

Modifications and Mutations of the English Language in Digital Space: Implications for Sustainability of Standardisation in Written Communication

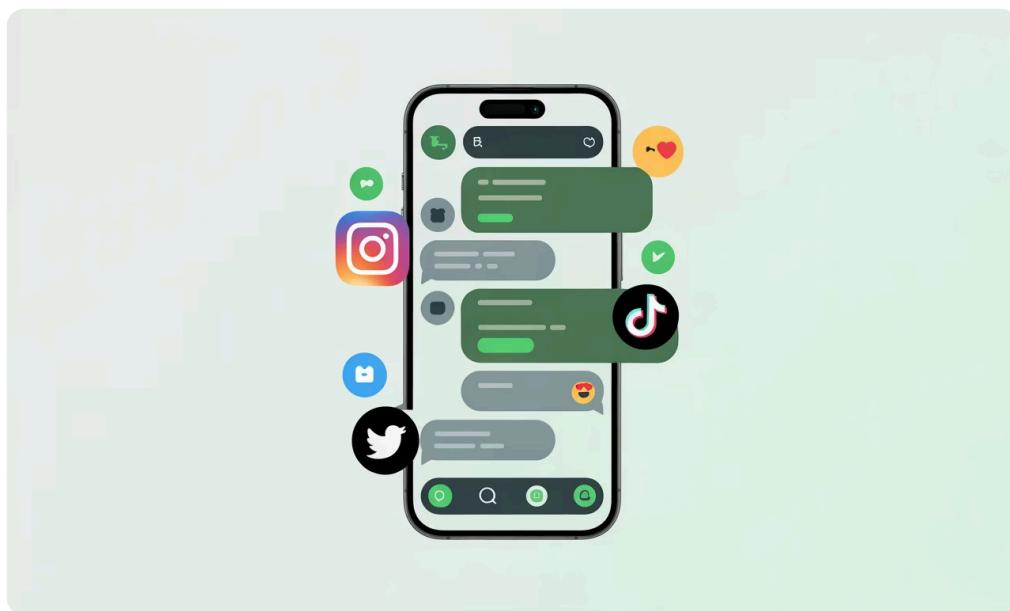
RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Lexical mutations and modifications in the English language have major consequences for the need to standardise written communication. The English language has changed and evolved in the digital realm, as platforms such as social networking and instant messaging have altered language use. The paper highlights how various media encourage non-standard writing practices, including the use of slang, acronyms, and informal styles. The rapid proliferation of new expressions, the blending of oral and written communication, and the coexistence of formal and informal language all pose a challenge to the long-term viability of standardised written English. This paper employs a qualitative method, examining users' linguistic adjustments through the analysis of various digital communication modes, including chat logs and social media messages. The findings indicate that users often shift between informal and formal registers based on circumstances, demonstrating the adaptability of language in modern communication. Although these linguistic shifts pose a threat to long-standing conventions, the article contends that they are also indicative of the natural development of language in reaction to technological progress. Educators, linguists, and policymakers may all benefit from these findings, which can guide language planning efforts and help shape a more responsive language curriculum. This paper fills a **gap** in the literature by investigating the potential ramifications of digital language mutations on society. It portrays a more nuanced picture of how English has changed in the digital era and recommends appropriate solutions and ways forward, taking into account the ever-changing nature of language in digital spheres while still facilitating successful communication.

Methodology

Qualitative analysis of digital communication modes, including chat logs and social media messages.

Key Focus

Lexical mutations, abbreviations, slang, and informal writing practices across digital platforms.

Main Finding

Users adaptively shift between formal and informal registers based on communication contexts.

Keywords: Modifications, Mutations, Digital Space, Sustainability, Standardisation, Written Communication

INTRODUCTION

The English language has always been a unique and ever-evolving form of communication, owing to a variety of cultural, social, and technological innovations (Crystal, 2001). In contemporary society, the existence of numerous online communication media has a profound impact on the language itself (Panjaitan & Patria, 2024). This change presents new threats to the viability of standardised written communication. In the Nigerian context, especially in institutions of higher learning, where English is the language of mass communication and education, the influence of new media language from social sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, SMS, Skype, WhatsApp, 2go, MySpace, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) has infiltrated the written communication of many youths and even adults, leading to a deviation from the rules of Standard English in their writing. This deviation in writing style manifests in school essays, emails, and standardised tests conducted outside the school system. Studies on text messaging, which often employs such informal styles, have highlighted these trends. The sociolinguistic context of these language variations can be understood through existing frameworks.

New media has greatly impacted the use of the English language across the four major communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with a more significant influence on the written form of expression. Social media is seen to be worsening grammar, and the addictive use of abbreviations and emoticons is weakening formal writing skills at an alarming rate. The impact of new media has made informality in language use second nature to some English language users, such that it constantly infiltrates official and academic platforms. Digital discourse analysis provides further insights into these phenomena.

01

Social Media Influence

Platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, SMS, Skype, and WhatsApp have impacted formal writing in educational institutions.

02

Writing Skills Impact

The excessive use of abbreviations and emoticons is rapidly weakening formal writing skills among users.

03

Language Infiltration

Informal digital language use has become habitual, increasingly affecting official and academic communications.

People gain a large following on new media in spite of a lack of eloquence or standard writing. Most online writing is replete with frequent spelling errors, short sentences with numerous abbreviations, and unusual jargon, all of which diminish formal writing skills. This reflects broader trends in online language practices and digital discourse (Quattrociocchi et al., 2024).

Writing in posts, tweets, texts, blogs, and emails, according to Varnhagen et al. (2010), is characterised by the deletion of the last letters in words—lov, hav for love and have respectively; the use of pidgin forms like waka for go, dem for them, how una dey? for how are you? Spellings often incorporate numbers instead of solely letters; for example, '2' for 'two'. There is also a tendency to drop articles and use incorrect tenses. The prevailing norm appears to be prioritising message delivery over adherence to correct presentation form. These linguistic simplifications are increasingly prevalent across digital platforms.

A major contributing factor to the alteration of language, generally in the global digital context and particularly in the Nigerian context, is the popularity of social media (Sergeant & Tagg, 2014). Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have accelerated the spread of linguistic innovations, which in turn bring new lexical items, abbreviations, and stylistic conventions into fashion. For instance, Facebook features slang capitalisation, while Twitter and text messaging have become popular for their pervasive informal abbreviations, acronyms, and phonetic spellings.

The consequences of digital communication reach far beyond social media. Text messages and instant messaging services such as WhatsApp and Discord have also changed how people interact in writing (Thurlow, 2003). These platforms tend to adopt a more relaxed, informal, and abbreviated mode of expression. The use of shorthand, colloquialisms, and a casual voice in writing on these platforms further flouts the established conventions of language and writing. Furthermore, the expansion of digital content production, such as blogs, vlogs, and discussion forums, has broadened the variety of contexts or registers of language use. These platforms encourage a unique style of writing where individuals' voices are captured, and those voices are freer to innovate with language. This blending of medium and language interacts to produce new patterns of language that deviate from conventionally formalised written rules.

The development of language during the digital era critically affects the preservation of the standardisation of written communication (Crystal, 2001). As Tagg states, *"the impact of changes to language and its use in digital contexts is a challenge to traditional ideas of 'correct' language and its standardisation"* (Panjaitan & Patria, 2024).

To sum up, the impact of the digital era on the English language has been significant, causing an increase in linguistic mutations and posing a threat to standardised written communication. These changes require deep analysis to understand their impact on language teaching, business communication, and safeguarding language diversity within digital platforms.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The longstanding conventions of English writing have supported effective communication, understanding, and clarity across different contexts. However, the changes in language use created by technological advances pose a threat to these norms.

The widespread use of social media and instant messaging as means of communication stands as one of the most significant contributing factors to the evolution of the English language and its formal written standards. Over 60% of regular users of this form of communication report a decline in their writing competence. These media promote a more informal and expressive style, which is evident in the linguistic changes associated with digital communication. The social platforms' use of abbreviations, phonetic spelling, slang, and evolving vocabulary all diverges from formal written English.

Core Problems

- Over 60% decline in writing competence
- Widespread use of abbreviations and slang
- Phonetic spelling and informal expression
- Unedited and unsupervised content

Research Gaps

- Limited analysis of digital language mutations
- Need to examine social implications
- Assessment of standardisation sustainability
- Understanding of code-switching patterns

The participatory aspects of digital communication and increased interaction have created an overlap between spoken and written forms of language. The rapid sending and receiving of messages, lack of strict editorial control, and informality of tone featured in digital interactions have also allowed for greater use of contractions, ellipses, and emotionally charged language typically associated with verbal communication. Such blending of language styles defies the traditional expectations society has for the English language and its prescribed standards.

The spread of social media and mobile applications has resulted in the acceleration of English's fragmentation, as novel patterns of English become assimilated into users' daily interactions. Socialised language is embedded and entrenched within the language framework at an unprecedented speed. Such processes may accelerate the fragmentation of English in its written form, with unstandardised variants emerging as unguided, user-centric English takes over organised systems, defeating the very purpose of regulated communication and standardisation.

The evolution of fixed written English has consequences across a wide array of issues. Some of these include the standards of education, business communication, and cultural heritage concerning languages. To address this issue, it is important to analyse the complex causes of linguistic changes and develop appropriate regulatory policies to manage the delicate interface of digital language along with effective written communication.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this paper is to examine modifications and mutations of the English language in digital spaces, and their implications for the sustainability of standardisation in written communication (Tagg, 2015; Michael, 2025).

The specific objectives are:

01

Analyse Digital Modifications

Analyse the nature and extent of English language modifications and mutations in digital spaces.

02

Evaluate Implications

Evaluate the implications of these modifications and mutations on the standardisation of written English in the workplace and educational domains.

03

Explore Measures

Explore potential measures to sustain standardisation amidst rampant linguistic mutations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the global prominence of English as a lingua franca continues to grow, the examination of its digital mutations becomes increasingly vital for a range of stakeholders, including educators, linguists, and policy-makers. Understanding the profound transformations that the English language is undergoing in the digital age, including vocabulary evolution and linguistic simplification, can provide crucial insights to guide the development of strategies that balance the need for effective communication with the acknowledgement of the organic evolution of language.

For educators, this study offers a valuable resource for the development of contemporary English language curricula that are responsive to the evolving nature of digital communication and the impact of technology-enhanced language learning. By recognising the prevalence of linguistic mutations, such as abbreviations, slang, and informal expressions, educators can better prepare students to navigate the complexities of written communication in the digital realm. This understanding can inform pedagogical approaches that foster flexibility, creativity, and critical awareness of language use, rather than rigid adherence to traditional standards.

Similarly, for linguists, this exploration of digital language modifications contributes to a broader understanding of language change and the factors that shape it. The insights gained from this study can inform theoretical discussions and empirical investigations into the dynamics of language evolution, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving digital technologies and communication platforms. This knowledge can then inform policy decisions and language planning initiatives that aim to address the challenges posed by the erosion of standardised written English.

Ultimately, this paper serves as a valuable resource for a range of stakeholders, equipping them with the necessary understanding to navigate the complexities of language use in the digital age and to develop strategies that maintain effective communication while respecting the organic evolution of the English language.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sociolinguistics and Digital Communication Theories

This paper is set within the context of sociolinguistics and communication studies. The change in English language use due to digital communication is best approached from William Labov's variationist theory (Labov, 1972). One of his theses is that the existence of language differences and the variety of forms within a language are products of social interaction and the use of language in a particular community. This explains the social, circumstantial, or contextual informality of conversation, as well as the rapid transmission of language within the digital sociocultural framework.

David Crystal's analysis of "netspeak" (Crystal, 2006) is an important application of the sociolinguistic approach, as it aids in explaining the sociolinguistic aspects of digital dialect. Crystal's work analyses the impact of the internet and digital media on language evolution, including the development of idiosyncratic lexicons, syntax, and style.

1 Variationist Theory

Labov's theory explains language differences as products of social interaction and community language use within digital sociocultural frameworks.

2 Netspeak Theory

Crystal's analysis addresses digital dialect evolution, including the development of idiosyncratic lexicons, syntax, and style in internet communication.

3 Combined Approach

This paper adopts a comprehensive framework **analysing** language variation and change within digital communities and technological advancement contexts by combining insights from both theories, including considerations for computational approaches to language analysis (Ananiadou, McNaught, & Thompson, 2012).

The term “netspeak” allows for greater examination of the linguistic characteristics found in the provided excerpts, including the use of abbreviations, phonetic spelling, and informal slang. Crystal’s theory places these linguistic developments in the wider context of civilisation’s digital age and helps explain the extent of change that language undergoes in cyberspace, as well as the effects this change may have on the preservation of **standardised** English grammar and usage, especially in the area of code-mixing. The pervasive influence of social media on these linguistic shifts, particularly among young adults, underscores the challenges to language **standardisation**.

The combination of variationist theory—on how language varies and changes within a speech community, and how these variations are systematically linked to social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class—and “netspeak,” which involves searching for words on the net, constitutes a comprehensive set of hypotheses regarding the evolution of the English language in the context of modern technological advancements. These approaches broaden one’s perspective on the implications of language and technology, language and society dynamics, and ultimately, the analysis of the degree of **standardisation** in written language communication.

Concept of Language Mutations in the Digital Age

The rise of technology has made it the most effective means of communication in the world today. However, while technology has made it easier for people to communicate with one another by providing many features, it is also embedded with miscommunications, leading many people to struggle with written English. Altered English mutates in structure, meaning, grammar, and punctuation through the internet. Throughout the internet, people are constantly using new words and phrases, which transform traditional English. This ongoing linguistic evolution is significantly influenced by digital platforms and contributes to both novel forms of expression and potential challenges for traditional language norms.

Social media platforms enable easy connection and sharing of daily lives. However, research suggests Twitter's abbreviated and picture-based nature encourages shortened forms, including phonetic spellings and abbreviations. This "language of social media" is known for its playfulness, informality, and expressiveness via slang, capitalisation, and hashtags. Linguistic simplification patterns are evident across various platforms (Quattrociocchi et al., 2024).

The informal conversational style on these platforms encourages contractions, slang, and informal written communication (Sargeant & Tagg, 2014). This merging of written and spoken language challenges traditional expectations of formal written structures. Increased digital content creation (blogs, vlogs, online forums) further diversifies language (Varnhagen et al., 2010). Engaging with expressive digital writing leads users to experiment with new words, stylistic choices, and unorthodox grammar (Thurlow, 2003).

The interplay between linguistics and the digital world highlights contemporary language change. *Language mutations* refer to linguistic innovations caused by technological, social, or cultural evolution. While these changes may challenge formal English standards, they also demonstrate language evolution in a changing world. Digital communication forms like texting and tweeting are revolutionising how we communicate, interact, and share information, offering insights into 21st-century linguistic changes (Ahmed, 2024).

Digital Communication and Language Modification

Online communication tools have rapidly transformed interaction, introducing new linguistic changes and variants (Crystal, 2011). This language change phenomenon has garnered significant attention in the growing literature (Asharaf, 2025). The creation of "new technologies-enabled linguistic activities" is a key factor in these changes. Unlike face-to-face communication, digital media's unique constraints—like space limits, visual modes, and information speed—require new forms of expression such as abbreviations, emojis, and creative spelling (Sikandar, 2025). While emojis, memes, and internet slang enhance expressiveness and social connectivity, they can also diminish formal writing skills, grammatical accuracy, and linguistic coherence.

Research shows digital language variation is shaped by social and identity factors (Ahmed, 2024). Individuals use language to construct identity, fostering group-specific dialects and conventions, like the unique English spoken in Nigeria's Delta State (Asharaf, 2025). Distinct subcultures create regionalisms and subculturalisms, challenging standardised English.

Digital communication, integrating advanced technologies, has transformed human expression and language (Crystal, 2011). This includes new lexicons, stylistic conventions, and a convergence of speech and writing into a hybrid form using text, images, and sounds. Such changes further challenge standardised written language and effective communication.

Given rapid technological advancements, understanding language modification theory and its impact on written communication standardisation is crucial. Research in this area benefits educators, communication specialists, and decision-makers navigating language use in the digital age.

The Concept of Digital Communication

Digital technologies have fundamentally altered communication methods. Digital communication is defined as interaction, exchange, and expression via digital devices, platforms, or networks. Computers, smartphones, and internet-connected devices mediate these interactions, allowing information, messages, ideas, and texts to be transmitted through images, audio, video, and text. Advanced digital infrastructure enables information to circulate globally, facilitating real-time interactions and fostering global communities.

Digital communication is increasingly interactive and relies on user-generated content. Unlike one-way media like TV or radio, digital platforms promote two-way, participatory dialogue where users actively contribute, react, and guide communication. User responses foster modes of expression such as social media, instant messaging, and online forums. Additionally, digital communication is multimodal, combining text, emojis, GIFs, and hyperlinks to enhance expression beyond traditional written language. The complexity of social media posts, for example, has evolved over time.

The widespread adoption of digital communication has blurred formal and informal expression styles. The spontaneous, casual nature of digital interactions expands conventional written language norms. While digital communication tools are vital, their impact on language proficiency, especially for students, warrants attention. This paper primarily focuses on the conflict between technology-driven communication and standard language.

As noted, "digital communication" encompasses new interaction methods using technology. Grasping its specific forms and consequences is crucial for understanding contemporary communication.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The development of English language use in the context of communications technology has become a focus of scholarly work. In particular, researchers have studied how the internet alters the boundaries and conventions of the English language. Today, a considerable number of studies have reported on the processes of language change and the outcomes of such transformations in the context of the internet (Thurlow, 2003; Friedrich & de Figueiredo, 2016). There is considerable concern about the implications of such changes for the preservation of formal standards of written English.

Goel et al.'s (2016) study on the use of "shorthand," including abbreviations and phonetic spellings, within Twitter serves as a foundational piece. Using a corpus of Twitter data, Goel et al. (2016) showed that educational attainment, age, gender, and the social network where language was used impacted the use of shorthand. Most importantly, users who had little time to converse and were accustomed to informal dialogue greatly modified English spelling conventions, contributing to nonstandard word growth and linguistic influence. Contemporary research continues to explore linguistic simplification patterns on social media, along with the evolution of English vocabulary in the digital age.

Incorporating this work into a review of the impact of digital media on language and speech phenomena within sociolinguistics, it is noted that participatory online communication exacerbates informal style elements in language hybridity. With regard to digital language features that may be distinct from written language, technological affordances such as emojis and hyperlinks also contribute to the construction of digital language. This evolving digital linguistic landscape is further shaped by technology-enhanced language learning.

Goel et al. (2016)

Foundational study on Twitter shorthand usage, showing impact of educational attainment, age, and gender on modified spelling conventions.

Tagg (2015)

Examined language diversity in computer-mediated communication, highlighting formal-informal pattern coexistence and local dialect emergence.

1

2

3

4

Varnhagen et al. (2010)

Explored linguistic creativity in instant messaging, documenting strategies like abbreviations and emoticons for identity negotiation.

Udenze (2020)

Analysed emojis as vital non-verbal markers, emphasising their role in conveying sentiments and preventing misinterpretation in digital communication.

Varnhagen et al. (2010) explored linguistic creativity in instant messaging, where users employed abbreviations and emoticons to convey meaning, negotiate, and express personal identities. This suggests digital environments allow for greater stylistic and expressive liberty than formal written language.

Tagg (2015) highlighted language diversity in computer-mediated communication, noting the coexistence of formal and informal patterns and the emergence of local dialects in social media. Udenze (2020) analysed emojis as crucial non-verbal markers for conveying sentiment and preventing misinterpretation.

Labov's (1972) sociolinguistic perspective offers a framework for understanding how social factors drive language variation and change, especially relevant to novel linguistic practices fostered by digital communication's new social environments.

Tagg's (2015) study on computer-mediated communication diversity challenges the notion of a single, homogenised form of written English, citing the use of formal/informal language patterns and emerging local dialects. This work underscores the need to understand language in its sociocultural contexts and reconsider its implications for language policy, education, and professional discourse.

Technology has enhanced text message and social media communication, increasing shorthand use. Shorthand indicates social status or group affiliation, saves time, and socially unites people. Leppänen's (2007) study highlighted how young people use abbreviations to form linguistic identity, reflecting social changes and technological influence.

Emojis have received extensive scrutiny as crucial non-verbal markers. Udenze (2020) argued that emojis convey sentiments and prevent misinterpretation, making them a vital part of the lexicon in digital communication by mitigating misinterpretation.

Research shows users often spell words phonetically or combine letters creatively for humour or intensity. Cingel and Sundar explored how prolonged exposure to unconventional expressions impacts younger generations' perceptions of standard language. Contemporary research emphasises the significant social media impact on English language use among young adults. While informal styles foster creativity, they can negatively affect formal writing skills and classroom norms, challenging the development of structured writing.

Michael (2025) provides further insights into social media's role in language standardisation, while technology-enhanced language learning is discussed as a bridge between these styles.

Panjaitan & Patria (2024) also explore social media's role in this language evolution. These processes demonstrate language's evolutionary development amidst globalisation and new technologies.

These findings illustrate digital communication's advancements and their impact on English evolution, demonstrating technology's effect on language in modern society. Continued digital platform development promises further understanding of these linguistic changes and consequences.

These advancements contribute to a contemporary world where users employ diverse styles for varied communication contexts. Such patterns regarding standardised written communication's sustainability would not be accessible without the qualitative approach taken by researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The anonymised samples from the analysis of linguistic excerpts from various digital communication platforms, including Twitter (Excerpt 1), Facebook (Excerpt 2), WhatsApp (Excerpt 3), Discord (Excerpt 4), and Facebook Messenger (Excerpt 5), have revealed the pervasive nature of linguistic mutations in the digital age. These modifications, driven by the unique characteristics and affordances of these digital media, challenge the traditional standards of written English and raise significant concerns about the sustainability of standardisation in written communication.

Excerpt 1 (Twitter)

"Omg, today was like, so cray-cray! My BFF and I went to the mall and did seriously mad shopping. Got the cutest new dress, you have to see it! #OOTD #Blessed"

The linguistic mutations observed in the Twitter excerpt demonstrate the evolving nature of written communication in the digital age. The use of abbreviations and shorthand, such as "omg," "2day," and "2," reflects a tendency towards concision and efficiency in digital interactions, where character limits and rapid message exchange prioritise brevity over formal language structures. Additionally, the inclusion of phonetic spelling, exemplified by "lyk" and "cray-cray," reveals a departure from standard orthographic conventions.

Excerpt 2 (Facebook)

"Just had the most EPIC weekend with my squad! We went clubbing, got turnt, and made so many memories. Can't wait for the next adventure! #YOLO #LiveLaughLove"

The linguistic mutations and modifications observed in the Facebook excerpt reflect the dynamic evolution of the English language in the modern era. The language used deviates significantly from the standardised norms of written English, showcasing a range of linguistic transformations characteristic of social media language use. Firstly, the use of capitalisation for emphasis, as seen in the word "EPIC," demonstrates a departure from the conventional rules of written communication.

Excerpt 3 (WhatsApp Chat)

"Yo bro, u free 2nite? Wanna link up and grab some grub? I'm feelin' hella hungry, n' we can chill and catch up. Lemme know what u think!"

The linguistic mutations observed in the WhatsApp chat excerpt reflect the significant transformations that the English language has undergone in the digital age. One of the primary features evident is the extensive use of abbreviations and shorthand. The replacement of "you" with "u" and the shortening of "tonight" to "2nite" are examples of this trend, which aims to facilitate quicker and more concise written exchanges.

Excerpt 4 (Discord Chat)

"Dude, did u see that sick gameplay from the new game? The graphics were insane, and the combat was so smooth. Def gonna cop that when it drops. Gonna be lit!"

The linguistic mutations and modifications observed in the Discord chat excerpt exemplify the evolving nature of the English language in the digital realm, particularly within online gaming communities. The excerpt demonstrates extensive use of slang and gaming-specific terminology. Words like "sick" (meaning "impressive" or "cool"), "cop" (meaning "to obtain" or "purchase"), "drops" (referring to the release of new content), and "lit" (meaning "exciting" or "enjoyable") are all part of the specialised lexicon commonly employed by gamers.

Excerpt 5 (Facebook Messenger Chat)

Friend 1: "Yo, what's up? You free this weekend?"

Friend 2: "Yoo, yeah I'm down! We should def hang out. Any plans in mind?"

Friend 1: "Nice! Hmm, how about we grab some food and then hit up that new club? It's supposed to be poppin'!"

Friend 2: "Sounds good to me, fam! Let's do it. What time works for you?"

Friend 1: "Sweet, let's say 8 pm? I'll send you the deets later."

Friend 2: "Bet, see you then! Can't wait, it's gonna be lit!"

The linguistic mutations observed in the Facebook Messenger excerpt exemplify the pervasive influence of digital communication on the evolution of the English language (Ahmed, 2024). This excerpt demonstrates widespread use of slang and informal expressions, such as "Yo," "down," "def," "fam," "poppin'," and "lit." These shifts reflect how digital platforms foster the incorporation of vernacular into written communication and impact language standardisation.

Abbreviations and shorthand are also present, as in "def," "gonna," and "deets," reflecting concise and efficient writing styles motivated by speed (Asharaf, 2025).

The conversational tone, interjections, and integration of slang create immediacy and intimacy typical of spoken language.

These linguistic features blur the boundary between oral and written communication, challenging traditional expectations of formal written English. As individuals engage in such online interactions, they are reshaping English, introducing new lexical items, stylistic conventions, and modes of expression (Sikandar, 2025).

Digital communication platforms widely feature linguistic mutations—abbreviations, phonetic spelling, slang, and hashtags. These patterns challenge traditional standardised written communication and impact language standardisation in the digital age (Panjaitan & Patria, 2024).

Digital modifications often create a hybrid language, blending standard English with new digital expressions, which challenges the uniformity of standard written English (Panjaitan & Patria, 2024). The evolution of English vocabulary in the digital age is particularly notable. Nevertheless, many users code-switch between digital and standard forms, showing contextual awareness (Ahmed, 2024).

Standardisation implications are multifaceted. While the flexibility of digital language enriches communication, it also complicates language education and the preservation of linguistic norms crucial for professional and academic contexts (Asharaf, 2025).

FINDINGS

Digital communication research highlights the profound impact of the digital era on English language use. It reveals socially emergent dialects that challenge Standard English uniformity and raise questions about its preservation in the digital world (Crystal, 2011).

Abbreviation Patterns

- "Today" rendered as "2day"
- "To" and "you" shortened as "2" and "u"
- Phonetic spellings like "lyk" and "cray-cray"
- Prioritisation of message speed

Slang Integration

- Terms like "squad," "turnt," "link up," "hella"
- Casual expressions replacing formal vocabulary
- Sociocultural forces influencing language development
- Generational shift towards informal communication

Digital Conventions

- Hashtag inclusion for context and emphasis
- Alignment with cultural and social phenomena
- Transcendence of traditional written boundaries
- Convergence of spoken and written language

Digital communication frequently features shorthand and phonetic spellings, such as "2day" for "today," "2" for "to," "u" for "you," and phonetic forms like "lyk" and "cray-cray" (Excerpt 1). This prioritisation of message speed over formal writing rules represents a notable pattern (Crystal, 2011).

Like its historical forms, the English language continues to evolve, with digital forms demonstrating the diversity of modern English in informal settings, a trend anticipated by earlier linguistic analyses.

The integration of slang and colloquialisms is another key characteristic of digital excerpts. Terms such as "squad," "turnt," "link up," and "hella" (Excerpts 2 and 3) highlight a generational shift towards casual language, reflecting the influence of sociocultural forces on modern English development (Ahmed, 2024).

The study also examines digital-only conventions, such as hashtag inclusion, and their impact on language. These conventions, previously absent, reflect cultural and sociological constructs, explaining context, accentuating meaning, and aligning thoughts with broader phenomena (Asharaf, 2025).

Hashtags in Excerpts 1 and 2 exemplify how these conventions transcend traditional written communication boundaries. Modern digital communication increasingly blends spoken and written language, as seen in the casual tone, conversational style, and contractions in WhatsApp (Excerpt 3) and Facebook Messenger (Excerpt 5) (Sikandar, 2025).

The combined shifts evident in digital language create a more fluid, adaptable, and context-dependent English. This divergence from traditional formal written communication has significant implications for maintaining English standards.

These speech pattern changes have far-reaching consequences for education, professional identity, and sociolinguistic diversity. Addressing these challenges requires understanding the rationale behind digital language interfacing and developing models to regulate its innovative fluidity while guiding written communication.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

Technology has significantly altered English usage and expression. Social media and messaging apps introduce diverse written English forms that challenge conventional standards. Changes like abbreviations, slang, informal spellings, and regressive grammar are now common, as evidenced in excerpts. This also includes evolution in English vocabulary.

English's uncontrolled digital evolution stems from two main factors. First, participatory digital communication has narrowed the gap between spoken and written language, incorporating speech traits. Second, the rapid integration and distribution of new English patterns via digital means could reduce its uniformity and intelligibility.

Conclusion

Digital language evolution presents significant challenges to the sustainability of standardised written English (Crystal, 2001). While modifications are inevitable due to technological and cultural shifts, strategic action is crucial to maintain effective communication and preserve language integrity.

Recommendations

01

Educational Interventions

Emphasise digital literacy and contextual language use. Equipping students with these skills fosters a balanced understanding of standard written English and its role across contexts.

02

Technological Integration

Digital platforms should incorporate grammar tools that encourage standard language without hindering creativity. This can bridge the gap between informal digital communication and the need for comprehensible written English.

03

Collaborative Research

Further research is needed on the long-term effects of digital communication on language. Policymakers, linguists, and tech developers must collaborate to ensure digital language evolution supports, rather than undermines, standard written English.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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