

## Acceptance of Neologisms in the Omani Society

Asma Zayid Alsalmi

Freelancer and Independent Researcher, Oman

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### ABSTRACT

Neologisms have recently become part of everyday speech. The rapid progress in internet-based communication and changes in society, particularly in culture and technology, appear to have influenced its acceptance. Therefore, this study examines some English words that have been integrated into the Omani colloquial Arabic and are considered neologisms. This study seeks to gain insight into the perspectives of the Omani society on the use of neologisms. In addition, it analyzes the morphophonemic and semantic changes that occurred after the neologisms were integrated into the Arabic lexicon. Two phases are involved in this study. The theoretical phase deals with defining neologisms and their emergence within Omani society. The interactive phase is where data from the questionnaire and interview responses are discussed. One of the most significant outcomes of this study is that neologisms can generally be considered a positive addition to the participants' everyday speech. Furthermore, this study reveals that social media is the most common context in which neologisms are used in the Omani context. Among the other outcomes is the observation of changes in neologisms to adapt them to the reception language and the new context.

**KEYWORDS:** *Neologisms, Internet-based Communication, Morphophonemic Changes, Semantic Changes*

### INTRODUCTION

A language is a living thing that is constantly changing with time, and the lexicon has a significant impact on this change because some words have been discarded and new ones have been introduced. In other words, every day thousands of new words are added to our language. These new words are referred to as neologisms, which speakers create. Rets (2016) argued that neologisms should be included in vocabulary materials given to language learners because they are a good way to understand the culture of any language. In this regard, Pimat (2016) stated that the word neologism comes from Greek "neo" (new) and "logos" (word). Hence, as its root suggests, a neologism is a new word that has recently been included in the vocabulary of a language (Pimat, 2016). In reference to Newmark (1988a:140), a neologism is either a newly created lexical unit or an existing lexical unit that acquires a new meaning. However, Haspelmath (2002:100) argued that neologisms are new words designed to satisfy specific requirements or needs, since discovering new things involves the development of new terms and expressions.

Neologisms appear to be rapidly and broadly adopted in many aspects of our lives, including social media

platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, or as it is currently called the "X" platform. However, how do they gain acceptance?

Neologisms have become increasingly popular, particularly among the younger generation, for several reasons. Exposure to the media, for instance, has the greatest impact on the borrowing of English words. Numerous words related to social media have been fully incorporated into Arabic colloquial language use and have no equivalent in that language. The absence of Arabic equivalents to the words *selfie*, *hashtag*, etc., for example, has led to the prevalence of these terms among Arabic speakers. Hockett (1958) described this as filling a gap in the dialect. With the rapid development of Internet-based communication, people have been able to adapt to these changes by combining and creating new words to communicate with one another more effectively. Neologisms can also be used to gain popularity and attention in everyday communication. These trendy neologisms increase the perception of being up to date among speakers and individuals. Cultural contact cannot be discounted as a contributor to the development of neologisms over time. The term cultural contact refers to the interaction that has existed between peoples and cultures worldwide because of technological advancements. In addition, the

advancement of technology has resulted in easier commercial transactions and has led to numerous neologisms in the field of economics. To illustrate, terms like *cash, money, price, tips, and bills* can be substituted for Arabic words: , *فاتورة بقشيش, سعر, نفود, نقد*.

Historically, between 1820 and 1971, Britain dominated the Arabian Gulf for over 150 years, but its dominance shifted from economic influence to political dominance (Allday, 2014). It may be argued that the British colonization of the area in the past century introduced many foreign words into the local dialect. As a way of illustration, it has become common practice in the Gulf dialect to refer to all forms of vehicles with the word, *motor*, instead of the Arabic words, *سيارة مركبة او*. This word and others, were incorporated into their dialect during the British occupation.

Note that when a word is adopted into another language, both phonological and morphological changes must be made to suit its new context and tongue. In a language, neologisms may be formed through loan words, word formation, or layering (Lipka, 2010: 97). These changes can occur through two methods: either by creating their own lexical and functional equivalents of terms from other languages, or by accepting new terms from the source language (SL) into their lexicon as loanwords that are then integrated into the target language (TL) system as neologisms with a few small phonemic, morphological, or syntactic modifications to conform to the TL linguistic norm (Pepper 2020). Hamdan and Al-Salman (2021) reported that phonemic changes occur when changes occur in the pronunciation of some English words after they have been integrated into the Arabic language system as a result of interference caused by native languages. For example, in Arabic, the letter P is not aspirated as in English. The classic example of this can be found in the word, *Pepsi*, which is pronounced as, *bebsi*, in Arabic. Similarly, Arabic does not have the English consonant, /v/, so words such as, *virus*, is pronounced in Arabic as, *fairoos*,

On a morphological level, speakers incorporate neologisms from English words into their native rules regarding number, gender, case, and article. The plural-forming Arabic suffix *-at*, as in these examples;

slides *slydat* سلايدات      mobiles *mubaylat* موبايلات

A further example of morphological change is the addition of feminine 3rd person suffix *Ta'a* or the feminine suffix /*ah*/. As shown in the following examples, it is commonly used to designate feminine words;

note *nuta* نونة      doctor (f) *doktoorah* دكتوره

Modifications to neologisms are necessary to bridge the gap between two languages during daily communication. In this regard, Rets (2014) defined neologisms as words or word combinations that are innovative in form or

meaning within a specified period and carry a new social and cultural reference.

## TRACE THE USE OF NEOLOGISMS IN THE OMANI SOCIETY

It was not long after oil first appeared in Gulf countries that production and exportation began due to the growth of international oil companies. This resulted in enormous profits, which contributed to development and reconstruction in some areas. Al-Emadi (2004) claimed that as oil production and export operations began, massive revenues entered the coffers of countries in the region that had recently gained independence from British colonialism. This fund was one of the most important basic requirements for construction (Ibid). This stage represents the rapid transition from scarcity of livelihood to abundance, along with a major shift in values and concepts (Ibid). Economic recovery also resulted in a large influx of immigrants to the region. Thus, the expansion of intercultural interaction between Gulf countries' residents and immigrants has impacted the concepts and values of these societies. A good example of this impact is the emergence of English words into the colloquial Arabic language. Because these words were new to these societies, they can be considered neologisms. Rets (2014) defined neologisms as words or word combinations that are innovative in their form or meaning within a specified period and carry a new social and cultural reference. Considering that Gulf countries share many common customs, traditions, and ideas, the fabric of the Omani society is consistent with that of other Gulf countries. Most of these neologisms were the same words that were used throughout the Gulf states, including Oman. Below, we have included some of what we consider neologisms at the time of their use over the years by Omanis from all walks of life. It is noteworthy that most of these words were gathered from electronic questionnaires and interviews with respondents. The words listed at the top of the table are also more commonly used by older people. Additional details of this procedure will be discussed later in the methodology section.

Since the late 1990s, the Omani society has adopted many neologisms derived from English. This is caused by the rapid changes in technology, science, economics, and communication in society in recent decades. Thus, we observe that the most neologisms at that time were derived from those domains but not from social media because it had not yet been introduced into Omani culture. During that time, words like *film, tape, video, bank, telephone, computer, fax, radio, business, and spare*, among others, were integrated into Arabic and frequently used in daily interactions. It is possible to argue that these words were new in their times; yet today, Omanis use them frequently.

Recently, Social media has contributed to the emergence of numerous neologisms within the Omani society, most of which lack an Arabic equivalent. Words taken from social media include; *selfie, hashtag, snapchat, share, scan, screenshot, online, offline, emoji, Wi-Fi, attachment, filter, application, underscore, browser, trend....etc*, are becoming part of the Omani society

colloquial language. Increasingly, social media is shaping and influencing all types of discourse (Al-Salman, 2017). A social media platform can act as an alternative source of power to promote the development of ideologies, cultural attitudes, and political views (Ibid).

Table1. Neologisms and their Pronouncements in the Omani Context

No.	List of commonly used neologisms in the Omani context, as they are pronounced	Transliteration of these words	English words	No.	List of commonly used neologisms in the Omani context, as they are pronounced	Transliteration of these words	English words
1.	راشن	Rushen	Ration	21.	راديو	Radiu	Radio
2.	رنجوز	Rangoose	Orange Juice	22.	فريزر	Frizir	Freezer
3.	شيكرا	Shikar	Sugar	23.	تلفزيون	Tilfizyun	Television
4.	ساندويك	Sanduyk	Sandwich	24.	ليسن	Lisan	License
5.	سبيطار	Sbitar	Hospital	25.	اشيك	Ashyk	To check
	دختر	Duktar	Doctor	26.	بلوك	Biluk	To block
6.	موتر	Mwtr	Motor/car	27.	كوبي بيس	kubi bis	To copy and past
7.	ريس	Rayis	Race as for accelerator pedal	27.	بوكسات	Buksat	Boxes
8.	سيكل	Sikul	Cycle	28.	مسجات	Musagaat	Messages
9.	كراج	Karag	Garage	29.	كابت	Kabat	Cupboard
10.	سبير	Spir	Spare	30.	كوفي	Kufi	Coffee
11.	تاير	Tāyr	Tyre	31.	تريند	Trind	Trend
12.	ساكروبو	Sākrwb	Screwdriver	32.	بريزنتيشن	Birzintishan	Presentation
13.	لايت	Layt	Light	33.	واي فاي	Way fay	Wi-Fi
14.	ياليك	Yalik	Leaking	34.	كود	Kud	Code
15.	بيب	Bayib	Pipe	35.	بي دي اف	bi di af	Pdf
16.	هوز	Houzz	Hose	36.	إموجي	'iimuji	Emoji
17.	فورمن	Formun	Foreman	37.	كيبورد	Kiburud	Keyboard
18.	واير	Wayar	Wire	38.	لاب توب	lab tub	Laptop
19.	جلاص	Galas	Glass	39.	باص	Ba'as	Bus
20.	بيترول	Bitrul	Petrol	40.	راديو	Radiu	Radio

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. In what contexts do neologisms appear most frequently in the Omani society?
2. How are these neologisms formed and what processes do they undergo?
3. How does the Omani society justify the use of neologisms?

METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct this research, a mixed method was employed, both quantitatively and qualitatively. By using this method, necessary data can be obtained to determine the contexts in which neologisms are most frequently found in Omani society. Additionally, it would help provide information regarding the changes that these words undergo, as well as indicate respondents' attitudes toward neologism usage. To collect information, a questionnaire was designed and distributed online to participants of various ages, from those under 19 to those over 50, from different

governorates in Oman. Furthermore, a total of 20 people were interviewed, most of whom were elderly females, to collect examples of neologisms over time. By conducting these interviews, the problem of the elderly being unfamiliar with electronic questionnaires was resolved. In addition, they are considered important sources of terminology during certain periods.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: open-ended and closed-ended questions, most of which allowed respondents to provide additional information. In section four of the questionnaire, respondents are invited to provide examples in either English or Arabic. The questionnaire is available in both English and Arabic, while the interview is conducted in Arabic. Overall, 90 respondents completed the electronic questionnaire, and most of them (70%) were female, and 20% were male. Approximately half of the respondents (32 people) were between 40 and 49 years old. The questionnaire form can be found in the Appendix

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this section is to present and analyze the results of the questionnaire that was compiled to gain a better understanding of the views on the usage of neologisms in the Omani society. With regard to the question, “Do you often use neologisms in your daily

communication?”, respondents clearly showed a tendency to use neologisms borrowed from English in everyday communication, as can be seen in the chart below.

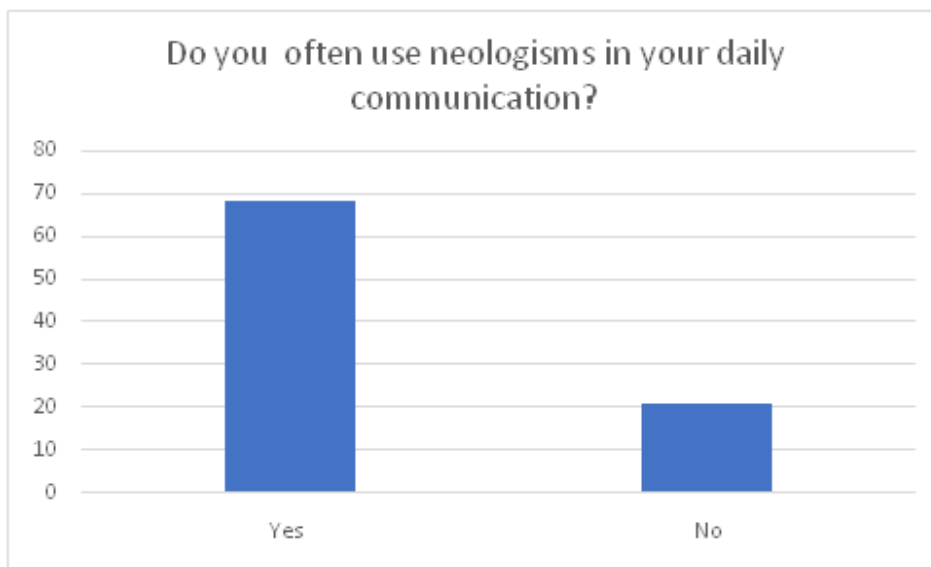


Figure 1. Use of Neologisms

With regard to the first research question, namely, the contexts in which neologisms are most frequently used in the Omani society, the findings reveal the contexts in

which the respondents use neologisms the most, as shown in figure (2).

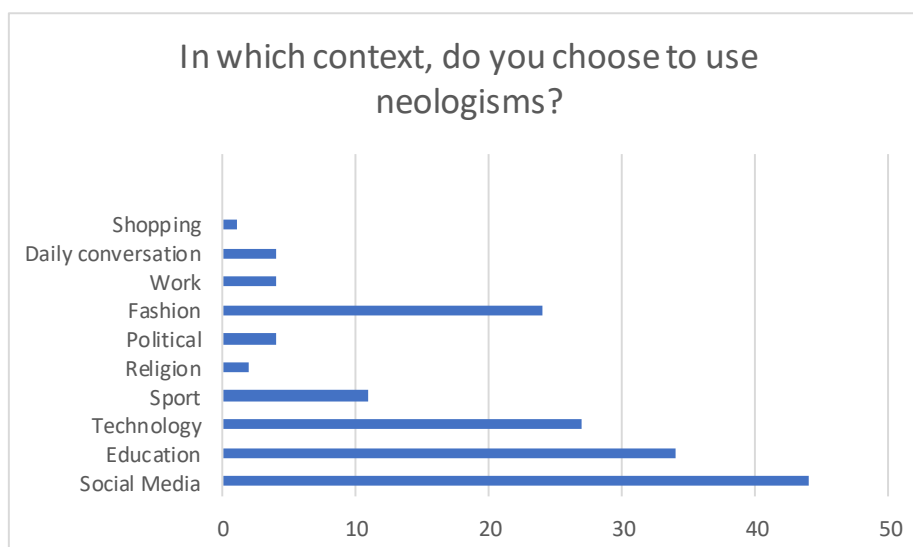


Figure 2. Context of Neologism Use

As shown in the chart above, social media accounts for a significant proportion of neologism usage (45%, followed by education 35%, technology with 28% and fashion with 25%). These contexts are considered ideal environments for the emergence and use of neologisms, and the results are expected. Because of the trending waves of social media craze over the past decade, neologisms related to social media have been introduced into the Arabic language system. It was determined that media exposure—including radio, television, and the internet—had the greatest effect on boosting the rate at

which English words are borrowed and turned into neologisms (Hoffer,2002) .

When we look at the Omani society in which the study is being conducted, we may not find that it differs from other societies in that social media occupies a high position. New lexical units related to social media have been incorporated into the Omani vernacular language as evidence of this trend. As a way of illustration, words like *screenshots*, *posts*, *trend tweets*, and *reels*, among others, have become exclusive to social media users in

everyday language. It is also good to mention that, following the devastating COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of e-learning, technology in the form of platforms has emerged as a solution to the problem of providing education at all levels. Numerous neologisms related to education emerged as a result; *online, offline, google meet, draft and folder*. On the other hand, it is surprising to find such a low percentage of results in the context of shopping. There is a possibility that participants classified shopping as part of the technology or fashion context.

Regarding the related question, “Do you tend to make any changes to these words, for example, changing the sound to the nearest sound in your mother tongue?”. Unexpectedly, a significant number of participants (more than 40%, as shown in figure 3) indicated that they do not tend to modify the morpho-syntactic structure of English neologisms, as shown in the coming figure. There is a possibility that most of these

neologisms, which do not receive any modification, are phonologically close to the mother tongue of the users. Such words may represent a case of Arabicization (i.e., words written in Arabic orthography), e.g., *coffee kufi* كوفي; *block biluk* بلوك. This could also be due to the fact that some of these words are clip words (e.g, adv) or abbreviations (e.g. omg), which facilitate communication, particularly on social media. Therefore, it should not be surprising that users do not modify such words, because they facilitate their communication.

However, upon examining each response individually, it was discovered that most respondents who answered “no” were younger or had higher academic degrees. One possible explanation for this result could be that younger generations prefer to use neologisms unchanged as a form of prestige rather than to modify them. While those with high academic degrees tend to use neologisms without modification, this is probably due to their familiarity with the language.

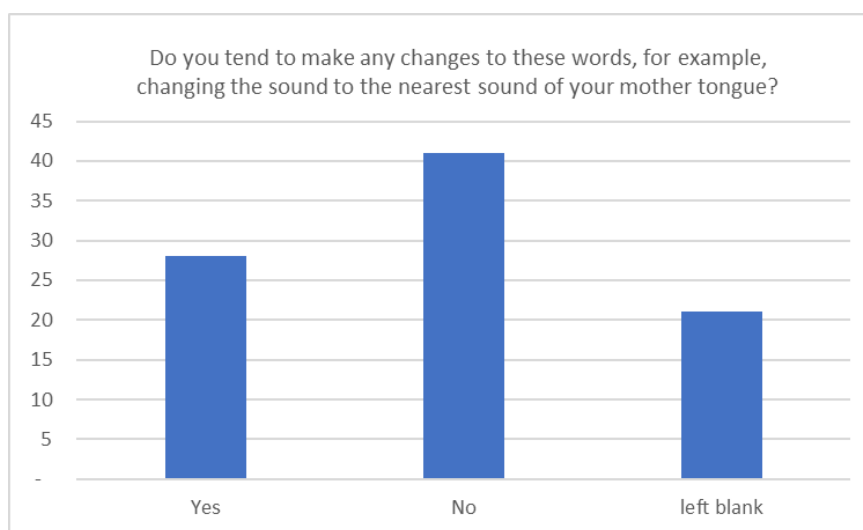


Figure 3. Changes in Neologisms

This leads us to the second research question, “How are these neologisms formed and what processes do they undergo?” Based on the examples provided by the participants and words shown in table (1), borrowed neologisms undergo some changes to suit the reception language. A foreign word borrowed into Arabic is likely to adjust to its morphological and phonemic system (Khrisat & Mohamad, 2014). Morphological changes, including derivation and affixation, appeared in the given examples. For illustration purposes, derivation is used to modify the verb to *check*:

أشيك *ashyk* as in present tense)

تشييك *tashyik* as a noun

Another example of morphological changes is the addition of the suffix *at* for Arabic plurality. For example but not limited to: *files* فايلات *faylat*, *messages* مسجات *musajaat*, *boxes* بوكسات *buksat*.

Moreover, several neologisms have undergone phonological changes because English and Arabic consonants are articulated differently. For example, the consonants /b/, /f/ and /g/ replace the consonants /P/ , /N/ and/dʒ/ respectively as in the following examples:

*Pet as bit* بت , *petrol as bitrul* بيترول , *save as sayf* سيف , *garage as karag* كراج , *message as musig* مسج

Syntactic changes have also been made to some neologisms in Arabic. The following example illustrates how some changes in English verbs may result from morphological or syntactic changes when used in an Omani context.

1. أسيف الفيل . *asif alfil: save the file*

Or

2. أسوي سيف للفيل . *aswy sayf lilfil: (to do) save the file*

As shown in the first example above, the verb *to save* has undergone morphological changes to make it accessible to the speaker. On the other hand, in the

second example, the same verb is transformed into a noun and receives the auxiliary verb, *اسوي/aswy*.

Adding the Arabic definite article, *al-* (*the*), to borrowed English neologisms while maintaining their original pronunciation is another example of syntactic change. It can be asserted that the Arabic definite article is used to keep these neologisms within the framework of the Arabic lexicon, as can be seen in the following words.

*the group الجروب al- gru:b*, *the computer الكمبيوتر al-kumbyu:tar*, *the assignment الاسايمينت al-asaymint*

According to this analysis, neologisms not only follow the phonological and morphological patterns of Arabic (on both sides) but also undergo semantic changes. Semantic borrowing is the taking of a word from another language and its eventual use as an original word. It is

extended to have a foreign counterpart's meaning (Mott & Laso, 2020). The term “doctor” is a good example of an English word in Omani society whose meaning has shifted slightly along the journey. The old Omanis, for example, used to call *دختر dikhtar* for the English word doctor, to refer to a hospital in addition to its literal meaning. They also called *رانجوز ranguz* for orange juice, to refer to all types of Juices. In general, denotation theory defines neologisms as words that represent new things or ideas and therefore have a new denotative meaning (Ulanova, 2014).

With respect to the third research question about the attitude of the Omani society toward neologisms, the fifth section explores some justification statements. As a first step, we reviewed the statements included in the questionnaire.

Table 2. Motivation to Use Neologisms

Motivations to Use Neologisms	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No direct equivalence to my words					
Because it is a global language					
Because it is the language of technology					
Gives my communication/ conversation a prestigious status					
Shows my superior proficiency in English					
Improves my English					
Facilitates understanding					
Time saving technique					

Here, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements. In this step, we attempt to identify Omani society’s perspectives on the

increasing use of English neologisms in everyday life. The following chart shows the results of the respondents.

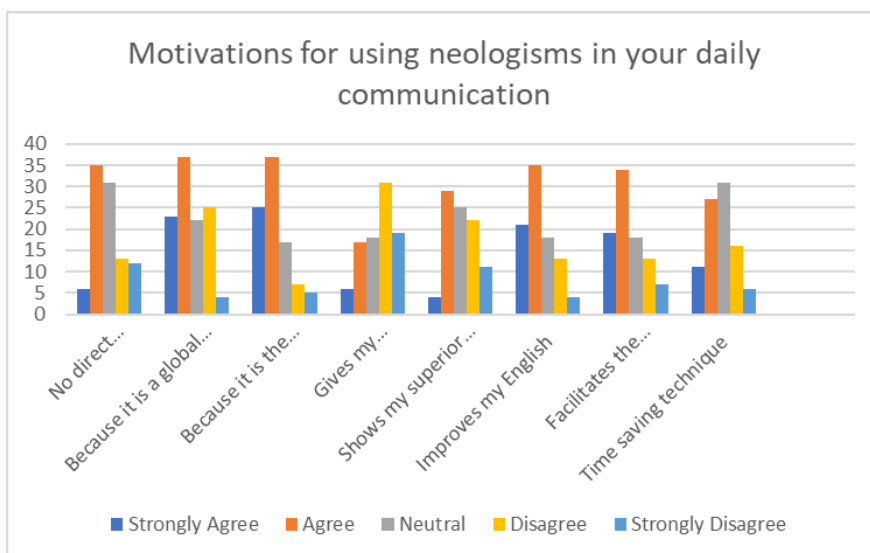


Figure 4. Motivation to Use Neologisms

According to the respondents, their attitude toward using neologisms in everyday language is quite positive. Despite the availability of Arabic equivalents, original English words remain the preferred choice among young people:

Telephone/ mobile *تليفون/tilifo:n/ موبايل mwbayil* vs *هاتف /ha:tif/*, *راديو radio /ra:dyu/* vs *مذياع /midhya*

Overall, society has shown acceptance of the usage of neologisms since they are largely technology-related words. This leads us to another motive: whenever there is no direct equivalent, participants are encouraged to use neologisms. Moreover, the chart indicates that among the motivations for using English neologisms is the desire to improve the English language, which is a

global language. Additionally, respondents believed that English neologisms could facilitate understanding and save time.

Now why do not we flip the script a bit and examine the Omani society's negative attitude toward the neologism based on the chart analysis. A significant number of respondents appear to oppose the use of neologism for prestigious reasons. To put it another way, more than 50% of respondents disagreed with the use of neologisms for the purpose of enhancing prestige. Most responses were motivated primarily by academic concerns. In contrast, 23% agreed with the perception of prestige. For these respondents, neologisms are trendy terms reflecting modernity, social status, and perhaps a sense of prestige. When using neologisms, they attempt to create captions or posts that are interesting to hear or read.

### CONCLUSION

In everyday language use, neologisms, or new words or meanings, are constantly emerging. A rapid increase in integrative neologisms has recently been observed in the Omani society, both in Standard Arabic and even in colloquial forms. Technological advancements and openness to other cultures are among the factors that have contributed to the acceleration of neologism use.

As mentioned earlier, this paper attempts to shed light on the attitudes of the Omani society toward the use of neologisms in daily communication. Furthermore, it attempts to examine the changes in both the morphophonemic and semantic structures associated with these neologisms once they have been assimilated into the Arabic language.

Based on the results of a questionnaire conducted within the framework of the research, 68% of the respondents used neologisms in their everyday conversations. According to the survey results, the participants demonstrated a positive attitude toward the use of neologisms in their everyday speech. The use of neologisms in social media was the most prevalent context in Omani society, followed by categories such as education and technology. Following the interviews with some participants in the second part of the survey, changes were observed in the borrowed words to suit the respondents' reception language, as discussed previously. It is widely believed that neologisms, regardless of their original language, constitute an integral part of society and a valuable addition to communication.

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None.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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### ETHICAL CONSIDERATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable.

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