

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction.

In order to see the sequential ways of how turn-taking occurs in chat rooms the short sentence structures produced by ‘chatters’ were analyzed. Two reasons are cited for this. First, if several people are speaking at once, then it is necessary to respond quickly, hence the short sentences. Secondly, short sentences are used by interlocutors to avoid misinterpretation of interaction or meaning in ongoing conversations as well as for quick responses in view of time constraints. To begin, conversations in chat rooms focus on openings. Openings tend to commence with greetings.

#### 4.2 Greetings

Greetings as exchanges are part of the organizations in conversations with the function ‘to greet or take leave’ (Francis and Hunston, 1992: 137). A greeting begins with an opening followed by an answer move. However, the data analysis in this study found that there were appears to be no specific requirements for topics to be strictly adhered to and participants were observed to be demonstrating that phenomena where they do not necessarily finish the topics they begin and often resort to starting new topics. Topics were often initiated or undertaken by greetings which were caused by an entry often resort to starting new topics into

the chat room of a new participant as illustrated in Appendix C. Transactions were sometimes undertaken by participants who use opening moves which were defined by Francis and Huston (1992: 134) as a function of ‘initiating’ a conversation. It appears that opening moves could also be used in the rituals of greetings and leave taking (Francis and Huston, 1992: 129) purpose. In this section, the opening moves will only be observed for their functions as a greeting. A greeting was a ‘hi’ signal used at the beginning of a new transaction as illustrated in the following.

**Examples:**

line 81; Angeline\_nAdam: **hi 3k**

Line 10; Chinadollie : **hi james**

Line 1; MIZZY 28F : **hi berkurunnn lamanyerrrrrr**

It was also observed that one of the non-language conventions used in an IRC setting in Malaysia is the use of different colors allocated to chatters for easy identifications. The colors were duplicated as in the cases of M122Y28, MY-5<sup>th</sup> LUV Le-Torque, Redlittle princess, Chine lady 2, and Loving – Mamall.

Schegloff (1968) argues that “conversational sequence can be described by the formula of ABABAB, where “A and B are the parties to the interaction”. He points out that the ABABAB formula describes two party conversation that already is underway; it does not provide for Allocation of the A and B roles. The first speaker of the conversation is not readily determined. Thus the ABABAB formula “makes each successive turn sequentially dependent on the previous one;

it provides no resources when or who the first speaker might be and this is problematic in CMC” (Schegloff, 1968: 1076).

Participants in chat rooms appear to join the conversation in three ways:-

- a. They greeted other participants and received feedback.

**Examples:**

Line 54; Trippal-k-k: **hellow princess.**

Line 55; Erica-Nut: **Hi trippal**

- b. They greeted other participants who failed to reply.

**Examples:**

Line 56; opah-blonde: **hi ston**

- c. They did not greet other participants but their presence is identified by the given status of other participants.

**Examples:**

Line 72; Trippal\_k\_k: *I always tot chinise lady and chinadoll are relative*

Line 99; Mizzy 28 f ; **erm .....all the screaming gang huh**

Line 106; My-5thLUV: **Screaming gang is back in action**

Line 109; Loving-Mama1: *mizzy come Lah join the screaming gang*

Line 114; Ancient Takes 1 : **mizzy scream the house down !!**

Line 126; Loving –Mama : *lol opah .....can join mah*

However, a common feature found in greeting exchanges within the data analyzed was a greeting that consisted of three (3) components. For example, a participant who enters a chat room introduces himself to the chat room generally. He or she is then greeted back by others. The greeting leads to an initiation of a conversation with any member who wants to chat. Furthermore, because chat rooms were occupied by more than two participants at any one time, the number of greeters responding to the new participants was not limited to one. The data below demonstrates this three-component pattern.

**Examples:**

Line 438; hubby-sept13 has joined the conversation.

Line 441; Jdo:weeeeei bub

Line 443; azurin: **hi anggung**

Line 446; Anggun: **hei azurin**

From the example shown above, the entrance of Anggun into the chat room was announced. The use of “>” denotes an action by a participant who is announced by the server. Francis and Hunston (1992) in their analysis had limited a greeting to two moves that is the initiation and the response. This system has therefore been adapted by chat room participants into three possible ways.

The first posting is to make the initial greeting incomplete from Anggun-jb:hello (line 440) room. The second posting is an initiation of greet exchange (Azurin: hi Anggun – line 443) and the third response (Anggun-jb:hei azurin – line 446). Therefore, Azurin responded to the announcement made by the server of Anggun

into the room or to the response of Anggun-jb greeting. If the former is true, then what Francis and Huston suggested can be applied to circumstances such as the examples below indicate:

**Examples:**

Line 440; Anggun: **hello room**

Line 443; Azurin: **hi anggun**

Line 446; Anggun-jb: **hei Azurin.**

#### **4.2.1 Answer Patterns**

A striking feature observed in IRC chat rooms is that some of the Summons (i.e. entering the chat room and inviting conversation) were successful because they received replies. Others were unsuccessful because they did not get any response. Therefore, in the IRC one can choose to respond or not, without losing face or being rude, validating Schegloff's (1968: 1076) claim.

**Examples:**

Line 158; Trippal\_k\_k: *wah, princess in a great mood tonite*

Line 159; MIZZY 28F ; **hi blitz**

Line 162; Blitz 6888 : *hi mizzy*

Line 163; Opahblonde: **badminton tak cukup energy**

#### **4.2.2 Status of Participants**

Another unique feature of IRC was the greetings of other members in the chatting room. This marked their presence with the given status of a participant and use of

nicknames of the IRC users to illustrate the IRC conversation features previously outlined in Chapter 3. They are categorized into the following:-

**Examples:**

- i).Line 51; Given status of ] Lizz honey has joined conversation
- Line51; participant ] mantikot07 has joined the conversation
- Line 53; Summon ] Trippal – K : *hi Erica*
- Line 55; Answer ] Erica – Nut : **Hi tripal**

**Examples:**

- ii) Line 127; Given status of ] Sweet Summerwine 1 has
- Line 127; Participant ] lovehandles joined the conversation
- Line 45; Summon ] ChinaDollie : **hi Erica**
- Line 55; Answer ] Erica\_Nut : **hi doll**

**Examples:**

- iii) Line 451; Given status of ] Intellectual – wiseguy has joined the  
conversation
- Line 451; Participant ] has joined the conversation
- Line 454; Summon ] matt\_cool: **anggun... hi**
- Line 456; Answer ] Engr40SPJI : **HI**

The researcher finds this common among Malaysian chatters in the chatrooms.

### **4.2.3 IRC - Joining Confirmation (JC) and Newly-Joined Users**

For newly-joined users, the verbal nature of joining confirmation is significant primarily because the collective reference implies reference to interactional environment which orients the newly joined user to the group setting.

A joining confirmation signals that interaction is possible and Laver, (1975: 221) terms this as part of the initiating function of an opening. It does not by itself, ratify the attention levels, the availability, or the desire of others to interact.

When we hear the telephone ringing, this acts as a sort of summons to answer it. However, the joining confirmation is not directed at a particular class of interactants nor does this indicate whether others are busy or potentially available. The joining confirmation also provides few clues as to what should be done after entering the chatroom. Unlike the telephone, the summons to answer the ring does not provide a clear indication of 'answer', 'busy' or 'not answered'. Acknowledgement that 'you have joined a channel' is not a feedback that would normally require an answer by a specific individual. It does not require an answer by a user to produce a greeting or other basic uses.

The joining confirmation thus provides no 'conditional relevance' (Schegloff 1968: 1083) for newly- joined users to address any individual on the existing public channel. The newly-joined user knows that the joining confirmation is a directed token of initiation, propitiation or exploration, so it signals that human interactions can now occur. The introduction of the joining confirmation notifies users that they have intruded upon the interactional territory of a group of others.

On the other hand, a territory here is spatially tenuous, in an environment where verbal interaction is all that is possible. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there are boundary conditions for the production of new verbal behaviors.

Newly-joined users know they are operating in a medium geared primarily towards interaction and that joining a public channel is an implicit statement of public presence as well as a request for invitation to interact. The closest the joining confirmation comes to having ‘conditional relevance’, is the implicit invitation for the newly-joined user to address the group.

#### 4.2.4 Emoticons Features

An emoticon is a communication mode used to excite an emotional response or message during a communication. The following are examples found in IRC:
















To send this:	Type this:	To send this:	Type this:
 Smile	:-) or :)	 Open-mouthed	:-D or :d
 Surprised	:-O or :o	 Tongue out	:-P or :p
 Wink	;-) or ;)	 Sad	:-( or :(
 Confused	:-S or :s	 Disappointed	:-  or :
 Crying	:'(	 Embarrassed	:-\$ or :\$
 Hot	(H) or (h)	 Angry	:-@ or :@
Angel	(A) or (a)	 Devil	(6)
 Don't tell anyone	:-#	 Baring teeth	8o

Figure 4.1: Types of Emoticons used in a chatroom.



The Emoticons used in the extract has been devised quite differently from the normal ones that the researcher observes. It appears that emoticon features were being used in two ways:-

- a) emoticons before or after messages
- b) emoticons within a message.

#### **4.2.4.1. Emoticons Before or After a Message**

Emoticons were inserted before or after the sentence to suggest possible emphasis of the ‘participants’ feelings as emphasized in chapter 1. They were meant to display personalities and may not be real.

##### **Examples:**

Line 71; opah – blonde : **RLP** ) ) ) ) )

Line 75; Angeline – nAdam : ) ) ) ) ) **pearlie .... Check yr weeper...**

#### **4.2.4.2 Emoticons Within a Message**

The following are more examples of emoticons inserted within a message.

##### **Examples:**

Line 46; Redlittle princess : **Eri ccc Cccc Cccc Cccc** ) ) ) ) )

Line 102; My – 5<sup>th</sup> LUV : **mama** ) ) ) ) ) **muaaahhh**

Line 116; mat – cool : **red** ) ) ) ) ) ) ) **0000**

By way of the letters of words or names being outlined above, it is clear that those were to show emphasis or for the participant to show affection.

#### 4.2.5 Capitalization used in Language

The use of capitalization is another notable feature. It has for instance, long been established in chat rooms that using capitals for every turn taking is considered 'rude' as it is the equivalent of shouting (Reid 1991; Rheingold, 1991, 1994). When participants are even experienced chatters and they use this form of 'speech' it is worth seeking an explanation. The examples from MSN chat room is illustrated below.

##### Examples:

Line 101; Red little princess : **Lma MMM mmmm MMM mmmm  
MMM mmm MMMa**

Line 106; my – 5<sup>th</sup> LUV : **screaming gang is back in action**

Line 152; **R O K K K K K K K K K K K ooo OOO ooo kkk KKK ) ) )**

#### 4.2.6 Grammatical Patterns

Various examples of the types of missing punctuations, capitalizations, spellings and other features are illustrated in the examples throughout this chapter. Missing capitalization were found in IRC conversations. They were in three forms:-

- (i) No Capitalization of the first word of a sentence
- (ii) No Capitalization of pronouns
- (iii) No Capitalization of proper names

**Examples:** First letter in a sentence not capitalized as follows:

Line 19; Trippal – k-k : *how r u pearlie ? Itnc*

Line 72; Trippal –k-k: *i always tot Chinese lady and Chinadoll are relative*

Line 265; mat –cool : **u no more virgin .....mizzy**

**Examples:** Capitalized pronoun as follows:

Line 160; mizzy 28f : **she is 3 k** .....

Line 177; Trippal –k-k: *why they call kacip fatima, not kacip aminah or kacip cakes dok*

Line 380; MyWAM: **She's nice**

It is evident from the examples above that the first letters in sentences were not capitalized. A smaller percentage of the pronouns were also not capitalized. It is possible that these features reflect that the IRC participants were trying to minimize time and constraints of maneuvering the shift buttons. It is also possible that participants were attempting to respond immediately to other participants as there were more than five chatters with as many topics at the same time (Aokk, 1995; Siemienuich and Sinclair, 1994).

#### 4.2.7 Spelling Specifications

Spelling norms also appear to be simplified according to the participant's way of pronouncing the word. Examples of these are shown below;

**(I) Examples:** Use of alpha and numeric or numeric plus letter(s):

- a) i) Line 40; **hi 5thluv?**
- ii) Line 81; **hi 3k** (hi 30gramma)
- iii) Line 231; *im 26/m/italy..* (26 /m/Italian)

iv) Line 283; **hu gr8**

(II) **Examples:** Spelling norms that accommodate the participant's pronunciation patterns:

i) Line 174; *bedminton* (badminton)

ii) Line 188; **frens** (friends)

iii) Line 75; mai /weeper (my/words)

iv) Line 33, 269; **wat is he toking??** /dun (what/done )

v) Line 425; **Siow bug** (our/so) line 425

#### 4.2.8 Spelling Extensions

Spelling extensions refer to the ways letters are added or extended to create an effect while chatting online. The types of spelling extensions found in this study are illustrated through eccentric spelling use which are mostly found in the following form:-

i) to illustrate laughter

ii) to indicate surprise

iii) to draw attention

#### **Examples:**

Line 46; **EriCccccCCCcccCCcccCCccccCCccccca ) ) ) ) )**

Line 102: **mama ) ) ) ) muaaaahhhhhhhh**

Line 128; **hi opah h h h h h h h h h h h h h h h**

The above lists of illustrations show how participants via the IRC extend spellings in a creative way to indicate their emotions and virtual body language.

#### **4.2.9 Absence of Punctuation Marks**

Participants also do not seem to use punctuations such as question or exclamation marks. In replacements, these were substituted with particles as shown below:

##### **Examples:**

Line 153; **ala...solitaire opah ....main lain lah**

Line 155; **psst.....shadap la red.....aiya.....**

Line 157; **Opah main Bed minton laaa**

#### **4.2.10 Code Switching**

IRC Participants in this study also switch languages especially from Bahasa Melayu to English and Cantonese.

##### **4.2.10.1 Code Switching Patterns**

There are two types of switching patterns found in the extracts:

- (i) Lexical shifts; and
- (ii) Adding an exclamation mark to indicate a closing statement.

##### **(I) Lexical Shifts**

Lexical shifts occur in cases where a word of language 1 is replaced by a word of language 2. Examples found indicate that the phenomenon of code/language switch Cantonese and Bahasa Melayu switches of words of three levels:-

- a) nouns
- b) verbs
- c) adjectives

**Examples:**

Line 24; kin kaw lieu mai kap

Line 31; sip song mong is my time

Line 62; **wii..pompuan Melayu**

Line 110; **reDddd...terseliuh mulut**

Line 139; **arghhhh my peyut very kembung, eat too much dinner**

Line 342; wei....azu

### **4.3 Turn – Taking**

The examples below show the indication of turns used by different usernames, unlike face-to-face conversations where the direction of the conversation can be followed by looking at the speaker and the addressees. In IRC however, it is difficult to establish the streams of interactivity. Sacks and Schegloff's rule which says that speaker A selects the next speaker by making specific indications appear to exist in the following data where participants engage each other:

**Examples:**

Line 237; Giabrieleforyou : *hi MIZZY*

Line 238; MIZZY 28F : **hi gab**

Line 240; Gabrielleforyou : *would u chat with me?*

Line 240; Kak Ngah40 has joined the conversation

Line 240; Mrmidnite12 has left the conversation.

Line 243; MIZZY 28 F : **sure why not .....**

The turn between Mizzy and Gabrielle shows the coherence of the conversation going on between the two. Sacks and Schegloff's (1976) rule of ABABAB exists.

#### **4.4 Use of Turns - Tokens as an Initial Exchange**

Turn – tokens is based within a verbal salutation (Krivonos and Knapp, 1977: 193) such as the simple greeting of 'hi' and these are generally held to be important for their exploratory function (Laver 1975, 221, 1981, 298 – 300) and potential social information encoded in token choice and phonetic behavior during a conversation. Tokens are used to attract chatters (Mclaughlin 1987,170 – 176; Schegloff 1968, 1090; 1986, 177 – 118) and they are as illustrated as below:-

##### **Examples:**

-Line 9; AncientTales1 : **hi mizzy my wife**

-Line 10; ChinaDollie : **hi james**

-Line 11; AncientTales1 : **hi red**

Line 56; Opah – blonde : **hi ston**

Line 57; Red little princess : **Hi TKK**

Line 58; MRmidnite12 : sawadee kap opah

Line 59; Erica \_Nut28F : **hi opah**

The choice of token is designed to attract certain chatters in IRC openings and has similar ramifications to those proposed by Laver (1975). The choice emphasizes relational development more than the social aspects of individual greetings and the use of a greeting token usually indicates that the greeted user is known. This is illustrated below:-

**Examples:**

Line 51; Erica-Nut: **hi Reddddddddddddddddddddddd**

Line 96; GentleasianI has jointed the conversation

Line 96; jacq – luxon I has joined the conversation

Line 97; Trippal – K\_K : *hello mama loving*

Line 101; Redlittleprincess: **LmaMMMmmmMMMmmmMa**

The examples below show how participants come close to matching each other's greetings and establish both intimacy and the ABABAB sequencing.

**Examples:**

Line 87; Redlittleprincess : **wb matt Tttttt**

Line 119; mizzy28F : **aaaaaaaa.....sexy mexy.....lol**

Line 199; Azurin : **muahhhhhh matt**

Analysis of data also indicates that coordination and intimacy are established by token exchange (Edmondson, 1981:.83).



#### 4.4.1 Passing Turns

Turns are passed from one participant to another as illustrated in the following examples which are about food.

**Examples:**

Line 206; Azurin - : **hi tales**

Line 350; pearlie1456 : **wam wat u had just now**

Line 351; My WAM : nah AA ..... Ahd roti canai

Line 357; pearlie 1456 : **roti canai near ur place**

Line 360; pearlie 1456: **me hungry now**

Line 364; My WAM : yes pearlie

From the examples given above, it can be noted that there is a lack in the use of apostrophes in the turns. This phenomenon seems to reinforce Rintel and Pittam's (1997:18) observation on abbreviation creations where participants 'use what is shortest, easiest-to-type and the 'phonetic' equivalent of a word'. These features are commonly found in IRC conversation and they signify the users' efforts which are geared towards rapid interactions (Rintel and Pittam 1997: 18, Bays 1998: 3).

Another feature that was manifested in online chatting is the self-selecting of speakers. Sacks'(1974) concept of this feature is used when an utterance is targeted at a specific individual in the middle of a chat with one or more other users as in the examples illustrated below:

### **Examples:**

Line 251; Gabrieleforyou : *may I whisper u mizzy ?*

Line 253; mizzy28F: **lets chat here gab...my hub's in the room  
watching...lol**

Line 254; AncientTales1: **mizzy .....lets Gabriele whisper u...u can  
learn how to make pasta**

#### **4.4.2 Self Addressing And Repair**

As chat room conversations are constructed in a forward direction there is no going back to rewrite a script. The phenomenon of repair is where participants self address and correct their or other participant's words or phrases. Only a few examples were found in the data to illustrate the pause feature used by participants in self-addressing and repair.

### **Examples:**

Line 259; Gabrieleforyou: *please.....in private*

Line 277; Gabrielforyou: *please....whisper me mizzy*

Line 313; Red little princess: **I'm great now Mum whenever I see u**

Line 514; AncientTales1: **mizzy... am still waiting for u**

#### **4.5 Closing Phase**

It was found that the closing conversation sequences in online chatting closes in a peculiar way. From the data analyzed, there is also a tendency to add a more personal touch or style to the close.

#### 4.5.1 Closing at Conversation Levels

The findings reveal that participants in IRC may bring their own style to close conversations at different levels.

##### **Examples:**

Line 4; Le\_ToRQuE : *alamak ...10.30 pm aledi huh ..... I have to stop herelah ...see u all tomorrow morning Fellas ...if I didn't shut this PC.....never can finish my report... hehehehehehe*

Line 6; Bubbblehin: **byebye tor**

Line 11; Redlittleprincess : **tata Torqqq**

Line 18; AncientTales1: **hi torque...bye**

Line 230; ,y\_5thLUV: **bye adam**

Line 552, 554; lagy\_frust : **gd nite**

#### 4.5.2. Possible Pre –Closing Level

Occasionally, participants also manifest attempts like almost closing a conversation and then, perhaps having a change of mind, then restart. This level allows the speaker the choice of either introducing an entirely new topic or turn passing to the previous participants as illustrated below:

##### **Examples:**

Line 213; OpenMindADAM: **ok all....CTG...**

Line 214; OpenMindADAM: **t'care and happy chatting**

Line 216; pearlie 1456: **bye adam**

Line 217; mizzy28F: **bye adam**

Line 221; OpenMindADAM: **miss u all**

#### **4.5.3. Status of Participants**

The status of participants entering and leaving the chat room appears automatically on the screen which in turn, makes other participants aware of who has left and who come into the channel without the need to bid farewell.

The examples found in the data as detailed in the appendix contain six hundred and seventy eight different turns from different participants' 'users names'. Unlike the face-to-face mode of communicating where talk is directed within an active conversation, it may be difficult to establish what is being said in the chat room. One feature of online chatting is its obvious ability to create a new set of rules for interactivity while participating. There is a need for participants to spend time in 'housekeeping' the conversation engagements with a particular respondent. The initial part of the opening script is loaded with greetings like 'hi' to attract attention. All participants in the channel will try to establish who or with whom they would like to interact. From the data extracted, it was observed that these participants generally appear to be familiar or recognize each other's user names when calling each other.

Examples:

Line 65; Trippal\_K\_K : hi chineselady.

**Line 67; Chineselady2:** hey ...k-k

Line 68; Erica\_Nut: **hi chinese lady**

Line 70; chineselady2: **hi....Erica**

Based on the analysis of the short sentences produced during online conversation, it is evident that participants employ a variety of strategies in chat room communication to give meanings and these are linguistically manifested.

#### **4.6 Summary**

The findings elaborated in this chapter are summarized as follows:

- i) There are no specific norms for greeting or farewell in chat room conversations.
- ii) The ‘greetings’ by participants will however, enable chat room participants to recognize one another in the absence of face-to-face interaction.
- iii) Chat room conversations need to be short sentences to keep abreast with the ongoing ‘chat’ and for quick responses.
- iv) Turn-taking strategies are still evolving and will be influenced by experienced chatters. Hence, much more development is needed to ensure continued conversation sequence during ‘chat’ as this is considered very important to keep the conversation on track, especially since participants cannot see each other.

- v) In the absence of face-to-face interaction, chat room conversations are, but a mere exchange of texts or one dimensional interactions which become monotonous. However, CMC and IRC interactions can be given significant ‘vibrancy’, ‘life’ and ‘color’ through the use of emoticons, capitalization, spelling specification and extension, Code switching and lexical shifts, for example.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The feature of online chat therefore, creates a new set of rules for interactivity. There is a degree of time where participants need to spend in ‘housekeeping’ their engagement with a particular respondent. Participants all try to establish who or whom they would like to interact with. It has also been established that these participants appear to be familiar or recognize user’s name in the fact that the examples illustrate participants call to each other.

Based on the analysis of the short sentences produced during turn taking in chat room conversation as carried out in this chapter, it is evident that interlocutors employ a variety of strategies in chat room communication which are linguistically manifested. In the following chapter, the researcher will summarize the findings in this study and discuss their implications.