

## TYPOGRAPHY, MORPHOLOGY, AND SYNTAX CHARACTERISTICS OF TEXTING

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### ABSTRACT

*The main purpose of this research was to investigate Indonesian, English, and Japanese linguistic characteristics of Short Text Messages (SMS) performed by students. In particular, this research tried to seek linguistic characteristics in terms of typography, morphology, and syntax. Furthermore, the long term purpose of this research was to find out the difference of linguistic characteristics of those languages as well as its socio-pragmatic implication of the short text messages. This research applied content analysis for its method which made use of records or document as the main source of data in terms of recording, official records, text book, reference, letter, autobiography, pictures, movies, cartoon, etc. Meanwhile, technique of analysis included several stages such as defining text, categorizing text, verifying text category, assessing the accuracy of text coding, revising the criteria of text coding, reassessing the category of text coding, coding entire texts, and finally reassessing the accuracy of coding. The identical language characteristics between SMS used by the student to communicate with their lecturers and universal language characteristics are found in this research. The research expectedly provides the main resource for improvement of language learning that enables students to use language appropriately.*

**Keywords:** *typography characteristic, morphology characteristic, syntax characteristic, texting*

### INTRODUCTION

Linguistic characteristics in communication between students and lecturers in terms of short messages through social media likely arise when the use of mobile phones as a means of global communication significantly increases. They introduce attractive features including phone calls, videophone, radio, television, internet, camera, and audio player. Furthermore, there is also a feature of sending and receiving short messages which can be in the form of Short Message Service (SMS) and Instant Messaging (IM). The strength of IM over SMS is that IM enables the user to send the message via the Internet. Thus, it allows users to send more messages than when they use SMS. This fact is supported by an information company stating that in 2012, there are 19 million messages sent from IM surpassing the number for SMS which is 17,6 million messages (Meyer, 2013).

The issue arises when students use particular language style to communicate with lecturers through Short Messages (henceforth called as SM), which is found to be less appropriate and less acceptable. Diction, spelling, and sentences that they express tend to violate grammatical rules. On this point, research on linguistic characteristics

used by students through SM to their lecturers in the Faculty of Humanities of Jenderal Soedirman University is important to investigate. Thus, this research focuses on linguistic characteristics particularly in the level of typography, morphology, and syntax. This is then followed by identifying the meaning with contrastive analysis to improve students' awareness to use language appropriately while communicating.

This research is beneficial in providing the explanation on the linguistic characteristics in Indonesian, English, and Japanese in terms of typography, morphology, and syntax. Meanwhile, this research theoretically contributes to the universal concept formulation on linguistic characteristics of SM in terms of typographic that is concerned with morphological and syntactical aspects. The typographic aspect is concerned with general feature of printed matter (punctuation, phonetic spelling, pictorial, symbol, and emoticons), morphological aspect with the structure of the word, while syntactical aspect with the structure of sentences. Therefore, this research is aimed at developing language skill mastery in accordance with grammatical rules.

This research is mainly based on the following considerations; (1) there is a pattern change of written

communication by using SM which results in the change of language use performed by students to their lecturers. This pattern of communication, according to Segerstad (2002), consists of four patterns; pattern in using email, web chat media, Instant Messaging (IM), and SMS. (2) Inappropriateness and acceptability of linguistic characteristics that are performed by students to their lecturers through the messages they send. Their language is frequently unclear and inappropriate since they have different linguistic characteristics from the common written style. (3) The various sociocultural and ethnic background of both students and lecturers. (4) Only a few studies on the linguistic characteristics are performed by students to their lecturers through SM. Accordingly, it is important to conduct this research since it provides the description on students' use and ability in engaging communication with their lecturers in terms of the use of linguistic characteristics, which is appropriate and acceptable in their alma mater.

Based on this background, the research questions are then formulated as follows: (1) How are the linguistic characteristics on the SM performed by students in communicating with their lecturers in the Faculty of Humanities of Jenderal Soedirman University? (2) How are the implications of linguistic characteristics on the SM performed by students in communicating with their lecturers in the Faculty of Humanities of Jenderal Soedirman University?

SM is basically a kind of communication containing text as the message. As suggested by Brown, Shipman, and Vetter (2007), it is evident that SMS messaging is becoming a widely used communication mechanism for cell phone users. It is also supported by Thurlow and Poff (2011) who stated that text is a short message written and sent through the service of mobile phones, PDA, smartphones, and web browsers. Hence, IM and SMS belong to SM.

The language used in SM has its own characteristics, which are different from common language practice even though they have the same function as to express thoughts and ideas. This is in accordance with Kahari (2014) who has argued that the language of texting has its own style, and the dominant features in SMS language are the use of abbreviations; slang; syntactic reductions; asterisk emoting; deletion of parts of speech especially subject pronoun, preposition, articles, copula, auxiliary or modal verbs; and contractions. It is also in line with Richardson and Lenarcic (2009) who have asserted that forms of multimedia communication such as email and instant messaging have been observed as one of language stylistic evolutions. The language used via computer and mobile phone based communication is considered the emergence of new form of language. Thus, this new form of language does not apply to normal patterns of either written or spoken language.

Hamzah, Ghorbani, and Abdullah (2009) have argued that the new patterns are regarded as an indicator of the quality degradation due to electronic media's effect. They explain that linguistic characteristics used in SM, including spelling, punctuation, and abbreviation, are not based on standard language. Consequently, this results in the language quality used by students which also affects the language used in daily communication.

Research on the use of SM in communication conducted by Thurlow and Poff (2011) have shown the following findings: (1) in Hongkong, male students who received monthly pocket money from their parents are regarded of having higher social status for their high frequency of sending SM. (2) In Hongkong and Japan,

adults of low social interaction ability tend to use SM in communication rather than phone call. Lastly, (3) mothers in America, who come from the Philippines, use SM to keep in touch with their children. From these facts, it can be concluded that the use of SM is as a means or pattern of communication which is commonly performed by people and globally used by world society. It is also supported by Koross and Kipkenda (2016) who have said that the use of SMS texting is pervasive and that SMS text styles messaging could heighten the tendency among students to adopt non-standard uses and contracted forms of English words in their class work, examinations, and research reports. At last, the language used in SM can be classified into a new language used which embed certain linguistic characteristics which are different from common language.

The word characteristic is derived from Greek, *charakteristikos*. It consists of 'character' and '-istikos' or '-istic', meaning distinct or basic nature. Hence, the characteristic is a part of things that differentiate them from others. Linguistics, according to Collin, derives from 'linguist' and '-ic' or '-icaf'. Linguistics deals with language and studies about language. Therefore, linguistic characteristics refer to certain characteristics of linguistic aspect used in communication through SM, which covers phonological, morphological, and syntactical level.

According to Baron (2008) and Brown, Shipman, and Vetter (2007), SM linguistic characteristic, in general, is its focus on the aspect of abbreviation, acronym, misspelling, vowel omission, subject pronoun, and punctuation. It is also said by Vosloo (2009) that SM language is a phonetic abbreviation which is phonologically acceptable although they are inappropriate in terms of spelling. SM linguistic characteristics according to Thurlow and Poff (2011) are: (1) conventional and unconventional abbreviated form; (2) letter-number homophones; (3) non-standard spelling by changing into phonetic transcription; (4) the separation of compound words, the use of capital or small letter throughout words in text, shortened forms of words, the use of symbols and emoticons; as well as (5) unambiguous abbreviated form.

Linguistic characteristics in this research cover typography, morphology, and syntax. Typographic characteristics include punctuation (full stop, comma, and space), capital letter, sound deletion, use of symbols and/or emoticons (letter homophone, number homophone, and letter-number homophone), phonetic spelling, symbols, and emoticons. As supported by Lyddy et al. (2014), this is an important contribution to the understanding of the processing of spelling variants. Morphological characteristics involve initials, abbreviation, shortened form, repetition, and dominant diction of certain group. Meanwhile, the syntactical characteristics are limited to one out of four aspects, namely the sentence complexity categorized into simplex, complex, compound, and compound-complex sentences.

The first characteristic is punctuation which consists of the use of full stop, comma, and space. Tim Pengembang Pedoman Bahasa Indonesia (2016) has said that full stop [.] is used: (1) at the beginning and the end of a sentence, except for interrogative and exclamation; (2) after number or letter in a diagram, summary or list; (3) to separate number of hour, minute, and second which indicates time or duration; (4) to separate author, title, publishing in reference; and (5) to separate thousands number and its multiplication which show certain number. Comma has several functions including to be used: (1) between components in numbers;

(2) to separate clauses in compound sentence which use conjunction to show contrast; (3) to separate the main clause from dependent clause; (4) after words or inter-sentences connector at the beginning of the sentence; (5) to separate direct quotation from the other part of the sentence; and (6) between one's name and their academic title.

On the other hand, the function and location of comma [,] are related to expression and certain components. These are (1) to flank unbounded additional information; (2) separate between words in a sentence; (3) to separate name, address, part of address, place and date, name of place, which is respectively arranged; (4) to separate reversed name in references; (5) to be used in footnotes; (6) to be used in numbers and currency; and (7) to avoid misreading after the information at the beginning of the sentence. Therefore, space is punctuation which typographically plays an important role in marking one word to another and as an inter-sentence marker in SM.

The second characteristic is the capital letter. According to Tim Pengembang Bahasa Indonesia (2016), the capital letter is used in certain place and function. It is used as an initial letter in a sentence; the first letter in direct quotation; the first letter to address God and its pronoun, holy book, the first letter of noble title, descent, and religion followed by name of person; the first letter of title and rank followed by name of person; the first letter of each word in one's name; the first letter of nation's names, ethnic group, and language; the first letter of year, month, day, holiday, and historical moments; the first name of geographical name, state, government, legal document, newspaper, title of article; the first letter of kinship; and the first letter of pronoun.

The third characteristic is vowel deletion. The deletions found in text messages are expected to correspond with reductions in speech. In text messages, the letters which represent vowels in unstressed positions should be deleted within the domain of the weakly accented syllable. It happens because: (1) consonants bring more information than vowels, and (2) this deletion does not confuse the readers in comprehending the message.

The fourth is replacing words or syllables with symbols or emoticons, which consists of letter/number homophone and letter-number homophone. The fifth is phonetic transcription which is necessarily classified into phonemic transcription under the study of phonetics and phonology. According to Tim Pengembang Pedoman Bahasa Indonesia (2016), phonemic transcription consistently describes each phoneme in a language by one symbol while phonetic transcription illustrates each variant of phoneme or sound by one symbol.

The sixth is emoticons or smiley, which is a facial image commonly used in the email to express the certain feeling. According to Crystal (2008), the emoticon is derived from 'emote', meaning expressing emotion and designed to show facial expression based on the certain feeling of the sender. It can be either positive or negative expression. In other words, emoticons are symbols provided in mobile phone to show facial expressions representing sender's or receiver's feeling.

Morphology studies about word formation from the smallest unit of meaning are called morpheme. Morphological process in SM includes initials, abbreviation, cutting, repetition, and diction. Initials, as Greenbaum (2009) and Plag (2009) have described, is a deletion of an entire letter in a word except for the initial letter. This can be pronounced with the spelling of the former one by one

without sounding like a word. The abbreviation is a process of deleting the certain element in a word. Unlike initials, it maintains more than one letter in the intended word. Cutting is a word formation by cutting or omitting certain letter or syllable in a word and form a new shorter word. Hence, it is one of the word formation processes that are done by omitting certain sound/letter or syllable. The next characteristic is diction. Richardson and Lenarcic (2009) have defined diction as an author's word selection of what is considered effective and appropriate. The aspect used as the focus of the research is inappropriate and ineffective dictions by students in engaging communication with their lecturers. It is particularly concerned with the different role and social class among participants.

In literal meaning, the syntactical characteristic is related to the rule of phrase and clause formation. It particularly deals with the number of elements which form a sentence which is then classified into simplex and complex (Alwi et al., 2008). In contrast, Carter and McCarthy (2006) categorize it into (1) simplex sentence consisting of one main clause, (2) compound sentence with two or more main clauses, and (3) complex sentence with one main clause and one or more subordinate clause. Meanwhile, Droga and Humphrey (2005) have stated that simplex sentence contains one main clause, compound sentence two or more independent clauses, and complex sentence a combination of one independent clause and one or more dependent clause. That being said, the independent clause is a clause that can stand on its own while dependent clause cannot.

This particular aspect involves: (1) analyzing the context of communication between students and lecturers in terms of participants, place, theme, the communicative function for the social dimension covering degree of closeness, participants' social status, background and types of interaction, as well as purpose or topic of interaction. (2) Relating the result of factor analysis and social dimension of students and lecturers' communication to the five language styles namely intimate, informal, consultative, formal and phatic. (3) Examining linguistic characteristics used with the language style which should be applied. Lastly, (4) To interpreting relevant similarity and difference of real characteristics and ideal one.

## METHODS

This research is applied to the students of 2015/2016 class from the Faculty of Humanities in Jenderal Soedirman University. Moreover, it employs content analysis. This method is selected since: (1) it is a process of describing and analyzing text to represent the content through a process of selecting such as calculating word frequency as well as the qualitative assessment on the words or terms used. (2) It requires categorizing qualitative textual data into groups of the entity or similar conceptual category to identify consistent pattern and relation among variables.

This is a descriptive content analysis by applying procedures as follows: (1) collecting SM in Indonesian, English, and Japanese sent from students to lecturers, (2) studying other relevant research focusing on the same topic to determine the focus of the research, (3) comprehending relevant literatures to formulate criteria as the base of data analysis, (4) analyzing data, (5) reducing data, (6) re-analyzing data, (7) presenting findings, and (8) drawing conclusion.

The data of this research are SM linguistic

characteristics in Indonesian, English, and Japanese produced by students. The data are collected through the following steps: (1) asking for students' and lecturers' willingness to collect their messages, (2) transforming SM into documents in the form of Microsoft Words and Excel, and (3) presenting SM into the table. Then, the procedures of data analysis in this research are carried on as follows: (1) arranging data coding, (2) categorizing data, (3) re-checking the classification and coding, and discussing it with researcher and team (a doctor of linguist and translator), (4) explaining pattern of linguistic characteristics, (5) presenting the frequency of each characteristics, (6) explaining the different characteristics in Indonesian, English, and Japanese in SM, (7) comparing the real characteristics to the ideal characteristics, and (8) drawing conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research analyzes the linguistic characteristics of students' SMS in terms of punctuation and capitalization in Indonesian, English, and Japanese. These characteristics include the use of full stop (FS), comma (Co), space (S), and capitalization (Ca). Three types of those are: (1) using FS, Co, S, and Ca in accordance with grammatical rule; (2) using FS, Co, S, and Ca without accordance with grammatical rule; as well as (3) not using FS, Co, S, and Ca (see Appendix 1).

The use of full stop in SMS done by the humanities students is not always in accordance with the grammatical rule. Nevertheless, the correct use of full stop is found at the beginning and the end of the sentence while the incorrect use is identified in particular position of the sentence. This punctuation is not only used as a sentence marker but also the linguistic marker in the level of the word.

The use of the comma in this research is rarely found. Ideally, the comma is used to add details of information and appositive marker. It is also used to separate clauses of compound sentences which contain contrast or difference in meaning. Space is naturally used among students to separate words within phrases, clauses, and sentences. However, incorrect use of space is still identified in the use of space which precedes comma, full stop, and the question mark, the use of space to beautify paragraph, and the use of space in the passive voice.

The use of this punctuation is inconsistently applied. According to Tim Pengembang Pedoman Bahasa Indonesia (2016), capital letter is used as the initial of first word in a sentence, direct speech, the God address, name of Holy book, month, year, holiday, geographical name, state or country, governmental institution, name of book, magazines, newspaper, title of article, and the first letter of abbreviation. In this research, the incorrect use of capital letter is found in the beginning, middle, and end of certain words which should not necessarily be used. Inconsistency use of full stop, comma, space, and the capital letter is caused by either the students' intention to be straightforward to the topic or their low comprehension of the use of punctuation (see Appendix 1).

The use of emoticon is relatively rare in this research. The purpose of using emoticon is to express the particular emotion, either positive or negative. The emoticon ☺ is used to express request and gratitude; ☹ to express expectation, the sadness of being declined, and permitted. However, this emoticon is only used to express positive emotion by far.

The omission is frequently used by the students, yet it does not change the meaning. It is commonly done by omitting vowel in pronoun, address, verb, noun, interrogative word, adverbs, and omitting particular letter. However, this omission is still understood by the receiver most probably because of the consonant dominance.

This next type is frequently used by the students in communicating with their lecturers. The common forms of this types are letter homophone (*bt* for *buat*; *cs* for *because*; *tq* for *thank you*; *ur* for *your*; *bw* for *buat*; *sns* for *sensei*), number-homophone (2 for *two*; 4 for *four*), letter-number homophone (*b4* for *before*; 2day for *today*) and symbol or picture (*se(x)* for *sekali*; *di(+)* for *ditambah*; *di(-)* for *dikurangi*). The use of letter homophone is rarely found in this research. Several examples include the use of *liat* for *lihat*; *oke* for *ok*; *gud* morning for *good morning*; and *bcs* for *because*. The use of letter homophone, vowel, particular letter omission, and boiled forms tend to be the same as the general use of text message. This type is generally used to express common terms such as *btw* for *by the way*, and the letter *d* for the preposition *di*. The abbreviated form commonly used by the students include those which are generally recognized such as *b. Indonesia* (*bahasa Indonesia*), *lg* (*lagi*), *angk* (*angkatan*), *ma ksh* (*terima kasih*), *byk* (*banyak*), *thx* (*thanks*), *emg* (*emang*), *yg* (*yang*), and *mjd* (*menjadi*).

Repetition is seldom used by the students. The repetition can be the full repetition as in *kira2* (*kira-kira*) and *sunnguh2* (*sunnguh-sunnguh*); or partially repetition such as *saudara/i* (*saudara- saudara*). The unique finding of this type is the presence of number 2 (two) and letter *x* which are used on their own (*kmrn2* for *kemarin-kemarin* and *kr2* for *kira-kira*), altogether (*benar2x* for *benar-benar* and *kira2x* for *kira-kira*), and/or put between letters (*mdh2n* for *mudah-mudahan*; *ti2p* for *titip*).

Reduction is one of the most common forms used by the students of the Faculty of Humanities. The reduced form occurs by deleting one syllable or more in certain position like in the beginning (*biss* (*habis*)) and *tuk* (*untuk*); in middle (*hub* (*menghubungi*)), and/or in the end of word (*jap* for *Japanese*; *eng* for *English*; *grad* for *graduate*; and *info* for *information*).

The use of colloquial form is realized through its root, such as: *ganggu* for *mengganggu*; *butuh* for *membutuhkan*; *bantu* for *membantu*; and *tanya* for *bertanya*. In addition, some informal forms are still used, for example *ko* for *kok*; *udah* for *udah*; *banget*, *ga*, or *gag* for *enggak*; *pengen* for *ingin*; *mo* for *mau*, and *doank* for *doang*.

The use of simplex sentence, complex sentence, compound sentence, complex-compound sentence are also identified in this research. Simplex sentences are the most dominant of the findings, yet some complex sentences are also found by the absence of the conjunction. The use of simplex sentences does not mean that it contains short message only, but it cannot be separated from the basic function of the cellphone which only accommodates brief message.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the findings and analysis, the conclusion are as follows; (1) the use of punctuation and capitalization by students is inconsistent, and it occurs as they want to be straightforward to the topic they discuss (see Appendix). It also happens due to their lacks of competence in using

these punctuations. (2) The use of letter homophone, the vowel and particular letter omission, boiled forms, and phonetic spelling in short text messages tend to be similar to the general use in daily communication in the Faculty of Humanities (see Appendix). (3) The use of morphological characteristics is realized through abbreviation, repetition, omission, and tolerable colloquial language (see Appendix 2). (4) The use of simplex sentences cannot be separated from the basic function of the cellphone which only accommodates brief message. However, several complex sentences are also found.

Further research that is arranged after this research is completed. The findings which describe the use of linguistic characteristics in the level of punctuation, typography, morphology, and syntax will be followed up with characteristic differences on those four levels. This will be done alongside an analysis of sociopragmatic relevance on the Short Message Service among students of the Faculty of Humanities in Jendral Soedirman University.

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## Appendix 1

FS = FULL STOP		CHARACTERISTIC	
Co = COMMA	ACCORDANCE WITH LINGUISTIC RULE AND USING FS, Co, S and Ca (*)	NOT ACCORDANCE WITH LINGUISTIC RULE AND USING FS, Co, S and Ca (**)	NOT USING FS, Co, S and Ca (***)
S = SPACE			
Ca = CAPITALISATION			
SHORT MESSAGE (SM) EXAMPLES			
<b>FS</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* Alright miss. Thank you.		Alright miss. Thank you.	
** Thank you...		Thank you.	
*** Thank you		Thank you.	
<b>Co</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* <i>Alhamdulillah</i> thanks bu afin.		<i>Alhamdulillah</i> , Thanks Bu Afin.	
** <b>Good morning, miss</b> , Do you go to campus today?		<b>Good morning miss</b> , Do you go to campus today?	
*** <i>Assalamu alaikum ibu</i> I am Havid fahlevi F1F012016 I want to ask when I could see to do consultation?		<i>Assalamu alaikum Ibu</i> , I am Havid Fahlevi F1F012016 I want to ask when I could see to do consultation?	
<b>S</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* Good evening Miss. I am Annisa Rizkiah. I put my draft last Monday. When will I meet you? Thank you.		Good evening Miss. I am Annisa Rizkiah. I put my draft last Monday. When will I meet you? Thank you.	
** <i>ruangan nya</i> penuh semua bu.		<i>Ruangannya penuh semua bu.</i>	
*** <i>Trimakasihya</i> bu, udah menambahkan nilai untuk saya		<i>Terima kasih ya Bu, sudah menambahkan nilai untuk saya</i>	
<b>Ca</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* <i>Assalamu alaikum bu afin</i> . I want to ask your availability for my semhas. Will you be available on Monday, August 22, at 08.30?		<i>Assalamu alaikum Bu Afin</i> . I want to ask your availability for my semhas. Will you be available on Monday, August 22, at 08.30?	
** Gud morning <b>miss</b> , Sorry <b>miss</b> My SIA is locked. Could you unlock it? Thank you		Good morning <b>Miss</b> , Sorry <b>Miss</b> My SIA is locked. Could you unlock it? Thank you	
*** <i>Assalamu alaikum bu afin</i> , can i see you today to consult my draft?		<i>Assalamu alaikum Bu Afin</i> , can <b>I</b> see you today to consult my draft?	

## Appendix 2

A = ABBREVIATION		CHARACTERISTIC	
R = REPETITION	ACCORDANCE WITH LINGUISTIC RULE AND USING A, R, O and C (*)	NOT ACCORDANCE WITH LINGUISTIC RULE AND USING A, R, O and C (**)	NOT USING A, R, O and C (***)
O = OMISSION			
C = COLLOQUIAL			
SHORT MESSAGE (SM) EXAMPLES			
<b>A</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* <i>Fiqqi Faisal 2014 kelas B</i>		<i>(Saya ) Fiqqi Faisal (dari angkatan) 2014 kelas B</i>	
** <i>Pak bagus maaf kenapa sy nilai ilbud c ya?</i>		<i>Pak Bagus, maaf kenapa saya nilai Ilmu Budaya (mendapat) C ya?</i>	
*** none		none	
<b>R</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* <i>Kalau besok kira-kira jam berapa Bapak bisa?</i>		<i>Kalau besok kira-kira jam berapa Bapak bisa?</i>	
** <i>Iy ibu sama sama</i>		<i>Iya Ibu. Sama-sama</i>	
*** none		none	
<b>O</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* <i>Saya ingin konsul dan sharing mengenai morfologi bu. Kapan ibu ada waktu luang bu? Terimakasih</i>		<i>Saya ingin konsultasi dan sharing mengenai Morfologi Bu? Kapan Ibu ada waktu luang? Terima kasih</i>	
** <i>Trimakasih banyak ya Bu Maaf mengganggu</i>		<i>Terima kasih banyak ya Bu. Maaf mengganggu.</i>	
*** - (none)		(none)	
<b>C</b>			
<b>Data in SM</b>		<b>Meaning</b>	
* none		none	
*** none		<i>Terima kasih Bu. Saya senang.</i>	
		none	