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Authors
Sun, Zhewei
Jiang, Yizhan
Xu, Yang

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The Emergence and Propagation of Online Slang

Zhewei Sun

University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Yizhan Jiang

University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Yang Xu

University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Slang is a common socio-linguistic phenomenon, but how slang emerges and propagates is poorly understood. We explore this problem by analyzing longitudinal data from 1,000 Reddit communities over the past decade. We consider social and linguistic factors pertaining to the emergence and propagation of recently emerged online slang. We show that while linguistic factors can be relevant, social factors play a more important role in predicting the emergence and propagation of online slang. We find community size to be the dominant factor in the emergence of novel slang terms and user mobility to be the most critical factor in the widespread propagation of slang.