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**A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ELECTRONIC MAIL
MESSAGES IN A LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

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ABSTRAK

Dalam beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini, komunikasi melalui mel elektronik telah menjadi satu cara berkomunikasi yang luas digunakan di dalam sesebuah organisasi dan juga di antara organisasi. Banyak organisasi telah mewujudkan sistem elektronik mereka sendiri dalam organisasi mereka. Ramai pelajar kita akan menyertai dunia pekerjaan yang melibatkan penggunaan sistem mel elektronik untuk berkomunikasi. Oleh itu, kita memerlukan pengetahuan tentang sifat sistem komunikasi ini dan memastikan cara-cara untuk membantu pelajar kita supaya mereka dapat memperoleh "ciri-cirinya yang tertentu, dalam cara sama kita mengajar Bahasa Inggeris untuk pertuturan, penulisan dan untuk panggilan talipon" (Murray: 1988,4).

Memandangkan keadaan yang demikian, kajian ini bertujuan menyelidiki fitur-fitur nahu yang biasa wujud serta fungsi-fungsi yang berkaitan dengannya di dalam komunikasi melalui mel elektronik yang dijalankan oleh sebuah komuniti perniagaan tempatan. Kajian ini juga menyelidiki samada sistem mel elektronik boleh mempengaruhi bentuk-bentuk bahasa dalam komunikasi mel elektronik komuniti tersebut. Perbezaan antara bahasa dalam komunikasi mel elektronik itu dengan bahasa penulisan untuk perniagaan secara konvensional, juga dikaji dalam penyelidikan ini. Komuniti perniagaan yang telah dipilih untuk kajian ialah sekumpulan eksekutif di sebuah firma awam berhad di Malaysia. Korpus kajian terdiri dari 102 mesej mel elektronik yang telah dikutip dari komunikasi harian eksekutif-eksekutif itu di dalam konteks pekerjaan mereka.

Dalam menganalisis data yang dikutip, penyelidik telah mengikut cadangan Brown & Yule (1983) untuk membincang tentang ciri-ciri 'regular' yang terdapat di dalam realisasi linguistik yang dipraktik oleh individu untuk menyampaikan makna dan hasrat mereka dalam sesuatu komunikasi. Untuk mengenalpasti dan membincang tentang kewujudan ciri-ciri 'regular' di dalam mesej mel elektronik, penyelidik telah menjalankan satu process "pengiraan 'frequency' sesuatu fitur linguistik yang wujud" (Brown & Yule: 1983). Pengiraan 'frequency' bilangan dan / atau peratus kewujudan fitur-fitur yang tertentu dalam mesej-mesej tersebut dijalankan untuk menyokong dapatan kajian ini.

Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa dalam komunikasi mel elektronik komuniti tersebut, terdapat kehadiran meluas klausa utama dalam 'mood' imperatif dan 'mood' deklaratif, dan klausa-klausa subordinat yang menyampaikan tujuan dan sebab. Nampaknya, komunikasi mel elektronik komuniti tersebut lebih digunakan bagi tujuan meminta dan memberitahu daripada untuk tujuan menyoal.

Diharap fitur-fitur dan fungsi-fungsi bahasa, serta fitur-fitur komunikasi lain yang telah dikenalpasti di dalam komunikasi mel elektronik komuniti perniagaan yang dikaji boleh menyumbangkan kepada pengajaran dan rangkaian kursus Bahasa Inggeris untuk Komunikasi Perniagaan, dan juga untuk komunikasi melalui mel elektronik di tempat kerja.

ABSTRACT

Communication by electronic mail has become a dominant mode of communication both within and between organisations in the last few years, many of which have developed their own in-house electronic systems. More and more of our students will enter the workforce to find that their job involves using the electronic mail system for communication; therefore we need insights into the nature of this mode of communication, and ascertain ways in which we can assist our students in acquiring “its particular characteristics, in the same way we teach spoken English, writing and the use of telephones” (Murray, 1988: 4).

In light of the above scenario, this study attempts to investigate the typical or recurrent grammatical features and the functions of electronic mail discourse in a local business community. In addition, the study also examines whether the electronic mail system has influenced language forms in the e-mail discourse of the selected business community. Differences between language in the e-mail discourse and language in conventional business writing are also explored in this study. The business community selected is a group of executives in a public limited company in Malaysia. The corpus comprises 102 electronic mail messages from the routine communication of the executives in work contexts.

In analysing the data collected, the researcher has adopted the suggestion of Brown and Yule (1983) to describe regularities in the linguistic realizations used by individuals to convey meanings and intentions in a discourse. The identification and description of such “regularities” in the electronic mail messages are based on the “frequency with which a particular linguistic feature

occurs" (Brown & Yule: 1983). Thus, a frequency count of the number and / or percentage of occurrences of features in the messages has been conducted to support the findings. The electronic messages were examined for three aspects – the grammatical features of the messages, their communicative functions and their discourse features.

The findings reveal a predominance of main clauses in the imperative mood and declarative mood, and subordinate clauses denoting purpose and reason in the e-mail communication of the particular business community. This seems to reflect that e-mail communication in this community is used more for requesting and informing, and less for enquiring. Other discourse features like opening salutation, opening statement, closing statement and closing salutation are also found in the e-mail messages although they are not compulsory for such a communication.

It is hoped that the language features and functions, as well as other discourse features identified in the e-mail communication of the business community would contribute towards pedagogy and course design for English for Business Communication, as well as for e-mail communication at the workplace.

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