

The Social Media and English Language

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Abstract

OMG! LOL! TTYL! ROFL! are the commonly used words in mainstream lately which only proves the astounding popularity of social media these days. There is no doubt in saying that social media has caused a huge effect on English language with words like “Tweet” and “Selfie” making its way down in to English dictionary, it is evident that social media has made quite an impact on English language. Social networks are impulsive and drive us to write faster and with the limit such that of Twitter the limited characters barricade force us to write short which in result lead many in using incorrect abbreviated words and poor grammar. The focus being more on transferring the content, than the container. But on the other hand, it urges a common user to express his/her thoughts in front of a wide and diverse audience. So, there remains a need to further investigate the effects of social media on English language whether it has more positive effects or negative.

Keywords: social media, English language, technology, poor grammar, future of English

1.1-Introduction

With the advent of technological upsurge in past few years and easy access to hand held devices, we became more dependent on our smartphones and it has revolutionized the way we communicate to each other in our daily life, it has made it stress-free for us to intermingle with people throughout the world with a single touch through social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. It is quite fascinating to see the kind of technology we have today. In the last few decades the general idea of communication has evolved to such an extent that the traditional ideas of communication are nowhere to be seen. Having access to a smartphone, and through that all kinds of information and utilities has become too common. Such kind of power, which is so accessible, is definitely changing the way we think about communication. But it's not just restricted to that. In fact, all kinds of ideas are evolving, and are taking a separate, intriguing direction. But to think that technology exists in isolation would be a mistake, and its stemming from something, but is it also leading to something? The answer to that is, yes. This dynamic relationship is not just confined to communication, but other aspects of life. In fact, the process of living has been affected by it too. But here it would be discussed how technology is affecting and being affected by the communication. In particular, the language.

Technology has changed language in ways that is quite intriguing. This has not only changed the way people communicate these days, but also how language itself is. While the languages throughout the world are getting affected, here the English language would remain in focus. The English language, which exists as a lingua franca in the contemporary world, has been affecting the world in different ways. But has the language been affected itself too? Yes.

Technology is unmistakably having some impression on the English language and the vocabulary we use. Recently, as discussed earlier, we saw some internet words have seeped in to the Oxford dictionary. However, some people argue that it is okay to misuse Grammar or word spelling on social networking sites, for example using “your” rather than “You're”. And using acronyms such as OMG as part of the normal construction of the sentences. The list goes on. So, it is indeed a question worth asking: what impact do these sites make on the English language, a positive or the negative one?

1.2-Literature Review

A research made by Mallery Jean Tenore in 2013 with the title “5 Ways That Social Media Benefits Writing the English language” detailed some methods that social media benefits writing and language, such as how it escalates the awareness of mistakes people will point them out via these websites therefore we become more conscious of our spelling and grammar thus refining our language. She also spoke about how it produces and evolves new words and meaning, such as “instagrammed”, “tweeted”, “Unfriended”. She believed that it also spotlights short writings meaning it valued short storytelling with short videos where you have just six seconds of time to express your message and as discussed earlier in twitter you only have 140 characters count to use which limits you to make every word count.

A similar research was carried out in 2010 by Andy Bloxham called Social networking: teachers blame Facebook and Twitter for Pupils' poor grades, it spoke about how tutors blame Facebook and Twitter for students' poor grades, he said students devote too much time online which makes it tougher for them to

concentrate in class, they become more preoccupied and have shorter attention spans as researchers found. Educators are also very unhappy that students are substituting words like “Tomorrow” to “2mor” or “message” to “msg”, it also debates how the students with the poorest grades are the ones who expend more time on social network sites. This research argues how social media affect the student at undergraduate level.

Web slang and short message administrations have been appeared to affect the English dialect. It was evaluated that 90% of school kids possessed a cell phone, and 96% utilized content informing. This demonstrates youngsters are dynamic 'texters' (Plester et al., 2008). Web slang was created to save keystrokes. As writing is much slower than talking, to counter this issue, individuals began shortening words and making novel terminology.

A researcher examined the understudies' inspirations for Facebook utilization. A nearby finished survey was coordinated to 595 University understudies who were perceived as clients of the site at Karlstad University in Sweden. Their outcomes recommend that male invest more energy in Facebook than females. The evaluation demonstrated that college understudies' login their Facebook account a larger number of times each day than graduate understudies. Aghazamani (2010)

The total number of Social networking sites users has enlarged enormously over the previous five years, particularly amongst youngsters and scholars (Aydin, 2012). Several handlers have shaped Internet colloquial speech to interconnect and present their opinions on SNSs and portable systems.

Another researcher Khan (2009) originate that sixty-five per hundred of Facebook clients got to their record every day in a few times to check whether they had gotten novel posts. The measure of time spent fluctuated from only a couple of minutes to over an hour on Face-book at each login. The Ohio report demonstrates noteworthy lower GPAs among understudies who utilize Facebook than the individuals who didn't utilize the site. 79 percent understudies utilizing Facebook trusted that the time spent nearby had no effect on their scholarly execution. As indicated by the investigation, youngsters spend a normal of 31 hours per week on the web.

1.3-Research Question

Do social networking sites shape the English language? And if so does it change in a positive or a negative way? And how can we use social networking sites make English better?

1.4-Methodology

The methodology used for this research is mixed methodology that is quantitative and qualitative both. The data for this research paper was collected though both primary and secondary sources, primary data through an online survey and secondary through literature available on internet. In this research an online survey was carried out, the participants on this survey consisted of 100 people using these social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter random sampling method was used to select participants. The survey consisted of asking these participants a question or asking these participants to share their thoughts on daily basis for a course of one month on social networking platform. The question statements were asked in proper English language, which were published on Facebook as well as on Twitter alternatively to visualize the difference caused by the medium. Each day a random question was published or a piece from mainstream media was shared and these participants would be asked to share their thoughts. When the participants were done with their comments, a thorough analysis was carried out of the content each participant has shared and relevant statistics were made. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to mention here that there is lack of reliable data on this subject; there are no books that discuss this topic may be because this is a new study matter and not many researchers have looked into it yet.

1.5-Results

After completion of one month it was found that there is an apparent degrading of language on social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. With focus on being 'quick', participants tend to take less time to construct a sentence. This, as the implication is, led to following:

- 1) Poor grammar.
- 2) Standardization of poor grammar.
- 3) Normalization of poor grammar.
- 4) Poor shorter forms of the words.
- 5) Relying on the language used commonly on social media to express.
- 6) Lack of context, emphasis on text.

Poor grammar seems to be one of the major issues with the social media these days. People tend to learn grammar by picking up bits and pieces and using cognition to make sense of it. While the message most of the times gets through, but the structure itself suffers. Although people try to make corrections in case of a mistake but since the language is understood not much of emphasis is made over it. With social media, perhaps this issue is inherent. And sadly, it only gets worse. There's a whole underlying 'learning mechanism' in place which impacts the language negatively, and at times becomes too difficult to unlearn.

What makes this worse is the standardization of poor grammar. Grammar seems to go through all kinds' treatment and end up in a shape which is not up to the standard, and yet, ironically, is the standard. Poor grammar is taken as standard and nothing much is done about it. Since social media is a beast which is both huge and multi-layered, there's not much one can do to tame it. With people coming from different kind of backgrounds, it becomes quite a hindrance to the language itself.

Poor grammar's standardization is followed closely by its normalization. It was perfectly normal to use bad grammar in language. Because the message is reaching the audience, and there seems to be no criticism, it leads to acceptance. While it is debatable as to the extent of it all.

The abbreviations and shorter form of words are encouraged, which extend to acronyms too. The need of the usage of such forms stem from the idea of doing much in less time. The need to be quick has given way to the widespread usage of such words. The forms are not always standardized, and multiple forms might exist of the same word. This of course would set a standard for all the users of the social media, giving way to messed up digital sphere of language. There is no regulation, and there is no any sort of consideration. In fact, people fill their linguistic gaps through social media and at times wrong information is accepted and put to use when required. This blind acceptance leads to no research on the part of the user (since there appears to be no need for cross-checking or verification in the first place).

This is the age of feeding on information as quickly as possible and moving on. This leads to the promotion of text without context. Participants tend to look beyond, or completely ignore the contextual basis of a text and tend to focus on what they are seeing. In other words, the face value is preferred. This of course comes with its own set of issues, but in terms of language, lack of context leads of wrong understanding of text, which in turn is stemming from comprehension of text. On surface this might seem like a smaller problem, but it goes deep and affects the linguistic competence of a person.

People these days prefer social media over a book or a newspaper. The language used in the mentioned mediums varies greatly when compared with social media. In newspapers, and books, there is a standard that is maintained, and even at its worst there is a sense of uniformity, and correct usage. When it comes to social media there's a serious lack of that.

1.6-Conclusion

Based on the study, it can be said that social media is affecting the way people use language. In fact, it shapes the basic understanding of the English language, and normalizes the use of wrong forms and language structure, slang language and acronyms and abbreviations. It was found that such language becomes too common for the user to differentiate between correct and wrong language. But, there's also a serious lack of understanding, and people are not indeed informed on the matter. The use of language i.e. its utility also makes sure that people don't go beyond what they know or have unknowingly adopted through social media. Having said that, one must consider what sort of impact social media is having on language? Moreover, would it be fair to blame social media for all sorts of degradation, and is social media the only reason for the degradation of language?

No. Social media itself is a representation of the linguistic and social patterns. It shows people relying more on social media as a standard for language than anything else. Is there a change from the language used in real life? Yes, there is. But social media seems to induce a separate form of language that is different than what happens in real life. But they are still connected and do influence each other. Think of as two different spaces interacting with each other, and a continuum existing right between them where changes occur and affect both spaces.

Moreover, these days English has transformed so much so rapidly, some of it is good and positive change and some of it not. The query now is how English is going to be changed in next 10 years? Will it be how we speak now on social media? Or will it alter even more? One thing is evident that English language can adjust and adapt to change so straightforwardly unlike other languages; I think we will see some enormous changes in the future. And the kind of flexibility the English language has shown over the last couple of decades, particularly since internet came into being, has been fascinating.

1.7-References

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1.8-Abbreviations used

OMG: OH MY GOD

LOL: LAUGHING OVER LOUD

TTYL: TALK TO YOU LATER

ROFL: ROLLING ON THE FLOOR LAUGHING