



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section(s): *Culture, Media & Film*

The impact of digital media on language development and communication competence among university students

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Recent decades have witnessed a significant expansion in the use of digital media as a primary means of daily communication, directly impacting language usage patterns and methods of social interaction. This paper studies the way of digital media platforms, like social media, messaging applications besides online forums, effect of language development also enhancing communication abilities of university students in both digital and real world. The digital communication increase having introduced novel phenomena of language, encompassing abbreviations, memes, emojis, in addition to code-switching that reflecting and reshaping language models. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is employed as theoretical framework that explains the interactive relationship between the individual and digital tools as cultural media that influence thought and language. Results indicate that digital media fosters creative language application and challenges traditional language conventions, affecting literacy and interpersonal skills. University student's users, in particular, demonstrate a high degree of adaptability, developing shorthand and multimodal communication proficiency. However, concerns about decreased attention span, reduced in presence communication skills, and language deterioration are also discussed. The findings highlight the need for educational strategies that balance digital literacy with the cultivation of strong communication competencies, ensuring individuals can navigate digital and in presence communications effectively.

KEYWORDS: digital language, digital media, hybrid language, language improvement, understanding, vocabularies

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1. Introduction

Today digitally-driven world, university students are progressively exposing to different digital media forms, like social media platforms, smartphones, online content besides tablets, this quick technology integration in everyday life has significantly affected the manner university student of acquiring in addition to applying language. Although digital media is usually recognized for promoting communication via direct messaging besides multimedia partaking, its wider effect on language enhancement remained worry also investigation extended area. This study adopted the Sociocultural Theory for Vlad (Glăveanu, 2021), which is based on the premise that language and thinking develop through social interaction, and that individuals acquire linguistic and cognitive skills through the cultural media and technological tools they use in daily life. The theory suggests that communication occurs not only through words, but also through symbols and social contexts. This research adopts a qualitative, descriptive, analytical approach, incorporating some quantitative aspects to support the findings. This approach is most appropriate for understanding the social and linguistic phenomena arising from the use of digital media. The study selected 50 of Iraq's university students intentionally (purposive sample) who use digital media on daily basis for the academic year 2024-2025, used semi-structured interviews and digital content analysis of texts and conversations with their acceptance to use them for research purposes and maintain their confidentiality. This research aims to analyze how digital media influence language development and communication styles among university students. This research explores the linguistic changes resulting from the extensive use of digital applications and determines the impact of these changes on communicative abilities, both at the level of self-expression and social interaction.

2. Literature review:

The recent decades have witnessed a tremendous development in digital communication tools such as social media, messaging applications, blogs, and forums, radically impacting the linguistic structure and methods of human communication. Studies have varied in their description of this impact, with some viewing it as positive development in the tools of expression and interaction, and others viewing it as a threat to traditional linguistic structures. This has led to the development of a specialized field of research concerned with "digital language" and "virtual communication."

2.1. *The Impact of Digital Media on Language:*

Many studies indicate that digital media has contributed to the emergence of new linguistic patterns, including abbreviations, emojis, and code-switching between multiple languages.

- a. (Marcos, 2024) in his article "The Language Development in the Digital Age" discusses what is known as "internet language," asserting that digital media does not corrupt language, but rather creates new linguistic diversity that adapts to the technological and temporal requirements of users (Marcos, 2024).
- b. (Makanise, & Madima, 2024) in their book "Decolonising Digital Media and Indigenisation of Participatory Epistemologies" focus on the role of the internet and social networking sites in the process of extinction of ethnic languages, especially African languages (Makanise & Madima, 2024).
- c. (Obojska, & Vaiouli, 2025) this study examines how users especially children and young people use digital media to develop language, literacy, and communication skills, arguing that these media are an effective learning tool if used thoughtfully (Obojska & Vaiouli, 2025).

2.2. *The Impact of Digital Media on Communication Skills:*

In terms of communication, researchers have observed that digital media not only changes language, but also reform methods of interaction, discussion, and even self-representation.

- a. (Jensen, 2022) express in his book "Media convergence: The three degrees of network, mass, and interpersonal communication" an integrated framework for analyzing media and communication in contemporary structures, distinguishing between three levels or "degrees" of communication: network, mass, and interpersonal. The approach relies on integrating historical, philosophical, and practical theories to understand the relationship between ancient and modern media (Jensen, 2022).
- b. Azhar, Ali, Hamid, Akhtar, & Rahman, (2022) in their study "Demystifying the effect of social media eWOM on revisit intention post-COVID-19" introduced the computer-mediated communication, suggesting that users compensate for a lack of nonverbal cues by producing more explicit texts, or using emojis to express emotions (Azhar et al., 2022).
- c. Kutlu, Baxelbaum, Sorensen, Oleson, & McMurray, (2024). "Social network diversity leads to more flexible speech perception in school-aged children" explored the concept of digital audio multiplicity where digital media allow individuals to control their identity and the way they communicate with others through flexible linguistic and contextual patterns (Kutlu et al., 2024).

2.3. *The Arabic Studies*

a. (Belabbas, 2022) in a study titled “The Arabic language in the Shadow of Social Media” observed significant linguistic transformations among Arab youth, manifested in the replacement of classical Arabic vocabulary with local dialects or foreign words, sparking a debate between modernity and the preservation of identity (Belabbas & Youssef, 2022).

b. (Suad Hamed et al., 2020) studied the psychological and communicative impact of using messaging apps among Jordanian university students, concluding that excessive use leads to a weakening of direct verbal interaction and a shift in the ways of expressing opinions (Suad Hamed, Hamoud, Farman, & Adel, 2020).

The Arabic studies have shown that digital media have contributed to the weakening of standard Arabic and spread of hybrid languages, and have also changed the methods of interaction and expression among Arab youth.

2.4. *Research Gap*

Despite the numerous studies that have addressed digital language or the impact of electronic communication, few have combined the development of linguistic structure with interactive communication capabilities, particularly in the Arab university context. Furthermore, there remains a need to link these phenomena to interpretive theoretical perspectives, such as Glăveanu’s sociocultural theory, to understand how language is shaped by digital cultural tools.

The literature demonstrates that digital media play a vital role in reshaping language and communication, whether in terms of vocabulary, style, or linguistic identity. However, this is influenced by social, cultural, and educational factors. This research aims to provide a scientific, analytical reading of this influence by integrating sociocultural theory with contemporary field research.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the impact of digital platforms on language acquisition, communication and cognitive development among university students in contemporary societies influenced by technological globalization, this transformation has produced new linguistic forms and social interactions that are qualitatively different from those prevalent in traditional environments. In order to understand this linguistic and communicative change, adopting Glăveanu’s Sociocultural Theory, and Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory; the Interactionist Approach to Language Learning, and Multimodal Learning Theories (Main, 2021). By following an in-depth qualitative approach, the research seeks to explore and explain the dialectal relationship between the individual and his or her digital environment.

3.1. *Sociocultural Theory*

Vlad P. Glăveanu developed the sociocultural theory in the last four years, emphasizing that language and thought are formed by social interaction, and that cultural tools, including language and technology, play a key role in the development of higher cognitive processes. The theory is based on concepts such as symbolic tools, the zone of proximal development.

3.2. *Applying Theory to the Digital Environment*

In the age of digital media, smartphones, social media, and interactive games have become cultural tools that influence language development and communication styles, creating hybrid language patterns, abbreviations, and new emojis. These media also provide opportunities for educational interaction within what Glăveanu calls the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. *The Role of Digital Media in Language Acquisition for University Students*

University students nowadays are engaged in continuous improvement digital setting continually reshaping their language achievement and communication capacities. With the social media platforms appearance, digital tools also academic settings students are subjected to a different language forms range, each effecting their spoken besides the written language. The digital media role in determining language improvement is essential, presenting chances besides challenges (Marcos, 2024).

The digital media effect on language acquisition starts with the complete linguistic input capacity the student obtains. The Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok besides Instagram though mostly informal represented highly engaging in addition to present a space to students for practicing language via cooperating communication, for example, slang, acronyms (such as lol and brb), besides emojis represented integral to numerous student’s everyday online communications (Barrot, 2022). These interactions form more cultural references, reflecting the language developing nature. On social media, the student frequently facing informal expressions coexisted alongside extra formal academic dialogue, created a sole linguistic registers connection (Jensen, 2022).

On the contrary, educational tools like online research platforms, Google Scholar, academic journals offering the student to extra specialized, formal besides academic language. These resources assist students to participate with field-certain academic agreements besides terminology, consequently sustaining their formal language abilities (Shadiev & Dang, 2022). Digital platforms for academic aims repeatedly featuring peer-reviewed articles, organized writing in addition to compound academic arrangements, necessary for student’s intellectual improvement (Desta, Workie, Yemer, Denku, & Berhanu, 2021).

Nevertheless, the interactions between informal language contexts and formal language contexts make the process of language acquisition a complex task. The student is progressively required to change between these two distinctive language registers, one described by brevity, humor, and informality, and another by accuracy, structure, and formality. The capability for codeswitch between these registers is a basic ability to the successful language improvement (Muslimawati, 2022). Coding-switching includes adjusting one's language style depended on the context besides audience; a capability necessary to the academic success besides for navigating specialized besides social environment (Ulanday, Centeno, Bayla, & Callanta, 2021).

Regardless of these challenges, digital media besides presents chances for language sustenance. The student regularly involves in online deliberations, discussion media, and shared academic tasks improving challenging besides convincing writing improvement. These interactions required students for constructing coherent, well-enhanced opinions, practicing academic dialogue besides refining their writing via peer feedback (Ulanday et al., 2021).

The online platforms flexibility lets the student discover a new language besides improve their language abilities at their own pace, answering to active content besides building a multipurpose language toolkit (Barkley, 2020).

Nevertheless, this continuous commitment with digital media besides increases apprehensions regarded academic consistency possible loss. The enticement for applying informal languages or shortcuts in the academic writings (for example -u- for "you" and -2- for "to") remained an important challenge to the students. Gradually these informal practices might cause profound rooted, and then causing the students' lack in formal academic writing (Gong & Yang, 2024). Teachers should play an effective role to direct the student via separating their digital communication practices procedure from their academic writing skills.

4.2. Digital Media Cognitive and Linguistic influence on the University Students.

Digital media applies a profound influence on language improvement besides on cognitive methods, like memory, attention in addition to critical deliberation. The university student involves with digital media on everyday basis, regularly in multi-tasks settings. This constant changing between academic platforms, social media, news, email could have resulted in thinking excess, might hinder the profounder cognitive skills improvement required to the academic success (Sauce, Liebherr, Judd, & Klingberg, 2022). One of the main cognitive digital media impacts on language improvement is the improved need for the student to practice information rapidly. Platforms like Instagram or Twitter presents information of quick -paced, bite-sized pieces' necessity for quick consideration changes. This digital consumption form inspires the student for scanning information instead of involve intensely with the content might delay long-term holding besides complex academic. Material studies comprehension has exposed that as digital media making easy for the quick surface-level knowledge acquisition, it obstructs the capability to involve in profound thinking (Schneegass & Draxler, 2021).

The brevity besides digital media discourage closeness promoted focus, essential ability for the university student tasked with treating complex thoughts, reading dense manuscripts besides expressing better-argued academic researches (Kim, Seo, Zo, & Lee, 2021).

Additionally, the multitasking practice regularly encouraged via digital media, could have harmful impacts on the student's cognitive abilities. Study has reached that multitasking like switching between platforms of social media through studying or writing researches could lessen consideration also increase cognitive burden. The student might find it stimulating to focus on a sole task for long time, resulted in lessening -quality academic production. Multitasking also resulted in regular interruptions disrupting thought continuousness important for profound academic commitment. When the student divides their consideration between numerous incentives, losing the capability of processing besides retain data successfully, damagingly effects his academic presentation (da Silveira, 2021).

The cognitive tasks linked with digital media remained not restricted to focus besides attention. The other significance is the possible active sophisticated abilities degradation. Reading digital content regularly in fragmented practices deprives the reader of the important ability to analyze the digital content of these texts, as the data is distributed across multiple pages or sources, supporting superficial reading rather than deep and systematic analysis (da Silveira, 2021).

Since the student regularly scan content online, might fail to involve in acritical manner with the material, missing out on the chance for assess besides create compound opinions.

This change toward browsing, besides multitasking, contributes significantly to reading comprehension. Although digital texts like e-books or articles of journal accessed online, regularly extra reachable, might not improve comprehension the similar depth such as the printed texts. Researches having shown that the student tends to achieve well on reading understanding tasks when reading printed materials, since the book physicality or article promotes continued emphasis (Leu et al., 2011).

On the contrary, the continuous notifications besides connections rooted in the digital texts regularly resulted in disruptions, causing disjointed reading besides trouble recalling main points. Accordingly, while digital texts present closeness, presenting challenges for the student needing to involve with dense academic content demanding essential consideration in addition to analysis (Chan, Churchill, & Chiu, 2017).

4.3. *Digital Media Effect on University Student's Literacy Abilities*

Digital media have basically converted literacy concept. No longer restricted to old-style reading besides writing, literacy in the digital time nowadays includes the capacity of interacting with various digital platforms in addition to media organizations, included blogs, social media, and online videos besides podcasts. Consequently, the university student should improve literacy novel forms generally referring to as digital literacy for navigating the quickly changing data landscape successfully (Jones & Hafner, 2021).

Digital literacy encompasses the capability of critically involve with the digital content, evaluating its dependability, besides generate content in a formats variety. This literacy form extending past the simple capability of accessing digital tools or apply social media required the student to comprehend the way digital media operating, the way of communicating effectively in digital spaces, besides the way to evaluate the information reliability he is encountering (Jones & Hafner, 2021).

The student should besides be mastering multimodal communication art, combining text with the visual, auditory even conjoining constituents for transmission meaning in professional manner. This alteration from text- depending communication to multi-modal arrangements is the most significant changes one happened via digital media.

In academic settings, the student is progressively anticipated for producing digital content integrating various communication forms. For instance, the student might be required to make videos, PowerPoint presentations, and info graphics besides podcasts or besides old-style written papers. These tasks require a more expansive view of literacy, one that includes proficiency in reading and writing also the ability to understand and create visual and auditory content (Jones & Hafner, 2021).

Consequently, university student now days should become adapting at handling a media formats diversity necessities diverse skill set than those usually taught in literature- dense academic environments.

The improvement focus on digital media caused by fancies in the manner the academic tasks are assessed. Previously, research papers and written essays were the principal assessment forms in university environments. Today, multimodal tasks are increasingly public in addition to the students being expected to show the ability for producing content that is visually besides linguistically consistent (Fjørtoft, 2020).

This change challenges old-style literacy notions, needed the student for mastering the textual analysis besides visual literacy, the skill to understand, create meaning and analyze, via graphs, images and other visual formats.

Nevertheless, this change besides presents challenges. As the student become extra depended on digital platforms, there is a comprehension that their capability of involve intensely with printed academic texts might weakening. Digital media inspires extra disjointed method to learning, where the student is regularly unfocussed by notifications or over links. In the contrary, old-style academic reading necessities continued concentrating also the capability of handling compound concepts (Fjørtoft, 2020).

Teachers besides students similarly should know the maintaining skill significance in the print-based literateness also promotion abilities in digital literateness.

4.4. *Digital Media Academic and Social Communication Effect*

The digital media emergence having affectedly reorganized communication uses for university student in affected manner, in academic besides social environments affectedly. Platforms such as Microsoft Teams Slack besides Zoom diverse social media sites become essential tools for the student, staff also faculty, these platforms making communication easier, fostering collaboration also improving remote learning settings. Yet, while digital media develops suitability and convenience, in addition to introducing novel challenges affecting communication quality besides depth, mainly in academic settings.

4.4.1. Academic Communication besides Teamwork

In academic environments, digital media having revolutionized method the student involves with project, work in partnership on course work besides cooperate with teachers. Platforms like Zoom also Microsoft Teams having made effective classrooms a model, letting the student to contribute in synchronous debates, attending lectures distantly besides engaging in presence communication with their teachers and classmates in spite of geographical obstacles. These tools are essential, particularly through emergencies such as COVID-19 epidemic, when in presence learning has become almost difficult, digital media introduction in education improves better flexibility besides suitability, making education extra reachable to more students (Ge-Stadnyk, Herring, & Sa, 2025).

Furthermore, loose besides discussion boarding in learning controlling systems like Moodle also Blackboard allowing the students to work together on group tasks in actual. These platforms qualify the students sharing files, communicating rapidly besides discussing academic content at their suitability, development a cooperative learning setting extended beyond the classroom. The digital tools application having resulted in improvement in the manner the student approaches learning also communicate together in academic way (O'Day & Heimberg, 2021).

Nevertheless, inspire of these platforms suitability, there existed numerous challenges. Non-verbal cues represented the key concerns playing a substantial role in communication. In presence communications, voice tone body, language in addition to

expressions of face present further meaning to communication layers, assisting to intent clarification also misunderstandings reduction. In the contrary, platforms of virtual communication regularly limit interaction richness that could cause miscommunication. Online communication tends to be extra disjointed besides less nuanced, regularly removing meaning layers essential for academic discourse (Ge-Stadnyk, Herring, & Sa, 2025).

Moreover, the change to digital media having provoked apprehensions regarded commitment reduction of profound learning. Researches demonstrate that online learning settings could occasionally develop insincere commitment, as the student might be extra subject to multitasking or not involving through virtual sessions. Checking social media simplicity, browsing the internet, answering text messages, or through an online lecture could reduce the student's capability of concentrating on academic content besides hindering critical thinking besides profound understanding abilities improvement (O'Day & Heimberg, 2021).

4.4.2. Social Communication and Networking

Besides the academic communication, digital media have changing social communication among the university students. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Instagram, let the student for maintain relations with friends, sharing personal skills besides contribute in social networks. These present a space for the student for sharing with classmates in informal, unplanned communication promotes a community and belonging intelligence., digital media having redefined social communications via empowering the student to make also maintain friendships across far distances besides time regions, consequently improving social sustenance networks (O'Day & Heimberg, 2021).

Notwithstanding these advantages, digital media effect on social communication having facing numerous challenges. The online communication informal besides reduced nature, like the emojis application, acronyms, slang might negatively affect the student's formal communication abilities, the change to communication digital forms might cause the grammatical exactness destruction also competence, particularly when the student fails to coding-switch properly between unplanned social media language also formal academic language (Sauce et al., 2022).

Online communication represented fast method resulted in disjointed discussions might participate in reducing profound, meaningful social interactions. In presence communications, the student could involve in rich, nuanced discussions improve stronger social ties. Nevertheless, the quick -fire of social media interactions nature could regularly stop the student from forming profound, considerate contacts with others.

Additionally, the pressure to maintain a specific image of social media could participate to issues such as social comparison, apprehension besides insufficiency spirits. As the student curates his online identities might feel obligated to offer themselves perfect version could make separate sense. Digital media making easy for communication could occasionally contribute to inconsistency; persons are extra linked, yet feel extra inaccessible (O'Day & Heimberg, 2021).

4.5. Results

The research Outcomes disclose that reasonable besides directed digital media apply particularly communicating content like educational applications also digital narration can improve vocabulary and narrative skills. Nevertheless, excessive exposure to non-educational digital media, mainly passive consumption, for instance watching videos, was linked with limited syntactic difficulty besides reading understanding reduction. Social media apply in university students illustrate mixed impacts, developing informal language apply, yet weakening grammatical exactness.

4.6. Discussion

This research focuses on digital media the dual effect on language improvement besides communication among university students. Digital platforms improve linguistic creativity via abbreviations memes, besides emojis, code-switching, sustaining easy communication besides multi-modal literacy. Students become skilled at navigating diverse language records, adjusting to numerous digital besides the academic settings.

Regular digital media application encounters challenges. It could weaken consideration extents, reducing the reading and writing depth also distortion the line between informal besides the formal language. The change toward fast, bite-sized content might delay significant thinking also the academic commitment.

Socially, digital tools promote contact and collaboration nevertheless regularly reducing the in presence interaction richness according to restricted non-verbal indications. Academically, students' advantage from flexibility nonetheless might struggle with preserving concentration besides formality.

5. Conclusion

As digital media change academic language besides social communication among the university students offering challenges complex set. Academic communication is improved via the flexibility in addition to teamwork chances present through platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom besides Slack. Nevertheless, the non-verbal cues lack also the possible for superficial

commitment could weaken academic dialogue complexity. On the social side, while digital media fosters greater connectivity, it can also lead to social comparison, reduced presence connections, also social links reduced quality. As universities remain to utilize digital platforms into their communication substructure, it is important to strike stability between improving the digital tools benefits also upholding the communication old-style forms richness.

Digital media considerably forms language improvement past basic communication. Presents valuable chances for vocabulary development besides communicating learning, loose or extreme apply could delay deeper linguistic abilities. The research highlights the balanced, purposeful digital media apply essential to sustain healthy language improvement in the digital time.

Digital media are reshaping the linguistic and communicative environment for young people, not by weakening their language skills or abilities, but by creating a hybrid, interactive linguistic environment that requires new analytical tools. Incorporating sociocultural theory into this context is an effective framework for understanding this complex interplay between technology, language, and the self.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Applied Recommendations for Educators:

a. Encouraging Coding-Switch Abilities

Universities must present training programs besides workshops stress to assist the student improves active code-switch abilities via teaching the student to balance informal, digital communication with formal academic language, teachers could well preparing them for social besides academic achievement.

b. Integrating Digital Media in Classroom

Teachers should deliberate integrating digital tools into teaching approaches. Like platforms such as online debate forums and academic blogs.

c. Encourage Profound Reading and Attentive Commitment

Assumed the challenges linked with digital reading traditions, teachers can inspire the student to involve in profound reading drills focusing on essential analysis. For instance, assigning reading duties where the students interpret digital texts main points could assist to exercise continued care besides advance understanding.

d. Applying Digital Media to the Multi-modal Learning

Teachers should consider using multi-modal learning approaches incorporating visual, auditory besides written constituents.

e. Make Digital Literacy Curricula

Universities must start particular curricula to develop digital literacy.

6.2. Applied Recommendations to the Student:

a. Improve Strong Writing Traditions

b. Exercise Digital Balance besides Emphasis

c. Be Aware regarding Language Options in Academic Settings

d. Encourage Multi-modal Communication Abilities

e. Involve in Critical Consideration on Digital Practices

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

R.A.H. designed and organized the study. S.S.M. collected the data and presented the analysis. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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