

## The Impact of Social Media on Language Use Among Teenagers

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### Abstract

The digital era, marked by rapid advancements in information and communication technology, has brought significant changes to various aspects of human life, including communication. Social media has become an integral part of teenagers' lives, influencing the way they interact, obtain information, and express themselves. This study aims to analyze the impact of social media on the changes in language use among teenagers. Using a qualitative research method, the study seeks to explore in-depth how social media shapes language use among teenagers. Through social media content analysis and in-depth interviews, the research finds that social media has triggered the emergence of slang, abbreviations, and unique emojis. This language use not only reflects teenagers' social identities but also affects their formal language skills. Additionally, social media influences the way teenagers think and communicate. Exposure to various types of texts and language styles on social media can enrich their vocabulary and improve their language skills. On the other hand, excessive exposure to inaccurate information or harsh language can negatively impact teenagers' critical thinking skills and their ability to evaluate information.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Language, Teenagers, Digital Generation



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## I. Introduction

The digital era, characterized by rapid advancements in information and communication technology, has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, particularly communication. The presence of social media, which is a direct product of this technological advancement, has reshaped global communication paradigms (Ana Dahniar & Rr. Sulistyawati, 2023). In this context, social media has become the primary tool for social interaction, especially among teenagers. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have revolutionized the way teenagers communicate, gather information, and express themselves. This transformation in communication methods is not only about faster communication but also about how messages are delivered in simpler and more creative language (Jadmiko & Damariswara, 2022). This demonstrates the profound impact of technology on the social and cultural development of society. One of the phenomena resulting from the widespread use of social media is the change in language use among teenagers. The language used on social media platforms is often different from the standard language taught in schools. For example, the use of abbreviations such as "LOL" for "Laugh Out Loud," "BRB" for "Be Right Back," or emojis as substitutes for words has become increasingly common (Sakinah et al., 2023). In a study by Harsono (2022), it is mentioned that this phenomenon has become part of teenagers' digital identities. They use this language to signify closeness and solidarity among peer groups. On the other hand, the use of non-standard language has given rise to new forms of language, such as slang and internet language, which can be difficult for older generations to understand.

This change in language use not only affects communication methods but also influences the way teenagers think. Social media facilitates more spontaneous and rapid communication, with messages often packaged in short and clear formats. This influences the way teenagers structure their arguments and ideas, which tends to follow a fast-paced and easily digestible line of thought. Research by Fadhila (2020) shows that this type of communication can accelerate critical thinking processes but also risks reducing the ability for in-depth analysis. These changes in thinking patterns are crucial for the cognitive development of teenagers (Ana Dahniar & Rr. Sulistyawati, 2023). However, the use of non-standard language on social media does not always have a positive impact. Some studies show that excessive use of informal language, such as abbreviations and slang, can hinder teenagers' formal language skills. This is especially apparent in their ability to write properly and correctly. For example, a study conducted by Astuti (2023) found that many teenagers struggle to write essays or articles that adhere to formal language rules because they are accustomed to using more casual language on social media. This excessive use of informal language can reduce their mastery of grammar, which is essential for formal communication, both in educational and professional settings (Jadidah et al., 2023).

Furthermore, social media also serves as a platform for sharing information, but not all the information spread on these platforms is trustworthy. Research by Santoso (2021) revealed that the spread of fake news or hoaxes is prevalent among social media users, especially teenagers. Due to teenagers' tendency to communicate quickly and without sufficient verification, they are often caught up in the dissemination of inaccurate information (Prawira et al., 2022). This negatively affects their ability to think critically when evaluating the information

they receive. Another challenge that arises is the role of schools and families in addressing this phenomenon. As educational institutions responsible for shaping students' character and language skills, schools must have wise policies in utilizing social media as a learning tool. Language education that teaches proper and correct language use must still be emphasized, even though social media provides space for freer self-expression (Ramadhani, 2021). Families also play a crucial role in providing guidance to children on how to use social media wisely. Without proper guidance, the use of social media can have negative consequences for the development of teenagers' language and cognitive skills (Darmawan & Rahman, 2023). Moreover, the use of social media in education can have a positive impact on teenagers' language development, particularly in enriching vocabulary and stimulating creativity in communication. According to a study by Aditya (2020), the interactions that take place on social media expose teenagers to various language styles and text types, such as memes, creative videos, or diverse comments. This can broaden their vocabulary, improve their language skills, and stimulate their creativity in using language in more relaxed and informal contexts.

By understanding this phenomenon comprehensively, we can draw conclusions about the significant role of social media in shaping teenagers' linguistic identities. As part of their social and cultural development, social media provides a platform for teenagers to express themselves and interact in unique ways (Woran et al., 2021). However, the use of non-standard language can create difficulties in mastering formal language, which is important for education and future professional life. Therefore, it is crucial to balance the use of social media with teaching proper language use in schools and providing wise guidance from parents (Putri, 2022). Overall, the impact of social media on teenagers' language is a complex phenomenon. It brings positive changes, such as vocabulary expansion and creativity, but it can also have negative effects, such as a decline in formal language skills and critical thinking (Seti Indriani & Ditha, 2020). The role of formal education and family is essential in guiding teenagers to use social media wisely, so they can benefit from technology without sacrificing their development in formal language and communication skills (Julianti & Siagian, 2023).

## **II. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research method to explore in-depth the impact of social media on language use among teenagers. A qualitative approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to delve into the subjective experiences and perspectives of teenagers in communicating through social media (Wahyuni, 2022). In this case, the research will focus on understanding the meanings built by teenagers regarding word choices, the use of abbreviations, emojis, and language styles they employ in various online interactions. With this method, the study aims to uncover communication patterns that are shaped not only by habits but also by social and cultural factors influencing teenagers in their digital communication (Ervina Arianita & Fatma Dwi Aini, 2022). In practice, this study involves two main techniques: direct observation and content analysis. Direct observation is carried out by observing teenagers' activities on various social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, to see how they interact with peers, express opinions, and engage in self-expression through text and images (Balqis et al., 2022). Meanwhile, content analysis focuses on posts, comments, and interactions on social media to identify dominant language use patterns, frequently occurring themes, and emerging language styles. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a more

comprehensive picture of how social media influences the development of teenagers' language and communication in the digital era.

### **III. Discussion**

Based on content observation and analysis, it was found that social media has created a new public space where teenagers can interact, share information, and express themselves freely. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become integral parts of their daily lives. In this context, language not only functions as a means of communication but also as a tool for building social identity, forming relationships, and representing oneself (Wahyu Setiawan & Ariani, 2022). One of the most apparent impacts of social media is the emergence of new forms of language. The use of abbreviations, emojis, and slang has become a hallmark of communication on social media. This creative and informal use of language allows teenagers to express themselves more freely and build a sense of solidarity with their peers (Hanafi et al., 2021). However, on the other hand, the overuse of casual and informal language can negatively affect formal language skills and the ability to write effectively. Furthermore, social media also influences how teenagers think and communicate. Exposure to various types of texts and language styles on social media can enrich their vocabulary and enhance their language skills (Nabilah & Suprayitno, 2022). On the other hand, excessive exposure to inaccurate information or offensive language can affect their critical thinking and how they evaluate information.

#### **The Positive Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Language Use**

##### **1. Vocabulary Expansion**

Exposure to various types of texts and language styles on social media can unexpectedly enrich adolescents' vocabulary. Social media provides various forms of communication, ranging from posts, comments, to private messages, all of which carry different linguistic nuances (Arianto, 2022). In these interactions, teenagers are often exposed to vocabulary that is not only standard but also creative, such as slang, colloquialisms, and rapidly evolving new terms. This introduces them to a wider range of language, expanding the vocabulary they use and allowing for more flexible and expressive communication.

Moreover, the use of hashtags and abbreviations also significantly contributes to the expansion of adolescent vocabulary. Hashtags often introduce specific and sometimes temporary terms or topics, which collectively contribute to language development (Lubis, 2020). For instance, teenagers engaged in certain discussions or communities on social media become accustomed to using vocabulary related to those topics. As such, they not only enrich their general vocabulary but also engage in the creation of new language relevant to their social dynamics. The importance of social media in expanding adolescent vocabulary is also evident in the fact that online interactions are not bound by the formalities found in conventional communication. Teenagers have the freedom to experiment with language, often adopting new words, foreign terms, or even creating their own neologisms. This demonstrates their ability to adjust language to different situations and audiences (Sherlynda et al., 2023). Such experiences provide them with opportunities to be more flexible in their communication and increasingly diverse in their choice of words suitable for the communication context.

However, it is important to note that this vocabulary diversity can also create challenges for teenagers when transitioning to more formal language in academic settings. As Gee (2020) explains, language on social media is often more informative and expressive but places less emphasis on strict grammatical rules. Nevertheless, exposure to various types of texts on social media can still contribute to adolescents' ability to understand the differences in language registers and use them appropriately according to the communication context (Azizah et al., 2021).

Therefore, although social media can expand teenagers' vocabulary, it is important for educators and parents to guide them in differentiating language use in informal and formal contexts. In this way, teenagers can benefit from the potential of social media to enrich their vocabulary without sacrificing their ability to communicate effectively in academic and formal settings (Sa'diyah et al., 2022).

## 2. **Increased Creativity**

One of the major positive impacts of social media is the encouragement of creativity among teenagers in using language (Alifah Arde Ajeng Hamidah et al., 2023). Social media platforms allow teenagers to experiment with various language elements in more flexible ways, such as memes, captions, or even videos that combine text and images. These creations are not only for entertainment but also serve as forms of self-expression that reflect their thoughts and views on a particular issue or phenomenon (Fauziah et al., 2021). For instance, creating memes that blend humor with social criticism allows teenagers to communicate their ideas in a more engaging and attention-grabbing way. Creativity on social media is also driven by the opportunity to play with language and writing styles. The use of abbreviations, wordplay, or even altering word forms (such as intentionally reversing or combining words) can result in humorous and creative outcomes that are often absent in traditional communication (Ismawati, 2020). This shows how social media opens up space for teenagers to explore and develop their language skills in more innovative ways. The ability to create something new and combine various elements from digital culture provides a strong sense of achievement and personal identity.

Moreover, creativity in language use on social media encourages teenagers to think critically and reflectively. When interacting with various types of content, teenagers do not just consume information, but also edit, share, and comment on that content (Rahmah et al., 2023). This process requires the ability to craft words in a way that is engaging and conveys a clear message within existing limitations, such as character limits on a tweet or Instagram caption. Therefore, teenagers are trained to think more creatively in selecting words that are appropriate and relevant to their audience.

This creativity is not limited to words alone. The use of emojis, GIFs, and other images on social media enables teenagers to convey more complex emotions and nuances, making their communication more expressive and meaningful (Nurahman & Purwaka, 2021). These visual elements help them overcome the limitations of oral or written language in conveying richer messages. Thus, social media encourages teenagers to combine various forms of communication to create more effective and captivating messages (Yyun Yuliana, 2022). However, while this creativity provides many benefits, there are challenges in balancing creativity with an understanding of the broader social context (Sulastri, 2021). When language is used creatively, teenagers may sometimes overlook the importance of politeness or ethics in communication, which could affect how others perceive them (Gumperz, 1982; Squires, 2007). Therefore,

supervision and guidance from parents and educators are necessary to ensure that creativity does not compromise important social values in communication.

### **3. Development of Communication Skills**

Social media also plays a significant role in developing teenagers' communication skills, both verbally and in writing. On platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, teenagers learn to convey messages clearly and concisely, given the character or time limitations. The ability to craft effective messages within these constraints encourages them to think more sharply and selectively when choosing words (Candra Dewi et al., 2023). Furthermore, in communicating on social media, teenagers are also confronted with the need to adjust their language style to suit their audience, which can vary across different situations, such as speaking with peers or with older individuals.

The enhancement of communication skills is not limited to written text but also includes verbal communication, especially through videos and voice messages. Teenagers often interact through short videos or live broadcasts, allowing them to convey messages with facial expressions and voice, adding depth to their communication (Andi Saadillah et al., 2023). Through platforms like YouTube and TikTok, teenagers learn to organize their messages in more dynamic audiovisual formats, which involve not just speaking and writing skills but also creativity in presenting information. Additionally, social media interactions provide teenagers with opportunities to learn to communicate more assertively and persuasively. In group discussions or online forums, they often need to present convincing arguments or opinions, requiring the skill to construct logical and persuasive sentences. The ability to express opinions in a structured and convincing way can have a positive impact on the development of their communication skills in the real world (Rahmawati et al., 2022). This process sharpens their ability to think critically and filter relevant information before presenting it. However, although social media provides opportunities to develop communication skills, there is a risk that teenagers may become too focused on instant communication and neglect the importance of more in-depth communication that requires reflection and full attention (Jadmiko & Damariswara, 2022). The use of overly brief and rapid language could diminish their ability to communicate more deeply and attentively in real life, particularly in academic or professional settings.

### **4. Identity Formation**

The formation of social identity through language used on social media is an increasingly important phenomenon among teenagers today. According to research by Boyd (2021), social media provides space for teenagers to explore their self-identity, and the language they use often reflects their desire to be accepted within their peer group. In the online world, teenagers can interact with friends or even individuals with similar interests, where language serves as a tool to assert social closeness and share specific values. Language on social media, with all its dynamics, offers them an opportunity to form a more cohesive identity that connects them with virtual communities (Sakinah et al., 2023). Moreover, language on social media also plays a role in creating social norms among teenagers. Sutherland et al. (2020) assert that teenagers often adopt specific forms of language that develop within their peer groups on social media as a way to show their existence and status within the group. For example, the use of memes, abbreviations, or even slang understood only by certain groups can strengthen social bonds

among members. This language also helps them form perceptions about who belongs to their group and who is considered “foreign” or out of place within the group culture.

The importance of language in shaping teenagers' social identities is also reflected in their tendency to use certain platforms that influence the way they speak. Research by Lenhart et al. (2020) shows that teenagers who are more active on platforms like Instagram or TikTok often use specific visual and aesthetic language that prioritizes appearance and self-presentation. Language used on these platforms often focuses more on self-image, where teenagers try to conform to popular trends. In this case, language is not limited to words but also includes images, emojis, and hashtags, which become part of how they build their self-image in front of others (Ana Dahniar & Rr. Sulistyawati, 2023).

Furthermore, teenagers' social identities are also influenced by interactions outside their peer group, sometimes involving the use of more universal or standard language. In research conducted by Gee (2021), he explains that the language used in social interactions is not only limited to small communities but can also be a means for individuals to adapt to broader norms and values. When teenagers interact with people outside their peer group, they may adjust their language to match the social expectations of the individuals involved. This suggests that language on social media plays a dual role: as a tool for shaping group identity and as a medium for adapting to broader social contexts.

Finally, the language used on social media also serves as a way for teenagers to express differences or the diversity of their identities. As Seargeant (2021) points out, in the digital space, teenagers not only strive to be accepted by their peer groups but also engage in exploring different facets of their identity through language, which helps them understand their place in a more diverse society. Overall, social media can have a positive impact on the development of adolescents' language use. By providing exposure to diverse vocabularies, encouraging creativity, fostering communication skills, and supporting identity formation, social media becomes a platform for exploring new linguistic possibilities (Jadidah et al., 2023). However, it is essential for educators and parents to guide teenagers to use social media in a balanced and mindful way to ensure that the positive effects on language development outweigh potential negative impacts, such as over-reliance on informal communication styles and the neglect of deeper reflective thinking.

## **The Negative Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Language Use**

### **1. Decline in Writing Skills**

The use of overly casual and informal language on social media can negatively affect adolescents' formal writing skills. According to research by Vanderplank (2021), many adolescents tend to use more casual and unstructured language when communicating on digital platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. They often neglect proper grammar and spelling rules, as social media emphasizes speed over accuracy in communication. This can hinder their ability to write correctly in academic or professional settings (Prawira et al., 2022). Moreover, the excessive use of informal language on social media can lead adolescents to believe that writing in formal or standardized styles is no longer important. This decline is exacerbated by the increasing use of mobile devices for writing, where autocorrect features often “ignore” minor mistakes, making them less attentive to proper language use (Darmawan & Rahman, 2023). As a result, the formal writing skills required in academic or professional

environments may be neglected, making it difficult for them to complete tasks that demand more formal and structured language.

The negative impact of this decline in writing skills is particularly evident in education. For instance, adolescents who are accustomed to using informal language on social media may struggle when writing essays or scientific reports that require a more formal and objective writing style. According to research by Baker (2021), improper language use can interfere with the learning process by affecting comprehension and the ability to communicate effectively in academic spaces. When formal writing skills are not properly nurtured, they may hinder adolescents' academic development.

To address this, educators and parents need to emphasize the importance of distinguishing between the language used on social media and the language needed in educational contexts. According to Warschauer (2020), it is important for students to be trained in formal writing from an early age so that they are not only proficient in communicating on social media but also capable of writing correctly in more serious contexts. This way, they will be prepared to meet the challenges of the professional world, which demands better and more structured writing skills.

## **2. Use of Non-Standard Language**

One negative effect of social media is the increased use of non-standard language, often including abbreviations, emojis, and slang. This type of language often reduces the clarity of communication and can lower the reader's understanding. According to Crystal (2020), the language used on social media is heavily influenced by the desire to save time and space. Users often rely on abbreviations or acronyms that may be difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with the terms, leading to more limited communication. Additionally, the excessive use of emojis and visual symbols on social media can disrupt the communication process. For example, research by Tagg et al. (2021) shows that the use of emojis in inappropriate contexts can lead to confusion or even misinterpretation in conversations. Adolescents, in their efforts to express emotions or certain meanings, often rely on emojis to replace words, which can reduce their ability to express themselves verbally with precision. However, the use of proper language is essential in more complex social interactions, whether in education or the professional world (Woran et al., 2021).

The use of non-standard language can also negatively affect the development of adolescents' language skills. Research by Alvermann (2020) indicates that the habit of using non-standard language on social media can slow down the development of their language skills, especially in terms of writing and speaking clearly and effectively. Non-standard language learned on social media may feel more comfortable for adolescents, but it can become an obstacle when they need to communicate in more formal settings, such as at school or in the workplace (Seti Indriani & Ditha, 2020). Therefore, there needs to be a balance between using non-standard and standard language to maintain communication skills. On the other hand, while the use of non-standard language can be a legitimate form of self-expression, educators and parents must be aware of its potential impact on adolescents' ability to communicate in formal situations. They need to teach the importance of adjusting language to suit the context. This way, adolescents can use social media to interact with their peers while still mastering more formal and structured language for educational and professional purposes (Julianti & Siagian, 2023).

## **3. Spread of Inaccurate Information**



One of the most significant impacts of social media use is the spread of inaccurate information or hoaxes, which often affects adolescents' critical thinking. On social media, information is often disseminated very quickly without adequate fact-checking, making adolescents more susceptible to false news. According to research by Vosoughi et al. (2020), hoaxes and false information spread faster on social media than accurate information, and this influences how adolescents receive and believe information. False information can come from various sources, from personal accounts to unreliable news websites, ultimately affecting their thinking and attitudes toward certain issues. The spread of inaccurate information also affects adolescents' ability to think critically. As explained by McIntyre (2020), adolescents who are frequently exposed to false information on social media tend to find it more difficult to verify the truth of such information. This leads to a decline in their ability to analyze information objectively and make decisions based on factual accuracy. Relying on unverified information can hinder the development of critical thinking skills, which are essential in education (Wahyuni, 2022).

Furthermore, adolescents who are exposed to false information or hoaxes are also at risk of spreading inaccurate information to others. For example, many adolescents unknowingly share false news because they believe the information aligns with their views or beliefs. A study by Friggeri et al. (2023) shows that people are more likely to believe and spread information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs, even if that information is inaccurate. This exacerbates the problem, as adolescents influenced by hoaxes become agents of misinformation.

To address this issue, it is important for educators and parents to teach adolescents how to evaluate information critically. According to Hobbs (2021), good media literacy education can help adolescents understand how to assess the accuracy and credibility of information sources. This way, they will not only be more cautious in consuming information on social media, but they will also become more skilled at distinguishing between reliable and unreliable information.

#### **4. Dependence on Technology**

Dependence on social media and technology can make it difficult for adolescents to communicate face-to-face. In the fast-paced digital world, many adolescents prefer interacting via text messages or social media rather than in person. According to research by Radesky et al. (2020), excessive use of technology can reduce adolescents' social skills, such as the ability to communicate directly, read facial expressions, or manage interactions in more formal social settings. When they communicate online more frequently, their ability to understand broader social contexts can be hindered, which risks impairing their ability to interact effectively in real-world situations. Additionally, excessive social media use can lead to social anxiety or even isolation. A study by Primack et al. (2020) shows that adolescents who spend hours on social media tend to feel more isolated and anxious in face-to-face interactions. They feel more comfortable communicating virtually but feel awkward or lack confidence when interacting directly with others. This can hinder the development of crucial social skills, such as public speaking or handling challenging social situations.

Dependence on technology can also exacerbate communication problems within families or interpersonal relationships. According to research by Turkle (2020), many adolescents prefer communicating through their devices rather than speaking directly with family members or friends. This leads to a decline in the quality of relationships, which should ideally be strengthened through face-to-face communication that is more emotional and meaningful. When adolescents become too reliant on technology, they may miss out on opportunities to form

stronger, more authentic connections with people around them. To mitigate this negative impact, parents and educators should create opportunities for adolescents to practice direct communication (Ervina Arianita & Fatma Dwi Aini, 2022). This can be done by scheduling family time without devices or encouraging social interactions outside of the virtual world. Providing adolescents with direct communication experiences in various social situations will help them develop better social skills and reduce their dependence on technology.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The use of social media has a significant impact on adolescent language development, both in terms of vocabulary, creativity, communication skills, and identity formation. Exposure to different types of texts and language styles on social media enriches adolescents' vocabulary in unexpected ways, introducing them to more expressive and flexible forms of language. Through social media interaction, adolescents become accustomed to using non-standard language such as slang, abbreviations, and colloquialisms, which encourages the development of a richer vocabulary. However, to maximize the benefits, adolescents also need to be guided in distinguishing between language use in formal and informal contexts, especially when communicating in academic or professional settings. Additionally, social media fosters adolescents' creativity in language use and enriches their communication skills. With the freedom to create, adolescents can combine text, images, and visual elements like emojis to convey more expressive and engaging messages. This process enhances their ability to think critically, communicate assertively, and organize messages in more dynamic formats. On the other hand, social media also plays a role in shaping adolescents' social identities, where language is used as a tool to adapt to peer groups and create social norms. However, it is important to remember that social media not only shapes identity within small groups but can also be a platform for adolescents to interact with broader social contexts, helping them align with the prevailing norms and values.

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