

LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND THE NORTH EAST INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language becomes an integral content of social media and its effects whether adverse or conducive have caused concern for academic research all over the world which is mostly referential for developing societies through studies that seem to lay a greater stress on the negativities of social media. Despite the fact that no primary data is used for the study, the specific aim of the study is to create a critical jargon in socio-scientific analysis especially for lesser technically advanced areas like India's North-East. The significance of the study, though mainly formulated through literature review, lies in the fact that it brings into fore the scope of social media research in India's North East which is still a land locked terrain to a great extent and a virgin area in this particular field of research.

In today's shrinking world of 'post truth' and 'virtual communities' fostered by the boom in cybernetics, social media unabashedly serves as the easiest means of disseminating and dismantling information on everyday life ranging from personal, political, social, cultural, medical to the world of glamour and paparazzi creating a deep impact on human behaviour of all ages specially the youth (Ahmed, 2018). In taking a post-theory perspective of rejection of narrative and the questioning of the post structural and postmodernist notion that reality is entirely a linguistic construct, the correlation between language and social media seems to be an interesting point of interpretative departure. In the language literature dichotomy as defined by Rebecca Raglon and Marian Scholtmeijer in Lane (2013) in their piece "Language, Literature, and Nature's Resistance to Narrative" language plays the role of 'world-forming'

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whereas literature is responsive to other worlds, making ‘countervailing gestures’ or oppositional statements that counter anthropomorphism. The language of social media reflects the same idea at a cruder or non-intellectual level by making all forms of ideas available to the masses. The international communities of language analysis rely on a lingua franca for foregrounding their linguistic research but with the advent of social media in 1995 the dependence on lingua franca has changed invariably as members of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds interact online with one another on a daily basis. However, English has ruled as the dominant lingua franca internationally ever since the advent of social media. Currently, due to technological advancements, the exchange of ideas between people of different linguistic backgrounds have significantly increased frequently through virtual connection links making it imperative to breach linguistic barriers and create a common language for mutual understanding. The recourse to an alternative language like a pidgin dialect originated in what is known as lingua franca: an intermediary language spoken by speakers of different linguistic backgrounds (Sheilhofer, 2005). The present economic predomination of the United States of America and the United Kingdom’s widely expansive colonial past account for the dominance of English language as the international lingua franca. Kachru (2007) defines English speakers in three categories or circles – inner, outer and expanding circles. These circles are applied to the country of origin of the speakers in order to determine their place as users of English. The inner circle in his analysis consists of the ‘native’ speakers of English such as USA, UK, Canada, Australia and others whilst the members of the outer circle belong to the erstwhile English colonies such as India, Nigeria, Philippines and others where English is the second language. Further, Kachru includes Russia, China, Japan, Iceland and so on in the ambit of the expanding circle where English is taught as a foreign language. However, the complex language environments of bilingualism and multilingualism are not a part of Kachru’s analysis. Social media has added a larger proficiency for English among people who belong to the outer and expanding circles.

With the initiation of *Facebook* in the year 2005, people’s interaction with one another via social media escalated at a tremendous rate. Social media in its current form began its development in the 1980s under the forms of *Bulletin Board System* (BBS), *UseNet* and *Internet Relay Chat* which can be mentioned as the precursors of today’s cyber network of social interactions. Currently social media is divided into three main categories: