

## Chapter 5

### Analysis of Non-verbal and Unique Features

#### **Analysis of Non-verbal Features**

As the chat room does not allow chatters access to any non-verbal cues, the meaning of verbal messages may be unclear and finally misunderstood. To compensate for the lack of these wordless cues, chatters translate them into writing. This creative translation makes the on-line messages more speech-like and more special since they involve emotions. Also, it can give life to the electronic communication. This playful method not only demonstrates the chatters' realization of the significance of non-verbal cues but also indicates their effort to decrease the unreal atmosphere and then perceive the real feeling as if they are talking in the real time. In fact, chatters do not seem to be interested whether this non-standard use will dilute or enhance the communication. As long as it can fulfill their communicative needs, they will continue using it. By the regular use, these innovative non-verbal cues become popularized and standardized in the Internet chat room. Eye contact, facial expression and gesture, the three categories of non-verbal features, will be studied here.

#### 1. Eye Contact

Eye contact is one of the significant features of non-verbal cues. As stated before, in the chat room, it is unclear to whom chatters are talking. To solve this limitation, they make use of a nickname. When chatters need to direct a message to their specific or intended chat person, they will place their name or nickname before the utterances. This digitally represents eye contact. It is noticeable that this feature is similar to the use of vocatives studied in the preceding sections. It functions not only to identify the participant but also to call attention. The participant generally tends to respond if he/she knows that such an utterance is directed specifically at him/her. For example :

MONGOOSE\_00 asks: TODD WHAT OTHERS  
SPORTS U PLAY?

jcs\_genie asks: carol what is the book about?

billybob\_222\_1999 asks: Travis what kind of bike do  
you have?

These speakers initiated their questions by the chat partners' first names : "Todd," "carol" and "Travis". This way of speaking can effectively compensate for a lack of gaze. It seems as though the speakers were looking at them in the middle of a chat even though they cannot physically see each other.

## 2. Facial Expression

The immediate facial expression could be recognized in the chat room through the so-called emoticon, the graphic use of computer keyboard. Emoticon simply consists of a colon, a semicolon or an equal sign expressing eyes and a variety of different symbols suggesting a nose and a mouth ":-)" (see chapter 2). With these characteristics, an emoticon is regarded the chatter's struggle to express digital feeling without a luxurious use of many words. Leaning (1998) gives reasons to support the benefits of these icons by explaining that they are intended "to accelerate the communication and add depth to communication. By using them, the participants can condense complex meaning into a few keystrokes thereby allowing deep meaning to be passed in a short time." Due to the context, neither the chat speaker nor the chat partner need to say explicitly what the icon means. Anyway, emoticons of the chat room studied have no various forms and obvious meanings. Only plain smiling faces are regularly employed. They are mostly placed at the end of the utterances and the shortened version that lacks of character denoting a nose is frequently used. For example:

i\_have\_yellow\_hair asks: Jennifer. do those biore  
facial strips for blackheads really work?  
seventeen\_beauty\_editor: I love them :)

The speaker “seventeen\_beauty\_editor” revealed that she used the Biore facial strips to get rid of the blackheads. In her utterance, the plain emoticon “:)” is used to qualify her strong preference for such facial strips. This icon consists of a colon substituting for eyes and a parenthesis for a smiling mouth, meaning that the speaker was graphically smiling.

LaurelTeixeira asks: Do you guys tell the honest truth when people ask you questions in these chat things?  
 YahooGuest1:Zac: No, I have never told the truth ever! :) Just kidding.

To deny the previous statement, the speaker “YahooGuest1:Zac” made use of the shortened smiling face “:)” (no nose), followed by the words of confession, “Just kidding”. This graphic representation is to clear up the ambiguity of an utterance and also to inform that the previous utterance is defined as a joke. In fact, he intends to mean “I never tell a lie.”

Silas\_Gday76: Can I visit the Mpset whilst visiting USA?  
 BigStar\_Celeb: They don't allow visitor... Sorry :(

To inform that the chat partner was not allowed to visit the Mpset, the speaker “BigStar\_Celeb” verbalized “sorry” followed by the non verbal sign “:(” to reinforce his real feeling of sadness. Again, a colon is substituted for eyes and a parenthesis for the frowning mouth.

Peaceful\_River asks: Life seems so hard for me right now but you guys really help me get through each and every day through your music. I just wanted to tell you thank you so much you really help me survive!=D...

Here, the emoticon “=D” denotes the speaker’s feeling of gratefulness. An equal sign (=) is for eyes and a capital letter “D” is for a wide mouth. The speaker seems to be widely smiling or rather laughing at the chat partner.

Happee05 asks: What was your favorite performance?  
Love, Sarah :o)

The speaker “Happee05” used the emoticon “:o)” to express a feeling of love or friendship before leaving the room. It is like the ending of a letter. A colon is substituted for eyes, a figure zero is for nose and a parenthesis for smiling mouth.

AmyBecca21 asks: Why do you stick your tongue out so much?

Yahoo\_NSYNC: I don’t know .. it’s just has a mind of its own :P

The first speaker was just curious why “Yahoo\_NSYNC P” often stuck his tongue out. The graphic icon “:P” is intended by the second speaker to identify and confirm his habitual facial behavior of sticking the tongue out. A colon is for the eyes and a capital letter “P” for the protruding tongue.

In addition, as we know, spelling with multiple letters may signal stressed syllables, the multiple emoticons are also used to further emphasize the meaning such icons convey. Consider the examples below.

Chica10\_98 asks: I think you are one of the greatest actress. I was wondering if you can give us any little hints about the future for J&M. Please :) :) :) :D :D :D

AbErCroMbIe\_hOtTiE\_OO asks: ..thanks and have a great day :) :) :) :)

The first speaker asked for some details about the J&M story while the second speaker said goodbye. Again, the conventional types of emoticons were inserted in the utterances to denote the feeling of friendliness and amusement. With multiple symbols, the speakers’ present feelings are intensified; that is, they both seem to be heartily smiling, and the first speaker was also laughing with a very big wide mouth “:D”.

On some occasions, apart from expressing feelings, certain emoticons may suggest other additional functions. But, this phenomenon is hardly seen. For instance :

CircadianRhythms asks: What is your definition of beauty? (give some examples please;)

The speaker asked for the definition of the word “beauty”. At the end of the utterance, a smiling face “;)” is employed as a part of the parentheses; a semicolon is for the winking eyes and a parenthesis for a mouth.

Instead of emoticons, the punctuation like a question mark and an exclamation marker sometimes play an active role as a facial expression, expressing immediate reactions. This use is another way to verbalize facial cues in a very concise way. In fact, it is also found in comic strip and written literature where the writer is continually trying to put non-verbal cues into the written form (Crystal, 1987 : 180). For examples :

Lola\_12567 asks: How do eliminate wrinkles  
Dennie: WRINKLES??? Hey, how old are you  
ANYWAY????

Gummibears4ever asks: Howie, when will you  
shave???

Howie D: when will I shave? What my face? My  
mustache? My hair? What exactly!?! My chest!?

The multiple question marks (???) in the first pair of utterances, and the combination of the question marker with the exclamation markers (!?!) in the second pair of utterances present the speakers’ puzzlement; the speaker “Dennie” doubts about the wrinkles mentioned by her chat partner, whereas the speaker “Howie D” was uncertain of what he himself should shave.

### 3. Gesture

One of the ways to indicate a gesture is to make use of the function keys. Chatters simply verbalize their gesture by typing the action either in asterisks,

colons or parentheses. Interestingly, such a typed action is not included in a sentence; they are used separately to show the chatters' action during the moment of chatting. Emoticon is sometimes applied but it is rare. The more chatters imitate this type of presentation, the more it becomes conventionalized in the chat room. Following are some examples.

BigStar\_Celeb: my favorite actors...well, I like Meg  
 Ryan, Sandra Bullock, Drew Barrymore, Brad Pitt.  
 BigStar\_Celeb: And, I like everything @!

The typographic icon “@” inserted after the utterances looks like the speaker's open mouth, which is normally used with other types of punctuation, as found in “:-@” substituted for screaming smiley or “:@” used to mean “what?” (Marshall, 1995, Sanderson, n.d.). Hence, the symbol in this utterance is possibly to denote the speaker's mouth while shouting. This shouting behavior is qualified by the use of the exclamation marker (!) at the end. However, it is observed that on the computer keyboard, the symbols “@” and the exclamative marker “!” are very close to each other. This is why a typing mistake may be another possibility of this phenomenon.

B\_Witched\_2001: Do you guys ever get homesick?  
 B\*witched:Linsdsay: Yes, all the time \*laughs\* ...

IloveCIH asks: Brody, please tell Shay you love her!  
 She's buggin on me! ::grin::

At the end of the utterances, the speakers above uttered their physical actions and reactions through the use of the graphic characters. The first speaker purposely typed the verb “laugh” between the asterisks to represent her action of laughter \*laugh\*, while the next one differently verbalized his laughter by typing “grin” in the double colons ::grin::

Skypie1981 asks: Can you get me into show biz?  
 Shannon: Yeah right  
 Shannon: I barely got me into it

Shannon: (laughs)

ImOnTheRoad2Rlbertane asks: Hey !! I went to the Jones Beach on the 2 nd. i was wondering if it was fun playing in the rain? (LOL)

Besides asterisks or colons, parentheses are also employed, as shown in the examples above. These speakers verbalized their actions of laughter in the parentheses; the first speaker typed the verb “laughs”; and the latter one typed the abbreviated form “LOL” standing for the whole expression of “Laughing Out Loud” (Murphy and Collins, 1998; Puterman, 1994; Reid, 1991 Suler, 1997). By this use, the chatters’ laughter could be easily perceived.

EdwinMcCain: I don’t know ....hmmmm...let me think...

Some times, a series of periods is used to create pauses, which are related to thinking behavior. From the example above, the speaker “EdwinMcCain” typed the periods not only to mark his presence but also to let his chat partner know that he is thinking of the answer or there is some additional information coming next. The verbalization of minimal responses “hmmm” is also used to confirm his gesture of thinking as well as his still taking a turn.

From these examples, non-verbal cues can be creatively expressed in the chat room. Chatters type them in order to compensate for the lack of non-verbal features usually found in speech interaction. To substitute for eye contact, chatters’ names are mentioned. Symbols called emoticons are also employed to convey an on-line facial expression. As for gesture, chatters’ movements are intentionally typed in punctuation or functional markers. By this creative typing, non-verbal features are easily conveyed, introducing a new form of communication that blurs a dichotomy of spoken and written languages.

## Analysis of Unique Features

Speed of communication, which is related to the typing ability, is an extremely important factor in a synchronic chat room. This real-time communicative situation is expected to be rapidly fluid, almost as rapid as speaking. A person who is a slow typist will be disadvantaged in this virtual community (Reid, 1991). The chatter, with this purpose of typing economy, tries to produce some features unique to CMC – the specialized features related to typing speed and unusual or rarely seen in many other types of written communications. These features not only give the chatter a sense of belonging to a particular group of the chat community but also differentiate the experienced chatter from the one who is new to this environment. Some of them include the use of phonological spelling, shortened form, the lack of capitalization and typing mistakes.

### 1. Phonological Spelling

Typing takes a longer time than speaking. To compensate for this inconvenience, chatters invent certain features. One of the most dominant features is a phonological spelling, which refers to a replacement of a word with a shortened form based on the same phonological properties. In other words, a word will be replaced with a letter, a number or a mixture of a letter as well as a number in case that their pronunciations are correspondent. Even though the way this word is spelled differs from Standard English, its meaning does not change at all. Instead, the word itself looks simpler, and the chatters seem to be as familiar with its shortened form as the full one.

This specialized spelling can fulfill several of the chatter's communicative and social needs. It not only increases typing speed but also suggests the chat speaker's casual and relaxed tone with a very enjoyable style. Speaking this fashionable language, the experienced chatters become modern in a chat community. Consider the use of phonological spelling in the following examples.



### 1.1 Substitution of Letters, Numbers or the Combination of Them for a Whole Word

If the pronunciation of a word is equivalent to a single letter, a single number or their combinations, such a word can be replaced. This substitution is quite dominant in the chat room. It is most likely in accordance with a concern for time constraints. To the chatters, doing just one keystroke is of course easier and more convenient than doing a lot of them. Typing some extra letters may mean little to a skillful chatter who is fluent in typing, but for a poor typist, it produces a significant difference. The examples below are the evidence of this.

browidegurlie1 asks: Puff have u seen the two guys who have been on Jenny Jones several times imitatin u and Mase?? and if so do u think of how they imitate u guys??

This is a part of written conversations in which the speaker chatted to the celebrity named Puff. Throughout this utterance, the full personal pronouns “you” are replaced with the simplified spelling of the letter “u” because both are similarly pronounced /u:/.

babyc\_19\_99 asks: What r cute hairstyles?

wetwilly\_316 asks: who would you like to meet the most now that your a star?

The speaker “babyc\_19\_99” asked about the hairstyles, whereas the speaker “wetwilly\_316” wondered whom his chat partner would like to meet the most at that moment. Instead of the full form “are,” these speakers intended to use only the letter “r” to save the keystrokes. This substitution causes no trouble in understanding the message since both “are” and “r” share the same pronunciation.

Yahoo\_HANSON:T: Pretty soon we're all gonna b a straight line instead of a stair step...

The speaker “Yahoo\_HANSON” predicted his great height and his friends’ would increase rapidly like a straight line within a short time. An infinitive

form “be” which consists of only two letters “b” and “e” is also shortened to “b”. Even though the way it is spelled is changed, its pronunciation of /bɪ:/ remains the same.

Bsboys121 asks: What’s ur fave car???

In this question, the possessive pronoun, “your” is quite strange since its spelling is changed to “ur”. However, when this series of letter “u” and “r” are pronounced together, their sounds are similar to the possessive pronoun “your”. Thus, this form is welcome in the chat room.

iliv4Hanson asks: have u guys ever wanted to Bungie jump or sky dive or n e thing like that ????

Dsitseyme asks: Brad do u play any baseball or does n-e-1-of u play basketball

In these utterances, “any-”, the first syllables of the implicit “anything” and “anyone,” is replaced with the shortened forms “n e” (as in “n e thing”) and “n-e” (as in “n-e-1”). This is because “any” and a series of the letters “n” as well as “e” are equivalent in pronunciation /enɪ/. Again, under the concept of typing economy, the word “one” in the second utterance is phonologically substituted by the number “1” and the hyphen (-) is to mark a clear boundary of each syllable.

litishaangel asks: ...I wanted 2 know if you would ever date someone with a different race?

roxyl621 asks: Hey Lainey! what would u recommend to wear 2 get a guy’s attention.... and how can I do my hair 2 meet that special someone?

Peppermont\_Jamuary asks:what’sit like 2 B so well known?

The substitution of a letter for a whole single word is shown in all of these utterances. The preposition “to” is purposively replaced with the number “2” since they have similar phonological aspects; both are pronounced /tu:/. Again, the capitalized “B” in the last utterance is for the verb “be”. It is noted that in typing

the normal “be” and the unusual “B”, two keystrokes are equally required. The latter is intentionally capitalized so that it is more easily recognized, more attractive and more playful.

BadMoFo\_69 asks: Gil...What kind of tips can u give 4 a cool outfit for a guy 2 put together for a millennium party?

Pimp69\_46112 asks: So, do u like what u do or r u just in it 4 the money?

Consider the utterances above. Whenever the word and the number share the same pronunciation, the chatter, without hesitation, will replace it. Like a frequent substitution of the number “2” for the preposition “to,” the preposition “for” (with a strong form) is replaced by the letter “4” because the way they are pronounced are very similar; that is, both are pronounced /fə:r/ and /fɔ:r/.

BiF\_CountryGirlLove asks: You said you dreamed bout a 3some with Carmen and Pamela... have you ever thought about being with another woman??

The word “threesome” was invented through the combination of the letter and the element of a word; the number “3” replaces the first syllable, “three-” while the second syllable “-some” stays the same. This replacement possibly occurs because of the resemblance of the written forms.

Danielle\_1998 asks: have u ever skinny dipped b4?  
When?

J.: Yup. I often do it at my house...

The speaker “Danielle\_1998” questioned his participant about a “skinny dip”. To save time in typing, besides the phonological form “u”, he also used another shortened “b4” in place of a preposition “before”. Creatively, the first syllable “be” is replaced with a letter, “b” and the second syllable with a number

“4”. This shows the chatter’s attempt to playfully replace a word with a mixture of a letter and a number that have the same phonological properties.

## 1.2 Substitution of Letters for Certain Elements of a Word

The pronunciation of the everyday word is hard to change but its written form tends to be very quickly and easily altered to suit the situation. This phenomenon is also seen considerably in the chat room. Every now and then the element of a word is replaced with a certain letter that shares the same pronunciation. This does not indicate lower status of the chatters but suggests their experience of chatting in this virtual community.

SK8A96\_98: who waz you guyz biggest inspiration?

ITZJulzDuhBoy asks: Hey you guys! What kind songz do you think will be in the new album?

The words “waz,” “guyz” in the first utterance and “songz” in the second one were changed in spellings. Phonologically, they are respectively pronounced /wʌz/, /gaɪz / and /sɔ:ŋz/. To imitate these phonological properties of English speakers’ accents, their normal endings with the letter “s” were deviated to “z”.

Vanity\_69\_chick asks: what looks better with overalls undone or buttoned up?? if so what shirts look kool with both of those styles?

The slang adjective “kool” in this utterance seems to be uncommon. Instead of the letter “c”, the first letter of this word was spelled with the letter “k”. This change in spelling imitates the phonological spelling, /ku:l/. Although this spelling does not save the chatter any keystrokes (compared to the standard form “cool”), it is a means to attract the chat partner’s attention; the unusual form is more likely to catch the others’ eyes.

react\_bwitched:Lindsay: ...Don't brush your hair, just run your fingers thru it when it's wet

The preposition “through” was simplified as “thru”. Even though its spelling is altered, “thru” is pronounced like the commonly spelled word form. In terms of the idea of typing economy, this peculiar “thru” contains fewer letters and therefore it means fewer keystrokes.

### 1.3 Others

From the previous sections (1.1 and 1.2), the phonological spelling is used to emulate the normal speech speed rate. But now, there is no concern for this timesaving concept. Some spellings are changed, even though they consume more time typing. As a means not only to color the messages but to immediately catch a chat partner's attention (which seem to be more important rather than only to compact information), the use is another preferable alternative style of speaking in the virtual room. For example:

KooderLama asks: Ali, what is the weirdest thing you have ever done @ an audition?

The playful typing of an icon “@,” of which the pronunciation is similarly to the preposition “at,” does not save any time in typing ; it needs the combination of two keystrokes. But this well-known sign is used to color the message and to catch the others' interest.

Absolutejustin asks: ...who's you're favorite member of the group?

amanda\_parker\_1999 asks: Who were you're inspirations as kids?

SweetHoneyz: You're music has been the inspiration to my life. You're so soulful lyrics tickle my heart.

Rdedkerjr2 asks: What happened with you're radio show?

Compared to the normal pattern “your,” the unusual spelling “you’re,” which stands for the personal possessive pronoun “your,” takes much more time typing. The widespread use of this pronoun does not accidentally take place but arises from the chatters’ intentions to use more keystrokes in order to make the written utterance more attractive and more distinctive.

The sweetest girl: ...and how can i wright you a letter?

From the example above, the infinitive “write” is typed to “wright”, indicating the speaker’s playing with the written form of the word. Besides the context in which it occurs, the way this word is pronounced also helps the participant understand its meaning more easily.

## 2. Shortened Form

Shortening is a process carried out by omitting some parts of a word or phrase (Algeo, 1991 : 8). Because this shortened form is rarely defined, it becomes difficult to understand what people are saying or writing. Nevertheless, it is noted that the shortened word is much more common in written language than in spoken language. In writing, if one does not know the definition of a certain shortened word, time is available for him/her to ask the others at a different time. However, in speaking, communication occurs under a time constraint. Taking time to search for such a definition may cause inconvenience for an ongoing interaction (Parisana, 1995 : 112).

This word formation is one of the most favorite chat terms because it helps to minimize the number of keystrokes and thus increases the speed of responses. Wauchope (1997) gives a reason to support this point in that “the person who is a slow typist, ..., will be disadvantaged, even considered to be less intelligent.” Moreover, the abbreviated word aims to replace full forms for the chatter’s convenience. The more elements of a word are made shorter, the more the chatter is given no difficulties in typing. Even a word consisting of only one element is deliberately abbreviated. The length of elements to be made into

abbreviations is not important. Every word, no matter how many letters it contains, seems to be too long for chatters to type in a common full form.

## 2.1 Initialism

Initialism is one type of shortening. As the name suggests, it refers to the initial letters of a word in a phrase or an expression that are pronounced individually by the names of letters (Algeo, 1991; Falk, 1973). Importantly, Initialism, which is one of the chatters' most preferable and enjoyable word formations in the chat room, is very specialized. In general, initialism is mostly related to certain institutions, technical terms or may be used in a particular field (Sola, 1967 : 10), and mostly written in capital letters (Algeo, 1991 : 9). But, in the chat room, even words commonly used in daily life are also shortened. The way words are formed is more flexible and casual. Most of them are typed in lower case letters, whereas some have a variety of forms, depending on the individuals. Markers, such as a slash, are applied in some occasions in order to make words easily noticed or just to mark the boundaries of words' syllables. Examples of the conventional initialism will begin first.

Washpost\_carolyn: some people think it's flattering when their SO's get jealous

Washpost\_carolyn: but there's no such thing as good jealous

The abbreviated word "SO" in the utterance above might be interpreted as either "SOMEONE" or "SIGNIFICANT OTHER" (Barry, 2000). It is formed by using only the initial letters of each syllable of the word. This is similar to the way the word "somebody" is conventionally shortened to "sb".

A\_Rose\_in\_the\_Rain asks: ...You're out of high school now, right?

Yahoo\_HANSON:I: Yes, I'm out of HS...

BigStar\_Celeb:...some one stole my purse.

BigStar\_Celeb: I had all my cc's and ID in there.

The initialisms “HS” “cc” and “ID” are formed by replacing the longer units “high school,” “credit card” and “identity card” with only the first letters of each syllable. Noticeably, this shortened “cc”, which conventionally stands for “carbon copy”, is newly used to mean “credit card.” In other words, this electronic initialism may duplicate the existing one, which stands for other things. Anyway, to make these abbreviations more distinctive, the chatter decided to capitalize them even though he has to do more keystrokes, as found in “HS” and “ID”.

Cybervenue\_cnote:Brody: I’m tired now (lol)

LuvinAdanMb20 asks: Adam? Do you enjoy it when people call you sillypants?

Matchbox20\_live:Adam: LOL! Ahh! I think Silly Pants is a wonderful nickname...

Fine\_usher 78 asks: Usher, you have 6 bathroom [sic.] in your house? When do you have time to use them??? (LoL)

MightyAphrodite\_16 asks: Hey guys...Any favourite CD you listen to ? A Mantra chat perhaps? (Lol)

These innovative initialisms are derived from the social expression “laughing out loud” (Murphy and Collins, 1998; Reid, 1991). Only the first letters of a series of words are combined to coin the word. Obviously, there is no concern for the inconsistency of their written forms; “lol”, “LOL”, “LoL” and “LoI”. No matter how this expression is written (either in only lower case letters, capital letters or the mixture of them), its various patterns are all accepted.

STUPID2547 asks: do yall have a g/f?

washpost\_carolyn: otherwise, keep your friendship and let BF figure out

washpost\_carolyn: he’s the one who matters.

Christiebunny asks: Hey, I met my bf on line and we’re together since last august. ...



Even “girlfriend,” “boyfriend” and “boyfriend,” the common words used in daily conversation, are replaced only with their initial letters “g/f” (a combination of the letters and a slash marker), “BF” and “bf.” (with a period), respectively. These initialisms are alternatives to the old words.

## 2.2 Vowel Dropping

Vowel dropping is a specialized word formation in the chat room. Only the vowels of a word are dropped. Normally, without any use of vowels, the word will be very hard to be pronounced. But, in this visual typing communication, actualized pronunciation of any word is not necessary, and therefore their spellings can be simply and deliberately changed. Only two examples are found in this study.

Paint\_Pastel\_Princess asks: What advice do you have for ppl trying to get into the music biz?

The speaker “Paint\_Pastel\_Princess” asked for some advice to get into the music business. In his/her message, an abbreviation “ppl” of a word “people” was invented by only using a string of letters “p”, “p” and “l” respectively, whereas the vowels “e”, “o” and “e” were dropped.

cybervenue\_cnote: Brody: we’ve been doin this type of music for 4 ½ yrs, that the way it came out

In the utterance above, the shortened word “yrs” of which the full form is “years” is invented by omitting the vowels “e” and “a”. The two keystrokes are therefore saved. This abbreviated word has already been well-established in the today’s dictionary (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000 : 1564).

## 2.3 Abbreviated Word

Abbreviation is an abridged contraction. It is usually coined regardless of the grammatical rules (Sola, 1967 : 9-11). In the chat room, the tendency to use this type of word formation is growing ; the chatter invents abbreviated words every

minute or second for their own convenience in typing without giving any specific definitions. Yet, there is no difficulty in understanding what the abbreviation means because of the surrounding words. Similar to initialism in the previous section, abbreviation found in the chat room is formed by combining the letter with several markers, such as a slash, a period or a hyphen. This combination not only makes the small word look distinctive but also marks the boundaries of each syllable. This electronic abbreviation may duplicate an existing one, which stands for other things. Following are examples.

Jam22\_99 asks: Sorry ....typical interview q. but What would you like to have been other than a musician?

BaaadGrrrl asks: Heys guys. I'm Samantha, 13/f. I'm a musician myself...

celloCBS asks: I have all these colored clothes, but one pair of really cool black and white shoes. Will colored clothes match B&W?

react\_layne: Yes, everything matched black and white.

The single words “question” (in the first utterance), “female” (in the second utterance), “Black” and “White” (in the third utterance) seem too long for the chatters to type in the full forms. So, only their initial letters that include “q.,” “f.,” “B” and “W” are used, respectively.

EDAngel\_ask: How do you put up w/ all those little girls screaming during a concert?

ChrissySimmons asks: does KY Jelly w/nonoxyl 9 really cause bladder infections?

Beachbabe43 asks: HOW DO U DO YOUR ACTS W/OUT LAUGHING?

In the speakers' first and second questions, a preposition “with” is formed only by the first letter “w” followed by the slash marker “/” so that the shortened form of the word may be simply noticed, whereas the last element of this

word “out” is omitted. Notably, “W/OUT” in the third question is unusual since the second element is typed in the full form, indicating the speaker’s personal preference or individual styles. Actually, it should have been shortened to “W/O”.

Sportysporty3 asks: what do u plan to do for your 20<sup>th</sup> b-day

Mpnda asks: So what u doing for V-day?

Mmm\_marica asks: talor, last v/d you had your ear pierced. What did you pierce today?

Only the first syllable of the word “birthday” and the compounds “Valentine’s day” are shortened to be “b-day,” “V-day”, respectively. It seems that whenever the last element of a compound word is “day,” other initial elements tend to be shortened and only “day” remains to be presented in a full form. However, “valentine’s day” (in the third utterance) is specialized; that is, it is formed through the process of initialism to “v/d”. From these examples, there seems to be no consistency in the written form of the words; they can be written in small letters, capital letters or the combination of both. Besides, the elements of words are separated either by a hyphen (–) or a slash marker (/).

BigStar\_Celeb: we like a street called Robertson Blvd.  
For shopping.

stefTTFN: Will you be moving back into your old apt?

The shortened “Blvd.” and “apt” are derived from the full word “boulevard” and “apartment”. These abbreviated words are also widely found in many written registers.

Yahoo\_huestl1: K: I was picked on when I was a lot younger, b/c I had brothers and sisters...

The conjunction “because” is abbreviated to “b/c” by using only the initial letters of each syllable of the word. However, these two syllables are separated by a slash marker.

### 3. Lack of Capitalization

Capitalization is an English conventional rule. It is significant in written communication. This standard feature, however, loses its functions in this virtual world. Chatters generally ignore capitalization of the first word of a sentence, the first pronoun “I,” abbreviations, designations following a name, the names of months, days of the week as well as holidays, and even proper nouns. This ignorance is intended to speed up chatters’ typing. For example:

Kevinmc asks: i play high school soccer i always get really frustrated ...

Agent\_Danna\_Scully\_F\_B\_I asks: i read your article in seventeen. was i really like going back to highschool?

CYEETSM\_ONE asks: i didn’t know you played in the soaps. what soap did you play on & what kind of role did you play?

Capitalization of the first word of a sentence and the first personal pronoun “I” are ignored in these examples; the pronoun “I” is typed with the lower case letter in these utterances, and a lack of capitalization at the beginning of a sentence is also found in the second and third speakers’ utterances.

martyann318 asks: Who would you say was the beat all time player in the nba

girl\_007\_pez asks: ...any advice on getting a job on a movie or t.v.???????

The abbreviation is another interesting area. In the first speaker's question, the abbreviation "nba" standing for "National Basketball Association" and "t.v." substituting for "television" are typed in lower case letters.

Morninglory72 asks: can i have the shirt you wore last tuesday?

Nicole218 asks: ...we'll see ya in april!

haloheadgirl asks: I'm not feelin' the christmas feelin' this year

gonnie27 asks: What you gonna be for halloween?

In the first two utterances, the names of day (tuesday), month (april) and holidays (christmas and halloween) respectively begin without any use of capitalization.

(1) DUHBRAT33 asks: if you had a choice to go out with cruise, brad pitt, or joshua jackson who would it be?

(2) Trashmanxxx asks: come on at least say hello to holly and becky!

(3) Justin\_f\_98 asks: do you like america?

(4) the\_sweetiest\_girl: i am a big fan of you and i am from israel what do you think about that and how can i wright you a letter?

(5) Nina106 asks: What do you order at mcdonalds?

(6) Just\_Sweet48 asks: Are you planning to attend the grammys?

The proper nouns do not begin with the capital letters in the utterances above. In the first two utterances, personal names, which are "cruise," "brad pitt," "joshua jackson," "holly" and "becky," are all presented in the lower case letters. This use is also found in geographical names of the next third and forth, as in "america," and "israel," for instance. The commercial names of the companies like

“mcdonalds” and “grammys” are included as well, as displayed in the last two utterances.

#### 4. Typing Mistake Due to the Time Shortage

Like disfluencies of speech communication, typing mistakes in many very simple words are found in this digital environment. To keep up with the flow of communication, speed at a keyboard is required. This means that chatters have to type quickly. Typing mistakes then possibly occur. Remarkably, the proportion of typing mistakes in each chat transcript is quite small, probably because of the chatter’s self-correction. The chatter can revisit the message and repair it before sending it. By this quality, the falseness is facilely removed. However, since these misspelled words do not cause misunderstanding or severe confusion, chatters sometimes leave them behind.

The widespread arguments about the benefits of these orthographic mistakes have been made by some researchers. To Backer (1997) and Wauchope (1997), even though regarded as a mistake compared to the Standard English, misspellings are ways to color messages with personality. Danet, Ruedenberg-Wright and Rosenbaum-Tamari (1995) consider them as “a word play” in the chat room. They can create funny possibilities and appear to be made on the basis of time shortage (Wohlk, 1996). Now, two types of typing mistakes related to the time limit will be explained, as presented in the followings :

##### 4.1 Missing Letter

As stated earlier, communication in the chat room requires a typing ability. But, during this immediate written conversation, certain letters of a word may be missed or left out, causing spelling errors. The following examples are important evidence of this phenomenon. The missing letters will be indicated in the brackets :

Sky\_lo asks: Do you have a *ta[ ]t[ ]oo???*

Yahoo\_HANSON:T: Just before the *sh[ ]o[ ]w* all your excitement and adrenalin gets going...

koolgirldx asks: Do you write your own songs? Do you play your own *inst[r]uments*?

nean05 asks: What sports do you like? I like basketball and your hot and *se[e]m* like a b-ball player.

Gia: But I *th[ɪ]nk* likely my fame hasn't reach uncomfortable proportions

BluStardust asks: What is one thing you wish you could've done in the past *diff]erent*?

StarWars\_McCallum: ...I think his overall idea is hopefully, soon, you'll see this *extr[a]o[r]dinary* saga of a family over 6 parts or chapters. Hopefully, it will be one big 12 hour film.

sourjack2 asks: whats your *fav[o]rite* current Movie?

Gia: My family and friends *t[h]at* love me

wteal asks: HOW MANY MORE *SE[A]NSONS* WILL THE SHOW BE ON?

Shannon: I will not look *go[fo]d* with blond hair

doole160 asks: Do you guys ever get sick of being around each other all of the time? By the way, *cong[r]ats* on your success.

## 4.2 Finger Slipping

As previously stated, the typing speed influences the rapid flow of communication. To give a quick response, the chatter's fingers may slip to wrong letters, either the letter next to the intended one or other letters far from the intended ones. Or, the letters may accidentally shift their positions. That is, the latter letter may come before the former. Nevertheless, this produces certain playful spellings. Even the experienced chatter probably encounters this phenomenon. In the following examples, the rewritten word will be indicated in the brackets.

Yahoo\_HANSON: T: Well, we were *enjoy8ing* [enjoy] it and wanted people o[sic.] enjoy it as much as we did...

Vfinn17 asks: Are you or any of the guys *vegetarians* [vegetarians]?  
 Justimz\_girl\_311 asks: Why do you stick out your *tounge* [tongue] all the time?

Mickyt54 asks: *hoe* [how] much did the movie cost

Jay: iw as at the wardrobe department  
 Jay: doing a fitting with her for the first movie  
 Jay: And coming form the modeling *indystry* [industry]

Zornanna asks: Shaggy- goodluck for the future!  
 Goodbye&*thatnk* [thank] -you for answering my questions.

sugarblooie61 asks: How long *hvae* [have] you been married?

Vern: he's nice, funny and he came to my *traielr* [trailer]  
 Vern: wanting to sing karaoke all the time

Marljay asks: What impact has such intense adoration from *youn* [your] women had on your self esteem?

I\_Luv\_Justin98 asks: What is it like always seeing your self [sic.] in *magazines* [magazine] and things?

girl\_007\_pes asks: ...im 13 and live in minnesota, any *idvice* [advice] on getting a job on a movie or t.v ????????

shannon: I did a chata *coupld* [couple] weeks ago with MSNBC

Yahoo\_BackstreetBoy: ...It was cool. It got to hang out *iwth* [with] Naomi, Whitney and Donatella. ...

AlienAub asks: is Pokey Reese a good bet to take this year and is he going to continue his excellent season he *ahd* [had] at the beginning?

Littleangel1745 asks: what is your *favorute* [favorite] movie of all time?



Lonewolf2003 asks: where is your *faverite* [favorite] place to eat?

ned\_flanders324 asks: whats your *favirote* [favorite] salsa