Twenty-first century English [Keynote speech to IATEFL Annual Conference, March 2001]

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English language teachers always have to be prophets - that's prophet in the sense of prophesying not profit-making, of course. Typically, young students are being introduced to a language by somewhat less-young teachers, whose responsibility it is to provide their charges with a set of linguistic abilities that will meet their future needs. If I found myself teaching a class of fifteen-year-olds, in some nightmare, I would not want to be teaching them how to speak 59-year-old Crystallese. I would want to be giving them a take on the language which was more compatible with their own age, and the age of young adulthood which they were about to enter, and that would mean my taking into account the usage trends around them. Teachers obviously have to teach the language as it has been and as it is now; but they also need to keep a wary eye on the linguistic future - the kind of language their students will find themselves experiencing some years from now. It is not easy. Teachers are always having to make judgements about the chaos of language variation and change which they find around them - which usages are trivial, which ephemeral, which significant, which long-lasting. It is a difficult task because predicting the linguistic future is full of uncertainty - and it needs special help. Doubtless some people rely on supernatural assistance to do it (and thus make my analogy with prophets particularly apt). You have done something just as sensible: you have joined IATEFL.

The fact of the matter is that, at any moment, the language might change and a particular rule or recommendation become out of date. Wise teachers therefore always pay special attention to those aspects of English which signal possible, impending, or ongoing change in the standard language - the differences in dialect usage which can be heard or seen within a country or between countries; the distinctive usage which accompanies the arrival of new activities within society; the areas of disagreement, or disputed usages, which surface among native speakers; or the letters of complaint which are sent to the press or the BBC. Of course, not all kinds of variation will result in changes in standard English: some developments in society are always going to be more influential than others. And even linguists can be taken by surprise at the unpredictability of a change. But sometimes a particular trend stands out above all others, and then it is well worth taking time to reflect on it. My topic today is one such. I believe it to be the trend which is going to have the greatest impact on the English language during the 21st century: computer-mediated communication, and specifically the Internet.

The Internet, as we all know, is an association of computer networks with common standards which enable messages to be sent from any central computer (or *host*) on one network to any host on any other. It is now the world's largest computer network, with over 100 million hosts connected by the year 2000, providing an increasing range of services and enabling unprecedented numbers of people to be in touch with each other through electronic mail (*e-mail*), discussion groups, and the provision of digital 'pages' on any topic. There is no denying the unprecedented scale and significance of the Net, as a global medium. The extra significance is even reflected in the spelling, in languages which use capital letters: this is the first such technology to be conventionally identified with an initial capital. We do not give typographical enhancement to such developments as 'Printing', 'Publishing', 'Broadcasting', 'Radio', or 'Television', but we do write 'Internet' and 'Net'.

What is it like, to be a regular citizen of the Internet, a *netizen*? Those who already spend appreciable amounts of time online need only self-reflect; for those who do not, here is a short selection from various Web pages headed 'addicted to the Internet':

You wake up at 3 a.m. to go to the bathroom and stop to check your e-mail on the way back to bed.
You sign off and your screen says you were on for 3 days and 45 minutes.
You placed the refrigerator beside your computer.
You say 'scroll up' when someone asks what it was you said.

All of your friends have an @ in their names.
You tell the cab driver you live at http://123.elm.street/house/bluetrim.html
Your phone bill comes to your doorstep in a box.
You check your mail. It says 'no new messages'. So you check it again.

With so many people spending so much time on the Internet, especially in an interactive way, the effect on language is bound to be immense - and immediate. In the old days, it might take decades for a new usage to find its way around the globe. Today, new usages can be everywhere within minutes. All languages with an electronic presence are therefore going to find themselves changing faster than ever before - and English, as the still dominant voice of the Internet (recent surveys suggest it accounts for some 70% of Internet traffic, though the figure is rapidly falling as other languages come on-line) will change more than most. The nature of the electronic medium as such, along with the sheer global scale and intensity of Internet use, will result in developments that will be far more pervasive and momentous than in the case of previous communication technologies. The arrival of print, the telegraph, radio, and television each gave language fresh dimensions that generated many new distinctive varieties and usages, from the telegrammatic graphic prominence of newspaper headlines to the hyperverbal sonic prominence of sports commentaries. The electronic medium will have a much greater impact because it presents us with a channel which facilitates and constrains our ability to communicate in ways that are fundamentally different from those found in other semiotic situations. Teachers are used to thinking of English in terms of 'spoken English' and 'written English' (and perhaps also, 'signed English'). Now, they must take on board a new medium, computer-mediated English, where many of the expectations and practices which we associate with spoken and written language no longer obtain.

We need a name for this new medium, and over a dozen have been proposed, such as 'computer-mediated communication' and 'electronic discourse'. A firm believer in the succinct, I call it *Netspeak*. If you want to focus exclusively on English, you may find *Netlish* convenient. I am comfortable with Netspeak, for it falls within a tradition of usage which began with George Orwell's *Newspeak* and *Oldspeak* in *1984*, later developments such as *Airspeak* and *Seaspeak*, and media labels such as *Royalspeak* and *Blairspeak*. It is functional enough, as long as we remember that 'speak' here involves writing as well as talking, and that any 'speak' suffix also has a receptive element, including 'listening and reading'.

Before I go into the nature of English Netspeak, it is worth stressing the point that it is a medium, not a variety. To see this, think of radio broadcasting. It doesn't make sense to talk about radio broadcasting as a 'variety' of English; rather, it is a more abstract notion - a medium, or channel - which is represented by many linguistically distinctive varieties - newsreading, weather-forecasting, sports commentary, monologue talks, plays, and so on. Some of these varieties consist, in turn, of sub-varieties - think of all the kinds of sports commentary, for instance, and how different they are linguistically (football, cricket, snooker, horse-racing, tennis ...). Netspeak, likewise, is a medium, consisting of many varieties, some of which in turn consist of several sub-varieties. I came to this conclusion after researching my book, *Language and the Internet* (2001). Within the Net, I was able to find five main domains within which varieties of Netspeak could be identified - there is the World Wide Web, e-mail, two types of chatgroup (the synchronous type, which operate in real-time, and the asynchronous type, where you leave a message in an electronic location and hope someone will read it one day), and the domain of virtual worlds, where you role-play imaginary situations in long-running games for edification or just plain fun. I am in no doubt that this figure of five is soon going to grow as new technologies come to be; but these are the five that are out there right now.

The crucial point is to recognize the way a technology directly shapes a form of linguistic expression. The history of writing repeatedly shows how a new technology (the cuneiform wedge, for instance) can literally give shape to language. Printing did the same, as did the telegraph, typewriter, telegram, and other technologies up to and including the latest, texting - the short-messaging service where the small screen size immediately motivated an unprecedented range of abbreviated linguistic expression. It is the same with computer-

mediated communication, as seen in the Internet, where the technology has enabled a whole new medium of communication to come into being, something that is electronic, global, and interactive, and this has given rise to a distinctive type of language, neither spoken nor written.

It is not like writing, firstly, because it lacks one of the most basic features of traditional writing - the fact that a piece of text is static and permanent on the page. If something is written down, repeated reference to it will be an encounter with an unchanged text. We would be surprised if, upon returning to a particular page, it had altered its graphic character in some way. Putting it like this, we can see immediately that Netspeak is not by any means like conventional writing. A 'page' on the Web often varies from encounter to encounter (and all have the option of varying, even if page-owners choose not to take it) for several possible reasons: its factual content might have been updated, its advertising sponsor might have changed, or its graphic designer might have added new features. Nor is the writing that you see necessarily static, given the technical options available which allow text to move around the screen, disappear/reappear, change colour, and so on. From a user point of view, there are opportunities to 'interfere' with the text in all kinds of ways that are not possible in traditional writing. A page, once downloaded to the user's screen, may have its text cut, added to, revised, annotated, even totally restructured, in ways that make the result seem to come from the same source as the original. E-mails too are variable: we may delete them, edit them, cut and paste in them, all with an ease and undetectability that is not possible when people try to alter a traditionally written text.

But Netspeak is not like speech either, because it lacks the kind of simultaneous feedback you get in face-to-face conversation, or the immediate reaction signals which people make to each other (the *mhms* and nods). When you are sending me a message I cannot react to it while you are writing it, because until it arrives on my screen I have no idea that it exists. And when it does arrive, there is a delay before I can give you a response, which makes the rhythm of the exchange totally unlike that of conversation. Nor is Netspeak like speech, in that there is no way of expressing the full range of vocal variations in pitch (intonation), loudness (stress), speed, rhythm, pause, and tone of voice. As with traditional writing, of course, there have been somewhat desperate efforts to capture these effects in the form of an exaggerated use of spelling and punctuation, and the use of capitals, spacing, and special symbols for emphasis. Examples include repeated letters (*aaaaahhhhh, hiiiiiii, ooops, soooo*), repeated punctuation marks (*no more!!!!!, whohe????, hey!!!!!!!!!!, see what you started???????????????????*), and a range of emphatic conventions:

all capitals for 'shouting':	I SAID NO
letter spacing for 'loud and clear':	W H Y N O T, w h y n o t
word/phrase emphasis by asterisks:	the * real * answer

These features are certainly capable of a certain expressiveness, but the range of meanings they signal is few, and restricted to gross notions such as extra emphasis, surprise, and puzzlement.

Related to this is the way Netspeak lacks the facial expressions, gestures, and conventions of body posture and distance which are so critical in expressing personal opinions and attitudes and in moderating social relationships. The limitation was noted early in the development of Netspeak, and led to the introduction of *smileys* or *emoticons*. These are combinations of keyboard characters designed to show an emotional facial expression: they are typed in sequence on a single line, and placed after the final punctuation mark of a sentence. Almost all of them are read sideways. The two basic types

　　　:-) or :) 　　　　　:-(or : (

express positive attitudes and negative attitudes respectively (the omission of the 'nose' element seems to be solely a function of typing speed or personal taste). It is plain that they are an extremely crude way of capturing some of the basic features of facial expression, and

their semantic role is limited. In fact, they are not especially frequent; in one study, only 13% of 3000 posts contained them – and many people do not use them at all.

Netspeak is not like speech or writing. It is not a hybrid of spoken and written features. It does things that neither of these other mediums could ever do, and must accordingly be seen as a new species of communication. My own vision of Netspeak is of something genuinely different in kind. Electronic texts are simply not the same as other kinds of texts. In particular, they display a dynamism that is lacking elsewhere, in the way texts can be manipulated and changed. And they permit a multiplicity of simultaneous communicative activities that neither speech nor writing could tolerate - such as hypertext links between documents or carrying on half-a-dozen conversations at the same time with other members of a chatroom. This is why I talk of Netspeak as a genuine 'third medium'. I do believe it is a revolutionary moment, in the history of language. 50-100,000 years ago, speech. 8-10,000 years ago, writing. And now, computer-mediated language.

How far have people begun to develop an intuition that varieties of Netspeak exist? The fact that people are conscious of something 'out there' is demonstrated by the way other varieties of language are being affected by it. It is always a sure sign that a new variety has 'arrived' when people in other linguistic situations start alluding to it. In everyday conversation, terms from the underlying computer technology are given a new application among people who want their talk to have a cool cutting-edge. So I am impressed when I hear such examples as these:

It's my turn to download now (i.e. I've heard all your gossip, now hear mine)
I need more bandwidth to handle that point (i.e. I can't take it all in at once)
She's multitasking (said of someone doing two things at once)
Let's go offline for a few minutes (i.e. let's talk in private)
Give me a brain dump on that (i.e. tell me all you know)
Are you wired? (i.e. ready to handle this)
Get with the programme (i.e. keep up)
I got a pile of spam in the post today (i.e. junk-mail)
E you later (said as a farewell).

Let's look at a couple of examples in more detail. *Dot com* is now a commonly heard phrase, as well as appearing ubiquitously in writing in all kinds of advertising and promotional material. But written English shows developments well beyond the stage of the literal use of *.com*. It has come to be used as a general adjective (with or without the period, and sometimes hyphenated), as in *dotcom organizations* and *dotcom crisis*. It has also come to be used in a variety of ludic ways, especially in those varieties where language play is a dominant motif – newspaper headlines and advertising. The similarity of *com* to *come* has been noticed: an offer to win a car on the Internet is headed *.com and get it*. A headline in the Independent Graduate on openings still available on the Web is headed: *Dot.com all ye faithful*. A phonetic similarity motivated a food-outlet advertisement: *lunch@Boots.yum*. The 'dot' element is now introduced into all kinds of phrases: *Learnhow.to* and *launch.anything*, are names of sites. *un.complicated* introduced an ad for personal finance. One company uses the slogan *Get around the www.orld;* another has the slogan *www.alk this way.*

A similar ludic trend applies to the symbol @, now the universal link between recipient and address. It was chosen pragmatically by a computer engineer, Ray Tomlinson, who sent the first network e-mail in 1972. He needed a character which did not occur in names, and this typewriter keyboard symbol stood out, with the bonus of having an appropriate meaning (of someone being 'at' somewhere). A subsequent irony is that many firms and organizations have replaced the letter *a* or *at* in their name by an @, as in @tractions, @cafe, @Home, @pex. And it has been seen turning up in other settings where traditionally the word *at* would be used: *This is where it's @* is one slogan; Bill Gates' 1999 book is called *Business @ the speed of thought*. It has even been added to text where the word *at* would not normally appear: a postcard to my house read: *Crystals @ ...* followed by the address.

The *e-* prefix is another index of Netspeak's influence. By now it has been used in hundreds of expressions. *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1997) had already noted *e-*

text, e-zine, e-cash, and *e-money*, and in 1998 the American Dialect Society named *e-* 'Word [sic] of the Year' as well as 'Most Useful and Most Likely to Succeed'. Examples since noted include *e-tailing* and *e-tailers* ['retailing on the Internet'], *e-lance* ['electronic free-lance'] and *e-lancers, e-therapy* and *e-therapists, e-management* and *e-managers, e-government, e-bandwagon, e-books, e-conferences, e-voting, e-loan, e-newsletters, e-security, e-cards, e-pinions, e-shop, e-list, e-rage,* and *e-crap.* A bookmaker developing a Net presence called the firm *e-we go.*

How many of these developments will become a permanent feature of the language it is impossible to say. There are already signs of a reaction against some of the above usages. A Silicon Valley company, Persistence Software, is reported to be campaigning against the proliferation of e-words: it has established The Society for the Preservation of the Other 25 Letters of the Alphabet. But this only makes the general hypothesis more compelling, that a notion of Netspeak has begun to evolve which is rapidly becoming a part of popular linguistic consciousness, and evoking strong language attitudes. The problem, from an ELT point of view, is of course that English speakers are still getting to grips with the communicative potential made available to them. They are in a learning situation of a rather special kind. They are having to acquire the rules (of how to communicate via e-mail, of how to talk in chatgroups, of how to construct an effective Web page, and so on), and yet there are no rules, in the sense of universally agreed modes of behaviour established by generations of usage. Teachers don't like the sound of that: if there are no rules, how can we teach them? There is a clear contrast with the familiar world of paper-based communication. Letter-writing, for instance, is routinely taught in school; and because there is widespread agreement on how letters are to be written, supported by the recommendations of usage manuals, we feel secure in that knowledge. We know such conventions as how to use opening and closing formulae (*Dear Sir/Madam, Yours faithfully*), where to put the address and date, and how to break up the text into paragraphs. Adults make use of this knowledge almost without thinking, and on occasion, as in informal letter-writing, they dare to break the rules with confidence. But with the Internet equivalent of letter-writing - e-mails - there is no such long tradition. Most people have been using e-mails for less than a decade, and they are unaware of the factors which have to be respected if their messages are not to be misunderstood. Often, the first indication that they have misconstrued a message comes when they receive an unpalatable response from the recipient.

A big difficulty, from the teaching point of view, is that a strong personal, creative spirit imbues Netspeak, as an emerging medium. The rate at which users have been coining new terms and introducing playful variations into established words has no parallel in contemporary language use. The *Jargon File*, which records 'the language hackers use among themselves for fun, social communication, and technical debate', is quite clear about its innovative, ludic, dynamic properties: 'Hackers ... regard slang formation and use as a game to be played for conscious pleasure'. We respond to 'the voice of the quirky, individualistic writer', say the authors of *Wired Style*, in expounding one of their principles, and they recommend: 'play with voice'.

You have to be careful if you consult these guides, because they are reflecting a stage in the development of Netspeak which is already changing. As hackers built the Internet and gave physical presence to its various situations, they have naturally developed a sense of ownership of Netspeak which is reflected in the attitudes of the current generation of dictionaries and style guides. But the beast they have created is now so large that it is beyond ownership. The hacker community is but a tiny part of the online population, and the linguistic intuitions and preferences of such vast numbers are immensely variable and impossible to control. Quirky, individualistic writers there will be among them; but there will also be huge numbers of non-quirky, conservative writers, who don't go in for wordplay. The future of Netspeak, then, is very much bound up with the extent to which hacker-originated language and style has developed a sufficiently stable and powerful identity to motivate new Internet users to use it, or whether these users will introduce fresh linguistic directions, evolving norms of stylistic usage which owe nothing to hacker origins, and which avoid the

playful and esoteric features so much in evidence now. The evidence suggests that it is the second direction which is the dominant contemporary trend.

Publications such as *Wired Style* have their place as part of a climate of opinion which will eventually help to shape Netspeak. The principles are important statements, as they make explicit a set of intuitions about language which are likely to be influential. Under one of their principles, 'Anticipating the future', they include such 'style commandments' as 'Save a keystroke' and 'When in doubt, close it up'. The former is illustrated by the replacement of initial capital letters by lower-case letters – as in *webmaster* and *telnet*. The latter refers to the trend for originally spaced compound words to become hyphenated and then written solid (as in such everyday examples as *flower pot, flower-pot,* and *flowerpot*). The authors are well aware that this is a regular feature of linguistic change, and they are keen to hasten the process: 'Go there now.' They recommend *startup, homepage,* and *email,* for example. 'The way of the Net is just not a hyphenated way.' Comments of this kind are bound to influence people (such as myself) who have no idea what is normal usage, in Internet situations. I have always spelled *e-mail* with a hyphen, and have done so in my book. Whether I change to *email* in due course will depend on whether a consensus emerges. I have no aesthetic axe to grind, and the presence of the additional keystroke is not going to have a serious effect upon my life. Eventually, one standard of usage will prevail, and it will probably be the solid form. In the meantime, it is important to recognize the fact that there is a great deal of divided usage in Netspeak, and to treat with caution those guides which come down on one side or the other.

So what are the distinctive linguistic features of Netspeak? They are to be found under two main headings: the lexicon and the graphology. A large number of words and phrases have emerged which are needed to talk about Internet-restricted situations, operations, activities, and personnel, making this one of the most creative lexical domains in contemporary English, involving all major lexical processes. Many terms are associated with the software which enables people to use the Internet, and which routinely appear on screen. Some have a permanent presence (albeit in hidden menus), in the form of the labels used to designate screen areas and functions, and to specify user options and commands (*file, edit, view, insert, paste, format, tools, help, save*). Some terms appear only at intervals on a screen, depending on circumstances – usually, when things are going wrong, in the form of error messages (*illegal operation, error, not found* - there seem to be no positive messages to tell us that everything is going right). Several terms are associated with the use of computer hardware (*freeze, lock, down, hang, crash, bomb, client* [the machine, not the user]). And terms have emerged for the population of Internet users themselves (*netizens, netters, netties, netheads, cybersurfers, nerds, newbies*).

A popular method of creating Internet neologisms is to combine two separate words to make a new word, or *compound*. Some elements turn up repeatedly: *mouse* in such forms as *mouseclick, mousepad, mouse across, mouse over; click* in *click-and-buy, one-click, cost-per-click, double-click; ware* in (*firmware, freeware, groupware, shareware, shovelware, wetware* ['brain']); *web* in *webcam, webmail, webliography, webmaster, webzine, webhead* ['Web addict']; *net* in *netlag, netdead, netnews, hypernet, Usenet, Netspeak, EcoNet, PeaceNet; hot* in *hotlist, hotspot, hotlink, Hotmail, HotBot, HotJava;* and *bug* ['software error'] in *bug fix, bugtracker, bug bash* ['hunt for bugs'], *BugNet*. Similar in function are the use of *cyber-* and *hyper-* as prefixes or combining forms (*cyberspace, cyberculture, cyberlawyer, cybersex, cyber rights; hypertext, hyperlink, hyperfiction, hyperzine*) and the suffixal use of *-bot* [an artificial intelligence program, from *robot*], as in *annoybot, chatterbot, knowbot, cancelbot, softbot, mailbot, spybot*. Other prefixes include *e-* (already illustrated); *V-* ['virtual'], and *E* [for a number raised to a power, from mathematics], as in *V-chat* ['virtual chat'], *ThanksE6* ['Thanks a million']. The word *at*, often shown as @, also has an increasingly prefixal function, as in *atcommand, atsign, @-party, @-address*. Blends (in which part of one word is joined to part of another) are illustrated by (*netiquette, netizen, infonet, datagram, infobahn, Internaut, Bugzilla* [a bug-tracking agency]). An innovation is the replacement of a word-element by a similar sounding item, as we have already seen in the use of *e-* (*ecruiting* ['electronic recruiting'], *ecruiter, etailing* ['electronic retailing']). Another

is the retaining of the period found in electronic addresses within certain compounds, as a kind of infix, seen in *net.legend, net.abuse, net.police, net.citizen*, with the punctuation mark often spoken aloud as 'dot'. In a development which will cause delight to all Anglo-Saxonists, the *-en* plural of *oxen* is found with some words ending in *-x*, such as *boxen, vaxen* ['VAX computers'], *matrixen, bixen* ['users of BIX', an information exchange system] – a usage which could well increase, given that so many computing names end in *-X*. Word-class conversion is important, too, usually from noun to verb, as in *to mouse, to clipboard, to geek out* ['talk technically'], *to 404* ['be unable to find a page']

The various types of abbreviation found in Netspeak have been one of its most remarked features. A tiny sample would include *BBS* ['bulletin board system'], *BCC* ['blind carbon copy'], *DNS* ['domain name system'], *FAQ* ['frequently asked question'], *HTML* ['hypertext markup language'], *ISP* ['Internet Service Provider'], *URL* ['uniform resource locator'], and the names of many firms and sites, such as *AOL, IBM, IRC*. Letter-plus-number combinations are also found: *W3C* ['World Wide Web Consortium'], *3Com* [a data-networking organization], *P3P* ['Platform for Privacy Preferences'], *Go2Net*. Newer technology, such as the WAP-phones ['Wireless Application Protocol'] with their tiny screens, have motivated a whole new genre of abbreviated forms. The acronyms are no longer restricted to words or short phrases, but can be sentence-length, as in *AYSOS* ['Are you stupid or something?'], *CID* ['Consider it done'], *CIO* ['Check it out'], *GTG* ['Got to go'], *WDYS* ['What did you say?']. Individual words can be reduced to two or three letters: *PLS* ['please'], *THX* or *TX* ['thanks'], *WE* ['whatever']. Some are like rebuses, in that the sound value of the letter or numeral acts as a syllable of a word, or are combinations of rebus and letter initial: *B4N* ['Bye For Now'], *CYL* ['See you later'], *L8R* ['later']. There are dictionaries of such forms now.

Distinctive graphology is also an important feature of Netspeak. The range extends from an enhanced system (by comparison with traditional writing) with a wide range of special fonts and styles, as in the most sophisticated Web pages, to a severely reduced system, with virtually no typographic contrastivity (not even such 'basic' features as italics or boldface), as in many e-mails and chatgroup conversations. All orthographic features have been affected. For example, the status of capitalization varies greatly. Most of the Internet is not case-sensitive, which thus motivates the random use of capitals or no capitals at all. There is a strong tendency to use lower-case everywhere. The 'save a keystroke' principle is widely found, where whole sentences can be produced without capitals (or punctuation): *john are you going to london next week*. The lower-case default mentality means that any use of capitalization is a strongly marked form of communication. Messages wholly in capitals are considered to be 'shouting', and usually avoided; words in capitals add extra emphasis (with asterisks and spacing also available), as already illustrated. There are, however, certain contexts where capitals need to be recognized. A capital letter may be obligatory in a business name (especially if trade-marked). Indeed, a distinctive feature of Internet graphology is the way two capitals are used - one initial, one medial – a phenomenon variously called *bicapitalization* (*BiCaps*), *intercaps, incaps*, and *midcaps*: *AltaVista, RetrievalWare, ScienceDirect, ThomsonDirect, NorthernLight, PostScript, PowerBook, DreamWorks, GeoCities, EarthLink, PeaceNet, SportsZone, HotWired, CompuServe, AskJeeves*. More complex examples include *QuarkXPress, aRMadillo Online*.

Spelling practice is also distinctive. In English, US spelling is more common than British, partly for historical reasons (the origins of the Internet), and partly for reasons of economy, most US spellings being a character shorter than British ones (*color* vs *colour*, etc). New spelling conventions have emerged, such as the replacement of plural *-s* by *-z* to refer to pirated versions of software, as in *warez, tunez, gamez, serialz, pornz, downloadz, filez*. Nonstandard spelling, heavily penalized in traditional writing (at least, since the 18th century), is used without sanction in conversational settings. Spelling errors in an e-mail would not be assumed to be an indication of lack of education (though they may be) but purely a function of typing inaccuracy. Nonstandard spellings are used to reflect pronunciation, such as *yep, yup, yay, nope, noooo, kay* ('OK'), *sokay* ['It's OK']. Emotional expressions of horror, shock, and the like make use of varying numbers of vowels and consonants, depending on the

ferocity of the emotion: *aaaiiieee, yayyyyyyy*. Some deviant spellings have become so widely used as to be virtually standard in this variety, such as *phreak, phreaker, phreaking* [= 'freak', etc]. Some are still restricted to certain groups of users, such as the *-y-* spelling (from *byte*) introduced into certain expressions for bit blocks of different sizes: *tayste, tydbit* (2 bits), *nybble* (4 bits), *playte* (16 bits), *dynner* (32 bits). The dollar sign sometimes replaces *S*, if some sort of dig is being made about costs, as in *Micro$oft*, and a £ sign can replace *L*, as in *AO£*. Teenage users, in particular, have introduced several deviant spellings, such as *kool, c%l* ['cool'], *fone* ['phone'], *d00dz* ['dudes'], *l0zers* ['losers']. Among this group of users, the *k* is often used as an emphatic prefix, producing such forms as *k-kool, k-awesome, k-k-allright*.

Punctuation tends to be minimalist in most situations, and completely absent in some e-mails and chat exchanges. It is an important area, for it is the chief means a language has for bringing writing into direct contact with (the prosody of) speech, as well as conveying a great deal of information about grammatical construction. A lot depends on personality: some e-mailers are scrupulous about maintaining a traditional punctuation; others use it when they have to, to avoid ambiguity; and some do not use it at all, either as a consequence of typing speed, or through not realizing that ambiguity can be one of the consequences. On the other hand, there is an increased use of symbols not normally part of the traditional punctuation system, such as the hash: #. Unusual combinations of punctuation marks can occur, such as (to express pause): ....., ---, and ,,,,,. Emphasis and attitude can result in exaggerated or random use of punctuation, such as *!!!!!!!* or *£$£$%!*. A potential contrastivity seems to be emerging, in the use of some pairs, notably the scope of emphasis indicated by the asterisk. The two sentences below convey rather different effects: the second is much slower and more emphatic.

This is a * very * important point.

This is a * very * * important * * point.*

However, the asterisk is still developing a range of functions, and is at times used somewhat idiosyncratically.

The most general features of Netspeak distinctiveness are currently found chiefly in graphology and the lexicon – the levels of language where it is relatively easy to introduce innovation and deviation. As with language change in general, grammatical variation is less frequent or widespread. When it does occur it tends to be restricted to a particular situation or group of users. For example, the phenomenon of *verb reduplication* occurs in some chatgroups, and occasionally elsewhere, but as yet is not a universally encountered feature. A verb (from a fairly small set) is used twice in immediate succession to express a range of functions, such as an expression of pleasure or pain, as a sarcastic or exasperated reaction, or simply as a turn-marking marker, showing that an utterance is ended:

How about that! Win, win. ['the program has performed successfully']

I deleted your message. Lose, lose! ['I'm stupid']

So far I have been illustrating features which can be found across Netspeak domains. When we examine a particular domain in greater detail, there is evidence of further linguistic distinctiveness. I shall use some features of e-mails to illustrate the point. E-mails have a fixed internal structure, and each element of that structure has its conventions. For instance, in the body of an e-mail, there are both obligatory and optional elements. The obligatory item is, patently, a message of some sort. What is interesting is the extent to which it is preceded by a *greeting* (or *salutation, opening*) and followed by a *farewell* (or *signature, closing*). Several types of e-mail have no greeting at all. They include first messages from people who do not know the recipient, and are therefore typical in the case of public announcements and junk-mail. Some messages include an automatically derived 'Dear X' or 'Hi, X' to their openings, often with bizarre results. Automatic junk-greetings in my case have included *Hi, Professor D; Hello, Crystal; Dear Mr Wales*.

Between people who know each other, greetingless messages are usually promptly sent responses, where the responder sees the message as the second part of a two-part interaction (an *adjacency pair*), for which an introductory greeting is inappropriate. For example (a) is all right, but (b) would be unlikely, and (c) even less so.

(a) Arriving message: David, will 7.30 be OK for the talk? Colin
Response message: Fine
(b) Response message: *Colin, Fine.
(c) Response message: *Dear Colin,
                        Fine.

The longer the delay in responding, the more likely the response will contain a greeting, if only an apology for the time-lag.

By contrast, two-thirds of a sample of 500 e-mails in my Deleted folder from people who know me contained an introductory greeting.

–Dear
General word: *Hi, Hello again, Hi there!, Bonjour*
General word plus ID: *Hi from Pete, Goodday from Oz*
Intimate name alone: *David, david, Dave, DC, Dad*
Combination of general word and intimate name: *Hi David, Hey D, Hello David, Hello DC, Good morning David, Howdy David, Hi dad*
Formal name: *Professor Crystal, Professor*
[but never (yet): General word and formal name: *Hi, Professor Crystal, *Hello Professor*]
+ Dear
With intimate name: *Dear David, Dear Dave*
With whole name: *Dear David Crystal, Annwyl David Crystal* [Welsh: 'Dear']
With title and surname: *Dear Professor Crystal, Dear Dr Crystal, Dear Mr Crystal, Estimado profesor Crystal*

They express a wide range of effects, from most formal to most informal, and indicate several kinds of social relationship and intimacy. They could be classified in many ways, but an important variable is the use of an initial endearment *(+Dear* messages were twice as common as *–Dear* messages). By far the most frequent individual greeting formula was *Dear David*, followed by *David*, then *Hi David*, confirming the general view about the medium as a means of informal interaction between people who know each other.

Farewells display fewer possibilities for variation, but the same points of principle arise. Two elements are available: a pre-closing formula (of the *Best wishes* type) and the identification of the sender. Most interpersonal messages (80%, in my case) end with both elements present, and the influence of traditional letter-writing is evident in the overwhelming tendency to place each element on a separate line, usually spaced away from the message body. The remaining 20% give a name, and dispense with the formula. The usual range of formulae, known from traditional letter-writing, is employed, with the same range of functions (affection, gratitude, expectation, communicative intent, and so on): *Lots of love, Thanks for everything, See you soon, Let me know if this isn't clear* .... The informality of the medium is reflected in the relative absence of the *Yours sincerely* type (turning up in only 5% of my messages, though it seems to be increasing). There seems to be no difference between old and young in their predilection for formulae, though preferences vary dramatically, as we would expect. (I cannot see myself ever using *ta-ta, babe* used by one of my children to her friend. Sadly, I don't seem to know any 'babes'.)

The overriding impression I have, even from such a small sample of material, is of the remarkable amount of variation which is found within the medium. E-mail guidebooks present a much more standardized picture, and in their prescriptions reduce the range of options quite considerably. One of them is unequivocal in its support for first-name only: 'Start the message with the person's first name if you're communicating with a person you know on that basis'. However, as with other domains, such as letter-writing, having a range of linguistic options increases the communicative power of a medium, and usage manuals need to recognize this. In any case, people are voting with their feet: as e-mail becomes a routine part of social life, at all levels, it will inevitably be influenced by the linguistic practices of its users. Already many people use it as a more immediate and practical way of sending formal

letters and greetings cards. In recent months I have received official invitations, letters of agreement, and many other formal communications through this medium, and replied to them in the same way. It is likely that the technological benefits of the medium (in terms of speed, forwarding, automatic typesetting, etc) will eventually be a more important driving force than the fact that it permits a greater degree of informal communication than existed before. My prediction is therefore that e-mail in a few years time will display a much wider stylistic range than it does at present, as the medium is adapted to suit a broader range of communicative purposes, and the legal issues surrounding the status of certain types of message come to be resolved.

The clarity of the message on the screen is a dominant theme of e-mail manuals. Clarity in this context involves both legibility and intelligibility. Legibility chiefly refers to ways of avoiding a screenful of unbroken text. Writers are recommended to use a line-of-white between paragraphs, for example, or to highlight points in a list using a bullet or numbering facility. (The increased use of bullet points is an important stylistic feature of e-mails, having previously been rare in letters and typewritten documents.) They are advised to use short, simple sentences, long ones being felt to be more difficult to read on screen. But all questions of legibility have to be considered from two points of view – the reader's as well as the writer's. This is one of the unique features of e-mail communication: there is no guarantee that the message as reproduced on the writer's screen will appear in the same configuration when it reaches the reader's. A common problem is for the line-length settings to differ, so that a message which sat neatly in 100-character lines at the sender's terminal is reproduced with a highly erratic sequence of long and short line-lengths on the receiving screen, or fails to wrap around at all (requiring an awkward repeated right-scrolling manoeuvre), or is processed so that the end part of each line is simply left out. In addition, any special formatting (such as the use of bold or italic typefaces) may be lost in transmission. And attachments may be unreadable at the other end. No other type of written communication presents us with such potential asymmetry.

The pressure to maintain a message's intelligibility might be thought to be no different from that encountered in any other communicative domain. But the speed and spontaneity with which e-mails can be written and sent makes it more likely that the processes of reflection normally used with written language will not take place. Evidently many people do not read through their message before sending it – often with the unintended consequence that the first reply they receive is a request for clarification. Misspellings, for example, are a natural feature of the body message in an e-mail. They occur, regardless of the educational background of the writer, in any situation where there is fast typing and a lack of editorial revision. For the most part, these errors cause little or no disruption to the communicative process. No-one is likely to be misled by such e-lines as:

I'll procede with the practical arrangments.

Hav eyou got the tikcets yet?

Nor is the reader going to make a social judgement about the writer's educational ability, on the basis of such data – a contrast with what *would* happen if someone wrote a traditional letter containing such errors. Of the hundreds of e-mail typing errors I have seen, hardly any really interfere with the meaning. Nonetheless, some manuals are hotly against misspellings of any kind. And the same anxiety is expressed over omitted capitalization and punctuation. The attitude doubtless has some force in the context of business communication, where prescriptive attitudes are likely to be strongly present, consciously or unconsciously. But as a principle of general guidance for all e-mail users, it is unreal. Lightly punctuated and uncapitalized messages, given the relatively short sentence lengths, pose few problems of ambiguity:

log onto the address below and you will see a mock up of our site

this is an excerpt from a tommy cooper story i got

More important, in relation to intelligibility, is the question of a message's coherence, arising out of the inherently dialogic character of e-messaging. Although some e-mails are sent without any expectation of a response, the vast majority do expect a reply – and get one. Accordingly, the communicative unit, as in everyday conversation, is the *exchange*. The chief

linguistic evidence for exchanges is the frequency with which response messages begin with an acknowledgement that there has been a previous message: direct feedback expressions, just as in everyday conversation, or elliptical and anaphoric (referring-back) devices, as the queries illustrate in this selection of opening sentences:

> Yes, I think you're right [about what?]
> No, he won't be there [who? where?].

An explicit acknowledgement of the existence of a previous message is common: excluding replies which have been automatically generated (usually because the recipient is away), 70% of my messages begin with an acknowledgement, as in:

> Thanks for your message
> Many thanks for your thoughts
> Sorry for the delay in replying

Formality varies greatly: *Thank you, Thanks, THX, Ta* .... In my corpus, the majority of the messages *without* any acknowledgement were very short – often one line or one word in length. This is understandable: it would be anomalous to add an acknowledgement which would be longer than the meat of the response. The following seems highly unlikely:

> ?*Thanks for your message. Yes.

Acknowledgement is also sometimes omitted when the full text of the previous message is reproduced further down the screen, as when use has been made of the 'Reply to Author' option. The opposite situation also occurs, with a reply message consisting solely of an acknowledgement, such as *Thanks*. Usage manuals differ in their views about this practice: some warm to the fact that a courtesy has been expressed; others castigate it as a time-wasting device.

The dialogic character of the body element in an e-mail is made totally explicit when the 'Reply to Author' option is activated, and respondents add reactions which refer directly to the whole of a received message. The process is facilitated by the software, which makes a clear typographic distinction between original message and reaction. After early experiments using indention, standard practice is now to insert a right-pointing angle bracket (sometimes a colon or vertical black line) at the beginning of each line of the original message (including the paragraph-separating lines-of-white), so that (a) becomes (b).

> (a) I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
> you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
> Fred is bringing his car ...
> (b) >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
> >you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
> >Fred is bringing his car ...

The reaction may then be added, in any of three locations: above the whole of the received message, below it, or within it – repeatedly, if necessary. The procedure is a little like adding notes at the beginning or end of a letter, or in the margins, and returning it to the sender – but with the difference that in e-mail both parties end up with a perfect copy of everything.

It is the within-message comment which is really interesting, from a linguistic point of view. This is especially used when several points are being made which require individual attention. A within-message reply to (a) above might read as in (c):

> (c) >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains.
> I know – remember last time?
> >Will you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time?
> Car
> >I know Fred is bringing his car ...

It would not be intelligible to give the sequence of responses illustrated in (d) at the end of the message, or as in (e) at the beginning.

> (d) >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
> >you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
> >Fred is bringing his car.
> I know – remember last time?
> Car

(e) I know – remember last time?
Car
>I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
>you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
>Fred is bringing his car.

To make either intelligible would require major rewriting, with more explicit cross-reference to or paraphrasing of what the sender had said. In business communication, where documents can be very long and reactions to individual points erratically located, guidebook advice to avoid within-message reactions is well-taken. A point might easily be missed, and it would be difficult to work out the nature of the overall reply from a sequence of individual, widely separated reactions.

Message intercalation is a unique feature of e-mail language, and a property which could only succeed in an electronic medium. And there is a further refinement. It is possible for recipients to respond to an original message not by adding reactions to selected parts of the original text, but by editing the original text so that only those parts which require reaction are left. The procedure is, effectively, one of quotation. Thus, for example, I sent the following paragraph (a) to someone, who replied as (b), cutting one of my sentences and pasting it into the new message.

(a) There are still several loose ends for the Tuesday. We've had a lot of people wanting to contribute, and our original proposals for timing seem to be out. Do you think it would work having two sessions in the afternoon? It would mean cutting down on the tea-break, and maybe even timing dinner a half-hour later than usual. That in turn would push the evening session on a bit, but I don't see any problem there, as everyone is staying the night.

(b) >Do you think it would work having two sessions in the afternoon?
Good idea

The longer a sender's paragraphs, the more likely the recipient is to respond in this way. The result has been described as *framing*, because of the way in which the quoted text is demarcated typographically, either through an angle-bracket or a vertical line. Framing is a consequence of the ease with which people can cut and paste from an original message.

Framing has both strengths and weaknesses. It is a convenience, in that a series of points can be responded to rapidly and succinctly, either in the order in which they were made or in some fresh order – much as we can strategically recapitulate a series of points made by an interlocutor in a face-to-face discussion. Time and memory are saved, as it is no longer necessary to trawl back through an e-mail thread to find the original remarks. And dealing with several points at once saves repeated e-mailing. Reactions to reactions are also possible, with each new reaction retaining its own framing device, so that the page takes on a nested appearance (as shown by the increasing angle brackets in:

>B's extract from A's message
>>A's extract from B's message
>>>B's extract from A's extract ...

On the other hand, everybody knows the difficulties which arise when quotations are being used extensively: meaning can change dramatically when words are quoted out of context, whether innocently or deliberately. Deliberate out-of-context quotation may seem a strange concept to people expecting the e-mail or chatgroup worlds to be inhabited by polite, well-mannered individuals. But misquotation, in order to score a point, is widespread.

A framed message is certainly a most unusual object, not like anything else in language use. The stylistic consequences of cutting and pasting text from an earlier message – either our own or someone else's – are also unusual; here, too, there is nothing remotely like it in other domains of writing. Where else would we find so much physically adjacent but semantically unrelated paragraphs of text? In traditional writing, such texts would be penalized for lack of organization and logical progression; but in an e-mail, where the points are taking up different issues in a previous message, such overriding considerations are waived. The bottom line is that, with e-mail, a new document is created with every transaction. The permanence of e-writing is only a superficial impression. Although a single

piece of text may be preserved throughout a thread of messages, via forwarding or replying to author, each screen incarnation gives it a different status and may present it in a different form - either through electronic interference from the software or editorial interference from the new user.

Writers repeatedly draw analogies between e-mail and other forms of communication, in order to locate it in communicative 'space'. Homer Simpson has it explained to him in this way:

Homer: What's an e-mail?

Lenny: It's a computer thing, like, er, an electric letter.

Carl: Or a quiet phone call.

From the above analysis, it is clear that e-mails do indeed have elements of the memo about them, notably in their fixed header structure. The informal letter analogy is also appropriate, with the medium's reliance on greetings and farewells, and the use of several informal written features in the message body. The telephone conversation analogy is also proper, given the way a dialogue style can build up over time; and the cheapness of the medium has often been remarked . And some e-mails are highly telegrammatic in style. But e-mail, in the final analysis, is like none of these. It is not written speech not spoken writing. It is, formally and functionally, unique.

The evolution of e-mail style is in its infancy, and perhaps the only thing we can say for certain is that it will soon no longer be as it currently is. Generalizations about the medium have hitherto been heavily influenced by its technical origins and early years of use. There is an understandable tendency to think of e-mailing solely in terms of informality. It feels temporary, indeed, and this promotes a sense of the carefree. Messages can be easily deleted, which suggests that their content is basically unimportant. Because of its spontaneity, speed, privacy, and leisure value, e-mail offers the option of greater levels of informality than are found elsewhere in traditional writing. But as the medium matures, it is becoming apparent that it is not exclusively an informal medium, and received opinion is going to have to change. The result will be a medium which will portray a wide range of stylistic expressiveness, from formal to informal, just as other mediums have come to do, and where the pressure on users will be to display stylistic consistency, in the same way that this is required in other forms of writing. E-mail will then take its place in the school curriculum, not as a medium to be feared for its linguistic irresponsibility (because it allows radical graphological deviance) but as one which offers a further domain within which children can develop their ability to consolidate their stylistic intuitions and make responsible linguistic choices. E-mail has extended the language's stylistic range in interesting and motivating ways. In my view, it is an opportunity, not a threat, for language education.

I am therefore very supportive of the various initiatives to introduce e-mail and other Internet domains into the ELT world. David Eastment, for example, carried out a survey on English-language teaching (ELT) in relation to the Internet, on behalf of the British Council in 1996, and was in 'no doubt that the Internet ... will eventually transform the way that the teaching and learning of English, and the business of ELT is conducted.' E-mail is a convenient medium which gives students the experience of authentic writing tasks, in relation to fellow-students, teachers, and native-speaker contacts. It is now widely incorporated into language teaching - in those parts of the world where Internet access is routine - for a wide range of purposes, such as 'domestic' exchanges on everyday topics, teacher feedback on points of usage, exercises in business correspondence, and collaborative research projects. It is even possible to have the words of a text given an automatic grammatical parsing, using an e-mail connection. Additional textual and graphic material can be sent through the use of attachments. There have been several procedures devised for specific teaching purposes, such as the 'language learning in tandem' approach developed by David Little and others, in which people with different languages work together in pairs. Each participant sends messages in the other person's language, and provides feedback on problems of usage as they occur. The procedure also gives the participants the chance to learn about each other's character and culture, and exchange knowledge about their

professional lives. The use of e-mail in this way certainly puts traditional methods of contact in the shade. I recall in 1960, after a multinational work experience in Europe, attempting to work in tandem with an Algerian Arab friend - my English in exchange for his Arabic. It lasted only a few weeks, simply because of the impracticability of the only method then available to us – exchange by slow and expensive letter. If e-mail had existed then, I would be a fluent Arabic speaker now, instead of being able to do little more than get through the first verse of 'Moustapha'.

The use of the Internet in foreign language teaching may be in its infancy, but it is plainly here to stay. Yet it already presents teachers with fresh challenges. The difficulties I noted earlier, arising out of the nature of the medium in conversation, apply with greater force to foreign learners – the lack of intonational cues, facial expressions, and so on. Also, teachers have to work out ways of handling a new kind of difficulty – new, at least, in the order of magnitude that it presents – namely, the fact that so much of the native-speaker usage in chatgroups and virtual worlds is non-standard, often ludic and highly deviant. The tolerance of typographical error, and the relaxation of the rules of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, will not in themselves be novelties to learners, for the same flexibility doubtless exists in their own mother-tongue Internet use. But foreign learners lack the intuitive sense of the boundary between standard and non-standard, or a sense of just how deviant a chatgroup usage might be, and by dint of exposure to repeated instances they may well end up misusing a construction, idiom, or other form. The bending and breaking of rules, which is a hallmark of ludic linguistic behaviour, always presents a problem to those who have not yet developed a confident command of the rules *per se*. Ironically, learners can sometimes give the impression that they are more fluent than they actually are, in that their errors can superficially resemble the deviant forms flamboyantly manifested by mother-tongue Internet users.

I have illustrated from technologies that are currently available. Already they are sufficient to introduce a huge range of new varieties to the English language (as to other languages), and their combined impact has brought us face-to-face with a new linguistic medium. But the story of 21st century English is only beginning. Computational futurologists are anticipating radical innovation in each of the three traditional domains of communication: production, transmission, and reception. There will be extraordinary changes in delivery systems and access devices, and inconceivable increases in processing power. All of these will have an impact on the kind of language we use. The heart of the matter seems to be the immense increase in bandwidth, already seen in ISDN, cable, and optical fibre technologies, which will permit many channels to be simultaneously available within a single signal, and thus allow hitherto separate communication modalities to be integrated. The two main modes, sound and vision, have already begun to be linked in this way; and there is in principle no reason why other modes (tactile, olfactory, gustatory) should not also be incorporated. The various established media elements are already becoming increasingly integrated, in a frame of reference neatly captured by the phrase *streaming media*. It would appear that the aim is to make anything speedily available with anything - Web with sound and video, personal digital assistants with Web access, television with Internet access, Internet with television access, radio programmes with pictures, and so on. New terms are already evolving to describe the novel combinations of function, such as *teleputer*. Some domains, such as holography, have yet to develop their communicative nomenclature. It is difficult to resist the conclusion of one pair of commentators, Bob Cotton and Malcolm Garrett, who entitle their 1999 booklet on the future of the media and expert systems, *You ain't seen nothing yet*. That, of course, is what religious prophets used to say, too. And for English language teachers, attempting to emulate prophets, the message is plain. Get familiar with the innovative language of the new technology as soon as you can; for the 21st century will see more linguistic change in English than we have seen at any time since the Renaissance. With language, too, we ain't seen nothing yet.

Twenty-first century English

David Crystal

1   aaaaahhhhh, hiiiiiii, ooops, soooo

2   no more!!!!!, whohe????, hey!!!!!!!!!, see what you started??????????????????

3   all capitals for 'shouting':   I SAID NO
      letter spacing for 'loud and clear':   W H Y N O T, w h y n o t
      word/phrase emphasis by asterisks: the * real * answer

4   :-) or :)   :-(or : (

5   It's my turn to download now (i.e. I've heard all your gossip, now hear mine)
      I need more bandwidth to handle that point (i.e. I can't take it all in at once)
      She's multitasking (said of someone doing two things at once)
      Let's go offline for a few minutes (i.e. let's talk in private)
      Give me a brain dump on that (i.e. tell me all you know)
      Are you wired? (i.e. ready to handle this)
      Get with the programme (i.e. keep up)
      I got a pile of spam in the post today (i.e. junk-mail)
      E you later (said as a farewell)

6   .com and get it

7   Dot.com all ye faithful

8   lunch@Boots.yum

9   learnhow.to
      launch.anything,
      un.complicated

10   Get around the www.orld
      www.alk this way

11   @tractions, @cafe, @Home, @pex

12   This is where it's @

13   Business @ the speed of thought

14   Crystals @ ...

15   e-text, e-zine, e-cash, e-money

16   e-tailing, e-tailers ['retailing on the Internet']
      e-lance ['electronic free-lance'], e-lancers
      e-therapy, e-therapists
      e-management, e-managers
      e-government, e-bandwagon, e-books, e-conferences, e-voting, e-loan,
      e-newsletters, e-security, e-cards, e-pinions, e-shop, e-list, e-rage, e-crap

17   e-we go ['here we go']

18   webmaster, telnet

19   flower pot, flower-pot, flowerpot

20	startup, homepage, email
21	file, edit, view, insert, paste, format, tools, help, save
22	illegal operation, error, not found
23	freeze, lock, down, hang, crash, bomb, client [the machine, not the user]
24	netizens, netters, netties, netheads, cybersurfers, nerds, newbies
25	mouseclick, mousepad, mouse across, mouse over
26	click-and-buy, one-click, cost-per-click, double-click
27	firmware, freeware, groupware, shareware, shovelware, wetware ['brain']
28	webcam, webmail, webliography, webmaster, webzine, webhead ['Web addict']
29	netlag, netdead, netnews, hypernet, Usenet, Netspeak, EcoNet, PeaceNet
30	hotlist, hotspot, hotlink, Hotmail, HotBot, HotJava
31	bug fix, bugtracker, bug bash ['hunt for bugs'], BugNet
32	cyberspace, cyberculture, cyberlawyer, cybersex, cyber rights
33	hypertext, hyperlink, hyperfiction, hyperzine
34	annoybot, chatterbot, knowbot, cancelbot, softbot, mailbot, spybot
35	V-chat ['virtual chat'], ThanksE6 ['Thanks a million']
36	atcommand, atsign, @-party, @-address
37	netiquette, netizen, infonet, datagram, infobahn, Internaut, Bugzilla [a bug-tracking agency]
38	ecruiting ['electronic recruiting'], ecruiter, etailing ['electronic retailing']
39	net.legend, net.abuse, net.police, net.citizen
40	boxen, vaxen ['VAX computers'], matrixen, bixen ['users of BIX', an information exchange system]
41	to mouse, to clipboard, to geek out ['talk technically'], to 404 ['be unable to find a page']
42	BBS ['bulletin board system'], BCC ['blind carbon copy'], DNS ['domain name system'], FAQ ['frequently asked question'], HTML ['hypertext markup language'], ISP ['Internet Service Provider'], URL ['uniform resource locator']
43	W3C ['World Wide Web Consortium'], 3Com [a data-networking organization], P3P ['Platform for Privacy Preferences'], Go2Net
44	AYSOS ['Are you stupid or something?'], CID ['Consider it done'], CIO ['Check it out'], GTG ['Got to go'], WDYS ['What did you say?']
45	PLS ['please'], THX or TX ['thanks'], WE ['whatever']
46	B4N ['Bye For Now'], CYL ['See you later'], L8R ['later']
47	john are you going to london next week

48 AltaVista, RetrievalWare, ScienceDirect, ThomsonDirect, NorthernLight, PostScript, PowerBook, DreamWorks, GeoCities, EarthLink, PeaceNet, SportsZone, HotWired, CompuServe, AskJeeves

49 QuarkXPress, aRMadillo Online

50 warez, tunez, gamez, serialz, pornz, downloadz, filez

51 yep, yup, yay, nope, noooo, kay ('OK'), sokay ['It's OK']

52 aaaiiieee, yayyyyyyy

53 phreak, phreaker, phreaking [= 'freak', etc]

54 tayste, tydbit (2 bits), nybble (4 bits), playte (16 bits), dynner (32 bits)

55 Micro$oft

56 AO£

57 kool, c%l ['cool'], fone ['phone'], d00dz ['dudes'], l0zers ['losers']

58 k-kool, k-awesome, k-k-allright

59 #

60 .....   ---   ,,,,,

61 *!!!!!!!   £$£$%!*

62 This is a * very * important point.
    This is a * very * * important * * point.*

63 How about that! Win, win. ['the program has performed successfully']
    I deleted your message. Lose, lose! ['I'm stupid']

64 Hi, Professor D; Hello, Crystal; Dear Mr Wales

65 Arriving message: David, will 7.30 be OK for the talk? Colin
    Response message: Fine

66 Response message: *Colin, Fine.

67 Response message: *Dear Colin,
                            Fine.

68 *–Dear*
    General word: *Hi, Hello again, Hi there!, Bonjour*
    General word plus ID: *Hi from Pete, Goodday from Oz*
    Intimate name alone: *David, david, Dave, DC, Dad*
    Combination of general word and intimate name: *Hi David, Hey D, Hello David, Hello DC, Good morning David, Howdy David, Hi dad*
    Formal name: *Professor Crystal, Professor*
    [but never (yet): General word and formal name: *Hi, Professor Crystal, *Hello Professor]
    + Dear
    With intimate name: *Dear David, Dear Dave*
    With whole name: *Dear David Crystal, Annwyl David Crystal* [Welsh: 'Dear']
    With title and surname: *Dear Professor Crystal, Dear Dr Crystal, Dear Mr Crystal, Estimado profesor Crystal*

69   Lots of love, Thanks for everything, See you soon, Let me know if this isn't clear ...

70   ta-ta, babe

71   I'll procede with the practical arrangments.
         Hav eyou got the tikcets yet?

72   log onto the address below and you will see a mock up of our site
         this is an excerpt from a tommy cooper story i got

73   Yes, I think you're right [about what?]
         No, he won't be there [who? where?]

74   Thanks for your message
         Many thanks for your thoughts
         Sorry for the delay in replying

75   Thank you, Thanks, THX, Ta ...

76   ?*Thanks for your message. Yes.

77   I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
         you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
         Fred is bringing his car ...

78   >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
         >you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
         >Fred is bringing his car ...

79   >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains.
         I know – remember last time?
         >Will you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time?
         Car
         >I know Fred is bringing his car ...

80   >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
         >you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
         >Fred is bringing his car.
         I know – remember last time?
         Car

81   I know – remember last time?
         Car
         >I hope to be there by six, though everything depends on the trains. Will
         >you be coming by train yourself, or are you driving this time? I know
         >Fred is bringing his car.

82   There are still several loose ends for the Tuesday. We've had a lot of people wanting to
         contribute, and our original proposals for timing seem to be out. Do you think it would work
         having two sessions in the afternoon? It would mean cutting down on the tea-break, and
         maybe even timing dinner a half-hour later than usual. That in turn would push the evening
         session on a bit, but I don't see any problem there, as everyone is staying the night.

83   >Do you think it would work having two sessions in the afternoon?
         Good idea

84   >B's extract from A's message
         >>A's extract from B's message
         >>>B's extract from A's extract ...