

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework for the study and reviews related literature. The first part of the discussion comprises an overview of communication and computer-mediated communication (CMC) with e-mail being the focus. This is followed by a discussion of communicative competence and strategic competence that encompasses communicative strategies (CSs), which is the central issue of the present study. The definitions, theoretical approaches and a taxonomy of CSs for e-mail are then explained. Gender and differences in gender communication are also discussed. The review ends with studies that have been conducted in these areas.

2.1 Communication

2.1.1 Definition of Communication

Communication in general has been defined from various perspectives by many linguists and communication researchers. It is a highly complex and difficult process.

Generally, communication is seen as a systemic process by which people share information, ideas, and feelings, understand them and arrive at common meanings through message

exchange (Allwood, 1995; Rubin et al, 2005; Hybels & Weaver, 2001; Wood, 2004). Systemic process means that it involves a group of inter-related parts that affect one another. The inter-related elements of communication go beyond the words (spoken and written) themselves but also include nonverbal cues such as body language, personal mannerisms, variations in voice, timing, physical closeness, media treatments, format and style or anything that adds meaning to a message (Hybels & Weaver, 2001). The process of communication also involves change, interaction, adaptation and an ongoing function so that there are changes in the social system, establishment of personal bonds, successful management of conflict, personal rewards and gratifications, and accomplishment of mutual goals.

From another perspective, communication is seen as a creative, constructive process (Kresten, 1986, cited in Nor Azni, 2003) through which people create their social world and construct meaning for the objects and events around them. Since communication contains both message and meaning, interpretation cannot be based simply on the message per se, instead meaning must be created by each of the participants in the process. The meanings of verbal and nonverbal messages are in the people who use them.

From the pragmatic point of view, Colin (1957) calls it 'a social affair' of the ways in which communicative forms and social circumstances are inter-related (in Corner & Hawthorn, 1993). She refers to pragmatics which relates language use to both the users and contexts of use. The element of context is vital, for every act of communication must happen in some sort of surroundings: the physical, social and cultural contexts.

Although there are numerous definitions of communication, most people would agree that communication is a dynamic process; that the communication process is a transaction that will affect both the sender and the receiver; and that communication is a personal, symbolic process requiring a shared code or codes of abstractions. Communication theorists however define it beyond these basic shared assumptions to revolve around the notion of intent. Cronkhite (1976) suggests that human communication can be produced intentionally or unintentionally and responded to in an intentional or unintentional manner. The intention of sender and perception of receiver should correspond, and then there is no trouble calling that communication.

With the fast development in communication technologies, interpersonal communication can be mediated and people exchange their messages, fulfill their entertainment or information needs by using technologies such as computers, cell phones, and digital video cameras. Scholars now examine how people use these technologies to enhance, complement, or substitute for face-to-face (FTF, henceforth) communication.

The wide diversity in communication literature includes a variety of subjects that defines the field. The study of communicators and their messages is common to all areas of communication. What differentiates one subject area from another is the focus on different settings, channels, or dominant modes of interaction (Rubin et al, 2005). In this study, the focus is on one of these new communication technologies, that is, electronic message (e-mail) sent through computer. Since it is a computer-mediated communication, the face-to-face verbal and non-verbal forms are absent although the process that takes place involves participants and assigning of meanings to the message.

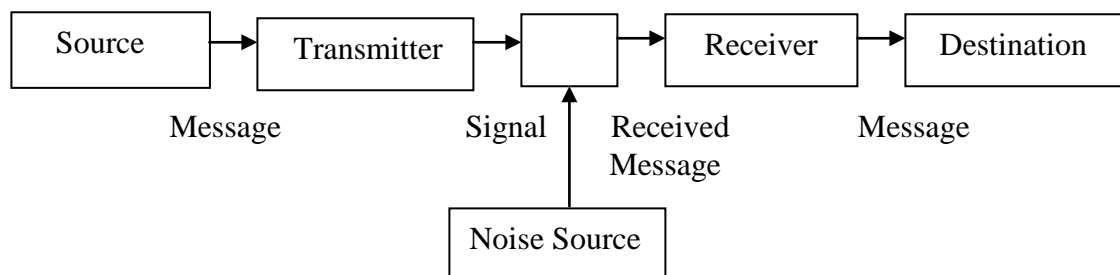
2.1.2 Models of Communication

A model is a visual representation that can clarify complex systems in order to help us conceptualise the relationship between the various elements involved in a process, in this case communication. As there are different elements and different views of what makes up the communication process, so too there are different models.

a) *Linear Model*

Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1948) developed one of the earliest models of the communication process known as The Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication (see Figure 2.1). It is concerned with the accurate transmission of a message.

Figure 2.1 The Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication



This basic model describes communication as a five-step output-input process that entails a sender's creation (or encoding) of a message, and the message's transmission through a channel or medium (a telephone or microphone or other transmitting equipment). This message is received by an ear or a piece of receiving equipment and then interpreted by the person who is a destination. As messages move from source to destination, there is a potential loss of information due to noise in the communication system. Noise could be

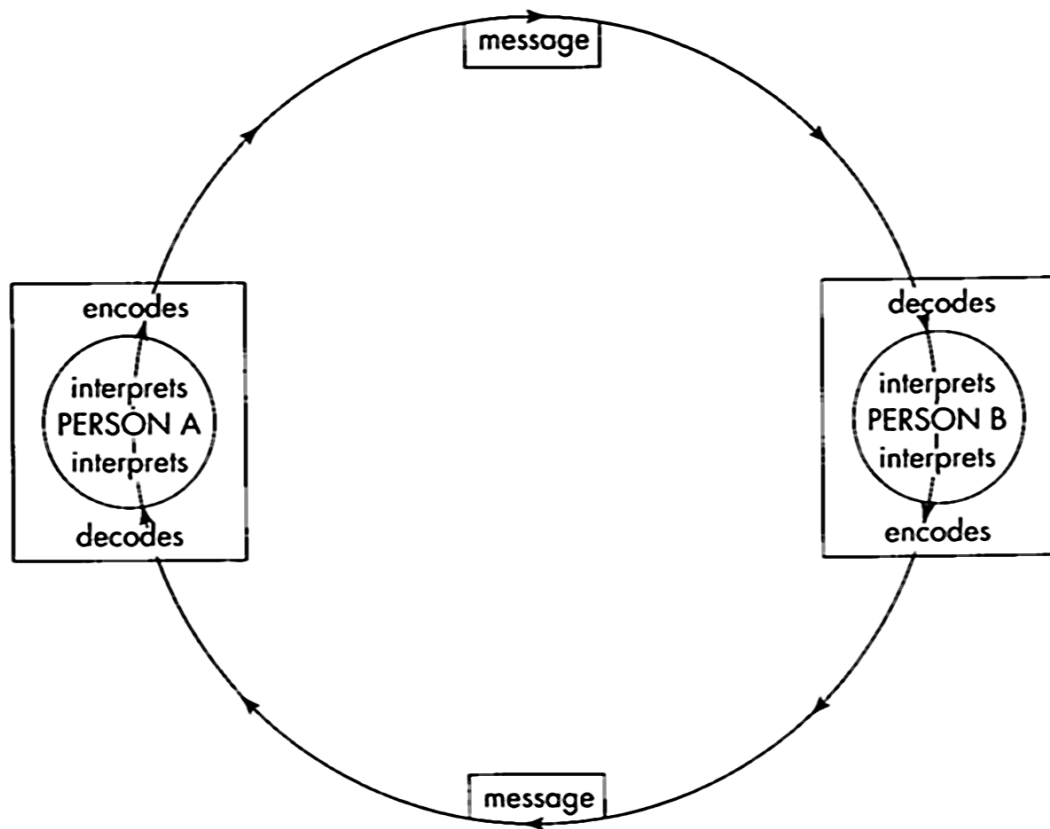
static on phone lines, competing sounds such as television or stereo or distractions such as smoke or odors in the environment of one or both communicators. Finally this message is responded to, which completes the process of communication.

The major criticism to this model is that it misrepresents communication by portraying it as a one-way process in which information flows in a linear sequence from one source to the receiver. They also label each communicator as either a sender or a receiver, instead of acknowledging that all communicators are both senders and receivers. This led Norbert Weiner (1948) to refine Shannon and Weaver's ideas by adding two new features to their model, that is, feedback and ethics (as the technological system of communication could be used to control and manipulate human beings). Therefore, the communication process is generally made up of various elements such as sender, receiver(s), messages, channels, noise, feedback, and setting or context.

b) *Exchange model*

The exchange model (Figure 2.2 below) indicates that communication is a two-way process, that is, interactional communication. It makes the point that messages go both ways in a conversation which means everyone is a decoder and an encoder. Both the decoder and encoder are also interpreters in the communication process. When the message sent gets across exactly as intended, an accurate interpretation has taken place and hence, successful communication has taken place. Interpretation of messages, a fundamental reason for communication studies, is an important matter in this model: communicators' perceptions and interpretations are heavily influenced by their experience and assumptions of all kinds.

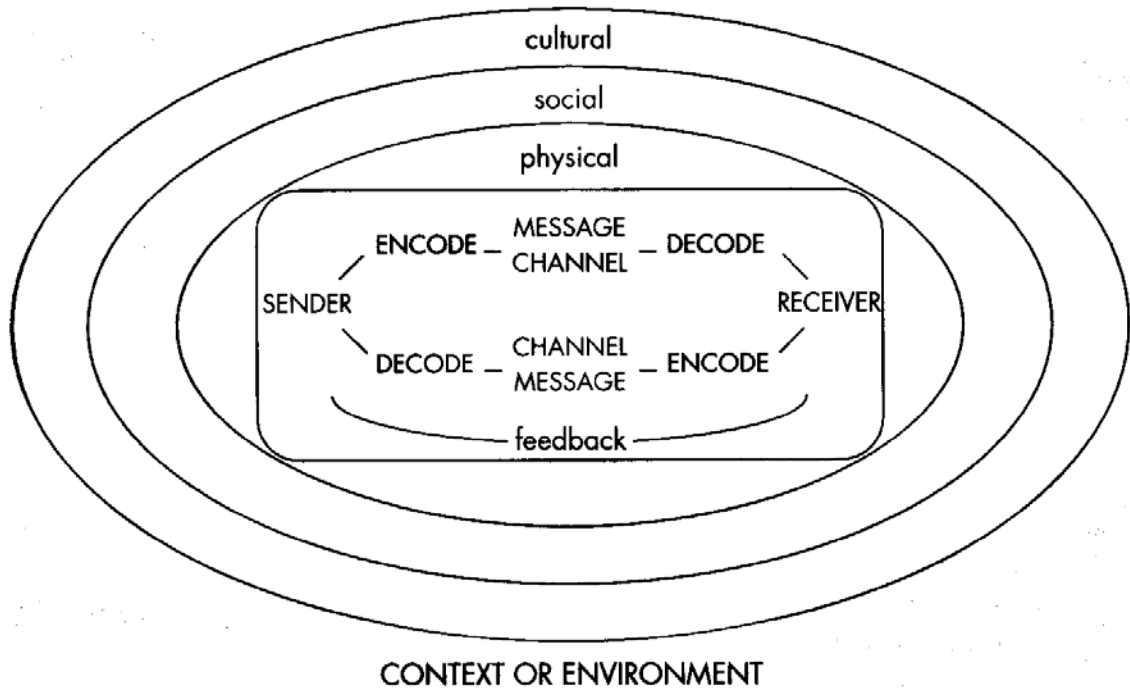
Figure 2.2 An Exchange Model of Communication
(from Dimbleby & Burton, 1998)



c) *Contextualised Model*

This model (see Figure 2.3 below) takes into consideration the dimension of situation or surroundings (also context) where the communication takes place besides the role of the communicators. Different contexts (physical, social or cultural) always affect the act of communication. An important term in this model is feedback which means communication is often two-way (interactive communication): there are responses to messages sent. Adjustments are made as a result of feedback. The channel that conveys the feedback need not only be speech but may include other non-verbal cues.

Figure 2.3 Contextualised Model
(from Dimbleby & Burton, 1998)



2.1.3 Spoken and Written Communication

Spoken and written language displays a few obvious distinctions. In the physical form, speech uses the phonic medium produced by the vocal organs whereas writing uses the medium of graphic made by a hand using an object such as pen and brush.

In spoken language, there is no time-lag between production and reception. The spontaneity and speed of exchanges make it difficult to engage in complex advance planning. The pressure to think while talking promotes difference in language structure: the grammar and vocabulary of speech is usually looser than written language. Speech is also marked by repetition, rephrasing, and pauses which divide long utterances into short manageable chunks thus making sentence boundaries unclear. Writing, on the contrary, is composed of

a sequence of discrete items (letters, words, sentences) and the boundaries are usually fairly clear. Written text allows repeated reading and close analysis of text; hence it promotes careful organization of message content and layout as well as the use of intricate sentence structure and accurate punctuation. It is produced with a specific reader in mind based on the writer's assumption.

These two mediums also function as independent methods of communication. Speech is time-bound, dynamic and transient. It is a part of present interaction between participants. In a face-to-face interaction, participants can rely on extralinguistic cues such as facial expression and gesture to aid interpretation of message. Unlike speech, writing is space-bound, static and permanent. Hence, a distance exists between the writer and reader (who may or may not know each other). The lack of visual contact does not allow participants to rely on context to make their meaning clear. Since there is no immediate feedback or none at all, ambiguous expressions are avoided.

The lexicon and constructions of speech are often vague and informal as they refer directly to the situation (e.g. the use of expressions such as *this one*, *over there*). Nonsense, obscene or informal words (such as colloquial, and slang) which do not appear in writing are normal in speech. On the contrary, constructions in writing are characterized by a wide range of elaborated syntactic patterns and multiple instances of subordination in the same long sentences (especially those found in legal documents). Jargon and terminology such as long names of scientific process are found.

The status of the two mediums is not equal. Speech is very suitable for 'phatic' communion where casual and unplanned discourse takes place. It is also good for expressing social

relationships and varied personal opinions and attitudes with the aid of prosody and non-verbal features. In the progress of an utterance, errors made cannot be withdrawn except by starting again or adding a qualification. However, writing is very suitable for facts, records and communication of ideas. Written records are easier to keep and scan for future reading or interpretation. Besides, written formulations such as contracts, inscriptions, manuscripts and sacred writings are given higher respect, which is rarely accorded to speech (although archives of sound recordings are beginning to be built up).

Overall, written communication provides fewer clues to guide message interpretation due to distance, absence of extralinguistic cues and prosody compared to speech in face-to-face interaction. With the advent of modern technology and the emergence of the Internet, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has brought about changes in the way people think about communication and also in the ways they use written language, compose in it and interact through it (Ferrara et al., 1991). Furthermore, the distinction between speech and writing is becoming blurred as a consequence (Halliday, 1989). Spoken language is found interspersed among the written language while other features that neither speech nor writing could ever convey are added; thus different cultures and languages are merged (Crystal, 2001, 2004). This culture and language seem to be displayed in text messaging or texting (also commonly known as SMS – Short Messaging Service), chatroom contributions and e-mails. The highly abbreviated conventions and styles are motivated by the small screen (for text messaging only) and the principle of least effort and time saving. As far as email is concerned, Angell and Heslop (1994:xi) state that the e-mail medium makes “different demands on writing style and has its own unique conventions”.

With the change in communication and the existence of a new language and culture, it is only reasonable to anticipate some indistinctness in the language of CMC discourse, including e-mail discourse – the data of the present study.

2.1.4 Elements Conditioning Communication

Human communication (including CMC) is generally conditioned by a number of elements, that is, synchronicity, means of expression and situation (Allwood, 2000; Segerstad, 2002). These elements are interdependent.

(a) Synchronicity

The focus of synchronicity is on the time aspect and whether the communication is one-way or two-way. The level of synchronicity determines how the language is used and what is to be communicated. Expressions and contents to be communicated depend on whether the communication takes place in real-time (synchronous) or at a later time (asynchronous). Furthermore, the presence of other parties during the interaction also affects what people say and how they convey it.

(b) Means of Expression

The element of means of expression encompasses the production and perception conditions related to various means of expression. It is the means by which humans communicate, and can be subdivided into 3 main categories (Allwood, 2000):

1. Primary means of expression: communication which can be controlled directly by the communicator without any extra aids such as body movements, voice, speech, gesture, etc.

2. Secondary means of expression: instruments are used to support the primary means of communication. They are used to overcome space or distance and to preserve information over time. Some examples of means are pen, telephone, telegraph and e-mail. The last two examples require several steps to be recorded.
3. Tertiary means of expression: human artifacts that express technical, functional and aesthetic ideas and intuitions. Examples of this means are objects such as table, chair, building and car, which are symbolic rather than directly communicating the message.

E-mail requires both mediations from primary means and tertiary means (that is electronic means of transfer) to enable recoding of messages.

(c) Situation

The element of situation consists of the physical, psychological and sociological aspects of communication (Segerstad, 2002).

In terms of physical and psychological tools, humans have both to perceive and understand – the physical brain is a crucial tool which permits psychological activity. They also have the ability for rational, coordinated interaction. Communicators usually adapt their communication to suit the conditions of the physical environment and context (for example, at the football field, in a conference room and at the kitchen). Besides that, it is also closely connected to the activity itself and the roles in the activity: the type of activity determines the formality of repertoire, together with roles in the activity, purposes and goals for communication, the people involved in the interaction and the number of communicators involved. Furthermore, the relation between the communicators (family member, friend,

colleague or stranger), topic of communication, shared background knowledge, conventions of communication and ethical conduct also influence the formulation of messages.

In summary, these elements deal with general human communication and socio-cultural factors. According to Hymes (1974), a theory of communication must consider the context or setting, participants involved, purposes, instrumentalities, genres, etc., and the conditions of the three elements explained above affect human communication in one way or another.

2.2 Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

2.2.1 Definition of CMC

The development of the Internet has allowed people to communicate via computer. Computer-mediated communication or CMC is human communication mediated by a device. Various definitions on CMC are forwarded by linguists and researchers though there may be some overlap. Wikipedia (an online encyclopedia) states that CMC is “any form of communication between two or more individuals who interact and/or influence each other via computer-supported communication technologies”. It is rather similar to face-to-face interaction minus the aid of telecommunication networks. Rice (1984) takes one step further to emphasise the importance of the systems used in CMC as a media which facilitates the exchange of meaningful content through computer(s) between individuals and also groups of individuals. On the other hand, Thurlow (2006) describes CMC as a form of linguistic 'revolution' which implies a decisive and dramatic break with conventional practice of communication.

From the synchronicity perspective, CMC is viewed as a dichotomy of asynchronous and synchronous creation and transmission of messages using digital techniques. In other words, the sender encodes in text the message that is relayed from the sender's computer to the receiver's but the receiver may or may not be readily available (Walther, 1992; Ferrara et al., 1991; December, 1996).

When viewed from another angle, CMC is considered a somewhat new medium of communication which develops its own rhetorics and languages as it is shaped by its cultural contexts (Moran, & Hawisher, 1998). In addressing the language used in CMC, Herring (2002) explains that users appear to be able to convey social meanings effectively through CMC and they achieve this through creative use of language, such as “novel spellings, repeated punctuation, and ASCII graphics designed to convey attitude, non-speech sounds and facial expressions”. Looking at the macro level of CMC language, most of it is non-standardised, playful, highly deviant from the language rules, tolerant of typographic and spelling errors, and contains many new words. Users, therefore, have to adapt their language creatively to meet changing circumstances and to suit the new medium. Crystal (2001) calls this the “language revolution”

Generally, the linguistic features of CMC can be described as follows (Crystal, 2004):

1. CMC demonstrates a mixture of features drawn from prototypically spoken and prototypically written media (e.g. telegraphic language). CMC discourse exhibits non-edited non-standard spoken language of FTF interaction;
2. the nature of language used in CMC is conditioned by the text-type. Generally, the trend is towards a more informal, ‘spoken’ style of writing. This is especially obvious at

the paralinguistic/graphic level, where additional means have been developed to substitute effects that are possible in FTF interaction but not in writing;

3. real-time interaction constraints seem to be responsible for many of the features of CMC language. The time constraints on message production and processing also influence the message length, complexity, formality and interactivity;
4. socially, group solidarity amongst users of CMC seems to be the outcome. The choice of language used is aimed at reducing social distance and emphasizing group membership.

The rich linguistic features of CMC provide sufficient evidence to prompt online text-based language analysis. Segerstad (2002), in her study on CMC language, developed a taxonomy of linguistic features which are found to be common characteristics of CMC texts. The taxonomy is reproduced in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Linguistic Features Characteristic of CMC
(Segerstad, 2002:239)

Category	Feature
1. <i>Space, case, punctuation and spelling:</i> i. Space	a. Omitting blank space between words b. Omitting punctuation c. Unconventional punctuation
ii. Case	a. All lower case b. All capitals c. Mix of lower case and capitals
iii. Spelling and punctuation	a. Unconventional, spoken-like spelling b. Typos, or mispredictions c. Repetition of letters and punctuation d. Repetition of words e. Consonant writing f. Split compounds
2. <i>Grammatical features:</i> i. Reduced sentences	a. Subject pronoun b. Verb phrase c. Preposition or possessive pronoun d. Exchange long words for shorter
ii. Word order	a. Inspiration from English (word order, preposition)
3. <i>Logotypes:</i> i. ASCII characters	a. Emoticons b. Asterisks c. Symbol replacing word d. Addressivity marker
4. <i>Lexical features and abbreviations</i> i. Lexical features	a. Colloquial lexicon (dialect, expletives) b. Code switching c. OCM ¹ features from spoken language
ii. Abbreviations	a. Conventional abbreviations b. Unconventional abbreviations

¹ OCM stands for Own Communication Management (Allwood, 2000)

In her taxonomy, Segerstad categorises the features into 4 main ones. First, features related to space, case, punctuation and spelling make up strategies that seem to be used for reducing number of keystrokes, whereas grammatical features include different strategies used to reduce sentence, or message length. The third category, logotypes consisted of different ways of using ASCII² characters and the final category, lexical features and abbreviations covers lexicon, code switching, OCM features from spoken language spelled out in written form and various types of abbreviations.

In the exploration of CMC language, researchers have wrestled with the fact that CMC apparently has features of both oral and written language. Baron (2000) lays out a continuum of CMC whereby at one end, it resembles traditionally composed text and at the other end, dialogue that resembles speech. She adds that CMC allows for a wide range of permutations and combinations within these two ends of the spectrum. She also reveals that although e-mail is technically a form of writing, its usage conventions are often closer to those of the social telephone or FTF conversation.

In view of this spectrum, Bellamy & Hanewicz (1999) provide a useful summary of the differences between CMC and FTF communication that explains the leveling effects of CMC:

1. Non-verbal gestures such as facial, body, and body posture are missing as informational cues for defining the situation.
2. Verbal cues including voice tone, voice quality, voice modulation, and intonation are frequently absent from CMC but present in FTF communication.

² ASCII stands for American Standard Code for Information Interchange

3. Information related to social and personal characteristics of the individual such as gender, physical appearance, and status are substantially suppressed within CMC.

Indeed, the social presence that we experience in the real world is compromised in CMC with a new kind of language which uses various strategies to compensate for that loss of physical world attributes.

2.2.2 Types of CMC

The Internet makes possible a number of types of CMC. Most CMC used today are still text-based. Messages are typed on a computer keyboard and then sent and read as text on a computer screen. Crystal (2001) lists five broad text-based Internet-using situations or CMC, i.e.,

1. electronic mail (e-mail),
2. synchronous real-time chat groups,
3. asynchronous discussion groups (bulletin boards),
4. virtual worlds, and
5. world wide web (www).

These five situations are not mutually exclusive.

E-mail allows users to type extended messages which are electronically transmitted to recipients who can read, reply, print, forward or file them at their leisure. Since e-mail remains the focus of the present study, it is important to have a comprehensive definition and a list of e-mail language conventions (refer to 2.2.3 below).

Chat groups are continuous discussions on a particular topic or organised in ‘rooms’ at particular Internet sites, in which computer users can choose to participate based on their interest. There are two situations for users to choose to interact – real time (synchronous) or postponed time (asynchronous). In a synchronous situation, a user enters a chat room and joins an ongoing conversation in real time. Contributions from the user are inserted into a constantly scrolling screen along with other participants’ contributions. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is an example which consists of thousands of rooms dealing with different topics. A user can choose to engage in more than one conversation simultaneously.

Conversely, in asynchronous discussion groups, the interactions are stored in a certain format, and it is available to users when they want to catch up with the discussion, or add to it, at any time. An example is the *bulletin boards* which was a popular feature of CMC in the 1980s.

The virtual world is an imaginary environment which people can enter to engage in text-based fantasy social interaction. It started with MUD (Multi-User Dungeon) which offered players the opportunity to explore imaginary and vividly described environments in which they adopt new identities, explore fantasy worlds, engage in novel exploits and use their guises to interact with other participants. Today with technological development, many MUDs have moved to education and business contexts, and multimedia elements (sound and video) are added to this genre. A range of sub-genres now exists such as MOO (MUD, Object-Orientated), MUSH (Multi-User Shared Hack, Habitat, Holodeck, or Hallucination), MUCK (Multi-User Created (or Character, or Carnal) Kingdom), MUSE (Multi-User Simulation Environment) and TinyMUD (smaller size of a Multi-User Dungeon).

2.2.3 Electronic Mail and Its Features

Computer-mediated communication (CMC), primarily in the form of electronic mail (e-mail), has emerged as the mainstream form of written communication for individuals and organizations today. The use of e-mail has resulted in the further exploration and creation of new ways of using the new hybrid of language, organizing communication as well as interacting.

Electronic mail or e-mail is a letter-like document that is typed on a computer screen and then mailed electronically, via the Internet, to the server computer of the recipient's ISP (Internet Service Provider). When the recipient logs on to the ISP, the message is downloaded to his computer and will appear in the "inbox" of the e-mail programme. The message can be read on screen, printed out or saved to a file. Generally, e-mail is an asynchronous form of communication. This means that it is a non-real time communication with messages being written and read at different times and locations.

Unlike traditional written communication, e-mail is an emergent medium with few established norms of interaction. There is no specific guide on the common standards or expectations for e-mail users when they join the online culture. Therefore, "e-mailers appear to derive their modes of use, and also their style and language, from their knowledge and experience of related, pre-existing genres..." (Mulholland, 1999:58). Since there are no prescribed norms or textbooks, the writers of e-mails have a wide range of linguistic elements to choose from and there are few guidelines to assist them in their choice such as online guide on e-mail language (which is unknown to most e-mail users). Hence, they

have a greater tendency to “exploit” the medium and many of them use their own strategies to send their intended messages.

Brevity or ‘minimalism’ (Mulholland, 1999), omissions of words and punctuations, and “editorial nonchalance” (Baron, 2000) are some of the common practices displayed in e-mail messages for both business (Nor Azni, 2003; Ng, 2000; Le Vasan, 1996) and recreational purposes. With regard to brevity, Segerstad (2002) explains that text-based CMC messages (like e-mail messages) show evidence that words are shortened, reduced and even left out. This is the effect of frequent use, the principle of least effort and time pressure, and the interlocutors’ pragmatic knowledge about the world and how communication works when words and phrases are reduced. Furthermore, the elimination of the writer’s voice or depersonalization is a convention in CMC that operates to maintain a distance between writer and reader. However, when seen from another perspective, the presence of the writer’s identity (name and address) in the header encourages the elimination of personal pronouns ‘I’ so as to reduce keystrokes.

E-mail is considered to be a “lean medium” that filters out important social cues (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Relational cues can be used to compensate the absence of nonverbal cues and are transmitted in two ways: first, electronic paralanguage includes verbal renditions of physical cues such as “*hahaha*” (laughter), expressions to describe physical action, such as “*hugs*”, and phrases that help the receiver to interpret the message, eg. ‘just kidding’; and second, nonverbal paralinguistic elements such as unconventional use of punctuation marks (e.g. multiple exclamation marks or question marks; trailing dots), capitalization and multiple letters, and emoticon (emotional icons). These reduced social cues expressed by using electronic paralanguage also reduce misinterpretation of the message in the e-mail. In

order to express extreme opinions or vent anger, messages typed wholly in capitals considered to be ‘shouting’ (also known as *flaming*) are used (but usually avoided).

The language in e-mail is said to be structurally simpler than traditional forms of writing. Murray (1985) discloses this salient feature of email messages – simplification of language. This feature includes syntactic simplification, and the use of abbreviations and quotation marks. In syntactic simplification, the email sender may delete auxiliaries, determiners and copula, resulting in text messages being made up of shorter, grammatically less complex sentences, and containing more sentence fragments and typographical errors (Hale, 1996, cited in Segerstad, 2002). According to Murray, some common abbreviations found in e-mail include *u, ur, u r, r u* for *you, your, you are, are you* respectively; *btw, yw, cul* for *by the way, your welcome, catch you later*.

According to Baron (2000), the linguistic profile of e-mail could be seen in terms of four dimensions: social dynamics, format, grammar, and style. With this in view, she proposes an e-mail linguistic profile as shown below (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Linguistic Profile of E-mail (Baron, 2000: 251)

Social dynamics	<p>Predominantly like writing :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interlocutors are physically separated • physical separation fosters personal disclosure and helps level the conversational playing field
Format	<p>(Mixed) writing and speech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like writing, e-mail is durable • like speech, e-mail is typically unedited
Grammar	<p>Lexicon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heavy use of first- and second-person pronouns <p>Syntax:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like writing, e-mail has high type/token ratio, high use of adverbial subordinate clauses, high use of disjunctions • like speech, e-mail commonly uses present tense and contractions
Style	<p>Predominantly like speech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low level of formality • expression of emotion not always self-monitored (flaming)

On the other hand, a more optimistic view holds that email will lead to a closer level of personal feelings between members and a sense of unity due to the increased opportunities for lateral communication offered (Hirschheim, 1985, cited in Nor Azni, 2003). Despite distance and location constraints, Hirschheim argues that the asynchronous medium like e-mail actually provides opportunities for more thoughtful communication. Users have more time to think of their response and to make more careful and less emotional replies, compared to oral exchanges.

This language variety, like most other varieties, arises out of a new social context which needed new yet suitable forms of expression. Therefore, language users draw on existing language varieties to form hybrids. Crystal (2003) suggests that online language is best viewed as neither written nor spoken language, but rather as a new species of interaction, a “third medium,” which is in the process of evolving its own systematic rules to suit new circumstances. However, Werry (1996, also available online <http://www.uq.edu.au/~ensrinte/work/irc/academic/>) argues that "the conventions [in e-mail] that are emerging are a direct reflection of the physical constraints on the medium combined with a desire to create language that is as ‘speech-like’ as possible". Undoubtedly, brevity of expression and energy saving are the premium factors that have been responsible for the emergence of highly abbreviated conventions and styles.

The features of the ‘new’ variety of language in e-mail would be easier to identify with the aid of a taxonomy. Segerstad (2002) designs a taxonomy of linguistic features characteristic of email in the same study on CMC (as mentioned above). She reveals that not many specific ‘e-style’ characteristics were found in her email corpus, i.e. e-mails composed by the general public and sent to the city council of Goteborg in Sweden. Hence, the taxonomy of linguistic features of e-mail can be described as a sub-set to the taxonomy of CMC (in Table 2.1 above). The simpler taxonomy is reproduced and presented below in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 A Taxonomy of Linguistic Features Characteristic of E-mail
(Segerstad, 2002: 243)

Category	Feature
1. <i>Space, case, punctuation and spelling:</i>	
i. space	a. Omitting punctuation b. Unconventional punctuation
ii. Case	a. All lower case
iii. Spelling and punctuation	a. Unconventional, spoken-like spelling b. Typos, or mispredictions c. Split compounds
2. <i>Grammatical features:</i>	
i. Reduced sentences	a. Subject pronoun b. Verb phrase
3. <i>Logotypes:</i>	
i. ASCII characters	a. Emoticons b. Symbol replacing word
4. <i>Lexical features and abbreviations:</i>	
i. Lexical features	a. Colloquial lexicon (dialect, expletives) a. Conventional abbreviations
ii. Abbreviations	b. Unconventional abbreviations

With exceptions, Herring (1998, cited in Segerstad, 2002) reports that she found that the language in e-mail messages posted to professional discussion lists tended to be linguistically sophisticated, making use of complex grammar and containing few errors. Demographic factors and purpose of communication are important factors in conditioning linguistic expressions.

This study attempts to determine whether the above characteristics found in e-mail discourse are prevalent in the e-mail messages of schooling teenagers who send e-mails for recreational purpose. It will unveil the common characteristics found in the data and the reasons for using them.

2.3 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is related to one's ability to communicate appropriately, and effectively in the target language. It encompasses knowledge of the surface structure of the language (i.e. the grammatical forms) as well as knowledge of when, where and to whom these forms are appropriately used in any given situation. The social and cultural knowledge of the speakers are presumed to enable them to use and interpret the linguistic forms (Saville-Troike, 2003). This simply means that our competence allows us to communicate functionally and interactively within specific contexts.

The term “communicative competence” was first introduced by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1972:26). He defines it as “what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community”. Meanwhile, Canale and Swain (1980) explain communicative competence as the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication which include both knowledge and skills in using this knowledge during actual communication. They proposed four major strands which come under this proposition, namely, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence is the mastery of the linguistic code of a language, both verbal and non-verbal, and it includes features and rules of the language such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics.

Discourse Competence refers to the mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text of different genres such as scientific reports, business letters, narratives, argumentative essays and sets of instructions.

Sociolinguistic competence concerns knowledge of socio-cultural rules of both language and discourse. It is the ability to produce and comprehend utterances which are appropriate in terms of the context in which they are uttered. This means sensitivity to the contextual factors such as the status of the participants, purposes of the interaction, degree of formality and norms or conventions of interaction.

Strategic Competence, also known as Communication Strategies (CSs), encompasses the mastery of both verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies that may be used either to compensate for breakdown in communication or to enhance the effectiveness of communication. In FTF communication, it refers to the ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication through strategies such as paraphrase, repetition, and circumlocution.

The present study seeks to investigate both the grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence mentioned above, that is the use of communication strategies by the second language learners/speakers of English in conveying their messages through e-mails.

2.3.1 Communicative Strategies (CSs)

People often run into problems when converting their communicative intentions into speech or written text in the course of communication. Interestingly, people are able to adapt to the

conditions of context and situation despite the complexity of language. This ability to use and adapt language to suit the conditions of context and situation is central to human behaviour and the evolutionary success of the human species (Diamond, 1992). When they experience discrepancy between their communicative intentions and their limited communicative resources, they resort to the use of problem-solving devices known as communication strategies (CSs) or strategic competence (which is classified within the framework of communicative competence). It refers to a speaker's ability in FTF communication to solve communication problems by means of strategies. CSs are conscious or unconscious processes which people make use of in using a language. They are thus considered important tools for communicators in both FTF and CMC as these strategies can help the communicators get their intended messages across. In CMC particularly, the success of communicators relies heavily on their ability to communicate within restrictions by employing appropriate communication strategies.

2.3.2 Communicative Strategy in L2 Speakers

Several definitions have been proposed for CSs in speech particularly those used by L2 speakers. These definitions, however, vary among researchers. In the studies of second language acquisition, speakers of L2 are found to depend heavily on strategies to convey their intended message. Bialystok (1990:116) commented that CSs are “an undeniable event of language use”. Thus, the term ‘communicative strategy’ was coined by Selinker (1972) in his account of the processes responsible for inter-language (IL). He accounted for CSs as a by-product of the learners’ attempt to express meaning in spontaneous speech with their limited target language system. IL is also referred to the separateness of a second

language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language.

Corder defines CSs as “a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his or her meaning when faced with some difficulty” (Corder, 1983:16). Based on this definition, CSs are seen as a problem-solving device which is used by speakers to compensate for their lack of command of the language, i.e. L2.

Another similar definition of CSs forwarded by Poulisse et al. which touches on the existence of communication problems and the adoption of a systematic technique to cope with such problems is as follows:

“strategies which a language user employs in order to achieve the intended meaning on becoming aware of problems arising during the planning phase of an utterance due to his own linguistic shortcomings”

Faerch and Kasper (1983) however, view CSs rather differently. They consider CSs as an elaborate model of speech production and provide its definition from the aspect of psycholinguistics. The element of consciousness is also included in their definition of CSs, that is, “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” Faerch and Kasper (1983:36). From this perspective, CSs are located within the individual's underlying cognitive structures and thus requires the communicator to activate a strategic plan to solve the problems.

These definitions have been extended further to include “every potentially intentional attempt to cope with any language-related problem of which the speaker is aware during the course of communication” (Dornyei and Scott, 1997:179).

Overall these definitions highlighted 3 features namely problem, consciousness and intentionality that cause CSs to be created in the course of communication.

i) *Problematicity* or problem-orientedness is the primary defining criterion for CSs (Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Bialystok, 1984, 1990). Thus, strategies are used to overcome obstacles in communication whenever a language user perceives a problem.

ii) *Consciousness*, the second defining criterion for CSs, is difficult to be proven empirically (Faerch and Kasper, 1983:36). As such it includes ‘both plans which are always employed and plans which are sometimes consciously employed’ into their category of strategic plans which are known as potentially conscious plan. Dornyei and Scott (1997), on the other hand, expand this notion of consciousness into three aspects namely, consciousness as awareness of the problem, consciousness as intentionality and consciousness as awareness of strategic language use.

iii) *Intentionality*, the third criterion refers to the learner’s control over a repertoire of strategies and selection of specific ones from the whole range of options to apply deliberately in order to achieve certain effects (Bailystok, 1990). Thus, language users are assumed to have control over the strategies that can be selected depending on the problems encountered and the social context in which they are in.

In this study, the researcher has taken a step further to link these 3 features (i.e. problem, consciousness and intentionality) that bring about the use of CSs in the process of communication in e-mail context. However, the linkage of these features has to be viewed from different perspectives as e-mail is mediated communication. The various CSs

employed by male and female teenage e-mailers may not be to compensate for the lack of command of the target language, but may be due to problems arising from the restrictions in expressing verbal and non-verbal language which is use in FTF communication. As such, CSs are employed consciously and intentionally in the course of communication for various reasons which will be unveiled in this study.

2.3.3 Taxonomy of Communicative Strategies Used in E-mail for Current Study

Wilson, A. (1992), Crystal, D. (2001) and Peters, P. et al (2002) examine the notable linguistic features of CMC and highlight that the proportion of these features exhibited in a CMC text can vary enormously according to criteria such as text-type and the personal characteristics of the individual writer such as age and identity.

In order to investigate how e-mailers express their thoughts and apply paralanguage in the e-mail context by using ‘an innovative set of linguistic devices’ (also known as Internet etiquette or netiquette (Crystal, 2001) and why CSs are used to replace paralinguistic features commonly used in FTF in a teenage speech community (subscribers of www.friendster.com), a taxonomy is required to form the backbone of the research.

Bialystok (1990) considers taxonomies or typologies as “systematic organizing structures for a range of events within a domain”. With the given rich descriptions on e-mail language and the strategies used to substitute both verbal and non-verbal cues found in FTF conversation, the researcher decided to create a taxonomy of CSs used in e-mail which are generally used by e-mailers across the board. The rationale for creating this taxonomy is that it is more systematic and complete for the identification of CSs employed by the

participants in the study. Therefore, Segerstad’s Taxonomy of Linguistic Features Characteristic of E-mail was adapted and modified to suit the present study. In addition, studies on linguistic features of CMC done by Murray (1995), Beh (2001) and Su (2004) provide useful information for the choice of CSs to be included in this taxonomy. The modified taxonomy presented below is used as the framework for the analysis of the data.

Table 2.4 Taxonomy of Communicative Strategies for Present Study

Category	Features
1. Orthography	a) Informal or phonetic spelling b) Speed-writing c) Absence of capitalization
2. Vocabulary	a) Informal words b) Interjections c) Initialisms d) Abbreviations
3. Paralinguistics and Graphics	a) Multiple letters b) Capitalisation (for shouting) c) “Excessive” punctuation d) Punctuation-mark emoticons or smileys
4. Discoursal Features	a) “Telegraphic” language b) Syntactic simplification c) Interactional features

1. Orthography

Nonstandard spellings and spelling errors are typical characteristics in e-mail discourse. It cannot automatically be assumed to reflect a lack of education in the user but simply a typing inaccuracy, a lack of editorial revision or being in a playful mood.

a) *Informal or phonetic spelling* is a form of speech simulation in CMC. The reason for its usage is hard to define but it may be due to close similarities between CMC and FTF interaction. An example of informal or phonetic spelling is “**wat u** mean?” (What do you mean?). E-mailers learn this speech simulation of real life speech from their exposure to CMC language but its use may be inhibited by their perspective on the use of proper English language.

b) *Speed-writing* is similar to a shorthand convention. It usually tends to be a combination of informal word-spelling with letter(s) omitted. E.g. m fine thx (I’m fine, thanks). Stevenson (2004) calls speed writing ‘shortening’ and therefore the use of this strategy may simply be in the interest of ‘economy’. In Beh’s study (2001) on Internet Relay Chat, her findings on the absence of apostrophes for word such as “dont” (don’t) and “im” (I’m) were placed under the typography of punctuation. In my study, I considered the absence of apostrophes as speed writing as typing this punctuation mark (‘) means more keystrokes are involved.

c) *Absence of capitalization* (even with the pronoun ‘I’ and proper nouns) is a way of saving time and scoffing the written norms of English language spelling. It may be seen as a lazy convention or the application of ‘save a keystroke’ principle. Surprisingly, it can also be an intentional behaviour of frequent e-mailers who want to produce specialized personality and noticeable creativity in the virtual community, for instance, a lower case is found in the initial letter of the word in a sentence. An extract found in the corpus which exemplifies this practice is “**oh** that’s cool **i**’m from **cheras**” [Cheras is a place in the Klang Valley], “**calvin** is my name”.

Punctuation tends to be minimalist in most situations, and completely absent in some e-mails. Its usage depends on the personality of e-mailers; some are scrupulous about maintaining a traditional punctuation; some use it only when they want to avoid ambiguity; and some do not use it at all. On the other hand, there are e-mailers who purposely use the lower case to denote the “lowering of voice” (Sherwood, 2002) which interlocutors commonly do in FTF communication when they want to make their conversation difficult for someone to overhear.

2. Vocabulary

Vocabulary abuse, for the reason of quick typing or creativity, is a common phenomenon in most CMC including e-mail.

a) *Informal vocabulary* items used are a natural trend of the simulation of daily informal colloquial English, for instance, “ok wat u **wanna** tok ab.. can we tok in msn” (What do you want to talk about? Can we chat in MSN?) The suffixation of ‘a’ to replace the prepositional ‘to’/‘of’ or ‘you’ is listed in the examples below.

want to	→	wanna
got to	→	gotta
going to	→	gonna
I’ve got you (I understand)	→	gotcha
sort of	→	sorta

Interestingly, both ‘wanna’ and ‘gonna’ are now found in The Oxford English Reference Dictionary as officially recognised colloquial contractions. However, it is stressed that they

are non-standard words and should generally be avoided in both formal speech and writing which e-mail in Friendster is not.

b) *Interjections* or particles such as *oops* are typical symbols of simulation of FTF speech behaviour. They stand for the tone, mood and emotions of the e-mailer, expressing happiness, sadness, joy, surprise, disappointment and so on. Some of the examples found in the data include ‘hehe’ (sneer), ‘haha’ (laugh), ‘oh’ (an exclamation), ‘err’ (hesitation), ‘wow’ (surprise/overwhelmed with joy), ‘mah’ (a tag), ‘lah’ (auxiliary verb/tag), ‘ah’ (rising tone) and ‘wo’ (falling tone).

In the Malaysian context, the “lah’ particle is extensively used in FTF interaction by English Language speakers and it has extended to computer-mediated interactions. According to Morais, the function of ‘lah’ may be likened to that of “please” in English, “sila” in standard Malay and “tolong’ in colloquial Malay (Morais, 1994; Jamaliah, 2000). She examines the use of “lah’ in FTF interactions, and reveals the functions of the particle. First, it is used to indicate agreement and support (e.g. “It’s him *lah*”). “Lah’ is also used to function as a plea for speakers to accept the truth of the proposition. It adds strength to one’s effort at persuading and pleading with somebody to accept the truth. In addition, the function of “lah’ is to show indirect emphasis when reiterating a point (e.g. "Don't be so worried *lah*"). It is an emphasis marker. Sometimes the letter “h” is dropped (i.e. “la”) to indicate more of the softening effect of emphasis. In general, the use of “lah’ or ‘la’ has a smoothing effect on the interactional flow of discussion. Moreover, the particle ‘lah’ is used to present a sentence as rather relaxed, and informal. However, it appears to have no specific meaning on other occasions. Other variants of ‘lah’ such as ‘le’, ‘ler’ and ‘lo’ are

also found to be typical in Malaysians' speech (particularly among Chinese interlocutors) and CMC discourse, perhaps due to the influence of the Chinese expression "啦"/la/.

On the contrary, Su (2004) observed that the interjections found in chatrooms are used mainly as back-channeling responses. In his study on inter-cultural communication, Clyne (1994) reports that South-east Asians, especially women, use more backchanneling responses, compared to people from other cultural groups. If such prevailing pattern is found in women's responses, the present study hopes to unveil the types and frequency of interjections used by male and female teenage e-mail users for other communicative purposes apart from backchanneling.

c) *Initialism* refers to nonstandard 'words' formed by combining the initial letters or parts of a compound term, for example, FOC (free of charge), BTW (by the way), FYI (for your information)". Basically, in computer-mediated communication, users abbreviate phrases to reduce key-strokes to the minimum; yet they are understood by the receivers. Such strategies definitely save time and space. An initialism is generally verbalized letter by letter, rather than as a single word. This strategy is similar to *acronyms and abbreviations* in Su's (2004) research on chatroom language. Both initialism and acronym are similar in terms of graphology but differ in the way they are verbalized (see 1.10 Definition of Terms). Thus, the modified taxonomy for the present study does not include acronym as a sub-strategy.

d) An *abbreviation*, on the other hand, is a shortened form of a word. The reduction of letters in a word does not follow the formation of either acronym or initialisms. The manner

in which an abbreviation is verbalised is rather flexible, for example, Ph.D (Doctor of Philosophy), Bio (Biology), and bro (brother). Like initialisms, the use of abbreviations reduces the typing time and economizes keystrokes.

3. Paralinguistics and Graphics

Gumperz (1977) points out that speakers signal the activity they are engaging in, i.e. the metacommunicative frame they are operating within, by using paralinguistic and prosodic features of speech such as intonation, pitch, amplitude, and rhythm. He calls these features “contextualization cues” (Jamaliah, 2000:85; Su, 2004). Paralinguistics are related to the non-semantic aspects of speech – everything but the words themselves. Recently, researchers have concentrated their studies on the effects various vocal characteristics have upon listeners. They have found that listeners, to a significant extent, can judge a speaker’s age, sex, race, education, social status, geographical origin, and emotional disposition.

a) *Multiple letters* means reduplicated letters used to represent prolonged or expressive intonation in the text like ‘**longggggggg** reply’ and ‘**ermmmmmmmmmmmmm.....**’. It may be used by cyber communicators who wish to exaggerate the word or phrase. However, the interpretation much depends on the intention and perception of the receiver of the message. Reid (1996) refers to this as “eccentric spelling” which has communicative purposes. In general, it is used to produce paralinguistic effects commonly found in FTF interactions.

b) The use of *capitalization* is a strongly marked form of communication due to reduced social cues. It is adopted to communicate conversational tone and extrinsic nonverbal messages (such as anger). Words in capital letters are only employed to show emphasis or

rising tone but messages which are wholly in capitals are considered to be ‘shouting’ (flaming) and usually avoided (Crystal, 2003) as its use reflects the lack of politeness in e-mail users. It is not as frequently used in asynchronous communication such as in email context but is a common communicative convention in chatroom situations.

c) *Excessive use of punctuation* (e.g. “n wats wrong wit her?????”) is a convention which is similar to real life extralinguistic cues but is hard to express due to the absence of both interactors in the process of cyber communication. The keyboard is the only tool to simulate the prosodic effects of speech; therefore, users have to create ways so that they can produce a real paralinguistic effect. Different punctuation marks are used to denote different intentions of the sender, for example, multiple question marks (?????) are used to express states of emotion such as amazement, astonishment or shock while trailing dots (.....) or repeated hyphens (---) to express a pause or even uncertainty. Other unusual combinations of punctuation marks (...?!?!?) may also be used; however, the intentions of the sender and interpretations of receiver must meet. All these practices are very popular in all text-based virtual communities as in the CMC situation.

d) *Punctuation-mark emoticons* or *smileys* are characters created from the keyboard to manifest emotional cues to compensate the messages that vocal inflection gives and body language sends. Emoticons are a form of electronic paralanguage which are used to show effect (Murphy and Collins, 1997) and to establish relational tone. Smileys are perhaps the most used of all emoticons. Emoticons consist of a colon, semicolon or an equal sign to represent eyes followed by a variety of different symbols to represent nose/mouth shape or tongue. Some emoticons or smileys must be viewed 90 degrees anticlockwise. There are whole online Smiley Dictionaries and a wide range of ASCII gestures available ranging

from ill (%^P) to angry (>:-<) to astonished (:o) to accompany e-mailers words with hand or facial gestures and voice variations. It should also be noted that Japanese emoticons are quite different.

The presence of emoticons implies that a textual comment should be taken with a smile, and not too seriously – it may be a joke, or a friendly insult. However if used without care, it can lead to misunderstanding: closing a plainly angry text with a smile can increase force of the flame rather than otherwise. A CMC user guide discourages the overuse of emoticons. In one study, only 13.4% of 3 000 posts contained them which indicates that many people still do not use them at all. Usually users limit themselves to just the few basic variations such as

☺ or :-) (I'm happy)

☹ or :-((I'm sad)

;) (I think I'm being funny or winking)

;-) (I'm crying).

4. Discoursal Features

Discoursal features in the present study refer to the analysis of CSs used at discourse level as the strategies have extended to phrase or sentence levels.

a) *Telegraphic language* or speech refers to a form of reduction of speech like those used by children who first imitate the sentences of adults in their first language acquisition. In such speech, only the lexical or contentive words are retained while the grammatical ones are deleted. In this study, it is referred to the use of a stretch of incomplete structures

(mainly phrases) which is unconventional in traditional written language. This feature is frequently found in spoken discourse particularly in an informal setting. (e.g. “Busy for what? Exam? Now you still study?”)

b) *Syntactic simplifications* may include the deletion of subjects, auxiliaries, and determiners and copula in statements which are understood by the reader. In question formation, all parts of the verbs, modals or “do” followed by subject are deleted. (e.g. “dunno”[I don’t know], “enjoy the show??”[Did you enjoy the show?]) Maynor (1994) agrees that e-style can be quite casual, freely omitting subjects, modals, or articles. There are many opportunities for the sender to omit the subject since the server inserts the sender’s userid (user’s identification) and name which are familiar to the receiver.

c) *Interactional features*, e.g. questions, are commonly found in e-mail discourse although it is a form of asynchronous communication. Question-forms, for instance, exercise strong pragmatic force. They are not rhetorical in function, but invite interaction. Besides, they give the message a conversational feel.

Since there is free flow of ideas (without much planning and organisation) from the mind of the sender to the screen of the computer, questions are formed by punctuating simplified syntactic or “telegraphic” structures which end with or without question marks, for example, “ermmmmmmm the way i intro myself?” (Is it the way I introduce myself?), “u going to celebrate mooncake fest tonite...” (Are you going to celebrate mooncake festival tonight?). Accurate interpretation of the ‘utterance’ is vital so that an appropriate response(s) is given.

The modified taxonomy of CSs used in e-mail which includes four categories of CSs and their sub-strategies will be used as a guideline for the present research on the frequency of manifestation of communicative strategies used by male and female teenage e-mail community.

2.4 Gender and Communication

2.4.1 Definition of Gender

Sex is the biological categorization of people whereas gender is the interpreted identity that males and females choose to take on. If these sexes are accepted as people of different worlds, therefore it is also inevitable that there are certain differences in the usage of language among these two separate genders (Vanfossen, 1998, cited in Ivy & Backlund, 1994). The difference in language use is not primarily due to the different sexes but mostly because of sex role stereotyping and socialization. This is to say that culture and society tend to construct this language difference.

The concept of “gender differences” differs from “sex differences”. Sunderland (1994) explains that sex differences suggest biological identification between the male and female whereas gender differences are not biologically determined but are socially constructed. Meanwhile Ponyton (1989) claims that the term “gendering” is created by the society to shape the gender roles and is seen in what men and women do, both occupationally and socially. However, Sunderland (1994:2) argues that gender differences are a matter of tendency and degree. She states that “the social construction of gender in terms of roles and relations is not static, but can be continually reproduced, from one generation to another”.

She also elaborates that it is because of the continual social force that masculinise the biological males and feminize the biological females in our society. Furthermore, this process is two-way which means the institutions, practices and beliefs shape gender, and gender roles and relations in turn shape beliefs, practices and institutions.

2.4.2 Differences in Men's and Women's Style of Communication

Research into language and gender did not really begin in a systematic or serious way until the early 1970s. Gender related differences in speech have always been a source of fascination, especially with respect to the ways in which these manifested themselves in non-Western societies. Scholars from a variety of disciplines engaged in research into language and gender have led to more and more questions as they have come to grips with the complexity of the problem.

In the last 20 years, feminist sociolinguistics research has typically been concerned with whether, and how, women and men use language differently, and whether these differences are symptomatic of women's subordinate social status, or contribute to their subordination, or are merely markers of gender differences, and are the result of different sub-cultural norms rather than asymmetrical power relations. But recently, language studies on gender have shifted focus to certain features of conversation, and the differences in the use of these features by men and women as researchers are interested in how power is achieved and maintained through discourse as well as in evaluating and re-valuing women's conversational style. Some of the most interesting features studied include turn-taking, use of questions and tag questions, topic introduction and development, and back channel support, and the use of hedging. Gender-related differences have been found in all these

features of FTF conversation but the studies have not always been in agreement in their findings.

The differences in men and women's speech is further supported by separate studies by Hirschmann (1973) and Coates (1986a) which identify minimal response as a feature of women's conversational pattern (cited in Holmes, 1986). Hirschmann found that women have a greater tendency of using minimal responses such as "mm-hmm" and "uh-huh" in conversations than men do and attributed this to women's supportiveness in interactions. Beside that, Hirschmann also discovered greater female use of "fillers" (e.g. uhm, well, you know), "qualifiers" (eg. maybe, sort of, I think) and "affirmative" responses (eg. yeah) as markers of supportiveness as well. These features are also used by men but they appear less in their conversation. In addition, the work of Brown (1980) on politeness phenomena in a Mayan community reveals that Tenejapan women used more speech particles to strengthen or weaken an utterance (cited in Kendall and Tannen, 2003) which brings to light another contrast between men's and women's conversation pattern.

Jariah's (1999), Ng (1999) and Ainun Zanariah's (2004) studies on gender differences in spoken discourse at the workplace and media discourse focus on the speech patterns and conversational strategies of male and female spoken discourse. The corpus was analysed for the differences in the use of hedges and for features produced by women as conversational strategies. Their studies reveal significant gender differences particularly in the use of hedges by female speakers as well as every individual subject. They concluded that the topic of discussion and the familiarity of the speakers were the main factors that affect the use and choice of hedges in informal conversation at the workplace.

Generally, there are some characteristics of both sexes in FTF communication. Men speak in a higher, rougher and direct tone without hesitating and they choose a faster and a slightly rougher and direct tone of speech. Women, on the other hand, speak by using tag questions, qualifiers and fillers in order to soften their speech and by doing this, they avoid direct rough and threatening language. Women also tend to speak more slowly and clearly. This is due to the gendered expectations imposed on the society that we either behave as a man or a woman in accepted forms in communication. However, Lakoff (1973) does not believe that men and women speak different languages. She says that the distinction between men and women's language is a symptom of a problem in our culture and not primarily the problem itself but rather, it reflects the fact that men and women are expected to have different interests and different roles, hold different types of conversations and react differently to other people.

Similarly, one can expect there be a noticeable difference in the language used in CMC. Herring (1994) claims that "men and women have recognizably different styles in posting to the Internet" and that "women and men have different communicative ethics"(also cited in Rosetti, <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/Articles/Rossetti-Genderdif.html>). This is in contrast to the general understanding of the Internet which provides a gender-less, age-less, race-less and any other bias-less opportunity for interaction. In the same study, she also proposes the case that "women and men have different characteristic online styles" which is the result of the differences in culturisation and integration into society. The male style is characterized by adversarial utterances such as put-downs, strong, often contentious assertions, lengthy and/or frequent postings, self-promotion, and sarcasm. In contrast, the female style is characterized by "supportiveness and attenuation" with expressions of appreciation, thanking, and community-building as well as apologizing, expressing doubts,

asking questions, and contributing ideas in the form of suggestions” (Herring, 1994: 3-4; Rosetti, 2001). Thus, in reality women are not provided with an equal opportunity for online discussion due to the different communication styles existing between the two sexes. This simply means that if women continue to use language that is considered weaker, more frivolous or less powerful than men, they will continue to be relegated to a secondary status by men. Men, on the other hand, will continue to remain in power and use their aggressive, competitive and dominating style.

Rosetti (2001) conducted an informal research into the different styles women and men adopt when contributing to e-mail discussion group; it reveals a clear difference in the language used by males and females online. Men were found to use far more openly ‘aggressive’ or sarcastic expressions which include personal attacks and put-downs as well as references to ‘taboo’ body parts. Men are also more interested in promoting their personal views in order to present an ‘authoritative’ contribution to the discussion. On the other side of the dichotomy, women used far more expressions offering support and a deepening of their relationship with the readers. In addition, women used more open expressions of appreciation and thanks. This shows that the male/female language style dichotomy has been transported into computer-mediated communication regardless of the lack of physical contact.

In contrast to the above scholarship, Jaffe, et al (1999) in their study on gender and the use of pseudonyms in CMC reveals that the use of gender-crossing or gender-neutral pseudonyms would reduce the gender-based communication norm between male and female CMC users (which includes e-mailers) without negative repercussion. Besides that they also lend insight into why men and women would prefer to use cross-gender

pseudonyms to express themselves in certain ways. The result of their study reveals that the greater similarity of male and female pseudonyms used, the differences in communication patterns between male and female CMC users may be mitigated.

Much had been said about the contrasting styles and features in both FTF and online communication between the two sexes. However, studies on their use of various communicative strategies in the course of communication through e-mail remain virtually unexplored. Therefore, it is the researcher's interest to look into the frequency of employment of communicative strategies by male and female teenagers when communicating through e-mails, and also to unveil the differences (if any) in the use of communicative strategies between men and female teenage e-mailers.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the human communication process and the three interdependent elements conditioning communication namely synchronicity, means of expression and situation. These elements deal with both FTF interaction and computer-mediated communication (CMC) in one way or another. CMC, which is human communication mediated by a device such as computer, and mobile phones, has its own rich linguistic features to prompt online text-based language analysis. A taxonomy of linguistic features found to be characteristic of the various modes of CMC was developed by Segerstad (2002) for this purpose. E-mail, a type of CMC, has its own new hybrid of language which is speech-like but in written form. This result in further exploration and creation of communicative strategies used to compensate for the reduced social cues. Subsequently, a modified taxonomy was created based on the taxonomy of linguistic

features characteristic of e-mail in Segerstad's study (2002) as well as other studies conducted by Murray (1995), Beh (2001) and Su (2004) on different types of CMC. This modified taxonomy forms the framework of the present study. A major part of the discussion has focused on the 4 main categories of CSs in the taxonomy to aid the analysis of data. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of the differences in FTF communication between men and women and other studies on CMC language and gender.

In the following chapter, the research design and the research method adopted will be presented.