# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the following topics background of the study, problems of the study, objectives of the study, scope and limitation, significances of the study, definition of the key terms, and research method which includes research design, research subject, data source, research instrument, data collection, and data analysis.

## A. Background of Research

Language is an essential means through which people interact with one another and express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas. In recent decades, the rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of human communication, giving rise to new linguistic phenomena that have attracted increasing scholarly attention.[1] According to the Global Overview Report by DataReportal, more than 5.17 billion people worldwide are active social media users, representing approximately 63.7% of the global population a figure that continues to grow annually.[2] This massive digital engagement has profoundly influenced language use, accelerating the creation, spread, and adoption of new words and expressions at an unprecedented rate. The impact is particularly visible among younger generations, who are not only consumers but also active creators of digital language. Internet-mediated communication has brought about a “linguistic

[1] Holmes, Janet. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. 4th ed. London: Routledge, 2013.
[2] DataReportal. Digital 2024: Global Overview Report. 2024. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report.

revolution," fundamentally altering vocabulary, grammar, and communicative norms.[3] Understanding how language evolves within digital platforms is, therefore, not merely a linguistic concern but a critical area of inquiry for sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and communication studies alike.

Within the broader field of linguistics, morphology the systematic study of word structure and word formation provides the most direct framework for analyzing how new words emerge and circulate. Morphology examines the internal composition of words and the processes through which new lexical items are created, such as affixation, compounding, blending, clipping, acronym formation, and borrowing.[4] Central to this study is the concept of the morpheme, the smallest meaningful unit of language, which serves as the building block of word formation. In the digital context, the relationship between morphological processes and social media language is particularly productive: users constantly coin, adapt, and repurpose linguistic forms to achieve brevity, creativity, and social belonging. Trending words on platforms such as TikTok exemplify this dynamic, as they often result from multiple overlapping morphological processes. Yule's framework of word formation processes offers a systematic and widely-applied approach for classifying and analyzing these formations, making it an appropriate theoretical lens for the present study.

---

[3] David Crystal, Language and the Internet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[4] George Yule, The Study of Language, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

In real communicative practice, TikTok stands as one of the most significant sites of contemporary language innovation. Launched globally in 2018 and reaching over 2 billion monthly active users by 2026, TikTok has become a primary platform through which linguistic trends are initiated, amplified, and disseminated across cultural and national boundaries.[5] The platform's algorithmic content distribution ensures that certain words, phrases, and expressions gain viral visibility within hours, rapidly entering the everyday vocabulary of millions of users worldwide. Expressions such as "rizz," "delulu," "cap" and "aura farming" all of which emerged or gained prominence through TikTok between 2024 and 2025 illustrate how the platform functions as a laboratory of linguistic creativity. These trending words frequently reflect social commentary, youth culture, humor, and identity expression, and their rapid diffusion demonstrates the extent to which digital platforms now shape the trajectory of language change in real time.

Several previous studies have examined word formation and language development within digital communication contexts, providing a valuable foundation for the present research. Yardımcı examined word formation in TikTok content and found that social media users actively create neologisms to improve communication efficiency, often departing from traditional grammatical conventions.[6] Sabir analyzed English neologisms used by Iraqi Kurdish Facebook users and identified various morphological processes

[5] Resourcera Editorial Team, "TikTok Statistics 2025: Global Users, Data, Trends & More" (Resourcera, 2025), https://resourcera.com/data/social/tiktok-statistics/.

[6] Aylin Yardımcı, "Dilbilim Dergisi," no. 45 (2025): 1–11.

influenced by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors.[7] Similarly, Blaženović studied English word formation on the internet and reported that abbreviations, clippings, and compounds are highly productive in online communication.[8] Studies by Yanti and Rinche focused on word formation in viral words across Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, revealing that blending and abbreviations are favored due to their effectiveness in digital interaction.[9][10] However, despite these contributions, a significant research gap remains: existing studies have largely focused on identifying types of word formation in social media language without systematically examining which processes are dominant, how multiple processes interact within single lexical items, or why certain formations are preferred over others in the TikTok environment. Furthermore, most prior research does not address the most recent wave of TikTok trending words from 2024 to 2025, leaving a temporal gap that this study seeks to address.

The present study is motivated by both theoretical and practical imperatives. Theoretically, a systematic morphological analysis of TikTok trending words can contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital communication environments shape word formation patterns and whether established morphological frameworks such as Yule's adequately account for

[7] Paiman Hama and Salih Sabir, "The Use of English Neologisms in Social Media : A Case of Facebook Language in Iraqi Kurdistan" 6, no. April (2022): 3186–3211.

[8] Banja Luka, "English Word Formation on the Internet" 3 (2024): 33–41, https://doi.org/10.35120/sciencej0301033b.

[9] Cita Hikmah Yanti and Febriana Miftahul Barokah, "Word Formation Process of New Words on Popular Social Media Platforms," 2025, 50–63.

[10] Rosmilinda Rinche, I Nyoman Udayana, and Made Detriasmita Saientisna, "An Analysis of New Word Found on Twitter Using the Process of Word-Formation" 2, no. 5 (2024).

the creativity observed in social media language. The researcher specifically focuses on trending words that emerged during 2024–2025 because this period represents a significant milestone in digital communication. In 2024, TikTok surpassed two billion global users, marking its transition into a platform of global mass adoption where linguistic innovations spread rapidly across diverse communities. Furthermore, the selection of brain rot as the Oxford Word of the Year 2024 demonstrates the increasing influence of social media language on contemporary English and highlights the growing academic relevance of internet-generated vocabulary.[11] Practically, the findings of this research are expected to benefit English language educators, curriculum designers, and lexicographers who increasingly encounter digital vocabulary in contemporary language use. If the morphological patterns underlying trending words remain unexamined, both learners and educators may misunderstand the structural logic of an important portion of present-day English vocabulary. Conversely, a systematic analysis of these patterns can support the development of authentic teaching materials, facilitate the instruction of word formation processes in meaningful contexts, and contribute to documenting language change in the digital era.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to identify and analyze the word formation processes found in TikTok trending words that circulated widely during the period 2024–2025. The primary variables under

[11] Oxford University Press, "'Brain Rot' Named Oxford Word of the Year 2024" (Oxford University Press, 2024), https://corp.oup.com/news/brain-rot-named-oxford-word-of-the-year-2024/.

investigation are the morphological processes including but not limited to compounding, blending, clipping, acronym formation, affixation, and borrowing and the trending words themselves serve as the object of analysis. By applying Yule's theoretical framework, this research seeks to classify the types of word formation processes present in the selected data, determine which processes are most dominant, and examine whether combinations of processes are characteristic of TikTok language. The expected outcomes of this study include a comprehensive taxonomy of word formation patterns in recent TikTok trending vocabulary, an evidence-based account of morphological dominance and interaction in digital language, and a contribution to the growing body of research on the relationship between social media and linguistic innovation.

## B. Research Questions

From the background above, the researcher compiled the formulation of the research problem as follows:

1. What trending words are used by Gen Z on TikTok during 2024–2025?
2. What types of word formation processes are found in trending words used by gen Z during 2024–2025?
3. Which word formation process is most frequently used in the formation of trending words during 2024–2025?

## C. Research Objectives

Based on the research problems above, the researcher compiled the objectives of the research as follows:

1. To identify the trending words used during 2024-2025
2. To identify the types of word formation processes used in trending words during 2024–2025.
3. To determine the most dominant word formation process found in trending words of 2024–2025.

## D. Significance of Research

1. Theoritically

   The finding of this research underscore the theoretical importance of semantic shift as a co-occurring phenomenon in word formation, particularly in digital contexts. By applying Yule's theory of word formation processes, this study helps explain how trending words are formed and developed in contemporary society, particularly through digital communication. This research also shows that language is dynamic and continuously develops as a response to social and cultural changes.

2. Practically

   For English language teachers and educators, the findings of this study highlight the importance of acknowledging and incorporating awareness of digital language variation into language instruction. This study can provide authentic materials that can help students learn morphology in a more interesting and meaningful way. In addition, this research may help

language users become more aware of how trending words are formed and used in daily communication.

3. For Further Study

This study offers a methodological model for analyzing language data collected from social media platforms, demonstrating the feasibility of applying classical morphological frameworks to informal digital corpora. This study is expected to be a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in morphology, language change, or language use in digital media. The findings of this research can also support further studies related to the development of language and the influence of social media on language use.

## E. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study focuses on the analysis of English trending words that emerged and were widely used during the period of 2024–2025. The data are taken from digital communication, particularly trending words circulating on social media platform that is TikTok. This research specifically examines the word formation processes of these trending words by applying Yule's theory of word formation processes as the main theoretical framework.

The weaknesses of this study mainly relate to methodological and analytical aspects. First, the data selection process involves potential subjectivity, as the researcher manually selected 49 trend words from TikTok without using a fully standardized or corpus-based method, which may affect objectivity and reproducibility. Second, the validation of the "trend" status is

limited, since tools such as Google Trends measure search interest rather than actual usage on TikTok, making the classification of trending words partly dependent on observation. Third, the study relies on a single analytical framework, namely George Yule's word formation theory, which may not fully capture complex or hybrid word formation processes in digital language, potentially leading to oversimplification. Finally, the analysis may appear descriptive if patterns such as dominant processes and tendencies are not explicitly emphasized. However, these weaknesses do not undermine the main objective of the study, as it still provides a systematic classification of word formation processes in contemporary TikTok trend words.

## F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Word Formation

   Word formation refers to the processes through which new lexical items are created in a language or existing words are modified to produce new forms. Bauer explains that word formation involves systematic morphological mechanisms such as compounding, derivation, blending, clipping, borrowing, and acronyms, which enable languages to expand their vocabulary and adapt to communicative needs.

2. Trending Words

   Trending words are words or expressions that spread quickly and gain widespread use through digital communication, especially on social media platforms. According to Tagliamonte and Denis, the rapid circulation of such words is driven by online interaction, social networking, and shared

cultural practices, making trending words a reflection of contemporary language change in digital environments.

3. Morphological Analysis

Morphological analysis is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the internal structure of words and the processes by which words are formed. According to George Yule, morphology is the study of word formation, including how words are created through processes such as derivation, compounding, blending, clipping, and acronyms. This means that morphological analysis examines how smaller units of meaning, called morphemes, combine to form new words.