LANGUAGE USE ON TWITTER AMONG MALAYSIAN L2 SPEAKERS

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ABSTRACT

Twitter, being a mode of computer-mediated communication (CMC), has portrayed an interesting language use in the medium given that it has a 140 character limitation. In this study, the impact of this limitation on language use has been investigated with distinctive attention to its linguistic features as well as the shortening strategies employed by Malaysian Twitter users. Two frameworks were used to analyse the features and the strategies; (1) the linguistic features of short texts (Ling and Baron, 2007) and (2) shortening strategies (Dabrowska, 2011). The author presents the findings by means of qualitative and quantitative analysis that show the frequency of linguistic features categorized into three areas; (1) emoticons and lexical shortenings, (2) sentence punctuation and (3) length. Shortening strategies include occurrences of clipping and contractions, deletion of vowels, non-standard spelling, word-letter substitutions, deletion of apostrophe and also deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries. The perceptions given by the participants on the language use in Twitter specifically on the creativity and clarity of tweets within the limited space are also analysed. The results show that the frequencies calculated for the features and strategies were relatively small on the whole; however, they have revealed gender differences in the language use. Furthermore, the present study confirms that language is neither deteriorating nor are users less efficient to convey their message clearly and successfully. It is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of language use on Twitter by Malaysian users.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication, Twitter, character limitation, linguistic features, shortening strategies, gender differences, perceptions

ABSTRAK

Twitter, sebagai satu komunikasi termediasi-komputer, telah mencetuskan satu penggunaan bahasa yang menarik kerana perantara ini hanya membenarkan pengguna untuk menulis tidak melebihi had sebanyak 140 huruf. Dalam kajian ini, kesan batasan ini ke atas penggunaan bahasa telah diselidik dengan memberi perhatian kepada ciri-ciri linguistik serta strategi pemendekan bahasa yang digunakan oleh pengguna Twitter Malaysia. Dua kerangka kerja telah digunakan untuk menganalisis ciri-ciri dan strategi tersebut; (1) ciri-ciri linguistik teks ringkas (Ling dan Baron, 2007) dan (2) strategi pemendekan bahasa (Dabrowska, 2011). Penulis membentangkan hasil analisa melalui analisis kualitatif dan kuantitatif yang menunjukkan frekuensi ciri-ciri linguistik yang dikategorikan mengikut tiga kumpulan: (1) emotikon dan pemendekan perkataan, (2) tanda baca dan (3) panjang teks. Strategi pemendekan bahasa termasuk menggugurkan bahagian-bahagian tertentu dalam perkataan, penghapusan vokal, ejaan tidak standard, penggantian perkataan-nombor, penghapusan apostrof dan juga penghapusan kata ganti nama dan pembantu. Persepsi yang diberikan oleh para pengguna di dalam kajian ini tentang penggunaan bahasa di Twitter terutama dari aspek kreativiti dan kejelasan tweet dalam ruang yang terhad turut dianalisa. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa frekuensi ciri-ciri linguistik dan strategi pemendekan agak kecil pada keseluruhannya, namun ia telah menunjukkan perbezaan dalam penggunaan bahasa antara jantina. Tambahan pula, kajian ini mengesahkan bahawa cara penggunaan bahasa tidak merosot dan pengguna mampu untuk menyampaikan mesej mereka dengan jelas. Diharap kajian ini dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang fenomena penggunaan bahasa di Twitter oleh pengguna Malaysia.

Kata kunci: komunikasi termediasi-komputer, Twitter, had huruf, ciri-ciri linguistik, strategi pemendekan, perbezaan jantina, persepsi

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide a brief background to the study and describe the language of CMC. The purpose and objectives of the study are also given in this chapter followed by more explanation on terms used in this study.

1.1 Development of English in Malaysia

Before Malaysia gained its independence in the year 1957, the English language was commonly used as it was seen as the essential language of colonial rulers and was to be acquired by society (Asmah, 1987). It was widely used in official ceremonies as well as in government administrations. When Bahasa Melayu was announced as the national language of Malaysia in 1957, English was still the alternate official language where both the languages used in official functions (Asmah, 1987) until 1967. As stated in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution:

> The National Language is Malay and Parliament has the right to decide the script in which it may be written. (Romanized script is the official script, but Jawi may be used.) Until 1967 English will continue to be the alternate official language and until then it must be used in all Parliament Bills and Acts. Similarly, both Malay and English may be spoken in Parliament and the State Assembles, but English remains the language of the Supreme Court until Parliament decides otherwise. (p.99-100)

Not only was it widely used in official functions, it was also used in educational domains. English was used as the medium of instruction in schools until the end of 1982 where the school system then underwent the process of changing to national

schools (using only Malay as the medium of instruction) (Gaudart, 1987). This shows that Malaysians have already been exposed to two main languages (Malay and English language) even before Independence and it can be seen nowadays that English is still used widely in the Education and Workplace domains. The wide use of English among Malaysians has shown that English has a top position in the society. In the modern era, being proficient in English is highly demanded and is seen as a 'way to survive' in the real world as it has become a world language.

1.2 The Use of Language in the Malaysian Society

1.2.1 Variations in Malaysian English (MalE)

In Malaysia which consists of 28 million people from various multiracial/multicultural communities who speak different languages and dialects, different varieties of English have emerged. For instance, Tan (2009) found lexical borrowings of Malay and Chinese words into MalE which are driven by social and linguistic factors. This is also due to the fact that some words are said to be better expressed in the second language than the first language. To illustrate, the words such as 'Ang pow' (red packet in Chinese) and 'Pontianak' (vampiric ghost in Malay) are widely and commonly used among the locals, and it is not preferred to be said in another language.

Therefore, it could be said that the use of words or a language simultaneously or interchangeably has been a common phenomenon in Malaysia. In other words, the use of code switching, be it intrasentential or intersentential, is being practised by Malaysians (Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim, 2009). To explain this situation, Weninger (2007) finds that switching for words occur when there is a lexical gap in the language of interaction. Besides, the use of suitable phrases or expressions in a particular situation often contributes to code switching. A subject in her study claimed

that code switching takes place when there is a necessity for accuracy of meaning. In the meantime, switching for segments of conversation entirely from the dominant to non-dominant language (or vice versa) occurs due to the absence of relevant vocabulary, the language the speakers last used, the language they were thinking in prior to the upcoming conversation, as well as the speakers' physical or psychological state (exhaustion or stress) (Weninger, 2007). The language style may also vary according to the purpose of the message or the status of the receiver. Apart from the phenomenon of code switching, there are other variations used in MalE such as the use of discourse particles and coinage especially within Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim, 2009) (See Section 1.3).

On the whole, in relation to the local context, it could be observed that the Malaysians have availed themselves of the opportunity to use their first language intermittently with English (or vice versa) to communicate. The variations that exist have demonstrated that MalE has "an identity of its own and the many deviations in these lexical aspects make it a distinct variety of English" (Thirusanku and Melor Md. Yunus, 2012, p.11).

1.2.2 Language and Gender in Malaysia

In the field of sociolinguistics, language and gender has also drawn a prolonged interest among researchers. According to Lakoff (1975), males and females are believed to be brought up and taught to use language in different styles. In other words, there exist differences in the language use among the males and the females, and Malaysians are no exception to this circumstance. Evidence in the local context can be seen in a study by Zaini Amir, Hazirah Abidin, Saadiyah Darus and Kemboja Ismail (2012) who have revealed differences in the use of tag questions, hedges, intensifiers and empty

adjectives between male and female Malaysian bloggers. More details on the differences are extended in Section 2.6.1.a.

1.3 Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

The use of computer mediated communication (CMC) has become extensive worldwide and over the past decades, new social networking services keep on emerging (i.e. Facebook, Skype and Twitter) since World War II through the invention of the first digital computer. Aside from face-to-face interactions, it is convenient to use these services as they are also a medium for people to create, exchange, and obtain information at the comfort of their own home. This, in return, saves their energy, money and time since they do not have to go somewhere further to meet their addressees in order to communicate.

Language has also evolved with the invention of CMC. Users tend to construct shorter texts to convey their message and many even use smileys/emoticons or abbreviations to express their emotions. The language use in CMC is also often associated with speech, which means it contains speech-like characteristics of which the messages are informal and simple (Bubas, 2001). In Malaysia as well, with the growing interest of using CMC to communicate, there are unique features found in MalE. According to Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim (2009) on electronic English in Malaysia, different informal varieties and features were found that have the influence of the native languages and varieties such as code switching and code mixing, discourse particles, borrowings, affixation, coinage and blending.

It is also observed that most Malaysian online users have adapted well linguistically to the online communicative environment which requires them to use certain features

pertaining to the medium that are not applicable in standard written or spoken discourse (see Section 2.1.3). Siti Hamin Stapa and Azianura Hani Shaari (2012) reveal that these users make use of informal language to the point that the norm of language inaccuracy has become acceptable among them.

Furthermore, a lot of new words have also been created for the internet community. As for Twitter, to illustrate, it has its own dictionary called Twictionary which consists of twitter words and their meanings that users have created that comprise the language of twitter and twitter phrases. The use of all these words is only applicable in that particular social network; some examples of the words are *tweeps* which stands for twitter peeps (friends) and *tweetup* for twitter meetup (gathering). Table 1.1 shows an excerpt of Twictionary that is available online.

Table 1.1 : Excerpt of Twictionary. (Source: http://twictionary.pbworks.com)

Tweed	Twitter + feed: A stream of tweets.
Tweefic	(adj) Something great, super, exceptionally good!
Tweego	(a.) The over-inflated ego that one gets when one has thousands of Twitter followers.
Tweehab	Twitter + Rehab: Taking a recovery break from Twitter
Tweek	Twitter geek (Twitter + Geek)
Tweekative	Talking or Chatting in Twitter too much
Tweeotches	Twitter + biotches (slang for bitches)
Tweep	Weep on twitter
Tweepartee	(n.) A term for carrying on an argument or discussion via tweets. (Tweet +Repartee)
Tweeperbole	Exaggeration in Twitter for emphasis or effect, as in Hyberbole - a figure of speech
Tweeple	People in Twitter
Tweepliment	A nicety garnered from a good Tweet.
Tweeps	Twitter + peeps (friends)

Apart from a two-way or group communication, online users can also post their thoughts or stories without interacting with anyone through the use of blogs. Blogs

function as a medium for users to give commentary on a certain subject of interest and it also serves as an online diary. The blog posts are usually lengthy and the users are free to write to their heart's content. On the other hand, there is also a microblog and it is different from the traditional blog in terms of the length of posts. Microblogs only allow users to post short content comprising short sentences and images or video links. However for both types of blog, if its user allows his readers to leave comments on their posts and responds to them, the medium will become interactive.

1.4 A New Character-Limited Microblog: Twitter

Created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Twitter is a newly emerging social networking service and has achieved a huge following around the globe with over 140 million active users as of March 2012, spawning over 340 million of short messages, known as tweets, per day. This medium has received a great number of users as it is very convenient to use especially for those who own smartphones. This means that people can not only use Twitter via its website but they can also tweet using a third party application (i.e. Tweetcaster, Plume and Ubersocial) downloadable on smartphones.

Moreover, Twitter users can actively share what they are doing at the time of tweeting. Twitter does not require its users to partake in a two-way or a group communication. Unlike IM and SMS, there is usually no expectation of replies from the other users as many tweets are not specifically dedicated to anyone in particular. Another feature of Twitter that is different from SMS is the visibility of messages to the addressees. For SMS, it is a one-to-one communication between the sender and the receiver and that the message is only known by these two people at the point of texting.

Conversely, tweets which are displayed on a stream or timeline can be shared within the system with other users whom are referred to as followers or just any random users if their accounts are set for public viewing (default setting). The visibility of the tweets will only be restricted to users' followers only if their twitter accounts are set as private. These followers are usually among the user's friends, colleagues, families and even fans to celebrities if the user is a celebrity. Having said that the tweets, when broadcasted online, are subject to visibility, it may involve careful planning when constructing the tweets as the language use may reflect the user's personality. Such case may be applied to celebrities who usually have numerous followers where they are seen as role models to the people around them through their use of language in Twitter.

Some users are also information seekers as they are more interested to gain quick updates regarding the world issues; for instance, through British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) twitter account (@BBCWorld), or any latest products of their liking. In other words, users can decide whether to follow thousands of accounts or just a few and they can even follow random accounts if they find them fascinating. If one replies to or mentions any other users in their tweets, they will have to use the *@user* form which reduces the number of characters for their message or text. Figure 1.1 shows the illustration of the form.

Figure 1.1 : The usage of @user form (Source: https://twitter.com/#!/OfficialKimora)

One unique feature of Twitter is the 140 character limitation that it poses. This is explained further below.

1.5 Character Limitation in CMC

Some microblogs only allow users to post content within a given character limitation. One of the early services to impose such limitation in the early 1990s is text messaging, which is referred to messages sent through Short Message Service (SMS) and the current highly used service is Twitter. Further information on character limitation for both of these forms of CMC will be detailed below.

1.5.1 SMS and its Parameter

Mobile phones provide asynchronous communication through the use of text messaging. In sending a text message, a user either uses a single key press that produces predictive texts or multi-tap technique on the keypad. Unique to this medium, there are occurrences of modifications in the syntax and lexicons used. This is because in SMS communication, the text can only be written within 160 characters for Latin alphabets and 70 for non-Latin alphabets such as Chinese and Arabic, and it can only contain words or numbers or both which we call as alphanumeric characters (Hård af Segerstad, 2002).

It is possible to text more than the required characters but the users have to pay twice or more than a single text as they will send out two to three text messages which are stitched together. According to Dabrowska (2011), the longer the text, the more expensive it will cost the user. Therefore, mobile phone users are often obliged to express themselves briefly when sending a text message. Rafi (2008) states that this

limitation is the reason why short forms are used. Users will use a lot of short forms such as abbreviations and acronyms so that their message can fit into the 160 character limitation. With these techniques of producing text messages, users can save their effort, money and time and they probably do not mind sending subsequent messages (Rafi, 2008).

1.5.2 Twitter and its Parameter

Twitter also has the same feature as SMS; the character limitation. Nevertheless, the number of characters allowed for Twitter is lesser than that of SMS which is 140 characters. The idea of creating such service with character limitation is further explained below by Talha (2012),

> "Twitter's 140 character limit is based upon the 160 character limit that was in place for text messages on mobile phones. The number was chosen by a German named Friedhelm Hillebrand who worked for German Telecom. In 1985, Friedhelm decided to count the number of characters in a large sample of sentences and he found that almost all of them clocked in fewer than 160 characters. This set the standard for text messaging and Twitter's character limit is derived from this..." (Talha, 2012, para. 2)

This limitation has indeed influenced the way tweets are constructed in this medium as users will be driven to modify their language to ensure that their messages are conveyed in 140 characters. The ways users craft their tweets could also reveal their wittiness and creativity.

1.6 Language Use within Character Limitation

There are advocates of character-limited mediums. They see CMC as a medium for users to be linguistically innovative and creative. Clark (2010) states that Twitter users will be driven to certain strategies in order to get their message to fit into the 140

character limitation and this is essentially good for writing (As cited in Vognar, 2010, para. 20). Furthermore, according to Crystal (2005), the Internet gives us the opportunity to discover the power of the written language in a creative way. Nevertheless, many are also against this notion saying that CMC contributes to linguistic ruin. Humphrys (2007) refers to SMS as a medium that wrecks a language. Disappointed, he further states that,

> "It is the relentless onward march of the texters, the SMS (Short Message Service) vandals who are doing to our language what Genghis Khan did to his neighbours eight hundred years ago. They are destroying it: pillaging our punctuation; savaging our sentences; raping our vocabulary. And they must be stopped." (John Humphrys, 2007, para. 17,18)

Having mentioned the negative views of the usage of character-limited mediums, the statement of problem was then formulated for this study.

1.7 Statement of Problem

When talking about CMC, many will specifically oppose to the language used in the medium saying that it has contributed to the poor usage of language structures and grammar (Tagliamonte and Derek, 2008; Fiennes, 2011; Greene, 2011). It is hard to find a communication technology that is not criticized for degrading a language. According to Greene (2011), the written form in CMC depicts users with lazy minds. These users do not even bother to construct structurally and grammatically correct sentences.

Tagliamonte and Derek (2008) also argue that the language use in CMC, particularly instant messaging (IM), demonstrates a low-grade kind of communication as it is occupied with numerous grammatical and spelling errors, incomprehensible lexicons and unknown or secret codes. On the other hand, some agree that CMC provides the

opportunity for users to construct a more creative and concise sentence (Knapp, 2011; Fung and Carter, 2007). Users will try to avoid long-winded messages and start to focus on what they want to deliver.

However, with the emergence of a character-limited medium such as Twitter, the concern over the deterioration in language has even increased given that users may not be able to express themselves clearly and effectively within the parameter of the medium. Fiennes (2011) blames Twitter for the increasingly poor use of English by saying that the comfort of using some words has been taken away when there are problems constructing more than one clause or words more than two syllables (as cited in "Actor Ralph Fiennes Blames Twitter", 2011, para. 6).

Due to this concern, "Is Twitter really bad?" is a question that may need to be answered. This led the researcher to look into the problems mentioned in CMC above and also to investigate whether they are applicable to the language used in Twitter. To do this, the linguistic features of Twitter language were explored and certain strategies used by the subjects to construct their tweets were studied.

Besides that, most studies that investigate language use within character limitation are done on SMS communication such as studies conducted by Hård af Segerstad (2002) and Dabrowska (2011). The present research was therefore conducted to study the language use within another new character-limited medium that is Twitter to shed some light on the linguistic features of this medium.

Having described the statement of problem, and highlighted that there is a lack of studies done on language use on Twitter, the purpose of this study is to investigate how

tweets are constructed within the character limitation among L2 Twitter users in Malaysia.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by four objectives and they are:

1) to examine the linguistic features of tweets constructed among the Malaysian L2 users
2) to investigate the strategies used to construct a tweet in order to fit into the 140 character limitation
3) to examine the gender differences in the linguistic features and strategies used within the character limitation
4) to find out users' perceptions of their language use in Twitter with a focus on the creativity and clarity of tweets within the parameter of the medium

1.9 Research Questions

Bearing in mind the objectives above, four research questions are formulated and will be addressed in this study, and they are:

1) What are the linguistic features of tweets within the character limitation among L2 users?
2) What are the strategies used so that a tweet is capped less than or at 140 characters?
3) What are the differences in the linguistic features and strategies used in tweets between male and female participants?
4) What are the users' perceptions on the language use in tweets?

1.10 Significance of the Study

Since Twitter has not been extensively researched on, the present research was conducted so that future researchers who have an interest in this field can benefit from it. This research hopes to provide information on the linguistic features of the character-limited medium, Twitter, which is considered rather new in the field. Furthermore, it may offer a new perception that users can also become creative and efficient in constructing their messages despite the strict character limitation. To do this, the researcher has explored the linguistic features of Twitter language and investigated whether certain strategies to tweet are essential in producing good writing. In addition, the respondents of this study were asked to give their perceptions on the creativity and clarity of tweets and how language is used within the medium.

Furthermore, based on the data obtained from this research, certain features are found to be Twitter-specific and there are evidence that these features have revealed gender differences in the Malaysian male and female's language use. This is a great contribution of the study where the analysis of the data has uncovered new findings related to language and gender. Besides that, since most teachers are now incorporating CMC as one of the classroom instructions in language teaching and learning, the findings from this study may provide some evidence on how Twitter could help students to be creative and precise in constructing sentences within the parameters of this medium.

1.11 Definition of Terms

There are a few terms that need to be defined to convey what they mean in the context of the present study. Those terms are *computer mediated communication* (*CMC*), *second language* (L2), *Malaysian English* (MalE), *character limitation* and *tweet*.

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is defined as any communications that are carried out through the use of networked telecommunications systems (e.g., email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter). The term not only refers to communications that occur via computer-mediated formats, other forms of text-based communication such as text messaging is also a type of CMC. Jones (1995) further stated that CMC is not merely a tool; it is "at once technology, medium, and engine of social relations. It not only structures social relations, it is the space within which the relations occur and the tool that individuals use to enter that space" (as cited in Romiszowski and Mason, 2004, p. 398)

Second language (L2) is a second language that is learned after the first language. In other words, it is "the language a person knows, is learning or is acquiring in addition to their native language" (Source: http://www.teaching-english-in-japan.net/acronyms/l2).

Malaysian English (MalE) is also known as English in Malaysia which is different from the standard English in terms of the pronunciation due to ethnic group variation. It is also referred to as a lingua franca among multiracial Malaysians. Examples of MalE subvarieties are Malay-influenced (MME), Chinese-influenced (ChME) and Indian-influenced (IME) MalE (Phoon, Anna Christina Abdullah and Maclagan, 2013).

Character limitation refers to the restriction of number of characters allowed for a post. For instance, in text messaging the messages are clocked in fewer than 160 characters. In the case of the present study, Twitter, which is known as a microblogging

site, only allows its users to construct short messages of 140 characters for others to read.

Tweet is a message constructed within the parameter of Twitter. To make it clearer, it is the short post sent by users using 140 characters or less.

Retweet is an act of reposting what other users have said, making these users engage in a shared conversational context without directly addressing one another. According to Danah, Golder and Lotan (2010), "retweeting is the Twitter-equivalent of email forwarding where users post messages originally posted by others" (Introduction section, para. 3).

1.12 Summary

This chapter has first described the background of the study that explains the place of English in Malaysia and its use. Then it looks briefly into how language has evolved over the decades with the invention of CMC where it has become more innovative through the use of unique features such as abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons. There are advocates of CMC who believe that people will become more creative in using a language through these innovations; however, to some, it poses a threat to users' linguistic ability. Hence, the present study was conducted to find out more about this language issue especially in Twitter which only allows its users to post short messages within 140 characters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth view and information on how language has evolved through the development of CMC. Extensive researches have been done on CMC within linguistics; they look at how this medium of communication contributes to language change by focusing on the unique features of online languages, the interactional styles of this medium as well as gender-related differences and similarities in language use.

2.1 Previous Work on Language Use in CMC

The language in CMC is said to have the characteristics of both spoken and written language, and some features are only exclusive to this medium. This is substantiated in previous studies which investigated the linguistics features of different modes of CMC e.g. e-mail, web chat, IM and SMS that are detailed further below.

2.1.1 CMC Language: Its Resemblance to Spoken Language

Having said that CMC language is nearly similar to spoken language, it means that the language is usually less structured and organized as compared to written language (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). In other words, it is described as a spoken language being written down, which is brief and often without the use of pronouns or verbs.

Additionally, when people are in a conversation, they take turns with short lapses of time to speak. According to Werry (1996) in his study on the linguistic features of

Internet Relay Chat (IRC), which is one of the examples of a web chat, he found that CMC does have this particular characteristic of speech that involves short turn-taking. Not only that, he also revealed that users tend to omit pronouns and auxiliary verbs in their texts. For instance, a user would say "going to school tomorrow" instead of " I am going to school tomorrow". It is known that most of the messages that do not include first-person pronoun may indicate that the messages refer to the user himself.

Language in CMC also carries informal tone and consists of shortened sentences as in spoken discourse. For instance, users tend to use colloquial words (e.g. 'kid' instead of 'child) and shorten lexical pairs by using contractions (e.g. *I'm* for *I am* or *I'd* for *I would*) as in spoken language (Baron, 2004). Such features arise because it appears to be more convenient for users to use a vernacular language that reflects their everyday conversation and it is also easier for them to use shorter forms of words as it saves a lot of their time to construct a sentence.

Another scholar, Ling (2005), who examined SMS use among Norwegians, also states that the language of this medium may be similar to speaking or writing in some ways. It resembles spoken discourse as users can immediately reach their addressees. Nonetheless, in the study of ICQ, an instant messaging computer programme, it is found that though messages can be delivered immediately, it is not the case for some, as it also depends on a user's typing speed and the speed of network connection which may cause delay in delivery (Fung and Carter, 2007). It means that people have different speed in typing a message; while a person can deliver his message within a few seconds, others may take a few minutes. Internet access, as well, runs at different speeds depending on the types of equipment and connection a computer has. High-

speed connectivity allows messages to be delivered instantly and vice versa. These circumstances can be applied in text messaging through smartphones as well.

2.1.2 CMC Language: Its Resemblance to Written Language

On the other hand, online language is also similar to writing in some ways. To illustrate, the addressees are not physically close to the users in terms of distance. Traditionally in olden days, people who lived far away from one another communicate through letters sent by post. This type of communication is asynchronous which means that an interaction between two parties does not occur at the same time and there will be a delay in the response. With the current technology, asynchronous interaction may also take place (e.g. through emails); however, in CMC, distance may not be a problem anymore when messages can also be delivered synchronously (e.g. through instant messaging).

Also, it is often found that adjectives and adverbs are not used frequently in written discourse. In the Norwegian context, Ling (2005) found zero occurrences of these two items in his analysis of SMS features; nevertheless, there were appearances of these items in his data of spoken language. This indicates that people tend to be more descriptive verbally than in written language. Furthermore, Ling (2005) added that since SMS text is written like any other forms of writing, a message can be edited before it reaches its addressee as to avoid any mistakes contextually and linguistically. This does not only apply to SMS but also any other written forms in CMC such as in Facebook or Twitter. Unlike in spoken discourse, what is said has already been heard by its addressee and it is not reversible.

In addition, the written form is also identified as being lexically dense. To elaborate, lexical density refers to the ratio of content and grammatical words in a text, and written language is found to be denser compared to spoken language. CMC language, according to Yates (1996), has this particular characteristic; therefore, he believed that the language in this sense is more written-like. In any case, although online language may have the characteristics of both spoken and written language, there are also features that are only exclusive to this medium. These features are listed and elaborated further in the next section.

2.1.3 Features Pertaining to CMC Language

Despite being quite similar to written discourse, CMC language it has its unique features that cannot be applied in formal writing. These features include the use of abbreviations, deleted vowels, word-letter or word-number substitutions, clippings, unconventional spellings as well as emoticons. The unique writing style of online language is the result of the suspension of the rules of standard/formal writing “to give way to linguistic play” (Fung and Carter, 2007, p. 348).

There is also a combination of standard and non-standard language in CMC especially by young users. It is termed as "textese", "textspeak" (for SMS), "netspeak", "netlingo", and "weblish” (for CMC) (Crystal, 2008). He calls these unique linguistic features as novel communicative symbols that include letter-number combinations (e.g. ‘cr8’ for ‘crate’), vowel-free words (e.g. ‘pls’ for ‘please’, ‘tht’ for ‘that’), acronyms (e.g. ‘BRB’ for ‘be right back’) and smileys/emoticons that represent various positive and negative moods namely happy, sad, angry and so on. In general, the discourse on the Internet has brought communication to a new level as it is “complete with its own lexicon, graphology, grammar and usage conditions” (Tagliamonte and Derek, 2008, p.4)

Apart from that, online language can also be described as purely text-based which is absent from the characteristics of spoken discourse. By way of illustration, features in face-to-face interaction such as the kinesics or non-verbal movements (i.e. gestures, facial expressions, body language) as well as paralanguage (i.e. pitch, volume, intonation) are not present in online communication (Fung and Carter, 2007). However, this is not always the case. Online users can use emotive features such as smilies (e.g. :), ;)) or frownies (e.g. :(, x() to non-verbally express their feelings. On the other hand, in the case of an instant messaging service, Yahoo Messenger, it is possible for users to say something or convey their emotions out loud by using 'audibles'. 'Audibles' are animated characters or emoticons that are given a voice; for example, some audible emoticons produce crying or kissing sound along with animated movements. This is a witty and smart way to represent both real body language and paralanguage to enhance the online communicative environment.

As mentioned above, logotype such as emoticon is frequently used. In addition to this feature, one of the most commonly used features is abbreviation; to name a few, there are *LOL* for 'laugh out loud', *IDK* for 'I don't know', *FTW* for 'for the win' and *OMG* for 'oh my god'. Farina and Lyddy (2011) state that the use of abbreviations is for the convenience of the users to save their time and energy; however, similar to other features, it comes to be the showcase of personal identity as well as to build boundaries between the in-group that knows the features and those who don't (i.e. teachers or parents). Additionally, Ong'onda, Matu and Oloo (2011) that study the features of Kenyan text messaging state that the use of abbreviated words/phrases is also due to the challenge in the size of screen which is rather small and the limitation of characters posed by the medium.

In order to give a clearer picture of how language is used in CMC, Hård af Segerstad (2002) has done a comprehensive study stating the features involved in four different modes of CMC (e-mail, web chat, IM and SMS) by dividing them into four major categories: (1) space, punctuation, spelling and case, (2) grammatical features, (3) logotypes and (4) lexical features and abbreviations. While the final two have been briefly mentioned before, the first two categories are also the items studied in online language. In the first category, it involves the omission of space between words and punctuations, the use of lower or capital case or the combination of both, and the unconventional spellings and punctuations with possible occurrences of repeated letters or punctuation markers. As for grammatical features, sentences in CMC tend to be shorter, which may involve the deletion of pronouns or the change of word order. Although grammatical errors are commonly found in CMC, it has become an acceptable norm as this is what defines the discourse where language constructed in a fast-paced technology is much simpler.

Other unique features found by researchers in this field besides those mentioned earlier are onomatopoeic spellings (i.e. "roar" or "hehe"), misspelling/typographical error which is normally due to slips of the finger (e.g., "teh" for "the") and deleted apostrophes (i.e. "wont" or “shes”) (Farina and Lyddy, 2011). Apart from that, there are also occurrences of hybrid words or utterances that make use two or more of the features outlined above; for example, “im2bz2t2y” for “I am too busy to talk to you” which contains a full word, initials as well as letter and number homophones. According to Crystal (2008), the instances that illustrate the use of these unique features reveal the innovative, playful side of the online language which will then encourage more novelty (i.e. the abbreviation ‘imy’ for ‘I miss you’ can be developed

to ‘imysm’ for ‘I miss you so much’ or ‘imysmmhiatb’ for ‘I miss you so much my heart is about to burst.’)

Online users also tend to use non-standard spellings. Examples of misspelled words that are commonly used are ‘gud’ for ‘good’, ‘wud’ for ‘would’ and ‘shud’ for ‘should’. In these instances, vowels ‘oo’ and ‘ou’ are omitted and replaced with the letter ‘u’ which has the equivalent sound to what it substitutes. These words could someday be conventionalized due to their frequent use in online communication in the same way as the words ‘thanx’ for ‘thanks’ and ‘tonite’ for ‘tonight’ (Dabrowska, 2011). The use of these modified spellings is not only for the purpose of saving space alone by shortening the words. There is also a case of intentional misspelling which makes words longer in the number of characters (Jaffe, Lee, Huang and Oshagan, 1995). This is done by adding and repeating a vowel or consonant to accentuate a particular word or phrase i.e. “Goooooood morningggg!” or “Soooooo hot.”

The choice of lexical items also differs from a formal writing where in CMC the words are more colloquial and the users also code switch with another language. This proves that the phenomenon of code-switching does not only exist in spoken discourse. Urbäck (2007) who examined code switching in CMC, specifically in a Swedish online discussion forum, finds that words from the English language are often inserted into the postings especially into the greetings. English is also preferred alongside Swedish based on several reasons: (1) some respondents who may have lived in an English-speaking country feel more comfortable using English, (2) most respondents are aware that the main language being used in the online forum is English; hence, it is proper to use the language more than Swedish, and (3) some respondents are native English speakers but since they have lived in Sweden for a long time, they feel that it is more

appropriate to use Swedish especially when saying greetings to give them a sense of belonging among the Swedish users. For the last reason, it is evident that **e**thnicity/nationality does have an effect on the choice of language.

In the case of Urbäck's (2007) study, the native speakers of English, who know how to communicate in Swedish, used the language to accommodate to the language of the local ethnicity. According to Fishman et al., ethnicity consists of "the sensing and expressing of links to one's own kind (one own's people), to collectivities that not only purportedly have historical depth but, more crucially, share putative ancestral origins and, therefore, the gifts and responsibilities, rights and obligations deriving therefrom" (cited in Yeh et al., 2004). Hence, many people will use their native language with those of the same ethnicity in order to preserve their ethnic identity and thus form solidarity within the group.

2.1.4 Malaysians' Language Use in CMC

In Malaysia as well, CMC has influenced the ways languages are used by the locals. The use of English is favored online and there are numerous unique features used given the demographics of the country itself which are represented by multiple ethnic groups. Interestingly, each ethnicity has different styles of language use.

Since multiple languages are spoken and written in Malaysia, code switching and code mixing have become part and parcel of language use. Not only in the spoken language, these features are also extensively found in CMC. According to a study done by Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim (2009) on language use in blogs, IM, emails and text messages, there are occurrences of code switching and code mixing alongside abbreviations, acronyms, discourse particles, borrowings, affixation, coinage and

blending. The study reveals common features of informal varieties such as the use of intrasentetial and intersentential code switching between English and Malay, borrowing (e.g., *kampung*, a Malay word for *village*) and colloquial discourse particles (e.g., *meh* and *la* from the chinese language that are usually placed at the end of sentences) (Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim, 2009).

In the use of discourse particles, Fung and Carter (2007) find heavy use of this feature (i.e. 'meh', 'ar', 'la') in the data of their study that comprised online, private chat in the English channels on ICQ. There are reasons behind using these features as stated by Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim (2009),

> "The users of English in Malaysia are adapting their language to meet the demands of new situations, and to exploit the potential of new media for creativity and self-expression. Interlocutors establish their social identity through the use of features specific to the variety and through the medium that is used." (p. 44)

This situation relates to the notion posited by Gumperz (1982) where he introduced the 'we-code' and 'they-code', saying that "the tendency is for the ethnically specific, minority language to be regarded as the 'we-code' and become associated with in-group and informal activities, and for the majority language to serve as 'they-code' associated with the formal, stiffer and less formal outgroup relations". In other words, each individual uses a specific language for diverse purposes; it is not only for communicative purpose, but it also reflects which group or community they belong to in order to build rapport or form solidarity.

Furthermore, since the English language is spoken regularly in Malaysia by linguistically varied citizens, it is unavoidable that multiple words or phrases from different ethnic groups' languages are borrowed into the language; thus, it has brought

the rise of the variety of English used in the country which is termed as the Malaysian English (MalE). A study by Tan (2009) that looked at the lexical borrowings from the Chinese and Malay language into MalE reveal that there are three common borrowed features: loan words, compound blends and loan translations. Table 2.1 below shows examples of these three features found in MalE as identified by Tan (2009).

Table 2.1 : Lexical Borrowings (Tan, 2009)

	Loan words	**Compound blends**	**Loan translations**
Lexical borrowings from Malay language	Gatal • *Flirtatious* Akad nikah • *Solemnization* Kompang • *Drum*	Beef rendang • *Spicy beef dish* Pandan leaf • *Screwpine leaf* Ice kacang • *Shaved ice dessert*	Friday prayer • *Congregational prayer held every Friday* God willing • *Hopefully* Night market • *Night bazaar*
Lexical borrowings from Chinese language	Char kuey teow • *Noodle dish* Kopitiam • *Coffee shop* Feng shui • *Chinese system of Geomancy*	Kuey teow soup • *Noodle soup* Wantan noodles • *Noodle dish* Angpow packet • *Monetary gift in red packet*	Chicken rice • *Chinese dish* Mooncake • *Chinese traditional cake* Lion dance • *Traditional dance*

There are several reasons for these borrowings. The main purpose is that some words do not exist in the English language due to the fact that they are developed locally and culturally; hence they are only commonly used and known among the locals (Tan, 2009). Examples are the malay word ‘rendang’ which is a Malay traditional dish and the chinese word ‘mantou’ which is a chinese steamed bun. Besides that, some words

are better uttered or expressed in the first language as it gives more emphasis to them i.e. the malay word ‘gatal’ which means ‘flirtatious’ or the chinese word ‘kopitiam’ which means ‘coffee shop’.

In addition, Siti Hamin Stapa and Azianura Hani Shaari (2012) stated that users will not have to worry about being judged by others for not being fluent in either their language or the second or third language. They found that users tend to modify spellings of words by combining letters and number homophone, reducing or omitting vowels, replacing the letter ‘s’ with ‘z’ and using one letter to represent a word. According to Crystal (2006), these common features of incorrect spellings and the use of inaccurate language structures are an acceptable norm of CMC; hence users are free to express themselves “with no fear of displaying mistakes” (Siti Hamin Stapa & Azianura Hani Shaari, 2012). Other than wrong spellings, there are also errors related to punctuation marks. According to Shazia Aziz, Maria Shamim, Muhammad Faisal Aziz and Priya Avais (2013), it is not only caused by frequent texting alone, but users also tend to be careless and are unaware of the correct use of some marks.

It is also found that Malaysian users who use English language to converse online use a lot of informal varieties and features compared to English native users as demonstrated in the findings by Siti Hamin Stapa and Azianura Hani Shaari (2012). They discovered that findings in studies by Baron (2006), Tagliamonte and Denis (2008), and Lewin and Donner (2002) revealed low frequencies of common features of CMC language constructed by native speakers. This shows that Malaysian users adapt well to the nature of CMC that uses informal language to communicate.

2.2 Linguistic Shortenings in CMC

Users of CMC tend to shorten their sentences before delivering their message. There are reasons for doing so such as to save users' time and effort in constructing the message (Ong'onda et al., 2011). There are a number of strategies used to do it. Bieswanger (2008) reveals that in the shortening of text messages in English and German language, English text messages demonstrate a higher frequency of shortening than German language especially in the use of word-value characters and phonetic spellings. Apart from these features, it is also found that users tend to apply clippings, contractions, initialisms and letter-/number-homophones. Interestingly, letter-/number-homophones are the most frequently used kind of shortening in the English language in contrast with the German language that represents none.

All these strategies, except for word-value character, are mentioned by Dabrowska (2011) which are elaborated in the following section. In her study of the comparisons of methods used in the shortening of English and Polish, it is found that the frequency of shortenings is higher in English text messages. This is due to the fact that English is more analytical compared to Polish and given its features, a variety of shortening strategies can be applied to it (Dabrowska, 2011). This finding is similar to Bieswanger's (2008) mentioned earlier. It is fascinating to discover from their findings that not all shortening strategies can be applied to all languages. To illustrate, the use of word-number or word-letter substitutions are not applicable in Polish (Dabrowska, 2011) as well as in German language (Bieswanger, 2008).

Similarly, Ong'onda et al. (2011) state in their study that similar strategies are being used in Kenyan text messages comprising sentence and word modifications which have contributed to language change. They find that these text messages are being shortened

through the deletions of certain particles and punctuations, apart from the use of abbreviations. Examples given are the cuttings of word (contractions) such as ‘hwz’ for ‘how is’, ‘wassup’ for ‘what is up’ and ‘Ihv’ for ‘I have’ (p. 5) which have changed the sentence structure. There are also omissions of articles ‘a’, ‘an’ and ‘the’ as a way to condense a message. Besides that, the finding also reveals that ‘to’ infinitive is also deleted to save time and space e.g. ‘She wud like eat s/wich’ (She would like *to* eat a sandwich). Furthermore, Ong’onda et al. (2011) disclose that most users, too, omit the pronoun or the subject in the beginning of sentences; examples are ‘hv been very bz’ (*I* have been very busy) and ‘going to rain soon’ (*It is* going to rain soon).

The modifications or simplifications of words have triggered a great interest among a significant number of researchers. Advocates of language change especially in CMC believe that it demonstrates adaptability and capability of users to manipulate their language in order to suit the online settings; nevertheless many fear that CMC is detrimental to the language.

2.3 Theoretical Constructs for the Present Study

The present study is interested to examine the features and shortening strategies preferred by Malaysian Twitter users. Apart from the theories mentioned above, there were two other frameworks to look into these linguistic phenomena. First is a framework by Ling and Baron (2007) of which in their study, they made comparisons between the linguistic features of American SMS and IM. This framework was used due to the fact that it was also used to study texts within a character-limited medium similar to Twitter which was SMS, and since this framework was used initially in the American context, it was then hoped to shed light into the use of language in the local context.

Three linguistic areas were involved: (1) length of each transmission in terms of the number of characters, words and sentences per transmission, (2) emoticons and lexical shortenings with an emphasis on the occurrence of contractions (e.g., *can't* rather than *cannot*), abbreviations (e.g., *R* rather than *are*) and acronyms (e.g., *lol* for *laughing out loud*), and (3) sentence punctuations that look into the use of required punctuations especially at the ends of sentences such as the period and question mark. There was also a frequency calculation on the number of apostrophes found in the identified contractions. In their study, it was found that text messages, which are limited to 160 characters, were longer and had more sentences compared to IM texts (Ling and Baron, 2007). Text messages also contained more abbreviations and contractions; however IM had two third more contractions. Nevertheless, there was also an occurrence of uncontracted forms particularly in text messages which was believed to be used to avoid the complexity of typing apostrophes. In a nutshell, Tables 2.2 and 2.3 demonstrate the summarized findings of Ling and Baron's (2007) study.

Table 2.2 : Similarities between American Text Messaging and IM (Ling & Baron, 2007)

Feature	Texting	IM
Emoticons and lexical shortenings		
emoticons	.001% of words	.004% of words
acronyms	.005% of words	.003% of words
Sentence punctuation		
overall sentence punctuation	39% of sentences	45% of sentences
transmission-final punctuation	29% of sentences	35% of sentences
transmission-internal punctuation	54% of sentences	78% of sentences
use of required question mark	73% of questions	100% of questions
use of required period	30% of other sentences	41% of other sentences

Table 2.3 : Differences between American Text Messaging and IM (Ling & Baron, 2007)

Feature	Texting	IM
Length		
transmissions (in words)	7.7 words	6.0 words
transmissions (in characters)	35 characters	29 characters
one-word transmissions	3.7% of messages	18.8% of messages
multisentence transmissions	60% of messages	34% of messages
sentences per transmission	1.76 per transmission	1.27 per transmission
Emoticons and lexical shortenings		
abbreviations	3.2% of words	0% of words
contractions	84.7% of potential	68.1% of potential
apostrophes	31.9% of contractions	93.9% of contractions

From Tables 2.2 and 2.3, it is a known fact that users of CMC are driven to construct shorter texts comprising the linguistic features unique to this medium of communication. In other words, linguistic features are derived from the ways users shortened their messages. For instance, when a user constructs the short form 'gd' for 'good', it reveals that they omit the middle vowels to simplify the word. This means that any users need to arrive at certain strategies to be able to shorten a sentence. Therefore, the second framework used in the present study was by Dabrowska (2011) who listed seven shortening strategies as illustrated in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 : Shortening Strategies (Dabrowska, 2011)

Shortening Strategies	**Examples**
Clipping and Contractions	1. Pls write down ur ***add*** (address) & pass it 2 me 2. I will c u ***tomo*** (tomorrow)
Vowel Omission	1. I didn't get ur ***msg*** (message) 2. ***Pls*** (Please) let me know ASAP
Word-Letter Substitution	1. ***U*** (You) shud respect ur parents 2. Wud u like to ***b*** (be) my fren?
Word-Number Substitution	1. Shes praying ***4*** (for) u 2. She wants ***2*** (to) get good scores

Non-Standard Spelling	1. I ***shud*** (should) go 2 ***skool*** (school) now or else I ll be super late 2. It ***wud*** (would) b fun to watch a movie ***2geda*** (together)
Deletion of Pronouns and Auxiliaries	1. ***Just landed*** (I have just landed) in Kuala Lumpur after a long flight frm South Korea 2. ***Back*** (I am back) frm a long holiday in France
Apostrophe Deletion	1. ***Im*** (I'm) 2 tired 2 walk. ***Cant*** (Can't) we just stop for a break? 2. ***Shes*** (She's) nt my fren. ***Dont*** (Don't) u knw her

She concluded that almost all languages undergo the shortening processes in CMC; nevertheless, its rate of recurrences may differ from language to language. It is therefore for this reason that her framework was chosen for the current research to examine the possible strategies used in the local context and their frequencies.

From the two frameworks, only one study by Denby (2012) was found to have made use of the framework by Ling and Baron (2007) where he also examined the nature of language on Twitter among random users of which their origins were not disclosed. Due to the lack of prior research that used any of the two stated frameworks, the current research was carried out to fill this gap by looking specifically into the context of language use in Twitter among Malaysian L2 users which has not only revealed the linguistic features but also the strategies used to truncate texts.

2.4 Perceptions of Language Use in CMC

Language has evolved since the invention of CMC. The two well-known services, Twitter and SMS, which impose character limitation in the construction of messages have given an impact on language use. Users use many kinds of strategies to make sure that their message fits within the character limitation. In both types of CMC mentioned earlier, shortened forms of words are often used which means the messages are mostly constructed in shorthand. According to Talha (2012), the use of shorthand 'b/c' for 'because' and 'b4' for 'before' have already been used in SMS previously but when Twitter emerged, they became more widely acknowledged and used. Hård af Segerstad (2002) adds that users will tend to use lexical short forms and reduce the syntactic structure of a message; thus it will save keystrokes.

2.4.1 Linguistic Deterioration in CMC

There have been numerous debates on whether it has contributed to the deterioration of many languages or vice versa. Popular views state that language use has become poor in CMC as posited in several studies. Thurlow (2006) has done a study investigating the media's perceptions of the use of CMC and found that they are mostly negative and discouraging, especially when it comes to its impact on language use.

To name a few negative quotations about the language use on CMC, it is stated that **"**if the already ingrained corruption of the English language is perpetuated, we will soon be a nation made up entirely of grammatical duffers" ("Perspective: Mind Your Language", 2001, p. 11) and "Texting can be incredibly simple. You can fill your role of returning calls and keeping in touch with people without any pressure to be creative or witty. We're talking about language in its most stripped down kind of level"

(Thompson, 1999, as cited in Thurlow, 2006). It is feared that CMC would encourage users to construct sentences that are full of errors and unintelligible.

2.4.2 Linguistic Innovation in CMC

Despite the disadvantages of CMC on language use mentioned earlier, there are also the good sides of it. Users have their own reason for using certain features and it enhances their ability to adapt to the language change in CMC (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). The media perceptions of how IM has contributed to the breakdown of the English Language are not always true. According to Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) in their findings, the use of shortened words and abbreviations is relatively small in IM; it did not appear that extensively as how the media put it. Instead, these features demonstrate creativity of users to construct their messages, and most of the time what they want to deliver is successfully conveyed despite the non-standard forms of language that they use. Hence, rather than seeing it as degrading a language, it should be seen as users having an innovative and a good command of the language.

Another study by Shazia Aziz et al. (2013) has contradicted the belief that the use of non-standard forms online will put the future of Standard English in danger. The students participating in their study state that they are aware of standard and non-standard forms, and they know how to distinguish the usage of these two forms in formal (specifically academic) writing and informal (online) communication. They add that they are driven to use short forms because of "the urgency of turn taking and the ease of typing and the urge to save time and space" (as cited in Shazia Aziz et al., 2013, p. 12889). Moreover, since they already know standard spellings of words prior to abbreviating them, it is not a matter to be concerned with, whether it will affect their

academic writing or not. This is because if errors still exist, the problem might be a lack of knowledge on the students part (Shazia Aziz et al., 2013).

In addition, concerning the language use on character-limited Twitter, users are given the opportunity to play around with words to get them to fit into the constraint and it is really fun to do besides encouraging the users to be efficient in constructing a tweet (Knapp, 2011). In this case, 'language play' means users tend to manipulate linguistic forms in the act of communicating (Jones, 2010). However, it is not always about form. Creativity in the new media also involves word play (e.g. punning), type play (e.g. repetition) and sound play (e.g. accent stylization, letter-number homophones) (Thurlow, 2011). Yet, creativity in utterances or writing may not only lie in the 'language play', puns, metaphors or other rhetorical devices. According to Jones (2010),

> "What may be 'creative' may have more to do with the strategic way language is used, and what may be 'created' may not be an inventive linguistic product, but rather a new way of dealing with a situation or a new set of social relationships." (p. 473)

He further explained that linguistic innovations exist when writers code-mix and shift styles in their texts based on their social and cultural contexts. When it involves more than one language, this is termed as 'bilingual creativity'. Online users having two languages can manipulate words through the use of code switching or code mixing, sounds through the use of punctuations or rhyming words and graphics through the use of emoticons are engaged in creative interactions (Fung and Carter, 2007). In their study that examined the language of English-Cantonese bilinguals, they have found "a new creative hybrid variety of language containing highly playful, interactive spoken-like features in written form" (Fung & Carter, 2007, p. 349).

2.5 Studies on Twitter

2.5.1 Tweeting Style and Feature

People's writing styles in Twitter are influenced by their intentions to tweet, and these intentions can be observed through the linguistic features and content of their tweets (Wang, Chen and Kan, 2012). An interesting study by Paris, Thomas and Wan (2012) revealed several features used by two different communities (science and social service) in Twitter which they believed have different communicative goals. Two classes of linguistic features were taken into account: differences in the use of emotive and personal language and variations of English that include spelling.

It was found that the science community that conducted many researches constructs a more formal language that had low frequencies of contractions and informal words, and follows the right punctuation rules. Furthermore, since this community tend to share factual information, there was low occurrence of personal pronouns. Unlike the social service community, their tweets were mostly written to express personal emotions, opinions and experiences; thus, the use of personal pronouns is more crucial for this community. Additionally, the social service community that engaged in more personal interactions used more personal/informal language, making their tweets both more speech- or conversational-like.

Similar to other well-known social networks such as Facebook and Yahoo Messenger, emotive features are also heavily used in Twitter. According to a study conducted by Wang et al. (2012), emoticons such as smilies (e.g. ☺, :-)), frownies (e.g. ☹, :-() and other forms are found to be prevailing features in tweets. However, a study by Denby (2012) revealed otherwise. In his Twitter data, the use of emoticons was not favourable as stated mostly by the previous studies. Nevertheless, there were some other unique

elements that were noticeable in the data. Denby's (2012) findings revealed that there was a considerable number of hyperlinks to websites where some of the links were shortened using services such as Bit.ly (http://bit.ly). The use of these links is rather a new phenomenon in CMC. By embedding the links into tweets, users can share pictures, videos or blogs from other websites with their contacts. Besides this feature, another element exclusive to Twitter is the symbol hashtag (#) which is used as a prefix to certain words. The accounts of this symbol and its use are detailed in the next section.

Additionally, having character limitation has made Twitter similar to text messaging. In fact, the idea of setting the parameter was in point of fact derived from the characteristic of SMS (Talha, 2012). Nevertheless, in comparison with text messaging, some may say that in Twitter, users would try to challenge themselves to construct longer messages and make full use of the limitation. This is proved in a study done by Denby (2012) which compared the mean message length in words between tweets and text messages. It was found that users construct more words in Twitter than in SMS albeit the parameter (140 characters) is much shorter than the latter service (160 characters).

As mentioned earlier in the literature, the use of common short forms such as abbreviations, acronyms and contractions in CMC are also identified within tweets posted in Twitter. With a parameter of 140 characters, it is without a doubt that users would tend to play around with languages by making use of lexical shortenings or by thinking of simpler words or phrases to replace longer ones with similar connotations. Notwithstanding, the occurrences of short forms might not be that frequent in Twitter. Denby (2012) came to a conclusion that the language use in Twitter is significantly

more standard and formal than any other social networks when his findings revealed that Twitter language makes proper use of punctuations and has relatively low amount of abbreviations and initialisms.

In essence, even though the limited space in Twitter is a constraint, it should not be seen as a limitation; while users might abbreviate, truncate or modify their message to fit into 140 characters, this feature of Twitter can also be considered as a favoured circumstance. The diverse methods users use in dealing with constraints disclose what they value in particular tweets and in Twitter as a medium of communication. Moreover, the language economy allows for production and sharing of tweets without much attempt, letting a fast-paced communication to take place.

2.5.2 The Use of Hashtag

There is a feature unique to Twitter that are now being used widely in other social networks which is the hashtag symbol (#). Originally, it is used to tag topics of interest in Twitter among its users. This means that users who may or may not know one another can talk about the same topic by putting this symbol prior to the title of the topic and get connected (Paris et. al. 2012). For instance, any fan of the popular television series, Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) can use the hashtagged acronym *#CSI* to connect to other fans. This serves to aid tweet search (André, Bernstein and Luther, 2012). Other than for the purpose of sharing interests, Twitter users use hashtags innovatively for other disparate reasons as well. To name a few, the use of this symbol reveals users' creativity as it can also be used to express humor or 'joke' topics (Denby, 2012).

Besides that, users tend to use hashtags to give an emphasis on their tweets or to express their feelings. Interestingly in the case of a study by André et al. (2012), this particular item carries different meanings when it is placed in different positions in a sentence: the beginning, middle and end, in which the researchers termed as beginner, middler and ender. Their findings revealed that the beginners usually carry the structure 'subject+verb' such as '#Iwish' or '#Ibelieve', or the structure subject+verb+object such as '#Ushouldntleaveme' or '#Iamlate' which is the common start of a sentence. On the other hand, the middlers are often single-word nouns that are used as keywords to accentuate the message behind the tweets sent (e.g. #politics, #Malaysia) whereas the enders act as extra information or simply the end for the tweets such as '#BFN' for 'bye for now' or *#HTH* for 'hope that helps'.

2.5.3 Retweeting Practices

The practice of retweeting has become part and parcel of Twitter communication. Users are motivated to retweet due to several reasons. According to Danah et al. (2010), people retweet to overtly concur with other users or corroborate others' thoughts. Moreover, it is also done to prompt a conversation or give commentaries by adding new ideas or information in the general interest to share. Not only that, but the act of retweeting, as well, represents friendship or loyalty between companions.

There are a number of studies done to study the phenomenon of retweeting. Wang et al. (2012) did an intriguing study which looked into the use of verb tenses (past and present) in retweets. They categorized their sample tweets into three classifications: (1) Update, which contained tweets of users' or someone else's status at the point of tweeting, (2) Opinion, which contained tweets regarding users' ideas or feelings towards any subject around them, and (3) Interaction, which contained tweets that seek

communication with other users. Among these three groups, users use past tense more for Update (33.70%) followed by Interaction (24.2%) and Opinion (14.9%). This confirmed that Update often addresses past events and it makes use of verb tense more frequently than other groups.

To get tweets to be retweeted, users have to construct at least original and witty messages (Wang et al., 2012). They added that "the craftiness of a saying influences its "retweetability"" (Sentence Similarity section, para. 1). Tweets that contain complex syntactic structure and multiple clauses have low "retweetability". Most users prefer reading retweets that are simple but creative and comprehensible, and this not only applies to retweets, but also normal tweets.

Having a 140-character limitation, it not only gives restrictions as to how and what to tweet, but it also limits the ways a tweet should be retweeted. Retweeting can be done in different ways; the two most common methods are automatic retweeting and "retweet/quote and reply". Automatic retweeting will need users to click on the retweet button/link in the bottom of every tweet and the retweet will be shown on their timeline. On the other hand, "retweet/quote and reply" option allows users to retweet and reply to it by giving their opinions or whatever they would like to draw attention to. In the latter case, when there is an additional comment, a tweet may not be retweeted in full sentence if it comprises more than 140 characters. Therefore, users are obliged to shorten these retweets using certain strategies.

According to Danah et al. (2010), the shortening of a retweet may involve vowel deletion as well as the omission of entire words. When vowels are removed from words, the message can still be conveyed provided that there is cognitive effort

involved. Alternatively, when whole words are omitted, it is ensured that the meaning intended to be delivered is not misinterpreted. In this case, it can be done by only removing unnecessary words or parts of speech such as the conjunctions, articles, pronouns or auxiliaries. These two techniques mentioned by Danah et al. (2010) are also stated in Dabrowska's (2011) study where CMC users may delete vowels in words (e.g. 'gd' for 'good') or pronouns and auxiliaries (e.g. 'taken medicine' for 'I have taken medicine') as part of their shortening strategies. There are also other strategies to shorten retweets as mentioned in Table 2.4.

2.5.4 Value of Tweets

Tweets may appear valuable or otherwise depending on users' interests or preferences. Some users may find certain tweets dull, but these tweets may appeal to other users. André, Bernstein and Luther (2012) did a comprehensive study to examine what kinds of tweet are valued and vice versa. They found that tweets that are worth reading are those that are brief, carry beneficial information and have a sense of humour. These types make users want to read or know more. It is also without a doubt that concise tweets are preferred to long-winded ones given the nature of Twitter as a microblog. The function of 140-character limitation is to encourage users to be more precise and concise in sharing their thoughts and feelings.

On the other hand, tweets which are considered as not worth reading are those that are boring, repetitive, ambiguous or using hashtags and @ signs to mention other users frequently (André et al., 2012). Mostly, tweets that often contain old information appear dull to users. They do not wish to read the same content over and over again. Not only that, tweets that do not give a clear message are also not valued by users. Users prefer to read tweets that are straight forward and comprehensible. Furthermore,

given the feature of Twitter that enables its users to post links to other websites, these links will become impractical if the users just tweet the links alone without any additional comments. Most of the time, the readers will just ignore the tweets without even clicking on the links.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, tweets that are not worthwhile are tweets that overuse hashtags and @ signs (André et al., 2012). This has become a common phenomenon among younger users such as school students. Initially, people use hashtags to tag topics of interest in Twitter; nonetheless, there are users that misuse this symbol by using it aimlessly for every word they type (e.g. #I #cant #miss #theconcert #this #weekend) which could be intimidating to other readers. Moreover, when users use @ signs to mention and reply their acquaintances too frequently, this could also trigger boredom as readers might feel that they are engaging in other people's private conversation. They could have used other way to chat such as 'direct message' which lets them send their contacts private notes.

In a nutshell, users' feedbacks to their feeds are often diverse: some tweets can be hilarious, spark interest or even appear vexing. If users could apprehend what tweets are counted as worthwhile or the other way round, and the reasons for such judgments, it could help them produce valued content.

2.6 Language and Gender

Research on language and gender in the field of sociolinguistics has been a prolonged interest since the 1970s. This is due to the notion of gender stereotypes which has long existed in the society where it is perceived that the males and females are brought up and socialized in a different way; hence, there are differences in the way they present

themselves physically, emotionally and, in the interest of the present research, linguistically. It is inevitable that the males and the females are seen to have differences in how they use a language. There are certain styles and features that are only appropriate to be used by one gender over the other. Nevertheless, this is not always the case as there are also features that are not gender-specific.

However, the studies of language and gender on the internet should not always be compared to traditional gender and language studies. This is because the Internet, being a virtual medium, offers a space where users can use a language in a more flexible and unrestricted way (Rodino, 1997). To exemplify, although the males may appear to be more assertive in CMC, it does not mean that the females normally use a passive language to express themselves. Females may also communicate online in a forthright way.

2.6.1 A Brief Review of Works on Gender-Bound Language in CMC

Sophisticated technology has provided another medium for people to express themselves i.e. via the Internet. It is commonly observed that there are differences in the online language use by males and females depending on their views, cultures and styles of which the language is normally informal and resembles spoken language.

The features of gendered language use in face-to-face communication is similar to CMC contexts such as the use of "verbosity, assertiveness, use of profanity, politeness (and rudeness), typed representations of smiling and laughter, and degree of interactive engagement" (Coates, 1993) (As cited in Herring, 2000). However, there is a marginal difference between these two types of interactions that is in the turn-taking sequences where it is often not consistent in CMC due to the nature of the medium which can be

asynchronous as in emails. Details on the differences and similarities in online language are extended below.

a) Gender Differences in Online Language

It is believed that women and men are taught to speak differently since they were young (Lakoff, 1975). Basically, women have to speak softer than men and their language normally involves the use of tag questions (i.e. right?, isn't it?), lexical hedges (i.e. I guess, kind of), polite forms (i.e. please), intensifiers and qualifiers (i.e. quite, very, rather), and empty adjectives (i.e. lovely, adorable). The use of the intensifier 'such' and the polite form 'please' by female users have outnumbered the male users about two to one (Karlsson, 2007). Lakoff (1975) also believes that the question tags used by women are a sign of uncertainty due to their lower status than that of men. The list below shows ten features that are perceived as appropriate in women's language (as cited in Holmes, 1993, p. 314)

1. Lexical hedges or fillers, *e.g. you know, sort of, …*
2. Tag questions, *e.g. she is very nice, isn't she?*
3. Rising intonation on declaratives, *e.g. it's really good.*
4. Empty adjectives, *e.g. divine, charming, cute.*
5. Precise color terms, *e.g. magenta, aquamarine.*
6. Intensifiers such as *just* and *so*.
7. Hypercorrect grammar, *e.g. consistent use of standard verb forms.*
8. Superpolite forms, *e.g. indirect requests, euphemisms.*
9. Avoidance of strong swear words, *e.g. fudge, my goodness.*
10. Emphatic stress, *e.g. it was a BRILLIANT performance*.

On the contrary, men are always associated with using rough language (Lakoff, 1975). The use of profanities is often connected to male language (Karlsson, 2007). However, among all the vulgar words used, the word 'shit' is found not to be related to the male language as proposed by Lakoff (1975). Lakoff (1975) as well as Flexner (1960) stated that the coarse word 'shit' is dominantly used by males only; nevertheless, nowadays females have also started to use the word in their everyday conversations.

In the local context, Zaini Amir et al. (2012) have found differences in the language use between male and female Malaysian bloggers. By using a checklist of language characteristics by Jesperson (1922), Lakoff (1975) and Crawford (1995), they reveal the differences in five language features among these bloggers which are the intensifiers, lexical hedges, tag questions, empty adjectives and adverbs. It is found that the females use more intensifiers, lexical hedges, tag questions and empty adjectives than men and this has confirmed Lakoff's (1975) theory. However, in the use of adverb, there is no significant difference in the male and female bloggers' language use; hence it is concluded that this feature is not gender specific. Al Rousan, Noor Hashima Abdul Aziz and Cristopher (2011) also find another feature that is skillfully and mostly used by females, which is the punctuation mark. This concurs with Ling's (2005) study which reveals the same result of young Norwegian females. Females are thought to produce more accurate and clear messages than males apart from being more expressive by the use of excessive unconventional punctuation like the exclamation mark (Rousan et al., 2011).

In other words, females are inclined to use more literary embellishments such as appropriate greetings, punctuation marks and capitalization in their communication (Balakrishnan and Yeow, 2007). Their messages have the tendency to make use of

more of the traditional and standard language of a written discourse. Conversely, males opt to write a more concise message that is simple and direct to interact (e.g. a single sentence or a single word) (Ling, 2005).

Another outstanding feature that is favoured by most online users is the emoticon, be it in the graphical or text-based forms. These forms are used in place of face-to-face expressions and gestures. In terms of gender variation in the use of emoticons, many studies have found that females use more of this feature than males. For instance, studies on online language by Witmer and Katzman (1997), and Tossell, Kortum, Shepard, Barg-Walkow, Ahmad Rahmati and Zhong (2012) have revealed that emotive feature is preferred by women than men. The females are more likely to embed emotional elements in their interactions.

Interestingly, a study by Wolf (2000) reveals a slightly different finding which is in the purpose of using emoticons. In her findings, while women use emoticons to express humour, men use more of this feature to tease or to show sarcasm. Briefly, there exists a gender difference in the types of emoticons being used. Nonetheless, studies done on gender differences have revealed mixed results. A study by Huffaker and Calvert (2005) discloses a contradictory finding to the traditional belief that females appear to be more emotional and expressive than the males. They find it surprising that the outcome of their study reveals that it is men who use more emotive features.

In general, it is evident that many researches done on sex differences in language use support most of Lakoff's (1975) theories. Nevertheless, Mizokami (2001) thinks otherwise by stating that "by using 'men as the norm and women as a deviation' criteria, they have explained their results in order to prove how women's language use

is inferior to or different from men's." She asserts that how women interact is just part of the androcentric ideology that claims that women should use language that is "silent', 'non-assertive', 'indirect', 'polite' and 'supportive'" (Mizokami, 2001). To illustrate, tag questions may not be gender specific but the use of this feature depends on a user's social class, age and occupation (Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary, 1989). They add that people in authority such as leaders and teachers tend to use tag questions more regardless of their sex as to represent their role in the society. This has opposed Lakoff's theories which state that women use tag questions more due to their low self-confidence and the feeling of being inferior to men. Additionally, a study done by Nemati and Bayer (2007) has investigated whether it is true that females use intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than males in the English and Persian languages. They also find no significant differences in the usage of these three features and hence reject Lakoff's ideas regarding the linguistic differences between male and female language.

b) Gender Similarities in Online Language

Apart from gender differences in language use, there are also some similarities. Huffaker (2004), in his study that investigates this issue among teenage bloggers, finds that there are no differences in a few features namely the prolificacy, the use of explicit language and how frequent emoticons are used. Firstly, both males and females share a similar prolificacy in which the numbers of words, characters and different words used as well as the average length of transmissions are about the same. Secondly, in terms of the usage of explicit language, both genders are inquisitive in expressing themselves and do not demonstrate any differences in the language use, and lastly, though the result reveals that the average of men that use emoticons are more than that of the females, there is no difference on how often they use the emoticons. When it comes to

the use of acronyms, some studies found no difference in its use between the two genders (Baron, 2004, and Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan, and Crawford, 2007). This has illustrated that "Internet users (both males and females) might adhere to an existing set of standards or norms in online communication" (Huffaker, 2004) and as a result, they display about the same frequency of online linguistic features.

As for the character-limited medium, Twitter, there is a study conducted to compare the Indonesian male and female tweets by Soedjono (2012). She examined the use of three features namely pronoun, abbreviation and profanity. Even though the females use the first-person and second-person pronouns more which reveals the straight-forward character of this gender in addressing people, the third-person pronoun shows equal use by both genders. Meanwhile, in the use of abbreviations and profanities, the frequencies are similar; nonetheless, the females tend to manipulate the spellings of vulgar words by repeating the middle vowels or altering the spellings (letters) in comparison to the males who prefer to use standard spellings more. This demonstrates that although both genders use profanities equally, the males say it more directly and this shows that they seem to be less courteous as compared to the females.

In a nutshell, although many researchers have shown interest in the field of language and gender in CMC, it has not been extensively researched on in Twitter; therefore, it would be interesting to find out more about the differences and similarities within this particular medium especially with the existence of 140-character limitation. The current research was then carried out to fill this gap.

2.7 Summary

The chapter has looked deeply into the previous studies that are interested in and concerned with the impact of CMC on language use. It is observed that the linguistic features in Twitter are more or less similar with other CMC medium/social network, however, it might differ in the frequencies of the features used given its 140 character-limit. Additionally, all the unique features pertaining to online language can not only reveal how an individual use a language, but it also discloses similarities and differences in the language use among males and females. On the whole, the previous studies have looked rather extensively into the language use in CMC; nevertheless, very few studies regarding language use in Twitter have been done. It is therefore due to this gap that the present study was conducted.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study on how users of Twitter construct their tweets within the 140 character limitation with a focus on the linguistic features and shortening strategies used. It describes the research design, the selection of samples and instruments, the data collection procedure as well as data analysis techniques.

3.1 Research Design

The research design employed for this study is the explanatory mixed method. The explanatory design was chosen because among all mixed method designs, it is regarded as the most straightforward (Creswell, 2003). According to Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2003), the general purpose of this design is that the initial quantitative results could be explained and supported by qualitative data. In this study, it involves:

1) calculations of the frequency of linguistic features and shortening strategies used in Twitter by all participants, which were then recalculated and divided by gender
2) explanation on the features and strategies used to shorten words or phrases which also look into the creativity and clarity of tweets within the parameter of Twitter.

To elaborate, this design was chosen mainly because the present study involves quantitative data which were gathered from a collection of tweets and analysed for frequencies of features and strategies, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data that were obtained from email questionnaires to explain and support

the findings of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2003). It is hoped that this would offer the present study a more extensive perspective than a single design would (Creswell, 2003).

3.2 Participants

A total of twenty participants who were either undergoing a degree program or who have already graduated were selected for the study using the snowball sampling approach (see 3.3). They are in the 20-30 age group and were chosen without preference in their ethnicity or religion since these aspects are not the focus of the research. The participants have the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) or the *Malaysian Certificate of Education* which is equivalent to the O'levels, a bachelor's degree or a master's degree as their higher educational qualification. Out of the twenty participants, ten were males and another ten were females.

3.3 Sampling Method

The snowball sampling approach was used where the participants were selected through referrals by some acquaintances. They were all active users of Twitter. This approach was chosen because there are millions of Malaysian twitter users and the researcher only intended to elicit the participation of twenty users who not only use L1 in their tweets but also L2. Furthermore, this approach was more cost-effective and the samples were easily accessible.

3.4 Data

The data for the present study were obtained from the collection of tweets via the participants' Twitter timeline and answers from the email questionnaire distributed to them. These two instruments are further explained in the following sections.

3.4.1 Tweets

Twitter was used in collecting data from the participants. Data were presented in the form of tweets constructed within the 140 character limitation. Tweets that were excluded were: (1) re-tweeted ones that were not constructed by the participants themselves, and (2) tweets that involved interactions with other users. In other words, conversational tweets as explained in (2) were not the primary focus of this study and thus they were excluded to give way to personal tweets that expressed the participants' emotions, views, ideas and thoughts. A list of the gathered tweets is provided in Appendix II.

3.4.2 Email Questionnaire

Email questionnaires were also used to collect data. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix I. The questionnaire that was used in the present research was divided into five sections. Section A asks the participants' background information which includes their gender, age and educational background.

Section B consists of questions concerning the participants' linguistic background. Here, the participants were asked which language they considered as their first language and which language they feel more confident and comfortable with when texting. They were requested to comment on their degree of proficiency in their first language, English language or any third language, and given options such as *fluently*, *able to communicate with others*, *able to communicate with others but with difficulty* or *able to understand but not able to speak*. These questions were included mainly because the participants' linguistic history and competence may contribute to the reliability of tweets gathered.

In the meantime, Sections C and D comprise questions that were intended to find out what the participants think of creativity and clarity of tweets within the 140 character limitation. The questions were answered in two different ways: one with questions which were answered through open-ended questions, and the other by using a Likert scale. In the former section which is Section C, the participants were asked to give their views and ideas of a creative tweet. Three ideas were given based on Thurlow's (2011) views of a creative text in SMS, IM, Facebook and so on, which he termed as new media discourses. Thurlow's (2011) ideas were adopted in this study as Twitter is also one of the commonly used social networking services apart from those mentioned in his study. According to Thurlow (2011), creativity can be perceived in a number of ways:

> There is certainly *type play* (e.g. capitalization, repetition) and *word play* (e.g. punning), but there is also… *sound play* (e.g. accent stylizations, letter-number homophones). (Playing with Language: The Creative Tactics of New Media Discourse section, para. 8)

Apart from the given ideas of creative texts by Thurlow (2011), the participants were also able to give their own view and understanding of what is perceived as a creative tweet. They would have to define a creative tweet because the main issue in studying creativity is "the lack of an objective definition of creativity" (Xiaojin Zhu et al., 2009, p.1). According to Xiaojin Zhu et al. (2009), due to the high subjectivity of creative writing, they overcome this problem by using human judgement as the ground truth. Furthermore, the participants were also asked whether they think twitter promotes creativity or not, and that if it does, in what way.

Meanwhile, in the latter section that is Section D, participants' perceptions of the clarity of tweets within the 140 character limitation were elicited. Since Twitter is a form of CMC and has limited space for users to construct their messages, there are

claims that there is deterioration of language ability where users do not bother to use structurally and grammatically correct sentences (Greene, 2011), and that they are driven to use unintelligible lexicons and unknown codes (Tagliamonte and Derek, 2008). As a result, their messages that make use of non-standard language may lack clarity. Hence, by using a Likert scale, the questions in this section asked the participants if the messages conveyed to them were clear, despite the limitation and shortening features used. They also had to state what their idea of a clear tweet is.

The last section, Section E, is intended to elicit the overall language use in Twitter by the participants. This section involved a Likert scale where they were asked to choose between *never*, *always* and *sometimes*. This includes their styles of tweeting (usage of short forms) as well as their strategies/plans before tweeting, such as whether they would ensure the grammar or structure of their tweets are correct before posting them.

Words from the participants were included in the present research because it is believed that they should be given the chance to exhibit their own understanding and points of view on how they use a language within the 140 character limitation in Twitter. According to Weninger (2008), "speakers' understandings about language use can be useful in providing insight into perceived norms" (p.138).

a) Questionnaire-filling

The distribution of the email questionnaires commenced after the participants' tweets were collected from their timeline. They were instructed to give written responses to the questionnaire and that no questions were supposed to be left blank especially the open-ended ones. They were also told that their answers would be kept confidential and

would only be used for the purpose of the current study. Their permission was sought prior to the distribution of the questionnaires.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

A Twitter feed/account was created right before the data collection began and the selected participants, who are active users of Twitter, were asked to follow the account and vice versa. In Twitter, when a person is followed, it means that whatever they tweet will appear on a list that is also known as a timeline. From the timeline, the researcher could access each participant's tweets and collect data accordingly.

Data were then collected from two procedures. The first one involved the gathering of ten English tweets from each of the participants to look out for the features of the tweets and the strategies used to construct the tweets within the parameter of Twitter. As mentioned in Section 3.4.1, the researcher did not gather tweets that involved any interactions with other users or tweets that were re-tweeted; thus, the first ten tweets from each participant that were naturally-occurring data were collected when the researcher had had all the twenty participants in her contact list. Regarding the size of the samples, only ten tweets per participant were collected based on the sample size used in Ling and Baron's (2007) study (as this study is based on their framework) where they gathered 191 text and IM transmissions each from their subjects, which amounted to 2619 number of words. It was from that quantity that the present researcher came up with a total of 200 tweet transmissions (which contained 2486 words) to collect from the twenty participants.

The second procedure involved the distribution of email questionnaire to the twenty participants. The participants were asked to give their email addresses and they would

get a copy of the questionnaire of which they would answer and return to the researcher once the questionnaire was completed. Further details on how the data were analysed is given below.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data that were gathered from Twitter and the questionnaires were analysed in four ways as elaborated next.

3.6.1 Linguistic Features of Twitter Language and the Shortening Strategies

This part elicits answers for the first two research questions. To answer the first research question, the researcher selected the participants' first ten tweets that appear on her timeline to be studied. A total of 200 tweets were gathered and analysed for the coding of linguistic features. The framework by Ling and Baron (2007) (see Section 2.3) was applied for this analysis. As shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3, most of the themes and codes were used to identify the features in the tweets obtained for this task. The linguistic areas involved were: (1) length of each transmission in terms of the number of characters, words and sentences per transmission, (2) emoticons and lexical shortenings, and (3) sentence punctuations that look into the use of required punctuations especially at the ends of sentences such as the period and question mark. This involved numerical data as the researcher counted the frequencies of the features. The data analyses for these linguistic features are presented following Ling and Baron's (2007) style as shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. The calculation methods for each of the frequencies are shown below:

Frequency Calculation for Emoticons and Lexical Shortenings

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Feature}}{\text{Total Number of Words}} \quad \text{X } 100$$

Frequency Calculation for Sentence Punctuation

a) Required question mark

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Question Mark}}{\text{Total Number of Questions}} \text{ X } 100$$

b) Required period

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Period}}{\text{Total Number of Sentences}} \text{ X } 100$$

Frequency Calculation for Length

a) Transmission (in characters)

$$\text{Mean Value} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Characters}}{\text{Total Number of Tweets}}$$

b) Transmission (in words)

$$\text{Mean Value} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Words}}{\text{Total Number of Tweets}}$$

c) One-word Transmission

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of One-word Tweet}}{\text{Total Number of Tweets}} \text{ X } 100$$

d) Multisentence Transmission

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Multisentence Tweet}}{\text{Total Number of Tweets}} \text{ X } 100$$

e) Sentence per Transmission

$$\text{Mean Value} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Sentences}}{\text{Total Number of Tweets}}$$

On the other hand, to answer the second research question, the same 200 tweets were analysed for the occurrences of any of the seven strategies listed in Table 2.4 by Dabrowska (2011) and they were used to explain the features found in the studied tweets. These strategies include clipping and contractions, vowel omission, word-letter

substitution, word-number substitution, non-standard spelling, deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries, and apostrophe deletion. The frequencies of these strategies were calculated in the form of the number of occurrences in the collected data. The data analyses for these strategies are presented following Dabrowska's (2007) style in her study.

Sample tweets for each of the features and strategies are also given following the frequencies, and they are presented as shown in the instances below.

> Be at the right place at the right time and do the right thing **:) [**emoticon] everything will fall into places

From the example shown above, the sample tweet is identified to have an emotive feature '**:)**'. Therefore, it is placed under the Linguistic Features of Tweets section (See Section 4.1.1) and is indented to distinguish it from the explanation given. Then, the feature used is highlighted in bold, followed by its description as being an emoticon which is written in brackets e.g. [emoticon]. Other instance that has different feature is shown as follows:

> Cheese cake for breakfast makes one happy but then I realised that it'll be my last day at **Icu** [acronym for 'Intensive Care Unit']. Tearing up a bit (inside).

Nevertheless, for a sample tweet that has a shortening strategy used in it, it is written as shown in the sample tweet below just as how Dabrowska (2011) presented hers:

> Lessons learned:our way might b different,but not necessarily better than others.Don't judge n prejudge,even if u do,keep it to ***urself*** [yourself],pls.

From the example shown previously, the sample tweet is identified to have the shortening strategy of clipping and contraction. Therefore, it is placed under the Clippings and Contractions section (See Section 4.2.1) and is also indented. Then, the strategy used is highlighted in bold and italics e.g. ***urself***, followed by the correct form of the word that is bracketed e.g. [yourself].

On the other hand, sample tweets that contain other language such as Malay words or expressions as a result of code switching are presented as follows:

> Body temp 39ºC is no joke..my body is burning up..***slmt mlm*** [selamat malam] *semua*..
>
> - ***slmt mlm*** [selamat malam]: *good night*
> - *semua: everybody*

From the instance above, the sample tweet is identified to have the shortening strategy of vowel omission in the Malay phrase 'slmt mlm' which means 'good night'. Therefore, it is placed under the Vowel Omission section (See Section 4.2.2) and is also indented. Then, the strategy used is similarly highlighted in bold and italics, followed by the correct form of the word that is bracketed. However, since the phrase is in Malay, its definition or English equivalent is written in bullet form below the sample tweet. Notice that the word 'semua' which means 'everybody' is only written in italics and not in bold to stress that it is a Malay word and that no shortening strategy is applied on it.

3.6.2 Gender Differences in Twitter

To answer the third research question, the similar frequencies of features listed by Ling and Baron (2007) and shortening strategies by Dabrowska (2011) were counted by gender. Samples of tweets by the male and female participants are presented as well.

The explanation of the findings regarding this issue are based on theories and findings from past studies (see Section 2.6) that might have highlighted similar or contradictory outcomes such as by Witmer and Katzman (1997), Wolf (2000), Huffaker (2004), Tossell et al. (2012) and Denby (2012).

3.6.3 Perceptions on Language Use in Twitter

Data regarding the participants' perceptions of the language use in Twitter were gathered from the email questionnaires distributed to the twenty participants. The answers obtained which comprised diverse perceptions by the users were used to support and substantiate the findings for research questions 1 and 2. From the questionnaires, the answers obtained from the Likert scale and yes-no questions were calculated in percentages and presented in the form of bar graphs. Meanwhile, the answers obtained from the open-ended questions were used to explain and interpret the outcomes from the graphs by elaborating how and why the participants arrived at their answers by providing relevant information regarding the topic of the research.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has detailed how data were gathered, analysed and presented using the mixed method approach. In a nutshell, data were collected on Twitter from twenty participants and they were observed, analysed and calculated in frequencies for the linguistic features and the shortening strategies used. Also, the analyses of these findings have disclosed the features that have revealed gender-based disparity. Apart from that, questionnaires were also distributed to gain the participants' perceptions of how language is used on twitter with a focus on the creativity and clarity of tweets. The findings and discussions will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents two major sections. One will present the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the collection of tweets and questionnaires. The other presents the discussion of the findings which are compared and contrasted with those of previous studies presented in the literature review. It comprises an account of how language is used by L2 twitter users in Malaysia. This serves to answer the research questions formulated for this study, and for easy reference, the questions are reiterated below:

1) What are the linguistic features of tweets within the character limitation among L2 users?
2) What are the strategies used so that a tweet is capped less than or at 140 characters?
3) What are the differences in the linguistic features and strategies used in tweets between male and female participants?
4) What are the users' perceptions on the language use in tweets?

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1.1 Linguistic Features of Tweets

In order to see how the participants constructed their tweets to fit into the 140 character limitation, the answers were obtained through the linguistic features found in their tweets. From the data gathered, there were a total of 200 tweets with 2486 words, 13207 characters and 371 sentences. They were coded according to the list of features

mentioned in the framework by Ling and Baron (2007) as shown in Table 2.2 and Table 2.3, and tabulated in Table 4.1. The linguistic features are categorized into three areas: (1) emoticons and lexical shortenings, (2) sentence punctuation and (3) length.

Table 4.1 : Linguistic Features of Twitter

Feature	Frequency
(1) Emoticons and lexical shortenings	
Emoticons	1.45% of words
Acronyms	0.76% of words
Abbreviations	3.26% of words
(2) Sentence punctuation	
Use of required question mark	92.31% of questions
Use of required period	80.98% of other sentences
(3) Length	
Transmission (in characters)	66 characters
Transmission (in words)	12.4 words
One-word transmission	0.5% of tweets
Multisentence transmission	52% of tweets
Sentences per transmission	1.86 per transmission

From Table 4.1, the analyses of each of the features are briefly detailed below.

Emoticons and Lexical Shortenings

The occurrences of emoticons, acronyms and abbreviations were counted and averaged to the overall number of words. In 2486 words, there were only 36 emoticons (1.45%), 19 acronyms (0.76%) and 81 abbreviations (3.26%) found. The following shows the examples of the three features.

Emoticons

Be at the right place at the right time and do the right thing **:) [**emoticon] everything will fall into places

...and so i thought winter was actually about to end soon. **-.- [**emoticon]

I'm sorry boss but i have to study for my quiz tonight. **T_T [**emoticon]

Acronyms

For £50mil, chelsea shouldve bought **RVP** [acronym for 'Robin Van Persie'] instead of **FT** [acronym for 'Fernando Torres']

Cheese cake for breakfast makes one happy but then I realised that it'll be my last day at **Icu** [acronym for 'Intensive Care Unit']. Tearing up a bit (inside).

Watching spidey reminds me of **NYC** [acronym for 'New York City']!

Abbreviations

Anyone knows how to cut down 5**kilos** [abbreviation for 'kilograms'] in a month? Sobssss

im packing the materials for **tmrw**!!!! [abbreviation for 'tomorrow']

Newlywed/couples should really keep their ups and downs to themselves. Life is not a **tv** [abbreviation for 'television'] show

Sentence Punctuation

As for the second category of sentence punctuation, the required period and question marks were observed and recorded. 24 out of 26 (92.31%) of the questions asked were followed by a question mark and 247 out of 305 (84.68%) sentences were written with a period at the end.

Length

Meanwhile, for the length of the tweets which is the third category of linguistic features, they were averaged in the number of words, characters and sentences per

transmission. The mean number of characters and words out of the 140 character limitation is 66 characters and 12.4 words respectively. Only one tweet (0.5%) is one-word out of the 200 tweets gathered. There was also an occurrence of multisentences per transmission with a total of 104 transmissions (52%) out of the total 200 transmissions resulting in the mean of 1.86 sentences per transmission.

4.1.2 Shortening Strategies for Tweeting

From the linguistic features observed, numerous shortening strategies were used by the participants to ensure that their tweets were capped within the 140 character limitation. By using Dabrowska's (2011) framework as shown in Table 2.4, the strategies were recorded, listed and explained to answer the second research question, followed by the examples extracted from the participants' tweets. Table 4.2 gives a summary that shows the frequency of each strategy utilised by the participants.

Table 4.2 : Shortening Strategies used in Twitter

Shortening Strategy	**Frequency**
Clippings and Contractions	13
Vowel Omission	12
Word-letter Substitution	32
Word-number Substitution	0
Non-standard Spelling	9
Deletion of Pronouns and Auxiliaries	64
Apostrophe Deletion	20

From Table 4.2, each of the strategies are detailed as follows.

Clippings and Contractions

One of the ways that is used to shorten a message is by clipping and contracting some words. According to Dabrowska (2011), users do this by cutting the beginning, middle or ending of the words. Examples from the participants' tweets are shown below.

> Lessons learned:our way might b different,but not necessarily better than others.Don't judge n prejudge,even if u do,keep it to ***urself*** [yourself],pls.
>
> Were discussing with ***Kazakh*** [Kazakhstan] partner on wind power plant. And i said panels instead of turbines. Panels for solar power la deyyyyy!!!!!
>
> - *la deyyyyy*: *for god's sake!*
>
> For £50***mil*** [million], chelsea shouldve bought RVP instead of FT
>
> Body ***temp*** [temperature] 39ºC is no joke..my body is burning up..*slmt mlm semua*..
>
> - *slmt mlm* [selamat malam] *semua*: *good night everybody*
>
> Shall i depart now n sleep at rnr or just depart around 4am? Problem is i cant sleep ***eventho*** [eventhough] i'm quite sleepy..huhu..
>
> From a spot where I can reach home in less than 5***min*** [minutes] riding, been stuck for 20***min*** [minutes] in the car and moved only half way to home. Alahai.
>
> - *alahai*: *my oh my!*
>
> when i ask my parents a simple "yes" or "no" ***Q*** [question] and I will get a lecture.

There are more types of clippings and contractions used by the participants with a total of 13 examples found. Most clipped and contracted words in the data involve the removal of the second part of the words e.g. 'mil' for million and 'min' for minute. This strategy not only saves the participants' time to type their message, but it also saves the space needed to construct a tweet within the parameter of Twitter. The examples given show the words that are normally being shortened especially by online

Malaysian users; therefore, it may not impede the readers' understanding of the words since they are typically used (Siti Hamin Stapa and Azianura Hani Shaari, 2012) .

Vowel Omission

Some participants also omitted vowels in certain words. This strategy is quite common in online communication. It will save some space especially when constructing a tweet within the 140 character limitation. Furthermore, even though some words are shortened by omitting the vowels, they are still comprehensible given the consonants that remain as these consonants are 'the main message carriers' (Dabrowska, 2011, p. 11). Examples are presented as the following:

> i wud ***hv*** [have] given u all of my heart but there is someone who has torn it apart...
>
> Successfull ***ppl*** [people] never complain! Reminder to myself
>
> honey stop please, i don't wanna waste my quid..***pls*** [please]
>
> I pity those who came just 3minutes later than me..no more number for them n need to come back ***tmrw*** [tomorrow] n q up again..tiring it is..
>
> Lessons learned:our way might ***b*** [be] different,but not necessarily better than others.Don't judge n prejudge,even if u do,keep it to urself,***pls*** [please].

However in the present data, only 13 items are found to be present out of the 200 tweets gathered. The highest frequency of words being shortened appeared only twice. Examples are the auxiliary *have* and the exclamation *please*. Most words involved the omission of more than one vowel. Meanwhile, the short form *b* that appeared only once in the data involved the deletion of only one vowel and that by pronouncing the letter, it is understood that the letter *b* stands for *be* given the similar pronunciation. This strategy of using a letter that has the same sound can also be categorised under word-

letter substitution that will be mentioned below. Furthermore, interestingly in the data, Malay words were also simplified using this strategy. Illustrations are shown as follows.

> ***mne nk cr*** [mana nak cari] brownies *yg* awesome??
>
> - ***mne nk cr*** [mana nak cari]: *where do I find*
> - *yg* [yang]: *that is*
>
> Body temp 39ºC is no joke..my body is burning up..***slmt mlm*** [selamat malam] *semua*..
>
> - ***slmt mlm*** [selamat malam]: *good night*
> - *semua: everybody*

In the first example, the respondent meant to say *where do I find* which is the translation for the phrase *mana nak cari* and the occurrence of this malay phrase together with English words in the same sentence is known as intrasentential codeswitching. In the meantime, for the second example, *slmt mlm semua* means *good night everybody* and the use of a Malay phrase alongside an English phrase is known as intersentential codeswitching. Both the examples stated above show the deletion of vowels as appeared in the English words.

Word-Letter Substitution

Participants tend to substitute a word with a letter which carries the same sound as the word. Especially for the English language, it makes users easier to use this strategy as the language has a lot of monosyllabic words (Dabrowska, 2011). The most common words to be shortened in the data were the second person pronoun ‘you’ which is substituted with the letter ‘u’ and the conjunction ‘and’ which is substituted with the

letter ‘n’. The list of examples that follows shows the words that were normally shortened by the participants using this strategy.

> Its totally a different thing: ***u*** [you] do what ***u*** [you] like and ***u*** [you] have to like what ***u*** [you] do. Job.
>
> Lessons learned:our way might ***b*** [be] different,but not necessarily better than others.Don't judge ***n*** [and] prejudge,even if ***u*** [you] do,keep it to urself,pls.
>
> This is ***y*** [why] people hate to deal with government officers..i hope somebody can take action..bad image it is..
>
> I pity those who came just 3minutes later than me..no more number for them ***n*** [and] need to come back tmrw ***n*** [and] ***q*** [queue] up again..tiring it is..
>
> It is ugly when ***u*** [you] are critiquing people for doing something that ***u*** [you] thought was bad,but then ***u*** [you] have all ***d*** [the] reasons in ***d*** [the] world to do it. Urgh.
>
> nicky minaj on american idol is a bit annoying. ergh. ***y*** [why] is she a judgeeee.
>
> At last..seen my fren back on twitter..***u*** [you] know who ***u*** [you] ***r*** [are].hehe..

This strategy has the second highest frequency of use with the occurrences of 32 items. This is quite similar to Dabrowska’s (2011) finding where although there are 32 items found, the words being shortened were only of seven different kinds which were *y* (2) for *why*, *u* (15) for *you*, *b* (2) for *be*, *n* (6) for *and*, *r* (4) for *are*, *d* (2) for *the* and *q* (1) for *queue*. While six of the elements represent the exact sound the full forms carry, it is not the case for one type of element which is *d* for *the* which is believed to be the pronunciation of the strong ‘the’ (which is pronounced as *thee*) that precedes words which begin with a vowel.

Word-Number Substitution

Apart from word-letter substitution, there is also word-number substitution. The most commonly substituted words in online communication are ‘4’ for ‘for’ and ‘2’ for ‘to’

as illustrated below. However in the data gathered, there are no occurrences of this feature at all. It appears that the participants prefer to use full forms instead of changing words or parts of words to numbers. Examples of the items in a tweet that could have been shortened are shown below.

> It is ugly when u are critiquing people ***for*** doing something that u thought was bad,but then u have all d reasons in d world ***to*** do it. Urgh.

Non-Standard Spelling

Users also tend to modify the spelling of a word as one of the strategies to shorten a message. According to Crystal (2008), the modification of spelling in making a word shorter and less complex does not demonstrate that a user is uneducated (as cited in Dabrowska, 2011, p. 13). Examples of non-standard spelling are 'wud' for 'would' and 'shud' for 'should'. Surprisingly in the data there were only 10 occurrences of such strategy. This shows that most users opt to use standard spellings. The tweets that used this strategy are shown as follows.

> no longer on fb. ***dunno*** [don't know] how long *boleh bertahan*. lets see.
>
> - *boleh bertahan*: *can stand*
>
> im not married and i dont need to be reminded every single day that im not and i ***wud*** [would] really need to.
>
> ***Bekfes*** [Breakfast] with honeystar yum yummy!
> just ***bcoz*** [because] a girl talks to you.doesnt mean she likes you =,=
>
> Went to settle this thing for nothing. I ***shud*** [should] just have been at home doing my work.
>
> panic attack. panic attack. So many things, ***to*** [too] little time. *Ya Allah*.
>
> - *Ya Allah*: *Oh god!*
>
> What the hell is ***goin*** [going] on tv3 now?!

> Damage control by mainstream media, allowing citizens to not #listento what they ***shud*** [should]. But most of us are also netizens, we got YouTube yo.
>
> Get the highest marks in class for the 1st time ***evaaaa*** [ever]! Don't even know where those marks came from. Oh I beat that brilliant girl. Hehe
>
> I pity ***does*** [those] who r stupid by showing their stupidity tweeting stupid accusations..

According to Dabrowska (2011), users either shorten the words by modifying vowels or consonants, or in the case of the present study, by modifying both. In the present data, simplification of vowels were found in the words *would* (i.e. *wud*), *should* (i.e. *shud*) and *too* (i.e. *to*), whereas simplification of consonant was found in the word *going* (i.e. *goin*). Other items that saw the modifications of both vowels and consonants are the words *breakfast* (i.e. *bekfes*), *because* (i.e. *bcoz*) and *those* (i.e. *does*). However, the word *evaaaaa* that stands for *ever* saw the deletion of the two final consonants 'e' and 'r' at the back of the word that were replaced with repeated 'a'. This was believed to be used to emphasize the word or the meaning of the sentence. Other examples that are meant to show emphasis are illustrated in the tweets below.

> nicky minaj on american idol is a bit annoying. ergh. y is she a ***judgeeee***.
>
> Goodmorning ***Malaysiaaaa***, i ***missssss youuu***!

Deletion of Pronouns and Auxiliaries

This strategy is used when users omit pronouns, auxiliaries or both commonly in the beginning of sentences. Among all the shortening strategies, this strategy demonstrates the highest usage with a total of 64 occurrences. Out of the 64 examples, 23 illustrate the deletion of pronouns of which 19 involved first person pronouns, 3 involved a

possessive pronoun and 1 involved a demonstrative pronoun. Illustrations of the participants' tweets that used this strategy are shown as follows:

> ***should*** [I should] start searching for beef recipes, ;))
>
> ***cant*** [I can't] wait for the weekend already!!!!!
>
> ***Went*** [I went] to settle this thing for nothing. I shud just have been at home doing my work.
>
> ***Heart*** [My heart] beating fast. This is no joke. No, scratch that. I think this joke has gone too far on me. -_-"
> Successfull ppl never complain! ***Reminder*** [This is a] to myself

A tweet is generally a status of what its user is up to; hence, most users tend to avoid using pronouns especially the first person pronoun *I* as it is known that most of the time they are talking about themselves. This is done in order to save space to fit their message into the parameter of Twitter and to give way to more content words (Dabrowska, 2011). Apart from that, there are also deletions of a pronoun and an auxiliary together which were mostly used by the participants (41 occurrences). Examples are as follows:

> ***Craving*** [I am craving] for some magnum or cornetto ice creams. ***Going*** [I am going] out to hunt for some.
>
> ***Problem fixed*** [My problem is fixed]. ***Off*** [I am off] to work. And good morning people!
>
> ***Full*** [I am full] of energy but too freaked out to be running outside this early. I need a running buddy.
>
> ***Certainly*** [It is certainly] not a good sign.
>
> ***Trying*** [I am trying] to identify unimportant topics and ignore them. Clock is ticking! ***Starting*** [I am trying] to spot questions. Phewww...
>
> ***Getting*** [I am getting] new haircut

In this case, most examples involved the deletions of pronouns along with the auxiliaries *have* and *be*.

Apostrophe Deletion

The last strategy stated by Dabrowska (2011) is the deletion of apostrophe. The use of this strategy by the participants is rather noticeable with a total occurrence of 20 items. Examples from the data are shown below:

> hope my car next birthday ***wont*** [won't] cost me this much, ;((
>
> I can sleep in peace knowing that if I get to wake up tomorrow, I don't have to spend my time in shower contemplating ***whats*** [what's] for breakfast.
>
> ***im*** [I'm] not married and i ***dont*** [don't] need to be reminded every single day that ***im*** [I'm] not and i wud really need to.
>
> Trying to push myself all the way.Now really nearing my limit.***Lets*** [Let's] try go beyond that.The worst could happen i would just explode to pieces.
>
> For £50mil, chelsea ***shouldve*** [should've] bought RVP instead of FT

According to Dabrowska (2011), the most common deletion is in the contraction of pronouns and auxiliaries (i.e. I'm, I've). However, in the present data, apostrophes were omitted mainly in the contraction of negative verbs (i.e. don't, won't). Other examples saw deletions in the possessive forms of singular or plural nouns as illustrated below.

> i am so going to quit this job in few ***years*** [years'] time.
>
> Meeting at 10am n i'm the first person to b here at 9.45..***Malaysians*** [Malaysians'] attitude..

4.1.3 Gender Differences in the Language Use within the Character Limitation

Based on the data obtained from the study, there is evidence that some features and strategies were favoured by either the male or the female participants. In short, these features have revealed gender differences in the Malaysian male and female's language use. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 give a summary of the findings that demonstrate the frequencies of use of both linguistic features and shortening strategies based on gender and the differences that exist are shown in italics.

Table 4.3 : Gender and Linguistic Features of Twitter

Linguistic Feature / Gender		**Male**	**Female**
Emoticon		*0.82% of words*	*1.94% of words*
Acronym		*1.01% of words*	*0.57% of words*
Abbreviation		3.3% of words	3.23% of words
Required Period		82.88% of other sentences	79.25% of other sentences
Required Question Mark		92.31% of questions	92.31% of questions
Length	*Word*	*10.91words*	*13.95 words*
	Character	*57.81 characters*	*74.26 characters*
	One-word	1% of tweets	0%
	Multi Sentence	46% of tweets	58% of tweets
	Sentences	*1.7 per transmission*	*2.01 per transmission*

From Table 4.3, three linguistic features were identified to have demonstrated differences in the language use by male and female participants. Two of the features which are emoticon and acronym show a difference of more than half the use of that of the opposite gender. Instances from each type will be presented later to give a better account. Meanwhile, having looked at the length of tweets, the female participants

appeared to have constructed longer tweets than the male participants in the number of words, characters and even sentences.

On the other hand, as for the shortening strategies listed by Dabrowska (2011), three categories were identified to have demonstrated gender differences namely vowel omission, the use of non-standard spelling, and deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries. The three strategies are shown in Table 4.4 below in italics alongside the other strategies. Similar to linguistic features, instances for the three strategies are shown and explained.

Table 4.4 : Gender and Shortening Strategies

Shortening Strategy / Gender	**Male**	**Female**
Clippings and Contractions	6	7
Vowel Omission	*4*	*8*
Word-letter Substitution	18	14
Word-number Substitution	0	0
Non-standard Spelling	*6*	*3*
Deletion of Pronouns and Auxiliaries	*28*	*36*
Apostrophe Deletion	10	10

a) Gender and Linguistic Features

Emoticons

In the case of linguistic features, the use of emoticons was favoured by the female participants with 1.94% occurrence of the total of words whereas the male participants only used about 0.82%. To be exact, out of the 100 tweets by both the males and the females, the number of emoticons that were used out of the total 2486 words were 9 and 27 respectively. The following demonstrates the instances of emoticons used by the male and female participants.

Male - and so i thought winter was actually about to end soon. **-.-**

- Love my new duvet,sleep in heaven **:p**
- just bcoz a girl talks to you.doesnt mean she likes you **=,=**

Female - My student still failed her addmaths exam. The dad asked me "*mcm mane ni*?". Urghhh as if it was my fault that she failed. **T_T**

  - *mcm mane* [macam mana] *ni*?: *how could this happen?*

- I was telling Gary that I'm exhausted from all the studying and he went licking my nose and forehead. Thanks, very comforting indeed. **:p**
- Can't wait for the movie! Uh. Oh. Should I go find the book first? But then it would not be a surprise, would it? **(><)**

Acronyms

This differs in the use of acronyms. While emoticons were preferred by the females, acronyms were favoured by the males. With an occurrence of 1.01% of the total words, the males used about twice more than that of the females who only used about 0.57%. The instances of acronyms used by the male and female participants are shown as follows:

Male - For £50mil, chelsea shouldve bought **RVP** [Robin Van Persie] instead of **FT** [Fernando Torres]

- Watching spidey reminds me of **NYC** [New York City]!
- Being poor can be quite sad :(**lol** [lough out loud]

Female - Aye let's start working. I need to drive up to **JB** [Johor Bahru] at 5am.

- Cheese cake for breakfast makes one happy but then I realised that it'll be my last day at **Icu** [Intensive care unit]. Tearing up a bit (inside).
- My 2nd last day at **TNB** [Tenaga Nasional Berhad]! **Omgggg** [Oh my god] **mcm tak percaya**

    - *mcm* [macam] *tak percaya*: *it is unbelievable*

Length

As for the length of tweets, the females constructed longer tweets with an average of 13.95 words, 74.26 characters and 2.01 sentences per transmission as compared to the males' with an average of 10.91words, 57.81 characters and 1.7 sentences per transmission.

b) Gender and Shortening Strategies

In the case of shortening strategies, out of the seven categories listed by Dabrowska (2011), only three categories demonstrate gender differences (see Table 4.4); vowel omission, the use of non-standard spelling, and deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries, and they are detailed below. The other four categories are not discussed since the differences are too small and insignificant.

Vowel Omission

This strategy was favoured by the female participants with occurrences of 8 shortened words whereas only 4 words were applied using this approach by the male participants. The following shows the instances of vowel omission applied by the male and female participants.

Male
- honey stop please, i don't wanna waste my quid..***pls*** [please]
- Body temp 39ºC is no joke..my body is burning up..***slmt mlm*** [selamat malam] *semua*..
  - ***slmt mlm*** [selamat malam]: *good night*
  - *semua: everybody*
- I pity those who came just 3minutes later than me..no more number for them n need to come back ***tmrw*** [tomorrow] n q up again..tiring it is..

Female
- i wud ***hv*** [have] given u all of my heart but there is someone who has torn it apart...
- Successfull ***ppl*** [people] never complain! Reminder to myself
- Lessons learned:our way might ***b*** [be] different,but not necessarily better than others.Don't judge n prejudge,even if u do,keep it to urself,***pls*** [please].

As for the use of non-standard spelling, with a total occurrence of 6, the males used this strategy twice more than that of the females who only used this approach on 3 words. Below are the instances of non-standard spelling applied by the male and female participants.

Male
- What the hell is **goin** [going] on tv3 now?!
- Went to settle this thing for nothing. I **shud** [should] just have been at home doing my work.
- panic attack. panic attack. So many things, **to** [too] little time. *Ya Allah*.
    - *Ya Allah*: *Oh god!*

Female
- Get the highest marks in class for the 1st time **evaaaa** [ever]! Don't even know where those marks came from. Oh I beat that brilliant girl. Hehe
- **Bekfes** [Breakfast] with honeystar yum yummy!
- no longer on fb. **dunno** [don't know] how long *boleh bertahan*. lets see.
    - *boleh bertahan*: *can stand*

Deletion of Pronouns and Auxiliaries

When it comes to omitting pronouns and auxiliaries usually in the beginning of tweets, the female participants seemed to favour this shortening strategy as compared to the male participants. The results demonstrate that the tweets constructed by the former saw 36 occurrences whereas the latter applied this strategy for 28 times. The examples of this strategy by gender are shown as follows.

Male
- **Already** [I have already] said I just wanted to look around, yet you stood next to me all the way as I tried on the display phone. Customer engagement fail.
- **Have** [I have] to take nap. Or i wont be able to work at all.

- I'm not sure whether my phone or the internet connectivity is shit. **Time** [It is time] to buy a new phone just to make sure.

Female
- **hope** [I hope] my car next birthday wont cost me this much, ;((
- **Craving** [I am craving] for some magnum or cornetto ice creams. **Going** [I am going] out to hunt for some.
- **Full** [I am full] of energy but too freaked out to be running outside this early. I need a running buddy.

4.1.4 Participants' Perceptions on Language Use in Twitter

Data were gathered through questionnaires distributed to the 20 participants of which the age range is from 20 to 30 years old. All of them are either still studying in universities (local and abroad) or have graduated and are currently working. Their first language is the Malay language of which they are very fluent in whereas their second language is English of which they are able to use to communicate with other people without any difficulty. 17 of the 20 participants stated that they feel more confident to communicate in Malay than in English.

a) Language Creativity in Twitter

When asked about language creativity in Twitter, the participants have different ideas of a creative tweet. Three ideas were given following the question with an addition of the participants' own answers. The following bar graph shows the results.

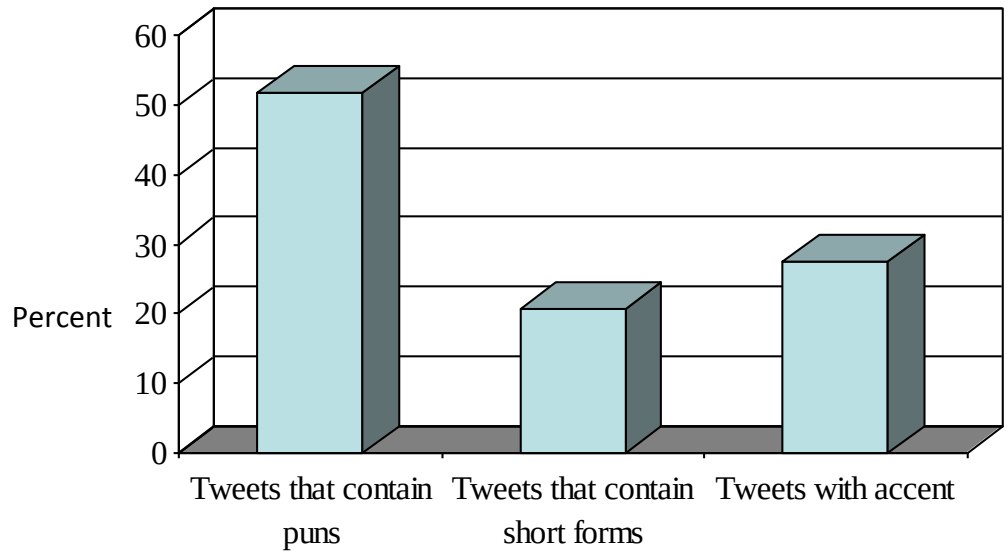

Figure 4.1 : Percentage of the participants' ideas of a creative tweet

Figure 4.1 shows that 51.72% of the participants think that tweets that contain puns (comical words or phrases with several meanings or sound like other words) are creative tweets. Examples shown below are extracted from a public twitter account @omgthatpunny (Source: https://twitter.com/omgthatspunny).

- Saw a kidnapping today. Decided not to wake him up though...
- I farted in the Apple store and everyone got pissed. Not my fault they don't have Windows.

On the other hand, 27.59% of the participants believe that tweets with local or foreign accent are creative whereas the lowest percentage (20.69%) refers to tweets that contain short forms such as abbreviations and acronyms. While the latter is common, instances are only shown for the former. The examples given use the American southern dialect of English which is also known as 'southern accent'.

- People think I'm gone. I ain't gone. I'm plannin'.

  (Source: https://twitter.com/GovernorBlake)

- On another note, Im'a be 'round while the seasons off. An' I got some monologues comin'. So stay tuned.

  (Source: https://twitter.com/Dixon_Daryl)

Other additional views by the participants of what creative tweets are include tweets that rhyme (poetic style) and tweets that contain novel information. When asked about the 140 character limitation, 18 of the 20 participants believe that this parameter encourages creative thinking among users and 16 of them think that it promotes language creativity. Reasons given are they believe that having a lot to tell in a very limited space will drive users to use more precise words as long as their messages or intentions are successfully conveyed. Users will think of how to replace two or three words with only one word which may require them to use a dictionary or a thesaurus just to find new words to use. Consequently, it sharpens their linguistic skills by having to play around with words besides learning new vocabulary. A respondent stated that in comparison with other social networks that provide ample of space for users to construct messages, Twitter encourages users to compress a long message using creative language to get the same message across in a simpler way. This will positively challenge a user's ability to get their tweet to fit into the 140 character limitation.

When asked whether Twitter should extend the character limitation to more characters, 14 of the participants disagree while the other 6 agree to this. These six participants think that people should be given a chance to express themselves more in order to avoid misunderstanding given that 140 characters are just too short for some conditions. For

example, if a user needs to clarify a sensitive issue which requires them to give evidence or facts, 140 characters might be too short to express in a single tweet. Hence, longer characters will enable them to do so as to fend off any confusion or misinterpretation. Furthermore, when users are given enough space to write, it will promote a habit of using proper language instead of the usual short forms. This is because they will not feel pressured to shorten their words or sentences given the ample space they have to express themselves.

On the other hand, those who think that Twitter should not extend its space feel that this limitation is the unique feature of this medium and that tweeting is all about simplifying messages, and if people were to blabber, they could always use other social networks such as Facebook or Blogspot to do so. Moreover, it helps the users to appreciate all the value and meaning that can be packed into a small space. Usually what they tweet is a compressed summary of what they are doing or thinking about and it may carry the whole idea of a situation. To elaborate, a participant further stated that,

> "It [Wanting to write more than 140 characters] would betray the aim of Twitter itself as a microblogging service and longer tweets might cause the server to take longer times for loading process. Since we already have other social networking services which allow users to post longer text and share it on Twitter in hyperlink form, so extending it would be meaningless."

If users wish to construct longer tweets, there are third party services such as Twitlonger for them to use. These services let users post long messages that need more than 140 characters and send them to Twitter. If they do not want to use any of these

services, it is always possible to post multiple tweets to talk about a single subject. Readers can always keep track of what a user is trying to convey by scrolling the timeline.

b) Language Clarity in Twitter

The participants were given two statements regarding language clarity in Twitter:

1) Most tweets are clear in meaning despite the 140 character limitation
2) Most tweets are always clear despite the short forms or the shortening strategies used (e.g. abbreviations, deletion of vowels).

For the first statement, 12 (60%) of the participants agree with it, while 6 (30%) strongly agree and only 2 (10%) strongly disagree as shown in Figure 4.2. It is always feared that the limitation posed in Twitter could cause a lot of errors when lexical shortenings are used and consequently tweets might appear confusing to the readers and they might misinterpret the real meanings. However, from the findings obtained, it is apparent that majority of the participants (18) gave a positive view of the limitation by stating that it does not impede clear and comprehensible delivery of tweets.

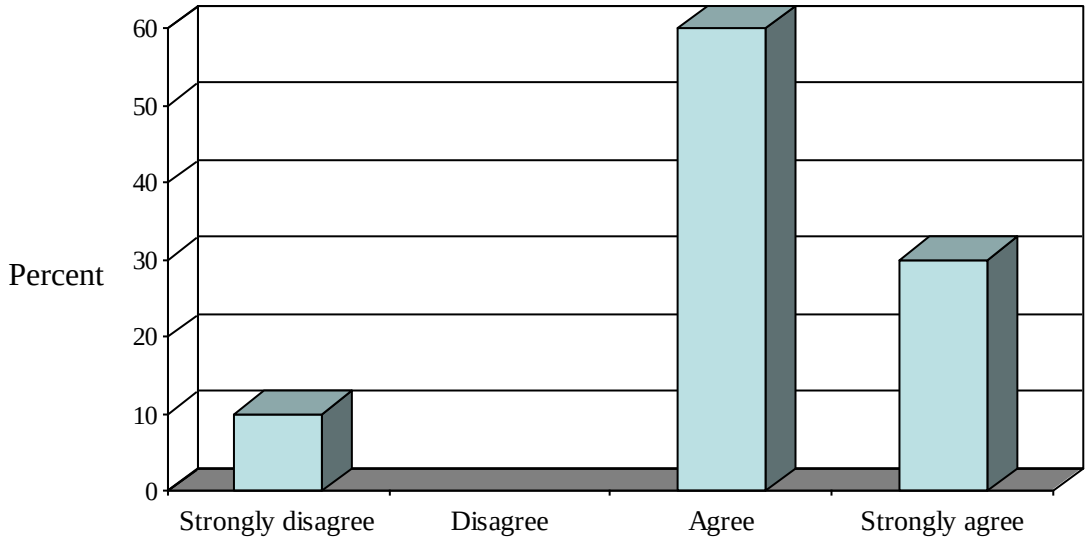

Figure 4.2 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *Most tweets are clear in meaning despite the 140 character limitation.*

On the other hand, for the second statement, 15 of the participants feel that the short forms and shortening strategies used do not hinder the understanding of tweets with 13 (65%) of them agreeing and 2 (10%) strongly agreeing. The phenomenon of using short forms has become quite prevalent in CMC and most users have gotten used to seeing these forms; therefore, it is usually not a hindrance for them to comprehend the shortened words or phrases. Meanwhile, a minority of 5 participants think otherwise with 3 (15%) of the participants disagreeing and 2 (10%) strongly disagreeing. This might be due to the fact that words that are typically being shortened are easy for users to understand; however, some words might be abbreviated to a user's liking which may not be common and this could trigger confusion and misunderstanding for the readers. Moreover, words from certain dialects can be incomprehensible when shortened as well. All these findings are illustrated in Figure 4.3.

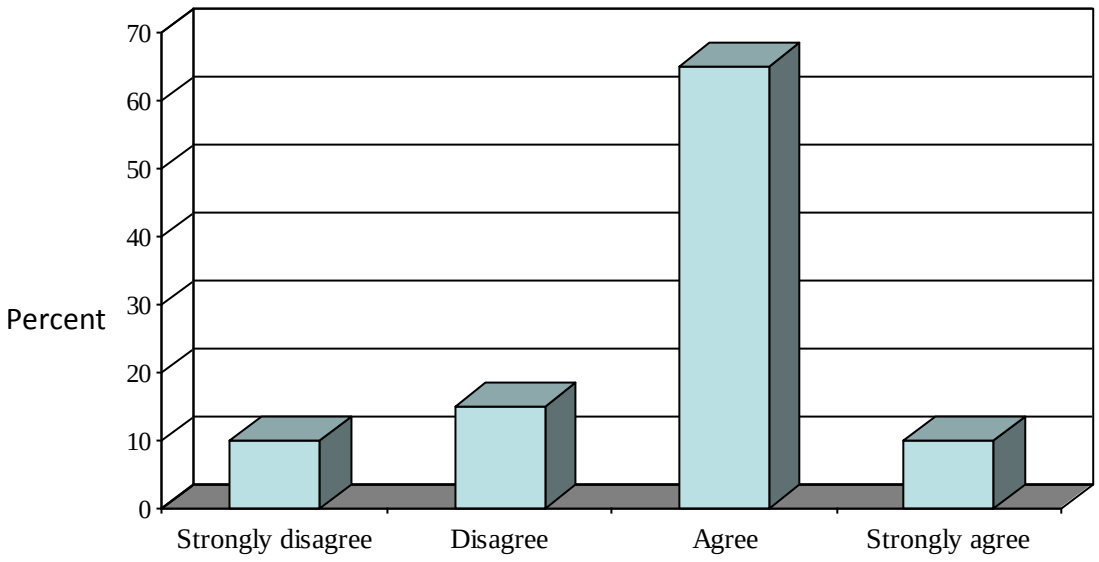

Figure 4.3 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *Most tweets are always clear despite the short forms or the shortening strategies used (e.g. abbreviations, deletion of vowels).*

The participants were then asked to give their own ideas of a clear tweet. The majority believe that tweets which are simple and comprehensible despite the short forms used can deliver clear messages. Some believe that if there are no short forms and that proper spellings are used, tweets will appear clearer to readers. This goes back to the second statement in Figure 4.3 where the majority of the participants agree that most tweets are always clear despite the short forms or the shortening strategies used.

c) Language Use in Twitter

In section E of the questionnaire, the participants were asked on their language use in Twitter. This section involved a Likert scale where they were asked to choose between *never*, *always* and *sometimes*. The findings reveal their styles of tweeting (usage of short forms) as well as their strategies/ plans before tweeting to see whether they ensure the grammar or structure of their tweets are correct before posting them. The following shows the statements and their responses which are illustrated in bar graphs.

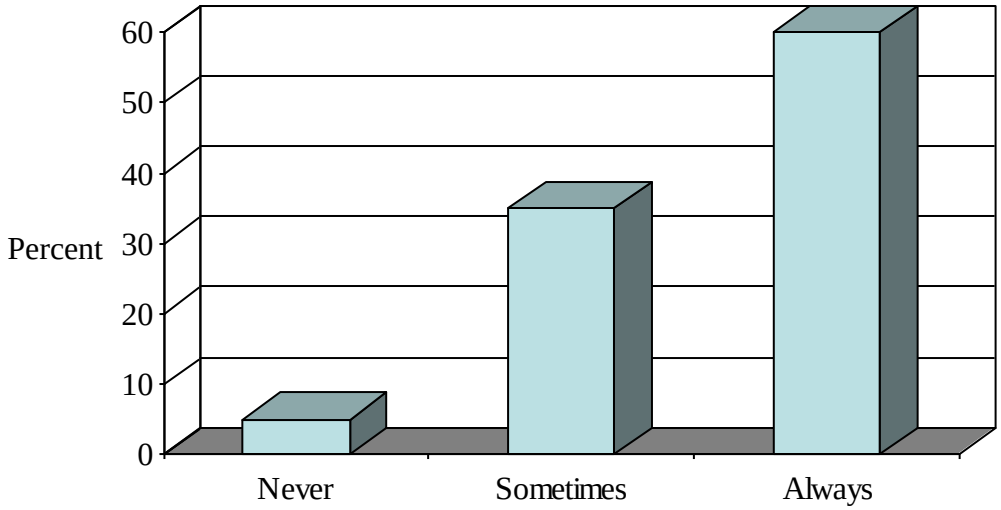

Figure 4.4 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I think of how to construct a creative tweet before tweeting.*

Fun and creative tweets are usually looked up to as they may reflect a user's good linguistic skill. In Figure 4.4, only 1 (5%) respondent never thinks of how to construct a creative tweet before tweeting meanwhile 7 (35%) sometimes do and another 12 (60%) answered *always*. This may mean that the majority of the participants are aware of how others view their tweets and they may also want to attract readers by using catchy words; hence, prior thinking is involved. This may suggest that a user's cognitive effort to be innovative is a positive sign that Twitter has constructive effects on language use where it will not only promote linguistic creativity, but it will also instill the need to write better by using the right vocabulary, grammar and structures as claimed by majority of the participants (see Section 4.1.4 (a), and Figures 4.7 and 4.8).

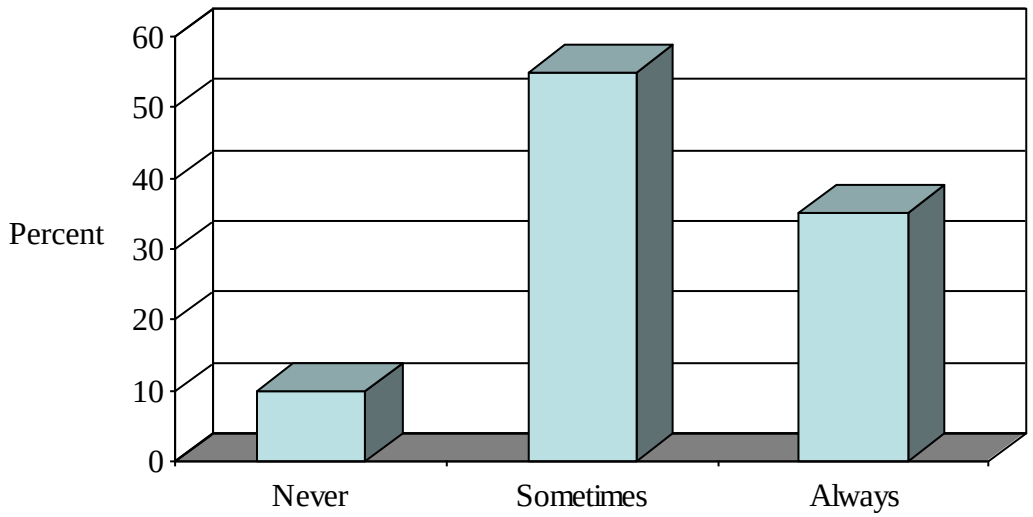

Figure 4.5 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I use short forms when tweeting*.

As in Figure 4.5, only 2 (10%) participants never use short forms when tweeting meanwhile 11 (55%) answered *sometimes* and another 7 (35%) answered *always*. Those who do not favour short forms means they prefer to construct tweets in full forms despite the limited space of the medium. This could indicate that the parameter of Twitter may not always get in the way of writing a complete sentence with proper

punctuations and spellings. It is always possible to avoid using short forms as long as a user knows how to use simpler words or phrases to convey their messages. In the meantime, the case of participants using short forms occasionally or frequently appears to be a common phenomenon in online communication. Since using short forms may also be seen as a creative way to construct a tweet as illustrated in Figure 4.1, it is no doubt that majority of the users make use of lexical shortenings.

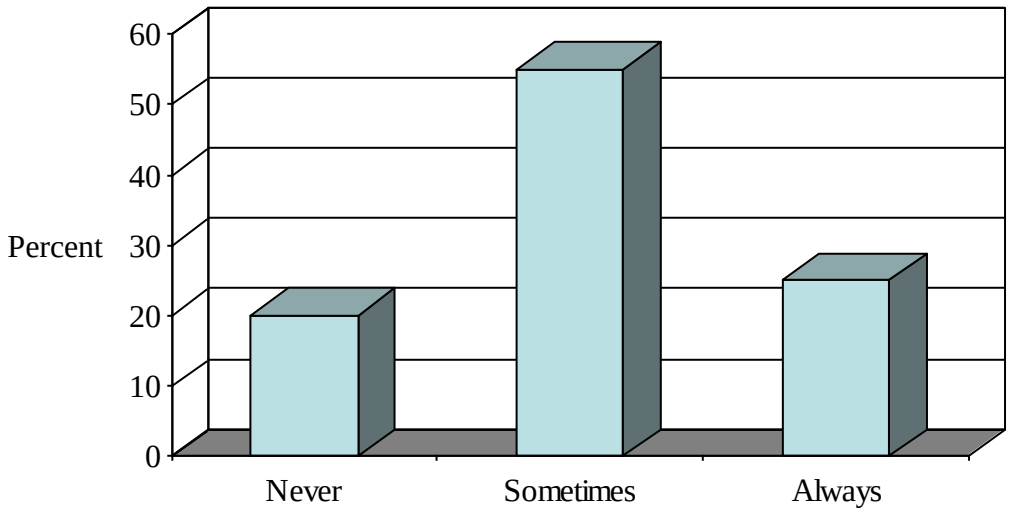

Figure 4.6 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I try to make full use of the 140 character limitation when tweeting*.

When asked whether the participants try to make full use of the 140 character limitation when tweeting, 4 of them answered *never*, 11 (55%) answered *sometimes* and another 5 (25%) answered *always* as illustrated in Figure 4.6. It can be seen here that even though Twitter only permits its users to construct a message of not more than 140 characters, it does not mean that this limited space is not sufficient for them to get their message across. The findings revealed that most of the users construct their tweets with less characters (66 in average) so long as their followers or addressees understand what they wish to tell or talk about. Unquestionably, there are also users who utilize the 140

character limitation for a number of reasons; to challenge their linguistic skills and to maximize the comprehensibility of their tweets. These users may include more content words in their tweet so that it will be more descriptive and intelligible, and rather than posting multiple tweets to talk about a single topic, they could force their thoughts into the 140-character space provided that they know how to be linguistically astute.

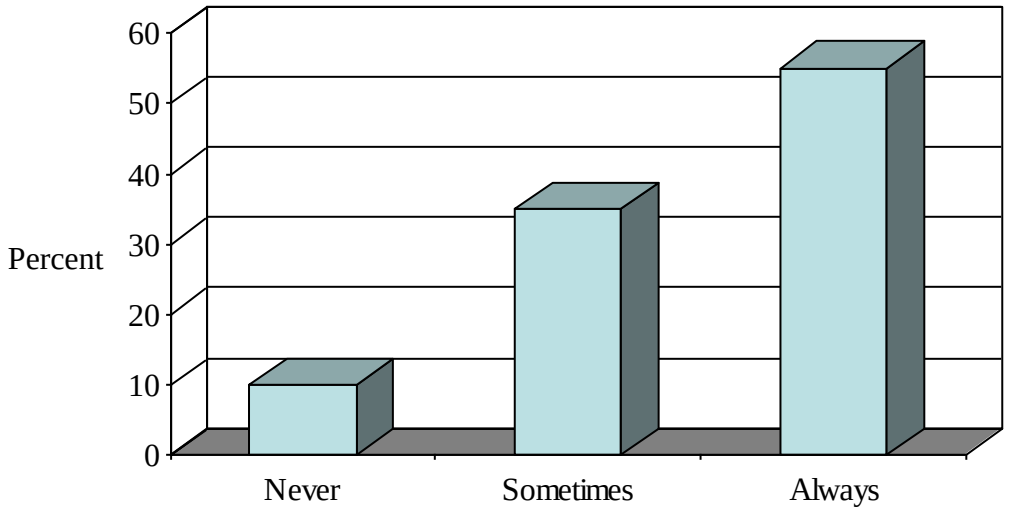

Figure 4.7 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I think of the right sentence structure before tweeting*.

Regarding the sentence structure, more than half of the participants (55%) are attentive to the structures of their tweets before posting them for public viewing as shown in Figure 4.7. Another 35% think of the structure occasionally while the other 10% never seem to take it seriously. This indicates that the parameter of Twitter does not impede the correct and proper constructions of sentences. In other words, while trying to fit sentences into the limited space, it is still possible to have the right structures in order to convey clearer messages rather than merely dishing out key points in a tweet without using proper functional words to connect these words.

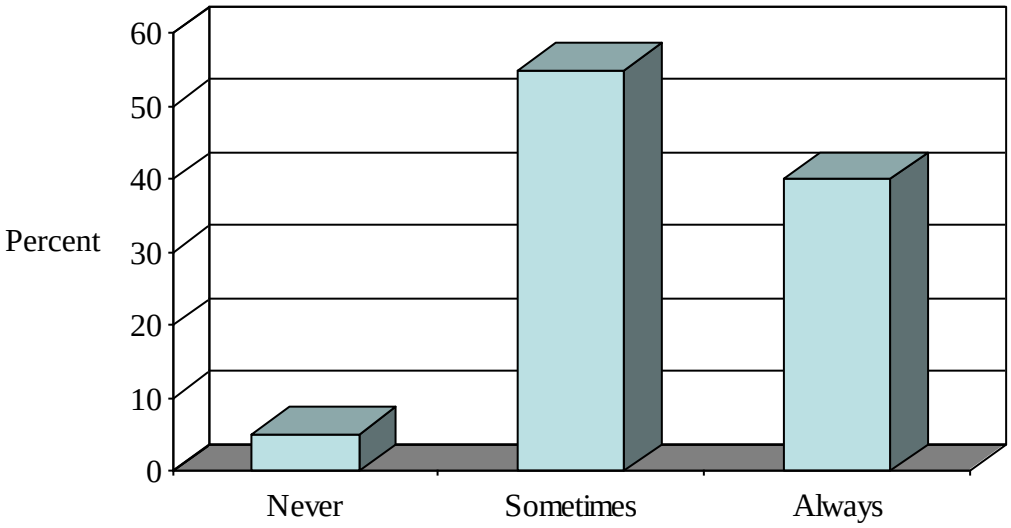

Figure 4.8 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I make sure that my grammar is right before tweeting*.

Besides sentence structure, grammar is also essential in constructing proper and comprehensible tweets. As illustrated in Figure 4.8, while only 1 respondent (5%) never ensures that his grammar is correct before tweeting, 11 participants (55%) occasionally do so. The other 8 (40%) frequently check the grammar of their tweets before posting them online. Similar to the previous interpretation about being alert of sentence structure, Twitter users also, while trying to construct a sentence within a limited space, can construct tweets with decent grammar in order to deliver clearer messages. Some users may find indecent tweets with numerous grammatical errors a turn-off as it may show a writer's incompetence in constructing proper and intelligible texts.

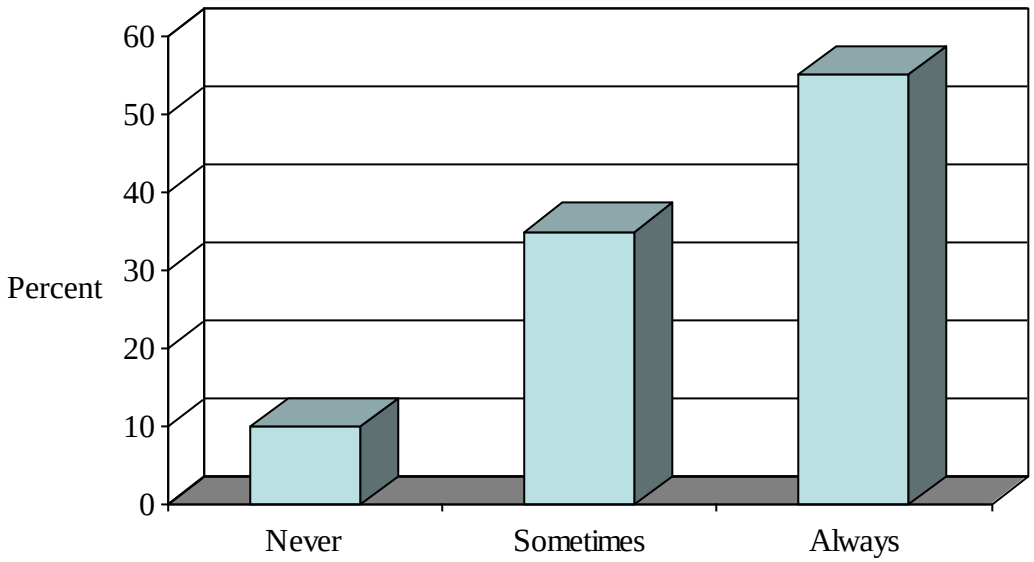

Figure 4.9 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I am careful in choosing words to tweet to avoid sensitivity*.

Furthermore, living in a multiracial society such as in Malaysia, many aspects need to be looked into such as the culture, beliefs, race or traditions before any tweets are made public. Therefore, for most of the participants, they have to be more sensitive when choosing words to tweet in order to avoid being disrespectful towards other cultures. As illustrated in Figure 4.9, 11 (55%) of the 20 participants are always sensitive when it comes to word selection before tweeting. Another 7 (35%) occasionally do so while only 2 (10%) participants appear to be indifferent towards this aspect of sensitivity. This suggests that even though users are given the freedom of speech, most of them are still socially and culturally conscious in the sense that they still know what issues or words to avoid so as to preserve peace in the online community.

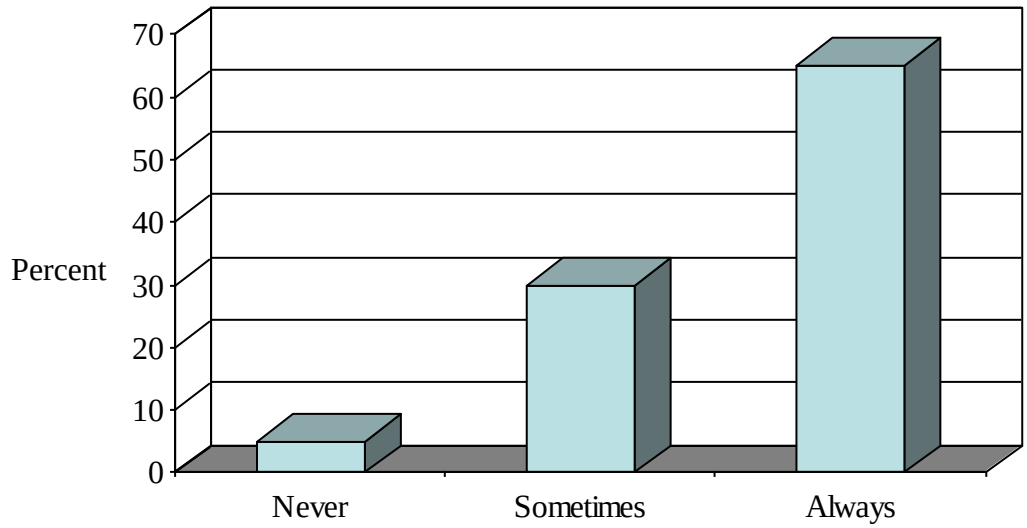

Figure 4.10 : Percentage of the participants' responses for *I believe that the language I use in twitter reflects my personality*.

Last but not least, as shown in Figure 4.10, about two-thirds (65%) of the participants always believe that the language they use in Twitter will reflect their personality. This includes the way they construct their tweet; whether the right structures, grammar and words are used. This corresponds with the findings in Figure 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 where majority of the participants are aware of the grammar, structure and sensitivity of words in their tweets before posting them online. In the meantime, 6 (30%) of the participants occasionally believe that their language will be a mirror of their character and only 1 (5%) respondent does not think that his tweets could affect how people view him. This overall finding shows that language does play a part in reflecting or determining a user's nature that includes his intelligence and behaviour. Intelligence, in this case, may be reflected through the ways tweets are constructed; whether they are of decent structures and grammar. As for behaviour, for instance, tweets that often contain vulgar words may indicate that its user is in some way bad-mannered in real life.

4.2 Discussion of the Findings

The findings presented in the previous sections regarding the linguistic features of Twitter and the shortening strategies dealt with the first two research questions in the present study. It is observed that there were not many occurrences of shortened words in Twitter in the Malaysian setting. Gender-wise, in the use of language, only a few features reveal differences between males and the females. When it comes to users' perceptions on their language use in Twitter, the findings revealed interesting insights into how they utilize this medium to get their tweets across. All the findings are discussed below.

4.2.1 Language use in Twitter by Malaysians

a) Linguistic Features

From the analysis of the data, there exists a combination of standard and non-standard language in Twitter. Similar to other eminent social networks such as Facebook and Yahoo Messenger, non-standard forms such as acronyms that combine initial letters of words (e.g. 'lol' for 'laughing out loud'), abbreviations that leave out some letters in words or emoticons that represent various positive and negative emotions (e.g. :), :p) are also found in the data of the study.

In the use of emoticons, most of the past studies (Crystal, 2008; Ling and Baron, 2007; Farina and Lyddy, 2011; Wang et al., 2012) revealed that this feature stands out in CMC. In Twitter as well, Wang, Chen and Kan's (2012) study found emoticons as one of the main features of tweets. If the preceding observations of online language are given credence to, then the present data would be expected to have abundance of this feature. Nonetheless, the current finding has revealed otherwise. The use of emotive

features is only at 1.45% which makes up a total of 36 emoticons used out of the 2486 words in the data. This shows that the minimal use of emoticons in Twitter is in line with Denby's (2012) finding. Denby (2012) is of the view that this feature is not quite preferable among Twitter users. From the relatively small amount of instances, it can be said that this feature is insignificant to this medium, at least in the case of the present study. Ling and Baron (2007) also found that in text messaging, emoticons have low prominence than assumed in the past literature.

Besides emoticons, two of the most commonly used features in CMC are acronyms and abbreviations. The use of these features makes typing convenient for users as they could save time and energy by shortening words or phrases (Farina and Lyddy, 2011). However, the appearances of acronyms and abbreviations in the present data also did not even exceed 5% of the total number of words. Although abbreviations may be used due to the limitation of characters posed or the challenge in the size of screen (e.g. tweeting using smart phones) (Ong'onda, Matu and Oloo, 2011), it seems that it is not the case for the present study. It is found that only a total of 81 (3.26%) abbreviated words were accounted for out of 2486 number of the words gathered. This may suggest that users favour standard forms of a language rather than the simplified ones even though there is limited space to construct sentences.

Although the number of abbreviations and acronyms were considerably small, these findings differ from that of Denby's (2012) study where he compared his Twitter data to Ling and Baron's (2007) IM and SMS data. In the latter case, users used more lexical shortenings compared to the former. Since Twitter has the most restricted format when it comes to character count, it would have been expected that this medium feature the

most abbreviated words and phrases. While this is not applicable to Denby's (2012) study, the present data supports that character limitation in Twitter indeed encourages the use of short forms more than in SMS or IM. Additionally, to some participants, the use of short forms reflects creativity of users to construct a tweet. They agreed that the more short forms are used, the more creative a tweet will appear.

Besides that, short forms also help users to get their message to fit into the parameter of Twitter. A participant said that when people have so much to tell in a very limited space, using short forms will be the best option for them to construct their tweet in complete sentences and in less than 140 characters. Some instances of these are given below:

Original sentences (160 characters):

- The use of short forms reflects creativity of users to construct a tweet. They agreed that the more short forms are used, the more creative a tweet will appear.

Shortened version (140 characters):

- ***D*** use of short forms reflects ***creatvt*** of users ***2*** construct ***twit***.***Dey*** agreed ***dat d*** more short forms ***r*** used,***d*** more creative a twit ***wil*** appear.

From the example given, it can be seen that by using short forms, it is possible for users to construct complete sentences without having to do away with the content or functional words. The meaning is still retained given that the readers are competent enough to make out the shortened words. The ability for a user to simplify their messages may reflect their intelligence and agility. However, to some other

participants, they prefer if entire words are used. If what they want to convey is longer than the allowed 140 characters, they could replace the long words with shorter ones that carry the same meaning though this would require some cognitive effort. That being the case, users will be strained to make use of a dictionary or thesaurus in order to find new words to use and consequently they might acquire new vocabulary.

In terms of the use of punctuation, on the other hand, it is said that an online language usually involves the improper and unconventional use of punctuation marks. To illustrate, in Twitter, it might be reasonable to omit punctuations given its limited space. On occasion, users also tend to be careless and are oblivious of the correct use of some of these marks (Shazia Aziz et al., 2013). However, the present data displayed an almost-perfect use of periods, question marks, and apostrophes in contracted words. Most of the first two marks were placed correctly at the end of sentences while only twenty contracted words did not utilize apostrophes accordingly. This seems to suggest that users opt to write smoother and more understandable tweets to separate words and clarify meanings.

Length-wise, participants produced more characters (averaged at 66 characters) compared to 35 characters for SMS and 29 characters for IM (Ling and Baron, 2007) despite the 140-character limitation. Also, more than half of the gathered data saw the construction of more than one sentence. It is observed that users of Twitter favour constructing long and complete sentences to shorter ones. This appears that the medium's parameter does not restrain users' capability to get their messages across.

Perhaps the more instructive finding in the present research, however, is a feature found that was not listed by Ling and Baron (2007) in their study of SMS and IM; the use of

hashtags. According to Denby (2012), it may be posited that users utilizes this feature in Twitter "to become linguistically creative within it" (p.35). By using this symbol, users can talk about and share the same topic of interest and get connected (Paris et al. 2012). Even though the frequency of this feature is rather small in the data, it is worth mentioning, given its unique function in Twitter. As stated by André et al. (2012), users have their own positional preference for applying hashtags where different placements in a tweet carry different purposes. In the case of the present study, the data saw the use of this symbol in the middle and at the end of tweets that are used as keywords, additional information or the end of a tweet. Some of the tweets that used this feature are shown below.

- When I was pregnant,#MyDad bought fresh milk for me everyday...
- can never start my readings before putting my boys to sleep..but when they slept, i will fall asleep too. so how? #firstworldproblem
- Too many shooting and killing games! #PrayForNewton

In a nutshell, the collection of tweets suggests that short forms might not be used that frequently in Twitter, at least in the Malaysian context. The language use in Twitter is considerably more orthodox than any other social networks as revealed by Denby (2012). To put it another way, twitter language has relatively low appearances of short forms and emotive features, makes just about appropriate use of punctuations, and are constructed meaningfully and almost completely despite the 140-character limitation.

b) Linguistic Shortenings

The findings have proved that Malaysian Twitter users utilize almost all of the abbreviation strategies listed by Dabrowska (2011) except for one strategy that is word-

number substitution. Nevertheless, the frequencies of each strategy appear to be considerably low on average. The strategies that are commonly used are deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries (64 appearances), followed by word-letter substitution (32 appearances). Meanwhile the use of nonstandard spellings is one of the least popular options found besides clippings and contractions, and vowel omission. The low occurrences of these approaches may suggest that most users do not usually shorten their tweets. Furthermore, two participants never use any kind of short forms.

As far as the most preferable strategy (deletions of pronouns or auxiliaries) is concerned, the types of omissions are in line with Dabrowska's (2011) findings where the participants in the present study also prefer to omit both a pronoun and an auxiliary together, especially in the tweets comprising present continuous tense. In the omission of only pronouns alone, such as the first person pronoun, possessive pronoun and demonstrative pronoun, the frequencies appear to be quite low. This could be due to the fact that since twitter is mostly about what users are doing at the point of tweeting, it is unquestionable that continuous tense is typically used, and when a pronoun and an auxiliary are deleted (e.g. "having a party" instead of "We are having a party"), it saves a lot more space given the character limit.

The second favorite strategy that is utilized by users is word-letter substitution (e.g. 'u' for 'you). This approach is common in online language as found in past studies by Bieswanger (2008), Dabrowska (2011) and Siti Hamin Stapa and Azianura Hani Shaari's (2012). However, alongside this strategy, there is also another substitution involving numbers. (e.g. 'gr8' for 'great'). Surprisingly, there is no such occurrence in the current collection of tweets. This seems to suggest that Malaysian users might not

opt to use numbers in replacement of letters or words; instead, they would rather spell out common abbreviated words such as ‘to’ for ‘2’ and ‘for’ for ‘4’.

While CMC language is expected to comprise many spelling misbehaves, the present study reveals otherwise. In fact, the number of nonstandard spellings used is too small and so this shortening approach may be regarded as insignificant. Siti Hamin Stapa and Azianura Hani Shaari’s (2012) in their study, revealed a common phenomenon of modifying spellings where users tend to reduce or omit vowels, combine letters and number homophone or even use one letter to represent a word. These modifications are the strategies to shorten words. The words are still comprehensible despite the missing vowels or consonants. However, contrary to Dabrowska’s (2011) theory that this approach is part of lexical shortenings, some of the instances in the present data show that some words are made or spelled longer by the use of repeated letters (e.g. ‘misssss youuu’ for ‘miss you’) (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). Having said that the online language is absent from paralinguistic features (i.e. pitch, volume, intonation) (Fung and Carter, 2007), modifications of spellings as shown in the example earlier are used to replace these features in order to express the users’ emotions.

The results concerning the use of clippings and contractions as well as vowel omission, on the other hand, have higher frequencies than the use of nonstandard spellings. It is noted that the number of occurrences are still rather small (13 and 12, respectively) as compared to Dabrowska’s (2011) findings. This could be because some users make use of these two strategies as they are not new; they have long been observed (Crystal, 2008).

On the whole, it can be observed that Malaysian Twitter users have also adapted to the linguistic environment of CMC that requires them to use certain strategies to convey their messages. Nevertheless, the low occurrence of the shortening strategies is probably due to the fact that most of the users' idea of a clear tweet is a tweet that is simple and straight forward without or with slight use of short forms. In other words, they prefer to use standard and complete forms of words despite the short parameter of Twitter.

c) The Most Distinctive Features and Shortening Strategies in Male and Female Tweets

From the findings obtained, the linguistic features and shortening strategies that are more distinct are identified. There are three features from Ling and Baron's (2007) list that demonstrate gender differences: emoticons, acronyms, and length of tweets. Similarly, out of the seven shortening strategies listed by Dabrowska (2011), three types were identified to have demonstrated gender differences: vowel omission, the use of non-standard spelling and deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries.

Emoticons

The addition of emoticons will help readers to better comprehend the emotional value surrounding the message communicated over the internet given the absence of verbal cues in CMC. Regardless of the gender, generally both males and females make use of this feature to help them convey their feelings better; however there is a gender variation in the frequencies of emoticons used. The present data has revealed that female users prefer to use more emoticons than the male users. Similar results can be found in studies by Witmer and Katzman (1997), Tossell et al. (2012), and Yuen, C.K., Gill, S.K., Maisarah Noorezam and Asma'a Abdulrazaq (2012). This finding concurs

with the traditional belief that women tend to be more expressive than men (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005). It appears that the male participants in the present research do not think that using emoticons is a necessity to display their emotional state.

Acronyms

While many studies have looked into the gender difference in the use of abbreviations, only a few included acronyms to be studied. In the studies by Baron (2004), and Fox et al. (2007), as far as the use of acronyms was concerned, their finding disclosed that this feature was not gender specific. However, the present study revealed otherwise. It is found that the males prefer to shorten words or phrases than the females. According to Balakrishnan and Yeow (2007), females have the tendency to make use of more of the traditional and standard language of a written discourse than the males. This suggests that acronyms, being short and simple, are favoured by the males whereas the females may have a preference to spell out words or phrases in complete form.

Length of Tweets

Contrary to Huffaker's findings (2004) where both males and females share a similar prolificacy, that is in the number of words and characters written, the present data shows that there is a difference in the length of tweets by both genders. The results show that the females constructed longer tweets than the males. This finding is similar to Ling's (2005) study of text messaging where he found that women "seem to be the chattiest" (p. 12); hence, they use more words than men. In other words, women tend to be more talkative and expressive, which means that they generally construct more elaborate messages than men (Yuen et al., 2012). It appears that in the current research, given the parameter of Twitter, the lengthier tweets that the females write not only

shows that they are more expressive than the males, but it can also be surmised that they have tried to maximize the 140 characters of the medium.

Vowel omission, Use of Non-Standard Spelling, and Deletion of Pronouns and Auxiliaries

While many previous studies (Lakoff, 1975; Nemati and Bayer, 2007; Wolf, 2000; Al Rousan et al., 2011; Zaini Amir et al., 2012) have looked into the gender-based disparity of linguistic features, very few mentioned about the preferred shortening strategies. A brief explanation on this matter is provided below, with some support from previous studies, and the feedback from the participants is also given to substantiate the findings.

First of all, in the deletion of vowels in words used as a strategy, the different gender indicated their preference. In the collection of tweets, it is observed that this strategy is favoured by the females more than the males. According to a number of female participants, their contacts can still make out the meanings of the abbreviated words rather than the incorrectly spelt words which could be more confusing. For example, a tweet that says "having **brkfst** [breakfast] with friends" is clearer than "having **bekfes** [breakfast] with friends", at least to foreign contacts from other countries. The following excerpt by a participant demonstrates this point:

> "A clear tweet is a tweet that can be read despite the short forms used, but words with the correct spelling are better. Wrong spelling sometimes can be misleading."

This is supported by the finding in the use of non-standard spellings which is not preferred by the females. The finding revealed that the males' tweets have twice more spelling misbehaves than the females'. This shows that females like to construct a more formal sentence (Balakrishnan and Yeow, 2007) comprising words with proper spelling. However, although the difference is noticeable, the number of misspelt words are very few with only 6 appearances out of the 1091 words written by the male participants. Hence, it might be safe to say that the language in Twitter is geared towards a more standard and formal style as posited by Denby (2012) as his findings disclosed that Twitter users might not be enamoured of lexical shortenings.

Finally, females also delete pronouns and auxiliaries more than men. This contradicts Biber's (1995) finding where women are found to use more pronouns especially the first-person pronouns since they like to feel "involved" in their communication. Soedjono (2012) also found that the female participants in her study utilize more pronouns (specifically the first person and second person pronouns) to connect with their readers whereas the male participants seemed not to favour this feature. The different outcome in the present research may demonstrate that since women share more information than men, they need to include more essential points of their message, hence the pronouns and auxiliaries are opted out to give way to more content words.

d) Perceptions on Language Use in Twitter

To support the findings, the participants were asked regarding their perceptions on the linguistic aspect of CMC particularly the language use in Twitter with a focus on the creativity and clarity of tweets within the parameter of the medium. To date, no studies have been done on this; hence, most of the analyses are obtained solely through

exhaustive observation of the data gathered with some aid from the participants' points of view and general remarks from past studies (Hård af Segerstad, 2002; Crystal, 2006; Thurlow, 2006; Denby, 2012) on CMC.

Creativity of Tweets within 140 Character Limitation

In the present research, it is observed that Twitter does not impede the constructions of creative tweets of which the innovative tweets, as voiced by majority of the participants, are those that contain puns, short forms, accent stylization (Thurlow, 2011), and even inspirational messages. They stated that Twitter has provided them with the opportunity to be creative given the 140 character limitation, and according to the surveys conducted, it is revealed that they do make an attempt to construct a creative tweet before tweeting. They believe that the limitation posed by the medium could encourage creative thinking among users; therefore, if they are given a choice to have a longer space, they feel that is unnecessary since the current parameter could promote language creativity.

Besides, the participants also stated that they get to play around with words in order to get their message to fit into the parameter of Twitter. This encourages them to explore more words and craft their tweets. As stated by Knapp (2011),

> "The 140 character restraint not only forces efficiency, but it also lends itself to some really, really fun wordplay." (Knapp, 2011, para. 5)

In brief, being creative in Twitter is mainly about utilizing strategic approaches to determine how a language is used within the given space and this could help enhance the users' linguistic skills. It is intriguing to find how this medium has shed a new light to the language use in CMC with its role as a platform for users to be more creative.

Clarity of Tweets within 140 Character Limitation

Having asked about the clarity of the tweets within the character limitation, the participants seem not to have any problems comprehending tweets provided that less short forms are used. From the data gathered, it is observed that most of the words in the tweets are usually written in a complete form and this has made the content rather clear in meaning. Since Twitter language in the current study has seen a relatively low amount of short forms, it can be said that the more standard style (which is close to formal written discourse) is used, the more comprehensible the messages will appear as compared to the language use in any other social networks (Denby, 2012).

Even if the tweets are not written in complete sentences, the participants are still able to understand them because the items that are usually absent in the incomplete tweets are pronouns, auxiliaries or vowels. The absence of these items does not interfere with the main message needed to be conveyed which lies in the use of more content words.

Language Use within 140 Character Limitation

A majority of the participants are aware of what they want to tweet and how they are going to construct their tweet. In fact, they are concerned about how their contacts or other Twitter users will view their writing. Due to this, they become attentive to the grammar and structures of their tweets before posting them online. This finding is opposed to that of Hård af Segerstad's (2002) where the language in CMC is observed to be very similar to the spoken language, in which grammar is seemingly not of any importance. Since the participants believe that the language they use in Twitter is a mirror of their real-life personality, they tend to be more careful in choosing and placing their words in a sentence.

Additionally, although the use of incorrect language structures and spellings has become an acceptable linguistic pattern in CMC (Crystal, 2006); the current findings show that Twitter users prefer to use a language close to the standard conventions. It is evident from the data that almost all tweets in the data portray very precise messages with good grammar and structures that are easy to understand, and only few errors were found in the data, specifically spelling errors. Thus, it can be said that the media's negative perceptions of the impact of CMC on language use (Thurlow, 2006) may not necessarily be true.

4.3 Summary

The results obtained have given an insight into how Malaysian Twitter users construct their tweets within the 140 character limitation. Having analysed the linguistic features and shortening strategies, it was found that users only used these two elements minimally. Moreover, some features and strategies correspondingly revealed gender differences in the language used. Most of the participants also believe that the character limitation does not impede their creativity to construct a tweet, and the clarity of tweets when posted.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will present the conclusion of the present study which comprises a brief account of how language is used by L2 twitter users in Malaysia. Then, some implications and limitations of the study as well as future research considerations will be discussed.

5.1 Summary of Findings

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study. It is evident that Twitter also shares the same features as other CMC modes with occurrences of emoticons, abbreviation, acronyms and so on as illustrated in previous studies (Hård af Segerstad, 2002; Lewin and Donner, 2002; Ling and Baron, 2007; Crystal, 2008; Norizah Hassan and Azirah Hashim, 2009; Farina and Lyddy, 2011). In addition, with the 140-character limitation that this online social networking has, it was initially expected that there would be abundance of online linguistic features as mentioned earlier.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the study has revealed otherwise. For instance, the use of emoticons, acronyms and abbreviations was rather minimal and could be said as being insignificant to this medium, at least in the case of the present study. This shows that the language use in Twitter is somewhat more proper and closely related to the traditional written language. It has the qualities of being complete and clear which are essential in getting a message delivered clearly. Likewise, in the use of punctuations

especially the period, question mark and apostrophe in contracted words, they were also used almost perfectly which may suggest that the participants of this study opt to write more comprehensible tweets to separate words and elucidate meanings. The finding showing the participants being more careful in using marks concurs with Shazia Aziz et al.'s (2012) finding where online writing may not always be improper as deemed by popular misconceptions (Tagliamonte and Derek, 2008; Fiennes, 2011; Greene, 2011).

Interestingly, a feature that is worth mentioning, although it is not part of the framework by Ling and Baron (2007), is the use of hashtags which is Twitter-specific. To date, no studies have mentioned the considerable use of this feature in other social networking services except in Twitter (André et al., 2012; Denby, 2012; Paris et al., 2012). Participants may use this feature as a way to be linguistically creative as posited by Denby (2012). Apart from that, hashtags also connect Twiter users by communicating the same topic of interest (Paris et al., 2012). It is also found that hashtags are used to give an emphasis on a certain subject or for users to express their feelings by positioning this item in different places in a tweet (André et al., 2012).

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In terms of shortening strategies, almost all strategies listed by Dabrowska (2011) can be found in the collection of tweets such as clippings and contractions, deletion of vowels, non-standard spelling, word-letter substitutions, deletion of apostrophe as well as deletion of pronouns and auxiliaries. Only one strategy that is word-number substitution was not applied by the participants in this study. Nevertheless, the overall frequencies of strategies used in the present study are relatively small as compared to Dabrowska's (2011) findings. Despite having to construct tweets in a limited space, the findings suggest that this parameter does not restrain the participants to write using standard and complete forms of words. This is perhaps due to the fact that majority of

them stated that they prefer to construct tweets without or with slight use of short forms so that they will appear clearer and more direct.

Some features and strategies have also revealed gender-based disparity in the language use although their appearances are rather few. From the analysis, it was found that the female participants used more emoticons, construct longer tweets, and delete vowels, pronouns and auxiliaries in their tweets more than the male participants. Conversely, the male participants used more acronyms and non-standard spellings. Nonetheless, the gender use of language in Twitter is more alike than different. Perhaps both genders are becoming well versed in the online linguistic environment and have been more adept to it. For instance, the finding showing that the male participants use pronouns and auxiliaries more in their tweets than the female participants contradicts early literature on the use of these grammatical items in their communication (Biber, 1995; Soedjono, 2012).

In addition, the 140 character limitation also has a positive impact on language use in Twitter. From the answers obtained in the questionnaires, the majority of the participants agree that Twitter serves as a medium for them to become more creative and efficient in constructing tweets. This has rejected the popular belief that decries Twitter as a medium that degrades a language. Furthermore, when looking at the average number of characters per transmission in the finding (66 characters), it shows that users do not encounter problems of not having enough space to convey their message. They know exactly how to convey their thoughts within the parameter of the medium.

The present study has also helped to give an insight into how language is constructed in Twitter and with the positive views of this medium as stated by the participants, it gives a convincing stand that this mode of CMC does not contribute to the increasingly poor use of English. In other words, the present study confirms that language is neither deteriorating nor are users less efficient to convey their message successfully. What can be observed is how the users adapt linguistically to the limited space of Twitter.

In a nutshell, the current study has shown that Twitter, being a rather new mode of CMC, has encouraged its users to develop inventive approaches of using written language. According to Hård af Segerstad (2002), CMC users will tend to apply creative strategies as an attempt to deliver their messages efficaciously. It is evident that the ability of users to comply with the character limitation of Twitter has demonstrated man's diverse linguistic adaptability.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study suggest that Twitter may be an avenue to promote language creativity among its users. This is because the 140-character limitation is said to drive users to think creatively which may then encourage them to make use of dictionaries to replace long words or phrases with shorter ones in order to get their message to fit within the parameter. Hence, it could also be a consideration for use in the classroom especially to encourage students to become more innovative in constructing sentences which could result in the improvement of their linguistic ability. Having collected the data from naturally-occurring tweets and using them to analyse how Twitter users employ creative ways of writing, this process could also be adapted for language enrichment in classes where students who have a higher proficiency of English may be exposed to such methods to enhance further learning. Currently there is

a lack of the use of authentic materials for language classes and this could be a way to help learners be more aware and cognizant to various creative ways of language learning.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

As in most studies conducted on a small scale, there are some limitations that need to be highlighted. First is in the size of the data gathered. This study was conducted on a small sample size. Due to this, the data gathered was not massive and hence the findings cannot be generalized to all Malaysian Twitter users. Secondly, because of the lack of previous studies on Twitter and the related areas being investigated (i.e. creativity and clarity of texts), the findings could not be further contrasted with the current study. Moreover, due to this lack, observations on the participants' language use were carried out and a perception survey was conducted. This may appear to be inconclusive and once again the findings cannot be generalized.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The current study only examines a small size of participants (20 participants) and Twitter data (200 tweets). In order to make the data more reliable, it is recommended for future researchers in this field to study a larger sample size. Furthermore, it would be interesting to pursue comparative studies on the language use in Twitter with another character-limited medium which is SMS that has a different nature in terms of the visibility of messages to the public at large. By doing this research, it could draw attention as to why differences between the two channels exist, that is if there is any. Apart from that, the present study only focuses on the gender differences in the language use. Future research could focus on the gender similarities so as to provide a better insight into the issue of language and gender.

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APPENDIX I : Email Questionnaire

Dear participant,

I am Noor Aqsa Nabila Bt Mat Isa, a MESL student from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. As part of my master's programme, I am currently conducting a research on The Impact of Character Limitation in Twitter on Language Use among L2 Users in Malaysia. I would appreciate it if you could spend a few minutes to answer this questionnaire. Your information will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank you very much for your participation in this study.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND/EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

Please tick (/), where appropriate.

1. **Gender** Male ( ) Female ( )

2. **Age:** [ ] years old

3. **Educational Background**

Highest Qualification	Programme of Study	University	Year of Study

SECTION B: LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Please tick (/), where appropriate.

4. What language do you consider as your first language?

Malay Language ( )
English Language ( )
Other language (please specify): _____

5. Which language do you feel more confident with when you text?

Malay Language ( )
English Language ( )
Other language (please specify): _____

Language Proficiency:

Please tick (/) in the appropriate boxes.

Proficiency / Languages	Able to communicate with others fluently	Able to communicate with others moderately	Able to communicate with others, but with difficulty	Able to understand, but not able to speak
Malay				
English				
Other language (please specify):				

SECTION C: LANGUAGE CREATIVITY IN TWITTER

6. What is your idea of a creative tweet? (You may tick more than one)

	Tweets that contain puns (a humorous use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or that sounds like another word)
	Tweets that contain short forms (abbreviations, acronyms, deletion of vowels etc.)
	Tweets with accents (local or foreign)

Others (please specify):

_____

_____

_____

7. Do you think that the 140 character limitation encourage creative thinking among users?

Yes ( )
No ( )

What are your reasons?

_____

_____

_____

8. Twitter users can only construct a tweet within 140 character limitation. Do you think that this limitation promote language creativity or not?

Yes ( )
No ( )

If it does, in what way?

_____
_____
_____

9. Do you think twitter should extend the 140 character limitation to more characters?

Yes ( )
No ( )

Give reasons for your answer.

_____
_____
_____

SECTION D: LANGUAGE CLARITY IN TWITTER

To respond to this questionnaire, please check (/) in the appropriate choice as follows:
1 (strongly disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (agree) 4 (strongly agree)

No.	**Statement**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
10	Most tweets are always clear in meaning despite the 140 character limitation.				
11	Most tweets are always clear in meaning despite the short forms or the shortening strategies used (e.g. use of abbreviations, deletion of vowels).				

12. What is your idea of a clear tweet?

_____
_____
_____

SECTION E: LANGUAGE USE IN TWITTER

To respond to this questionnaire, please check (/) in the appropriate choice as follows:

1 (Never) **2 (Sometimes)** **3 (Always)**

No.	**Statement**	**1**	**2**	**3**
13	I think of how to construct a creative tweet before tweeting.			
14	I use short forms when tweeting.			
15	I try to make full use of the 140 character limitation when tweeting.			
16	I think of the right sentence structure before tweeting.			
17	I make sure that my grammar is right before tweeting.			
18	I am careful in choosing words to tweet to avoid sensitivity.			
19	I believe that the language I use in twitter reflects my personality.			

APPENDIX II : Sample of the Collection of Tweets

It is ugly when u are critiquing people for doing something that u thought was bad,but then u have all d reasons in d world to do it. Urgh.

tgh rebus Yuca Root kat dapur tu. Tak taulah it will turn out to be ubi rebus or keladi rebus. lol. #hantamsajalahlabu....

Ayah:alamak!Perut dah maju! Faris:Ibu,r we going to hv a baby? O.o

Why I love snow? Because it's warm when it snows!

When I was pregnant,#MyDad bought fresh milk for me everyday...

Thunderstorms tomorrow!

From bedroom to living room. Faris said he needs "to take a break" (to sleep 5 more minutes). Haihhhhhh

can never start my readings before putting my boys to sleep..but when they slept, i will fall asleep too. so how? #firstworldproblem

Rain tomorrow!

Lessons learned:our way might b different,but not necessarily better than others.Don't judge n prejudge,even if u do,keep it to urself,pls.

Circumstances don’t make a person; they reveal him or her

Face your fear, head on. Only then will you enjoy your life fully

Break a leg!! And have fun :)

When she's a daughter, she opens a door of Jannah for her father. When she's a wife, she completes half of the Deen for her husband.

Be at the right place at the right time and do the right thing :) everything will fall into places

Pray for the best insyaAllah, u just don't know what life has to offer u, so enjoy every bit of it ;)

My 2nd last day at TNB! Omgggg *mcm tak percaya*

How to buy mansion in jannah?

The 7 islamic habits based on al-fatihah

Back to civilization, survived the 8 days in obs lumut ;)

The knee is getting worse. Hmmmm

February that I always love ;)

Trying to identify unimportant topics and ignore them. Clock is ticking! Starting to spot questions. Phewww...

Have been wanting to present our report but this China guy in our group is too nervous and we have to wait for him. Urrrghhhhh annoying!!!!

Get the highest marks in class for the 1st time evaaaa! Don't even know where those marks came from. Oh I beat that brilliant girl. Hehe

Were discussing with Kazakh partner on wind power plant. And i said panels instead of turbines. Panels for solar power la deyyyyy!!!!!

I need a good 'someone' to talk to and it's u. Yes YOU!! ;)

Have to produce an article every fortnight. And need to add in islamic perspective. Shariah compliance haaaa. Idea sila muncul :(

I'm sorry boss but i have to study for my quiz tonight. T_T

My student still failed her addmaths exam. The dad asked me "mcm mane ni?". Urghhh as if it was my fault that she failed. T_T

I love trafic jam.so much.and i mean it.

Malaysian mentality- Trash bin is everywhere.

Lampard is leaving The blues. Wtf man?

Too many shooting and killing games! #PrayForNewton

For £50mil, chelsea shouldve bought RVP instead of FT

Blood diamond is the shit!

Watching spidey reminds me of NYC!

What the hell is goin on tv3 now?!

Dissapointment has a name.

Its totally a different thing: u do what u like and u have to like what u do. Job.

My Beautiful Malaysia. Volunteers. 'Arahan' to all schools, that can be translated as volunteering. I see.

Will make up for that.

Riding along sg tua was fun.

First time I'm waiting for a live webcast. This better be good. Less than an hour to go.

Anybody coming home from the States soon? Like real soon. Mahu order air filter. Muahaha.

Damage control by mainstream media, allowing citizens to not #listento what they shud. But most of us are also netizens, we got YouTube yo.

3 Idiots. Simply one of the best movies.

From a spot where I can reach home in less than 5min riding, been stuck for 20min in the car and moved only half way to home. Alahai.

Indulging differences.

Already said I just wanted to look around, yet you stood next to me all the way as I tried on the display phone. Customer engagement fail.

So if I don't struggle now, not only others will be ahead, I will also need to struggle later.

I should take note that it's not only me that wants to be a successful person, everyone wants it.

You've made me craving for Dominoe's Pizza. Hm.

Good morning! <-- Scheduled tweet so that nampak macam bangun awal :p

Goodmorning Malaysiaaaa, i misssss youuu!

Dont choose the better person. Choose the one that makes you a better person.

It's not that we cant do it, it's that person in us who is lazy. So let's remove that personality.

If you want something in your life you've never had, you'll have to do something, you've never done.

You shouldn't give up. Fight for yourself and who you are. You've got to go through the hard times to get the best.

No matter how bad you think it is, stay positive. Life goes on. You'll get through it somehow.

Went to settle this thing for nothing. I shud just have been at home doing my work.

Not a good day for me. Astaghfirullahalazim.

Trying to push myself all the way.Now really nearing my limit.Lets try go beyond that.The worst could happen i would just explode to pieces.

The 'best' thing about migraine, it always come at the right moment, at the right time.

Exhausted. Really2 exhausted.

panic attack. panic attack. So many things, to little time. Ya Allah.

...and so i thought winter was actually about to end soon. -.-

Well they both really look well together. *Sigh*

Have to take nap. Or i wont be able to work at all.

Kerja bertimbun2. literally. Padan muka aku. Jalan byk2 lagi. Oh God give me strength.

Time to focus yo

Its been a really really really really fat weekend

Full moon means my period is around the corner #pms
Disheartened :(

Judy is the least favorite name of the day! #killme

Being poor can be quite sad :(lol

Newlywed/couples should really keep their ups and downs to themselves. Life is not a tv show

Promises are just words

Debating and barking are two different things biotch

How should i make it exciting

weighing and balancing

i'm still thinking

honey stop please, i don't wanna waste my quid..pls

sometimes stupid is compulsory

This kind of weather makes me thinkof going back =,='

unproductive weekend, bad man

Love my new duvet,sleep in heaven :p

when i ask my parents a simple "yes" or "no" Q and I will get a lecture.

she talks because she dont want to hurt you

just bcoz a girl talks to you.doesnt mean she likes you =,=

new house is too comfy..dok malas aja...need to get up and exercise~~

this sofa is too comfy..i am refused to get up and ready to uni ~~

Bekfes with honeystar yum yummy!

Finished with shop brg2 rumah and kemas rumah. alhamdulillah. Tmr starts with daily routine yeay :)

I think brisbanians are moody today, despite of the sunny weather... ~~

This kid..i can tell that she is still at primary school & she is using iphone 4s!

Little that i know about you.

Dear kids, please stay adorable until you grow up.. :)

Alhamdulillah for d blessed friday..have you recited al-kahf today? It's part of our beloved prophet's sunnah to recite d surah every Friday

It's hard to be different but be brave and firm if you know that you are right :D

Whenever i tweet,i whine. So dont tweet meena :(

I need to migrate. Bismillah, may Allah guide me
Sometimes one joke can destroy everything.

My mum is my best living example if i want to start business/invest. But she's a bit rough, and that just scare me hehe.

Too bad that we are not in the same wavelength

Anyone knows how to cut down 5kilos in a month? Sobssss

I shall not sleep in class tonight! I shall not sleep in class tonight! Chaiyokkkkkk

Successfull ppl never complain! Reminder to myself

I really need a kerja baru

Everybody is struggling in their lives. How can we become so selfish sometimes?

Kolkata 199MYR is a stealer. Haih.

Aye let's start working. I need to drive up to JB at 5am.

Am I the only person unaware of Anuar Zain's concert?

It's about time lah rasanya kedatangan sleepless nights.

I've got someone asking to feature my picture dancing in front of Taj Mahal in a magazine.

This habit of mine is very hard to ditch. But I shall try, I shall try not to use phone when I'm with friends.

I need to self-discipline myself again. Like never to use my phone on dining table. Leisure reading everynight. And the list goes on...

They don't know I don't do shopping. Saya beli apa yang saya perlu. But I do shop for books every month. That's a must-buy.

Problem fixed. Off to work. And good morning people!

Certainly not a good sign.

im not married and i dont need to be reminded every single day that im not and i wud really need to.

no longer on fb. dunno how long boleh bertahan. lets see.

miss reading the quran.

i am so going to quit this job in few years time.

i miss travelling not for work.huhuh.

arrogance is to think one is better than other people. huuuu. lets purify our hearts!

pardon the grammar.

cant wait for the weekend already!!!!!

nicky minaj on american idol is a bit annoying. ergh. y is she a judgeeee.

i wud hv given u all of my heart but there is someone who has torn it apart...

A dose of caffeine. Cause other substance is freaking illegal and I'm obviously nerdy.

i feel like i should get married so to cut the cost of accommodation and to not make my dad freaked out of me travelling by myself.

Cheese cake for breakfast makes one happy but then I realised that it'll be my last day at Icu. Tearing up a bit (inside).

Full of energy but too freaked out to be running outside this early. I need a running buddy.

I'm not a people pleaser, I just try very hard to be less shitty as I grow up. I think everyone should too.

I can sleep in peace knowing that if I get to wake up tomorrow, I don't have to spend my time in shower contemplating whats for breakfast.

I'm ready to run by the beach but the weather didn't look too friendly. Let's run to the mall instead then. XD

I was telling Gary that I'm exhausted from all the studying and he went licking my nose and forehead. Thanks, very comforting indeed. :p

It's another world outside my duvet. A cold harsh world!

It didn't surprise me anymore that almost always, the laziest people want to get married early. In vain hope that marriage will change them.

Heart beating fast. This is no joke. No, scratch that. I think this joke has gone too far on me. -_-"

Shoot. I think I blushed talking to Mars tadi. ('0')

I miss my neighbour. Craven! Come back quick! :'(

I don't buy stupid male jokes. I really don't. So quit spitting rubbish on my face. Go read some books!

About to board the plane. I guess this is where we say goodbye, Indonesia. :'(

Our first day here really is a story worth to tell. Well at least, it won't leave my mind for years to come. :)

Rainy afternoon. Bed. Safe haven. I'm all good. :)

Can't wait for the movie! Uh. Oh. Should I go find the book first? But then it would not be a surprise, would it? (><)

Dear coffee, I'm going to depend on you a lot today. Help me to stay focus, dear friend. Craving for some magnum or cornetto ice creams. Going out to hunt for some.

i hate december.....

some things are better remain unsaid
hope my car next birthday wont cost me this much, ;((

should start searching for beef recipes, ;))

before i die i want to post something funny on 9gag ;p

in serious need of a good book i could lose myself in

mne nk cr brownies yg awesome??

goal --> rich enough to hire a hitman

went to a friend's house and puke twice, so sorry fiza!!
sleepover w/ famili ;))

Sorry isn't just a word. Selamat tidur.

May the force be with us, Gunners.

Anyone looking for a job in servicing? We're recruiting. DM me jika malu dan segan.

I guess you might need a chill pill?

Whatever happens in Whatsapp, stays in Whatsapp.

Trying hard to not to stay awake at this hour.

Are you ready for BN? Of course lah. :')

What a professional you are! Calling yourself a leader. I pity you. May God be with you always when everyone else isn't.

Come on, Fazley. Make it happen.

So,, what is up today, people?

Body temp 39ºC is no joke..my body is burning up..slmt mlm semua..

At last..seen my fren back on twitter..u know who u r..hehe..

Morning all.. :)

Do u know why the time goes faster n faster? Because we are the ones that prays for it..we keep on asking for the day to end faster..

Shall i depart now n sleep at rnr or just depart around 4am? Problem is i cant sleep eventho i'm quite sleepy..huhu..

Meeting at 10am n i'm the first person to b here at 9.45..Malaysians attitude..

This is y people hate to deal with government officers..i hope somebody can take action..bad image it is..

Wtf is wrong with our immigration officers??? Where the heck r they?? 1 kaunter je operate..patut la slow nak mampus..

I pity those who came just 3minutes later than me..no more number for them n need to come back tmrw n q up again..tiring it is..

I pity does who r stupid by showing their stupidity tweeting stupid accusations..

It is good to be back.

The proper skirt length is at least two inches below your cellulite.

You know your mind is fucked up when u read Pelawat as Peliwat.

Oh yeah..!! Castiel is back.

I'm not sure whether my phone or the internet connectivity is shit. Time to buy a new phone just to make sure.

Keep calm and polish nail.

Make love,not war.

I envy those two. They can proudly say, i did something for my country.

It is an honour to live and die wearing that uniform.

I am a wizard.

Back to business!!

Off to Malpensa Airport

Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much

Chocolate time with adam mikail

A great food will taste sucks if the service is poor

Steamboat session...at home!!

Back up plan..is there any?

Dear appetite, where are you?

To abu's wedding at Sik

Getting new haircut