
АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ ЛІНГВІСТИЧНОЇ СЕМАНТИКИ
[CURRENT ISSUES IN LINGUISTIC SEMANTICS]

УДК 811.134.2

Стаття надійшла до редакції [Article received] – 05.09.2024 р.

Фінансування [Financing] – самофінансування [self-financing]

Перевірено на плагіат [Checked for plagiarism] – 15.09.2024 р.

Оригінальність тексту [The originality of the text] – 95.98 %

<http://doi.org/10.17721/2663-6530.2024.46.04>

INTERNET SLANG AND DIGITAL NEOLOGISMS IN ITALIAN: IMPACT
ON TRADITIONAL LINGUISTICS

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The article studies the use and role of Internet slang and digital neologisms in Italian language. It is stated that with the development of social media, chats, and digital platforms, daily language is undergoing rapid and significant transformations. Italian neological units and the use of specific Internet slang, often created to respond to the unique communicative needs of the online environment, raise questions about the future of the Italian language and its evolution. The reasons for the emergence of digital neological units and Internet slang have been mentioned. The examples of Internet lexical units have been selected and analyzed, the perspectives of the study have been described. The article delves deeper into the implications of these linguistic changes, exploring how Internet slang reflects cultural shifts and societal trends. The role of youth culture in shaping language is emphasized, as younger generations adapt their communication styles to fit the fast-paced digital landscape. Additionally, the study considers how these neologisms can both enrich and challenge the traditional norms of the Italian language. By examining specific case studies of commonly used terms and phrases, the article aims to provide insights into the dynamics of language evolution in the digital age and its potential impact on future linguistic practices. The active use of borrowed and altered anglicisms in Italian is observed. It was concluded that the phenomenon of Internet slang and digital neologisms is the one changing linguistic norms,

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influencing grammatical structures and challenging traditional approaches to language learning. As it is claimed, the studied topic represents a fertile field for research and offers opportunities to investigate how the Italian language is transforming in the digital age.

Key words: *Internet slang, digital neologisms, social media, digitalization, online environment, anglicisms.*

ІНТЕРНЕТ-СЛЕНГ ТА ЦИФРОВІ НЕОЛОГІЗМИ ІТАЛІЙСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ: ВПЛИВ НА ТРАДИЦІЙНУ ЛІНГВІСТИКУ

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У статті досліджується використання та роль інтернет-сленгу і цифрових неологізмів в італійській мові. Відзначається, що з розвитком соціальних мереж, чатів та цифрових платформ повсякденна мова зазнає швидких і значних трансформацій. Італійські неологічні одиниці та використання специфічного інтернет-сленгу, який часто створюється для задоволення унікальних комунікативних потреб онлайн-середовища, порушують питання про майбутнє італійської мови та її еволюцію. Окреслено причини виникнення цифрових неологізмів та інтернет-сленгу. Наведено та проаналізовано приклади інтернет-лексичних одиниць, описано перспективи дослідження.

У статті глибше розглядаються наслідки цих лінгвістичних змін, досліджується, як інтернет-сленг відображає культурні зрушення та соціальні тенденції. Підкреслюється роль молодіжної культури у формуванні мови, адже молодші покоління адаптують свої стилі спілкування до швидкоплинного цифрового середовища. Крім того, у дослідженні розглядається, як ці неологізми можуть одночасно збагачувати та ставити під сумнів традиційні норми італійської мови. Аналізуючи конкретні кейси поширених термінів та фраз, стаття має на меті надати уявлення про динаміку еволюції мови в епоху цифровізації та її можливий вплив на майбутні лінгвістичні практики.

Зафіксовано активне використання запозичених і видозмінених англіцизмів в італійській мові. Зроблено висновок, що явище інтернет-сленгу і цифрових неологізмів змінює лінгвістичні норми, впливає на граматичні структури та кидає виклик традиційним підходам до вивчення мови. Як стверджується, досліджувана тема є

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перспективним полем для наукових досліджень і відкриває можливості вивчення трансформації італійської мови в цифрову епоху.

***Ключові слова:** інтернет-сленг, цифрові неологізми, соціальні мережі, цифровізація, онлайн-середовище, англіцизми.*

With the development of social media, chats, and digital platforms, everyday language is undergoing rapid and significant transformations. Neologisms and the use of specific slang, often created to respond to the unique communicative needs of the online environment, raise questions about the future of the Italian language and its evolution.

Relevance of the research topic. The analysis of the language used in digital environment offers insights into how language adapts to new technologies and social dynamics. Neologisms reflect cultural, social, and technological changes, and their diffusion can influence the standard language. Therefore, linguistic evolution is observed. Moreover, Internet slang and neologisms can serve as markers of identity and belonging to specific online communities, as well as affects the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Studying these phenomena could contribute to understanding of how people relate to each other in the digital context, which describes **the scientific novelty** of the research.

The object of this article is internet slang and digital neologisms in Italian online environment, while **the subject** is the challenges they cause for traditional linguistics, particularly concerning linguistic purity, identity, and educational practices. The article explores how these evolving forms of communication reflect broader shifts in Italian language and necessitate a more inclusive understanding of modern language use.

Talking about the **perspectives** of the article, it is worth noting that this research can involve different disciplines, including linguistics, sociology, psychology and media studies, opening up a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

Analysis of recent publications. Neologisms and Internet language were studied by a lot of foreign scientists such as M. Dardano, P. Trifone, Adame e Della Valle, M. Zanola, R. Bombi, P. D'Achille, R. Gualdo, G. Messina, B. Migliorini, D. Crystal [2], C. Thurlow & K. Mroczek, N. Baron [1], S. Tagliamonte, as well as many domestic researches like M. Berhelson, T. Vynohradova, H. Vokalchuk, O. Horoshko, L. Ivanov, M. Navalna, T. Popova, O. Styshov, L. Struhanets,

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S. Chemerkin, E. Stukaryova and others considered this topic quite challenging and important.

Presenting the main material. Language, like a living organism, undergoes continuous development in line with changes in society, scientific progress and human activity. Every year the Italian language is enriched with new words that arise following certain political, cultural, historical and global events. Some newly formed lexical elements remain fixed in linguistic discourse for a long time, but most neologisms disappear as quickly as they appeared. The cause of these processes is the rapid development of language and verbal activity, the continuous changes in the life and development of society. Like a living organism, language also has the ability to be born, grow, develop and die, as well as to improve itself by eliminating old and no longer functional words from use. Instead, old lexical elements are replaced by completely new, modern, relevant and adapted to the present, which establish themselves in daily use and become an integral part of speech.

Modern technologies, having made a great step forward, have given a certain impetus to the expansion of the lexical system of the Italian language. Most of the neologisms that have appeared in everyday communication are primarily related to the development and active use of social media and online resources.

Before proceeding to a more in-depth analysis, it is worth noting that Internet slang is a specific form of language that emerges in the context of online communication. It is distinguished by abbreviations, acronyms, informal phrases and newly formed lexemes. New dynamics of language use have been named through new media platforms including not only the use of abbreviations and all the components mentioned before, but also the use of emojis, and the use of social media language through the use of hashtags among others as identified by Crystal [2]. Such lingual changes should be viewed as a part of the distinct trend in the evolution of language: the usage of language in new communicative contexts – as Baron notes, *flexibility of language in the net-communicative environment where conciseness and speed are valued excessively* [1].

Digital neologisms, in their turn, are new lexical elements or combinations of words that emerged as a result of technological changes. Today, both of these phenomena, together with Internet slang, constitute new linguistic norms and challenges for traditional linguistics.

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PROBLEMS OF SEMANTICS, PRAGMATICS AND COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

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Social media and other forms of digital networks are integral to modern society, fundamentally changing how people interact, exchange information, and present themselves. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram, messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram and WeChat, and various online discussion forums have created new avenues for social communication that use languages transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

As for the reasons for the emergence of Internet language, several factors need to be mentioned: first, **the speed of communication**. In today's world, information is transmitted instantly, so users try to reduce the time it takes to write messages, which leads to the simplification of language.

Secondly, **the cultural context** is an important factor in the evolution of language. Youth culture, in particular, plays a significant role, as it often embraces creativity and experimentation with language, leading to the development of new words and expressions. Memes and subcultures contribute to this phenomenon by providing a shared language that resonates with specific communities, facilitating communication and fostering a sense of belonging. As these new terms gain popularity, they can quickly spread beyond their initial contexts, influencing broader societal language and reflecting the values, humor, and concerns of contemporary youth. This dynamic interplay between culture and language highlights how social trends and digital communication shape the lexicon, making it an ever-evolving aspect of linguistic development.

Furthermore, **globalization** is a significant factor in the evolution of every language. It should be noted that Italian is some kind of a conservative language, which does not accept new lexical units that often. The pervasive influence of English, along with other languages, has led to the emergence of new terms in Italian as well, as speakers frequently borrow and adapt words to fit their linguistic context. This process often involves not the direct translation of terms but more the modification of spelling, pronunciation, and usage to align with Italian phonetics and grammar. As a result, many anglicisms become integrated into everyday communication, reflecting modern trends, contemporary technological advancements, and cultural exchanges. These linguistic borrowings demonstrate the fluidity of the language and illustrate how global interdependence constantly shapes and enriches the Italian lexicon, creating a dynamic and hybrid form of communication.

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The impact of Internet slang on traditional linguistics is significant. First of all, linguistic norms are changing. Slang challenges established rules of use, causing discussions among linguists. At the same time, lexicography is also adapting to the new rules: dictionaries cannot keep up with the rapid changes and relatively often neologisms are not recorded. In particular, for a word to become a neologism, it is not enough to coin it and start using it; its use, regardless of how appropriate it may seem, must spread and become an effective part of the language of society. As it is known, the Accademia della Crusca is responsible for recording such linguistic phenomena in the Italian language. After the end of each calendar year, the official website of the Academy publishes a list of “new words” that have entered the modern Italian language during this period. This poses new challenges to lexicographers regarding their role in recording modern language. In addition, grammatical structures are also evolving under the influence of new forms of communication. New constructions appear that often do not conform to traditional grammatical rules.

Studies based on the analysis of texts from social media have revealed numerous examples of neologisms that have rapidly entered everyday language. Surveys conducted among different age groups have shown that young people perceive Internet slang as part of their identity, while older people often feel uncomfortable using it. Moreover, it should be recalled that nowadays, there is a great deal of gamers – people involved in various gaming activities online on such streaming platforms as Twitch or Youtube. During gaming-communicative processes, participants use a completely different language that is invading Italian lexical system actively. Therefore, the following lexical items may be vivid examples of digital neologisms and Internet slang:

- **bannare** – a verb meaning the expulsion of a user who has acted contrary to internal rules from a given community, for a limited period of time or indefinitely. Although expulsion is still very much in vogue in sports and the “real world,” the virtual world uses the Italianization of the verb *to ban*: “*Idea vincente, perché così i bot della rete russa hanno cominciato a essere individuati (e bannati) in massa. Ma per il gruppo non era finita*” [3];
- talking about **blur**, however, we are not referring to Damon Albarn's famous band, but rather to that disturbing, somewhat blurry effect caused by the rapid movement of an image on a screen. The lexeme is quite used by the youth, especially in the context of online conferences or Zoom meetings;

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- **boomer** – to be precise, it is supposed to refer to all people born between the 1950s and 1960s, during the postwar economic boom. Today, however, we tend to use the term to refer to anyone who belongs to an earlier generation and struggles to understand certain dynamics of today. For example, *"I boomers? Sono risorse umane da valorizzare in azienda, così come i loro figli, i Gen X che si avviano a entrare nei loro 50 anni, nel pieno della loro maturità personale e anche lavorativa"* [4];
- **cringe**: in Italian we can translate this anglicism as some kind of embarrassment, although it actually encompasses a number of additional shades of meaning. One is usually embarrassed by the behavior of others, whether it is inappropriate or unsuitable. A cringe can be defined as a boomer who persists in sporting a “youthful look” at all costs. An example is *"Perché cringe è facile, veloce, ma intenso"* [5];
- the expression **bossfight** seems to be quite literal, and one only needs to know a minimum of English to understand it. In video games, it is combat against the main enemy that must be defeated to move forward in the story, which is distinguished from other enemies by being more complicated to beat or by their character, usually important to the plot. The example of the use of such a lexical unit is *"La saga di Dark Souls è famosa per avere in ogni capitolo bossfight molto difficili"* [6];
- a much more widely used term today, given the prevalence on social media, is **bot**, by which we generally refer to a game element that is out of a user's control. It may be Artificial Intelligence or, in the case of Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, a fake profile designed to generate posts and interactions as well as enrich the follower scoreboard. The great example could be *"E così è stato per i giovani studenti universitari che hanno creato una delle più pervasive reti di bot che giocano a poker"* [3];
- **chill**: in Italian as well as in English, it is used to refer to a state of being calm, achieved or to be achieved. To be in chill means to enjoy some relaxation, like *"serviti a ritmo di compilation chill out"* [7];
- **droppare**: literally it means to drop but the usage of such a dropping is more abstract. Generally in the music world we drop a single or album, that is, we “make it fall” in the marketplace, on a platform, and the same goes for TV

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series, movies, and beyond. *Droppare* also means leaving something behind, such as "*droppare una foto su Instagram*" [8];

- *shippare* – a verb borrowed and reformed from the English ship (short for relationship), used in Internet slang to describe the desire to see two real or imaginary people in a romantic relationship. For instance, "*Giulia e Paolo, vi shippo*" [9];

It should go without saying that the language needs to be constantly updated, which compels even those who usually keep well away from technology to learn a certain amount of new terminology.

All of this relates to the concept of *figital*, which is a combination of lexemes physical and digital. It is a term that describes our current condition, in which the virtual is massively present in our lives, although it has not yet replaced the real-world reality. At the same time it can be described figuratively as being in both dimensions at once.

For instance, a set of technologies that enables the structuring of a virtual chain of blocks containing a shared and immutable ledger of all cryptocurrency transactions, also enabling the tracking of assets in corporate networks is called **Blockchain** – it is the international neologism that exists in all languages of the world. "*La Blockchain è l'innovazione sottostante alle criptovalute, una tecnologia di registri distribuiti in cui ogni nodo della rete ha a disposizione il registro completo di tutte le transazioni attuali aggiornato in tempo reale*" [10].

The neologism *token* corresponds to a set of digital information within a blockchain, which permits the conversion of the rights to an asset into a virtual one, and the most famous area of use is in cryptocurrencies. The example "I token possono essere emessi e utilizzati per diversi scopi, come ad esempio facilitare le transazioni, gestire diritti di proprietà intellettuale" [11].

All neologisms mentioned in this article perfectly illustrate how Internet slang and digital technologies influence everyday language, creating new forms of expression that can pose problems for traditional linguistics, especially in terms of grammar and word formation. As it can be noticed, spheres of neological emersion may be absolutely different, but the Internet and current innovations make a significant step forward which causes the appearance of a lot of new lexemes in Italian daily communication.

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Conclusions. In general, Internet slang and digital neologisms cause a serious challenge to traditional linguistics. This phenomenon is changing linguistic norms, influencing grammatical structures and challenging traditional approaches to language learning. In light of these changes, it is necessary to rethink modern linguistic research methods and recognize the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. Overall, the topic of this article represents a fertile field for research and offers opportunities to investigate how the Italian language is transforming in the digital age. The analysis of slang and neologisms not only enriches the understanding of the language itself, but also offers a mirror of contemporary social dynamics.

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