How digitalised has communication become? – An investigation through the analysis of

'Requests' on LINE chats

Kazuko MIYAKE, Toyo university

Across the globe, mobile media have developed considerably since the first introduction of accessible mobile phones towards the end of the 20th century. One notable global trend in recent years is the widespread use of SNS (Social Networking Systems). Among them is LINE, which is similar to WhatsApp and the most popular platform in Japan, with 98.1% use among youths in their 20s and an average of 82.3% in all generations (Somusho 2019). As mobile media and SNS have become increasingly central to our daily communication, they are arguably also influencing our interpersonal communication patterns. This study, as part of an investigation into the differences between mobile media and face-to-face communication, examines how 'Requests' are carried out in LINE communication and demonstrates how communication patterns are structurally and pragmatically influenced by the features of this medium:

1. 'Requests' on LINE tend to be made 'in one go', using single, long speech balloons, while general conversations involve short speech balloons and extend along the screen. This contrasts greatly with face-to-face communication, where 'Requests' tend to involve preambles and negotiation between the interactants;

2. The interactants naturally handle the 'switch-back' interactions, delayed answers and comments caused by the time-lag, while the intial topic is already shifted to a new one;

3. The opening and closing of the interaction with greetings and addressing has much less significance compared to face-to-face interactions. The interactants do not have to make a fresh start or close their conversation as the screen on the LINE platform is always open for them to start a conversation;

4. Extremely flexible gender representation can be observed. Male-female language boundaries are blurred; women often use male-oriented words and expressions, while there are some cases of women's and men's use of stickers representing opposite genders;

5. Abundant use of visual languages such as emoji, kaomoji, symbols, and stickers can be seen.

By examining the above phenomena, this study sheds light on the differences between face-to-face communication and LINE communication, and argues the need for further research in this area to develop our understanding of future directions of interpersonal communication.