

## Lexical Innovation Processes of Youth Netspeak on Malay Twitter Posts

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### ABSTRACT

The formation of neologisms in Malay has not been extensively studied and therefore has yet to be fully understood. The current study examined the lexical innovation processes in Twitter posts in Malay. A 25,679-word corpus was compiled from 2,000 tweets of 200 Malaysian Twitter users in their twenties. The textual analysis performed through AntConc software identified “*ni*” (this) and “*nk*” (want) as the top two neologisms, and these words constituted 45.8% of the corpus. Most of the neologisms are formed through clipping (65%) and pseudo-elliptical construction (26%), while blending (7%) and elongation (2%) are minor word formation processes. The clipping affects vowels (28%) more than consonants (9%), whether it is deletion, replacement, or addition. The pseudo-elliptical constructions involve letters of the alphabet and phonological adjustments to vowels and consonants. On vowel changes, the results show that there is a simplification of diphthongs to monophthongs, and a movement towards vowels in the middle position [e] or [o]. As for consonant changes, there is a shift in the place of articulation towards bilabial consonants [p], [m], and [w] and words containing [h] and [r] are likely to be dropped or replaced. The changes in the spelling are a result of changes in the spoken discourse. The findings suggest that exploring the phonological rules can explain pseudo-elliptical constructions, leading to a better framework on morphology and phonology to understand formation of neologisms in social media discourse.

**Keywords:** social media; Twitter; neologisms; non-standard words; Malay

### INTRODUCTION

Social media discourse is a potent site to study and understand the evolution of language in the digital era. The instant messaging through digital media has brought about changes such as a more informal writing style and the use of emoticons and emojis for emotional expressiveness. For example, the acronym LOL (laughing out loud) appeared in internet slang and was first listed in The Oxford English Dictionary in March 2011 (Scholarly Community Encyclopedia, 2022). Since then, more words have been shortened in creative ways. One of the most used social network

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