Transformation in Language: 'Mansplaining,' between Language Unit and Social Media Phenomenon

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Abstract

Mansplaining is a relatively new word that appeared in 2008. The portmanteau term has a gender-based connotation, as it denotes condescending behavior of men towards women in certain contexts. Since its emergence, not only has it been the object of scholarly research, but also that of usage on social media platforms. The wide use on social media platforms transformed the neologism into a social media phenomenon. The output on these platforms gave rise to the need to refine its definition and categorize its types. I hypothesize that the word transformed on two fronts: 1) from a new word, it became a phenomenon, thus adding various connotations depending on the context it is used in; 2) the gender-based undertones of the term weakened, and it is becoming more likely to interpret the term in terms of power relations. To support this, I will start with an overview of the term's appearance, present layers of its meaning and interpretations, and conclude with a short reflection on its use in a film.

Keywords: mansplaining, portmanteau term, language unit, social media phenomenon