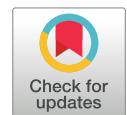


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The Influence of Social Media on Linguistic Practices and Communication: A Discourse Analysis of Language Use and Word Formation in TikTok Contents

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Abstract

Social media has become a significant component of individuals' daily lives due to globalization and swift technological advancements. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are utilized by billions of individuals in daily life. This leads them to function as an active communication tool. Owing to the constraints of vocabulary and time on social media tools, individuals often do not utilize English 'correctly'. This study investigated the evolution of language use and word formation on social media platforms over the past decade and assessed its influence on the social, cultural, and linguistic identities of individuals. The study analyzed 3 video coverages from TikTok sources using content and thematic analysis, encompassing posts and comments on TikTok as a social media platform. The data examined within the study revealed that individuals utilizing English in the digital realm tended to generate neologisms through various strategies to enhance mutual linguistic comprehension and expedite communication. It is clear that in the modern digital world, language and communication are changing and evolving. It is clear from results that factors such as communication efficiency, meaning construction through word contraction, and disdain for grammatical and orthographic rules all have a significant impact on the creation of new terms. It was found that social media platforms constituted an area that is effectively and actively used for word development.

Keywords

Linguistics · Word formation · Neologism · Social media · TikTok



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Introduction

Social media has become a crucial element of individuals' daily lives owing to globalization and rapid technical progress. Billions of users employ social media sites such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook in their daily lives. This results in social media platforms operating as a dynamic communication instrument. Most social media sites impose a word limit on individual posts, while short video platforms restrict content to a maximum duration of 1 to 2 minutes. Consequently, individuals communicate directly and employ acronyms, which inevitably leads to diminished attention span and cognitive engagement. Due to constraints on vocabulary and time, individuals often do not use English 'correctly.' Moreover, algorithms are designed to identify information that viewers find gratifying to propose such material. For example; specific terms, such as "killed" or "raped," are subject to censorship. Content creators navigate them using novel synonyms. For instance, "unalived" is employed in place of "killed," and "graped" is utilized instead of "raped." Moreover, pre-existing words acquire entirely distinct meanings as a result of social media. Billions of individuals from diverse languages and cultures concurrently engage on social media platforms, transcending linguistic and geographical borders in the globalized world. In other words, individuals who proficiently utilize multiple native languages to convey identical content on the same social media platform, hence facilitating the emergence of novel linguistic phrases due to the amalgamation of diverse languages.

Linguistic innovation is a primary element of social media's impact on language. Alterations in language and syntax have transpired in social media communication due to character constraints and the necessity for conciseness. The proliferation of memes and graphics has engendered a novel kind of communication within social media's visual domain. The utilization of memes has increased in popularity as a method of conveying comedy, sarcasm, and cultural references. Memes exemplify the emergence of novel linguistic phrases facilitated by social media, as they often depend on intertextuality and collective cultural awareness. Abbreviations and acronyms have grown ubiquitous on social networking platforms. Emojis and emoticons have become integral to digital communication, enabling users to swiftly and effectively convey nuances and emotions. Social media seems to be a rich environment for experimentation, the invention of new lexicon, and the alteration of existing terms. It provides a platform for those indifferent to syntax and grammatical norms, enabling them to be unusual, creative, and innovative while subverting the conventions of the English language (Jebaselvi et al., 2023).

This study aims to examine the progression of language usage and word production on social media platforms over the last decade and to evaluate its impact on the social, cultural, and linguistic identities of individuals. The research meticulously examines media coverage derived from TikTok content using content and theme analysis, including postings and comments on the TikTok social media site. It is significant for its addition to the greater discussion on social media and linguistic innovation. Social media tools are crucial in illustrating societal power relations and influencing linguistic trends. Comprehending how social media either reinforces or contests these patterns is essential for tackling linguistic novelties in our globalized society. This study aims to elucidate how social media platforms foster language innovation and to provide insights for critiquing and comprehending these processes. It seeks to enhance the understanding of emerging communication and word formation trends by emphasizing the necessity for a more inclusive and precise representation of shifts in individuals' language usage habits. The following research questions were formulated accordingly:

- How have language usage and word formation on social media platforms developed over the last decade?
- What are the emerging tendencies in communication and word formation processes on social media platforms?

Literature Review

The formation of new lexicon in a language is incessant, and English is notably inclined to augment its extensive vocabulary (Yule, 2022). The phrase 'word formation' is confusing in contemporary linguistics. In one use, the term is synonymous with 'morphology' and pertains to aspects such as affixation and reduplication in word formation. In its more often recognized definition, word formation denotes the generation of new lexemes within a certain language (Bauer, 2006). Due to its importance in linguistics, it is essential to delineate the fundamental processes of word formation. In the simplest term, the process of creating a new word is called neologism. Neologisms may arise through several mechanisms. A few prevalent approaches are as follows: borrowing (loan-translation), compounding (blending), clipping (hypocorism, backformation) conversion, coinage, acronyms, derivation (prefixes and suffixes, infixes), and multiple processes (Yule, 2022). A neologism is a newly created word or phrase, or a novel meaning assigned to an existing term. Neologisms are produced to articulate novel concepts or phenomena, frequently influenced by cultural, societal, and technological transformations. Neologisms exemplify the evolving character of language; fresh terminology is essential for articulating novel concepts and activities. These neologisms originate from several sources, including technological advancements, popular culture, and literature (Nikolopoulou, 2025).

One of the ways that language may develop new vocabulary through interaction with another language is borrowing. In borrowing, the terms acquired are referred to as loanwords. They are frequently nativized, indicating that their pronunciation, and occasionally their morphology, is altered to conform to the standard patterns of the recipient language (Doner, 2025). Being one of the borrowing ways, words or phrases that are reproduced as literal translations from one language into another are known as loan translations or calques (Backus & Dorleijn, 2008). Compounding is a process in which independently existing bases are amalgamated to create new lexemes. The components of a compound cannot be arbitrarily substituted with other words to differentiate them from other phrases. Substitutions in compounds alter their meaning (Biber et al., 1999, cited in Bérešová, 2022). Blending is a word-formation process that incorporates two or more source words and falls within the compounding category. At least one source word is shortened, but often there is considerable overlap between the source words. The front portion of the first source word and the latter portion of the second source word are the most common blending patterns (Grlj, 2022). Clipping denotes the procedure by which a lexeme (either simplex or complex) is abbreviated while preserving its meaning and remaining within the same grammatical category (Bauer 1983, cited in Park, 1988). Backformation and hypocorism are two ways that clipping can happen throughout the word formation process (Yule, 2022). Back-formation is the process or outcome of generating a new word through morphological alteration, generally by removing or replacing actual or presumed affixes from a lexical item, hence increasing the number of lexemes linked to the related root word (Crystal, 2011). On the other hand, hypocorisms, or hypocoristics, are colloquial variations of personal names employed to express affection for the individual they designate. They may manifest as a diminutive, but they can also arise from clipping, suffixation, or a mix thereof (Pérez-Hernández, 2024). Word conversion is a distinctive word creation event that entails a modification in the word class, function, and meaning of a specific lexical unit, without any alteration in its form through the addition or removal of derivational affixes (Jovanović, 1997). Coinage refers to a term derived from the frequent usage of a product name, subsequently evolving into a general term throughout society (Herlambang & Nurmala, 2022). Acronyms are a subset of abbreviations, specifically constructed from the first components of a phrase or word (Andriningtyas, 2022). The derivation method, specifically the affixal approach to word construction, involves the use of affixes that create base words through suffixes, prefixes, or a combination of both (Nasrullaevna, 2022). While it focuses on each word-formation process individually, it is feasible to identify the simultaneous application of multiple processes

in the production of a certain word. For instance, the term "deli" appears to have entered ordinary American English through the initial borrowing of "delicatessen" (from German), followed by the subsequent cutting of that borrowed phrase. When an individual states that issues with the project have snowballed, the term "snowballed" exemplifies compounding, wherein "snow" and "ball" merge to create the noun "snowball," which subsequently undergoes conversion to function as a verb (Yule, 2022, p.184).

The typical methods employed in word formation processes are elaborated upon in depth above during a theoretical linguistic review. Historically, numerous terms have been generated in the English language through these processes and have been actively utilized by communities. Nevertheless, due to the incessantly accelerating advancements in globalization and technology, digitalization and communication via digital technologies have become indispensable. These advancements unite individuals and civilizations across boundaries, irrespective of language, religion, culture, or ethnicity, and allow people from diverse backgrounds the ability to engage with identical information. Social media is unquestionably the most significant of these digital technologies. They are utilized daily by billions, facilitating instantaneous communication among individuals from many countries, languages, and cultures. It has become inevitable for individuals from many backgrounds to formulate strategies for establishing a unified social media lexicon and to enrich the classical language through the creation of new terminology. A study presented an analysis of six billion tweets to examine changes in word formation trends. The data indicated that in 2013, American tweets transitioned from a trend of innovative spelling to a trend of acronym development. The 140-character limitation of Twitter, along with the escalating volume of information disseminated on the platform, has been suggested as a primary explanation for this phenomenon. Secondly, the increasing vocabulary exhibited an S-shaped pattern characteristic of linguistic evolution (Grieve et al., 2015). The literature has numerous studies on word generation processes via social media applications. The findings of a study analyzing the Facebook comments and narratives of three participants revealed various examples of word-formation processes, including borrowing, coinage, compounding, acronyms, blending, clipping, inflection, and derivation which was interpreted by the researchers as that the vocabulary on social media can enhance language skills, particularly in English, with a specific focus on word creation (Prasita et al., 2022). Paramarta (2022) examined word formations and their usage motivations in social media communication among 109 participants from Indonesian, Balinese, and English linguistic backgrounds. The study identifies twelve categories of word formation utilized by the participants in their social media interactions. The newly created words are generally more succinct than their original counterparts. English predominates in language selection, succeeded by Indonesian and a limited number of Balinese terms.

There are six justifications for employing word formations: efficiency and brevity, demonstrating intimacy with peers, being contemporary, conveying clandestine messages for close friendships, and accommodating the constraints of available typing space. Nisa & Subiyanto (2016) evaluated 35 words from 11 Twitter accounts concerning the process of word formation. The procedures that transpired include derivation, blending, borrowing, clipping, and acronym formation, among which borrowing was the predominant strategy. A further examination of morphological processes previously analyzed within spoken and written discourse has demonstrated that students' social media communication leads to the creation of novel lexical items, as well as the utilization of symbols, Arabic numerals, and letters to denote morphemes or words employed in their daily interactions. Additionally, morphological processes, including compounding, blending, clipping, borrowing, abbreviations, and acronyms are found to be prevalent in the students' social media discourse (Gervasio, 2024). Rinche (2024) analyzed the emergence of new words on Twitter through the process of word formation, and found that five sorts of word-formation processes are identified on Twitter. They comprised derivation, abbreviation, blending, acronyms, and clipping. Among these categories, abbreviations constituted the predominant mode of word construction on Twitter. Another analysis (Blaženović

et al., 2024) examined fundamental concepts related to Internet-mediated communication and evaluated their impact on language usage. The study and debate revealed that certain methods are markedly more productive than others. Certain word-formation mechanisms proved to be significantly more prevalent than others. Abbreviations, conversions, clippings, and compounds appeared to be significantly more prevalent than mixes.

The literature review indicates that the frequency, habits, and strategies of individuals generating neologisms through social media and digital tools are a hot topic of research. In the digital age, it is crucial to undertake diverse studies by identifying distinct approaches for neologism-generating strategies on social media and digital platforms, thereby illuminating newly created language units and the strategies employed. This study seeks to clarify how social media platforms promote language innovation and provide insights for analyzing and understanding these processes. It aims to improve comprehension of developing communication and word creation trends by highlighting the need for a more inclusive and accurate depiction of changes in individuals' language usage patterns.

Methodology

This study employed the framework of Discourse Analysis (DA) to examine the progression of language usage and word development on social media platforms over the last decade and to evaluate its impact on the social, cultural, and linguistic identities of individuals. Discourse analysis often denotes a study methodology that scrutinizes linguistic material, including spoken or written texts, and occasionally other forms of material, as indicators of processes transcending the individual. Sociolinguists and numerous other scholars regard language as inherently linked to its social surroundings. They examine variations in language use, including speech and writing, that are associated with socioeconomic class, other social categories, specific activities, situations, roles, and purposes. This line of writing and research has evolved from the domain of 'linguistics proper' to examine aspects of language associated with social problems. Discourse analytic study includes examinations of the nuances of language variation across settings, the manifestation of social distinctions, and the processes by which children develop linguistic competence, as well as the relationship between that skill and identity along with social differences (Taylor, 2013, p. 2-3). The data for this study were obtained through a discourse analysis of three distinct social media posts made on the TikTok website. The neologism derivation strategies employed in three TikTok videos and their accompanying comments were analyzed in terms of word formation processes and classified according to these strategies. Each video material and the corresponding strategies employed in the comments are delineated separately. The material for discourse analysis was selected by the purposive sampling method as population sampling method where a researcher selects participants based on their existence in a target community, attributes, experiences, or other specified criteria (Stratton, 2024).

Findings and Discussion

The researcher identified that various methods, including abbreviations, exclamations, emojis, and figurative meanings, were employed alongside conventional word formation techniques in the creation of new vocabulary within social media language and communication, and these categories were incorporated into the data analysis.

Analysis of Video 1

Video 1 features a social media influencer known as Aliyah's Interlude presenting the song "It Girl".¹² Table 1 shows the word formation strategies in the commands written under the post.

Table 1

Word Formation Strategies in the Commands Written under Video 1

Word	Formation Process	Description
Y2K	Abbreviation	Year 2 Thousand Y stands for Year K stands for Kilo which also means Thousand
FR	Acronym	For Real "For real" essentially denotes the affirmation of a particular state or condition similar to statement "that is a fact for me."
TYSM	Acronym	Thank You So Much T stands for Thank Y stands for You S stands for So M stands for Much
LUV	Abbreviation	Love An unconventional spelling of the word "love"
YALL/Y'ALL	Blending	You+All "You all" is a phrase used to address a collective audience or a huge assembly of individuals.
ATE	Figurative Meaning	"Ate" is employed to indicate that "it's so really good."
IDC	Acronym	I Don't Care I stands for I D stands for Don't C stands for Care
SLAY	Figurative Meaning	"Slay" is employed to indicate that someone perceives something as "attractive."
YOU ATE	Figurative Meaning	"You ate" is employed to indicate that "you performed exceptionally well."
GIRLLY	Hypocorism	The word "girly" is employed to refer to a girl or woman in a playful manner.
FAB	Clipping	"Fab" stands for the word "fabulous"
UGHHH	Exclamation	"Ughhh" conveys a profound emotional intensity.
B4	Abbreviation	Before B stands Be 4 stands for Four which is similar to "fore" in pronunciation
OMG	Acronym	Oh My God O stands for Oh M stands for My G stands for God
UR	Multiple Processes Acronym + Clipping	You Are Y stands for You R stands for Are
ATL	Acronym	Above The Line A stands for Above T stands for The L stands for Line

¹The post is accessible via this link: <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNdDTq7qn/>.

²The video is posted on 23.10.2023 and accessed by the researcher on 19.06.2025.

Table 1 illustrates that users commenting on the content published on social media platforms employ diverse word formation strategies and generate neologisms. The first video evaluated for conversation illustrates the following word formation strategies ($n=16$) employed by the participants: acronym ($n=5$), abbreviation ($n=3$), figurative meaning ($n=3$), blending ($n=1$), hypocorism ($n=1$), clipping ($n=1$), exclamation ($n=1$), and multiple processes ($n=1$). The most commonly employed strategies were acronym ($n=5$), abbreviation ($n=3$), and figurative meaning ($n=3$), respectively. The acronym and abbreviation strategies utilize shorter forms of words, whereas the figurative meaning strategy employs specific phrases to succinctly convey expressions often articulated using lengthier terms. Those strategies might be understood as designed to establish a common lexicon and enhance efficiency in communication, owing to the typographic constraints of posts on social networking sites.

Analysis of Video 2

Video 2 features social media content shared by Anastassiya Yarotskova. In this video, a woman is holding a butterfly with exquisite wings. Upon the woman's utterance of "slay", the butterfly unfurls its wings.³⁴ Table 2 shows the word formation strategies in the commands written under the post.

Table 2
Word Formation Strategies in the Commands Written under Video 2

Expression	Formation Process	Description
THAT	Figurative Meaning	"THAT +" signifies becoming an emblem in a particular domain. You aspire to be that individual. Individuals aspire to emulate that particular individual. Similar to an icon.
IN ANOTHER UNIVERSE	Figurative Meaning	"In another universe" signifies that, although it may not exist in this reality, it is destined to occur in an other timeline.
WHO IS THIS DIVA 	Multiple Processes Figurative Meaning + Use of Emoji	"Who is this diva" expresses one's admiration for an individual. It is frequently accompanied by a purple heart emoji  .
THIS IS SO ... CODED	Figurative Meaning	"This is so coded" is a term utilized to indicate that something evokes a reminder of a particular somebody. It is also employed when the individual in question would reciprocate similarly.
UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT	Figurative Meaning	"Understanding the assignment" refers to comprehending "its intended purpose." It is also utilized to recognize an individual's endeavors.

Table 2 demonstrates that users commenting on content disseminated via social media platforms utilize word formation strategies and create neologisms. The second video analyzed for discussion demonstrates figurative meaning ($n=4$) and multiple processes ($n=1$) for word formation strategies. The examples illustrate that employing a term or phrase with other meanings is a prevalent practice on social media. Moreover, augmenting expressions using emojis constitutes an additional approach employed. This can be understood as initiatives and strategies aimed at establishing a universal language that facilitates communication and comprehension among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the digital realm.

³⁴The post is accessible via this link: <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNdDwpj7Y/>.

⁴The video is posted on 13.05.2025 and accessed by the researcher on 20.06.2025.

Analysis of Video 3

Video 3 features social media content shared by Flossybaby. In this video, a girl is constructing a snowman with her sister. She subsequently states that she merely requires a slight adjustment on the sides, to which her sister inquires if the snowman is female. She states, "I would never create a man." The sister responds, "He should improve himself." The Sister then states, "period."⁵⁶ Table 3 shows the word formation strategies in the commands written under the post.

Table 3

Word Formation Strategies in the Commands Written under Video 3

Expression	Formation Process	Description
PERIOD/PERIODT	Multiple Processes Figurative Meaning + Use of Emoji	"Period/Periodt" is employed to underscore the assertion. It is additionally utilized alongside the 🌟 emoji. Occasionally, the emoji 🌟 is utilized as a substitute for the written word.
ISTG	Acronym	I Swear To God I stands for I S stands for Swear T stands for To G stands for God
ASAP	Acronym	As Soon As Possible A stands for As S stands for Soon A stands for As P stands for Possible
SMH	Acronym	Shaking My Head S stands for Shaking M stands for My H stands for Head
IKR	Acronym	I Know Right I stands for I K stands for Know R stands for Right
IK	Acronym	I Know I stands for I K stands for Know
NGL	Acronym	Not Gonna Lie N stands for Not G stands for Gonna L stands for Lie
JK	Abbreviation	Joke J stands for Jo K stands for Ke
OFC	Acronym	Of Course C stands for Course
BC	Acronym	Because B stands for Be C stands for Cause

⁵The post is accessible via this link: <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNdDKFTyD/>.

⁶The video is posted on 18.02.2021 and accessed by the researcher on 21.06.2025.

Expression	Formation Process	Description
GN	Acronym	Good Night G stands for Good N stands for Night
GRWM	Acronym	Get Ready With Me G stands for Get R stands for Ready W stands for With M stands for Me

Table 3 also demonstrates that people commenting on content disseminated via social media platforms utilize various word construction techniques and create neologisms. The third video analyzed for conversation demonstrates the subsequent word construction strategies ($n=12$) utilized by the participants: acronym ($n=10$), abbreviation ($n=1$), and multiple processes ($n=1$). The predominant method utilized was the acronym ($n=10$). The acronym strategy employs abbreviated forms of words. This strategy is interpreted as creating a shared vocabulary and improving communication efficiency due to the typographic limitations of social media posts. The data in the table clearly indicates that utilizing word initials in sentences has become a prevalent technique of communication on social media.

Study results show conformity with other research in the literature. Another research (Ćilić & Plauc, 2021) investigated utilization of neologisms in social media discourse similarly asserts that neologisms generated through various morphological processes are extensively utilized in internet communication, with instances collected and compared from three TikTok video contents. The investigation results indicate a remarkably high prevalence of neologisms on social networking sites similar to other research. Ibrahim et. al. (2024) examined the utilization of neologisms, newly formed words, in the comments and posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms and determined that neologistic terms are extensively utilized by social media users owing to the emergence of new products, the diverse cultural norms of other countries, and worldwide events. Mworia (2015) examined the utilization of English neologisms on social media, specifically Twitter, within the Kenyan setting. The study revealed that social media neologisms diverge from the conventional application of Standard English at several levels, as elucidated by linguistic analysis; this departure facilitates communication among online users. Upon evaluating and comparing the current study with other research in the literature, it is evident that the language employed in social media platforms has been evolving, utilizing various word production processes across distinct categories and for diverse objectives.

Conclusion

It is concluded in this study that individuals utilizing English in the digital realm tend to generate neologisms through various strategies to enhance mutual linguistic comprehension and expedite communication. Language and communication are evidently experiencing a shift and transformation in the contemporary digital landscape. Upon examining derived neologisms, it is evident that variables such as the expediency of communication, the creation of meaning through word contraction, and the disregard for grammatical and orthographic conventions significantly influence the generation of new terms. Furthermore, it was determined that social media platforms constitute a domain that is actively and efficiently utilized for word development according to the content examined in the present study. This study is limited since it does discourse analysis on merely three videos shared on the TikTok platform. In addition, the study exclusively examined word formation strategies. Future research may examine the motivations and reasoning behind individuals who create neologisms on social media sites to employ these methods.



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