

Termed “computer-mediated discourse” (CMD), or language and new communications technology

(Crystal, 2011) CMD cannot be identified with either spoken language or written language, even though it shares some features with both because the electronic medium constraints and facilitates communication in unprecedented ways; examples of constraints include limited message size, message lag and lack of simultaneous feedback (though now this is already changing due to the rise of instant messaging), and examples of opportunities include hypertext links, emoticons and simultaneous multiple conversations or multi-authored texts

Features of social media:

- Social media handles: construction and representation of user identity
- “Verified” markers: mark of legitimacy and power
- Synchronous communication: instant messaging, “online” status resulted in shorter messages, sentence fragments for simultaneous input that reduced the importance of consistent adherence to standard language rules
- Circulation of memes, etc.: intertextuality, usually meaning is exclusive to the speech community
- “Reply” function: no linear conversation / clear topic, because there is no turn-taking signals
- Features such as underlining, bold, italicization to represent quotes, emphasis, etc.
- Word / character limit: unique to platforms such as Twitter (now “X”) leading to a rise in shortenings
- Collaborative discourse vs passive viewing of content
- “Bluetick” or “Read” caused a paradigm shift in expected time of reply

Domains of internet linguistics:

- 1) World wide web (passive viewing of content)
- 2) Electronic mail (Email)
- 3) Asynchronous chat groups (bulletin boards, newsgroups, short message service SMS)
- 4) Synchronous chat groups (instant messaging IM)
- 5) Language of virtual worlds (particularly gaming)
 - Apps and platforms that serves different functions generate new linguistic innovations based on purpose
 - Facebook marketplace: NWT (New with tag), PPU (Pending pick-up), EUC (Excellent used condition), VGUC (Very good used condition)
- 6) Blogs
 - Used to express opinion, clear personal voice

- Many sub-categories: lifestyle, travel, beauty, food, parenting...

7) Social media

Features of CMD:

- Omission of letters (msg, smth)
- Phonetic spelling (what as wot)

Changes in language due to NCT:

- 1) Rise of ludic language: where language is used such that its primary function is to be part of play and amusement rather than primarily for effective communication, may have initially started as misspelling but now used deliberately

Lolcats and Doge Speak: viral and humorous pictures of cats and dogs accompanied by ludic text, but what's interesting is that the text style can be identified separately from its visual aspect

- Doge Speak characteristics:
 - More standard spelling than LOLcats
 - Shortest forms of words are used, most commonly "amaze" and "excite" instead of amazing or exciting
 - Two-word phrases modified by an intensifier, limited to a list of "much, many, very, so and such"
 - Follows its own selectorial restriction such that phrases cannot sound "too coherent" or in accordance to standard English rules
 - "much delicious" and "many delicious" is typical of Doge Speak but "so delicious" is not
- Influenced by aspects of real-life, namely pet-directed speech that is similar to baby talk

Leetspeak: a type of early internet slang where numbers and other special characters substituted similar-looking letters

- Incorporated common typos such as "teh" for "the" and "pwn" for "own"
- Leetspeak combined with multiple exclamation marks were markers of computer proficiency and excitement in the past, but they became ironic through continued use
 - "OMG, D@T is teh Rox0rz!!!" (Omg, that rocks!)

- 2) Rapid informalisation of discourse: process by which language forms traditionally used for close personal relationships are now used in much wider social contexts

(Fairclough, 1994) "Professional encounters are increasingly likely to contain informal forms of English; they are now becoming conversationalised"

- Could have arisen from new forms of communication that blurred the dichotomous distinction between writing and speech giving rise to new conventions

Donald Trump, on Twitter now known as "X". Unlike the social media accounts of other political figures that are usually highly formal and curated, former USA president and current presidential candidate Donald Trump's tweets are highly informal. As a political figure with

high instrumental and influential power, it is expected that he uses the formal register to address the American people and build brand competence. However, he defies expectations consistently using exclamations and sentence fragments. During his presidential term, national updates were released in the forms of tweets such as this in response to the Covid-19 pandemic: "STOCK MARKET UP BIG, VACCINE COMING SOON. REPORT 90% EFFECTIVE. SUCH GREAT NEWS!" (Nov 2020)

3) Paralinguistic restitution: compensatory strategy to replace social cues normally conveyed by other channels in face-to-face interactions

- Multimodality of NCT had allowed for the rise of emojis, GIFs, stickers
- Meant to improve virtual communication but can lead to unintelligibility instead due to difference in interpretation or under-lying meanings that are ever-changing; there is a difference in meaning of emojis between generations

“❤️ The heart emoji” is used by millennials the way it was intended to be used to show affection towards others. By Gen Z, it is often used sarcastically such as when answering a question but wanting to soften the blow of a reaction, “No ❤️”.

“💀 The skull emoji” at face-value stands for death or skull. While millennials use it to express “feeling dead” such as feeling so exhausted after work to the point of feeling lifeless, Gen Z often use it to mean that something is so funny or cringe that they die laughing.

- Smileys and variations of laughter such as “lol” and “HAHAH” can serve as social lubricants rather than their purely humorous function

4) Linguistic innovation: leads to the creation of “another register”, a reinterpretation of existing conventions which arise to accommodate international function

Disappearance of punctuation: in CMD, messages are now usually sent in sentence fragments that appear separately as new messages or with a line break. This allows the reader to start thinking of a reply sooner, and also contributes to the informal register often used in IM. However, in the past when bills were charged per message and space to write on a physical surface was limited, ellipsis and dashes were ambiguously used to signal a separate utterance. They do not follow their classical usage in standard English but instead can represent speech-like features such as trailing off or pausing; by not conforming strictly to formal, standard punctuation, users show that they are not standing on ceremony and seem more inviting. The problem appears when users of these two norms engage in CMD, where each habit may be misinterpreted by the other party. The most common assumptions made by younger audiences about the use of the ellipsis in IM is

either passive aggressiveness or sheer confusion. The passive-aggressive potential of the period and then the ellipsis, have been featured in thinkpieces as early as 2006 to 2013. Though rarer in short, casual messages, the use of the period is a natural way to talk about weighty matters. This shows that punctuation now contributes to a “typographical tone of voice” where text is perceived to be written in a certain tone because of the way it is written

- Another example is WRITING IN ALL CAPS to show strong feelings such as happiness or anger, mimicking speaking louder, faster or in higher pitch to emphasise something in speech
- Another example is repeating letters, or expressive lengthening. Originally used to be a literal, written representation of longer sounds in speech but is now a form of emotional expression that is not completely tied to phonological feasibility. Such as “sameeee” and “dumbbbb” which are silent letters

Issues of NCT:

1) Is CMD a blend of written and spoken discourse?

(2009, Quan-Hasse) Argues that instant messaging (IM) is a hybrid form of communication blending written, spoken and computer-mediated communication

- IM: direct, immediate, casual online contact
- IM has developed unique communication practices, forms of expression, and linguistic characteristics
- CMD is speech-like but is more conservative than expected (Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008)
 - Through studies of the use of personal pronouns in spoken, written and IM, it is found that like spoken discourse, the use of first-person pronouns dominate in IM discourse while the use of third-person dominates in written discourse
 - IM is a more formal register than speech, intensifiers are typically associated with colloquial usage and non-standard varieties but the data showed that teenagers are much less likely to use intensifiers in IM, and IM cannot simply be labelled a speech-like register
 - The quotative verb “be like” is observed more in speech than in IM, where in IM the use of the more standard quotative verb “said” is close in frequency to the colloquial “be like” that is thought to be characteristic of youthspeak. The colloquial “gonna/going to” instead of the standard variant “will” is also used less in IM than speech

2) Linguistic whateverism: appears most frequently in e-mail, IMs, text messages

3) Attitudes towards linguistic innovations in CMD

- Belief that it is ruining the language

The use of CMD in texting or instant messaging is criticised for being harmful to the English language and to children's developing literacy, although there is no empirical evidence to support either. An article in *The Guardian* described texting as "bleak, bald, sad shorthand" that "masks dyslexia, poor spelling and mental laziness".

- (Crystal, 2011) argues that the variations in CMD are an expression of creativity that is logical and systematic because the phenomenon of omission of letters, phonetic spelling and other characteristics of CMD is not recent, while initialisms and using symbols in place of words are centuries old
- (Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008) IM is more conservative than the media portrays
 - The frequency of so-called "characteristic IM forms" such as abbreviations, short-forms, and symbolic uses in IM is much rarer in teenage, IM discourse than what is popularly portrayed by the media; all forms combined only represented 2.4% of the massive sample of IM text logs
 - Another popular characteristic of IM referenced by the media is the usage of the abbreviated "u" instead of you and the lowercase "i" instead of I, research found that the vast majority of teenagers on IM still use the standard forms "you" and "I" and distribution of the data by individuals showed that it is a stylistic choice unique to the individual
- (Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008) IM still promotes linguistic innovation, by observing the choice of intensifiers. In terms of intensifiers, it is an area of grammar that is known to change constantly because of a speaker's desire to be "original" and it changes with the times. "Very" is most commonly used among older individuals, while "really" and "so" is preferred by the younger generation. In IM, "so" was the most frequently observed in IM. This suggests that linguistic innovation is characteristic of IM
- The resultant findings were that the use of short forms, abbreviations and emotional language often thought to be characteristic of IM, only made up 3% of the conversation logs collected; showing that the adverse perceptions of IM in the media have been blown out of proportion