

## A Review of Perspectives on Transformation of English Language due to Social Media

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### Abstract

*The English language has undergone continuous evolution since the fifth century, marked by significant transformations attributed to a variety of factors. Among these, technological advancements have exerted the most profound and a pivotal role in instigating substantial shifts in the patterns of English language usage. An observable and noteworthy correlation exists between the rapidity of language transformation and the exponential rise in the user base of social media platforms. A comprehensive exploration of the existing body of literature within this domain offers a comprehensive vantage point to discern the potential avenues for future investigations concerning the ramifications of social media on the linguistic forms and expressions of the English language.*

### Introduction

From ancient cave drawings to contemporary Emojis, the evolution of language as a medium of communication has continually aimed to refine and enhance the clarity and complexity of both verbal and visual expressions. The English language stands as no exception to this trend, having undergone a gradual and transformative process over the course of time (Crystal, 2019). The inception of the English language can be traced back to the fifth century, during which the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians, speakers of a shared West Germanic tongue yet possessing distinct dialects, converged to forge a novel Germanic language (Bernstein, 1997). This amalgamation, now recognized as Anglo-Saxon or Old English, marked the nascent stages of English's development. Across successive centuries, English underwent a series of transformations spurred

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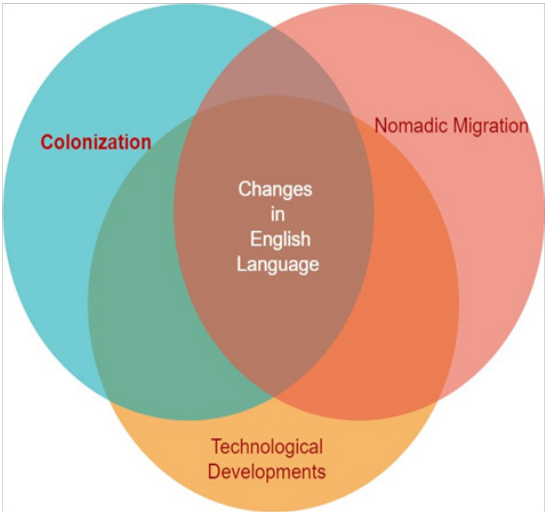
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by a myriad of influences such as migration, colonization, and, notably, technological advancements (Johnson, 2003). These influences contributed to the language’s gradual evolution, shaping it into its present form.

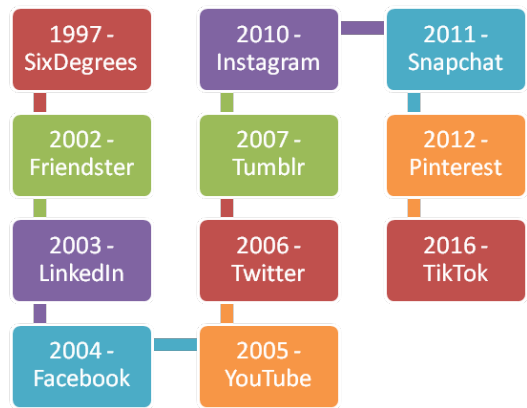
Figure 1: Evolution of English Language



Language evolution can be perceived as the diffusion process of novel linguistic elements, often denoted as linguistic innovations, within a given linguistic community (Chambers, Trudgill and Schilling-Estes, 2004). This progression can be partitioned into two sub-processes: “innovation” and “diffusion” (alternatively labelled as “propagation”). In tandem with technological advancement and particularly the emergence of the Internet, fresh vocabulary within the English language emerged (Yancey, 2004). Over time, English solidified its role as the preeminent language for most forms of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (Halim & Maros, 2014). As technology grew increasingly user-friendly, the proliferation of new terms surged, eventually embedding themselves into common parlance, thereby enriching the lexicon (Mustaeva, Mukhabat and Mamajanova, 2022). However, a prominent shift within the linguistic landscape became evident with the advent of social media. Since the onset of the early 21st century, diverse social networking platforms have seamlessly woven themselves into the fabric of social interaction and content dissemination (Asur and Huberman, 2010).

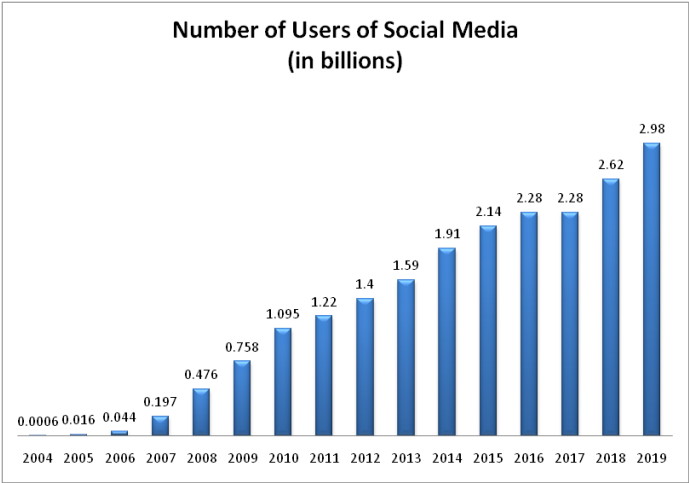
The genesis of social media can be traced back to 1971 when the inaugural email was dispatched (Barron, 2004); yet it was only in 2002 that the concept of social media, as recognized today, was pioneered through the launch of Friendster. Subsequently, an array of other social media platforms emerged in succession, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 2 : Timeline of Development of Social Media (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019)



Social Networking Sites have facilitated the expansion of individuals’ connections and social bonds, particularly among those sharing similar interests, activities, social contexts, and even real-life affiliations (Leskovec, Backstrom and Ravi Kumar, 2008). These platforms empower their users to exchange ideas, engage in activities, discuss events, and explore shared interests within their own personal networks. Their influence transcends various age brackets, spanning diverse educational, cultural, professional, social, and linguistic backgrounds. This broad reach is attributed to their widespread availability, open accessibility, and language adaptability(Kachhia and Kachhia, 2016), resulting in a surge of users, many of whom actively participate across multiple platforms.

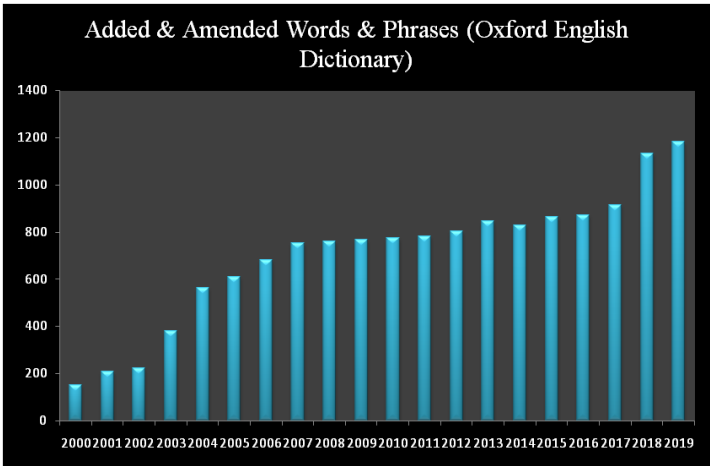
Figure 3: Number of Users of Social Media - (Ortiz-Ospina E, 2019)



A shared attribute among these various social media platforms was their adoption of the English language as a means of communication (Herring and Kapidzic, 2012).

Nevertheless, the language employed across these platforms frequently deviates from standard English, giving rise to the emergence of novel phrases and terms that hold a distinct usage within the realm of social media. Over time, these terms have gradually integrated into the established and accepted lexicon of English. This integration has not only expanded the vocabulary but has also introduced fresh grammatical dimensions to the utilization of these words (Herring, Kouper and Kutz, Vaisman & Zhang, 2012).

Figure 4: Words Added to the English Dictionary (Ratih and Gusdian, 2018)



Evident from both Figure 3 and Figure 4, a noticeable correlation exists between the quantity of social media users and the expansion of the English language lexicon. While a causal relationship remains undetermined at present, this paper conducts an examination of literature authored by diverse experts and researchers (Deng, Sinha and Zhao, 2017). The focus of this review is on the potential causal interplay between distinct social media platforms and the transformative influences they exert on the formal and informal usage of the English language in communication.

Methodology

Through this section, the research paper outlines the methodology employed for conducting the review paper on the transformation of the English language prompted by the influence of social media. The objective of this paper is to present a comprehensive synthesis of existing perspectives and insights on how social media has impacted the English language. The methodology encompasses the following steps

Literature Search Strategy

This review is done by formulating a structured search strategy to identify relevant scholarly articles, research papers, reports, and publications related to the transformation of the English language due to social media. Databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and relevant academic journals were extensively explored. Keywords and phrases such

as “English language transformation,” “social media impact on language,” “linguistic changes in social media,” and related terms were used to ensure the inclusivity of relevant sources.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Identified sources were screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Included sources were required to discuss the influence of social media on the English language, offering distinct perspectives, empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and anecdotal evidence. Non-English sources, duplicates, and materials that lacked substantial relevance were excluded.

### **Data Extraction and Categorization**

Extracted data from selected sources were categorized according to key themes and perspectives. These categories include (but are not limited to) linguistic changes, sociocultural impacts, implications on education, shifts in vocabulary, grammatical alterations, and variations across different social media platforms.

### **Synthesis and Comparative Analysis**

We conducted a comparative analysis of the diverse perspectives presented in the selected sources. This involved identifying commonalities, contradictions, and emerging trends across the literature. By systematically synthesizing these perspectives, we aimed to present a comprehensive overview of the transformation of the English language influenced by social media.

### **Critical Evaluation and Framework Development**

A critical evaluation of the reviewed literature was performed to assess the robustness of the arguments and the methodologies employed by the authors. We identified gaps, limitations, and areas warranting further research. Additionally, a conceptual framework was developed to organize the diverse perspectives and provide a coherent structure to the review paper.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The synthesized perspectives were discussed in light of their implications for language evolution, communication norms, educational practices, and cultural dynamics. Potential future directions for research and the broader significance of understanding the transformation of English due to social media were explored.

### **Conclusion**

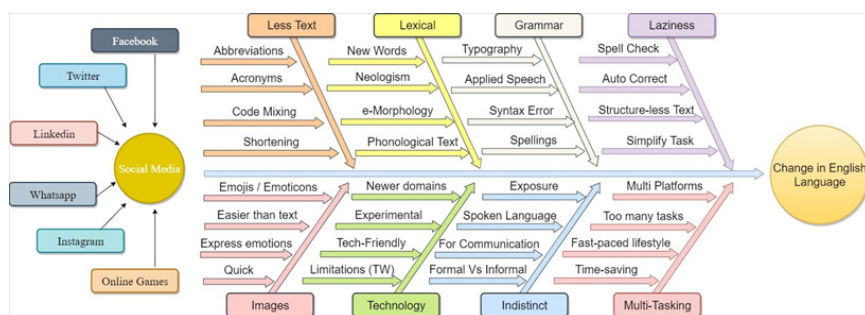
The methodology section concludes by summarizing the approach taken in conducting the review paper. It underscores the rigorous selection process, categorization, and synthesis of perspectives from diverse sources to present a holistic view of the topic.

Through this methodology, we aim to provide an insightful and comprehensive examination of the transformation of the English language resulting from the pervasive impact of social media.

## Discussion

Well-established research and studies centring around the interrelation of Social Media and shifts within the English language reveal ten overarching classifications that shed light on the evolving patterns of linguistic utilization (Onyedum, 2012). This comprehensive overview accentuates extensively substantiated inquiries that highlight the potential factors contributing to modifications in English language usage, particularly within user groups for whom English serves as a secondary language. Ultimately, these changes are poised to pave the way for a novel rendition of the English language.

**Figure 5: Reasons and Impact of Social Media on Changes in English Language**



**1. Deliberate Use of Less Text:** In the realm of social media, the rapid exchange of messages has spurred a deliberate shift towards brevity in language usage (Amedie, 2015). This necessity to maintain pace has led users to opt for fewer words to convey their messages. The origins of this preference for shortened language can be traced back to the era of 'telegraph technology,' which laid the foundation for the evolution of fragmented language, ultimately perpetuated through SMS and other forms of social media (Kenning, 2007). This transition towards a more lenient orthography has become commonplace in various forms of electronic communication, encompassing a range of linguistic alterations, including abbreviations, acronyms, clippings, vowel omissions, and phonetic substitutions (Shortis, 2016). These changes have emerged both unintentionally and as a result of creative experimentation. Non-standard spellings emerged in humorous contexts but eventually gained traction due to their efficiency in conserving keystrokes (Baron, 2010). Additionally, phonetic representations of words have enabled explicit expression of emotions (Ge, 2019).

A substantial portion of research examining the intersection of social media and linguistics has concentrated on Facebook, a prominent social networking platform rife with abbreviated language and code-switching, particularly among multilingual users (Lomicka and Lord, 2012). However, this trend has been associated with a

detrimental impact on written skills (Omar and Miah, 2012). Surveys conducted at Tlemcen University in Algeria indicate that approximately 82% of social media users employ abbreviations due to time-saving convenience, a practice that has even infiltrated academic writing (Zeitzoff, 2017). The extensive use of shorthand in digital conversations has been observed to negatively influence students' formal writing abilities, evident in their tendency to employ similar shortened language in exam papers (Obi, Bulus, Adamu and Sala'at, 2012).

Another perspective that has been put forth by researchers focuses on the 'Global Village' concept of the social media (Wellman, 1999). With users from different nationality, the platform becomes a melting pot of language and creating of alternate dialect; especially acronyms, bring about a connect between the users, a sense of life-like conversations (Seeger, Auer and Schwarz, 2016). This commonality of acronyms or neologism, despite being a liability in use of English, can convey more with fewer words and also probably expunge any grammatical obstacle for non-native speakers (Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2018). A number of research studies conducted among the student community across the world, to study the impact of social media on academic writing indicate that usage of abbreviations, non-standard spellings, neologism by way of using a combination of numbers and words are all rampant (Peersman, Daelemans and Vandekerckhove, 2016). Cited here are a few relevant studies that indicate a high influence of social media language seeping into academic writing.

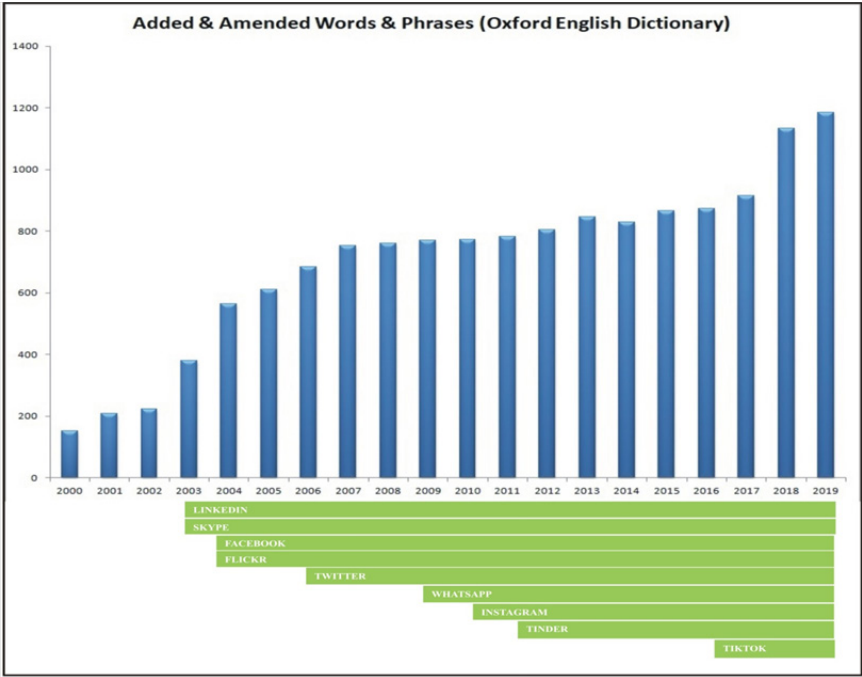
1. Australian students by Bushiness C et al (2011)
2. Saudi Arabian students by Albasheer NAA et al (2012) at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia
3. South African social media users (with focus on WhatsApp) by Songzaba L et al (2019)
4. Jordanian college students by Al-Qudah M A(2016) at Princess Sumayya University for Technology, Jordan
5. Ghanian students by Dansieh S (2011)

Linguists believe that these changes in the way language are expressed in merely a natural progression. Similar to distinct and unique styles of English across geographical and cultural domains, technology is creating a form of English which is common across social networking sites which allows coinage of new words, changed collocations, new derivations of existing words, eponym, pseudo-neologism and blends of different words (Behera and Mishra, 2013). Topological analysis indicate new meanings of words and formation of new compound nouns like netiquette and frenemy, indicating a paradigm shift of English language usage(Kachhia and Kachhia, 2016).

**2. Emergence of New Vocabulary:** In the wake of the emergence of social media, the English language has experienced a decentralization, transcending borders and adapting to specific communities (Crystal, 2019). The influential capacity of social media has reshaped English communication patterns (Amedie, 2015). Alongside the formation of novel acronyms, abbreviations, and various neologisms, there has been a notable

surge in fresh vocabulary that has been integrated into standardized language usage. Unconventional typography and orthography have manifested in words across diverse social networking platforms, seamlessly blending into everyday language (Herring, Kouper, Kutz, Vaisman &Zhang, 2012). The realm of multiplayer online games has given birth to innovative e-morphology due to the intense and rapid communication between players (Ruiz and Nilsson, 2022). Many online games incorporate voice chat and text functions, significantly impacting player interactions. As these games often unite participants on a global scale, English assumes the role of a Lingua Franca, facilitating the influx of loanwords from other languages. Consequently, the English lexicon expands and undergoes standardization (Mangiron and O’Hagan, 2006). Furthermore, the multi-user dimension of online games and the linguistic adventurousness of younger generations have sparked diverse connotations in previously established vocabulary (Carlsson and Gustafon, 2000). This exploration of languages among younger users contributes to a tapestry of linguistic richness (Baron, 2010).

**Figure 6: Correlation between Increase in Words in English and Launch of Various Social Media**



Research has demonstrated that social media platforms such as Facebook serve as a convenient tool for enhancing language skills, particularly among individuals who are not native English speakers (Slim H and Hafedh M, 2019). Moreover, users who have mutually connected friends on social media have been observed to exhibit improved English performance (Lavy V & Sand E, 2012). Nevertheless, it’s important to note that these studies lack empirical validation.



In contrast to the findings of various studies, some researchers, including Al-Qudah M A. (2016) and Thuraiaraj S et al. (2015), argue that the language utilized in informal chats and on social media platforms differs significantly from formal contexts. They suggest that this informal language use does not significantly impact the English language proficiency of its users. Social media has developed a sort of “Meta language,” influenced by the incorporation of an individual’s native tongue, which is shared within closed communities. This linguistic phenomenon is not evident in academic writing.

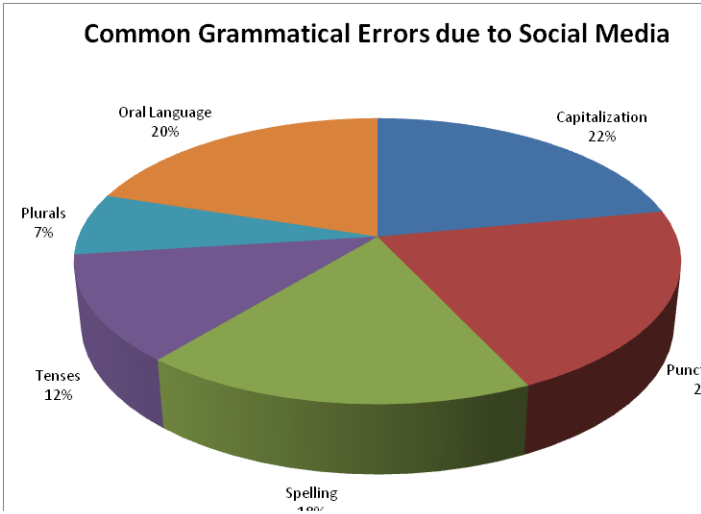
**3. Disregard to Standardized Grammar:** Inherent in every language are structural regulations that dictate the arrangement of words, phrases, and sentences, all aimed at effective communication. Traditional language purists adopt a critical stance, suggesting that computer-mediated communication is eroding the integrity of the English language. However, contrasting perspectives from scholars perceive the impacts less detrimentally. These scholars regard the language employed in digital media as applied speech, wherein the chosen words bear resemblance to spoken language. Some researchers contend that, being in its early stages, the language used in electronic communication lacks the time to establish a standardized structure (Herring S, 2012).

Given that electronic communication users are dispersed across diverse geographical locations and diverse socio-economic backgrounds, their native language’s grammatical patterns often seep into their English usage on social media (Bieswanger, 2007; Herring, 2007; Johanyak, 1997). Common language errors observed include unconventional capitalization, extensive use of emoticons and keyboard symbols mirroring facial expressions, as well as ‘Leet,’ a language prevalent in gaming communities that involves replacing letters with similar-looking characters to convey impact or emotions (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

Anticipations from scholars indicate that, over time, e-grammar will undergo rapid evolution and ultimately establish a distinctive identity apart from traditional grammar (Herring SC. 1998). A survey conducted among Malaysian students revealed that a significant number of social media users were unaware of the grammatical inaccuracies they were employing (Thuraiaraj S et al., 2015). As social media communication has evolved, so has the language associated with it, commonly referred to as ‘Netspeak.’ This form allows a high degree of grammatical flexibility, encompassing absent punctuations, open sentence structures, symbol-substituted words, and capitalization for emphasis (Para I, 2018). This transformation of language has led to a negative influence on grammar skills in academic writing (Larocque, P. 2011).

The personal nature of social media communication dissuades teacher interventions, reinforcing poor grammar and writing skills, particularly when English isn’t the users’ native language (Shaver). Another contributing factor to the rise of subpar grammar skills among social media users is the lack of proofreading before posting, resulting in a loss of coherence and coherence (Alhusban A M, 2016).

Figure 7: Impact of Social Media on Grammatical Errors in Academic Writing



**4. Technology:** In the evolving technological landscape, user-friendly interfaces have made it increasingly effortless to incorporate features that streamline tasks for individuals. These advancements, such as spell checks, auto-corrections, and phrase suggestions, have lessened people’s reliance on their own language skills and learning (Kozhin Omer, Kochar Ali, Airin Shwan & Shawkat, 2022). This trend is particularly noticeable in various forms of Computer Mediated Communication. The drive for brevity and urgency is often cited as the driving force behind the use of acronyms, improper grammar, and the neglect of relevant punctuation in social media communication (Mworia, 2015). The convenience of spell-check and emoticons, however, has contributed to a decline in users’ willingness to engage their standardized language proficiency (Chih-Hsiung, 2022).

These technological conveniences expedite and simplify tasks, leading to a mindset of minimal effort invested in writing fostering a tendency to opt for shortcuts without a comprehensive grasp of the writing process (Alhusban, 2016). This inability to apply grammar skills and proper language usage is noticeable in academic writing, where assistive features are typically disabled. Millennials, growing up in an era of accessible assistive technologies, exhibit a high dependency on language assistance provided by these tools, often experimenting with language (Purcell, Buchanan and Friedrich, 2013). The significant time millennials spend on social networking sites, averaging 7.5 hours a day, underscores their reliance on technology for communication and multitasking (Allahverdi, 2022).

As technologies become increasingly user-friendly, individuals lean more heavily on these features to articulate themselves, fostering a perception that shortcuts can be taken without fully understanding the writing process. Students may justify their lack

of correct language usage by downplaying its significance (Adely, Mitra, Mohammed, Shaham, 2021). The progression of social media has expanded its language options from English to encompass almost all languages and scripts worldwide, allowing situational code-switching between English and vernacular languages (Aarts, McMahon and Hinrichs, 2020). The more time users spend on social media language, the more it influences standard language usage (Twenge, 2019).

Certain social media platforms, like Twitter, impose character limitations on posts, prompting users to resort to abbreviated words (Indu and Thampi, 2021). To maintain connectivity on social media, individuals often use mobile phones, historically equipped with smaller screens. This constraint has popularized the use of word and sentence acronyms (Hossain and Hussain, 2020).

The proliferation of communication platforms driven by technology has led to an increased reliance on virtual communication rather than face-to-face interactions. While this facilitates global connections, it presents challenges in conveying emotions accurately through text alone. In response, the integration of emojis, emoticons, GIFs, and images within social media allows non-verbal information to be conveyed through visual symbols closely representing different facial expressions, scenarios, and phrases (Zhang and Cassany, 2023). These computer-generated images not only simplify the expression of intended emotions but also reduce the number of keystrokes required (Herring, Kouper, Kutz, Vaisman & Zhang, 2012).

These new technological landscapes, with their unique linguistic features, have transformed language usage on social media, leading to a surge in chat-like language adoption across diverse contexts.

**5. Blurred Boundaries Between Virtual and Real Scenarios:** The prolonged periods spent on diverse social media platforms have given rise to a complex issue wherein users struggle to differentiate between communication in the physical world and that which occurs within virtual spaces (Ruwe, 2023). Adolescents devoting over 30% of their day to social media often perceive computer-mediated communication not as writing, but merely as a means of interaction. As a result, the necessity for formal language usage is diminished (Belqassim and Saadi, 2021). This difficulty in discerning the language style suitable for social media versus academic or official contexts has posed challenges for graduates, particularly in adopting formal language within the workplace. A hybrid of text slang and formal language has become commonplace in educational institutions and professional environments (Burgstahler, 2023).

The primary goal within social media is to convey messages in an attention-grabbing manner, prioritizing appearance over the precision of writing skills. Consequently, the significance of using proper language in formal communication appears to have diminished, hinting at a potential decline in structured language usage over time (The Semantics and Pragmatics of Three Potential Slurring Terms). While this perspective might appear pessimistic regarding the future of the English language, certain studies

highlight that teenagers indeed possess the ability to differentiate between writing suited for academic or formal scenarios and that intended for casual communication (Ansari and Nawab, 2010).

## Conclusion

In spite of social media's existence since the previous century, it's only been in the past fifteen years that specific social networking platforms have garnered popularity and evolved to user-friendly interfaces. Social and language researchers continue to delve into the ramifications of this digitized communication platform on diverse facets of human existence, including the English language. An extensive exploration has been undertaken, encompassing research articles, blogs, online content, white papers, and dissertations, all in pursuit of pertinent insights. The deductions drawn from the referenced literature underline a positive association between the rising user count on social media and the augmentation in dictionary entries during the corresponding period. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that correlation doesn't necessarily signify causation, necessitating further in-depth exploration.

All the aforementioned papers and articles unequivocally assert that the emergence of social media has induced a metamorphosis in the English language. This transformation manifests through the introduction of novel words, adaptations to existing terminology, and shifts in word combinations. Factors contributing to this linguistic evolution include personalization, a lax approach towards grammatical norms, the utilization of imagery, and the integration of user-friendly technology.

## Scope of Further Research

Future research can be delved into the impact of social media on the way English is used in Formal and academic context using empirical research tools. Areas that can be looked into to extend the research can be

1. Statistical validation of social media being the biggest impact factor
2. Clarity in terms of whether the transformation of English is reflected in formal, informal or only social media environments
3. Substantiation of the extent of impact that various social media has had in the transformation of the language
4. Verification as to the alteration in usage of English across different professions where English proficiency is mandated

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