

Volume 04, Issue 07, 2023 | Open Access | ISSN: 2582-6832

Students' Digital Discourse in the New Normal

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Abstract— With the recent technological advancements, communication is no longer limited to face-to-face interaction in the physical world but has become computer-mediated or digital. When covid-19 pandemic happened, the use of online platforms and social media sites to connect with people has become everyone's norm, most especially to one of the most affected sectors - in schools, among teachers and students. This study examined the students' digital discourse in the new normal. The researcher analyzed the corpus produced by the participants - senior high students from three different classes from three different public schools in Sorsogon City, in their digital classroom, for the 1st semester of school year 2021-2022. This study utilized the qualitative-descriptive method of research, and used (electronic) document analysis, (digital) discourse analysis as well as (online) conversational analysis to understand the discourse features in the students' computer-mediated communication, and the purposes behind their dialogs, as well as how they managed their interactions.

Keywords— computer-mediated communication, discourse analysis, discourse features, digital discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Language is the most central tool to human communication, and one of its characteristics is that it constantly adapts and changes to mirror people's day-to-day lives, experiences and cultures (Shashkevich, 2019). Although for many people, it is not noticeable in everyday communication on a personal level, history records that languages, indeed, change over time and includes all areas of language use, from phonological (Salmons, 2018), to lexical (Chan, 2017), to semantic (Khalid, 2019), to syntactic (Smitterberg, 2021), and even orthographic changes (Jahan, Irfan & Jahanzeb, 2022).

When technological developments and inventions digitized the world, and the use of the internet has become the primary means that ease human's lives, language also inevitably adjusts to this process (Qodriani & Wijana, 2020). English language, as one of the world's most commonly used languages, has been significantly affected by the creation and use of a great volume of neologisms, abbreviations, acronyms, numeronyms, logograms and emoticons in social media (Abbasova, 2019).

Aside from the rapid changes brought by technology, the unanticipated global health crisis has forced each one to heavily rely on the internet and social media that further contributed to the changes in the English language (Kreuz, 2020). It has been three years since the pandemic changed the ways of the world and the daily lives of everyone. Wearing face masks, sanitizing and social distancing have become the new normal. Social distancing and distance learning, the absence of face-to-

face interaction, are affecting how people behave in the world. From the linguistics side, how these social changes impact language use, on a short-term and possibly, long-term basis, are relevant and timely issues to study on (Popiolek, 2020).

The way people communicate changed in an instant, not only in the workplace or academic setting but also within the society, among family members and close friends. However, ninety percent of communication is nonverbal and today in the pandemic era, people are losing a lot of nonverbal cues which makes distant or online communication more challenging (Lindberg, 2020). That is why, it is necessary to ensure that misunderstandings are minimized in discourses.

Discourse, in its traditional sense, refers to any oral or written communication that involves active participation of two or more people in a social environment. As time went by and technology evolved, communication process takes place through, or can be facilitated by the use of electronic or computer medium. This is how Computer-mediated communication (Hiltz and Turoff, 1978) was coined. Computer-mediated communication or CMC refers to various forms of either synchronous or asynchronous human communication that involve one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many exchanges of text, audio, and/or video messages through networked computers (Lee & Oh, 2015). Today, in the digital age, CMC has been more popularly known as Digital Discourse.

Discourse, in society, helps individuals build their identity, their interests, and their social positions



Volume 04, Issue 07, 2023 | Open Access | ISSN: 2582-6832

(Estermann, 1999). Thus, discourse plays an important part in shaping individuals and their society. Today, people live and communicate in the digital world. Discourse is no longer limited to face-to-face interaction in the physical world but now is also computer-mediated.

The worldwide use of online learning has immensely changed the teaching and learning process from face-to-face communication to computer-mediated, either synchronous or asynchronous setting (Qodriani & Wijana, 2020).

The purpose of the researcher in conducting this study is to analyze the digital discourse of senior high school students, and link it to their culture and ethics they practice in a digital setting, as reflected from their CMC, as well as its implications to language pedagogy, especially now that this is how students communicate more frequently in this new normal era, and that discourse in digital contexts, according to Skyes (2019) can be highly useful for language learning and teaching.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to analyze the discourse features of senior high school students in Sorsogon City during the new normal in their digital classroom for the 1st semester of SY 2021-2022.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:

- 1. What are the discourse features of the students in computer-mediated communication (CMC) in terms of lexico-syntactic features?
- 2. What do the discourse features in CMC reflect in the students' culture, and ethics?
- 3. What are the implications of the findings to language pedagogies in the new normal?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative-descriptive method of research. The researcher collected the data from the digital discourse of three different classes from three different schools in Sorsogon City. Two are Grade 11 classes, composed of 37 and 41 students, respectively, while one is a Grade 12 class, composed of 39 students. The corpus gathered and analyzed were entries encoded by these senior high school students on the posts, comments, and reply sections of their Facebook groups. The researcher used computer-based document analysis, digital discourse analysis as well as Internet-transmitted conversational analysis to understand the conversations among the senior high school students, and the purposes behind their dialogs, as well as how they managed their interactions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Discourse Features in Students' Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The corpus produced by the senior high school students in their CMC was carefully analyzed. It is composed of a total of 104 posts, 871 comments and 882 replies. The findings of this research showed that the students used various discourse features in their CMC, specifically focused on the lexico-syntactic features such as Acronyms, Interjections, Terms of Address, and Insertion of 'po'.

Lexico-syntactic features refer to the language use of students in CMC in a lexico-syntactic level, and how their use of words or group of words function in the sentence.

1. Acronyms are words formed by abbreviating a phrase by combining certain letters of words in the phrase (often the first initial of each) into a single term.

Table I. Acronyms used by students in CMC

Acronym	Standard form	Acronym	Standard form
1. etc.	Et cetera	11. no.	Number
2. P.S.	Post script	12. AKA	Also known as
3. BTW	By the way	13. ASAP	As soon as possible
4. LOL	Laugh out loud	14. DepEd	Department of Education
5. e.g.	Exempli gratia (For example)	15. ILY	I love you
6. OK	Okay	16. LGBTQ+	Lesbians, gays, bisexuals,
			transgenders, queer (and allies)
7. JK	Just kidding	17. SLR	Sorry late reply



Volume 04, Issue 07, 2023 | Open Access | ISSN: 2582-6832

8. ff.	following	18. pls.	Please
9. TBH	To be honest	19. SONA	State of the Nation Address
10. IDK	I don't know	20. Others (28)	

Table I presents various acronyms that students use in their CMC. Most of the acronyms used have become prevalent in the time of text messaging, social media and internet writing such as *BTW*, *LOL*, *JK*, *TBH*, *IDK*, and *SLR* while some acronyms are already being used, especially in writing, even before the existence of text messaging and internet such as *etc.*, *P.S.*, *e.g.*, *OK*, *ff.*, *no.*, *AKA*, *ASAP*, *ILY*, and *pls*. Other abbreviations used are names of groups, institutions, or technical terms such as *LGBTQ+*, *DepEd*, and *SONA*.

Admin - January 25 - 😝 How will the things I learned in Oral Communication help me in my college years or career in the future? 10 Comments Seen by 35 Like Comment Comment All comments . It can help me to communicate and socialize with others in my college days. It can also help me in writing and making essays and many more. It can help me by communicating to others, delivering speech, having confidence to speak about own opinion,using some le ons I learned about effective communication and Reply

Fig. 1. Student's use of etc. in CMC

Fig. 1 shows a thread containing an example of a student's use of the most frequently used acronym which is *etc*. Despite the usualness of informal acronyms in social media, *etc.*, an acronym more commonly used in formal writing (Allen, 2019) appeared to be the most frequently used acronym probably because the learners are well-informed that the Facebook group is created for academic purposes.

Etc. or Et cetera is a Latin phrase which means and so on or and the rest. It is used at the end of a list to indicate that further, similar items are included just like how it was used in the above example.

In Fig. 1, what could have triggered the student in using this acronym could be connected to her classmate's answer before her response who used 'and many more' to indicate that there are more alike things that she meant to add, but was unspecified.

The next figure presents another example of a student's use of an acronym – btw. BTW or By the way, one of the most popular acronyms on the internet (Vicente, 2021) is commonly used to insert a new idea into a discussion. Sometimes, it is used to give further information about something that was already mentioned like how it was used in the following figure:



Fig. 2.1. Student's use of BTW in CMC

BTW can also be used to change the topic of a conversation or to bring something up like in Fig. 2.2. Fig. 2.2 presents a portion of the lengthy response of the student on his teacher's question, "Are you in favor of academic freeze?".

He immediately followed his comment with another one, bringing up to the readers that his answer was the same script which he used in their previous activity, a debate.

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Implementing a delay may result in students having no knowledge at all; their desires and pleasures in life will succumb them and eventually the young generation whom we expected to be the "hope" of our country will be the ones causing "catastrophe" and "chaos" to it.

Like Reply 13w

this is my speech in our debate po btw

Like Reply 13w

Fig. 2.2. Student's use of btw in CMC

The placement of *btw* in this example was at the end of the sentence probably because he only added a piece of information as if he forgot to mention it on his previous utterance.

From the corpus, it can be observed that *btw* can be spelled both in all caps or in all lowercases, and can be placed either at the beginning or end of the sentence.

Depending on the writer and the context, the use of BTW can be polite (like in Fig. 2.2), critical (like in Fig 2.1) or anywhere in between (Serrani, 2021).



Fig. 3.1. Student's use of lol in CMC

Fig. 3.1 presents a comment (with a reply) to a hilarious video post showing a group of students playing a game that depicts how the details in a specific message change as it is passed on from one person to another, if uncareful or inattentive.

The student on the reply section on Fig. 3.1 used *LOL* or *Laugh out loud*. This acronym came about during the 80's, but it was during the initial years of electronic

communication in the 90's that it had an established use. Over the years, it has lost its original meaning. Today, hardly anyone expects *LOL* users to be actually laughing out loud. It's more likely to indicate a smile or slight amusement like how the student used it on Fig. 3.1.

However, a Facebook study revealed that most people don't *LOL* anymore. Instead, they '*Haha*' or '*Hehe*' on social media (Sonawane, 2015).

This finding is true as this study revealed the same. Surprisingly, students used *LOL* three times only in their CMC while *haha*, *hehe*, and even *hihi* were used 70 times, 13 times, and 7 times, respectively. See Fig 3.2.



Fig. 3.2. Students' use of haha, hehe, and hihi in CMC

According to Moreau (2020), typing a message takes more time than speaking the words; thus, internet slang or short-form words are used to get the message in writing as quickly as possible, especially that internet users today prefer to communicate in a faster and more convenient way.

2. Interjections, also known as an ejaculation or an exclamation, is a word, phrase, or sound used to convey an emotion such as surprise, excitement, happiness, anger, etc. (Nordquist, 2019)

Aside from acronyms, the use of interjections is also prevalent in the students' digital writing.

Table II presents the interjections used by the students in their CMC, their standard form, meaning/use and example from the corpus.



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Table II. Interjections used by students in CMC

Interjection [Standard	Meaning/Use	Example from the corpus	Interjection [Standard	Meaning/Use	Example from the corpus
Form]			Form]		_
1. Argghhh	used as an	"life is nakaka	11. Luh	short for the	"luh bat lalaki
[Argh]	exclamation of frustration, annoyance, etc.	argghhh!!"	[Luh]	Filipino expression Hala which is used to sarcastically express disbelief or dissent	(why boys?)"
2. Chuchu	a Filipino expression	"set aside personal	12. Mwuaa	a term which	"agreed to your
[Chuchu]	which means "blah blah blah"	issues chuchu"	[Mwah]	comes from the sound made when giving someone a kiss and it is used when a person wants to send a virtual kiss	answer! Mwuaa ♥"
3. Duh	used to comment on	"duhhhh im not	13. Naks	a Filipino slang	"naks hahahaj"
[Duh]	an action perceived as foolish or stupid, or a statement perceived as obvious	iyakin (crybaby)"	[Naks]	word used to express genuine admiration over someone or	naks hahahaj
				something that that is impressive	
4. Ey	used as an informal	"Ey wait…"	14. Oh	used to express a	"Oh, dear.
[Hey]	greeting or to call attention		[Oh]	range of emotions, or when reacting to something that has just been said	Leaders are just like their boss, they just command everything then
5.0	E'll i li	": 1 C 11	15.0.1	-302-0	leave."
5. Ganern	a Filipino gay lingo	"just wait for the	15. Ouch	an expression of	"НАНАНАНА
[Ganern]	derived from the Tagalog word Ganon/Ganoon which means "Like that"	perfect moment ganern"	[Ouch]	one's own pain or in sympathy at another's pain	ouch kasaday palan san utak kooo (I didn't know my brain is so small)!"
6. God/ Ghuddd/ Mygod [(Oh) (My) God]	an interjection denoting shock, distress, or surprise	"my nose is bleeding na ghuddd ⊜"	16. Sanaol [Sana all]	a Filipino expression used to wish for an individual's success or luck to spread to other people	"sanaol napansin (I wish all was noticed)"
7. Haaa/Huh [Huh]	used to express surprise, disbelief, or confusion, or as an inquiry inviting affirmative reply	"huh kala ko disagree ka (I thought you disagree)"	17. Shhhhhhh [Shhh]	an exclamation to request or demand silence	"shhhhhhh hilom na (shut up)"



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8. Hays	derived from the	"kada (Let's go)!!	18.	a Filipino gay	"ma migrate na
[Hays/	Tagalog expression	НАНАНАНАНА	Tsar/Char	lingo, short for	lang kita (let's
Hayst]	"Hay" which is	hays!"	[Char]	charot, which	just migrate),
	sort of a very audible			means "just	char"
	sigh			kidding"	
9. Huhu	an expression of	"Yes, life is indeed	19. Voila	used to call	"So you chose
[Huhu]	emotion which	unfair. Huhu"	[Voila]	attention, to	carefully and
	varies from one			express satisfaction	Voila! You got
	place to another. In			or approval, or to	yourself a
	the Philippines, it is			suggest an	Hawaiian
	used as a term for			appearance as if by	pizza."
	crying			magic	
10. Lit	an expression used to	"The debate was so	20. Yeyyyy	A Filipino way of	"yeyyyy"
[Lit]	describe something	LIT"	[Yehey]	expressing joy or	
	that is exciting or			victory that could	
	excellent			be an alternate	
				word for "Yahoo"	
				or "Hurray"	

Eight of the interjections used are expressions familiar only to Filipinos such as *Chuchu*, *Ganern*, *Hays*, *Luh*, *Naks*, *Sanaol*, *Tsar/Char* and *Yehey*, while 13 of these such as *Argh*, *Duh*, *Hey*, *(Oh)* (*My*) *God*, *Huh*, *Huhu*, *Lit*, *Mwah*, *Oh*, *Ouch*, *Shhh*, and *Voila* are used not only by Filipinos but also non-Filipino English language speakers. The context of the discourse in some of the examples above needs to be considered in order to understand its full meaning or purpose. For example, for interjection 8 [*hays*], see Fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Student's use of hays

Fig. 4 shows a part of the lengthy exchange between two students when the class was asked whether they are in favor or not of an academic freeze where the first one disagrees, and the other one agrees. Here, the student used *hays* to express his exhaustion or frustration about the academic scenario in the country, and just jokingly agreed with his classmate on the idea of migrating by saying, "*kada* (let's go)!!".

In Fig. 4., the first and second utterances, as well as the fourth and fifth utterances are examples of adjacency pairs. *Adjacency pair* refers to the minimal sequence in communication, consisting of two-paired utterances (Alexiou, 2020), where the second utterance is functionally dependent on the first (Nordquist, 2020). The second and fifth utterances are called second pair parts (SPP) which are a response to the first and fourth utterances, respectively, which are called the first pair parts (FPP).

The first, third, and fourth utterances on Fig. 4 is an example of a sender's posting of multiple messages in series, effectively breaking up a turn, and successfully self-selecting to take a number of turns consecutively (Meredith, 2019). This act may result to what is called a disrupted turn adjacency. Disrupted turn adjacency happens when the FPP and SPP of a sequence are not adjacent, but instead are interrupted by other threads of conversation. Notice the sixth utterance on Fig. 4, "kada!!! HAHAHAHAHAHAHA hays". This is actually a response to the second utterance, "...ma migrate nalang

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kita (let's just migrate), *char*", but was disconnected by the other injected utterances in the conversation.

Next, the following figures present the context on the examples for interjections 11 [luh] and 13 [naks] from Table II:



Fig 5. Student's use of luh in CMC

The first utterance on Fig. 5 was commented by a female student. It says: "I'm just saying 'most', not 'all'. A real man will never repeat his(the) mistakes/errors he did if he love(s) that girl that much. Maybe he doesn't really love you that's why he repeatedly hurts you and commits mistakes. Because if he loves you, he might have committed an error but he will not do it again. In other words, if a couple truly loves each other, one mistake is enough to make the person change, and never to do same mistake again."

From this female student's remark, a male student reacted: "luh bat lalaki (why boys?)", probably questioning his female classmate who seems to think that it is just the boys who always commit mistakes in a relationship.

These comments were left on their teacher's post: "Should we always find errors to improve?". This question is actually related to their subject, Organization and Management but the conversation went on, and the topic has extended to more relatable subjects for the students such as love and relationships.

The same female student received another response from a classmate as seen on this figure:



Fig. 6. Student's use of naks in CMC

Contrary to the male student who was in disbelief with his female classmate's statement, this student expressed his amazement on his classmate's 'impressive' thoughts by saying "naks...".

Lastly, the Fig. 7 shows the context on the example in interjection 20 [Yeyyyy].



Fig. 7. Student's use of yehey in CMC

The student used *yeyyy* to express her feeling of delight and success after her classmate finally ended their discussion. This was after these two students had a total of 36 exchange of responses on their argument about legalizing divorce in the country as part of their topic on Claims and Counterclaims.

Interjections are used in oral and written language, and more often during informal conversations. In the age of social media, interjections have also sprung up especially on Facebook (Yatno, Nurkamto, Tarjana, & Djatmika, 2018). The findings discussed above show that interjections are typically used by students in their digital discourse. In doing so, they are able to express a particular feeling without necessarily using vivid words to explain their actual emotion in details.

Interjections, as used in this study, can be defined as syntactically independent expressions which come in unfixed or various forms used as a substitute to detailed descriptive words to convey certain feelings, or used to signify different emotions as a reaction to a former utterance.

3. Terms of address - also known as address terms or forms of address, are words, phrases, names, or titles (or some combination of these) used to address someone either in writing or in speaking (Nordquist, 2019).

Address terms may be formal or informal. Formal forms of address are commonly used in professional contexts such as academia, government, medicine, religion, and the military. They are usually used to recognize a person's authority or achievements. Some examples of these are Doctor, Honorable, and His Excellency. Informal forms of address are used outside of professional contexts, and are used to express affection

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or closeness. These include terms such as nicknames, pronouns, and terms of endearment like honey, dear, and baby.

Since the participants of this study are senior high school students and not yet professionals, it is expected that they more commonly use informal terms of addresses with each other. The following figures present students' use of terms of address in their CMC:



Fig. 8. Student's use of dear in CMC

Dear is used to show affection for a romantic partner or close friend. From the example above, the student replies, "very well said dear or to her classmate who expressed her learnings and reflections about oral communication and its importance to daily life. Her use of dear here means that she considers her classmate a close friend or they are in fact friends or close friends.

The next one is *labs* (or *lab*), a Filipino slang word for *love* or *loves*. According to Kennedy (2019), calling someone '*love*' can be deceiving because it isn't only used to someone a person loves but can also be used for anyone for whom a person feels any degree of affection.

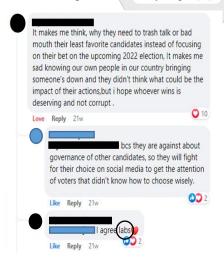


Fig. 9. Student's use of labs in CMC

From the example on Fig. 10, *labs* is used as a term of address to a friend. What may have caused the student to address her classmate, *labs*, is due to the fact that they have aligned thinking about the question raised by the teacher, "What is your reaction about the kind of conversation or the heated arguments about politics among your friends and even family on social media?".



Fig. 10. Student's use of ate in CMC

Ate is a Filipino word which means sister. Usually, this term is addressed to one's older sister but this can also be used to address any woman older than the speaker or any female stranger. According to Garcia (2017), Ate can also relate to the workplace and school. Using these words is a way of showing respect due to age gap or superiority.

For example, a mentee asking a mentor, or a younger student to an older student. This is the case on the example of the student's use of *ate* on Fig.10.

The student here consoled her classmate who was having a hard time understanding a quote posted by their classmate by saying, "...don't worry ate, you're not alone \(\sigma\)".

The next is *Kuya*, the male counterpart of *Ate*, is a term addressed to an older brother, and is also a friendly term given to an older male. This was also used by a student in their digital discourse.

The first utterance on Fig. 11 counters a student's claim on death penalty as the key to lessen the crime rate in the Philippines. Notice that the response (second utterance) is not related to the student's counterclaims but rather he seemed more bothered by his classmate's use of 'he' in her arguments.

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Fig. 11. Student's use of kuya in CMC

As seen from the example on Fig. 11, the female student in the third utterance addressed her male classmate, *Kuya* (plus his first name), as a sign of respect to him who is older. She says:

"Hihi sorry
"THEM" is what I meant. I was just carried away by emotions
sorry kuya --- (FT)
HAHAHAAH"

Here, the female student immediately apologizes for using 'he' as the pronoun to refer to criminals (see first utterance on Fig. 11) which the male student finds offensive (see second utterance on Fig. 11) for generalizing or implying that all criminals are only male persons. Her use of *kuya* could also be a sign of humility especially that she was saying sorry in the utterance.

In relation to this, *Bro*, an abbreviated form of the word brother is a colloquial term of address used as a friendly way of addressing a male, or between close male friends who aren't actually brothers, like this example:



Fig. 12. Student's use of bro in CMC

Fig. 12 presents a male student's reply to his fellow male classmate's answer about a book which the latter has read, where the former addressed the latter, 'bro'.

In their digital classroom, their teacher asked them to recall a book which they have read and answer a number of questions given by the teacher.

From the above example, it appears as if he could relate to his classmate's reason for choosing the book and emotionally reacted by expressing, "broo...i'm gonna cry ©".

Aside from they may actually be friends, his being moved and inspired by the lesson of the story could be the reason why he called him *bro*. On the other hand, some may interpret the utterance as an act of mockery.

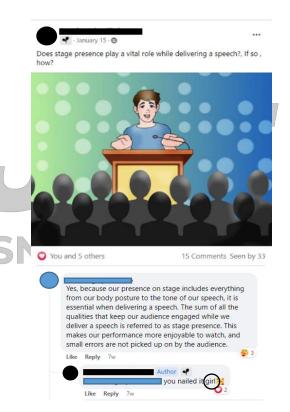


Fig. 13. Student's use of girl in CMC

As shown from Fig. 13, the student in the first utterance asks if stage presence plays a vital role in delivering a speech. Her classmate in the second utterance provides a well-expressed explanation that prompted the questioner to convey her affirmation by saying, "...you nailed it *girl*", as seen on the third utterance. *Girl* is used as a friendly way of addressing a woman or girl.

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Next, the sender on Fig. 14 took two consecutive turns as seen from the first and second utterances. In each utterance, he tagged his classmate's name, and used GIF that do not match the content of the message, as if pissing his female classmate off, and provoking her to engage.

As shown on Fig. 14, the female student on the third utterance engaged and addressed her gay classmate, gurl. In their heated argument, she says, "Acting like the center of attention, gurl? You're personally attacking my groupmate \Box ".



Fig. 14. Student's use of gurl in CMC

More commonly these days, *gurl*, an alternative spelling of *girl*, is used to refer to someone who look and act like a girl but not biologically female (Vigilante, 2008).

Other forms of address similar with *Ate* such as *teh* (short for *Ate*), *sis* (short for *sister*), and *ses* (intentionally misspelled *sis*) were also used as intense conversation in the students' CMC went on.

Table III. Students' use of teh, sis, and ses in CMC

Term of address	Example from the corpus
Teh	"Mga teh, please lang. AWAT NA.
	BALIK SA TOPIC!"
Sis	"HAHAHAHAHA your so ridiculous
	para sabihan ako nyan
	HAHAHAHAHA wag mo kaseng
	personalin masyado kang halata sis
	НАНАННААНА"
Ses	"nakaka wara gana ang kaapin mo
	ses"

The first example on Table III says, "Mga (referring to more than one) teh, oh please! STOP IT ALREADY. LET'S GO BACK TO THE TOPIC!"

The second one says, "HAHAHAHA your (you're) so ridiculous for you to tell me that HAHAHAHAHAHA don't take things personally you're so obvious sis HAHAHAHAAHA".

On the third example, it says, "Your groupmates make me lose interest (on the topic), *ses*".

The examples on Table III depict how students use different terms in addressing one another. It appears like they use these words with one another to appear sarcastically friendly in the midst of an intense argument. This is also true to other address terms used like *baby*, *bibi*, *darling*, *dzai* and *beh/bhe*. See the Table IV.

The first example on Table IV used the address term, baby. Baby is a common way that romantic couples address each other. But nowadays, friends also use this to call each other because it is more like a universal word for showing affection and appreciation to the people close to you (June, 2021).

Next, *Bibi* is a Bicolano (language variety in the Philippines) way of pronouncing "*baby*" which is typically used to address a young girl, or a female friend.

Table IV. Students' use of baby, bibi, darling, dzai, and beh/bhe in CMC

Term of address	Example from the corpus
Baby	"chill baby⊜ ⊜ ⊜"
Bibi	"magkakampihan kami, malamang nasa same side kami (we're joining forces of course because we're on the same side) bibi"
Darling	"Leaders can't have that idea without the woZZZrds coming from the manager, darling. Remember that."
Dzai	"you're asking why I'm always kontra (against) dzai"
Beh/Bhe	"beh, pros side ka diba (you're on the pros side right) (a)" "Tears of joy to (These are tears of joy), bhe"



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The third one is *darling* which is a term that can be used between friends or loved ones (Lassen, 2022).

Fourth is *dzai* (or simply *day*), short for *Inday*, a Visayan form of address for a female either the same age or younger than the speaker, often adopted as the informal first name.

The last example on Table IV is *beh/bhe* which is a variation of the word *bes*, an endearment between friends in the Philippines which comes from the word, best friend (Valdeavilla, 2018).

Ironically, all these sweet and friendly address terms such as *baby*, *bibi*, *darling*, *dzai* and *beh/bhe* were used by the students as terms to address not for their friends but for their opponents on their online debate in their class.

Based from the analysis of these samples from the corpus, the purpose of the students for doing this is to mock the other team, or for them, using these words of 'endearment' is their way of easing the tension between the conflicting sides.

All of these utterances where the students sarcastically used these friendly terms above were taken from a single thread as if the initiation of the first who used one triggered the others to use other similar forms of address.

Next, Fig. 5 presents a fragment of the students' long exchange of views on issue about legalization of divorce in the country raised by their teacher.

The sender of the first utterance mentions her classmate whom she was replying to, raising a series of questions, implying that she disagrees with her.

Instead of answering the questions, the student in the second utterance, questioned the former as well.

The sender of the third and fourth utterances took two sequential turns in the thread, tagging each of the first two senders, agreeing and disagreeing with them, respectively.



Fig. 15. Student's use of bff in CMC

Similar with the address term, beh/bhe on Table IV, which comes from 'best friend', bff, an initialism of the phrase, 'best friends forever', was also used in the students' CMC. The third utterance on Fig. 15 shows that the sender called their classmate, bff.

Bff is mostly used by younger people, especially girls, in informal communication. It is used to refer not exclusively to a best friend but also to a close friend, or if in the case of Fig. 15, they are not close friends, the student addressed their classmate bff probably because they are 'friends' or 'allies' in the debate.

All terms of address discussed above were generally used by girl and gay students. There are however some students who also use formal address terms.

Consider Fig. 16 that shows a string of comments and replies from the question posted by the teacher about their thoughts on the answer of Ms. Philippines during the Ms. Universe Q and A portion.

The first three utterances after the question were left by one student who took multiple successive turns. It seems as if she was promptly typing whatever comes to her mind. First, she commented a thinking emoji.

Then, replied to her own comment with their teacher tagged on it, indicating that she has thought of a response already, and finally, left another reply, providing an additional answer.

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While the student from the fourth utterance partly agreed with the first commenter, it wasn't clear if the student from the fifth utterance agrees with the student from the second and third utterances, or with the one from the fourth utterance, because he did not mention to whom she has the same thoughts with, unlike the student from the sixth and seventh utterances whose answers cannot be misunderstood because they used the tag feature in the reply section.



Fig. 16. Students' use of Miss and Ms. in CMC

Notice that *Miss* and *Ms*. on Fig. 16 were used by the students in their convo. Their sudden shift from using informal address terms to formal ones such as *Ms*. and *Miss* could have something to do with the question which is about 'Ms.' Universe.

Miss is usually used to address girls or young women who are not married or have no other title, while *Ms*. can be used formally to address a woman. It can be used in reference to a family name, but it does not necessarily mean that the woman is not yet married (Denomme,

2021). Other forms of address equivalent to these words are *Mrs.* and *Mr. Mrs.* is used to refer to a married woman while *Mr.* is used to refer to a man, regardless of his marital status (Edens, 2020).

The discussion above presents the students' use of various terms of address in their CMC that ranges from intimate to formal address terms. Through the use of address terms in conversations, the interpersonal relationship and distance between the sender and receiver are established (Qin, 2008). However, as observed from how these students used them in CMC, they are altering the original meaning or purpose of some terms of endearment and a number of times, they use address terms for sarcasm and mockery.

The above two items (interjections and terms of address) that occurred in the corpus, accustomed only to the locals – the Filipinos – such as *Chuchu*, *Ganern*, *Hays*, *Luh*, *Naks*, *Sanaol*, and *Tsar/Char* and *Yehey*, as well as *Ate*, *Teh*, *Kuya*, *Labs*, *Bibi*, *Dzai* and *Beh/Bhe*, respectively, are a proof that Philippine English has developed its own distinctive features, and displayed traits resulting from how it was locally and contextually used (Borlongan, 2011).

4. Insertion of 'po' – Po (and Opo) in the Philippines are words used to express respect and politeness when speaking especially to someone older or someone with authority (Anza, 2020). In the Philippines, saying po (and opo) is crucial in showing courtesy to the person that someone is talking to, usually used by children to their parents, students to their teachers, and even employees to their bosses (Sta. Maria, 2018). The following figures demonstrate how students in CMC use or insert the word po in their utterances.

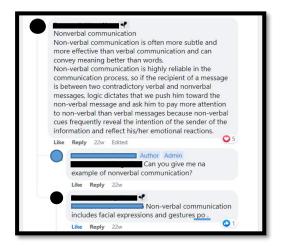


Fig. 17.1. Insertion of 'po' when replying to a teacher

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Fig. 17.1 presents a student's use of *po* in CMC when replying to their teacher. The first utterance is a student's answer to the teacher's question on which between verbal and non-verbal communication is more important. In her response, she chose non-verbal and explained its significance and influence to the communication process. After her teacher asked her a question (see second utterance), she used *po* in her reply (see third utterance).

Throughout the entire corpus, the students used po 75 times when addressing the teacher, and 16 times when responding to their fellow students. The fact that students insert the word, po, in an English discourse, or even if this term has no translation in English or any other language, proves that the learners have high regard to this culture of politeness taught to them as a Filipino, in any context, even in the digital world. However, sometimes, their insertion of po, when communicating with their classmate does not always and totally mean politeness.

not all managers can do their duty right? They hire an assistant to help with what needs to be done with members or employees yes they hire an assistant to help but dont you think sometimes before the leader make her or his decision needs the approval of manager? Like Reply 7w Excuse me from your own word the MANAGER IS JUST THE ONE WHO APPROVES so do you think he/she is useful rather than the leader who think of ways, who inspires everyone, who opens his/her mind for everything and everyone? Like Reply 7w Edited oh really so you are saying that the roots are useless so how can a tree grow without roots? (INTINDIHIN MO ETO HA) 😀 Like Reply HAHAHAHAHA naiintindihan kopo Like Reply 7w

Fig. 17.2. Insertion of 'po' when replying to a classmate

Fig. 17.2 presents the mid-part of the students' conversation on the issue of which between a manager or a leader is better, where the involved senders on Fig. 17.2 already have an earlier exchange of comments and replies.

The student in the first utterance on Fig. 17.2. responded to a classmate whom she also mentioned in her comment. This student engaged and threw a question back to her classmate as seen from the second utterance.

For the third and fourth utterances, another student took two consecutive turns where she used all caps in some portion of her replies, and where she mentioned her classmate in each utterance, signifying that she demands for an answer from her. From the fifth utterance, the student replies, "HAHAHAHAHAHA naiintidihan ko (I understand) po", where po which was supposed to be used to infer politeness and submissiveness was used in a sarcastic, mocking way.

Agreements and disagreements are normal especially when people want to voice out their opinions, values, and choices (Liew, 2016). Based from the above discussions, this is not only true to face-to-face conversations but also in digital interactions where opinions exchange take place as well. However, when interlocutors start to get too heated in the argument, sometimes, inappropriate words are thrown or mean comments are left.

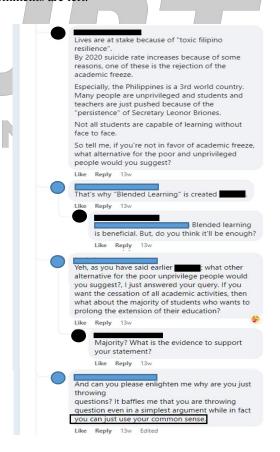


Fig. 20. Mean comment in students' CMC



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Fig. 20 depicts an example of a mean comment left by a student. It contains a part of the conversation between a female and a male student on a thread about the possible implementation of an academic freeze.

It can be observed that the first utterance is a response to the second, the second utterance to the third, the third to the fourth, and so on and so forth. These are examples of *adjacency pairs* particularly, exchanges such as question and answer. Other types include complaint and denial, offer and accept, request and grant, compliment and rejection, challenge and rejection, and instruct and receipts (Nordquist, 2020).

This portion of the thread as viewed in Fig. 20 signifies conversational coherence because as observed, connections between utterances can be established (Berglund, 2009). When interconnectedness in the conversation is achieved, this means that interlocutors have successfully applied *Topic Control* where they have kept the subject of the conversation going by sticking to the topic through asking questions related to it that resulted to the continuous elicitation of response like what can be seen on Fig. 20.

The first utterance above contains the female student's reply to her male classmate's earlier comment who is not in favor of an academic freeze. Here, she presented facts and numbers to prove her point and ended with a question to her male classmate, "...what alternative for the poor and unprivileged people would you suggest?". From the second to fifth utterances, they took equal number of turns and exchanged ideas and/or queries to each other.

On the sixth utterance, the male student seems bewildered about his female classmate's responses and tries to make sense out of them by asking her to enlighten him, but at the same time, it appears that he insults his classmate's intellectual capacity by suggesting to her to use her common sense as if she doesn't have one, just because they have contradicting views.

To say, "use your common sense", has been a tactic of intimidation. From the above example, it seems that the purpose was to shame and shut his classmate. This approach is what Hurd (2018) considers as 'intellectual dishonesty' or 'fraudulent elitism' because this student seems to think that his views are superior than that of his classmate.

This was also similar with an incident in another FB group where three students intentionally looked down on their classmate's thinking ability for having opinions opposite theirs. See Fig. 21.

The first example on Fig. 21 says, "so if you're actually thinking why can't you even answer us something that has sense?", the sender here acknowledges that her classmate responds but for her, makes no sense. In her statement, she implies that her classmate's thinking is irrational, probably because it is contrary to their group's ideas.

On the second example, "...it's obviously you're only relying on what they say and its like you don't have originality", another student attacks the same student where she labelled her classmate 'unoriginal', who, he believed, just repeated and copied her groupmate's answers. Here, he purposefully and specifically shames only this specific classmate of theirs, and not the other members of the group who just have the same beliefs.



Fig. 21. Derogatory remarks in students' CMC

The degrading comments worsen in the third example above where another student audaciously regarded his classmate as someone who has a very small brain when he says, "...let's see where your very small brain will take you when you cannot even keep up with just a simple debate".

This clearly presents the occurrence of derogatory remarks in students' CMC where three students deliberately gang up on their classmate, personally attacking and directly throwing hurtful remarks at her. This was unanticipated because the Facebook groups were intended for educational and research purposes, and especially since the learners are aware that an authority, their subject teacher, is a spectator in the online group. These acts, if uncontrolled, may lead to

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cyberbullying, the act of intentionally and consistently maltreating or harassing someone through the use of digital technologies or other forms of digital communication such as social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms, and mobile phones (Bottaro, 2022).

With the pervasiveness of social media and online forums, the contents shared by users, may it be posts, comments, photos, or videos, are often viewed not only by acquaintances but also strangers, and these are all subject to public criticism, and even cyberbullying.

2. What the Discourse Features in CMC Reflect in the Students' Culture and Ethics

The discourse features in the students' CMC particularly the lexico-syntactic features reflect some significant findings to the learners' culture and ethics. These will all be expounded in this portion of the paper.

A. Convenience Culture

Learning the *lexico-syntactic* features or the words, terms, or phrases that students use in their digital discourse is the initial stage in relating to them, the Gen Z audience. For acronyms, although language purists claim that the growing use of these, degrades the language, it is irrefutable that language constantly evolves in ways that reflect the changing world. The students' use of these social media acronyms reflects the changes in technology, in the society they live in, thus, in their way of life or culture. The rise of technology and the fast-paced world have caused people to depend on the culture of convenience where they seek out shortcuts (Ofei, 2023), even in communicating using digital platforms; hence, the use of social media acronyms have become a ubiquitous feature of everyday internet usage (Ertikin & Pyror, 2022).

B. Friendliness and Unfriendliness

The discourse features in the students' digital conversations reflect the kind of behavior or conduct that they commonly share in the digital space

Another *lexico-syntactic feature* in the students' CMC is their use of various *terms of address* among each another, more commonly, the informal and intimate ones, even in a formal setting such as a digital classroom. The terms of address used by the learners give hints into the closeness or distance of the relationship they have with one another (Braithwaite,

2021) or perhaps, the kind of relationship they assume or want to have towards each other.

The use of such friendly address terms in their CMC discussed from the prior section of this paper reveals the students' friendliness like: "very well said *dear*", but at the same time, their unfriendliness for sarcastically using sweet and friendly address terms such as *gurl*: "Acting like the center of attention, *gurl*? You're personally attacking my groupmate \(\Boxed{1}\)", sis: "HAHAHAHAHA your so ridiculous *para sabihan ako nyan* HAHAHAHAHAHA *wag mo kaseng personalin masyado kang halata sis* HAHAHHAAHA", etc.

C. Politeness and Impoliteness

One of the unique discourse features observed in the corpus is the recurrence of the word, 'po' in the students' sentences. The fact that they add the Filipino polite word po even in an English discourse, and even if it has no translation in English or any other language, attests that the students have high regard to this practice which they carry with them, even in today's new digital world – the culture of politeness, the use of po (and opo) taught to them in their primary years.

However, these students can go from being mannerly to being disrespectful and rude towards one another. As mentioned earlier, the derogatory comments that occurred in the students' CMC was unforeseen since their digital classroom was purposely created for educational and research purposes, and the learners are well-aware that their teacher is an observer in their Facebook group. However, this is now the real scenario in cyberspace regardless of a user's purpose of immersing in the internet - students are dominated and most influenced by technology and social media, therefore, are prone to impoliteness, offensiveness, and even cyberbullying (Hunter, 2012).

3. Implications of the Findings to Language Pedagogy in the New Normal

In the digital age, social networking sites have become one of the most important tools used by people around the world, especially on the onset of the new normal when face-to-face or personal interactions have been limited due to the pandemic.

Aside from communication purposes, social media sites have been used to facilitate essential and meaningful teaching and learning activities in the distance learning modality.

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In this study, Facebook, one of the world's largest social media apps, was used to create digital classrooms, as part of the implemented blended learning modality, for the groups of participants where learning tasks were facilitated by the teachers. The discourse features that arose in the students' digital discourse in their Facebook groups as well as the cultural and ethical practices reflected from these features have implications to language pedagogy in the new normal.

A. Lexico-syntactic features

The prevalence of *acronyms*, *interjections*, and *terms of address* in the students' CMC indicates that these lexico-syntactic features are already imbedded in their online conversations; hence, the presence of these features in students' output or in the language teaching and learning process, may be more common, both in face-to-face and online modality.

The Philippine variety of English in the learners' CMC was evident from the corpus, and solidified by the occurrences of some lexico-syntactic items such as localized acronyms, interjections, and address terms. These features that prevailed proved the existence of a nativized English in the students' digital discourse. Hence, language teachers must not exclusively base their assessment of students' output from Standard American English (the parent language of Philippine English). Moreover, the unique characteristics of Philippine English, different from that of the Standard American English, should not be considered as linguistic errors but as idiosyncrasy that distinguish Philippine English from other World Englishes. Furthermore, language teachers may expose language learners to the actual use of other varieties of English through various literary pieces written in non-native English.

Digital discourse allows English language learners to practice their language skills like reading and writing skills. When language teachers use social media, which is an interactive tool, teachers are able to build deeper connections with the learners, and students feel more engaged in learning (Ward, 2020). The use of digital technologies then plays a crucial role both in the language teaching and learning process.

B. Culture and Ethics

Even before social networking sites and other digital media apps have been used as tools for teaching and learning, and became the norm for formal education due to the pandemic, they have already been entrenched in almost every individual's day-to-day lives (Bernabe, 2021), especially students. Thus, social media serve as an avenue for both formal and informal learning experiences that learners can engage with at their own convenience. The convenience culture that was reflected from the students' discourse features in CMC suggest the need for language teachers to craft pedagogical approaches in their class, maximizing the use of these digital sites, that allow students to learn language skills at their own pace and discretion so that language learning as well as the skills that come along with it are cultivated to the learners in a smooth, natural, and unforced way. This way, their learned language skills will be firmly implanted to them.

The negative behaviors or acts that arose in the students' CMC such as unfriendliness and impoliteness could be explained in Wakefield's (2015) idea that the internet acts like a "digital-fueled alcohol" that liberates people to say things that they would never dare to say in front of the person.

In as early as 1996, Baym in her paper, 'Agreements and Disagreements in a Computer-Mediated Group' claimed that communicating through computers has been accused of encouraging unfriendly and competitive discourse.

Flaming, a hostile online interaction that includes insulting messages between users (Rouse, 2017), or the phenomenon of attacking others online, has been hypothesized to result from "a lack of shared etiquette, by computer culture norms or by the impersonal and text-only form of communication" (Kiesler, Siegel & McGuire, 1984).

With learners spending more time online than ever, many teachers are witnesses to cyberbullying among their students in online classrooms (Boyland, 2020).

Thus, language teachers, when using digital technologies in teaching, should enforce ethical standards or a set of rules on how students should behave online, especially when language tasks entail learners to exchange views or opinions, and argue with, or counter issues that are raised. Moreover, the use of multimodality should be encouraged in order to create intended meaning, provide better context, and avoid miscommunication towards receivers of the message.

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CONCLUSIONS

The discourse features that arose in the students' CMC along lexico-syntactic features are acronyms, interjections, terms of address, and insertion of 'po'. Technology plays a central role in the difference of how these features are used and how the communicative strategies are employed in digital conversations and in face-to-face interactions.

Moreover, the discourse features in the students' CMC reflect relevant insights about their culture and ethics such as their convenience culture, and some ethical issues including their ironic characteristics such as friendliness and unfriendliness, and politeness and impoliteness, and the occurrence of mean comments and derogatory remarks which may possibly lead to cyberbullying.

Furthermore, the students' discourse features, as well as the culture and ethics mirrored from their CMC have significant implications in language pedagogy in the new normal, particularly in designing teaching and learning strategies, developing instructional materials, and using appropriate assessment tools.

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SSN: 2582-6832