

# SMS and Email: Linguistic and Stylistic Features

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*Abstract: Email and SMS languages have its own impacts, both formally and informally among the youth of the country. Through this project, I mainly concentrate on the language adopted in emails and SMS with special focus on its linguistic and stylistic features. This project aims to study the variations in language when it is used computer-mediated environments. The first section of the core chapter elaborates SMS language and its influence on society, followed by the primary motivation which leads to the emergence of SMS language. Then, concentrate on each and every characteristics of SMS language. As observing the language used in emails I would be able to notice certain deviations when compared to that used in conventionalized language. Then my focus is on various language aspects used in emails, such as, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, contractions, ellipsis, sentence constructions, etc. I present the project in such a manner that the non standard spelling, incomplete sentence constructions, omission of punctuations are often excused or ignored in emails and is even considered as a “natural feature” of electronic communication. Email and SMS language not destroying the traditional rules of language but it is a new form of language which is more creative and innovative. The advent of SMS and email communication has considerably changed the linguistic environment we are in.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Email and SMS languages have its own impacts, both formally and informally among the youth of the country. The use of Slang words and short hand words are one other than a time saving money saving strategy, where the youth today tries to adopt a shortcut and a condensed way to communicate.

Through this project, we mainly concentrate on the language adopted in emails and SMS with special focus on its linguistic and stylistic features. For this we also seek the help of the famous linguist David Crystal's various articles published about texting.

This project aims to study the variations in language when it is used computer-mediated environments. The first section of the core chapter elaborates SMS language and its influence on society, followed by the primary motivation which leads to the emergence of SMS language. Then, we concentrate on each and every characteristics of SMS language with appropriate examples.

The second section of the core chapter deals with email and its effect on this technocratic world. Then, we also discuss the distinctive elements of texting language. As we observe the language used in emails we would be able to notice certain deviations when compared to that used in conventionalized language. Then our focus is on various language aspects used in emails, such as, punctuation, capitalization, spellings, contractions, ellipsis, sentence constructions, etc. We present the project in such a manner that the non-standard spelling, incomplete sentence constructions, omission of punctuations are often excused or ignored in emails and is even considered as a “natural feature” of electronic communication. We also incorporated four to five samples of emails which we used as the study material for this project.

## 2. SMS: LINGUSTIC AND STYLISTIC FEATURES

### 2.1 SMS Language

Short Message Service (SMS) language tends to create a novice language, which has become an integral part of the multilingual world. It pursues simple sentences structure for communication.

In one American study, researchers found that less than 20% of messages used SMS language. Looking at his own texting history, the study's author, linguist David Crystal, noted just 10% of his messages used SMS language.

David Crystal summarized his findings about SMS languages' impact on verbal language and literacy in his book *Txtng: the Gr8 Db8*. In his book Crystal argues that:

- In a typical text message, words are not abbreviated as frequently as widely thought.
- Abbreviating has been in use for a long time, and thus is not a novel phenomenon only found in SMS language. Furthermore, some words such as 'sonar' and 'laser' that are accepted as standard words in the dictionary are actually acronyms.
- Both children and adults use SMS language, so if adults do not display the errors seen in children's written work, they cannot be attributed to SMS language alone.
- Use of abbreviations in written work and examinations is not that prevalent among students.
- A prerequisite to using SMS language is the knowledge of spelling, so use of SMS language does not necessarily imply low literacy.

## 2.2 Advertisements and SMS language

In recent years, advertisements have been increasingly influenced by SMS language. The longer the message in the advertisement, the less impression it will leave. Hence, short messages that are more catchy, cost and space saving are more commonly used. The visual effect elicited by SMS language also lends a feeling of novelty that helps to make the advertisement more memorable.

Now, we can make a glance upon the linguistic and stylistic properties of SMS language. These properties include – initializations, reductions and shortenings and omission of parts of speech, reactive tokens, pictograms and logograms, paralinguistic and prosodic features, capitalization, punctuations and variations in spelling.

### (1) Initializations (acronyms and abbreviations composed of initials)

There are many examples of words or phrases that share the same abbreviations (eg. 'lol' could mean 'laugh out loud', 'lots of love' or 'little old lady' etc).

### (2) Reductions and shortenings and omission of parts of speech

For words that have no common abbreviation, users most commonly remove the vowels from a word, and the reader is required to interpret a string of consonants by re-adding the vowels. (eg – 'dictionary' becomes 'dctnry' and 'keyboard' becomes 'kybrd'). Omission of words, especially function words (eg – determiners like 'a' and 'the') are also employed as part of the effort to overcome time and space constraints.

### (3) Reactive Tokens

The feature of 'reactive tokens' that is ubiquitous in Internet Relay Chat (IRC), is also commonly found in SMS language. It includes phrases or words like 'yeah I know,' which signifies a reaction to a previous message.

### (4) Paralinguistic and Prosodic features

Prosodic features in SMS language aim to provide added semantic and syntactic information and context from which recipients can use to deduce a more contextually relevant and accurate interpretation.

### (5) Capitalization

In the case of capitalization in SMS language, there are three scenarios: SMS message with : No capitalization, capitalization of only the first word, Full capitalization as appropriate that conforms to all grammatical rules.

### (6) Pictograms and logograms (rebus abbreviation)

Some tokens of the SMS language can be likened to a rebus, using pictures and single letters or numbers to represent whole words (eg: – "i<3u" which uses the pictogram of a heart for love, and the letter 'u' replaces you).

### (7) Emoticons

Just as body language and facial expressions can alter how speech is perceived, emoticons can alter the meaning of a text message, the difference being that the real tone of the SMS sender is less easily discerned merely by the emoticon

### 2.3 Punctuation

While vowels and punctuation of words in SMS language are generally omitted, David Crystal observes that apostrophes in SMS language is approximately 35 percent. There are not that many cases in English where leaving out the apostrophe causes misunderstanding of the messages. For example, “Im” and “Shes”, there is no ambiguity.

### Different types of examples in SMS language

#### Single letters can replace words

- *be* becomes *b*
- *see* or *sea* becomes *c*
- *okay* becomes *k* or *kk*
- *are* becomes *r*

#### Single digits can replace words

- *won* or *one* becomes *1*
- *to* or *too* becomes *2*
- *ate* becomes *8*

#### A single letter or digit can replace a syllable or phoneme

- *to* or *too* becomes *2*
- *tomorrow* becomes *2mro* or *2moro*
- *forget* becomes *4get*
- *mate* becomes *m8*
- *skater* becomes *sk8r*
- *wonderful* becomes *1drfl*
- *enjoy* becomes *njoy*
- *easy* becomes *ez*
- *see you* becomes *cu* or *cya*
- *your* and *you're* become *ur*

Although SMS language has yet to be accepted as a conventional and stable form, dialect and language. As a result notable lexicographical efforts and publications (e.g. dictionaries) dealing specifically with SMS language have yet to emerge. However, SMS language proves that it exists as a dynamic social and linguistic entity that is constantly changing, as conventionalized languages do

## 3 E-MAIL: LINGUISTICS AND STYLISTIC FEATURES

### 3.1 Language of E-mail

Email, second to telephone in terms of the world wide users is one of the most familiar and widely used modes of Computer Mediated Communication and undoubtedly an influential force in contemporary communication exchange.

One of the chief manners in which email resembles the traditional letter is the fixed structure of discourse that email messages are composed from following the structural elements of a business-like memo, typically including a “To” and “From” address, a subject header, a space for carbon copies and a message body. This practice has become increasingly standardized among compositional software and widely recognized and accepted by email users. This structural format is an adaptation of the intra-organizational memorandum, a template originally created in the late nineteenth century for succinct communication within a large economic or governmental body

Even in formal business writing, a move towards a more lenient acceptance of informality in communication parallels an increasing acceptance of informality in the corporate workplace in general.

The function of punctuation may also be extended, like capitalization, to exaggerate emotion or personal expression through excessive repetition of a particular punctuation mark. For example: Alright!!!!!! Is that true??????

### Ellipsis

Ellipsis is very typical for emails. This is because email is close to speech, where sentences are often left unfinished or words are omitted. It is closer to the way people think shortness is another reason. Since it is interactive communication, one word is often enough for a logical unit. Besides, in the “reply” mode, context can be attached without typing it again. This is not possible in traditional letter writing where context must be entirely created in every letter. Very often pronouns are omitted, especially in the beginning of the sentence. Because of ellipsis, dots are one of the most common punctuation mark. They indicate thoughtful pauses,, “well... I guess love is what we believe in...”

### Introductory words

Since email is an interaction, sentences often have introductory words, attracting attention or expressing an emotional view on the topic. This is a very common pattern. Introductory words are different and may be classified according to their function.

(a) Affirmative:

Some examples for this type introductory words are : O right, yes, ok, yeah, yah. Thus the sentences would be like “O’right, I wont argue,” “yes Roman I do understand,” “ok that was a comic relief.

(b) Negative

Some examples for this type of introductory words are : Nah, no, etc and the sentences would be like “nah, forget it,” “No, grrr... not via internet why...” etc.

(c) Attracting attention

Some examples for this type are Hoooo, now, ah, hey, oh. Sentences may have a question mark in both parts, as in the following examples – “is sandis still on the list? Or you kicked him out because of his shameless free thinking?” Or in the first part only, like, “would u ever b together? like physically together...”

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion that we arrived by analyzing this topic is that- language and the language use can often be influenced and constrained by new technologies. The advent of SMS and email communication has considerably changed the linguistic environment we are in.

Email and SMS language has evolved as one of the major form of communication among youth, has its own impact both formally and informally. It has enhanced the verbal skills.

Various researches conducted by famous linguists also prove that most of the messages contain ninety to ninety five percentage of SMS language .Email and SMS language is not destroying the traditional rules of language but it is a new form of language which is more creative and innovative.SMS and email language has yet to be accepted as a conventional and stable form, dialect and language. For that, notable lexicographical efforts and publications dealing with SMS and email language have yet to emerge. In future, we hope that this language variety would prosper to such an extent that it would develop into a special genre and thus it would be studied as a separate branch of linguistics.

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