

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ENGLISH MORPHEMES

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Abstract

In today's digital era, social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram have notably influenced English morphology. This study examines how these platforms drive the creation of new morphemes and alter traditional morphological processes such as derivation and inflection. Using a mixed-methods approach with purposive sampling, the research highlights social media's role in shaping English morphological patterns in informal communication. Findings reveal that English on social media is highly adaptable and creative, with processes like abbreviation, acronym formation, and blending being particularly affected. The study concludes that social media acts as a powerful catalyst for morphological change, integrating novel morphemes into everyday language.



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INTRODUCTION

Human communication has undergone rapid transformation and transition since the advent of digital spaces of communication widely known as social media tools or platforms especially X formerly Twitter and Instagram. These platforms or digital spaces on one hand facilitate the rapid spread of communication for various purposes i.e. education entertainment, information etc; on the other hand it has also created certain opportunities and challenges for linguistic analysis of such a language used on such platforms. Such advancement in Information and Communication Technology has affected ways and patterns of language use particularly English alongside other communication means and methods and this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of Social Media on English Morphology particularly focusing on two key areas i.e. generation of new morphemes through acronyms, abbreviations, and

portmanteaus, and the conventional morphological structures such as derivation and inflection. The significance of the present study lies in its focus on the implications of technology and modern communication means on structure and function English language, specifically at Morpheme level.

Literature Review

The rise of social media has affected various linguistic characteristics of English language and one of such affected areas is English Morphology. Morphology in linguistics refers to the study of word formation and structure. This section of the research study deals with the available literature on the influence of social media on English Language Morphology and identifies gaps in current research.

The existing literature pertaining to literature pertaining to the effect of social media on English language takes into account various factors. For

instance, Menon, 2023 attributes the fast tracked speed of English word formation in the form of new phrases abbreviations and acronyms to increased use of social media and considers such phenomena of word formation not only as a common place term in linguistic perspective but also notes that such changes have been unnoticeably integrated into every day vocabulary. Prior to this, a study conducted by Gangwar 2022 also concludes that social media platforms have facilitated the adoption and integration such newly merging word forms into the mainstream language. Apart from these, similar type of findings are also reported in existing literature i.e. Baron, N. S. (2008) analyses the evolving characteristics of language utilization in the digital era, focusing on the influence of mobile technologies and social media on communication patterns and linguistic practices. Crystal, D, 2001 investigates the impact of globalization and technology on language change, including the emergence of new forms of English, such as those found in online forums. Crystal, D. (2006) examines the diverse influences of the internet on language development, highlighting the emergence of new online communication genres and the effect of online communities on linguistic diversity. Apart from this, Herring, S. C. (2013) also comes up with the findings that Social media platforms are shaping public discourse and influencing linguistic evolution, including the emergence of new forms of online communication and identity. In another study Leech, G. (2008) presents a thorough analysis of the globalization of English and its various expressions, including the influence of social media and technology on language development. . Another study by Crystal, D. (2006) investigates the several ways the internet is changing language development, including the rise of new online communication genres and the effect of online communities on linguistic variety. A study by Danet, B. (1998) investigates the distinctive attributes of online communication, such as the influence of hypertext on the creation and interpretation of meaning. In another study (Jianfeng Lu and Bing Liu (2012) it is shown that the frequency, distribution, and semantic functions of acronyms and abbreviations in online communication, revealing patterns and trends in their usage.

While exploring the perspective of Abbreviations and Acronyms in terms of social media impact on English morphology, Naomi Baron (2016) investigates the historical evolution of online abbreviations and acronyms, tracing their origins and examining how they have changed in response to technological advancements and changing social norms. Crystal David (2008) Studies the effect of texting on language, demonstrating the rise of abbreviations and acronyms as a method of effective communication in specific contexts. Crystal contends that texting signifies a natural progression of language rather than a deterioration of linguistic standards. Findings of another study (Andreas Ekström 2014) hold that there is a significantly visible prevalence of abbreviations and acronyms on Twitter suggest that prevalence of abbreviations and acronyms as a these features reflect the platform's unique characteristics and the social dynamics of its users. Another study by Francesca Dell'Utri (2011) looks at how the change of an acronym "LOL" with the passage of time in online communication and its assuming different meanings and uses in different social situations. Nancy S. Baron (2008) in a study analyses the evolving characteristics of language utilization in the digital era, from the perspective of the influence of mobile technologies and social media on the growth of phonetic spellings and informal language. Besides, a research work (Crystal S. Liu (2013) examines the linguistic features of social media, with a specific focus on the prevalence of phonetic spellings and informal language as a reflection of the platform's casual and conversational nature. One more study (Andreas Ekström (2014) informs that the linguistic features of Twitter, including the use of phonetic spellings and informal language reflect the platform's unique characteristics and the social dynamics of its users.

While looking at the impact of social media on structural features of English the existing literature also offers some valuable insights from the perspective Grammar and Syntax. Gunther Kress (2010) for instance explores the ways by which technology particularly social media is transforming language use evident from changes in sentence structure, punctuation, and the use of grammatical rules. Ekström (2014), another

study on the relevant perspective reveals that the linguistic features of Twitter i.e. fragmented sentences, run-on sentences, and non-standard grammar not only indicate the distinctive characteristics of the social media but also reflect the social dynamics of its users. Moreover another study (David Crystal, 2006), on examining the impact of the internet specially social media on language, explores that online communication through social media also causes emergence of new syntactic and grammatical features in online communication, such as the use of emoticons and other non-verbal cues to convey meaning. In another study (David Crystal, 2008), it is also shown that the impact of texting on language encompasses use of unconventional punctuation, and non-standard grammar and such changes have their own consequences and implications for the future of a language.

In terms of the impact of social media on code-switching and multilingualism aspects of English language several studies come up with various findings and interpretations. For instance Gunther Kress (2010) analyses the way multilingualism and code-switching are facilitated by social media platforms and subsequently connecting people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. One more study Crystal S. Liu (2013) concludes that social media platforms are used to maintain and revitalize minority languages and code-switching itself serves as a medium used to express identity and social affiliation. Additionally a study Nancy S. Baron (2008) underscores the significance of mobile technologies and social media as agents that facilitate the spread of multilingualism and code-switching and such trend is evident more among young people.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive studies on the influence of social media on English morphology, numerous gaps persist. Numerous studies emphasise on the formation of neologisms and abbreviations; however, there is scant research regarding the lasting impacts of these alterations on linguistic structure and grammar (Herring, 2013). The influence of social media on non-native English speakers and their language acquisition processes remains insufficiently examined (Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011). Additional research is required to comprehend the impact of social media on

language evolution across various demographics and regions (Squires, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

With the rapid expansion of social media as a dominant mode of digital communication, significant changes have been observed in the structure and use of the English language. Among the most affected linguistic components is morphology, particularly the processes involved in word formation, such as inflection and derivation. Social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram facilitate informal, fast-paced interactions that often encourage linguistic innovation, including the creation of new morphemes and the alteration of traditional morphological patterns. Despite increasing scholarly attention to the effects of digital media on language use, there remains a lack of focused research on how social media specifically influences English morphemes. This study addresses this gap by examining how these platforms contribute to the emergence of new morphemes and the transformation of conventional morphological usage in English. Understanding these changes is critical for educators, linguists, and language policy-makers as they reflect evolving language norms and influence both spoken and written communication in formal and informal settings.

Research Objectives

- To examine how social media platforms, specifically X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, contribute to the creation of new English morphemes through processes such as abbreviation, acronym formation, and blending.
- To analyze the influence of social media on the frequency and usage patterns of traditional morphological processes in English, including inflexion and derivation.

Research Questions

1. In what ways has social media influenced the creation of new English morphemes, particularly through processes such as acronyms, abbreviations, and portmanteaus?
2. How has the use of social media impacted the frequency and application of traditional morphological processes in English, such as inflexion and derivation?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance as it explores the evolving relationship between digital communication and linguistic structure, specifically focusing on how social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram influence English morphology. By investigating both the emergence of new morphemes (such as acronyms, abbreviations, and blends) and the shifting patterns of traditional morphological processes (such as inflexion and derivation), the research provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of language in informal digital contexts. The findings are particularly relevant for linguists, educators, and curriculum designers, as they highlight the need to reconsider how language change is addressed in both theoretical and applied settings.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the impact of social media on English morphology. This design was selected to allow for a comprehensive analysis of both measurable linguistic patterns and in-depth insights from user perspectives.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised university-level students and young adult social media users who actively engage with platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. This demographic was chosen due to their frequent use of digital platforms and their role in language innovation.

Sample Size

A total of 100 participants were selected for the study, including 80 students from the undergraduate level (linguistics, English language, or communication studies) and 20 language educators or digital content creators for broader insight.

Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to select participants who are frequent and active users of the targeted social media platforms. This non-probability sampling technique ensured that

participants had relevant exposure to language use on social media.

Data Collection Tools

The following are the data collection tools;

Quantitative Data

Collected through a structured questionnaire, which included Likert-scale and multiple-choice items measuring participants' awareness and usage of new and traditional morphemes on social media.

Qualitative Data

Gathered through semi-structured interviews and content analysis of selected social media posts to examine actual instances of morphological usage (e.g., acronyms, derivational forms, blends).

Data Analysis Tools

Quantitative data analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), focusing on descriptive statistics and frequency analysis to identify trends in morpheme usage, and qualitative data analyzed through thematic analysis using coding procedures to identify patterns in linguistic creativity and morphological changes.

Data Analysis:

Data analysis in linguistic research involves the systematic interpretation of language data to uncover patterns, trends, and relationships. It often employs statistical tools to test hypotheses, examine linguistic variation, and explain language behavior. In this study, **descriptive statistical analysis** was used to identify patterns in the distribution of morphological features, with percentage comparisons across regions to reveal regional preferences. This method aligned with the study's objective of understanding how social media influences English language use at the morphemic level. The results are presented in both tabular and graphical form, including a bar chart for visual clarity.

Region	Acronyms (%)	Abbreviations (%)	Portmanteaus (%)	Inflection (%)	Derivation (%)
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North America	45%	10%	25%	10%	10%
Europe	40%	15%	30%	5%	10%
Africa	50%	20%	10%	15%	5%
Asia	30%	25%	30%	5%	10%
Latin America	35%	20%	25%	10%	10%

Table 1: Analysis of Linguistic Features in Media Posts across Regions

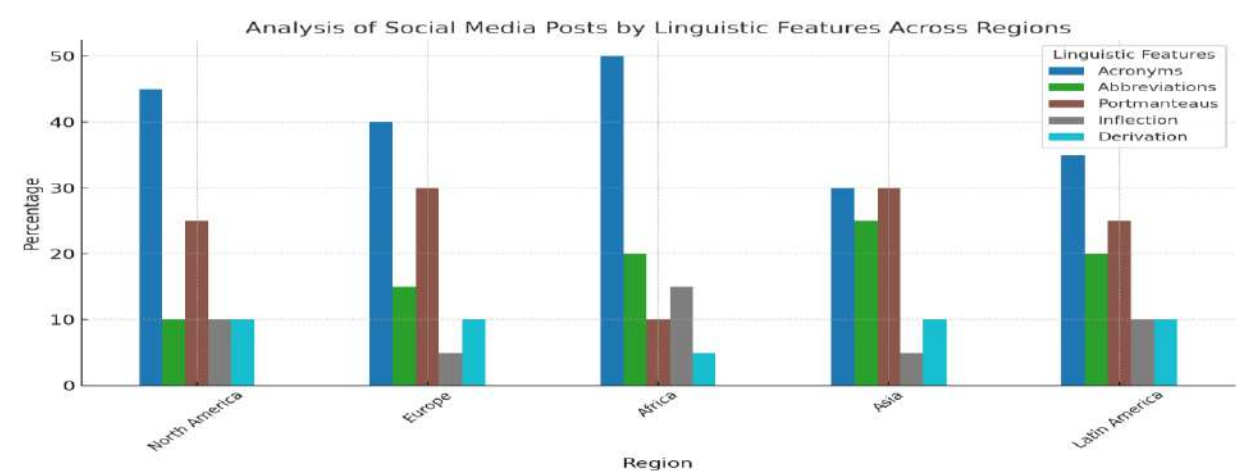


Table 1: Analysis of Linguistic Features in Social Media Posts Across Regions



Results and Discussion

The results of the study are discussed under two heads: analysis of linguistic patterns and regional trends. To begin with the linguistic patterns, the analysis of the selected social media posts show vivid patterns in the use of English morphemes across Twitter and Instagram. The findings show that acronyms and abbreviations are particularly prevalent in informal social media communication, especially on platforms like Twitter, where brevity is frequently observed due to character limitations. A common use of acronyms like LOL (laugh out loud), “BRB” (be right back), and “FOMO” (fear of missing out) is observed across all regions through at a varied percentage used across all regions. Beside this, the emergence of portmanteau as a recurring phenomenon on social media language was also noticed as a significant trend of digital communication and this trend words also emerged as a significant feature, particularly on Instagram, where users often blend words to create new, compact expressions. For instance, “brunch” (breakfast + lunch) and “hangry” (hungry + angry) were frequently noticed in posts reflecting the creative flexibility as an essential feature of social media communication. Pertaining to the traditional morphological processes, the study observed that inflectional morphemes, such as plural markers and verb tense markers, were less frequently used in informal social media posts. This could be attributed to the desire for brevity and the informal nature of social media communication, where such markers are often dropped or simplified. Derivational morphemes, however, remained prominent, particularly in the formation of new words from existing roots, such as “selfie” (from “self” + “-ie”).

The present study also revealed that social media users from different regions exhibit distinct patterns in morpheme use. For example in using acronyms Africa leads in the use of acronyms with the highest percentage of acronyms at 50% and Asia at the lowest percentage use of acronyms at 30%. In terms of the use of abbreviations, however, Asia tops the list with the highest percentage i.e. 25% of abbreviation usage; whereas North America reflects using abbreviations at the lowest rate i.e. 10%. Additionally, in using portmanteaus Asia and Europe show similar prominence in highest use of 30% each; whereas

Africa being the lowest one reflecting only 10% use of portmanteaus. While use of inflection of inflection shows that Africa displays the highest use of inflectional morphemes i.e. 15% and Europe and Asia at the lowest level in this aspect with 5%. However in terms of using derivational morphemes it is reflected that use of this feature is fairly consistent across regions, with most regions recording 10%, except Africa (5%). In conclusion, users from Africa and Asia demonstrated a higher frequency of acronyms and abbreviations, reflecting regional linguistic and cultural preferences for efficient communication. In contrast, users from Europe and North America showed a greater tendency to use portmanteau words, indicating a trend towards creative word formation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the dynamic and evolving nature of language in the digital age, where social media serves as both a reflection and an agent of linguistic change. As social media continues to shape communication across the globe, the study of its impact on morphology provides valuable insights into the future of the English language and its continued adaptation to new social and technological contexts. This analysis reveals significant regional differences in the usage of linguistic features on social media platforms. The findings highlight how cultural and social contexts may influence linguistic creativity and adaptation in digital communication.

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