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**ICT and the English Language: The Defective Impact of Text
Messaging and E-Mailing**

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Abstract

This paper examined the various innovations occasioned by the global study of English language and observed the challenges posed to effective writing by products of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) such as the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) and E-mail. In what seems like a ‘method in madness’, the paper identified an emerging written language of the E-mail and (GSM) via the lexemes, morphemes, syntax and mechanics of punctuations (capitalization and spacing), and use of symbols in sampled messages written in English in the Short Message Service (SMS) and E-mail. Despite the advantages of electronic-English, it introduces many problems. Among these are: arbitrary use of affixation, consequent difficulties with well-formed sentences as well as with mechanics. Most importantly, there is the overall chaotic effect of these coinages. The paper called on writers using the English medium to strive to stick to the original and keep the written language of E-mail and SMS out of formal writing so that it will not lead to the extinction of formal writing.

Key Words: ICT, text-messaging, GSM, E-mailing, and Internet

Introduction

The various innovations occasioned by science and technology in the world today have contributed immensely to the growth and the use of English in painting the present-day realities. Similarly, information technology has not only redefined the way we live but it has also equally changed the usage of English. Adegbola (2007, p. 435) opined that “science no doubt has spun great successes and facilitates technology to define the way we live.”

Information Communications Technology (ICT); which is an offshoot of science through its internet and computer mediated communication (CMC), has gone beyond science to broaden the lexical inventories of the English language. Gradol (1997, p. 51) asserted that “computer technology age is not only encouraging the use of English but also transforming it”.

With the modern technology like GSM and E-mail, users can communicate frequently without limitation of distance and exorbitant cost. E-mail enables the users to exchange messages with one another with speedy delivery. As the world is advancing in technology, everybody needs to follow the trend. Many applicants nowadays need to submit their curriculum vitae through E-mail. It is now a must for progressive minds to be technologically developed. According to Ndukwe (2006, p. 1), graduates without basic ICT skills are now “being referred to as functional illiterates”. This is because computer literacy is a pre-requisite for employment in the emerging digital workplace. English, being the major language of computer operation, is becoming a global language (GL).

Meanwhile, with many advantages of Electronic English, there are some demerits. ICT such as E-mail and GSM began to significantly change the language. For example, the various text messages in mobile phone and expressions used while engaging in computer related activities like E-mail messages come with various spellings and coinages that deviate significantly from the conventional English spellings and usages (Faleye 2008, p. 173).

This captures what Crystal (1992, p. 337) aptly described as “the features of situational distinctive uses of language”. Electronic English has its own peculiar coinages, vocabulary and spelling devices. Faleye (2008, p.173), quoted in Awonusi (2004, p. 46), is of the opinion “the advent of SMS messaging which is an aspect of Electronic English depends on the linguistic features of informal English as an important vehicle for communication”. He equally identified the constraints of time, money and space as some of the factors encouraging the evolution of various linguistic strategies to communicate comprehensively but briefly.

Hence, this caused the distortions of English spellings, and omissions of punctuations, substitution of lexemes with the letters of alphabet or Arabic numerals, multifarious shortening of lexical items through pseudo clipping and creation of pseudo affixes in some constructions in text messages and E-mail messages (Alabi, 2005).

Review of Related Literature

Information Communication Technologies

Roger (2005) described ICT as an umbrella term that includes all technologies for the manipulation and communication of information. The term is sometimes used in preference to Information Technology (IT), particularly in two communities: education and government. In the common usage, it is often assumed that ICT is synonymous with Information Technology (IT). ICT, in fact, encompasses any medium of recorded information (Magnet disk/tape, optical disks (CD/DVD), flash memory etc., and arguably also paper records); technology for broadcasting information – radio, television and technology for communicating through voice and sound or images – microphones, camera, loudspeaker, and telephones. It includes the wide variety of computing hardware application from the software smallest home-developed spreadsheet to the largest enterprise packages and on-line software services: and the hardware and software needed to operate networks for transmission of information again ranging from a home network to the largest global private networks operated by major commercial enterprises and, of course, the internet. Thus, “ICT” makes more explicit that technologies such as broadcasting and wireless mobile telecommunications are included (Heather, 2005).

The Internet

The internet is a global network of computers that provides a variety of resources and data to the people that use it. The internet hosts several services. The two most well-known are E-mail and the World Wide Web (www) though there are many others.

E-mailing

Heather (2005, p.16) defined E-mail as a system for transmitting messages between computers. Internet e-mail enables you to exchange messages with anyone else on the internet with a mail box (a unique electronic address to which E-mail can be sent). Because of the speed at which E-mail is composed, delivered and read, it is fundamentally different from paper-based communication. Because the turnaround time can be fast, E-mail is more conversational than traditional paper based media.

In a paper document, according to Roger (2005), it is important to make points clearly and unambiguously, because your audience may not have a chance to ask for clarification. With E-mail document, your’ recipient can ask questions immediately. E-mail tends, like conversational speech, to be less formally phrased than communications on paper (Roger, 2005) asserted.

However, E-mail does not convey emotions. It lacks vocal inflections, gestures and a shared environment. Your correspondent may have difficulty telling if you are serious or joking, happy or sad, frustrated or euphoric. But the tone of writing could suggest this.

The Evolution of GSM

The standard of the Global System for Mobile-communications (GSM) was established in the mid-1980s to meet the demands of the modern society. The objective of wireless communications is to increase the user’s accessibility to a global network of people and services regardless of destination or mobility status. The European Telecommunication Standard Institute (ETSI) adopted the GSM stand in 1991 because of its superiority in technology and services. GSM became very popular because it

offers improved speech quality, supports a wide range of services, and through a uniform international standard, it enables subscribers to use one telephone number and a mobile unit anywhere in the world (Y'hello! 2002).

Meanwhile, the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) came into use in Nigeria in 2001. Precisely, MTN, the first GSM Company to arrive in the country, commenced commercial services in August 2001. Other companies like Globacom, Zain, Starcom and O'net also operate at the present in the country. Thus, people now have access to telephoning and sending messages on SMS. Even then, most people usually avoid exceeding a page, made up of one hundred and sixty (160) characters, per chargeable page of a message. This has placed constraint on writing and no Nigerian sender of an SMS message would seem to be left out of the constraint, not even the GSM companies! For example, on July 18, 2005, MTN sent the following text in 157 characters to its customers:

Y'ello. Pls only the first 160 characters of ur SMS is free in the SMS Promo. Anything extra is charged. Ur phone will show 11 when it's over 160 characters (Underlining mine/ for emphasis). (Alabi, 2005).

Wang (1989, pp. 397-412) has suggested that in any language, speakers reach for what is referred to as "shelfare" in Electronic English. Cheater (2006, p. 19) also explained that prefabs are used by "hurried people with practical jobs to get done". She further explains that prefabs arise from the over greater demands of speed and efficiency which directly affect e-English as part of the computing environment.

Components of Formal Writing

Writing is one of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Literature abounds on the acquisition of these skills. For instance, according to Lyons (1981, p.15), it has been "demonstrated experimentally that babies are capable, in the very first weeks of life, of distinguishing speech sounds from, other sounds and are predisposed, as it were, to pay attention to them". Indeed, "all normal children acquire the language that they hear spoken around them without special instruction" (Lyons 1981, p. 253). And they start talking in what are traditionally termed one-word sentences (i.e. the so-called holophrastic period) from the age of about nine to eighteen months (Lyons 1981, p. 256). Langacker (1973, p. 12) asserted that "every normal human child who is not reared in virtual isolation from language use soon comes to speak one or more languages natively". This is not so with reading and writing which must be learnt with special instruction. Reading and writing are so vital in the life of a modern literate man. That is why Pearson (1977, p. 270) observed "writing is so pervasive in modern society that it is difficult to imagine life without it". Little wonder, the great philosopher. Sir Francis Bacon, asserts that "Reading maketh a full man; and writing an exact man" (cited in Oguine, Gowon and Gochal 1998, p. 367).

The reading text, according to Otagburuagu. (1998, p. 134), "is a complex matrix of ideas woven into a neat embroidery with words and sentences. The words may comprise simple or complex morphological units which the author believes can most adequately convey his/her ideas. These words enter into certain syntactic patterns to form the text". Thus, writing, according to Oguine, Gowon and Gochal (1998, p. 367),

is “a highly sophisticated and individualistic activity comprising five general components, namely content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics” and “for formal writing, all these components must be properly taken care of”.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the various innovation occasioned by science and technology in the world today which are contributed immensely to the growth and the use of the English in painting the present-day realities. Emphasis will be laid on the defective impact of these innovations and to sensitize the users of the English of the dichotomy that exist between the formal and informal styles of writing. The important terms to be dealt with in this study are the lexemes, morphemes, syntax and mechanics of punctuations.

Methodology

In this paper, the components of Electronic English that would be examined are restricted to grammar (Lexis, morphemes and syntax) and mechanics. Randomly selected messages on SMS and E-mail sent or received by University lecturers, postgraduates, undergraduate, secondary school students and companies are the data used for the analysis. Twenty messages have been selected from SMS and E-mail boxes for the purpose of this paper.

Ten SMS were selected, five from “undergraduates and Post graduates while the remaining five were from University lecturers. At the same time ten messages were also selected from E-mail boxes. Four of them were sent and received by students. Four of them were sent and received by University lecturers, while the rest were sent by companies to their customers. The reason for the selection of data from these sources is that they used English formally than other sources. The components of Electronic English identified in section two are analysed and discussed in the next section.

Data Analysis and Discussion Features of the Written Language of Electronic English

This section discusses the distinguishing trend identified in the SMS and E-mail messages.

A. Substitution of Lexemes with the Letters of the alphabet or Arabic numerals

In messages on SMS, whole lexemes are sometimes substituted with the letters of the alphabet or Arabic numerals as in the following:

Lexemes replaced with letters of the alphabet

- a is used to replace ‘are’
- b is used to replace ‘be’
- c is used to replace ‘see’
- d is used to replace ‘the’ or ‘this’ or ‘that’
- e is used to replace ‘he’

- f is used to replace ‘for’
- m is used to replace ‘morning’
- n is used to replace ‘and’ or ‘in’
- r is used to replace ‘are or ‘your’
- u is used to replace ‘you’
- w is used to replace ‘with’ or ‘which’ or ‘we’
- x is used to replace ‘times’ (as in cald 3x)
- y is used to replace ‘why’ or ‘your’
- z is used to replace ‘is’ (as in datz – that is)
- z is used to replace ‘as’ (as in hz = has)

Lexemes are made up of morphemes which are the smallest meaningful elements in language (Lehman 1972, p. 124). Using above letters of the alphabet to replace lexemes is not acceptable in formal writing.

Lexemes substituted with Arabic numerals and the alphabet:

- 1 is used to substitute ‘one’ (as in any1, every1)
- 1 is used to substitute ‘eye’
- 2 is used to substitute ‘to’, ‘too’ (as in in2)
- 4 is used to substitute ‘for’ (as in 4ever) or ‘fore’ (as in 4cast)
- 4m is used to substitute ‘form’
- 10q is used to substitute ‘thank you’
- b4 is used to substitute ‘before’
- b2 is used to substitute ‘between’
- L8 is used to substitute ‘late’
- T4 is used to substitute ‘therefore’
- M8 is used to substitute ‘mate’
- Gr8 is used to substitute ‘great’
- L&r is used to substitute ‘later’
- G8 is used to substitute ‘gate’

Lexemes cannot be substituted with Arabic numerals and the alphabet in formal writing.

B. Lexical Shortening through: (1) pseudo clipping of one of two similar and contiguous alphabet (2) pseudo clipping of the beginning, middle or ending of lexical items:

Clipping, according to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973, p. 448), denotes the “subtraction of one or more syllables from a word”. The shortening may occur at:

- i. the beginning of the word: phone-telephone
- ii. the end of the word (more commonly): photo-photograph
- iii. at both ends of the word (rare): flu-influenza

Bound morphemes or affixes, as generally known, occur as prefixes, infixes and suffixes. A prefix precedes the core of a word (that is, the root) while a suffix follows the root. Less common than the prefix and suffix is the infix which is inside a root but which manifests in very few languages including English in which the infix is realized as a replacive morpheme.

All the clips in our data can best be seen as pseudo clipping as they do not follow syllabic patterning. Instances are: ‘Clipping’ of one of two similar contiguous alphabets as in:

adres (address)	hv (have); hpy (happy)
asignment (assignments)	ar (are); helo (hello)
al (all)	miro (mirror)
beta (better)	stll (still); sori (sorry)
cal (call)	tel (tell)
cary (carry)	til (till)
cros (cross)	tomoro (tomorrow)
discus (discuss)	wori (worry)
getn (getting)	wil (will)

Pseudo clipping at the beginning, middle or ending of lexical items as in the following:

- a) ‘Clipping’ at the beginning of lexemes includes: nd (and), xperience (experience), xtra (extra), ow (how), appy (happy).
- b) ‘Clipping’ in the middle of lexemes is in three forms. The first is the omission of a single letter and letters ‘e’ and ‘O’ are predominant here. The second is the omission of two letters (compound omission) and the third is the omission of more than two letters (complex omission). Examples are as follows:
 - i. ‘Clipping’ of single letters
 - Letter ‘e’ e.g. bhind (behind), bgins (begins), blvd (beloved), bcaus (because), bfor (before), evry (every), hat (heart), knw (knew), lft (left), nxt (next), prayd (prayed), prfect (perfect), usful (useful).
 - Letter ‘O’ e.g. gt (got), nw (now), hme (home), wnt (wont), wmen (women), wrd (word), nt (not), lng (long), hw (how), knw (know), cme (come), fr (for), stry (story), tday (today), tld (told), wrk (work).
 - ii. ‘Clipping’ of compound letters e.g. wn (when), gl (girl), arnd (around),

- mangr (manager), aftnoon (afternoon), Ivly (lovely), jorny or jony (journey), insrnce (insurance), grt (greet), fr (from).
- iii. ‘Clipping’ of complex letters e.g. bot (bought), chrn (children), lkng (looking), rt (right), conscnce (conscience), cnfrmd (confirmed), endorsmt (endorsement) std (student).
- iv. ‘Clipping’ at the end of the lexemes. Two types are identified: single letter omissions – predominantly letter ‘e’ and complex letter omissions as in the following:
- i. Single letter omission e.g. strik (strike), ar (are), gam (game), giv (give), tak (take), hav (have), mayb (maybe), leav (leave), lif (life), tim (time), writ (write), som (some).
 - ii. Complex letter omission e.g. dif (different), dist (distance), prob (problem), acc (according) proj (project).

C. Multifarious Shortening of Lexical Items

Many times, a single lexical item is shortening in many different ways.

Instances are:

- (i) about – abt, bout
- (ii) are – a, ar, r, re
- (iii) although – aldo, altho
- (iv) been – bin, bn
- (v) between – b2, bt, btw
- (vi) could – cd, cld, cud, kud
- (vii) good – g, gd, gud
- (viii) have – ve, av, hv, hav
- (ix) morning – m, am, mrn, moni, mony, morn, mng, mrning, morn’n
- (x) before – b4, bf
- (xi) bought – bot, bout
- (xii) night – nt, nite
- (xiii) see – c, ce, si
- (xiv) through – tru, thr, thru, thro
- (xv) little – litl, litu
- (xvi) laugh – laf
- (xvii) these – dez, thez, des
- (xviii) keep – kip, key, k
- (xix) thanks – tx, tks, tanks, thanx
- (xx) weekend – wknd, wkend, wikend
- (xxi) yesterday – yd, ystdy, yestday, yestada
- (xxii) your – y, yr, ur, r
- (xxiii) happy – hapi, hapy, hpy
- (xxiv) good – gud, god, Gd
- (xxv) journey – jorny, jurny, jorni

D. Substitution of inflectional and derivational morphemes and creation of pseudo affixes

The following twelve English letters of the alphabets of which the underlined nine are possible morphemes are either used to substitute some inflectional and derivational morphemes or are used as pseudo affixes at beginning, middle or ending of lexemes as in the following:

'a' is used to substitute (i) 'er' e.g. in better = 'beta', eva = 'ever', gada = 'gather', prayer = 'praya' (substitution of inflectional and derivation morpheme 'er' with 'a' respectively).

It is also used to substitute 'er' in ever = 'eva' and 'ear' in heart = 'hat' (creation and recognition of pseudo suffixes and replacive morphemes respectively).

'd' is used to substitute 'th' e.g. in that = 'dat', then = 'den', they = 'dey' (creation and recognition of pseudo prefixes).

'e' is used to substitute 'ai' e.g. in said = 'sed' (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive morpheme).

'f' is used to substitute 'ph' e.g. in phone = 'fone', laugh, 'laf' (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive prefix and suffix respectively).

'g' is used to substitute 'ing' e.g. in bothering = 'botherg', getting = 'getg' (substitution of inflectional morpheme 'ing').

'I' is used to substitute:

- i. 'ea' e.g. in read = 'rid', dream = 'drim' (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive morphemes).
- ii. 'lee' e.g. in been = 'bin', keep – 'kip', seen – 'sin', green = 'grin' (substitution of replacive morphemes 'lee')
- iii. 'ey' e.g. money = 'moni', journey = 'jorni' (creation and recognition of pseudo suffixes)
- iv. 'ie' e.g. in believe = 'biliv' (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive morpheme)
- v. 'y' e.g. in happy – 'hapi', (substitution of derivational morpheme 'y')
- vi. 'd' e.g. that – dat, this – dis, the – de (creating and substitution of pseudo prefix)
- vii. 'n' is used to substitute 'ing' e.g. in getting = 'getn' (substitution of inflectional morpheme 'ing')

'o' is used to substitute 'ha' e.g. in what = 'wot' (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive morpheme).

's' is used to substitute 'ce' e.g. in assistance = 'asistans' (substitution of derivational morpheme 'ce').

‘u’ is used to substitute ‘OO’ e.g. in school – ‘skul’, food = ‘fud’, proof = ‘pruf’, good = ‘gud’, love = ‘Iyv’ (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive morphemes)

‘x’ is used to substitute ‘ks’ e.g. in thanks = ‘tanx’ (creation and recognition of pseudo suffix).

‘z’ is used to substitute (a) ‘as’ e.g. in was = ‘wz’

(b) ‘ese’ e.g. in these = ‘dz’

(c) I ‘ce’ e.g. in rice = ‘riz’

(d) ‘s’ e.g. in busy = ‘bizy’, dreams = ‘drimz’

‘c’ is used to substitute ‘see’, seen = ‘cn’ (creation and recognition of pseudo replacive morphemes/suffixes and substitution of inflectional morpheme ‘s’ in ‘dreams’)

Source: (Alabi, 2005)

E. Use of Elliptical Sentences

Syntax, according to Langacker (1973, p. 90), entails “the principles or rules specifying the set of grammatical sentences of a language and their structures”. There are thus constraints in any language on the ways in which words can be combined to form acceptable sentences. For instance, among several others, for a grammatical English sentence are the rules of agreement of verb and subject or object and noun and its modifies or the principles of forming simple, compound, complex, compound-complex.

Many elliptical sentences are also employed in SMS messages. Some instances are cited as follows:

Ellipted portions are put in parenthesis

The written Language of

GSM and E-mail

- Not stepped out once
- So not in sch 4 a while
- Cookg and washg done
- Calling but no response
- WiI call way hom
- Hop revsn going on fire
- ,Am getn beta
- Wil erit pastr Olu
- Feeling shy to come home
- Came bak ystday Now sure who 2 vote 4?
- c u then, God’s Grace
- In school afterwards
- Teaching till 5 or so

Formal Writing

- [I have] not stepped out once
- So [I have] not [been] in school for a while
- Cooking and washing [have been] done
- [I] called but [there was] no response
- (I) will call (on my) way home
- Hop revision (is) going on fire
- (I) am getting better
- (I) Will write (to) pastor Olu
- (He is) feeling shy to come home
- (I) Came back yesterday (Are you) now sure who to vote for?
- (I shall) see you then, (by) God’s Grace.
- (I was) in school afterwards
- (I am) teaching till 5 or so

- Hope rats ok (I) hope (the) rats (are) okay
- Later (I shall see you) later

Nouns (subject), verb and phrase are mostly omitted in sentences are. This is against the rules of syntax.

Mechanics

The term “mechanics” means the signs and rules that we use to control our writing. They are used on orthographic words to make them readable, meaningful and as well convey the exact message we intend our readers (Adedokun, 2006).

In the same vein, Afolayan (2009) observed mechanics as the various graphological devices that are crucial in the development of a prose piece. These devices are often represented (on paper) by diverse orthographic conventions employed to represent different forms of pauses as initially stated.

Crystal (1992) defined these graphic media as punctuation marks, italics, bold prints (capitalizations) and spacing. They are regarded as the whole writing system. In English, we have different types of conventional punctuation marks which include the full stop, semi-colon, colon, comma, dash, quotation mark, hyphen, exclamation mark, ellipsis period and apostrophe. The concern in this paper in mechanics will be with the employment of full stop, the quotation marks, the apostrophe and question marks. In short, bad punctuation spoils good write-up. Here we can see clear deviation from the norm.

F. Peculiar use of some punctuation marks, capitalization, spacing and Symbols

Often, the apostrophe, the full stop and the question mark are not used in the written language of the GSM and Email. It is usual to find the omission of the apostrophe for example in the following: “Im”, ‘Gods grace’, ‘its’ ‘theres’, ‘didn’t’, ‘isnt’, ‘janes’, ‘todays message’. Many times, double quotation marks are mistakenly used for the apostrophe as in: it’s getting fierce: PLS SEND IT TO MY MAILBOX AT THE PORTER’S LODGE. Full stops are also sometimes omitted in the middle and at the end of messages as in: ‘be ready 2 lead the group on mon ^ I called but DHL 2 Abuja yesterday ^ Question marks are also not often used when questions are asked as in: ‘Thomas, Whatz up,’ how you dey,’ ‘hope revisn going on fine’. Wh r u comg’.

Some mathematical symbols like greater than ‘>’ and less than ‘<’ are used haphazardly. Other examples are:

- Wit Ease ...
- ... d sun shines
- ... d moon glows
- ... d bird flies
- ... d fish swim

In this month, U wil enjoy all aspects of ur life with Ease this month in Jesus name ...

Elliptical dots are used to make a deliberate omission of some words from a sentence.

Here, there is deviation from the normal two dots and the dots above are not used for any omission of words.

Most of the times, capital letters are not used after the full stop. Two examples are: 'has back finally trying to settle down. 'cros husband could not make it feeling shy to come home, bye' and Gd pm. Im had d intavm 1st yest. Still in Abuja asked 2com bak 2moro hope 2retune after seein dem tomoro. Thank you, sir.

Noteworthy is the pervasive use of the lower case form of 'I' and 'u' which may be viewed as having a dehumanizing effect especially when reinforced through repetition as in:

1. Yes, I was neva brave enuf 2 tell u --- bt now I will --- I ---I I ---I 10--
- lov=- I love --- I love y--- I love yo--- I lov youhurt (sic)--- ha ha c
u
 2. God will be above u 2 bless u, below u, b4 u 2 guide u, behind u 2
protect u beside u 2 comfort u & inside u 2 sustain u. God bless u.
- i. Many people, to avoid switching between upper and lower-case letters, use capitalization throughout as in: PLANNING A HOLIDAY? CALL TRAVEL EXPERT CAPTAIN MIKE OMOKORE FREE. FOR BEST DEALS, FINANCING VISA PROTOCOL, TRAVEL LOGISTICS. WE'LL CARRY YOUR BURDEN.
 - ii. FACE D FUTURE WITH HOPE. GOD HAS PROMISED U A LIFE FULL OF
PROSPERITY. BELIEVE IT & IT'LL BE URS.

Many times, characters are squeezed together sometimes to save space or out of habit as in examples (a) and (b) below respectively

- a. Hi girl! E tie ta si wa moo Hop revisn going on fine. Doi tel d guys abt her?
Chated wit Joshua on dnet yestdy. Pikd d leta tdy funny one. Wil writ pastr Ayoola (= 156 characters + 4 spaces at the beginning to ensure a reply that the messages has been received at the intended destination).
- b. D bst of ur sogs r yet 2 be sug d stories ar yet 2 be told nd d. bst of urs yrs still lies ahead. May God tak u beyond ur drims. Ho's life?
- c. How are you? It's been a while, I just wanted to say hello 2 you and remind, you that I still remember you. Shalom! (109 characters).

Certain symbols which are not used in conventional writing are also employed in writing SMS messages. Examples are:

& used for and

@ used for 'at', 'art as in ch@ for 'chart', @ uhea for
"at where"

? used for 'question'

n used to 'ing'

u used for 'you'

o used for OO (as in bok = book)
 fused to divide words as in c/rnan for chairman, G/f for girlfriend, b/4 for before,
 W8 for wait, G8 for gate, L8 for late.

Findings

This paper has examined the defective impact of text messaging and E- mailing on formal writing. Among the distinguishing characteristics identified in an emerging ‘written language of the GSM and E-mail are: substitution of lexemes with the letters of the alphabet or Arabic numerals; lexical shortening through pseudo clipping of one of two similar and contiguous alphabets, pseudo clipping of the beginning, middle or ending of lexical items; multifarious shortening of lexical items; substitution of inflectional and derivational morphemes and the creation of pseudo affixes; use of elliptical sentences and peculiar use of punctuation, capitalization, spacing and symbols.

It is clear that almost all the identical distinguishing trends of the ‘written language of the GSM and E-mail are problematic. Replacing lexemes with the alphabets or Arabic numerals is not practicable for formal writing. ‘Clipping of lexemes especially compound and complex types and the employment of multifarious shortened lexical items have serious negative repercussion for spelling in formal writing. In addition to this is the confusion that would, in the long term, emanate between the spelling of a word and another full morpheme which form is shortened. Examples of such words are:

Word	Shortened Form
Better	beta
Could	cud
Caught	cot
Heart	hat
Read	rid

Substitution of inflectional and derivational morphemes and the creation of pseudo affixes would definitely affect the learning and usage of affixation. The types of elliptical sentences in our data are also not acceptable following the principles or rules of formal writing. The peculiar use of the punctuation marks, capitalization, spacing and symbols discussed in this paper are also not permissible. The proper employment of these features of mechanics should normally help to break a mass of writing into smaller more manageable portions and reduce the burden of the reader.

While experienced writers are still able to switch between this ‘written language of GSM and E-mail’ and formal writing, many students, who send and receive the most message, have not been able to switch easily or are not willing to switch at all. Rather, they seem to be basking in their new mode of writing. For instance, how else would one account for words that are merely changed without any visible rationalization? Cases in point are:

du	for	do	2 characters each
dey	for	day	3 character each

meni	for	many	4 character each
hause	for	house	5 character each

Many times, too, more than half of text messages are done in a new language. As in

1. On d route 2 destiny, dea a meni paths 2 travl on, smoth or rouf, drk or brite. Don't 4get LIFE IS SWIT.
2. Gud 2 c u. u r Gr8. Sum 1 luv u. Am w8 4 ur repl,

Thus, within a few years of sending messages on SMS especially, 'students' formal writing including long essay and in fact examination papers have come to be riddled with this written language of the GSM and E-mail'.

Implications of the Findings

The computer is impacting greatly on the way we write and speak English. This is because it has 'revolted' against some parts of the formal/conventional patterns of usage and writing. Language teaching is clearly entering a new and uncharted phase as a result of Electronic English (Faleye; 2008). This is what Warchauer and Kern (2000) described as "a socio cognitive phase" whose students/teachers interact with each other and the world via GSM and computer. Life is changing, so is language too.

The dynamism seen in language is as a result of the creative power of the human mind using language. English language as a global language accepts these changes (Faleye 2008, p. 184). Some of the newly created spelling will shock some teachers in the classroom, and the implication is that, the students who are at the centre of these usages will be at the receiving end since most of their expressions will be seen as errors. Some students might even fail English, which is a core subject at the senior school certificate examinations (SSCE).

Also, the informal variety of English, which GSM allows in fact; is becoming a habit. Some students and undergraduates can hardly demarcate the differences between formal and informal contexts of language use due to the limitless freedom they enjoy in writing through Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). All these create a great Challenge for lecturers and teachers in the schools. How can we overcome all these challenges?

Recommendations

The following points have been recommended in order to sustain good writing in formal domain. The teachers should emphasize in their teaching the dichotomy that exists between the formal and informal styles of writing and point out to their students that most of the distortions in spelling and use of abbreviations permissible in GSM or E-mail are not allowed in formal academic writings.

Also, it should be stressed that users of Electronic English should be very conscious of the context of use of language and make a right choice of which variety of expression to use in different domains of language use. Publishers and writers should stick to the formal writing as so not to confuse the learners as this language of GSM and E-mail is not unanimously acceptable and this can cause more confusion. It should be discouraged.

On the final note, the user of English should keep this language of GSM and E-mail out of formal writing completely.

Conclusion

In the course of this paper, we have identified how the advent of GSM and Email has caused the distortions of English spellings, and omissions of punctuations in the construction of sentences. It has also been identified that “the written language of GSM and Email emerged as a result of the constraints of time, money and space. The evolutions of the various linguistic strategies of communicate comprehensively but briefly have necessitated this method.

Writing, in the process of formal teaching and learning in English, is thus becoming confusing and more complex than it should be. If, however, it is difficult to imagine life without writing and if writing makes an exact man, then formal writing should not be allowed to be killed. Alabi (2005, p. 16) affirmed that writers in the English medium should strive to keep ‘the written language of the GSM and Email out of formal writing so that it will not be one of its death knells in Nigeria. Writers should stick to the formal writing especially when writing an academic piece. They should not mingle formal writing with informal writing.

Those who are interested in researching in this area should further consider the semantic implications of Electronic English I lexemes and lexical coinages

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