CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Evidence of interaction management on Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) can be traced to earlier research done on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW). To proceed with the discussion, this chapter looks at the similarities and differences that face-to-face communication may share with Inter Relay Chat (IRC) communication process. The chapter will also review previous literature that has touched on the use of language in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) besides other aspects of it like the theoretical framework involved (expanded in Chapter 3) and the communication strategies most commonly employed by users. To develop that, the following section will discuss some relevant areas related to CMC.

2.2 The Internet as a medium for Communication

As a medium for communication, the *internet* provides new channels for people to communicate with each other. As the internet is primarily one dimensional in the sense that the interaction needs to be written rather than vocalized, it can be construed then that the written aspect of language is an important area for any researcher. This is inadvertent as a process of communication since the medium with which users engage in sharing what they want to say is written rather than spoken. However, the availability of images, colours, shapes, sounds and also background motives like the use of emoticons have allowed users the space to

express themselves even better, almost similar to spoken words which can be accompanied by the severity of tone, loudness of volume, repetitions, as well as non-verbal movements which can make or break certain communication transactions. Researchers who are keen in establishing how relationships work among online *chatters* can tap into such chat websites which provide a wide choice of emerging discursive forms of *chatting* as well as the common practices engaged by online users as they interact with each other. By studying how people who are engaged in chatting online, a researcher can help to elucidate certain aspects of language use. Particularly in the use of CMC such as *emails* as well as online "multi-participant" chatting, a researcher can also identify what would serve as their common practices.

2.2.1 Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer Mediated Communication is a new term that is related to communication and translated, it simply means communication via the computer. In the last two decades, new technology has churned out new development which in turn, makes communication more advanced. Consequently, a new form of discourse other than the conventional ones of speaking, letter writing, and telephone conversations have emerged. Previously the term discourse implies a dichotomy of writing and speaking instances which encompasses both formal and casual settings. Today the CMC is seen as a hybrid register that resembles both speech and writing and yet it is neither (Veselinova and Dry, 1995). CMC is dichotomous: synchronous and yet asynchronous. For example, the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is supposedly a spoken medium because people who use it are those

seeking casual interactions and yet, due to its mode, it only uses words which are typed onto the screen whilst users are interacting with each other online. It can thus be said that CMC relies on tangible words as a channel for meaning to emerge and to be understood by others (Kiesler, 1984: 1123).

The CMC is interesting in that it has two characteristics; (a) a paucity of social context in formation and (b), a few widely shared norms governing its use. Kiesler (1984: 1123) claims that users of CMC use words to express themselves via writing and yet, these users are restricted by the availability of gesture and nuances of tone that come with spoken interactions that provide social feedback for the other party. In other words, online chatters cannot rely on a conventional system of interaction to make sense of any interaction that is going on online over the internet by people transmitting their messages (Herring, 2001*)*.

2.2.2 IRC (Internet Relay Chat) as a network of computers.

As a context of social construct, the *internet*, with its various websites and myriads of activities for users to engage themselves in, may be seen as a unique discursive milieu for those who are interested in creating an environment for communication with total strangers. Further, it serves as a safe haven for those who need to socialize but are not ready to reveal themselves due to insecurity or other reasons. Such an unthreatening environment can be seized as opportunities by personalities of all types as it is shrouded with anonymity. In that sense, it is certainly less stressful. In addition, without the need to see and hear the other party while interacting helps to alleviate all kinds of fears experienced by an

individual. For that purpose, the IRC is certainly a safer ground to interact with than face-to-face environments. However, the IRC requires users to have some level of literacy since they would need to have the basic fundamentals of communication and language fluency. For instance, those who communicate through the use of English would unquestioningly need to be equipped with the language and likewise for those interacting via Mandarin or Thai or other languages.

2.2.3 Internet as a Network for Computers

As a network facilitating all kinds of movements for computer users, the *internet* is a prized haven. It not only serves as a network that helps to narrow the physical distance between people, it also helps to promote a collective and collaborative communication among the users. Experience has shown that the speed of transmission via the web, henceforth, the *internet* coupled with the archiving capacity of computers has transformed time into a malleable construct.

2.2.4 Internet Chat Room

For users to be able to chat online, there must be a venue and in CMC, the venue where people chat is referred to as *chat rooms* which are not really rooms but websites that allow single or multiple users to engage in what has been termed as ‘synchronous CMC’, a type of communication that occurs in real-time where the users are interacting among themselves all at once as opposed to asynchronous interacting via *email* (Jacobsen, 1996). The Federal Networking Council (FNC) in

America recognizes the Internet-use as a global information system that contains the following characteristics:

i. It is logically linked together by a global unique address based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follows on.

ii. It is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP/IP) suit or its subsequent extensions/follow-on and other IP-compatible protocol.

iii. It is able to provide users or make accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure (Leirer, 1997).

2.2.5 Using the Chat Room

In order to use a chat room, one must first be connected to the internet via-dial up (modem) or network connection. Once connected, there are many web sites that offer chat room services such as America Online (www.aol.com) and Prodigy (www.prodigy.com) whilst other commercial internet providers may have their own subscribers. Despite certain chat rooms being subscribed to, one can also have access to non-subscriber's chat rooms easily. Of these, the largest free chat systems can be traced to the websites offered by Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), info seek (www.infoseek.com), and also those that offer the services of IRC.

2.2.6 Procedures in the Chat Room

The chat room is a venue for users to communicate or interact among themselves. Unlike the conventions of spoken interactions, chatters need to produce writing via their computers also termed as synchronous textual dialogue that appears to allow spatial and distant interlocutors to participate. This type of communication has been labeled as 'interactive written discourse' by Allen and Guy (1984: 47.) In such a manner of interaction, chatters write as if they are speaking to each other and it would also seem that interruptions are impossible as Allen and Guy claims, "Each utterance…displayed in the chronological closer, order in which it is entered into the chat system by the composer, meaning that disparate strands of conversation are juxtaposed, forming sequences that intertwines to form a multidimensional text" (Allen & Guy, 1984: 51).

Chat rooms also provide a less stressful environment as claimed earlier, for all new and old participants interact on almost the same level that is, they all do so without the benefit of extra-linguistic cues that can disclose a participant or user's identity such as his/her personality, mood, background, age, region and other necessary clues that spoken interactions can reveal almost instantly (Herring, 1996: 4). Lindlof and Shatzer (1998: 183) who talk about multi-threaded interactions in chat rooms suggest that "chat rooms can therefore, appear as random juxtaposition of statements that can apply to anyone in the chat room".

Although termed chatting, it is just an interactive written discourse which allows designated real-time customers or users the purported cyber-interaction which

users have subscribed to through agencies offered by specific corporations (Marriot, 1998). In a sense, such chatting would tend to produce written language as users who need to interact are required to write their message out. This suggests that they need to rely on the use of words and vocabulary. However, the fact that such interactions are done so in a spontaneous manner without second thought, is also akin to spontaneous verbal interactions in terms of rapidity, informality, use of 'personal pronouns', and loose grammatical structures which accompany spontaneous talks as over the online chatting sequences (Herring, 1996: 3-7).

First time users are expected to learn about the practices or rules of online chatting. With experience, they soon adapt to the system where they then become adept at following the multiple streams of conversation. It is uncertain if online chatters or participants ever resort to having a face-to-face meeting but it seems clear that CMC behavior can be quite different. Individuals who chat online soon come to realize that they can speak their minds with impunity, that is without the need to feel threatened or stressed or pressured. This is because there is a very remote chance of anyone in the interaction ever wanting to link what he/she had written as significant to his/her identity (Ma, 1996). Observations have shown that online participants produce behavior patterns in ways which they desire. In addition, they may also display personalities that would be totally the opposite of their real self whilst engrossed online. Hypothesized, this allows them to preserve their real self and live in a fantasy within the *internet* chat room.

Another aspect of online chatting is the geographical consideration that enables intercultural and interpersonal communication to play a very significant part in people's lives (Ma, 1996: 183). Invariably, on line communication helps users or online chatters to have access to people from one end of the world to the other end of the globe without much hassle. It cannot be denied that communication via the *internet* or any 'electronic media' creates new social environments that not only narrows the regional gap but that also enables users to re-shape their behavior. By altering the nature and limitation of social and political situation, electronic media has enhanced public access to 'events and behavior'. Electronic media has actually created for us 'new events and new behaviors' (Meyorowitz, 1995:43) which expands our knowledge and experience world wide.

Slack (1984:64) writes that "communicative technologies are not discrete, autonomous objects whose effects are either inherent in them or the mere result of interaction with social forces…..technologies are linked, as both cause and effect to society within which they emerge and exercise effectively rather than technologies being isolable phenomenon, they are considered integral to the society as a whole.'' New waves of information can be distributed widely across the World Wide Web (*www*) conveniently and simultaneously being usually by its nature, a public domain and accessible by the internet user community.

Other than those aspects discussed above, chat rooms also have the potential to alter the structure of socialization that is created by the speed of online communication. Such a phenomenon empowers new types of social and political

roles of interaction while eventually marginalizing or altering others. For instance, the advent of the television has created a strong dichotomy between communicators and recipients such that "When viewing television, for instance, people feel they are merely observing what the outside world is like" (Meyrowitz, 1985: 89) whereas the main strength of chat rooms and other *internet* communication is that every person has the potential to engage in discourse with the form of interaction being just as important as the content since both shapes the way people think and act.

2.2.7 Malaysia – Internet Chat Rooms (IRC)

The use of computers at the domestic, school and government level is on the increase since two decades ago. Currently, the government is also providing incentives to parents to purchase their own computers. Rashid Mohd Din (1999) wrote that the Internet is widely used in Malaysia, especially among students although its use only began in 1990 when the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic systems (MINAOS Bhd) launched the Advanced Integrated Networking system (JARING) as the main Internet Service Provider (ISP). With the installation of satellite links between Malaysia and USA that occurred in 1992, such a phenomenon has also provided 140 countries in the world to have accessibility to the net.

The national network also known as TMNET (Telekom Malaysia Network) was launched by Telekom Malaysia in July 1996 and it became operational in November 1996 to complement JARING. Of late, there has been ongoing

improvement in its services including broadband, a network that was added to the Internet communication system in 2004. Since December 1997, TMNET has 51% of subscriber market share while JARING holds 49% (New Strait Times, 1996). Young people appear to be the ones most dependent on the computer as they rely on the *internet* for chatting purposes more than the older generation. The reason is unclear but it is probably because they are more computer-savvy than the older generation of users. The government's recent ban of illegitimate video arcades and cyber cafes frequented by the younger generation may also have contributed to the increased demand for the internet. As a result, facilities provided by the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) has become more popular in demand.

2.2.8 Internet Relay Chat (IRC)

The Internet Relay Chat is synchronous, unlike face-to-face interactions although it allows 'chatters' to transmit the non-verbal aspects of speech that conventional synchronous communication demand. The use of standard sentences in Computer-Mediated Communication is problematic and behaviors that are normally decided upon by non-verbal cues would not be clearly indicated when information is purely textual. Smiles and frowns are lost in the translation of synchronous speech and the fact that online environments are unknown to interlocutors is also a contributing factor. It seems as though the social etiquette which one practices whilst engaged in social face-to-face interactions is an alien concept to the CMC.

2.2.9 Paralinguistic Features

In a face-to-face communication, a speaker is able to monitor the effects of his or her participation with other people via facial expressions and other paralinguistic features. In any event, he/she can also seek clarification and correction which can be done on the spot. The IRC may be a two way communication but it is not face-to-face. Participants are often unable to observe the paralinguistic features for meanings. However, it would seem that chatters have devised their own method for doing that. Most participants use typographic and emoticon features as a means of alleviating misunderstandings and ambiguities during chat sessions.

While typographical features refer to the use of capitals, colons and semicolons or brackets, emoticons refer to the smiley faces which may be twisted to suggest anger, happiness, sadness and so on. Such visuals although typed, serve similar functions like the paralinguistic features of face-to-face interactions (Rintel and Pittam, 1997).

Another way chatters succumb to the CMC is to break certain rules of standard language use. On doing so, they revert to the use of eccentric, non-standard grammar, spelling, and various vocabularies which may also be conveyed through the use of emoticon (Rieds, 1996). Through these strategies, participants on IRC become players as they try to modify the punctuation symbols to represent their emotion. However, as participants may often assume different roles and say what is not always true, Neuages (1999) highlights that emoticons do not necessarily

reveal ones' emotions. He suggests that it is the type of users who affect the way the emoticons and typographic features are used (Rintel and Pittam, 1997).

2.2.10 Differences between Experienced and New Users

The genre of writing or communicating applied in online chatting is conventional. Studies have expounded that people who are new to the game are often easily identified because of their lack of experience. For example, first timers or new participants (newbie) have been observed to type their initial sentences with capitals and they tend to end with full stops; personal names also carry initial capitals, and all their spellings are immaculate. On the other hand, experienced users develop a style that acts much like non-verbal cues while at the same time they have also developed an increased speed in their deliveries. In such cases, lower case letters are evident features and so are abbreviations. Rintel and Pittam (1997) also note one major guideline for the creation of abbreviation which uses the shortest, easier to type, phonetic equivalent of a word. They identify that the frequent use of expressions like abbreviations clearly indicate the user's long experience on IRC. In conclusion, it can thus be said that participants on the IRC creatively use punctuation symbols to represent their emotions which simultaneously, also replace the paralinguistic features in face-to-face interaction. Samples of emoticons are shown below.

☺ smiley; ☹ frown; ;-) wink; ;-(angry; :P~ ~ drooling;
<8-) smile with glasses and a hat;))))) smile.

2.2.11 Asynchronous of IRC

Some researchers have reported that there are gender differences detected in IRC online interactions. Self and Meyer, 1991 found that asynchronous chat on IRC, participants tend to carry traditional genders and power imbalances being demonstrated on online discourses. Men participants have been shown to contribute more and longer messages and they also seem to initiate new topics and were more likely to disagree with others.

Asynchronous IRC is dependent on written texts as the communicative medium, but the interaction is more rapid and speech-like. The asynchronous writing conforms to the conventions of written language and individuals must use their literate knowledge to participate. Participants read while actively choosing nonlinear pathways through online texts or hypertexts, thus constructing their learning experience by choosing what they read and in what sequences (Henry and Worthington, 1999). Bangart-Drowns (1997: 2-3) also mention that 'literate thinkers build personal knowledge through explorations of meanings in interactions with texts'. He suggests that 'electronic literatures do have special capacities to stimulate, foster, and support literate thinking'. Unlike synchronous messages which are brief, informal, and superficial messages that constitute the texts to be acted upon in well-structured asynchronous web course are content-laden (Lapadat, 2000 in press) and lexically dense (Yates, 1996).

The act of writing in chat rooms may foster higher thinking for reasons that have to do with relationships between writing and cognition. Olson (1995: 228) argues

that writing enables cognition, and that writing enables us also to say and think things that we could not or at least have not said and thought without writing. Written language is de-contextualized, or de-coupled from the layers of information typically available in the physical context (i.e., surrounding environment and events) or through paralinguistic channels (i.e., tone of voice, gesture, and so forth (Lapadat, 1995; Olson, 1994). Therefore discursive participants need to assess others' knowledge status and selectively provide explicit contextual and background information to frame their own contributions. This requires perspective-taking as well as metalinguistic thinking about language and how their words will be taken or used to accomplish their purposes.

Participants in asynchronous chat room tend to produce less in quantity what they are writing for example, the number of words. But their contributions to the discussion tend to be carefully crafted, adapted to audience, dense with meaning, coherent and complete.

2.2.12 Features of Online Chatting

There are four distinct features of online chatting in comparison to conventional forms of interaction. These features were described by Kiesler, Siegel and McQuire, 1984 as displaying:

1) An absence of regulating feedback,

2) Dramaturgical weakness,

3) Few social status cues, and

4) Social anonymity.

The conventional system that regulates communication falls apart; the IRC structure cause users to deconstruct conversational boundaries defining social interaction.

2.2.13 Types of Electronic Communication:

There are two different types of communication in the IRC;

I. One-to-one communication.

II One-to-many communication.

II (a). One to a group (Channel)

II (b). One to a host/server mask.

II (c). One to all.

I. One-to-one communication

Users usually communicate on a one-to-one basis which means one user interacts with another at a time. An example of this is *email*. To provide a secure means for users to talk to each other, it is important that all *www* servers are able to send a message in one direction to reach another user.

II. One-to-many

The main goal of IRC is to provide a forum which allows easy and efficient conferencing for people who want to chat and offers several means to achieve this specific purpose.

a) One-to-a-group

This happens when there are multiple users on a *www* server in the same channel. The message text is sent only once to that server and then to each user on the channel. This action is then repeated for each until the original message has fanned out and reached each member of the channel.

Examples

1. If there is only one user in one channel, messages to the channel go to the www server and then nowhere else.

2. If there are two users in a channel, all messages traverse a path as if they were private messages between two users outside a channel.

3. If there are three users in a channel, all messages goes to all clients.

b) One-to-a Host/Server Mask

To provide IRC operators with some mechanism that could help to send messages to a large body of related users, the host and server mask messages are provided. The messages are sent to locations where users are in the same channel.

c) One-to-all

The one to all type of message is better described as a broadcast message sent to all users or *www* servers. A single message can result in a lot of traffic, traveling over the network in an effort to reach all the desired destinations. For messages, there is no option but to broadcast them to all *www* servers so that the state of information held by each *www* server is reasonably consistent.

2.3 Statement of the Research Problem

The Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is based on typed text. Thus, the interlocutors in IRC depend on the typed text which is sent by one to other interlocutors. IRC has its own conventions, register, forms and culture. A study on IRC discourse is necessary to shed light on some computer language.

Early studies of IRC done by researchers such as Kiesler, Siegel and McGuirer (1984) argue that the IRC system disregard social context cues which can affect impersonal interactions. Consequently, language use is also influenced.

Scholars in the 1990s reported that IRC resemble a social rich oral gathering, despite its typographic nature. Some users are aware of this type of electronic discourse and they actively participate in this type of discourse. Other users remain less aware and do not participate. At times, newbie's may even transfer inappropriate conventions which are face-to-face to IRC world, thereby resulting in inexperienced users and getting the experienced users annoyed since they need to read laborious sentences or to explain the conventions to newbies, which is time consuming as they lack the knowledge of IRC.

It was pointed out earlier that IRC exhibits characteristics common of oral discourse as it allows explicit and emphatic sociability (December, 1995). Research has been done on interpersonal needs shedding light on the features used by IRC users in expressing their interpersonal needs and emotion (Reid, 1996). Interactions in IRC in many ways resembles cocktail parties in which there are

many simultaneous interactions. Goffman (1959) notes that while people at cocktail parties can attend to many parallel discourse events, they in fact participate in only one discourse event at a time. This seems to be untrue for IRC discourse because interactions among participants are simultaneous.

Many CMC historians have pointed out that computer networks were originally intended for data transmission and not as a social interaction. Further, there are limitations to group interaction and may range from high production to peer reception and speakers may experience chaos. With many problems plaguing the system, researchers like Herring (1999) for example, suggest that interactional coherence was not viable at the initial stage. Moreover CMC in current use is text based only and is a one-way transmission, and as such incoherence is especially wide spread.

It is unclear whether or not studies on the coherence of turn-taking on the IRC has ever been attempted but Herring (1999) who looks into this area came to the conclusion that turn-taking on IRC is not coherent in structure.

2.4 Real-Time Chat

Chat-room interactions, as previously mentioned, is a mode of CMC which requires a synchronous system in order to put the interlocutors online. A chat room is a web site that provides a venue for communities of users to communicate in real-time chat that may have slightly different text only as opposed to graphic means as a capacity for digital images to be sent. Therefore, messages are either

sent in their entirety versus other participants who may see messages character-by-character. An example of this is Paolitlo (1999) text-base virtual realities such as MUDs (Multi-Users Dungeons). Observations show that most chat rooms do not require users to have any special software but those that do have are allowed to download from the chat room.

In real-time chat, a number of people are participating simultaneously but in written conversations, one may 'oversee' another person's conversation. In real world situations, it is difficult for an individual to take part in more than two conversations at one time.

2.5 Face-to-Face Interaction

Face-to-Face interactions have been studied for over 25 years. The aim is to find the patterns, routines and convention-based behaviors in interpersonal interactions (Arifi, 1998). Discourse analysis has been used to define the nature of face-to-face interactional patterns (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1995), (Cohen, 1996) and turn-taking management (Rintel and Pittam, 1997).

On the other hand, studies on CMC have been recent, dating back just 15 years (Alturn, 1998). Early studies of CMC do not seem to suggest that most social contextualization cues such as non-verbal cues that are present in face-to-face interactions are absent. Ultimately, this limits the interaction management of social and interpersonal communications (Kiesler, Siegel, & Mcquire, 1997)

while recent research studies have shown the possible effects of interactional management used in an interactive CMC medium (Rintel and Pittam, 1997).

2.5.1 Similarities and Differences between Face-to-Face Conversation and IRC

'Online chatting' is a form of computer-mediated communication that seems to resemble verbal interactions as has been mentioned. But unlike spoken interactions, 'chatting' is a process that rates low at managing interruptions, organizing turn-taking, conveying comprehension and resolving floor-control conflicts. Studies from various fields such as communication and sociology have demonstrated there are challenges and ambiguities in 'chatting' mechanisms of social interaction suggesting that chatting could be a mechanism that upsets this nature.

In addition, conversation analysis and sociological studies that focus on the structures of ordinary face-to-face interactions is of a particular value when seeking a way in which to improve chat. Studies of conversation analysis found that natural occurring conversations reveal that people use a suite of fine tuned, but ordinary techniques for maintaining spoken conversations that are coherent and unstable. Turns, responses and conversation structures are observed in spoken interactions and these are governed by a set of simple rules that organize how turns will be exchanged between groups of people. Sack et al (1974) argues that turns are valuable commodities that require an orderly allocation system.

By using simple turn-taking rules, people are able to sustain spoken conversation however, overlaps may occur but they are usually brief and transitions between speakers commonly occur without gap or overlap.

2.5.2 Communication Process in an IRC

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 through out the current and future interactions.

However, in the IRC, both decoder and encoder have to imagine their looks, voice and dress while interacting. As Rheingold (1997) states, people in virtual communication do just about anything people do in real life, but users leave their bodies behind. They are only known by their nicknames which can be changed anytime, even during conversations (Rintel and Pittam, 1997). In order to create a good initial impression, the choice of nicknames is important in a CMC environment. The choice of nickname can refer to personal unity and may make the other participant guess about a particular participant's identity.

Feedback on IRC is not simultaneous. It depends on the amount of time lag for which a message takes to get across to another participant. Excessive lags or slow feedback can make communication difficult. According to MacLaughlin (1995), simultaneous feedback plays listenership, an important role in timing turn-talking and maintaining continuous interaction. A study by Herring (1999) to evaluate the coherence of online chat interaction by looking at feedback, found that in the

absence of audio-visual cues, feedbacks during chat were simultaneous. Users do not hear nor see their interlocutors and there are non-verbal cues to guide them. Further, it is a one-way transmission where messages are sent in their entirety when the encoder presses the decoder to respond while the message was being typed, or to be aware that he / she was being addressed until a complete message appeared on the computer screen.

In communication, noises refer to elements that interrupt messages, there are two types of noises: internal and external. The first type refers to noise that occurs inside the individual such as being dreamy, anxious and angry. The second type refers to noise that occurs in the environment.

In the IRC the environment, noise occurs in two ways:

i. the decoder may not have received the message, or

ii. the decoder may not have noticed the message.

Grundy K. and Kino (1997) list three types of noises in the IRC chat:

i. The state of mind of other participants is unknown,

ii. The strong dependency on message which is frequently ambiguous therefore, attitudes of other participants are difficult to obtain, and

iii. The different coding system to translate the messages.

In IRC channel, there are different services which enable people to form their own group discussion, separate from other conversations. These are thought to be

crucial elements for IRC service (Reid, 1997: 7). On IRC, several voices happen at once. Aoki (1995) and Reid (1996) points out that online chatting also involves the discussion of many topics at a time. Participants do not wait for responses, but they type rapidly backward and forth so that each participant can read and respond to the messages while the other is typing. This interaction is multivolume or multi-directional (Eggins and Slade, 1997: 20).

Another consideration of the IRC is the lack of body language that occurs in traditional face-to-face communication. Electronic messages are known only for their written components which can be used to represent language. No sounds or visual cues are available and yet by the speed and immediacy of the electronic medium, the illusion of a real conversation is created (different from the customary slowness and distance in other form of written communication, such as letters), yet *email* made computer buffs invent the 'smiley', a combination of characters, standardized to express themselves. Thus the way people have been trying to deal with this typical problem suggests the importance of body language as an accompaniment of interactions.

On the IRC, a certain feeling or attitude towards what is being written (in some cases, the attitude is the equivalent of a smile) can be indicated by putting a 'smiley' next to what you are writing. This can represent something like: "Don't take this seriously; treating the 'smiley' is a visual mitigating device. There are reportedly well over a hundred 'smileys' among computer users and a whole 'smiley' subculture is developing.

2.6 IRC as Social Phenomenon.

Short, William and Christies (1976) in their 'communications media, suggest that CMC media can transcend time and distance, conveying only part of communicator's presence for instant direct face-to-face communication where both verbal and non-verbal cues were unavailable via traditional business letters. The original definition by Short (1976: 65) was that interlocutors 'regard Social Presence as being a quality of communication medium (i.e. they are not wasting their time online)'. Although this is expected to affect the way each individual perceive their discussion and their relationships to the person with whom they are communicating. Therefore, it is important to define Social Presence as the medium itself'.

Rice (1984) refers to this medium as 'the personal or social differentiation of quality communication acts'. He went on to say that there is a feeling that other interlocutors are jointly involved in the communicative interaction. On the other hand, Turoff (1978) who reports on the development of 'online communities'' and others like Steinfield (1986) presents cases of friendship and warm relationships on CMC. It was Walter (1992) who points out that humans are driven to interact with one another just as communicators in any other context. He also pointed out that people, given the opportunity to interact, will not merely do so to communicate in business or in any other situation but will develop relationships despite using a medium that offers no NCV (non verbal communication).

2.6.1 IRC Interpersonal Relationship

The pragmatics of face-to-face communication is less conscious, since body language and facial expressions often communicate messages with no need for spoken dialogue (Watzlwick, 1967). Suler (1997) explores the potential of online communication and goes on to say that online text on Internet Relay Chat (IRC) requires at least two people to interact in synchronous conversation. The text might convey emotion, mood and sometimes show the environment or person in which they are speaking to. Schnarch, (1997) and Rheingold, (2004) note the use of nicknames which is a popular practice in chat rooms. The non disclosure of a person's real name or true personality to a stranger provides a safe opportunity for feedback. Suler therefore concludes that synchronous text based communication is a better way of interaction than face-to-face.

Within the context of CMC online, face-to-face and CMC has to be converged. To achieve this, Alterman and Taylor (1973: 183) propose the following three factors for research.

1) A researcher must look at the rewards/costs ratio which is an instrument in describing decision made by a person to continue a relationship, obviously not all relationships are formed or perceived in order to benefit from it).

2) Relationships are rarely developed in an orderly way, and this is seen in the different rates at which people will disclose information about themselves.

3) The ‘onion skin’ personality implies that people have layers of personality that must be stripped away in order to find out the ‘real’ person.

2.6.2 Linguistic Feature of CMC

The linguistic features of CMC were previously associated with oral communication which has striking evidence in real-time chat. Dannet (1997) observes these linguistic features and came up with a conclusion that CMC, in general, is strikingly playful.

Storrer (2001) was one researcher who used data samples to discuss media in specific forms of turn-taking and the use of deitic expressions in chatroom communication. She claims that the mechanism of written language and the specific technical setting of the CMC affect the strategies used for chat conversations which differ considerably from interlocutor’s spoken counterparts. She explains some linguistic peculiarities in the phenomenon which she claims, reveal significant differences between spoken and written dialogue.

Schonfeldt (2001) examines how ‘typed conversations’ in chat room were used to discuss unspecified topics. She was able to compare face-to-face conversations with web text in chatrooms by comparing units coming up with organizational structures corresponding to patterns of organization in oral conversations. Schonfeldt concludes that chats should be analyzed as a new form of conversation.

Researchers such as Novick and Walpole (1990: 229-245) condemn the strictness of one-at-a-time speaker roles. On the other hand, Ellis, Gibbs and Rein (1991; 39-58) find that strict sequencing in dyadic (two persons) text-based CMC situation increases the amount of time required to determine their own strategies for turn-taking. Woodburn (1991) also did a study on full-duplex split-screen connection and found the same result that users liked being able to see messages being composed character-by-character, and consequently, could begin answering in parallel.

Mckinlay (1994: 151-171) notes that properties of CMC may offset some problems that increase group sizes in face-to-face situations. For instance, the permanence of the medium, users depart from serial turn-taking and adopt topics in parallel (Black, 1983: 147-183). On the other hand McCarthy (1993) reports on text-based conferencing in which users can only see contributions after a typist presses a 'send' key. Since composition was not visible and upcoming messages were not signaled, users missed contributions or wasted time typing what another user had already sent.

Users were also unsure of who was listening and available for conversation. Timely repair mechanism was also missing. McCarthy therefore concludes that message structuring need to be implanted in order to help with signal of understanding, for example, back channeling responses Oviatt and Cohen (1991a: 297, 1991b: 326) find that keyboard communication of instructions to assemble a water pump resulted in fewer back channels, longer turns and fewer clarification

or interruptions. The medium was found to be less efficient than the interactive speech medium, since the task took longer to complete, and it was also a complicated one.

However despite Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) turn-taking in face-to-face procedure and CMC procedure, the researcher in this study believes that the loose coherence of turn-taking found in IRC is what that attracts users to flock to the channels. The excitement it brings, the anonymity and role-play all contribute to the language play of words just as in McLaughlin and Smith (1995: 90-111) who explore the impact of discourse process on social structures and vise-versa. They found that behavior of users on Usenet, an asynchronous Internet discussion forum, was that the term 'community' in CMC is justified in the usage.(i.e. the creation of speech communities). Saville-Troike (1982: 20) looks at language and special language use which help to unify members of CMC and exclude others. Schegloff (1977: 415-450) states that evidence of CMC openings has been an interesting and helpful insight to how users come on-line to join the conversation.

Werry's (1996) study looks at written online interactions. She found that as participants communicate in real-time, they were able to negotiate meaning in another fashion unlike in traditional letter writing. Werry (1996) argues, that though the receiver is usually unable to supply minimal responses, for instance non-verbal forms such as nodding, gaze and verbal forms, such as 'mm,' 'hm', and so on. Witmer and Katzman (1997) points out that:-

A key characteristic of virtual reality is that CMC can mask personality characteristics and identities of cyberspace travelers to create personal anonymity in public area.

Wilson A. (1992), Crysal (2000) and Peters, (2002) who examine features of CMC notes that the proportion of these linguistic features exhibited by CMC text can vary enormously, according to criteria such as text-typed and the personal characteristics of the individual in geographical location, age and identities, etc. These features are typical in IRC context and they can be exemplified through a number of features which leverages some of the data analysis used in this study. They are as follows:

1) Orthogaphy

> informal ('phonetic') e.g. wat is he toking???? (what is he saying).

> absence of capitalization with pronoun. e.g. how r u? (how are you).

> Usage of capitalization to indicate shouting

bye TorqQQQQQ…lapyou (bye TorqQ I love you)

2) Vocabulary

> Infomal (hi frens) Hello friends

> Use of 'in'terms and abbreviations (lol, brb, gtg) meaning (laughing and rolling on the floor, be right back, got to go)

3) Grammar

> use of ellipsis

> hi mat……wcb (hi mat where have you been)

4) Discourse and text

> wah mizzy from Srilanka , tigress rebel ar?

> markers for emphasis e.g. *LOL*

> excessive punctuation e.g. my frens is anum????

Interestingly, one or more of the significant features noted in chat room is the use of discourse markers 'lah, mah ar' commonly used in the Malaysian conversational language. The discourse marker occurrence of *lah/la* or *mei* would be interpreted by Platt and Webber (1980; 76) and Lim (1986; 213) who observed a phenomenon in the English of Singaporeans or Malaysian as 'a marker of rapport, solidarity, familiarity and informality'.

Example:

Malay		***Chinese***
La	(line 140)	Mah (page 126)
Lah	(line583)	kah (line 388)
Ar	(line 248)	laaaaaa (line 576, 597)

The features of CMC as described, follows the demonstration of mix features drawn from prototype of spoken and prototype of written media including sub-types of these, e.g. telegraphic language. Text-type has been an important role in determining the type of language used in CMC. In all, the trend is towards an informal, 'spoken' style of writing. This is quite obvious where additional means have been developed to represent effects that are possible in face-to-face interaction but not in writing. The constraints of real-time interaction seem to be responsible for many features of CMC language. These seem to have been diffused into synchronous text types. Socially, there seems to develop solidarity amongst users of CMC where several language choices appear to aim at reducing the social distance and emphazing group membership.

2.7 Summary

The conclusion in this chapter is that the language in CMC situation is becoming a trend. CMC is used by various people for different functions. However, it is a new field for linguistics especially in the area of turn-taking. The language being used currently will provide researchers in this line as to the field of new language being developed and will give an insight into technology history into the next century, especially enhancing the literature already developed like Herring (1999), Terrel Neuage (2003) and Stevenson, J (2004).