

Research Article

<p>THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE A TEACHER/STUDENT APPROACH</p>		<p>Language Variation and Change</p> <p>Keywords: Language, teacher, student, social networks, classroom.</p>
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Abstract

People have always looked for novel ways to communicate with one another throughout human history. Humans once drew pictures to communicate their ideas; later, they began to utilize symbols and letters. Humans have utilized a variety of methods to communicate through speech and body language. In the past, individuals would transmit official or informal letters using special messengers; on other instances, notably during times of conflict, people would convey messages using birds. As time went on, industrial development produced a number of innovations, including the telephone, which was later superseded by computers, tablets, and cell phones. Regardless of the tools people employed, the necessity for communication persisted. As computer technology has advanced greatly in recent years, people have begun to use various platforms known as social networks.

INTRODUCTION

We have created two questionnaires to collect the necessary information about how students and their professors see linguistic developments in the digital era, particularly when taking into account the fact that they, themselves, can be regarded as netizens. We collected the data by using Microsoft Forms to collect anonymous responses from 32 students and 21 teachers who were asked the question stated below. The information is visually presented and subjected to detailed and comparative analysis.

METHODOLOGY

By giving examples based on the respondents' responses, the descriptive approach will be utilized to describe the phenomena of vocabulary change in a systematic manner. The major goal of applying this methodology will be to characterize the predominant views on the research topic. The existence of such a wide range of Internet usage that touches on vocabulary reconstruction in the Digital Age can be assessed and contrasted with the correlational method, which will be used to discover or establish the existence of a relationship/association between two or more aspects of the topic, such as what is the impact of different social, educational, and psychological aspects about the topic, which result in such changes, especially does generational gap has.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Student Data

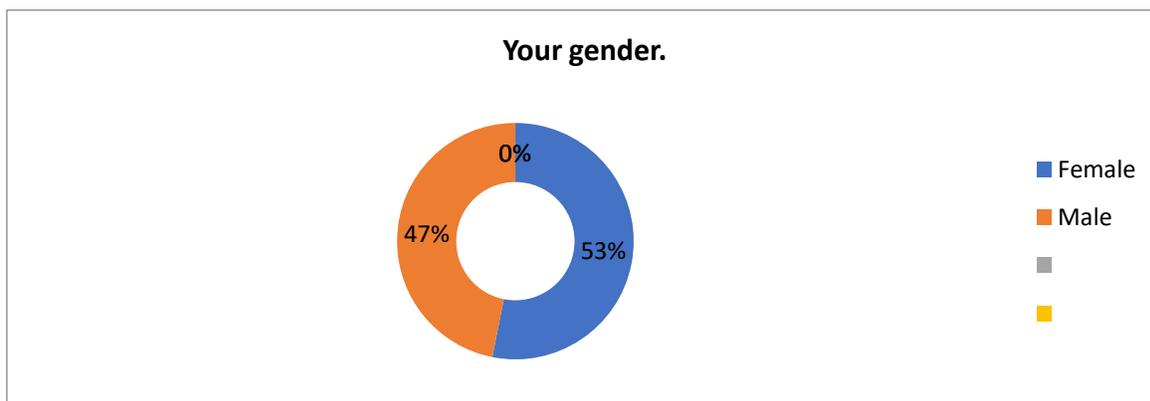


Figure 1. Data from the First Question

To obtain a complete overview of the object of study, we should approach the research from every possible aspect, one of which is to determine the gender of those we surveyed. This approach was especially important while dealing with students, for the fact that they are younger in age compared to their teachers, therefore, they are more prone to be influenced by the Internet storm. As we can from the Fig. 1, we have an almost balanced data from both genders, thus making the information more compact and complete.

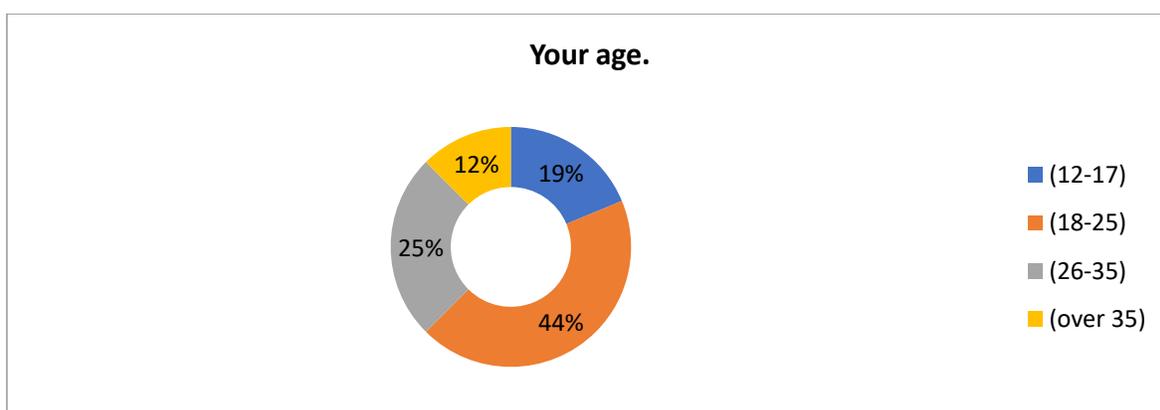


Figure 2. Data from the Second Question

Age is also very important considering the fact that young people are the ones who use the Internet more often. As we can see from fig. 2, if we take away the 12% of the respondents who were older than 35 years, in general, we can consider them all to be quite young and ideal for the issue at hand. This will be reflected through the data that we will analyze in the following pages. It is important to notice that almost half of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25.

This data is especially important when we put it in contrast with the data obtained from the educational workers.

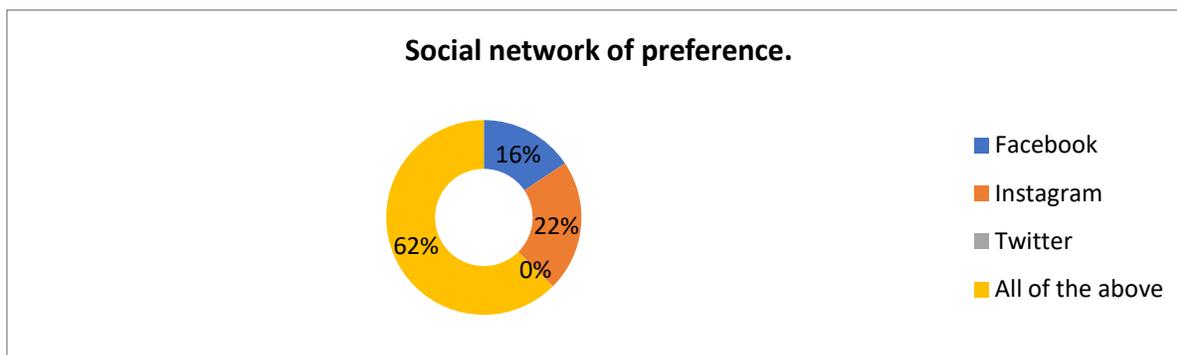


Figure 3. Data from the Third Question

This is the question where we start getting actual data related to how the respondents use the Internet, especially websites in the field of social networks. It is very important to notice that 62% respondent that they use all of the mentioned social media. There are two things we should emphasize in this respect. First, it is obvious that *Instagram* is the most popular social network that young people use, this is in accordance with the data obtained from the question regarding the age of the respondents. The second issue is related to Twitter; it is true that 62% said that they use all of the above social media platforms, nevertheless, we have high doubts that any of the respondents use Twitter to any important degree. This is supported by the fact that none of those surveyed have responded that they use Twitter in particular. But let us get back to *Instagram*; we should keep in mind that that particular social media platform is mainly based on sharing pictures than actually posting written text. All of this suggests that the usage of abbreviations and other similar ways of expression is crucial in this regard.

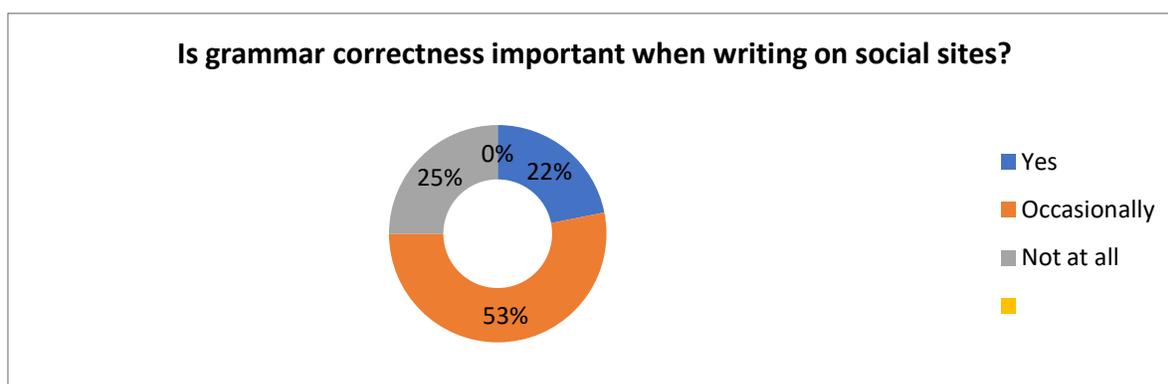


Figure 4. Data from the Fourth Question

This is where things get a bit problematic, at least when we analyze data obtained from the students. We state this for the fact that as we will witness later, these responses are in sharp contrast with those obtained from the teachers. 53% said that they care about grammar correctness only occasionally, whereas 25% said they see no importance in checking their writings for

possible grammar issues. A simple math adds up to 78% of those who care too little or not at all for proper writing of a given text. One issue we need to address at this point is the fact that we didn't specify the language that the respondents use when communicating with others. This was done on purpose for the reason that we know that the vast majority of those surveyed communicate in Albanian, nevertheless, we are aware that very often they use word abbreviations in English, therefore, if we comply all this things together we can easily say that the carelessness of proper writing applies to both the Albanian and English languages, and probably to any other language.

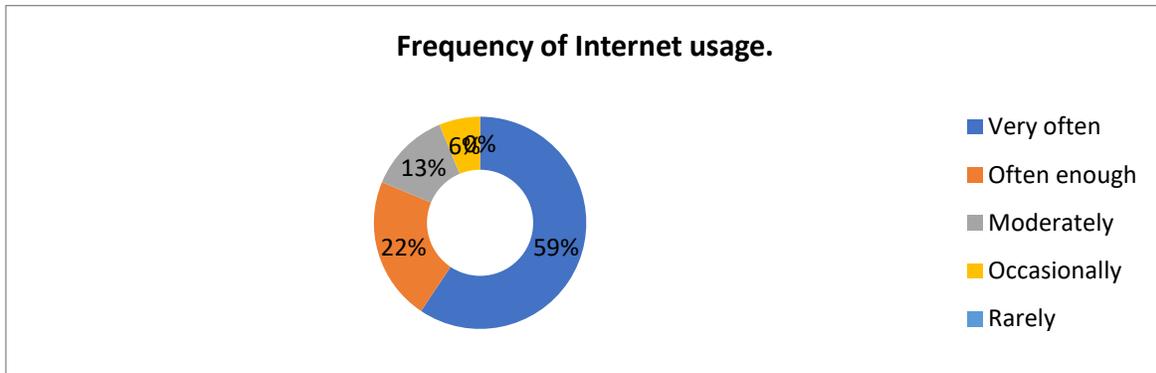


Figure 5. Data from the Fifth Question

As we can see from fig. 5, the vast majority of the respondents use the Internet very often, a fact that does not surprise us at all. But we can take it as a surprise the fact that none of those surveyed said they uses the Internet rarely. To be honest, we were expecting that at least a few of them would respond as such. Whatever the case may be the extensive usage of the Internet in general and social media in particular is of utmost importance because all these data suggest that nowadays the majority of people communicate through such platforms. This is especially important in the last few years when all humanity had to deal with the Covid 19 Pandemic, which made almost all of us use such mediums a lot more than ever before.

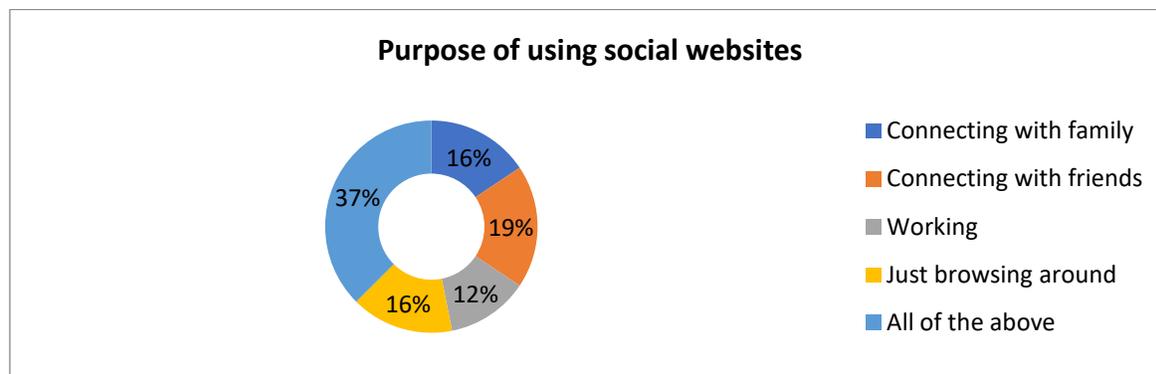


Figure 6. Data from the Sixth Question

We all have a purpose why we use something, using the Internet is certainly no exception to this rule. The data from the sixth question are self-explanatory as can be seen from the figure above. Regarding this question, it is of special importance to note the 16% who have responded that they just browse around the web. If we put this in correlation with the 37% that have responded with “All of the above”, the issue becomes a little tricky to analyze for the fact that that percentage is the largest of them all. Does that mean that young people just browse around casually? This is a question for further research, which I hope will be done in the near future. But without a doubt we can testify that the main reason why students use such sites is to stay in touch with others.

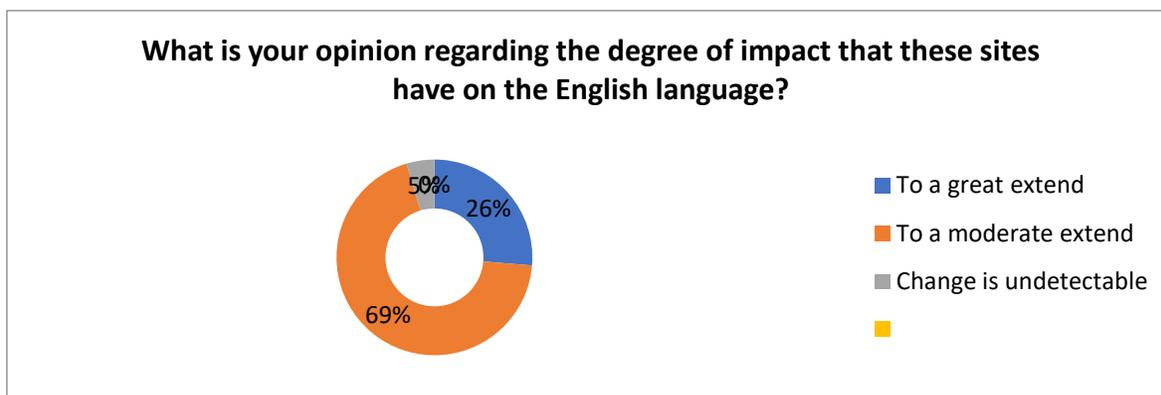


Figure 7. Data from the Seventh Question

69% percent is the number of respondents who said that the way we communicate through the means of the Internet will moderately affect the English language, while 26% are of the opinion that language impact will be a lot greater. This data is important if we consider that students are young people who mainly use social media for entertainment or communication with relatives and friends, and they cannot be considered as people who actually view these issues from linguistic point of view. Still, it is striking that despite that fact, it seems they are very aware that the language they use is going through changes and this is a very positive viewpoint.

However, if we compare this with the data when we asked about the importance of grammar rules during writing texts where we witnessed a problematic negligence. From this we can conclude that although students are aware of the changes in using a language, at the same time they don't seem ready to do anything about it.

	<i>Answers to question 8: “Do you think social and other communication sites have changed the way you use English? If yes, explain in which way.”</i>
1.	They change it in making it with shorter vocabulary.
2.	No
3.	Change in vocabulary.
4.	Vocabulary.
5.	By using more abbreviations.
6.	Vocabulary.
7.	Using symbols.
8.	Short sentences.
9.	Symbols.
10.	Vocabulary is different.
11.	No change.
12.	Language is symbolized.
13.	By using technology more often.
14.	No.
15.	Drastic change in vocabulary.
16.	Using word shortcuts.
17.	-
18.	By making communication quicker.
19.	Grammar.
20.	No change.
21.	No change whatsoever.
22.	Change in the way I communicate.
23.	No.
24.	-
25.	Vocabulary change.
26.	Great change in grammar.
27.	No change.
28.	Grammar change.
29.	Using abbreviations.
30.	Usage of technology.
31.	Grammar and vocabulary.
32.	Detectable change in vocabulary.

Table 1. Data from the Eighth Question

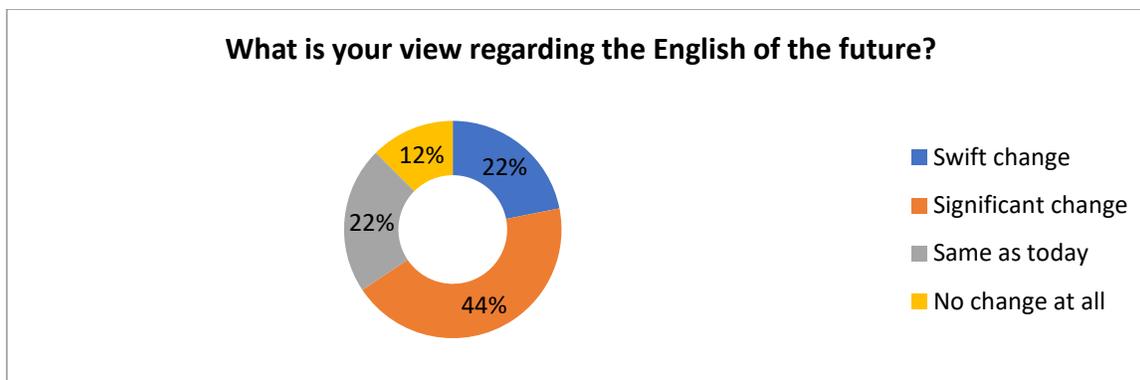


Figure 8. Data from the Ninth Question

The ninth question is in close relation with the seventh where we asked about the impact these websites have on the English language. Here we deal with how we see the future in relation with the possible expected changes. Let us start with the smallest number here. We see that only 12% said that they expect no change at all. This is a bit higher than the 5% who said that for now change is undetectable, nevertheless, here we deal with what we believe the future will bring, therefore data seem to be in accordance. Let us pay attention to the 22% who responded that they see language to be same as today. But let us be careful here, because that doesn't mean that they see no change at all, the thing is they do not expect any further important change. This is suggested if we compare data obtained from the seventh question.

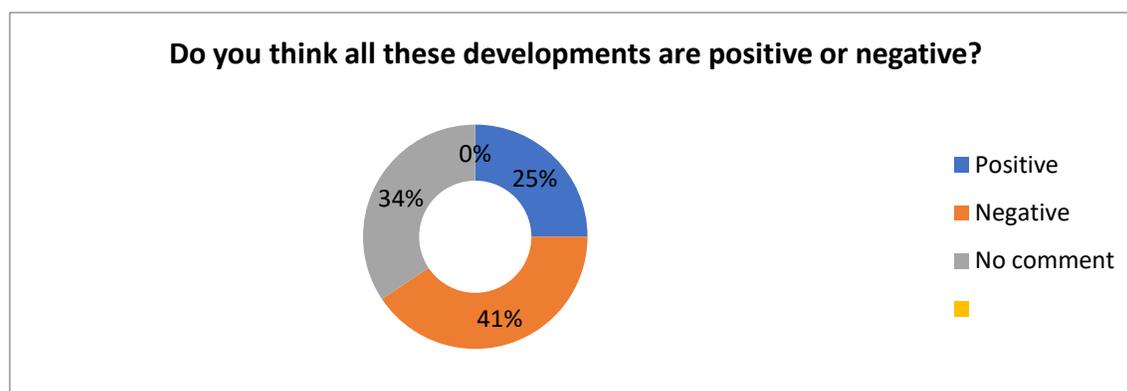


Figure 9. Data from the Tenth Question

After all, it all comes to this. Yes, it is obvious that changes are detected and they seem unavoidable. Yes, we all use Internet way of communication; we are all netizens in the end. But, the crucial things are, are all these changes positive or negative? If something is being used a lot, it doesn't have to mean it is good for the development of a given language. 41% of the respondents are of that particular opinion. Using shortened words and sentences, although it may seem to facilitate the way we communicate, but, on the other hand, many times it deconstructs the rules of

proper ways of writing, especially in the scientific field. The problem lies on the fact that when we teach our brains to read short texts and use abbreviated words, we will certainly face difficulties when reading longer texts. Moreover, these changes can help us adapt our language usage according to the faster way of living in the modern world, so seem to believe 34% of the students we surveyed. Whereas, some believe that, for now it is better to stay neutral and wait for what the future will bring, so at least think 25% of the respondents.

Teacher/Professor Questionnaire

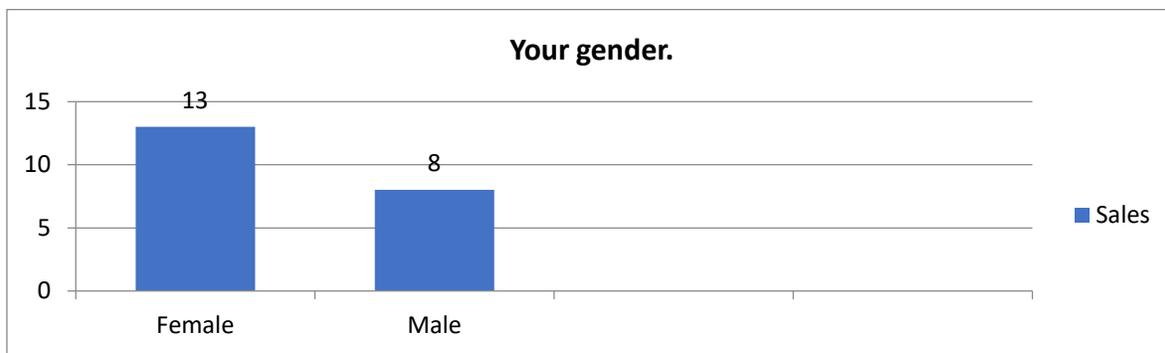


Figure 10. Data from the First Question - Teacher/Professor

As we mentioned before, to obtain a complete overview of the object of study, we should approach the research from all possible aspects, and one of those is to determine the gender of those we surveyed. The same approach was made when dealing with educational workers. This is important to see how both genders view language developments in the digital age, although that is not specifically what we try to achieve here. As we can from the Fig. 10, in contrast with the students, here have more female respondents; nevertheless, we don't believe it has a great impact on the aim of this thesis.

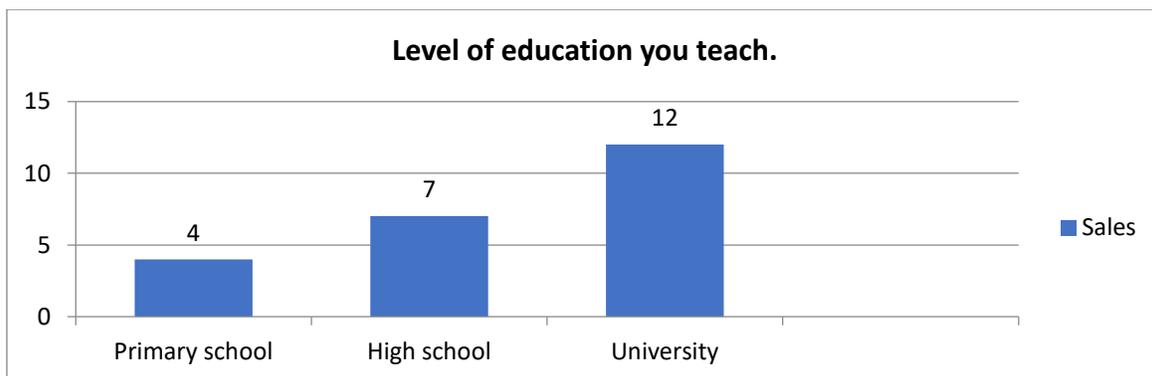


Figure 11. Data from the Second Question Teacher/Professor

Although we mentioned age as very important considering the fact that young people are the ones who use the Internet more often. As we can see from fig. 11, in this case we decided to skip that data and focus on the level of education that teachers/professors teach, for the fact that here we want to know how people in those professions view the issue of vocabulary change in relation with the youth which is the audience they teach. We can see that half of the respondents are university professors, thus making their responses more academic and more prone to be based on actual linguistic viewpoints of research. It is important to notice that 17% come from primary school. This is important because in this way we obtain data from the institutions where the youth begins dealing with language phenomena.

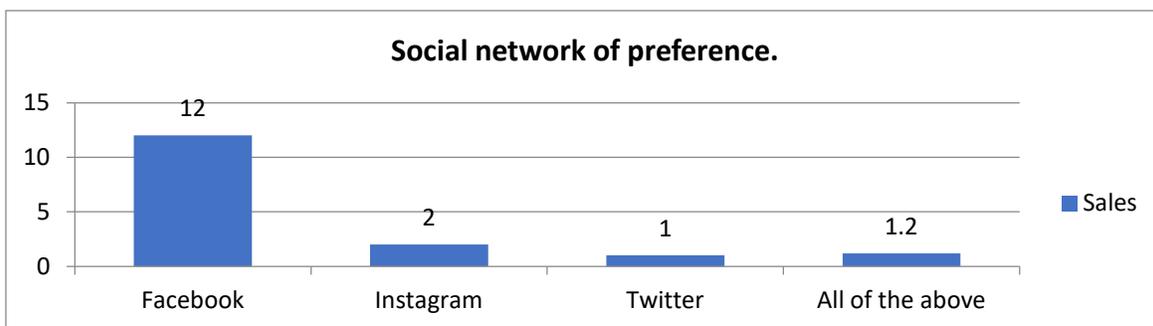


Figure 12. Data from the Third Question Teacher/Professor

Same as before, this is the question where we start getting actual data related to how the respondents use the Internet, especially websites in the field of social networks. It is very important to notice that 74% said that they mostly use Facebook. This is in accordance with other research that suggests that social websites such as Instagram are more widely used by the youth. There are two things we should emphasize in this respect. First, as we mentioned before, Instagram is the most popular social network that young people use, this is in accordance with the data obtained from the students. The second issue is related, again, to Twitter. We see that that 6% said that they use the platform and 8% said they use all of the above social media platforms, so, in this case, we may conclude that considering the nature of the platform, it comes as no surprise that people from educational working positions may use it. This is supported by the fact that none of those surveyed have responded that they use Twitter in particular.

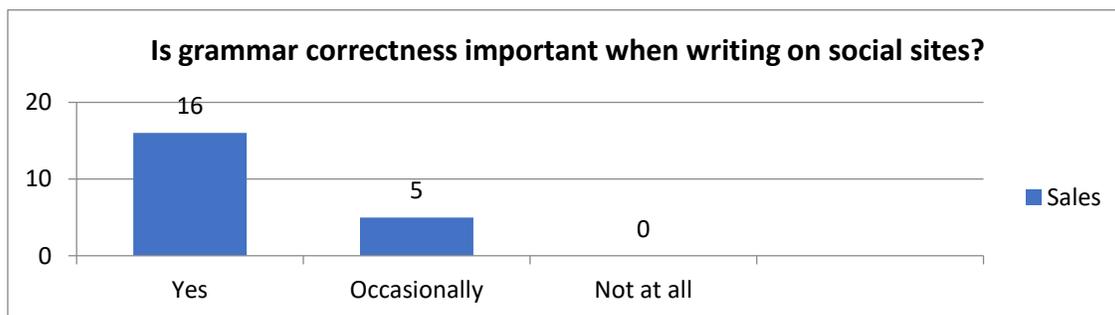


Figure 13. Data from the Fourth Question Teacher/Professor

As we put forward previously, this is where things get a bit problematic, at least when we analyze data obtained from the students. We mentioned that we will witness here that the responses from the students are in sharp contrast with those obtained from their teachers. As we can see from fig. 13, 76% said that they care about grammar correctness, whereas 24% said they pay attention to grammar occasionally. Here too, a simple math adds to 100% of those who care to write properly. Here too we need to address the fact that we didn't specify the language that the respondents use when communicating with others. As we stated before, this was done on purpose, for the only reason that we know that the vast majority of those surveyed communicate in Albanian, nevertheless, we are aware that very often they use word abbreviations in English, therefore, if we put all things together, we can easily say paying attention to writing within the boundaries of grammar is viewed very differently by the educational workers. Nevertheless, we should also mention a suggestive opinion in this regard and that is that we make a more specific research on this issue to see whether this is actually true or the respondents have stated as they did only to not be ashamed of their working position.

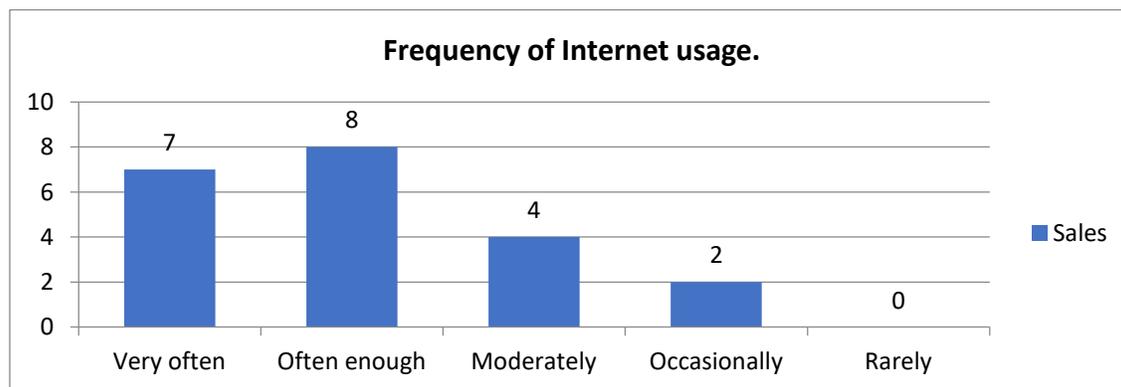


Figure 14. Data from the Fifth Question Teacher/Professor

As we can see from fig. 14, the majority of the respondents use the Internet often enough or very often, a fact that does not surprise us at all, same as with what we expected from the students. But, here, too, we may say we are surprised from the fact that none of those surveyed said they use the Internet rarely. To be honest, same as with the students, we were expecting that at least some of the teachers/professors would respond that they rarely use social media, although the true focus here is on the Internet as a whole. As previously stated, this is mainly due to the fact that in the last few years all of us had to deal with the Covid 19 Pandemic. But let us not ignore the 19% who said they use the Internet moderately, a fact that is different to a certain level compared with the students.

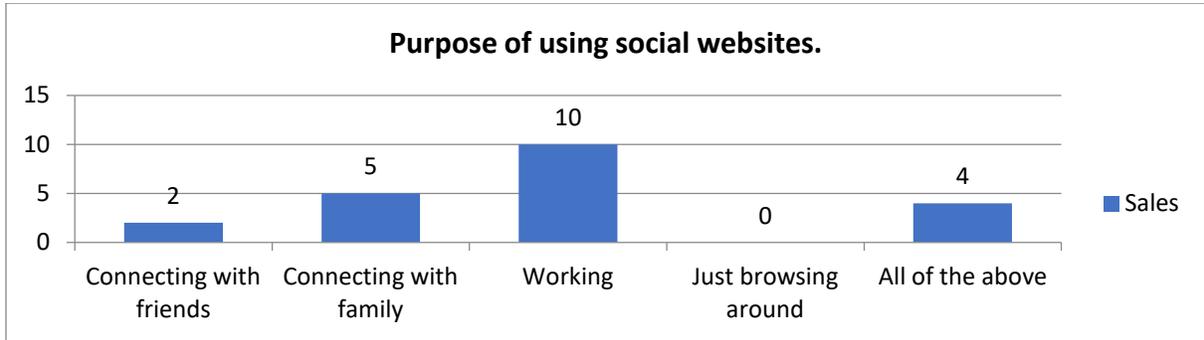


Figure 15. Data from the Sixth Question Teacher/Professor

It is true that we all have a purpose why we use anything and Internet usage seems to comply to this rule. The data from fig. 15 are self-explanatory. Regarding this question, it is of special importance to note the 48% have responded that they use such mediums for work. This comes as no surprise at all considering that here we deal with people who actually work and when keeping in mind that students use vastly the mentioned platforms, it will seem quite reasonable that their teachers/professors will use them to communicate with their students. If we put the other data in correlation with what the students have responded, we see a certain degree of compliance, which we believe is expected but, despite that, we should mention it for comparative purpose. In the end, without a doubt we can declare that the main reason why education workers use such sites is to facilitate their work and connect with family and friends.

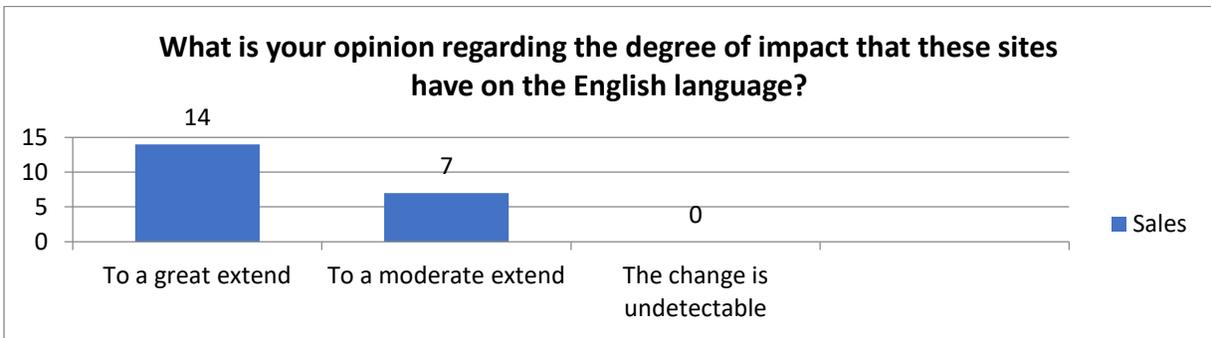


Figure 16 Data from the seventh question teacher/professor

67% of respondents said that the way we communicate will greatly affect the English language, while 33% are of the opinion that language impact will be moderate. This data is important if we consider that the results are totally the opposite of what the students responded. This can be expected, because, as we stated previously, students are young people who mainly use social media for entertainment or communication with relatives and friends, and they cannot be considered as people who actually view these issues from linguistic point of view. Still, it is obvious that both the students and their teachers/professors are aware that the language they use is going through changes.

However, if we compare this with the data obtained when we asked about the importance of grammar rules during writing texts where we witnessed a problematic negligence from the students, we encounter the sharp contrast in relation with the teachers. Based on this fact, we can conclude that education workers are aware of the changes that languages go through and are ready to do something about it.

<i>Answers to question 8: “Do you think social and other communication sites have changed the way you use English? If yes, explain in which way.”</i>	
1.	Vocabulary has gone through great change.
2.	Grammar rules have been ignored at times.
3.	Vocabulary is the most affected.
4.	A greater usage of digital devices for communication.
5.	Using mails for communicating.
6.	-
7.	Vocabulary.
8.	No change I can state.
9.	Yes, the changes are very obvious for the fact that although, personally, I may not want to use emojis or abbreviations for communication, still, those that use such things make it unavoidable for me too.
10.	Changes are more obvious in vocabulary.
11.	Changes are various.
12.	I tend to write shorter sentences.
13.	Grammar rules seem to be ignored sometimes.
14.	Don` t witness any change.
15.	-
16.	It made me move away from pen and almost fully embrace the keyboard.
17.	Emojis are the new way of expression.
18.	Shorter became even shorter.
19.	I am still trying to understand how GIFs work.
20.	Shorter means faster.
21.	Vocabulary changes are crucial.

Table 2. Data from the Eighth Question Teacher/Professor

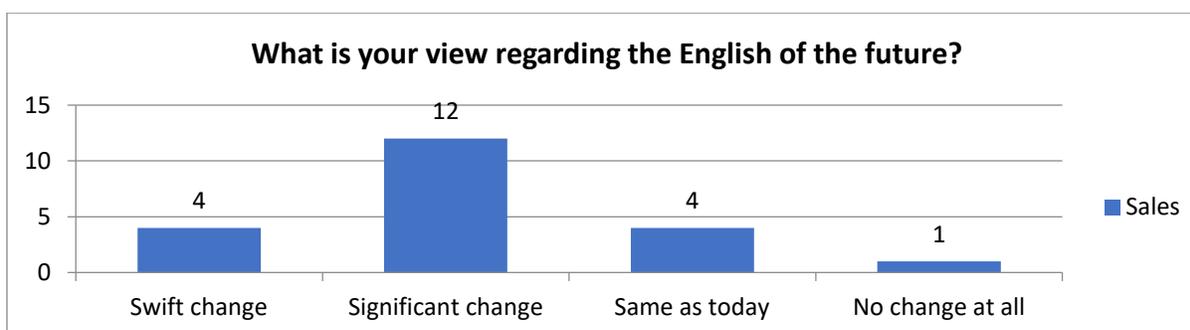


Figure 17. Data from the Ninth Question Teacher/Professor

Similar with the student's ninth question, we face a close relation with the seventh where we asked about the impact these websites have on the English language. Here too we will start with the smallest number. We see that only 5% said that they expect no change at all, so even a smaller number compared with the data from the students. Another obvious difference is that 57% said they expect significant changes, and if we add to that another 19% who expect swift changes, which for the sake of honesty, is the same as those who believe language will be the same as today, we can easily declare that teachers and professors view things differently compared to their students. This probably has to do with the fact that they view the problem more scientifically. Let us get back to the 19% who said that they expect language to be same as it is now. But this is more in correlation with those who believe in language change because data suggests that being the same does not ignore the actual changes.

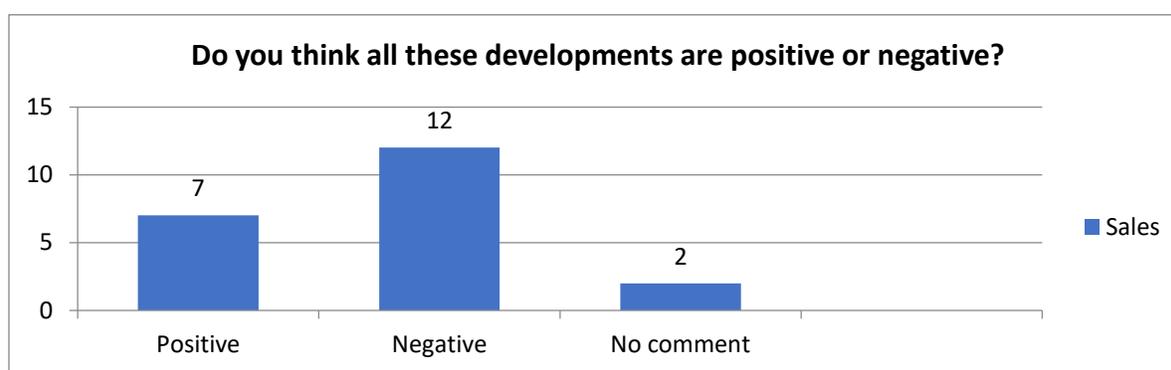


Figure 18. Data from the Tenth Question Teacher/Professor

57% of the respondents are of the opinion that most of the changes that languages go through are on the negative side of things. This is expected viewpoint from the academic people. If we were honest enough, we would say that we were actually expecting a greater percentage in this regard. This is based on what we said on the student questionnaire that using shortened words and sentences, although it may seem to facilitate our communication, making us write faster, in any case, on the other hand, this will certainly lead to the deconstruction of the established rules of grammar. Maybe in the future linguists will find ways to comply those rules in accordance with all these new developments, still, the way how language is viewed today, many of the changes we mentioned in this thesis pose serious obstacles to the proper use of the language. While 25% of the students decided to stay neutral in this regard, their teachers who share the same opinion seem to be less, at 10%.

CONCLUSION

English-language social media communication is driven by the desire to connect with others, express one's own viewpoint, and send or receive important information. As a result, it is an open dialogue, a spontaneous exchange of ideas, the application of certain life principles, and an active use of expressive and emotionally-estimated vocabulary, including epithets and metaphors, slang, and phraseology. The desire of users of social networks to express themselves honestly is influenced by the urge to break some standards for sentence construction, word choice, and the use of expressive, emotive, and highly prevalent in the Internet sphere terminology. The context, or the focus on the topic of discussion, and the desire to avoid semantically superfluous words (for example, auxiliary verbs or personal pronouns of the first person of the singular, which, if used frequently, is written with the capital I letter, drive the choice of each word made by representatives of the English-speaking Internet community. English-language Internet communication relies on an informal communication style and aims to draw others' attention to the speaker, their thoughts, knowledge, skills, and personal experiences. As a result, it is motivated by an expression of interest in the interlocutor, which significantly increases the use of question and exclamation marks as well as interjections.

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