

## **Register Analysis of Iranian Medical Students' Text Messages**

**Mahmood Maniati**

*Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran*

**Amir Mashhadi**

*Department of English Language and Literature, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran*

**Saeed Khazaie<sup>1</sup>**

*Health Information Technology Research Center, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran*

### **Abstract**

A text messaging service, among other functions of mobile phones, allows mobile phone subscribers to send and receive alphanumeric characters and emoticons. The discourse of the text messages characterizes a kind of interaction, mostly on the boundary between verbal and visual communication. Adopting Halliday's Socio-semiotic Model of Language, this study considered three register variables of field, mode, and tenor in a text message corpus comprising 2440 text messages collected from 122 medical students at *Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences* to investigate how the discourse of text message can be affected by the sociolinguistic dimensions of the context of language use. To that end, text messages were analyzed and categorized in term of the social interaction that constituted the content of the messages. The findings revealed that mobile phone text messaging is an asynchronous mode of communication which is characterized with particular register variables, and there are also pragmatic reasons in addition to the technical restrictions for the creation of this register as its users actively and selectively make use of the resources of spoken and written discourses in constructing the message.

**Keywords:** Corpus, Register analysis, Socio-semiotic Model of Language, Text message

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: saeed.khazaie@mng.mui.ac.ir

## 1. Introduction

Written and spoken discourses are conventionally considered as two fundamental forms of communication (Lu, 2020). However, with the emergence of novel communication technologies such as text messaging, social networking, tweeting, blogging, video conferencing, and other Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) systems the arrays of using the language have radically reconfigured, and the boundary between written and spoken discourses has become categorically blurred (Möller, 2017; Peña Gangadharan, & Niklas, 2019; Stevens, 2019).

Around the world, it can now be apparently observed that the novel communication systems have progressively changed the potentials of verbal interaction and have materially affected how individuals communicate (e.g., Basoglu, Fuller, & Valacich, 2018; Rossi & Neumayer, 2017). Although estimates about the impact of technology on individuals' lives may be dubious, the fact remains that the mobile phone is a much more popular and widespread communication technology than any other communication technologies in many countries worldwide (Geels, 2020). Like many earlier communication technologies, the mobile phone has now so penetrated in individuals' daily lives that it has brought about concerns regarding the nature and types of cultural, social and psychological effects it is likely to have. In view of that language and its context of use is no exception and seems to be affected by such revolutionary changes in the way individuals communicate via recent communication technologies. In effect, with the mobile phone technology becoming ubiquitous in Iran, the rise of questions about how individuals' use of language is changed by different communication functions provided by the technological variables seems rather reasonable.

The mobile phone, like any other social or cultural artifact, is indeed bound in the social context, and the way individuals have come to use

language in text messages is strongly related to their social histories. The text message language has established its own unique characteristic features as have earlier communication technologies like chat rooms, emails, and social networks through the use of their own unique language styles and conventions. The components, characteristic features, and impacts of text messaging are diverse, and cooperation among specialists from different disciplines is needed so to assess its complexity and implications properly (Latif, Hussain, Saeed, Qureshi, & Maqsood, 2019).

Given that only a limited space is available for communication through text messaging, the texter has to squeeze as much meaning as possible into a small message. This has in turn led to the development of a unique form of communication that is arguably almost as much expressive as verbal interaction in the hands of the right person.

Along these lines, the discourse of text messaging seems to be an underresearched line of inquiry that has not yet been thoroughly expounded in terms of different facets of social life. Introducing the college-level students' text messaging as a new register, this study endeavors to investigate this new register in terms of Halliday's *interpretation of language as a socio-semiotic structure*; that is to say, "interpreting language within a sociocultural context, in which the culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms" (Halliday, 1987, p. 2).

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Iranian Youths' Use of Mobile Phones**

During the recent few years the use of mobile phones has won a great popularity among Iranians. There are several reasons for the rapid spread of mobile telephony in Iran, including the marked reduction of fees for the subscription to mobile phone network after the emergence of nongovernmental service providers in Iran (Semati, 2017). In addition to the

decrease of the subscription prices, these new operators provided their subscribers with novel mobile telephony services and affordances such as GPRS and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) which were not already available for the Iranian users.

The next reason may be the great diffusion of the multifarious mobile devices which permit a high-speed transfer of different formats of video and audio files including exciting games serving as more legitimate alternative to personal digital devices such as MP3 players and cameras which serve only one single purpose (Jalilifar & Mashhadi, 2013).

The final reason, and the one this study endeavors to investigate, is the text messaging service of mobile phones. It can arguably be claimed that no other mobile phone affordances has ever attracted so much attention among the teens as the text messaging service (Hayati, Jalilifar, & Mashhadi, 2013). Text messaging as the most popular means of communication at the present time was originally developed as a novelty item rather than as a serious option for mobile phone users, enabling them to transmit text messages. However, it has now become widespread rapidly around the globe for the communication and information dissemination purposes. Text messages have indeed provided adolescents with a novel form of interaction that they have adopted and shaped to their own purposes in different communicative situations (López-Rúa, 2007).

## **2.2 The Youths' Preference for Text Messaging**

Although the mobile phone has a variety of applications and affordances for the youths as a directory, an alarm clock, a portable music player, a game device or even an up-to-date accessory, no other mobile phone applications has ever received so much attention among them as the text messaging service. The question here is why this new medium of communication has become so widespread among the youths or *Digital Natives*, as Prensky

(2001) defines, and what specific socio-psychological impacts it will have on the maintenance of different social networks.

As to the reason why text messaging has become so popular especially among *Digital Natives*, Ling (2005, p. 335) believes that "it is relatively cheap and it is personal, it is a direct message from one person to another". In addition to the factors mentioned by Ling, Hashimoto (2002, p. 107) attributes the young individuals' preference for messaging to psychological phenomenon that he calls self-defense. *Sending messages*, he claims avoids the possibility of circumstances that could give rise to psychological shock such as when the receiver does not answer even when they are expected to be able to answer. Ylva (2002, p. 195) claims that text messaging supports *quiet interaction* making it useful in public situations where there are audiences present and you do not want anyone to be able to listen to the conversation. Moreover, the language used in peer-to-peer text messaging of digital natives serves as a social territory and an indicator of group membership among them. This language, or more technically speaking register, which involves an enormous use of jargons or newly manufactured word items and spellings, underpins group membership within a peer group and also serves to exclude those who are not competent with it. Given that any register involves several sociolinguistic dimensions, this study also attempts to provide an understanding of these dimensions under a Hallidayian framework. However, before dealing with this issue at length, a brief overview is given on the nature of and the studies conducted so far on the linguistic features of text messaging discourse.

### **2.3 The Linguistic Features of Text Messaging and Studies Conducted So Far**

There are many factors contributing to the unique, and sometimes troublesome, nature of the language used in text messaging communication.

First of all is the notorious 160-character-limit of each message that exerts a great pressure on the senders to condense as much meaning as possible into a small message (Shudong & Higgins, 2005). It is noteworthy that such restriction cannot always be considered as a drawback because texting is for the most part an interaction between people who know each other and this allows them to skip the ritual openings and off-topic talks which are mostly present in phone conversations. Likewise, such shortening mechanisms in the language of texting as abbreviation, clipping and initialization together with a few symbols in texting can be capitalized on to compensate for the text input limitation of a text message when texting the longer messages (López-Rúa, 2007).

Another difficulty is the irritating text entry mechanism on a mobile phone's small keyboard which makes texting to be time-consuming and cumbersome. This has already been taken care of by the mobile phone manufacturers with the introduction of predictive typing technologies which suggest the probable word items when you enter the initial letters of a certain word. However, Eldridge and Grinter (2001) found marginal support for predictive typing technologies, as the teenagers' common use of abbreviations and shorthand writing made them indeed barely usable in practice.

The language of text messages have been examined by several researchers from different perspectives including the linguistic features (e.g., Akbari, 2013; Bosco, 2007; Chaka, 2015; Döring, 2002; Eldridge & Grinter, 2001; Hashim, Soopar, & Hamid, 2017; Hussein, Hao, Yan, & Everson, 2013; Ling, 2005; Partey, Addo-Danquah, Bonku, & Sarfo-Adu, 2018; Pérez-Sabater, 2015; Tagg & Asprey, 2017; Thurlow & Poff, 2013; Yusuf, Natsir, & Yusra, 2016).

For instance, Akbari (2013) found that there are several characteristic features to text messages written by Iranian cell phone users including

"punctuation, omissions, consonant writing, graphical means and symbols, contractions, letter repetitions, loanwords, and letter-number homophones" (p. 197). By the same token, investigating linguistic adaptations to text messages in six major categories (viz., lexical, syntactic, punctuation, space, code, and script adaptations in text messages), Hussain (2013) showed that text messages were linguistically adapted to the context of use under certain patterns/ principles. From Hussain's view, "most intentional adaptations in text messages are caused by three major factors that are to be *economical* in the use of time and effort, to be *creative/innovative* in developing new language patterns, and to be *rapid* in communication" (p. ix).

So far, however, not many studies have comprehensively dealt with how text messaging affects our use of language except for few studies (e.g., Eldridge & Grinter, 2001; Grinter & Eldridge, 2001; Ling, 2005) which are mostly (except Ling's study) dedicated to the use of syntactic and lexical reductions and short forms in the discourse of text messaging. These studies, however, have not considered how the sociolinguistic dimensions of the text messaging context modify the use of language; that is, how the interpersonal relations between the participants are maintained, what is happening, namely, the nature of the social action that is going on, and finally what range of functions are there that the participants expect language to serve for them in that immediate situation.

Investigating the types, frequencies, and functions of the shortened language forms in a body of 1,000 authentic text messages from 124 student mobile phone users, Nicola Döring (2002) reported that abbreviations and acronyms fulfilled a collective identity function which required a specific shared knowledge on the part of the participants to be able to comprehend the language and subsequently be able to make use of it in relevant situations. Döring contends that the technical text entry restriction per message both

allows and forces individuals to squeeze as much meaning as they can into a message and has driven the growth of an even more shortened language form than that which occurred in virtual contexts before. She maintains that the language of texting is not often related to standard language, and the mass media thus label texting communication as *the secret code of the youth* or as *the big text messaging action against long sentences* (Döring, 2002). These writing-linguistic standards, as argued by Döring, provide an enriched experience of psychosocial closeness between a text author and a text reader. For instance, one is likely to express oneself concisely without fear of being recognized as short-spoken. Likewise, one has to make oneself brief so as not to exceed the limited number of characters per message, seeing as each message sent costs money. Moreover, one tends to be concise since text input takes time and is often cumbersome. Finally, given that most text message communication is interpersonal communication between individuals who know each other, one can make oneself brief, relying on pragmatic and shared background knowledge.

Another interesting study is the work of Ling (2005) who examines the sociolinguistic aspects of text messages. His analysis showed that only about 6% of the messages he had collected included any form of abbreviations. Moreover, the results of text message analysis revealed that teen-aged and young adult text message users are the main users of language short forms and that there is a quick decline of use with age. In effect, slightly more than 20% of 13-15 year old females employed abbreviations in their text message messages, while only 3.5% of the females in the 35- 44 year old group did the same. Likewise, female text message users also employ emoticons and abbreviations significantly more than males.

Ling (2005) took one step further and included an analysis of the themes in the messages. He found beliefs that when studying the different categories



one can find socio-demographically based dissimilarities. Males, for instance, are slightly more inclined to use short one-word answers in their text messages. As for utilizing text message to make plans, males are more prone to use them for planning activities in the middle future as are older teens and young adults. Females, however, are more inclined to use text message to plan activities for the immediate future. Moreover, females, and to a less significant degree, teens and young adults, were more inclined to send grooming short texts. Accordingly, females were more prone to send emotionally based grooming messages.

As indicated earlier, text message often preserves both written and spoken language characteristics, though speech and writing are usually characterizable in different contexts (Hughes, 1996). Written language is indeed more prescriptive than spoken language, that is, authors have the chance to edit the written word items. As such, text message users make different word choices when writing than when speaking. Biber (1998, p. 112) argues that "all informational discourse has a high lexical variety in contrast to interactive, affective types of discourse". Thus, much of the characteristic features of texting language, a blurring of written and spoken discourse, can be better recognized by examining language variations and uses. Text messaging is indeed unique regarding language selection, more like a written form of speech. Biber (1998) maintains that, in terms of its linguistic characteristics, stereotypical speech is interactive, and dependent on shared space, time, and background knowledge; while stereotypical writing has the opposite features. Text messages, however, are prone to be more similar to the former. Koritti (1999) examined how *reactive tokens* like yeah I know, an acknowledgement that one is following what the other is saying, is prevalent in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) language. This feature of IRC is found to be very common with texting language, showing how it is

more akin to speech in many of its representative features. Resembling normal speech, text messages tend to be structurally simple, fragmented, concrete, and conditional on situation-dependent reference. As such, many parts of spoken speech are likewise eliminated or reduced through the use of abbreviations (Rintel & Pittam, 1997).

#### **2.4 Register Studies**

Malinowski (1923) and Firth (1935) were the first to deal with register analyses, or studies dedicated to the contextual variations of language use. Particularly, they were concerned with how contextual factors affect our use of language. According to Malinowski "a statement, spoken in real life, is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered... the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation" (1923, p. 307). What is also important to him is the role of speech community and the relationship between social life of this community and language functions. The next level of analysis Malinowski and his associates pay attention to is the context of culture, investigating how language is both used and interpreted within a particular culture.

Register analysis studies are conducted in terms of context-of-situation. Firth was the leading scholar to investigate meaning based on the inner workings of language within a particular context. According to Firth, a meaningful interaction involves a number of variables belonging to the context of situation. These variables give rise to a certain type of language which Firth refers to as the *restricted language*, "serving a circumscribed field of experience or action" and having "its own grammar and dictionary" (1957, p. 87). The language of the law, medicine, etc. are examples of the restricted language. A restricted language can also be "a type of work associated with a single author or a type of speech with its appropriate style" (1968, p. 112). Every member of a given speech community is "in command

of a constellation of restricted languages, but these are governed by the general language of the community" (1968, p. 207).

The literature had no reference to the term register until 1956 when Reid used this term referring to how social situations affect human language, and how language can adapt itself with regard to these situations. The scholarly efforts of the researchers interested in this field resulted in different definitions and frameworks suggested by them, and the field of register analysis has witnessed a wide variety of methodological approaches. The most widely used approach is the one developed by Halliday within the tradition of functional systemic linguistics where the context of situation is characterized by three parameters: *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*. Simply put, field is what the text is all about, and it involves experiential meaning. Tenor has to do with the relationship between speaker/writer with listener/reader, and it includes interpersonal meanings. Mode is how the text is organized, so it is based on textual meanings. Each one of these elements characterize the relationship between language form and language function. For example, it is possible to analyze the tenor of a particular verbal interaction in terms of the degree of (in)formality "on a scale of categories which range from formal to informal" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 50).

Register studies have been the subject of the scholarly attention of a great diversity of language studies. These include linguistics (e.g., Halliday & Hassan, 1991), applied linguistics (e.g., Folarin, 1979; Love et al, 2019), sociolinguistics (e.g., Halliday, 1978; Stockwell, 2002), education (Rose, 2018), translation (Yang, 2019) and discourse analysis (e.g., Eggins and Martins, 1997; Ghadessy, 1988). Along with these studies, which have generally applied the Hallidayian framework, this study intends to employ this type of register analysis to the register of text messaging discourse of college-level students.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

Three instruments were employed to gather data, including a questionnaire soliciting students' habits and preferences of communicating by text messages. Most of the items only needed the respondents to select one from a list of short answers consisting of yes, no, daily, once a week, so on (viz., multiple-choice items), while a number of open-ended items asked them to justify their answers. The students were also asked whether they possessed a mobile phone and how often they sent or received text messages. Besides, the question about which languages the informants used in everyday communication and which ones they claimed to use in their text messages was of special interest to this study. Given that one of the main objectives of this study was to examine how collegiate students adapt their written language to text messages, they were sought whether they adopt strategies like abbreviations and emoticons in their text message. They were also required to provide examples of these strategies from their own communication.

The second source of data involved the last 20 messages that the students had recently sent. According to Ling (2005), this approach is merited for several reasons, though it may color the data. There are indeed some ethical and methodological reasons that we asked for the last messages sent versus those received. Ethically, it is not reasonable for the researchers to ask for messages a respondent has received since implicitly one contains data from individuals who have not given their approval to take part in the study. Methodically, one does know the background, demography or other characteristics of the sender for messages a respondent has received. Thus, it is not possible to analyze the materials in any significant way at a sociological level. Another weakness with the materials is that the messages are often extracted from their immediate context in a string of messages sent to another person. This can obviously make interpretation challenging in

some cases and it also excludes the possibility of doing any type of discourse analysis. As said earlier, to do any type of data collection wherein one does not have the permission of the text authors is not ethically defensible. Given these limitations, however, the corpus of messages is a fairly good reflection of text message use among university students in Iran. It provides one with deep insights into the phenomena and the ability to generalize the results to a greater degree than in convenience samples.

In the next stage, the forwarded messages by the students to the researchers' mobile phone were stored in a mini-corpus for later analysis. The students were asked to forward every message they chose or felt comfortable sharing for the research purpose.

The third stage consisted of semi-structured interviews with some of the informants who kept a diary and forwarded messages. The interviews included a few prompts to guide the talk in which the informants could add comments on both the research itself and about their own communication through mobile phones.

The corpus stored in a machine-readable format was then categorized into two groups of messages according to their text font types: messages written in Farsi alphabets, and those written in Latin alphabets.

### **3.2 Corpus**

The text message corpus used for this study comprised 2440 messages collected from 122 medical students at *Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences* between August 2019 and February 2020.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

Adopting a Hallidayan framework to deal with how the sociolinguistic dimensions of the context of text messaging alter our use of language, this study considered three register variables of *field*, *mode*, and *tenor* in the following with the purpose of elucidating specific values for each in the corpus data.

#### 4.1 Field

Verbal interactions do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they happen within and are bound by a particular social situation. In fact, discourse events depend on the components of the communicative situation. *Field* is the job language is doing in a specific context of situation. This involves the event where a piece of discourse is functioning, plus the language user's purposive activity in that event which we can refer to as the subject-matter of discourse. Therefore, the *field* involves the social activity and the subject matter. According to Halliday (1978), "...*what we are talking about* has to be seen as a special case of a more general concept, that of *what we are doing*, or *what is going on*, within which that language is playing a part" (pp. 221-222). In fact, to Halliday, *field* of discourse is what ascribes order to any given communicative situation. Of course, the amount of language use in any social situation is variable. Language plays a supportive role in some social situations facilitating the achievement of a certain goal. On the other hand, in some other social situations, language itself is the goal. For example, in a social situation like a football match, language is used to serve different purposes (e.g., to get the ball, to make teammates aware of counterattacks, etc.). Here, the football match is a first order of *field*, and the language used therein is the second order *field*, namely the subject matter. However, in a TV show discussion of that football match, the social action is the discussion itself which is constructed by the verbal interactions of the participants of that TV show, and the football match is the second order of *field*, namely the subject matter.

Now, concerning the texting language, what is done in the social situation of texting is the texters' hitting their cell phone keys, and the subject matter is what they are texting. However, we should not assume that the language used is second order here, like what language dose within the social event of a

football match. Rather, like a discussion of a football match, the language is a goal in itself, but here the medium used to get the message across is different. Therefore, when texters text each other to plan a visit to museum, this activity of texting is the first order *field*, while getting ready to visit the museum is the second order *field*.

In this regard, text message contents were analyzed and categorized in terms of the second order *field* of the social interaction that is taking place since the first order is identical in all texts, namely the action of texting. Bearing this dimension in mind, the researchers found the following typology of text messages including several major categories that constitute the content of messages. The order in which these categories are introduced does not by any means represent the frequency of messages containing that content, namely, the first category was not found to be the most frequent one. Moreover, in so far as the texting language is highly structured and theme-focused, the addressor and the addressee had to stick to the topic.

### **Major Categories**

#### ***-Human relations***

This concerned the use of salutations, congratulations, invitations, and jokes, etc., in human relations.

Ghadame no reside mobarak (Congratulations on the newborn)

#### ***-Social***

Messages in this category included all texts referring to social events, occasions, and ethno-political news, etc.

Bazam gardo khak bazam tatili

#### ***-Current political issues***

This type included messages depicting students' views on current news in the media.

***-Romance***

Senders of this message type expressed their feelings and emotions to their loved ones.

بین منو اون همه چیز تمام شده، غیر از اینکه که من هنوز دوش دارم...

***-Religious***

Still another category of messages were those expressing congratulations and or condolences over religious occasions.

عید فطر بر فطرت پاکتان مبارک

***-Superstitious***

Messages of this type dealt with inviting others to practice some widely-held superstitions.

اگر دعای حضرت یونس را به ۱۰ نفر ارسال کنی سود کلانی خواهی یافت. اگر این کار را نکنی تا ۳ روز دیگر حتما اتفاق بدی برای تو یا یکی از افراد خانواده تو پیش می آید.

***-Ethical***

These messages contained an ethical lesson for the receiver of the message.

ارزش هر کس، برابر است با ارزش آن چیزی که برایش ارزش قائل است.

***-Sports***

Some messages provided sports news or expressed the senders' views on recent sporting events of high interest to public.

Perspolis va sepahan chan chande?

***-Answers***

Messages of this type provided a reply to a question.

Bashe vasat miarameshoon

***-Questions***

A bulk of messages dealt with simple, short questions put on classmates.

Jozveha ro shohar dadi raft?

***-Requests***

Miay berim naderi? Ghabl az azoon bem ye tak bezan age khasti beri



***-Personal news***

جزوه را خودم نوشته بودم

***-Other***

It is definitely clear that different aspects of social and individual life have been objected to, confirmed or made fun of by means of these messages. In fact the topics of these messages reflect what a person is preoccupied with in the course of their daily life varying from sexual or romantic activities to the worship of God.

حق نداری از کسی بپرسی روزه ای یا نه وقتی یازده ماه ازش نپرسیدی سیری یا گرسنه

**4.2 Mode**

The language used in texting is the combination of the characteristics of written and spoken language, but the frequent use of reduced forms and its deviation from the conventions of standard written language make it more akin to spoken language. Notably, these characteristics are partly the result of the circumstances under which the text message is produced. That is, texters are usually obliged to type their message in a limited space with regard to the number of characters, and these messages are often sent to friends who know one another.

The reductions used in texting language involve both syntactic and lexical structures. According to Döring (2002), as far as syntactic reduction is concerned, subject pronouns are deleted in text messages, elevating the level of informality while at the same time making the message telegraphic. As far as lexical reduction is concerned, usually abbreviations are used to compensate for the limited space of text messages. Some of these abbreviations are already established while others are innovatively created in the discourse of text messaging.

In our study, both types of reductions, along with graphical techniques were used while texting. One common example of syntactic reduction in our

corpus was verbalization of nouns. For example, the noun *zang* means *bell* in Farsi, and when it is used with the verb *zadan* (to hit) together will mean 'to call'. However, in the following example, the word *zang* receives inflections and becomes a verb on its own: *Ba'adan bet mizangam*

Generally, it is claimed that short forms and abbreviations used in texting language are almost always the products of economy function (Döring, 2002). However, contrary to this widely-held belief that the use of such abbreviations is due to the very short space provided for text messaging, the participants of this study mostly did this in order to show their membership to the social group of texters. For instance, one of the female participants of the study comments:

I don't care how many characters it may take in a message. I mainly use these abbreviations because they are cool and because they are the routine ways of writing text messages (In Persian).

Therefore, it is not always for the sake of the limited space or the relationship between the texters that they use the specialized texting language. Rather, according to Sveningsson (2001), this is a way of showing membership to a particular community by which they claim their group identity. Our analysis showed that abbreviations such as *B khial*, *2khtar*, *sa@* and *mer30* fulfill a very particular goal, namely claiming a collective identity which is shaped by a set of shared assumptions making it possible for group members to produce and understand language in a way that the non-members are not competent with it.

#### 4.3 Tenor

The interpersonal relationship between texters and receivers is discussed with regard to tenor. In fact, the lexicogrammatical features of texting is not merely dependent on its channel. Rather, it is largely affected by who is

texting whom and for what reason they are communicating through text messaging. The linguistic characteristics of text messaging are not defined by the medium alone, but mostly by the characteristic features of the communicators, their interpersonal interactions and their reasons for communication. It is generally held that texting communication is primarily an interaction between people who know each other and this allows them to skip the ritual openings and off-topic talks which are mostly present in phone conversations. Notably, the female texters of this study were more inclined to start their messages with greetings and closing them with appropriate structures used for closing a formal conversation. Interestingly enough, in the text messages analyzed in the current study, most of the messages had a specific recipient who usually shared a considerable amount of knowledge with the sender. This makes short text a preferred medium for communication of private messages. Therefore, the particular relationship established between the senders and recipients involves a high degree of personal disclosure in their messages.

## **5. Conclusions**

There is a widely held belief among lay people that the language used in text messages is a sign of corruption given the popularity of technology which is being on the rise day by day. However, when it comes to scientific scrutiny and experimental evidence, the unique characteristics of the texting register are not regarded as corruption but a creative way for communication relying on manipulations with lexemes and graphemes. Results of the present study showed that the way texting language has evolved is not merely due to the limited characters allowed to be used or the mobile phones' limited size keyboards. According to the results of our study, the text messages in our corpus seldom reached the maximum character length, suggesting that the character limit is not really a major barrier in this type of communication. We

believe that there are pragmatic justifications for the ritualized texting language affecting each and every variables of its register. We explained these pragmatic reasons based on Halliday's register framework. Most messages in our corpus were sent between friends or relatives who shared a considerable background knowledge, allowing the texters to minimize the amount of lexicogrammtical structures they used in messages.

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