



The Effect of Virtual Networks on Iranian Junior Male Students' Register of Written Text

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Vol. 12, No. 6, Tome 66
pp. 231-269
January & February 2022

Abstract

Virtual networks and Internet language have now been shaped by and are shaping language and registers as communicative tools. The present study aimed at investigating the effect which the internet is making on the language, the discourse and the writing style of Iranian male teenager students in cyberspaces of Telegram and Soroush. To conduct the research project, initially, 60 junior high school students from SAMPAD, Rasht, at the ages of 13-15 years old were selected through non-probability convenience sampling joined in a common group on the social media as the members. Then, 837 utterances from students Netspeak were selected through purposeful sampling. Their social and verbal behaviors including written and spoken had been recorded and transcribed for one month. To this end, the data were analyzed into two levels of description and explanation. At the level of description, the features of network discourse inspired by Crystal (2004) were represented. Along with Crystal's classifications, this study achieved to other features peculiar to Persian networks as follows: Substitution for Persian alphabetic system (Finglish), lexical barrowing, text spoken style, spelling mistakes (slip of the pen), humorously idiosyncratic Netspeak, permutation of Persian word ordering, encryption, and punctuation. At the explanation level, the network discourse which was inspired by Gricean (1975) model, revealed that the cooperative principles worked differently and the quantity maxim was flouted without any violation. But other three maxims were in line with the prominent characteristics of the cooperative strategies. The results manifested that cyberspace for the survival of communicative competence generated the virtual variety as marked written register of Persian language for social media purposes.

Keywords: Virtual networks, Internet language, marked writing style, textual register

Received: 1 September 2019
Received in revised form: 15 January 2020
Accepted: 25 February 2020

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Virtual networks and Internet language have now been shaped by and are shaping language and registers as communicative tools. Language itself is a medium of diversity of signs which, due to its important communication role in human social life, has become an integral part of the social life of its speakers and is influenced by linguistic and multilingual changes as well as any cultural changes. On the other hand, the cycle of public communication is not complete without a media tool or institutions that can convey their message. Various aspects of people's lives have been comprehensively influenced by new media, including the Internet and virtual social networks, so that the effects and consequences of these new information and communication technologies cannot be denied (Ghasemi et al., 1392, p.6). In this regard, the most important objectives of the present study, citing the views of Grice (1975), are:

- Representation of the effect of virtual messenger networks on the applied style of Persian text and writing system in Iranian adolescents,
- Analysis of the damage to the body of Persian written language with an emphasis on the effectiveness of virtual messenger networks,
- Representation of differences in the written text and the spoken text of students' speech in their virtual networks messages,
- Comparing and classifying the characteristics of the written texts in virtual messenger networks.

It is very important to note that the role of virtual networks as a fast and economic communication tool is not hidden for anyone, which due to its written nature, plays a significant role in promoting orthography and Persian language development among Iranian youth and adolescents. The present study tried to investigate the effect of mobile messenger networks (Internet discourse) on the Persian language writing system among adolescents through descriptive-analytical methods in order to obtain appropriate answers to the following research questions:

-RQ1: Do the descriptions and representations of the written form of messages in virtual networks have a tendency towards written discourse or they display the characteristics of discourse in spoken texts?

-RQ2: Which of the highest frequency of sub-categories of text spoken style is the writing system of messenger networks among adolescents?

-RQ3: How can the characteristics of the virtual discourse be evaluated and explained based on Grice's principles, and what are the effects of these characteristics on the applied style of text and writing system of Iranian adolescent students?

The Internet, as an electronic, global, and interactive medium, has features compared to other media, each of which has implications for language. Users are limited to a number of hardware and software components to communicate, which must also transmit all text rules and language features via the keyboard. In this regard, in order to address the questions of the present study, a theoretical framework has been considered which is a combination of Crystal (2004) points of view on Internet discourse, and Grice's (1975) principles of cooperation.

❖The six characteristics of Crystal's (2004) written form of messages (Internet discourse) in virtual networks are:

- *Neologism*,
- *Contraction*,
- *Shortening*,
- *Unconventional spelling*,
- *Abbreviation (word-digit replacement, word-letter replacement, word-combination)*, - *Emoticon*.

❖The four main characteristics of Grice's (1975) cooperative principles are :

- *Quantity*: Give enough information, no less and no more;
- *Quality*: Be honest and do not provide inaccurate information;
- *Method*: Address the issue and do not marginalize;

- *Relevance*: Communication should be explicit and concise.

According to Crystal (2006), the language of the Internet and media communication, especially virtual media, influences and changes the Standard English Language for its survival. He believes that the language of the Internet is in a process of constant change. In such a way that this language changes momentarily and daily. Therefore, in the opinion of the authors, the functional language of the Internet, whether in English or in other languages, will not be unaffected by this rapid change.

This research is analytical-descriptive research in nature and identifies and analyzes writing errors in virtual networks which aimed at investigating the effect of the Internet on the language, the discourse and the writing style of Iranian male teenager students in cyberspaces of Telegram and Soroush. The necessary information for writing the background and theoretical foundations of the present research has been obtained from library sources and documents. To conduct the research project, initially, 60 junior high school students from SAMPAD, Rasht (Mirza Koochak Khan High School out of 360 students in total) were selected. The age range of them was between 13 to 15 years old and they were from the first three grades of the aforementioned school - 20 students from each grade were selected - which was done by non-probability sampling method. Then, 837 speeches (out of 2487 speeches) of Internet chats used by them in virtual networks were selected by purposive sampling method. It is worth mentioning that the research data was collected from the Internet discourse of virtual messenger networks that was exchanged between the mentioned high school teenagers. This study was a copy of private chat pages and conversations of people in different groups according to the completed form of their satisfaction. Their social and verbal behaviors including written and spoken had been recorded and transcribed for one month. To this end, the data were analyzed into two levels of description and explanation.

At the first level, the collected data were described based on the theoretical framework of Crystal (2004) on Internet discourse including:

neologism, contraction, shortening, unconventional spelling, abbreviation (word-digit replacement, word-letter replacement, word combination). Along with Crystal's classifications, this study achieved to other features peculiar to Persian networks as follows: Substitution for Persian alphabetic system (Finglish), lexical barrowing, text spoken style, spelling mistakes (slip of the pen), humorously idiosyncratic Netspeak, permutation of Persian word ordering, encryption, and punctuation.

Also, at the second level, the data were explained based on the theoretical framework of the four principles of Grice (1975), including: *quantity, quality, method, and relevance*. From the authors' point of view, in addition to crystal views, they were considered as substituting Persian written system (Finglish), lexical borrowing, text-spoken style, text slip of pen, humorously idiosyncratic Netspeak, shifting sentence elements, coding, and marking.

The present study, based on Crystal (2004)'s views on Internet discourse and the four principles of Grice's (1975) model, concluded that the inclusion of neologism and other language terms in standard Persian vocabulary is itself a symbol of lexical borrowing. The type and nature of these terms and borrowed applications, create a new format of Persian language as an online form of Persian language in virtual networks. According to the authors, the reason for entering this kind of Persian language is to fill communication gaps in a limited time in cyberspace. Also, based on data analysis, it can be explained that changes in the application of Persian language by these users in these virtual networks act as automated social-linguistic devices and to express their intentions under the influence of situational context. Society and observance of appropriate conditions in the Persian language create the criteria for changes and encodings appropriate to cyberspace, and this introduces the style of marking the Persian language for virtual purposes. In addition, in the analysis of the speech style of the text, as a subcategory of the applied style of the text among these adolescents, it has the highest applied frequency, which is a symbol of observing the principle of economics and diligence in any language. The use of dialogues is a factor

that refers to the use of language in various social situations through the users. At the explanation level, the network discourse which was inspired by Gricean (1975) model, revealed that the cooperative principles worked differently and the quantity maxim was flouted without any violation. But other three maxims were in line with the prominent characteristics of the cooperative strategies. The results manifested that cyberspace for the survival of communicative competence generated the virtual variety as marked written register of Persian language for social media purposes.