

## Netspeak features in Facebook communication of Malaysian university students

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### ABSTRACT

Social media communication uses a written platform but fosters spoken-like communication which challenges what is known about formal and informal language features of communication as most of the informal language features are part of spoken communication. The research examined netspeak features in Facebook communication of Malaysian university students. Data for analysis of discourse features of Netspeak were taken from naturally occurring conversations of 24 users in Facebook's status posts where respondents were asked to submit copied texts of authentic conversations within their social circle. Preliminary analysis revealed the use of creative word formations which include dropping of vowels, homophones, word compression, and the usual use of "x" for negation. Also, punctuations were adapted to accentuate intended meanings. Another feature of netspeak is code switching using borrowed words from other languages which the university students did not usually use in their daily conversations. The findings of the study on discourse features of social media communication shed light on areas where differences between spoken and written language features are getting fuzzy.

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## 1. Introduction

Social media communication is blurring the line between written and spoken communication. The nature of social media communication is that it is typed, written in mode and bite-sized but because it is synchronous, it is similar to spoken language. Social media communication has the interactivity of spoken interactions, and the distance in time and space is reduced with the exchange which happens in real-time. Interactants respond to each other in a matter of seconds. While they may be separated by some physical distance, the instantaneity of their exchange resembles that of a telephone conversation albeit taking place through the written medium of SMS, Facebook,

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WhatsApp and the like. Therefore, social media communication falls in between written and spoken language. Speaking involves face-to-face interaction, contracted, prosodic, error-bound; whereas writing does not involve face-to-face interaction, is elaborated, static, and can be error-free [1].

There are several key differences between speech and writing [1]. Firstly, speech is time-bound, dynamic and transient involving interaction between participants who are usually present in the same location; while writing is space-bound, static and permanent where the writer is usually distant from the reader. In other words, written communication is put on record at the point it is created, and when it is read at some other time whether in the same place or in another place, the message has a time and space signature to it. Secondly, there is no time lag between production and reception of speech whereas there is a time lag between the production and reception of written messages. This is what is meant by the instantaneity of spoken interactions which often take place face-to-face and what is said is immediately decoded by the listener. Even for spoken interactions in which the interactants are geographically distant like in the case of telephone calls, the instantaneity is still present – unlike the case of written communication where there is some time-lag. Thirdly, speech relies on extra linguistic cues like facial expression and gesture; as compared to writing that lacks visual contact. Fourthly, speech uses abbreviated words and constructions such as “isn’t” and “he’s”, in contrast to writing which has elaborately balanced syntactic patterns and some are long sentences, particularly in legal documents. The fifth difference between speech and writing lies in the function of the communication. Speech is very social and used for phatic functions but writing is suited for recording facts and communication of ideas for memory and learning. Because of the instantaneity of spoken communication, there is no opportunity to withdraw an utterance once it is made. In contrast, errors in writing can be corrected in later drafts before it is sent to the reader. Because of the permanence of written communication, people are also usually more careful than when they are talking. Lastly, speech has unique features of prosody where intonation, tempo, stress and other tones are involved. On the contrary, unique features in writing include pages, lines, capitalisation and punctuation.

Social media communication uses a written platform but fosters spoken-like communication which challenges what is known about language features of spoken and written communication. In the context of the differences between speech and writing, social media communication is like writing in these aspects:

- Space-bound, static and permanent;
- Absence of extra linguistic cues like facial expression and gesture, and compensated by the use of emoticons; and
- Features in writing such as pages, lines, capitalisation and punctuation.

On the other hand, social media communication is like speech in these aspects:

- Almost no time lag between production and reception of speech provided there are no technological glitches;
- Use of abbreviations and shorter sentences; and
- Social and “phatic” functions of communication.

Social media communication shows features of both spoken and written communication, for example, it can be argued that social media communication is both time- and space-bound. In addition, the unique features of writing, particularly punctuation and capitalisation are being used in different ways in social media communication to provide extra linguistic cues which are provided by facial expressions and gestures in speech.

The most common feature of social media communication that is highlighted is creative word formation [2]. For example, net users are actively using initialisms to shorten their conversation in social media. Initialisms are abbreviations and acronyms, prominent usages are “LOL” for “laugh out

loud”, “OMG” for “oh my god”, “WTF” for “what the fuck” etc. The Internet has paved a way to the increased usage of these word formations. A study of a 31,000-word corpus from a bulletin board chat room “Ohnotheydidnt” showed the frequent use of initialisms in informal English. Using an online programme called Word Frequency Counter, initialisms in the Corpus of Contemporary American English were analysed. The top ten most frequently used initialism are “LOL” for “laughing out loud”, “OMG” for “oh my god”, “WTF” for “what the fuck”, “BTW” for “by the way”, “TBH” for “to be honest”, “IMHO” for “in my humble/honest opinion”, “IKR” for “I know right”, “IRL” for “in real life”, “OFC” for “of course”, and “FYI” for ‘for your information’. These initialisms were reported to make up 546 (or 1.72%) of the 31,000 words in the corpus. Five initialisms occurred more than 20 times in the corpus, and “FYI” was the most popular (372 occurrences), followed by “LOL”, “OMG”, “WTF” and “BTW”. Usage of initialisms rapidly increased in the 2005-2009 period. However, “FYI” was shown to have peaked and declined rapidly from the years 2005-2009 to date. The findings of this study showed that social media communication is changing the way how language is used, particularly in making conversation shorter.

The formality of social media language varies. A group of researchers compared the linguistic and psycholinguistic features of Twitter with other media such as SMS, chat, email, blogs, magazines and newspapers [3]. It was thought that the usage of singular pronouns like “I” and “you” which would be replaced with “i” and “u” respectively, but this was not true as Twitter users were found to retain the original spelling. It was also found that language used by Twitter users was more similar to email and blogs, which led to the researchers to believe that the users posted Tweets after some deliberation. This makes Twitter a more serious platform than SMS and online chat. Furthermore, intensifiers found in Tweets showed dominant usage of the word “really” instead of “very” which tended to be used by the younger and older generation respectively. On the other hand, Tweets were reported to have higher lexical density than SMS, chat and email. Tweets contain more meaning words because of the 140-character limit for each Tweet. Social media also varied in the use of tenses for making temporal references (e.g., “gonna”, “shall”, “will”). Blogs and news used more future references especially the word “will” but Twitter, SMS and chat had more references to the present. Another interesting finding was that the “gonna” was more widely used in online chat (20.3%) than Twitter (9.7%). From the psycholinguistic perspective, Twitter was found to have more positive affect posts, meaning that users’ post is generally about happy things. Also, Twitter users were reported to use more language in the certainty category (e.g., always, never) of cognitive aspect, denoting the fact that Twitter language is less conversational than SMS. This shows that despite the 140-character limit in each Tweets, the language used in Twitter resembles that of more formal media like news and blogs.

As communication is a purposeful activity intended for a specific audience, other researchers have studied the influence of socio-demographic variables such as age and gender on social media communication, particularly in wording, stylistic choices and online behaviour [4]. From the analysis of 24,500 blogs downloaded from LiveJournal, the researchers concluded that pre-social media bloggers and post-social media bloggers have significantly different writing styles. The data from authors born from 1940 to 2000 (aged 10 to 70) were pre-processed by adding part-of-speech tags and syntactic dependencies between words. Then, 17 different features were examined and were grouped into three categories: online behaviour, lexical-stylistic and lexical-content. These features were paired together with another set of data that showed increased, decreased or fluctuated use to predict the age of the bloggers. The results showed that as bloggers got younger, the number of emoticons, acronyms, capital words, slang and punctuation increased, but sentence length decreased. Older people used words such as “house” and “old” while younger people talked about “school”. In addition, younger people were found to use first person singular (e.g., I, me) whereas

older people use more first person plural (e.g., we). There is also the possibility of cultural background creating variations in the characteristics of social media communication, and so far studies are still on-going to map out various features of social media communication.

Thus far, research has shown that social media communication has unique language features that are reflective of neither spoken nor written language. For example, social media communication uses the same system of orthography as that used for written communication – whether the language is English, Malay or Chinese – but there are creative word formations unique to social media communication arising out of the need for expediency when typing the message. Examples of creative word formations are initialisms like LOL and OFC in English [2]. To compensate for the absence of extra linguistic cues that are present in face-to-face spoken communication, social media communication has evolved to express emotions through the use of emoticons and unusual use of punctuations [4]. There are also features of social media communication that are not directly linked to the mode of communication but deals with the tenor or the relationship between interactants. Social media communication is more informal and this includes the use of pronouns and word choice but the formality of language used varies for Twitter, SMS, chat, emails and blogs [3]. In fact, some researchers have pointed out that the language features of social media communication is influenced by the age of the users, among other factors [3, 4]. Therefore, age and other demographic variables as well as the type of social media site need to be controlled in studies on social media communication to produce a better characterisation of the discourse features of netspeak. Research of this nature has taken off in the last five years, and relatively little is known about netspeak features compared to other genres of language use. Hence, more studies are needed to identify the distinctiveness of social media as communicative genres.

This study examined characteristics of digital texts produced by university students. The specific aspects of Netspeak analysed are: (1) word formations; (2) punctuation adaptation; (3) code switching; (4) slang; (5) capitalisation; (6) use of “2” for repeated words; (7) abbreviation; and (8) spacing.

## **2. The study**

Data for analysis of discourse features of netspeak were obtained from naturally occurring conversations of 23 users in Facebook’s status posts. These students aged between 20 and 23 were in their first or third year in a public university in Malaysia. The students came from different disciplines. All of the students were active users in Facebook during the time of this study.

Facebook was chosen as the medium for this study as it is the most used social media site as compared to other sites like Twitter and Instagram. It is also a platform where daily conversations actually happen as users engage in real exchanges unlike Twitter which is a micro-blogging site used mainly for status update purposes, whereas Instagram is used mainly for posting pictures. Facebook acts like an overall purpose social media site where users post their status updates, feelings, pictures, news and whatnot.

Students who volunteered to participate in this study were asked to come to the computer laboratory. They were required to printscreen and copy their Facebook conversations into a Microsoft Word file. Two selection criteria of the conversations were used. First, the conversations must consist of at least two or more users conversing with each other including the students themselves regardless of the time and date of the conversations. Second, each of the conversations must comprise at least two replies or response from both the students and their family and/or friends in Facebook. This is to ensure that a real conversation had taken place as compared to just having a single comment or reply on an original post, which would not be considered as a conversation.

The framework for analysis of netspeak features were adapted from an existing framework [1], which included word compound, word creation, abbreviation, capitalisation, spelling, and punctuation. During the process, features of netspeak not in the original framework were found and these were added to the framework: dropping of vowel, homophone, negation, code switching, using of “2” for repeated words, and spacing (indicated by asterisk in Table 1). Crystal pointed out that word compound and word creation fall under the neologism category but he did not deal with homophone and negation, and these two features were added to the framework. In addition, Crystal’s spelling domain which is too general was sub-divided into addition/replacement of letters, dropping of vowel and repetition. The use of “2” for repeated words is not present in Crystal’s features of netspeak. It is, however, widely used in Malay for note-taking as many of the plural form of Malay words consist of using a hyphen in between the same word (e.g. “buku-buku”). Also, Crystal did not explicitly mention spacing as one of the domains in netspeak. Spacing is an important feature of digital texts as users are getting used to not using the space bar on the keyboard due to the advancement of predictive keyboard softwares on mobile phones. See Table 1 for the framework for analysing features of netspeak.

Some confusion occurred during analysis where dropping of vowel are found to be similar to word compression. After going back and forth different exchanges in the analysis, it became clear that dropping of vowel involves only the removal of vowel and maintaining the consonants (e.g., “pdh” for “padah”); while word compression is the combination or shortening of one or more words (e.g. “lemah nyawa” into “mahwa”). Another instance is the confusion between repetition and capitalisation as many of the respondents repeated the same punctuation (e.g., “!!!!!!”). Repetition of punctuations was categorised as punctuation adaptation because the repetition domain is solely reserved for repetition of letters of the alphabet.

**Table 1**  
 Framework for analysing features of netspeak

Domains	Definition
Word compression	Combination or shortening of one or more words (e.g. “lemah nyawa” into “mahwa”)
Homophone*	Replacement of similar sounding word with another word or letter, mostly in a compressed and shortened form
Negation*	Use of “x” for negation
Word formation	Addition/replacement of letters*
	Change of spelling of a word without changing the meaning
	Spelling
Dropping of vowel*	Omitting of vowel in a word (e.g., “pdh” for “padah”)
Repetition*	Recurrence of letter of a word replaced with a numeral 2 (e.g. buku2 for “buku-buku”)
Punctuation adaptation	Modification of punctuation (e.g., “!!!!!!”)
Code switching*	Change of language between different languages and/or different dialects in a sentence
Capitalisation	Ignorance of the rules of capitalisation
Using of “2” for repeated words	Use of the number “2” for recurring words
Abbreviation	Extracting of initials to form a single word
Spacing*	Disregard of spaces between words and punctuations
Slang*	“haha”, “eh”, “la”, “bah”, “mah”

\*Not in Crystal’s (2004) original framework

The frequency of each of the domains mentioned above was tabulated. For this study, other languages are considered for the analysis besides English, namely, Chinese, Iban, Melanau, Malay,

and other Malay dialects (e.g., Kelantan, Sarawak). In this study, Iban, Melanau, Malay, and other Malay dialects are categorised as Austronesian languages.

### 3. Results and discussion

This section describes the results on features of netspeak identified from the university students' exchanges in Facebook (Table 2). The total number of netspeak features identified is 917, and the highest three are dropping of vowel (23.12%), punctuation adaptation (19.41%), and slang (16.34%). These three features have frequencies between 150 and 212 each but the frequency of other netspeak features are below 75.

**Table 2**  
 Results on university students' features of netspeak in Facebook exchanges

Domains		Frequency	Percentage	
Word formation	Negation*	17	1.85	
	Homophone*	52	5.67	
	Word compression	74	8.07	
	Spelling	Addition/replacement of letters*	12	1.31
		Repetition*	26	2.84
		Dropping of vowel*	212	23.12
Mechanics	Spacing*	78	8.51	
	Capitalisation	45	4.91	
	Punctuation adaptation	178	19.41	
Abbreviation		9	0.98	
Using of "2" for repeated words		13	1.42	
Code switching*		51	5.56	
Slang*		150	16.34	
TOTAL		917	99.99	

Notes:

\*Not in Crystal's (2004) original framework

The total does not add up to 100.00 due to rounding off

#### 3.1. Word formation

The results are presented for word formation involving negation, homophone and word compression before results for spelling adaptations (Table 3). Word formation occurrences account for 42.86% of netspeak features in the Facebook status posts of the 24 students, and among the three types of word formation, word compression is the most frequent (8.07%), followed by homophone (5.67%) and negation (1.85%). Word compression involves altering and shortening words like "cos" for "because", "smth" for "something", "tmr" for "tomorrow", "thx" for "thanks", "don" for "don't", "ady" for "already". The data analysis revealed that the students also took two or more words and combined them into one word, "macam itu" into "camtu", "camtew"; "tak ada" into "takde"; "is it" into "issit"; "a lot" for "alotss"; "lemah nyawa aku" for "mahwaku", "2day" for "today" etc. An example of a sentence containing word compression is "sempat juak tadik Sir mahwaku" instead of "sempat juak tadik Sir *lemah nyawa ku*" (translation: I managed to, Sir, oh well).

Users of Malay and other Austronesian languages tend to shorten the personal pronoun; "aku", is shortened to "aq". In the Iban culture, the practice of shortening names like "ndan" for "Landan" is observed. Some words are already shortened words in Malay like "saja" from "sahaja" meaning



“only”. The former is used in speech but the latter is used in writing. In their Facebook communication, the students shortened the word to the second syllable: “jer”, “je” and “jak”.

Out of 917 occurrences of Netspeak, 5.67% were homophones. Homophone is used to replace similar sounding word with another word or letter, mostly in a compressed and shortened form, “whr r u now?” instead of “where *are you* now?” It is apparent in English like “n” for “and”, “d” for “di”, “cda” for “sidak”, “bc” for “bisi” (busy), “u” for “you”, “y” for “why”, “v” for “very”, “tot” for “thought”, “hu” for “who”, “ez” for “easy”, “dun” for “don’t”, “tis” for “this”, “rite” for “right” etc. Users are influenced by the way speak when they type, thus this is considered as the spoken feature of social media communication. This is also to save time when they are typing out the messages.

The frequency of negation is low – 1.85% out of 917 occurrences of netspeak. The use of “x” for negation is mainly found when words like “tak” or “tidak” (translation: no) is present, like “xde” for “takde” (translation: none), “xda” for “takda” or “sikda” (translation: none), “xnak” for “tak nak” (translation: don’t want), “xleh” for “tak boleh” (translation: cannot) etc. An example of how “x” is used for negation is as follows: “nk kirim byk2 ktut mu xrok nk akat” instead of “nak kirim banyak-banyak takut mu *dok* rok nok akat” (translation: I wanted to order a lot but I’m afraid you wouldn’t be able to carry all of it). The using of “x” for negation is a written feature mainly found in taking notes to speed up writing.

Three categories of negation were evident from the analysis, namely, adverb, determiner, and indefinite pronoun:

- Negation in adverb is “not” as in “Untunglah pergi xajak” (translation: Lucky you get to go, but you did not invite me) where “x” is used to negate the verb “ajak” (translation: invite), so it becomes “do not invite”.
- Negation in determiner refers to “no” as in “Xyah duk glenya nk masuk la” (translation: There’s no need to go crazy over getting in) where the noun “yah” short for “payah” (translation: need) is negated with an “x” to make “no need”.
- Negation in indefinite pronoun refers to “no one”, “nobody” or “none” as in “tpi xbest la lpas ni diorang xde” (translation: but it wouldn’t be nice after this because they are not around), in this case the “xde” refers to “none” where the “x” is used to negate “de” short for “ade” or “ada” (translation: “yes” as in “yes, there is”).

Next, the three types of spelling adaptation in netspeak are described: dropping of vowel, repetition and addition/replacement of letters. The most common is dropping of vowel (23.12%). Dropping of vowel involves omitting the vowel in a word as such “2 laa.. tp vil dh mula ska yg 5 org 2... tp msh x dpt lawn mka 3 lg.. huhu” instead of “Itu lah. Tapi Vil dah mula suka yang 5 orang itu. Tapi masih tak dapat lawan muka 3 lagi.” (That’s why. But Vil has already started to like the 5 people. But her face is still not a challenge to the 3.). Vowel dropping tended to occur when Malay was used, for example, “mna” for “mana”, “org” for “orang”, “nk” for “nak”, “tp” for “tapi”, “dpt” for “dapat”, “sbb” for “sebab”, “dgn” for “dengan”, “kban” for “kaban”, “pdh” for “padah” etc. This could be carried over from note-taking practices into social media communication.

Repetition of letters is a form of spelling adaptation, possibly used for emphasis. For example, “YESSSS”, “lawaaa”, “Euwww”, “hahahahaha” and “hehehehehehe”. For instance, “YESSSS this Friday to Sunday! can go leh!” indicates the excitement by repetitively typing the letter “s”, thus emphasising on the word “yes”. This is a written feature used to show emotions and expressiveness that cannot be shown in written communication, and did not occur frequently (only 2.84% of 917 occurrences). Since Facebook communication takes place through the digital media, there is an absence of face-to-face interaction which makes it difficult for the interactants to express their emotions through their facial expression and gestures.

Addition or replacement of letters to change the sound and spelling of words is not a common feature of netspeak (1.31% of 917 occurrences). The meaning remains unchanged and is still obvious despite the changed spelling, for example, “hancus” for “hancur” (translation: break into pieces), “bende” for “benda” (translation: things), “ons” for “on”, “issit” for “is it”, “masok” for “masuk” (translation: enter), “betol” for “betul” (translation: correct). An example of a sentence with addition or replacement of letters is “eh anak saya comey nye” instead of “eh anak saya comel nya” (translation: wow, my child is so cute), shows that the “l” in “comel” (translation: cute) and “a” in “nya” (translation: a suffix used as an intensifier like “so”) are swapped with a “y” and “e” respectively, thus changing the sound of the word pronounced. These words are influenced by the spoken language as the students spelt them like how they pronounced them instead of using the standardised spelling in Malay.

### 3.2. Manipulation of mechanics

Manipulation of mechanics refers to changes made to the conventional use of punctuations, capitalisation and spacing. Table 2 shows that these changes account for 32.83% of 917 features of netspeak identified from the 24 students’ Facebook status posts.

Punctuation adaptation is a common feature of netspeak and the frequency of occurrence is the second highest among the netspeak features (19.41% of 917 occurrences). In their Facebook status posts, the students used ellipses “...” at the end of sentences to replace full stops. For example, “Finally I finish my task ....it’s very good yo have it in the next time....because I fell the mercy of GOD in me...even quite exhausted....thanks for st Joseph cathedral priest”. Ellipses may resemble hesitations in speech because spoken language is full of hesitations and silences [5]. Another way they did not comply with conventional use of punctuations is the repetition of punctuation marks to accentuate excitement, shock or anger. For example, “JANGAN BUAT HAL!!” (translation: don’t create trouble). Questions marks were used to show curiosity, for example, “BIAR BETOL??” (translation: are you sure). In digitally mediated social communication, punctuation adaptations are like emotions expressed in the voice during spoken communication.

Unconventional use of capitalisation is not a common feature of netspeak (4.91% of 917 netspeak features). Examples of unconventional use of capitalisation is not using capital letters for proper nouns like people’s names (“kak kadia”, “fazura”, “amanda”), places (“penang”, “kuching”), brand names (“whatsapp”, “colgate”). The students also did not capitalise the personal pronoun “i”. The unconventional use of capitalisation could be to save time and does not affect meaning like “yes! 2day morning i call to bpps office and they say approved ady~haha”. As unconventional use of capitalisation does not affect meaning, this feature is likely to become even more commonplace over time.

Some Facebook users do not put a spacing between words to save time, for example, “thankyou”, “Kan?haha”. This is especially found after the use of ellipses “ya..nasib”, “dsman..camera”, “Haa...auk”, “haha...thank you”, “game...maybe”. Absence of spacing does not affect the meaning, and accounts for only 8.51% of 917 netspeak features identified from the students’ Facebook exchanges.

### 3.3. Use of “2” for repeated words

The numeral 2 is used to show repetition of words 13 times (1.42% of 917 netspeak features) for Malay words. For example, “betul2” for “betul-betul”, “besar2” for “besar-besar”, “lepak2” for “lepak-lepak”. The repetition is either for emphasis or to show plural form. For example, “Puji lbh2



pulak dia” for “Puji lebih-lebih pula dia” (translation: you’re over-complimenting). It is a written feature practised in note-taking to save time and has the same function in Facebook communication.

### 3.4. Abbreviation

Surprisingly, not many abbreviations are used except one particular “lol” for “laughing out loud”, with variations like “lols”, “lolll”. Only 0.98% of 917 netspeak features identified were abbreviations. Popular abbreviations like “omg” for “oh my god”, “wtf” for “what the fuck” are not present. These abbreviations are exclusive features of social media which are not found in other forms of spoken and written communication.

### 3.5. Code switching

Code switching refers to the “juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” [6]. Examples of how the pinyin of Chinese words are spelt are “nan de lo” (Mandarin for “thin chance”), “bojio” (Hokkien for “did not invite”), chia” (Hokkien for “treat to a meal”) and “abo” (Hokkien for “if/why not”). Code switching adds emotion to sentence but it is not a common feature of netspeak (5.56% of 917 netspeak features).

Code-switching was not only used by Chinese students, but also by Malay, and the indigenous people of Sarawak and Sabah. For example, “boleh letak no *member* dan *family* dari pelbagai rangkaian” (translation: can include members and family’s numbers from different network), “*Not this event* ajak ke bisi *register fee* ku rasa, buat mayuh agi ke bisi *more than this event* lain yg pihak lain *organise* pun bisi byaran” (translation: This is not the only event requiring registration fee I think, there are a lot more other events requiring more payment from different organisers as compared to this event). The use of code-switching in Facebook communication is carried over from spoken communication because Malaysians often code-switch when they speak in informal settings [7, 8].

### 3.6. Slang

Slang is the third common feature of netspeak, accounting for 16.34% of 917 occurrences in the Facebook status posts analysed. Common examples are “haha”, “eh”, “la”, “bah”, “mah”. Slangs used in Malaysia differ across cultures. Chinese use slangs after sentences like “de”, “ma”, “liao”, “gua”, “nia”. In this excerpt from the Facebook status post of a Chinese student, two slangs were used (“nia” and “la”): “Haha..enjoy la.. The moment belom sampai nia..work time u will get more FUN” (translation: Enjoy now. Your time has not come yet, things will get more FUN when you start working). The slang “la” can have a wide variety of meaning depending on how it is pronounced; in this case, “enjoy la” means “enjoying yourself, I’m jealous” or “enjoying yourself, go ahead”. The second slang “nia” means “only” or “not yet”. In Malay, for instance “erk”, “la”, “bah”, “kot” are used after sentences too as in “Nsb la..” (translation: What to do). Without the “la”, “nasib” alone means “luck” but when “la” is added, it means “I’m accepting my luck” or simply put “what to do”. In the Malay speaking community, “Chia chia chia” which is coined by Malaysian comedian group, Sepahtu is used to display flirtatious advances towards someone of the opposite sex [9]. The analysis showed that slang is a common feature of netspeak and the meaning of slangs depends on the context, particularly the ethnicity of users and the language used. Further studies are needed to identify words which have definitely different meanings from their conventional usage in spoken and written

communication because this sheds light on language change taking place because of the influx of social media communication among the younger generation.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of students' Facebook conversations for netspeak features showed that social media has changed the way people communicate. With social media communication being concise and happening in real-time, it shares similarities with spoken language. Four netspeak features resemble features of speech, namely, homophone, addition/replacement of letters, code switching, and slang. The netspeak features that have features of written communication are dropping of vowel, negation, repetition, capitalisation, use of "2" for repeated words, and spacing. These features arise because the Facebook users want to save time. The only feature found in both spoken and written aspects of social media communication is word compression. The feature that is exclusive to social media communication that does not exist in both speech and writing are punctuation adaptation and abbreviation. Punctuation adaptation is the modification done to punctuation like "!!!", "...", and "???" whereas abbreviation refers to the extraction of initials to form a word like "lol" for "laugh out loud". Further research is needed to identify cultural and demographic variations in use of netspeak features because social media communication is decidedly different from either spoken or written communication, and has to be treated as a different mode of communication. However, further research is needed to describe the distinctive features of social media communication which enables it to be identified as a communicative genre. Presently, advertisers for online newspapers, magazines and election campaigns still maintain the use of traditional writing conventions when using social media communication. In future, when more findings on the characteristics of social media communication have emerged from research in a variety of settings, it is possible to identify conventions of social media communication which can be used for more effective persuasive and informative communication.

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