
PROSPECTS OF NEOLOGISM AS AN INNOVATIVE STYLISTIC DEVICE IN PRINT MEDIA

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Abstract

Neologisms are newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense in a language. This study, therefore, examines the potentialities of such coinages, especially viewed as innovative stylistic devices, as used in the print media. Although researches abound on instances of neologisms by scholars, our current study examines the subject as an innovation in the media space, particularly, in the print media. Two theoretical concepts guide this study. While one is based on the three components of neologism, thus: Word Formation, Borrowing, and Lexical Deviation, the other is the Agenda Setting Theory of the mass media which provides a linkage between the government and the people as the media sets the tone for what opinion the people hold of their leaders. The secondary data have been used in this study. The data were collected from articles, news publications and books. The findings of this study revealed that neologism implies innovation and that its prospects remain very promising because it facilitates the creation of new words into the lexicon of the target language. It is also revealed that since neologisms undergo certain word formation processes, if cautiously used,

it would further boost communication and style with the print media as the medium. Hence, further investigations with regards its expansion to accommodate novel ideas, natural phenomena, events and activities is strongly recommended.

Key Words: Neologism, Innovation, Stylistic Device, Print Media

Introduction

New ideas and variations on feelings and perception come from the media and other forums with attendant issues for consideration. This is notwithstanding the fact that the English language has positioned itself as a language that can hardly be relegated or done without in contemporary society. This is because of its dominance, relevance and the various varieties and colours the language has taken on in the course of its spread.

As observed by Eka (2000), the English language has enjoyed global spread and its dawn in Nigeria can be traced to early European contact, religion, economic relations and advancement in science and technology. Since its arrival, the English language has assumed the position of the official language of the nation. This has made it almost compelling for Nigerians to learn the language and has made it take on varieties within the polity, especially, in view of the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria.

Besides geographical and diachronic considerations, the English language has in the course of its development been adorned with novel terminologies, expressions and creative innovations. As noted by Qaisar (2015) the writer sometimes goes beyond the prescriptive rules of using a language and coins several new expressions which do not fit into the conventional grammatical rules. The creative aspect has to do with the creation of new words into English, semantic shifts and extensions and the like, which are usually created for specific purposes or to make desired effect especially in the media as a stylistic devise.

Asif, *et al* (2021) further notes that the people, who use language around the world, can generate and coin new words as per their interest and need. However, they practice it with the support of existing words. On the other hand, language plays a role like a bridge and it associates other cultures, languages, and individual persons and this type of linking represents syntactical words and new morphological structures. So, the language incorporates interpersonal and social phenomenon that transfers information from generation to generation. A language is considered as a blend of ideas and thoughts which automatically generates and coins new words to accomplish the needs of conversational situations.

Although researches abound on instances of neologisms by scholars, our current study examines the subject as an innovation in the media space, particularly, in the print media. The secondary data were used in this study. The data were collected from articles, news publications and books. Those parameters guided our methodology as that this paper seeks to examine issues bothering on neologism as a stylistic device in the print media.

The Concept of Neologism

Neologisms are new words, word-combinations or fixed phrases that appear in the language due to the development of social life, culture, science, technology and media adventure. Ekpenyong (2002) opines that it is a process by which new words may be added to the lexicon of the language and thereby expand the vocabulary of the language. Khan (2013) notes that the strength of new words exceeds the accumulative extent of information. According to Stenertorp (2010), a neologism is a lexeme that is not described in dictionaries. New meanings of existing words are also accepted as neologisms. It is also true that nowadays, there seems to be a consensus that neologism is a word that expresses a novel concept either through coining a new vocabulary item or through attaching a new meaning to an already existing one (*Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*, 1995).

According to Janssen (2005) neologism forms a linguistic category. It signifies the components of language modification. Further, it also defines that language is not static but it possesses a dynamic potential. Crystal (2001) observes that neologism is as the foundation of new lexical items and is acceptable within a speech community at a specific time. This is so because many of those lexical items are more or less transitional in nature, which implies that they are short-lived, have restricted use and are easily lost over time. The non-permanent livelihood of neologisms in some instances is because some of the coinages or neologisms do not enjoy wide acceptability and legitimacy, and so, are not incorporated into the lexicon of the target language.

What is Media?

The media has been variously described in diverse ways by scholars, including Paul & Rai (2021) and Kumar (2008). It would be noticed that all the scholars who attempted to define the term “media” usually identify or point out two basic roles of the media which include publicizing information and entertaining a large audience, people of various social, political and educational backgrounds (Princewill-Nwaduwa and Badom, 2022). The implication of this is that the media serves to feed the public with needed information which in turn shapes the world view of the people and attitude. The media does this salient and sensitive duty through the use of language, including coinages and neologisms.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical concepts guide this study.

(i.) Krishnamurthy's Model of Neologism (2010)

The first component of neologism highlighted by Krishnamurthy (2010) is word-formation. Word formation processes are based on compounding, blending, affixation, coinage, and acronym. Morphemes are defined as “minimal units of words carrying complete meaning”. The second component of this model is borrowing. The speakers intermix various languages for the easiness of communication. According to the context and situation the speakers borrow a sentence or a single word to make communication effective. Borrowing is a tool that develops a vocabulary of a language. The third component of the theoretical framework is lexical deviation. Lexical deviation happens when a writer makes up a word which has not existed before. This is called neologism, or the invention of new words. It is one of the more obvious ways in which a writer exceeds the normal use of the language (Leech, 2014). Lexical deviation tends to produce neologism which refers to “creation of new words where existing rules (of word formation) are applied with generalization”.

(ii) Agenda Setting Theory

This theory captures the ability of the media to influence the significance of events in the public's mind. The media set the agenda for the audience's discussion and mentally order and organize their world. The Agenda Setting Theory of the mass media which provides a linkage between the government and the people as the media sets the tone for what opinion the people hold of their leaders. Through language, the media influences the way of thinking of the people, including their use of words and what meaning such words offer.

The Creation of Neologisms

There are avenues through which neologisms can be created. These are blends, generified words, borrowing, semantic drift, compounds and compounding, the agentive suffix '-er', and the diminutive suffix '-y/-ie', Sayadi (2011).

Blends

New words can be formed from existing ones by various blending processes: for example, motel (from motor hotel), infomercial (from information and commercial), edutainment (from education and entertainment), brunch (from breakfast and lunch), cafetorium (from cafeteria and auditorium), netiquette (from network etiquette), trashware (from trash and software), and bit (from binary and digit).

Generified Words

The words *Kleenex* and *Xerox* illustrate another technique for creating new words, namely, using specific brand names of products as names for the products in general (generification). Hence *Kleenex*, a brand name for facial tissue, has come to denote facial tissue in general. *Xerox* is the name of the corporation that produces a well-known photocopying machine, and much to the dismay of the company, the term *Xerox* has lost its specific brand-name connotation and has come to be used to describe the process of photocopying in general.

Borrowing: Direct

Yet another way to expand our vocabulary is to "borrow" words from other languages. Speakers of English aggressively borrow words from other languages. We have kindergarten (German), and sushi (Japanese), among many others.

Borrowing: Indirect

An interesting type of borrowing occurs when an expression in one language is translated literally into another language. For example, the borrowed terms *firewater* and *iron horse* are literal translations of Native American words meaning "alcohol" and "railroad train".

Semantic Drift

Over time the meanings of words can change, or drift. A rather striking example of change has occurred in the word *lady*. Half of it was the Old English word for "bread" (related to the modern word *loaf*) and *dighe* was the word for "kneader" (related to the modern word *dough*). Thus, the original "kneader of bread" has experienced a rather remarkable increase in status.

Compounds and Compounding

In English (as in many other languages) new words can be formed from already existing words by a process known as compounding, in which individual words are "joined together" to form a compound word. For example, the noun *ape* can be joined with the noun *man* to form the compound noun *ape-man*; the adjective *red* can be joined with the adjective *hot* to form the compound adjective *red-hot*.

Compounds are not limited to two words, as shown by examples such as *bathroom towel-rack* and *community center finance committee*. Indeed, the process of compounding seems unlimited in English: starting with a word like *sailboat*; we can easily construct the compound *sailboat rigging*, from which we can in turn create *sailboat rigging design*, *sailboat rigging design training*, *sailboat rigging design training institute*, and so on.

The Agentive Suffix '-er' and the Diminutive Suffix '-y/-ie'

Agentive nouns are formed by the word formation rule "Add the suffix '-er' to a verb".

English has a so-called diminutive suffix, usually spelled -y (or -i.e.), which is added to nouns such as those in the following pairs: dad-daddy, mom-mommy, dog-doggy, and horse-horsie.

The Print Media and Neologism

So much of new words and coinages have been popularized and contributed to the vault of English vocabulary and communication by the print media. Okon (2002) observe that these stylistic variations add additional cogency and layers of meaning in communication. Some of these are as follows:

Neologism	Meaning
Febuhari	'ife' is a Yoruba term for <i>love</i> , and Buhari's election was fixed for February 14, lovers day. It hence translates: love Buahari on February 14. (Media Trust, February 1, 2016)
Abacharise or Abachaism	Abacha was a despotic Nigerian Head of State who made things difficult for Nigerians. A person is said to abacharise another if he makes things difficult for him. Abachaism suggest insensitivity, senseless killings, intimidation and terrorism. (Newswatch, December 27, 1999, p. 6)
Owambelification	It is coined from a Yoruba word 'owambe' referring to a lavish and extravagant party and merry-making with afro-beat music at the background. Saturday Punch, June 30, 2001, p. 15)
Guesstimated	It is an adulteration of two words guess and estimated. These two words are compounded to mean: guessing to a certain level. It captures a situation where one is not very sure of the choice: guess. Therefore, this uncertainty is stabilized by another word: estimated and vice versa. (Newswatch, September 28, 1987, p. 13)
Gundate	Of the military regime: this is a mandate through the barrel of the gun. (Tell, March 9, 1998, p. 3)
Executhieves	Formed from two words: 'executive' and 'thieves'. It is coined to satirize corrupt government officials.

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	(Newswatch, March 11, 1996, p.8)
Administra-looters	It is coined from ‘Administrators’ and ‘Looters’ referring to the state Military Administrators who looted government treasuries before handing over to elected governors in General Abubakar’s regime. (Newswatch, July 5 1999, p.6)
Siddon-look	To be indifferent to something; keeping mute; showing no reaction and making no comment. (Tell, April 17, 2000, p. 8)

There are also other aspects of neologisms and creativity which adorn the print media, especially with Nigerian colourations.

As observed by Adebajo (2012), a lot of neologisms feature in the writing and speech of Nigerians. Some examples of these are:

Neologisms / Coinages	Meaning
Big boy/Big girl: [noun]	Used to refer to youths [teenagers and adolescents] that are gregarious, extroverted, proud and often well-to-do. These type of youths are usually singers, cyber-criminals and playboys.
Chinko: [noun & adjective]	Used to refer to people who come from China, or products, especially mobile phones, that are ‘made in china’. In English, the proper usage is without ‘o’ i.e. ‘chink’.
Chop: [verb]	Simply means to eat. But it can also mean to enjoy or maximise an opportunity to the fullest.
Coded: [adjective]	If something is coded, then it is either surreptitious or complicated. It is best known and understood by the speaker. Example: My relationship with her is <i>coded</i> , and I don’t have to speak about it.
Collabo: [noun]	(1.)This is an abbreviated form of the word ‘collaboration’. It is mostly used in the entertainment industry to mean partnership between musicians in the production of a song. Example: The song is a product of the <i>collabo</i> between 9ice and Tu face. Collabo [verb]; is to enter into partnership with someone, especially a singer. (2.) It may also mean to make love with someone.
Corper: [noun]	A corper is someone who is serving the country through the NYSC [National Youth Service Corps] scheme.
Doe: [noun]	Simply means money or cash. Example: Give me more <i>doe</i> , then we can discuss.
Environmental: [noun]	A non-Nigerian might be confused when he hears that this word

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	is a noun, not an adjective. Well, Nigerians make use of this word as a short-form of ‘environmental sanitation’, a monthly exercise in which people clean-up their houses and its surroundings, gathering the dirt for government to dispose. Example: Please, when is the next <i>environmental</i> taking place?
Express: [noun]	This word is erroneously used in Nigeria to mean a highway i.e. a wide road that connects two major cities, and is less trafficked. Example: An accident is reported to have occurred on the <i>express</i> .
Face-towel: [noun]	This is a small absorbent clothe used mainly for drying the face. We have hand towels, beach towels, kitchen towels, sanitary towels, tea towels but no face towels. The equivalent expression used in English countries is possibly towelette. Example: I need to get <i>face-towel</i> , I’m sweating profusely.
Flash: [verb]	This is in fact one of the most popular words that fall into this category. It means dialling a phone number, allowing it to ring and then intentionally end the call. Rather than use this word, variants such as phone, telephone, call, ring up and dial are more suitable as they can also mean an attempt to reach someone by phone, not necessarily having a conversation with that person. Notwithstanding, flash is still the most perfect word to use, a very nice innovation that fits into the current state of the economy. Example: Don’t worry, when I get to your apartment, I will <i>flash</i> your number.
Fleet: [verb]	To spray liquid substance from a container, most especially insecticide, into a particular place. I was surprised when I found that the word ‘fleet’, in actuality, does not mean this. Example: Make sure you <i>fleet</i> your room with ‘ota pia-pia’ before going to sleep.
Four-One-Nine/419: [noun]	This is a felonious crime of obtaining title to another’s property by knowingly making false representations with the intention of defrauding the victim. It is known in legal parlance as false pretence. Most people use this word [419] without knowing the origin. Why is it 419 and not any other set of figures? This is because it is section 419 of the Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that states the meaning, criminality and sanction of this crime. Someone who commits this crime is liable to ‘imprisonment for three [3] years. Example: Due to unemployment, everybody is now engaging in <i>419</i> . (note that

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	this word may also refer to the person engaging in false pretence).
Go-slow: [noun]	In the English vocabulary, this means a slowdown or retardation in business, spread of a disease etc. However, it is used in Nigeria exclusively to mean a traffic jam in which there is slow movement of vehicles.
Hammer: [verb]	If someone hammers, then he has just hit it big i.e. he has suddenly, sometimes unexpectedly, gained a huge sum of money. This may be as a result of participation in a contest, lottery or fraud. Example: Everybody gets a free drink today, I just <i>hammered</i> big-time.
Jack: [verb]	To jack is to study persistently for hours, most especially in preparation for an oncoming examination. It's a common usage in the tertiary school environment. I recently learnt that there are different ways to it, such as MTN [from Morning Till Night], TDB [Till Day Break] and so on. It means, in English, to fish in the night using a jacklight, to raise the level of something or to take to task. Example: Is it true Tony fainted today as a result of excessive <i>jacking</i> ?
Jazz: [noun]	Popularly known as "juju" by the Yorubas, this is an act of affecting another's thinking or condition through the use of magical powers, or an object that symbolises this act. The English equivalents are charm and mojo. Example: While in the exam hall, I forgot all I read. I must have been under the influence of jazz.
Machinery: [noun]	A person whose professional services are employed and paid for, often illegally, by a group or organisation, especially in order to win a contest against another group or organisation. The closest word to this, in meaning, in the English vocabulary is mercenary. Example: Their soccer team undoubtedly won because they hired skilful <i>machineries</i> .
Mama-put: [noun]	A local restaurant where foods are sold at relatively low prices. Example: I do not like patronising mama-puts, the hygiene of their foods cannot be guaranteed.
Momcy/Momsy/Mumcy/Mumcy: [noun]	This means mom. Synonyms include mother, ma, mama, mamma, momma, mammy, mommy and old lady. Example: <i>Momcy</i> is about to be delivered of a baby boy.

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On-point: [adjective]	When something is on point, it is perfect for a purpose or for an occasion, and it needs no modification. Synonyms include spot-on, precise, exact, on-target, dead-on etc. Example: Oh my God, that dressing is just <i>on-point</i> . 2. It may also serve the purpose of emphasis for a particular activity or event you are engaging in or you are planning to engage in. Example: Wedding [things] <i>on-point</i> .
Palm: [noun]	(1.)This is a type of foot-wear, made of rubber, leather or any thick material, which, unlike shoes and sandals, does not cover or support the heels/back side of the foot. Example: A lot of my foot-wears are <i>palms</i> because they are very easy to put on. (2.) Palm is also used to mean to steal or pilfer, especially something of a palm size.
Pant: [noun]	This, in correct usage, (besides underpants) means an outer garment covering each leg separately and usually extending from the waist to the ankle [usually used in plural just like ‘trousers’]. But in Nigeria, if you tell someone to take off his pants for an X-ray test, he will definitely be amazed and quizzical. This is because he considers the word to mean only knickers or underpants.
Pepper [noun & adjective]	Pepper means money. It also means something unpalatable. Example: Hunger dey show me pepper.
Player: [noun]	A player is someone who flirts a lot, has many of girl/boyfriends and is very promiscuous. It has a similar but not exact meaning of ‘playboy’.
Popcy/Popsy/Pop-man: [noun]	Simply means Dad. Synonyms include father, old man, pop, poppa, pa, papa and daddy. Also see Momsy. Example: I’ll see <i>popcy</i> today concerning my school fees.
Shack: [verb]	In the English vocabulary, it is a noun that means a hut, room or any similar enclosure. But in Nigeria, it is a variant of the word ‘drink’, only that it is mostly used for alcoholic substances. Example: I hope you have something I can <i>shack</i> in here?
Slippers: [noun]	Or bathroom slippers: this is also a common usage in Nigeria. It is used in reference to foot-wears that are light, open and made of rubber. They are indoor wears that are mostly used in the bathroom while having a bath. The word does exist in the

	English vocabulary but it depicts a different type of foot-wear which is not open, not made of rubber and perhaps used while sleeping. It is worthy of note that what this word often erroneously refers to is, in actuality, what is called a pair of 'flip-flops'. Example: Please get me a pair of <i>slippers</i> , I need to use the bathroom.
Toast: [verb]	Does this not mean to make something turn brown by heating it? NO! At least, not in the Nigerian colloquial usage. Rather it means the act of flirting [i.e. behaving amorously without serious intent] with another, especially one belonging to the opposite sex. A toaster refers to one who is fond of toasting, or who is flirtatious in nature. Example: I am tired of toasting here and there, it is high time I settled down.
Vandalization (noun & verb)	Usually used in Nigeria colloquially in place of the appropriate form: vandalism.

Conclusion

This paper has examined neologisms in the print media with particular attention to their use as innovative stylistic devices. Neologisms stand for innovation in every language. New words are created every day and their number in English is growing fast. The print is one of the media which has a significant role in creating and spreading neologisms by using these new words in their articles. Neologisms undergo certain word formation processes and if cautiously used would further boost communication and style with the print media as the medium.

It is a fact that many of these lexical items are more or less transitional in nature. This is to say that they are short-lived, have restricted use and are easily lost over time. The non-permanent livelihood of neologisms in some instances is because some of the coinages or neologisms do not enjoy wide acceptability and legitimacy, and so, are not incorporated into the lexicon of standard Nigerian English. In spite of this, the prospects of neologism as an innovative stylistic device remains high as more coinages are birthed and brought to the fore frequently in the media when need be in the Nigerian cultural and linguistic environments. And so, coinages or neologisms will always thrive as innovative stylistic devices in the Nigerian syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic soils because they are, basically, events-driven.

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