

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will summarize the findings of the data analysis of chat room communications as discussed in Chapter Four. It also attempts to answer the Research Questions. The different strategies employed by interlocutors of chat room conversations will be briefly discussed. The implication and recommendations leading to future studies will also be discussed.

5.1 Summary of Analysis

The summary of the findings will be based on the research questions posed in Chapter One. There are three research questions that the researcher has hoped to find. They are:-

- a) What are the on-language conventions do users employ in an IRC setting in Malaysia?
- b) What turn-taking strategies are employed during chat room 'talk'?
- c) How is coherence of chat room communication linguistically manifested?

5.1.1 Response to the Research Questions

- (1) What are the non-language conventions employed in an online chatting environment like the Inter Relay Chat (IRC) setting in Malaysia?

In response to research question one, the non-language conventions that are commonly employed by users in an IRC setting in Malaysia are the use of emoticons, grammatical and typographical features.

The emoticons are used in two ways; using emoticon before or after the messages and using emoticon with a message. IRC chat users used emoticons to show or express their feelings.

Grammatical and typographical features are considered as part of the IRC jargon. They are used in chat room to speed up conversations by reducing typing need. The knowledge and frequent use of these conventions mark the interlocutor as an experienced in-group member of the IRC society. The typographical features that found in the data collected for this research are: non standard punctuation and absence of punctuation, errors in sentence structures, wrong spellings (spelling specification and spelling extension) and code switching of languages.

Further the researcher found that in the data extracted, the number of turns in the text contained six hundred and seventy eight turns from different user's name's unlike fact-to-face conversations, where speakers can see or follow the direction of what is being said. It is therefore, difficult to establish at the initial stage but with patience and knowing the internet

language one is able to diversify what is written and be able to understand the different turns being taken.

Therefore the non-language conventions employed in the online chat room environment like the IRC setting in Malaysia are the following:

- a) Openings by participants (e.g. greetings) for recognition between participants;
- b) Farewells to indicate an exit from the chat room conversations;
- c) Short responses are preferred to keep pace with ongoing conversations;
- d) Unlike in other countries (e.g. USA), moral etiquette upheld due to strong cultural influences; hence actions such as flirting by participants is generally not allowed or encouraged in the chat rooms;
- e) Turn-taking strategy employed is self-selection by the participants which can result in much incoherence (i.e. taking on the speaker's role in conversations).

(2) What turn-taking strategies are employed during chat room talk?

In response to the research question 2, the turn-taking strategies employed during chat room talk are as follows:

- a) The most successful strategy was for the current speaker to select the next speaker, which had similar results found in the observations by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1994) research on face-to-face conversation;
- b) Although Lunford (1996) advocates self selection because everyone in the chat room has equal rights to a turn, however coherence would be sacrificed if all participants took on the role of speaker all of the time;
- c) Between (a) and (b) above, Malaysian chat room environments favour self selection and coupled with the fact that local chat rooms have limited message buffer available by chat room service providers, inadvertently can lead to incoherence in chat room conversations. For example, the local #alamak chat room's limited message buffer only allows a mixture of hundred and fifty characters per message. If one wishes to take a long turn, one must first send a message and then continue posting in a second message, thus creating the appearance of 'some speaker continues' (Lunford, 1996).

(3) How is coherence linguistically manifested?

Based on the discussions of the analyzed data of chat room conversation in Chapter four, the researcher found that coherence is not linguistically manifested in chat room as occurs in a face to face conversation. By the time a user is in the process of replying to a question or a line of conversation, other responses from

internet users are already flooding the chat room. Thus, the conversation is lengthened and coherency is not marked or cannot be detected.

In response to research question 3, coherence is linguistically manifested when:

- a) Turn-taking ensures continued sequence of interaction in the chat room;
- b) Self-selection is avoided in the allocation strategy of interlocutors in chat room conversations to ensure coherence. In contrast, if the speaker self selects the next speaker, this will create linkage between turns as observed by Sacks et al (1974);
- c) All commonly used abbreviations, emoticons, capitalization, spelling specification and extension, Code switching and lexical shifts become standardized.

5.1.2 Implications and Recommendation for Future Studies

In this study, the researcher has examined the conventional language such as the grammatical and typographical features in the use of emoticon and other cues to compensate for body language and other features in the face-to-face conversation. Secondly, the researcher examined turn-taking in the chat room i.e. turn-allocation with participants in the local Malaysian chat room context in order to find out if they are coherent to participants.

The methodology aspect adopted conversation analysis from studies of turn-taking in face-to-face procedure.

The findings from this study are relevant only to this present time. There must indeed be many features that this present study has not touched on due to the ever evolving and dynamic nature of the IRC and CMC environments. However the researcher has presented some basic and obvious characteristics. There remains much to be said about turn-taking on CMC and how this can be related to common modes of face-to-face conversation. In conclusion, turn-taking conversation is similar to pragmatic face-to-face conversation in chat rooms when in print and that whilst there is no definite coherence, chatters do understand one another when chatting.

The recommendation therefore, is to expand research in the following areas:-

- a) To undertake detailed empirical studies of turn-taking strategies in the chat room in order to arrive at a more definitive conclusion.
- b) Establish whether the majority of gender participants (male and female) have a significant effect on the chat room conversations.
- c) To undertake periodic investigation to determine what shifts have evolved in the dynamics of conversation within the IRC and CMC environments and its impact on linguistic cohesion.