DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH NEOLOGISMS: WORD FORMATION, DISSEMINATION, AND THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Turgunova Jasminabonu
Uzbekistan State University of World Languages
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Abstract: The rapid development of digital communication has significantly influenced the evolution of the English lexicon. Social media platforms, online communities, messaging applications, and emerging digital technologies have created new communicative environments in which lexical innovation occurs at an unprecedented pace. As new technologies, social practices, and cultural phenomena emerge, speakers require new linguistic forms to describe them. Consequently, numerous neologisms have entered contemporary English, including terms such as *doomscrolling*, *clickbait*, *cyberbullying*, *influencer*, *ghosting*, and *de-influencing*. This article examines the relationship between digital communication and the development of English neologisms, focusing on the processes through which new lexical units are formed, disseminated, adopted, and potentially normalized within the language. Particular attention is given to social media as an accelerator of lexical innovation and to the role of artificial intelligence and generative AI in creating and popularizing emerging terminology. The article argues that digital communication does not simply increase the number of new words in English; it also changes the speed, mechanisms, and social conditions through which lexical innovation takes place. Artificial intelligence further contributes to this process by introducing terminology associated with machine learning, generative technologies, and human-AI interaction. The study concludes that digital communication represents one of the most influential environments for contemporary English lexical change.

Keywords: neologism, digital communication, English lexicon, social media, lexical innovation, word formation, artificial intelligence.

Introduction

Language is a constantly changing system that reflects developments in society, culture, science, and technology. As new objects, practices, technologies, and social phenomena appear, speakers need linguistic resources to describe them. One of the most visible consequences of this process is the emergence of **neologisms**, which can be broadly understood as newly created or newly established lexical units.

Throughout the history of English, technological and social developments have contributed to lexical expansion. However, the emergence of digital communication has created particularly favorable conditions for rapid lexical innovation. The internet has transformed not only how people communicate but also how quickly new words can be created, distributed, evaluated, and adopted by large communities of speakers.

Social networking sites, video-sharing platforms, online forums, blogs, gaming communities, and messaging applications provide users with environments in which linguistic experimentation is frequent. Users can create new expressions, modify existing words, shorten phrases, combine lexical elements, or assign new meanings to established vocabulary. Once an innovative expression becomes popular, digital platforms allow it to spread beyond the community in which it originated.

For example, terms such as *clickbait*, *cyberbullying*, *ghosting*, *doomscrolling*, *livestream*, and *influencer* have become recognizable components of contemporary English. Many of these words describe behaviors or concepts that became particularly prominent because of digital technologies.

The development of artificial intelligence has accelerated this process even further. The emergence of machine learning, generative AI, large language models, and AI-assisted communication has introduced a new group of lexical items and expressions into English. Terms such as *prompt engineering*, *generative AI*, *AI-generated content*, *deepfake*, and *AI hallucination* have become increasingly common in technological, academic, and public discourse.

Therefore, digital communication should not be viewed merely as a channel through which language is used. It is also an environment in which language changes. The purpose of this article is to examine how digital communication contributes to the formation and evolution of English neologisms and to explore how artificial intelligence is becoming a new source of lexical innovation.

The Concept of Neologism and Lexical Innovation

A neologism is generally understood as a newly created lexical item or an existing word that has acquired a new meaning or function. Neologization is therefore closely connected with the natural process of language change.

Neologisms can emerge for different reasons. Scientific discoveries may require new terminology, technological developments may create new concepts, and social or cultural changes may produce new expressions. In many cases, a neologism emerges because speakers need a convenient way to refer to something that previously lacked a specific linguistic label.

Lexical innovation does not necessarily mean creating completely new combinations of sounds. New vocabulary can be produced through several

word-formation processes. These include compounding, blending, affixation, clipping, conversion, borrowing, acronym formation, and semantic change.

Digital communication is particularly important because it provides both the **motivation** and the **environment** for lexical innovation. New digital technologies create new concepts, while online communication provides a mechanism through which the vocabulary associated with those concepts can rapidly spread.

For instance, *cyberbullying* combines *cyber* and *bullying* to identify a specific form of harassment conducted through digital technologies. Similarly, *clickbait* combines *click* and *bait* metaphorically to describe online content designed to encourage users to click on it.

Thus, neologisms reflect not only linguistic creativity but also changes in the world that speakers need to describe.

Digital Communication as an Environment for Neologism Formation

The rise of digital communication has changed the conditions under which lexical innovation takes place. Traditional forms of language change often require considerable time for a new expression to spread across different speech communities. Digital communication can significantly shorten this process.

Social media users communicate with people from different geographical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. A lexical innovation created by a relatively small online community can become visible to millions of users within a short period.

Several characteristics of digital communication contribute to this process.

Speed of Communication

Online communication operates at a high speed. Users continuously produce comments, posts, captions, messages, videos, and other forms of digital content. This high volume of communication creates numerous opportunities for linguistic experimentation.

When a new word or expression is considered useful, humorous, memorable, or culturally relevant, other users can quickly reproduce it. Repetition increases its visibility and can contribute to its wider adoption.

Brevity and Linguistic Economy

Digital communication often encourages concise forms. Users may prefer shorter expressions because they allow information to be communicated more efficiently.

This tendency contributes to processes such as clipping, abbreviation, acronym formation, and blending.

Expressions such as *DM* for “direct message,” *FOMO* for “fear of missing out,” and *app* for “application” illustrate how digital communication

encourages compact lexical forms.

Linguistic economy is particularly significant when speakers repeatedly encounter the same communicative concept. A long phrase can gradually be replaced by a shorter and more convenient lexical unit.

Viral Dissemination

One of the most important characteristics of digital neologisms is their ability to spread rapidly.

A word can move from one online community to another through reposts, hashtags, memes, short-form videos, and influencer content.

Consequently, digital platforms can function as mechanisms of lexical diffusion. The development of a digital neologism can therefore be represented as:

Creation → Online Use → Repetition → Viral Dissemination → Wider Recognition → Normalization

However, not every new digital word completes this process. Some expressions disappear after a short period, while others become stable components of contemporary vocabulary.

Word-Formation Processes in Digital Neologisms

Digital communication provides examples of almost every major English word-formation process

Compounding

Compounding involves combining two or more existing lexical elements to create a new word.

Examples include:

cyberbullying
livestream
clickbait
smartphone
webcam
online community

Compounding is particularly productive in technological vocabulary because it allows speakers to combine familiar words to describe new concepts.

Blending

Blending combines parts of two or more words.

A well-known example is *doomscrolling*, which combines *doom* and *scrolling*. The term describes the activity of continuously consuming negative news or content online.

Other examples of contemporary blends include:

infotainment = information + entertainment
netiquette = internet + etiquette
edutainment = education + entertainment

Blending is particularly effective because it produces compact lexical units while maintaining recognizable connections with their source words.

Clipping

Clipping involves shortening an existing word without substantially changing its meaning.

Digital communication has popularized numerous clipped forms, including:

app from application

admin from administrator

bio from biography

DM as a shortened digital communication label

Such forms demonstrate the preference for efficiency in online communication.

Conversion

Conversion occurs when an existing word changes its grammatical category without the addition of an affix.

The verb *to google*, for example, developed from the name of a search engine and became a commonly used verb. Similarly, digital discourse has produced numerous examples in which nouns associated with technologies or platforms become verbs.

This demonstrates that digital technologies can influence not only vocabulary but also grammatical behavior.

Semantic Change

Digital communication can also assign new meanings to existing words.

The word *viral*, for example, traditionally refers to something related to a virus. In contemporary digital discourse, it commonly describes online content that spreads rapidly among users.

Similarly, *friend*, *follow*, *like*, *story*, and *stream* have acquired or developed important digital meanings.

This demonstrates that lexical innovation does not always require the creation of an entirely new word. Existing vocabulary can undergo semantic expansion when new communicative contexts emerge.

Social Media and the Popularization of Neologisms

Social media platforms have become one of the most influential environments for lexical diffusion. Unlike traditional media, social media allows ordinary users to participate directly in language production.

Platforms based on short-form content are particularly important because their communication systems encourage repetition and rapid circulation. A new word can become associated with a meme, hashtag, video trend, or online challenge and subsequently reach users who were not part of the original community.

Terms such as *ghosting*, *stan*, *rizz*, *delulu*, and *de-influencing* demonstrate how digital culture can create or popularize vocabulary associated with

contemporary social behavior.

The role of social media should therefore be understood in two ways. First, it can serve as a space where new words are **created**. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it can serve as a mechanism through which these words are **popularized**.

A lexical item does not necessarily need to originate on social media to become a digital neologism. In many cases, an expression already exists in a limited community but gains widespread visibility through social platforms.

This distinction is important because it shows that digital communication influences both the **formation** and the **dissemination** of neologisms.

From Internet Slang to Mainstream English

Not every digital neologism becomes permanent. Some expressions disappear when the trend that produced them becomes irrelevant. Others survive and gradually become accepted outside their original online communities.

This process can be described as a movement from:

Internet community → Social media → General public → Mainstream discourse

The transition from digital slang to established vocabulary can occur when a word becomes useful for describing a recurring social phenomenon.

For example, *ghosting* refers to suddenly ending communication with another person without explanation. As digital communication became increasingly important in interpersonal relationships, the term acquired relevance beyond online communities.

Similarly, *influencer* has moved from a relatively specialized digital term to a widely recognized occupation or social role.

This raises an important linguistic question: **When does a digital neologism cease to be merely internet slang and become part of contemporary English?**

There is no single answer. Frequency of use, dictionary inclusion, media usage, recognition among speakers, semantic stability, and continued use across different contexts can all contribute to lexical establishment.

Artificial Intelligence as a New Source of English Neologisms

The development of artificial intelligence represents a particularly important stage in contemporary lexical innovation. As AI technologies have become integrated into education, business, communication, entertainment, and everyday life, speakers have needed new terminology to describe emerging concepts and practices.

The vocabulary of artificial intelligence includes terms such as:

machine learning

generative AI

large language model
prompt engineering
AI-generated content
deepfake
AI hallucination
prompt injection
AI assistant

Some of these terms are relatively technical, while others have entered general public discourse.

The rapid popularization of generative AI has significantly increased the visibility of AI-related terminology. Users who previously had little contact with artificial intelligence are now encountering terms related to prompts, chatbots, models, generated content, and automated systems.

Consequently, AI is influencing the English lexicon in two interconnected ways: it **creates new concepts that require names**, and it **creates new communicative practices that generate additional vocabulary**.

Generative AI and the Creation of New Lexical Practices

Generative AI has introduced not only new technologies but also new forms of interaction between humans and machines.

For example, *prompt engineering* refers to the practice of designing instructions for AI systems in order to obtain particular outputs. As the practice has become more widespread, the term has moved beyond highly specialized technical communities.

Similarly, expressions such as *AI-generated image*, *AI-generated text*, and *AI-assisted writing* have become common descriptions of new forms of content production.

Another important example is *AI hallucination*, which describes cases in which an AI system produces information that is inaccurate or unsupported but presented in a seemingly plausible manner.

The spread of such terminology demonstrates how technological innovation generates lexical innovation. Once a new technological behavior becomes socially relevant, speakers require a stable linguistic label for it.

Artificial Intelligence and the Acceleration of Neologism Dissemination

AI does not only generate new terminology. It can also accelerate the circulation and reproduction of language.

Generative AI systems can produce text at a scale and speed that would be impossible for individual human users. As people use AI to create posts, articles, advertisements, educational materials, captions, and other forms of digital content, emerging expressions can potentially be reproduced across large quantities of text.

This creates a new relationship between **language production and language dissemination**.

Traditionally, humans created a lexical innovation and other humans reproduced it. With generative AI, AI systems can participate in the reproduction of linguistic forms. This raises questions about whether AI will merely reflect existing linguistic change or actively influence the direction of future lexical development.

For example, if an emerging term is repeatedly used in AI-generated content, it may gain additional visibility. At the same time, AI systems can introduce unusual combinations or expressions that human users subsequently adopt.

Therefore, artificial intelligence may become not only a tool for studying language change but also an active participant in contemporary lexical evolution.

Digital Neologisms and Generational Language Change

Digital neologisms are closely associated with generational differences. Younger speakers who spend significant amounts of time communicating online are often exposed to emerging lexical forms earlier than speakers who interact with digital platforms less frequently.

This can create differences in vocabulary between generations.

Words such as *rizz*, *delulu*, *ghosting*, and *doomscrolling* may be immediately recognizable to frequent social media users but unfamiliar to individuals who are less engaged with digital communication.

However, generational vocabulary differences can decrease when digital neologisms enter mainstream media and everyday communication.

This process demonstrates that digital communication can function as a mechanism of linguistic diffusion between generations.

Cultural and Sociolinguistic Dimensions of Digital Neologisms

Neologisms are not purely linguistic phenomena. They also reflect cultural values, social practices, and changes in human behavior.

For example, *ghosting* reflects changing patterns of interpersonal communication. *De-influencing* reflects a critical attitude toward online consumer culture and influencer marketing. *Doomscrolling* describes a behavior associated with continuous exposure to negative digital information.

Therefore, examining neologisms can provide insight into contemporary society.

Digital vocabulary can also reveal the cultural influence of English. Because many major digital platforms and technologies have developed within English-dominant environments, English terminology frequently spreads internationally.

As a result, English neologisms can enter other languages through borrowing,

code-switching, and digital communication. This process is particularly relevant in multilingual societies, where young speakers may incorporate English digital vocabulary into their everyday communication.

Challenges Associated with Digital Neologisms

Despite their linguistic creativity, digital neologisms also present several challenges.

First, their meanings can be unstable. A new word may have different meanings in different online communities.

Second, some neologisms have very short lifespans. A word can become extremely popular for several months and then disappear as the associated trend loses relevance.

Third, digital vocabulary can create communication barriers between generations or between different online communities.

Fourth, the rapid development of technology can produce terminology faster than educational institutions and dictionaries can document it.

Finally, AI-generated language introduces another challenge: artificial systems may reproduce emerging expressions without fully understanding their cultural or pragmatic meanings.

Therefore, digital neologisms require continuous linguistic observation and analysis.

Implications for Foreign Language Teaching

The development of digital neologisms has important implications for foreign language education. Traditional vocabulary teaching often focuses on relatively stable lexical items found in textbooks and dictionaries. However, learners increasingly encounter language through social media, online videos, games, and AI-based tools.

Teachers therefore need to help learners distinguish between:

standard vocabulary;

informal vocabulary;

internet slang;

technical terminology;

newly emerging neologisms.

Teaching digital neologisms can also improve students' pragmatic competence. Learners need to understand not only what a word means but also **where, when, and with whom it is appropriate to use it**.

For example, a learner may understand the meaning of *ghosting* but still need to know whether it is appropriate in academic writing. Similarly, expressions such as *rizz* or *delulu* may be appropriate in informal digital communication but unsuitable for formal academic contexts.

Digital neologisms can therefore be used as authentic material for teaching

vocabulary, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and language change.

Discussion

The relationship between digital communication and lexical evolution demonstrates that technological development and language change are closely interconnected.

The evidence discussed in this article suggests that digital communication influences English neologization through three major mechanisms.

First, technology creates **new concepts**. New technologies and online practices require new names.

Second, digital platforms provide mechanisms for **rapid dissemination**. Once a lexical innovation appears, social media can expose it to a large number of users.

Third, digital communication encourages **linguistic creativity**. The speed and informality of online communication facilitate blending, clipping, compounding, abbreviation, semantic change, and other processes.

Artificial intelligence adds a new dimension to this process. Unlike earlier digital technologies, generative AI can produce language itself. As a result, AI occupies a unique position in contemporary linguistic change: it is simultaneously an object described by new vocabulary, a tool used to manipulate language, and a potential participant in lexical dissemination.

Nevertheless, it would be premature to assume that AI will independently determine the future of English vocabulary. Human speakers remain central to lexical adoption because a new word becomes established only when communities recognize, use, and reproduce it.

Thus, the evolution of digital neologisms should be understood as a dynamic interaction between **technology, human creativity, social communities, and linguistic structure**.

Conclusion

Digital communication has become one of the most influential environments for contemporary English lexical innovation. The emergence of social media, online communities, mobile technologies, and artificial intelligence has created new communicative practices and social phenomena that require new linguistic forms.

Digital neologisms are formed through a variety of processes, including compounding, blending, clipping, conversion, abbreviation, and semantic change. Their development is accelerated by the rapid dissemination mechanisms of social media, where innovative expressions can move from small online communities to mainstream discourse within a relatively short period.

The evolution of words such as *clickbait*, *ghosting*, *doomscrolling*, *influencer*,

and *de-influencing* demonstrates how digital culture influences contemporary English vocabulary. These words do not simply name technologies; they frequently represent new social behaviors, cultural practices, and ways of interacting.

Artificial intelligence has introduced another significant stage in this process. The rapid development of generative AI has generated new terminology such as *prompt engineering*, *generative AI*, *AI-generated content*, and *AI hallucination*. At the same time, AI systems may contribute to the reproduction and dissemination of emerging linguistic forms.

Ultimately, digital communication demonstrates that language evolution is closely connected to technological and social change. English continues to adapt to new realities by creating, modifying, and adopting lexical units that allow speakers to describe their changing world.

The study of digital neologisms is therefore valuable not only for linguists but also for language teachers, translators, researchers, and students. Understanding how new words emerge and spread can provide deeper insight into the dynamic nature of English and the relationship between language, technology, and society.

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