

An Exploratory Study to the Characteristics of Textisms in Text Messaging

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Abstract—Text messaging (SMS) has become a part of daily life of many people. It occurs easy, fast and effective. This study attempts to reveal the characteristics of texting based on textisms used in texting messages. In order to achieve the aim of the research, the method adopted is the descriptive research method, analyzed quantitatively and content analysis technique is used to finalize the data. The participants are seven students of postgraduate studies and they are asked to snap-shot their text messages while chatting with people. The tool to collect the data is a social media called WhatsApp. The finding of this study revealed that textisms are available in the text messaging and the people used only some of textisms such as contractions, emoticon, acronym and initialism; they shortened the words and even sentences to the minimum syllable length by removing vowels. Further, Texting was based on their personal style than non-standard form. Therefore, textism showed that texting is a new methods of communicating, using words innovatively which hold vary semantically and pragmatically. The result showed peoples' vocabulary, phonological awareness and language performance.

Keywords—text messaging; textism; linguistic

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Texting

Texting is usually used for short text messaging. Nowadays people texting each other via different applications used by internet and mobile. Hence, texting growth depends on inventions of new technology software, and hence, it was forecasted that text messaging traffic will continue to increase reaching 9.4 trillion messages by 2016 [1]. Further, nowadays there is MMS, which includes images, videos, music, and texting, is a very fast, short and time keeping, therefore; it is called an informal and instant communication [2].

Texting messages creates a new form of language that is called textism. Textism based on Collins English Dictionary means a word or abbreviation typically used in a text message According to Thurlow, Textism as the new language of texting that involves the usage of shortened words or phrases [3]. These textisms include shortenings, contractions, G clippings, other clippings, acronyms, initialisms, letter/number homophones and misspellings. At the present period, some people include textisms in their texting messages and are rarely investigated.

Therefore, this study investigates the feature of texting message based on these textisms and will explore variant language and frequent of textism and other elements used in the text. By doing so, WhatsApp as a messenger application is used in this research [4]. WhatsApp is free to download for smartphones and computers. It is popular due to the privacy security, MMS, group chatting and voice messages and location sharing. It is used mostly among students to share vital issues regarding their studies with each other in individual and group chatting.

This research will answer to the following research questions: Is there any textism available in the text messaging used by the students? What kind of textisms are used most in the text messaging communication between students? Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate and explore texting in general and textism in particular, and finding out the frequency of textism in texting messaging. This research helps us to know exactly the content of texting, and their variant language used in texts. This study is also beneficial for the people who use text messaging such as teachers, students, workers, teenagers and children even linguists to know the linguistic features of the text messaging. Indeed, Theoretical review will help us to know the pros and cons of texting related to linguistic features of language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Short Message Service (SMS) popularly known as, 'text messaging' or 'texting' is a service which enables its users to send short text messages from one mobile phone to another or to a mobile phone via internet [5]. In other words, it is famous to 'texting' and 'textese' which have been used to describe the language of text messages [5] or it is called finger speech [6]. Besides, nowadays often include images, videos and music which is called MMS 'multimedia message service', the basic text-based messaging service [7].

According to the recent surveys, in 2013, it was estimated 6.8 billion mobile subscriptions worldwide [8]. In 2009, it was 60% of the world's population – about 4.1 billion people – had access to a mobile phone [7]. In United States 72% and in British 52% of teenagers showed the rapid increase in text messaging in last 5 years [9].

Furthermore, based on the findings of Singh in India, people text about 2272 times a month Out of that 31% send

100+ texts each day, 16% sends 51-100 texts each day [10]. Including this, Singh believed that 5 billion text messages are exchanged every day for personal or professional use [10]. Texting is near synchronous and associated with distinctive styles of conversation and writing features such as ‘textisms’ which is language variants such as [11]:

TABLE I. CATEGORIES AND EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TEXTISMS EVIDENT IN TEXT MESSAGES [1]:

-	Example
Shortening	Pics, fres, uni
Lengthening	HeIIII, soooo, loooooove
Contraction	Ur, plz, hv
G-clipping	Goin, doin
Other clipping	Lemme, wanna, outta
Initialism	Cbf, omg, btw
Symbol	@, &, xx
Unconventional spelling	Gurls, tonite, coz
Letter/number homophones	2nite, c, r, b, 4
Acronym	ASAP, FB, BBQ
Humour/emotion	Hahah, mwa, hehe

A. Texting and Linguistic

Based on literature review, texting is an improved instant communication [12]. In addition, McWhorter called it linguistic miracle [6] that has a lot of pros and cons and affects language. For instance, Crystal stated that “telephone and SMS caused similar threats but the curiosity, suspicion, fear, uncertainty, opposition, charm, excitement and enthusiasm all at once that texting has aroused in such a short span of time is surpassed by no linguistic phenomenon” [13]. Moreover, Ling believed that Texting is a fast, cost effective, personal and nonintrusive means of communicating [14] and Baron contends that the use of SMS language manifests creative use of letters, punctuation and numbers and it increases phonetic awareness in children [12]. Further, Thurlow believed that the orthographic or typographic choices made by young people in their messages are sociolinguistically and communicatively intelligible [7]. Moreover, he stated that the use of consonant clusters (e.g. THX), following the rule and Metapragmatic awareness of consonants in English having more semantic value than vowels. Even though many ‘linguistic puritans’ nowadays exaggerate the ‘death’ of punctuation, the use of question marks(?) and full stops(.) is persistently observed despite the extra effort and time it takes [15]. Including this, Plester’s research confirms that young people as well as older texters are inherently aware of main pragmatic factors such as context, relationship and communicative purpose [16]. Consequently, based on Drouin (cited in Kent and Johnson), that the practice of text messaging has birthed a language form with its own vocabulary referred to as textese which includes unique “grammatical, lexical, stylistic and visual features” [1], such linguistic features include:

TABLE II. DESCRIPTION OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES EVIDENT IN TEXT MESSAGE [1]:

Linguistic features	Description of linguistic features
Length	characteristics, words and sentences
Emoticon	Graphic or iconic representations of facial Expressions and emotions
Specific Textism	lexical shortening and lengthening, contraction, clipping, initials, symbols, homophone.
Punctuation	Punctuation marks contributing to meaning Including repurposed punctuation
Capitalization	use of capital letters in personal pronouns, Proper nouns and the first word of a sentence
Misspellings	Misspelled words not classified as textisms

On the other hand, scholars insist that texting has a negative influence on standard writing, spelling and grammar [17]; likely, Broadcasting Company reported that text messaging has long been blamed for declining standards of spelling and grammar, particularly in paper and pencil writing [17]. Further, Crystal asserted that texting has added a new dimension to language use, but its long-term impact is negligible (nothing) [13] and he added that it is not a disaster and it will not harm the standards of language service, thus, students sometimes confuse the lines between formal English and the very informal SMS language and hence, this is thought to be causing them to make a lot of spelling and grammatical errors in their assignments and tests [13].

Titanji, et al., conducted a study entitled Implications of text messaging on students’ language skills: the case of the University of Buea [18]. They carried out a survey on the aim of findings that what the people write in their messages that it identifies the kind of messages that students write and shows how different they are from the formal contracted forms, which is known by writers and linguists. Based on their findings, the result showed that findings are very different from the regular contraction that is known in English language. Further, the findings revealed that students presented what was understood by their readers and friends, which was different from Standard English forms. Hence, the authors believed that the phenomenon of SMS texting is positive rather than negative, which others believed. Therefore, there is many things to achieve with its use than otherwise.

On the other side, to know whether text messaging: is a ‘Linguistic Ruin or Resource’; an article reviewed by Farina and Lyddy [19]. They summarized that non-standard language accounts for a minority of words in text messages and majority of messages consist of conventional forms. According to their findings, text language includes emoticons, typographic, symbols, acronyms and almost all of textisms with frequent occurring appear to be phonetically based forms for instance non-conventional spellings, accent stylizations and onomatopoeic spellings, and less frequent occurring are symbolic-based form such as emoticons, typographic symbols etc. In last, Farina and Lyddy and based on their findings concluded that using textism is to correlate positively with word reading, vocabulary and phonological awareness in children and some aspects of language perform in young adults [19].

III. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the aim of the research, the method adopted is the descriptive research method and analyzed quantitatively and further content analysis technique is used to finalize the data. The participants are students of postgraduate and limited to seven students and the tool to collect the data is a social media called WhatsApp. WhatsApp is used in various aspects such as chatting with someone in individual and group, audio and video calling, sending files and pictures are possible with this social media. Indeed, to collect data, Participants were asked to snap shot their chatting they had with their families and friends.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

According to the findings, the result revealed that there are textisms used in texting messages and majority of the messages in chatting were consisting of “Contraction, Emoticons, lengthening and other clippings” The table below provides further detailed information:

TABLE III. THE RESULT OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

Textism type	Messages	Occurrence % (Total=336 words)
Shortening	Eventho, grad,	3 (0.89%)
Contraction	Jg,bc, dr, Kmrin, Gak, Skrg, tp	223(66.36%)
Lengthening	Iyaaa, whaaat,	6(1.78%)
G-clipping		0
Other clippings	Dunno,	6(1.78%)
Initialism	Lols, btw, otw	5 (1.48%)
Symbols		0
Number/letter homophones	2 (too), hati2	5(1.48%)
Unconventional spelling		0
Acronyms	BF, Pb,	2(0.59%)
Humour/Emotions	Happiness, laughing excited, funny	27 (8.0%)
Total		250 (74.40%)

Based on the findings above; contractions are used the most in chatting. It is used (223) times, which can be (66.36%) of all words used in chatting. The whole contracted forms are daily basic words, for instance: “*aduh, banyak, orang, tapi, Saya, juga, dimana, darimana, yang*, and English words such as what, why, welcome. The second one is Humour/Emotions. It is used (27) times and it is about (8.0%). They are not counted as a word but as emoticons, usually emoticons are used three or four of them together. The finding showed that most of emoticons are showing laughing, happiness, and funny or excited. Lengthening such as ‘Iyaaa’, ‘whaaat’ and other clippings such as ‘Dunno’ are used (6) times and it is (1.78%) of all total words. Initialism and Number/letter homophones are used (5) times which is (1.48%). Amazingly, G-clipping, symbols and unconventional spellings are used (0) times and Acronym and shortenings are used (2) and (3) times, these are the minimum used in chatting. As a result, 250 (74.40%) words out of 336 (100%) words are used Textisms, which means that almost all of the texts are not written in a standard form.

Further, according to the findings above, Initialism and Acronyms used in text messaging are in English language; however, the chatting was in Indonesian language. It means people used to famous words either their own language or others such as English words. There are some reasons, for instance, maybe there is not appropriate acronym in local language or maybe foreign language is easier and understandable and well known among them. Besides, interestingly, there are some sentences which are contracted, it is the means by which the words are shortened to the minimum syllable length, by removing vowels [11]. Sometimes this could be difficult to understand but on the other hand, all people know and accustomed in using such words, which occurs fast and easy. It is in line with Ling, she believed that Texting is a fast, cost-effective, personal and nonintrusive means of communicating [14].

According to the result of this study, basically; people used the personal style and everyone has his/her own way of texting, for instance, someone has used “OMJ” instead of “OMG”. There is a difference in self-pronouncing than standard form and the pronunciation relates to the local language, though it is understandable.

The findings of this study is in line with result of a research conducted by Titanji, et al., [18]. They conducted a survey in order to know what the people write in their messages while texting others which would help to explore the kinds of texting messages they do. According to their findings, the result showed that the findings are very different from the regular contraction which is known in English language. Further, the findings revealed that Students presented what was understood by their readers and friends which was different from Standard English forms. By doing so, the result of the study is matched with which means nowadays texting messages are completely different with a standard form of language. Within this view, textism is a kind of identified form of language which is consisting different aspects as mentioned above such as shortenings, contractions, G clippings, other clippings, acronyms, initialisms, letter/number homophones and misspellings, almost all of them are used in texting messages of students.

In similar vein, Farina and Lyddy studies resulted that text language includes emoticons, typographic, symbols, acronyms and all various forms of textisms with frequent occurring appear to be phonetically based forms [19], for instance their research showed that non-conventional spellings, accent stylizations and onomatopoeic spellings, and less frequent occurring are symbolic-based form such as emoticons, typographic symbols. Similarly, result of the research showed that texting message has a specific characteristic that consists of different textisms. This means that texting message has different language. Textism is used positively that shows phonological awareness and language performance of people.

As a result, Texting is like any other language, has its own distinct rules and structures, for instance, McWhorter believed that “LOL” has subtler meaning these days and acts as a marker of empathy and accommodation [6], hence, he called texting is the miracle of linguistics that these all are pragmatic particles available in every language. Similarly, this conducted

research revealed that texting itself is a different language, the people text what they speak more than slung; do not care about the structure and meanings, and at the same time they enjoy communicating via texting. In last, the researcher agreed that texting is a miracle of linguistic [6].

V. CONCLUSION

According to the findings, the result of this study revealed that textism are available in text messaging and People mostly used contractions, emoticon, acronym and initialism while texting with others, they shortened the words and even sentences to the minimum syllable length, by removing vowels. It was explored that texting is usually a personal style than standard forms. It is quiet easy, fast, effective and time keeping. Linguistically, texting affects language and has pros such as new methods of communicating, using words innovatively which hold vary semantically and pragmatically. In summary, text messaging is consisting of different kinds of textisms that in some cases are positive showing peoples' vocabulary, phonological awareness and language performance. Hence, reflect the use of metalinguistic knowledge.

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