

A Study of Neologisms and Semantic Shifts in Queer Discourse: The Influence of Drag Lexicon in RuPaul's Drag Race on Audience Language Practices in the Comments

Natcha Namkhang¹, Pimlada Raitongrunroj¹, Prakaifa Pongsatatkij¹,
Wachira Zeingchong¹, Kasidit Supan^{1*}

Abstract

Language is a tool for communication and a medium that reflects creativity, identity, and community belonging. In the queer community, many specialized words have emerged, and media such as *RuPaul's Drag Race* play a crucial role in spreading them to wider society. This study examines queer lexicons in three dimensions: neologisms, semantic shifts, and polarity. The data come from *RuPaul's Drag Race* Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16 (comprising 53 episodes), chosen to compare the early and contemporary periods. The analysis combines quantitative methods, focusing on word frequency, with qualitative discourse analysis. The results reveal 176 queer lexicons: 35 neologisms from the early period and 60 from the contemporary period, as well as 30 semantic shifts from the early period and 51 from the contemporary period. The findings also show that positive polarity dominates in both periods, while negative polarity appears more often in the contemporary period but still less than positive polarity. These outcomes highlight the dynamic nature of queer language, which reflects identity, creativity, and the influence of mainstream media. The study also uses audience comments as supporting evidence of the spreading of queer language.

Keywords: Drag, Neologisms, Semantic Shifts, Polarity

Received 9 November 2025; Received in revised form 21 December 2025; Accepted 27 January 2026

* Corresponding Author
E-mail: kasidit.supa@ku.ac.th
¹ Kasetsart University, Thailand

1. Introduction

Nowadays, language is a significant tool to communicate with people around the world. In addition, language has always changed over time. In drag culture, performers often develop innovative language that they use to identify and categorize themselves; there is a uniqueness in their language. The linguistic innovations that appear also reflect the cultural experiences of queer individuals. In sociolinguistics (Wardaugh, 2005, 2006), the language used in a specific social group or situation is referred to as a register. Registers show the identity and characteristics of their users. This perspective is supported by Simmons (2014), who demonstrates that drag queens on RuPaul's Drag Race construct a "speech code" that operates not only as a register, but also as a form of performance that encourages community belonging and challenges mainstream linguistic norms.

The important group of people who have a significant impact on social media is the LGBT and drag community. In this study, the researchers focus on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a reality show that has been influential since 2009. The show features language from the LGBT community that reflects the identity of drag culture. The linguistic innovations examined in this research, which collected neologism patterns and semantic shifts that appear in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, demonstrate how linguistics has evolved. This process of linguistic innovation reflects Zimman's (2014) findings, which show how trans men use language to reshape discourse about their bodies, emphasizing that queer and trans speakers not only reflect identity through language but also construct and negotiate it. Thus, LGBT and drag communities play a crucial role in changing or generating new linguistic forms.

The semantic shifts and neologism within the LGBT and drag community can be found in the selected seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Neologism is a newly formed word, expression, and a new meaning assigned to an existing word that has recently become widespread in use to express a new concept or approach to a topic. It can arise deliberately or naturally from popular culture and blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage. Once a neologism becomes established in dictionaries, it is no longer considered a neologism but part of the standard language. Therefore, the creation of new words reflects the dynamic and adaptable nature of language as it continuously interacts with society and technology. This ongoing process ensures that language remains relevant and capable of meeting contemporary communication needs.

Drag communities often create new words to describe their identities, experiences, and self-expression. For example, the word "Hunty" was changed from the original word "Honney," which means "close friend." On the other hand, semantic shift refers to a change in meaning in which an original word is used in a new context and takes on a different meaning from its original one. The language of the drag community clearly represents this kind of semantic shift. For example, the word "shade," originally meaning "shade," is used informally

to mean playful sarcasm or irony. The word “slay,” originally meaning “kill” or “destroy,” is transformed into a compliment for uniqueness, beauty, or talent. Therefore, RuPaul's Drag Race has become an important platform for sharing both neologisms and semantic shifts with the wider community. These terms are being spread across digital and social media platforms.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and categorize the distribution of neologisms and investigate how many semantic shifts occur in the selected seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. This study also focuses on the influence of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and its adaptation by viewers through social media. Moreover, the study aims to identify the linguistic functions and polarity of these words to examine how *RuPaul's Drag Race* influences audience language practices in the comments.

Research questions

1. How are neologisms distributed through different word-formation processes?
2. How many words have undergone semantic shifts?
3. Which polarity of the neologisms and semantic shifts occurs more often?

2. Literature review

2.1 What is Neologism and Semantic Shift?

The first process of creating new words through various processes is called neologism. Mariano et al. (2024) explain that the word “neologism” has Greek roots, where “neo” means “new” and “logos” means “speech or utterance.” Therefore, “neologism” means a new term or utterance. In general, neologisms refer to new words that have not yet been entered into the dictionary or words that are still in the process of lexicalization. This phenomenon occurs frequently in the LGBT community through various processes, such as the work of Harijanto and Dimara (2023), which includes blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage. In addition, Harijanto and Dimara (2023) point out that the “word formation process” reflects identity construction and community affirmation.

In addition, there is also another process by which words remain the same, but their meanings change, as Hamilton et al. (2016) stated: semantic change or semantic shift, which refers to any change in the meaning of a word that occurs over time. Moreover, Mariano et al. (2024) explain that semantic shift occurs because words are repeatedly used in different contexts, under different situations, and with diverse intentions. These varying intentions are shared within the speech community and gradually become conventionalized in usage, which ultimately leads to semantic shifts.

In conclusion, neologism and semantic shift are important mechanisms that keep language moving and adapting. Both processes add to the vocabulary and show linguistic creativity as well as the building of community identity. Harijanto and Dimara (2023) state that neologism, semantic shift, and language use mark and affirm the identity of the queer

community. This produces what is known as queer language, which members use to show their existence and to express knowledge, views, identity, and imagination (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023).

2.2 What is Polarity?

Firstly, as Wilson, Wiebe, and Hoffmann (2005) explain, positive polarity is used to indicate positive emotions, evaluations, and stances. For example, (I'm happy), (Great idea!), and (She supports the bill) are all subjective expressions that reflect positive polarity. Building on this idea of positivity in language use, Harijanto and Dimara (2023) show that queer TikTok users often create and spread new words such as “slay,” “werk,” and “yaaas queen!” to express pride and foster a sense of community participation

Secondly, Wilson et al. (2005) also noted that negative polarity in subjective expressions applies to those that convey negative feelings and disapproving assessments. For example, (I'm sad), (Bad idea!), Furthermore, words like “shade” and “read” reflect the negative nature of criticism and teasing yet remain within the framework of entertainment and community bonding (Simmons, 2014; Hall, 2019).

Thirdly, as also mentioned by Wilson et al. (2005), the neutral polarity applies to subjective expressions that either convey alternative forms of subjectivity, such as speculation, or that lack any clear positive or negative polarity. For example, the formal term “homosexual” or a playful coinage like “Apololie” does not carry an explicitly positive or negative meaning but instead highlights belonging to the group or reflects aspects of drag culture (Simmons, 2014).

In summary, the three types of polarity—positive, negative, and neutral—not only classify subjective expressions but also demonstrate how linguistic choices convey emotions, evaluations, and stances. They also emphasize the symbolic role of language in the formation of identity, the support of community ties, and the definition of social interaction, especially within LGBT communities, where creative language use acts as a sign of pride, resistance, and unity.

2.3 The Language Use in LGBT Community

In the present time, language plays an important role in communication to express identity and social belonging within the LGBT community. The use of language in the LGBT community usually reflects identity, resistance, and creativity, especially in gay or drag culture. They often use distinctive words, vocabulary, speech patterns, and style to create an in-group linguistic culture. For example, words such as tea (meaning gossip or truth), shade (a subtle insult), and read (a humorous but sharp critique), as well as performative terms like werk, slay, and queen, have become emblematic of queer linguistic expression. These terms, often humorous or exaggerated in delivery, carry deeper cultural vitality as symbols of resistance, community, and pride. This point is supported by Simmons (2014), who found that

the speech practice of drag queens, for instance, playful exaggeration and performance of speech styles, refers to markers of identity and in-group belonging through the drag community.

Moreover, language use in LGBT communities is used to resist norms and create new ways of expression. It reflects the fluidity of gender and sexuality. Another point beyond communication, it helps build a sense of community and belonging, supporting each other, which allows members to connect and express their identities. Moreover, evidence from Zimman (2014) shows how trans men reconstruct language around gendered bodies and sexuality, which links speech to identity and empowerment. These linguistic practices strengthen bonds within the community and influence broader social and cultural conversations, which shows how language can be both a tool for empowerment and social change.

2.4 Language Change in the LGBT Community

Language in the LGBT community is in a constant state of change in response to social, cultural, and media contexts. For example, “Queer” was used in a derogatory manner, but now this word is used to present identity affirmation, diversity, and a sense of proud community (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023; Luhulima et al., 2023). This creation of a new meaning also reflects the potential of language as a “political tool” that challenges cultural domination and allows marginalized communities to define the framework of meaning for the words they use to describe themselves.

Furthermore, Zimman (2014) offers an analytical approach to the construction of body and gender meaning through language, pointing out that language plays a crucial role in accommodating queer individuals' experiences. In terms of both the assertion of the right to self-determination over one's own body and the challenge to the rigid framework that links gender to biology, such changes include the creation of new vocabulary that is not bound by a binary gender system and the promotion of gender-neutral language. In other words, language not only serves to reflect the reality of gender but also has the power to continuously produce and reshape the understanding of gender and the body.

In summary, linguistic change within the LGBT community reflects a profound relationship between language, identity, and social change, both through the creation of new words, the reshaping of word meanings, and the development of language that accommodates gender diversity, as well as the transformation of language into a space for identity negotiation and a platform for marginalized groups to express themselves and gain greater acceptance in mainstream society. (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023; Luhulima et al., 2023).

2.5 The Influence of *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Since 2009, *RuPaul's Drag Race* has become a highly influential television show in the language and culture of the gay community, particularly among drag queens, who express themselves linguistically with distinctive traits such as overacting speech, slang, wordplay, and technical terms such as “shade,” “read,” “sickening,” and “realness,” which, as Simmons (2014) analyzes, have become a “speech code” for drag queens to express their identities and, at the same time, become part of popular culture that has spread to a wider audience. These words not only serve as communicative terms but also as symbolic tools that reflect the creative, satirical, and socially critical power of drag culture. The choice of these words is therefore significant. The choice of these words is significant, not only for entertainment but also for resistance against gender norms and sexuality norms that oppress diverse people.

In addition, the spread of this language goes beyond television shows and has expanded through digital platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok. Common examples include “Yaaas queen!”, “She came to slay!”, and “No tea, no shade.” These comments not only reflect popularity but also present identity and participation in LGBT culture (Harijanto & Dimara, 2023; Luhulima et al., 2023). Nevertheless, scholars caution that once these terms enter the mainstream, they may lose the social, political, and historical significance associated with their original communities (Luhulima et al., 2023). And in many cases, the language of the LGBT community has been used by users outside the community whether through parody or through semantic shifts, this demonstrates the dynamics of language as it is relocated into wider contexts of use.

In conclusion, *RuPaul's Drag Race* is not only an entertaining show, but it is also a very important media that has a great influence on the spread of the language and culture of the LGBT community. The show spread the language of the LGBT community, specifically the language that represents the identities and uniqueness of drag queens, which has gained popularity and spread rapidly across digital and social media. One important piece of evidence of the influence of this language is that ordinary viewers have incorporated vocabulary from the show in various comments.

2.6 Previous Studies

According to the research Harijanto and Dimara (2023) explored the use of Queer English in Dean Modah's TikTok videos by employing a sociolinguistic approach to examine how members of the queer community use English to express their identities. The study identified several types of word-formation processes including conversion, clipping, derivation, compounding, blending, and coinage, as well as different types of semantic shifts. However, this research has adopted the research procedures and word formation classifications from Harijanto and Dimara (2023) as its foundation.

Additionally, in the research by Mariano et al. (2024) study of neologisms and semantic shifts that have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which analyzes politically created terms through morphological and semantic analysis. This research study adopts the concept of semantic shift from Mariano et al. (2024) as a framework for discourse analysis to investigate the semantic shifts that occur within the queer language of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Moreover, this study not only focuses on identifying semantic shifts, but it also emphasizes the duration of the existence of words that occur from early to contemporary.

Furthermore, in the research by Wilson et al. (2005) study approaches to resolving the ambiguity of contextual polarity. In the first step, clue instances which words or phrases carrying emotional implications were classified as either Neutral or Polar. In the second step, the words identified as Polar were further categorized as positive, negative, both, or neutral. In this research study applies this concept as part of its analytical framework as well. Specifically, it begins by separating Neutral from Polar terms and then classifies the remaining Polar words into positive, negative, and neutral based on their actual usage contexts in *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Moreover, this study extends the analysis to examine polarity change between the early and contemporary stages to explore the evolution of word usage among the LGBT community.

In conclusion, the review of previous studies has clearly shown that neologism, semantic shift, and the use of polarity in communication all play crucial roles in expressing identity and reflecting the experiences of various communities whether in political contexts or within queer communities. These studies demonstrate that language is constantly changing and adapting to real-life contexts. In the present research applies these concepts to the study of language used by the LGBT community in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, not only examining what kinds of new words or semantic changes occur. But also analyzing how frequently these words appear, what factors contribute to their emergence, and how their polarity shifts from the early seasons to the present.

This study therefore highlights that Queer language is not merely a collection of entertaining expressions, but rather a linguistic and cultural force used to construct identity, build community, and spread into the wider society.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

In this research, the focus is on queer lexicons from *RuPaul's Drag Race* (Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16; 2009–2024) and their linguistic features. The analysis covers three dimensions: neologisms, semantic shifts, and polarity, with YouTube comments used as supporting evidence of diffusion and adoption. The conceptual framework views language as a cultural resource reflecting creativity, identity, and community. Neologisms are newly created words through blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, or coinage. Semantic shifts

involve transformations of meaning in early or contemporary contexts. Polarity reflects the evaluative orientation of words as positive, negative, or neutral depending on context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative interpretations. In the quantitative stage, the analysis focuses on calculating the frequency and polarity of neologisms, as well as identifying instances of semantic shifts and their functions in *RuPaul's Drag Race*. In the qualitative stage, the data are examined through discourse analysis, which interprets the distribution of neologisms (blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage) and compares their patterns. The data were collected from the reality competition program *RuPaul's Drag Race*, specifically from Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16, comprising a total of 53 episodes. These seasons were purposefully chosen to allow comparison between the early and contemporary periods of the show, recognizing how neologisms and semantic shifts have appeared and how the program continues to influence queer and drag-related language use.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this research comprises the linguistic data contained in *RuPaul's Drag Race*; the reality drag competition that has been broadcast for multiple seasons since 2009. The study focuses on LGBT language, specifically examining neologisms and their word-formation processes, the number of semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and the polarity of both neologisms and semantic shifts.

The sample consists of four seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*: Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16. Seasons 1 and 2 represent the early stage of the show; on the other hand, Seasons 15 and 16 represent the contemporary form. This long gap of time shows the comparison that the language has changed over time, especially in neologisms and semantic shifts.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument of this study is descriptive content analysis, designed to identify and categorize neologisms and semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race* and related viewer comments. The coding scheme records the word-formation processes of neologisms, including blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, and coinage. Polarity is determined by identifying the positive, negative, and neutral connotations of words according to their linguistic and situational use. The scheme allows for quantitative analysis, including the frequency of neologisms and semantic shifts, as well as calculation of polarity in both early and contemporary stages.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were collected from RuPaul's Drag Race Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16, which were watched on the WOW Presents Plus streaming platform, and to see how viewers are actually using these new words on YouTube. These seasons were chosen to compare the early and contemporary allowing for diachronic comparisons and the identification and categorization of the six types of word formation in neologism and semantic shifts over time

3.5 Data Analysis

This section describes the procedure used for analyzing the data in order to answer the research questions. The analysis consisted of five main stages which were designed to ensure both systematic examination and reliability of interpretation.

a. Data selection

The study selected *RuPaul's Drag Race* Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16, which represent the early and contemporary stages of the franchise. Episodes were viewed on the WOW Presents Plus platform, and audience comments were collected from YouTube.

b. Identifying neologisms and semantic shifts

After watching the selected episodes with transcription, the next step was to identify and extract utterances that contained neologisms and semantic shifts.

c. Categorization and coding

The identified neologisms and semantic shifts were coded using the coding scheme developed for this study. Each instance was classified according to (a) type (neologism or semantic shift), (b) word-formation process (blending, compounding, derivation, clipping, conversion, coinage), (c) polarity (positive, negative, or neutral). Contextual notes were also included to ensure that each occurrence was interpreted within its discourse environment.

d. Stage of comparison

The quantitative and qualitative data were compared between the early stage (Seasons 1 and 2) and the contemporary stage (Seasons 15 and 16) to identify the innovation and the linguistic change, including the frequency of neologisms, semantic shift, and polarity.

e. Summarizing the findings

The final stage of the analysis was to summarize both the quantitative and qualitative results. Audience comments were also analyzed as evidence of how neologisms and semantic shifts from *RuPaul's Drag Race* have been adopted and circulated by viewers. These summarized findings were then used to address the research questions.

4. Findings

This section aims to present the findings of the study based on linguistic analysis to answer the three questions stated in the research following.

4.1 To categorize the distribution of neologisms and identify their part of speech that occurs the most.

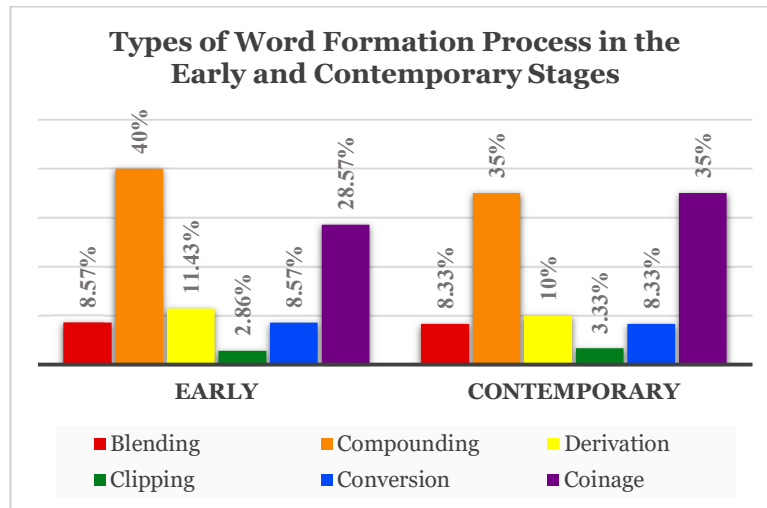


Diagram 4.1 percentage of word-formation processes in the early and contemporary stages

Diagram 4.1 shows the percentage of word-formation processes in the early and contemporary stages of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. In the early stage, compounding is the most frequently used process, with 40%, followed by coinage at 28.57%, and derivation at 11.43%. Blending and conversion both account for 8.57% each. The lowest percentage is clipping with only 2.86%. In the contemporary stage, compounding and coinage are equal at 35% each, followed by derivation at 10% and conversion at 8.33%. Blending is at 8.33% and clipping remains the lowest at 3.33%.

Table 4.1 types of word-formation processes in the early stage

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Blending	Condragtulations, Hunty and She-Mail	3	8.57%
2.	Compounding	Drag mother, Drama Queen, Eleganza Extravaganza, Fatass, Gaff in, Kitty girl, Lip-sync for your life, Maxi challenge, Pit crew, Read to filth, Snatch Game, Two piece and a biscuit, Volume Serving and Werkroom	14	40%
3.	Derivation	Fierceness, Gurl, Realness and Sickening	4	11.43%

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
4.	Clipping	Mug	1	2.86%
5.	Conversion	Read, Shade and Untuck	3	8.57%
6.	Coinage	Bam, BGB, Bitch Stole My Look, Body-ody-ody, C.U.N.T, Eleganza, Gentlemen, Start your engines, Sashay away, Shantay and Shanté, you stay	10	28.57%
Total			35	100%

Overall, the results show that *RuPaul's Drag Race* uses word formation mainly through compounding and coinage, which support creativity, humor, and identity construction. Less frequent types like clipping appear rarely because drag discourse prioritizes expressiveness over brevity. This reflects how drag performers use language not only to communicate but to perform, empower, and entertain.

Table 4.2 types of word-formation processes in contemporary stage

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Blending	Apololie, Condragulations, Hunty, Leotarded and Rusical	5	8.33%
2.	Compounding	Big girl, Country Realness, Death drop, Drag mother, Drama queen, Eleganza Extravaganza, Fierce jazzercise realness, Lip Sync for Your Life, Lip-sync assassin, Meryl Streep Realness, Pit crew, Purse first, Pussycat, Quick Drag, Sissy That Walk, Snatch Game, Soul Train Realness, Throw shade, Walk that fucking duck, Werk Room drama and Werk room wisdom	21	35%
3.	Derivation	Bitchy, Gurl, Piggy, Realness, Sickening and Voguing	6	10%
4.	Clipping	Lewk/ Look and Mug	2	3.33%
5.	Conversion	Read, Shade, Spilling the tea, Tea and Untuck	5	8.33%
6.	Coinage	Aet, Bam, Body-ody-ody, C.U.N.T., Cucu, Gu-huh, Hallelloo, Henny, Hieeee, Kai kai, Kiki, Ladyboy, Miss Vanjie, Okurr, Sashay Away, Shablam, Shantay, Shanté, you stay, She done already	21	35%

No.	Types of Word-Formation Processes	English Registers Units	Frequency	Percentage
		done had herses, Who-ho and Yas, queen		
Total			60	100%

In summary, the results show that *RuPaul's Drag Race* uses word formation mainly through compounding and coinage, which support creativity, humor, and identity construction. Less frequent types like clipping appear rarely because drag discourse prioritizes expressiveness over brevity. This reflects how drag performers use language not only to communicate but to perform, empower, and entertain.

Table 4.3 parts of speech of neologisms

Function	Early Frequency	Contemporary Frequency	Early Percentage	Contemporary Percentage
Noun	18	28	51.43%	46.67%
Verb	3	9	8.57%	15%
Adjective	2	3	5.71%	5%
Interjection	5	12	14.29%	20.00%
Other	7	8	20%	13.33%
Total	35	60	100%	100%

In the early stage, nouns accounted for the highest proportion of neologisms, with 18 items or 51.43%. This was followed by other forms with 7 items or 20.00%, interjections with 5 items or 14.29%, verbs with 3 items or 8.57%, and adjectives with 2 items or 5.71%. This indicates that earlier neologisms were mainly created to name new concepts, identities, and objects within the drag community, such as drag mother, realness, and werk room.

In the contemporary stage, nouns remained dominant, with 28 items or 46.67%, although their proportion slightly decreased. Interjections accounted for 12 items or 20.00%, followed by verbs with 9 items or 15.00%, other forms with 8 items or 13.33%, and adjectives with 3 items or 5.00%. The rise in verbs and interjections reflects the community's growing emphasis on performance, action, emotion, and self-expression.

Overall, the comparison shows a linguistic shift from naming (nouns) to performing (verbs and interjections). This change suggests that language in drag culture has evolved from defining static identities to expressing dynamic performance, attitude, and emotion in modern contexts.

4.2 To analyze which words have undergone semantic shifts

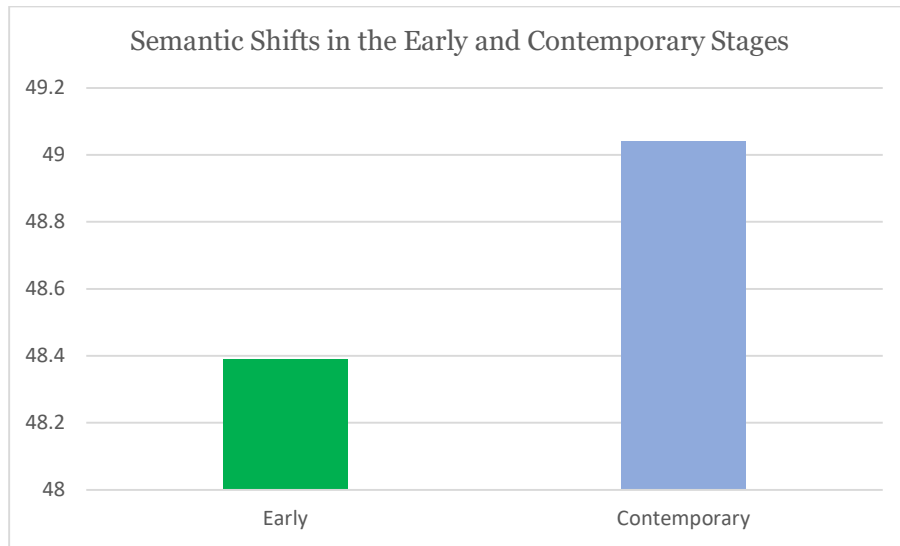


Diagram 4.2 the percentage of semantic shifts in the early and contemporary stages

Semantic shift in the early stage occurred in 30 out of 62 words , accounting for 48.39%, while in the contemporary stage, semantic shifts occurred in 51 out of 104 words , accounting for 49.04%.

Semantic shifts occurred at a similar rate in both stages, with a slightly higher percentage in the contemporary stage. This suggests that semantic shift remains an important feature of drag language across time. At the same time, the contemporary stage also shows a stronger tendency toward the creation of new lexical items, reflecting the maturity, creativity, and wider influence of drag language in mainstream and digital contexts.

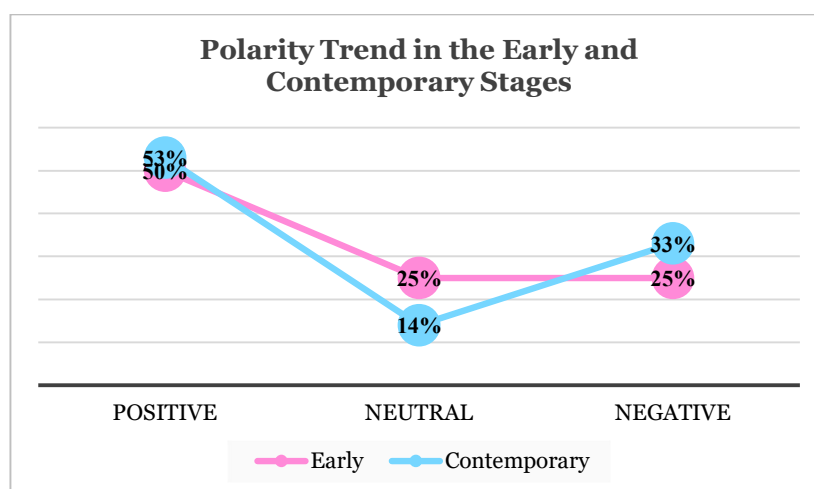
Table 4. 4 examples of semantic shifts in early stage

No.	Word	Part of Speech	Original Meaning	Drag Meaning
1.	Beat	Verb	To defeat somebody in a game or competition	To apply your makeup flawlessly
2.	Bitch	Noun	A female dog	Insult / friendly call
3.	Box	Noun	A container made of wood, thick card, metal, etc. with a flat base and sides and often a lid, used especially for holding solid things	Male genitalia (slang)
4.	Busted	Adjective	Caught in the act of doing something wrong and likely to be punished	Being unpolished or messy

Table 4.5 examples of semantic shifts in contemporary stage

No.	Word	Part of Speech	Original Meaning	Drag Meaning
1.	Boot	Verb	To kick somebody/something hard with your foot	To reject or eliminate
2.	Busy	Adjective	Having a lot to do; perhaps not free to do something else because you are working on something	Busy, skilled
3.	Camp	Noun	A place where people live temporarily in tents or temporary buildings	Exaggerated, theatrical style
4.	Chic	Adjective	Very fashionable and attractive	Stylish and elegant

4.3 Polarity of the neologisms and the semantic shifts

**Diagram 4.3** the polarity trend in the early and contemporary stages

In the early stage, positive polarity accounted for 50.00% (32 words), while both neutral and negative polarities showed the same rate at 25.00% (16 words each), indicating that positive words were dominant during this period. Similarly, in the contemporary stage, positive polarity remained the most frequent with 56.73% (59 words), followed by neutral polarity at 26.92% (28 words) and negative polarity at 16.35% (17 words). This overall pattern suggests that positive expressions were consistently dominant across both stages.

4.3 Examples of Audience Comments

Comment 1 (From 13 years ago)

“Ru...Now Honey....that last wig? **Busted!**”

Comment 2 (From 12 years ago)

“The way Sharon Needles and Phi Phi O’Hara move in the video are **SICKENING**”

Comment 3 (From 9 years ago)

“That **shade** pandora threw at trya.”

Comment 4 (From 5 years ago)

“CAROL CHANNING Was SHEelarious!!! That Was My All-Time Favorite **Snatch** Contestant **Hanny!!**”

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This research outlines three questions elaborated in the research questions.

The first question that must be answered is to categorize the distribution of neologisms and identify their part of speech that occurs the most in the selected seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. The second one is to analyze which words have undergone semantic shifts. The third question is to examine the polarity of the neologisms and the semantic shifts in terms of positive, neutral, or negative. The analysis in this study is based on three main theories, namely the Word Formation Theory by Harijanto and Dimara (2023), the Semantic Shift Theory by Mariano et al. (2024), and the Polarity Theory by Wilson et al. (2005).

The findings of this study reveal that compounding is the most dominant word-formation process of neologisms in *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. This finding suggests that the queer or drag community often creates new words by combining existing words into innovative and creative terms. Since compounding is the most frequently used, it reflects queer or drag communities’ linguistic creativity and memorable expressions that come with the entertaining and performative nature of drag culture. This supports Simmons (2014), who found that the speech practices of drag queens, such as playful exaggeration and the performance of speech styles, act as markers of identity and in-group belonging within the drag community. Moreover, this process indicates that neologisms in *RuPaul’s Drag Race* tend to prioritize identity, creativity, and playfulness.

The findings also indicate that a total of 81 words have undergone semantic shifts. Semantic shifts occurred in both stages at a similar rate, with the contemporary stage showing a slightly higher percentage. This suggests that semantic shift continues to be an important mechanism in queer and drag discourse, even though the contemporary stage also demonstrates a strong tendency toward the creation of new lexical items. This broader pattern can also be seen in digital spaces. This research aligns with Harijanto and Dimara (2023), showing that on TikTok, queer people perform their identities openly through language, gestures, and memes to build community, show individuality, and resist heteronormative norms.

Regarding polarity, the analysis shows that positive expressions occur more than both neutral and negative ones in early and contemporary stages. As Wilson et al. (2005) explain, positive polarity is used to indicate favorable feelings, opinions, and viewpoints. This result indicates that neologisms and semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race* are mostly used to express confidence, colorfulness, and amusement rather than negativity or criticism. In addition, the positive polarity shows how language functions as a tool for self-expression, encourages identity affirmation, and promotes acceptance through humor and pride. Similarly, Harijanto and Dimara (2023) point out that queer communities often generate and circulate new words to express pride and strengthen collective identity. On the other hand, the data may be slightly inaccurate because the mainstream may restrict or not be able to widely disseminate negative words, as the mainstream tends to promote positive things that affect no one. As Luhulima et al. (2023) caution, once such terms are absorbed into the mainstream, they risk losing the social, political, and historical significance tied to their original communities.

5.2 Conclusions

This research aims to study the neologisms and the semantic shifts from the LGBT community in *RuPaul's Drag Race* from Season 1 (2009), Season 2 (2010), Season 15 (2023), and Season 16 (2024). The research findings are summarized as follows:

Research findings distribution of neologisms and their part of speech that occurs the most

From the study across the four selected seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, it was found that the *Neologism* words were most frequently formed through *compounding* in both periods, accounting for 35 words, coinage (31 words), *derivation* (10 words), *blending* (8 words), *conversion* (8 words), and *clipping* (3 words). It can be seen from this research that nouns were the most frequently occurring word class in both periods. This research is based on the study by Harijanto & Dimara (2023). The process of word formation was categorized into several types, including conversion, clipping, derivation, compounding, blending, and coinage. The classifications are classified according to the frequency of occurrence that from the most common to the least common types in both times as follows:

- 1. Compounding:** The study found that compounding was the most frequently used word-formation process with 14 words, accounting for 40.00% in the early stage and 21 words, accounting for 35.00% in the contemporary stage, such as “Kitty girl” does not mean “a small female cat” but refers to a drag queen who embodies femininity with confidence, cuteness, sexiness, and playfulness.
- 2. Coinage:** The research found that coinage was the second most common process with 10 words, accounting for 28.57% in the early stage and 21 words, accounting

35.00% in the contemporary stage. such as “C.U.N.T” is a created term formed by combining the words of four words into a new word.

3. **Derivation:** This process occurred in four words, accounting for 11.43% in the early stage and 6 words, accounting for 10.00% in the contemporary stage, such as “Fierceness” is derived by adding the suffix -ness to the adjective fierce turned it into a noun.
4. **Blending:** This process occurred in three words, accounting for 8.57% in the early stage and 5 words, accounting for 8.33 %in the contemporary stage, such as “Hunty” is formed from hun and cunt across to blending parts of each word to create a new one.
5. **Conversion:** This process occurred in three words, accounting for 8.57% in the early stage and 5 words, accounting for 8.33% in the contemporary stage, such as “Shade” has shifted grammatically from a noun to a verb.
6. **Clipping:** This process occurred in one word, accounting for 2.86% in the early stage and 2 words, accounting for 3.33% in the contemporary stage, such as “Mug” is clipped from “mugshot” meaning “face” or “a fully made-up face.”

Research findings words have undergone semantic shifts

From the study across the four selected seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* a total of 81 words were found to have undergone semantic shift. This research found 30 words appeared during the early stage and 51 words appeared in the contemporary stage. This research applied the concept of semantic shift from Mariano et al. (2024) to study how word meanings change within queer language in *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. It also considers the presence of these words across different time periods from the early to the contemporary period in order to present a more comprehensive overview of linguistic change and the development of drag language within the context of digital society and public communication.

This research that has semantic shifts occurred most frequently in the early stage of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. During this period, the show and the drag community were in the process of constructing their own identity and language style often by redefining existing English words to suit drag culture. Such as “shade”, “read”, and “serve” which took on new meanings related to witty insults or criticism, critique, and performance.

Research findings polarity of the neologisms and the semantic shift

From the study across the four selected seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* positive words were found to be the most frequent total of 91 words in all. These were separated to 32 words occurring during the early stage and 59 words during the contemporary stage. The concept of polarity in linguistic value analysis from Wilson et al., (2005) who proposed a method for distinguishing emotionally oriented words or phrases as either neutral or polar, and further

classifying polar expressions as positive, negative, or neutral according to their contextual use. This allows for a more accurate reflection of the emotional direction of meaning.

This research shows that positive polarity was the most frequent in both periods. Positive polarity accounted for 32 words, or 50.00%, in the early stage and 59 words, or 56.73%, in the contemporary stage.

5.3 Implications of the research

According to the discussion and major findings, some implications are provided. First, the students can understand how language changes in queer communities by studying neologisms and semantic shifts in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, which are discussed in this research. This research might also make students aware that language has changed over time, especially the new words from queer communities.

For linguists, this study can provide the processes of neologisms and semantic shifts, along with the polarity within queer discourse. The findings of this study show that neologisms and semantic shifts are influenced by identity, culture, and performance, which reflect how society and culture affect and shape language. However, the mainstream media may limit or filter the use of negative words. Linguists should find other ways to approach accurate data.

5.4 Implications of the research

The results of this study on neologisms and semantic shifts found in *RuPaul's Drag Race* (Seasons 1, 2, 15, and 16) are only part of the investigation and exploration into word formation processes, semantic shifts, and polarity. This topic of the drag community is considered highly interesting and recommended. Accordingly, the researchers offer the following suggestions for future studies.

1. The researchers should analyze alternative classification theories, which may lead to different ways of categorizing neologisms.

2. The researchers should explore semantic shifts in other seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* to understand broader linguistic evolution.

The researchers should investigate the audience's language adoption by focusing on how viewers use neologisms and semantic shifts and exploring social and cultural factors that influence language change.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses only on the American version of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and does not include other international versions, such as *RuPaul's Drag Race Thailand*, which could be compared in future research to investigate how linguistic features differ between Western and Thai contexts.

This study only investigates and analyzes neologisms and semantic shifts. However, there are other ways to analyze innovative linguistic features beyond neologisms and semantic shifts, which include drag or queer discourse, such as reappropriation (taking back negative

words and turning them into positive ones to empower), hyperbolic meaning shift (using drama and exaggerated expressions), and pejoration to reversal (turning the meanings of negative words into positive ones).

Authors

Natcha Namkhang A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Pimlada Raitongrunroj A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Prakaifa Pongsatatkij A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Wachira Zeingchong A fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English at Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

Kasidit Supan Lecturer at Division of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

References

- Borge, J. (2015, March 16). Decoding 'RuPaul's Drag Race': 16 terms you need to know. Marie Claire. <https://www.marieclaire.com/culture/news/a13716/rupaul-drag-race-terms-to-know/>
- Hamilton, W. L., Leskovec, J., & Jurafsky, D. (2016). Cultural shift or linguistic drift? Comparing two computational measures of semantic change. In Proceedings of the Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP 2016) (pp. 2116–2121). Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://aclanthology.org/D16-1224/>
- Harijanto, S., & Dimara, W. (2023). Language and identity: A case study on Queer community language in Dean Modah TikTok videos. *Loquēla (Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Education)*, 1(1), 18–31. <https://doi.org/10.61276/loquela.v1i1.4>
- Luhulima, C. C., Hutagaol, D. R., Nofiyanti, & Linuwih, E. R. (2023). Language change on social media: The evolution of queer linguistic practices in digital spaces. *Journal of Sociolinguistics and Media Studies*, 12(3), 210–230.
- Mariano, J., Gonzales, M., & Lualhati, K. (2024). Neologisms and semantic shifts in pandemic language: A morpho-semantic analysis. *Asian Journal of Language, Literature and Culture (AJL2C)*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://journalajl2c.com/index.php/AJL2C/article/view/210/430>
- Simmons, N. (2014). Speaking like a queen in RuPaul's Drag Race: Towards a speech code of American drag queens. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 18, 630–684. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12119-013-9213-2>
- Wilson, T., Wiebe, J., & Hoffmann, P. (2005). Recognizing contextual polarity in phrase-level sentiment analysis. In Proceedings of the Conference on Human Language Technology and Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (HLT/EMNLP 2005) (pp. 347–354). Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://people.cs.pitt.edu/~wiebe/pubs/papers/emnlp05polarity.pdf>

Zimman, L. (2014). The discursive construction of sex: Remaking and reclaiming the gendered body in talk about genitals among trans men. *Symbolic Interaction*, 37(1), 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.81>