

## Language Evolution in Bookish Social Media: A Netspeak Analysis of Booktok, and Bookstagram

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the evolution of language on Bookstagram and BookTok using digital ethnography to analyze posts from popular content creators. By employing content and thematic analysis, the research examines how Netspeak, consist of acronyms, emoticons, and abbreviations, reflects online language and identity. The findings reveal that #Bookstagram prefers emojis and a formal, literary style, while #BookTok adopts unique linguistic traits such as symbols and a lack of punctuation, reflecting a more conversational tone. These differences highlight the role of Netspeak in encouraging interaction, sharing literary experiences, and building a sense of community in online book discussions. The study shows the impact of internet culture on communication practices, illustrating the dynamics of identity and community in digital spaces. Ethical clearance was obtained, and permissions were secured from content creators, ensuring compliance with ethical standards and respect for intellectual property rights. This research provides valuable insights into how digital spaces shape language use and community building within online book communities.

**Keywords:** *booktok; bookstagram; netspeak; online book community; social identity*

### INTRODUCTION

Social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have created a variety of "reading formations" and online communities where book lovers from around the globe can connect and discuss stories, characters, and themes (Thomas, 2021). Social media has had a huge impact on the book industry, creating a new generation of readers and offering a forum for sincere dialogue and community development. People's interactions with books and reading have changed dramatically in the digital age. Online reading communities have transformed the idea of reading as a solitary, book-page-only hobby into a dynamic, collaborative experience. The development of social media platforms, like BookTok and Bookstagram, has transformed the way individuals interact with literature and express their passion for reading (Dezuanni et al., 2022; James, 2022; Rozaki, 2023)

The phenomena like #Booktok and #Bookstagram has a big impact on how people interact and talk about books. These phenomena have not only given readers a place to express their opinions and suggestions, but they have also helped the terminology used in the book community

to change (Dubroc, 2021; Lo, 2020). #Booktok and #Bookstagram has become the online book communities that bring together readers, writers, and critics to discuss, review, and recommend books.

The rise of these platforms has a significant impact on how books are discussed and recommended. #Booktok itself is a hashtag that represents an online book community created by content creators on TikTok and their followers. #Booktok is also a video-sharing platform, allows users to create short, engaging clips that showcase their favorite books, encapsulating the essence of a novel in just a few seconds (Rozaki, 2023). The format of #Booktok content itself is mostly videos in which the creator content provides book reviews or recommendations or just ordinary videos that show fragments of the contents of the books being reviewed and recommended. There are also videos that have no words, only aesthetic images to represent the contents of the book.

Meanwhile, #Bookstagram has transformed book covers into visual art and made aesthetic themes and stylized photography integral to book promotion. #Bookstagram is a hashtag and online book community located on Instagram. Unlike TikTok whose content is almost all video, #bookstagram has more content in the form of photo posts that are decorated as best as possible (Thomas, 2021). Language evolution has also been influenced by the visual aspect of #bookstagram. Beautiful photos and insightful words are a common addition to “bookstagrammers” postings. Bookstagrammers is the content creator in Instagram that create #Bookstagram content. Bookstagrammers have given the book community a new way to communicate language by using visually appealing fonts, emojis, and creative layout. Captions are expertly written to express feelings, viewpoints, and suggestions, improving the reader's experience as a whole.

#Bookstagram also reviews more books than #Booktok. However, this review from #Bookstagram itself becomes a recommendation for followers. #Bookstagram is also can be seen as a place for authors to promote their books. Marketing on #Bookstagram is used more than on other platforms. Unique hashtags including #shelfie, #bookishflatlay, and #currentlyreading were also established by bookstagrammers and have since gained popularity and widespread use among the #bookstagram community (Dezuanni et al., 2022). Book enthusiasts can interact with each other and share experiences by using these hashtags as shortcut to express particular themes, emotions, or book-related activities.

New words and slang terminology unique to the reading community are emerging on these sites as part of language evolution. Users frequently invent and popularize new terms to characterize book genres, characters, and reading experiences. The terminology used in discussions and reviews can be significantly influenced by these terms as they soon become generally accepted

among users. These expressions express a feeling of acknowledgement and appreciation within the community in addition to capturing the core of the book. Furthermore, the language evolution of #booktok and #bookstagram demonstrates the book community's dynamic nature and adaptability to new platforms and communication styles. These online communities have not only given readers a place to interact, but they have also influenced how they express themselves and interact with books (Kokko, 2023). Inside these digital communities, book conversations have become a lively and interesting experience because of the introduction of new words, inventive acronyms, and aesthetically pleasing language.

As a result, in this study, the researcher looks into the world of bookish social media phenomena like #BookTok and #Bookstagram, where language undergoes significant shifts. The purpose of this study is to identify the precise netspeak components that are frequently used in book-related discussions on each platform by conducting a thorough netspeak analysis. Additionally, to examine how much the language on bookish social media represents the community's identity. Through a detailed analysis of how users effectively convey their ideas, eloquently advocate for books, and voice their opinions, we may learn a great deal about how language and communication have changed in the digital age.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Present Language in digital spaces has undergone significant evolution with the rise of "netspeak," a distinct form of online communication characterized by informal expressions, abbreviations, and stylistic innovations. This phenomenon has transformed how individuals interact, particularly within niche online communities. Existing research highlights the cultural and linguistic dimensions of netspeak and its role in shaping identity and community dynamics in virtual settings. Building on this foundation, the present study explores netspeak's broader implications for online book communities, contributing to our understanding of language adaptation in the digital age

### ***Previous Studies on Netspeak***

Netspeak is a topic that is increasingly being researched. However, in Indonesia, researchers have found little research on netspeak. Trimastuti (2017), analyze slang word in social media. Electronic media has emerged as a vital medium for communication since it makes understanding and communicating easier. However, because of certain grammatical problems in Indonesian, the used of informal expressions like "*alay*" had become problematic. The researcher examined the data from numerous social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and BlackBerry

Messenger, this study seeks to address this problem. Reducing the amount of time spent using “*alay*” language can assist preserve Indonesian communication standards and avoid miscommunication.

In addition, Tupamahu, Uktolseja and Gaspersz (2023) also examined the communicative aspects of Instagram, a visual social media platform, through the use of netspeak. It displays distinguishing visual elements such as turn-taking, proper spelling, and emojis. The study showed that written language development on Netspeak was helpful in overcoming expressive barriers in Instagram communication and draws attention to the complicated characteristics of data, such as informality and anomalies.

Another study also examined how netspeak was expressed linguistically on Facebook, focusing on status updates from Indonesia and India between December and February. Data was gathered from 727 users in order to identify netspeak categories, classify meanings, and determine the dominating netspeak. Syahfitri (2018) found that 34% of the text used formal language, 55% deleted vowels, 8% used numbers, and 3% used abbreviations. It was essential to comprehend social media language in order to keep up with the latest styles and trends.

In contrast to netspeak research in Indonesia, many researchers from other countries have researched netspeak in their countries as well as netspeak in general. Liu and Liu (2014) analyzed the neologisms from the new media era by looking at their characteristics and patterns of formation. It has been indicated that compounding, blending, affixation, acronyms, conversion, clipping, and old words with new meanings were the most often used word production methods. The variety of word construction techniques found in English netspeak neologisms may provide insight into the innovation of language used online. This study offered a useful database for language learners and scholars.

Several aspects of netspeak in Malaysian university students' Facebook interactions were also analyzed by Yeo and Ting (2017). According to the study, word constructions including homophones, word compression, omitting vowels, and negation were used in innovative ways in netspeak, a type of social media communication, to highlight main ideas. Furthermore, punctuation was modified to highlight intended meanings. Additionally, words from other languages that were borrowed into Netspeak were used, something the kids were not used to in their regular talks.

Monderin and Go (2021) also investigated the lexical patterns that were forming in Netspeak, a Filipino language that has been borrowed from the Internet, and how Filipinos used Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, concentrating on comments made by citizens on various sites. The results showed

that homophones and abbreviations form the majority of Netspeak features, with Twitter and politics having the highest usage.

Thus, deriving from all the previous studies above, this study aims to investigate how netspeak features are used on bookish social media platforms, particularly #Booktok and #Bookstagram, and to what degree the language employed there represents the identity of its community. This will be done by figuring out which netspeak components are most frequently used in book-related conversations on each platform, analyzing those components, and looking at how these components help to create a bookish social media community. The study will provide light on how language has changed in virtual book communities and how this has affected the development of community and identity. Moreover, the result may be used as a guideline for linguistics students, scholars, and researchers interested in understanding of how language has evolved in virtual book communities and how this has affected the development of community and identity. This research is also expected to contribute to the understanding of the impact of social media on language and identity and will be useful for linguists, social media researchers, and anyone interested in the evolution of language in virtual communities.

### ***Theoretical Perspectives on Netspeak in online book communities***

"Netspeak," also referred to as "internet speak," is a unique style of online communication that emerged from a combination of language and technology. This language phenomena is defined by the rapid development of acronyms, abbreviations, and new terms that allow for easily understood and effective communication within the limitations of digital interfaces (Crystal, 2001). David Crystal first introduced the term "netspeak" to characterize the language used in chat rooms and messaging apps. In order to speed up message typing, Netspeak combines acronyms, emoticons, and abbreviations. According to Crystal (2001), netspeak as a novel form of communication that combines text, speech, and electronically mediated features

Netspeak, sometimes called internet slang or online jargon, is widely used in online book communities. It refers to the informal language and acronyms that are unique to online communication. Netspeak has evolved as a way to quickly and efficiently communicate online, often with a focus on speed and convenience (Tupamahu et al., 2023). To help members communicate quickly and effectively, online book groups frequently create their own distinctive netspeak. Netspeak is widely used in these areas for book reviews, comments, and conversations. An abbreviation like "DNF" (did not finish) or "TBR" (to be read) might be used by members to indicate their reading experiences or preferences. Additionally, abbreviation phrases like "LOL"

(Laughing Out Loud) and "OMG" (Oh My God) are used in online book communities as part of netspeak to describe feelings or sentiments.

The cultural and social aspects of language evolution are also emphasized by analyzing netspeak. Online communities frequently create their own linguistic conventions, resulting in subcultural identities and mutual understandings. Through the study of netspeak, scholars can investigate the formation, development, and impact of these distinct languages on language usage in general. In general, studying netspeak offers a useful perspective on how language is continuing to change in the digital era. It explains how language adapts to new communication technology, how linguistic norms emerge within online groups, and how these changes affect language use in society.

### ***Stylistic Features Distinctive to the Netspeak***

To analyze netspeak in #Booktok and #Bookstagram, researchers need to know the stylistic features of netspeak. According to Thurlow and Poff (2013), stylistic elements in Netspeak are the different ways in which users modify language to produce original and distinctive communication styles in online contexts.

- a. Graphic features refer to the emoticon and emoji, acronyms and abbreviations, capitalization, typography and memes.
- b. Orthographic features refer to the spelling, punctuation, and other conventions of written language.
- c. Grammatical features refer to the shortened words, abbreviations, non-standard capitalization, lack of punctuation, and the use of emojis and emoticons.
- d. Lexical features refer to the unique words and phrases that are commonly used in online communication for example hashtag

### ***Theoretical Perspectives on Language and Identity***

Identity is the way that one constructs their linguistic belonging to one or more social groups or categories (Kroskrity, 2000 as cited in Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021). Social identity is linked to the social category that an individual belongs to, which encompasses not just their ethnicity but also their situational function. Social identity also refers to a person's perception of who they are depending on their group membership(s). Tajfel and Turner (2004) suggested that belonging to a group was a major source of pride and that a person's sense of collective identity is derived from their group membership. Every person has the ability to belong to numerous groups. The majority of individuals would prefer to be able to identify themselves as belonging to one group on certain

occasions and another group on other occasions. Since language reflects our social standing, cultural background, and group affiliations, it is also extremely important in forming our identity. Our language can be a symbol of our national, ethnic, or regional identity and can identify us as members of specific communities. Therefore, in order to distinguish it, specific communicative techniques like the use of silence, greeting formulae, or gaze, as well as the employment of specific lexical forms or linguistic variations, may help identify a speaker (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).

## **METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

This research is qualitative research combined with digital ethnography as a data collection method. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as text, video, or audio, to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Mackey & Gass, 2021). Qualitative researchers also can provide essential insights into complicated phenomena and help to develop theories and knowledge of human behavior.

### ***Research Site and Participants***

Ethnography is generally conducted over extended periods through participant observations and deep interactions with community members, resulting in rich, "thick descriptions" of their lived realities documented in field notes (Bailey, 2007; Coleman, 2010; Geertz, 1973; Murthy, 2008, as cited in Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017). However, unlike traditional ethnographies, digital ethnography involves observing internet interactions without physical travel, typically conducted from a computer. Digital ethnographers process texts and graphics available online, interpreting their meanings. This method can include studying specific chatrooms, discussion groups, or virtual realities (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017). Thus, digital ethnography is a research method that involves studying and understanding the behavior, practices, and interactions of individuals and communities in digital spaces. It combines traditional ethnographic techniques with digital tools and technologies to explore online cultures, virtual communities, and digital experiences. The data is selected from two popular content creators on TikTok and Instagram. These content creators have amassed thousands of followers and consistently appear when one searches for the hashtags #Booktok or #Bookstagram. Ethical clearance for this research has been obtained. Permissions were secured from content owners, specifically @erinsbookdiary and @auioueioua, ensuring compliance with ethical standards and respect for the intellectual property rights of the content creators.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The data collection techniques were carried out through content analysis method through TikTok and Instagram using the hashtags #Booktok and #Bookstagram. According to Krippendorff (2018), this method systematically reads a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter. Thus, the data will be collected through posts with the hashtag above and also from the comments column and will be categorized according to Stylistic Features Distinctive to the Netspeak according to Thurlow and Poff (2013). Thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated and rarely-acknowledged, yet widely-used qualitative analytic method (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006), and although qualitative approaches are incredibly diverse, complex, and nuanced (Holloway & Todres, 2003), thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. Therefore, this research utilized thematic analysis to examine how Netspeak, characterized by elements like abbreviations, hashtags, and emojis, reflects identity and stylistic features within the #Booktok and #Bookstagram communities. The analysis process involved thoroughly reviewing posts, comments, and interactions; systematically coding linguistic elements using Thurlow and Poff's framework; grouping these codes into broader themes; refining and naming these themes; and discussing them with supporting examples. This method highlighted how stylistic features of Netspeak contribute to identity construction and community building in online book discussions.

### **FINDINGS**

The findings reveal distinctive stylistic features of netspeak within online book communities, particularly in #BookTok and #Bookstagram. While both platforms share common traits such as the use of abbreviations, hashtags, and emojis, #Bookstagram emphasizes visually driven language paired with creative orthographic elements to align with its image-centric nature. Additionally, the study highlights how language on these platforms fosters identity formation and a sense of belonging within the bookish community. By utilizing unique linguistic styles, members express shared values, preferences, and social affiliations, illustrating the vital role of language in constructing collective identity in digital spaces. The data obtained are the posts and comments that appear with hashtag #Booktok and #Bookstagram. In addition, the table below is adapted from Tupamahu, Uktolseja and Gaspersz's (2023) research to help clarify this research.



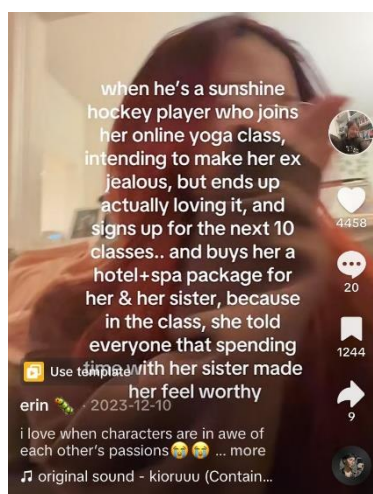
*Stylistic features of Netspeak in #Booktok*

**Table 1. List of #Booktok Stylistic Features**

Stylistic Features	Forms	Examples
Graphic Feature	Emoticons	シ
	Emojis	👁️👁️💀❤️👉👎👤👤♀️
	Acronyms	RN, hea
	Abbreviations	BC
	Capitalization	FINALLY
	Typography	Spóóns, Päntiēs. Heàdb()oard, Ridés, Fàce, Gláre, *hating*, *Üñá   ìvℓs*
	Memes	-
Orthographic Features	Spelling	Bvsiness, THAT’S, Soooooo, so gooood
	Punctuation	-
	Capitalization	PERFECT, CHOCKED, SHIP
	Abbreviations	MM
	Numbers	gr4bs, pi55ed, l0v3, rem0ve
	Symbols	bl\   sh, d&rken, kn—eels, [unalive], h()ld, Heàdb()oard, *Üñá   ìvℓs*
Grammatical Features	Shortened words	delulu, rec, arc
	Abbreviations	OMG
	Non-standard	I LOVE IT, FINALLY, SO so much
	Capitalization	
	Lack of punctuation*	
	Use of emojis	👁️👁️💀❤️👉👎👤👤♀️
	Use of emoticons	シ
Lexical Features	Chatbots and Virtual assistants	-
	Hashtags	#booktok, #bookboyfriend, #onebedtrope, #hockeyromance, #icehockey #hockeyboys #hockeyboyfriend #hockeyromancebook #forcedproximity

Stylistic Features	Forms	Examples
		#hockeybook
		#tbr
		#billionaireromanceread
		#arrangedmarriagetrope
		#bookrecs
		#steamyromance

Figure 1. The example of the use of punctuation in #Booktok



### Stylistic features of Netspeak in #Bookstagram

Table 2. List of #Bookstagram Stylistic Features

Stylistic Features	Forms	Examples
	Emoticons	-
Graphic Feature	Emojis	
	Acronyms	Tbr, mc, qotd, omg
	Abbreviations	Oooo
	Capitalization	THIS
	Typography	-
	Memes	-
Orthographic Features	Spelling	Oooo, girlie, LOVEEEEE
	Punctuation	-
	Capitalization	THIS, LOVEEEEE
	Abbreviations	abit



	Numbers	-
	Symbols	kidn@ps, kill\$
Grammatical Features	Shortened words	fav\$
	Abbreviations	Oooo, abit
	Non-standard	THIS, LOVEEEE
	Capitalization	
	Lack of punctuation	-
	Use of emojis	 
	Use of emoticons	-
Lexical Features	Chatbots and Virtual assistants	-
	Hashtags	#bookclubbya #booklover #boookishgirlschat #bookadiction #bookraffle #bookstagram #booktok #bookreview #christmasrecs #prettycovers #prettybookcovers

Figure 2. Content/post style of #Bookstagram

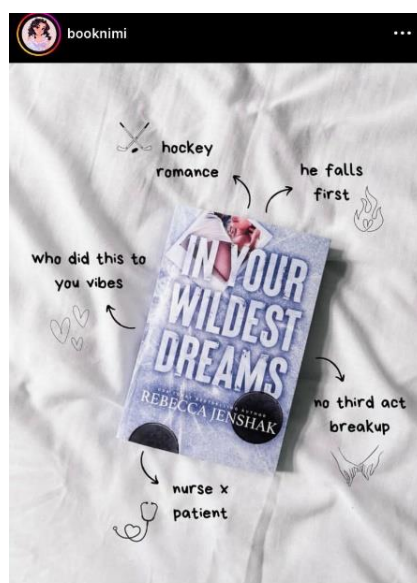
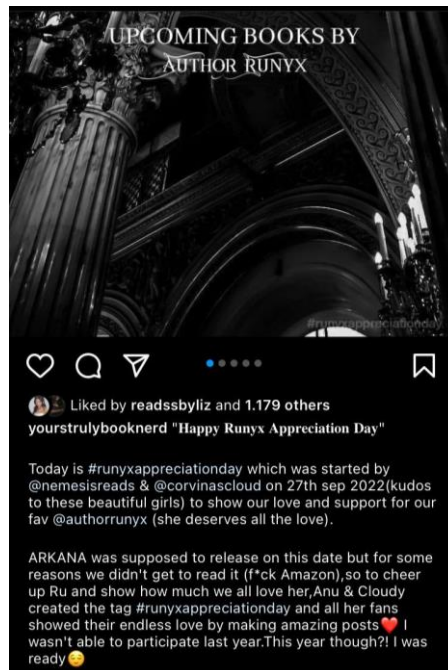


Figure 3. The use of formal language and emoji in #Bookstagram post.



## DISCUSSION

On #Booktok, four categories of stylistic features are filled with various variations of netspeak. In graphic and grammatical features, the use of emoticons on #Booktok is not much and the only one found so far is on the data above. This emoticon is also not only exclusively used on #Booktok but also can be found in many contents with other hashtags. In general, this emoticon is interpreted as a smile and is usually paired with the hashtag #fyp on TikTok. When combined, it will be interpreted as "good content for you and gives a smile to the person watching it" which is known as #fyp itself stands for "for your page". Meanwhile, emojis are widely used by creators and viewers alike. These emojis symbolize their emotions or expressions in conveying something.

The use of acronyms and abbreviations is widely used, especially found in the comment's column. This may be influenced by the character limit on this platform. The comment field on TikTok is limited to 150 characters so that the use of acronyms and abbreviations is widely used to express the intentions and desires of its users. There is a lot of capitalization in #Booktok content. Capitalization is frequently utilized to emphasize a point or other significant aspect of the books being discussed on #Booktok, as the platform is mostly used for book sharing and book reviews. Moreover, in the comments section by emphasizing the commenter's intention to read the book.

Furthermore, in the picture bellow, it can be seen that the use of punctuation or other punctuation marks in #Booktok content is very much ignored. This is because #Booktok is fun

content for sharing books by the creator and also the viewers thus, the use of proper and appropriate punctuation is ignored. However, even without proper punctuation, #Booktok content can still be read and the meaning that the creator wants to convey is conveyed.

In the #Booktok and #Bookstagram communities, language and identity are important factors. These online forums have developed into places where people gather to debate literature, exchange book suggestions, and express their identities as readers, while coming from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They play a significant role in shaping identities by providing a platform for discourse and interaction between members. The aim of these online book communities is to encourage people who live in the digital age to read.

Mostly centered around TikTok, the #Booktok community is where members make short films to highlight their favorite books, talk about literary topics, and take part in challenges relating to books. As creators express themselves through the language and accent of their choice, language and identity become entwined. In the #bookstagram community, which is centered on Instagram, people submit visually appealing book photographs, write reviews, and participate in debates via captions and comments. The language that users choose for their captions reflects their language and identity; they might write in their mother tongue, create bilingual captions, or utilize certain slang terms.

The formation of social identity on #Booktok and #Bookstagram is influenced by interactions with fellow followers and also content creators. As #Booktok provides content using video, it can be said that the social identity of the online book community on TikTok is by their choice in choosing video content. Unlike #Bookstagram, the online book community on Instagram may prefer content in the form of posts rather than video content. Thus, this represents the social identity of each follower of these two online book communities.

The comparison of the use of formal and informal language in the content of these two online book communities also represents the social identity of each user. As said above #Bookstagram uses formal language and style while #Booktok uses informal language so that users Thus, symbols in words or sentences are mainly showing in the content of #Booktok. Whereas in #Bookstagram, to balance the delivery of content with formal language, the use of emojis is widely used. This shows the difference in user identification from #Booktok and #Bookstagram which can be seen from the netspeak features they use. Nevertheless, social identity plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics and diversity of the #Booktok and #Bookstagram communities. These communities developed into lively forums for literary exchange and interaction by sharing their reading and interest in reading.

## CONCLUSION

A study of language evolution on #BookTok and #Bookstagram reveals some important findings. First of all, both platforms demonstrate the usage of netspeak, which is defined as the use of acronyms, emoticons, and abbreviations in written communication. The use of symbols and also the lack of punctuation are very clear in #Booktok. While the use of very many emojis is characteristic of #Bookstagram. This shows how internet culture has influenced language usage and the necessity of clear, expressive language in social media settings. The study also emphasizes how language creativity influences the vocabulary used in bookish social media. The use of informal language on #Booktok and formal on #Bookstgram is also a comparison between these two online book communities. Yet, on both platforms, users still coming up with new terms, expressions, and hashtags to share their ideas and opinions about books. This indicates how language is dynamic and flexible enough to fit into different online communities.

The study also reveals linguistic variations between #Bookstagram and #BookTok. #BookTok typically uses language that is more casual and conversational. #Bookstagram users, on the other hand, employ formal language and style while maintaining a creative and aesthetic photography post, demonstrating a more refined and literary communication style. These bookish social media platforms use language that constructs social identities in addition to reflecting the influence of digital communication and popular culture. In addition to fostering a sense of community and belonging among users, the language patterns seen on #BookTok and #Bookstagram can also encourage the sharing and exchange of literary experiences. In conclusion, the way that language has evolved on #BookTok and #Bookstagram illustrates how dynamic communication is in the digital age. The study highlights how language is changing in bookish social media and highlights how important it is to think about language as a contribution these online communities in shaping their social identity.

The research on language evolution in #BookTok and #Bookstagram offers valuable contributions to both academic fields and society. For academic fields, this study provides insights into the dynamic nature of language and its adaptation in digital communities, enhancing the understanding of netspeak and digital communication. It serves as a reference for further research in sociolinguistics, digital media studies, and communication, demonstrating how social media influences language use and creativity. For society, the research underscores the importance of language in shaping social identities and fostering community among users. It highlights how digital platforms can facilitate the exchange of literary experiences and promote a sense of belonging, encouraging more meaningful and engaged interactions in online book communities. This understanding can improve the way educators, communicators, and digital platform

developers approach language use in social media, promoting more effective and inclusive communication strategies.

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