THE INFLUENCE OF INSTANT MESSAGES ON ENGLISH WORD FORMATION AND CHANGES IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

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Abstract: The latest technological innovations have revolutionized traditional social interactions, facilitated information exchange between individuals and enabled friends, relatives, classmates etc. to connect virtually. Communication through instant-messages and the language teenagers use was a starting point of interest of this paper. Social media allows users to procure information from various sources, to share ideas, photos, videos and experiences, as well as to extend their connections. This new way of communication, empowers people to collaborate and share information, but on the other hand it weakens physical encounters and conversations in person. Social media has changed the whole process of communication, the availability of information needed, of lowering the time to transmit the message, and the practical aspect of this type of communication. The creativity of the users of the language, English in this case, their literacy, knowledge of grammar, word formation and phonetic rules, are put to the test when communicating through mediums like Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, Whatsapp, etc. The forms of the words which appeared as a result of this type of communication are not coined anew; rather they are formed from already existent forms or words. The following paper will shed a new light on the latest trends in word formation, resulting from the constant use of instant messages among teenagers and how social media is shaping the process of communication. The new tendencies in internet communication have brought a new use of the language and changes on lexicological, phonological and sociolinguistic level and it is very important to understand firstly how the internet and other communication technologies fit into teenagers' external environments and complex lives. The social aspect of this paper implicates that these tendencies in word formation are not following the strict rules of the language system, i.e. they occur spontaneously in most of the cases. As more companies offer instant messaging on phones, and more pocket-sized devices with keyboards and internet access, teens start to take textual communication with them in their mobile lives. Teenagers use social networks to present themselves as they want to be seen and instant messaging is their primary tool for online communication. Teachers also express concern about the casual, almost disrespectful way that young people are encouraged to use language online as their informal speech starts to rely mostly on abbreviations and contractions and teens develop a 'whatever attitude' towards formal writing. This paper will eventually show the forms of words used in instant messages, the reasons why teenagers rely so much on this type of communication and it will open areas for further research of this topic among English language teachers.
Keywords: *communication, instant-messaging, word-formation, social networks*;

1. INTRODUCTION

Linguists have developed different theories about language, or as Meyer (2009) explains, some linguists are concerned with the theories which are competence based, i.e. that are centered on the belief that language is property of the mind, whereas others have developed theories which are more performance based, i.e. they examine the language in social context. As a proponent of competence - based theories, Chomsky (2002) describes the knowledge of language as part of any speakers' linguistic competence and his theory supports the notion of creativity, which according to him is a defining characteristic of human language. He believes that a finite set of rules within a speaker's competence, can generate an infinite set of sentences. That notion of creativity is defined as something which distinguishes human language from all other forms of communication. Many linguists disagree with competence-based theories because they ignore the language use and see it as 'consisting of errors'. What they believe is that in order to understand a language, one must consider the social and linguistic context. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), provide a new, more expansive view of the language and the theory of systemic/functional grammar, which is one of the most comprehensive theories of both performance and competence. From a functionalist point of view, the above mentioned authors both believe that language exists in order to satisfy the communicative needs of users, and they propose three 'metafunctions' of the language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The last two functions reflect the fact that the social and linguistic context, in which the language is used, influences the language itself. Meyer (2009) claims that languages change in response to internal and external

influences, the first ones resulting from natural process that languages undergo, whereas the second ones occur as a result of the social and cultural contexts in which languages are used, i.e. speakers of different languages come into contact, resulting in changes in the languages they speak. Crystal (2003), reviews the history and development of English as a global language and he concludes that when new technologies emerged in late nineteenth century and brought new linguistic opportunities, English was the language in industries which affected all aspects of society - advertising, press, transport, communication, motion pictures etc. The latest tendencies in internet communication have brought a new use of the language and changes on lexicological, phonological and sociolinguistic level. Lenhart et al. (2005), point out, it is very important to understand firstly how the internet and other communication technologies fit into teenagers' external environments and complex lives. Their research provides data that an overwhelming majority of teenagers, around 84%, own a device that connects them to the internet. It is noted that teenagers were aware that over time their communication over the internet had changed, due to the transition of internet access from dial-up connections to relying on high-speed internet access. When it comes to the communication tools they use, Lenhart et al.(2005) report that e-mail is still a fixture in teenagers' lives, but they prefer instant messaging (IM) when talking to friends. Almost half of online teenagers (46%) responded that they most often choose IM over e-mail and text messaging for written conversations with friends, whereas only a third (33%) said that they most often use e-mail to write messages to friends, and about 15% prefer text messages for written communication. The above mentioned report also provides data that almost half (48%) of the reviewed 16 million teens who use instant messaging, say they use it daily. This shows that as more companies offer IM on phones and more pocket-sized devices with keyboards with internet access, teens start to take textual communication with them in their mobile lives. As Baron (2008) notes, the use of social networks amongst teenagers is to present themselves as they want to be seen and IM is their primary tool for online communication. Moreover, the author expresses concern about the casual, almost disrespectful way that young people are encouraged to use language online as their informal speech starts to rely mostly on abbreviations and contractions and teens develop a 'whatever attitude' towards formal writing. Liu & Liu (2014), explain that because of the easy approach to the internet, the changes in the language happen very quickly and if a person fails to follow the new trends and occurrences, very soon they will have problems in communicating online or understanding the other parties involved in such communications. Older users of online mediums are more likely to experience such problems of miscommunication due to irregular use of IM.

2. THE LATEST TRENDS IN WORD FORMATION AMONG TEENAGERS

Over the years the way people communicate has changed dramatically. The latest tendencies in word formation due to the excessive use of social media and texting, is the point of interest in this paper. Only few of these new words which have appeared as a result of this type of communication can be found in dictionaries, whereas the rest of them are still subject to investigation. Stefanovski (2006) explained that shortening the words is a trend which is more and more present in modern English language. Furthermore, he notes that word formation as a process began 150 years ago, in order to clean the language from internationalisms, borrowed words etc. The short versions of already existent words, as he explains, are a popular way of attracting attention of the interlocutor and they can easily be remembered. Crystal (2008), on the other hand, points out that this phenomenon which is popular among younger generations is causing frustrations among the older ones. Even though the words that teenagers use are not new, but are coined from already existent words, still present a hindrance to older generation to question their meaning. The author also believes that more research should be done in this field of study, so that the meaning of these latest forms can be explained and become easier to use.

During recent years changes in the language became unavoidable or as Gorney (2012) explain, they became common and expected due to various reasons, such as events in history, culture and the most influential factor being the technology. As we became more reliant on technology, a new trend occurred in the way we communicate and that is the use of abbreviations. Gorney (2012) explains that "instant messaging and texting have created a need for our messages to be delivered now'' and in order to make this happen abbreviations became widely used. Even though they provide faster communication, Gorney argues that they take away the eloquence of the language, can also lead to a less professional impact and sometimes a loss of understanding between people might occur. Crystal (2008), goes into details and explains abbreviations and according to him''a new medium for language doesn't turn up very often which is why the linguistic effects of electronic communications technology have attracted so much attention.'' According to him, the use of 'textspeak' is like decoding a message, and what it requires is a different

interpretation of the language due to technology and the speed with which messages are delivered and what is interesting is that there is a whole new way of thinking about language that has not been used before because of the new adaptation of symbols and punctuation. The impact that technology has on the English language is clearly visible through various examples that made it in the Oxford Dictionary. One example is the word 'tweet', which according to the dictionary means 'a posting made on the social networking service Twitter'. The appearance of new words in the dictionary can be seen as a positive effect of technology and social network sites on the language, whereas the use of abbreviated forms, incorrect grammar and pronunciation, can be seen as the negative effect of social media on the language. Wyn et al. (2005) explain that young people learn about themselves, their relationship to others and the world by using ICTs as a medium, which also provides a type of 'identity resources' for them through two main mechanisms- one being the facilitated communication between people and the other between people and websites. Teenagers nowadays are using modified language and the question is whether this is slang, jargon, dialect or some other word. Another question also occurs, for example, whether the use of short forms means that the old forms will disappear? Crystal (2008) analyzes the adaptation and popularization of SMS and the need to explain the language changes that occur in this type of communication. Namely, shortened words, incontrollable use of the language or avoiding language rules altogether. However, the same thing happens when teenagers communicate via social media. The constant use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp etc., contribute to the need to define the language used in this type of communication, its characteristics and word formations, and the importance to accent on the characteristics of the channel used for communication as one factor that influences word formations. The language used in this Internet based communication, which has mobile devices as the channel through which communication is established, is not a new language. It is a language that is being used on daily basis which has the body of the English language and its wide spectrum of use. Wyn et. al (2005) explain this in their report where they have elaborated the framework for understanding the way ICTs impact on young peoples' wellbeing.

3. INTERNET SLANG

Internet slang is a jargon that was popularized by the users of internet and in most cases it was derived from existing words. Teenagers and even adults use this type of language in order to save time and space, i.e. use a small space available for writing to say as many things as possible. The use of acronyms, use of pictures instead of words, omitting letters, it is all part of instant messaging through social media nowadays. Crystal (2004), notes that the use of these forms from written into spoken language is a new use of the language and we should encourage such use. According to him, linguists' opinions vary, and on one hand there are those who believe that the constant use of these short forms will destroy the language and those who use it. These references to the written and spoken communication of young people that may worsen in the way that they would become illiterate, as well as the ones who will continue to follow this trend. On the other hand there are those as Crystal mentions, who believe that if a person abbreviates a word or a sentence, it means that the user of the language knows the language well enough to know when and how to abbreviate. Teenagers use these abbreviations in order to identify to a certain group, to feel that they are special and important. Their messages have multiple roles besides the main one of transmitting a message. For example, when they use the acronym LOL, i.e. Laughing Out Loud, the person who uses this abbreviation might not be laughing out loud, but he or she might just express a sort of a gratitude to the other person for trying to make him or her laugh. Crystal explains that the use of LOL or the use of smiley or a grin, is not real, and the question posed is how people laugh out loud when they send the LOL?

4. INSTANT MESSAGES

The linguistic formation known as '*Textese*', '*txtese*', '*chatspeak*', '*TXT*', and similar, is a term for the abbreviations used when communicating through text messages or when using the internet, including the e-mail or instant messaging. Users of instant messaging are prone to using words which don't have an abbreviation of their own, and the person reading the text should figure out which word is it, depending on the context in which the word is used. Baron (2008) claims that this type of language that teenagers use is not following the standard grammar rules and it has an impact on both the social and linguistic human interaction.

5. **CONCLUSION**

The above mentioned media for communication and the new forms that occur as a result of the instant messaging are just a part of the evidence that changes in the language do occur. What is noticeable is that teenagers omit the vowels from the word or phrase, or they just use the first letters of a sentence and this result in the creation of many abbreviations and slang words. Because teenagers talk with several people at once their goal is faster communication through having fun. In such situations, teenagers do not pay attention to grammar, punctuation, capitalization and so on and so forth. Having in mind that technology develops really fast, more changes in the language are expected in near future.

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