THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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Abstract. This article examines the influence of social media on the development of the vocabulary of modern English. Based on recent updates to the Oxford Languages and Cambridge Dictionary and the materials of the “Word of the Year” selections, social media vocabulary is classified according to word-formation processes: compounding, blending, affixation, clipping, abbreviation, conversion, semantic change, and borrowing. Each category is illustrated with specific examples, including selfie, unfriend, doomscrolling, rage bait, delulu, to ghost, and FOMO. The article also explores the functions of this vocabulary, the process through which new words move from social media into dictionaries, and the significance of social media vocabulary in teaching English to Uzbek students.

Keywords: social media, vocabulary, neologism, word formation, abbreviation, conversion, semantic change, internet slang, lexicography.

IJTIMOIY TARMOQLARNING INGLIZ TILI LUG‘AT BOYLIGINI RIVOJLANTIRISHGA TA’SIRI

Annotatsiya. Maqolada ijtimoiy tarmoqlarning zamonaviy ingliz tili lug‘at tarkibi rivojlanishiga ta’siri tadqiq etiladi. Oxford Languages va Cambridge Dictionary lug‘atlarining so‘nggi yillardagi yangilanishlari hamda "Yil so‘zi" tanlovlari materiali asosida ijtimoiy tarmoq leksikasi so‘z yasalish usullariga ko‘ra tasniflanadi: so‘z qo‘shish, qorishma so‘zlar (blending), affiksatsiya, qisqartirish, abbreviatsiya, konversiya, semantik o‘zgarish va o‘zlashtirish. Har bir guruh aniq misollar bilan izohlanadi (selfie, unfriend, doomscrolling, rage bait, delulu, to ghost, FOMO va boshqalar). Shuningdek, bu leksikaning vazifalari, yangi so‘zning ijtimoiy tarmoqdan lug‘atga o‘tish yo‘li va o‘zbek talabalariga ingliz tilini o‘qitishdagi ahamiyati ko‘rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, lug‘at tarkibi, neologizm, so‘z yasalishi, qisqartma, konversiya, semantik o‘zgarish, internet slengi, leksikografiya.

ВЛИЯНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ НА РАЗВИТИЕ СЛОВАРНОГО СОСТАВА АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается влияние социальных сетей на развитие словарного состава современного английского языка. На основе последних обновлений Oxford Languages и Cambridge Dictionary, а также материалов, связанных с выбором «Слова года» (Word of the Year), проводится классификация лексики социальных сетей по способам словообразования: словосложение, контаминация, аффиксация, усечение, аббревиация, конверсия, семантические изменения и заимствование. Каждая категория иллюстрируется конкретными примерами, включая selfie, unfriend, doomscrolling, rage bait, delulu, to ghost и FOMO. В статье также рассматриваются функции данной лексики, процесс перехода новых слов из социальных сетей в словари и значение лексики социальных сетей в преподавании английского языка узбекским студентам.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, словарный состав, неологизм, словообразование, аббревиация, конверсия, семантические изменения, интернет-сленг, лексикография.

Introduction. Vocabulary is the most changeable layer of any language, because it reacts directly to changes in society, technology and culture. In the history of English, each new means of communication has left its mark on the lexicon: printing, the telegraph, radio, television and the telephone all produced their own words. Social media, however, differs from all earlier technologies in two important respects. First, it is not only a channel but also a place where words are created: millions of ordinary users, not only journalists or writers, coin and spread new words every day. Second, it works at an unprecedented speed: a word that appears in a short video can be used by millions of people within weeks.

The results of this process are clearly visible in dictionaries. In 2013 Oxford Dictionaries chose selfie as the Word of the Year; in 2009 the New Oxford American Dictionary chose unfriend. In recent years the choices have been even more closely connected with online life: rizz (2023), brain rot (2024) and rage bait (2025) [10]. In 2025

Cambridge Dictionary added more than six thousand new words, phrases and meanings, among them skibidi, delulu, tradwife and broligarchy, and named parasocial its Word of the Year [4]. These facts show that social media has become one of the main driving forces of lexical change in modern English.

Public opinion often evaluates this process negatively: internet language is described as "lazy", "careless" or even as a threat to correct English. Linguistic research, however, presents a more balanced picture. D. Crystal argues that internet communication has created a new variety of language with its own features rather than destroyed the old one [6; 5], and the study of S. Tagliamonte and D. Denis showed that the language of young people's instant messaging is a mixture of standard and innovative forms, not a "ruin" of the language [12].

The relevance of the study is determined by the rapid growth of social media vocabulary in English, the need to describe the mechanisms of its formation, and the practical importance of this vocabulary for learners of English in Uzbekistan, who meet it every day on the same platforms.

The aim of the article is to identify and describe the main ways in which social media influences the development of English vocabulary. The tasks are:

1. to classify social media vocabulary according to the method of its formation;
2. to illustrate each method with clear examples and contexts of use;
3. to define the functions of this vocabulary and the path of a new word from social media to the dictionary;
4. to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of this influence and its significance for teaching English.

The study relies on the theory of word formation and lexical semantics. In English lexicology, the main ways of enriching vocabulary are traditionally divided into word formation (affixation, compounding, conversion, shortening, blending), semantic change of existing words, and borrowing from other languages [1; 3; 11]. A neologism is understood as a new word, a new meaning of an existing word, or a new combination of words that has appeared in a given period and is still felt by speakers as new.

For the description of internet communication the study uses the works of D. Crystal, who introduced the term Netspeak and later internet linguistics [6; 5], N. Baron, who described the language of online and mobile communication [2], G. McCulloch, who analysed informal internet language and its rules [9], and M. Zappavigna, who studied the language of Twitter and the role of hashtags in creating social affiliation [14]. Quantitative research has shown that new words on social media spread through networks of users in ways that resemble the spread of innovations in society: J. Eisenstein and colleagues traced how new spellings and words moved between American cities on Twitter [7], and J. Grieve, A. Nini and D. Guo identified hundreds of emerging words in a large corpus of tweets [8].

Material and methods. The material of the study comprises English lexical units connected with social media that have been (a) included in the online editions of the Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries in recent years, (b) selected or shortlisted as "Word of the Year" by Oxford Languages, Cambridge Dictionary and other publishers, or (c) widely used on major platforms and described in the linguistic literature. The following methods were used: word-formation analysis, componential and contextual analysis, the descriptive method and elements of comparative analysis (English and Uzbek). The example sentences in the article are typical contexts constructed by the author to illustrate usage; they are not quotations from individual users.

The analysis made it possible to divide the vocabulary under study into eight groups according to the method of formation (Table 1).

Table 1. Main methods of forming social media vocabulary in English

Method of translation	Examples	Meaning
1. Compounding	hashtag, screenshot, livestream, clickbait, rage bait, brain rot, doomscrolling, mouse jiggler	Two stems joined: click + bait, doom + scrolling
2. Blending	vlog, podcast, netizen, emoticon, hangry, sharenting, tradwife, broligarchy	Parts of two words fused: video + blog, traditional + wife
3. Affixation	selfie, unfriend, unfollow, retweet, influencer, YouTuber, cottagecore	Old affixes on new stems: un- + friend, self + -ie
4. Clipping	app, pic, insta, rizz, sus, delulu, fam, vibe	Shortened words: charisma → rizz, delusional → delulu
5. Abbreviation and acronymy	LOL, OMG, DM, FOMO, POV, TBH, IRL, GOAT, TL;DR	Initial letters: fear of missing out → FOMO
6. Conversion	to google, to friend, to DM, to screenshot, a like, a follow, a share	Change of part of speech without affixes
7. Semantic change	troll, viral, follower, feed, story, wall, ghost, stan, ratio, NPC	Old word, new meaning
8. Borrowing and spread of group slang	mukbang, slay, no cap, lowkey, skibidi	From other languages, communities or media content

Each group is examined below with examples of use.

Compounding is one of the oldest and most productive methods of English word formation, and social media has given it many new applications. The compound hashtag (hash "the # symbol" + tag "label") names a word or phrase marked with the symbol # that groups posts on one topic. The word clickbait (click + bait) denotes a headline or picture

designed to make people click a link. On the same model, rage bait was formed: content that is deliberately designed to make people angry so that they react, comment and share it. According to Oxford Languages, its use roughly tripled during 2025, and it was chosen as the Word of the Year [10].

For example: That video is pure rage bait – don't comment, it only gives it more views.

The compound brain rot (Oxford Word of the Year 2024) describes the supposed decline of a person's mental state as a result of consuming too much trivial online content, as well as the content itself. Doomscrolling (doom + scrolling) means spending too much time reading bad news on a screen. These words show an important feature of modern compounds: they name not objects but forms of behaviour typical of social media.

For example: I spent the whole evening doomscrolling instead of preparing for my exam.

Blending (forming a word from parts of two words) is also very productive, because blends are short, expressive and easy to remember. Classic examples are vlog (video + blog), podcast (iPod + broadcast), netizen (internet + citizen) and emoticon (emotion + icon). More recent blends reflect new social practices: sharenting (sharing + parenting) means parents posting a lot of information and photos about their children online; tradwife (traditional + wife) names a woman who promotes a traditional household role on social media; broligarchy (bro + oligarchy) is an ironic name for a group of very rich and powerful men in the technology industry [4].

For example: Many parents do not realise that sharenting can affect their children's privacy in the future.

Affixation: old affixes in a new environment. Social media rarely creates new affixes, but it gives a new life to old ones. The suffix -ie, traditionally used to form informal and affectionate words (Aussie, barbie), produced selfie "a photo that one has taken of oneself". This word in turn became a base for new formations, for example selfie stick and selfie culture.

The prefix un- acquired a new function with verbs that denote online actions: unfriend, unfollow, unlike, unsubscribe. In the word unfriend the prefix does not mean "not" (as in unhappy) but the reversal of an action, "to remove someone from one's list of friends".

For example: She unfollowed him after their argument, but she didn't unfriend him.

The prefix re- gave retweet and repost, and the suffix -er formed the names of new professions and roles: influencer, YouTuber, TikToker, streamer. A notable phenomenon is the appearance of splinters – parts of words that begin to behave like affixes. From influencer, the element -fluencer is separated: finfluencer (a financial influencer), kidfluencer. From hardcore, the element -core came to mean "an aesthetic or style": cottagecore, normcore.

Example: Be careful with finfluencers who promise quick profits.

Clipping, abbreviation and acronymy: the economy of language. The written conversation of social media is fast and often takes place on a small phone screen. This explains the popularity of clipping: application - app, picture - pic, Instagram - insta, family - fam, suspicious - sus. Some clipped forms change not only their length but also their stylistic colouring. The word rizz (most likely from charisma, Oxford Word of the Year 2023) means "the ability to attract a romantic partner", and delulu (from delusional) means "believing things that are not true, usually because you choose to" [4]. Compared with the full words, these forms are playful and less serious.

For example: He thinks she will text him first – he is completely delulu.

Abbreviations and acronyms are the most recognisable feature of internet writing. Some of them are old (LOL "laughing out loud", BRB "be right back"), others appeared later: DM "direct message", TBH "to be honest", IRL "in real life", TL;DR "too long; didn't read", GOAT "greatest of all time", POV "point of view". Research on young people's text messaging has shown that such abbreviations actually make up a smaller share of their messages than is popularly believed [13]. Their development, however, shows interesting semantic processes. For example, LOL has largely lost its literal meaning: people who write it are usually not laughing aloud; it has become a marker of friendly tone, similar to a smile [9]. POV on TikTok is used not as "point of view" in the ordinary sense but as a label for a short video in which the viewer is invited to imagine a situation.

For example: POV: you open the exam paper and recognise none of the questions.

The acronym FOMO (fear of missing out) is especially productive: it has given rise to JOMO (joy of missing out) and is used as an ordinary noun: I have serious FOMO. Some acronyms even become verbs: to DM someone.

Conversion: nouns become verbs. English is known for conversion - the formation of a new word by changing the part of speech without adding affixes [1; 3]. Social media has strengthened this tendency. Names of companies and services have turned into verbs: to google "to search for information on the internet" (included in major English dictionaries in 2006), to photoshop "to change a photo digitally", to zoom in the meaning "to have a video call".

For example: I don't know the answer – just google it.

Nouns for online objects have become verbs (to friend, to screenshot, to message, to tag), and verbs have become nouns: a like, a follow, a share, a fail. For example, in the sentence The post got two thousand likes, the word like functions as a countable noun meaning "a sign of approval clicked by a user". Such conversion makes it possible to name a new action in the shortest way.

For example: Can you screenshot the message and send it to me?

Semantic change: old words with new meanings. Perhaps the most interesting influence of social media is not the creation of new words but the change of meaning of existing ones. Many everyday words have received a second, "online" meaning (Table 2).

Table 2. Examples of semantic change under the influence of social media

Word	Traditional meaning	New social media meaning
friend	a person you know well and like	a contact on a social network (may be a stranger)
follower	a supporter of a leader or idea	a user who subscribes to someone's account
viral	connected with a virus	spreading very quickly online
troll	a creature from Scandinavian folklore	a person who posts provocative messages to upset others
feed / story / wall	food for animals / narrative / part of a building	parts of the interface of a social network
ghost	the spirit of a dead person	(verb) to suddenly stop all communication with someone
stan	a male name	a very enthusiastic fan; (verb) to support someone eagerly
ratio	a mathematical relationship	a reply getting more likes than the original post
NPC	non-player character in a video game	a person who seems to act without independent thought

These examples illustrate the main types of semantic change described in lexicology. Friend and follower show a weakening of meaning: an online "friend" is not necessarily a close person. Viral demonstrates metaphorical transfer: the spread of information is understood through the image of the spread of an infection. Ghost demonstrates metaphor and conversion at the same time: a person disappears "like a ghost".

For example: We talked every day for a month, and then he just ghosted me.

The word stan has a particularly interesting origin: it comes from the title of Eminem's 2000 song "Stan", about an obsessive fan. A proper name thus became a common noun and then a verb (I stan this singer) – a vivid example of how media content enters general vocabulary through social media.

Borrowing and the spread of group slang. Social media is global, so it brings English into contact with other languages and cultures. A well-known example is mukbang, borrowed from Korean: a video in which a person eats a large amount of food while talking to the audience. Through K-pop and K-drama fans, a number of Korean words have become familiar to English-speaking users.

Another source is the slang of particular communities. Many words that are now associated with Generation Z (slay, no cap "no lie", lowkey "slightly, secretly", bussin "very good") originated in African American English and the culture of LGBTQ+ communities and spread to a wide audience through social media. Linguists emphasise that this process raises questions of attribution: words often reach dictionaries as "internet slang" or "Gen Z slang", while their real origin is forgotten [9].

For example: Your presentation was amazing - you really slayed.

Finally, some words are born directly from viral content. Skibidi comes from the YouTube animated series "Skibidi Toilet" and, according to Cambridge Dictionary, can mean "cool" or "bad" or can have no real meaning at all and be used as a joke [4]. Words of this kind show that social media also produces vocabulary whose main function is not to name something but to signal belonging to a group.

Functions of social media vocabulary and the path to the dictionary. The analysis allows us to distinguish four main functions of social media vocabulary:

1) economy - short forms save time and space (DM, pic, TBH);

2) nomination - new words name new objects and practices (hashtag, livestream, sharenting, mouse jiggler "a device that makes a computer look active");

3) expressiveness and evaluation - many words express attitude and emotion (rage bait, brain rot, cringe, delulu);

4) identity and language play - words signal belonging to a group, generation or fandom (rizz, skibidi, no cap).

The path of a social media word to the dictionary usually has several stages: (1) the word appears in a small community or in one viral post; (2) it spreads across platforms and is used by influencers; (3) it appears in online news and journalism, often with an explanation; (4) it is used outside the internet - in speech, advertising and even politics; (5) lexicographers record stable usage in their corpora and include the word in the dictionary. Dictionary editors stress that only words with "staying power" are included [4]. Many words never complete this path: forms such as on fleek or YOLO, which were extremely popular in the early 2010s, are now perceived as outdated. This shows that social media produces a large number of short-lived occasionalisms, and only a part of them becomes a permanent part of the vocabulary.

The data presented above make it possible to evaluate the influence of social media on English vocabulary from two sides. Social media enriches the vocabulary with names for new realities that could not be described with the old words. It makes word formation visible: users actively apply all the traditional methods of English – compounding, blending, affixation, conversion – which proves the vitality of the language system. It also demonstrates the creativity of ordinary speakers and makes the process of language change faster and easier to observe. As shown by the research of Tagliamonte and Denis, young people who use internet forms continue to use standard forms as well; they choose between them depending on the situation [12].

At the same time, the speed of change creates certain problems. Many words are unstable in meaning (skibidi is an extreme example), which may lead to misunderstanding between generations. Learners and young users sometimes transfer informal forms (u, gonna, LOL, tbh) into formal writing, which shows insufficient awareness of register. Some words, such as brain rot and rage bait, reflect negative social phenomena - a decline of attention and the manipulation of emotions online - and in this sense the vocabulary itself documents the problems of the digital age.

Uzbek learners of English meet social media vocabulary every day, and many English words have already entered Uzbek youth speech: layk bosmoq (to like), post joylamoq (to post), storis, bloger, kontent, xeshteg. At the same time, Uzbek has developed its own equivalents for some notions, for example obunachi (follower/subscriber), obuna bo'lmoq (to subscribe), ulashmoq (to share). This contact between the two languages can be used in class. The following practical recommendations can be formulated:

– to use social media vocabulary as material for teaching word formation (for example, asking students to identify the stems in vlog, sharenting or doomscrolling);

– to teach register explicitly, comparing informal and formal variants: DM me - Please send me a message; tbh - to be honest / frankly;

– to use dictionary "Word of the Year" lists as authentic, up-to-date material for discussion;

– to develop critical thinking about online language through words such as clickbait, rage bait and brain rot.

The study leads to the following conclusions.

1. Social media has become one of the most productive sources of new vocabulary in contemporary English, as confirmed by dictionary updates and "Word of the Year" selections of recent years (selfie, unfriend, rizz, brain rot, rage bait, parasocial).

2. Social media vocabulary is formed with the help of the traditional methods of English word formation: compounding (clickbait, doomscrolling), blending (vlog, sharenting), affixation (unfriend, influencer), clipping (app, rizz, delulu), abbreviation (DM, FOMO, POV) and conversion (to google, a like). New productive splinters, such as - fluencer and - core, are also appearing.

3. A large part of the influence of social media consists in semantic change of existing words: friend, follower, viral, troll, ghost, stan have acquired new meanings through weakening, metaphor and conversion.

4. Social media vocabulary performs functions of language economy, nomination, expressiveness and group identity. Only part of it passes the path from a platform to the dictionary; many units remain short-lived occasionalisms.

5. The influence of social media should not be regarded as "damage" to English: it accelerates the natural processes of lexical development. Its main risk is the confusion of registers, which makes the explicit teaching of formal and informal vocabulary especially important for learners of English, including students in Uzbekistan.

Further research may focus on a corpus-based comparison of social media vocabulary in English and Uzbek and on the ways English internet words are adapted in Uzbek phonetics, grammar and spelling.

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