



The Bureau of Linguistical Reality

A dictionary for the future present

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The History of the Bureau

The Bureau was established in 2014 by two artists who were at a loss for words to describe emotions and experiences they were having around climate change and other Anthropogenic events.

The Bureau derives its name from **Linguistic Relativity** (also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) which holds that “the structure of a language affects the ways in which its respective speakers conceptualize their world, i.e. their world view or otherwise influences their cognitive processes.”

The Mission of the Bureau

At *The Bureau of Linguistical Reality* we reference the term, **Linguistic Relativity**, playfully but sincerely believe that until we have the language to describe the changing world around us, we will not be able to fully grasp what is happening. To this end the *The Bureau of Linguistical Reality* is tasked with generating new words and inviting others to create new words that reflect our relationship to our rapidly changing environment.



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Here are some examples of words that have helped to shift the way people conceptualize their world:

Genocide: The word *genocide* was created by the Jewish Lawyer Raphael Lemkin in the 1940s to describe "the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group." He created the word by combining Greek *genos* γένος, "race, people" and Latin *cidere* "to kill". Once this word was created a phenomena became real. When people now hear this word, they call up a whole understanding of this tragic human phenomena. They are able to use the word in conversations and debates and those who hear it understand it to be a real thing.

Smog: The word smog is a portmanteau from the words smoke and fog. The word was created in 1905 by Dr. Henry Antoine Des Voeux, to describe the new phenomena of air pollution caused by factories burning large amounts of coal during the industrial revolution. When this term was coined people were able to directly talk about a phenomena that they had previously not had the language to express.

Scofflaw: A person who flouts the law, especially by failing to comply with a law that is difficult to enforce effectively.

"Scofflaw" was the winning entry of a nationwide word competition sponsored by the Boston Herald during the prohibition in 1924. The newspaper was seeking to coin a new word to describe "someone who consumes alcohol illegally." The word was submitted by two separate entrants, Henry Irving Dale and Kate L. Butler. The term scofflaw was deemed the best and most suitable out of over 25,000 entries. The word was from the outset frequently used until the eventual repeal of Prohibition in 1933. It experienced a revival in the 1950s, as a term for anyone who displays disdain for laws difficult to enforce. Derived from the Norwegian scoff "an expression of scorn, derision, or contempt" and the Germanic lag "something laid down and fixed"

Anthropocene

An.thro.po.cene

(N.)

An informal geologic chronological term for the proposed epoch that began when human activities had a significant global impact on the Earth's ecosystems. The term is meant to render the end of the official epoch, the Holocene, as no longer relevant to the conditions of the planet. The Anthropocene has no precise start date, but based on atmospheric evidence may be considered to start with the Industrial Revolution. Other scientists link the new term to earlier events, such as the rise of agriculture and the Neolithic Revolution.

Eugene F. Stoermer 1980's, made popular by Paul Crutzen 2002