A COMPUTER-MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON UNDERGRADUATES' FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP

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Abstract
The study aims at investigating the socio-linguistic reasons for the undergraduates' use of e-discourse features, presenting salient features of e-discourse and exploring the ways e-discourse writing skills deviate from formal English writing and communication skills. Structured questionnaires were administered to the study participants drawn from the Faculties of Arts, Law and Social Sciences of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria. In addition, 85 Facebook comments and 210 WhatsApp messages were collected from the departmental Facebook group page and class WhatsApp group chats of the students. The study was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics of Mean and percentages. Limited space on computer or cell phone screen, showing creativity in the use of the language, socializing and interacting among the participants were found to be the socio-linguistic reasons for the undergraduates' use of e-discourse features on Facebook and WhatsApp. Diminishing concerns for punctuation, improper capitalization and beginning a sentence with a lowercase were shown to be the reasons for the deviation of e-discourse writing skills on Facebook and WhatsApp from formal English writing and communication skills. Therefore, students should adhere strictly to grammatical conventions and mechanics of formal writing to avoid forming hybridized constructions in their academic work. The study recommends that teachers of English as a second language in institutions of higher learning should include the disparities between e-discourse and formal English in their course outlines.
Keywords: Computer-mediated, discourse, Facebook, WhatsApp

Introduction

Language has been an integral part of communication and human beings being compulsive communicators continue to find new ways of communication to bridge the distance between individuals. Internet technology has greatly influenced human

life especially in the area of communication. Following the wave of technology, there is an overwhelming access to different forms of media with an increase in inter-connectedness of peoples and races around the entire world and transmitting information. The use of the internet and computer technology has a significant impact on language change and usage. It has seen the appearance of a new language variety known as electronic discourse or e-discourse. E-discourse is a variety of language that leads to significant variations in the written structure of language. It creates a kind of semi-speech that is between speaking and writing and it has its own features and graphology.

Increasing numbers of people are communicating with each other through various technologies such as Short Messaging Service (SMS), Internet-Based Instant Messaging, Synchronous Chat, Asynchronous Discussion Forums, E-mail, Twitter, Skype, Facebook and WhatsApp. Many of these communications are interactive, much like a conversation but conducted at a distance (often both in time and space) and in written form. Facebook and WhatsApp, as speech communities, have their own identifying styles, codes and shibboleths extending from single sentence greetings to informative and directive texts such as reports, newsletters and announcements. They are becoming increasingly ubiquitous among undergraduates, who in order to speed up a communicative exchange or achieve their communicative intents have developed fast and cheaper ways for expressing words, phrases, and emotions as well as, textual and graphical pragmatic devices. Also, they resort to Facebook and WhatsApp which appear to have fewer network problems.

Moreover, every discourse is affected by the medium of communication, as Johnstone (180) puts it, "no matter the medium of communication, it affects discourse, and each set of technological constraints means a different set of possibilities, preferences and restrictions". Mobile phones are currently a stretching tool world-wide among families and friends mainly to reinforce existing networks of contacts. With their innovative force, they have brought an important culture of communication for many communicators, especially youths. This variety of language developed for online communication represents the creation of a new media language, distinct from, but complementary to conventional written English. It has new linguistic structures which benefit students in terms of encouraging creativity in written expressions and increasing literacy and affect their proficiency in the written and spoken forms of the target language (the English Language).

Though Facebook and WhatsApp communications and other internet chats are not traditional forms of interaction, they are so prevalent and persistent that they deserve

attention from linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and socio-linguistic perspectives. This paper hence, shows that technologically mediated communication (Facebook and WhatsApp) has fostered the development of new hybridized textual ways of writing and communication in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). It explores the socio-linguistic reasons for the undergraduates' use of e-discourse on Facebook and WhatsApp and presents a comprehensive picture of salient features of e-discourse. It also examines the writing skills on Facebook and WhatsApp which are deviations from formal English writing skills. This will help to prove if e-discourse is really a threat or menace to learning English as a second language as some linguists assume.

It is a common notion that the students' e-discourses are sometimes incomprehensible, and extremely shortened and coded with some negative effects on formal writing skills and communications. Facebook and WhatsApp have become communication portals for social networking among interaction media, which have rapidly transformed the way people communicate. Due to the heightened informality of language use on Facebook and WhatsApp, there is a growing fear of its deterioration. It is considered a corruption of the English language and degradation in students' formal writing skills and communications, although, it is socio-linguistically significant. This is because users of Facebook and WhatsApp may lack adequate knowledge of the distinction between electronic discourse and formal English. They misuse electronic discourse and sometimes use it interchangeably with formal English. This leads to the formation of hybridized constructions and misinterpretation of messages in electronic communication, which show a lack of proficiency in the English language. The study is therefore, concerned with finding out socio-linguistic reasons that necessitate the undergraduates' use of e-discourse on Facebook and WhatsApp and a Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis of the features found in the discourse of Facebook and WhatsApp. This encourages creativity and dynamism among the users of electronic discourse, especially, on Facebook and WhatsApp. Furthermore, in as much as the rules of English, as taught in a classroom or by the native speakers prescribe correct words and grammar for every situation, it also examines the areas where e-discourse writing skills deviate from formal writing skills and communications. This helps to enhance or facilitate effective teaching and learning of English as a second language.

An Analysis of Salient Features of Computer-Mediated Discourse

Communication via electronic media facilitates the rise of a new variety of language, that is, e-discourse and creates new forms and functions of language. E-discourse is

considered an innovative variety of discourse with its own salient discourse features. AbuSa'aleek (137-138) outlines the following features of e-discourse: shortenings, clippings, contractions, unconventional spellings, word-letter replacements, word-digit replacements, word combinations (accent stylizations), initialisms, and emoticons.

Shortenings

Shortenings are words with missing end letters. Days and months are commonly shortened, for example, Sun/Sunday, Tues\Tuesday, Fri\Friday, Feb/February and so on. Others include bro\ brother, sis\sister, lang\language, aft \ after and so on. According to Dąbrowska (10), the use of *s* for 'is' may, in fact, be just a misprint, but it may also be used as a shortening, although based only on partial homophony (paronomasia). The word *sis*, on the other hand, is, in fact, more of a term of endearment as a form of address, rather than just a shortening, similar to other forms which are often subjected to the strategy of clipping, examples. bro, ma, pa and so on. This strategy is surely the simplest and least risky of all.

Clippings

In linguistics, clipping is the word formation process which consists of the reduction of a word to one of its parts. It is also known as truncation or shortening. According to Lyddy *et al.* (155), clippings can be sub-categorised as g-clippings and other clippings. The former are words for which the final "g" has been omitted in a word ending with'ing', for examples goin\going, talkin \talking, comin\coming, smilin\smiling, drivin\driving, meetin\meeting, nothin\nothing, mornin \morning, evenin\evening, askin\asking, feelin\feeling, writn\writing, happnin\happening, unsuspectin\unsuspecting and so on. The latter represents other final letter omissions, typically final consonants, for example, wil /will, I'l \I will, til\till, and silent vowels, for example, hav\ have, wher\where, sumwher\somewhere and so on.

Initial Clipping or Aphaeresis

Initial (or fore) clipping retains the final part of the prototype. Examples are: bot (robot), chute (parachute), roach (cockroach), coon (raccoon), gator (alligator), phone (telephone), pike (turnpike), varsity (university), net (internet).

Final Clipping or Apocope

Final (or back) clipping is the most common type, in which the beginning of the prototype is retained. The unclipped original word may be either a simple or a composite word. Examples are: ad (advertisement), cable (cablegram), doc (doctor), exam (examination), fax (facsimile), gas (gasoline), gym (gymnastics, gymnasium), memo (memorandum), mutt (muttonhead), and pop (popular music).

Medial Clipping or Syncope

This is the combination of the final and initial clippings to result in curtailed words with the middle part of the prototype retained, which is the stressed syllable. Words with the middle part of the word left out are equally few. Examples are: flu (influenza), frig or fridge (refrigerator), jams or jimmies (pajamas\pyjamas), Polly (Apollinaires), shrink (head- shrinker), tec (detective).

Phonetic/Non-Conventional\ Non-Standard Spellings

Phonetic/non-conventional\non-standard spellings refer to spelling of words from sound. They are "considered one of the most important features of e-discourse, hence the reason behind unconventional spelling either economic, typing errors or lack of familiarity of the accurate spelling" (AbuSa'aleek 140). Unconventional spellings follow legitimate letter-sound correspondences in a language, but they are not the conventional spellings for those particular words. For example, fone\phone, nite\night or knight, luk\look, buks\books, cum\come, sum/ some, thanx/thanks, they\dey, other\oda, odr, been\bin, bn, that\dat, those -dose, dos, doz, this\ dis, ds, these\diz, dz, order\oda, sir\sa, thought\tot, courage\korig, koreg, number\numba, nmba, and the much publicized use of "k" in "skool" or "skul". This strategy involving the modification of the spelling of words is often used by the users of electronic discourse. However, much of the phonetic spellings correspond with the pronunciations of uneducated Nigerian English and generally alters or totally ignores the morphological representation of some particular words (Chiluwa 14).

Word-Letter Replacements

Word-letter replacement refers to the process of replacing a word with a single letter. This strategy is one of the most important features of e-discourse used by internet users because the English language contains a large percentage of monosyllabic words. This makes it fairly easy to find words which sound like individual letters of the English alphabet, and at the same time makes it impossible for many other

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languages which use longer words and are additionally inflected (that is, receive various endings), to utilize this strategy. The examples below show that the words which typically get substituted this way are fairly limited in number: u\you, b\be, c\see or sea, d\the, m\am, r\are, y\why, s\is.

Word-Number or Digit Substitutions (logograms)

Word–number substitution is one of the salient features of e-discourse in which a number or a digit is used to take the place of a phoneme, syllable, or word of the same sound. It is used frequently in the e-discourse and found much in internet users' e-discourse. The internet users use digits to substitute a word, syllable or phoneme, which has the identical pronunciation. One of the strategies typically enumerated in publications concerning the use of English in electronic media, and one that no doubt adds a special flavour to electronic language, is that of substituting a whole word with a single numeral. Besides the use of the word-letter substitutions discussed above, word-number substitutions are mainly responsible for the fact that electronic communication is treated as a unique form of written language. Here are some examples of word-digit replacement: 2\to, two or too, 4\for or four. The examples show us clearly that the number of options here is limited. The most frequently used figures are naturally "2" for the infinitival marker "to", an Old English preposition "to" in "tomorrow" or possibly the adverb "too"; and the numeral "4" for the preposition "for". One other option which may be found in the electronic language is the figure "8", typically found in the words: great\gr8, h8\ hate and debate\db8. Thus, as imaginative as the strategy is, it is not very widespread.

Word-number substitution also encompasses phonetic reductions or syllabograms, which is the pronunciation of the individual letters/numbers that are significant, as opposed to the overall appearance of a homophone. Some commonly cited examples in both are: cu 18r/see you later, gr8 \ great, 2nite\ tonight, and 2gether. These examples illustrate both types of homophone, where "cu /see you", for example, denotes a letter homophone and "18r/later" denotes a number homophone.

Word Combinations (Accent Stylizations)

Word combination also refers to phonological approximation in which words are pronounced as in an informal speech. Crystal refers to word combinations as accent stylizations in which the internet users write the words in accordance with informal

local language, Thewall also uses the term accent stylizations to refer to humorous alternatives, while Plester, Wood & Bell use the term "youth code" to refer to word combination which is words that are spelt in accordance with informal\regional speech, for examples: wanna\want to, gonna\going to, lemme\let me, dunno\do not know, gotta\got to and ello\hello.

Initialisms

Initialisms are words or groups of words represented by initial letters. Instances of Initialisms are tb=text back, gf=girlfriend, poa=plan of action, nntr=no need to reply. In general terms, acronyms and initialisms involve shortening words to their initial letters. Acronyms are sometimes considered as formal shortenings such as North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or World Health Organisation (WHO), West African Examination Council (WAEC) and so on, while initialisms are more informal, for example, omg\oh my God, bf\boyfriend, imho\in my humble opinion, ttyl\talk to you later, afaik\as far as I know, asap\as soon as possible, idk\I do not know, cmb\call me back, lol\laugh out loud, irl\in real life. However, Bieswanger (58) distinguishes between acronyms (letters pronounced as one word, as above) and alphabetisms (pronounced letter by letter), for examples: TV, FBI or BBC. Many of such forms are not unique to Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), and many have been in general use for a considerable time and are now standard.

Theoretical Framework

Facebook and WhatsApp communications, their linguistic features, socio-linguistic significances and effects on formal English are situated within the theories of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) by Susan Hering and Internet Linguistics (IL) by David Crystal. Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) is an approach to researching online behaviour as proposed by Susan Herring. It was adapted from language-focused disciplines such as linguistics, communication, and rhetoric to the analysis of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). This framework describes different levels of analysis of online discourse which include structure, meaning, interaction management and social practice. It is the analysis of logs of verbal interaction, characters, words, utterances, messages, exchanges, threads, archives and so on.

On the other hand, the theory of Internet Linguistics (IL) was advocated by the English Linguist, David Crystal in studying new language styles and forms that have

arisen under the influence of the internet and other new media such as Short Messaging Service (SMS), Text Message, Facebook, WhatsApp and so on. He argues that since the beginning of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) leading to Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and Internet-Mediated Communication (IMC), experts have acknowledged that linguistics has a contributing role in it, in terms of the web interface and usability. Studying the emerging language on the internet can help improve the conceptual organization, transaction and web usability. In a broader sense, this theory studies internet linguistics through four main perspectives which are effectively interlinked and affect one another: socio-linguistics, education, stylistics and applied perspectives. However, all the aspects of this theory are not covered in this particular study.

Objectives of the study

The study seeks to ascertain the socio-linguistic reasons for the use of e-discourse features on Facebook and WhatsApp and identify the salient features of e-discourse on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Study design

The research is a descriptive research and in view of this, a survey research design was chosen.

Study Sample

Samples of e-discourses on Facebook and WhatsApp class group chats of the third-year regular students of Faculties of Arts, Law and Social Sciences of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka were drawn to form the sample of the population. Purposive Sampling technique was used in selecting a total of fifty (50) students from the Faculties. The third-year regular students were chosen because they were supposed to have adequate exposure to the internet that will enable them to use Facebook and WhatsApp heavily in relating with one another either for academic or social purposes. Regular students were chosen because they were always available during the normal academic sessions. The sample messages collected from their class Facebook and WhatsApp group chats were analysed and used as the general opinion of the entire population.

Instrument of Data Collection

For the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection while students' class Facebook and WhatsApp group pages formed the major sources of data.

The socio-linguistic reasons necessitate the undergraduates' use of e-discourse features on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Data collected were presented and analyzed in table one.

Table 1: Mean rating of the respondents' responses to the socio-linguistic reasons for the undergraduates' use of electronic discourse to communicate on Facebook and WhatsApp.

S\N	ITEMS	TOTAL NO	STRONGLY AGREE (4)	AGREE (3)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (2)	DISAGREE (1)	TOTAL	MEAN X́	REMARK
i	Limited space on the computer or cell phone screen	50	11	12	10	17			
			44	36	20	17	117	2.3	Not accepted
ii	Showing creativity in the use of the language		13	20	8	9			
			52	60	16	9	137	2.7	Accepted
iii	Socializing and interacting among the participants		26	20	1	3			
			104	60	2	3	169	3.4	Accepted
iv	Sharing of private information		18	20	6	6			

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			72	60	12	6	150	3.0	Accepted
v	Being cheaper in terms of money		21	12	10	7			
			84	36	20	7	147	2.9	Accepted
vi	Being economical in terms of time spent		32	13	3	2			
			128	39	6	2	175	3.5	Accepted
vii	Easy and fast communication		35	12	1	2			
			140	36	2	2	180	3.6	Accepted
viii	To have fun		29	19	1	1			
			116	57	2	1	176	3.5	Accepted
ix	Expression of emotion		15	24	9	2			
			60	72	18	2	152	3.0	Accepted
x	Minimal use of words		33	15	2	0			
			132	45	4	0	181	3.6	Accepted

Table one showed that the E-discourse Features on Facebook and WhatsApp under analysis were found to be primarily necessitated by the above question items. All the outlined socio-linguistic reasons except one had the mean scores above the cut-off point with the following scores: 2.3, 2.7, 3.4, 3.0, 2.9, 3.5, 3.6, 3.5, 3.0 and 3.6. This showed that each of the question items, except one was accepted as a socio-linguistic reason for the undergraduates' use of e-discourse to communicate on Facebook and WhatsApp. Further research on the rejected item revealed that Facebook and WhatsApp have no character limitations for the users. That is, they have nothing to do with space on the computer or cell phone screen.

The salient features of e-discourse on undergraduates' language use on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Facebook = 388 Items

Table 2A:

S\N	Discourse Feature	E-Discourses	Standard Forms	Frequency	Percentage%
1.	Shortenings				
		Chris	Christian	1	
		dept	Department	1	
		congrats	Congratulations	3	
		prof	Professor	1	
		bro, bros	Brother	7	
	Total =			**17**	**4.4**
2.	Clippings				
a.	G-Clippings				
		amazin	Amazing	1	
		givin	Giving	1	
		killin	Killing	1	
		supportin	Supporting	1	
		knwin	Knowing	1	
b.	Vowels Only				
		problm	problem	1	
		nd	and	1	
		re	are	1	
		gon	gone	1	
		non	none	1	
c.	Other Consonants and\or Vowels				
		bday	birthday	1	
		em	them	1	
		ok	okay	1	

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		deptment	department	1	
		tel	tell	1	
	Total =				
3.	Contractions				
		dt	that	1	
		wld	would	1	
		nt	not	5	
		plz	please	3	
		knw, knwn	know, known	4	
4.	Non-Conventional Spellings				
		wit	with	4	
		cos, coz	because	5	
		ds, dis	this	4	
		gud	good	3	
		wot, wat	what	2	
	Total =				**22.9**
5.	Word-Letter Replacements				
		u	you	42	
		ur	you are	2	
		m	am	3	
		d	the	24	
		y	why	1	
	Total =				**26.3**
6.	Word-Digit Replacements				

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		2	to	19	
		4	for	8	
		4rm	from	2	
		2geda	together	1	
		b4	before	1	
	Accent Stylizations				
		wanna	want to	1	
7.		lemme	let me	1	
	Total =			**2**	**0.5**
8.	Initialisms\ Acronyms				
		lolz, lolzzz	laugh out louds	3	
		lol	laugh out loud	3	
		hbd	happy birthday	5	
		aka	also known as		
		Fb	Facebook	1	
	Total =				**8.5**
9.	Emoticons				
		@	at	3	
		……..	contemplation	17	
		??	emphasis	2	
		&	and	7	
		!!, !!!, !!!!!!!!	exclamation	4	
		d@	That	1	
	Total =			**34**	**8.7**
	Total%				**99.9**

WhatsApp = 431   Items

Table 2B:

S\N	Discourse Features	E-Discourses	Standard Forms	Frequency	Percentage%
1.	Shortenings				
		congrats	congratulations	2	
		sis	Sister	1	
		bro, bruv	brother	7	
		mic	microphone	1	
		app	application	1	
	Total =				**4.6**
2	Clippings				
a.	G-Clipping				
		bein	being	1	
		morin	morning	1	
		tryin	trying	1	
		something	something	1	
b.	Vowels Only				
		re	are	4	
		nd	and	8	
		y	you	2	
		evry	every	1	
c.	Other Consonants and\orVowel Contr				
		al	all	1	

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		ave, ve	have	3	
		becca, becky	Rebecca	3	
		bday	birthday	1	
		pple	people	1	
	Total =			**40**	**9.3**
	Total =			**76**	**17.6**
4.	Non-Conventional Spellings				
		tym	time	2	
		cum	come	3	
		mi	me	1	
		wen	when	5	
		gud	good	1	
	Total =			**86**	**20.0**
5.	Word-Letter Replacements				
		ur	your	23	
		m	am	2	
		u,y	you	70	
		d	the	17	
		b	be	4	
	Total =			**136**	**31.6**
6.	Word-Digit Replacements				
		42 mb	forty-two mega bytes	1	
		2moro	tomorrow	1	
		4rm	from	1	

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		4	for	2	
		sm1	someone	1	
	Total =			**13**	**3.0**
7.	Word Combinations (Accent Stylizations)				
		wanna	want to	3	
		lemme	let me	3	
	Total =			**6**	**1.4**
8.	Initialisms\ Acronyi				
		hbd	happy birthday	4	
		NAU	Nnnamdi Azikiwe University	1	
		lolz, lolss	laugh out louds	2	
		llnp	long life and prosperit	2	
		wullnp	wish you long life and prosperity	2	
	Total =			**25**	**5.8**
9.	Emoticons				
		!!, !!!, !!!!!!!!	exclamation	3	
		…….	contemplation	18	
		₦	naira	1	
		@	at	2	
		!=	keep smiling	1	
	Total =			**29**	**6.7**
	Total% =				**100**

Table 2A and 2B presented the salient features of e-discourse on undergraduates' Facebook and WhatsApp respectively, which are different from those of formal writings and communications. Of the total of 388 occurrences of e-discourse on their Facebook, 17 (4.4%) were shortenings, 27 (7.0%), clippings, 47 (12.1%), contractions, 89 (22.9), non-conventional spellings, 102 (26.3%), word-letter replacements, 37 (9.5%), word-digit replacements, 2 (0.5%), accent stylizations, 33 (8.5%), initialisms\acronyms and 34 (8.7%), emoticons. Moreover, of the total of 431 occurrences of e-discourse on their WhatsApp, 20 (4.6%) were shortenings, 40 (9.3%), clippings, 76 (17.6%), contractions, 86 (20.0%), non-conventional spellings, 136 (31.6%), word-letter replacements, 13 (3.0%), word-digit replacements, 6 (1.4%), accent stylizations, 25 (5.8%), initialisms and 29 (6.7%), emoticons. Contractions, non-conventional spellings, and word-letter replacements were the most frequently occurred features in the two communication modes.

As the findings of this study showed, a new variety of the written language evolved in response to the increased use of the electronic means of communication such as Facebook and WhatsApp. It is understandable that Facebook and WhatsApp users write messages full of shortenings, clippings, contractions, phonetic spellings, word-letter replacements, word-digit replacements, accent stylizations, initialisms\acronyms and emoticons, applying the properties of both written and spoken language to the less formal language used in Facebook and WhatsApp. This agreed with Shortis' view that such language conventions have spread because the spelling used is "linguistically coherent, logical, and creative in its orthographic principles and draws upon pre-existing conventions of non-standard spelling" (23).

On the other hand, Hughes (45) described speech and writing in terms of the production and reception contexts. Depending on the degree of our adherence to the conventions of formal writing, the following writing skills found in the e-discourse on Facebook and WhatsApp may seem negative or positive: diminishing concern for punctuation, improper capitalization, beginning of a sentence with a lowercase, missing subject line and\or verb, wrong compound formation\word separation, missing\wrong verb forms or pluralisation, missing\wrong apostrophe or preposition. What needs to be emphasized here is that the use or overuse of these linguistic short-cuts should be based on the relationship of the sender and the receiver of the message, that is, reception contexts because the conventions of formality often remain necessary.

Conclusion

Social media has radically transformed the nature of modern communication and introduced ways of interaction which are "fundamentally different from those found in other semiotic situations" (Crystal 5). This study challenged the assumption that language is deteriorating because of the increased use in electronic communication. Contrary to this assumption and regardless of the linguistic and non-linguistic problems observed in the analyzed Facebook and WhatsApp messages, results suggested that language use is adapted creatively to the particular needs of the electronic age. This justified Makenzie's and Wajemans' assertion in Ezenwa-Ohaeto (109) that the role of a progressive society was to adapt to (and benefit from) technological change and social change as well. A number of e-discourse features and strategies used by the Facebook and WhatsApp users such as shortenings, spoken-like spelling, less attention to punctuation and capitalization, as well as syntactical and lexical reductions were well suited to the conditions of electronic communication to reduce space, time and effort.

Although Facebook and WhatsApp are very useful communicating tools, it should be borne in mind that just like any other forms of communication, brevity and clarity apply equally to electronic communication. Omitting punctuation, capitalization and grammar might not be always a good choice. If a user employs them without adequate consideration of the purpose (formal or informal) of the writing, or just to save a few precious seconds and shows little respect for the reader who is in a higher position, this is a human Problem rather than a technology problem. Therefore, although the language change due to the advancements in electronic communication technology is inevitable, the negative impact on the written language has to do with the technology users, not the technology itself.

In order to achieve communicative competence in both the English language and electronic discourse, users of Facebook and WhatsApp should not only see electronic language as the easier and quicker means of communication but should realise its negative effects on their academic work. They should imbibe the practice of writing formal letters and essays adhering strictly to grammatical conventions and writing mechanics. They should be conscious of their writings, so as to separate informal and formal writings in order not to use the features of e-discourse in their formal academic work.

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