

Quand l'analytique se fait synthétique : les formes verbales périphrastiques dans le texto

Long forms vs short space: what happens to periphrastic tenses in SMS?

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Abstract: The influence of text messaging on language has been hotly debated especially in relation to spelling and the lexicon, but the impact of SMS on syntax has received less attention.

This article focuses on manipulations within the verbal domain, as language evolution points towards a consistent trend going from synthetic to analytical forms (Bybee *et al.* 1994), which goes against the need for concision in texting.

Based on an authentic corpus of about 500 SMS (Fairon *et al.* 2006b), the present study shows condensation strategies that are similar to those already described, yet reveals specific features such as the absence of aphaeresis and the scarcity of apocope, as well as the overuse of synthetic forms. It can thus be concluded that while SMS writing displays oral characteristics, it cannot obviously be assimilated to speech; in addition, it may well slow down language evolution and support the conservation of short standard forms.

Key words: SMS language, language evolution, simple future, periphrastic future, written language, spoken language.