

LANGUAGE IN MOTION: GLOBALIZATION TECHNOLOGY AND LEXICAL-SEMANTIC CHANGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Ekaterine Vatsadze

PhD, Professor Central University of Europe,
Kutaisi, Tsereteli st. #13, Georgia, 4600, Georgia,
Associate Professor of Caucasus International University,
Contract lecturer of Akaki Tsereteli State University,
+995558185581, eka.vatsadze@unik.edu.ge,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9712-4066>

Abstract

This study examines lexical-semantic changes in the English language under the influence of globalization and rapid technological development. It aims to explore how new vocabulary emerges, how existing words shift in meaning, and how these processes reflect broader social, cultural, and communicative transformations. The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining corpus and contextual analysis with semantic and sociolinguistic theories, alongside a quantitative survey conducted among 100 students of Central university of Europe and Akaki Tsereteli State University in Kutaisi, Georgia.

The findings reveal that digital environments—particularly social media and online platforms—serve as primary drivers of lexical innovation. A significant majority of respondents (87%) reported frequent exposure to neologisms, while over 80% expressed positive attitudes toward their role in enriching communication. However, the actual use of such terms remains context-dependent, with 90% of participants adjusting their language according to social and communicative settings. The study also identifies key processes of word formation, borrowing, and semantic expansion, illustrating how terms such as *cloud*, *viral*, and *platform* have acquired new meanings in digital contexts.

Theoretically, the research contributes to understanding language as a dynamic and adaptive system shaped by technological, cultural, and social forces. Practically, it highlights the importance of linguistic awareness in navigating global communication and intercultural interaction. The study concludes that continuous adaptation and “renewable knowledge” are essential for effective communication in the modern, information-rich world, where language functions as a crucial tool for understanding and connection.

Key words: neologisms, globalization, digital technology, internet.

Introduction

If you want stability, never stop changing and handling obstacles. Nowadays' lifestyle is the most acute expression of 'rat race', permanent state of anxiety, stress and different kind of pressure including FOMO (Fear of missing out). On the one hand people are bombarded with too much information via also too many sources including doom-scrolling, on the other hand we feel confused and disoriented as if we are cloistered in a labyrinth made by Deudalus for the King of Greek Minos. So, we seek for Ariadne's thread to break free from it. And in the era of globalization and rapid development of technology that influenced not only economics, politics but also the language, the 'thread' is 'renewable' knowledge. Language as a living entity undergoes permanent lexical-semantic changes. Lexical-semantic changes shows how flexible language is and how it connects cultures, especially under globalization. Technology and Internet provide new vocabulary. Terms like 'streaming', 'app', 'viral', 'cloud', 'google'(verb), 'unfollow', 'DM'(Direct Message), 'AI' (Artificial Intelligence), 'zoom', 'influencer', 'start-up' have moved from niche or technical usage into everyday speech worldwide.

English as a global Lingua franca spreads these innovations across languages frequently with slight adaptations. In Georgian Language for example, the word ‘streaming’ სტრიმინგი [strimingi] is a direct borrowing + Georgian suffix -ი[II]), the word ‘app’ აპი [api] represents phonetic adaptation; sometimes we also use the word აპლიკაცია [aplikatsia] for a more formal term; the word viral ვირუსული is translated/adapted from ‘virus’ + Georgian adjective suffix ული[uli]; the word ‘cloud (computing)’ ქლაუდი [qlaudi] / დრუბლოვანი სერვისი is both borrowing and native translation; the word ‘Google’ (as a verb) დაგუგვლა [dagugvla / დაგუგლე [dagugle] is formed by

verb formation using prefix და[da] + adapted root; the word ‘unfollow’ ანფოლოუ [anfolow] is informal borrowing; the word AI (Artificial Intelligence) ხელოვნური ინტელექტი is fully translated term; abbreviation AI also used informally; the word ‘Zoom’ [zumi] (meeting) ზუმი / ზუმში შეხვედრა is brand name adapted + Georgian case endings; the word ‘start-up’ სტარტაპი is fully integrated borrowing with Georgian morphology.

New fields such as AI, digital technology, digital humanities, HCI (Human- Computer Interaction, E-learning and EDTech, FinTech, Environmental and Sustainability studies introduce new terms like ‘cybersecurity’, ‘clickbait’, ‘digital footprint’, ‘blockchain’, ‘metaverse’, ‘eco-anxiety’, ‘doomscrolling’, ‘workation’, ‘digital nomad’, ‘gig economy’, ‘crowdfunding’.

Moreover, the globalization of English led to the emergence of new varieties of English each with its unique vocabulary and expressions. Consequently, we’ve got a ‘world English’ adapted and enriched by different traditions, customs and spheres. English will continue to absorb words from other languages further expanding its lexicon (Stockwell, 2001).

Understanding language evolution and global communication and cultural exchanges requires the study of these lexical semantic-changes.

Methodology

Lexical-semantic changes in English can be examined through linguistic and semantic theories, which shows how language evolves over time in response to social, cultural, and technological developments. Using various methods, this research aims to capture shifts in meaning and word usage influenced by global and technological factors.

The study first applies corpus analysis and examines linguistic context. By analyzing sources such as literature, news, social media, and academic writing, it became possible to trace language trends over time. It also helped to identify new terms, monitor changes in their meanings, and track their semantic development. Due to corpus analysis, the work identified how terms like ‘platform’, ‘influencer’ and ‘hashtag’ shift from specialized to everyday meanings. Contextual analysis—examining sentence structure and co-occurring words—revealed how meaning depends on usage; for example, ‘cloud’ now refers both to weather and digital storage depending on context.

As for semantic theories, they explain how meanings change through processes such as broadening and polysemy (e.g., ‘streaming’ evolving from flowing water to digital media transmission). Sociolinguistics highlights the social and cultural origins of terms like ‘selfie’ and ‘hashtag’, linking them to digital practices and global communication, where such words often extend beyond their original contexts (Sytaniac, 20210).

Comparative and diachronic approaches trace how meanings evolve over time (e.g., ‘tweet’), while pragmatics examines how context shapes interpretation (e.g., ‘viral’ in internet culture) (Cassymova, 2024).

Apart from above mentioned corpus analysis the study also employed quantitative survey research method to identify awareness, attitudes and usage of neologisms using Likert scale. 100 from Central University of Europe and Akaki Tsereteli State University in Kutaisi, Georgia took part in it.

Together, these methods show how language adapts to technological and social change, offering insight into its ongoing evolution in global communication.

Results

Due to globalization and technological advancement, English has undergone notable lexical-semantic changes. The rise of digital culture, global communication platforms, and ongoing

technological innovation has driven the emergence of new terms and expanded the meanings of existing ones (Ibragimova, 2024). These developments reflect not only linguistic change but also broader cultural and communicative transformations across societies. Findings of quantitative survey method shows the awareness, attitude and usage of neologisms.

1. The majority reports regular encounters with newly coined words. Notably, 87% of participants strongly agreed that neologisms appear more often in digital contexts such as social media, online platforms, and digital communication channels. This suggests that digital environments function as the primary catalysts for lexical innovation and dissemination.

Over 80% of respondents strongly agreed that neologisms are interesting, enrich the language, and contribute to more dynamic communication. These findings support the view that language users generally perceive lexical innovation as a natural and beneficial aspect of linguistic evolution.

Despite high levels of awareness and positive attitudes, the actual use of neologisms appears moderate rather than extensive. Responses indicate that participants employ neologisms selectively rather than habitually. social context plays a critical role in language choice. Almost all respondents (90 out of 100) reported adjusting their use of neologisms depending on their audience. This suggests that neologisms function as socially conditioned linguistic resources, with usage influenced by factors such as formality, interlocutor, and communicative setting.

2. New Words and Phrases

These neologisms often arise to describe novel phenomena that previously had no linguistic representation. For example:

Eco-anxiety - a blend ‘ecology’ and ‘anxiety’ a chronic, often overwhelming, fear of environmental doom or catastrophe, stemming from the climate crisis.

Workation- a blend of ‘work’ and ‘vacation’, this term refers to employees working remotely from a location typically associated with leisure, such as beach, mountain, or foreign city.

Edtech – a blend of ‘Education’ and ‘technology,’ this term refers to creating and using technology for education and study.

Healthtech- (Healthcare Technology) refers to digital solutions that empower individuals to take control of their health.

Medtech- (Medical Technology) focuses on advancing patient diagnostics, treatment, and medical procedures through specialized equipment and medical devices.

Fintech- a blend of ‘financial’ and ‘technology,’ this term refers to innovative financial services using modern digital tools. It reflects the evolution of banking and finance in a tech-driven global economy.

Doomscrolling- a compounding of ‘doom’ and ‘scroll’ - compulsive, excessive consumption of negative, distressing news or social media content, even when it causes anxiety or sadness.

Digital nomad- a compounding -a person who earns a living working online in various locations of their choosing (rather than a fixed business location).

Blockchain- a compounding of ‘block’ and ‘chain’- a term which refers to a system in which a record of transactions, especially those made in a cryptocurrency, is maintained across computers that are linked in a peer-to-peer network

Cryptocurrency- affixation a crypto (Greek origin meaning hidden, secret) and currency (money) a digital currency in which transactions are verified and records maintained by a decentralized system using cryptography, rather than by a centralized authority.

Deepfake- synthetic media—images, audio, or video—created using artificial intelligence (AI) to convincingly replace a person's likeness or voice with another's. They leverage ‘deep learning’ (a type of machine learning) to generate realistic but fake content.

Digital footprint - Compounding. Online trace of activity

Metaverse – a concept describing a collective virtual space, often powered by augmented and virtual reality. This term gained attraction with the expansion of immersive digital environments and social experiences.

Crowdfunding – a method of raising money through the internet by collecting small contributions from a large number of people. The term illustrates how technology has transformed traditional fundraising models.

Emoji – originally a Japanese term, it has been adopted into English to refer to digital pictograms used in messaging. Emojis reflect the blend of linguistic and visual communication in the digital age.

Cyberbullying – a term used to describe harassment that takes place thereby digital platforms. The emergence of this term reflects a serious social issue tied directly to technological environments.

These new lexical items have been used into everyday language and are now commonly found in both informal and formal contexts. Their meanings are directly attached to technological functions and social behaviors, marking a fundamental shift in how we interact and communicate.

3. Semantic expansion and shifting meaning

These shifts reflect how familiar terms are repurposed or reinterpreted in response to technological advancements or global trends.

Cloud- Initially referred to a visible mass of water vapor in the sky; in modern usage, it denotes internet-based data storage and computing services. Over time, it has also broadened to include abstract ideas like ‘working in the cloud.’

Stream / Streaming- Traditionally meant a small flow of water; now it refers to delivering digital media (music, video, games) over the internet. It has further expanded metaphorically (e.g., streaming content, ‘live streaming events’).

Viral-Originally a medical term related to viruses; it now describes content that spreads rapidly across social media. Its meaning has expanded beyond negative connotations to include popularity and influence.

Platform- Once meant a physical raised surface; now widely used for digital environments (social media platforms, learning platforms). It has further shifted to mean a space for expression or influence.

Profile- Previously referred to the outline of a face; now commonly means a personal account or page on social networks, and even a summary of data or characteristics.

Handle- Traditionally a physical grip; in digital contexts, it refers to a username or online identity. It has expanded metaphorically to identity representation.

Feed- Originally meant to give food; now refers to a continuous stream of content on social media. It has shifted toward an informational rather than physical meaning.

Troll- Once a mythical creature from folklore; now primarily used to describe someone who deliberately provokes others online. The meaning has shifted significantly due to internet culture.

Avatar- Originally a concept from Hindu mythology referring to a deity’s incarnation; now denotes a digital representation of a user in virtual environments.

Dashboard- Historically part of a vehicle interior; now used for digital interfaces that display data, analytics, or controls.

Such shifts in meaning demonstrate the flexibility and dynamism of the English lexicon. They also underscore how context determines interpretation and how societal needs reshape language over time.

Discussion

Globalization and technological progress have greatly influenced how word meanings and vocabulary evolve. These changes do not happen in isolation—they are shaped by a combination of technological innovation, cultural exchange, and shifting social patterns. Together, these factors drive the creation, adaptation, and spread of new words in English and across other languages.

Technology has become one of the strongest forces shaping modern language. The rise of personal computers, the internet, mobile devices, and social media has introduced entirely new concepts that require new ways of expression. Words like *geotag*, *unfriend*, and *livestream* show how language adapts to describe new digital tools and behaviors. These terms do more than name technologies—they reflect how people interact and communicate in everyday digital life. At the same time, technology has made language change much faster than before. Online platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter (X), TikTok, and Reddit, Instagram allow new words to appear and spread almost instantly. Artificial intelligence is also influencing how people use language. In addition to introducing words like *chatbot* and *deepfake*, it is changing communication habits. For example, when

people speak to voice assistants, they often use shorter, more direct phrases to be better understood by machines.

Cultural exchange is another key factor in language change. Because English is widely used around the world in areas such as science, media, and business, it both adopts words from other languages and spreads its own vocabulary globally. Words like *anime*, *karma*, and *sushi* are good examples of terms that started in other cultures but are now widely recognized across the world. At the same time, English words are frequently borrowed into other languages. Terms like *app*, *stream*, and *startup* are now commonly used in everyday conversations in many countries. This creates a mixed linguistic environment where local and global influences come together. Using English-based terms can also signal connection to global culture. For instance, the word *influencer* is often used internationally to reflect familiarity with social media and digital trends. In this way, vocabulary becomes part of a shared global culture while still interacting with local identities.

Social factors—especially the role of younger generations—are important in shaping language. Young people are often the first to experiment with new ways of speaking, particularly through online communities. Their creativity leads to the development of slang, abbreviations, and new meanings for existing words. Terms like *ghosting*, *flex*, and *simp* began in smaller online spaces but quickly became widely understood (Ezuruike et al., 2025). In addition, modern communication is no longer limited to words alone. Digital natives often combine text with emojis, GIFs, and hashtags, creating a more visual and expressive way of communicating. These elements may not be traditional words, but they carry clear meanings and influence how messages are interpreted. Social media also encourages playful and creative language use. Memes, for example, rely on shared cultural knowledge and often introduce short-lived phrases that spread quickly (Hydaiati et al., 2025). Even if these expressions do not last long, they show how language can bring people together and reflect shared experiences.

Although globalization encourages the spread of shared vocabulary, it can also create tension between global influence and local identity. Some countries try to protect their languages by promoting native alternatives or limiting the use of foreign words (Alizada, 2021). For example, efforts in places like France and Iceland aim to preserve linguistic traditions. At the same time, adopting global vocabulary can be empowering. Using terms like *podcast* or *e-commerce* allows people from different parts of the world to participate in global conversations while still maintaining their own cultural identity. This shows that language change is not a simple process. It involves both adaptation and preservation, reflecting a balance between global connection and local uniqueness.

Language change is influenced by many factors, not just technology. Cultural values, social interactions, identity, and even politics all play a role. For example, the word *woke* originally referred to social awareness, but its meaning has shifted and become more politically charged in different contexts.

Economic changes also shape language. The rise of the gig economy has introduced terms like *freelancer*, *side hustle*, and *digital nomad*, reflecting new ways of working and living. These words capture modern ideas about flexibility, independence, and mobility.

Conclusion

In a world shaped by rapid technological advancement and globalization, language has become a dynamic and adaptive system that reflects the complexities of modern life. The constant influx of information, the pressure of digital communication, and the emergence of new social realities have transformed not only how people interact but also how they express meaning. As this study demonstrates, lexical-semantic change in English is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a direct response to evolving cultural, technological, and social environments.

The findings confirm that digital platforms serve as primary drivers of linguistic innovation, accelerating the creation and global dissemination of neologisms. At the same time, the adaptability of English as a global lingua franca enables these innovations to cross linguistic boundaries, influencing other languages such as Georgian through borrowing, translation, and hybridization. This process illustrates the interconnectedness of languages in a globalized world, where local linguistic identities coexist with global communicative practices.

Moreover, the study highlights that language users are not passive recipients of change but active participants who shape and regulate linguistic trends according to context, audience, and social

norms. While attitudes toward neologisms are largely positive, their selective usage underscores the importance of pragmatic and sociocultural factors in communication.

Ultimately, language evolution can be seen as the “Ariadne’s thread” that helps individuals navigate the complexity of the modern “labyrinth” of information and globalization. Continuous learning and adaptation—what may be termed “renewable knowledge”—are essential for maintaining clarity, identity, and effective communication in this ever-changing environment. Understanding lexical-semantic change, therefore, is not only crucial for linguistic studies but also for grasping broader transformations in human interaction, culture, and global society

REFERENCE

- Alizada, L. (2021). *Global spread of English and its impact on tourism lexicology*. Tourism and Management University, 6-11.
- Ezuruike, I., & Ibileye, G. (2025). *Lexical Innovation: A Morphosemantic Study of Gen-Z Neologisms*. Retrieved from https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/lexical-innovation-a-morphosemantic-study-of-gen-z-neologisms/?utm_source=chatgpt.com 10.01.2026
- Hdayati, F, Dallyono, R., Kurniawanm E, Yudistira, R. S. (2025). *The Emergence of Neologisms and New Linguistic Forms that Impact Communication on TikTok*. Retrieved from <https://ejournal1.unud.ac.id/index.php/ejl/article/view/4645/2653> 12.12.2025
- Ibragimova, (2024). *Neologisms and Loanwords in Modern English: Insights From Corpus Linguistics and the Impact of Digital Communication*. Retrieved from <https://webofjournals.com/index.php/1/article/view/2554/2525>. 14.02.2026
- Kassymova, A., Tussupbekova, G., Sabyrbayeva, R., Zhumagulova, A., & Saganayeva, G. (2024). Structural-semantic and linguocultural aspects of vocabulary in social networks. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 1–16.
- Stockwell, P., & Minkova, D. (2001). *English words: History and structure*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sytzniak, R.M. (2021). Evolution of the research of lexical changes of word meaning and regularity of semantic changes. *Vcheni Zapiski*, 1, 2202162.