

In fact, electronic communications have affected, and will continue to affect language in three distinct ways. First, they change the way language is used. Secondly, they have created a need for global language - and English will fill that slot. Third, they will influence the future of other languages which people will continue to speak. How is it to be effected?

Start with the simplest sort of change: the way English is used in electronic converse. The language of electronic chat is splattered with **abbreviations**, broken sentences and vocabulary of its own. Not only is **the** vocabulary of electronic communication different from ordinary **English**; **SO** is **the** way **in** which it is used.

Broadcasting and telephone have created other kinds of speech: a conversation with somebody you cannot see. Like talking in the dark it encourages speakers to confide. For the listener, concentration on the voice alone, stripped of misleading body language, can be far more telling than a face-to-face conversation. One study found that it was easier to detect when a person was lying in a telephone call than either in a video-call or face-to-face.

Electronic media have created another novelty: the written conversation, whose style is described as follows, 'There is no social pressure to avoid the broken sentence. The key-word is 'bandwidth'⁵ - which implies that the Internet will collapse if you use flowery language, but really means "Get to the point". A written conversation has **OC** great advantage over the spoken word: writers can refine their words before 'speaking' them. But it also lacks a key-quality of **ipee I**: it lacks the tone of voice that conveys emotion.

To foster more clarity *WIRED*, a magazine much read by the digerati, recently produced its own style guide, called '*Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age*'. The result of the development of the Internet will soon be extraordinary⁷: a language spoken by more people as a second tongue than a first.

This is an extraordinary state of affairs. Carl Mills, professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, says nervously: 'It will be the first time in the history of the world that the language is not ours any more. If a language is no longer the property of its native speakers, it will change, and it's not clear what consequences will be.'

Exercise 39

Explain the meaning of the italicized words in the sentences.

1. The electronic media that *bind* the world together are *carriers* of the language.
2. Internet TCP/IP allows computers anywhere in the world *to hook* into it.
3. The language of electronic chat *is splattered with* abbreviations, broken sentences and vocabulary of its own.
4. For the listener, concentration on the voice alone, *stripped of misleading body language*, can be *far more telling* than a face-to-face conversation.
4. The Internet will *collapse* if you *use flowery* language,
5. Writers can *refine* their words before speaking them.
6. A written conversation ... *lacks* the key-quality of speech: the tone of speech that *conveys* emotion.
7. *To foster* more clarity *WIRED*, a magazine much read by *the digerati*, produced its own style guide.

Exercise 40

What do you think? Share your ideas with the class.

1. Is the effect of the electronic means of communication on the English language positive or negative? Explain why.
2. Is it true that electronic communication encourages speakers to be more open?
3. What advantages and disadvantages does the author find in a written conversation? Do you share his opinion? Can you add to the list?
4. Will the Internet really collapse if you use flowery language? Why?
5. What effect will further development of the Internet make on the English language?
6. What may be the consequences of the fact that the English language is no longer the property of its native speakers?