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THE LIFE CYCLE OF NEOLOGISMS IN DIGITAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

Kamola Ismoilova

Department of English Language Theory, Faculty of Philology

Kokand State University

ikamola8622@gmail.com

Kokand, Uzbekistan

ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This article examines the emergence, dissemination, and stages of popularization of neologisms within digital media discourse. In contemporary linguistics, the Internet and social networking platforms have become the principal environment for the formation, development, and spread of neologisms. The study explores theoretical approaches aimed at modelling the life cycle of neologisms, including memetic and epidemiological models that explain the mechanisms of linguistic innovation and diffusion in communicative communities. Furthermore, the article analyzes the process through which neologisms become integrated into the lexical system of a language and investigates their correlation with sociolinguistic factors that influence their acceptance, stabilization, and conventionalization in language use.

Introduction. Language, as a living organism in constant development, reflects social, cultural, and technological transformations. Over the past two decades, the widespread expansion of the Internet and social media has resulted in an unprecedented increase in the emergence of neologisms. The digital environment has fundamentally transformed the processes through which linguistic units emerge, spread, and eventually disappear. The

inclusion of lexical items such as selfie, google (used as a verb), and hashtag in the general vocabulary clearly illustrates the influence of digital neologisms on the contemporary lexicon.

The term neologism originates from the Greek elements neo- (new) and logos (word), and in linguistics it refers to a newly created word, expression, or semantic meaning. However, in the digital era the nature of neologisms and the trajectory of their development differ significantly from traditional patterns of language change. Whereas in the past the diffusion of new lexical items often required years or even decades, today this process may occur within hours or days.

The purpose of this article is to provide a scientific analysis of the stages of the life cycle of neologisms in digital media discourse and to identify the factors that influence their dissemination and popularization.

Methodology. Understanding the stages of neologism development represents one of the important tasks of contemporary linguistics. Recent studies indicate that the life cycle of neologisms can be described through a two-stage model. A study conducted by Jiang and colleagues analyzed ninety of the most influential Chinese neologisms that appeared between 2008 and 2016. The findings demonstrate that during the initial growth stage of neologisms, the memetic model can be applied with considerable reliability; however, in order to predict the complete life cycle, particularly the turning point in their development, an epidemiological model becomes necessary.

The memetic model compares neologisms to genes and explains their spread on the basis of their degree of “contagiousness.” This model is particularly effective in explaining the dynamics of the early diffusion of new lexical items. In contrast, the epidemiological model becomes more relevant during the later stages of development, including processes such as stabilization, decline, or disappearance of lexical innovations.

Results. Digital media provides numerous sources for the formation of neologisms. According to a study conducted by Hidayati and colleagues on the TikTok platform, the most widespread type of neologism is lexicographic neologisms, which constitute approximately 50 percent of the observed cases. This category refers to the creation of entirely new lexical forms. The study also emphasizes the role of emojis as a new form of linguistic expression.

Social networks and online forums function as primary “incubators” for the creation of neologisms. Platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and Reddit have generated lexical items such as finsta (a fake or secondary Instagram account) and simp (a person who shows excessive attention or admiration toward someone else). Memes also contribute significantly to the spread of neologisms not only as visual artifacts but also as textual units. For instance, the word

stan, derived from Eminem's song "Stan," is now widely used in the sense of an enthusiastic or devoted fan.

Abbreviations and compound formations represent another important characteristic of digital linguistic creativity. Expressions such as FOMO (fear of missing out), YOLO (you only live once), and hangry (hungry + angry, referring to irritability caused by hunger) illustrate the linguistic inventiveness of the digital generation.

Discussion

The popularization of neologisms refers to the process through which new lexical items become integrated into the lexical system of a language and are accepted by the broader speech community. In his monograph *A Web of New Words*, Kerremans (2015) provides a detailed analysis of the process of neologism popularization. The researcher proposes a four-stage sequence of conventionalization:

- (1) non-conventionalization,
- (2) transitional conventionalization,
- (3) recurrent partial conventionalization, and
- (4) advanced conventionalization.

A number of factors influence the popularization of neologisms. These include the author's status, the type of source in which the neologism appears, metalinguistic usage, nominative necessity, and semantic transparency. In the digital environment in particular, the authority of the neologism's creator and their influence within social media networks play a significant role in determining the spread and acceptance of new lexical items. According to the research conducted by Rybakova, sociolinguistic factors such as gender, age, and level of education also influence the acceptance and dissemination of newly coined words.

The NeoCrawler technology enables the monitoring of neologisms at their early stages of emergence. This web crawler, developed by Kerremans and colleagues, makes it possible to automatically identify neologisms on the Internet and to track their development over time. A case study of the neologism *detweet* has demonstrated the effectiveness of this technological approach in observing the dynamics of lexical innovation.

Differences Between Digital Media and Traditional Publications

The mechanisms of neologism formation differ significantly between digital media and traditional published texts. A study conducted by Ryskina and colleagues carried out a comparative analysis of Twitter posts and historically published texts. The results indicate that the growth factor of topic popularity has a weaker influence on the formation of neologisms on Twitter compared to published texts. This difference can be explained by the distinct

mechanisms through which neologisms emerge and spread within these two communicative environments.

A corpus-based study conducted by Schulein further examined the process of neologism institutionalization using blogs as empirical material. By utilizing the GloWbE (Global Web-based English) corpus, the researcher analyzed various categorical features of neologisms in order to identify the stages of their stabilization and integration into language use.

The concept of “identity neology” proposed by Stepanova, in turn, focuses on the role of neologisms in youth speech. By distinguishing between a neological burst (the spread of new words among peer groups) and a media burst (their dissemination through mass media), the researcher provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying the diffusion of neologisms.

Conclusion. The life cycle of neologisms in digital media discourse represents a complex and multi-stage process, the comprehensive analysis of which requires the integration of various theoretical models and methodological approaches. Empirical studies have demonstrated that the memetic model is particularly effective in explaining the development of neologisms during the initial stages of their emergence and diffusion, whereas the epidemiological model provides a more adequate framework for interpreting the later stages of their development.

The digital environment possesses several distinctive characteristics that significantly influence the formation and dissemination of neologisms, including speed, interactivity, and the predominance of user-generated content. Social networking platforms, online forums, and blogs function as the primary “incubators” of lexical innovation. Among the factors that contribute to the institutionalization of neologisms, sociolinguistic characteristics, the authority of the author or originator, and nominative necessity play a particularly significant role. Future research should focus on examining the influence of artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems on the life cycle of neologisms. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of digital neologisms across different languages represents another important and promising direction for linguistic research.

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