MORPHOLOGICAL PROCESSES OF NEOLOGISMS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Morphology is a study of word formation and coinage. The advancement of technology through the Internet has led to evolution of English vocabulary as the *Lingua Franca* of it. This research report investigates the morphological processes used in forming neologisms through selected social media platforms namely, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The morphological processes notions adopted in this study are based on several researchers; Murray's (1995); Kemmer's (2003); Plag (2003). The lists of word formation processes used are acronym, affixation, antonomasia, abbreviation, borrowing, blending, clipping, compounding, conversion, reduplication and onomatopoeia. 93 neologisms were collected throughout the timeframe applied from November 2019 until March 2020. This study is a textual based analysis through qualitative approach. The samples were collected by random sampling of selecting social media influencers within the digital mediated communication as the neologisms analysed under study evolved in a wide platform due to online social media. The aspect of morphological process and word classes of the neologisms were analysed according to the adopted theory mentioned. The result is used to determine the most common morphology applied on the neologisms. The results indicate that acronym is the most common used of new word formation and most new words are formed in noun class through social media in this era. New word formation was found in this study as the sequence formation of words was undefined. This paper concludes that language is evolving occasionally and it is significant to language users by increasing their awareness of the productivity of existing words in the English vocabulary.

ABSTRAK

Morfologi adalah kajian pembentukan kata. Kemajuan teknologi melalui Internet telah menyebabkan evolusi perbendaharaan kata bahasa Inggeris sebagai *Lingua Franca*. Oleh itu, laporan penyelidikan ini menyiasat proses morfologi yang digunakan dalam membentuk neologisme melalui platform media sosial terpilih iaitu, Facebook, Instagram dan Twitter. Pengertian proses morfologi yang digunakan dalam kajian ini berdasarkan kepada beberapa penyelidik; Murray's (1995); Kemmer's (2003); Plag (2003). Senarai proses pembentukan kata yang digunakan adalah akronim, afiksasi, antonomasia, singkatan, peminjaman, pencampuran, pemotongan, penggabungan, penukaran, penggandaan dan *onomatopoeia*. 93 neologisme dikumpulkan sepanjang jangka masa yang ditetapkan dari November 2019 hingga Mac 2020. Kajian ini adalah analisis berdasarkan teks melalui pendekatan kualitatif. Sampel dikumpulkan dengan pensampelan rawak memilih tokoh awam dalam kerangka komunikasi berasaskan digital kerana neologi yang dianalisis dalam kajian berkembang dalam platform yang luas kerana media sosial dalam talian. Aspek proses morfologi dan kelas kata neologisme akan dianalisis mengikut teori adopsi yang disebutkan. Hasilnya digunakan untuk menentukan morfologi yang paling biasa berlaku pada neologisme. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa akronim adalah yang paling umum digunakan untuk pembentukan kata baru dan kebanyakan kata baru dibentuk dalam kelas kata nama melalui media sosial pada era ini. Pembentukan kata baru dikesan dalam kajian ini kerana pembentukan urutan kata tidak ditentukan. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahawa bahasa berkembang sesekali dan penting bagi pengguna bahasa dengan meningkatkan kesedaran mereka tentang produktiviti kata-kata yang ada dalam perbendaharaan kata bahasa Inggeris.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The world today is turning more to electronic communications through social networking such as *WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook* and other applications. Technology brings about a lot of amendments to humans, both advantages and disadvantages in the original variety of a language. The fast pace of online social networking of technological acquirements are impacting the language. The growth and changes of language have certainly reflected how society today perceives the world. The evolution of the language being adapted in social networking has changed the way how people communicate and write both in the social networking and real world communication through the application of new words or phrases.

With over a billion users of online sites, it was hard to argue against social networking being something ubiquitous. As more generations were born into the social age, social networking continues to be the most favoured communication form among young people. Today, we are living in a world of cutting edge information-technology. People have wider and more efficient access to knowledge and information with the help of technology. The advancement of technology require

new glossaries of the new words created online in order to keep pace with the rapidly growing information and knowledge available in social networks. As stated by Roggen (1996) on the root of knowledge, ' *'No new science is possible without neologisms, new words or new interpretations of old words to describe and explain reality in new ways. To reject neologisms, often despicably, is to reject scientific development'.* This shows that it was impossible to introduce a new discovery or to name terms without having a new word. Therefore, neologism was significant to all languages.

The word 'Neologism' comes from the combination of a French word *Neo* which means 'New' and a Greek word *logo,* which means 'word'. It generally refers to a newly coined word that may be in the process of entering common use, but has not yet been accepted into mainstream language. According to Peterson and Ray (2013), they stated that "A neologism is a newly coined word or phrase that is just emerging into mainstream use. Neologisms may be coined by and attributed to a specific person, or they may be the outcome of a publication, period, or event. There are multiple ways to create a neologism". Those 'multiple ways' are referring to morphological processes.

Some social media users create a neologism but using a specific process but some repeat the neologism. This specific process in coining new words is known as the morphological process in the linguistic field. To create a new word or to insert new meaning to a word, the process of word formation is the essential step. This research, therefore, mainly focuses on the construction or the process of the development of a neologism. As the main focus is the process of word formation, to analyse that, sources of data are needed. Thus, neologisms are collected to be the sources of data. Morphological processes, other than that, are important to a language as it contributes a significant difference on the patterns used in coining new words.

In pursuance of conducting this language related research, a language is selected. This study has selected English language as the source of data of the neologisms through social media. To support why English language is chosen is according to Sitsanis (2021), English has dominated the Internet platform for many years until present. English language, which is being widely spoken, has taken the role of the *lingua franca* of people from different geographical backgrounds throughout the world with the help of the Internet. The information and technology

explosion by modern society has taken English language with a dynamic vocabulary to meet its requirement. Such new vocabulary is defined as Neologism scientifically.

As mentioned earlier, there are various ways to create neologisms (morphological processes). In linguistics, morphological process is the study of word structure. Carlisle (2004) suggested that morphology refers to the study of word structure, which involves integrative linguistics processing that is centred on morphemes (the smallest units of meaning) and combination of morphemes. Murray (1995) illustrated that there are a lot of morphological processes being adapted in order to create neologisms especially in English such as abbreviations, acronyms, compounding, derivation, loan words and other processes. Other than that, a research by Kemmer (2003) explained and listed the type of word formation processes found in English websites.

According to a researcher, "A common explanation for changes in the forms we also see in neologism is that frequent forms tend to be shorter" (Lehrer, 2007). This may be a hypothesis of the most frequently used of neologisms are acronyms, abbreviations and clippings. These contexts of neologisms are designed by the users in social networking. This research might have a huge distribution to the language history especially in English language as the current *Lingua Franca* of the world.

There are an abundance of social networking sites being developed as part of the technology advancement impacts. These sites are called social media which are mostly created as digital entertainment. These social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp and others have attracted this modern society to connect and communicate via the Internet through those attractive platforms. However, as this study is related to textual analysis, written forms of language are selected to be the sources of data.

Application	Percentage of users (%)
Facebook	85
Youtube	79
Whatsapp	66
Instagram	63
Twitter	56

Hence, after perusing the infographic of the most accessed social media from www.digitalinformationworld.com (2019), this study has decided to select Instagram, Twitter and Facebook as these platforms use written posts greatly. This decision was also made for its potential of being accessed publicly unlike personal applications such as WhatsApp. This study, therefore, investigated the neologisms created in selected social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) by the social media influencers. Social media influencers demonstrate as an individual or entity that has acquired fame or notoriety or has participated in a particular public controversy. According to Geyser (2021), social media influencers were referring to people who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a topic. However, Geyser (2021) also stated that social media influencers were also celebrities but most of them were yet to have less influence on their followers as they were lacking in expertise. The social media influencers refer to people of the social media users who have gained many followers on their social media accounts. This study, nonetheless, selects randomly by concerning their numbers of followers that should be above 1000 followers on a single account which was considered as micro-influencers (Geyser, 2021). Moreover, their accounts were publicly exposed and can be accessed by anyone online. The neologisms created by them were then identified and followed with the analysis of the morphological processes involved in the word formation.

This has largely expanded English vocabulary as the netizens (the users of the Internet) tend to change, create new words or the existing words to fit in the social media world. This might be caused by the limitation of words being applied by most of the social media used in this study; *Instagram; Twitter; Facebook*. For example, Twitter has applied a limitation of letters or known as "characters" only up to 280 characters on a post or being called with "Tweet" by the Twitter users. This increases the tendency of the users to shorten words in order to write a post to deliver a message. However, the CEO of Twitter, Jack Dorsey (2017) claimed that the limitation of characters has increased the numbers of people "tweeting" and even led to more engagement between the users. This shows that the new generations in the digital world are enjoying a short form level of writing and engaged in good interaction with each other on social networking.

Neologisms occur in most languages in the world as the impact of modernization of technology. It can be used and perceived differently in different regions of the

world. Sometimes what makes this new theory worrying is because people misuse the original terms or phrases resulting in new definition usage which refer to the new slangs created in digital literacy. This changes the connotative meaning of a phrase or word of the original language. For instance, the words "grab", "Netflix", "chillax" and others. These words carry a total different meaning in digital literacy contexts which nowadays seem to be applied and adapted in real world conversation as the impact of social networking.

Table 1.1　　**Examples of morphological processes of neologisms found in social media**

1.	Blending	The process when two or more morphemes are combined after at least one of them is shortened or some parts of the syllables between the two are joined. Example: **Socmed (Social + Media)**
2.	Compounding	The process where two or more roots or free morphemes combine to produce a new word. Example: **Photobomb**

Table 1.1 shows two examples of morphological processes of neologisms found in social networking. The first process is the blending process. According to Murray (1995) blending is a process when two or more morphemes (smallest unit in a language) are combined after at least one of them is shortened or some part of the syllables between the two are joined. The example of neologism found in social media for this process is *Socmed. Socmed* is a blend of two words from two free morphemes, *'Social'* and *'Media'* where the first syllable of each word is taken and combined together. *Socmed* refers to social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and others. The second morphological process is compounding. Murray (1995) stated that compounding is defined as a process where two or more roots or free morphemes combine to produce a new word. The example shown in table 1.1 for this process is *Photobomb. Photobomb* is a combination of two words 'Photo' and 'Bomb'. *Photobomb* is used to refer to someone or something who purposely or accidentally appears in someone's photo.

As this study is related to analysis of word formation or textual-based analysis, the methodology of this research is through qualitative approach. Referring to Bandhari (2020), the qualitative approach involves collecting and analysing no - numerical data such as text, video and audio in order to get an understanding of the concepts, opinions or experiences portrayed. The sources of data that were used in this study are the neologisms and the analysing process was through morphological processes analysis of the neologisms found. Thus, this study is a qualitative research approach.

To summarise, this study was conducted because there was a need to recognise and acknowledge the revolution of English language specifically, so as not to overlook the importance of their significance difference to the continual process of neologisms creation or any changes in patterns of the process of coining the new words. This study, other than that, was relevant because an action of conducting a study in recording the usage of new meanings to the existing words to ensure there were no misconceptions of different connotations which was important for new learners of a language.

1.2   Problem Statement

This study was conducted to investigate the neologisms created in social media selected (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) by the social media influencers and the process of the word formation that were involved. Neologisms were seemingly to experience a rapid growth in social networking. Some of the new terms or words were not even recorded yet officially in the dictionary, and some have even gone extinct according to their significance to society. This was because neologisms had a significant difference especially in English vocabulary and perhaps may even affect part of its structures. Some of the neologisms had only been recently introduced and used by the social media users which thus were not recorded yet in the dictionary to explain the usage of a neologism. This study, therefore, is an essential effort to record and study the development of a language for future generations, especially new learners of a language.

The social media users create and use those neologisms widely in the social media platforms. Therefore, some of the new words or terms were not recorded in the dictionary despite the platform of the Internet itself which can be called as the infinity world of technology. In accordance with that, an effort to identify and acknowledge some of the neologisms academically is necessary to look at the significant and important contribution of the process of word formation in English language which is an on going process. In the academic world, the growth of such new words leads to a need to identify the word-formation processes involved in the formation of Neologisms. This was because Neologisms may affect parts of its structure and existence in the English vocabulary. Neologisms expand the vocabulary of a language and they ultimately bring about new ways of grammatical usage.

Other than that, this research was conducted mainly to identify the morphological processes involved in the word formation of the neologisms. As people were becoming more prone to using social media as a medium of interaction and expression, there seemed to be a modification on the formation of new words. This might happen for some reasons as well as the technical requirements opposed by some social media platforms. For example, most social media platforms have set limitations on words to be posted at a time. Twitter started its operation with limitation of words up to 140 characters per post. However, the tweet limit grew the maximum length of each post to 280 characters which was still considered as short but more expressions were enabled (Twitter Developer, 2021). This leads more for neologisms to occur and create by the users, especially shortening of word processes such as acronym and abbreviation. This could lead to misleading information or even misconception to the connotations created from the neologisms especially amongst the new learners of any language. Therefore, this study would help in recording the new word formation processes as well as the new words created.

There was a study by Cook and Stevenson (2010) which showed that blending was the most commonly used word formation examined in that time. That study was also the same with a study by Onyedum (2012) which showed the same pattern as blending was the most common word formation of neologisms. However, in this report acronym has taken the first place of the highest use of word formation through the social media platforms. This shows a difference in the pattern of morphological processes used in the neologisms used. Joyes (2011) once stated that, use of morphological processes in word formation is an ongoing process and found

out that there were some neologisms formed through a combination of at least two morphological processes in the media platforms. This study would contribute to the morphology context on the development of standard English language new word formation patterns. This study, therefore, is relevant because there is a need to study the changes and importance of word formation in the expansion of English vocabulary in social media.

1.3   Research Objectives

i.   To analyse the meanings, formation processes and word classes of the social media neologisms in English language.

ii.   To investigate the most frequently used morphological processes in the social media neologisms found.

iii. To identify the most frequently used word class in the social media neologisms collected.

1.4   Research Questions

In accordance with the study objectives, the following are the research questions:

i.   What are the meanings, word formation and word classes of the social media neologisms collected?

ii.   What are the most frequently used morphological processes in forming Neologisms found among the social media influencers in social media?

iii. Which is the most frequently used of word class in the social media neologisms found?

1.5   Scope of Study

This study focuses and concerns the neologism created in one particular language which is English language. Neologism is perhaps a never ending process in any language that exists in this world especially in English language. Moreover, English language is huge and widely used in social networking as it is the lingua franca in this technology era. It is indeed an impossible endeavour to keep up with the growing number of neologisms in English. In accordance with that, this study does not analyse a great number of Neologisms but only a small portion which focuses on word formation only. Moreover, this study refers to some researches on the morphological processes to analyse the word formation process used to create the neologisms. Those researches were developed by Murray (1995), Kemmer (2003), and Plag (2003).

The neologisms were analysed for their meanings within the framework of lexical semantics. Lexical semantics is the study of words (lexicology) and the meaning (semantics) which are often more specifically concerned with the study of lexical (content) word meaning, as opposed to the meanings of grammatical (or function words). There are two types of word classes, open word class (noun, verb, and adjective) and close word class (preposition, adverb and conjunction).

Other than that, this study was conducted by using three social media applications particularly which are *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. According to a survey by the Global Web Index (2019), the statistic of the most popular social media platforms is *Facebook* followed by *YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram* and *Twitter*. Those three applications mentioned earlier were selected despite the convenient state of being accessed and content. *YouTube* was not selected because most of the content is available in visual aids such as videos and audios which would make the analysing process difficult. WhatsApp was not selected either because this study focuses on neologisms created by social media influencers only as this application needs the access of phone numbers which was quite impossible. Thus, technological mediated communication was applied as this study enrolled through

social networking by using digital devices (mobile phone and computer) which is a wide platform.

This study was conducted among the social media influencers only. The neologisms created by them were collected and analysed for their structure and word formation processes. Social media influencers were selected because their social media accounts can be easily accessed by anyone publicly. Habermas (1991), stresses that if something is public it is "open to all". Social media influencers are those who are celebrities, influencers, entrepreneurs, politicians, *Instafamous* (someone who is famous in Instagram) and others; who are active users, many followers, available publicly, number of postings and others. Therefore, the social media influencers would require media for information and communication and access by all citizens.

1.6   Significance of Study

As this study was a language related study, there were few significance and contribution; contribution to English language researchers, English vocabulary and English language educators and learners. Firstly, this research was conducted as a means of contribution to helping researchers of the English Language recognize some of the most common morphological process patterns that are used in the coining of neologisms, particularly among the social media influencers in the current era. Other than that, this study analysed if there is any new word formation or pattern that happens in the coining of new words. This may be used by the future researchers to analyse neologisms existing in the timeframe of this study as well as the word formation processes involved. There are some morphological processes of neologisms in English Language applied in this study from several researchers in this field namely Murray (1995), Kemmer (2003), and Plag (2003). This study was conducted to investigate the morphological process patterns being used to create neologisms in social media. This would help on the current neologisms decomposed and used by social media users in the estimated time interval of this particular research (November 2019 until March 2020).

Moreover, this study was conducted to identify a significant number of neologisms created in social media and analyse the differences or changing of existing words and the formal/ standard language being used in the social media platform. This would help in recording the new word formation to the English vocabulary. Physical and digital vocabularies, Oxford Dictionary 6th Edition (2017) Netlingo.com, were used in this study in order to trace the availability of each of the neologisms found. This study was also operated to help in recognizing some of the neologisms being used in social media and the awareness of the usage of the words or terms in formal and informal English language. Neologisms were added from time to time along with the different range age of groups developing them. Therefore, misconception and misleading information would happen to some range of age groups. This study would give an explanation to some neologisms created.

Neologisms or new word formation is a never ending natural process happening in human language. Therefore, this study was unable nor intended to analyse a great number of neologisms but a small number within the targeted group of this study which was the social media influencers who use English language in their social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram); code switching (mix of language) is allowed in this study as long as the main message to be delivered is towards English language. This was conducted through digital mediated communication as it involves a wide social networking platform and it is also a textual analysis study.

This study, therefore, is beneficial and be significant to both educators and learners of English language. As new words or neologisms formation is an on going process in any language, this study is relevant and should be further continued concerning the new patterns and new connotation applied. As a result, new English language learners acquire the benefits in terms of avoiding any misconceptions on the new words created or new word formation processes. Other than that, this language study helps to raise awareness of the usage of the words or terms in formal and informal English language both users and non-users of social media.

1.7   Limitation of Study

Being a multi-disciplinary study encompassing the internet, social networking and language development, the digital mediated communication was adopted as conducted through the Internet and social media platforms. The neologisms were collected through three social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram from stratified random sampling of social media influencers. The period of time in neologisms collection was within November 2019 until March 2020 (5 months). The neologism was specifically focusing on English language only as it is the *Lingua Franca* of the Internet language. Internet users have widely used English as the medium of communication and socialization. Sample of the study was collected from social media influencers by using probability sampling which was based on the random selection of representative samples. However, concerning the technical glitches as stated by Constine (2014), A user account is personalized and this was resulting in the situation where all accounts are selected to appear based on "a variety of factors, including who you follow, who you're connected to, and what you liked, other than the trending news or pages with many followers or issues will spread easily usually within the same country's users. Therefore, most social media influencers where the sources of data were obtained from, were mostly Malaysians as this study was conducted in Malaysia.

There were eleven word formation processes selected to identify the morphological aspects of the neologisms adopted from Murray (1995), Kemmer (2003), and Plag (2003). The processes were acronym, abbreviation, clipping, blending, compounding, affixation, borrowing, conversion, onomatopoeia, antonomasia and reduplication. However, if a neologism that was indescribable for its morphological process was found in the data collection, a new process was used to refer to the formation with justifications by using the lexical semantics analysis. As mentioned, this study only adopted two methods of lexical semantics analysis by Murphy (2016) and those were the introspection and usage dictionaries. Murphy (2020) stated that the lexical semantics framework was used to analyse the meanings of the neologism as well as the word-classes. The lexical semantics analysis could be defined as study of meaning but it could specifically focus on the lexical (content) or the word definition, as opposed to the functions of the words. This defines that

lexical semantics are most interested in open classes of noun, verb and adjectives and the content of adverbs as well as prepositions classes. This study identified the content and purposes of the neologisms created as well as the word classes involved, but not in depth of the lexical semantics framework as the main objective was to identify the morphological processes of the neologisms created on social media.

1.8   Lexical Semantics Analysis

In the process of collecting the neologisms, definitions of the new words were emphasised in the first place. This study identified the content and purposes of the neologisms created as well as the word classes involved by using the lexical semantics analysis. Lexical semantics is defined as the study of meaning in the linguistics field. According to Murphy (2016), there were several methods in researching meaning of a word by using a variety of tools, including introspection, fieldwork, dictionaries, corpora and (where appropriate) psycholinguistic experimentation.

This study, nevertheless, only adopted the introspection and dictionaries approaches. Introspection means asking oneself how one uses language which was known as a classic linguistic method, and it is used throughout a lexical semantics purpose (Murphy, 2016). Dictionaries refer to usage of a dictionary in analysing the meaning of a word. There were two dictionaries used in this study, the Oxford Dictionary 6th Edition (2017) and the Internet language dictionary, NetLingo.com. Introspection analysis includes analysis from morphological processes theories that are selected in order to analyse the meaning of the word. Dictionaries were also used to examine the existing and differences of meaning of every neologism found.

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