

Information sheet and consent form for participants

i. Information sheet sent to participants

“Is there a device effect on language? A corpus-based study on the role of communication devices in computer-mediated communication”

Hello!

I am currently starting a PhD project about communication device effects on language at the University of Hamburg, under the supervision of Prof Jannis Androutsopoulos. I would be grateful if you would allow me to use your messages for my research. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the project and address privacy concerns.

The content and goals of the project

The goal of the project is to investigate to what extent people’s language usage is affected by their communication device, that is, whether people chat differently if they’re using a mobile device or a computer. Although such an effect does exist in the public consciousness, e.g. regarding capitalisation or message length, linguistic empirical research is as yet sparse. My project seeks to investigate to what extent microlinguistic features (emojis, acronyms, punctuation, etc.) and discourse features (topics of discussion, level of formality, etc.) are affected by the communication device used. Furthermore, I am interested in exploring how this possible “communication device effect” may interact with contextual factors, such as the sociodemographic characteristics of the user or the platform used. As both Discord and Twitter record what communication device was used to construct a message, I will be using those two platforms to compile messages for analysis.

Data collection and protection of privacy

Data to be collected:

If you consent to the use of your messages for my project, I will collect and analyse your Discord messages on the Blogchat server. The messages will be used only for my research. I will NOT be collecting DMs (direct messages), messages from any other servers, or messages from the Restricted Section (e.g. #modchat). In addition, if you consent to participate in the project, I will also collect and analyse your publicly posted tweets. The following privacy guidelines apply to both sets of data, i.e. from both Discord and Twitter.

Anonymisation:

The only person who will see the raw messages is me. All messages will be stored on my private computer and/or harddrive, not on any Cloud. All messages will be anonymised by me and the anonymisation key will be available only to me. Anonymisation applies to names, pseudonyms, and place names. Messages or message sequences that will be shown to others, such as to my supervisor or other colleagues, will only be shown anonymised.

For example, an original message such as (a) below will be anonymised and processed as (b):

- a) [@Anna]: I went to the bookstore in London with John 😊
- b) [@Katherine]: I went to the bookstore in Edinburgh with Tony 😊

My interest is neither in the exact content of the messages nor in the offline identity of the author; rather, I am interested in possible linguistic differences associated with the device used to write the message.

Dealing with attachments:

Attachments sent via Discord will be kept track of only as a factor of consideration in linguistic analysis. I will not have a visual or content analysis of said attachments, nor will they be shown to anyone else. That is, a picture of a dog may be referred to as '[picture of dog]' within the thesis, but will neither be reproduced nor analysed in more detail.

Schedule:

My plan is to collect data until September 31st, 2020. If I need to collect data at any point after that, I will inform you and ask for permission again. You are free to withdraw from your cooperation with the project at any point, with no reason given, at which point I will stop collecting data. I will not use any Discord messages posted before you gave consent.

If any of the conditions I describe above change in any way, I will inform all participants immediately and ask them to ratify that change.

If you are interested in taking part in the project, please fill out the attached consent form. Please feel free to ask me any questions about the project or about your participation in it, either privately or publicly.

If you agree, I will take the liberty to send you a simple sociodemographic questionnaire (e.g. age, gender, first language) in several weeks, and an eventual more in-depth questionnaire about your technological habits in due time (e.g. do you use autocorrect). The same strict conditions of anonymity apply; you are free to leave questions blank.

Many thanks!

Jenia Yudystska
yevgeniya.yudystska@studium.uni-hamburg.com

ii. Consent form sent to participants

Consent form for data collection for the project “Is there a device effect on language? A corpus-based study on the role of communication devices in computer-mediated communication” by Jenia Yudtska

If you consent to take part in this project and to have your data (messages, questionnaire answers) used for my research, please fill in the following form and send it back to me via email (yevgeniya.yudtska@studium.uni-hamburg.de) or via Discord DM (jenia#0993).

I, _____ [name/username], was informed about the content and goals of Jenia Yudtska’s PhD project, “Is there a device on language? A corpus-based study on the role of communication devices in computer-mediated communication”. I was informed about the data collection procedure and the measures to guarantee privacy protection. I hereby agree to voluntarily take part in the research project. I accept that my messages be used for Jenia Yudtska’s research purposes under the guidelines outlined in the information sheet.

I can withdraw my consent at any time, in written form.

Signed/initialled:

Sociodemographic questionnaire

Introduction to Questionnaire

Hello!

Thank you once again for letting me use your messages for my project! This is a follow-up questionnaire, split into several parts: some basic sociodemographic details, some questions about your technological habits, and some more open questions about your thoughts on technology and online communication.

Your anonymity remains the highest priority for me; you are free to leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer. On the other hand, I'm grateful for you to go into as much detail about your thoughts as you'd like! Please feel free to ask me any questions about this questionnaire or the project more generally if anything is unclear.

Many thanks,

Jenia Yudystska

Q1. Sociodemographic information

This section focuses on some basic sociodemographic information. The questions are mostly multiple choice.

1.1. What is your name (or username)?

Please write your answer here: _____

1.2. How old are you?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 18-20 | <input type="radio"/> 46-50 | <input type="radio"/> 75+ |
| <input type="radio"/> 21-25 | <input type="radio"/> 51-55 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 26-30 | <input type="radio"/> 56-60 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 31-35 | <input type="radio"/> 61-65 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 36-40 | <input type="radio"/> 66-70 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 41-45 | <input type="radio"/> 71-75 | |

1.3. What is your gender?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- | |
|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Male |
| <input type="radio"/> Female |
| <input type="radio"/> Non-binary |
| <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |

1.4. What is your "profession" in the book community? Mark all that apply. If your answer isn't listed or you'd like to expand on it, please do so in 'Other'.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Blogger
- Author
- Editor
- Publisher
- Other: _____

1.5. Is your first language English?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- Other

1.6. Do you regularly communicate online in any language other than English?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No
- Other

1.7. What is your country/region of residence? You can be as vague or precise as you'd like, e.g. Massachusetts/Sweden/East Asia.

Please write your answer here: _____

1.8. Is your country of residence primarily English-speaking?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

Q2. Technological Habits

This section focuses on your habits regarding using technology, specifically communication devices (e.g. smartphones, computers). By "chatting", I mean any kind of written online interaction (e.g. Discord, WhatsApp, IRC, Facebook Messenger, tweeting, texting). The questions are mostly multiple choice.

2.1. Which device(s) do you typically use to chat online? Mark all that apply. Feel free to comment if you think you use certain devices more/less frequently than others.
(Comment only when you choose an answer.)

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

- Computer _____
- Smartphone _____
- Tablet _____
- Smartwatch _____
- Other _____

2.2. Does your device usage vary over the course of a day? Please mark when you typically use your device(s) for online chatting.

	Morning	Around noon	Afternoon	Evening	Night
Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Smartphone	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tablet	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.3. Does your device usage vary between platforms? Please mark which device(s) you typically use to chat on these platforms. If you don't use a platform, please leave it blank; by messaging app I mean Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber, Signal, Telegram, WeChat, etc.

	Discord	Email	Messaging App	Reddit	Twitter
Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Smartphone	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tablet	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.4. Please feel free to add additional comments/clarification about how your device usage varies over the day and/or between platforms. What do you think causes you to shift between devices?

Please write your answer here:

2.5. How many years of experience (roughly) do you have of chatting via computer?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Under 2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- Over 20 years

2.6. How many years of experience (roughly) do you have of chatting via smartphone?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Under 2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- Over 20 years

2.7. What keyboard layout do you use? Mark all that apply if you use multiple.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- QWERTY
- QWERTZ
- DVORAK
- AZERTY
- Other: _____

2.8. Do you have the same keyboard layout(s) installed on your computer and smartphone?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- Other: _____

2.9. Do you have autocorrect installed on your device(s)? Mark all that apply.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Yes, on my computer
- Yes, on my smartphone
- Yes, on my other mobile device(s)
- No
- Other: _____

2.10. Do you also have a non-Latin keyboard layout installed? (i.e. Cyrillic, Arabic, ...)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No
- Other

2.11. Do you use voice-to-text when chatting online?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, often
- Yes, but rarely
- No

2.12. What keyboard do you typically use on your smartphone? (If you don't know, you can leave it blank.)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- iPhone keyboard
- Samsung keyboard
- Gboard
- SwiftKey
- Chrooma
- Other: _____

2.13. Please feel free to add any other comments/clarifications about your technological habits that weren't covered by the answers above.

Please write your answer here:

Q3. Open questions about technology - Part I

This third section focuses on some open questions about the interaction between communication devices and online communication. **There's no "right" answer** - I'm interested in hearing what *you* think.

3.1. I'm interested in finding out whether people prefer chatting via computer or smartphone (or other mobile devices). Personally, I primarily chat on my phone because it makes the conversation feel "cozier" and more intimate to me - more like "speaking".

What about you? **Do you prefer to chat via your computer or your mobile device, or do you like both equally? What makes you enjoy one or the other more?**

Please write your answer here:

3.2. Do you switch between devices across different conversations? For example, I typically reply to photos in my family group chat over my phone, but for a serious discussion I might switch to my computer instead. **What kind of conversations do you prefer to hold over your phone or your computer?**

Please write your answer here:

3.3. Do you ever switch between devices within a single conversation? For example, sometimes while chatting on my computer I'll briefly switch to my phone to send a photo. If my hands start to ache while chatting on the phone, I'll switch to the computer to continue the conversation more comfortably. Other reasons to switch might be to continue a conversation while going for a walk, to send a link to a website, or to take advantage of autocorrect features. Do any of those apply to you? **Why do you switch between devices during a conversation?**

Please write your answer here:

3.4. The main topic of my study is whether and **to what extent the device used affects a person's language in online communication.** So far, linguists have come up with some ideas as to how language might be affected, but there's very little empirical proof as to whether they're right or wrong. I've listed some of the features proposed below.

Please mark all the features which might be affected by the device used, in your opinion. "Affected" can mean used on one device and not used at all on another OR used more often on one device and less often on another OR used at similar rates but in different ways between the devices. Please feel free to add any comments if you want to specify.

(Comment only when you choose an answer.)

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

3.4.1.

- Length of messages _____
- Length of sentences _____
- Length of words (e.g. 'so' vs 'very') _____

3.4.2.

- Acronyms (e.g. 'idk', 'lol') _____
- Other abbreviations (e.g. 'no u', '2 me') _____

3.4.3.

- Accidental spelling errors (i.e. typos) _____
- Deliberate non-standard spelling (e.g. "Good mooorning!") _____

3.4.4.

- Emojis (e.g. the crying-laughing emoji or :peek: on Discord) _____
- Emoticons (e.g. :), :D) _____

3.4.5.

- Punctuation (e.g. "Thats good isnt it") _____

3.4.6.

- Capitalisation (e.g. "yeah i KNOW...") _____

3.4.7.

- Pictures (e.g. attaching photos, memes, etc to a message) _____

3.5. What about you? **In your opinion, does the device you use affect your language when you chat online?** This could be in relation to any of the features listed above, or any other ones you can think of.

Please write your answer here:

3.6. Some people claim that they can tell if *other* people are on their phone or their computer based on their language. **Can you tell if somebody's on their phone or computer by the way they communicate?**

Here's a few Discord messages from me. Can you tell which ones I wrote by phone and which ones by computer? What makes you think so?

Jenia 09/12/2020

Well well well so The Bone Shard Daughter is
really good 😊
Big revelation to everyone here I'm sure
I'm halfway through

1)

Jenia 11/05/2020

we should definitely be promoting masks like
that. the hot new fashion accessory!!! so hot,
so mysterious!!!

2)

Jenia 11/13/2020

There's a russian TV series about a pandemic
up on Netflix rn, called To The Lake. It's like a
horror series. I'm watching it with my mom
and am like "..... Well at least it isn't that
bad irl lmao"

3)

Jenia 10/30/2020

haha
idk, i can't think of what book to get tbh 😞
what a struggle
i had so many books i wanted to read while i
had 0 credits, and now i have 22 and am
blanking

4)

Please write your answer here:

3.7. Please feel free to add any other comments and thoughts about communication devices and online communication that weren't covered by the answers above.

Please write your answer here:

Q4. Open questions about technology - Part II

This final section focuses on some open questions about the interaction between online communities and online communication. **There's no "right" answer** - I'm interested in hearing what *you* think.

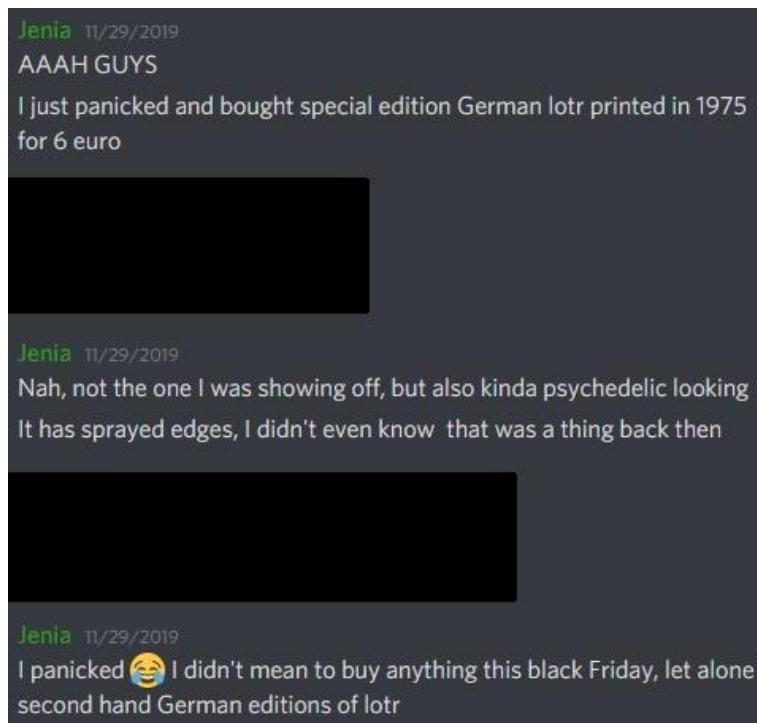
4.1. Do you feel like the book community has a special way of talking? Some people talk about the myriad acronyms you have to learn when you start book blogging (e.g. ARC, TBR, LOTR...). Can you think of other examples particular to the book community?

Please write your answer here:

4.2. Can you tell if a person is a member of the book community by their writing? Do you think more experienced members chat/post differently than newer members?

Please write your answer here:

4.3. I'm also interested as to how platform affects language. The screenshots below are of me discussing the same event (buying a cheap *Lord of the Rings* collection) on Discord and Twitter. Do you think there's a difference in my language between the two platforms? **What would you say are the differences between them?**





Jenia (Женя)

...

Okay, this 6 EUR 1975 LOTR collection is hilarious. It's bright green, there's NO appendices, the edges are painted-green-but-yellowing-with-age, and there's a copy of an article about the Hobbit film (with commentary from the last book owner) 😂



6:07 PM · Nov 29, 2019 · Twitter for Android

Please write your answer here:

4.4. Do you feel like *you* communicate differently over Discord and Twitter? I'm interested in whatever differences come to mind: how formal you are, Twitter's vs Discord's character limits, your usage of GIFs and emojis, whether being able to 'like' a tweet affects your interaction with others, etc. **What are the differences in *your* usage?**

Please write your answer here:

4.5. Finally, in regard to Discord specifically, **do you think people communicate differently between different channels in the same server?** One obvious example would be comparing #games and #fanart - even if the topic in both is the video game *Hades*, the former involves discussion and the latter mostly involves posting links to fanart. **In your opinion, what are some other possible differences between channels (e.g. message length, speed of interactions, posting links, posting images)?**

Please write your answer here:

4.6. Please feel free to add any other comments and thoughts about online communication in the book community and/or on various platforms that weren't covered by the answers above.

Please write your answer here:

Post-survey message

Thank you so, so much for helping me with this project! I am extremely grateful for your contributions.

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey.