

Analyzing the Discourse of WhatsApp's Status

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Abstract

The current study investigates the discourse of WhatsApp's status written by the users of WhatsApp application. The main goal of the study is to explore the types of status that people use. The discourse analysis of these status shows how the users manipulate in the language used to suit their concerns in order to represent their feelings. The study revealed that WhatsApp's status serve as a way to convey a specific messages, identities, and feelings through the language used by the users to be seen by others. Three hundred written status were collected and analyzed to investigate the types of them. Results indicate that the users of WhatsApp use standard and non-standard languages.

Keywords: WhatsApp's status types, discourse analysis, identities.

1. Introduction

The Internet has now been around long enough for us to 'take a view' about the way in which it is being shaped by and is shaping language and languages (Crystal, 2006). WhatsApp has become one of the largest social network sites (i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter etc.) used in the world (Ahad and Lim, 2014). WhatsApp is a smartphone messaging applications that allows the users to share messages, photos, videos, etc. It serves as a good communicator not only between two persons, but also between a large number of people share a specific relationship in different sides of life such as family groups, business groups, students groups, therefore it allows them to communicate worldwide. People use WhatsApp for personal and social purposes on a daily basis, therefore they express themselves by writing the WhatsApp status. This application has its impact on the linguistic features of the discourse they use.

Texts are 'multi-functional': there are various things going on simultaneously in texts. Texts are (or are part of) forms of action, and they also provide representations (of people, objects, events) and are part of the enactment of identities. In other words, texts draw upon and contribute to the constitution of genres, discourses and styles, and they do all of these simultaneously. (Fairclough, 2015).

WhatsApp enables the users to chat with their friends, co-workers and relatives and they can start chatting, sharing audio, video files, documents, updating status, etc. One of the biggest features of WhatsApp is that it does not collect personal information like your name, gender, address, or age (Sharma, and Shukla, 2016).

WhatsApp is rolling out a new Status features to all users. Instead of the text-only status make people know whether you're busy or available to chat, the new Status feature uses photos, text, emojis and sketches to show what you're doing.

2. Literature review

A good number of studies have focused on WhatsApp either in general terms or on the "conversations" held by its users. Less attention has been paid to how users choose language to present themselves to others through the WhatsApp status that users write on their profile. "We need to 'see ideologies expressed or lived by social actors, and 'work' in concrete social situations, that is, in everyday social practices." Van Dijk (1998).

Ahad and Lim (2014) revealed in the study of social and behavioral sciences through using the WhatsApp that there are different good points of using this app by the undergraduates through sharing of information and discussing them in their everyday communications with different friends and other people just like their family and relatives.

Moya (2015b) explore the discursive analysis of 420 profile statuses by Spanish users, focusing on the age variable and the preference users have when editing their profile. The authors provide a useful categorization based on the linguistic realization of the profiles, which they divide into automatically-generated statuses and self-generated ones. Automatically-generated statuses are those where users simply choose one of the status provided by default.

In the case of WhatsApp, the default status is “Hey there! I’m using WhatsApp” but users may choose from the following range of 12 other default status, mostly showing their degree of availability⁶ (Available, Busy, I can’t talk, only WhatsApp, Low bat, Only emergency calls, I’m sleeping) or places where they are located (At School, In the cinema, At work, At a meeting, In the gym). Self-generated status are those where users manually type a status of their own choice in the character gap provided by the application. Within this macro-category, users may choose a purely verbal (or rather “textual”) status, leave it blank, choose just emoji or a hybrid status where both emoji and text are employed.

According to the study of BarzanFaizin and M. Ali Ramdhani (2018) which examines the four speech acts, that were clarified in the WhatsApp status update, shows that there are many different pragmatic meanings involved in Searle’s speech acts that were used by the users of WhatsApp.

Maiz-Alvaro,(2018) in her study 206 WhatsApp status were gathered (in Spanish). The results show the existence of patterns connected to gender, or age play a key role in determining the emotions users choose to display in their profile status.

3. Theoretical Background

Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 2003) typically focuses on intertextual analysis, which shows how elements of other texts are incorporated and combined within a particular text, and inters discursive analysis which identifies how (‘hybrid’) texts can mix diverse genres, discourses and styles together. Analysis can also focus on the ‘recontextualization’ of texts, discourses, genres and styles. Fairclough (1995) argued that ideology devotes language in different ways at different levels in which a group of accounts put ideology in several forms of system of prospects underlying language practice in which Analyzing the text has different and many types which can be used and applied to texts. These types contain different linguistics levels such as analyzing the phonological sound patterns of talk, also analyzing the grammatical level of phrases and the types of sentences ;simple and compound. The semantics level is also one the levels that can be analyzed which concerns with the meanings of the words and how to connect the words through the meaning. Analyzing the pragmatics level to convey the meaning in special text.

There are various forms of content analysis, including analysis of the topics that are in focus in various types of texts (van Dijk 1997). Van Dijk (1998) argues that emotions are not mental at all but considered as a special domain. Having any feeling represents that they are interpretations for the state of mind or the state of body. This leads to consider that there is a relation between emotions and believes. (ibid, 2004) he defines ideology as "the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group". In the description of the ideology it can be considered as the representations of the basic concerns of social groups, classes and communities. The rapid advance of digital communication, computer mediated communication and other devices like smartphones, requires research into other means of interaction such as WhatsApp or Snapchat. (Bublitz, and Hoffmann,2015). That is to explore the relationships between the ideology and the social practices that represent each society.

In a study of Bani-khair et al (2016) It was found that the notifications of the status of WhatsApp users reflect their society as a whole. They were as a revelation of personal, social, religious and political issues the users are concerned about. Differences with respect to gender were not found in structural construction of the language rather in categories indicating various themes.

The framework of the study consists of both critical discourse analysis and textual analysis. Fairclough(1995) argued that there are three elements to analyze text : the text itself, the production of text and the reception of the text. Each of these elements gives different points of meaning, the intention, identity, etc. The analysis of texts is concerned with the different linguistic forms of texts, across different types of texts. Fairclough (ibid) argued that discourse reflects social beliefs and structure and it examines how texts formed by relations of power. Analyzing text involves areas such as structure, vocabulary or representation of actors through image, language or sound.

According to Van Dijk(2001), textual analysis can be on both micro aspects concerning linguistic choices(word choice), and macro aspects concerning the level representing the topic, theme, or core of a text. That to form a base for analyzing the socio- cultural factors of the discourse. Van Dijk suggested several ways to analyze the levels of discourse to arrive critical discourse analysis: Members-groups, action-process, context- social structure, and personal and social cognition.

4. Statement of problem

Written language of communication platforms like WhatsApp is a great field to be studied because it captures interactions among people, that are an essential part of their life. WhatsApp has turned out to be the most popular application that is used by millions of people. people use WhatsApp for personal and social purposes.

According to Sánchez-Moya and Cruz-Moya (2015), WhatsApp status can be grouped in two main categories: automatically-generated, (Hey there! I am using Whatsapp), and self-generated status (Hello). Then, within the latter, four sub-typologies were identified: purely verbal (My head hurts), hybrid (Hello ☺ ☺), purely-iconic (☺ ☺), and blank realizations [].

The current study seeks to explore the types of WhatsApp status in the light of the related studies to show the ways through which people use the language to express their status.

5. Importance of the study

The study tries to shed light on the development of the field of using new means of communication and the ways in which people communicate their thoughts or beliefs and identities. Thus it explores the types of texts used in writing WhatsApp's status to show what their reflections are. The study seeks also to know what is the language employed to express users' status taking into consideration the features used to form their structures. The study examines the patterns and types of status of WhatsApp society. Thus it is expected that the study will provide a deep understanding of the structure of the language of WhatsApp's status and the ways through which WhatsApp's users deviate from the norms of the language in order to suit their goals. It is expected that the study helps to motivate further researchers to do more research in this field.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research question

What are the main types of discourse that people use to write their WhatsApp status?

Linguists follow a direction of discourse analysis as critical discourse analysis to reach the relationship between discourse and society. In the area of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001) argues that language is a part of social life, so that research has to take language into account. In this qualitative study, three hundred status were collected from the WhatsApp of two smartphones.

They were analyzed thoroughly and then they were classified. The length of each text for data was between one letter "S", short sentences. The status were analyzed into language features: words (love), phrases (thanks God), sentences (life is too short to fight), acronyms (OMG) and classified according to specific types (Religious, social, personal, etc.) the personal type classified into sub-types: (emotional, national, etc.). The study examines the macro and micro features of the status from the view of the linguistic choices and socio-cultural values. The findings were classified in light of related studies.

7. Results and discussion

The analysis revealed the simplicity of the language used in writing the status in terms of structure. The majority of the status were either written in Arabic language or English language or both. This means that English language has influenced the use of Arabic language. Despite the fact that the majority of the users were not English learners, they managed to mix Arabic and English languages. The language of these status could be characterized having one letter "S", abbreviations with special expressions "U.R.wlcm", repeated punctuation marks such as "multi-full stops, multi-exclamation and multi-question marks" personal expressions "my mum is all things in my life. I love you. I lost my self". The status were in form of both verbal (using letters) and non-verbal (using emotional pictures ☺, small, upper case and a mixture of both as well as a mixture of both standard (formal) and non-standard language (informal).

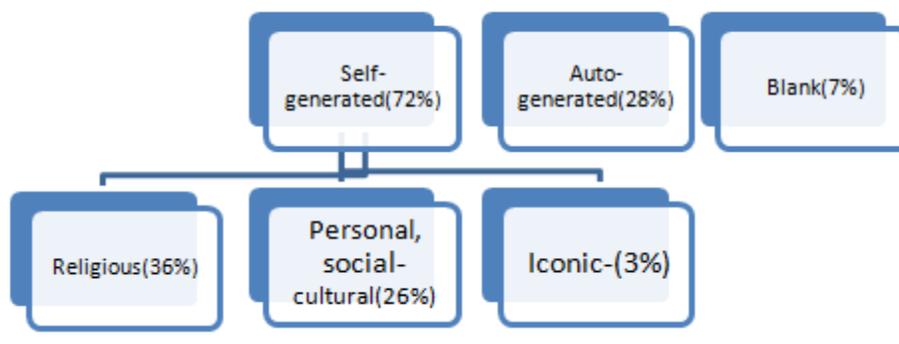
The formal and informal languages were analyzed; the standard language was exhibited in a poetic verse, Qur'anic verse "Say, 'He is Allah, the One'" and a proverb "conviction is an inexhaustible treasure". Another feature noticed in the data was the use of specific textual means instead of the standard language. The use of non-standard language were exhibited by certain linguistic features employing a slang language (i.e. informal language with particular expressions such as "thx" (thanks), "OMG" (Oh! my God), "wannasleeeeeeep", emotional signs besides non-standard use of grammar by over extension of letter (i.e. repeating some of letters in a word" to emphasize words. The repeated letter word "keeeeeeeeeepcaaaaaaaaaalm" can be seen as a way of stressing the words and its effect on the reviewers. Writing such words in a way they would be pronounced if it were spoken indicates informality. For example, the use of "wlcm" shows that the user expresses feelings to another user in his/her contact revealing understanding of each other informally.

Using informal language may be viewed as a form of revealing private identity. Such features of the WhatsApp status' language could be ascribed to the fact that people write their words the same way they pronounce them. This implies that the language used in WhatsApp status is simplified, abbreviated, shortened and conditioned to fit the context of this

kind of communication. This finding corresponds with Crystal (2004) that the language in the Internet communication is a variety of the traditional one at the same time it matches

Crystal's classifications of types of distinctive features of a language variety at orthographic (graphological) level: the writing system of individual language, defined as distinctive use of alphabet, capital letters, spelling, punctuation, and ways of expressing emphasis (italic, boldface, etc.). At the grammatical features level, the distinctive use of sentence structure, word order, and word inflections; (religious English makes use of an unusual construction (O God, who knows...)). The finding supports Bani-Khair (2016) finding that WhatsApp status notifications comprise of non-standard language, abbreviations, the notifications reflect the status of their users and their society.

The analysis also revealed that the majority of the WhatsApp users use the self-generated status as a way to share their personal, religious, and national themes through these status. In addition, certain expressions to show their feelings. It is worth mentioning that there is one status in the analyzed data contains numbers only (24/2/2019) as a date it is expected this one is a specific date of private event. Percentage of the types used in the status are in the figure below.



The largest amount of the users in the analyzed data have their WhatsApp status as self-generated status (Alhamdulillah, I love you, Jordan first, etc.) There are 108 users (36% of the total sample) represent this type. The smallest amount of the users have full- iconic status (☺ ☺ ☺) eight users only used this type (3% of the total sample). The blank status were used by 21 users (7% of the total sample).

The main self-generated types found could be classified as follows:

1. Personal, cultural and social topic: The language used in WhatsApp's status could be seen as are presentation of a particular personality, community, national group. The analyzed data reflect everyday life, social problems, values, and feelings of the individuals of that particular culture. However, it should be noted that these discourses can be taken as messages for a target community, rather than just the attitudes of particular person. The personal types can be classified into the following sub-types:

- Emotional: "you are my love", "Im suffering".
- Health: "I am sick alhamdulillah".
- Promotions: "The most famous trademarks", "American English teacher".

2. Religious topic: people benefit from these status to express their religious faith and believes. These linguistic expressions were in the form of Qur'anic verse "Say, 'He is Allah, the One". And religious background: "Alhamdulillah for everything". "May Allah bless you". "peace be upon our prophet Mohammad". "Oh, my merciful, God". "There is no God but God", "only when you Allah is the Greater."

3. National, social topic: the WhatsApp's users express some of their concerns and feelings: "Jordan first", "Alwihadat only", "A.C milan", "Al faisali Alzaeem"

A relatively large amount of users in the analyzed data have their WhatsApp status as automatically-generated status (hey there!, available, busy, In a meeting, at work etc.) There are 85 users (28% of the total sample) represent this possibility.

8. Conclusion

The study found that individuals give a specific identities of themselves to others through self-representation status. People like to share their experience on WhatsApp with friends and family. The study also found that there is a large amount of using informal languages. The study expects that WhatsApp could give advertisers the chance to locate ads on WhatsApp's status.

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