

Digital World Englishes, by Patricia Friedrich

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English, Technology, and Social Interaction: A Review of *Digital World Englishes*

In recent years, scholarly attention has increasingly focused on the ways in which digital communication reshapes linguistic practices within a globally networked world. Online platforms now serve as central infrastructures for interaction across geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, and English circulates through these technologically mediated environments in ways that affect not only linguistic forms but also patterns of visibility, authority, and participation. By destabilising traditional assumptions about bounded linguistic systems, these developments have prompted renewed debates within the field of World Englishes concerning how English should be conceptualised in digitally mediated contexts. Rather than treating English as a fixed system or a stable, clearly bounded variety—a view in discussions of international and lingua franca uses of English (Friedrich and Matsuda 2010)—the book aligns with recent research that conceptualises English as a socially situated and dynamic set of practices. In this view, English emerges from the interplay of multilingual repertoires, technological



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infrastructures, and human agency, highlighting its context-dependent and adaptable nature across diverse communicative settings (Androutsopoulos 2016; Wei 2018).

Situated within this evolving intellectual landscape, *Digital World Englishes* offers a timely exploration of the ways in which English is reshaped through digital communication. Across nine chapters, Friedrich demonstrates how linguistic diversity, technological mediation, and human participation intersect in online spaces and organises the book around these interrelated dimensions, suggesting that English in the digital era is continually negotiated through evolving communicative practices. Rather than treating chapters as discrete thematic units, the book develops a cumulative argument that highlights the co-construction of English through the interaction of language, technology, and users. In doing so, it advances debates within World Englishes by moving beyond geographically bounded models, such as Kachru's Concentric Circles of English (1983), to account for the sociotechnical processes through which digital Englishes emerge.

The first dimension, linguistic creativity, is most prominently illustrated in Chapters 1, 3, and 4. Chapter 1 concentrates on terminology and concepts that are fundamental to the comprehension of the rest of the book. Chapter 3 examines language contact and hybridisation in digital contexts, showing how English interacts with diverse linguistic resources to produce innovative forms. Drawing on examples from online communication, Friedrich demonstrates how such expressions circulate rapidly and gain broader social and cross-cultural significance. Chapter 4 extends this discussion by examining lexical diffusion in digital contexts, illustrating how English lexical items circulate across languages and communities. Drawing on examples such as “cringe”, the chapter shows that the spread of such forms is driven not only by lexical need but also by processes of innovation, social meaning, and online interaction. Across these chapters, Friedrich shows that digital environments foster playful experimentation, creative borrowing, and fluid integration of multilingual resources, positioning English as a dynamic, participatory repertoire shaped by ongoing social interaction.

The second dimension, technological mediation, is most clearly articulated in Chapter 2, which reconceptualises digital space as increasingly structured by algorithmic processes, rather than being solely defined by geographical boundaries. Friedrich's discussion highlights how platform- and algorithm-driven processes shape the production, circulation, and visibility of English online. Related concerns emerge in later chapters, where multimodal communication (Chapter 7) and ethical considerations in researching online environments (Chapter 8) are further examined. Chapter 7 situates digital World Englishes within new media and multimodality, highlighting the integration of multiple semiotic resources, including text, image, audio, and video, in online communication. It illustrates how English interacts with other languages across contexts such as social media, news platforms, fan fiction, and gaming, producing fluid, transnational, and hybrid practices, and argues that digital environments reshape conventional spatial and temporal constraints on communication, contributing to

ongoing variation and change in English. Chapter 8 addresses the ethical and methodological dimensions of researching digital Englishes, focusing on issues of privacy, informed consent, and the protection of minoritised populations in online research. It further notes that AI systems and digitally mediated platforms may reproduce social biases and privilege dominant linguistic varieties, and highlights broader concerns regarding fairness, representation, and linguistic justice through an examination of data practices and technological mediation.

The third dimension—human participation—is developed through the interrelated roles of identity construction, ideological positioning, and communicative practices in digitally mediated environments in Chapters 5, 6, and 9. Friedrich illustrates how individuals and communities mobilise English as a resource for identity construction, collaboration, and knowledge exchange across diverse online contexts. The discussion of native-speakerism (Chapter 5) highlights how entrenched linguistic hierarchies continue to shape digital interactions, while Chapter 6 shows how online environments enable fluid, performative, and self-directed identity work. Importantly, Chapter 6 extends Chapter 5 by demonstrating that identity is negotiated within, rather than outside, these hierarchies. In participatory spaces such as gaming communities and fan cultures, English functions as a shared medium among diverse users, producing hybrid practices that reflect global connectivity and local affiliation. Collectively, these discussions foreground human agency in negotiating meaning and identity online, though this agency remains structured by ideological and platform constraints. Chapter 9 further addresses the pedagogical implications of digital Englishes, arguing that educators must recognise the complex interactions between linguistic practices, identity construction, and digitally mediated communicative environments. Developing critical digital literacy therefore requires not only linguistic competence, but also an awareness of how online platforms regulate participation, shape visibility, and reproduce hierarchies of legitimacy in English use, particularly in relation to native-speakerism and emerging hybrid practices in multilingual contexts.

In a nutshell, one of the book's principal strengths lies in its integrative approach. By situating linguistic practices within broader technological and social contexts, Friedrich offers a nuanced, multidimensional account of how English evolves in digital networks. The book persuasively demonstrates that digital environments blur traditional distinctions between varieties of English and create spaces for linguistic creativity, technology, and human participation. English emerges not as a fixed system or a singular lingua franca but as a dynamic repertoire continuously negotiated through human agency, technological mediation, and communicative contexts. Moreover, Friedrich situates digital Englishes in dialogue with existing theoretical frameworks, including English as a lingua franca and translanguaging, clarifying how these approaches converge on the themes of linguistic fluidity while highlighting the distinctive affordances and constraints of digital contexts.

Despite these strengths, certain aspects of digital English remain underexplored. In particular, the experiential, identity-related, and socio-emotional dimensions of online engagement—how users experience emotions, develop linguistic subjectivities, and negotiate inclusion and exclusion—receive relatively limited sustained analytical attention. Additionally, while the book offers rich qualitative examples, readers interested in large-scale empirical analyses may find the discussion more conceptual than data-driven. Finally, while the book touches on issues related to platform governance and algorithmic influence, the broader political economy of digital platforms could be more systematically developed to further illuminate how digital infrastructures shape linguistic hierarchies.

Overall, *Digital World Englishes* makes a substantial contribution to contemporary debates on language, technology, and society. By foregrounding the interactions among linguistic creativity, technological mediation, and human participation, Friedrich demonstrates that English in digital contexts is dynamically negotiated, multimodal, and socially embedded. The book provides a conceptually rich and empirically grounded account of contemporary digital English, and will be of interest to scholars in World Englishes, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, digital media studies, and language education who seek to understand how language, technology, and social interaction co-construct one another in increasingly networked and multilingual environments.

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