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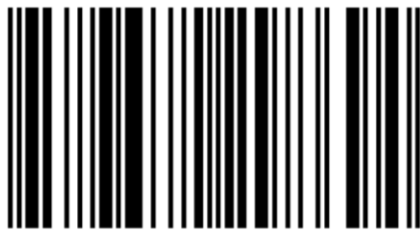
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Table of Contents

	Page
1. A Comparison of Euphemism between Bidayuh Bukar-Sadong and Bidayuh Biatah languages Angelia Marjorie FABIAN & Yvonne Michelle CAMPBELL	1
2. A Contrastive Study between Australian and Malaysian Women’s Online Advice-Seeking Strategies on IVF Wun Chiew PUNG & Ai Ping HO	7
3. A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Female Representation in Malay Beauty Product Advertisement on Instagram Aina Nadhirah MOHD ZAIDI & Humaira RASLIE	13
4. Chinese Students' Evaluative Reactions to Hong Kong English Shengnan LI, Su-Hie TING & Limin QIN	19
5. Communicating Perceived Barriers to Adopting Nasopharyngeal Cancer Preventive Behaviour Jia-Yiing HO, Su-Hie TING & Yuwana PODIN	25
6. Conceptualising CSR Communication: Exploring the Mediating Role of Opinion Leaders on the Local Communities Ammar Redza AHMAD RIZAL, Dayang Aizza Maisha ABANG AHMAD & Humaira RASLIE	31
7. Examining Bidayuh Proverbs and Sayings with Animal and Plant Elements: An Inquisitive Semantics Approach Florence G. KAYAD & Mary SAMAN	37
8. Fostering Social Competence in an Online ESL Class through Peer Writing Task Keezrawati Mujan YUSUF & Abd Razak ZAKARIA	43
9. Integrating Technology and Aesthetics for New Era of Exploration Amira HASAN AHMED ABDULLAH SAAD & Monaliza SARBINI	49
10. Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in High and Low Impact Political Science Articles Noor Afifah NAWAWI & Su-Hie TING	55

11. **Is it Possible for English in Thailand to be a First Language or a Second Language?** 61
Pairote BENNUI
12. **Language Use of The Iban People in Iban-Dominant and Non-Iban Dominant Areas in Sarawak** 67
Lilly METOM, Su-Hie TING & Hsin Nie LING
13. **Learning Academic Vocabulary through a Sociomaterial Approach: Ecological Perspectives of the Postgraduate Experience** 73
Daron Benjamin LOO
14. **Mendingka Radio Iban: Evaluating the Quality of Iban Radio Program and Language used by the Broadcasters at WaiFM Iban** 79
Malia TAIBI, Neilson Ilan MERSAT & Remmy GEDAT
15. **Millennials' Perceptions of Gendered Language Features of Facebook Communication** 85
Kirstie Tet Mei FUNG, Su-Hie TING & Kee Man CHUAH
16. **Nurture Risk Factors for Speech Delay and Disorders in Malaysian Children: Parents' Education Levels, Attitudes, and Infant-Care Practices** 91
Siew Fang CHEE & Jayapragas GNANIAH
17. **Oral Communication Apprehension in English and Self - Perceived Communication Competence among Marketing Students in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak** 97
Andi Aisya MAKMUR & Siti Haslina HUSSIN
18. **Social Media Users' Reasons for Using Non-Standard Words in Twitter** 103
Nur Nashatul Nasuha NAZMAN, Su-Hie TING & Kee-Man CHUAH
19. **Social Network and Language Ability of the Kejaman Community from Belaga, Sarawak, Malaysia** 109
Amee JOAN & Su-Hie TING
20. **The Nature of Motivation in Saudi EFL Context: An Overview** 115
Farhad ULLAH, Rokiah PAEE & Joseph RAMANAIR

21. **The Use of Voiceover Challenges on Tiktok as ESL Speaking Activities** 121
Kee-Man CHUAH & Looi-Chin CH'NG
22. **Tolerance towards LGBT individuals among Malaysians** 127
Hsin-Nie LING & Su-Hie TING
23. **Using the Motivational Technology Acceptance Model (MTAM) to explore Malaysian undergraduates' motivation to learn English through the Learning Management System (LMS)** 133
Christine Shane ONG & Florence KAYAD
24. **“Aduhai Malangnya Pak Kaduk, Ayamnya Menang Kampung Tergadai” Sebagai Manifestasi Kritikan Dalam Kancan Politik Tempatan: Analisis Pragmatik** 139
Muhammad Zaid DAUD, Mary Fatimah SUBET & Awang Azman AWANG PAWI
25. **Aplikasi Rangka Rujuk Silang Dan Semantik Inkuisitif Dalam Pengajaran-Pembelajaran Seni Bahasa** 145
George Romiko BUJANG & Mary Fatimah SUBET
26. **Asas Fonem Konsonan Bahasa Kedayan Varian Sibuti** 151
Nabilah Syazwani NORASMAN & Remmy GEDAT
27. **Asimilasi Kata Pinjaman Bahasa Inggeris dalam Dialek Melayu Sarawak** 157
Rosnah MUSTAFA, Wan Robiah MEOR OSMAN, Siti Marina KAMIL & Hamidah ABDUL WAHAB
28. **Eufemisme dan Cerminan Budaya Masyarakat Melayu Sarawak** 163
Siti Marina KAMIL, Hamidah Abdul WAHAB & Remmy GEDAT
29. **Faktor Motivasi Pelajar Antarabangsa Dalam Mempelajari Bahasa Melayu Sebagai Bahasa Asing** 169
Zuraini SERUJI, Minah MOHAMMED SALLEH, Nur Shazwanie WAKIMIN, Dayang Nurlisa ABANG ZAINAL ABIDIN & Mohd. Hairee ABDULLAH
30. **Fonologi Bahasa Punan: Analisis Linguistik Deskriptif** 175
Zeckqualine MELAI & Norazuna NORAHIM

31. **Kajian Tahap Penggunaan Bahasa Kebangsaan di Tempat Awam di Kuching, Sarawak** 181
Wan Robiah MEOR OSMAN, Hamidah ABDUL WAHAB, Remmy GEDAT, Rosnah MUSTAFA, Siti Marina KAMIL & Rusmadi BAHARUDIN
32. **Kamus Thomas Bowrey & Aspek Sosio-Budaya Melayu Abad Ke-17** 187
Nor Azizah OTHMAN
33. **Kata Arkaik Dialek Melayu Saratok: Tinjauan Penggunaannya Dalam Kalangan Generasi Z** 193
Salbia HASSAN, Fatimah SUBET, Dayang Sariah ABANG SUHAI & Norlina KIFLIE
34. **Kebimbangan Pelajar Sekolah Rendah Luar Bandar di Sarawak Terhadap Pembelajaran Matematik: Penglibatan Ibu Bapa dan Medium Pengajaran** 199
Wan Sofiah MEOR OSMAN, Wan Robiah MEOR OSMAN, Nur Fatimah MAT YUSOFF & Farida ABDUL HALIM
35. **Konsep 'Perjalanan' Dalam Bahasa Kiasan Kaum Iban** 205
Hamidah ABDUL WAHAB, Siti Marina KAMIL, Remmy GEDAT & Clinton RINGIT
36. **Manifestasi Budaya Sosial Dalam Lagu Dangdut Di Malaysia Dan Indonesia: Analisis Tema Dan Aspek Muzikal** 211
Mohammad Haris ABD AZIS & Hishamudin ISAM
37. **Metafora Konseptual Dalam Bahasa Halus Masyarakat Iban Sebuyau, Sarawak** 217
Clinton RINGIT, Hamidah ABDUL WAHAB & Remmy GEDAT
38. **Pandemik Covid-19 Memperkaya Akronim Bahasa Melayu** 223
Mary Fatimah SUBET, Roslan ALI, Salbia HASSAN, Dayang Sariah ABANG SUHAI, Muhammad Zaid DAUD & Shahira JOHAN
39. **Pantang Larang Masyarakat Kedayan di Limbang, Sarawak** 229
Nuraziyah AMAT & Jayapragas GNANIAH

40. **Perwatakan dan Nilai dalam Novel “Di Sebalik Dinara”:
Analisis Teori Relevans** 235
Srikandi Saemah SAMAON & Mary Fatimah SUBET
41. **Penterjemahan Homonim Arab-Melayu dalam Domain
Ketakutan: Satu Analisis Teori Relevan** 241
Roslan ALI, Fatimah SUBET & Maheram AHMAD
42. **Pola pemilihan bahasa komuniti Salako di Lundu, Sarawak** 247
Anne INTOH & Norazuna NORAHIM
43. **Sikap Bahasa dan Pemertahanan Identiti Komuniti** 253
**Sempadan Di Kampung Telok Melano, Malaysia Dan Desa
Temajuk, Indonesia: Satu Tinjauan Awal**
Dilah TUAH & Shin CHONG

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS' REASONS FOR USING NON-STANDARD WORDS IN TWITTER

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of non-standard spelling of words reflects the development of languages in meeting the demands of technological change in communication. A question which arises is whether social media users are passive followers or active initiators of some word formation processes. The study examined social media users' reasons for using non-standard words in Twitter. Structured interviews were conducted with 30 active users of Twitter to find out if they thought about which word should be shortened, and if they used different spellings for the same word. The results showed that the Twitter users attributed the shortening of words to the Twitter restriction on character length. According to the Twitter users, the use of non-standard spelling of words is normative in the social media environment, and shortening words saves time and eases typing and reading of Tweets. Interestingly, they considered the length and complexity of words, as well as the number of vowels to decide how to shorten words. A few Twitter users coined new spellings out of fun because Twitter users are accepting of idiosyncratic changes. The study suggests that non-linguistically informed Twitter users have an inkling of word formation processes underlying emergence of non-standard words in social media.

Keywords: social media; Twitter; non-standard words; word formation processes; shortening of words

Introduction

The growing use of social media as a form of digital communication is also creating more opportunities for the study of language (Crystal, 2001). Digital communication via social media is a good base for linguistic research as it includes more informal language styles, which are difficult to analyse but important for the better understanding of language development in the digital era (Crystal, 2011; Schmied, 2012). Among the many social media platforms, Twitter is the most frequently used platform. A total of 80% of Twitter users are aged 18 to 35 (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Twitter serves as a free social networking microblogging service, and allows registered members to broadcast short posts called