

EFFECT OF CULTURE ON LANGUAGE USED IN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Communication technology exists to connect, inform, entertain and marketing. Developments in communication technology force people to think differently about how they disclose information. A telephone call or a few clicks make any kind of message worldwide news. This results from the fact that with cell phones, tablets and laptops, communication has become extremely portable and even intrusive into people's daily lives since everybody can communicate at almost any time and from anywhere. The most commonly used type of communication technology is radio, television and the internet. This offers both positive developments and downsides. A people's culture impacts greatly on the language used in communication technology. Males and females differ in the way they speak, reason, feel and act. This is also notable in the topics they share, what they wish to achieve by making posts and how they communicate. This study focuses on how culture affects the language used in communication technology. Identify the most commonly used forms of communication technology. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approach. The objectives of this study were designed to answer the questions of whether culture changes language used in communication technology, how different cultures affect the language used in communication technology. The different cultures and their varied effects on the language used in communication technology by the university students. Purposive sampling will be used to get the respondents. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data. The Uses and Gratification Theory by Blumler and Katz was used to inform this study. The findings of the study will be used to create awareness and encourage society to embrace the dynamism in language and be able to communicate adequately in varied situations.

Key words: culture, communication, language, social media, effect, technology.

INTRODUCTION

A people's culture impacts greatly on the language used in communication technology. **Communication technology**, including traditional and digital means like mobile phones or the Web, need specialists for their appropriate working in a world that depends on remaining connected for commercial, academic and social purposes. Communication technology impacts society by making the interchange of ideas and information more effective. Communication technologies include the Internet, multimedia, e-mail, telephone and other sound-based and video-based communication means. **Communication** is the process of sharing information/ideas among two or more people through a certain sign, symbol or behaviour. The communication process involves a message moving from the initiation stage to the feedback stage; thus, initiator of the

message encodes only what is relevant and meaningful to the target audience. The receiver on the other hand knows what the sender wants him to know effectively.

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Culture is, basically, a set of shared values that a group of people holds. Such values affect how you think and act and, more importantly, the kind of criteria by which you judge others. Every culture has rules that its members take for granted.

While some of culture’s knowledge, rules, beliefs, values and anxieties are taught explicitly, most is absorbed subconsciously.

However, generalizations are valid to the extent that they provide clues on what you will *most likely* encounter – and how those differences impact communication.

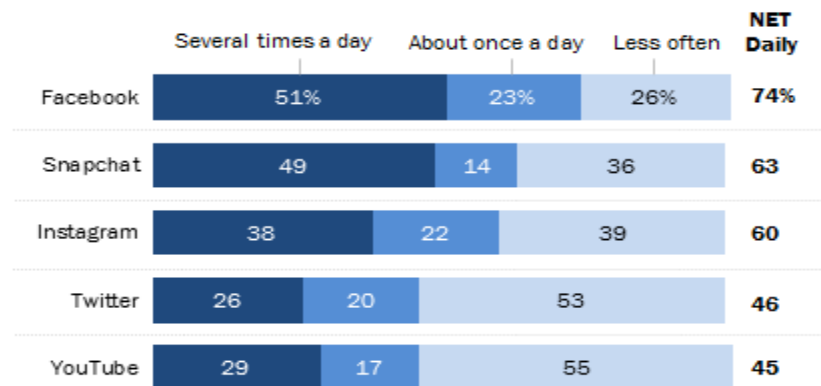
Every aspect of communication among university students is influenced by cultural differences. Even the choice of medium used to communicate may have cultural overtones.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey conducted by Pew Research Center (Smith A. & Anderson M., 2018) of U.S.A. adults on usage of social media landscape in early 2018 noted that there are long-standing trends and emerging narratives among social media consumers. The summary of their findings was shown as below:

A majority of Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram users visit these platforms on a daily basis

Among U.S. adults who say they use ____, the % who use each site ...



Note: Respondents who did not give answer are not shown. "Less often" category includes users who visit these sites a few times a week, every few weeks or less often.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.

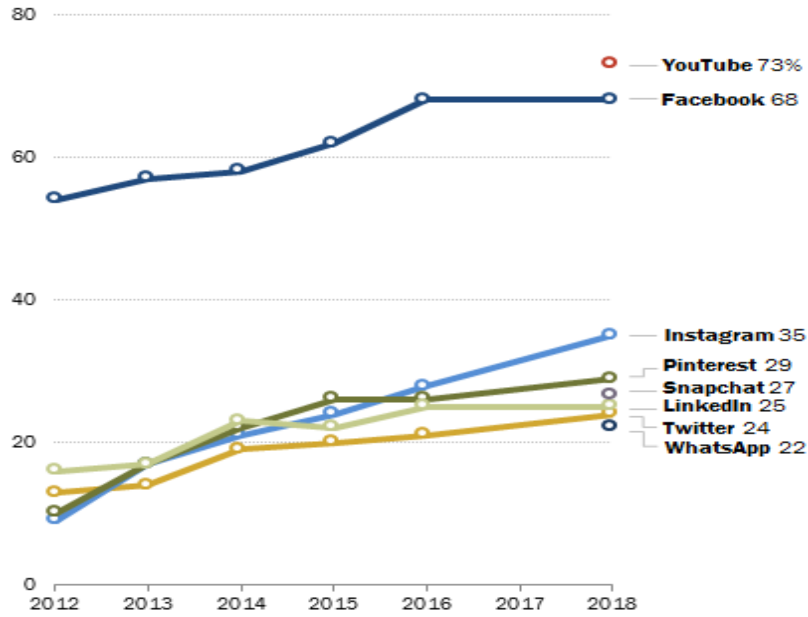
"Social Media Use in 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Table 1 Adapted from Pew Research Center

Majority of Americans now use Facebook, YouTube

% of U.S. adults who say they use the following social media sites online or on their cellphone



Note: Pre-2018 telephone poll data is not available for YouTube, Snapchat or WhatsApp.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018. Trend data from previous Pew Research Center surveys.

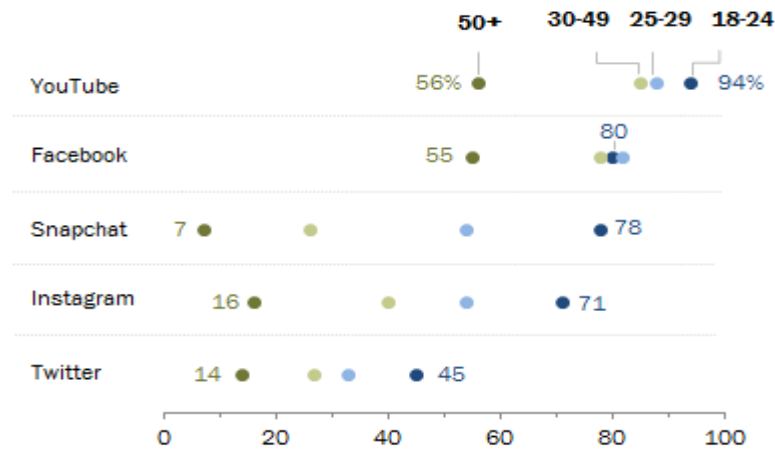
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Table 2 Adapted from Pew Research Center

Social platforms like Snapchat and Instagram are especially popular among those ages 18 to 24

% of U.S. adults in each age group who say they use ...



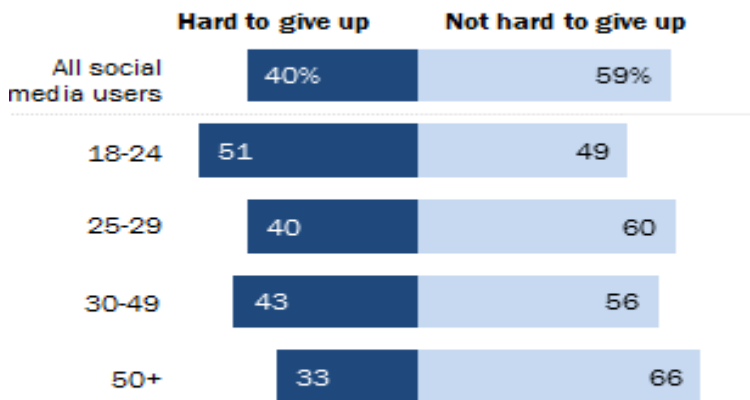
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.
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Table 3 Adapted from Pew Research Center

Majority of users say it would *not* be hard to give up social media

Among U.S. social media users, the % of who say it would be ___ to give up social media



Note: Respondents who did not give answer are not shown. "Hard to give up" include those saying it would be very or somewhat hard. "Not hard to give up" include those saying it would be not too hard or not hard at all.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.
 "Social Media Use in 2018"

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Table 4 Adapted from Pew Research Center

Substantial 'reciprocity' across major social media platforms

% of __ users who also ...

	Use Twitter	Use Instagram	Use Facebook	Use Snapchat	Use YouTube	Use WhatsApp	Use Pinterest	Use LinkedIn
Twitter	-	73%	90%	54%	95%	35%	49%	50%
Instagram	50	-	91	60	95	35	47	41
Facebook	32	47	-	35	87	27	37	33
Snapchat	48	77	89	-	95	33	44	37
YouTube	31	45	81	35	-	28	36	32
WhatsApp	38	55	85	40	92	-	33	40
Pinterest	41	56	89	41	92	25	-	42
LinkedIn	47	57	90	40	94	35	49	-

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018. "Social Media Use in 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

90% of LinkedIn users also use Facebook

Table 5 Adapted from Pew Research Center

The communication technology has transformed all aspects of human life since it became globally available to the society. This transformation is evidenced by the rising number of digital users globally. According to the Computer Industry Almanac (2009), the total number of internet users exceeded one billion in 2005. Communication technology has been accepted by academic institutions as a powerful means of information transmission and to strengthen research and academic work. Luambano and Nawe (2004:16– 19) noted that the communication technology has become a vital component of academic institutions as it plays a pivotal role in meeting the information needs of these institutions. They sum up the importance and benefits of the communication technology as:

- It increases access to information all over the world.
- It provides scholars and academic institutions with an avenue to disseminate information to a wider audience worldwide.
- It enables scholars and students at different locations on the globe to exchange ideas on various fields of study.
- It has enabled the growth of distant learning, both within nations and across international borders.
- It provides students and lecturers with a communication system that they can use to communicate with each other irrespective of distance.

Several other scholars have looked at the advancement of communication technology but very little has been done on language has been affected by culture in these communication technologies, which has necessitated this study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were:

- To establish whether culture changed the language used in communication technology by university students.
- Identify the most commonly used forms of communication technology by university students.
- How different cultures affect the language used in communication technology by university students.
- The different cultures and their varied effects on the language used in communication technology by the university students.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out amongst University students from Machakos University and Moi University who were recruited using a non-probability sample via Telegram, WhatsApp and email. The research instrument targeted the respondents' use of technology, their habits, their perceptions of face-to-face communication in the presence of technology, engagement both face to face and screen to screen, language used, which would help better answer the question of whether culture had an effect on language used in communication technology.

Field observations were conducted at three highly populated areas on both campuses, including dining hall, around lecture halls, and recreation areas.

These observations were conducted during heavy foot-traffic times, including in-between lectures and during meal times, when students would most likely be present and interacting with others.

A variety of different interactions between other students and technology were recorded, including those texting, chatting or talking on the phone, those browsing or googling on their tablets/laptops, those interacting with others, and those who did not have contact with devices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- 95% Of the respondents felt that the invention of new gadgets such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets has made communication easier and attractive while 87% noted that the culture and language used in the gadgets has easily been adopted by the students. This includes the adoption of the vocabulary therein and modelling a lot of the behaviour commonly depicted.
- 76% of the respondents reported that an embrace of traditional formal language was looked at as being backward, primitive and archaic.
- 93% of the respondents were of the opinion that the communication technology had evidently robbed the respondents of etiquette, pleasant and respectful language in their communication since they greatly embraced the culture portrayed in the technology commonly used. Examples given included use of disrespectful language among themselves and when talking to elders which is borrowed from the language commonly used in social media, movies and other forms of communication technology.
- 78% of the respondents argued that the different cultural backgrounds of the university students had made it impossible for them to collectively espouse the norms of each of the different cultures in as far as language was concerned. This left them with the option of embracing the language commonly used in the technology. They therefore were more comfortable using the non-standard language and vocabulary commonly used in communication technology. Social media for instance propagated the great use of

Sheng, English, slang and even coined vocabulary among the students both in social and academic interactions. This has influenced their communication to a great extent.

- 58% of the respondents felt that the liberal culture of the youths has systematically eroded the respect that the youths once had as they talked to the elders. The short forms of language used in communication technology rob it of the necessary polite and respectful words and sentences. Formal language has tended to be pushed back and in its place the jargon used in communication technology which does not adhere to grammatical rules has taken its place. However, 48% of the respondents felt that individuals from cultures that had sound morals used civil language when using communication technology.

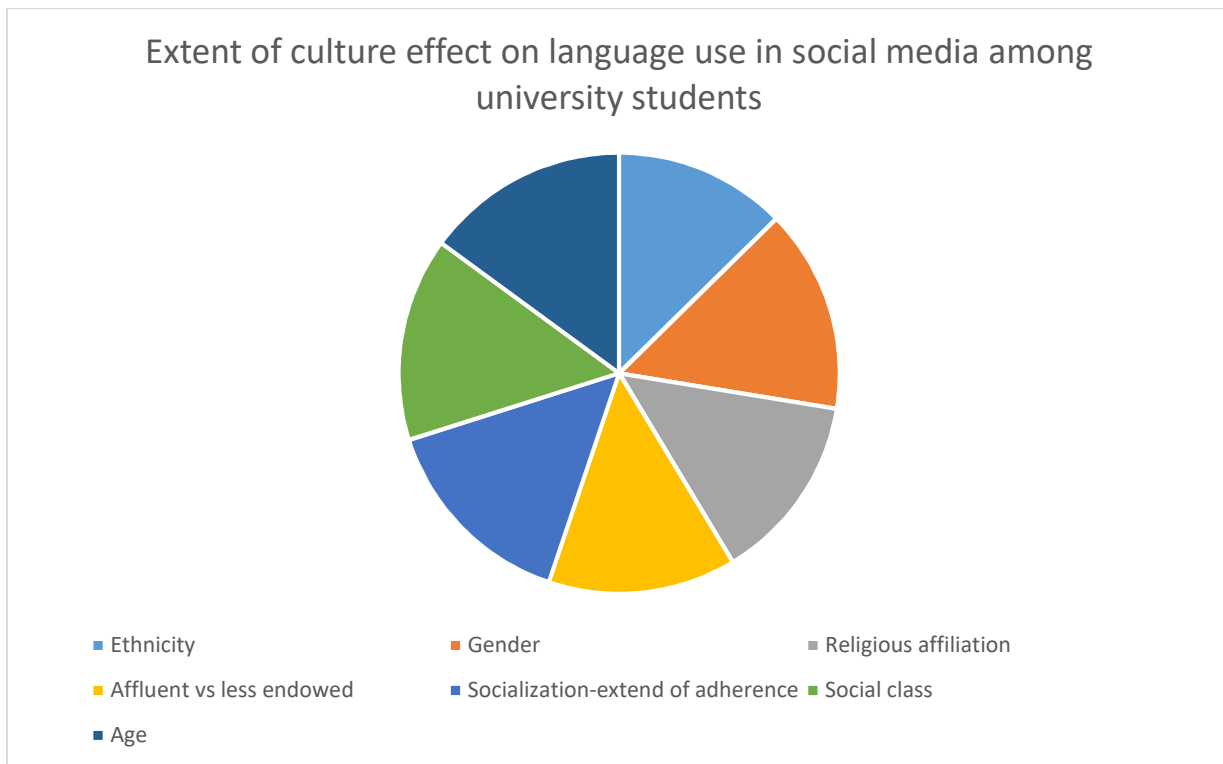


Table 1: Summary of findings

Finding	Percentage
Invention of new gadgets such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets has made communication easier and attractive	95%
The culture and language used in the gadgets has easily been adopted by the	87%

students

An embrace of traditional formal language was looked at as being backward, primitive and archaic 76%

The communication technology had evidently robbed the respondents of etiquette, pleasant and respectful language in their communication since they greatly embraced the culture portrayed in the technology commonly used. 93%

The different cultural backgrounds of the university students had made it impossible for them to collectively espouse the norms of each of the different cultures in as far as language was concerned 78%

Respondents felt that individuals from cultures that had sound morals used civil language when using communication technology. 48%

Respondents felt that the liberal culture of the youths has systematically eroded the respect that the youths once had as they talked to the elders. The short forms of language used in communication technology rob it of the necessary polite and respectful words and sentences. Formal language has tended to be pushed back and in its place the jargon used in communication technology which does not adhere to grammatical rules has taken its place. 58%

The most commonly used forms of communication technology included:

- Cellular systems such as mobile phones, tablets , laptops,
- Wireless networks such as internet, Skype , YouTube
- Most students used mobile phones on which they engaged on WhatsApp, Short-Message-Service(SMS), Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, making phone calls, Skype, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, SnapChat, e-Mail.

Social media

Percentage

WhatsApp

97%

Short-term age-old Ice (SMS)	86%
Twitter	41%
Facebook	93%
Telegram	52%
Instagram	68%
Phone calls	95%
Skype	8%
SnapChat	35%
YouTube	84%
LinkedIn	17%
Pinterest	23%
Email	93%

- They also used Laptops and tablets to access internet.
- Notable cultures included : (Ethnicity, Affluent vs less endowed and Socialization-extend of adherence to social class,age, gender and religious affiliation)
- Over 76% of the students identified with a given religion. The participants from religious background used more religious vocabulary like God, bless. The non-religious use curse words.
- Students from the urban cultures relied heavily on electronic technology and emphasized written messages over oral or face-to-face communication.
- The different cultures had varied effects on the language used in communication technology by the university students. There was radical shortening of words and increasing use of symbol and shortcuts, with little or no adherence to traditional grammatical rules in the language used.
- Standard English and Kiswahili language was no longer adhered to.
- Sheng was widely used since it was common among university students.

- Spelling mistakes were no longer a hindrance in communication language used.
- The language used was specific for the different cultures i.e. rural vs. urban depicted various forms of sheng depending on their towns and regions. This can be summarized in the table below:

Standard language	Social media language
By the way	btw
Family	fam
Love	luv
Come	kam
Facebook	fb
Direct message	DM
Oh my God	OMG
Laughing out loudly	lol
I don't know	idk
Police	popo
Shaking my head	SMH
Awesome/ cool	lit

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- From the study it was evident that culture had a great effect on the language used in communication technology by university students. The varied cultures dictated the type of language used in the communication technology. Some cultures impacted negatively on the language used in the technology. There is need to create awareness on the dynamism of language due to culture influence for adequate communication among individuals in varied situations.
- The most commonly used forms of communication technology were internet, multimedia, e-mail, telephone and other sound-based and video-based communication technology. Social media was noted

to be widely used in both social and academic circles. Therefore, policies that govern language used in these communication technologies should be put in place to avoid miscommunication.

- The different cultures impacted on the type of vocabulary used, sentence structures, contracted forms and the peer clusters among the students. It is therefore necessary to have rules in place to ensure acceptable formation of the new vocabulary and sentence structures.
- The study revealed that the evident cultures included: ethnicity, affluent vs less endowed and socialization—extent of adherence to social class, age, gender and religious affiliation. These cultures had specific language used among them especially in terms of register. There should be a standard pool of vocabulary from the various cultures to create effective communication among the university students.

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