Love and Language -
A Socio-rhetorical Analysis of Love Texts on a
Ghanaian Radio Network

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Abstract

While research in rhetorical analysis has focused predominantly on academic writing, little is known of the moves employed in relatively new modes of computer-mediated communication. This paper, therefore, examines the rhetorical structure of text messages posted by listeners, most of whom are university students, to express love to their partners on one of the most patronised shows of a local campus radio network in Ghana.

Based on a combined framework of Mann and Thompson's rhetorical structure theory and Swales' rhetorical move approach, results show that radio love text mesages bear a generic four-move structure. The study also reveals that the elaboration step is the nucleus of a love text, given that it involves a three-tiered sub-move which tends to be either romantic or erotic in nature.

Further, the research shows that men deployed more affectionate lover address forms than their female counterparts, thereby contradicting the extant literature on gendered language. These

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findings hold implications for further research in gender studies, computer-mediated communication and mass communication research.

Key words: *rhetoric, move, nucleus, text message, texter*

Introduction

For decades, the concept of 'rhetoric' in language studies has been predominantly rooted in academic writing. In recent times, however, current research emphasises disciplinary variation with the goal to enable learners to function aptly in specific discourse communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Kusell, 1992; Thompson, 2001). From this perspective, rhetoric is seen as the generic or organisational structure of language use beyond the sentence, taking into account such elements as purpose, context and audience (Afful, 2005). The organisational structure is segmented by so-called moves, that is, sub-commuicative units that help to realise a writer's or speaker's communicative purpose.

However, following the emergence of SMS in the early 1990s research into its rhetorical strucutre has largely been ignored. This gap is understandably clear given the fous of past research on texting. In what follows, I first sketch a vignette of the extant literature with the view to pointing out what remains untreated. Next, I discuss the theoretical framework underpinning the study and present the methodology adopted. This will be followed by a detailed analysis and discussion of data, whereupon I will conclude with a summary and implications for future research.

Review of Previous Scholarship on Texting

Research on texting spans exactly two decades. As said earlier, previous studies have largely focused on the linguistic, sociolinguistic and communicative approaches to texting.

Three Basic Sociolinguistic Maxims in Texting

Thurlow's (2003) analysis of text messages among first-year language and communication students at the University of Cardiff has revealed that texting is characterised by three basic sociolinguistic maxims. These are brevity and speed, paralinguistic restitution and phonological approximation. Examples of linguistic processes instantiated by brevity and speed include the abbreviation of lexical items, the minimal use of capitalisation, standard and grammatical punctuation.

Additional Features

Bieswenger (2006) also identifies similar findings in his comparative analysis of shortenings in English and German private SMS corpora. These include initialism (e.g. acronym), clipping and

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letter/number homophones. Thurlow's findings are confirmed by Crystal (2008) and Chiluwa (2008) in terms of initialism, clipping and contractions.

Texting Negatively Influencing Literacy?

Elsewhere, Thurlow (2006) analyses the metadiscursive construction and popular exaggeration of new technologies such as instant messaging and text messaging. Rooted in folk linguistics and critical discourse analysis, the author argues that many people misconstrue what he terms "the evolutionary trajectory of language change" (Thurlow, 2006: 18). According to him, one major narrative thread in public discourse is that texting negatively influences literacy among learners, though Crystal (2008) and Coker (2010) diametrically oppose this claim.

Abounds in Grammatical Errors

Al-Khawalda (2008) contends that the language of texting is a new variety replete with errors. The author's analysis of Arabic university students' text messages shows that the messages bore many grammatical mistakes, were devoid of temporal references and contained elements of code-switching. Away from the error analysis position, Chiluwa (2008), on the other hand, asserts that in SMSing grammatical correctness takes a backseat. This is because "what matters is not that it conforms to grammatical rules, but the fact that it communicates and is recognised by its receivers as coherent" (Cook, 1989 as cited in Chiluwa, 2008: 12).

Also Gender-sensitive

As well, research has shown that texting is gender sensitive. The recent work of Zelenkauskaite and Herring (2008), for instance, reveals that women write longer messages, using more emoticons and abbreviations compared to their male counterparts. This claim supports Fortunati and Magnanelli's (2002) as well as Ling's (2005) observations. In their study of Italian youth's use of mobile phones, Fortunati and Magnanelli (2002) explain that girls text longer messages than boys who typically do not utilise the entire space of their screens but rather opt for messages of about 40 to 50 characters. On their part, girls send their messages in "plain" language without too many expressions, references and suggestions.

Communicative Functions across Cultures

Finally, the literature is replete with studies on the communicative functions of texting across cultures. In many European countries such as Italy, France, Russia and Spain, texting enables users to maintain social contact, avoid telephone conversation, exteriorise emotions and have fun (e.g. Lorente, 2002; Rivière, 2002; Vershinskaya, 2002). Yu, Sacher and Louden's (2002) ethnographic study also shows that American teenagers use the technology to communicate with school mates, peers and relations. In Asia, Japanese, for instance, use the mobile phone to assert

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their identity (Barry & Yu, 2002). Meanwhile, it has been observed that the device is causing harm to the cultural values of Africans (Akyea & Aziaku, 2009).

Literature Lacks in Socio-rhetorical Analysis

In brief, the literature clearly shows that, first, a socio-rhetorical analysis of SMS is lacking, and that, second, texting in the electronic media, especially the radio, remains under-researched. The present paper is thus useful because "as people become more aware of the communicative potential of texting, the range of specialised uses grows" (Crystal, 2008: 117).

Given this lack of application, I examine the sequencing of moves observable in text messages posted to ATL FM, one of Ghana's premier radio network (personal communication, Antwi-Konadu, 2010). In particular, I focus on text messages posted by listeners to loved ones on one of ATL FM's most patronised shows: *'Love Reasons'*.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What sequencing of moves is noticeable in the texts posted to 'Love Reasons'?
2. What linguistic features instantiate the moves in the texts posted to 'Love Reasons'?
3. What gender variation, if any, is noticeable in the texts posted to 'Love Reasons'?

Theoretical Framework

I draw on Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory and Swales' notion of genre. Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is preferred to other similar theories because "up until now, RST has remained one of the best known and widely applied methods for discourse analysis" (Renkema, 2004: 113).

RST thrives on the assumption that a text contains minimal units whose interconnection can be identified by choosing a relational name. According to Mann and Thompson (1980), relational names can be categorised as subject relations and presentational names. Examples of the former include elaboration, circumstance and purpose. Such elements as background, motivation and justification are presentational in nature. The co-authors hold that, mostly, units are related by at least a nucleus and a satellite. A unit which is of more essence to the writer's purpose is the nucleus while the supporting element is the satellite. A pair consisting of a nucleus and a satellite is called a span. The authors further maintain that the interconnection between units and spans create 'a hierarchic structure'. This is because the largest span, when created in this manner, encompasses the whole text.

Similar to RST, Swales' move analysis focuses on the rhetorical structure of a given genre. Swales (1990: 58) defines genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share a set of communicative purposes". This means that a genre is a grouping of texts according

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to some conventionally recognised crtieria. This grouping, Swales miantains, must define some purposive goals. In other words, a genre is a recognised institutional medium for communication as manifest in such computer-mediated discourses as e-mails, instant messages and text messages. Central to genres are moves, or rather sub-communicative functional units that help to identify the overall communicative purpose of the texter in the case of texting.

Methodology

This section discusses the research site and nature of radio programme from which data were collected. Others include the data collection procedure and sampling method.

Research Site

The study was conducted at ATL FM, a campus-based radio network located at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. ATL FM, which broadcasts on a frequency modulation of 100.5, first began as a student initiative in 1989. From an initial two kilometre transmission capacity, the station was given full recognition by the National Media Commission in 1997, despite the freeze in frequency assignments that lasted from 1999 until 2001 (Ghana Broadcasting Study, 2005). The station serves the listening needs of people within and around the Cape Coast metropolis, the capital of the central region of Ghana.

I focused on ATL FM because it is the first to be established in the central region and the second institutional station in Ghana after Dr. Wireko Brobbey's Radio Eye (personal communication, Antwi-Konadu, 2010). Besides, given that ATL FM is located at UCC, it was readily accessible since I am resident at UCC.

The Nature of 'Love Reasons'

'Love Reasons' (henceforth LR) is arguably the most patronised programme of ATL FM. LR is a Saturday night show aired between half past eight and midnight. The goal of the show is to create a convivial atmosphere in which lovers could freely and clearly express their love for one another either through a telephone call or texting. Thus, LR is devoted to healing the wounds of lovers and reverberate old passions. It also serves as a medium through which shy persons, most of whom are undergraduate students, could openly confess their amorous intents to their secret admirers (Davis, 1978).

LR is a three-segment show. Aside the usual play of love songs, the host activates the phone lines where he requests text messages from listeners (i.e. lovers) to be read on air. (For a further discussion on this subject, see Data Analysis and Discussion). Next, the host gets in touch with the targets of the messages by making a phone call to them so as to inform them of the extent of the love of the callers. The final section concerns requests made by callers to the host in search

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of lovers. According to the management of ATL FM, although LR hits the airwaves on Saturday listeners begin to post their love messages as early as Wednesday.

Data Collection Procedure and Sampling Method

The corpus, comprising 500 text messages, was collected between January and August, 2010. The collection was possible upon negotiating entry with management. The data were then purposively sampled "in order to purposefully select documents that will best answer the research questions" (Cresswell, 1994: 148). Purposive sampling was necessary in order to exclude incomplete, fragmentary, serial and illogical messages from the corpus. The reason is that they could hardly be analysed as single communicative units.

Again, given the ethical snag found in the study, pseudonyms were used as names of texters and their targets because pseudonyms do not refer to specific persons. Besides, their contact lines were deleted from the messages. This position reflects Kaseseniemi and Rautiainen's (2002) view that text messages are often private and illicit so that the attempt to dissociate the texts from their owners was desirable. These steps were crucial in the research because "whatever the specific nature of their work, researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 56).

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study. Available evidence shows that the corpus yielded specific discourse functions as seen in the table below.

Table 1 Discourse Functions of SMS love texts on 'Love Reasons'

Discourse Function	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Confessions	278	55.6
Requests	116	23.2
Missing You	44	8.8
Apologies and Forgiveness	30	6.0
Encouragements and Well-wishes	22	4.4
Indeterminate	10	2.0
Total	500	100

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Table 1 shows five basic discourse functions of text messages posted to 'Love Reasons' (i.e. LR). For the sake of convenience, the discussion is done in the order presented above.

Confessions

As can be appreciated, confessions represent the highest discourse function of text messages posted to LR. Confessions are text messages sent by lovers in order to express and confirm their love for those they are enamoured of. Classfication supports two basic tpyes: *(a)* romantic and *(b)* erotic. Since the purpose of sending an SMS love message is to express one's affection for another via the radio in order to remind one's partner of the sender's undying love for the recipient, lovers structured their texts in such a way that their messages would have the intended effect on their listeners. A close analysis of the corpus reveals that confessions bear a generic move structure:

Fig. 1 Move structure of SMS love confession
Salutation>>> Request>>> Elaboration>>> Identification

Figure 1 shows that often making a confession via SMS on LR invloves a four-tiered move structure. This structure is exemplified in the following table.

Table 2 Move Structure of SMS Love Confessions on 'Love Reasons'

1. Salutation Move	*Hi Monkey!*
2. Request Move	*Please call Kwame and tell him this*:
3. Elaboration Move	
a. Reminder	*each time I kiss ur lips u steal a piece of my heart.*
b. Appreciation	*Thank u my dear for givin me so much love.*
c. Commitment	*I'll never stop loving u and I've missed u*
4. Identification Move	*From Abena*

The salutation move is usually the background of a text (Mann & Thompson, 1980). It aims at acknowledging the presence of the host of the show. Below are some examples:

- *Hi Paul/ Monkey!*
- *Hello!*
- *Monkey!*
- *Zero address term*

The way of greeting the host shows a dyadic relationship that exists between texters and the host. To a greater extent it was informal, as the host always refers to himself as "The monkey in the chair". While some texters, however, prefixed their messages with "Hello Mr. Paul", although

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itself a violation of the norm, which indicates a relation of distance and deference (Afful, 1998), others did not address the host in any way. Thus, it can be seen that the salutation move is an optional step in posting love text messages. Mann and Thompson (1980) would therefore term it the satellite. Here is an example:

1. Salutation Move   *Nil*
2. Request Move   *Pls call my darlin Alex of Accra*
3. Elaboration Move   *and tell him to come home for hot sex.*
4. Identification Move   *Ama. number: 000000*

The salutation move is usually followed by a request. The analysis reveals that most of the messages in the corpus were replete with the politeness marker "please". Research has shown that Ghanaians use "please" even in the electronic media to show politeness (Edu-Buandoh, 1999). This observation contradicts Akyea and Aziaku's (2009) claim that the advent of mobile commuication is making Ghanaians lose basic moral values. Below are some examples:

- *Kindly call my love/princess/sweetheart*
- *Please call…..*

The Elaboration Move

The purpose of texting a message to LR is contained in the elaboration move (henceforth EM). EM is the nucleus of a text message on LR; it is at EM that the thought processes of texters unfold. The thinking patterns of texters were expressed through the various sub-moves they employed in the bid to convey their deep-seated feelings and moods. The declaration of texters' affection for dear ones on air is in itself an admission of how proud they are to be associated with their partners, and that they wish to tell the whole world of that love. As Pearson *et al*. (1995: 152) point out:

> Usually when intimate information is disclosed, it is done so for the purpose of allowing another to know more clearly and deeply something of the discloser's personality and unique self, and inevitably allows the reduction of psychological distance between self and others.

The analysis also indicates that confessions invvolve three basic sub-moves namely, *(1)* reminder, *(2)* appreciation, and *(3)* commitment. The reminder move often foregrounds a past romantic or erotic experience shared between the sender and his or her target. It is usually nostalgic in nature. Here are some reminders.

- *each time I kiss ur lips u steal a piece of my heart*
- *if days won't allow us to see each other, memories will surely do*

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Similarly, the appreciation move refers to the acknowledgment of a sexual or romantic encounter between the sender and the target. The commitment move follows directly by assuring the target of the text that given the sender's appreciation of their relationhip, he or she will not act contrary to what they both share. Rather, the texter uses this move to pledge an unwavering constancy for their love. Some illustrations are cited below:

- *… I will never forget her. She is the woman of my dreams and I lover her so much*
- *… let her know that I Anthony so much love her till death do us part*
- *…. that I will never cheat on him because he is my sweetheart*

Requests and Love-Seeker Descriptive Phrases

The speech act of request also assumed a pattern similar to that of confessions. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

Fig. 2 Move Structure of Love Requests
Identification>>> Elaboration>>> Commitment

Examples of love requests and their corresponding moves are given below.

- Move 1   Identification   *I'm Ike*
  Move 2   Elaboration   *and seriously need a link up with a girl*
                              between the ages of 18 and 20. I have been too
                              lonely for far too long
  Move 3   Commitment   *I'm ready 2 luv her till I drop dead*

In the example above, the texter, first identifes himself as Ike and then goes on to explain the purpose for texting his message at the EM. He needs a love partner since he has been "too lonely for far too long". In the final move, Ike commits himself to his proposed relationship by assuring his would-be –lover of his canine love till he drops dead. Another example is given below.

- Move 1   Identification   *John is my name*
- Move 2   Elaboration   *and I'm dying for a love that seems sooo far long,*
                              pls call Benedicta and let her know that I'm waiting
                              no matter how long it takes to say yes to my proposal
- Move 3 Commitment   *and that is to say my heart is always hers to keep*

In this rather emotive text, John requests the assistance of the host to win the love of Benedicta, an enterprise he has upon several attempts failed to have. Notice that both his elaboration and commitiment moves are more revealing than the previous illustration.

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Further, in the bid to describe the kind of relationships they may like to keep and the persons involved, texters used what I term *love-seeker descriptive phrases (*henceforth LDSPs*)*. The research shows that LSDPs were highly deployed by men than women. LDSPs express the deep seated desires of love seekers and their intents for the proposed relationships. The intents are conveyed at the EM. Consider the following:

- *... I need [a lady about 25 years to love]*
- *...I want [a female to be my friend]*
- *...I have [a sister looking for a man to marry]. (She is a cook at one of the hotels in town. Her number is 0000. Only serious men should call.)*
- *...I want [a pretty and sexy sugar mummy between the ages of 28-45 for a serious relationship]. My number is 00000*

In brief, men use LDSPs as means to persuade women into accepting their proposals.

Missing You Messages

Love texts were also sent as missing you messages. These messages were sent to their targets in order to remind them of the deep loss caused by the seperation of the love-birds; the messages are characteristically romantic. Let us see the following examples:

- *Pls monkey, kindly call my sweetheart Esi at Kasoa (00000) and tell her dat, I miss her on my bed and that I can't sleep without hearing her voice. From Noah*
- *Please Monkey, pls call my love Raas on 0000 and tell him I miss him so much. I can't wait 2 see him again and will continue to be there for him. Frm Nancy*

Sometimes also, the messages are flatly platonic. Such messages are posted to either strengthen same sex friendship or cross-sex relationships.

- *Monkey, pls I'm Evelyn urgently call Aba on 0000 and tell her I really miss her friendship.*
- *Hello Mr. Monkey, pls send my warmest regards to my good friend Amy and tell her I MISS her. Enoch.*

Apologies and Forgiveness Messages

An apology is a speech act whose goal coincides with the social goal of maintaining harmony between the speaker and the hearer. A person may apologise because culturally it is a polite ritual to do so, and it differs from one society to the other. In apologising, a person acknowledges that he/she has done something wrong. Available evidence shows that in the bid to keep the passion of their relationships, lovers deemed it necessary to send apology texts to their loved ones for the wrong they caused them. Here are some examples:

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- *Hi monkey pls call my friend Andy and tell him that I regret what I have done to him. He should find in his heart to forgive me what I did because of love. I love him so much that I can never forget about him in my life. From Millicent.*
- *Good evening, pls call my love Jemima in Cape Coast pls tell her that am sorry for my action earlier on pls ask her to forgive me, I cant live without her, I love her so much that when she lives my life I will kill myself. Her no. is 0000. From John*

Structurally, apology text messages are developed at the elaboration stage. Besides, they are also emotional in nature as they bemoan the loss suffered by one of the parties in a relationship.

Encouragement and Well-wish Messages

Messages were also posted to loved ones to encourage them in the face of oddities, and wish them well in their endeavours. Coker (2009) intimates that well-wishes include admonition, success and general welfare messages. According to Chiluwa (2008), these messages basically function as phatic communion. They usually express such values as love, affection and solidarity with loved ones. Encouragement and well-wish texts often appear as season's greetings or solidarity greetings. Commenting on the communicative role of text messages, Chiluwa (2008: 18) admits that

> Interestingly, electronic cards and text messages are increasingly becoming an alternative to paper cards. Evidently, during festive periods season's greetings by SMS text messages precede the paper cards and reach more and wider receivers than the ordinary cards. People who may never get the paper cards are easily and satisfactorily reached.

The corpus contains some interesting examples such as those below:

- *Monkey b'cos of ur show I wish I was in school, I want you to wish my sweetheart Mary in T'di, happy b'day in advance. She celebrates her b'day 2moro. Tell her I love her soooo??!!! much. From Paa of Kumasi.*
- *Hi Paul please call my very and very good friend Bernice of Accra and tell her that she was born to win and this is her time. As she prepares to write Nov/Dec exams, I wish her God's guidance, good health and retentive memory. But most of all, I wish her A1, A1, A1. From Patrick of Tamale. Her number is 0000.*

Notice that in the first text the texter wrote the amplifier *so* as "soooo??!!!" or what Crystal (2001) calls 'typographic contrastivity' as an indication of his emotional disposition towards his target; he thus claims he is madly in love with her. The following are also examples of encouragement messages.

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- *Pls Paul, pls call Charles of Tema with the number 0000 to tell him that I wish him speedy recovery and have really missed him. Ama*
- *Keep the smile, leave the tear; think of joy, forget the fear, hold the laugh, leave the pain. Be joyous because it's new day.*

In the above messages, the text writers aimed at encouraging the recipients of the texts out of the challenges of life, be it sickness or a hard time. In a way, the messages enabled the texters to solidarise with their targets.

Indeterminate Cases

The label 'indeterminate' is a unique discourse function of love texts that captures the merging of more than one discourse function. Text messages in the data labelled *indeterminate* support Thurlow's (2003) view that it is sometimes difficult to account for the primary function of text messages. For example, some texters combined such functions as gratitude and confession, missing you and request as well as apology and well-wish. Below are some examples:

- *Hi monkey, I want you to call Kofi (00000) of Central University and tell him that I really thank God for making him a blessing to me. I love him soo much and will always do no matter de situation.* [**Gratitude** and **Confession**]
- *Hi monkey I am Isaac from C Poly and I want you to call my sweetheart, tell her that my eyes are hurting because I cant see her, my arms and lips are cold because I cant kiss her but my heart is breaking because I'm not with her. Happy B'day from me 00000.* [**Confession** and **Well-wish**]
- *Pls Monkey tell my boyfriend to forgive me because he's the spaces b/n my fingers and that I'VE MISSED HIM LIKE NEVER before. From Lisa to Roger* [**Forgiveness** and **Missing You**]

Evidently, in whichever way they appeared, the analysis shows that the messages were related by one common theme: *the declaration of love on air*. For this reason, almost all the types of love texts share similar rhetorical structures, albeit in varied ramifications. Further, they all seem to contain the Elaboration Move (EM), given that it is the nucleus of a love text. The next section of the discussion focuses on gender variation noticeable in the corpus, and how it is instantiated.

Gender and Lover Address Forms

Equally striking is how certain tokens of discourse, that is lover address forms, signalled variation in gender. I term *lover address forms* (henceforth LAFs) address forms used by lovers to romantically describe and refer to their love partners. Common LAFs deployed by both men and women were basically noun phrases that were not complex in their internal structures. Examples of LAFs used by both genders include:

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- *My love*
- *My (sweet) heart*
- *My dear*

Clearly, all the above LAFs are predicated by the personal pronoun "my", thus indicating a sense of possession. Despite this commonality, the analysis further reveals that the choice of LAFs used by male lovers was extremely complex and romantically touching than that of their female counterparts. As Pearson *et al*. (1995: 98) have noted, "Men and women do not discuss genitalia and sexual functions in similar functions". Thus, the corpus supports classification into three, namely, LAFs relating to *(a)* heavenly perfection *(b)* royalty, *(c)* sweetness and hope. Table 3 illustrates the types of lover address forms used by the genders and their level of modification.

Table 3 Types of Lover Address Forms and Gender Variation

Type of Lover Address Form

Gender	Heavenly Perfection	Royalty	Hope/Sweetness
Men	My angel My dream	The queen of my heart	My (sweet) honey
		My queen My one and only princess	My sweetheart The sweetest thing that has ever happened to me
	My perfect way		
			My source of hope and joy eversince I met her
	The woman of my dreams My one and only love The light at the dark side of me The only one my heart desires		
Women	My lovely man	The prince of my life	My (sweet) honey
			My sweetheart
	My dear one/love My love for him is beyond measure		

The modification process of lover address forms in their varied ramifications brings to light the fact that men have over centuries adored women in all forms of linguistic expression---art, music, film, dram and poetry. Again, contrary to Lakoff's (1975) position that women use modifiers because of their inferiority to men, the corpus, however, shows that men rather modified their address forms. This move by the men was an attempt to show how passionate and

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fond they are of their love partners. From the table above, it can be seen that men deployed complex LAFs in all the three types than women did.

This variation is clearly observed in the choice of royalty and sweetness/hope LAFs. Thus, the corpus indicates that the language of men is more sophisticated than women's at least in terms of the choice of lover address forms, and therefore supports Fortunati and Magnanelli's (2002) claim that females' text messages are plain without too many expressions, references and suggestions. For instance, with the exception of "the prince of my life", it appears that women were limited in their use of royal LAFs. This is also true of LAFs deployed to express concepts of sweetness or hope used by women to address their male lovers.

Evidently, the preponderance of modifiers in men's lover address forms is a clear indication that men readily express their love even in public spheres such on the radio compared to their female counterparts. This position is in contrast with the view that men are less able than women to withhlod their expressions of love when they feel love (Owen, 1987; Shimanoff, 1988).

Conclusion

Thus, the paper has shown that radio text messages perform five basic functions prominent among which are confessions and requests. Messages described as confessions are usually romantic or erotic in nature. Another key finding of the study is that the messages bear a four-move structure, namely, Salutation> Request> Elaboration> Identification.

In whichever way they appear, love texts contain the above moves though in differing permutations. Further, it was seen that the elaboration move is segmented by texters into three sub-moves in an attempt to express their intents for posting their messages. Meanwhile, men deployed love-seeker descriptive phrases and lover address forms more than women did mainly so as to persuade them into faling in love witih them. Three types of lover address forms were identified; they relate to *(1)* heavenly perfection, *(2)* royalty and *(3)* sweetness/hope.

The above findings have a number of implications. In the first place, the paper offers an insight into the nature of love discourse in the electronic media, in general, and the radio in particular. As Altheide (1996: 69) posits, "The media are consequential in social life". For this reason, this study is a valuable contribution to research in media and mass communication because media research proper is devoted to the functional analysis of mass communication among media consumers (Dominick, 1996; Wimmer & Dominick, 1997; McQuail, 2005).

The study is also useful in sociolinguistic research. It has again opened up the debate on gendered language as some are still of the view that gender variation is cosmetic and not real. More important, future research in sociolinguistics is desirable. Using such tools as the interview method and the questionnaire, sociolinguists may ascertain the reasons people use love language the way they do on air.

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Finally, it is hoped that further research be conducted in text messaging, in particular, and computer-mediated communication in general. Such proposed studies will unearth the rhetorical structures of other computer-mediated discourses. For as Herring (2001; 2007) has noted, it is only through empirical studies such as this that we will be able to maximise our understanding of human behaviour and society.

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