

SPECIAL FOCUS PAPER

A Corpus-Based Analysis of Digital Communication Patterns in Mobile Messaging Platforms

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ABSTRACT

Mobile phones have transformed everyday communication, with platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram becoming routine spaces for interaction. This study examines linguistic practices in these environments through a small, carefully curated corpus of anonymized mobile messages collected by university students. The analysis focuses on lexical choice, syntactic structure, language switching, and deployment of emojis, abbreviations, and other additional multimodal elements. Using corpus-linguistic methodologies, specifically AntConc and SketchEngine, the study identifies collocation tendencies, recurring patterns, frequent word pairings, and discourse practices that shape meaning in mobile messaging. The findings show that mobile communication represents a distinct mode of interaction that diverges from traditional speech and writing to reflect fast, informal, and socially embedded conversation. They also reveal how young adults adapt language creatively to meet the demands of digital exchange. The study further considers how mobile message corpora can support language teaching by providing learners with authentic instances of contemporary communication use.

KEYWORDS

mobile communication, messaging apps, pragmatic competence, corpus linguistics, university students, code-switching

1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile devices have become an integral component of our daily routine, and the impact of interpersonal interaction has become undeniable. Messaging applications have now mediated much of our social, academic, and professional interactions. These platforms evolved to facilitate interpersonal communications. What began as merely elementary conversations has steadily evolved into a transformative process in which social engagements are structured and preserved. As communication increasingly shifts from face-to-face conversation to digital communication.

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There is a clear distinction between verbal and textual conversation. Such rapid conversation maintains both speed and spontaneity while unfolding in visual text form and acquiring archival permanence. The consequence of such communication maintains informality yet documents a lasting textual form. Language within this domain strays from standardized conventions. Abbreviated language, unconventional spellings, uninventive orthographic choices, and ellipses frequently appear alongside emojis, stickers, Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) files, voice notes, and playful lexical choices. These features serve beyond embellishment, enabling creativity without affecting the semantic content or attitudinal stance as well as the emotional tone.

Instead of declining, these practices constitute unique requirements of mobile messaging and align with social expectations to coalesce around these technologies. Through perpetual mediation of appropriateness and expressiveness, the communicative norms differ from the characteristics of formal writing in face-to-face interaction. Recent applied linguistics research has progressively engaged with digitally mediated discourse, focusing on public platforms such as Twitter, online forums, and blogs. Corpus-based analyses have provided significant insights into evolving interactional patterns and the enactment of identity. However, private mobile messaging has garnered markedly less research attention. These datasets entail research challenges, such as ethical concerns and complexities related to management content and participant anonymization. Consequently, a considerable portion of everyday digital communication—particularly intimate and informal interactions—remains underexplored. The present study seeks to address a lacuna through “corpus-based” analysis of private mobile messaging among university students. Through analysis of a small, anonymized corpus of WhatsApp and Telegram messages, the study explores everyday digital discourse, regarding recurring linguistic and interactional patterns. While corpus linguistics has historically emphasized large-scale datasets, the carefully curated corpora involve sensitive and context specific data. For such an inquiry, university students and their extensive use of multiple messaging platforms and multilingual competencies provide a suitable site for examining the contemporary shifts in mobile-mediated communication. These practices hold pedagogical significance, as students’ everyday communication patterns often contrast with those reinforced in informal learning contexts. This research integrates interdisciplinary insights from corpus linguistics, multimodality, sociolinguistics, and digital discourse analysis. Collectively, these frameworks facilitate a systematic examination of lexical choices, abbreviation techniques, code-switching patterns, and use of multimodal elements. Rather than treating these linguistic features as separate phenomena, the research investigates how they converge to produce interaction that is both coherent and socially meaningful in mobile messaging settings. Beyond its descriptive and analytical functions, the research also engages with current debates regarding the educational affordances of digital communication data. Research in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has demonstrated that incorporating authentic digital discourse into language instruction fosters pragmatic competence, sociolinguistic awareness, and digital literacy. However, the pedagogical application of mobile messaging data is constrained by concerns related to ethical authenticity and representativeness. This study enables the implementation of corpus-informed pedagogical approaches grounded in authentic communicative practices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Computer-mediated verbal exchange as a hybrid mode of language

The scholarly attention considerably attracted the field of computer-mediated communication (CMC); their findings regarding digital communication challenge conventional understanding of what separates speech from writing, rather enhancing the modality of it. Online technology shaped and influenced the intent to technical aspects rather than the language ability [1, 2]. The fast-paced messaging tools help to connect and ensure keeping things short, brief, instant, and casual [3]–[9]. Computer-mediated communication has led to a transition in which ultimate of speaking displays evident hybridization of mobile messaging practices.

2.2 Temporality, multilingualism, and code-switching in mobile communication

Mobile messaging is motivated by flexible language choices by which users often communicate in their regional language to express real or precise meaning. To maintain the social relationship and identity in conversation, the flexibility of language is vital too. Time consciousness, code-switching, and multilingualism are featured through mobile devices. These, too, shape how people interact in digital settings. There ignites a pattern as “cellular chronotypes,” where scholars define it as presence, responsiveness, and availability across different time frames [10]. In many real-time interactional patterns, exchanges or delayed communication occur, with a distinct possibility of a less clearly conversational tone [11]. The common feature of mobile messaging, particularly in diasporic and postcolonial contexts, was multilingualism. Choice of language enables flexible conversation, communicative situations, or purposes encountered in digital space actively [12, 13]. In these environments, code-switching is represented solely as a marker of bilingual proficiency. It is a communicative strategy that is used to express meaningful identity, manage social relationships, and connect with emotions [14]. To strengthen personal bonds, bilingual texting, as shown through findings, often helps and coexists with other forms of feelings and expression [15]. Code-switching in education has been used as a second language, which serves a dual purpose for identity navigation and expression [16]. These impressions support a framework of translanguaging that approaches adaptable linguistic behavior and a conditional social environment [17]. This study emphasizes the students among Indians in tertiary who participate in code-switching behavior in personal text messages and multilingualism. By extending earlier research on public platforms to private exchanges, the study offers a grounded account of how English, Hindi, and Odia are used together in everyday digital interaction.

2.3 Corpus-based approaches to digital and multilingual discourse

Corpus-based methods are used increasingly to study multilingual and digital communication in a systematic way. Approaches similar to this allow the researchers to examine the patterns such as collocation, word frequency, and a large collection of texts in repetitive formats [18]. The corpus studies were earlier focused on public data and newspapers, including online forums. For examining corpora, analyzing texting in personal communication is quite effective for studying personal forms of

communication [19]. In applied linguistics and translation studies, corpus methods were often used to explore meanings shaped across different languages and their context [20, 21]. Comparable and parallel corpora have also supported research into how speakers negotiate meaning and use discourse strategies across languages [22]. These techniques are particularly useful for studying digital interaction based on bilingual and multilingual communication. Messages that resemble privacy remain underrepresented in corpus research, mainly due to ethical or access issues [11]. Some scholars suggest that the combination of corpus methods with discourse-based methods helps resolve these challenges while preserving or retaining contextual richness [22]. To connect with this approach, the study uses AntConc and Sketch Engine on a small specialized corpus comprising WhatsApp and Telegram messages. Although access to private data is restricted, content-based messages allow detailed examination of student communication behavior. This dual-method strategy supports a thorough investigation of how individuals employ language within a digital environment.

2.4 Pedagogical implications and research gaps in mobile messaging studies

The limited availability of ethically sourced private messaging data has set back the integration of real digital communication practices within language pedagogy. Research indicates that exposure to authentic language enhances pragmatic language use and gains a deeper understanding and language functioning across different social contexts. The ethical considerations were insights into language evolution and identity construction in everyday communication. Recent scholars align language pedagogy with contemporary communication practices. Mobile messaging reflects learners' actual language use beyond the classroom. The multilingual aspect integrates data that supports a more logical flow of communication in a digital environment.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research layout

The corpus-driven qualitative approach was used to examine the use of language in digital communication contexts. The recurring patterns identify naturally occurring messages rather than testing the predefined assumption. A design driven by corpus is an ideal pattern for mobile communication since its patterns emerge from data while remaining attentive to the context. In order to investigate repeated use and social interaction, a quantitative corpus is used in combination with close linguistic analysis. According to the approach, it traces how choices regarding linguistics reflect both cultural expectations surrounding their use and technological features of messaging platforms. Thus, this does not consider the departure from embellished language norms. Rather, this study treats it as a structural form of language that is used to shape the regular communicative needs. This design, supported by empirical data, supports a thorough explanation of how language practices adjust to mobile-mediated environments.

3.2 Members and context

The dataset is made up of the mobile message exchanges by the students between the ages of 18 and 25. This group was chosen due to its frequent use of messaging

apps and propensity to adopt new textual forms. This experiment included participants from undergraduate and postgraduate fields. These students enrolled in Indian education institutions extensively used platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram for coordinating academics and informal interactions. On a daily basis, these platforms function as a communicative space where students maintain, manage, and exchange responsibilities or routes for information. The study aims not only to communicate and provide information, but it also focuses on supporting the exploration of pedagogical practices where language use differs from formal academic norms.

3.3 Data collection and ethical considerations

The participants were clearly briefed while they gave their consent during voluntary contribution. The nature of the data being collected, and they were free to withdraw at any point in time. The participants who explicitly only agreed shared the inclusion of data. The priority was to confidently ensure the confidential nature of mobile messaging and its pattern of communication. Ethical considerations were the key factor to shape this study. Before any analysis was undertaken, a thorough de-identification of the dataset was processed. The labels involved telephone numbers or any other information that could reveal the identity of the individual, institutional affiliations and geographical locations—with anonymized labels or removing them completely. Messages with a sensitive nature or certain content of confidentiality were removed from the dataset. Only the natural linguistic integrity of the remaining data was preserved. The corpus was developed as an ethically curated dataset that upholds privacy and reliability. The standards of research were in accordance with digital communication.

3.4 Corpus composition and length

The final dataset comprises 35,000 words comprising a specialized corpus that reflects daily patterns of digital communication. Although traditionally these large datasets were focused, corpus linguistics increasingly values smaller, targeted corpora, particularly when ethical and privacy constraints limit access to personal communications. In the realm of mobile messaging, the curated version of a small corpus is a practical and viable alternative. The corpus encompasses both academic and informal interactions among university students. This diversity enables communication as variation, language use, and intent of interactional style. The messages use multiple languages that preserve linguistic characteristics such as abbreviations and nonstandard spellings. Table 1 outlines the key characteristics of the corpus, including its sources, languages, platforms, annotation practices, and ethical safeguards.

Table 1. Key characteristics of the messaging corpus

Corpus Feature	Description
Corpus Type	Small, specialised corpus
Data Source	Private mobile messaging data
Participants	University students
Age Range	18–25 years
Corpus Size	Approximately 35,000 words

(Continued)

Table 1. Key characteristics of the messaging corpus (*Continued*)

Corpus Feature	Description
Languages Represented	English, Hindi, Odia
Messaging Platforms	WhatsApp and Telegram
Interaction Contexts	Academic coordination and informal social communication
Nature of Data	Text messages including emojis and abbreviated forms
Annotation Method	Manual annotation for code-switching and emoji use
Analytical Tools	AntConc and SketchEngine
Ethical Safeguards	Informed consent, anonymisation, and removal of identifying details

Source: Constructed by authors.

In academic contexts, the corpus exhibits multilingual composition: English, Odia, and Hindi. English is stated as the dominant language for academics, whereas Odia and Hindi are primarily used for personal communication, contextual nuances, and emotional expression (See Figure 1). The multilingual aspect of the student is verified through the active interplay of languages in daily digital communication. The corpora were focused entirely on allowing detailed analysis of real communication within a specific social and linguistic context. Metadata, which includes specific message order or timestamps, also helps to analyze interaction patterns and their conversational levels over time.

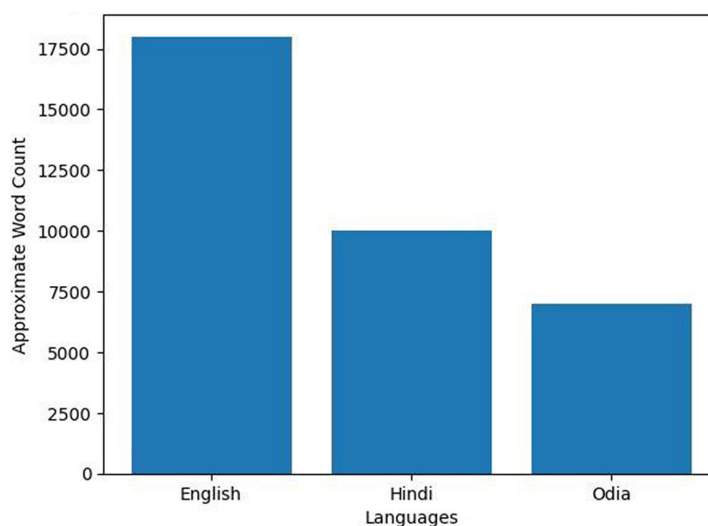


Fig. 1. Approximate distribution of languages in the mobile messaging corpus

Source: Constructed by the author.

3.5 Corpus education and annotation

Before the analysis of digital communication, the corpus was standardized to work with corpus evaluation software. Device-generated content, such as automatic notifications, was carefully removed. Informal writings, shorthand, and unconventional

spellings were maintained for the authenticity of language in mobile messaging. Emojis were not just pictures but were used as Unicode for analyzing symbols. Manual annotation was used more than automation of language detection because algorithms struggle to detect multilingual texts, culturally specific expressions, and uncommon spellings. Although it was time-consuming, the accurate analysis was derived from manual tagging.

3.6 Analytical tools

Methodological limitations. The dataset's focus on a single demographic group limits the broader applicability of the findings. In addition, manual annotation, while sensitive to contextual nuance, involves an element of interpretive judgment. These limitations are partly offset by the depth of analysis, the ethical precision of the dataset, and the study's aim to offer a grounded account of mobile messaging practices rather than broad stereotypes.

4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The two corpus investigation tools, AntConc and SketchEngine, were used to analyze the statistics. AntConc was used to create collocation associations, frequency lists, and keyword analysis. These features helped to identify the repeated words and phrases in mobile messaging. SketchEngine was used to find the analyses of word sketches and frequency profiles across the corpus. By using this combination of tools, researchers were able to cross-check and gain both qualitative and quantitative insights into linguistics.

4.1 Lexical traits: Frequency and abbreviations

The interaction-oriented vocabulary showed functional use of digital communication, reflecting practical use of messages. The corpus reflected usage of common words such as “hi,” “ok,” “bro,” “wait,” “send,” and “task,” portraying messaging used to coordinate everyday. Short forms and abbreviations appeared frequently such initialisms were “idk,” “asap,” and “btw”; short spellings were “wat,” “pls,” and “sry” and forms of phonetic speech were “gonna” and “wanna”. Certain stretched words like “thanksss,” “okkkk,” and “soooo” helped to add emphasis and add emotions. Though this writing strategy lacks tone, people still choose to be creative while communicating on a daily basis. In this graphic presentation, the mixed languages actively participate in helping students express their identity, communicate effectively, and build connections in daily messaging.

4.2 Sentence structure and reduced bureaucracy

Sentences in the corpus are mostly incomplete and short. Messages like “Coming,” “Done,” and “Sendquick” are tuned well because both messengers understand the context well. The requirements of longer sentences are only when there is something important to discuss in detail. People do express humor, add emphasis, and express identity by switching between English and Indian languages.

4.3 Emoji and multimodal utilization

Over 1,500 emojis have been diagnosed inside the corpus, with frequent use of symbols, including 😊, ❤️, 👍, 🎧, and 🙏. Emojis are characteristic of marking tone, signaling settlement, softening requests, expressing gratitude, and decreasing ambiguity. GIFs and stickers seem to be humorous or emotionally exchanged, at the same time as voice notes are used for better understanding or multitasking situations. The voice notes add tones that make the content more genuine for the recipient to give perfect feedback.

4.4 Discourse practices

Time-related phrases such as “on the way,” and “five minutes” help people to coordinate in real time. Messaging conversation shows humor, politeness, exaggeration, and memes, which help to connect and create a problem-solving working together. These patterns show mobile messaging is mainly building and maintaining relationships.

4.5 Comparison with conventional interaction

Mobile messaging is quite different from face-to-face conversation because there is no voice or sound, and messages are conveyed or happen at the exact time. It is also different from traditional writing because it does not emphasize strict grammar rules or informal tone. These features make mobile messaging unique, and both speaking and writing have their own rules of casual or informal communication.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings show how mobile messaging remains relevant, encouraging people to use language efficiently and to build connections. Technology with language choices makes it easier for people to connect and relate to the content provided during conversation. Multiple languages express different cultural identities, and such are depicted through emojis, memes, GIFs, and many more. These visual elements are not extra but create meaning to get to the core of the messaging. The digital messaging does not complicate but rather creates a comfort zone for every university student to communicate.

6 IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND STUDY

Integrating language corpora in messaging data can be beneficial for students to understand language efficiently. These texts can support their language intelligence and help them interpret how the language can be used in different situations. Students become aware of how to communicate in social groups and create meaning through visual content such as emojis, GIFs, and memes.

7 CONCLUSION

This study shows that mobile messaging gives rise to distinctive linguistic patterns shaped by speed, informality, and multimodal use. A corpus-driven approach illustrates how users construct meaning through the combined use of text, images, and audio. These findings confirm the value of private messaging data for understanding contemporary digital interaction. Future research could examine cross-cultural variation, trace changes in messaging practices over time, and investigate the communicative roles of emojis, GIFs, and voice notes in shaping tone, humor, and clarity in everyday exchanges.

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