



# A Morphological Analysis of Abbreviated Neologisms of Social Media Discourses: A Case of Kenyans on X

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## Abstract

In recent years, the rise of social media platforms has dramatically transformed communication patterns and language use across the globe. Among these platforms, X (formerly known as Twitter) stands out as one of the most influential, having witnessed the emergence and widespread adoption of abbreviated neologisms. This paper presents the morphological analysis of abbreviated neologisms used by Kenyans on X. The objective was to analyse these abbreviated neologisms within social media discourses using the natural morphology framework (NMT) propounded by Dressler (1985). NMT is a functionalist theory that accounts for morphological preferences based on extra-linguistic motivations. Data for the study was purposively collected from Kenyans on X. The abbreviated neologisms were identified, and their meanings were determined through contextual analysis. The data was then classified based on the morphological structure of the neologisms, including the type of abbreviation, the source words or roots, and other morphemes. This provided insights on the interaction between technology and the morphological evolution of language as evidenced by the use of abbreviated neologisms by KOX. The findings reveal significant insights into the morphological features of abbreviated neologisms, shedding light on the innovative linguistic practices employed by Kenyan X users. The study highlights the role of social media platforms in language evolution, demonstrating how technology influences word formation processes. These findings underscore the broader understanding of language variation and change facilitated by social media platforms. The abbreviated neologisms are formed through initialisms, clipping, and contraction.

## Introduction

Users on X often create and popularise new words and phrases to convey their messages more succinctly within the character limits imposed by the platform (Mworia, 2015). This trend is not confined to X alone; other prominent social media networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram have also become fertile grounds for the creation and dissemination of neologisms (Shalee & Mustafa, 2019). These platforms, with their vast user bases and rapid communication dynamics, facilitate the development of new linguistic forms, particularly abbreviations and acronyms, that enable users to communicate quickly and efficiently. The phenomenon of abbreviated neologisms is particularly pronounced in the Kenyan context, where social media users creatively adapt language to suit the fast-paced nature of online interactions.



### **Linguist Practices on Social Media Platforms**

In 2006, Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams founded Twitter, which has since grown to become one of the most popular social media platforms globally (Boot et al., 2019). In 2022, billionaire Elon Musk acquired Twitter, and in March 2023, he rebranded the platform to X. X is a social media platform that allows users to send and read short messages known as 'tweets.' Users can post messages of up to 280 characters, including text, images, videos, and links. These posts are designed to be concise and easily shareable. The platform also supports hashtags, enabling users to tag their tweets with relevant keywords or topics. Hashtags can categorise tweets, make them more discoverable by other users, and allow KOX to participate in more extensive conversations. Tweets have become a popular form of communication due to their brevity and shareability. According to Mworia (2015), X has revolutionised how people communicate online and has significantly spread news, information, and culture in the digital age.

The use of abbreviated neologisms on social media has been the subject of numerous studies in linguistics and communication. Research has shown that these neologisms reflect the changing nature of language and communication in the digital age (Thurlow et al., 2004). Crystal (2008) asserts that the rapid pace of communication and the limited space for text-based messages on social media platforms have led to new forms of language optimised for these contexts. This is especially true for X, which had a limit of 140 characters per post at its inception; however, this was increased to 280 characters per post in 2017 (Boot et al. 2019). The constraint of a limited character count encourages users to express their thoughts concisely within the given space, thus promoting the use of abbreviated neologisms and other word shortening mechanisms.

Language is used differently in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) due to the unique characteristics of digital platforms. According to Herring (2001), users often rely on written text-based communication, which lacks non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and facial expressions. This necessitates using alternative strategies to convey meaning and emotions effectively. The time gaps between messages on SNS also influence the pace and flow of conversation (Crystal, 2011). Crystal (ibid) posits that CMC environments foster informal language, including slang, neologisms, and internet-specific jargon. These linguistic innovations emerge as users adapt their communication styles to the digital context. This creates a sense of online identity and community, like Kenyans on X. According to Thurlow et al. (2004), the relative anonymity and distance in CMC can lead to disinhibition, which makes users express themselves more freely or engage in behaviours they might otherwise avoid in face-to-face interactions. The use of abbreviated neologisms on social media has also been controversial, with some arguing that it is a sign of the deterioration of language, not to mention the decline of traditional forms of communication (Crystal, 2008). On Social Networking Sites, abbreviated neologisms often indicate new trends, ideas, or phenomena specific to the platform (Yong & Kris-Ogbodo, 2019).

The present study contributes to a broader understanding of language use in Kenya and the role of social media in shaping linguistic practices. The paper analyses the interaction between technology and the morphological evolution of language, as evidenced by the use of abbreviated neologisms by Kenyans on X. The study of shortened forms of words and phrases can aid in creating language technology capable of addressing the dynamic nature of language. The internet will record linguistic diversity more fully and accurately than ever before, and the creative potential of the new medium is forming new areas of expression. This research will help scholars navigate the evolving linguistic landscape by providing valuable insights into the structure and usage of these linguistic forms in the digital age. Add a paragraph about technology.



## **Theoretical Framework**

The study utilised Natural Morphology Theory, a functionalist approach proposed by Dressler (1985), to account for morphological preferences based on extralinguistic motivations. Natural Morphology Theory is a linguistic framework suggesting that language structure is influenced by cognitive and communicative constraints rather than by strict linguistic rules (Bybee, 2009; Dressler, 1985). This theory maintains that words and phrases in a language are formed most efficiently and effectively for communication. NMT also posits that word formation patterns are not arbitrary, but rather based on universal principles common across all languages (Dressler, 1987; Dressler et al., 2011). According to the theory, the structure of words arises from the interaction between linguistic and non-linguistic factors, such as the physical properties of the human body, the cognitive abilities of language users, and the social and cultural context in which language is employed. Bybee (2012) examines the principles of NMT that are relevant to the present study, including economy, analogy, paradigmatic relations, generalisation, and frequency. Economics indicates that linguistic structures tend to be formed in the most efficient manner possible. In the context of abbreviated neologisms, it is pertinent to analyse how speakers economise linguistic resources by shortening words and creating new forms that convey meaning efficiently, particularly within the constraints of the character limits on X. Additionally, understanding the role of analogy in forming abbreviated neologisms is crucial.

Concerning abbreviated neologisms on social media, natural morphology theory suggests that speakers create and use these textisms to communicate efficiently and effectively in the digital context (Bybee, 2002). The theory proposes that textisms are shaped by the constraints of digital communication, such as the need to save space and time in messages, as well as to express emotions and social identities. Abbreviated neologisms are used by netizens in an ad-hoc manner within a spatial-temporal context because Netspeak is not geographically constrained. Crystal (2018) notes that abbreviations have a long history in the evolution of language, having been used in ancient writing systems, medieval manuscripts, and early print culture to simplify communication and save space. He provides valuable insights on abbreviations, which were employed as shorthand symbols or characters to represent frequently used words or phrases, allowing scribes to write more efficiently. He further notes that abbreviations have continuously evolved, becoming integral to efficient communication from medieval manuscripts to early print culture. This evolution occurred as space-saving techniques became essential for producing texts with limited resources. In contemporary communication practices, Crystal (ibid) acknowledges the significant impact of digital communication platforms, mainly social media like X, on the proliferation of abbreviated neologisms. With character limitations in tweets and the need for clear and concise expressions, users must be creative and devise abbreviated forms of words and phrases to convey their messages effectively.

Abbreviated neologisms are new words formed by shortening existing lexemes and refer to three correlated phenomena: clippings, acronyms, and initialisms. Clippings, also known as truncation, involve removing segments of a word to create a synonym, while initialisms are usually presented in capital letters without spaces or periods between them (Jimaima & Nkhata 2020). They further state that, unlike acronyms, initialisms are not pronounced as words but rather letter by letter. Crystal (2008a:1) defines an abbreviation as “a word that is shortened by omitting one of its meaningful elements either at the end of a word, such as ‘exam,’ or at the beginning of a word, such as ‘phone.’” Crystal (2008a:1) further adds that abbreviation is a “term that has been refined in linguistics as part of the study of word formation, distinguishing several ways in which words can be shortened.”

On the other hand, a neologism refers to the creation of new words in a language through various word formation processes. There are numerous words that grammar can generate, and these words must conform to word formation rules (Aronoff, 2007). The new words coined in this manner are



called neologisms (Jimaima & Nkhata, 2017). These neologisms can be classified into various grammatical categories. Mworira (2015) notes that they can function as nouns, referring to people, objects, or concepts. Shortened forms of words or phrases can also serve as verbs (indicating actions or states), adjectives (describing or qualifying nouns), adverbs (modifying verbs or adjectives), and interjections (expressing emotions and reactions). Kubova (2010; as cited in Jimaima et al. 2020) defines a neologism as “any set of words/set expression formed according to the productive word formation rules in English.” Crystal (2018) notes that neologisms are products of linguistic creativity, demonstrating the adaptability of language users to express novel concepts and experiences. He states that the continuous creation of neologisms enriches language and reflects the dynamic nature of human communication.

### **Technology and Word Formation**

The relationship between technology and word formation in social media neologisms has been the subject of much research in recent years, as technology acts as a catalyst for language change (Crystal, 2011). Several scholars have investigated how technological advancements have given rise to new linguistic practices and contributed to the creation of new words and phrases. Herring et al. (2010) note that the use of abbreviations and acronyms in computer-mediated communication is widespread, and this trend is related to the development of these new forms of communication. Similarly, Tagg et al. (2014) examine the impact of digital media on language use, highlighting how the immediacy and informality of social media platforms have led to the emergence of new linguistic forms. Crystal (ibid) discusses how social media has created a new form of communication characterised by brevity and informality, leading to new words and phrases.

It is important to note that language evolution and innovation are complex processes influenced by various factors. According to Crystal (2011), social media catalyses the spread of linguistic innovations by facilitating communication. Jimaima and Nkhata (2020) have examined the interplay between technology and grammar to establish whether the lexical items involved can be classified within the established word formation processes. Their study also considers new words as being coined over time due to the creativity of language and productivity. Their findings show that some neologisms conform to word formation rules, while others are created by ‘pseudo-word formation processes. The present study focuses on morphology, which is understood as the word formation process in language. Word formation cannot occur in isolation but must adhere to word formation rules.

The advent of digital communication technologies, such as social media platforms, instant messaging, and email, has revolutionised how people interact and exchange information, facilitating real-time conversations and leading to a need for concise and efficient language use (Baron, 2008). Technological advancements often introduce new concepts and ideas that require linguistic expression. Crystal (2008) notes that language users creatively form neologisms to describe these emerging technologies and their associated phenomena. One key aspect of the relationship between technology and word formation in social media is the speed at which new words and phrases can spread (Baron, 2008). Social media platforms allow users to share content with a global audience in real time, meaning new words and phrases can quickly become part of the online lexicon. The current study is modelled on the properties of language creativity and arbitrariness to explain the morphology of abbreviated neologisms used by KOX.

Another study by Deumert et al. (2019) discusses how digital media, especially mobile communication, has created new opportunities for online visibility and expression of African languages. However, linguistic repertoires often appear as mobile and fragmented resources, including phrases, words, or expressions, rather than as bounded entities with names like Kiswahili



or isiXhosa. It provides examples of how Kenyans on X (KOX) use hashtags like #KOX and #Someonetellcnn to engage in political discussions and respond to misrepresentations of African realities. While these hashtags typically utilise English to reach an international audience, Kiswahili and other languages become more visible when discussing local topics. This illustrates how Kenyans on social media are employing abbreviated neologisms and multilingual writing practices to express themselves and engage with political and social issues. The study offers a useful framework for analysing the morphological processes behind these new linguistic forms.

Many researchers have conducted studies on neologisms, such as Rundell (2013), who analyses how social media influences the formation and integration of new words into the English language. Another aspect he examines is the role of user-generated content in creating social media neologisms. Rundell's (2013) study describes the various forms of user participation in lexicographic projects, which include the wiki approach, user-generated content (UGC), and crowdsourcing. He explores how dictionaries like Urban Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary encourage submissions of neologisms from their users and how these words are integrated into the English language.

According to Mworira (2015), social media platforms enable users to create and share content, including new words and phrases. She further states that this has led to the creation of numerous neologisms specific to certain platforms or communities, such as "tweet" and "retweet" on Twitter. Mworira (ibid) has studied English neologisms in Kenyan social media, aiming to investigate factors that contribute to the production and usage of neologisms in SNS and to determine the effectiveness of neologisms in communication. Mworira's (ibid) study, which focused on neologisms in social media within the Kenyan context, argues that the word formation processes employed in creating neologisms on social media include derivation, compounding, semantic transfers, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations, and graphological deviation.

Onyedum's (2012) study analyses 70 neologisms on social media drawn from the following SNS: Facebook, Myspace, Messenger, Twitter, Yahoo, YouTube, and Blackberry Messenger. From this study, 70 neologisms were formed through five morphological processes: blending, compounding, affixation, semantic extension, and coinage. The researcher also paid close attention to the contextual factors contributing to these linguistic innovations' emergence and adaptation. One of the study's key findings was the prevalence of abbreviations, acronyms, and hashtags as prominent forms of social media neologisms. These shortened and compact expressions serve as linguistic shortcuts to convey information efficiently in the fast-paced world of digital communication. Onyedum's research also highlights the role of social and cultural factors in shaping social media neologisms. Onyedum (ibid) emphasises the dynamic nature of language and how social media platforms have become incubators for linguistic creativity. The study sheds light on the evolving communication landscape in the digital age, where social media neologisms reflect the rapid adaptation of language to technological advancements and shifting societal trends. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of internet memes and viral content in spreading neologisms across various social media platforms.

The study differs from the study above in that it will not focus on memes but instead examines abbreviated neologisms and the complex, multifaceted relationship between technology and word formation in social media. It explores how new words and phrases emerge rapidly and reflect the unique characteristics of these platforms and the communities that use them.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative analysis to explore the morphological characteristics of abbreviated neologisms among Kenyan X users. A purposive sampling method was utilised, adhering to the principles set forth by Creswell (2014), which advocate the intentional selection of participants with



specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. This approach was instrumental in identifying posts on X that featured the phenomenon of interest, namely, abbreviated neologisms. The sampling process involved a preliminary examination of X, using hashtags, keywords, and user profiles to identify users who exemplify the linguistic phenomena under investigation. This targeted selection process aimed to assemble a participant pool that reflects the diverse linguistic behaviours on X, facilitating an in-depth exploration of neologism usage among KOX. The researcher could distinguish whether a user was Kenyan based on their X profile, identifying factors such as a Kenyan flag or a Kenyan name in their username. However, the researcher acknowledges that having a Kenyan name does not necessarily confirm Kenyan citizenship or residency. To address this, the study incorporated additional screening criteria by analysing the content of tweets for references to Kenyan contexts, such as cultural, social, or political themes. This was then cross-referenced with other Kenyan users. While this approach enhances the likelihood of identifying Kenyan users, the study recognises the limitation that some individuals with Kenyan names may not reside in Kenya. The abbreviated neologisms were collected over three months between November 2023 and January 2024. These neologisms were extracted from a variety of tweets by KOX, captured through screenshots. These words represented a diverse array of linguistic expressions within this specific online community.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted. A detailed interview guide was developed, comprising open-ended questions designed to explore participants' understanding and usage of abbreviated neologisms. Questions were structured to elicit responses about their usage and meanings of abbreviated neologisms. To ensure a representative sample, 30 participants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria, including the frequency of their use of abbreviated neologisms, diversity in demographic backgrounds (such as age, gender, and education level), and engagement level on X. This sampling method ensured that the participants were regular users and engaged with the platform, providing a relevant cross-section for the study. With participants' consent, interviews were recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and subsequent analysis. The selection of participants was based on criteria such as frequency of use, demographic diversity, and engagement levels on the platform. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and focused on their perceived meanings and connotations of the collected abbreviated neologisms. Detailed notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual nuances contributing to the interpretation of linguistic phenomena. The interview method proved instrumental in uncovering the morphological intricacies and sociolinguistic dimensions of the use of abbreviated neologisms. Insights gained from participants' narratives enriched the understanding of how these linguistic phenomena contribute to the dynamic evolution of language in digital contexts.

The data collection thus involved actively engaging with X users, following relevant conversations and trends, and observing the social dynamics and interactions surrounding the abbreviated neologisms. The abbreviated neologisms included in the study were selected based on their prevalence and relevance within the Kenyan X discourse. Priority was given to those words that were used frequently and held cultural significance within the online community, ensuring the representation of a diverse range of linguistic phenomena.

## **Results**

This section provides an overview of the demographic information of the participants whose posts on X contributed to the linguistic data for the study, as well as the findings of the study. A total of 30 participants were selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

### ***Age Distribution***

The participants were drawn from a range of age groups as shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Age distribution of x users

Age Group	Number of Participants	Percentage
18-24	8	26.7%
25-34	12	40.0%
35-44	7	23.3%
45-54	2	6.7%
55+	1	3.3%

As seen in Table 1, the data indicates that the majority of participants were between 18 and 34 years old, accounting for 66.7%, suggesting that young adults are more likely to use abbreviated neologisms on X. This is in line with Lenhart (2009) who states that it is the youth who make up three quarters of the adult users of social networking sites. The gender distribution of the participants was as follows:

Male: 16 participants (53.3%)

Female: 14 participants (46.6%)

The gender distribution shows a relatively balanced representation with a slightly higher proportion of male participants.

Participants were also categorised based on their frequency of X usage.

Table 2: Participants' Usage Frequency of X Platform

Usage Frequency	Number of Participants	Percentage
Daily	22	73.3%
Weekly	6	20.0%
Monthly	2	6.7%

As shown in Table 2, it is clear that most participants selected for this study are frequent users of X, with 22% logging in on a daily basis, which is equivalent to 73.3%. The high percentage of daily users suggests that the sample primarily consists of active X users who are likely familiar with and use abbreviated neologisms.

The bio data provides a comprehensive overview of the participants' demographics, which will be crucial in analysing the patterns and trends in the use of abbreviated neologisms by Kenyans on X. The subsequent sections will delve into the specific findings related to the morphological analysis of these neologisms.

### Morphological Processes in forming Abbreviated Neologisms

Morphological analysis is a crucial component of linguistic research, particularly in the study of abbreviated neologisms in contemporary language usage (Barasa, 2023). A total of 147 abbreviated neologisms were identified from a corpus of tweets collected over a three-month period using a purposive sampling strategy. The dataset consisted of publicly available tweets that demonstrated high engagement and frequency of abbreviated language use. The analysis of these neologisms was informed by data drawn directly from the corpus of tweets, supported by participant observation and responses from semi-structured interviews with 30 active users of X. These sources provided contextual evidence that aided in identifying and categorising the morphological processes employed. The study explored abbreviated neologisms within the social media discourses of KOX. The findings reveal a significant reliance on initialisms, clippings, and contractions, underscoring a linguistic economy driven by the need for concise communication.



### Initialism

Initialism is an abbreviation formed from other words' initial letters and pronounced as a word (Saleh, 2019). This process is shown in the example below;

#### Example 1

Tulikuwa colonized hadi akili, hatufikirii...Our chefs, baristas are no longer creative?? Or we don't have professionals anymore, *SMH!* (X, 2023).

In the tweet, "SMH," which is formed through the process of initialism, stands for "shaking my head." This abbreviation is commonly used in digital communication to express disapproval, disappointment, or disbelief. In this context, "SMH" conveys the author's frustration with what they perceive as a decline in creativity and professionalism among chefs and baristas in the hospitality industry in Kenya. The use of "SMH" effectively communicates the author's emotional response, adding a layer of non-verbal expression to the text.

#### Example 2

Ain't got no kids but *IMO* it's expensive coz you *gotta* have your finances in order and you also *gotta* make sure you give your kids enough attention. Basically, it's all about being ready to have kids. (X, 2023).

In example 2, the tweet expresses their perspective on the financial and emotional readiness required for raising children. Here, the initial letters of each word in the phrase create the neologism "IMO," meaning 'in my opinion.' In other cases, it can be written as "IMHO" to mean 'In my humble opinion.' This is a common practice in digital communication to save space and convey meaning clearly and concisely. This encompasses both grammatical and lexical words. Notably, the entire tweet is written in English without any code-switching. This choice likely reflects the awareness of X users that the platform is public and accessible to a broad audience, some of whom may not understand Kiswahili or Sheng. This increases the likelihood that many readers will understand the message. Additionally, it's worth noting that multiple abbreviated neologisms can be used within a single tweet to reduce the number of characters. This practice allows users to share more information within the platform's character limits, demonstrating the efficiency and adaptability of language in digital communication.

### Clipping

Bauer (2003) defines clipping as a process whereby a lexeme is shortened while retaining the same meaning and still being a member of the same form class.

#### Example 3

I've gone to art café gastro bar and *idk* if I'm overthinking but I swear the *yt* people were the only ones being served. I was left there to look at the artwork. Anyway, let me just leave and go where I'm wanted because it's not like the place was full at all (X, 2023).

Example 3 shows how clippings are utilised on X. In this case, the user has used 'yt' to refer to people of the white race, complaining about how they receive preferential treatment compared to Kenyans like himself. Similarly, "CU" for "See You" and "TYM" for "Time" reflect a linguistic economy, optimising character usage while retaining the semantic core of the expressions.

### Contraction

Contractions, which merge elements of multiple words to form a condensed expression, symbolise the informal, conversational style that pervades social media discourse, as noted by Shahlee and Ahmad (2022). Examples such as "B4" (before), "Imma" (I am going to), and "Lemme" (let me) not only



demonstrate the efficiency of language on platforms like Twitter but also reflect a deeper, colloquial intimacy that users bring into the digital space. These forms mimic spoken language, thus reducing the distance between written and oral communication and fostering a sense of immediacy and familiarity among users.

#### Example 4

Ngl, peer pressure *ya* twitter *imefanya y'all* her fans, lmao. (X, 2024)

Contractions like "Wanna" (want to) and "Y'all" (you all) underscores the versatility of these linguistic forms in expressing desires, plans, or collective identity within tweets.

Distribution of Neologism Types among Kenyans on Twitter

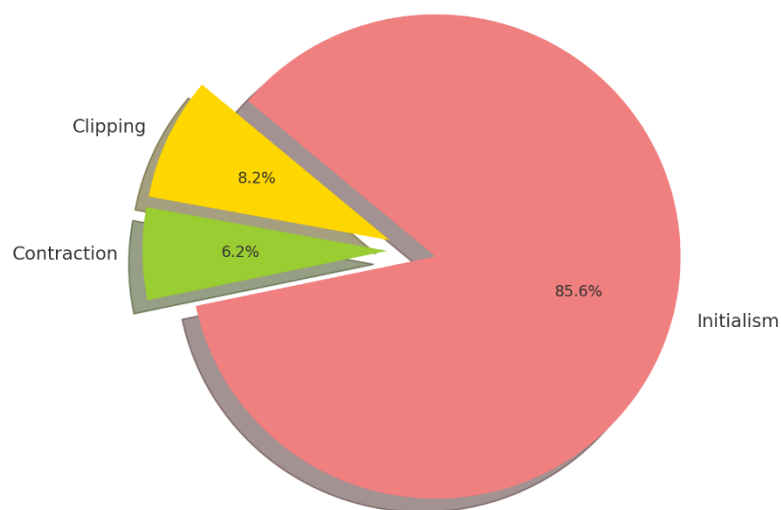


Figure 1: Distribution of Neologism Types among Kenyans on Twitter

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of neologism types among Kenyans on X based on the collected data. This illustration offers a clear and immediate understanding of how different types of abbreviated neologisms are employed within this digital community. The data on abbreviated neologisms among Kenyans on X (KOX) reveals a predominance of initialism, which accounts for 83.3% of the observed instances. This notable percentage highlights the preference for initialism as the most common morphological process.

In contrast, other forms of abbreviated neologisms, such as clipping and contraction, make up much smaller portions of the observed data. Specifically, clipping represents 8% of the neologisms, while contraction accounts for 6%. These smaller percentages indicate that, while these methods of abbreviation are present within the KOX community, they are far less prevalent compared to initialisms.



## **The Interplay between Technology and Word Formation Caused by Using Abbreviated Neologisms by KOX**

The digital landscape, epitomized by platforms like X, offers unique affordances that significantly shape linguistic behavior. Despite recent expansions, the platform's inherent character limit encourages users to convey messages succinctly. This technological constraint has fostered an environment where brevity is not just a convenience but a necessity. The predominant use of initialisms (83.3%) among KOX directly responds to this constraint, enabling users to compress complex messages into digestible, easily shareable forms. Initialisms serve the dual purpose of adhering to the platform's brevity norms and facilitating rapid communication, which is essential in the fast-paced realm of social media.

Moreover, the platform's real-time nature demands that communication be brief and immediate. This urgency has cultivated a preference for linguistic forms that can be quickly typed, understood, and responded to. By their very design, initialisms meet these criteria, offering a streamlined mode of communication that aligns with the temporal demands of digital discourse. Clipping and contraction, while less prevalent, also reflect this trend towards linguistic economisation, demonstrating users' inventive responses to the constraints and opportunities presented by the digital medium.

The technological environment of X acts as a catalyst for linguistic innovation, prompting users to develop and adopt abbreviated neologisms. These forms are not merely practical solutions to the limitations of digital communication but also reflect the creative potential of language to adapt and evolve in response to new communicative contexts. The prevalence of these abbreviated forms among KOX underscores a sophisticated engagement with the platform's affordances, balancing linguistic economy and efficiency with the need for expressive and meaningful communication.

Moreover, the adoption and innovation of abbreviated neologisms among KOX also illuminate the complex interplay between language, technology, and social identity. These linguistic practices do more than facilitate efficient communication; they serve as markers of identity, signalling membership within the digital community of Kenyans on X. The use of specific initialisms, clippings, and contractions becomes a means of asserting a collective identity, differentiating in-group members from the broader digital populace. This linguistic signalling is particularly significant in global digital cultures, where users navigate vast and diverse communicative landscapes. A similar sentiment is highlighted in the study by Saleh (2021), whose study's findings support the thesis that linguistic change and creativity is a universal property of language, which reflects global societal changes.

Moreover, user agency is central to this process. KOX users actively participate in creating and disseminating abbreviated neologisms, leveraging the technological features of Twitter to innovate and express communal identities. This agency reflects a broader trend in digital culture, where users are not passive consumers of technology but rather active co-creators of digital content and practices. Similar conclusions were reached in the study by Jimaima and Nkhata (2020), who assert that social actors productively exploit virtual space, resulting in the ubiquitous spread of new lexical creations. The applicability of word formation processes on certain bases makes morphology productive and language in general.

The dynamic interaction between users and the platform illustrates the reciprocal nature of technological and linguistic evolution, with each influencing and being influenced by the other.

### **Conclusion**

The study investigated the interaction between technology and the morphological evolution of language, particularly regarding the abbreviated neologisms used by KOX. The findings indicate that



the technological affordances of X, including character limits, the speed of communication, and the platform's global reach, significantly influence linguistic practices.

These constraints have driven KOX users to develop a lexicon of abbreviated neologisms that facilitates quick, efficient communication while fostering a sense of community and shared identity. The study found that the character limits imposed by X encourage the use of shorter forms, such as initialisms, clippings, and contractions, which allow users to maximise the amount of information conveyed within a limited space. Additionally, the speed of communication on X requires rapid exchanges, leading to the adoption of forms that are easy to produce and understand.

Moreover, the global reach of X has contributed to the rapid dissemination and normalization of these linguistic innovations across the platform, illustrating how digital technologies can accelerate language evolution. The study suggests that the abbreviated neologisms prevalent among KOX users are not merely practical responses to technological constraints but are also deeply embedded in socio-linguistic practices, reflecting the users' adaptation to a new communicative environment shaped by technology.

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