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SOCIAL NETWORKING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS AMONG TERTIARY STUDENT BLOGGERS

Field of Study: Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the interactive practices of bloggers when they network socially. Based on speech acts theory and social presence theory, the present study analyses the social networking practices and proposes a conceptual framework of blog interaction. The study hopes to contribute towards the existing pool of knowledge on language strategies used in blog forums.

Prior to the collection of the data, a pilot study was conducted to observe blog interactive practices for a period of fourteen weeks. The data for the main study was collected over a period of thirteen months in the form of blog postings. Both qualitative and quantitative analytical methods are used in the study. The qualitative design of the study entails analyzing blog postings, conducting interviews and discussing the blog discourse phenomena. The quantitative design consists of analyzing responses from questionnaires and the quantification of the social networking strategies identified in the data.

By using Herring's (2004) analytical procedures, Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), the qualitative design analyses the social networking practices in blog forums at the participation level and functional moves level. The participation level of analysis entails among others, contextual analysis and frequency of blog postings. Functional moves analysis involves categorizing segments of blog postings to the various types of social networking strategies identified in the data based on its form and content. Additionally, all functional moves identified in the data are quantified to determine the frequencies of the categories of social networking strategies.

This study found that the participants in this study social network mostly for the purposes of giving and generating opinions from others within the given speech community. Additionally, the participants social network by remaining focused on the blogging topics and themes that enabled to engage in fruitful discourse. This happened when blog members served as gate keepers and to ward off defective and negative behaviour in blog forums. Therefore, as members of the discourse community, blog participants are expected to comply with certain discursual expectations.

The participants in this study were found to have used social networking practices and linguistic features that fostered camaraderie and encouraged intercultural interaction. In addition, the participants used different sets of social networking strategies in blog forums on gender topics. This study found that the female participants used a more direct strategy than their male counterparts.

This study found that social presence influenced interactivity in blog forums. Among others, the influence of social presence was seen in the choice of words and language in the social networking strategies in blog forums. For example, blog participants hedged, used avoidance strategy in the discussion of blog issues which was deemed sensitive as they were conscious that other participants were reading their comments.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian adalah untuk menyiasat strategi-strategi interaktif yang digunakan oleh peserta blog dalam jaringkerja sosial. Berdasarkan teori *speech-acts* dan teori *social presence*, kajian ini menganalisa kelakuan jaringkerja sosial dan mencadangkan satu rangkakerja konseptual interaksi blog. Diharap kajian ini dapat menyumbang kepada pengetahuan tersedia ada perihal strategi-strategi bahasa yang digunakan di dalam forum-forum blog.

Sebelum data dikumpul, satu kajian awal telah dijalankan untuk memerhati interaksi blog selama empat belas minggu. Data untuk kajian utama dikumpul dalam jangkamasa 13 bulan dalam bentuk pos-pos blog. Kedua-dua rangka penganalisan kualitatif dan kuantitatif di gunakan dalam kajian ini. Rekabentuk kualitatif merangkumi penganalisan pos-pos blog, temuduga dan membincang fenomena wacana blog. Rekabentuk kuantitatif merangkumi penganalisan respon-respon yang diperolehi dalam soalselidik dan pengiraan jaringankerja strategi sosial yang dikenal pasti di dalam data.

Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) Herring (2004) rekabentuk kualitatif menganalisa kelakuan jaringankerja sosial pada aras penyertaan, dan aras *functional moves*. Penganalisan pada aras penyertaan merangkumi di antaranya, analisis konteks dan kekerapan pos-pos blog. Analisis *functional moves* dijalankan dengan mengkategorikan segmen-segmen pos blog kepada pelbagai strategi jaringkerja yang dikenalpasti berdasarkan bentuk dan isi kandungan data. Kesemua *functional moves* yang telah dikenalpasti dikira untuk kekerapan kategori-kategori strategi jaringkerja.

Kajian ini mendapati jaringankerja strategi sosial digunakan untuk pelbagai tujuan interaktif seperti memberi dan menarik pendapat dalam isu-isu blog. Ditambah lagi, penyerta blog mengambil bahagian dalam jaringankerja dengan menjaga suasana blog, supaya aktiviti blog dijalankan dalam konteks harmoni. Ini berlaku apabila ahli-ahli blog mempertahankan kelakuan-kelakuan yang tidak diinginkan di dalam forum blog sebagai '*pengawal pintu*'. Oleh itu, sebagai ahli komuniti wacana blog, penyerta blog dipercayai mempunyai dorongan menggunakan norma-norma interaktif yang bersesuaian.

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa penggunaan jaringankerja sosial mengalakkan persahabatan. Para penyerta di dapati menggunakan ciri-ciri linguistik yang mengalakkan persahabatan dan interaksi antara budaya. Ditambah lagi, para peserta menggunakan jaringankerja yang berlainan di dalam dalam perbincangan '*gender topic*'. Kajian ini mendapati peserta perempuan menggunakan lebih *direct strategy* daripada peserta lelaki.

Kajian ini mendapati '*social presence*' mempunyai kesan kepada interaktiviti di dalam forum blog. Diantaranya, ini dapat diperlihatkan di dalam pilihan kata-kata apabila penyerta jaringankerja di dalam forum-forum blog. Sebagai contohnya, para penyerta blog membentengkan diri (*hedge*) dan menggunakan strategi hindaran dalam perbincangan isu-isu blog yang dipercayai sensitif memandangkan peserta-peserta lain membaca komen-komen mereka.

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