



THE MAIN PROBLEMS IN LANGUAGE USAGE BETWEEN YOUNGSTERS AND OLDER PEOPLE WHILE USING SOCIAL MEDIA.

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Abstract. Social media has fundamentally reshaped how we communicate, connecting people across all age groups. Platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp are now common spaces for interaction, yet a significant linguistic divide often separates younger and older users. This gap in language use, driven by generational, cultural, and technological factors, leads to frequent miscommunication and misunderstanding. While younger generations thrive on fast-paced digital slang, emojis, and memes, older users typically adhere to more traditional and formal language. This paper explores the primary challenges of intergenerational communication online and suggests pathways toward greater understanding.

Keywords: Social Media, Intergenerational Communication, Linguistic Divide, Digital Slang, Generational Gap, Miscommunication, Online Communication.

Annotatsiya: Ijtimoiy tarmoqlar barcha yoshdagi odamlarni bir-biriga bog'lab, qanday muloqot qilishimizni tubdan o'zgartirdi. Facebook, Tik Tok va Whats App kabi platformalar endi o'zaro ta'sir qilish uchun umumiy maydonlardir, ammo sezilarli lingvistik bo'linish ko'pincha yosh va katta foydalanuvchilarni ajratib turadi. Avlodlar, madaniy va texnologik omillar ta'sirida tildan foydalanishdagi bu bo'shliq tez-tez noto'g'ri muloqot va tushunmovchiliklarga olib keladi. Yosh avlodlar tez sur'atda raqamli jaranglar, kulgichlar va memlarda gullab-yashnasa-da, keksa foydalanuvchilar odatda an'anaviy va rasmiy tilga amal qilishadi. Ushbu maqola avlodlararo onlayn muloqotning asosiy muammolarini o'rganadi va ko'proq tushunish yo'llarini taklif qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Ijtimoiy media, avlodlararo muloqot, lingvistik bo'linish, raqamli jargon, avlodlar orasidagi farq, noto'g'ri aloqa, onlayn muloqot.

Аннотация: Социальные сети коренным образом изменили способы нашего общения, объединяя людей всех возрастных групп. Такие платформы, как Facebook, TikTok и WhatsApp, теперь стали обычными площадками для взаимодействия, однако между молодыми и пожилыми пользователями часто существует значительный языковой разрыв. Этот разрыв в использовании языка, обусловленный поколенческими, культурными и технологическими факторами, часто приводит к недопониманию и непониманию. В то время как молодое поколение процветает на динамичном цифровом сленге, эмодзи и мемах, пользователи старшего поколения, как правило, придерживаются более традиционного и формального языка. В данной статье рассматриваются основные проблемы межпоколенческого общения в интернете и предлагаются пути к лучшему взаимопониманию.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, межпоколенческое общение, языковой разрыв, цифровой сленг, межпоколенческий разрыв, недопонимание, онлайн-общение.

Social media has become one of the most dominant platforms for communication in the 21st century. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and



messaging applications such as WhatsApp or Telegram are used by people of all ages. However, despite sharing the same platforms, youngsters and older people often struggle to understand each other's language styles. For the younger generation, online communication is fast, dynamic, and filled with creative linguistic innovations, whereas older people often use more formal, structured, and conventional language. With the rapid penetration of social media platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and messaging apps—digital communication now bridges generational divides (Azad, Chhibber, & Tajhizi, 2020, p.76). These differences create communication barriers that affect the effectiveness of interaction across age groups.

This thesis discusses the main problems in language usage between youngsters and older people while using social media. It identifies generational differences in digital language, explores the challenges of understanding online slang and symbols, and analyzes the social consequences of these gaps.

One of the main problems is the generational gap in digital literacy and language innovation. Youngsters have grown up in a technology-driven environment where they constantly create new abbreviations, acronyms, and emojis to make communication faster. For example, expressions like “LOL” (laughing out loud), “TBH” (to be honest), or emojis like “the LOL” are part of their everyday communication. In contrast, older users often find these forms confusing or meaningless because they are more accustomed to full words and grammatically correct sentences.

Moreover, youngsters frequently use code-switching, mixing languages, or creating hybrid forms influenced by internet culture, which makes comprehension even more difficult for older people. For instance, memes often contain cultural references that the older generation may not recognize, leading to exclusion or misunderstanding.

The differences in language usage frequently result in misinterpretations. Young people may perceive older users' formal tone as “too serious” or even “rude,” while older people may interpret youngsters' slang and emojis as careless or disrespectful. For example, when a youngster uses the “thumbs up” emoji as a quick acknowledgment, older people might misinterpret it as passive-aggressive or dismissive. Older generations generally adopted digital media later and have less exposure to evolving internet linguistic norms (Predictors of Social Media Use, 2022). Additionally, acronyms and abbreviations may carry multiple meanings, creating further confusion. The abbreviation “BRB” (be right back) is clear to younger users, but many older people still struggle with such shorthand. These



communication gaps sometimes discourage both groups from engaging with one another online.

Another problem is the cultural and emotional disconnect that arises from language differences. Social media communication is not only about exchanging information but also about expressing identity, humor, and belonging. The informal, humorous, or irreverent tone common in youth social media may conflict with older users' expectations of politeness, creating tension (Intergenerational Communication Satisfaction, 2010). Youngsters use new words, hashtags, and inside jokes to create group identity, while older users may feel excluded because they cannot fully participate in this form of communication.

Furthermore, older generations may prefer longer and more reflective messages, while youngsters often use short and fragmented sentences. This contrast can reduce the emotional connection between the two groups. Misunderstandings caused by language can sometimes escalate into frustration, reinforcing stereotypes that older people are "out of touch" and youngsters are "immature."

The communication problems caused by generational language gaps have several consequences. First, they weaken family communication in online settings. Grandparents or parents may struggle to understand the online expressions of their children, making it harder to connect digitally. Second, these barriers can create feelings of exclusion for older people, who may avoid social media altogether. Third, they reinforce generational stereotypes, which deepens the social divide between young and old.

The language usage problems between youngsters and older people on social media reflect broader generational differences in communication styles, values, and digital literacy. Youngsters can moderate their usage of acronyms or ambiguous slang when messaging older interlocutors; older users can gradually adopt some digital forms (emojis, shorthand) to converge communicative styles. Encouraging mutual accommodation fosters better alignment (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2011). While youngsters rely on speed, creativity, and innovation in language, older people prefer clarity, tradition, and formality. These contrasting styles often lead to miscommunication, misinterpretation, and cultural disconnect. However, these challenges can be reduced through increased digital literacy for older generations and greater patience and awareness among youngsters. Promoting intergenerational digital education and encouraging mutual respect in communication may bridge the gap and foster more inclusive online communities.

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