizes public concern about climate change. The global challenge of the XXI century is transition to low-carbon development of world industrial sector (Cherepovitsyn, Ilinova, Evseeva, 2019). The neologism Diesel-Fahrverbot, also included in the top Words of the Year 2018, indicates the increasing role of green-thinking in society, the awareness of the need to reassess the role of man in the nature-society system (Vakhnin, 2016). Environmental problems, along with political ones, reflect the prevailing public sentiment in 2018. Other major themes that affected the society were personnel changes in domestic policy (strafbelobigt), major foreign policy events (Brexit-Chaos, Handelskrieg) and social and political debates on migration (Ankerzentren, Wirsindmehr, die Mutter aller Probleme).

The Word of the Year in 2019 became a neologism «Respektrente» - pension of respect. Low payment despite many years of employed service attracted public attention. The topic was widely discussed. The shortlist of words is connected with social, political and environmental issues. For instance, loan phrase «Fridays for

Future» describes protest meetings of young people that took place on Fridays. It was an attempt to raise general awareness of climate change. Another important ecological environmental problem is reflected in the word *Bienensterben* – death of bees – as a result of pesticides use. The words *Rollerchaos* and *Donut-Effekt* (doughnut effect) are about the problems of big city life. Traditionally, the attitude of German society towards domestic and foreign policy is reflected in the shortlist of words. They are *brexitmüde* – tired of Brexit, *Oligarchennichte* – scandal with vice-chancellor of Austria who was caught meeting with a supposed niece of the Russian oligarch and agreeing to engage inappropriate actions.

The main trend of 2020 was the social changes associated with the reaction of people to the emergence of a new virus, which radically changed not only the usual course of life of people all over the planet, but also, to a large extent, the language picture of the world. The dictionary immediately reacted with the appearance of a new vocabulary nominating the disease itself (*das Virus SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19, Coronavirus-Erkrankung 19, Corona*), as well as describing the reaction of society to the subsequent events. The word "*Coronapandemie-coronavirus pandemic*" was recognized in Germany as the word of the year 2020. The second place in the list of words of the year 2020 was taken by the Anglicism "*Lockdown-lockdown*", reflecting the restrictions that followed the announcement of the pandemic. As I. G. Gerasimova rightly notes in her research, "the English language no longer belongs to British culture, it belongs to the whole world" (Gerasimova, 2020). Seven of the top ten words of 2020 reflect events related to the coronavirus epidemic and their perception by society. The acronym *AHA* (5th place in the rating), an abbreviation made up of words denoting the rules of behavior written during the pandemic "*Abstand-distance, Hygiene - gi - hyena, Alltagsmaske-mask*" can be mentioned here. The lexeme "*Triage-triage, sorting of patients*", which occupies the 7th place, reflects the tragic need to make a choice in favor of the most promising patients in conditions of a shortage of medical care at peak morbidity. The eighth place in the rating was taken by the composite "*Geisterspiele*" - ghost games, a bitter irony that reflects the experiences of Germans, fanatical football fans at the ban on the presence of spectators at matches. In this lexeme, we observe the phenomenon of semantic derivation based on the metaphorical transfer of meaning. Semantic derivation is a process as a result of which a word gets a new meaning and which is characterized by anthropocentricity, i.e. the correlation of the worldview to the knowledge and ideas of native speakers (Tokareva, 2020). The phrase "*Bleiben Sie gesund! - Be healthy!*", which has become popular as never before took the 10th place (Bär, 2020). The shortlist of Words of the Year put together by Oxford Languages 2015-2020 looks as follows:

**Table 2 – Word of the Year**

	<b>Word of the Year 2015</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	'Face with Tears of Joy' emoji.	A pictograph, officially called the 'Face with Tears of Joy' emoji.
2.	Ad blocker	A piece of software designed to prevent advertisements from appearing on a web page.
3.	Brexit	A term for the potential or hypothetical departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union.
	<b>Word of the Year 2016</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Post-truth	An adjective defined as 'relating to or denoting

		circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’.
2.	Adulging	The practice of behaving in a way characteristic of a responsible adult, especially the accomplishment of mundane but necessary tasks.
3.	Alt-right	(In the US) an ideological grouping associated with ex-treme conservative or reactionary viewpoints, characterized by a rejection of mainstream politics and by the use of online media to disseminate deliberately controversial content.
	<b>Word of the Year 2017</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Youthquake	A significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people.
2.	Antifa	A political protest movement comprising autonomous groups affiliated by their militant opposition to fascism and other forms of extreme right-wing ideology.
3.	Broflake	A man who is readily upset or offended by progressive attitudes that conflict with his more conventional or conservative views.
	<b>Word of the Year 2018</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Toxic	The adjective is defined as ‘poisonous’ and first appeared in English in the mid-seventeenth century from the medieval Latin <i>toxicus</i> , meaning ‘poisoned’ or ‘imbued with poison’.
2.	Big Dick Energy (BDE)	An attitude of understated and casual confidence
3.	Cakeism	The belief that it is possible to enjoy or take advantage of both of two desirable but mutually exclusive alternatives at once.
	<b>Word of the Year 2019</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Climate emergency	A situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.
2.	Climate action	Actions taken by an individual, organization, or government to reduce or counteract the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, in order to limit the effect of global warming on the earth’s climate.
3.	Climate crisis	A situation characterized by the threat of highly dangerous, irreversible changes to the global climate.
	<b>Word of the Year 2020</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1.	Coronavirus	The disease caused by the novel coronavirus, has infected tens of thousands of people worldwide.
2.	Lockdown	A period of time in which people are not allowed

		to leave their homes or travel freely, because of a dangerous disease (Cambridge dictionary, 2021).
3.	Remote working	The practice of an employee working at their home, or in some other place that is not an organization's usual place of business (Cambridge dictionary, 2021).

The choice of the words in 2015 shows the importance and wide spread of IT technologies. There were other strong contenders from a range of fields but the emoji was chosen as the ‘word’ that best reflected the ethos, mood, and preoccupations of 2015. The important events in the political life and possible changes within the European Union resulted in emerging two portmanteau words – Grexit and Brexit. Both of them were included in the shortlists, the former by the German Language Society, the latter by Oxford Languages (2021).

The top-three Words of the Year 2016 show that political issues were discussed in society and there was a lot of controversy and unrest. On the other hand, the word *adulating* shows the pursuit of balance.

The Words of 2017 reflect further changes in political and social life. As can be seen, all layers of society were involved in ongoing transformations, they had their own views and undertook certain steps. The word *broflake* combines two prominent trends of twenty-first century lexical innovation: the appropriation and subversion of terminology from one’s political opponents, and the popularity of compounds and blends with *man-* and *bro-* to refer to male behaviour and characteristics.

The 2018 winner word toxic is used in various contexts, both in its literal meaning and metaphorical sense. It collocates with many nouns, most popular of them were *chemical, masculinity, substance, gas, environment, relationship, culture, waste, algae, air*.

Currently, the earth is facing many disheartening environmental issues as a result of modern life and industrialization. Today’s environmental issues, such as loss of biodiversity, air pollution, and global warming are affecting each and every human, animal and vegetation on this planet (Dallyono, Sukyadi, 2019, p.472). The Words of 2019 are all about public response to the climate change. As can be seen public awareness has heightened significantly. Literally everyone has something to say and do to fight against climate change. A lot of scientists all over the world try to solve environmental problems and offer different solutions such as carrying out works to optimize the traffic organization in megacities, improvement of road construction; equipment of megacities with public transport, corresponding to the norms of the Euro-3 eco-logical standard, i.e. with the use of fuel with improved environmental characteristics; improvement of the system of state control over the protection of atmospheric air (Pashkevich, Petrova, 2017).

According to Oxford Languages’ monitor corpus of English 2020 was called Unprecedented Year (Oxford languages, 2021) and was characterized by rapid language change, first of all connected to new social reality caused by Coronavirus. In almost real time, lexicographers were able to monitor and analyze seismic shifts in language data. A number of new words and phrases entered the general lexicon in 2020. It is a rare linguistic phenomenon to observe such a rapid global spread of certain terminology as has occurred with the COVID-19 pandemic (Foster, Welsh, 2021, p.200). All the words were so much actual that it was impossible to name the best one. Two words – Coronavirus and Covid-19, which was firstly recorded by the World Health Organization, became the most frequently used in 2020. People all over the world face new reality. The languages of the world instantly responded to the new realities that needed a nomination. In this study, we present an analysis of coronavirus neologisms included in the Words of the Year rating in German and English.

However currently there are many studies confirming the presence of such coronavirus neologisms in other languages. So, A. Zholobova in her research explores coronavirus innovations in the Spanish language (Zholobova, 2021). In 2020 and today, more and more attention is paid to self-employment, when, in the face of an exacerbated situation related to the spread of coronavirus, the authorities recommend people to work remotely (Iliasheva, Mahova, 2021). Almost everyone in the world has had to learn about public health concepts such as *social distancing*, *droplet transmission* or *flattening the curve* to avoid getting sick (Piller, Zhang, Li, 2020). One more word *Lockdown* appeared in English language and, unsurprisingly, *remote* and *remotely* with reference to working at home (not in common in the general sense) were extremely used in spring 2020. Virtual meetings resulted in appearance of the words *on-mute* (when nobody online can hear you) and *waist-up dressing* (the way to dress up only upper bodies as a visible part during on-line meetings). In spring 2020 in a period of lockdown all the institutions faced the challenge to continue educational process on-line (Savelyev, Zherlygina, Kuvanov, 2021). Online learning in this time period can be challenging because it is believed that performance of the students is significantly influenced (Daniel, 2020). The relevance of using distance learning techniques was confirmed by the situation of mass remote work of higher educational institutions during COVID pandemic (Murzo, Chuvileva, 2021). So the word expression *on-line education* reflected a new reality for not only English-speaking students, but became the international terms. The issues of global warming and occurrence of the greenhouse effect are widely discussed on a global scale (Blinova, Romasheva, Stroykov, 2020). Among other words mentioned as words of unprecedented year we could not avoid the new word *bushfire* which was one of the top words at the beginning of 2020. The severe bushfire season caused more than 2000 houses to burn, at least 34 people have died and likely over one billion mammals, birds and reptiles were lost. One of the main threats to environmental safety is the territory reduction of natural objects untouched by humans (Yurak, Dushin, Mochalova, 2020).

The analysis of Words of Year provides a lot of data that can be used by linguists, historians, politicians, sociologists and general public. It is valuable food for thought that allows us to think about what we are doing now, whether we are doing well and where our actions may bring us tomorrow.

The analysis of the words recognized as Words of the Year in 2015–2020 showed that the most sensitive issues for German society during that period were political events inside the country and on a global scale, the terrorist threat, financial scams and scandals related to the collection of personal data by secret services, as well as global environmental issues and ways of solving them.

The British society was more concerned with climate change and social awareness of environmental issues, IT technologies – their benefits and threats, political events and appropriate treatment of fine matters. 2019 became the year of environmentalism when top three phrases begin with *climate* in spite of drastic political alterations that happened in Britain – general election, UK withdrawal from EU. It means that Brits are used to having a busy political life and take it for granted, but growing concerns and even anxiety over climate change are more important for the time being among all generations.

## Results

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### **Discussion**

Do Words of the Year subsequently become usual and be recorded in dictionaries of neologisms? A neologism is a new lexical unit, or a new meaning of a word or expression, which appeared and became widespread at a certain stage of language development and is subsequently perceived as the language norm (Steffens, 2011).

Researchers of the German Language Institute (Institut für deutsche Sprache, IDS) compile a list of words - potential neologisms (about a thousand lexical units) based on the processing of texts and audio materials, as well as the analysis of academic literature corpus. These words are cross-checked against the linguistic corpus of the German Language Institute (Deutsche Referenzkorpus), which is the world's largest contemporary collection of written texts in German and includes fiction, non-fiction and academic texts (a total of about 25 billion words). Words used in the corpus for a decade are excluded from the lists. Thus, the list of neologisms consists of words that have a sufficient frequency of use in recent years, but were not used several years ago. Since 2011, the analysis using a similar methodology has been conducted annually. The experts choose 10 lexemes that appear in the current year, have become widespread and can potentially become usual in subsequent years. The selection of neologisms for such a short period is not an easy task for linguists, especially since nonce formations and jargonisms often cannot be included in the list.

We came across a small number of lexical units named Words of the Year in 2013-2020 in the lists of neologisms, for example, Words of the Year 2013 GroKo and falsche Neun. Some Words of the Year remain in the language for a longer period of time. For example, Word of the Year 2010 Wutbürger (citizens disappointed with government policies and actively protesting against it) stuck in the active lexicon, and is still used (in 2014 and 2015 news reports). Its definition can be found in the Duden, Multitran and other dictionaries). The word Nacktscanner (a scanner, which scans clothes) became widely used in 2008, and was ranked among the 2008 neologisms.

The word *kompromat* that was in the shortlist 2017 has a curious story to tell how it made into the English lexicon and dictionaries. Having existed in English for many years it was of little use until 2017 when a spy scandal broke out. The word can be described as a boomerang loanword as it came to English from Russian where, in its turn, it was borrowed from English.

### **Conclusion**

Words of the Year rarely become usual due to the fact that, although the criterion of communicative relevance is at the basis of the selection of lexis in both cases, the meanings “new” and “more or less included in everyday speech ” are critical for the innovation project, as well as compliance with the requirements for entry into the dictionary of neologisms. However, these criteria are not obligatory for the project “Word of the Year”, it can include words that have long been in the language, or nonce formations.

These lexical innovations are a kind of markers that reflect the most relevant and controversial topics of the year and are often associated with fierce political and public debate, statements of political figures, sports events that have influenced the life of the country. The words that take the first places in terms of frequency of use and significance reflect the events that marked the current year. It should be noted that many words of recent years in Germany and Britain describe the same events in the areas of politics (e.g., Brexit), environmental concern (e.g. climate change), public reaction (e.g., social unrest).

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