# Gender differences in Short Message Service texts among Sandwich students: a Sociolinguistic Analysis

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## Abstract
This paper examined the sociolinguistic aspect of Short Message Service (SMS) language, particularly in identifying gender differences represented in SMS texts. The research applied the qualitative approach on 40 sandwich students of University of Cape Coast. Data collection involved 120SMSes; each participant was asked to forward at least 3 messages. Katz et al 1974 uses and gratifications theory, results show that male students usually send text messages in order to inform and/ or avoid conversation with others during critical moments. Among female students, the most important gratifications remain the externalization of emotions and the maintenance of social networks. The study thus indicates that while men's language tends to be transactional that of women is usually interactional, thereby providing additional evidence of gendered language results also show that Student Pidgin English continues to be male dominated and supports peer-bonding.
*Keywords*: *Gender, Difference, gratifications, Interactional, transactional, SMS*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is part of human life since time immemorial. Scherba de Valenzuela (1992) describes it as:

"Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or nonlinguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes."

Given the fact that communication is one of the basic necessities to human life, it has been considerably improved and enhanced for ease and expedience in every era right from the earliest known communication. Apart from face to face (FtF) communication, other forms of communication can only be made successful by an intermediary. In fact, Whittaker (2002) captures this very well in his statement that "the natural human communication apparatus is constrained in several ways". There are limits to the distance at which speech is audible, and visible behaviour such as gesture, gaze or facial expressions are perceptible. Furthermore, these natural communication behaviours are transient and do not persist over time. These limitations lead us to rely on some form of mediation if we are to communicate at a distance and across time. People have therefore invented media technologies that attempt to circumvent these limits to allow remote forms of communication. This is what is meant by Mediated Communication. It is any kind of communication that uses some form of intermediary for it to be accomplished. The mobile phone is an example.

Ling (2005) suggests that language evolves and the evolution of a new language goes vis-à-vis with emerging technology at the time. One major example of such influence of technology development on language is the preferable use of Short Message Service (SMS) to that of the usual protracted phone call which seemingly results in hybridization of a language. The Short Message Service (SMS), a type of computer mediated communication (CMC), is a service that enables its users to send short text messages via one mobile phone to another or to internet. Research has established that the first SMS message was sent in United Kingdom in 1992 and since then SMS messaging has become a SMS messaging is used for person-to-person communication for a variety of purposes. Obviously, SMS messaging, though recent, is a very popular technology used globally by all categories of people in communicating with friends and keeping in touch with them, or even staying in contact with family (Thurlow and Brown, 2003). Studies have revealed that most messages are sent between friends who share almost the same background knowledge (Hård af Segerstad, 2002; Ling, 2003). Interestingly, Solis (2007) sees SMS as a technology of romancing gadget which allows users to create their own world,

expressing emotions; thus, playing a major role in aiding romantic relationships among young people. SMS messaging is also seen as a technique people use for wooing ladies they admire but afraid to approach (ibid).

In fact, apart from the usual use of SMS messaging for person-to-person communication, it is also used to interact with automated system for buying of products or in the business sphere of banking services for notification of payments and withdrawals of cash. Again, in recent times, financial institutions, faith-based organizations, politicians, educational institutions and other institutions have equally seen the importance of SMS messaging and began to make good use of it. For instance, in Ghana today, people receive invitations to employment, congratulatory messages, examinations, interviews, admissions, warnings and announcements via text messaging. More so, faith-based greetings, especially, during Christmas, Easter, Islamic and traditional festivities as well as birthday wishes, wedding ceremonies and invitations to meetings are now done through SMS messaging rather than the medium of cards. Also, several programmes on electronic and print media in Ghana rely on SMS messaging to engage the public in participating in television contests, radio discussion, counselling and feedback. In essence, SMS messaging has come to stay since it is taken to be a dependable and affordable tool many people use to disseminate information or express thoughts among themselves (Eldridge and Grinter, 2001).

What is quite exciting to many people is how human beings develop imaginative means of making technology in the area of communication work better for them; thus, the creative ability of mankind in a contemporary society needs to be applauded. Research has even pointed it out that due to 'limitation in time and miniature space that comes along with SMS messaging, it becomes necessary for the users to devise an alternative means for sending their messages' (Chiluwa, 2008:96). General observation is that the development of technology in the area of communication has brought some influence on language use and with this development some elements of language are likely to die away as others become a model of excellence.

Gender is defined as socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male (Reeves & Baden, 2000). It is not an ontological state of being that one simply 'is', but rather a process of one's 'becoming' produced in and through social interaction (Deutsch, 2007; Salih, 2002). Gender is subconsciously and constantly produced and reproduced out of human interactions, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life (Lorber, 2003). Human interaction develops and gives cues about what sort of behavior is believed to be appropriate for men and women, giving men and women certain roles according to their biological, social, and cultural states-gender roles (Blackstone, 2003). Gender roles shape different kinds of life experiences of men and women, and these experiences produce different kinds of feeling, consciousness, relationships, skills-ways of being that can be labeled as feminine or masculine (Blackstone, 2003; Lorber, 2003).

Gender roles, according to Blackstone (2003) and Lorber (2003), are closely intertwined with cultural and the different levels of power that males and females hold in society from which a set of ideas about appropriate gender behaviours that govern the lives of males and females are constructed accordingly. Blackstone (2003) and Lorber (2003) state that from the moment of birth, one's gender role is determined on the basis of one's sex category and is dependent upon social and cultural experiences; and once the role of gender is evident, it will continue to develop as long as social interaction takes place.

Since the earliest theorizations on gender differentiation from the days of Lackoff (1975), sociolinguistics has expressed keen interest in gender issues, though through different angles. In this paper, gender is expressed as a construct that is socially determined and alterable (Wodak, 1979; Litosseliti, 2006), and not just the traditional binary opposition between maleness and femaleness as postulated by the difference model. Thus, the term difference here refers to observable gender variations in the use of language taking into consideration the social context since variations in gender are neither monolithic nor given, but are rather fluid (Eckert, 1989; Butler, 1990). For as Litosseliti (2006: p 1) points out: Gender and gendered identities are both social and individual, but also variable: they vary from one generation to the next, from one situation to another, and among language users who belong to different groups in terms of age, ethnicity, race, religion, class, sexuality, or education.

Following the emergence of mobile telephony in the early 1990s (Crystal, 2008; Campbell, 2008), sociolinguistic research has focused on possible gender differences in text messages. Quite apart from micro studies that investigate gendered texting strategies, there also have appeared some studies at the macro level. Examples of micro include punctuation (Waseleski, 2006), non-standard typography (Zelenkauskite & Herring, 2006) and emoticons (Witmer & Katzman, 1997; Crystal, 2008). Macro-level research reveals the uses or personal gratifications of text messages, and how they are constructed by men and women (e.g Herring, 2003; Yates, Mills, Lockley & Doherty, 2004). In Ghana, since the first cellular service, Mobitel, was initiated in 1992, Ghana's teledensity has continued to be attractive and "is deemed as the fastest growing on the continent" (Benoni-Okine & Asamoah, 2007: p.34). This means that many Ghanaians now own their personal cellular phones and also do send SMS to loved ones. Despite this picture of Ghana's teledensity, very little sociolinguistic studies have been conducted into the discoursal use of text messages. It is to fill this gap that the

present study explores the motivations for texting among sandwich male and female university students in Ghana.

Accounting for almost all languages, Thurlow and Poff (2009) compiled three kinds of texting maxims which are brevity and speed; paralinguistic restitution; and phonological approximation. The researchers claim that different methods such as the usage of acronyms, emoticons, letter-number homophones, phonological approximation, non-observation of grammatical rules, multiple punctuation and capitalization have been employed in texting to achieve the three maxims. Similarly, Crystal (2001, p. 229) pointed out that "the challenge of the small screen size and its limited character space (about 160 characters), as well as the small keypad, has motivated the evolution of an even more abbreviated language than emerged in chat groups and virtual worlds".

The experiential literature has been examined in detail and what follows currently is a summary of previous studies on how men and women use language in a social context, most especially, SMS messaging. There has been a growing body of research on the language of SMS messaging. One of the prominent findings documented in the literature is gender differences in language used in SMS messaging. Notably, studies have shown that SMS messaging is gender responsive and that women tend to send more text-messages than men, and women's messages are more likely to be longer and more complex (Ling, 2004 and Rosen et al., 2010). The limited evidence as to whether girls and boys differ in their text-messaging behaviour is mixed: Plester et al. (2009) found that girls used a significantly higher proportion of SMS language of 38% when asked to generate their own text messages than boys (28%), whereas De Jonge and Kemp (2012) saw no significant gender differences in any of the texting behaviours of their samples of Australian teenagers.

Baron (2004) unveils some significant gender discrepancies in relation to contracted forms and emoticons. He established that male users of SMS messaging make use of more contracted forms than their female counterparts, and that females employ more emoticons than males. Similarly, Igarashi et al (2005) discover that first-year undergraduate Japanese female students use their text messages more actively than males in social networks. They reveal that the content of female text messages is different from those of males, and that female teens send more and longer text messages, and get involved in discussions of text messages more than males do.

Exploration of gender differences in relation to the use of address-terms and code-switching in the SMS text messaging of some university students have also been examined. Coker (2011) examines the rhetorical structure of 500 text messages posted by lovers, using University of Cape Coast students, to express love to their partners on a radio show known as 'Love Reason'. The study reveals that men deployed more affectionate lover address forms than their female counterparts.

Similarly, Thomson and Murachiver's (2001) study of e-mail communication establish that both men and women equally asked questions, offered compliments, apologies, and opinions as well as hurl insults at their net pals. However, other studies have reported significant differences in the opposite direction. In a comparison of 36 female and 50 male managers giving professional criticism in a role play, it was realized that men rather used more negations and asked more questions whilst women used more directives (Mulac et al. 2000). However, the study confirmed that men used more words on the whole, whereas women used longer sentences.

Computer-mediated communication, including e-mail and text messaging, promotes self-disclosure and "can be used to relieve tension in interpersonal communication, and satisfies affiliation motivation". Although computer-mediated communication promotes self-disclosure, this study will examine the differences in the way men and women use text messaging as a means of communication. A study conducted by the University of Washington found that at least two thirds of text messages sent by teens were relational based, meaning the topic was social arrangements, salutations, friendship maintenance, romance, etc. It is important to note that the sample was 75% women and 25% men.

In general, women are more expressive and socially oriented than men and women rely heavily on non-verbal cues. Women are more likely to have an in-depth conversation where as men tend to make general statements making the conversation more task oriented. "Women tend to engage in intimate conversation with their good friends, whereas men tend to spend time in common activities with theirs". Men prefer to use communication to gain social status and use their social networks in a task-oriented manner. Face-to-face communication differences between genders and has been shown to cross over into e-mail and computer-mediated communication makes women communicate more thoroughly because of the lack of non-verbal cues.

In their study of Italian youth's use of mobile phones, Fotunati and Magnanelli (2002) explain that girls post longer text messages than boys who typically do not utilize the entire space of their screens, but rather opt for messages of about 40-50 characters. On their part, girls stress the fact that the space fills up easily and criticize boys' inability to interpret text messages. According to the co-authors, girls send their messages in 'plain language' without too many expressions, references and suggestions. As well, Ling (2005) add that females are more active and more pragmatic users of text messages than their male counterparts. He observes that females send longer text messages than do males, and that the uses of emoticons or 'smiley' face icons are

more characteristic of the former than the latter. For Herring and Zelenkauskaite (2006), emoticons and other textual representations of smiling and laughter are more often used by women than by men in both synchronous and asynchronous CMC, perhaps as an indication of women's tender and more affectionate behavioural dispositions. Also, in a German study of asynchronous discussion forum, Waseleski (2006) opines that exclamation points are used more often by females. However, rather than functioning as a marker of excitability, as has popularly been claimed, the exclamation points were analyzed by Waseleski as an indicator of friendly interaction.

Differences in gender are accounted for in respect of the differing social values males and females attach to SMS text messages. Lorente (2002) in a Spanish study holds that more among men than women, the mobile phone is seen as an instrument to organize life and arrange dates, contacts and meetings. This view is shared by Oksman and Rautianen (2002) who believe that "the mobile phone is generally associated with efficiency in the use of time and organization of social relationships" (p.29). Contrarily, however, the Finnish authors hold that SMSing serves as a "virtual fraternity" more among young women than men, which according to them emphasizes men's social identity and social network. The authors further maintain that women's social networks are larger and more complex than men's, and this, like other studies, confirms why females send more messages than their male counterparts. Thus, the literature clearly indicates that SMS gender gratification under researched especially among sandwich university students in Ghana.

The main interest of this study is to examine and evaluate the language of mobile phone SMS among sandwich students of the University of Cape Coast in order to bring out the gender differences and their verbal behaviour expounded in these text messages. From the assumption that language varies in relation to the different users, this work sets out to compare how texters of the same university use SMS messages to communicate. The differences if found could help us to avoid communication confusion or misunderstanding between genders. The paper addresses the question of whether gender as a social category is expressed and constructed through texting. Thus, this research paper attempts to answer the following questions:
1.      Are there any gender differences in the in the use of SMS among students in a Ghanaian university?
2.      What verbal behaviours, if any, are evident in the use of SMS among students in a Ghanaian university?

## II.      THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I draw mainly on uses and gratifications theory (henceforth, UGT). Originally grounded in media studies and mass communication, the theory was first introduced by Katz in the 1970s when he held that people use the media to their benefit. Another assumption of UGT is that in the mass communication process, much initiative in linking need/gratification and the media choice lies with the audience member. For such communication scholars as Mc Quail (1987), Ruggiero (2000) and Littlejohn (2000), UGT thus springs from the functionalist and descriptivist approach. With the popularization of the internet, telecommunication and computer-mediated communication, the importance of UGT has been critically assessed. Ruggiero (2000) posits that "the timely intervention of CMC has bolstered the theoretical potency of UGT by allowing it to stimulate research into a proliferating telecommunications medium" (p.27). He adds that the primary strength of UGT is its ability to permit researchers to investigate mediated communication via communication content and psychological gratifications within a particular cultural context. For example, the use of text messages promotes social contact, entertainment and information dissemination (Lorente, 2002; Riviere, 2002). The theory was therefore pertinent in the analysis of the data. This is particularly true because it enabled the present researcher to identify gender variations in the gratifications of SMS text messages among sandwich students in a Ghanaian university. The theory is relevant to sociolinguistics because sociolinguistic studies emphasize what language users do with language rather than prescribe how the language should be used. For this reason, a key assumption in both UGT and sociolinguistics in use (Katz et al., 1974; Brown &Yule, 1983). This assumption recognizes that language users choose to appropriate their language in response to meeting specific communicative ends. Evidently, texters often ignore linguistic violations in their messages because "what matters is not that it conforms to grammatical rules but the fact that it communicates, and is recognized by its receivers as coherent" (Cook, 1989 as cited in Chiluwa, 2008: p.12)

## III.      METHODOLOGY

The study was rooted in the qualitative research paradigm. This type of research is "a very personal process because two researchers analyzing a transcript will probably come up with different results" (Dawson, 2002 p. 128). In qualitative research, researchers are concerned with finding out how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structures of the world (Cresswell, 1994). The goal of this kind of research, Altheide (1996: p.42) posits, "is to understand the process and character of social life and to arrive at meaning types, characteristics, and organizational aspects of the documents as social products in their own right, as well as what they claim to represent". The author adds that grounding the assessment of the social world in a qualitatively

oriented research helps to preserve the processual character of social life (p. 44). Punch (1998) also sees qualitative analysis as comprising multiple methodologies and research practices for undertaking research of field or life situations that are reflective of everyday life, groups, societies and organizations. In this light, the present researcher was interested in describing and understanding the discoursal uses of text messages among male and female students in a Ghanaian university.

The study was conducted among 40 undergraduate sandwich students at the University of Cape Coast, a Public University in Ghana. The University of Cape Coast was selected because it can be described as a microcosm of the ethnolinguistic structure of Ghana. This is because the polyethnic nature of the university community brings together students. The University can be described as a linguistic pot-pourri because of the representation of people from different parts of Ghana. Finally, this site was chosen on account of its proximity to the researcher because the researcher was a sandwich student.

### 3.1 Data Collection

A corpus of 120 text messages was gathered from randomly selected participants. Participants were required by the researcher to forward SMS texts they had written to friends and relatives and not those they had received for ethical and methodological reasons. Ethically, it is not proper for the researcher to ask for messages a respondent has received since implicitly one includes data from persons who have not given their consent to participate in the study. Methodologically, one does not know the linguistic and social backgrounds of the senders for messages a respondent has received. I tried to be as loyal and faithful as possible to the original texts. Sandwich undergraduates were selected since they are more youthful and so show a greater interest in text messaging (Riviere, 2002). The data were collected using the sampling method. The reason is that it is not easy to access text messages because they are often private, intimate and illicit (Kaseseniemi & Rautiaianen, 2002; Crystal, 2008). The sample size comprised 20 male and 20 female sandwich students. The rationale was to maintain gender balance and prevent the occurrence of any bias. The data were gathered from participants from hostels, lecture theatres on the main campus through negotiation. Participants were given a particular mobile number where their messages were forwarded in order to maintain objectivity in line with Kaseseniemi & Rautiainen (2002), Thurlow (2003) and Aboagye-Aniagyei (2009). Unfilled slots, templates and clichés texts were excluded from the data. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics "in order to describe, summarize and reduce to manageable forms the properties of mass data" (Fraenkell & Wallen, 2000: p. 211)

## IV.  RESULTS

This part presents the findings of the study. The analysis is done with reference to the research questions. Gender differences in the use of SMS among sandwich university students in UCC. This sub-section discusses observable gender differences in the use of text messages among sandwich university students in UCC. The table below presents some gratifications identified in the data.

| Gender | MALE | FEMALE |
|---|---|---|
| Showing emotion | 41.7% | 58.3% |
| Social orientation | 43.3% | 56.7% |
| Information | 62.5% | 37.5% |
| Well wishes | 54.2% | 45.8% |
| Conversation avoidance | 100% | 00% |

**Table 1:** The distribution patterns of texting among male and female sandwich students

The table above illustrates the distribution patterns of texting among male and female sandwich university students at UCC.

## V.  DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Showing Emotion

The data paint the picture that more women than men send messages to show their emotions. Women are generally known for their warmth, emotional sensitivity and tender-heartedness (Zelenkauskaite & Herring, 2006). Although it is difficult to determine the emotional content of mobile messages given the absence of context, most of the messages in the data express the themes of gratitude, love, happiness, sadness, romance and frustration. The following are some examples:

1.      *Don't u eva call this line again, aboa like that*

In the first text, the anonymous writer expresses his or her anger to someone who is not liked and does not want to have anything doing with the person. For this person distance is not a barrier to vent his or her spleen. Thus, via this text message the sender of the text directs his or her emotion to his or her target. The texter may have found the SMS medium more appropriate to externalize his or her emotion than other media such as face-to-face

interaction. This is because the technology of SMS affords distance and is therefore convenient for shy-looking persons.

2.      *Honey u r e best thing tat has eva happen 2 me, I luv u*

In text 2, the sender of the above message expresses his or her gratitude to the recipient. The texter is grateful because of the recipient's concern and support in making the texter's life stress free. According to Lobet-Maris and Hennin (2002), the number of text messages received is an expression of the individual's social importance. Women thus could be described as more gregarious than men since they usually share intimacy than men do. For example, women share the secrets of their love life with their peers as could be seen in the following messages:

3.     *Vero, John has finally proposed marriage to me, u knw wat he did tat wen he was fuckin me*

In short, women resort to text messages in order to express their emotional dispositions to their ones due to the immediacy of the SMS technology. This affords them the opportunity to maintain their virtual fraternity. Girls are more talkative and use more relational-type expressions than boys who use an assertive-type language while boys are less able to show emotion-based expressions like sharing of self and empathy (Leaper & Smith 2004). In addition, girls feel that they are better in showing feelings (Michaud, Bégin & McDuff 2006) and emotions (Balakrishnan & Batat 2010). Equally interesting is that females who are active in SMS messaging too often fill their text messages with references and social gossip (Thurlow & Poff 2009). Hence, it can be said that women are more talkative and "emotional" than men who are more "practical".

**5.2 Information dissemination and the maintenance of social contact**

The above table indicates that males usually send SMS text messages in order to inform loved ones, while among women SMS is used for the maintenance of social networks. Thus, it could be said that language use among males is more transactional while among females it tends to be interactional (Brown and Yule, 1983; Crystal, 2008). From the table, men recorded 62.5% compared to 37.5% represented women. This observation is what Brown and Yule (1983) term "primarily transactional language" given that "we assume that what the speaker or writer has primarily in mind is the efficient transference of information" (p.2). Accordingly, such sociolinguists as Eckert (1989), Cameron (1998), and Tannen (1994) have commented on the tendency of women to use conversation predominantly as a tool for facilitating social interaction, while their male counterparts are more prone to use conversation for conveying information. Certainly, these claims disconfirm Aboagye-Aniagyei's (2009: p.22) view that "the least representation of communication orientations and themes is informational". Informational- Orientations can be classified into three: (1) personal/social, (2) academic and (3) receiver's whereabouts. Some examples are cited below:

4. *Lecture 2day @ 3pm @NLT*

5. *@ Goil*

6. *I m not feeling v wel can u get the lecture notes for me pleas*

In respect of social contact, females recorded 56.7% compared to 43.3% that of males. This claim is similar to Oksman and Rautianen's (2002) view that women have larger and more complex networks than those of men. Examples of messages sent by females include the following:

7. *Wil u by I fish?*

8. *Wen wil u be free so tat we can talk*

9. *I am goin 2 taw wil u accompany me?*

10. *I luv u more honey. Reach u l8r*

**5.3 Well-wishes and Conversation Avoidance**

The analysis also indicates that males express well-wishes than their female counterparts. Men recorded 54.2% compared to 45.8% that of women. The messages are in the admonition, encouragement, success and general welfare. Below are some examples:

11. *I wish u all e best in ur quiz*

12. *I wish u e best n good luck*

13. *Don't b sad, b hapi 4 God is in control*

14. *Wish u a hapi Father's Day*

One other significant difference between male and female students was in their conversation avoidance ability. According to the data, no female student used SMS in that respect probably because they may not be seen as being piquancy. Men may, however, avoid conversation even with loved ones when busy:

15. *txt I'm in lectures*

16. *wld like to finish, see u l8r.*

**5. 4 Verbal behaviour**

Pidgin English and code switching and code mixing were obvious in the data. The analysis of the data shows that Student Pidgin English is used more widely among male students. SPE is a mesolectal variety of Ghanaian Pidgin English spoken mainly by students (in higher institutions of learning) from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Sekyi-Baidoo (2002) describes SPE as an emergent sub-variety that has the tendency of applying semantic change and restrictions to English words as well as being noted for the use of abbreviated forms of Standard English words (p.70). According to Dako (2000), SPE is spoken by highly educated males that have alternative codes. She further maintains that this type of pidgin serves the purposes of bonding and peer grouping and is an identity marker among male students. Thus, it was found that 6.2% of the data were Pidgin text messages sent by males while females posted only 1.4% in that respect. This may be because women usually shy away from using Pidgin English to avoid being seen as not properly educated or 'unladylike' (Dako, 2000). Example of pidgin messages texted by male students include:

17. *Papa, I dey Goil, I wan chill small*
(Paraphrase: I am at Goil enjoying)
18. *I dey bell u waa, you no dey respond*
(Paraphrase: I am calling you and you are not picking up the call)
19. *I bell u waa wer u dey*
(I have called you severally, where are you?)
Compare the above examples to those texted by their female counterparts:
20. *Why u go chiw?* (Why will you chew?)
21. *Where you dey?* (Where are you?)

In both instances, the items ***dey*** and ***u go*** were used to express their knowledge of the code, though it cannot be compared to the finesse of their male counterparts. Pidgin is an autonomous code with its own rules, distinct from both its substrate(s) and its superstrate. Deuchar (1988) appears to recognize the gender differentiation in speech as an aspect of inequality of power in gender relations. She therefore explains female conformity in linguistic behavior as essentially a face-saving strategy. The pidgin of the female students cannot be compared to the finesse of their male counterparts because it may mean that female students aim at a good command of the spoken English and are more conscious of speaking correctly and might therefore not want to contaminate their speech with pidgin. Men and women have basically different bonding patterns, men bond around occupational patterns whereas women bond through face saving appearance. Female students may see pidgin as a language of little use to them or as a prestige marker.

**5.5 Code-mixing and code-switching**

It is known to be a common linguistic behaviour in multilingual settings. In the context of SMS, code-mixing is not only restricted to "English" and "pidgin" mixing. A number of codes (which are created by the users themselves) are available for users to express themselves in different situations. This section proposes a classification of "codes" that are commonly adopted and practised by university students.

There were instances of code switching more among females than among males. This is represented by 7.2% and 3.8% respectively. Ofulue (2008) has observed that one of the motivations for code-switching is that certain formulaic expressions are best communicated in the language within which they were created. She argues that code-switching invests text messages with a degree of naturalness. Al-Khawalda (2008) also explains that texters switch codes in order to express such emotional feelings as love and admiration (p. 205). The Ghanaian culture is not left out:

22. *Forget work baa daben, we will not keep long.* (English/mother tongue)
23. *Don't u eva call this line again, aboa like that.* (English/mother tongue)
24. *Look wasei paa*

In text 22, the writer uses Akan, the most widely spoken Ghanaian language with over 60% of both natives and non-native speakers (Obeng, 1997; Nyarko, 2008), within the matrix English with its official policy of using Akan. The embedded code "baa da ben" may be translated to mean 'how long has it been in existence', in effect the texter does not care about the work been done by the recipient however the texter is only interested in herself or himself. In text 23, the sender is so angry with the caller that the best way shows how angry the person is by texting and eventually rain an insult on the victim. The embedded code "aboa" may be translated to mean an insult "animal". Also, in text 24, the text is in Akan which may be translated to mean "you are spoilt too much" one could see that there is a kind of relationship between the sender and the recipient which is a personal and an intimate one.

## VI.   IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

These findings have a number of implications. First, this paper is a remarkable contribution to studies on the construction of identity in the area of Linguistics. It adds to our knowledge of how real people in real

places use language to identify themselves as either individuals or groups. Another implication is that, alongside the technology, social practices and interpersonal factors are likely to shape text. Moreover, this paper broadens our horizon of how sandwich male and female university students use language to devise certain pragmatic ways of texting messages in response to their daily gratifications. The various shortening strategies indicate that texters are communicatively competent because they have knowledge of the variegated domains of language use.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This work has explored gender variation in the use of text messages among sandwich undergraduates of the university of Cape Coast, employing uses and gratifications theory. One finding of the study is that the language of men used in the text is mainly transactional while that of women tends to be interactional (Brown & Yule, 1983; Crystal, 2008). Specifically, the results of the study show that many male students than females tend to use mobile messages to send information, wish loved ones well and occasionally avoid conversing with others. Females, on the other hand, are noted for depicting their emotions as well as maintain social contact. Also, it was observed that Student Pidgin English is more common among male university students, and that it serves as a marker of solidarity and identity rather than a signal of incompetence. Finally, the study reveals that male students switch codes when texting more than their female's counterparts.

## VIII. FUTURE RESEARCH

Researchers can carry out a comparative study on how gender is represented in English text books. Other studies can be conducted through the analysis of the gender equality paradigm. Again, researchers can look at the impact of age and gender on linguistic choices in SMS messaging.

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