

THE DOMINANT FEATURES OF THE INTERNET LINGUISTICS

AS CARACTERÍSTICAS DOMINANTES DA LINGUÍSTICA DA INTERNET

LOS RASGOS DOMINANTES DE LA LINGÜÍSTICA DE INTERNET

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ABSTRACT: This research aims at the modern Internet linguistics features by carrying out linguistic analysis using descriptive statistics of students in distance learning. A linguistic analysis found that most students used lexical, orthographic, paralinguistic, and graphic features when communicating in an online classroom. A total of 452 messages, containing a corpus of 6,340 words, were analyzed and found that only 23.72% of the total corpus was found with lexical, spelling, paralinguistic and graphical features at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 22.63% at Stanford University, 21.78% at Harvard University, 24.58% at the California Institute of Technology and 22.76% at Oxford University.

KEYWORDS: Electronic discourse. E-communication. Foreign language.

RESUMO: Esta investigação visa as características linguísticas modernas da Internet, realizando análises linguísticas utilizando estatísticas descritivas dos estudantes no ensino à distância. Uma análise linguística descobriu que a maioria dos estudantes utilizava características lexicais, ortográficas, paralinguísticas, e gráficas quando comunicavam numa

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sala de aula online. Um total de 452 mensagens, contendo um corpus de 6.340 palavras, foram analisadas e verificou-se que apenas 23,72% do corpus total foi encontrado com características léxicas, ortográficas, paralingüísticas e gráficas no Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 22,63% na Universidade de Stanford, 21,78% na Universidade de Harvard, 24,58% no Instituto de Tecnologia da Califórnia e 22,76% na Universidade de Oxford.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Discurso electrónico. Comunicação eletrônica. Língua estrangeira.*

RESUMEN: *Esta investigación se centra en los rasgos lingüísticos modernos de Internet mediante la realización de un análisis lingüístico con estadísticas descriptivas de los estudiantes en la enseñanza a distancia. El análisis lingüístico reveló que la mayoría de los estudiantes utilizaban rasgos léxicos, ortográficos, paralingüísticos y gráficos cuando se comunicaban en una clase en línea. Se analizaron 452 mensajes, que contenían un corpus de 6.340 palabras, y se comprobó que sólo el 23,72% del corpus total presentaba rasgos léxicos, ortográficos, paralingüísticos y gráficos en el Instituto Tecnológico de Massachusetts, el 22,63% en la Universidad de Stanford, el 21,78% en la Universidad de Harvard, el 24,58% en el Instituto Tecnológico de California y el 22,76% en la Universidad de Oxford.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Discurso electrónico. Comunicación electrónica. Lengua extranjera.*

Introduction

At the beginning of the XXI century, a completely new direction in linguistics appeared called Internet linguistics. The widespread of the Internet has a big effect on the functioning of different languages in general and the English language in particular (ALEKSANDROVA; MENDZHERITSKAYA; MALAKHOVA, 2017). A variety of texts and discourses can be found on the Internet, and in this respect, the growth of cognitive and discursive paradigms in the learning of this new type of language becomes more and more significant (AMOUSSOU; AYODELE, 2018).

Since speech is an integral part of communication, and people are compulsive communicators, they continue to find new ways to communicate to overcome the distance between people. Internet technology has had a major impact on human life, especially in the communication area. After a wave of technology comes weighty access to various forms of media with the increasing interconnectedness of peoples around the world and the transmission of information. The use of the Internet and computer technology has a substantial influence on the change in language and its use (AKUJOBI; EZE, 2021).

There is a great variety of materials on the Internet, including those where there is a maximum convergence of oral and written speech. In the first place, it concerns online communication (ALEKSANDROVA; MENDZHERITSKAYA; MALAKHOVA, 2017). The

rapid development of e-communication contributes to the emergence of a new type of language used on the Internet. Crystal (2001) states that technology opens new horizons for linguistic research: Netspeak is a new viewpoint for the academic study and exploration of variations in electronic discourse and the expansion of the language revolution within e-communication means. Graddol (1997) supported position that advanced e-communications increase the development of new languages. The revolutions in e-communication can lead to new communication ways that can be created through e-communications.

E-communication is considered an important linguistic tool, covering every stage of human life as well as education and learning a target foreign language. English is considered the most widely spoken language in the world because of its use in innovative globalized media and commerce, which, in turn, has contributed to the spread of the language throughout the world. The use of the Internet and computer technology have a significant impact on language change and use (ABUSA’ALEEK, 2015).

The reality of the cognitive-discursive paradigm in Internet linguistics is evident, and it is used for rigorous research of this type of material (ALEKSANDROVA; MENDZHERITSKAYA; MALAKHOVA, 2017). The need for access to information regardless of time and place has intensified the effects of digital and mobile technologies, which have made adjustments in the development of modern Internet linguistics (UYSAL; GAZIBEY, 2010).

This research aims to establish a pattern to promote the dominant features’ development of modern Internet linguistics by conducting a linguistic analysis using descriptive statistics of students’ electronic discourse in online classrooms when implementing distance learning to establish new varieties of language and its characteristic features.

Research tasks of the article are:

- 1) To analyze the main language features in chatting of students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, Harvard University, California Institute of Technology, and Oxford University;
- 2) To analyze the status of high-speed broadband Internet access and mobile Internet speeds and assess the online education status in 30 countries and the global ranking of social networking platforms;
- 3) To conduct a linguistic analysis using descriptive statistics of students’ electronic discourse in online classrooms while implementing distance learning to determine the dominance of modern Internet linguistics.

Literature review

The dominant features of modern Internet linguistics are that electronic discourse takes on new dimensions, mainly in the way the communication process takes place. Last years' researches have shown an explosion of interest in the study of the language that young people use in e-communication (BARON, 2010; CRYSTAL, 2008; FARINA; LYDDY, 2011; LING, 2005; LING; BARON, 2007; LYDDY *et al.*, 2014; SUN, 2010; TAGLIAMONTE; DENIS, 2008; THURLOW; BROWN, 2003; VARNHAGEN *et al.*, 2010).

The use of digital and mobile technologies in Internet linguistics is gaining an intensive spread (BURSTON, 2015; GOLONKA *et al.*, 2014; SANDBERG; MARIS; GEUS, 2011), which have demonstrated significant benefits during e-communication over the past decade (FU, 2018; HWANG; SHI; CHU, 2011; LAI, HWANG, 2015).

The term Internet linguistics is used to refer to the written form of language used in e-communication and the study of how speech styles have changed as a result of Internet use. Internet linguistics explores new diversities of language that lead to substantial changes in the written structure of language. The researchers, while exploring the dominance of modern Internet linguistics, use various terms to refer to the language used by people in e-communication, such as: “electronic discourse” (DAVIS; BREWER, 1997; PANCKHURST, 2006), “electronic language” (COLLOT; BELMORE, 1996), “computer-mediated communication” (HERRING, 1996), “interactive written discourse” (WERRY, 1996), “Netlish”, “Weblish”, “Internet language”, “Cyber speak”, “Netling” (CRYSTAL, 2008; THURLOW; BROWN, 2003), cyberlanguage (MACFADYEN; ROCHE; DOFF, 2004), Netspeak (CRYSTAL, 2008; THURLOW; BROWN, 2003), and virtual language (POP, 2008).

According to Davis and Brewer (1997), the term “electronic discourse” focuses on how people use language to exchange ideas and views rather than how they communicate. Herring (1996) states that “e-discourse refers to text-based SMS in which participants interact using the written word, such as typing a message on one computer keyboard, read by others on their computer screens either immediately (synchronous SMS) or later (asynchronous SMS)”.

Davis and Brewer (1997) define electronic discourse as “a form of interactive e-communication in which humans use a keyboard and write in the language”. The authors also

argue that the term “electronic discourse” refers to the written conversation of “writing standing in place of voices”.

Electronic discourse is a type of language that leads to substantial changes in the written structure of language, which creates a kind of half-language that lies between oral and written style and has its characteristics and graphology. More and more people communicate with each other through various technologies such as short message service (SMS), Internet instant messaging, synchronous chat, asynchronous discussion forums, e-mail, Twitter, Skype, Facebook, Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp, Line, QQ, Snapchat, Weixin/WeChat, etc. Many of these communications are interactive, similar to a conversation, but conducted at a distance (often in both time and space) and in writing. Facebook and WhatsApp, as language communities, have their styles of identification, codes, and shibboleths, spreading from one-sentence greetings to informative and directive texts such as reports, newsletters, and announcements. They are becoming more and more common in use among students and youth to speed up a communicative exchange or to reach their communicative intentions, quick and cheap ways of expressing words, phrases, and emotions through textual and graphic pragmatics have been developed (AKUJOBI; EZE, 2021).

Sun (2010) conducted a linguistic study to examine the features of English on the Internet and found that by analyzing the characteristics of Internet linguistics, people can effectively use the resources available online and achieve effective online communication. Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) investigated instant messaging language who analyzed a corpus of more than one million words of instant messages. The results show that instant messaging is firmly rooted in the form of modern language. In addition, the results show that there are variations and changes in the language in modern English. Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) summarize that instant messaging is a distinctive new hybrid of language that exhibits a combination of formal and traditional variations.

Young people and students tend to make their message brief in instant messaging, so they use acronyms and other languages to make their chat shorter but still informal for understanding. The linguistic structures of online context are distinctive because they have the same meaning as a standard letter but are different in form. The linguistic features of the written text in an offline context demonstrate the diverse and exclusive structures of the text in an online context. Hezili (2010) classified the existing linguistic features in online communication in terms of (1) orthographic features (alphabet, capital letters, spelling, and punctuation), (2) linguistic features (informal vocabulary, abbreviation), (3) grammatical features (word order, sentence structure), (4) discourse and (5) paralinguistic and graphic

features (alternative marker such as capital letters' use and small excessive punctuation). Furthermore, the main difference between offline and online written discourse is that language in the online context is usually in a nonstandard form (HASAN; MUHAYYANG, 2018).

The Internet phenomenon is more than just a matter of new technologies; it is also a problem of radical changes in human life and thus in language. The researchers note changes in orthography, grammar, the function of punctuation marks, the increasing use of abbreviations and acronyms, and other phenomena that appeared with the emergence of the Internet and mobile communication (ALEKSANDROVA; MENDZHERITSKAYA; MALAKHOVA, 2017).

Nowadays, cell phones are a tool that expands the range of interactions around the world, mainly to strengthen existing networks of contacts. They have brought an important communication culture to many communicators, especially young people, due to their innovative power. The diversity of languages developed for communication on the Internet acts as a means of creating a new media language, different from but complementary to conventionally written English. Internet linguistics has new linguistic structures that benefit students in terms of encouraging creativity in written expression and improving literacy, as well as affecting their command of written and spoken forms of English (AKUJOBI; EZE, 2021).

Therefore, the importance of mobile and information communication technologies as a dominant feature of modern Internet linguistics is discussed theoretically and practically in scientific publications and studies. However, this issue is relevant and open to additional research.

Materials and methods

The realization of the research aim involves the use of such research methods as:

- Systematization of the main language features in the students' chat at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, Harvard University, California Institute of Technology, and Oxford University;
- Systematic and logical analysis, information synthesis method;
- Summarizing the latest scientific publications and statistics published by national governments and reporting organizations on the state of broadband speed and mobile

Internet speed in 30 countries, assessing the climate of online education in 30 countries based on the *Speedtest Global Index 2020 Report*, and statistical data from The World Bank Group for 2020, determined the global ranking of social media platforms for January 2019 (million people) based on the *Digital 2019 Report*.

The linguistic analysis was conducted to determine the dominance of modern Internet linguistics by using descriptive statistics of students' electronic discourse in online classrooms in the distance learning implementation.

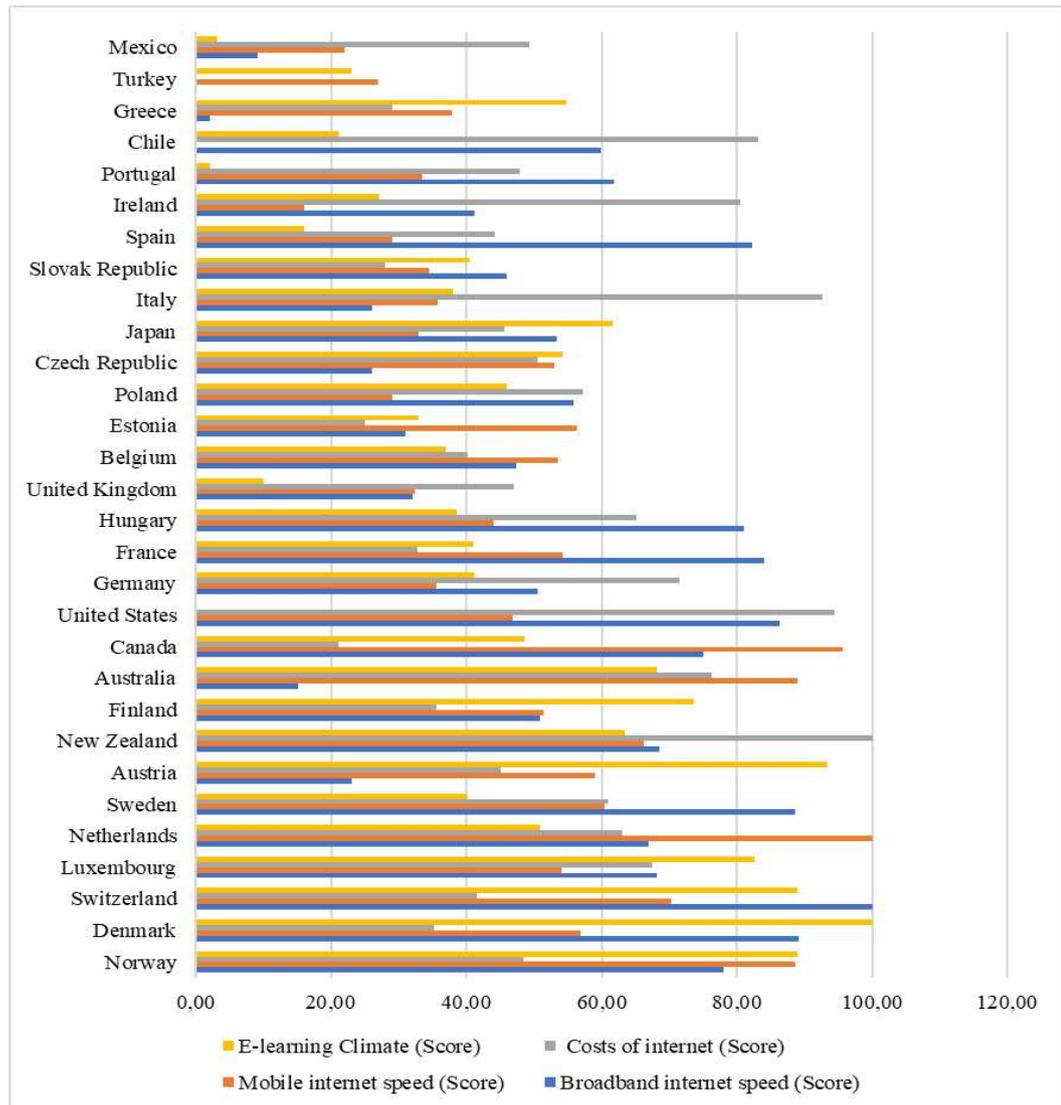
The research was conducted in the Department of English at MIT, Stanford University, Harvard University, California Institute of Technology, and Oxford University. For this survey, 30 students from the MIT English Department, 30 students from the Stanford English Department, 30 students from the Harvard English Department, 30 students from the California Institute of Technology English Department, and 30 students from the Oxford University English Department were randomly selected. The participants of the survey were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program. The average age of the students was 22 years old.

The corpus of this study was collected from the electronic discourse of 150 students. The students provided a sample of their electronic discourse for a linguistic analysis of the new diversities of language and its characteristics, where each student provided two of their electronic discourses. The students received information about the purpose of the study, and the data would be used only for academic use. The corpus of this research was 452 messages of 6,340 words.

Results

High-speed broadband Internet access and mobile Internet access are required to support the development of modern Internet linguistics. High-speed broadband Internet is accessible in the USA, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain and France, and high-speed mobile Internet is accessible in the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Switzerland and Norway (Figure 1).

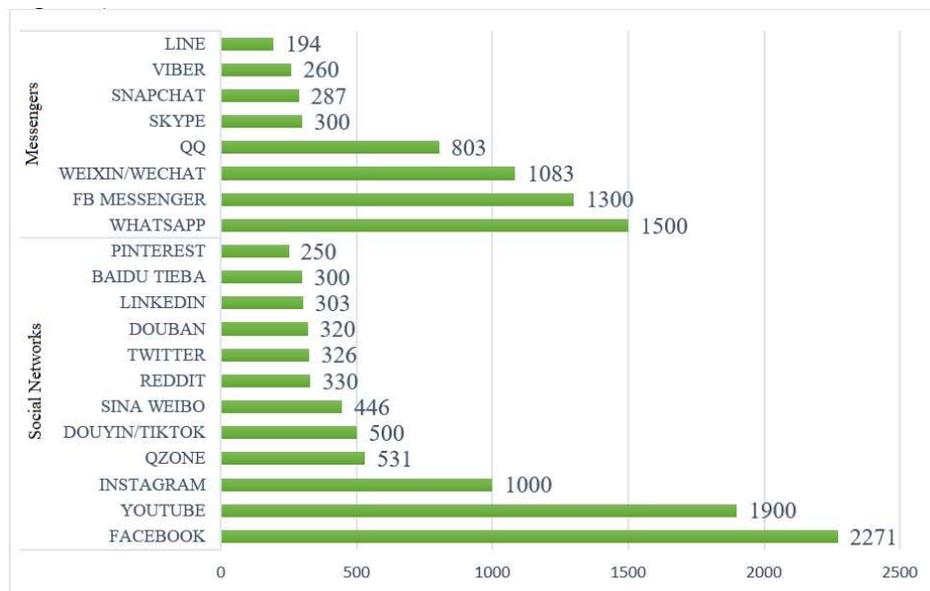
Figure 1 – Internet accessibility statistics for the world' top 30 countries



Source: Compiled by the authors based on official data of *Speedtest Global Index* (2020) and The World Bank Group (2020)

Analyzing the *Digital 2019 Report*, it was found that Facebook’s user count is the highest in early 2019, and it is ranked as the top platform in early 2019. The number of monthly active Facebook users has grown steadily over the past 12 months, and the platform’s latest earnings announcement reports user growth of nearly 10% per year. YouTube is second in the 2019 rankings, with a current total of 1.9 billion users. The current growth tendencies suggest that WhatsApp is not that far behind Facebook and YouTube, especially considering that the rate is 1.5 billion users (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – The global ranking of social networking platforms as of January 2019 (million people)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on official data of Kemp (2019)

The main research results of the dominant features of modern Internet linguistics were students’ messages in online classes and chats during the distance learning implementation at MIT, Stanford University, Harvard University, California Institute of Technology, and Oxford University. The results of this survey showed that students used four language features in chat (Figure 3).

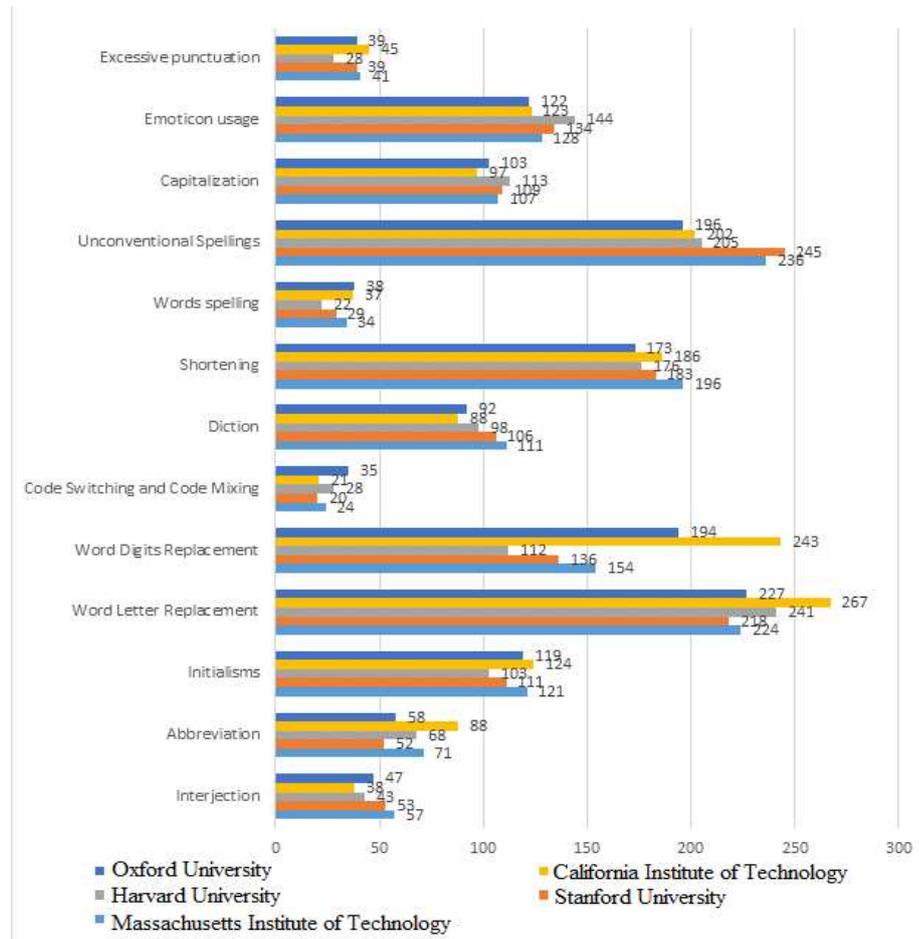
Figure 3 – The language features used by students during online classes

Lexical	Orthographic	Grammatical	Paralinguistic and graphics features
a)Interjection b)Abbreviation c)Initialisms d)Word Letter Replacement e)Word Digits Replacement f)Code-Switching and Code Mixing g)Diction h)Shortening	a)Words spelling b)Unconventional Spellings c)Capitalization	a)Tenses b)Passive voice c)Verb use d)Personal Pronoun	a)Emoticon usage b)Excessive punctuation

Source: Compiled by the authors

During the research, it was found that the majority of students used lexical, orthographic, paralinguistic, and graphical features while communicating during online classes and chats. Thus, analyzing a corpus of 6,340 words, only 23.72% of the total corpus was found with lexical, orthographic, paralinguistic, and graphical features with a total of 1,504 words at MIT, 22.63% with 1,437 at Stanford University, 21.78% with 1,381 at Harvard University, 24.58% with 1,559 at Caltech and 22.76% with 1,443 at Oxford University (Figure 4). Hence, this conclusion contradicts the common notion that students' electronic discourse is incomprehensible by an extremely abbreviated “code”.

Figure 4 – The linguistic analysis of students' electronic discourse



Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 1 shows examples of the new English varieties used by students during online classes and chats at MIT, Stanford University, Harvard University, California Institute of Technology, and Oxford University.

Table 1 – The new word varieties in English used by students during online classes and chats

	Types	Online Form	Standard Form
Lexical	Interjection	Oooow Hurray Aarrgghhhh Opps Yuhuu	Ow Hurray Argh Oops Yoo-hoo
	Abbreviation	LOL Odpmt ID and NL	Laugh out loud Officer development pro- management training Indonesia and Netherlands
	Initialisms	AFAIK ASAP IDK CMB	As far as I know As soon as possible I do not know Call me back

	Word letter replacement	U Y B R	You Why Be Are
	Word digits replacement	4 2 1 8	For Two, too, to One Ate
	Code-switching and mixing	Marc: How was your day? Carlo: Già, Laura, com'è andata oggi? Laura: Non c'è male (looking at Carlo), it was ok (looking at Marc).	Marc: How was your day? Carlo: Yeah, Laura, how did it go today? Laura: Not bad (looking at Carlo), it was ok (looking at Marc).
	Diction	White a second miss	Wait a second miss
	Shortening	Lang Fri Friday Feb Aft	Language Friday February After
Orthographic	Words spelling	Useing Pleasw Phartner ImmedietlyAppyied	Using Please Partner ImmediatelyApplied
	Unconventional Spellings	Gud Shud Sory Thanx Sum Masseg	Good Should Sorry Thanks Some Message
	Capitalization	seeing the other car approaching, i screamed "watch out!"	Seeing the other car approaching, I screamed "Watch Out!"
Grammatical	Tenses	I am searching grammar formula yesterd	I searched grammar formula yesterday.
	Passive voice	The flight is delay because	The flight is delayed because
	Verb use	But I already confused	But I am already confused
	Personal pronoun	If I give she free movie ticket.	If I give her a free movie ticket
Paralinguistic and graphics features	Emoticon usage	😊 😬 😞	:)* :~ :x
	Excessive punctuation	I do!!!	I do!

Source: Compiled by the authors

Discussion

The literature shows the research complexity of the dominant features issue of modern Internet linguistics. The linguistic analysis was carried out on the frequency of new word varieties in English by using descriptive statistics of students' electronic discourse in online classes in the implementation of distance learning. This study was conducted to examine the electronic discourse features of a large corpus of electronic student discourse. In an analysis of a total of 6,340 words, only 23.72% of the total corpus was found with lexical, orthographic, paralinguistic, and graphic features at MIT, 22.63% at Stanford University,

21.78% at Harvard University, 24.58% at the California Institute of Technology, and 22.76% at Oxford University, while most of the corpus was a standard form.

Students during online classes and chats were found to use the following varieties of words in English most frequently at the:

- MIT—replacement of word letter (224 words), nontraditional word spelling (236 words), abbreviation (196 words), replacement of words by numbers (156 words) and initialisms (121 words);
- Stanford University—nontraditional word spelling (245 words), replacement of word letter (218 words), abbreviation (183 words), replacement of words by numbers (136 words) and initialisms (111 words);
- Harvard University, word letter substitutions (241 words), nontraditional spelling (205 words), abbreviations (176 words), word replacements with numbers (112 words), and initialisms (103 words);
- California Institute of Technology, word replacement (267 words), word replacement with numbers (243 words), nontraditional spelling (202 words), abbreviations (186 words), and initialisms (124 words);
- Oxford University, word replacement (227 words), nontraditional spelling (196 words), word replacement with numbers (194 words), abbreviations (173 words), and initialisms (119 words).

In addition, the student corpus during online classes and chats found that the following varieties in language were most commonly used: word replacement, word replacement with digits, abbreviation, and nontraditional spelling of words. This conclusion is aligned with previous studies (CRYSTAL, 2008; FARINA; LYDDY, 2011; LING, 2005; LING; BARON, 2007; LYDDY *et al.*, 2014; TAGLIAMONTE; DENIS, 2008; THURLOW; BROWN, 2003);

Lyddy *et al.* (2014), in their research, found that 25% of the corpus used nontraditional spelling. In a study by Thurlow and Brown (2003), the percentage of the abbreviated form found in the corpus sample is 19% of the total content. Ling (2005) demonstrated that only 6% of the common words in the Norwegian group texts were abbreviated. Meanwhile, Ling and Baron (2007) found that less than 5% of the corpus were abbreviated words, and the rest were standard forms. Farina and Lyddy (2011) found that the most common signs of electronic discourse were in nontraditional spelling, word combinations, and less common

were emoticons, letter-word substitutions, and word-number substitutions. They conclude that electronic discourse is not as unconventional as the media note.

The research results are similar to Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) because their findings demonstrate that there are variations and changes in linguistics in modern English, and electronic discourse is a distinctive new hybrid of language that demonstrates a combination of formal and vernacular variants. The existence of nontraditional language is associated with some words in English electronic discourse, while most of the content of electronic discourse is made up of standard forms. Electronic discourse makes maximum use of abbreviations, nontraditional spelling, replacement of letter words, replacement of number words, initialisms, and emoticons.

So, the dominant features of modern Internet linguistics in the development of information communication technologies will face new challenges contributing to the development of new electronic discourse and e-communication. In-depth research will increase attention to the formation of a methodological framework and the description and study of specific units of e-communication to analyze the patterns of their appearance and characteristic features characteristic of communication in the electronic environment.

Conclusions

As a result of the dominant features' analysis of modern Internet linguistics, it is found that English uses the categories of electronic discourse and offers many possibilities of abbreviation in the e-communication process. Taking all the aforesaid into consideration, even though there is a need to use abbreviations in messenger communication, which are defined as universal. The frequency and number of abbreviations usage will be depended on several determinants, such as language, the tangibility of electronic discourse, and the place where the language is used. According to the research results on the lexical and grammatical side, the following dominant features of Internet linguistics stand out as the most frequently used: extensive use of affixation and word compounding to save time; omission of articles in headings; the use of abbreviations understood only by people in the respective environment.

On the stylistic side, since unofficial sources do not have a clear structure and clichés in the note design, personal blogs and private pages in social networks are more visited and readable than official sources. On the spelling side, it is the deliberate agrammatism if the message is too large, to save time; the use of special characters, replacement of letter words and number words, emoticons, etc., to give more expression and show one's attitude to

something. It is noteworthy that different symbols are understood differently by users depending on the message context requiring certain background knowledge, which symbolizes the presence of the Internet's symbolic language.

The results show that students use electronic discourse when interacting with each other. The suggestion of the present study is that students' English spelling in e-communication will be threatened if they reinforce their use of electronic discourse language. Therefore, there is an urgent need to raise students' awareness of the linguistic variations between the language of e-communication and the standard form. In addition, students can be introduced to the unique characteristics of electronic discourse to increase their awareness of the different categories of discourse.

The practical significance of the research conducted is that the authors' assumptions and proposals can be useful to form an in-depth study of the application of modern Internet linguistics' dominant features in the curriculum.

The results of the current research indicate a critical need for further research on dominant features of modern Internet linguistics to fill the research gap. We suggest researching with a larger number of students, differentiated by gender, to present a clear and more generalized picture of the phenomenon under study.

Further research is seen in conducting a study of modern Internet linguistics with other respondents to refute or confirm these results. In addition, this article is limited to the basic categories of electronic discourse. Future research could continue to explore other aspects of electronic discourse and dominant features of Internet linguistics.

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