

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis show that language in chatroom is generally recognizable and interactively communicable among the participants, though there are phenomena of 'relexicalization' and dysfunctional turn-taking sequences. Culture merge is becoming a trend in the virtual community with the emergence of Internet. And speech acts in FTF context are also found in the chatroom situation.

#### 5.1 'Relexicalization'

'Relexicalization', coined by Werry (1996), refers to the chaotic phenomenon of word-creating or word-juggling in the IRC context. Such practice has always been regarded as 'antilanguage' (Halliday, 1978) in the field of linguistics. 'Anti' as it is, researchers still find that the number of participants in chatrooms is in a rising tendency (Reid 1994, Herring 1999, Stevenson 2004) and chatroom 'jargons' are becoming increasingly popular among the young people. The data analysis finds that it is not only the text-based chat a time consuming pressure but rather the creative motivation propels the participants to convey their ideas in that most 'reduced' and 'alien' forms. A case to argue is that [MAIYA] types \*LOL\* (5 stroking) in line 607, the time of stroking is no less than she simply types 'laugh' or 'haha' (5 and 4). But she prefers to choose the 'novel' way to show her creativity and personality.

Werry (1996) recognizes the presence of 'relexicalization' by the fact that participants tend to play with language, to produce hybrid and heteroglossic forms. But he does not observe the phenomenon from pragmatic perspectives. The survival of language lies in its use but not its form. The unpopularity of Esperanto is a good case to illustrate the matter (no language environment and aboriginal speakers). Language in chatrooms is recognizable symbols, at least, in that community. This is because the created words are formed in a regular thread either from sound or spelling. One can easily figure out the meaning from the context as shown below: "\* divlady cool boy luv me..but i dun even noe u"; or "[abc] \*sob\*....ppl r much frdly here". In addition, the 'hybrid' and 'heteroglossic' phenomena as acronyms are acceptable, if created practicably, as 'lol'; 'omg'; 'btw', etc. The commonest acronym word 'news' is primitively coined from the first letters of 'north', 'east', 'west', and 'south'.

Example 46. Mixed samples from data corpus

284)[cool_boy] luv u divlady
288) * divlady cool boy luv me..but i dun even noe u
818) [abc] *sob*....ppl r much frdly here

Stevenson (2004) claims that there is the 'overlexicalisation' of certain terms, especially, among acronyms, e.g. the simulation of laughter: 'lol' (laughing out loud), 'lmao' (laughing my arse off), and 'rotflol' (rolling on the floor laughing out loud). However, the data in this study do not display such confusion. The reason must be that the use of language needs a process of verification. As slang in English, there are many

new sayings created every year, but only a few of them can be adopted as idioms in the dictionary. 'Relexicalization' and 'overlexicalization' are just the initial phenomena in the text-based virtual community, rather than permanent ones, since some impractical use will disappear automatically as Darwin's doctrine, "the survival of the fittest".

## 5.2 Paralinguistic Phenomena

The paralinguistic phenomenon is checked with Gumperz's 'contextualization cues' in the data analysis. The findings show that the aim of chatters using 'intonation', 'pitch', 'loudness', and 'facial expression' in chatroom situation is the same as that used in FTF context, but rather a way of simulating the latter. As we can see cases like capitalization for 'SHOUTING', 431) [NoNo] "🔊 PLAY GAME!!!"; asterisk markers for action, 898) \* Morpheus yawns at ptm\*; and abuse of punctuation for tone, 425) [dennie] "you dun understand hokkien???? kao tai mean sing song lor...".

In addition, another kind of paralinguistic use, *emoticons*, is also examined in the study. The analysis deals with two kinds of graphic language, punctuation markers (:-)) and image (👉) emoticons, and illustrates the effect of using them respectively. The result shows that the function of emoticons is more expressive than text-based utterances, and that culture difference between the oriental and the occidental exists in applying emoticons as Singapore Chinese use more image icons while Australians adopt more punctuation markers due to various thinking modes.

### 5.3 Cultural Merge

Cultural influence as mentioned above seems to be a ubiquitous issue among the chatroom participants. This is, in a great sense, because the Internet is a world wide web with English as its main communicative medium and people of various races. The data analyzed reflect, at least, three cultural fusions. The first one exists in Alamak Chat # SG (Singapore), where chatters largely use the conventions of combined interjections of Chinese and Malaysian language as 'lah', 'mah', 'wah', 'nia', 'wan', etc. in an English environment. Such phenomenon will lead to a communicative obstacle if a person enters the chatroom only with English cultural background. On the other hand, the so-called 'Singlish' (Singapore English) also proves the practices that in code-switching people bring their culture with them. The second phenomenon is in Language Salon (China), where, unlike other chatrooms, the chatters use relatively formal but somewhat a Chinese way of English expression (a typical cultural influence). The analysis concludes that the Internet chatroom as a mirror reflects the state of English education in a certain area. And the third comes from Alamak Chat #1 (Australia), where chatters exchange their greetings in different languages as 'ciao' (Italian), 'ni hao' (Chinese), 'harigato' (Japanese), and 'howdy' and 'hiya' (informal Australian English) as if the chatroom were taken as a stage of intercultural communication. From these findings, regardless of the positive or negative effect on language, we could expect that a cultural merge is on the way.

#### 5.4 Features of Turn-taking

The analysis of turn-taking has focused on chatroom conversation of separated adjacency pairs: the violation of “no gap, no overlap” principle; and turn construction repair in terms of SSJ’ model. The findings show that the ‘dysfunctional’ turn-taking, to a great extent, is caused by factors as system lag, automatic order taxis, and lack of visual and auditory feedback in computer-mediated environment. As a result, the analysis exhibits a high degree of overlap and a high incidence of gap in violation of the “no gap, no overlap” ideal of spoken conversation. And turn repair in chatroom situation is even more frequent than that in FTF context. Actually, it is text-based CMC that poses problems for the mechanics of turn-taking. However, through observation, this ‘dysfunctional’ turn-taking does not influence the general understanding among chatroom participants. We can liken a chatroom talking to a supermarket shopping. A buyer will not miss finding the items he or she wants to buy in a supermarket full of beautiful things in eyes. An interesting topic is always closely tracked by the participants, whereas a dull one is weakened as it goes.

#### 5.5 ‘Chat’ Speech Act

‘Chat’ speech act, as Terrell Neuage (2003) first called it, is an inherited use of Austin’s speech acts in FTF situations. As where there are interactive communications, there should be speech acts. Chatroom is such a place on the Internet. In analysing chatroom language with *Speech Act Theory*, a question, “Is there a speech act in the

chatroom?”, is asked to seek for the answer. With <SUNGIRL to guest\_56056>’s utterance “so confident!”, the analysis verifies that Austin’s famous threefold distinction of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts is appropriate in describing what the language in a chatroom is doing. Austin argues that many utterances are equivalent to actions as “I now pronounce you man and wife”, the utterance creates a new social or psychological reality, i.e. ‘saying’ equals ‘doing’. And in the chatroom we meet the same situation as [Sketchy\_Unit] types “a nice chat, byeeeeeeeeeeeee!”, and his leaving follows by the notice of “\*\*\* Signoff Sketchy Unit”, and here, ‘typing’ equals ‘doing’. In addition, Searle’s further classification of speech acts, commissives, expressives, declaratives, directives, and representatives, are also adopted to verify language used in subgroup category of chatroom situation. The findings show that there is not much difference between language used in chatroom and FTF context except for the use of performative verbs or declaratives. As chatrooms are virtual spaces, it can seldom provide opportunity for chatters to realize what they are saying, unless there is a real person-to-person resultant contact. The limitations on action equate to limitations on speech acts. After all, virtuality is not reality.

## **5.6 Conclusion and Implications**

Chatroom language, a form of CMC, is a product of computer science in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is not only a technological phenomenon, but rather a social phenomenon.

The analysis reveals that chatroom language is recognizable and interactively communicable, though there are some of the abusive 'relexicalization' and 'overlexicalization' in language use. Historically, however, language has always been evolved from the process of 'use and disuse' as Darwin described in his "The Origin of Species". It is not unusual to take the view of 'antilanguage' towards such phenomenon as if people in middle age would have seen the modern language as an 'anti'. "In this potentially infinite universe of language variety, it would be naïve to suggest that 'antilanguage' didn't exist at all" (Stevenson 2004). The analysis result indeed suggests the presence of 'text-based virtual realities' with exclusive tendencies. But we have to admit that the popularity of chatroom language among youngsters is an irresistible force in the future language development. No one could foretell what the future language would be as it only depends on the need of social development promoted by the technological innovation as CMC language. It is a 'language revolution' as Crystal (2001) puts it in his book, "Language and the Internet".

Moreover, how to look on chatroom language is an important task among linguists, sociologists, and other related experts. It is, to some extent, significant to analyze chatroom language through pragmatic perspectives – study the mystery of text-based symbols, uncover the features of CMC language, and prefigure language development for the future. In the cyberspace times, human beings are more and more dependent on machines; talks on the Internet will be a trend for the future generation. To timely study

the chatroom language and correctly envisage the 'novel' speech intention in the virtual communities among young people will be helpful to the study of other sciences as sociology, psychology, education, and so forth.

Nothing is more significant than we could get benefit from chatroom language for the sake of education. It can benefit the education in both micro- and macro-respects. For the micro-respect, the result of the analysis could help teachers to be well-informed about what is going on in particular language settings as IRC language and IM messages which are mainly used by school children and youngsters. These materials should be a living textbook to teaching. For example, teachers could keep informed of the language variety. And the findings will help them to lead their teaching to a correct direction, say, to keep up with the time (language trends) and to guide their students to use right language patterns both in spoken and written discourse, esp., to train L2 students to realize successful communications rather than a failure in the cross-cultural or inter-cultural settings. And with respect to macro, analyzing the phenomena of chatroom language and learning the trend of language development will help the curriculum audit committee to reconsider the overall categories in a language course design; organizing manpower to revise the textbooks existed, amending what is necessary in a textbook and adding the practical contents into the new curriculum for the interest of the whole education.



And last, the term 'global village', which has become ubiquitous since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is reinforced by the development of computer science and Internet, which is leading to a linguistic revolution with English as a global language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although the Internet as a technology has been around only for several decades, an increasing number of people have access to it almost everyday. And what we now have is a new medium – computer-mediated communication – which is undeniably a revolution technologically and socially, and which Crystal (2001) argues is just as much a 'revolution linguistically'. Chatroom language is the characteristic use of language on the Internet unique to that medium – is remarkable not just because it has introduced new vocabulary and jargon, or because of the speed at which innovation in language can be circulated worldwide, but because it has provided us with new alternatives to the way in which human communication can take place. It is neither speech nor writing. The absence of immediate feedback distances 'Netspeak' from FTF conversation, and demands new ways of expressing rapport and anticipating reaction (the invention of emoticons are a creative attempt at solving this problem). Chatroom language is not like writing in its impermanence as pages on screen can change as we watch (through animation, text movement, and so on), and be refreshed in ways that written language, with its stability, cannot match. Unlike FTF speech, chatroom conversations enable us to participate in many conversations simultaneously and communicate with people of various cultural backgrounds. Thus, 'Global English' has

given extra purpose to a variety of Standard English, in the way it guarantees a medium of international intelligibility; but it has also fostered the growth of local varieties as a means of expressing regional identity (the chatroom data in this study prove this), and some of these new varieties will, in due course, evolve into new languages. The Internet has provided us with fresh dimensions of linguistic and stylistic variation, and provided new ways of focusing on language use. It is not exaggerative to confer on 'it' revolutionary status in the history of human language development. From a global view, analyzing chatroom language through pragmatic perspectives is to study language in use for the future.