

Linguistic Changes in New Media

- from chat style to hash tag poetry

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This article addresses the question of how language use and interaction in new media are affected by technological and social circumstances and affordances. The first part of the article outlines some of the central characteristics of interaction in new media and discusses the term “medialect” as a way to understand linguistic changes in new media. The second part of the article offers a brief introduction to central areas of research in computer-mediated communication and discourse. Finally, the article’s third section proposes a way to map linguistic changes in new media at two different linguistic levels. This review of salient linguistic changes is followed by a presentation and discussion of a recent survey of 533 respondents’ use of and attitudes towards some specific examples of medialect such as the smiley, the heart-icon, and certain abbreviations and alternative spellings. The survey shows that some new forms of language use are generally tolerated, for example hesitation dots, the smiley and the heart-icon. This tolerance does not count for *netspeak* in e-mail though, nor for uses of a smiley by official authorities like the police or social workers.