

Language has evolved a great deal over time. For example, the English language took parts of many other languages, such as French from the Normans. Nowadays, language is still evolving like technology, with abbreviations of words or phrases becoming parts of pop culture (e.g. “sus” for suspicious) like how phones constantly get gratuitous amounts of cameras. The American Dialect Society consider these changes as factors of what word they think should be the word of the year. This will be shown in the following essay.

One factor of how the ADS choose their word of the year is change in general, but they look at specific changes that have been a large part of the year that has passed. For example, they chose the word of the year as “#blacklivesmatter” in 2014 to respond to the race equality movement, which was a prominent part of 2014. One type of change shown by this is change in society. Another example that shows this is when they made “pronouns” the word of the year in 2019 in reference to personal pronouns. This word of the year was based on a change that happened in society in the past, and was also done to acknowledge personal pronouns. Another example would be the word of the year for 2020, which was “Covid” in response to the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic that completely changed our lives.

This proves that changes in society are a factor of how the American Dialect Society chooses their word of the year.

Another factor of how the American Dialect Society chooses their word of the year is if the word has been widely used throughout the year. An example of this would be the word “because”, which was word of the year in 2013 as a word which introduced a noun (e.g. “Because reasons.”). This shows how language evolves, as people began to use the word “because” in a more colloquial way in more informal conversations, such as “Because human rights,” as opposed to using it in more formal arguments. People talk far less formally in the modern world, especially in communication (e.g. Texting), so the way “because” has been used more recently demonstrates changes in how we speak. Therefore, the ADS will consider how widely used a word has been in the year when thinking of their word of the year.

A third factor would be if the word links to a key event that has happened in the year, such as 2020’s word of the year being “Covid”. An example other than “Covid” would be in 2017, when the word of the year was “Fake News” in response to the first year of Donald Trump’s presidency where the phrase “Fake News” was used widely, remaining in use even when Donald Trump was voted out of the Whitehouse in 2020. Therefore, the ADS chooses their word of the year from words linking to key events that took place in the year.