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ENGLISH AND SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY (BASED ON TIKTOK)

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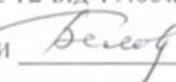
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АНОТАЦІЯ

Ця дипломна робота присвячена дослідженню грамотності онлайн-користувачів у соціальних медіа в контексті TikTok як однієї з найвпливовіших та найпоширеніших онлайн-платформ серед молодого покоління. Актуальність праці зумовлена популярністю TikTok та його впливом на сучасне розуміння поняття грамотності в соціальних медіа.

Об'єктом дослідження є грамотність в соціальних медіа, в той час як предметом є орфографічні, лексичні, граматичні, синтаксичні та невербальні особливості Інтернет сленгу.

Метою дослідження є розглянути рівень грамотності в соціальних медіа на основі порівняльного аналізу повідомлень користувачів та лінгвістичних засобів, які вони використовують для досягнення власних комунікативних цілей. Наукова робота базується на лінгвістичному аналізі орфографічних, лексичних, граматичних та синтаксичних, невербальних особливостей інтернет-сленгу як мови спілкування в TikTok. А також фокусується на прагматичних та соціально-лінгвістичних аспектах онлайн-комунікації, включаючи створення віртуальної особистості, самовираження в інтернет-просторі та комунікативні цілі користувачів. Дослідження базується на аналізі коментарів до коротких відео, взятих із TikTok.

На основі проведеної роботи можна зробити висновок, що грамотність в соціальних медіа включає різні компетентності, необхідні для ефективного спілкування в динамічному та інтерактивному середовищі TikTok. Швидкість обміну інформацією, популярні тренди та мовні тенденції стимулюють користувачів до змін у власних комунікативних практиках, спонукаючи до спрощення та креативності. На лексичному рівні це відображається у широкому використанні аббревіатур, різних видів скорочень та популярних сленгових одиниць. З боку граматики та синтаксису відбуваються спрощення граматичних

закінчень, використання еліпсису, паратаксису та фрагментарних речень. Зміни орфографії полягають у порушенні правил пунктуації, вживання великих літер та правопису слів, часто задля пришвидшення комунікації або як спосіб додати емоційного забарвлення повідомленню. Також характерною рисою є часте використання або супровід коментарів графічними елементами, такими як стікери, GIF, емоджі та емотікони, щоб більш ефективно та чітко передати емоції та почуття.

Останнім етапом дослідження було визначення та порівняльний аналіз комунікативних цілей користувачів TikTok. Результати роботи показують, що кожен учасник платформи переслідує певну мету спілкування і залежно від неї проявляє різний рівень грамотності в соціальних медіа. На основі аналізу мети комунікації та лінгвістичних і графічних засобів, які користувач застосовує, щоб досягти результату, можна сказати, що залежно від комунікативної цілі кожна група може показувати вищий, середній та нижчий рівень грамотності. Було досліджено, що певні групи можуть одночасно мати різний рівень грамотності учасників, що переслідують одну й ту саму мету.

Ключові слова: *грамотність в соціальних медіа, Інтернет сленг, TikTok, комунікативні цілі.*

ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted to the study of literacy of online users in social media in the context of TikTok, as one of the most influential and widespread online platforms among the younger generation. The relevance of the work lies in the popularity of TikTok and its influence on the modern understanding of the concept of literacy in social media.

The object of the study is social media literacy, while the subject is the orthographic, lexical, grammatical, syntactic and nonverbal features of Internet slang.

The aim of the study is to examine the level of literacy on social media based on a comparative analysis of the messages of users and the linguistic means they incorporate to achieve their own communicative goals. The scientific work is based on a linguistic analysis of the orthographic, lexical, grammatical and syntactical, and nonverbal features of Internet slang as a language of communication in TikTok. It also focuses on pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of online communication, including the creation of a virtual identity, self-expression in the online space, and communicative goals of users. The study is based on the analysis of comments as from the short videos found on TikTok.

Based on the conducted work, it can be stated that social media literacy includes various competencies necessary for effective communication in the dynamic and interactive environment of TikTok. The speed of information exchange, popular trends, and linguistic tendencies stimulate users to change their own communicative practices, encouraging simplicity and creativity. At the lexical level, this is reflected in the widespread use of abbreviations, various types of clipping, and popular slang units. From a grammatical and syntactical perspective, there is a simplification of grammatical endings, as well as the use of ellipsis, parataxis, and fragmented sentences. Orthographic changes involve violations of punctuation and capitalisation rules, and nonstandard spelling, often to accelerate communication or to add

emotional expressiveness to the message. Another characteristic feature is the frequent use or accompaniment of comments with graphic elements such as stickers, GIFs, emojis, and emoticons, in order to convey emotions and feelings more effectively and clearly.

The final stage of the study involved identifying and conducting a comparative analysis of the communicative goals of TikTok users. The results show that each participant on the platform pursues a specific communicative goal and, depending on it, demonstrates a different level of social media literacy. Based on the analysis of the communicative goal, linguistic and graphic devices that a user incorporates to achieve the result, it can be concluded that, depending on the communicative goal, each group may show a high, medium, or low levels of literacy. It was found that certain groups can simultaneously include participants with varying levels of literacy, even when they pursue the same communicative goal.

Keywords: *social media literacy, Internet slang, TikTok, communicative goals.*

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the concept of literacy has been defined as simply the ability to read and write. However, the beginning of the 21st century became the start of the digital era, with the emergence of online technologies and social networks that significantly changed the way humans interact. With the rise of social media, literacy had to expand its meaning to include the necessary skills for safe and effective navigation within the digital environment. Hence, social media literacy encompasses a wide range of competences, consisting of critical thinking, adaptability, information evaluation skills, production knowledge, content moderation, and cultural awareness. Moreover, TikTok, as one of the most popular and influential online platforms, especially among Generation Z, serves as a perfect context for the study of social media literacy. With its innovative tools, short form videos, fast paced communication, and interactive comment sections, it stimulates users to be adaptive and creative, therefore reshaping modern literacy practices.

The novelty of the research lies in its comprehensive analysis of social media literacy in the context of TikTok platform, focusing on the examination linguistic and multimodal devices that users incorporate, including the study of orthographic, lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and nonverbal features of TikTok messages, as well as communicative goals of TikTok users.

The relevance of the study lies in its analysis of how social media platforms, in particular TikTok, shape contemporary communication and language practices. It examines social media literacy by studying how users navigate, interpret, and convey meanings, interact, build communities, and produce content in digital space.

The aim of the research is to analyse the level of social media literacy and the competences it includes, based on the analysis of linguistic and multimodal devices, as well as the communicative goals people incorporate while communicating online:

The objectives for achieving the aim of research:

- to explore Internet discourse as a special type of discourse within digital environment;
- to examine social media platforms as the setting for social media literacy;
- to explore historical roots, definitions and characteristics of literacy, multiliteracy, digital literacy and social media literacy;
- to explore TikTok as the most influential and popular online platform across younger generations;
- to examine orthographic features of the messages of TikTok users;
- to study lexical features and word formation processes in Internet slang;
- to explore grammatical and syntactical features of messages of TikTok users;
- to examine how users incorporate various graphic elements to convey emotions and support their messages;
- to analyse the communicative goals of TikTok users.

The object of the study is social media literacy on TikTok.

The subject of the study are linguistic features of TikTok communication, including orthographic, lexical, grammatical, syntactical and nonverbal characteristics of Internet slang, as well as communicative goals of TikTok users.

Research methods are based on critical and descriptive analysis of theoretical scientific works on Internet discourse, social media platforms and literacy practices. The methods of linguistic analysis were used for a systematic examination of language at multiple levels, while the pragmatic research methods were applied to study communicative goals of TikTok users.

Research material: 104 short videos from TikTok, 12 pages of TikTok users, 420 comments from TikTok videos.

The structure of the work. It consists of an abstract, introduction, two main parts: theoretical and practical, conclusions to these parts, general conclusion and references.

1. English Language and Literacy in the Digital Space

1.1 Characteristics of Internet Discourse

The appearance of Internet discourse as a new form of interaction is closely tied to the emergence of the Internet as a means of mass communication and information exchange. Its history dates back to the late 1960s, when it was developed as a technological project for military and scientific purposes. Over time, however, the Internet expanded into various spheres of social life and gradually became a universal tool for disseminating information. Eventually, it evolved into a digital communicative space that reshaped traditional modes of interaction and enabled new forms of online communication [5, pp.8-10]. As virtual space became an inseparable part of everyday human life, communication increasingly shifted to the online environment. This transformation made the analysis of Internet discourse particularly important, as it allows researchers to trace the development of the modern English language in digital contexts.

Many scholars have turned their attention to the rapidly developing field of Internet linguistics. One of the key figures of early online communication research is Susan Herring, a linguist and communication scholar from the United States. She introduced the term Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), which was initially used as the title of a Georgetown University Round Table (GURT) workshop she organized in 1994. Then, later in 1996, Herring defined Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), describing it as communication between human beings conducted with the help of technological means such as computers [39]. Although she continues to use the term CMC, later she writes that computers are no longer the only form of interaction, as voice calls and television-mediated text communication also play an important role. Therefore, alternative terms such as “Internet language”, “Internet communication”, and “online discourse” have emerged [38].

Alongside Herring, one of the most prominent researchers in this area is David Crystal, who is considered a pioneer of linguistic studies of digital communication.

Crystal focused on how language is used in various online environments such as e-mails, chat groups, and virtual worlds, emphasizing that each of these contexts follows its own rules and patterns. He introduced the term Netspeak to describe Internet language, defining it not as purely spoken or written, but as a combination of both. Through his detailed analysis, Crystal showed that Internet discourse is not chaotic and it gives space to linguistic innovations, laying theoretical foundations for further research [24, p.5; p.17]. According to Loboda, Internet discourse can be interpreted as a process of creating and comprehending texts in virtual space, paying attention to such factors as social, cultural, and communicative aspects [9, p. 157]. While Gudz identified Internet discourse as a collection of online texts, audio, and video materials together with extra-linguistic factors, all interconnected by hyperlinks and accessible through the Internet via computers or other digital devices [5, p. 13].

Building on the foundational studies of Susan Herring, David Crystal and their early works, contemporary researchers continue to expand and deepen the understanding of the Internet discourse phenomena. With the rapid development of online communication, current studies shifted its focus from the verbal components of digital interaction to more complex and multimodal elements of modern Internet language. Therefore, while defining Internet discourse, scientists review it as a combination of verbal and nonverbal means of communication that are influenced significantly by the highly-interactive and diverse nature of social media platforms. A more accurate definition of Internet discourse was given by Eric Katchem, who stated that communication in virtual space combines characteristics of both written and spoken discourse. Specific features of written discourse include the written form of interaction, physical distance, and temporal separation of the communicators [49, p.6].

Shifting focus to more recent studies, Iryna Dudko and Natalia Zaitseva analysed Internet discourse in terms of how digital communication influences and reflects attitudes, reshapes identity and social dynamics [28, p.18]. The focus of their work was on an analytical research of lexical, grammatical and stylistic features of

Internet discourse, highlighting the quick paced nature of online interactions and cultural diversity of the participants. Moreover, Muhammad Afrasiab, Dr. Said Imran and Dr. Syed Sabih Ul Hassan applied Critical Discourse Analysis techniques, while studying communication on social media platforms, concentrating on the meaning-making processes, linguistic aspects and media sociology. [12, p. 4]. According to their studies, Internet discourse can be defined as a complex form of interaction occurring in a digital environment, that is immediate, interactive and incorporates both verbal and nonverbal means of communication. In addition, Muhammad Tahir, Suardi Lista Litta approached the analysis of Internet discourse through the examination of online language practices of Generation Z, focusing on the structural changes in discourse and identity construction [71, pp.3-4]. Their study suggests that Internet discourse is communication in digital environments that is characterised by immediacy and multimodality, shaped by the constraints of various social media platforms.

Proceeding to specific features, in their works Chernysh, Gudz, Hromko, Vokhidova, Halova, Novotna, Machackova characterise Internet discourse by a common set of core features:

- Hypertextuality - refers to the user's opportunity to navigate easily between various texts and contexts by using hyperlinks. Therefore, it allows people to quickly access and explore topic-related information in more detail [6. pp.80-81].
- Virtuality and indirectness - communication is conducted with the help of technical means such as computer, smartphone, or tablet. The interaction takes place remotely and allows participants to remain anonymous or communicate under a pseudonym, which can significantly influence how users present themselves in virtual space. Although online platforms offer opportunities for quick connection, they also foster an illusion of closeness between communicators. In this case, technology acts as a mediator, while virtual communities impact one's identity and promote emotional distance [40, p.249].

- Anonymity - allows users to communicate anonymously or act under a pseudonym, granting them freedom of expression and encouraging them to be open in sharing their opinions. However, it may reduce responsibility for one's words, for example, in comments, people may feel less constricted to act aggressively or leave inappropriate statements, as their identity can't be uncovered [36, p.6].
- Multimodality - refers to the simultaneous usage of various modes of communication such as texts, images, videos and audio to convey information in different formats and enhance interaction. It can be seen on social media platforms, where photos and videos are often accompanied by captions to support the visual content. In this way, multimodality also aids the perception of the information [79, p.353].
- Interactivity - is the ability of users to actively interact with each other by participating in discussions, leaving comments, asking questions, sharing their opinions, creating and engaging with posts. This provides a new form of dialogic communication where ideas and responses continuously interact, leading to long discussion chains [40, p.248].

Furthermore, Internet discourse is closely connected with a process named informatization. The Internet serves as a huge database that collects and stores information across different fields and topics. As every user has free access to this knowledge, it contributes to the growth of intellectual development and information exchange. Free and instant access has reshaped communication practices, making them faster and more efficient. [11, p.121] Therefore, online interaction prioritizes speed, accessibility and user convenience, which directly influences linguistic choices.

This created perfect conditions for the emergence of a special type of language used in online communication [80, p.54]. Hence, the term Internet language came into use. It can also be called Weblish (from the combination of words Web+English), Netspeak, electronic language, computer-mediated communication (CMC), Netlish or

electronic discourse [24, p.17]. Internet language is characterised by simplified grammatical structures, frequent use of Internet slang, emojis, and little attention to spelling, punctuation, or capital letters. Users tend to shorten words and rely on abbreviations and acronyms to make communication faster and easier [84, p. 27]. In comparison with other types of discourses, the language of Internet discourse has a tendency for rapid development. Fast circulation of information, constant emergence of new trends and technologies contribute to the expansion of the online dictionary. Moreover, Internet users themselves often create and disseminate neologisms, actively enriching Weblish [62, pp.130-131].

In summary, the appearance of Internet technologies became a foundation for a special kind of communication called Internet discourse. Primarily, Internet discourse is considered a combination of written and spoken discourses. However, deeper analysis revealed that it is shaped by special features that define its nature. These include virtuality and indirectness, which allow users to communicate remotely by means of modern technologies. Anonymity provides participants with the opportunity to conceal their identities by using pseudonyms and giving freedom of expressing personal opinions. Multimodality enhances content perception by incorporating different forms of communication, while interactivity enables users to actively engage with each other. Hypertextuality offers easier navigation and information access, and the concept of informatization contributes to knowledge and intellectual growth. Internet discourse gave rise to a special Internet language, Weblish, that developed its own defining features, allows the quick flow of information, and connects people worldwide.

1.2 Social Media as a Genre of Internet Discourse

The history of social media began with the appearance of the PLATO system in 1960 at the University of Illinois and ARPANET in 1969, which evolved into the Internet in the 1990s. Both early forms of social media offered features such as user-generated content, interactive communication, and community building, which

laid the foundations and became key concepts for modern social networks [1, pp.214-224]. However, the breakthrough in the development of social media was made by Tim Berners-Lee, who created the World Wide Web by integrating HTML with the Internet [68]. The late 1990s witnessed the emergence of what would become recognizable as social networks. Six Degrees, launched in 1997, introduced the concept of profile-based networking, LiveJournal and Blogger gave rise to blogging, transforming how individuals shared personal narratives and opinions online, meanwhile, LinkedIn, launched in 2002, focused on professional networking [73].

As more similar platforms continued to appear and grow, social media quickly gained importance in human life, becoming a fundamental medium for communication, self-expression, and disseminating information. Taking into consideration the popularity and rapid development of digital platforms, many scientists turned their focus to the studies of this field, in particular, the foundational studies were conducted by José van Dijck [46], Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein [48], Francisco Yus [83], Clay Shirky [21], Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison [18], and others.

One of the early definitions of social media was provided by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein. They stated that social media refers to Internet-based platforms built on Web 2.0 concepts that give users the opportunity to create, modify and share content through collaborative participation [48, p.61]. Later, in 2013, José van Dijck challenged the common perspective of social media as a simple communication tool. She studied them as socio-technical systems and introduced the concept of “programmed connectivity”, explaining that online platforms actively create social connections through the means of algorithms and interface design. Her framework defines social media as a powerful system that influences and shapes social life, constructing and strategically controlling social interactions. According to

her, online platforms are driven by corporate goals like gathering user data that can be analysed and sold [46, pp.14-18].

Francisco Yus, however, studied social media from the pragmatic perspective and cyber pragmatics. He defines them as constantly changing online spaces for social interaction that allow users to shape their identities and upload content [83, p.11]. Other key figures in the field of social media research include Clay Shirky, who stated that social media is a tool that enables people to share more, cooperate and take collective action [21]; and Danah Boyd, known for her book “It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens” (2014) [25]. Although, a more complete definition of social media was given by Mohammed Saaida, who defined them as digital platforms designed for users to connect, communicate and share information by creating multimodal content, engaging with it and interacting with other participants [65, p.16].

However, the study of social media has not escaped the attention of Ukrainian linguists. According to Chalabiyeva and Grihorova, social media are online platforms that exist to help people connect and interact with each other, express themselves and communicate [10, p.126; 4, p.96]. In addition, Derkachenko defined them as a type of mass media based on the concept of Web 2.0, and that makes users both the consumers and creators of the content, enabling them to interact, cooperate, share information and participate in different communicative practices [7, p. 52].

Social media possesses a range of distinctive features, starting with **accessibility**. It means that everyone can use it easily with no special skills required and at minimal or no cost. Therefore, participating in digital communication is open to all people who have online access. In addition, it offers unlimited reach to all content available online. Moreover, social media is remarkable for its **speed** of interaction. The published content is instantly accessible to a wide audience, and the author can receive immediate feedback and connect with their followers. **Interactivity** is another key feature. Social media allows two-way or multi-way communication, enabling users to engage with each other, discuss various topics,

share their opinions and collaborate with others [69, p.33]. In terms of **longevity** and **volatility**, the content on social media remains available for a long time. It can also be edited and updated at any moment, as users can always change their opinion [78, p.29].

Nowadays, there are various ways to classify social media. Francisco Yus and Kietzmann offer to study them through the concept of functional blocks, which suggests dividing social media into different parts for better understanding how users communicate online. They include: **identity** - how much users choose to reveal themselves, as on social media people can not only show their true personalities, but rather construct them in digital space, **conversations** - how users communicate with each other, **sharing** - the amount of shared and distributed information, **presence** - ability to know whether other users are accessible, **relationships** - how much users are attached to each other, **reputation** - determining your status and the status of other users, **groups** - the ability to form communities and communicate within them [50, p.243].

The other way of classification was introduced by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, who studied social media from a different perspective. They divided them into separate types with their own specific features and introduced such classification: collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual social worlds, virtual game worlds [48, pp.62-64]. However, a more modern and up-to-date division was given by Alekseenko, who structured social media in this way: social networks, blogs, and microblogs, multimedia platforms, messengers, forums and chats [2, pp. 204-208].

For further research, it is crucial to pay attention to social networks, as one of the most widespread forms of social media communication. Boyd and Ellison define SNSs (social networking sites) as web services where individuals can create their own public or semi-public profiles, connect with people, compile lists of friends, and share information and messages. Popular examples of social networks include: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn and Twitter [18, p.211]. They can be

characterised by the set of specific features, starting with personal profiles, that users create and complement with general information about themselves, such as age, hobbies and interests. Social networks often allow people to share photos, videos, make blog posts to express themselves and to help users stay in touch with their audience. These pages can be public or private, meaning that the owner can control who sees the profile. Social networks also enable users to make new connections or find people they already know online. They can add their acquaintances to the friend lists, which can be visible or accessible only to certain followers, depending on the page settings and network a person uses. Another key feature is messaging, which can be implemented through comment sections, private messages, or group chats. Even though each social network has its own characteristics and target audience, they are all designed to help people connect in the online space and share their content [18, pp.213-214].

Another significant and influential form of social media are blogs, often defined as “online diaries where information is electronically posted, updated frequently, and presented in reverse chronological order” [50, p.243]. Blogs often blur the line between private and public, encouraging people to share their intimate feelings and thoughts with complete strangers. Digital space stimulates users to open up and get support from their readers, whom they have never met. This highlights how social media changes the way people communicate and connect nowadays [64, p.1354]. However, over time, blogging acquired other purposes, except for self-expression, for example, they bring people together, serving the function of socialisation. Blogs may have a positive effect on mental health, providing people with an outlet for their feelings and opinions. Additionally, they can be of an educational or advertising nature, where an author aims to share and teach the audience useful information or benefit from promoting themselves or certain products [8, p.78].

In conclusion, nowadays, social media occupy an important place in human life, and they have been actively developing in recent years. Their history started

from the early online platforms such as PLATO and ARPANET and evolved into social networks, forums, messengers, multimedia platforms, chats, blogs and microblogs. In summary, social media are online spaces for digital communication that provide users with a range of different tools and functions such as: creating profiles to express themselves, sharing their opinions, interacting with other people, disseminating information and making content. There are two major ways to classify social media, according to specific features that distinguish them or relying on the principle of functional blocks. The most common forms of online communication are social networks and blogs, which can be further subdivided by their topics and purposes. All in all, these days, social media serve as a powerful tool for connecting people, encouraging communication and also spreading all types of informational content.

1.3 Tik Tok as a Type of Social Media

With the rapid development of social media, online platforms have significantly changed how users create and consume content, shifting from written text to visual media. In recent years, the concept of short videos has gained popularity across various social networks. Due to their brief duration, ranging from 15 seconds to a couple of minutes, highly engaging and dynamic content, short videos easily capture the audience's attention and support the need for quick, consumable content [56 p. 45]. A wide range of social media platforms incorporate this representation format, including Instagram and Facebook with Reels, Snapchat with Spotlights, and YouTube with Shorts, although the concept originated on TikTok.

Launched in 2016 by a Chinese private internet holding company, ByteDance, TikTok is a popular global social media platform that supports informal communication through short videos, known as TikToks [86, p.228]. Ugoala notes that the platform incorporates various communication modes, such as written texts, comments, videos, and pictures enhanced with effects and filters, alongside emojis,

stickers, music, and performance [76, p.214]. In addition, Zhong, Zheng, and Zhang highlight the “fragmentation of speed”, referring to the rapid circulation of content and how trends quickly go viral and fade. The platform also uses algorithms for a conscious content push. Each “For you page” of the user is personalised and relevant, based on preferences tracked by likes, comments, shares, reposts, and watch time [85, p.332]. Finally, Omar and Dequan emphasize user-generated content as a key feature, as every participant can create and upload videos easily using just a mobile phone [58, p.122].

Nowadays, TikTok, being one of the most popular and dynamic social networks, plays a crucial role in forming contemporary language practices. Relying on the statistics from 2021, the prevailing majority of the platform users are teenagers, mostly people between the ages of 16 and 24, who are widely recognised as Generation Z [75]. According to the analytical survey of Jones and Robers on the youth Internet slang, language for adolescents is a tool for self-expression, a way to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. In addition, digital space gives young people an opportunity to construct and search for their identity through various communication modes [44, p.7]. Hence, the phenomenon of Internet slang emerged, coined by the needs of adolescent users, making online interactions more efficient, vivid, and helping to build the sense of community between the participants of the platform.

Internet slang on TikTok refers to a unique set of new words and phrases that are created and disseminated by means of algorithms through short videos by the users themselves [45, p.205]. It can be defined as an informal and highly expressive language in online space, that includes words that reflect the social, cultural, and psychological state of users and is characterised by its unique word formation[53, p.2]. In their works, I.Anataichuk, I. Oleshkevich, V. Sazonova [14, p.186], O. Panchenko, M. Bondarenko [59, pp. 82-84], stated that Internet slang encompasses such aspects as:

- Lexical - including neologisms, abbreviations and acronyms, clipping, contraction and word formation.
- Grammatical and syntactical - simplified grammatical structures, violation of punctuation rules, non-standard capitalization, deliberate misspelling.
- Non-verbal - visual elements, emojis, GIFs and stickers.

Furthermore, while studying social media, it is essential to understand how individuals shape their identities by using different modes of communication and language devices in digital space. Tik Tok, in particular, provides users with an opportunity to construct their personality by having a freedom of voice and the ability to stay anonymous or act under a nickname. Hence, emerged the concept of virtual language identity that illustrates how a person presents themselves through the language while communicating online [48, pp.61-64]. According to the communicative goal, language patterns and behaviour, users can be divided into certain categories, each incorporating their own techniques in order to reach the aim of interaction.

To conclude, Tik Tok is one of the most popular social networks mainly dominated by the younger audience due to its highly interactive and dynamic nature and easily consumable short content. In a short matter of time, the platform has greatly changed and influenced language practices in the online environment, forming a backdrop for the appearance of new lexical units and the development of Internet slang. In addition, it reshaped the way people perceive themselves in digital space and gave the ability to reconstruct their virtual identity, giving every user a freedom of voice and action, resulting in the formation of various virtual language identities.

1.4 Social Media Literacy on TikTok

The history of literacy dates back to the foundation of the alphabet and when writing systems became more complex. For centuries literacy simply meant one's ability to write and read. However, in modern contexts, the term encompasses not

only traditional reading and writing skills, but it also includes digital literacy, media literacy, critical literacy, and other forms. Nowadays, there is no universal or the most correct definition of this term that will fit all contexts. Therefore, to understand the concept of literacy, multiple ideas should be taken into consideration [51].

According to Janet Fellowes and Grace Oakley, the most common definition of literacy includes reading, writing, speaking, listening and visual literacy. They also emphasize the significance of such skills as critical thinking and the ability to select suitable modes of communication in specific contexts [31, p.33]. More complete explanations were given by UNESCO, they defined literacy as: “The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts” [33], and “Literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world” [81]. In other ways, literacy can be interpreted as the capacity to understand, use and create meaning through writing, oral speech, visual or digital modes across various contexts and for specific purposes [31, p. 36].

The concept of literacy was studied through different frameworks, most commonly it was shaped by cognitive and psycholinguistic perspectives. However, the sociocultural approach played a significant role in the development of this field as it focuses on how people incorporate literacy in contexts. Many prominent scientists turned their attention to the study of this field, including Barton D. and Hamilton M., [16], Perry K.[61], Gee J. [32], Cope B. and Kalantzis M. [23], Hymes D. [41], and others. This approach highlights that literacy is closely intertwined with cultural, historical, and power relations.

Further research revealed that much of the groundwork was done by David Barton and Mary Millton, who studied the concept of literacy as a social practice, shifting their focus from the traditional views. The core idea of this perspective lies in understanding that literacy is shaped by and takes place within real-world social

contexts. This framework offers to understand literacy by looking at what people do with reading, writing, and texts in their daily lives. Barton and Millton stress that literacy practices are connected to one's values, feelings, attitudes, and social relationships. The scientists also state that there are various literacies connected to specific areas of life, and they are purposeful and influenced by social or cultural goals. In addition, literacy practices are historically situated, changing over time and reflecting the historical development [16, p.8].

Complementing this theory, Kristen Perry identified three broad aspects that a person needs to be considered literate: lexico-syntactic and graphonic knowledge - refers to understanding vocabulary and syntax, how information is encoded and decoded in written form; cultural knowledge - refers to being aware of beliefs, values and traditions of a certain group of people; and written genre knowledge - refers to understanding of various text types, their characteristics, purposes and structure [61, p. 55].

Another important perspective is the concept of multiliteracies, which was developed by New London Group, a collective of ten international scholars. Multiliteracy also focuses on literacy in real-world contexts and puts emphasis on the role of power relationships. This approach defines literacy as the ability to interpret, create, and interact using a wide range of communication modes, such as written, visual, audio, digital forms, and others. It concerns the concept of multimodality, an idea that people incorporate various communicative channels in the process of meaning-making, and critiques the early studies for their emphasis only on reading and writing [23, p. 5]. Multiliteracy suggests that there are different types of literacy, for example, critical literacy, visual literacy, digital literacy, and others. This perspective also supports the idea that literacies can vary depending on the different cultural and social groups. For example, literacy practises in a family with access to modern technologies and devices, and books will differ greatly than in a less resourced family. Multiliteracy theory gives a broader definition of literacy, which

includes linguistic and cultural diversity, and various modes of communication people use [61, p. 58].

The final approach to studying literacy through a sociocultural perspective is by delving into the field of critical literacy. The beginning of the theory can be tied to the work of Paulo Freire, who argued that literacy is closely connected to the development of critical consciousness. He stated that education is influenced by political views, personal perspectives, and can not be neutral. According to his concept “reading the word and the world”, literacy is not simply a technical skill of decoding the written information, but rather the ability to read and connect the text to reality, relying on personal experience, relationships, culture, etc. [67, p. 20]. Critical literacy analyzes the connection between language, power, identity, and society. At its core, this perspective aims to foster critical consciousness and encourage people to decode texts, analyse and question the information to change the world through literacy.

As the 21st century was marked by the rise and rapid development of information and computer technologies, it has greatly impacted almost every part of human life, reshaping the way society communicates, learns, and interacts with the world. This shift highlights the importance of change from traditional views on literacy to meet new demands of a technology-driven era. The constant development and the multiplying amount of digital tools require every individual to develop necessary technical, social and cognitive skills to successfully navigate modern life. Therefore, digital literacy appeared and became an important part of contemporary literacy studies.

Originally, the term was introduced by Paul Gilster in 1997 and was defined as the ability to understand the information presented via computers. Digital literacy can be explained as a combination of social, technical, and cognitive competences that enable individuals to effectively communicate in online environments [55, p.65]. According to UNESCO, “Digital literacy involves the confident and critical use of a full range of digital technologies for information, communication, and basic

problem-solving in all aspects of life” [27]. Over time, researchers broadened the understanding of digital literacy to a more complex one. Havrilova and Topolnik state that it consists of such components: computer literacy - an ability to use electronic devices; informational literacy - includes analysis and search of information, along with critical thinking skills; network literacy - responsible usage of network sites [3, p.6]. While Martin and Grudziecki also added technological literacy - refers to the ability to use technology and understand how it affects life and society; media literacy - is the ability to analyse, access and communicate information through different media; visual literacy - refers to understanding, using and expressing ideas through images; communication literacy - the ability to interact effectively with others through texts, images, etc [57, pp. 250-253]. To conclude, digital literacy can be further divided into three main parts: locating and consuming digital content - the ability to search, find, and understand information online; creating digital content - refers to making content; and communicating digital content - sharing information with other people through online platforms [55, p.68].

Together, all the previously discussed concepts and frameworks built a backdrop for further study and understanding of social media literacy, which is defined as a comprehensive set of skills and knowledge needed to use social media platforms effectively. It encompasses a wide range of literacies, including media, information, and digital literacy, and focuses on the social nature of online spaces. For a better understanding of the term, it has to be divided into different competences, and then each of them studied separately:[37, p.7]

- Information evaluation skills - refers to media and information literacy, including the ability to check the reliability of sources and verify social media data. Content moderation and understanding of how information circulates online are necessary skills to see how content is promoted, how emotions draw attention and interaction, making information go viral. It highlights the awareness of platform rules and standards, which outline acceptable behaviour

and content. In addition, the concept also showcases that repeated patterns of interaction lead to the emergence of different participant roles [37, p. 4].

- Cultural competence - social media users create their own language, discussion practices, and behaviour expectations, etc. Being literate in the digital context means the ability to participate appropriately and follow these online norms, including maintenance of civil discourse, using suitable expressions, staying on topic, and the realization of the influence of online communication on offline life. It also highlights the awareness of cultural diversity, the role of influencers, filter bubbles, and bots on information flow [81, p.1].
- Production knowledge - includes the understanding that every post, comment, and image contributes to the ongoing digital conversation that is recorded. Users need to know how to create and share content effectively. The most crucial aspect is paying attention to such questions as data ownership, who can access it, and how to manage privacy settings [37, p. 5].
- Countering anti-social behavior - refers to being aware of and addressing anti-social behavior, such as abusive posts, trolling, or bullying, and any kind of offensive content. It is about the ability to recognize a healthy conversation from a harmful one and being able to respond in an ethical and responsible way [54, p.147].
- Content moderation is the main way to fight against anti-social behaviour, as its goal is to keep social media safe and respectful by blocking or removing harmful content. Algorithms automatically scan posts for words and images that are against the rules. However, some of them are checked by people, and users themselves can have an impact on online situations by reporting irrelevant or anti-social accounts and publications. Understanding how content moderation works is crucial for people to stay safe and be responsible members of the online community [22, p.275].

In summary, social media literacy is a broad term, the study of which requires thorough analysis of a wide range of different types of literacies, competences, and

historical research into the roots of the concept itself. Initially, literacy was defined as the ability to read and write, but later other ideas were added and overtime it evolved also into visual and critical analysis skills, speaking and listening. Previously, to be considered a literate person, one had to acquire lexico-syntactic, graphonic and cultural knowledge. Various conceptual frameworks were developed to further construct the meaning of literacy, for example sociocultural approach and the idea of multiliteracies. However, with the appearance of the Internet and online technologies, the understanding of the term began to broaden to suit the requirements of the fast-changing world. New types of literacy appeared, including computer literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, etc. Together, these ideas were combined into social media literacy, which encompasses multiple competences necessary to effectively and safely navigate online space.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

In general, Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive theoretical background on the English language on the Internet, online platforms, and social media literacy. Starting with the analysis of Internet discourse, as a type of communication that evolved alongside digital platforms and reflected how individuals interact in virtual space. Primary Internet discourse was defined as a combination of written and spoken speech, although over time the definition expanded to include nonverbal elements. It can be characterised by virtuality, anonymity and indirectness, hypertextuality, multimodality and interactivity. Furthermore, Internet discourse gave rise to the phenomenon of Weblish or Netspeak, a special online language that reflected the innovative communicative practices in digital space.

Shifting focus to the study of social media, from the early and simple systems such as PLATO and ARPANET, they evolved into complex communicative spaces, aimed at increasing and encouraging interactions between individuals. Contemporary platforms are characterised by accessibility, a highly interactive nature, and the ability

to form communities and disseminate information. Over time, social networks and blogs emerged as distinctive types of social media, providing users with innovative tools for effective communication. Additionally, research has examined the concept of identity construction within digital environments.

Building on this information, the concept of social media literacy was introduced and thoroughly analysed. Although the term literacy is complicated to define, the study focused on the history and broader aspects, such as multiliteracy and digital literacy, laying the foundations for further research. It was concluded that social media literacy encompasses a wide range of competences necessary to navigate the digital space effectively, including information-evaluation skills, cultural competence, production knowledge, countering anti-social behaviour, and content moderation.

To conclude, TikTok was analysed as one of the most popular and widespread social networks, especially among younger generations. Due to its highly interactive, multimodal, and informal setting, the platform encourages linguistic innovations, shifting focus to more simplified and rapid interactions. Therefore, Internet slang was introduced as a highly expressive online language that reflects the contemporary language practices, coined by the needs of adolescent users for quick and vivid interactions to build a community.

2. Social Media Literacy of TikTok Users

2.1 Orthographic Features of Messages of TikTok Users

Social media is a complex digital environment that drives linguistic innovations by quickly spreading and adopting them in every day online interactions. The study of orthographic features within the TikTok setting revealed new writing practices that often mirror the casualty of spoken speech. As it was previously discussed, one of the most prominent features of online communication is the pressing need for speed, in order to be able to keep up with long and fast-developing conversation chains. Therefore, this urgency is vividly reflected in written messages of TikTok users, that often include incorrect spelling due to the quick typing. While interacting online people tend to shorten the words and sentences, ignore the rules of capitalisation, omit punctuation marks or on the contrary excessively use them to create an emotional effect or put more emphasis.

To begin with, one of the orthographic features of TikTok messages is nonstandard capitalisation. According to traditional writing rules, it is obligatory to capitalize the first letter of the sentence, proper nouns and pronoun I. However, the ignorance of these requirements can occur in Internet slang, which is reflected in lower case i and non-capital letters at the beginning of the sentence, especially after the period mark. In this way, users make online texting more convenient and efficient, as the typing process is simplified and consumes less time. The following examples illustrate the comments that start from a lower case letter: *“which episode?”*, *“literally gen z moses”*, *“bruh she literally brought them all back to life too”*, *“it’s her playground but she didn’t come to play.”*, *“she’s waterbending like earth bender. to split a literal ocean you would have to.”*[115], *“oh yeah... this deserves widescreen view”*, *“the lord of the rings and living on a prayer! it’s literally my two favorite things in the world”*[163], *“why did he do that. horses are the smartest but dumbest animals istg”* [152]. Examples of the lower case pronoun I: *“First sec i*

thought she would enter avatar state lol xD", "Where can i watch it?", "Show me a better water bender, i will wait", "Wait im confused on where she was when she did that on the ship orrrrr", "Ugh i hate how they nerf her lowkey like no blood bending in the movie UGH", "Ooooooh, how i love this man" [115]. The examples that illustrate both the usage of lower case letter at the beginning of the sentence and pronoun I: "this is THE aragorn edit i fear", "who do i send it to", "oh i love him" [151], "i literally said no no no no out loud. that was a gard catch! Jesus "[152].

In addition, there is a tendency to write personal names, as well as the names of the characters and famous people in lower case to save time and create a sense of casual interaction [20]. On online platforms, using capitalisation can be perceived as too formal or strict, while lower case signifies amicability and informality, for instance: "bet even korra in avatar mode can't do it", "no one has ever said katara is weak bro", "we can see it when she fought tagha", [115], "harry and ginny is better", "hermione doesn't hug ron like that or look at ron like that, ron cared so much for her but not as much as harry cared, harry risked his life for hermione but ron didn't, yepp my parents where right not all soulmate's will be together" [114], "thought i was getting an enola edit" [153], "my love for mae whitman was born in avatar the last airbender she rly did so amazing as katara" [154], "im literally in my anakin skywalker phase right now!!" [155], "every time i hear this intro the only thing i can think about is that aragorn son of arathorn meme" [156], "I NEED a thranduil, thorin, boromir, faramir, fili and kili version of this" [157], "dante basco didn't even try to make him sound any different Imao" [158].

Further research revealed that capital letters can be used to put emotional emphasis in order to better convey one's feelings and thoughts. Writing all letters in capitals imitates shouting, excitement or expresses strong statement, helping users to better communicate their emotions compensating for the lack of tone and voice in written texts [74]. The analysis of the following examples revealed, that the capitalisation of one or several words in the sentence serve an emphatic function, reflecting the way the speaker stresses certain words in real life speech: "That's our

GIRL", *"She also does this as a TEENAGER!!!"*, *"She's the only waterbender who can do that PERIOD"*[115], *"Oh so this is THE Aragorn edit"*, *"absolutely ATE and DIGESTED"*, *"Ummm... hello? This is literally THE Aragorn edit. I'm OBSESSED"*, *"This is the best Aragorn edit EVER I am going FERAL"*, *"FINE I'll watch the LotR extended editions AGAIN"*[155]. While the messages written in all capital letters help to express strong feelings and emotional intensity, reflecting the raised voice in real life conversation and making the comments feel louder or more urgent: *"WHERE CAN I WATCH IT PLEAASSEEEEEEE"*, *"Split the sea IN THE IMMORTAL STORM BTW"*, *"WHEN I TELL YOU I SCREAMED WHEN SHE SPLIT THE FUCKING SEA! THE FUCKING SEA DUDE!"* [115], *"YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE "THE" ARAGORN EDIT AND WE WOULDNT NOTICE??"*, *"TO THIS SONG. OH MY."* [155].

Continuing the research on orthographic features, punctuation rules have also undergone significant changes. Nowadays, there is a shift towards the simplification or omission of the punctuation marks, that can be explained by the need for speed to provide immediate answers and sometimes by the constraints or inconvenience of mobile keyboards. Therefore, messages of TikTok users seem to be a continuous flow of words that reflect the chaotic and spontaneous nature of spoken speech [42], for example: *"Most of the time when a female character the writers make her overpowered and strong But somehow Kyoshi is Fit to be introduced that way"* - in this case, the absence of punctuation reflects how speaker expresses their thoughts in the stream of consciousness, while the use of the word But with capital letter signifies a contrast, substituting a period mark or comma[159]; *"to those saying outside lane so she starts Infront of them, let me tel you...the inner circle has the least distance than the outside circle so to make it fair runners start from different positions to match the distance"* - in this example ellipsis is used to create a dramatic effect, signifying a pause before shifting to important information and reflecting hesitation in spoken speech[160]; *"No he didn't he had a daughter and that's his daughters son so that's his grandson let's not be larping and lying to other ppl now"* - in this case

the absence of punctuation marks creates an urgent tone, reflecting the passionate and quick way of the speaker's flow of thoughts[158]; *“dyk when toph asks if friendship can carry over more than one lifetime? well yes Roku was friends with gyatso and gyatso is friends with aang and toph and katara zuko is friends with aang and Korra has met them all and they have all mentored her see how I didn't mention sokka? he's dead.”* - this comment reflects the lack of commas and period marks. Instead it uses question marks to introduce reflection questions and to break down the parts of the message. While the period mark at the end signals finality of the statement.[161].

Expanding on the matter of punctuation, participants of online communication tend to utilize repeated or exaggerated punctuation as a way to convey various emotions, tone and intensity [42]. It also serves a performative function, where numerous signs make the messages stand out and attract attention in ever-continuing conversation chains and long comment sections, for example: *“what is the episode of this again I can't find!!!”* - the author used numerous question marks to show frustration and urgency, emphasizing the plea for help; *“oh gawd noo!!!!”* - in this example multiple exclamation marks highlight the reaction, making it more dramatic[158]; *“Wait where did u download it????PLEASE TELL ME”* - here question marks signal urgency and desperation of the request; *“THIS OMG!!!!”* - in this case numerous exclamation marks help to express excitement and amazement; *“okay but HAVE U HEARD HIS VOICE?!?”* - the author used a combination of exclamation and question marks to highlight the disbelief and add emotional intensity; *“I was like number 5??? Then it sat right with me”* - here multiple question marks express confusion, surprise and disbelief; *“accounts that love general Iroh >>>>”* - symbols “>>>>” are used to show approval, preference and admiration for the accounts with similar opinions to the author's; *“AND NO ASAMI???????”* - in this comment multiple question marks mimic shouting or louder voice [120]; *“Mannn.....”* - in this case numerous periods create a long pause, signaling frustration and disappointment, as though the speaker is sighing or trailing off[162].

In addition, another orthographic peculiarity of online slang is the absence of the apostrophe. It aligns with the modern trend for simplicity in digital writing, as well as makes the typing process quicker and easier. The apostrophe is omitted in contractions, between the noun or pronoun and the auxiliary verb that comes after it, and when expressing possessive case with the help of 's. The following examples illustrate the omission of apostrophe in possessive case: "Rokus voice too OP" [159], "I mean he is born into zukos family tree", "wrong Izumi is his daughter & Iroh is Izumis son" [161]. Omission of apostrophe in contractions: "he couldve atleast help him to get ready for fire bending", "go watch legend of korra hes hella old", "this is a movie hes not 100 in it", "Thats probably the best birthmark to have but I don't know how it has effected your life", "Im angrier than ever and i dont know why"[159], "Im love the edit im mad they leaked it", "someone once told me i remind them of toph. best compliment ive ever gotten" [163], "im gonna have to say i firmly believe Asami on this one HAVE U SEEN THAT WOMAN", "WHYS EVERYONR SHIPPING A GROWN ASS MAN WITH A WOMAN", "Oh wait theyre all the same person" [173], "cant wait for school to be over", "I month.. oneee! then ill graduate this dam high-school" [114].

Equally important is to mention the creative spelling and phonetic writing that reflect the spontaneous and playful nature of internet slang. Creative spelling stands for the change of the usual word spelling to a more unique one for a humorous or casual conversational effect. It can be done by switching the places of letters or swapping them for those with a similar sound, or by altering some parts of the word by adding new ones, for example: stawp for stop in "staaawwwwwppp"; cuz for cause in "It was destined cuz it was a 10,000 year cycle girl don't piss me off"; geddit for get it and yknow for you know in "Someone was saying "the family has a tragic history of always having 1 good kid and their psychotic sibling" and yknow what i GEDDIT" [159]; hunny for honey in "hunny it was gonna happen no matter what"; obviois for obvious in "And it's soooo obviois that it's gonna be that some apocalyptic level threat happened to Korra had to do something to save the earth"

[164]; cos for cause/because in *“used to love having mine silly in the trailer cos he was so silly lol”*; yass for yes in *“Nah it’s high af now! YASS diva”*; scarwd for scared in *“im so freaking scarwd”*; shyt for shit in *“og fine shyt holy”* [165]; shalya for shayla in *“My shalya. She went through the worst”* [166]; goof for good in *“WHAT THIS IS SO GOOF”* [167]; plz for please in *“.name of the anime plzz”* [121].

Moreover, due to the fast-paced nature of TikTok communication, users tend to produce numerous misspellings unconsciously as a result of quick typing. In addition, the participation on platforms via mobile phones with small keyboards increases the incorrect writing even more, for example: *“destruction is always nesscary for creation”*, *“Imao he can’t trust the dude that actually clean up his mess (he’s the one who indirectly killed the moon spirit) but rather trsuted again an unknown dude”* [166], *“okay this is the new THE zuko edot and i will be saving th HAHAHA”*, *“My shalya. She went through the worst”* [165], *“UGH I WANT THIS HEIWOKW”*, *“what its literally a series it has 3 seasons and it has a movir”* [163], *“theres no leak of the moive we are all waiting for it to come out to support the animators”* [159].

Furthermore, the repetition of the letters within words is another distinctive orthographic feature of online slang, that can be considered a kind of creative spelling. The deliberate extension of vowels and consonants adds emphasis to the message, strengthening the emotions and intonation. By making the words longer, users indicate the urgency, tone, their attitude towards something and expand the expressiveness of written comments, for example: *“whole year flew by but finals week is sooooo slowwww”*, *“3 days lefttt”*, *“2 daysssssssss”* *“1 month.. oneee! then il graduate this dam high-school”*, *“ME AT THE END OF THIS WEEEEEEK”*, *“1 day left im going crazyyyyyy”*, *“finished my last one yesterdayyyyyyy”*, *“is there any app or web that we can study online together 🤔, like study with me video, i need motivationnn”*, *“Yess girlss”*, *“Soonnnnnn”*, *“Bac RELEASE MEEEEEEEEEE”*, *“I have an English exam tomorrow..helppp”*, *“3 weeeeeeeeeeeeks”* [158], *“same twinnnnnn”*, *“saaaaaaaame”*, *“my girlllll”* [172], *“Ohhh goodnesss graciousss”*

[168], “*MY SHAYLAASSS*”, “*SO GENTLE OH MY GOOOOD*”, “*LUCKYYY*”[159], “*UUUUURG GGGHHHHH*”[164].

Regarding the phonetic spelling, the term refers to a way of spelling the words so they closely mirror how people actually say them . This helps to make the online interaction feel more informal and resemble the casual real-life conversation, for example: yall for you all in “*OMG PLS STOP POSTING EDITS OF THE MOVIE YALL ARE GONNA MAKE ME WATCH IT JUT I WANT TO WAIT (fire edit btw)*”; gonna for going to in “*that’s the point it was not gonna release in theatres*”, “*oh this is gonna do numbers*” [161]; gotta for got to in “*gotta love geldings*”, “*we just gotta manifest it*” [163]; coulda for could have in “*korra didnt even try to find the best benders from every nation but ofcourse they cant be all muscle like boulder they gotta be worthy. She coulda used her avaterness skills to find the best benders for her team*” [162]; kinda for kind of in “*she kinda reminds me of a Digimon in that get up*” [161]; allat for all that in “*Korra CAN handle allat i fear*” [164]; wanna for want to in “*They kissed like 5 times in the show and Aang almost risked millions of lives just bc he doesn’t wanna close a chakra for Katara*” [166]; ima for i’m going to in “*It’s worth it ima jst rewatch to support the creators!!*”; sorta for sort of in “*Sorta of even with online websites as well*”[167].

Concluding, social media continue to reshape traditional language practices, most frequently simplifying them or adding innovations. Nowadays, TikTok, being one of the most popular and widely used social networks by the younger generation, constantly drives orthographic changes resulting in formation of vibrant and unique online language. Such phenomena as nonstandard capitalisation, creative or incorrect spelling and irregular punctuation serve various communicative purposes that help to imitate real life conversation in the digital world.

2.2 Lexical Features and Word Formation Processes in the Messages of TikTok Users

Nowadays, language is constantly evolving under the influence of social media platforms, in particular TikTok that quickly gained popularity among Generation Z, encouraging innovation, brevity and creativity. Together, these factors gave rise to the phenomena of Internet slang, an expressive and vivid language that reflects contemporary online communication, search for identity and self-expression. Due to the constant flow of trends and fast-paced form of interaction, new ideas, words and expressions appear and gradually are integrated, becoming a part of everyday online interactions. In addition, the prevailing majority of users are younger generations that incorporate language to express themselves in a simple and concise way, often incorporating informal and creative expressions. Hence, to study lexical features, it is necessary to analyse word-formation processes within TikTok slang.

A closer examination revealed that on TikTok there are limitations to word number for on screen text, captions and comment sections. Therefore, users tend to incorporate a wide range of abbreviations in order to express themselves and fit in the tight requirements. An abbreviation is defined as a complex contraction of a word or phrase. It is a brief form derived from a longer lexical unit that still refers to the same concept. [34, p.1119] For example: *IMHO - in my honest opinion*, *BRB - be right back*, *OMW - on my way*, *OOTD - outfit of the day*, *BTW - by the way*, *FYI - for your information*, *OG - Original Gangster*, *DM - Direct Message*, *LMK - Let Me Know* [99], *WDYM - What Do You Mean* [100]. Initially, they were written with capital letters, but over time, to make the communication more convenient, users started to write and read them as usual words.

Among the scientists, there is no universal classification or certain position on the formation of new abbreviations. However, during this research the most frequently used types of abbreviations will be outlined, starting from **initialisms** and **acronyms**. These are abbreviations that consist of the first letters of the words or

phrase to represent the whole expression. [17, p. 11322] However, the **initial abbreviation** is read separately letter by letter, as in: *FBI - Federal Bureau of Investigation* in “*i wanted to be an FBI sooo Bad when i was younger*”[97], *CEO - Chief Executive Officer* in “*CEO girl vibes*”[90], *UFO - Unidentified Flying Object* in “*Happy alien UFO template*”[87], *HTML - Hypertext Markup Language* in “*Me after i learn how to add a picture in HTML*”[110], *ADHD - Attention-deficit/hyperactivity Disorder* in “*adhd core*”[87], *PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* in “*When the PTSD starts kicking in*”[101]. While an **acronym** is pronounced as a single word, for example: *LOL - Laughing Out Loud* in “*lol we are flying*”[88], *IMAO - In My Arrogant Opinion* in “*that’s genuinely the best transition i’ve seen lmao*”[102], *ASAP - As Soon As Possible* in “*#asap*”[103], *NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration* in “*i love u nasa*”[104], *FOMO - Fear Of Missing Out* in “*when i walk back in bcs i get fomo*”[105], *POV - Point Of View*, can be both spelt like a single word or letter by letter, for example: “*pov: me acting like i’m one with nature after I spent 5 minutes outside*”[106].

Moreover, abbreviations on TikTok are context-dependent, as their meaning and function relies heavily on the situation they are used in. While some abbreviations have only one or several similar meanings, others can carry both positive and negative connotations, as well as have various functions according to the intention of the author, for example:

fr - For Real - functions as an intensifier, showing agreement or highlighting emotions, often is written in lower case and is placed in different parts of the sentence: “*Fr I hate that balto got the fame*”[107].

oat - Of All Time or *goat - Greatest Of All Times* - function as intensifiers, signifying that something is the best or most important. They are often written in lower case, at the end of the sentence or following a noun or an adjective they refer to: “*my favourite character development oat*”, “*he’s the goat*”[107].

omg - Oh My God or *omfg - Oh My Fucking God* - are similar expressions, although with slightly different usage. Both can express and emphasize positive

emotions, such as admiration, surprise and excitement. However, *omfg* is more emphatic and can also be used to convey various negative emotions. The abbreviations are written both in capital and lower case letters, as well as placed in different parts of the sentence, for instance: “*That’s SO beautiful omg 🤔🤔*” [107], ““*NO HIS FACE WHEN SHE DISAPPEARS OMFG 💔💔*” [109].

lmao - *Laughing My Ass Off* - primary signals humor, amusement and laughter, although sometimes it can be used to express or soften negative emotions, reduce tension and show sarcasm or irony: “*HELPPPP NOT THE OOO YEAH LET’S GET THE FEELINGS HATE LMAOAOAOAO*”.

ngl - *Not Gonna Lie* - can serve as a discourse marker to express honesty and personal opinion. It is mainly written in lower case and placed in the beginning or at the end of the sentence: “*ngl this so funny*” [108].

ik - *I Know* or *idk* - *I Don’t Know* - signal agreement and shared knowledge, or on the contrary disagreement, uncertainty and lack of knowledge. Most frequently they appear at the beginning of the phrase and are written in lower case letters: “*idk why people act like no ones capable of saving up money*”, “*ik you mad*”) [114].

idc - *I Don’t Care* - is often written in lower case and in the beginning of the sentence to express indifference of the speaker: “*idc, bro i’m posting my bf (when/if i get one) to this song.*” [110].

ty - *Thank You* or *tysm* - *Thank You So Much* - expressions that are used to show gratitude and indicate politeness. They are mostly written in lower case letters and can be put in any part of the sentence: “*aaawww, tysm*”, “*ty for support*” [109].

tf - *The Fuck* - functions as an intensifier to show confusion, disbelief and in some cases annoyance. It is mainly written in lower case, often appearing at the beginning of the sentence: “*Tf... When did they ever hate.*” [112].

tbh - *To Be Honest* - a discourse marker that introduces honest opinion and mainly comes at the beginning of the sentence: “*tbh life is better without feelings*” [111].

idgaf - *I Don't Give A Fuck* - an expression, used to show indifference, emotional detachment and dismissal, sometimes serving as a way to improve self-confidence of the speaker. The abbreviation is mostly written in lower case and can come in any part of the sentence: “*me when i'm in my idgaf outfit, and then i see someone i know*”.

sybau - *Shut Your Bitch Ass Up* - can have both positive and negative connotations and is often used to convey humorous or playful tone, although it can act as a dismissive or aggressive response: “*Sybau bro the comment isn't serious*” [115].

In addition, the abbreviations of the names of the series, books, films, groups, authors and characters can be often found across the Tik Tok, as an efficient way to communicate, when writing the full name can be time consuming. Examples include: *HP* for Harry Potter, *POA* for Prisoner of Azkaban, *OOTP* for Orden of the Phoenix [116], *COS* for Chamber of Secrets [94], *LOTR* for Lord of the Rings [117], *GNR* for Guns N' Roses [94], *SOAD* for System of a Down [91], *RHCP* for Red Hot Chilly Peppers [89], *TSITP* for The Summer I Turned Pretty [118], *TASM* - *The Amazing Spider Man*, *TSAM2* - *The Amazing Spider Man 2* [119], *MJ* - *Mary Jane* (the love interest of Spider Man) [98], *ATLA* for Avatar The Last Airbender [120], *POTC* for Pirates of the Caribbean [121], *TCOTBP* for The Cadence of Part Time Poets [122], *AOT* for Attack on Titan [123], *TLOK* for The Legend of Korra [114].

Alongside abbreviations, one of the most prominent lexical tendencies of TikTok messages is the wide use of various contractions and shortened word forms. Written language on social media often reflects the informal style of spoken speech, therefore users tend to make their texts brief, simplifying the typing and making the interaction more efficient. Hence, the process of clipping can be often found in the messages of Tik Tok users. **Clipping** is the act of shortening the words by eliminating syllables, while the initial meaning prevails [26, p.32]. Depending on the part that is being removed, it is further divided into such categories [26, p.36-37]:

- Back-clipping - the omission of the final part of the word, for instance: vamp for vampire in *"CAN SHE JUST MAKE HIM A VAMP I CANT BARE"*, tho for though in *"The caption is so real tho"*, fav for favourite in *"FAV COUPLE EVERRRRRRRRRRR"*, bro for brother in *"i wanna be in love so bad bro"*, w for with in *"Oh u ate w this edit"* [123], vid for video in *"The bay in this vid is 14hh too"* [120], esp for especially in *"To experience this for the first time in the Theatres again...esp now as an adult"* [94], movin for moving in *"Oh my god they-re MOVIN"*, pic for picture in *"I loved that pic of Zuko swimming further and deeper than anyone else"* [114].
- Fore-clipping - the omission of the initial part, for example: u for you in *"U are like a superhero"* [120], roids for steroids in *"How I will be moving after hopping on roids"* [124], stream for livestream in *"CRAZIEST STREAM"*, verse for universe in *"team avatar gotta be top of the verse"* [114].
- Middle clipping - the omission of the middle part, for instance: sry for sorry in *"Aw I'm sry to hear that, it's more targeted to ppl that don't have a medical issue that keeps them from doing it, hope you regain more balance soon so u can follow ur riding dreams"*, congrats for congratulations in *"Dang girl congrats!"* [120], *"How it feels listening to ts"* [92], comms for communications in *"Is this media and comms?"* [124], garms for garments in *"garms i highly despise"* [126], rlly for really in *"y'all don't get it, they rlly had everyone get a glow up"* [127], fking for fucking in *"the best spiderman argeu with a fking wall"* [98], fave for favourite in *"my fave scene!!!"* [115]
- Non-sequential clipping - removing different parts of the word in non-linear way, for example: ppl for people in *"i KNOW the first ppl to encounter tophs metal bending after the tv series had to think about life for a second"* [120], bc for because in *"...he put the power of blue into red and that's bc zuko learnt from dragons"* [128], js for just in *"Gng why tf he is so OLDD. Last time i watched he was js a lil kid"* [110], tg for together in *"it took me days to get over the fact they didn't end up tg..."* [129], tb for throwback in *"tb to when i*

was in middle school and i could throw this without any warmup”, smth for something in *“Im not tryna diss korra but ion think she ever pulled smth like splitting the ocean with or without avatar state”* [115], bs for bullshit in *“Zuko had to deal with everyone’s bs after joining the gaang”* [130].

- Disemvoweling - omitting all the vowels in the word, for instance: sht for shit in *“this sht deserves a million likes”* [120], gng for gang in *“Gng why tf he is so OLDD. Last time i watched he was js a lil kid”* [112], pls for please in *“please do a cute little time lapse of you walking around and just putting random stuff...”* [107]

Shifting focus to other word formation processes in TikTok slang, it is important to analyse **affixation**, the act of joining prefixes and suffixes to the root morpheme to create derived forms of a word. It includes prefixation, the process of adding prefix at the beginning, and suffixation, the process of adding a suffix at the end, for example: *Repost* (re+post) - a special feature that initially originated on TikTok. *A repost* or *to repost* content signifies that a user shares someone else’s short videos on their page, for instance: *“check my repost”* [131]. *Baddie* (bad+ie) - used to describe a girl, who is very attractive and self-confident. It can also stand for a “cool/hot person”, someone who is trendy and stylish, for example: *“all the baddies r team conrad”* [93]. *Peakest* (peak+est) - a creative form of a word *peak*, that in Generation Z slang signifies something of highest quality and absolute best, for instance: *“the edit is peakest”* [96]. *Junkie* (junk+ie) - refers to a person who is into/hooked on something: *“there’s really no way of winning cause in their eyes you’ll always be a junkie”*[132]. *Tagging* (tag+ing) - the act of mentioning a person’s account in the post, video, comment etc, for example: *“i love tagging random people and pretending we’re friends”*[133].

Semantic shift - refers to an act when a word acquires new meaning or function over time, without undergoing any changes in its form. Hence, it is called zero derivation, where a word alerts its grammatical category, without using affixation or other word-formation processes [19, p.29]. For instance, initially the

verb *to slay* meant “to kill”, but on TikTok it refers to do something extremely well or to look stunning (“*You slayed it giiiirl*”)[134]. Other examples include: *vibe* - initially referred to “atmosphere/feeling”, but it has broadened its denotation to “mood/energy” (“*i can feel the vibes*”)[135]; *flex* - signified “to bend”, nowadays stands for “to show off” (“*thats the flex you think it is*”)[134]; *dead/I’m dead* does not literally mean that someone has passed away, it describes something very funny (“*im dead, lol*”) [135]; the noun *ghost* (meaning phantom) shifted its grammatical category to a verb and in slang refers “to suddenly stop replying/ignore someone” (“*he ghosted me...*”)[136]; *to ship* changed its meaning from “deliver” to the act of supporting or wanting two people be in romantic relationship, as well as shipper on TikTok stands for someone who engages in shipping (“*biggest dramione shipper over here*”) [137].

Borrowing - is a word-formation process that lies in taking new words from other languages to adopt them into its own. The initial meaning of the foreign term may be preserved or changed [63, p.279]. For example, the word *kawaii* - “cute” is derived from Japanese [136], *senpai* - “admired senior” or “crush” (Japanese) [138], *maknae* - “youngest member” (Korean) [139], *habibi* - “my dear”(Arabic)[140], *appa* - “farther” (Korean) [112].

Compounding - is the process of combining two words to make a new single one, with a different meaning of the compound from the words that created it [47, p.165-166]. Frequently compounds are written as a single word, for example: *doomscrolling* = *doom*+*scroll* - to scroll excessively short video content, especially negative one (“*does doomscrolling ever make your real life feel empty?*”)[141], *lovebombing* = *love*+*bombing* - an act of literally bombing someone with affection, feelings and gifts to create dependency (“*someone tried lovebombing me but i am avoidant Imao*”)[141], *ragebait* = *rage*+*bait* - an act of provoking negative emotions or outraging other users (“*is this a ragebait?*”)[143], *clickbait* = *click*+*bait* - contend created to attract attention (“*We all got clickbaited before*”), *fanart* = *fan*+*art* - artwork created by fans (“*you ate with this fanart*”)[120].

Blending refers to the word formation process, when two or more words are combined together to create a new term. However, unlike compounding, only parts of the words are blended in order to form a lexical unit [35, p.137]. For instance: *finsta* = *fake+instagram* [144], *flexitarian* = *flexible+vegetarian* [145], *mansplain* = *man+explain* [146], *chillax* = *chill+relax* [147], *fandom* = *fan+kingdom* [148]. In addition, the names of the characters from different fandoms, movies, books and series can be blended to create a nickname for a ship, for instance: *Zutara* (Zuko+Katara), *Kataang* (Katara+Aang) [149], *Harmione* (Harry+Hermione), *Romione* (Ron+Hermione), *Hinny* (Harry+Ginny), *Dramione* (Draco+Hermione) [154], *Marichat* (Marinette+Chat Noir), *Ladynoir* (Ladybug+Chat Noir), *Adriennette* (Adrien+Marinette), *Ladrien* (Ladybug+Adrien)[150].

To conclude, it can be considered that TikTok is a highly dynamic digital environment that sparks linguistic innovations under the pressure of constant flow of ever changing trends and new ideas. Due to the fast-paced nature of communication, the messages of Tik-Tok users reflect the need for brevity and self-expression to keep up with the circulation of content. Hence, it is reflected in lexical creativity, such as abbreviations, various ways to shorten the words and mix them in order to create innovative and convenient ways to communicate the ideas.

2.3 Grammatical and Syntactical Features of Messages of TikTok Users

Social media platforms have greatly influenced language practices, not only the vocabulary has to adapt to the new communicative environment, but the grammatical forms and syntactical patterns have to be reshaped in order to fit the norms of digital interactions. Taking in consideration the TikTok's orientation on immediacy, efficiency of communication and fast-paced interactions, the standard rules of grammar and syntax are often violated. The platform encourages the use of simple grammatical and syntactical structures and introduces linguistic innovations, including the omission of subjects, auxiliary verbs, articles and deliberate disregard of syntactic norms.

To begin with, one of the grammatical features of the messages of TikTok users is **reduced inflection**. In linguistics, it refers to the process of simplification or omission of word endings that indicate tense, case, number, gender, person and aspect [43]. While studying the comment sections on TikTok it was found that users tend to refine their writing by facilitating or ignoring the grammatical endings. In general, the reduced inflection revolves around the tense, person and number, including the omission of the third person singular or auxiliary verb, for example:

“she even have blood bending but not use it” - omission of auxiliary verb *does* and third person singular present tense (*have* instead of *has*)[115].

“Buddy did u watch it if katara revive them who revive her?” - omission of auxiliary verb *did* and third person singular (*revive* instead of *revives*)

“when the movie came out” - omission of auxiliary verb *did*.

“they did died. already been mentioned, even aang.” - overuse of past tense and omission of auxiliary verb in passive voice (*been mentioned* instead of *has been mentioned*).

“when who wake up katara since sais she died? Cause definitely a dead person can’t heal herself.. Unconscious is also same like being dead for a while. i wait for your counter.” - omission of auxiliary verbs *does* and *did*.

“Yea he fight him no holding back im talking about group of non benders” - omission of third person singular (*fight* instead of *fight*s).

“don’t matter he still took good damage for someone with mastery over all the elements. He also still acknowledged himself they were good fighters” omission of third person singular (*don’t* instead of *doesn’t*).

“Funny enough is people always comparing zaheer with aang the only thing i know notice about aang is that he always hold back no matter what but doesn’t mk him the weakest lol” - omission of auxiliary verb (*people always comparing* instead of *people are always comparing*), omission of third person singular (*hold* instead of *holds*)

“what make it even crazier is that Zuko can react to literal lightning and redirect ts” - omission of third person singular (*make* instead of *makes*)[176].

“isnt they the same people” - incorrect subject-verb agreement (*isn’t* instead of *aren’t*).

“harry and ginny is better” - compound subject requires a plural verb (*are* instead of *is*) [113].

“The waters in the entire LARGE AH AREA was amplified by the DEAD TURTLES- You make sound like everything wasn’t explained. Notice where they’re fighting the scene above. Golly it’s in water” - incorrect number and person inflection, because *waters* is plural, therefore there should be *were* instead of *was*.

“The first airbenders was peacekeepers that was skilled and ready to destroy other benders” - incorrect number and person agreement. The noun *airbenders* is plural, so it should be followed by the plural verb *were*.

“bending is a martial arts, the denied were all skilled martial artist as well. skill are transferrable” - the plural noun *martial arts* should be used without article “a”, *martial artist* is singular, while the correct form will be *martial artists*, and *skill* is singular so it has to be followed by singular verb *is*.

“New airbenders was actually the ancient airbenders. Kind of contradicted your own statement buddy. Tagah was pulling up with techniques NONE of them knew” - incorrect number and person inflection. The subject *airbenders* is plural, so it should be followed by a plural verb *were* [176].

Shifting focus to the syntactical features of Internet slang, while interacting online users often incorporate various syntactic strategies aimed at brevity, efficiency and immediacy. A thorough analysis of TikTok comment sections demonstrated a wide use of ellipsis, simple or fragmented sentence structures, repetition for emphatic effect, parataxis and frequent omission of subject, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions and articles. As a result, digital communication reflects the tendencies of spoken speech in written form, making the communication more direct, informal and conversational.

Another important feature of the messages of TikTok users is **ellipses**, the omission of one or several words, as well as sentence parts that can be understood from the context [29]. On TikTok, it revolves around the omission of single or several words, in particular, subject, auxiliary verb or main verb. Examples of omission of subject and auxiliary verb: *“Kinda giving his vibe”, “crying”, “cracking up”, “still cramming on graduation day”*. Omission of auxiliary verb: *“what kinda lexapro he on i’m asking for my doctor”, “The anxiety just watching”, “this gonna be me”*. Omission of subject: *“wait can’t believe i missed u at unconn”, “Missed all the boring stuff”, “Missed all the fluff, at least he was there”, “took type B to a whole new level”, “Love a bit of chaos. But graduation day? lol”, “didn’t even notice this”, “was there yesterday, you missed horrible speeches you’re fine”*. Omission of subject and main verb: *“well rested and on time”, “Lowkey future husband vibes”, “just so nonchalant.. love it”, “so glad he made it”, “late for the party just about it”*. Omission of the main verb: *“he in the nick of time... he the snooze button”*[177].

Furthermore, the ellipsis of conjunctions, articles and demonstrative pronouns can be observed in the messages of TikTok users, when they are expressing their opinion passionately, presenting ideas or describing a sequence of events. In Internet slang meaning relies heavily on the context and shared understanding of the topic, therefore it is reflected in the absence of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, for example: *“the biker girl energy is forever unmatched i love seeing interactions like this lol”, “ngl i’m really excited to go shopping for my gear it’s gonna be so fun”, “awesome taste, rarely see any of them around, huge bike be careful”*[178], *“stepped in just in time got his degree dipped”*[177], *“got the second dog she still likes to be alone”*. The following examples illustrate the omission of the article: *“she’s waterbending like earth bender. to split a literal ocean you would have to.”*[115], *“Enola holmes this is 2nd one”, “finest man on earth”, “Can you please do tutorial?”, “best edit ever”*[180], *“the popularity one but rest is true”, “only time i’ve found Brad Pitt attractive”*[181]. Examples that combine the omission of conjunction, article and demonstrative pronoun: *“truly iconic im obsessed”* [177], *“i*

tell my girls all the time, i got 2 of you for a reason go play with each other”, *“realest shit ever”*[179], *“nah at the end he says he was more popular than aang rest is true tho”*[181].

Another important feature of messages of TikTok users is the use of **fragmented sentences** and **parataxis**. Fragmented sentence refers to the incomplete sentence, where one or more essential clause components are missing, including subject or predicate [66], for example: *“best edit ever”*, *“love”*, *“not a single exaggeration”*, *“so real”* [180], *“best catwoman”*, *“film name?”* [181], *“less money, hard to get animated”* [176], *“2 DAYS LEFT”*, *“pray for you”*, *“basically the divorced parents at first”*, *“Every day, every hour, every minute, every second”*, *“lol right!!!”* [156], *“TikTok this week”*, *“song name, pls?”*, *“your grammar tho...”*, *“just a concern animal”*, *“korra. same face syndrom.”*, *“Everyone from that damn family...”*, *“same girl...same here”* [168].

Continuing, parataxis stands for a way of organising clauses, phrases or sentences putting them one after another without using coordinating or subordinating conjunctions between them[60]. It can be demonstrated in long, run-like sentences, where users are actively expressing their opinion or describing a sequence of events, often separating the parts by commas, dashes or nothing at all, for instance: *“That's why tenzin is so obsessed at reviving air nomads culture he knows what aang has been through”* - there are two independent statements that are placed one after the another without any comma or conjunction to separate them; *“them flying away from Aang, symbolizing them leaving him. Little Aang trying to follow them, he was the ladt one to run behind their back, symbolizing someday, he will follow them. Monk gyatao, nodding to him but his eyes scream ‘we will wait for you’”* - there are numerous descriptive fragments and thoughts that are not connected or organised into subordinate clauses, the author is enumerating the events and building up an emotional and vivid narrative; *“and they have the audacity to say they missed some parts like katara forgot she can get water through air it's months before the release date, of course it's not”* - in this example the clauses follow each other without any

conjunctions or punctuation, jumping between ideas without any clear structure; *“wan was the first avatar he was a fire bender he accidentally intervened in the fight between Rava the avatar spirit and vatu the dark lord”* - in this case the information is listed in succession with no conjunctions or punctuation[168].

Concluding the analysis of grammatical and syntactical features of messages of TikTok users, it was found that modern communicative tendencies in digital space are greatly influenced by the highly interactive nature of the online platforms themselves. Grammatical structures have undergone significant changes, primarily through reduced inflection of tense, number and person. At the same time, the analysis of syntactical features revealed a shift towards linguistic economy and informality, that is reflected in a widespread use of simple and compound sentences, fragmented sentences, parataxis and ellipsis. However, these changes aimed at simplicity allow users to convey their ideas rapidly and express themselves easily, relying on the shared understanding of context.

2.4 Nonverbal Features

Nonverbal elements became an inseparable part of modern online communication, especially in the context of Internet slang on social media platforms. People tend to incorporate various graphic components in their everyday online interactions, to enhance the meaning and expressiveness of written messages or to completely substitute the text with an image. In a digital environment, the absence of vocal tone, gestures and facial expressions can hinder effective communication, leading to misunderstandings and ambiguity. Therefore, countless graphic elements, such as stickers, emojis, emoticons, meme pictures and GIFs can be used to convey and clarify the emotions, for example: *“....so plot armour 😂”*, *“It’s explained 🙄 just watch it”*[184], *“this will 100% be someone digital footprint in the future 🤖”*, *“Future pilot btw 😊”*, *“I mean these are all Mickey Mouse degrees so you don’t need to be serious, have fun 🔥 😁”*, *“how is it not?? 🤔 🙌”*, *“🤔🤔🤔”*, *“Yea studying as a lawyer is an easy degree 🙌💔”*, *“You say while you can’t get them*

🙌”, “Ok optimism police who kicked ur kennel 🐶”[169], “WAIT I LOVE THIS. >:f”, “:7”, “I use :] as one or >:] when I'm feeling devious”, “My favorite is :D! It's a lot cuter than 😊 and less passive aggressive!”, “0_o I feel like I'm using a dying art”, “Especially the cat face :3”, “<|:3 he has a hat”, “ō_ō = concern or judgment” [170].

During the research, it was found that a wide range of various visual components with distinctive features has emerged, starting with emoticons. An **emoticon**, short form for “emotion icon”, was an early form for conveying emotions, before the appearance of the emojis in digital environments. It stands for a pictorial representation of facial expression or emotion with the help of various punctuation marks, numbers and in some cases letters [15, p. 45], for example: “I am up to no good :>” - in this sentence :> signifies mischievous expression, giving a playful tone to the comment; “same!! :]” - here :] means a smiling face and expresses agreement and friendly tone; “REALL (≥ ∇ ≤)” - in this example (≥ ∇ ≤) expresses extreme excitement and happiness; “YESHH(●••●)” - here (●••●) stands for a cute and blushing happy face, expressing excitement and agreement; “why are you pressed pooka :/” - in this case :/ signifies slight annoyance or confusion; “me too :3” - here :3 is a cute and cat-like smile that conveys a friendly and playful tone; “You're so real :p” in this example :p expresses teasing or joking; “No one can stop me!! :3” - here :3 adds a cute and playful tone, making the bold statement feel less strong or serious; “yay :D” in this case :D means a big grin and expresses happiness and excitement; “cuteee :o” - here :o symbolises an opened mouth showing surprise; “so glad they're coming back o_o” - in this sentence o_o helps to express surprise or amazement[171].

However, overtime emoticons were substituted with emojis, pictures that represent the human face expressions, emotions and different objects, that can be used separately or be embedded into the message to convey the attitude or reaction of the user [15, p.45]. The following examples illustrate the usage of emojis to convey

positive emotions: *“I am, ty babes 😊”* - in this case a smiling face with hearts creates a friendly and warm atmosphere, helping to express gratitude and appreciation; *“wedding dress vs ✨WEDDING DRESS✨”* - in this example stars signify magic and highlight the wedding dress, making it stand out and feel special; *“Girl your famous 😭😭”* - in this case crying emojis express overwhelming happiness or excitement; *“THE DRESS?? EXCUSE ME??? WOW 😍😍😍”* - here the emojis intensify the emotional expressiveness of the statement, by increasing the amazement and admiration; *“Oh my gosh, you look absolutely stunning 😭”* - in this example the crying face expresses happy tears and signals deep emotional reaction; *“FINALLY BRO THESE TYPA BIG WEDDING DRESSES 🙌”* - here raised hands signal joy, celebration and approval; *“😂😂😂 so cuute! hi Raquel! 💕”* - combination of laughing emojis with a heart express friendliness and affection, showing that something is funny and welcomed; *“CAN YOU PLEASE DESIGN MY WEDDING DRESS 😭😭😭😭”* - in this case numerous crying faces symbolise high excitement and a desire to have something as good [172]. The following examples illustrate complex emotions, that can be difficult to interpret: *“The Becca bloom comparisons are just mean 😞 let that girl enjoy her dress and her moment 😞😞😞”*, - while 😞 signals sadness and empathy, as the speaker feels sorry for the author to be compared with other person, 😞😞😞 express annoyance and disagreement with negative comments; *“Ik what a joke is 😂 but I PERSONALLY don’t think making fun of a bride on her wedding day is funny, but whatever you like 🙄”*, - in this case 😂 signals exaggeration and frustration, while 🙄 shows resignation and acceptance of different opinion, to soften the disagreement; *“Literally EVERYONE is talking about it 😂🌹💀”* - here 😂 stands for laughter, showing that something is ridiculous, 🌹 symbolises fading or ruin, adding an ironic tone, while 💀 means dead from laughter or shock, emphasizing the humorous reaction [172].

Furthermore, the rapid development of social media platforms increased visual orientation of online communication, forcing users to expand their expressive tools far beyond written text messages. Moreover, traditional emoticons and emojis show

only the basic and simple emotions, while often lacking originality. Therefore, such phenomena as stickers was integrated into digital interactions, being a more efficient and creative way to express one's feelings and attitudes [15, p.45]. Originally **stickers** referred to static or animated images with transparent backgrounds, mostly used on chat apps. However, on social media platforms stickers quickly evolved to include photos, written texts and popular online phrases, meme pictures and GIFs.

Further research revealed that platforms themselves encourage users to incorporate more visual elements, while interacting online. For instance, TikTok gives the participants an opportunity to select or create their own personalized sticker packs, allowing people to express their individuality in a unique way, for example [173]:

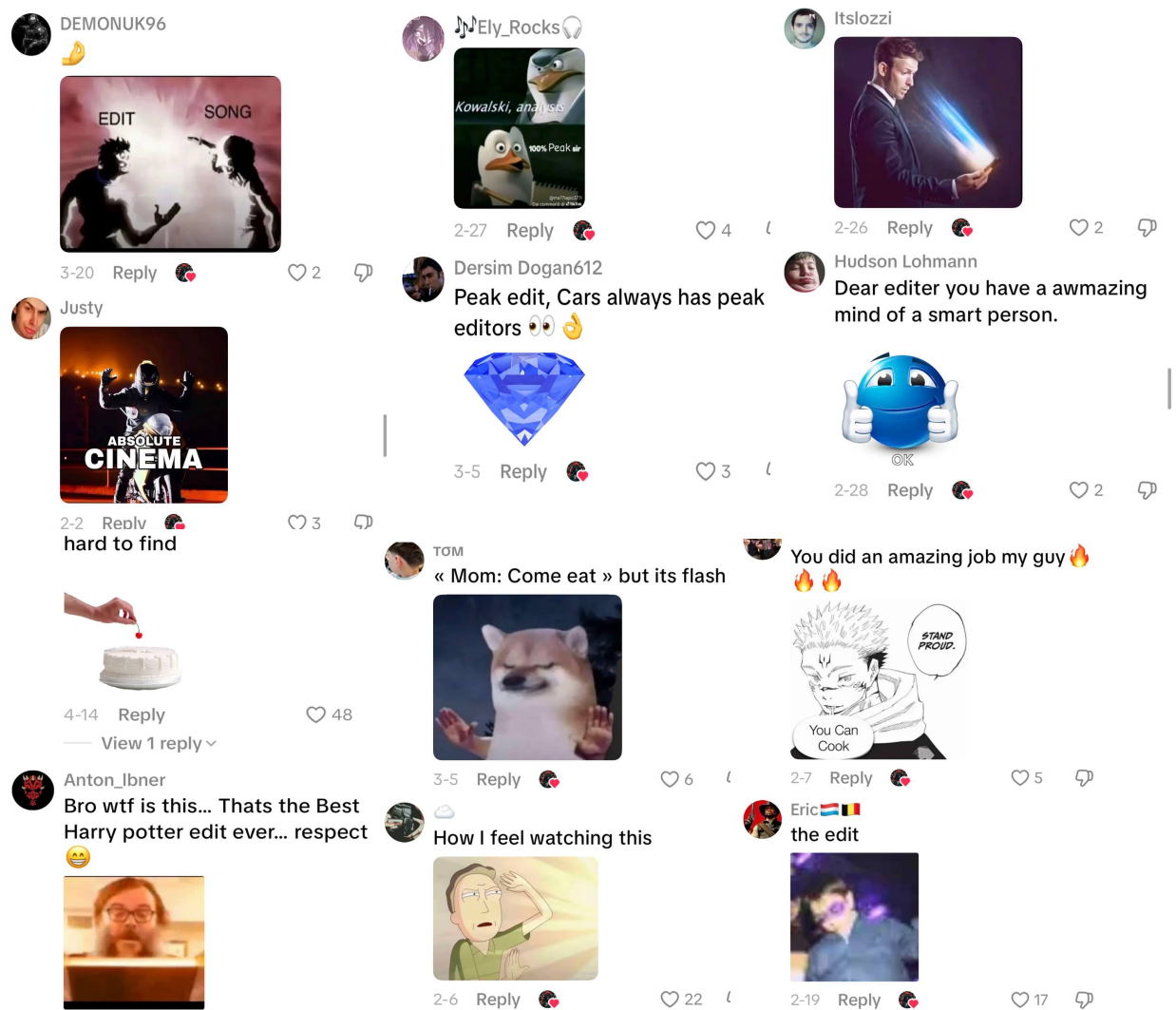


Fig. 2.1. Examples of personalised sticker packs

Moreover, visual elements serve a community building function, giving users the sense of belonging and helping to bridge the distance between the participants. The use of popular stickers or memes can demonstrate one's digital literacy and the awareness of cultural movements and online trends. In addition, certain graphic signs can belong to particular fandoms, a group of people who show a strong interest or sometimes even obsession for a particular subject, for example a movie, series, book, music band or celebrity [30]. When incorporating stickers or pictures related to a specific topic, a user demonstrates their sense of belonging to a community, hoping to bridge the communicative gap with other users. Often fandom graphic signs illustrate favourite characters with different face expressions to represent emotions and famous quotes. For example, these stickers are used within the community of Harry Potter and kpop fans[174]:

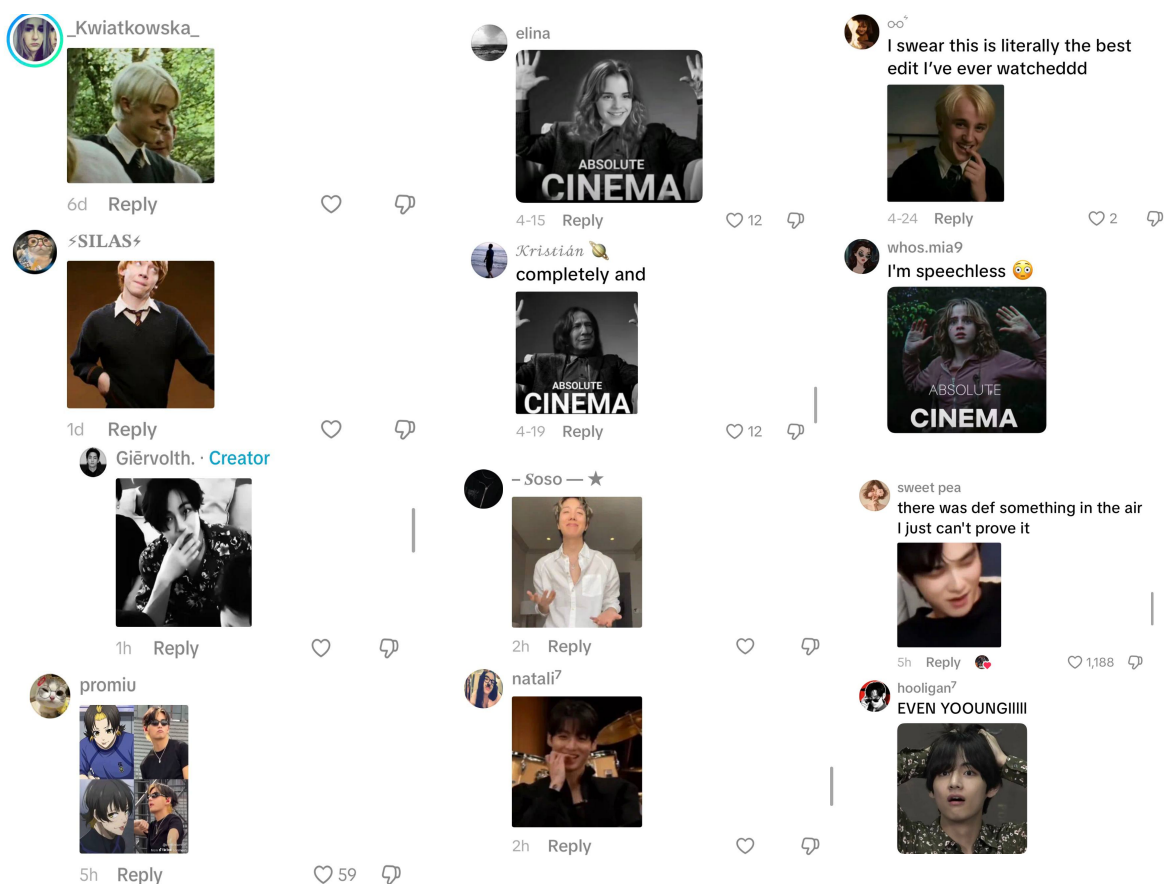


Fig.2.2. Examples of stickers in the Harry Potter and kpop community

Examples of fan stickers of the famous cartoon by Disney “Cars”[176]:

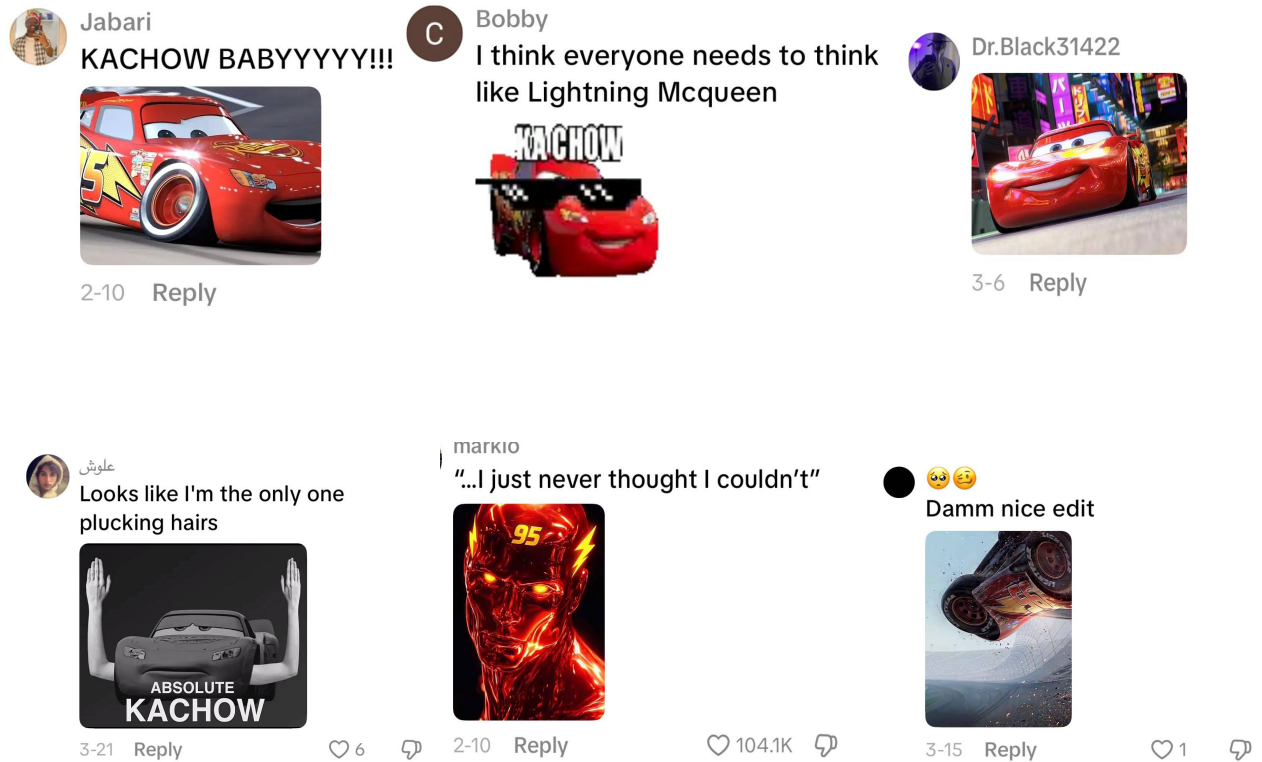


Fig.2.3. Examples stickers from the cartoon “Cars”

In conclusion, a wide range of graphic elements, such as stickers, GIFs and meme pictures play a significant part in facilitating and making online interactions more efficient. Visual aids were quickly integrated into social media, due to the users seeking innovative ways to express themselves, by expanding their communicative tools far beyond simple written texts. Stickers serve numerous functions, enriching online interactions with emotions, expressiveness and creativity, while also helping to build communities based on common interests.

2.5 Pragmatic Features of Messages of TikTok Users

With the rapid development of digital platforms, social networking sites, and the growing significance of online communication, analyzing the communicative goals of TikTok users is essential for understanding how social media literacy is applied in everyday online interactions. The study examines the choices individuals make regarding language, structure, and multimodal elements to achieve a specific communicative goal, reflecting how users participate in, influence, and build online communities. This concept concentrates on the purpose the individual seeks to achieve, including expressing emotions, giving information, questioning, entertaining, or fostering a sense of community, and the linguistic and visual devices they incorporate. Therefore, social media literacy is reflected in participants' language choices, use of slang, awareness of TikTok trends, and ability to navigate platform features effectively, and it also highlights evolving norms and contemporary online communication practices. After thorough research on the TikTok platform, such communicative goals can be outlined [70].

Informative goal is aimed at sharing knowledge with other participants and contributing to the informational value of the interaction. It suggests providing relevant and truthful insights, clarifying facts, offering explanations, correcting misconceptions, and sharing applicable data. The participants who employ an informative goal tend to demonstrate a high level of social media literacy by adapting their language practices to the platform's fast-paced, highly interactive, and multimodal communication. In addition, they adjust their tone to the level of knowledge of other users, making complex information accessible. The following examples illustrate different people providing detailed explanations, using informal and expressive language to create a conversational style. In terms of syntactical and grammatical structures, the messages include simple, compound, and complex sentences, as well as ellipses. In addition, they incorporate nonverbal elements, such

as emojis and non-standard capitalisation for emphasis and to maintain attention, for example:

“To begin with it's really hard...even if you are a good rider..hitting the ball looks easy..but it's alot harder than it looks...or it was for me 😊 It's frustrating and then once you start being able to hit the ball at a canter...it is MAGICAL and totally addictive ! The ponies are fantastic. Honest, brave and super clever. The ponies are everything 💕 If you love team sports and horses..it's brilliant...there's nothing more fun than playing with your friends and working as a team! It can be scary. Matches are fast. The horses turn quickly and the game moves quickly. But clubs usually slowly introduce you into it so you build up. In the lower levels (which I play) its usually really friendly and most clubs will have try polo days to have a go ! Most clubs will have kit you can borrow for lessons, but when you get into it there is quite abit of kit, hat, visa, goggles/,glasses, boots, knee guards , sticks etc...but you can collect along the way! It's such an amazing sport, you meet amazing people, ride amazing horses, you can do polo holidays all round the world which is really fun. I started with a "try polo weekend" 15 years ago...and never looked back..now it is my families whole life and passion and the ponies make it so special ❤️ Hope that gives you a flavour ! 💕🐎” - in this example the author uses simple, compound and complex sentences structuring the message in clear way to connect with the audience and share useful information. They often ignore commas or periods to separate the fragments and combine exclamation marks, emojis and capitalisation (“MAGICAL”) to add expressiveness and emphasis to the statements[201].

“he once apparated (still not 100% confirmed) or found himself suddenly on the roof of his primary school when he was running from Dudley and his gang, it was one of his early signs of magic” - this is example of a complex sentence, that combines multiple ideas with commas to separate clauses and actions, as well as parentheses to give additional facts. The speaker uses correct grammatical tenses and loose structure signaling informality. Overall, the information is presented in a clear and accessible way[182].

“So Hi. Geologist here! what you have there is a unique soil. Its called liquifaction and it happens when you have a very saturated cohesive soil. IE sandy elastic silt/sandy silt/sandy lean clay. Its only as unsafe as its stability otherwise its really not a big deal. Now as for fixing it theres a couple different ways to fix it. 1. you can add density to the soil by backfilling with some dense stones. (expensive but fast) 2. you can do your best to remove it all and then just backfill it with soil. (cheap but laborious)” - in this message the speaker uses a combination of simple, compound and complex sentences with listing structure to add clarity. The punctuation is standard, although the user omits apostrophe in *its* and *theres*, and some sentences begin with lower case first letter. [183].

“Looking at the ride schedule for your area and volunteering is a good way to start. I compete for MNDRA (Minnesota distance riding association) and UMECRA (upper Midwest endurance and competitive riding association) and we have a thing called the green bean team where rookies can earn rewards separate from veterans while still advancing in the sport. I also found a mentor who brought me along and helped me succeed, which is something you should do if you want to get really good at the sport. I learned so much and have been able to bring other people along because of it!” - in this message the author effectively combined simple, compound and complex sentences and parentheses to clarify the details. The standard punctuation and capitalisation rules are followed, making the message clear and well-structured, but creating a friendly tone[184].

Interrogative goal - the primary aim of this communicative goal is to seek feedback, obtain information, and clarification from the answers and content of other participants. People may ask questions to receive explanations on certain topics and trends, gather opinions on different matters, or stimulate further interactions with the creators and users. In addition, this goal provokes dialogue and often sparks long conversation chains, improving engagement and shifting focus from simple consumption of short video content to more productive and meaningful

communication. However, the interrogative communicative aim encompasses various levels of social media literacy.

Starting with a higher level, which is demonstrated through the use of various sentence structures (simple, compound and complex), correct grammatical forms, context-relevant vocabulary, clear punctuation and standard capitalisation, for example: *“Is there a reason why polo horses get their mane cut so short and tails braided? I feel like it has to do like with the hair getting tangled in the equipment but I was never sure”*, *“Can you go into more detail about posting in the canter please? I’m so curious!!”*, *“What happens if you do conflicting signals, ie., your voice is saying one thing but the rein position is saying something else?”*, *“Is it true that mares are more sensitive to this and it's harder to train geldings to be polo ponies?”* [185], *“What is the name of the movie?”*[186], *“Where can you watch the movie?”* [187], *“How long have you had it? How long did it take to create the interactive page? At least roughly?”*[115], *“So then what’s the point of using all of the additions?”*[188].

However, some users tend to incorporate more simplified grammatical and syntactical structures, which is reflected in the omission of auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, and articles, as well as the use of short sentences with ellipsis, which mainly consist of key words. Moreover, these questions are highly context dependent, for instance: *“Dude what title is song name????”*, *“SONG NAME????!?!?!?!?!?”*, *“Is this new?”*, *“Name song?”* [188], *“Uhh ? so aang can take away someone's bending but can't give to someone?”*[176], *“When new season? 😊”*, *“Whats name”* [189], *“But no one remembered it ? Or set an alarm?”*, *“anyone else think of Stripes?”*, *“UCONN ?”*, *“nobody told him to get ready?”*[159], *“THEY RESPONDED LMAO????”* [175], *“song name????”*, *“wait I thought this song is india?”*, *“partner?”* [93], *“love bombing? wym bro”*, *“orry what now?”* [114], *“im doing foine?”*, *“OVULATING ???? 😭”* [118], *“Insecure of not knowing?”*, *“Max deadlift?”*[147], *“elona holmes 3 whennn??”*, *“Wedding??? Hello??? 😊👏😊😊”*, *“MARRYING?!”, “fake nails ?????”, “WEDDINGGGG??”* [190].

Expressive goal refers to one's intention to openly share their emotions, feelings, opinions, and attitudes by employing various communicative tools, including a wide range of linguistic and multimodal devices. Due to the highly interactive and dynamic nature of TikTok, the platform encourages self-expression, helping an individual to construct and present their identity within the digital community. Another function of an expressive communicative goal is to seek social connection, validation, and support through shared feelings, opinions, and experiences. Therefore, TikTok provides users with an opportunity to communicate their emotions with a bigger audience and receive feedback instantly. In addition, social media platforms create a sense of physical distance and anonymity, encouraging users to be more open when expressing vulnerable emotions online by decreasing the fear of judgment.

The feelings and opinions can be conveyed through various linguistic devices, including written text messages in the comments section, captions, and video content, or through the combination of language and graphic elements. The following examples illustrate the use of written messages with punctuation and emojis: *“lead guitarist is crazy good Fo Realz!!! Excellent, young man!! 🔥🔥”*, *“Hell yes! 🤘🤘🤘, freakin nailed it!”*, *“Just so yall know, you guys are absolutely the coolest teenagers ever! 🤘”* [191], *“That’s sick! 🔥🔥🔥🔥👏👏👏”*, *“A+.... mad respect for drummers !!! 🔥😎😁”*, *“i went from “awww🥺” to “ohh💀””* [193]. Examples combining written text with emojis, creative writing and spelling: *“literally hate it with every bone in my body😭😭😭”*, *“congratufvkinglations”*, *“I’m so happy for^uYo^cku”* [192], *“I hate my mind 🧠”* [193]. Examples of written text messages: *“yea ur crazy good coolest kids at that school”*, *“sooo good”*, *“the lead guitarist is just amazing”*, *“hear me out on the bassist?”*, *“The confidence of the drummer is what I need”*, *“bro holy aura That solo was peak”*, *“Drummer should be more in the centre of attention”*, *“Good shit! y’all have a great sound. Even without all the expensive sound equipment you still sound good as fuck. keep it up! hope to see y’all on a big stage”* [191].

Examples of comment reactions, which combine written texts with stickers [191]:



Fig.2.4. Examples of comments with written texts and stickers

Supportive goal - aims at providing other participants with emotional support, through being sympathetic, helping, encouraging, comforting, or giving practical advice based on personal experience and knowledge. The primary focus of interaction is to create a positive communicative space and to strengthen the sense of belonging and mutual care between the members of the digital community. In particular, users implement this goal by congratulating and expressing pride for the achievements of other individuals, being reassuring and empathic, as well as encouraging and motivating in moments of hardship and self-doubt. Although the empathetic messages of TikTok users often include simple, compound, and complex sentence structures, they are balanced with an informal and conversational style, including nonstandard capitalisation, punctuation, creative spelling, and graphic elements for emotional emphasis.

Therefore, individuals who incorporate supportive communicative goal tend to show a high level of social media literacy, for example: *“I spent my golden birthday alone too last year and didn’t even make myself a dessert. Things will get better for us ”* - here the author shares a relatable story to support the other users, writing two simple sentences with clear structure and punctuation; *“Floater friends grow up to be very successful adults. You face adversities at a young age. It prepares you for an amazing adult life with boundaries and people that truly respect you. Hold your head up it won’t always be this way. ”* - in this example, there is a combination of simple and compound sentences, with standard punctuation and capitalisation. The speaker gives support and advice, strengthening the warm atmosphere with heart emoji; *“My momma always said “There will always be someone who has a harder situation than yours. But it doesn’t mean your feelings don’t count.”  Whatever you are facing, I hope you keep fighting.”* - in this case the speaker shares their wisdom and perspective by using simple and complex sentences with an embedded quote, with standard punctuation and capitalisation, as well as emoji to signal support; *“Happy belated birthday to the stranger I found on my fyp, I hope your day is better today  ”* - in this example there is one compound sentence with clear punctuation and standard capitalisation, and emojis to signal kindness and support; *“You are loved, you are cherished and you are adored! Happy birthday sweet girl  this is just a small season of life and it does get better! Hang in there! You are WORTHY of being celebrated!”* - in this message, the speaker used a combination of sentence types, as well as parallel structure, exclamation marks and capitalisation for emphasis (in *WORTHY*), as well as heart emoji to signify love and support[194].

Debating goal refers to individuals expressing their critique, opposing views, and participating in argumentation in order to defend their personal opinion and challenge different perspectives. While employing this goal, users aim to persuade other participants of the correctness of their viewpoint, often highlighting misconceptions, providing contrasting insights, and offering alternative ideas. However, the ultimate aim of interaction may not always lie in reaching agreement,

but rather in stating one's opinion and gaining support from the audience, simultaneously initiating a long debating chain.

Furthermore, argumentative comments can be divided into two groups: polite and aggressive. Starting with polite messages, they demonstrate a higher level of social media literacy through various sentence types, ellipsis, nonstandard punctuation, contextually appropriate language, and abbreviations, making the communication seem informal, but at the same time respectful, for example: *“No this was necessary. Even though that dog was training, what if it was reactive and the little dog just ran up without control? The little dog would've gotten hurt but we don't know which dogs are reactive or not. The lady was an unreasonable owner because she had the dog off leash and wasn't able to control it.”* - in this example, there is a combination of simple, compound and complex sentences, uses correct grammatical forms, standard punctuation and capitalisation; *“Mb, i'm not trying to make it seem like i'm trying to force my views onto you. I simply disagree that's all. I should've worded my comment differently”* - in this comment, the speaker uses simple and compound sentences, correct punctuation, clipped word *mb* which stands for *maybe*, and lower case *i* in *i'm* [195]; *“No it's not. We own mineral rights in another state from when my great grandparents sold their land and decided to keep them. Yes, most people do sell them with the land but it isn't a standard practice.”* - in this case the author incorporates a mix of sentence types, standard punctuation and capitalisation, as well as correct grammatical forms[196].

On the contrary, aggressive disputes or rude messages reflect a controversial level of social media literacy. To expand on the matter, these comments mainly incorporate simple grammatical structures, short sentences, and ellipses, often combining them with creative spelling and nonstandard capitalisation for emphasis. However, even though rude comments may be efficient at expressing criticism and reflecting the informal and conversational tone of internet communication, they frequently carry an antagonistic tone, showing a lack of respect. Therefore, it destroys meaningful interactions and hinders the community-building process, for example:

“he doesn't lmao, you're allergic to any hetero ships” , “Maybe Toph isn't the only blind one here”, “education system failed you”, “He got the reference dumbass”, “It must physically hurt to be that stupid”, “Your the reason shampoo has instructions”, “idgaf ill make fun of yall skittles”, “idgaf about your opinion go to your pillow cry baby”, “lol, you dumboooooooo”, “dont see any sense in continuing this conversation w stupid man, byyyyyyyyy”, “if you can't prove the point stfu” [195].

Self-promotional goal - aims at attracting the attention of the audience to one's profile and content, improving visibility, and stimulating interaction among the participants. On the TikTok platform, this goal is effectively implemented in comment sections, where individuals employ both constructive and disruptive methods. Some users tend to incorporate positive engagement techniques, including posing relevant questions and asking for advice, stimulating other participants to share their experiences, and giving feedback, as well as using humor, actively responding to messages, and writing friendly or emotional comments. Hence, the individuals contribute to the conversations and engage in fostering the sense of community, while increasing algorithms and audience reach. The following examples represent interrogative comments or search for advice: *“any tips for notetaking when you don't have an ipad/touchscreen laptop? would ppl recommend typing or handwritten 🙏”, “can you pls help me on the referencing part, I'm completely new to that pls don't judge 🤔🙄🙄”, “Do you really recommend getting an iPad?? I'm undecided”, “tutorial on how to select preferred classes?”[198].* Examples of friendly comments that give feedback and express emotions: *“Omg you restore my faith in people, you are both amazing.”, “Queen energy! Really proud there are people like you.”, “you should be so proud of yourselves!! you were amazing!! well done girls ❤️”, “This video makes me so proud to be a woman.”, “I have tears in my eyes watching these brave women ♥️I'm so incredibly proud of you all. We can truly feel safe knowing there are angels like you beside us 🌟♥️” [197].*

On the contrary, disruptive techniques suggest flooding comment sections with irrelevant or repetitive messages that carry no meaningful value and don't contribute

to the conversations. The primary aim of this behaviour is to maximize exposure and to draw attention, often provoking negative reactions from other participants. Common examples include excessive tagging, overuse of graphic elements and capitalisation, writing off-topic comments, and leaving long, often repetitive and meaningless messages. Examples of irrelevant comments: “*CHECK, MY REPOSTS*”, “*FREE PALESTINE*”, “*CHECKKKK MY REPOST*”, “*SEE MY REEPOST*”, “*John 3:16 NIV [16] For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. To believe in Him means you believe He is the definition of good itself. And everything he said is good. And nothing else is good but Him. A human will do whatever they believe is good therefore if you believe His commandments are good which is believing in Him. You will want to do them to your best ability.*”[199]. Examples of repetitive messages: “*Amen 🙏 Amen Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Love*”, “*check check check my my my repoooooost*”. Examples of overuse of emojis and capitalisation: “*Whether 😭 awake 😭 or 😭 dreaming 😭 we 😭 are 😭 all 😭 on 😭 this 😭 planet 😭 together 😭*”, “*God is always there JLY! Romans 10:9 “..be saved” JESUS IS THE ONLY TRUE WAY TO GOD THE FATHER IN HEAVEN! Declare Jesus as LORD, believe, and repent!!*”[199].

In terms of social media literacy, users who employ constructive methods tend to show a higher level of social media literacy. They incorporate various linguistic and multimodal devices effectively according to the norms of the platform, supporting the conversational tone, but still conveying the meaning clearly. On the contrary, disruptive techniques, while being effective at increasing visibility and audience reach, do not demonstrate adaptability, hindering meaningful interactions and community-building.

Community-building goal refers to the use of language, multimodal elements, and various communicative techniques to establish connections, increase user engagement within the community, and foster a sense of belonging to a specific group and shared identity. The primary aim of interaction is to create a safe, comfortable,

and inclusive online space where individuals with common interests can form and maintain new social connections. On TikTok, the community-building goal is realised through the creation and dissemination of thematic video content, which provokes further discussion and comment threads. For instance, when producing videos on specific book series, movies, and fictional universes, an author provides the audience with an environment for collective engagement. Users tend to share their opinions, feelings, emotions, insights, and knowledge on the topic, fostering meaningful interactions around a shared interest. Furthermore, these communities have a diverse audience, uniting people with various levels of social media literacy.

For instance, these comments illustrate the group of people who are interested in the topic of golden retrievers: *“I’ve never in my life seen an non-happy golden retriever 😂”*, *“my dad has 3 shih zhus that are stuck to him like glue and I always hear him shout IM JUST GOIN FOR A FUKIN SMOKE CALM DOWN 😂”*, *“i’ve been a dog owner for the past 7 years and I can tell you that it does not end 😭”*, *“dogs my spirit animal tbh”*, *“i will now only describe myself as a golden retriever who woke up too early”*, *“uhhh someone get me a golden retrieverrrrr 😭😭”*, *“Honestly relatable. But I would wake him up pretty early again and again just to see that grumpy face x”*, *“commenting to stay on golden retriever tok”* [200] - in these examples users demonstrate mostly a high level of social media literacy. They effectively incorporate abbreviations, clipping and informal vocabulary (*“tbh”*, *“goin”*, *“tok”*). Some comments illustrate standard capitalisation or capitalised words for emphasis, combining them with emojis to better express emotions and attitudes. While others write the words in lower case at the beginning of the sentence and in pronoun i. Regarding grammar and syntax, users incorporate various sentence types, with some comments using ellipses.

Examples on the topic of cooking: *“you not wrong they are edible but they bitter af 😭 maybe zest as topping but lemon peels in cake is crazy 😭😭😭”*, *“Boiling takes the bitter away”*, *“how long do you boil it? couple mins?”*, *“You used the wrong type of lemon. You need use Meyer lemons. They’re less acidic and are a*

sweet lemon.”, “I used seedless lemons and I even boiled them beforehand to make them less bitter. It was gross!!! 😊😊😊 I’ll try the ones you suggested but I will not be trying this method ever again. Thanks!”, “Can't recommend: 1. The white part underneath the skin is quite bitter (for all citrus fruit). 2. I'd you use the outer skin layer, make sure to get "bio" quality, as standard fruit get sprayed with biocides a lot, which to some extent stay in the skin.” [201] - across these examples users demonstrate a varying level of social media literacy, ranging from a medium to a higher one, which is reflected in the use of context appropriate abbreviations and clipping (“af”, “mins”), simple and compound sentences with run-on structure and frequent omission of auxiliary verbs and articles. The punctuation is primarily used for emphasis and is accompanied with emojis to express emotions.

To conclude, a thorough analysis of TikTok comment sections and video content revealed that while interacting online, the participants pursue a certain communicative goal by incorporating specific techniques to reach the desired result. Depending on the aim of communication, the level of social media literacy can be identified for a certain audience, although it may be the same or different within a particular group of people.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

In summary, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive analysis of how social media literacy is demonstrated in the messages of TikTok users through communicative goals, linguistic and graphic devices they incorporate. The highly interactive and dynamic nature of online communication prompts the participants to adapt their language practices, shifting towards more expressive and simplified interactions aimed at constructing their identities and creativity. The analysis of lexical features of messages of TikTok users revealed that due to the constant flow of trends and content, users have to adapt their vocabulary to fit the contemporary tendencies, including the wide use of abbreviations, clipping, affixation, semantic shift, borrowing, blending, and compounding.

From an orthographic perspective, the participants incorporate punctuation and capitalisation in various ways, often to simplify the typing process to facilitate and speed up the interactions. Furthermore, overuse of punctuation marks, nonstandard capitalisation, and creative spelling can serve an expressive function, providing individuals with creative tools for conveying emotions and feelings, while imitating real-life conversations. In addition, the messages of TikTok users are frequently supported with such graphic elements as stickers, GIFs, emojis, and emoticons. Visual aids quickly gained popularity on the platform, enriching digital communication and helping to build communities.

Shifting focus to grammatical and syntactical features, they have undergone significant changes that are illustrated in the modern tendency for economy and informality. Grammatical alterations are reflected in the use of reduced inflection of tense, number, and person in the messages of TikTok users. While the analysis of syntactical features revealed that the prevailing majority of participants incorporate various sentence types, most frequently simple and fragmented sentences, parataxis, and ellipsis.

To conclude, the level of social media literacy of each individual can be analysed through the framework of communicative goals, which suggests dividing people into distinctive types, based on the goal of interaction they pursue. It was noticed that each user incorporates specific techniques and linguistic means to reach the desired result. Depending on the aim of communication individuals pursue, it is possible to analyse the level of social media literacy based on the orthographic, lexical, grammatical, syntactical and nonverbal features. Although this framework provides a way to distinguish the literacy competences of a certain audience, in some cases, the result can be the same or different for the particular group of people.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this research presents a comprehensive analysis of social media literacy, investigating how it is applied on social media platforms, in particular in comment sections and short video content on TikTok.

It provides a comprehensive theoretical background on the rise of digital technologies that prompted the appearance of Internet discourse as a special kind of communication in digital space, highlighting such distinctive features as hypertextuality, multimodality, virtuality, anonymity, and interactivity. Proceeding to the analysis of social media, it was found that online platforms occupy an important place in the social aspect of human life, providing people with various communicative tools and features that encourage self-expression and interactions.

Furthermore, the study focused on the historical roots of the term literacy, its variations, and how it expanded its definitions over time. Primary literacy signified the ability to read and write, although it broadened its meaning to include various types of literacy practices and competencies. With the emergence of online platforms, the concept of social media literacy was introduced, covering a variety of skills needed for safe and effective online communication. In addition, the study examines TikTok as one of the most influential social media platforms among Generation Z users, emphasising its impact on contemporary communicative trends and introducing Internet slang.

Shifting focus to the practical part of the work, it provides a detailed analysis of the modern tendencies and innovations in online communication, through the analysis of special features and word formation processes in Internet slang. Firstly, the examination of orthographic features demonstrated that users tend to violate the rules of punctuation and capitalisation for various purposes. The participants intentionally misspell the words, omit or overuse the punctuation marks, and use capital letters for a more emotional or dramatic effect to attract attention and increase expressiveness.

Moreover, the analysis of word formation processes and lexical features of the messages of TikTok users revealed a wide use of abbreviations, clipping, borrowing, semantic shift, affixation, blending, and compounding as effective ways for self-expression, acceleration of interaction, and community building. Furthermore, the examination of grammatical and syntactical features of messages of TikTok users demonstrated a shift towards simplification, which is reflected in reduced inflection, ellipsis, parataxis, various sentence types, and use of simple and fragmented sentences. In addition, graphic elements are constantly integrated into everyday interactions, often used separately or combined with written comments to illustrate emotions, feelings, and attitudes.

To conclude, the study examined the level of social media literacy of participants through the framework of communicative goals. The approach suggests dividing the individuals into groups based on the aim of communication they pursue and the linguistic and multimodal devices they incorporate to reach it. During the research such communicative goals were identified: informative, interrogative, expressive, supportive, debating, self-promotional, and community building. Hence, the level of social media literacy could be studied based on the previously mentioned linguistic features of Internet slang and according to the aim of interaction. Although the levels of literacy were found to be mainly the same for all the users of one group, within some communicative goals, the results may vary.

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175. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9to7JUV/>
176. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9756TUC/>
177. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9KmhA3e/>
178. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9KXc11y/>
179. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9KqfMdA/>
180. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9ENh2D8/>
181. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9ENsGaD/>
182. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx1A2fyx/>
183. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx1Ahdp7/>
184. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx1AFEER/>
185. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx1S1HHd/>
186. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9E6EmWd/>
187. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9ENsGaD/>
188. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx1p4wjW/>
189. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9ENh2D8/>
190. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx13MSkL/>
191. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxeb37Rf/>
192. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxexhf5h/>
193. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxexC63Y/>
194. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxe7j5Nx/>
195. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxd26S2o/>
196. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxd2SH1a/>
197. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxRwADPe/>
198. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxRwa4b7/>
199. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx818Jw1/>
200. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx8U9rGQ/>

201. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSx8P31TQ/>
202. URL: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSxujeJ9u/>