

AN EXPLORATION OF WRITING CHARACTERISTIC IN INSTANT MESSAGING AMONG
THAI STUDENTS

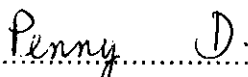
A MASTER'S PROJECT
OF
MR. RAKKIAT SUMLITPANIT

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for
International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University
March 2004

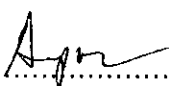
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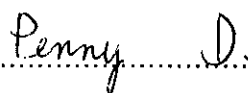
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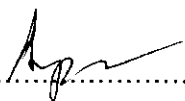

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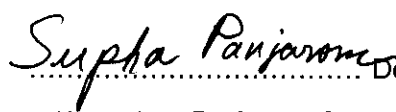
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March 13, 2004

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Chapter1

Introduction

The Internet was started by the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, trickled down to the corporate world and then into the lives of everyday people. It has affected our lives in countless ways. Although some of the people may not personally utilize the Internet as much as others do, it still has an influence over the way of live. In addition to improving the advertising, communication and business world, the Internet has started to affect people's personal lives by allowing new forms of communication with friends, family and colleagues worldwide.

What makes the Internet an attractive place to meet or communicate? There are three reasons Christopher Lloyd's lists why developing a social relationship on the Internet has become so popular. He stated, "First, communicating via the Internet is cheap compared to sending overseas letters or paying outrageous long distance phone bills. Second, with the increased pandemonium and demand surrounding Internet chat lines there is always so much going on. One can never get bored. There is a new person to meet in a new situation with every click of the mouse. Third, the Internet is seen as a romantic medium. You never quite know whom you are talking to. Much is left up to the imagination."(Lloyd.)

The Internet is composed of endless pathways to communicate and explore information. Some devices, such as the World Wide Web, acts largely as an information library with no actual real-time or personal interaction between two or more people. However, there are many resources on the Internet that provide both real-time interaction and personal communication between individuals and groups. There are many times that people will meet one another in one setting and then go on to communicate with them in a different setting. However these interactions of the onliners may develop, the first thing to explore is where people initially meet on the Internet.

A common place for people to first interact with each other is in a newsgroup. Newsgroups consist of a vast amount of different message boards where Internet users around the world may read and post public messages about any topic they can imagine for others to read. There are newsgroups for movie star fans, sports clubs, religion, education, etc in fact anything imaginable. People initially begin to read and to post messages in newsgroups with the topics that interest them.

During the time the messages were sent back and forth in the public forum, a particular person can wait for either a public discussion on the newsgroup about the related topic, or sending the other person a private e-mail message.

E-mail, the next possible step in a newsgroup, initiated relationship as well as an extension of it to other persons on-line relationships, is also a saved electronic message system which does not allow for real-time interaction between the two parties. E-mail allows for candid communication between two people in a text-based format. Some people revert to e-mail communication after their initial meeting on a newsgroup or IRC (Internet Relay Chat).

The more immediately interactive types of Internet programs that allow for instant communication of text back and forth are IRC, MSN messenger, Yahoo messenger, AOL messenger and ICQ.

The actual layout of IRC is different depending on the software, but it basically consists of different IRC servers of which each contains a number of channels or rooms with different topic areas set. Once we are connected to an IRC server, we may find out which channels that are offered. We may join a channel with a topic that interests us, or even create a channel of our own in the IRC environment, with the name they post at the front of the message. One can reply to the scroll on the screen, or choose a person that looks particularly interesting and post a private IRC message to him. IRC, then, is a place where both public and private real-time chat takes place.

Another immediate interactive type of Internet communication is Instant Messaging (IM). IM is an Internet technology that allows people to send and receive text messages that are delivered in real time. It is commonly described as a combination of chat and email. Like chat, IM is live and instantaneous, where email messages take time to deliver, the significant difference between IM and chat is that IM sessions are invite-only while chat rooms are open to anyone. IM is used to seek out people to chat with. In that way, IM is similar to email, which is directed communication between two or more people. When a user signs into an instant messenger service, his contact list (or buddy list) will immediately come up and their status will also be shown. It is easy to know who is online and who is not as the online contacts move to the top of the list. When user starts a conversation, a new window will open up. A window that user can immediately begin typing his message and then it will be instantly conveyed to the recipient.

However, there are more misunderstanding without the visual and oral cues that we receive in face-to-face or telephone conversations. Most researches concerning effective communication indicate that up to 90% of face-to-face communication consists of eye contact, facial expression, body language, tone of voice and pauses in speech, etc. As IM is text-based, people may wish to include emoticons in their online communication to express their feelings. Some of the common emoticons are as follows:

Emoticon	Meaning
:) or :-)	Smiling; happy; don't take it seriously
:(or :-(Frowning; unhappy; I'm sorry
:-o or :-O	Surprised or astonished
:-D	Laughing
:-P	Various meanings, but the idea is the tongue hanging out
:-/	Wry face; used for wry humor
#: -O	Shocked
8-O	Shocked
%-\	Hung over
%-{	Ironic
8-]	Surprise
:-@	Screaming

Like emoticons, commonly used acronyms can assist IM communication. Some acronyms are widely recognized shorthand for common words. Acronyms are not generally accepted in formal communication. They can sometimes be written in lowercase. Some common acronyms are as follows

Acronyms	Meaning
A/S/L	Age/Sex/Location

BCNU	Be seeing you
BRB	Be right back
BTW	By the way
F2F	Face to face
FAQ	Frequently asked questions
FWIW	For what it's worth
FYI	For your information
G2G	Got to go
IMHO	In my humble opinion
IMO	In my (plain, ordinary) opinion
IRL	In real life
LOL	Laughing out loud
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
TNSTAFL	There's no such thing as a free lunch
TTYL	Talk to you later

Today there are several IM services. Some of the most popular services used by teenagers are AOL, Yahoo and MSN. With the speed and intensity, IM has altered the social lives of people today. "It is more than just a new place where people can interact and not only has it become but the fastest growing communication medium in history", said Sterling (1993). IM has changed the nature of communication and language. By replacing what has been an oral discourse with a text-based form of communication, people have created a new language, and the new culture that reflects this communicating difference.

IM is not only used for personal communication, but also some businesses use IM as an important element of communications structure. Companies are using IM for a variety of activities including staff meetings, immediate file transfer, customer service chat, training feedback, and instant collaboration among workers. "Businesses have found that IM is the most cost-effective and convenient way to stay in touch with telecommuters and traveling employees," says Laura Schneider (1998).

Statement of the Problems

The Internet is growing at a rapid rate. Based on the increased usage of the Internet comes an increased demand for distance and online communication. In order for this new medium to prosper, it is important to understand the true impact the online environment has on the language.

In the past five years, IM has imposed and advanced our society. Some may think IM has not only made a positive impact but brought many disadvantages such as laziness, lack of self-betterment, and de-motivation. It also influences people into slack of writing skills and bad grammar. Since people spend most of their time in front of the computer screen, they tend to abbreviate every word in order to make their message just easier, such as cu (see you), dnd (do not disturb). Not only this, since online chatting is all informal writing, people disregard the need to use sentences with comma or periods and also the correct use of capitalization. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the language used in the conversations performed with Instant Messenger. Therefore, explore the use of Internet as a medium of communication and learn the ways that this medium has changed or affected the messages people in our society use to communicate with each others.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the writing style and language used of Instant Messaging. Explain the state of the English language as used by Thai students on the Internet.

Definition of Terms

Acronyms - An acronym is an abbreviation of several words in such a way that the abbreviation itself forms a word.

Emoticons - On the Internet in e-mail, chatting, and posted messages, an emoticon (sometimes referred to by the name of the original emoticon, the smiley) is a short sequence of keyboard letters and symbols, usually emulating a facial expression, expressing a feeling that supplements the message.

Instant Messaging - Short messages sent immediately via the Internet between two or more persons using an Instant Message program.

Smiley - A sequence of typed characters that graphically produces the sideways image of someone smiling

Research Question

What effect does Instant Messaging have on the written English?

Scope of the Study

This paper presents a general overview of the writing characteristics in IM. The study was conducted with 30 students at the age 18-25 years. The data derived from the survey were made through a questionnaire distributed to the participants. The findings from the study were specific to the population surveyed and were limited to perceptual measure since the data was collected by a questionnaire and observation.

Expected Outcome and Utilization of the Study

This research study shows the language used in the Instant messaging under Thai cultural contexts. The result revealed would be useful as the following:

1. General people to understand the effect of modern technology towards communication language.
2. General people to examine the writing style in Instant Messaging of Thai students.
3. Educators to determine how to adapt literacy education to the reality with IM as the dominant mode of written communication of Thai students.

Chapter2

Review of literature

Related research in writing styles

The earlier researches relevant to online English Language are discussed as follow:

1. Brown-Owens, Michelle Eason and Art Lader (2003) mentioned in their research "What Effect does Computer-Mediated Communication, Specifically Instant Messaging, have on 8th grade writing competencies?" that the impact that the new medium is having on the language habits of the children. Is Instant Messaging inhibiting students' mastery of correct English? In their study, they studied the effects of Instant Messaging on middle school student grammar. By analyzing the surveys in conjunction with the student portfolios and GPAs, They sought answers to three things: (a) determine whether Instant Messaging is a secondary or "shorthand" form or computer-mediated communication that has no effect on grammar competencies. (b) determine if the amount of time dedicated to Instant Messaging affect student writing skill. (c) determine what measures could be used to correct grammar issues related to Instant Messaging.

The participants they selected were the eighth grade because of two reasons: 1) middle school students comprise one of the largest single demographics within the IM community, and 2) the break between middle and high school provides natural and easily quantifiable benchmarks with regards to students' understanding and usage of Standard English. Eighth graders in many ways are living on the precipice of change, thus it is fitting that their writing assignments and accomplishments would reflect evolving cultural "standards" as well. According to the South Carolina Department of Education's 2002 English Language Arts Curriculum Standards, eighth grade students should be able to demonstrate the ability to edit for language conventions such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, agreement, syntax and word usage as well as generate drafts that use a logical progression of ideas to develop topics for specific audiences and purposes. Materials they used are included individual student portfolio, which include graded and

returned class writing assignments along with student. Then the survey will be distributed to students to determine usage frequency and purpose of Instant Messaging. They obtained listings of students' beginning and ending writing grade point averages (GPA) in order to track writing skill assimilation.

The results of the study indicated that Instant Messaging lingo is like any other form of slang or casual communication. It holds a solid position in our evolving lexicon. With roots in the casual nature of adolescent communication, it is today equivalent to the notes passed during class in years past. Long hours spent on the telephone are now spent online chatting. Whether grammar competencies are affected by usage or not, if this form of slang or communication is appearing in formal school assignments, then there are corrective measures that may assist in teaching students about appropriate use. Clearly, students do benefit from correction during the CMC process. Although the writing competencies were not necessarily affected, the students experienced a positive attitude about learning. The results concluded that the affect of computer mediated communication on literacy is still to be determined. Many educators report that students have a difficult time differentiating formal and informal writing. At the same time, CMC does clearly positively affect students' motivation to write.

2. Ylva Hard af Segerstad (2002) investigated in his research "Use and Adaptation of Written Language to the Conditions of Computer-Mediated Communication." that how written language is used and adapted to suit the conditions of four modes of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Texts from email, web chat, mobile text messaging (SMS) and instant messaging (IM) have been analyzed. The general human ability to adapt is deemed to underlie linguistic adaptation. A linguistic adaptivity theory is proposed in his study. It is proposed that three interdependent variables influence language use: synchronicity, means of expression and situation. Two modes of CMC are synchronous (web chat and instant messaging), and two are asynchronous (email and SMS). These are all tertiary means of expression, written and transmitted by electronic means. Production and perception conditions, such as text input technique, limited message size, as well as situational parameters such as relationship between communicators, goal of interaction are found to influence message composition.

The dissertation challenges popular assumptions that language is deteriorating because of increased use in CMC. It is argued that language use in different modes of CMC are variants, or repertoires, like any other variants. Contrary to popular assumptions, results show that language use adapted creatively and is well suited the particular modes of CMC. A number of linguistic features are shown to be characteristic of the modes of CMC investigated in the present study. Strategies such as syntactical and lexical reductions are employed to reduce time, effort and space. These techniques often appear to serve multifunctional purposes, by expressing interpersonal intimacy by the choice of word and phrases, while reducing keystrokes. This clearly indicated linguistic awareness. Texts in email, web chat, instant messaging and SMS are found to contain unconventional and not yet established abbreviations based on Swedish as well as words from other languages, unconventional or spoken-like spelling, unconventional use of punctuation and use of non-alphabetical graphical means (emoticons, asterisks). Thus, written language is found to have been developed and enhanced to suit the conditions of computer-mediated communication.

These two earlier researches serve as preliminary studies in order to investigate the language and writing styles.

Instant Messaging as the medium of communication.

Instant messaging is a unique form of communication that is likely to continue to grow at an enormous rate. Though instant messaging has only been around for seven years, 19% of online youth say that instant messaging is the primary way they contact friends. Less than 10% use email. (Rainie. 2001)

Lenhart Rainie (2001) stated that communication via instant messaging is on unique to online youth:

- Over one-third of instant message users say they have used IM to say something that they would not have said face to face.
- More than half have blocked messages from someone they didn't want to hear.

- Over two thirds of IM users use messaging at least several time a week.
- 17% have used IM to ask someone out, and 13% have used it to break up with someone.

IM usage has increased, and this increase has been accompanied by a multitude of changes in our basic language, bringing the question of standardization and how synchronous and asynchronous text based exchanges affecting basic, standard language. IM offers an opportunity to use elements of communication in writing that have in the past been associated only with oral communication, "the use of formulaic devices, presence of extra textual content, and development of community that had been characteristics of oral communication" (Ferris. 2002). Because the content of IM communication is more adaptable and more easily manipulated to suit the situation than traditional writing platforms, language becomes more literal and more interactive, while the roles of reader and writer become blurred. The environment of IM and other electronic mediums is on the whole more fragmentary and immediate (Sudol. 1993).

One of the defining aspects of the IM is that it is comprised mostly of English speakers, or at least writers, from all over the world. Many of the Internet users are not native English speakers, but most at least have a comprehension of the language. Since the use of English is so widespread among IM users, it stands to reason that English would be the common language. IM users seem to have their own dialect, or at least their own acronyms and jargonisms. The effects that IM has on the English language such as misspelling words and syntactical errors by the non-native typer and are taken in as the user soaks up this new word or syntax without thought. The examples of this could be the use of shortened words used as quick shorthand. Because typing is a more difficult and time consuming task than speaking the most obviously changes of English language used in IM communication include the shortening of words, omission of punctuation, subject pronouns and articles, and numeric inclusion in terminology (Hancock. & Dunham. 2001). According to Cullen Murphy, the new, digitalizing age or computers "the English language may be entering a period of rapid revolution." IM users have created a fashionable language to use instead of standard writing language throughout teenage culture. Geoffrey Nunberg, senior researcher at the Center for the Study of Language and Information at Stanford University and Consulting Professor in the Stanford Department of Linguistics said, "The telegraph came in the

19th century. Everyone was alarmed about its effects on the language. Every technology of communication brings with it its own characteristic linguistic games and tropes and ways of saying things," he says, "and IM is just another one of those."

Teenagers have always been innovative in adapting language to suit their needs. It is no surprise that this electronic medium has become a part of teen vocabulary, particularly in IM, where writing simulates speech in all aspects. To teenagers who use electronic medium, the language used may be quite fashionable, but how does this form of communication affect their everyday written English?

For the better understanding about online writing styles of Thai, this research has been established with Thai students that will allow us understand their writing styles preferences.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In selecting participants, a random sampling of 30 Thai net-surfers were asked to participate in the online survey. The population in this study was university students, aged 18-25 years old.

The Population of the Study

The population of this study were 30 students who used instant messenger software and used English as the medium for communicating. They were randomly selected from the webboard of www.mthai.com during October-December 2003.

Research Procedures

A survey was conducted over the Internet, questionnaire was sent individually to all participants who responded by email or sent as a document file via Instant messenger software.

Data Collection

The data were collected online by a questionnaire. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire within three hours and return their completed questionnaire by e-mail or using instant messenger software.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by percentage calculation and presented in the forms of bar charts and data discussion. Participants' responses were examined in relation to the research question. In addition, relevant comments to the research question were also analyzed and reported in the result.

Chapter 4

Findings

Major findings from the questionnaire

The data collected from the questionnaire were presented in 2 parts. The first part presented the primary information of the respondents. The second part described the IM writing style of Thai students.

Part I: Primary information of the population.

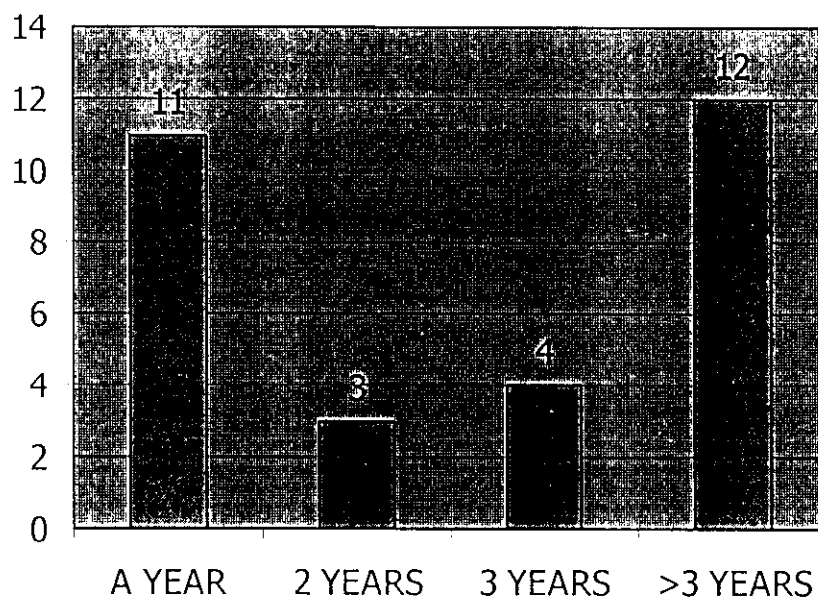


Figure1 IM experience of the respondents

In Table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents are divided into two groups. There were 11 respondents (37%) of the total respondents who communicated with each other via IM for one year while other 12 respondents (40%) had this online experience for more than three years. The rest of the respondents (23%) had used IM between 2 and 3 years.

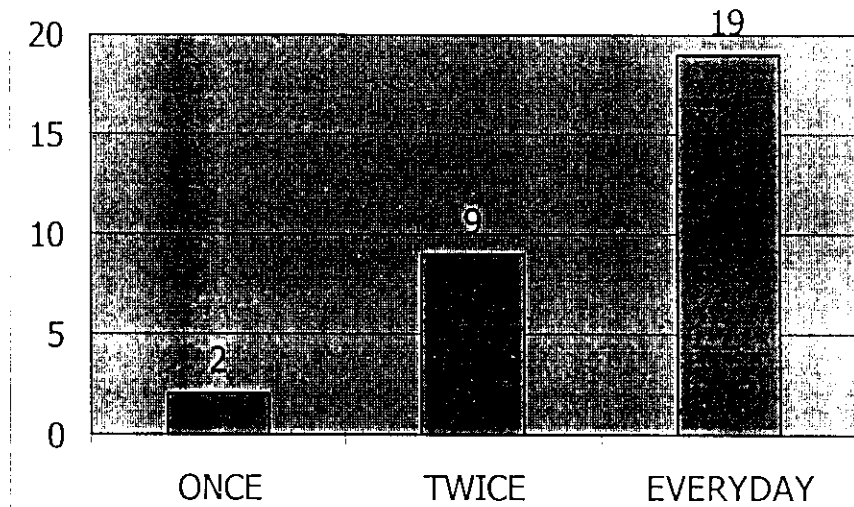


Figure 2 Frequency of use IM by the respondents

Table 2 shows that there were 19 respondents (63%) using IM everyday while 9 respondents (30%) using IM twice a week and the rest, 2 respondents (7%), chatting via IM once a week.

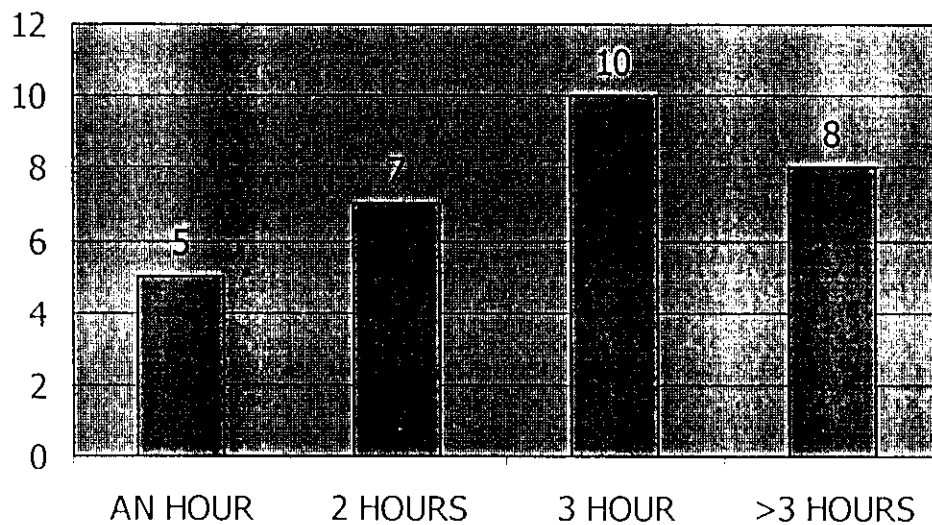


Figure 3 Time spent on IM by the respondents

There were 5 respondents (16%) spent one hour on IM, 7 respondents (23%) spent 2 hours, 10 respondents (33%) spent 3 hours and 8 respondents (27%) spent more than 3 hours each time they used IM.

Part II: Writing Style of the respondents

The respondents were asked about their online writing style and their attitude towards the IM language. The findings are classified in table 4 to table 10.

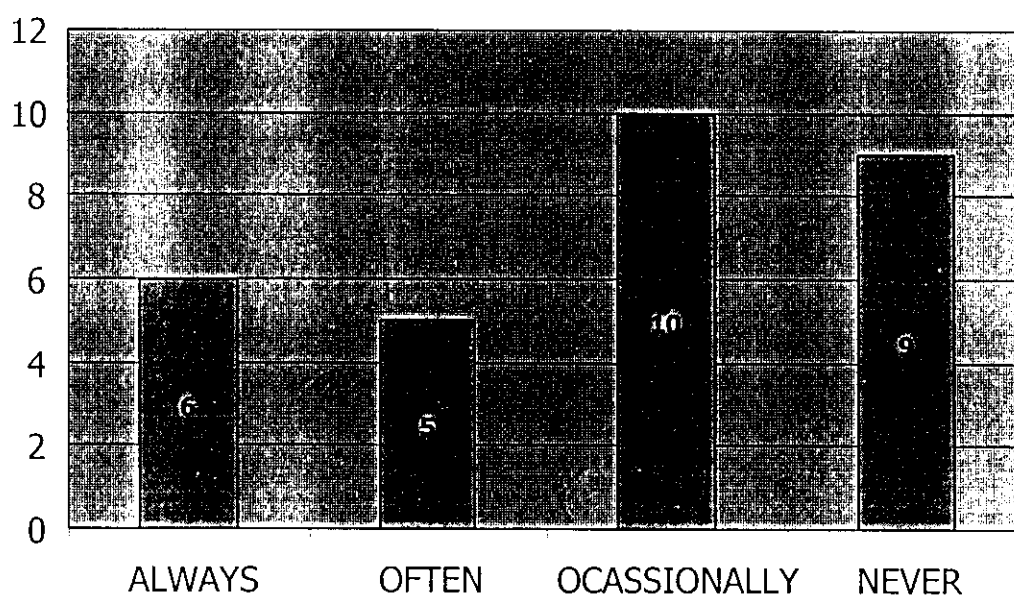


Figure 4 Check for spelling when sending a message

There was a slight difference between those who had occasionally checked for spelling (33%) and those who had never checked (30%). The rest (37%) always and often checked their spelling before sending their messages.

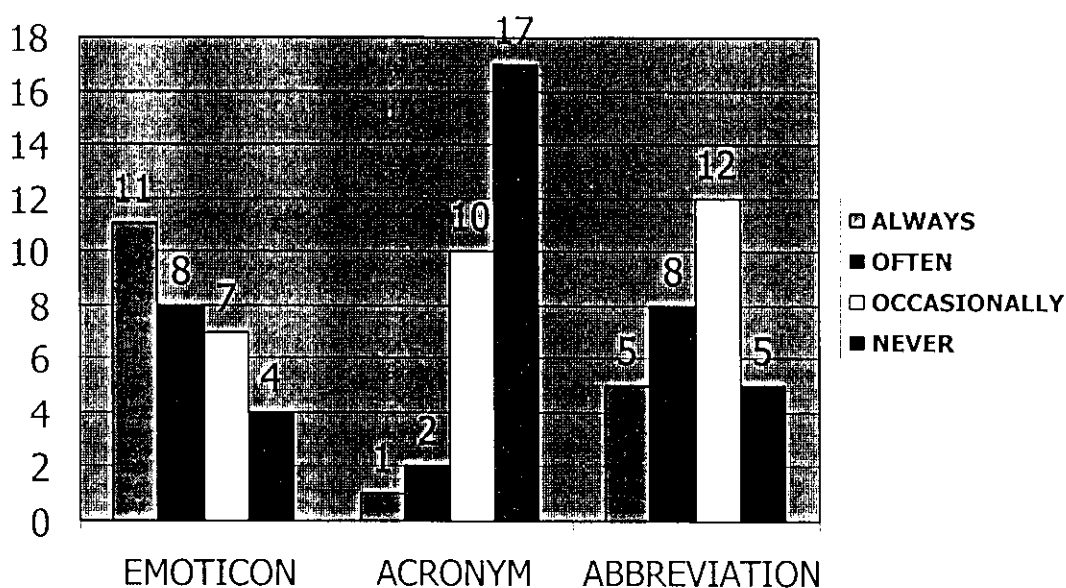


Figure 5 Use of emoticon, acronym and abbreviation

Emoticons were used by the respondents more than abbreviations and acronyms: 37% of the respondents said they always used emoticons when using IM, 50% used emoticons regularly. Abbreviations were also commonly used. Only 17% of the respondents had never used any kind of short form of abbreviations and also didn't know what acronym meant. Acronyms were used much less than the others. Only 3 respondents always or often used them, with 57% of the respondents said that they had never used them at all.

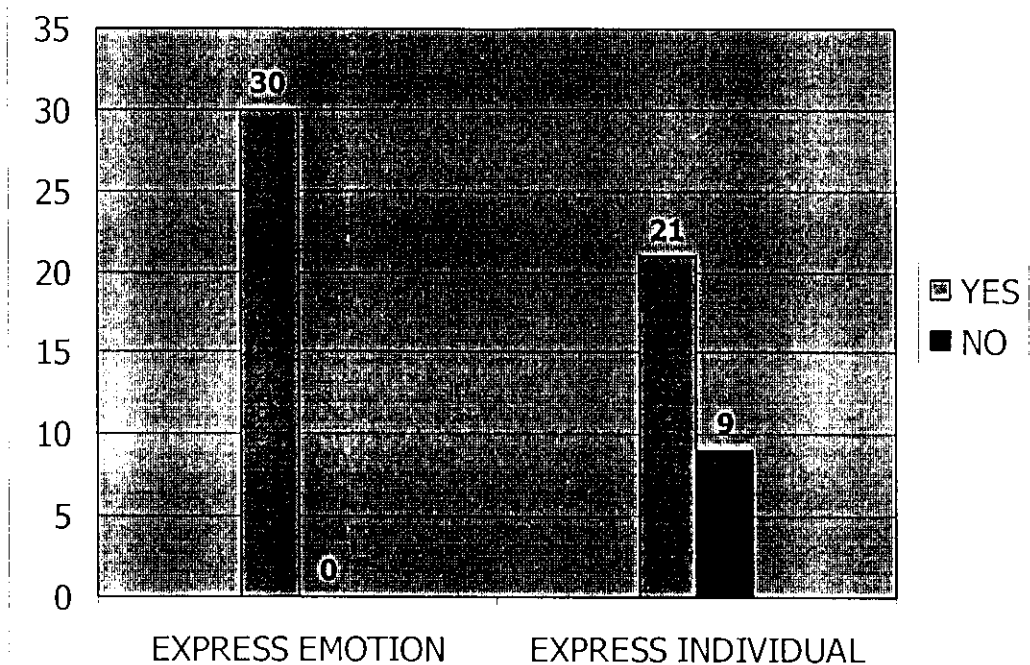


Figure 6 Attitude of respondents towards the use of emoticons

All of the respondents confirmed that emoticons represent a primitive but useful means of bringing a small portion of body communication, especially facial expression into the online conversation. They all thought using emoticons could clarify their messages or made them more appealing. The numbers differed when asked if the use of emoticons expressed the individuality of the writers. 9 respondents (30%) disagreed that they did.

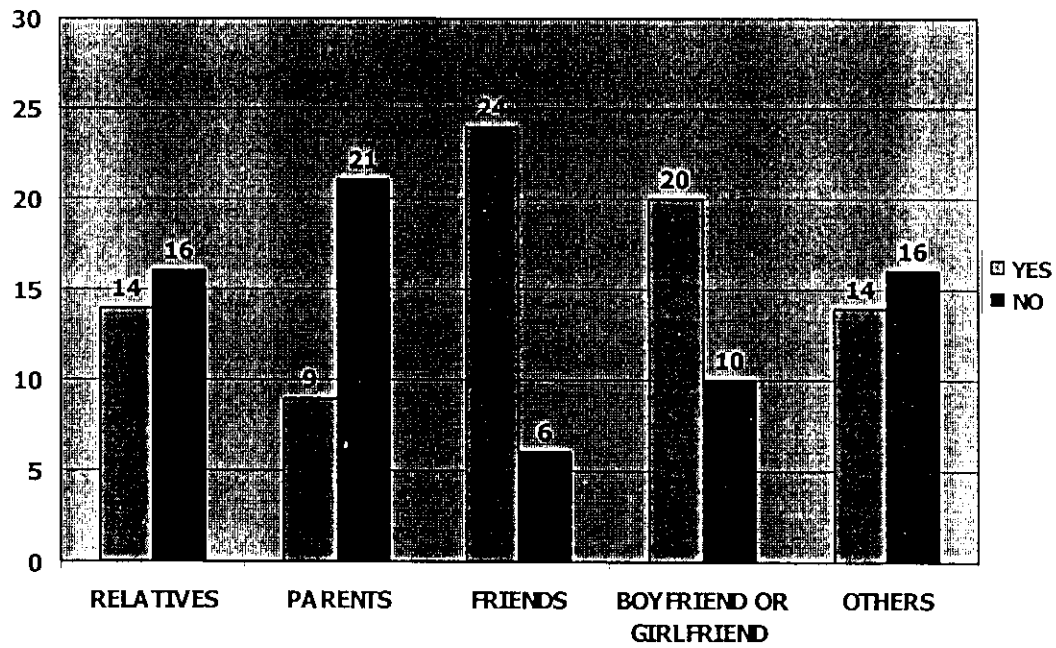


Figure 7 Use of emoticon and acronym in IM dependent on specific recipients

The use of emoticons by the respondents was quite high when the respondents sent message to their friends and boyfriends (or girlfriends). While only 6 respondents (20%) claimed to use emoticons with their parents due to the reason of formality. Chatting with relatives and other people such as strangers appeared the same percentage. The number of respondents who regularly sent emoticons to their relatives was less than those who never sent them to their relatives.

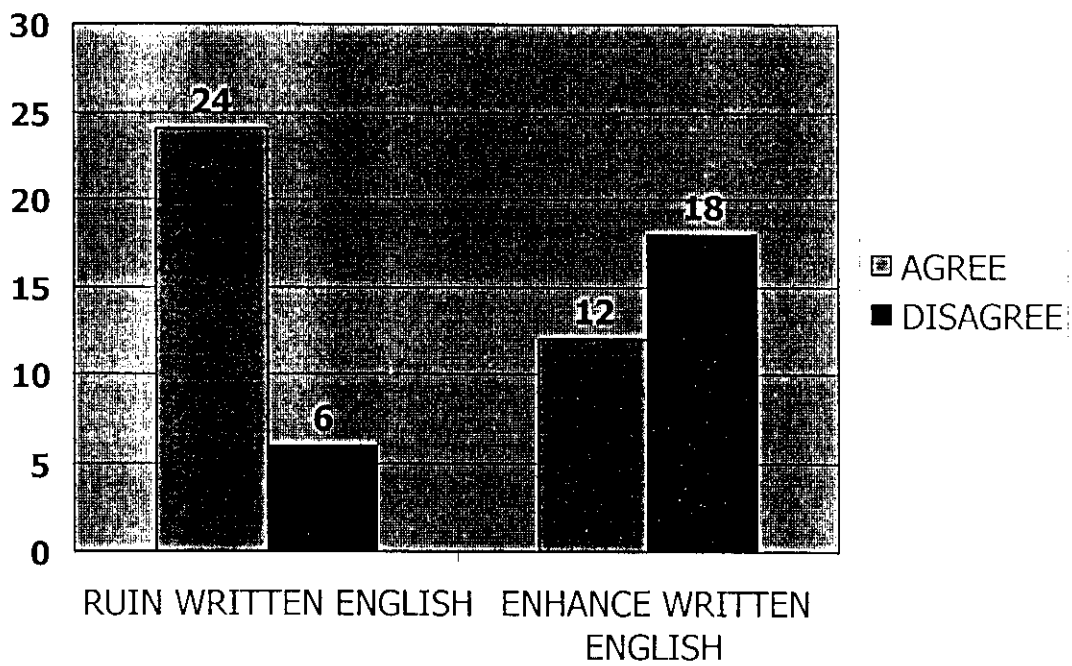


Figure 8 Respondents' attitude concerning the effect of IM to written English

24 respondents (80%) agreed that IM language might ruin their written English, whereas 20% felt the opposite. However, 12 respondents (40%) thought, IM language enhanced their written English, as opposed to the rest, 18 respondents (60%).

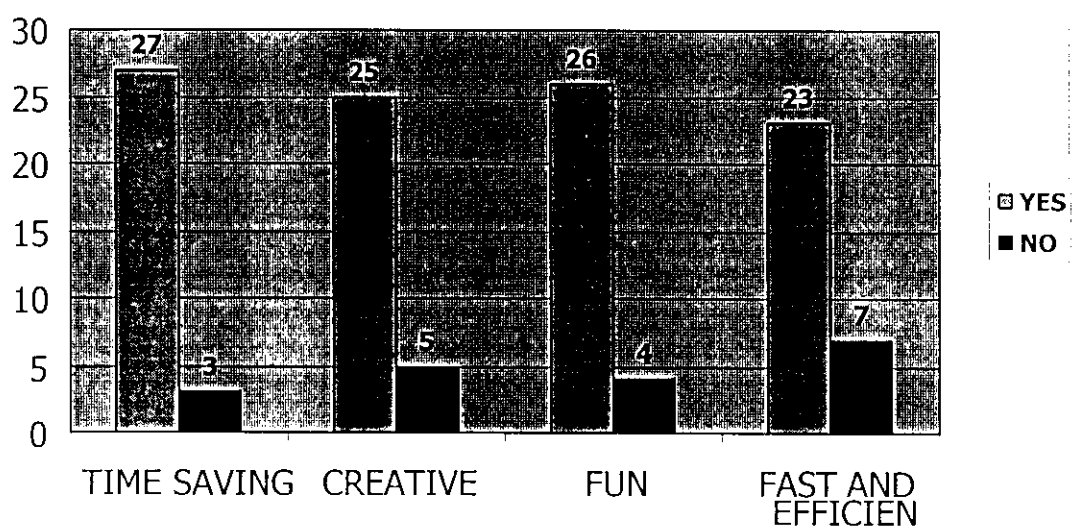


Figure 9 Respondents' attitude concerning good points of IM language

27 respondents (90%) agreed that using emoticons and acronyms could save their typing time

25 respondents (over 83%) thought that IM language was creative.

26 respondents (over 86%) agreed that language online was mostly used for fun.

23 respondents (over 76%) agreed that using emoticons and acronyms made their writing fast and efficient.

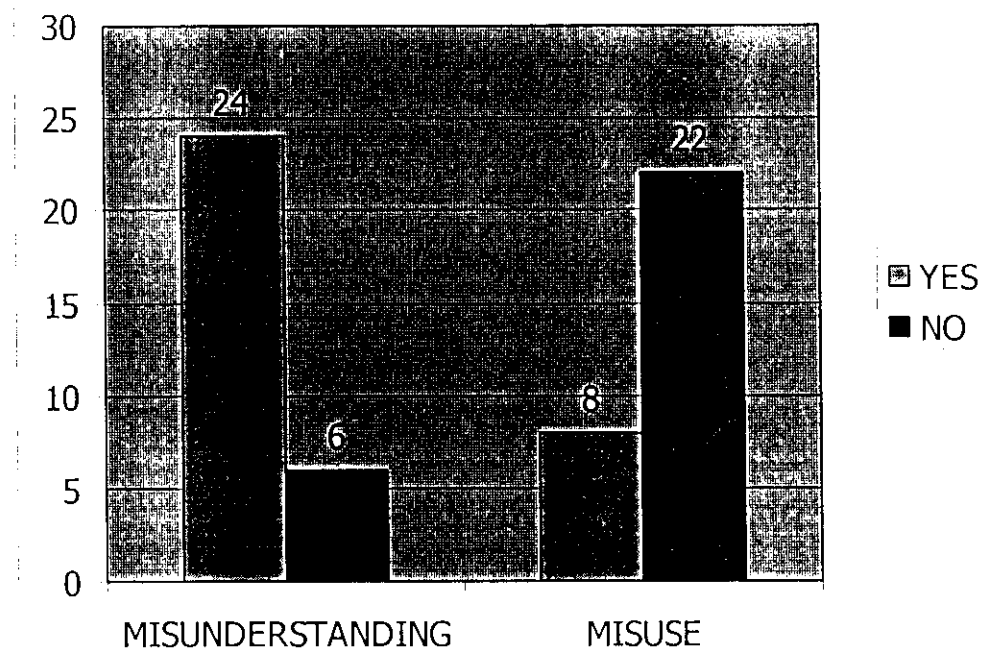


Figure10 Miscommunication occurs because IM language

This table shows that 24 respondents (80%) claimed that they had regularly misunderstood what others said because of the lack of non-verbal cues in IM language. However, just only 8 respondents (27%) misused IM language in their traditional writing.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter presents a summary of the study, including discussion of the findings. The research question formulated in chapter 1 is used as a guideline to make the conclusion. Finally, recommendations for further studies are presented.

Summary of the Study

- Instant messaging has become a major form of interpersonal communication among the 18-25 age group.
- Only 20% of the students always checked their spelling and about 33% of students checked their spelling occasionally.
- Virtually almost 75% students recognized the need to use formal (or at least more formal) language in the traditionally appropriate situations.
- The use of abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons or other similar communication elements demonstrates a level of creativity in writing English.
- Emoticons and other indicators of emotion or reaction are attempts to represent the body, while informal use of punctuation, grammar and diction are attempts to represent the spoken word. IM language combines these representations with writing to create a new writing language type.
- 60% of emoticon users employed IM to perform the difficult written act of expressing feelings.
- Over 83% of students felt that inventing emoticons and words for online communication are creative. However, 26 users treated IM language as something enjoyable.
- IM language is almost universally known among students between 18-25 years of age. Over 86% uses emoticons and knows the meaning of the abbreviation their respondents use. Most of them understand almost intuitively the meaning and function of all IM language.

Online users recognize the communication needs in various situations and choose their use of language accordingly. For example, while 80% use emoticons in online conversation with their friends, only 36% use them in messages with their parents. The users also recognize the differences in formality between the IM language and the traditional language. 20% always check spelling in their message while only 26 % make mistakes in using online informal language in their traditional writing. Although there are no non-verbal cues, Emoticons, acronyms and other abbreviations are used in order to convey their thoughts and feelings across. Emoticons, acronyms and other abbreviations are very common in instant messaging (55% uses them). Emoticons help users convey attitudes and tone of voice, and they provide cues for the receivers of how to read the message in the way it was intended. Users can write to build non-verbal communication into the message to show smile, anger and other physical expressions. 61% of IM users feel that emoticons help clarify their message, so not only have the emoticons become acceptable, but also preferable.

Research Question: What effect does Instant Messaging have on the written English?

IM communication combines the immediacy of the spoken word with the benefits of being able to write out the thoughts before sending them to the other persons. This combination is a revolution. Speaking requires a command of the language by both parties and most of us can master it at a very early age, Writing is different from speaking because it is a complicated skill. It requires the ability to transfer thought and emotion to paper. It takes a long time to learn. The two skills were totally different until the advent of Instant Messenger, people can write the way they speak to each other and send the message back and forth immediately. Speed was considered since people will spend much less time thinking about what they want to write. This has an affect on the ability to write. IM fingers must transfer the thoughts at a very fast speed. People are learning a skill that they have never known before, and it is time they come to recognize and develop this writing skill.

Discussion

The results derived from the questionnaire reveal that IM communication allows and encourages creativity. Since IM tries to simulate a face to face conversation, people tend to type as they speak. There are things that cannot be express online, such as tone of voice or

facial expressions. But there have been additions to the chat language to make up for these. The emoticons are the most significant addition. Emoticons can help users express their emotions and they can use emoticons in their messages sent to people with whom they have a personal relationship. Using emoticons sometimes causes misunderstandings. Some of the respondents may send emoticons just for fun or they may not be able find an emoticon that really matches their feeling. However, at least they're trying to show some feelings.

New acronyms and abbreviations appear every now and then when people decide they need a new one. People can create and use acronyms and abbreviations freely. In online conversation, if a person is going to leave for a second they would use brb (be right back), but in real life a person would say something like "I'll be right back". IM communication relies so much on speed of message exchange that they build a new form of language. IM communication is different from the traditional communication because the users have more freedom in using their language. When an informal message is sent online and if the receiver understand what is said, they can just give a reply to the message without any formality. The students realize that the IM language is informal and optional and they don't even have to worry about making any mistakes. They have not incorporated the language they use online into their real life conversations. The language that is used in real life; There is no need to mix the two. However, when they send messages to someone they respect, they will use more formal language. Another purpose of using informal language is for speakers to demonstrate that they belong to a specific group: they choose the correct use of the language for that specific group.

Users learn new vocabulary, new diction, new ways to emphasize, new language play and new slang. At school the users learn how to draw the shapes of letters, punctuation mark and the convention of writing. IM teaches them the other side of the language: the words that their friends want to hear, the expressions that make all users be part of the group. If someone gets on the Internet, he learns the language of the Internet. Any IM user can add new non-linguistic signs, new abbreviations and acronyms, a new form of greetings and new vocabulary. In many cases, these additions are encouraged and appreciated. This kind of encouragement and acceptance is somewhat common in conversation with friends, particularly among youth, but is not acceptable in written communication.

IM and the written language involved may be the most informal type of language. When communicating online there is not really a pressing need for punctuation or capitalization. In

fact, capitalization can be seen as a bad thing. The message that wholly in capitals are considered to be shouting and should be avoided.

The language changes in every situation, whether it be online or in person. There are times for formal and informal language in either case. But online communication seems to be the most flexible or lenient when it comes to informality. It allows for abbreviations of every kind, a lack of punctuation, capitalization, and in some cases, even grammar and spelling. Everything we were taught in schools or universities about proper writing can be ignored when it comes to online interaction.

Although it is sometime more convenient to not have to worry about the perfect grammar or capitalizing the beginning of every sentence, it can affect other aspects of life. There are some students who catch themselves abbreviating words like people as ppl just because they do it so often online. It is possible that students are having an increasingly difficult time differentiating formal and informal writing, and that acronyms and reckless (or absence of) punctuation would appear in formal writing. And there is similar concern that children in the future will lack the attention span to complete text of any length beyond conversational snippets. Students sometimes blur the lines between what is formal and what is colloquial. The dilemma is how to help the students to use the language appropriately between the formal and casual environment.

In the future, users will develop their own means of expressing themselves, including new ways of non-linguistic communication. The formalization of emoticon by the pictorial versions in IM software will bring emoticons into the mainstream. IM language will continue to grow in importance as people use Internet more and more to communicate personally and socially. And the language will expand, adapt, evolve or change whenever a new kind of online communication arises. Writing and speaking will continue to merge in order to effect this evolution. The result will be a language that efficiently and creatively combines the characteristics of writing and speaking which bring a new means of online language into our lives.

Limitation of the Study

The small sample size is the major limitation for this study (30 students). That limits the generalization of the results. Another limitation of the study was the open-ended part of the questionnaire. Many of the respondents hesitated to make their comments.

Recommendations for the further studies

As this study focuses only on university's students, further study should be conducted among various users such as young workers so that the finding will be more gerneralized to the whole writing style of English language used in IM. The result of such studies may reveal additional information on the problems and needs of using IM to communicate in the work place.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. How long have you been using instant messaging? (AOL Messenger, MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, ICQ)

☐ 1 year

☐ 2 years

☐ 3 years

☐ More than 3 years

2. How often do you use instant messenger?

☐ Once a month

☐ Once a week

☐ Twice a week

☐ Everyday

3. How much time do you spend on Instant Messenger every day?

☐ An hour

☐ Two hours

☐ Three hours

☐ More than 3 hours

When you use Instant Messaging on your computer, which of the following do you do?

Put a x in front of your choice

4. Check for spelling

☐ Always

___Often

___Occasionally

___Never

5. Use "smiley" (or emoticons) like smiling faces😊 or frowns😞

___Always

___Often

___Occasionally

___Never

6. Use acronyms like LOL, a/s/l, G2G, TTYL

___Always

___Often

___Occasionally

___Never

7. Use short forms or abbreviations that you or other online friends may have made up (such as C U for See You.).

___Always

___Often

___Occasionally

___Never

8. Does using emoticons (smileys😊) in IM help you express your emotions?

___Yes

___No

___Sometimes

If yes, how does it help you express your emotions? Please explain.

9. Does using emoticon (smileys😊) in IM help you express your individuality?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sometimes

If yes, how does it help you express your individuality? Please explain

10. Does using emoticons (smileys😊) in IM save time and typing stoke?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sometimes

11. When people use emoticons (smileys😊) in IM, What do you think about this?

☐ It makes the message more appealing

☐ It makes the message less appealing (Distracts form message)

☐ I never notice them

☐ Others, please explain.

-
12. In general, when you are sending email, would you use emoticons(simlieys😊) in your message to...

Relatives

___Yes ___No

Parents

___Yes ___No

Friends

___Yes ___No

Boy or Girl friends

___Yes ___No

Other person

___Yes ___No

13. Do you ever use any of your online language in other forms of communication? (i.e. use emoticons or informal language in everyday correspondence?)

Personal letter

___Yes

___No

___Sometimes

Academic writing

___Yes

___No

___ Sometimes

If yes, please explain

14. In which situations would you use the most formal language in instant messaging (CHOOSE ONLY ONE).

___ To ask someone about your homework

___ To communicate with a stranger

___ To communicate with your older relative or parent

Please explain

15. Have you ever misunderstood anyone online caused by lack of non-verbal cues?

___ Yes

___ No

If yes, why?

16. When someone sends you an instant messages, and they use abbreviations, emoticons (smileys) and acronyms to express themselves, What do you do?

___ Don't pay attention/notice these things

___Correct their English

___Respond in the same manner

Please explain

Would you agree or disagree with the following?

17. The language you use online is mostly for fun.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

18. People who use emoticons and acronyms online are creative.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

19. Online language will ruin spoken and written English.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

20. Online language will enhance both spoken and written English.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

21. People who use emoticons and acronyms online are deteriorating the use of English language.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

22. You can often tell what people are like from online use of emoticons and acronyms.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

23. Using emoticons and acronyms to makes my writing faster and more efficient.

___Agree

___Disagree

Please explain

Please state other comments (if any).

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C. 3

AN EXPLORATION OF WRITING CHARACTERISTIC IN INSTANT MESSAGING AMONG THAI STUDENTS

AN ABSTRACT
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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Rakkiat Sumlitpanit. (2004). *An Exploration of Writing Characteristic in Instant Messaging Among Thai Students*. Master's Project, M.A. (Business English for International Communication). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University. Advisor: Asst. Prof. Penny Diskaprakai.

Nowadays, the Internet has become a new medium for communication between individuals. People make extensive use of electronic mail, instant messaging and chat rooms to exchange written messages at very fast speed and at various levels of informality. This study was created in order to explore the ways that the writers of online message adapt the English language for their needs, and how they bring the elements like emoticons in an attempt to express emotions.

This study explained the state of the English language used by Thai students via the instant messenger software. Its findings and conclusions from data and observations generated by a questionnaire survey. The data were collected during October-December 2003, and were analyzed by percentage calculation. The population in this study was 30 students who were studying or graduated with a Bachelor's degree both in Thailand and abroad. The population was randomly selected from the webboard of www.mthai.com.

The results of the study revealed that most of the respondents felt that sending messages through IM is users-friendly without regard to grammatical correctness or spelling as long as comprehension is concerned. Emoticons and Acronyms add creativity and appeal to the emotion. The language is informal in nature, which is the distinguished characteristic of IM. In the near future, it is anticipated that the language used primarily in IM will be

developed as a combination of written and spoken language and adapted in response to the growing technology to the diverse needs of users for maximum benefit and successful communication. This writing styles will bring about novelty of language used in the era of global network.

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บทคัดย่อของ
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ศาสตราจารย์ เพ็ญณี ดิสกะประกาย

ในแวดวงของการสื่อสารปัจจุบันนี้ อินเทอร์เน็ตได้เข้ามามีบทบาทสำคัญในหลายๆรูปแบบ ช่วยขยายโอกาสในการติดต่อสื่อสารให้เป็นไปด้วยความรวดเร็ว มีประสิทธิภาพ โดยลดข้อจำกัดด้านระยะทางและค่าใช้จ่าย ทำให้มีการสื่อสารผ่านทางอินเทอร์เน็ตเพิ่มสูงขึ้นจนเกิดเป็นสังคมใหม่และลักษณะของภาษาที่ใช้ก็ถูกดัดแปลงให้เหมาะสมกับสื่อใหม่นี้ สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อที่จะสำรวจลักษณะภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้โต้ตอบทางอินเทอร์เน็ต กลุ่มเป้าหมายประกอบไปด้วยนักศึกษาไทยที่ศึกษาอยู่ในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยทั้งภายในและต่างประเทศ จำนวน 30 คน จากผลของการศึกษาพบว่า นักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่สื่อสารกันผ่านทางอินเทอร์เน็ตเพื่อความสนุกสนานระหว่างเพื่อนฝูง ภาษาที่ใช้เน้นไม่เคร่งครัดต่อหลักไวยากรณ์หรือการสะกด ในบทสนทนา มักจะพบการใช้คำพ้องเสียง ใช้อักษรย่อและสัญลักษณ์ต่างๆ กลุ่มนักศึกษาถือว่าสิ่งเหล่านี้เป็นความสร้างสรรค์ ที่ช่วยให้การสนทนาน่าสนใจและเป็นกันเอง ซึ่งจะไม่ส่งผลกระทบต่อทักษะการเขียนอันเนื่องมาจากความเคยชินที่ใช้ภาษาอินเทอร์เน็ตบ่อยครั้ง โดยให้เหตุผลว่า การใช้ภาษาอย่างละเลยหลักไวยากรณ์หรือรูปประโยคที่เกิดขึ้นนั้น ไม่ได้มาจากข้อจำกัดด้านทักษะการเขียน แต่เกิดจากการเลือกใช้ภาษาให้เหมาะสมกับกลุ่มสังคมในยุคของการสื่อสารไร้พรมแดน