

Language is similar to a house that is continuously under construction. A home provides an essential use to its dwellers, who make small changes to it over the years. Generations go by and these small changes accumulate. Ultimately, the building may not be recognized by the former dwellers.

We could appreciate the magnitude of the changes by comparing the existing building with its old blueprints, and this also holds true for language. English students normally understand the 400-year-old plays of Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* that was written over 600 years ago, is almost unclear without university-level language courses. The fundamentals are there, however; it is a completely new structure.

Centuries might look like a rational timeframe for linguistic change, however; a curious thing occurred in the last few decades: English is changing a lot. Why is this so? This is because of the internet.

Our new online tools for communicating have helped us move into a new era of linguistic change, where various rules for spelling, grammar and syntax can be created and popularized in only a few years. In these following chapters, we will go deeper into internet culture and look at the linguistic changes the web has created.

## The internet caused an outbreak of informal writing.

Let's take a moment to look at writing, a lot of us think about books, magazines, and newspapers. However, for most of us, our reading skills were gotten from these means. Mostly for writing, we usually cut out teeth with school essays and exams papers.

Currently, there is absolutely nothing wrong with these means. However, they all have a significant thing in common which is there are all forms of formal writing.

Formal writing isn't just about political journalism or dense academic articles. It is any form of edited prose that highlights form, mostly at the expense of instant flair and creative flow. This covers self-editing and you might not have had the opportunity of a copy editor exploring

through your English essay in tenth-grade; however when writing you were probably mindful of adhering to the rules of correct spelling, grammar, and syntax.

For over a long time, what the majority of us read was formal writing. Nevertheless, these books cost money to print them; hence, why waste money on wrong sentences and stodgy words? However, over the last century, things have changed as a result of the internet and mobile phones.

These technologies vividly increased the number of writing in everyday life, making it a daily requirement for ordinary people. Phone calls progressively lost ground to emails and text messages. In order for you to get to an audience of thousands, you didn't have to make it past an editor anymore, all you require is just to create a blog.

Also, to write these day-to-day messages, we used a different form of language which is informal writing. This is direct and unselfconscious writing, which doesn't go through newspaper editors or our own internal editors. A text or conversation in the internet chat rooms is straight and conversational as if we are talking or speaking.

This led to informal writing which started to change the way we communicate even language itself.

For instance, Acronyms are methods of saving space in formal writing, think of NASA or NATO. Since the rise of informal writing, acronyms have now been repurposed by multitudes for the same purpose, however, with very different outcomes. Currently, a lot of people know that "BTW" stands for "by the way," and "OMG" is the short form for "oh my god."

This way, the rules of language are no longer given to us from figures of authority such as teachers and dictionary editors. We've all become involved in creating new types of expression as a result of the internet.

## Internet linguistics is a new and interesting field.

Take a road trip across the United States from east to west. In New York and Washington for instance, you'll hear people calling sugary carbonated drinks "soda." If you continue driving

west, and you'll hear people calling it "pop" in the area from Detroit to Utah. Then, when you drive to Arizona or California, it's back to being "soda." Why is this so?

If this observation captivates you, you are likely to make a good linguist. They're concerned about why people communicate differently.

Since the time middle of the nineteenth century, linguists have been explaining the reasons why language differs and what influences our ways of expression. Also, they've benefited greatly from the introduction of a revolutionary new research tool which is the internet.

Linguistic research has been changed in different ways by Cyberspace. Formerly, linguists had to record or transcribe individual conversations for analysis; this took a lot of time, and the participants might change the way they speak in the presence of a researcher. However, presently with a lot of social media posts and text messages to study, researchers have millions of illustrations of people speaking informally and organically.

Let's consider a few known linguistic theories for the reasons why people speak differently, and then let's look at how internet linguistics assisted in supporting their influence.

First, there's the influence of networks. People learn language habits from the social groups around them such as their family or workplace networks. In the 1970s, a study that was conducted in Northern Ireland by Lesley Milroy studied the changing pronunciation of the word "car" into something like "care." In one Belfast community still in change, Milroy saw that specific young women were causing this change. These women all worked in the same store out of town, where customers and staff alike started using the new pronunciation.

Another vital point that was raised from Milroy was the influence of strong and weak relations. These are social science terms describing your relationship with other people; strong for close friends and family members, while weak for casual acquaintances. It was concluded by Milroy that having a lot of weak relations led to more linguistic change because this exposes the speaker to different habits of talking. On the other hand, Strong ties have the tendency to share much in common linguistically.

This way, it's very easy to see how the internet affects language changes. The web is a bundle of weak relations, with social networks, forums and chat rooms that enable contact with people

outside your main networks. For instance, Twitter is the main driver of linguistic change because it inspires you to follow people you don't know before.

However, what kind of people use the internet, and when did they first come online? Find out more about this in the next chapter.

## Internet users can be divided into various groups, depending on when they first came online.

Internet users are remarkably very easy to divide into a few groups, and being a member of one group tells a lot about your communication habits.

The first group is called Old Internet People which consists of people that are the most influential in the development of internet language. This is similar to what linguist Salikoko Mufwene calls the founder effect and it states that the earliest members of a language group have an uneven influence on its later development.

When the internet was still new, Old Internet People were the first ones online. They're known by a high level of computer literacy because being online back in those days required you to use a computer using coded commands and you need to have the knowledge of a few programming languages.

Because accessing the internet needed technical expertise, it only attracted those interested in technology which means that everyone had something in common. They hung out on platforms and sites like Usenet and software like Internet Relay Chat which would look ancient to us now. Old Internet People created acronyms such as "BTW" which stands for "by the way," and "FYI" which means "for your information." They also created emoticons like :- ) and :- ( in order to convey emotion to each other.

The next categories of people to come online were Full Internet and Semi Internet People. These happened during the late 1990s and 2000s when the internet was just becoming accessible and mainstream.

Full Internet People were younger people and people still in school, realizing the web same time as their classmates. And they used it to communicate with people they already knew, the example of such services are MSN Messenger and AOL Instant Messenger.

Semi Internet People came online at the same time as Full Internet People; however, they mostly used the internet for work and other functional tasks such as reading the news. They might maintain real-world relationships online; however, they are usually more doubtful about electronic communication. They're highly skilled in specific programs or skills such as Photoshop or Microsoft Office.

The next two groups online were Pre and Post Internet People. Post Internet People are those too young to remember life without the internet and they grew up with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as normal. Pre Internet People are older people who resisted going online because they were intimidated by the learning curve. Pre Internet People were forced online when the internet became a requirement of everyday life, for things like applying for a passport or checking the weather update.

## The internet has an exceptional typographic pattern.

An interesting illustration of online communication changing language is that the period has come to show passive-aggressiveness.

Currently, we message each other in chat-style conversations, with messages among two people being collected and showed on a single screen. With this presentation, it became very normal to separate clauses not with a period, however with a new message. Over time, ending a sentence with a period started to express annoyance or passive aggression. In 2013, Even mainstream publications such as the New Republic started using this method.

Another habit to the internet is the use of capital letters to either EMPHASIS or TO SHOW THAT YOU'RE SHOUTING.

This is because, when we communicate online, a lot of the tools we use to communicate are lost. When speaking or talking, we emphasize words by saying them louder, faster or at a higher tone; when we want to shout, we just shout. Using capitals as alternatives for these was a way to fill the void in the tone of our real-life expressions.

And once we look past its disarming grin, even the simple smiley :-)) emoticon is very difficult. Once again, it began as an alternative for something lost in the cyber world: a real smile. With text-based messages being more unclear than speech, this was a useful approach to communicate a message's true meaning.

However, in this present day, if your best friend sends you a message like this "you're a terrible person :-))", she using the emoticon to signify something else like the statement is just a joke. A smiley can also reduce the tone of aggression of a message. For instance, your boss might message you that "don't forget to be on time tomorrow :-))" to gently raise the issue of your recent lateness.

"Lol" also has different meanings. Lol was created in a chatroom by Old Internet Person Wayne Pearson in the 1980s, it initially meant laughter. However, soon "lol" changed and presently it can be used to show appreciation of a joke, to resolve an awkward situation or to signify irony.

The last meaning is very essential because irony is extremely difficult to communicate in writing; during a speech, this can be easily communicated by a change in tone or an arched eyebrow. This is an issue that far predates the internet: in 1688, John Wilkins who was the British natural philosopher suggested the use of an inverted exclamation mark to signify irony. Unluckily, it wasn't used.

Instead, surrounding ironic text with ~sarcasm tildes~ were used. For instance, when you say "I'm ~so~ glad to be at my parents' house for Christmas;" by putting those tildes when they're not necessary, the writer suggests that the content of an apparently serious message isn't so serious. The sarcasm tilde might even have gained popularity because it imitates the rising and falling tones of a sarcastic sing-song voice, like when we say "soooo."

## Emoji covers an important gap in electronic communication.

We all know a few emoji haters, these are the people who don't use the colorful, cartoonish graphics we put into electronic messages. Maybe, they remember a time when there was no emoji and we had to use emoticons like :- ( in our chats, and they prefer what they are used to already. Or maybe it because they feel emoji demean writing and they are scared that language is gradually filled by novel symbols.

However, irrespective of their reason; emoji belongs to part of pop culture and they are here to stay.

Emoji were invented in the 1990s by a Japanese cell phone carrier called SoftBank and emoji became popular globally in 2010 when Apple and Android phones began to support them. At first, there were only 608 emoji symbols; but now it has rapidly increased. Presently, all phone carriers have over 2,800 emoji.

Then, why did emoji become a worldwide part of our online language?

Well, it goes back to the argument in the former chapter. This is because writing takes out the body from language, and a lot of our communicative tools are lost. Emoji assist to fill this gap.

There are two specific beneficial ways to think about emoji.

First, as emblem gestures. Just to explain this briefly, gestures are any physical action you use to communicate your idea, for instance, when you hold your hands away from each other just to signify a fish was "this big." Emblem gestures were defined by theorists as gestures that have a particular name. For instance, all English speakers can tell what a wink or a thumbs-up signifies, and you'll even find their names and definitions listed in English dictionaries.

The high success of emoji is partly due to the fact that they provide gestures in writing which was lacked previously. Now, we have on our smartphone keyboards, the ability to flip someone off (👊), wave (👋), wish luck (🍀) and roll our eyes (🙄).

However not all the emoji are emblem gestures, some are just illustrations.

These emoji are used to buttress the meaning of our messages and explain the context. Examples of these are Birthday messages. Currently, when we get “happy birthday” messages from friends, they usually come with different illustrative emoji such as the birthday cake (🎂), balloon (🎈) or gift (🎁). Also, we regularly mix these context-dependent emoji with others that have deeper meanings, like sparkles (✨) and hearts (❤️).

Either you love emoji or you hate them, emojis filled a gap in our informal writing and added new meaning to our messages. They are colorful illustrations of our physical world, and they add touch as well as flair to our chats.

## Good examples of Ray Oldenburg’s third place are social media and online communities.

Pessimistic over the influence of technology on society, particularly TV, Ray Oldenburg the sociologist definitely didn’t think of online spaces when he created the term third place in 1989.

Oldenburg used this word to denote social spaces, different from the first place of home and the second place of work. Third places are known for calming atmospheres, which stresses on recreation, relaxation, conversation, and playfulness. Oldenburg believed these were necessary to social life, civic engagement and the democratic process, using pubs and cafés as main examples.

Even though he wouldn’t consider them as such, social media are perfect examples of third places.

When we log in or go online on the third place of our social network accounts, we see a lot of old and newcomers communicating with one another and socializing. We see the day to day lifestyles of other people and we are very current on the major things happening in our acquaintances’ lives. When we begin a conversation with our old friends, it is not necessary to catch up because we are aware since we have been in the hoop.

In current years, social media specifically Facebook is now the main third place for adolescents to hang out, communicate and socialize. Instead of us going bowling, a huge number of teens log in online on weekend chats and they post updates as well as flirt with others. This has an influence on what teenagers aren't doing too, in a shocking reversal, a lot of studies have observed that these post-internet teenagers aren't having sex or drinking as much as the former generations.

Also, Oldenburg claimed that third places have been vital in creating the broad, loosely-knit social groups significant to revolutionary movements. The main examples mentioned by Oldenburg are the taverns of revolutionary America and European coffee shops in the Enlightenment

For example, in 2011, during Arab Spring, which witnesses a lot of pro-democracy uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa; Twitter was the main instrument for organizing protests and spreading disagreement

Other examples of third places are Internet forums and online communities. Presently, Reddit is the most common forum on the internet and it provides to over 1.2 million different communities, with the forum being focused mainly on topics like makeup artistry to 3D printing. These serve as third places in the way a pottery class might: firstly, you go for the content and afterward you start to get familiar with the names and faces. Also, you find yourself attending the social feature.

**Mememes are the basic of internet culture, and it serves as inside jokes among subcultures.**

Remarkably, mememes have been in existence even longer than the internet. In 1976, Richard Dawkins who is the evolutionary biologist invented the term, as a counterpart of the gene. According to Dawkins, a mememe is a piece of cultural information that is shareable which survives through social selection.

Defined like this, memes were in existence long before 1976. Limor Shifman who is the internet scholar that also specializes in internet memes, emphasizes a specific graffiti sketch as a classic pre-internet meme. "Kilroy Was Here" shows a large-nosed man peeking over a wall, and it became very famous in Europe during World War II.

However, internet memes as it is known presently mostly feature text superimposed onto a digital image and these internet memes started in the early 2000s. After, other sites showed up which enables you to upload an image with some text. A few of the first popular memes that started in an anonymous forum called 4chan in 2005 were lolcats which are funny pictures of a cat with some witty captions attached to it.

The main character of the majority of lolcat memes was the purposeful use of incorrect grammar and spelling. This was intended to show the poor grasp of English a cat would surely have if it could speak. One lolcat meme that showed a kitten in a bow tie, was captioned: "I CAN HAS PROM DATE?"

The theme of purposeful linguistic errors was later imitated in a particularly successful meme called Doge. Itself a misspelling of "dog," Doge was centered on a photo that was taken by a Japanese teacher named Atsuko Sato of her pet called Shiba Inu. Normally sporting text spread randomly around the photo revealing Doge's inner monologue, the meme was reproduced by various subcultures to show jokes within their community, regularly maintaining Doge's distinct linguistic style.

One Doge meme which was among the gamer society featured Doge roughly photoshopped into a soldier's uniform. Font from the best-selling shooter franchise Call of Duty was used, the meme was written "Call of Doge" with other text such as "wow," "so pro" and "much tough" written over the picture.

The lasting popularity of memes doesn't only lie in their simple creation and circulation. In order to create or enjoy a meme, it is typical for you to be an insider of a specific community. This strengthens a sense of belonging among the members, and it sets boundaries among outsiders who don't get it.

From the rise of informal language to Call of Doge, the internet hasn't only changed the way communicate, after all, language is regularly changing and it has intensely increased the speed of this change.

## Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language by Gretchen McCulloch Book Review

The English language is forever changing. However, the arrival of the internet has accelerated the pace of this transformation. The online world is a perfect place for linguistic innovation because it's led to the rise of informal writing by ordinary people, free from the dread of editors and English teachers. Also, because a lot of our communicative tools such as gestures and tone of voice are lost in writing, people have created creative new methods to articulate themselves and their intentions. However, if electronic messaging limits us in some ways, it also create way for other modes of expression; for instance, the use of memes which is an internet-specific way to make in-jokes and to feel part of a group.

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