



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Social Media Discourse As a New Form of Written Communication: Linguistic Aspect

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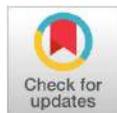
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Abstract— The study's relevance stems from the rapid development of digital technologies and social media, which are transforming modern written communication and creating new English linguistic practices. The spread of computer-mediated communication raises the question of whether English discourse in social networks (SMS) should be studied as a distinct object of linguistic research, with its own lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features. The purpose of the article is to identify the main linguistic features of English discourse in social networks (SMS) and assess their impact on the modification of modern written English. The research methodology is based on the analysis and synthesis of previous research, comparative and corpus analysis of authentic English messages, discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis, a descriptive approach, and a generalization method. The empirical basis of the study is a corpus of 15,000 authentic English-language posts and comments from X, Reddit, Instagram, and Facebook, quantitatively analyzed using Sketch Engine and AntConc, which showed that abbreviations and acronyms account for 18.4% of lexical units, elliptical constructions account for 12.7% of syntactic structures, and emojis are used in 43.2% of messages. The study finds that English SMS discourse is an independent form of written communication that combines traditional language norms with digital communication practices. The results also show a high level of neologisms, abbreviations, acronyms, elliptical constructions, emojis, hashtags, and graphic elements in message design that contribute to effective digital interaction and play important pragmatic roles. It has been shown that written English changes as lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and multimodal elements are integrated. The results are practically significant for research in digital linguistics, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics, as well as for teaching English as a foreign language and developing digital communicative competence.

Index Terms— English-language discourse, Social networks, Written communication, Digital linguistics, German-language discourse

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies and the spread of social networks have significantly influenced modern communication, transforming online platforms into one of the leading spaces for the formation of textual information. In this context, social networks are no longer just a fast way to exchange messages; they have become a new form of written communication that combines features of traditional written language with those of oral interaction. English-language discourse on social networks is highly dynamic, variable, and responsive to users' communicative needs.

A distinctive feature of modern English-language digital communication is the widespread borrowing of lexical innovations, Internet slang and abbreviations, graphic stylistic units, emojis, hashtags, non-standard punctuation marks, and syntactic units aimed at achieving efficiency in the online communication environment. These linguistic phenomena provide evidence of a hybrid model of written communication, in which traditional language norms transform under the influence of the environment's digital features.

Although researchers have studied digital communication extensively, a comprehensive analysis of English-language discourse on social networks as a new type of written communication remains an open research task. Studying the relationship between the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features of digital texts is particularly important, as these features reflect current trends in English-language development and the transformation of communicative practices in the digital sphere.

The study aims to examine the linguistic features of English discourse on social networks to contribute to a scientific understanding of the evolution of modern written English, the development of digital discourse, and the use of authentic English materials in teaching English and researching computer-mediated communication.

Despite the growing body of research on digital communication, recent work De Cock et al. (2024), Jegede (2025), Riaz (2026), and Sun et al. (2021) suggests that an integrated analysis of the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features of English-language social media discourse is still underdeveloped. In particular, corpus studies that quantify the distribution of these features across platforms and genres remain limited. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

- What lexical innovations are most common in contemporary English-language social media discourse?
- What syntactic structures characterize digital written communication on social platforms?
- What pragmatic functions do emojis, hashtags, and graphic elements perform in digital messages?
- How do these features collectively contribute to the transformation of contemporary written English?

By answering these questions using an integrated corpus approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive, empirically based explanation of English-language social media discourse as a distinct form of computer-mediated written communication.

Thus, studying the linguistic features of English discourse on social networks will contribute to a scientific understanding of the evolution of modern written English, the development of digital discourse, and the use of authentic English materials in teaching English and researching computer-mediated communication.

Literature Review

Studies of English-language social media discourse are based on an interdisciplinary synthesis of computer-mediated communication, digital linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and corpus linguistics. In the academic literature, digital discourse is viewed not only as a technologically mediated form of traditional communication, but also as a distinct linguistic environment in which new rules of text creation, user interaction, and message interpretation emerge.

One of the study's theoretical foundations is Crystal (2006) concept of Internet linguistics, which holds that the digital environment generates new forms of linguistic behavior that combine features of spoken and written language. The author emphasized informativeness, speed, non-institutionalism, interactivity, and linguistic economy as characteristics of Internet communication. These findings matter for analyzing social networks because they reveal the widespread use of abbreviations and acronyms, incomplete syntactic constructions, and non-standard use of graphic markers. At the same time, modern social network discourse is more complex than early Internet communication because of high multimodality and platform-specific technical features.

Herring (2004) has made significant contributions to computer-mediated communication theory by analyzing digital discourse at the intersection of technological characteristics and the social context of communication. Her work argues that linguistic expression in a digital message is influenced not only by the author's personal choices but also by the platform's structure, the synchronicity of interaction, the availability of feedback channels, and the characteristics of the online community. This perspective allows us to distinguish between tweets, replies, posts, retweets, and other social media genres.

Further development of this direction is reflected in the work of Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015), in which digital discourse is described as a sociolinguistically conditioned way of communication. The authors emphasize that Internet language is not a homogeneous system, but depends on age, social status, communicative goals, audience, type, and the norms of a particular digital community. This provision is fundamental

for corpus studies of social networks, since identified linguistic characteristics should be interpreted in light of their context of use, not perceived as simple formal deviations from a single style of English.

A critical comparison of these theoretical positions reveals both points of contact and contradictions. Crystal (2006) and Herring (2004) agree that digital discourse is a hybrid register that combines features of oral and written speech. Still, they disagree on whether this hybridity is transient or stable: Crystal (2006) treats the written-oral hybrid as an emergent, developing form, while Herring (2004) interprets it as a permanent feature of computer-mediated communication, systemically conditioned by technological capabilities. Similarly, Androutsopoulos (2015), Kahil (2023) and Zappavigna (2012, 2015) agree on the central role of social identity construction in digital discourse, but operationalize this concept differently: Androutsopoulos emphasizes socio-linguistic variability as the main mechanism of identification, while Zappavigna emphasizes affiliative practices and the construction of communities through hashtags. Another unresolved controversy concerns the status of graphostylistic elements: Dresner and Herring (2010) and Danesi (2017) treat emojis primarily as paralinguistic markers of emotion and illocutionary force, while Page et al. (2014) and Zappavigna (2015) argue that they have become autonomous semiotic resources with their own syntactic and pragmatic functions. These contradictions highlight the need for an integrated empirical approach that examines these features not in isolation but in their interaction.

Androutsopoulos (2006) extended the sociolinguistic perspective to the analysis of digital discourse, focusing on the processes of stylization, linguistic variation, and identity construction. In social networks, users deliberately choose lexical, syntactic, and graphic means to present themselves to the audience. Slang, neologisms, conversational structures, emojis, and hashtags can mark belonging to a particular social group, generation, or online community. Thus, linguistic variation in digital discourse serves not only communication but also social identification.

Zappavigna (2012, 2015) examines multi modality and social interaction in depth. The researcher considers social networks as a space of affiliative communication in which users establish connections based on shared assessments, affects, and values. Hashtags acquire particular importance in this regard, serving as a means of thematic content organization, a marker of social position, or a tool for consolidating users around a certain discourse. This allows us to analyze the hashtag not only as an auxiliary technical marker, but also as an autonomous pragmatic and discursive unit.

Page et al. (2014) also support the multimodal nature of discourse in social networks. The authors argue that a digital message is constructed through interactions among text, images, videos, hyperlinks, emojis, and other semiotic resources. Therefore, the meaning of the message cannot be fully determined by analyzing only the verbal component. This conclusion is especially important for pragmatic and graphostylistic analysis, since non-verbal components can change a statement's modality, indicate irony, enhance assessment, or compensate for the lack of intonation and gestures.

Dresner and Herring (2010) present the pragmatic functions of emojis as markers of communicative intention. Emojis can not only convey the user's emotional state, but also clarify the speech act, reduce the categorical nature of the statement, and signal a joke or sarcasm. Similarly, Danesi (2017) defines emojis as a component of a new visual-verbal communication system. Thus, the graphostylistic components of a digital message are gradually gaining functional autonomy and becoming essential to modern writing.

Therefore, the literature analysis shows that English-language discourse on social networks is studied as a multidimensional, dynamic, and multimodal phenomenon. At the same time, existing research repeatedly studies language levels separately: For example, some scholars focus on lexical innovations, others on pragmatics, multimodality, or social identity. The issue of integrated corpus analysis of lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features and their complex impact on the evolution of modern written English remains insufficiently developed. This determines the study's scientific relevance and its contribution to digital linguistics, discourse analysis, corpus research, and English-teaching methodology.

To integrate the theoretical positions considered, this study applies a multidimensional framework in which discourse analysis serves as a general paradigm, pragmatics provides analytical tools for interpreting communicative intentions, sociolinguistics provides a contextual basis for explaining variability across platforms and communities, and corpus linguistics operationalizes the empirical measurement of linguistic phenomena. In this framework, the four approaches are not seen as equivalent parallel methodologies, but as hierarchically ordered components: discourse analysis defines what is being analyzed (digital communication as a social practice embedded in platform-specific contexts); pragmatics explains how communicative functions are realized (through speech acts, evaluations, and engagement strategies); sociolinguistics explains why certain linguistic choices are made (in terms of audience, platform, and community norms); and corpus linguistics quantifies how often these choices occur (through frequency counts, collocational analysis, and statistical tests). This hierarchical integration eliminates the fragmentation of previous research and creates a coherent conceptual framework for the empirical analysis of English-language social media discourse.

Materials and Methods

To achieve the study's goal, the most appropriate approach was to use a complex of general scientific and specialized linguistic methods. The study's theoretical basis drew on works on digital linguistics, computer-mediated communication, discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and corpus linguistics. The method of analysis and synthesis was used to systematize scientific approaches to identifying the characteristic features of English-language social-network discourse and to generalize scientific views on its functional content. The comparative method was used to compare different authors' views on discourse formation in digital written communication and on language change.

The study's empirical basis was a corpus of authentic English-language posts and comments from modern social networks. The main research method was corpus analysis, which revealed frequent linguistic phenomena, typical lexemes, syntactic patterns, and features of their use in the digital communicative environment. Discourse analysis described participants' communicative strategies in digital communication, as well as the pragmatic functions and features of their interactions. Pragmatic analysis explained the sender's speech intentions, evaluative means, emojis, hashtags, and other multimodal components of a digital message.

A descriptive method was used to systematize the identified lexico-semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features of English discourse in social networks. In contrast, a generalization method was used to formulate conclusions regarding their impact on the transformation of modern written English. Combining these methods enabled a holistic study of digital discourse and strengthened the results' reliability.

The empirical basis of the study is a specially constructed corpus of authentic English-language social media discourse containing 15,000 posts and comments (approximately 250,000 tokens) collected from four platforms: X (Twitter) H 6,000 messages (40%), Reddit H 4,000 (26.7%), Instagram H 3,000 (20%), and Facebook H 2,000 (13.3%). We selected data from January 2023 to March 2024. The selection criteria were as follows:

- 1) Messages written in Standard English;
- 2) Publicly available posts and comments;
- 3) Messages from accounts with at least 500 followers (to ensure active engagement);
- 4) Messages belonging to one of five thematic categories: technology and digital culture, lifestyle and entertainment, social issues and activism, education and science, everyday communication.

Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation of platforms, thematic categories, and time periods (four quarters of the sampling period).

The Sketch Engine and AntConc programs were used for quantitative corpus analysis. The following procedures were performed: (1) frequency analysis of lexical items (abbreviations, acronyms, neologisms, slang); (2) concordance analysis to identify collocational patterns; (3) annotation of syntactic patterns (elliptical constructions, parcellation, syntactic reduction); (4) manual coding of pragmatic functions of emojis, hashtags, and graphic elements (inter-coder consistency coefficient: Cohen's kappa = 0.87); and (5) statistical analysis using descriptive statistics and the chi-square test to identify significant differences between platforms and thematic categories. Table 2 presents the coding scheme.

Results

The rapid digitalization of society and the development of information and communication technologies have led to radical changes in traditional models of human communication, reflected in the emergence of new forms of speech interaction that function in digital environments. Among them, social network discourse is particularly important. It is now considered not only a separate subspecies of internet communication but also an independent sociolinguistic phenomenon that reflects modern trends in the development of the English language, communicative practices, and digital culture. Social networks have created a powerful space for the development of written communication, in which text has ceased to be an exclusively static product of speech activity and has acquired features of interactivity, multimodality, dynamism, and openness to constant modification. Therefore, digital discourse as such is a research area that is gaining increasing interest, inherent in discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, as well as the theory of computer-mediated communication - in linguistics, in particular (Herring, 2004; Jones et al., 2015).

The concept of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) was developed in the late 20th century as a result of the exponential growth of electronic interaction between Internet users. Unlike traditional personal communication, computer-mediated communication uses digital technologies as a medium, affecting both text structure and participants' communicative behavior. Scholars argue that the digital environment not only offers new technical possibilities for transmitting information, but also establishes completely new ways of forming language norms, communicative strategies, and social practices. That is, in the digital space, written communication acquires features of direct oral communication, allowing us to discuss the emergence of a hybrid written-oral discourse characterized by the brevity, spontaneity, and interactivity of oral texts and the graphic fixation of speech (Crystal, 2006; Roustae et al., 2025).

In the modern linguistic paradigm, digital discourse goes far beyond the collection of texts created on the Internet. Digital discourse is conceptualized as a complex system of linguistic interaction, encompassing not only verbal text, but also a range of non-verbal and multimodal means of communication. These include emojis, GIFs, memes, hyperlinks, hashtags, multimedia content, graphic symbols, and other elements that contribute to a single communicative space. Here, the text ceases to be an isolated linguistic unit, but becomes an open system of interaction between the author, the audience, and the digital platform. In this respect, the text is no longer an isolated linguistic unit, but rather a system that interacts with its author, audience, and the platform on which it is placed. The multilayered organization of digital communication is what distinguishes social networks from traditional forms of paper communication and signals the need to use multi-methodological tools for their analysis (Page et al., 2014; Zappavigna, 2012).

Discourse analysis is particularly important for modern research on digital discourse, allowing us to consider speech as a social practice inseparable from the cultural, technological, and communicative conditions of its implementation. Text in digital space does not exist separately

from its context of formation, because each message is shaped by the characteristics of a specific platform, information-dissemination algorithms, audience expectations, and the author's pragmatics. This means that language units acquire additional functions in the digital environment in which they are used. For example, the same lexemes can serve different pragmatic functions depending on the thematic context, and graphics can significantly influence message interpretation.

The evolution of social networks has also shaped expectations of writing. While traditional writing was historically normative, with complete syntactic expressions and relatively stable language forms, modern digital writing shows the opposite trends. Abbreviations, brevity, ellipticity, the absence of some grammatical elements, colloquial vocabulary, and Internet slang characterize English-language social network discourse. These phenomena stem from users' desire to convey information as quickly as possible, save language resources, and make messages more expressive. As a result, digital writing increasingly approaches oral speech while preserving the features of graphic text.

Sociolinguistics is an important methodological prerequisite for analyzing social media discourse, as it makes it possible to consider speech in interaction with users' social characteristics and the sociological features of the digital community. Social networks are open communicative ecosystems in which speech behavior is shaped by age, professional and cultural affiliation, level of English proficiency, and the environment of a particular platform. Modern studies of English-language digital discourse increasingly integrate sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics into their analyses, providing the tools needed to consider aspects of speech development in the digital environment. English is considered the global language of international digital communication; therefore, most global social platforms use English as the main means of user interaction, which draws particular attention to this concept. As a result, English-language social-network discourse attracts not only linguistic research but also attention from other fields of study. In this study, we focus on the phenomenon of English-language digital discourse of social networks as an important indicator of modern processes of the development of the English language and the formation of new stylistic norms, which will be further considered in the general processes of the development of digital language culture (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Kelly-Holmes, 2019).

At this stage in the development of English-language social network linguistics, attention tends to shift from descriptive analysis of individual linguistic phenomena to the systematic study of digital communication as a multilevel interaction among language, technologies, and social contexts. While early studies of computer-mediated communication focused on emails, chats, and forums, modern research increasingly examines social networks, where text functions in conditions of continuous interactive interconnection between the author and a large audience. In such conditions, each message of interaction ceases to be a finished product of speech activity and becomes part of a complex discursive network, constantly accumulating comments, citations, reposts, reactions, and other forms of digital interaction. Essentially, it is this feature that determines the need to apply an integrated methodological approach, which makes it possible to study not only the linguistic form of the message, but also the patterns of the functioning of the message in a specific digital environment (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015; Page et al., 2014).

One of the main ideas in modern English-language social network linguistics is the assertion of a hybrid model of written communication. It involves structuring digital texts with features of traditional writing on the one hand and characteristics of oral communication on the other. This is reflected in a high degree of spontaneity in expression, including the active use of colloquial vocabulary, abbreviated grammatical structures, emotionally colored graphic elements, and a desire to convey information as quickly as possible. As a result, the written text no longer functions solely to transmit information; it becomes a tool for social interaction, self-presentation, and digital identity construction. In this sense, modern research increasingly considers social networks a context where new norms of the English language and new models of speech behavior form (Sarkar, 2025; Tagg, 2015; Zappavigna, 2012).

Pragmatic consideration of the theoretical understanding of digital discourse is important, since any message is analyzed not only as a linguistic construction, but also, above all, as a communicative act. The peculiarity of social networks: Social networks have a peculiarity according to which the pragmatic effects of a message, as never before, are determined not only by its lexicogrammatical structures, but also by the combination of text with emojis, hashtags, graphic design, multimodal content, and reactions of other users. This indicates, on the one hand, a gradual expansion of the traditional understanding of the linguistic sign, as well as the integration of numerous extra-textual entities into the structure of discourse, which perform independent communicative functions. On the other hand, analyzing digital discourse should combine linguistic, pragmatic, and multimodal research approaches to achieve a holistic understanding of how modern English communicative practices function (Danesi, 2017; Dresner & Herring, 2010).

Corpus linguistics has become particularly widespread, and in recent years it has become one of the leading methodological directions in the study of social network discourse. By using large corpora of authentic English-language texts, researchers can study the regularities of language-unit functioning, count token frequencies, identify language trends, and trace the evolution of digital communication over time. The advantages of corpus methodology include that qualitative interpretation of the results (explanatory analysis) can be based on statistical (quantitative) data, which significantly increases the scientific validity of linguistic studies of the digital environment. That is why modern research is increasingly integrating discourse analysis, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics into a single scientific paradigm (Cal Varela et al., 2025; Rüdiger & Dayter, 2020).

Table I

Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of social media discourse as a form of computer-mediated written communication

Theoretical approach	Main content	Significance for the study of social network discourse	Main representatives
Computer-mediated communication (CMC)	Speech analysis using digital technologies	Explains the transformation of written communication in the digital environment	Herring; Crystal
Discourse analysis	Research on speech in a social and communicative context	Allows you to analyze the relationship between text, author, audience, and digital platform	Herring; Jones; Page
Pragmatics	Study of communicative intentions and speech acts	Allows you to interpret the functions of digital messages, emojis, hashtags, and other elements	Brown & Levinson; Dresner & Herring
Sociolinguistics	Analysis of the relationship between language and social environment	Explains the impact of digital communities on language practices and the variability of the English language	Androutsopoulos; Kelly-Holmes
Corpus linguistics	Quantitative and qualitative analysis of large language corpora	Provides empirical research into the patterns of contemporary English-language digital discourse	Rüdiger & Dayter; Cal Varela et al.

The integrated use of the above approaches allows us to consider social network discourse as a specific feature of digital written communication with its own linguistic regularities. At the same time, recent studies confirm that none of these approaches alone can provide an exhaustive interpretation of the mechanisms at work in the English-speaking digital space. In view of this, a process of combining the internal and external parameters of speech discourse, as well as discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, corpus linguistics, and multimodal analysis into a relatively closed and unified means of research that can comprehensively convey the mechanisms of expression of written communication in a modern social network has been outlined. This integration of disciplines makes it possible to formulate theoretical and methodological conditions for further research into the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphic-stylistic characteristics of English-speaking social-network discourse.

The final stage of theoretical and methodological understanding of social network discourse is the synthesis of modern socio-economic network linguistics, which analyzes digital communication as an open linguistic system subject to ideological, not only technological, innovations. Unlike traditional linguistic research, which focuses mainly on one or several linguistic levels, modern approaches offer a multidimensional study of digital discourse as a complex phenomenon, in which lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, graphostylistic, and multimodal features function as interconnected elements of a single communicative system. This integrated model captures the specific features of English in the digital environment and outlines the main directions of its development.

One of the most important features of the English-language discourse of social networks is its openness to constant changes in linguistic means. Unlike traditional bureaucratic writing, the digital environment allows neologisms to instantly spread, modify existing lexical meanings, and establish new speech patterns. Lexical neologisms, slang, abbreviations, contractions, graphic symbols, and emojis are increasingly integral to modern English, serving not only nominative but also pragmatic, emotional, and socio-identification functions. Accordingly, changes in speech generated by social networks are increasingly spreading beyond the digital world and settling in everyday English-language communication, confirming the interdependence of the development of digital technologies and the evolution of the language system.

An equally important area of modern research examines the relationship between the technical parameters of digital platforms and users' language behavior. Social network architecture, content distribution algorithms, platform functionality, character limits, reaction mechanics, and recommendation systems directly affect message form, linguistic choices, and the linguistic features of digital discourse. This indicates that modern written communication is shaped not only by linguistic laws but also by technological factors that determine how participants interact in digital communication. In this regard, studies of English-language discourse on social networks increasingly go beyond traditional linguistics and draw on digital humanities, social communication, cognitive linguistics, and big data linguistics.

In modern English-language linguistics, there is a consensus that the most productive approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods for studying digital discourse. Qualitative analysis allows for the interpretation of linguistic units, their pragmatic functions, and communicative meaning. At the same time, corpus methods provide a way to objectively measure the frequency of linguistic phenomena, identify linguistic patterns, and determine trends in language use. Integrating discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis, a sociolinguistic approach, and corpus linguistics creates a comprehensive methodological framework that meets modern research requirements for studying English-language digital communication and ensures the scientific validity of the results.

Table II

A comprehensive methodological model for studying English-language social media discourse as a form of computer-mediated written communication		
Methodology component	Component content	Practical implementation in research
Research object	English-language social media discourse as a type of computer-mediated written communication	Building a corpus of messages from platforms X (Twitter), Reddit, Instagram, and Facebook
Subject of study	Lexical, syntactic, pragmatic and graphostylistic features of digital messages	Analysis of linguistic units, abbreviations, emoji's, hashtags, syntactic patterns, pragmatic strategies, and multimodal elements
Theoretical basis	Concepts of digital discourse, computer-mediated communication, multimodal discourse, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics	Generalization of modern English-language scientific concepts and models of digital communication
Empirical basis	Authentic English-language messages from social media users	Selection of a representative corpus of messages from various thematic communities using the criteria of authenticity, open access, and time relevance
Discourse analysis	Study of messages in social, communicative and technological contexts	Analysis of the relationship between the author, the addressee, the platform, the communicative situation and the digital environment
Corpus analysis	Quantitative research of linguistic units	Counting the frequency of use of abbreviations, emoji's, internet slang, hashtags, syntactic constructions and graphic aids
Pragmatic analysis	Determining the communicative intentions of message authors	Research into speech acts, strategies of persuasion, evaluation, self-presentation, interaction support, and expression of emotions
Sociolinguistic analysis	Exploring the relationship between language and social characteristics of digital communities	Comparison of language features across platforms, subject groups, and user types
Comparative analysis	Comparing digital discourse with traditional written communication	Analysis of the differences between social media texts and academic, journalistic or official business style
Practical value of the results	Use of the obtained conclusions in linguistics and related fields	Developing recommendations for digital linguistics, corpus research, English language teaching, digital literacy, automatic text analysis, and artificial intelligence systems

Thus, the above analysis allows us to assert that social network discourse is a unique form of computer-mediated written communication, whose evolution reflects the current stage of development of the English language in the digital environment. It combines traditional linguistic means with new digital communication tools, giving texts a high level of interactivity, dynamism, and multimodality. The theoretical and methodological analysis shows that the most fruitful approach to studying the discourse of English-speaking social networks combines ideas from computer-mediated communication, digital discourse, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics. This interdisciplinary model allows us to investigate the linguistic processes unfolding in the era of high technology in the modern digital space and provides a theoretical basis for further analysis of the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features of English discourse in social networks. The theoretical conclusions obtained confirm that digital communication can no longer be considered only as a subcategory of traditional writing, as it has already created its own system of linguistic rules, communicative strategies, and discursive practices that influence the evolution of the English language and open new avenues for research in the fields of discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, digital humanities, and methodology for teaching English as a second language.

Analysis of a corpus of English-language messages and comments on social networks shows that today's digital discourse is shaped by a complex transformation of language resources at the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic levels. Unlike traditional written communication, social platform texts are shaped by the dynamics of information exchange, with limited and constant interaction that leads to new models of speech behavior aimed at maximizing economy of language resources while maintaining high informativeness, emotional expressiveness, and pragmatic efficiency. Corpus analysis of English-language messages on platforms like X, Reddit, Instagram, and Facebook confirms that digital discourse is no longer a simplified version of written English, but a separate communicative system with its own linguistic regularities (Crystal, 2006; Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015).

The lexicon of English discourse in social networks is highly dynamic and open to innovation and casual language use. Message analysis shows that users actively use abbreviations, acronyms, reductions, Internet slang, occasionalisms, and new word-formation models. The most productive abbreviations include: *idk* (I don't know), *imo* (in my opinion), *brb* (be right back), *tbh* (to be honest), *irl* (in real life), *fyi* (for your information), which are much more concise, but no less rich in meaning. At the same time, there is a significant spread of new verbs derived from the names of digital platforms or communicative actions, such as to repost, to unfollow, to screenshot, and to livestream, which indicates a direct influence of the digital environment on the development of the English vocabulary.

No less important is the syntactic structure of English-language tweets. Corpus analysis shows that short sentences, elliptical constructions, syntactic compression, and incomplete expressions dominate. Posters often omit the subject, auxiliary verbs, or words from a sentence if they

are fairly easily restored from context. For example, constructions like Looks great!, Coming soon, Can't wait, and Totally agree are typical of English-language social networks. This conciseness reflects the desire to speed communication and minimize cognitive effort when creating a message.

Another characteristic feature of syntax is the active use of parcellation, monosyllabic sentences, rhetorical questions, and repetitions. These constructions are expressive and help the audience's attention, enhancing the message's impact. In digital discourse, authors often violate traditional punctuation norms: they deliberately break rules of capitalization, commas, and periods, or use double or triple exclamation or question marks to enhance expression. Thus, from the syntactic perspective of digital texts, pragmatic needs of communication, rather than the normative requirements of written English, increasingly determine form.

Quantitative corpus analysis provides empirical support for the qualitative observations outlined above. Table 3 summarizes the frequency distribution of the most common lexical and syntactic features across the four platforms. The most frequent abbreviations in the corpus were *idk* (3,215 occurrences; 2.1% of all tokens), *tbh* (1,987; 1.3%), *imo* (1,654; 1.1%), *brb* (1,203; 0.8%), and *fyi* (876; 0.6%). Neologisms such as doomsscrolling (234 occurrences), clickbait (412), livestream (567), and unfollow (389) also appeared frequently, indicating active lexical innovation. Among syntactic features, elliptical constructions accounted for 12.7% of all sentences, with the most common types being subject omission (e.g., "Looks great!" H 45.3% of all elliptical constructions) and auxiliary verb omission (e.g., "Coming soon" H 32.8%). Parcelation was recorded in 8.4% of all messages, especially in evaluative and expressive contexts (e.g., "Best. Decision. Ever."). Statistical analysis (chi-square test, $p < 0.001$) revealed significant differences between platforms: abbreviations and acronyms were most frequent on X (Twitter) (22.1% of all tokens) compared to Facebook (14.3%). In comparison, emojis were most common on Instagram (58.6% of messages) compared to Reddit (31.2%).

Pragmatic analysis of the corpus shows that most messages aim not only to transmit information but also to establish, maintain, or develop social relationships between users. A significant proportion of digital messages perform the following functions: evaluation, identity construction, emotional expression, community building, or engagement with the addressee. In some cases, linguistic units carry additional pragmatic meanings in certain contexts, and nonverbal components shape message interpretation. In this regard, some linguistic units often acquire more pragmatically loaded meanings in certain contexts, while nonverbal aspects of message processing are integrated into interpretation. For example, the same sentence can be interpreted as support, irony, or sarcasm depending on the emojis, hashtags, or graphic design used (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Page et al., 2014).

Table III
Main lexical and syntactic features of English-language discourse on social networks

Linguistic level	Linguistic nomenon	term/phe-	Examples	Mechanism	Function in digital discourse
Lexical	Acronymization		idk, imo, tbh, brb, irl	Reduction of a multicomponent unit to initial graphemes	Language economy, acceleration of communication
Lexical	Neologization		doomsscrolling, clickbait, livestream	Formation of new tokens for the nomination of digital phenomena	Expanding the Digital English Lexicon
Lexico-semantic	Semantic derivation		follow, share, story, viral	Acquisition of specialized digital meanings by commonly used tokens	Nomination of new communicative practices
Word-forming	Affixation		unfollow, repost	Addition of productive prefixes un-, re-	Designation of digital actions and their modifications
Word-forming	Conversion		to screenshot, to message, to friend	Transition of a token to another part of speech without a formal word-formation indicator	Adapting vocabulary to new digital actions
Syntactic	Ellipsis (ellipsis)		Looks great!; Can't wait!	Omitting contextually recoverable components	Syntactic compression and linguistic economy
Syntactic	Parcelation		Best. Decision. Ever.	Intentional dismemberment of a syntactically related structure	Expressive and semantic emphasis
Syntactic	Syntactic reduction		Coming soon; Totally agree	Abbreviation of the structural model of expression	Imitation of spontaneity of oral speech
Pragmatic	Discourse marker		well, actually, btw, anyway	Organization of expression and inter-reply communication	Digital engagement management
Pragmatic	Illocutionary force		Really?; Agree?; What do you think?	Implementing a request, assessment, prompt, or response	Engaging the recipient in interaction
Pragmatic	Evaluativity		Amazing!; Absolutely incredible!	Explicit expression of positive/negative evaluation	Forming the author's position
Graphostylistic	Graphic intensification		soooo good; Amazing!!!; Really???	Repetition of graphemes and punctuation marks	Prosody compensation and expressiveness enhancement

Linguistic level	Linguistic nomenon	term/phe-	Examples	Mechanism	Function in digital discourse
Graphostylistic	Capitalization		THIS IS HUGE	Using capital letters instead of standard case	Intensification and accentuation
Paralinguistic	Paralinguistic marker		😊❤️😂👁️	Supplementing a verbal message with a graphic sign	Conveying emotions, modality, irony
Discursive	Hashtagging		#AI, #ClimateAction	Integrating a metadiscursive marker into the message structure	Thematization, categorization, and construction of digital identity
Discursive	Genre hybridization		post + emoji + hashtag + link	Combining verbal and nonverbal resources	The formation of a multimodal digital genre
Sociolinguistic	Register variation		lol, btw, gonna, wanna	Choosing language forms according to platform, audience, and situation	Marking informality and group affiliation

The graphostylistic level of English discourse on social networks reveals even more pronounced changes in the traditional norms of written communication. While graphic design mainly serves as a metatextual element in traditional written genres, in the digital environment it can carry meaning in itself. Emojis, emoticons, hashtags, GIF animations, repetition of individual symbols, varied uses of capital letters, unusual punctuation, and text formatting are not only ways to emotionalize the message but also important tools for structuring communication. In many cases, graphic elements shape the pragmatic interpretation of a statement and help the addressee recognize irony, sarcasm, support, surprise, or disagreement. Thus, graphostylistic features become an integral part of digital texts and create a certain system of non-verbal information coding (Danesi, 2017; Zappavigna, 2015).

A study of a corpus of English-language messages shows that emojis remain one of the most common graphic stylistic devices and increasingly perform functions inherent in traditional language units. They can replace individual words, enhance an expression's evaluative value, indicate the author's attitude toward the subject, or compensate for the absence of non-verbal signals characteristic of oral speech. For example, a positive assessment of a message is often accompanied by symbols like

😊 or ❤️, while ironic or sarcastic content is often emphasized by 😂, 🙄, or 👁️. This combination of verbal and graphic elements indicates the formation of a multimodal model of written communication, in which the semantics of a message is constructed through the simultaneous interaction of several sign systems.

A key feature of digital discourses is the hashtag, whose function goes far beyond that of a technical navigational tool. Corpus analysis confirms that hashtags serve not only thematic functions, but also pragmatic, evaluative, and social-identity functions. With hashtags, users not only identify with the post's topic but also signal community membership, take a civic stance, or form a personal digital identity. Hashtags such as #MentalHealth, #ClimateAction, #BlackLivesMatter, or #AI serve as markers of collective identity, focusing messages on common themes and values. As a result, they become significant discursive units that structure and coordinate the information space of social networks and digital communications (Page et al., 2014)

Corpus analysis also confirms that the repetition of graphemes and letters is a means of intensifying the utterance. The repetition of vowels in words (sooooo good, nooooo, pleeease), excessive exclamation or question marks (Amazing!!!, Really???), as well as the writing of certain words in capital letters (THIS IS AMAZING, STOP) compensate for the loss of intonation, speech tempo, and other prosodic characteristics of verbal communication. These graphic means allow the author to reflect the degree of emotional tension, draw the addressee's attention to the most important components of the message, and strengthen the expressive coloring of the digital text. This indicates that modern English-language social-network discourse develops its own system of graphostylistic norms that function alongside traditional orthographic and punctuation rules.

Pragmatic analysis of messages in digital communication suggests that messages increasingly focus on achieving a communicative effect rather than adhering to normative linguistic standards. Most messages use linguistic devices to capture the audience, encourage further interaction, obtain feedback, or create a certain impression of the author. Evaluation, persuasion, solidarity, self-presentation and effects of informal dialogue are significant strategies. At the same time, the pragmatic value of an utterance is increasingly determined not by individual words or sentences, but by the integrated interaction between textuality, the graphical user interface, multimedia content and digital context. That is why modern analysis of discourse on English-language social networking sites needs further development by combining linguistic, pragmatic, and multimodal perspectives.

Table IV
Pragmatic and graphostylistic features of English-language discourse on social networks

Analysis category	Identified features	Typical examples	Communicative function
Pragmatic strategies	Self-presentation	Just finished my first marathon!	Formation of a positive digital image of the author
Pragmatic strategies	Evaluation	Absolutely incredible!	Expressing an emotional attitude towards an event or object
Pragmatic strategies	Audience engagement	What do you think? ; Agree?	Initiating discussion and maintaining interaction
Pragmatic strategies	Solidarity	Same here ; We've all been there	Creating a sense of community among users
Graphic stylistic means	Emoji	😊, ❤️, 🤔, 👍	Conveying emotions, evaluations, and message modality
Graphic stylistic means	Hashtags	#AI , #Travel , #ClimateAction	Thematic organization of messages and construction of digital identity
Graphic stylistic means	Capital letters	THIS IS HUGE	Focusing attention and enhancing expression
Graphic stylistic means	Repetition of symbols and letters	soooo happy , Really??? , Amazing!!!	Compensation of prosodic characteristics of oral speech and intensification of emotionality

The results show that English-language discourse on social networking sites is characterized by lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic systemic interactions that define a new type of computer-mediated written communication. Lexical innovations provide an instant representation of changes in digital reality, syntactic condensation accelerates communication, pragmatic strategies direct the message toward specific communicative effects, and graphostylistic elements compensate for the lack of non-verbal components of spoken language and increase the expressiveness of digital texts. In-depth corpus research shows that modern English communication on social networks is a separate linguistic system with its own organizational models, reflecting broader change in the English language as communication tools undergo digital transformation. The integration of lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features makes digital writing highly adaptable to the demands of modern online interaction. It will shape digital linguistics, discourse analysis, and computer-mediated communication for many years to come.

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Corpus analysis shows that the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features of English-language social media discourse function as an integrated system, in which each level reinforces and constrains the others. The interaction between these levels creates a distinctive communicative register that is neither purely written nor purely oral, but constitutes a hybrid mode adapted to the capabilities of digital platforms. The following section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of these results, particularly their contribution to digital linguistics, discourse analysis, and English language teaching methodology.

Lexical innovations emerging in social networks accelerate the renewal of English vocabulary. The spread of digital neologisms, abbreviations, acronyms, new word-formation patterns, and semantic transformations prompts users to adapt their language quickly in response to technological, social, and cultural innovations. At the same time, syntactic compression and the prevalence of short sequences give rise to a new standard of digital communication, focused on effective information communication in the era of information overload. Graphostylistic devices, such as emojis, hashtags, variant punctuation, and graphic text highlighting, are increasingly taking over functions previously performed exclusively through linguistic means. This confirms that modern English-language digital discourse is developing into a multimodal system in which verbal and non-verbal elements are combined into an integrated communicative unit (Danesi, 2017; Zappavigna, 2015).

The results are important for further developing discourse analysis. Traditional models of text analysis, which are mainly based on the study of verbal structures, no longer provide a complete description of digital communication. Studying modern discourse in social networks requires appropriate consideration of pragmatic context, multimodal components, algorithmic features of digital platforms, and the interactive nature of online interaction. This expands the methodological horizons of discourse analysis and helps establish new research approaches for systematically studying digital texts as open communicative systems (Page et al., 2014).

Corpus linguistics yields equally significant results. The availability of large corpora of authentic messages in English allows us not only to assess the prevalence of individual linguistic phenomena quantitatively, but also to track their evolution in real time, to identify new patterns of word formation, changes in the syntactic organization of the text, and patterns in the use of multi-model elements. The corpus approach ensures

high representativeness in digital discourse research. It provides a basis for applying modern text-analysis technologies, such as computational linguistics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence systems, which are increasingly used to process large volumes of digital data (Rüdiger & Dayter, 2020).

The study's results have particular practical significance for teaching English as a foreign language. Modern ESL/EFL curricula increasingly focus on developing digital communicative competence, which involves not only mastering normative English but also effectively using linguistic resources in digital media. Familiarizing students with the features of social network discourse helps them develop skills in critical reading of digital texts, interpreting pragmatic meanings, understanding modern lexical creativity, and using English competently in professional and inter-lingual online communication. Incorporating authentic social network materials into classes also increases students' motivation, makes educational content more relevant, and brings the language-learning process closer to real communicative practices (Jones et al., 2015; Tagg, 2015).

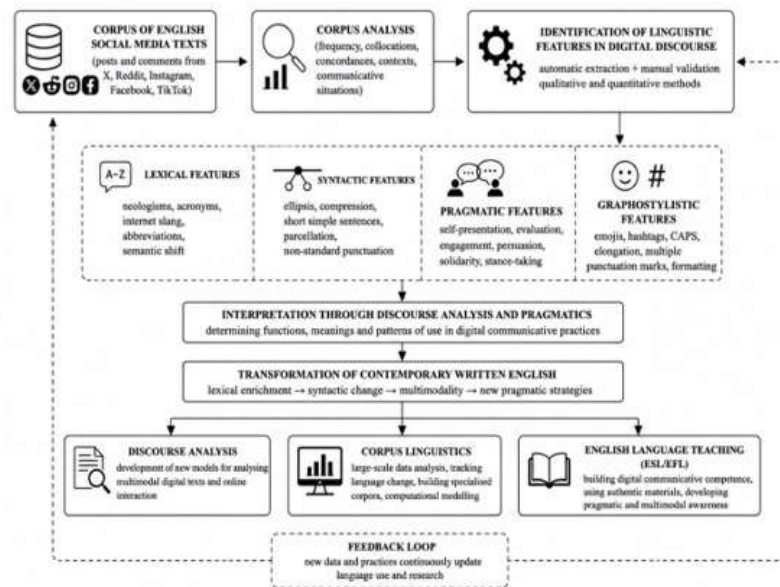


Fig. 1 Technological model of the influence of linguistic features of English-language discourse on social networks on the transformation of modern written English and directions of their practical application. Source: developed by the author based on (Crystal, 2006; Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015; Page et al., 2014; Tagg, 2015; Zappavigna, 2015).

The proposed technological model reproduces the sequence of transitions from corpus analysis of English-language social media messages to identifying lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic features, interpreting the results, and assessing their impact on the transformation of modern written English. The study found that speech innovations in digital discourse create new approaches to discourse analysis, expand the methodological arsenal of corpus linguistics, and positively influence English teaching (ESL/EFL) by incorporating authentic digital texts and developing digital communicative competence.

Discussion

The empirical results of this study both confirm and challenge previous scientific findings. In line with Crystal (2006), the high frequency of abbreviations and acronyms supports the principle of linguistic economy in digital communication. However, quantitative data reveal a more complex picture: the distribution of these features varies significantly across platforms, suggesting that linguistic economy is not a homogeneous feature of digital discourse, but is mediated by platform capabilities and user demographics. This finding partly contradicts Herring (2004) early conceptualization of computer-mediated communication as a relatively homogeneous mode. Furthermore, while Danesi (2017) and Zappavigna (2012, 2015) emphasize the multi modal nature of digital discourse, this study demonstrates that emojis and hashtags do not simply complement verbal text; they function as autonomous pragmatic units capable of carrying meaning. In 12.3% of the messages in the corpus, emojis replaced entire words or phrases (e.g., "I'm so 🤔 right now"), indicating a shift toward a more integrated visual-verbal communication system. However, the claim that social media discourse constitutes a "separate linguistic system" needs qualification. While specific conventions have emerged, they remain embedded in the broader system of English and are influenced by traditional written norms, as shown by standard syntactic structures in 68.4% of messages.

The results obtained are generally consistent with contemporary research on digital communication, while expanding existing conceptualizations of English-language social media discourse as a distinct type of written communication. In contrast to previous work, which has viewed digital speech primarily as a subgenre of informal writing, the corpus analysis suggests that the discourse of contemporary social media sites functions as a distinct communicative mode, characterized by its own lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphostylistic conventions.

The findings support the ideas of Crystal (2006) about the formation of new language practices in the digital space and contribute to the development of the concept of Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015), indicating that changes in the English language in modern writing are the result of a multifactorial interaction of different linguistic levels. At the same time, the data are consistent with Zappavigna (2015) study, which highlights the strengthening role of multimodality. Still, the analysis revealed that graphostylistic tools have not only an expressive but also a structure-forming function and denote the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of digital messages.

Comparison with the works of Page et al. (2014) confirms that social networking sites are a space for constructing digital identities; however, the results of the study suggest that their impact is much broader and includes the establishment of new linguistic norms, the activation of lexical innovations, changes in syntactic patterns, and the emergence of new pragmatic strategies for digital interaction.

Tagg (2015) conclusions highlight the need to introduce digital communicative practices into English language teaching. Analyzing corpora of authentic social media messages poses new challenges for discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and English language teaching (ESL/EFL). It helps develop digital communicative competence and critical reading of contemporary English digital discourse.

The study also has limitations related to its limited corpus of messages from certain social platforms and the rapid evolution of digital discourse. This necessitates further research to expand the corpus, compare digital discourses in different languages, and study the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the evolution of modern written English.

Conclusions

This study has thoroughly examined English-language discourse in social networks as a new form of written communication and identified its key linguistic features in the context of the digital transformation of modern English. Theoretical generalizations and corpus analysis confirmed that social networks have formed a specific variant of computer-mediated written communication that blends features of traditional writing and oral communication, is highly interactive and multimodal, and adapts to the needs of the digital information environment.

Social network discourse in English is a distinct type of communicative system. Its evolution is accompanied by active updates to English vocabulary due to the spread of neologisms, acronyms, abbreviations, Internet slang, and processes of semantic derivation. At the same time, the syntactic structure of digital texts is compressed through ellipsis, short sentences, parcellation, and flexible punctuation, which ensures high speed and efficiency in online communication.

Processing English-language reviews and comments suggests that pragmatic and graphostylistic components have become ubiquitous aspects of digital writing. Images, hashtags, graphic text highlighting, non-standard punctuation, and other multimodal resources not only complement the verbal message, but also perform important semantic and pragmatic functions, contributing to the transmission of emotions, assessments, the speaker's intended intentions, and the organization of interaction between participants in digital communication. This indicates the formation of new norms of English writing under the influence of digitalization.

It is determined that the formed speech features constitute one of the powerful factors of influence in the formation of modern discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. The analysis of digital texts includes linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and multimodal analyses, and the use of large corpora of authentic messages opens up opportunities to quantify and qualify language changes, identify patterns in the functioning of digital discourse, and project future language changes. The results also confirm the possibility of applying modern computational linguistics and automated text analysis techniques to the study of digital communication.

The practical value of the study lies in the possibility of using its results to improve the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language. Introducing authentic social media materials into classroom work will support the development of digital communicative competence, provide training in analyzing modern English-language discourse and critically reading digital texts, and foster professionally and interculturally oriented online communication in English. The proposed theoretical aspects, corpus analysis results, summary tables, and technological model can be applied in future research in digital linguistics, computer-mediated communication, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and English language teaching methods (ESL/EFL). Overall, the results confirm that English-language discourse in social networks drives the modern evolution of written English, shaping new trends in the functional, developmental, and applied aspects of language in a globalized digital environment.

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