

SEMANTIC CHANGE IN ONLINE SLANG: NEW MEANINGS OF OLD WORDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA ENGLISH

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Abstract

Language is living and changes all the time with society, culture, and technology. The most powerful propagator of current linguistic change is the social network that enabled English internet lingo to sprout through such dramatic speed. This paper explores the processes of semantic change of online slang in its trajectory from traditional English words to new meanings in social media. Based on theory of semantic change and the concurrent study in sociolinguistics, this research's goal is to determine possible types of semantic change: metaphorical extension, broadening-narrowing-amelioration and contextualization that are most frequently observed in digital discourse. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method, the research examines specific slang words used frequently in online interaction regarding how their traditional dictionary definitions are at variance with their meanings today as they appear in social media. The data are obtained from standard dictionaries and current on-line discourse. The results show that metaphorical extension and semantic generalization are the most frequent processes, reflecting the fact that social media users rely heavily on re-lexifying existing lexical items to signal new social, emotional and cultural facts. The research also reveals the role of online slang as an identity and group affiliation marker, especially among younger people. Together, the studies exhibit that SNSs provide a strong stimulus for word-meaning change in contemporary English. The study brings a new perspective on linguistic innovation in the digital age and reminds us of the need to include internet slang as one of its objects in linguistic, educational and lexicographical inquiries.

Keywords: Semantic change, Internet slang, social media, Online discourse, Modern English

Introduction

Language is an ever-changing system that is dynamic and is adjusted to the changes of society, culture, and technology. Social media is one of the most powerful agents that influence the modern language use, as it has changed the communication process, interaction patterns and meaning expression. Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit have recently established informal communication platforms that promote language and linguistic creativity, speed, and innovation. Consequently, a good number of the available English words have taken on new meanings especially in the new slang vocabularies of the internet. The process of semantic change, or the change of the meaning of words over an extended period of time, was one of the most perennial fields of linguistic interests (Ullmann, 1962). The process of semantic change traditionally was a gradual change over the generations, but the emergence of digital communication has much quickened this process. Words like ghost, dead, vibe, slay, and viral, which used to possess the stable dictionary meaning, nowadays are more likely to be used in social media speech with the new and context-dependent meanings. These variants can be obtained by the processes of metaphorical extension, semantic broadening/narrowing, amelioration, and pragmatic adaptation.

According to internet linguistics scholars, online space offers the most favorable conditions in terms of quick language change based on the intensive use of language of frequency, globality, and also the impact of online communities (Crystal, 2006). The negotiating and reworking occurs actively with social media users, meaning that the slang terms can gain momentum, become popular, and stabilize in a fairly brief time. Furthermore, online slang is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but also an identity, group, and cultural consciousness signifier especially among the younger users (Eckert, 2000).

This paper discusses semantic change as it applies to online slang, in which case traditional words in the English language take on new meanings in the social media. The study will show the role of social media as a stimulus to semantic innovation in the modern English language by examining some of the slang words and comparing the original meaning of the word in the traditional dictionary with its current application on the internet. The work adds to the overall knowledge of language change in the digital era and gives prominence to the social media as a potent powerhouse in the modern English semantics formation.

Significance of Study

It is significant that how English digital communication has evolved in response to language by analyzing online slang's semantic change, the study finds that in fact traditional English words take on new meanings through social media. This dynamic nature of contemporary English (Ullmann, 1962; Crystal, 2006). It takes the classic theories of semantic change and adapts them to the modern digital context, thereby closing the gap between Traditional linguistic and internet-oriented language research. The study is likewise important for sociolinguistics in that it demonstrates how social media platforms function as spaces where meaning is jointly made and fixed by online communities. Online slang is also a form of shared identity mark for young users in particular (Eckert, 2000). The rapid propagation of new meanings by digital communication is a further sign that the Internet stimulates linguistic change from an educational standpoint, the research is beneficial to both English language teachers and learners. A knowledge of online slang helps fill in the gap between proper academic English and informal communication through digital technologies (Herring, 2013). The registration of new meanings also helps to build dictionaries because it gives dictionary compilers examples from current usage patterns (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Research Objectives

- i. To examine how traditional English words acquire new meanings through their usage in social media slang.
- ii. To identify and categorize the types of semantic changes such as broadening, narrowing, pejoration, and amelioration that are most common in online slang.

Research Questions

- i. How have traditional English words acquired new meanings through usage in social media slang?
- ii. What types of semantic change (e.g., broadening, narrowing, pejoration, amelioration) are most common in online slang?

Theoretical Framework

This paper is theoretically grounded in the notion of semantic change from a sociolinguistic perspective and addresses the mechanism by which traditional English words develop novel meanings under social media slang. According to semantic change theory, word meanings

change through time in accordance with sociocultural as well as communicative requirements (Bloomfield, 1933; Ullmann, 1962). In the digital environments of social media today, these meanings can take on a life of their own and be updated at speed as part of dynamic linguistic spaces in which informal interaction, creativity and repetition play key roles. In this way, traditional English words are often extended in meaning through online slang, for example by broadening (words which take on ever-expanding semantic boundaries); narrowing (where meanings become increasingly specific); pejoration (when a word picks up negative connotations) or amelioration (when it gains positive nuances in use) (Traugott & Dasher 2002). These procedures offer a coherent view on online slang lexis and syntactic innovation. Sociolinguistically, these changes are determined by group identity, social valuation, and community norms in digital discourse communities (Labov, 1972). Thus, the theory of semantic change provides a pertinent framework for explaining how the explosion of social media drives and channels changes in word meanings within current English.

Literature Review

The advancement of technology in internet-based communication has a corresponding effect on the fast-growing vocabularies that is called English internet slang. Supported by the sophisticated technology, especially in social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApps, and You Tube has attracted millions of English-speaking users who use internet connection for communication (Akunna, 2012, p. 7). In this case, Valikova (2014, p. 15) states that the majority of the innovations in the branch of computer technologies come from the English-speaking world. It is supported by Crystal (2003, p. 115) who states that the communication via internet or social media mostly conducted in English, it is due to the worldwide use of internet and social media communication. It can be concluded that internet slang is a new language with innovative and novel characteristics (Gua and Dai, 2019). In this research, the writers apply the term English internet slang. The internet itself is an ideal medium for new slang to emerge because of the richness of the medium and the availability of information.

Nurhayati (2015) says language users build words by joining two morphemes. Language changes drastically from generation to generation. It has created new terms and eliminated others. Language changes constantly, according to Language Change and Historical Reconstruction in Linguistics 001. Old words change meanings, new words are produced or borrowed, morphology improves or degrades, and pronunciations alter. Slang phrases have distinctive structures even when casual. Tambunsaribu (2019) found that language structure and norms may be assessed. Morphology is the study of forms, initially utilized in biology and subsequently in linguistics (Yule, 2010). Since the middle of the eighteenth century, morphology has shown the complicated relationship between linguistic morphemes.

Word formation process is a way to construct new words from the existing materials (Trask, 1997) cited in Ratih and Gusdian (2018). Meanwhile, Hacken and Thomas argue that word formation process is how to produce new words based on some rules (2013). Morphology explores the internal structures of words that studies the form-meaning relationships between lexical units and their arrangement in forming words (Hamawand, 2011). Semantics defined as the study of meaning in a language plays a very important role whether the meaning resulted from word formation process is denotative or connotative. It is called denotative if the meaning of the words can be found in a dictionary (Rahman, 2015, p. 37). Whereas connotation refers to personal aspects of meaning, the emotional association based on individual experience, thus some words shared their connotations (Kreidler, 2002, p. 45) cited in Rahman (2015, p. 53). The following is an example of denotation and connotation mouse (Noun) is a denotation its meaning can be found in a dictionary that is sort of small rodent,

but at this time mouse (N) is a tool for moving a cursor when we operate computer, in this case there is a shift of meaning. Though it is denotative, its naming is taken connotatively from one characteristic of mouse, the movement of a cursor is mouselike characteristics. When it is viewed from the type of semantic changes, it is regarded as a more specific one, thus the changes of the word mouse meant small rodent into a tool for moving the cursor is narrowing. Semantic shifts, in particular, are a proven method for the evolution of language. Internet has become substance of our atmosphere and life activity. Since then, the internet has been used for communication. Interest has been drawn in the way it influences people's language use (Lundell, 2012). It does refer to the way people use their language online e.g. how articles are written for newspapers and the type of communication with which they engage on social media, across its various apps. The authors want to investigate a change of meaning from the morphological process in which there is shifting of meaning as an English internet slang. There are some studies which are also particularly of semantic change in terms meaning shifts but on some other research objects. I will be reviewing the first to articles; The first in a journal written by Tuti Siti Rohbiah entitled An Analysis of Semantic changes of English Lexical Borrowings in Indonesia Tourism Field (2020).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design that is employed in this study is qualitative descriptive. The qualitative methodology is suitable since the study aims at describing and interpreting the semantic changes in the English internet slang and not quantifying them. The research will attempt to describe the change of the meaning of traditional words in English in social media and categorize the changes based on the existing theories on semantic change.

Research Approach

The study lies on the basis of a semantic and sociolinguistic approach. Semantic analysis is used to contrast the traditional meaning of the meaning of the chosen English words in a dictionary with their modern meaning in the online discourse. The sociolinguistic approach is also used to learn how social media space and online communities can shape the construction of meanings, mode of usage, and language creativity.

Data Source

The information will be the chosen English slang words that are often used in social media communication. The words have been selected because they are commonly used in various platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, Tik Tok, Reddit, and online forums. Two primary sources were utilized:

- i. Authoritative dictionaries like the Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Cambridge Dictionary were used to get traditional meanings.
- ii. Online meanings were selected from online sources, such as social media posts, entries in Urban Dictionary, and examples of online communication situations.

Data Selection

Purposive sampling was applied in the selection of slang words with emphasis on words that:

- i. Was originally in a standard English,
- ii. Find application in Internet communication,
- iii. Evidence of evident semantic changes in online environments.

These are ghost, dead, vibe, slay, viral, sus, highkey, and touch grass among others.

Data Collection Procedure

- i. The process of data collection had a number of steps:
- ii. Determining popular social media lingos.
- iii. Writing down the conventional meanings of their traditional dictionaries.

- iv. Gathering their existing meanings in online applications.
- v. Comparing the two meanings to find out the difference in semantics.

All data were gathered by the analysis of documents as opposed to direct contact with the participants.

Data Analysis Technique

Qualitative semantic analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The words in the slang language were analyzed one by one and classified in terms of types of semantic change, and they included:

- i. Metaphorical extension
- ii. Semantic broadening
- iii. Semantic narrowing
- iv. Amelioration
- v. Pragmatic adaptation
- vi. Neologism and colloquial abbreviation.

The theories of semantic change, postulated by some of the scholars, including Ullmann (1962), Bloomfield (1933), and Traugott and Dasher (2002) were used to guide the classification.

Validity and Reliability

To further increase the validity, the research used various sources of authority on both traditional and online definitions. The dictionaries and the actual use on the internet were cross-referenced so as to ascertain consistency and accuracy in interpretation. The consistency of using the established theoretical frameworks in all analyzed data helped to improve reliability.

Ethical Considerations

The study only relied on publicly available data in dictionaries and open online sources. No personal information or personal communication was subject to analysis, which guarantees that ethical guidelines in language studies are observed.

DATA Analysis and DATA Interpretation

Table: Slang words with traditional meanings and Online Source

Slang Words	Traditional Meaning Source	Online Meaning Source
ghost, dead,	Oxford English Dictionary	Urban Dictionary; social media discourse
slay	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Merriam-Webster <i>Words We're Watching</i>
viral, spam	Cambridge Dictionary	Tagliamonte & Denis (2008)
vibe	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Social media discourse analysis
highkey	Cambridge Dictionary	Urban Dictionary
sus	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Online gaming & social media discourse
crash	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Social media discourse
tea	Oxford English Dictionary	Urban Dictionary; pop culture

Slang Words	Traditional Meaning Source	Online Meaning Source
		discourse
fire	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Online discourse
soft launch, hard launch	Cambridge Dictionary	Social media relationship discourse
touch grass	(idiomatic expression)	Online discourse
locked in	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Social media discourse

Semantic Analysis: Old Meanings to Social Media Meanings Ghost

- Traditional meaning: The spirit of a dead person
- Social media meaning: To suddenly stop communicating with someone
- Type of change: Metaphorical extension

Analysis

The word *ghost* traditionally refers to the spirit of a dead person, a supernatural being that is typically imagined as appearing briefly and then disappearing without warning. In social media communication, however, *ghost* has acquired a new meaning: it describes the act of suddenly stopping all communication with someone, especially in digital relationships, without providing any explanation. This semantic change represents a clear case of metaphorical extension, in which characteristics of the original concept are transferred to a new social context. Just as a ghost vanishes and becomes unreachable, a person who “ghosts” disappears from online interaction by no longer replying to messages or calls. The metaphor effectively captures the emotional uncertainty and abrupt absence experienced by the person being ignored. Social media platforms and digital messaging environments have facilitated this change by making silent withdrawal from communication easy and socially recognizable. As a result, the word *ghost* has shifted from a noun associated with folklore and the supernatural to a verb commonly used to describe a specific form of social behavior in online communication, illustrating how digital contexts accelerate semantic change in contemporary English.

Dead

- Traditional meaning: No longer alive; the state of having ceased all biological functions
- Social media meaning: Used to express extreme amusement, shock, or emotional impact
- Type of change: Hyperbolic metaphorical extension

Analysis

The dead is a word that is commonly used to mean something that is no longer alive and is connected to the irreversible cessation of biological existence. In social media communication, though, dead has been given a new definition and is normally utilized to convey adverse amusement, a shock, or emotional influence, usually in a sarcastic or overstated sense. This semantic shift is a hyperbolic shift; a word having a strong and literal meaning has a high degree of exaggeration in order to express a certain intensity instead of its literal meaning. In saying, I’m dead, or adding emojis like or, all users do not mean that

something is dead but rather it is so funny or unexpected. It is exaggerated taking advantage of the seriousness of the initial meaning to give an extreme expression of emotion in a dramatic yet playful way. This movement can be interpreted as the fact that the words of social media tend to support expressive, attention-seeking language that effectively transfers very strong responses, indicating the way in which hyperbole is a primary semantic change agent of online conversations.

Vibe

- Traditional meaning: Emotional atmosphere
- Social media meaning: A feeling or aesthetic
- Type of change: Semantic broadening

Analysis

Vibe is a traditional term that is used to describe a web of emotions or the overall mood of a certain place, scenario or encounter. The vibes in social media communication have experienced semantic dilution, which has extended the meaning of this concept to not only emotional atmosphere but also a vast array of emotions and moods, aesthetics and even personal style. The word is also used online to refer not just to the emotional feeling of something but also its appearance, sound, or cultural perception, as in a phrase like summer vibe, good vibes or this outfit is a vibe. This should be used more broadly to enable vibes to be used as an evaluative term that is flexible enough to include emotional as well as aesthetic impressions. Semantic broadening is indicative of the requirements of digital communication where users are interested in the use of concise words to be able to represent complex sensory and emotional experiences in an efficient manner. Consequently, the use of vibe has become a more multifunctional word and is now commonly applied to indicate approval, mood, or aesthetic fit in the social media context.

Highkey

- Traditional meaning: Not commonly used
- Social media meaning: Very openly or strongly
- Type of change: Neologism via contrast

Analysis

The highkey does not have a well-established and commonly used meaning in traditional British English and is mostly not found in older standard dictionaries. However, highkey has come to be used in social media communication as a slang term that means very openly, strongly, or explicitly, commonly used to underline force or honesty, such as I highkey love this song. This semantic evolution constitutes a series of neologism through contraposition since the word was coined directly as the antithesis to the ubiquitous slang lowkey, meaning subtly or quietly. Creating the highkey as its semantic counterpart, the speakers provided a new lexical element to articulate the reverse level of intensity. It is an experiment that shows how online communities actively construct new lexicons based on contrastive patterns and not historical inheritance. The emergence of highkey demonstrates how social media promotes lexical innovation at a very high rate, in that newly minted words can be widely accepted by being repeated in informal discourse over the internet.

Slay

- Traditional meaning: To kill
- Social media meaning: To perform excellently
- Type of change: Amelioration

Analysis

Slay is actually originally a term which has a negative, violent connotation in older and formal English; it means to kill or destroy. But when we turn to social media, the trajectory of

slay may be one of ameliorations, a shift in which word for a negative concept takes on a positive value. The slang use for slay online is to “destroy,” in other words, to look so good, or do something so great that you obliterate everyone else around you — as- if-you’d-killed-them dead; as one might say after Beyoncé performs at Coachella. The opposition is precisely what inverts the original pejorative sense of, and now makes» ·bravo a term of applause and commendation. This move is indicative of how the culture on social media often inverts strong or emotional words in order to amplify positive sentiment and excitement and goes a long way towards showing that value judgments embedded in words can also see reversal over time.

Sus

- Traditional meaning: Short form of suspicious
- Social media meaning: Untrustworthy or strange
- Type of change: Informal abbreviation

Analysis

Sus is a word that starts as a casual contraction of the word suspicious in the conventional English language. Sus is a common form of slang use in social media that means untrustworthy, suspicious, or weird; in most cases, the usage of sus suggests that the behavior of an individual is questionable or even deceiving. This transformation is an informal shortening of words, as a longer word is shortened to make it more efficient and convenient to use in fast-paced digital communication. Despite the fact that the essence has been inseparably related to the original word, sus has become more practical and informal, often applied in informal statements and jokes on the Internet. The fact that it is popular, especially in gaming as well as social media circles, proves that abbreviation is a valuable tool of language change in cyber space.

Crash

- Traditional meaning: Sudden collision
- Social media meaning: Fail suddenly (emotionally or socially)
- Type of change: Metaphorical extension

Analysis

The term crash is commonly used as a sign of an abrupt and violent impact, that commonly involves vehicles or tangible objects colliding with each other. Crash in social media communication has acquired a new context where it boils down to suddenly failing be it emotionally, socially or mentally as well as having burnout, embarrassment or loss of control. The metaphorical extension of physical collision and its suddenness is an example of this semantic change. Like in a physical crash, which consists of a sudden loss of stability or a sudden breakdown, emotional or social crash refers to the sudden loss of mood, confidence or social stature. The metaphor is very effective in communicating intensity and abruptness, and thus it is highly apt in expressive digital communication. This change explains the way in which social media users reassign the real-life terms to explain and characterize internal conditions and social life, which is why a new meaning of the words continues to develop in modern English.

Viral

- Traditional meaning: Related to viruses
- Social media meaning: Widely shared online
- Type of change: Metaphorical extension

Analysis

Viral is a term that is traditionally associated with viruses and the manner through which diseases are transmitted within a short period of time between one host to another. Viral in social media communication has also been metaphorically extended and it has taken the

meaning of content that travels rapidly and broadly on online communication platforms. The metaphor creates a very distinct analogy between being biologically infected and being online: just like a virus is encouraged to multiply and infect others, viral content can be circulated over and over again and goes to a vast number of end-users within a relatively limited amount of time. This figurative application is a successful way of portraying the pace, pervasiveness and reciprocity of information found online, and how scientific language is used to explain the phenomena related to digital realms.

Troll

- Traditional meaning: A mythical creature
- Social media meaning: Someone who provokes online
- Type of change: Metaphorical transfer

Analysis

Troll generally means a creature from folklore that can be ugly and cause trouble. In the discourse of social media, 'troll' has undergone a metaphoric shift to refer to someone who deliberately seeks to provoke (anger or hurt) others with inflammatory statements, on-line abuse etc. Negative mythical traits of aggression and trickery, or of misanthropist are employed and applied onto this kind of internet user. This metaphorical extension emphasizes how cultural imagery is being instrumentalized for labeling and understanding new trends in the social praxis of digital communication, at the same time underlining that figurative language continues to be a powerful resource intarding semantics change.

Spam

- Traditional meaning: Canned meat / junk mail
- Social media meaning: Repeated unwanted messages
- Type of change: Semantic extension

Analysis

Spam is a kind of processed meat and the term subsequently became associated with unsolicited electronic messages. Semantic bleaching: The meaning of "spam" has changed in the context of social media to include everything from bulk messaging and posting through unwanted messages, comments, or postings on the internet. Though the original use of this term referred to a particular kind of product and a certain type of unsolicited email message, the current usage applies more broadly to any online behavior which makes communication difficult due to its volume or spamlike nature. This generalization extends the sense of terms for recurring cases of misuse or annoyance to digital environments.

Fire

- Traditional meaning: Flames
- Social media meaning: Excellent or exciting
- Type of change: Amelioration

Analysis

Fire generally refers to flames or combustion and is linked with heat and destruction. Fire has undergone metaphorical extension in social media language from its original eutral or possibly derogatory physical use to a favorable expressive meaning great, wonderful, fantastic. When a user calls content, fashion or performance “fire,” they tap into the force and power of flames to communicate something that’s of high quality, exciting or inspiring. From a more positive perspective, it is interesting to see how violent physical imagery such as being punched becomes conventionalized for expressing praise in an online environment.

Chill

- Traditional meaning: Cold
- Social media meaning: Calm or relaxed

- Type of change: Metaphorical shift

Analysis

The term chill originally referred to cold temperature or the feeling of being cold. In the world of social media conversation, chill has experienced a metaphorical change and now apparently is used to describe being calm, relaxed or easygoing. It's a metaphor linking cool body temperature to cool calm and an absence of intensity or pressure. This usage is even more common in informal online conversation, where asking someone to "chill" does not mean cooling down literally but emotionally: Yet another example of the way that metaphor molds meaning on our everyday digital tongues.

Soft launch

- Traditional meaning: Marketing strategy
- Social media meaning: Subtle reveal
- Type of change: Pragmatic adaptation

Analysis

The term soft launch is a term of marketing and business, which implies the stepwise or partial launch of a product or service. It has been pragmatically adapted in the speech of social media where the term has become widespread to denote a rather delicate or oblique disclosure of personal information, especially romantic connections. Users can allude to a relationship in the form of half photos or ambiguous posts instead of an open declaration. Such adaptation demonstrates that the specialized professional language is re-read and re-used in personal social practice in the digital space.

Hard launch

- Traditional meaning: Formal release
- Social media meaning: Public relationship reveals
- Type of change: Contextual specialization

Analysis

Likewise, hard launch is a conventional use of the term in marketing, where a formal launch is full-scale. Contextual specialization of the term has occurred in social media communication, where it now has a more limited meaning of an explicit and public declaration of a relationship or personal milestone. A hard launch is high profile and is identified and publicly confirmed as opposed to soft launch. The given shift proves that digital culture reuses the old semantics and attributes to it new and context-specific meanings, which further proves the importance of social media in the modern semantic change.

Touch grass

- Traditional meaning: Literal action
- Social media meaning: Disconnect from the internet
- Type of change: Idiomatic metaphor

Analysis

The term touch grass is commonly used in reference to the literal physical process of putting one hand on grass or the outdoor environment. In communication with social media, however, touch grass has come to be used idiomatically to suggest that one should stop using the internet and get back to real life in the argument that the person is too consumed with everything on the internet. This shift in meaning is an idiomatic figure of speech where the act of literally touching grass is an allegorical expression of returning to reality, nature, and being offline. The term serves as a reproach or dismissive term in e-media discourse that describes social views of excessive use of the internet and how expressions of idiom can be formed by metaphorical rebranding.

Locked in

- Traditional meaning: Physically secured
- Social media meaning: Focused or committed
- Type of change: Metaphorical extension

Analysis

The term locked is used in the traditional sense to refer to something that is held or placed in position physically i.e. a door or an object that cannot be opened or relocated. Locked in has extended itself metaphorically in the social media usage, in which the notion of physical constraint or entrapment is extended to a mental and emotional condition. It is an adjective that is applied online, meaning that an individual is so intent and dedicated to a task, objective or is so obsessed with something that they are fully committed or focused on it. The metaphor implies that the focus or commitment is secured and cannot be distracted easily. The transformation proves the way that the concrete physical states are remapped onto the abstract thinking processes, and this is where the metaphor plays its role in the formation of the modern digital language.

Findings

The study of online slang proves that social media is a significant parameter in the process of promoting the semantic change in modern English. The usage of traditional English words is becoming more and more acquainted with a new meaning as it is reutilized in the digital context, where the speed, creativity, and informal communication are the key elements.

To begin with, the results indicate metaphorical extension to be the most prevalent form of semantic change in online slang. Such words as ghost, crash, viral, troll, chill, and locked in carry their initial physical or literal connotation to denote more abstract social, emotional, or behavioral conditions. This shows that the users are highly dependent on the metaphor to map the known physical experiences in both digital and psychological worlds.

Second, there is semantic broadening in the case of words such as vibe and spam which are broadened in meaning and interpretations to a larger emotional, aesthetic or functional sense. These words have now become versatile assessment instruments of online conversation.

Third, the paper finds obvious instances of amelioration, especially in slang like slay and fire where words that had neutral or negative conventional sense have acquired strong positive sense with them. This is indicative of the inclination of online communities to re-use intense or dramatic words in order to convey admiration and praise.

Fourth, productive processes of meaning change are displayed to be neologism and informal ushering. Such terms as highkey and sus depict how digital communities actively produce new lexical units or reduce the size of the existing ones to satisfy the needs of quickened communication.

Lastly, the results affirm that online slang serves as a social identity marker and also group belonging particularly among the younger users. The knowledge of such changing meanings is an indicator of cultural competence and involvement in digital communities, which supports the sociolinguistic aspect of semantic change.

Conclusion

The research results in the conclusion that semantic change in slang in the online context is fast, systematic, and socially motivated and is mostly influenced by the communicative behavior of social media users. English traditional words do not lose their original meaning but rather coexist with the newly formed, contextualized meaning that appears in the digital discourse.

The research objectives were met by establishing how semantic innovation occurs through social media and also by determining the most common forms of semantic change, especially metaphorical extension, broadening, and amelioration. The research questions are resolved

with the help of practical examples of how old words are resemanticized to meet new communicative requirements.

In general, the paper proves that social media is not just a communication tool but a potent force of linguistic transformation and alters the English semantics on a scale that has never been observed before. The changes conform to the existing semantic change theories and also underline the special impact of digital culture on the evolution of language.

Suggestions

i. For Future Research

Further research may increase the sample size by adding corpus-based analysis or quantitative analysis to determine the frequency and diffusion of online slang in various platforms like Tik Tok, X (Twitter), or Reddit. Cross-linguistic or cross-cultural studies would also enhance the knowledge in digital semantic change around the world.

ii. For Language Education

Online slang ought to be recognized as a valid field of study of linguistics by the English language teachers. The semantic change in the digital environment can be presented through discussions that will assist the learners in closing the gap between formal and informal English in the classroom and online world.

iii. For Lexicographers

The dictionary compilers must also keep on tracking the discourse in social media in order to record the new meanings faster. There are numerous instances of slang that were used in this research that have exhibited some indications of stabilization and can be included in future versions of the dictionary.

iv. To Sociolinguistic Awareness.

Social media users must also understand that the meaning of slang words is contextual and might not be universal. One must be sensitive to the audience and the setting where online slang is used outside the digital context.

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