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

RAFAT MAHMOUD AL ROUSAN

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
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Abstrak


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