Recurrent Patterns of Netspeak among Selected Nigerians on WhatsApp Platform: A Quest for Standardisation

Authors : Lily Chimuanya, Esther Ajiboye, Emmanuel Uba
Abstract : One of the consequences of online communication is the birth of new orthography genres characterised by novel conventions of abbreviation and acronyms usually referred to as Netspeak. Netspeak, also known as internet slang, is a style of writing mainly used in online communication to limit the length of text characters and to save time. The aim of this study is to evaluate how second language users of the English language have internalised this new convention of writing; identify the recurrent patterns of Netspeak; and assess the consistency of the use of the identified patterns in relation to their meanings. The study is corpus-based, and data drawn from WhatsApp chart pages of selected groups of Nigerian English speakers show a large occurrence of inconsistencies in the patterns of Netspeak and their meanings. The study argues that rather than emphasise the negative impact of Netspeak on the communicative competence of second language users, studies should focus on suggesting models as yardsticks for standardising the usage of Netspeak and indeed all other emerging language conventions resulting from online communication. This stance stems from the inevitable global language transformation that is eminent with the coming of age of information technology.
Keywords : abbreviation, acronyms, Netspeak, online communication, standardisation
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