

**A COMPARISON ON THE FACTORS THAT SHAPE
LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN CHAT ROOM
DISCOURSE OF UiTM SARAWAK STUDENTS**



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1. Letter of Report Submission

BORANG TAMAT PROJEK GERAN PENYELIDIKAN

BAHAGIAN A : MAKLUMAT KETUA PROJEK	
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Tajuk Projek:	A Comparison On The Factors That Shape Linguistic Variation In Chat Room Discourse Of UiTM Sarawak Students
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BAHAGIAN C : HASIL PENYELIDIKAN	
Penerbitan Berindeks (Tajuk dan Penerbit)	Belum ada
Harta Intelekt (No Patent/No IP)	Tiada
Pelajar yang di latih (Nama, KP, Kod Program)	Tiada
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5. Report

5.1 Proposed Executive Summary

The rapid development in computer technology and the Internet has increased the popularity of Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) in chat rooms for interaction in all domains. The study on various types of CMC discourse is not new but the characteristics of and the variation within CMC are in flux. Many studies done on CMC have revealed contradictory findings. Besides, many researchers are unable to conclude that CMC should be labelled as speaking, writing, a combination of both, or neither. The need for research in this area, therefore, is ongoing.

While the number of users of chat rooms is increasing, little is known about the reasons behind the wide variation in chat styles that chat users exhibit. This study aims to shed some light on the variations, first, the linguistic features and variation in chat room discourse of UiTM Sarawak students, and second to examine the contextual and individual factors influencing these linguistic features and variations found in the chat messages of the students.

This study will analyse the chat room discourse of 22 UiTM Sarawak students. The data will be collected using three instruments - survey, online chat room, and interview. The survey will be used to gather background data on the participants. The transcripts of the chat room discussions will be analysed to find out what kind of linguistic styles and forms each individual uses in his or her discourse. T-Unit analysis and frequency analysis will be used to analyse all the participants' CMC transcripts. The face-to-face interview serves to garner information related to the individual and contextual factors affecting the language style and variation. The data gathered through the interviews will be analysed using the constant comparison method to identify the emerging contextual factors.

5.2 Enhanced Executive Summary

The objectives of this study are to identify the linguistic features and variations of the chat room discourse and, factors that influence these features and variations. The participants are 24 UiTMS students of both genders from different disciplines. The data are collected through survey, online chat room discussions and interviews. This study reveals that although individual and contextual variables seem to be so closely intertwined that it is difficult to justify the variations in the Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication (SCMC) of the participants; there are a few variables that are more distinct than others.

Perceptions of the participants on online discussion discourse seemed to influence their choice of language and style. In this study, participants displayed linguistic features of both spoken and written texts that were ‘non-standard, playful, highly deviant from the rule of language, tolerant of typographic and spelling errors, and full of new words’ (Crystal,2001). Not many attempts were made to correct the grammar, spellings and punctuation used. The excessive use of emoticons and “addressivity” indicate that many viewed the online discussions as spoken discourse conducted in an informal setting. Code- switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia was often used to facilitate the understanding of ideas and messages during the online chat room discussions. One explanation for this is many participants have low level of English proficiency.

This study also shows that gender does not influence the participants’ contribution in text-based SCMC which is in tandem with Savas’ (2010) study but contradicts the findings of Baron (2004) that gender is the key variable in influencing participation, turn-taking and turn-length in Instant Messaging (IM).