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Electronic Communication as an Object of Linguistics

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Abstract

The article examines the linguistic features of electronic communication in the context of the rapid development of digital technologies and Internet discourse. The study analyzes the influence of computer-mediated communication on contemporary language processes at lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and graphic levels. Particular attention is paid to the transformation of traditional language norms in online interaction, including the widespread use of abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, borrowings, and simplified syntactic structures. The paper also discusses the hybrid nature of Internet discourse, which combines characteristics of both written and spoken communication. In addition, the study considers the role of social media platforms and digital environments in the formation of new communicative practices and linguistic identities. The research demonstrates that electronic communication represents a dynamic and evolving sphere of modern language use shaped by the principles of interactivity, linguistic economy, and globalization. The increasing adaptation of English-based digital vocabulary and the emergence of new graphic and stylistic devices reflect ongoing changes in contemporary communication culture. The findings confirm that online discourse has become an important object of modern linguistic research and continues to influence the development of national languages in the digital era.

KEYWORDS

electronic communication; abbreviations; Internet; discourse analysis; social media language.

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the ways in which people communicate, exchange information, and construct social relationships. The widespread use of the Internet, social networking platforms, instant messaging applications, and artificial intelligence has created a new communicative environment in which linguistic practices continuously evolve. Unlike traditional forms of communication, electronic communication is characterized by immediacy, interactivity, multimodality, and the integration of written, spoken, and visual modes of expression. Consequently, digital communication has become one of the most significant factors influencing contemporary language change.

The emergence of computer-mediated communication has attracted considerable attention from linguists, discourse analysts, sociolinguists, and communication scholars. Previous studies have demonstrated that online communication influences language at lexical, syntactic, stylistic, graphic, and pragmatic levels. The increasing use of abbreviations, acronyms, borrowings, Internet slang, emojis, hashtags, and multimodal resources illustrates the adaptation of language to the communicative requirements of digital environments. Moreover, the global dominance of English in digital technologies has accelerated lexical borrowing and facilitated the emergence of hybrid linguistic forms across many languages.

Recent technological developments, particularly the expansion of social media platforms and AI-assisted communication tools, have further accelerated linguistic

innovation. Digital communication is no longer limited to text-based interaction but increasingly combines written language with images, videos, audio, hyperlinks, and algorithmically generated content. These developments have transformed not only language use but also the processes of meaning construction, identity formation, and social interaction in online environments.

Although numerous studies have investigated individual aspects of electronic communication, existing research is often limited to particular linguistic phenomena, specific digital platforms, or individual languages. A comprehensive synthesis of the principal linguistic features of electronic communication and their contribution to contemporary language change remains necessary, especially in light of the rapid evolution of digital technologies and AI-mediated communication.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the major linguistic characteristics of electronic communication and to analyze how digital communication contributes to contemporary language change at lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and graphic levels. The study adopts a qualitative literature review approach and synthesizes findings from research in computer-mediated communication, digital discourse, sociolinguistics, and Internet linguistics to identify the dominant linguistic tendencies shaping online communication.

The study addresses the principal linguistic features of electronic communication, examines how electronic communication influences contemporary language change, and explores the role of digital technologies and AI-mediated communication in the evolution of linguistic practices.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The methodology section describes the research design and analytical approach adopted in the study. The subsequent section presents and discusses the principal linguistic features of online communication. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the main findings and outlining directions for future research.

The analysis of digital communication processes highlights that contemporary society is experiencing rapid linguistic and communicative change driven by online environments and social media platforms. As Kerswill, (2021) argues, digital communication accelerates the diffusion of linguistic innovations and contributes to faster cycles of language change by enabling large-scale, real-time interaction among users. In this sense, online environments not only facilitate access to information but also actively shape how linguistic forms spread, stabilize, or disappear within speech communities. This distinction underscores the cognitive and epistemological implications of digital media consumption in the modern era.

The evolution of the Internet from Web 1.0 to the emerging paradigm of Web 4.0 has fundamentally transformed communication practices and, consequently, contemporary language use. While Web 1.0 was characterized by static websites and one-way information exchange, subsequent stages introduced increasing levels of interactivity, collaboration, semantic technologies, artificial intelligence, and personalized digital environments. These technological developments have not only expanded opportunities for communication but have also accelerated linguistic innovation by creating new contexts for language production, interaction, and dissemination.

Previous studies emphasize different aspects of this transformation. Crystal, (2011) argues that online communication is primarily shaped by the principle of linguistic economy, leading to the simplification of orthographic and syntactic structures. In contrast, Blommaert & Varis, (2020) view digital communication as a sociolinguistic environment that promotes linguistic diversity, hybridization, and the emergence of new communicative repertoires. Similarly, Herring (2013) highlights the hybrid nature of computer-mediated communication, demonstrating that online discourse combines characteristics of both spoken and written language while simultaneously developing its own communicative conventions. Rather than representing competing perspectives, these approaches complement one another by explaining different dimensions of language change in digital environments.

Taken together, these studies suggest that technological development should not be regarded merely as a sequence of technical innovations but as a major catalyst for linguistic transformation. The transition from static websites to interactive social media platforms and AI-mediated communication has accelerated the spread of abbreviations, lexical borrowing, multimodal expression, Internet slang, and other innovative linguistic forms. Consequently, the evolution of the Web has contributed not only to changes in communication technologies but also to the emergence of new linguistic norms and communicative practices that characterize contemporary digital discourse (Khuduyeva, 2024).

The widespread adoption of the Internet has thus contributed to the emergence of a fundamentally new communicative environment in which individuals actively engage in the production, circulation, and interpretation of information. Contemporary users are no longer passive recipients of content; rather, they participate in the continuous shaping of virtual spaces and the co-construction of digital culture. Through various online platforms, individuals engage in communication, express opinions, share experiences, construct social identities, and participate in global discourses.

Previous research has made substantial contributions to the study of electronic communication by examining individual aspects of digital discourse, including computer-mediated communication, Internet slang, abbreviations, multimodal communication, emojis, and lexical innovation. Many studies have focused on specific platforms, linguistic phenomena, or individual languages, while others have investigated the sociolinguistic implications of online interaction and the influence of digital technologies on language use. However, much of the existing literature addresses these phenomena in isolation, providing limited integration of the diverse linguistic processes that collectively characterize contemporary electronic communication. Moreover, recent developments in artificial intelligence, algorithmically mediated communication, and emerging digital platforms have introduced new dimensions of language change that have not yet been sufficiently synthesized within a unified analytical framework.

To address this gap, the present study provides a comprehensive qualitative synthesis of contemporary research on electronic communication by examining the principal linguistic transformations occurring at lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and graphic levels. By integrating findings from computer-mediated communication, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and Internet linguistics, this article offers a broader perspective on how technological innovation reshapes language in digital environments. The novelty of the study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which combines classical theories of Internet linguistics with recent scholarship on multimodal communication, social media discourse, and

AI-mediated interaction to present an up-to-date overview of contemporary language change.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative literature review design to examine the principal linguistic features of electronic communication and their contribution to contemporary language change. Rather than analyzing an original corpus of digital communication, the study synthesizes findings from previous scholarly research in the fields of computer-mediated communication, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, Internet linguistics, and digital media studies.

The data source consists of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and edited volumes published primarily between 2002 and 2025. Classical studies were included because of their theoretical significance in the development of Internet linguistics, while recent publications were selected to reflect current developments in social media communication, multimodality, and AI-mediated discourse. Sources were identified according to three criteria: (1) relevance to electronic communication and language change; (2) academic quality, including publication in peer-reviewed journals or by recognized academic publishers; and (3) contribution to the analysis of lexical, syntactic, stylistic, pragmatic, or multimodal features of digital communication.

The collected literature was analyzed using descriptive, comparative, and thematic analysis. First, previous studies were reviewed to identify the major linguistic characteristics of electronic communication. Second, different scholarly perspectives were compared in order to highlight similarities, differences, and emerging research trends. Finally, the findings were synthesized into a comprehensive framework describing how digital technologies influence language at lexical, syntactic, stylistic, graphic, and pragmatic levels. To illustrate these linguistic phenomena, representative examples of common online communication practices in English and Azerbaijani are included as explanatory illustrations rather than as evidence derived from an original linguistic corpus.

As a qualitative review, the study does not seek to provide statistical generalizations. Instead, it offers a critical synthesis of existing scholarship and identifies the principal mechanisms through which electronic communication contributes to contemporary language change.

Result and Discussion

The study of online communication began to attract significant attention from linguists, sociologists, psychologists, and communication theorists in the late twentieth century, coinciding with the rapid expansion of digital technologies and their integration into everyday social practices. Researchers have since become increasingly interested in examining how digital environments influence language behavior, discourse organization, identity construction, and patterns of social interaction. Within this context, Internet communication has been identified as a particularly important domain for understanding the evolving relationship between language, technology, and society.

As noted by Belinskaya, (2013), Internet communication reflects the interactive nature of contemporary information technologies more clearly than any other communicative sphere. This heightened interactivity fundamentally distinguishes digital communication from traditional mass communication systems. Whereas conventional media typically operate on a unidirectional model of information transmission from producer to receiver, online communication enables users to occupy dual roles as both consumers and producers of information. This participatory structure has profound implications for discourse, facilitating immediate feedback, collaborative content creation, and the continuous negotiation of meaning.

The reviewed literature consistently identifies interactivity as the defining characteristic of electronic communication; however, scholars conceptualize its implications in different ways. Belinskaya (2013) emphasizes the transformation of communicative roles and the participatory nature of digital environments, while (Balashova & Dementyev, 2022) situate these developments within broader changes in discourse theory. Their perspective extends the analysis beyond interaction itself by arguing that discourse should be understood as a dynamic, multimodal process shaped by linguistic, social, cognitive, and technological factors. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the evolution of electronic communication cannot be explained solely by advances in digital technology. Rather, it reflects a broader theoretical shift from viewing communication as the transmission of fixed textual content to understanding it as an interactive, context-dependent process of meaning construction.

This comparison also highlights an important implication for discourse studies. While earlier linguistic frameworks primarily treated text as a static and monologic entity, contemporary approaches recognize that digital discourse is inherently fluid, multimodal, and collaboratively produced. The convergence of these perspectives indicates that electronic communication has not merely introduced new channels for interaction but has fundamentally redefined the relationship between language, technology, and social participation. Consequently, the analysis of online discourse requires theoretical frameworks that account for multimodality, user agency, and the evolving communicative practices characteristic of digital environments.

In this regard, electronic communication can be defined as a form of communication that takes place within digital environments and is characterized by several key features, including technological mediation, spatial and temporal distance between communicants, hypertextual structuring, multimodality, and varying degrees of interactivity. These characteristics collectively contribute to the emergence of new communicative practices that differ substantially from traditional face-to-face and print-based communication. Consequently, electronic discourse represents not only a technological innovation but also a fundamentally new communicative paradigm that continues to reshape contemporary linguistic and social landscapes.

Computer-mediated communication is widely recognized as a hybrid form of discourse that integrates features of both spoken and written language. On the one hand, online communication is typically realized in a written graphical form, as it is mediated through digital interfaces such as messaging applications, social media platforms, and forums. On the other hand, it frequently exhibits linguistic and pragmatic features traditionally associated with spoken interaction. These include spontaneity, informality, emotional expressiveness, reduced syntactic complexity, elliptical constructions, and the frequent use of colloquial or conversational vocabulary. This dual nature of computer-mediated communication provides a key

explanation for many of the distinctive linguistic properties observed in Internet discourse. As a result, researchers increasingly argue that online communication has developed into a relatively autonomous communicative register or style, which differs systematically from both conventional written language and face-to-face spoken interaction.

The increasing significance of information technologies has been facilitated largely by the expansion of user participation in communicative processes. In contemporary digital society, information is not valued solely in terms of its accessibility, quantity, or economic utility, but also in relation to its role in identity construction and self-expression. Online communication platforms enable individuals to construct and project virtual identities, participate in communities of shared interests, and establish and maintain social relationships that are not necessarily dependent on physical co-presence. In this sense, digital communication technologies exert influence not only on linguistic practices but also on broader sociocultural dynamics, including patterns of social organization, identity formation, and interpersonal interaction.

In the twenty-first century, individuals have access to vast and continuously expanding volumes of information distributed across a wide range of digital platforms, including websites, social networking services, blogs, online forums, and instant messaging applications. This unprecedented informational environment allows users to selectively engage with content based on personal interests, actively participate in discussions, comment on current events, and share individual experiences in real time. The Internet thus enables instantaneous interaction across geographical and temporal boundaries, fundamentally reshaping traditional constraints on communication. Consequently, electronic communication has become an integral and indispensable component of everyday social, cultural, and professional life, significantly influencing both individual behavior and collective communicative practices.

Contemporary scholarship broadly defines electronic communication as a form of computer-mediated interaction between two or more individuals conducted through digital devices and networked platforms. Despite differences in terminology and analytical focus, researchers generally agree that this mode of communication is distinguished by immediate or near-immediate feedback, the written representation of spoken language, rapid information exchange, and the capacity for simultaneous interaction among multiple participants. Beyond these structural characteristics, scholars argue that digital communication has created a virtual communicative environment that shapes both linguistic practices and users' perceptions of social reality. As Yus, (2011) suggests, online interaction influences not only the ways language is produced and interpreted but also the cognitive and pragmatic processes through which meaning is constructed in digital contexts.

The reviewed studies further demonstrate that one of the most significant consequences of electronic communication is the transformation of traditional linguistic norms. While Crystal (2011, p. 19) emphasizes the adaptation of orthographic, punctuation, and syntactic conventions to meet the communicative demands of digital environments, Yus (2011) interprets these changes within a broader pragmatic framework in which language evolves in response to new patterns of interaction and meaning-making. These perspectives are complementary rather than contradictory. Together, they indicate that linguistic innovation in online discourse is driven not only by technological affordances, such as character limits, typing speed, and real-time interaction, but also by users' communicative goals, including efficiency, expressiveness, and the negotiation of social identity.

This synthesis suggests that deviations from conventional written language should not be viewed merely as a decline in linguistic standards. Instead, they represent systematic adaptations to the communicative conditions of digital environments. The convergence of these perspectives supports the view that electronic communication has generated distinct linguistic conventions that function as legitimate features of online discourse rather than as random departures from traditional language norms.

Lexical innovation represents one of the most dynamic dimensions of language change in electronic communication. The rapid exchange of information in digital environments encourages the continuous emergence of new lexical items, semantic shifts, borrowings, abbreviations, and hybrid expressions that reflect both technological development and evolving communicative practices. Unlike traditional written discourse, online communication is characterized by a high degree of lexical creativity, where users actively adapt existing vocabulary and create new expressions to satisfy the demands of speed, efficiency, and expressiveness.

Previous studies have demonstrated that lexical change in digital communication extends beyond the simple creation of new words. Crystal (2011) emphasizes that online communication promotes linguistic economy through shortened lexical forms, while Herring, (2002) argues that lexical innovation is equally influenced by the interactive nature of computer-mediated communication. More recent studies further suggest that lexical development in digital discourse is increasingly shaped by multimodal communication, platform-specific conventions, and algorithmically mediated interaction, indicating that vocabulary change is closely connected with technological innovation rather than merely with informal language use.

One of the most visible lexical processes is the incorporation of technology-related vocabulary into everyday communication. Terms such as hashtag, selfie, emoji, livestream, podcast, unfollow, and influencer have evolved from platform-specific terminology into internationally recognized lexical units. Many of these expressions have subsequently entered general dictionaries and are no longer restricted to digital contexts. Their widespread adoption demonstrates how technological innovation continuously expands the contemporary lexicon.

Electronic communication also facilitates extensive lexical borrowing and code-mixing. English functions as the principal source of digital terminology because most social media platforms and technological innovations originate in English-speaking environments. Consequently, users of many languages incorporate English lexical items into everyday online interaction. Azerbaijani digital communication provides numerous examples of this tendency, including expressions such as story paylaşmaq, like etmək, post paylaşmaq, follow etmək, online olmaq, and link göndərmək. These hybrid constructions combine English lexical roots with Azerbaijani grammatical morphology, illustrating how global digital vocabulary is adapted to the structural characteristics of the local language.

Another significant characteristic of lexical development in online communication is semantic extension. Existing words frequently acquire new meanings within digital environments. For instance, the word friend has expanded beyond its traditional meaning to denote a social media connection, while follow increasingly refers to subscribing to

digital content rather than physically accompanying someone. Similar semantic shifts can also be observed in Azerbaijani, where words such as izləmək and paylaşmaq have acquired specialized meanings associated with social networking platforms. These developments illustrate that language change in digital communication involves not only the creation of new lexical items but also the transformation of existing semantic structures.

Overall, lexical innovation in electronic communication reflects the interaction between technological progress, globalization, and user creativity. Rather than representing random deviations from standard language, these developments demonstrate the adaptive capacity of language in response to changing communicative environments. The coexistence of global English-derived terminology with locally adapted lexical forms further suggests that digital communication simultaneously promotes international linguistic convergence and language-specific innovation.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the linguistic characteristics of electronic communication extend far beyond isolated lexical innovations. They reflect broader processes of linguistic economy, multimodality, technological mediation, and identity construction that collectively contribute to the continuous evolution of language in contemporary digital environments.

At the syntactic level, online communication is typically characterized by a preference for shorter sentence structures, fragmented constructions, ellipsis, and overall grammatical simplification (Habibova, 2009). Although Habibova's study focuses specifically on elliptical structures in the Azerbaijani language, its findings are highly relevant to broader discussions of digital discourse, as they illustrate how syntactic reduction functions as a key mechanism of linguistic economy in contemporary communication. Comparable tendencies toward ellipsis, omission, and structural simplification can be observed across a wide range of

languages in digital contexts. In many forms of computer-mediated communication – particularly chats, instant messaging, and social media interactions – users frequently omit elements such as subjects, auxiliary verbs, articles, and even punctuation marks. These linguistic reductions reflect a general tendency toward economy of expression, efficiency in information transfer, and adaptation to the fast-paced dynamics of online interaction.

Overall, such syntactic and structural modifications demonstrate that digital communication is not merely a simplified version of written language but rather an evolving communicative system with its own internal norms, constraints, and expressive strategies.

At the lexical level, online discourse is characterized by highly productive word-formation processes, including lexical innovation, borrowing, abbreviation, and semantic compression. One of the most prominent tendencies is the extensive influence of English as a global source of digital vocabulary. Mahmudov's study of SMS communication in Azerbaijani is particularly relevant in this regard, as it demonstrates how global patterns of lexical compression, abbreviation, and borrowing are reproduced within a localized linguistic environment. His findings suggest that processes typically associated with English-dominated digital communication are not confined to English alone but are also observable in other national languages under the influence of globalization, technological modernization, and cross-linguistic contact.

The increasing dominance of English in digital communication has generated both opportunities and challenges for contemporary language development. On the one hand, the widespread use of English facilitates international communication, promotes the rapid dissemination of scientific and technological knowledge, and contributes to the establishment of a shared global digital vocabulary. The adoption of English-based terminology enables users from different linguistic backgrounds to participate more effectively in global online communities and technological innovation.

Consequently, a large number of English lexical items have been widely integrated into other languages, particularly in domains related to technology and Internet communication. Terms such as browser, online, web, chat, blog, hacker, and streaming have therefore become part of the international digital lexicon and are frequently borrowed or adapted across different linguistic systems (Mahmudov, 2020). In addition to direct borrowing, Internet users actively engage in the creation of new lexical units that are adapted to the communicative needs of online environments, reflecting both linguistic creativity and functional efficiency.

On the other hand, the growing influence of English raises concerns regarding linguistic globalization and the preservation of national languages. The continuous borrowing of English lexical items may gradually reduce the use of native equivalents, particularly in the fields of technology, business, and digital communication. In smaller linguistic communities, this tendency may contribute to lexical replacement, language homogenization, and the gradual erosion of linguistic diversity. Consequently, scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of balancing global communicative efficiency with efforts to preserve national linguistic identity and cultural heritage.

These linguistic tendencies can be illustrated through representative examples commonly observed across social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online communication environments. For instance, abbreviated forms such as pls (please), thx (thanks), and msg (message) are widely used to reduce typing effort and increase communicative efficiency, reflecting the principle of linguistic economy. Similarly, acronyms including LOL (laughing out loud), OMG (oh my God), IDK (I don't know), and BRB (be right back) have become conventional

elements of digital discourse, functioning not only as lexical shortcuts but also as pragmatic markers that express emotions, attitudes, and interpersonal solidarity.

Syntactic reduction constitutes another characteristic feature of online communication. Expressions such as Gəlirsən? (Coming later?) instead of Nə vaxt gələrsən? (Are you coming later?) or Nolub? (Need help?) instead of Nə isə olub? (Do you need help?) illustrate the omission of grammatical elements that remain inferable from the communicative context. Such elliptical constructions enable rapid interaction while maintaining communicative effectiveness and therefore represent one of the defining features of computer-mediated discourse.

The growing use of emojis further demonstrates how digital communication compensates for the absence of non-verbal cues typical of face-to-face interaction. For example, the message I'm fine 😊 conveys reassurance and positive emotion, whereas I'm fine 😢 communicates sadness or emotional distress despite the identical verbal content. In this way, emojis function as multimodal discourse markers that enrich written communication by expressing emotional and pragmatic meanings beyond the lexical level.

Online communication also promotes the rapid dissemination of Internet slang. In the Azerbaijani digital environment, expressions such as əjdahadı (awesome), bombadı (excellent), krinjdı (cringe), and like atmaq (to give a like) have become widespread across social media platforms, particularly among younger users. These lexical

innovations function not only as markers of informality but also as indicators of group identity and participation in digital culture. Their rapid diffusion across linguistic communities illustrates how social media accelerates lexical innovation, semantic change, and the globalization of digital vocabulary.

One of the most widespread and systematically productive phenomena in electronic communication is the use of abbreviations and acronyms. These forms emerge primarily from the need to increase communicative speed, reduce typing effort, and optimize information exchange in real-time interaction. Abbreviations in online discourse can be categorized into several main types.

First, abbreviations may be formed through the omission of vowels or internal segments of words, resulting in shortened orthographic forms that remain easily recognizable in context. English-language examples such as pls (please) and msg (message) illustrate the tendency toward linguistic economy in digital communication. Comparable patterns can also be observed in Azerbaijani online discourse, where users frequently employ reduced forms such as slm (salam), tşk (təşəkkür edirəm), nvny (nə var, nə yox?), and hllk (hələlik). These abbreviated forms are particularly common in instant messaging and social media, where rapid interaction encourages orthographic simplification while preserving communicative efficiency. Such reductions represent systematic adaptations of written language to the speed and informality of digital interaction rather than random deviations from standard language norms.

Second, online discourse widely employs initialism-based abbreviations, in which the initial letters of words in a phrase are combined to form compact lexical units. Internationally recognized examples include LOL (laughing out loud), OMG (oh my God), BTW (by the way), and IDK (I don't know). Similar tendencies are also evident in Azerbaijani digital communication, where abbreviated expressions such as AS (aleykum salam), İnş (İnşallah), and tmm (tamam) are increasingly used in online conversations. These forms function not only as devices for reducing typing effort but also as markers of informality and shared digital conventions within online communities.

Third, hybrid forms combining letters, numbers, and phonetic substitutions illustrate the creative nature of online language. English examples such as gr8 (great) and b4 (before) demonstrate how orthographic innovation is motivated by phonetic similarity and communicative efficiency. Although numeral-based abbreviations are less common in Azerbaijani, users frequently create innovative spellings through vowel omission, phonetic simplification, and code-mixing, for example gəlrsən? instead of gəlirsən?, or expressions such as like elə, story paylaş, and okdı. These examples demonstrate that linguistic innovation in digital communication is shaped by both global Internet conventions and language-specific adaptation, reflecting the interaction between English-mediated digital culture and the structural characteristics of Azerbaijani.

In addition to abbreviation and borrowing, the tendency toward linguistic economy also facilitates the emergence of compressed lexical structures and hybridized formations. Users frequently merge word elements, shorten multi-word expressions, and generate innovative lexical items that circulate rapidly within online communities. These processes highlight the highly dynamic and emergent nature of Internet discourse, where linguistic forms are continuously negotiated, reshaped, and disseminated.

Importantly, such abbreviations and lexical innovations function not only as mechanisms of efficiency but also as sociolinguistic markers. They signal informality, group affiliation, digital literacy, and participation in specific online communities. Thus, lexical processes in electronic communication reflect both functional adaptation to technological constraints and broader socio-cultural processes of identity construction and community formation.

Online communication also encourages the development of new graphic and stylistic devices intended to compensate for the absence of face-to-face interaction. In traditional oral communication, emotions and attitudes are often expressed through gestures, facial expressions, and intonation. In digital communication, however, users must rely primarily on graphic means.

One of the most common methods of expressing emotions online is the use of emoticons and emojis. Emoticons constructed from keyboard symbols and modern graphic emojis function as important semiotic resources in digital communication, enabling users to express emotional states, attitudes, irony, humor, and evaluative meanings. Their widespread use reflects the growing role of visual and multimodal meaning-making in online discourse, where non-verbal cues are replaced and reconfigured through digital symbols (Zappavigna & Logi, 2024).

In addition, online users frequently employ repeated punctuation marks, capitalization, and repeated letters for expressive purposes. Multiple exclamation marks may indicate excitement or emotional intensity, while capital letters are often used to imitate raised intonation or emphasize particular words. Similarly, repeated letters may strengthen emotional meaning or create stylistic effects.

The language of online communication is also characterized by processes of jargonization and slang formation. Internet slang may be defined as a set of informal lexical, graphic, and stylistic features characteristic of digital communication environments. It includes abbreviations, acronyms, phonetic spellings, emojis, hybrid word formations, and non-standard orthographic practices used to accelerate communication, express emotional meaning, and construct online identity. Unlike traditional slang, Internet slang spreads rapidly across linguistic and cultural boundaries through social media platforms and global online interaction. In many cases, Internet slang functions not only as a mechanism of linguistic economy but also as a marker of group identity, informality, and participation in digital culture.

It is important to distinguish between slang and colloquial vocabulary, as these two lexical categories differ in both function and sociolinguistic distribution. Slang is typically associated with specific social, professional, or age-based groups and often serves as a strong marker of group identity, solidarity, and in-group membership (Eble, 2012; Tagliamonte, 2016). In contrast, colloquial vocabulary is generally used in informal everyday communication and is not necessarily restricted to particular social subgroups, although it remains stylistically non-standard in comparison to formal language registers.

Digital communication also reveals significant forms of linguistic inequality. Speakers of globally dominant languages have greater access to digital resources, educational materials, and AI-powered language technologies than speakers of less widely used languages. As a result, many minority and low-resource languages remain underrepresented in digital environments, limiting their visibility and reducing opportunities for technological development. This digital language divide has become an important sociolinguistic issue, as unequal access to language technologies may reinforce existing social and linguistic inequalities.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence introduces additional sociolinguistic implications. Since most generative AI systems are trained predominantly on large English-language datasets, they tend to reproduce linguistic patterns, stylistic conventions, and cultural perspectives that are characteristic of English-dominated digital discourse. While AI significantly improves multilingual communication through automated translation, writing assistance, and content generation, it may also contribute to the standardization and homogenization of language use. Furthermore, increasing reliance on AI-generated texts raises important questions concerning linguistic authenticity, authorship, language variation, and the long-term preservation of local linguistic norms. These developments suggest that future research should examine not only the technological benefits of AI-mediated communication but also its broader impact on linguistic diversity and sociocultural identity.

Computer-mediated slang represents a particularly dynamic lexical subsystem that combines elements of professional terminology, technical jargon, colloquial speech, and emotionally expressive vocabulary. In digital environments, such hybrid forms emerge through rapid interaction, technological innovation, and the need for efficient communication. As a result, computer slang often reflects both functional adaptation to online contexts and expressive creativity among users (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Crystal, 2019). These lexical units are frequently shaped by platform-specific communication practices, including messaging apps, gaming environments, and social media discourse, where brevity, speed, and emotional intensity are highly valued.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence have introduced additional forms of linguistic interaction within digital environments. For example, a user may prompt an AI system to "Write a polite email declining a meeting invitation," and receive a grammatically accurate, contextually appropriate, and stylistically coherent response within seconds. Such interactions demonstrate that AI systems increasingly participate in discourse production rather than merely assisting with language correction. Consequently, AI-mediated communication has become an important factor influencing lexical choice, discourse organization, stylistic adaptation, and contemporary writing practices.

Computer slang initially developed within relatively specialized communities, particularly among programmers, gamers, and early Internet users who required efficient and context-specific forms of communication. Within these groups, slang functioned not only as a communicative tool but also as a means of identity construction and community cohesion. Over time, however, many of these expressions have diffused beyond their original professional or subcultural boundaries and have entered mainstream everyday communication. This process illustrates the broader sociolinguistic phenomenon of lexical diffusion, whereby terms originating in restricted domains gradually become integrated into general usage (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Zappavigna, 2018).

The spread of computer slang into everyday language demonstrates the increasing influence of digital culture on contemporary language development and highlights the role of online environments as major sites of linguistic innovation. In particular, it illustrates how computer-mediated communicative practices contribute to the ongoing restructuring of lexical systems, including processes of semantic shift, lexical expansion, and morphological creativity. At the same time, the diffusion of digital slang across different communicative domains reflects the gradual blurring of boundaries between formal and informal registers, a phenomenon widely observed in studies of computer-mediated discourse (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Crystal, 2019; Herring, 2013).

This shift is further reinforced by the multimodal and interactive nature of online platforms, where linguistic, visual, and pragmatic resources are combined in flexible ways to construct meaning.

Moreover, the emergence and normalization of computer slang contribute to the formation of new hybrid varieties of language that integrate elements of spoken, written, and digital communication. These hybrid forms are not static but dynamically evolve through processes of user interaction, community practices, and technological affordances. As a result, digital slang should not be interpreted merely as informal or non-standard vocabulary; rather, it represents a productive site of linguistic innovation that reflects broader sociocultural transformations in the digital age. Contemporary research in sociolinguistics and digital discourse analysis increasingly emphasizes that such lexical phenomena function as indicators of identity construction, group affiliation, and cultural participation within networked communication environments (Danesi, 2016; Georgakopoulou, 2017).

Consequently, computer slang can be viewed as an essential component of modern linguistic ecology, offering insight into how language adapts to technological change and how speakers negotiate meaning within rapidly evolving communicative landscapes. Recent studies further suggest that these processes are accelerating due to algorithmic mediation and platform-based communication structures, which amplify certain lexical innovations while suppressing others, thereby shaping the trajectory of contemporary language change (Page et al., 2014). Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Telegram, and X further accelerate linguistic change.

Communication on these platforms combines verbal and nonverbal elements, including hashtags, emojis, abbreviations, images, videos, and hyperlinks. As a result, online discourse becomes increasingly multimodal. Users communicate not only through words but also through visual and graphic elements that contribute to meaning construction (Jones et al., 2015). Short-video platforms such as TikTok have created new forms of multimodal discourse combining written text, spoken language, music, visual effects, hashtags, and algorithm-driven trends. Communication on such platforms is characterized by brevity, creativity, rapid lexical innovation, and strong interaction between global and local linguistic practices. TikTok discourse demonstrates how contemporary digital communication increasingly integrates audiovisual and textual elements into unified communicative structures. The popularity of short-form video content also contributes to the rapid international spread of slang expressions, memes, and hybrid linguistic forms across different languages and cultures. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that platforms such as TikTok increasingly shape linguistic behavior through algorithmic personalization, multimodal interaction, and AI-assisted communication practices (Obreja, 2024; Steen et al., 2023; Taylor & Chen, 2024).

Another important feature of electronic communication is hypertextuality. Hypertext structures allow users to move between different texts, websites, and information resources through hyperlinks. Consequently, online discourse often appears non-linear and fragmented compared to traditional printed texts. Hypertextuality significantly changes reading and interpretation processes because users can navigate information in multiple directions (Barton & Lee, 2013).

Recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) have

introduced new dimensions to electronic communication by influencing the ways in which digital texts are produced, edited, and interpreted. Unlike earlier communication technologies, generative AI systems actively participate in discourse production by generating contextually appropriate and grammatically coherent texts. This development has contributed to changes in lexical choice, sentence structure, stylistic variation, and communicative efficiency in online environments.

These changes can be illustrated through AI-assisted writing practices. For example, a user may prompt an AI system to "Write a polite email declining a meeting invitation," and receive a well-structured and stylistically appropriate response within seconds. Similarly, AI-powered writing assistants increasingly suggest vocabulary, reformulate sentences, and adapt texts to different communicative contexts. Such examples demonstrate that AI is no longer merely a technological tool but has become an active participant in digital discourse, influencing contemporary language use and writing practices.

Therefore, AI-mediated communication should be understood as one of the emerging linguistic features of electronic communication rather than as an independent technological phenomenon. Its significance lies in its impact on language production, stylistic adaptation, and digital communication practices, all of which contribute to ongoing processes of contemporary language change.

AI-based systems such as predictive text technologies, automated translation tools, conversational agents (chatbots), and generative AI platforms increasingly mediate everyday communicative practices across digital environments. These technologies not only assist users in producing language but also actively participate in shaping linguistic choices, thereby influencing lexical selection, syntactic structuring, and discourse organization in real time. As a result, AI-driven communication contributes to the growing standardization, acceleration, and automation of interaction processes, while simultaneously introducing new constraints and affordances for linguistic creativity.

From a computational linguistics perspective, these systems are often trained on large-scale language corpora and therefore reproduce statistically dominant linguistic patterns, which may lead to both normalization and homogenization of discourse. At the same time, generative models can introduce novel lexical combinations and stylistic variations, thereby expanding the expressive potential of digital communication. This dual effect – standardization on the one hand and creative augmentation on the other – has become a central focus in recent studies of AI-mediated language use (Periti et al., 2024; Sussman & Carter, 2025).

Furthermore, AI-mediated communication raises important theoretical and ethical questions regarding authorship, linguistic agency, and authenticity. In environments where machine-generated suggestions or fully generated texts are increasingly indistinguishable from human-produced language, traditional notions of individual authorship become blurred. This shift challenges established linguistic and discourse-analytic frameworks, requiring a reevaluation of how meaning, intention, and responsibility are attributed in digital communication. Recent scholarship has therefore emphasized the need to reconceptualize discourse as a hybrid product of human–machine interaction rather than a purely human-centered phenomenon (Tang, 2018).

In addition, the increasing integration of intelligent systems into everyday communication practices suggests a continuous transformation in the relationship between human linguistic behavior and technological mediation. As AI systems become embedded in messaging applications, search engines, and writing platforms, they begin to function not merely as tools but as co-constructors of discourse. This development signals a shift toward what some researchers describe as “algorithmically mediated language environments,” where linguistic choices are shaped by predictive models, personalization algorithms, and context-aware systems. Consequently, the future evolution of digital language norms is likely to be increasingly influenced by the interaction between human communicative intentions and machine-driven linguistic optimization processes.

The dynamic development of electronic communication continuously influences national languages, leading to observable changes in lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic systems across diverse linguistic communities. Contemporary linguistic research demonstrates that similar processes are taking place globally, including increased lexical borrowing, simplification of grammatical structures, and the widespread diffusion of Internet slang and digital registers (Schmidt & Löser, 2019). These developments indicate that digital communication functions as a transnational linguistic space in which languages interact and influence one another more rapidly than in traditional communicative environments. At the same time, online communication contributes significantly to the globalization of linguistic practices, as users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds increasingly engage in shared digital platforms such as social media networks, forums, and messaging applications. This interaction facilitates the emergence of hybrid linguistic forms and promotes the circulation of globally recognizable discourse patterns (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Tagg, 2020).

Despite the apparent simplification of certain linguistic structures in digital environments, online communication simultaneously demonstrates a high degree of linguistic creativity and innovation. Internet users actively manipulate language by experimenting with orthography, phonetic spelling, punctuation, and multimodal resources such as emojis, hashtags, and gifs, thereby expanding the expressive potential of written communication (Danesi, 2016; Georgakopoulou, 2017). In addition, new lexical formations, including neologisms, blends, and creative abbreviations, emerge continuously within online communities, reflecting both linguistic economy and expressive intent (Zappavigna, 2018). These processes illustrate that digital discourse is not merely reductive but also generative, allowing users to construct meaning in flexible and context-dependent ways.

Thus, digital communication cannot be interpreted simply as a simplified or degraded form of traditional language. Rather, it should be understood as a complex, multimodal, and dynamically evolving communicative system that integrates linguistic, visual, and technological resources. This system reflects ongoing sociocultural transformations and demonstrates how language adapts to new communicative ecologies shaped by digital technologies (Herring, 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2014).

Conclusion

The present study examined the principal linguistic features of electronic communication and their role in contemporary language change. The analysis demonstrates that digital communication has transformed language at lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and graphic levels through the widespread use of abbreviations, acronyms, Internet slang, emojis, multimodal resources, and AI-

mediated communication. These linguistic innovations reflect the adaptation of language to the communicative demands of digital environments rather than a decline in language quality.

Furthermore, the study highlights that technological developments, particularly social media platforms and artificial intelligence, continue to reshape patterns of language use and accelerate linguistic innovation. In addition, by incorporating examples from both English and Azerbaijani digital communication, the study extends previous research beyond the predominantly English-centered perspective and provides a broader understanding of linguistic adaptation in multilingual digital environments.

This study has several limitations. First, it relies exclusively on secondary literature and does not incorporate original empirical linguistic data. Second, the findings are based on a qualitative synthesis of existing studies, which may reflect the methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives, and publication biases present in the reviewed literature. Finally, the scope of the review is limited to selected recent publications and therefore may not capture all relevant research on electronic communication. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and highlight the need for future studies that incorporate primary data and broader systematic reviews. Unlike many previous studies that focus on individual linguistic phenomena or specific digital platforms, this article offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how different dimensions of digital communication collectively contribute to contemporary language change.

The findings have practical implications for linguistics, digital communication studies, language education, and the development of AI-based language technologies by providing a comprehensive overview of current linguistic trends in online communication. Beyond these practical applications, the principal scholarly contribution of this review lies in its integrated qualitative synthesis of recent research from the complementary perspectives of computer-mediated communication, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and Internet linguistics.

Unlike previous studies that have typically examined these perspectives in isolation or focused on specific aspects of digital communication, this review brings them together within a unified conceptual framework. By critically comparing and synthesizing these approaches, it demonstrates how technological, linguistic, and sociocultural factors jointly shape the evolution of online discourse. This integrative perspective advances the existing literature by offering a more comprehensive understanding of electronic communication as a dynamic, multimodal, and socially embedded phenomenon, while identifying conceptual links and research directions that may inform future theoretical and empirical investigations.

Author contributions

The author conceptualized and designed the study, conducted the literature review, developed the theoretical framework, analyzed and synthesized the relevant literature, interpreted the findings, and wrote, revised, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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