The Internet gives new meanings to common words

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The fast pace at which the Internet has entered and transformed our lives has had an impact on the words and language we use. It is 20 years since the website Dictionary.com was created, and it has looked back at the past two decades to see how the worldwide web has created additional definitions to many commonly used words. Dictionary.com boss Liz McMillan says it's interesting to see, "just how much the rise of technology has shaped our word use over time". She said: "To commemorate the 20th birthday of Dictionary.com, we look back at 20 words that have expanded in meaning over the last 20 years." The website has been documenting new lexical uses since, "the dawn of the Internet era".

Perhaps one of the most easily recognisable changes is to the word "friend". For centuries, this word has been a noun. However, with the meteoric rise of Facebook, this very common word is now also a verb, as in, "Can you friend me". A variant of this word is "befriend," which means to become friends with someone (usually in the real and not cyber world). The word "tablet" used to commonly refer to a flat piece of stone, clay, or wood that is used to write on. Now it's more likely to mean a touchscreen device that is Internet-enabled. Other words that have new definitions include "cloud," "wireless," "viral," "tweet" and "troll". There's no knowing which new words will have new meanings in the next two decades.

Sources: *Telegraph / mercedsunstar.com / Dictionary.com*

Writing

New English words should not be used in other languages. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

fast pace / transformed / impact / dictionary / two decades / definitions / Internet / centuries / cyber world / tablet / touchscreen device / cloud / wireless / viral / troll

True / False

a) The article says the Internet has had no impact on the words we use. T / F

b) The website Dictionary.com started 20 years ago. T / F

c) The website looked back at language change over the past ten years. T / F

d) Dictionary.com has been tracking lexical change for two decades. T / F

e) The article says the biggest change to words is to the word "word". T / F

f) The article says Facebook is responsible for a new meaning. T / F

g) The word 'tablet" also means a flat piece of clay for writing on. T / F

h) The article says the word "troll" only came into the language last year. T / F

Synonym Match

1.	pace	a.	age
2	impact	b.	celebrate
3.	additional	c.	speed
4.	commemorate	d.	alternative form
5.	era	e.	growth
6.	recognisable	f.	extra
7.	rise	g.	describe
8.	variant	h.	effect
9.	refer to	i.	upcoming
10.	next	j.	identifiable

Discussion – Student A

a) What three English words do you really dislike (and why)?

b) What other words that technology has created can you think of?

c) Which is better – "friend me" or "befriend me"? Why?

d) What are the different meanings of the word "cloud"?

e) What are the different meanings of the word "wireless"?

f) What are the different meanings of the word "viral"?

g) How interested are you in the development of words?

h) What questions would you like to ask Dictionary.com?

Phrase Match

1. fast
2. transformed
3. created additional
4. technology has
5. since the dawn
6. the meteoric
7. A variant of this
8. in the real and not
9. a touchscreen
10. There's no

a. shaped our word use
b. word is "befriend"
c. of the Internet era
d. device
e. definitions
f. cyber world
g. pace
h. knowing
i. our lives
j. rise of Facebook

Discussion – Student B

a) What three English words do you really like (and why)?
b) How has the Internet changed the words in your language?
c) What do you think about what you read?
d) Do you like English words being used in your language?
e) How has the Internet changed your life?
f) What has changed in the past two decades?
g) What would life be like without the Internet?
h) How does the Internet help you study English?

Spelling

1. <u>rrtmodsnafe</u> our lives
2. the past two <u>aescedd</u>
3. created additional <u>infdoteisni</u>
4. <u>tmrmeoamcoe</u> the 20th birthday of
5. <u>xdapedne</u> in meaning
6. new <u>iaxcell</u> uses
7. easily <u>goslnicereab</u> (UK) / <u>iorcalgenzeb</u> (USA)
8. the <u>ctmieero</u> rise of Facebook
9. A <u>niarvat</u> of this word is "befriend,"
10. a touchscreen <u>eidcev</u>
11. Internet-<u>dlabeen</u>
12. "<u>iewessrl</u>," "viral," "tweet" and "troll"

Role Play

Role A – App
You think app is the best Internet-related word. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their words aren't so good. Also, tell the others which of these meanings are not so good (and why): cloud, wi-fi or tablet.

Role B – Cloud
You think cloud is the best Internet-related word. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their words aren't so good. Also, tell the others which of these meanings are not so good (and why): app, wi-fi or tablet.

Role C – Wi-fi
You think wi-fi is the best Internet-related word. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their words aren't so good. Also, tell the others which of these meanings are not so good (and why): cloud, app or tablet.

Role D – Tablet
You think tablet is the best Internet-related word. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their words aren't so good. Also, tell the others which of these meanings are not so good (and why): cloud, wi-fi or app.

Speaking – Tech words

Rank these with your partner. Put the ones you like most at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- app
- friend
- like
- cloud
- wi-fi
- viral
- troll
- tablet

Answers – Synonym Match

1. c	2. h	3. f	4. b	5. a
6. j	7. e	8. d	9. g	10. i

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.