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Neologisms in Popular Culture: A Review of Linguistic Innovation

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Abstract. Neologism refer to creation of new word or expression in language plus are widely recognized as important part of language development together with cultural change. This article reviews emergence of new vocabulary in popular culture as well as shows that popular culture provide dynamic environment for linguistic creativity. It examines study discussing neologism that originate from film, especially blockbuster movie, television series, music, along with social media. These study demonstrate important role of popular culture in introducing new expression into language plus spreading them to wider audience. Although many scholars have examined neologism, only limited number have explored popular culture as broad together with interconnected domain. Popular culture include music, film, television program, video game, social media, internet trend, in addition to other cultural activity that influence everyday life. In recent year, it become major source of new vocabulary, continuously producing modern plus widely used expression. This study apply qualitative library research approach through systematic review of literature obtained from journal, book, along with academic database. Finding indicate that popular culture plays major role in accelerating spread together with acceptance of neologism, particularly through digital communication. In addition, social media platform as well as entertainment industry serve as important channel for introducing new term, contributing to language development, identity formation, plus intercultural communication in modern society.

Keywords: Digital Communication; Kreativitas Linguistics; Language Neologism; Popular Culture; Social Media.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language are not fixed system but one that continuously change in addition to develop over time. New word along with expression are constantly added as part of linguistic innovation together with cultural creativity. Introduction of new vocabulary is influenced by cultural activity, social interaction, technological progress, as well as global communication. As society continue to change, language adapt to meet new communicative need. For this reason, lexical innovation is often viewed as important sign of language development plus change (Kerremans, 2023). One of clearest example of this process are emergence of neologism, which can be entirely new word, new expression, or existing word that acquire new meaning together with become part of everyday communication.

Formation plus spread of neologism is closely linked to cultural value, social behavior, along with technological change. Earlier study have shown that new word often emerge as response to social transformation, digital communication, globalization, in addition to technological advancement (Fandrych & Thurmair, 2022; Renouf, 2023). Previous research have examined neologism in area such as social media communication, online community, pandemic-related discourse, together with digital journalism. For instance, Zhang as well as Liu (2024) (Onyedum, 2021) found that social media platform greatly increase speed at which new expression are adopted across different language community. Likewise, Algeo (2023) stated

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that technological innovation remain one of most productive source of vocabulary growth in contemporary English.

Popular culture become one of most influential setting for creation together with spread of neologism. Film, television series, music, video game, internet meme, plus social media trend regularly generate new word as well as expression that often move beyond their original context along with become part of everyday communication (Crystal, 2023). Vocabulary originating from entertainment industry frequently gain popularity because audience are repeatedly exposed to it through global media network. As result, some of these expression eventually become widely accepted in addition to are included in major dictionary such as Oxford English Dictionary plus Merriam-Webster (Oxford Languages, 2024).

Although research on neologism have increased considerably, many previous study have focused on only one aspect of popular culture, such as social media, film, or digital communication (Kerremans, 2023; Zhang & Liu, 2024). Only small number of study have examined popular culture as complete system that combine film, music, and social media at same time. This create research gap because new vocabulary is increasingly shaped by interaction among multiple cultural platform rather than by single medium. In addition, earlier study have mainly focused on linguistic structure together with word-formation pattern, while giving less attention to wider cultural process that support spread plus acceptance of new expression.

This study attempt to address that gap by providing broad review of English-language neologism across major area of popular culture, including film, music, along with social media. Originality of this study lie in its integrated perspective, which view popular culture as connected source of lexical innovation. Instead of focusing on only one medium, this research examine how different cultural sector work together in creating, spreading, as well as normalizing new vocabulary in contemporary English. Through this approach, study offer wider understanding of connection between linguistic creativity, cultural production, in addition to language change in digital era.

English have shown strong ability to absorb plus create neologism because of its openness to borrowing word from other language together with its flexibility in adapting to social, political, along with technological change. Major global development, including technological advance, social movement, as well as public health emergency, have produced many new lexical item that reflect contemporary reality plus experience (Cabré, 2023). Rapid growth of internet together with digital technology have further accelerated this process by creating new communication environment that require innovative terminology. As result,

English remain one of most productive language for lexical innovation in addition to provide ideal context for studying influence of popular culture on language development.

Besides reflecting social plus technological change, neologism also function as marker of identity together with group belonging. Community often create as well as use new expression to distinguish themselves from others, strengthen group solidarity, along with communicate shared experience or value. Within popular culture, fan community, online influencer, plus content creator frequently introduce new vocabulary that spread rapidly among follower before reaching larger audience. This process demonstrate that language are not only means of communication but also important tool for building social identity in addition to cultural belonging.

Growth within digital platform significantly changed speed as well as scale at which neologism spread. Unlike traditional communication channel, social media allow user to create, modify, and share new expression almost instantly across geographical boundary. Viral content, hashtag, together with user-generated post contribute to rapid circulation of lexical innovation, enabling some expression to gain worldwide recognition within short period of time. Consequently, digital communication have become major driver of language change as well as have strengthened influence of popular culture on modern vocabulary development (Crystal, 2023).

Study of neologism also provide valuable insight into broader linguistic plus cultural process. By examining how new expression emerge together with become accepted, scholars can better understand relationship between language, society, along with cultural transformation. Reviewing neologism within popular culture not only reveal pattern of vocabulary development but also show how cultural product influence everyday communication. Therefore, investigating neologism in film, music, in addition to social media contribute to deeper understanding of contemporary English as well as factor that continue to shape its evolution.

2. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Neologism: Literature Review

Neologism is defined by some scholars as the process of generating words or expressions that are not existent in a language; it is a essential element of linguistic innovation and cultural evolution**.** A neologism is can be described as a newly developed word that becomes part of the common usage. When an expression is fully has the acknowledgement to be used appropriately in everyday usage. It usually chosen to be selected by dictionaries. It is

generally to define new cultural or technological phenomena, most of neologisms emerge because of technological needs. Technological advancement plays such a vital role in the process of new words insurgence, words like selfie, meme, hashtag…etc. solidify their position in individual common usage. It can be considered as the process that includes any expression or morpheme and any fresh illustration to an already existent expressions in a language (Picone, 1996).

Linguistic illustration would be that a neologism means words or a group of expressions generated according to the productive word formation rules in English, social media neologisms are emerged by this specific method. Sometimes, it is not just the new frame of the word that has been emerged, however linguistic innovation may also be done in a totally different sense of an already existing word, for instance word like 'surf' thar means 'to browse the internet' (Onyedum, 2021).

According to Casey & Kelly (2007) neologisms can take many shapes and styles, it may be totally new or formulated from an existing word. For instance, the word "mansplain" combines the words "man" and "explain" Neologism not necessarily a newly formulated word. They can be existing lexical items that have developed. The word "influencer" was in fact used as "a person or thing that influences another ", but recently has gained a new sense. Neologisms are new words that are structured by the patient or ordinary words that are used with totally new concepts. Moreover, the term 'neologism' refers to producing new formations for specific words used by individuals with schizophrenia. In addition, Some patients diagnosed with aphasia employ words inaccurately, invent and structure words or distant the phonetics structure of words.

Neologisms and Popular Culture

Popular culture or sometimes abbreviated to pop culture, generally refers to the traditions and material culture of a particular society. In the modern West, pop culture refers to cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, television, radio and even cyber culture considered as part of popular culture that are absorbed by the majority of a society's population. It is comprised of types of media that have mass accessibility and appeal. The term "popular culture" was coined in the mid-19th century, and it referred to the cultural traditions of the people, in contrast to the "official culture" of the state or governing classes. In broad use today, it is defined in qualitative terms pop culture is often considered a more superficial or lesser type of artistic expression. It includes everyday cultural products like music, art, and movies enjoyed by many people. Today, people create, change, and share pop culture through social media and other forms of interaction. (Story, 2018).

Newly formed expressions are constantly emerging through films that become hit universally, series, music, fashion, social media and trends in platforms like twitter and Instagram as social media becomes part of everyday communication that cannot be over looked easily. Neologism is such a significant in the way it helps to reinventing individuals' image. From slang in hip-hop and K-pop to creating of new words in films and television to internet memes and hashtags. Moreover, popular culture not only feeds new expressions, but also gives momentum to items, it's a living and powerful resource for linguistic creativity. It plays a massive role in the appearance of new words through mass media. It has manifested as a powerful tool of new words that are considered as a reflection of modern concept like technology, globalization and social media. It highlights the role of globalization, social media and fandom in preserving neologisms while demonstrating the challenges of documenting their quick rise and decline (Globallanguageservice, 2024).

Neologism in Films, television and Music

Neologisms in films, television, and music show the significance of popular culture in shaping and expanding language of everyday use. Through memorable conversation, lyrics, and some catchphrases made by famous characters, media presents new words that quickly become part of the public use. These neologisms often capture cultural trends, emotions, and identities of their time. The approach of learning a language through films and series is that it gathers education with a form of entertainment, so we are not only learning new phrases, slang or expressions, but we get a good lap out of them. Through popular culture individuals will get experience real live conversations and realistic topics that being discussed. In films there are words and sentence used repeatedly enabling viewers to understand the context clearly and surely better than learning from books, because individuals experience a real like situation and conversation (TEDx, 2025) (Picone, 1996).

A special connection often formed between particular films and songs and audience. This bond may arise from brilliantly produced plot or from touching stories that strikes emotionally, leaving viewers moved and at times in tears. Some films inspire people through their powerful messages and their ability of portraying real life experiences. Certain films, series, online mems and trends transcend entertainment and become universal phenomena unifying fans from different countries, environments, and orientations around the globe. These works have massive influence on popular culture giving rise to memorable expressions some of them newly formed while others are already existent but acquire new meaning.

One of the famous made-up expressions is "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" that gain popularity and then commonly used. This expression has no literal meaning and was created by

the writer of the film “Marry Poppins” in 1960s to capture the people attention through its unusual formation and playful sound, it describes something extraordinarily special, astonishing and wonderfully impressive. The cinema industry as a global domain provides us with various styles of discourse and language use with expressions and phrases that help to enrich languages (Monaco, 1996).

Neologism and Technological Innovation

Language is developing and changing through years to reflect changes in society and culture, in which societies as effective entities that have the ability to shape languages. Moreover, societies are substantial and decisive parts considering linguistic matters, like changing, developing and planning. Societies are always ready to be part of developing and changing due to particular societal needs and factors like technological, economic and cultural factors. As societies influenced by innovation, these innovations considered as part of people’s everyday use. This is evidently clear in popular culture, where creativity, identity and trends merge. Popular Culture as a universal domain acts as a means for viral videos, memes and online fandoms that lead the way for creating new expressions and as a result new methods of speaking, writing and learning languages (Marshal, 2025).

Technological progress is a such a vital factor in the process of creating and emergence new words and formation and introduce them to the public use. In many instances neologisms emerge as names for newly created things, like airplane and television or to describe actions related to their use, such as the verbs ‘taxi’ and ‘broadcast’. In the internet era the word ‘google’ come to be used as a verb by veery day use, originated from the name of the famous search engine Google. Moreover, expressions like smartphone and web applications have made it possible for users to “crowdfund” or “uber” locations terms that represent acts performed rapidly and with no much effort than traditional fundraising or hailing a taxi (Zeidan, 2025).

Considerable aspects made huge impact in the 21st century lexical innovation include globalization due to increased international communication, technology which has introduced the internet, mobile devices and social media to the world where the language of communication is heavily reformed with abbreviations, emojis and informality. Moreover, there is another significant point centers on culture modification where language aims for the concept of expressing the new and reformed culture of the new generation. In consideration of the social power and identity of the individuals, language in present times is considered as a mirror of one’s social image and identity. A survey made on the neologisms of Gen-Z demonstrated that older English speakers either have not come across with those words or are not in agreement with the new interpretation of the words (Ezuruike & Ibileye, 2025).

New created words are constantly being considered as part of the lexicon to present new ideas, perspectives and new emerging inventions and technologies as well as their specific meaning to individuals. Conversely, older words gradually vanish from usage as their cultural significance also gradually disappears. Considering the impact digital products have had on society, it is not surprising then that lexicographers have found that science and technology are by far the most creative sources of neologisms in recent times (McDonald, 2005).

The nature and conception of neologisms illustrated by the expression 'tweet' which its original meaning is to make a short, high sound was then switched to mean the process of sending a short message on the social media platform twitter (Yule, 2020).

Neologisms and Social Media

In recent years, social media has added a quite enormous number of new words to the language. 'Memes and 'rizz' are just a few instances of modern-day neologisms that have been merged into American English (Merriam webster). Some of the communication technologies such as social network and texting have paved the way to groups of words, like 'emoji' to transfer the complicated emotions and attitudes of the individuals. Emoji in recent times becomes a rally significant part of individuals communication. It is commonly used especially by young people as a part of trend in addition to the contribution of the spreading of adjectives on another level of sense related to emotion found in the word 'hangry' (Crystal, 2011).

According to Weaver (2025) states that, TikTok and Instagram have great part in feeding dictionaries with new words due to their popularity and widespread use. Some of these words like, 'skibidi' and 'delulu' are one of the words recently entering Cambridge dictionary. This linguistic expansion shows how online culture is changing and influencing English language. Experts of lexicography suggest that online environment considerably influences dictionary entries and has the power for enabling some expressions to be solid and constant, in addition to have the power of making some odd words and phrases to be acceptable and normal.

Moreover, the word 'skibidi' gained popularity by platforms like TikTok which is originated from the skibidi toilet video on YouTube where people make humorous performances from different angles. By the mid of 2025, the video has more than 60 million views. In the dictionary 'skibidi' considered as a polysemous word which mean cool or bad at the same time.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study use qualitative literature review design to examine how neologism emerge plus spread within popular culture. Review rely on secondary source, including academic article,

book, together with theoretical publication related to linguistics, sociolinguistics, media study, as well as language change. Relevant literature was gathered from reputable academic database such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, plus Crossref. Selected publication were examined to identify theoretical perspective together with empirical finding concerning linguistic innovation, lexical creativity, along with role of popular culture in generating new vocabulary.

Systematic literature review approach were employed to combine existing knowledge about neologism while providing broader perspective on popular culture as major source of lexical innovation. Particular attention were given to creation of new word as well as expression through film, television program, music, social media platform, together with other form of mass communication. Collected information were examined through thematic content analysis, which involved identifying, organizing, plus interpreting recurring theme related to word formation, language change, cultural influence, in addition to spread of neologism across different media environment (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Within addition, study adopt descriptive plus analytical approach to explain how different sector of popular culture contribute to creation, distribution, along with acceptance of new vocabulary in contemporary English. Finding were interpreted using perspective from sociolinguistics as well as language change study to provide comprehensive understanding of relationship between popular culture together with linguistic innovation (Kerremans, 2023; Capilla Martín, 2023).

Main objective of this study are to review plus analyze existing literature concerning neologism in popular culture. Because popular culture change rapidly together with continuously, it provide rich source of newly created word in addition to expression. This review explore role of film, television, music, social media, along with other form of media in encouraging linguistic innovation as well as shaping modern vocabulary.

This study focus specifically on neologism together with new expression emerging from major area of popular culture, including film, music, television program, plus social media. Attention is directed toward understanding how these expression become part of everyday language along with how popular culture contribute to creating, spreading, as well as normalizing new vocabulary within contemporary society.

4. RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Popular Culture as a Productive Source of Neologisms

Review of selected literature reveal that popular culture have become one of most productive source of neologism formation in contemporary English. Unlike traditional lexical innovation, which often emerged gradually through institutional, academic, or literary channel, modern neologism are increasingly generated through popular media as well as digital communication platform. Film, television program, music, social media, online community, together with internet culture continuously produce new lexical item that rapidly spread among user plus frequently enter mainstream communication. This finding support argument that language change is strongly influenced by cultural practice in addition to media consumption pattern (Kerremans, 2023).

Several study indicate that popular culture contribute not only to creation of new word but also to their diffusion as well as normalization. Widespread accessibility of digital platform allow newly coined expression to reach millions of user within short period of time. As result, neologism that initially emerge within specific fan community or online group often become part of everyday vocabulary. Capilla Martín (2023) (Onyedum, 2021)emphasizes that social media platform function as powerful mechanism for lexical innovation by facilitating rapid circulation of linguistic creativity among user. Consequently, popular culture serve as both creator together with distributor of neologism.

Literature further demonstrate that contemporary popular culture differ from previous cultural environment because of its global reach. Cultural product are no longer restricted to national audience. Film produced in one country, song released by international artist, plus viral content shared on social media can influence language user worldwide. This global circulation contribute to international spread of neologism together with accelerates lexical borrowing across linguistic community. Therefore, popular culture have become influential force in shaping vocabulary of contemporary English.

Neologisms in the Film Industry

Review indicate that film industry have long been significant contributor to lexical innovation. Film often introduce fictional concept, technology, identity, as well as cultural practice that require new linguistic expression. Some of these term remain limited to fan community, while other eventually enter mainstream language along with official dictionary.

One frequently cited example are term “Jedi,” which originated from Star Wars franchise and later became cultural reference extending beyond film itself. Similarly, word such as “muggle,” introduced through Harry Potter series, have gained widespread recognition

together with are commonly used to describe individual lacking specialized knowledge or ability. These example demonstrate how fictional narrative can generate lexical item that acquire broader social meaning.

Literature also reveal that film contribute to semantic expansion, whereby existing word acquire new meaning. Popular movie dialogue, character name, plus fictional technology often become metaphor or symbolic reference in everyday communication. Crystal (2023) argues that media exposure play crucial role in transforming initially unfamiliar expression into culturally recognizable term. Repeated exposure through sequel, merchandising, streaming platform, as well as fan community further strengthens adoption of these neologism.

Moreover, globalization of film industry have increased cross-cultural movement of lexical innovation. Hollywood production, in particular, have introduced numerous expression into international discourse, illustrating how entertainment media can influence language development on global scale.

Music and Linguistic Creativity

Finding also demonstrate that music represent highly productive environment for linguistic innovation. Musician frequently manipulate language creatively to establish unique identity, express cultural value, together with connect with specific audience. As result, music genre often generate distinctive vocabulary that later enters broader public usage.

Hip-hop culture provide one of most influential example of lexical creativity. Numerous slang expression originating from rap music have eventually become mainstream vocabulary. Term such as “bling,” “diss,” plus “flow” initially emerged within specific musical community before being adopted by wider audience. These expression illustrate how linguistic innovation often originates within subculture before spreading to mainstream society.

Literature suggest that musical neologism are particularly effective because music combine language with emotional engagement in addition to repeated exposure. Listener frequently encounter same expression through song, performance, social media promotion, and fan interaction. This repetition increases familiarity plus encourages adoption. Furthermore, music often reflects contemporary social reality, making its vocabulary relevant to ongoing cultural discussion.

Another important finding are that music contributes significantly to identity construction. New expression associated with musical community often function as marker of belonging as well as cultural affiliation. Through language, fan signal membership in particular social group together with participate in shared cultural experience. Consequently, music not only produce new word but also reinforces their social significance.

Social Media as the Most Influential Generator of Neologisms

Among all domain of popular culture examined in this review, social media emerges as most powerful generator plus disseminator of neologism. Literature consistently highlights unprecedented speed at which new lexical item are created, modified, together with distributed through digital platform.

Unlike film and music, which generally involve professional production process, social media allow every user to participate in linguistic innovation. New expression can emerge spontaneously through hashtag, meme, viral video, online discussion, plus user-generated content. Term such as “doomscrolling,” “unfriend,” “selfie,” “finsta,” along with “ghosting” illustrate how digital communication continuously generates vocabulary that reflects contemporary online experience.

Research conducted by Zhang and Liu (2024) indicate that social media platform facilitate rapid diffusion of neologism because user actively reproduce plus adapt linguistic innovation within their network. Viral communication significantly reduces time required for new expression to gain widespread recognition. In some case, newly coined term can achieve global popularity within day or week.

Review also reveal that social media encourage linguistic experimentation. Character limitation, visual communication, emoji, abbreviation, as well as internet meme create environment where user frequently manipulate language creatively. Consequently, social media functions not merely as channel for communication but as active laboratory for lexical innovation.

Furthermore, digital communication have transformed traditional process of language standardization. Previously, dictionary as well as academic institution often determined linguistic legitimacy. Today, widespread online usage frequently precedes formal recognition. Many contemporary neologism become established through collective user acceptance before being incorporated into dictionary together with academic study.

Patterns of Neologism Formation in Popular Culture

Reviewed literature identify several common mechanism through which neologism emerge in popular culture. Most frequently observed process include compounding, blending, clipping, acronym formation, semantic shift, plus borrowing.

Compounding combine existing lexical item to create new meaning, as seen within expression such as “doomscrolling” plus “crowdfunding.” Blending merges segments of two word, producing form such as “netizen” and “bromance.” Clipping shortens existing expression,

while acronym generate compact form suitable for digital communication. Semantic shift occur when existing word acquire new meaning due to changing cultural context.

Prevalence of these process demonstrate adaptability of English language. Rather than relying solely on entirely new lexical construction, speaker often modify existing linguistic resource to meet emerging communicative need. This flexibility contribute to continuous expansion of vocabulary within popular culture.

Another notable pattern involve interaction between technology along with language. Many contemporary neologism describe experience that did not previously exist, particularly within digital environment. As technology evolves, language continuously adapts by way of creating term capable of describing new form of social interaction, communication, together with identity.

The Institutionalization of Neologisms

Significant finding of this review concern process through which neologism become institutionalized. Not all newly coined expression survives over time. Many remain temporary as well as disappear when cultural trend lose relevance. However, some neologism achieve long-term acceptance plus become integrated into standard language.

Literature suggest that institutionalization depend on several factor, including frequency of use, social relevance, media exposure, along with communicative utility. Expression that fulfill genuine communicative need are more likely to survive together with become standardized. Oxford Languages in addition to Merriam-Webster regularly document this process by incorporating widely used neologism into official dictionary.

Popular culture play critical role within institutionalization process because it provide repeated exposure plus social legitimacy. When term appears across film, music, news media, social media platform, as well as everyday conversation, its likelihood of becoming permanent component of language increases significantly.

Discussion

Finding demonstrate that neologism are not merely linguistic phenomena but also cultural artifact reflecting broader social transformation. Popular culture serve as dynamic environment in which language innovation, cultural creativity, together with technological development intersect. Review confirms that film, music, in addition to social media contribute significantly to lexical innovation, although social media currently functions as most influential domain due to its participatory nature plus global reach.

These finding support sociolinguistic theories emphasizing close relationship between language as well as society. New word emerge because speaker require linguistic resource to

describe new experience, identity, technology, and cultural practice. Popular culture provide context in which these innovation are generated, shared, along with normalized.

Furthermore, study highlights importance of examining popular culture as integrated ecosystem rather than as separate media domain. Interaction between film, music, plus social media create powerful mechanism for production together with dissemination of neologism. This integrated perspective represent primary contribution of present review as well as addresses important gap identified in previous research.

Overall, evidence suggest that popular culture will continue to play central role in shaping future development of English vocabulary. As digital technology evolves in addition to global communication becomes increasingly interconnected, creation plus spread of neologism are likely to accelerate, making popular culture essential field for understanding contemporary language change.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This article has concluded that popular culture especially films, series and social platforms like Instagram are considered as one of the most significant tools in participating in linguistic creativity in recent years due to their massive existence in individual life. Some series has really become a global phenomenon, like Game of Thrones as a living example of the power of cinema industry existence and influence on people. On the other hand, internet is commonly used in almost every aspect of our daily communication, and with this intensive dependence on the internet particular words, phrases and sometimes newly created meaning for already existing words has constantly emerging and making their way to public use.

Popular culture is a substantial domain in emerging new expressions creatively due to its constant development and dynamics, it’s a field where new styles and inventions regularly revealed. Some of the neologisms emerge from films, series or social media reach widespread use, however some of them vanished.

In recent years, social media is the most powerful tool in the process of emerging and prevailing of new expressions or new meanings of some existent words. Social media is an amusing field, dynamic and changing, in addition to have different followers of different environments, class, age and gender. This variety gives social media a brilliant advantage of being one of the most significant words generators

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