LINGUISTIC PECULARITIES OF COMPUTER AND INTERNET DISCOURSE

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Annotation: The rapid development of digital technologies has profoundly transformed human communication, giving rise to new forms of discourse mediated by computers and the Internet. Computer and Internet discourse represent a hybrid communicative environment that combines features of spoken and written language while introducing unique linguistic characteristics. This article examines the linguistic peculiarities of computer and Internet discourse, focusing on lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and discourse-structural features. Drawing on established linguistic theories and empirical studies in computer-mediated communication (CMC), the paper analyzes how technological affordances shape language use in online environments. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of digital discourse as a distinct and evolving linguistic phenomenon.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication; internet discourse; digital linguistics; online language; discourse analysis

Introduction

The emergence of computer and Internet technologies has led to significant changes in the way language is produced, transmitted, and interpreted. Since the late twentieth century, linguists have increasingly focused on computer-mediated communication as a new domain of language use that cannot be fully explained by traditional models of spoken or written discourse [1]. Internet discourse encompasses various genres such as emails, chat rooms, social media posts, blogs, forums, and instant messaging, each characterized by specific communicative goals and linguistic conventions [2].

Scholars emphasize that computer and Internet discourse forms a "third medium" situated between speech and writing, combining spontaneity, informality, and interactivity with textual permanence and visual organization [3]. The linguistic peculiarities of this discourse arise from technological constraints, communicative immediacy, and the social dynamics of online communities. Understanding these peculiarities is essential for modern linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse studies, particularly in the context of globalization and digital literacy.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this study is based on qualitative linguistic analysis and discourse analysis. The research draws on peer-reviewed academic publications in the fields of computer-mediated communication, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse studies. Key analytical categories include lexical choice, grammatical structure, orthographic variation, pragmatic strategies, and discourse organization.

Comparative analysis is applied to examine differences between traditional written discourse and Internet-based communication. Descriptive and interpretative methods are used to systematize observed linguistic features, relying on documented examples and findings from authoritative studies rather than invented data [4]. The methodological approach aligns with established practices in digital discourse research.

Results

The analysis reveals that computer and Internet discourse exhibits a set of stable linguistic peculiarities shaped by the digital environment. These peculiarities can be grouped into several interrelated categories.

Lexically, Internet discourse is characterized by extensive neologism formation, borrowing, and abbreviation. Acronyms such as LOL, BRB, and IMO emerged to increase communicative efficiency in real-time interaction [5]. Technical vocabulary and platform-specific terms (e.g., hashtag, emoji, username) have entered everyday language use, demonstrating lexical expansion driven by technology [6].

Grammatically, online discourse often shows simplification of sentence structures, reduced use of complex syntactic constructions, and frequent omission of function words. Studies indicate that users prioritize speed and clarity over grammatical completeness, especially in synchronous communication such as chats and instant messaging [7].

Orthographically, non-standard spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are common. The use of lowercase letters, repetition of punctuation marks, and creative spelling function as expressive tools rather than indicators of linguistic incompetence [8]. Emojis and emoticons serve as paralinguistic markers that compensate for the absence of non-verbal cues.

Analysis and Discussion

From a pragmatic perspective, computer and Internet discourse is fundamentally shaped by the absence of physical co-presence between interlocutors. Unlike face-to-face communication, online interaction lacks immediate access to prosodic cues, facial expressions, gestures, and other non-verbal signals that traditionally support meaning-making. As a result, users rely heavily on explicit linguistic and paralinguistic strategies to convey stance, emotion, and interpersonal intent [9]. This reliance has led to the development of compensatory mechanisms such as emojis, emoticons, typographic emphasis, and metacommunicative expressions, which function as pragmatic markers within digital discourse.

Emojis and emoticons, in particular, play a significant role in online pragmatics. Research shows that they serve functions similar to intonation and facial expressions in spoken language, helping to clarify illocutionary force and reduce the risk of misinterpretation [8]. For example, the addition of a smiley face can mitigate the perceived harshness of a directive or critical statement, thereby maintaining politeness and social harmony in interaction [9]. These visual elements should not be interpreted as signs of linguistic simplification but rather as pragmatic adaptations to the constraints of text-based communication.

Another important pragmatic feature of computer-mediated discourse is the increased explicitness of discourse management. Online users frequently employ markers such as I mean, to be honest, just kidding, or in my opinion to guide interpretation and manage interpersonal relations. Walther's social information processing theory suggests that communicators adapt their linguistic behavior over time to achieve relational goals despite reduced social cues [9]. This adaptation is clearly reflected in the strategic use of language to express alignment, disagreement, or solidarity in online settings.

Discourse organization in Internet communication also differs markedly from traditional written texts. One of the defining characteristics of online discourse is hypertextuality, which enables non-linear navigation through hyperlinks, comment chains, and embedded media [10]. Unlike printed texts, which typically follow a linear and hierarchical structure, digital discourse often unfolds in fragmented yet interconnected segments. Meaning is constructed across multiple turns, posts, and responses rather than within a single coherent text.

In online forums and social media platforms, coherence is achieved through topical threading and interactional adjacency rather than conventional paragraphing or narrative progression. Participants orient their contributions to previous posts by quoting, tagging, or replying directly, creating a dialogic structure that resembles spoken conversation while remaining text-based [2]. This hybrid organization blurs the traditional distinction between monologic written discourse and dialogic spoken interaction, reinforcing the idea of Internet discourse as a mixed or hybrid mode of communication [3].

Temporal features further distinguish computer-mediated discourse from traditional forms. Asynchronous communication, such as emails and forum posts, allows for delayed responses and

greater opportunities for reflection, while synchronous communication, such as chats and instant messaging, promotes immediacy and spontaneity [5]. These temporal conditions influence linguistic choices, including sentence length, lexical density, and degree of formality. Studies consistently show that synchronous online discourse tends to be shorter, less syntactically complex, and more interaction-oriented than asynchronous forms [7].

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Internet discourse functions as a key site for identity construction and social positioning. Language choices in digital environments signal users' age, expertise, group affiliation, and ideological stance [11]. For instance, the use of platform-specific jargon, memes, or abbreviations indexes membership in particular online communities, while deviations from these norms may mark outsiders. Androutsopoulos argues that online identities are not fixed but dynamically negotiated through repeated linguistic practices across different digital contexts [11].

Code-switching and style-shifting are also prominent features of Internet discourse. Multilingual users frequently alternate between languages within a single interaction, especially on social media platforms, reflecting both linguistic competence and social identity [4]. Such practices challenge traditional notions of language boundaries and highlight the fluidity of linguistic resources in digital communication. Importantly, these patterns are shaped not only by individual choice but also by platform norms and audience expectations.

A recurring concern in public discourse is the perceived negative impact of Internet communication on language standards. However, linguistic research consistently rejects the notion that digital discourse represents linguistic degradation. Crystal emphasizes that language variation in online contexts reflects functional adaptation rather than decline [1]. Non-standard spelling, grammatical reduction, and informal expressions are contextually motivated and governed by implicit norms shared among users [8].

Moreover, many features of Internet discourse have historical precedents in informal writing, personal letters, and note-taking practices. What distinguishes digital communication is the scale, speed, and visibility of these practices rather than their linguistic legitimacy [12]. The Internet has made informal written language more public and widespread, prompting increased scholarly attention but not fundamentally altering the nature of linguistic creativity.

Technological affordances play a crucial role in shaping linguistic behavior online. Character limits, interface design, algorithmic visibility, and multimodal integration influence how users structure messages and select linguistic resources [6]. For example, the emergence of hashtags has introduced a novel discourse-organizing device that simultaneously serves indexing, evaluative, and interactional functions. Such features demonstrate how technology and language co-evolve in response to communicative needs.

Conclusion

Computer and Internet discourse constitutes a distinct and evolving form of language use with specific linguistic peculiarities. Lexical innovation, grammatical simplification, orthographic creativity, pragmatic adaptation, and non-linear discourse structures collectively distinguish digital communication from traditional spoken and written forms. These features are not random deviations but systematic responses to the communicative conditions of online environments.

The findings confirm that Internet discourse should be studied as an autonomous linguistic phenomenon within modern linguistics. Further research may focus on cross-cultural variation, genre-specific norms, and the long-term impact of digital communication on language change. Understanding the linguistic peculiarities of computer discourse is essential for education, media studies, and digital communication practices.

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