

How social media is changing language. Is it alarming?

Dr Reena Mittal

M.A. (Eng.) Ph.D, M.B.A.

Asso. Prof. and Head,

Deptt. Of English

DAK Degree College, Moradabad

M: - 9412135835

Mail Id: mittal.reena23@gmail.com

Abstract:

Language is an evolving thing. It's naive to think that the language of social media isn't having an effect on the way we use English in day-to-day life. It's more appropriate to consider just how much of an effect it's having on the way we communicate. What social media has done is enable us to communicate with a much larger number of people on a global scale in a way that we only really used to be able to do on a local level. This is great when it means we're keeping friendships alive over great distances, but it's also increasing the demands placed on an individual to keep a much larger number of relationships going simultaneously. For example, the average number of friends a person has on Facebook in the UK is around 300 – even if you're only actually really friends with, say, 10% of that number that's still 30 friendships to be maintaining. The result is an ever-increasing speed of communication. The present paper is a study of social media and its impact on language and also suggests some technological measures for academic purpose. Social media no doubt, contracted the distances, make universe closer but that does not mean at all that we can play with the roots and shape of any language. The paper suggests some academic and creative purpose of social media too.

Keywords: Technology, Social Media, Websites, Youngsters, Language.

Introduction

The words that surround us every day influence the words we use in our conversation. Since so much of the written language we see is now on the screens of our computers, tablets, iPad and smartphones which has completely evolves language partly through our interaction with technology. And because the language we use to communicate with each

other these days tends to be more malleable than formal writing, the combination of informal, personal communication and the mass audience afforded by social media is a recipe for rapid change. Today, learning English involves much more than studying a textbook, doing tests, and putting dictums into practice. With the advent of the Internet and its attendant technology, lots of options

exist for improving English language skills. These options involve interacting with others online via social networks - communicating in order to learn about other cultures, have fun, and to learn English at the same time. In the past few years, a series of language learning social networks have popped up, and they make learning more fun, efficient, interactive and interesting than traditional ways of reading, writing and speaking. The average language student can now turn an arduous task like studying into something enjoyable by meeting and interacting with native language speakers from around the world through these language educational social networking sites and apps. There are many truly impressive social networks for language learners to use if they are trying to learn a new language especially English. The days of writing grammatically correct, perfectly punctuated sentences may seem like a thing of the past now. But what role has social media played in this trend? Is the question which is haunting in all ELT's minds? If new research from Brandwatch is anything to go by, it could be said that social networks have transformed modern day English, with Twitter presenting

the greatest visible change. The site analyzed the effect of various social media sites on the English language to find that Twitter users are the most likely to deviate from correct spelling and grammar. A total of 0.56 per cent of words posted on the micro-blogging sites are either misspelled or unofficial, although it has been suggested that this might be down to its strict 140-character limit. Taking up second place is Google+ with 0.42 per cent of misspelled words, then Facebook with 0.31 per cent. However, it's not all bad news for Twitter users, as the website found that people have become increasingly literate since 2011 – although how much of this is down to autocorrect features? Women were found to be more likely to deviate from the official language than men, as well as being more inclined to elongate their words for effect. Men, perhaps unsurprisingly, showed a preference for shortening words, instead using phrases such as 'kinda' and 'wanna'. I can narrate an example from my personal life. My son who is my technology Guru actually; never uses these slangs despite an avid social networking sites user. Instead I even as a teacher condemn this use of misspelled words but use myself here

and there for personal purpose. Now it's not uncommon for even the greatest of spelling devotees to struggle with the odd word or two, but Brandwatch's analysis found that some words are more commonly misspelled than others. The worst offenders were definitely, separate, embarrass and achieve, with weird and surprise also featuring on the list. It just goes to show that even in a field as broad as social media, people are still on the lookout for good spelling and grammar – something that people running twitter campaigns should bear in mind.

Introduction of Social Media

Since the introduction of social network sites many years ago, to communicate with friends and family has been easy once you have access to internet. The internet has given us the ability to connect with people from around the globe with a few clicks of a button. Social networking began in 1978 with the Bulletin Board System (or BBS.) The BBS was hosted on personal computers, requiring that users dial in through the modem of the host computer, exchanging information over phone lines with other users. This was the first system that allowed users to sign in and

interact with each other, although it was quite slow since only one user could be logged in at a time. The difference between Usenet and other BBS and forums was that it didn't have a dedicated administrator or central server. There are modern forums that use the same idea as Usenet today, including Yahoo! Groups and Google Groups. The first version of instant messaging came about in 1988. The internet is a place to interact with new people and a way to expose oneself to strangers. One should be cautious while using social media. There are risks of accounts being hacked by someone else and they can pretend to be you by stealing your identity in the virtual world. Though social media has revolutionized the world by bringing us closer than ever, it should be used to stay connected with our family and friends i.e. for necessary conversations. The future of social networking sites look promising but people will have to deal with the problems associated with it. The experts are suggesting that using of social networking is not wrong but the way it is being used is important. Students and youngsters must be given guidance on what should be the dos and don'ts. Also, the students

must be educated on the overall developmental activities instead of getting glued to the mobile phones and computers and spending precious time chatting. Students from their end must take initiative to find out how best such sites can be used. So folks, wake up and use technology as a boon and not a bane.

What is a social networking site?

“Social” as the word sounds is deals with the way will communicate in our society, in which you meet and spend time with other people. Network is the connection of parts together to allow movement or communication with other parts. Social networking is the connection of friends or family together which allow you to communicate easily. With social networking sites you can have a long chain of friends you can chat or share information or ideal with. The increased use of Social Networking Websites has become a global phenomenon in the past few years. What started out as a hobby for some computer literate people has become a social norm and way of life for people around the globe (Boyd, 2007)? Teenagers and youth especially student have embraced these sites as a way to connect with their friend and

make new once, share information, photos of their activities such as birthday, photo with friend in class etc., and showcase their social lives. With the advent of social network it has become easy to get information on nearly every issue around the globe. Before now it is not easy getting information, you need to buy newspaper, stay close to your TV set or radio to get information. Internet has changed everything and social network has made it more flexible (Lewis. 2008). According to the questionnaire used for this project, everybody who answered the questionnaire has access to the internet, and they are connected to one social network.

Benefits of Social Networking

Though many arguments can be made about the possible risks of adolescent Social networking, it is important to point out the benefits of these websites as well. Many schools have started to use these sites to promote education, keep students up to date with assignments, and offer help to those in need (Boyd, 2007). In general, the Internet and social networking sites can be a positive influence on adolescents. Social networking sites provide an outlet for

teens to express themselves in their own unique ways (Boyd, 2007). In addition, they serve both as a meeting place for teens to interact with other like-minded people and as showplaces for a teen's artistic and musical abilities (Boyd, 2007). Finally, high school students use these sites as tools to obtain information and resources for graduation preparation and future planning. For example, students applying for college visit profiles of that college's students to view pictures and read blogs of past students to determine whether the college would be a good fit (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Social Network and the users

The issue of whether social networking helps or hurts a student's academic performance is often depending on the larger issues identified with the overall use of SNS. Internet usage has grown rapidly over the last few years. Users are able to build a network of connections that they can display as a list of friends. These friends may be people they have never met before in their life or people they only know or have met in real life. The use of SNS is very common today. Facebook alone has over 750 million members, Twitter

having over 177 million tweets per day, and about 3 billion people view YouTube each passing day.

Effect of Social Network on Academic performance

Sound Quality education produces productive students who lead to the prosperity of their respective educational institution and subsequently are proved as strong contributors to the national well-being. Use of technology such as internet is one of the most important factors that can influence educational performance of students positively or adversely. About 48% of the respondent uses SNS for downloading of music, posting of photos and chatting, while about 52% uses SNS for research, submitting of assignment and articles. This shows that more student use SNS for academic work rather than for just leisure. Most of the student agrees on the fact that SNS help them academically in getting educational materials for their assignment and project work. With the help of the internet it is almost possible to get any kind of subject material at your disposal. About 50% says social network sites does not affect their study time, while the other

50% says the social networking sites affect their study time.

Some recommended Social Media sites and Apps for Academic Purpose:

Here is a list of some uncommon sites and apps which are really helpful for students:

1. **vk.com.** Promoting itself as Europe's largest social media site, **vk.com** is essentially the Russian version of Facebook, with the same kinds of profiles, messaging, and games you would expect. Like Facebook, **vk.com** allows users to enter both personal and professional information about them, and show support for organizations and business.
2. **Bussuu.** Bussuu is a language community that functions like a cool interactive game. It offers free interactive lessons, exams, text and video chat, writing exercises, reading comprehension tests and many other features. Users can write text in a foreign language such as Spanish and submit it to have a native Spanish speaker in the network correct their writing. Most of the features on the site are free though paid

upgrades are available for features like audio samples, PDFs and Podcasts. Busuu were selected as the Red Herring 100 European Winner of 2010!

3. **Meetup.** Meetup is a perfectly-named platform, because it's perfect for organizing local groups around specific interests. There are meetups centered on just about everything, from music to hobbies, and get-togethers are almost always open to newcomers. That makes it perfect for exploring an interest and making new friends at the same time.
4. **Secret.** This might be the best social media app most people haven't tried. The premise is simple: join into a group of friends and then share an anonymous message. It's great for fun interactions, idea starters, or just finally getting something off your chest. (Editor's note, 5/13/2015: Secret has folded. Co-founder David Byttow writes: "After a lot of thought and consultation with our board, I've decided to shut down Secret. Over time, I

plan to publish postmortems so that others can learn from the unique mistakes and challenges we faced and the wisdom gained from such an incredible 16 months.")

5. **Medium.** If you've ever wished that social engagement could come with an ongoing, up-to-date "how to" manual written by the experts, Medium might be just what you're looking for. With lots of helpful advice, tips, and articles, it can give you everything you need to start connecting like a pro.
6. **Vine.** This site which is also available as an app, offers users the chance to share and view brief video clips. While that theoretically offers a virtually endless range of uses, most of Vine's content is entertainment-focused, with a heavy preference towards "viral" and "meme" clips that are easy to share.
7. **Twoo.** This Belgian social network site is geared for the 25 and under crowd all over the world. Alongside normal social features like posts, updates, and photo sharing, it

also boasts online games and chat features that make it popular with younger users who want to stay entertained while connecting with each other.

8. **Disqus** Disqus isn't actually a social media platform so much as a social engagement platform, but it can definitely help you improve your social engagement. As a tool for commenting, managing feedback on your own website or other Disqus-enabled websites, and managing spam/troll type messages, it's invaluable. Advanced features allow for social monitoring and upvoting.
9. **Lang-8** Lang 8 offers language students the ability to connect with native language speakers from 180 different countries. Its focus is on writing correction wherein people can submit their writing to be corrected by other native language speakers and learn using this method. This is extremely helpful for people wanting to write term papers for school or companies

needing to translate their text in a reliable ways. Its unique features are interesting and very useful.

10.VoxSwap This site is another social network that connects people for the purpose of learning a new language. The site will match you up with a particular language speaker that also wants to learn the language that you speak and you can chat with each other to practice speaking, writing, or ask questions. In addition, there are many videos compiled in the videos section of the site and an active forum split up into different language categories.

Conclusion

Social media will be around for a very long time. It is important to realize that you have to adapt to the evolution and keep up with all of the new technologies and language that are being offered. If you don't, it will be like the Tower of Babel. Everyone will be speaking but nobody will be speaking a common language. Language is alive and keeping an open mind about letting new

concepts and new words in to be a part of it is generally an intelligent thing to do. Experts say that using of social networking is not wrong but the way it is being used is important and need some careful watch. Students and youngsters must be given guidance on what should be the dos and don'ts. Also, the students must be educated on the overall developmental activities instead of getting glued to the mobile phones, iPads and computers and spending precious time in chatting that too using slangs and incorrect language. Students from their end must take initiative to find out how best such sites can be used. So we teachers have a duty to wake up our students and teach them to use technology as a boon and not a bane.

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