

CREATIVE NEOLOGISMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CHICK LIT: FORM-BASED,
MEANING-BASED CREATIVITY AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

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This article explores creative neologisms in English language chick lit, focusing on form-based and meaning-based creativity that co-evolve in their production, and the functions they perform in this genre of fiction. The study draws on a corpus of 35 English language chick lit novels, which returned a total of 141 neologisms. The research applies a combined morphological, semantic, and linguo-cognitive approach, with a focus on metaphorical and metonymical mechanisms underlying lexical innovation. The analysis demonstrates that neologisms in English language chick lit emerge through various word-formation processes, including compounding, blending, affixation, and clipping which are adapted and subverted to produce different types of form-based creativity. From a semantic perspective, many neologisms rely on conceptual metaphor and metonymy, enabling authors to produce a range of types of meaning-based creativity. These are grounded in creative uses of metaphor and metonymy to convey complex emotions, social evaluations, and personal experiences in a compact and vivid manner. Functionally, creative neologisms serve multiple purposes within the genre. They enhance humour and irony, reinforce intimacy between narrator and reader, and contribute to the construction of a distinctive female narrative voice. Moreover, such lexical innovations reflect contemporary cultural values, consumer practices, and gender-related discourses, thus positioning English language chick lit as a socially meaningful literary form rather than merely light entertainment. The findings indicate that neologisms in English language chick lit are not accidental stylistic embellishments but systematic tools of meaning-making and identity construction. By integrating linguistic creativity with narrative strategy, authors shape readers' perceptions of characters and social realities. The article concludes that English language chick lit represents a productive domain for the study of modern lexical innovation and its interaction with literary and cultural processes.

Key words: neologism, lexical creativity, form, meaning, function, literary discourse, English language chick lit.

Бєлова Марина. Креативні неологізми в англомовній чїк-лїт: огляд форм, семантики, функцій

У статті досліджуються креативні неологізми в англомовній чїк-лїт, зосереджуючи увагу на формальній та смисловій креативності, що співрозвиваються у процесі їх творення, а також на функціях, які вони виконують у цьому жанрі художньої літератури. Дослідження ґрунтується на корпусі з 35 англомовних романів чїк-лїт, у яких було виявлено загалом 141 неологізм. У роботі застосовано комплексний морфологічний, семантичний та лїнґвокогнїтивний підхід із фокусом на метафоричних і метонїмїчних механїзмах, що лежать в основі лексичних інновацій. Аналіз показує, що неологізми в англомовній чїк-лїт виникають унаслідок різних словотвірних процесів, зокрема словоскладання, телескопїї, афїкації та усїчення, які адаптуються й трансформуються для створення різних типів формальної креативності. Із семантичного погляду, значна частина неологізмів ґрунтується на концептуальних метафорах і метонїмїях, що дозволяє авторам реалїзовувати рїзні типи смислової креативності. Вони базуються на творчому використанні метафори та метонїмїї для компактної та образної передачі складних емоцій, соціальних оцїнок і особистого досвіду. У функціональному аспекті креативні неологізми виконують низку важливих ролей у межах жанру. Вони підсилюють гумор і іронїю, сприяють встановленню інтимності між наратором та читачем, а також беруть участь у конструюванні специфічного жїночого наративного голосу. Крім того, такі лексичні інновації відображають сучасні культурні цїнності, споживчі практики та гендерні дискурси, що дозволяє розглядати англомовну чїк-лїт як соціально значущу літературну форму, а не лише як легке розважальне читання. Отримані результати свідчать про те, що неологізми в англомовній чїк-лїт не є випадковими стилїстичними прикрасами, а виступають системними інструментами творення значення та конструювання ідентичності. Поєднуючи мовну креативність із наративною стратегїєю, автори формують сприйняття персонажів і соціальної реальності читачами. У статті робиться висновок, що англомовна чїк-лїт є продуктивним середовищем для вивчення сучасних лексичних інновацій та їхньої взаємодії з літературними й культурними процесами.

Ключові слова: неологізм, лексична креативність, форма, значення, функція, художній дискурс, англомовна чїк-лїт.

Introduction. The proliferation of new words in fiction is not a mere by-product of linguistic evolution but often a deliberate narrative strategy, especially in genres that thrive on wit, intimacy, and cultural commentary. Chick lit, which emerged in Anglophone culture, is a prime example of such genre where language functions as both a mirror

and a magnifier of contemporary female experience. One defining feature of neologisms in English language chick lit is their creativity commonly defined as the combination of novelty and appropriateness [1], meaning that an idea must not only be original but also serve a clear communicative function [2]. In the case of neologisms, newness is inherent

by definition. What distinguishes creative neologisms is their appropriateness within discourse. Creative neologisms act as foregrounding devices through which writers position their characters as socially perceptive individuals – those who seek attention, navigate relationships, and aim to be “socially successful with their speech” [3, p. 1056]. Such coinages operate as markers of identity, interpersonal involvement, and socio-discursive stance [4]. Moreover, their expressive force is context-dependent, co-varying with who creates the word, in what setting, and for what purpose [5].

Lexical creativity operates on two complementary levels: form-based and meaning-based [6; 7; 4; 8]. Morphology is one of the primary domains of form-based creativity in English language chick lit, providing the structural foundation for the invention of new words. The study of particularly unconventional morphological formations has given rise to a subfield known as extravagant [9] or extragrammatical [10] morphology which explores coinages that stretch standard morphological rules. Meaning-based creativity, on the other hand, arises from creative use of linguo-cognitive operations – metaphor and metonymy [7; 4; 8].

In contemporary scholarship, form-based creativity is viewed by Carter R. [1] extending from F(ixed) to E(xtended) to X creativity [11; 5; 12; 13; 14]. F-creativity involves pattern-adhering (full compliance to the rule), pattern-bending (following an established morphological pattern but violating one or more of its constraints), pattern-extension (productively stretching an existing pattern to include previously unlicensed elements) [14; 15], and pattern-elaboration (when conventional morphological patterns are semantically enriched through substitution of licensed components) [16]. E-creativity encompasses instances of pattern-creation, where entirely new morphological patterns are innovated [15]. X-creativity refers to lexical formations that resist classification, lack reproducibility, and exhibit no clear derivational path [13].

As argued by Lakoff G, Johnson M. [17] and Littlemore J. [18], metaphor and metonymy are key conceptual mechanisms that underpin the meaning-based creativity of neologisms in English language chick lit. As empirically proved by Littlemore J., Tagg C., and Tuck P. [7; 8], to interpret a metaphor- or metonymy-based neologism, readers or listeners rely on familiar conceptual mappings, which are creatively elaborated – extended, reduced, or combined – in unconventional ways.

The **aim** of the article is to identify and systematize creative neologisms in English language chick lit through the analysis of form-based and meaning-based creativity types, as well as to determine their functions in the literary discourse of the genre. To achieve this aim, the following **tasks** are set: (1) to describe the types of form-based creativity in chick lit neologisms; (2) to single out the types of meaning-based creativity in chick lit neologisms; (3) to determine the functions of neologisms in this genre of fiction.

Data and method. This study presents the first systematic, genre-specific investigation into neologisms in English language chick lit, integrating theoretical insights from literary studies, neology, morphology,

and cognitive linguistics. The research is designed to offer a description of form-based and meaning-based creativity that co-evolve to construct neologisms in English language chick lit, as well as to single out the functions that creative neologisms perform in the genre. The study relies upon the data sampled from 35 English language chick lit novels, which returned 141 neologisms. They were identified using a close reading methodology supported by digital keyword and pattern searches.

In this study, I adopt a dual analytic perspective on creative neologisms in English language chick lit. On the one hand, I draw on rule-based models of word formation, not as prescriptive accounts of linguistic possibility, but as heuristic frameworks (a diagnostic tool) for identifying deviations and violations that mark form-based creativity. On the other hand, I adopt a linguo-cognitive perspective to examine the meaning-based creativity of neologisms, focusing on the ways metaphor and metonymy are employed in novel ways. This approach identifies the types of creative use of metaphor and metonymy underlying the formation of neologisms in my dataset.

The study also employs a qualitative stylistic analysis to describe the functions of the sampled neologisms in English language chick lit.

Results and Discussion. Through systematic examination of key morphological processes – affixation, compounding, blending, conversion, and clipping – the study has demonstrated how English language chick lit authors engage with, adapt, and subvert established word-formation patterns to achieve foregrounding and narrative distinctiveness. This resulted in different **types of form-based creativity** illustrated below.

F-creativity comprises four types. At the most conservative end of this continuum lies pattern-adhering creativity, which refers to neologisms that fully comply with established morphological norms. Consider the neologism *ass-tastic* from J. Weiner’s “Good in Bed” [19]:

(1) “*Ass-Tastic! Four Butt Blasters to Get Your Rear in Gear!*”

This formation adheres strictly to a well-established evaluative template in English, whereby the libfix *-tastic* is attached to a noun to create adjectives (e.g., *rocktastic* [20]). The word *ass-tastic* innovates not through structural deviation but by inserting a colloquial, body-related base (*ass*) into a familiar affixational pattern, producing a humorous and attention-grabbing term that aligns tonally with the hyperbolic and body-conscious discourse typical of chick lit. This illustrates how neologisms can achieve expressive novelty and genre-specific resonance while remaining entirely within the bounds of morphological convention.

Moving along the continuum toward greater innovation, pattern-bending emerges, encompassing cases where a neologism follows a familiar morphological pattern but deliberately violates one or more of its typical constraints – both internal and external. One example is *nature-y* in (2):

(2) *The window is full of gorgeous books, folders, boxes and cushions – all covered in hand-blocked prints of trees, birds, and other nature-y stuff* [21, p. 149].

In the above example from Sophie Kinsella's "Shopaholic and Baby", the protagonist Becky Bloomwood uses the word *nature-y* to describe a group of aesthetic objects. The suffix *-y* is typically used with concrete, material nouns that describe sensory or physical qualities (e.g., *muddy*, *cloudy*, *fishy*, *spiky*). The base *nature*, however, is abstract and broad. It's not easily associated with a tangible or descriptive property in the way *mud* or *cloud* are. This makes the derivation *nature-y* semantically unusual stretching the meaning of $[X + -y]_{Adj}$. What's being "bent" is the typical semantic domain in which *-y* operates – from the concrete (*grassy*, *milky*) to the abstract (*nature-y*). The result is a playful, imprecise, but expressive adjective that foregrounds tone and attitude rather than clarity or precision.

Importantly, this choice also aligns with Becky's characterisation throughout the series. She is frequently portrayed as someone who tries to project confidence even when she lacks expertise – most notably during her stint as a financial journalist, where she often attempted to sound knowledgeable while not fully understanding the material. Her use of *nature-y* reflects this pattern: instead of supplying a specific term, she reaches for a vaguely fashionable, expressive approximation that lets her "sound right" without needing precise knowledge. This linguistic behaviour fits seamlessly with her established persona: resourceful, improvisational, and adept at navigating situations in which she is not entirely competent, often emerging unscathed through charm, spontaneity, or verbal creativity.

In neological pattern-extension, lexical creativity often involves the innovative application of an existing morphological structure – either by extending the use of a familiar base or a derivational affix in novel or unconventional contexts. Metaphorical or metonymical processes, both of which recontextualise linguistic elements to generate new meanings, can drive this extension. A notable example of metaphoric base extension in English language chick lit is *caramelly*, as seen in Sophie Kinsella's "Shopaholic and Sister" [22, p. 296]:

(3) *As I pass any shiny surface I stop to admire myself, and flick up my hair so it cascades back down in a caramelly shower.*

The $[N + -ly]_{Adj}$ pattern is productive in English and is frequently used to coin adjectives that denote culturally universal "cradle traits" [23]. Cultural universals – elements, patterns, traits, or institutions common to all known human societies – reflect what the authors describe as "the psychic unity of mankind" [23]. These universals influence linguistic marking tendencies, with language itself being one such universal, and are evident in recurring patterns across domains such as colour terminology [24], temporal reference [25], and causal reasoning [26], to name just a few. In colour description, the dominance of basic colour categories (such as red, yellow, and brown), which reflect the chromatic properties of the physical environment, often constrains lexical innovation. Against this backdrop, the adjective *caramelly*, used as a colour descriptor, stands out as a creative and marked form.

What enables the coinage is the metaphorical extension of the base noun *caramel*, operating through synesthetic

transfer – a process by which a property associated with one sensory modality (taste) is metaphorically mapped onto others (vision and touch). In this case, *caramelly* does not evoke flavour, but rather conveys texture, richness, and sensual visual appeal, describing the protagonist's hair as luscious, flowing, and golden-toned, much like liquid caramel. In the context of the novel, this mapping is anchored by narrative details: the protagonist has just dyed her hair blond, which grounds *caramelly* as a colour term. The neologism thus illustrates the expressive range of synesthetic metaphor and creative morphological extension in chick lit's stylistic landscape.

A number of compound neologisms in my dataset exhibit cases of substituting components in established compounds. This trend is evidenced by *glass floor* in the following excerpt:

(4) *Yayy! Have broken through 150lb glass floor (though may have been through standing on one leg and slightly leaning on washbasin [27, p. 56].*

Formed analogously to the well-established metaphorical compound *glass ceiling* – which denotes an invisible barrier to professional advancement, especially for women – *glass floor* in this instance reconfigures the metaphor to suit a new context: body image and weight loss. Structurally, *glass floor* preserves the N + N compound format of *glass ceiling*, maintaining its metaphorical logic. However, rather than representing a limit one cannot rise above, it represents a perceived lower boundary – a weight threshold the speaker feels unable to fall below. The metaphor thus works in ironic reversal: where the *glass ceiling* signifies systemic constraint, the *glass floor* ironically marks a personal, internalised limit, infused with both anxiety and humour. Formally, this compound reflects F-creative compounding in its repurposing of an entrenched metaphor (*glass + spatial barrier*) and substitution of the directional frame (floor instead of ceiling), resulting in a fresh yet intelligible construct.

Among the various morphological processes observed in English language chick lit, compounding stands out as the only one involved in pattern-creation, giving rise to a distinctive phenomenon that can be labelled "decompounding" – a process whereby an existing compound is reanalysed and split into its constituents, which then function as a syntactic phrase rather than a lexical unit. This is a case of E-creativity, which can be seen, in the following example:

(5) *By the next evening, my heart has **hipped and hopped** all over the place. I am getting ready for supper, staring at myself in the tiny cracked mirror in my room (everything here is old and picturesque), unable to think about anything except: what are my chances? [28, p. 46].*

Traditionally, *hip-hop* functions as a compound noun referring to a genre of music and cultural movement, with no transparent internal syntax. In (5), however, the compound is deconstructed into *hipped* and *hopped*, each treated as a past participle verb. This reanalysis represents a striking formal innovation: *hip*, which is not conventionally attested as a verb in this sense, is creatively "verbed" through analogy with *hop*, its phonological twin

in the original compound. The result is a coordinated verb pair that echoes the rhythmic and expressive character of *hip-hop* while figuratively conveying the speaker's agitated emotional state – her heart has 'danced or ricocheted with anxiety and anticipation.'

Not all neologisms in the ELCL corpus can be assigned with confidence to a single, transparent word-formation process. A small but analytically valuable group are characterised by morphological ambiguity, where multiple interpretive paths are plausible, but none can be definitively confirmed. These cases highlight the difficulty of applying rigid classificatory frameworks to highly playful and context-sensitive lexical innovation exemplifying X-creativity. One notable example of this are the neologisms *scrubscious* and *shoffed* in (6):

(6) *I have this secret vocabulary for my husband. Words I've invented, just to describe him. I've never even told him about them: they just pop into my head, now and then. Like...*

Scrubscious: *the adorable way he scrunches up his face when he's confused, his eyebrows akimbo, his haze imploring, as if to say: 'Explain!' Dan doesn't like to be confused. He likes everything straight. Clear. Out in the open. [...]*

Shoffed: *when life has turned round and punched him in the face so hard, his breath is literary takes away for a moment [29, p. 1].*

The neologism *scrubscious* presents an instructive case of creativity through an ambiguous morphological pathway. At first glance, it invites two plausible analyses. On the one hand, it may be read as the result of suffixation, with *-ous* attached to an invented or truncated base, which would place it within the bounds of F-creativity, pattern-adhering. On the other hand, it can also be interpreted as a blend, combining elements of *scrub/scrunch* with *conscious* or *scrumptious*, likewise a recognised word-formation strategy and therefore still F-creativity. Yet, in both cases, the base remains opaque: no single etymological source can be identified with certainty, and the relation between the formal material and the intended meaning ('the adorable way he scrunches his face when confused') is not entirely transparent.

For this reason, *scrubscious* straddles the boundary between F-creativity and X-creativity. If we assume blending or suffixation, the coinage remains pattern-adhering. If, however, the base is deemed non-recoverable, then the item moves into X-creativity, where the precise formation path cannot be assigned to an established word-formation rule. Its creative force therefore lies not only in the evaluative affixal shape (*-ous*) but also in the very indeterminacy of its construction, which leaves open multiple interpretive routes for decoding.

The coinage *shoffed* is even harder to categorise. On the surface, it resembles a past tense verb formation (with *-ed*) used as an adjective, yet its base *shoff* is unattested in English. The semantics – 'to be taken aback, stunned, or knocked breathless by life's blow' – could suggest a playful alteration of *shoved* or *scoffed*. Alternatively, it may be treated as an instance of invented base + suffixation

where the formal regularity of *-ed* lends the neologism grammatical legitimacy despite the absence of a recognised stem. The word has onomatopoeic overtones: the initial *sh-* and the abrupt *-off-* cluster give the impression of a sudden blow, puff, or shock (like *shoved* + *scoffed* + *shock*). Overall, the effect is a word that "feels" like a past participle form used as an adjective, while remaining opaque in derivation.

Hence, the neologism *shoffed* exemplifies a case of X-creativity. The coinage is built around an entirely novel root, *shoff-*, which has no prior existence in English and no clear morphological or semantic source. While the form is partially anchored in the familiar morphological paradigm ([V + *-ed*]_{Adj}), the creative core of the word lies in its unprecedented root. This combination situates the term outside the scope of both F-creativity, which relies on conventional and predictable word-formation processes, and E-creativity, which stretches but still draws upon recognisable lexical material. Instead, *shoffed* embodies X-creativity, in which a wholly new morpheme is introduced into the lexicon, semantically motivated only within the speaker's private context.

As evidenced by my dataset of neologisms in English language chick lit, **meaning-based creativity** draws on the cognitive potential of metaphor and metonymy.

Metaphor-based creativity manifests through the exploitation of underlying conceptual mappings that are applied in novel ways. These patterns correspond exactly to the creative uses of metaphor identified in [8]: (1) an extension of a conventional metaphorical mapping; (2) using a metaphor to talk about something that it's not usually used to talk about; (3) employing a metaphor that interacts with metonymy in a novel way; (4) altering the valence of a conventional metaphor; (5) introducing more detail into a conventional metaphorical expression or mapping.

I will now give an overview of these types.

First, "the extension of a conventional metaphorical mapping" involves retaining an established source–target relationship while intensifying or elaborating it. For example, the progression generation gap → generation chasm → Generation Grand Canyon in (7) *People talk about generation gap. Generation chasm, more like. Generation Grand Canyon* [30, p. 13] builds on the conventional mapping INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE, gradually amplifying the perceived scale of separation. The escalation from a "gap" to the "Grand Canyon" produces both humour and conceptual vividness.

Second, "using a metaphor to talk about something it is not usually used to talk about" entails applying a familiar source domain to an unconventional target. This can be seen in re-tread in (8): *Jude had been to the gym where she ended up reading some articles calling single girls over thirty 're-treads'* [31, p. 21]. The metaphor re-tread maps the properties of retreaded tyres onto women over thirty, conceptualising them as "used", cosmetically "upgraded", yet devalued in comparison to younger women. Its effect is amplified by its novelty: tyres are not a conventional source domain for describing women, which makes

the metaphor particularly salient. It frames ageing and life experience as a loss of market value while presenting self-care as an attempt to remain competitive. At the same time, it exposes and reinforces ageist and objectifying assumptions, portraying women as commodities within a dating “market”, where desirability declines over time despite continued viability.

Third, “employing a metaphor that interacts with metonymy in a novel way involves” combining two cognitive mechanisms is evident in testosterone-meter in (9) *If we had a testosterone-meter hanging on the kitchen wall the mercury level would have gone through the ceiling* [32, p. 47]. The neologism is grounded in the metonymy TESTOSTERONE FOR SEXUALITY and is embedded within a metaphor that treats sexuality as a measurable quantity. The imagined “meter” and “the rising level” create a vivid, quasi-scientific representation of an abstract human quality.

Fourth, “altering the valence of a conventional metaphor” refers to a shift in its evaluative meaning. One example of this is armpit huggers in (10) *And because of that I'd had to wear these funny mesh paper-type knickers. They were horrible and they were huge. Armpit huggers* [32, pp. 276–277]. The underlying metaphor for armpit huggers is the primary metaphor grounded in the embodied experience of being held or hugged – an act that traditionally conveys warmth, safety, and affection. In armpit huggers, the primary metaphor is reinterpreted negatively to convey discomfort and awkwardness. The underlying conceptual mapping remains intact, but its emotional polarity is reversed, producing a humorous and slightly grotesque effect.

Finally, “introducing more detail into a conventional metaphorical mapping” involves modifying its internal structure. For instance, the neologism *detranced* in (11) *Shazzer suddenly detranced. 'Stop him, stop him,' she screamed, flinging herself at the receiver. 'Shut up, Tom, shut up, shut up, shut up'* [31, p. 160]. A trance is a psychological state, and states are conventionally conceptualised as containers in English (the CONTAINER metaphor): people fall into a trance or come out of it, as if entering and leaving a space. In Fielding's [9, p. 160] passage, the neologism detrance implies that Shazzer actively removes herself from this state. The coinage highlights the suddenness and agency of her mental shift, presenting it not as passive emergence but as deliberate exit. Thus, detrance extends the conventional container metaphor by adding the idea that one can actively “take oneself out” of the state.

As evidenced by my dataset of neologisms in English language chick lit, metonymy-based creativity manifests through the exploitation of underlying conceptual mappings – both via reductions and extensions – applied in novel ways. Littlemore J. and Tagg C. [4; 7] developed a taxonomy of meaning-based creative use of metonymy, while acknowledging that the classification is not exhaustive. The following six types of creative metonymic use have been identified: (1) the extension or elaboration of an established metonymic relationship; (2) extended use

of the same underlying ICM; (3) the juxtaposition of two established metonymic relationships; (4) combination and/or juxtaposition with metaphor; (5) ‘twice-true’ metonymy; (6) possible personification. Some of these types are evident in the manufacture of creative neologisms in English language chick lit.

One prominent pattern is “the extension or elaboration of an established metonymic relationship”. For example, in tentry in (12) *Tentry: that taut, defensive way he behaves whenever the subject of my father comes up in the conversation (He thinks I don't notice)* [29, p. 1], the conventional expression on tenterhooks (where physical tension stands for psychological unease) is extended by adding a new behavioural dimension: tension is reinterpreted not only as internal discomfort but also as defensive behaviour.

A closely related type is “the extended use of the same underlying ICM”. In Lewinsky-esque in (13) *Samantha sighed again. "He calls you Lewinsky-esque"* [19, p. 156], the proper name activates the ICM of the Lewinsky–Clinton scandal. While PERSON FOR TRAIT metonymy initially points to a salient physical characteristic, the neologism extends this model to include broader associations of public exposure, humiliation, and betrayal, thus transforming a descriptive label into a culturally loaded marker.

Another type involves “the juxtaposition of two established metonymic relationships”. One example of this is (14) *"Okay," said the doctor, laughing. "My point is, they could be the best doughnuts in the world. They could be the Platonic ideal of doughnut-ness. But if you've already had breakfast, and you aren't really hungry, ideally, you should be able to walk right by"* [19, p. 37]. In the discussion of doughnut-ness, the interpretation relies on a chain of metonymies: DOUGHNUT FOR SWEET FOOD (SPECIFIC FOR GENERAL), combined with SWEET FOOD FOR TEMPTATION, an embodied metonymy grounded in sensory experience. The layering of these relationships allows a simple lexical item to encode a more complex experiential meaning.

Metonymy may also appear in combination with metaphor, as in mentionitis in (15) *"It's Mentionitis," Jude was saying. – "What's that?" said Magda. – "Oh, you know, when someone's name keeps coming up all the time when it's not strictly relevant: "Rebecca says this" or "Rebecca's got a car like that"* [31, p. 56]. Here, the conventional metaphor LOVE IS A DISEASE is combined with a metonymic pattern where a symptom stands for a condition. The repeated mentioning of a person is reinterpreted as a “symptom”, producing a humorous diagnosis of romantic obsession.

The analysis also identified other, not previously described, types of creative use of metonymy. One of these is “redundant domain reduction”, as in *Obama-esque* in (16) *Hah! I seized the moment, adopting a statesmanlike, Obama-esque tone. 'Yes. Now. I have something to say: Billy – and particularly Mabel – hitting is not allowed in our family'* [27, pp. 137–138]. Here, the broader category of STATESMANSHIP, already reduced to the salient feature of controlled, authoritative speech in statesmanlike

tone, is further narrowed to a single, culturally salient exemplar – Barack Obama. This creates a metonymic chain in which a category is represented by one prominent member, who in turn stands for a specific communicative style associated with rhetorical discipline and eloquence. At the same time, the addition of Obama-esque is, strictly speaking, redundant, since the key semantic features are already encoded in statesmanlike. Its motivation is therefore not semantic necessity but contextual salience: the heroine selects Obama not because of a nuanced awareness of his distinctive rhetorical style, but because he is the most visible and readily available exemplar of “statesmanship” at the time, besides, she is not particularly interested in politics and is unlikely to be drawing on nuanced knowledge of Obama’s distinctive qualities compared with other politicians.

Finally, creative neologisms may involve “altering the valence of a metonymic mapping”, like in (17) *Can you believe it? How dramatic can you get? I know her husband is Italian, but I really don't think he's likely to kill the pair of them. He's a waiter, not a Mafia stooge, so what's he going to do? **Black pepper** them to death?* [32, p. 12]. In black pepper them to death, the conventional metonymic relation INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION is retained but semantically intensified to the point of absurdity. An action that is typically neutral or positive (seasoning) is exaggerated into harmful excess, producing a comic reversal of their usual evaluative polarity.

Across examples in my database, neologisms perform multiple **functions**: they encode class and gender commentary, foreground affect and intimacy, and create space for humor, irony, and play. They are stylistic markers of character and genre – tools for expressing emotional registers, satirizing social categories, and affirming the performative, confessional voice typical of chick lit. They thus increase narrative entwinement while affirming the genre’s capacity to counterbalance frivolity with awareness and sentiment with critique.

One prominent function of neologisms in English language chick lit is social irony and sociolectal identity marking, as seen in *unbologna* in (18):

(18) *We sit on the empty bench in the shade, while he sniffles, and eat out sandwiches, which have some sort of vegetable spread in them and I think, **unbologna*** [33, p. 45].

In “The nanny diaries” [33], the protagonist is a working-class student caring for a little boy born into a wealthy family. Her use of the new word unbologna to describe the child’s sandwich highlights this gap. Bologna is processed luncheon meat. It is often associated with affordable, everyday meals consumed by the middle- or working class. By contrast, the child’s unbologna vegetable spread represents the family’s affluence and status-driven lifestyle, where even a child’s meal is a curated, health-conscious choice. The prefix un- suggests more than just an alternative to bologna. For the nanny, who humorously coins the word to make sense of this unfamiliar spread, unbologna becomes a linguistic marker of her outsider status – a way to label the subtle, everyday reminders that she and the child she cares for live in vastly different socioeconomic worlds.

Hyperbole and parody also play an important role, especially in consumer culture commentary. *Pramaholic* in (18), for example, uses the libfix *-aholic* to parody compulsive parenting consumption, echoing the branding logic of *shopaholics*:

(19) *“Hey, Bex”. Suze comes over, pushing the twins with one hand and the state-of-the-art buggy with the other. “Do you think I need a new pram?” – “Er... .” I look at the twins. “Isn't that double buggy quite new?” – “Yes, but I mean, this one's really manoeuvrable. It would be really practical! I think I should get it. I mean, you can't have too many prams, can you?” There's a kind of lust in her eyes. Since when did Suze become such a **pramaholic**?* [34, p. 106].

In this scene from Sophie Kinsella’s “Shopaholic and baby” [34], the protagonist describes her friend Suze’s compulsive desire to acquire yet another high-end pram. The libfix *-aholic* in this newly coined word imparts both hyperbole and humour, intensifying the character’s behaviour to the level of parody.

Other neologisms serve more intimate or affective functions, adding texture to emotional states. *Achey-painy*, a reduplicated neologism, exemplifies this:

(20) *The baby suddenly kicks me hard inside and I wince. Everything's so ... **achey-painy**. Me. Luke. The whole horrible situation* [34, p. 283].

The neologism is a creative reduplication, built from the base words *ache* and *pain*, with the duplicated suffix *-y* added for both musicality and emotional tone. The repetition and modification mark it as child-like, melodramatic, and affectively loaded – it exaggerates physical and emotional discomfort during pregnancy in a soft, almost whimsical way. Rather than clinical or precise, the word conveys a diffuse sense of distress that is embodied, emotional, and narrative-friendly. It is pain made palatable and performative.

Humor and metalinguistic play are also recurrent, like in (21):

(21) *9.17. p.m. Oh God. Everyone is ridiculing me and retweeting my drunken birds tweet. Must try and do damage control.*

<@JoneseyBJ # **twunkbirds** Look, sorry. I really wish I hadn't – what is the past tense of tweet? Tweeted? Twittered?>

<@_Roxter@JoneseyBJ I believe the appropriate term is '**Twat**'.>

<@JoneseyBJ @_Roxter Are you being grammatical or rude?>

<@_Roxter@JoneseyBJ The former *pretentious voice*: from the Latin, **Twitto**, **Twittarse**, **Twittat**.>

He's funny. And pic is handsome. And young-looking. I wonder who he is? ... [27, p. 147].

In this Twitter exchange featuring *twunk*, *twatting*, and their mock-Latin conjugations (*twitto*, *twittarse*, *twittat*), the author plays with the evolving lexicon of social media and its collision with older norms of propriety and grammar. These coinages dramatize the generational and technological friction embedded in contemporary communication, all the while satirizing digital self-performance and public faux pas.

Additionally, some neologisms create personal or domestic mythologies that help fictional characters construct relational intimacy. *Witchies* and *Ho* in (21), for example, represent whimsical child-speak within a family unit:

(22) They do strange things, too. ... Like they call sandwiches ‘*witchies*.’ Moreover, a drink is a ‘titchy’ (except if it’s water, which is ‘*Ho*’) [35, p. 156].

These clipped forms index playfulness and emotional bonding, generating a linguistic microcosm in which even mundane objects become enchanted. On the other hand, *glass floor* humorously converts the ubiquitous *glass ceiling* to represent a perceived weight-loss barrier, redefining feminist discourse in terms of body image and personal effort. The metaphor is simultaneously an ironic critique of society and a self-ironizing reflection on mastery of the body.

Conclusions. The analysis has demonstrated that creative neologisms in English language chick lit emerge from a dynamic interplay between form-based and meaning-based processes. On the formal level, authors exploit the full spectrum of word-formation strategies – from pattern-adhering to highly innovative and ambiguous formations – to produce lexical items that are both recognisable and strikingly novel. This

continuum of F-, E-, and X-creativity highlights not only the flexibility of English morphology but also the genre’s sensitivity to voice, characterisation, and stylistic foregrounding. On the semantic level, neologisms are systematically grounded in metaphor and metonymy, which are extended, combined, or reinterpreted to generate nuanced and contextually rich meanings. Together, these mechanisms reveal that lexical innovation in chick lit is neither arbitrary nor purely ornamental, but cognitively motivated and structurally patterned. Functionally, neologisms play a central role in shaping the discourse of the genre. They contribute to humour, irony, and parody, while also serving as markers of social identity, emotional expression, and interpersonal intimacy. Through such coinages, authors encode cultural commentary on gender, consumerism, and relationships, often blending light-hearted tone with critical insight. At the same time, neologisms enhance narrative voice, reinforcing the confessional, performative, and self-aware style characteristic of chick lit. Overall, the findings suggest that English language chick lit constitutes a fertile domain for studying contemporary lexical creativity, where linguistic innovation operates as a key resource for meaning-making, character construction, and the reflection of broader social realities.

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