

Language Technology and Social Media: Evolution and Condensation

SANA FATIMA

Abstract. Language, in simple terms is a means of communication and social media in the present scenario is a platform that enables communication, interaction, and exchange of ideas, connection and everything that encompasses human relationship. Language has existed ever since humanity came into existence. Social media is a technical innovation which has gradually assembled its position to a higher pedestal. Social media makes use of oral, written and multi modal sources. Language has witnessed a considerable shift owing to the social media interactions and online discourse. Selfie, groupies, WhatsApp, Facebooking, surfing, unfriend, unlike, etc. is still not recognised by the MS-Word lexicon but has earned a place in our daily communication. Similarly, words have reduced to pictorial or visual representations in the form of smileys or GIF's. Technology has influenced language both ways. On the one hand it has evolved and added to the vocabulary and semantics of a language, while on the other it has compressed emotions to a mere facial representation, some signs and the semiotic wordplay. My aim is to evaluate these changes and study the influence of social media on our everyday language.

Keywords : Language; technology; pictograms; social media.

Around 2012 a song under the banner 'Funzoa Songs: Mimi Teddy' was released, Tu Online Hai... Main bhi online hun. (Mr. Anand). The popularity of this unique lyrics lead to several new additions in the same flow, such as, "tu offline hai, and maine tujhe whatsapp kiya. The lyrics are completely dedicated to the virtual world, revealing everything social media plays upon. The terminology abounds in everything from the social media world. Facebook, twitter, status update, selfie, mutual friends, Photoshop, dp, profile, chat, ping, poke etc.

1. Munda thoda off beat hai, par kudiye de naal boht sweet hai... Viral hogya ye tweet hai... (Zee Music Company)
2. Sunn baby deadly hai teri walk ni
Tere thumke bhi karte hain talk ni
Huaa tujhse main kudiye attach ni
Teri kundli bhi kar lunga match ni
Tujhe jaldi se wify banaunga (T-Series)
3. Le le le le selfie le le (T-Series, "Aa Toh Sahii Song (Lyrics) | Judwaa 2 | Varun | Jacqueline | Taapsee | Meet Bros | Neha Kakkar")
4. College ki saheliyon se catch up kr liya, jinko mil na payi unko whatsapp kar diya (Sony Music India)

Received : 9th May, 2019; Accepted : 16th May, 2019

Recent years have witnessed such lyrics. These are mainstream Bollywood tracks. They are played in social gatherings, wedding ceremonies, bachelor parties and other random celebrations. They summon to the intelligibility of a large mass. We are a generation of social media users. Songs, movies and dramas are just a segment of wide influence that social media has in our daily lives. Social media has long been in our lives and people irrespective of gender, age, nationality or religion use this platform. We as a generation have witnessed the changes, the evolution that language of social media has undergone. Facebook was founded in 2004. Online profiles made communication instant and public, both in the visual as well as textual format. In 2006 twitter was invented as a social network microblogging site, limiting users to 140 character messages, similar to original text messages. WhatsApp was founded in 2010, bringing instant messaging to the smartphone and making 21st century communication even more immediate.

To begin with, Orkut, Facebook of 2009-10 had imposed a character limit with a limited range of 160 characters required to update a particular status. Back then, the interaction was mostly verbal. By verbal I mean words - words framed under a limit of 160 characters. As a result users took to condensing and condensing resulted in omission affecting vowels, double letters and silent letters.

e.g. "how are you?" written as- hw r u?
I am fine as m f9.

Though the new script conformed to the pronunciation and comprehension, the writing style led to a blow, especially among the literary circles, who thought that vowels were on the verge of extinction. People were consumed by the desire of expressing themselves and exhibiting themselves to the virtual world, under every possible typology that kept emerging and is still evolving.

Orkut died. Twitter carried the legacy of character limit, SMS' follows the character limit too, now, with WhatsApp messages things changed to a large extent. Naturally vocabulary expanded and expressions from words changed to images. The age of emojis, smileys, stickers, gif's had begun. Putting it simply, users now instead of words made use of pictorial representations, images and stickers that represent almost every activity possible. Emoji, the visual system of communication that is incredibly popular online, is Britain's fastest-growing language according to Professor Vye Evans, a linguist at Bangor University. He observes, "As a visual language emoji has already far eclipsed hieroglyphics, its ancient Egyptian precursor which took centuries to develop," says Evans. We're heading back to ancient Egyptian times, next stop the Stone Age, with a big yellow smiley grin on our faces... Demand is massive: 72% of 18-25 year old find it easier to express their feelings in emoji pictures than through the written word, according to a survey for TalkTalk mobile (Jones) But the simplest and the most common-sense historical and anthropological evidence tells us that Emoji is not

"progress" by any definition. It is plainly a step back. Egyptian hieroglyphics used superb artistic style and mythology to write spells, the legacy was further made flexible by Aegean loudmouths, using an abstract non-pictorial alphabet they got from the Phoenicians, obviously and spectacularly outdid the Egyptians in their range of expression. And then years later we are speaking in the language of the past. The need for instantaneous communication, simplified to a single emoji, is the norm. In 1999, Shigetaka Kurita, part of the team working on NTT DoCoMo's i-mode, a mobile internet platform for Japan's biggest mobile phone operator, realised digital contact lacked emotion and left room for miscommunication. He created emoji, where the word can be dissected as E meaning picture and moji meaning character in Japanese. Apple tapped into the market in 2007 and created an emoji keyboard for Japanese iPhone users. By 2011, they offered emojis internationally. By 2015, 74 per cent of Americans were using them, with an average of 93 per day. Now there is an annual World Emoji Day on July 17.

"Face with Tears of Joy" emoji was coined in Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year in 2015. After Swift Key, the prediction technology for mobile typing, found it to be the most popular emoji across the world. "Images are the way we create sense and meaning and represent the world", said Marcel Danesi, Professor of Semiotics and Linguistic Anthropology at the University of Toronto, in his TED talk from cave drawings to emojis :

A simple emoji tells us so much about who we are today. (TEDx Talks)

This is what technology entrepreneur Tracy Pickett calls "the evolution of human communication and the language of emoji", (TEDx Talks, "From Cave Drawings to Emojis: Communication Comes Full Circle | Marcel Danesi | TEDxToronto"). She argues these pictographs are "the most significant advancement in restoring social intimacy back to our everyday communications". The fastest growing language in history which fills the gap, left by facial expressions, of computer mediated communication.

From oral communication that began during the 1980's through telephones and cell phones, communication shifted to textual interaction with the coming of internet. Text language became abbreviated because of the 160-character limit on keypads, and the time taken to enter words on a numerical keyboard. John McWhorter, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, argued texting is not the deterioration of language but a "linguistic miracle" of typing the way we speak in an unmonitored, informal way.

Facebook gradually removed the character ban and now we can write the words as they are, we can likewise substitute expressions. Instead of writing everything in words, we often resort to easier alternatives that technology has provided. Images are the new trend and an update without a picture or a video

seems incomplete. A "like" on an update, a "react" which is a current addition, smileys, gifs, picture messages have all conveniently made words less important. But often Facebook revives its old textual tradition by circulating an all word post with a challenge, "let's see who reads a post without an image, copies it as his/her status..." Memes are another addition to the medium of expression. We tag people in situations, quotes, or parts lipped from a movie or drama to relate them to. Instead of writing for them, the written in the picture conveys the content. A 'meme' is a virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea. The majority of modern memes are captioned photos that are intended to be funny, often as a way to publicly ridicule human behaviour. Other memes can be videos and verbal expressions. Some memes have heavier and more philosophical content.

I remember a time, when verbs and supposed facial expressions were expressed within asterisk during a chat or a message. e.g. *sleeps* *shrugs* *frowns* *smiles*, now no more in use, these asterisks serve the purpose of making words appear bold in WhatsApp. Hashtag is another important dimension in Twitter, slowly making its way towards Facebook and obviously daily communication where people comment on each other's important activities speaking with reference to hashtag.

On Twitter it refers to a clickable keyword used to categorise posts, but hashtags can be seen everywhere, from cup prints, to t-shirts, to dialogues in sitcom, interviews, greeting cards and obviously posters, slogans and daily lives.

When it comes to adding words or recreating meanings, Facebook has left no stone unturned. Facebook friend is a friend on social media; troll is a recurring comment, regressively targeting the uploader. Uploader is one who updates a status, a post or a photo. Status, wall, timeline, insta, these are very different when compared in a real world and a social media world. Apart from adding to the existing lexicon, social media has appropriated meanings using a metaphorical connection. Imagine words like wall, timeline, profile, account. The traditional meaning has long been replaced by the new sense. Another fact remains that more than 50% of the content available online is in English, and while the users from all groups remain a part of social media world, the teenagers and people less than 30 years of age are its most active users. This is one of the biggest reasons for the changing and evolving language and fast affected English vocabulary in particular. English is the most dominant language of social media. While linguists believe that a new kind of pidgin may evolve in English, other languages may suffer drastically. English suffers too. In an age, when anybody and everybody could be an author, grammar has been neglected widely. New rules have taken place, expressions have dominated the use of words, and impressive patterns have led to a new style of decoding. And a smiley says it all... "Hmmm" is a lot more than repeated mm's, k is a sign of being angry. As you can imagine, it's not just the English-speaking countries that have seen changes in language, thanks to the internet. "Computer slang is developing

Language Technology and Social Media: Evolution and Condensation pretty fast in Ukraine," says Svitlana Pyrkalo, a producer at the BBC World Service Ukrainian Service. For example, the force-quit process of pressing "Control, Alt, Delete" is known as ???? (dulya). A dulya is an Ukrainian gesture using two fingers and a thumb, used in the same situations in which we'd give "the finger." "And you need three fingers to press the buttons," says Pyrkalo. "So it's like telling somebody, a computer in this case, to get lost." (Kolowich)

Other countries have adopted their own versions of common internet acronyms like "OMG" and "LOL." In France, the acronym "mdr" stands for "mort de rire," meaning "dying of laughter." Swedish write "asg" as an abbreviation of the term Asgav, meaning intense laughter. For those in Thailand, the number "5" signifies the Thai letter "h," so putting three 5's together, 555, translates to "hahaha."

So social media has altered language, regenerated lexicons and even deteriorated expressions! While some of us cannot neglect the grip that social media has over language, linguists like David Crystal say, "the Internet has only been around for some 20 years, which is no time at all. It takes a lot longer for permanent or significant language change to operate." Through social media words move around the world within weeks, days and sometimes as fast as a moment. Earlier it took years for an exchange to accelerate. Julie Coleman, the author of "The Life of Slang" says, "it's not necessarily that language is changing more quickly, but technologies have developed and they allow the transmission of slang terms to pass from one group to another much more quickly".

It has led to the evolution as well as condensation. It has advanced the verbal exchange and has still taken us back to primitive exchange of ideas through pictures. LOL- once meant, Laugh Out Loud, now it means a lot more. It has replaced words like, ok, fine, you know... stupid! It is a way to bring the communication to a pause, without offending. It is a kind of mock, it is a verb when discussed among friends, and "I lolled him" In linguistic terms we can call this usage, pragmatic particle, a word or a phrase use to fill in the gaps. Social media has taken hold of communication easily and in a really short time.

Social Network" became a word in Oxford Dictionary in 1973.

Re tweet is a new addition to oxford dictionary.

Pronunciation: /ri??twi?t/

Verb: (on the social networking service Twitter) repost or forward (a message posted by another user). **Noun:** are posted or forwarded message on Twitter" In 2013, Oxford Dictionary declared "selfie" as the word of the year. Internet records the first use of the word "selfie" in 2002. To google has become another important phenomenon after surfing on Internet, surfing otherwise is different.

Words these days are visible everywhere, every moment on our laptop screen and on our smart phones. A built in android dictionary, spell checker, auto

correct are some of the evolved features that technology has introduced to us. Language with the advancement of technology has evolved a great deal. New words have been introduced, old words have assumed new meanings, and some words have crept into our daily activities and will soon be recognised by the lexicon at large. Acronyms, abbreviations, condensed forms; expressions like smileys, Gif's, neologisms have grown up around technically mediated social media oriented communication practices. And the big question remains,

Are we evolving or condensing?

Sana Fatima

Research Scholar, Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

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