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THE FORMATION OF NEOLOGISMS IN GERMAN AND THEIR ROLE IN MODERN COMMUNICATION

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Abstract. This study examines the mechanisms through which neologisms emerge and circulate in contemporary German and evaluates their communicative functions in digital and public discourse. Drawing on corpus-oriented German neologism lexicography and comparative word-formation theory, the article applies qualitative morphological, semantic and discourse analysis to a transparent illustrative sample of lexical items associated with technology, social media, environmental discussion and pandemic communication. The analysis distinguishes compounding, derivation, borrowing, hybrid formation and semantic innovation, while considering how institutional settings, platform conventions and audience expectations shape diffusion. Results indicate that German productive compounding readily condenses complex social practices; English-derived vocabulary serves transnational and technological domains; and expressive, often short-lived formations index stance and group identity. A documented methodological distinction is maintained between examples selected for illustration and population-level frequency estimates. The study proposes a practical model for analyzing lexical novelty in educational, media and intercultural contexts.

Keywords: German language, neologism, lexical innovation, word formation, compounding, borrowing, digital discourse, semantic change, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not a static inventory of words; it changes as speakers need to name technologies, represent social transformations, express evaluations and negotiate belonging. The contemporary German lexicon is especially revealing because it combines highly productive native word-formation patterns with intensive multilingual contact. New forms are visible in news reporting, online forums, advertising, public administration and everyday conversations. Nevertheless, an unfamiliar word is not necessarily a neologism: it may be an established technical term, a regional variant, an occasional invention or a conventional expression used in a novel sense. Contemporary lexicography therefore considers both novelty and evidence of circulation [1, 2].

The objective of this article is to explain how German neologisms are formed, identify the communicative work they perform, and assess why digital contexts accelerate their visibility without guaranteeing their long-term establishment. Three questions guide the analysis: Which structural mechanisms make new formations interpretable? What roles do genre and social context play in the uptake of new expressions? How should the communicative value of an item be evaluated without confusing illustrative examples with representative corpus measurements? This framing is relevant to translation practice and German as a foreign language, where literal equivalents may fail to convey pragmatic or cultural associations [3, 8].

LITERATURE REVIEW

German neologism research has increasingly moved from intuitive lists of fashionable expressions toward corpus-based documentation. Park examines how newly borrowed items enter the Neologismenwörterbuch and demonstrates the need to examine orthographic, morphological and contextual evidence before a borrowing is treated as an established lexical unit [1]. Storjohann describes IDS-Neo2020+ as a lexicographic resource designed to capture words and meanings emerging from 2020 onward, combining linguistic description with contextual and encyclopaedic information [2]. These contributions show that the date of first appearance and the point of broad social recognition are distinct analytical questions.

Wolfer and Klosa-Kückelhaus compare psycholinguistic acceptance judgments with corpus-based evidence for German neologisms, emphasizing the relationship between familiarity, perceived novelty and observable use [3]. Their approach cautions against using individual impressions as substitutes for longitudinal measurement. Studies of pandemic-era German demonstrate how unusual social conditions may spur lexical creativity and how innovations move between media registers. The study of Austrian media and online forums reports related but differently timed patterns in the circulation of pandemic vocabulary [4]. Further work on German-language media identifies evaluative and pragmatic functions of newly coined vaccination-related words [5].

Uzbek linguistic scholarship offers an important comparative foundation rather than direct empirical claims about German frequency. Hojiyev's account of Uzbek word-formation systems helps distinguish morphological motivation and derivational productivity across languages [6]. Safarov's cognitive-linguistic perspective foregrounds the relation between lexical choices and processes of conceptualization [7]. Mahmudov's discussion of language research highlights the broader interaction of linguistic meaning with cultural and discursive interpretation [8]. Accordingly, these Uzbek sources inform the theoretical and contrastive interpretation of the German examples; they are not cited as if they were German-language corpora.

The central gap addressed here is the frequent conflation of form, diffusion and communicative value. A compound may be transparent without becoming widespread; a borrowed expression may be frequent in specialist communities but remain opaque to other groups; and a widely shared meme expression may disappear after its immediate social context fades. A structured qualitative comparison is therefore useful alongside existing quantitative lexicography

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study uses a descriptive and analytical design based on documented scholarship and a purposively selected set of German lexical examples. These expressions are examined as examples of mechanisms, not as a randomly sampled or exhaustively extracted corpus. Their inclusion should not be read as evidence of contemporary usage frequency or official neologism status in every case. For each item, the analysis records morphological segmentation, probable formation pathway, thematic domain, discourse function and any plausible translation difficulty. Published corpus-based studies and lexicographic resources provide the evidentiary context [1–5].

Four interrelated methods are applied. First, morphological analysis distinguishes compounds, derivations, borrowings and blends or hybrid forms. Second, semantic analysis identifies nomination, narrowing, extension and recontextualization. Third, pragmatic analysis evaluates

whether a unit primarily names an object, communicates stance, creates solidarity, humor or social criticism. Fourth, contrastive interpretation considers how a German expression might be explained in Uzbek or English rather than translated word for word. The theoretical categories are complemented by Uzbek scholarship on word formation and cognition [6–8].

A word is assigned to one dominant formation category for visualization, even though real lexical histories can involve more than one process. The chart below therefore displays counts in a small illustrative teaching sample, not incidence rates in German usage. Reproducible quantitative conclusions would require defined corpora, sampling intervals, normalized frequencies, concordance checking and inter-annotator agreement; none are claimed here [2, 3].

RESULTS

The comparison indicates that German compounding is particularly effective for compactly encoding newly salient practices and concepts. Compound nouns enable speakers to combine existing bases in ways that remain largely interpretable to an audience acquainted with the context. Expressions such as Homeoffice-Pflicht or Klimakleber also show that the boundaries between direct nomination and evaluation can be crossed within one lexical unit. By contrast, Anglicisms such as liken and streamen undergo grammatical adaptation to German syntax and inflection: for example, ich like and wir streamen. Their acceptability depends on audience, register and frequency of exposure [1, 3].

Table 1. Illustrative lexical formations and communicative functions

Example	Principal mechanism	Contextual function
Homeoffice-Pflicht	Compound / hybrid base	Names an institutional work rule
Klimakleber	Compound	Condenses a contested public label
Maskenpflicht	Compound	Names a public-health requirement
Kontaktbeschränkung	Compound	Names a regulatory measure
Videokonferenz	Compound	Names digitally mediated interaction
liken	Borrowing + verbal adaptation	Describes approval on platforms
streamen	Borrowing + verbal adaptation	Describes online media transmission
Influencerin	Borrowing + German derivation	Marks a social-media role
Entfreundung	Derivation / nominalization	Names an interpersonal relation change
Corona-Leugner	Hybrid compound	Expresses social categorization
Zoom-Müdigkeit	Hybrid compound	Names a perceived digital burden
entfolgen	German derivation	Describes social-media disengagement

Table 1 makes visible the differing roles of lexical creativity. The same social field may accommodate an institutional term, an affective label and a platform-specific verb. Context matters for evaluation: while a formation may be clear within a professional network, the same expression can be ambiguous or stylistically marked in intergenerational interaction. Conversely, repeated exposure in public communication can normalize an initially unfamiliar term [3, 4].

For pedagogical transparency, Figure 1 counts only the twelve examples explicitly listed in Table 1. Under the dominant-category coding used here, the table contains six compounds, two adapted borrowings, two hybrid compounds and two derivatives. These are analyst-selected instances; the chart is not a measurement of lexical prevalence across German.

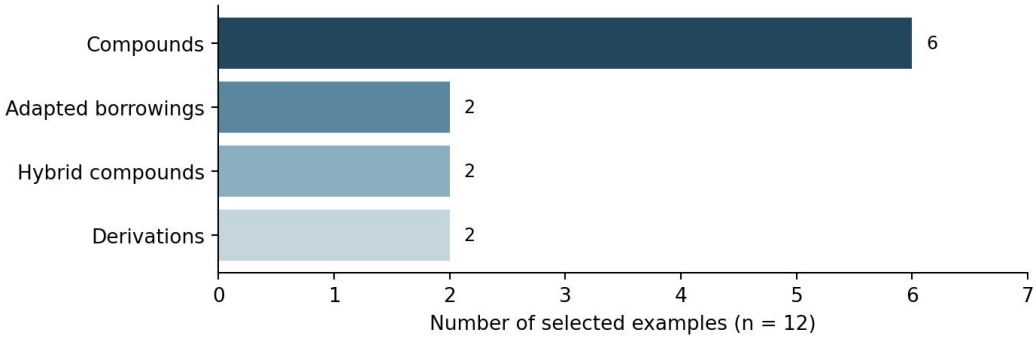


Figure 1. Formation mechanisms in a selected 12-item illustrative sample (author classification; not corpus frequencies).

A second observation concerns communicative functions. Neologisms may facilitate rapid naming, for example of unfamiliar technological practices; provide expressive evaluations, especially in polarized debates; and signal membership in a digitally mediated community. The word Klimakleber exemplifies why researchers must distinguish the descriptive content of a term from the political or affective stance it may convey in context. The same caution applies to pandemic-related labels, where public debates generated both neutral and evaluative lexical forms [4, 5].

Semantic expansion and formal borrowing are interconnected. German allows English stems to combine with German morphological endings or grammatical rules, yet the pragmatic function of a borrowed item may differ from its English source. Thus, the loanword label alone does not explain whether a form conveys prestige, technical precision, irony or group affiliation. Discourse context and social distribution must be assessed separately from etymology [1, 3].

DISCUSSION

The analytical findings suggest that lexical innovation can be described through a three-stage conceptual model: linguistic availability, communicative uptake and possible conventionalization. Availability arises when a formation complies with recognizable patterns or is borrowed from a salient contact language. Uptake occurs when participants reproduce it in meaningful interactions. Conventionalization requires stability beyond a transient event or isolated community. These phases may overlap, and neither a first attestation nor a moment of viral attention proves that an item is permanently established [2, 3].

German compounding is a resource for economy: a short lexical expression can package the institutional background, goal and participants of an event. Such economy can also produce

compression that hides contested assumptions; readers may need contextual knowledge to interpret compressed compounds accurately. This is particularly important in journalism and public communication. In the educational setting, attention to the internal structure of compounds can strengthen vocabulary inference, while pragmatic comparison prevents learners from assuming that a formally transparent word is always neutral [5–8].

Digital platforms favor fast repetition, multimodal cues and audience segmentation. A newly coined form can spread within a particular platform or interest community and still remain unknown to speakers outside it. Studies contrasting formal media with participatory online forums offer evidence that registers may differ in the timing and intensity of the same innovations [4]. This pattern encourages a methodological separation between communicative visibility and durable lexical acceptance. Large datasets, corpus metadata and longitudinal observation are needed before claims about "the most common" formations can be justified [2–4].

For German–Uzbek communication, the translation of neologisms involves three decisions: retain a recognizable internationalism, explicate the encoded practice, or choose an Uzbek expression built by local word-formation resources. The choice should be sensitive to genre: a scientific paper may prefer an explanatory equivalent, while a social-media post may preserve a platform term. Uzbek analyses of derivational models and conceptual meaning help frame this decision, although the actual equivalence must be tested for each expression [6–8]. In addition, language policy and teaching materials should avoid stigmatizing all borrowings: the relevant criteria are clarity, appropriateness and communicative accessibility.

The principal limitation is the lack of a new, independently collected German corpus. The twelve words constitute a purposive explanatory sample; their counts cannot support statistical generalization, causal inferences or claims of chronological growth. The reviewed empirical publications supply broader context but use distinct collections and measures. A subsequent study could investigate the same formation categories in a balanced corpus of German news, social media and educational discourse for 2020–2026, with normalized frequencies and inter-coder validation [1–5].

CONCLUSION

Neologisms in contemporary German arise through the interaction of productive word formation, language contact, semantic reinterpretation and changing communicative needs. Compounds make social and technological developments concise and interpretable; adapted borrowings connect German usage to transnational digital cultures; and evaluative innovations help participants position themselves in public debates. Whether a new expression survives depends not only on its morphology but also on repeated, socially distributed use.

A rigorous account of lexical innovation must distinguish the structural mechanism of a form from its pragmatic function and the empirical evidence of its spread. The proposed comparative framework and illustrative inventory can support German-language instruction, media-literacy work and Uzbek–German translation, provided that illustrative counts are not mistaken for corpus statistics. Future investigations should combine longitudinal corpus evidence with reader-response and contextual analyses to assess conventionalization [2, 3].

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