

Effects of Technology and Social Media on English Language Use and Acquisition: A Study on Language Variation and Change

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The present paper throws light on the impact of technology and social media on the use and acquisition of the English language, with special emphasis on language variation and change. The paper examines how digital communication platforms, such as social media, instant messaging, and other internet-based technologies, have influenced linguistic practices. The study of existing literature and analysis of contemporary examples shows that technology has accelerated language change, introduced new linguistic norms, and influenced language learning processes. It also demonstrates the impact of these changes for linguistic diversity, education, and future research.

Keywords: technology, digital, social media, language, internet.

1. Introduction

The advancement of technology and the blooming of social media platforms have vividly restructured numerous aspects of modern life, including the use and acquisition of language. The English language, in specific, has undergone substantial alterations due to these technological advancements. Over the last two decades, the integration of technology into everyday life has revolutionized communication. The spread of internet and mobile technology has facilitated extraordinary levels of connectivity, allowing people from diverse linguistic

backgrounds to communicate seamlessly. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. have become fundamental to this digital communication revolution, creating spaces where users can exchange information, share ideas, and involve in social communication.

One of the most prominent influences of technology on English language use is the advent of novel forms of written communication. Traditional writing conventions have been transformed and the fast-paced nature of digital communication has emerged. Abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons have become part of day-to-day communication, showing a shift towards conciseness and efficiency. Phrases like "LOL" (laugh out loud), "BRB" (be right back), and "TTYL" (talk to you later) are now deep-seated in common language. This linguistic shorthand not only saves time but also nurtures a sense of belonging among users who share the similar digital vernacular.

Social media has also played a vital role in the development of language as it served as a breeding ground for linguistic innovation, where new terminologies emerge and spread swiftly. Memes, hashtags, and viral content aids to the dynamic nature of online language, persuading how people connect and express themselves. The pace at which these linguistic variations occur is unprecedented and challenges the conventional ideas of language stability and standardization.

Moreover, technology and social media have enabled the globalization of English, leading to increased exposure to various dialects and varieties of the language. This exposure has resulted to the hybridization of English, as users imbibe elements from various English dialects into their own speech and writing. For example, the widespread use of American English on social media platforms has affected vocabulary and spelling conventions in other English-speaking regions. On the other hand, non-native English speakers often use their native linguistic features into their English usage, thus forming unique hybrid forms of English.

The effect of technology and social media on English language acquisition is equally profound. Digital tools and online resources have transformed language learning, making it more reachable and interactive. Language learning applications, online courses, and virtual language exchange programs offer learners with chances to practice English in authentic contexts. Social media platforms provide a treasure of real-time language exposure, permitting learners to interact with native speakers and immerse themselves in the language.

The impact of technology and social media on language acquisition is not always a smooth process. The informal nature of digital communication can sometimes lead to the reinforcement of incorrect language forms and usage patterns. Moreover, the overwhelming amount of information and the persistent influx of new linguistic trends can make it challenging for learners to distinguish standard usage from colloquial or non-standard variations. Crystal (2011) discusses how the internet has introduced new vocabulary and

revived archaic words. Terms like "tweet," "selfie," and "emoji" exemplify the lexical innovation driven by technology. Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) highlight how instant messaging and texting contribute to the rapid evolution of slang and abbreviations, impacting informal written communication. Baron (2008) explores how digital writing platforms influence syntactic structures, promoting concise and fragmented sentence constructions. This reflects the efficiency and immediacy of online communication. Thurlow and Poff (2013) investigate the morphological creativity seen in social media language, including the blending of words (e.g., "brunch" from "breakfast" and "lunch") and playful modifications like "internaut." Androutsopoulos (2013) examines the conversational dynamics on social media, emphasizing the informal, interactive, and multimodal nature of digital discourse. This includes the use of emojis, memes, and GIFs to convey tone and emotion. Herring (2010) discusses how social media platforms foster new pragmatic norms, such as the practice of "liking" or sharing posts to signal agreement or support.

The influence of technology and social media on English language use and acquisition are multilayered, showing both positive and negative aspects. The fast progress of digital communication has resulted in novel forms of language variation and change, showing the dynamic nature of the English language in the contemporary era. This paper further delves deep into these phenomena, probing the ways in which technology and social media continue to effect the linguistic landscape, language learning and usage.

TECHNOLOGY AND LANGUAGE USE

Technology has intensely effected language use, impacting both the structure of language and the ways individuals communicate. As digital platforms become increasingly essential to daily life, they bring substantial language variation and change. Technology contributes to these linguistic shifts, and also influence the broad patterns of language.

The growth of the internet and social media has led to the advent of new linguistic forms and norms. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have introduced abbreviations, acronyms, and emojis that facilitate rapid and succinct communication. Terms such as "LOL" (laugh out loud), "BRB" (be right back), "DIY" (do it yourself) and the common use of emojis illustrate how technology fosters innovative ways of communicating emotions and ideas. These innovations echo a change towards informal language and brevity, influencing how people communicate in both online and offline contexts.

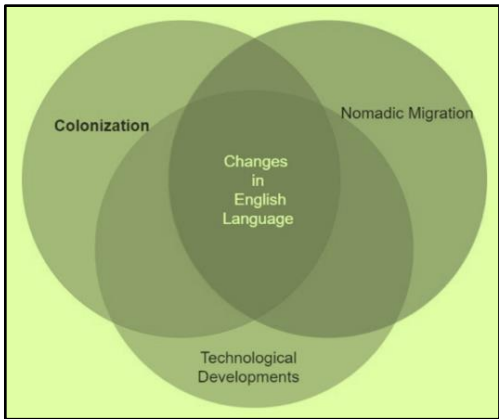


Fig: 1.1 Evolution of English Language

Additionally, the rise of text messaging and online communication has resulted in language variation through the formation of distinct online dialects and registers. For example, internet slang and memes often emerge within niche communities, contributing to a rich tapestry of language variation. This process reflects the broader impression of technology on language evolution, as digital spaces offer platforms for the rapid spreading and normalization of new linguistic forms.

However, the effect of technology on language is not solely positive. The prevalence of autocorrect and predictive text features in digital communication tools can lead to homogenization of language and a potential loss of linguistic diversity. While these tools enhance convenience, they may also reduce users' engagement with traditional language norms and spelling rules.

Additionally, technology affects language acquisition and literacy. With access to diverse linguistic resources online, individuals can encounter a wide array of language styles and dialects. This exposure can enrich language skills but also complicate the learning process, as learners navigate a landscape of varied and evolving linguistic practices.

Thus, technology plays a crucial role in determining language use, driving both variation and change. By facilitating new forms of communication and influencing linguistic norms, technology continues to transform how people interact and engage with language in the digital age.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND LANGUAGE CHANGE

Social media has significantly influenced language variation and change, reforming how individuals use and perceive language in contemporary society. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok has enabled new forms of communication, resulting in noticeable shifts in linguistic practices and norms.

One major way social media influences language is through the formation and propagation of new vocabulary and slang. Platforms often act as incubators for linguistic innovation, where users coin novel terms or re-create existing ones to fit new contexts. For instance, words like "selfie," "hashtag," and "meme" have gained prominence due to their common use on social media, showing how technology can hasten language evolution.

Furthermore, social media contributes to language variation by fostering diverse linguistic communities. Users from distinct regions, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds communicate in digital spaces, leading to the amalgamation of linguistic features. This cross-pollination leads to new hybrid dialects and linguistic tendencies, as individuals imbibe elements from several languages and vernaculars into their online communication.

The informal nature of social media communication also plays a critical role in language change. The platform's character limits, such as those on Twitter, promotes brevity and creativity, which often results in the development of new abbreviations, acronyms, and emojis. These conventions can spill over into other forms of communication, influencing how language is used more broadly.

Additionally, social media platforms offer users with a sense of immediacy and audience awareness, which affects language use. The pressure to create engaging and relatable content prompts users to adopt more casual, conversational language styles, including the frequent use of humor, irony, and emotional expression. This alteration towards a more casual and personal tone differs from the formal language typically used in traditional media and academic writing.

Thus, social media serves as a powerful catalyst for language change, presenting new vocabulary, fostering linguistic diversity, and changing communication styles. As digital platforms continue to advance, they will likely play a progressively noteworthy role in determining the future of language and its variations.

TECHNOLOGY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

In the digital era, technology intensely impacts language acquisition, driving both variation and transformation in linguistic practices. The advent of the internet, social media, and various communication technologies has transformed how individuals learn, use, and evolve language, reflecting both opportunities and challenges in linguistic studies.

Technology enables language acquisition by providing unprecedented access to varied linguistic inputs. Online platforms such as language learning apps, educational websites, and interactive forums offer learners exposure to a wide array of dialects, registers, and language varieties. This accessibility promotes linguistic diversity and enables learners to engage with multiple linguistic contexts, potentially accelerating their acquisition of different language forms. For instance, immersive tools like virtual reality environments and language games create dynamic learning experiences, making language acquisition more interactive and engaging.

However, technology also contributes to language variation and change by influencing communication patterns. Social media platforms, with their informal and often abbreviated communication styles, introduce new linguistic phenomena such as emoji use, hashtags, and internet slang. These elements not only reflect but also shape contemporary language practices, leading to the emergence of new linguistic norms and expressions. The frequent interaction on these platforms fosters rapid language evolution, where certain linguistic forms gain prominence while others fade.

The impact of technology extends to the sociolinguistic domain as well. Digital communication enables the blending of regional dialects and sociolects, leading to hybrid language forms. This phenomenon is particularly evident in multilingual communities where technology-mediated interactions facilitate the convergence of different language varieties. For example, code-switching and code-mixing become more prevalent as individuals navigate multilingual digital spaces, resulting in new language patterns that reflect both linguistic and cultural integration.

In conclusion, technology significantly influences language acquisition, variation, and change. It enhances learning opportunities by broadening exposure to diverse linguistic inputs and shapes communication practices through new digital norms. As technology continues to evolve, its impact on language will likely persist, driving further variation and transformation in linguistic landscapes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for educators, linguists, and learners as they navigate the complexities of language in the digital era.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND EDUCATION

The study of language variation and change reveals significant implications for linguistic diversity and education, reflecting how evolving technologies and societal dynamics reshape language use. This research underscores the complexities of language evolution in contemporary contexts, offering insights into its impact on educational practices and linguistic diversity.

Firstly, technology and social media have profoundly influenced language variation. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok contribute to rapid linguistic shifts by promoting new vocabulary, slang, and grammatical structures. This phenomenon, while enriching, can also challenge traditional language norms. For educators, this presents a dual opportunity: to integrate contemporary linguistic trends into curricula and to address potential issues arising from these changes, such as the erosion of standardized language skills.

Linguistic diversity is both enhanced and endangered by these developments. On one hand, global communication technologies expose speakers to a broader array of languages and dialects, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and preserving minority languages through digital documentation. On the other hand, the dominance of global languages like English may marginalize less widely spoken languages, threatening their survival. Educators must navigate

this complex landscape by promoting linguistic diversity and inclusivity in their teaching practices.

In education, adapting to these linguistic changes requires innovative approaches. Curricula must incorporate the linguistic realities of students' lives, including their use of digital and colloquial languages. This approach can make learning more relevant and engaging, bridging the gap between students' everyday language experiences and formal education. Additionally, teacher training should address the impact of digital communication on language acquisition and variation, equipping educators with strategies to support diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Ultimately, understanding language variation and change is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment. By recognizing and embracing the dynamic nature of language, educators can better support students' linguistic development and contribute to preserving linguistic diversity. This balanced approach not only enriches the educational experience but also aligns with broader societal shifts, ensuring that language education remains relevant and responsive to contemporary needs.

2. Future Research Directions

Future research on language variation and change should focus on several key areas. First, there is a need to explore the impact of emerging digital communication platforms, such as social media and messaging apps, on language evolution. Understanding how these platforms influence language use, create new linguistic norms, and affect language acquisition could provide insights into contemporary language change. Additionally, research should investigate how globalization affects linguistic diversity, especially in terms of endangered languages and language contact phenomena. Another important direction is the study of language variation across different demographic groups, including age, gender, and socio-economic status, to better understand how these factors influence language use and change. Finally, incorporating computational methods and big data analytics can enhance the study of language patterns and trends, offering more comprehensive and nuanced insights into the dynamics of language variation and change.

3. Conclusion

Technology and social media have significantly influenced the English language, driving variation and change in its use and acquisition. These digital platforms have introduced new linguistic norms, facilitated rapid language evolution, and transformed language learning processes. As technology continues to evolve, its impact on language will likely become even more pronounced, necessitating ongoing research and adaptation in education and linguistic studies.

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