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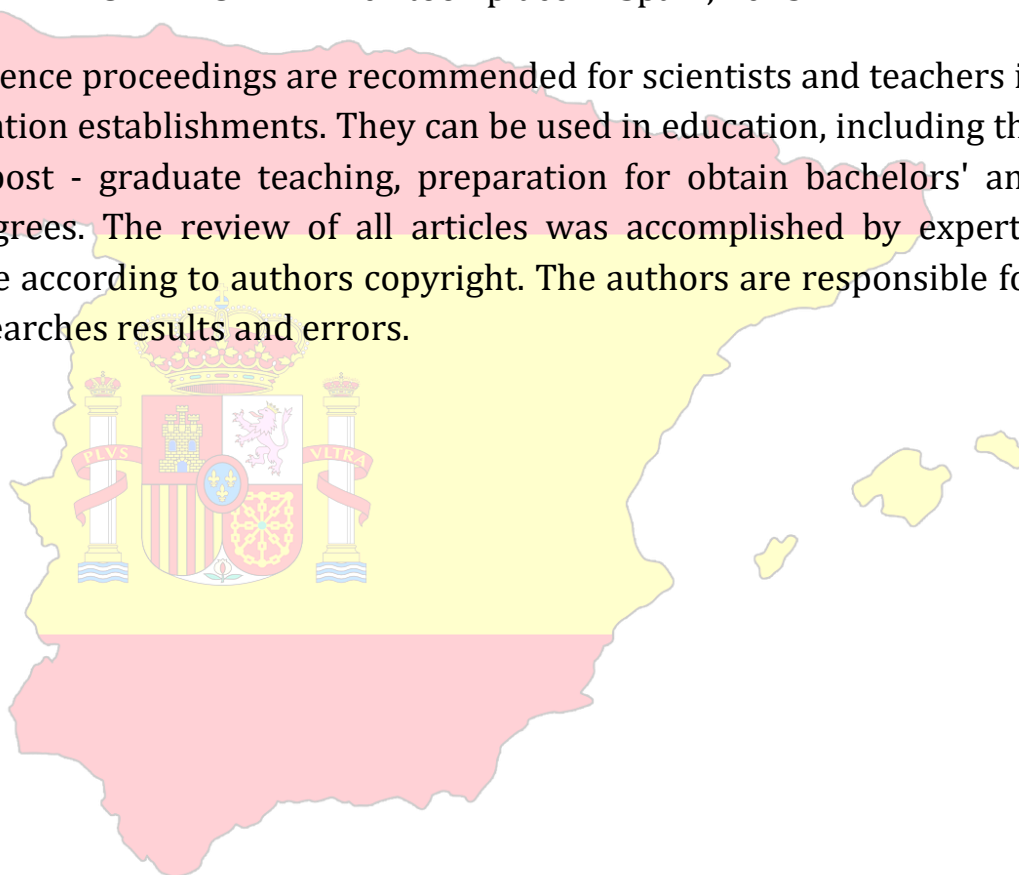


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INTERNET COMMUNICATION AND ITS LINGUISTIC IMPACT: EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract. This article examines the transformative influence of the Internet on language and communication. At the end of the twentieth century, the Internet emerged as a multidimensional communication channel, creating a global informational environment and a unique network culture. This development has profoundly influenced linguistic behavior, leading to the emergence of new forms of written and electronic discourse. Special attention is given to the communicative, cognitive, emotive, aesthetic, and interactive functions of language within the online sphere. The article also highlights the interdisciplinary approaches used by linguists and scholars from other fields to study Internet communication and its socio-cultural implications.

Keywords: Internet communication, electronic discourse, linguistic innovation, digital language, online interaction, sociolinguistics.

The Internet, by the late twentieth century, had become a major channel for information exchange and a multifaceted medium of mass communication. Its rapid expansion created a global informational environment within which a distinct online communication culture emerged, influencing the development and transformation of language. The Internet now occupies a central role in progressive culture, permeating all aspects of modern society.

Online communication has become a subject of linguistic study because the Internet provides a rich, interactive, and global communicative space, offering unprecedented opportunities for research. Traditional forms of communication are undergoing revolutionary changes, resulting in the formation of new online communities and fostering “interactive interpersonal communication” within the digital sphere. Consequently, it is essential to examine the concept of “Internet communication” in greater detail.

Language is inherently dynamic, continuously evolving in response to social, cultural, and technological developments. The advent of the Internet and the rapid growth of electronic communications have contributed to the emergence of new language forms. These changes have led to radical transformations in online language usage, giving rise to new modes of communication.

Features of spoken language are often transmitted through written transcription, particularly in emails and messaging platforms. The use of Internet and computer technologies has significantly influenced language change and usage, resulting in the emergence of electronic discourse.

The combination of the terms “Internet” and “communication” can sometimes appear contradictory. Historically, the Internet’s primary function was the retrieval and storage of information. However, its current role is increasingly communicative, stimulating new socio-cultural processes.

The Internet has become a specialized medium for communication, occupying a leading position in people's everyday lives. Its accessibility and immediacy facilitate the development of innovative and practical communication methods, forming a specialized domain of information exchange. This evolution leads to new forms of interaction and innovative language use.

Russian linguists define the communicative space as a "mentally represented environment in which the speaker experiences themselves during the process of linguistic activity." Within this space, phenomena from aesthetics, stylistics, text and discourse theory, linguistic pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and other disciplines can be studied. The Internet functions as a "meta-environment" for communication, business technologies, mass media, and the storage and processing of information.

The Internet thus provides a new cognitive environment in which information is self-organized as fragments of reality, reflecting social conventions and traditions and facilitating mutual understanding among interlocutors. Despite its long-standing presence in society, scholars worldwide have yet to establish a unified terminology to define Internet communication comprehensively.

Users communicate online through a specialized language that serves multiple functions. In linguistics, the term "function" is equivalent to "produced work," "goal," or "role." The most important function of language is the communicative function, enabling individuals to express and share thoughts, feelings, moods, and desires.

Various terms are used to describe online interaction, including electronic, virtual, computer, or Internet communication. Scholars increasingly adopt interdisciplinary approaches to study this complex phenomenon. Internet research has historically been interdisciplinary, involving sociologists, linguists, political scientists, psychologists, educators, cultural researchers, and philosophers, each analyzing the Internet's impact from their disciplinary perspective.

The defining characteristics of online communication are complexity and interactivity. Global connectivity allows users to interact regardless of geographic location. Simultaneously, communication occurs with physical and temporal separation, mediated by technology. Interactivity enables direct dialogue with audiences in real time and facilitates peer-to-peer communication.

Internet communication relies on standard protocols for exchanging information. Information can be transmitted through voice messages, video messages, documents, instant messaging, and file sharing. The communicative function encompasses several specific roles:

1. **Informational Function:** Explains and shares data about reality and current events, as seen in forums, chats, blogs, and news sites.
2. **Questioning Function:** Appears in inquiries and search requests, often via search engines and discussion boards.

3. **Connecting Function:** Maintains contact between interlocutors, visible in greetings, farewells, or small talk.

4. **Cognitive Function:** Enables participants to acquire new knowledge through online portals such as educational, informational, and encyclopedic sites.

5. **Influencing Function:** Guides behavior by persuasion, reasoning, or propaganda to achieve ideological or practical objectives.

6. **Emotive Function:** Expresses feelings and emotions, often using visual cues such as emoticons or emojis to convey tone in written communication.

The emotive function includes prosody and paralinguistic features, expressed through variations in tone, volume, speed, rhythm, pauses, and voice. Online, expressive devices include repeated letters, punctuation, capitalization, spacing, and symbols to convey emotion, emphasis, or sarcasm.

Language in online communication also serves aesthetic and playful functions. Website and blog design, text formatting, and content presentation contribute to the aesthetic impact on users. The playful function is evident in digital games, whether group, intellectual, or role-playing, with language adapting to each context.

Internet has transformed language, creating new forms of electronic discourse that serve communicative, informational, cognitive, emotive, aesthetic, and playful functions. These functions are facilitated by the interactive, global, and technologically mediated nature of Internet communication. Linguistic research now requires interdisciplinary approaches to fully understand the socio-cultural, cognitive, and technological dimensions of digital communication.

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