

THE LINGUISTIC FEATURE DIFFERENCES OF GENDER ROLES AMONG UiTM STUDENTS IN WEBLOG: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Weblogs is one of the developments in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) whereby they are easy to use, free to the public, and can encourage self-expression as well as self-presentation among the users. Due to the features mentioned, this text-based social communication mode has attained widespread popularity among both female and male students in universities. Thus, this study examined the gender roles on patterns of online interaction and organization in weblogs among UiTM students. Twelve students (six male and six female students) from the Faculty of Computer Science UiTM Alor Gajah Melaka, participated in the study. The aim of this study is to investigate how linguistic features in terms of punctuation marks and capital letters, code switching and blogging jargons were used to express ideas, feelings and experiences and thoughts when posting on weblogs. A qualitative research design was adopted in the data collection. Direct-observation was used as the instrumentation in this study and percentile method was applied to measure differences and similarities of gender roles from the data gained in the weblogs created. The comments and posted articles were analysed based on the linguistic features identified in this study. The findings suggest that firstly weblogs contained gender similarities and differences when looking at the linguistic features. This could be seen in the use of punctuation marks and capital letters that show that the male bloggers were more conscious than the female bloggers. Secondly, there were no obvious gender differences in the created weblog in this study. This was especially true in the features like code-switching and jargons. Finally, the similarities shown in this study has proven that weblogs were easy to use by both the male and female bloggers. It can be concluded that the significance of this study is to view the ways the weblog community is expected to interact (norms) based on gender roles in weblogs.

Keywords : Blogs, English, Linguistic Feature, On-line Learning

INTRODUCTION

This research looks into gender roles on the use of linguistics features in weblogs among UiTM students. With these features, genders' roles can be analysed and viewed in detailed as the emphasise is on the concepts of sex role identification. This study could prove important in the development of gender differences. The linguistics features consist of simple use of punctuation marks, capital letters, code-switching and jargon. A group of Malay students is used in this research paper. They are Diploma students and majoring in Computer Science. They come from a similar background thus their language and behavioural would be relevant to look into the gender differences in the linguistics area. This paper considers the use of single case

study as the investigation includes only a homogeneous group of student. Direct observation is also adopted to look at their posts and comments and classification is done accordingly.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Weblogs is deemed popular because bloggers know that the information changes every day. Something new in terms of personal view would be posted on subjects of topical interest or themes. In this case, collective comments are posted among the students in the created weblog. It is a collection of their experiences and memories in the campus, besides sharing ideas and discussion of opinions. The traditional way of keeping a diary has long been replaced by individual blogs as they are accessible to the use of computer and Internet easily. Pictures can be posted and individual preference to design the weblog are also part of the reasons why students would participate actively. They would create simple to complex visual designs and layouts. These blogs have also encouraged not only visual expression such as icons, names, template selection and et cetera but also textual expression in terms of words used and the mechanics of language. It was really an insightful tour browsing through this weblog as we could see how different both female and male bloggers are in the context of Computer-mediated Communication (CMC).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At UiTM, when students were asked if they have read the newspaper or listen to any broadcast news, the answer is usually a "NO". but when asked, if they have emailed or surf the Internet the answer will always be a "YES" and they have lots of time doing that. To them the difference between work and fun can be seen clearly and when it comes to any forms of electronic discourse, they will always be motivated and the initiatives to continue reading, writing and learning out from the classroom is already viciously used, most importantly they want to use. CMC gives them complete ownership of their text and they are more willing to participate in reading, writing and learning than in classroom. However, with the existence of these CMC and it seems, a new CMC enters the scene rapidly, how has gender roles giving rise to new social practices and if so, can linguistic features of a homogeneous group define the different gender roles? Extensive research has been conducted on strategies used for blogs as an educational tool and how blogs are able to help students improve on their language skills. While these studies have described and developed the construct of weblogs efficacy among students, there is little empirical research on the efficacy of gender roles in linguistic features used in weblogs (Huffaker, D.A., and Calvert, S.L., 2005). Exploring efficacy in gender roles in linguistic features might reveal strong patterns of language differences between males and females, as well as more intricacies into weblog community in understanding the norms used for males and females in portraying their identity online. Crystal (2001:18) defines Netspeak as "a type of language displaying features that are unique to the internet...arising out of its character as a medium which is electroic, global, and interactive".

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As we know, the areas to look at gender in blogs are too broad, so this paper will narrow down the analysis to language features of the male and female bloggers. The reasons this project paper focuses on the language features is to identify language differences due to gender

differences and to compare the gender differences in describing and analysing patterns of online social interaction and organisation among the youth bloggers in an educational setting.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question in this study is focusing on the differences and similarities of the gender roles in weblogs for UiTM students. The research question is how language is used by youth bloggers in UiTM to express ideas, feelings and experiences or thoughts when posting to weblogs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT IS WEBLOG?

Users are able to control the information age through the impact of the phenomenon known as blogging. Short for weblogs, blogs are both a technology and also a genre. They are a technology in the sense that the format, layout, linking, and other conventions are standardized and requires little to no technical expertise on the part of users. They are a genre because they invoke certain forms of discourse and shape the outcome of the text. Blogs offer standard features for how to enter text, how to insert links, how to insert links, how to track back to other blogs, and so forth. These conventions make the blog quite simple to use, and they also invite a sense of self and of self in relation to others that has always been present on the Internet but is quite visible, very standardised, global, and relatively well mainstreamed when compared to the Internet in 1993 (Laura J. Gurak & Smiljana Antonijevic, 2008,60-68). However, blogs while still used widely, were the precursors to today's popular social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace and Flickr.

Blogging, therefore, offers a rich environment from which to look at gender analysis using the features as a lens and there are many predictions and findings of blog research that have held true.

BACKGROUND OF WEBLOG

Over the last 20 years, cyberspace has spawned a range of text-based, digital genres from chat rooms, to multi user domains, to peer-to-peer file sharing networks in which Internet users can write, communicate and interact with each other (Gurak et al., 2004:1). The newest online genre to enter popular consciousness, being touted as the 'next evolution of web-based experience' (Kahn and Kellner, 2004:91) are blogs.

Blogs have become very popular and they are attracting a huge followings on the World WideWeb. According to a survey conducted by Technorati (2006), there are more than 70 million blogs worldwide and about 120 000 new blogs each day (Sifry, 2007).

A weblog is defined as a web contained numerous entries in reverse chronological order (Thelwell and Hasler, 2007). Most weblogs can be easily set up and well maintained besides able to access via hyperlinks. Blood (2004) indicated that weblogs are different in both content

and form from other types of webpages. Most blogs are primarily textual in spite of focus of some blogs on images(photoblog ad sketchblog), videos(Vlog) or audio(podcasting).

There are various use of blogs such as for publishing information, transferring knowledge and building relationships with other bloggers (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005). Besides that, blogs are also suitable for individuals who wish to share their experiences or information, stories and even personal messages with small outside groups (Wagner and Bolloju,2005). A survey conducted by Edelman and Technorati, (2006) has found that 34% of blog owners use their blogs to establish themselves as an authority figure in their field whereas 32% of them use their blogs to create a record of their thoughts and 20% of blog owners use their blogs to connect with others.

BLOGGING TOOLS

The rapid growth in the popularity of blogs has been driven by the twin motors of free, user-friendly blogging applications such as Blogger and LiveJournal and the global media exposure of 'A-list' bloggers like Salam Pax (aka the 'Baghdad Blogger') and Wil Wheaton (Blood, 2002; Gurak et al., 2004; Mortensen and Walker, 2002; Serfarty, 2004: 458). Current estimates of the number of blogs online are varied: conservative estimates are in the range of 2.8 million (National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education, 2006) while more liberal ones suggest the existence of 31.6 (Henning, 2006) to 100 million blogs (Riley, 2005).

With regard to creating a website, using blogging technology is far easier for novice web user and keeps the exercise simple and focused on the mission that is to provide information, ideas and opinions. Weblog-building technologies (or blogging tools) bring new capabilities, such as web publication and communication, to average people, especially those nontechnical users. They are designed to facilitate simple and fast creation of web content without much technical or programming skill. The blog is stored on the software provider's server and the interface is simple to use. They give you everything you need to create your blog. Most are free but there are paid blogging sites as well which suits better for the savvy users as they are more customizable. Blogs are created according to the bloggers' needs.

Recent releases of blogging tools have been further improved to provide enhanced features for between-blog interactivity; thus promoting the creation of social networks among bloggers. As an innovative social computing technology that enables web based word-of month (through blogging activities), weblog was recently identified as among the top "10 tech trends to watch in 2005" by Fortune magazine (Vogelstein et al., 2005, p. 43).

In order for weblogs to be considered an important area of research for bloggers and technology, and more specifically, as a new venue for understanding the gender analysis of language used as norms in the community, it is important to look at blogs and computer-mediated communication as well as blogs and linguistic features.

LANGUAGE ON THE INTERNET

The Internet has undoubtedly appeared almost from nowhere to take a rather important role in our lives and had changed tremendously on the way people communicate with one another. An increasing number of people throughout the world heavily rely on the World Wide Web as the primary source of information on various enquiries.

According to Crystal (2001: 24), the fact that the Internet is an electronic, global, and interactive medium is crucial for the kind of language used on the Internet. The term *Netspeak* serves as an alternative to terms such as *Netlish*, *Weblish*, *Internet language*, *cyberspeak*, *electronic language*, *computer-mediated communication*, etc. Both *Netlish* and *Weblish* can be said to have been simply derived from English, 'electronic discourse' highlights the interactive nature of Internet dialogues, while 'computer-mediated communication' focuses on the medium itself.

One of the distinctive features in the Internet is the language used within its community, a representation of creative and innovative adaptation by users (Crystal, 2001).

Language change can never be predicted, but only recognised once it has happened. Crystal (2001: 22) concludes that a certain notion of *Netspeak* has begun to evolve which is rapidly becoming a part of popular linguistic consciousness, and evoking strong language attitudes. Hence the importance of determining its main linguistic properties and aspects.

According to Hudson (2000: 411), one of the causes of language change is expression of new meanings. With the changes in societies, there is always a need to express new meanings in languages. Hudson argues that it is the characteristic of openness that enables languages readily to create new words to express new things, events, and ideas that come along. As far as new meaning is concerned, Hudson (2000: 241) argues that there is no evidence that languages place any limits on imagination, or therefore on new possibilities of meaning. Because of the principle of limited novelty, new meanings with new forms are relatively rare. However, one of the ways to get such words, particularly in an Internet situation, is invention.

GENDER AND ONLINE LANGUAGE

Issues regarding gender and language in computer-mediated communication (CMC) have been an important interest for research (Herring, 2000; Rodino, 1997; Savicki, 1996). These issues not only surround the dynamics of social interaction (Herring, 1993, 2001) but also emotional expression (Witmer & Katzman, 1997; Wolf, 2000) and the norms in the online community (Kirk, 1992 & Hawkins, 1985).

The linguistic features that signal gender in computer-mediated interaction are much the same as those that have been previously described for face-to-face (FTF) interaction, and include verbosity, assertiveness, use of profanity, politeness (and rudeness), typed representations of smiling and laughter, and degree of interactive engagement (cf. Coates 1993). There are, however, differences in the mediums of CMC, which may produce some natural linguistic devices or social interactions.

Studies on gender and CMC look at differences in interactional styles. Such research supports dichotomies used to describe gender and linguistic features in FTF contexts. Complementing Tannen's (1990/1991) claim that women tend to use conversation as "rapport" rather than "report" talk is Kaplan and Farrell's (1994) finding that for girls, "the sociability of this online exchange seems its sole reason for being" (p. 12). Further supporting the existence of women's report and men's rapport CMC styles is evidence that women tend to display textual patterns of social interdependence more than men do in both real-name and pseudonymous conferences (Jaffe et al., 1995). Jaffe et al., however, report that in pseudonymous discussion men exhibited greater social interdependence than they had in real-name sessions. Also in agreement with Tannen's conclusions are Herring's (1993) findings that women contributed

most to "personal" discussions, and men contributed most to talk about "issues" on an electronic academic bulletin board. In addition, women's speech is described as "personal" and men's as "authoritative."

Previous studies have produced mixed findings related to computer-mediated communications and gender. On the one hand, the use of computer-related devices are typically associated more with males than females. For instance, historically the computer has been coupled more with males in the work environment than females. In fact, male dominance of computers was said to hover as high as 98 percent of the population of computer users in the 1980s (Kirk, 1992). This, accompanied by the normative belief that males are more competent in dealing with computers (Hawkins, 1985) are cited as reasons for the prevailing male domination of computer-related activities.

On the other hand, other researchers have reached different conclusions for computer-mediated mediums, stating that these types of environments may allow females to escape from well established, male-oriented gender norms and thus may be preferred more by females than by males. For example, Hiltz and Johnson (1990) found in their study that females viewed computer-mediated communication more favorably than males because, as they suggest, females may "appreciate the opportunity to have their say" when normally this may be more difficult to do (p. 760). Furthermore, Allen (1995), in a study examining business professionals found that females perceived e-mail to be easier to use, as well as being more efficient and more effective than males because, according to her, it can promote relational communication, which is typically favored more by females than by males.

In either case, studying CMC can provide a variety of insights into the ways males and females present themselves and interact with others in online settings. For purposes of this study, differences in language represent an important aspect in which bloggers form their identity in the norms of the community. If gender differences are indicated, they are not meant to oversimplify issues of gender in society, but to provide insight and understanding into the ways bloggers portray themselves online.

GENDER AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

The rise of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), or text-based communication via computer has given a tremendous rise to a sphere of communication in which users cannot base their knowledge of each other on physical cues. For the first time, gender could be a non-factor in the flow of discourse between human beings.

Some have speculated that with gender factored out, CMC users are less constrained by "real life" gender-based stereotypes and social expectations, and this leads to a reduction in gender-based differences regarding both power-related, relational, and socioemotional discourse. (Jaffe)

But, despite the fact that there is the absence of physical indicators, some gender cues seem to remain in text-only CMC. Gender issues do exist online, and their analysis remains important. For instance, when given opportunity, females may be more apt to mask their gender within CMC context (Jaffe, Lee, Huang & Oshagan, 1995). One reason may be a fear of being stalked by males or sexual harrasment (Gilbert, 1995) and another reason maybe intimidation or attempts at dominance by male participants (Herring, 1993).

Mirroring gender differences in language use and interaction style observed in online communication (see Mulac, 1998 for a review), researchers have found that men and women exhibit different stylistic features and communication behaviours in CMC.

For example, men's postings to newsgroups showed self-promotion, sarcasm, insults and strong assertions, whereas women's messages revealed supportiveness and personal orientation (Herring, 1993); female-only discussion groups displayed more self-disclosure, statements of personal opinion and coalition language than did male-only or mixed-gender groups (Savicki, Kelley, & Oesterreich, 1998); women relied more on graphic accents (e.g., smiley faces) than men (Witmer & Katzman, 1997) but men were more likely than women to use contracted forms (Baron, 2004).

BLOGS AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

Blogs combine features of other modes of computer-mediated communication, most notably the personal home page and the asynchronous interactions of newsgroups and discussion boards, into a new hybrid form: Compared to the personal homepage, blogs are more dynamic because content is updated more often, and other users can add comments (Herring, Scheidt, et al., 2005).

They encourage interpersonal communication but, unlike other formats of synchronous communication (like Instant Messaging or chat), they do not necessarily entail instantaneous replies. They also give the author more control over the content and communicative setting, thus acting as a "protected space" (Gumbrecht, 2004) for communication and self-presentation.

In their study of blogs, Lenhart and Fox (2006) found that creative expression and the documentation of personal experiences are the predominant motivations for keeping a blog (similar findings are reported by Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004), but that about half of the bloggers also give reasons such as influencing other people or meeting new people. The creation and how to maintain blogs will differ for various recipient/user groups (e.g., based on age, gender, formal education, socio-cultural milieu) that might apply the same format for different reasons.

The importance of blogs within the Internet community is evident. Therefore, they remain an important area of study, especially when looking at the types of expression and presentations blog authors tend toward. If the blog community continues to grow, understanding the role of blogs by gender would augment current literature in computer-mediated communication.

BLOGS AND LINGUISTIC FEATURES

Linguists and other social scientists acknowledged the differences in the style of discourse between men and women in computer-mediated communications. Herring (2000) analyzed the language and gender issues in Chat, multi-user dimensions (MUDs), Multi-user object oriented (MOOs), listservers, and newsgroups. She found that gender socialization from face-to-face interactions is carried over into both synchronous and asynchronous environments. Graddy (2004) reported: Male conversational style [tended] to be adversarial, self-promoting, contentious, and assertive. Males were less concerned about discussion posting rules than females, and males worried more about threats to individual expressions. Males were likely to

post longer and more frequent messages than their female counterparts. Female computer-mediated conversations tended to be qualifying, apologetic, supportive, and polite. (p. 3)

Selfe and Meyer (1991) undertook similar studies and concluded that, even in a state of complete anonymity, men who occupy high status off-line dominated the interactions of an academic listserv.

Rossetti (1998) attributed the differences in online discussions between men and women that in the formative stages of social development, children tend to associate with their own gender. This socialization process results in the peculiar ways males and females negotiate status within the gender groups.

Cameron (1998), however, pointed out that the various styles of speech were the result of children's activities. Boys learn direct, confrontational speech because they tend to play in groups organized around hierarchy structure. Girls learn to play in small groups based around friendship and intimacy. In general, women exhibit a collaborative-oriented style of discourse, while men are competition-oriented (Rossetti, 1998; Baron, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is to examine the differences and similarities of gender roles in weblogs. It is a case study on a created blog and maintained by a small group of bloggers was conducted. Qualitative case study is adopted to explain both the process and outcome of the real-life phenomenon through a detailed observation because this is a unique way to observe natural phenomenon which exists in a set of data (Yin, 1984). Data were collected by coding the bloggers' blog entries as well as comments. The coding was based on looking for differences and similarities between genders roles in the blog.

Subjects and Sampling

The subjects are from a homogeneous group of 3rd semester Diploma in Science Computer students. They are all Malays and English Language is their second language. This group comprises 15 students, 6 male students and 9 female students. Thus, for this study, 6 female students were selected randomly to equalize the number of male students as subjects in this study. They are all between 19 to 20 years old.

Instrumentation

The reason why this study is using case study method is due to the fact that this homogeneous group of bloggers consists of 15 Computer Science students that have similar background and education level. The duration of 14 weeks is used in order for events observations, data collection and also data analysis based on the results gained. Observational method is much more than simply watching the bloggers or the events that happened in the weblog. It has to be carefully planned and properly executed to derive its full benefits. The collected data through observation were recorded to ascertain the differences and similarities of

linguistics features used by the bloggers. Classification technique is employed in this study to draw out differences and similarities of gender roles in linguistics features of this blog. The linguistics features are classified into three different sections which are punctuation marks and capital letter, code-switching and blogging jargon.

Procedures

The methodology used for this study included:

- Investigation of the literature on Computer-Mediated-Communication and emphasizing on the newest Internet Application; "The Blog".
- Study of the use of actual blogs.
- Creation of a blog hosting site for bloggers which comprises a group of homogeneous students, Malays, and then analyse based on their blogging experience.
- The site that was created for this study is www.dcs3a.blogspot.com
- Analysing the content on two features which is linguistic using direct-observation and classification methods. (content-analysis)
- Monitoring the articles posted in the blogs and comments by each bloggers. Besides that, any hyperlinks in the blog are also taken into consideration as part of the study.

Data Collection

The students were given instructions to create a blog for the class and no guidelines were provided as the researchers would like to see their creativity and how much they are willing to reveal in the blog. There are no rules and regulations; neither was any netiquette imposed. The blog is also used as a communication facility and one direct way of doing this is to utilize the Comments and Discussion link usually placed at the bottom of each posting. Students were to post their own article, link, concepts, idea and other students who belong to the same class were invited to make specific comments on this. This blog functions as an asynchronous communication device which is similar to a bulletin board or threaded discussion, but moderated by the student on whose topic the conversation is initiated and managed. The student facilitates the topic and the responds. Thus, through this communication process, knowledge is being extended and published. A visitor who is another student can easily read the whole discourse. The students were asked to continue with the process of blogging for one whole semester which is for 14 weeks to be specific and the interesting point of this communication is the way it is presented. Students are less formal in tone. They are less pressured as in class lectures and they are basically chatting to each other or having a group discussion, each trying very hard to give comments and responding to the comments on the topic of their own choice.

Data Analysis

This study analysed numerous topics posted and comments for the past 14 weeks starting from January till April 2009. The blog had a total of 23 articles posted and 195 comments received. Before analysing the data, the researchers chose 6 female bloggers randomly to equalize the number of male bloggers. The data were then analysed according to classification on the items found and the numbers resulting from the measurements that only

label the bloggers' linguistic features such as punctuation marks and capital letters, code-switching and blogging jargons.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results cover the use of different aspects of linguistics and metalinguistics features for the total population. Specifically, it focuses on the use of punctuation marks and capital letters, code-switching, blogging jargons, lengths of posts and comments, online name choice, avatar selection, and emotive features. Results were derived from using Direct-Observation method and classification by interpreting the findings.

Gender Differences and Similarities of Using Punctuation Marks

Most of the time, bloggers tend to ignore the use of punctuation marks as well as capital letters in their blogs to convey their message but in this case, the study shows the female bloggers use language that has more passive tone, cooperative and accommodating than males.

Female bloggers tend to use exclamation marks and question marks profusely to express their emotions whether they are angry, upset or even excited than the male. Eventhough different emotions were portrayed by female bloggers, the language that they have used shows they are also more passive yet accomodating and cooperative than male bloggers. View the examples given below:

1) ctNuruLAin^o^ said...

➤ *hye dcs3a!!!!!!*

(Written at the initial stage of the blog-to show excitement)

2) zue said.....

➤ *because last semester i do a test at lab..*

and all my frend dat have a blog use dis blog to communicate each other to ask the answer for their question...

so mat u tink???

Is that is a good thing for create a blog???

THINK AGAIN!!!!

(To create a question for readers to think about. Although, she's trying to inform the readers that creating a blog has more advantages than disadvantages, but the language she used indicates passiveness towards the end by putting in too many question marks and exclamation marks, which creates confusion to the readers)

Gender Differences and Similarities of Using Capital Letters

The use of capital letters in this study shows that female bloggers also use capital letters to show frustration, to vent their anger at certain issues being discussed in the blog as well as to show emphasis on the importance and seriousness about sensitive issues more than male bloggers. An example below;

1) shahira said.....

➤ **RAPE**

(Using capital letters in a topic to show seriousness to discuss the issue)

Whereas for male bloggers, they use more capital letters on proper nouns, beginning of a sentence, and words pertaining to religion. Examples written by the male bloggers in this blog;

- 1) Hafiz said.....
 - **“Hari Raya Aidiladha”**
(Use of capital letters only at the beginning of each word for the proper noun)
- 2) UMAM said.....
 - ***Don't argue with idiots. It only make you sick and usually the discussion never end with best solution.***
(Use of capital letters at the beginning of each sentence. This blogger used capital letters for his online name choice to be more noticeable than the rest of the bloggers. Other than that, he also used language explicitly to express his opinion)

The commonalities for both genders are, when referring to words such as greetings in their mother tongue at the beginning of each sentence, the bloggers used capital letters, followed by a comma appropriately. The example is as such;

- 1) Al-gspch said....
 - ***Assalamualaikum,***
I think blogging can improve our vocabulary.
- 2) Nurul said.....
 - ***Assalamualaikum,***
Firstly i want to says sorie cause to late comment in this blog.

In addition, bloggers are able to identify the use of proverbs, quotations as well as citations that comes with open-inverted comma and closed-inverted comma in the sentence. For instance;

- 1) Syakira said....
 - ***According to Microsoft: “ The total numberof people in the world speaking and studying English is approximately 1.5 billion.”***
- 2) UMAM said.....
 - ***“Who’s seek, will find. So don’t stop untill u find what you want.”***

Gender Differences and Similarities of Code-Switching

Code switching is defined as the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction. This contextualization is practiced in this study in the various forms of bracketing by this group of bloggers as they have diverse identities yet sharing the same exposure of Bahasa Melayu as their mother tongue and acquire English language as their second language in the community.

The study found that, there were no gender differences for code-switching. Below are some examples of code-switching to indicate emphasizing, expressing emotions or opinions, used as a dramatic device in narrative, work as an attention-getting device as well as an emphatic device by using repetition to express the same meaning in both languages sequentially between female and male bloggers.

- 1) Fiezza said.....
 - ***Firstly, sorry coz late for the comments..... (Maaf sebab komen lambat)***
Well, i agree to create this blog coz from this i can ask or even share anything coz we not have a lot time together...(kiter tidak ader banyak masa bersama)
- 2) Sha_era said....

- “love” make me feel that i appreciated and comfortable..aha... as a student, focus on your study like zue said. **“Caya la zue!”**

Male bloggers tend to code-switch often too and one of the example is they want to express the same meaning in both languages sequentially by using repetition as an emphatic device.

3) UMAM said.....

- Without using too many **“short-form words” or non-formal sentences (rojak)** will reduce the mistakes in general writing and it will slightly improve the writing skill.

Furthermore, there are a few examples that shows the male bloggers actually used words that exemplify the processes of shifts in word classes and some of the words can change their meanings. Look at the examples given below;

4) Al-gspch said.....

- *Minds can be open in doing so (be open-minded as in able to accept other opinions)*

5) Hafiz said.....

- *She very like me (she likes me a lot)*

Gender Differences and Similarities of Using Jargons

Jargon can be defined as a language that is complex and hard to understand, usually because it is highly technical or occupational, used in the wrong contexts, or designed to impress or confuse. Jargons were also used among the bloggers in this study and it's actually interesting to find out what were the terms or jargons used by this group of computer science students in the blog community.

Bloggers used jargon in the most confusing ways for readers to understand but it serves a purpose as a useful form of communication between bloggers of the same group. It acts as a 'shorthand' which eliminates the need for lengthy explanations. Eventhough, there were no significant differences found, the types of jargon used in this blog for both male and female bloggers have been classified as technical terms, colloquialisms, abbreviations, foreign words or phrases, acronyms and slang. For instance;

1) Zue said.....

- *I need to understand java dat i i hate it.....*

Joptionpane.showinputdialog(“”)

Null

Swings

Array

Uuuuu....wats dat??? Third language??? Hahahah.... so the conclusion is.../ STRESS WIF MY STUDIES!!!!

(Technical terms used for the subject (JAVA) which the bloggers have to take in the university that is basically compulsory for computer science students. Apparently, students who specialise in computer science are be able to understand all the terms used here and some even find it difficult to understand the terms as shown in the example above)

2) are en prettyz Gurls said.....

- *but to me myspace is too open and there are certain people who use it at the wrong ways..perhaps we are using this cool blog in the right way and hopes we can get advantages for our writing skills.*

(In the preceding example, the colloquial phrases "is too open" and "cool blog" have more than one meaning. As a result, more precise language is more appropriate. Perhaps the blogger should write "open to public, anyone can access or link to it" and "interesting blog")

3) ctNurul Ain said....

- *when i grow up and get a better job, i will take care my parent hospitality.. i dnt want to be directful daughter.*

(In the above-mentioned example, the slang phrases "parent hospitality" and "directful daughter" demonstrate confusing meaning. The blogger meant by saying "parent's well-being" and "daughter who follows parents' biddings")

4) sha_era said....

- *juz (just)*
- *dun hv (dun have)*

(These examples show the abbreviation forms that were commonly used in the blog. It seems that such abbreviations do not have proper rules yet it can be understood by bloggers, thus accepted as norms in the community)

For male bloggers, they have also used jargon to convey their thoughts in the blog. The following examples will explain the types of jargon that they have used.

1) Syukri said....

- *IPTA (Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam)*
- *IPTS (Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Swasta)*
- *IMU (International Medical University)*

2) Sofi said.....

- *PS2 (Play-Station 2)*
- *Pc game (Personal computer game)*

(Acronyms are used most often to abbreviate names of organizations and long or frequently referenced terms)

3) Hafiz said.....

- *X knowing anytg bout blog & blogging & bloggers.*

(Technical terms used in the above-mentioned examples such as "blog & blogging & bloggers" are relatively new in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). It can only be understood by a community who specialises in this field or individuals whom are involved directly in the world of blog).

4) Al-gspch said....

- *I wonder if I will be sent to Tanjung Rambutan (mental institution) if I do talk to myself when people is around-Malay*

5) Hafiz said.....

- *Assalamualaikum..... Arabic-(Peace Be Upon You)*

(Foreign words were used too when interacting with the other bloggers. This shows the context of how Malaysian bloggers will usually insert words which may be in their mother tongue or even third language "assalamualaikum" (Arabic) as mentioned above. Eventhough foreign words were used, bloggers were able to make sense of the word thus be considered as an acceptable norm.

CONCLUSION

Weblogs employed constructions from both spoken and written language. They are used with informal, spoken language constructions and many nonsensical words besides fostering threads of conversation through linking that supports a rich social network. The social networking functions can be seen clearly when following a thread of conversation through comments and trackbacks of a post, which noted the gender differences and similarities in the community. Although weblogs is a form of social communication, the medium is still textually based and as such, maintains the advantages of written communication. Weblogs are a public space to record thoughts, organize notes, and bookmark information for future reference. It can also be considered as a self-reflecting journal entries or a well kept daily diary, recording their experiences, observations, advice, impressions, opinions, analysis, notes and comments across a whole range of subjects such as news, politics, travel, economics, journalism and computer programming just to name a few, and with a touch of technology, it has since then become so much sophisticated and advanced compared to the traditional way. Weblogs are contrived and time lag always exist between the creation of a post, the posting and possible response. The format of the blog encourages immediacy, quick response, and unstructured writing, which unlike the convention published writing, the texts tend to be carefully edited and revised, blog posts resemble the quickly jotted down note, unedited, with intermingling, yet frequent bursts of conversation. The language of blogs is both space bound and time bound, to certain extent. Just as text is bound to the space it is written on, blogs are bound to the medium in which they are written. There is no standard size for a web page and they are user-friendly too. Blogs are also time-bound as there is an accepted range for posting length. Post are present on the front page of a blog for a certain length of time and later they will be removed to their permanent home in the archives. Comments by the other bloggers to a post are also more speech-like situation. It takes time to post comments besides it is in a form of conversation between bloggers eventhough in a written form. Bloggers can edit as often as needed and then to republish their posts just with a click of a button but, a convention of blogging is the lack of editing thus errors were enormous sometimes in their posts.

Bringing gender roles into weblogs can be beneficial for many researchers as instantaneous data can be collected, besides, weblog is in a form of conversation between bloggers even though in a written form. Researchers are able to collect a rich source of data or information whereby participants or subjects are more natural while communicating online without any pretentious behaviour that is always the case when they know that they are being monitored and the data are to be analysed and the validity measured in spoken discourse particularly for sociolinguistic studies.

The main limitation of this study is its inability to control factors that could influence the motivation for bloggers to maintain the blog by posting articles and even to provide comments. This could be that the duration of this study, which is for 14 weeks (one semester) is a bit too long. During that 14 weeks too, public holidays such as Chinese New Year, semester break and even study week were given to students and these caused the bloggers to stop maintaining the blog after a period. Then, bloggers needed to be motivated to continue with the blog. Other than that, words of encouragement are also needed for individual bloggers so that they can continue to post and to give comments to ensure that the study could be completed in the allotted time.

Future studies need to be conducted with an increased sample size using subjects of varying age and ethnicity for creating and presenting themselves online for a more blended learning as well as for language development. This study should also focus more in linguistics to reveal stronger patterns of language differences between the male and female bloggers as well

as more intricacies into the topics the bloggers discuss online. It would also be interesting to find out the reasons bloggers were able to be loud in the virtual world than in the real world. They were practically not shy and able to contribute and be more involved in expressing their opinions and thoughts while having a discussion. The findings could also lead to conduct another study for a classroom blog to help promote the use of English language and a way to help students to build up their confidence in having a conversation and writing using their second language especially for students who are innate and refuse to share ideas in the classroom. This will allow students to continue learning and using English language and to find out if there are improvements in doing so.

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