Digital Silence: The Pragmatic Functions of Non-Response In Emails Among EFL Users

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Abstract

This research deals with the pragmatic functions such as digital silence which is used in the emails as one of computer- mediated communication ways in social, academic, private or even professional discourses. Digital silence provides speed and amenity to keep communication in different places and time. EFL users of English such as instructors, clients or colleagues tend to use this type of communication among different parts of the world. This research explains digital silence in communication by using politeness theory, pragmatic functions of silence, and EFL communication and email uses. The pragmatic functions are explained by constructing some perceptions of non- response through different contexts and different cultures and by giving some examples to explain how these cultural norms influence non- response behavior. The research also mentions three basic functions that silence depends on: a/ interactive- regulating turn- taking or signaling readiness to listen; b/ affective- expressing emotions such as anger, disappointment, or empathy; and c/ social- maintaining, social hierarchies or norms. The importance of this research shows how silence can be a means of communication within the digital context. Digital silence in emails is discussed through the concept of politeness theory.

In the methodological part of this research, the research depends on qualitative design, a mixed- methods item, and descriptive analysis to know the occurrences of identified silence functions in the collected emails. The sample of 30 emails are taken from different participants in different countries. The research also collects data from email corpus and semi- structured interviews. Thematic analysis and quantitative descriptive analysis are conducted to analyze the data of collected emails. Four pragmatic functions are addressed in the research which are politeness and face- saving, avoidance or deferral, refusal or rejection, and power assertion or status signaling.

Finally, important findings and conclusions are made and the references of this research are authenticated.

Key words: Digital silence, emails, politeness theory, EFL Users, pragmatic functions

1. Introduction

Nowadays, an email is considered as one of the basic forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in academic, professional, social, and private discourses. It helps persons to communicate at speed and comfort without constraining by time and area. Communication in emails have generally become a major way for EFL users to reach out to the other parts of the world - their colleagues, instructors, and clients. It is interesting to know that contrary to the coincided modes of communication such as phone calls or face-to-face interactions, the email exchanges may form wide open gaps of time among responses or, in some cases, no responses at all. The idea of non-response or digital silence in email communications has many significant impacts for the subject of communication and pragmatics beyond the fact of that absence or non- response.

However, in communication studies, silence has been regarded a meaningful idealization rather than an absence in communication (Jaworski, 1993; Tannen, 1985). While silence in face-to-face interaction among interlocutors can often be interpreted through physical ideals like body language and facial expressions, on the contrary; digital silence in email lacks these non-linguistic signals of facial expressions, leaving the email open to multiple interpretations. In this situation, the matter has become more confuse and difficult for EFL users because the interpretations and conceptions can be influenced by cultural criteria and pragmatic competence in English as well as by different expectations regarding email curtseys.

The pragmatic functions of non-response in emails are searched backwardly, even though there is an increasing accreditation on email. Focusing on spoken interactions or coincided digital tools like instant messaging (e.g. Herring, 2013) has become the interest of most research, while it is often interpreted in email as an expression of disinterest, disengagement, or impoliteness. Interpretations of such pragmatic functions can be culturally biased and context dependent. For example, silence is considered an expression of respect in honorific or high-context cultures of certain societies, as well as an avoidance of conflict (Hall, 1976); but, on the other hand, in low-context cultures of other societies, delayed response or

silence is regarded   being negative. Hence, a good understanding of the pragmatic functions that digital silence uses in EFL contexts of such cultures is important to prevent misunderstanding and achieve effective intercultural communication.

This research focuses on the pragmatic functions of silence in emails that are used in communication among EFL users. It aims to scrutinize EFL users' interpretations of silence which are used in emails, the communicative intentions behind their non-responses, and factors such as cultural background, social hierarchy, and relationship of convergence affecting these implementations. Thus, the study contributes to develop the scientific research on digital pragmatics and intercultural contacts.

Thus, the study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the pragmatic functions of digital silence in email interactions among EFL users?

2. How are perceptions of non-response constructed in different contexts of emails by EFL readers?

3. How do cultural norms and power dynamics influence non-response behavior?

The results of this study adopt theoretical and practical importance. In the theoretical part, silence can be regarded as a communicative behavior which is found in the digital contexts. It is known as asynochronous interaction within the framework of pragmatics. In the practical part of silence, it is used EFL teaching, workplace policy, various intercultural training systems by knowing the instructions of its managing and interpreting for silence or non- response in different academic and professional emails of individuals. Misunderstanding of digital silence has strict consequences, especially after pervasiveness of globalization and consideration of English language as Lingua- Franca. These consequences lead to terminate the professional relations and to lose important chances. This research explains the gap of communication which happen in the pragmatic differences, especially in the digital silence of individuals' emails.

This study will narrow its focus on email communication among EFL users for academic and professional purposes. Though the conclusions might extrapolate interestingly into other forms of digital communication, like messaging apps or social media, the research proceeds very much under the "email umbrella" to retain analytical depth. Limitations may include self-report bias: participants might fail to disclose or misrepresent their

communicative intentions in their responses, and generalization to all EFLs will be problematic because of diverse cultures.

2. Literature Review

2.1 An Introduction to Silence in Communication

Silence, historically considered the absence of speech, has been traditionally acknowledged as a communicative act across different contexts (Jaworski, 1993; Nakane, 2007). Pragmatically silence may mean agreement, disagreement, politeness, refusal, or even emotional states without using any verbal language, but it can be interpreted according non-verbal contextual cues (Ephratt, 2008). There are many anthropological and sociolinguistic studies of various societies consider the silence is culturally mediated and interpretation of it depends on contexts of those cultures largely, especially across high-context and low-context cultures (Hall, 1976) which can be understood as high- context or low- context according to their dominant style of communication within a culture. Contextuality of a culture can be defined by its features of the social class, family status, traditions, or the type of their relationships. Cultures of high context such as the Middle East and East Asia consider the silence accepted because it shows the respect, avoid conflicts and it can keep harmony among individuals. On the contrary, cultures of low context interpret silence as a type of harassment, discomfort, a sign of ignoring, or non-cooperation (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). So, silence in Japanese culture has a deep meaning ,but silence in American culture may express unacceptable feeling.

From the point of view of pragmatics, silence is not simply defined as absence of language, but it is choosing to be silent. This decision may be just as deliberate and strategic as using verbal language. Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle holds that successful communication is premised on jointly held assumptions about such matters as the relevance of the contribution being made and the degree of informativeness. This implies that silence may either violate or adhere to such conversational maxims, creating implicatures that need interpretation by the interlocutors.

2.2 Pragmatic Functions of Silence

Scholars have different views regarding the functions of silence. Saville-Troike (1985) argues that there are three basic functions that silence serves: (1) interactive-regulating turn-taking or signaling readiness to listen; (2) affective-expressing emotions such as anger, disappointment, or empathy; and (3) social-maintaining social hierarchies or norms. Ephratt (2008) builds on this view and considers silence as a fully-fledged speech act which can

accomplish functions such as refusal, dissent, or even persuasion, depending on context and shared norms of the culture.

According to Nakane (2007), social interaction differs from one culture and language to another with respect to the use of silence in intercultural communication. In some contexts, silence operates as a face-saving strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987) used by the speaker to avoid direct confrontation or disagreement. EFL users' idea of limited linguistic resources could also strategize with the use of silence as a means of buying time to figure out their way in the conversation better or to escape errors.

2.3 Digital Silence in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

With the rise of CMC, silence has assumed new forms and connotations. In asynchronous communication, the time lag between the messages-or total absence of an answer-can constitute a kind of digital silence (Herring, 2013; Merchant, 2001). Unlike face-to-face conversational silence, digital silence lacks nonverbal exemplars that could help clarify its interpretation. For this reason, its interpretation is very ambiguous and left to the textual and contextual interpretation. Soffer (2010) explains that digital silence occurs when an individual intentionally refrains from responding to digital messages, often as a form of protest, disengagement, or to convey disapproval. Silence in emails can be a powerful way of communication to indicate the cases of contrariness and annoyances without using words or verbal signals.

According to Kumari (2025), digital silence can be intentional and unintentional which comes from different factors such as technical problems or misconstruction which leads to neglect the feelings of individuals and missing opportunities to understand the participants' emails.

In the view of psychology and emotion influences, the digital silence, according to Briones (2021); in communication can raise different feelings like anxiety, relief, or aimlessness of the contexts. So, understanding this type of pragmatic framework is important, specifically the emotional non-response in computer- mediated communication. According to Walther (1996), variant in the modes of communication among EFL users can be interpreted as a type of compensation for non- response of individuals in CMC and it may have some of ambiguity for the receiver. For example, depending on the relationship and cultural variables involved, the meaning of a delayed email might be construed as one of avoidance, one of being busy, or simply as an oversight.

According to Kalman and Rafaeli (2011), email response latency is socially meaningful; long delays convey disinterest or assertion of power. However, this interpretation is not universal: within some professional contexts, delayed responses may mean careful consideration rather than negligence.

2.4 Silence and Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory offers a useful approach to analyze digital silence. Silence is a form of face-threatening acts (FTA) when it delays or ignores the expected time to respond. It is likewise a form of face-saving process since the sender escapes informing a negative response or refusing a request. Hence silence in this sense becomes an indirect speech act; it thereby corresponds with Leech's (2014) definition of politeness as a way to minimize conflict and maximize harmony.

In intercultural email communication, EFL users may use silence for navigating contrasting politeness norms. For instance, bearing in mind that in collectivists' culture, avoiding a direct "no" through non-response can be viewed as a polite way of declining without embarrassing someone (Scollon & Scollon, 2001) - this illustrates an aspect of negative politeness in which the speaker makes an effort not to impose on the hearer.

2.5 EFL Communication and Email Use

Email is for EFL users not just a useful tool for communication but also a site of intercultural negotiation. Studies on EFL email pragmatics (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Chen, 2006) show that many nonnative speakers have trouble negotiating levels of formality, directness, and timing of response. These difficulties arise from variation in pragmatic competencies, sociocultural expectations, and where the first language (L1) interferes with the appropriate English communication strategies.

In the academic environment, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) explains that interpretation of silence as a negative signal has made EFL students more hesitated in sending or answering emails to their professor, to whom they had previously emailed without a response. Suh (2016) also explains that some EFL users in professional contexts may postpone their responding on a certain purpose to avoid confrontation, especially in a hierarchical position of a foreign contextual situation when the professors are the native persons and their students are EFL learners.

This interpretation of digital silence depends on power difference. In organization communication, silence from the principal can be generally understood as disapproval or deliberate withholding of information ,but the response of dependents often carry reluctance, lack of initiative, or deference (Kraut et al., 2002). In addition, these interpretations are further deepened by cultural differences regarding power distance within intercultural contexts (Hofstede, 2001).

Research has shown that EFL professionals in high power distant cultures are more forgiving of silence from above without seeking clarification, whereas in low power distance cultures, silence is likely to invoke follow-up queries from subordinates (Nguyen, 2017).

Gaps in the literature where silence has been documented in spoken or even synchronous digital communication, empirical evidence has sorely been lacking concerning the pragmatic functions of non-response specifically in email communication by EFL users. Most of the studies available already categorize email silence either under technical issues or breakages in communication rather than as a deliberate communicative strategy. A gap exists as a basis for systematic research in the pragmatic meanings and cultural abutments of digital silence in EFL emails because it depends largely on the way of their interpretation, manifestation, and clarification within the same cultural contexts and different cultural contexts among students or even their instructors.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design

This research uses descriptive analytical procedures and a qualitative research design to explain the topic of pragmatic function in digital emails that are used by EFL users as an empty message. The research also uses qualitative methods to clarification of the phenomenon of digital silence. Silence is highly defined contextually and culturally and deeply embedded in interpersonal relationships, and as a result, and it is very difficult to capture by quantitative measures (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study primarily uses qualitative thematic analysis with a mixed-methods component to identify the frequency of pragmatic functions of silence which are found in the collected email data by giving a comprehensive and systematic description of silence patterns.

3.2 Participants

The participants are taken from three different cultural background. Their emails are from academic and business reasons:

The first group are university students who are taken from the Netherlands, Germany, and Japan.

The second group are professionals who have worked in certain companies. They are from Brazil, Vietnam, Egypt, United Kingdom and United States American who use English language as lingua- franca.

The third group are researchers and academics who participated in international scholarly messaging.

Inclusion criteria:

- Age: 20 years and above.
- Proficiency: B2 and higher or intermediate to advanced English levels on the CEFR scale which is abbreviation for these words "common European framework of reference for language".
- Emails: At least five professional/academic emails sent per week.

Sample Size:

The study will consist of 30 participants; 10 of them are university students, 10 of them are professionals who have worked in multinational companies, and 10 of them are researchers and academics. They are chosen to ensure diversity and maintain the same dataset to show manageable for qualitative analysis. Recruitment is conducted purposively by focusing on individuals' relevant email communication experience and by representing a range of cultural backgrounds.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Email Corpus

This study uses the dataset of a collection which consists of email exchanges of the participants that happened in their real-life messaging. To adhere to the ethical requirement, those participants will engage in voluntary sharing of selected email threads with evidence of non-response (delayed or absent replies). All identifying information (names, addresses, organizations) shall be anonymous .

Criteria for email selection:

- Must be either professional or academic in nature.
- Must show an instance of clear non-response (no reply within a period the participant considers reasonable, commonly over 5 working days).
- May be followed up by attempts or not.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the email corpus, Each participant has semi-structured interviews which focus on the following:

- Understanding the interpretation of non-response by the respondent.
- Understanding what the respondent believes is the reason behind the silence.
- Understanding cultural and relational factors that will be included in their understanding. Each interview is conducted through approximately 30 to 45 minutes and they are made in audio- recorded after taking the consent of the participant.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss the method of analyzing qualitative data thematically. The procedure involves the following:

1. The familiarization stage entails reading and rereading the email corpus and transcripts from the interviews.
2. Coding initiation, including the initial coding of instances of silence and the interpretations attributed to them.
3. Theme development-fused codes into broader themes representing pragmatic functions (e.g., politeness, refusal, avoidance, power assertion).
4. Reviewing the themes: checking for consistencies across the dataset.
5. Defining and Naming the Themes-finalizing the categorization for reporting.

3.4.2 Quantitative Descriptive Analysis

Apart from thematic analysis, a frequency count will be conducted to find out the common uses of digital silence among the co-researchers. It will further provide the quantitative overview along with the insights into quality.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval from the concerned Institutional Review Boards which will be acquired . The following measures will safeguard the anonymity and informed consent of participants:

- Anonymization: Names, email addresses, and any information that would identify people will be deleted.
- Informed Consent: Each participant will sign a consent form explaining the purpose, methods, risks, and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Voluntary Participation: No pressure would be employed; participants may decide which emails they would like to appraise.

- Data Security: Data will be collected in such a way as to be kept secure in encrypted drives.

3.6.1 Results and Analysis

90 email threads and 30 semi- structured interviews with EFL users within the academic, professional, and research environments are collected as a comprehensive dataset to explain the functions of digital silence. For this study, participants each provided about two to five email threads which show evidence of a clear occurrence of nonresponse when the reply was absent for five or more working days. The email corpus documented communication between EFL users and a mix of the native speakers such as the United States and the United Kingdom, while the non-native English speakers are different countries such as Vietnam, Brazil, China, and Japan to represent 15 different nationalities.

The initial coding of the email data which are taken from the semi- structured interviews identify four pragmatic functions of digital silence: politeness and face-saving, refusal or rejection, avoidance or deferral, and power assertion or status signaling.

3.6.2 Function 1: Politeness and Face-Saving

This action covered approximately 38% of the cases analyzed which happened in 11 interviews: Participants indicated that one of the reasons for not replying to some emails was to avoid giving a negative answer, which endangered coming across as rude or confrontational within the given cultural context.

For instance, there was one Japanese participant who didn't reply to his peer for a collaborative request and explained during the interview: "If I say it directly no, it might embarrass him. I thought he would understand from my silence that it's soft decline."

This is in accordance with what one could call Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative politeness, whereby silence functions as a strategy for minimizing imposition. In high context cultures like East Asia or the Middle Eastern, for example, non-reply might mean implicit refusal that affects social harmony (Hall, 1976; Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

Conversely, silence within this context was perceived negatively by individuals originating from low-context cultures like Germany or the Netherlands; according to these participants, silence means unprofessional or indicates rejection. This cultural variation explains the interpretative ambiguity of digital silence.

3.6.3 Function 2: Refusal or Rejection

Almost 27% of these cases involved the use of silence as a form of refusal and they happened in about 8 interviews. Distinct from the indirectly face-saving silences, more culturally motivated, refusal silences related to rejecting the idea or invitation or to the conflict to be expected from such a refusal in most workplaces.

A Brazilian participant working in a multinational firm narrated how he ignored repeated follow-up emails concerning an internal project that he did not wish to join: "I knew saying No would lead to many questions; so I just didn't reply, hoping they'd drop the matter."

Silence here is just simply acting as a speech act of rejection (Ephratt, 2008), which elides verbal expression of disapproval but is significant because it was more common in hierarchical relationships wherein authority placed the sender in relative advantage to the recipient. Thus, once again, an indication of asymmetry regarding communicative obligation is demonstrated.

3.6.4 Function 3: Avoidance or Deferral

About 21% of the dataset revealed avoidance or deferment and the occurrence is about 6 interviews. In this case, they just postponed replying to an email because they did not know how to approach its content or maybe because the matter at hand needed more time than what they had made available at the moment, or more resources.

For example, a participant from Egypt-an academic-doesn't respond to a reviewer whose comments he sent regarding a given manuscript submission: "I felt overwhelmed and needed more time to think it out. But the more I was delaying, the harder it became to reply."

This phenomenon resonates with Walther's (1996) Social Information Processing Theory, which suggests that when asynchronous communication includes a time gap, that may signify cognitive or emotional processing. Yet, extended avoidance leaves an unintended impression of disinterest or neglect. Indeed, such may be valued in cultures that prescribe punctuality as a sign of professionalism.

3.6.5 Function 4: Power Assertion or Status Signaling

As high as 14% of silent responses were interpreted by participants as power assertion acts according to them which happened in about 4 interviews . Silence in these cases comes from an authority figure-a supervisor, a senior academic, or a top-corporate manager-and is understood as a hierarchical boundary reinforcement.

As one participant from Vietnam went further and commented, their department head almost never replied to all emails except those sent by senior faculty: "We all know he reads our messages, but he replies only to professors. It's like a signal of who matters."

This is in line with research on chronemic expectancy violations (Kalman & Rafaeli, 2011), where response time or lack thereof forms a power cue in digitized communication. In most high power-distance cultures (Hofstede, 2001), silence may well be accepted, but should the culture be in low power distance, then such silence may be viewed as disrespectful or even demotivating. Analysis established obvious patterns of culture with regard to interpretation of digital silence.

High-context cultures (e.g., Japan, Saudi Arabia, China) tend to ascribe maximum meaning to silence, as both polite and neutral. Low-context cultures (e.g., USA, Germany, UK) fall more easily under the negative interpretation of silence. They generally associate it with inefficiency, disregard, or incompetence. Such cultural melting mirrors Hall's (1976) model and ultimately indicates that most misunderstandings in EFL email exchanges occur when cultural expectations are at odds with each other.

3.6.6 Unintentional or Technical Silence

These are issues that are not analyzed in the main pragmatic analysis; however, it is pertinent to note that 12% of non-response cases fall under non-strategic causes such as email delivery failures, spam filtering, or just overlooking a message. The participants of this research reached to the concept of "the noise of normal email" which decrease the strict consequences of digital silence and decrease the feelings of anxiety which come from intentional or unintentional silence in order to remove the ambiguity of communication options which leads to misunderstanding.

3.6.7 Summary of Findings

Analyzing of the findings explains that the concept of digital silence is one of the pragmatic, communicative and social strategy instead of a singular structure among EFL users. It is related to cultural, social, and relational norms of society. The research deals with four pragmatic functions related to the concept of digital silence which are refusal- rejection, politeness- face saving, power assertion- status signaling, and avoidance- deferral. It can be concluded that interpretation of silence depends on the cultural traditions of different societies. EFL users should understand these cultural norms of different societies to help them reduce the discrepancies of interpretation for these emails in different situations of using English language.

4. Discussion

The results of this research discovered that digital silence in emails communication among EFL users includes different pragmatic functions which are refusal- rejection, politeness- face saving, avoidance- deferral, and power assertion- status signaling.

According to Jaworski (1993) & Ephratt (2008), silence has social meanings and it cannot be considered nonsensically. 38% of results explain the control of Brown & Levinson's (1987)politeness theory which considers the concept of silence as a negative politeness and face saving strategy used by the individuals. This perception agrees with Hall's (1976) view about the effect of high- cultural context in which the meaning of silence is hidden in the implicit expressions. On the contrary, Scollon & Scollon (2001) consider the silence in low- cultural orientation as negative interpretation and it has many risks of misunderstand across- cultural contexts which adheres the previous results about intercultural pragmatic situations.

The analysis of data found that 27% of results lead to refusal and avoidance of confrontation among professional and academics' emails in which digital silence may be a strategy to avoid endangered harmony. Nguyen (2017) supports this view by explaining that a refusal silence can be predominant in different relations to achieve harmony among different contexts of EFL users.

Cultural background of participants appeared a strong effect on choosing the pragmatic function to express the digital silence in their emails. The EFL participants from high- cultural background interpret the silence positivity while the EFL participants from low- cultural background consider silence as insult and unappreciative communication. 14% of silence results in emails represent the power assertion pragmatic function similar to the perception of Kalman & Rafaeli (2011) about computer- mediated communication CMC.

According to Hofstede (2001), silence in the cultures of high power distance setting is acceptable and it can be a part of hierarchical figuration for society. In low power distance contexts, however, perceived irreverence could endanger such behavior. This discrepancy can form a bias among the policy of communications and reality of cultures.

The results also explain that teaching English language takes into account training the participants on how using their pragmatic competence in writing their emails. There are some of choices can involve:

- Role-play ability to simulate delayed or absent replies.
- Cross-cultural comparison of email etiquette.
- Awareness of potential misinterpretations in multicultural environments.

Such instruction will assist learners prevent pragmatic failures (Thomas, 1983) in professional and academic communication.

5.Limitations and Recommendations for Intercultural Communication

This is a participant self-selection bias: Email data sharers might not be representative of the entire EFL population.

Analyzing the interviews to know what the participants mean or intend from their emails; the analysis explains some sort of alignment related to the hindsight interpretation. The collected data is taken from assorted sample which cannot be generalizable for cultural differences. In addition to the size of the sample cannot be covered of EFL users' experiences and their pragmatic proficiency. From the results of this study, some recommendations can be taken into account when the intercultural communication of emails is used:

1. Make reasonable expectations for the responses of emails to reduce misunderstanding of digital silence.

2. Attenuate the negative perception for the silence in emails and admit the rights of the receiver.

3. Disseminate the cultural awareness among EFL users to help them understand the digital silence and its pragmatic functions.

4. Understand the different non- response meanings in the cultural contexts and in the linguistic contexts for both the receiver and the sender of the email.

6. Conclusions

It can be concluded that non- response or digital silence in email communication involves four pragmatic functions, each one has different interpretation depending on the context in which the communication can happen. These pragmatic functions of silence are avoidance- deferral; power assertion- status signaling; politeness- face saving; and refusal- rejection. Interpretation and understanding for these functions relate to the cultural norms, harmony of relationships and hierarchical structures of the societies.

To note, key contribution of this study includes:

- Furthering the reach of the pragmatic theory to asynchronous digital contexts.

- Consideration of the cultural variation in interpretation of silence.

- Provisions on pedagogical and organizational implications on effective management of digital silence.

Finally, the research summarizes the concept of digital silence of intercultural email communication with the clause " saying nothing and remaining on taciturnity" can be interpreted in much meanings and can avoid

misunderstand later. So, the intercultural communication in this global world needs more gentility and respectability.

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الصمت الرقمي: الوظائف التداولية لعدم الاستجابة للرسائل الالكترونية بين مستخدمي اللغة الانكليزية

المستخلص

يعد هذا البحث توضيح موجز للوظائف التداولية المستخدمة للتعبير عن الصمت الرقمي في الرسائل الالكترونية كونها واحدة من وسائل الاتصال بوساطة الحاسوب في المحادثات سواء كانت اكاديمية، مهنية، اجتماعية، او خاصة. طريقة التواصل هذه تحقق الراحة والسرعة دون التقيد بالزمان والمكان. يميل مستخدمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية الى استخدام الرسائل الالكترونية للتواصل مع زملائهم ، معلميهم ، زبائنهم عبر انحاء الكرة الارضية. يتناول هذا البحث توضيح الصمت الرقمي في التواصل، الوظائف التداولية، العلاقة بين الصمت ونظرية المجاملة ، واستخدامات البريد الالكتروني للتواصل باستخدام اللغة الانكليزية. لقد تم توضيح الوظائف التداولية وتفسير بعض المفاهيم حول عدم الاجابة في سياقات مختلفة وثقافات مختلفة بإعطاء بعض الامثلة عن تأثير القواعد الثقافية على سلوك عدم الرد. هناك ثلاث وظائف اساسية للصمت: التفاعل لتنظيم تبادل الادوار او الاشارة الى الاستعداد للاستماع؛ التعبير عن المشاعر عاطفياً مثل الغضب، خيبة الامل، او التعاطف، الاعراف او القواعد الاجتماعية. تقع اهمية هذا البحث حول عرض الصمت الرقمي كوسيلة للتواصل داخل السياق الرقمي وقد استخدمت نظرية الكياسة لتحليل مفهوم الصمت الرقمي في الرسائل الالكترونية.

اما الجزء العملي من هذا البحث، فقد تناول التصميم النوعي والتحليل الوصفي والبحث بالطرق المختلطة لحساب عدد مرات حدوث وظائف الصمت في بيانات البريد الالكتروني التي تم جمعها في عينة من ثلاثون مشاركاً. أُستخدمت مجموعة البريد الالكتروني والمقابلات شبه المنظمة لجمع البيانات وتحليلها عن طريق التحليل الموضوعي والتحليل الوصفي الكمي. لقد أُستخدمت اربع وظائف تداولية في هذا البحث هي المجاملة او حفظ ماء الوجه، الرفض او الامتناع، التجنب او التأجيل ،تأكيد السلطة او الاشارة الى المكانة الاجتماعية.

واخيراً تم التوصل الى مجموعة من النتائج والاستنتاجات المهمة مع توثيق المراجع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصمت الرقمي، الرسائل الالكترونية، نظرية الكياسة، مستخدمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية، الوظائف التداولية.