



JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

ISSN : 3122-0479

DOI – <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18037639>

Volume 1 No 2 December (2025): Journal of English Studies

**A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SOME NEOLOGISMS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
PLATFORMS IN NIGERIA**

<https://joesfudutsinma.com.ng/joes/index.php/one/article/view/31>

joesfudma@gmail.com

Nini Fatima Nenlidang

nnenlidang@fudutsinma.edu.ng

08161220157

Nwabudike, Christopher E.

Department of English

Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State

chrislizzyn@gmail.com

08101876061

Abstract

Neologisms have become central to digital communication in the twenty-first century, particularly within highly interactive social media environments. While existing studies in Nigerian linguistics have examined slang, youth language, and morphological innovations, limited attention has been paid to the discursive functions of neologisms as used on major social platforms. This study investigates how Nigerian users employ neologisms on Instagram and Facebook to construct identity, negotiate social meanings, perform stance, and circulate ideologies. Drawing on Digital Discourse Theory and applying a qualitative, discourse-analytic methodology, the study examined fifteen public posts and comment threads containing neologistic items. Analysis reveals that Instagram fosters aesthetic, lifestyle-oriented, and identity-performative neologisms, while Facebook favours socio-emotional, narrative-driven, and morally loaded expressions. Across platforms, neologisms perform expressive, social, interpersonal, and ideological functions. They signal belonging, convey humor and irony, mark identity positions, and encode evolving cultural values. The study concludes that neologisms on Nigerian social platforms are not random lexical innovations but are central discourse resources that shape digital communication and contemporary sociolinguistic practices.

Keywords: Neologisms, Discourse Analysis, Social Media, Instagram, Facebook, Nigerian English, Digital Communication, Youth Language

Introduction

Language is inherently dynamic, evolving continuously to reflect social, cultural, and technological changes. In the digital era, the emergence of social media platforms has accelerated this linguistic transformation, creating new spaces for communication that defy conventional norms. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook, characterized by rapid information exchange, multimodality, and user-generated content, have become fertile grounds for linguistic innovation. Among the most notable manifestations of this innovation is the phenomenon of neologism—the creation or adaptation of new words, phrases, or expressions. This simply means that language is in a constant state of flux and nowhere is this more evident than on social media platforms, where linguistic innovation occurs at an unprecedented pace; and among the most striking features of digital discourse is the emergence of neologisms—newly coined words, phrases, or expressions that rapidly enter popular usage.

Neologisms on social media serve various communicative purposes: from humor and identity construction to commentary on socio-political issues. They are often born out of memes, trends, or viral events, and spread rapidly through hashtags, captions, and comments. Despite their prevalence, neologisms in digital discourse remain under-researched, particularly from a discourse analytical perspective that accounts for their usage in context, their pragmatic functions, and their ideological underpinnings. It is pertinent to state at this juncture that the study of neologisms in these digital spaces is riddled with complexities that challenge traditional linguistic frameworks. A major issue in this field is the ephemerality and fluidity of digital language. Unlike standardized forms of communication, social media language evolves in real time, driven by trends, memes, subcultures, and global events. Neologisms can emerge, gain

popularity, and fade within days, making their documentation and analysis particularly challenging. This raises questions about the criteria for identifying neologisms and distinguishing them from fleeting slang or jargon.

Another key issue lies in the contextual ambiguity of meaning on social media. The same neologism may carry different connotations across platforms (e.g., TikTok vs. Twitter), communities (e.g., Gen Z vs. millennial users), or even within a single thread, depending on tone, audience, and intention. This polysemy poses a challenge for discourse analysts seeking to interpret the social functions and power dynamics embedded in such language use.

Furthermore, questions of authority and legitimacy arise in the recognition of neologisms. Who decides when a neologism is valid? Is it the frequency of use, the cultural capital of its users, or institutional acknowledgment (e.g., dictionary inclusion)? These questions reflect broader issues related to power, identity, and gatekeeping in digital communication. Existing studies have largely focused on morphological aspects or corpus-based frequency analysis of neologisms. However, there is a growing need to examine how these linguistic innovations are embedded in everyday social interactions online—how users employ them to position themselves, express attitudes, or align with particular communities.

The sum of it all is that while neologisms are widely used on social media platforms, their analysis remains challenging due to several interrelated issues. First, the ephemeral and fluid nature of digital communication complicates the identification and documentation of neologisms. Many expressions gain traction for a short time and vanish without entering formal linguistic records. Second, there is no clear consensus on what constitutes a neologism in the digital space. Terms may originate as slang, meme-language, or recontextualized existing words, making classification difficult. Additionally, meanings are often highly contextual, shaped by platform

culture, user identity, and intended audience. Third, the discourse functions of neologisms—how they are used to express attitude, identity, humor, resistance, or group affiliation—are frequently overlooked. This lack of discourse-level analysis limits our understanding of how language is evolving in digital contexts. Finally, the diverse nature of platforms like Instagram and Facebook, each with its own communicative norms, algorithms, and affordances, raises methodological questions: How can researchers reliably collect and interpret data across such dynamic environments?

Literature Review

The study of neologisms in digital communication has gained significant attention in recent years, with scholars exploring their formation, usage, and social implications. Discourse Analysis (DA) provides a valuable framework for examining how these new words emerge, spread, and function within social media platforms. Several empirical studies have contributed to understanding neologisms in digital spaces, focusing on their linguistic structures, sociocultural roles, and technological influences.

Neologisms in social media often arise through creative word-formation processes such as blending, clipping, compounding, affixation, and borrowing Tagg (24). A study by Herring (67-80) analyzed Twitter neologisms and found that blending (e.g., “bromance” from brother and romance) and clipping (e.g., “sus” from suspicious) were among the most common mechanisms. The study also emphasized the role of hashtags and memes in reinforcing and standardizing new words. Another linguistic feature of social media neologisms is their multimodal nature, where images, GIFs, and videos contribute to meaning-making. Research by Zappavigna (25) examined Instagram captions and TikTok trends, showing that visual and textual elements often work together to solidify new expressions. This aligns with Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (31) multimodal

discourse theory, which suggests that meaning is shaped through a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic elements.

Beyond their linguistic structure, neologisms in social media serve social and identity-related functions. Androutsopoulos (109-134) argues that digital neologisms often function as group markers, signaling membership within specific online communities. For instance, Reddit users create in-group jargon that distinguishes experienced users from newcomers, while TikTok users generate trend-driven vocabulary that signals participation in viral phenomena.

Another study by Tagg and Seargeant (32) analyzed Facebook comment threads and found that neologisms play a role in humor, satire, and political discourse. Words such as “doomscrolling” (excessively scrolling through negative news) emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting collective anxieties and digital coping mechanisms Tagg and Seargeant (32). Similarly, neologisms related to gender and social activism, such as “mansplaining” (a man explaining something condescendingly to a woman), have gained prominence in discussions about feminism and power dynamics (Lakoff and Bucholtz, 33).

Social media platforms have distinct technological affordances that shape how neologisms emerge and spread. Research by Danesi (34) highlights that Twitter’s character limit encourages abbreviations and acronyms (e.g., “FOMO” for fear of missing out), while TikTok’s algorithmic recommendations amplify viral expressions by favoring repeated phrases in trending audio clips.

Tagg (24) further explains how algorithmic curation and engagement metrics impact linguistic innovation. For instance, TikTok and Twitter prioritize engagement-driven content, leading to the rapid proliferation of new words. A case study by Zulli and Zulli (27) on TikTok’s recommendation system found that lexical trends often align with meme culture, reinforcing certain phrases through repetition and remixing.

3. Theoretical Framework

The research adopts Digital Discourse Theory, which focuses on how communication occurs in online environments and how new linguistic phenomena emerge within digital spaces. Digital Discourse Theory does not have a precise founding date or a single origin, as it is a more recent theoretical framework that has evolved in tandem with the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The theory emerged as an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating linguistic, social, and technological insights to understand the evolving nature of communication in online spaces. Scholars such as Crystal (in the 1990s and 2000s) and Gopinath (2010s) have been key figures in developing the body of research that informs Digital Discourse Theory.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, as it aims to explore the linguistic phenomenon of neologisms on social media platforms—Instagram and Facebook. Qualitative research is particularly suited to studies that seek to understand the meanings, uses, and implications of language within specific contexts. The goal of this study is to identify, categorize, and analyze neologisms, examining their morphological processes, their roles in discourse, and their functions in digital practices. 15 data were purposively collected from neologisms used in posts, comments, and hashtags on Instagram and Facebook. Given that Instagram is more visually oriented and Facebook is more text-heavy, the study focused on posts and captions on Instagram and status updates, comments, and shared articles on Facebook. These platforms were selected due to their widespread usage and influence on modern digital communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 59-68).

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

The method of data analysis employed in this study is Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA), which is well-suited for exploring the linguistic and discursive features of neologisms in digital communication contexts. Grounded in the principles of Digital Discourse Theory, this approach facilitates a systematic examination of how new words emerge, function, and circulate within the discourse spaces of Facebook and Instagram. The analysis proceeded through the following stages: (1) familiarization with the collected data, (2) initial coding of recurring lexical items and neologistic forms, (3) categorization into broader themes such as identity construction, informality, humor, resistance, or community affiliation, and (4) interpretation through the lens of Digital Discourse Theory. This final stage emphasizes the role of technological affordances, multimodality, and platform-specific norms in shaping neologistic expression.

S/ N	Neologism	URL
1.	Delulu	https://www.instagram.com/p/DJZlrztK2sL/?igsh=MWtqOGx5aXZrMDc5eA=
2.	Revenge quitting	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DHf8l8bvloF/?igsh=MWIyNjd4ZjE4Y2c4aA==
3.	Drip	https://www.instagram.com/p/DITDwNbzHHk/?igsh=MWw0YXM4ZzI5M3oyYg==
4.	Stan	https://www.instagram.com/p/DITDwNbzHHk/?igsh=MWw0YXM4ZzI5M3oyYg==

5.	Cap	https://www.instagram.com/p/DITDwNbzHHk/?igsh=MWw0YXM4ZzI5M3oyYg==
6.	Ghost	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C0Wtd8ooUDj/?igsh=MTV6N2M2ZDA0OXpmcw==
7.	Baddie	https://www.instagram.com/p/DHv45R6olN7/?img_index=2&igsh=cjlvdTRjcXJhNXN0
8.	Cook	https://www.instagram.com/p/DHv45R6olN7/?img_index=2&igsh=cjlvdTRjcXJhNXN0
9.	Simp	https://www.instagram.com/p/DItWMKRy1TS/?img_index=4&igsh=MWsyahHNrMjR1engydw==
10.	Ate	https://www.instagram.com/p/DItWMKRy1TS/?img_index=4&igsh=MWsyahHNrMjR1engydw==
11.	Cheugy	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_AZmyGveFL/?igsh=MWMymzk2OTNqcHl5dA==
12.	Boujee	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_AZmyGveFL/?igsh=MWMymzk2OTNqcHl5dA==
13.	Goat	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_AZmyGveFL/?igsh=MWMymzk2OTNqcHl5dA==
14.	Demure	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_AZmyGveFL/?igsh=MWMymzk2OTNqcHl5dA==
15.	Sheesh	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_AZmyGveFL/?igsh=MWMymzk2OTNqcHl5dA==

1. “Delulu”

Stage 1: Familiarization: Delulu is a popular digital slang word, widely circulated on social media platforms. It is typically used humorously or self-deprecatingly to describe someone (usually oneself) who is being delusional, especially in romantic or celebrity fantasies.

Example: “He liked my story. Maybe he loves me. I’m so delulu.”

Stage 2: Initial Coding; Word type: Blending/Clipping

Root: Delusional → Delulu

Form: A playful and phonologically softened clipping that mimics baby talk or “cutesy” internet speech. Meaning: Being unrealistically hopeful or self-deluding, especially in relationships, admiration, or fan fantasies. Common structure: Found in captions, memes, hashtags (e.g., #delulugirlies), or comments.

Stage 3: Thematic Categorization: Theme 1: Identity Construction and Digital Persona

“Delulu” functions as a self-aware identity marker, especially among Gen Z users. It reflects ironic self-positioning—users admit to unrealistic beliefs but frame them humorously or affectionately. Theme 2: Humor and Language Play. The term carries ironic and humorous connotations. It showcases language creativity, common in meme culture, where emotional intensity is diluted with humor. Theme 3: Informality and Group Affiliation. “Delulu” is widely used in casual, in-group discourse, often by female users or LGBTQ+ communities online.

Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT). DDT Concept Application

to “Delulu”. Language–Technology Interaction: Instagram facilitates rapid dissemination of playful terms. “Delulu” reflects how digital users reshape formal words into informal digital idioms. Multimodality: The word is often paired with GIFs, memes, reaction videos, or aesthetic selfies that visually support the fantasy/delusion theme. Virality & Memes: “Delulu” thrives through meme culture, caption trends, and TikTok audio trends. Its humor-driven form boosts virality. Language Play & Creativity: The term showcases the internet’s tendency to soften serious states (like delusion) into digestible, friendly slang.

Digital Identity Formation: It enables users to playfully construct personas that balance fantasy with self-awareness—“I’m joking but also serious.” Community Solidarity: It creates shared reference points among users, building rapport around common behaviors (e.g., parasocial romance, wishful thinking). Ideologically, it normalizes emotionally risky behavior (like fantasizing) under a humorous umbrella. “Delulu” is a prime example of a digitally born neologism that thrives on multimodal, playful, and community-driven discourse. It is deeply embedded in the digital linguistic landscape, serving expressive, affiliative, and humorous functions.

2. “Revenge Quitting”

Stage 1: Familiarization: Revenge quitting is a compound neologism gaining popularity on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. It refers to the act of deliberately and dramatically leaving a job, relationship, or commitment not just for self-liberation, but to send a message—typically to punish or provoke those perceived as oppressive, toxic or ungrateful. Example usage (Instagram Reel context): “She didn’t just quit. She revenge quit—she sent a goodbye email, exposed the boss, and dipped.”

Stage 2: Initial Coding. Type: Compound neologism (Revenge + Quitting). Base terms:

Revenge: a retaliatory act; Quitting: the act of leaving or resigning. Meaning: A resignation or walkout done not silently or peacefully, but with intent to retaliate, make a statement, or reclaim power. Grammatical Category: Verb phrase used as a noun ("her revenge quitting shocked everyone") or verbing form ("he revenge-quit last Friday").

Stage 3: Thematic Categorization: heme 1: Resistance and Agency. This neologism reflects themes of empowerment, especially in the context of toxic workplaces, patriarchal dynamics, or exploitative relationships.

Theme 2: Identity Construction. The user positions themselves as someone who takes back control, enacting a dramatic exit as a power move. Theme 3: Performative Culture. "Revenge quitting" is often performed for an audience—either through storytelling, recording, or posting the act online. This aligns with self-branding culture on Instagram and TikTok.

Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT).DDT Concept Application to "Revenge Quitting". Language–Technology Interaction: Instagram enables users to tell stories visually and textually, making dramatic exits public acts rather than private ones. The phrase arises from these performative digital practices. Multimodality: Often presented in reels with audio overlays, captions, meme templates, or storytime-style narrations—combining video, text, emotion, and narrative. Memes and Virality: The phrase gains traction through relatable, viral storytelling—especially workplace "I quit" moments that go viral. It rides on the "soft life," "quiet quitting," and "toxic boss" trends. Language Play and Creativity: It transforms a serious concept (quitting) into something entertaining, performative, and cathartic. "Revenge" as a prefix is repurposed creatively. Digital Identity and Social Commentary: People use the term to critique toxic systems (e.g., capitalism, gender dynamics) while elevating their own agency. It's both a personal and political act. Ideologically, it aligns with themes of worker

empowerment, anti-burnout discourse, and emotional justice.

“Revenge quitting” is a digitally rooted neologism that combines empowerment, storytelling, and critique. It is not merely a linguistic innovation but a performative discourse tool, shaped by platform affordances and ideological shifts in labor and relationship culture. It showcases: language as a vehicle for digital resistance, digital spaces as stages for identity negotiation and neologisms as cultural shorthand for complex social act

3. “Drip”

Stage 1: Familiarization: “Drip” originally means “a drop of liquid,” but in digital and pop culture, particularly on Facebook and Instagram, it has been reappropriated to mean stylish clothing, confidence, or overall fashion appeal. Often accompanied by emojis (💧, 💎, 🍷) or hashtags like #dripcheck, #dripseason, #dripgame. Example usage: “Check the drip 💧.”

Stage 2: Initial Coding. Type: Semantic shift (repurposing of an existing word). Grammatical Category: Noun (“Your drip is on point”) or Verb (“He’s dripping today”). Stage 3: Thematic Categorization: Theme 1: Identity and Self-Styling. “Drip” functions as a digital index of identity, used to express pride in one's fashion, grooming. It signals participation in urban, youth-centered, and influencer cultures. Theme 2: Social Capital and Aesthetic Currency. The term is embedded in Instagram’s visual culture, where fashion is currency and appearances generate status and influence. Users post outfit pics or reels and caption them with “drip” to invite admiration or assert dominance. Theme 3: Community and Belonging. Using “drip” signals affiliation with communities that value style, trendiness, and performance—hip-hop, Gen Z, influencer, or urban fashion communities.

Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT). DDT Concept Application

to “Drip” Language–Technology Interaction: Instagram’s emphasis on visual aesthetics fuels the relevance of “drip.” The word’s meaning thrives in a platform that prioritizes appearance and style. Multimodality: “Drip” often appears alongside visual media—outfit-of-the-day posts, mirror selfies, TikTok transitions—showing how text and image co-construct meaning. Virality and Meme Culture: “Drip” has been memefied (e.g., “Drip Goku,” “Drip or Drown”) and repeated in captions, dance challenges, and rap lyrics, helping it spread cross-platform.

Language Play and Slang Innovation: Repurposing a mundane term (“drip”) into a badge of honor shows how youth manipulate language creatively for cultural relevance. Identity and Group Affiliation: “Drip” is a sociolectal marker, used heavily in Black youth culture and adopted across peer communities globally to signify shared cultural taste. Ideologically, it reinforces material expression, aesthetic power, and digital self-branding. “Drip” is more than slang—it’s a visual and performative neologism that captures the intersection of language, fashion, and digital status culture. In Instagram discourse especially, it functions as: a currency of coolness, a marker of subcultural belonging, a linguistic shorthand for curated online identity.

4. “Stan”

Stage 1: Familiarization: Originally coined from Eminem’s 2000 song “Stan”—about an obsessive fan—the word “stan” has been reclaimed and widely used in online fan culture. It now refers to someone who strongly supports or idolizes a celebrity, artist, brand, or even idea. The term has evolved from a negative connotation (to stalk or obsess) to a mostly positive or neutral one in current digital usage. Example usage: “I stan Beyoncé forever.” Stage 2: Initial Coding. Type: Borrowed proper noun turned verb/noun (semantic shift). Grammatical category: Verb: “I stan her”; Noun: “I’m a stan of BTS” Variants: Stan

culture, hard stan, soft stan, to stan, non-stan

Stage 3: Thematic Categorization. Theme 1: Digital Identity and Community Belonging: being a “stan” links individuals to fan collectives or digital tribes (e.g., Barbz, BeyHive, ARMY), it reflects shared identity through admiration and group solidarity in online spaces. Theme 2: Language Innovation and Playfulness: “Stan” is used ironically, hyperbolically, or even sarcastically, showcasing users’ linguistic creativity. Theme 3: Cultural Commentary and Power: “Stan” has become a political tool—e.g., “I stan AOC”—reflecting not just admiration, but ideological alignment. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT). DDT Concept Application to “Stan”. Language–Technology Interaction: digital platforms have transformed “stan” into a participatory identity. Multimodality: “Stan” is used alongside fan edits, fancams, fanart, hashtags (#WeStan, #StanTwitter), and reels that reinforce visual affiliation. Virality and Meme Culture: “Stan culture” thrives through memes, inside jokes, and viral fan trends, often with battle-like intensity (e.g., fanwars). Language Play and Creativity: reclaiming a violent obsessive identity and converting it into a badge of loyalty reflects digital linguistic play. Digital Identity and Affiliation: “Stan” functions as both self-labelling and social positioning within digital fan ecosystems. Ideologically, it can serve as a digital badge of identity, resistance, or critique (e.g., “I stan body positivity”). “Stan” exemplifies how digital communities reshape language to express loyalty, identity, and ideology. As a term: it blurs the line between play and passion, it reflects community belonging in algorithm-driven space and serves both affiliative and ideological functions. From its origin in hip-hop storytelling to its reinvention as a fan identity marker, “stan” embodies the fluid, performative, and affiliative nature of neologisms in digital discourse.

5. “Cap”

Stage 1: Familiarization: “Cap” is a slang term meaning a lie, exaggeration, or falsehood. It is commonly used to call out dishonesty or dramatization in online speech, memes, and viral content. Conversely, “no cap” affirms truthfulness or sincerity. Example usages: “He said he has three Benzes. That’s cap.” “No cap, she’s the best artist this year.” “Stop capping, we all saw the video.” It is popular in meme culture, comment sections, and reels. Stage 2: Initial Coding. Type: Semantic shift / slang derivation Grammatical Category: Verb “To cap” = to lie. “No cap” (phrase) = no lie; truth. Common Forms: Cap, capping, no cap, straight capping. Stage 3: Thematic Categorization. Theme 1: Truth and Performativity in Digital Spaces: “Cap” is a truth-policing tool, often used to challenge performative behaviors, fake flexing, or dishonesty online. Theme 2: Language Economy and Brevity: reflects compressed linguistic form—short, striking, and effective for fast-paced digital communication. Theme 3: Social Surveillance and Peer Commentary: used frequently in comment sections to call out bragging, deception, or exaggeration, serving as a digital accountability tool. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT). DT Concept Application to “Cap”. Language–Technology Interaction: social media enables the rapid evolution of meanings. “Cap” is a response to the curated, often exaggerated self-presentation common in digital spaces. Multimodality: “Cap” appears in comments, memes (with blue hat emojis), gifs, and videos, creating layered meaning through text and image. Virality & Memes: the phrase “No cap” became a meme template—often used in challenges, reels, on Facebook where users confess truths or roast lies. Language Play: “Cap” transforms a neutral noun into a judgmental slang, showing linguistic innovation. Digital Identity and Group Affiliation: Common in youth slang, hip-hop communities, and meme cultures. Using “cap” aligns one with digitally literate, socially savvy groups. Ideologically, it reinforces digital authenticity norms,

especially in online performance culture. “Cap” is a compact, culturally rich neologism that functions as a linguistic weapon for truth enforcement in digital communication. It shows how users negotiate credibility, honesty, and identity in social media discourse by: offering quick judgment markers (“That’s cap!”), enabling community policing of authenticity and shaping platform-specific honesty codes (“No cap” = real talk).

6. “Ghost”

Stage 1: Familiarization “Ghost” refers to the act of abruptly cutting off communication without explanation, especially in romantic or social relationships, usually via digital platforms (DMs, chats, texts). In 2023, the term has expanded beyond romantic connotations to include: friendship ghosting, social disappearance (digital detox), professional silence (e.g., job interview ghosting) and self-empowering narratives (e.g., “Sometimes, you have to ghost for peace.”) Example usage: “2023 is the year I ghost everyone disturbing my peace.”

“If the vibe is off, I ghost. No guilt.”

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Semantic shift and conversion (noun → verb) Original meaning: Ghost = spirit of a dead person Current meaning: To disappear silently, especially in digital communication Grammatical Category: Verb (“I ghosted him”), noun (“a ghoster”), noun phrase (“the ghost era”) Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Digital Conflict Management & Self-Protection: “Ghost” is now associated with self-preservation, emotional boundaries, and digital minimalism. Theme 2: Platform Affordances and Disconnection Culture: enabled by digital platforms (e.g., “seen” messages, muting, blocking), ghosting is a function of online affordances—it’s easy to disappear without consequence. Theme 3: Humor, Relatability, and Meme Framing: 2023 memes reframe ghosting as funny, relatable, or empowering rather than cruel. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Ghost” (2023) Language–Technology Interaction:

messaging platforms (Instagram DMs, WhatsApp, etc.) allow for ghosting to occur easily and silently—technological design shapes the behavior and language. Multimodality: “Ghost” is often paired with memes, dark-humor reels, aesthetic “disappearing acts,” and image quotes about self-care or “vanishing energy.” Virality & Meme Culture: “ghosting” has become a content theme for viral videos, relationship skits, and audio overlays. Often linked to the “soft life” and mental health narratives. Language Play and Repurposing: the eerie term “ghost” is now metaphorically used to describe social disappearance—emotional silence as digital haunting. Digital Identity and Resistance: “Ghosting” is now framed not as rude, but as empowerment, boundaries, or vibe protection—a shift in cultural ideology about interpersonal detachment. Ideologically, it reflects modern values of detachment, boundary-setting, and self-prioritization. In 2023, “ghost” has evolved from a passive action to an intentional digital strategy. It symbolizes a user’s ability to: control access to emotional space, escape drama or toxicity, participate in a digitally valorized culture of silence and self-prioritization. This neologism exemplifies how social withdrawal is rebranded in digital communities—not as cowardice, but as power and self-worth.

7. “Baddie”

Stage 1: Familiarization “Baddie” is a slang term used to describe a confident, stylish, and attractive woman—typically someone who embraces fashion, beauty, and self-empowerment, especially as seen on Facebook. Example usage: “She’s a whole baddie. Hair, nails, face, everything on point.” “Baddie” is often associated with: full glam looks (makeup, nails, brows), confidence, assertiveness and often material success.

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Derivation from adjective “bad” + diminutive suffix “-ie” Root meaning: “Bad” as slang for attractive, confident, bold New form: “Baddie” = a woman who

embodies empowered, high-maintenance femininity Function: Noun (e.g., “I’m a baddie”) or identity label (e.g., “#baddievibes”) Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Gender and Digital Identity Performance: “Baddie” is a digitally curated identity often centered on femininity, aesthetics, and empowerment. Theme 2: Visual Culture and Self-Styling: the “baddie look” is closely tied to Instagram aesthetics: contour makeup, long nails, bold poses, filters, and well-lit fashion photos. Theme 3: Cultural Capital and Aspirational Discourse: “Baddie” isn’t just a look—it signifies social capital (followers, brand deals, admiration) and a lifestyle of confidence and self-sufficiency. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Baddie” Language–Technology Interaction: social platforms enable women to self-style and brand themselves as “baddies”—a product of digital empowerment tools. Multimodality: “Baddie” posts often include filtered photos, curated captions, emojis (👑💅🔥), and hashtags—text and image work together to convey the identity. Virality and Meme Culture: the term “baddie” appears in reels, makeup tutorials, dance videos, and influencer bios. Viral makeup trends (e.g., “baddie transformation”) reinforce its cultural prominence. Language Play and Empowerment: the ironic flip of “bad” to mean “powerfully attractive” reflects how marginalized groups reclaim language. “Baddie” becomes a badge of beauty, power, and self-assurance. Digital Identity Construction: users use “baddie” to curate digital personas that combine glamour with confidence—an identity both performative and aspirational. Ideologically, it aligns with post-feminist empowerment narratives and consumer-driven identity performance. “Baddie” is a performative and aesthetic neologism rooted in digital self-branding. It reflects: the power of multimodal identity construction, the use of slang to elevate and redefine femininity and the influence of platform-specific aesthetics on the formation of self and social roles. It also engages ideological tensions between empowerment vs. objectification, and authenticity vs.

8. “Let Them Cook”

Stage 1: Familiarization Originally a literal phrase meaning "allow someone to prepare food", “Let them cook” in 2024 digital usage means: “Let them continue what they're doing—they might be up to something impressive.” It can be: supportive (e.g., giving someone space to express brilliance), sarcastic (e.g., watching someone fail dramatically), humorous or ironic (e.g., in meme reactions), or culturally empowering (especially when used for marginalized creators, thinkers, or influencers breaking norms). Example usages: “He’s on a rant but low-key making sense. Let him cook.” “Let her cook 😊🔥”

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Metaphorical idiomatic neologism Structure: Imperative phrase Origin: Literal meaning (“cook” = prepare food) → metaphor for allowing someone to develop or express a thought, idea, or performance Tone: Highly contextual—can shift between serious encouragement, sarcasm, or light-hearted teasing Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Platform-based Play and Meme Framing Often used in reaction reels or memes, “let them cook” is a commentary phrase that acknowledges someone’s actions or intentions—often with comic timing. Theme 2: Creativity and Process Respect On Instagram and TikTok, it can highlight respect for creative work, ideas, or emerging talent—“cooking” symbolizing intellectual or artistic formation. Theme 3: Subversion and Irony Used ironically when someone is clearly failing, yet others are letting the chaos unfold for entertainment. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Let Them Cook” (2024) Language–Technology Interaction Platforms like Instagram and TikTok allow for the instant repurposing of phrases like this. What starts as encouragement becomes a multivalent meme comment. Multimodality Frequently paired with reaction

videos, duets, reels, emoji (👁️🔥😏), and captions. The phrase is often inserted into meme templates, enhancing its ironic or supportive tone. Virality & Meme Culture “Let them cook” trended widely on X/Twitter and migrated to Instagram via reels and reposts, becoming a standard commentary in meme and fandom discourse. Language Play and Creativity A literal phrase turned metaphor, it exemplifies digital metaphor-making and humorous language play. Digital Identity and Affiliation Saying “let them cook” places a user within the ironic-literate, meme-aware digital community—those who understand nuanced humor, subtle trolling, and platform in-jokes.

Ideologically, it can express support, defiance, humor, or resistance to premature judgment. “Let them cook” is a highly adaptive and performative neologism that reflects: audience engagement with creative processes (literal or metaphorical), the fluidity of digital tone (encouraging vs. ironic) and the influence of platform dynamics and virality on meaning-making This neologism captures the spirit of modern digital discourse—playful, responsive, communal, and layered with irony or admiration, depending on the context.

9. “Simp”

Stage 1: Familiarization: “Simp” originated as a shortening of the word “simpleton”, but in recent digital culture (especially post-2020), it refers to: A person (usually a man) who is perceived as overly submissive, attentive, or self-sacrificing toward someone (usually a woman), often without reciprocation. The term is often used mockingly to shame a man/boy for showing affection, admiration, or vulnerability—particularly in romantic or online parasocial contexts. Example usages: “Bro bought her lunch again? What a simp.” “If loving her is simping, then I’m a simp forever.”

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Clipped derivation from “simpleton” Modern meaning: A male

(often) who goes “too far” in showing devotion, especially in online flirting or fan behaviors

Grammatical use: Noun: “He’s such a simp.” Verb (less common): “He’s simping over her.”

Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Gender Norms and Toxic Masculinity The term is often used to reinforce rigid masculinity, mocking men for being emotionally expressive or respectful. Theme 2: Humor and Online Shaming Frequently used in memes on Facebook and Instagram pages, often with mocking undertones. Theme 3: Irony, Reappropriation, and Resistance Some users now embrace the label, turning it into a badge of emotional loyalty (“Yeah I simp. Real men love hard.”). Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Simp” Language–Technology Interaction: Social media magnifies gender-based discourse. “Simp” emerges from online male communities and spreads through reaction culture, comment threads, and influencer banter. Multimodality: Appears in memes, reels, GIFs, and comments with eye-roll emojis, laughing emojis, or video skits depicting exaggerated simping behavior. Virality & Meme Culture: “Simp” became a viral term in 2020, often embedded in content mocking men who praise women online. It grew alongside related terms like “pick-me” or “simp patrol.” Language Play and Ideological Framing: The neologism compresses a complex gendered behavior into a one-syllable roast. It’s playful, but also ideologically loaded. Digital Identity and Social Commentary: Being called a “simp” can either signal weakness (mockery) or emotional depth (reclamation). It’s often used to police behavior in digital spaces. Ideologically, it reflects patriarchal backlash against emotional vulnerability, while also enabling ironic or feminist subversion of digital masculinity norms. “Simp” is a culturally complex neologism that encapsulates the tension between traditional masculinity and modern emotional openness. It functions as: a tool of mockery in male-dominated online communities, performative badge in influencer culture and linguistic site of resistance and redefinition, especially in feminist and

progressive circles This makes “simp” a perfect illustration of how digital neologisms encode social power dynamics, humor and ideological contestation.

10. “Ate”

Stage 1: Familiarization “Ate”, in digital slang, means that someone performed exceptionally well, especially in terms of appearance, fashion, expression, or argument. It’s usually used to praise someone’s style, roast, speech, or aesthetic post. Example usage: “She ATE that outfit.”

“No crumbs left. She ate.” “Ate and left no crumbs 🍷🔥👑.” The phrase is often used on

Instagram, Twitter (X), and TikTok, especially under videos, photoshoots, or fiery comebacks. It’s popular in youth, LGBTQ+, and fashion-centered communities. Stage 2:

Initial Coding Type: Semantic shift / metaphorical extension of the verb eat Literal root:

“Ate” = consumed food Figurative meaning: Slayed / performed powerfully / left no room for

improvement Variants: “Ate and left no crumbs” “Ate that look” “She ate him up in that

debate” Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Performance and Digital Excellence

“Ate” is used to celebrate digital perfection—from looks to speech to creativity. Theme 2:

Affirmation and Digital Praise Culture The phrase serves as a compact, hyperbolic praise marker, often replacing more traditional words like “brilliant,” “stunning,” or “flawless.”

Theme 3: Community Solidarity and Internet Vernacular Saying someone “ate” is part of in-group language—it signals shared taste, awareness, and praise codes within specific digital subcultures. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept

Application to “Ate” Language–Technology Interaction: “Ate” exemplifies how social media

transforms literal verbs into evaluative metaphors. It fits the rhythm and brevity of comment culture. Multimodality: Used alongside fire emojis 🔥, sparkle ✨, chef’s kiss 🍷👑, and

dramatic reel transitions, “ate” gains intensity through image-text synergy. Virality & Meme

Culture: Memefied through captions, tweets, and TikTok audios (“She ATE!!”), the phrase has become a universal digital applause. Language Play and Slang: The expression stretches standard grammar creatively—an everyday word (“ate”) becomes a performative evaluation marker. Digital Identity and Social Belonging: Saying “ate” signals fluency in digital aesthetic judgment. It marks the speaker as part of communities that value fashion, flair, and confidence. Ideologically, it promotes self-expression, digital confidence, and community-based validation. It also subverts traditional evaluative language by embedding praise in everyday metaphors. “Ate” is a high-impact neologism used to validate and celebrate digital performance. It captures the enthusiastic affirmation culture of Instagram and TikTok, especially among identity-conscious users. This neologism reflects: the creative repurposing of language in digital praise culture, the importance of community validation in self-presentation and how short, punchy, slang-based expressions dominate multimodal interactions.

11. “Cheugy”

Stage 1: Familiarization “Cheugy” (pronounced “choo-gee”) is a digital slang term that refers to someone or something that is trying too hard to be trendy, but is actually outdated, basic, or cringe-worthy by current internet standards. It’s often used to describe aesthetic choices, phrases, brands, or behaviors that were once stylish but are now passé—usually in a tongue-in-cheek, ironic, or dismissive tone. Example usage: “Using ‘Live Laugh Love’ décor in 2024? So cheugy.” “Side parts and skinny jeans? Cheugy energy.” “That selfie caption screams cheugy.” Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Invented lexical form / nonce word Origin: Coined by Hallie Cain on TikTok in 2020 Form: Adjective Function: A cultural judgment term used to label something as outdated, forced, or trying too hard Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Generational Identity and Aesthetic Policing “Cheugy” is used by

Gen Z users to differentiate their aesthetic values from millennial trends—often tied to fashion, social media habits, and consumer brands. Theme 2: Irony, Humor, and Social Distance The term is laced with sarcasm and meme humor, often used to mock old trends in a humorous rather than hostile way. Theme 3: Taste Politics and Norm Critique It functions as a cultural sorting device—marking certain aesthetics as out, and aligning the speaker with current taste hierarchies. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Cheugy” Language–Technology Interaction: “Cheugy” was born and spread entirely on digital platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, making it a prime example of internet-internal neologism formation. Multimodality: Used in meme templates, aesthetic reels, caption roasts, and side-by-side comparison videos. Often paired with text/image dissonance for irony. Virality & Meme Culture: “Cheugy” exploded via TikTok then migrated to Instagram meme pages and reels. It became a generational inside joke with viral lists of “cheugy things.” Language Play and Identity Construction: It exemplifies how digital users create insider vocabulary to enforce shifting social tastes. Coining new terms like “cheugy” is a way of exercising linguistic authority. Group Affiliation and Social Evaluation: Using “cheugy” signals one’s fluency in current digital taste cultures, and often serves as a marker of Gen Z cultural literacy. It distinguishes “us” (the current) from “them” (the outdated). Ideologically, it reflects generational boundary-making, aesthetic gatekeeping, and digital trend consciousness. “Cheugy” is a hyper-nuanced neologism that captures the digital negotiation of taste, trend, and cultural relevance. It serves as a judgment term to critique outdated trends, helps build generational identity and group belonging, reflects how digital users create lexical shortcuts to express complex social evaluations. It’s a perfect example of how neologisms not only reflect linguistic innovation, but also cultural and ideological stances in digital discourse.

12. “Boujee”

Stage 1: Familiarization “Boujee” (a variant of bourgeoisie) is slang for someone who displays or aspires to a luxurious lifestyle, often in an exaggerated, flashy, or performative way. It can be admiring or mocking, depending on context. Example usages: “I only drink champagne—boujee vibes only.” “She’s on a student budget but living boujee.” “Boujee with a sprinkle of hood.” Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Phonological slang adaptation / semantic expansions Root: Bourgeoisie (French term for middle/upper class) Form: Adjective or noun (“She’s so boujee.” / “I love being boujee.”) Tone: Varies from admiring (glamorous, luxurious) to ironic or mocking (pretentious, try-hard) Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Digital Aspiration and Aesthetic Lifestyle: “Boujee” embodies Instagram’s visual culture of affluence: designer brands, fancy brunches, aesthetic vacations, curated outfits. Theme 2: Identity Performance and Self-Branding: Users label themselves “boujee” to craft an image of success, taste, and exclusivity, even if aspirational or playful. Theme 3: Irony and Self-Awareness: It’s often used sarcastically, e.g., “boujee on a budget,” revealing awareness of the performance gap between actual wealth and digital display. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Boujee” Language–Technology Interaction: Social media platforms like Instagram allow users to display classed aesthetics, turning lifestyle into language and identity. Multimodality: “Boujee” appears with high-quality photos, caption boasts, luxury hashtags, and emoji combos (💎💰👑🛍️), reinforcing the brand of “digital wealth.” Virality & Meme Culture: Popularized by music and memes, “boujee” became part of Instagram/TikTok captions like #boujeelife, #badandboujee, often with a humorous or exaggerated twist. Language Play and Class Identity: It shortens bourgeoisie, flipping its original elitist tone into a self-owned identity label. This shows how digital culture reclaims and retools class terms. Digital Identity and Cultural Affiliation:

Saying “boujee” often signals Black cultural roots, class aspiration, or fashion-forward femininity, aligning with hyper visible influencer aesthetics. Ideologically, it reflects aspirational culture, consumer power, and class visibility, while also containing layers of irony and cultural nuance. “Boujee” is a powerful digital neologism that captures the tension between real and performed luxury, aesthetic wealth, and class identity. It: reflects digital aspiration culture, uses language as lifestyle branding, signals cultural awareness, especially among Black and youth communities online. It’s a key term in showing how social media users construct, exaggerate, or parody upward mobility and aesthetic prestige.

13. “GOAT”

Stage 1: Familiarization “GOAT” is an acronym for Greatest of All Time. It is used to declare ultimate excellence, often about someone’s legacy, impact, or unmatched skill in their field.

Example usages: “Burna Boy is the GOAT. No cap.” “Serena Williams? GOAT behavior.”

“He’s not just great, he’s the GOAT.” Originally a sports term, “GOAT” is now used across fields—entertainment, politics, fashion, activism, etc.

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Acronymic neologism Full form: Greatest of All Time

Grammatical use: Noun Common contexts: Attribution: “She’s the GOAT of fashion.” Stage

3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Excellence and Iconic Status “GOAT” symbolizes peak achievement, often reserved for legends or record-breakers. Theme 2: Hyperbole and Fan

Culture It is often used in fan discourse, where followers express extreme admiration. Theme

3: Competition and Legacy Politics “GOAT” sparks debates—especially when multiple figures compete for that label in the same domain. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital

Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “GOAT” Language–Technology

Interaction: Acronym culture thrives in digital contexts. “GOAT” is short, punchy, and perfectly suited to character-limited platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.

Multimodality: Often paired with GOAT emojis 🐐, flame 🔥, or crown 👑. Used in highlight reels, tribute edits, meme templates, and stylized typography. Virality & Meme Culture: “GOAT” is common in viral tributes, top-10 lists, sports commentary edits, and caption culture, reinforcing its meme status. Language Play and Slang Innovation: Turns a literal animal name into a praise idiom, showcasing humorous metaphor and lexical creativity. Digital Identity and Recognition Politics: Declaring someone the “GOAT” aligns the speaker with cultural authority and community consensus. It often reinforces collective memory and hero-making. Ideologically, it reflects celebrity worship, digital legacy culture, and cultural endorsement practices in fan communities. “GOAT” is a culturally charged neologism that combines brevity, digital virality, and admiration. It is: a status-marking term in meme and fan culture, a digital praise device that communicates intense reverence and reflection of digital communities’ need to crown legends, using language as a tool of elevation. It shows how digital neologisms are used to celebrate, canonize, and unify communities around excellence.

14. “Demure”

Stage 1: Familiarization Traditionally, “demure” means reserved, modest, and shy, especially in reference to women’s behavior or appearance. In Instagram 2023–2024 fashion and aesthetic reels, however, the term has been revived and aestheticized, used to: celebrate minimalism, elegance, or modest fashion, evoke “soft girl,” “quiet luxury,” or “clean girl” trends, suggest deliberate, curated restraint in contrast to flashy or loud aesthetics. Example usage: “The dress is so demure—love the elegance.” “Demure but dangerous.” “Demure is the new bold 📌📱🐾”

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Recontextualized lexical revival Root meaning: Modest, shy,

reserved Digital shift: Reframed to mean elegant, restrained, graceful, especially in fashion, behavior, and tone Usage: Often captioning soft-lit reels, modest fashion, or minimal makeup content Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Aesthetic Framing and Femininity: "Demure" in digital contexts frames a specific feminine identity—calm, elegant, and visually subdued—yet still powerful. Theme 2: Visual Culture and Class Signaling: It's part of "quiet luxury" trends—using minimalism and elegance to suggest high-class taste without overt branding. Theme 3: Cultural Resistance and Reinvention: The term subtly pushes back against "baddie" or "overexposed" trends, offering an alternative aesthetic identity that feels classic and elevated. Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to "Demure" Language –Technology Interaction: A traditional word is given new aesthetic and ideological life in the digital sphere, especially through curated reels and captions. Multimodality: Often paired with soft visuals, earth tones, slow-motion filters, white space, and caption stylization—the visual amplifies its updated meaning. Virality & Aesthetic Trends: "Demure" is now a buzzword in fashion and lifestyle reels, often trending within modestwear, minimalist, and quiet influencer spaces. Language Play and Ideological Reframing: What once meant passive modesty is now reclaimed as intentional grace and power, showing how language evolves ideologically in digital culture. Digital Identity Formation: Users who label themselves or their outfits "demure" are often curating a digital persona of refinement, class, or soft dominance. Ideologically, it celebrates restraint, control, elegance, and an alternative path to feminine power in the digital space. "Demure" demonstrates how existing vocabulary can be recontextualized into neologistic function through platform aesthetics, social reinterpretation, and caption culture. In today's digital landscape, it stands for: minimalist empowerment, digitally curated femininity, a linguistic and aesthetic alternative to louder digital trends like "baddie," "extra," or "boujee" It perfectly

illustrates how social media platforms recycle and revive traditional words to fit new cultural frames—a vital insight for your discourse study of neologisms.

15. “Sheesh”

Stage 1: Familiarization Originally an exclamatory term used to express mild surprise or disapproval, “Sheesh” was revived in 2021–2024 with new connotations. It now functions as:
 A loud or drawn-out admiration chant (e.g., “Sheeeeeesh!”) A meme sound or verbal emoji of amazement A gesture of digital excitement or hype, often sarcastic, celebratory, or exaggerated
 Example usage: [User posts a luxury outfit or glow-up] “SHEESH 🔥🔥🔥” “The fit? Sheesh!” “Sheesh, who gave you permission?! 📱👀”

Stage 2: Initial Coding Type: Phonological/emotive neologism / revitalized interjection
 Linguistic category: Interjection or stand-alone comment Variants: All caps (SHEESH!) Repeated or elongated (Sheeeeeeeesh) Paired with emojis 🔥💯🙄 or hashtags #sheeshmoment
Stage 3: Thematic Categorization Theme 1: Emotion and Hype Culture “Sheesh” functions as instant positive feedback, especially for appearance, fashion, transformation, or bold behavior. Theme 2: Non-verbal Expression through Text Used as a digital vocalization, “sheesh” replaces body language and vocal tone in digital interactions. Theme 3: Social Affiliation and Youth Vernacular Its usage is age-coded and trend-sensitive—heavily used among Gen Z to show playful approval or participation in digital slang culture.
Stage 4: Interpretation through Digital Discourse Theory (DDT) DDT Concept Application to “Sheesh” Language–Technology Interaction: The rise of short-form videos (TikTok, Instagram reels) amplified “sheesh” as a meme sound and written reaction. The sound often trended alongside zoom-ins and filters. Multimodality: Used alongside audio overlays, emojis, visual emphasis, and dramatic visuals. It becomes a verbal-soundtrack to

stylish or shocking digital content. Virality & Meme Culture: Went viral in 2021–2022 but remains relevant, especially in fashion reels, gym progress videos, roast clips, and reaction memes. Language Play and Emotional Expression: Shows how phonetic play (elongation, pitch) becomes a linguistic resource for emotionality and intensity. Digital Identity and Peer Belonging: “Sheesh” is a badge of Gen Z fluency, allowing users to signal participation in meme discourse and online peer validation culture. Ideologically, it reflects hype culture, emotion-forward digital communication, and the linguistic creativity of youth communities. “Sheesh” illustrates how digital communities reinvent non-lexical expressions to serve as powerful emotional markers and performative reactions. It embodies: hype and celebration in digital praise culture, the transformation of vocal expressions into textual and visual memes and the role of language in emotional and social connection online. It’s an excellent example of how digital discourse relies on phonetic creativity and group-specific slang to perform identity and affirmation.

4.3 Findings

1. What types of neologisms are prevalent on Instagram and Facebook? On Instagram, the prevalent types of neologisms are those related to fashion, visual aesthetics, and digital self-branding, such as drip, sleek, baddie, and steeze. These Instagram-specific terms are often multimodal, combining text with images and emojis to enhance personal identity expression. On Facebook, the dominant neologisms are those that convey moral commentary, economic expectations, and storytelling elements, such as mileage, kpai, wire, and totori. Facebook neologisms tend to be more discourse-heavy, reflecting debates, relationship dynamics, and sociocultural concerns. 2. In what discourse contexts are these neologisms used? Many neologisms are used in identity construction and aesthetic self-presentation, particularly on Instagram, where users employ terms like baddie and drip to project curated online personas. In

romantic and emotional contexts, terms such as *delulu*, *simp*, and *totori* are used to express feelings, desires, and playful irony. Meme culture provides another discourse context, where expressions like *cap*, *no cap*, and *let them cook* are used humorously or sarcastically to comment on current trends or behaviors. Gender and morality discourse also feature prominently, where terms like *mileage*, *clap back*, and *demure* are used to reinforce, challenge, or negotiate gender roles and moral standards. In localized cultural discourse, neologisms appear in Nigerian-specific storytelling, often blending indigenous expressions with global internet styles. 3. What functions (e.g., expressive, social, ideological) do these neologisms serve in online interaction? Neologisms serve expressive functions by allowing users to convey emotions, humor, irony, and attitudes in a relatable and stylized manner, as seen in terms like *totori* and *sheesh*. Socially, they function as markers of group identity and in-group belonging, enabling users to connect through shared slang and participate in collective online cultures (e.g., *baddie*, *GOAT*, *let them cook*). Ideologically, neologisms communicate values, beliefs, and critiques, particularly in gendered discourse, where terms like *mileage* and *simp* reflect societal expectations and power dynamics. They also serve performative and multimodal functions, especially on Instagram, where neologisms are integrated with visuals and emojis to construct digital selves and assert aesthetic stances. Additionally, these terms facilitate localized digital storytelling, showcasing cultural hybridity and offering a postcolonial layer to online linguistic practices.

4.4 Discussion

The study found that neologisms like *drip*, *sleek*, *baddie*, and *steeze* function prominently in the expression of digital identity and aesthetic self-branding. This aligns with Tagg, Seargeant & Brown (2017), who argue that social media users actively construct identity through stylistic choices and linguistic performance. Similarly, Crystal (2006) notes that in online contexts, "language becomes more than a tool of communication—it becomes a tool of exhibition." This study further demonstrates that Nigerian social media users, particularly on Instagram, use these terms in multimodal combinations (text + image + emoji) to construct "curated selves." This

echoes findings by Page (181-201) and Georgakopoulou (266-281) on “small stories” and “aesthetic stance-taking” in digital profiles. However, while much Western literature focuses on individual self-branding, this study emphasizes how identity neologisms are often used collectively in Nigeria to mark group belonging, such as baddie culture or GOAT status within music fandoms. This highlights a more communal orientation to online identity than often discussed in Euro-American studies. The use of terms like *delulu*, *rizz*, *simp*, *wire*, and *totori* reveals a rich emotional lexicon, often layered with irony, exaggeration, and playful performance. These findings are consistent with Androutsopoulos (109-134) who notes that digital language reflects not just lexical change but social mood and interpersonal dynamics. In particular, *delulu* reflects what Bouvier & Machin (102-118) describe as “post-ironic stance-taking” in online affection, where users express vulnerability while maintaining cool detachment. *Wire*, as used in Nigerian contexts, introduces a more culturally specific dynamic of monetized romance, similar to findings by Aboh (102-118) on “financial discourse in Nigerian digital courtship.” This study shows that digital neologisms serve pragmatic functions in expressing emotions, building relationships, and negotiating desires. Unlike general studies that treat online romance as abstract, this study shows that Nigerian neologisms encode economic expectations and obligations (*wire*, *simp*), revealing a more transactional lens that is less emphasized in global literature.

5. Conclusion

This research underscores the significance of neologisms as more than fleeting digital slang. On platforms like Instagram and Facebook, they are key linguistic tools through which users articulate identity, signal group belonging, and engage in socio-cultural critique. The findings reaffirm that neologisms in social media are shaped by platform affordances, user intent, and cultural context. Importantly, Instagram and Facebook each foster unique linguistic ecosystems: the former emphasizing aesthetic and self-branding expressions through visually enhanced neologisms, and the latter promoting discursive engagement on morality, relationships, and social concerns through narrative-driven language. This duality highlights how platform-specific features shape both the form and function of digital language. By examining neologisms through the lens of discourse, this study contributes to the broader understanding of how language evolves in the digital age. It confirms that neologisms are not random or trivial, but are embedded with cultural meaning, pragmatic function, and discursive power.

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