Review Article

NEOLOGISMS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
MORPHO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Morphology

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Abstract

This paper is set against the premise of technological advancement in the past years where the internet based communication and its connected and corresponding effect it has on the English language and vocabulary. World known linguist David Crystal had once expressed his belief that the internet usage would be the trend which will have the greatest impact on the English language in the 21st century. The daily use of the Internet and as of recently the massive use of social media platforms and easy to access technologies such as smart phones, have truly shaped the way we communicate, which contributes to the development of a whole new variety that defines culture as it is today. This study will therefore focus on the social media platforms, and will reveal the new words that have sprung as a result of the social media platforms use. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have attracted millions of English and non-English speaking users who connect and communicate on the platforms, using computers and smart phones and other mobile devices. This vast use of social media on daily basis has largely expanded and enriched the English vocabulary. Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the neologisms from social media platforms into the lexical system of Modern English and reveal the trends that are taking place within the processes of their formation and meaning.

Introduction

Social media language is a new phenomenon in our society and it has been brought about by the prevalence of social networking sites which have brought about new channels of communication. At the center of the language used on social media is morphology as new words are being formed and used on social networks and further introduced in every day used language and with that introduced into mainstream dictionaries. There are a number of perspectives in the definition of the term 'morphology', which is part of the focus of this study. As Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:11) define Morphology as the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed. Additionally, Booji (2005:5) defines morphology as the sub-discipline of linguistics that, deals with the knowledge of systematical relationship between the form and meaning of words. In a different perspective, Deutscher (2006:1) states that language is mankind's greatest invention. However, in further retrospect, Deutscher points out that language was never invented. Deutscher argues that language undergoes several processes formation, evolution, refinenement and decay. This leads to the meaning that when words are formed in any language, they do not retain the original morphology but are refined with time to serve the communicative needs of the social group that is using that particular language. Morphology interacts with other domains of linguistics. This is to show that morphology does not exist in isolation of linguists. First, we have the way in which morphology interacts with phonology. Stekauer et al. (2007) claims that the morphological makeup of words brings considerable influence on its pronunciation, that is what

makes some words easier to pronounce than others, Second, which is important to the subject of this study is the relationship morphology maintains with another branch of linguistics, semantics. Perfetti and Verhoeven (2011:461) say that children approach new words in most cases by analyzing them into their constituent parts and that in the course of schooling, children's ability to segment and manipulate morphemes within complex words increases substantially. Third, there is an interface between morphology and syntax. Junghanns and Szucsich (2003:25) say that inflectional morphology results from syntactic operations.

Language does not maintain its original form of words and hence neologisms are continually formed. Brinton (2000:4) writes that inflection is the modification of a word to express different grammatical categories such as tense, mood, voice, aspect, person, number, gender and case. He gives an example of the Latin verb 'ducam' – meaning "I will lead" which includes the suffix –am, expressing person (first), number (singular) and tense (future).

This research will focus on such neologisms that are continually being formed on the social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

This research will focus on linguistic items, some of which have been derived from existing words. Morphology, in this sense, is hence very useful to linguists, since with the means of morphology we can follow the birth and rise process of any new word. Morphology gives rise to neologisms and since this study will be focused on them, it is important to examine the number of definitions of the term 'neologism'. And since the study will give main focus to the neologism that rise on the social media platforms, therefore, I will give explanation of the various definitions on the terms 'social media' in regard to the Internet and Internet tools that are used in our everyday life.

Literature Review

Henry Fowler (popularly referred to as "The Warden of English") in his celebrated publication "Modern English Usage states that "the gift of speech and well-ordered vocabulary are characteristics of every known language group" (1983:16).

Having in mind, Fowler's assertion, the English vocabulary has a systematic but dynamic landscape. Words are the basic elements of every language; and therefore they are the medium by which changes occur in a language. The vocabulary is thus said to be the first point of contact in the process of language change. The vocabulary of a language, the totality of its words, is also called its lexicon. We will look into details the English lexicon, however, first we have to include a general discussion of what is a lexicon and what does it contain. These will be examined according to the ideas of various scholars, but first we must acknowledge the polysemy (the state of having multiple meanings) of the word 'lexicon'.

According to Murphy (2002:12), the lexicon can refer to:

- A dictionary, especially a dictionary of a classical language; or
- The vocabulary of a language (also known as lexis); or
- A particular language user's knowledge of their own vocabulary (mental lexicon).

The study will not include the first meaning, since that refers to the classical language, and we can leave the study of such lexicons to the students of classical languages. The last two definitions, however, are both relevant to the study of neologisms. In speaking of the lexicon, different scholars and theories assume one or the other or the interrelation of both.

Several traditional approaches to the lexicon, make a disputable claims as to where the lexicon exists, is it the mind of people or in the speech community, as Anderson (1992) says:

"The lexicon is 'out there' in the language community – it is the collection of anything and everything that is used as a word or a set expression by the language community- not 'in here' – in the mind of a language user." (1992)

The term 'mental lexicon' is used in order to distinguish this more psychological and individualistic meaning of lexicon. Clearly though, we have to take into account the fact that the 'out there' and 'in here' lexicons are interrelated.

Most current approaches to the lexicon attempt to find a balance between 'out there' and the 'in here'. The continued use of the ambiguous term 'lexicon' is an acknowledgement of the dual nature of the object of our study, but the terms 'mental lexicon' and 'lexis' are used wherever disambiguation is needed. This study however is concerned solely with the lexicon 'out there' in the speech community or as seen further below "in the on-line speech community"

Having discussed the 'where' of the lexicon, we move on the 'what'. Stump (2005:44) asserts thus:

The things that one knows when one knows a language can be divided into two categories: the lexical and the grammatical. A grammar is a system of rules or regularities in a language, and a lexicon is (at the very least) a collection of linguistic knowledge that cannot be capture by rules. The lexicon is organized into lexical entries; each of these lexical entries collects the appropriate information about a particular linguistic expression called a lexeme.

Having in mind that this study uses a Lexeme-Based approach to morphology, we would be further looking at why it is more precise to use the term 'lexeme' rather than 'word' when studying lexical meaning.

Research Methodology

In recent years, we have been facing new challenges in processing social media data and its integration in document summarization. Texts on social media platforms are extremely noisy, ungrammatical; they do not adhere to conventional rules and they are subject to continuously changing conventions. Over the past few years, online social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn) have revolutionized the way we communicate with individuals, groups and communities, and altered everyday practices (Boyd and Ellison 2007). Social media data is the collection of open source information which can be obtained publicly via Blogs and micro-blogs, Internet forums, user-generated FAQs, chat, podcasts, online games, tags, rating and comments. Social media data has several properties: the nature of conversation in social which are posted in real-time. Geo-locating a group of topically-related conversations is important as it includes emotions, neologisms, credibility/rumor and incentives. The texts are non-structured and are presented in many formats and written by different people in many languages and styles. Monitoring and analyzing this rich and continuous flow of user-generated content can yield unprecedentedly valuable information, which would not have been available from traditional media outlets.

Discussion

The first section of the analysis is qualitative. It shows how each word is formed, the word class it belongs to, what it is its semantic meaning, an example to show its context of usage and its source and confirmation on the on-line dictionaries sites. This section revealed that not all word-formation types are used in the creation of social media neologisms, and not all word-classes can admit neologisms. The word-formation types identified in the data (in order of frequency are): blending, semantic extension, acronyming, compounding and borrowing, coinage and abbreviation, while the word classes they belong to are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbial phrases.

The most common word formation-type among the neologisms in this study is blending. Twenty eight out of the sixty neologisms are blends. Technically, this is forty-six percent of the data examined for this study. This is close to the finding of a similar study by Cook and Stevenson (2010) in which blends accounted for roughly 44% of the neologisms examined.

The next word formation type in order of frequency is semantic extension which account for twelve out of the sixty neologisms, and that is 20% of the entire data examined. After semantic extension, comes acronyming with ten out of the sixty neologisms, making it 16.66% of the entire data examined. Then follows compounding with seven out of the sixty neologisms, making it 11.66% out of the entire data examined. And at last we have borrowing, coinage and abbreviation all of which account for one neologism out of sixty, making 1.66% each respectively, of the entire data of this research.

The most common word-class in the data is the noun. Out of the sixty neologisms, thirty-four are nouns. This is 56.66% of the entire data examined. This confirms Shtekauer's notion of onomasiology. Since words are coined to name existing objects and concepts, it is natural for most neologisms to be nouns. The analysis above also shows that most neologisms can only belong to the open class of English words which includes nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbials-word classes identified among the neologisms in this study. They are typically able to absorb new words into their class, unlike grammatical words which rarely absorb neologism.

As a result of the ease with which language users convert nouns to verbs, and vice versa, some of the neologisms which were originally nouns and verbs are now used interchangeably, either as nouns or as verbs, thus out of the sixty neologisms, 9 (15%) can be used in this manner.

Verbs account for 5 out of the sixty neologisms, making them 8.33%. Adjectives and adverbials account for five out of sixty neologisms each respectively, making them 8.33%.

What strikes as a peculiarity in the study is the semantic extension of the pronoun "They", since the pronouns are a closed class which rarely absorbs neologisms, the semantic extension from plural to singular strikes odd, and can be accounted as having 1.66% of the entire data, however in a broader research would account as a statistical error. However, the semantic shift in the pronoun exists, as this study shows.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate new words and expressions that were created as a result of using social media platforms. The objectives of the study were to analyze the neologisms to reveal their meanings, word-classes and word-formation processes, and to distinguish the most dominant word-class and word-formation process among the neologisms collected as data. Sixty neologisms were collected and delineated in the analysis. The observation method of data collection was used to gather social media neologisms from primary and secondary sources; and both qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry were adopted. The primary sources were the social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, while the secondary sources were on-line dictionary editions and published works about the subject matter. The qualitative mode of analysis involved a definition of each neologism, revealing its meaning, word-class and word-formation process, with an example to show its context of usage. The quantitative mode of analysis involved the compact arrangement of the data in tables and charts to show the number of neologisms that fall under each word-class and word-formation process identified in the data. Pie charts were drawn to represent the data in order to reveal what percentage of the data was accounted for by each word-class and word-formation type.

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