TIMELY NEOLOGISMS

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For many years Time magazine has had a reputation for introducing new words into the English language. Every issue of Time contains hosts of words which appear novel, or unfamiliar, or are just plain coinages. The bulk of these are destined never to appear in standard dictionaries, but occasionally a few find their way into the mainstream of the English language and are recognized by lexicographers.

Recently I decided to examine a single issue of Time in great detail for neologisms: the European edition dated June 6, 1977. I read every word of the editorial material, but omitted advertisements. I marked down about 400 words and phrases -- all those I felt had the slightest possibility of being neologisms. However, I excluded all proper names except where the item concerned was not actually a proper name but merely derived from one. For example, I wasn't interested in names such as Jody Powell and Hamilton Jordan (two of President Carter's aides who were featured in the cover story), but I would have been interested in terms such as Powellian and Jordanlike had they appeared (which they didn't).

I first checked these words and phrases against the main body of Webster's Third New International Dictionary, discarding any which were already in that work. For example, I discovered that marathoners, moneyman, podiatrist and spokeswoman -- all words which looked like out-and-out neologisms to me -- were all in the Third. I was not interested in recording a word or term as a neologism if the difference between Webster's Third and Time was merely the presence or absence of a hyphen: Time listed afterhours, bomb-proof, burnt-orange, byproduct, co-chairman and ocean-going, whereas Webster's had after-hours, bombproof, burnt orange, by-product, cochairman and oceangoing. It is odd that terms which Webster's Third was spelling solidly sixteen years ago are spelled with a hyphen by Time. I had imagined, perhaps wrongly, that Time would be well ahead of Webster's in scrapping hyphens and spelling words solidly.

Initially, I had resolved not to consider meanings when adjudging terms to be neologisms or not. Some words appearing in Time had such completely different meanings to those given in Webster's Third that I was forced to stop and reconsider. For example, Webster's Third indicates that Burnsian is an adjective descriptive of the poet Robert Burns or his writings; Time magazine, however, uses the adjective to describe Arthur Burns (Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board) or
his beliefs. As another example, Webster's Third defines fishnet as "netting fitted with floats and weights or with a supporting frame often oval for catching fish". Time uses the same word in referring to a red fishnet shirt. Obviously, the word is being used attributively here with a much less precise meaning -- the shirt doesn't have floats and weights attached, but it probably bears some resemblance to a fishnet! After further thought, I decided to reject Burnsian and fishnet (and others like them) as neologisms. Had I accepted them, I would have been forced to consider ever-finer shades of definition.

After checking Webster's Third, I was left with just under 250 items which didn't appear in that dictionary. I next checked these against the Random House Dictionary, and found the following eleven listed there: anti-intellectual, half-century, half-right, mens sana in corpore sano, nonracial, top-level, unpoliced, well-cultivated, and well-traveled. In an attempt to identify those suspected neologisms which had appeared in at least one dictionary produced after Webster's Third and the Random House, I then checked the remaining items against the Eighth Edition of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. The following ten items appeared there: down-home, downplaying, high-energy, Maftosi, misallocation, overachievers, skateboarding, snowmobilers, teenyboppers (still spelled with a hyphen by Time!), and zapping. Proceeding backwards in time, I finally checked the Second Edition of Webster's New International Dictionary, which first appeared in 1934. (Surely, anything that appears in a dictionary of this vintage hardly qualifies as a neologism!). A thorough check revealed that the following twenty-four items were listed in that dictionary: apple-cheeked, cotton bale (with a hyphen in Time), ever-present, ex-president, far-ranging, five-minute, food-producing, four-hour, four-year, free-spirited, French-speaking, hyperventilate, long-sought, mild-mannered, six-legged, six-mile, ten-hour, ten-mile, ten-minute, three-day, three-hour, three-week, two-hour, and two-legged. No doubt a diligent search of other dictionaries would have reduced the list somewhat; I leave this as a task for other readers.

By this stage, my original list of around 400 items had been whittled to just under 200, given in the list at the end of this article. As most of the terms are reasonably self-explanatory, I haven't attempted to provide definitions (probably the only word in the list that requires further definition is Adidases: sports training shoes bearing the trade-name Adidas). Next to each item, though, are a few words showing the context in which the neologism (identified by +) was used.

A few oddities are worth commenting on. As can be seen from the last quarter of the list, Time is very keen on prefixing a number to a word or phrase, especially "year-old". I don't know why Time resorted to the abbreviated forms ft. and lb. rather than spelling them out in full. Furthermore, Time appears to be internally inconsistent in that both 1 1/2-mile and mile-and-a-half were used. Surely there is a preferred house style? Perhaps the strangest item on the list is 7:59-minute -- no doubt this means 7 minutes and 59 seconds, but how is it pronounced?
To me, the most astonishing thing about the list of neologisms is that the great bulk are formed from familiar prefixes and suffixes, by joining together otherwise familiar words, by the use of initials, or by the importing of foreign terms. Only a few, such as Adidases, klunkers and tokamaks, are really novel, bearing little relation to anything else. Perhaps Time's reputation for word-coining is somewhat overrated?

actress-singer  
Adidases  
aerobics  
a/k/a  
anti-doomster  
anti-org  
arms-limitation  
artist-intellectual  
aspiring-photographer  
best-remembered  
best-researched  
blizzard-like  
body-building  
brawnstorm  
Carrollian  
CB-radio  
Celebans  
center-right  
cholesterol-free  
combat-ready  
company-financed  
compromesso storico  
co-responsible  
decade-long  
deuterium-tritium  
disease-carrying  
double-digit  
doughnut-shaped  
droopy-eared  
duty-whipped  
eco-doomsters  
ecofreaks  
eight-nation  
eight-year  
eight-year-old  
emotion-filled  
encounter-group  
ex-dictator  
ex—nightclub hostess  
ex—senator  

... + daughter of Ethel Barrymore  
... they argue the virtues of their + points will be awarded to readers.  
... The Greatest, + Muhammad Ali  
+ Wilfred Beckerman.  
... many are + types  
... a new + agreement  
... he is an +  
... his + wife Margaret  
... running is certain to be the + sport  
... that + snow job  
... the + film  
Another profitable +  
Yet it is likely to burnish the + reputation.  
... the skateboarding and + crazes  
... Sumatrans, Javanese, +  
... the vaguely + coalition  
... listening to some + windbag  
... the most + troops in the entire US Army  
... the + (historic compromise)  
... are + in this situation  
... a + history of creating trouble  
... a + mixture  
... the + mosquitoes  
... inflation is bumping back up to + levels.  
... tokamaks are toruses, or + chambers  
... a pack of + hounds  
... the miserable, + jogger  
.. against those he calls "the +"  
.. indulgent toward youthful +  
.. a 20,000-mile, + tour.  
.. a 20-month to + sentence  
.. grim farmer whose + son spent four days  
.. four + days  
.. + therapy.  
.. + George Papadopulos is locked up  
.. an + on the lam  
.. Defeated + Dicarlo.

Franquismo  
frozen-smile  
fumble-fingered  
general-service  
gieldy samoch  
glibsters  
glittery-eyed  
good-ole-boy  
G. O. P. - run  
government-sea  
gray-and-white  
half-billion  
home-leave  
insulin-making  
iron-pumpers  
jet-hopping  
kilometer-deep  
klunkers  
lap-swimmers  
law-and-order  
lightning-fast  
longer-range  
long-governing  
macho-minded  
made-for-TV  
Mafia-like  
middle-level  
mid-1990s  
mile-and-a-half  
Mob-laundered  
Moluccans  
neo-Franquist  
North-South  
nooseblow  
one-eighth  
one-liners  
one-mile
isms, affixes, initials, didases, mention to is some-

is

ex-serviceman
ex-speaker
extra-powerful
ex-wife
feet-on-the-ground
Fiji-born
five-month
fix-its
flood-control
four-sentence
Franquismo
frozen-smile
fumble-fingered
general-services
gieldy-samochodowe
glitsters
glittery-eyed
good-ole-boy
G.O.P.-run
government-sanctioned

gray-and-white-faced
half-billion
home-leave
insulin-making
iron-pumpers
jet-hopping
kilometer-deep
klunkers
lap-swimmers
law-and-order
lightning-fast
longer-range
long-governing
machine-gun-mounted
macho-minded
made-for-TV
Mafia-like
middle-level
mid-1990s
mile-and-a-half
Mob-laundered
Moluccans
neo-Franquista
North-South
noseblow
one-eighth
one-liners
one-mile

. . . an + 's scholarship . . .
Convicted + Fineman.
+ magnetic fields . . .
. . . the younger sister of Dayan's + Ruth.
. . . sturdy, + Undecideds who knew . . .
. . . a + financial wizard . . .
. . . jockey's unmatched + winning spree.
. . . +, tinkerers, image builders . . .
. . . flood-control project.
. . . poignantly personal + message . . .
. . . the second generation of + . .
. . . customary round of + receptions . .
+ softball, bowling and Ping Pong . .
. . . 1,500 + employees in Geneva . .
. . . similar + (automobile exchanges) in . .
. . . the commentary of + . .
. . . some + types run 100 miles a week . .
. . . the bumpkin + pose . .
. . . + Congress . .
. . . + small-time capitalists . . .
. . . the + miner . .
. . . the + dollars now being spent annually . .
. . . a paid + every two years . .
. . . potential + capability . .
. . . fanatical cyclists, joggers, + . .
. . . + financiers.
. . . a + security cordon . .
. . . from brand-new models to well-traveled + . .
. . . cyclists, joggers, iron-pumpers, + . .
. . . problems of + . .
. . . + electronic funds transfer.
. . . a + goal of integration . .
. . . Italy's + Christian Democratic Party . .
. . . + personnel carriers . .
. . . the region's + males . .
. . . a staple of + movies.
. . . with + governments . .
. . . + officials in the Franco regime.
. . . ready by the + . .
. . . her + run . .
. . . + money sticks to their fingers.
. . . young + grew up alienated from the Dutch.
. . . party whose image is actually + . .
. . . + relations . .
The all-important running one-handed + . .
Each gallon of sea water contains + gram . .
. . . + that serve to calm tempers . .
. . . around the + track . . .
one-quarter raised its prime + point, to 6 3/4 % ..
one-third at least +.
one-woman her + revue of musical theater ..
open-necked an + barong tagalog (formal shirt) ..
organic-food the + munchers ..
outpollute we can + anyone on earth.
Peace Corps—type a private + organization ..
post-imperial sympathy and + breast-beating.
post-independence a + civil war ..
post-Watergate major differences in + America.
Presleymania + reigned. A frenzied girl tried to jump ..
pro-growth the + side of the debate ..
racquetball singles tennis, +, squash, rowing ..
re-engineered production of insulin by + bacteria.
reporter—researcher And then there is + Paul Witteman ..
rifle-toting + Dutch police ..
rope-jumpers iron-pumpers, lap-swimmers, + ..
rope-skipping a demonstration of +.
rust-colored cozy with + carpet ..
Saturday-morning the conventional mayhem of + TV.
scandal-sniffing outraged by + reporters ..
semi-exalted this + position ..
seven-man + board of governors ..
seven-minute broke into tears during a + speech ..
seven-nation a + swing through Latin America.
seven-state following their idol on a + tour ..
shoe-pinched ministering mostly to + fat ladies ..
sitcom Middle age is a + joke ..
skinnies The + of the world ..
slumdwellers concerns of factory workers and +.
Soviet-built sell his 1977 Lada (a + Fiat) ..
state-run the + television network ..
sunken-chested a tousled, frazzled, + scarecrow ..
sweat-producing bodies as strong, + machines.
sweat-stained tossed a + scarf to the peons below ..
swine-flu last year's abortive + program ..
talked-to + plants grow better.
tax-haven offering + advice for the wealthy.
ten-year-old His greatest attachment was to + Alice ..
third-ranking + the U.S. officer in Korea ..
time-temperature-density the + combinations at which the fusion ..
tokamaks used in fusion experiments are called +.
twelve-member the + Federal Open Market Committee ..
twelve-year-old one + girl ..
twenty-five-year-old + John Holewinski collapsed during the race ..
two-week a grueling + ordeal.+
uh, yes, that's very interesting.
ultra-marathon
ultra-private
una gran bienvenida
undecideds
un-Marxist
used-car
U.S.-educated
U.S.-made
U.S.-sponsored
wall-to-wall
well-publicized
world-class
ZANU
ZAPU
zero-growth
1 1/2-mile
3 1/2-hour
7:59-minute
8-ft.
15-man
15-mile-a-week
18 1/2-minute
20-mile
20-minute
20-month
24-year-old
29-paragraph
29-year-old
30-year-old
34-year-old
35-year-old
41-year-old
42-year-old
45-acre
47-year-old
50-mile
52-mile
72-page
75-year-old
79-year-old
81-year-old
89-lb.
95-lb.
95-ton
100-mile
.. a 52-mile +..
.. the couple's + wedding ceremony ..
.. promised her + (a great welcome) ..
.. + who knew the whole thing was bosh ..
.. an + solution: used-car capitalism.

There is no sign that + fever will end.
.. the + Methodist minister ..
.. + arms enter Rhodesia illegally ..
.. + Republic of Panama ..
.. compared with his + successor ..
Hong Kong is + skyline.
.. + state visits to Zambia ..
Typically, + is incessant, and terror ..
+ swimmers and distance runners ..
.. the Zimbabwe African National Union (+) ..
.. Zimbabwe African People's Union (+) ..
.. the + merchants have been creeping back.
Dotted around its + track are signs ..
.. a + session with the President ..
.. the bull leaped an + chain-link fence ..
.. the + Politburo.
.. the + runner ..
.. famous + gap in the White House tapes.
Marathoner at + mark in Aurora, Ill. race.
.. delivered a + broadside.
.. a + to eight-year sentence ..
.. relatively unknown, + alderman ..
.. 26th paragraph of a + story ..
.. a + runner sagged into a phone booth ..
.. + Pro Tennis Player Karen Krantzcke ..
.. a + labor lawyer from Seville ..
.. + Romance Language Teacher Alberto ..
.. + Miki Gorman ..
.. a + Mayville, Wis., businessman ..
.. his + New Hampshire farm ..
.. a + merchant who survived a triple bypass ..
.. a + foot race ..
.. a + ultra-marathon ..
.. a precisely detailed, + memo ..
.. a + dentist came up behind me ..
.. South Korea's + former President ..
.. the + 'La Pasionaria' ..
.. the + woman ..
.. + frame of Steve Cauthen ..
.. one of those + Bucyrus steam shovels ..
.. a West Coast + ultra-marathon ..
A computer which can transform printed text into spoken English has many potential applications, from automatic lookup of telephone numbers (replacing information operators) to reading machines for the blind. However, such a program is not easy to set up because of the imperfect correspondence between spelling and sound. In "Automatic Translation of English Text to Phonetics by Means of Letter-to-Sound Rules" (NRL Report 7948, Jan 1976), four Naval Research Laboratory workers describe a set of 329 rules for translating written words into sequences of phonemes from the 41-character International Phonetic Alphabet. Most rules do not simply make a one-to-one translation from letter to phoneme, but consider neighboring letters as well. Samples: an O after an initial C and before M is pronounced like a in father; a final E, if the only vowel in a word, is pronounced like the e in she. About one-sixth of the rules are full phonetic translations of common words with atypical pronunciations. Once a text has been translated into phonemes, the words can be synthesized by a Vocoder-like device and the correctness of the phonics judged by a listener. 96 per cent of the commonest thousand words (representing 65 per cent of English text) are pronounced correctly using these rules, but only 65 per cent of the rarest words (occurring once or twice in a million-word text) are correct. Most of the incorrect words are mispronounced in a single syllable and can be readily identified by the listener.

Would more rules help? Probably not too much, for an analogous 1974 Bell Telephone Laboratories study achieved only a 97 per cent success rate on the thousand commonest words using 850 rules.