

ABSTRACT

E-mail is a popular medium for communication among individuals in this era of modern technology. In the silent electronic environment, e-mail communicators need to substitute the absence of tone, voice, and paralinguistic aspects of language with other forms of words or symbols when conveying their messages. Thus, communicative strategies (CSs) are employed by e-mailers to replace the prosodic features and modify graphological features of communication. E-mail language which is speech-like has its own unique conventions.

The present study investigates authentic e-mail messages of teenagers for recreational purposes on the Friendster website, www.friendster.com. It focuses on the types and frequency of CSs used by the participants. The reasons for using each type of strategy are also identified and discussed. In addition, the influence of gender on the communicative strategies used is explored. To guide the analysis of CSs, a modified taxonomy is drawn based on Segerstad's taxonomy of linguistic features of e-mail and other studies on CMC.

A corpus of 123 e-mail messages forms the primary linguistic data. Frequency counts are used to analyse the data. Two instruments, namely questionnaire and interviews are used to gather information related to the reasons for the use of CSs, and seek clarifications on CSs used.

The analysis reveals that the participants used many permutations and combinations of CSs and these are not distinct from each other. It also showed clearly that *orthographic* strategy was used most extensively by the teenage e-mailers compared to the other strategies, that is, *paralinguistic* and *graphic*, *vocabulary* and *discoursal features*. It is found that the main reason for the use of CSs is predominantly due to the need for brevity. It also reveals that there is no stark contrast in the frequency of CSs used by male and female teenage e-mail users. This study also discusses the implications particularly pedagogical ones, related to teaching methodology and course or syllabus design.

ABSTRAK

Mel elektronik (e-mel) ialah medium komunikasi yang popular dalam kalangan individu pada era teknologi yang moden ini. Dalam persekitaran eletronik yang senyap, pengguna-pengguna e-mel perlu menggantikan ketiadaan nada, bunyi, dan aspek-aspek paralinguistik bahasa dengan bentuk paralinguistik bahasa, perkataan atau simbol semasa menyampaikan mesej mereka. Oleh hal yang demikian, strategi komunikatif yang digunakan oleh pengguna e-mel untuk menggantikan fitur-fitur prosodik dan membuat suai ciri-ciri grafologi dalam komunikasi. Oleh sebab bahasa e-mel menyerupai pertuturan manusia, bahasa e-mel mempunyai konvensinya yang unik.

Kajian ini menyelidik kandungan e-mel sebenar yang digunakan dalam kalangan remaja untuk tujuan rekreasi mereka, sebagaimana yang diperoleh dalam laman web Friendster, www.friendster.com. Fokus kajian ini jenis dan frekuensi strategi komunikatif yang digunakan oleh peserta-peserta kajian.

Sebab-sebab penggunaan bagi setiap jenis strategi komunikatif tersebut juga dikenal pasti dan dibincangkan. Tambahan pula, pengaruh gender dalam penggunaan strategi komunikatif dikaji. Satu taksonomi yang diubah suai berdasarkan taksonomi ciri-ciri linguistik e-mel oleh Segerstad (2004) dan beberapa kajian “Computer-mediated Communication” (CMC) telah digunakan sebagai panduan untuk menganalisa strategi komunikatif.

Korpus yang mengandungi 123 mesej e-mel membentuk data linguistik primer. Bilangan frekuensi digunakan untuk menganalisa data tersebut. Dua jenis instrumen, iaitu soal selidik dan temu bual digunakan untuk mengumpulkan maklumat-maklumat berkaitan dengan sebab-sebab penggunaan strategi komunikatif, dan mencungkil penjelasan tentang strategi komunikatif yang digunakan.

Analisis menunjukkan bahawa peserta-peserta kajian telah menggunakan banyak permutasi dan kombinasi strategi komunikatif dan kesemuanya tidak sangat berbeza. Kajian ini juga jelas menunjukkan bahawa strategi ortografi digunakan secara ekstensif oleh pengguna-pengguna e-mel remaja, berbanding dengan strategi-strategi lain seperti paralinguistik dan grafik, kosa kata, dan ciri-ciri wacana. Selain itu, kajian ini mendapati bahawa sebab utama penggunaan strategi komunikatif ialah faktor keringkasan. Malahan, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa tiada perbezaan nyata dalam frekuensi penggunaan strategi komunikasi di antara pengguna-pengguna e-mel remaja lelaki dan perempuan. Kajian ini juga membincangkan implikasi-implikasi khasnya daripada aspek pedagogi yang berkait rapat dengan metodologi pengajaran dan reka bentuk kursus atau sukatan pelajaran.

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