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A STUDY OF SEMANTIC CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY: NEOLOGISMS

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DEDICATION

TO

My Mum, Evangelist TABE Cecile EMANGA, and my elder sister, TABE Sally ATEM.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation titled “A Study of Semantic Changes in the English Vocabulary (21st-century Neologisms): The Case of Social Media”, has been carried out by TABEL MARYANNE NKENG of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts Letters and Social Sciences, University of Yaoundé 1 under the supervision of

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ABSTRACT

The English language, a dynamic system constantly in flux, has undergone significant semantic transformations in the 21st century due to the rise of social media, leading to unintelligibility and misinterpretations amongst English speakers. The rapid emergence of neologisms within social media platforms presents a challenge for effective communication and inclusiveness. This is particularly concerning for older generations or users who are not updated with new words/ new meanings and new expressions that have in fluxed the English vocabulary, thus posing a problem for language learners and speakers. This study delves into the intricate relationship between social media platforms and semantic changes within the English vocabulary, with a particular focus on the emergence of new words and expressions. This research utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. A Google form questionnaire that incorporated 11 Closed-ended questions and 10 Open-Ended questions with a blend of 9 exercises that encouraged respondents' active participation and deeper reflection was administered to 60 learned adults. Data was meticulously collected from various sources, including social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, online libraries, and dictionaries. Some responses were analyzed based on the different age groups in order to compare the level of difficulty or unintelligibility encountered by each age group. In order to get frequently use neologisms on social media, the researcher observed interactions on social media platforms. The key findings of the research uncover the sociocultural factors that have contributed to the emergence of neologisms. the findings also throw light on the negative effects of the emergence of neologisms. Looking at the difficulty faced by learned adults, the research proposes solutions that could either solve or mitigate the effect of semantic changes. The study is significant in the field of language and linguistics as it examines patterns of semantic changes in the 21st century and proposes measures that could be taken to mitigate the effect of semantic changes on learned older adults specifically, and English speakers and learners in general.

RESUME

La langue anglaise, un système dynamique en constante évolution, a subi d'importantes transformations sémantiques au 21e siècle en raison de l'essor des médias sociaux, entraînant une inintelligibilité et des interprétations erronées parmi les anglophones. L'émergence rapide de néologismes sur les plateformes de médias sociaux présente un défi en matière de communication efficace et d'inclusivité. Ceci est particulièrement préoccupant pour les générations plus âgées ou les utilisateurs qui ne sont pas informés des nouveaux mots, des nouvelles significations et des nouvelles expressions qui ont afflué dans le vocabulaire anglais, posant ainsi un problème aux apprenants et aux locuteurs de la langue. Cette étude se penche sur la relation complexe entre les plateformes de médias sociaux et les changements sémantiques au sein du vocabulaire anglais, avec un accent particulier sur l'émergence de néologismes – de nouveaux mots et expressions. Cette recherche utilise une approche mixte, combinant des techniques d'analyse de données quantitatives et qualitatives. Un questionnaire Google Form comprenant 11 questions fermées et 10 questions ouvertes avec un mélange de 9 exercices encourageant la participation active des répondants et une réflexion plus approfondie a été administré à 60 adultes érudits. Les données ont été méticuleusement collectées à partir de diverses sources, notamment des plateformes de médias sociaux comme WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, des bibliothèques en ligne et des dictionnaires. Certaines réponses ont été analysées en fonction des différentes tranches d'âge afin de comparer le niveau de difficulté ou d'inintelligibilité rencontré par chaque tranche d'âge. Afin d'obtenir des néologismes fréquemment utilisés sur les réseaux sociaux, le chercheur a observé les interactions sur les plateformes de réseaux sociaux. Les principales conclusions de la recherche mettent en lumière les facteurs socioculturels qui ont contribué à l'émergence des néologismes. les résultats mettent également en lumière les effets négatifs de l'émergence des néologismes. En examinant les difficultés rencontrées par les adultes instruits, la recherche propose des solutions qui pourraient soit résoudre, soit atténuer l'effet des changements sémantiques. L'étude est importante dans le domaine du langage et de la linguistique car elle examine les modèles de changements sémantiques au 21e siècle et propose des mesures qui pourraient être prises pour atténuer l'effet des changements sémantiques sur les personnes âgées instruites en particulier, ainsi que sur les anglophones et les apprenants en général.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SNA -----	Social Network Analysis
OED -----	English Dictionary
CMC -----	Computer Mediated Communication
MOD -----	Modern English
ME -----	Middle English
AD -----	After the death of Christ
(OE) -----	Old English
GEN Z -----	Digital Natives; those born between the late 1990s and early 2010s.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A study of the Semantic evolution of the English Vocabulary involves examining the changes in the meaning of words and expressions in the English language. Specifically, this research focuses on the semantic evolution of words and expressions. This refers to the process by which the meaning of a word or one of the meanings of a word changes over time, often due to shifts in cultural, social, economic, or linguistic elements. Neologisms often drive semantic change; new words often emerge to fill a specific gap in vocabulary. Examining how these new words are used and how their meanings evolve can be a valuable way to understand broader trends in semantic change. William Labov's work on Sociolinguistics provides rich examples of his perspective on language as a dynamic system. Here are two quotes with references that highlight this:

"Change is not a haphazard or erratic process; it follows a set of social and linguistic rules. Speakers are not simply making random mistakes; they are actively participating in the ongoing evolution of language." (Labov, 2001).

This quote highlights that language change is not random, but rather a systematic process influenced by social factors. Labov argues that speakers are not passive participants, but are actively involved in shaping language through their everyday use.

(Croft, 2000) in his *Explaining Language Change: An Evolutionary Approach*, says:

"Language is not a static system, but a set of procedures that we use to construct expressions on the fly. These procedures are constantly being honed and modified through experience, and this is how languages change over time."

As a cognitive linguist, Croft emphasizes the role of perception, interaction, and embodiment in language. He argues that language is constantly shaped by our experiences and interactions with the world around us, reflecting its dynamic nature.

Some Linguists worry about declining standards of the English lexicon, others celebrate the flexibility and dynamism of the language. Discrepancies in meanings in the 21st century are wideranged. A synchronic approach focuses on language at a moment in time without taking the history of its evolution from the very beginning into account. This research explores semantic changes in the 21st century. Based on the distinction between the meanings of words and the meanings of sentences (expressions and phrases), we can recognize two main divisions in the study of semantics; lexical semantics studies and phrasal semantics studies.

This present study focuses on 21st-century Neologisms. Words or phrases have been recently coined using some word formation processes such as affixation, blending, eponymy, and compounding, while existing words have undergone semantic changes. The semantic changes discussed in this work are; semantic broadenings, (polysemy), Semantic narrowing, semantic amelioration, pejoration, and reclamation

This research involves exploring the role of cultural and social factors in semantic evolution. For example, changes in technology, or popular culture can have a significant impact on how words are used and understood. In addition, understanding semantic evolution in the English language can provide valuable insights into how languages in general change and adapt over time, and how linguistic and cultural factors interact with each other.

Language is an ever-evolving system, constantly adapting and changing to meet the needs and experiences of its speakers. The study of semantic evolution, specifically the changes in word meanings over time, provides valuable insights into the cultural, social, and technological developments of a particular era. This study aims at investigating the semantic evolution within the English vocabulary during the 21st century, focusing on synchronic analysis.

The 21st century has witnessed rapid advancements in technology, globalization, and the shifting of societal values, all of which have influenced language use and meaning. The rise of the internet, social media, and mobile communication platforms has provided unprecedented opportunities for communication and linguistic innovation. Additionally, social, and cultural transformations have contributed to the creation and transformation of vocabulary, resulting in shifts in semantic meaning.

1.1. Background to the study

A study of semantic changes in the English vocabulary cannot be carried out without digging into the history of the very beginning of the English language. The earliest form of English is conventionally divided into three separate periods, usually called Old English (or Anglo-Saxon), Middle English, and Modern English. Old English was the language spoken in England from roughly 500 to 1100. Very little survives in written form from the very earliest years, of which the first half, before the coming of the Danes, is generally known as the age of Æthelberht, Aelle, and Caedmon. A great deal, however, remains from the half-millennium or so after the arrival of St. Augustine in 597. By the latter date, the Germanic tribes that had invaded southern and eastern Britain (the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes), with the one exception of the Celtic-speaking people of Cornwall, had driven the 'British', speakers of a Celtic tongue, into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

These tribes established several separate kingdoms, the most powerful of which, Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex, eventually formed a unified England, though this did not become permanent until the late 9th and early 10th centuries, by which time the country had undergone a series of assaults and invasions by Vikings. England's link with the continent became closer and more important during the Old English period. From around 700 to well past the Conquest, England was frequently visited by missionaries, scholars, and soldiers from the continent, many of whom came to England to escape the dangerous and lawless conditions caused by the barbarian invasions and general upheaval that followed the fall of the Roman Empire. This contact not only brought England back into contact with the current European civilization but also exposed it to new ideas and new words.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that many of Milton's supposed 'inkhorn' terms date from the late Old or Early Middle English period, and were taken from Latin through Norman French some 200 years before the alleged inkhorn influx.

By the time the most important single event in the subsequent history of the English language, the Norman Conquest of 1066, the vocabulary had already undergone many changes in meaning, though few if any in structure. The influence of the Norman Conquest on the English language can hardly be exaggerated. Norman French completely displaced English as the language of the ruling classes for more than 300 years. Though many of the Norman conquerors spoke a variety of Old

French known as Anglo-Norman, the elite gradually adopted Parisian French, together with much of the French culture imported by the Normans. The Anglo-Norman dialect, also known as AngloNorman French or simply Anglo-French, was a Romance language spoken in England, and to some extent elsewhere in the British Isles, from the Norman Conquest until the late 14th century. It was used by the ruling classes and the Law Courts, and also by the Church. Yet, despite the use of French for such a long time by such a wide and influential section of the population, very few words have been borrowed into English from it. Most of our vocabulary comes directly from Latin through the 'High' variety of Norman French known as Anglo-Norman, a dialect used by the lords and ladies in the royal courts of England and Normandy.

The true importance of the Norman French influence on English is not that it has supplied words that were previously lacking in English; it is that the majority of the words borrowed from French during the period of Norman French dominance were already present in English in some form or other. This can be seen most clearly in the many pairs of English words that were Frenchified and so had both an English-derived and a French-derived form.

Examples include '*reward*' and '*guerdon*' (both from Latin's *recordare*, 'to remember'); '*warden*', '*guardian*', '*sentinel*', '*custodian*' and '*janitor*' (all from Latin's *warden*, 'to guard') and '*disdain*' and '*contempt*' (both from Latin's *disdainare*, 'to reject' or 'to scorn'). While the number of such doublets is very large, most of them are of little semantic importance. Often, the Anglo-Norman and English words that derive from the same Latin source still retain their original meanings side by side. However, in some cases, one or both of the cognates has undergone a change of sense. For instance, the Anglo-Norman '*pay*' and the Old English '*worthe*' (originally 'to be or become'), both ultimately from Latin's *pacare*, originally meant 'to pacify'. But while '*pay*' now means 'to give money', '*worthe*' has developed the sense 'to be of a particular value' or 'to be deserved'. It is fascinating to observe the intricate and multifaceted influences that have shaped the English language throughout its long and varied history.

From the migration of Germanic tribes to the conquest of the Normans, each era has left its mark on the linguistic landscape. The fusion of diverse cultures, languages, and ideas has enriched the vocabulary of English, providing a vast array of expressions and nuances to communicate thoughts,

emotions, and experiences. The development of English has been a dynamic process, constantly evolving to adapt to the changing world and absorbing influences from different sources.

While the Norman Conquest brought significant changes to the language, it is important to note that English had already undergone numerous transformations before this pivotal event. The interactions between English, Latin, and French in the centuries leading up to the Conquest laid the foundation for the language we know today. The borrowing of words from French was not simply a matter of importing new vocabulary, but rather a complex interplay between existing English words and their French counterparts. This linguistic exchange resulted in the creation of doublets - words with similar etymological origins but distinct semantic nuances. These doublets offer insights into the evolution of the English lexicon and showcase the persistence of both native and borrowed terms.

While the Norman French influence may not have introduced an abundance of new words into English, it shaped the language by refining and redefining existing vocabulary. The infusion of French culture and the widespread use of French in the ruling classes fostered a sense of prestige and elegance associated with the language. However, the English language remained resilient and resilient, maintaining its presence despite the dominance of French.

The enduring impact of Norman French on English serves as a testament to the complexity and adaptability of language. As English continues to evolve and absorb influences from various sources in the modern world, it is essential to recognize the rich tapestry of its history and appreciate the multitude of influences that have contributed to its vibrant and diverse vocabulary.

Before delving into 21st-century neologisms which is the core of this work, it is important to know the very history of the English Language.

1.2. History and development of the English language

The history of the English language can be divided into several distinct periods, including Old English (450-1100), Middle English (1100-1500), Early Modern English (1500-1700), and Modern English (1700-present). Each of these periods is characterized by unique linguistic features and changes in the language, which may have contributed to semantic evolution.

1.2.1. Old English Period (450-1150 AD)

The Old English period marks the earliest recorded stage of the English language, characterized by the influence of Germanic tribes, primarily the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, following their migration to Britain in the 5th century. During this era, English underwent significant lexical expansion as it assimilated words from Germanic languages while also absorbing Latin and Old Norse vocabulary due to cultural and historical interactions. Semantic changes in Old English were often driven by societal shifts, religious influences, and the introduction of new technologies and concepts.

For instance, words such as "*hus*" (house) and "*weorc*" (work) evolved in meaning to accommodate changes in societal structures and economic activities. Moreover, the spread of Christianity brought about semantic shifts in terms related to religion and spirituality, as evidenced by the evolution of "god" from its Germanic roots to its Christian connotations. The Old English period thus laid the foundation for semantic developments that would continue to shape the English language in the centuries to come.

1.2.2. Middle English Period (1150-1500 AD)

The Middle English period witnessed a convergence of linguistic influences following the Norman Conquest of 1066, which introduced Norman French into English society. This linguistic amalgamation led to a rich tapestry of vocabulary, with Old English, Norse, and French contributing to semantic changes within the language. The semantic landscape of Middle English was marked by a process of lexical enrichment, semantic broadening, and semantic narrowing as English absorbed and adapted words from diverse linguistic sources.

For instance, the Old English word "*cild*" (child) underwent a semantic expansion to encompass the modern sense of infancy and adolescence, reflecting changes in familial and social structures. Additionally, the semantic range of words like "*meat*" and "*flesh*" expanded to accommodate culinary distinctions influenced by Norman culinary practices. The Middle English period thus exemplifies a dynamic interplay of semantic changes driven by cultural, linguistic, and historical factors.

1.2.3. Early Modern English Period (1500-1700 AD)

The Early Modern English period marks a pivotal juncture in the evolution of the English language, characterized by significant semantic shifts within its vocabulary. This era witnessed profound transformations driven by cultural, scientific, and literary developments, which left a lasting impact on the semantic landscape of English.

I) Literary Renaissance and Semantic Enrichment

The Early Modern English period saw the emergence of the Renaissance, a cultural movement that celebrated humanism, individualism, and artistic expression. This period witnessed a surge in literary creativity, with authors like William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and John Milton enriching the English vocabulary through their innovative use of language. Semantic changes occurred as writers coined new words, repurposed existing ones, and explored the nuances of meaning in their literary works. For example, Shakespeare's plays introduced hundreds of new words and phrases to the English lexicon and expanded its semantic range.

II) Scientific and Technological Advancements

The Early Modern English period coincided with significant advancements in science, exploration, and technology. The Renaissance sparked a renewed interest in empirical inquiry, leading to breakthroughs in fields such as astronomy, medicine, and navigation. These scientific discoveries necessitated the creation of specialized terminology to describe new concepts and phenomena. Words such as "*experiment*," "*hypothesis*," and "*discover*" underwent semantic shifts as they acquired specific meanings within scientific discourse. Similarly, technological innovations such as the printing press, the telescope, and the microscope introduced new words and concepts into the English vocabulary, reflecting the changing intellectual landscape of the era.

III) Religious Reformation and Linguistic Standardization

The Early Modern English period was also shaped by religious upheaval, notably the Protestant Reformation led by figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. The translation of the Bible into vernacular languages, including English, played a crucial role in standardizing the language and disseminating religious teachings to a wider audience. Semantic changes occurred as religious

terminology underwent adaptation and reinterpretation in English translations of the Bible, influencing the language's semantic structure and cultural identity.

IV) Colonial Expansion and Linguistic Contact

The Early Modern English period coincided with the age of European exploration and colonization, leading to extensive contact between English and other languages around the world. This linguistic contact facilitated the borrowing of words from indigenous languages, as well as from languages encountered during trade and colonial expansion. Semantic changes occurred as loanwords from languages such as Arabic, Spanish, and Native American languages were assimilated into English, enriching its vocabulary and reflecting the cultural exchange occurring during this period.

In summary, the Early Modern English period was a time of dynamic linguistic change, characterized by semantic enrichment, scientific innovation, religious reform, and colonial expansion. The vocabulary of English underwent significant transformation, reflecting the diverse influences and cultural currents of the era.

1.2.4. Late Modern English Period (1700-present)

The Modern English period represents a continuation of the semantic changes initiated during the Early Modern English era, while also witnessing new developments driven by globalization, technological innovation, and cultural exchange. This period is characterized by the rapid expansion of the English vocabulary, as well as the evolution of existing words to accommodate the shifting realities of the modern world.

I) Industrial Revolution and Technological Innovation

The Modern English period saw the advent of the Industrial Revolution, a transformative era marked by mechanization, urbanization, and economic growth. This technological revolution brought about profound changes in society, industry, and commerce, which were reflected in the semantic evolution of English vocabulary. Words related to machinery, manufacturing, and transportation underwent semantic shifts as new technologies emerged and reshaped daily life. For example, words like "steam engine," "telegraph," and "automobile" entered the lexicon, reflecting

the impact of steam power, communication networks, and transportation advancements on language and culture.

II) Globalization and Cultural Exchange

The Modern English period witnessed unprecedented globalization, driven by European colonial expansion, trade networks, and advancements in transportation and communication. English spread across the globe as a result of British colonialism, becoming a dominant language in politics, commerce, and culture. This global spread of English facilitated linguistic contact and cultural exchange, leading to the borrowing of words from diverse languages and cultures. Words such as "*safari*," "*yoga*," and "*kimono*" entered the English vocabulary through contact with languages such as Swahili, Sanskrit, and Japanese, reflecting the interconnectedness of the modern world and the diversity of human experience.

III) Technological Revolution and Digital Communication

The latter half of the Modern English period has been defined by the digital revolution, characterized by the emergence of computers, the internet, and digital communication technologies. This technological revolution has had a profound impact on the English language, influencing both its vocabulary and its modes of communication. New words and phrases related to computing, social media, and digital culture have entered the lexicon, reflecting the rapid pace of technological change and innovation. Words such as "*blog*," "*vlog*," "*tweet*," and "*selfie*" have become ubiquitous in everyday language, symbolizing the integration of digital technologies into contemporary life and language use.

Media as part of technology is a potent force shaping the lexicon. Viral trends, memes, and slang terms from movies and TV shows can quickly enter mainstream usage, often with slightly altered meanings. Social media platforms provide fertile ground for new words (neologisms) to emerge. Hashtags and abbreviations, like "LOL" or "OMG," become part of everyday communication, often blurring the lines between formal and informal language.

IV) Social and Cultural Shifts:

The Modern English period has also been marked by significant social and cultural shifts, including movements for civil rights, gender equality, and environmental awareness. These social movements have influenced language use and semantic change, as new words and concepts emerge to articulate evolving social identities and concerns. Words such as "*intersectionality*," "*microaggression*," and "*climate change*" have entered the lexicon, reflecting the discourse surrounding issues of social justice, diversity, and sustainability in the modern world.

One of the key areas of research in the study of semantic change is the mechanisms that drive it. Some scholars have argued that semantic change is primarily driven by external factors, such as cultural and historical events, while others have suggested that internal factors, such as language contact and linguistic innovation, play a greater role.

To better understand the mechanisms behind semantic changes in English, there will be a study of some 21st-century Neologisms that have experienced semantic changes. For example, the evolution of the word "gay" from its original meaning of "joyful and carefree" to its current connotation of homosexuality is a well-documented case of semantic change.

1.3. Motivation

- ✦ Intellectual Curiosity: The passion for language and the desire to explore its intricate workings, is one of the motivations for conducting this research. As a lover of language, it is fascinating to trace the advent of new meanings (Neologisms) of the 21st century in order to satisfy my intellectual curiosity and provide a deeper understanding of how language has evolved.
- ✦ Contribution to Linguistic Knowledge: The desire to contribute to the existing body of linguistic knowledge is another motivation for this research. our findings can expand readers' understanding of how and why word meanings change, helping them to keep to date with this evolving language, and provide insights into the underlying mechanisms and patterns of semantic evolution.

1.4. Statement of the problem

English is a language that has evolved over time and keeps on evolving with new words being added (neologisms) and old words changing in meaning. Semantic evolution is a natural and ongoing phenomenon in any language. The dynamic nature of language is particularly evident in the emergence of Neologisms, and slang terms, in the 21st century. Social media platforms, with their informal nature, have become a breeding ground for these neologisms. The rapid emergence of neologisms within social media platforms presents a challenge for effective communication and inclusivity. While neologisms can enrich language, their informal nature and rapid evolution can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, and social exclusion for users unfamiliar with these new words. This is particularly concerning for older generations or users who are not fluent in the dominant language of a particular platform thus creating a communication barrier. If new people are not updated on the new patterns of words and meanings that have emerged, it poses a problem for language learners and speakers.

1.5. Aims and Objectives

By acknowledging the challenges discussed above, the study aims to analyze some 21st-century neologisms that are widely used on social media (words/expressions/new meanings) and the Sociolinguistics factors that have contributed to shifts in meaning, thus the emergence of neologisms. The study equally aims at examining the effects of the emergence of social media neologisms/slang on learned adults from the ages of 20 and above.

Narrowing the broad aim of this study to specific objectives, the first objective of this study, is to;

I . Examine social media slang and new meanings that have the highest frequency of appearance or usage on social media. Analyzing the frequency of a slang will determine if the word/expression/meaning is a neologism or has the potential of becoming a neologism.

II. This study equally has as its objective to discuss some Sociolinguistic factors contributing to the emergence of neologisms in the 21st century.

III. Finally, this study has as objective to examine the negative effects of the emergence of social media neologisms/slang on learned adults between the ages of 20 and above and to propose possible solutions that could mitigate the negative effects of the emergence of neologisms.

1.6. Research Questions

This research is driven by a set of carefully crafted research questions that will guide the investigation

- I. What are some of the 21st-century social media Neologisms that have over time, gained popularity amongst English speakers?
- I. How Sociolinguistic have factors (Technological advancements, social media) and linguistic factors (Borrowing, Derivation, Compounding) contributed to the emergence of neologisms in the 21st century?
- II. What are the negative effects of the emergence of social media neologisms/slangs on learned adults between the ages of 20 and above and what are the possible solutions?

In Locke's *Philosophy of Language*, he thinks that speakers want to communicate about their ideas; the contents of their mind. From here it is a short step to the view that: "*words in their primary or immediate signification, stand for nothing, but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them*". Through a systematic examination of these changes, we aim to uncover patterns, identify underlying mechanisms, and gain a deeper appreciation for the subtleties embedded within the English lexicon.

1.7. Hypothesis

Our study is based on the premise that language develops over time, and the emergence of neologisms/ internet slang has negatively affected learned adults between the ages of 20 and above as it has led to mutual unintelligibility and misunderstandings among English speakers. Also, time which is the number one factor for semantic change, and social media are the number one factors that bring about such changes, thus the emergence of neologisms.

1.8. Significance

The exploration of neologisms within social media goes beyond simply identifying new words. The neologisms that are analyzed in this study could be informative to English speakers as it will keep them updated on the new meanings/words/expressions that have emerged in the 21st century.

While this research has identified new words, or "neologisms," within social media, its true value lies deeper. It explores the fundamental relationship between these words and online communication. By understanding neologisms, we can bridge the growing communication gap and create a more inclusive digital world. Here's how this study holds significance.

Analyzing neologisms and how they are used can inform the creation of educational resources and initiatives focused on digital literacy. Equipping users, particularly older generations, with the ability to understand these new words empowers them to actively participate in online conversations and navigate the ever-changing language landscape. The research findings can guide the development of strategies that promote clear and inclusive communication within social media platforms. This might involve features like pop-up definitions, support for multiple languages, or guidelines for responsible neologism use within online communities.

By identifying the negative effects of the advent of neologisms, this research can empower users to be more critical consumers of online information. The findings can inform the development of fact-checking tools and educational campaigns that promote responsible online engagement.

This study offers valuable insights into the social dynamics within online communities. It sheds light on how neologisms function as markers of group identity and explores the potential for social exclusion associated with the rapid evolution of online language. This knowledge can inform strategies for fostering a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all users.

Social media platforms can benefit from the findings of this research when designing user interfaces and features. This knowledge can guide the development of tools that bridge communication gaps, encourage responsible use of language, and ultimately contribute to a more positive and productive online experience for all users.

The significance of this study extends beyond social media. Understanding how neologisms evolve and impact communication grants us valuable insights into the dynamic nature of language itself. This research can contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics, offering valuable data on how language adapts and flourishes within online environments.

1.9. Scope of Study

The foundation of any successful research project is a well-defined scope of study. This acts as an outline of the boundaries and key areas of exploration. It specifies what the research will investigate and what it will not. In this project, the scope of the study lies in lexical semantics and phrasal semantics. Words have meanings individually as well as in sentences (in context). Now this is where phrasal semantics comes in. The study delves into the interplay between sociolinguistics, technology, and the emergence of selected Neologisms.

To talk of this study as being synchronic only is not workable. Two synchronic studies give rise to a Diachronic study. This work is a diachronic study of semantic changes focusing specifically on the Modern English period (1500-Present. Olga Fischer in her book *"History of English"* (2000), Fischer suggests a division between Early Modern and Late Modern English based on the gradual standardization of grammar and pronunciation in the 18th century. In this work, the Modern English Period is further subdivided estimably into two periods; the MODE period Late MODE Period (1700-2000 AD), and the Contemporary English period (2000-Present).

However, the scope of this work does not incorporate the very origin of a word (etymology), rather it is focused on the present usage (meaning), and for this reason, we talk of “neologisms”. As mentioned earlier in the objective of the research; the study aims at analyzing the types of semantic changes (broadening, deterioration, amelioration, narrowing, metaphor, etc.) observed in a corpus of some selected 21st-century neologisms. (single words/phrasal wholes and words in sentences). To be able to analyze change, there must be a past and a present; the way the word/expression was used in the past, and how it is used in our contemporary society. Therefore, for the purpose of contemporality, the selected neologisms are analyzed based on two distinct periods in modern English; the Late Modern English Period (1700-2000 AD), and the Contemporary English period (2000-Present). Language change happens continuously, making it difficult to pinpoint a specific year as the start of a sub-period.

Douglas Landel in his book *History of Linguistics* (2015), briefly mentions the idea of Late Modern English as a transitional period before the full emergence of standardized modern English (MODE). The research investigates the factors driving the emergence of these neologisms in the technological and social media landscape. This combined approach will shed light on how

language adapts and reflects the ever-evolving landscape of human communication in the digital age.

Based on the distinction between the meanings of words and the meanings of sentences (expressions and phrases), we can recognize two main divisions in the study of semantics; lexical semantics and phrasal semantics.

1.10. Definition of Key Terms

1.10.1. Neologisms

The term neologism is first attested in English in 1772, borrowed from French *néologisme* (1734). The French word derives from the Greek *néo-* *néo*(="new") and *λόγος* /*lógos*, meaning "speech and utterance". In an academic sense, there is no professional neologist, because the study of such things (cultural or ethnic vernacular, for example) is interdisciplinary. Anyone such as a lexicographer or an etymologist might study neologisms, how their uses span the scope of human expression, and how, due to science and technology, they spread more rapidly than ever before in the present times. The term neologism has a broader meaning which also includes "a word which has gained a new meaning". Sometimes, the latter process is called semantic shifting, or semantic extension. Neologisms are distinct from a person's idiolect, one's unique patterns of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Neologisms are usually introduced when it is found that a specific notion is lacking a term, or when the existing vocabulary lacks detail, or when a speaker is unaware of the existing vocabulary. The law, governmental bodies, and technology have a relatively high frequency of acquiring neologisms. Another trigger that motivates the coining of a neologism is to disambiguate a term that may be unclear due to having many meanings.

In linguistics, a neologism (/ni:'plədʒɪzəm/; also known as a coinage) is any relatively recent or isolated term, word, or phrase that nevertheless has achieved popular or institutional recognition, and is becoming accepted into mainstream language. Most definitively, a word can be considered a neologism once it is published in a dictionary.

Neologisms are often formed by combining existing words or by giving words new and unique suffixes or prefixes. Neologisms can also be formed by blending words, for example, "brunch" is

a blend of the words "breakfast" and "lunch", or through abbreviation or acronym, by intentionally rhyming with existing words or simply through playing with sounds. A relatively rare form of neologism is when proper names are used as words (e.g., boycott, from Charles Boycott), guy, and dick

Neologisms can become popular through memetics, mass media, the Internet, and word of mouth, including academic discourse in many fields renowned for their use of distinctive jargon, and often become accepted parts of the language. Other times, they disappear from common use just as readily as they appeared. Whether a neologism continues as part of the language depends on many factors, probably the most important of which is acceptance by the public. It is unusual for a word to gain popularity if it does not resemble other words. Authors might delve into the mechanisms behind the creation of neologisms in computer-mediated communication. This could include discussions on how abbreviations, acronyms, portmanteaus (blends of words), and other linguistic innovations emerge in online conversations.

There is a key difference between the types of neologisms and the ways neologisms are formed; while types of neologisms categorize neologisms based on their meaning or function and they tell you what kind of new word it is. Ways neologisms are formed describe the methods used to create new words. They tell you how the new word, new meaning, and expression came about. Ways neologisms are formed is a morphological type of neologism. Types of neologisms include;

1.10.2. Semantic Neologism

An existing word takes on a completely new meaning. (e.g., "like" on social media) Semantic neologisms are new meanings assigned to existing words. They expand the vocabulary of a language by giving familiar words fresh applications. This process is very organic and can happen over time as a culture or society changes. An example is the word "like" originally meant "similar to" but gained a new meaning in the late 20th century to express approval or enjoyment (e.g., "I like that song") Semantic neologisms can add nuance and efficiency to language. They allow us to express new ideas or concepts without creating entirely new words from scratch. Sometimes, it can be subtle to recognize a semantic neologism. If you encounter a word being used in a way that seems unfamiliar or strange, it might be a new meaning gaining traction.

1.10.3. Phonological neologisms

Phonological neologisms are brand-new words created through innovative combinations of sounds. These words don't necessarily have any connection to existing words and instead rely on invented or creative sounds to convey meaning. Examples include words like "bling" (descriptive of ostentatious jewelry) or "bloop" (a nonsense word used in comics) are phonological neologisms. They don't derive from existing words but rather use new sounds to create meaning. Onomatopoeia, which are words that imitate sounds (like "buzz" or "sizzle"), can also be considered phonological neologisms. Phonological neologisms are a playful way to expand language and can be particularly creative and imaginative. They often emerge in informal settings or slang and may eventually become more widely accepted.

1.10.4. Morphological Neologisms

Morphological neologisms encompass a wider range of word creation than just new coinages. They focus on how the word is formed through the structure of existing words. Here's a closer look at morphological neologisms. This category includes new coinages (entirely new words) but also covers other modifications of existing words. These modifications can involve:

- I) Derivation:** Adding prefixes or suffixes (e.g., "biodegradable" from "bio" + "degradable")
- II) Compounding:** Combining two or more words (e.g., "weekend" or "spaceship") through blending (shortening combined words, like "smog" from smoke + fog) or full incorporation of separate words.
- III) Clipping:** Shortening existing words (e.g., "doc" from "doctor")
- IV) Backronyms:** Creating acronyms to fit existing words (e.g., "SCUBA" for Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus)

Morphological neologisms are a crucial way for languages to adapt and grow. They allow for the efficient creation of new vocabulary by using familiar building blocks. The term "new coinage" emphasizes the act of creating a new word or phrase. It highlights the "coining" process, where something entirely new is introduced into the language. Essentially, all new coinages are potential neologisms. However, not all new coinages become permanent fixtures in the language.

Here are some factors that influence whether a new coinage becomes a full-fledged neologism:

- **Frequency of Use:** The more a new coinage is used and understood by a larger group of people, the higher the chance of it becoming a neologism.
- **Social Context:** If a new coinage arises from a specific social movement, technological advancement, or cultural phenomenon, it might gain traction quickly and become a neologism associated with that context.
- **Need and Utility:** If a new coinage fills a gap in the language and provides a way to express a concept more effectively, it's more likely to be adopted and become a neologism.
- **Formal Acceptance:** Inclusion in dictionaries and acceptance by the wider linguistic community solidifies the status of a new coinage as a neologism.

Examples of New Coinages as Neologisms:

- "Hashtag" (coined in the early days of Twitter to categorize messages, now a widely used term)
- "Podcast" (a blend of "iPod" and "broadcast," now a popular form of digital audio)
- "Crowdfunding" (a new way to raise funds online, now a recognized term in the financial sphere)

New coinages that don't become neologisms might fade away. Some new coinages are trendy for a while but then disappear from common usage. Remain niche: They might be used within a specific subculture or group but not gain wider acceptance. By understanding the relationship between new coinages and neologisms, we gain a deeper appreciation for the dynamic nature of language. New words and phrases are constantly being created, reflecting the ever-changing world around us. Whether they become lasting neologisms or fleeting coinages is a fascinating story of language evolution.

1.10.2 Eponyms

Eponyms are words derived from the names of people or places. They serve as a way to commemorate someone or something significant and become ingrained in the language. For

example, many brand names become eponyms, like "Aspirin" from the Bayer scientist Felix Hoffmann or "Hoover" for vacuum cleaners. Geographical locations can also inspire eponyms, like "Denim" from the fabric originating in Nîmes, France. There are different kinds of eponyms. Patronyms are derived from a father's name (e.g., Johnson), while matronyms come from a mother's name (e.g., Harriet). Demonyms are eponyms based on places (e.g., Parisian). Eponyms can be a powerful way to honor achievements or contributions. They become embedded in our vocabulary and serve as constant reminders of their source. When an eponym is a new word being introduced into the language, it can be considered a neologism. This is especially true for simple eponyms (direct adoption of a name) and compound eponyms (combining a name with another word) where the resulting word is entirely new. For **example**; "Sandwich" was introduced as a new food item named after the Earl of Sandwich.

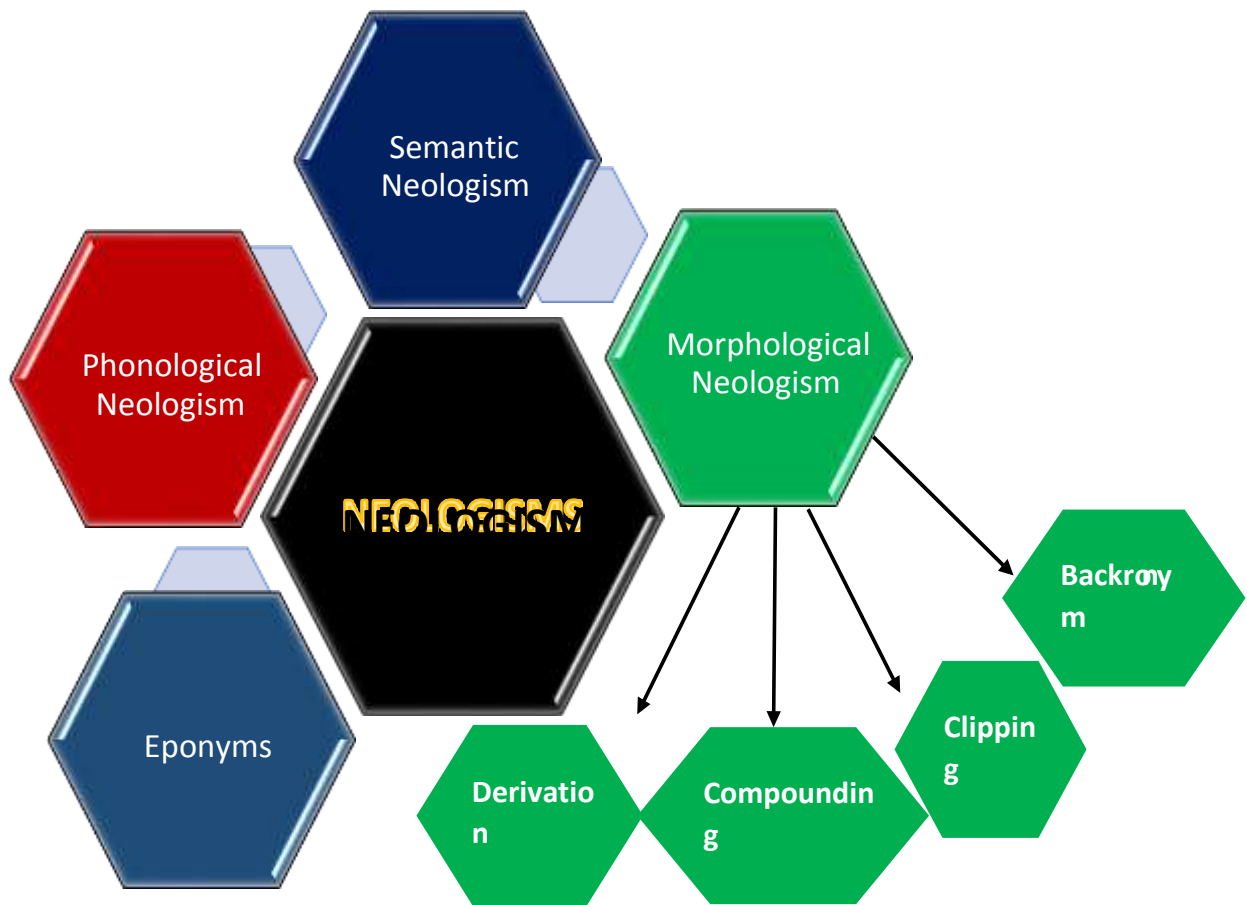


Figure 1: Types of Neologisms

Ways Neologisms are Formed (Focus: How the new words, meaning and expression came about)

- **Borrowing:** Taking a word from another language. (e.g., "sushi" from Japanese)
- **Blending:** Combining parts of two words. (e.g., "brunch")
- **Clipping:** Shortening an existing word. (e.g., "text" from "text message")
- **Acronyms/Initialisms:** Using initials or first letters of words. (e.g., "FBI")
- **Derivation:** Adding a prefix or suffix to an existing word. (e.g., "unhappy")

1.10.5. Slang

According to sociolinguists, a slang term is not just about silly words teenagers use. It is a complex and dynamic facet of language that serves a variety of social functions. Slang is typically informal language, used within specific social groups or communities. It acts as a marker of group identity and solidarity, creating a sense of shared understanding and belonging among those "in the know." This informality often involves playful manipulation of existing words, shortening them ("bae" from "babe"), adding creative twists ("lit" for "excellent"), or borrowing from other languages ("chillax" from a blend of "chill" and "relax"). Slang is highly dynamic and constantly evolving. New slang terms emerge rapidly, often reflecting current trends, events, or shared experiences within a particular group. However, slang terms also tend to have a relatively short lifespan. Some terms fade away quickly, while others might gain wider acceptance and eventually become part of mainstream vocabulary ("cool" or "awesome").

Slang allows for a more expressive and creative way of communicating. It can be used for humor, irony, or emphasis. Slang terms can be vivid and metaphorical, offering a more nuanced way to express emotions or ideas compared to more formal language ("epic fail" for a complete disaster). This creativity also allows for playful wordplay and innovation within language. Slang can be used to challenge social norms or express defiance against authority figures. By creating their own language, social groups can carve out their own space and express their unique identities. For instance, teenage slang might be a way to distinguish themselves from older generations.

While a social media slang is an informal language used on social media, some factors that determines if a word/expression is has graduated to being a neologism or has the potential of becoming a neologism include the following; the frequency of usage or appearance, the ability to transcend its initial social boundaries, demonstrate lasting power and potentially fill a gap in the existing vocabulary. Some examples of slang terms widely used on social media include;

Shortened Words and Acronyms:

SMH: Shaking My Head (expressing disapproval or disbelief)

IMHO: In My Humble Opinion

NSFW: Not Safe for Work (content containing nudity or profanity)

AMA: Ask Me Anything (invitation for questions)

GOAT: Greatest Of All Time

1.10.6. Semantics

Semantics is a sub-discipline of linguistics which focuses on the study of meaning. Semantics seeks to understand what meaning is as an element of language and how it is constructed by language as well as interpreted, obscured and negotiated by speakers and listeners of language. Semantics, the study of meaning in language, has been explored by linguists for decades. Given that this research is focused on recent semantic changes (21st Century Neologisms), here are a couple of contemporary definitions from prominent scholars to serve as foundation to this research.

According to Eve Sweetser, a scholar in the field of cognitive linguistics in her *“From Etymology to Ideology: Essays in Cognitive Linguistics”*, she says "Semantics is the study of how languages encode concepts, especially those related to perception, action, space, and social interaction, and how these encoded concepts are used to build up more complex meanings". Sweetser's definition incorporates the role of mental representations (concepts) and emphasizes how language reflects our perception, actions, and social interactions. This revised edition (2010) reflects the ongoing development of cognitive linguistics within semantics.

Stephen Pinker, a linguist in the field of cognitive science (2007), in *“The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature”*, explains; "Semantics is the study of how mental representations—concepts—are encoded in expressions in a language" Pinker emphasizes the cognitive aspect of semantics, focusing on the connection between mental concepts and their expression through language.

1.10.7. Semantic Change

1.10.7.1. Historical Overview of Semantic Change

Looking at the historical overview of semantic change from the Old English Period till date, one would notice that the old English lexicon seemed like another language, and of course will not be understandable by modern English speakers. This is to attest to the fact that a language is never static and of course English language is not an exception.

I) Old English lexicon

During the Old English period, there was a notable presence of inflection and word derivation, which led to the emergence of many doublets in the English language. Words went through transformations, shedding their previous forms and embracing new ones, while some became obsolete over time. An example of this phenomenon is the word '**witan**', which gave rise to '**wit**' and '**wise**', each with their unique meanings. While '**wit**' retained its original sense of knowledge and wisdom, '**wise**' underwent a semantic shift, evolving into a symbol of sagacity and intellectual prowess.

Another word that experienced a significant change in meaning is '**silly**', which originally expressed happiness and blessings. Over time, it took on a more negative connotation, suggesting foolishness or dim-wittedness. Borrowed words played a captivating role in the English language, as they crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries.

During the Old English period, the English lexicon welcomed countless words and phrases from Latin and French, resulting in fascinating transformations within the language. This can be seen in the word '**knight**', which carried a sense of valor and grace. Through cultural integration, '**knight**' acquired a grandeur reserved for high-status individuals in Norman society. The Old English period serves as a testament to the intriguing nature of linguistic evolution. Words transcended time, acquiring new meanings and depths that reflected cultural exchange and the passage of time. These transformations shaped the linguistic landscape and influenced our collective consciousness.

II) Middle English lexicon

During the Middle English period, which lasted from the 12th to the 15th centuries, there were significant changes in society. As a result, the meanings of words themselves underwent a profound transformation. This was mainly due to the increase in trade and commerce, which led to the assimilation of words from different languages and the expansion of the English vocabulary. The Crusades, for instance, had a significant impact on this process, as they brought numerous linguistic contributions from the Middle East. Additionally, the widespread destruction caused by the Black Death and the Hundred Years War led to a reconfiguration of word meanings, with an increased use of euphemisms. Besides these semantic changes, the Middle English period witnessed major alterations in English grammar and pronunciation, breaking down barriers

between different races and dialects. Consequently, there are many old-fashioned terms that are no longer used, and there are also many words whose old forms are no longer recognizable to contemporary readers.

1.10.7.2. Definition of Semantic Change

Andreas Blank (1999) in his “*The Meaning of Word*” says "Semantic change is not accidental... It is driven by the need for language to be efficient and effective in communication... New meanings arise... to fill gaps or to avoid cumbersome expressions" (Blank, *The Meaning of Word*).

Language, as a dynamic and living entity, undergoes a continual metamorphosis, reflecting the intricate interplay between cultural evolution, societal dynamics, and the adaptability inherent in human expression. At the heart of this linguistic evolution lies the fascinating realm of semantics—where the meanings of words undergo subtle transformations, thus capturing the characteristics of a given era. This study embarks on a journey into the complexities of semantic changes within the English vocabulary, not merely as a linguistic curiosity but as a profound exploration of the subtleties in the very fabric of communication. The pulsating heartbeat of any language resides in its lexicon, where words serve as vessels for ideas, emotions, and cultural connotations. Yet, within this lexicon, a word's meaning is not a static entity; it is a dynamic entity, subject to the whims of time and societal shifts.

Ferdinand de Saussure, in his “*Langue and Parol*”, explains that there are no objects (words/texts/others) that carry inherent autonomous meaning; there are only points of view whose meanings depend on their interrelatedness: Saussure states “in language there are only differences without positive terms”.

The significance of this study extends beyond the realm of linguistic academia. As words shape our perceptions, influence our interactions, and mirror societal shifts, understanding the patterns of semantic change becomes imperative for effective communication and cultural literacy. Through a meticulous analysis of semantic shifts, we endeavor to contribute not only to the scholarly dialogue on linguistics but also to the broader discourse on how language mirrors, shapes, and connects human experiences.

In recent years, English has seen the rise of neologisms, which are newly coined words or phrases and words which have gained new meanings. Neologisms often reflect emerging technologies, social trends, or popular culture. The internet and social media have played a significant role in the creation and dissemination of new words and expressions. Going to the focal point of this work is 21st-century Neologisms

1.11. The English vocabulary

English, as one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, boasts a rich and diverse vocabulary that has been shaped by centuries of linguistic evolution, cultural exchange, and historical influences. The English vocabulary encompasses a vast array of words and expressions, ranging from everyday colloquialisms to specialized technical terms. Here are some key aspects of the English vocabulary:

1.11.1. Linguistic Diversity

The English vocabulary is incredibly diverse, drawing from a wide range of linguistic sources including Germanic, Romance, Greek, Latin, Norse, French, and more. This linguistic diversity is a result of historical events such as invasions, migrations, trade, and colonialism, which brought English into contact with various languages and cultures over time. As a result, English has borrowed extensively from other languages, enriching its vocabulary with loanwords, cognates, and calques from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

1.11.2. Semantic Flexibility

English is known for its semantic flexibility, allowing words to adapt and evolve in meaning over time. This semantic versatility enables English speakers to express nuanced concepts and ideas using a relatively small set of words, as words can acquire multiple meanings, connotations, and usages depending on context. For example, the word "run" can refer to physical movement, management of an organization, or the operation of a machine, demonstrating the broad semantic range of English vocabulary.

1.11.3. Specialization and Jargon:

English encompasses specialized vocabularies and jargon associated with various fields of knowledge, professions, and subcultures. From scientific terminology to legal jargon, from

technical jargon to slang used in specific social groups, English accommodates a wide range of specialized vocabularies tailored to specific contexts and domains. This specialization reflects the diversity of human experience and the need for precise and efficient communication within specialized communities.

1.11.4. Neologisms and Innovation:

The English vocabulary is constantly evolving through the creation of new words and expressions, known as neologisms. Neologisms arise through processes such as blending, borrowing, derivation, compounding, and conversion, as speakers coin new words to describe emerging concepts, technologies, and cultural phenomena. With the rapid pace of technological innovation, social change, and cultural evolution, English continually absorbs and adapts to incorporate new vocabulary into its lexicon, reflecting the dynamic nature of language and human creativity.

The present 21st-century English vocabulary has undergone semantic changes. Meanings of some words have ameliorated, some words have added new meaning, while new words have been created through various word formation processes such as compounding, derivation, acronyms, conversion, borrowing, clipping, blending, coinage, and eponymy. These various word formation processes have been explored in the formation of neologisms. This evolution is fueled by factors such as technological advancements, cultural shifts, globalization, and the influence of other languages.

1.12. Conclusion

In conclusion, the English language boasts a rich and dynamic history, constantly evolving through various influences. We've explored the different ways Semantic meaning can change over time, highlighting processes like Broadening, Narrowing, and Amelioration/Pejoration. We've also introduced the concept of Neologisms, the ever-present influx of new words that keep the language fresh and adaptable. As we delve deeper into the 21st century, social media platforms have emerged as a potent breeding ground for Neologisms. In the next chapter, we'll specifically examine how social media, with its unique characteristics and rapid communication style, is shaping the landscape of Neologisms and influencing the evolution of meaning in the English language.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter sets a guideline and foundation for this study by laying down theories that will serve as a footprint in researching and analyzing data. The literature review aimed at meticulously analyzing and evaluating prior research relevant to our topic. The rapid evolution of digital communication and the influence of social media have given rise to a dynamic linguistic landscape, marked by the emergence of new words and expressions referred to as Neologisms. As individuals increasingly engage in online discourse, the lexicon of social media undergoes constant expansion, reflecting not only linguistic creativity but also serving as a mirror to the ever-changing nature of contemporary communication.

2.1. Theoretical framework

Having established a comprehensive understanding of the existing research through the literature review, I now turn my attention to solidifying the theoretical framework that will underpin my thesis. This analysis not only highlights key findings and methodologies within the field but also identifies the focal point of this research. In essence, the theoretical framework will function as the analytical instrument through which I will approach and interpret the data gathered during my research. In this work, I embark on an exploration of the English vocabulary in the 21st century, with a specific focus on semantic shifts and the emergence of Neologisms. Language is inherently social, and theories within sociolinguistics highlight the role of societal dynamics in shaping linguistic norms. Language change theories in this context explore how linguistic innovations spread through social networks, emphasizing the influence of communities, social classes, and demographic factors on the diffusion of new meanings. Incorporating sociolinguistic perspectives enriches our understanding of the social fabric woven into the semantic shifts we observe. To underpin this investigation, I integrate several linguistic theories, each contributing distinctive perspectives to our understanding of language evolution and innovation.

2.1.1. Functional Load Hypothesis

Originating from the work of Wang and Minett, the Functional Load Hypothesis serves as a cornerstone in our exploration. This theory suggests that language change is driven by the need for clear and efficient communication. As we navigate the realm of Neologisms in the 21st century, understanding how these linguistic innovations serve functional roles becomes imperative.

Functional theories of language change underscore the pragmatic aspects of communication. Changes in meaning are often driven by communicative inefficiency and the need for clarity in conveying ideas. By examining language change through a functionalist lens, we gain insights into how semantic shifts serve as adaptive responses to the evolving needs of effective communication.

The dynamic world of social media thrives on efficiency and immediacy. This fast-paced environment creates fertile ground for Neologisms, new words or expressions, to flourish. The Functional Load Hypothesis, proposed by Wang and Minett, offers a compelling framework to understand how these Neologisms take root and evolve. This theory suggests that language change is driven by the need for clear and efficient communication. In the context of social media, Neologisms often emerge to fill functional gaps and streamline communication.

One way this plays out is through the creation of Neologisms that shorten existing phrases or concepts. Consider the ubiquitous "LOL," which stands for "laugh out loud." This single abbreviation conveys a specific meaning instantly, replacing a longer, more cumbersome expression. Wang and Minett themselves discuss how acronyms can *"reduce processing load"* (2005, p. 182), highlighting the functional benefit of these Neologisms. Analyzing the frequency and contexts in which social media users employ "LOL" and similar abbreviations in this research can reveal how these neologisms enhance efficiency in online communication.

The Functional Load Hypothesis also sheds light on how Neologisms arise to provide clear labels for new concepts specific to social media. Terms like "hashtag" or "selfie" didn't exist before the digital age. However, the rise of social media platforms created a need for unambiguous terms to describe these new practices and how these new words function to enhance efficiency, provide clarity, and keep pace with the ever-changing needs of online communication. These Neologisms fulfill a functional role by providing a universally understood label for these online phenomena.

This research examines how the meaning and usage of these terms have evolved over time, reflecting the ongoing development of social media and its associated practices. The dynamic world of social media thrives on efficiency and immediacy. This fast-paced environment creates fertile ground for neologisms, new words, or expressions, to flourish. The Functional Load Hypothesis, proposed by Wang (2007), offers a compelling framework to understand how these neologisms take root and evolve.

2.1.2. Sociolinguistic Theory (Variationist Sociolinguistics) with Labov:

William Labov is considered a founding figure in Variationist Sociolinguistics. William Labov's foundational work in Variationist Sociolinguistics examines how social factors like ethnicity, gender, and social class influence language use. Another key principle in Labov's theory is the influence of social factors on language use. Social factors like age, gender, ethnicity, and social class can all play a role in how speakers create, use, and perceive language. This applies to Neologisms on social media as well. A Neologism used by Gen Z might have a different meaning or connotation than when used by Millennials. Similarly, a Neologism popular within a specific online gaming community might not be understood by users outside that group. By considering these social factors in this research, we will gain insights into how social media Neologisms evolve and acquire different meanings within different social groups. Social media platforms foster the creation of online groups with specific interests. These groups develop their in-group vocabulary, using an evolving language in a distinct way concept of "communities of practice" is particularly useful here. These are groups who share common experiences and activities, and their shared language use reflects that. Online communities cultivate specific vocabulary through memes, hashtags, and online slang. Analyzing this phenomenon through a sociolinguistic lens allows for the exploration of how social media creates new social spaces where language evolves rapidly and reflects the group's identity and interests. Labov in his arguments says

"Change is not a haphazard or erratic process; it follows a set of social and linguistic rules. Speakers are not simply making random mistakes; they are actively participating in the ongoing evolution of language." (Social Stratification and Linguistic Change, 1966).

This quote emphasizes that social factors like age, gender, and social class influence language change in a systematic way. Speakers are not passive observers, but actively contribute to this

evolution through their language choices. He found out that language change was either conscious or unconscious; unconscious, being when people realize they are changing the way they speak and actively encourage it. This framework is highly relevant to this research as it guides in investigating the unique vocabulary that emerges within different social media communities. Some key concepts he discussed in his sociolinguistics theory are;

I) **The Concept of Variation**

William Labov's Variationist Sociolinguistics offers a powerful lens to understand how language evolves. One of the core principles of this theory is the concept of variation. Labov argues that the presence of multiple ways to say the same thing within a speech community (variation) is the driving force behind language change. Social media platforms, with their diverse user-based nature, can be a breeding ground for variation in Neologisms (the new words or expressions constantly emerging online). Over time, certain variations might become more widely used and eventually become the standard way to express something, while others fade away. By analyzing how these variations are used and evolve on social media, this research contributes to understanding the ongoing evolution of language. The most relatable and pertinent aspect of his sociolinguistic theory upon which this work is framed is;

II) **The Observer's Paradox**

William Labov, credited with first coining the Observer's Paradox in sociolinguistics, addressed the issue when studying speech variations and styles. The paradox arises because the very act of observing language use can influence how people speak thus obstructing or forging the true result from the observation. Linguistic research often involves observing and analyzing how people speak. However, Labov highlights a challenge called the "**Observer's Paradox.**" This principle suggests that when studied in a formal setting, speakers might alter their language use, making it difficult to capture natural variation. He says "*The interview situation itself can affect the speech of the informant*" (1966, p. 49). This can be particularly relevant when researching social media Neologisms. If a researcher solely relies on surveys or interviews, users might provide more formal or edited versions of their language use. To capture the natural variation and evolution of

Neologisms on social media, data for this research is collected from real-world interactions like comments, posts, status updates, stories, and discussions within online communities

William Labov, in his study of language variation in New York City, acknowledged the limitations of interview settings, Labov presents his Observer's Paradox by comparing it to the classic Hawthorne studies. He called it "**The Hawthorne Effect**". In the classic Hawthorne studies, researchers observed factory workers under different lighting conditions to see if it impacted productivity. Interestingly, productivity increased regardless of the lighting changes. This unexpected outcome led to the realization that the workers were simply responding to the increased attention they received from the researchers, not necessarily the lighting itself.

Similarly, in gathering data for research, and interviews, participants might subconsciously alter their speech patterns due to the presence of the researcher. They might use more formal vocabulary. Imagine someone from a rural background being interviewed by a university professor. They might subconsciously switch to a more standard dialect or avoid slang they would typically use with friends. Being aware that they are being observed, can lead to participants enunciating more clearly and avoiding colloquialisms that might be misinterpreted. Thus, hindering the true essence of the research in the first place. Labov offered the example of a New York City resident who, during a casual conversation, used a particular vowel sound specific to their neighborhood. However, when directly interviewed about the same topic, the speaker switched to a more standard pronunciation, perhaps due to the formality of the interview setting.

Labov acknowledged the inherent artificiality of the interview setting. Imagine yourself having a conversation with a close friend at a coffee shop versus a formal interview for a job application. The language you use, the topics you discuss, and even the pace of your speech will likely differ significantly. This artificiality poses a challenge for capturing natural language use. Here's how it can affect the data:

- **Limited Topics:** Interviews often focus on specific themes chosen by the researcher, potentially missing the natural flow of conversation and the vocabulary used in everyday situations.

- **Pressure to Perform:** Participants might feel a pressure to "perform" a certain way, either trying to impress the researcher with their knowledge or fearing they might be judged for their language choices.
- **Limited Emotional Range:** The interview setting might not evoke the full range of emotions that naturally occur in everyday conversations, potentially limiting the researcher's understanding of how language adapts to different emotional states.

Labov addressed this challenge by employing various techniques alongside interviews. He used:

Sociolinguistic Observational Methods: Observing natural conversations in public spaces like parks or markets could provide a more authentic picture of how people use language in everyday interactions.

Narrative Analysis: Eliciting personal stories through interviews could tap into a more natural register of speech compared to discussions on predefined topics.

By acknowledging the artificiality of the interview and employing diverse data collection methods, Labov provided a more comprehensive approach to studying language in its natural social context.

III) **The concept of Apparent Time**

Labov's concept of "apparent time" offers another valuable tool for analyzing language change. This principle suggests that by studying language variation across different age groups, and across different periods we can gain insights into ongoing linguistic shifts. This can be applied to this research on social media Neologisms by analyzing how the meaning and usage of Neologisms differ between different periods (Early Modern English Period- Late Modern English Period- Contemporary English Period) on these platforms, you can understand how these Neologisms are evolving over time. For example, a Neologism that originated on TikTok might have a different meaning for Gen Z users compared to how it's understood by older generations on other platforms and it might as well be unfamiliar to an older generation.

By applying Labov's sociolinguistic framework, we can analyze how social media interactions influence semantic shifts in neologisms. Labov argues that speakers are not passive participants in language, but actively shape it through use. Social media allows users to experiment with language

in real time, potentially leading to new meanings for neologisms. Examining how these neologisms are used in different online contexts (posts, status updates, and comments) can reveal patterns of semantic variation influenced by social factors like group affiliation or online trends. Labov's theory provides a valuable lens to understand the dynamic interplay between social factors and language change by applying it to the study of social media and neologisms, we can gain insights into how the digital age is shaping the evolution of meaning. This research not only contributes to our understanding of semantic change but also opens doors for further exploration. Future studies could investigate how Labov's framework can be adapted to analyze other aspects of social media's influence on language, such as the rise of slang or the impact of online communication styles on language formality.

2.1.3. Communicative Efficiency Principle:

Intimately connected to the Functional Load Hypothesis is the Communicative Efficiency Principle. This principle posits that languages evolve to optimize communication, emphasizing the streamlining of linguistic structures for enhanced efficiency. In the context of our study, delving into the communicative efficiency of new linguistic forms becomes paramount. Investigating how 21st-century Neologisms contribute to efficient communication sheds light on the adaptive nature of language in response to contemporary communicative needs.

2.1.4. Prototype Theory:

Central to this exploration is the notion of Prototype theory, where words are seen as having central, prototypical meanings surrounded by a spectrum of related senses. This framework allows us to appreciate the fluidity inherent in language, acknowledging that meanings are not fixed points but rather dynamic clusters of associated concepts.

Prototype theory, developed by Eleanor Rosch and colleagues ((Rosch et al., 1975) suggests that our minds categorize concepts based on a central, prototypical example. This prototype serves as the best representation of a category, containing the most common features associated with it. For instance, the prototype for a "bird" might be a "robin" – it has feathers, wings, and a beak. Other birds, like penguins or ostriches, might deviate from this prototype in some aspects but are still considered members of the "bird" category because they share enough core features.

Imagine you're cleaning your room and have a box for toys. You know where to put cars, dolls, and balls because you have a clear picture in your mind of what each one looks like. That picture in your mind is a prototype. Here's how this works with new words:

- **New Words, New Boxes:** Imagine finding a weird toy with wheels and fur – it doesn't quite fit any box you have. This is like a neologism; a new word people invent. It doesn't have a clear category at first.
- **Building the Picture:** As people use the new word online, they kind of explain it through jokes, pictures, or stories. This helps everyone build a picture in their mind of what the word means.
- **The Word Evolves:** Over time, the way people use the word might change what that picture in their mind looks like. Maybe the new word starts to describe a slightly different situation than it did at first.

An example based on 21st century neologisms widely used on social media is the word “Slay” which originally meant to kill has become a Neologism as it has developed a new meaning which by the early 1900s, was used to describe someone who looked so good they were *“killing it”* with their outfit. In today’s context as widely used on social media, “slay” transcended just looks. It signified that someone's entire presentation – outfit, hair, makeup, dance moves, and confidence – was flawless. It became a metaphor for completely dominating with your style and presence. Today, “slay” has permeated mainstream social media and internet culture. It's used as an expression of:

- **Looking fabulous:** Someone might say “You slay!” to compliment a friend's outfit.
- **Doing something spectacularly well:** “She slayed that presentation!” could describe someone's impressive work.
- **Exuding confidence and self-assuredness:** “He's walking down the street slaying that look!” might describe someone with an incredible swag.

To elaborate more on the prototype theory using this example of 21st century Neologisms, the prototype for “Slay” as a verb, could be “snatched” as an adjective, “hot” as an adjective, “drip” as a noun, “on point” as an adjectival phrase, “Its giving” as an adjectival phrase, and “swag”

as a noun, where these prototypes contain the most common feature associated with the word slay, that is; “attractiveness”.

Slay: As discussed earlier, it signifies complete mastery of style and presence, often exceeding expectations.

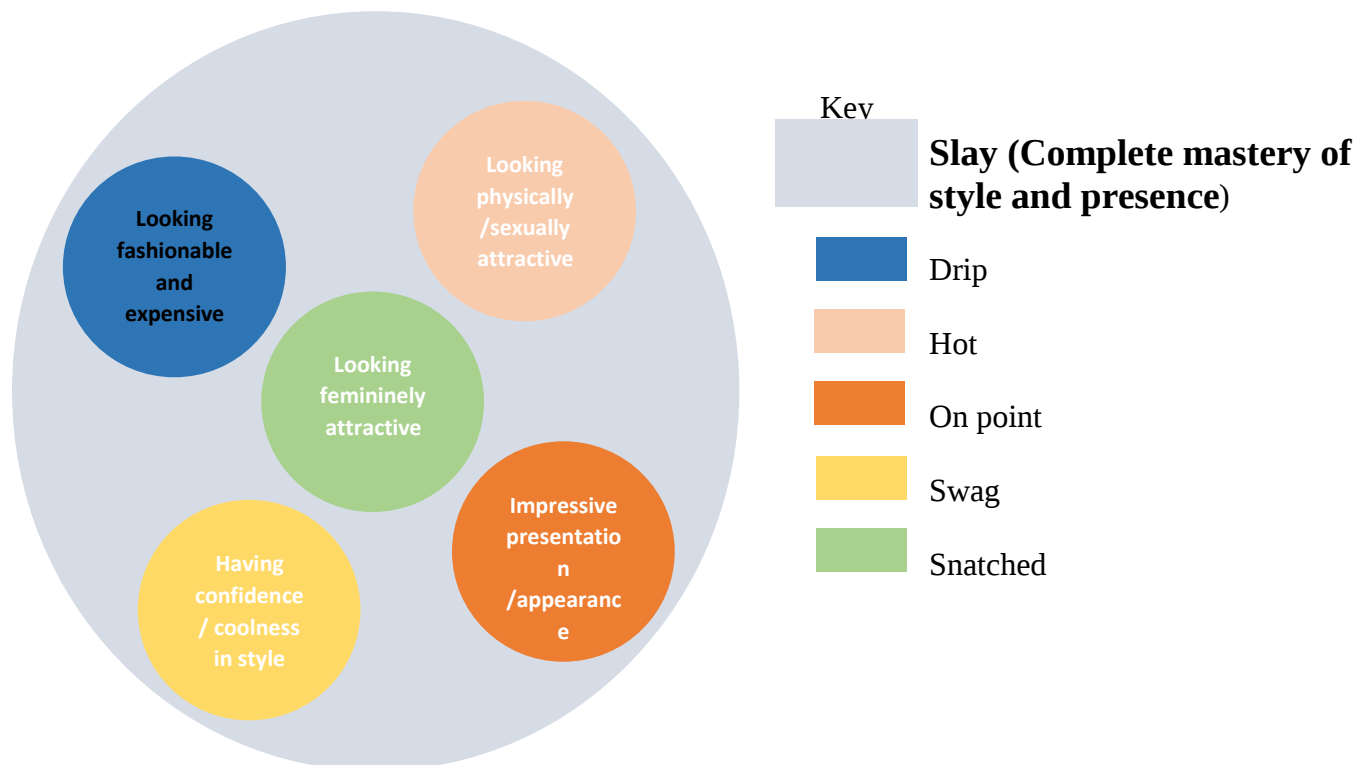
Snatched: This term emphasizes that someone looks femininely attractive, almost like they've "stolen the show" with their appearance.

Hot: A classic term for physical attractiveness, often associated with sex appeal.

Drip: This slang term refers to having impeccable style, often with a focus on expensive or trendy clothing and accessories.

Swag: Similar to drip, swag signifies confidence and coolness in style and demeanor.

Figure 2: The Prototype Diagram Illustration



From the diagram above the prototypes Drip, Hot, On point, Swag, and Snatched have central, prototypical meanings and contain the most common feature associated with the word “SLAY”, that is “attractiveness”.

So, Prototype theory is all about how our brains understand new words and how those words can change and evolve over time. Social media platforms create unique environments for language use. Here's how prototype theory sheds light on semantic changes in this work;

‡ Neologisms and Category Creation

Neologisms, often emerge on social media to describe novel concepts or online experiences. These words initially lack a clear prototype, existing on the fringes of established categories. Users then negotiate meaning through online interactions, gradually building a prototype for the Neologism.

‡ Shifting Features

As a neologism gains traction, its usage patterns evolve. Social media users might emphasize certain features of the word while downplaying others. This can lead the Prototype itself to shift, incorporating the most frequently used aspects of the word.

‡ Competition and Family Resemblance

Sometimes, multiple Neologisms might align with dominance within a category. Prototype theory suggests that the one with the most features aligning with user expectations (family resemblance to the category) will become the dominant prototype.

Applying the Framework to this Dissertation, here are some ways this framework of the Prototype theory is utilized in this research:

- Trace Prototype Development; Track how these Neologisms are used over time. Look for patterns in how users define them and the contexts they appear in.
- Prototype Competition; Explore instances where multiple Neologisms compete for the same concept.

2.2. Literature Review

Reviewing literature is an essential component of a research process. This section involves identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant academic sources to establish the existing knowledge and gaps in a field of research. In this writing, five scholarly articles have been chosen for use as existing literature. They are; ***“Semantic Change in English Language: Social Media Neologisms”*** by Jahnazeab Jahan and Dr. Humaira Irfan (2021), ***“Neosemantism and Semantic Change”*** by Karina Gtale (2015), ***“Neologisms and Cameroonisms in Cameroon English and Cameroon Francophone English”*** By Gilbert Tagne Safotso (2020), ***“Semantic Shift of English Internet Slangs Used in Social Media: Morphosemantic Analysis”*** by Oon Suzana Rahman, Cecesobarna, Eva Tuckyta Sari Sujatna, and Lia Maulia Indriyani (2022), and ***“The Influence of Social Media On Cameroon English”*** by Charles Esambe Alobwede (2023). A review on types of semantic change will also be carried out. The credibility, relevance and quality of the sources has been assessed. Some of the factors that were used in assessing the articles are; title of article, methodology of research, and date of publication.

2.2.1. **“Semantic Change in English Language: Social Media Neologisms”** by Jahnazeab Jahan and Humaira Irfan.

I) **Relevance of Work**

“Semantic Change in English Language: Social Media Neologisms”, written by Jahnazeab Jahan and Dr. Humaira Irfan (2021), was published under the Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review in December 29, 2021. This research paper is relevant to our work in that it is up to date as it was published in 2021 provides this work with a lighting path as they talked about the use of CMC (computer mediated communication) which was as a result of Socia-Media which in turn gave rise to the need for new terminologies to describe concepts, and actions on these platforms.

Jahanzen Jahan is the author of the first ever alliterated poem on the life of holy prophet PBUH which is published on AMAZON. He has been working as a lecturer in the Department of English, at university of education, Lahore in Pakistan since 2007. He followed his passions and proved himself as a successful teacher, trainer and content developer. His Youtube channel

#jahnazejbahan has more than 900 videos on English language and linguistics. Drawing from his vast experience and his extensive study of English literature and linguistics. He has a unique methodology of combining conventional teaching patterns and unconventional research on topics. Jahnazeb Jahan is a writer of three books amongst which the best of his works is Muhammed the Messenger, and the crown of creation.

Dr. Humaira Irfan, is an Associate Professor of English, Division of Arts and social sciences at the university of education, in Lahora, Pakistan. She pursued MS Applied Linguistics, TESOL and PhD in Sociolinguistics from the university of Glasgow, UK on UE Higher Education Commission foreign scholarship. She has published a number of national and international research papers, two international research papers and two books. The titles of her works are “*Testing Creative writing in Pakistan*” and “*The policy and practice of English medium of instruction (EMI) in Pakistan universities*”. She was awarded a visiting scholar fellowship by the university of Exeter, UK in 2018. She has received many international awards to present her research paper. She has also been invited at higher educational national conferences in USA, Turkey, and France to present her research paper. She has been a toastmaster since 2018, and currently acts as the president UE Toastmaster club that is chartered with Toastmasters International in USA. The solid, educational background and career of these authors adds relevance, credibility and quality to their article; **“*Semantic Change in English Language: Social Media Neologisms*”**

II) Summary of literature

In Jahnazeb’s and Humaira’s “*Semantic Change in English Language: Social Media Neologisms*” they stressed on the role of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) in the creation of Neologisms. They wrote that according to Fowler 1983, “*a good language group depends upon the gift of speech as well as a good vocabulary*”. Jahnazeb and co-wrote that “*the English vocabulary has remarkable flexibility*”. Their study aims at analyzing the semantic changes in English language and the role of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) in semantic change. To them, due to contact with foreign languages, English language has a range of adaptability.

Jahnazeb and Co refer to Crystal (2006) “*social media has influenced the English language and made it a new register*”. Focusing on Neologisms used in social media, their study highlights

words and their meanings. They believe that everything that is living goes through a process of change or evolution and so has English language. These scholars focused on both shortterm Neologisms and long term established Neologisms. They make reference to *Fischer 1998* who defines a Nonce formation as “*a Neologism created by a writer or speaker immediately to shelter some instantaneous requirement*”.

In their analysis on factors responsible for semantic evolution, they make mention of external and internal factors, for which the external factors as they elaborated, are the sociolinguistic factors while the internal factors are the psycholinguistic factors that is to say, factors that exist in the mind of the speaker. The rise of social media platforms and digital communication has indeed led to the rapid creation and dissemination of new words and phrases, often referred to as Neologisms. In presenting the analyzes of the writers, one will consider the following aspects:

‡ Language evolution

The article discusses how social media has accelerated the process of language evolution. The quick adoption of new terms and phrases, driven by the need to express specific concepts in a rapidly changing digital landscape, demonstrates how language adapts to contemporary needs. Since the advent of social media, new terms and phrases that according to Jahanzeb and Dr. Humaira were adopted by the need to express specific concepts are; “*Facebook friend, like, tag, tweet, share, check-in, story, follow, post, profile, DP, cover photo, status, upload, subscribe, dashboard and community*”.

‡ Semantic Change

The article explores how these newly created terms have undergone semantic change over time. Some neologisms gain different connotations or evolve in meaning based on their usage within different online communities or social contexts. Jahanzeb and co focused their study on neologisms used on three dominant social networks; YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. They explored neologisms that have undergone semantic change over time by going into the history of the old usage of these neologisms. Some of the neologisms from twitter they elaborated upon were;

Table 1: *Examples of Social Media and Neologisms*

NEOLOGISMS	OLD USE	NEW USE
Tweet	A short loud sound	To post some message or video
Twitter	To make fast and loud sounds	A social media application for management of twitter account
Tweetdeck	None	A social media application for management of twitter accounts
Tweetup	none	A meeting organized by means of posts on twitter
Twiliterature	none	Literature use of the microblogging service on twitter
Follow	To move behind	To connect with some on twitter
Follower	Someone who comes behind you	To connect with someone on twitter, someone who likes you and your posts on twitter
Twittersphere	none	Users of twitter collectively
Twittionary	none	Dictionary of twitter related words

III) Methodology

In carrying out this research, Jahanzeb and Co, (2021) used the qualitative and descriptive methods. Their source of data collection was Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in order to collect frequently used Neologisms. The data collected from these three websites were presented in the shape of various words and their old and new meaning. According to them, they consider these websites a representative of the rest of all other social media networks. This is because they are used everywhere in Pakistan. They elaborated that, most online communities in Pakistan are active members of these websites and that all celebrities in Pakistan (politicians, singers, and actors) use Twitter and Facebook, hence these social media networks are daily accessed and used.

Using the purposive sampling technique (which involves selecting participants because you believe that they might contribute something to your analysis), the most popular terminologies used on social media were analyzed to know whether and to what extent neologisms are created by the CMC.

IV) Critical analysis of Literature

While this work is focused on examining some 21st-century Neologisms and the Socio-Linguistic and technological factors that have contributed to shifts in meaning and the creation of new words, with social media as my case study, Jahanzeb Jahan and Dr. Humaira Irfan, focus on Created Terminologies of some social media platforms such as *“like, home, share, upload, story, dashboard, and community.”* This however somehow excludes the group and class of people who are not too social media inclined. For example, Senior citizens and stereotyped individuals might know little or nothing about social media terminologies such as dashboard, community, upload, and home. Most of these individuals often manage for keep up with communication on simple platforms such as WhatsApp while creating novel words/meanings unintentionally.

Also, their purposive sampling technique which involves selecting participants because you believe that they might contribute something to your analysis could be limiting in that Purposive sampling might miss recently emerged Neologisms that haven't yet reached the target group selected for the study. Purposive sampling, by design, selects specific cases, potentially missing broader trends in semantic change or Neologism development.

William Labov, a prominent sociolinguist, emphasizes the importance of random sampling to ensure results are generalizable to the larger population. He also suggests a technique in data collection which involved observing natural speech patterns in relaxed settings or conducting interviews designed to elicit casual language use rather than formal responses. Furthermore, JahnazeB and Dr. Humaira strictly focused on the role of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in the creation of Neologisms. What then happens to the ideas of individuals who are not actively present on social media? Hence to deal with this issue, research methods that capture natural language use beyond the formality of traditional interviews and online observation methods is adopted in this work.

2.2.2. "Neosemantism and Semantic Change" (2015) Karina Gtale's

a) Relevance of work

Karina Gtale's *"Neosemantism and Semantic Change"* (2015), suggests expertise in the field of language evolution. This work directly aligns with our research topic, **"A Study of Semantic Changes in the English Vocabulary, (21st century): the Case of Social Media,"** as it explores the concept of "Neosemantism" - new meanings adopted by existing words. Understanding the mechanisms behind Neosemantism is crucial for analyzing how social media platforms influence the semantic evolution of words used in online communication.

b) Summary of literature

Gtale's article delves into the concept of Neosemantisms, exploring the various factors that contribute to semantic change in language. She identifies social and cultural shifts, technological advancements, and language contact as key drivers. The article likely discusses how these factors interact to create fertile ground for the emergence of Neosemantisms. For instance, social movements might lead to the adoption of new meanings for existing words to represent emerging concepts or ideologies. Technological advancements can introduce new vocabulary, which in turn might influence the semantic development of existing words.

Gtale's work sheds light on the multifaceted nature of Semantic Change. It emphasizes that Neosemantisms are not random occurrences, but rather a consequence of broader social, cultural, and technological forces. Social media platforms can be seen as microcosms reflecting these broader trends. The rapid exchange of information, online communities with unique communication styles, and the constant influx of new ideas all contribute to the creation and adoption of Neosemantisms within the digital landscape.

c) Methodology

Gtale's work employs a theoretical approach, drawing on established research in semantics, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics. She analyzes existing literature on semantic change and Neologisms, exploring how different scholars have explained these phenomena. Additionally, the

work incorporates case studies of specific Neosemantisms, tracing their development and the factors that contributed to their emergence and acceptance.

d) Critical Analysis of Literature

Gtale's work provides a valuable foundation for this research on social media Neologisms. It highlights the various factors that influence semantic change, which can be directly applied to the online communication environment. Here's a breakdown of the critical aspects. The article offers a comprehensive framework for understanding Neosemantisms and the driving forces behind semantic change. It allows the analyses of social media Neologisms within a broader linguistic context.

However, the work did not delve specifically into the unique features of social media that contribute to Neologisms. By building upon Gtale's work, our research explores how social media platforms act as breeding grounds for Neosemantisms, and investigates the role of online communities in shaping the semantic evolution of Neologisms. Examining how social media users negotiate meaning and react to Neologisms can offer valuable insights into the dynamics of semantic change in the digital age. By Incorporating Quantitative Methods this research uses corpus linguistics or sentiment analysis tools to analyze large datasets of social media communication and measure the frequency of neologisms, explore how online communities negotiate meaning, react to new terms, and contribute to the establishment of new semantic norms for Neologisms within those communities.

2.2.3. “Semantic Shift of English Internet Slangs Used in Social Media: Morphosemantic Analysis” by Oon Suzana Rahman, Cece Sobarna, Eva Tuckyta Sari, And Lia Maulia Indriyani

a) Relevance of work

This research is partly aimed at uncovering how the rise of social media in the 21st century has impacted the evolution of the English language, specifically the creation and semantic change of new vocabulary terms, often referred to as Neologisms. One article that I found particularly insightful in this regard is *"Semantic Shift of English Internet Slangs Used in Social Media: Morphosemantic Analysis"* by Rahman et al. (2022).

This article struck a chord with my research goals for a few key reasons. Understanding these semantic shifts is crucial for analyzing how new vocabulary gains traction and evolves within a language. This article's relevance stems from its focus on two key areas that directly align with my research interests. Firstly, it tackles the concept of semantic shift, a crucial aspect of language evolution. As Rahman et al. suggests, *"Semantic Change refers to the gradual process whereby words or phrases alter their meaning over time"*. Understanding semantic shifts is essential for analyzing how new vocabulary gains traction and evolves within a language.

Second, Rahman et al. (2022) focuses specifically on the realm of internet slang used on social media platforms. This aligns perfectly with one of our research objectives; how social media shapes the meaning and usage of new vocabulary terms. Their research delves into the fascinating world of internet slang, analyzing the morphological processes involved in the formation of these new terms. More importantly, they explore the various types of semantic shifts observed in this online language, providing valuable insights into how the meaning of these Neologisms can transform over time.

By incorporating the findings of Rahman et al. (2022) into my literature review, I can demonstrate my awareness of existing research on the dynamic interplay between social media and language evolution. Their work provides a strong foundation upon which I can build my own investigation into the Neologisms born in the digital age and the fascinating ways their meanings adapt and change within the ever-evolving landscape of social media.

b) Summary of literature

This article by Oon Suzana Rahman, Cecesobarna, Eva Tuckyta Sari Sujatna, and Lia Maulia Indriyani, explores the impact of the internet on language evolution through the lens of Semantic Shifts in English internet slang. They acknowledge established notions of language change but emphasize the internet's unique role: *"the internet does not necessarily speed up how quickly language changes itself, but rather the technology allows slang terms to rapidly disseminate across different groups"* (Kolowich, 2019, as cited by (Rahman 2022)). Their focus is on semantic shifts, meaning changes, within the ever-evolving realm of English internet slang. They believe that the internet acts as a powerful catalyst for this phenomenon. As the authors acknowledge, *"This rapid*

spread allows for quicker shifts in meaning compared to traditional, slower language change” Kolowich (2019).

Their research aims to identify the most common morphological process through word formation found in the lexical of English internet slang and to identify the common type of shift of meaning used by netizens on social media. They focused on exploring the morphological process that contributes to the language change that leads to shifts in meaning. The explained that *“word formation process is a way to construct new words from the existing materials”* as cited by (Trask 1997)

The authors argue that the internet acts as a potent catalyst for semantic change, amplifying the speed at which words acquire new meanings. They acknowledge established notions of language change but emphasize the internet's unique role. This rapid dissemination allows for quicker semantic shifts compared to more traditional language development. Rahman and his team looked at narrowing as a type of semantic shift rather than a process of semantic shifting. Their research suggests that the most common semantic shift observed is Narrowing. This means that words acquire more specific meanings when used in internet slang compared to their original definitions. The study also emphasizes the prevalence of reusing existing words with new, narrower meanings online. These findings provide valuable insights into how the internet shapes the way we use and understand language

c) Methodology

The research methodology employs a descriptive-qualitative textual analysis. Data collection is planned for social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, incorporating existing resources on teenage internet slang to gain a comprehensive understanding of this evolving linguistic landscape. A key analytical tool used in the research is morphosemantics, a powerful approach that combines morphological analysis (word structure) with semantic analysis (meaning). By studying both how words are formed and how their meanings change, morphosemantics provides a deeper understanding of how internet slang evolves. This approach, as the authors state, *“...allows for a deeper understanding of how internet slang evolves by examining both how words are formed and how their meanings shift”*

d) Critical Analysis of Literature

This research aligns with my investigation into how the internet impacts language evolution. The focus on semantic shifts in internet slang provides a specific case study for understanding how online communication platforms can influence language change. The morphosemantics approach adds a valuable layer of analysis by considering both the form and meaning of internet slang terms. The results of their findings show that the types of semantic shift prevalent in the formation of some social media slang were; Derivation, widening which is also called extension or generalization, narrowing which is also called specification or restriction, and branching, which is a process by which a lexeme become polysemous.

Their Findings and Discussion This section describes the three steps involved in the analysis, those are, Morphological Process, Semantical Process and Semantic changes.

e) “JUNKY” morphosemantic process: which they elaborated has undergone a Morphosemantic Process. “Junky” refers to someone who is addicted to drugs. The word “to junk” as a transitive verb means to throw or discard. The word junky (adjective) comes from the word junk (noun) with the addition of the suffix “y”. The morphological changes that occur from nouns to adjectives; namely derivation. Actually, what means condenser or drug addict is the word “junkie” (noun). Thus, from the word junk (Noun) to junkie (Noun), Netizens prefer to use “junky” rather than “junkie”. When viewed from the meaning search process, the word “junk” refers to drug addict, and the word “junky” (adjective) means low-quality goods. Therefore, drug addicts can be categorized as junk or low-quality goods, meaning that people are useless because they are not of high quality. The word “junk” means useless. It contains a denotative meaning that turns into a connotative meaning, which refers to people who are useless or of low quality such as drug addicts. Thus, there is a shift of meaning which is Narrowing.

f) “CRAP” Morphosemantic process: The word crap is a noun which means dirt, something worthless, and or trash. If the word crap is an adjective, then the word means very bad, poor, and or stupid. The word crap that is used on social media means: “something that is worthless or a lie.” The use of the word “crap” in slang or its general meaning has not changed. From the meanings described above, it can be seen that the meaning shift that occurs from “dirt”

which is a denotative meaning to something useless or a lie which is a connotative meaning is thus Narrowing. However, they concluded that the morphological process does not occur since a noun that is “dirt” remains as a noun that is “a lie”. In this case, only a semantic process occurs, that is Semantic Change or a shift in meaning.

- g) **“HELLA” Morphosemantic Process:** Hella can be used as an adjective or adverb, both are used as slang. As an adjective, the meaning is “a lot of” which can be seen in the following example: “*They're making hella money now, but the rematch is more money, or even a draw of a good fight is more money.*” (Deontay Wilder, May 2015). Whereas the use as an adverb, the meaning is “very or extremely”. Its usage in social media is in the form of adverbs, and the examples are as follows: “*She is hella beautiful.*” “*And though she's excited, she's also hella scared.*” (Mimi Valdes, Vibe, 2002). Transfer of meaning does not occur that is due to this word had the same meaning since 1987 as described in *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*. Thus, there are no changes in meaning or morphological process.

Their conclusion is based on the findings discussed above; morphological process does not occur. This is because users of English Internet Slang created new words from the old words that existed and reused them again without any changes to the parts of speech as when the word is a noun, it remains the same as a noun, and adjective takes the same parts of speech as an adjective. While the research offers a compelling analysis, Rahman and his crew, however, omitted the following aspects which are of importance in studying semantic changes on social media. This now creates a gap in wherein, my research is intended to fill.

- ✦ **Mechanisms Driving Narrowing:** Investigating the factors that drive narrowing in internet slang, such as character limitations or online anonymity, could offer deeper insights. This work intends filling in this gap by Analyzing novel terms across multiple platforms and considering the role of specific social media features in semantic change.
- ✦ **Longitudinal Analysis and original meanings:** To correctly track the evolution of specific slang terms over time), and also for the purpose of correctness and validness, established dictionaries like Merriam-Webster and online resources will be used to identify the original meanings of words within the collected data set. This also reveals how meanings change and

narrow, providing a valuable historical perspective. The history evolution of a few selected neologisms focusing on the three distinct periods within The Modern English period will be traced (from the Early Modern English Period -Late Modern English period -Contemporary Modern English

- ✦ **Data Collection:** They focused on lexical words (excluding acronyms) specific to internet slang. My research goes beyond just lexical words as this work investigates acronyms such as ASAP, (as soon as possible) and GOAT (greatest of all times)

2.2.4 “Neologisms and Cameroonisms in Cameroon English and Cameroon Francophone English” By Gilbert Tagne Safotso

Gilbert Tagne published the article “*Neologisms and Cameroonisms in Cameroon English and Cameroon Francophone English*” in October 2020 in the Journal “*Theory and Practice in Language Studies*”.

a) Summary of literature

Tagne begins by pointing out the fact that some determining factors for a language’s survival is Coining and Borrowing. He says; “*If all languages cannot lend some of their lexical items to other languages, they are bound to borrow from them*”. Tagne focuses his study on the Cameroon context where English and French are the official languages of the country. He talks about Neologisms formed as a result of the contact of languages in Cameroon. The term he coined to describe this creation was “**Cameroonisms**” His study looks at some Neologisms and Cameroonisms in Cameroon English. He explains that home languages borrow from CamE (Cameroon English), English, Pidgin English, French, and other home languages, and CamE borrows from home languages, Pidgin English and French. His study aims at examining the various strategies and processes used to create and form Neologisms and Cameroonisms in the two varieties of English in question. These processes he suggests are; coining, derivation, loanwords, metonymy, re-structuring, and code mixing. According to him, Neologism is the inclusion of a new item in a language be it new Coinages, a phrase, or a familiar word used in a new sense. Cameroonisms as he explained come from local languages. Cameroonisms are formed when local languages come in contact with the English language thus giving rise to a code-mixing expression.

Tagne explains that Neologisms and Cameroonisms are usually formed when there is an inefficiency in old meanings, words, or expressions to explain new concepts or ideas. From his findings, he states that *“from simple words like trash, mark, chief, bonus, and check, CamE and CamFE users are able to coin many new words which will fill in the gap in the GCE marking room”*. The coining is generally done by adding a suffix to the English stem. Those suffixes include –er, -é, -eur, -euse, -ess, -able, -ser, -sé, -ing. It can be noted that many of them are French ones. In Cameroon English (Cameroon Francophone English, and Cameroon Anglophone English) many French words are fully adopted and understood by the majority of speakers. The words listed in the following table are very popular among university students, lecturers, and the general public. Some of the loan words; “Exposé, Presentation, Capitalisé - Capitaliser, Passed - Passe, Informatique - Computer Studies, Rattrapage - Catch-Up Session, Centre Medico - University Health Centre, Mini Cité -Students Residential Building, Licence - Bachelor’s Degree, Maîtrise - Master’s Degree, Bordereau - Number File Reference, Délai - Deadline.”

b) Methodology

Gilbert Tagne in his methodology made use of a very rich source of data. The data analyzed came from several sources; national TV and radio debates where both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians interact in English on a daily basis on several topics, political campaigns speeches, conversations student-student and lecturer-lecturer, seminars and conferences, students’ essays and dissertations, casual encounters and discussions/ jokes in the GCE marking rooms. The items were jotted down each time that the investigator heard or read them, and documented according to the various categories studied here. His analysis was done under the following categories: coining, derivation, loans, metonymical use of some names, restructuring of some idiomatic expressions, French induced Cameroonisms, code mixing and other Cameroonisms.

c) Critical analysis of literature

His study which aims at examining the various strategies and processes used to create and form Neologisms and Cameroonisms is quite limiting. This is because limiting the process of Neologism creation to only the contact between home languages alone could be unapplicable given that the

world has become a global village with the advent of social media and technology. Also limiting the scope to just the Cameroon context gives a gap which my research is intended to bridge.

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, English language is influenced by common languages used on social media. For example, the common exclamation as the Nigerians use “*ewooo, chineke*” is gradually getting into mainstream English. Due to language contact on social media, Netizens are unintentionally influenced by the usage of this expression. Personally speaking, when I accidentally fall or throw, break or spoil something, I unintentionally use that expression.

Tagne looks at the emergence of Neologisms and Cameroonisms from a contextual perspective. He argues that because of French domination in Cameroon, in most university campuses many common documents and forms are not translated into English. That also applies to the vast majority of university offices, places and signposts. Therefore, many Anglophone students refer to them only in their French appellation to be understood. For example, on campus of the University of Yaoundé I or Dschang if a student does not say ‘*where is the Centre Medico?*’ for ‘Where is the University Health Centre’, or ‘*this is my Licence*’ for ‘*this is my Bachelor’s Degree*’, there is every likelihood not to be understood even by some Anglophone students. In contact situations this would be treated as code-switch. But clearly, this is something different in CamE / CamFE as students who use the French expressions in question here do not have any communication problem. They know what they are talking about in French and English. It is the context which pushes them to use the French expressions. Other French words or expressions well established in CamE that have been studied by early studies include *mandat* (money order), *patente* (business tax), *rappel* (arrears), *bon de caisse* (pay voucher), *demande d’explication* (query) (Simo Bobda 1994). The phenomenon of borrowing is a general feature of languages. This happens in British and American English too. Tagne concludes by saying that Cameroon has its own distinct characteristic features (Cameroonisms) which resulted from language contact. That is contact between English, French, and local languages thus leading to what he called “Cameroonisms”

2.2.5. International Journal of Research: The Influence of Social Media on Cameroon English” by Charles Esambe Alobwede

a) Background of Author/expertise/relevance of work

“*The Influence of Social Media on Cameroon English*” by Charles Esambe Alobwede”, which was published in July 2023, under “*the international journal of research*”, is an actual relatable literature for this work. The author begins by acknowledging the positive impacts of social media on the different sectors in Cameroon. He however forges ahead to explain that social media has negatively influenced the use of standard English in Cameroon with regards to CMC (computer mediated communication). His article is aimed at showing the extent to which text messaging is drastically influencing the quality of the written form of standard English at the levels of grammar, syntax, semantics, orthography and punctuation of learners in different faculties at the university of Yaoundé I. The paper explores how social media has affected the use of Standard English in Cameroon, particularly among young people. The author argues that social media has led to the development of a new form of communication characterized by abbreviations, emojis, and informal language. This new form of communication, sometimes referred to as “*textese*”, can negatively impact students' ability to write Standard English. He focuses on word contraction in sentences, frequent use of non-standard spellings, interference abbreviations and the mélange of numbers and letters in words.

He adopts the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) of Howard Giles (1971) which he explains as a theory that emphasized the adjustments people make while communicating. According to this theory “*people try to emphasize or minimize the social difference between them and those with whom they interact*”. Alobwede concentrates on the analysis of written form of communication (texts), noting the prevalence of abbreviations and informality. From the Text messages of students of the University of Yaoundé I he collected, it was gathered that texting has affected students’ writing skills as they are so used to short hands and informal forms of writing. Also, from reports gotten from some lectures, it was analyzed that texting is an easier method they use to relate with their students. However, from students' examination scripts gathered, it showed that texting has affected students' formal writing as they are sometimes tempted into using informal forms such as short hands, non-standard English spellings and non-standard initializations and this

can sometimes lead to mutual unintelligibility amongst texters especially of different age groups. From the data he collected, some of the informal forms (non-standard spellings) students used in communicating through text messages were;

Table 2: *Examples of students' use of non-standard spellings*

NON-STANDARD SPELLINGS		INFORMAL WORD COMBINATIONS	
Word in full	Informal form	Word in full	Informal form
Teacher	Ticha	Let me	Lemme
House	Huz	Want to	Wanna
yes	Ye/ yep	Kind of	Kinda
School	Skul	What is up?	Whatsup
That	Dat	Leave me	Livme/limme
Wife	Wify	I tell you	Ateu/ ateyu
Right	Ryt	Give me	gimme
Your/ you are	ya	How are you	howayu

b) Methodology

This study was carried out by analyzing the scripts and texts messages of the students and analyzing the responds of questionnaire gotten from lecturers. To evaluate the extent to which elements of text messaging are present in the writings of students at the university of Yaoundé I, a questionnaire was administered to twenty students; 10 boys and 10 girls This selection was made randomly within the faculty and the sex of the student being taken into consideration. Fifty examination scripts which were collected from different faculties were equally selected and analyzed. Also, another questionnaire was also designed and administered to seven lecturers. This was done in order to assess the lecturers' thoughts with regards to students' use of text messaging, and how they think it affects their formal academic writings.

c) Critical Analysis of Literature

“The Influence of Social Media on Cameroon English” offers valuable insights into the impact of social media on formal writing in Cameroon which excludes the speech aspect. However, some aspects can be further explored to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

One limitation lies in the study's scope. Focusing solely on university students provides a specific view, but a broader analysis encompassing different age groups and professions within Cameroon could reveal a richer picture of how social media influences English usage across the population. The present research wishes to complement the scope of his work. The research aims at encompassing social media with no limitation to age, profession/career, nor social class while incorporating the spoken aspects of semantic change as well, through the collection of WhatsApp voice recordings.

Another point to consider is that the article identifies the problem but doesn't outrightly propose a solution. While the article suggests that social media negatively affects formal writing, it is worth investigating if pre-existing weaknesses in formal writing are simply amplified by social media use. Perhaps students with strong formal writing skills are more adept at code-switching between formal and informal communication styles. Exploring strategies to promote Standard English usage alongside social media literacy development could be highly beneficial. This might involve educational interventions or programs specifically designed to equip users with the ability to navigate both formal and informal communication styles effectively.

2.2.6. Types of Semantics

A review of types of semantics is paramount in understanding the scope of this work. This research dives into the fascinating world of Neologisms; those shiny, new words that pop up on social media all the time. how these words get their meaning, and how they go from head-scratchers to everyday slang is of interest to us. Lexical semantics is where it's at for this part. It's like the key that unlocks how these words become part of our online vocabulary. But social media is not just about single words. People toss them around in phrases that are sometimes single wholes and that's where things get interesting. Phrasal semantics helps us see how these neologisms work in combination with other words, and how they create new meanings that go beyond their basic definitions. It's like

these new words become building blocks for even more creative ways of expressing ourselves online.

Lexical semantics and phrasal semantics are the core of this research, while historical semantics gives us a flash into the history of meaning. Words have meanings in isolation and in context. Neologisms are used on social media in certain contexts. Incorporating lexical semantics and phrasal semantics in carrying out this research is like using a whole toolbox of semantic approaches to understand how neologisms become part of the ever-evolving language of social media, as seen in comments, posts, Captions, and online interactions.

a) Lexical Semantics

This area focuses on word meaning, exploring how words acquire meaning, how their meanings relate to each other (synonymy, antonymy, etc.), and how they are structured.

b) Phrasal semantics

Phrasal semantics is a subfield within semantics that focuses on how meaning is constructed not just from individual words, but also from phrases and multi-word expressions. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects of phrasal semantics, along with references for further exploration. It delves beyond the meaning of individual words to analyze how meaning is created when words are combined into phrases and expressions. It explores how the meaning of a phrase can be more than the sum of its individual word meanings. This is particularly relevant for idioms, figurative language, and phrasal verbs.

Examples: **Idioms**

Consider the phrase; "spill the tea" While the individual words "spill" and "tea" have their own meanings, the phrase as a whole signifies "revealing a gossip or juicy detail". This is a noncompositional meaning, meaning it cannot be derived simply by adding the

Phrasal Verbs: Verbs that combine with prepositions to create new meanings (e.g., "look up," "run into") are another area of interest in phrasal semantics.

c) Historical Semantics

Historical semantics is a fascinating subfield of linguistics that delves into how the meaning and usage of words change over time. It's like examining the life story of a word, tracing its evolution and transformations across generations. This shift can be subtle or dramatic, and it can be influenced by various factors like historical events, technological advancements, social changes, and even fashion trends. However, this work is focused on present-day new words and meanings without considering the etymology of words and meanings. The table below shows some words from their historic meanings leading to their contemporary meanings.

Table 3: *From Historic Meanings to Contemporary Meanings*

Word	Middle English (1100–1500 ad)	Early Modern English (1500-1800 AD)	Modern English (1800d-present)
meat	any kind of food	flesh of animals	flesh of animals
bread	food in general, often made from grain	baked food made from flour	baked food made from flour
awful	worthy of awe or respect	inspiring awe or fear; terrible	very bad or unpleasant
gay	happy, joyful	lighthearted, carefree; associated with homosexuality (from 19th century)	happy, joyful; associated with homosexuality
slay	to kill violently	to kill violently; to succeed spectacularly (informal, from 20th century)	to succeed spectacularly (informal)
nice	foolish, ignorant	pleasing, agreeable	pleasing, agreeable
wicked	evil, cruel	mischievous, playfully bad	evil, morally bad

sick	weak, infirm	ill, unwell	ill, unwell; disgusted (informal)
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d) Types of semantic change

There are five primary forms of semantic change: the first is amelioration; the second, pejoration; the third, broadening of meaning; the fourth, narrowing of meaning, and the fifth, metaphorical extension. **Stephen Ullmann (1957)**, proposed a more comprehensive classification of semantic change, which included both broadening and narrowing of meaning, as well as amelioration and pejoration. He also distinguished between radial change (where the meaning of a word changes along a single dimension) and tangential change (where the meaning of a word changes in a more unpredictable way).

‡ Semantic Amelioration:

Semantic Amelioration is a process in which a word is used in a more favorable, or at least, less unfavorable sense than before. To understand whether a word has undergone amelioration in its history, it is necessary to understand the evaluative features of the word at the time of study. This will often involve an exploration of the social and cultural context of the speaker or writer using descriptive semantics. A change in evaluative features implies a shift in the affective meaning of a word, often understood as a change from positive to negative or vice versa. An emotive shift will often take place in amelioration if a word becomes stronger in its affective force and acquires an intensified version with the original word taking on a more positive connotation.

In historical linguistics, the term amelioration refers to a change in a word's meaning so that it acquires a more positive or favorable connotation. The idea of evaluating semantic change with respect to the evaluative feature connotation was initially put forward in the 1960s by Anna Wierzbicka. The concept of amelioration is useful in understanding changes in attitudes and changes in meaning. French *ameliorer*, from Old French *ameillorer*, to make better: a (from Latin *ad*; see *ad-*) + *meillor*, better (from Latin *melior*; see *mel-* in Indo-European roots).

‡ Semantic Narrowing

Narrowing of meaning also occurs when a more general word is given a more specific one. In Latin, the word “scio” means "I know", but a more specific term was needed to translate the English "know" in the sense "to have knowledge of", so the word “cognoscere” was used. A more recent example of this type of semantic change is “disinterested”. This was a word that was originally used to mean uninterested, however a need was felt for a word to express the original sense of uninterested, so the prefix dis was added to create the word that we now know as “disinterested”.

In narrowing of meaning, a word becomes more specific in its meaning than it originally was. For example, in Old English, the word *fisc*, pronounced Modern English fish, meant any animal living in water. Its meaning has now become narrowed so that it only refers to a particular type of animal that lives in water. Another example of this type of semantic change is deer. In earlier forms of English, it was used as a general term for "animal", with time the meaning narrowed and it is now used to describe a specific type of animal.

‡ Semantic broadening

Broadening of meaning, which occurs when a word's significance becomes more general. Stephen Ullmann (1957) says "Semantic change shows a remarkable tendency to move in opposite directions... A word may broaden its meaning, extending its application to a wider range of things, or it may narrow its meaning, becoming restricted to a more specific sense" (Ullmann, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning*).

Several factors contribute to this alteration. Words that are more general in nature have the ability to encompass a wider range of things. Conversely, when a word becomes more specific, its meaning becomes more limited. Sometimes, a word with a specific use can undergo a change in meaning through the use of metaphor, and as a result, become more general in its application.

Examples include the following.

“Girl”

The semantic change of the word "girl" has increased in its level of generality and has broadened its meaning. It was originally used to describe a young person of either sex and only recently has it been specifically applied to a young female.

“Meat”

The word "meat" originally referred to food in general, and the generic sense of the word can still be seen in such compounds as "sweetmeat" and "meats". However, today "meat" has a more specific meaning and now refers to animal flesh as food.

“Knight”

The word "knight" has undergone a substantial amount of semantic change and has broadened in its meaning considerably. Originally a boy servant, it then came to mean a young servant who was a military attendant to a medieval knight. Later, it was used to describe a man of humble birth who was entitled to bear arms, the meaning which is retained in various surnames such as Spelman and Smith. Now, the most recent meaning of "knight" is that of a man granted an honorary title of knighthood by a monarch

The word "**deer**" also serves as an example of how semantic change is not confined to a word acquiring more general meanings but also to a word acquiring more specific meanings. "Deer" was once a generic Old English word for any animal, which was then employed in Middle English to describe animals that were hunted because they were owned by someone rather than inhabitants of the forest. Finally, it came to refer to the animal which today we know as deer.

✦ Semantic Narrowing

Another means through which meaning can be transformed is through metaphor, as exemplified by the word "cherry." Initially, "cherry" was the collective singular form of the term "chary," which currently conveys the notion of being "careful." This sheds light on why we use "cherry" to describe something done in a cautious or selective manner. When words are borrowed from other languages, it is common for their meanings to broaden as they become detached from their original context. This is evident in the case of the English word "folk," which had a more specific meaning when it was borrowed from Old Norse.

An example of when a word becomes restricted in sense due to loss of related connotations can be seen with the word "hound". This word comes from Old English "hund", which was used to denote any type of dog and had a parallel in the word "dog" (though this word went through its own

narrowing of meaning, hence why we have it today). During the medieval period, "hound" began to be used specifically to denote a dog used for hunting. From here, it developed into its modern sense a breed of dog used for hunting, but by the 17th century, it had taken on a derogatory sense referring to a man who was perceived as base and vile, often with the connotations of untrustworthiness and servility. It is this sense that leads to "*hound*" only really being used today in the compound phrase 'hell hound' (though it is still used independently by members of the Countryside Alliance). In this example, we can see how "hound's" meaning has shifted in inverse proportion to that of "fox", due to semantic change types on both words.

For example, Old English "*dæg*" had the meaning 'period of light between sunup and sundown', a sense retained in modern day, though it is rather literary and poetic. It also meant '24-hour day', a sense which was carried over when the word began to be used in its modern meaning 'period of light between sunup and sundown'. In the end, the word became restricted in sense, coming to denote a 'time span equal to that of one revolution of the earth on its axis', and it was this sense that led to the French borrowing "day" and a new word "24 hours", now the older sense has been lost, and the Modern English word has a still more restricted sense, in that it applies to a period of waking hours as opposed to slumber. In saying 'I was sleepy all day, but now I'm wide awake', we are using "day" to mean 'waking hours'.

† Pejoration/Semantic Deterioration

The term derives from the Latin word 'peior' meaning 'worse' whilst the suffix '-ation' refers to a process or result. The term 'pejoration' therefore refers to the process by which a word becomes pejorative. A word that is 'pejorative' is a word that expresses disapproval, discontent, criticism, or other negative connotations. Pejorative language may be used as a slur or to insult someone.

It is important to remember that different terms are perceived as pejorative by different groups of people. For example, people in certain social or ethnic groups may perceive a term as pejorative that others don't (and vice versa). This can develop over time as societal. Examples include:

“Attitude”

The word 'attitude' is technically a term that describes a figure's posture or position in a piece of art, as well as describing someone's mental state or mode of thinking. The word "*attitude*" would

not be viewed from a pejorative perspective in the Domain of art. For example, if an actor is on stage playing a dignifying role, one could say “he got an attitude”, and that would be taken as a complement.

However, in today's society, the word 'attitude' is commonly thought of in its negative context rather than simply describing someone's thoughts on something. For example, if we were to say 'She has got an attitude' it would suggest the person is rude, arrogant, and confrontational.

This is an example of pejoration as a fairly neutral term that has developed negative connotations over time and is now commonly used in a pejorative way.

“Silly”

In the Early Middle English period (11th-13th century), the word '*seely*' (or '*sely*') was used to describe someone as happy, fortunate, or blessed. As time went on, the definition shifted to mean someone innocent, holy, and pure. Then again to mean someone naïve. Eventually, the word became associated with its present-day connotations of foolishness and idiocy. We see examples of Shakespeare using 'silly' in the same context that we would use today e.g. '*this is the silliest stuff that ever I heard*' - Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595). Here, 'silliest' refers to the most ridiculous and stupid thing the speaker has ever heard.

This pejorated word example demonstrates how the meaning of the word has changed since the Middle English period, developing negative connotations over time. Other examples of Pejoration include:

Table 4: Examples of Pejoration

Words that have undergone Pejoration	Original Meaning	Current Meaning
Mad	Insane or mentally ill	Angry or frustrated
Witch	Female practitioner of folk magic	Malevolent or unpleasant woman

Cretin	A person with a congenital condition causing mental retardation	Derogatory term for a stupid or foolish person
Lunatic	A person with mental illness	Derogatory term for a crazy or unpredictable person
Retarded	Delayed or slow	Derogatory term for a person with an intellectual disability
Hysterical	Related to the uterus	Derogatory term for a woman who is overly emotional
Idiot	A person with an intellectual disability	Derogatory term for a stupid or foolish person
Lame	Unable to walk properly	Derogatory term for something that is uncool or inferior

The meaning of any word may be narrowed by the restriction of its range of reference. Deer and poultry are examples of this process, for both applied originally to any kind of animal. Holy Ghost in its time has ranged in meaning from '*holy spirit*' to 'gust of wind' but it has now reverted to the earlier sense. These examples of narrowing have had no long-term effect; all the words are still in use, and their restricted meanings are merely special cases of the earlier meanings rather than substitutes for them. But the final outcome of pejoration is often either that the earlier meaning of a word is lost and its new meaning takes its place, or that the old and new meanings coexist, thus creating ambiguity.

‡ Metaphorical Extension

A metaphorical semantic extension is characterized by a referential shift where a word adopts a new meaning that is in some way conceptually related to the original, for example, the word bead. Originally, “prayer” only later came to mean a small, spherical, ornamental object. Here the concept of a small object is related to the concept of an object which is a focus for spiritual contemplation. As this sort of extension is not a complete break with the original sense of the word,

it is often disputed as to whether the new meaning constitutes a separate lexical item or whether the original word has simply developed polysemy. This is not an issue in cases such as a bead, where there has been a complete transfer of meaning to a point where the original sense is no longer apparent.

Michel Bréal (1897) highlights Metaphor as a driving force behind semantic change, the process by which words acquire new meanings over time. He argues that metaphors act as a powerful tool in transforming the meaning of words, particularly by:

Shifting from Physical to Abstract: Bréal suggests that metaphors often involve taking a word with a concrete, physical meaning and applying it to a more abstract or intangible concept. For instance, the word "light" originally referred to physical illumination but through metaphor, it can also signify understanding or knowledge

Creating New Associations: By using a metaphor, a word develops new associations. The metaphorical use of "light" to represent knowledge connects the physical experience of brightness with the mental clarity of understanding.

Some words change their meaning by taking on a figurative sense in a metaphor. That is, the word comes to be used in an extended way to talk about something to which the literal meaning does not apply. A common way for this to occur is for an adjective, originally used to describe a particular kind of person, to come to be used to describe a kind of characteristic or behavior, often in a disapproving way.

For example, the adjective “cunning” originally described a person with skills or knowledge, and more recently it has come to be used in a metaphorical way to talk about behavior that is seen as skillful but devious. The change from literal to metaphorical can often be explained by the more general social and cultural changes, as have been described earlier in the work. The meaning change for cunning may be related to the increasing individualism and competition in modern society, where people are more concerned with protecting their own interests.

In conclusion, this chapter has comprehensively explored the existing literature on semantic changes, types of semantic changes, and the advent of Neologisms on social media. By critically

examining various studies, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies, we have gained a deeper understanding of Semantics evolution, internet slang, and Neologisms. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of Labov's Sociolinguistics theories, Prototype Theory, and Functional Load Hypothesis of Wang and Minett, has provided a robust lens through which to analyze social media Neologisms. However, as highlighted by Labov's Observer's Paradox, the act of studying language use can influence the data itself. This underscores the importance of employing diverse data collection methods alongside interviews to capture a more complete picture of this research. Building upon this foundation of knowledge and acknowledging potential limitations, the following chapter will outline the research methodology employed in this study. This methodology will detail the specific data collection techniques, participant selection process, and data analysis strategies that will be utilized to investigate patterns of semantic changes, the socio-linguistics, and technological factors that give rise to the emergence of Neologisms. Through this rigorous approach, this research aims to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge on Semantic Change.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The cornerstone of any rigorous academic inquiry is its methodology. As Bryman (2008) defines it, "*Methodology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the study of methods*". It encompasses the rationale behind the research design, the specific techniques employed for data collection and analysis, and the justification for their selection. Denzin and Lincoln further emphasize the role of methodology in shaping the knowledge produced, arguing that "*methodology is not just about techniques; it is also about the underlying assumptions that guide inquiry*" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1). In carrying out this study, a robust methodology is crucial for capturing the dynamic nature of the new word forms and the nuanced ways they emerge and evolve in everyday interactions. This chapter outlines the specific methods employed in this research, detailing the rationale behind the selection of data sources like social media comments, recordings of natural conversations, and informal speech, it describes the research design, data selection and collection, instruments for data collection, area of study, and sample population. It also delves into the data analysis techniques used to identify, categorize, and analyze the neologisms gotten from these rich and diverse sources. By meticulously outlining the methodological approach, this chapter aims to provide a transparent and replicable framework for understanding the research process and the resulting findings on neologisms within the ever-evolving tapestry of the English language.

3.2. Research Design

This research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. A corpus linguistics approach will offer a quantitative perspective by presenting neologisms in a frequency distribution table; stating their context of usage, calculating their frequency of usage, and analyzing the old and contemporary meaning of the neologisms. Social Network Analysis (SNA) complements this quantitative aspect by mapping connections between users and communities, revealing how neologisms circulate within specific social circles or hashtags. This descriptive method will provide a rich understanding of the social factors influencing semantic change, aligning with Labov's theory. By combining these quantitative and qualitative methods, the research will not only identify the neologisms and their semantic shifts

but also provide a nuanced understanding of the social forces driving these changes within the unique context of social media communication.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection in this research aligns with Labov's focus on natural speech utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. Corpus linguistics and Social Network Analysis (SNA) techniques will be employed to gather large-scale data on neologism frequency, usage patterns, and spread within social media networks. Complementing this, Labovian sociolinguistic observer's principle we will delve deeper into observing social media interactions which capture user motivations, intended meanings, and the social and technological context influencing semantic change. This comprehensive data collection strategy ensures rich information to investigate the interplay between social media, neologisms, and semantic change.

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering information on neologisms and their evolving meanings within social media. The process of data collection involves identifying data sources like online corpora of social media text, (e.g. comments) and getting a justifiable sample population. This multi-pronged approach ensures a comprehensive dataset encompassing both large-scale quantitative data on neologism usage and qualitative insights from user interviews.

3.3.1. Data Site

Social media is the case study for this research. Neologisms are gotten from three social media platforms; WhatsApp (chat messages, and caption of status updates), Facebook (posts and comments), TikTok (comments and captions). Online dictionaries like Merriam-Webster and Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online) which is considered the most comprehensive historical dictionary of the English language is used. For the literary aspects of this work, data was collected from online articles, books, publications and censored sites such as Wikipedia.

3.3.2. Sample Population

The probability sampling technique is adopted in this work by using social media as one of the main sources of data collection. For the sake of individuals who often manage to keep up with communication on simple platforms such as WhatsApp, the random sampling technique is adopted in this work. Also, for stereotyped individuals who are hardly actively present on social media and

sometimes totally absent from social media, this research incorporates a wide method of data collection, which includes a questionnaire, observation of social media comments, chats, posts, updates, and interactions.

Labov's (1963) concept of "apparent time" offers another valuable tool for the selection of the sample population. This principle suggests that by studying language variation across different age groups, and across different periods we can gain insights into ongoing linguistic shifts. A questionnaire was administered using a Google form. The respondents were chosen targeting different age groups. 33.3% of respondents were between 20-34 years old, 33.3% of the respondents were between 35-44 years old, and 33.3% were 45 years and above. The sample size was 60 participants for administering the questionnaire.

3.3.3. Justification of Sample Population

Age is not necessarily the sole factor influencing exposure to neologisms. While younger generations might be credited with creating many neologisms, social media usage spans across age groups. Including adults of different ages ensures the capturing of neologisms adopted or used by different demographics in order to prevent bias towards a specific age group known for creating and using neologisms. However, the research is focused on learned adults of 45 years and above. The criteria for the selection of individuals to administer the questionnaire depended on, their educational qualifications, and their ages. Individuals had at least a bachelor's degree or any qualification equivalent to it. They also had to be at least 20 years of age. The reason for choosing respondents in this criteria is because the study is aimed at examining the difficulty learned adults face as a result of the emergence of neologisms. The different age groups were also taken into consideration because this permits us to know how different age groups respond to new words and new meanings that have developed and are developing. The way a youth understands word meaning may not be the same way a senior citizen does. The reason for choosing respondents from different age groups is to be able to get individuals from each age group that can represent the sample population of the age group.

Also, for the data collected on social media through the observation of social media interactions popular random posts with many views, likes, and comments were chosen. Different social media platforms with diverse audiences and communication styles were chosen. Collecting frequently

used neologisms from multiple platforms; WhatsApp, TikTok, and Facebook, allows for the collection of a wide range of neologisms.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools for linguists, according to the field's principles, are not simply technical instruments but strategic choices reflecting the research question. Labov's emphasis on natural speech informs the use of tools that capture language in its everyday context, like observation.

3.4.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaire which incorporated both questions and exercises, served as a strategic tool to gather data on individual awareness, understanding, and perception of these new words and expressions. The questionnaire delves into various aspects, painting a detailed picture of how individuals interact with language change in the digital age.

a) Questions

The first section which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions is a baseline for participants' exposure to neologisms. 11 Closed-ended questions and 10 Open-Ended questions were formulated and administered. Questions like; how often do you encounter new words? and prompts to list recently popular words gauge their general awareness. Further sections explore specific neologisms. By including terms like "slay" and established words with new meanings like "dog," we investigate participants' familiarity and grasp of these evolving terms. The questionnaire delves deeper by contrasting traditional and newly acquired meanings. Questions like "Have you witnessed the word 'dog' used differently?" explore participants' awareness of semantic shifts. Social media language is also a key focus. By including questions on acronyms and slang commonly used online, we gain insights into how participants understand and utilize this unique linguistic register.

This data on individual perception is crucial. It allows us to move beyond the "what" of neologisms, as identified through corpus linguistics, to the "why" behind their adoption and usage. By understanding how individuals engage with these new terms, we can begin to piece together the social and cultural factors influencing their creation and spread.

b) Exercises

A questionnaire is not simply a collection of static questions. It incorporates exercises that encourage active participation and deeper reflection. 9 exercises Prompts like; list three words/expressions that have recently become popular and "Can you use any of these words or phrases in a sentence? were administered These exercises move beyond basic recall and encourage participants to not only identify but also integrate these neologisms into their own understanding of language.

This approach offers several benefits. Firstly, it allows participants to engage with the concepts on a more personal level, potentially sparking memories or experiences related to encountering new words. Secondly, it reveals how comfortable participants are using these terms in their own communication, providing insights into the potential social acceptance or resistance towards neologisms. Furthermore, these exercises can unearth creative uses or interpretations of new words, going beyond established definitions and revealing the dynamic nature of language in everyday contexts.

By combining these elements – probing individual awareness, encouraging active participation, and delving into social media language – the questionnaire becomes a powerful tool for data collection. The rich information gleaned from participants will complement our quantitative analysis from corpus linguistics. Together, this multifaceted approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the fascinating world of neologisms and their ever-evolving role in the digital age.

2.4.2. Observation

Labov advocated for studying language within its social context in his "*Observers' Paradox*" where he says that the very act of observing language use can influence how people speak thus obstructing or forging the true result from the observation. Social media comments, posts, messages, were observed and these observations were screenshotted. By observing these interactions, we can gain insights into the social factors influencing the creation and adoption of neologisms. For instance, analyzing a meme that uses a particular neologism can reveal the humorous or ironic context in which the word is employed. Similarly, observing heated discussions

on social media can uncover how neologisms are used to express strong opinions or establish group identity within online communities. Observations, of Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp chats, comments, posts and captions as employed strategically in this work, are effective tools for data collection which aligns with Labov's sociolinguistic principles. By capturing natural speech patterns and observing online interactions, we gain valuable insights into the "why" behind neologisms, going beyond their mere existence to understand the social and cultural forces shaping their use and evolution within the digital age.

3.5. Data Sources

Data sources for this research will leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, reflecting Labov's emphasis on natural speech data (Eckert, 2008). On the quantitative side, a corpus linguistics approach is employed, utilizing existing online corpora of social media. This allows for the identification of frequently used neologisms and analysis of their usage patterns over time, providing a large-scale view of semantic shifts within the online environment. On the qualitative side, Labovian sociolinguistic theory sheds light on the source of data in this study. This research on neologisms and social media employs a multifaceted approach to data collection, utilizing both primary and secondary sources

3.5.1. Primary Sources

The primary source of data was a meticulously designed questionnaire which comprised of questions and exercises. Unlike traditional data collection methods that might solely focus on word occurrence, this questionnaire delves into the "why" behind neologisms, shedding light on how individuals engage with this ever-changing linguistic landscape.

Straightforward questions like "How often do you encounter new words?" establish a baseline for individual exposure. By including specific neologisms like "slay" (question 10) and established words with new meanings like "dog" (question 13), we move beyond basic awareness and explore participants' grasp of these evolving terms.

Furthermore, exercises like listing recently popular words (question 5) and using them in sentences (question 15) encourage active participation and go beyond simple recall. These exercises reveal not just what participants know about neologisms, but also how comfortable they are integrating them into their communication. This approach is crucial as it allows us to move beyond the surface

level of neologism identification and understand the social and cultural factors influencing their adoption and use.

The questionnaire strikes a delicate balance between accessibility and intrigue. While the questions are phrased clearly and understandably, they are designed to be thought-provoking. For instance, comparing traditional and newly acquired meanings of words (question 13) or prompting participants to recall instances where specific events influenced neologism adoption (question 29) encourages deeper reflection on the dynamics of language change. This balance between ease of understanding and thought-provoking inquiry ensures that participants remain engaged and provide rich insights into their personal experiences with neologisms in the digital age.

In essence, the questionnaire is not just a static collection of questions; it's a carefully crafted tool for sparking conversation and revealing individual perspectives on neologisms. The information gleaned from this questionnaire will complement our analysis of online interactions and observations, painting a multifaceted picture of how neologisms are perceived, understood, and integrated into everyday communication.

Also, other primary sources of data were social media comments, messages, chats, captions, and posts. These online interactions offer a window into the natural habitat of neologisms – the dynamic and ever-evolving social media landscape. By analyzing this data, we gain valuable insights into how neologisms are used in real-time communication, how they function within online communities, and the potential social, factors influencing their creation and spread.

3.5.2 Secondary Sources

The research incorporates existing data and knowledge on semantic change and neologisms. This includes scholarly articles, research papers, and an online English dictionary; Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED Online), while others were obtained from related dissertations from the English department of the University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon. These secondary sources provide historical context on how words acquire new meanings, analyze the impact of social media on language evolution, and explore the cultural factors influencing neologism creation. By integrating these resources with the primary data gathered from online interactions, the research can build a more comprehensive understanding of the forces shaping the emergence and spread, of neologisms within the digital age.

3.6. Data selection

Collecting data is one thing while selecting the relevant data is another. Given our research focus, it's crucial to target online interactions where neologisms are likely to flourish. Separating relevant data from irrelevant ones demands a series of processes. Social media platforms known for their informal communication style, like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp are prime hunting grounds for neologisms. Facebook, according to Meta's Q3 2023 investor report, has around 2.085 billion daily active users (DAUs) on average. TikTok, while daily active user figures for TikTok are not officially released by the company, estimates suggest it has around 1.582 billion daily active users as of April 2024. These platforms foster a space for experimentation and creative expression, making them ideal for identifying newly emerging terms.

The selection criteria for Facebook and TikTok observation, were based on online posts having thousands of engagements (views, comments, likes, shares, saves). Posts that surrounded trending topics, memes, or emerging social movements that can further increase the likelihood of encountering neologisms were preferred. These discussions often serve as breeding grounds for new slang terms used to express current events or cultural phenomena.

The selection criteria for neologisms were new word/expressions/meanings that have high frequency of appearance or usage on social media.

3.7. Data analysis

Examining the context in which a neologism appears is crucial for understanding its meaning and function. This involves analyzing surrounding text, that will enable us decode the emotional tone, intended humor, or potential sarcasm associated with the neologism's use. This will prove the hypothesis right or wrong by analyzing a neologism to know if it has ameliorated, broadened, deteriorated, or narrowed.

The research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data. Qualitative analysis involved examining specific cases of semantic evolution, exploring contextual factors, and identifying the underlying reasons for meaning shifts. Quantitative analysis utilized statistical tools to track frequency patterns, collocational shifts, and semantic associations.

Tracking the frequency of a neologism's appearance across different platforms or communities can reveal its popularity and potential spread within the online landscape. Analyzing the frequency of a slang will determine if that word/expression is a neologism or has the potential of becoming a neologism. This depends on its ability to transcend its initial social boundaries, demonstrate lasting power, and fill a gap in the existing vocabulary. It's a fascinating process where informal language can evolve and leave its mark on the ever-changing landscape of language.

3.7.1. Descriptive Statistics

To quantify the prevalence of neologisms within our data set we Utilize a frequency distribution table to describe the data. This involved calculating how often specific neologisms appear in social media comments, posts, or questionnaire responses. A manual analysis of the word formation processes involved coining neologisms.

We employed descriptive statistics to analyze participant responses by summarizing the data obtained from the questionnaire. This involved calculating the percentage of participants who are familiar with specific neologisms or understanding the average level of awareness about neologisms across different age groups. for morphological neologisms, and acronyms we will analyze the word formation process employed in their coining using a descriptive statistic. To sum up, descriptive statistics is instrumental in quantifying the prevalence of neologisms within my data set.

3.7.2. Evolutionary Analysis

On the other hand, to be able to find out if a word has ameliorated, deteriorated, broadened, or narrowed we will employ evolutionary analysis techniques. The analysis is done by the presentation of a table where the old meaning of a word is defined, then the new usage is defined as well. With this, we can also observe shifts in meaning or function. Evolutionary analysis will allow us to track the emergence and spread of neologisms over time. By analyzing the new meanings/neologisms collected from the questionnaire and from social media, then comparing the before meaning of the word/ expression to the new word or meaning

3.8. Challenges in Data Collection

While questionnaires and the observation of online interactions are great tools for data collection, collecting good information can be tricky. Venturing into the dynamic world of online language presents some challenges, particularly when aiming to capture authentic language use and user perspectives.

One of the challenges encountered was the over-spiritual attitude of some respondents. Looking at the responses of some respondents on the Google form, their responses deviated from the question. For neologisms that had immoral meanings according to some respondents, they gave responses such as “evil, Abomination, and Madness” which totally deviated from the question. In the words of one respondent, they said: “...any other meaning ascribed to the word dog is from the pit of hell”. Another respondent said, “I will never allow that, because most new words are evil and are formed with evil intentions”. Quite hilarious! Some researchers decided not to answer some questions by simply responding “no”. These challenges were navigated as the researcher worked with the rest of the responses of other respondents since the percentage of respondents who deviated from the question and or refused to answer some questions were about 2% of the total number of respondents.

The reluctance of some respondents to write down full-fledged sentences in the section of the exercises. In one exercise that demanded respondents to narrate any instance where specific events or phenomena influenced the adoption of neologisms (new words/ new meaning/ new expression) in their social or professional circles, some respondents managed to explain but did not use full-fledged sentences. Due to the fact that most of the responses to this particular question were linked to the covid 19 period this challenge was mitigated as the researcher summed up the central idea in respondents’ narration. Furthermore, the reluctance of some respondents as they complained of the numerous questions in the questionnaire, some delayed submitting their final responses

Another challenge faced was the lack of knowledge of some respondents in this field of study. Viewing the responses of some respondents it was understood that they did not understand the question. For a question where respondents were asked to attach an affix to “boss, baby, slay, and runs”, the response of one respondent was “manager, immaturity impression, and nothing”, while another respondent wrote “none”. This shows that they did not really understand the meaning of

an affix. To mitigate the impact of this challenge, the researcher used other methods of data collection besides the questionnaire.

Also the difficulty in purchasing online articles and books also posed a challenge. The challenge was in getting a virtual or a visa card for online purchases. The researcher not being versed in online purchasing sought help.

Misplacing a book where the researcher had written down data gotten from observation (social media interactions and onsite inciting conversations). This was a major drawback causing the dalliance in the completion of this work. However, the researcher managed to research these words all over.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Exploring the fascinating world of neologisms in social media demands careful consideration of ethical principles. This research complied with ethical principles. For participants directly interacting with our research through questionnaires, we obtained informed consent. This involved a transparent explanation of the research purpose, how their data will be used, and a guarantee of anonymity throughout the process. Building trust with participants through clear communication and ethical data-collection practices was essential. In the administration of the questionnaire, a Google link was sent to them. Clicking on the link was a matter of choice. Data collected were kept confidential and identity of respondents were not made public.

When collecting data from online comments, posts, and posts we implemented clear anonymization procedures. For Facebook and TikTok interactions, blurred usernames, profile pictures, and identifiable details. For WhatsApp chats, the name and contact of the person under observation was cropped out.

To avoid misinterpreting the intended meaning of neologisms we studied the word in the context of the post that incited interactions (comments). Also, we incorporated open-ended questions within our questionnaire in order to avoid any bias for freedom of expression. These questions allowed participants to elaborate on their understanding of specific neologisms.

The data collected from social media platforms or questionnaires was stored securely. We utilized password-protected databases and adhered to data privacy regulations to ensure participant information remained protected.

We remained honest and upfront about the limitations of our research. We acknowledged that the questionnaire might not capture the full spectrum of neologism usage or user perspectives. Transparency builds trust with participants and ensures the integrity of our research findings.

By addressing these considerations, we demonstrated a commitment to responsible research practices. This commitment not only protected participants but also strengthened the credibility and impact of our research on neologisms within the social media landscape.

3.10. Language of the Research

Dealing with neologisms that could be sometimes informal, non-standardized English, and sometimes borrowed from other languages, the language employed throughout the research itself demands careful consideration.

Through the work we ensured utilizing clear definitions and consistent terminology to allow readers to grasp the nuances of the study. While some technical language might be unavoidable, we strive to present our research in a way that is accessible and understandable to a wider audience. This involved explaining complex concepts in simpler terms or providing brief definitions alongside technical jargon. The goal is to ensure that the research findings are not limited to academics or linguists but can be understood and appreciated by anyone interested in the fascinating world of neologisms and their impact on language.

When analyzing data from questionnaires or interviews, we paid close attention to the language used by participants themselves. This is crucial for capturing the authentic use of neologisms within online communication. The potential for creative uses or interpretations of new words, avoiding imposing rigid definitions based solely on established dictionary entries was acknowledged. This ensured the research reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of language use in the social media sphere.

The research maintains an objective tone, avoiding subjective opinions or interpretations when presenting findings. Data analysis was guided by established linguistic principles, and any conclusions drawn were supported by concrete evidence. This ensures the research remains credible and informative, offering valuable insights into the evolution and usage of neologisms within the digital age.

Our exploration of neologisms within the social media landscape extends beyond the boundaries of a single language. Working with social media neologisms, we encountered informal and nonstandard language. We also encountered neologisms that were borrowed from other languages. While English serves as the primary language of our research, the digital world thrives on the richness and dynamism of multilingual communication. Here is how we'll approach the use of multiple languages, informal and non-standard use of the English language in our research.

When we encounter these terms, we italicize them to visually distinguish them from English words, explain their meanings, and signal their foreign origin. This multifaceted approach ensures that our research captures the essence of neologisms within the multilingual world of social media. We strive for clarity and accessibility in English while acknowledging the significance of neologisms from other languages and providing context for a broader audience.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter has meticulously outlined the methodological framework that guided our exploration of neologisms within the social media landscape. We have detailed the research design, data collection methods (including potential ethical considerations), and the analytical tools we will employ. The adoption of Labov's theory of sociolinguistics as of the chosen theoretical framework for the study, guided us throughout the methodology of this work. His theory guided us in the data selection, data sources, data analysis, selection of the sample population, and data collection tools. This is reflected in our data collection methods, which prioritize user-generated content from social media platforms. Labov's work on variation and nuance informs our approach to analyzing neologisms. We acknowledge the potential for age and social variations in neologism use, reflected in our consideration of user demographics within our analysis. By incorporating these Labovian principles, our methodology goes beyond simply identifying neologisms. It allows us to explore

the social and user-driven factors that influence their emergence, usage, and evolution within the dynamic world of social media. We utilized both evolutionary analysis and descriptive statistics, while we used a qualitative approach to collect data, – tracking their emergence and spread, quantifying their prevalence, and understanding user demographics that might influence their adoption. With this robust methodology in place, we are now prepared to delve into the data presentation and analysis phase of our research journey, eager to uncover the hidden patterns and trends that lie within the world of neologisms.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

Having meticulously constructed our methodological framework in Chapter Three, we now embark on the exciting journey of data presentation and analysis in Chapter Four. This chapter presents the data collected from the selected social media platforms and also the data collected from the questionnaire. Through several approaches, we will not only present the neologisms identified within our research but also delve deeper into their usage patterns, user demographics, and the fascinating world of semantic change. Questionnaires and exercises served as the primary tools for gathering data. We embark on a two-part exploration; first, we dissect the insights unearthed from the initial section of the questionnaire, then, shift our focus to the second section, where the analysis hinges on data extracted from the respondents' exercises. To unlock the secrets within this data, a blend of statistical analysis and software tools were employed; excel tables to meticulously present the questionnaire responses. In this chapter we present the frequency and distribution of neologisms we collected from the three platforms; Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp. Quantitative analysis employs descriptive statistics to reveal the prevalence of specific neologisms and identify potential correlations between user demographics and neologism usage. Qualitative analysis involves examining interview responses and social media interactions to understand the context and motivations behind the use of neologisms. Through this multifaceted approach, chapter four presents the data and analysis the data while relating to the aim and objectives of this research.

4.2. Data Presentation and Analysis of the Questionnaire

The Google link of the questionnaire was sent to about 78 respondents. 60 participants completed and submitted their responses. The questionnaire was designed to assess participants' understanding and use of new words, new meanings, and new expressions. slangs and neologisms that were obtained from the observation of social media interactions (comments, posts, updates, and chats) were further tested in the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 2 questions and 10 exercises on specific neologisms. The first section of the questionnaire (questions 1-5) comprised of formulated questions intended to get the background information from the

participants; age, and gender. The second section (questions 6-12) comprised of questions formulated to get respondents' general awareness and usage of neologisms and social media slang. The third section (questions 13-22), dives deeper into getting respondents' analyzes of some specific neologisms. Lastly, section four (questions 22-30) got respondents' encounters concerning new words. The experiences they narrated gave us a glimpse into the contributing factors to the emergence of neologisms.

4.2.1. Participants Personal Information

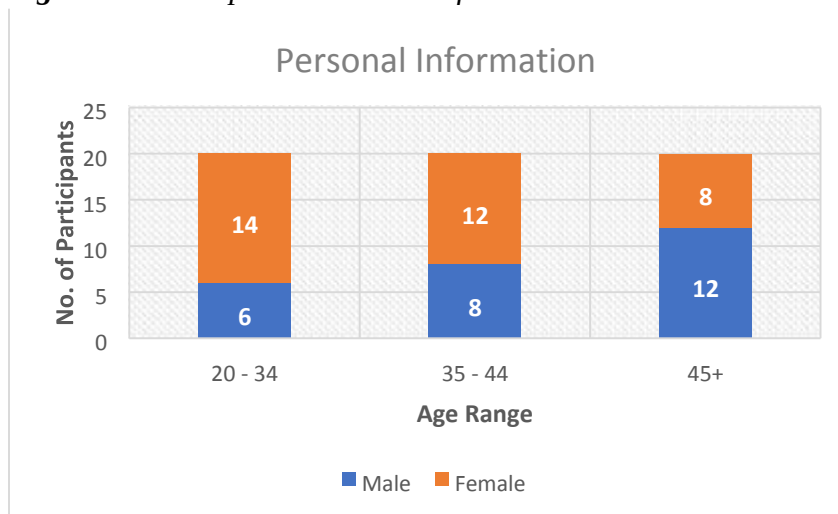
The first section of the questionnaire presents the personal information of 60 respondents which included their age ranges. The age ranges were divided as follows; Young Adults (20-34 years old): This age group is another major demographic for social media and is known for its heavy use of mobile devices and social networking. Mid-Life Adults (35-44 years old): This group might be more selective in their social media use and might prioritize specific platforms for professional networking or connecting with family. Older Adults (45+ years old): This group is the least likely to use social media frequently, but some might use it for specific purposes like staying connected with distant relatives or joining interest groups.

Table 5: Participant's Personal Information

Age range	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
20 - 34	6	14	20	33.33%
35 - 44	8	12	20	33.33%
45+	12	8	20	33.33%
Total	26	34	60	100%

From the table above the respondent's personal information is reflected in the graph below for a clearer presentation of the data.

Figure 3: Participants Personal Information



The above statistics on participants' personal information which included age, 33.3 % of the total number of respondents were between the ages of 20-34 years, 33.3% were between the ages of 35-44 while 33.3% were between 45 and above. Referencing the framework that guides this study, is William Labov's functional work in Sociolinguistic Theory which examines how social factors like age and gender influence language use. The reason for showcasing the percentages of respondents who fall between the various age ranges is to see the impact of age on individuals' familiarity and usage of neologisms. In other words, the aim for distinguishing the age ranges is for us to be able to identify which age range is more affected negatively by the emergence of neologisms.

Since one of the objectives of this research is to examine the effects of the emergence of social media neologisms on learned adults, the responses of respondents are separately analyzed based on the three age ranges discussed above. We cannot conclude that the emergence of neologisms has affected adults 45 and above without testing if they are the only age group who are being affected.

4.2.2. Participants' awareness and usage of neologisms

The questions in this section were formulated to get participants' awareness and usage of neologisms. The level of awareness between individuals of different age groups can hardly be the same. The table below presents the statistical responses for question 6.

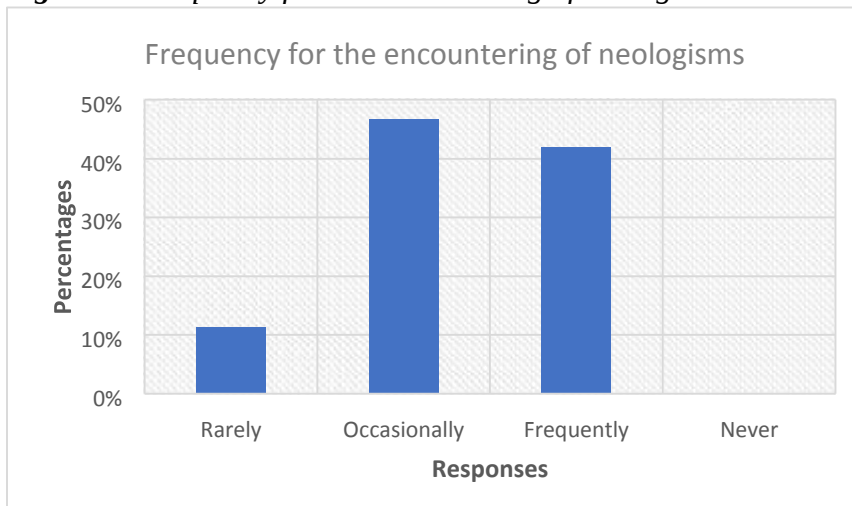
Question 6: How often do you encounter new words or expressions in your daily life or work?

Table 6: Frequency for the encountering of neologisms

Responses	No. Respondents	Percentage
Rarely	9	11%
Occasionally	29	47%
Frequently	25	42%
Never	0	0%
Total	60	100%

The percentages of respondents' responses were calculated based on the total number of respondents. Given that the respondents from each group was 20.

Figure 4: Frequency for the encountering of neologisms



The above presentation of the data using a bar chart, shows that 11% of respondents said they rarely encountered neologisms in their daily life, 47% said they occasionally encountered neologisms, 42% percent said they frequently encountered neologisms while the percentage for those who said they never encountered new words or expressions was 0.0%. Adding up the 47% and 42% that responded "occasionally" and "frequently" we can say that 98% of the total number of respondents which was 60 attested to the fact that they encountered new words or expressions.

This grouped age of individuals encounters neologisms occasionally or frequently. This is because this group of people are the most active on social media.

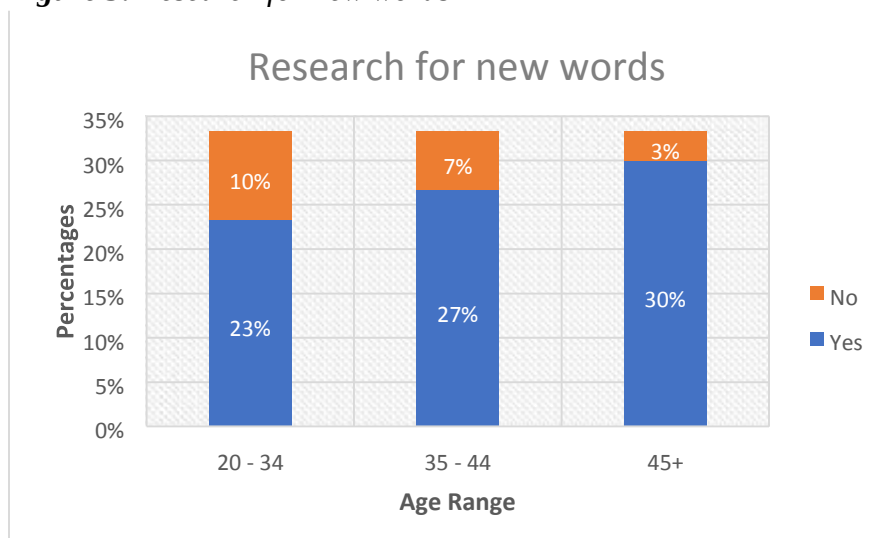
Question 7: Do you actively research for new words?

Table 7: Research for new words

Age Range	No. of Respondents		Percentage		Total %
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
20 – 34	14	6	23%	10%	33%
35 – 44	16	4	27%	7%	34%
45+	18	2	30%	3%	33%
Sub Total	48	12	80%	20%	100%
Total	60		100%		

The bar chart below presents the statistics respondents research for new words. The percentages are calculated based on the overall total number of respondents.

Figure 5: Research for new words



The above statistics shows that 90% of respondents said they actively researched for new words while 10% said they were not actively researching for new words. However, the fact that a word is new to an individual does not mean the word is a neologism. Respondents' familiarity and usage

of new words will be more evident in the exercises. Their responses to the exercises will determine if they research for words that are new to them or if they research for neologisms.

Question 8: Have you been present where English was spoken but you could not understand what was said?

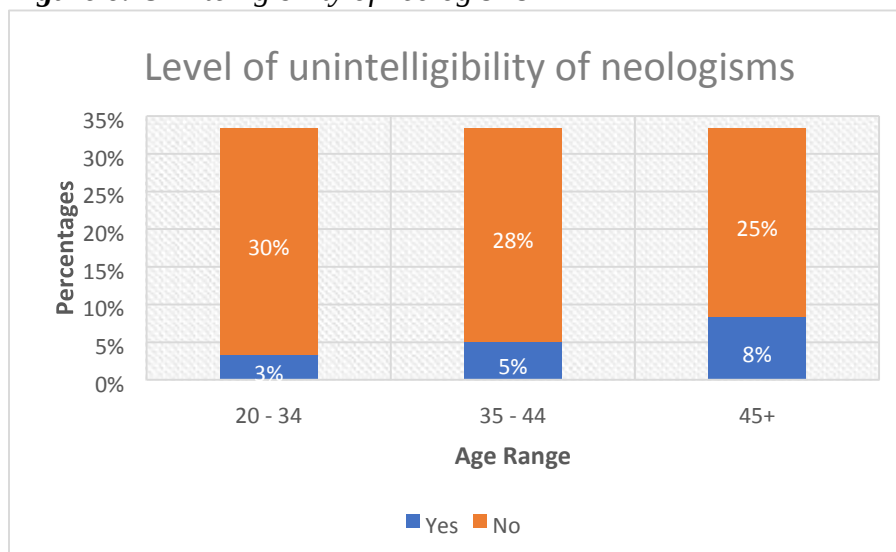
In question 8 participants were asked if they have ever found themselves in a place where English was spoken but they did not understand.

Table 8: Unintelligibility of neologisms

Age Range	No. of Respondents		Percentage		Total %
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
20 - 34	2	18	3%	30%	33%
35 - 44	3	17	5%	28%	33%
45+	5	15	8%	25%	34%
Sub Total	10	50	17%	83%	100%
Total	60		100%		

From the table above, the statistics is represented in the bar chat below

Figure 6: Unintelligibility of neologisms



From the above statistical representation of the responses of participants about their unintelligibility of the English language at a certain point in time, the data was presented with the different age groups of participants taken into account. There was an equal number of respondents in each age group. Starting with the age group 20-34 years, out of the 33.3% of respondents that belonged to this age group, 3% “YES”. They affirmed that they been present where English was spoken but they could not understand what was said while 30% said “NO”, and that they had not been present where English was spoken but they could not understand what was said.

Going to the second age group (35-44 years) those who fell within this age group were also 33.3% of the total number of respondents. Out of this 33.3%, 5% affirmed that they had been present where English was spoken but they could not understand what was said while 28% said that they had not been present where English was spoken but they could not understand what was said. Out of 33% of those who fell between the ages of 45 and above, 8% attested to the fact that they been present where English was spoken but they could not understand what was said while 25% said they had not found themselves in such a situation.

Looking at the data, 83% of the total number of respondents said “NO” to experiencing unintelligibility at some point in time while 17% of respondents agreed to experiencing unintelligibility. Looking at their responses we can analysis this by saying that learned adults encounter very little difficulty in understanding new words, new meaning and new expressions. Comparing the responses of the different age groups, looking at this from Labov’s sociolinguistics principle which says that social factors like age influence language use, we can conclude that the older a respondent is, the more difficulty in understanding neologisms. this is seen as 8% of respondents encountered difficulty in understanding certain words as opposed to the 3% and 5% in the other age groups.

Question 9: Can you list 3 words/expressions that you think have recently become popular?

Question 10: Can you list at least 2 old words or expressions that have gained new meaning in the 21st century?

Question 11: Can you list two (2) new expressions that are commonly used on social media?

The data of Questions 9, 10, and question 11 were merged in presenting and analyzing this data. This is because the three questions center on neologisms; social media neologisms, new words, and expressions. For the purpose of clarity and coherence some responses were edited while responses that had a central idea were summarized in order to avoid repetition. Neologisms that participants listed are presented with the meaning they gave and the frequency of appearance. Some neologisms were mentioned severally while some were mentioned by one or two respondents. The questions compelled respondents to list commonly used neologisms and social media neologisms. the data is presented in two separate tables; Commonly used neologisms and social media neologisms.

Table 9: Social Media Neologisms

Neologisms	Meaning	Frequency
LOL	Lots of love, or laugh out loud	3
Selfie	Self-photograph used on social media	4
FOMO	Fear of missing out from some activity, information, or event	2
Emoji	Shows reactions of users.	2
RIP	Meaning rest in peace	3
Tweet	A message posted on Twitter (X), a social media platform	7
MOG/WOG	Man of God / woman of God	3
A babe and more	A complement intended to hype the physical appearance or performance of a lady	3
To block	To prevent someone from contacting you on a social network like twitter or viewing your profile	2
go viral	- For a video or a person to go viral means for the video to be viewed by thousands and millions of people from around the world - Becoming very popular by circulating quickly from person to person especially, through the internet	7

Side eye	- a glance or gaze that expresses scorn, - a look that can make someone stop a bad behavior a look of suspicion, disapproval, or curiosity - looking at someone without wanting the person or other people to notice	4
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Peppe them	- A state of positive energy or success that goes beyond people's expectation. - Mostly used as a photo caption - Used as a caption when you intend to provoke or shame people who though you cannot make it in life. There is also "peppe them gang"	3
DP	Display photo	2
GOAT	Greatest of all times	3
Speed	- success or prosperity - used to wish someone good luck or success. For example, your friend is going for a job interview or an exam, you can say "speed bro"	2
Troll	- Threatening someone on social media - Cyber bullying, insulting, dragging, or attack	3
Silly	- Bad sense of judgement - to be foolish - it means when someone is behaving childish	3
lit	An expression used to complement a good performance, or look	3

To Ghost/ ghosting	- Blocking Someone on social media from seeing anything about you - Blocking someone from seeing your posts - Refers to the act of suddenly ending communication or contact with someone without any explanation, typically in a romantic or social media context.	6
Ghost Town	- A day, week or period of time Void of human movement or any activity - Since ghosts are invisible with the human eye, the term ghost town is used when no human is visible outside, or outdoors.	5
	- A day when no one steps foot outside as Monday is a ghost town day in the anglophone regions due to the anglophone crisis.	
Total		59

The table above presents some popular neologisms listed by respondents, their meanings, and the frequency of usage. 5 respondents mentioned “ghost town” as relating to the anglophone crisis. This already gives us a glimpse of some socio-cultural factors that have influenced semantic changes thus the emergence of new vocabulary. Some most mentioned social media neologisms were “tweet” which was mentioned 8 times, and go viral which was mentioned 7 times. **a) “Viral”**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, (9th ed.), Oxford University Press, “viral” means relating to or caused by a virus. In contemporary English and as used on social media, “viral” refers to a post, video, or story that spreads rapidly and widely across the platform due to high engagements, shares, and views. A viral post usually hits millions of views. Looking at the old and contemporary meanings of the word viral, the word has undergone semantic changes from meaning the widespread or a disease caused by a virus, to mean the widespread of a post on social media. Thus, the word viral as used on social media is a semantic neologism.

b) “Tweet”

The word “Tweet” according to the Oxford English Dictionary referred only to the sound of a bird; any short high-pitched sound or whistle before it was added to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary in 2011 and the Oxford English Dictionary in 2012. The contemporary meaning of the word as used on social media specifically refers to a public message posted on the platform Twitter. These messages are limited in character count, forcing users to be concise with their thoughts and updates. The term "tweet" can be used as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it refers to the message itself. For instance, you might say "I saw a funny tweet about cats earlier." As a verb, it means to post a message on Twitter. An example of this usage would be "I'm going to tweet about this new restaurant I tried." Looking at the neologisms with high frequency as mentioned by respondents, it is evident that semantic changes have occurred and thus the emergence of neologisms.

Table 10: *Commonly Used Neologisms*

Neologisms	New Meaning	Number of Respondents
Chork	The act of making the sound your shoes make when you're walking in them and they're full of water	1
Uglyography	Poor handwriting	1
Frienemy	An enemy who disguises to be a friend	4
Its giving	- Used to describe someone or something that's giving off a particular vibe or feeling. - Often used to complement something that is looking the way it is supposed to look - Its giving is a complement or an insult depending on the context	12
Anglosphere	Collective name of English-speaking countries	1

Pleasureship	- It comes from join together pleasure and relationship - A form of relationship that is not defined - A temporal relationship that the both parties are just in to catch fun	3
A babe and more	used to complement a lady about her physical looks	3
Gay	- Couples of the same sex - Homosexuals	6
Lesbians	- Female couples - Female couples of the same sex	3
<i>Jazz/kayamata</i>	- Something used to make someone answerable to you - A love portion - Something used to make someone madly in love with you - Something used to control someone	6
<i>Odogwu</i>	- Meaning rich and wealthy man - Meaning generous man - <i>odogwu</i> means big man	4
Wife material	- It means having the characteristics of a wife - A Proverbs 31 woman/ a virtuous woman - A wife material is a woman who can take care of a home	6
Tablet	A general-purpose computer contains in a touchscreen panel	3
hot	- Looking attractive, and sexy - Looking extremely feminine - Looking indecent	6
AWFUL	Very bad	1
Total		60

Some responses in the table above are presented in the exact words of respondents, while some were summarized, and others were edited to correct grammatical errors. From the table above the

meanings of some words and expressions in the 21st century have shifted. This question helps us attain one of the objectives of this study which is to examine social media slang and new meanings that have the highest frequency of appearance or usage on social media. Analyzing the frequency of a slang will determine if the word/expression/meaning is a neologism or has the potential of becoming a neologism. Some of these neologisms mentioned by respondents in the questionnaire have been further tested through the observation of interactions on Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok.

c) “It’s Giving”

The phrase “it’s giving” is a popular slang term used to describe someone or something that’s giving off a particular vibe or feeling. It’s giving; This part introduces the vibe or feeling being conveyed. The vibe or feeling can be anything from a certain era for example;

- The wig is pure human hair that’s why it gives luxury
- His shoes were giving poverty
- The song quality was giving low budget artist
- Her birthday gown was giving slay queen vibes

Using these expressions or words in sentences is where phrasal semantics comes in. The meaning of some of these novel words or expressions depends on the context of usage. The tone can be positive or negative, but it is often used humorously or to add a bit of exaggeration. It’s a way to playfully describe something striking or memorable.

d) “Wife Material

This is used to describe a woman considered to possess qualities that make her suitable for marriage. These qualities can be domestic skills, good character, or loyalty. These commonly used neologisms likely emerged from discussions about ideal qualities in a wife. It originated in the West and spread to Africa through social media. Some commonly used expressions in relation to this phrasal noun are;

- My daughter-in-law cooks so well, she is indeed a wife material

- Wife material, 1000 yard

Traditionally, wife material might have been associated with specific cultural expectations. Social media usage broadens it to encompass more diverse qualities depending on individual preferences. However, this expression is further tested by observing social media comments with the key term “wife material”. This expression will be further discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

e) “*Kayamata/Jazz*”

This term refers to a concoction or potion traditionally used in some African cultures to enhance a woman's sexual attractiveness. The word “*Kayamata*” likely stems from Hausa or other West African languages. In the digital age, “*Kayamata*” has gained a broader meaning online. It can be used humorously or suggestively to describe anything that enhances a woman's desirability or anything that makes a man madly in love with a woman; something like a love potion.

Jazz is a vibrant musical genre originating in African-American communities of New Orleans. It's characterized by; Syncopated rhythms, Improvisation by musicians, Polyphonic ensemble playing (multiple melodies intertwine), Elements of blues, ragtime, and African musical traditions. This word has semantically titled to mean anything that one can use to have total control or influence over another. The origin of these words sheds light on the social and cultural factors that have influenced or led to the emergence of neologisms.

f) “*Odogwu*”

This Igbo word translates literally to “warrior” or “fighter.” On social media, it's used to describe a strong, successful man, often one who is wealthy and takes charge. Traditionally, “*Odogwu*” referred to physical strength and bravery. Social media usage expands it to encompass financial success and confidence. These terms showcase how language evolves online. Everyday words take on new meanings to reflect current social conversations and cultural references. As seen from the explanations, one of the factors that influence the creation of novel terms are language contact; and borrowing.

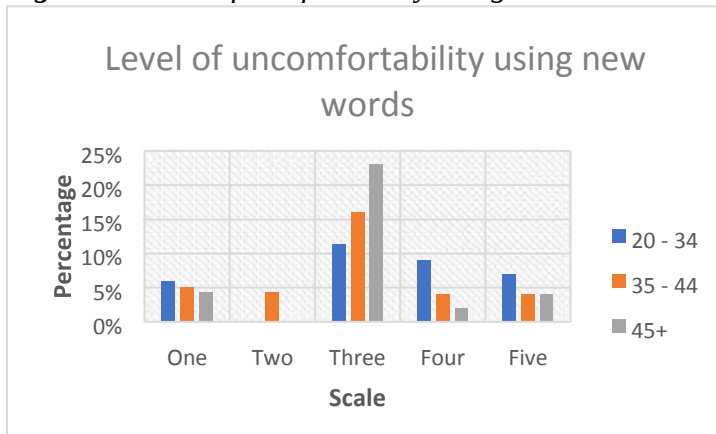
Question 12: On a scale of 1 (very uncomfortable) to 5 (very comfortable), are you comfortable you using new words to communicate in your daily life?

Table 11: *Level of comfortability using new words.*

Age Range	Total Percentage	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
20 - 34	33.33%	6%		11%	9%	7%
35 - 44	33.33%	5%	4%	16%	4%	4%
45+	33.33%	4%	0%	23%	2%	4%
Total	100%	15%	4%	50%	15%	15%

For a clearer presentation of the data, the level at which respondents are uncomfortable using new words is presented in the bar chart below. With one being very uncomfortable, 2 being uncomfortable, 3 being moderately comfortable, 4 being comfortable and 5 being very comfortable.

Figure 7: *Level of comfortability using new words.*



The responses are presented with the three age groups taken into consideration. The blue-colored bars are respondents between the ages of 20-34, the orange-colored bars are respondents between the ages of 35-44 while the arch-colored bars are respondents between the ages of 45 years and above. 50% of Respondents said they are moderately comfortable using new words. out of this 50%, 11% were between the ages of 20-34, 16% were between the ages of 35-44, while 23% were between the ages of 45 and above. this shows that older adults of 45 years and above face more

challenges in using neologisms. also, going to the scale of 5 which means very comfortable, 15% of respondents said they were very comfortable using neologisms. out of this 15%, 4 % were between the ages of 35-44 and 45 and above. this shows that the older the age, the more difficulty encountered in using or understanding neologisms.

As one of the objectives of this study which is to examine the negative effects of the emergence of social media neologisms/slangs on learned adults between the ages of 20, this question provides the negative effect of the emergence of social media neologisms on learned adults. Looking at the above data, we can see that the emergence has affected the fluency of learned adults. If they are not comfortable using neologisms, this means that there will be a bridge in communication.

4.2.3. Participants' knowledge of specific neologism

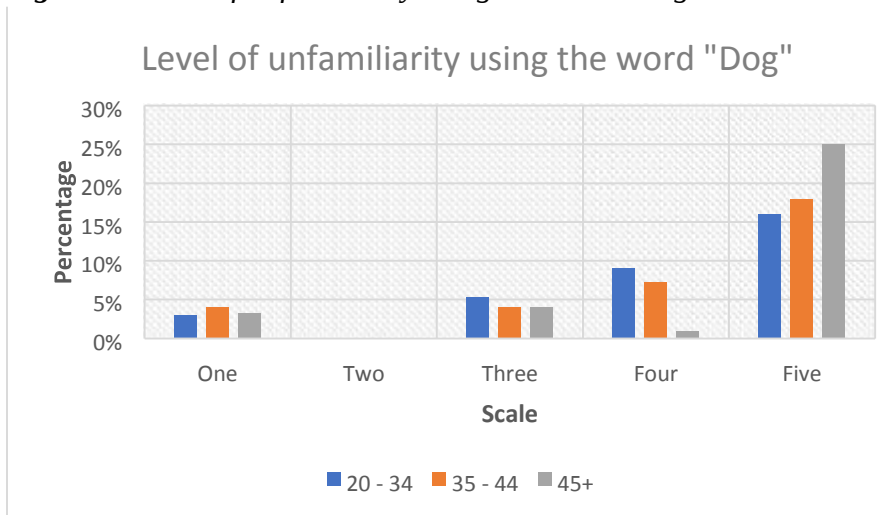
The questions in this section of the questionnaire were formulated to know how well familiar know certain words. this section is preceded by some exercise on the knowledge of some neologisms. it is important to know participants' familiarity with certain words because this will help us know if they are familiar with the new meaning of the word of the old meaning of the word. The meaning they say they are familiar with will be best known in the exercises. If they are more familiar with the new meaning, this will mean that the new meaning of the word/expression has successfully established itself as a neologism.

Question 13: How familiar are you with the word “DOG”? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not familiar at all and 5 being very familiar).

Table 12: Level of unfamiliarity using the word "Dog"

Age Range	Total Percentage	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
20 - 34	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33.3%
35 - 44	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33.3%
45+	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	1%	32.33%
Total	100%	0%	0%	0%	1%	99%

Figure 8: Level of unfamiliarity using the word "Dog"



The table above shows that 99% of respondents were familiar with the word “Dog”

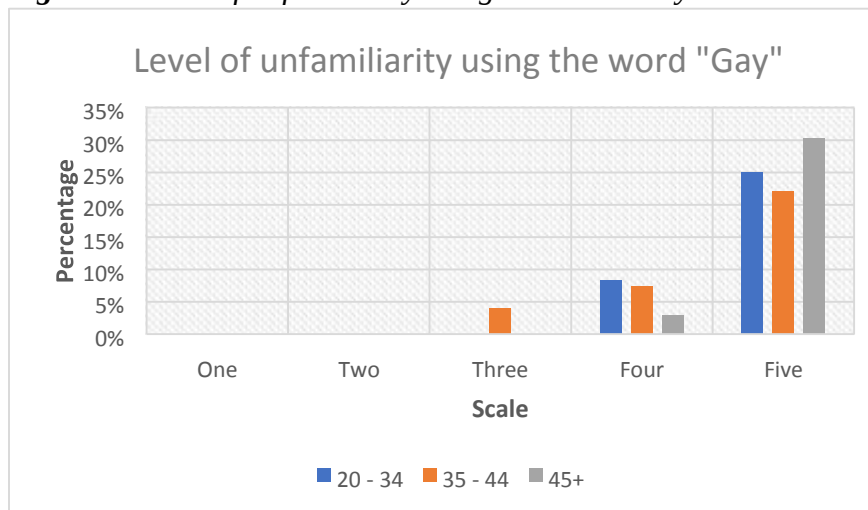
Question 14: How familiar are you with the word “GAY”? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not familiar at all and 5 being very familiar).

Table 13: Level of unfamiliarity using the word "Gay"

Age Range	Total Percentage	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
20 - 34	33.33%	0%		0%	8%	25%
35 - 44	33.33%	0%	0%	4%	7%	22%
45+	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	3%	30%
Total	100%	0%	0%	4%	19%	77%

The table above shows the percentages of respondents who were either very unfamiliar, moderately unfamiliar, familiar, moderately familiar or very familiar with the word “gay” 77% of participants said that they very familiar with the word gay, as opposed to 19% who said they moderately familiar and 4% who said they very moderately unfamiliar. The fact that some respondents can say that they are unfamiliar with the dog, goes a long way to affirm the premise of this research which says that there is semantic, and that this semantic change has led to mutual unintelligibility.

Figure 9: Level of unfamiliarity using the word "Gay"

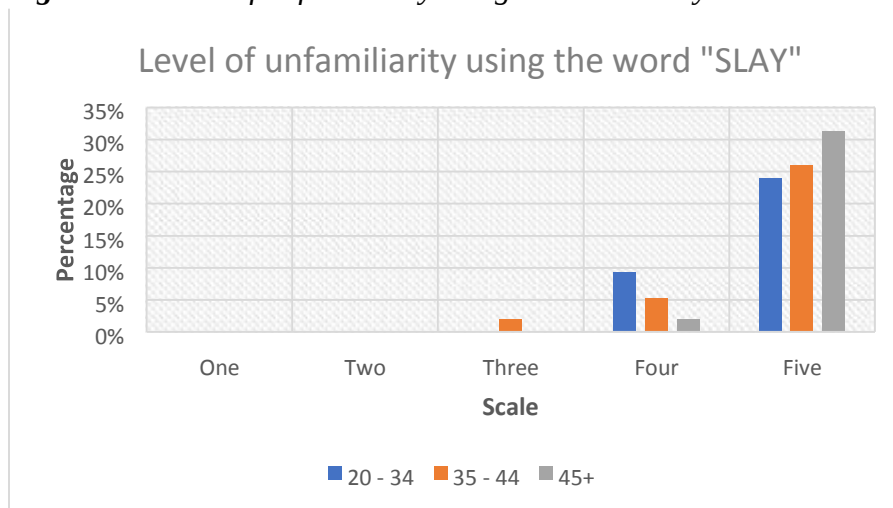


Question 15: How familiar are you with the word “SLAY”? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not familiar at all and 5 being very familiar).

Table 14: Level of unfamiliarity using the word "Slay"

Age Range	Total Percentage	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
20 - 34	33.33%	0%		0%	9%	24%
35 - 44	33.33%	0%	0%	2%	5%	26%
45+	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	2%	31%
Total	100%	0%	0%	2%	17%	81%

Figure 10: Level of unfamiliarity using the word "Slay"



Exercise 16: How would you define the word "SLAY"?

Table 15: Definition of the word "SLAY"

Number of respondents	Definition of the word slay	Summary of Definitions
2	To kill somebody	To kill
1	Normally it means to cut something or somebody.	
2	To put someone down by killing	
2	To cut through something	
3	It means to kill, to kill someone	
2	A way to dress which makes one attractive	
4	To display or flaunt oneself or wealth in an ostentatious or inappropriate manner	

3	The word "slay" is a slang term that is commonly used on social media and in everyday speech to describe someone or something that is performing exceptionally well, doing something impressive, or looking fantastic. It is often used to praise someone for their skills, confidence, or style.	To attract or impress by possessing confidence, unique style and charisma in looks or presentation
2	Making the most out of your appearance (positive)	
2	To appear beautiful and attractive.	
3	The word slay means someone who dresses to impress others	
2	To Entertain	
2	To perfectly rock or wear an outfit	
2	Bad for family expressions and societies	Deteriorative Meaning

The definitions respondents gave in the questionnaire are presented in the table above. Some definitions that were similar were summarized. While others were simply copied and pasted. Their definitions were summarized and grouped into three definitions. The table is divided into frequency of the definitions, the definitions given by respondents, and a summary of the main idea in their definitions. Looking from the table above 10 out of 60 respondents defined “slay” as “to kill”. Two respondents the other hand said the word is bad for family expressions and societies. That means according to them they believe the word slay has acquired deteriorative meaning. To summarize the responses of 49 out of 60 respondents who defined the word “slay” they said to slay means to attract or impress by possessing confidence, unique style and charisma in looks or presentation. The fact that the new meaning of the word “slay” has successfully replaced the old meaning which meant “to kill” this means the word has successfully implanted itself as a

neologism to the extent that most of the respondents did not know the early modern English meaning of the word “slay”.

Exercise 17: Can you provide any other definition of the word "SLAY"?

Table 16: *Other definitions of the word “SLAY”*

Number of respondents	Other definitions of the word slay
5	An adjective describing someone who has dressed to impress others sexually.
6	To display external features, especially of a woman in an awful way
1	to besmirch (to make dirty complements thus tarnishing someone’s reputation)
5	Immoral and evil, (slay means kill) true meaning
1	The only definition I know is to kill, any other definition is from the pit of hell
8	Another way to define the word "slay" is in the context of the LGBTQ+ community, where it is often used to describe someone who exudes confidence, fierceness, and authenticity in expressing their gender identity or sexual orientation. In this sense, "slay" can represent empowerment and self-affirmation in the face of societal norms and prejudices.
1	when you do your work or a presentation well, one will just say you Slayed
6	Feeling beautiful in an attire
7	To be very pretty in appearance
2	To impress
4	To socially Display your skills to the public

After respondents provided a definition of the word “slay”, they were asked to provide another definition of the word “slay” apart from the one they had given. The second set of definitions they gave was totally void of the meaning “to kill”. Some of the definitions they gave were similar to the first definition. However, some definitions they gave proved that they viewed the word from a

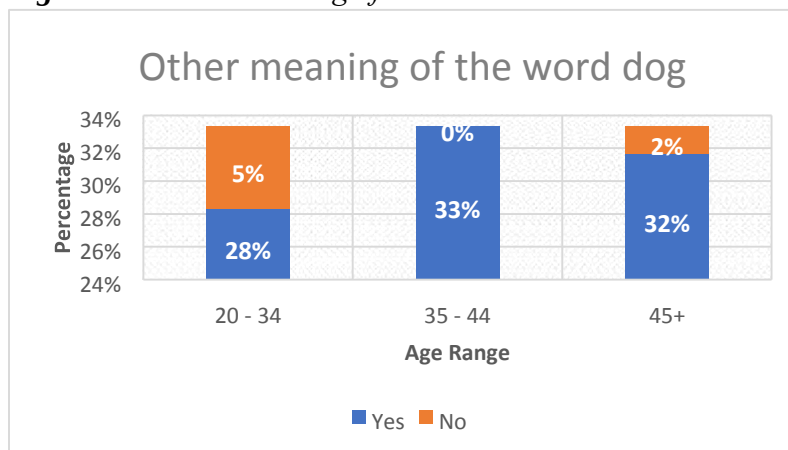
negative aspect. Their definitions were similar in that they all had to do with performance, appearance, and looks.

Question 18: Have you witnessed or experienced any instance where the meaning of the word “DOG” has been used differently from its traditional meaning?

Table 17: Other meanings of the word “DOG”

Age Range	No. of Respondents		Percentage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
20 - 34	17	3	28%	5%
35 - 44	20	0	33%	0%
45+	19	1	32%	2%
Total	56	4	93%	7%
	60		100%	

Figure 11: Other meaning of the word “DOG”



Respondents’ knowledge on whether they have experienced or used the word dog in a different context apart from the traditional mean is presented in the table and bar chart above in percentages and numbers as well. Their age group is also presented. Summarily, 93% of respondents responded “YES” to having experienced or used the word “dog” in another context apart from the traditional

meaning. On the other hand, the inferior 7% responded “NO”. analyzing the data presented, we can conclude that the new meanings (new context) ascribed to the word “dog” is an established neologism. The definitions/meanings and example sentences provided by respondents is presented and analyzed below

Exercise 19: When you think of the word “DOG” what are the THREE words or phrases that come to your mind?

Table 18: *Words or Phrases Associated with the Word “Dog”*

Number Of Respondents	Words Or Phrases Associated to the Word “Dog”
6	Sex Addict, And Foolish
1	Prostitute, Cheat, Bone
12	An Insult
1	Loyalty, Security, Friendship
10	An Animal
1	Loyal, Friendly, Playful
2	Domestic Animal
8	Wild
1	Costly To Keep
3	Prostitution
4	To Follow Someone
2	To Be Lazy
1	Someone Who Cannot Say no for An Answer
4	Pet
1	Disloyal
2	Contemptible
1	Untrustworthy

Looking at the words mentioned by respondents in the table above, just 10 out of 60 respondents listed words that insinuated the traditional meaning of “dog”. This means that the word has successfully transcended its age and class barrier, thus this new meaning is an established neologism.

Exercise 20: Can you use any of the meanings in a sentence?

Table 19: Words or Phrases describing the word “DOG”

Number of respondents	Meaning	Words or Phrases describing the word dog
1	To be mad	Ben really got mad at him like a dog chasing a grasshopper.
2	Domestic animal (pet)	Dogs are often found with bones
1	Foolish	After all, we’ve been through, you still behaved like a dog
2	To follow	He follows me like a dog.
7	Animal (pet)	A dog is a domestic animal
12	Domestic animal (pet)	The dog happily greeted its owner with a wagging tail and a big, slobbery kiss.
3	A Cheat/ flirt	Your husband is a dog, he sleeps with everything in skirts
8	Sex addict	Your husband is a dog, she sleeps with women around.
2	Wild	When the fight started, he jumped on me like a wild dog ready to devour
3	To follow	Stop dogging me all about means stop following me Little tasks I asked you to do, you did not do it, you're just being lazy.
6	To be Promiscuous, Prostitute.	Looks like your girlfriend cannot say no, she is indeed a dog
8	a domestic animal (pet)	This is my (dog) pet

2	To be Disloyal	I have been dogging around with my maker's commandments.
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Out of 60 respondents, 58 gave example sentences. Sentences with similar ideas and sentence patterns were summarized. As presented above the meanings of “dog” gotten from the sentences respondents gave were; “disloyal”, “pet-animal”, “promiscuous,” “wild” “foolish”, “mad”, and “follow”. 29 respondents used the word “dog” in the traditional context. While 20 respondents used the word dog to mean someone who is sexually loose or promiscuous. In question 19 above where respondents provided other meanings of the word dog, they did so excellently without any difficulty but when they were asked to make sentences with any of the meanings they had given above, most of the sentences they gave tended to portray the word “dog” in its traditional meaning. However, the 29 respondents who used the word dog in a meaning other than its traditional meaning had difficulty in communicating the meaning they intended to. This exercise shows the difficulty encountered by learned adults as a result of the emergence of neologisms. As seen from their responses to exercises they faced difficulty in using and understanding neologisms.

Question 21: When you think of the word “GAY” what are the THREE words or phrases that come to your mind?

Table 20: Words or Phrases associated with the word “GAY”

Number of respondents	Words or Phrases associated with the word “GAY”
7	Immorality,
3	pervert, insanity
3	Bad
2	Queer, deviant, different
5	Evil, immoral, wickedness.
8	love, equality
4	Men acting like women

3	Have sex with fellow men
2	Behaving abnormal
4	Transgender
6	Light-hearted and carefree
3	Homosexuality
2	Law breakers
1	Evil, against god's principle,
4	Abomination, not god's original principle
5	Madness, against the law
3	Nuisance
5	Abominable expression

Looking at the above responses, 35 out of 60 viewed the word from a negative point of view. They mentioned deteriorative adjectives such as “nuisance”, “abominable expression”, “lawbreakers” “evil”, “against god’s principle”, “abomination”, “not god’s original principle”, “madness”, “against the law”, “pervert”, “insanity”, “bad” and “immorality”. 6 respondents gave words that defined the word as in middle English, 8 respondents viewed the word from a positive perspective, as they made mention of “love” and “equality” 10 respondents were indifferent as they simply gave words that define the contemporary usage of the word. They made mention of expressions such as “different” “having sex with fellow me”, “transgender” and “homosexuality”

Summarily the word “**gay**” could be termed an established neologism since about 90% of respondents gave words that meant new meanings that have been ascribed to the word. Out of 60 respondents, 10% of respondents made mention of the word as meaning “joy and carefree”

Question 22: Did you know that in Middle English, the word “GAY” meant “joyful” and “carefree”?

Table 21: Knowledge of “GAY” in Middle English

Age Range	Percentage	No. of Respondents		Percentage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
20 - 34	33.33%	2	18	3%	30%
35 - 44	33.33%	5	15	8%	25%
45+	33.33%	8	12	13%	20%
Total	100%	15	45	25%	75%
		60		100%	

In relation to question 21, respondents were asked in question 22 if they knew that the word “gay” meant “joyful” and “carefree” in Middle English. 25% of respondents said “YES” to knowing that the word meant “joyful and carefree” while 75% said “NO” to knowing that the word meant “joyful and carefree”. This observation goes a long way to conclude that the new meaning of the word “gay” has successfully replaced the old meaning.

Question 23: As used on social media, what is the full meaning of "G.O.A. T" and “ASAP”

Table 22: Social media backronym

Backronym	Meaning in full	Backronym	Meaning in full	Percentage of participants'
G.O.A.T.	Greatest of All Times	A.S.A.P.	As soon as possible	100%

100% percent of participants defined the full meaning of the backronyms “GOAT” and “ASAP”. This means the backronyms are established neologisms.

Question 24: According to you, what is meant by these 5 local expressions;” Mbanya”, “My 90 Minutes Person”, “Item 11”, “Yahoo Boy” And “24/7”

Table 23: Commonly used social media neologisms/slangs

Word	Number of respondents	Meaning
Mbanya	1	Shares of the same man
	40	<i>Mbanya</i> means Co-wife
	18	closest friend/ close friend/ best friend
My 90 minutes person	16	someone you spend most of your time with
	6	My most trusted person
	18	Someone who is reliable and efficient in getting things done
	4	Buddy
	8	close person
	7	best friend
	2	lunch/dinner,
Item 11	8	Eating time
	8	Food and drinks
	12	special moments
	12	time to eat and drink
	8	Meal time
	12	Item 11 mostly used in parties means food time
	35	a scammer
	4	A young man involved in internet
	1	fraud schemes.

Yahoo boy	6	cyber thief
	6	Yahoo Boys are considered boys who use the internet to commit fraudulent acts.
	2	a fraudulent person
	2	flamboyant boy
	2	Internet fraudster
24/7	6	Something that is available or accessible all day and every day
	16	Round the clock, available at all times
	4	Every day from 6 AM to 6 AM the next day
	4	every day of the week
	8	every time
	2	everyday
	5	247 means every day in a week
	5	24 ours round always available every day

a) “Mbanya”

In some Cameroonian languages, particularly *Douala* and *Bakweri*, "*mbanya*" translates to "cowife." This refers to a woman who is one of multiple wives married to the same man in a polygamous relationship. In recent times the word has acquired another meaning; which refers to a close friend. Socio-cultural factors such as borrowing from local languages have influenced the adoption and wide use of this local expression. Taking something from another language: This is the most common way "borrowing" is used regarding language. It refers to when a word, phrase or even a grammatical concept is adopted from another language and incorporated into your own. The core meaning of "*mbanya*" as co-wife remains consistent when borrowed into English used in

Cameroon. Borrowing words like "*mbanya*" reflects the cultural context of Cameroon where polygamy exists. English, lacking a direct equivalent, adopts this term to address this specific situation.

b) "My 90 Minutes Person"

The expression "My 90 minutes person" is a creative word used on social media, particularly common in Cameroonian context. "My 90 minutes person" is the most likely interpretation. Someone you spend quality time with. "90 minutes" could represent a dedicated period for spending time with a significant other, close friend, or workout buddy. Looking at it from a sociocultural perspective this expression makes reference to football (soccer). In football, a game lasts 90 minutes (excluding stoppage time). "My 90 minutes person" could be an intentionally playful or humorous way to describe someone special. It is a term used within a specific social media community or friend group with an inside joke or reference. This could be a playful way to refer to a teammate or someone you enjoy watching the sport with. Football as a popular sport influenced the creation of the meaning ascribed to the expression "90 minutes".

Compounding, refers to the process of creating a new word or phrase by joining two or more existing words together. The resulting compound word or phrase takes on a meaning that can be either being literal or figurative. The phrase "my 90 minutes person" utilizes compounding as a word-formation process. The concept comes from combining "my" (possessive pronoun) with "90 minutes person" (descriptive noun phrase). This creates a new unit to describe someone you spend a dedicated amount of time with.

c) "Item 11"

"Item" is a common English word, but "Item 11", literally, refers to the eleventh item on a list. In the Cameroonian context item 11 refers to the last activity on a program. This activity is usually eating time. Some respondents referred to this program as "a special moment". In the African context the last program on the list is usually considered as the most important program since, Africans have it as a culture that eating together is a symbol of love and unity. Scenes where lavish feasts are central to social gatherings and important ceremonies as seen in Achebe's "Things Fall Apart".

The terms "Item" (noun) + "11" (number) are compounded to give a new meaning. Semantic changes have occurred as the expression “item 11” which literally referred to the eleventh item on a program list to now mean “time for refreshment” (eating and drinking)

d) “Yahoo Boy”

As originated in Nigeria or other West African countries with a significant online presence is a reference to early email scams using Yahoo services or a general term for online fraudsters. It is a derogatory term for an internet fraudster who scams people online. The word formation process involved is compounding - "Yahoo" (possibly a brand name) + "Boy" (noun). The term "Yahoo Boy" exemplifies the fascinating phenomenon of semantic change within language (*Akmajian et al., 2010*). While its origin likely stems from a connection to the Yahoo internet company, its meaning has shifted significantly in West African contexts (*BBC, 2019*). Today, "Yahoo Boy" has become a derogatory term referring to a young internet fraudster who scams people online (*BBC, 2019*). This semantic change reflects the evolving nature of language, where words adapt to represent new realities and social issues. The specific reasons for the association with "Yahoo" remain unclear, but it highlights how language can morph and take on new meanings based on its usage within a particular cultural context.

e) “24/7”

Early 20th century, emerging from business and military contexts ‘24/7’ is a shorthand for "twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week." Indicates continuous operation or availability. **Word Formation: Compounding** - "24" (number) + "/" (slash) + "7" (number). "24/7" is a well-established term with a clear origin and formation process, reflecting a need for concise communication in business settings. In the Nigerian context, 24/7 means always and round the clock. In a popular Nigerian gospel song titled “*Obinigwe*” in his lyrics he says;

“24/7, every day you came,

You came through for me,

I had no essence, I had no meaning

Lord, you showed up for me”

To further explain the meaning of the expression 24/7 as used in the song, the singer expresses his gratitude to his God for always coming through for him.

Question 25: How would you explain these commonly used expressions; “IT’S GIVING”, “LOW KEY”, and SIDE EYE”

Question 26: How would you explain these commonly used words/ expressions “THAT’S ON PERIODT”, “PLUG”, “LIT.”, “DRAMA FREE”, “FANBASE”, and “DOPE”

Questions 25 and 26 are analyzed and presented jointly as they had to do with commonly used words/ expressions. The questions given to respondents were exercises that made them define the listed expressions in their context, and according to how they understood the expressions. Some of them gave definitions, some gave explanations, while others gave sentences that explained the expressions. The definitions were grouped and summarized, in order to avoid repetition or presenting bulky data. For a few words/expressions, some respondents responded “NONE” while some respondents responded adequately which made up for the inconsistency of others.

Table 24: *Commonly used neologisms*

Word	Number of respondents	Meaning of word/expression
It’s Giving	8	it’s delicious(food), its beautiful(dressing)
	2	It's productive
	8	"It's giving" - This phrase is commonly used on social media to describe something that is currently happening or being shown. It can be used to express an opinion or
		interpretation of a situation or item. For example, if someone posts a photo of their outfit on social media and another person comments "It's giving summer vibes," they are saying that the outfit gives off a summery feel.

	9	Very good
	8	Moving smoothly
	7	It's giving has different meanings based on how you say it, it can be used when something is done right, it can be used to attribute something to a negative aspect e.g. 'it's giving helpless'
	2	It's working
	2	it's amazing, gracious
	4	it's succeeding
Low key	1	lay low so a situation can die
	1	Low key" - This phrase is often used to describe something that is done in a subtle or discreet manner, without drawing attention to itself. For example, if someone says "Mary Ann is on low key," they are saying that she (Mary Ann) is secretly or quietly living a life without notice or attention.
	12	Lying low
	8	not too exposed
	8	Keeping it simple or private
	8	just there, without seeing or receiving no attention
	1	Low key means you are living u see the grid, you basically are minding your business and letting the world mind theirs. Most at times it is used when people have no motivation money available to party and catch fun
	2	positive acknowledgment, or complement
	2	Almost giving up
	3	low-key not attracting attention
	12	Very simple

	2	Be private
Side eye	1	used to correct people or frighten in certain situation
	9	Side eye" - It refers to a facial expression or gesture where someone looks at another person or something with a side glance, usually in a skeptical, disapproving, or suspicious manner. It can be used as a non-verbal way to express doubt, disbelief, or annoyance towards someone or something.
	1	Stealthy
	7	Glance
	2	Doubtful
	13	gazing someone in a disrespectful way
	6	Side eye is in fact a way of looking at someone that inflicts fear or brings attention or causes adjustments
	4	not reality in what you just said
	6	You give someone a side eye when there is no truth in what they said

Table 25: *Commonly used expressions*

Word	Number of respondents	Meaning of word/expression
That's on periodt	2	"That's on periodt" - It is a slang term that emphasizes a point or statement being made. It is often used to show strong agreement or affirmation. It can also be seen as an extension of the phrase "that's on period," with the extra "t" added for emphasis.
	3	I rest my case

	4	it's on the right time
	18	what I have said is final
	6	That's on periods means what you said or another person said is valid and final
	10	They are used as slangs aunty for example that's on period is to say I go no further it's a final stop.
Plug	6	trustworthy person, company or boutique
	8	"Plug" - It refers to someone who can supply or provide something, usually something desirable or of value. It is often used to refer to a person who can connect you with goods, services, or opportunities. For example, a drug dealer might be referred to as a "plug."
	10	Reference of a service provider or a good service
	3	A Plug is someone supplies you with vital information or supplies you with goods.
	8	reliable Source
	3	Plug, my type my taste
	5	to advertise or to publicize
	15	A plug is someone you can trust to help you with a particular thing
Lit	13	"Lit" - A term used to describe something that is exciting, fun, or high-energy. It can also mean something that is excellent or impressive. For example, if a party is described as "lit," it means that the party is lively and enjoyable.
	9	Literature
	16	filled with much light
	19	Lit means something is very nice
	3	cool and real

	1	In French “lit” means bed
Drama Free	2	Drama free, is being free from all crazy <i>wahalas</i> (Nigerian pidgin slang to mean trouble)
	24	"Drama free" - A term used to describe a situation or person that is free from conflict, tension, or unnecessary drama. It implies a sense of peace, tranquility, and harmonious interactions
	8	Drama free just means staying out of trouble
	2	Drama free means having a simple character
	5	Someone who is drama free is a calm and gentle person
	8	Drama free is an adjective used to describe someone who likes
	2	staying out of trouble
	3	Correctly done
	3	Someone who cannot act in a drama movie
	1	A very straight forward person
	1	Someone who is drama free is someone who is mostly playful, free and jovial
		No social media wahala or people wahala
Fan Base	32	fans of someone
	6	Followers of someone who creates content on social media
	1	"Fanbase" - Refers to a group of loyal fans or supporters of a particular individual, group, or product. Fanbases are often dedicated and enthusiastic, actively engaging with and promoting what they are fans of.
	8	people who enjoy watching you do something
	5	a group of fans for a particular sport, musical group,
	4	Fanbase are a set of people who are fans to someone

	2	People who like support and are entertained by what a star does
Dope	29	"Dope" - It is used to describe something that is cool, impressive, or excellent. It can be used to compliment someone or something that is seen as stylish or of high quality.
	6	Dope has to do with someone being or looking stupid like the way rascals dress.
	5	Dope means it's good or it's fine
	8	Dope meaning high class
	8	It means good
	2	when you say dope, it simply means good and vibrant

These expressions are thoroughly analyzed in subsequent section which has to do with the presentation of the data gotten from social media. The meaning of the expressions according to respondents are presented in the table above. responses with similar idea or meanings were summarized while some were simply copied and pasted. The frequency of usage is also given in the table above. the expressions “Its Giving”, “Low Key”, “Side Eye” “That's on Periodt”, “Plug”, “Lit.”, “Drama Free”, “Fanbase”, and “Dope” have further been tested on social media by checking their frequency of appearance or usage.

Question 27: According to you what is the meaning of the expression “to be served breakfast”?

In question 27, respondents were asked to explain the meaning of the popular expression “to be served breakfast”. Some respondents gave the meaning as they perceived it from a giving end; serving someone breakfast, rather than from a receiving end “to be served breakfast by someone”. The responses are presented with the three age groups taken into consideration.

Table 26: *Meaning of the expression “to be served breakfast”*

Age group	Number of respondents	Meaning of word/expression
45 and above	2	To make breakfast available for someone
	5	On a normal context it will mean being given the meal breakfast so you can eat
	2	To be served the first meal of the day which is breakfast
	3	To be invited to have breakfast
	2	To break up expectedly with your partner. Is this the breakfast you’re going to serve?
	5	Meaning breakfast will soon be served, it’s still in the process to be served
35-44	2	It is often used in the context of someone being humiliated in a relationship. That is someone receiving a break-up.
	7	When someone say you were served breakfast it means you had a breakup with your partner
	3	To receive some kind of bad news or heartbreak from someone you love
	1	Breakup a relationship against my wish
	1	Emotional rupture
20-34	2	Disappointed
	6	Experiencing betrayal from your boyfriend
	1	Catching your boyfriend cheating on you
	4	Deception in a relation
	3	To be betrayed, cheated on, dumped
	4	But in a second context, it means someone broke up with you

Looking at the data presented above, respondents who feel between the age of 45 and above explained the expression as to mean “a meal of the day”. Out of 20 respondents who fell between this age group, 18 of them had little or no idea about the semantic changes that have occurred with this expression. This shows some level of difficulty of unintelligibility they encounter with the expression. Respondents of this age group are not so much actively involved on social media and this slang is more popular amongst the Gen-zs. Respondents who fell between the age groups 20-34 and 35-44 said that the expression means to be cheated on, dumped, or to experience heartbreak from a partner in an erotic relationship.

In summary, 66% of respondents understood the and are versed with the semantic changes that have occurred with the expression, while 34% are yet uninformed about the changes that have occurred. Out of 66% of respondents who defined the word as relating to a relationship breakup, just 3% of them were adults of 45 years and above. One would interpret this by concluding that older adults experience difficulty in understanding novel words and expressions and this can lead to mutual unintelligibility between them and younger adults.

Question 28: Which word/Affix can you attach to each of the following words? “Boss”, “Baby”, “Slay” and “Runs”

Respondents were asked to attach any word to the words that were listed. This was intended to get possible neologisms that could be created as a result of compounding. For this question, 37 respondents gave responses, some gave partial responses by attaching an affix to 1 or two of the words, some totally ignored the question while others responded “none” or “nothing”, probably due to the challenging nature of the question. Some respondents instead gave relatable meanings of the words rather than attaching affixes to the word while others gave words that were not attachable to the words, but rather separate wholes. Relevant information was meticulously selected, and responses that did not align with the aim of the exercise were trashed. However, we worked with the few who gave responses and repeated responses were simply merged. The data we collected is presented in the table below.

Table 27: Word/Affix on neologisms

Number of respondents	Word	Word+ affix
12	Boss ----- Baby----- - Slay ----- Runs----- -	Boss man Baby girl Slay mama Guns boy
20	Boss ----- Baby----- - Slay ----- Runs----- -	Boss baby Baby boy Slay queen Runs girl
5	Boss ----- Baby----- Slay -----	Bossing Babying/ baby doll Slaying

Question 29: Which lexical categories do you believe undergo the most significant semantic changes?

Table 28: Lexical categories undergoing semantic changes

Age Range	Percentage	Adjectives	verbs	noun	Adverbs
20 - 34	33.33%	7%	11%	15%	0%
35 - 44	33.33%	8%	12%	13%	0%
45+	33.33%	10%	10%	13%	0%
Total	100%	25%	34%	41%	0%

From the table above 34% of respondents mentioned “verb” as the lexical category that has undergone the most significant semantic change. 25% mentioned “adjectives” while 41% mentioned “Noun”. It is relatable that a noun, being the name of a person, place, animal, thing, or idea/concept was mentioned by the majority of the respondents. This gives us a glimpse into one of the factors influencing the adoption and creation of neologisms.

One of the factors influencing the creation of neologism is the emergence of social media and in order to be able to explain actions, concepts, and things on this media, neologisms emerged. Nouns explain concepts, verbs explain actions while adjectives describe actions. For example, the creator of TikTok needed a name for his app, so he named it TikTok. Then individuals who were actively involved in creating TikTok content are called Tiktokers. Thus, the need for expressions/ or meanings to fill a gap in the language influenced the creation of novel terms.

Question 30: Can you recall any instance where specific events or phenomena influenced the adoption of neologisms (new words/ new meaning/ new expression) in your social or professional circles? If yes please narrate.

Table 29: Knowledge on factors influencing the adoption of neologisms

Age Range	Responses		Percentages	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
20 - 34	8	12	13%	20%
35 - 44	7	13	12%	22%
45+	6	14	10%	23%
Total	21	39	35%	65%
	60		100%	

35% of respondents agreed to recalling instances where a particular phenomenon influenced the creation or adoption of a neologism. Out of 35% that responded “yes” this question, a few managed to narrate the particular instance. Some respondents gave answers that totally deviated from the

core question. A respondent said, “I will never allow that, because most new words are evil and are formed with evil intentions”. Their narrations are provided in the table below.

Table 30: *Instances for the adoption of some neologisms.*

Word	Narration/ instance
<i>Knack</i>	the new sex cultures have produced the word " <i>knack</i> " in African English
Covid 19	One specific instance where specific events influenced the adoption of neologisms in my social circle was during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the pandemic causing significant changes in our daily lives, there was a rapid emergence of new words and phrases related to the virus, lockdown measures, remote work, and social distancing.
Zoom Fatigue	One neologism that became widely used was "zoom fatigue," which refers to the exhaustion and burnout associated with long hours of virtual meetings and video calls. This term quickly gained popularity as more people transitioned to remote work and online meetings due to the pandemic.
Amba Fighters	Since the outbreak of the anglophone crisis, some words have come to life like Amba fighters meaning separatist fighters, groundnuts, and bitter cola which means "bullet"
Slay/ Hot	Whenever the girls and I have to go out we compliment ourselves with words like ‘slay baby slay ‘or you look ‘hot’

The instances of the creation of neologisms as narrated by respondents brought out socio-cultural factors that influenced the creation and adoption of neologisms. One of the aims of this research is to examine the socio-linguistic factors that have influenced the creation or emergence of neologisms. From the narration of some respondents, we gathered that some factors that have influenced the creation of neologisms are; the new sex culture, which influenced the creation of the word “knack” in African English. Another is the coronavirus pandemic that influenced the emergence of the phrase “covid 19”.

Social media also influenced the creation of the term “zoom fatigue” to mean tiredness that resulted from being too engaged in online activities such as video calls and texting. Another factor is the anglophone crisis in Cameroon that resulted in the creation of new words/expressions/meanings. neologisms like “*Amaba boys*” to mean the separatist fighters and “groundnuts” which means bullet.

4.3. Data Presentation and Analyses of Social Media Observation

Observations of users’ interactions on TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook were made. In alignment with Labov’s observer’s principles where he says that formal interviews can alter the very results. Comments, posts, and interactions on these chosen platforms were recorded. These slangs/neologisms are presented below in a frequency distribution table.

Table 31: *Neologisms from social media (backronyms)*

Neologisms	Comment/Caption/Message	Context	Frequency	Meaning
GRWM	“GRWM” as I dress exactly like my husband to follow him on a brunch date”	A popular content creator on Facebook posted a get ready with me video (GRWM) where she dressed up and made up in front of the camera	23	The phrase “GRWM” means get ready with me. Content creators usually use this as a video caption
OMG	“OMG! I am so sorry you have to go through all that, it’s so pathetic but then, it is well...”	A lady on Facebook explains what she went through in the hands of her doctor. She captions the post “How I got abused by my doctor”	27	“Oh my god” is an exclamation variously expressing disbelief, frustration, excitement, or anger.

LOL	“ Lol I don’t do her kind of movies-same story line, same faces, same buildings, same sound track, we are tired....”	An actress posted a shot from her movie and someone commented that they do not like her kind of movies. LOL as the person uses it means no hard feelings and that they are just expressing their personal opinion about the actress’s kind of movies.	29	it means “laugh out loud”, and “lots of love” lol is mostly used to indicate smiling or slight amusement or a light mood
ASAP	“So many girls need to do this, ASAP . Thank me later”	A Facebook content creator posted a video where she was explaining a ritual procedure for attracting Goodluck. She captioned the post “so many girls need to do this ASAP	32	As soon as possible. For when you need something, right now. According to her, many girls need that ritual in order to attract Goodluck into their lives as soon as possible
GOAT	“ GOAT meets GOAT , Cristiano Ronaldo just shared photos of him having a nice time with legendary Cameroonian martial artist Francis N’Gannou”	A popular Facebook blogger reposted photos Chritiano Ronaldo had shared of him and Francis N’Gannou. This blogger captioned the post “GOAT meets GOAT....”. so according to him two people who are the greatest of all times finally meet.	19	"G.O.A.T." is an acronym used to call someone or something the "greatest of all time," according to Dictionary.com. It is pronounced "goat" like the animal.

MOG/ WOG	“Dear MOG/WOG improve on your vocabulary, stop quoting “Apostle says.... I didn’t come to you with eloquence	A Facebook user posted that men of God and women of God should improve on their eloquence by learning new vocabularies rather than backing up their inadequacies.	23	"Man of God," and “woman of God” emphasizing a person's commitment to a religious or spiritual calling
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The table above presents 6 backronyms that were observed on social media. The observations obtained from the three platforms were joined together. The frequency of the usage of these backronyms were recorded. The table presents backronyms, unlike most neologisms which are formed organically through language use, backronyms are deliberately constructed. They take an existing acronym (an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of words) and invent a phrase that spells out those letters. Even though the letters themselves are not new, backronym creates a novel phrase with a specific meaning. Backronyms can become widely recognized and even influence how people understand the original acronym. Some learned adults did not know the original meaning of "GOAT," but the backronym has become relevant in the online space.

Table 32: Social Media Neologisms (expressions/phrases)

Neologism	Comment/ caption/ post	Context	Frequency	Meaning
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Its giving	“You definitely can’t be my makeup artist what kind of makeup is this? Madam, it’s not giving at all”,	A popular makeup artist posted a makeup tutorial video on TikTok. Another user commented, “It's not giving at all”. This comment got 68 replies. According to this user, the makeup was not good enough, like, it was not giving.	17	"It's giving" is a slang phrase used to convey that something is exuding a particular vibe, style, or energy. It's often used in a complimentary way, but can also be used ironically or humorously. A noun can also be attached to the expression. In that case, the
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	“The silence after; “It’s giving senior”. ”	The second phrase was the case of a British girl who had a clash with a host in a tv show. She made a mockery of the host’s shoe by saying “It’s giving senior, meaning she was wearing an old-fashioned shoe. This video had over 5m views with millions of likes and thousands of comments. Most comments highlighted the remark she made about the host S shoe.		noun will play the role of an adjective
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Wife material	<i>“This woman na case. 1000-yard wife material”</i> <i>“A very good wife material well-done”</i> <i>“As a proper wife material (laughing sticker)”</i>	A popular Nigerian reality content creator who posted a sarcastic video of the wifely chores she will do when her inlaws visit. According to African in-laws a potential wife must perform difficult and stressful task in order to be a “wife material” This video recorded about 500k likes and 20k comments.	11	The term "wife material" used on social media describes someone (typically a woman) who possesses qualities considered desirable in a longterm partner, potentially leading to marriage.
To serve breakfast/ To be served breakfast	<i>“U see that relationship I was keeping private; they have served me breakfast I’m</i>	A popular Facebook user posted a picture of himself after a breakup. According to him, he didn’t expect his partner to break up with him in the manner she did. He explained that he had been served breakfast, so he was	21	It is often used in the context of someone being humiliated in a relationship. That is someone receiving breakup news from your partner. However, a breakup sometimes generally means
	<i>in pains, someone should please momo me”</i>	heartbroken, he experienced a heartbreak		receiving unexpected bad news.

The weekend is weekendi ng	“I fell in love with this song yesterday, hope the weekend is weekendi ng at your end? <i>Abeg who done cook achu?</i> ”	A WhatsApp user made a status update of a picture of her relaxing and having fun at home during the weekend. She captioned it “hope the weekend is weekendi ng at your end. Since the weekend is a day off work for most people it is usually meant for relaxation and catching of fun. Weekend i ng is used to describe the characteristics of a weekend	18	The weekend (noun) is weekendi ng (ing) is a new sentence pattern used to talk about the characteristics of any noun in question. We also have commonly used phrases like “the wig is wiggi ng; the dress is dressi ng”
That’s on peroidt	“Stop feeling guilty for outgrowing ppl. It’s a part of life and that’s on peroidt”.	A popular TikTok creator who became a transgender posted of video of him/her looking like a man. He captioned the video and ended the caption by writing “and that’s on peroidt” this means that he needed no one’s opinion about his new look as a male	19	Essentially, "that's on peroidt" means: “You can't argue with this.” It conveys strong conviction about the preceding statement. "This is the truth." It expresses a belief that the point being made is undeniable. “The conversation is over.” It suggests that the speaker has the final word and doesn't want further discussion.

The table above presents data that was gathered from social media. The data has to do with expressions that are commonly used on social media as observed. Looking at the data, there is a prevalence of informal language, local languages, inflected spellings, and the use of emojis. The exact comments, captions, and posts were extracted from social media, the context was explained in order to understand the meaning.

Table 33: Social Media New Words and New Meanings

Neologism	Comment/ caption/ post	Context	Freq uency	Meaning
Slay	“6k all original, Douala made 3500 all qualities are good <i>na your money di talk</i> , slay according to your budget”	An online vender posted a gown for sale in her WhatsApp group with this caption. According to her everywoman can slay within her budget. The pidgin expression “ <i>na your money di talk</i> ” means slaying depends on your money		"slay" is a slang term used to express extreme approval, admiration, or success. It's a way to say someone is doing something exceptionally well and deserves recognition. It could be used as a noun when compounded with queen “slay queen”
Yahooversary /payoneerve rsay	”happy Yahooversary” “happy Payoneerversary”	Yahoo and Payoneer made an update on Facebook wishing its users happy anniversary for using their app one year in a roll	17	Yahoo+anniversary which gives “Yahooversary” meaning the anniversary of Yahoo. “Versary” could be blended to any noun to mean anniversary
Pleasureship /situationship	“she is pregnant for him... from pleasureship to situationship. <i>She never see anything</i> baby	In a WhatsApp group chat where singles share their dating experiences, someone was sharing a story of a girl who because she knew that a man was rich, decided to get into a pleasureship with him	18	Pleasure +relationship which gives pleasureship. A "pleasurship" is a non-committal casual relationship where emotional attachment is not a priority. A situation ship is a term used to describe a
	mama loading...	which later on led to a situationship because she became pregnant. So she had to stay with the man just for the sake of the baby		complex or unclear romantic involvement.

Akara/ puffpuff	“akara cassava banana for business or home consumption”	A food vendor on Facebook posted a yummy picture of <i>akara</i> that was just made and captioned the post		Cameroon and Nigerian local street food commonly taken as breakfast. Akara is made from beans, corn or cassava and puffpuff is made from weed flour
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The table above presents new words whose frequency and usage on social media has been observed and recorded. Some of these words were borrowed from local languages while others were coined through blending and compounding. The table also presents semantic neologisms; old words that gained new meanings. The meaning of the word and the context of usage is explained for an understanding of the meaning.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a comprehensive analysis of the data collected through questionnaires and social media observations. By examining both quantitative and quantitative responses from insights gleaned from social media platforms, we have gained valuable insights into the emergence of neologisms in social media communication. These findings illuminate the factors that contribute to the creation of neologisms without and within the social media space. The findings also illuminate the negative effects of the emergence of neologisms on learned adults. While this chapter offered a detailed exploration of the data, some limitations are worth acknowledging. The observation on social media may have been susceptible to the fact that social media observations might not be fully representative of the broader population. Building upon the foundation established in this chapter, Chapter Five will delve into a detail presentation of findings. The chapter will also provide possible solutions to the negative effects of the emergence of neologisms, and suggest measures that could possibly mitigate the negative effect of the emergence of neologisms.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The findings of this research hold significant implications for understanding the cultural, social, and technological dynamics of the 21st century in relation to semantic changes. This chapter presents the implications of the findings. This chapter concludes on key findings that accomplish the aim of the research. The aim of the research was to examine social media neologisms that emerged in the 21st century, to discuss the socio-linguistic factors that contributed to semantic changes, and the emergence of neologisms, to discuss the negative effect of semantic changes, and to suggest possible solutions that could mitigate the effect. The nature of a neologism gives a glimpse into the factors that contributed to its emergence or creation. Respondents' level of awareness speaks a lot about the negative effect of the emergence of neologisms on learned adults. The summary of the work is presented in this chapter.

5.2. Results and Key Findings

This research was driven by a set of questions that guided the investigation. The findings reveal that semantic changes have occurred. This is seen in expressions like “slay” “hot” “dog” and “serve breakfast”. “slay” in early modern English meant “to kill by the sword” while in contemporary modern English (21st century) it means to look or perform in an attractive way. “hot” on the other hand in early middle English meant “high in temperature” while in contemporary modern English, it means “to sexually appeal”. Comparing the old meanings of these words to their contemporary meanings (semantic neologisms) proves that semantic changes have occurred. And these changes have led to the creations of novel terms and new meanings which are called neologisms.

The findings also reveal that semantic development has mostly occurred. This is because semantic neologisms have simply gained new meanings while their old meanings are still very much usable. So new meanings simply added while the old ones still stayed. This semantic development has led to many words becoming polysemous. This is seen in the expression “serve breakfast”. 66% of respondents explained the expression as to mean “a meal of the day” and “to mean a heartbreak from a relationship” while 34% explained the expression as to mean “a meal of the day”. The fact

that 66% of participants gave two definitions to the expression, shows that semantic development has taken place, as the old meaning of the expression is still very usable and understandable among English speakers

One of the research questions was “what are some of the 21st century social media Neologisms that have over time, gained popularity amongst English speakers. From the blend of the observation of social media interactions and carrying out a survey using the questionnaire, the findings reveal that some social media neologisms that have emerged and have gained popularity over time are; Akara/ puff-puff, Wife material, Hot, MOG/WOG, That’s on periodt , slay, GOAT, To serve breakfast/To be served breakfast, Akara/ puff-puff, ASAP, Drama free, Plug, Fan base, Lit, Item 11,*Mbanya*, My 90 minutes person, Gay, Low key, Dope, Side eye, Dog, Yahoo boy,24/7, It's giving, Pleasureship/situationship,LOL, Covid 19, Yahooversary/Payoneerversary, OMG, Boss baby, Runs girl, Amba fighters, Knack, GRWM Zoom fatigue, the weekend is weekending, and RIP. These neologisms that were gathers answers one of research questions of this research thus accomplishing an aim.

A significant key finding which aligns with one of the theoretical frameworks of this study is the prototype theory. Prototypical words have a central theme. In linguistics, prototypes are mental categories that represent the core meaning of a word, the most common or typical examples of a concept. For example, the research findings present words such as “hot”, “dope”, slay and “lit” are prototypes of the concept of “attraction/looks”

If a few neologisms emerge as prototypes for a single concept, it can have several interesting implications for language and communication: The emergence of multiple neologisms for a single concept suggests a competition for dominance within the language. Social media, with its rapid spread of information, can accelerate this competition. One neologism might eventually win out and become the standard way to refer to the concept, similar to how "tweet" became the go-to term for a short message on Twitter.

The existence of several neologisms for the same concept can also indicate the need for more nuanced communication. Each neologism might carry slightly different connotations or shades of meaning. The neologism someone chooses to use might reflect their social group or online

community. If a neologism becomes widely adopted, it can influence the meaning of the original word or related concepts. The constant influx of neologisms can contribute to the overall semantic change within a language.

While neologisms can enrich a language, the rapid emergence of multiple terms for a single concept can create temporary confusion, especially for those not familiar with online communities or new trends. This highlights the ongoing need for adaptation and understanding of the evolving nature of language.

5.2.1 Factors Influencing the Creation of Certain Neologisms

a) Socio-cultural

Another key finding answers the question “How have Socio-cultural and linguistic factors (Technological advancements, social media) and linguistic factors (Borrowing, Derivation, Compounding) contributed to the emergence of neologisms in the 21st century”. Social media as a social factor, provides a fertile breeding ground for the creation and dissemination of neologisms. Drawing facts from the questionnaire, one socio-cultural factor that influenced the emergence of certain neologisms is the covid 19 period and the anglophone crisis in Cameroon. During the Covid 19 pandemic, terms to describe the disease needed to be created.

Due to the advent of social media, Language contact has led to many words being borrowed. The terms "*puff puff*" and "*akara*" can be considered neologisms in specific contexts, particularly when used outside of West African regions. These words originate from West African languages and may not have been widely recognized in English before increased contact and exchange. Language contact is a significant driver in the creation of neologisms, introduction of new words, and enriching a language's vocabulary.

From the data collected from social media, West African terms "*puff puff*" and "*akara*." represent neologisms for English speakers outside of West Africa. While these words might hold established meanings within specific West African languages, their adoption into English, particularly when referring to the fried snacks themselves, signifies their status as new additions to the English lexicon. This phenomenon highlights how language contact, through trade, migration, or cultural exchange, fosters the borrowing of words to represent new concepts or realities encountered. These

borrowed terms, like "*puff puff*" and "*akara*," then become neologisms for speakers of the receiving language.

b) Technological factors

Talking about technological factors that influenced the creation of neologisms, one neologism that became widely used was "zoom fatigue," which refers to the exhaustion and burnout associated with long hours of virtual meetings and video calls. This term quickly gained popularity as more people transitioned to remote work and online meetings due to the pandemic. From observations of social media interactions, social media with limited character space contributes to the creation of short ways of expressing lengthy sentences. A catchy or humorous backronym attached to a popular hashtag or meme can reach a vast audience within seconds. This rapid spread can solidify the backronym in the collective consciousness. Online communities often engage in playful wordplay, and backronyms can emerge organically through user interactions. Discussions, comments, and memes can collectively shape a backronym for a trending acronym or abbreviation. The fast-paced nature of social media can lead to the creation of short-lived backronyms.

A backronym might be relevant to a specific trend or inside joke within a particular online community, and its meaning might not be readily understood by outsiders. In essence, backronyms leverage existing acronyms to create new and memorable phrases. Social media with usually character limitations for posts, and comments have influenced the creation of backronyms that could explain lengthy expressions in a shorter way. This playful manipulation of language exemplifies the creativity and adaptability of human communication. Also, the findings reveal that the need to express actions and concepts on social media contributed to the creation of novel terms that could conveniently and successfully express ideas.

c) Linguistic factors

Going to the linguistic factors influencing the emergence of neologisms, neologisms are formed by coinages. The need for efficiency or expressiveness might trigger the use of a specific word formation process to create a neologism. Some neologisms are formed through compounding, and blending. Compounded neologisms obtained from the questionnaire and social media included; "pleasureship", "situationship", "Yahooversery" and "Payoneerversery". Social media is known

for its informal language and users coin novel terms in a most playful manner, and these terms quickly spread and become popular.

The third research question was “What are the negative effects of the emergence of social media neologisms/slang on learned adults between the ages of 20 and above possible solutions?” what could be the effects of the emergence of neologisms? The emergence of neologisms within social media can have a wide range of effects, impacting both language itself and how we communicate online both online and onsite.

5.2.2. Negative Effects of the emergence of neologisms

a) Confusion and Misunderstanding: New words have led to confusion, especially to older adults who are not familiar with online communities or platforms where neologisms are prevalent. This has created communication barriers and has led to mutual unintelligibility. This is seen as adults between the ages of 45 and above had difficulty in explaining some neologisms in the exercises. For the expression “to be served breakfast” out of 66% of respondents that defined the word as relating to a relationship breakup, just 3% of them were adults of 45 years and above. One would interpret this by concluding that older adults experience difficulty in understanding novel words and expressions and are uninformed of the semantic changes that have occurred. This can lead to mutual unintelligibility between them and younger adults.

b) Erosion of Standard Language: The widespread use of neologisms, particularly informal ones, might be seen as a threat to established grammatical rules and formal language use. This can lead to concerns about the decline of language standards. In the social media sphere, there is the wide use of informal spellings. An example includes “that’s on periodt” The inflection of the word “period” shows informality and there are concerns about the falling standards of the English language.

c) Social Exclusion: The rapid evolution of neologisms can create a situation where certain groups, particularly older generations, struggle to keep up. This can lead to social exclusion and a widening communication gap. Findings reveal that respondents who fell between the age of 45 and above explained the expression as to mean a meal of the day. Out of 20 respondents who fell between this age group, 18 of them had little or no idea about the semantic changes that have

occurred with this expression. This shows some level of difficulty of unintelligibility they encounter with the expression. This means that if a GenZ would have a conversation with an older adult, they may be a language gap between them as older adults are socially excluded.

d) Misinformation and Bias: Neologisms can be used to spread misinformation or promote biased viewpoints. The informal nature of online communication can make it difficult to verify the accuracy or legitimacy of newly coined words. This misinformation is seen in the findings as some respondents defined “drama-free” as Someone who cannot act in a drama movie. The emergence of neologisms within social media is a complex phenomenon with both positive and negative effects. It's important to acknowledge the potential for language enrichment and adaptation alongside the challenges of misunderstanding and social exclusion. Understanding these effects can help us navigate the ever-evolving landscape of online communication and ensure that neologisms contribute positively to the way we connect and share ideas within the digital world.

5.2.3. Possible Solutions to the Negative Effects of The Emergence of Neologisms

Digital Literacy can be promoted by Integrating lessons on online communication and neologisms into school curriculums which will equip younger generations with the skills to decode new words and navigate the ever-evolving language of social media. Also, developing online glossaries or dictionaries specifically for popular neologisms and social media neologisms on platforms can provide users with a quick reference point to understand the meaning of commonly used neologisms.

Interactive games or quizzes that introduce neologisms in a fun and engaging way can encourage learning and bridge the gap for older generations who might struggle to keep up. Social media platforms could introduce features that encourage clear communication alongside the use of neologisms. This might involve pop-up definitions when hovering over unfamiliar words or options to translate neologisms into more standardized language.

Implementing community guidelines for online communities can establish guidelines that promote responsible use of neologisms, encouraging clarity alongside creativity to ensure everyone understands the intended meaning. Combating misinformation can be implemented. Integrating

fact-checking tools within social media platforms can help identify and flag neologisms associated with misinformation campaigns.

Promoting critical thinking. Educational initiatives can emphasize the importance of critical thinking and evaluating the source of information encountered online, especially when encountering unfamiliar neologisms. Also, users should be thought that understanding a neologism is understanding the context of usage. Understanding the context a neologism is being used will ease understanding and reduce the level of unintelligibility.

Platforms can provide multilingual support to bridge the gap for users who might not be familiar with the dominant language used online. Raising awareness about the potential for social exclusion caused by neologisms can encourage online communities to be more inclusive and mindful of using language that is easily understood by everyone.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution, and the most effective approach will depend on the specific platform and user base. The goal is not to eliminate neologisms but to promote responsible use and mitigate the potential for misunderstandings and social exclusion.

By implementing these solutions, we can foster a more inclusive and informed online environment where neologisms continue to enrich language while minimizing their negative impacts.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Recommendation for Further Research

This research has shed light on the semantic changes that have occurred in the 21st century in the online sphere which has resulted to the emergence of social media neologisms amongst English speakers. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that could be addressed in future studies to provide an even more robust understanding of this phenomenon.

One limitation pertains to the scope of neologisms identified. The social media landscape is dynamic, with new terms constantly emerging and gaining traction. This study, by its nature, offers a snapshot in time. A more comprehensive picture could be achieved by employing a wider data collection method, such as monitoring social media trends over a longer period or utilizing a larger corpus of online text. Additionally, future research could benefit from incorporating participant demographics beyond just age range. By including factors like location, socio-economic

background, and social media platforms frequented, a more nuanced understanding of how neologism usage varies across different user groups could be obtained.

Another limitation lies in the representativeness of the sample used. This study relies on data gathered from two primary sources: social media interactions and questionnaires. While these methods provide valuable insights, the participants involved in these data collection strategies might not accurately reflect the broader population of English speakers aged 20. Future research could benefit from employing a more targeted sampling approach to ensure the participants are representative of the population under study. This could involve employing stratified sampling techniques to ensure representation based on factors like region.

The depth of analysis applied to the neologisms identified also presents a limitation. While the study successfully compiles a list of social media neologisms and explores some of the potential factors influencing their creation, a more in-depth analysis of each term could provide richer insights. This could involve delving into the origin stories of these neologisms, examining how their usage varies across different social media platforms, and exploring potential evolutions in meaning over time. Further research could also investigate the role of specific social media features, like character limitations or meme culture, in shaping the creation and dissemination of neologisms.

The study acknowledges the negative effects of the emergence of neologisms on established communication patterns but does not explore these effects in detail. Future research could address this limitation by providing specific examples of these negative consequences. However, it's also important to acknowledge the potential positive impacts of neologisms. Further research could explore how these new terms contribute to the dynamism and expressive nature of online communication, potentially enriching the English language as it evolves in the digital age.

The study focuses on English speakers, neglecting the potential influence of other languages spoken in Cameroon. Social media platforms can be multilingual spaces, and neologisms might emerge from interactions between English and other languages. Future research could explore code-switching and the influence of Cameroonian languages on the formation and usage of social media neologisms.

The current analysis primarily relies on identifying and listing neologisms. Future research could benefit from employing more sophisticated data analysis methods. For instance, sentiment analysis could reveal the emotional connotations associated with specific neologisms. Additionally, network analysis could be used to map the connections between different neologisms and how they circulate within online communities.

The study examines neologisms at a specific point in time. However, the long-term impact of these neologisms on the English language remains unexplored. Future research could involve tracking the usage of these neologisms over time to see if they become more widely adopted or fade away. Additionally, investigating how these neologisms potentially influence the way established English words are used could offer valuable insights.

The questionnaire data relies on the written forms of neologisms. Future research could incorporate voice notes and audio recordings in order to capture intricate speech patterns such as tone, speed, and hesitations. Also, analyzing actual video interactions in the social sphere will capture forms of non-verbal communication such as grimaces, facial expressions, body language, and eye contact that contribute to meaning.

The study focused on a specific set of social media platforms for data collection; Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok. However, neologism usage and trends can vary significantly across different platforms. For instance, some platforms might be more image-based (e.g., Instagram), potentially leading to a rise in visual slang or the use of emojis as integral parts of neologisms. Future research could explore how platform-specific features and demographics influence the creation and dissemination of social media neologisms.

The study focuses on adults aged 20 and above. However, social media usage patterns and preferences can vary significantly across generations. Younger users might be more likely to adopt and create new neologisms compared to older demographics. Future research could explore these generational differences and how they impact the evolution and adoption of social media neologisms.

By acknowledging this limitation, we have demonstrated a well-rounded understanding of the complexities involved in studying social media neologisms. These limitations also highlight

potential areas for further exploration, paving the way for future research to build upon our findings and offer even deeper insights into this fascinating linguistic phenomenon. By uncovering the semantic changes within the English vocabulary, this study contributes to the broader field of linguistics, particularly in the area of lexical semantics and sociolinguistics. Furthermore, the research can shed light on the ways in which language adapts to contemporary circumstances and reflects the experiences and values of its speakers. The findings of this study will contribute to the field of linguistics and provide insights into the cultural, social, and technological trends of the 21st century through the lens of language evolution.

5.4. General Conclusion

This research has investigated the fascinating phenomenon of semantic changes in the English vocabulary during the 21st century, with a particular focus on the role of social media in the creation of neologisms. As highlighted in Chapter one, language is a dynamic system in constant flux, shaped by cultural, social, and technological forces. The 21st century, characterized by rapid advancements in technology, globalization, and evolving social values, has provided fertile ground for the emergence of new words and expressions, as well as semantic shifts in existing vocabulary. The exploration highlighted language as a dynamic system in constant flux, shaped by cultural, social, and technological forces. Chapter Two established the theoretical underpinnings for this investigation. It explored the concept of language change, emphasizing social media's role in fostering neologisms. The chapter examined various factors influencing the creation and spread of neologisms in the digital age. These factors included the need for efficient communication, as outlined by the Functional Load Hypothesis. Additionally, the chapter explored the influence of social factors on language use, drawing on Labov's Variationist Sociolinguistics framework.

Chapter 3 outlined the methodological approach employed in this research. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, strategically combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. This approach aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how social media neologisms emerge, evolve, and impact the English language. Data collection encompassed various sources, including social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok. Online dictionaries and Labovian sociolinguistic observation were also utilized to gather data. The analysis of this data, presented in Chapter Four, illuminates the intricate ways social media shapes

the evolution of language. This analysis reveals the most prevalent social media neologisms with high frequency and their meanings. Furthermore, the results shed light on the social, technological, and cultural contexts driving the creation and adoption of neologisms.

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between social media and semantic change in the 21st century. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how language continues to evolve in the digital age and the significant role social media plays in shaping the way we communicate and express ourselves. This research also paves the way for future investigations into specific semantic changes, the long-term impact of social media neologisms, and strategies for navigating communication gaps arising from their use. By continuing to explore this ever-evolving landscape, we can gain valuable insights into the future of the English language and the ways social media continues to influence how we interact and shape meaning in the digital world.

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APPENDIXES: QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a Master's student at the University of Yaoundé I, studying English Modern Letters. I am carrying out research on “A Study of Semantic Changes in The English Vocabulary: 21st Century Neologisms”. This research is aimed at examining some Neologisms (new words and expressions) that have been created. The completion of this research will award me with a Master’s degree in my field of study. I am soliciting you to take at most 10 minutes of your time to support this research by giving your response to the questions. In the course of answering the question please do not refer to any source, your point of view will be highly appreciated

PART ONE: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. (Circle  the correct answer)

NAME OF RESPONDANT	GENDER	AGE	STATUS
	Male	16 - 24 Years	Prof/ Dr/Lecturer
		25 - 34 Years	Mr/ Mrs/ Miss
	Female	35 - 44 Years	Rev./ Pst
		45 and above	Student

2. Are you an Anglophone or a Francophone Cameroonian? _____

PART TWO: AWARENESS AND USAGE OF NEOLOGISMS (NEW WORDS)

Instruction: Tick in the box corresponding to your answer

3. How often do you encounter new words or expressions in your daily life or work?

[A] Rarely [B] Occasionally [C] Frequently [D] never

4. Do you actively research for new words? Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Have you been present where English was spoken but you could not understand what was said?

6. On a scale of 1, (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), are you comfortable using new words in English to communicate in your daily life?

1	2	3	4	5

7. List 3 words/expressions that you think have recently become popular

No	Word	Old meaning	New meaning
1			
2			
3			

8. List 3 old words or expressions that have gained new meaning in the 21st century.

No	Word	Old meaning	New meaning
1			
2			
3			

9. List two (2) new expressions that are commonly used on social media

PART 3: SPECIFIC NEOLOGISMS

Instructions: Please consider the following list of neologisms, all of which emerged in the 21st century. (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unfamiliar, 2 being slightly unfamiliar, 3 being slightly familiar, 4 being averagely familiar' and 5 being 'very familiar').

10. How familiar are you with the word "DOG"?

1	2	3	4	5

11. How familiar are you with the word "GAY"?

1	2	3	4	5

12. How familiar are you with the word "SLAY"?

1	2	3	4	5

13. How would you define the word "SLAY" ----- 14. Can you provide any other definition for the word "SLAY"? -----

15. Traditionally the word "DOG" is defined as a four-footed mammal that barks.

Have you witnessed or experienced any instance where the meaning of the word “dog” has been used differently from its traditional meaning?

16. When you think of the word “DOG” what are the THREE words or phrases that come to your mind?

1	2	3

17. Can you use any of the words or phrases in a sentence?

18. When you think of the word “GAY” what are the THREE words or phrases that come to your mind?

1	2	3

19. Did you know that in Middle English, the word “Gay” meant “Joyful” and “Carefree”?

Yes ☐

No ☐

20. As used on social media, what is the full meaning of "GOAT" and “ASAP”

21. According to you, what is meant by these 5 local expressions. ” *Mbanya*”, “My 90 minutes person”, “Item 11”, “Yahoo boy”, “247”

22. How would you explain these commonly used expressions “That’s on perodt”, “plug”, “lit”, “drama free”, “fanbase”, “dope”

23. What is the meaning of the expression “to be served breakfast”

PART 4: FACTORS AFFECTING NEOLOGISM (THE CREATION OF NEW WORDS)

Instruction: Please tick the right answer.

24. Which factor do you think has the most impact on the creation and adoption of new words?

☐

Culture Social media

☐

education

☒

others please specify

25. To what extent do you think technological advancements influence the meaning of words over time?

Very much	Slightly	moderately	not at all

26. How much do you believe social media contributes to the spread of neologisms (new words/new meaning/new expressions)?

Very much	Slightly	moderately	not at all

27. Which lexical categories do you believe undergo the most significant semantic changes?

☐ Nouns
 ☐ verbs
 ☒ adjective
 ☒ adverbs

28. To what extent do technological advancements contribute to new word creation in your field of interest?

Not at all	Minimally	Moderately	Significantly

29. Can you recall instances where specific events or phenomena influenced the adoption of neologisms in your social or professional circles?

☐ Yes
 ☐ No

30. If yes, please narrate -----

ANSWERED SAMPLES OF GOOGLE FORM QUESTIONNAIRE

Screenshot of questions-8

A STUDY OF SEMANTIC CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY: 21ST CENTURY NEOLOGISMS (Responses)

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Timestamp	1. Title (Please choose the right status for you)	2. Gender	3. Are you an Anglophone or a Francophone Cameroonian? If you are not a Cameroonian, please state your nationality	4. Name of the Respondent	5. Age of the Respondent	6. How often do you encounter new words or expressions in your daily life or work?	7. Do you actively research for new words?	8. Have you been present where English was spoken but you could not understand what was said?
5	4/10/2024 10:15:49	Prof. Dr. Lecturer	MALE		Njeng Eric Sipinyu	45 and Above	Occasionally	Yes	No
6	4/10/2024 20:05:26	Mr, Mrs, Miss	FEMALE		Tahii	35 - 44 Years	Occasionally	Yes	No
7	4/12/2024 7:50:26	Mr, Mrs, Miss	MALE		W. E. Richardson	25 - 34 Years	Occasionally	Yes	No

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Screenshot of Question 9-17

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A STUDY OF SEMATIC CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY: 21ST CENTURY NEOLOGISMS (Responses) ☆ 📁 🗑️

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	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
9. Can you list 3 words/expressions that you think have recently become popular Answer Format: Word — Old Meaning — New Meaning	10. Can you list at least TWO 2 old word or expression that have gained new meaning in the 21st century? Answer Format: Expression — Old Meaning — New Meaning	11. Can you list two (2) new expressions that are commonly used on social media?	12. On a scale of 1 (very uncomfortable) to 5 (very comfortable), are you comfortable you using new words to communicate in your daily life?	13. How familiar are you with the word "DOG"? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not familiar at all and 5 being very familiar).	14. How familiar are you with the word "GAY"? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not familiar at all and 5 being very familiar).	15. How familiar are you with the word "SLAY" (rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not familiar at all and 5 being very familiar).	16. How would you define the word "SLAY"?	17. can you provide any other definition of the word "SLAY"?	
NO	NO	NO	3	5	5	5	To cut through something	to besmirch	
I am livestreaming.	popular—viral, fans—followers	It's trending, my followers.	1	3	5	5	Bad for family expressions and societies	Immoral and evil (slay means kill) true meaning	
Word: "Simp" — Orig	Expression: "Covidiot" — Expression: "Tweet" —	1. "FOMO" - An acronym							
Word: "Quarantine fifteen"	Word: "Cloud" —	2. "Ghosting" - Refers to	5	5	5	5	The word "slay" is a slang	Another way to define the	

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Screenshot Of Question 18-26

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Navigation: Gmail YouTube Maps

Document Title: A STUDY OF SEMATIC CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY: 21ST CENTURY NEOLOGISMS (Responses)

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Cell C7: MALE

	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
1	18. Traditionally the word "DOG" is defined as a four-footed mammal that barks. Have you witnessed or experienced any instances where the meaning of the word "dog" has been used differently from its traditional meaning?	19. When you think of the word "DOG" what are the THREE words or phrases that come to your mind?	20. Can you use any of the word or phrase in a sentence?	21. When you think of the word "GAY" what are the THREE words or phrases that come to your mind?	22. Did you know that in middle English, the word "GAY" meant "joyful" and "carefree"?	23. As used on Social Media, what is the full meaning of "G.O.A.T" and ASAP	24. According to you, what is meant by these 5 local expressions 1. Mbanya 2. My 90 minutes person 3. Item	25. How would you explain the following phrases 1. Its giving 2. Low key 3. Side Eye	26. How would you explain these commonly used words/ expressions That's on periodt— Plug Lit Drama free Fanbase
5	Yes	loyalty, security, friendship	He follows me like a dog.	Queer, deviant, different	Yes	greatest of all time and as soon as possible	1. co-wife, 2. close friend, 2. lunch/dinner, 3. flamboyant boy, 4. no	1. succeeding, 2. lying low, 3. stealthy	no
6	Yes	And animal	A dog is a domestic animal	Evil, immoral, wickedness	No	G.O.A.T—greatest of all time, ASAP—as soon as possible.	1. a person or a program, 2. someone you spend most of your time with, 3. special moments, 4. a scammer	1. it's productive, 2. almost giving up, 3. glance, 1	1. it's on the right time, 2. go in, 3. immediate, 4. correctly done, 5. followers, 6. satisfactory.
7	Yes	loyal, friendly, playful	The dog happily greeted	proud, love, equality	Yes	"G.O.A.T" stands for "Greatest of All Time"	1) Co-wife 2) Someone who is related 3) Food and drinks 4) A young man involved 5) Something that is available	1. "It's giving" - This phrase refers to someone who is confident or stylish. 2. "Low key" - This phrase refers to something that is not very noticeable or dramatic. 3. "Side eye" - It refers to a look that suggests suspicion or disapproval.	1. "That's on periodt" - It refers to a situation that is happening or about to happen. 2. "Plug" - It refers to someone who is promoting or advertising something. 3. "Lit" - A term used to describe something that is exciting or fun. 4. "Drama free" - A term used to describe a situation or person that is not involved in drama or conflict. 5. "Fanbase" - A group of people who are fans of a particular person or thing.

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Screenshot of Question 27-34

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A STUDY OF SEMATIC CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY: 21ST CENTURY NEOLOGISMS (Responses)

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C7 MALE

	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ
1	27. according to you what is the meaning of the expression "to be served breakfast"?	28.(a) Which factor do you think has the most impact on the creation and adoption of new words?	(b) If your respond in question 23 is OTHERS, please specify.	29. To what extent do you think technological advancements influence the meaning of words over time?	30. How much do you believe social media contributes to the creation and spread of neologisms (new words/new meaning/new expressions)?	31. Which word/Affix can you attach to each of the following words? 1. Boss ----- 2. Baby ----- 3. Slay ----- 4. Runs -----	32. Have you noticed a relationship between societal trends and the emergence of new words?	33. Which lexical categories do you believe undergo the most significant semantic changes?	34. To what extent do technological advancements contribute to new word creation in your field of interest?
2	url, unimpe...	Others (please specify)	evolution	moderately	very much	run/ing	yes	verbs	moderately
3	to be invited to have breakfast	Culture	no	Very Much	Very Much	none	Yes	Verbs	Significantly
4	Is this the breakfast you going to serve?	Others (please specify)	The elites cults that roll the system of the world	Moderately	Slightly	1. boss man. 2. baby boy. 3.slay him. 4. runs away.	Yes	Nouns	Moderately
5	It is often used in the con	Culture	Globalization	Very Much	Very Much	1. Bossy (affix: -y) 2. Babyish (affix: -ish) 3. Slaying (affix: -ing) 4. Runs (no common affi	Yes	Verbs	Moderately

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SAMPLE SCREENSHOTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION (COMMENTS, POSTS, CAPTIONS)

