

# **“I’m a Gen-Z Baddie”: A Morpho-semantic Study of Neologisms in Nigerian Gen-Zs’ X-Conversations**

Bukola Alfred

Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to conduct a morpho-semantic analysis of neologisms found in the Nigerian Gen-Zs’ lexicon. The *study* analyses the neologisms into their morphological components, and discusses the semantic implications of the identified neologisms as used in contexts. The data for this study were drawn from 150 randomly selected posts on X(*Twitter*). The theoretical orientation relies largely on the Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar. The study reveals a dynamic and creative expression of language, especially among *Gen-Zs* on X-space. Findings further show that coinage and borrowing, are widely used as morphological processes in the data while compounding, clipping, acronym and blending were minimally used, reduplication and affixation were not used at all in the neologisms of Nigerian *Gen-Zs’* X-conversations. The study concludes that the classification of Nigerian *Gen-Zs’* lexicons showcases the creativity, flexibility and adaptability of language among this younger generations and how they innovate to express themselves in unique ways, shaping linguistic trends. It is therefore crucial for the older generations to understand these expressions used by the *Gen-Zs*.

**Keywords:** morphological processes, semantics, morpho-semantics, neologisms, Gen-zs

## **Introduction**

Language is a dynamic system of communication that evolves and adapts over time to reflect changes in society, culture, and technology. Asiyanbola (2012) opines that language can be described as a human vocal voice or a graphic representation of that noise used systematically and conventionally by a group of people living in the same place. Another definition that highlights this dynamic nature of language is that of Crystal (1987) who describes language as a "living organism" that constantly grows and changes through usage and interaction among speakers. Language not only allows us to exchange ideas and thoughts but also shapes our understanding of the world. One intriguing aspect of language is its ability to evolve and adapt to changing contexts and needs, giving rise to neologisms. Over the years, the internet has helped to facilitate and sustain communication between individuals, groups and larger societies, even when they are miles apart. These online communications have in turn become authentic resources for scholarship (Computer Mediated Discourse) among linguists. Karami *et al.* (2020) report that the volume of published works on X has tremendously increased since its launch in 2006 and is likely to rise even more in the coming years. According to Plag (2005), the use of technology in communication has greatly impacted communication, resulting in vocabulary expansion, either in general or among a social group.

X, formerly *Twitter* is an online social networking site founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and his partners, Biz Stone, Noah Glass and Evan Williams. X was created to enable short communication forms on the internet. The platform allows users to read text-based messages

not more than 280-characters. By the end of 2011, the platform had surpassed 100 million users (Scolari, 2025) and has becoming increasingly popular in the analysis of online interactions. X's high popularity has enabled into utilization for various purposes, such as digital marketing, political campaign, social activism and protests and so on. Due to space-constriction, online users started to devise a means to communicate their messages through the use of neologisms. Neologisms are newly coined words or expressions that may be entirely new creations or repurposed existing words to serve a different meaning. These linguistic innovations often emerge to fill gaps in existing language or to encapsulate novel concepts and trends.

Peprnik (2006, p. 76)) defines neologisms as “ a new word or a new sense of a word which could derive from any word class”. According to Curzan (2014, p. 34), ‘A neologism is a new word, meaning, or usage, especially one that has recently come into use.’ It often describes new concepts, technologies, phenomena, or cultural trends. These new words or phrases may initially be unfamiliar to the general population but can become integrated into common usage over time. Neologisms can reflect societal changes, technological advancements, shifts in popular culture, or even individual creativity. They play a vital role in capturing the spirit of the times and aiding in effective communication by providing succinct and impactful terminology. Neologism represents a dynamic aspect of language evolution, reflecting cultural shifts, technological advancements, and social changes. As societies evolve, so do languages, necessitating the invention of terms that capture new concepts, experiences, or objects. The creation and adoption of neologisms are intertwined with language use in various ways. Individuals constantly contribute to the growth of language by coining new words, which, upon gaining acceptance and widespread usage, become integrated into the lexicon. Language users, including writers, speakers, and even social media influencers, play a significant role in popularizing neologisms and ensuring their longevity. Moreover, the use of neologisms can foster a sense of community or identity among language users, as these new terms often carry cultural significance or insider references. They can serve as linguistic markers that distinguish one group from another or convey specific meanings that resonate within a particular community. Through the creation and incorporation of new words and expressions, language users contribute to the richness and vibrancy of human communication, reflecting the ever-evolving nature of society and culture.

In time past, we have had different generations. Each generation has its unique characteristics, influenced by the social, cultural, and technological context they grew up in. In the analysis of USC Libraries (2024), the Silent Generation people are (born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), Millennials or Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994), and now the Generation Z. The origins of *Gen-Z* language can be traced back to the early 2000s, when the internet and social media began to revolutionize communication. Generation Z is a group of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s, roughly from 1997 to 2010, they are known for being the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age. They are often described as technologically and socially conscious. Their digital immersion has shaped their world view, communication styles and behaviours. They are able to coin words from both their local languages and English. With easy access to information and social media platforms, *Gen-Z* has developed a distinct communication style and has contributed to the creation of neologisms and slangs that reflect

their experiences and values. According to Murtiani (2012), the fact that English is used and adapted differently in many parts of the world should also be taken into consideration. The emergence of new words and phrases among *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria reflects not only linguistic evolution but also cultural shifts and technological advancements as most of these words are used in online conversations. Without a grasp of *Gen-Zs* vernacular, certain nuances in meaning may elude one.

Bauer and Valera (2014) define morpho-semantics as the investigation of the interaction between morphology and semantics, specifically looking at how the internal structure of complex words influences their meanings. Morpho-semantic analysis involves breaking down newly coined concepts into their morphological components and exploring the meanings they convey in various cultural and linguistic contexts. This study examines the morpho-semantics of neologisms used by *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria within the context of social media discourse. The study seeks to explore the word-formation processes of these neologisms, their semantic connotations, and their role in social interactions among Nigerian *Gen-Zs* on social media platforms. There have been existing studies on language evolution and neologisms in Nigerian English and among different age groups. For instance, Adebowale, Odebunmi and Adeniran (2019) explored neologisms in Nigerian English but did not specifically target the *Gen-Z* demography. Similarly, Opeibi (2020) investigated language use among Nigerian millennials, providing valuable insights but not exclusively focusing on neologisms or *Gen-Z*. Alfred (2019) carried out a morpho-semantic analysis of netspeak neologisms in fashion and entertainment blogs among young Nigerians. The present study stands out by focusing specifically on neologisms used by *Gen-Z* in Nigeria, offering a unique and more focused perspective on language dynamics within a specific cultural and demographic/generational context (*Gen-Zs*).

### **Semantic and Morphological Thrusts**

According to Saeed (2016, p. 3), Semantics as a branch of linguistics ‘is the study of meaning in language.’ It explores how words and sentences convey meaning, the relationships between different signs, and how these meanings are understood in various contexts. Semantics involves analysing the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences, and understanding how these meanings are constructed and interpreted in communication. Semantics also delves into how context affects meaning, such as how the word ‘bank’ can refer to a financial institution or the side of a river depending on the context. Meaning may be studied in segments: Lexical semantics (which deals with the morphological-lexical meaning); Compositional Semantics (Phrasal-sentential meaning) and Pragmatics (Contextual-situational meaning). The first thing anyone would like to know about a word is its meaning, then its pronunciation and then its word-class. Lexical semantics is that part of semantics that makes this possible. Thus, lexical Semantics relates the meaning of a word to the form in which such is written. According to Lieber (2016, p. 4), ‘Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and how they are formed from smaller units such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes.’ Morphological analysis groups words into structures such as root, stem, affixes. Morphological processes involve analysing the rules and patterns that govern the formation of words, including processes such as affixation, conversion, compounding, blending, borrowing, semantic extension *etc.*

Quirk et al. (1985, p. 1520-1584) list affixation, compounding, conversion, reduplication, clipping, blending and acronym as essential word-formation processes in English. Bauer (2003, p. 41) defines compounding as ‘the process of forming a new word by combining two or more existing words, usually written together as one word, or joined by a hyphen, or written as separate words’. It is a word-formation process that involves the joining of two roots to form a single word. Bauer (2012) defines blending as ‘a process of word formation in which parts of two words are combined to form a new word.’ This process often involves taking the beginning of one word and the end of another to create a new term. It is the combination of parts of two or more existing roots to form new words without any regard for where one ends and another begins. Blending merges parts of two or more roots to form a new word. Clipping refers to the ‘subtraction of one or more syllables from a word (Ashiyanbola, 2017, p. 79). The deletion occurs at the initial or final parts of the word or even both. Acronyms consists of a set of letters taken from a phrase or word, and pronounced as a word (Crystal 2008). It is a word formation process that involves the formation of new words by combining the first letters of two or more words. Affixation is a morphological process that involves adding prefixes or suffixes to existing words to create new words (Spencer, 1991). Conversion is a process that involves changing the grammatical function of a word, such as from a noun to a verb, without changing its form (Matthews, 1991). It can also be described as a type of word-formation process that involves changing the grammatical function of a word without adding any affixes or modifying its root (Lyons, 1968). Hall (2013) defines coinage as the process of creating new words or expressions, often through a combination of existing words or parts of words. It provides the possibility to create new words or new meanings with the help of already familiar words. Borrowing is the incorporation of a lexeme from another language into a speaker's native language, often without translation, and often as a result of language contact, cultural exchange, or linguistic diffusion (Tadmor, 2009). Haspelmath (2009) defines borrowings as a ‘loanword,’ that is, a word that entered a language's lexicon as a result of borrowing or transfer from another language. Bamgbose (1984) describes semantic extension as ‘the process by which a word's meaning is extended or broadened to include new concepts, ideas, or referents, often through metaphorical or analogical means’.

### **Neologisms and the Digital Space**

Neologisms can arise through several morphological processes, including blending, compounding or borrowing from other languages. Furthermore, they often reflect the zeitgeist of a particular era, encapsulating collective sentiments and experiences in a rapidly changing world. For instance, the term ‘digital nomad’ reflects the rise of remote work and the flexibility it offers. While some neologisms quickly fall out of usage, others gain traction and become embedded in everyday language, showcasing the fluidity of linguistic norms. The acceptance of neologisms in mainstream discourse is also influenced by social media, where new terms can spread rapidly, reaching a global audience. Understanding neologism is crucial for appreciating how language adapts to meet the needs of its speakers, acting as a lens through which we can view cultural and societal transformations. In this aspect, we will delve into the origins, processes and implications of neologism in contemporary language.

Neologisms in the digital age are driven by several intertwined factors that reflect the dynamic nature of technology and society. The rapid evolution of technology introduces new concepts and innovations, necessitating the creation of new terms. Social media platforms amplify this process by facilitating the rapid dissemination and adoption of new words. This is buttressed by Kerrremans, Stegmayr and Schmid (2011, p. 60) who observe the ongoing expansion of vocabulary in online interactions and report that:

...the study of new words has a number of crucial advantages. Firstly, probably the most prominent asset – especially if one focuses on material retrieved from the Internet, as we do – lies in the possibility of collecting a more or less exhaustive sample of all authentic tokens of a new form within a certain period of time subsequent to its coinage. Secondly, the monitoring of recently coined words gives us the unique opportunity to study processes of ongoing change so to speak ‘in vitro’.

The quote above explains that with the rapid use of technology in communication, there is the creation of new words, the adaptation of existing terms into new contexts or the imposition of new meanings on already existing words – all of these reflect new changes in computer mediated discourse (Li-na, 2016). User-generated content, memes, and viral trends contribute significantly to the lexicon, with internet culture producing neologisms at an unprecedented pace. The global connectivity of the internet also fosters cross-cultural interactions, leading to the blending of languages and the borrowing of terms. Recent research highlights these trends. For instance, a study by Balteiro (2021) examines how social media platforms like *TikTok* and *Instagram* contribute to neologism creation through user interactions and meme culture. Another study by Tagliamonte (2022) explores the impact of digital communication on language evolution, emphasizing the role of technological advancements and online communities in shaping contemporary lexicons. The development of neologisms and their dissemination are now strongly influenced by social media and technology, hastening the evolution of language.

According to Crystal (2006), neologisms thrive on the internet and social media platforms because of their quick and widespread dissemination. Within hours, words and phrases can travel the world, accelerating their adoption and evolution. Among them are ‘meme,’ ‘retweet,’ and ‘unfriend’. Baron (2008) draws attention to the way that emoticons, acronyms, and abbreviations are encouraged in online communication and might develop into neologisms. Terms like ‘LOL,’ ‘IMHO,’ and ‘selfie’ serve as examples of this phenomenon. The emergence of neologisms is greatly influenced by the popularity of memes and hashtag trends on social media sites like Instagram and Twitter. Page (2019) highlights the ways in which these digital practices can invent new words, alter ones that already exist, and make them more widely-known. Consider the terms ‘adulthood’ (managing adult duties), ‘bae’ (significant other), and ‘fleck’ (on point).

Herring (2010) investigates how language experimentation is fostered in online forums, resulting in the creation of new words through word merging, portmanteau, and playful redefinitions. Examples are ‘derp’ (to behave foolishly), ‘ship’ (to encourage a love



relationship), and ‘bromance’ (a close male friendship). Social media and technology have developed into potent neologism catalysts. English language continually changes to reflect speed and informality in online communication, resulting in the spread of new concepts.

### **Empirical Review of Related Studies**

While there are existing studies on language evolution and neologisms, these works did not delve into the linguistic innovations of *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria. For instance, Adebowale, Odebunmi & Adeniran (2019) explored neologisms in Nigerian English but did not pay specific attention to its usage among *Gen-Zs*. Also, Opeibi (2020) examined the use of language among Nigerian millennials, providing valuable insights but not exclusively focusing on neologisms or *Gen-Zs*. In addition, Alfred (2019) examined the unique linguistic innovations emerging from Nigeria's digital landscape, particularly within the realms of fashion and entertainment. This study focuses on how internet culture influences language, leading to the creation of neologisms that blend morphological constructs and semantic nuances specific to Nigerian fashion and entertainment contexts.

Furthermore, Adebisi's, (2018) study on neologisms focused on lexical and morphological aspects in Nigerian English. The study explored the emergence of new words and expressions among young Nigerians and investigated their linguistic features. But, just like Adebowale et al (2019) and Opeibi (2020), the study did not specifically target the *Gen-Zs*. Oladipo (2020) explored the use of slangs and neologisms among youths in contemporary Nigerian society, exploring the cultural and linguistic contexts of these expressions. The study unearthed the motivations behind linguistic innovation among young Nigerians. The research focused extensively on the sociolinguistic rather than morpho-semantic analysis of neologisms. It did not provide a morphologically breakdown of the neologisms used by *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria.

Suleiman's (2006) work examined neologisms in digital communication platforms among Nigerian youths. It analysed the morpho-syntactic structures of the new terms and their adoption within online discourse. While the research focused on the linguistic innovations within digital communication, it did not cover a wide range of communication channels used by *Gen-Zs*. Nweze (2013) did a morpho-syntactic analysis of text SMS of GSM users in Nigeria. It analysed and categorised the lexicons in the text messages into their respective morphological and syntactic classes. While these studies serve as spring board for the current study, this study seeks to do a morpho-semantic analysis of neologism among *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria. This study stands out by focusing specifically on neologisms used by *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria, offering a unique perspective on language dynamics within a specific cultural and generational context.

### **Data Source and Methodology**

Social media platforms and online interactions provide a rich repository of text data that reflects linguistic trends and communication styles in various contexts. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of neologisms in everyday conversations and specialised communities. The data source for this study is limited to *X (Twitter)* because the 280-character limit encourages concise language, making it easier for new words and phrases to emerge and spread quickly. The real-time nature of this data source allows the study to capture the latest

linguistic trends, while the accessibility of digital data facilitates large-scale collection without compromising ethical standards. Including profiles of influential digital personalities further helps understand the diffusion and adoption of neologisms within *Gen-Z* communities. Due to the large number of tweets on X, only 100 posts were randomly selected. The posts selected were those which had neologisms used by only Nigerian *Gen-Zs*. The selected data source is justified as it is widely used by *Gen-Z* individuals, making it ideal for collecting authentic and contemporary linguistic expressions. The research employs a qualitative approach to the analysis of the data, the qualitative approach identifies neologisms from the selected posts and analyse their morphological structures. It also conducts a semantic analysis of the neologisms and analyse the contexts in which these neologisms are used by *Gen-Zs*.

The study is premised on Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), developed primarily by M.A.K. Halliday in the 1960s, is an approach to understanding language that emphasizes the relationship between language, meaning, and context. Halliday describes it as a theory of language that emphasizes the functional aspects of language use. He states that 'language is a social semiotic system, a resource for making meaning in context.' This definition highlights the role of language in representing experiences and facilitating social interactions (Halliday, 1985). SFG views language as a social semiotic system, where the structure of language is intertwined with its functions in communication. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p.10) define systemic functional grammar as 'a theory of grammar that considers the relationship between grammar and the social context of communication.' This definition underscores the importance of understanding language not just as a set of rules but as a tool shaped by social needs and functions. SFG emphasises the role of context in shaping meaning, advocating for a detailed analysis of how linguistic choices are influenced by social, cultural, and situational factors.

At the heart of SFG is the notion that language performs three metafunctions: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction relates to how we represent both inner and outer experiences. The interpersonal metafunction focuses on the social roles and relationships expressed through language, such as the speaker's attitude or the formality of the discourse. The textual metafunction pertains to how a piece of information is organized and managed within discourse. Halliday's SFG incorporates functional and structural components of language, providing a holistic way to analysing how new concepts fit into existing linguistic systems and serve new roles within *Gen-Zs* language. Halliday's SFG is relevant to our analysis in that its portrayal of language as a "network of systems ...for making meaning" helps us to understand how *Gen-Zs* construct and change language to meet their communication demands.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The data analysis systematically highlights the meanings of the selected neologisms as conventionally used in X. The word class and word formation process of each neologism is discussed. The study observes the implications of the morphological structures of neologisms to the use of English language in online conversations among *Gen-Zs*.

## A Morpho-Semantic Analysis of Neologism in the Selected Posts

### Coinage

Coinage is when totally new words are made up, usually not from two root word. It is when a word's meaning is broadened or extended to include new concepts, ideas, or contexts. In the collation of data, it is observed that some words had been in existence, but had recently taken up new meanings in the X-conversations of Gen-Zs. Other words in this category may have the same orthographically representations and word-class categorisation as already existing words but with slightly different phonetic transcription (pronunciation). The examples of coinages include:

**1. Cook** /kuk/ (v.) 'Cook' among *Gen-Zs*, depending on the context of usage, means devising a new plan or scheme, trying to defeat someone in a verbal argument; or creating a unique appearance or a style.

*I no **cook** today so make I serve u guys this side dish 😊😊😊* @gyaigyimii -X  
*Them don too dey **cook** this somto girl chai* @iluvsochi -X

**2. Drag** /dræg/ (v.) To *Gen-Zs*, 'drag' means to ridicule or expose someone's flaws or hypocrisy, often in a humorous manner.

*No music TikTok people no dey vibe to, song wey them go dey **drag** on twitter, you open TikTok you see as them dey jump shake nyansh* @adxjnr -X

*Dem Erica fans abuse me and **drag** me, for the first time I lock comment 😊😊*  
@topetyez -X

**4. Gas** /gæs/ (n.) This is an informal, colloquial use of language among Nigerian *Gen-Zs* which means to praise or compliment someone or boost someone's confidence.

*I just wanted u to **gas** me up 😊👉. Now I can return to set gingered @BaajAdebule -X*  
*Na this victory **gas** I no dey like hear 😊* @yayikanbai -X

**4. Shade** /ʃeɪd/ (v.) To *Gen-Zs*, this refers to the act of subtly insulting or making mockery of someone.

*One girl on Instagram wanted to **shade** Wizkid because he hasn't said anything concerning the late Mohbad.... FC shut her down* @the\_Lawrenz -X

*Throw a **shade** at your ex but don't tag him or her, or mention the name 😊👉*  
@jon\_d\_doe -X

**5. Cancel** /kænsəl/ (v.) To *Gen-Zs*, this is used to refer to the act of calling out and rejecting individuals or entities publicly because of their controversial actions, behaviour, or statements.

*South Africans about to cry and **cancel** Burna Boy for the 9<sup>th</sup> time 😊😊*  
@Abbye\_edi\_ -X

*This is the time to **cancel** Nairamarley & Zinoleesky!! Let's do it now!!'*  
@anthonystilldey -X



**6. Ratio** /reɪʃiəʊ/ (v. or n.) This is used to describe the proportion of opinions or reactions to netizens online comments. When a user is 'ratio-ed', it means their tweet has more replies than likes and retweets. In other words, the comment section performs better than the original content, with more people being in disagreement with the tweet than being in support of it.

Wizkid don **ratio** Davido 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔 @TheMahleek -X

See **ratio**, this app will be banned for life 🤔🤔🤔🤔 @\_theladymo-X

**7. Air** /eə/ (v.) To Gen-Zs, this means deliberately ignoring, avoiding or dismissing someone.

If Una **air** me, I go break Una head 😊 @JosephLaughterS -X

Once you **air** my DM, I'll soft block you and move on like it never happened.

@anthonystilldey -X

**8. Lit** /lɪt/ (Adj.) To Gen-Zs, this refers to the quality of being exciting or appealing, especially to the parties involved.

Broda Shaggi & friends dancing to Asake's Fuji Vibe. This song is too **lit** 😊🔥

@olamideofficial -X

**9. Snatch** /snætʃ/ (v. or n.) To Gen-Zs, this means to look exceptionally good or to strike a flawless appearance. It also refers to the act of achieving a perfect waistline for a lady, often referred to as 'figure 8'. It can also be used as the **head** in a noun-phrase like 'a snatch,' referring to someone's stunning look.

Attitude <sup>100</sup>Waist **snatched**, Boss moves, Baddie ways @SymplyTacha -X

Close to two months now. No soft drinks.... I'm loving the changes I'm seeing. Only thing left now is to buy waist trainer and **snatch** that waist!

@Alaga Of Abuja -X

**10. Capping** /'kæpɪŋ/ (v.) Among Gen-Zs, it means to lie or exaggerate.

A lot of people **capping** with my name for likes on here, Ravers eat em up if y'all like, respect is reciprocal.

@heisrema -X

You dey **cap** rubbish 😊

@gottabelikesam -X

**11. Slay** /kæp/ (v.) Among Gen-Zs, it is used to describe someone who is looking exceptionally good or performing impressively in a situation.

Some days we work! Some other days we try to **slay**! A blessed weekend to everyone.

@Enioluwa\_ -X

Social Media Relationship: If you keep posting to **slay** for Social Media and to earn public validation, you'll need to keep going to them for validation which comes at the price of keeping up appearance.

@Wizarab1Ø -X

**12. Hustle** /hʌsəl/ (v. or n.) In the Nigerian Gen-Z context, 'hustle' refers to working hard or exerting effort, often in the pursuit of financial gains or personal goals. It may also be used as a noun which refers to the actual pursuit.

*They no send me many years ago, when I dey **hustle** for street on a low.*

@heisrema -X

*6:37am, wake up and **hustle** ☹️*

@blaqbonez -X

**13. Breakfast** /brɛkfəst/ (n.) Gen-Zs use 'breakfast' as a metaphor for a breakup in relationship or heart-break.

*He was toxic, every time you chop **breakfast**, the guy suddenly becomes toxic.*

@wizarab\_ -X

*Your last relationship nah you serve person **breakfast** or them serve you?*

@Temmy\_laade -X

**14. Ate** /eit/ (v.) Ate is a slang expression meaning that something is exceptionally good or impressive. It is also used to describe someone who performed exceptionally well in a specific context, often relating to appearance, behaviour, or the mode of delivering a strong argument.

*This Ogechi remix with Davido **ate** like madd!*

@\_theladymo\_ -X

*So sexy, you **ate** queen mother 😊*

@tinugrills -X

**15. Woke** /wook/ (Adj) Woke is used to mean being socially conscious and active.

*No matter how **woke** you claim to be or how you choose to view this, it makes no sense for a father to dance with his daughter this way.*

@itsShØla\_ -X

*Some people met their soulmates on bike, some met them inside danfo after conductor joined them together with change, your own might be on Lekki-Epe Expressway. Stay **woke** guys.*

@Fayokunmii\_ -X

**16. Flex** /flɛks/ (n.) Flex typically refers to the act of showing off or boasting about something, often in a way that highlights wealth, status, or skill.

*Nobody will see my call and ignore because they feel I'm about to bill them or beg for money, and that's a **flex**.*

@itsShØla\_ -X

*Dear vendors. Remove 50k from your business money and **flex** this weekend. You deserve it'*

@tinugrills -X

**17. Drip** /drip/ (n.) It refers to a person's fashionable style or the elegance in their fashion sense and accessories. It also suggests that someone is dressed in a way that is impressively trendy or luxurious.

*When it comes to **drip** related Yhemo lee is your guyyy!! I'll really like to know his favorite Nigerian brand*

@abbietayo\_ -X

*Naaah, the **drip** in this photo of Obasanjo and Jimmy Carter is everlasting.*

@the\_Lawrenz -X

As shown in examples (1) to (17), there are clear instances of coinage in the data. It is observed that all these words had been in existence, but had recently taken up new meanings in the X-conversations of Gen-Zs. Even though these coinages may have the similar orthographically representations and word-class categorisation as already existing words, some of them have

slightly different phonetic transcription (pronunciation) either with similar or varied word-class functions, peculiar to the *Gen-Zs*. In example (5), *cancel* is used as a verb to mean publicly rejecting someone or something. Also, in example (6), *ratio* is used as a noun or verb to mean that a comment online has garnered more attention than the original post. In example (8), *lit* is used as an adjective to refer to the quality of being exciting or appealing. Also, in example (9), the item *snatch* is used as noun or verb to refer to a flawless appearance. Also, *woke* in example (15) is used as an adjective to refer to the quality of being socially conscious. All these have both their meanings and word-classes changed. All other instances of coinage, even though they have retained word-classes as those in the English language vocabulary, have peculiar meanings different from their original meanings.

Examples (18) to (21) are minimal uses of words that never existed before in the X-conversations of *Gen-Zs*. It is observed these coinages fall function as nouns and refer to human beings as seen in examples (19) to (20) below. There is only one example of adjective in this category.

**18. Vawulence** /'væwʊləns/ (Adj.) This is often used to describe someone's actions or words that are considered confrontational or provocative.

*Let's keep today **vawulence** free.*

@yabaleftonline -X

*I come in peace to witness **vawulence** not to partake in it in any form but to feed off it. I do not support the oppressor, nor do i feel for the oppressed, neither will i tolerate them who seek peace. On this ground shall i sit and witness unrest. Everywhere must scatter. IJN*

@GucciStarboi -X

**19. Dawg** /dɔːg/ (n.) This is a term that has a few different meanings depending on the context and community. In some circles, 'dawg' is used as a friendly term to address a close friend or acquaintance, similar to a close 'pal' in the informal sense. In some other online communities, 'dawg' may be used to express respect or admiration for someone's skills, accomplishments, or style.

*Guy, Nigerians lack exposure mehn. They are so deep in their bubble that when they get out, they are amazed by how different the world is. By the way, congrats on your graduation **dawg**.*

@oluwatroy\_ X

*If we dating I don't wanna hear about your exes you with the big **dawg** now'*

@iamchriscoroo -X

**20. Baddie** /bædi/ (n.) 'Baddie' typically refers to a confident, attractive, rich and self-assured woman who knows her worth and isn't afraid to express herself.

*No **baddie** for poor man*

@idkShalewa -X

*If you have a serious girlfriend that her head is properly screwed, you'll be more focused and happier than your male friends that have none. Because you'll be thinking of marriage while those friends of yours will be dealing with **baddies**. **Baddies** will ruin your life.*

@jon\_d\_doe -X

**21. Zaddy** /zædi/ (n.) It is used to describe an attractive man who is also fashionable, confident, and often has a charismatic demeanour. It is often used to refer to a charming old man with whom one has an intimate relationship.

*When I realized I sent my nude pics to my Daddy instead of my **Zaddy** and I mistakenly press delete for me instead of everyone* @HaYoMiDe\_-X

*How old is my **Zaddy**? You people are funny Sha* @tinugrills-X

### Borrowing

Another interesting morphological process visible in the data is borrowing which designates the adoption and incorporation of words from one language to another without any affixational application. In other words, it is a process of deriving lexical items from one language or dialect and fusing same into another. As evident in the data, instances of clipping in the data include:

**22. Idolo** /ɪ'dooloo/ (n.) 'Idolo' is a Spanish word, meaning 'idol' or 'icon'. It emerged in informal, colloquial language use, particularly among *Gen-Zs* and on social media platforms. It is used to express: intense admiration or adoration for someone, often bordering on obsession; a strong desire or attraction to someone. It may also be a nominal that refers to a person who is considered a role model or inspiration.

*Akpi blocked me on his main page, I wan die, cause all I said was 'my joy giver' I'm so pained tf..... my **idolo*** @\_hali\_-X

*They are keeping my **Idolo** Ronaldo for Europa league* @\_VALKING-X

**23. Japa** /dzæpə/ (v.) This is a Yorùbá word, which means 'to escape or abscond'. Among *Gen-Zs*, *japa* connotes 'to travel abroad,' or the idea of fleeing hardship in Nigeria for a better life in other countries.

*I prayed and waited for Jehovah to act and He listened! I don **japa** o! To a new beginning!*

@Step1ofLagos -X

*You people have **japa** savings?*

@big\_temsx -X

**24. Odogwu** /o'dogwu:/ (n.) 'Odogwu' is a word originally from the Igbo language. 'Odogwu' retains its original meaning of greatness or heroism. Among *Gen-Zs* the term has been extended to describe anyone who is seen as outstanding, successful, influential, wealthy or a veteran in certain fields

*I need that one **odogwu** Anon that will just say 'Cori baby' share 100 plates of food*

@thecori\_kitchen\_-X

*Sugar daddy of the year, baller of the year, '**odogwu**' of the year, and none of them don dash me money before, skip!*

@tinugrills -X

**25. Pablo** /pæblou/ (n.) The term is inspired by the notorious Colombian wealthy drug lord, Pablo Escobar. However, it is extend to refer to someone who has a flashy lifestyle. This may be considered an instance of historical allusion

*I get feeling say **Pablo** don collect your babe recently 🤔🤔' @the\_smallie\_ -X*  
*Idk but for me, I think Hushpuppi is the **Pablo** Escobar of our generation, there should be a documentary on him soon, he's truly the greatest internet fraudster of all time.*  
 @\_VALKING -X

**26. Sapa** /sæpə/ (n.) 'Sapa' is a Yoruba word that refers to a state of being financially handicapped . It's often used to describe a situation where someone experiences extreme financial hardship.  
*Na **sapa** be the root of most rejection* @royzkingin\_ -X  
***Sapa** had me checking my mails every 20 minutes. Anything not business inquiry, auto delete.*  
 @\_AsiwajuLerry -X

**27. Aza** /æzə/ (n.) The term 'aza,' is commonly used in Nigerian Pidgin English to refer to a bank account. It is derived from the Hausa word 'asusu,' which means "account" or "bank account."  
 It has been adapted and shortened in Pidgin English to 'aza,' which is now widely used in informal contexts to refer to a bank account, among Gen-Zs.  
*Send **aza** let me replace the 1k* @OloriOfOloris\_ -X  
*Daddy just wired school fees inside my **aza**.* @the\_smallie -X

**28. Idan** /ɪ'dæn/ (n.) 'Idan' is a Yoruba word. Among Gen-Zs, it is often used to praise or admire someone or someone who is seen as influential. It's a way of acknowledging someone's impressive abilities or status.  
*@NHaleed replies to a photo as 'my guy ❤️👑' @zaynabtinu replies "**Idan** ❤️" -X.*  
***Idan** no dey read, **Idan** no dey cram but **Idan** dey always pass' @the\_smallie -X*

**29. Omo** /'ɔ:mɔ:/(Intj.) While 'omo' means 'child' in Yoruba, it has taken on a broader, more flexible meaning in among Gen-Zs. It is often used as an exclamation or to add emphasis to a statement, regardless of the original meaning. It is also used to express surprise, excitement, or emphasis in a statement.  
***Omo!** money good* @Khanstillday\_ -X  
*Guys, sometimes it's good to stick to just one babe o. Three girls in one day, **omo!!!***  
 @itsShØla -X

While our observation shows that borrowing is a prominent morphological feature in the neologisms of Gen-Zs on X, most of these examples belong to the nominal group *idolo*, *odogwu*, *Pablo*, *idan* and mostly refers to human beings , except for *Aza* and *sapa* that refer to bank account details and financial bankruptcy respectively. Examples (26) and (29) which are *Japa* and *omo* function as verb and interjection respectively. It is pertinent to attest that lexical borrowing that relates to adverbs, prepositions, adjectives, pronouns and conjunctions are not commonly used in conversations of Gen-Zs on X as drawn from the data so far. In addition, the examples of borrowing are dominated by lexicons from Nigerian indigenous languages



(Yoruba, Igbo) and even the Nigerian pidgin. Only example (22) in the data is attributed to a foreign language (Spanish) while example (25) makes reference to a foreign personality.

### Clipping

Clipping occurs when a word is shortened or reduced to a smaller form, often to make it easier to pronounce or use, yet the word still maintains the semantic import of the original word (Plag 2005, p.13). This morphological process constitutes another description of data. Instances of clipping in the data include:

**30. Fam** /fæm/ (n.) Fam is a clipped word from family which has become popular on social media and has been reduced to a more informal, affectionate term, with the original meaning extended to include close friends, and not just biological relatives.

*Once your lawyer starts doing this, your going to jail **fam**'* @itshawk\_rsa -X

*Up! Thankful for another day! Another producer nd Artiste added to the StarBoy **Fam**! Growing Strong!* @wizkidayo -X

**31. Simp** /simp/ (n.) Simp is a clipped word from simpleton which, among Gen-Zs, refers to someone who shows excessive sympathy and attention toward someone or something, often in a romantic context, typically to the point of being perceived as submissive or lacking self-respect.

*Be the man she bend rules for and not the **simp** she make rules for.* @itsShØla -X

**32. Rizz** /rɪz/ (n.) 'Rizz' is a clipped form of the word 'charisma'. It is a slang term used by Gen-Zs that refers to someone who is attractive, enticing or charming, particularly in a romantic or

flirtatious manner. It may also be used to describe someone who is confident and skilled in arresting other people's attention or sustaining the interests of others in something.

*Girls abeg **rizz** me, make I blush small* @'\_Khalid -X

The lexical items in bold from examples (30) to (32) show clear-cut instances of clipping in the data. The original words from English are *family*, *simpleton* and *charisma* respectively. However, parts of each of the English words have been truncated to form Gen-Zs lexicons while still retaining the original meaning from the target language. Examples (30) and (31) have their deletion done at the end of the original words, however for example (32) the truncation is done at both ends initial and final parts of the word). This prominent pattern of final-syllable deletion in the analysed data is similar to observation made by Quirk et al. (1985, p. 1580), where it is reported that "the surviving fragment is usually initial..."

### Blending

Blending is a morphological process that involves the combination of two roots are into a single new word with a distinct meaning. Nordquist (2017) refers to this process as the amalgamation of parts of different words. Quirk et al. (1985, p. 1583) argue that most instances of blends in English are products of advertisements and hardly exist for a long time before they go into

extinction. However, in the data being examined, it is observed that the blends are integral parts of the lexicons of Gen-Zs' X-Conversations of the language. Instances from the data include:

**33. Frenemies** /frɛnəmɪz/ (n.) The word is a blend of fr(iend +)enemies) and denotes a complex relationship in which parties are both friends and rivals, embodying a mix of friendship and animosity. This illustrates the dual nature of such a relationship, where friendship coexists with underlying tension.

*I hope Fola wasn't killed by **frenemies** tho. No proper investigation in Nigeria I feel so sad by this news, I still viewed his story recently always cooking great meals I would even attach one of his noodles I screenshot. Life is Deep. I can't accept he drowned 😞😞 @badgalfofo -X*  
*When Mohbad said "I've been dealing with **Frenemies**, he was talking about Zino sad 💔*  
*@\_C\_D\_2 -X*

**34. Chillax** /tʃɪ'læks/ (v.) The word is a blend of (chil(l+re)lax, indicating the act of unwinding or taking things easy.

*At least make I use your latest released album dey **chillax**. This Nigeria and election matter no fit kill man.*  
*@GOODNESSCHIEDO2 -X*  
*Why are you being hostile because I stopped talking to you?? **Chillax***  
*@big\_temsx -X*

**35. Steeze** /sti:z/ (n.) The word is a blend of 'style' and 'ease.' It refers to someone who carries themselves with a natural, effortless style and confidence. Often used in fashion, sports, and pop culture, it describes someone who looks effortlessly stunning.

*Only Wizkid can make singlets look like designer clothes, **steeze** wan wound am'*  
*@TheMahleek- X*  
*Money is all the **steeze** you need*  
*@kayzywizzzy -X*

As seen in examples (33) to (35), the instances of blending are *frenemies*, *chillax*, *steeze*, formed from *friend* + *enemies*, *chill* + *relax* and *style* + *ease* respectively. However, in *steeze*, the vowels are modified as 'eeze' and not 'ease'. In example (33), *frenemies* means an combination of friendship and hostility, while *chillax* in example (34) means to unwind or take things easy. In examples (35), *steeze* means a stunning look or confidence. In addition, *frenemies* and *steeze* are deployed as nouns while *chillax* functions as a verb phrase. It can be argued, therefore, based on the identified examples, that blending occurs more in verb forms than noun forms in the Gen-Zs neologisms on X.

### Compounding

Compounding involves the combination of two or more roots to form a new lexical unit which is often considered as a single word (Quirk et al 1985: 1569). A compound may be open, closed or hyphenated. It may also be formed by combining two nouns, a noun and a verb, or a noun and an adjective. Examples from the data include:

**36. On-colos** /ɔn 'kooloos/ (Verb) 'On-colos' is a compound phrase where "on" is combined with 'colos.' 'Colos' is a clipped form of 'colorado', a hard substance being consumed. The phrase 'on-colos,' is commonly used to refer to someone who is mentally unstable as a result of the influence of drugs (Colorado)".

@serenasexxxxy says 'Men have periods!!! I didn't believe it until I researched it!!! They literally have a time of the month their emotions get higher just like us cause all human beings start off as female in the womb!!!' @Wizarab10 replies '**On-colos**' -X

@Sincerely\_AO says 'I literally thought today was Friday' and @anthonystilldey replies '**On-colos**?' -X

**37. Pillow-talks** /'pɪloo tɔ:ks/ (n.) It refers to the intimate conversations that occurs between partners, typically late at night while lying in bed. It often relates to personal thoughts, feelings and secrets

Stop telling your partners your friends secret during those **pillow-talks** 😊

@bjames204 -X

Sha please don't use me and do **pillow-talks** with your man because I'll drag your hair. I'm not his friend and he shouldn't know my business' @NihiRacheal-X

**38. E choke** /ɪtʃok/ (verb) This is a compound word originating from pidgin 'E' and 'English' 'choke'. It is often used to express being overwhelmed or shocked, typically in a positive or humorous way. It can also be used as an exclamation to indicate that something is intensely amazing and breath-taking.

The goal is to be focused No loose guard! Congratulations to Team Nelita 🙌 for winning this week's immunity challenge and heads of house. **E Choke!**' @chommy78207019 -X

Sometime this year ... your account balance will say '**E CHOKE**' AMEN

@davido -X

**39. Drama queen** /'dra:məkwɪ:n/ (n.) This term refers to a person, typically a woman, who is overly dramatic or emotional, often seeking attention through exaggerated behaviours.

Undisputed **Drama queen** 🔥🔥 all hail the king of double wahala 🙌 baby girl keep doing what you know how to do best. Winning in life is your birthright! You're born to win there's no other you.

@loveth172 -X

Our coach na **drama queen** 😊😊😊

@UnclePamilerin -X

As shown in examples (36) to (39), there are clear instances of compounds in the data. Semantically, the compounds *on-colos*, *pillow-talks*, *e choke*, *drama queen*, mean a mentally unstable person, intimate conversations, overwhelming and shocking moments and an attention-seeking female respectively. While compounds (36) and (37) in the data are clear examples of hyphenated compounds, compounds (38) and (39) were examples of open compounds. The implication of this is that closed compounds are not popularly used in conversations of Gen-Zs on X as drawn from the data so far. In addition, while 'on-colos' and

'e choke' are deployed as adjectives in their respective clausal functions, *drama queen* and *pillow-talks* perform nominal roles.

### Acronyms

This is a type of word formation process that consists of a set of letters taken from a phrase or word, and either pronounced individually or as a word. When the initial letters as separated letters, they are referred to as alphabetism while they are called acronyms when they are pronounced together as a word.

**40. LWKMD:** It is an acronym for 'Laugh Wan Kill Me Die', a humorous expression of extreme amusement. This expression is borrowed from Nigerian Pidgin English.

*Lwkmd*, wallahi you're not serious. #DropDead @Erbdoul -X

*Babes don't like you, you're talking about 'beautiful mute' lwkmd... that brother thinks it's by blowing grammar* @bambi\_\_bambs -X

**41. ASAP (Adv.)** It is an acronym for 'as soon as possible, or an action that requires a sense of urgency.

*NIGHT GAIN* ❤️ Retweet and drop your handles let's follow you **ASAP**. 🔥 🔥

@Tee\_shine1 -X

*Oya o If you're trying to build your page Say HI let's connect with you ASAP*

@Bod\_republic -X

**42. IYKYK (Adv.)** It is an acronym for the expression 'If You Know, You Know,' suggesting a shared knowledge among a circle of people. The letters are pronounced separately. It is used to conceal meaning from an 'external' social group.

*Nigerians are never ready for anything new. We are always okay with the status quo. But if we have digital banks, it will phase out traditional banks in no time, especially that bank that swallowed diamonds. Iykyk* @JosephOttu -X

**43. LMAO /li:məu/(v.)** It is an acronym for 'Laughing My Ass Off,' indicating something is extremely hilarious.

*LMAO*, this tems album is not for Nigerians sha iykyk 🍷 @oh\_toby -X

*Your babe na senior man. LMAO* @Wizarab1Ø -X

Most of the examples of acronyms are realised as individual alphabets as seen in examples (40), (42) and (43) and only one example (41) may be pronounced as either alphabets or a single word. It is also observed that the example of acronym in example (41) performs circumstantial role (adverb of time), while the other examples are not accorded specific word-classes, but are made to stand alone – more like dislocated syntactic elements.

## Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive morpho-semantic analysis of neologisms commonly utilized by *Gen-Zs* in Nigeria, by exploring their structural and semantic features. It uncovers newly created words or phrases used by Nigerian *Gen-Zs* that are not present in conventional dictionaries. It shows the flexible nature of Nigerian English words as they easily adapt and evolve in their usage to suit the needs of the user, especially due to the influence of culture, technology, and social transformations. The analysis reveals that while some of the neologisms are newly created, some others have been in existence and have only undergone semantic extension. 100 randomly selected post of X users were analysed. The study identified and analysed the neologisms into their morphological structures and discussed their meanings, as used by the *Gen-Zs*. The analysis of these neologisms reveals the common morphological processes associated with the *Gen-Zs*' neologisms to be coinages and borrowing. Compounding, clipping, acronym and blending were minimally used, while reduplication and affixation were not used at all in the interactions of Nigerian *Gen-Zs* on X.

The study concludes that the use of neologisms reflects not only a fun and engaging way of communicating but also represents an expansion of the lexicon within the digital space. It is evident that neologisms are a dynamic and creative expression of language. However, it is also clear that many of these terms may be difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with the *Gen-Zs* use of language, especially the older generations. The study showcases the creativity, flexibility and adaptability of language among Nigerian *Gen-Zs* and how they innovate to express themselves in unique ways, shaping linguistic trends. Future research may investigate how these neologisms transition from being exclusive to *Gen-Zs* to a wider audience. Subsequent research may also explore whether these new words inhibit or abet traditional learning of formal English words.

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