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Manufactured Words for WhatsApp Interactions: A Morphological Approach to the Analysis of Yaba Tech. HND II Students' Selected Messages

*Simon, E. E.

Department of Languages, School of Liberal Studies, Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos
Nigeria

*Corresponding author email: emmanuelosimon896@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the morphological processes used by WhatsApp platform users for the formation of new words for WhatsApp communication. The WhatsApp messages of HND II students of Yaba College of Technology serve as data for the study. The selected data were analysed within the theoretical framework of Distributed Morphology. The morphological processes were employed in the analysis of the selected data in order to explore the morphological strategies that WhatsApp users adopt in deriving new words on the platform. For example, the morphological processes viz compounding, prefixation, clipping, aphetic form, abbreviation, acronyms are identified and analysed in the study. Effort is also made to find out whether the manifestations of those identified processes are the same as those of the English language word-formation processes. The findings of the paper show that the word formation processes (i.e. clipping, abbreviation, blending etc.) used for newly derived words are distinct from the English language word-formation processes. It can be concluded, based on the findings, that WhatsApp users manipulate the English word-formation processes to derive new words for communication on the WhatsApp platform.

Keywords: Word-Formation Processes, WhatsApp Platform, Morphological Analysis, Social Media, Students'

Introduction

The emergence of social media has resulted in the use of new linguistic strategies by users of the platform. One common feature of the language form that is used on social media is the deviant language forms. The major reason for the social media users switching to the deviated forms of language is to facilitate mutual participation of all the interlocutors in the process of communication. The language forms used on social media deviate in morphological, syntactic and semantic forms. For instance, the morphological form of words used on social media is entirely distinct (Cifuentes & Lents, 2011; Arteage et al., 2014; Jasim, 2023). WhatsApp platform is one of the fastest medium through which people communicate nowadays. Apart from the fact that it is the fastest way to disseminate information to others, it is not costly to be used and maintained by its users. This makes it accessible to many people (Ali & Kootbodien, 2017; Jasim, 2023; Ogundeji, 2024; Shubhra et al., 2024). According to Jasim (2023), the linguistic features used by social media users are shortenings (which include aphetic form, clipping, acronyms etc.), shorthand expressions and so on, a view that this paper seeks to espouse. The purpose of this study is to examine the word-formation processes used by HND II students of Yaba College of Technology for deriving new words on WhatsApp platform.

Literature Review

Morphology and Morphological Processes

Morphology is defined as the scientific study of morpheme. According to Jasim (2023), 'the study of a language is segmented into different parts'. The author asserts that the word is the basic unit of language and the study of it is crucial. So, morphology serves this purpose: its basic aim is to study the formation of words, through the use of morphological processes. Morphological processes refer to the linguistic processes that are used to

generate word forms by applying morphological rules. There are three major morphological processes in English language. They are compounding, affixation and conversion. The morphological processes like shortenings, blending and coinage are called minor morphological processes (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002; Bauer, 2003; Lieber, 2009). Compounding is used to derive new words through the combination of two base words e.g. 'girl + friend' form the compound 'girlfriend'. Affixation is the process of attaching affixes (i.e. prefixes, infixes, or suffixes) to base words in order to come up with new words. Under affixation, there are terms like prefixation, infixation, and suffixation. These three terms are used to mean the process of attaching prefixes, infixes, or suffixes, respectively, to base words. For example, the prefixes 're-' and 'pre-' can be attached to the base words such like 'do' and 'independence' to generate newly derived words like 'redo' and 'pre-independence'. Conversion is a process by which a word belonging to a certain word class is used to function as another word class. An instance of this is the use of the adjective 'wicked' to function as a noun e.g. 'It is risky to walk in the company of the wicked' (Jackson et al., 2000; Lieber, 2009). Shortenings comprise abbreviation, acronyms, clipping, aphetic forms, and so on. Abbreviation and acronyms denote the word-formation processes whereby the initial letters of every word of a phrase are extracted and combined to represent the phrase. The only difference between abbreviation and acronyms is that an abbreviation cannot be pronounced as a word, but we pronounce the letters one after the other e.g. 'NYSC' for National Youth Service Corps. In contrast, an acronym can be pronounced as a word e.g. 'NOUN' for National Open University of Nigeria. Clipping is the process of forming new words by extracting a part of a word to represent the word e.g. 'prof.' for 'professor', 'lab.' for laboratory. An Aphetic form is the process of creating new words by extracting the stressed syllable of a word to stand for the word, for example 'cause' stands for 'because'. Blending refers to a process of deriving new words by extracting the parts of two words and use the extracted parts to represent those words e.g. 'computerate' for 'computer literate' (Jackson et al., 2000; Lieber, 2009).

Empirical Review

Some researchers have carried out studies on the use of language on WhatsApp platform. For instance, Ezenwamadu (2024) does a textual analysis of language usages in Short Messages Service (SMS) and WhatsApp text messages using a qualitative method of analysis. In the analysis, the author focuses on the (mis)spelling usage, contextual usage and semantic usage. The findings of the study show that some words are misspelt and this leads to misunderstanding of the contents of the subject matter in WhatsApp communication among WhatsApp users.

In 2023, Amadi and Mbah carried out a sociolinguistic study of WhatsApp conversations between students and lecturers through the examination of whether the language politeness principles are violated or not. It was discovered from the findings that social factors like age, gender, class, status, etc. affect language politeness between students and lecturers.

Furthermore, Ogundeji (2024) explores speech acts used in WhatsApp chats among non-academic staff of the University of Uyo. The study adopts qualitative and quantitative research techniques in the analysis of the garnered data. The findings show that non-academic staff of the university used illocutionary speech acts such as directives, assertives, expressives, commissives and declaratives to call individuals' attention to certain actions, to make claims on perceived truths, to express certain information, to make promises and pledges, and to make statements respectfully.

Lastly, Shubhra et al. (2024) inquire into intriguing language dynamics within WhatsApp platform. The focus of their study is language attribution – a subtle transformation in the manner languages are used in the digital age. Eclectic approach of qualitative analysis of WhatsApp conversations with a digital questionnaire survey was employed for the study.

Even though the aforementioned previous studies have explored some relevant language aspects, such as spelling, contextual and semantic usages, social factors on language use, speech acts and so on, none of them investigates the morphological aspect of language used on WhatsApp platform. Therefore, this current study aims to fill this research gap. It takes a run at identifying the morphological processes used on WhatsApp platform to derive new words for communication on the platform.

Theoretical Framework

The data collected for the study were analysed within the theoretical framework of Distributed Morphology. Distributed Morphology is a linguistic theory that explains how words are composed of abstract features such as tense, person, number, etc. The core aim of the theory is to explain word formation, inflection, derivation, etc. This study adopts an aspect of the theory known as Morphology Parsing: Segmentation parsing was used after identifying the morphological processes. This denotes a process of dissecting down words into their smallest meaningful units called morphemes (Jackson et al., 2000; Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002; Lieber, 2009). Segmentation parsing, a type of morphology parsing is used to break English words into their various morphological parts. For example, the word 'undecided' can be segmented into un + decide +ed: the word contains the prefix 'un-', the base word 'decide', and the suffix '-ed'. Also the word 'disenfranchisement' is broken down, using the theory, into the prefixes 'dis-' and 'en', the base word 'franchise', and the suffix 'ment'.

Methodology

The source of data for the study is HND II Students' WhatsApp Platform. Data were collected from the students' course representative. There were up to 30 snapshots of the chats among the students sent by their course representative. The snapshots were thoroughly examined before selecting those excerpts containing morphological processes. Then, 60 excerpts were selected for the analysis. The selected data were analysed within the theoretical framework of distributed morphology. After the identification of morphological processes such as abbreviation, clipping, prefixation, compounding, blending, etc., morphology parsing was employed to segment some of the identified processes. The study also adopted a qualitative research design because it focuses on understanding how WhatsApp platform users use word-formation processes to generate words which they use for interactions on the platform. A qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of linguistic patterns, offering insights into the use of language as a tool for communication, and not just rule-governed one. It also aids a systematic, precise, and accurate analysis of data. Besides using qualitative research type, this research also uses a descriptive method, which is a method of research that describes the objects purely derived from the data in the course of the study. The descriptive method will be used because the data analysis will be presented descriptively.

Data Presentation

- Excerpt 1: Wait a moment, painting class
Excerpt 2: Confirm by me Assistant Gov.
Excerpt 3: Ok no P thanks
Excerpt 4: But the information way I hear say na only Pt get strike
Excerpt 5: Pls government should give us feedback on this.
Excerpt 6: The painting lecturer said tomorrow, his going to brief us tomorrow before ceramics class.
Excerpt 7: To does dat pay d POP we appreciate U and for does did not pay we also appreciate u. All thanks to GENERAL L Who pay for everyone cos he pay 99% of total money
Excerpt 8: Painting class is holding at the car park
Excerpt 9: Ladies Vs Guys
Excerpt 10: Wat's the topic
Excerpt 11: Pls pay here for ur textbook
Excerpt 12: U must be a bastard fellow u know we need plywood to do coddle for ceramics u no talk say u house near sawmill make I send money give u to buy it, but u feet go out far to help someone to buy load (bravo)
Excerpt 13: Hi guys
Am here to tell u guys datwe will be having DEBATE next week
Excerpt 14: Debate on wat?
Excerpt 15: I mean with d lecturer ooo
Excerpt 17: Shud we still wait?
Excerpt 18: Class is abt to start o oo
Excerpt 19: Hw much
Excerpt 20: Hi guys
Pls if u know ur matric no. is here dm b4 Wednesday
Excerpt 21: For does dat are not in d group
Excerpt 22: Hi guys
If u see ur matric number here no dat u are redoing ur leg

- Excerpt 23: Nice work bro
Excerpt 24: For wat
Excerpt 25: U to go nd search for it
Excerpt 26: if u come to class u will understand so once u are not in class u can get d full details.
Excerpt 27: The first box pls
Excerpt 28: Hello guys is not that I can't help some people to mark attendance but HOD knows faces.
Excerpt 29: So I will resend the attendance now if I don't help you to mark please don't blame cos is with me . . .
Excerpt 30: XUP
Excerpt 31: Awfa Romeo DM me a beg
Excerpt 32: The first box pls
Excerpt 33: Afa mark my own na
Excerpt 34: Romeo abeg help me mark one
Excerpt 35: HOD said you should see him
Excerpt 36: HOD take one of your painting he said I should tell you.
Excerpt 37: Bro abeg go chop onions and come back and check
Excerpt 38: Na Gideon write am I just reach school and snap it and post so I will be sure that everybody has submitted
Excerpt 39: Mr. Man respect ur old age
Excerpt 40: XUP
Excerpt 41: if you need answer to all, DM
Excerpt 42: Which one be dm u post question if u have answers post baba?
Excerpt 43: happy birthday bro wish you long life and prosperity in good health and wealth in Jesus name
Excerpt 44: Is there anyone who did not partake in the project at all? Kindly respond to this ASAP
Excerpt 45: Bro. open your eyes and read now
Excerpt 46: Pls can someone send the text question to the group.
Excerpt 48: Sure, DM
Excerpt 49: Hello good afternoon guys, 'Y' all that haven't submitted their STA assignment should please come along with it tomorrow.
Excerpt 50: I stay for your front during the examination.
On wyn me sha
Excerpt 51: Sis. Mary Walker, how was class today?
Excerpt 52: U die for it
Excerpt 53: The job advert is mainly for HND students
Excerpt 54: But ma we never get certificate
Excerpt 55: But ma is it for only those that have graduated?
Excerpt 56: Ok ma
Excerpt 57: Sis Mary, pls tell me cause you would like to teach in YCT
Excerpt 58: Pls house NESB 1-20 B is the same class we used for first semester abi ?
Excerpt 59: Good evening everyone, pls those that went to school . . .
Excerpt 60: See people way I dey look auto shey I never miss road like this.

Analysis and Discussion of Data

This section is concerned with the analysis of the morphological processes used to realize the lexical features identified from the selected WhatsApp messages of HND II, Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State. These processes are identified below.

Blending

Blending is used in the WhatsApp messages selected. This is a morphological process whereby parts of two or more words are brought together to form new words. Examples of such words are cited from the selected WhatsApp messages below.

Excerpt 6: his going . . .

Excerpt 10: Wats the topic

Table 1

P r o c e s s	F u l l w o r d s	B l e n d e d P a r t s	N e w w o r d s
B l e n d i n g	h e i s ' h ' a n d ' i s ' h i s		
	W h a t i s ? ' w a t ' a n d ' s ' w a t s		

Excerpt 13: Am

Excerpt 30: XuP

Excerpt 31: Awfa . . .

Excerpt 31, 33, 34 & 37: Afa, a beg

Table 2

P r o c e s s	F u l l w o r d s	B l e n d e d p a r t s	N e w w o r d s
B l e n d i n g	I a m	'A' and 'm'	a m
	W h a t i s u p ?	'X' and 'up'	X u p
	H o w f a r ?	'Aw' and 'fa'	A w f a
	I b e g	'a' and 'beg'	a b e g
	Y o u a l l	'Y' and 'all'	Y ' a l l

Some of the words in the two tables above do not follow the normal blending as a word formation process because parts which are not in the original phrases or clauses are brought into being in the identified lexical features. For instance, 'X' in 'Xup', 'A' in 'A beg, Awfa&Afa'; still these newly formed or derived words can be best situated within blending, a morphological process.

Prefixation

This is a morphological process, a kind of affixation, denoting a process of attaching a group of letters to the beginning of a root/base word, forming a new word. Let us consider the following.

Excerpt 22: . . . U are redoing ur leg.

Excerpt 29: . . . I will resend the attendance . . .

Table 3

P r o c e s s	F u l l w o r d s	B l e n d e d p a r t s	N e w w o r d s
P r e f i x a t i o n	r e	- d o i n g	r e d o i n g
	r e	- s e n d	r e s e n d

The words in the above table follow the normal lexical features and morphological process used to derive them. The prefix 're__' can be attached to a verb to express an action which is to be done again.

Compounding

The compounds in the data are 'birthday' 'good health', 'long life', and 'good afternoon' in excerpts 43 and 49. Each of the words contains two base words as illustrated below.

Table 4

	P r o c e s s F u l l w o r d s	Compound words
Compounding	'birth' and 'day'	B i r t h d a y
	'good' and 'health'	g o o d h e a l t h
	'long' and 'life'	l o n g l i f e
	'good' and 'afternoon'	g o o d a f t e r n o o n
	'part' and 'time'	P a r t - t i m e

In the above table, two words are combined to form new words which are compounds such as birthday, 'good health', 'long life' 'good afternoon' and part-time.

Shortenings

Shortenings are used in the selected WhatsApp messages and the kinds of shortenings used in the messages are initialism, aphetic form, acronyms and clipping.

(i) Initialism

Excerpt3: no P

Excerpts 20, 31, 41, 42 and 48 :Dm

'P' stands for problem

'Dm' represents 'drop message'

Excerpts 28, 35 and 36: H O D

'H O D' stands for Head of Department

(ii) Acronyms

Excerpt 7 : P O P

Excerpt 44 : A S A P

Table 5

A c r o n y m s	F u l l m e a n i n g
P O P	P l a s t e r o f P a r i s
A S A P	A s s o o n a s p o s s i b l e

iii. Aphetic Forms

Excerpt 7 :cos he pay 99% . . .

Excerpt 29 : please don't blame cause is with me . . .

Table 6

A p h e t i c F o r m s	O r i g i n a l W o r d s
C o s	B e c a u s e
C a u s e	B e c a u s e

In the aphetic forms, as seen in the table above, the stressed part of a word is retained for the original word while the unstressed syllable is deliberately elided. The unstressed 'be' in the two words is removed while the second syllable which is stressed is retained for the words. Thus, 'cos' in the two words is still the same as 'cause', the normal spelling of the second syllable of 'because'.

Clipping

The use of clipping dominates the whole selected WhatsApp messages of ND11 students of Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State. However, some of the derived words using clipping do not correspond with the real clipping types', but what was observed in the selected WhatsApp messages is that the students either clipped one position of a word to represent the word or clipped two positions, that is, the initial word position, initial and medial positions, medial and final word positions are clipped from a word then used to represent the

original word. Instances are cited from the excerpts of the selected WhatsApp messages and represented in the tables below.

Excerpts 1- 5: Wat, Gov., Ok, pls, govt

Table 7

Excerpts	P	o	s	i	t	i	o	n	s	
	(I)	(I + M)	(M)	(I + F)	(F)	(I + M + F)				
	Initial	Initial + Medial	Medial	Initial + Final	Final	Initial + Medial + Final				
1								w	a	t
2	G	o	v							
3	O		K							
4										
5		P	l	s		g	o	v	t	

Based on the table above, clipping type in excerpt 1 is made up of initial + media + final representing the original word, 'what'; excerpt 2 contains initial clipping which stands for the word 'governor' and 'ok' for 'okay. In excerpt 5, there are two derived words through clipping the first (i.e. Pls) is derived through initial + medial positions of the word 'please' to stand for the word, while 'govt' via initial + final positions representing the word 'government'.

Excerpts 7, 9 – 12: u, vs., ur, no.

Table 8

Excerpts	P	o	s	i	t	i	o	n	s	
	(I)	I	+	M	M	I	+	F	F	I + M + F
7										U
9		V		S						
1	1	P	l	s						
1	2									U, n o

In table 19, 'u', medial clipping, stands for 'you', 'Vs.', initial + media representing 'Versus', 'pls' is also an initial + medial clipping, standing for the word 'Please' and 'u' in excerpt 12 is medial and 'no' is also medial clipped from the word 'know' to represent it. Unlike normal clipping that the clipped part is usually a simple word on its own e.g. 'plane' in 'aeroplane', 'Phone' in 'telephone'; a clipped part is usually a letter or a group of letters in each of the words, as can be seen in the analysis.

Excerpts 13-19: U, wat, shud, abt, Hw

Table 9

Excerpts	P	o	s	i	t	i	o	n	s	
	(I)	I	+	M	M	I	+	F	F	I + M + F
1	3									U
1	4									W a t
1	7									S h u d
1	8					a	b	t		
1	9					H		W		

Table 20 contains a medial clipping in excerpt 13, initial + medial + final clipping in excerpts 14 and 17, and initial + final in excerpts 18 and 19

Excerpt 20, 22 – 25: Pls, no, no, u, bro, wat, nd

Table 10

Excerpts	P	o	s	i	t	i	o	n	s
	(I)	I	+	M M	I	+	F F	I	+ M + F
2	0	n o .	P	l	s		u	r	
2	2				U , n o		u	r	
2	3	B r o							
2	4							w	a t
2	5				U		n	d	

'no' in excerpt 20 is an initial clipping representing 'number, while 'no' in excerpt 22 is a medial clipping standing for the lexeme 'know'; 'ur' in excerpts 20 and 22 is a final word clipping which stands for the possessive adjective 'your'. Finally, 'nd' in excerpt 25 is a final word clipping representing the coordinating conjunction 'and'.

Excerpts 26 & 27, 37 – 39: U, pls, Bro, an, as, ur

Table 11

Excerpts	P	o	s	i	t	i	o	n	s
	(I)	I	+	M M	I	+	F F	I	+ M + F
2	6				U				
2	7		P	l	s				
3	7	b r o ,	a n						
3	8	a n ,	a s						
3	9						U	r	

It is shown in the table that the newly derived word 'bro' is formed through initial clipping which stands for the original word 'brother', and 'an' representing the coordinating conjunction 'and', 'as' in excerpt 38 is also an initial word clipping and it stands for the primary auxiliary verb 'has'.

Excerpts 42, 45 – 47: u, bro, pls, Bcos

Table 12

Excerpts	P	o	s	i	t	i	o	n	s
	(I)	I	+	M M	I	+	F F I	+ M	+ F
4	2				U				
4	5	B	r o						
4	6			P	l	s			
4	7			B	c o	s			

As seen in table 23, the types of clipping used to form the words in the table are initial, and initial + medial word clipping.

Conclusion

The study examines the morphological processes used by WhatsApp platform users to create words for communicating on the platform. Based on the findings after the analysis, the paper concludes that minor word-formation processes are commonly used by WhatsApp users to derive words for WhatsApp interactions. In the analysed data, there are a few instances of the use of compounding and affixation for the formation of new words. Minor morphological processes, especially clipping and abbreviation, are largely used in the data analysed. Secondly, the use of morphological processes for the derivation of new words on social medial platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X etc. deviates from the normal ones in English language. For instance,

the use of aphetic form, which is a kind of shortening, does not follow its use generally. For instance, 'cos' that is taken or seen as the stressed word from 'because' is not the right spelling of the stressed part. It is spelt as 'cause'. The clipped parts of words in some of the original words are often letters or groups of letters. Only a few clipped parts follow the normal clipping types e.g. 'Gov.' for 'governor', 'Ok' for 'okay', 'bro' for 'brother', etc. the rest of the clipped parts are not properly clipped.

Recommendations

To achieve consistency and universality in research findings, it is recommended that:

1. Other researchers can carry out research works on how students from other higher institutions use morphological processes for the derivation of new words for WhatsApp communication, so as to find out whether there will be similarities in the research findings.

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