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The Impacts of Social Media on Morphological Changes

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Abstract
The developments of social media have also contributed greatly to the evolution of language, especially morphological developments like abbreviations, acronyms, blending, clipping, compounding and employing emoticons (emojis). This paper will discuss how digital communication systems hasten and transform the process of word construction, creating new linguistic strategies of succinctness, expressiveness and urgency. Social media is conducive to the use of abbreviations (SS, BTW) and acronyms (FOMO, YOLO) because of the limitations of characters and speedy communication. Combining (brunch, motel) and combining (selfie stick, photobomb) proves to be creative in terms of blending ideas in a brief manner. Clipping (pic meaning picture, app meaning application) indicates an inclination to be efficient and emoticons serve as visual morphemes, either as a complement or substitute to text in order to add tone and emotion.

This study examines the information available on such sites as Instagram, facebook, tiktok and youtube to discover the tendencies in morphological changes with the help of a qualitative approach. This paper explores how digital communication have lead to morphological changes, including the proliferation of different morphological processes. The research concludes that social media acts as a catalyst for morphological innovation, shaping contemporary communication in unprecedented ways and it's upon future research to analyze that how long these morphological changes last.

Keywords: social media, morphology, abbreviations, acronyms, blending, compounding, clipping, emoticons, linguistic evolution.

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1. Introduction

The social media has had a great influence on communication besides affecting the linguistics. It promotes the growth of English as lingua franca and interference in language. The morphological innovations of a certain place (e.g., a viral Tik Tok phrase) could influence the English spoken in the rest of the world in several days as trends develop almost quickly. It greatly influences the morphology, including the morphemes of slang, acronyms, abbreviations, and emoticons (emojis). There are digital networks that bring about these morphological changes and these are Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok and many others. These networks are one of the main language exchange sources as people communicate with each other and get to know new words or slang. Ballard (1980) argues that language is the mirror of the social world and at the same time it contributes to its construction. It means that slang does not only emerge due to communication via social media; it also affects the way people interact with each other in the social media. The present tendency towards such morphological changes is not just laziness, but a feasible response to the limitation of characters (one of them is instagram). Technological Determinism and Social Constructivism which hastily answers the question of whether morphological change is strictly determined by platform constraints (including character limits) or is a planned social action by users to form a unique group identity is quite the difference. Development of social and cultural situations could never be out of context in relation to language. Changes in language as well as in society and culture, which only help to emphasize how flexible it can be (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022). As studies indicate about neologism on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, acronyms and clips are the most frequently found in noun formation and have evolved with bizarre word-forming mechanisms (Shahlee & Ahmed, 2022). The changes in language are due to the generation Z (born between 2000 and 2013) since they have access to and can use international digital communication tools compared to

the past generations. They must be most educated, as they are even believed to be the most diverse group of people in history, in terms of race and ethnicity. The most notable feature that defines Generation Z is the importance of technology in their growing up. Being the first generation to have grown around the technological innovations such as cell phones, this generation merely embraces them as a common aspect of their life and not a novelty that should be accepted (Bashir et al., 2025; LeDuc, 2019).The main forces behind the morphological changes in digital communications that we are adjusting to are Gen Z. The internet provides a conducive environment that is favourable to language evolution because it enables people to communicate with each other over a long distance in a real-time fashion (Crystal, 2011). This enables new language trends to become popular virtually overnight across the globe, so slang is able to evolve in a bizarre word forming process. Crystal (2011) has coined the term Netspeak to describe the unique language form that incorporates aspects of both speech and writing, which forms the foundation of how digital morphology ties the two forms of media. Since Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube are interconnected, a neologism that is created somewhere in the world (e.g. a viral Tik Tok phrase) can spread all over the world within several days. The world of social media is rapidly evolving and developing words within weeks rather than decades. Ultimately, these language changes reflect the contemporary perception and interaction with it in the society. These language changes, which are still undergoing change in succeeding generations, give them a special language that Generation Z often utilize. Along with the question of how social media-driven morphology (e.g. LOL or OMG) transcends national borders and helps to form a more or less global Digital English, which can be comprehended by non-native speakers globally, these morphological shifts establish a so-called digital divide, meaning that Gen Z

applies a knowledge of certain slang or acronym as a social capital or in-group signalling.

1.1. Research Questions

The language has certainly evolved to indicate the way the modern world is perceived by the society. The emergence of neologism is examined in this research.

1) What morphological shortcuts do you use the most?
2) What processes have been the product of social media in the invention of modern slang, acronyms, abbreviations, compounds, and emoticons?

1.2. Objectives

- 1.To identity the morphological processes on social media platforms.
- 2.To analyze the usage frequency of morphological shortcuts.
- To examine the linguistic status of the emotions (emojis).

2. Literature Review

This paper is devoted to the neologisms which are used on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube by common people and famous people. It emphasizes the great role of the social media in the development of the modern language acting as a trigger of the appearance of new lexical terms. Only there is brevity due to character constraints. Some neologisms, such as pookie, cringe, and slay, are used to signell identity and express affection instead of being shorter than other words. To understand the fundamentals of the digital communication, this study looks at the morphological processes of the formation of new words.

Morphological changes are brought about by the following processes according to Murray (1995):

Blending: the term of combining two or more words to formulate a new term through combining the meanings of the words and sounds.

Acronyms: a sort of abbreviation made out of the first letters of words and sounded like one word.

Abbreviations: A word or phrase that is made shorter instead of using the entire word or phrase.

Clipping: It is the process of shortening a word by removing one or more syllables,while retaining the original meaning.

Compounding: This is the process by which two or more free roots can be joined together to create a new word with a meaning not necessarily just the sum of its components.

A newly created term or phrase that is only now becoming widely used is called a neologism (Peterson & Ray, 2013). In addition to the development of structures, the changing sense of the English words must be investigated through the lexical and historical perspective to track the changes in the use of the language over time (Hao and Chi, 2013; Shahid et al., 2025; Chen, 2024). Moreover, emoticons can be considered visual morpheme that complements or substitutes text in an attempt to better convey tone and emotions. Twitter and Facebook initialisms and clipping follow strict morphological rules and not arbitrary cut-ups. Abbreviations are evidently fruitful morphological processes which are limited by the character constraints of platform (Herring, 2013). The comments on YouTube are more compounded (e.g., comment-section destroyer), whereas Tik Tok is more inclined

towards the spoken-like morphology (e.g., he was like... (Zappavigna, 2018). Digital morphology encompasses shortening procedures, pictographic affixes, and users are inclined to combine them with new grammatical constraints (SMcCulloch, 2019). The effect of social media on morphological production is shown through the analysis of the morphological production category into the classification of abbreviations according to different morphological processes (Obwang'i & Barasa, 2025). Although studies on platforms such as TikTok indicate that users often do not follow general conventions, such as typing acronyms in small letters or strange capitalisation, certain abbreviations are based on systematic principles. This is one of the key characteristics of modern digital morphology, a "flippant" use of language. To form a word, the morpheme should be either independent or it should be a combination of at least one morpheme (Matthews, 2003). Both emojis and acronyms were grammaticalised to discourse-level morphemes (Aziz et al., 2021; Virtanen, 2020). Crystal (2011) considers that abbreviations may be considered derivational morphemes, which create new lexical objects, exclusive to digital registers. This implies that morphological shortening is not sluggish but it is controlled by cognitive rules. Nowadays, emoji tracking is considered an essential predictor of civility and tone on the Internet (Setyawan and Musthafa, 2024). Like morphological concatenation, emojis follow the rules of combinatorics (Cohn et al., 2019). Emojis may be used as sentence ending particles in the vein of Chinese ma used in sentences or Japanese ne used in the same way, or they may be used to denote illocutionary strength (e.g., a sarcasm marker 😂). With the application of new semantic changes, the language parameters are redefined in the context of digital communication (Putra and Rahman, 2022).

The recent research suggests that social media has resulted in a dualistic nature of communication that is a combination of spoken, written, and visual

communication. Consequently, even users are working on new visual-semiotic codes, where the meaning should be found not only in the text but also in the relationship between words and emojis and even the design of the post. The previous linguists have also studied the language of the internet, however, they have not focused on Generation Z as the key drivers of these changes. There has not been much precedent to analyse the usage and origin of relatively new terms such as pookie under a strict morphological approach. In previous studies emojis were regarded as decorations and not visual morphemes. Though lingualists describe these changes as neutral, other teachers and style guides are against them. It implies knowledge of the larger discussion. To find a consistent trend of morphological adaptation, reflecting the manner of modern society interaction all over the world, previous studies have not pooled the information of a large pool of contemporary high-engagement sites. Platform-mediated multimodal processes might not be sufficiently described by classical language models, which were originally designed to describe face-to-face spoken conversation. The current study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the use of language on social media by Generation Z in a number of aspects. Gen Z is quite good at changing discourse to formal and informal. Due to their linguistic flexibility, they are free to convey the sense of individualism and ties with the social environment in the form of slang and at the same time, adapt to stricter norms when required. Although previous researchers have discussed the frequency and situations of slang use (Marzuki and Mustapha, 2024) and the linguistic novelties of Generation Z on TikTok, including their semantic changes and mechanisms (Ugoala, 2024), they do not focus on the semantic shifts and the processes themselves.

3. Methods

The present research employs a qualitative research approach to assess the influence of social media use on the morphological changes in the language. The information will be obtained in social media platforms where people use colloquial languages, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. To track the trends of change, posts and comments that depict high-engaging material in a small number of past years (2020-2025) was analyzed. The selection was based on a random sample of posts by users of social media all over the world to ensure an international and diverse perspective on English language development. Publications of the existing linguistic research on the development of digital languages have been scrutinized very keenly with the aim of getting credible references to ensure that these findings are upheld in the established academic theory. To tackle the research issues that are related to the production and classification of neologisms, this study uses data. The data collected was counted according to its morphological classification in order to single out the most frequently used shortcuts in digital communication, e.g. the clipping, blending, or acronymization.

This research study used a qualitative approach in compiling the results of the study which focused on the discussion of existing theories on the dynamics of online communication. A procedure known as "screenshot" was used to gather proof of neologisms used by the general population on social media. The name of the method is obtained by a morphological process called compounding the terms screen and shot and has the meaning of taking a picture of the image being shown on the screens of digital devices such as laptops or mobile phones.

4. Findings

The neologisms listed below were acquired through different social media posts in English-language on Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube.

NEOLOGISM	**MORPHOLOGICAL PROCESSES**
BTW (by the way)	Abbreviation
TTYL (talk to you later)	Abbreviation
OMG (oh my God)	Abbreviation
IYK (if you know)	Abbreviation
TBH (to be honest)	Abbreviation
BRB (be right back)	Abbreviation
DOB (date of birth)	Abbreviation
DIY (do it yourself) WTH (what the hell)	Abbreviation Abbreviation
IMO (in my opinion)	Abbreviation
IMHO (in my humble opinion)	Abbreviation
SS (screenshot) DP (display picture)	Abbreviation Abbreviation
LOL (laugh out loud)	Acronym
POV (point of view)	Acronym
BOGO (buy one,get one)	Acronym
ASAP (as soon as possible)	Acronym
GIF (graphics interchange format)	Acronym
FOMO (fear of missing out)	Acronym
YOLO (you only live once)	Acronym
WIP (work in progress)	Acronym
ZIP (zone improvement plan)	Acronym
RIP (rest in peace)	Acronym
BAE (before anyone else)	Acronym
Smog (smoke+fog)	Blending

Motel (motor+hotel)	Blending
Brunch (breakfast+lunch)	Blending
Bit (binary+digit)	Blending
Webinar (web+seminar)	Blending
Spork (spoon+fork)	Blending
Frenemy (friend+enemy)	Blending
Clash (clap+crash)	Blending
Staycation (stay+vacation)	Blending
Glimmer (gleam+shimmer)	Blending
Telecast (television+broadcast)	Blending
Finsta (fake+intsagram)	Blending
Promo (promotion)	Clipping
Info (information)	Clipping
Intro (introduction)	Clipping
Fav (favorite)	Clipping
Doc (document)	Clipping
Diff (different)	Clipping
App (application)	Clipping
Bio (biography)	Clipping
Cap (caption)	Clipping
Vibes (vibration)	Clipping
Pub (public house)	Clipping
Pic (picture)	Clipping
Crowd funding	Compounding
Artificial intelligence	Compounding
Cloud computing	Compounding

Virtual reality	Compounding
Social media	Compounding
Face-time	Compounding
Selfie stick	Compounding
photobomb	Compounding
Glow-up	Compounding

The digital media is modifying the norms of language, making the language more flexible and adaptable (Crystal, 2011).

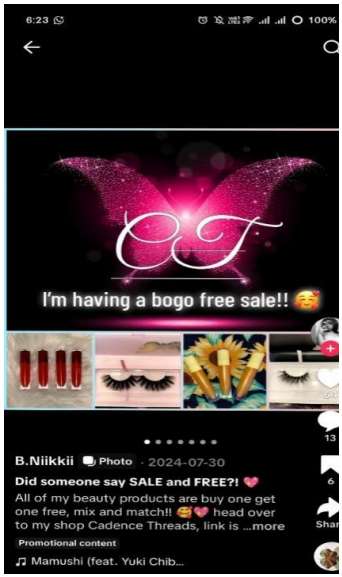
The proliferation of social media has unveiled a host of more phrases more popular in speech than in writing and often restricted to a particular context. To illustrate, one can use the word, slaughter, to indicate that a person is doing great, rizz is used to shorten the word charisma, pookie is a new term to refer to someone as cute or adorable, Dope is a term used instead of awesome, no cap is a term used a lot to imply that the person is saying something clear as glass without lying, bet is a term used to show agreement with what someone has said, savage is a term used to be bold, and ghost is a term used to show off. All these are varieties of modern English slang. All these changes are propelled by gen Z who prefers succinct and digestible information.

Emoticons are often used to express emotions other than this; one emoticon can easily be used instead of words. The first set of 176 emojis was created by Shigetaka Kurita in 1999 as a part of the NTT DOCOMO Japanese mobile service. Emojis may serve as lexical stems, meaning they may have derivational and inflexional affixes and undergo other lexicalisation and grammaticalization processes in online discourse (Stormont, 2024). As the ❤️ can be used to express love and kindness, the □ can be used to express a soft tone, the 😡 can be used to express anger, the □□□ can be used to express annoyance or frustration, and the

hundreds of other emoticons can be used to express a message based on the context. These are the benefits of using social media.

Morphological processes & neologisms	**Frequency of usage**	**Percentage (%)**
Abbreviation	13	17.3
Acronym	11	14.6
Blending	12	16
Clipping	12	16
Compounding	9	12
Slangs	11	14.6
Emoticons	7	9.3

Based on the analysis provided above, the most percentage of neologisms collected in the social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, and YouTube belong to the category of abbreviation (17.3%). The samples used in this study show that blending and clipping follow with 16 and 14.6 percent, respectively, then there are compounding and emoticons with 12 and 9.3 percent.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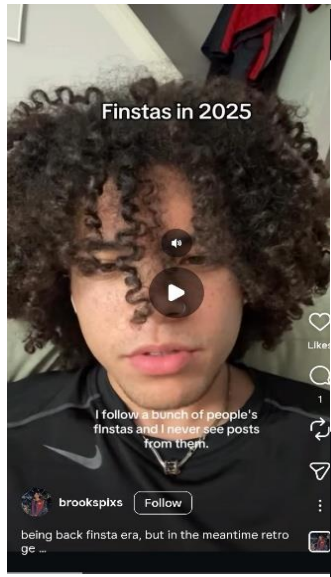
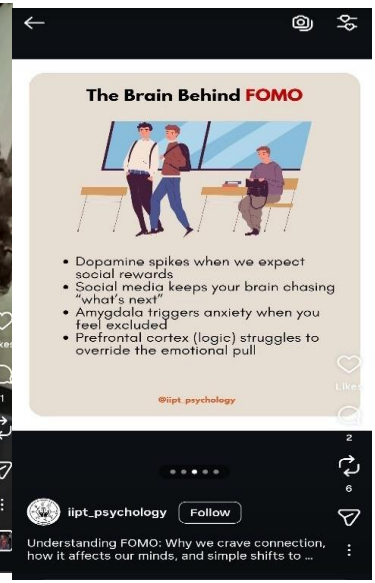

Finstas in 2025
I follow a bunch of people's finstas and I never see posts from them.
brookspixs Follow
being back finsta era, but in the meantime retro ge ...


The Brain Behind FOMO
Dopamine spikes when we expect social rewards
Social media keeps your brain chasing "what's next"
Amygdala triggers anxiety when you feel excluded
Prefrontal cortex (logic) struggles to override the emotional pull
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Understanding FOMO: Why we crave connection, how it affects our minds, and simple shifts to ...

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POV: you have a dentist appointment
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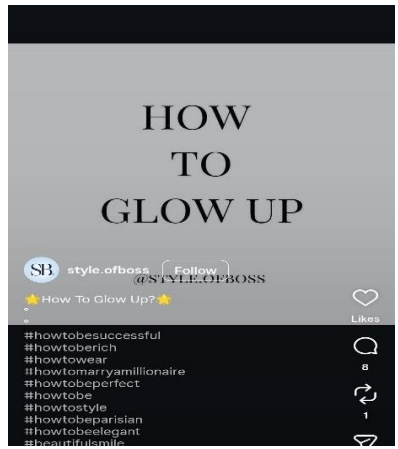
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#howtobeparisian
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#beautifulsmile

Digital Spartans
31 Dec 2020 ·
They both out for a BRUNCH 😍
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#rubabhashim #pakistanifashion #brunch
#pakistanicelebs

5. Conclusion

Morphological innovation is fueled by social media, and the speed, brevity and creativity they focus on have increased the rate of word formation development, resulting in popular forms of informal and condensed language. Abbreviations and acronyms are efficient and blending and compounding are indicative of the high creativity and dynamism of digital discourse. Clipping also facilitates communication more in fast-paced user and emoticons are in effect visual morphemes, providing the text-based interaction with emotional and contextual richness.

Though these changes stimulate linguistic flexibility and innovativeness, they also provoke concerns of language standardization and understanding among various age and social groups. However, the morphological changes caused by social media highlight the fact that the internet has been a driving factor in language development, and it affects the way that contemporary users converse in a more digitized society. It is not only that social media has changed the way we communicate but also the way language itself is changed, and morphology is dynamic just like the platforms it relies on. However, certain changes might be erased, others might become rooted in the English language, as the nature of digital communication changes. This is why the future study may be investigating the long or short term consequences of such changes in morphology on the use of formal languages and literacy, and cross-cultural differences to observe how various languages and regions cope with their morphological changes driven by social media.

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