

Gendered Use of SMS

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Surpassing the traditional methods of communication, novel strategies for communication have come into being with the modern, technological advancement. These methods of correspondence have expanded their impact on both informal and formal communicative contexts, depicting both advantages and disadvantages. Today, the mobile subscriber rate has dramatically increased as a result of its popularity in using it for numerous functions and SMS facility has become a commonly used service by commuters since its introduction in 1990 s. Even though SMS is widely used as a service, irrespective of gender, it is fascinating to observe whether gender has an impact on the function and language usage of the individual users. In analyzing the gendered use of SMSes 500 messages of 50 informants from the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo are examined, and spontaneously produced 10 SMSes are collected from each of the participant and the main method used to collect SMSes was through informal data collection within the researcher's friend circle. Questionnaires and informal interviews were also used to acquire data and attempts were taken to preserve the anonymity of the informants. Further, it was expected to gain answers for five research questions. It was mainly attempted to identify the availability of differences with regard to the function and language of SMSes shared by males and females and the reasons for them. Moreover, specific attention was given to the investigation into the fact whether males' SMS language can be referred to as a report type of language while the females' language can be referred to as a rapport language in texting. Contrary to the hypothesis that gender has a significant impact on the usage of SMSes, the research findings based on the corpus and the answers derived from questionnaires emphasize a minimum gender difference. It is discovered that gender is only one variable that affects the SMS usage among a number of other social and individual factors. SMS practices of both genders seem to be quite similar and both genders use the mobile frequently to text and the reasons for texting and to whom they text are also similar. Considering these observations, it can be concluded that gender is only one determinant that has an impact on the SMS usage as, individual characteristics and their socio-cultural contexts also seem to have a great impact on their SMS usage. Consequently, further investigations on the impact of individual and socio-cultural factors on SMS usage can be highlighted as insight to further research. Nevertheless, the findings of this research provide an insight to the SMS usage of the modern youth in the urban Sri Lankan context while this research also unravels certain aspects with regard to the SMS usage in the country that are not sufficiently researched.

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