English neologisms in social media: a linguistic analysis

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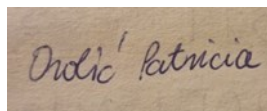**Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti i o suglasnosti za javno objavljivanje**

IZJAVA

Izjavljujem s punom materijalnom i moralnom odgovornošću da sam ovaj rad samostalno napravio te da u njemu nema kopiranih ili prepisanih dijelova teksta tuđih radova, a da nisu označeni kao citati s napisanim izvorom odakle su preneseni. Svojim vlastoručnim potpisom potvrđujem da sam suglasan da Filozofski fakultet Osijek trajno pohrani i javno objavi ovaj moj rad u internetskoj bazi završnih i diplomskih radova knjižnice Filozofskog fakulteta Osijek, knjižnice Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku i Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu.

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ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

Summary and key words in English

The internet has made it easier for new words and phrases to enter the language of communication. Neologisms are essential to a language because they keep it modern. The discussion and analysis of English neologisms from the social media platforms TikTok and Twitter are the main goals of this thesis. On social media platforms, abbreviations, clipping, compounding, blending, coinage, and semantic shift are the most frequently used word formation processes. The major motivation for using neologisms, according to the participants, was their efficacy in communicating ideas.

Key words: neologisms, word formation processes, social networking sites

Summary and key words in Croatian

Internet je olakšao ulazak novih riječi i fraza u jezik komunikacije. Neologizmi su ključni za jezik jer ga održavaju modernim. Rasprava i analiza engleskih neologizama s platformi društvenih mreža TikTok i Twitter glavni su ciljevi ovog diplomskog rada. Skraćivanje, slaganje, srastanje, novotvorenice i semantički neologizmi najčešće su korišteni procesi tvorbe riječi na društvenim mrežama Twitter i TikTok. Sudionicima je glavna motivacija za korištenje neologizama bila njihova učinkovitost u prenošenju ideja.

Ključne riječi: neologizmi, tvorba riječi, društvene mreže

Table of content

1. Introduction

Language is a social phenomenon and as such is always a subject of change. There are numerous examples of social change that have affected linguistic forms. For instance, the emergence of a whole new variety, with new words and phrases, has been facilitated by the new kind of communication, called internet-based communication (Šetka & Ilić, 2021). Roig-Marin (2016) argues that new words in a language are merely a product of changes in society. Indeed, a big reason for those changes is the invention of the Internet. The modern usage of the Internet includes people communicating more online. Therefore, there is a need to name new "products" of internet-based communication. Words like *wall, like,* and *tweet* have all taken on new meanings as this kind of communication has progressed. *Tweet*, which initially referred to the sound generated by birds, eventually became the title of a post on the social networking platform Twitter. Due to the change of meaning, these words are considered neologisms. A neologism is a new word in a language. They are a necessary part of a language since they keep it current. What it means is that neologisms usually emerge as a result of novel circumstances in a society, which should be discussed. Hence, the relevance of this thesis stems from the fact that it focuses on neologisms and their use and meanings. In his book *Language and The Internet*, a British linguist David Crystal conducts a study on the languages used in chat rooms, virtual worlds, and emails. Crystal (2002, p. 6) predicted that new technologies would emerge "which will integrate the Internet with other communication situations, and these will provide the matrix within which further language varieties will develop." He believed that the many new terms and phrases appeared to describe Internet-limited situations, operations, and activities. This is still true nowadays, as terms such as *Zoombombing*, *cancel culture*, and *doomscrolling* have all gained popularity during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss and analyze the presence of English neologisms from social media sites Twitter and TikTok in contemporary English. It is important to study neologisms since they appear almost daily and expand English vocabulary. Understanding neologisms might lead learners to employ language in different ways as well as improve their communication skills. The structure of the paper will be as follows: chapter 1 will provide some key terms essential to the understanding of the following parts, chapter 2 will define neologisms and various word-formations processes that take place when creating a new word, chapter 3 will

provide some research done on neologism, specifically on social media, chapter 4 will cover methodology, chapter 5 results and discussion and final chapter 6 will conclude this whole thesis.

2. Defining key terms

2.1.　Social networking sites: Twitter and TikTok

Twitter is a social networking site that was created in 2006 in San Francisco. People post Tweets, short and quick messages that are public; hence, everyone with a Twitter account can see them. Tweets can be more than public messages; they can contain photos or videos too. One can comment under other people's Tweets (also called a reply) and Retweet them – Tweet that you forward to those who follow you (Twitter Help Center). A Tweet is allowed to have 280 characters. If one wants to Tweet more, one would start a Twitter thread, which is a series of Tweets, one under another. In simple terms, it is commenting under own Tweet and it is usually indicated by a plus sign (+) or *cont.*

TikTok is a video based online social networking site. Anyone with an accout can watch videos posted on the app as well as create their own videos. TikTok has gained a lot of popularity during 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and it was used as a platform to connect people from various sides of the world. At the beginning, people mostly posted dance cover videos or made up their own choreographies. Nowadays, there are many sides of TikTok and its users will use a # (hashtag) sign to note which side they belong to. For instance, those people who like to read books and share their interest and love towards reading are on *#BookTok*.

2.2.　Word formation processes

Plag (2003, p. 13) defines word formations as a "study of the ways in which new complex words are built on the basis of other words or morphemes." According to Plag (2003), words are created when smaller components are combined to create larger words with more intricate meanings. Štekauer (2005) states that word formation, or WF, is concerned with the construction of naming units as a consequence of the different demands of language users. The term language users, however, does not refer to the language users as a whole since it is unusual that word-formation processes can satisfy the requirements of each language user. Instead, neologisms are primarily used by 'first-contact' users; broader usage may or may not occur later (Štekauer, 2005). Plag (2003) in his book *Word-Formation in English,* determines the rules that underlie the

make-up of complex words in English, essentially the word formation rules. He uses the prefix *un-* to exemplify his point. He established three different *un-* prefixes and their meanings: de-adjectival with the meaning "not" as in *happy – unhappy*; denominal with the meaning "lack of" as in *unease*; and deverbal with reversative or privative meaning as in *undo*. Another thing he mentions is (the proportional) analogy as in earwitness from eyewitness or cheeseburger from hamburger. In proportional analogy, the relationship between two items is the same as the relation between two others (37): "The relation that holds between eye and eyewitness is the same as the relation between ear and earwitness." However, Bauer (1983) argues that word formation rules are optional; hence, it is possible not to apply a word formation process when creating a new word. This usually provides a description instead of the name that the word formation suggests. When it comes to nouns, it happens frequently that a whole noun phrase gets established as a name without going through any word formation steps.

2.3.   Lexical semantics

Lexical semantics combines two branches of linguistics: lexicology and semantics. In simple terms, lexicology is the study of words, and semantics is the study of meaning, which would mean that lexical semantics is the study of the meaning of words. Paradis (2012) describes it as a discipline that is concerned with the meaning of words, the reasons behind their meaning, how they are represented in the mind of a speaker, and their usage in oral and written speech.

2.4.   Netspeak

According to Crystal (2002), Netspeak is another name for cyberspeak, computer-mediated communication and even Netlish as a type of English. However, the term Netlish as a blend of two words *net* and *English* is nowayds rather outdated since the Internet is becoming multilingual (Crystal, 2002). The idea that there is some kind of language with features unique to the Internet is rather common. The effect it has on many language variations serves as evidence that individuals are aware of it. Crystal exemplifies this by saying that when legal jargon is used in a

pretend courtroom sketch on television, it is anticipated that the audience will get the linguistic allusions. He contends that spelling changes are minimal and that Netspeak mostly affects a language's lexicon. He contends that those who wish to seem creative or innovative in everyday conversation will employ terminology from Netspeak. This is especially true of advertisement companies that employ popular neologisms to attract younger audiences. He mentions abbreviations and acronyms as ways to create new words online, in addition to compounding. He claims that all orthographic features have been impacted and uses the vast variations in capitalization as an example. Because of the lower-case default attitude, capitalization is a very distinctly defined style of communication. Messages written entirely in capital letters are seen as "shouting", and should be avoided. Spelling is another characteristic of Netspeak. US spelling is more prevalent in English than British spelling for two distinct reasons, according to Crystal (2002). Firstly, the history of the Internet – thanks to two American computer scientists in the 1970s, technology started to advance which led to further developments. Second, US spelling is often one character shorter than British spelling (for instance, color vs. color). Based on the mentioned reasons, Crystal sees Netspeak as a linguistic variant.

The usage of language in different Internet contexts, particularly Netspeak, is governed by a set of broad norms known as netiquette. As it would have been predicted, some behaviors or patterns are advised to follow, while others should be avoided. Individual users may face punishments, such as banishment from discussions, for violating the rules or standards set forth by various Internet sites, chat groups, and forums (Hadžiahmetović-Jurida, 2009). Today, the phrase *cancel culture* refers to just that. Asynchronous environments allow participants to join a conversation at a later time. Back then, forums predominated; today, social media networks do. According to Hadžiahmetović-Jurida (2009), what unites internet forums is a shared passion for a certain subject. Regular visitors typically join the discussion groups to exchange ideas and debate developments, while others do so to engage in word games and enjoy gossip. Online forums and social media sites have similarities in that group members post their contributions (posts), the system makes all the messages available to all group members, there are threads (semantically related messages), and members are accommodating to other members. Although group members come from different backgrounds, they tend to use the same types of grammatical construction, jargon, slang, or abbreviations, giving their language a distinctive character.

Netspeak relies on the characteristics of both speech and writing; on the one hand, the majority of communication is written, but some forms of it, such as emails or chat groups, exhibit

some characteristics of speech despite being represented through writing (Jurida & Pavlović, 2016). Speech differs from writing in that it involves face-to-face interaction, is appropriate for social occasions (any situation where casual and unplanned discourse is desired), and does not require a lag time between production and reception, which prevents the use of looser constructions, repetition, rephrasing, and filler words. Writing is aesthetically decontextualized, has a complex structure, and is ideal for preserving information and conveying ideas. Because they are time-governed, need an instant response, and are temporary, emails and chat groups exhibit certain characteristics of speech.

3. Defining neologisms

The word neologism was borrowed from French néologisme, made up from *neo-* (from Greek "neos") for *new* and Greek *logos* meaning *word* plus affix *–ism* denoting that a word is a noun and infers a practice ("Neologism", n.d.). Therefore, the simplest definition, which can be made from these two explanations, is that a neologism is a new word found in a language. A term is a neologism up to the point at which it loses its novelty and becomes conventionalized, at which point it is added to the dictionary. Neologisms, according to Mikić Čolić (2015, p. 23), emerge when "there is a particularly strong wish to address familiar issues in a fresh and different way. " Neologisms, therefore, continue to be created as a result of innovations, discoveries, conflicts, and revolutions.

Two processes by which a neologism can become standardized are diffusion and usualization. In the case of a specific new term, it is created by a single speaker and first circulates among speakers who may be personally connected to the creator and/or have common interests with them. Diffusion is the process whereby a word gets out to more speakers and starts to become commonplace in different speaker communities. Contrarily, the process of usualization results in the growing acceptance of a given neologism through frequent use within a single community of speakers (Würschinger, 2021). The study done by Würschinger (2021) is based on a selection of 99 neologisms and investigates their use on Twitter from its launch in 2006 to the end of 2018. The chosen neologisms vary in terms of the overall observed lifetime. The cumulative rise in usage intensity of the chosen neologisms shows how widely disparate diffusion paths may produce similar overall frequency counts of neologisms. Neologisms like *alt-left* and *hyperlocal*, which have similar overall use frequencies but have very diverse observable lifespans in the corpus, exhibit various diffusion channels and intensities.

The most recent developments in English word creation were covered by Szymanek (2005) in *The latest trends in English Word-Formation.* He noticed a rising number of prefixes such as e-, as in e-education as well as combining forms, such as *eco-, electro-, hyper-, and macro-,* which are all employed in place of traditional Germanic suffixes.

New words can be created by the following word formation processes: affixation, compounding, blending, clipping, semantic shift, abbreviation, acronyms, and conversion.

3.1.   **Affixation**

According to Plag (2003), words are created when smaller components are combined to create larger words with more intricate meanings. Affixation is a word formation process in which an affix is added to the base of a word. An affix can be a prefix which occurs before the root of a word and a suffix which occurs after the root of a word. *Inventor*, for instance, is made up of the elements *invent-* and *-or*. Complex words can be broken down into their smallest possible meaningful units. Morphemes are the name for these units. However, Plag (2003) mentions the word *promise*, which cannot be broken down into separate meaningful components. Some common prefixes are *de-, a-,* and *un-,* while some common suffixes are *–ism, -less, -sh*.

3.2.   **Compounding**

Another method of creating words by combining two bases is known as compounding. Examples of verb-to-noun conversion are *to walk* and *taking a walk* (Plag, 2003). The primary distinction between synthetic and root compounds according to Lieber (2005) in his *Handbook of Word Formations* is whether or not the second stem is a verb. In English, both synthetic and noun-root compounding are quite prolific. For example, a synthetic compound is *pan fried* and a root compound is *coffee cup*. There are three methods to write English compounds: hyphenated, open, and closed (Fang, 2021). For instance, *long-term, high school*, and *cheesecake* are all examples of compounds.

3.3.   **Blending**

Blending, or the creation of new words by connecting two (or more parts of words) into a new term, is the second most common word formation process. Blends can be categorized as those created by clipping the initial part of the word, the second half of the word, and those created merely by an overlap of phonological content. Mikić Čolić (2015) states that in registers that are prone to blending, such as the register of journalists or the language of advertisements, the illocutionary force—or speaker's intention—emerges as the primary drive behind their development. Their usage, which is mostly restricted to generational and professional groups, determines their short-term character. However, there are patterns, that is, certain aspects of human activity that require new words more frequently than others. These topics include computers, music, fashion, and daily living.

3.4.   Clipping

Plag (2003) defines clipping as a deletion of parts of the word, as in lab for laboratory. Clipping is also common in personal names: Trish would be a clip a personal name Patricia. To Bauer (1983) the term clipping describes the technique of shortening a lexeme while keeping its original meaning and form class membership. Clipping frequently causes a shift in aesthetic quality. The degree to which the underlying lexeme is reduced is unpredictable. Examples of this imperceptibility are the clips *bi* from *bisexual* and *mike* for a *microphone*. It is impossible to predict whether the stressed syllable from the base lexeme will be included or not, how many syllables will be kept in the clipped version, and if the last syllable will be open or closed. Because compounds also utilize clipped forms, the distinction is not always obvious. Forms that accept simple word stress are not clipped compounds, but forms that keep compound stress are. Examples of compounds built of clippings are *sci-fi* and *sit-com*.

3.5.   Abbreviation

The spectrum of English abbreviations is broad (Fang, 2021).In a strict sense, it only relates to acronyms; in a wide sense, it can also apply to clipping and blending (Fang, 2021). Abbreviations as well as truncations, involve loss of material (Crystal, 2002). Orthography is of central importance in abbreviations. They are most commonly formed by taking initial letters of multi-word sequences to make up a new word (BA Bachelor of Arts) as well as non-initial letters (Inc. – Incorporated). Abbreviations can be spelled with either capital or lower-case letters and can be pronounced either by naming each letter (also known as initialisms) or by applying regular reading rules (in this case they are called acronyms). An abbreviation is pronounced the same but is written differently from the extended form – for instance, Ft., which is short for feet (Behera & Mishra, 2013).

3.6.   Acronyms

Bauer (1983) defines an acronym as a new term created by combining the first letters of the word in with another word, phrase, or title. TBH, for example, stands for To Be Honest. Abbreviations are spoken as a string of letters, whereas acronyms are pronounced as a (new) word. This is the key distinction between the two. According to Bauer (1983), the lack of

predictability of acronyms is caused by the importance of the acronym's interests. She gives an example by giving FIST (the Federation of Inter-State Truckers), but the term FOIST would be far less effective as a trade union name because the particle of is missing. Another reason acronyms lack predictability is that not every abbreviation that may be an acronym is regarded as one, and there doesn't seem to be any specific justification for ignoring some abbreviations. In contrast to GOM or OD, BBC is not pronounceable as a word since it violates the rules governing the phonetic structure of English words.

3.7.   Conversion

Plag (2003) defines conversion, which is also known as zero-suffixation, as a word-formation process where there is a change in the word class with no overt expression, that is an additional suffix. To Lieber (2005), conversion is the process by which lexical objects change category without concurrently changing in form, at least in analytical languages like English. Conversion is a particularly effective process in English, where nouns routinely change into verbs (Google becomes to Google) and vice versa (to throw becomes a throw). On occasion, adjectives can also function as verbs (cool to cool). Bauer (1983) adds to the previously mentioned definitions that there do not seem to be any morphological limits on the forms that may be converted, therefore compounds, derivatives, acronyms, blends, clips, and simplex words are all valid inputs to the conversion process. Fang (2021) states that in English, there are three basic word classes that are involved in different conversion types: nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

3.8.   Semantic shift

Newman (2016) argues that semantic shift is not only a change of meaning throughout certain historical periods, for instance, a change of meaning from Middle to Modern English but also a change of meaning without having to reference great history stages. For instance, Behera & Mishra (2013) claim that the Internet and computers' extensive use led to the emergence of new meanings for terms like window, virus and net. Nelkoska (2021) in the study Neologisms under the influence of social media morpho-semantic analysis found that the pronoun They underwent a semantic shift from the plural form. The author finds this unusual because pronouns are a closed class that seldom, if ever, include neologisms. This may be explained by 1.66% of the total data, but in a larger study would be regarded as a statistical mistake. However, as her study demonstrates, there is a semantic shift in the pronoun's usage.

4. Previous research on neologisms

Hamdan and Salman (2021) seek to answer two research questions: *What are the reasons for the use of social media neologisms in Arab social media users?* and *Which word formation processes are commonly used to form new words?* These researchers first gathered a preliminary list of 145 neologisms from social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as blog posts, tweets, and a considerable amount of WhatsApp conversations. Then they gathered 100 students and asked them to name computer-based terms and social-media terms they use, how often they use them especially when there is an Arabic counterpart and justify their use of a neologism. 159 neologisms were collected this way. After comparing the lists, one from the social media sites and one from the students, they narrowed down the list and the final list had 129 words. Some of the computer-based terms found: *text, update, PDF, favorites, cancel, clickbait*. Among the typical Arab ICT users, such terms score surprisingly high in terms of frequency. In other words, the sample members chose the original English phrase rather than its possible Arabic counterpart. Some of the social-media terms found: *Facebook, image, tag, Selfie, Emoji, Imo*. When asked why they use English neologisms, students answered that they use English because it is convenient as well as accurate. English uses ICT terms that are accepted around the globe and students who are in this field of study find that English use of the terms helps them deal with hi-tech. Some even argued that English is a language of trendy words which represent social status and modernity. Students stated that the Arabic language has insufficient words to describe the world of ICT and social media. The researchers found that derivation and affixation are two commonly used processes in creating new words. Similarly, Jahan and Irfan (2021) did a study on the three most popular social networking sites and discovered a major semantic shift in neologisms. Some of the neologisms that social media users have coined and that are now commonly used on a daily basis include: *like, hashtag*, and *unfriend*. The quick growth and widespread of these terms is mostly due to social media and CMC, or computer-mediated communication.

Another researcher, Lotfi (2019) found out that the most common type to form new words is compounding, with almost 60% of the words being formed this way. Another word formation process which according to the author yields new words is abbreviation. The author dived abbreviations into three categories: acronyms, blends, and clips. Some examples of abbreviations include *DM, PP*, and *FOMO*. The author argues that the main purpose of social media sites is

short interactions among people which is why abbreviations are so useful since they can help achieve that goal. Acronyms that the author found were categorized into two groups: the first being acronyms pronounced as a whole *LOL* and *POS* (parent over shoulder) and the second category acronyms that pronounce each syllable as in *BRB*. The spelling of some clipped forms is marking them as an informal language, according to Lotfi (2019). To further prove this violation of rules of spelling, the author gives an example of the word *cuz* which is a short form for because. Some of the blends that were found in the research are *bromance* (brother+romance), *Propic* (Profile picture), and *Fakefol* (fake + follower). Similarly, the researchers Nkhata and Jimaima (2020) showed a list of commonly used neologisms by participants among which are: *BAE, OMG, TBT, selfie, fam.* The list showed that initialism, acronyms, and clips are the most used word-formation processes. Neologisms are the outcome of breakthroughs in technology, social life, and, in certain circumstances, culture (Nkhata & Jimaima, 2020). Participants were seen to be able to converse by utilizing these neologisms since they had common sociocultural background.

Šetka and Ilić (2021) examined four distinct social media sites to see which WF processes were the most prevalent on them: because the most conversation on Facebook takes place in the form of comments, it is only natural for people to type quickly. This leads to the bulk of neologisms on Facebook being composed of clip words and blend words. Twitter produces comparable outcomes to Facebook (blends and clips), with the message being conveyed by shorter forms. The same results were found on Instagram. Researchers argue that it is because it is an efficient and speedy form of communication.

Shahlee and Ahmad (2022) wanted to research word-formation processes in three different social media sites, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. They used dictionary and introspection methodologies to investigate neologisms found on three different social media networks. In total, 93 new words were gathered and out of those 93, the highest percentage of use showed acronyms (31 neologisms, that is, 33.3 percent). The second place on the frequency of usage was blending with 28% and compounding with 14%.

Neologisms are a necessary part of a language since they keep it current. What it means is that neologisms usually emerge as a result of novel circumstances in a society, which should be discussed. For instance, the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 influenced the English language lexicon, and Asif et.al (2020) investigate in their study the new terminologies and idioms that COVID-19 had given rise to. During the COVID-19 pandemic, two new words—*Covidiot* and

Covidient—emerged, and they were fully defined in all illustrious dictionaries throughout the globe. Both newly coined words are examples of blends: the first word is a blend of *covid + idiot* and the second is *covid + obedient*. In the same vein, Azzawi and Haleem (2021) found out that remarkable numbers of new words during COVID-19 pandemic were created by blending. For instance: *coronacation* (corona + vacation), *covidivorce* (COVID + divorce), *coronababies*, and *covexit* (COVID + exit). The authors argue that the reason for the increased usage of the mentioned blends was the humorous intention behind them. Coinages were also another word-formation process and some of the interesting ones were *doomscroling*, *elbowbump* and *missrona*. It can be seen that these new words fullfiled at least two different kinds of functions – firstly, to inform people about the COVID-19 pandemic and secondly, to bring people together through humor (Azzawi & Haleem, 2021).

5. Methodology

5.1.   Aim and research questions

The primary focus of this study was to investigate whether or not non-native English speakers use English neologisms from social networking sites Twitter and TikTok in their online and offline communication and for what reasons. Moreover, I wanted to find out which word-formation processes are prevalent in social media neologism and what their meanings are. It is crucial to study the formation of neologism and neologisms themselves since they reflect the change happening in society, therefore, covering a wide range of topics from economics, culture, technology, and politics.

There were five research questions:

1. Which word-formation processes are the most common among English neologisms on Twitter and TikTok?

2. How many neologisms, that is, their meanings, are known to participants? What is the meaning of each neologism?

3. Is there a correlation between the participant's age and knowledge?

4. Is there a correlation between years of learning English and how they found out the meaning of a neologism?

5. Do participants use the given neologisms in online and offline communication, and if yes, for what reasons?

5.2.   Instrument

Firstly, I gathered a list of 20 neologisms, which were collected from social networking sites Twitter and TikTok. I used my experience as an active user of both social networking sites to identify neologisms on Twitter and TikTok whose form and meaning seem unknown and up to date. The research method was a survey and the instrument used was a questionnaire. There were four demographic questions: sex, age, years of learning English, and whether or not a participant is an active social media user. There were 10 neologisms collected from both social networking

sites Twitter and TikTok and the participants were asked to: write the meaning of the word, say whether they use it in an online and/or offline communication, how they learnt the meaning of the word, and give reasons for using neologisms in general.

5.3.   Procedure

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, that is the percentage, mean, minimal, and maximal value, and standard deviation was used to answer the first and second research questions. The third and fourth research questions were answered using the Pearson correlation coefficient since they examined the correlation between the two variables. The way in which words were defined was by the following methods: observation – as an active user of both social media sites, I was able to observe data and take notes of the new words that were being used. Since this method is rather subjective, another method was used and that is a questionnaire. The questionnaire would provide a better understanding of how neologisms are used by non-native speakers. The words were defined by myself and also with the help of One Look Dictionary Search.

5.4.   Participants

There were 108 participants in the survey, 42 male and 66 female. What differentiates them is age, how long they have studied English, and whether they are or are not active users of social media sites Twitter and TikTok. All participants were non-native English speakers. Most of the participants were students who partook in Erasmus exchange programme and stayed in Osijek during the summer semester of academic year 2022/2023. They came from Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Balkan countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. Participants' age ranges from 18 to 35, and the mean value was 23,02. Years of studying English also varied – the minimum is 1 year and the maximum is 26 years and M is 14,41. 50% of participants are active social media users (of Twitter and TikTok) and 50% are not.

6. Results

1. Which word-formation processes are the most common among English neologisms from Twitter and TikTok?

The first research question aimed to find the most common word formation types on social media. The first 10 words were used in the questionnaire, while the rest were added by the researcher to make a thorough analysis of word formation processes found on social media sites Twitter and TikTok. From this list, it can be concluded that abbreviations and acronyms are the most common word-formation processes, 35 percent. Another popular word formation process is clipping with 20 percent of neologisms being clips. The following processes based on the frequency of usage are 15 percent compounding, 15 percent semantic shifting, and 5 percent blending and coinage. Table 1 shows the list of 20 neologisms, their word formation process, and their meaning.

Table 1

A NEOLOGISM	WORD FORMATION PROCESS	MEANING
IYKYK	Acronym	If you know, you know
Glow up	Compound	Become more physically attractive over some time
Rizz	Clip	Short for charisma; can also refer to someone good at flirting with people
Sus	Clip	Short for suspicious
Fr	Abbreviation	For real
POV	Acronym	Point of view
Loml	Acronym	Love of my life
YT	Abbreviation	Initially YouTube, nowadays refers to white people
Situationship	Blend	Situation + relationship; the undefined relationship between two people (neither friends nor lovers)
Hot girl summer	Coinage (Compound)	Enjoying your summer without worrying
Slay	Semantic shift	Do something successfully
Periodt	Coinage	Emphasizes a point
Acc	Clip	Account
Ib	Acronym	Inspired by
istg	Acronym	I swear to god
Go feral	Compound	Go insane and act like a feral animal
delulu	Clip	Delusional
FYP	Acronym	For you page
Flex	Semantic shift	Showing off your riches
Snowflake	Semantic shift	An insult used to mean that someone is easily offended and upset

2. How many neologisms, that is their meaning, are known to participants? What is the meaning of each neologism?

OneLook was used to find definitions of selected neologisms in different online English dictionaries. However, chosen neologisms have not been defined in most of the modern online English dictionaries because the whole idea of a neologism is that it cannot be found in one. Hence, most definitions were provided by the researcher, who is an active social media user of Twitter and TikTok and uses these in their communication, and with the help of Urban Dictionary, which is an online dictionary that contains definitions of slang words, neologisms or coinage words.

IYKYK

42,59% of participants knew the meaning of this acronym. 57,41 percent contained both people not knowing the meaning and wrong answers. Some of the wrong answers were: *If you kill yourself now; I just know you know; and I know you know.*

IYKYK stands for If you know, you know. Commonly used on TikTok to depict a situation in which one can find themselves and assumes other people will understand the situation so the additional explaining will not be necessary. For example, it can describe a thing or a situation that people can find themselves in and they want others to relate to them without having to explain the whole situation. It can also refer to an inside joke among individuals. For instance, "Last night was crazy. IYKYK."

GLOW UP

88% of participants knew the meaning of this compound. Only 12% did not know the meaning. Some of the correct answers: to better yourself both physically and mentally after a certain amount of time; to change towards a better looking; positive change over time. It is interesting to see that there were answers which focused on this positive outcome and leveling up overall in life, not just in physical appearance.

A glow up is a positive, both physical and mental, transformation of a person. The compound is usually visually paired with a before and after picture of a person who underwent a glow up. The compound can be used either as a noun or a verb and it always has a positive

connotation. An example sentence of the neologism as a noun is *She had a huge glow up over summer*. An example sentence as a verb *I saw her glow up during her pregnancy*. Glow up is usually only used for people, not inanimate objects.

SUS

27 or 25% of participants did not know the meaning, while 75% knew the meaning. Some of the explanations included examples: "I don't trust him. He is sus." and "You are acting sus, show me what you texted him." Some participants mentioned the game Among Us in their explanation of the word.

Merriam-Webster dictionary explains the outburst of the usage of the abbreviation sus – the popular multiplayer phone and computer game "Among Us" raised the usage of the word sus. The clip sus is short for a suspect and it was used to denote a person who was an imposter in the game. In the game, the players had to work with each other to survive and were given tasks to complete. There was an Imposter whose task was to eliminate other players without getting caught. The basic premise of the game was to work out who is the imposter within the group. When discussing who the Imposter was, the players would label the accused as sus.

RIZZ

50,9% of participants did not know the meaning of this word, but 49,1% did know the meaning. Apart from a synonym *game*, some of the answers depict the meaning perfectly: the ability to talk to someone you're attracted to; someone who is charming in a flirting sense; and confidence when approaching the opposite sex.

Rizz is a clip of the word charisma with a modified spelling. However, it is not used in a true sense of a word, but rather as a synonym of the popular word *game* which means the ability to flirt with the person of your interest. According to *Urban Dictionary*, the term was created by a Twitch streamer from New York City to denote the mentioned meaning.

FR

86 participants knew the meaning of the acronym. 22 were unanswered and wrong. One person wrote French for this abbreviation.

For real is abbreviated to fr. Most modern online English dictionaries do not contain the meaning which is used on social media for this abbreviation. Nevertheless, *Collins Dictionary*

states that it is used to express genuineness or state one's surprise for what had been said or seen. For instance, "He went to rehab? For real?"

POV

Out of 108 participants, only 7 did not know the meaning of this acronym. 93,5 percent did know and the most common explanation was simply explaining each letter – Point Of View. Some other examples include: often used on TikTok when filming how someone sees things from their perspective and imagining a situation and someone's perspective.

POV gained popularity on social media site TikTok during 2020 and it was used to present a situation from the perspective of a person who made a TikTok video. However, the content could either be relatable or ironic. For instance, the writing on the video or in the caption of the video could be: "POV You're a little kid and you are asking me if I have games on my phone" which would be followed by a video of a person lurking on someone's phone which would represent a kid.

LOML

60,2% did not know the meaning of this acronym which stands for love of my life. Some participants gave example sentences: "I'm going to marry the loml one day" (loml=soulmate) or "Luke Hemmings is the loml". The crosstab of loml and being an active user of social media sites Twitter and TikTok showed that 24 people who use both social media sites knew the meaning while 20 people who choose "I do not use either of these" did not know the meaning. What this might mean is that the neologism loml is popular on social media, but has not yet reached people outside of it.

SITUATIONSHIP

21,3% of the participants knew the meaning of this word. Some examples: A romantic relationship that does not have a label yet; an undefined relationship between two people; FWB; more than a friendship, less than a relationship. *Urban Dictionary* defines it as a relationship that has no label on it, something in between friendship and relationship.

YT

73,1% knew the one or the second meaning of this abbreviation. Yt is a polysemic word, it stands for YouTube and people of white race. In this questionnaire, 18 people wrote that yt stands

for white people. Both YouTube and white were accepted as answers since they do stand for each separate meaning. However, on both Twitter and TikTok, yt is used as a derogatory term for white people.

HOT GIRL SUMMER

66 people defined this term. 38,9% did not know the meaning. Some examples: enjoying the summer with your friends; girls having fun and not worrying about anything; having fun summer; "I'm eating my greens, working out every day, doing my skincare every morning and night, I'm preparing for hot girl summer 2023". *Urban Dictionary* defines hot girl summer as a summer of fun. Essentially, everyone has their definition of what fun is therefore many answers were accepted. The term originated back in 2019 when the popular American rapper Megan Thee Stallion released a song titled "Hot girl summer".

3. Is there a correlation between age and knowledge of neologisms?

Number of participants is 108, so N is 108. The mean value for age is 23,02 and the standard deviation, or sd, is 2,665. There is no significant correlation between the participant's age and knowledge of the meaning of the following words: IYKYK ($r=$,091, $M=$,56, $Sd=$,727), Fr ($r=$,170 $M=$,80, $Sd=$,405), POV ($r=$,087, $M=$,94 $Sd=$,247), loml ($r=$-,134, $M=$,41 $Sd=$,494), situationship ($r=$,043, $M=$,71 $Sd=$,454). There is a significant correlation between participant's age and knowledge of the meaning of the following neologisms: glow up ($r=$-,309, $\rho=$,001, $M=$,89, $Sd=$,316), sus ($r=$-,249, $\rho=$,009, $M=$,76, $Sd=$,430, Yt ($r=$-,201, $\rho=$,037, $M=$,7315,$Sd=$,44525), rizz ($r=$-,195, $\rho=$,043, $M=$,49, $Sd=$,502), and hot girl summer ($r=$ -,202, $\rho=$,036, $M=$,6111, $Sd=$,48977).

4. Is there a correlation between years of learning English and how they found out the meaning of a neologism?

Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship between the two variables. To find a correlation, variables had to be coded and they were coded in the following way: 1 is "I googled it", 2 is "I asked someone (a friend or a family member), 3 is "I don't know the meaning

of this word", 4 "I figured it out from the context" and 5 were other answers provided by participants. There was no significant correlation between years of learning English and how participants found out the meaning of a neologism. The results were as follows: IYKYK ($r=$,000, $M=$3,25), glow up ($r=$-,078, $M=$3,83), rizz ($r=$,024, $M=$3,17), sus ($r=$-,137, $M=$ 3,45), Fr ($r=$ -,179, $M=$ 3,49), POV ($r=$-,040, $M=$3,32), loml ($r=$-,038, $M=$2,95), Yt ($r=$,003, $M=$3,43), situationship ($r=$,127, $M=$ 3,61), hot girl summer ($r=$,153, $M=$ 3,46).
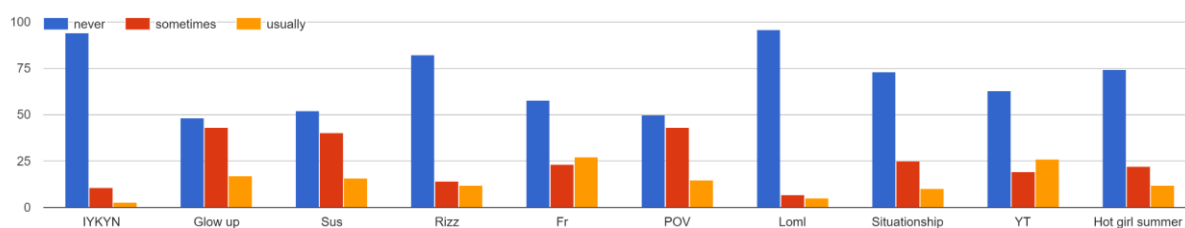
5. Do participants use given neologisms in online and offline communication and if yes, for what reasons?

Do You use these words in an offline communication?
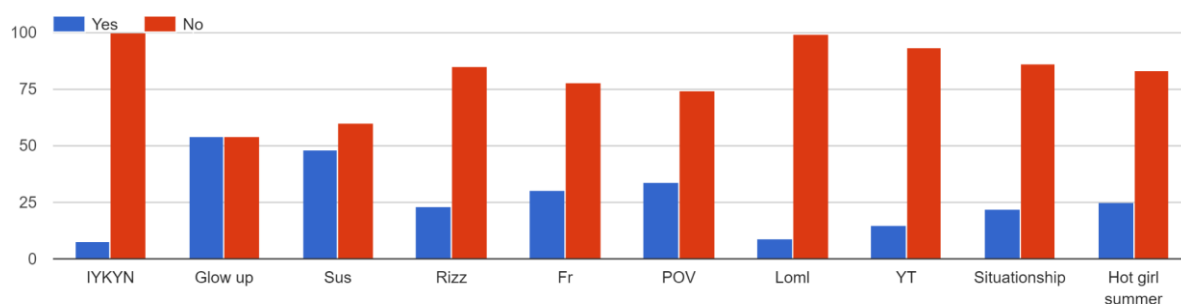
Graph 1

How often do You use these words in an online communication?

Graph 2

From Graphs 1 and 2 it is visible which words participants use in online and offline communication. The following neologisms most of the participants use neither in online nor online communication: IYKYK, rizz, fr, loml, situationship, yt, hot girl summer. Neologisms glow up, sus and POV showed higher frequencies of usage among the participants.

To the question *Why do You use neologisms in general* participants responded with the following answers: because they make communication quicker (40,7%), because they make communication more fun (34,3%), because I want to fit in (0,9%), I do not use neologisms (17,6%). The remaining 6,5% of the participants gave their reasons: *I see them so often online that I involuntarily use them, I do not use neologisms willingly, I sometimes use them to make communication quicker with someone I know uses them, I rarely ever use them, but when I do it's for quicker communication or to express something hard to describe any other way (e.g. I use "lol", when I find a situation laughable, but its neither very impressive, nor bad enough for sarcasm.); all of the above, reason 1 and 2 (quickness and enjoyability; because sometimes they explain the emotion better; they quickly become the standard expression for something and it is easier to describe specific concepts using neologisms.*

7. Discussion

The first research question aimed to find which word formation process is the most common on social networking sites Twitter and TikTok. The word-formation types identified in the data are abbreviations and acronyms, clipping, compounding, blending, coinage, and semantic shift. The limitation of this is that the list was quite short. One of the reasons for the popularity of abbreviations and acronyms is the fact that there is a word limit on social media sites. One is required to express themselves in as little as 280 characters. TikTok is a little different – the limit is 2,200 characters, but the most liked comments are the short ones. Another reason for their popularity is their effectiveness in conveying a message. Dabrowska (2018) argues that acronyms, and not abbreviations, are especially useful to express one's emotional reactions. For instance, *omg* and *lol* function as emotive markers since they describe one's emotive attitude towards a subject. Abbreviations and acronyms just like any word formation process can be effective if both sides understand what each abbreviation, acronym, or blend stands for. However, a problem may occur if a receiver of a message cannot recall the meaning of two words in case of blends (Roig-Marin, 2016) or is not familiar with abbreiviated forms (Dabrowska, 2018).

The second research question was expected to indicate how many neologisms, that is their meanings, are known to participants. Participants generally knew the meanings of given neologisms. The reason behind knowing neologisms is that they are relevant despite some of them originating a decade ago. The requirement for neologisms was that they can be found on both social media sites and that they are not defined in online English dictionaries. Another reason for higher results in correct answers is that some of the neologisms are open to interpretation. That could be a limitation of the study since it is a subjective approach, that is, my opinion of a valid definition for each neologism influences whether an answer is acceptable or not. Even though neologisms from the questionnaire are popularized now, some of them originated a decade ago. What it tells us is that they are in a stable phase of neologism life cycle, meaning that they are becoming well-known and might be achieving long-lasting acceptability (Behera & Mishra, 2013). Loml, for instance, was used on Twitter by young fans back in 2013 and is still today used with the same meaning. Another reason for such high percentages of knowledge of neologisms might be due to the fact that the chosen neologisms are so-called "pop-culture" neologisms, which according to Behera and Mishra (2013) refer to words developed from mass media content. Behera and Mishra (2013) argue that neologisms gain popularity through "mass media, the Internet, or word of mouth – especially by younger people" (3).

Therefore, the language of the youth might be affected by the previously mentioned. Similarly, Ana Buljan (2021) in her work states that the language of the youth is characterized by creation and usage of new words, semantic change, vulgarisms, jargon, different speech styles. Due to the fact that social, cultural, political and economical changes reflect the language young people use, Buljan argues that they transform the language. Along with the theoretical part, in her work Buljan did a research to compare with theory. There were 30 participants, both high school and university students from Orahovica, a city in Slavonia, who partook in the survey. They were asked to circle the neologism which they use daily as well as give their own examples. Buljan also collected neologisms through social media sites, Facebook and Instagram. In English, it is common to find clips and abbreviated forms, while what was interesting in Buljan's research is that she found out that Croatian youth likes to add suffixes to the existing words without it affecting the meaning of the word but rather intensify the emotional aspect of it. For instance, the Croatian word for jam (as in traffic jam) is *gužva* and *gužvara* would mean the exact same, but it is much more picturesque; however, less economical. Despite few examples of this word formation processes found in Croatian neologisms, it is important to note that Buljan too found that clipping and abbreviating are the most used word formation process. Abbreviations like *LOL* and *OMG* are used among Croatian high school students and university students according to this research.

The third research question wanted to figure out the correlation between participants' age and their knowledge of neologisms. It can be argues that neologisms *glow up*, *sus* and *yt* showed a significant correlation because they are accessible to a broader public. What is meant by that is they are used on both social networking sites and among people of various backgrounds and generations. Social networking sites have made it easier for people of various age groups to connect and talk about similar topics. In that way, social networking sites such as Twitter and TikTok close the generational gap between younger and older generations. The neologism loml, for instance, is characteristic of fandoms to use. Fandom refers to a large group of fans of someone. On the other hand, the popularity of the neologism sus grew from the game called Among Us. The game is simple and can be played either on a phone or a computer. The word sus used to denote a player who was acting suspiciously, but since the game can be fast-paced and players communicate through chat within the game, the abbreviation for suspicious was rather used. Again, there is no age limit for one to play this game; hence, anyone with accessible technology could play it – whether an experienced gamer or only a beginner. The correlation between age and the participant's knowledge of the meaning of the word Yt also might be

explained by the fact that both YouTube and white were accepted as correct answers. Because Yt is a polysemic word, meaning that it can be defined in at least two different ways, both the abbreviation Yt for white and the acronym Yt for YouTube were acceptable.

The fourth research question wanted to find the correlation between years of learning English and the way of finding out the meaning of a neologism. There was no correlation found between years of learning English and finding out the meaning of each separate neologism.

The fifth research question found out the frequency of usage of given neologisms in participants' online and offline communication. Graphs 1 and 2 represent that frequency. Participants' usage of the given neologisms in offline communication overall is relatively low, while in online communication more participants were inclined to use the mentioned neologisms. The reason behind that might be that in an online environment, there is a higher chance of interacting with people who share the similar interest hence the usage of a certain neologism will not be strange to a receiver of a message. Participants were also asked for reasons for using neologism in their communication, whether online or offline. Most of them answered that neologisms are a quicker way to communicate with others and they also make the conversation more interesting. Despite the low levels of neologism usage in offline communication, still a lot of participants stated that they use them in online communication. It can be argued that the words have entered their vocabulary and it is safe to assume that they know their meaning and usage due to the data obtained from the survey. Jimma (2017) in his work discussed English's status as the dominant Lingua Franca on social media as well as participant's attitudes regarding English as a Lingua Franca online. Participants were asked if they interacted with speakers of languages other than their own using English. The participants responded: 81 (95.3%) respondents indicated they converse in English with people who speak different languages. The data showed that the majority of respondents thought that knowing English was crucial when communicating with people who spoke other native languages. That is further supported by the fact that 89% participants answered that English is the main language used in social media. As it is simpler for people with diverse levels of skill to discover a common understanding, informal language is frequently utilized during these online interactions (Reed, 2015, as cited in Jimma, 2017). Neologisms are seen as informal language and because of that people are inclined to use them more frequently and feel less pressure to speak English correctly.

8. Conclusion

Language is part of society and as such is subject to change. It is a communication tool used to aid interaction among people of different backgrounds. The rise of the popularity of the Internet has greatly influenced the way people communicate as well as language. New words have emerged in English as a consequence. Brand-new terms that are added to a language as a result of societal changes are called neologisms. The discussion and analysis of English neologisms from the social media platforms TikTok and Twitter are the main goals of this thesis. This paper had five research questions. The first research question showed that the most common type of word formation process on social networking sites is abbreviations and acronyms. The results of the analysis have been consistent with the previous research done on the topic of neologism in social media (for instance, Shahlee and Ahmad (2022), Šetka and Ilić (2021), and Jimma (2017)). The purpose of the second study question was to determine how many neologisms participants were aware of, along with their meanings. Most participants understood the meaning of the neologisms that were provided. The third question examined the relationship between the participants' ages and their neologism knowledge. There was no correlation between the two variables. However, three neologisms did correlate: glow up, sus, and yt and one can argue that it is because they are available to a larger audience of people of different backgrounds and generations. The fourth study question looked for a relationship between the number of years spent learning English and the process of determining a neologism's meaning. There was no connection between the two variables. The fifth question examined how often certain neologisms were used in participants' offline and online communications. This frequency is seen in graphs 1 and 2. In contrast to how frequently the 10 neologisms were used in online conversations, participants in offline conversations generally used them less frequently. That might be because there is a greater likelihood of meeting individuals online who have similar interests, which leads to more interaction.

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