

# THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH USED BY UiTM TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (TESL) STUDENTS IN THEIR FACEBOOK INTERACTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

*Facebook is a popular social network which has become a powerful and essential tool for communication today. This study examines the use of English in the Facebook interactions of TESL (Teaching English as a second language) students in the Faculty of Education, UiTM Shah Alam, Malaysia using the categories adapted from Thurlow and Brown (2003) and McNeil (2008). The study also addresses the respondents' perceptions on their language choice and language use using the survey questions and interviews. This study is significant as it provides empirical evidence of the use of English in social media in a Malaysian context. The findings indicate that there are several features of English used in their Facebook interactions which show that a distinct variety of English is used in this computer-mediated context. This is because there is frequent use of non-standard forms of English where some words are abbreviated and spelt in non-conventional spelling. Although these students are TESL students, they believe that it is acceptable to use these non-standard forms because their written texts in Facebook are not considered as academic writing. They are writing in such a way because they are communicating, adapting and accommodating their "speech" in the written mode in online communication.*

**Keywords:** internet linguistics; Facebook; asynchronous online communication; social media; variety of English.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Crystal (2011, p. 10) "the diversity on the language encountered on the internet is enormous as the internet could produce the largest language corpus in the world. The stylistics range not only be from emails, blogs and instant messaging but the increasing amount of linguistic communication in social networking forums such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace". Facebook is chosen as the domain to collect data as nowadays Facebook is one of the most popular social network site (SNS) in the world. Discourse communities that exist in Facebook are unique and interesting to study. Although more and more people are logging in today, relatively little is known on how this phenomenon affects individual languages.

Any similarities and differences of online interactions and face to face interactions will add to the literature of electronically-mediated communication (EMC) and computer-mediated

communication (CMC) especially in social networking. As these social networks are popular, they become the reasons for people to go online more often these days. Facebook has both asynchronous and synchronous modes of communication but this study will only address the asynchronous mode of communication as it is quite different from face to face interaction. According to Herring (2007, p. 2), this mode of communication is interesting to study as asynchronous CMC and EMC allow the communicator more time to edit messages before sending them, like traditional writing, whereas synchronous mode such as chat exchanges (and other short messages, text messaging from mobile phones) are more likely to be composed and sent on the go, like turns in spoken conversation. Hence, asynchronous modes constitute evidence for the conversationality of text-based CMC and EMC.

The study is important as to date very limited study has been done to examine the linguistic features of the language use by Malaysians in Facebook. Apart from that, the phenomenon of CMC and EMC in Malaysia has not been well addressed, although more and more people are logging on to it every day. Therefore, empirical studies are needed to understand how Malaysians as the non-native speakers of English interact online. Knowledge gained from the study could add to the understanding of the new form of language use in CMC and EMC especially in a social network such as Facebook. This study does not solely investigate the structure of language use as a result of electronic communications. It also examines how the respondents perceive their language use and language choice from a sociolinguistic viewpoint. This aspect needs more empirical evidence as they were not extensively covered by other researchers. As Androutsopoulos (2008) points out, research on “Web 2.0”: Platforms for social networking (e.g., Facebook, MySpace), content sharing (e.g., Flickr, YouTube) and collaborative authoring (e.g., Wikipedia, Wictionary) have received little attention from language-oriented scholars so far, with the exception of blogs (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005 cited in Androutsopoulos (2008, p. 2).

Following this, the literature review on the language use in cyberspace will be presented next. Then, methodological procedures will be discussed, followed by results, discussion, implications and conclusion.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The rapid spread of technology and network information has led to a new brand of communication, called Computer-Mediated Communication, or CMC, a type of communication which involves various electronic technologies such as instant-based messaging (IM), synchronous chat, text-messaging, websites, e-mail and blogs. Now that communication can also be accessed by electronic devices such as hand phones, tablets and I pads, this communication can also be called Electronically-mediated communication, or EMC. These devices have created new forms of written discourse. The style of writing created by people on online social network sites has formed some unique characteristics because it combines both written and features normally associated with spoken communication.

According to Lee (2001; 2006) and Smith (2003), the users of e-discourse apply other means to convey their emotions and facial expressions. They invented linguistic devices including onomatopoeia (e.g., lol = laugh out loud, btw = by the way) and keyboard symbols using smiley faces (e.g., :-)) are commonly found in e- discourse to make up for the absence of paralinguistic features of real time communication. Crystal (2008, p. 7-8) states that “texting has evolved as a twenty-first-century phenomenon – as a highly distinctive graphic style, full of abbreviations

and deviant uses of language, used by a young generation that doesn't care about standards". Thurlow and Brown (2003) listed examples found in his participants' transcribed online messages of what might reasonably be regarded as non-standard orthographic or typographic forms. These forms were organised into the following broad categories: shortenings (i.e. missing end letters), contractions (i.e. missing middle letters), G-clippings (i.e. dropping final letter in -ing suffix), acronyms and initialisms, letter/number homophones, misspellings and typos, non-conventional spellings and accent stylizations. Baron (2010) examines discourse structures in instant messaging (IM) communications among American college students to investigate the validity of a hypothesis that the users of CMC commonly presume online platforms such as email and instant messaging (IM) mirror informal verbal language. Sun (2010) conducted a linguistics study to investigate the characteristics of internet English. Sun found that individuals could use resources available on the internet effectively and attain effective communication on the internet. Crystal (2011) states that communication on the internet and other forms of electronic communication shows the use of language(s) in their most economical forms which include the use of abbreviations, symbols and emoticons, and heavily reduced syntactic structures. Averianova (2012, p. 15) states that "the unique linguistic and iconographic features of electronic writing are not limited to innovative abbreviation (acronyms, clippings, logograms, or letter-numeral hybrids and letter-morpheme substitutes, vowel deletion, etc.), emoticons, truncated simplified syntax, non-normative capitalization and other characteristics. Lyddy, Farina, Hanney, Farrell, and Kelly O'Neill (2014) conducted a study to analyze 13 characteristics of e-discourse with a corpus of 936 English messages, with total (13391 words). The findings showed that 25% of corpus used unconventional spelling and the category of dropping capital letters is the most commonly occurring. Freiermuth (2011) argues that the observation of writing in Facebook – an asynchronous form of communication – reveals 'adaptation from a spoken language,' 'timesaving spellings' or 'misspellings'.

In a Malaysian context, Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim (2009, p. 43) claim that "technology has afforded 'netizens' to write in more economical ways with abbreviations and acronyms". Hazadiah, Idris, and Abdul Wab (2011) examine the Facebook walls of 50 students aged 18-25 of higher learning in Malaysia who are bilinguals and multilinguals. The findings indicate that the linguistic repertoire of the subjects consists of more than one language. The messages that appear on the walls of Facebook consist of a form of textual language which usually appeared in text messages via hand phones. These messages consist of abbreviations, emoticons, English words which are spelt in Malay and showed innovations in spelling.

Nowadays, with the advance of electronic technologies people can easily login to Facebook using mobile phones provided there is an internet connection available. Therefore, the researcher expects this would have the same features as the CMC such as misspellings, abbreviations and emoticons on Facebook. Perhaps the way people interact on Facebook prompted by the question 'What's on your mind?' could be affected by the way they write their text messages. Thus, the following questions are addressed in the study:

1. What are the linguistic features of English used by the UiTM TESL undergraduates in their non-academic and academic Facebook interactions?
2. What are the UiTM TESL Undergraduates perceptions on using English in their non-academic and academic Facebook interactions?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The respondents of the study are TESL undergraduates who are in their third year at the Faculty of Education, UiTM Shah Alam, Selangor. As they are TESL students, interactions in the classroom are in English. However, outside of the classroom, as bilinguals they are using Malay and English simultaneously. The respondents are selected to be the sample of the research due to convenience sampling as the researcher is working at the university and know the students. This is to ensure that the process of data collection and data validation could be carried out smoothly. Moreover, they are computer savvy and most of them are familiar and avid Facebook users.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the semester March-July 2012. The survey contains Likert-scale and open-ended questions on the respondents' demographic information, computer usage information, language choice and their perceptions on using Facebook for non-academic and academic interactions. Before the survey was conducted, the researcher briefed the respondents about the study and asked them to sign their consent in the survey questionnaire to meet the ethical requirement. Thus, the respondents' consents were sought before the researcher observes and records their online interactions. In the data analysis, alphabets were used to label the respondents in their online interactions to ensure anonymity and privacy of the respondents.

Three Facebook academic closed groups were created for the purpose of the study. Closed group means that the students are only invited to be in the group. Close group is significant to ensure that the respondents in the group are the registered students who are taking the same subject, Second Language Acquisition (TSL515). The respondents of the research were using the three groups to interact or ask questions, post links or make comments about the subject TSL515. The interactions in these groups were named as academic interactions 6 to 10. Other than that, the researcher is also interested to study the interactions of the respondents outside of the group. These are non-academic interactions which are done in the Facebook walls of the respondents. There is no specific group created for non-academic interaction as the respondents had already had their own groups in Facebook. They would interact socially with their respective friends in a casual non-academic setting. These interactions are named non-academic interactions 1 to 5.

In both the academic and non-academic interactions, the respondents were free to choose any form of language and create any topic of discussion that they were comfortable with, formal or informal, and either English and Malay. They were not going to be penalised on their language choice and language use. This is because the researcher wants the interactions to be in a natural environment and not restricted to any language with formality.

In addition, a series of interviews were carried out as a form of triangulation. Twenty-five (25) male and female respondents were interviewed guided by a set of questions on reasons for accessing Facebook, frequency of accessing Facebook, language choice, reasons for choice and perceptions of using Facebook as an online study group. In order to make the interview valid and reliable, the same questions as the survey questions were used to all respondents. In the process of interviewing, the researcher probed them to get more reasons of their answers. This was to confirm with the answers that they had given in the survey. The reasons given by the respondents also helped to explain some of the forms of the languages that appeared both in the academic and non-academic setting in the walls of Facebook of the respondents.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Data from the non-academic interactions 1 to 5 and academic interactions 6 to 10 on how the languages are used and combined was analysed according to Thurlow and Brown (2003) who organised the following broad categories: shortenings (i.e. missing end letters), contractions (i.e. missing middle letters), G-clippings (i.e. dropping final letter in -ing suffix), acronyms and initialisms, letter/number homophones, misspellings and typos, non-conventional spellings and accent stylizations. Besides that, some of McNeil (2008) Facebook corpus findings are utilised to describe how the languages are used and combined. This is to address research question 1.

Data from the questionnaires were quantitatively analysed using SPSS version 20.0 in order to determine the respondents' demographic information, computer usage information and language choice. For the open ended questions, the researcher did document/content analysis where the respondents' responses to the questions were coded according to patterns or themes. Data from the interview were analysed using the same method. This is to address research question 2 and at the same time will triangulate the data of the study. Another form of data triangulation and to increase the reliability of the data analysis, validation of data analysis was carried out with 25 respondents. The researcher managed to ask the respondents to review the data analysis and obtained positive feedback from them. Overall, 88% (n:22) of the respondents agreed with the data analysis but 12% (n:3) disagreed with some of the analysis. The researcher took note of their disagreement and recorded some of their answer in the data analysis. The respondents corrected some of the analysis of the words used in the interactions.

#### 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented and discussed according to the research questions.

In order to address research question 1, the researcher is using the categories adapted from Thurlow and Brown (2003) and McNeil (2008) to analyse the non-academic and academic interactions on the Facebook walls. In addition, new categories are created if the previous categories do not fit the findings from the data. Based on Table 1, the respondents are using shortening or abbreviations by dropping some letters at the end of the word in *vid*, *admin* and *login id*. An example of contraction is the word *asgnment*. Other than that, *crammin* is used as the letter g is dropped instead of 'cramming' indicating G-clipping. The respondents are using acronyms/initialisms such as *mtw*, *ae*, *sv* and *lol*. These acronyms are educational jargons used by the respondents who are TESL undergraduates. In non-conventional spelling category, the words *dont*, *doesnt*, *its*, *shouldnt* are used without adding the apostrophe (') which indicated that the respondents probably are doing that for the ease of typing the words. Other than that, in the emphasis category, the word 'so' is used by adding more vowels as in *soooooo* which mimicked the action of speaking.

Moreover, as the discourse in asynchronous interaction on Facebook walls reflects spoken language, interjections are used such as *huh*, *gulp* and *wow* to portray the feelings of the respondents while interacting. In the abbreviations (including other typographical irregularities including improvised phonetic renderings) category, several words are spelled in ways reflecting how they are spoken by the students such as *dats*, *y*, *shud*, *phail*, *sumwhat*. These indicate the creative construction of the word forms by the respondents. This word forms also shows that the respondents are adapting the spelling from their first language, Malay. In Malay, the words are generally spelt phonemically as they are pronounced.

Table 1: Lists of Non-Standard Forms of English in Non-Academic Interactions 1 to 5

Form	Non-standard Form (English)	Standard English
<b>Shortening</b>	Vid admin login id	Video administration logging in identification
<b>Contraction</b>	Asgnment	Assignment
<b>G clippings</b>	crammin	Cramming
<b>Acronyms/initialisms</b>	Sv ae  mtw  lol	supervisor Academic exercise Methodology of teaching writing Laugh out loud
<b>Letter/number Homophones</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> time	First time
<b>non-conventional spelling: omission of apostrophe (')</b>	Dont ur doesnt its shouldnt	don't your doesn't it's shouldn't
<b>Accent Stylistation</b>	Gonna sucha	Going to Such as
<b>Emphasis</b>	A: <i>Y is soooo eating me once she sees this.</i>	<vowel lengthening>
<b>Interjection</b>	Huh, gulp, wow	
<b>Abbreviations, and other typographical irregularities including improvised phonetics renderings</b>	phail shud sumwhat dats	Fail Should somewhat that's
<b>Use of lowercase in interactions turns.</b>	E: a states plan to conquer uganda for their rich oil resource C: we are still at home~ <i>haha</i>	
<b>Orthographic representation of laughter</b>	C: <b>hahaha..u</b> didn't read it properly i guess. that is so Misleading ....wow, hearing ur sv sounding very calm nrelax makes me a bit relax as well <b>woooooo</b> .	

Next, the findings on the use of English in academic interactions 1 to 6 will be described in Table 2.

Table 2: Lists of Non-Standard Forms of English in Academic Interactions 6 to 10

Form	Non-standard form (English)	Standard English
<b>Shortening</b>	Vid lang chaps	video language chapters
<b>Contraction</b>	Uplod aftr evry	upload after every
<b>G clippings</b>	Somethin	Something
<b>Acronyms/initialisms</b>	AVA CAH  vs Q&A	Audio Visual Aid Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis versus questions and answers
<b>Letter/number Homophones</b>	2nd	Second
<b>'Misspellings' and typos</b>	Preeschool	Preschool
<b>non-conventional spelling: omission of apostrophe (')</b>	Didnt im isnt its	Didn't I'm Isn't it's
<b>Accent Stylisation</b>	sorta sumink yup dangit!	Sort of Something Yes Damn it
<b>Emphasis</b>	looooooong	<lengthening of vowel o>
<b>Emphasising using Uppercase</b>	0 marks if you don't attend the class that is all. :) <b>THERE WILL BE NO SLA CLASS TOMORROW. SLA Term Paper is due this Friday. thanks people. love ya! :D</b>	
<b>Interjection</b>	oh! Yeah	(indicating understanding) (indicating happiness)
<b>Abbreviations, including other typographical irregularities including</b>	i c bcoz orait!	I see because alright

<b>improvised phonetic renderings</b>	Ur y tot	your why thought
<b>Use of single case</b>	A: all of a sudden i have this idea of visiting a <i>preeschool</i> and observing children and how they communicate with each other and adults.	
<b>Orthographic representation of laughter</b>	A: haha babies! now where can we get them? Haha B: lets go to the nursery! hehehe.	
<b>Making correction</b>	E: I remembered Sir said that we <i>cnt</i> <b>do the same topic</b> and that <i>its</i> okay to write on the topic you present.  E: <i>**two ppl</i> doing the same topic	

Based on Table 2, the respondents are using shortening by dropping some letters at the end of the words in *vid*, *lang* and *chaps*. There are also quite a number of words contracted such as *uplod*, *aftr* and *evry*. Nonetheless, these words are quite easily to understand as only the vowels are dropped. Next, *somethin* is used instead something and *crammin* instead of ‘cramming’ by dropping the letter g indicating G-clipping. In non-conventional spelling category, the words *didnt*, *im*, *isnt* and *its*, are used without adding the apostrophe (‘) which indicate that the respondents probably are doing that for the ease of typing the words. The respondents are using more acronyms/initialisms such as *AVA*, *CAH*, and *Q &A*. These words are educational jargons and since the respondents are TESL undergraduates that explained the reasons for using such jargons. It also shows that the respondents are interacting in a Facebook discourse community where the speech is mutually intelligible among that community.

Other than that, in the letter/number homophones category, the number 2 is added to the letters ‘nd’ to means second. Again, this indicates that the respondents are using this non-standard form as a feature of time-saving in order to convey their messages more smoothly and faster in the interactions. Only one misspelling is found in the word *preeschool*. Misspelling or typo is quite common in online interaction because the respondents are sometimes typing the messages quite fast. Therefore, they tend to have typos. In the accent stylisation category the words that are used are *sorta*, *sumink* and *yup*. These words are quite normal to be used in spoken language which indicates that the respondents are applying their spoken language in their online asynchronous interactions on Facebook walls. The respondents are using lots of lowercases in the interactions but interestingly are using uppercases to emphasise the words in the next category as in the examples shown. This is quite different in the interpretation of using uppercases in SMS, emails and CMC in general to indicate shouting. Again, they are using lowercases more for the ease of typing. In the abbreviations (including other typographical irregularities including improvised phonetic renderings) category, several English words are spelt phonemically such as *i c*, *bcoz*, *orait*, and *tot* to indicate the creative construction of the word forms by the respondents. In the emphasis category, that the respondents are lengthen the <o> in *looooooong* to mimic the spoken language. Other than that, corrections are made by adding two asterisks (\*) which show that the respondents are applying the written form in their online interactions. The findings also show that interactions in non-academic and academic have the timesaving features that are usually used in online interactions. This is because non-



academic interactions are considered as informal because the respondents are interacting with their peers about any topic while academic interactions are considered as formal because the respondents are interacting with the peers and the lecturer and the topics are about the subject that they are taking for that semester.

All in all, when comparing these findings with McNeil (2008) corpus, some of the findings from his study can be found in the study such as the use of single case and improvised phonetic renderings. This is very interesting as the subjects are non-native speakers of English whereas his subjects are the native speakers. Hence, it could be concluded that the use of words and the style of writing online are quite similar and could be mutually intelligible across the internet users regardless of participants' language background. Furthermore, these features are not generally found in academic texts. The findings also agree with studies on Facebook which documented similar characteristics of language use in cyberspace; a new code resembling the SMS-textese (McNeil, 2008; Thurlow, & Brown, 2003) cited in McNeil (2008:7). These studies indicate that dominant features are the use of abbreviations, slang, syntactic reductions, asterisk emoting, emoticons, deletions of parts of speech (especially subject pronoun, preposition, articles, copula-, auxiliary- or modal verbs (+XP), contractions. In the study, dominant features in the findings are abbreviations, accent stylisation for the English non-standard forms are mostly used by the respondents. The findings also agree with those of Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim (2009, p. 43) who claim that "technology has afforded 'netizens' to write in more economical ways with abbreviations and acronyms". The findings also concur with Sun (2010) that this "new language" should also be known as Internet English as it displays some distinct features in word-formation and lexicon. Similar findings are also reported in a study done by Hazadiah, Idris, and Abdul Wab (2011, p. 40-42) who examine the Facebook walls of 50 students aged 18-25 of higher learning in Malaysia who are bilinguals and multilinguals. Their findings indicate that some of English words are used in abbreviations and acronyms.

The findings are also in agreement with Freiermuth (2011) who states that the observation of writing in Facebook – an asynchronous form of communication – reveals 'adaptation from a spoken language,' 'timesaving spellings' or 'misspellings'. The findings also confirm the findings of Crystal (2011) who states that communication on the internet and other forms of electronic communication shows the use of language(s) in their most economical forms which include the use of abbreviations, symbols and emoticons, and heavily reduced syntactic structures. The findings also concur with the findings of Averianova (2012, p. 15) who indicated that "the unique linguistic and iconographic features of electronic writing comprise but are not limited to innovative abbreviation (acronyms, clippings, logograms, or letter-numeral hybrids and letter-morpheme substitutes, vowel deletion, etc.), emoticons, truncated simplified syntax, non-normative capitalization and other characteristics". The findings are also similar to Lyddy et al. (2014) who conducted a study to analyze 13 characteristics of e-discourse with a corpus of 936 English messages, with total (13391 words). The findings showed that 25% of corpus used unconventional spelling and the category of dropping capital letters is the most commonly occurring.

Thus, as presented in Table 1 and Table 2, it can be seen that the respondents are sometimes using English in non-standard forms and spelling in their interactions on the Facebook walls. Moreover, it could be seen that the respondents are using "timesaving feature" of spelling or even "misspelling" by dropping vowels and using abbreviated words. These are not errors of typing or processing language; rather, they represent new forms and so are lexically distinct

items to the users according to Freiermuth (2011). The examples of these forms also confirm the conclusion of some linguists who have characterised computer mediated discourse (CMD) as an emerging oral-written hybrid (Crystal, 2011; Herring, 2007) cited in McNeil (2008, p. 8).

In short, the messages that appear on the walls of Facebook consist of a form of textual language which is composed text messages via hand phones or computer keyboards. These messages consist of abbreviations, phonemic English, contractions, g-clipping and so on.

Nevertheless, the study was only confined to data derived from the interactions of UiTM TESL students aged 21 to 24 which is the limitation of the study. Even though this group has been interacting in their social network, they do not represent the entire online community which is the limitation of the study. This is because the diverse online community may exhibit different discourse strategies and characteristics depending on the intent of or purpose for communicating and who they communicate with. However, this cohort of Facebook users can be representative of this particular group of language users on account of their educational and ethnic background. Next, research question 2 will be addressed.

In order to address research question 2, the tabulated findings from the survey will be presented to present the perceptions of the respondents on their language use in non-academic interactions on Facebook. Based on Table 3, 52.6 % of the respondents are using more non-standard forms than the standard forms (36.8%: 21) in Facebook.

Based on Table 3 to Table 5 below, 52.6 % of the respondents are using more non-standard forms than the standard forms (36.8%: 21) in Facebook. 86.0% of the respondents agree that they are aware that their language use includes the use of abbreviations but they still use them on Facebook because they are used to them. 87.7% are in agreement that it is acceptable to use that forms of language as they are not writing academically.

Table 3: Respondents' Preference of Language Forms in Non-Academic Interactions on Facebook

Language Forms	No.	%
Standard	21	36.8
Non-standard	30	52.6
Both	2	3.5
Total	53	92.9

No response: 4 (7%)

Table 4: Respondents' Awareness of Their Language Use in Facebook

Question	I am aware that my language use consists of abbreviations, emoticons etc but I still use them on Facebook because I am used to them.	
	No.	Percentages (%)
Strongly Agree	20	35.1
Agree	29	50.9
Disagree	6	10.5
Strongly disagree	1	1.8
Total	56	98.2

No response 1 (1.8%)

Table 5: Respondents' Perceptions of Using Non-Standard Forms of Language in Academic Interactions

Question	I also feel that it is alright to do so as I am not writing academically.	
	No.	Percentages (%)
Strongly Agree	18	31.6
Agree	32	56.1
Disagree	5	8.8
Strongly disagree	1	1.8
Total	56	98.2

No response 1 (1.8%)

The respondents are also asked to provide reasons for their language choice and their preference of their language forms. The analysis uses thematic analysis. Similar themes are grouped together. The most frequent reasons are presented as no. 1 and others are in descending order. The responses from the respondents are presented verbatim to avoid any misquoted responses. They are presented in Table 6. Based on Table 6, the respondents claim they use non-standard English in their Facebook group because they feel that Facebook is for leisure activities and Facebook is personal not academic. They claim that writing in full can be tedious as there are some who lack grammar knowledge and are used to mix with English and Malay.

Table 6: Reasons for Using Non-Standard/Informal English in Academic Interactions

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facebook to me is still personal not academic</li> <li>2. Facebook is for leisure activities</li> <li>3. I always like to mix English and Malay</li> <li>4. I use short forms</li> <li>5. I am lacked of grammar knowledge, used to it</li> <li>6. I'm not a perfect second lg speaker</li> <li>7. Writing in full is tedious</li> </ol> |
|--|

Based on Table 7 to Table 8, the respondents prefer to use the non-standard forms because they think non-standard forms are better to express emotions. They also think it also depends on subject matter as they will usually use English to interact with TESL friends and use Malay with their relatives and close friends. Since most of their friends are bilinguals, they will need to use both languages to adapt to them. On the other hand, some of them prefer to use the standard forms because they feel that the language is beautiful and easier to convey, thus everyone can understand it. Standard language also shows professionalism and is suited to official occasion.

Table 7: The Reasons for Using Non-Standard Forms in Non-Academic Interactions on Facebook

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facebook is a personal space to communicate with friends about various things</li> <li>2. Easier for communication.</li> <li>3. Non-standard form is common for daily communication.</li> <li>4. Non-standard form is better to express emotions</li> <li>5. Most my friends are TESL students, so I use English but I use Malay with my relatives and close friends.</li> <li>6. It depends on my mood to choose different language to use</li> </ol> |
|--|

7. I have multicultural friends on Facebook
8. It depends on the subject matter
9. Malay is used to communicate with friends while English is used for information sharing
10. My friends are bilinguals so I need to use both languages to adapt to them

Table 8: Reasons for Using Standard Forms in Non-Academic Interactions on Facebook

1. Standard language is simply beautiful
2. Standard is more suitable as I do not favour to use dialects in Facebook
3. Standard language is easier to convey info as everyone can understand it
4. Standard language shows professionalism.
5. Standard form more suited to official occasion

### **5.1 Interview Responses of the Respondents**

Based on the interview, most respondents reveal that they are using both non-standard forms of Malay and English in their Facebook interaction but they are using the standard forms in the Facebook group. This is captured in extract 1 of respondent 1.

#### **5.1.1 Extract 1**

Respondent 1

Question : Do you prefer to use standard or non-standard forms in Facebook?

Answer : I use non-standard. It sound so awkward to use standard Madam.. but in the Facebook group.. I will use standard.

Question : Why?

Answer : Because I feel that the academic interaction is formal..like classroom.

Most respondents are aware that they are using abbreviations but think that abbreviations can be used as they are not writing academically. This is based on extract 2 of respondent 2.

#### **5.1.2 Extract 2**

Respondent 2

Question : Do you use emotions and abbreviations in your interaction?

Answer : Yes ..most of the time Madam but I will try my best not to do it in the Facebook group.

Question : Why?

Answer : Hmm .. I think the group is more formal

Question : Do you think is it alright to use abbreviations and so on?

Answer : Yes ..cause it's not academic writing

Most respondents also prefer to use non-standard forms with their friends in the group but will write in full when writing to their lecture. This is based on extract 3 of respondent 6.

#### **5.1.3 Extract 3**

## Respondent 6

Question : Do you prefer to use standard or non-standard forms in Facebook?

Answer : Non-standard form

Question : Why?

Answer : It's weird to write in full Ma'am

Question : What about the group?

Answer : It depends .. if I talk to my lecturer I write in full .. if to my friends ..No

The findings from the survey and the interview confirm the findings from non-academic interactions 1 to 5 and academic interaction 6 to 10 on the Facebook walls of the respondents. Therefore, what the respondents indicate in the survey and interview are reflected in their interactions on Facebook.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the study, the researcher managed to adapt, adopt and extend the categories developed by Thurlow and Brown (2003) and McNeil (2008) and found that dominant features in the findings are the use of lower-case letters, abbreviations, contractions, clippings, emoticons, orthographic representation of laughter such as *hahahaha* and *hehehe*, phonemic spelling and acronyms/initialisms. The respondents are using these features as time-saving and are more concerned about replying to the Facebook's postings fast. They are also not concerned about intelligibility as others could still understand them although they are abbreviating while interacting online. These timesaving spelling is sometimes unavoidable as the TESL students are typing in online interactions; therefore, for the ease of typing they unconsciously applied these features. In other words, as they are applying their spoken language to online interactions, they are more comfortable using the non-standard forms so that their online "speech" would not sound unnatural or artificial as what they claimed in the open-ended questions that they felt that it is acceptable to do so as they are not writing academically.

When comparing findings with McNeil (2008) corpus, some of the findings from his study can be found in this study such as the use of lower-case letters, abbreviations, orthographic representation of laughter and emoticons. This is very interesting as the researcher's respondents are non-native speakers of English whereas McNeil's respondents are the native speakers. Hence, it could be concluded that the use of words and the style of writing online are quite similar and could be mutually intelligible across the internet users regardless of participants' language background. Therefore, the findings show that the respondents' Facebook discourse is not only distinctive in their own way but also intelligible to online users to a certain extent.

In addition, this study helps to document some of the linguistics aspects which have been developed by the Facebook users to facilitate online communication. This is because internet linguistics could grow to be more extensive and at high speed with the aid of technology. Therefore, the question that arises is whether Facebook CMD sets the trends for future language use which could change the perceptions about what is standard and what is not. In conclusion, this study has shed light on how the young and educated Malaysian bilinguals creatively use and combine languages in social media such as Facebook.

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