

**Gender differences in the use of linguistic  
features in SMS text messaging of  
Pakistani university students**



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## **CERTIFICATE**

Thesis entitled “Gender differences in the Use of Linguistic Features in SMS Text Messaging of Pakistani University Students” has been completed under my guidance. I am satisfied with the quality of work produced by hers.

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Supervisor

Date:

## DEDICATION

صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ  
Sayyadi Rasool Allah

The Holy Prophet said, “None amongst you can be a true believer until his love for me is greater than the love he holds for his parents, his children and everyone else”

## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to explore gender differences in the use of linguistic features in SMS text messaging of Pakistani university students. Theoretically, the study is guided by Bodomo and Lee's model of Technology-conditioned Language Change and Use and Herring's approach of Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis. The study is quantitative in nature. One hundred students\_50 males and 50 females were selected through purposive sampling method. They provided a corpus of 300 text messages. Two methods were used for data analysis: content analysis and descriptive statistics. Content analysis was used for classification and coding of data. Data was classified into: the text messages sent by male students and the text messages sent by female students. Linguistic features were categorized into lexical features and typographical features. Lexical features were further categorized into initialism, contraction, clipping and letter and number homophones. Typographical features were further categorized into punctuation, phonetic spellings, emoticons and onomatopoeic words. The researcher assigned the codes to each lexical and typographical feature for the analysis of data. Data analysis uncovers and brings forward various linguistic features used by males and females in their text messages. It also includes description of results and discussions on these linguistic features used in both genders' text messaging. Descriptive statistics interprets data through frequencies and simple percentages. The messages were analyzed for the occurrences of lexical and typographical features and compared for differences across gender. The messages were also analyzed to identify the most frequently occurred lexical feature and typographical feature among other lexical and typographical features, in males' and females' text messages. The findings of this study reveal the existence of gender differences in the use of linguistic features in SMS text messaging of Pakistani university students. Males tend to use more lexical features than females. Males use more initialisms, contractions and clippings whereas females use letter and number homophone more than males do. In terms of typographical features, the males tend to use more phonetic spelling than females while the females tend to use more punctuation, onomatopoeic words and emoticons than males. Among lexical features, contraction is the most frequently used lexical feature in males' text messages and letter and number homophones in females' text messages. Among typographical features, punctuation is the most frequently used typographical feature in both males' and females' text messages. This study contributes to the literature related to the study of language in terms of the use of some of the linguistic features and their variations in text messaging between males and females.

Keywords: Gender differences, SMS Text messaging, Linguistic features

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## List of Abbreviations

|             |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| CMC.....    | Computer-Mediated Communication      |
| CMD.....    | Computer-Mediated Discourse          |
| E-mail..... | Electronic Mail                      |
| F-T-F.....  | Face-To-Face                         |
| GSM.....    | Global System for Mobile             |
| IM.....     | Instant Messaging                    |
| SMS.....    | Short Message Service                |
| CMDA.....   | Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis |
| IRC .....   | Internet Relay Chat                  |

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language and gender is one of the most debated issues over the recent decades. While previous studies on spoken communication have identified numerous gender differences, less gender-based variations have been observed to occur in written structure. Tendencies that have frequently been observed include phenomena at discourse level i.e. rhetorical style or choice of topic (Argamon, Koppel, Fine, & Shimoni, 2003). It is quite unusual to spot gender differences in punctuation, spelling and grammar because mostly writing that has been studied is published literature and normative rules are applied on that. It is presumed that the literature having errors, non-standard grammar and spellings is either rejected by the authors or is corrected before the particular literature is published.