

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature that is relevant to this study is reviewed in this chapter. This chapter is divided into three sections. Section One deals with the similarities and differences between face-to-face and the IRC communication. Section Two reviews past studies on the communicative purposes of code-switching. And the last section, Section Three reviews literature related to the conversation structure for both opening and closing patterns of the chat.

Face-to-face interactions have been studied for over 25 years in order to find the patterns, routines, and the convention-based behaviour in interpersonal interactions (Arif, 1998). The discourse analysis has been used to define the nature of face-to-face interaction patterns (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1995; Cohen, 1996) and turn-taking management (Rintel & Pittam, 1997).

On the other hand, the studies on CMC date back about 15 years (Altun, 1998). Early studies of CMC asserted that CMC does not have most social-contextualization cues, such as non-verbal cues that are present in face-to-face interactions, and therefore limited the interaction management for this type of social and interpersonal communication (Kiesler, Seigel, & Mcguire, 1984). Recent research has investigated the possible effects of interaction management strategies used in an interactive CMC medium (Rintel & Pittam, 1997).

Therefore, in this study, the researcher looks at how conversation is held in a synchronous on-line mode (IRC).

2.2 Similarities and Differences between Face-to-Face Conversation and the IRC

The similarities and differences between face-to-face conversation and the IRC are reviewed into two subheadings: communication process and paralinguistic features.

2.2.1 Communication Process

The communication process of IRC is similar to face-to-face interaction, because the elements of encoder, decoder, channel, noise, and feedback in the face-to-face interaction also appear in the IRC communication process. This is presented schematically as shown in Figure 3.

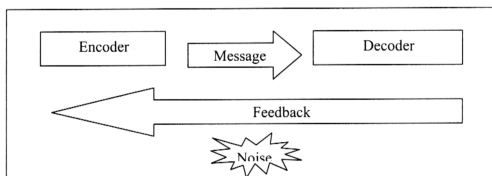


Figure 3: Communication Process in an IRC Environment

In face-to-face communication, the encoder (sender) and decoder (receiver) are able to see one another and observe the non-verbal cues. Moreover, their names are exchanged and fixed throughout the current and future interactions. However, in the IRC, both the decoder and encoder have to imagine their looks, voice, and dress while interacting. As Rheingold (1993) states *people in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind*. They are known by nicknames and the nicknames can be changed anytime, even during conversation. Rintel and Pittam (1997) reported that in order to create a good initial impression, the choice of the nickname is important in a CMC environment. The choice of nickname can refer to personal unity; moreover, it may make the other participant guess about the participants' identities.

The feedback in IRC is not simultaneous. It depends on the amount of time lag for the message to get across to another participant. Excessive lags or slow feedback can make communication difficult. According to McLaughlin (1995), simultaneous feedback plays an important role in signalling listenership, timing turn-taking, and maintaining continuous interaction. Herring (1999) did a study to evaluate the coherence of on-line chat interactions by surveying feedback in an on-line chat. She found that due to the absence of audio-visual cues, feedback during chat was not simultaneous. Users did not hear or see their interlocutors and thus non-verbal cues were unavailable. Users used *one-way* transmission where messages were sent in their entirety when the encoder pressed the *enter* button. Therefore, it was impossible for the decoder to respond

while the message was being typed, or to be aware that he or she was being addressed until a complete message appeared on the computer screen.

In communication, noises refer to elements that interrupt messages which are sent to the decoder. The elements are of two types: internal and external. The first refers to noises that occur inside the individual such as being dreamy, anxious, and angry. The latter refers to noises that occur in the environment. In face-to-face and IRC communication, noises do exist. In the IRC environment, noises occur in two situations:

- i. the decoder may not have received the message
- ii. the decoder may not have noticed the message

In addition to the above list of noises in IRC, Gundykunst and Kim (1997) list three other types of noises in the IRC chat:

- i. the state of mind of other participants is unknown
- ii. the strong dependence on messages which are frequently ambiguous; therefore, the attitudes of other participants are difficult to obtain
- iii. the different coding system to translate the messages

In the IRC, several voices happen at once. Aokk (1995) and Reid (1996) point out that the online chat also involves many topics at the same time. The participant does not wait for a response. If two participants are typing rapidly back and forth, each participant can read and respond to the messages sent while

the other is typing. This interaction is a *multilogue* or *multi-directional* (Eggins & Slade 1997:p.20), rather than a monologue interaction in printed form.

Chat room conversations are unnecessarily routine because a person is rarely in a chat room. Reid (1996) adds that chat room conversation is intentional, unlike face-to-face conversations which we sometimes engage in because we need to. But, conversations in the IRC are usually carried on with short sentences. Two reasons were given by Gudykunst and Kim (1997) for this: first, to respond quickly if many participants are *speaking* at once, and second, short sentences will minimize misinterpretations.

In conclusion, face-to-face and IRC interactions are similar in terms of the five elements that occur in the communication process: encoder, decoder, message, noise, and feedback. On the other hand, four factors that differentiate the face-to-face and IRC interactions are: absence of non-verbal features, time lag in feedbacks, multi topics and intentional interaction in the IRC.

2.2.2 Paralinguistic Features

In face-to-face communication, the speaker is able to monitor the effects of his or her participation with other people and has the possibility to correct it, in case of misunderstandings. The correction can be done as speakers can observe the paralinguistic features (gestures, looks, laughs) as they coincide with the verbal communication of the speaker. But the IRC is unable to observe the paralinguistic features found in face-to-face conversation. So in the IRC, the

participants use typographic and emoticon features as means to control misunderstandings and ambiguities during chat. Emoticons are the alphanumeric characters and punctuation symbols to create a visual for the participants' emotion (Rintel & Pittam, 1997).

To replace the missing paralinguistic features, the IRC participants in Reid's (1996) study broke certain rules of standard language use and resorted to the use of eccentric, non-standard grammar, spelling, and vocabulary, and to the use of emoticon. Through their special uses, participants on IRC become *players* as they try to modify the punctuation symbols to represent their emotion. Neuages (1999) argues that emoticons do not necessarily reveal one's emotions. For example, an angry encoder who type :-) (smile), the decoder may misunderstood the encoder's emotion as the decoder is unable to observe the actual facial expression of the encoder.

Rintel and Pittam (1997) suggest that the types of users affect the ways the emoticons and typographic features are used. According to them, newbies often type their initial sentences with capitals and end with full stops, personal names have initial capitals, and all their spellings are immaculate. Experienced users, however, have developed a style that acts much like nonverbal cues while at the same time increasing the speed of delivery. Lower case letters are an evident feature, as abbreviations. They also note one major guideline for the creation of abbreviation – *use the shortest, easiest to type, phonetic equivalent of a word*. They also say that frequent use of expressions like these clearly indicates a user's long experience in the IRC.

In conclusion, participants in the IRC creatively use punctuation symbols such as :) or :((Refer to Appendix A) to represent their emotions or replace the paralinguistic features in face-to-face interactions.

2.3 Communicative Purposes of Code-Switching

This section reviews literature related to past studies which shows that code-switching in face-to-face interactions serves important communicative purposes such as to show status, solidarity, and fluency. But there seems to be little research on code-switching in the CMC domain.

Gibbon (1983) studied language attitudes and code-switching in Hong Kong between Cantonese and English in face-to-face interactions. Gibbon found that when Chinese speakers used English with one another they wanted to project an impression of status and westernisation. When they used Cantonese, they were expressing Chinese humility and solidarity. However, code-switching on the whole was considered ill-mannered, show-off, ignorant, aggressive, and proud from the Cantonese point of view.

Chana (1984) studied a listener's evaluative reactions to code-switched speech by a speaker who is good in Punjabi and the English language. When the speaker used the code-switched form, the speaker was considered less fluent, less intelligent, and less expressive than when the speaker used only Punjabi or only English.

Nishimura (1992) looked at Japanese/English code-switching in Canadian Niseis' (second generation Japanese-Canadians) in-group speech repertoire. According to Nishimura (1992), the group speech repertoire consists of three bilingual varieties resulting from the language choices which the Niseis make depending upon their interlocutor(s). The Niseis used Japanese when talking to native Japanese, mixing in English nouns. Some of these nouns filled in the Niseis' Japanese lexical gaps; some are utility words in the Japanese community and some occurred in free variation. The Niseis when talking to each other normally use English, interspersing Japanese phrases and sentences to express their shared ethnic identity. The Niseis used both Japanese and English, when talking to a mix group of native Japanese and Niseis, or whenever a kika-Nisei (a Nisei educated in Japan) is present. In this case, the pattern of code-switching is more complex, and the functions served are multiple. Nishimura's (1992) study shows three patterns for code-switching: first, relating to the interactional processes between the speaker and the interlocutor(s); second, concerning the organization of discourse; and third, giving stylistic effects.

Paolillo (1999) did a study on code-switching on the Internet. He analysed 352 messages posted to a channel (*soc.culture.Punjab*) in the Internet over a three-week period. He identified all instances of use of non-English expressions and categorized them by communicative purposes. The analysis revealed that English is the dominant language on *soc. culture.Punjab*, and Punjabi is only used for a small number of purposes which clearly reflect its symbolic value as a code of in-group identification. The communicative purposes

include sharing jokes, exchanging greetings and salutations, appreciating poetry, and writing song lyrics.

Hock (1995) found that IRC channels in countries such as Malaysia and Singapore where English is the national language or the second language, English is the major language used by participants in the IRC channel. The participants are able to express their national identities by code-switching. Nationality markers usually come through as soon as interlocutors realize that their conversational partner is of the same nationality and not a native English speaker. They may switch into common language or use it for certain expressions such as greetings.

In the present study, the researcher claims that code-switching phenomenon in spoken discourse is common among Malaysians. It becomes a natural phenomenon spoken discourse. Heller (1992) says that code-switching happens naturally in bilinguality and serves important functions for the language user. In the analysis, the researcher attempts to study the code-switching patterns and the communicative purposes of code-switching in the Malaysian IRC.

2.4 Conversation Structure

In all communication, there must be ways to show that communication is about to begin and ways to show that it is about to end. Hatch (2000) says that open/close signals differ according to the channel of communication (phone calls, classrooms, letter, meetings). She adds that although there is variation

across channels, each type of communication will have sequences that can be systematically described. This study intends to discover if the opening and closing strategies for face-to-face channel are transferred to the IRC channel. Therefore, this section reviews literature related to the opening and closing strategies for both face-to-face and the IRC conversation.

2.4.1 Opening Patterns

This section reviews literature related to the characteristics of greetings in the openings of face-to-face and IRC conversation.

2.4.1.1 Characteristics of Openings in Face-to-Face and IRC Conversation

James (1972) said that greeting is a transaction that occurs at the beginning of a conversation, where it is a specific conversational event that occurs before all other possible conversational events.

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (SSJ) (1974) are of the opinion that greetings are quite universal in conversation, and although they sometimes do not occur, they are noticeable. SSJ point out two universal features about greetings. Firstly, greetings occur at the openings of a conversation, and they are not found elsewhere in the conversation. Secondly, greetings allow all speakers a turn, right at the beginning of the conversation. Coulthard (1981) however, holds that greetings do not necessarily occur in conversation especially among strangers who are not on greeting terms and during telephone conversations.

In the IRC, exchanging greeting or salutation is rare in the opening of chat. According to Reid (1996), in chat rooms, there is often a sense of instability, as people come and go, often without greeting. Jonnsson (1996) points out that participants in the IRC usually work their entrance by an informal greeting. Just as in a face-to-face communication with many people, it is not necessary to greet everybody on a channel personally. Hence, one *Hello!* is enough. He adds that participants do not expect everybody to greet them back. The same applies to goodbyes.

Rintel and Pittam (1997) as well as Jonsson (1996) hold that openings of IRC are essential to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. They analysed language from ten extracts of IRC interaction on two channels and their findings suggested that the openings of IRC resembled face-to-face communication. The opening level of face-to-face communication was greatly affected through non-verbal behaviour, such as cues conveying mood, age, gender, health, and social status. But in the IRC, these non-verbal cues were impossible. The participants used typographic features to convey the non-verbal cues.

In conclusion, the literature review indicates that greetings in face-to-face interactions are normally in the opening phase. However, in IRC, greetings sometimes occur in the middle of the chat when a new participant joins the chat room. This is due to participants in IRC can join the chat room at any time they wish. Moreover, greetings in IRC sometimes do not present at all.

2.4.2 Closing Patterns

The endings of conversations are points that have to be acknowledged because speakers do not just stop speaking and they are not forced to exist while having compelling conversation. Hatch (2000) says that closings also differ across languages and cultures. In some culture groups, every person in the group must be spoken to in the closing. However in some other groups, one can leave with non-verbal cues.

Brown and Levinson (1987) said that over-hasty and over-slow closing in face-to-face communication might carry unwelcome inferences about the social relationships between the participants such as rudeness or anger. Conversation normally ends with closing pairs such as *goodbye*. But this is not the case in long conversations. Sacks (1974) suggested a location sequential model that is the three strategies that speakers can employ to end long conversations. They are topic bounding, pre-closing, and closing. Topic bounding occurs when one speaker produces a short summary or comment about the topic which the other speaker agrees on. The speaker may produce discourse markers such as *well* and *so*. By doing this, the speaker passes the turn to the next speaker. A pre-closing is a sequence that signals that the end of a conversation is near. It provides opportunity for the discussion of any additional remaining topic before the speaker proceeds with the closing sequence. Closing occurs when speaker ends the conversation by producing discourse markers such as *bye* or *good night*.

2.4.3 Adjacency Pairs

Conversations appear to be made up of paired utterances of the type, *greeting-greeting*, *question-answer*. To account for this tendency in conversations, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) developed the concept of *exchange*. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (SSJ) (1974) categorize this as *adjacency pairs* in face-to-face interactions which have been defined as below:

- i. adjacent positioning of component utterances
- ii. produced by different speakers
- iii. ordered as a first part and a second part
- iv. typed so that a particular first part requires a particular second part

SSJ (1974) demonstrated that to establish contact requires a minimum of one exchange in what they have termed as *summons-answer* (S-A) sequence. They gave an example from openings in telephone conversation; the telephone ring achieves the *summons*, while a voice by the one who picks the phone acts as *answer* to the summons. They also indicated that in face-to-face communication, adjacency pairs respond to statements made as sequences, for instance the relationship established between question-answer, greeting-greeting, and offer-acceptance.

Adjacency pairs on the other hand, perform double functions in the IRC because many individuals take part in the chat, which in turn may hinder understanding. The adjacency pairs enable the identification of who is speaking

with whom and give coherence to the chat. That is the reason an answer connected with a former question directs participants in the course of their interaction. But Herring and Nix (1996) argued that many initiations (summons) receive no response (answer). In a study on IRC channel named #yakyak, they found that 18% of messages (N=226) were not responded to by other participants. Moreover, 34% of all participants (N=117) received no response.

In the analysis section of this study, the researcher will note patterns of the opening and closing phases of the chat to discover if IRC follows face-to-face concepts of adjacency pair patterning in the two phases.