Gretchen McCulloch
Because Internet:
Understanding the New Rules of Language
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The explosion of informal writing is changing the way we communicate. The norms that we worked out for books and newspapers don't work so well for texts and chats and posts (p. 7).

In writing we often make language more efficient by selecting just a few important letters.
- The Romans used SPQR
- Medieval scribes created the & ampersand
- Increased interest in classics during the Renaissance resulted in e.g. and ibid. (in the same reference already cited)

Acronyms began flourishing during WWII when soldiers used acronyms like AWOL, snafu (situation normal all fucked up /// used by professors in emails!), radar.

After the war, acronyms kept proliferating especially for organizations and new discoveries (NASA, NATO, AIDS, DNA). Many of these acronyms are used in technical and specialized communication to maximize efficiency (LAX = airport code for LA; ENGL 15; ENGL 420) (pp. 10-11)

A new kind of social acronym has come into use, based on conversational phrases rather than technical jargon
- btw
- omg
- lol
- tl;dr

Internet acronyms are a perfect example of the intersection between writing and informality. Internet English is a third language, an in-between language that shares features with both speech (conversation) and writing.

Writing is a technology
Writing systems are greatly affected by the tools available to make them...once we developed the technology to send any image anywhere, we used it to restore our bodies to our writing, to give a sense of who's talking and what mood we're in when we're saying things.

Research: 1-2% of people who post on Twitter tag their tweets with their exact geographic coordinates. A data miner can code up a county-level map of where Amwericans say *pop* rather than *soda*.
A researcher (Jacob Eisenstein) found that
Geo tagged tweets containing "hella" (*that movie was hella long!*) are most likely to occur in Northern California, while those containing *yinz* are clustered around Pittsburgh.
- Ikr (I know right) is popular in Detroit;
- "suttin" for "something" popular in New York City

Jack Grieve – lecturer in forensic linguistics at Aston University in Birmingham, UK – focused on swear words. He has created a detailed set of maps of the US showing strong regional patterns of swearing preferences.
Link (NOTE: do NOT click if foul language offends you)

Eisenstein and Pavalanathan: people used slang and emojis and other informal language more in tweets that @mentioned another user. The same people used a more standardized , formal style in tweets with #

The Oxford English Dictionary has begun using Twitter as a source of data.

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Women lead change
Research in other centuries, languages, and regions continues to find that women lead linguistic change, in dozen of specific changes in specific cities and regions. Young women are also consistently on the bleeding edge of those linguistic changes that periodically sweep through media trend sections, from uptalk (rising intonation at the end of sentences) to the use of "like" to introduce a quotation. The role that young women play as language disruptors is so clearly established at this point that it's practically boring to linguists who study this topic. … (p. 34)
What's less clear is why

Strong ties Vs weak ties
- ● Strong ties are people you spend a lot of time with and feel close to
- ● Weak ties are acquaintances who you may or may not share mutual ties with

The weak ties introduce the new forms in the first place, while the strong ties spread them once they're introduced.

The internet, then, **makes language change faster** because it leads to more weak ties.

Social networking sites that prompt you to interact with denser ties – people you already know and friends of friends – tend to be less linguistically innovative. It's not an accident that Twitter, where we are encouraged to follow people we don't already know, has given rise to more linguistic innovation than Facebook, where we primarily friend people we already know offline (p. 39).

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A digital language: Texting

Slang and abbreviations are used for very common words.
- ● "u" for "you"
- ● "Idk" or "dunno" for "I don't know"

In psychological terms, shortcuts are for ideas that we have overlearned.
We don't use abbreviations for longer, more complex words (p. 58).

Linguists Sali Tagliamonte and Derek Denis got 71 teenagers to donate the written records of their instant messaging conversations for study. Only 2% of the teens' messages were slang. What the teens were doing was more sophisticated: they intermixed the very informal features, like smiley faces and acronyms, with the very formal ones, using words like *must* and *shall*

Example:
Aaaaaaaaagh the show tonight shall rock some serious jam

Jeff says "lyk omgod omgod omgodzzzzZZZzzzzz!!!11one"

Heheh okieee! Must finish it now ill ttyl

Lol. . as u can tell im very bitter right now.

Informal
- Expressive lengthening
- Expressive punctuation
- Abbreviations

Formal / rare in teen conversation
- Shall (going to)
- Says (teens prefer *is like*)
- Must (have to
- Very (teens prefer *so*)

Teens deploy a mix of formal and informal:
This suggests that what they are doing is neither an imperfect transcript of casual speech nor a failed attempt at formal writing. **Digital conversations are a distinct genre** with its own goals. To accomplish those goals successfully requires subtly tuned awareness of the full spectrum of the language (p. 59).

Typographical Tone of Voice
We are creating new rules for typographical tone of voice. Not the kind of rules that are imposed from on high, but the kind of rules that emerge from practice (p.15).

In speech our baseline is the utterance, a burst of language surrounded by pauses. We don't talk in complete sentences unless we are giving a speech.

Question: How do we indicate an utterance in instant messaging? (p. 110)

If you hit send, the conversation flows better. Even in formal genres online (news articles) paragraphs have become shorter and are separated by a blank line rather than an indent as they are on paper.

Older people (whose norms are oriented towards the offline word) tend to use dashes or strings of dots (p. 111)

Example: Hey…how's it going…..just wondered if you wanted to chat sometime this week….maybe tuesday…?

McCulloch reports on a study of periods in 157,305 text messages.
We use periods to talk about weighty matters (p. 113).
It's a marker of **typographical tone of voice**

Read an article on the period: the [Period is pissed](#)!

How we add emphasis to our digital messages today is an interesting research area.
Linguist Maria Heath observes that happy messages are even happier when we use all caps

IT'S MY BIRTHDAY!!! feels happier than
It's my birthday!!!

Sad messages do not become any sadder (p. 115).

Another way to create emphasis online is by repeatingggggg letteerrrrssss (p. 119).

The most common lengthened words words on Twitter are sentiment words
- Nice
- Ugh
- Lmao
- Ah
- Love
- Crazy
- Yeah
- Sheesh
- Damn
- Shit
- Really
- Oh
- Yay
- Wow
- Good
- ow

Tyler Schonebelen named this "expressive lengthening"

People are not tied to phonological feasibility. They write things like
Stahppppp
Or
Omgggg

It's not physically possible to hold ppppp or ggggg for more than an instant.

People will lengthen silent letters writing "dumbbbbb"
These expressions have no spoken equivalent.
They are not made for talk; they are made for digital communication.

Politeness
Politeness literature offers several strategies for being nice and protect self- and other-face.

Two strategies are typical online
One is two use hedges, honorifics, or simply more words. Example:

"Professor, could I possibly trouble you to schedule a meeting?"

Another is to indicate solidarity, using endearments or in-group vocabulary
- Honey
- Mate
- Dude
- Luv
- Bro

Both of these strategies appear online.

Many internet acronyms make polite hedges accessible to slow typists:
- Iirc (If I recall correctly)
- Afaik (as far as I know)
- Imho (In my humble opinion)

Exclamation marks are not always used to indicate excitement.
How can they be used?

A 2006 study conducted by Carol W. (p. 124) found that in email exclamation marks were infrequently used to indicate excitement
They indicated friendliness 32% of the times
- See you there!
- I hope this helps!

And emphasized statement of fact another 29%
- There's still time to register

"Lol" takes on the polite function of laughter as a social lubricant.
Smileys can have a similar effect (see study of workplace messages by Erika Darics)
Example:
Everyone else has already submitted their report. You are the LAST! :)

Interpretation: The capital letters do not mean shouting and the emoticon does not represent a smile. Both can be seen as a friendly nudge; the emoticon is tempering the tone of the message.

Hashtags
They started out as a practical way of finding and grouping social media conversations about similar a similar topic

Today the hashtag is used for metacommentary.
- One linguist parent was delighted by her kid saying "hashtag mom joke"
Another example:
- My daughter just finished a sentence with "hashtag awkward"

This repurposing is not entirely new.
English has a long history of verbalizing punctuation
Example:
- That's the facts, period!
- There was a big question mark in her voice

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Emoji as Internet gestures (Chapter 5, p. 155)

Emoji comes from the Japanese
E (picture)
Moji (character)

There are thousands of them…and yet, the most commonly used sets are the faces and hands, like the smile, the face with tears of joy, the thumbs up…We use emojis less to describe the world around us, more to be fully ourselves in an online world. We do the same with gifs. Writing is a technology that removes the body from the language. Our bodies are a big part of the way we communicate!

If someone stamps into a room with a furrowed brow, slams the door, and proclaims, "I'M NOT ANGRY!" Do you believe their body, or their words?
If someone is crying but tells you "No, no, there is nothing wrong" What do you think?

How do we try to compensate in our life online?

Many gestures now have emoji equivalents
- Thumbs up
- Crossed fingers
- Rolling eyes
- Winking

Emojis were added through a hodgepodge of historic compatibility and individual request, not designed as a systematic attempt

Problem of emoji fragmentation: Different app or device manufacturers were displaying the same underlying emoji with different designs. 2018 was the year of convergence.

We do not use full-bodied avatars of ourselves.

What are the most common sequences of two, three, four emojis? Researchers found a lot of repetition.

Two tears of joy emoji; three loudly sobbing emoji; four red heart emoji.
Also present: Complex repetition like snow around a snowman or kiss face and kiss marks.

Repetitive gestures are known as beats. Emoji have the same rhythmic tendency as beat gestures
:-) were named emoticons

Kaomoji more complex (you don't need to turn your head sideways)
^-^ (happy)

¯_(ツ)_/¯ Shruggie

Emphasis on the eyes important because of a broader cultural difference in how emotions are represented. Asian users tend to make conclusions about the emotions based on what people are doing with their eyes.
Manga and anime vs Western cartoons