

THE WORD FORMATION OF SLANG TERMS ON ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2023

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Abstract: *The study delved into the formation of slang terms on English and Vietnamese social media in 2023, utilizing a theoretical framework that combines the works of Yule (2010), Meyer (2009), Schmid (2015), and Le (2023). Employing a quantitative method to analyze the data, the researchers discovered several instances of various word formation processes in both languages. In English, this study found 14 cases of meaning extension, 5 of acronyms, 5 of coinage, 4 of clipping, 3 of compounding, 1 of conversion, and 1 of syllable change. Meanwhile, Vietnamese had 13 cases of meaning extension, 8 of borrowing, 8 of syllable change, 7 of compounding, 6 of multiple processes, and 2 of coinage. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the field of linguistics by expanding our knowledge of word formation processes.*

Keywords: *Word formation, Slang terms, Vietnamese social media, English social.*

I. Introduction

Word-formation research aims to uncover, categorize, and model the mechanisms that underlie the production of new and existing complex lexemes (Schmid, 2015). However, the variety of ways that a word forms is still debatable. For example, Bauer (1983, p. 1), stated that “There is, at the moment, so single ‘theory of word-formation’, nor even agreement on the kind of data that is relevant for the construction of such a theory.” A similar idea was conveyed in a recent study by Schmid (2015), which said that there is a great deal of disagreement over the specifics of how word-formation processes should be modeled. Therefore,

other research regarding word formation is never abundant.

Another factor is the characteristic of the vocabulary and the role of social media in replenishing it. According to Arnold (1973), the lexical system is adaptable, and vocabulary changes to meet the ever-evolving demands of culture, human communication, and other needs. Rapid technological advancement has led to the expansion of this system, as social media are believed to have contributed to creating some new words which are related to word formation types, which is stated by Faradisa et al. (2019). Hence, it is essential to research the formation of slang terms coined on social media.

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Because of this, we chose to conduct the study “The Word Formation of Slang Terms on English and Vietnamese Social Media in 2023”.

The study focuses on achieving these two aims: to investigate and compare word-formation processes in the creation of slang terms on English and Vietnamese social media in 2023 and to examine strange instances from which new theories can be proposed in English and Vietnamese social media word-formation.

Based on the study’s objectives, two research questions were made as follows: (1) What are the word-formation processes found in creating slang terms on English and Vietnamese social media in 2023, and how do these processes differ across the two languages? (2) Are there any strange instances? If so, what new theories can be developed to explain these phenomena?

II. Literature Review

2.1. Slang terms

According to Haspo and Rosa (2018), slang is a form of language used by young people within a particular group with a shared interest. Le (2023) argues that many slang phrases used by young people are gradually expanding in meaning and becoming more ingrained in the language patterns of users, potentially becoming universal language components. The prevalence of social media has contributed to the development of slang language, as Prastikawati et al. (2021) noted. However, some slang terms are popular briefly before becoming outdated (Le, 2023).

2.2. Word-formation

Kirtman (2005) provided a brief description, stating that word formation is the process of expanding a language’s vocabulary. To be more precise, Yule (2010) defines word formation as the

process by which new words are created, either entirely new words or by changing old ones, and then become a part of the language. Schmid (2015) put out the same concept, which included the goal of word formation: creating rules and other kinds of generalizations.

2.3. Word-formation Classification

Yule (2010) divided word-formation processes into many groups: coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronym, derivation, and multiple processes. Other researchers proposed similar processes, including two more categorization methods: meaning extension (Meyer, 2009) and reduplication (Schmid, 2015). With Vietnamese slang, Le (2023) additionally proposed these word-formation processes: syllable change, homonyms, spoonerism, and adding new elements.

Meaning Extension: According to Meyer (2009), meaning extension is a common process in English that involves extending the meaning of existing words. This process often occurs through the use of metaphors, where new words take on the meaning of existing ones. Examples of this phenomenon include “heart” in “the heart of the city” and “head” in “the head of a university “. Just about any word, if it is around long enough, will have its meaning extended at some time during its life,” Meyer also underlined in his book (2009, p. 178).

Reduplication: According to Schmid’s (2015) proposition, the phenomenon of reduplication can be perceived as a word-formation process that involves the repetition of a given word, word-like element, or a segment of the word in its original form (hush-hush), often accompanied by a modified vowel (hip-hop) or an alternate consonant (boogie-woogie).

Coinage: According to Yule (2010), coinage is the creation of entirely new terminology; the most common example is the name of a commercial product that becomes a generic phrase. Meyer (2009) referred to the process with a different name, “root creation,” and considered “echoic” words such as “cuckoo” or “zap” to also be the products of this creation.

Borrowing: As per Yule’s (2010) explanation, borrowing refers to incorporating words and their translations from other languages. Unlike some languages that are hesitant to adopt vocabulary from foreign languages, English has a history of being receptive to such linguistic transfers (Meyer, 2009). On the other hand, loan translation or calque is a distinct type of borrowing where the individual components of a word are translated directly into the borrowing language (Yule, 2010). It is believed that the English word “superman” is an example of loan translation derived from the German word “Übermensch.”

Compounding: According to Yule (2010), compounding is the merging of two distinct words to create a single form. In English, compounding is the most efficient method for creating new words (Plag, 2003). According to Meyer (2009), compounds can take on various forms, such as two separate words (e.g. “police officer”), a single word (e.g. “policeman”), or a hyphenated word (e.g. “word-formation”).

Blending: According to Yule (2010), blending is fusing two distinct forms to create a new term, which is typically accomplished by taking one’s beginning and attaching it to the end of another word. Occasionally, we may also blend the first syllables of both words, such as with information technology terms like modem (modulator/demodulator) and telex (teleprinter/exchange) (Yule, 2010).

Clipping: According to Yule (2010), clipping is shortening a word by removing

one or more syllables, which is typically done in informal speech. Additionally, Yule (2010) highlights another type of reduction known as hypocorisms, where a longer word such as “moving pictures” can be reduced to a single syllable and then appended with -y or -i.e., resulting in the commonly used term “movie.”

Backformation: According to Schmid (2015), backformation is the removal of a bound morpheme or morpheme-like element.

Conversion: Yule (2010) stated that conversion is the term for a shift in a word’s function, such as when a noun starts to be employed as a verb (without any reduction). Meyer (2009) referred to this process as a “functional shift.” Yule (2010) noted that Modern English conversion is highly productive, resulting in new uses of words being created on a regular basis.

Acronyms: According to Yule (2010), an acronym is a new word created from the first letters of a group of other words, which can be pronounced as a word or sequences of letters. Additionally, Meyer (2009) proposes that acronyms encompass two distinct processes: those that can be spoken as a single word (acronyms) and those that require letter-by-letter enunciation (abbreviations).

Derivation: As defined by Schmid (2015), derivation is affixing a new term to an existing one. Words may be formed by adding components like “nhà, già, sĩ,...” to existing ones, as stated by Tac & Huy (2016).

Syllable Change: Le (2023) listed a partial change in syllable form as one of the ways to create slang.

Homonyms: Le (2023) mentioned that one technique to form slang is to use the phenomena of homonyms, which are words with identical pronunciations but different meanings.

Spoonerism: Spoonerism was regarded by Le (2023) as one of the ways to create slang.

Adding New Elements: Le (2023) listed adding new elements as one way to create slang.

Multiple Process: According to Yule (2010), it is feasible to track the collaboration of many processes involved in forming a given word.

2.4. Previous Studies

Sari (2018) concentrated on examining the mechanisms by which words are formed on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter. In the end, inflection emerged as the most common form of word creation process, followed by compounding and acronyms. In order to shed light on the word generation processes discovered on Instagram, Faradisa et al. performed a study in 2019. The three most common procedures were discovered to be acronyms, borrowing, and abbreviations. Sihombing (2021) conducted research on word creation in a report released by the World Economic Forum in January 2021.

III. Methodology

3.1. Subjects

The study focuses on the frequently used slang terms on English and Vietnamese social media during the year 2023. The scope of these terms spans both newly coined words and those that had been previously created but were re-popularized during the course of the research year. These terms correspond to a wide range of topics, including but not limited to popular food names and personal mood indicators. It is important to note that phrases or sentences that gained popularity in 2023 have been excluded from the study, as they do not fall under the purview of word formation theories.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

The research under discussion drew upon a diverse array of contemporary social media charts, a blog-based survey, and reputable newspaper articles as primary data sources. Regarding social media charts, the research relied on Younet Media, Coccoc Year in Search 2023, and Wechoice Z-slang. A survey conducted by preply.com was employed to collect data on contemporary slang. Additionally, the study drew on a number of other sources, including dantri.vn, voh.com.vn, ef.com, and studyusa.com.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

Regarding modern English slang, a survey carried out by preply.com in 2023 serves as the main reference. The survey gathered responses from 682 parents who have children aged 12 to 18 and covered a range of questions to identify the most commonly used slang terms in 2023. Additionally, sources such as ef.com and studyusa.com were consulted.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The paper employs the quantitative method. After identifying the word formation process behind each slang term using the theoretical framework, the number of instances for each word formation process was used as statistics for analysis and comparison. To provide a better illustration of the statistics, charts were utilized for data analysis, followed by a comprehensive analysis of the findings.

IV. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Word-Formation Processes in The Creation of Slang Terms on English and Vietnamese Social Media in 2023

4.1.1. Word-Formation Processes in The Creation of Slang Terms on English Social Media in 2023

In 2023, 33 English social media slang terms were identified through 7 distinct word formation processes. The

appendix analyzes these instances, and it is discovered that meaning extension was the most frequently used method, accounting for 14 out of the 33 terms (42.4%). The terms “Era” and “Extra” are two examples of this word-formation technique, whereby their original meanings were expanded to describe new concepts and experiences.

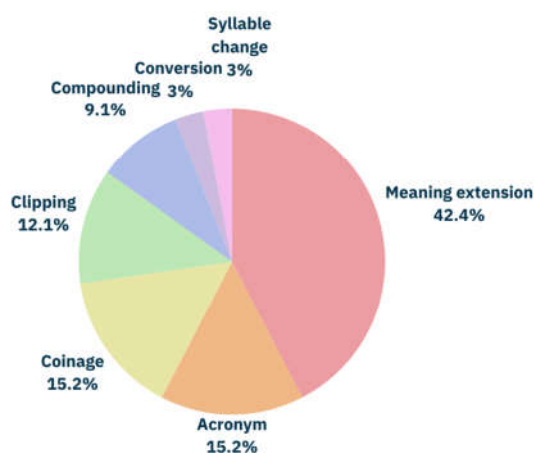


Figure 1. Word-formation processes in the creation of slang terms on English social media in 2023

Acronyms and coinage were the second most commonly used methods, appearing in 5 out of 44 cases (15.2% total). Acronyms such as “Iykyk” (If you know, you know) and “DTB” (don’t trust boys or don’t trust b**) were prevalent, as were coinages such as “Sheesh” and “Oof,” which convey admiration and unease, respectively.

Clipping and compounding were popular word formation methods, accounting for 12.1% and 9.1% of instances, respectively. Clipping examples include “Sus” (suspicious) and “Rizz” (charisma) while compounding examples include “Finna” (fixing + to) and “Situationship” (situation + relationship).

Lastly, conversion and syllable change were the least frequently used word formation methods, each accounting for 3% of the total instances. The term “Slay” was changed from a verb to an

adjective, meaning ‘awesome, lovely, or cool,’ while “Turnt” is an example of syllable change (turned/turn), meaning ‘to become enthusiastic about something.’

4.1.2. Word-Formation Processes in The Creation of Slang Terms on Vietnamese Social Media in 2023

It is noteworthy that in Vietnam, as of the year 2023, there are 44 social media slang terms, which are believed to have been created using six identified word formation processes. These processes are specified in the appendix, with each instance being clearly outlined. From among the terms studied, it was observed that 13 words were created using meaning extension, making it the most frequently used word formation method, with a frequency of 29.5%. Examples of such extensions include “Cà nhỉnh” and “Xìt keo,” which originally meant ‘to eat little by little’ and ‘spraying a cosmetic used to style hair’ respectively, but have now come to mean ‘expressing interest and excitement’ and ‘expressing surprise or embarrassment to the point of being unable to speak’.

Budget Pie Chart

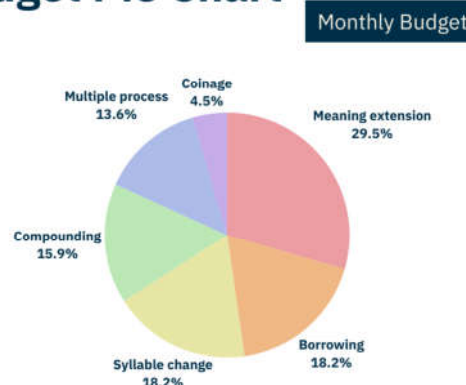


Figure 2. Word-formation processes in the creation of slang terms on Vietnamese social media in 2023

Borrowing and syllable change were found to be the second most used word formation methods, with 8 out of 44

cases utilizing each method, accounting for almost one-fifth of the total amount. Examples of borrowing include “Flex” and “Pressing”, both of which are English words, while “Xin lỗi” is an example of syllable change (“Xin lỗi”), meaning ‘sorry’, and “Mơ” is another example of syllable change (“Mê”), meaning ‘being passionate about’.

The third and fourth most commonly used word formation methods were compounding and multiple processes, which accounted for 15.9% and 13.6% of the cases, respectively. Examples of compounding include “Cà phê muối” (Cà phê + Muối) and “Mì tôm thanh long” (Mì tôm + Thanh long), while “Sốp/xốp” is an example of multiple processes, which was borrowed from the English word “shop” and its meaning is extended to address acquaintances in a friendly manner instead of an owner of a shop.

Finally, the least frequently used word formation method was coinage, which accounted for 15.9% of the cases. “Keo ly” was coined to convey admiration at something that makes you want to bite or taste just by looking, while “Quế lâu” was coined to refer to an attractive individual. 4.1.3. Comparison of Word-Formation Processes in The Creation of Slang Terms on English and Vietnamese Social Media in 2023

In 2023, 9 processes were discovered in the word-formation of slang terms in English and Vietnamese. English boasted a greater number of word formation processes, with 7 identified in contrast to the 6 found in Vietnamese. Coinage, compounding, meaning extension, and syllable change were common to both languages. However, acronyms, clipping, and conversion were unique to English, while borrowing and multiple methods were exclusive to Vietnamese.

4.2. *Strange Instances from Which New Theories Can Be Proposed in Vietnamese Social Media Word Formation*

4.2.1. *À Lôi - An Ambiguous Case of Borrowing*

À Lôi	Borrowing
“Huh?” or “Oh my god” (Being surprised)	

A song with the title, which is also “À Lôi,” brought this word to the public’s attention, and then the music piece’s addictiveness led to the term’s prevalence. “À Lôi” is a case of borrowing from the language of the Tay people, a Vietnamese minority. So, this type of borrowing didn’t happen across boundaries, and if this word became a permanent addition, the people of Vietnam wouldn’t look at it as a case of borrowing at all because Tay people are also considered Vietnamese. If so, the assumption that this word is borrowing fails if it becomes more popular. However, if that case happens, looking back in retrospect, the lack of awareness of this term before the song went viral and made it famous cannot support the fact that it is not a borrowing. This paradox could possibly lead to the ambiguous boundaries of borrowing - whether it should be across languages or across only the major languages of each country.

4.2.2. *Elm - A Special Case of Syllable Change*

Elm (Em)	Syllable change	You
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“Elm” was initially used to refer to a baby named Pam of a girl on the Pam Yeu Oi fan page in September 2023. It quickly became popular despite its peculiar spelling and exotic pronunciation. However, this is a special instance since all the other syllable changes in the research database are considered readable regarding the Vietnamese pronunciation system. The same system doesn’t apply to “elm” since the letter “l” imitates the /l/ phoneme of the English language, which

never happens in the middle letter. Plus, in the syllable change cases reviewed by Le (2023), a similar case was not brought up. This possibly indicates that one of the characteristics of the word formation “syllable change” is that the phonetic alterations don’t necessarily happen within the corpus of the language under study. Since this is the only instance of its sort among the resources—the small number of articles this study cites—the claim will need to withstand additional future proof and support.

V. Conclusions

This study delved into the creation of slang terms on English and Vietnamese social media in 2023. The research drew upon a theoretical framework that combined the ideas of Yule (2010), Meyer (2009), Schmid (2015), and Le (2023). The study discovered that, in the given context, 14 instances of meaning extension, 5 instances of acronyms, 5 instances of coinage, 4 instances of clipping, 3 instances of compounding, 1 instance of conversion, and 1 instance of syllable change occurred in English. Meanwhile, in Vietnamese, there were 13 instances of meaning extension, 8 instances of borrowing, 8 instances of syllable change, 7 instances of compounding, 6 instances of multiple processes, and 2 instances of coinage. After comparing the findings with the theories of various scholars, the study proposed some insights that could contribute to the model of word formation in Vietnam and beyond. For instance, the study highlighted the differences and similarities in the frequency of certain methods between English and Vietnamese. Ultimately, this study aimed to shed light on issues in word formation in particular and linguistics in general.

In the future, similar studies should be conducted within the same scope but in different years to highlight the word

formation trends of youngsters nowadays. This precious insight can help predict future trends as well as compare with other languages that already have abundant studies regarding this area.

With time constraints and such a broad subject to cover, the study is unable to dodge the incomprehensive understanding of the matter; therefore, some findings might not be accurate and generalized. Plus, within the form of a mini-essay, the findings might not be in-depth enough, while the appendix covers quite a wide range of cases. The research relied only on weekly papers from the same site, which sometimes included a chart of slang terms and sometimes didn’t. Therefore, the reliability of the paper is only somewhat acceptable.

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SỰ HÌNH THÀNH TỪ VỰNG CỦA CÁC THUẬT NGỮ TIẾNG LÓNG TRÊN MẠNG XÃ HỘI CỦA TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT NĂM 2023

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu đã đi sâu vào sự hình thành của các thuật ngữ tiếng lóng trên mạng xã hội tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt vào năm 2023, sử dụng khung lý thuyết kết hợp các công trình của Yule (2010), Meyer (2009), Schmid (2015) và Lê (2023). Bằng cách áp dụng phương pháp định lượng để phân tích dữ liệu, các nhà nghiên cứu đã phát hiện nhiều trường hợp thuộc các quá trình hình thành từ khác nhau trong cả hai ngôn ngữ. Trong tiếng Anh, nghiên cứu đã tìm thấy 14 trường hợp mở rộng nghĩa, 5 trường hợp viết tắt, 5 trường hợp tạo từ mới, 4 trường hợp rút gọn, 3 trường hợp ghép từ, 1 trường hợp chuyển loại và 1 trường hợp thay đổi âm tiết. Trong khi đó, tiếng Việt có 13 trường hợp mở rộng nghĩa, 8 trường hợp vay mượn, 8 trường hợp thay đổi âm tiết, 7 trường hợp ghép từ, 6 trường hợp kết hợp nhiều quá trình và 2 trường hợp tạo từ mới. Cuối cùng, nghiên cứu này nhằm đóng góp vào lĩnh vực ngôn ngữ học bằng cách mở rộng hiểu biết về các quá trình hình thành từ.

Từ khóa: Hình thành từ, tiếng lóng, mạng xã hội Việt Nam, mạng xã hội Anh.

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