ICQ English: Sociolinguistic and Pedagogical Perspectives

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ICQ English, like other forms of English used in computer-mediated communication, is emerging as a low variety. It deviates from Standard English in many ways yet it is widely understood, accepted, and adopted by specific social groups for specific communicative purposes. Working within these sociolinguistic realities, English teachers are faced with the challenge to help students achieve a high proficiency level in Standard English. The present research analyzes in detail the English grammatical features of 40 ICQ histories submitted by 21 university students in Hong Kong, with a view to exploring the linguistic processes at work. Issues of strengthening learners' sense of linguistic appropriateness in relation to genre, audience, purpose, and medium are addressed, and the implications for developing effective literacy pedagogies are discussed.