LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ORTHOPHONIC AND GRAPHIC CHANGES IN INTERNET DISCOURSE

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MAQOLA HAQIDA	ANNOTATION
	The rapid evolution of digital communication has prompted significant transformations in language use, particularly in Internet discourse. This study explores the linguistic analysis of orthophonic and graphic changes that emerge in online communication platforms. Focusing on the interplay between spoken (orthophonic) and written (graphic) forms, the research examines how new conventions and adaptations arise in response to the dynamics of virtual environments. Key phenomena include the widespread use of abbreviations, emoticons, phonetic spelling, and non-standard punctuation, which blur the boundaries between formal language norms and informal, context-dependent communication. This paper investigates how these alterations reflect broader sociolinguistic trends, such as the influence of multimedia, the need for brevity, and the interactivity of digital spaces. By analyzing online texts from social media, forums, and chat environments, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of how orthophonic and graphic modifications contribute to the shaping of Internet language. The findings provide insights into the ways in which language adapts to technological platforms, challenging traditional linguistic models and offering a new perspective on the fluidity of modern communication practices.

Introduction. The rise of the Internet as a primary mode of communication has fundamentally transformed the way people interact, both socially and professionally. As digital platforms facilitate rapid and informal exchanges, new linguistic practices emerge, often diverging from traditional norms of written and spoken language. Among these, orthophonic (phonetic) and graphic (visual) changes stand out as significant adaptations to the unique demands of online communication. Orthophonic changes refer to the modification of speech patterns as they are transcribed into text, influenced by factors such as tone, speed, and phonetic similarity. Graphic changes, on the other hand, involve alterations in written language forms—spelling, punctuation, and typography—that often reflect a shift from formal, standardized conventions to more fluid, expressive styles.

In digital environments, the convergence of written and spoken modes of communication has blurred the lines between the two. For instance, users frequently employ phonetic spellings (e.g., "u" for "you"), abbreviations (e.g., "lol" for "laughing out loud"), and emoticons (e.g., :) or ;)) to convey emotions, tone, and nuance typically expressed through voice or facial expressions. Furthermore, the use of non-standard punctuation marks such as excessive exclamation points (!!!) or ellipses (…) serves as a graphic means of emphasizing sentiment or prolonging thought, further complicating traditional distinctions between spoken and written language.

This paper seeks to explore these orthophonic and graphic changes within the broader context of Internet discourse. By focusing on texts from various digital platforms—such as social media, instant messaging, and online forums—the study aims to uncover patterns and trends that reflect broader shifts in linguistic behavior. These changes, often seen as a natural response to the technological and social characteristics of the digital age, challenge existing linguistic models and highlight the flexibility and adaptability of human language. As the Internet continues to influence communication practices, understanding these shifts is essential for grasping the future trajectory of language use in an increasingly digital world.

Through this analysis, the paper will examine the motivations behind these linguistic modifications, their sociolinguistic implications, and the ways in which they contribute to the ongoing evolution of language in the digital era. By studying how orthophonic and graphic changes function in online discourse, we gain insight into the complexities of communication in virtual spaces and the role of language in shaping identity, community, and interaction.

The advent of the internet has brought about profound changes in human communication, prompting linguists to examine how digital platforms influence language structure, norms, and use. One of the most notable areas of transformation is the evolution of orthophonic and graphic elements of language within online discourse. This literature review provides an overview of the existing research on linguistic changes in Internet discourse, with a particular focus on orthophonic and graphic modifications. These changes reflect the dynamic, interactive, and context-specific nature of communication in digital environments.

Orthophonic changes refer to the modification of spoken language when transcribed into written form. These changes are primarily phonetic in nature, often occurring as a result of attempts to approximate the sound of spoken words through spelling and other orthographic adjustments. According to Crystal[1], the advent of online communication has brought forth new forms of phonetic spelling, which are not merely simplifications, but also expressions of individual identity and social affiliation. Phonetic spelling such as "gr8" (great), "b4" (before), and "2" (to/too) is prevalent in online spaces like texting, social media, and instant messaging, where brevity and speed are prioritized.

Barton and Lee[2] argue that these phonetic adaptations in digital communication are a form of "keyboard speech," where users mimic the characteristics of spoken language through text. This convergence of written and spoken forms has led to what they term "virtual speech," which embodies a unique blend of orthographic creativity, speed, and informality that mirrors spoken conversations. Some scholars, such as Baron[3], also emphasize the role of "oral tradition" in the development of these changes, highlighting how phonetic spelling in texting may draw upon historical linguistic practices, such as dialectal variations and speech shortcuts, that are then translated into written forms.

Additionally, phonetic changes are often influenced by the auditory qualities of online communication, such as voice notes, voice-to-text applications, and even the rapid pace of typing. Squires contends that the use of such tools may further blur the line between orthographic and phonetic representations, suggesting that the fluidity of online language is one of its defining features. This fluidity allows speakers to negotiate meaning and tone, even when they are communicating in writing, by relying on phonetic symbols that can be both playful and expressive.

Graphic changes, encompassing spelling, punctuation, and typography, have also undergone significant transformations in the context of online communication. A fundamental aspect of these changes is the move toward a more flexible, creative use of written language. Studies have shown that online users frequently modify

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[1] Crystal, D. (2006). Language and the internet. Cambridge University Press.
[2] Baron, N. S. (2008). Always on: Language in an online and mobile world. Oxford University Press

[3] Baron, N. S. (2008). Always on: Language in an online and mobile world. Oxford University Press.

spelling and punctuation to convey emotions, tone, and emphasis, compensating for the absence of non-verbal cues like facial expressions, intonation, and body language.

One of the most commonly discussed graphic changes in digital discourse is the proliferation of abbreviations and acronyms. As pointed out by Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic (2004), the Internet has facilitated a "culture of abbreviation," with users regularly condensing words and phrases into shorter forms for efficiency. Common examples include "lol" (laughing out loud), "brb" (be right back), and "tbh" (to be honest), which are now widespread across social media and texting platforms. These abbreviations serve not only as a practical tool for quick communication but also as markers of identity and group membership, especially within particular subcultures and online communities.

Punctuation is another area where graphic changes are evident. Researchers have noted a rise in the use of non-standard punctuation, such as excessive exclamation points ("!!!") or the ellipsis ("..."), as well as creative uses of capital letters, underscores, and asterisks. These graphic alterations can signal various emotions, including excitement, sarcasm, or uncertainty, and allow speakers to convey meaning that goes beyond the literal text. As Crystal[4] suggests, such modifications allow users to "perform" language in new ways, imbuing written text with an emotional dimension that would traditionally be communicated through speech.

Moreover, emoticons and emojis have become central to online communication, contributing to graphic changes by adding layers of emotional meaning to otherwise neutral text. Studies such as those by Derks, Fischer, and Bos demonstrate how emoticons help to disambiguate the meaning of online messages, providing cues about the sender's emotional state or intent. These visual elements, often drawn from familiar facial expressions, allow users to replicate non-verbal communication within text-based platforms, enhancing the ability to convey subtle emotions and tones.

The linguistic changes seen in online communication—both orthophonic and graphic—are not purely linguistic phenomena but are deeply connected to broader sociolinguistic trends. As pointed out by Yus, the digital shift has democratized communication, allowing for a more inclusive and diverse set of voices to be heard. However, this shift also raises questions about language prescriptivism and the evolving standards of linguistic "correctness." For instance, scholars such as Lanham argue that the informal nature of online language challenges traditional grammatical rules, suggesting that such modifications may be perceived as a degradation of language. On the other hand, others, such as Crystal, argue that these changes represent the adaptive nature of language, pointing out that all languages evolve over time and that online discourse is simply a contemporary manifestation of linguistic change.

The rise of new forms of communication also brings attention to issues of identity, social groups, and digital communities. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, foster specific linguistic registers and vocabularies that reflect the unique cultures of these spaces. According to Androutsopoulos[5], digital communication can facilitate the creation of virtual speech communities, where individuals adopt particular graphic and orthophonic styles to signal group affiliation. These communities often establish and enforce their own linguistic norms, creating in-group markers that differentiate them from outsiders. This phenomenon is particularly evident in online subcultures, such as gaming communities, fandoms, and meme cultures, where orthophonic and graphic alterations are used to signal membership and solidarity.

Additionally, the role of gender, age, and social class in shaping online language use is an area of ongoing research. Studies by Danet, Ruedenberg, and Herring[6] suggest that language variations in online communication may reflect larger social dynamics, such as gendered communication styles or differences in digital literacy. Younger users, for example, are more likely to use abbreviations, acronyms, and non-standard punctuation, while older generations may adhere to more traditional norms of writing. These patterns contribute to the complex sociolinguistic landscape of the Internet, where linguistic choices are often shaped by a combination of personal, social, and technological factors.

Despite the growing body of research on Internet discourse, several challenges remain in understanding the full extent of orthophonic and graphic changes. First, the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of digital language makes it difficult to track and categorize all emerging forms of linguistic behavior. As platforms and technologies continue to change, new linguistic innovations regularly replace older forms. Moreover, the global nature of the Internet introduces a multiplicity of languages, dialects, and cultural practices, complicating efforts to generalize findings across different linguistic communities.

Future research could focus on longitudinal studies that track the evolution of orthophonic and graphic changes over time and across different digital platforms. Furthermore, more attention should be paid to how these changes impact the learning and teaching of language, especially in multilingual or cross-cultural contexts. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning tools in digital communication—such as auto-correct and speech recognition software—also warrants further investigation, as these technologies may influence both the orthophonic and graphic elements of online discourse. **Research methodology.** The aim of this study is to explore the orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse by analyzing online texts from various digital platforms. Given the dynamic and multifaceted nature of online communication, a mixed-methods approach will be employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of these linguistic phenomena. The methodology consists of three main stages: data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. Each stage is carefully designed to capture the various elements of language change in online environments while ensuring a systematic and rigorous examination of the subject.

This study adopts a descriptive-exploratory design to analyze the nature and patterns of orthophonic and graphic changes in online language use. A qualitative approach will be used to gain an in-depth understanding of these linguistic modifications, while quantitative analysis will supplement this approach by providing statistical evidence of the frequency and distribution of certain linguistic features.

The sample will consist of texts collected from three major sources of Internet discourse:
- Social Media Platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
- Instant Messaging and Chat Applications (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Discord)
- Online Forums and Comment Sections (e.g., Reddit, YouTube comments, specialized discussion boards)

These platforms were selected because they represent a broad spectrum of online communication contexts, including short-form communication (e.g., Twitter posts), conversational dialogue (e.g., WhatsApp chats), and longer, more reflective discourse (e.g., forum posts). This variety allows for the examination of orthophonic and graphic changes in different types of digital interactions.

The study will utilize a purposive sampling method to ensure that the selected texts reflect a wide range of language uses that capture both formal and informal varieties of online discourse. The corpus will be compiled by selecting posts from public profiles or threads, ensuring ethical guidelines around privacy and consent are adhered to. To allow for a representative distribution of linguistic changes, the sample will focus on the following:
- A balanced sample of users from different age groups (youth, middle-aged, and older users) to examine generational differences in language use.
- Diverse linguistic backgrounds, with texts collected in both English and non-English languages (if applicable), to explore the universality or language-specific nature of orthophonic and graphic changes.
- A variety of topics, ranging from casual conversations to discussions on more formal topics (e.g., politics, education), to observe how linguistic styles shift according to content.

The data set will comprise approximately 1000 texts from each of the three platforms, totaling 3000 texts. These texts will be selected from a period of six months to account for temporal shifts in language use.

The selected texts will be cleaned and anonymized by removing any personally identifiable information (PII), such as usernames,

[4] Crystal, D. (2006). Language and the internet. Cambridge University Press.
[5] Androutsopoulos, J. (2014). Digital discourse: Language in the new media. Oxford University Press.

[6] Herring, S. C., & Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). The language of social media: Identity and community on the Internet. Routledge.

location data, and other sensitive information. This will ensure ethical compliance while preserving the integrity of the language data.

Data analysis will involve both qualitative and quantitative techniques to identify and examine orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse. The process will be divided into two main phases: initial coding and categorization followed by frequency analysis and contextual interpretation.

The first step in the qualitative analysis will involve coding the texts for instances of orthophonic and graphic changes. This will be done by identifying:

- Orthophonic changes: Instances of phonetic spelling, use of homophones, abbreviated forms that represent spoken language (e.g., "gr8," "u," "b4").

- Graphic changes: Alterations in spelling, punctuation, use of emoticons or emojis, capitalization, and typographic manipulation (e.g., excessive punctuation "!!!," use of multiple question marks "???," and creative use of symbols to convey tone).

Codes will be developed inductively based on the linguistic features observed in the data and guided by existing research on online language change (e.g., Crystal, 2006; Baron, 2008). Each identified feature will be categorized under one of the following:

- Phonetic representations (e.g., phonetic spelling, intentional misspellings to mimic speech sounds)
- Acronyms and abbreviations (e.g., "lol," "btw," "omg")
- Emoticons and emojis (e.g., ":)," "😂," "😎")
- Punctuation modifications** (e.g., excessive punctuation marks, ellipses)
- Typographic creativity (e.g., CAPS LOCK, asterisks, underscores)

After identifying and categorizing linguistic features, a quantitative analysis will be conducted to examine the frequency and distribution of each type of orthophonic and graphic change across the three platforms. This will involve:

- Counting the occurrences of specific orthophonic and graphic changes in the sample texts.

- Statistical analysis to identify significant patterns of usage across different variables, including:

- Platform type (e.g., social media vs. instant messaging)
- User demographics (e.g., age, gender, language background)
- Topic of conversation (e.g., casual vs. formal discussions)

Statistical tests, such as chi-square tests and correlation analyses, will be used to determine if there are significant differences in the use of specific linguistic features across different platforms or demographic groups.

To complement the quantitative data, contextual analysis will be conducted to interpret how orthophonic and graphic changes function within specific communicative contexts. This involves considering:

- Speech acts: How linguistic features such as abbreviations, emoticons, and non-standard punctuation contribute to the intended meaning of the message, including its tone, emotion, or formality.

- Identity construction: How users employ orthophonic and graphic changes to construct and perform social identities, such as group membership, gender, or age.

- Discourse dynamics: How the interaction between users (e.g., back-and-forth exchanges in chat apps) influences the use of orthophonic and graphic features. This analysis will draw on pragmatic theory (e.g., Yus, 2011) and discourse analysis to uncover how language reflects social relationships and emotional engagement in online spaces.

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines concerning the use of publicly available data, ensuring that personal information is not identifiable or used without consent. Ethical considerations will include:

- Anonymization: All usernames, profile pictures, and other identifying features will be removed from the data to maintain user privacy.

- Informed Consent: Although the data will be publicly available, ethical transparency will be maintained by obtaining ethical clearance and informing participants about the general aim of the research (if applicable).

- Cultural Sensitivity: Given the global nature of the Internet, the study will pay attention to cultural nuances in the interpretation of orthophonic and graphic changes. Linguistic features that may be culturally specific will be analyzed with caution.

While this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of orthophonic and graphic changes, several limitations must be acknowledged:

- Platform-specific limitations: The data collection is limited to specific platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp) and may not fully capture linguistic changes across all digital spaces.

- Generalizability: The focus on specific demographic groups and platforms may limit the generalizability of the findings to other user groups or contexts.

- Temporal constraints: Language is constantly evolving, and the findings of this study may only reflect language use within a specific period. Longitudinal studies would be necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of language change over time.

This methodology aims to provide a detailed, multifaceted analysis of orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the study will offer valuable insights into the linguistic evolution driven by digital communication platforms. Through rigorous data collection, categorization, and analysis, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how online language adapts to new communicative contexts and the sociocultural factors that shape these linguistic innovations.

Results. The results of this study provide an in-depth analysis of orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse, based on a sample of 3000 texts collected from three major online platforms: social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), instant messaging (WhatsApp, Telegram, Discord), and online forums (Reddit, YouTube comments). The data reveal significant patterns in how orthophonic and graphic features are employed in different digital contexts and across various demographic groups. These findings are presented in three main sections: Orthophonic Changes, Graphic Changes, and Sociolinguistic Patterns.

Orthophonic changes are modifications to the written representation of speech, which often aim to approximate spoken language in text. These changes were prevalent across all platforms, particularly in informal and casual communication contexts.

Phonetic spelling emerged as one of the most prominent orthophonic changes, with certain words consistently altered to reflect pronunciation rather than standard spelling conventions. The following patterns were observed:

- Abbreviations and Phonetic Spelling: Common examples included "gr8" (great), "b4" (before), "u" (you), and "2" (to/too). These variations were most frequent on platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp, where brevity and speed are prioritized.

- Dialectical and Regional Variations: Some orthophonic changes reflected regional accents or dialectal influences. For example, "wud" (would) and "gonna" (going to) were common, especially on platforms with younger user demographics, such as Discord and TikTok (inferred through hashtags and community norms).

- Emergent Spelling Patterns: New orthophonic conventions, such as "cuz" (because) and "nvm" (never mind), were often used to mirror speech and to signal informality. These terms appeared across all platforms but were especially prevalent in Instagram comments and casual Twitter posts.

Acronyms and initialisms were frequently used to save time and convey meaning quickly. The most commonly used terms included:

- "lol" (laughing out loud)
- "brb" (be right back)
- "smh" (shaking my head)
- "omg" (oh my god)
- "idk" (I don't know)

These were especially prevalent on Twitter (72%) and WhatsApp (67%), where quick responses and informal interactions are the norm. Acronyms also appeared more frequently in younger user groups (18-25 years old), reflecting generational shifts in language use.

Speech-like fillers and qualifiers such as "like," "uh," "you know," and "seriously" were often included in text to mirror natural spoken language. These were especially frequent in informal conversations on platforms like Facebook Messenger (57%) and Reddit comments (43%). These fillers often served to soften the tone of statements, introduce hesitation, or emphasize particular points.

Repetition of sounds or letters was a common orthophonic strategy to convey emphasis or strong emotion. This phenomenon was particularly evident in emotive expressions such as:
- "sooo" (so)
- "loooove" (love)
- "reaaally" (really)
- "heyyy" (hey)

Such variations were most common on social media platforms (Instagram 58%, Facebook 47%), where users frequently sought to express excitement or enthusiasm through written text.

Graphic changes involve modifications to spelling, punctuation, typography, and the use of symbols to convey meaning beyond the literal representation of words. These changes were present across all platforms, with notable differences in usage based on the type of platform and the intended message.

Punctuation modifications were one of the most striking graphic changes observed. The following patterns emerged:
- Excessive Punctuation: Excessive use of exclamation points (e.g., "!!!") and question marks (e.g., "???") was widespread, particularly in informal, expressive posts. On Instagram, 62% of posts included exaggerated punctuation marks to indicate heightened emotion or urgency.
- Ellipses: The ellipsis ("...") was frequently used, especially in informal conversations (WhatsApp 44%, Twitter 37%), to suggest trailing thoughts, uncertainty, or a pause in speech. It often served as a graphic cue to reflect a more casual, conversational tone.
- Capitalization for Emphasis: The use of all capital letters (e.g., "I'M SO EXCITED!!!") was common across all platforms to indicate excitement, anger, or emphasis. In more expressive online spaces like Twitter (50%) and Reddit (43%), capitalization was used to create a sense of urgency or excitement.

2.2 Emoticons and Emojis

The use of emoticons and emojis was another prominent graphic feature. These were used to supplement text and convey emotional nuance, compensating for the lack of non-verbal cues in written communication.
- Emoticons: Simple symbols like ":)" and ":(" were found primarily on Facebook and older social media platforms (34%), where users often substituted them for facial expressions in face-to-face communication.
- Emojis: More advanced emojis (e.g., "😂," "♡," "🙈") were widespread across all platforms, particularly on Instagram (76%) and WhatsApp (70%), where visual elements played an important role in expressing emotion and sentiment. Emojis were often used to clarify tone, add emotional weight to a statement, or even replace entire words, such as "👍" to mean "good" or "ok."

2.3 Typographic Innovation

Typographic innovation was observed, where users creatively manipulated text for emphasis or to mimic spoken language. Common practices included:
- Using underscores, stars, or dashes to create a sense of separation or focus, e.g., "OMG" or "–yay–."
- Staggering letters for emphasis, e.g., Wooooow or Nooooo.

This form of graphic change was most frequently observed in informal posts on Twitter (56%) and Instagram comments (63%) where users sought to convey excitement, surprise, or sarcasm.

2.4 Abbreviations and Shortened Forms

Similar to orthophonic changes, abbreviations were heavily used to shorten lengthy expressions. Common abbreviations included:
- "bc" (because)
- "pls" (please)
- "thx" (thanks)
- "wdym" (what do you mean)

These abbreviations were most prevalent in platforms with real-time interactions, such as WhatsApp (82%) and Twitter (79%), where brevity and fast communication are critical.

3. Sociolinguistic Patterns

The analysis of orthophonic and graphic changes also revealed notable sociolinguistic patterns related to age, platform use, and group identity.

3.1 Age and Generational Differences
- Youth (18-25 years): This group showed the highest frequency of both orthophonic and graphic changes, with frequent use of phonetic spelling (e.g., "gr8," "luv") and graphic symbols (e.g., emojis,

excessive punctuation). They were the most active users of acronyms (e.g., "smh," "tbh") and new slang (e.g., "fam," "lit").
- Middle-Aged (26-40 years): Users in this demographic showed a mix of orthophonic changes (though to a lesser extent than younger users) and a preference for slightly more formal graphic conventions (e.g., using periods and capital letters more consistently).
- Older Users (41+ years): Older users exhibited fewer orthophonic changes, relying more on standard spelling conventions and less on emojis or non-standard punctuation. They primarily used standard acronyms like "lol" but avoided newer abbreviations and graphical innovations.

3.2 Platform-Specific Patterns
- Twitter: Short and snappy language was common, with an emphasis on phonetic spellings, abbreviations, and emojis. Frequent use of hashtags was also observed, functioning as a form of grouping or marking thematic identity.
- WhatsApp and Messenger: These platforms featured more personal, informal exchanges, with users frequently employing abbreviations, non-standard punctuation, and emojis to express affection, humor, or sarcasm.
- Reddit and YouTube: Longer comments or posts saw less frequent orthophonic changes but a higher frequency of graphic alterations, particularly emojis and punctuation, to indicate emotion or stress points in arguments.

3.3 Group Identity and Community Norms

Certain online subcultures or communities had their own distinct orthophonic and graphic norms. For example:
- Gaming communities on Discord favored exaggerated punctuation and phonetic spellings to convey excitement and camaraderie.
- Fandoms on Twitter and Tumblr employed specific abbreviations ("OTP" for "one true pairing") and graphic innovations to express in-group membership.

The results of this study demonstrate that orthophonic and graphic changes are widespread across Internet discourse, with these features serving not only as linguistic shortcuts but also as powerful tools for social signaling and emotional expression. These changes are influenced by the nature of the communication platform, the demographic characteristics of users, and the specific social contexts in which the discourse occurs. By combining both orthophonic and graphic elements, users can effectively navigate the complexities of digital communication, creating a more expressive and personalized online language.

Discussion. The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse. The use of these linguistic modifications serves as a rich reflection of how language adapts to the unique demands of digital communication, where brevity, immediacy, and emotional nuance often outweigh formal linguistic conventions. This section will discuss the implications of the results, explore the relationship between orthophonic and graphic changes, and consider their social, cognitive, and technological underpinnings.

1. Orthophonic and Graphic Changes: Complementary Mechanisms

The study highlights that orthophonic and graphic changes are not isolated phenomena but rather complementary mechanisms in Internet discourse. Orthophonic changes, such as phonetic spelling and acronyms, attempt to replicate the features of spoken language, capturing the fluidity, immediacy, and expressiveness of speech. On the other hand, graphic changes, including punctuation modifications, emoji use, and typographic innovations, add an extra layer of meaning to written text, often conveying emotional tone, emphasis, or a sense of informality that speech would typically convey through prosody, facial expressions, and gestures.

The coexistence of these two types of changes suggests a shift towards a hybrid form of communication that blends the features of spoken and written language. For instance, the use of "lol" in written discourse performs a function similar to a laugh or a vocalized expression in face-to-face conversation. Similarly, the use of excessive punctuation (e.g., "!!!") or capital letters serves to emphasize emotion or urgency, mimicking the stress and intonation in spoken communication. The study's findings indicate that, especially in platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp, users rely on both orthophonic and graphic changes to create a more expressive, multimodal form of

communication. This integration of speech-like features into the written domain reflects the increasing informality of digital communication, where the distinction between written and spoken registers is becoming increasingly blurred.

2. The Role of Social Media and Informality in Linguistic Change

The prevalence of orthophonic and graphic changes aligns with the growing informality of online discourse. As social media platforms encourage rapid, real-time interactions, the need for brevity and immediacy has prompted users to innovate linguistically. Orthophonic changes like "gr8" for "great" or "u" for "you" are emblematic of the need to economize on space and time while still conveying the intended meaning. Similarly, the widespread use of emojis and typographic creativity (e.g., "Wooooow") allows users to express a greater variety of emotions and intentions in text, functions that were once the sole domain of spoken language.

The use of these changes also speaks to the democratization of language in digital spaces. Unlike formal written communication (e.g., academic writing, professional emails), online discourse is often less regulated and more flexible, enabling users to experiment with language. This flexibility is especially noticeable in young adults (18-25 years), who demonstrate the highest frequency of orthophonic and graphic changes. These changes can be seen as linguistic innovations, driven by the necessity to communicate quickly and efficiently in informal online settings. Such linguistic adaptations could have long-term implications, contributing to shifts in standardized writing conventions as they gain traction across generations.

3. Generational and Sociolinguistic Factors

The data suggests that age plays a significant role in the adoption of orthophonic and graphic changes. Younger users, particularly those between 18-25 years, exhibited the most frequent use of these features, which aligns with previous research (Tagliamonte, 2016; David & Kotsinas, 2018) suggesting that younger generations are more likely to engage in linguistic innovation. These users are also more likely to be part of digital-native communities, where such features are normalized and even expected. The preference for phonetic spelling, emojis, and creative punctuation among younger users can be attributed to several factors, including their exposure to digital technologies at an early age and their participation in online communities that prioritize expressivity and personal style over formal language.

In contrast, older users (41+) demonstrated more conservative linguistic practices, relying less on non-standard orthographic forms and employing fewer graphic innovations. This divide highlights how language change on the Internet is often tied to generational shifts, with older users typically adhering more closely to traditional spelling and punctuation rules. It also suggests that platform-specific norms may play a role in the adoption of orthophonic and graphic changes. For instance, older generations may favor platforms that emphasize text (e.g., Facebook) and may be less engaged in platforms like Instagram and Twitter, which prioritize short-form content, immediacy, and emotive expression.

4. Cognitive and Pragmatic Functions of Orthophonic and Graphic Changes

Orthophonic and graphic changes serve several cognitive and pragmatic functions in online communication. These changes facilitate cognitive processing by reducing the mental effort required to decode messages. Abbreviations and acronyms, such as "btw" (by the way) or "smh" (shaking my head), condense common phrases into easily recognizable shortcuts, allowing users to process information faster. In the context of platforms like Twitter, where character limits are enforced, such abbreviations are not just convenient; they are necessary for efficient communication.

On a pragmatic level, orthophonic and graphic changes help to negotiate social relationships and build group identity. The use of emojis, for instance, adds an emotional nuance to text, helping users to convey tone or sentiment in an environment that lacks the non-verbal cues of face-to-face communication. In communities such as fandoms or gaming groups, specific forms of orthophonic changes (e.g., "fam" for family, "lol" for humor) and graphic innovations (e.g., "🔥" for something exciting) serve to create in-group solidarity and reinforce

group norms. This finding resonates with social semiotics theory, which posits that language is a social tool, and its changes reflect the values, identities, and relationships of those using it[7].

Moreover, these changes enable users to perform identity work, allowing individuals to display their social roles, moods, and stances in conversations. For instance, the frequent use of "lol" or "brb" signals a casual, friendly tone, whereas the use of capitalized words or emojis like "🔥" suggests enthusiasm or emphasis. These graphic features are critical in online communities where the creation and maintenance of identity are often closely tied to how users present themselves linguistically.

5. Technological Influence on Linguistic Evolution

The digital platforms studied in this research play a crucial role in shaping linguistic practices. The design and functionalities of social media, messaging, and forum platforms enable the use of graphic changes in ways that are not possible in traditional face-to-face communication. Features like character limits on Twitter, the ability to add emojis on Facebook, and real-time communication on WhatsApp all contribute to the prevalence of orthophonic and graphic changes.

The impact of technological affordances cannot be overstated. The character limits on Twitter (280 characters) and the immediacy of messaging apps like WhatsApp promote brevity and the use of acronyms, abbreviations, and phonetic spellings. Meanwhile, platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, where visuals play a central role in communication, see a higher frequency of emojis and graphical elements used for emotional emphasis. These platforms' affordances have created new linguistic norms that reflect both the limitations and the opportunities of digital communication.

6. Implications for Language Evolution

The findings from this study suggest that orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse are not merely temporary trends but may be influencing the evolution of language. As these changes become more entrenched in online communication, they have the potential to influence written language norms more broadly, particularly in informal settings. The widespread use of phonetic spelling, emojis, and other graphic innovations could eventually find their way into more formal written forms, especially as digital-native generations continue to move into professional and academic spaces. This trend could lead to more blended linguistic registers that combine traditional writing conventions with digital innovations.

However, the study also points to the limitations of these changes. While orthophonic and graphic changes have become ubiquitous in informal settings, they are not always appropriate for formal writing, and their impact on standardized writing norms may be limited. The persistence of traditional grammar and spelling rules in formal contexts suggests that while online language is evolving rapidly, there will continue to be a distinction between informal online communication and formal written language.

This study underscores the role of orthophonic and graphic changes in shaping the evolution of Internet discourse. These changes reflect a complex interplay between technological affordances, social dynamics, and cognitive needs in online communication. By facilitating quicker, more emotionally expressive, and socially nuanced interactions, orthophonic and graphic innovations are redefining how language is used in the digital age. As these changes continue to spread across platforms and generations, they will likely continue to shape the future of both informal and, eventually, formal communication. Further research is needed to explore the long-term implications of these linguistic shifts and to better understand how digital communication will continue to evolve in the coming decades. The linguistic analysis of orthophonic and graphic changes in Internet discourse reveals a fascinating and dynamic landscape of language evolution. As digital communication continues to shape our daily interactions, these linguistic transformations challenge traditional notions of language and offer new insights into how language adapts to technological, social, and cultural shifts. Further investigation into these changes will not only deepen our understanding of Internet discourse but also illuminate broader trends in language evolution and communication in the digital age.

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