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ANALYZING THE CONVERSATIONAL FEATURES IN THE CONVERSATIONS OF WHATSAPP GROUPS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A CORPUS STUDY

Mr. Waheed Shahzad[1]*, Ms. Sana Urooj[1], Dr. M. Anwar Farooq[1], Ms. Qurat ul Ann[1]

[1]Institute of Humanities and Arts, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan. quratulanin@gmail.com
[2]Department of Education, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan. dr.naeemullah@kfueit.edu.pk
* waheed.shahzad@kfueit.edu.pk https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2237-8237, Researcher ID: S-9501-2017, IRED: AM2020059, Web of Science Researcher ID: HLQ-2923-2023

Abstract
The thesis entitled "Analyzing the Conversational Features in the Conversations of WhatsApp Groups in Social Media: A Corpus Study." aims to identify the conversational features used by participants of WhatsApp Academic Groups, including students and teachers. The results of this study can help students and researchers who would like to work in the field of corpus linguistics and social media. Quantitative research with descriptive analysis is applied. The researcher has selected this topic because in today's era Internet learning has become quite common. For quick interaction and sharing many institutes and students now create WhatsApp Academic Groups to share knowledge and material conveniently. The researcher has analyzed the types of conversational features using corpus software and has also analyzed which conversational features are most prominently used by teachers and students at university level. According to the researcher, In the total of 5 different Academic Groups, the most prominent conversational features are adjacency pairs, backchannels and discourse markers. Their frequency however differs in each group. The frequency of these conversational features is high in three of the groups as compared to the other two groups, respectively.

Keywords: Corpus, WhatsApp, Group Conversations, Conversational Features

Introduction
The matter of young people language is now the profuse field of research socially, culturally and academically in Pakistan now a days. Most of the research is employed on the use of linguistic features in the field of conversation analysis, and latterly the online or text language usage in the groups of students as they lay stress upon the requirement for supporting young generation with instruction and information about the relevant language. At different social or individual groups, culture, hobbies or various artistic activities play a vital role in the world. In a broader context, it might be described as a style of living that people in a certain social team or organization consider to be proper or right (Park, 2015).

A corpus is described as a series of spontaneously growing linguistic documents, selected to form a condition or series of the language. Sinclair. A range of purposes, both larger and smaller machine-based documents collection and texts are compiled in accordance with strategic guidelines which have established an everlasting place in the linguistic area. Today, corpus studies are effectively integrated into language study in almost all the fields (for example, Hornero et al., 2006),

Internet and Social media have undoubtedly been common source of communication between people especially the young generation. WhatsApp is an extremely popular smartphone app that offers text messaging functionality. To transmit different text and multimedia messages to users or groups, it uses web resources. WhatsApp is famous especially among youth. The app is used by almost 54% of Pakistanis at least once per day. (Telenor Group, 2016). Users are capable of sending free text, audios and videos. Similarly, WhatsApp Groups are now common among the users and especially among young people. Groups can be either for entertainment purposes, office related, family related, and academic groups respectively.

Academic groups are popular among students and teachers, there are also faculty and staff related groups.

Significance of the Study

One of the important aspects of a research proposal is its significance. It points about the study's influence on a research area and its contributions. The significance clearly identifies how the research findings are beneficial. This research will have a great scope in the field of corpus linguistics as well as in social media domain. Most of the corpus-based research has been carried out in Facebook groups, conversations, as well as in WhatsApp notifications, conversations, and statuses, however there is almost no work done in the corpora of WhatsApp academic groups. Thus, this research will not only bring about the mostly prominent conversational features used by university students but also help them generate their linguistic knowledge.

Research Objectives

- To identify the types of conversational features used by social media users in
- WhatsApp groups at university level.
- To analyze the most prominent conversational features used in the conversations of WhatsApp groups at university level.
- To examine the frequency of conversational features found in the conversations of social media users in WhatsApp groups at university level.

Research Questions

1. What types of conversational features are used by social media users in the conversations of WhatsApp groups at university level?
2. What are the most prominent conversational features used by social media users in the conversations of WhatsApp groups at university level?
3. What is the frequency of conversational features found in the conversations of social media users in WhatsApp groups at university level?

Literature Review

The goal of conversation, according to discourse experts, is to exchange speech within a certain environment. This refers to language that is employed with the speaker's aim in mind. Conversation is seen as both formal and casual discussion. There are several types of conversational features which include: adjacency pairs, discourse markers, backchannels, repair, turn-take sequences, topic shifts, elisions, hedge, prosodic features, non-fluency features, feedback and so on. According to Vandjik (2008), the fundamental problem for discourse research in particular as well as the humanities and social sciences as a whole is to demonstrate precisely how our texts and conversations depend on and are influenced by such contexts. The concept of register, which aids in deciphering the actual circumstance, is traditionally used to approach theory of context.

A corpus is described as "a large, organized collection of texts produced at random." It implies that the language contained in a corpus is not chosen at random but rather on purpose. However, no matter how thorough, moral, or substantial a collection may be, it will not accurately represent all languages. In a nutshell, a corpus with one billion words like the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC) may not contain all instances of a language's use. In general, corpus linguistics examines patterns that are connected to lexical and grammatical traits. These types of inquiries can be answered by searching corpora.

- What are the most frequent words and phrases in English

- What are the differences between spoken and written English
- What tenses do people use most frequently
- What prepositions follow particular verbs
- How do people use words like can, may, and might
- Which words are used in more formal situations and which are used in more informal ones?
- How often do people use idiomatic expressions?
- How many words must a learner know to participate in everyday conversation? How many different words do native speakers generally use in conversation?

We can learn about frequency, register, and language use from corpora, which are concepts mentioned in the exercise on adverbs of degree.

Conversation Analysis

CA refers to the study of the relationship between speaking and writing skills is concerned in real setting. It relates to casual conversation, but its techniques were used to hold task-centered interactions such as those jargons that relate to institutional language use in doctors' offices, academic setting and mass media. Consequently, CA has developed to be a distinguished and effective method in the analysis of social interaction (Paulus, Warren & Lester, 2018).

A conversation consists of many conversational features such as linguistc features, pragmatic features, opening and closings, turn-taking, topic shifting, adjacency pairs, backchannels, pause, repair mechanisms, feedback, politeness strategies, hedge, discourse markers deixis and so on. These are some of the features that have been analyzed in the conversations of WhatsApp Academic Groups in this study.

i. **Turn Taking:** When one person listens while the other person speaks in a conversation, it is called turning-taking. The sequence of eye contact, and verbalization appear to develop extremely early— long before language ever began to emerge (Thornbury and Slade, 2006).

ii. **Adjacency Pairs:** A pair of turns made by separate speakers that are placed next to one another and in which the secondary utterance is acknowledged as being connected to the first are called adjacency pairs. It could be a response, for example, to greet or to request. To deny or to approve etc.

iii. **Backchannels:** When one person is speaking in a discussion and another person is interjecting comments to the speaker, this is known as back channelling in linguistics. A listener may employ a back-channel indication, such as a sound, movement, facial expression, or word, to show that the speaker has their attention. Such as: Uh huh, Hmm, Yeah.

iv. **Pause:** There are some characteristics of spoken discourse analysis that are best explored, such as the length of the speech and its pauses, gaps, and overlaps. Because it gives the participant the chance to decode and encode utterances intellectually and also initiate and respond to talk, the duration information used during vocal pauses is a pause. This use of pausing is common when it appears that the participants are talking intermittently and pausing sometimes

v. **Repair Mechanisms:** A speaker as well as other parties frequently employ a repair mechanism to rectify speech problems during a conversation. Usually, this is accomplished by restating, retracting, or repeating what has already been spoken. Repair is the method or tactic used by speakers to rectify what they or another person has said and confirm what they have understood throughout a

discussion, according to Brian (2006:119). As stated by Paltridge (2000, p. 95) that repair is the way speaker correct things that have been said in conversation. When someone fails to take the floor, the speaker pauses and someone else begins to speak, or the current speaker repeats what the speaker said before to give intended another speaker opportunity, they did not hear or did not understand.

vi. **Feedback:** It is possible to provide feedback verbally (with vocabulary words or response tokens such as "Yeah" or "Mhm" or paralinguistically by the use of gestures or the nodding of head respectively. Feedback describes how one person sees the behavioural patterns of another in a two-way dialogue.

vii. **Politeness Strategies:** When face-threatening actions are unavoidable or intended, politeness methods are utilised to structure communications in order to safeguard the listener's positive and negative face. Four basic categories of politeness methods are outlined by Brown and Levinson: blatant, negative politeness, positive politeness, indirect as well as avoiding the use of face-threatening gestures. Many academics that study English communication activity make the assumption that politeness is undoubtedly one of their most defining characteristics. Even while many foreign tourists grumbled about English reserve, they all tended to be pleased by British civility, according to renowned English social anthropologist Kate Fox (Fox, 2004). Jokes are seen as a positive politeness approach, as can be shown in the section on politeness tactics. Positive politeness strategies can be employed to make somebody feel like they belong. As a result, smiling might help someone feel like they belong. But as several modern studies have pointed out, humour is complicated, therefore not every gag may be deemed appropriate, Dynel, Marta (2016).

viii. **Discourse Markers:** Discourse indicators are phrases or words that are used in discussion or discourse to indicate an endpoint, an alteration in the person speaking, a subject, and a subtopic. Discourse markers, as defined by Wharry (2003), are used in sermons to lay out the main portions or sections, emphasise the important ideas, and create literary transitions. These additionally have conventional lines such as "Yes!" or Furthermore, Nevertheless" that serve a number of purposes, such as call-response, additives or postponement techniques. Formulaic emotions, such as chuckling, pausing, stressing (emphasising), and using gestures or facial expressions, can serve as call-response discourse markers, according to Wharry.

ix. **Elision:** If an initial or syllable is deleted from a word, it is known as an elision. Because it facilitates conversational flow and accelerates, makes simpler, and usually improves it, elision is fairly prevalent in conversation. These forms of human contact, according to some experts, have been hampered by technology and social media. For example, I don't know as "I dunno" They would as "they'd" want to as "wanna" and so on.

x. **Hedge:** According to the linguistic subfields of applied linguistics and pragmatics. A hedge is a word or phrase that is employed in a sentence to convey confusion, likelihood, prudence, or indecision about the balance of the statement instead of complete precision, precision, assurance, or determination, Words like "Maybe, Perhaps, To some extent, Usually, fairly, etc."

xi. **Deixis:** A word or phrase that denotes the point in time, location, or circumstance where somebody is saying something is also referred to as a deictic expression or deixis. For example words like: here, there, this, that, now, etc. Adverbs or Personal pronouns and tense are used in English to communicate deixis.

These conversational features are found in normal everyday conversations as well as academic conversations. Their frequency however differs according to the environment and the degree of formal and informal situations respectively.

Research Methodology

An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study. It enables the observation of natural human behavior, which can only be achieved by personal contact in situ, not by artificially arranging experimental observations. The participation in social media as part of their daily routine affords an ethnographic approach an excellent opportunity to pursue this. Therefore, this study adopts the ethnographical approach of 'living with and living like those who are studied'. Also, the researcher has a high level of personal familiarity with the WhatsApp platform and prior report.

Corpus analysis was conducted by using python code for this research. Since Python provides dynamic typing and a mix of reference counting and a cycle-detecting garbage collector for organizing memory, we have employed Python code in this study to investigate the conversational characteristics. Method and variable names are bound during programmer execution via flexible resolution of names. Python gives developers a choice in their development style while aiming for a simpler, less cluttered syntax and grammar. Python adheres to the "there should be one—and preferably only one—obvious way to do it" tenet as opposed to Perl's "there is more than one way to do it" maxim. A fellow at the Python Software Foundation and the author of a Python book, Alex Martelli, stated: "To describe something as 'clever' is not considered a compliment in the Python culture."

Research Design

For any research framework a research design provides a road map to reach the destination. Most of the researchers focus on study design and techniques that are suitable for their studies and or investigations. The current study has a quantitative and descriptive research design. Python Code Software will analyze the data after it is gathered from the WhatsApp group conversations. A software program called Python that was firstly developed in 1991 and it continued to be updated and developed over the time. It's latest version; Python 3.11 was developed on November 2022 which is the current stable release.

This research pointed to explore the conversational features in five different WhatsApp academic groups and provide a complete identifying of their message changing features. The groups were identified as WhatsApp Academic Group 1, WhatsApp Academic Group 2, WhatsApp Academic Group 3, WhatsApp Academic Group 4, and WhatsApp Academic Group 5, with varying numbers of messages and participants. The analysis focused on numerous key conversational features, including adjacency pairs, turn-taking, topics, backchannels, discourse markers, deixis, elision, hedge, non-fluency features, prosodic features, interruptions, topic shifts, politeness strategies, and repair sequences. These features provide efficient awareness into the cooperative nature, engagement levels, and organization of the discussions within each group**.**

Findings and Discussions

Conversational features play a vital role in recognizing the changes in volume of message within various social contexts. The evaluation of these features provides understanding into the shape, engagement, and effectiveness of conversations. With the increasing prevalence of digital interaction platforms like WhatsApp in academic settings, studying the conversational features within WhatsApp academic groups has become an important zone of research. The findings are explained in the following way.

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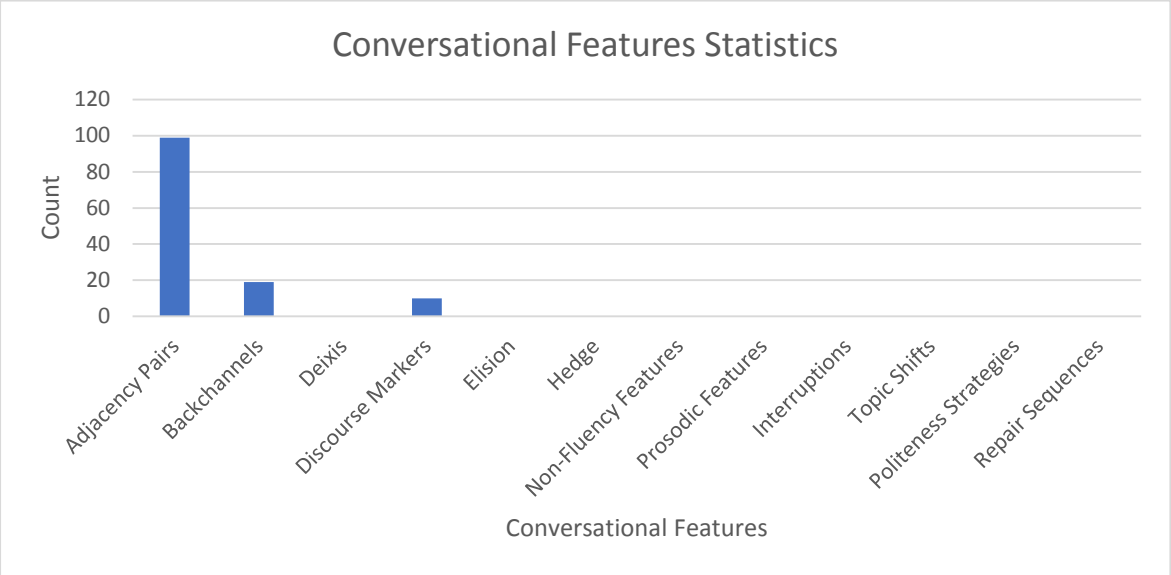
Conversational Features Statistics of WhatsApp academic group 1.



The provided conversational features result of the WhatsApp academic group 1 indicates the occurrences of different communication elements within the group. Let's delve into each feature in detail:

Adjacency Pairs (99): This feature refers to the exchange of conversational turns between participants in a structured manner. In the WhatsApp group, there were 99 instances where one participant's utterance was followed by an appropriate response from another participant.

Backchannels (19): Backchannels are brief verbal or non-verbal responses that indicate active listening or agreement without interrupting the speaker. The group had 19 instances where participants provided backchannels to show their engagement or support during conversations.

Deixis (0): Deixis refers to the use of words or phrases that rely on the context to determine their meaning, such as pronouns or demonstratives. In this group, there were no instances of deixis observed.

Discourse Markers (10): Discourse markers are words or phrases used to indicate the structure and organization of discourse. The group had 10 instances where participants used markers to signal transitions, emphasize points, or introduce new topics.

Elision (0): Elision refers to the omission of sounds or syllables in speech. In this group, there were no instances of elision observed.

Hedge (0): Hedges are words or phrases that indicate uncertainty or a lack of commitment to a statement. There were no instances of hedges observed in the conversations within this WhatsApp group.

Non-Fluency Features (0): Non-fluency features refer to speech disfluencies such as hesitations, repetitions, or fillers. In this group, no instances of non-fluency features were identified.

Prosodic Features (0): Prosodic features involve variations in pitch, intonation, and stress that convey meaning or emotion. No instances of prosodic features were observed in the conversations within this group.

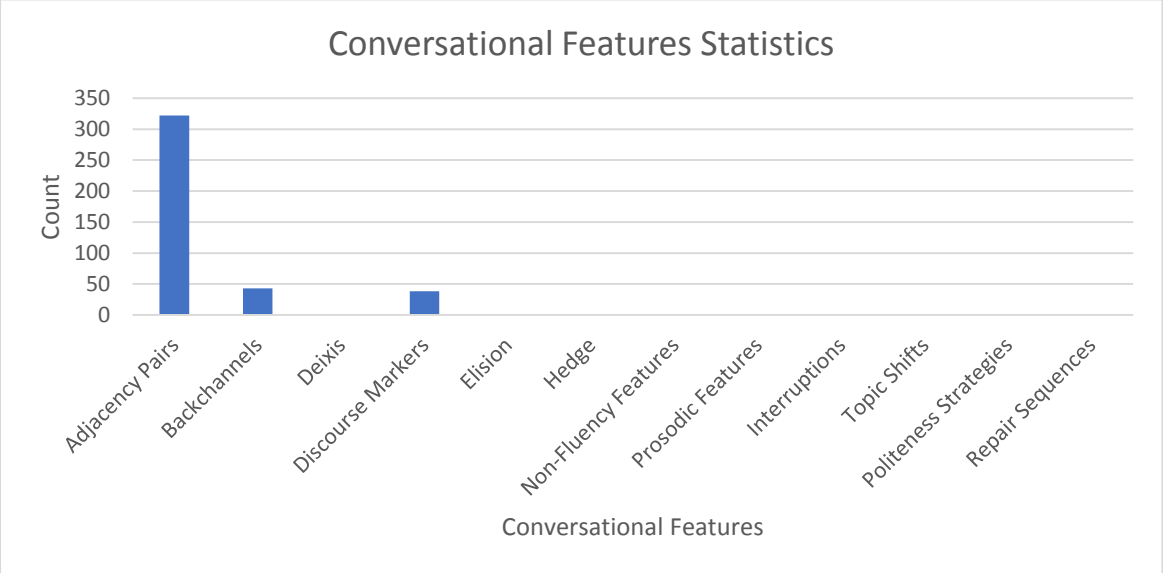
Interruptions (0): Interruptions occur when one participant cuts off or overlaps another participant's speech. In this group, no instances of interruptions were identified.

Topic Shifts (0): Topic shifts refer to changes in the subject or focus of conversation. There were no instances of topic shifts observed within this WhatsApp group.

Politeness Strategies (0): Politeness strategies involve linguistic choices and behaviors used to maintain positive social interactions. No instances of politeness strategies were observed in the conversations within this group.

Repair Sequences (0): Repair sequences occur when participants correct or clarify their previous utterances. In this group, no instances of repair sequences were identified. Overall, the analysis of conversational features in the WhatsApp academic group 1 suggests that adjacency pairs and backchannels were commonly observed, indicating structured and engaged conversations. However, there were no instances of deixis, elision, hedges, non-fluency features, prosodic features, interruptions, topic shifts, politeness strategies, or repair sequences in the conversations within this group.

Conversational Features Statistics of WhatsApp academic group 2.



The analysis of conversational features in WhatsApp academic group 2 showed some interesting findings that are discussed below:

Adjacency Pairs: It is noticed a large number (331) of closely connected exchanges in the conversations. This suggests that people in the group often responded to each other in a structured way, keeping the conversation smoothly.

Backchannels: Participants used short responses or acknowledgments (43 instances) to show active listening. These responses helped create a positive and engaged environment within the group.

Deixis: No explicit references or indicators were found in the conversations to point to specific individuals, objects, or places. It seems that participants relied more on general statements rather than specific details.

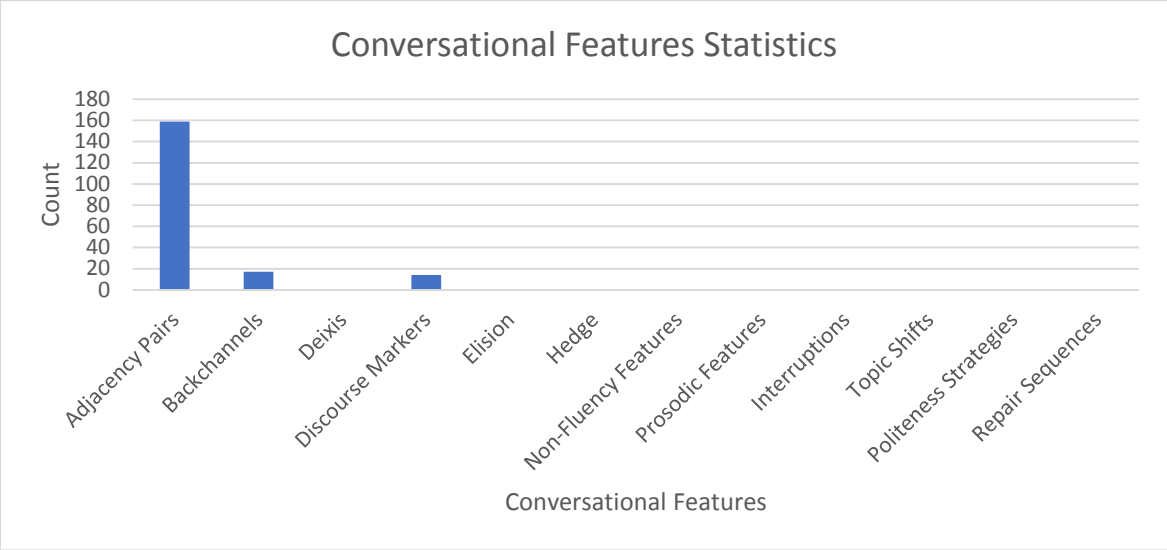
Discourse Markers: Total 38 found where participants used specific words or phrases to guide the conversation and connect ideas. These markers helped organize the discussions and ensure a coherent exchange of thoughts.

Elision, Hedge, Non-Fluency Features, Prosodic Features, Interruptions, Topic Shifts, Politeness Strategies, and Repair Sequences: None of these features were observed or counted in the conversations of WhatsApp academic group 2. It is suggested that they were not prominent or easily detectable in the group's communication style.

These findings provide insights into the dynamics of the group's communication. The high count of adjacency pairs indicates active engagement and interaction among group members.

The presence of backchannels shows that participants actively listened and agreed with each other.

Conversational Features Statistics of WhatsApp academic group 3.



After analyzing the conversations in WhatsApp academic group 3, following outcomes regarding the conversational features are observed:

Adjacency Pairs: The analysis shows a total of 159 instances of adjacency pairs. These pairs indicate that the Sender/Person engage in interactive conversation, where one communication follows another in a smooth order. This suggests that there is a structured and responsive communication pattern found within the group.

Backchannels: There were 17 backchannels found in the conversation's messages of WhatsApp academic group 3. Backchannels are brief responses or acknowledgments that indicate active listening or participation. The presence of backchannels shows the percentage of engagement and attentiveness among the participants that participate in conversation.

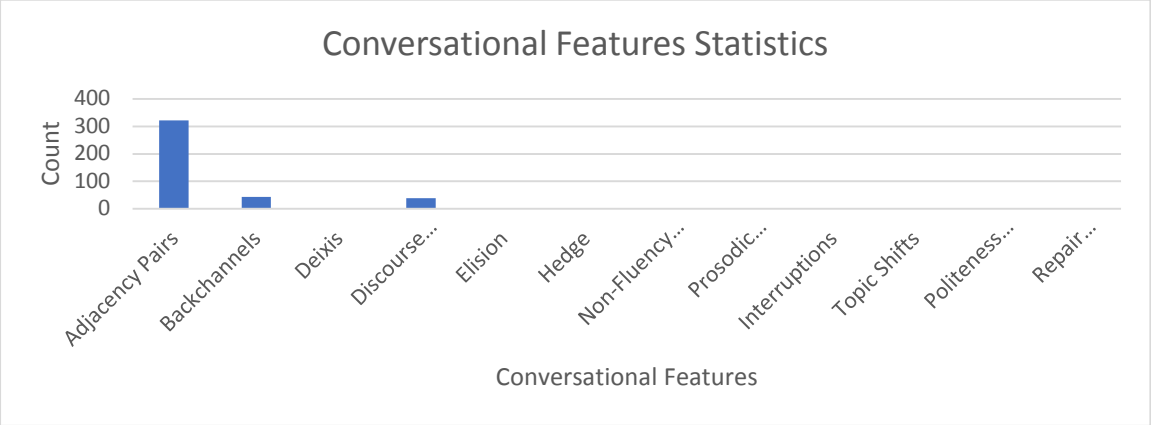
Deixis: There is no deixis present in the conversation, which involves explicit references or indicators, were identified in the investigation of the conversations. This suggests that the participants did not frequently use specific references against individuals in the group, objects, or locations to provide some contextual information.

Discourse Markers: The analysis reveals that there are 14 occurrences of discourse markers found in the conversations of the WhatsApp academic group 3. These markers serve to guide the flow of discourse and establish connections between the thinking of Sender/Person. Their presence indicates the participants' efforts to structure and organize their discussions.

Elision, Hedge, Non-Fluency Features, Prosodic Features, Interruptions, Topic Shifts, Politeness Strategies, and Repair Sequences are not present in the conversation of WhatsApp academic group 3. These conversational features did not exhibit any count in the analyzed data. This predicts that they were not significantly utilized by the participants in their communication within the WhatsApp academic group 3.

These findings light on the communication statistics and patterns found within the group. The frequent occurrence of adjacency pairs suggests interactive exchanges, while the presence of backchannels indicates active engagement of the participants. The absence of certain features suggests the communication preferences and styles of the participants. However, it is important to consider that these results are based on automated analysis, and a comprehensive understanding of the conversations would require a complete examination of the message content and context.

Conversational Features Statistics of WhatsApp academic group 4.



The analysis of conversational features in WhatsApp academic group 4 reveals the following findings:

Adjacency Pairs: There were 322 adjacency pairs observed in the conversations. Adjacency pairs characterize connected conversations between participants, indicating interactive and structured discussions.

Backchannels: The backchannels found in the conversation are 43, indicating instances where participants provided direct responses or acknowledgments. Backchannels play a role in maintaining conversational smoothly and indicating engagement of the participants.

Deixis: No entry of deixis was found in the conversations of WhatsApp academic group 4. Deixis refers to explicit mentions or indicators used to point to specific senders, objects, or locations. Its absence indicates that deixis was not commonly used to provide context or clearness in the group.

Discourse Markers: The presence of 38 discourse markers suggests interaction or guides the flow of conversation. Discourse markers help assembly and connecting ideas within the discussions.

Elision, Hedge, Non-Fluency Features, Prosodic Features, Interruptions, Topic Shifts, Politeness Strategies, and Repair Sequences features did not show any count in the analyzed data, indicating their absence or very small occurrence in the conversation messages.

These results provide complete details about the communication statistics within WhatsApp academic group 4. The high count of adjacency pairs suggests active and structured discussions between members of the group, while the presence of backchannels reflects commitment and listening behavior of the members as well. The absence of certain attributes indicates the communication preferences and style of the members. However, it's important to consider that these results are based on completely automated study and may not show full complexity of the conversations. Further analysis of the content and context would provide a more detailed understanding of the communication within the group.

1 Conversational Features Statistics of WhatsApp academic group 5.

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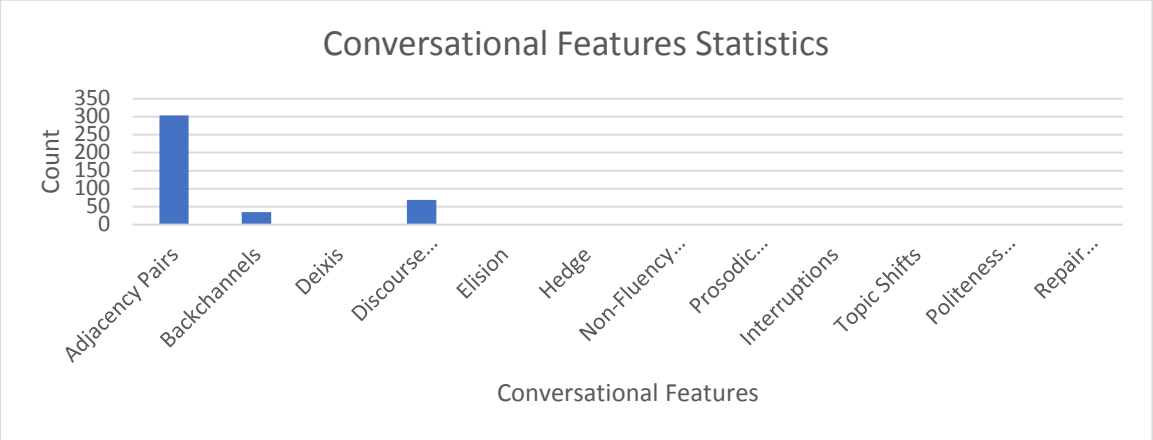

The analysis of conversational features in WhatsApp academic group 5 reveals the following results:

Adjacency Pairs: There were 304 instances of adjacency pairs observed in the conversations. Adjacency pairs represent closely linked and consistent exchanges between participants, indicating shared and coordinated discussions.

Backchannels: The number of backchannels is 35, indicating instances where participants provided brief responses or acknowledgments. Backchannels contribute to maintaining spoken flow and indicating engagement.

Deixis: No occurrences of deixis, which refers to raw references or indicators used to point to specific senders, objects, or locations, were found in the conversations. This suggests that deixis was not commonly used to provide context or clarity in the group.

Discourse Markers: The presence of 69 discourse markers indicates their usage to signal discourse relations or guide the flow of conversation. Discourse markers help structure and connect ideas within the discussions.

Elision, Hedge, Non-Fluency Features, Prosodic Features, Interruptions, Topic Shifts, Politeness Strategies, and Repair Sequences: These features did not show any count in the analyzed data. This implies that they were either not prevalent or not detectable in the conversations of WhatsApp academic group 5.

These results provide visions into the communication subtleties within the group. The presence of adjacency pairs and discourse markers suggests interactive and well-structured discussions. The occurrence of backchannels indicates engagement and active listening. The absence of certain features suggests the communication style and preferences of the participants. However, it's important to note that these results are based on automated analysis and may not capture the full complexity of the conversations. Further examination of the content and context would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the communication dynamics in WhatsApp academic group 5.

Comparison

Conversational Features comparison of WhatsApp academic groups

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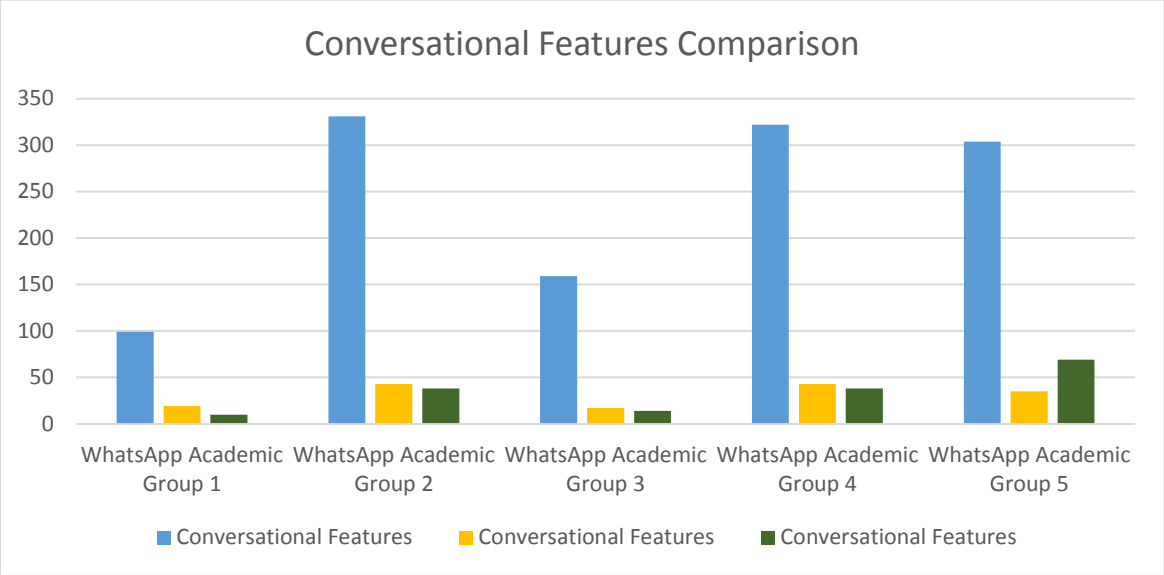

Here is a detailed assessment of the conversation features across the five WhatsApp academic groups:

WhatsApp Academic Group 1:

- Adjacency Pairs: 99
- Backchannels: 19
- Discourse Markers: 10

Group 1 demonstrates a moderate usage of adjacency pairs, indicating relatively structured and interactive discussions. Backchannels are also present, indicating commitment and active pay attention. However, the use of discourse markers is relatively low, indicating fewer instances of guiding the conversation's flow or signaling discourse relations.

WhatsApp Academic Group 2:

- Adjacency Pairs: 331
- Backchannels: 43
- Discourse Markers: 38

Group 2 exhibits a high count of adjacency pairs, indicating a significant presence of closely linked and coherent exchanges. Backchannels also contribute to maintaining spoken flow and engagement. The usage of discourse markers suggests effective structuring and connection of ideas within the conversations.

WhatsApp Academic Group 3:

- Adjacency Pairs: 159
- Backchannels: 17
- Discourse Markers: 14

Group 3 shows a moderate count of adjacency pairs, suggesting arranged and cooperative discussions. Backchannels indicate engagement and active attending. The usage of discourse markers, although relatively lower than Group 2, still aids in guiding the conversation's flow and connecting ideas.

WhatsApp Academic Group 4:

- Adjacency Pairs: 322
- Backchannels: 43
- Discourse Markers: 38

Group 4 exhibits a high count of adjacency pairs, indicating active and structured discussions. Backchannels influence maintaining conversational flow and engagement. The usage of discourse markers is like Group 2, suggesting effective structuring and connection of ideas.

WhatsApp Academic Group 5:

- Adjacency Pairs: 304
- Backchannels: 35
- Discourse Markers: 69

Group 5 demonstrates a significant count of adjacency pairs, indicating active and structured exchanges. Backchannels contribute to maintaining conversational flow and engagement. Notably, the usage of discourse markers is higher assessed to other groups, suggesting a strong emphasis on structuring and connecting objects within the conversations.

After comparing the conversational features of the five WhatsApp academic groups, several noteworthy patterns and variations have emerged. These findings provide valuable insights into the communication dynamics within each group and highlight potential areas for further exploration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of conversation features in the WhatsApp academic groups provides valuable insights into the communication dynamics within each group. The comparison reveals variations in the usage of adjacency pairs, backchannels, and discourse markers among the different groups.

Groups 2, 4, and 5 consistently demonstrate higher counts of adjacency pairs, indicating active and structured discussions. These groups also exhibit a significant presence of backchannels, indicating engagement and active listening. Furthermore, the usage of discourse markers in these groups suggests effective structuring and connection of ideas within the conversations.

On the other hand, Groups 1 and 3 show relatively lower counts in these conversation features. This implies potential differences in communication dynamics and preferences within these groups. However, it's important to note that the absence of certain features, such as deixis, elision, hedge, non-fluency features, prosodic features, interruptions, topic shifts, politeness strategies, and repair sequences, does not necessarily indicate their complete absence but rather their limited occurrence or detectability in the analyzed data.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of analyzing conversation features to gain insights into communication patterns within academic groups. Further analysis of message content, context, and specific language used would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the communication dynamics and effectiveness within each group.

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