Frequency of Learned words of English as a Marker of Gender Identity in SMS Language in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect learned words of English in SMS language (Short Messaging Service) of gender in Pakistani society where Roman Urdu is used as a language for mobile phone communication. Frequently learned words of English are being used. From this, the frequency the gender differences in SMS language has been marked. Quantitative method was used to collect data. About 1000 SMS were collected through random sampling of 25 male and 25 female university students of Lahore city. Later text was analyzed on its sentence structure. The frequency of learned words of English was found from dominant language to less dominant language. However, only that data have been used for investigation in which the field of the participants and their age factor was same. The quantity of male and female was made equal and findings were generalized male and female citizens of Pakistan.

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Introduction

Short messaging service is very popular in Pakistan now-a-days. It is very quiet quick, cheap and easy way of communication. The basic purpose of this study was to determine the SMS, writing style of both male and female in Pakistani Language is a set of sounds and then medium of expression. It is the strong and best source of communication. A society is divided into monolingual, bilingual and multilingual on the basis of number the languages used by its people. For the last decade SMS has become a common habit among men and women of every society where cell phone is used. If they know two languages they switch from one language to another or mix both the language for their own convenience. This is actually called code switching and code mixing. In Pakistan mostly people are aware of three languages; Urdu as Their national language, any regional language as a mother language and English as a second language. It has been observed that the people use more than two languages but mostly use two languages to communicate on mobile phones where code mixing and code switching is rampant. The aim of this research was to investigate differences in the SMS language on the basis of the use of leaned words by the males and females in society. What type of words are used by males and females and the style of their writing SMS is the same or different.

Significance of the study

Previous studies in this regard have shown that there is linguistic difference in gender language used in SMS. Ling (2000) concludes in his study that although men were early adopters of mobile telephones yet it is among the women that the great motor of SMS lives. Settles (1985), Treichler and Kramarae (1983) and Rosenthal (1985) also conclude that females write longer messages and have a more complex structure than messages written by males. "There is a significant gender based difference in the number of words used in SMS Shaban Rafi (2010). The present study was conducted to further explore into the matter that combination of learned words in SMS or what are the factors which mark gender identity in SMS language of Pakistani bilingual speakers.

Object of the study

This study investigates the syntax of the SMS used by the bilingual English-Urdu mobile users living in Pakistan. The main objectives of this study are:

    a. To know the frequency of learned words used in SMS language of male and female mobile users who use English and Urdu language for communication.

Research Questions:

Following questions were designed for this study:

    a. What kind of learned words are used in the SMS language of males and females?

    b. How frequent different kinds of learned words are used in the SMS language of males and females?

Literature Review

The widespread use of cellular telephones has led to the proliferation of messages sent using the Short Messaging Service (SMS). The first text message was sent in 1992, and recent estimates put the number of messages sent worldwide in 2008 at more than 2 trillion (2008 Global Key Trends and Statistics in the Telecoms Industry 2008; Ho 2008; Leberecht 2008). The functions of texting appear to be dominated by friendship maintenance (Deumert & Masinyana, 2008; Thurlow, 2003). The 160-character limit on text messages encourages the use of shortenings and other variations on language use.

Recent studies indicate that bilingual speakers continue their code-switching behavior when sending text messages (Deumert and Masinyana 2008; Haggan 2007). When bilingual speakers use SMS, their access to multiple sources of vocabulary, sentence structure, and other language devices would appear to provide additional resources for addressing the character limits imposed on SMS. Bautista (2004) suggested that bilinguals could use code-switching to maximize their communication efficiency (i.e., using the fewest possible characters or keystrokes to convey a message) in the domain of text messages.

The emergence of CMC (computer mediated communication) has motivated a real dichotomy among researchers as whether to consider CMC as a written or spoken form of language. While Baron (2000: 248) gives a metaphor to CMC as "an emerging language centaur, part speech, part writing", Crystal (2001) suggests that CMC is more than just a hybrid of speech and writing. He assumes that although CMC displays properties of both mediums, it holds features that neither one of these mediums have. Crystal suggests that it must be seen as a new species of communication and he calls it a "third medium". Moreover, a number of scholars

(e.g., Androutsopoulos 2006; Siebenhaar 2006; Yeh 2004; Sue 2003; Lobet-Maris 2003; Puro 2003; Lin 2000) show how the new technology has immediate linguistic consequences. Crystal (2001) contends that the technical restriction of 160 characters per message has motivated the use of new forms of language, such as the use of short forms that basically have two types: acronyms and abbreviations. Speaking of the effect of computer-mediated communication on language use, Warschauer et al. (2002) argue that one important and the most feared consequence of the use of new technology is the global use of English to such a degree that it would replace other languages. To deal with this LANGUAGE CHOICE IN MOBILE TEXT MESSAGES 39 problem, speakers of other languages have developed new forms of writing which adapt to their languages using the Roman scripts (Warschauer et al. 2002).

In a number of previous works (e.g., Blom & Gumperz 1972; Castells et al. 2006; Sue 2003) it has been observed that in certain situations, English is used alternatively with other languages in what is known as "code-switching" (Myers-Scotton 1993). Grosjean (1982: 145) defines code-switching as "the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation". Some scholars differentiate between two types of mixed discourse: "code-switching" and "code-mixing" (Auer 1999; Kachru 1978; 1983). Myers-Scotton (1993: 85), who introduces the Compliment Phrase (CP) as the unit of analysis, notes that a number of scholars, notably Kachru (1978; 1983), make this terminological distinction, but she considers the term "code-mixing" not to be terribly useful and instead prefers to use intra-CP versus inter-CP code-switching (CS). Myers-Scotton (1993) objects to the use of the term "code-mixing" because it implies CS is unconstrained and lacks structure. She (1998) argues that because the CP can be defined more precisely than either the sentence or the clause, it is the best unit for discussing the grammatical structuring of CS.

Though many authors have dealt with the processes of code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing, not all of them have provided clear-cut distinctions for such phenomena (Romaine 1989; Myers-Scotton 1990; 1993; Poplack 1988). Code-switching and borrowing are explained (Halmari 1997: 17–18; Pahta 2004: 79) as a continuum in progression in which code-switching precedes borrowing in time and is more restricted in its use (individual vs. societal). In Pahta's (2004: 79) words: "The distinction between the two may seem straightforward in theory: switching involves the use of two languages in one utterance, whereas the term 'borrowing' is used of embedded elements that have been integrated into the host language" (reported in Crespo & Moskowich, 2006: 51). Since this paper deals with language choice in

mobile text messaging, we will adopt the term "code-switching" as an umbrella term to refer to any occurrence of alternating between Arabic and English.

Previous research (e.g., Castells et al. 2006; Bautista 1999; 2004; Sue 2003; Myer-Scotton 1993) has named common factors that affect an individual's reasoning for code-switching. Among these are: 1) environmental settings, 2) audience, 3) conversations with embarrassing or uncomfortable topics, and 4) picking up "cues" from others that serve as an invitation to speak both languages (reported in Benitze 2008).

Functional studies of CS have focused on the reasons why bilingual speakers do engage in CS, in describing the social context in which such utterances are produced, the social functions they attempt to serve, and the sociolinguistic factors triggering this kind of behavior (e.g., Chung 2006; Castells et al. 2006; Sue 2003; Al-Khatib & Farghal 1999; Auer 1999; Adendorff 1996; Myers-Scotton 1995; 1998; Mustafa & Al-Khatib 1994; Gumperz & Hernandez-Chaves 1978). Nowadays, with the emergence of new techniques of communication such as the Internet and mobile phones, studies of CS have shifted their attention to investigate how the process occurs through these new media of communication (e.g., Benitze 2008; Castells et al. 2006; Sue 2003; Paolillo 1996; Baron 2000; Durham 2003; Kung 2004).

As far as Pakistani society is concerned mostly English and Urdu in addition of any regional language; Punjabi, Sindhi Pashto and Sariaki, are used in code switching and code mixing. But our focus of the study is only English and Urdu which is mostly used in the domain of mobile phone communication. Mostly Urdu is used in using English orthographic symbols making a new script known as Roman Urdu. Mobile phone chatting is very common and popular among the youth. Every day billions of SMS are sending. Code switching and code mixing is used during the exchange of SMS. And in previous research it is proved that the females switch more from one language to another than the male. In this study this hypothesis is checked in case of SMS language whether or not switching of leaned words of English from one code to another can make a distinction in the language used by male users or female users.

Methodology

In this study both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to investigate the frequency of learned words of English in the language of gender in English-Urdu SMS.

Collection of data

To count the frequency of learned words in SMS language of male and female quantitative method of data collection was used. According to Grosjean (1982) age, field, topic, situation, event, content, participant and their role and education level of the communicator effect Code switching therefore, the data were selected in such a way that these factors may have less effect on switching of codes. For this purpose, 1000 SMS were collected randomly through balloting from different university students of Lahore city ranging in age from (20-30), who belonged to the same field, same relation, same topic, and same profession. The sample was consist compose of 25 male and 25female all of whom were native speakers of Urdu. But it should be noted here that due to their educational background, all of the subjects learned English as a foreign language and used the language as a medium of instruction in their universities. From the outset, those SMS were consist used which were non-forward and personal messages sent by both male and female students to each other an order to examine the frequency of learned words used in SMS language in Pakistan,. As mentioned above 1000 messages were collected from the participants. Some messages were eliminated to have a nearly equal number of messages from both sex groups. All names and any other information that may identify the participants' identity were removed.

The data were collected by chatting them personally without tell them about for what purpose their messages were used so that participants may not deliberately change the natural setting of the SMS language. Once the data collected, they were informed about the study and the data will be used after obtaining their permission. If, any one did not permit that his data should not be used, it not be used and collection of data remained continued till the required amount of SMS,s received.

Analysis

Data were analyzed carried both quantitatively and qualitatively. Percentages were utilized to show how frequent English and Urdu elements are used in the text messages.

Before moving on any further, it is worth mentioning how frequencies of learned words were scored. That is, how it will be determined whether the text will be primarily in Urdu as a base language or primarily in English. Only one main element

was taken into consideration to determine whether switching takes place from Urdu to English or vice versa. This element is the structure of sentence. It will be found whether the structure of sentence is SVO or SOV. After it, the frequencies (with percentage) of learned words of English were determined in SMS of both the sexes.

Text analysis

Discussion

Frequency of use of learned words in SMS language

	Girls total	Percentage	Boys total	Total	
English	140	28 %	40.8	204	45.7
Urdu	360	72	59.2	296	31.37
Noun	186	101.08	126.6	158	14.5
Verb	35	18.9	29.77	39	10.2
Adverb	34	18.37	3.8	5	26.4
Adjective	53	28.64	29.9	39	85.2
Preposition	2	1.08	.76	1	50
Pronoun	3	1.62	0	0	100
Conj	0	0	3.05	4	100
int	2	1.08	1.52	2	0

Male and females SMS:

As 500 SMS data has been collected from different male and female respondents. The total words used by male respondents in 500 SMS 3378 and the average words used in one SMS are 8. While the SMS data which was collected from 500 female respondents consist of 6230 words and they have used 12 words in each SMS showing that females use 20% more words than the males.

The use of English language in SMS of males and females:

Out of 500 SMS in 204 SMS the males have used English language. While out of 500 SMS in 140 SMS the females have used English language. And this shows that the males use 45.71% more English language in SMS than females.

The use of Urdu language in SMS of males and females:

Out of 500 SMS in 296 SMS the males have used Urdu language. While out of 500 SMS in 360 SMS the females have used Urdu language. And this shows that the females use 31.7% more Urdu language in SMS than males.

The use of Nouns in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 158 words are nouns 120.6%. While out of 184 female code mixed SMS, 185 words are nouns 100.54%. And this shows that the males use 14.59% more nouns in code mixed SMS than females.

The use of Verbs in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 39 words are verbs 29.77%. While out of 184 female code mixed SMS, 35 words are verbs 19.02%. And this shows that the males' use 10.25% more verbs in code mixed SMS than females.

The use of Adjectives in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 39 words are adjectives 29.77%. While out of 184 female code mixed SMS, 53 words are adjectives 28.80%. And this shows that the females use 26.41% more adjectives in code mixed SMS than males.

The use of Adverbs in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 5 words are adverbs 3.81%. While out of 184 female code mixed SMS, 34 words are adverbs 18.47%. And this shows that the females use 85.29% more adverbs in code mixed SMS than males.

The use of interjection in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 2 words are interjection 1.08%. While out of 184 female codes mixed SMS, 2 words are interjection 1.52%. And this shows that the males use .44% more interjection in code mixed SMS than females.

The use of conjunction in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 4 words are conjunction 3.05%. While out of 184 female codes mixed SMS, no word is used as conjunction 0.0%. And this shows that the males use 100% more conjunction in code mixed SMS than females.

The use of pronoun in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, no word is pronoun 0.0%. While out of 184 female codes mixed SMS, 3 words are pronoun 1.62%. And this shows that the females use 100% more pronouns in code mixed SMS than males.

The use of preposition in code mixed SMS of males and females:

Out of 131 male code mixed SMS, 1 word is preposition .76%. While out of 184 female codes mixed SMS, 2 words are preposition 1.08%. And this shows that the females use 50% more preposition in code mixed SMS than males.

Conclusion:

From the data and its analysis it is proved that frequency of the use of learned words is the marker of gender identity in male and female in SMS language communication. These are females who most of the time use learned words during their discourse. And it is also observed that more females prefer to use SMS to communicate with their acquaintances. It is relevant with the research of Angel Lin (Gendered, Bilingual Communication Practice: Mobile text messaging among Hong Kong College Students) whose result show that more females than the males use SMS. It is also relevant to the study of Mahmoud A. Al Khatib and Enag H. Sabbah (Language Choice in Mobile Text Messages among Jordanian University Students) whose study also demonstrates that the sex of the text writers has a role to play in the process of code-mixing and code-switching. Females have a stronger tendency than males to use learned words and males by contrast have a stronger tendency to use one totally language than mixed language. Muhammad Shaban Rafi research in this contest is also relevant in which the results say that there is significance gender based difference in the number of words per SMS message and in the complexity of the messages. Females generally use lexically dense words in SMS messages. And male prefer to use simple one sentence or one clause messages while the females use many clause structure during their conversation. Ling (2000) concludes in his study that although men were early adopters of mobile telephones yet it is among the women that the greater motor of SMS lives.

Settle (1985), Treichler and Kramarae (1983) and Rosenthal (1985) also concludes that females write longer messages and have a more complex structure than males. However it is against Chambers (1999) men use nonstandard language mean learned words (CS) more than women.

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