

# Lexical Creativity in Online Music Reviews: A Corpus Study of Hyphenated Neologistic Compounds

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## Abstract

*The language of the 21st century encompasses a wide array of texts, many of which can be found on the Internet. While the language of Internet blogs, posts and memes has received considerable attention from scholars, the language of online music reviews remains one of the most underresearched Internet genres. One of the music reviewing websites offering lexically creative content is Pitchfork. Authors of the reviews are prolific with regard to the creation of hyphenated neologistic compounds such as all-proceeds-to-charity wine, the last-real-gangsta-standing attitude and smartphone-sucking lives. The aim of this study is to analyse hyphenated compound occasionalisms and neologisms in Pitchfork music reviews in terms of their meaning, structure and function. The analysis features compounds obtained from the corpus of music reviews created for the purpose of the study. Quantitative analysis involves all compounds in the reviews, while qualitative analysis is employed for neologistic compounds. The findings indicate that two-element compounds are the most common in the corpus as far as compound structure is concerned. In terms of the syntactic criterion, compound adjectives are the most frequently used, followed by compound nouns, with few instances of compound verbs and adverbs. Neologistic compounds are employed for the purposes of ludic wordplay as well as achieving humour and irony. The most salient features of neologistic compounds are high context-dependence, unpredictability and allusions to pop-culture.*

*Keywords: lexical creativity, neologisms, compounds, music reviews, digital genres.*

## Streszczenie

Kreatywność leksykalna w internetowych recenzjach muzycznych. Badanie korpusowe neologistycznych złożeń

*Język XXI wieku obejmuje szeroką gamę tekstów, z których wiele można znaleźć w Internecie. Podczas gdy język internetowych blogów, postów i memów spotkał się z dużym zainteresowaniem badaczy, język internetowych recenzji muzycznych pozostaje jednym z najmniej zbadanych gatunków internetowych. Jedną ze stron internetowych oferujących leksykalnie kreatywne treści jest Pitchfork. Autorzy recenzji są kreatywni pod względem*

tworzenia neologizmów z łącznikami, np. *all-proceeds-to-charity wine, the last-real-gang tq-standing i smartphone-sucking lives*. Celem tego badania jest analiza złożeń z łącznikami (neologizmów i okazjonalizmów) w recenzjach muzycznych Pitchfork pod kątem ich znaczenia, struktury i funkcji. Analiza obejmuje neologizmy uzyskane z korpusu recenzji muzycznych stworzonego na potrzeby badania. Analiza ilościowa obejmuje wszystkie złożenia w recenzjach, podczas gdy analiza jakościowa jest stosowana do złożeń neologicznych. Wyniki badania pokazują, że pod względem struktury, w korpusie najczęściej występują złożenia dwuelementowe. Pod względem składniowym, najczęściej używane są przymiotniki złożone, w drugiej kolejności rzeczowniki złożone, a najrzadziej w korpusie występują czasowniki i przysłówki złożone. Złożenia neologiczne są wykorzystywane do celów ludycznej gry słownej, a także do osiągnięcia humoru i ironii. Najważniejszymi cechami złożeń neologicznych są wysoka zależność od kontekstu, nieprzewidywalność i odniesienia do popkultury.

*Słowa kluczowe: kreatywność leksykalna, neologizmy, złożenia, recenzje muzyczne, gatunki cyfrowe.*

## 1. Introduction

The language of the Internet has certainly shaped the landscape of texts which can be read via this medium. The mere fact that a certain text can be found on the Internet and not in the print form moulds the text and has an impact on its final form. Numerous written genres have undergone the process of remediation in that they can also be found in the digital form (Kathpalia 2021). It is also the case when it comes to music reviews. While print music criticism used to be more withdrawn and less direct, Internet reviews display more characteristics typical of the informal register, probably due to the more direct nature of the medium. Moreover, it is a medium that encourages lexical creativity. Discourse related to art also has a propensity to display more lexical creativity compared to its non-artistic counterparts. One of the music reviewing websites where texts demonstrate a high level of lexical creativity is Pitchfork, an American webpage devoted to music-related discourse, for the most part music criticism. Pitchfork criticism is known for its capacity to influence the career of artists in meaningful ways, which is commonly referred to as the “Pitchfork Effect” (Walker 2024). This phenomenon refers to the website’s ability to transform artists’ career either in a positive or negative way depending on the type of the review. Pitchfork contributors tend to use direct and creative language. Particularly interesting instances of creative lexical inventions which can be found on the website are multi-element neologicistic compounds where elements are joined together by hyphens. These compounds often showcase the innovative use of language in contemporary music criticism. This paper aims to provide an analysis of hyphenated compounds in Pitchfork music reviews in terms of their meaning, structure and function with particular consideration to neologicistic compounds.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Novel word formations

Examining novel word formations allows one to identify the characteristics of various types of enrichments made to the lexicon. Neologisms, occasionalisms and hapax legomena all refer to novel word formations, yet they are placed on different points on the novel word formation spectrum. Hapax legomena are new words which appear solely once in a particular text, i.e. “words with only a single attestation” (Bauer, 1988: 65). The Bible is abundant with this kind of novel word creations, e.g. *Behemoth*. Occasionalisms are also referred to as nonce words (Hohenhaus 2007; Štekauer 2002). They have been employed several times but have not yet entered the language in the sense of a wide spread use. Nonce words tend to be created in everyday spoken language to fulfil a highly specific communicative need. Crystal (2019: 142) illustrates this with an example of a word *fluddle* as a term intermediate between a puddle and a flood to describe water residue that can be seen on the road after a storm. This word is not likely to be included in a dictionary; it was made specifically for that occasion. Hohenhaus (1996: 349f) provides examples of attested nonce-formations such as *reporter-turned-hostess-turned-novelist* and *split-the-difference deal*. Nonce words have the capacity to become neologisms under certain conditions. Hohenhaus (2005: 364) suggests that a nonce-formation becomes a neologism when “it begins to be recognized as item-familiar and catches on in the usage of other speakers”. In other words, whether or not a particular occasionalism is likely to become a neologism, hinges on the language users themselves as they ultimately “vote with their speech” as a result of which some words are bound to be used more profusely than others. Semantically transparent nonce words are said to be more likely to enter the lexicon if used frequently and with sufficient exposure (Guz, 2012: 232). The majority of nonce words are the result of an interplay between the language, extra-linguistic reality and the speech community (Štekauer, 2002: 97). Neologisms can be predominantly found in literature, specialised language, journalism, advertising and in young people’s language (Mattiello 2016). They may be a response to social, cultural or technological changes. This overview shows that hapax legomena could be treated as indicators of text uniqueness. Nonce words are employed to accommodate very specific communication needs. Neologisms are the creative inventions that have become a part of the lexicon. The section indicates that not every nonce word has the potential to become a neologism.

## **2.2 Lexical creativity vs. lexical productivity**

Attempts have been made to delineate a distinct boundary between the notions of lexical creativity and productivity (Schröder and Mühleisen 2010; Bauer 1983). Initially, it was thought that it is the type of word formation process applied that differentiates these two concepts. Regular word formation processes were deemed as a preserve of lexical productivity, whereas lexical creativity was confined to marginal morphology (Miller 2014; Ronneberger-Sibold 2008; van Marle 1985). However, the validity of this distinction was undermined by several researchers. In their study, Dal and Namer (2018) show that both word creation and productivity in French make use of regular word formation processes. After investigating a corpus of politically correct terminology, Konieczna (2012) differentiates between creative morphological processes (blending, analogical extension, internal modification, clipping, initialisation, and abbreviation) and productive morphological processes (predominantly compounding and derivation). It is noteworthy, however, that compounding and suffixation emerged as highly frequent processes employed to produce creatively formed words (Konieczna, 2012: 15). Despite such conclusions which can be drawn from certain studies, many scholars believe that attempts to capture the exact nature of productivity have been in vein so far or highly challenging (Zawada 2006; Spencer 2019). However, it is possible to move towards the creation of comprehensive definitions of lexical creativity and productivity by pinpointing their distinctive features which may ultimately lead to the creation of a more clear-cut distinction.

If the type of word formation process, i.e. regular or marginal, cannot be perceived as a distinguishing feature of the two concepts in question, other features which could serve this purpose are worth examining. As noted by Štekauer (1998; 2005), productivity performs an onomasiological function; it yields new lexemes which are either construed to name already existing yet unnamed entities or utterly new phenomena. Hence, it most often fills a gap in the lexicon (see Fig.1).

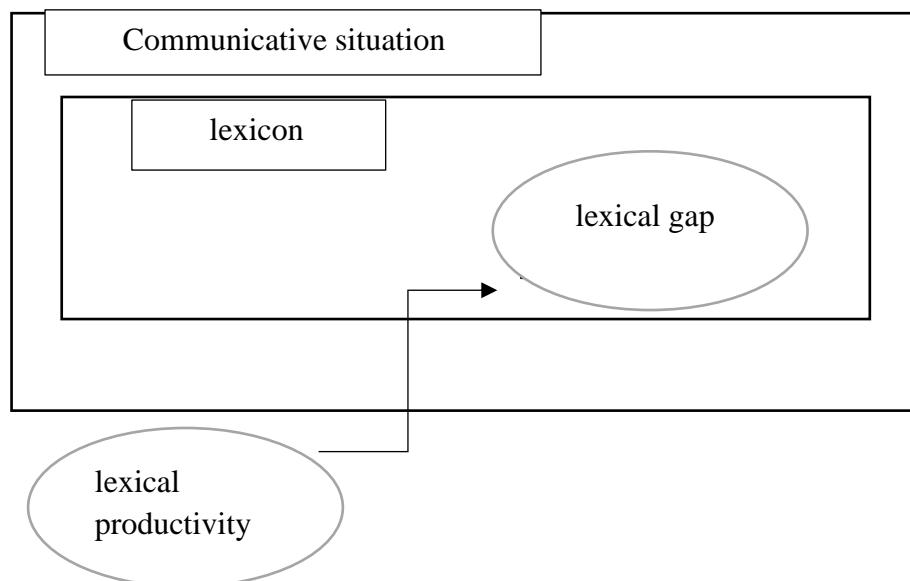


Figure 1. The onomasiological function of lexical productivity. Own work.

Lexical creativity, on the contrary, performs the non-onomasiological function as creative lexical inventions are “never intended to fill any real or permanent naming need in the wider community of speakers” (Munat, 2015: 95) while at the same time they “may be productively formed, serving an impelling communicative need of the moment” (Munat, 2015: 95). Munat (2015: 93) suggests that “productivity and creativity often function in much the same way, although the effects produced may be quite different”. In summary, it is the purpose and effect that help distinguish these two notions, not the word formation pattern applied. This could be illustrated with the following metaphor: *instead of eating something basic, one wants to order a fancy dish*. It is not that the fridge is empty, but they are just willing to eat something more sophisticated as the available food does not satisfy the culinary need of the moment. Hence, one also resorts to lexical creativity when none of the existing words in the lexicon is capable of fulfilling the specific communicative need of the moment. Zawada (2006: 235) views lexical creativity as “a graded phenomenon ranging from the more conventional and predictable to the less conventional and unpredictable”. Such an approach allows one to examine the products of lexical creativity by assessing the degree of their unpredictability. Carter (2011: 337) highlights that what makes creativity unique is that it is not confined to genius individuals, but can also be found in the language of ordinary people. The above deliberations indicate that there is a wide array of features that can help differentiate lexical creativity and lexical productivity from each other. The type of word formation process involved in the creation of a particular word might not be the best feature that allows one to differentiate lexical productivity and lexical creativity.

This is due to the fact that regular word formation processes are also utilised to yield creative inventions. The features that could draw a more prominent line between these two concepts are the purpose and the effect. Lexical creativity allows for eliciting an effect that could not be achieved with the use of readily available items from the lexicon. The purpose of lexical creativity is to contribute to the unconventional use of language.

## 2.3 Compounds

### 2.3.1. General aspects of compounds

Compounds constitute a substantial component of lexical enrichment. According to Crystal (2019: 139) “[a] compound is a unit of vocabulary which consists of more than one lexical stem”. Compounding is one of the most productive word-formation processes in English. It is present in most world languages, and in certain languages, it is the only word-formation process (Scalise and Vogel 2010). The overall structure of compounds can be portrayed by the following schema (Guevara and Scalise 2009: 108):

$$[X R Y]_Z$$

where X, Y and Z are the lexical categories, R is the relation between constituents (Cetnarowska, 2019: 51). Compounds prove to be particularly useful when one is willing to “express quite complex ideas in an economical manner” (Benczes, 2010: 217). Huber (2023: 11) views a compound as “a conceptual unit that can (but does not necessarily have to) be different from that of the combination of its components”. Understanding the meaning of multi-element compounds sometimes necessitates paraphrasing them. A compound whose meaning can be deduced from the meaning of its constituents can be explicated with the following example in German. Noun+noun compounding is one of the most frequent and productive types of compounding in German. An extreme case of a 79-letter nonce compound in German is *das Rinderkennzeichnungsfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz* (Dudenredaktion 2017). It is the name of a legal act pertaining to the supervision of beef labelling. Despite being lengthy and intimidating at first glance, it is actually a fully transparent compound which can be dissected into the following constituents sporadically intertwined with a linking -s- (*das Fugen -s*) which is supposed to facilitate pronunciation:

- Rinder=beef cattle
- Kennzeichnung=labelling
- -s-

- Fleisch=meat
- Etikettierung=labelling
- -s-
- Überwachung=monitoring
- -s-
- Aufgabenübertragung= delegation of tasks
- -s-
- Gesetz=law

Due to the lack of any metaphorical content, the constituents point clearly to the meaning of the compound.

Elements which make up the structure of a compound are termed differently by various scholars. Bauer (1983) and Crystal (2019) suggest that compounds can be dissected into two or more stems. Instead of using the term stem Matthews (1991) and Haspelmath (2002) state that compounds consist of two or more lexemes. Other scholars point out that a compound is composed of two or more bases (Huddleston and Pullum 2002; Bauer, Lieber and Plag 2013). In the most simplistic terms, a compound is made up of two or more words (Fabb 1998; Marchand 1969). In this paper, constituents which are the building blocks of a compound are referred to as elements. Various compound spelling alternatives, that is with a hyphen, without a hyphen or with a space in between could be enumerated. The analysis conducted in this paper focuses exclusively on hyphenated compounds.

Huber (2023) identifies a significant research gap as far as compounds are concerned. She draws one's attention to the fact that it is mostly two-element compounds that are subject to analysis. In order to fill this research gap, the present study tackles two-, three- and multi-element compounds. It also focuses on their neologistic properties.

### 2.3.2. Neologistic compounds

Neologistic compounds are novel word formations in the form of compounds. Neologistic compounds may be hapax legomena, occasionalisms or neologisms. In this sense, the term neologistic encompasses all kinds of novel word formation. Crystal (2019: 145) provides one with the following literary examples of neologistic compounds:

- Shakespeare's works, e.g. *pitypleading eyes, oak-cleaving thunderbolts*

- juxtapositions of Ulysses, e.g. *a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freely freckled shaggybearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero*

- Orwellian compoundspeak, e.g. *doublethink, oldspeak, thoughtcrime, newspeak*

He also points out that creative compounds could be already found in Old English, e.g. *hronrad* ‘sea’ (literally, ‘whale-road’).

Neology and compounding have been studied separately, yet there is a dearth of research on neologistic compounds. A rare instance of a study on the topic is the one by Benczes (2005) where she elaborates on compound neologisms with metaphorical content. She focuses on noun-noun combinations only.

### 2.3.3. Phrasal compounds

Phrasal compounds, such as *why-is-it-so-boring type of a film* or *I-don't-like-this-place attitude*, constitute an interesting object of linguistic analysis. When analysed from the terminological angle, they are named differently by various scholars. Jovanovic (2005), Meibauer (2007), Scalise and Bisetto (2009), Bisetto and Scalise (2005), Štekauer and Lieber (2005) dub them as phrasal compounds. Bauer (1983) employs a similar term, namely phrase compounds. Huddleston and Pullum (2002), on the other hand, use the term dephrasal compounds. Finally, Plag (2003) uses the term syntactic phrases to describe phrasal compounds.

There is no agreement as to the precise status of phrasal compounds. Some scholars do not deem them as words since they do not comply with the “No Phrase Constraint” which stipulates that syntactic phrases cannot be incorporated into words. For this very reason, Meibauer (2007: 233) portrays phrasal compounds as “a sort of morphological provocation” and believes that they “display an expressive flavour typical of marginal morphology” (Meibauer, 2007: 233). Despite their vague status, they do appear in literature pertaining to word formation. Bauer (2017: 42) provides an example of a particularly lengthy phrasal compound “he was the groundsman, handyman, if-there’s-any-sort-of-difficulty-ask-William-and-he’ll-fix-it-for-you person”. Their violating of the “No Phrase Constraint” renders them alike to jokes in some sense as “there is a parallel with jokes that appears to have to do with incongruity, a notion that is fundamental for a general theory of humour” (Meibauer, 2007: 249). Violating the constraint could be, therefore, equalled with incongruity. This incongruity can be attributed to the fact that it is unusual to combine a phrasal meaning with a word meaning. Owing to this, Meibauer (2007: 256) highlights that “ad hoc phrasal compounds are understandable and witty to a high degree”



(2007: 233) and are “wittier than their alternatives”. This could be the reason why they are used profusely in the analysed corpus. They can be considered neologistic compounds owing to the aforementioned characteristics.

Missud (2018) analysed phrasal adjectival compounds in literary works. The author distinguishes three groups of compounds: “classic adjectival compounding”, “marginal adjectival compounding” and “extreme adjectival compounding”. This is due to the fact that compounds presented in the study range from two-element to fifteen-element compounds. The paper highlights the possibility of creating extremely lengthy phrasal compounds.

#### **2.4 Analogy in word formation**

Analogy in word formation is described as “the process whereby a new word is coined that is clearly modelled on an already existing word or on a set of words constituting a word family (i.e. a group of words sharing the same base(s)) or a series (i.e. a group of words sharing the same formation, or a subgroup of the same formation))” (Mattiello 2016). In Munat’s (2015) words, analogy in word formation can be analysed from three main vantage points. It may be viewed as:

1. one type of word creation (Hickey 2006)
2. the main force which plays a “central role in the mechanism of linguistic creativity” (Veale 2007: 209)
3. an umbrella term encompassing all types of word creation (Miller 2014: 100) and a vehicle by which “all word creation originates and spreads”.

Analogy certainly plays a pivotal role in the creative word formation in the analysed examples. It may stem from the fact that moulding new creations on the already existing words or phrases facilitates the understanding of such creations. The meaning is thus a combination of the frame from the base and the new infused meaning. Some part of the meaning, however, may deviate from the original. Munat (2015) enumerates *buppie*, *chapess* and *outro* as analogous to *yuppie*, *chap* and *intro* while at the same time stressing the fact that even though they were created by means of analogy does not render them fully transparent.

#### **2.5 Online music reviews as a digital genre**

There is a wide variety of genres related to music on the Internet. These include music blogs, official band websites and music reviews. As far as music reviews are concerned, one can discern single, album and concert reviews. Albums reviews are the most frequent type of music

criticism on digital platforms due to the high number of albums that are being released in the 21st century. Even though album reviews are written by professional critics and writers, they have to appeal to a wider audience. This audience may be challenging to define in a straightforward manner due to the phenomenon of context collapse on the Web. Context collapse alludes to the fact that digital genres do not seem to cater to a clearly defined and homogenous audience (which was the case for many print genres) and hence the audience may include people with different amounts of expertise on a given topic (Davis and Jurgenson 2014).

Album reviews serve a threefold function: they are meant to provide a description, evaluation and interpretation of a particular album. The overarching purpose of a review, however, is to provide a balanced evaluation (Shaw 2009). Because of that, even the description of particular elements may be imbued with evaluation and persuasion (Walker 2024; Kathpalia 2021).

Internet language displays a wide array of distinctive facets, some of them being directness, the use of colloquialisms and emphatic devices. Hyperlinks bolster intertextuality as they enable one to be redirected to a different article in a matter of seconds (Pérez-Llantada and Luzón 2022). Online reviews are an instance of remediation of print genres whereby an originally print genre is also published online and it is the very medium that reshapes the genre in a meaningful way (Kathpalia 2021). Apart from the body of the review, a digital review is accompanied by a plethora of metainformation such as the posting date, the number of comments as well as photos. Digital reviews also differ from the print ones as in the former there are affiliate links at the bottom of the page so that the reader can buy the album immediately after having read the review. Online book and film reviews have been studied from multiple vantage points including the analysis of their structure and pragmatics (Chik and Taboada 2020; De Jong and Burgers 2013). Online music criticism, however, has received scarce scholarly attention. In order to fill this research gap, this paper aims to provide an analysis of compounds that can be found in a corpus of online music reviews.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Corpus design**

The analysis is based on a corpus of album reviews drawn from Pitchfork. Pitchfork is an American music reviewing website created in 1996. According to Similarweb (2024), the monthly traffic at the website as of February 2024 was 11.2 million. The webpage is notorious

for its direct reviews which are sometimes considered scathing. Directness and linguistic creativity are emblematic features of these reviews owing to the unfiltered way of writing. Authors of the reviews are prolific with regard to the creation of neologistic compounds such as *all-proceeds-to-charity wine*, *the last-real-gangsta-standing attitude* and *smartphone-sucking lives*. A corpus amounting to 20 480 words in total was created for the purpose of this study. It encompasses 23 reviews written in the years 1999-2021 (see Table 1). Compounds subject to analysis are drawn from the Corpus of Pitchfork Music Reviews (CPMR) created for the purpose of this study. All compounds (340 units) are subject to quantitative analysis whereas qualitative analysis is presented based on selected examples of neologistic compounds. Excerpts drawn from particular reviews are labelled according to the following pattern [CPMR-year of publishing the review-review number in the corpus]. In this paper, neologistic compounds encompass all novel formations (hapax legomena, occasionalisms, neologisms). Only hyphenated compounds are examined.

Table 1. Reviews included in the Corpus of Pitchfork Music Reviews (CPMR). Own work.

Review number in the corpus	Album review date	Name of the artist with the album title	Author of the review
1	1999	Moby-Play	Brent DiCrescenzo
2	2000	Sonic Youth -NYC Ghosts & Flowers	Brent DiCrescenzo
3	2001	Björk-Vespertine	Ryan Schreiber
4	2002	David Bowie-Heathen	Eric Carr
5	2003	M83-Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghosts	Matt LeMay
6	2004	The Killers-Hot Fuss	Johnny Loftus
7	2005	Sufjan Stevens- Illinois	Amanda Petrusich
8	2006	Camera Obscura-Let's Get Out of This Country	Brian Howe
9	2007	Rihanna-Good Girl Gone Bad	Tom Breihan
10	2008	David Byrne/Brian Eno-Everything That Happens Will Happen Today	Joe Tangari
11	2009	Lady Sovereign-Jigsaw	Ian Cohen
12	2010	Flying Lotus- Cosmogramma	Joe Colly
13	2011	Coldplay- Mylo Xyloto	Ian Cohen
14	2012	The Avett Brothers-The Carpenter	Rachael Maddux
15	2013	Phoenix-Bankrupt!	Stuart Berman
16	2014	Madlib/Freddie Gibbs-Piñata	Nate Patrin
17	2015	Justin Bieber-Purpose	Ivy Nelson

18	2016	Parquet Courts-Human Performance	Jenn Pelly
19	2017	Logic-Everybody	Sheldon Pearce
20	2018	Snail Mail-Lush	Ryan Dombal
21	2019	billy woods/Kenny Segal-Hiding Places	Marcus J. Moore
22	2020	Dua Lipa-Future Nostalgia	Anna Gaca
23	2021	Madlib-Sound Ancestors	Andy Cush

### 3.2 Quantitative and qualitative approaches

The purpose of this study is to analyse hyphenated compounds in Pitchfork music reviews in terms of their meaning, structure and function. The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

- 1) What is the structure of hyphenated compounds in CPMR?
- 2) What parts of speech are the compounds used as?
- 3) What are the word formation patterns employed in the creation of neologistic compounds?

This study combines a qualitative and quantitative approach. Quantitative approach involves dividing all hyphenated compounds into groups based on the number of elements they consist of. The second step of quantitative analysis entails categorising hyphenated compounds based on the function they perform, i.e. what part of speech they are used as. Qualitative approach aims at providing examples of neologistic compounds in context and examining the patterns that led to their creation.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1 Quantitative data analysis

First, all hyphenated compounds (340 units) were divided into three groups based on the number of elements they consist of. This yielded three groups:

- 2-element compounds - *hernia-busting* (vocals)
- 3-element compounds - *more-is-more* (approach)
- 4-element and more - *last-real-gangsta-standing* (attitude)

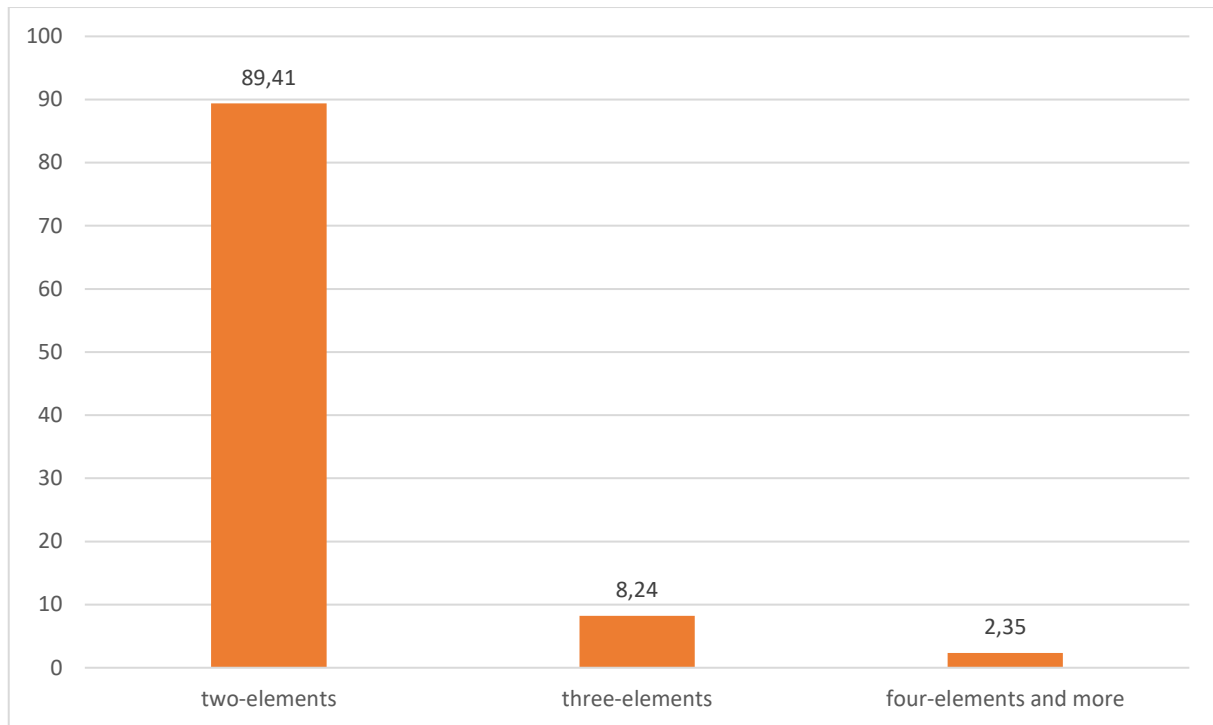


Figure 2. Distribution of hyphenated compound types according to the number of elements

The percentage of compounds belonging to each of the aforementioned groups was calculated. As shown in Figure 2, two-element compounds were prevalent in the corpus with 89.41% of instances. They were followed by a significantly smaller group of three-element compounds which comprised 8.24% of the corpus. With solely 2.35%, four- and more element compounds were the least frequent in the dataset. This can be corroborated by previous studies that predominantly dealt with two-element compounds due to their being the most commonly found compounds (Huber 2023). Biber et al. (2021) suggest the typology of two-element adjectival compounds. The vast majority of these compound patterns could be found in the analysed corpus (CPMR) as illustrated in the table below (see Table 2).

Table 2. Typology of the most common adjectival compound patterns (adapted from Biber et al. 2021: 531–532 with examples drawn from the CPMR)

1. Adverb + adjective	fast-changing
2. Adverb + ed-participle	finely-ground
3. Adverb + ing-participle	rapidly-expanding
4. Reduplicative	jingle-jungle
5. Adjective + color adjective	-
6. Adjective + other adjective	faster-louder
7. Adjective + ed-participle	weed-scented
	helium-voiced

	palm-muted
	juvenile-aimed
8. Adjective + ing-participle	nonsense-spewing
	Billboard-charting
	stomach-turning
	gut-punching
9. Noun + adjective	cult-favourite
10. Noun + ed-participle	jazz-oriented
	L.A.-based
	Kylie Minogue-inspired
	New-York inflected
	Gwen Stefani-scented
	Las Vegas-based
11. Noun + ing-participle	stadium-spanning
	steam-building
12. Adjective + noun	top-shelf
13. Participle + adverbial particle	washed-up

After grouping the compounds based on their structure, they were studied from the angle of a syntactic criterion by dividing them into hyphenated compound nouns, compound adjectives, compound verbs, and compound adverbs (Cetnarowska 2019). Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of compounds (340 units) according to their function as a part of speech. The vast majority of compounds under analysis were employed as adjectives (81.76%). This comes as no surprise since reviews are inherently evaluative texts and adjectives are a part of speech used to express evaluation (Shaw 2009). When applied as nouns, compounds could be identified in 15.88% of cases. Rarely were they used as verbs (1.47%) and even less frequently as adverbs (0.88%).

An example of a compound noun:

As punk turns 40 on both sides of the Atlantic this year, it's fitting that this record is out on Rough Trade—that era's arty, leftist wing of **outsiders-among-outsiders**. [CPMR-2016-18]

An example of a compound verb:

You can find them **short-circuiting** the indefatigable bounce of lead single “Lloyd, I’m Ready to Be Heartbroken”; trilling through the dreamy melt of “Tears for Affairs”; and dappling “The False Contender”’s melancholy sigh. [CPMR-2006-8]

An example of a compound adverb:

A **brain-numbingly** awful Jay-Z verse helps nothing; it's like that guy's lost all interest in rapping. [CPMR-2007-9]

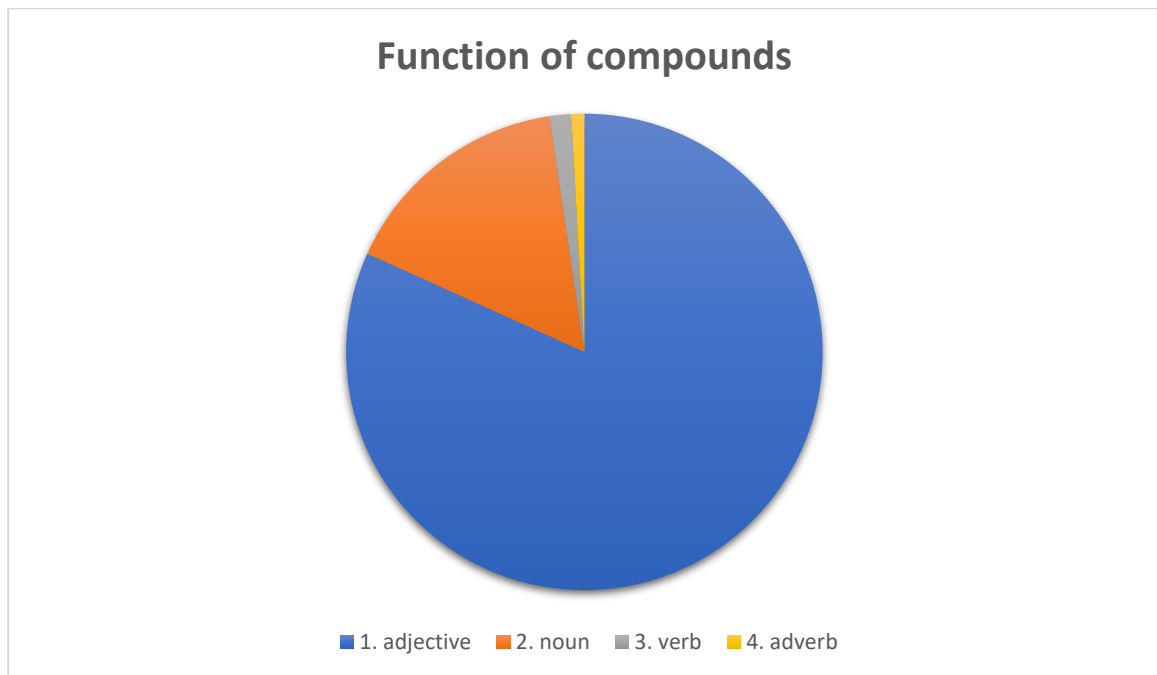


Figure 3. Distribution of hyphenated compounds based on their function as a part of speech

#### 4.2 Qualitative data analysis

Having conducted quantitative analysis, one can now proceed to the qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis involves neologistic compounds. Several examples of neologistic compounds are presented and elaborated on to shed light on their shared characteristics as well as other distinctive features. The analysed neologistic adjectival compounds act as complex modifiers in nominal compounds, hence the examples are provided with their nominal head, e.g., in the expression *dopamine-intake-inhibited kids*, *dopamine-intake-inhibited* is a neologistic adjectival compound performing the role of a complex modifier whereas *kids* is a nominal head.

Example 1: dopamine-intake-inhibited kids

Believe it or not, but when he's not playing New England basements, Moby entertains thousands of **dopamine-intake-inhibited** kids. [CPMR-1999-1]

The first example aptly illustrates the compound's reliance on the knowledge of a different discipline. The reviewer described children who lack energy as "dopamine-intake-inhibited kids". It is a three-element compound with the following structure (noun+noun+past participle). Drawing on the medical terminology pertaining to the inhibition of dopamine intake, which

contributes to lowered mood, the reviewer most likely aimed to achieve a humorous and exaggerated effect (Meibauer 2007). In lieu of depicting the children in the audience as tired, they opted to somehow magnify this trait by applying the compound. This, in turn, results in poking fun at the audience the artist entertains and at the same time mocking the artist. In order to understand this compound, however, one has to be au fait with the fact that dopamine deficiency has an adverse impact on mental health. Therefore, this compound is semantically transparent only to some extent. Exaggeration, humour and irony seem to be underlying this linguistic choice.

Example 2: the last-real-gangsta-standing attitude

Piñata isn't a major lyrical departure from the **last-real-gangsta-standing** attitude that's kept Gibbs defiantly his own unfiltered self over the last five years. [CPMR-2014-16]

A rapper described in the review has a particular attitude phrased as a four-element compound "**last-real-gangsta-standing**". Analogy was utilised to create this compound (Veale 2007; Miller 2014). It may have been modelled on the expression *the last man standing* which is used to describe "[t]he final person who endures or emerges victorious from some situation, activity, or pursuit in which others are eliminated" (The Free Dictionary 2023). However, instead of using it as a noun phrase, e.g. *He is the last real gangsta standing*, the reviewer converted it into an adjective. Thus, the exaggeration of the message may have been the ultimate aim of this product of lexical creativity.

Example 3: intellectual-property-case-waiting-to-happen

The Killers can't figure a way to add resonance beyond adding more keyboards, more layered guitars, more cribbing of established tastemaking currency (check the **intellectual-property-case-waiting-to-happen** that is "Change Your Mind"). [CPMR-2004-6]

In example 3, a six-element compound was deployed to denote an instance of plagiarism. Created by analogy to *an accident waiting to happen*, which denotes "a very dangerous situation in which an accident is very likely" (Cambridge Dictionary 2023), it highlights the fact that the song mentioned in the review resembles another one to such a degree that is eligible for a plagiarism lawsuit. Sarcasm emerges as the compound's function (Meibauer 2007).



## Example 4: smartphone-sucking lives

the pace of our hyperactive, distracted, **smartphone-sucking** lives [CPMR-2013-15]

A two-element neologism, **smartphone-sucking**, was based on the adjective *soul-sucking*. It exhibits the noun+ing participle structure. While the latter denotes something “depressingly tedious” (Your Dictionary 2023), the former stresses the fact that life in this day and age is dominated by smartphone use. Even the adjective it was based on can only be found in an online dictionary of fairly new words. Yet again, analogy plays a pivotal role in the formation of creative lexical inventions (Veale 2007; Miller 2014).

## Example 5: jingle-jungle morning

“It’s a **jingle jungle**/ Jingle junkie-junkie jumble.” [CPMR-2013-15]

The song’s synth-buzzed whirr eventually dissolves into gentle acoustic picking, but you know it’s just a brief moment of calm before Mars must brace himself to face another **jingle-jungle** morning. [CPMR-2013-15]

High context-dependence appears to be a distinctive feature of the reviews under examination. This can be illustrated by the two-element compound “**jingle-jungle**” that is simultaneously a reduplicative formation. Upon entering a corpus query into the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2008-), it transpires that *jingle jungle* has merely two occurrences (see Figure 4), both of them being used as a noun, including one occurrence of a proper noun. Therefore, the origins of the adjective can be traced to the beginning of the review. It is earlier in the review that the following lyrics of a particular song are quoted “It’s a **jingle jungle**/ Jingle junkie-junkie jumble.” Therefore, the reviewer opted for reusing the reduplicative expression, yet with an adjectival function. It can be thus determined that this reduplicative adjectival compound was formed for the purposes of ludic wordplay (Bagasheva and Stamenov 2013). This wordplay, however, is transparent only to those who are familiar with the previous part of the review.

The screenshot shows the COCA search interface. The top navigation bar includes 'SEARCH', 'FREQUENCY', 'CONTEXT', and 'ACCOUNT'. The search results are displayed in a table with two entries:

Rank	Year	Source	Text
1	1997	NEWS NYTimes	, Mr. Karmen, 60, wrote in his 1989 book, "Through the <b>jingle jungle</b> . " " They don't get no respect. " But it's
2	1997	NEWS NYTimes	York Hospital Association campaign against health-care cuts, for now he is out of the <b>jingle jungle</b> , he says, and hunting for new challenges. # As he sat

Additional interface elements include a '(SHUFFLE)' button, '2 ENTRIES: 1 TEXTS', 'LIMITS: NONE', 'SORTING: YEAR', and a table header 'CLICK FOR MORE CONTEXT'.

Figure 4. Occurrences of the reduplicative compound **jingle jungle** drawn from COCA. Source: COCA.

#### Example 6: know-your-worth anthem

“New Rules,” the **know-your-worth** anthem that became her breakout, was actually the sixth single from an album delayed eight months past its original release date. [CPMR-2020-22]

The example above is an instance of an information-condensing phrasal nonce-compound (Schmid, 2008: 17–18). The message of “**know-your-worth** anthem” could have been easily expressed by writing: it is an anthem whose message is that you should *know your worth* or this anthem tells you to *know your worth*. In place of a verbal phrase, the very same message is expressed by virtue of a three-element information-condensing phrasal nonce compound. Therefore, it can be deduced that wittiness may be the reason for using this phrasal compound. Additionally, phrasal compounds can be likened to jokes due to them violating the “No Phrase Constraint” which can be equalled with incongruity that was mentioned in the theoretical part of the paper (Meibauer 2007).

#### Example 7: all-proceeds-to-charity wine

Heaped upon the gunky, puffed-up electric guitars and drum thrashings and hernia-busting vocals are lyrics referencing the movie star’s eponymous line of organic, **all-proceeds-to-charity** wine. [CPMR-2012-14]

“**All-proceeds-to-charity**”, a four-element compound, was most likely modelled on the analogical expression *all proceeds go to a charity*. This could have been reworded into organic wine all profits from the sales of which go to a charity, yet it would not have yielded the same witty result. Condensing this message contributes to a far more striking effect.

Example 8: Oval-sampling “Unison.”

Perhaps it appears for a moment in the repetitious chorus of “It’s Not Up to You,” or the album’s shimmering closer, the **Oval-sampling** “Unison.” [CPMR-2001-3]

High context-dependence is not limited to being familiar with the context within a particular review. It also pertains to external references to music and pop culture. A two-element compound, following the noun + ing-participle pattern, **Oval-sampling**, may not seem transparent at first glance. Upon deeper inquiry, it appears that *Oval* is a name of a German band. Hence, the adjective denotes that a song called “Unison” makes use of a sample which comes from one of the songs by the German group *Oval*. Due to the fact that Pitchfork is a website, it does not shy away from using hyperlinks. Hence, on the website, the element *Oval* is underlined so that one can click on the hyperlink and read content about the band in question. Hyperlinks thus aim at diminishing the hindrances stemming from high-context dependence and intertextuality. Intertextuality, in this example, involves a reference to a text, that is a song, created by another band. It is meant to evoke an “intricate web of connotations” (Ryker, 2024: 107), in this case specifically associated with the sound of the band. Allusions to pop culture play a pivotal role in drawing comparisons in reviews, hence the reviews abound in neologisms pertaining to other artists such as *Kylie Minogue-inspired* or *Gwen Stefani-scented*.

#### 4.3 Why are neologistic compounds used in album reviews?

Qualitative analysis of hyphenated neologistic compounds drawn from the corpus allows one to draw certain conclusions as to the role they play in the texts. Due to the evaluative nature of music reviews, these creative formations frequently serve as devices which strengthen the praise or criticism expressed by the reviewer. What is achieved by this, is a more emotionally charged review which may potentially attract the reader and even animate them to read other reviews. In certain instances, sarcasm, humour and irony can be achieved by using the compounds in question. As Meibauer (2007: 256) points out, ad hoc phrasal compounds display a high level of wittiness. A function of the compounds which should not be overlooked is the one of ludic wordplay (Bagasheva and Stamenov 2013). Ludic wordplay consists in approaching the language in a creative manner usually for the sake of fun and entertainment. As reviews pertain to the products of the entertainment industry, ludic wordplay in reviews is undoubtedly in line with the premise of the industry. Additionally, such a dense distribution of these compounds

may be deemed as an attempt to create a distinctive style whose main characteristics are the condensation of information (Schmid 2008) achieved by employing striking multi-element compounds.

Based on the conducted analysis, it could appear that multi-element compounds are solely the preserve of Pitchfork and constitute an integral part of their contributors' writing style. Upon the comparison with other music reviewing websites, it seems that the compounds can be found on both commercial and independent websites. Another commercial platform which could be termed as a British equivalent of Pitchfork is NME, where the following compounds could be found: *get-married-and-settle-down agenda*, *stream-of-consciousness meandering* (Daly 2023). On the independent-journalism side-of-the-spectrum, the following compounds: *her bedroom-confessional hymn-manifesto* (Scaruffi 2023) were found on the website run by an American-Italian journalist Piero Scaruffi. Therefore, it would be worth investigating whether there are certain differences as to the distribution and usage of the compounds across the websites.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this study enabled one to draw conclusions related to hyphenated compounds in general as well as to neologistic compounds in particular. This study corroborates previous findings in showing that despite being a productive process, compounding can be employed to yield creative lexemes as well (Konieczna 2012; Dal and Namer 2018). The results indicate that the role of these formations is not to fill a lexical gap, but to create a lexeme that will be more striking than its regular equivalent. Furthermore, this may help further reinforce the evaluative and persuasive function of album reviews (Walker 2024; Shaw 2009; Kathpalia 2021).

Several types of compounds according to the number of elements can be distinguished, namely 2-, 3-, 4- and more than 4-element compounds. Two-element compounds are prevalent in the corpus. Compounds in the corpus are predominantly adjectives. This is most likely due to the evaluative nature of reviews (Shaw 2009).

The picture of compounds that emerges from this study is a highly creative one. High context-dependence, unpredictability and allusions to pop-culture emerge as the most salient features of the analysed material. This appears to be an interesting finding as it would seem that the language of the Internet is, overall, aiming to be more accessible and palatable. In this case, however, information processing may pose significant challenges to individuals unfamiliar with

this kind of language. Analogy plays a pivotal role in the creation of the analysed neologicistic compounds. Creative formations make use of already existing words or expressions and infuse them with a new meaning that predominantly serves the purpose of ludic wordplay.

The function of phrasal compounds in the presented examples is frequently humour, sarcasm and irony. This can be attributed to them apparently breaking the “No Phrase Constraint”, thus leading to incongruity. These compounds are most likely used due to the fact that they are wittier and more striking than their regular alternatives in the lexicon. The mere fact that they contain hyphens makes these formations stand out from the spelling point of view. This linguistic choice may be regarded as a distinctive feature of the music reviewing discourse that can be found on the Pitchfork website.

The limitation of the present study is a small corpus confined solely to one website. Another limitation is including English texts only. In the future research, a detailed comparison with other music reviewing websites as well as a comparison with music reviews in other languages would certainly make a substantial contribution to the study of music reviews.

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