

A MORPHO-SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA NEOLOGISMS

¹ Aminu Bashir, & ² Liman Amsami Alkali

¹ Department of English, Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare, Bauchi – Nigeria

² Department of General Studies, Mohamet Lawan College of Agriculture, Maiduguri, Borno – Nigeria

Abstract

New words in the early phase of their life cycle are called neologism. Neologisms are new words expressions, innovations in language. Neologism is more linguistically defined as any word or set of expressions formed according to the productive word formation rules in English. Social media is any means, platform or activities where humans shared stories and influenced others. Social media neologisms are words coined by the use of social media networks to ease communication or to suit user groups or age groups. This study intends to find out how these words are formed and what grammatical class do they belong to and how they are used syntactically. The study reveals that most of the social media neologisms are coined through semantic extension -the word exists and is given another meaning. Others are formed through blending and affixation. Syntactically, they belong to different grammatical classes and can be correctly used in sentences.

Key Words: neologism, social media, morphology, syntax.

Introduction

Linguist David Crystal once expressed his belief that the internet would be the trend to have the greatest impact on the English language in the 21st century, (Crystal, 2005). The use of internet and telecommunication technology have shaped the way we communicate, contributing to the development of a whole new variety that defines internet culture, this paper focuses on new word that have been created as a result of social network.

Social Networking Site (SOSs) such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube have attracted millions of English-speaking users who connect and communicate via internet using both computers and mobile devices. This has largely expanded the English vocabulary, ‘Apple’ and ‘Blackberry’ are no longer just fruits anymore and medical term ‘tablet’ now belongs to the social media register too.

Social Media

According to Junco *et al.* (2010), social media are collection of internet websites, services and practice that support collaborations, community building, participation and sharing. The growing dimensions of the use of social media among the youth of today cannot be overemphasized. Social media refer to internet and telecommunication-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings. It is a typical blend of technology and social

interaction of social value. It is a term used to refer to a category of networks that is based on user participation and user generated content and includes social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, social bookmarking sites like Delicious.us, social news sites like; Digg or Simpy, and other sites that are centred on social networking. It also includes mobile technology-based communication such as SMS and instant messaging commonly referred to as chat like Blackberry messenger, Yahoo messenger. Social networking is thus known as the act of interacting with other people in a social online environment through the use of a website or telecommunications network. Social networking sites describe these websites that enable users to create public profiles within that websites and form relationships with other users of the same websites who access their profiles, friendships are reviewed, relationships are fostered and even businesses are showcased to a very large audience through social media.

According to Lenhart *et al.* (2010) about 57% of social network users are 18 – 19 years old and have personal profile on multiple social media websites. In a study by Pempek, Yermoleyeve and Calvert (2019) the amount of time spent daily on social network sites varied greatly. However, an analysis of the data indicates that most participant spent approximately thirty minutes a day socialising mostly during the evening hours. Student spent an

average of up to forty-seven minutes a day on Facebook alone.

Neologisms

New words in the early phase of their life cycle are called neologisms. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a neologism as 'a new word or expression, innovation in language'. A more specific and by all means more linguistic definition would be that a neologism is any word or set expression formed according to the productive word formation rules in languages. Social media neologisms are coined in this manner created sometimes, it is not just the new form that has been created, but this innovation may also emerge in a new use already existing word (e.g. surf; meaning 'to browse the internet') such neologisms created through general mechanisms of semantic extension are called metaphors.

Syntactic Analysis

Syntactic Analysis is defined as analysis that tells us the logical meaning of certain given sentence or parts of those sentence. It is worth considering that rules of grammar should be considered in order to define the logical meaning as well as correctness of the sentence. Syntax is the branch of grammar that deals with the inner structure and general characteristics of sentence. The founder of syntax is generally considered to be the Greek grammarian A. Dyscolous.

Over the courses of the development of linguistic theory, the content and relative significance of syntax in the description of language have varied. In the early period of the study of linguistics, syntax was the study of the sentence and its parts, which were analysed according to the general concepts of logic (the study of the parts of a sentence). The categories of syntax, unlike morphological forms, were considered universal. Thus, syntax dealt with the meaning of a sentence, or the semantic aspect of speech. In contrast, phonetics and morphology studied the expressive aspects, this approach later led to be viewed that syntax was a branch of grammar that examined linguistic phenomena in terms of their evolution from meaning (function) to form since the content of a sentence was regarded as the subject of syntax. Syntax was sometimes equated with the method of synchronic analysis and contrasted to the diachronic approach to language, (Brame, 1978).

In the second half of the 19th century, interest awakened in the national character of languages, and morphology became paramount in importance, in connection with these developments, syntax came to be regarded as the study of the functions of classes of words or parts of speech in the sentences. The syntax

of part of speech was a continuation of morphology. However, syntax did not include phenomena characterizing a sentence as an integral unit; such phenomena were regarded as an unrelated supplement to the syntax of part of speech, (Brame, 1978).

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study is situated within the framework of the computer-mediated communication (CMC) theory because the neologisms under study evolved in large part due to online social networking (using computers). It investigates aspects of the aspect of word formation will investigate morphological processes and adopts for methodological reasons Parol Stakauer's onomasiology theory of word formation, using the word-formation component and lexical component within the theory. The word-formation component accounts for the creation of entirely new words while the lexical component accounts for the creation of neologism through semantic extension of existing words. The data is collected by carefully studying words used by social media users. This is because the entire study centers around social media.

Review of Related Literature

In his much, celebrated publication Fowler (1983), popularly referred "Modern English Usage" to as "the warden of English" states thus: "the gift of speech and a well-ordered vocabulary are characteristics of every known "language group". In accordance with Fowler's assertion, the English vocabulary has a systematic but dynamic landscape, words are the basic elements of every language; thus, they are the medium by which changes occur in language, the vocabulary is thus said to be first point of contact in the process of language change. The vocabulary of a language, the totality of its words, is also called its lexicon.

According to Murphy (2002), the lexicon can refer to:

- A dictionary, especially a dictionary of a classical language; or
- The vocabulary of a language (also known as lexis); or
- A particular language users knowledge of his/her own vocabulary (mental lexicon).

This study does not include Murphy's first meaning but the last two definitions are both relevant to the study of neologisms.

Stump (2005) in his study of word-formation defines the lexeme thus: "A lexeme is realised by one or more words (whether in the phonological or the

grammatical sense): the full system of words realizing lexeme is its paradigm.

Vocabulary Change in English

Dyscolus (2010) once wrote: the belief that a language ought to be fixed made stable and forbidden to modify itself in any way, was held by a host of scholars in the 17th and 18th centuries. They were more familiar with the dead languages, in which the vocabulary and usage was closed than they were with the living languages, in which there is always incessant differentiation and unending extension.

Truly, the development of a language was firstly grounded on the lexical changes, when the first linguistics saw that the older the text is, the less its languages has similarities with that of their own time. Any new epoch was accompanied by the introduction of new words denoting new objects and phenomena, Methews (1992), in his essay, The Idle Dream of Fixing a Language, wrote:

Despite the exacerbated protests of the upholders of authority and tradition, a living language makes new words as they are needed, it bestows novel meaning upon old worlds; it barrows words from foreign tongues; it modifies its usage to gain directness and to achieve better expression.

There will always be people who see language change as language decline but this study in line with Trask (1994) who takes the stand point that it is futile to resist language change.

Neologism

Dealing with such a lexicological phenomenon, as “neologism” requires first ‘cleaning out what exactly is and what the criteria to differentiate it among the multitude of lexemes are. Most frequently, a neologism is explained and defined as a new word, which seems quite clear and simple but the present researchers identify a problem as to which words can be regarded as new ones and which not. Niska (1998) assertion’s aims to solve this;

The problem lies in the relativity of the concept of novelty or newness as it depends on what periods is taken into consideration; for how long the words has the status of being new etc.

However, Ukranian philologist, Mostovy (1994) opines that there are no clear criteria of defining neologisms as a linguistics phenomenon”. As a result, we face a kind of ambiguity at the very beginning of neologism investigation. There are however a number of definitions offered by various linguists, which bring us some clarity in identifying neologism within the vocabulary of English.

Mostovy also writes that “a neologism is a linguistic unit that is created for the definition of a new notion”. Apart from the simple definition of a neologism as “a new word”. Mostovy’s definition seems shallow but is suitable for the depth of this research. He does not go deep into the features of the new words, but rather displays the main idea of a neologism that “part of the strength and vitality of English is its readiness to welcome new words and expressions and to accept new meaning for old words”.

Fosler-Lussier (2006) thus defines a neologism as “a new word or a new sense of a word”. It can come from any of the categories of word formation, but this study believes that social media neologisms are mostly blends and compounds.

The Dictionary of Linguistics Terms (2006) by Akhamanova provides a more detailed definition, where two kinds of neologism are distinguished. The first definition runs as follows: “A neologism is a word or phrase created for defining a new (Unknown before) object or for expressing a new notion”. The second definition says that, it is:

A word or expression that has not received the right for citizenship in the national language and thus is perceived as belonging to a specific and often substandard style of speech.

This research is concerned with the first definition, notwithstanding its shallowness like Mostovy’s definition. The second definition refers to some kind of barbarism or xenism and is more suited for broader studies involving the lexicalisation and institutionalization of neologism.

The Linguistic Encyclopaedia by Yartseva (1999) offers a broader definition stating that: Neologisms are words, word meanings or collocations that appeared in a certain period in languages or that are once used occasional words) in a text or speech act.

Here, the notion neologism expands beyond the framework of a lexeme, and includes new meanings and collocations, which might be conveyed by old

and known words. The researchers consider this approach more profound as it takes into consideration not only the fact of the appearance of a new word form, but also the changes of its internal and external organization. Examples are social media neologism such as friend, like, web, net and unlike which have assumed new meanings.

Dutch Linguist Marten Janseen (1996) offers five criteria for defining a neologism:

- i. Psychological – a neologism is a word that is perceived as new by the language community.
- ii. Lexicographic: any word that is in use among speakers of a language but does not appear in the dictionary is considered a neologism.
- iii. Exclusive definition: a word not appearing in a lexicon defines the stable language fragment, against the background of which the neologism cannot as new.
- iv. Diachronic definition: any word-form that appears in a recent general language text, and was not previously part of that language is a neologism
- v. Reference corporal definition: any word form, which appear in a recent general language text, and does not appear in an established corpus of that language is a neologism.

Finally, he offers his own definition that he named as an “extended lexicographic diachronic” one and which is stated as follows: “any word that does not occur in the morphological database derived from the dictionary because of its recentness is a neologism”.

It is worth noting that the term “neologism” on one hand, is absent from the index of such reference books on general linguistics as Bloomfield (1933), Harris (1951), Gleason (1961), Lyons (1977), but that, on the other hand, many lexicologists classify thousands of linguistics forms as neologisms.

Stump (2005) differentiates between “morphological neologism” created through derivation, compounding, blending, acronymic and borrowing and “semantic neologisms” resulting from:

- Expansion: extension of the meaning of a term by giving it a new meaning (i.e. a shift from concrete to abstract or from abstract to the concrete).
- Metaphor: the process whereby a word or expression is used to refer to something other than what it was originally applied to, or what

it literally means in order to suggest some resemblance between the two bring”

Thus, in treating the concept of neologism, it discerns a threefold nature of the new words and it would be quite reasonable to graphically depict it with the help of the following according to (Iska 1998).

The Types of Neologisms

1. A completely new word
2. A totally new meaning of an old word
3. A new ‘seme’ in an existing word

Social Media

Cummings (1995) wrote:

Whenever I am asked to give a brief history of social networking or social media, I start by letting the audience know that these activities and tools are not new phenomena that developed with the launching of sites like Myspace, Facebook and twitter. In fact, the history of social media goes back to humans gathering around campfires and sharing stories or painting history on cave walls.

There has been a general misconception that social networking began with the advent of Facebook and other social networking sites. Cummings assertion above shows that this is not so, social networking began when humans to communicate. In accordance, Crystal (2005) later stated that:

Consider any activities in the past where humans shares stories and influenced others can pretty much as social networking and the tools they used (words, paint etc.) were their social media. Smoke signals tribal drums, background bar because etc., were all social networking that used different types of social media.

Being connected to the world around us has never been easier and more accessible than it is today; but it did not start out that way. Harris (2000) reveals, “After the internet made it possible to reach people around the globe with merely a click of a button, social networking exploded into one of the biggest industries of our time”. The World Wide Web (www) created by Tim Berners – Lee in the early 1960s, is a collection of software and protocols designed to make it easier for computers to communicate across the internet.

Yates (1996) states that:

With the coming of the web, a number of communication functions known as social media, such as the online platforms and internet locations that provide a way for people to participate in conversations were developed for individuals as a way to connect and share content with friend and like-minded people. Social media typically include web and mobile-based technologies, which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organizations, communities and individuals.

Keplan and Heenleih (2011) described social media as having different forms, e-magazines, internet forums, web logs, social blogs, micro-blogging, wikis, social network sites (Facebook, twitter etc.) podcast, etc.". This study thus draws neologisms from all these forms of social media. Crystal (2005) considers these neologisms in the following statement;

What is truly remarkable is that so many people have learned so quickly to adopt their language to meet the demands of this new technology, and to exploit the potential of the medium to creatively form new areas of linguistic expression.

Wilkins (1991) traces the development of social networking since the advent of the email in 1971: When the first email was sent. The two computers were sitting right next to each other. 1978: the Bulletin Board System (BBS) exchanged data over phone lines with other users and the first copies of web browser were distributed through the USENET, an online bulletin board.

1994: one of the webs first social networking site, geocities, was founded. The concept was for users to create their own websites, categorized by one of the six cities.

1995: another site, the globe.com was funded and gave users the freedom to personalize their online experiences by publishing their own content and interacting with others that have similar interest.

1997: AOL instant messenger was launched, popularising instant messaging.

2002: Friendster was launched, pioneering the online connection of real-world friends.

2003: Myspace was launched: in the following years, many other social networking sites were launched: Tribe.net, LinkedIn, lassmaescome joiku, netlog etc

2004: Facebook was launched, first at Harvard, originally as a way of connecting U.S College students more than 19,500 students signed up within the first month.

2006: Twitter was launched, regardless of social media is used one certain thing is, it will continue to evolved and its used will expand; and in the process, it will become more integrated into the lives of language users, pulling the English vocabulary along with it as it evolves and expands.

Morpho-Syntactic Analysis of Social Media Neologisms

Neologisms collected for the study are morphologically and syntactically analysed in this section.

1. **Selfie:** (noun) a photography that one has taken of oneself. **Origin:** portrait photography has existed for then a century, but the popularity of selfies has surged in recent years.

She likes taking selfies

N V V N

2. **Twerk (verb):** dance to popular music in a sexually proactive manner involving thrusting hip movement and a low, squatting stance. **Origin:** Twerk could have been adopted from the word "work" ("werk") since dancers are often told to "work it". The extra "t" at the front could have been added to mean twist or twitch.

Just wait till they catch their daughters twerking to this song .

V

3. **tt; dr:** (acronym) short form for "too long; didn't read.

Origin: A with all things on the internet, it is a sin to ramble on and on as the attention span of its users are fleeting at best. "tt; dr" is community used in online discussion from to indicate that the post is just too wordy.

Example: A: I have sent the material, did you read them?

B: Tl; dr. It is used as an expression.

4. **Photobomb:** (verb) spoil a photograph by unexpectedly appearing in the camera's field of view as the picture is taken.

Origin: photobomb is known from the proliferation of uploaded photos to photo-sharing sites online, photobombing has since become a tradition.

Aliyu photobombed the new couple

V

5. **Blog:** (noun, verb) a type of website where you write your regular posts.

Origin: the word come from a blending of web + log. Exam "Aisha posted the posts onto her blog" (Akunne, 2012).

N

6. **Chatiquette (Noun):** social rules that have to be abided by when chatting with someone else on a mobile device.

Origin: a blending of chat and etiquette. Example: Terminating a chat without the other party is a breach of chatiquette (www.urbandictionary.com)

N

7. **Cyber-bully** (noun, verb): one who bullies another person with the use of electronic communication by sending intimidating or threatening messages.

Origin: affixation (the fixing of prefix "cyber" to noun-bully". Example: I avoid chatting with him because he is a cyber-bully (www.englishclub.com).

N

8. **Cyber-feminism:** (noun) a community on a social network with philosophies and sets of practise concerned with feminist interactions.

Origin: affixation (fixing prefix 'cyber' to noun 'feminism'. Example: cyber-feminism is broadly concerned with expressing and developing feminism in the context of online interactions. (www.livinginternet.com)

9. **Favourite (verb):** to mark an item as one of your favourites on a social networking site.

Origin: semantic extension (of the word favourite) "favouriting a picture means you like it" (www.digg.com)

10. **Friend (Mun, verb):** someone you regularly interact with on a social networking site.

Origin: semantic extension (of the word

friend) "Most of my facebook friends are people I have never meet face to face but I friended them anyway" (www.urbandictionary.com)

Other are: Hackton (N) an online event typically lasting several days in which a large number of people meet, usually on a social network, to engage in computer programming (Bleeding of Hack and Merathan).

Hashteq (noun) compounding of tash and tag hyper connectivity (C) affixation (prefix hyper to noun connecting). Jabox (verb) semantic extension. e.g. kindly inbox me your picture do not post them on my page: www.urbandictionary.com

Conclusion

Social network/media has become a source of neologism in English language. This had helped its development as it increases the vocabulary of English. The words are first used by a group of friends who later made it part of their day-to-day usage and then it becomes part of English vocabulary. All the words given as example can be grammatically used in speech and writing. Beside the aforementioned words, other abbreviations or acronyms have found their way into English vocabulary.

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