Abstract

This article presents the results of a two-year study of North American youth which produced a 179,000 word corpus of internet language from the same writers across three registers: email, instant messaging, and phone texting. Analysis of three linguistic phenomena—(i) acronyms, short forms, and initialisms; (ii) intensifiers; and (iii) future temporal reference—reveals that despite variation in form and contrasting frequencies across registers, the patterns of variant use are stable. This offers linguistic evidence that there is no degeneration of grammar in internet language use. Instead, the young people are fluidly navigating a complex set of new written registers, and they command them all. (Internet, language change, youth)*