

Chapter 3

Phonological and Lexical Analysis

Phonological Analysis

In face-to-face communication, phonological features play a large part in determining social relations between people. Much information can be deduced from their sounds. However, in the Internet chat room, as communication occurs through the written process, there is no direct access to any sounds. This is why chatters cannot judge their participants by phonological features. To overcome this limitation, they may verbalize the message through other devices, such as punctuation, capitalization and multiple letters that are available on the computer keyboard. By doing this, prosody, which is a distinctive feature helping identify the nature and quality of sounds, may be perceived. It will be discussed in terms of three main features : pitch, duration and loudness.

1. Pitch

Pitch concerns high or low and rising, falling or steady patterns of a sound (Cruttenden, 1997 : 3-4). Different kinds of pitch are simply perceived in speech communication. Yet, they cannot be directly transmitted in the Internet chat room. Chatters have to invent certain creative methods to compensate for the absence of phonological patterns. One of them is to make use of punctuation. Nevertheless, observation suggests that many types of punctuation markers are obviously ignored. Consider the following examples :

- (1) reel_Rustyman asks: Who was your role model growing up
- (2) DougieHHS asks: what was your first prank
- (3) marsharuiz asks: where were u born
- (4) Burdue_Celeb asks: how was your honeymoon
- (5) SullyKate710 asks: Have you met the Prince of Wales

- (6) quai_cha asks: Traci do you have any tatoos [sic.]
- (7) cyberventue_lfo asks: Brad; I like a girl that treat me right
- (8) Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy: I definitely believe in Love at first sight

We observe the distinct lack of punctuation throughout these utterances. The first six utterances lack the question marks to identify question utterances, and there is no period marking sentence endings in the latter two utterances. It seems that the use of punctuation, particularly periods and question markers, loses its traditional function in this electronic room. However, wh-words, word order or even a context, in which these utterances occur, can identify them as interrogative or declarative sentences. Actually, this phenomenon of ignoring punctuation is a very common feature in the chat room. Although it is considered non-standard use, chatters seem widely to accept it since it may be another effective method to save time in typing. Notice that this use may not be consistent, depending on the individual style.

However, if punctuation is purposively used, it implies certain phonological features. The use of question marks is a significant example. Since question marks are inserted at the end of yes-no questions, the chat participants have to simultaneously use eyes and ears in order to perceive a rising tone. This indicates their ability to go beyond the limitation of chat-room communication; that is, chatters are trying to transmit pitch by making use of question marks. Consider the following examples :

vicks27 asks: Girlfriend?
 YahooGuest1: Zac: Yes. We all have girlfriends. No, just kidding.

The first speaker “vicks27” formed the utterance above by using only one word “girlfriend” followed by a question mark. Thus, it is a question mark that helps signify the yes-no question, and this utterance is then spoken with rising pitch.

feobie asks: I want to be a song writer too any suggestions?

The utterance is formed by inserting a question mark at the end of the utterance “any suggestion”. It is therefore pronounced with a rising pitch. The word “any” also helps to identify it as a question asking for suggestions rather than as a statement providing information.

Adanshirt asks: so, Adam do you remember the girl at the Chicago show at the Vic who caught your shirt???
Yeah that was me...want my number?

At the end of the utterance, the speaker “Adanshirt” offered the participant her telephone number, as in “want my number?” Since the utterance begins with the verb “want”, it would be very similar to imperative sentence. However, a question mark helps mark off the imperative from this yes-no question, and this question has to be then spoken with a rising pitch.

In the chat room, many other examples of utterances identifying the rising pitch of yes-no questions have been found. Look at the utterances below.

beatboxbetty: Any examples?

Hellokittyusa asks: favorite Grimm fairy tale?

Yahoomc: how about the Griese/Brister controversy – any thought?

sleepy76_2000 asks: Was there a connection? A musical connection?

Jay_Star_5 asks: Any pet peeves?

roxychica_surf asks: No secrets huh? Then tell us yuor [sic.] most embarrassing moment!

Michelletimmons asks: What are your definitions of success? Chart topping? Being famous?

Lfoote1 asks: I have a dress with a jewel collar. I also have a round face and need to figure out how to do my hair. It's really fine and won't hold curls. Any ideas?

mr_scorpio2000 asks: You know Christina Ricci?

SommerLovin asks: talor, read any good books lately?

itz_lindx asks: Ike, got any new guitars lately?

BisStar_Celeb: Dinner with anyone...

BigStar_Celeb: Living? Or, dead?

From the examples above, we can see that the chatters' rising pitch is perceived by using only single question mark. But, when multiple question marks are employed, certain additional functions may be suggested. According to Bruns (1996) and Doell (1998), the repetition or multiplication of question marks may signal emphasis. This characteristic widely used in the chat room is:

Sweetsmile34 asks: any pets??

Dare_m_bergin: unfortunately no, I would love a dog, but I travel too much

The duplicated question marks (??) added to the end of the utterance of the speaker "Sweetsmile34" not only indicate a rising pitch but intensify the degree of doubtfulness also.

Red_Hot_Boom_Joey: The most impressive?? That's a tough question. I really like Asia.

The question marks appear at the end of the first utterance. Interestingly, apart from expressing the speaker's rising pitch, the repetition of question markers (??) here emphasizes a high degree of wondering.

Of course, the multiplication of question marks is not a mistake caused by chatters' finger slipping. This phenomenon is found frequently in this chat room. Several chatters intentionally use up to seven question marks at the end of

the same utterance in order that the intensification is physically conveyed. Some of the examples are:

Dawsynn asks: ...i was just wondering what your upcoming album will be called??

Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy: The up coming album does not have a title right now. Everyone is looking for one still

Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy: Any suggestion??

Dkny_chick_05 asks: Do you write your own songs??

Nick_Carters_Girlie asks: what is it like to be on tour without seeing your family and all your friends???

Sky_lo asks: Do you have a tattoo???

mrbelloc: Do you believe in love at first sight???

Hyper_lady asks: Nick, Why did u cut your hair?????????

2. Duration

Duration is another significant spoken feature. It concerns the length of time used in speech production (Cruttenden, 1997 : 2). In a word, some syllables are pronounced longer than others are, or a speaker may prolong some syllables in contrast to other syllables (Kreidler, 1997 : 28). Through the unusual visual representation of reduplicated letters, duration is iconically conveyed in the chat room. The more the letter is reduplicated, the more time is visually consumed in pronunciation. Also, this use of letter elongation can signal intensification. It should be noted that long vowels tend to be the most commonly repeated. Examples are as follows :

Dora04_98 asks: Hi Nick!! Have you ever gone skinny dipping? And if not will you ever?

Yahoo_BackstreetBoy: Yeeecaaaah I have, but was by myself.

The interjection “Yeeecaaaah”, which is one of the derivatives of “yes” frequently occurring in rapid casual interactive talk (Eggins and Slade, 1997 : 96-

97), is used to confirm the speech feature. This uncommon word suggests a longer duration than normal because of the multiplication of the letters; that is, the letter “e” occurring three times (eee) and the letter “a” four times (aaaa).

Stripes_14 asks: Why is the video so short? We can never get toooooooo much Hanson.

In the utterance above, the adverbial phrase “too much”, which means a very high degree, is peculiar since the letter “o” in “too” is typed eight times. This spelling not only indicates a long duration of the word but also intensifies the speaker’s admiration.

TeenHollywood_Guest: I loooove pop tarts!

Again, repetition of the letter “o” in the word “loooove” indicates a long duration of the long vowel /o/ when being pronounced. This repetition effectively used to express a high degree of love is a linguistic alternative to using adverbs such as “very much” or “a lot” to modify the verb “love”.

beatboxbetty: I’d like to have you in my belly Verne!
Vern: Oooooookay!

In making jokes at the chat partner’s request, the speaker “Vern” uttered the interjection “Oooooookay”, which looks unusual compared to the normal “okay”. Since the letter “o” is repeated, the first syllable of this interjection has a longer pronunciation than the second syllable.

baybieblue5 asks: I went to your concert on the 15, it was ssssoooooo cool ...

ITZMeB asks: Hey guys, first off, you are all soooo great!!...

Consider the adverbs, “sssssooooo” and “soooo” in these utterances of admiration. There is no difference in meaning between them; the second, like the

first, means “very”. It should be noted, however, that both are presented in a strange way; the letters “s” together with “o” in the first utterance and the letter “o” in the second utterance are multiple. These adverbs are thus pronounced longer than the other words in the same environment, and the pronunciation of “ssssssooooo” would be longer than that of “soooo”.

jaimeluv007 asks: hellloooooo..... where did Devin
go to High School

In the example, the letters “l” and “o” in the greeting word “hellloooooo” were typed six times to indicate long duration, especially in the final syllable of this word. It may claim that the speaker “jaimeluv007” is echoing this greeting from a long distance.

YahooGuest1: Isaac: In Moe, we try to pick out some
web sites that are reeeally unique and cool...

In this utterance, the letter “e” was multiplied to intensify the first syllable of the adverb “reeeally” itself, which then intensifies the adjective “unique” and “cool”.

Yahoo_HANSON:Z: it was maaad baby, yeah

The speaker “Yahoo_HANSON:Z” lengthened the adjective “mad” by repeating the letter “a” two times. So, this word would be uttered longer than other words in the same utterance. It should be noted, however, that the repetition of the letter here might function as the adverb “very” modifying the adjective “mad”. By this creative typing, the adjective “mad” can modify and also intensify itself in an economical way.

beatboxbetty: This may be a little personally[sic.], but
when did you loose your virginity?
Shannon: No comment
beatboxbetty: okayyyyy

From the utterance, the speaker “beatboxbetty” was denied the answer since what he asked was a sensitive or personal matter. Expressing his realization and acceptance of this denial, the speaker uttered “okayyyyy”; the letter “y” is repeated to lengthen the pronunciation of the last syllable of the word.

Brownie1124 asks: my wedding is August 15 in New York-frizz season! Should I have my curly hair blown out straight (how I really love it) or put up? Will it look feminine up? I don't want a “slick” look but I don't want messy long frizzzzz.

Consider the last sentence of the utterance above. The multiplication of the letter “z” in the noun “frizzzzz” suggests a long duration of this word when being pronounced, and also visually gives the image of long frizzed hair.

Marical_Merlin asks: How old were you when you were first kissed?

BigStar_Celeb: Ooooooh ... I was in 5 th grade ...

Sooperychat_fanatic asks: What is your favorite film that you've worked on?

sleepy_hollow_johnny_depp: ohhhh, hmmm...

In the first pair of utterances, the speakers both prolonged the interjection “oh” by repeating its letter. However, the multiplication of the letter “o” in “Ooooooh” is much more found than that of the letter “h” in “ohhhh” since the long vowel would be commonly lengthened in a conversation.

3. Loudness

Loudness concerns the intensity of a sound or sequences of sounds in spoken language (Cruttenden, 1997 : 2; Kreidler, 1997 : 29). From a variety of studies, it is evident that shouting or yelling, which obviously deals with loudness, would be normally suggested through the use of capitalization (Doell, 1998). Moreover, in the chat room studied, special emphasis and screaming are also conveyed in capital letters. Notice that capitalization can be produced with other

creative typing; for instance, certain words, which are simultaneously capitalized and multiplied, can indicate both loudness as well as long duration at the same time. Compared to the common use, this capitalization calls for attention more dramatically. This is actually found in earlier written registers, such as hand writing. According to Danet, Ruendenberg-Wright and Rosenbaum-Tamari (1997), children and young people, who are naturally richly expressive in personal letters, playfully employ capital letters, especially when they want to emphasize certain words or phrases in their letters. The following examples demonstrate this non-standard use of capitalization in the chat room.

Broadcast_artist: hey angie HAPPY BIRTHDAY ...

From this example, the birthday blessing was intentionally created in capital letters whereas the surrounding terms were not. This linguistic creation possibly indicates the speaker's imaginary shouting; that is, s/he was shouting, "happy birthday".

TeenHollywood_Guest: A guy pulled up in his car and yelled "OH MY GOD, MILA, I LOVE YOUR SHOW!!"

The speaker "TeenHollywood_Guest" intended to use capital letters when reporting the yelling (OH MY GOD, MILA, I LOVE YOUR SHOW!!) so that the chat participant could imaginatively "hear" the real voice. Compared to other parts of the utterance presented in lower case letters, this capitalized part would be pronounced much louder.

BigStar_Celeb: I always stand up and scream.... I KNOW THAT GUY!

To make the chat participant visually perceive the loudness of his screaming, the speaker "BigStar_Celeb" purposively capitalized the utterance "I KNOW THAT GUY". This helps the participant to determine the intensity of sounds more easily.

KathyCarter asks: If you were abducted by aliens who were going to erase all of your memories except for one, which one would you pick to keep?

Yahoo_BackstreetBoy: I would pick to keep---wow
WOW what a question! I'd probably have to say .. I would pick ...Darnnit [sic.]...You're got me brain struck!

The exclamative word is used twice in this utterance. However, the first is presented in lower case letters (wow), whereas the latter is in capital letters (WOW), suggesting that the capitalized word would be pronounced much louder than the previous instance. This capitalization also playfully gives a rhythmic pattern to this exclamation of surprise.

melissa_joan_hart: I DO believe in true love with aliens!

To convince the chat partner of what she had already said and also stress her personal belief, the speaker "melissa_joan_hart" not only used the helping verb "do" but also capitalized it (DO). This helping verb would be consequently pronounced much louder than the rest of the word in the utterance.

Usher_Ryan14_98 asks: ... I think that you are the HOTTest girl on Baywatch

The speaker "Usher_Ryan14_98" intended to capitalize the adjective "HOTTest" in order to show stress. This first syllable would be therefore pronounced much louder than the second one.

DNaSYNCLuva asks: Was that kiss with Lance and Kathy Griffin on the Billboards real or part of the act??

Yahoo_NYSNC_Joey: It was part of the act!

Yahoo_NYSNC_Joey: And it wasn't Lance's idea. It was Kathy's!

Yahoo_NYSNC_Joey: She just chose Lance. It wasn't real. Lance is still single! They're not dating.

Yahoo_NYSNC_Joey: It's OOOOOKAY!

This example shows a combination of non-standard capitalization and repetition. The word “OOOOKAY” is capitalized and the letter “o” is typed five times, suggesting that this whole word would be pronounced loudly, and the first syllable would be uttered longer than the second one. The capitalization is used here in order to emphasize that there is no doubt about this matter.

Lila_6581 asks: What warm-up and vocal exercises do you do before a performance?

Matchbox20_live: Goo, goo, GOO, goo, goo!

The term “goo” occurs five times in the utterance. To enable the chat participant to distinguish the intensification of each “goo”, the speaker “Matchbox20_live” intended to capitalize it. This means the capitalized “GOO” would be pronounced louder than the others.

Many times, a whole utterance is intentionally capitalized to indicate shouting; however, this way of speaking is usually discouraged (Danet, 1996) because it may be considered rude or bad behavior (Wauchope, 1997), and may also be difficult to read. Worcester (1999) gives an opinion of this device : “...by using capitalization, you show that you are raising your voice, Many people chatting find this behavior obnoxious and annoying.” Though this phenomenon receives negative comments, it still appears widespread in the chat room as follows:

Eryn_7 asks: JORDAN-WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NEW TO THE BUSINESS? DO YOU THINK ITS WORTH IT?

Kam1513: asks: IF THIS MOVIE IS TRUE, THEN I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE MAKING A MOVIE ABOUT PEOPLE KILLING OTHER PEOPLE!

The two speakers above are examples of chatters who prefer to capitalize the whole utterances as if they were shouting to their participants. As shouting is

conventionally regarded as impolite behavior in everyday conversation, this capitalization would generally be discouraged.

In addition, like in spoken interaction, unaccented syllables used as an emphatic device may be loudly pronounced in the chat room. Instead of screaming, shouting or yelling, chatters may capitalize certain syllables to express emphasis or even intonation of the utterance. Look at the following examples.

Chaiscox1978 asks: if Guster was in a steel cage
match who would win?
react_guster: Brian: Maria, she's fat AND hot!

In the utterance, the speaker "react_guster" gave an emphasis on the presence of two outstanding characteristics of a person named "Maria" by means of capitalization : Maria does not have just one characteristic (fat) but two characteristics (fat and hot). However, capitalization here might suggest the low rising intonation occurring in the middle of this sentence; the speaker may have a low rising intonation on this utterance when he/she expects to say something more (Ladefoged, 1993 : 111-112). Therefore, "AND" here might be pronounced with a slightly rising intonation.

Lexical Analysis

When looking at lexical features of the chat-room language, there are certain important points we have to keep in mind. Language of the chat room is produced under the constraint of "real-time" planning. Moreover, it functions to be "relational" or "interactional"; that is, chatters use it to establish or reinforce social relationship rather than to transmit information. With these factors, lexicons in the chat room and speech communication share some similarities. Thus, in this chapter, the study of the chat-room language shifts from phonological features to lexical features, for it will adequately show that phonological features are not only the subject of our investigation. This study is mainly concerned with the way in

which this electronic language has its reflection in lexical choices of informal spoken language. These involve sociolinguistic features, onomatopoeia, clipping, vague expression, deixis, vocative, expletive and interjection, each of which will be discussed below.

1. Sociolinguistic Features

Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to social and regional variables. Social variables include a speaker's demographic features or social contexts (for instance, education, occupation, gender, age and income level), whereas regional residential variables depend on his/her geographical area (Holmes, 1992 : 142; Malmkjxr, 1991 : 415). As has been pointed out that the Internet chat room, where people throughout the world communicate to one another, is non-visual communication, the socially and regionally determined features of those others may be difficult to identify. However, through the language used, sociolinguistic features may possibly be perceived.

1.1 Social Variables

Social variables influence language used in speech communication. People in different social contexts may have different pronunciations. The linguistic phenomenon of "g-dropping" is an example. According to Falk (1973 : 222), members of a lower class group consistently pronounce the suffix "-ing" with the alveolar nasal sound /n/ rather than the velar nasal sound /ŋ/. In addition, it usually takes place when the sound /ŋ/ (-ng) occurs in an unstressed syllable (Wolfram, 1991 : 281). Like in speech situations, "g-dropping" of unstressed syllables also appear in the chat room. This enables chatters to show their actual pronunciation of the words and thus convey their social features. Below are examples.

Jester_169: Heard somthin about Gary helping you on that what's his part???

BigStar_Celeb: I like tomorrow's music because it's coming mama...it's comin'!

The speakers “Jester_169” and “BigStar_Celeb” verbalized the suffix “-ing” with the alveolar nasal sound /n/ rather than the velar nasal /ŋ/ in the unstressed syllables of the words “somthin” and “comin’”, respectively. Being sensitive to the missing of the letter “g”, the speaker sometimes replaces its position by an apostrophe, as shown in the word “comin’”. It should be noticed, however, that this phenomenon does not necessarily indicate the speakers’ low social classes because people, no matter what the social factors are, may use the sound /ŋ/ in a highly formal situation and at the same time they may use /n/ in a highly informal situation (Falk, 1973 : 222) (see chapter 2). Similarly, as the name “chat” primarily suggests casual talking, communication in the chat room is considered informal. Such non-standard pronunciation is then commonly used, regardless of the speaker’s social class.

BigStar_Celeb: That’s all I’m gonna say!

Nala17_99 asks: just wanna say i love your song “stay the night”

From the utterances above, both “gonna” and “wanna” which are the colloquial contractions representing an American accent (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2000 : 580 and 1514) are used instead of “going to” and “want to”, respectively. Again the speakers’ social classes cannot be exactly identified since even the most highly educated or cultured people frequently use this reduction of word-final consonants in rapid and informal speech situation (Falk, 1973 : 222), including the Internet chat room.

Cirrus_dose asks: hey u guy’s ever thought of doing live raves, cuz I have seen EPMD at a rave before

Christiebunny asks: Do u think that those cyber relationships last coz we do make our dreams/fantasies come true and it’s different in real life?

Red_Hot_Boom_Jordan: No. I should and could cause I am all over the place

Matchbox20_live: Rob:...the idea of school violence is a lot scarier than it used to be. 'Cause kids 15 or 16 years old, there's always violence their anyway...

Sweetlady_99_tigger_99 asks: what was your first kiss like???

Cybervenue_cnote: Raul: great, cold becuz we were eating ice cream

From the examples, although “cuz,” “coz,” “cause,” “Cause”(with apostrophe) and “becuz” are different derivatives of the standard pattern “because”, the way they are spelled may vary, depending on how each speaker pronounce it. Note that the first four terms (colloquial instances of deleted unstressed initial syllables) are mostly used in informal situations (Wolfram, 1991: 281) and are therefore common in chat rooms, which often exhibit informal speech-like features.

BigStar_Celeb: I have a fan mail um..whaddyoucallit?
Studio Fan Mail.

Fear Factory: Christian: I dunno man, I have no clue

PreppyGirl1980 asks: Wassup CNOTE, Kathy from Chicago here...

Ace240000 asks: Now c'mon guys, spill it! Are there any lucky ladies in your lives? :)

Imx_live: Nah. We never thought about.

TeenHollywood_Guest: If anyone brings 'em, we'll eat as many as we can!!

In the examples, the expressions “whaddyoucallit,” “dunno,” “Wassup,” “c'mon,” “nah” and the reduced form of the pronoun “'em”(with apostrophe), which represent respectively “what do you call it,” “don't know,” “what's up,” “come on,” “no” and “them”, imitate spoken common conversation. Even though considered non-standard, these colloquial patterns are still used to reduce certain “unreal” feelings associated with the electronic atmosphere of the chat room. They can also be found in literary works. By using these peculiar spellings,

sociolinguistic attributes of characters can be simply represented (Wolfram, 1991: 263).

In addition, the speech features of people of different ages may differ. This difference can be indicated through the use of word choice. Slang is an example. Since it can make them feel “fashionable,” and signal their membership of a youth group or mark others as outsiders (Chambers, 1995 : 171; Holmes, 1992: 183), slang is mostly used among teenagers (Finegan, 1994 : 373; Holmes, 1994 : 184-187). As previously mentioned, the chat room in this study falls in the teen category, slang is therefore very commonly uttered among the chatters. The slang terms “hot” and “cool” are very preferable. Consider the following examples:

mr_nice_guy_party_supplies asks: why are yo [sic.] so damn cool?

Red_Hot_Boom_Shaggy:...thanks for the compliment.

shaggy_tazz asks: What’s the coolest gift you’ve gotten??

Aron Carter: I got a watch one time..that’s about it. And I got a dog once! (a real one!!!)

The slang adjectives “cool” and “coolest” were used by respective speakers “mr_nice_guy_party_supplies” and “shaggy_tazz” in order to show their admiration or approve (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000 : 289). In the first utterance, the adjective “cool” means “great”, whereas the superlative form in the latter utterance “coolest” means “most fashionable, attractive and different”. These uses show the speakers’ attempts to mark themselves as members of the teenagers’ group.

Decs6: asks: A.J.-----DYE YOUR HAIR BLOND!!!!!!YOU LOOK SO HOT WITH BLOND HAIR!!!!!!

Yahoo_BackstreetBoy: Right now I’d say that new song Alliyah has out. It’s on the Doctor Doolittle soundtrack, the video is hot!

The adjective “hot” is another slang term frequently found in this chat room. It contains different meanings in the utterance above. In the first utterance, “hot” means “sexy”, whereas it means “very popular” in the second one (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000 : 658).

Cnotespanishfly asks: ...You guys are awesome and so sweet!

The two adjectives “awesome” and “sweet” are slang words appearing in the utterance above. Both convey positive meanings: “awesome” means “great,” “attractive” or “impressive”, whereas “sweet” means “nice”.

Baasam asks: what is the dorkiest thing you have ever done?

Yahoo_NSYNC: LOL! Oh, I don’t know!

Yahoo_NSYNC: I guess I went to a Tom Petty concert, and I felt like a dork.

The adjective “dorky” (presented in the superlative form, “dorkiest”) and the noun “dork” are slang terms suggested in the utterances. The slang adjective “dorky” means “stupid” or “boring” while the meaning of the slang noun “dork” is a “stupid” or “boring” person that everybody laughs at (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000 : 394).

Crazylittlegirl_5 asks: So, how did u guys come up with the name b*witched cause it’s a wicked name if i say so my self

react_bwitched: Keavy: Thank you! Our producer gave it to us, he thought it was a perfect name.

The speaker “Crazylittlegirl_5” admired the name of the addressees’ musical band, as in “it’s a wicked name.” This term commonly has a negative meaning; it means “morally bad”. But, among teenagers in this situation, it positively means “very good” or excellent (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000 : 1539).

Fantasy_Freak2: OK that's it – we're outta here!

Washpost_carolyn: Go get hitched, civil ceremony.

There are two slang expressions used in these utterances. The expression “get hitched” in the first utterance is used to mean “get married”, whereas “outta here” in the second one is “are leaving”.

1.2 Regional Variables

Another sociolinguistic aspect of spoken language is regional variables. They deal with the notion that language spoken by people of various geographical or regional residences may vary (Holmes, 1992 : 142; Malmkjær, 1991 : 415). This phenomenon may be significantly perceived in the chat room. As participants in the chat room come from various parts of the world, their language uses can reflect particular regional variables. In the chat room studied, US regional variables are the most popular. Here are some examples :

cbarte asks: Do yall have a fan club?

Britney622 asks: why did y'all change your name from Immature to Imx?

The second plural personal pronouns “yall” and “y'all” which stand for “you all” are used to identify the participants. These colloquial terms indicate a US regional context, specifically the southern states (Biber, et al., 1999 : 1123; Wolfram, 1991 : 295). Thus, we may conclude that these speakers come from the United States.

Yahoo_HANSON:I: Since we've been on the road we haven't gotten a chance to watch all that much television...

The past participle form “gotten” used in this utterance implies the speaker's US regional background since Americans prefer saying “gotten”, whereas the traditional British prefers “got”.

medical dental equipment. Hence, if there is no context involved, it will be difficult for anyone to understand this unusual sound.

JenChasey88 asks: I saw scary pictures of my man (JC) with Britney Spears whats up with that?

Yahoo_NSYNC: *AANKK* No, thank you for playing though...They were just friends...

The speaker "Yahoo_NSYNC" imitated the sound one made in an embarrassed cough, "AANKK". You may notice that repetition of the letters "a" and "k" indicates the duration, and the capitalization suggests loudness.

2.2 Lexical Items

Compared to the previous example, this type of onomatopoeic words is relatively preferred in the chat room. But their functions are the same. Besides imitating the actual sound, it can convey nonverbal cues of the speaker. Some examples are as follows:

LaUrEnBsBeR: DO YOU CRY AT SAD MOVIES?

Yahoo_BackstreetBoy: ...I don't bawl like a baby, but when I'm talking it will be like "Blah blah blllaaaa"..my voice will quiver a little...

Yahoo_HANSON:T: It's a quite rush. Blah Blah Blah.. duh.. it's really awesome. That's why we decided to go play and do a tour

"Blah blah blllaaaa" and "Blah Blah Blah" are examples of onomatopoeic words. The first example is invented by imitating the real sound. To represent a quivering sound, the first speaker purposively repeated the letters "l" and "a" in the syllable "blllaaa," whereas the second example is not necessarily an imitation of the real sound; it may be a kind of shortcut in speaking.

Sday8 asks: Do you have boyfriends in real life?

Tammy Blanchard: No, single and lonely

Joie Lenz: Me and Tammy keep each other

company LOL
 Tammy Blanchard: Boo hoo

The onomatopoeia “Boo hoo” normally indicates the action of crying as a result of sadness. In the utterance, this expression is the speaker’s comment on her single and lonely life. It could mean “Tammy” does feel sad about it, but she is able to joke about it at the same time.

Broadcast_eyc: Damon—We fight about who messes up the dance steps (ha ha)

PhooFiter asks: are you going to celebrate Cinco de Mayo tonight?

Matchbox20_live: Rob: Well, hahaha, my girl is Latin.

sugar14_female asks: Are you married? Do you have any children?

Verne: I’m single....

Verne: Call me

Verne: hehehehehe

From these examples, “ha ha” in the first and second utterances, as well as “hehehehehe” in the last utterance are onomatopoeic words, which imitate the speakers’ sound of laughing and, at the same time, non-verbally express their act of laughing. Crystal (1987 : 181) suggests that these vocalizations resemble the presentation of actions in comic strip, in which laughter can be shown in many ways : “Ha! ha!,” “He, hee, hee!,” and “ho, ho, ho”, for instance. Moreover, the vowel variations may indicate different types of laughter; that is, the vowels “a,” “e,” and “o” are for “normal laugh,” “giggle” and “hearty laugh”, respectively.

3. Clipping

Clipping refers to the process of making a word smaller by removing an element of a word but its meaning and function are still the same (Adams, 1973 : 133; Bauer, 1983 : 233). This shortened form is one of the most common features of chat-room language. Chatters intentionally or unintentionally use clipping

frequently since it takes less time to type. In other words, this type of word formation helps speed up typing and therefore provides a smoother flow of written conversation. Chatters finally get accustomed to this shortened form rather than the full form, and it becomes the standard term. Although clipped words can be classified according to various factors, this study will deal with only three types: common clipping, clipping with plural form and clipping for phonological imitation.

3.1 Common Clipping

Common clipping concerns the way certain parts of a singular word, either front or hind part, is omitted. However, in this study, hind-clipping is more often found than front-clipping.

Glwaprez asks: umm, it's too easy to get lost when you advertise on the net .. is it going to get easier?

The speaker "Glwaprez" talked about advertising on the "net". The word "net" is the clipped form of the full word "Internet". Or, we can say that "Internet" loses the first element by front clipping and eventually becomes "net".

hollywood_patrick: I know your site has been getting a lot of traffic.

The speaker "hollywood_patrick" informed his female chat partner of how popular her web site was. The first element of the compound "web site" is clipped to become only "site".

j0rd0 asks: What are the chances of a Pie 2?

The speaker suggested "Pie 2", which is the front clipped term for a movie called "American Pie 2".

Cutie Pie JC asks: Would you ever consider writing your own autobio?

The speaker “Cutie Pie JC” uses the noun “autobio” as the shortened form of “autobiography”, clipping the last element.

StarWars_McCallum: ...I got a lot of info from the web each day.

The speaker “StarWars_McCallum” informed his chat partner of how much information he had gathered each day. The two clipped words – “info” and “web” – are the abbreviated forms of “information” and “web site” respectively.

LilTotogrl asks: hey vern first off I gotta say one of the main reason me and my sis and cousin went to see the movie was because you were it ...

Patty1943 asks: ...I also thought you looked good today with Mick’s bro !

The last syllable of the word “sister” was hind clipped to “sis” and the word “brother” lost its second element to be “bro”.

Yahoo_HANSON: there’s a company called Line Six that does a plug in for pro tools and also does amplifiers...

Timberlakegr199 asks: How can I get rid of my over-dried perm?

Louis: Scissors :-) Visit a pro. It doesn’t go away on its own.

The first speaker introduced the company to the partner whereas the second one asked for suggestions about her hair. The adjective and the noun form of “professional” are both shortened by hind clipping to become just “pro”.

One point to note about the common clipping is that there is no consistency in the written form; it may end either with a period or without. Nevertheless, every shortened form of a word, no matter how different it is, is

welcome among the chatters only if it can replace a full form and also give typing convenience. To see how it differs, look at the following examples.

Yahoo_NSsync_Lance: I graduate from a Univ. of Nebraska program, ...

mydogcharlie asks: Okay, my son is 6yrs old and says he wants to play ball. Is there an app. age to enter him?

Consider the noun “Univ.,” the abbreviated form of “University”, in the first utterance, and the adjective “app.,” which is the shortened form of the adjective “appropriate”. Each ends with a period.

girls_17_99 asks: what's your fave TV show???

abercrombiesweetheart_99 asks: whats your fav. tv show?

keavystar20 asks: Keavy: My Grandma died 2 weeks ago and the song “It was Our Day” is my fav song of the album ...

The adjective “favorite” was shortened by hind clipping to variously “fave” (with the letter “e”), “fav.” (with period) and “fav” (without period), respectively. This shows the inconsistency in the written form.

In the chat room, there are many examples of clipped words. In the following examples, the full forms are restored in square brackets:

Marisha9 asks: when did u start preparing for SATS?
Freshman, soph. [sophomore]Year?

Sleepy76_2000 asks: Does Ginko Baloba help remember
vocab [vocabulary] words?

Fantasy_Freak1: you can't be excited about his
attitude...but really there aren't many players that have his
combination of speed and power plus great def.
[defensive] ability...

ryans_freako_princess asks: how do you get to be in the mag [magazine]?

Taco31699 asks: who inspired you more your mom or your dad?

Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy: I would have to say my grandma [grandmother]. She's from England and a professional dancer over there. ...

uk_stud_99 asks: i just want to know if you are coming to the uk

broadcast_artist: we totally HOPE

broadcast_artist: we think Feb [February] and March of 2000

cereal_kicks asks: hey hotties! You guys looked kinda uncomfortable on loveline on wed. [Wednesday] was it weird doing that?

Ben Rock: Same thing with the TV show on the Sci-Fi [Science-Fiction] network.

Rob Cowie: This is Kevin Fox, the exec [executive] producer and Dan Myrick. co-director.

hollywood_patrick: Let's go back to the chatroom for a sec [second].

BigStar_Celeb: I remember having a crush on my gym [gymnastic] teacher, but I think everybody did.

SupermanML: Now that there is a Gov. [Governor]Ventura ... how long until we see Gov. [Governor]Long?

Long: My hero!!!! Our program is gonna be in Minnesota. We've got to get him on air. Finally someone who's gonna call it the way it is. These politicians today ... it's hard to believe them.

Maryann318 asks: i have seen your ad [advertisement] on tv about child abuse, is this a personal cause for you?

3.2 Clipping with the Plural Form

As previously stated, the hind clipped word is a term that loses its last element. Theoretically, the plural suffix “-s,” which is regarded as the last element of the plural word, could be omitted. But, the chatters never forget to end the

plural clipped word with the plural “-s”, since it is crucial to meaning. Consider the following examples :

Jescicle asks: what celebs have you met so far?

The word “celebrities” is clipped to “celeb”. Since the plural suffix “-s” can mark off the word from the singularity, it is inserted at the end of the utterance.

BigStar_Celeb: ...but I take all the pics they want and sign you know .. it’s flattering as well.

In describing the experience shared between his fans and himself, the speaker “BigStar_Celeb” used the clipped word “pics”, which was shortened from the full word “pictures”. Again, the plural “-s” is put in the final position of this word to suggest the plural property.

washpost_carolyn: I might say not to tell. Some parents don’t want a full
washpost_carolyn: accounting of what their 19-year-olds are doing when they get back to the
washpost_carolyn: dorms at night.

The speaker “washpost_carolyn” warned her chat partner not to tell her parents what she had been doing when she arrived at the “dorms” at night. Here, the plural “dormitories” was clipped to “dorms”.

VIPER_9999 asks: Do you think that you want to continue with soaps, or move on to movies?

The speaker “VIPER_9999” asked his/her chat celebrity about his career in the entertainment field. In this question, the word “soaps” is the clipped form of the plural word “soap operas”.

titmich asks: The promos for this film, the tv specials, the web page, the music are great. ...

In this utterance, the noun “promotions” was hind-clipped to “promos”. The suffix “-s” was inserted at the end of this shortened form to indicate the plurality.

3.3 Clipping for Phonological Imitation

Apart from the finding that clipping may be indicated with plural suffix, clipping for phonological imitation is another phenomenon that should be remarked. The phonological spelling can be simply demonstrated in the clipped words. Furthermore, chatters sometimes suggest both a plurality indicator and the phonological spelling in the same abbreviated word. Even though this is one of the special features of words in the chat room, it is not frequently found. For examples:

BigStar_Celeb: I don't know the procedure of getting tix.

Here, “tix” comes from “tic” or “tick”, themselves abbreviated from the word “ticket”. With the sound /k/ at the end together with the plural “-s”, the /-ks/ can be replaced by the letter “x” in order to imitate the phonological feature.

lefteye143 asks: did you ever doubt that you
would make it into the big time shobiz?

From the example, the word “shobiz” is abbreviated from the compound noun “show business”. Because the word “business” is pronounced [bɪz nɪs], the written shortened form is “biz”.

Yahoo_NSYNC : no, I just hold the mike where its
comfortable to sing.

The clipped word “mike” is the abbreviated form of “microphone”. The letter “c” which is the initial letter of the second syllable (-cro-) can be replaced by the letter “k” for a phonological spelling.

4. Vague Expression

In speech communication, vague expression is especially used when it is not appropriate to be precise. In addition, it may indicate the speaker's careless thinking (McCarthy, 1998 : 181). As for communication in the chat room, since there is possibility for planning, repeated reading and revising, the more specified and varied expression, which is normally produced in written communication (Finegan, 1994 : 378-379), should have been found. However, for fear that the flow of communication may slow down and the participants may feel bored and finally leave the room, the chatters ignore selecting the exact words. Therefore, the chat room, a synchronous communication under time constraint, can be another source of vague expressions. These vague expressions can also mark casualness in the reply and therefore in the situation. An example frequently used in the chat room is the term "stuff":

Howie D: I like to go out to clubs, hang with the guys, go to movies, enjoy life, do the normal everyday stuff that I would do back home.

In the above utterance, the word "stuff" was the vague expression indicating the speaker's avoidance of mentioning the many activities he normally did in his spare time when at his home.

TaraGirl12 asks: What are the weirdest rumors you've heard about yourselves?
Yahoo_HANSON:...that we're dating a Spice Girl or something like that!

The vague expression "something like that" in this utterance covers other similar rumors concerning the speakers themselves, besides the rumor of dating the Spice Girl.

Todd_Eldredge: Besides golf, I play a lot of tennis. Tennis and Golf are the favorite things I like to do when I'm not skating.

In this utterance, an imprecise plural word “things” refers to the activities or sports in general that the speaker “Todd_Eldredge” likes to do.

A.J.:I: ...some of the down sides are being away from family, not getting home cooked meals, stuff like that.

The speaker “A.J.:I” told about the negative sides of being a Backstreet Boy. The vague expression “stuff like that” refers to “other negative aspects of his lifestyle”.

YahooGuest1: Taylor :a boat. Secondly, a cell phone. thirdly, something extremely interesting on the trip from the desert island.

The speaker “YahooGuest1: Taylor” revealed the three things he would want if he were stranded on a deserted island. The expression “something” is vague since we do not know exactly what it refers to.

TruNSYNcer asks: What’s Your favorite Style of Clothing?

Red_Hot_Room_Jordan:Whatever is in fashion.

Since the speaker “Red_Hot_Room_Jordan” could not identify his favorite style of clothing immediately, the imprecise expression “whatever” was uttered.

5. Deixis

Deixis involves words or expressions that point backwards and forwards. When we speak, we identify participants, object or events by deictic references, which rely entirely on the situational context of the utterances (Fromkin and Rodman, 1998:199). Deixis is readily found in the synchronous chat room. Like speech communication, the chat room occurs in real time and the situation or context shared between the chat participants helps determine what is referred to. This is why utterances in the chat room do not need too much specificity. Deixis

then comes to play a significant role. Three types of deictic terms - namely, personal pronoun, place and time deixis - are found in the chat room. However, it should be observed that by deixis, proximity can be simply conveyed in this non-visual environment. Consider the following example :

Nscbf ask: WHAT GRADE YOU ARE IN?
 Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy: I am in 10th grade

The personal deixis of “you” and “I” in this conversation refers to the same chat person nicknamed “Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy”. We see that the referents “I” and “you” will shift, depending on who is addressing. These pronouns are often found in the chat room and correspond to those of general speech interaction in which the participants are in immediate contact, and the interaction typically focuses on matters of immediate concern.

MandymooreRULE asks: what do you think about comparisons to Britney Spears

Red_Hot_Boom_Mandy: She has sold so many records and is really great, but I feel flattered [sic.] to be compared to her.

alinvic asks: How did you like working with Ron Howard?

BigStar_Celeb: It was beautiful thrilling exciting time of my life. He is the most down to earth genuine giving director I have ever met. ...

The third personal pronouns “she” and “he” are both mentioned in the utterances above. To understand to whom these pronouns refer, the participants have to remember the preceding remarks. In the first utterance, “she” refers to the singer named “Britney Spears” and in the second “he” refers to the director named “Ron Howard”. Without a context or shared situation, these pronouns would be difficult to identify.

IloveJRTCurly asks: Could you ask Justin to marry me??
 Yahoo_NSYNC: I can do that later, he's not here right now...

The deictic term “here” refers roughly to a place that is “near the speaker”, not the places where all participants are presently sitting. It is more likely that the region is meant to include only the speaker and the person “he”, not the addressee.

KES_KIDS asks: will you ever come to Australia?
 BigStar_Celeb: hopefully, I really go there, that's cool

The speaker “BigStar_Celeb” said that he would like to visit “there” someday. This deictic term indicates some place outside the region of “here”. In this utterance, “there” refers to “Australia” which was mentioned in the preceding question. To know the location the speaker refers to, referring back to the previous turn is necessary. You may notice that the meaning of “there” in this utterance is a distantly spatial one, as opposed to “here” in the previous utterance.

michael_fredo_live asks: I'm in Elmyra right now, and maybe we can have lunch and hang out tomorrow.

The speaker “michael_fredo_live” suggested that the chat partner and he might have lunch and hang out together. The time “tomorrow” is the day after the day on which the conversation takes place. By using this deixis, the speaker is anchoring his time of having lunch and “hanging out” with respect to the moment at which he delivers his utterance.

Clouder19 ask: Kelly, What is coming up for your character this season on Baywatch?

The speaker “Clouder19” asked about the addressee's character in the television show “Baywatch”. The time deixis “this” refers to period of the upcoming season known by the speaker and his chat partner.

Doctor: Thank you for coming everyone! Be sure to join us next week, same place same time. ...

Before leaving the room, the speaker “Doctor” requested the participants to join the chat room “next week”. The deictic term “next week” in this context refers to the week immediately following the week this utterance occurs.

Kristian: I want to welcome everyone and thank you for joining us tonight. ...

Big_Bubba_B asks: dID YOU HAVE FUN ON THE mARK and bRIAN sHOW TODAY. I COULDN'T STOP LAUGHING TODAY

In the utterances above, the first speaker gave her expression of gratitude while the second speaker revealed how funny he found the television show. The time adverbial items “tonight” and “today” refer respectively to the present night and the present day this conversation takes place.

6. Vocative

Vocative is the method a noun phrase generally used at the beginning of the utterance to identify someone, or more generally to call attention or direct the utterance to a particular person (Biber, et al., 1999 : 1108; Crystal, 1992 : 143). It also signals social relationships between participants (Biber, et al., 1999 : 1108; Huddleston, 1993 : 122). It should be noted that on-line vocatives are various. This is how social relationships between participants are differently established. However, most of them are name-based : first name, family name and shortened name. The two categories of vocatives of the chat room will be discussed. They are redundant vocative and targeting vocative.

6.1 Redundant Vocative

In speaking, if one speaker asks some questions which the present listener knows only he/she can answer, there will be no need for vocative, or it will be redundant (Egins and Slade, 1997 : 145). However, in the chat room, the

redundant vocative is very dominant since it can call a participant's attention and then assure the chatters that what they type is likely to be seen in this non-visual environment. Following are some examples of redundant vocatives in the chat room studied :

michelewriter asks: Michael are you a collector?

xxxxxxx_uk asks: Traci what's it like to be adored by men all over the world?

applelifesaver asks: Patrika, do you think your character is more for Carrie and Mike or Carrie and Austin?

manolis_varnassingner asks: Eileen what is like working with Heather Tom

KoRn108 asks: Daisy, how did you like working on MTV?

In the utterances above, vocatives are not necessary because the celebrity, visiting the room alone, will know to speak next. If the chat speakers still insist on using them, these vocatives will be redundant. The redundant vocatives, which are found in the initial positions of the utterances, function to attract chat participants' attentions. They are based on the first names; namely "Michael" (Michael Bergin), "Traci" (Traci Bingham), "Patrika" (Patrica Darbo), "Eileen" (Eileen Davidson) and "Daisy" (Daisy Fuentes). By this use, familiar relationships between participants are thus established.

Motionsuggests asks: Mr. McCallum, What was the most remarkable thing about the production of this movie? ?

badbrad_48104 asks: Mr. Depp: you have a reputation for choosing what some would call 'outlandish' characters...

Malik_Corbin asks: Mrs. Fox, do you plan on going back to Theater?

To virtually ensure the participants' attentions and socially mark a more distant and respectful relationship, the speaker of each utterance intentionally used the redundant vocatives, which are at the beginning of the utterances, even though there is only one celebrity targeted to speak. Notice that they are based on the surnames ; McCallum (Rick McCallum), Depp (Johnny Depp) and Fox (Vivica A. Fox), and also fronted by the title "Mr.," "Mr." and "Mrs.," respectively.

Sandywake asks: Hannah, M'am, ...Can I receive a scholarship if I do really well?

In this case, the respectful redundant address "M'am" (the phonological spelling of "madam") serves an emotive purpose, being used with the chatter's name, "Hannah," to mark politeness, friendliness, warmth and even formality to the participant.

jamaican_chick asks: Cob, do you think that football will ever be known as "football" in the States?

IloveCobi asks: Hey CJ, Do you consider yourself more of a serious, romantic, funny, action or risk-taker type?

The speakers chatted to the only celebrity named "Cobi Jones". They both used the redundant vocatives, which are presented in the shortened forms; the clipped form "Cob" and the initialism "CJ". Compared to the vocatives used in the previous examples, these shortened vocatives establish much closer relationships since they are preferred as an alternative for personal address (Biber, et al., 1999 : 1110).

cnotespanishfly asks: Hey Hotties! We all know that you all wear boxer briefs..But are they just plain..or do they have patterns on them?

Dr_C_ asks: Hey beautiful, What is your favorite

The vocatives "Hotties" and "beautiful" in the above utterances not only reflect informal tone of the speakers but also express their positive feelings

towards the participants. The former marks the participant's sexiness, whereas the latter marks the participant's beauty.

6.2 Targeting Vocative

On some occasions, the speaker may use vocatives identifying the preferred next speaker in a situation where contextual clues do not make that person the most likely next speaker. Eggins and Slade (1997:145) call this phenomenon "targeting vocative". Targeting vocative occurs specifically when celebrities are invited to a group. It helps identify the particular participants and also avoids potential confusion; without vocative, the participants in the group could think that a question is addressed to them all. Consider the following examples.

(1) Foxy8419: What albums are you listening to now?

(2) rocketts007 asks: Zac, how much energy does it take
to play the drums

The speakers above talked to a music band with three male members. When the utterance is addressed to all members, a vocative is usually ignored, as shown in the first utterance; the speaker asked his chat participant without any use of the vocative. Conversely, the vocative is a very common in the multiparty talk of the next utterance where there can be no assumptions about who would be the next speaker. The second speaker thus used the targeting vocative "Zac" (related to the participant's name) in order to make this person know that the utterance was directed just to him. The other members of the band then understood they were exempted.

7. Expletive

According to the etiquette of the Internet chatting world, a person has to reply to any messages directed to himself/herself in a courteous manner. Thus, expletive, which involves swear words or expressions used as exclamation reacting to negative experiences in a normal speech situation (Eggins and Slade, 1997 :

151), should be avoided (Worcester, 1999). If one breaks this rule, he/she will be either ignored or immediately excluded from the room (Chatchawadee, 2001). More particularly, Yahoo has also established the rules for the chat communities. Chat members are not allowed to post, transmit or make available any contents that are harmful, threatening, obscene, or even invasive of another's privacy. Postings that violate these rules will be removed and lead to deletion of Yahoo Identities. Any violations of the members are asked to report to Yahoo's Customer Care (**Terms of Service**, 2002). Despite being a norm of on-line interaction, this etiquette of the chat room is still violated, as in :

Droopy2408 asks: Aren't you afraid Yahoo is gonna kick you out of for profanity Johnny...

Jerky_boys_johnny: That's always an option they have, yes. I try to keep it clean.

ChatYahoo_Lisa: Please no spamming¹ or obscenity

TNT roughcut.com'David Poland: Pretty please

ChatYahoo_Lisa: okay pretty please no spamming or obscenity

The utterances above reveal the existence of the "chattiquette" and also violations since profanity and obscenity are still witnessed. While chatters remind their participants to follow this etiquette, some may break it. Sinclair (1997) notes that such violations are perhaps due to the fact that the interaction of the chat room is more like casual spoken discourse than written discourse. Now, expletives that mark casual atmosphere of the electronic chat room will be divided into two categories: expletive that concerns sex or bodily excretion and expletive that expresses emotional involvement.

¹ The expression "spam" or "spamming" is used throughout communication on the Internet, in both synchronous and asynchronous forms, to mean any "excess of words". On some occasions, it may also mean words which enter the stream of ongoing conversations too rapidly to be read, causing displeasure to the others (Marvin, 1995).

7.1 Expletive that Concerns Sex or Bodily Excretion

In a chat room, expletive terms concerning sex or bodily excretion are obviously special because letters of these terms are simply replaced with characters, such as asterisks or hyphens. The number of the characters usually indicates the number of letters in each word. By this replacement, direct rudeness is avoided and etiquette of the chat room is then followed. It can be noticed that this type of expletive is often embedded in a clause. Below are examples.

Greg Hale: People will be camping out in line from noon on. And tomorrow night, all 5 filmmakers will be at the Angelika. They'll be giving s**t awayecan [sic.] I say s**t?

Cola_blossom_69 asks: RON, YOU ARE THE SH*T!!!
LOVE YOU!!!

The terms “s**t” and “SH*T” both are interpreted as the expletive “shit,” concerning bodily excrement. Note that there are asterisk symbols involved. Each asterisk is intended to replace a letter of the impolite word.

REBECCA: Yes...there were lots of teen girls screaming at Josh. And what they screamed was “Stop f***ing your teacher”

The terms “f***ing” implicitly refers to “fucking”, the action of having sexual intercourse. To avoid direct impoliteness, the speaker “REBECCA” used “f***ing”, instead.

Nikechick_24319 asks: I just broke up with my boyfriend.
What do I get him?
react_dennie: Breaking up at ANY time totally s*cks, but I'm pretty sure it's at its all time worst around Xmas, New Year and Valentine's Day. ...

The speaker “react_dennie” used the term “s*cks” for the expletive “suck”, which involves sexual behavior.

Jerky_boys_johnny: Pick up the phone! God! How are ya
f--- bastard!

Again, the term “f---” stands for the expletive “fucking”. Instead of the asterisks as used in the previous examples, the speaker “Jerky_boys_johnny” playfully used three hyphens (-). It is notable that the number of hyphens does not correspond to the number of letters in the word.

BigStar_Celeb: This movie’s rated R cause we said
the word “*****” over 60 times...

The speaker “BigStar_Celeb” talked about R rating of the movie. He replaced all elements of a four-letter expletive with asterisks, “*****”. The length of the word here corresponds to the number of letters in the word. This utterance may reflect the speaker’s personal values; omitting every letter of the expletive may be more polite than showing the word in full or certain parts of it, as found in the previous examples.

7.2 Expletive that Expresses Emotional Involvement

This expletive camouflages its taboo origin by either modifying sounds of a word or replacing it with the related word (Biber, et al. 1999 : 1999-1095). In the chat room, this type of expletive mostly concerns religious terms, and appears as an adjunct to a clause rather than as entirely independent clause. For example :

Iluvpoofu asks: hey guys, this is krystal, cheryl and
laura from Ny and i was just wondering what u guys
sleep in???

Red_Hot_Boom_Cnote: Dru-oh Gosh!

Red_Hot_Boom_Cnote: nothing but boxer briefs

BbluGrl_99 asks: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ALL
TIME SONG?

Yahoo_NSUNC: My gosh, I would say Fragil by Sting...

The speakers above expressed their comments on the questions by using the terms “Gosh” and “My gosh,” which are created by phonetic modification of

the religious word “God” (Mencken, 1997 : 395), because using this type of expletives is more polite than using the original religious word.

Youbetterbelieveit asks: Hey, Gia! How long did it take for the make up...

Gia: ohmigod!

Gia: That was really a long job

In the utterance, the speaker “Gia” uttered the exclamative expression “ohmigod,” indicating how long the make up took. This expression consists of “oh”, “mi” (the phonological spelling of “my”) and “god” which are connected without any spaces. This phenomenon indicates her attempt to produce a particularly speech-like message since in speaking, exclamative expression is rapidly produced without any pauses.

Evan18NJ asks: How does it feel to take the place of such a great as Bob Saget?

BigStar_Celeb: oh goodness, ...

Again, the speaker “BigStar_Celeb” used a related expletive term “goodness” which was invented as a substitute for the word “god” in order to denote his sudden surprise at the question; the speaker himself may not think of being as great or popular as the movie star named “Bob Saget”.

Soccer_star_KT asks: can you say hi to my sister ...
{she’s dying}

BigStar_Celeb: Oh Jesus! Wow!

From the example, in order to express his shock or surprise at the tragic story, the speaker “BigStar_Celeb” inserted in his message the expletive “Jesus,” which is a central part of the Christian vocabulary. In this way, we perceive sympathetic involvement in the conversation.

Jerky_boys_johnny: Actually, no, Mom is living with me. And she is unemployed, yes. She is a lazy old dirty bastard!

The term “bastard” which is normally used to insult somebody (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000 : 95) is an expletive expressing the speaker’s probably mock annoyance with the behavior of his mother.

8. Interjection

Interjection is a traditional classification for a part of speech. It functions to be purely emotive (Biber et al, 1999; Bussmann, et al., 1996; 235); it expresses a speaker’s curses and wishes, degrees of surprise, unexpectedness or emotional arousal. This speech feature, very frequently found in this chat room, can reduce the impersonal electronic atmosphere, helping the chat participants feel like they are chatting in a real conversational situation by allowing them to express their immediate feelings. For example :

Dawnluvsbrian: out of you who do you think will get married first?

Yahoo_BackstreetBoy: Wow... that’s hard. I don’t know. Let’s see, I think Brian or me

To express an immediate feeling concerning what was asked, the speakers “Yahoo_BackstreetBoy” uttered the interjection “wow”. In the above context, this emotive word indicates the speaker’s surprise. More importantly, it also suggests hesitation probably because he had never thought of this issue, so it was very difficult for him to answer immediately; he had to take time thinking through the possible replies.

Alienjess asks: What are some of your pet peeves?

TeenHollywood_Guest: When a dog licks himself and then licks your face... ewwww!!!!!!!!!!

The speaker “Alienjess” personally felt disgusted by being licked by a dog that had just licked itself. To communicate the sound showing this strong dislike, he used the interjection “ewwww”, with a repetition of the letter “w,” representing a long sound duration.

bella_export asks: What is your take on Bill Clinton /Monica Lewinsky affair?

BigStar_Celeb:Ugh..um, sadly enough I just think that ...I just can't believe that it's such a big issue.

Berlla21 asks: WHY SHOULD GIRLS WEAR SLIPS?

Shannon: To get rid of underwear lines. Uggh!

In the utterances above, the emotive non-words, “ugh” or “uggh,” were typed, meaning “it’s disgusting.” Note that the latter sound is expected to be pronounced for a longer period than the former because of the repetition of the letter “g”.

Thrill_seekerrr asks: I recently cut my hair accidentally, ..., and how long do you think it will take for it to be around my shoulder?

seventeen_beauty_editor: Eeek! i hate when I cut my hair too short.

The second speaker personally dislikes accidentally cutting her hair too short. Her dislike is expressed through the use of the interjection “Eeek”. This feeling is then explicitly revealed in the utterance that follows: “I hate when I cut my hair too short.”

WildEyedSouthernBoy75 asks: Cool strip scene you plan on being a Chippendales dance [sic.]?

BigStar_Celeb:Argh!

BigStar_Celeb:Next!

BigStar_Celeb: I don't want no guy asking me that!

The speaker “BigStar_Celeb” did not want to talk about the comparison to Chippendales dancers. The interjection “Argh” is used to suggest his strong dislike or displeasure. The last utterance, “I don't want no guy asking me that!,” also confirms this feeling.

Allcutegirl_asks: POLAND HERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

BigStar_Celeb: Poland! Gosh! I've never been there. How's Warsaw?

On being informed that the chat participant was in Poland, the speaker “BigStar_Celeb” expressed his/her instant surprise through the use of the interjection “Gosh”, the phonological derivative of God.

leonardo_delvecchio asks: i feel very sad since my
parents died

washost_carolyn: of course you do, geez.

washost_carolyn: you can remember them, though.

washost_carolyn: that will keep them alive for you.

The interjection “geez”, which is a phonetic modification of “Jesus”, was uttered to express the speaker’s sadness on the death of her chat participant’s parents, but also to convey her feeling that the participant’s sadness is completely understandable and to be expected.