GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE TEXT MESSAGING OF YOUNG JORDANIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES

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Abstrak

Walaupun kajian menyeluruh telah dijalankan ke atas komunikasi bersemuka, perbezaan jantina masih belum dipelopori dengan meluas dalam pesanan teks. Objektif kajian ini adalah meneroka perbezaan jantina dalam ciri linguistik yang terdapat dalam pesanan teks dalam kalangan pelajar lelaki dan perempuan di universiti-universiti di Jordan yang berkaitan dengan (1) ciri leksikal (singkatan, akronim, pemendekan, pinjaman, terbitan, teradun, majmuk, dan pertukaran), (2) ciri sintaktik (menggugurkan kata nama subjek, menggugurkan kata nama subjek dan kata bantu, menggugurkan kopular/katakerja modal, dan menggugurkan kata sandang) dan ciri tipografi (tanda bacaan, huruf dan homofon nombor, ejaan fonetik, perkataan onomatopia dan emotikon). Dari segi teori, kajian ini berpandukan model Bodomo dan Lee, iaitu *Technology-conditioned Language Change and Use* dan pendekatan Herring, iaitu *Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis*. Tiga teknik pengumpulan data secara kualitatif digunakan, iaitu soal selidik terbuka, diari pengguna dan temu bual separa berstruktur untuk memperoleh maklumat berkaitan ciri yang terdapat dalam pesanan teks pelajar tersebut. Seramai seratus orang pelajar menjawab soal selidik manakala dua puluh orang pelajar ditemu bual secara separa berstruktur. Enam puluh orang pelajar yang terlibat dalam diari pengguna memberikan korpus sebanyak 1,612 pesanan teks yang telah dianalisis berdasarkan jantina penghantar teks. Pesanan teks juga dianalisis untuk melihat kehadiran ciri leksikal, sintaktik dan tipografi dan dibandingkan untuk mencari perbezaan antara jantina. Ciri leksikal dikategori berdasarkan kategori *word-formation processes* oleh Yule (2009) manakala ciri sintaktik dan tipografi dikategori mengikut Hård af Segrestad (2002) dan tipologi ciri linguistik pesanan teks mengikut Thurlow (2003). Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan jantina dalam pesanan teks pelajar Jordan dalam ketiga-tiga ciri linguistik. Pelajar perempuan didapati cenderung menggunakan lebih banyak ciri leksikal berbanding dengan pelajar lelaki manakala pelajar lelaki pula cenderung menggugurkan ciri sintaktik berbanding dengan pelajar perempuan. Dari segi ciri tipografi, didapati pelajar lelaki cenderung menggunakan lebih banyak huruf, homofon huruf dan ejaan fonetik berbanding dengan pelajar perempuan yang lebih banyak menggunakan tanda bacaan, perkataan onomatopia dan emotikon. Dapatan kajian ini juga menyokong dapatan kajian lampau mengenai terdapatnya perbezaan jantina dalam pesanan teks, dalam komunikasi bersemuka dan komunikasi berperantara komputer. Kajian ini memberi sumbangan terhadap literatur kajian bahasa dari sudut penggunaan beberapa ciri linguistik dan variasinya dalam pesanan teks antara lelaki dengan perempuan. Beberapa implikasi dan cadangan turut dikemukakan dalam kajian ini.

Kata kunci: Perbezaan gender, Pesanan teks, Ciri linguistik, Pelajar universiti di Jordan

Abstract

In spite of being extensively studied in face-to-face communication, gender differences remain widely unexplored within text messaging. The objectives of this study are to explore gender differences in the use of linguistic features in the text messaging of young Jordanian male and female university students with regard to (1) lexical features (abbreviations, acronyms, shortenings, borrowing, derivation, blending, compounding, and conversion), (2) syntactic features (deletion of subject pronoun, deletion of subject pronoun and auxiliary, deletion of copular/ modal verb, and deletion of article), and (3) typographical features (punctuation, letter and number homophones, phonetic spellings, onomatopoeic words, and emoticons). Theoretically, the study is guided by Bodomo and Lee's model of Technology-conditioned Language Change and Use and Herring's approach of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis. Three techniques of qualitative data collection were used: open-ended questionnaires, user diaries and semi-structured interviews to elicit information on the features reflected in the text messages of the students. One hundred students responded to a questionnaire while twenty students participated in semi-structured interviews. The sixty students who participated in the user diaries provided a corpus of 1,612 text messages which were analyzed according to the gender of the senders. The messages were also analyzed for occurrences of lexical, syntactic, and typographical features, and compared for differences across gender. Lexical features were categorized based on Yule's (2009) categorization of word-formation processes while syntactic and typographical features were categorized according to Hård af Segrestad's (2002) and Thurlow's (2003) typology of linguistic features of text messaging. The findings of this study reveal the existence of gender differences in the text messages of the Jordanian students in all the three linguistic features. The females tend to use more lexical features than males, whereas the males tend to favor the deletion of syntactic features more than females. In terms of typographical features, the males tend to use more letter and number homophones and phonetic spelling than females while the females tend to use more punctuation, onomatopoeic words and emoticons than males. The findings corroborate with previous findings on differences across gender in text messaging as well as in face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. This study contributes to the literature related to the study of language in terms of the use of some of the linguistic features and their variations in text messaging between males and females. Some implications and recommendations are provided in this study.

Keywords: Gender differences, Text messaging, Linguistic features, Jordanian university students

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

List of Abbreviations

ARPANET	…Advanced Research Project Agency Network
CMC	…Computer-Mediated Communication
CMD	…Computer-Mediated Discourse
CSCA	…Central States Communication Association
DLSU	…De La Salle University
E-mail	…Electronic Mail
F-T-F	… Face-To-Face
GSM	…Global System for Mobile
HTTP	… Hyper Text Transfer Protocol
ICQ	… I Seek You
IM	… Instant Messaging
IP	… Internet Protocol
JP	… Jordanian Piaster
MBU	… Megabyte University
MDA	… Mobile Data Association
MIT	… Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MOE	… Ministry of Education
MOHE	… Ministry of Higher Education
MOO	… Multi User Domain-Object Oriented
MUD	… Multi User Dimension
PDA	… Personal Digital Assistance
SMS	… Short Messages Service
TCP	… Transmission Control Protocol
TESL	… Teaching English as a Second Language
TRC	… Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Text messaging, popularly known as Short Messages Service (SMS), is an asynchronous mode of computer-mediated communication (henceforth CMC) which does not require communicators to be present online simultaneously. Hård af Segerstad (2002, p. 68) defines SMS as "a service that enables its users to send short text messages to one mobile phone from another, or to a mobile phone via the internet."

Text messaging abounds in the lives of people in the world nowadays and is one of the most successful mobile services in recent years. Even though text messaging is used for multi-user communication, 90% of text messages are person-to-person communication (Pederson & Macafee, 2007). In the first stage of text messaging, the length of each text message would be up to 160 characters for Latin alphabets and up to 70 characters for non-Latin alphabets like Chinese and Arabic. Presently, there is no limit to the length of a message. Messages exceeding the number of characters can still be sent; they are automatically split into chunks during the process of sending (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). SMS or text messaging is also referred to as "texting, text" (Harper & Hamill, 2005; Herring, 1994) or "SMSing" (Rouibah, 2006).

The contents of the thesis is for internal user only

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