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## INTERNET IMPACT ON LANGUAGE REASONING

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Since the first web browser appeared on computer screens in 1994, the Internet has radically changed global communication. With instant access to messaging and email, the ability to circulate commentary and opinion has revolutionized the way people communicate. This has had an affect on language and writing, but people still debate the scope of these changes, and whether or not they are for the better.

Many linguists and educators are worried about the language, whether they are going to end up as Internet casualties, and these specific questions raise a profusion of spectres. Do the relaxed standards of e-mails augur the end of literacy and spelling as we know it? Will the Internet herald a new era of technobabble? Will linguistic creativity and flexibility be lost as globalization imposes sameness?

On the Internet, as with traditional speaking and writing, the language that individuals produce is far exceeded by the language they receive; and as the Internet is a medium almost entirely dependent on reactions to written messages, awareness of audience must hold a primary place in any discussion. The core feature of the Internet is its real or potential interactivity. There is a widely held intuition that some sort of Netspeak exists – a type of language displaying features that are unique to the Internet, arising out of its character as a medium which is electronic, global, and interactive.

It is therefore of considerable interest to note the way in which salient features of Netspeak, taken from one or other of its situational manifestations, have already begun to be used outside of the situation of computer-mediated communication, even though the medium has become available to most people only in the past decade or so. The influence is mainly on vocabulary, with graphology affected in some written varieties.

We may attribute a growing misuse of language to the outbreak of electronic communication. Analyzing the many-year experience of holding the retraining courses for interpreter-advisors, we may claim that texting has made students believe that it is far more acceptable than it actually is to just make screamingly atrocious spelling and grammatical errors. Our students, over the past several years, have increasingly used a more informal English vocabulary in formal assignments. The term papers they make, alongside the business communication projects, are now being peppered with casual informal phrases that were absent almost a decade ago. We may attribute the change to instant and casual communication. We have also seen an increase in incorrect word usage, with students reaching for a word that sounds correct, whose proper meaning is just a bit off from what they intend to say.

In everyday conversation, terms from the underlying ICT technology are given a new application among the students who want their talk to have a cool cutting-edge. An ICT related students have long needed special vocabulary to talk about their lines of code, and some of this has now spilled over into everyday speech. Examples from recent

overheard conversations include:

*Are you wired?* (i.e. ready to handle this); *E you later* (said as a farewell), etc.

Other among all distinctive features of a Netspeak noticed at the classes include:

- combining two separate words to make a new word, or compound: *mouseclick*, *wetware* [‘brain’];
- extending the noun-forming suffix *-ity* *dubiosity* (from dubious);
- *itude* use (*winnitude*, *hackitude*, *geekitude*), *-full* (*folderfull*, *windowfull*, *screenfull*, *bufferfull*), and *-ification* (*hackification*, *geekification*);
- the *-en* plural of *oxen* is found with some words ending in *-x*, such as *boxen*, *vaxen* [‘VAX computers’], *matrixen*, etc.;
- suffixal use of *-bot* [an artificial intelligence program, from robot], as in *annoybot*, *chatterbot*;
- overuse of the symbol @ as an increasingly prefixal function: *atsign*, *@-party*;
- the development of various types of abbreviation and acronym *CID* [‘Consider it done’], *CIO* [‘Check it out’];
- a strong tendency to use lower case everywhere, minimizing the punctuation, exceeding US spelling – all sort of language shortenings to fit into a limited textbox of the Twitter or Facebook;
- extended use of prosody and paralinguistics: repeated letters (*aaaaahhhhh*, *hiiiiiii*), repeated punctuation marks (*no more!!!!*, *whohe????*), all capitals for ‘shouting’: *I SAID NO*, word/phrase emphasis by asterisks: *the \*real\* answer*;
- emerging of new spelling conventions, such as the replacement of plural *-s* by *-z* to refer to pirated versions of software, as in *warez*, *tunez*;
- Word-class conversion usually from noun to verb: *to clipboard*, *to geek out* [‘talk technically’], *to 404* [‘be unable to find a page’].

How many of these developments will become a permanent feature of the language it is impossible to say. We can never predict language change, only recognize it once it has happened. Finally, maybe it’s just a reflection on the nature of the message then the writer's ability to use language correctly!? The dynamic nature of the Internet makes it difficult for comprehensive analysis of its effects to stay up-to-date. We believe that the impact of the worldwide web on language remains minimal. The linguistic changes caused by the Internet run parallel to changes in the existing lexicon. What we are not seeing is an alteration, but additions to the language. The main effect of the Internet on language has been to increase the expressive richness of language, providing the language with a new set of dimensions that haven’t existed in the past.

While the Internet's use of language might change rapidly over the next few years, all scholars point out that educators need to ensure that students maintain an academic understanding of the use and rules of language. “One of the biggest things that should happen in relation to the Internet is that kids and adults, too, should be taught to manage it,” David Crystal, a notorious British linguist.

