Linguistic Symbol Intraference in Textese and E-mailese: Implications for Teaching and Learning Standard English[1]

Intraferencia de Símbolos Lingüísticos en Mensajes de Texto y Correos Electrónicos: Implicaciones para la Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje de Inglés Estándar

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Abstract

This paper examines how senders of text messages and informal e-mail redeploy linguistic symbols innovatively to communicate. Even a cursory look at an SMS text (textese) and informal e-mail (e-mailese) will show that its style is different from that of formal writing. Two thousand twenty text messages and five hundred informal e-mail were studied from June 2004 to May 2013 to establish how linguistic symbols *intrafere*; that is, how they are taken from their known and established areas of application and redeployed in text messages and e-mails, where they are not formally used. The texts and e-mails were analysed against the backdrop of formal English writing rules and items. The study, which is historical and descriptive, shows that senders creatively redeploy the extant writing signs and rules of English in new ways and environments; hence, the habit is conceptualised as the *intraference* of linguistic symbols and rules. Intraference is the redeployment of linguistic rules and features from where they have been established by usage to other areas in the same language where they did not used to apply. The paper asserts that the methods of SMS and e-mail will not ruin effective communication in English. Rather, the methods display a new interesting variety according to a "techno-linguistic" dimension. This variety refers to the creative redeployment of extant language rules and items as constrained by the dynamics of technological or mechanical devices,

which should be isolated and taught as such in Standard English, or Educated Nigerian English in this case.

Keywords: Intraference, linguistic symbols, textese, e-mailese, techno-mechanical, Educated Nigerian English.

Resumen

El artículo expone cómo los remitentes de mensajes de texto y correo electrónico informal utilizan símbolos lingüísticos de una forma innovadora para comunicarse. Incluso una mirada somera a un mensaje de texto o correo electrónico informal mostrará que su estilo es diferente al utilizado en un escrito formal. Dos mil veinte mensajes de texto y quinientos correos electrónicos informales fueron analizados desde junio de 2004 a marzo de 2013 para establecer cómo es la *intraferencia* de símbolos lingüísticos; es decir, cómo son tomados de los ámbitos de aplicación comúnmente conocidos y reasignados en los mensajes de texto y correos electrónicos donde no son formalmente usados. Los textos y mensajes de correo electrónico fueron analizados bajo el contexto de las reglas de escritura formal del idioma inglés. Este estudio histórico y descriptivo muestra que los remitentes cambian creativamente la ubicación de los signos de escritura al crear nuevas formas de uso de las reglas del inglés y sus entornos de aplicación. Por lo tanto, el hábito es concebido como la *intraferencia* de símbolos lingüísticos y reglas. Intraferencia es la redistribución de las reglas lingüísticas y las características que han sido establecidos por su uso en otros ámbitos del mismo lenguaje donde no se solían aplicar. El artículo afirma que los métodos de mensajes de texto y correo electrónico no afectan la efectiva comunicación en inglés. Por el contrario, los métodos de visualización son una nueva e interesante manera de comunicación de acuerdo con la dimensión tecnolingüística. Esta variedad de símbolos hace referencia a la distribución creativa de las normas lingüísticas existentes por la dinámica limitada de los dispositivos mecánicos o tecnológicos, los cuales deben ser aislados y enseñados como tales en el inglés estándar o para este caso, en el inglés nigeriano formal.

Palabras clave: Intraferencia, símbolos lingüísticos, mensajes de texto, correos electrónicos, tecnomecánico, inglés nigeriano formal.

Resumo

O artigo expõe como os remetentes de mensagens de texto e correio eletrônico informal utilizam símbolos linguísticos de uma forma inovadora para comunicar-se. Inclusive vendo por cima uma mensagem de texto ou correio eletrônico informal, mostrará que seu estilo é diferente ao utilizado em um escrito formal. Duas mil e vinte mensagens de texto e quinhentos correios eletrônicos informais foram analisados desde junho de 2004 a março de 2013 para estabelecer como é a *intraferência* de símbolos linguísticos; melhor dito, como são tomados dos âmbitos de aplicação mais conhecidos e redesignados nas mensagens de texto e correios eletrônicos onde não são formalmente

125

usados. Os textos e mensagens de correio eletrônico foram analisados sob o contexto das regras de escritura formal do idioma inglês. Este estudo histórico e descritivo mostra que os remetentes mudam criativamente a localização dos signos de escritura, ao criar novas formas de uso das regras do inglês e seus entornos de aplicação. Portanto, o hábito é concebido como a *intraferência* de símbolos linguísticos y regras. Intraferência é a redistribuição das regras linguísticas e as características que foram estabelecidas pelo seu uso em outros âmbitos da mesmo linguagem onde não se tinha o hábito aplicar. O artigo afirma que os métodos de mensagens de texto e correio eletrônico não afetam a efetiva comunicação em inglês. Ao contrário, os métodos de visualização são uma nova e interessante maneira de comunicação, de acordo com a dimensão técnico-linguística. Esta variedade de símbolos faz referência à distribuição criativa das normas linguísticas existentes pela dinâmica limitada dos dispositivos mecânicos ou tecnológicos, os quais devem ser isolados e ensinados como tal em inglês padrão, ou para este caso, em inglês nigeriano formal.

Palavras chave: Intraferência, símbolos linguísticos, mensagens de texto, correios eletrônicos, técnico-mecânico, inglês nigeriano formal

Introduction

The computer, along with the Internet and GSM (Global System for Mobile Communication) with cell phones, facilitate the sharing of SMS and e-mail. SMS (Short Message Service) is a menu that enables cell phone users to send and receive short "letters" of 160 words per message. The first SMS was sent on 3rd December 1992 by Neil Papworth, who used a personal computer powered by *Vodafone* to send a "Merry Christmas" text message to Richard Jarvis' orbited 901 hand phone (//http//cellphone.about.com//originofsms). GSM became operational in Nigeria in August 2001. The computer and Internet had come about a decade earlier in the 1990s.

Textese and *e-mailese,* which invoke the memory of *journalese*, *legalese*, *officialese*, etc., denote SMS and e-mail with their characteristic linguistic features, which are occasioned by the writer, techno-linguistic and mechanical factors. Educated Nigerian writers of SMS and e-mail face the limitations of time and space, lack of computer know-how, the pressure of striving to express so much within so small a space and the high cost of sending e-mail and SMS. In the beginning in 2001, thirty naira, also written as N30, naira being Nigeria's currency, were charged for an SMS, which has now been reduced to four naira (N4). To send an e-mail, one had to visit a cyber café and buy a time-ticket for thirty minutes or an hour, usually a hundred naira or more. Consequently, writers adopted informal and creative writing methods to

126

overcome these constraints. Users violate formal orthography, truncate and reorganise the features of the language in order to communicate as briefly as possibly. Interestingly, in most cases, meaning is conveyed despite the strange redeployment of familiar orthographic features. How should we then view the strange reordering and coinages to which the language is subjected? This paper answers this question by conceptualising the habit *as the intraference of linguistic symbols and rules.*

In intraference of linguistic symbols, linguistic codes, rules and items are transferred from areas in which they acceptably operate to areas where they do not usually apply, especially in *textese* and *e-mailese*. Intraference at this level is cyclical: from formal writing, rules and signs are "hijacked," that is, seized and used in the new "mechanical space" in innovative ways. The innovative style and formations in turn *intrafere* in, or are poured back to the formal system of writing, as shown in these diagrams:
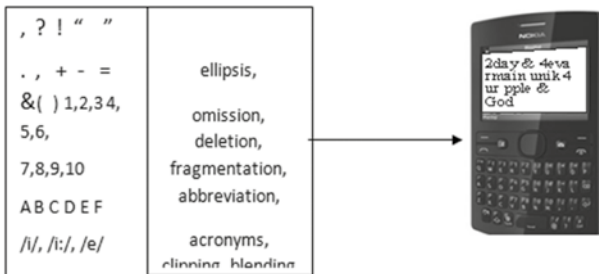

Figure 1. Orthographic symbols and writing rules

Figure 2. A letter with the Intraference of SMS style

127

These features of text messages and their transfer to formal writing in recent times have caused debates and necessitated many studies globally. This study adds to the corpus of studies in the area. It examines textese and e-mailese against the backdrop of the concept of linguistic symbol intraference.

Literature Review

Ekundayo (2006, 2013) coined intraference as a more economical term for "systematic intralingual errors" or "intralingual interference" (Richards & Sampson, 1984, p.13) and "the overgeneralisation of linguistic materials and semantic features" (Selinker, 1984, p.37). Ekundayo (2006) presents intraference as the opposite of interference and says that it is the transfer of second language rules, items and system from sections where they acceptably operate in the language to sections of the language where they have hitherto not been operating. "In intraference, the (second) language performer consciously and/or unconsciously engages in self-correction and creativity by using the rules of the language and redeploying grammatical, lexico-semantic, segmental, supra-segmental features and orthographic rules" (Ekundayo, 2013, pp. 33). Ekundayo (2013) asserts that intraference constitutes the extenuating background in which second language learners produce some deviations, variations and creative fabrications, which distinguish ESL. He categorises intraference into the phonological, graphological, morphemic, (morpho-)syntactic and semantic types and sub-types. The graphological type is divided into formal writing intraference and intraference of orthographic symbols and rules in textese and e-mailese.

Intraference of linguistic symbols denotes the redeployment of linguistic rules and tools in SMS and e-mail. Examples are elicited from Educated Nigerian English (ENE). However, the propositions and discussion here may apply as well to the links and dissimilarities between textese and other Standard (inter)national varieties of English.

The Concept of Nigerian English (NigE)

128

Nigerian English denotes the variety/varieties that literate and educated Nigerians use; often juxtaposed with Standard British English (SBE) and Standard American English (SAE). Region, formal education and (psycho-)sociolinguistic parameters are often used to classify NigE varieties (Jowitt, 2008; Surakat, 2010). In terms of regions, there are Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Izon, Efik, Edo, Urhobo, etc NigE varieties.

Although all the regional varieties have many features in common, phonological peculiarities differentiate regional varieties mainly.

Several classifications have been made with formal education and linguistic features. Prominent among them are Brosnahan's (1958), Banjo's (1970, 1996) and Odumuh's (1980) varieties I, II, III and IV. Banjo's model, which is the most popular, uses grammatical features and educational levels. Accordingly, *Variety I*, the lowest, reflects vulgar errors of grammar and broken structures, associated with primary school pupils and those with little formal education. *Variety II*, an improvement on *Variety I*, is associated with secondary school students and school certificate holders. Highly educated Nigerians: graduates, teachers, lecturers, professors, writers, broadcasters, etc., use *Variety III*. Banjo proposes this as the model for *Standard Nigerian English* (SNE) or *Educated Nigerian English* (ENE). Lastly, Banjo's *Variety IV* is like the native English standard associated with a few Nigerians who were born and brought up in native English-speaking countries or have a parent of English origin and consequently acquired English as their first language. However, most Nigerians regard this fourth variety as too foreign for their liking or use (Banjo, 1996).

Using sociolinguistics, three levels or –lects: basilect, mesolect and acrolecthave been identified. The mesolect is the lowest variety analogous to Banjo's *Variety I*. The basilect is the most popular and widely used in Nigeria by junior civil servants, secondary school students and youths with some but not extensive education. The acrolect is used by a few very highly educated Nigerians. It has the greatest prestige and international intelligibility. Banjo's *Variety III*, which is also the acrolect on the sociolinguistic pyramid, is often recommended or preferred as the Nigerian standard. Nevertheless, there are overlaps and no "firm dividing lines" (Banjo, 1996, p.79). These typologies are reminiscent of Bernstein's (1971) concepts of restricted and elaborated codes. Manifestations of restricted codes will be found in the lower varieties of Banjo's classification and the basilect, which has limited vocabulary and choices of linguistic features, while the elaborated codes will be found in the acrolect and Banjo's varieties three and four of NigE, which has expanded speech patterns and more choices of language features.

129

This paper concentrates on the cases of the intraference of linguistic symbols in text messages and informal e-mail by educated Nigerians. Linguistic symbols are signs used to represent sounds, rules and meanings in language. Unlike icons and indexes, symbols are conventional and socio-cultural marks handed down from generation

to generation, which is why they differ from place to place and culture to culture. Language is symbolic because language users and writers employ symbols to communicate and store information.

Writers of text messages and informal e-mail draw heavily from the plethora of rules and symbols in English and combine them creatively in hitherto "alien" contexts, thereby "cloning" strange language structures that have drawn the attention of linguists and communicators worldwide. However, the variety has polarised linguists and communicators into two camps: those who think textese and e-mailese are ruining formal communication and those who believe that they are welcome developments. Cole (2009) believes that text messaging has become an obsession, ruining e-mail and formal communication. Humphreys (2007) argues that the "sloppy," "annoying," and "clumsy" habit from textese will lead to "improper grammar and wrong use of punctuation marks"(p.3).Contrarily, Curtis (2009) says that text messaging, e-mail, myspace/facebook and blogs "can be seen as simply an evolution of communication... Many people now keep in touch via computer and cell phone screen. But the fact is, people are still keeping in touch, the mode in which they do so has just changed a bit" (p.2).

Belani (2009, 2013) has put the debate at the court of public opinion in the Internet. The question to which respondents are to vote "NO" or "YES" is whether text message style is ruining communication. Of the 2703 votes cast so far, 1475(55%) respondents have said "YES" while 1228 (45%) have said "NO." It is believed and recommended in this paper that examining how and why textese redeploy orthographic features from formal writing and how text message style in turn invades formal writing will be more rewarding than a debate on whether it is ruining communication or not. After all, the history of communication from its most primitive state/stage to the twenty-first century presents us with a panorama of innovations, displacements and replacements. In this light, Crystal's (2008) studies are the most outstanding in this area. He submits that texting may turn out to be of help to literacy and writing rather than hinder them.

Awonusi (2004) examined Nigerian examples of SMS in relation to informal English and diglossia in a second language situation. A similar study submits that "Nigerian users of the English language are eclectic, vibrant users who possess a uniquely expressive technique" (Uhunmwangho, 2007, pp.26-36). Uhunmwangho's and Awonusi's studies do not show how SMS writers redeploy linguistic rules and items to communicate effectively and how the style is invading formal writing. Eka (2007), however, shows that text messages have a spelling and syntactic system, which is a "departure from known patterns" (p.86).

Eka concludes that SMS styles are bizarre, ridiculous and damaging to the established canons of writing. Although there are sometimes ridiculous features in SMS, this paper shows that writers of SMS draw from the dynamics of the language to create seemingly new formations. The paper further looks at how the styles of text messaging are being extended to formal writing. Even though the trend is worldwide, some peculiar Nigerian features characterise the examples studied.

Educated Nigerian writers of SMS and e-mail invent new spelling of words, clip and blend figures, symbols and sounds, acronymise and deploy peculiar vocabulary and grammatical structures to communicate with text messages and e-mail. These methods are spreading fast into very formal writing and so have the potential of changing and augmenting ENE orthography in future, not necessarily ruining it.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the qualitative research approach, which is non-statistical and most suitable for exploratory, historical and linguistic studies concerned with establishing causal processes and intentional behaviours by self-directing and knowledgeable participants. It is predicated on the assumption that writers of *textese* and informal *e-mailese* redeploy the dynamics of the language in unprecedented ways that will influence and augment communication in Standard English, not necessarily destroy it. The paper sets out to use the concept of intraference to answer the following questions: 1) Why do text message writers compose texts in the way they do? 2) How do they compose text messages? 3) How will *e-mailese* and *textese* affect formal writing? and 4) How should we view and treat them in relation to formal writing, teaching and learning Standard English?

Context and Participants

The study was conducted in Nigeria from April 2004 to May 2013. Subjects studied were educated Nigerians of different age brackets from all parts of the country. Educated Nigerians in this context are those in the continuum of a National Diploma (ND) to Ph.D/Professor. Two thousand twenty text messages sent and received by educated Nigerians were studied from June 2004 to May 2013, and five hundred e-mail were read and analysed in the same period. However, few specimens are presented here because of space constraint and for the fact that the methods are essentially the same in all the specimens studied.

131

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data for the study were extracted from the computer (Internet), cell phones and printed/published materials. The researcher depended largely on the text messages and e-mail sent to him or supplied, on request, by friends, students and relations during the research.

Data Analysis

The peculiar features of SMS and e-mail were identified and compared with those of standard writing. The method of analysis is textual, which involves the identification, analysis and explication of linguistic and literary features of a text. Specifically, a description and explanation of the linguistic features of SMS and e-mail specimens were undertaken. The specimens were grouped into either e-mail or text message and numbered consecutively. The analysis is limited to only informal e-mail because the methods and features examined manifest more in informal e-mail. Other features of textese and e-mailese like the use of icons, indexes, logograms, pictograms and word play are not examined because they fall within the purview of semiotics, which is not the focus of this paper. Specimens used are compared with standard written variants and the linguistic methods deemed to be interfering in the texts are then underscored.

Results

How Nigerians Invent New Spelling of Words in SMS and E-mail

Specimen 1 below shows some of the rules and items writers deploy to compose SMS:

Specimen 1. A text .message

Gud evnin my dia…. Evryday I rember u & al u tld me b4 I left… if I'd any nolej dat dis was wat I wud xperiens,I swe I wudnt hav left….. cud u bliv dat they ar forcng me in2 prost? They tuk me 2 a hotel wher Nig-girls ar dancing naked & askd me 2 join dem. I'v s-capd frm Athens 2 tesloniki… (E-mail from obehi79@hotmail.com to ekuns20@yahoo.com, 22 June 2002).

The text message in full standard form

Good evening, my dear… Every day, I remember you and all that you told me before I left… if I had any knowledge that this was what I would experience, I swear that I would not have left … could you believe that they are forcing me into prostitution? They took me to a hotel where

Nigeria girls are dancing naked and asked me to join them. I've escaped from Athens to Thessaloniki.

The sender redeployed various forms of abbreviation and deletion of redundant features to abridge it. For example, *remember* is spelt as "rember;" the "em" in the middle is deleted. Knowledge is written as "nolej," *experienceas* "xperiens," *prostitution* as "prost," *evening* becomes "evnin," etc.

Specimen 2. An e-mail

C'plmnts of d seasn 2 u my luv. Hw r u & evry1?@ hom? Swthrt, plz, 4get dat ug. dev. Wen r u comin 2 Cal? Donald Duke our Gov is turning C'River round 4 d beta. Com 2 Tinapa & C things 4 ursef. (E-mail from clara_net@yahoo.com to ekuns20@yahoo.com, 6 May, 2007).

Full standard written form

Compliments of the season to you my love. How are you and everyone at home? Sweet heart, please, forget that ugly development. When are you coming to Calabar? Donald Duke our Governor is turning Cross-River State round for the better. Come to Tinapa and see things for yourself.

Through the same strategies, the full text has been reduced to half or less. The next sub-section discusses how phonemes, letters and figures *intrafere* in SMS and e-mail.

Intraference of Symbols, Phonemes, Figures and Letters

Below is specimen three, a blend of arithmetic figures and letters.

Specimen 3. Arithmetic figures and letters

Wil u b in d ofis 2moro morn? Rmain gr8 n luvly. 10x 4 ur 1-daful asst. d oda day! Gu9t… (SMS from 08038291465 to 08059246395, 16 October, 2006).

"U," a letter and the sound /u/ stand for the word *you*, "d" stands for "the," "b" for "be," "2" combines with "moro" (a clip from *tomorrow*) to make "2moro." "Gr8" stands for *great*, a clip of the "gr-"of *great*, to blend with the figure "8" and its sound /eit/, hence "gr8." In "10x 4 ur 1-derful asst.," figure 10 and its sound (/ten/) combines with letter "x" pronounced /eks/. So, 10/ten/ +x /ks/ = /tenks/. Formally, "10x" would be pronounced as /ten eks/, as it is still pronounced in statistics and mathematics, but with assimilation and elision in textese, it is /tenks/, which is the phonological representation of *thanks*. The figure "4" stands for *for* and figure 1 (pronounced) /w^n/ replaces the first syllable in "won-der-ful;" hence we have "1-daful" /w^ndafl/. "Assist." is an abbreviation of *assistance*. The figure "9" represents the sound

133

and spelling /nai/ or "nigh." Then letter "t" is added to make it "9t" (*night*), hence we have "gu9t," which is *good night*. The letter "d" is elided as in elision and assimilation.

The Deployment of Acronymisation and Coinages

Some examples are given below:

"Wil cul," or "I'l cul" *for I will see/call you later*, "ILU" for I *love you*, "H r u?" for *How are you?* "Msg" for *message*, "Uc?" f*or you see/do you see?* "Ammu" for *I'm miss you/am missing you*, "Takia" for *you take care/take care of yourself.* The letter "a" is often used for "er" and "ar," as in "6ta" for *sister*, "4da" for *further*, "fada" for *farther* or *father*, "2geda" for *together*, "mata" for *matter*, "wateva" for *whatever*, "broad" for *brother*; "10q" for *thank you*, "9ice" for *nice*, "9ja" for *Nigeria*, "Remba/rember" for *remember*, "U'v" for *you have*, "iJN" for In *Jesus name*, "hnm" for *happy new month*, "LLNP" *for long life and prosperity*, "HML" for *happy married life*, "OMG" for *Oh my God!* "Uwc" for *you are welcome*, "coz" for *cousin*, or *because*, "G.mom/G. ma" for *grandmother/mom*, "b-day" for *birthday*, "som1" for *someone*, "Y" for *why*, "yL" for *while*, "y-d" for *wide*, "2L" for *tool*, "4L" for *fall*, "4m" for *form*, etc.

The Grammar and Orthography of Textese and Informal E-mailese

SMS and informal e-mail parades a different grammar from other registers and fields. Specimen 4 below is an example.

Hi wazup u gt my txt so does d ntwrk invstmnt interest u? … U ment 2 ask if its late 4 me 2 cm rite? Wud'v com bt 'm tired&its wet was in d bathrm wen u cald. 'v bn washin since mrni. dn't u c d txt I snt u? (Text message from 08038293970 to 08037243494, 20 May 2010).

Full Form:

How are you? What's up? Did you get my text? So, does the network investment interest you? You meant to ask if it's late for me to come, right? I would have come, but I'm tired and it is wet. I was in the bathroom when you called. I have been washing since morning. Didn't you see the text I sent you?

Here, "ntwrk" is for *network*, "its" for *it's* or *it is*, "dn't" for *didn't* "bathrm" for *bathroom*, in addition to the non-use of relevant punctuation marks. The next specimen shows the fragmented nature of SMS and informal e-mail. Areas of fragmentation are underlined:

134

Specimen 5.A text message

Sorry! Cudnt pik ur cal.Was in d bathrm U hom now? On my way. wt my frend Edith Mind? We talk dat mata wen I com. Mind I bring u beans & dodo ur favrit? Catch ya! (Message from 08036661245 to o8037243494, 2nd May, 2008).

There are all together eight sentences fragmented with periphery elements and punctuation marks deleted here. The first sentence in full is "I *am* sorry that I couldn't pick your call."The subject and the verb of the main clause, *I am*, the conjunction *that*, the *I* of the subordinate clause are all dropped to "…sorry, cudn't pik ur call." There is no full stop before the next sentence begins, and the next sentence begins with a small letter. Sentence two in full is, *I was in the bathroom*, but the "I" is dropped by the rule of ellipses. It is to be inferred or supplied by the reader. Sentence three is, *I am on my way to your place*. Again, the subject, the verb and the adverbial of place are dropped in preference for the prepositional phrase that carries the essential message, "on my way." The sender takes for granted that the receiver already knows who is sending the message. Sentence four is *Are you at home now?* "R" stands for *are*, "U" for *you* and "hom" for *home*. The fifth sentence is *I am coming with my friend Edith*, and the sixth is *Do you mind me coming with my friend Edith?* All that has been reduced to a single word-question "mind?" Sentence seven is W*e will talk about that matter when I come*, and eight is *Do you mind if I bring you beans and dodo, your favourite food?* "Catch ya" is a colloquial phrase for *I will see you* or *I will catch you later.*

The core elements of a sentence are the subject and the verb, which can be deleted sometimes (Crystal, 2009; Quirk & Greenbaum, 1989). SMS and e-mail writers apply this grammatical possibility to concentrate on the elements that convey the intended meaning more economically. The resultant text at times becomes poetic to the extent that it uses only necessary structures to convey maximum meanings. The text below illustrates this method:

Specimen 6

A luvly msg/2 a luvly frend/4rm a luvly persn/4 a luvly reason/at a luvly time/in a luvly mood/2 wish u a luvly 9t/&2 make u lie/in paradise/ on d pilo of heavn/under d protectn of angels ((Text message from 07038131053 to 08037243494, 25th December, 2007).

135

In this text, the writer lumped parallel structures of eleven prepositional phrases together in one long statement without punctuation marks, which makes the text poetic and musical. These methods of writing are being extended to formal writing.

Intraference of SMS and E-mail/Internet Chat Styles in Formal Writing

SMS features are "trespassing" on the domain of formal writing in ENE and other Standard Englishes. In August 2002 and on the 4th of March, 2003, the BBC reported that British examiners warned over exams culture, asking whether SMS text was mightier than the word. Similarly, in an on-going study by Pew Internet and American Life Project, "it was found that 64% of American teens have used chat and "textcuts" or emoticons in their school assignments" (Dog, 2009, p.1). Now, one often sees textcuts in students' examination scripts and homework in ENE (Chiluwa, 2007; Falake & Ibrahim, 2011). Emoticons or textcuts are intrafering and becoming established in journalese in ENE. The print media journalists are faced with the same challenges of time, cost, space and deadline. So, they employ similar strategies to overcome these constraints. Some bold-faced examples are given below:

"C'tee …to replace foreign workers with Nigerians" (Vanguard 13 April, 2009, p.23). **"C'tee"**, a word formed through syncope stands for *Committee*.

"Nollywood **gals** date producers" (Erhariefe, 2007, p.17). Here, *girls* is spelt as "gals."

"Thru…with Nigerian Idols" (Ifebi, 2012, p.28). Through is back-clipped to have *thru*.

"I left banking **bcos** I wasn't…" (Aluko, 2012, p.28).Because is spelt as "bcos."

¬"The **6fter** dark-skinned beauty…" (Nwanchuku & Dim, 2009, p.42). Here, *six footer* is reduced to "6fter"through the yoking of a figure and the deletion of letters.

Nigerian journalists now write *National Assembly, Abuja* as **NASS**, *Niger Delta* as **N'Delta**, *South East* as **S'East**, etc., "Don't Create New States, Ikuforiji Tells NASS." (Okoeki, 2012, p.7). Although news headlines and other newspaper write-ups always strive to save space and cost, SMS style has further reinforced this habit.

Textcuts and informal e-mail style are not limited to journalese. They are invading written formal ENE. Even the banking sector, well known for its attention to details and accurate documentation, uses textcuts. "NGN" is often used to denote *Nigerian Naira*, "AMD" for *American Dollars*, "Int'l" for *International*, "DL-Ext.No" for *Direct Line Extension Telephone Number,* "cwbyself" for *check withdrawn by self'* (United Bank of Africa, 2009 and Oceanic Bank, 2010 text message and e-mail).The last example below is an advert on a computer-

print pasted on the notice boards for the University of Benin students and staff:

> *Hav u wronged **som1& u** don't know how **2** say **u're** sorry? Do u have secret feelings **4some1& u** can't **xpress** ur feelings **2 d** person? Do u want **2** get **some1** a gift **& u're** confused about what gift to buy? Are **u** planning celebrating **ur** birthday & **u** don't know what 2 celebrate with? Why not solve ur problems with a cake? CAKES can be used **2 xpress** a lot. Apologize with a CAKE. **Xpress ur** feelings with a CAKE. Celebrate life with a CAKE. Visit us today @ Block **B RM 4**, Iyobosa Hostel, Ekosodin. Tel: 08062535793, 08027720428.*

Before the advent of GSM and e-mail, this advert would not have been written in this form with all the examples bold-faced.

Conclusions

The paper has so far examined *textese* and informal *e-mailese* to show a) their peculiar linguistic features, b) how educated Nigerian writers redeploy English rules and items to create intriguing new words and phrases, and c) the implications of the features studied for teaching and learning Standard English. The linguistic phenomenon has been conceptualised as *the intraference of linguistic symbols*. Senders redeployed clipping, syncope, apocope and the deletion of redundant letters and phonemes to abridge a text message, as in Specimens 1 and 2. The Nigerian writers studied often put the initial letters of words together to form new words which carry with them the concepts and meanings of all the words from which they have been formed; e.g. "ammu" *for I'm missing you, "h r u?" for how are you?* and other examples in Specimen 4.

Educated Nigerian writers of text messages redeploy letters, Arabic numerals, Alphanumeric, (icons, although not treated here) colloquial expressions and abbreviations; insert capital and small letters indiscriminately, avoid punctuation marks, fragment sentences, cover up necessary spaces between words, delete articles and peripheral sentence elements, as in Specimen 3, 4, 5 and 6. Sometimes, they yoke phonemes, letters, sounds and figures creatively to coin a new word, as in "gu9t" for *good night*, "10q" *for thank you, "*1-daful" *for wonderful,* etc. Since these are internal dynamics of the language that are transferred from one section of the language to another, they are best presented as the intraference of linguistic symbols and rules.

137

Now, these methods of writing are invading formal writing and arrangement of orthographic features. It is affirmed here that the style

and features of *textese* and *e-mailese* are more advantageous than disadvantageous to written communication for several reasons. First, it helps to distinguish a new field of writing having its peculiar methods. Second, the style and features of these modes show us how, when and where the language and its rules can be used more economically. For example, SMS and e-mail style is very useful in minute writing, note-taking and shorter spelling forms under deadline, pressure and haste. Hence textcuts are invading informal writing where some forms of abbreviations and contractions are allowed. Third, the style proves that language and its symbols are amenable to unprecedented combination and reorganisation for the purpose of communication now and in the future.

Furthermore, *textese* and *e-mailese* underscore the fact that language is primarily spoken and secondarily written. There is no one-to-one correspondence between spoken and written word. To the extent of its arbitrariness and inconsistence, the written medium and its rules are vulnerable to mutations and manipulations. There is no difference, for example, in the pronunciation of these words and figures: "four," "fore," "for," "4;" or "two," "too," "to" and "2;" "won," "one" and "1." Textese and informal e-mailese simply use the Figures 4, 2 and 1 to represent them respectively. So, the modes emphasise sounds and meanings, not the artificialities of writing. In addition, textese and e-mailese show the uselessness of some institutionalised questionable spellings. We can, for instance, spell *tomorrow* as "tomoro," Josephine as "Josfin,"*assessment* as "asesment," etc and still convey their meanings. So, does this phenomenon, as Dog (2009) asks, "signal the end of the English language as we know it? Probably not, IMO. I mean In My Opinion. After all, language changes… and why should language not change?" (p.2).

Indeed, language and communication vary from time to time to reflect advancement in science, education and technology. The GSM and the Internet revolutions are quintessential examples now in vogue. In the future, the scenario will surely change because the womb of time and the industrious wakefulness of scientists are pregnant with more inventions and methods. The position taken in this paper, therefore, is that rather than ruin real communication, these linguistic strategies are expanding the frontiers of written communication. In Nigeria, for instance, SMS and e-mail are teaching educated Nigerians how to be brief and even write poetically. Yule (2003) advises that we should not feel that the language is being debased. Instead, "we might prefer to view the constant evolution of new terms and new uses as a reassuring sign of vitality and creativeness in the way a language is shaped by the needs of its users" (p. 64).

So, textese and e-mailese should be accepted as a new variety according to techno-linguistic dimension and its useful features may be applied in other areas of the language. When linguists, particularly varietologists and language teachers, study language varieties like *journalese, officialese, medicalese, legalese*, etc, *textese* and *e-mailese* should also come to mind. It should be taught as a variety different from formal writing, a variety that displays an interesting panorama of linguistic signs: indexes, icons and symbols combined in intriguing ways. All considered, "communication is all about understanding. Sometimes it requires language to be written in its fullest most comprehensive forms, at other times a few missing vowels, or figures standing in for words, will do just as well. It is still a real form of communication" (Belani, 2009, p.1).

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139

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141