**Chapter 6**

**Additional activity**

**Style online**

We don’t just alter our linguistic style according to whom we are talking to in face-to-face communication. We also do so when we communicate online. In Chapter 6, for instance, we talked about a study by the sociolinguist Jannis Androutsopoulos (2014) in which he explored the ways Facebook users changed the way they used language based on who they wanted to include in their communication. Other studies have also shown that people alter the way they deploy communicative resources online based on who they are communicating with. Areej Albawardi (2018), for example, found that when Saudi University students use WhatsApp, they alter the way they use emjois and the ‘non-standard’ internet variety, Arabizi (a way of writing Arabic using Roman characters and numbers) depending on whether or not they were chatting with family members, friends or teachers. In another study focused on social messaging applications, Kate Muir and her colleagues (2017) found that people tend to accommodate to each other in terms of the style of their messages when they communicate online, and the degree to which they accommodate can affect the impressions others have of them.

In this activity, you will analyse your linguistic style on WhatsApp or a comparable instant messaging application, particularly your use of emojis, abbreviations and non-standard spellings.

Choose several different conversations with different kinds of people from your WhatsApp history (e.g., parents, friends, classmates). Look through the conversations and fill out the chart below. You will need to quantify the number of times you used emojis/ abbreviations/ non-standard spellings as a *ratio* of the total words or other symbols you used in the chat or section of the chat you are analysing. You should also consider the kinds of emojis and abbreviations that you and the other person used.

Then consider:

1. Do you change your style when you chat to different people on WhatsApp? How and why?
2. To what degree do you accommodate to the people that you are chatting with? Are there times when you do not accommodate (diverge) from your chat partner’s style/ Why? What’s the effect?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Chat** | **Amount you used emojis/****abbreviations/****unconventional spellings**  | **The kinds of emojis and abbreviations you used**  | **Amount your conversational partner used emojis/****abbreviations/****unconventional spellings** | **The kinds of emojis and abbreviations your conversational partner used** |
| Chat 1 |  |  |  |  |
| Chat 2 |  |  |  |  |
| Chat 3 |  |  |  |  |

**References**

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Muir, K., Joinson, A., Cotterill, R., & Dewdney, N. (2017). Linguistic style accommodation shapes Impression formation and rapport in computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *36*(5), 525–548. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X17701327>