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Communication: From Formal Written Interaction To Media Written Interaction

Chat

The Case of First Year Master Students of English - Mentouri University

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master Degree in Applied Language Studies

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time. To all my dearest brothers and sisters, a big thank for their support and encouragement and for putting colors in my life , may Allah bless you all.

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Abstract

This dissertation gives interest to conversational media written interactions taking place in a real time on the internet, mainly Internet (online) Chats. This work introduces English students' writing samples as a means of studying the multifaceted relationship between the overuse of chat and students' writings. This study mentions that students' writing samples offer a reliable framework in that they provide a way to understand, explain, and frame the students' use and adaptation of written language to suit the conditions of Computer-Mediated Communication. This adaptation of written language has a negative influence on the students written productions. This study aims at bringing out the instances, linguistic specificities of language practices by young users in cyberspace. This research is inspired by the works of Herring and Danet (2007) in digital writings namely in graphic usages, which deals with the differences between the available face to face semiotic material and that of chat, in addition to the claims put forward by Crystal(2001) that the new medium of communication in CMC is conducted in ways that are neither spoken nor written interaction 'Netspeak' as he pointed out. The results obtained from this study show the negative influence of chat.

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA: ASCII-ized Arabic

ASCII: American Standard Code for Information Interchange.

BBS: Bulletin Board System.

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication.

CMD: Computer-Mediated Discourse.

E-Mail: Electronic Mail.

IRC : Internet Relay Chat

MUD : Multiuser Domain

SMS:Short Message Service

UAE: United Arab Emarates

WWW: World Wide Web

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APPENDIX

Introduction

Over the past few years, the internet has emerged as a prominent new technology. The influence of such a powerful technological tool has spread over all the aspects of educational business and economic sectors of the world.

The internet brings new stylistic varieties of language, new forms of communication and new written interactions or the so-called “media-written interactions”.

The internet as new means of communication or as a medium of computer-mediated communication has had such an impact on language that it would be destructive.

The rapid development of technology makes a language evolve quickly and this may affect English learners’ productions.

This research deals with a new form of communication (chat) by giving interest to written production analysis in order to study how media-written interactions influence negatively students’ writings.

This piece of research is divided into two main parts a descriptive part which includes one chapter about the review of the related literature and an empirical part which includes two main sections.

The theoretical part deals with a synthesized historical background and a review about communication. It provides an overview of Computer- Mediated Communication and the language that is used in chat.

The practical part contains a formal questionnaire designed for first year Master students .Section one contains a detailed analysis of the students’ questionnaire and section

two deals with the analysis of written productions of English first year Master students in the University of Constantine.

I. Statement of the problem

Many studies of Computer-Mediated Communication were carried out in a variety of languages .Herring(2001) focused on verbal interaction on discussion boards and chat channels while Georgalcopoulou(2004) examined the edited content of websites and weblogs, which has been generally less explored from a sociolinguistic point of view. Crystal (2001) studied the scope of the internet linguistics. He examined the way in which a language develops new varieties, and especially increasing its expressive range at the informal end of the stylistics spectrum. These studies demonstrate the contribution of sociolinguistics to the study of the new forms of communication and community in what Castells (2000) calls “The network society”.

Language of chat affects students output either positively or negatively .The main concern of the present study is to investigate how language of chat influences negatively the learners’ written productions.

II. Aims of the study

As a new sophisticated attached form of communication, ‘Chat’ is a fascinating virtual space .This new technology attracts the Algerian youth; it has become an interesting thing in their lives. Chat is the most popular activity on the internet. It abolishes all the geographic, hierarchic and religious frontiers.

This study explores the features and strategies adopted by the *interactors*, in addition to the unwelcome effects of the new communication technologies on learners' writings.

III. Research questions

Our piece of research aims at addressing the following questions:

- a) Does the internet have any consequences on education?
- b) What are the basic features of chat?
- c) What are the strategies that are adopted by the internet users in order to interact?
- d) Does chat affect foreign English learners' writings?

IV. Hypothesis

Text messages, e-mails, instant messages and chat are media written interactions which have not replaced pencil and paper only, but also used as ways with which students communicate daily. Students have mastered the shorthand, condensed language of electronics by the time teachers introduce classic literature and formal writing. There are common terms which people have used to describe language in cyberspace such as 'Netspeak'. Netspeak is a term coined by Crystal(2001) , it makes potentially problematic assumptions about language in general and Net language in particular. It is assumed that the internet language is so different from traditional language, that it has special label. In fact, the popular belief often promoted by media is that the standard language is under threat in that new technologies have been radically affecting it and, in some cases, destroying it. Hence, our hypothesis on which this research is based:

In case students are usual chatters, would their written production be negatively affected?

V. Means of Research

In order to test our hypothesis, to obtain the information required from our subjects and to reach the objectives of our study, we will be using two main tools: a questionnaire designed for First year master students, chosen randomly. The second tool is a dictation of a text.

Chapter one

1.1.Introduction

Technology does not only modify our natural world to suit its own purposes by changing our medium of communication, but also by affecting our linguistic communication.

The internet as a medium for communication has penetrated the Algerians lives immensely, so much so that even their way of communication has become highly altered. More and more the Algerians as people all over the world are using the internet and cell phones and the case is specially pronounced among the younger generation, who now rely on faster, more efficient means of communication to save time. While there are numerous advantages of technological advancement, there could be equally disadvantages as well. With people chatting on the internet or text messaging each other, communication has never been as rapid as it is today with a completely new evolution of the English language popularly known as “chat-speak”. One of the major disadvantages of using chat speak is its penetration into the lives of the younger generation and its destructive ability over their use of English language, destroying their ability to communicate effectively and efficiently using appropriate spellings and words (Batul, 2009). Critics of the evolution of chat-speak argue that meaningful communication is bound among its users as children begin to use short forms in written communication replacing words like “you” with “u” or “great” with “gr8”. Other common variants include “s” to imply “yes” or the use of numerical digit “4” to signify “for”. The use of the internet and text messaging has become so profound that educationists have begun to worry their effects on the academic lives of students (ibid.). Expectedly, misspelled words and spellings replacing normal words and terms in the language is a definite cause for alarm hindering the ability of students and children to communicate effectively through the

appropriate written medium, when writing academic papers, essays, drafts or any other literary prose. Proponents of chat-speak however argue that the evolution of language is a continuous process which is why chat-speak should be a welcome medium of communication. Is chat-speak a medium which is here to destroy the English language or is it merely a form of communication which will be used by individuals to use time effectively?

1.2. Communication

Communication is an essential part of our professional and personal lives. We are constantly communicating, even when we are silent.

In our social interaction with others, we are communicating. Communication is the process whereby we attempt to transmit our thoughts, ideas, wishes, or emotions to others. Although for our purposes, communication involves only the information, thoughts, ideas, etc., that we want to transmit to a specific audience.

Communication is a learned skill. Most people are born with the physical ability to talk. Communicating effectively and speaking well require good learning skills. Speaking, listening, and the ability to understand verbal and nonverbal meanings are those skills developed in various ways. Most basic communication skills are learned by observing other people and modeling behaviors based on what we see. Some communication skills are directly learnt, practiced and evaluated.

1.2. 1. Defining communication

Communication covers a wide topic area. Any definition of a topic as broad as communication would be too general, too complex, or too fragmented to be of much use. Communication can be defined by its various aspects, but they would not be unified.

Communication is a key concept of language. Thompson (2003:37), following Montgomery (1995) argues that “language is not simply the ability to use words.” It “refers to the complex array of interlocking relationships which form the basis of communication and social interactions.”

Communication is an ambiguous term. Many articles, books, chapters are devoted to defining communication as Fiske (1990:1) notes; communication “is one of those human activities that every one recognizes but few can define satisfactorily.” He describes communication simply as a “social interaction through messages.”(ibid: 2.).

Berger (1995:208) defines the field of communication as “a process that involves the transmission of messages from senders to receivers.” However, Corner and Hawthorne (1993:2) state that “communication studies are about how human meanings are made through the production and reception of various types of sign. It is about visual and verbal sign systems and the technologies used to articulate, record and convey them.”

Two board schools of thought, the *Process School* and *Semiotic School*, provide a layered definition of communication.

The *Process School* deals with the ‘transmission model’ or ‘sender-receiver model’. This model bases on the transporting of the “message” from A to B in which “the sender

initiates the communication by encoding some piece of information in the form of a message. A message is typically denoted by the intention to communicate and that often excludes “unintended” messages” (Wodak & Koller, 2008). Many methods are used in transmitting messages (such as face to face or by media) to one or more persons. The message is then successfully decoded. Hence, this model is best for media forms.

Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) basic ‘straight –line’ model was interested in ‘the impediments’, that in real life situation, may block the ‘direct’ path of the ‘message’. These can be observed in the status of the sender and receiver (gender, educational and class differences); cognitive status of the receiver (who may not decode as intended and therefore receives different message) (Streeck, 1994); the fact that communication often includes a reply and this may affect the message (Dance, 1967). Thus, the goal of this communication model is the acceptance of the sender's message by the receiver. If the receiver understands the meaning of a message that asks for action but fails to act, the goal of communications is not achieved. If the receiver does respond to the message by taking the appropriate action, the goal of the communication has been achieved.

Gerbner (1956) was interested in perceptions and context. He ‘assumes’ that events and messages were perceived differently by the communicator and receiver and that this was influenced by the context in a dynamic relationship.

Gerbner’s(ibid.) model starts with an external event (E), which is received (clearly or unclearly) and interpreted by a human or machine (M) and understood to a greater or lesser extent (E). It is in the complex relationship between the event and the receiver that meaning is developed. The second stage of Gerbner’s model relates to the medium (form) by which the message is communicated, and its content.

The *Semiotic School* involves the production or exchange of meanings. It has roots in the works of Pierce and De Saussure. It is particularly concerned with the fields of semiology, structural linguistics and cultural studies. It deals with the signs, codes, rules and signifying systems by which meaning is constructed. According to it, meaning is created by sending signs which may include words, sounds, and images (Op.cit).

The semiotic school concentrates on the receiver and how he interprets signs. The combination of those signs form the message .This message conveys meaning; interpreted to the extent the same signs or coding systems have been shared. This places a much greater emphasis on the structured relationships which enable a message to signify something (Op.cit)

In other words, the semiotic approach appears to interpret communication as a process where a speaker constructs a message by coding a certain meaning by means of a linguistic system, and transfers it to a hearer who simply decodes it, thus retrieving its original meaning. The roles of the speaker and the hearer in a communicative event are thus reduced to coding and decoding respectively.

1.2.2. Jacobson's models of communication

Jacobson (1960: 213-220) elaborated a famous model of the factors of any act of verbal communication which can be generalized for any kind of communication.

He argues that every oral or written verbal message or 'speech act' (parole) requires the following elements in common: the message itself, an addresser, an addressee, a context (the social and historical context in which the utterance is made), a contact (the physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and addressee), and a code,

wholly or partially known to both addresser and addressee, which permits communication to occur.

Jacobson's model has two obvious merits: firstly, it takes into account, and represents synthetically, a complex set of factors; secondly, it deepens many of the specific functions of the message in relation to each of these factors in the communication process. This Russian linguist treasures his former belonging to the significant experience of Russian formalism, by introducing the poetic function into his model, as an '*autotelic*' orientation of the message towards itself.

1.2.3. Functions

Jacobson (ibid.) created a model of communicative functions. He argued that a shared code was not sufficient, but a context was essential in the communicative function. The components of communication are the addresser, the addressee, context, message, channel, and code. Therefore, depending on the focus of the component of communication, the functions are *emotive* (focuses on the addresser's attitude to his or her own message; e.g., interjections and emphatic speech), *conative* (focuses on the addressee; e.g., vocative), *referential* (refers to the context), *phatic* (refers to the contact/ channel of communication between two speakers), *metalinguistic* (refers to the code itself, language about language; i.e., metalanguage), and *poetic* (refers to the additional component of a message apart from content). Each piece of discourse requires an analysis to identify which of the above functions predominate.

In other words, although any or all of these functions may be present in any utterance, they vary in their importance as a result of which one function is dominant over the rest.

Where a particular function dominates, the message is oriented towards the corresponding factor.

1.3.Introduction to computer-mediated communication

The growing impact that internet has on our lives is increasingly difficult to ignore. It has become a fact of life. It has an unprecedented amount of change, in quantity, technology, and wider public participation as Naughton (1999:1) describes it:

The Internet is one of the most remarkable things human beings have ever made. In terms of its impact on society, it ranks with print, the railways, the telegraph, the automobile, electric power and television. Some would equate it with print and television the two earlier technologies which most transformed the communications environment in which people live. Yet it is potentially more powerful than both because it harnesses the intellectual leverage which print gave to mankind without being hobbled by the one-to-many nature of broadcast television.

Since the Internet became available, computer-mediated communication has become increasingly widespread throughout the world, partly thanks to the rapid development of the computer technology as Evans¹ states:

“The Internet is like a giant jellyfish. You can't step on it. You can't go around it. You've got to get through it.”(Quoted in Wood, 2005:3)

1.4. Computer -Mediated Communication

In the light of the rapidly changing nature of communication technologies, scholars do not specify forms of CMC², they describe it simply as “the process by which people

¹ Wood failed to give Evan's full references.

create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages” (December, 1996) . This seems to encompass both the delivery mechanisms, derived from communication theory, and the importance of the interaction of people that the technologies and processes mediate (Naughton, *ibid.*) .In that sense, Santoro (1995:11) claims that

At its broadest, CMC can encompass virtually all computer uses including such diverse applications as statistical analysis programs, remote-sensing systems, and financial modeling programs, all fit within the concept of human communication.

While Santoro (*ibid.*:2.) developed a more enigmatic definition by saying “Computer Mediated Communication is a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes.” Yet, Herring (1996:3) proposed another ‘classic’ definition “CMC is communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers.”

The social aspects of the communication form the basis of the more recent definitions. Johnson (1997) focus on the facilitation of sophisticated interactions, both synchronous and asynchronous, by computer networks in their definition of CMC. One of the most overt examples of the move away from a technological focus in definitions describes it thus: “CMC, of course, is not just a tool; it is at once technology, medium, and engine of social relations. It not only structures social relations, it is the space within which the relations occur and the tool that individuals use to enter that space” (Op.cit).

² Computer-mediated communication

CMC is a relatively new area of study. Wood & Smith (2005:4) state that “The field of CMC studies how human behaviors are maintained or altered by the exchange of information through machines.” This field is growing significantly since it has become an integral part of our lives and spread over all the aspects of educational, business and economic sectors of the world.

The history of CMC is little more than fifty years old. It has been around since the first electronic digital computer was invented time in the early 1960s.

Steinfeld (1986) reviewed the literature on CMC and suggested a number of gaps that he hoped would be filled by future research. Since the internet is not mentioned in Steinfeld’s review, researchers have made progress toward filling these gaps, as well as in analyzing new CMC-related phenomena, as part of an explosion in CMC research triggered by the popular expansion of the Internet in the late 1980s and 1990s (in Herring,1996:109).

Computer technology was still fairly exclusive and restricted mainly to practical concerns such as information processing, data transfer, hardware design, and what is known more generally as Human-Computer Interaction . However, it’s only really been since the mid-1990s that the fast growing popularity and ubiquity of personal computers (especially for emailing, chatting and surfing the web) has caused CMC to become so attractive to scholarly attention.

Hence, from all the definitions that are stated, CMC encompasses the applications and impacts of computer and digital technologies; however, in practice CMC is usually concerned more specifically with human interpersonal communication on, through and about the internet and web. Two strategies are used for identifying the key principles and issues which define

the field of CMC: scholarly definitions and scholarly discussions. Perhaps the most effective way of defining CMC is to try and pin down the core concepts.

1.4.1. Cyberspace

Cyberspace is an alternative term coined by Gibson (1984: 51) defined as:

A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts — A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding.

Interestingly, Gibson (ibid.) was writing a prophetic description of what the Internet might be like almost a decade before the introduction of the technology that would make any truly "graphic representation" of the World Wide Web possible.

Gibson's interpretation of cyberspace came after witnessing children playing with video games. "These kids clearly believed in the space games projected," he said, noting that they seemed "to develop a belief that there's some kind of *actual space* behind the screen, someplace you can't see but you know is there" (Quoted in McCarthy, 1992: 272). Gibson's term seemed to catch on once people began to note the similarities between Gibson's imaginary plane and what can be experienced in various online interactions.

1.4.2. Characteristics of Computer-mediated communication

Although CMC is not that new but its current spread sheds light on the new environments created by electronic communications. Scholars are increasingly interested in understanding the characteristics of CMC and its effects on people, groups and organizations.

This new mode of communication is characterized by features such as: synchronicity, asynchronicity, packet-switching, interactivity, physical transcendence, storing and replication and hypertextuality.

One of the main distinctions that has been made in CMC has been between synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delayed time) communications.

1.4.2.1. Synchronous communication

According to Strate (1996:275) “Messages exchanged over the Internet transverse not only space but also time”. From this quotation, synchronous forms can be defined as follows:

Synchronous forms are real-time communications between two people as in a face-to-face discussion or talking on the telephone, or as in a one-to-many form, such as a lecture, has its equivalent within CMC in chat rooms and similar environments (Herring, 1996). With synchronous forms, participants type messages that appear on others’ screens as soon as they are sent. Readers reply instantly, leading to a rapid exchange of brief messages. Chat rooms, where multiple people gather on the basis of shared interests, are one form of synchronous CMC, as is instant messaging, which usually occurs between two people.

1.4.2.2. Asynchronous communication

Asynchronous communication occurs when participants interact with significant spans of time between their exchanges.

The most popular forms of CMC are asynchronous Email, the electronic equivalent of letters, may be person-to-person, or may be group communication organized through mailing lists based on interest, family, friendship, work, or other ties. Websites are also asynchronous,

with static information posted for readers. On weblogs (or 'blogs'), a writer or collective of writers posts comments on a daily or even hourly basis. Readers can often engage in discussion of those comments through hyperlinked sections that appear newsgroups are asynchronous forms of topical discussion in which large groups of users may gather on their own time to read and leave messages (Op.cit). In general, asynchronous forms seem to predominate where in there is a, potentially significant, time delay between sending a message and it being read. In offline communication, this latter form is similar to letter writing, or sending faxes, and online has its usual manifestations in email, discussion lists, and most forms of bulletin board and computer conference.

Finally, Computer-mediated language can also be characterized by a set of other features that can influence interaction. CMC can be either one-to-one or one-to-many. Email, instant messaging, and SMS are usually directed at single users, while mailing lists, chat rooms, and discussion boards are usually written for a broad and often semi-anonymous audience. The ability for each Internet user to communicate one-to-many is an unprecedented transformation in the landscape of communication media, which have historically limited this capacity to a small number of influential mass media producers.

1.4.3. Communication through computer-mediated communication

People are always developing new ways to use the communication media around them. After using the telephone as a technology for the exchange of oral symbols, traditional mail-handling for printing legal contracts and fax machine for transmitting written materials and even images over the same telephone lines used for speaking; interaction over the internet has had similar history. At one time, this interaction was largely limited to text-based

exchanges. E-mail, BBSs, MUDs, and IRCs are forms for the exchange of textual messages in addition to the World Wide Web. The use of words alone is still a popular means of online communication, but now people can also share images and sounds through their computers. Scholars have examined communication in each of these five forms of CMC.

1.4.3.1. Bulletin Board Systems

BBS is a form for text-based communication distinguished by the size of the audience it attempts to reach and the technological manner in which messages are read. In a BBS, individual contributors send messages to a single computer address. The program then posts these individual messages that visitors can access and read at their discretion. (Wood & Smith, 2005).

1.4.3.2. Electronic Mail

E-mail is perhaps the most popular and familiar channel for communicating through the Internet. It is defined by Herring (1996:114) as :

A text-based asynchronous, and involves message-by-message transmission. A distinctive feature of the e-mail message that dates back to the early 1970s is its header, containing "to," "from," and subject lines as well as routing information.

Like its ancestor, the much slower, paper-based "snail-mail" routed through traditional postal means, e-mail involves the exchange of textual messages between two or more parties. Unlike its ancestor, e-mail arrives very quickly and seems to express meaning in a notably variant fashion.

1.4.3.3. Chat

Unlike asynchronous CMC, the most important feature of synchronous CMC is that it does provide a real-time link between users' computers. Although the most frequently cited example is the videoconference, the most widespread system is the Internet Relay Chat, or IRC. IRC is defined simply by Charalabidis (1999:11) as “a multiuser, real-time communication system hundreds of thousands of people all over the world use.” It is synchronous and involves message-by-message (one-way) transmission. Users connect to a chat site and communicate by typing typically brief (one-line) written messages, which are transmitted in their entirety when the user presses the “send” key. Messages are displayed to everyone in the room or channel in the temporal order in which they are received, with the user’s nickname appended automatically before each message (Herring, 1997).

1.4.3.4. Multiuser Domains

Multiuser domains (MUD) are textual online ‘spaces’ designed for functions as varied as role-playing, generalized socializing, and education. They are another form of synchronous, and primarily text-based, interaction occurs in. Originally constructed of nothing more than the words on the computer screen and the user's imagination, everything about a MUD is invented, although it is all rule-governed by the administering program. Nonetheless, participants enjoy a great deal of freedom in adopting roles, in indicating movement through the virtual environment that they read about on the screen, and in conversing with their fellow participants in a MUD (Herring, 1997).

1.4.3.5. The World Wide Web

The World Wide Web, often referred to as simply "the Web" or abbreviated "www", is increasingly becoming a portal to the other forms of CMC. It is what less knowledgeable people think of as the Internet. That is, people begin their Internet excursions to pick up mail from their e-mail accounts, check out the latest newsgroup messages, or meet some friends in a chat room through the Web. Perhaps because it is a much more graphical interface, people have lately been turning to this form of CMC as a way into the other, more text-based forms. Like the other forms discussed thus far, the Web also possesses communicative properties based on its technological abilities and the social practices that have emerged through the use of it. One of the rhetorical effects of the Web has been the ways in which the globally accessible messages posted to it address particular audiences.

1.4.4. Discourse

Many scholars use the term 'discourse' in many different ways. Although it's used here in the particular sense of 'language-in-use', in actual fact 'discourse' and 'communication' mean pretty much the same thing: both terms are concerned with social interaction and everyday encounters. However, while the notion of 'communication' always indicates a very broad, nonverbal perspective, 'discourse' tends to be more specifically directed at linguistic issues. What's also interesting is to examine people's linguistic practices online – the ways they are actually interacting and conversing with each other. This is described better by the term 'netspeak'. We don't only want to know what language on the internet looks like but also how people are using language in different ways. Scholars

interested in language and new technologies choose to refer to their sub-field as Computer Mediated Discourse (Herring, 2001).

1.4.4.1. Computer-Mediated discourse

According to Herring (ibid:1.) “*Computer-mediated discourse* is the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers.” Most CMC currently in use is text-based, that is, messages are typed on a computer keyboard and read as text on a computer screen, typically by a person or persons at a different location from the message sender. Text-based CMC takes a variety of forms (e.g., e-mail, discussion groups, real-time chat, virtual reality role-playing games) whose linguistic properties vary depending on the kind of messaging system used and the social and cultural context embedding particular instances of use. However, all such forms have in common that the activity that takes place through them is constituted primarily in many cases, exclusively -- by visually-presented language (Op.cit) .These characteristics of the medium have important consequences for understanding the nature of computer-mediated language. They also provide a unique environment, free from competing influences from other channels of communication and from physical context, in which to study verbal interaction and the relationship between discourse and social practice.

1.4.5. Netspeak

‘Netspeak’ is a term coined by Crystal (2001:19) defined as 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” .Computer-mediated communication focuses on the medium itself. Crystal selects the term "Netspeak" to describe the many forms of language

visible on the Internet. His selection of this term clearly arises from the ephemeral neologisms common to digital culture in the mid and late 1990s, evidence for which resides in the list of alternatives he considered -- "netlish," "weblish," and "cyberspeak."

1.4.5.1. The medium of Netspeak

“Netspeak is a development of millennial significance. A new medium of linguistic communication does not arrive very often, in the history of the race.” (ibid: 238–9). In fact, Crystal suggests that internet language is a ‘fourth medium’ (after writing, speaking and signing) and how the rate of change has been tremendous. Not everyone shares this perspective, however, and most scholars tend to be a little more cautious.

1.4.5.2. Netspeak: Speech that looks like writing

Netspeak and the language of conversation on the internet can be observed in the channels of synchronous CMC (e.g. online chat). People want to type as fast as they can but also to be as informal and friendly as they can. Discourse in these niches is therefore highly interactive, dynamic and spontaneous – especially when there are multiple participants.

Werry (in Herring, 1996:126) described internet relay chat as ‘interactive written discourse’. He noted that the organization of interactions was very complex; for example, different conversational strands running at the same time, short turns (usually only about six words), high degrees of ‘addressivity’ (i.e. the use of *nicks* to avoid ambiguity with multiple participants), and minimal backchanneling from listeners (e.g. *uh huh, mm hm*). It sometimes seems like chaos but everything usually works really smoothly. Once again, even though IRC is not face-to-face, and is typed, the language of the internet invariably looks

more like speech than writing. The communication situation more generally, lies in a wide range of contextual variables such as the type of channel being used (e.g. email or instant message), the participants (e.g. teen chatters or business colleagues) and the topic and purpose (e.g. love letter or customer complaint). Herring (ibid: 612-34) outlines a number of other variables, such as physical (or ‘medium’) variables like granularity (i.e. how transient or durable messages are), or social variables such as whether or not the channel is moderated by someone.

1.4.5.3. Some features of Netspeak

There are many features that exclusively belong to the Netspeak. Its emphasis on medium-specific features of language use is made explicit in labels such as ‘electronic language’ and ‘computer-mediated register’. There is a wealth of descriptive accounts of its ‘unique features’ (Crystal, 2001) such as emoticons and acronyms, the hybrid combination of written and spoken features, and principal differences between synchronous and asynchronous modes. Some of the most common typographic strategies used to achieve this interactional style are: The use of letter homophones (e.g. *RU* ‘are you’, *OIC* ‘oh, I see’), acronyms (e.g. *LOL* ‘laugh out loud’, *WG* ‘wicked grin’) and a mixture of both (e.g. *CYL&R* ‘see you all later’); the creative use of punctuation (e.g. multiple periods . . . exclamation marks !!!); the use of capitalization or other symbols for emphasis and stress; onomatopoeic and/or stylized spelling (e.g. *coooool*, *hahahaha*, *vewy intewestin* ‘very interesting’), generated *emoticons* or *smileys* (e.g. :-) ‘smiling face’ ,-) ‘winking face’, @>—;— ‘a rose’); the use of direct requests (e.g. *A/S/L* ‘age, sex, location?’ and *GOS* ‘gay or straight?’) _ Interactional indicators (e.g. *BBL* ‘be back later’) _ with more elaborate programming, colored text, *emotes* (e.g.

*{Sender} eyes you up and down**, *{Sender} cries on your shoulder**) and other graphic symbols (e.g. images of gifts and accessories in Virtual Worlds).

1.4. 6.Languages Used in Computer-Mediated Communication

Before computers were networked, the terms ‘language’ and ‘computer’ only occurred together in describing programming code. In recent years, however, the Internet and related technologies have become popular and pervasive media for human communication. The update question of how human language is used in these media has become an important concern for linguists communication scholars, sociologists, and researchers from other disciplines (Herring, 2001).

The overrepresentation of languages used in wealthy countries, especially English, has often given rise to a sentiment that the Internet represents a further colonization of poor nations by those with greater wealth, particularly the United States.

The use of a given language on the internet is also affected by the technology itself. Until recently, online writing was restricted to the ASCII³ character set, which is designed exclusively for the Latin alphabet. With the advent of Unicode, people can now write with other alphabets; however, this technology is neither available to nor used by all. The result has sometimes been considered a form of ‘typographical imperialism’ (Danet&Herring, 2007:11) with potential social, political, economic, and linguistic consequences.

³ American Standard Code for Information Interchange

1.4.6.1. Writing, Speaking, and Hybridity

Most scholars tend to describe the linguistics of CMC by comparing online interaction to face-to-face communication and writing. However, others like Biber (1986) are among those who have compared oral and written language. In general, scholars examining diverse forms of CMC in a number of languages particularly (English, French, Swedish, and Norwegian) have found that CMC resembles both written language and oral conversation. CMC is like writing in many ways. The text usually bears an address. Messages can be edited prior to transmission. The author and reader are usually geographically (and often temporally) separated, messages can often be read by anonymous readers who may not respond. It is not possible for interlocutors to overlap one another or to interrupt. Context must be created through the prose so that messages are often explicit and complete. There is rarely an assumption of shared physical context. Messages are replicable and can be stored. Vocabulary, syntax, spelling, and the use of uncontracted forms may make online interaction more like writing than speech. On the other hand, there are many ways in which online language better resembles speech. Messages are generally related to prior ones, often through turn-taking, although disrupted turn adjacency and lack of feedback can render turn-taking challenging (Herring, 2001). Messages are based on a relationship between writer and reader. Online language can be marked by colloquial and nonstandard spellings that phonetic qualities (e.g., ‘gotta’ instead of ‘have to’). Among the commented upon features of online writing are the use of abbreviation (e.g., TTYL for ‘talk to you later’), the use of asterisks as brackets to simulate underlines, and upper case lettering to indicate emphasis. A number of deletions have also been noted, including the deletion of subject pronouns (e.g., ‘gotta go now’), vowels, and punctuation.

1.5.Chat

Over the past decade, chat has become popular on a global scale among the Algerian users. Chat is synchronous and involves message-by-message (one-way) transmission. Velkovska (2007) defined Chat as electronic spaces devoted to electronic group conversation in which participants are identified by nicknames. Users connect to chat site, join channels or rooms, and communicate by typing typically (one-line) messages, which are transmitted in their entirety when the user presses the “send”. Messages are displayed to everyone in the room or channel in the temporal order in which they are received; with the user’s nickname appended automatically before each message.

1.5.1. Features of Chat

Perhaps one of the most striking features of chat conversations is that they often initially appear chaotic. When multiple participants are involved, messages can scroll quickly up and off the screen. Further, chat systems disrupt patterns of turn taking, due to the tendency of overlapping exchanges to cause an initiating message and its response to become separated by irrelevant messages (Herring, 1999). However, the same features that render chat fragmented and chaotic also make it popular. Loosened turn-taking fosters playfulness (Danet, 1997), and simultaneous multiple conversations foster enhanced interpersonal—what Walther (1996) terms “hyperpersonal’-interactivity (Quoted in Herring, 1999). The culture of chat rooms, although varying according to purpose, is typically sociable, playful, and disinhibited. Much chat content is phatic, indeed banal, and chat conversations tend to be stylistically informal (Werry, 1996). Topics decay quickly, making unstructured chat uncondusive to

extended, focused discussion (Herring & Nix, 1997), although users who chat together on a regular basis can develop strategies for maintaining coherence (Herring, 1999).

1.5.1.1. Synchronicity

The real-time nature of chat messages prevents any editorial changes in electronic discourse, and thus the writing style reflects that of the original author. In this aspect, it is quite valuable to work on unedited chat messages. However, in the mean time, having no editorial modifications means that, in chat messages, misspellings are more frequent compared to edited text. It is debatable whether these misspellings are part of an author's writing style or not. Due to its simultaneous nature, electronic discourse reflects the author's current emotional state much better than any other writing. Since the messages transmitted between users are purely textual, chat messaging has evolved its own means for transferring emotions. Emoticons are commonly known and widely used ways of representing feelings within computer-mediated text.

1.5.1. 2.Pseudonymity

The requirement on most public chat sites that each user select (effectively, a pseudonym creates an environment conducive to play, flirting, and other activities for which the user may wish to avoid being held socially accountable (Danet, 1998). As a very popular and publicly-accessible CMC mode, chat has attracted the attention of a number of Internet researchers.

1.5.1.3. Anonymity

In most chat servers, the real identity of a user is hidden from other users by a virtual identity, called “nickname”. Typically, the users have the option of building up this virtual identity and setting its different characteristic features. This gives the users the opportunity to provide others false information about their real identities. Having such a misleading information in chat environments makes authorship attribution and characterization quite difficult even for domain experts.

1.5.1.4. Unique style and specific targeted messages

Unlike literary writing, where the documents are written for public audience, chat messages target a particular individual. Most often, chat messages are transmitted between two users, that is, each message has a specific sender and a receiver. The writing style of a user not only varies with his personal traits, but also heavily depends on the identity of the receiver. For example, a student may send a message to another student in a style which is quite different from the style of a message he/she writes to his supervisor. This type of an ability of effectively changing one’s writing style is known as sociolinguistic awareness (Hakuta, 1991). As an interesting genre detection task, chat messages can be examined in order to find out who the receiver is. This type of documents is usually modified by editors who polish the initial drafts written by authors. Hence, most of the time, the writing style of the original author is mixed with that of an editor.

1.5.2. Linguistic features of Chat

A commonly described feature of chat is the use of abbreviations (e.g., lol “laughing out loud), nonstandard spellings, and ASCII graphics. Many researchers point to typographic and orthographic innovations as evidence of users’ attempts to compensate for the lack of vocal, facial, and gestural cues in text-only CMC .Other aspects of group chat that have been researched include choice of nickname influence of social network ties (Paolillo, 2001), community formation expression of gender identity.

1.5.2.1. Orthographic features

There are many orthographic features that used in the individual language ,defined in terms as distinctive use of the alphabet, capital letters, spelling, punctuation, and ways of expressing emphasis (italics, boldface, etc.). In chat servers (such as Algerian chat, Skype, Hotmail), English students chatters tend to use informal ("phonetic") spelling ,for instance: *do wot I did*. They combine informal spelling with letter omission (*thx 4 yr txt*) instead of (*thanks for your text*) in addition to the absence of capitalization

Ex: got your email. i'll be over later on in the day.

1.5.2.2. Lexical features

The second linguistic feature of chat is using informal vocabulary in online communication. The vocabulary of a language, defined in terms of the set of words and idioms given distinctive use within a variety .Ex: *Oh goody. ... Even goodier.*

- The use of interjections

ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

- The use of "in"-terms and abbreviations (BTW, ROTFL, PTB)

BTW have you heard an update on the continuing saga?

1.5.2.3. Grammatical features

"Telegraphic" language is the third linguistic feature that observed through online communication (chat). The many possibilities of syntax and morphology, defined in terms of such factors as the distinctive use of sentence structure, word order, and word inflections.

1.5.2.4. Discourse features

The structural organization of a text, defined in terms of such factors as coherence, relevance, paragraph structure, and the logical progression of ideas;

- The use of interaction features (e.g. questions)

*i'll be over later on in the day, **ok?***

*The main trip up seems to be that what we were thinking of is not in this call, **am I right?***

- The "stream of consciousness" writing

just one more thing, do i want to go to england to teach in a school??? do i? oh well, i'll decide that when i have to.

1.5.2.5. Paralinguistics and Graphic features

The general presentation and organization of the online written language, defined in terms of such factors as the use of spaced letters, the alternative markers for emphasis (paralinguistics), the use of capitalization, the little excessive punctuation and the use of similes.

- The use of spaced letters

*in case you're wondering why things went **R E A L S L O W** just now*

- The use of multiple letters

GRRRRRRRRRRRT

- The alternative markers for emphasis

**now* _now_*

- The use capitalization ("shouting")

- The little or "excessive" punctuation

do i want to go to england to teach in a school???

- The use of "smileys" (emoticons)

Instead of using it as a control key you have to do two keypresses :—(

Why not join the most exciting thing since Sue's hedgehog followed Tim round the building Anyone wanna buy some CPROS lottery tickets? :—) :—)

1.5.3. Communication situation in Chat

1.5.3.1. Participants

The kind of the relation: hierarchic, formal, informal or friends.

Velskovlka (2007) describes chat users as two participants who are engaged in two main forms of relations, personal and impersonal. The first ones rally as resources. The history of relationships and shared knowledge, often move implicit. The chat is characterized by the predominance of the personal relationship. The personal relation forms are easily to carry, so that, they require an electronic space (chat) which is characterized by the prevalence of collective relation type by the salience of personal relation. Participants frequently provide each other with expressions of rapport. Subjectivity rules: personal opinions and attitudes, often of an extreme kind, dominate, making it virtually impossible to maintain a calm level of discourse for very long.

1.5.3.2. Participants engagement

There is a great difference between face to face interaction and chat. In face-to-face communication, meaning is carried by blending two components: the verbal (with words) and the nonverbal (without words). Nonverbal communication adds nuance or richness of meaning that cannot be communicated by verbal elements alone. Unfortunately, nonverbal elements are generally absent in online discourse. According to Schweizer et al (2001: 2) nonverbal communication is a necessity to reveal one's inner state:

Every face to face communication reveals something about the speaker's current condition, his or her emotional and cognitive state. These communicative means seem to determine the speaker's social presence, the degree to which a person's distinct characteristics and modes of expression are perceivable in a communication situation.

Thus, meaning in real world chat messages depends not only on the words we use but also on how we express them by using a range of nonverbal cues. In a virtual world, these cues must somehow be expressed in written text messages or not at all. Feenberg (1989)

reflects on a need to overcome the obstacles of text based discussions, pointing to dilemmas for group participants where nonverbal cues are absent.

The lack of tacit cues in this written group interaction dictates compensatory practices: the only tacit sign we can transmit is our silence, a message that is both brutal and ambiguous ... the solution to this dilemma is explicit meta-communication... participants must overcome their inhibitions and demand further information ... request clarification of emotional tone and intent.

There are two types through which online communication can be achieved:

In the first type, the two participants are present and the conversational exchange is carried out between, A and B:” when a connection is made, using a normal phone connection between e-addresses, each person’s monitor screen is split into an upper half and a lower half. Everything A types is displayed in the upper half of A’s screen and the bottom half of B’s screen, and vice versa. The words are displayed as they are typed, character by character. Both people can be typing at the same time, with input coming in simultaneously with output.”(Crystal, 2001:157)

In the second type, several users are allowed to be simultaneously in touch with each other. They connect to Algerian Chat, each one devoted to a particular topic and prefixed by a hash symbol. Some are identified by country name (e.g. #gb), some by common interests (e.g. #sport, #poetry), some by age group (e.g. #41plus) or the use of a technology (e.g. #mac, #www).

1.5.4. The language of Chat groups

According to Crystal (2001:11) chat groups are “continuous discussions on a particular topic, organized in ‘rooms’ at particular Internet sites, in which computer users interested in the topic can participate.”

From a linguistic point of view, it is important to distinguish the chat groups from e - mail situation in that the latter is typically between a pair of named individuals, with message-exchanges often limited to a single transaction and relating specific pre-planned question. Chat groups, by contrast, typically involve several people, with message-exchanges often anonymous, continuing identifying, and dealing with a wide unpredictable range of issues.

Although there are several points of linguistic similarity between the two situations, the linguistic features and strategies taken up by chat groups, participants are very different from those typically employed by e-mail users.

In synchronous sitting, a user enters a chat ‘room’ and joins an ongoing conversation in real time. Named contributions are sent to a central computer address and are inserted into permanently refreshing screen along with the contributions from other participants. The online members of the group see their contributions appear on screen soon after they make them and hope for prompt response.

In asynchronous sitting, the interactions also go to the central address, but they are then stored in some format, and made available to members of the group only upon demand, so people can catch up with the discussion, or add to it, at many time-even after an

appreciable period has passed. It is not important for members to see their contribution arrive, and prompt reaction are welcomed but not assumed.

1.6. Writing Systems and Online Communication

The text-transmission protocol on the Internet is based on the ASCII character set. ASCII is an acronym for “American Standard Code for Information Interchange.” It was established in the 1960s, and contains 128 seven-bit codes. This character set is based on the Roman alphabet and the sounds of the English language. The expression “plain text,” as in email and chat, refers to a format that contains only basic ASCII characters, whether written in English, or in some other language. Problems emerged by the dominance of the ASCII character set online might lead some to speak of “typographic imperialism,” just as some authors have written in the past about linguistic imperialism. It is known from English-based research that synchronous chat and even email and discussion list postings tend to have partially speech-like features (Herring, 1996). What happens when people using formerly spoken-only varieties of languages other than English participate in typed chat online?

This question is especially pronounced in Arab countries, which are characterized by *diglossia* (Ferguson, 1972) written, literary, classical Arabic co-exist with a local spoken variety that is ordinarily not written—at least not until the advent of the Internet. In a study of instant messaging among Gulf Arabic speakers in Dubai, Palfreyman (2001) found a fascinating mixture of Arabic script, English and Romanized Arabic-- that is, *spoken Arabic written out in the Roman alphabet*. Also, they report a trend toward use of numerals to represent sounds of Arabic that cannot otherwise be represented in the Roman alphabet, a phenomenon noted earlier for Egyptian Arabic by Warschauer et al (2002).

1.6.1. Language Context

Language use in Algeria is a classic example of “diglossia,” a situation in which one dialect or language is used in formal (written) and a second dialect or language is used largely in informal (spoken). Diglossia can refer either to the use of two different languages or to the use of two different varieties or dialects of the same language (Ferguson ,1972). In Algeria, the two varieties used are both varieties of Arabic, referred to as Classical Arabic and Algerian Arabic. These two are considered the main Arabic dialects of Algeria. Classical Arabic is the literary dialect that is used in the Qu’ran; in most print publications, including books, magazines, and newspapers; and in formal spoken discourse, including prayer, television news broadcasts, and formal prepared speeches. It is used with relatively little variation throughout the Arab world; Algerians, Egyptians, Iraqis, and Saudis who know standard Arabic will be mutually comprehensible in writing or speech. Algerian Arabic also referred to as Algerian colloquial Arabic, is the spoken dialect of the Algerian people and is used in conversation.

The ASCII-ized Arabic (AA) used in the computer-mediated conversations studied here differs from traditional ways of writing Arabic in several ways. Most obviously, it uses ASCII characters rather than Arabic letters; this in turn means that AA is read from left to right (the opposite direction from normal Arabic script) and that the letters are always separate from each other, rather than joined together (in slightly varying forms) as letters in the cursive Arabic script often are. Warschauer (2002) studied the use of English and Egyptian vernacular AA in CMC and provided some initial observations about the prevalence of these two varieties in contrast to the use of MSA in non electronic written communication. They also noted in passing some orthographic features of the ASCII-ized variety, including

the use of numerals to represent certain sounds. Their main focus is on the balance between English and Arabic, rather than features of AA itself, but they point out the great volume of use of AA, compared with regular Arabic script.

1.6.2. ASCII-ization

Danet & Herring (2007:50) describe ASII-ization as

a phonological similarity to a sound in other languages than English, this sound in this language resembles a sound in English and/or another familiar language using the Roman alphabet, and there is a widely accepted and fairly consistent Roman alphabet spelling for this sound. There are many spelling conventions of particular foreign languages vary from ASII-ization.

For example, the sound /u/ in Arabic tends to be represented as <ou> in Algerian Romanized Arabic, on the basis of French spelling, and as <oo> in the UAE⁴, where English is the main foreign language. In general, ASCII-ization seems to produce competing alternate representations (Palfreyman, 2001); however, the factors that affect such variation remain to be investigated. Attitudes to this lack of consistency are often ambivalent: ASCII-ized varieties (in common with other new varieties of e-language) appear to be perceived as modern, but also as somewhat sloppy and perhaps as a threat to the language.

1.7. Effects of Computer-mediated Communication on EFL Writing

CMC covers a wide range of technologies of writing. These include various forms of synchronous communication, such as that which takes place in instant messaging or via

⁴ United Arab Emirates.

internet relay chat; asynchronous communication, such as that which takes place via e-mail. The way the language is dealt with through the media of writing and reading, in production and reception respectively, has led researchers to characterize Internet language as 'typewritten conversation': a language that is oral conceptually, but medially written.

One of the major obstacles of using computer-mediated communication is its overuse by the Algerian youth and its destructive ability over their use of English language (English students), destroying their ability to communicate effectively and efficiently using appropriate spellings and words. Students begin to use short forms in written communication replacing words like "you" with "u" or "Another Subject" with "AS". Other common variants include "s" to imply "yes" or the use of numerical digit "4" to signify "for". The overuse of the chat has become so profound that educationists have begun to worry their effects on the academic lives of students. The use of misspelled words and spellings by replacing normal words and terms in the language is a definite cause for alarm hindering the ability of students and children to communicate effectively through the appropriate written medium, when writing academic papers, essays, drafts or any other literary prose.

1.8. Conclusion

The phenomenal growth of computer mediated communication has captured both popular and scholar imagination.

This part states the claims put forward by Crystal (2001), that CMC is a genuinely new medium (Netspeak). This new medium deals with communication in CMC as being conducted in ways that are neither spoken nor written interactions (e.g. the contributions in synchronous, written multiparty conversation in a real-time chat are more persistent than the

spoken sound wave, as Crystal pointed out). This section also proposes that there are interdependent variables that influence language use: synchronicity, means of expression and situation. There are modes of CMC that are synchronous (web chat and instant messaging), and others are asynchronous (email and SMS). These are all tertiary means of expression, written and transmitted by electronic means. It also reports the various disciplines that have studied CMC in general and the chat mode of CMC that is the focus of attention in the present work in particular. Taxonomy of the factors that were taken to be important for how foreigners and English students in Algeria use language in chat was set up. These factors will be observed in the second chapter which will be devoted to the analysis of students' writings.

Chapter Two

1. Introduction

This study is an attempt to investigate the negative side of the chat overuse by younger generation and its negative effects on their writings. The ultimate purpose of this part is to analyze how written language is influenced by the cyberlanguage.

With the objective of checking the influence of the cyberlanguage on the students' writings, both a questionnaire and a test were carried out by giving twenty students sixteen questions to answer. Moreover, the test is an informal text (extracts) taken, from chatroom, and built up as text.

The sample consists of twenty students from the English department at the University of Constantine Mentouri. Our aim is to see the influence of cyberlanguage that is used in chat on their writings. This sample has been randomly chosen: 20 students from first Year master. The questionnaire consists of personal questions related to the students' sociocultural background. It is followed by a proficiency test.

This chapter deals with the description of both the questionnaire and the test .The questionnaire and the test's findings are carefully analyzed in order to know to what extent the cyberlanguage affects negatively the written form of English.

2. The choice of the sample

Among the students of the English department, a group of twenty of first year master students has been selected at random. There is a main reason that has influenced the decision of selecting such a category of students. They are mature enough and supposed to master the writing skills. Their level (First year master) indicates that they have studied the module of

written expression for eight semesters consecutively. In this way, this study will focus on first year Master students of English department, faculty of letters and languages, Mentouri University, Constantine.

3. Description of the questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed to investigate the social background of the young generation who are chat addicted. Our attempt, therefore, is to shed light on the negative side of the chat overuse.

The questionnaire was handed out to twenty students of first year master. The questionnaire took place in a vivid and friendly atmosphere with our main focus on drawing the students attention to the fact of answering objectively and honestly. The questionnaire consists of sixteen questions. Each question has a target to achieve .The objective of this set of questions, is to search for the main factors that support the presence of cyberlanguage in students' writings.

4. Administration of the questionnaire

Before dealing in details with the sixteen questions that constitute the questionnaire handed out to English students, it is essential to emphasise the fact that a certain number of students either have partly answered the questionnaire or left parts of questions unanswered

One can deduce with regard to the results which have been recorded that those students are left embarrassed simply because they did not understand the questions .Nevertheless, whenever it is the case, the real percentage of respondents in this situation will

be announced for each question separately as it comes. Thus, the tabulations of results, graphs have been operated only on the respondents who have completed the questionnaire.

1.Do you use the Internet?

The aim of the first question is to see first whether students use Internet and Chat.

	Yes	No	Total
Number of students	20	0	20
%	100%	0%	100%

Table1: The use of the internet

Table 1 indicates that all the respondents have answered “Yes”. The no-option has been completely avoided. Since all the proportion of first year master has affirmed their answers; one can conclude that all the twenty students use Internet. Hence, Internet penetrates the students’ lives.

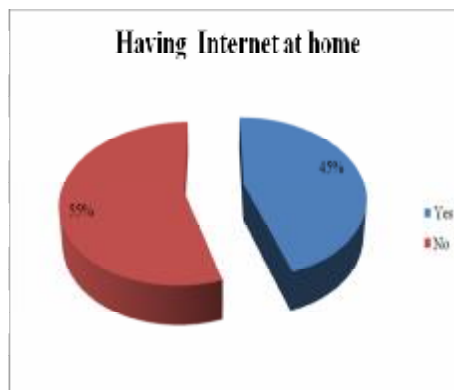
When the students’ answer to this question was positive, we required to specify if they have the internet at home or not.

2.Do you have the internet at home?

The answer of this question helps to make a relation between the frequency of using Internet and its effects on the English students’ writings.

	Yes	No	Total
Number of students	9	11	20
%	45%	55%	100%

Table 2 :Having the internet at home



Graph1 :Having Internet at home

This question lets us assume that if the students have the internet at home ,they will use it more than the others,and perhaps this will affect their writings.

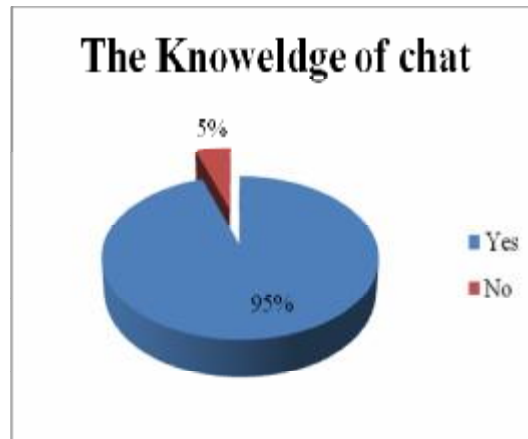
The second table demonstrates that 45% of the respondents have Internet at home while 55% of them do not. The first graph is another clear representation which shows that approximately half of the students have Internet at home.

3.Do you know what Chat is?

The aim of this question is to see first if the students are aware of Chat which is our main focus.

	Yes	No	Total
Number of students	19	1	20
%	95%	5%	100%

Table 3 :The knowledge of chat



Graph2 :The knoweldge of chat.

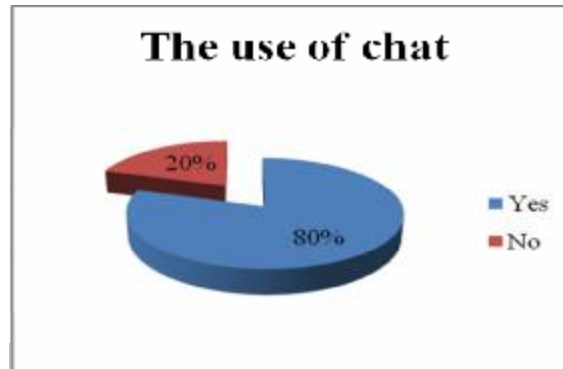
The results of the third table indicate that 95% of the respondents have ticked the yes-answer ,but only 5% have preferred the “No”option. Thus,most if not all(because 5%or one student is really a small proportion) of the respondents know what the chat is.

4.Do you use chat?

This question is intended to determine whether the students use of chat affects their writings.

	Yes	No	Total
Number of students	16	4	20
%	80%	20%	100%

Table4: The use of chat



Graph 3 : The use of chat

The results of Table 4 summarise the answers of the respondents about using chat. Thus, for the yes-option, the percentage recorded is 80% and for the no-option 20%. It is clear that the great number of the students, as graph 4 shows, use chat.

The following questions are only addressed to the respondents who have answered “Yes” in the fourth question.

5. How much do you use chat?

It is assumed that the overuse of Chat by students may lead to the over presence of the cyber language in their writings.

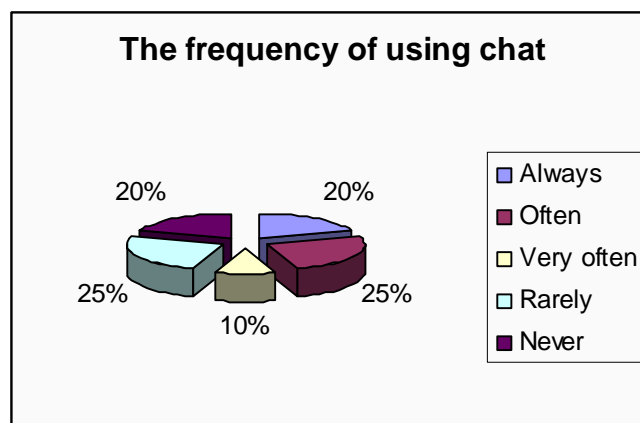
	Always	Often	Very often	Rarely	Never	Total
Number of students	4	5	2	5	4	20
%	20%	25%	10%	25%	20%	100%

Table 5: The frequency of using Chat

Table 5 summarises in terms of percentages the times that are spent in using chat. Hence, it is noticed that 20% of the respondents use chat frequently, 25% use it often, and only 10% use it very often. In contrast, 25% of the respondents use this media written communication rarely, and 20% never use it.

These results demonstrate that 55% students use chat (always, often and very often). Thus, we can conclude that students spend time in chatting.

A graphic representation is a very convenient way to visualize the results of Table 5.



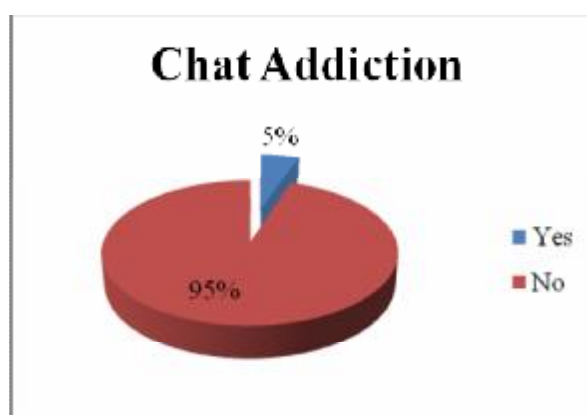
Graph4: The frequency of using Chat

6. Are you a chat addict?

The addiction of using chat means that there is a cyber language adaptation by the student. This may lead to negative influence on his writings.

	Yes	No	Total
Number of students	1	19	20
%	5%	95%	100%

Table 6: The chat addiction



Graph 5: The chat addiction

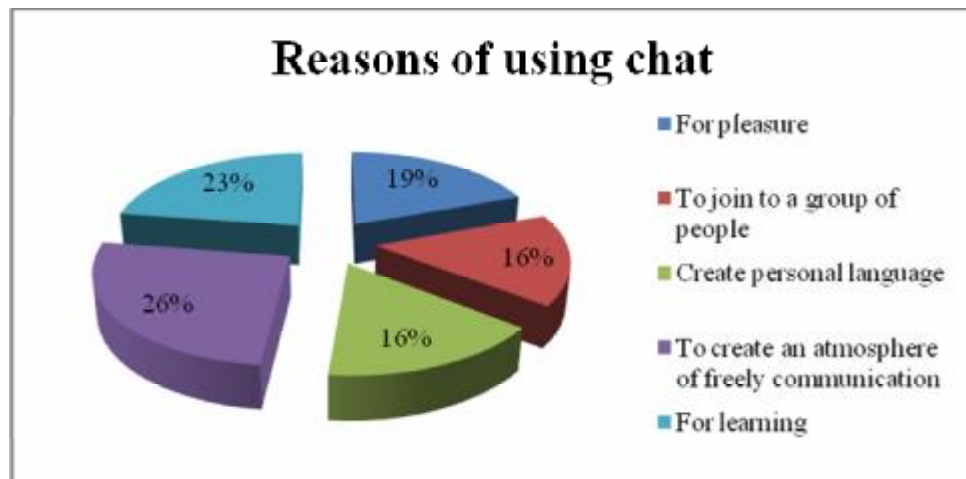
The aim of this question is to make a correlation between the students' addiction of using chat and its negative impact on their writings. Only one student considered himself as a chat addict which represents 5% of the sample while the other 15 students (95%) did not.

7. Why do you use chat?

The ultimate purpose of this question is to know the reasons behind using chat. This may help us to make a correlation between those reasons and the negative influence of chat.

	For pleasure	To join a group of people	Create personal language	To create an atmosphere of freely communication	For learning	Total
Number of students	6	5	5	8	7	20
%	19%	16%	16%	26%	23%	100%

Table 7: The reasons of using chat



Graph 6 : The reasons of using chat

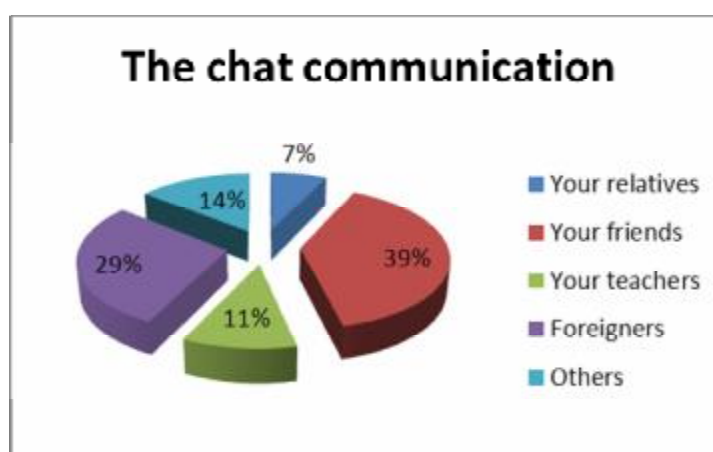
According to the answers expressed, Table7 is an illustration of the results. So, it indicates that 26% of the respondents use chat for creating an atmosphere of freely communication, 23% use it for learning, 19% for pleasure, 16% for joining to group of people and another 23% use it for creating a personal language. Hence, we conclude that a great number of students prefer to use chat for getting freely communication.

8. Who do you communicate with?

It is supposed that students who communicate with foreigners are much influenced than the others because they will use the cyberlanguage as a common understandable language.

	Your relatives	Your friends	Your teachers	Foreigners	Others	Total
Number of students	2	11	3	8	4	20
%	7%	39%	11%	29%	14%	100%

Table 8: The chat communication



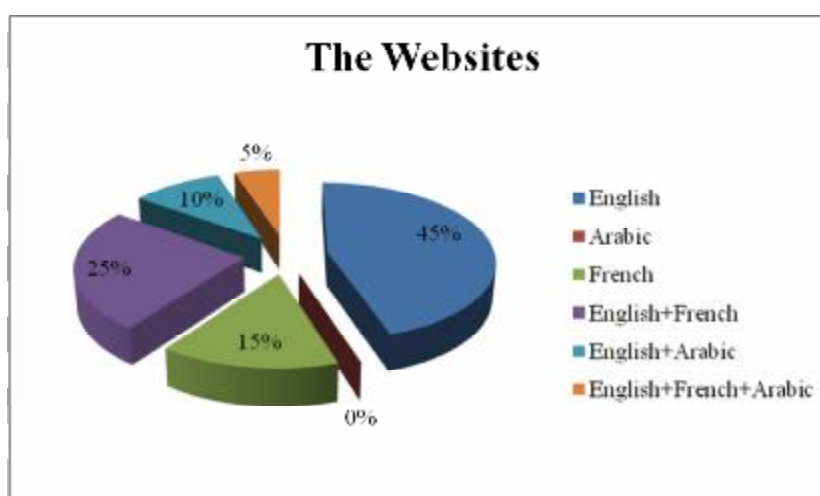
Graph 7: The chat communication

The results in Table 8 are oriented towards the use of chat for communication with friends (39%) and foreigners (29%). Communication with teachers and others have respectively received 11% for the former and 14% for the latter while communication with relatives has got only 7% of the sample.

9. Which Websites do you consult?

	English	Arabic	French	English+French	English+Arabic	English+French+Arabic	Totale
Number of students	9	0	3	5	2	1	20
%	45%	0%	15%	25%	10%	5%	100%

Table 9: The most consulted websites in chat



Graph 8 : The most consulted websites in chat

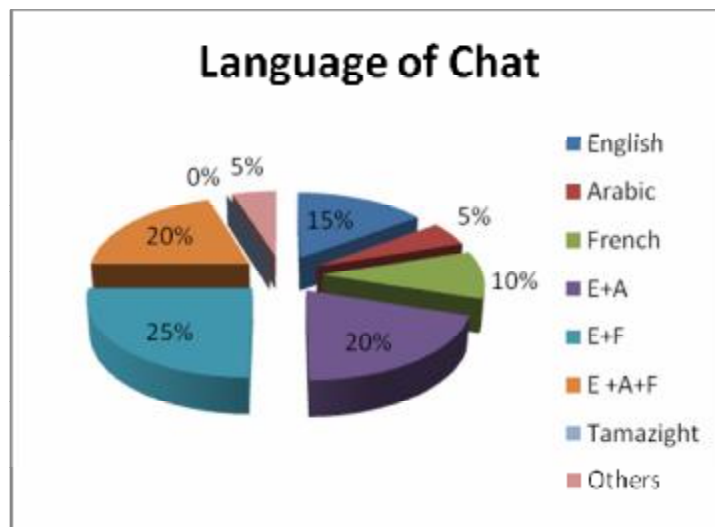
The ninth question focused on the most consulted websites by the students. Table 09 shows that 45% of the respondents consult only English websites, 25% English and French websites, 15% French websites and only 10% consult English and Arabic websites. Only one student (5%) consults the three websites and the Arabic ones (0%) are the least favoured. Hence, the great majority of students consult English websites.

10. Which language do you use?

The aim of this question is to see which language is more used by students to transfer their messages and to know if there is a relation between the use of those languages (netspeak) in chat and students writings.

	English	Arabic	French	E+A	E+F	E+A+F	Tamazight	Others	Total
Number of students	3	1	2	4	5	4	0	1	20
%	15%	5%	10%	20%	25%	20%	0%	5%	100%

Table 10: Language of chat.



Graph 9: Language of chat.

Table 10 shows the different languages used in chat. We proposed five languages but allowed the students to have a combination if they use more than one language. According to the answers expressed, there is a much more frequency of using English and French (25%), English and Arabic (20%) and the use of the three languages (English+Arabic+French) which represents 20% of the sample. Using English (15%), Arabic (5%), others (5%) and Tamazight

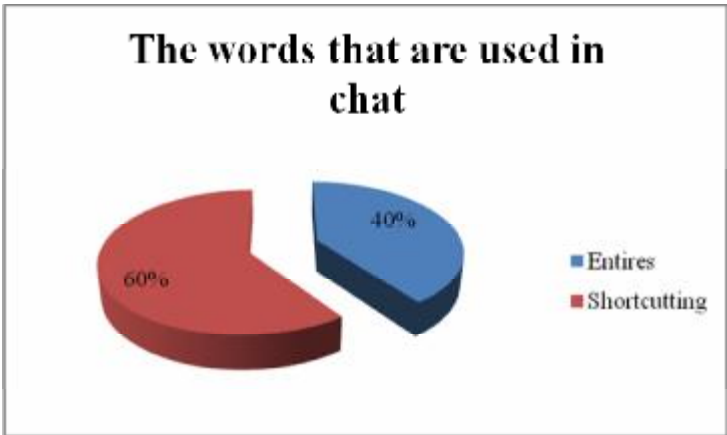
(0%) are the least favoured. So, we can conclude that students are used to like code switch languages in media written communication.

11. Which words do you use in chat?

This question is asked to check the words that are used by students in chatting and their relation to the bad writings.

	Entires	Shortcutting	Total
Number of students	8	12	20
%	40%	60%	100%

Table 11: The words that are used in chat.



Graph 10 : The words that are used in chat

The above table shows that Entires are used by 40% of the respondents while the 60% use shortcutting. The highest percentage that is recorded to shortcutting demonstrates that the majority of students prefer to use it. Once we have the percentage of the words that are used in chat, we want to know the reasons behind these choices.

12. Why do you use shortcutting?

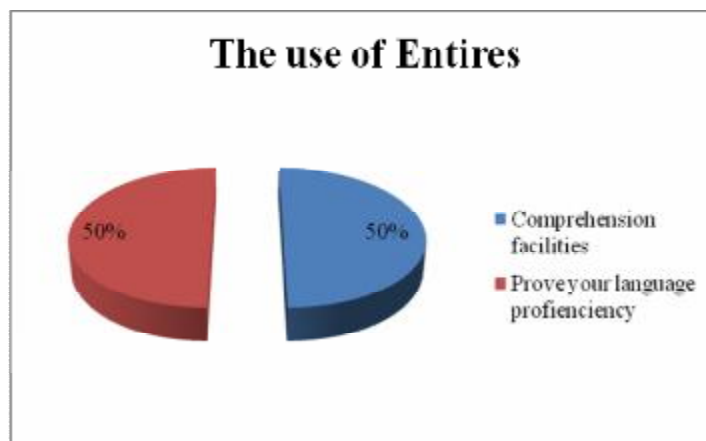
The twelfth question is addressed only to the respondents who answered “shortcutting” in the eleventh question. The use of shortcutting in chat, as the respondents have stated, is due to time and space constraints in addition to the ease use of this media written interaction (chat).

13. Why do you use Entires?

The ultimate purpose of these two questions is to know which words are more likely to be used and the basic reasons of using them. It was suggested that this had to do with the reasons for including them in the contributions, namely to save time to keep up with the speed of conversation, and thus save keystrokes.

	Comprehension facilities	Prove your language proficiency	Total
Number of students	3	3	20
%	50%	50%	100%

Table 12: The reason behind the use of Entires



Graph11 :The use of Entires

The thirteenth question is addressed only to the respondents who answered “Entires” in the eleventh question. On the basis of the results shown in Table 13, we notice that 50% of the respondents use Entire (40%) for comprehension facilities while the other 50% use it for proving their language proficiency.

14. What are the procedures that you use for shortcutting?

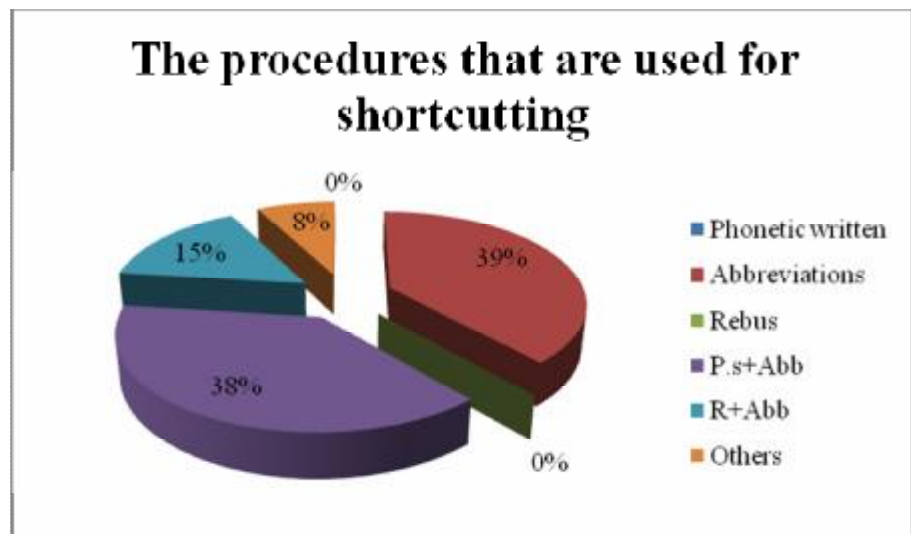
This question goal is to find out whether the students use abbreviation, phonetic written, and rebus; and their relation with students bad writings.

	Phonetic written	Abbreviations	Rebus	P.s+Abb	R+Abb	Others	Total
Number of students	0	5	0	5	2	1	20
%	0%	25%	0%	25%	10%	5%	100%

Table 13 :The procedures that are used for shortcutting

Reading the above table,it is seen that the use of phonetic written and abbreviations has got 50% , the use of rebus and abbreviation has received 10% while the last fifth percent

is recorded to the use of other procedures. Hence, we conclude that students prefer to use abbreviations and phonetic written .



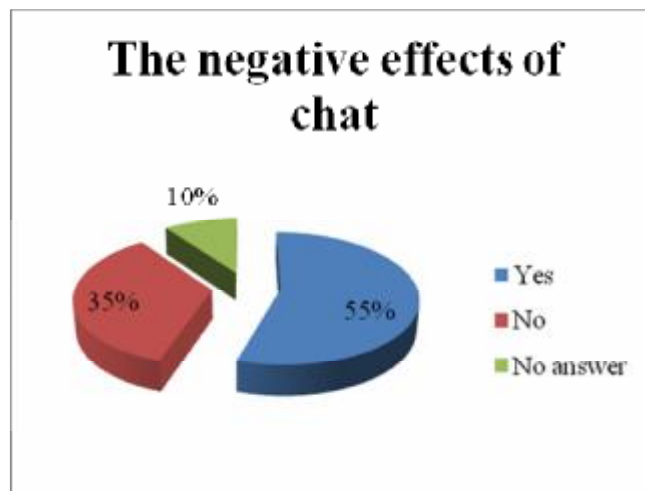
Graph 12: The procedures that are used for shortcutting

15. Do You think that the so called “ new language” affects negatively the Written form of the English language?

This question is of major importance since it will enable us to test our hypothesis.

	Yes	No	No answer	Total
Number of students	11	7	2	20
%	55%	35%	10%	100%

Table14 :The negative effects of chat



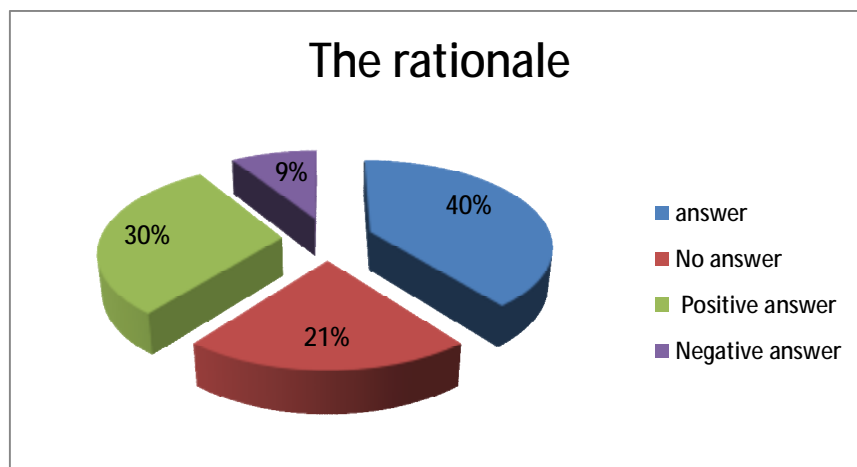
Graph 13 : The negative effects of chat

The fifteenth question is seen as a means to assess the students previous answers .In this question, the students have been asked to evaluate the negative influence of chat overuse.Table15 sums up the results recorded in the fifteenth question.Respectively,55% of the respondents have ticked to the yes-answer while 35% have choiced the no option and 10% have preferred not to answer.This evaluation is significant,the majority of first year master students think that cyberlanguage affects negatively the written form of English.

16. Why?

	answer	No answer	Positive answer	Negative answer	Total
Number of students	13	7	10	3	20
%	65%	35%	30%	9%	100%

Table 15: The rationale



Graph14: The rationale

Most of students (65%) answered this question. The rationale that is given by those who have answered positively (30%) is that the new language affects negatively the English language because of the overuse of shortcutting and language loss. In contrast, those who have answered negatively (9%) say that English language is a formal well protected language and can not be negatively affected.

5. The Test

The study is carried out in two stages: First the questionnaire is distributed and the test is dictated.

The questionnaire filling and test-taking lasted one hour on average: the questionnaire alone took 30 minutes, and the dictation 30 minutes.

Before starting the session, we introduced the aim and the objectives of the study, insisting on the following points:

1. That the papers were anonymous, and thus test-takers will not be recognized. We insisted on the fact that we wanted the students to answer as sincerely as possible.
2. That the test was not going to be marked, and they were by no means compromising their future.
3. That, however, we wanted them to work seriously, as if they were sitting for an exam.

5.1. Description of the Test

The objective of this test is to check the presence of cyberlanguage in students' writing drafts. In other words, it attempts to check whether the overuse of chat affects the students' writings. In order to get an informal situation resemble that of chat, the text chosen is an informal one taken from chatroom. It is a very simple text, it can be easily understood because the topic is general one and no difficult lexemes were present.

6. Analysis

According to the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the test, the students written productions have been negatively altered even if not to a great extent. The test is analyzed initially by counting specific instances used by students. In other words, we took the instances where sounds or words, numerals were represented in unexpected ways.

Category	Features	Example
1.Eccentric spelling(phonetic spelling) 2. Abbreviations	Unconventional, spoken-like spelling Accent stimulation Omission of vowels homophones Letter and number	Nits sittin gd r,2
3. Rebus writing	Acronym Clippings Symbol replace words	Lol func ↑ &♥/@?

Table16 : Typology of students' errors

From the above outcomes that have been recorded, we can make the following inferences:

As it is shown in Table 16, it can be argued the resources of students' instances are relatively homogeneous. The students' drafts demonstrate that there is a finite set of linguistic features which account for the overwhelming majority of text respellings and the use of shortcutting. The instances can be subdivided into three groups. Following the model developed by Werry's account of the linguistic features of Internet Relay Chat (Werry, 1996), there are three main motivations:

1. Features for economy and text entry reduction.
2. Features for giving the respelling a simulation of spoken language;
3. Features which involve a shift to multimodal visual and graphical effects and *iconicity* in which the linguistic sign is pushed into the periphery of meaning making.

The students' instances of linguistic materials that are observed from their written productions resemble those developed by Werry.

In detail each of these groups consists of a number of orthographic devices. Features for economy and text entry reduction comprise such devices as:

- Omission of vowels (<gd> for <good>)
- Letter and number homophones (<r> for <are>, <2> for <to>)
- Acronyms such as (<LOL> for <laughing out loud >)
- Clippings in which words are shortened by losing word ending (<func> for <functions>)

- Respellings by analogy with other words with more straightforward Sound-spelling correspondences (<nits> for <nights>).

Features for giving the respelling a simulation of spoken language include

- Accent simulation (<sittin> for <sitting>).

The students' attempts to reproduce spoken pronunciation in typed messages in chat are the major causes for the presence of eccentric spellings in their written productions. For prolonged pronunciation, letters are reduplicated, and words are spelled in what is called "pronunciation spelling" in English, as it is shown in Table 16, "wat" for "what." Innovative, two types of abbreviations were observed. They seemed to be taken over from the norms in international chat rooms, acronyms such as LOL for "laughing out loud" (language) and rebus writing. This is due to the familiarity of students with the cyberlanguage.

In English, acronyms are encoded by stringing together the initial letters of words in phrases; what the acronyms mean may not always be understood by users, unless they are already familiar with the language used in CMC. (Danet & Herring, 2007:174)

In general, the familiarity with chat by some students and its overuse by others play great role in influencing negatively their written productions.

7. Results and Interpretation

This chapter deals with the analysis of students' written productions in order to investigate the negative influence of media written interaction (chat) on the students' writings. It reports the methods and findings of both the questionnaire and the test. The aim of the questionnaire and the test was partly to check whether the overuse of chat affects negatively

the students' writings which have been analyzed for gathering specific linguistic materials. Another reason of inquiring into the habits of the students concerning chat use is to find out whether they used abbreviations, phonetic spellings and rebus in their writings. The analysis of students' written productions was searched for occurrences of these. Results show that the most frequent words are basic shortcutting. Results also indicated that many types of abbreviations were being used. Some of these seemed to be transferred straight from the norms of use in international chat rooms; others were based on English words in analogy with the ones taken over from international chats. It was suggested that this had to do with the reasons for overusing them in chat rooms. The result of this study was that only the very basic abbreviations were used widely. It was also suggested that the multi-functionality of saving keystrokes and time as well as expressing an in-group mastery of language norms of the particular activity, played a great part in the presence of cyberlanguage in the students' writings.

8. Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed how written language is negatively influenced by chat overuse. Several conclusions seem to emerge from the findings of this study. The most important one is that the overuse of chat seems to play a great role in affecting negatively the students' writings.

In this study, the internet, and net communication generally, have revolutionized cyberlanguage in the sense of altering traditional written language. There is not much new about cyberlanguage linguistic features such as vowel deletion, the use of homophones, phonetic spelling, accent stylizations, and the other features listed earlier.

The case of media written interaction (chat) has a bearing on what we hypothesized the negative impact of cyberlanguage. Written language in chat differs from the norms of traditional written language in that it is a form of conversation, which happens to be written down instead of spoken but what was unexpected is that the former affects negatively in one a way or another the latter one. This study demonstrates that syntactical structure often spoken-like, eccentric spelling and specific 'e-style' features, and ASCII characters, were used abundantly in the students' written productions.

Hence, over time students chatters will lose the ability to, spell, or use punctuation appropriately as a result of the time spent online.

General Conclusion

Our study has been concerned with investigating the effects of online communication on students' writings .It has allowed us to examine the negative impact of chat overuse on students' written productions. The ultimate purpose of this dissertation was to analyze how written language is used and adapted to the particular circumstances of a specific mode of computer-mediated communication and how it affected negatively the traditional language.

This research has had an attempt to clarify concepts like communication, Computer-Mediated Communication and Netspeak. The review of literature, in this paper, has helped us a great deal in the construction of the measures used in this modest research. The dissertation challenges the claims put forward by Crystal (2001) that CMC is a genuinely new medium. Even though it is acknowledged that communication in CMC might be conducted in ways that neither spoken nor written interaction can (e.g. the contributions in synchronous, written multiparty conversation in a real-time chat are more persistent than the spoken sound wave, as Crystal pointed out).

Both the questionnaire and the test have been administered to twenty students. Those students who have participated in this study are first year Master enrolled in the English department.

The results obtained in this study have allowed us to provide some conclusive observations in relation to the hypothesis and the research questions stated in the introductory part of this paper.

In this study, the students' writings have proved to be negatively altered by the students' overuse of chat.

Limitations of the present study

Due to many reasons, this study contains potential limitations that moderate the implications of the research findings. Thus, the results of this investigation must be considered within the limits of its design, sample and methods.

The limits of this particular use are concerned with a specific population in a given time, period, and context. In addition, this particular study has congealed around a population made up of a specific kind of learner, English students with a considerable base of domain knowledge in online communication (chat).

The study focused only on Chat use, specifically on its written interactions, and not on other technology like SMS and SKYPE.

The first limitation of this study is that the negative impact of online communication testing would give better results if all media written interactions were included.

The second limitation lies in the fact that both methods of research did not include students from all faculties and departments of the university.

Pedagogical Implications

Several implications can be drawn on the basis of the findings in this study .One possible implication is that we need to emphasize that both students and teachers should be

aware about the negative effects of cyberlanguage. Teachers of written expression should be strict in correcting the students' mistakes especially those caused by cyberlanguage.

Another possible implication points to the need to consider a variety of factors that support the presence of cyberlanguage.

Learners should be "language-sensitive" which means that in their communication (online communication) they should benefit from the language they know and thus try to bridge the gap between their ends and their means.

It is worth emphasizing that students should not concentrate on the meaning only (communication) in sending messages because grammar is no longer to be viewed as a central autonomous system to be taught separately from meaning, social function and discourse.

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APPENDIX

MENTOURI UNIVERSITY CONSTANTINE

FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**Communication: From formal written interaction to media written
interaction (chat)**

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear mates,

I'm carrying out a survey on the influence of chat on students' writing as part of my master degree, and would like you to fill in the following questionnaire.

Thank you

In advance!

Hezili Amina

Second year master Gr:1

Academic Year

2009-2010

1. Do you use the internet? Yes No

2. Do you have the internet at home? Yes No

3. Do you know what chat is? Yes No

4. Do you use chat? Yes No

5. How much do you use chat?

A. Always

B. Often

C. Very often

D. Rarely

E. Never

6. Are you a chat addict? Yes No

7. Why do you use chat?

A. For pleasure

B. To join a group of people

C. Create a personal language

D. Create an atmosphere of freely

communication

E. For learning

8. Who do you communicate with?

A. Your relatives

B. Your friends

C. Your teacher

D. Foreigners

E. Others

9. Are the Websites you consult:

A. English

B. French

C. Arabic

10. Which language do you use when chatting?

- A. English B. French C. Arabic
D. Tamazight E. Other

11. Which words do you use in chat?

- A. Entires B. Shortcutting

12. Why do you use shortcutting?

.....
.....

13. Why do you use entires?

- A. Comprehention facilities B. Prove your language proficiency

14. What are the procedures that you use for shortcutting?

.....
.....

15. Do you think that the so called “new language” affects negatively English language? Yes No

16. Why?

.....
.....
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Test

The nights are going sleepless. The days are going useless. So you (the student) asked GOD, "Is this love", GOD replied, "No Dear, result is near". What is the height of hope? It is sitting in the exam hall, holding the question paper in hand and telling your self "Do not worry." Exams will get postponed!" Human brain is the most outstanding object in world. It functions twenty four hours a day, three hundred sixty five days a year. It functions right from the time you are born, and stop only when you enter the examination door. Exams are there, at the paper you stare; and answer is nowhere, which makes you pull your hair. The teachers make you glare, the grades are not fair, but just like the past twenty years, you don't care. I know what it feels like while exams: Tick tock, mind block, pen stop, eyes up, time shock, jaw drop, no luck, time's up, exams suck, and still good luck. Rain of summer, snow of winter, grace of autumn, glory of spring, May beauty of every season give your heart a beautiful reason to smile. May God succeed you in every exams of your life. Good luck and all the best for your test.

ملخص

تهتم هذه الأطروحة بدراسة التفاعلات الكتابية الأنية التي تشغل زمنا واقعا على شبكة الانترنت و هذا في إطار المحادثات أو ما يعرف بالتشات معتمدة في ذلك على تحليل عينات من المنتوجات الكتابية للطلبة و ذلك لمعرفة الأوجه المختلفة لعلاقة الاستعمال المتزايد للتشات بالمنتوج الكتابي. تعتبر هذه العينات حقلا معتمدا للفهم والشرح حيث أنها تحيط باستعمال الطلبة و تكييفهم للغة موافاة لشروط التواصل عبر الحاسوب. لتكييف اللغة اثر سلبي على المنتوج الكتابي للطلبة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إفراز تواجد الخصائص التفاعلية والحوارية واللسانية والممارسات اللغوية للطلاب الجزائري مستعمل أفضية النت في المنتوجات الكتابية للطلبة مستفيدين من الأعمال التي قام بها كل من هارين و دنت في مجال الكتابات الرقمية من خلال مساءلة المنجزات الغرافية فيها واختبار اختلاف الأدوات السيميائية المتوفرة من خلال التعبير وجها لوجه ومن خلال التشات بالاضافة إلى النزاع القائم حول الوسيط اللغوي الجديد للتواصل عبر الحاسوب على انه مزيج من ألفاظ مكتوبة أو `netspeak` كما عرفها كريستال. تدق نتائج هذا البحث ناقوس الخطر بتأكيدها للتاثير السلبي للتشات.