NEOLOGISMS IN MODERN ENGLISH: THEIR FORMATION AND FUNCTION IN MASS MEDIA

Musayeva Adiba Abdumajidovna

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor of Uzbekistan National Pedagogical University After named Nizami.

Usmonova Diyora Azamatovna

3rd year Student of Uzbekistan National Pedagogical
University After named Nizami.

Abstract. Language is a living organism that evolves alongside technological and social advancements. This paper examines the phenomenon of neologisms—newly coined words or expressions—and their pervasive role in contemporary English mass media. The study categorizes recent neologisms based on their morphological formation processes, such as blending, compounding, and functional shift. Furthermore, it analyzes how mass media acts as a primary catalyst for the popularization of these terms. By investigating digital journals, social media platforms, and news broadcasts, the research highlights the pragmatic functions of neologisms in creating concise, engaging, and culturally relevant communication. The findings provide insights into the current trends of English lexicology and the impact of the digital age on linguistic norms.

Keywords: Neologisms, Mass Media, Morphological Formation, Lexicology, Social Media, Etymology, Modern English.

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented explosion of new vocabulary, largely driven by the digital revolution and global socio-political shifts. **Neologisms** serve as linguistic markers of these changes, filling lexical gaps to describe new concepts, technologies, and social behaviors. Mass media, including online news portals, blogs, and social networks like "X" (Twitter) and Instagram, serves as the "laboratory" where these words are tested and disseminated.

For philology students at universities, studying neologisms is essential for understanding the bridge between formal linguistics and the evolving reality of global communication.

Morphological Pathways of Neologism Formation

Neologisms do not appear at random; they follow established linguistic patterns. The research identifies the most dominant methods of word formation in modern media:

- **Blending (Portmanteau):** Combining parts of two words to create a new meaning.
  o *Examples:* **Staycation** (Stay + Vacation), **Fintech** (Financial + Technology), **Glamping** (Glamorous + Camping).
- **Compounding:** Joining two existing words to form a new concept.
  o *Examples:* **Greenwashing**, **Crowdfunding**, **Doomscrolling**.
- **Clipping and Abbreviation:** Shortening long words for brevity in digital headlines.
  o *Examples:* **App** (Application), **Influencer** (from Influence).
- **Functional Shift (Conversion):** Changing a word's grammatical category (e.g., noun to verb).
  o *Examples:* To **Google** something, to **DM** (Direct Message) someone.

Neologisms in Mass Media Discourse

The research categorizes the dissemination of neologisms into three primary discursive domains. Each domain employs unique sociolinguistic mechanisms to integrate new vocabulary into the public consciousness, transforming ephemeral jargon into established linguistic units.

Technological and Digital Media: The Language of Innovation

The rapid acceleration of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" has made technological media the most fertile ground for neologisms. In this domain, new words function as **"Conceptual Anchors"** that simplify complex technical realities for the general public.

- **Lexical Hooks:** Terms such as **"Generative AI," "Metaverse,"** and **"Blockchain"** are frequently used in media headlines to signal "modern relevance" and intellectual currency. These words act as semantic magnets, drawing readers into highly specialized topics.

- **Semantic Extension:** Many tech-based neologisms involve the re-purposing of existing words. For instance, **"Ghosting"** moved from a technological glitch description to a social phenomenon describing the sudden cessation of digital communication.

- **Syntactic Utility:** Media outlets prefer these terms because they offer **linguistic economy**—expressing a multifaceted digital concept in a single, punchy word.

Social and Political Media: Reflecting Ideological Shifts

Mass media acts as a mirror to social change, often coining or popularizing terms that describe emerging ideological movements or global crises.

- **Socio-Political Terminology:** Neologisms like **"Woke," "Cancel Culture,"** and **"Eco-anxiety"** have transitioned from niche academic or activist circles into mainstream journalism.

These words are essential for media outlets to categorize and discuss complex contemporary conflicts.

- **Portmanteau during Crises:** The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the media's ability to create urgent neologisms. The term **"Infodemic"** (a blend of Information and Epidemic) was adopted by the WHO and global news agencies to describe the viral spread of misinformation, showcasing how media-driven neologisms can serve a critical public health function.

- **Polarization Markers:** In political discourse, neologisms often carry heavy emotional connotations, functioning as markers of group identity within media echo chambers.

The "Meme" Effect: Bottom-Up Lexical Integration

One of the most significant shifts in modern lexicology is the **"Bottom-Up"** development of language, where slang originating from Gen-Z digital subcultures permeates prestigious, traditional media institutions.

- **From TikTok to The Guardian:** Lexemes like **"Rizz"** (a shortening of charisma) and **"Situationship"** (describing a romantic relationship that lacks formal definition) originated on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Within months, these terms appeared in the headlines of traditional outlets like BBC, The New York Times, and The Guardian.

- **The Validation Cycle:** This "Meme Effect" follows a predictable cycle: a word goes viral in digital subcultures, is adopted by influencers, and is eventually "validated" by mainstream journalists seeking to maintain a connection with younger demographics.

- **Linguistic Democratization:** This process proves that mass media no longer holds the monopoly on language creation; instead, it serves as a high-volume megaphone for the creative linguistic output of the general public.

Results and Frequency Analysis

The following table illustrates the frequency of specific neologisms in major English-language digital news outlets over the 2023–2025 period.

Category	Neologism	Context of Usage	Growth Trend
Tech	*Prompt Engineering*	AI-related news	**Exponential**
Lifestyle	*Quiet Quitting*	Workplace culture	**Stable**
Social	*De-influencing*	Consumerism/Social Media	**Emerging**
Health	*Long-COVID*	Medical/News reports	**High**

Key Finding: Neologisms that describe "relatable" social behaviors tend to have a higher "survival rate" in the lexicon than purely technical terms.

The Impact on Standard English

The rapid influx of neologisms presents a challenge for linguistic purism. While some scholars argue that these terms "pollute" the language, our research suggests they enrich it by adding nuance and emotional resonance. Mass media serves as a filter: words that are useful remain (like **"Selfie"**), while others fade away as temporary "fads." For English learners, neologisms represent a hurdle in formal testing but are vital for achieving "natural" communicative competence in real-world settings.

Neologisms are the heartbeat of modern English. Their proliferation in mass media demonstrates the language's resilience and capacity for innovation. By tracking the birth and spread of these words, we gain a clearer picture of contemporary human values and technological progress. For educators and students at **universities**, staying updated with these linguistic shifts is paramount for teaching English as a dynamic, living language.

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