In his essay, Slang in America, Walt Whitman wrote that the English language is one of change and growth.

View’d freely, the English language is the accretion and growth of every dialect, race, and range of time, and is both the free and compacted composition of all…It involves so much; is indeed a sort of universal absorber, combiner, and conqueror. (Whitman)

When consulting the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) for the meaning of a word, even a word that is commonly used in one particular sense so regularly that even conceiving of it in another may seem blasphemous, the inquirer may be bombarded with a slew of meanings, references, and dates so large that the task of understanding the word entirely may seem impossible. However, this is not necessarily the case. One may be right in assuming that there is only one proper way in which to use a given word, as its former meanings may now be obsolete. One may also discover that the word of inquiry may have several accepted uses in English that predate its most common conception, and are still accepted in certain instances. What a list of several connotations does is demonstrate Walt Whitman’s assertion that English is, in fact, a very involved and organic device.

For instance, during the better part of my early life, I had been under the impression that the word Lord was to always be capitalized, and was reserved for worship in reference to the Holy Trinity. As I became more educated, I’d learned that it was also a word used by the British to address a monarch or person in a position of power.
over the word’s user. However, a recent examination of *lord* in *The OED* rendered upon me a plethora of implications for the word dating back to c950 CE. Furthermore, it appeared as though my ignorance regarding *lord* was boundless, as I discovered that the word may also be used as a verb.

According to *The OED*, the word *lord* is defined as a master or ruler; and, in its earliest use, *lord* referred specifically to a master of servants, or a male head of a household (“Lord”). The etymological origins of the word lay in the combination of the two Old English words *hláf*, meaning bread or loaf, and *weard*, meaning keeper. The two words combined originally appeared as *hláfweard*, or *hláf-for-erd*. *The OED* says, “In its primary sense the word denotes the head of a household in his relation to the servants and dependents who ‘eat his bread,’” (“Lord”).

Around the year 950 CE, the English language finds its earliest recorded use of *lord* in *The Bible*; but, it is not in reference to Jesus Christ or God. *The OED* provides the following example in Old English to demonstrate how the word *lord* would have originally appeared, and does so in *The Bible*:

> Eadīe ǣcen ǣone miȝy cymes hlaferd his on-fand sua doende.

(qtd. in “Lord,” n.)

Again, the curious lay-reader would more likely than not have great difficulty retrieving any kind of discernable language from this. Luckily, *The OED* yields that its source for the previous excerpt came from none other than *The Holy Bible*. To be specific, the *OED*’s reference is from Jesus Christ describing the coming of God to Earth, and the appropriate behavior that a proper servant would display. In today’s English, the same sentence would appear something like, “Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when
he comes, will find so doing,” (Matt. 24.46). Taken out of context, this can seem confusing. But, the previous verses indicate that the master of servants implication can be recognized; because, as a whole this verse is taken from a metaphor that refers to a master of servants who leaves his house and appoints a servant in charge, and when he returns, finds that his servant has taken good care of his home.

However, the use of lord or hlaferd, no longer denotes simply a male ruler of a house or master of servants. True to Walt Whitman’s assertion that English is a language of growth, The OED’s definition of lord being a noun that refers to a master expanded its meaning and came to denote “One who has dominion over others as his subjects, or to whom service and obedience are due; a master, chief, prince, sovereign,” (“Lord,” n.). For a more contemporary example of lord being used in this sense, The OED cites a 1922 excerpt from James Joyce’s Ulysses. “The erring fair one begging forgiveness of her lord and master,” (qtd. in “Lord,” n.).

Lorde, Lard, Larde, and our modern Lord have each been religiously and theologically used in association with God and Jesus Christ. As I had mentioned earlier, this was my original understanding of the word. The OED cites that this use of the word can be traced back to sometime around 1000 CE. Still a noun, this exercise of the word is used to denote the divine reverence of Christianity’s Savior. Usually, it is seen as the Lord, my Lord, and our Lord (“Lord,” n.). It’s interesting to think back to the original meaning of the word: ‘breadkeeper’, in regards to this particular implication of the word. For the early English Christians, it suggests that they saw the Lord as servants saw their masters, as a kind of provider.
Lord is not merely a noun, though. According to The OED, around the year 1300, it had begun to be used as a verb. Now, it is only used as a verb “to act as the lord of” (“Lord,” v.), and its original meaning is obsolete. But one can see where our modern employment of the word comes from as the first implication of the word as a verb meant “To exercise lordship,” (“Lord,” v.).

Lord has such a rich and abundant history of meanings and uses that to not examine several of them would be objectionable, and possibly even deplorable to any self-respecting wordsmith. Then, what are some other prevalent uses of lord? Up until now, I’ve neglected to mention its connotation as a noun regarding an owner, possessor, or proprietor (“Lord,” n.). When this concept comes to mind, it’s hard to avoid thinking of a landlord. Thus, we get another implication for lord!

Lord also has a few strange meanings. I was amused to learn that The OED says lord is used astrologically to reference a planet that has particular control or influence over something. And, since Lord had been used as an exclamatory surprise and interjection since around 1384 CE (“Lord,” n.), I couldn’t help but laugh as I said to myself, “Oh, Lord! Jupiter is the lord planet, lording over the landlord’s lady in the year of our Lord 2009!”

My research and experience with The OED has lead me to the conclusion that the English language is full of words with histories like lord: full of change and multiple meanings. Another example can be seen with dizzy. Dizzy appears in The OED as both an adjective and a verb. I was under the impression that it was an adjective, and to be dizzy meant only to feel sick or nauseous. I was not wrong in assuming this, as this meaning is
one of several appropriate implications of the word; however, *dizzy* has a terminological abundance.

*Dizzy* finds its origins in several primitive linguistic forms. According to *The OED*, *dizzy* comes from the Old English *dysið*; Old Frisian *dusig*; Middle Dutch *dosech*; Low German *dusig*; Old High German *tusig*; Old English *dyslíc*, and *dyselíc*; Low German *düsel*; Middle Dutch *dûzelen*; and, the Dutch *duizelen* (“Dizzy,” a.). That’s quite the etymology!

The original etymological meanings of *dizzy* generally imply foolishness and giddiness. *The OED* cites the first documented use of the word c825 CE, and gives its first definition as, “Foolish, stupid.” Now, though, this use of the word is exclusive to certain dialects (“Dizzy,” a.).

My initial understanding of *dizzy* regarding nausea and sickness, according to *The OED*, became an inference of the word c1340 CE. Officially, the definition is, “Having a sensation of whirling or vertigo in the head, with proneness to fall; giddy,” (“Dizzy,” a.). To provide an example of this specific application of the word, *The OED* cites Jane Welsh Carlyle’s *Early Letters* in the excerpt, “With my heart beating and my head quite dizzy,” (qtd. in “Dizzy,” a.).

The work of William Shakespeare often incorporates the word *dizzy*. But, what’s interesting is that it often is not spelled the way it is spelled today, nor is it regularly employed in the same fashion. *The OED* references *King Lear* for an employment of the word in yet another different sense, regarding a production or accompaniment of giddiness. “How fearefull And dizie ’tis, to cast ones eyes so low,” (qtd. in “Dizzy,” a.). The word is spelled quite differently than it is now. In the Shakespeare excerpt, *dizzy*, or
dizie, is used implicitly in reference to how giddiness can be evoked by casting one’s eyes low.

What about the verb form of dizzy? The OED documents dizzy being used as a verb c888 CE. As a verb, the word’s etymology lies in Old English, and Old Frisian; and, dizzy meant “To act foolishly, stupidly,” (“Dizzy,” v.). In this sense, the word is now obsolete, and has given way to its more familiar and accepted form.

“To render unsteady in brain or mind; to bewilder or confuse mentally,” (“Dizzy,” v.). In this sense, the word came about in the year 1604 CE. The OED makes an indication to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin to illustrate a proper use of dizzy in this sense. “Giving her so many..charges, that a head less systematic and business-like than Miss Ophelia's would have been utterly dizzied and confounded,” (qtd. in “Dizzy,” v.). So, if I were to be dizzied by something, I would be confused or perplexed by it.

How we use the word dizzy today is a far cry from its original meanings, those being to describe something as foolish or stupid, and to act foolishly or stupidly. A quote from Eddy Peters, taken from the website ThinkExist.com, says about the English language, “Not only does the English Language borrow words from other languages, it sometimes chases them down dark alleys, hits them over the head, and goes through their pockets,” (Peters). In regards to dizzy, I found this to be a rather humorous application to the word, considering its vast etymological origins and meanings. The English language had taken a word, or group of words, from several languages meaning foolishness and giddiness, and somehow made the same word denote nausea and a sense of bewilderment.
If we refer back to Walt Whitman’s observation that English is a combiner, it’s hard not to think of how many words we hear on a regular basis that are combinations of words that already exist. Much of our accepted vernacular has come about through combining words to form new words that communicate new thoughts or concepts that have something to do with one of each of the words that make up the new word.

For example, text messaging has been somewhat of a cultural phenomenon that arrived sometime early in this decade. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines text messaging as “the sending of short text messages electronically especially from one cell phone to another,” (“Text Messaging,” n.). Recently, there have been laws implemented across the country prohibiting cell phone use while behind the wheel of a car. So, just as driving while intoxicated is a crime, so is driving while text messaging. If you take the dangerousness of being intoxicated while driving, and equate it with the dangerousness of text messaging while driving, what do you get? How does one linguistically associate driving while intoxicated to driving while text messaging?

Lorrie Lykins, in her article “Parents, Teens Need Safe Driving Contract” from The St. Petersburg Times, uses the word intexticated. In my understanding, to be intexticated means, roughly, to be so immersed in a text messaging correspondence that one loses focus on all other things around them.

We've had the discussion many times at our house of the idiocy of driving while using a cell phone and especially driving while "intexticated," and as confident as I am that my kid won't do it, there's always that nagging concern that the slightest distraction can lead to tragic consequences. (Lykins)
In this excerpt, Lykins describes her family's discussion of how dangerous it is to drive while *intexticated*.

Since the word is so new, it has no official documentation regarding its etymology. However, it appears to be rather clear that it came about as a play on *intoxicated* in combination with *text messaging*, in specific regards to driving while engaging in the activity of text messaging. *Wordspy.com*, a website that acts as a guide to new words, lists the word as an adjective, and offers the definition, “Preoccupied by reading or sending text messages, particularly while driving a car,” (Wordspy).

The word does have a noun inflection. One can be in a state of utter *intextication* (Wordspy). Though seldom used now, I wouldn’t be surprised if in the future young people are described as being *intexticated* with each other.

The *OED*, as well as the popular dictionary *Merriam-Webster*, both contain no entry for the word *intexticated*. However, that does not mean that it is not a word with valuable linguistic connotations. As a matter of fact, several words that are used in regular communication cannot be found in most dictionaries. Like *intexticated*, the word *twitterzine* is a noun, and does not appear in either of these dictionaries; however, it is a popular term that has been introduced in the past year or so, and is generally a reference to a magazine published via Twitter, the social networking site.

Heather Havenstein, in her article, ‘Confounded by Twitter? New Wall Tweet Journal to Guide Users,’ uses the word *twitterzine* to describe a series of publications that have since been released aimed at guiding users through the Twitter landscape.
The mission of the new “Twitterzine” will be “to deliver high-value informational content to a growing number of bloggers who want to benefit by learning and putting into place the best Web 2.0 strategies, tools and techniques.” (Havenstein)

A *twitterzine* operates in the form of short, one-hundred-forty character posts that appear on the [Twitter](https://twitter.com) website. A *twitterzine* is a kind of flash-information device that primarily aims to spread information as quickly as possible.

The website [Twittonary](http://www.twittonary.com) defines *twitterzine* as “a magazine published through twitter,” (Admin). According to this post, and using contextual clues within *twitterzine*, I have concluded that the word’s etymology comes from the employment of using Twitter to publish information. Since it would be periodically in the form of posts, then it could be considered a magazine. Hence, we get *twitterzine*. The word is a combination of *twitter*, and *magazine*.

Sadly, neither *intexticated*, not *twitterzine* have yet to appear in any standard hardcover English dictionaries. But, that doesn’t subtract from their communicational validity. Personally, I am almost convinced that sometime in the near future we will see these words in popular media, and even in dictionaries.

Taking into consideration the observations of Walt Whitman and Eddy Peters in regards to the words *lord*, *dizzy*, *intexticated*, and *twitterzine*, one can surely say that the English language is one of growth and combination that borrows words from other languages and sometimes chases them down alleys and beats them. Sometimes, especially with the latter two words, English has a tendency to exercise Peters’ humorous assertion on itself.
Through this exercise of researching the origins of words, I have clarified any doubts that I may have had about how words are produced: I am usually wrong. The exercising of certain ideas and the verbal articulation of those ideas are so free and infinite that what means one thing today, could have meant so many other things centuries ago. Likewise, what means one thing today could mean something entirely different years from now, especially if the concept of a breadkeeper has become synonymous with God, and the feeling of giddiness can evolve somehow into nausea.
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