The Effect Of Computer Mediated Communication On The English Language Of Youth

Dr. Ejaz Mirza¹, Dr. Muhammad Abdullah², Dr. Ayyaz Mahmood³

¹,²Assistant Professor Department of English, NUML, Rawalpindi
³Assistant Professor Department of English, NUML, Islamabad.

Abstract: In the present day global world connected through advanced means of science and information technology, social media is playing a major role in the lives of humankind in terms of up-to-date knowledge, readily available entertainment and telecommunication all over the world. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) therefore, is one of the features of social media that is vitally used by the youth today. The research focuses on the linguistic features and the effects of CMC specifically Instagram blogs on the language of youth. The study employs a ‘mixed method approach’. The language of Instagram blogs is analyzed through a corpus tool. The linguistic features usually present in the language of Instagram blogs are noted and described. A survey is conducted amongst the Instagram blog users where 5 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions are used. The closed-ended questions are analyzed using quantitative approach through SPSS whereas, the open-ended questions are analyzed qualitatively. The analysis of the language of CMC depicts the usage of coined words, reduced and shrink terms, acronyms, intensifiers and expressions from spoken discourse. These features therefore, tend to get induced in the writing of the youth who are preferably more active in reading Instagram blogs. Where the vocabulary and expressive skills of youth has comparatively seen a positive change due to the increase in exposure, the features of CMC has also affected their writing patterns negatively.

Keywords: effect, mediated, communication, language, youth

1. Introduction

People all over the world are connected to each other like a global village. Social media has become the main source of communication among the people across the globe. The Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), as defined by Kim (2002) is the communication that is mediated by a computer in any form occurring on an interpersonal or group level excluding mass communication. It is a process in which human interaction takes place through the assistance of one or more networked telecommunication systems. CMC is an empirical domain which appeared in the middle
of 1980s. In the beginning, CMC was used to refer to the exchange of asynchronous text messages between people through the medium of networked computers. The rapid technological development extended in 1990s including other domains within CMC.

Today, the CMC interaction occurs through various networks as email, instant messaging (IM), internet relay chat (IRC), HTML documents, blogs, wikis, UseNet and mailing list servers. CMC serves to save time and money in organizations facilitating the use of all communication formats. Where business organizations use CMC for their convenience, it is widely being used amongst the teenagers and youngsters for entertainment, socialization and communication. The social websites as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype etc. are also using this mode of communication. Nowadays, the term CMC is not only used to denote the processes utilized via computers but also through cellphones.

The vast expansion of the use of CMC provoked researchers from different fields to study the effects CMC has caused in the respected area. The present study intends to find out the linguistic differences in Computer Mediated Language (CML) specifically online Instagram blogs. The study analyzes the language of the blogs focusing on the frequently used words. It denotes special features that blog writing consist of and view the perception of the followers of the bloggers with regards to the differences they have found in their language.

As technology has taken over globally where no task is complete without the interjection of machines and computers, people have become pro in using computing devices. Due to the frequent use and easier yet cheaper means of communication via computers, CMC has become quite common. Where this type of communication is beneficial, faster and cheaper, CMC specifically through online Instagram blogs is suspected to have different linguistic features. The following study therefore, intends to look deeper into the language of online blogs and the way they are affecting the followers of those blogs. The research is delimited to inspecting Pakistani blogs and Pakistani blog followers living in Islamabad.

1.1 Research Questions
• What linguistic features are present in the online Instagram blogs?
• How is blog writing affecting the language of the followers?

1.2 Significance of the Study
CMC has become an integral part of our lives. The intervention of CML in our daily lives cannot be negated. It is suspected to have distinctive linguistic features which in turn are marking changes in the language of the followers. The study is planned to demonstrate the linguistic features online Instagram blogs possess and the affect they are causing on the language of the blog followers.

2. Literature Review
Being part of the world of science, information technology and innovations, the generation of today is highly equipped with advance technological devices. CMC is one of the characteristics of
computer based communication devices that in turn cause different changes in the language of youth. A comparative study of CMC and face-to-face interaction was done by Lee, Young (2009). The study investigated the different effects of CMC interaction considering both, text-chat and voice-chat in comparison to face-to-face interaction among ESL university students. The motives of the study were to examine whether being engaged in negotiated interaction while encountering new lexical terms through CMC help acquire new lexical terms or not. The other motive was to find whether ESL students consider CMC as effective and useful or not. A total of 12 students with 6 males and 6 females were selected from the university. The research design consisted of a pre-test, a treatment activity, an immediate post-test and a one-week delayed post-test. The results of the study concluded that all students negotiated successfully while interacting new lexical terms. The results also indicated that the students learned new terms only when they had a certain background knowledge of it, and that the students took learning through CMC as a positive addition to vocabulary or knowledge enhancing activity. As the study focused on learning new terms through CMC, the current study has focused on the linguistic characteristics of CMC along with its impact on the language of youth.

CMC promotes equality among the participants or negotiators as discussed by Beauvois (1992 &1998), Bohlke (2003), Chun (1994), Kelm (1992), Kern (1995), Sullivan & Pratt (1996) Tella (1992) and Warschauer (1996). Students who are silent in face-to-face discussion contribute in online discussion positively. There are many reasons for this, perhaps the most obvious is that in online discussion, all participants are able to contribute spontaneously, therefore, there is no need to wait for one’s turn and students have the opportunity to contribute far more in online discussion than in face-to-face discussion. Those students who participate least in face-to-face communication participate quite actively in electronic discussion. Face-to-face discussion is less assertive for comparatively less proficient learners. They avail the fewest opportunities because they are usually shy with lack of confidence. In other cases comparatively less capable, nervous or self-conscious students, women, and minority groups may be at a disadvantage in face-to-face discussion as well when they cannot react or respond immediately. However, CMC is known as the faceless environment. Participants are invisible in CMC. There are no faces, no facial expressions, and CMC is also free of meta-linguistic or para-linguistic features like body language, tone, pitch, etc. This faceless environment also results into face-saving, relieving learners of their inhibitions and enabling them to express themselves comparatively more freely. These studies focussed on the productivity and interaction of students via CMC when compared to the face-to-face interaction. The current study has targeted the linguistic features possessed by the CMC and its effect on the language of followers.

Tagliamonte (2016) refers to the findings of a two-year old study of North-American youth which produced a corpus of 179,000 words. They were collected from internet language of the same writers across three modes of communication: email, instant messaging and phone texting. Analysis of acronyms, intensifiers and future temporal references was carried out. Through quantitative analysis, it was shown that the language of internet consists of such linguistic features
up to greater extent. Words were being condensed and acronyms used quite commonly in CMC. However, coined terms were also one of the characteristics of the internet language. This study talked about the CMC through emails, text messaging and instant messaging. The study in hand focused on online Instagram blogs in this regard.

In may be concluded in view of the above mentioned discussion that CMC is being explored in its different domains in different parts of the world. The use of electronic communication devices have increased manifold in third world or developing countries. It is therefore deemed imperative that relevant studies may also be conducted in these areas to determine the effect of CMC on internet users through multiple devices and applications available in the market. Where a lot of studies are being carried out denoting the effect of CMC on the language of the learners, a few studies are carried out exploring the linguistic features of internet language. This study particularly, intends to study CMC from the perspective of online Instagram blogs and the effect they have on the language of youth.

3. Research Methodology

Methodology plays vital role for smooth conduct and fruitful results of a research. In the present study mixed method has been employed in order to fulfill the requirement of the research questions. The language of Instagram blogs is analyzed through a corpus-based approach. The linguistic features majorly present in the language of Instagram blogs are noted and described. A survey is carried out amongst the Instagram blog users where 5 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions are used. The closed-ended questions are analyzed using quantitative approach through SPSS whereas, the open-ended questions are analyzed using qualitative approach where the data is described and transcribed using descriptive-analysis method.

The instrument for the analysis of first research question is the Corpus that is made by taking up the Instagram blogs of 5 famous Pakistani Instagram users. The Corpus comprises 18,455 words taken from the blogs from 15th October, 2018 to 15th November, 2018.

In order to find the answer of the second question, a survey has been conducted which comprises 5 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions/items that have been described and analyzed accordingly. In the questionnaire, the items find out what differences have been found by respondents in their language with regards to their spellings, grammar, vocabulary and writing expressions. They are then asked to state any other changes they have found due to their interest in reading Instagram blogs. The closed-ended questions are then analyzed using SPSS while the open-ended questions are transcribed and interpreted using content analysis technique.

For answering the first research question, the population of the study comprises online Instagram Pakistani blogs whereas, for the second research questions, the population of the study includes Pakistani Instagram blog followers from Islamabad.

In the guidance of the first research question, a corpus of 18,455 words is taken as a sample which is run through Laurence Anthony’s AntConc3 for the analysis of the linguistic features present in
Among various types of sampling techniques, snowball-sampling is used in order to fulfill the data requirement of second question. In this regard, a google questionnaire is developed and forwarded through friends and friends of friends to reach a wider range of respondents in Islamabad, the capital territory of Pakistan. Subsequently, a sample of 480 respondents is collected through the process.

The research uses table to analyze the linguistic features present in the language of online Instagram blogs. Bar diagrams are generated to depict the results of closed-ended questions whereas, content analysis technique is used in order to analyze the open-ended questions of the survey depicting the effects CMC has brought to the language of the youth.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Linguistic Features in the Language of Instagram Blogs

It is presumed that CMC is somewhat different from the formal and conventional form of writing. The features that are different, in correspondence to the formal writing, are stated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency x/18,455</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ill</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Its</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Isn’t</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gotta</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wat</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dm</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Im</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Smth</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Goto</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lol</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Af</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Don’t</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Thankies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Duas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Insta</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fam</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As stated in the table, sign ‘&’ is used 107 times in the corpus instead of ‘and’. Expressions as sigh, huh, hehe, umm and ouch are used that are merely the characteristics of spoken discourse. The use of capitals to emphasize is also a characteristic majorly seen in blogs. Lexical terms are used twice or thrice to show the intensity as in ‘very very very’ or either the middle or end alphabet is doubled or tripled as in ‘tooooo’ and ‘haaad’. Acronyms as Yolo, Ootd, lol, af, dm and Jbh are also widely used in CMC. It is also observed that words in Instagram blogs are reduced and shrink as in ‘fam’ instead of family, ‘insta’ instead of Instagram, ‘smth’ instead of something, ‘fav’ instead of favourite, ‘mid’ instead of middle, ‘thankies’ instead of thank you and ‘wat’ instead of what. Two words are mainly reduced into a single word in Instagram blog discourse as in gotta.
and goto instead of ‘got to’ and ‘go to’. Expressions as ‘pls’ instead of please, ‘lezz’ instead of lets, ‘wifey’ instead of ‘wife’ are also noted. The use of bilingual categories are also being noticed as acha, Alhamdulilah, inshaAllah and kher.

4.2 Analysis of Closed-Ended Questions

The closed-ended questions are asked from 480 respondents. The closed-ended questions are made on multiple choice questions format. The responses are then analyzed through SPSS.

4.2.1 Respondent’s Age

The first Question was asked regarding age group of the respondents. The results are appended below accordingly:

As observed, it is noted that 5 out of 580 respondents belongs to the age group 10-14 years making up 1% from the total participants, 109 respondents belong to the group 15-19 years making up 19% of the total, 358 belongs to the group 20-24 years making up 61%, 99 respondents belongs to the group 25-29 years making up 17% while 9 respondents belongs to the group of 30 years and above making up 2% of the total participants.

4.2.2 Respondent’s interest in Pakistani Instagram Blogs

The respondents were asked how much do they indulge in reading Pakistani Instagram blogs. The results are as follows:
According to the findings, 315 respondents out of 580 see Instagram blogs everyday making up 54%, 209 respondents indulge in blogs once in 3 days making up 36%, 43 respondents indulge in blogs once a week making up 8% while 13 respondents see Instagram blogs once a month making up 2% from the total mass sample.

### 4.2.3 Instagram Blogs and their Impact on Spellings

The respondents were given a statement on Likert’s scale to respond. The statement was: Reading Instagram blogs affect the spellings of the users.
The results of respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs everyday show that 7% of the respondents disagree to the statement, 28% of them stays neutral, 60% of them agree to the statement while 5% of them strongly agree to the statement. The results of respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs once in 3 days imply that 10% of them disagree to the statement, 26% stays neutral, 58% agree while 6% strongly agree. The results of respondents who see Instagram blogs once a week denotes that 2% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement, 14% disagree, 36% of them are neutral, 44% agree while 4% strongly agree. The results of respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs once a month show that 18% of respondents disagree to the statement, 39% stays neutral while 38% agree to the statement.

4.2.4 Instagram Blogs and their Impact on Grammar

The respondents were given a statement on Likert’s scale to respond. The statement was: Reading Instagram Blogs affect the grammar of users.

The results of the respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs everyday implies that 38% of respondents strongly disagree to the statement, 32% disagree while 30% stays neutral. The results of respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs once in 3 days show that 31% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement, 39% disagree, 28% responded neutral while 2% agreed with the statement. The results of respondents who read Instagram blogs once a week denote that 34% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement, 35% disagree while 31% of them stayed neutral. The results of respondents who read Instagram blogs once a month shows that 29% of respondents strongly disagreed the statement, 41% of the respondents disagreed, 30% of them stays neutral while 3% agree with the statement.

4.2.5 Instagram Blogs and their Impact on Vocabulary
The respondents were given a statement on Likert’s scale to respond. The statement was: Reading Instagram Blogs affect the vocabulary of users.

![Diagram showing the impact of Instagram Blogs on vocabulary]

The results of respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs everyday denote that 22% of respondents stay neutral to the statement, 34% agree while 44% strongly agree with the statement.

The results of respondents who read Instagram blogs once in 3 days imply that 38% of respondents stay neutral to the statement, 27% agree while 35% of respondents strongly agree with the statement. The results of respondents who read Instagram blogs once a week shows that 38% of respondents stay neutral to the statement, 32% of them agree while 32% of them strongly agree with the statement. The results of respondents who indulge in Instagram blogs once a month shows that 3% of respondents disagree with the statement, 41% stays neutral, 27% agree while 29% strongly agree with the statement.

### 4.3 Analysis of Open-Ended Questions

The respondents are asked about the changes they’ve observed in their language with regards to spellings, vocabulary, grammar and writing expression. According to them, due to reading distorted form of spellings on social media and Instagram blogs, they at times end up writing the same spelling themselves. It therefore, becomes difficult for the respondents to remember the correct spelling of words. Due to the word limitations in Instagram blogs, the writers tend to shrink words for the sake of convenience and time saving. The shrink form of words tend to infuse within the writing patterns of the respondents.

The respondents do not find any significant changes in their grammar due to their indulgence in Instagram blogs however their vocabulary and writing expressions has quite improved. Due to
reading different forms of blogs related to different subjects and topics, the vocabulary of the readers has quite improved. They have gained information and knowledge about different aspects due to which their writing expression has become significantly better. They’re able to express and present their ideas in a more elaborative form.

When asked about any other changes Instagram blog readers have observed, the respondents replied that they find trouble in switching from informal mode of writing to formal mode of writing. They generally get confused and end up infusing the features from blogs in their academic writing. They at times mistakenly use acronyms and short forms of words which are prohibited in academic writing.

4.4 Discussion

While observing the linguistic features of Instagram blogs from the self-made corpus of 18,455 words, it is noted that Instagram blog writing consist of not only the characters of written discourse but also carry expressions from the spoken discourse. Apart from this, the use of acronyms, shrink terms, intensifiers, repeating words, capitals, exclamation marks to emphasize and coined terms are also observed.

The analysis of survey depicts that most of the Instagram blog readers are between the age group of 15 years to 29 years with majority between the age group of 20 and 24. Reading Instagram blogs has affected the spellings, vocabulary and writing expression of the readers with no significant changes in grammar. Where the readers find Instagram blogs beneficial for them as they get to know about different informational aspects which in turn increases their vocabulary, their academic writing has got affected due to the over reading of incorrect form of words.

5 Conclusion

In view of the study in hand it may be finally concluded that CMC plays a vital role in the lives of youth today in academic as well as nonacademic spheres of life. The analysis of the language of CMC depicts the usage of coined terms, reduced and shrink terms, acronyms, intensifiers and expressions from spoken discourse. These features therefore, tend to get induced in the writing of the youth who is preferably more active in reading Instagram blogs. Where the vocabulary and expressive skills of youth has comparatively seen a positive change due to the increase in exposure, the features of CMC tend to induce in the academic writing which is subsequently, affecting their writing patterns. The research may be beneficial for the future researches which intend to focus on linguistic and sociological changes CMC has brought. The future researches may come up with the problems faced by the students in their academic writing due to their indulgence with CMC.

6 References


Claro, J. (n.d.). Benefits for language students using CMC- evidence for and against equalization of student participation and increase in target language production.
https://kitami-it.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/7491/file_preview/vol_5_1.pdf?allow_aggs=False


https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/entities/publication/64598272-e642-4469-978f-c808a482b8a8


https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228781266_Talking_shop_via_email_A_thematic_and_linguistic_analysis_of_electronic_mail_communication

https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Computer-Mediated-Collaborative-Learning%3A-Theory-Warschauer/171c69f6d24129207424a9ad9e154eed28c39b08
7. **Appendix**

**Note:** This Questionnaire is for Instagram Blog users and followers

Dear Respondents,

I am Ayesha Masood working on ‘The effect of computer mediated communication of the language of youth’. The information provided would be kept confidential and be used for solely for this research article.

**Key in use**
SD = Strongly Disagree  
D = Disagree  
N = Neutral  
A = Agree  
SA = Strongly Agree

1. Age
   - 15yrs-19yrs  
   - 20yrs-24yrs  
   - 25yrs-29yrs  
   - 30yrs and above

2. How much do you indulge in reading Pakistani Instagram Blogs?  
   - Everyday  
   - Once in 3 days  
   - Once a week  
   - Once a month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S #</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading Instagram blogs effect my spellings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reading Instagram blogs effects my grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reading Instagram blogs effect my Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What changes you have observed in your language with regards to spellings, vocabulary, grammar and writing expression?
7 State other changes if any?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________