

SMS Texting, Language Use and Gender in an EFL Academic Context

Achili Nora^{1*}, Hamitouche Fatiha²

1- Department of English, University of Algiers, noraachili@gmail.com

2- Professor, Department of English, University of Algier,
f_hamitouche@yahoo.com

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Abstract:

The paper at issue attended to explain the issue of language use and gender differences while texting in a multilingual context. To this end, a questionnaire was used to account for the participants' employment of languages and major drives concerning the utilised languages. The data showed that both males and females use various languages concomitantly and alternate codes almost similarly. Besides, both males and females used various combinations of languages for similar reasons such as signalling membership and ensuring broad understanding.

Parallel to that, gender differences were spotted mainly when dealing with code-switching motives and language preferences while texting.

Key words: SMS texting; Language use; Gender differences; Multilingual context; EFL students.

* **Auteur correspondant** : Achili Nora, noraachili@gmail.com

1-Introduction

SMS language study, in association with language use and gender, is admittedly a novel and promising research avenue for sociolinguists, in general, and Algerian sociolinguists, in particular. This article intent is centred on the use of language (languages) in a multilingual context where code-switching (or code alternation, and code mixing are used here to mean the same) is considered as a naturally occurring linguistic phenomenon when languages come into contact. This latter is related to gender in an attempt to bring additional light to the issue of SMS texting from a sociolinguistic perspective by uncovering the reasons that explain male and female students' employment of languages and their linguistic preferences while texting.

2-Review of Literature

A growing interest in SMS language study started in the late 1990s by many scholars who were, more particularly, interested in examining the linguistic properties that define texting as a new language variety. Instances such as abbreviations, textual complexity, syntax, and punctuation were notably considered along with SMS language variation across gender (Kasesniemi, 2003; Ling, 2005; Thurlow & Brown, 2003; Shortis, 2007; Hård af Segerstad, 2005). In this regard, several gender differences emerged in the course of most studies, marking, therefore, a gender divide in the way males and females use texting language, in general, and language use, in particular.

The noted interest in language use and variation prompted several studies mainly in monolingual (where one language only is used) and bilingual countries (where two languages only are used) such as Kuwait, South Africa, Finland, and Nigeria which spotted the use of English in

connection with the national language of each country. In Kuwait for example, Haggan (2007), reported the texters' use of a mixture of Arabic and English in their messages. Similarly, South African texters mix English with isiXhosa by writing English nouns with isiXhosa prefixes (Deumert & Masinyana, 2008).

This was not common to all the conclusions drawn by the related studies as Chiluya (2008) investigation highlighted contrasting texting behaviours that consisted of the recourse to one language only. Indeed, Nigerian texters tended to completely avoid the Nigerian language even in their private texts and use exclusively standard British English. Given this disparity in results and research conclusions, one may sense the complexity of the issue as different behaviours are noted within the same bilingual context and further research is required in this ultimate case.

In this clear vein, researchers need first to distinguish between texting in monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual settings and determine their inherent characteristics. Indeed, any results and conclusions drawn regarding monolingual and bilingual contexts cannot be generalised to multilingual contexts, where more than two linguistic systems are used.

Here, it is not wrong to assume that in multilingual linguistic environments, possible mixtures of two, three or more languages can be used and predicted. Eventually, examining these possibilities along with the reasons that drive specific forms of langue behaviour, we believe, can throw additional light on the topic and bring more evidence on the particularity of multilingual contexts such as Algeria when compared to monolingual and bilingual ones.

3-Research Questions

Drawing on the aforementioned studies in both SMS texting field, Sociolinguistics and Feminist linguistics, this paper contribution resides in bringing together social, psychological and pragmatic reasons and explanations to throw additional light on SMS texters' language use in a multilingual setting. The analysis seeks to illustrate the complexity of SMS texting in multilingual instances as seen by the texters themselves and follow a meticulous analysis that is highly needed, especially in the Algerian research context. To achieve this goal and fill this gap in research, the following question, which is followed by two other sub-questions, was posed: *Do EFL female students differ from male students in terms of language use and preferences while SMS messaging? If yes, how and why.*

3-1-Method

This study aims to explore the social, pragmatic and psychological reasons that shape Algerian students' texting practices, and focus on the use of languages, on the one hand, and highlight the differences between EFL males and females' texting behaviours.

A quantitative method is adopted for its exceptional capacity to uncover the genuine state of issues (Bryman, 1988; Bell, 1988), and extricate the complexity of the reasons that drive texting and language use behaviours via a questionnaire. This is chiefly driven by the limited knowledge we have of language use in SMS texts, on the one side, and language use in SMS texts among multilingual texters, on the other side. This is rendered rich by including gender as an important variable that may significantly impact on language use in SMS texting.

3-2-Participants and Sampling

The informants are 40 English language students (out of 750 total number of the registered students) who are attending the Department of English of the University of Algiers 2. The students are ranging in age from 22 to 28 and belong to the Algerian Arab and Berber communities. The convenient sample is stratified into twenty (20) female students and twenty (20) male students. The forty students belong to 4th year classical system, with an advanced level in English. Both male and female groups include Non-standard Arabic speakers (10 males and 10 females) and Berber ones (10 males and 10 females) who speak either Berber or Non-standard Arabic or both. Both groups also master Standard Arabic as being the Algerian official language and language of instruction from primary school to high school, in addition to the French language which is considered to be a second language, and lastly, the English language which is a foreign language.

Native or mother tongue variable was carefully handled for two major reasons: the first concerns the fact that the majority of students in the English department are young Algerian students who speak either Berber or Non-standard Arabic or both. By selecting this group of students where Berber and Non-standard Arabic languages are present, we intended to provide an accurate portrayal of the real population found in the Algerian English student classes of the department of English. The second reason is triggered by our interest to work on ideal multilingual speakers that use three and sometimes four languages in their everyday life interactions, which is the case of the students taking part in this study.

3-3-Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

A questionnaire dealing with SMS texting practices, language use, and gender perceptions on texting practices is used as a data collection tool. The

objective of the questionnaire is threefold: first, it seeks to account for the daily texting practices and individual behaviours towards this medium and its place in the participants' everyday life interactions. Second, it looks into the texters' motives that justify their use of languages, and third, to identify the students' perceptions of languages use in relation to prestigious languages such as French and English. Eventually, the data is utilised to account for gender similarities and differences concerning all the above-mentioned points.

The questionnaire is edited in English and contains both closed and open questions in a semi-structured frame to help answer satisfactorily our research question. An array of open and close-ended questions is provided to ensure a certain variety in the formulation of the questions and maximise the validity of the questionnaire all along its elaboration process. This part is enhanced with a piloting phase that was carried out to avoid pitfalls and ensure accuracy and relevance to the questions.

The questionnaire contains 13 distinct items, set in two sections called parts. As far as data analysis procedure is concerned, close questions are quantified by counting the number of occurrences converted into percentages. Meanwhile, open questions are covered by setting up categories that are presented under the form of sentences or statements whereby each similar idea will be added to the specified statement or category.

The significance of the set categories is emphasised by codifying every category. Ethnos software package is adopted. By entering all the categories in the software, the quantification of the answers is generated into percentages. This procedure helped to synthesise big amounts of data in such a way to reveal possible and insightful patterns that are represented in tables. The results are cross-tabulated in regard to gender as a subsequent step. This

is provided to account for results in general and how these results are distributed by gender, in particular.

3-4- Results Presentation and Discussion

As previously mentioned, the questionnaire purpose is to explore and examine multilingual texters’ employment of languages use and drives, by additionally referring to gender differences in this particular case.

To the first question: *“Which language do you use when writing messages,* 30.65% of the respondents selected French language as their most used language , with 17.74% of females and 12% of males, followed by Non-standard Arabic and similarly English with equal percentages that are 27.42% respectively, and last, Berber (8.06%) and Standard Arabic (6.46%).

Accordingly, the provided reasons to explain the choice of French as the highest percentage highlight the common understanding of the language by all the Algerian students. In fact, the language is described as an easy language to understand and use, a relevant point that suggests that the respondents’ high degree of the French language command makes them feel more comfortable with that particular language than any other language.

Table 1. Students’ Reasons for the French Language Use

●	Male	Female	Total
It is understood by all	23.81%	33.33%	57.14%
Because it is easy	4.76%	23.81%	28.57%
I use it with friends I know they understand French	4.76%	9.52%	14.29%

Total	33.33%	66.67%	100%
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Interestingly enough, while considering carefully students' answers, notable disparities can be pointed out. In fact, the French language seems to be more popular among girls, as shown in the table below, with 23.81% for girls and only 4.76% for males, mainly when it deals with language easiness in use among friends who understand the language mostly.

As for the second language used by texters, Non-standard Arabic language highest percentage reported the participants' tendency to use the language for its communicative potentials to be understood by all the people in the environment of the participants. Non-standard Arabic which is the commonly used language in the Algerian context is represented here as the most shared language between the interactants, and therefore, the most suited language to communicate with the maximum number of people, as it is presented in Table 2 below.

Noteworthy dissimilarities are also shown in male and female reasons for Non-standard Arabic language use. In fact, the language seems to be more popular among male texters (33.33%) than the female ones (12.50%), as the language use seems to cover broader social networks much more to males than females. Conversely, Female texters seem to use the language as a binding means of communication given the prevailing nature of Non-standard Arabic language in everyday life interactions. This point is supported by the fact that the language is well implemented and used every time needed due to its easiness to the girls mainly.

Table 2. Students' Reasons for the Non-standard Arabic Language Use

●	Male	Female	Total
Because it is understood by all	33.33%	12.50%	45.83%
It is the language which is used in everyday life interactions	12.50%	29.17%	41.67%
Because it is easy	4.17%	8.33%	12.50%
Total	50%	50%	100%

In the same way, the English language is reported as the students' second choice, with an equal percentage with Non-standard Arabic, but clearly for different reasons as shown in Table 3. Evidently, the English language is used because of the students' academic status as the respondents are English students and their recourse to the language in their messages is intended to signal this particular status along with practicing and improving their language level. However, gender dissimilarities are reported at this level as well, with males out passing females significantly in the importance given to English language use.

Table 3. Students' Reasons for the English Language Use

●	Male	Female	Total
I'm an English student	26.32%	15.79%	42.11%
To practice English	15.79%	10.53%	26.32%
To communicate with	15.79%	5.26%	21.05%

classmates			
Because it is easy	00%	5.26%	5.26%
To use it with English speaking friends	5.26%	00%	5.26%
Total	63.16%	36.84%	100%

In fact, boys seem to value their academic status much more than females, by viewing themselves more likely as students of English who clearly use English to signal their membership to this group category. This is explained also by their needs to practice and improve the language in many respects to communicate with classmates and English-speaking friends.

Lastly, special reference is made to the Berber and Standard Arabic languages use, with 8.06% and 6.46% respectively. The percentages proportions as seen here are not significantly reported when compared to the other languages. Again, this can be explained to the restricted roles played by the two languages. For the Berber language, for instance, the language itself is mostly used among Berber speakers and in a very limited sphere of the home more specifically.

Berber language, in fact, is a minority language which is increasingly gaining importance and place in the Algerian society. Standard Arabic is also limited to instruction and administration purposes and roles. The language, in reality, is not commonly used in everyday communications.

Ultimately, French and Non-standard Arabic (and French more than Non-standard Arabic in this particular case) are used as neutral and unifying languages to communicate with all the categories of society, be them Arabic or Berber speakers. Indeed, the widespread and implementation of the two

languages offer more opportunities for communication understanding across all the groups in the Algerian setting.

In contrast, the English language is utilised as a group identity mark which use is limited to classmates and a limited number of friends who speak and understand the language. Likewise, Berber and Standard languages are also limited to specific contexts and roles that restrict their general use in society and among the participants of this study.

As mentioned in the outset, language use in multilingual contexts is far more complex as instances of code-switching or languages mixing (used in this paper interchangeably to mean using two to three languages simultaneously) may occur as a natural and typical result of languages in contact.

Using more than one language while messaging or mixing languages is another linguistic phenomenon which is targeted in this paper, by asking specific questions where the informants were requested to answer whether they mix languages and the reasons of the languages mixing.

Hence, to the question: *“Do you mix languages when you write messages?”* 82.05% of the respondents answered affirmatively (38.46% for females and 43.59% for males), by demonstrating higher percentages among males, for the reasons provided in table 4 below. As noted above, the majority of the respondents (40%) that is 26.67% of the male respondents and 13.33% of the females, answer that they mix languages to ensure more understanding from the part of the receivers.

Table 4. Students’ Reasons for Mixing Languages in Messages

	Male	Female	Total
● To be understood	26.67%	13.33%	40%

I don't find a word in one language	6.67%	16.67%	23.33%
For fun	6.67%	10%	16.67%
It is just a habit	10%	00%	10%
Because I write as I speak	00%	3.33%	3.33%
To be quick	00%	3.33%	3.33%
To intimidate my friends	3.33%	00%	3.33%
Total	53.33%	46.67%	100%

Given the multilingual context of the respondents, they explain their choice of language mix as an attempt to cover all the speakers of the different group community as if choosing one single language would mean taking potential risks to not be understood by one community or the other.

Broadly, the results reveal that switching languages is used as a communicative strategy to ensure maximum understanding through the use of two, three or four languages in a message. Further, 23.33% of the respondents explain their language mixing recourse by the need for lexical items that do not exist in the base language, be it the matrix language or a code-switched one. Additionally, 16.67% of the informants answer that switching languages is done mostly for fun, in other words as a play with language that make messages more interesting.

Despite the low percentages that are obtained in the answers calculations, other reasons such as the need for being quick, the use of mixed languages as a habit in SMS writing and the fact of writing messages as an extension of speech, are insightful reasons that are interesting and worth considering to understand languages use phenomenon as a whole.

Here again, gender differences are spotted. In fact, males concern with understanding seems to be central and more eminent than female texters who seem to be more concerned with solving vocabulary problems, when immediate use of an unknown or forgotten word is felt. Besides, the playful nature of mixing languages is more valued by females than males in this instance; male texters are more likely using more than one language as a habit mostly. Lastly, the last-mentioned reasons deal with females explaining their recourse to language mixing as an expression of spoken language and for speed reasons, which are not mentioned by male texters. Conversely, males tend rather to code-switch for intimidation purposes.

Along this line, question 3 sought to account for the respondents mixing habits and the languages used for that purpose. To the question *“what are the languages you usually mix?”*, more details concerning the reasons for the selected languages used while switching languages are provided table 4 below. As seen in the table, mixing languages concerns firstly Non-standard Arabic and French with 49.02% of the respondents. The second choice concerns Non-standard Arabic and English (17.65% of the respondents), then Non-standard Arabic and Berber with 9.80% of the respondents. Other choices are disregarded here due to the low percentages obtained.

In regard to gender, Non-standard Arabic and French code-switching option is reported with higher percentages among females with 29.41% against 19.61% of males, whereas in Non-standard Arabic and English, males tend to out pass females with 11.76% of boys and 5.88% of girls. These percentages again reveal males' preference in using English more than French, in contrast to females who prefer using French either in isolation or mixed with other languages.

Table 5. Students' Mixed Languages

	Male	Female	Total
Non-standard Arabic + French	19.61%	29.41%	49.02%
Non-standard Arabic + English	11.7%	5.88%	17.65%
Non-standard Arabic + Berber	5.88%	3.92%	9.80%
Non-standard Arabic + Standard Arabic	3.92%	1.96%	5.88%
Berber + French	1.96%	3.92%	5.88%
Non-standard Arabic + French + Berber	00%	3.92%	3.92%
Berber + French + English	1.96%	1.96%	3.92%
French + English	00%	3.92%	3.92%
Total	45.10%	54.90%	100%

Concerning the participants' beliefs and attitudes towards mixing languages, in general, and mixing in French and English, in particular, three (03) questions are asked to assess the texters' opinions concerning languages use in messages and the reasons that make people code-switch when texting. To the question *"Why do you think people mix languages in messages?"*, the majority of the participants (29.73%, 16.22% of females and 13.15% of males) seem to agree on the fact that the first major reason of mixing languages in messages is the lack of vocabulary in one language.

The second important reason has to do with the texters concern to be understood by the receivers of the messages. The third important reason has to do with the role of code-switching in facilitating communication among both males and females' groups. The fourth reason which is provided deals with the view that SMS writing is just a reproduction of oral practices whereby most speakers code-switch naturally. The next argument deals with the natural occurrence of languages mixing as a consequence of living in a bilingual context, followed by the texters' willingness to show language command, for fun and the role of the receivers of the messages in languages use.

In regard to gender, differences and similarities are both noted. In fact, contrary to male texters, Females seem to be more concerned with solving vocabulary difficulties, while males seem to care more for messages understanding than females. Besides, females show more interest in mixing languages for fun and for accommodation to the message receivers, while males explain mixing language recourse to the bilingual linguistic environment. However, male and female texters agree on the fact that people mostly use mixed language messages to facilitate communication, reproducing spoken language and showing language abilities.

On the subject of the use of the French and English languages, the next question aims to explore the reasons using the above-mentioned languages in messages. French and English languages are believed here to be prestigious languages, and the question asked is intended to test and verify this assumption here.

Therefore, to the question "*Why do you think students use French in their messages*", the majority of the respondents (36.84%) justify the French language by the fact that this latter is viewed as the students' second language

and thus a language they are familiar with since early age. This familiarity with the language helps the students to be comfortable with, in both everyday life interactions and SMS messaging.

The second reason comes to confirm this argument by assuming that French is a language used in everyday life (18.42%). The third reason which is provided by 15.79% of the respondents' concern language command which may be partly due to the long education background that makes French a second mother tongue for 10.53% of the respondents as well. Other reasons like prestige, the use of standard language is better than the use of dialects or the keypad which is in Latin; are very insightful but occur with lower frequencies in the students' answers.

Yet again, differences are observed in male and female texters' responses. French as noticed is believed to be a second language for females mostly, and a language that is used in everyday communication for being part of their ordinary practice and language they master. This supported by the place given to the French language in females lives as being a second mother tongue which is extended because of the keypad device that is supplied in the Latin language.

On the contrary, males seem to adhere to the idea that using standard languages is better than dialects for their capacities to reach the maximum of people in communication. Besides, the French language is seen as a valued language for being prestigious in society. Lastly, males believe that Non-standard Arabic is limited in scope as it is not able to cover all the meanings intended by the communicators.

A similar question is asked by focusing on English language use this time and the answers show that most of the respondents (29.73%) attribute English use to the students' desire to enhance their English level. This is

supported by the students' second choice with 21.62% of the respondents who argue that this is due to the fact that English is the language of studies not more.

This argument seems to find more support among females with 13.51% and only 8.11% of the males. The third reason refers to the students' need to show off (16.22%) and look fashionable (13.51%) to demonstrate a positive social image either within the group or outside the group, that is to say, among friends and family members for instance. Other reasons are provided to include the need to communicate efficiently with English speakers and good command of the language.

Eventually, gender differences are also noted. Indeed, Females show higher percentages when it deals with the use of English as a natural use that result from being English students who master the language and use it mostly to communicate with speakers of English to look fashionable.

In contrast, males show higher percentages when referring to the students' willingness to improve their English proficiency, and show equally their language command. One similarity concerns the students' need to exhibit self and show off. In fact, both males and females equally believe that English language use can be triggered off by the students' desire to show off their language command of a presumably a prestigious language.

Overall, the most important and recurrent reasons that are provided at this point either by the questions above or the previous ones, tend to agree on five major points which are summarised as follows: signalling membership by marking identity, practicing needs, ensuring understanding, facilitating communication and demonstrating language ability. These five motives are shown either when providing reasons for languages mixing, in general, or in the questions dealing with language preferences.

In other words, language use and languages' mixing can be driven by the same or different motives according to gender, which are notably a pure manifestation of both conscious and unconscious reasons that are, in our belief, the two major tenets that affect SMS texting in this study particular case.

In this ultimate vein, and in an attempt to gain more depth when dealing with the unconscious motives that underpin languages' use and mixing, an additional question has been raised to tentatively look into the symbolic aspects of language use through the participants' language mental representations.

By asking the question "*what does French represent to you?*", we have tried to inquire texters attitudes towards French, which is described here as a second language that is studied for years in Algerian schools, and used extensively in other spheres such as the media and education. Table 6 illustrates the different representations that are given by both males and females to the question stated above.

As noticed in the table, 39.02% of the respondents consider French as a second language with the same proportions among females and males. The second argument concerns 17.07% of the respondents who claim that the French language has no particular value which probably means that French is just a language for them, not more.

Interestingly enough, 14.63% of the participants who are exclusively females answer that French is their favourite language. Further, 12.20% of the respondents view the French language as a colonial language. French as a symbol of fashion, of the administration and literature is reported but in lower percentages.

Table 6. Students' Representations of the French Language

●	Male	Female	Total
A second language	19.51%	19.51%	39.02%
Nothing	9.76%	7.32%	17.07%
My favourite language	00%	14.63%	14.63%
A colonial language	9.76%	2.44%	12.20%
Prestige	2.44%	4.88%	7.32%
Language of the administration	3.44%	1.44%	4.88%
Fashion	00%	2.44%	2.44%
Language of literature	2.44%	00%	2.44%
Total	46.34%	53.66%	100%

Gender differences are also noted on this occasion. Notably, Female texters show more affective alignment to the French language by describing this latter as a favourite language. Additionally, they view the French language as a prestigious language and a fashionable means of communication. In contrast, the French language to males is viewed negatively as the language of the French coloniser, which is mostly used and limited to the administration use and literary works.

In this vein, the same question is asked to account for the texters' perceptions and representations of English in the students' minds and Table 7 provides a summary of the provided answers. Notably, to the majority of the students (30%), English is described as their favourite language. Yet, significant differences are noticed between males and females (20% of females and only 10% of males). This probably means that females are more prone to standard languages use than their male counterparts.

Table 7. Students' Representations of the English Language

●	Male	Female	Total
My favourite language	10%	20%	30%
The language of studies	17.50%	7.50%	25%
A universal language	12.50%	7.50%	20%
Civilization	7.50%	5%	12.50%
Language of technology	5%	2.50%	7.50%
An important tool in Business life	00%	5%	5%
Total	52.50%	47.50%	100%

English for males is much more the language of studies (17.50%) when compared to females (7.50%). This is maybe due to males' pragmatic uses of languages as English here is viewed by males as a universal language (12.50% of males for only 7.50% of females) and the language of civilization (7.50% of males and 5% of females) and technology among 5% of males and only half the number of females. Additionally, this may denote the males' need to be associated to modernity and the civilized world which both, in our sense, carry a positive and valued meaning that constitute important ingredients in shaping males' social and individual image.

In sum, the two questions on language perceptions and representations highlighted many aspects of languages use and mixing, by providing interesting insights that explain the texters' use of languages in a multilingual context. In fact, the findings reveal that French is considered as a second language which is very close to the students because of the long years of education and their good command of the language that resulted

from their educational background. English in contrast, represents for most respondents the language of studies which is important to practice and improve.

Gender differences are observed as well, by pointing at the affective tendency of females who favour French and English much more than their male peers. Males in contrast, express more practicality in their language perceptions and use. Males indeed use French to communicate in society and English to practice the language with classmates and English speakers as a possible attempt to display both language ability and accommodation to the language of civilisation and technology.

4- Conclusion

What does all this tell about the sociolinguistic and the psychological reasons that made male and female students of English use specific languages in messages?. First, the data showed that both groups use and mix languages almost similarly but for different reasons. In fact, both males and females use languages and various combinations of languages to communicate wider and better, to signal membership, to demonstrate language ability, to improve languages command. Besides, switching or mixing languages by both sexes was justified by their pragmatic reasons to cope with multilingual recipients to ensure better understanding within the different linguistic communities evolving in the Algerian context.

Interestingly enough, the examination of the findings allowed the identification of gender differences mainly when dealing with languages use and mixing motives, perceptions and preferences. In fact, males tended to believe that mixing languages occurs most critically to show language ability, whereas the reason of expressing and communicating better seemed to be

females' major concern. Exploring language perceptions also showed disparities between the two groups.

In fact, French seemed to be the girls' most preferred language for affective and social reasons, whereas English was more popular among males who see the language as their subject of study that deserves improvement via practicing and a positive vector of modernity and technology. Moreover, males seemed to use languages for more pragmatic reasons. In fact, males use English mainly in an attempt to show alignment to students' social category that is used with classmates for language enhancement purposes.

This practical aspect of language use marked a substantial difference between males and females texting styles that deliberately or unknowingly used languages apparently for different reasons. These differences were partly explained by both girls and boys positive and negative attitudes towards mainly French and English languages. For females, French and English were emphatically and positively seen as their favourite languages, whereas males viewed French negatively as the language of colonialism, and English positively as an international language. These psychological attitudes can conceivably be responsible for males and females' recourse to one language instead of another when composing messages.

In this line, the relationship between language use and attitudes are made prominent, given the responses and outcomes of the questionnaire. However, it should be noted here that attitudes cannot be the only considered reason for languages use and mixing. Consequently, they should be viewed as just parts of the texting languages use behaviour whereby social and cultural factors are integral components as well. We presently know that students use languages individually or in mixed modes and this decision is

profoundly affected by a number of social, psychological, attitudinal and perceptual factors.

Clearly, in the general process of research data analysis, the results of the questionnaire contributed a great deal in answering this paper research questions and more importantly, disclosing many aspects that are inherent to SMS texting in relation to languages use and gender. In fact, thanks to participants' answers, we can now state that students taking part in this study use one language or a mixture of two to three languages mostly as a communicative strategy intended to cover wider populations of different communities, speaking different languages. At the individual level, the use of French and English for many students appears to carry overt prestige which is noted among both male and female texters who notably use the languages for different social, psychological and perceptual reasons.

In conclusion, the topic of language use in gendered SMS texting in multilingual contexts, in our belief, deserves further and particular academic attention as the topic is notably underexplored in research agendas today mainly in Algeria. Extensive research is thus needed to throw additional light on the subject by analysing SMS texting from different perspectives as the ones suggested in this paper. As noted in the outset, SMS messaging has extensively been studied in many countries and from different angles mainly the linguistic one, and by conducting a sociolinguistic study, we wish to consider the issue in a multilingual country like Algeria in the perspective to throw extra light on the subject and fill the gap in the Algerian research on SMS texting language.

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