

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Language is always changing. Language changes across space and social group. Language changes for a variety of reasons. Large-scale shifts often occur in response to social, economic and political pressures. History records many examples of language change fueled by invasions, colonization and migration. Even without these kinds of influences, a language can change dramatically if enough users alter the way they speak it.

Frequently, the needs of speakers drive language change. New technologies, industries, products and experiences simply require new words. By using new and emerging terms, people drive language change. However, the unique way that individual speaks also fuels language change. That is because no two individuals use a language in exactly the same way. The vocabularies and phrases people used depend on where they live, their age, education level, social status and other factors. Through the interactions, people pick up new words and sayings and integrate them into the speech. Teens and young adults for example, often use different words and phrases from their parents. Some of them spread through the population and slowly change the language.

There are many causes of language change, including (1) economy: speakers tend to make their utterances as efficient and effective as possible to reach communicative goals. Purposeful speaking therefore involves a trade-off of costs and benefits. Speakers especially use economy in their articulation, which

tends to result in phonetic reduction of speech forms (see vowel reduction, cluster reduction, lenition, and elision). After some time, a change may become widely accepted (it becomes a regular sound change) and may end up treated as a standard. For instance: *going to* ['gou.ɪŋ.tu] → *gonna* ['gɒnə] or ['gʌnə], with examples of both vowel reduction [ʊ] → [ə] and elision [nt] → [n], [oʊ.ɪ] → [ʌ]; (2) analogy: reducing word forms by likening different forms of the word to the root; (3) language contact: borrowing of words and constructions from foreign languages; (4) cultural environment: groups of speakers will reflect new places, situations and objects in their language, whether they encounter different people there or not; and (5) the medium of communication: which refers to the means of delivering and receiving data or information.

Historically, the medium can be divided into the following stages (1) ideographic writing, (2) alphabetic writing, (3) printing, (4) electronic recording and broadcasting, and (5) computer-mediated communication.

With the flourishing of information technology in the last 50 years, computer-mediated communication has become an important and significant part in human's daily life. Computer-mediated communication refers to a domain of information exchange via the computer. It is the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers. Computer-mediated communication will be the asynchronous and synchronous creation and transmission of messages using digital techniques. Typical examples of asynchronous CMC tools include electronic mail (e-mail) and bulletin board system (BBS), while synchronous ones are instant messaging

such as text messaging via mobile telephone and also other real time web-chat systems.

The mobile telephone has been the latest way to communicate quickly since the invention of text-messaging (Ong'onda, 2011: 2). Text messaging refers to the brief typed messages sent using the Short Message Service, abbreviated SMS, of mobile/cell phones.

Short message service, abbreviated SMS, as defined within the GSM digital mobile phone standard, is a service that enables its users to send short text messages to one mobile phone from another, or to a mobile phone via the Internet" (Hard af Segerstad, 2002:68). A typical mobile text message consists of the following parts: (1) **header**, which usually includes the time and date of sending the message, the identity of the message sender either by a mobile phone number or by a name if that number has an entry in the recipient's contact list and (2) **body of message**, which is the main content of the message. The body of the message may be a new message or a forwarded message or a combination of both. Openings and closures can be added, though it is not common. Text messages may include words, numbers and also other symbols. There is no limit to the length of the composed messages. In the past, each message could only contain 160 characters for Latin alphabets and only 70 characters for non-Latin alphabets such as Chinese. But nowadays, even messages exceeding the number of characters can be sent between users as messages, which are too long, will be split into smaller chunks automatically during the sending process.

Theoretically, Li (2007: 21) states that when technologies are introduced, very often new concepts and ideas may emerge. And in order to express these new

ideas emerging along with the new media and tools, new forms of language and literacy are often necessary. Thus, the ways in which people use their language may face changes due to the new media of communication. The technologies are dealt with Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). In line to ICTs, Bodomo and Lee (Li, 2007:22) depict five characteristics of ICTs, including (1) flexibility, (2) connectivity, (3) affordability, (4) interactivity and (5) popularity.

The mentioned characteristics are important in the sense that they help distinguish ICTs in this information age from old passive modes such as television and radio which fail to show a high degree of flexibility, connectivity and interactivity. Also, Technology-conditioned approach to Language Change and Use (TeLCU) suggests that „the more of the above features a new technology carries, the more likely new forms of language and literacy will be introduced and the more widespread these new forms will be.“ (Bodomo and Lee, 2002: 45).

There is an assumption that SMS language tends to create a novice language, which has become an integral part of the multilingual world. It pursues simple sentences structure for communication (Rafi, 2011:1). Texting reflects language change and innovation in communication language. The reflection shows in the occurrence of certain linguistic features during the activity of texting. The occurrence of the certain linguistic features intrigued the writer into having deep analysis on the texting activity.

Research on language uses due to technology interest many researchers. Similar research has ever been conducted previously with different scope of study, where the research focused on the language use in technology in this case computer. With the explosive growth of the Internet to include anyone who is

interested, researchers into Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) are beginning to notice that computer networking constitutes a new revolution in communication media, on a par with speech, writing and print. (Cumming, 1995:4). In recent years, the topic of Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been one of most popular research areas not only in the field of linguistics, but also in other disciplines such as social sciences, computer science and education.

Thurlow (2003:2) observes that text messaging impacts on literacy and standard language use. People tend to be more creative and innovative in texting the message. The popular belief is that texting has evolved as a twenty-first-century phenomenon, as a highly distinctive graphic style, full of abbreviations and deviant uses of language, used by people that do not care about standards. The dominant features in SMS language are the use of abbreviations, slang, syntactic reductions, asterisk emoting, emoticons, deletions of parts of speech, especially subject pronoun, preposition, articles, copula, auxiliary or modal verbs and contractions. Linguists and educators can therefore use the debate on text speak as a legitimate language and the breadth of its grammar, syntax and semantics to spark academic discussion and understanding of all variations of language (Ong'onda, 2011:2).

The theory proposed by Bodomo and Lee (2002) which involves the framework of Technology-conditioned approach to Language Change and Use (TeLCU) leads the writer's interest to conduct this scientific research.

It is commonly known that communication via SMS has been the favourable option, considering the effectiveness as well as efficiencies. Communication via SMS knows neither boundaries nor time. Mobile phones

which provide this technology offer the comfortable and portable device. Texting, as commonly known, has great contribution to the varieties of language feature used. Due to the effectiveness and efficiencies, users tend to shorten the words and even add symbols representing the users' thoughts and emotion. The activity of texting is conducted not only by those with limited knowledge of standard language but also by those of high knowledge on good standard language which in this case, the researcher focuses her intention on the teacher as users with adequate knowledge of standard language. Teachers are selected as the object of observation due to the sense that they are well-educated and undoubtedly possess adequate knowledge on the use of language properly.

Having teachers as the subject of research regarding the use of SMS has been conducted during the research of "texting style of EFL/ ESL teachers in Saudi Universities: cultural perspectives". This research had the sample of one thousand of male teachers of English ranging in age from 30 to 50 years from different nationalities but mostly from Saudi Arabia. In this research, the researcher found that code mixing which is very common in oral communication was surprisingly used quite often in text messages. One interesting finding was that one of the Saudi professor in linguistics used informal texting when using SMS, example: **"Thanx for producing a strong abstract. It'll be translated 2nite."**

This finding has become one of the reasons for the writer in choosing teachers of language who considerably capable of using formal and proper language as the subject of the research.

This research conducts on the analysis of some linguistic features of teachers' text message related to the grammatical and lexical choices of the writer. It describes some of the lexical and grammatical resources –structural features– that realized in the texting activity which in this case text message. It is necessary to have literacy into discussion since the text message can only conducted by those who are literate. This study is going to investigate the language used and investigate the use of the linguistic features by teachers at Cinta Budaya National Plus School in text messaging in terms of the linguistic features presented from the perspective of Medan people.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

The problems of this study are presented in the following questions:

- (1) What linguistic features of text messaging are used by teachers at Cinta Budaya National Plus School?
- (2) Why do teachers use such linguistic features of text messaging during their communication within text messaging ?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

This research is aimed at highlighting the causal relationship between the introduction of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and new forms of language and literacy with reference to the model “Technology-conditioned approach to Language Change and Use”. Thus, the objectives of this study are

- (1) to investigate the linguistic features of text messaging used by teachers at Cinta Budaya National Plus School.
- (2) to elaborate the reasons why such linguistic features of text messaging used during their communication within text messaging.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is the use of linguistic features of text messaging which focuses more on the Technology-conditioned approach to Language Change and Use (TeLCU), Short Message Service (SMS) and text messaging. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is related to new forms of language and literacy with reference to the model of “Technology-conditioned approach to Language Change and Use” (TeLCU) proposed by Bodomo and Lee. The theory of linguistic features proposed by Crystal which consist of (1) pictograms and logograms, (2) initialism, (3) omitted letters, (4) nonstandard spellings and (5) shortenings will be collaborated with the theory proposed by Li to investigate the linguistic features of mobile texting used by teachers at Cinta Budaya National Plus School.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Findings of this study are strongly expected to have the theoretically and practically indispensable significances. Theoretically, the research findings will be valuable contributions for readers in identifying the linguistic features in the mobile phone text messaging context and elaborating the reasons of why such linguistic features used by teachers at Cinta Budaya National Plus School.

Practically, on the other hand, the research findings will be beneficial for students who are interested in conducting detailed and deep study on text messaging and the role of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as references.



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