

WORD FORMATION THROUGH COMPOUNDING IN GEN-Z SLANG ON TIKTOK

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Abstract

Language is dynamic and reflective of societal changes, with Gen-Z, the first true digital natives, playing a pivotal role in linguistic evolution. This study examines the phenomenon of word formation through compounding in Gen-Z slang on TikTok, exploring its linguistic structures and meanings. By analyzing the common compounding patterns in Gen-Z slang, we gain insights into the creative processes and social influences shaping language use among this demographic. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data was collected from TikTok videos and comments between January 2023 and May 2024. The findings reveal 15 distinct compound words, with compound nouns being the most prevalent, followed by compound verbs and compound adjectives. Endocentric compounds were more common than exocentric ones. This research highlights the innovative nature of language within Generation Z, reflecting their values of self-expression, technological engagement, and creative problem-solving. The study underscores the role of social media in shaping contemporary language and provides a foundation for further exploration of linguistic innovations and their implications for language development and cultural expression in the digital age.

Keywords: *compound words; gen-z; slang; TikTok*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic and ever-evolving entity, reflecting the social, cultural, and technological changes within a society. Linguistic evolution occurs as new words, phrases, and grammatical structures emerge, spread, and sometimes fade away. This dynamic process is influenced by numerous factors, including contact with other languages, technological advancements, and shifts in social and cultural norms. Gen-Z are undoubtedly the first true digital natives, born into an era of significant technological advancements and constant exposure to social media, smartphones, and instant access to information (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022).

Gen-Z is the generation born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s. This cohort, distinct from previous generations, exhibits several unique characteristics that shape their identity and behavior. According to (Rahmah & Khasanah, 2023), Gen-Z individuals prioritize self-expression, valuing each person's unique identity and encouraging diverse forms of personal expression. This generation is deeply embedded in technology, showing keen interest in various technology-driven communities and platforms where they can interact, share ideas, and collaborate on a global scale. They believe strongly in the power of communication to resolve conflicts and bring about social change, often leveraging digital tools to amplify their voices and advocate for causes they care about. Additionally, Gen-Z tends to have a more realistic and analytical mindset compared to previous generations, often approaching problems with a pragmatic and data-driven perspective. These traits collectively underscore their appreciation for independence and self-sufficiency, driving them to seek out opportunities for personal and professional growth in a rapidly changing world.

The rise of social media platforms like TikTok has given birth to a new wave of linguistic innovation, particularly in the realm of slang. Slang represents a form of linguistic creativity that reflects social dynamics and cultural evolution (John McWhorter in Zulkhaeriyah et al. (2023)). Gen-Z has been at the forefront of this linguistic evolution, leveraging TikTok's unique format to create and popularize new forms of expression. One notable phenomenon in this context is the widespread use of word formation through compounding, where new words are created by combining existing words or parts of words. This linguistic creativity allows Gen-Z to communicate complex ideas quickly and efficiently, often in a way that resonates with their peers. TikTok's algorithm promotes viral content, enabling these new words and phrases to spread rapidly and gain acceptance across the platform and beyond. The creation of new words also serves a social function, as it helps Gen-Z to establish their presence and identity within their digital communities. This process of linguistic innovation highlights the dynamic nature of language and its ability to adapt to new cultural and technological contexts (Ningsih & Rosa, 2013).

There is various research conducted regarding compounding words and word formation of slangs in Gen-Z. (Kasitha & Ida Ayu, 2022) conducted a study to identify and analyze the types of compounding and clipping in slang words used in the movie "After We Collided." Using Yule's (1986) theory for identifying compounding and clipping and Leech's (1981) theory for analyzing meanings, the researcher found seven instances of compounding and eleven of clipping. The meanings were classified as follows: six conceptual, one connotative, one affective, and eleven social. The second study was conducted by (Sisvinda, 2021) focused on the formation and meanings of compound words related to the COVID-19 pandemic used in The Jakarta Post's Health Column during the third week of April 2020. The findings revealed 26 compound words in total. The most prevalent lexical categories were compound nouns, specifically Noun + Noun and Adjective + Noun combinations. Regarding their meanings, 21 compound words were identified as endocentric compounds, where the meaning is a subset of the compound, and 5 as exocentric compounds, where the meaning is not directly related to the head of the compound.

Third, (Taqiyyudin et al., 2023) conducted a study which examines compound words and their semantic relations, interpreting the meanings of newly coined compound words in National Geographic magazine's January to June 2019 issues. Using Delahunty & Garvey's (2010) classification, compound words were categorized into five types: compound nouns, compound verbs, compound adjectives, compound adverbs, and neoclassical compounds. The semantic relations of these compound words were also analyzed. The results revealed 241 compound words, with compound nouns being the most common, followed by neoclassical compounds, compound adjectives, compound verbs, and compound adverbs as the least common. Most of the compound words were classified as endocentric compounds, with the remainder being exocentric compounds.

Compounding means a combination of two words or more in forming new words

(Yule, 2010). In slang, these compounds can involve various parts of speech, though prepositions, numerals, and pronouns are rare (Matiello, 2008). Compounding enhances linguistic creativity, allowing new words to emerge through the combination of existing ones. Quirk in (Simatupang & Supri, 2020) identified key characteristics of compounds, including their grammatical and semantic unity, lack of affixes, derivable meanings, determination of grammatical category by the headword, recursive nature, primary stress on the first element, and varied writing forms. Understanding compound words requires analysis from syntactic, morphological, and semantic perspectives (Taqiyyudin et al., 2023).

According to (Carstairs-Mccarthy, 2002), there are three types of compound words: (1) Compound Nouns: The most common type of compound in English is the compound noun. A determiner is properly contained within single words as a noun. Each compound noun functions

as a single unit and can be modified by other categories such as nouns, adjectives, and prepositions. McCarthy (2002) categorizes compound nouns into several lexical categories: preposition + noun, verb + noun, adjective + noun, and noun + noun. (2) Compound Verbs: Most compound verbs in English are not simply formed by joining two lexemes. Instead, they are typically formed by the combination of two or more words that grammatically function as verbs (Katamba, 1993). McCarthy (2002) divides compound verbs into several lexical categories: noun + verb, preposition + verb, adjective + verb, and verb + verb. (3) Compound Adjectives: The meaning of a compound adjective is generally clear from the words that compose it. Compound adjectives are formed by combining two parts to create a new adjective, usually written with a hyphen. A present or past participle is often used as the adjective. McCarthy (2002) categorizes compound adjectives into three types: noun + adjective, adjective + adjective, and preposition + adjective.

Delahunty and Garvey (2010) identify three distinct semantic relationships between the head and modifier(s) of compounds: endocentric compounds, exocentric compounds, and coordinative compounds. Endocentric Compounds: An endocentric compound is a compound word that denotes a subtype of whatever is denoted by the head. Essentially, the head names the type, and the compound names the subtype. For example, "armchair" refers to a type of chair, and "breath-test" refers to a kind of test (Delahunty & James Garvey, 2010). Exocentric Compounds: An exocentric compound is a compound word that denotes a subtype of a category that is not explicitly mentioned within the compound. While the compound names a subtype, the type itself is not represented by either the head or the modifier. Examples include "deadhead," "redhead," and "pickpocket," which refer to types of people distinguished by certain characteristics.

This study aims to identify and classify compound words in Gen-Z slang on TikTok, analyze their linguistic structures and patterns, and explore their meanings. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: What are the common compounding patterns in Gen-Z slang on TikTok? What meanings do these compound words convey?

METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a qualitative approach. According to Creswell, qualitative research involves exploring and understanding core phenomena through participants who provide information in various forms such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences (John W. Creswell; Cheryl N. Poth, 2017). This data is then thoroughly analyzed to produce descriptive insights. The data for this study comprises slang language found in captions or videos created by TikTok users (video creators/account holders) and comments written by viewers. Specifically, the slang collected includes compound words. The data was gathered from TikTok videos uploaded between January 2023 and May 2024, focusing on language used and written by Generation Z.

The TikTok users, identified as members of Generation Z, can be validated through their TikTok account profiles that include their age in their account bio, specifically within the age range of 12-27 years. Researchers classified the compound words into types based on McCarthy (2002). Then searched for their meanings using the Oxford Online Dictionary, Cambridge Online Dictionary, and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, identified their word classes, and analyzed their semantic relations according to (Katamba, 1993).

FINDINGS

The exploration of word formation through compounding in Gen-Z slang on TikTok reveals intriguing patterns and innovative linguistic trends. By analyzing various examples of compounded slang terms, we can gain insights into the creative processes and social influences that shape language use among the Gen-Z demographic on this platform. The findings highlight not only the structural aspects of these compound words but also their semantic implications and the cultural contexts in which they emerge.

Table 1: Compound Nouns of Gen-Z Slangs on TikTok

No.	Compound Words	Process of Compound	Combination	New Meaning
1.	Looksmaxxing	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	Maximizing one's own physical attractiveness
2.	Main character	Compound Noun	Adj + Noun	Refers to themselves as the main character of their own life.
3.	Face card	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	Person's facial attractiveness
4.	Girlboss	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	An ambitious and successful woman
5.	Babygirl	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	An attractive man
6.	Girl dinner	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	A meal inspired by what many women might make for themselves
7.	Girl math	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	Ways women justify an extravagant or unnecessary expense
8.	Clapback	Compound Noun	Verb + Noun	A quick, sharp, and effective response to criticism
9.	Vibe check	Compound Noun	Noun + Noun	Assess the general atmosphere or mood or situation

10.	Side eye	Compound Noun	Adj + Noun	A physical act: suspicion, scorn, annoyance
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Data 1

“You absolutely can change them, **looksmaxxing** works. Get lean, get a haircut that plays to your strenghts, start prioritizing sleep and exercise” (@themultzz)

According to Cambridge Dictionary “looks”: A noun referring to a person’s appearance, particularly their attractiveness. “Maxxing is a derived form of the verb "max" or "maximize," meaning to make the most of or to increase to the highest level. The process combines the two lexemes "looks" and "max" to form the compound noun "**looksmaxxing**". The compound "looksmaxxing" is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "looks." The word collectively means to maximize one’s appearance or attractiveness, with "looks" as the central concept. Together, "looksmaxxing" conveys the concept of enhancing or maximizing one's physical attractiveness.

The user's caption illustrates practical tips and insights into “looksmaxxing”, emphasizing its potential to significantly enhance one’s physical appearance through lifestyle changes and grooming practices. This usage aligns with the compound's broader cultural context, where personal appearance and self-improvement are valued aspects of social interaction and self-esteem.

Data 2

“They are the **main character** for sure” (@strugglemagic)

The compound noun "**main character**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "main" and "character." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "main" is an adjective meaning most important or principal. "Character" is a noun that refers to a person or being in a story, play, movie, or other narrative. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "character." In slang usage, "main character" refers to someone who perceives themselves as the central figure in their own life or narrative, suggesting a sense of self-importance or focus on one's own experiences. In this context, "main character" conveys the idea of someone viewing themselves as the protagonist or most significant figure in their personal story.

In the TikTok video, the user was commenting on a video where a person was being interviewed and asked if they consider themselves as the main character. This usage aligns with the slang meaning, where the interviewee is being prompted to reflect on whether they see themselves as the central figure in their life narrative.

Data 3

“Skin texture might fail me but my **face card** never declines” (@sunniyyee)

The compound noun "**face card**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "face" and "card." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "face" is a noun referring to the front part of a person's head, where the eyes, nose, and mouth are, often used to describe one's appearance or expression. "Card" is a noun that refers to a piece of thick, stiff paper or thin pasteboard, used for writing or printing on, but it also refers to a playing card. This compound is **exocentric** because its meaning is not directly inferred from the combination of "face" and "card" as separate entities. Instead, it forms a specific concept referring to a person's facial features or attractiveness, with "card" metaphorically suggesting something that can be evaluated or considered in a certain way, similar to how playing cards are judged in a game.

In the TikTok video, the user employs the term "face card" to highlight her facial beauty, despite having acne scars. This usage underscores the idea that her facial appeal remains strong and noteworthy. The term effectively conveys confidence and self-acceptance, aligning with contemporary slang used to praise physical appearance on social media platforms.

Data 4

“Me after a mental breakdown but then feeling my **girlboss** energy returning to my body” (@itgirlbaby_)

The compound noun "**girlboss**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "girl" and "boss." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "girl" is a noun referring to a female child or young woman. "Boss" is a noun that refers to a person who is in charge of a worker, group, or organization. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "boss." The word collectively refers to a woman who is assertive, ambitious, and successful in her career or endeavors, with "boss" as the central concept. Together, "girlboss" conveys the idea of a young woman who embodies leadership and empowerment in a professional or personal context.

The TikTok video shows a clip of Maddy, portrayed by Alexa Demie, who is a character from the TV series "Euphoria." Maddy is known for being bold, honest, and sweet. By showcasing Maddy in this context, the video emphasizes her "girlboss" qualities, aligning with the modern interpretation of the term. Maddy's character exhibits traits of confidence, assertiveness, and empowerment, which are core aspects of the "girlboss" persona.

Data 5

“Frenchie is so **babygirl**” (@nikitadragunonasunday)

The compound noun "**babygirl**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "baby" and "girl." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "baby" is a noun referring to a very young child, especially one newly or recently born. "Girl" is a noun that refers to a female child or young

woman. This compound is **exocentric** because its meaning deviates significantly from the meanings of its individual components ("baby" and "girl"). The term "babygirl" traditionally refers to a young woman or a term of endearment, and using it to describe an attractive man would be unconventional or possibly used ironically. In a more affectionate or colloquial usage, "babygirl" conveys the idea of endearment and tenderness, often used to address a young woman or girl with affection.

In the TikTok video, the user was commenting on a video of The Boys series edits which is Homelander and Frenchie. The TikTok video features edits from The Boys series, specifically focusing on the characters Homelander and Frenchie. The user expresses endearment for the character Frenchie. Using "babygirl" to describe a male character like Frenchie introduces an element of playful irony, subverting traditional gender expectations and adding a layer of contemporary humor. Viewers who are fans of The Boys can relate to the sentiment, as the term captures a blend of admiration and playful humor.

Data 6

“My **girl dinner** rn is blue takis and an oreo blizzard” (@laritzae06)

The compound noun "**girl dinner**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "girl" and "dinner." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "girl" is a noun referring to a female child or young woman. "Dinner" is a noun that refers to the main meal of the day, usually eaten in the evening. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "dinner." The word collectively refers to a meal that is typically associated with or preferred by young women, often implying a casual, light, or non-traditional dinner. Together, "girl dinner" conveys the idea of a simple, perhaps eclectic, meal that a young woman might prepare for herself, reflecting personal preferences and convenience.

In the TikTok video, the user was commenting on another video where a person showed her version of "girl dinner," which was macaroni and cheese. This underscores the casual and personalized nature of "girl dinner," as macaroni and cheese is a simple, comforting, and easily prepared meal. The commenting TikTok user also shared her own version of "girl dinner," further emphasizing the personalized aspect of this meal concept.

Data 7

“**girl math** is taking a late lunch bc that means there’s less time and you’re closer to being done after lunch” (@rushisingh5)

The compound noun "**girl math**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "girl" and "math." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "girl" is a noun referring to a female child or young woman. "Math" is a noun that refers to the study of numbers, quantities, and shapes, also known as mathematics. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood

from the head lexeme "math." The word collectively refers to a playful or humorous concept of reasoning or justification that is stereotypically associated with young women, often involving non-standard or whimsical calculations. Together, "girl math" conveys the idea of a humorous, informal approach to everyday calculations or decisions, reflecting a cultural or social stereotype.

In the TikTok video, the user was explaining how she takes a late lunch to have less time at work after the break. This example illustrates the concept of "girl math" by showing a non-traditional reasoning pattern that the user finds logical and beneficial. By framing it as "girl math," the user humorously acknowledges the unconventional logic behind her decision, making it relatable and entertaining to her audience.

Data 8

“they be having their **clapbacks** ready before u even SPEAK” (@peter nugget)

The compound noun "**clapback**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "clap" and "back." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "clap" is a verb that means to strike the palms of (one's hands) together repeatedly, typically in order to applaud. "Back" is an adverb that means to return or respond to a previous position or state. This compound is **exocentric** because the meaning of the compound is not directly deducible from the individual meanings of "clap" and "back". Instead, "clapback" collectively refers to a sharp, witty retort or comeback, which is a concept outside the literal meanings of "clap" and "back". Together, "clapback" conveys the idea of a verbal response that is intended to counter or criticize a previous comment, typically in a direct and assertive manner.

This user is a TikTok celebrity that create a skit or scenario, in this case it was about two friends bantering about one another. In the context of a TikTok skit, it highlights the cultural value placed on verbal wit and assertiveness. The use of "clapback" in a playful scenario involving friendly banter exemplifies its significance in modern social interactions and entertainment.

Data 9

“Did they all pass the **vibe check**!?! Second lady a vibe” (@stone889)

The compound noun "**vibe check**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "vibe" and "check." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "vibe" is a noun referring to a distinctive feeling or atmosphere that someone or something gives off. "Check" is a noun referring to an examination or inspection of something. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "check." The word collectively refers to the act of assessing someone's mood or the atmosphere of a situation, with "check" as the central concept. Together, "vibe check" conveys the idea of evaluating the emotional or social atmosphere to ensure it is positive or acceptable.

This user is a known TikToker for his rolling down car window prank. In the video, he was pranking the car next to his and giving them a signal to roll their windows down. The TikToker leverages a simple yet effective prank to engage his audience, focusing on the varied reactions of people when faced with an unexpected social interaction. The "rolling down car window prank" is not just about the prank itself but also about the subsequent "vibe check," which evaluates the social compatibility and humor of the strangers involved. The term "vibe check" captures the essence of evaluating social harmony and positive interactions in a light-hearted and relatable manner.

Data 10

“Me looking at that one girl who screams “Side Eye” but she doesn’t know she is actually the side eye” (@diorbbykelsey)

The compound noun "**side eye**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "side" and "eye." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “side” is a noun referring to the part of something that is not the top, bottom, front, or back. “Eye” is a noun referring to the organ of sight. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "eye." The word collectively refers to a sidelong glance or look, often conveying suspicion, disapproval, or skepticism, with "eye" as the central concept. Together, "side eye" conveys the idea of a look in which you move your eyes to the side without turning your face, showing that you are annoyed by someone, do not respect them, or do not believe what they are saying.

The TikTok video shows a clip of Kendall Jenner, who is a famous model. It is a video of her reaction of being annoyed accompanied with the video caption. The caption humorously points out the irony of someone frequently using the term "side eye" without realizing that their behavior is what actually warrants such a look from others. In the context of a TikTok video, it highlights the cultural value placed on non-verbal communication and subtle judgment. The use of "side eye" in a humorous scenario involving Kendall Jenner’s reaction exemplifies its significance in modern social interactions and entertainment.

Table 2: Compound Verbs of Gen-Z Slangs on TikTok

No.	Compound Words	Process of Compound	Combination	New Meaning
1.	Gatekeep	Compound Verb	Noun + Verb	Withholding information
2.	Brainrot	Compound Verb	Noun + Verb	Low value content

Data 1

“POV: that one friend who **gatekeeps** for no reason” (@peternugget)

The compound verb "**gatekeep**" is formed by combining the lexemes "gate" and "keep." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "gate" is a noun referring to a movable barrier used to close an opening in a fence or wall. "Keep" is a verb that means to continue to have something; not lose it. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "keep." The word collectively refers to the action of controlling access to a particular activity or community, with "keep" as the central concept. Together, "gatekeep" conveys the idea of regulating or controlling entry to a space or group, often implying a restrictive or selective process.

This user is a TikTok celebrity that is known to create a skit or scenario, in this case it was about a friend that refuse to tell what song they are listening to. The video humorously highlights the frustrating and often trivial nature of gatekeeping among friends, making it relatable to viewers who may have encountered similar situations. The use of "gatekeep" in a humorous scenario involving a friend refusing to share a song's name exemplifies its significance in modern social interactions and entertainment.

Data 2

“Chat do I have **brainrot** or are these genuinely funny” (@kaeyaspreads4me)

The compound noun "**brainrot**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "brain" and "rot." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "brain" is a noun referring to the organ inside your head that controls how you think, feel, and move. "Rot" is a noun that refers to the process of decaying or decomposing. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "brain." The word collectively refers to an obsessive, often irrational, or unhealthy fixation on a particular thought, idea, or concept, with "brain" as the central concept. Together, "brainrot" conveys the idea of a mental state characterized by repetitive or intrusive thoughts that may be perceived as negative or detrimental.

This TikTok user commented on a video containing slideshow of “brainrot meme” phrases. This illustrates the concept of "brainrot" by showcasing repetitive or intrusive thoughts through humour. The use of "brainrot memes" highlights how certain ideas or phrases can become pervasive in one's mind, leading to a state of mental saturation or fatigue.

Table 3: Compound Adjectives of Gen-Z Slangs on TikTok

No.	Compound Words	Process of Compound	Combination	New Meaning
1.	Highkey	Compound Adjective	Adj + Noun	Out in the open
2.	Lowkey	Compound Adjective	Adj + Noun	Secretive

3.	Rent-free	Compound Adjective	Noun + Adj	Someone can't stop obsessively thinking about something or someone
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Data 1

“when I’ve been **highkey** losing my mind but I gotta act nonchalant” (@supereleminator)

The compound adjective "**highkey**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "high" and "key." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “high” is an adjective referring to a great distance above the ground or a significant degree or level. “Key” is a noun that refers to a device used to open locks, but in slang, it can mean an essential or crucial element. This compound is **exocentric** because the meaning of the compound is not directly deducible from the individual meanings of "high" and "key." Instead, "highkey" collectively refers to something that is openly or blatantly expressed, often contrasted with "lowkey" which implies something discreet or subtle. Together, "highkey" conveys the idea of something that is emphasized or meant to be noticed.

In the TikTok video, the user wrote a caption on the video saying how he is in a state of distraught yet he still has to put a nonchalant behavior in order to look stable. In the context of a TikTok video, it highlights the cultural value placed on visible and intense expressions of emotion. The TikTok video features a caption suggesting that the user is experiencing intense emotional turmoil but feels the need to appear calm and composed outwardly.

Data 2

“Yk when a girl is being treated right when she become **lowkey** asf” (@djejymb)

The compound adjective "**lowkey**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "low" and "key." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “low” is an adjective referring to a small degree or level, or being situated not far above the ground. “Key” is a noun that refers to a device used to open locks, but in slang, it can mean an essential or crucial element. This compound is **exocentric** because the meaning of the compound is not directly deducible from the individual meanings of "low" and "key." Instead, "lowkey" collectively refers to something that is done or expressed in a subtle, restrained, or understated manner.

In the TikTok video, the user wrote a caption on the video saying how a girl will become more discreet when they are in a healthy relationship with someone. The TikTok video sets up a scenario where the behavior of a girl in a healthy relationship is characterized by being "lowkey," suggesting subtle confidence and contentment. It often implies a sense of understated confidence or satisfaction, where the subject does not feel the need to boast or draw attention.

Data 3

“This sound lives in my head **rent free**” (@zarajanice)

The compound adjective "**rent-free**" is formed by combining the two lexemes "rent" and "free." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "rent" is a noun referring to a regular payment made by a tenant to an owner for the use of property or land. "Free" is an adjective meaning without cost or payment. This compound is **endocentric** because its meaning can be understood from the head lexeme "free." The word collectively refers to something that does not require the payment of rent, with "free" as the central concept. In slang usage, "rent-free" refers to something or someone occupying another person's thoughts continuously and effortlessly, implying an obsessive preoccupation. Together, "rent-free" conveys the idea of mental space being taken up without effort, much like living somewhere without paying rent.

In the TikTok video, the user was enjoying and dancing to a Rel (Real) Mash Up Song by Donnell, Lavaman, and Mr Killa. In the context of a TikTok video, it highlights the cultural phenomenon of catchy sounds or memorable moments persistently staying in one's thoughts. The term "rent-free" resonates with contemporary social media culture, where catchy sounds and viral moments frequently occupy mental space.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of this study reveal that Generation Z uses 15 distinct compound words on TikTok, with compound nouns being the most prevalent, followed by compound verbs and compound adjectives. Among these, endocentric compounds are more commonly used than exocentric compounds. This research highlights the dynamic and innovative nature of language, particularly within Generation Z, who are at the forefront of linguistic evolution on social media platforms like TikTok. By examining these compound words, such as "looksmaxxing," "main character," and "girlboss," we gain valuable insights into the creative processes behind their formation, which mirror broader social and cultural trends.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of cultural context in shaping the meanings of compound words. Terms like "girl dinner" and "vibe check" reflect specific social behaviors and serve to reinforce group identity and solidarity among Gen-Z users. The use of humor, irony, and creativity in forming these compounds further emphasizes the playful and adaptive nature of language in the digital age. These compounds not only expand the vocabulary but also reflect the unique values, interests, and communication styles of Generation Z, emphasizing their focus on self-expression, technological engagement, and creative problem-solving. Overall, this study underscores the role of social media in shaping contemporary language and provides a foundation for further exploration of linguistic innovations and their implications for language development and cultural expression in the digital age.

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