

Language Innovation on Social Media: A Case Study of *Rizz* on TikTok

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ABSTRACT

The English language is in a constant state of evolution, particularly with the influence of online platforms. Each year, new words and expressions emerge, highlighted by the Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year (WOTY) announcement. In 2023, *rizz*, a term popularised on TikTok, which means the ability to woo someone, was named WOTY. Given the rapid rise of *rizz* from being a novel word to gaining widespread recognition, this study examines the invention and proliferation of this word using a mixed-method approach. With the aid of Diffusion of Innovations theory, 100 TikTok videos were analysed for their content and the English Trends corpus analysis was utilised, along with the tool Google Trends to understand the spread of this lexical item. The results show that *rizz* began to be used in 2022, and its usage has slowly declined since it was named WOTY. It was also found that creativity and virality are some of the pertinent aspects of word dissemination on TikTok. Aside from that, American English continues to dominate a newer platform like TikTok, as it has with previous applications. This dominance is evident in the widespread use of American slang and expressions which often become global trends. The study emphasizes the concept of language mobility on social media by showing how new lexical items are created online and reach a global audience, potentially becoming dictionary entries. The invention of novel lexical items is expected to continue in the future as it demonstrates the ongoing change and variation of the English language in a fast-paced world.

Keywords: language variation; language change; lexical variation and change; lexical innovation; TikTok

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INTRODUCTION

Change is inherent to languages, and the English language continually grows, with new words being created and used over the years. Language functions as a medium for people to express ideas, thoughts, and experiences, whether through verbal or non-verbal communication which mirrors our real-life experiences. Lexicographers and language experts consistently observe linguistic trends, analysing patterns in word usage, the emergence of new words, and shifts in meaning to ensure that language accurately represents society. One such effort is contributed by the Oxford Dictionary. Every year, the Oxford Dictionary selects a Word of the Year (WOTY) to stay attuned to the linguistic changes and incorporate new additions to the English lexicon. The word announced every year “reflects the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of a particular year, and which has potential to provide a snapshot of social history through language” (Oxford Dictionary, 2023).

According to Oxford Dictionary, there is an extensive process that leads to the selection of WOTY each year. Their team of lexicographers make use of the Oxford Monitor Corpus of English which stores news contents that are updated daily. It comprises over 14.5 billion words. Their team tracks potential words for WOTY through the surge of usage in the corpus each year by analysing language data such as frequency distribution, and these words are then shortlisted. Interestingly, in recent years, aside from using corpus evidence, Oxford has made the process of selection more inclusive by inviting the public to vote. In 2022, the public decided on the top three shortlisted words while in 2023, 30,000 people voted to divide the shortlists into half. Oxford then considers both the corpus evidence and public votes to determine the WOTY.

In 2023, there were a total of eight words shortlisted for WOTY, including *rizz*. Some of these words were nouns related to relationships which are *parasocial*, *beige flag*, and *situationship*. A *parasocial* relationship is a one-sided connection where an individual feels a sense of friendship or familiarity with a celebrity, even though the celebrity is unaware of their existence. *Beige flag* refers to the character of a partner with neither good nor worse traits, and *situationship* is an informal romantic relationship. Aside from that, there were also technical words such as *prompt* (related to artificial intelligence) and *heat dome* (related to the weather). The two remaining words, *Swiftie* and *de-influencing*, are more prominent on social media. *Swiftie* is a fandom name (names to a group of fans) given to the fanbase of Taylor Swift. De-influencing is essentially the reverse of influencing. While influencing involves influencers swaying their followers’ opinions and purchasing habits online, de-influencing occurs when people online are persuaded to avoid certain mindsets and purchasing behaviors. *Swiftie*, *situationships*, and *prompt* were among the finalists, but *rizz*, a term popularised on TikTok, ultimately became the WOTY.

One notable WOTY was *selfie* in 2013, recognised for its ubiquitous usage. Selfie first appeared in an Australian forum and gained popularity in 2012 (Day, 2013). The emergence and decline of lexical items are often predictable. With disuse, these words either decrease in usage or diminish altogether. For example, the lexical item *on fleek* which was shortlisted as WOTY in 2015 has shown apparent decline in its usage over the years (Gulnazir & Salehuddin, 2020). In contrast, *selfie* is still very much in use today, which could be attributed to the necessity or the practicality of the lexical item, as posited by Crystal (2011).

While words such as *selfie* are now recognised in the Oxford English Dictionary as legitimate lexical items, it is important to note that WOTY is not exclusively awarded to neologisms, or newly invented words. Existing words that have gained prominence in a particular year can also be selected. The prerequisite for words to be shortlisted is for them to have made a certain impact in a particular year. For example, in 2018, the existing word *toxic* was chosen as

WOTY. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 which had impacted the entire world brought medical jargon into everyday language. Therefore, it was unsurprising that the existing word *vax* which was short for either *vaccine*, *vaccination* or *vaccinated* spiked in frequency between 2020 and 2021 and eventually emerged as the WOTY in 2021.

Social media has become a notable tool in driving the precipitous rise in new lexical items. Some of the prominent sources of lexical variation and change have been Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) (Coleman, 2014, Grieve, Nini, & Guo, 2017; Gulnazir & Salehuddin, 2023). Interestingly, one of the newer platforms which has recently been dominating the social media landscape is TikTok. Created in September 2016, TikTok is a video platform which makes use of short form videos that can be recorded for up to 10 minutes. These videos feature a wide range of content such as dancing, lip-syncing, comedy and educational videos. Users have compared TikTok to its predecessors such as Vine and Musical.ly, which were also popular for their short-form videos. Although there are clear differences between the platforms, TikTok more closely resembles Vine than the stories feature on Instagram, Facebook, and X (Anderson, 2020). TikTok gained traction during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people worldwide connected and communicated virtually. In 2023, TikTok had 1.5 billion monthly active users and is anticipated to grow to 1.8 billion by the end of 2024 (Singh, 2024).

Research on Tik Tok is still developing across various domains despite its widespread use. In healthcare, it has been examined for its role in spreading health awareness, education, and promotion (Basch, Hillyer, & Jaime, 2022; Kong et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2022), as well as its impact on mental health and well-being (McCashin & Murphy, 2023). From a marketing standpoint, TikTok has been analyzed to understand the behaviors of brands and influencers (Haenlein et al., 2020; Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022) and to evaluate advertising strategies (Ma & Kim, 2021; Yuan, Xia & Ye, 2022). Environmental issues have also been explored, including research on climate change (Basch, Yalamanchili & Fera, 2022) and climate activism (Hautea et al., 2021). Narrowing the scope to English language, TikTok has been examined for its potential as an English learning tool. Studies have investigated its potential in terms of vocabulary expansion (Alghameeti, 2022, Simanungkalit & Katemba, 2023), grammar learning (Revesencio et al., 2022), pronunciation (Pratiwi, Ufairah & Sopiah, 2021), and communication skills (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021), all of which have demonstrated positive outcomes.

The digital landscape, particularly platforms like TikTok, fosters a unique environment for language change. The speed of communication, the ease of content creation and sharing, and the global reach of these platforms contribute to the accelerated evolution of slang. *Rizz* perfectly illustrates this rapid lifecycle: it emerged relatively quickly, spread virally, and its future longevity is uncertain. However, existing research often lacks the tools to analyze the speed and dynamics of online language change. The present study addresses this gap by adopting the Diffusion of Innovations Theory to analyze the “process by which an innovation is adopted and gained acceptance by members of a certain community” (Kocak, Kaya & Erol, 2013, p.23). Research on language change, particularly within the context of social media, remains limited. The accelerated pace of digital communication, which facilitates semantic change and grammaticalization, requires further investigation. This study of *rizz* will contribute to a broader understanding of language adaptation and evolution in online environments.

THE DEFINITION OF RIZZ

Rizz is shortened from the word *charisma* (ris) and follows the same word formation pattern as *flu* for *influenza*. According to Oxford Dictionary (2023), *rizz* carries the following definition: ‘style, charm, or attractiveness; the ability to attract a romantic or sexual partner’. In other words, *rizz* refers to the ability to woo a person. An earlier lexical item or slang which has a similar meaning with *rizz* would be the word *game*. According to the Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang and Unconventional English (2018) (Figure 1), *game*, a form of verb, first emerged in 1963 in American English which refers to the act of *deceiving* or *tricking*. Another usage for *game* became evident in 1988, which holds almost the same definition as *rizz*, that is to *flirt* or to *woo*.

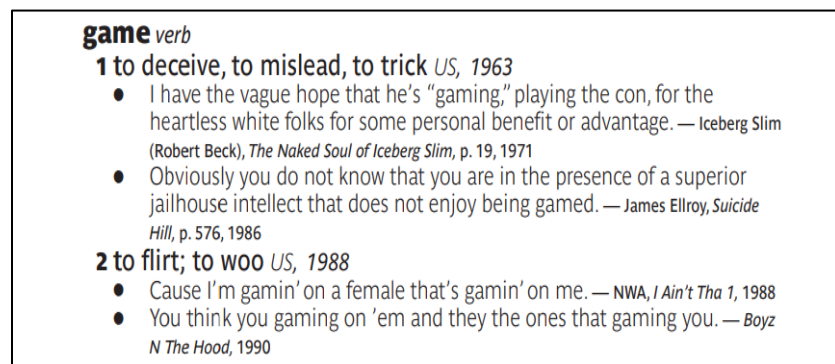


FIGURE 1: The definition of *game* in Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang and Unconventional English (2018)

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

Since the inception of social media, several theories have been utilized to elucidate its usage. One of the seminal theories includes the Diffusion of Innovations theory, which was introduced by Rogers in 1962 to explain the spread of new ideas, products, methodologies, or concepts in a social system. This theory posits that innovations undergo five stages which are knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Figure 2).

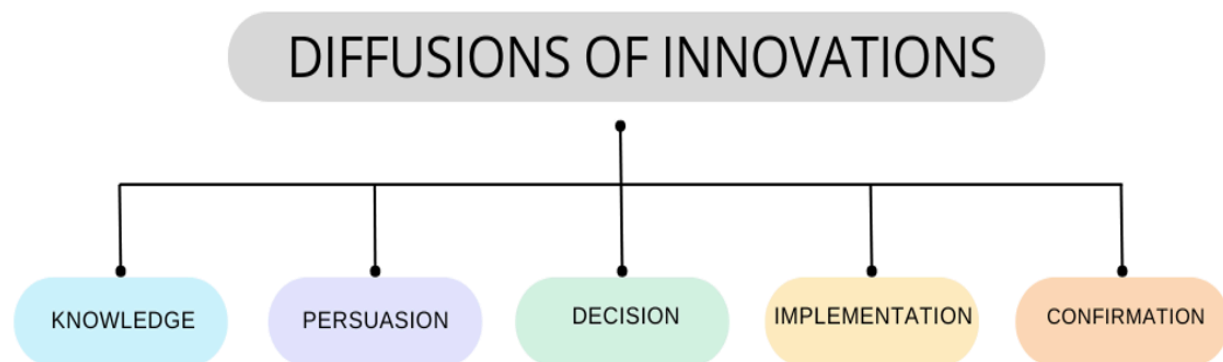


FIGURE 2. Diffusion of Innovations theory in Rogers (1983)

According to Rogers (1983), in the knowledge stage, individuals are exposed to an innovation and try to comprehend how the innovation functions. After that in the persuasion stage, individuals decide whether they find the innovation to be either favorable or unfavorable. Next, in the decision stage, individuals determine whether they would like to accept or reject the innovation. The implementation stage reveals how the innovation is utilised and the final stage of confirmation shows the continued use of the innovation.

The Innovations of Diffusions theory has illuminated several aspects pertaining to social media, including the social networking behaviour of people from different age groups (Folorunso, 2010; Peslak, 2010; Waters, 2010), the propagation of news (Ma, 2014), and sports journalism (English, 2016). Toan (2022) investigated how factors that are propounded in the Innovations of Diffusions theory—compatibility, trialability, complexity, observability and relative advantage—determine the success of slang propagation among youth. Each factor was found to be contributing towards the usage of slang on social media.

Research on the use of slang and lexical items on social media has grown significantly in recent years, paralleling the rise of social media platforms that have become central to users' lives over time. As elaborated in Coleman (2014), some popular slangs which were found on Facebook include *noob*, which came from video games; *lolz* (*laugh out loud*) and *s.m.h.* (*shaking my head*), which emerged from abbreviations in electronic communication; *heart* and *hashtag*, which evolved from the use of graphic symbols. Additionally, *duckface* came from the trend of uploading personal photos, and *troll* is the act of deliberately making someone upset online. A study by Grieve, Nini, and Guo (2017) identified 131 newly emerging words on Twitter or X, such as *rekt*, *famo*, and *baeless*, which gained popularity in contemporary American English. A recent addition to the aforementioned platforms is TikTok. Propelled largely by the younger generation, TikTok has also introduced a number of new words such as *bussin*, *cap*, and *pick me* (Muzani & Lotfie, 2024).

Traditional media such as printing and broadcasting, which were once tools to promote standard language have shifted to the Internet. Considering the global users of the Internet, traditional gatekeepers of language, mainly dictionaries, now share space with a more democratized process of language evolution. As Battarcharjee (2009) once put it, the Internet, particularly social media, is “contributing to the fluidity and promotion of vernacular, or in-group, language” (p. 49). For example, on TikTok, a viral video can propel a word or phrase into widespread use within hours or days, bypassing conventional channels of linguistic approval.

According to Tseng and Hinrichs (2020), language contact is now significantly influenced by online language use. The constant change of language online is now characterised by mobility, which was previously geographically bounded. Language change is now capable of traversing from one language to another, and this is marked at a micro linguistic level by lexical items which spread across dialects or languages (Adroustoupoulous, 2011). The English language is continually expanding beyond traditional geographical boundaries, causing a shift in English practices and introducing new conventions, including new lexical items. Therefore, to further understand the invention and proliferation of novel lexical items on TikTok, this study investigates the word *rizz*, which was recognised as Oxford's WOTY in 2023. This status reflects the widespread use in contemporary language and culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study explores *rizz* to understand the proliferation of this word. Thus, the approach employed in this study was a mixed-method approach, by using the Diffusions of Innovations theory. Since the theory comprises several stages, the research utilized data from different sources and tools such as corpus data, Google Trends, and TikTok content, as employed in previous studies (Grieve, Nini, & Guo, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Gulnazir & Salehuddin, 2022) to gather data relevant to each stage in the theory.

Given the popularity of the word *rizz* on TikTok, it was necessary to conduct a content analysis on TikTok (Basch, Yalamanchili & Fera, 2022). This study analysed 100 videos on TikTok with the hashtag *rizz* by using the advanced filter feature. The videos were sorted by Relevance and the video category was selected to *All*. From the results, the number of views, likes, comments, and shares for each video were recorded and considered. Screenshots are included to elucidate the results following (2022), which stated that “given TikTok’s design and public image, it can be assumed that most users are aware of their content potentially reaching large audiences” (p.1441).

In addition to conducting content analysis on TikTok, Google Trends was also used because it has been a key tool for analyzing online data (Grieve, Nini, & Guo, 2017; Jensen, 2017), enabling the tracking of specific search terms. For instance, searching for the term *rizz* on the platform provides numerical and graphical data about the term, which can be customized by region, country, categories, and time frame.

The quantitative aspect of this study relied on corpus linguistics, so the English Trends corpus on Sketch Engine was utilised. According to Sketch Engine (2024), The English Trends corpus is a continuously updated English corpus comprising news articles online, and it grows by approximately 70 million words each week. These consistent updates allow the use of this corpus to investigate trending lexical items, changes in word usage as well as the emergence of new words in English. Table 1 presents the summary of the corpus.

TABLE 1. Overview of the English Trends corpus

English Trends corpus (2014-today)	
Number of words	80+ billion
Number of tokens	94+ billion
Number of documents	250+ million

The following section outlines the data collection and data analysis procedure according to each stage in the Diffusions of Innovations theory.

STAGE 1: KNOWLEDGE

This stage involves individuals becoming aware of the new term *rizz*. Therefore, to identify when the public first became aware of *rizz*, the corpus of English Trends was used to identify the earliest usage of the word. To complement this, Google Trends was used to track the initial search for the term. Following Gulnazir and Salehuddin (2023), several criteria were customised on Google Trends. Firstly, the search term was set to *rizz*, and the location was set to Worldwide. Since *rizz* escalated in recent years, the time range selected was from 2019 until 2023. Lastly, for the

Category tab, *All* was selected because this provided a timeline of initial interest spikes, indicating when the term began to gain public attention.

STAGE 2: PERSUASION

In the persuasion stage, individuals become interested in *rizz* and actively seek more information about it, mainly from seeing the term used in various contexts, such as in memes or conversations on TikTok. As they see others using the term effectively or humorously, they begin to form a favourable attitude towards it. To examine the level of interest towards *rizz*, Google Trends was used to find the time frame of the earliest search for *rizz*, as well as the terms associated with *rizz*.

STAGE 3: DECISION

In this stage, individuals decide whether to adopt the term *rizz* into their own vocabulary. According to Rogers (1983), gathering data is particularly challenging in this stage. Thus, to identify whether TikTok users adopt *rizz*, the type of TikTok videos with its initial mentions was investigated, alongside the engagement metrics including the number of likes, views, comments, and shares. This type of data provided evidence for the videos, which was instrumental in the decision to accept and utilize *rizz*.

STAGE 4: IMPLEMENTATION

As the name suggests, in this stage, individuals begin to use *rizz*. To explore how *rizz* is used in practice, the usage of *rizz* was observed in the corpus of English Trends via concordance analysis. Concordance is defined by McEnery and Hardie (2011) as “a display of every instance of a specified word or other search term in a corpus, together with a given amount of preceding and following context for each result or ‘hit’” (p. 241). Generally, concordance analysis provides a deeper investigation of the words around a certain key word to better understand how the keyword is used in context. As a result of TikTok’s video formats making concordance impractical, popular phrases containing *rizz* in TikTok videos were also considered.

STAGE 5: CONFIRMATION

The confirmation stage reveals the continued use of *rizz*. Therefore, to track the ongoing adoption of *rizz*, its presence on Google Trends and English Trends corpus after being nominated as WOTY in 2023 was examined. The investigation on Google Trends centered on the interest in the term *rizz* after 2023, while the concordance analysis on English Trends corpus was used to identify usage patterns for *rizz* following its nomination as WOTY.

RESULTS

To clearly illustrate the spread of *rizz* as a novel lexical item on TikTok, the results are discussed according to the five stages in the Diffusions of Innovations theory.

STAGE 1: KNOWLEDGE

As posited earlier, language users first encounter the term *rizz* in this stage. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the origin of this word. The person responsible for the invention of *rizz* is a famous American streamer and Youtuber named Kai Cenat. Kai Cenat revealed in a podcast (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZRVZ4ppIhY>) that the word *rizz* was initially used among his small group of friends, before he started saying it in his live streams.

STAGE 2: PERSUASION

In this stage, individuals develop an interest in *rizz* and actively pursue further information about it. The exact period of usage of *rizz* in Kai Cenat's live stream is unclear; therefore, Google Trends was utilised to investigate this.

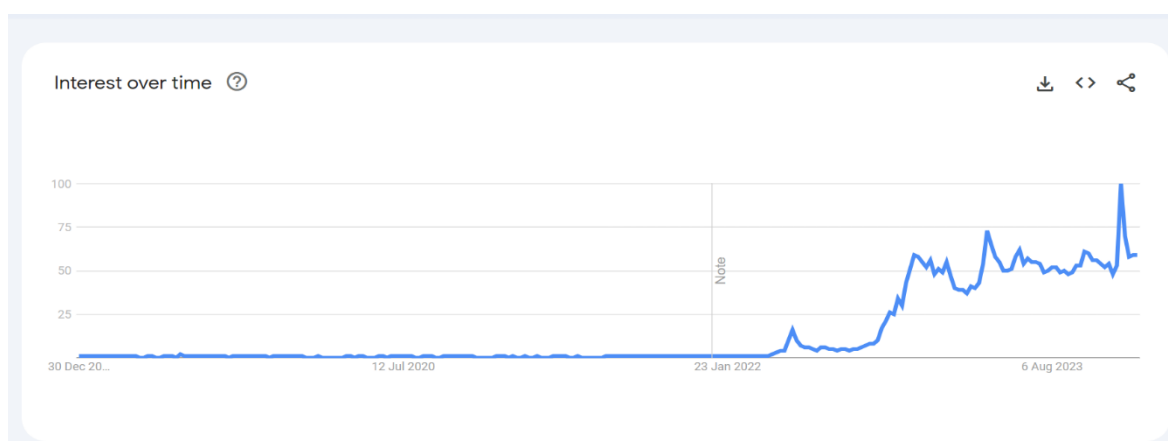


FIGURE 3. Google Trends search for *rizz* from 2019 until 2023

As seen in Figure 2, users' search for *rizz* on Google began in May 2022. After its initial spike, the usage dropped minimally, before rising again and fluctuating over the next few months. A deeper analysis revealed the leading topics and queries on Google Trends related to the lexical item.

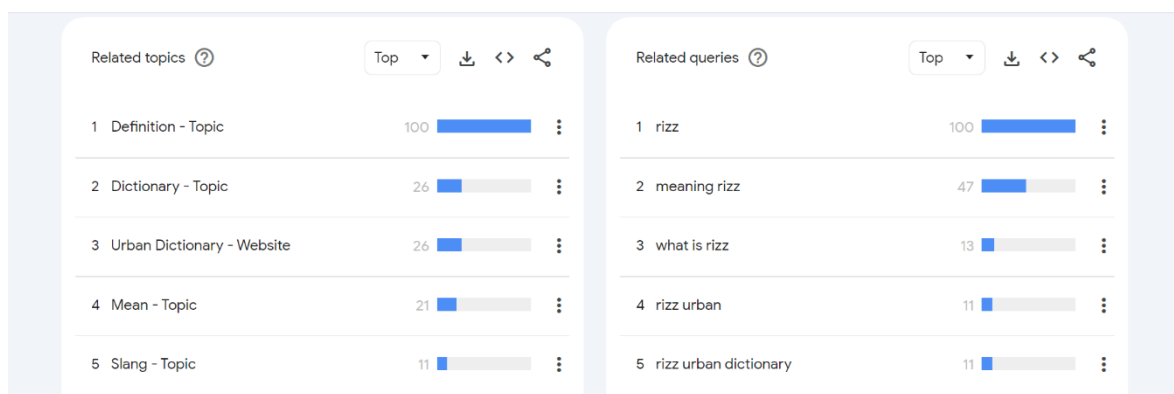


FIGURE 4. Topics and queries related to *rizz*

Figure 3 shows the top five leading topics and queries regarding *rizz* on Google from the year 2019 until 2023, which are (1) *rizz*; (2) meaning *rizz*; (3) what *rizz*; (4) *rizz* urban; and (5) *rizz* urban dictionary. It is important to note that in the map generated in Google Trends, the score 100 refers to the maximum query captured by the database. This means that a score of 50 depicts half the size of the maximum search interest, while a score of 100 indicates the maximum search interest. All of these queries are clearly from users who intend to know and understand the definition of *rizz* from Google, especially on Urban Dictionary. Used as a collaborative dictionary, Urban Dictionary stores and registers new lexical items almost every day. Since its inception in 1999, this site is used to search for new word forms which are emerging or have emerged in the English language. The initial usage of *rizz* could have caused confusion which then demanded language users or those who are curious or confused to search for its definition on Google. In the initial stage of its emergence, the word *rizz* was not recorded in the dictionaries; thus, users would have resorted to using Google to understand the meaning of it.

STAGE 3: DECISION

In this stage, users decide whether they would like to adopt the word *rizz*. To achieve this, TikTok videos using *#rizz* were analysed and the following were obtained.

TABLE 2. Content analysis of *rizz* on TikTok

Video categories	Number of videos	Highest number of views	Highest number of likes	Highest number of comments	Highest number of shares
Skits and roleplays	83	67.4 million	7.5 million	52.2 thousand	413.3 thousand
Tutorials	17	28 million	6.8 million	107.8 thousand	276.6 thousand

Out of the 100 videos, 83 videos were found to be skits and role plays using *rizz*, in which TikTokers act out scenarios to showcase their *rizz* in action in a humorous manner. Figure 4 presents a screenshot of the term *rizz* being used in roleplay. The highest view recorded for these types of TikTok video is 67.4 million views. A total of 17 videos were tutorials on how to be more charismatic or charming in social situations, with the highest view being 28 million views. The highest number of likes attained on TikTok with the *rizz* trend is 7.5 million likes, while the highest number of comments is 107.8 thousand comments for a *rizz* tutorial. The number of shares per video could also reflect on the potential of users adopting *rizz*, with the highest share recorded being 413.3 thousand shares.



FIGURE 5. Screenshots of *rizz* roleplay by @hyperx_rizz and *rizz* tutorial by @2phoneangie

STAGE 4: IMPLEMENTATION

From the analysis of 100 TikTok videos, it was found that some of the terms commonly associated with *rizz* are *rizz god*, *W rizz*, *rizz up*, *unspoken rizz*, and *ultimate rizz* as presented in Figure 6.

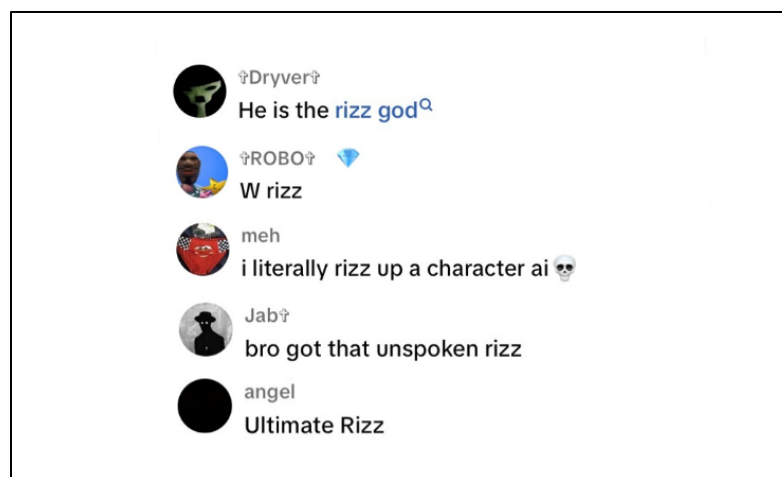


FIGURE 6. Examples of variations of *rizz* on TikTok

Rizz god refers to someone who is an expert in *rizz*. The *W* in *W rizz* refers to *Win*; thus, *w rizz* is a praise for someone with great *rizz*. *Rizz up* is used as a phrasal verb, much like *level up*. *Rizz* can be either verbal or non-verbal; hence, *unspoken rizz* refers to physical *rizz*. Lastly, *ultimate rizz* refers to the highest capacity of charisma.

Additionally, the usage of *rizz* was also observed in the English Trends corpus for further understanding of *rizz* in media.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
41	2018-07-24	gain and putting another hitter in the 9-hole," Maddon said. "If	Rizz	continues along this method, it's probably wise to try to get sor
42	2018-12-10	non-perishable food items will receive a limited edition KPNT	Rizz	Show Holiday WEIRDO Sticker. Mattress Direct designs and p
43	2018-12-10	mattress, every Premium Relax-O-Pedic mattress, and every	Rizz	Show WEIRDO Smart Pillow sold will be donated to KPNT The
44	2019-02-18	y. "The Nationals, they went above and beyond," Quinn said. "	Rizz	, so many of the people on staff, so many people supported hit
45	2019-05-07	sting, she was also seen recently as high priestess Jindah Kol	Rizz	in a 2018 episode of Supergirl. Sarah Douglas with Arnold Sch
46	2019-08-01	unicating, bouncing different guys, back and forth. . . I've told	Rizz	, 'Hey, you've done this for many, many years. If you think we c
47	2020-06-30	ayed out in spring training with KB (Kris Bryant) at the top and	Rizz	(Anthony Rizzo) following suit," Ross said. "I think the DH slots
48	2020-07-17	for them, Brown, Bivins, and Bell were joined by friend Ralph "	Rizz	" Tresvant and local choreographer Brooke Payne's nephew R
49	2020-10-04	KB and Schwarbs my best before you ship them out, and tell	Rizz	and Kevin how much I love 'em before you kick 'em to the curt
50	2020-11-13	d the outfielder held onto that spot for the rest of the season. "	Rizz	(Anthony Rizzo) was saying the leadoff spot here is cursed," B
51	2021-09-10	d the literal isolation felt by many across the globe at this time.	Rizz	did a great job of getting that stark loneliness across visually."
52	2021-09-16	ayed more games for the team at first base. A 3-time All Star, "	Rizz	" was a 4-time Gold Glove winner, recognized as one of the ga
53	2022-04-24	ashed from its face twice a week! What Is The Famous Slang '	Rizz	' On Tiktok? Recently a new slang has been going viral. Every!
54	2022-04-24	ame? So here we shall explore what is the actual meaning of '	Rizz	, ' the TikTok slang that has created a new trend among the app
55	2022-04-24	Kai Cenat, a Twitch streamer and YouTuber, coined the term "	Rizz	." According to Urban Dictionary, it refers to a man's skill to imp

FIGURE 7. Concordance lines of *rizz* before the year 2022

As seen in Figure 7, prior to the year 2022, *rizz* was used exclusively as a proper noun—for someone named Rizz. Lines from line 41 until line 52 prove this, in which Rizz refers to a certain someone. Corresponding with the results revealed in Stage 2 (Persuasion), *rizz* became a novel lexical item with a new definition from the year 2022 onwards. Lines which were recorded in the year 2022 (line 53, 54 and 55) refers to *rizz* as an invention on TikTok.

STAGE 5: CONFIRMATION

In Stage 2, it was revealed that *rizz* gained traction in May 2022; therefore, to identify the continued use of *rizz*, particularly after its announcement as WOTY, its usage beyond the year 2023 was examined.

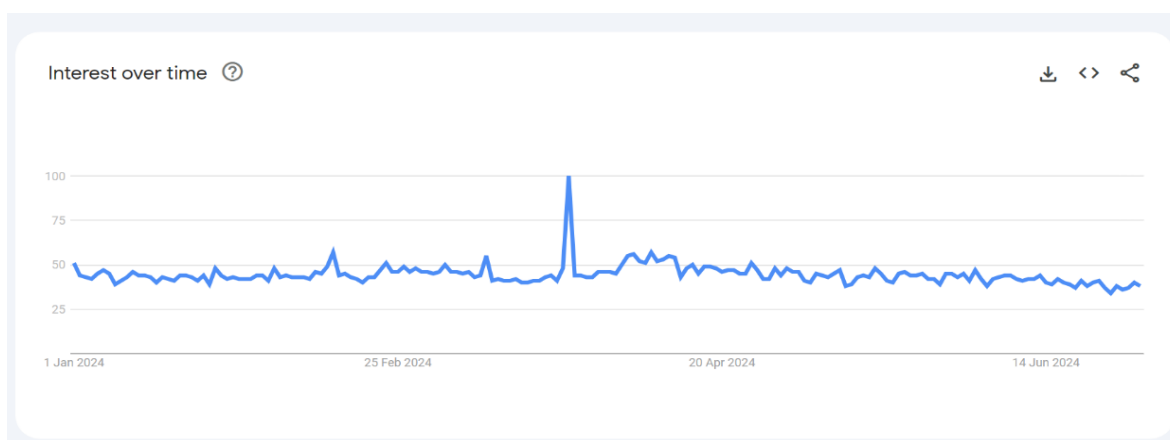


FIGURE 8. Google Trends results for *rizz* after 2023

As evidenced above in Figure 8, *rizz* continued to be searched on Google throughout the first six months of 2024, despite fluctuations in usage. Interestingly, the results on the English Trends corpus showed that the lexical item is used minimally in online articles, but still within its original context, with only 22 usages in total in the first 6 months of 2024 (line 1094 until line 1115) as illustrated in Figures 9 and 10.

1085	□	🕒	2023-11-18	spoken rizz? Unspoken rizz meaning refers to an elite form of	rizz	that allows someone to skillfully attract romantic partners with	📄
1086	□	🕒	2023-11-18	dy language, and overall vibe. When someone has unspoken	rizz	, they ooze so much charisma that it speaks for them. What is	📄
1087	□	🕒	2023-11-18	arisma that it speaks for them. What is the origin of unspoken	rizz	? What does 'rizz' mean in slang? In slang, 'rizz' means chari	📄
1088	□	🕒	2023-11-18	ks for them. What is the origin of unspoken rizz? What does '	rizz	' mean in slang? In slang, 'rizz' means charisma. It is a term u	📄
1089	□	🕒	2023-11-18	of unspoken rizz? What does 'rizz' mean in slang? In slang, '	rizz	' means charisma. It is a term used to describe someone's ab	📄
1090	□	🕒	2023-11-18	one's ability to attract others through charm and flirtation. Is '	rizz	' similar to flirting? 'Let's Go, Jannik! Mascots Walk On With S	📄
1091	□	🕒	2023-11-28	. "Authentic" beat out other contenders such as "deepfake," "	rizz	" (young-people speak for charisma) and "coronation" for hon	📄
1092	□	🕒	2023-12-04	onitor). Link to comment Oxford University Press has named '	rizz	' as its word of the year, highlighting the popularity of a term u	📄
1093	□	🕒	2023-12-15	apparel. "Was this a joke? You're so nice...Oh, Shams. Def a	rizz	god. Yes he is ladies and gentlemen!" About Brandon Contes	📄
1094	□	🕒	2024-01-08	g one was reinforced the other day when I casually dropped "	rizz	" into a conversation at home. It was an experiment to see my	📄
1095	□	🕒	2024-01-11	on us for the Raider 18 HX because it's got that even-number	rizz	. We do know that MSI expects the Raider 18HX to retail for c	📄
1096	□	🕒	2024-01-18	simple tweak (Picture: Getty Images) If you know, you know: '	rizz	' aka charisma, was Oxford's Word of the Year for 2023. If it n	📄
1097	□	🕒	2024-01-18	who said in an interview with Buzzfeed in June that 'I have no	rizz	whatsoever'. While it Tom Holland dropped the world in June,	📄
1098	□	🕒	2024-01-18	streamer Kai Cenat, who used it as far back as 2021. What is	rizz	? According to Oxford, it's 'style, charm or attractiveness' or 'tl	📄
1099	□	🕒	2024-01-18	a romantic or sexual partner'. While many use it as a verb to '	rizz	up' a person, or, to charm – but can the idea be applied elsew	📄
1100	□	🕒	2024-01-18	reported, that's not necessarily a bad thing), showing a bit of '	rizz	' during a job interview is no bad thing, as it shows the interv	📄

FIGURE 9. Usage of *rizz* in 2024 in the English Trends corpus

1101	□	🕒	2024-02-22	'art Two star was asked which of her castmates had the most	rizz	, a slang term for style, charm or attractiveness. "Me. Hello?"	📄
1102	□	🕒	2024-03-05	en, lovely to meet you, welcome to the show. Nikita is a bit of	rizz	with accents then, do you think he has secured the northern v	📄
1103	□	🕒	2024-04-12	it her boyfriend. When asked who she thought had the most "	rizz	" out of the Dune: Part Two cast, during a video with BuzzFee	📄
1104	□	🕒	2024-05-28	t used footage from the movie Get Out with text reading, "the	rizz	👤," earning roughly 1.1 million plays and 168,000 likes in nir	📄
1105	□	🕒	2024-05-28	d movie Megamind, writing in text overlay, "megamind fails to	rizz	up roxanne with his lightskin stare." The video received rough	📄
1106	□	🕒	2024-05-31	mes surfaced that were related to the trend in 2022, such as	rizz	nicknames which made puns out of the term, the phrase Rizz	📄
1107	□	🕒	2024-05-31	ins out of the term, the phrase Rizz God, the phrase negative	rizz	and the rizz 'chin up' prank. Origin In May 2021, Twitch stream	📄
1108	□	🕒	2024-05-31	r term, the phrase Rizz God, the phrase negative rizz and the	rizz	'chin up' prank. Origin In May 2021, Twitch streamers Kai Cer	📄
1109	□	🕒	2024-05-31	ssion of these streams, they started to introduce the idea of "	rizz	." If the date went well, they'd proclaim the other to have lots c	📄
1110	□	🕒	2024-05-31	'the date went well, they'd proclaim the other to have lots of "	rizz	," associating the slang term with having "game." For instance	📄
1111	□	🕒	2024-05-31	room where he's the teacher helping people with their overall	rizz	. On August 9th, 2021, the YouTube channel StageThePlug p	📄
1112	□	🕒	2024-05-31	ce of one of these streamers mentioning the term, "unspoken	rizz	." Rizz TikToks Going into April 2022, the term started to be us	📄
1113	□	🕒	2024-05-31	r girls on the beach trying to gauge his own level of unspoken	rizz	. Over the course of four weeks, the video received roughly 1.	📄
1114	□	🕒	2024-05-31	ivi posted a video with lots of text overlay, relating "unspoken	rizz	" to Hustle Culture signifiers. Over the course of four weeks, tl	📄
1115	□	🕒	2024-05-31	n of linguistic experts. Negative Rizz is a variant of the term "	rizz	" and "unspoken rizz" that means when someone has less the	📄

FIGURE 10. Usage of *rizz* in 2024 in the English Trends corpus

DISCUSSION

This study has revealed how a new lexical item, particularly *rizz* came into existence with the aid of a social media platform, i.e. TikTok. The Diffusion of Innovations theory has offered a perspective on how a new word is propelled online through five stages which are knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.

One of the pertinent aspects of new word formations or inventions is the necessity of the word itself. According to Crystal (2001), the ongoing development of new terminology is motivated by the immediate need to identify events and experiences that have not yet been named. For instance, Photoshop, a photo editing software introduced in 1990, led to the creation of the verb *photoshop*, which started appearing in dictionaries from 2008 onwards. Emily Brewster, a senior editor at Merriam-Webster, explains that using the phrase “I photoshopped it” instead of “I altered the image using digital software,” is more linguistically efficient which often drives the transformation of a noun into a verb (Kastrenakes, 2020). This phenomenon reflects how language adapts to meet the needs of its users which facilitates quicker communication in this fast-paced world.

Internet users are constantly looking for word forms to express their experiences, convey the essence of the digital world, and overcome the communication constraints of the medium. Interestingly, as noted earlier, *rizz* carries a similar meaning to the term *game* from 1988. . This shift reflects how each generation develops its own vocabulary to resonate with its cultural and technological context. Kai Cenat, who invented the term *rizz*, is a member of Gen-Z (i.e., those born between 1997 and 2012), and this generation is recognized for their adept use of technology for communication, as technology has been integral to their lives (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022). The variation between *game* and *rizz* highlights the dynamic nature of the English language, where each generation brings its own unique set of slang and expression. By creating new terms, Gen-Z not only establishes a distinct linguistic identity but also reflects the evolving social landscapes they navigate.

In recent years, with the advent of social media, newly coined words emerge from various influences, including popular culture and the desire to create a sense of belonging within peer groups. These online users are connected through common practices, principles and conventions (Tagg, 2015), for example, Twitter’s character limit back then promoted shared language patterns, indicating communal behaviors (Baym, 2010). This type of communal usage of social media, particularly on TikTok brings together family, friends, colleagues and strangers to connect with one another. As Schellewald (2022) puts it, “enframed through trends, memes, and shared ways of expression, these contents enable a different kind of relationship to form: that in which strangers can relate to one another in meaningful ways” (p. 1147). Documenting “silly-fun” on TikTok (Schellewald, 2022), especially when performed collectively fosters a sense of connection and relatability, and this leads to global trends. The words used in these trends then become widespread and are sometimes institutionalised. Words that are considered novel gradually gain acceptance among larger groups of speakers, thereby climbing the language register ladder. A prominent example is the word *selfie* which was regarded as the Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionary in 2013. *Selfie* transitioned from being a niched social media term on Flickr (Day, 2013) to a widely used description of a self-portrait image and has since then been listed in dictionaries.

It is also necessary to consider the power of influencers and virality in the invention of new words. According to Roose (2018), TikTok generally carries a negative connotation and is often regarded as a frivolous and superficial platform showcasing viral dance trends. Additionally, “TikTok and the communication it facilitates is seen as something lacking depth and complexity” (Schellewald, 2022, p. 1437). However, the platform’s virality has shown its usefulness; for instance, LeCompte and Klug (2021) revealed that the application is used for social activism. The aforementioned perception also overlooks the platform’s power to influence language.

From this study, it is evident that virality on TikTok can propel new lexical items to the forefront. Kai Cenat coined the term *rizz*, initially using it among his friends before introducing it on his live streams. Given that his streams can draw up to 700,000 viewers (Mukherjee, 2024), Cenat's influence as a social media personality enables him to rapidly spread new terms to a broader audience. This phenomenon highlights how virality on social media platforms can accelerate the adoption and popularity of new words, with TikTok being a massive hub for memes which turns trends into viral content (Tolentino, 2019).

Human creativity is immeasurable, particularly within language use. Chomsky (2003) asserted that "language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied" (p. 402). Language inventiveness and artistry that can be seen in art and literature can be found in ordinary communication practices, and language creativity is seen as both textual artistry and the innovative ways in which humans use language to establish identity and govern interpersonal interactions (Maybin & Swann, 2006). Social media has significantly enhanced human creativity in the English language. Words and phrases used in real life now have the potential to traverse the globe rapidly. Kai Cenat creatively invented the term *rizz* and used it among his close circle of friends before the word gained widespread popularity. Memes, viral challenges, and trending hashtags on TikTok encourage users to play with words and meanings, often resulting in creative and humorous expressions using skits and roleplays. A one-word term like *rizz* expands to birth phrases like *rizz god*, *W rizz*, *rizz up*, *unspoken rizz*, and *ultimate rizz*. These additions demonstrate the playful and inventive nature of language on social media, where users continuously build on and transform existing terms to suit different contexts and convey nuanced meanings.

Aside from that, it is evident that American English continues to dominate social media, even with newer platforms like TikTok. Based on Mair's model of World System of Englishes (2014), American English has established itself as the hub for global English, having the greatest potential to impact other varieties of English, and American words are expected to be a massive presence in other varieties of English. This is due to the global spread of American English through traditional media like newspapers and films (Crystal, 2001), and now with social media. American popular culture is a disruptive force (Crothers, 2021), and global digital environments are providing spaces for linguistic transformations. It was proven in Gulnazir and Salehuddin (2023) that American-owned platforms such as Twitter or X, is driving global language variation and change due to the pervasiveness of American English on it. This could also be extended to a newer application like TikTok, where an American lexical item like *rizz* is invented and subsequently crowned as Word of The Year.

CONCLUSION

Social media platforms like TikTok play a significant role in facilitating the spread of new words through shared group and social behavior as well as language patterns. Users of these platforms popularise new words and expressions through viral content and trends. These two processes enable rapid dissemination of new words across geographical boundaries, allowing such words to reach a global audience. The present study which explores the emergence of the word *rizz* serves as an example of how new words gain widespread usage on TikTok, one of the most popular social media platforms. It follows the framework of Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 1983) which outlines five key stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and

confirmation. TikTok users began searching for its meaning on Google from 2022. . The surge in searches reflects the confusion surrounding this new term in the English language. To track the diffusion process within the framework, this study examines the number of #*rizz* mentions on TikTok to determine whether the word has been widely adopted by users. Further analysis revealed that it is used extensively in a variety of lexico-grammatical features, adapting to the different functions in the sentences. This versatility demonstrates how new words like *rizz* can fluidly integrate into language, reflecting the expressions of a particular generation that shares similar perspectives and experiences.

One of the limitations of the present study is though *rizz* proliferated on TikTok, it is not exclusively used on TikTok; it is also employed by other users in other social media platforms. As a result, it does not show the true scope of the word's usage. Additionally, while the study suggests that Gen Z significantly contributed to the invention of the term, future research could pinpoint the specific generation disseminating new lexical items, especially as age data becomes available on TikTok. Such studies could offer valuable insights into how different generations use new word forms.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the rise and widespread usage of *rizz* on TikTok, illustrating how a single term can gain popularity. The present study also highlights the role social media plays in shaping and producing new words and expressions in the English language. Though the results reveal decreasing usage of *rizz* after the year 2023, many novel lexical items will still be invented online and become a part of the English lexicon.

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