

**THE ROLE OF NEOLOGISMS IN MODERN LINGUISTICS: LANGUAGE
EVOLUTION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION AND THE DIGITAL AGE**

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Abstract: This article examines the role of neologisms in modern linguistics as a fundamental mechanism of language evolution in the context of globalization and the digital age. Neologisms—newly coined words, expressions, or novel meanings assigned to existing lexical units—serve as dynamic indicators of societal, technological, and cultural transformations. Drawing upon a comprehensive literature review and corpus-based methodologies, this study classifies neologisms according to their formation mechanisms, semantic functions, and lifespan trajectories. The research reveals that globalization has accelerated the cross-linguistic diffusion of lexical innovations, with English functioning as a dominant donor language while simultaneously absorbing loanwords from diverse linguistic traditions.

Keywords: neologism, lexical innovation, globalization, digital linguistics, language evolution, borrowing, word formation, corpus linguistics, linguistic change.

Introduction

Language is an inherently dynamic and adaptive system, perpetually evolving to reflect shifts in the cultural, technological, and social landscapes of its speech communities. Among the most visible manifestations of this evolutionary process are neologisms—newly coined lexical units or novel semantic extensions of existing words that emerge in response to communicative demands. In the contemporary era, characterized by unprecedented global interconnectedness and the pervasive integration of digital technologies into daily life, the rate of neologism formation has accelerated dramatically, presenting both opportunities and challenges for linguistic theory and practice.

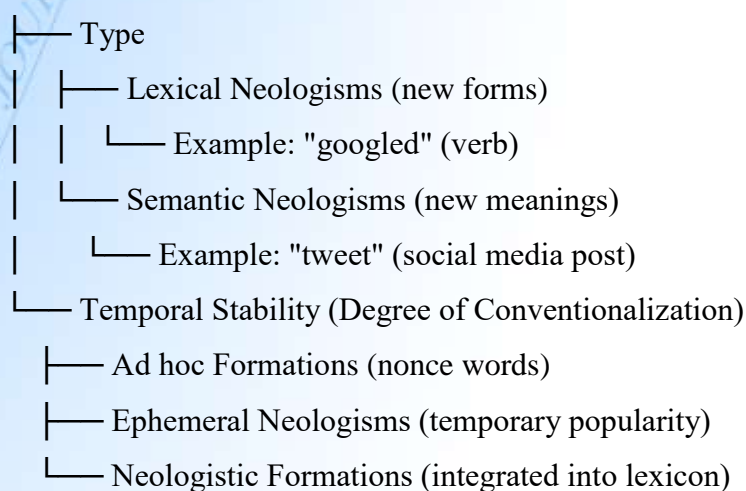
The phenomenon of lexical innovation is far from a peripheral curiosity within linguistics; rather, it constitutes a central mechanism through which languages maintain their functional adequacy and expressive richness. Neologisms fill lexical gaps, designate novel concepts

arising from technological advancement, and encode shifting cultural values and social practices. From the perspective of modern linguistics, the study of neologisms offers invaluable insights into the cognitive processes underlying word formation, the sociolinguistic dynamics of language contact, and the diachronic trajectories of semantic change.

Literature Review

The term "neologism" derives from the Greek roots *néos* (new) and *lógos* (word, speech), and in its broadest sense refers to any lexical innovation that introduces novelty into the lexicon of a language. However, the precise delineation of what constitutes a neologism has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. A fundamental distinction must be drawn between lexical neologisms—completely novel lexical forms that did not previously exist in the language—and semantic neologisms—existing words that have acquired new meanings or senses. For example, the word *tweet* existed in English long before the advent of the social media platform Twitter, but its semantic extension to denote a message posted on that platform constitutes a semantic neologism.

Scholars have further refined this taxonomy by considering the lifespan and degree of conventionalization of new lexical formations. Christofidou (2024) distinguishes three categories based on temporal stability: ad hoc formations (nonce words created for a single, context-specific communicative need), ephemeral neologisms (forms that enjoy temporary popularity within specific communities before fading from use), and neologistic formations (innovations that achieve lasting integration into the general lexicon). This temporal dimension is of critical importance, as it underscores the fact that not all lexical innovations successfully transition from transient novelties to durable components of the language system.



Neologism Formation

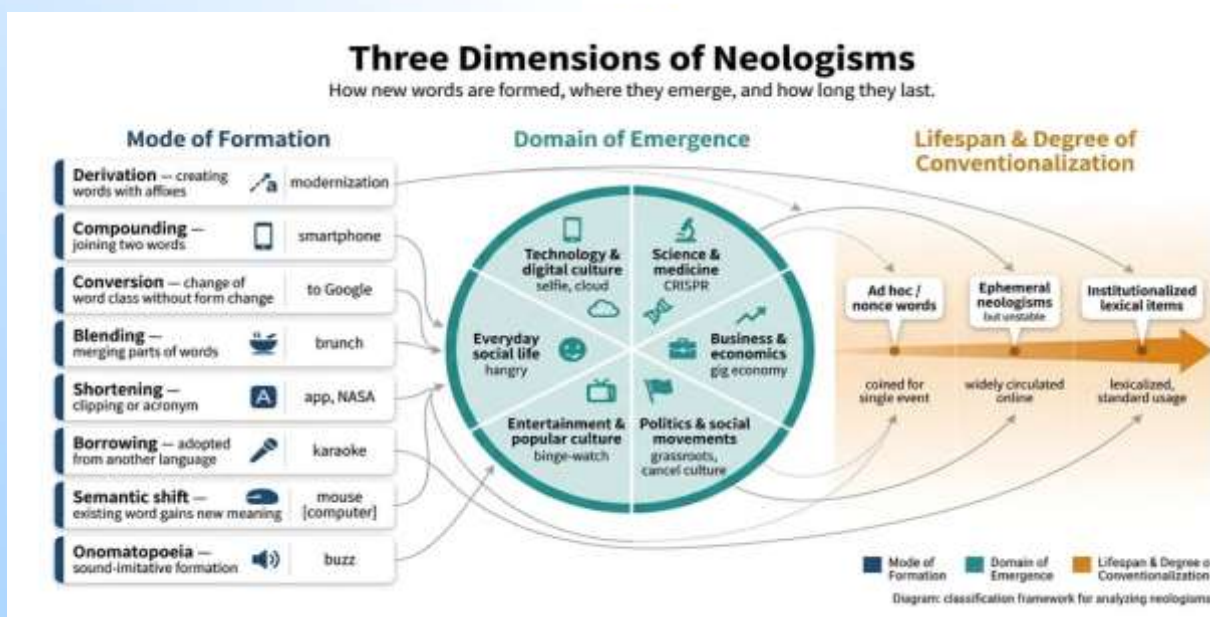
The linguistic processes through which neologisms are generated are diverse and reflect both the internal resources of a language and the influence of external linguistic systems. The primary word-formation mechanisms identified in the literature include derivation (the addition of affixes to existing stems), compounding (the combination of two or more free morphemes), conversion (the functional shift of a word from one grammatical category to another without morphological change), blending (the fusion of parts of two or more words), shortening (including clipping, acronyms, and initialisms), borrowing (the adoption of lexical items from other languages), and semantic shift (the extension or modification of the meaning of existing words).

Recent research has highlighted the increasing prominence of certain formation mechanisms in the digital age. Blending, for instance, has proven particularly productive in online discourse, generating forms such as hangry (hungry + angry), mansplain (man + explain), and glamping (glamorous + camping).

Methods and Discussion

This study employed a qualitative analytical framework combining systematic literature synthesis with illustrative corpus-based analysis. The research design proceeded in three phases. In the first phase, a comprehensive review of scholarly literature on neology, lexical innovation, and language change published between 2015 and 2025 was conducted, encompassing works in English-language academic journals, edited volumes, and authoritative reference works.

Based on the synthesis of the scholarly literature, a multi-dimensional classification framework was developed to systematize the analysis of neologisms. This framework integrates three primary analytical dimensions:



The analysis of the compiled neologism corpus revealed several significant patterns regarding the distribution of formation mechanisms across different domains. The following table synthesizes the key findings, presenting representative examples of neologisms organized by formation mechanism and domain of emergence.

Domain Representative Examples & Formation Mechanisms of Digital Neologisms

Formation Mechanism	Domain Representative Examples	Description	Characteristics
Derivation/Affixation	cyber-security e-wallet e-wallet re-tweet un-friend	Addition of prefixes (cyber-, e-, un-, re-) to existing stems; highly productive in digital contexts	
Compounding Tech	block-chain crypto-currency smart-phone crowd-sourcing	Combination of two or more free morphemes to designate novel technological concepts.	
Compounding Social	doom-scrolling ghost-ing photo-bomb binge-watch	Compound formations capturing new social behaviors mediated by digital technology.	
Blending	hangry (hungry+angry) glamping (glamorous+camping) mansplain (man+explain)	Fusion of elements from multiple multiple source words; particularly productive in informal digital discourse.	
Blending Acronyms	LOL TBH FOMO IRL DM AMA	Abbreviated forms optimized for efficiency in typed communication.	

Table 1. Classification of Neologisms by Formation Mechanism and Domain of Emergence

The data presented in Table 1 reveal several noteworthy patterns. First, technological and digital domains exhibit a marked predominance of compounding and derivation as formation mechanisms, reflecting the need to designate novel concepts and artifacts for which no pre-existing lexical items exist. The productive use of affixes such as cyber-, e-, and the conversion of brand names into generic verbs (to google, to uber) illustrate the adaptability of English morphology to the demands of technological innovation.

Second, blending emerges as a particularly productive mechanism in informal digital discourse and youth language, consistent with the tendency toward linguistic play and creativity in these communicative contexts. The portmanteau formations characteristic of blending (hangry, glamping) achieve expressive efficiency by condensing complex meanings into compact lexical forms.

Third, the data underscore the pervasive influence of English as a global lexical donor. Anglicisms such as selfie, hashtag, and smartphone have been borrowed into numerous languages, though the degree of phonological and morphological adaptation varies considerably across recipient languages. In languages with robust agglutinative morphology, such as Uzbek, borrowed stems are routinely integrated with native derivational suffixes, yielding hybrid forms that instantiate a dynamic interplay between global lexical material and local grammatical structures.

Conclusion

This article has examined the role of neologisms in modern linguistics as a fundamental mechanism of language evolution in the era of globalization and the digital age. The analysis has demonstrated that neologisms are not peripheral curiosities of lexical change but rather central components of the adaptive capacity of language systems. They fill lexical gaps, designate novel concepts, and encode shifting cultural values, thereby enabling languages to maintain their functional adequacy in the face of rapid social and technological transformation.

The findings of this study underscore the transformative effects of globalization and digitalization on the dynamics of lexical innovation. Globalization has intensified language contact and accelerated cross-linguistic lexical transfer, while digital technologies have created high-velocity communicative environments that foster the rapid emergence and dissemination of neologisms. The interplay between these macro-level forces and the creative agency of individual speakers and speech communities generates a complex and dynamic linguistic landscape characterized by both global homogenization and local diversification.

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