



CONVERTED NEOLOGISMS IN JOURNALISM

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Abstract

This article examines the role of conversion as a mechanism of word formation in the creation of neologisms, with a specific focus on journalism. Conversion allows for the rapid adaptation of language to new societal trends, technological advancements, and cultural shifts. Through the process of conversion, journalists contribute to the creation and dissemination of new words, reflecting the evolving nature of communication in the digital age. Examples such as *to google*, *to text*, *to blog*, and *to tweet* illustrate how the media plays a central role in shaping the lexicon. This paper explores the significance of conversion in linguistic innovation and highlights how journalists facilitate the emergence of new words in response to changing contexts.

Keywords: conversion, neologisms, journalism, word formation, lexical innovation, media, language change, digital communication.

In linguistics, word formation is an essential process through which new lexical items are generated to reflect emerging concepts, technologies, and societal changes. Among the most important mechanisms of word formation is conversion, also known as zero derivation. This process involves the transformation of a word from one grammatical category to another without the addition of any affixes, such as prefixes or suffixes. In the fast-paced, information-driven world of journalism, conversion plays a crucial role in the creation of neologisms that address the ever-changing landscape of contemporary life. Journalists, as key players in shaping



public discourse, are at the forefront of creating and popularizing new words through conversion.

Conversion allows for a great deal of flexibility and creativity in language, making it a vital tool for responding to new phenomena. For example, the noun *email* has been converted into the verb *to email*, meaning "to send an email." The same word can easily shift between categories without any morphological change, illustrating how conversion makes language efficient and adaptable. As Eric Partridge [5, 1950] and Walter L. W. Lee [4, 1975] have pointed out, conversion facilitates the rapid development of vocabulary, especially in fields like journalism, where the introduction of new concepts often requires quick linguistic solutions. This efficiency is vital when a new concept needs to be quickly incorporated into the public's vocabulary.

Peter Trudgill [6, 2000] notes that neologisms often arise in response to significant shifts in society, technology, or culture. These shifts are often first reported by journalists, who use conversion to adapt language to these new realities. The result is that many new words enter the lexicon through the media, as journalists coin, popularize, and spread terms that help society name and understand emerging phenomena.

A quintessential example of conversion in the media is the verb *to google*. Originally a noun referring to the search engine company *Google*, the word was converted into a verb meaning "to search for information on the internet." The transition from *Google* as a proper noun to *to google* as a verb demonstrates how journalists, reporting on the rise of the internet and digital technologies, contributed to the rapid spread of this term. As David Crystal [1, 2003] notes, the media played a key role in turning a brand name into a household verb, reflecting both the dominance of the Google platform and the changing nature of communication in the digital age.

Similarly, the noun *text* underwent conversion to become the verb *to text*. This shift in meaning, describing the act of sending a text message via mobile phone, reflects the growing importance of mobile communication. The media, particularly journalism, played a significant role in making *texting* a ubiquitous activity, and *to text* became widely understood and used in everyday language. The term *text* was further extended to describe the content of the message itself, such as in phrases like



"a text conversation." The widespread use of this term is a clear example of how the media accelerates the adoption of new words that arise from technological changes. Another well-known example of conversion in journalism is the term *blog*. Initially a short form of *weblog*, the noun *blog* was converted into a verb, *to blog*, meaning "to write or post on a blog." As blogs became a prominent platform for communication in the early 21st century, journalists helped cement *blogging* as an integral part of online media. Blogs were not only a new way of publishing content, but the media also rapidly adopted the term to describe this new form of digital communication. The verb *to blog* spread through news outlets, which began to focus on blogs as a significant part of the information ecosystem.

One term that emerged through the media and saw rapid conversion is *podcast*. A blend of *iPod* and *broadcast*, the noun *podcast* was quickly converted into a verb - *to podcast* - meaning "to create and distribute an audio file for public consumption via the internet." Journalists, covering the rise of digital audio content, played an instrumental role in spreading this term. The ease with which *podcast* became both a noun and a verb shows how conversion allows the language to adapt to new media formats quickly. The fact that podcasts were often discussed and promoted by journalists further solidified the term in public consciousness.

A more recent example of conversion is the verb *to friend*. Derived from the noun *friend*, this term emerged with the rise of social media platforms like Facebook, where users could *friend* someone by adding them to their network. Journalists, in their coverage of social media and digital communication trends, helped cement this new meaning of *friend*, which was extended to describe actions performed within these platforms. Journalistic reports about social media practices often referred to *friending* and *unfriending* (the act of removing someone from one's network), showing how the media not only reported on these behaviors but helped to establish the terminology.

The verb *to tweet* is another excellent example of conversion in journalism. Initially, *tweet* referred to the short messages posted on Twitter, but the noun was quickly converted into a verb, *to tweet*, meaning "to post a message on Twitter." The media played a key role in popularizing the term *tweet*, using it in the context of political and social discourse, as well as in discussions about new media. The fact that a



simple social media platform could generate such a widely used new verb highlights the influence of journalism in shaping how society engages with digital technologies.

Similarly, the term *clickbait* (from *click* and *bait*) emerged through the media to describe sensationalized headlines designed to attract clicks on online articles. Journalists, reporting on internet trends and the business of online media, quickly adopted the term to describe an increasingly common practice in digital journalism. The conversion of *clickbait* into both a noun and an adjective (e.g., "a clickbait headline") reflects the ways in which the media contributes to the development of new terms related to online content.

Another case of conversion linked to the internet is the term *selfie*. The noun *selfie*, meaning a self-portrait photograph, was converted into a verb - *to selfie* - meaning "to take a self-portrait photo." As selfies became a cultural phenomenon, journalists contributed to the popularity of the term by reporting on this new social practice. The fact that *selfie* entered both popular discourse and academic studies further illustrates how journalism helps spread newly coined words. The *selfie* phenomenon also underscores how social media platforms have shaped language, with journalists reporting on this trend and using the term extensively in their articles.

These examples illustrate how conversion serves as a key mechanism for the creation of neologisms in the media. Journalists are not just passive recipients of new words; they actively shape and spread new terms that reflect the changing social landscape. The role of journalists in linguistic innovation is particularly evident in the context of digital technologies and the internet, where new practices and behaviors often require new linguistic expressions. Through their coverage of these phenomena, journalists contribute to the adaptation of language, ensuring that new terms enter the common lexicon and become accepted by the public.

In conclusion, conversion is an invaluable tool in the creation of neologisms, particularly in the field of journalism. Through the process of conversion, journalists are able to adapt language quickly and efficiently to address new societal trends, technological developments, and emerging cultural phenomena. As demonstrated by the numerous examples in this paper, conversion enables language to remain dynamic and responsive to the evolving world. Journalists, by coining and



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popularizing new terms through conversion, play a central role in the ongoing development of language, ensuring that it stays relevant and reflective of contemporary life.

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