



## **Implications of Contemporary English Usage for Teaching and Learning of English as a Second Language**

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### **Abstract**

The institutionalization of English in Nigeria as a language of commerce, public communication and administration, a medium of instruction in our educational system and as a national bond is very commendable. But as a second language, English is acquired mainly through the school system of formal teaching and learning for communicative and linguistic competence. The advent of the social media, which in itself is a product of communication technology, has greatly impacted positively on the English language albeit few negative challenges. This paper examines the impact of technological innovation on language with particular emphasis on the societal media, using Halliday's systemic functional grammar, as its theoretical base. The study concludes that many innovations have been introduced into the English language which could have possible implications on the teaching and learning of English as a second language in Nigeria today.

**Key Terms:** English Language, Technological Innovations, Social Media, Teaching and Learning, Second Language.

### **Introduction**

Of the many legacies of the British colonial experience in Nigeria, is the institutionalization of English as a second language (L2). Though an exogenous language, a lingua franca among the educated elites, an additional language as labelled by linguists and non-linguists alike as well as an official language, English has been adopted as a cure for Nigeria's inability to evolve an indigenous national language as an independent nation. For instance, in the contention as to whether or

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not only one of the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) should be considered as national language, Ogu (1992, p.24) concludes that English is the answer:

As long as Nigerians from other language groups and other ethnic groups feel marginalized by the adoption of the three main languages of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, so long will a lingua franca elude us and so long will English continue to gain dominance.

Reasoning along these lines, Banjo (1995, p.4) observes, any attempt to drop English in favour of a Nigerian indigenous language would be considered as “breaking a national keg of gunpowder”. This is understood from the view point of the roles of English in Nigeria. We cannot ignore the growing impact of the information technology on the English language. The linguistic innovations brought about by the IT are ubiquitous and we cannot but be a part of that nascent linguistic culture that has revolutionized communication in the contemporary world. These innovations have implications in the teaching/learning of English as a second language in Nigeria.

### **THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

#### **The status of English language in Nigeria**

With over four-hundred indigenous languages, (Akindele & Adegbite, 1999, p.20), Nigeria is a multi-lingual society where ethnicity plays a key factor in national affairs. And with over 250 ethnicities in Nigeria, there is bound to be fissures along ethnic and linguistic lines. The English language in Nigeria, though an accident of history, becomes an essential element in uniting the diverse elements of the country. Thus, the dominance of the English language in Nigeria is underscored in its varied roles in the country. Essien in David Eka (2000, p.2) recognizes this fact when he posits that:

A language in a multilingual setting which, regardless of size, usually invests speakers with not only a full panoply of uses that signify a standard language but also with prestige, self-confidence, and power. In nation – states, the dominant

language is the language of government, business, education, the legal system, the learned professions and culture and mobility of the all sorts.

To the above claim, Eka (2000, p.3) gives his accent when he observes the following:

- i. English features in a multilingual setting in Nigeria;
- ii. It has a lot of prestige, fascination and fame;
- iii. It is the language used in practically all formal occasions and sometimes private ones; then we can hardly disagree with this view that English is a dominant language in Nigeria, indeed, in illiterate and semi-literate communities in Nigeria, one speaker of English – of even the most spurious quality – is often regarded as a “king”.

Considering the geographical spread of the English language across the globe to regions further a field, beyond its original base (i.e. England and the British Isles), the status of English language has grown from the language of the British people to that of the language of the international community. Its popularity on the global stage makes it an easily accessible currency for the interlinking of nations, such as in international fora. An article culled from the *Common Wealth Links in Education* declares the following:

Today, English-speaking communities encircle the globe. English is the vehicle for roughly half the worlds newspapers and half its scientific and technical journals. And it is the language most frequently used by the representatives of over a hundred nations in the United Nations Organizations.

For many countries, English has become the key to achieving higher standards of living. As the language of some of the wealthiest and most advanced countries in the world it represents a desirable way of life. It is self-evidently a language of great literature, science and learning – the common language of many of the world’s educated people. And it is not only a major means of communication between nations; by providing a common tongue in countries with a complex skein of

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languages of their own, it contributes to a sense of national identity (Qtd in Anoka 1978, p. 128)

As a country with several indigenous languages, the English language performs a crucial role in Nigeria. It has acquired the status of an 'official' language, the means through which to carry on the affairs of the government, education, the media, commerce, legal matters, and other social engagements. English language in Nigeria is the means by which the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria can interact with one another and maintain some level of harmony.

In the Nigerian situation, English language is a colonial legacy bequeathed us by the English people. English is an L<sub>2</sub> or a second language in Nigeria. What this means is that speakers of English in Nigeria must have acquired one or more indigenous languages as mother tongue before acquiring English language. Thus, English in Nigeria is English in contact situation, which means that it is inevitably going to be influenced by the mother tongue of the various speakers of English in Nigeria. Such Englishes have local colour features noticeable at the levels of spoken and written communication. Some of these features border on grammatical and spoken infelicities. Okune (2005, p. 100) asserts that:

Following the global spread of the English language, we find a case of English in contact situation, a situation where English has become intermingled with local dialects that it may sound unintelligible to people from elsewhere. Sometimes, this situation of casual contact with English speaking has produced a kind of pidgin of very limited vocabulary and use, as in the Pacific Islands and even in Nigeria. In Nigeria, English is largely an acquired language, a language spoken as an L<sub>2</sub> or a second language. Consequently, as observed by Akindele and Adegbite (1999, p 141), the learners end up learning and using bookish and stilted English. In the Nigerian situation, English has intermingled with the various regional dialects, thereby giving rise to a variety of English called Nigerian English.

The above situation is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It also applies in every non-native country where English has come in contact with local dialects, whether in Africa, Asia, South America or elsewhere. Without doubt, that is the price English language has to pay for its role as an international currency of exchange.

### **Variety of English Language in Nigeria**

As an international currency of communication, English language does not only function as a dominant language on the global stage, it is also characterized by varieties occasioned by regional influence worldwide. Hence we can talk of British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English, Indian English, Arab English, the African English as the English of the colonized people, etc. Even with the above regional varieties, there exist a plethora of other sub-varieties with their unique features. For instance, in Africa we have Nigeria English, South Africa English, Kenyan English, etc. In each of these countries, there also exist regional varieties of English that are typical to that region. We can, therefore, speak of the nativization process of the English language across various regions of the globe. David Eka (2000, pp.8-9) opines that:

The term *Englishes* naturally follows from the process of nativization. At first, it may sound unusual (almost a misnomer), since no matter the changes the language has gone through from its ancient period to the present, it remains essentially English. Also, no matter the modifications to it from new environments and new cultures, common core features of all the varieties must exist before they can be referred to as English. These are common and non-technical ways of considering the matter.

When considered from a technical viewpoint however, the term *Englishes* is used to describe varieties and subsets of English which arises as a result of specific, (and sometimes peculiar), circumstances in which it finds itself as it moves to various parts of the world through various people. As practically everyone knows,

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our generation has witnessed an unprecedented spread of English to nearly all parts of the world. Whenever English spreads to and remains there for a considerable length of time, it gets nativized and so develops peculiar features reflecting its new environment. Thus, the term *Englishes* may be used to refer to all subsets of English globally. It also covers general varieties such as those marked by subject matter, attitude and medium or even varieties designated qualitatively nonstandard, basic, standard, sophisticated.

### **Effects of Information Technology on English Language**

It is without doubt that the contemporary world is one that is witnessing great strides in communication technology, especially with the invention of computer and cell phones. Every society in the global village is affected in one way or the other with these innovations. In fact, the explosion in communication technology has affected virtually every aspect of our lives, not least of which is the innovation in the use of English language. Just as the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century had major impact upon language, so is the modern communication technology stretching the frontiers of innovations in the use of English. The introduction of printing into England by William Caxton in 1476 facilitated the pace of English language history in both written and spoken forms. David Crystal (2002) observes the following:

Printing also had a significant impact on conventions of word-spacing, hyphenation, line-breaking, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, and it was not long before new sets of graphological conventions became standardized as recognizable language varieties – seen today in such distinctive domains of graphic expression as books, periodicals, newspapers, advertising, brochures, catalogues, instruction manuals, contracts, and tickets. Since the nineteenth century, the range has increased yet again, with each new visual telecommunicative technology – such as the telegraph, typewriter and word processor –

manifesting a graphic medium which expresses certain elements of the language and suppresses others (p. 127).

The advent of information technology also affected speech communication in several ways. Again, Crystal (2002) comments as follows:

Speech too has had its expressive range immensely enriched by the arrival of new technology. The telephone demanded new set of linguistic conventions to enable speakers to 'manage' spoken interactions which was not face-to-face most obviously, the conventions of saying 'hello' and checking of numbers at the conversation outset (conventions which vary greatly between languages). Radio broadcasting produced the most dramatic expansion in the 1920s, not only by further privileging a particular accent and dialect (RP and standard English), but by introducing a range of new varieties of spoken expression, such as commentary (consisting of many sub-varieties, such as sports and political occasions), the news broadcast, the weather forecast, and the commercial (pp. 127 – 128).

By far the twenty-first century has witnessed the greatest technological explosion in the field of language than any other era in human history. And to be certain, this is by no means the terminal generation. What the future holds as far as the communication technology is concerned cannot as yet be fathomed. Let us stand on edge as we await greater innovations in communication technology. So far we have witnessed great strides in the areas of mobile phone device and the world-wide web that have resulted in the inter-linking of the global community in no small measure. With each technology comes linguistic innovations and creativity in language use. Commenting on this theme, Crystal (2002) opines that:

At the beginning of the twenty first century we are entering a further stage in the technologically motivated expansion of the linguistic resources of

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English, and this stage is likely to be more dramatic in its outcome than anything we have seen hitherto. The point is made by Bob Cotton and Malcom Garrett in the title of their book reviewing the emergence of interactive television, personal digital assistants, and the many other technologies that will take advantage of the immense increases in the communicative bandwidth: "You ain't seen nothing yet! But the arrival of the internet has already given some clear indications about the way in which languages are going to be affected and the signs are that we are here encountering a development whose consequences for English (and indeed for languages in general) are profound – in the long term expanding the language, and the range of varieties in the language, in many more ways than were achieved by either printing or broadcasting (p. 128).

Besides the radio and television broadcasts that have influenced humanity since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is another new medium that has revolutionized communication since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That technological and communication innovation would be our next subject of discussion.

### **The Internet**

The Internet is a Worldwide Web communication technology that has played a tremendous role in the interlinking of humanity across the globe. The concept of globalization has been made possible by virtue of this new medium of communication. Bob Reeves (2010) defines the Internet thus:

The Internet is a worldwide connection of computers. It can be used for communicating and sharing information in many ways, and the most important of these is the World Wide Web. This is made up of millions and millions of pages of information and the links between them. These pages are called web pages. A collection of web pages is called a website. All sorts



of organizations and individuals might create a website. In many cases these are businesses trying to sell things, but also include government organizations, charities, clubs and private individuals (pp. 125 -6)

In talking about this new medium of communication technology, Crystal (2002) asserts that:

The Internet is a genuine new medium of linguistic communication, taking some of the properties of the two traditional mediums, speech and writing, synthesizing them in a novel way and adding further properties which were available to either. This novel amalgam of properties (which I call 'Netspeak') manifests itself in somewhat different ways in each of the five communicative situations that comprise the Internet, and before exploring these properties further it is important to appreciate what they are (p. 129).

Crystal (2002, p. 129) identifies the following five communicative situations that comprise the Internet:

- i. **E-mail:** This is the use of computer systems to transfer messages between individual users. Crystal cites John Naughton who observes that 'the net was built on electronic mail... It's the oil which lubricates the system' (p. 129).
- ii. **The World Wide Web:** This is the full collection of all the computers linked to the internet which hold documents that are mutually accessible through the use of a standard protocol (the Hyper Text Transfer Protocol, or HTTP)". The computer scientist who created the web, Tim Berners-Lee defines the Web as "The universe of network – accessible information, an embodiment of human knowledge" (Crystal p.129).
- iii. **Synchronous Chatgroup:** This is an innovation that enables "people 'talk' in real time with others from around the world, entering any of the thousands of virtual 'rooms' which now exist. The subject-matter can be anything from the most inconsequential everyday gossip to the most arcane or specialized topic' (Crystal, p.129).

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- iv. **Asynchronous Chatgroup;** This innovation enables people “leave messages in an electronic location (often called a list) which can be read and responded to by other people at any subsequent time, from minutes to months. Here, too, the range of subject matters is vast, from hobbies to research debates” (Crystal, p. 129).
- v. **Virtual Worlds:** The range of *virtual worlds* activities (popular among younger netizens) was originally “stimulated by fantasy games of the ‘Dungeons and Dragons’ kind. In this device, “people adopted imaginary persons and engaged in combat. In their internet form, where they are known as MUDs (‘Multi-User Dimensions’) and MOOs (MUDs, Object Oriented’), they offer a broad range of opportunities for people to construct an imaginary world, which may be anything from a castle or alien planet to a grand hotel or school classroom. The participants send text messages to each other or interact with programmed ‘objects’ located within their virtual world, simulating real-life situations (in the manner of role-play), playing competitive games, or just having a good chat” (Crystal, pp. 129 – 130).

Crystal (2002, p.130) opines that “Each of these situations has its own linguistic conventions, but they all display the same core linguistic properties, arising out of their existence as Internet domains”. He equally warns that these situations should not be seen as “equivalent to traditional writing or speech”.

### **Some Technical Terms in Computer Technology**

1.	Windows	27	Spreadsheet
2.	Laptop	28	Yahoo/yahoo mail
3.	Desktop	29	Google/google mail
4.	Internet	30	Wikipedia
5.	Hardware	32	Netspeak
6.	Software	32	Hotmail
7.	Mouse	33.	Mousepad
8.	Keyboard	34	Webcam
9.	Downloading	35.	Webmail
10.	Microsft Word	36	Webliography
11.	Online banking/shopping	37	Cyberspace

12.	Website	38	Cyberculture
13.	Email	39.	Net citizen
14.	Chat rooms	40.	Refresh
15	Viruses and worms	41	Netiquette
16.	Passwords	42	Netizen
17.	Memory stick	43	Infonet
18.	Creating a backup	44.	Datagram
19.	Sorting information	45	Surfing
20.	Database	46	Scan
21	Cutting and pasting text	47	Megabyte
22.	Scrolling up and down	48	Gigabyte
23.	CD or DVD	49	Cyberian
24.	Uploading	50.	Cyberlawyer
25.	Installing new software	51	Virtual world

### **Theoretical framework**

The researchers have adopted the systemic functional grammar model of analysis for the work. This model of grammar was propounded by Michael A. K. Halliday.

The systematic theory follows in the European functional tradition, which is largely based on J. R. Firths system-structure theory and owes many ideas to the Prague school. The systemic model is formulated along the lines of functional grammar. Functionalism tends to explain the form of language by attributing a determining role to its function. The function, of course, is presumed to be the communication. That is to say, everything in language must attribute to communication, to a better communication, and inversely, nothing is linguistic which does not contribute to communication.

Turner (1979, p 77) asserts that the interpretation of texts, of the system, and of the elements of linguistic structures is all functional. Thus, the systemic model is referred to as 'functional because it accounts for how language is used. The theory, according to Turner, maintains that every text unfolds in some context of use. The systemic grammar is filled by Subject, Predicator, Complement and Adjunct(SPCA) as canonical order in its clause structure in English,

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though any other element aside from 'S' indicating subject, could take the initial position to mark theme, Osisianwo (1999, p.81).

According to Halliday (1985, xiv), in functional grammar, a language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realised. Halliday goes further to consider the systemic theory as a theory of meaning as choice by which a language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options, "either this, or the other", hence a language or any part of a language is represented as a resource from making meaning by choosing. Besides, Halliday posits that a systemic grammar is paradigmatic. According to him, describing something consists in relating it to everything else. This model claims that structure is an output device, the mechanism for expressing the choices that have been made.

The researchers have chosen this model not only because it approaches language as functional usage, but also because it elaborately dwells on the 'context of situation' which entails the use of sociolinguistic factors in explicating meaning. Firth asserts that meaning is chiefly situational relations in a context of situation.

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **Texting**

Another communication innovation that has come in the wake of the mobile phone technology is the short messaging service (SMS), sometimes called texting or text. messaging. Here the meaning of the abbreviated forms can be deciphered only within the context of the chat. The popularity of the text messaging today amongst cell phone users is indicative of the way communication technology can influence communication and language use. David Crystal (2002) observes the following with respect to texting:

A good example of the speed at which language can change these days is the remarkably rapid rise of the mobile phone *short messaging service*. Within three years of its introduction, a new language variety was

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well established and rapidly developing, with 15 billion messages being sent worldwide by the beginning of 2001. The nature of the variety also illustrates how a new technology has immediate linguistic consequences. The challenge of the small screen size and its limited character space (about 160 characters, without scrolling), as well as the small keypad, motivated the evolution of an even more abbreviated language than emerged in chat groups and virtual worlds (p.141).

There are some common abbreviations used for text messaging in Nigeria, especially, and elsewhere. Below is an inventory of some of the shorthand text messaging:

asap	as soon as possible	d	the	N	and
gbu	God bless you	4	for	eva	Ever
hnm	Happy new month	hm	home	Hp	hope
hbd	Happy birth day	y	why	gr8	great
Tgif	Thank God it's Friday	dia	their	2day	today
gdm/gudeem	Good morning	biz	Business	wcw	Woman
C	See	u	you	mcm	crush
B	Be	b4	before	Wce	Wednesday
Xmas	Christmas	ryt	right	gr8	great
jn	In Jesus name	r	are	Wlcm	Welcome
lmao	Laugh my arse off	H	Ho	ur/e	you are
2mao	Tomorrow	Xup/sup	What's up	Sowie	Sorry

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David Crystal (2002, pp. 142-143) has identified some abbreviations used in Netspeak conversations, which are listed below:

afaik	as far as I know	gal	get a life
afx	away from the keyboard	gd&r	grinning
ducking and running			
asap	as soon as possible	gmta	great
minds think alike			
a/s/l	age/sex/location	gsoph	good
sense of humour			
atw	at the weekend	hhok	ha ha
only kidding			
bbfn	bye bye for now	icwum	I see
what you mean			
bbl	be back later	idk	I
don't know			
bcnu	be seeing you	iirc	if I
remember correctly			
b4	before	imho	in my
humble opinion			
bg	big grin	imi	I
mean it			
brb	be right back	iou	I owe
you			
btw	by the way	iow	in
other words			
cm	call me	irl	in
real life			
cu	see you	jam	just a
minute			
cul&r	see you later	j4f	just
for fun			
cya	see you	jk	just
kidding			
dk	don't know	kc	keep
cool			
eod	end of discussion	khuf	know
how you feel			

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f?	friends?	l8r	later
f2f	face-to-face	lol	laughing out
loud			
fofcl	falling off the chair laughing	m8	mate
fwlw	for what it's worth	nc	no
comment			
fya	for your amusement		
fyi	for your information		
g	grin		
np	no problem	tffn	ta-ta
for now			
oic	oh I see	tttt	to tell
the truth			
otoh	on the other hand	tzul	talk
to you later			
pmji	pardon my jumping in	ttytt	to tell
you the truth			
ptmm	please tell me more	tuvm	thank
you very much			
rip	rest in peace	tx	thanks
rotfl	rolling on the floor laughing	tyvm	thank
you very much			
ruok	are you ok?	Wadr	with
all due respect			
sc	stay cool	wb	welcome
back			
so	significant other	w4u	waiting for
you			
sol	sooner or later	wrt	with
respect to			
t+	think positive	wu	what's up?
ta4n	that's all for now	x!	typical
woman		Y!	typical man
thx	thanks		
tia	thanks in advance		

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yiū                      yes I understand

The list of these abbreviations keeps increasing by day. These are being used even in formal situations in Nigeria today and need be checked accordingly.

### **Implications of Information Technology for Teaching and Learning of English as a Second Language**

English language is a second language in Nigeria and teaching and learning an exogenous language is quite demanding, if not challenging. For one, teachers of English as a second language in Nigeria and who by themselves are non-native users, need to know the discrete features of English syntax as well as evolve an approach to teach the language. Babalola (2015) opines that using communicative language teaching approach to teach English is very commendable. According to the source, this approach emphasizes interaction of both the means and the ultimate goal of teaching/learning and assessment in second language (English).

For one to effectively teach, learn and use English as a second language, ones listening, speaking, reading and writing skills needs be improved. These language activities could be acquired easily and correctly in formal situations of language teaching and learning. For instance, Nwachukwu(1990) opines that learning a language involves the ability to discriminates the sounds of the language in production. The source reasons that teaching of sounds should begin with the use of minimal pairs in which phonemes are contrasted with other phonemes the same way we could teach word stress, sentence stress and intonation. Word stress could pose a problem to L<sub>2</sub> users of English in Nigeria. This is so because English words has a fixed stress pattern, the wrong placement of stress in the word may impair intelligibility. The human teacher of spoken English could decondition the learner's ear easier than the computer to recognise, identify and discriminate the sounds of the language.

Reading is another language skill that one needs to develop to increase proficiency in the use of English as a second language. Reading could be defined as the actual glancing at words, phrases,



sentences, pictures, diagrams etc for the purpose of obtaining information. Integrated Use of English for Tertiary Institutions (2013, p.50) avers that the teacher has a role to play in improving the reading skills of the learner. According to the source, the teacher could select suitable texts that could challenge the reader at any level of his/her education, and could also provide activities which could help the learner to be actively involved in his/her reading. Above all, the willingness of the learner to know and apply the different methods for reading, could help him/her achieve the various purposes set for reading the different texts. The computer on the other hand, could provide everything needed to read but cannot for us what to read.

Writing a language demonstrates the user's proficiency to use the language. The skill of writing in English is handed down to the learner by the teacher. When you write, your intention is to communicate information. In his introduction, Taylor (2012) points out that in written communication, style determines the status of the writer. Style, according to the source, means paying attention to proper spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Information technology has revolutionised English usage positively and negatively to a reasonable extent. For example, Facebook as platform on information technology does not adhere strictly to grammatical rules. This is evidence in the way words are combined to form utterances. A cursory study of users of this platform of social media, indicates deliberate typographical errors which come in various forms such as linguistic shortening, abbreviations, acronyms, letter omissions, initialisms, punctuation, graphical representation etc, with attendant infelicities such as wrong spellings. This has become part and parcel of the syntactic constructions used as well as their vocabulary in their regular usage. All though communication is achieved with the innovations brought, learners/users of English as second language are not positively affected. Teachers of English in Nigeria have so much to do because a habit once developed, is hard to eradicate. This could affect their communicative skills; writing and spelling skills significantly in formal and academic occasions.

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One of the means that has come to boost acquisition of information and communication in English is the computer. It has brought profound breaks from the more traditional means of communication. With the internet has come a move from what McQuail (2010, p.136) calls a “one-way, one directional and undifferentiated mass”. Although we may not worry about the issue of undifferentiated flow to undifferentiated mass, but we have concern with the distinct set of communicative symbols and language difference from what has ever been seen and used by man. There is no gainsaying that Internet users have adopted coding, word lengthening, abbreviations, short-hands, acronyms and other styles in communication in the social media.

In employing the linguistic innovations brought about by the information technology, teachers of English as a second language should make it known to their students that there is a difference between formal and informal usages. Failure to do so would spell communication disaster. David Crystal (2008) argues along this line when he notes that:

It would indeed be worrying if students entered an examination hall unaware of the difference between formal English, or between standard and nonstandard English. Fortunately, all the evidence from examiners and others suggests that the vast majority of students are well aware of the difference, and do not use textisms in their writing (p. 166).

Social media platforms, such as facebook, 2go, twitter, etc, have enhanced mass communication within a very short time. Although the new media have impacted positively on language use, nevertheless the negative impact of language use today is a source for concern. For example, many learners and users of English are eroding the formality of its usage. This is the cause of many of our young students who write and fail Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE). For example, “gd”, “u”, “d”, “kom”, “mata”, “pipu”, “ol”, laf, etc are some form of orthographic representation based on the sounds of the word rather than the acceptable form of spelling. This innovation in the

form of spelling could negatively affect the student, especially where the examiner is not computer literate. The continuous use of the spelling system is capable of retarding the writing skills in English. Even within the business circle, Taylor (2012) points out the significance of a well-written email message:

A well written message that looks and sounds professional will make it easier for people to want to do business with you. It will help people feel good about communicating with you. It will help you achieve the right result (p. 74).

The continuous deployment of internet spelling by users of English may portray them as linguistically weak in English language.

It is evident that we live in a fast changing world, and the information technology is revolutionizing the way we communicate. Teachers of English as a second language should encourage learners to be willing to embrace changes and innovations in language use brought about by the information technology. But at the same time, they should encourage students not to lose touch entirely with the traditional handwriting, because they might find this to be very useful someday. Also, David Crystal (2008) shares a similar sentiment as he reports that research findings have discovered for example that:

... the use of the phone keypad, along with the ready availability of predictive texting, reinforces the point made in the 1990s that the internet is reducing the opportunities and thus the ability, of children to use handwriting. Teaching and examining – needs to take this into account. The need to maintain a clear and fluent handwriting style is of a great importance – and not only to guard against the day when there is a power-cut (p. 166).

Teachers of English as a second language in the country are expected to be Internet compliant or computer literate for effective encoding of

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computer language to the students. In Cross River State for instance, although many schools have computer teachers, power is erratic to encourage functional tutelage. The situation is so bad with schools in the rural areas where the schools are not provided with electricity. The teachers could be predisposed to properly guide the students when to be formal or otherwise since informality in language is so prevalent in the social media. Just as we have English for every purpose which tends to facilitate the kind of specialization required, we need to remind ourselves that English of social media may not be the same with that for academic purposes. It is only teachers who are conversant with the application of such specialised purposes, that can properly guide the students when, where and how to use English with the advent of the social media.

As if that is not enough, social media have altered significantly the way we communicate and this has the potential of fostering language evolution. Crystal (2004) reasons along those lines when he states that social media has evolved a distinctive variety of language. If the distinctive variety of language is understood and used properly by everyone, then there would be no problem. But if everyone do not know how to use, where to use and when to use it, then there would be a problem. While we are still grappling to perfect ourselves in the use of English as a second language in the country, we need to examine the problems associated with social media with regard to English language, so as to proffer remediation. Everyone should be computer literate in Nigeria, reason being that computer is now a medium through which language is taught, learnt and used. When everybody becomes computer compliant etc, we could institutionalized social media language as a standard variety in use in English. Until everyone is computer literate and knows where, how and when to use social media English, English language acquisition and use would continue to nose-dive.

### **Conclusion**

The English language which came to Nigeria as a British colonial legacy has continued to serve a useful communicative function in Nigeria. The language phenomenon is dynamic and not static, hence the

recent innovations brought about by the information technology are worth considering.

The influence of information technology on the English language, especially the electronic media, is ubiquitous. English language speakers are free to use these innovations in language. However, they should be mindful of the boundaries between formalities and informalities and between standard and non-standard usages. For instance, using texting innovations in formal writings should not be encouraged. Educators and teachers of English in Nigeria should be mindful of the implications of the recent linguistic innovation occasioned by the Information Technology on the teaching/learning of English as an L<sub>2</sub> language situation in Nigeria.

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