Language Analysis of Two Major Forms of Computer-Mediated Communication: Emails and Webpages

THESIS
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

VIRENDRA SINGH NIRBAN

Under the Supervision of

Prof. Meenakshi Raman

**BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE
PILANI (RAJASTHAN) INDIA**

2009

BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE
PILANI (RAJASTHAN)

<u>CERTIFICATE</u>

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Language Analysis of Two Major Forms of Computer-Mediated Communication: Emails and Webpages"** and submitted by Virendra Singh Nirban, ID.No. 2004PHXF020P for award of Ph. D. Degree of the Institute embodies original work done by him under my supervision.

Signature of the Supervisor _____

Place: Name: **MEENAKSHI RAMAN**

Date: Designation: **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contents

4. Language Analysis of Webpages

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Language in Transition

The last two decades have witnessed the world going through a transition which has been multidimensional and decisive. From business to personal life, education to training, information exchange, communication, beliefs and culture – almost everything has witnessed some kind of transformation – not only in terms of what we do but also how we do it. What is being witnessed in today's information age is the birth of a global culture and hence an evolution of a global language. Language is an integral part of any culture and it evolves with the culture. English also has changed substantially in the 1500 years or so, reflecting patterns of contact with other languages and the changing communication needs of people. In many parts of the world, as English is taken into the fabric of social life, it acquires a momentum and vitality of its own; developing in ways which reflect local culture and languages, while diverging increasingly from the kind of English spoken in Britain or North America.

The most rapid technological developments in human history have taken place in the later part of last century and they have given rise to two contradicting transformations. On one hand, the technological advancements such as electronic and now computer-based communications systems have brought people together in unprecedented ways. Sitting in one corner of a room we can locate anybody on earth and connect and communicate with them. We can create and contribute to online communities in varied ways. On the other hand, some of the technological advancements have brought changes that have served to

isolate communities. This is because of increased comforts and easy access to communication technology. Resultantly, people have become isolated from each other.

Most of the popular online communication systems use English as the primary medium of instruction. Everywhere, English is at the leading edge of information dissemination – be it technological and scientific development, new thinking in economics and management or new literatures and entertainment genres. This predominance of English language has given rise to new vocabularies, grammatical forms, and new ways of speaking and writing. The effect of this expansion of English into new domains cannot be seen anywhere as clearly as in communication on the Internet and the development of 'net English'.

At the same time, English as a language is also at a critical point in its global evolution. Within a decade or so, the number of people who speak English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers. The implications of this are likely to be far reaching. The centre of authority regarding the language will shift away from native speakers as they become minority stakeholders in the global user count. Their literature and television may no longer provide the focal point of a global English language culture; their teachers no longer form the unchallenged authoritative models for learners.

Language, of course, is influenced by many factors such as: class, society, political milieu and the developments in science. However, media is and has been the major

influencing factor. From the very early manuscript to today's use of internet language, media has always played a major role in influencing language.

The anywhere-anytime nature of electronic communication has firmly manifested itself in computer-mediated communication. The rapid development of information and communication technologies in recent years is associated with a corresponding growth of interest in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC).

CMC channels of communications are a relatively new phenomenon, having been developed in just the last couple of decades. But they have already had a significant impact on the geographically defined human community.

1.2 Communication Cultures

With the Internet becoming ubiquitous in contemporary world cultures, questions about how CMC affects people's lives arise. As with any immersion into a novel culture it takes some time for the uninitiated to begin to feel at home in "cybersociety" (Jones 1995:12).

Experienced participants in CMC claim that e-mails, newsgroups, Internet Relay Chat, Multiple Users Domains, the World Wide Web and other CMC devices radically reconfigures patterns of social interaction. Some go so far as to assert that CMC will revolutionize social life and liberate it from the principles and processes that shape offline relationships. Others express fears of the potential effects of the new communication technologies saying "cyberporn" and violent propaganda will poison the

use of CMC. No matter what our current perceptions or future predictions of the medium may be, the fact is that CMC is here to stay, and our analytical exploration of this rapidly changing world has only just begun.

To be able to look beyond the neologisms and complexity of information technology, it may be fruitful to put the electronic age into a historical perspective. The advent of the computer as a medium for human communication is indeed revolutionary. On the other hand, computer is only one of the many extensions of human modes of communication that have taken place in history and as such it may be regarded as a natural part of the evolution. All sudden extensions in modes of communication have had a powerful determining effect on the course of history. George McMurdo in his article *Changing Contexts of Communication* takes a retrospective view of characteristic communication features in the cultures preceding the electronic, namely, the oral, written and print cultures (1995: 140-146).

The cultures are not to be thought of as solely chronological, mutually exclusive historical periods, since oral culture, for instance, still exists in vast parts of the world. However, in the eyes of the contemporary citizen, these cultures happen to coincide with sequential history.

> All developing societies have passed through the phase when the oral culture was the only mode of communication. During this phase the storage, transmission and dissemination of linguistic information occurred face-to-face and the sense of social space was defined by range of collective "earshot". In this preliterate society, existing ways of doing things were not questioned and since there were no written records to refer to, myth, history and social reality merged into one (McMurdo 1995: 142).

Political power in the oral culture rested on verbal fluency and retentive memory and thus the socially influential individuals were often poets, bards and balladeers. Most striking of all, there were no facts in oral cultures (McMurdo, 1995:144). The absence of facts is not easy to grasp in a literate world where we rely on recognized facts easily found in reference books. In the oral society, knowledge was stored in the memory of its citizens. It was when the need to store this knowledge elsewhere was recognized that the written culture emerged.

In the written culture, personal distant communication between individuals became feasible instead of face-to-face communication. With the invention of writing, lengthy and complex orders or instructions could be conveyed over a distance, creating a detachment between speaker and audience. Written communication, to this day, sacrifices the richness of face-to-face communication. Nevertheless, the significance of writing in the scheme of things cannot be understated.

In the mid-fifteenth century, the workload of the scribes dramatically diminished as printing was invented. With the emergence of the print culture, the written word could reach a greater audience. Printing therefore essentially magnified the consequences of writing. Linguistically, printing had a standardizing effect. Spelling and vocabulary changed more slowly and language became more consistent in its usage. Printing also had a preserving effect on ideas. More than anything, however, print had the effect of dissociating age from wisdom - a feature we often ascribe to the information technology of today.

The advent of the Electronic culture in the middle of the twentieth century marked a new era in human communication. Radio and television - the initial mass analog electronic media - and telecommunications such as the telephone and the fax machine significantly contributed to changes in social, economic, cultural and political life.

Initiated in the early 1970s by the US Department of Defense and several research universities, the computer networks have grown phenomenally over the years. In the beginning it was mainly used for one to one communication. However, it was realized that a message may be required to be delivered to several recipients at the same time to save time and resources. And thus mailing lists were created. During the next decade the number of computer networks grew many folds and various software and hardware protocols were developed to enable them to connect to ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) which in turn, morphed into the Internet. The Internet has revolutionized the world of computer and communications like nothing before. The invention of the World Wide Web in the beginning of the 90s made it possible for everyone to go online. On the Internet Community, Michael Strangelove says:

> The Internet is not about technology, it is not about information, it is about communication-people talking with each other, people exchanging e-mail, people doing the low ASCII dance. The Internet is mass participation in fully bi-directional, uncensored mass communication. Communication is the basis, the foundation... The Internet is a community of chronic communicators. (1994: 7)

Today the Internet is the communication channel for millions of connected computers and their users, transferring pictures, animations, sounds, documents, video clips,

computer software and any other conceivable computer-retrievable information. Heller explains that along with the increasingly user-friendly interfaces, the number of Internet-users has exploded (Quoted by Jonsson 1997).

Estimating the number of users is difficult due to the constant expansion, but a reasonable estimation is that the Internet currently hosts communication between 250 million people and that by the year 2010 the number will have nearly quadrupled. Essentially, however, the Internet, although a network in name and geography, is a creature of the personal computer. At the end of the day what is presented and transferred via the Internet is human information - created and retrieved by individuals or groups of individuals by their computers.

The core motivation for human communication has remained constant throughout history; what has changed is the context and the media for the transfer of information. Given this insight, we can more accurately begin to examine the linguistic components of computer-mediated communication. How are computer-mediated messages realized and how is linguistic communication carried out? Computer-mediated language is for the most part written text and the dominant language is English. The Internet does support communication in languages other than English, but the technology itself is unfriendly towards a large number of scripts. The dominance of English often remains undisputed simply because of the sheer number of Anglophone users and the fact that most communication software is invented and produced in English-speaking communities. Goodman and Graddol in their work *Redesigning English - new texts, new identities*

explains the fact that the USA has dominated computer and software development which implies that the entire discourse of computing and computer science is based on American English. He further describes that most technical terms for computing, both formal and informal, derive from American English as well as most of the world's programming languages and operating systems. Even British writers use American spellings for some computer terminology - for instance a computer *program* is spelled the American way in British English, while a TV programme is not (1996: 32).

The subject of this research is the way people use language to communicate over the Internet. Different modes of Internet communication provide different rates of interactivity. Some of the services provided in the global communication network are intended to enable instant, interactive sharing of ideas and information (communication services). These include services such as electronic mail (e-mail), Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and Multiple User Domains (MUDs). Others are primarily intended to facilitate the storage and retrieval of information (information services). These include services such as file transfer, newsgroups, gopher-servers and the World Wide Web, though the latter is becoming increasingly interactive.

The research would focus on the most interactive text-based communication services of the Internet - electronic mail on one hand the relatively static form – the Web Pages on the other. The former holds the historical advantage of being among the first on the arena of the global network while the later is relatively new form; and at the same time both of them hold the current value of being the most prevalent and the appreciated.

Text-based Internet communication does not display the characteristics of traditional print genres. Instead, it often shows the spontaneity and informality of spoken, rather than written, language. Bordia briefly summarizes comparisons between CMC and face-to-face communication concluding that computer-mediated communication indeed is "a combination of written and oral styles of communication" (1996:151).

This hybrid nature makes CMC unique in the history of linguistics and an enthralling source for discourse analysis. Communication services on the Internet serve to substitute writing for spoken conversation. They extend the domain of writing to cover areas of communication that previously were limited to face-to-face interactions, mail and the telephone. Also, they allow for inexpensive communication between vastly dispersed parts of the world and parts of society, leading to changed social relationships, social groupings and to altered perceptions of time and space. The communication may be asynchronous, as in e-mail, linking participants at times of their own choice or it may be synchronous - in "real time" - as in IRC and MUDs. In the latter instance, the identity and agency of participants (characters) in the communication are often opaque.

1.3 Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-Mediated Communication has been present in some form or the other since the advent of modern computer in the life of human beings. Form its infancy in late 1960's to its colossal growth in 2008, the CMC has seen a phenomenal growth in the last two

decades. CMC is an umbrella term and technically all exchanges that happen via computers can be encompassed as an occurrence of CMC.

While the term has traditionally referred to those communications that occur via computer-mediated formats (i.e., instant messages, e-mails, chat rooms) it has also been applied to other forms of text-based interaction such as text messaging (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic 2004: 67).

Over its evolution, CMC has been defined in several ways. Given below is a partial listing of definitions by some of the renowned experts in the field.

Michel Metz of University of Georgia defines CMC as:

> Computer-mediated communication (CMC), for purposes here, can be defined as any communication patterns mediated through the computer. These include, but are not limited to, computer conferencing, electronic mail (e-mail), relay chat lines, and Multiple User Dungeons (MUDs) (1994: 33).

Jones, S. G defines CMC as:

> CMC is a technology, a communications medium and a space within which people form communities (1995: 4).

Santoro, G. M defines CMC as:

> At its broadest, CMC can encompass virtually all computer uses... (including) such diverse applications as statistical analysis programs, remote-sensing systems, and financial modeling programs all fit within the concept of human communication.

The broad interpretation derives from the recognition that computer systems were developed to receive data from humans (or from the environment in a way that mimics or extends human senses) and eventually return some form of that data to humans for some human purpose (1995: 153).

Shedletsky, L. defines CMC as:

CMC is a text-based tool that can be synchronous (communicators interacting at the same time) or, more frequently, asynchronous (communicators interacting at different times) (1995: 10).

Wendy Burton, University College of the Fraser Valley defines CMC as:

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is any communication using computers. This broad definition has been commonly refined to mean those communications that occur with the use of electronic media (1996).

Walther J. B., Professor, Michigan State University defines CMC as:

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) can be defined as synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing, by which senders encode in text messages that are relayed from senders' computers to receivers (1996:10).

Susan Herring, Professor, Indiana University defines CMC as:

Computer Mediated Communication is defined as the communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers (1996: 1).

Pixy Ferris, Assistant Professor, William Paterson College, New Jersey defines CMC as:

In general, the term computer-mediated communication refers to both task-related and interpersonal communication conducted by computer (1997).

John December, President, December Communications defines CMC as:

> Computer Mediated Communication is the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems (or non-networked computers) that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages.

> Computer-Mediated Communication is a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes (1997).

According to the Webster's dictionary, CMC is:

> Computer Mediated Communication - (CMC) Communication that takes place through, or is facilitated by, computers.

According to the Wikipedia, CMC is:

> Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is defined broadly as any form of human interaction across two or more networked computers. While the term has traditionally referred to those communications that occur via computer-mediated formats.

According to the EduTechWiki, CMC is:

> Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is any form of communication between two or more individual people who interact and/or influence each other via separate computers through the Internet or a network connection - using social software. CMC does not include the methods by which two computers communicate, but rather how people communicate via computers .

Various facets of CMC have been revealed in the definitions given above. Metz defines it as communication patterns mediated through computers, while Jones defines it as a

technological space within which people create communities. Santoro defines it as any use of computer undertaken by humans. Shedletsky views it as a tool facilitating synchronous and asynchronous communication. Some researchers find CMC as just another step in human communication evolution. The chronology of these definitions suggests that our understanding of CMC has broadened widely to include more and more areas of human interaction via computers. In a nutshell, CMC can be defined as, 'CMC is a technology enabled process of information exchange for personal, organizational and societal purposes.'

1.4 Scope and Objective

The literature review has revealed some limitations of the studies conducted in the field of CMC. First, there is the problem of artificiality. Many of the studies are based on artificial "test" situations which do not adequately replicate the intricacies of the complex process of CMC. Secondly, many of the experiments are based on an extremely narrow domain (either in terms of CMC channel studied or in terms of direction i.e. social, linguistic, gender, organizational, educational, basic learning, etc). Thirdly, some studies are based solely on opinion polls. These may indicate what medium a user would use, and perhaps even for what purposes, but they say nothing about how it is actually used.

Hence, the scope of this study is to address the above mentioned limitations. The study has been conducted under real and random data subjects. Perception and practice both have been studied. Also, more than one form of CMC has been studied.

The communication over internet takes place between people from different backgrounds, attitudes and cultures. Also, the communication happens in different situations. Moreover people keep switching between formal and informal roles while they communicate over the internet. This phenomenon has given rise to the belief that the CMC mode of communication is deteriorating usage of English Language in written form. The hypothesis assumed in this research work is that - the CMC mode of communication is not challenging the established practice of formal and informal written communication practices and that it provides a flexible medium of communication.

The objectives of the research are:

- To study the ways in which English language has been used by the users of CMC in Emails and Webpages.
- To observe and differentiate between users' perception and practice of the new form of communication.
- To study the influence of the new forms of CMC on language.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study begins with an investigation of the new medium of communication – Computer Mediated Communication. A detailed literature review has been carried out to gauge the extent of work done in the field of Computer-Mediated Communication. Emails and Web pages, the most widely used forms of formal communication, were particularly studied to figure out the kind of research work carried out. The secondary

sources consulted include books, print and electronic journals, online databases, conference/seminar proceedings, papers presented at various avenues such as conference/seminar proceedings, online content available in public domain and newspapers. The primary data sources include emails collected and questionnaire responses from a wide range of users.

Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) approach has been used in this study for the analysis purpose. Most of the communication related activity on the internet essentially leaves a textual footprint which is easier to access and study than to instances of spoken communication. This lends the textual footprint to a closer look using empirical methods and reflects on micro and macro phenomenon. Herring in his work *Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis: An Approach to Researching Online Behavior*, says:

> The online interaction overwhelmingly takes place by means of discourse. That is, participants interact by means of verbal language, usually typed on a keyboard and read as text on a computer screen. The textual communication remains an important online activity, one that seems destined to continue for the foreseeable future. Therefore it follows that scholar of computer-mediated behavior need methods for analyzing discourse, alongside traditional social science methods such as experiments, interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observation (2004: 348).

Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), applies theories from "linguistic discourse analysis, pragmatics, ethnomethodology, and semiotics in the analysis of discourse -language and language use - in computer-mediated communication" (Herring 2001: 620).

It may be supplemented by surveys, interviews, ethnographic observation, or other methods; it may involve qualitative or quantitative analysis; but what defines CMDA at its core is the analysis of logs of verbal interaction (characters, words, utterances, messages, exchanges, threads, archives, etc.). In the broadest sense, any analysis of online behavior that is grounded in empirical, textual observations is computer-mediated discourse analysis.

CMDA can be used to study micro-level linguistic phenomena such as online word-formation processes (Cherny 1999:32), lexical choice (Ko 1996; Yates 1996:36), and sentence structure (Herring 1998). At the same time, a language-focused approach can be used to address macro-level phenomena such as coherence (Herring 1999a:5), community (Cherny 1999:121), gender equity (Herring 1993:16, 1996a: 132, 1999b: 154) and identity (Burkhalter 1999:69), as expressed through discourse.

Broadly construed, the theoretical assumptions underlying CMDA are those of linguistic discourse analysis. First, it is assumed that *discourse exhibits recurrent patterns*. Goffman opines that patterns in discourse may be produced consciously or unconsciously (Quoted by Herring 2002). A basic goal of discourse analysis is to identify patterns in discourse that are demonstrably present, but that may not be immediately obvious to the casual observer or to the discourse participants themselves. Second, it is assumed that discourse involves speaker choices. These choices are not conditioned by purely linguistic considerations, but rather reflect cognitive (Quoted by Herring 2002); and

social (Quoted by Herring 2002); factors. It follows from this assumption that discourse analysis can provide insight into non-linguistic, as well as linguistic, phenomena.

It is useful to think of CMDA as applying to four domains or levels of language, ranging prototypically from smallest to largest linguistic unit of analysis: 1) structure, 2) meaning, 3) interaction, and 4) social behavior. Structural phenomena include the use of special typography or orthography, novel word formations, language use in broad terms and sentence structure. At the meaning level are included the meanings of words, utterances (e.g., speech acts) and larger functional units or 'macrosegments' (Longacre 1992:112). The interactional level includes turn-taking, topic development, and other means of negotiating interactive exchanges while the social level includes linguistic expressions of play, conflict, power, and group membership over multiple exchanges.

Our study has used the "coding and counting" paradigm of classical content analysis which is a specific CMDA approach and it scrutinizes the online communication behavior through the lens of language, and its interpretations are grounded in observations about language and language use. In the coding and counting approach, for emails, coding categories and their analysis parameters such as connectivity of message chunks (verbs, conjunctions and prepositions); vocabulary proficiency (spellings and fragmented sentences); variety in sentence formation (length of a sentence); framing of message (self absorbed or reader oriented content); degree of formality (conversational tone, capitalization); flow of message (punctuation); paragraph structure (short and long

paragraphs and spacing); channel specific influence (compressed words and abbreviations, typographic extremes, emoticons, transliteration) have been established.

Similarly in case of web pages analysis, coding categories and their analysis parameters such as vocabulary usage (use of collocations, multiword chunks, cohesive markers, abstract and concrete words); grammar usage (use of tense forms, active and passive voice, relative clauses, conditional clauses, modal verbs, use of pronouns); communicative functions (informing/announcing, acknowledging, persuading /offering services); conversational tone (greeting and identification, acknowledge, question, request, encourage for more communication, thanksgiving / final greeting); deficiencies (deviations in paragraph structure, sentence length, spellings and other grammatical flaws, mutations and the use of emoticons) have been established.

Multiple raters were engaged to analyze the coding categories and their measurement parameters. Their inputs were taken and corrections were made. The corpus was carefully scrutinized and each parameter was observed for its presence or absence in emails. This was tabulated and finally total counts were put in place for analysis.

The data for this study has been produced naturally (i.e., by online discourse participants for their own purposes), and the text has been retrieved from online archives, rather than eliciting it experimentally.

Of the six sampling techniques- random, theme, time, phenomenon, individual or group, and convenience - random sampling has been used in this study for the reasons that it provides the representativeness of a larger phenomenon and of a general nature. The context was created by classifying the data into Formal and Informal macro categories.

A two pronged approach has been adopted to collect data for the study. Survey questionnaire has been used to gather data on 'perceptual' usage of language from the respondents, while actual emails have been gathered for gauging the 'practical' usage of language.

Emails were collected from students, faculty, friends, and professionals. It was made sure that the participants were well versed with the online channels of communication, comfortable with the functioning of email services, and had been frequently using the services. For the study purpose emails have been classified into two categories, namely Formal and Informal context. The formal context refers to the emails written in professional context i.e. to seniors, colleagues, peers outside organization, groups, companies and strangers, while the informal context refers to those written to friends, relatives, informal groups, clubs and forums. Another important factor which has been considered is the 'relationship' between the sender and the receiver. Wherever the 'relationship' shared is informal, the exchange is considered to have happened in informal context. Each and every email has been carefully scrutinized for 'presence' or 'absence' of a particular parameter. A margin of two errors has been set aside as tolerable for some parameters. Once all the emails have been marked for 'presence' or 'absence' of

all the parameters, the next step of data compilation has been taken. A total of two hundred emails has been collected and classified under formal and informal context, a hundred each.

For the study on web pages twenty five web pages each from Professional and Personal Context were selected based on the premise that it had enough textual content rather than hyper textual content. For professional web pages, different industry domains such as telecommunications, information technology, academics, health, business process outsourcing, manufacturing and entertainment have been selected at random. Similarly, for personal web pages the selection has been based on the basic premise of substantial textual content and the selection has been random varying from individual professionals like doctors and engineers to personal blog pages to family web pages and personal diaries. It must be noted that the web pages in this study have not been restricted to one single screen content. In many instances a single web page has run for more than one screen page. After the selection, basic observations have been made on the number of paragraphs, their length in terms of words and sentences, number of sentences and word count. Once this has been done, other observations have been made and the procedure extended to the data compilation stage.

The questionnaire has been used primarily to gauge the perception of the users of email in terms of 'possible' use of a particular aspect of language. Respondents are required to answer (tick mark) all questions for the above discussed two contexts. The questionnaire consists of four parts (refer to Appendix A). These included questions on grammar and

vocabulary, composition, syntax, and structural Aspects. Each questionnaire was assigned a unique identification number. Prior to undertaking the complete study, a pilot study was done to check the efficiency of the questionnaire using 30 questionnaires. Language analysis of 30 emails was also done under the pilot study. The authors of email collected and the questionnaire respondents were distinct. Similarly a pilot run was done for websites also using 10 webpages. The entire process of compiling and analysing of data was undertaken to foresee any problems. No major issue was encountered during the pilot test.

In the case of email sample, once the survey was completed and emails studied and marked for absence or presence of parameters, the responses were tabulated with YES or NO answer. The responses were summarized and then used for analysis. In the study of web pages, personal observation of content have led to tabulation of some of the parameters like the number of paragraphs, their length in terms of words and sentences, and number of sentences. Data for other parameters like word frequency and concordance, the software tool TextStat has been used. A corpus has been created and subjected to frequency and concordance generator.

After compilation, the data has been subjected to statistical analysis, which uses the description approach. Descriptive analysis has been used to explain the basic features of the data gathered from the study and it helped in providing the statistical summaries of the sample. This approach has formed the basis for quantitative analysis of the data. In

this the graphic displays of data have helped in providing the comparative picture of the sample (user / respondent) behavior.

1.6 Thesis Structure.

The second chapter constitutes literature review of work done in the field of Computer Mediated Communication. It includes study of language and CMC, discussion on various forms of CMC, specific features of CMC channels, Early research from 1970 – 1995, the revolution of Email from 1995 till date and the study on Web Pages and related literature.

The findings of the emails studied, have been discussed in the third chapter that gives a statistical picture of Perception (questionnaire response) and Practice (actual emails) of the use of language in emails. This chapter elaborates on the parameters used, formal and informal letters as a premise for comparative analysis, and the analysis of various coding categories.

The fourth chapter of this thesis includes analysis and discussion on the use of web pages as a form of CMC to communicate to wider society. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the various coding categories have been presented. The fifth chapter highlights the major findings of the study.

This study is significant in terms of gauging the impact of CMC on the use of language in personal and professional contexts. It may enable the academicians to learn to some

degree the direction of evolution of the English used for CMC. As CMC is a major form of information exchange among millions of users and a study on the use of its language is scarce, this research is expected to provide a base in this direction. The study would also pave way for further research on the nuances of the language of CMC.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 CMC and Language

A wide range of possibilities can be counted for the impact that the Internet has produced and still has been producing on the lives of human beings. One such possibility is the number of social changes brought about by new ways of social and cultural interaction that has resulted in the need to restate the political, sociological or cultural questions. These interaction patterns lead to the formation of the so-called virtual communities possible. They (the interactions) make communities that allow the existence of relationships that are not so virtual. As Rheingold states:

> People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind (2000: 3).

These ways of social interaction are carried out through language without which, most of them would cease to exist.

One of the most frequent images with which Internet is associated is that

> millions of people on every continent also participate in the computer-mediated social groups known as virtual communities, and this population is growing fast (Rheingold 2000: 5).

The virtual community notion, which is so well defined by Rheingold, as

> …social aggregations that emerge from the Internet when enough people carry on public discussions long enough and with sufficient human feeling to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace (Quoted by Fernback and Thompson 1997)

has been and is the object of study for the different disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, and natural language studies.

Halliday defines languages as a "social (shared by community) semiotics (conveys meaning about culture)". He observes that language usage always takes place in a "context", it is influenced by the context and that all situations and functions exert an "influence on the language choices" (Quoted by Butt et.al. 1995: 11, 13). Language has also been studied as "a system in which choices of linguistic structure is motivated by the purpose for which it is used." (Butt et.al. 1995: 17)

Computer Mediated Communication offers special opportunities for examining language and communication theory, in that online discourse is immune to many nonverbal communication elements that may confound language effects in speech (Joseph B. Walther 2004: 384-396).

Now, one should note that language is actually very often used as a tool for power. For example, doctors have a specialized language, which gives them more power over the patients, by describing the medical problems in words that the patient cannot understand.

Lawyers and courts are known for using legalese, a specialized language which provides them with an edge over ordinary people. There is ample reason why discussions about language often get so heated. People defend their language because it provides them with the security of communicating effectively.

With its diverse forms such as email, websites, discussion forums and other online communities, Computer Mediated Communication, through the written language and, to a lesser extent, through the oral language, has turned into a tool that makes it possible to construct a new type of social interaction beyond space barriers. These new forms of communication also make it possible to throw light on some features of language functioning, as a general phenomenon. There are several forms of CMC and, each, with its own peculiarities, makes it possible to reconsider some features appearing in the traditional forms and ways of communication.

Since early 1970's, when people (predominantly from academic institutions, high end industries, military agencies and to some extent business professionals) started using computers as tools for communicating, researchers have tried to identify and examine this form of communication and its effectiveness within organizational, interpersonal and mass communication levels. Cumming, J. D. (1995: 3-8) points out that English is the dominant language on the internet for various reasons. Firstly the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII), the word processing system used on the net, allows only for Roman characters. Secondly, English is the dominant language in international interaction in general. He also says that with an increasing number of non-

professionals, non-English-speaking users, this dominance of English can be expected to diminish to some extent.

As Kell describes, there was a time when the use of computer as a machine implied entering punch cards and receiving greenbars. This was done without the use of monitors. This was followed by the progress in technology, which provided the capability to send short messages from one computer located in one campus to a computer located in another campus. And thus to alleviate the boredom, programmers then decided to try to create "chat programs" which would also enable somewhat more reliability in sending and receiving these messages (Quoted by Metz 1994: 31).

From these simple message-sending applications evolved more complex programs which used many higher-level commands and programming instructions. These complex applications, called the Relay Programs, connected individual computers via a network, which facilitated private conversations between several pairs of people on individual network channels at once.

So, broadly CMC can be defined as any instance of communication mediated through the computer. These include electronic mail (e-mail), chat programs, Multiple User Dungeons (MUDs), computer conferencing, static and dynamic web pages etc. This is not an exhaustive list as CMC happens in many other forms as well. It was when the creation of the ARPANET in 1969, produced exceptional advantages of using emails that CMC actually started taking a shape as a mode of communication in its own right. Even

the developers of this technology never had any idea that communication would be the greatest asset of this invention.

Thereafter the impact of innovations in communication technology was so immense that it almost came as a surprise to the researchers of human communication. The research work concerning CMC struggled behind these innovations and the resultant cultural influence with no theoretical base as such. With this hurried response from researchers, most of the work done seems to be carried out in isolation without connecting various threads within this domain. Consequently, many sub-areas in CMC such as computer conferencing have been explored to a vast extent while others such as bulletin boards and webpages have been neglected for long. More importantly it seems that the entire body of the researchers has polarized into those who believe that CMC is deteriorating the language and those who believe that it is ameliorating the English language. While there have been many who have worked and published to support the former's view, there are only a handful of researchers like David Crystal in *Language and the Internet* , who propones the latter's opinion(2001).

The ever-increasing communication over internet has been nothing less than explosive. Fueling this expansion is a steady decrease in the cost of computer and communication systems. But besides cost considerations, the network has been developing a critical mass of users, primarily academics, who communicate and share resources. Just as with the early telephone system, there was little reason to be among the first; there were few others to talk to. As the number of telephones increased, so did the reasons to obtain one.

Also, as mentioned earlier, the online communication has manifested itself in various forms. The next section explores some of the major forms of CMC.

2.2 Major Forms

CMC channels can be classified in many ways. Two major criterion for classification are: a) flow of communication (i.e. Two way or one way) and b) whether communication is asynchronous (i.e., participants do not interact in real time) or synchronous (i.e., real-time communication).

Two Way Exchange

Email: The Electronic mail is an asynchronous form of CMC, initially designed for one to one communications. Later on utilities were added to send messages to multiple recipients, forward messages to other entities like third parties also. Ray Tomlinson, a computer engineer working at Bolt Beranek and Newman, the firm hired by the US Department of Defense to build ARPANET sent his first message, an arbitrary string of letters, between two PDP-10 computers in the same room that were connected via ARPANET. He used the @ symbol to clarify the recipient and machine location to which a message was addressed. The @ symbol was used to separate a user's login name from the name of his or her computer, e.g., janemishra@education.com. Very quickly, email became the most prevalent use of ARPANET, and eventually emerged as the "killer application" of networked computing.

There is a lot of variation in the styles of language used in email as these styles are determined by such variables as age and computer experience of user, function (e.g., replacement for a formal office memo, casual invitation to lunch next week, teenage online flirting). Email is, in principle, not intended for public view and is usually only stored on an individual user's computer (and perhaps, in the case of a company, in the organization's back-up files). Therefore, the kind of language used in email sometimes ungrammatical, lacking in standard punctuation or spelling should not be an issue for natural language processing or search procedures. However, given the enormous popularity of email, many of the informal (even careless) writing conventions that have emerged in writing email are finding their way into other CMC venues that are intended for wider audiences.

Instant messaging: Instant messaging (IM) is a synchronous form of CMC and, like email, is prototypically utilized between a single sender and a single recipient. Given the synchronous nature of the communication, IM messages tend to be quite short and even more casual than email. One-to-one synchronous communication systems have been in use for some time, dating back at least to the 1980s and early 1990s with the use of such UNIX applications as "talk", "ytalk", and "ntalk". However, IM did not become a widespread phenomenon until the late 1990s mostly due to the technology and marketing efforts of America Online (especially AOL Instant Messenger) and Mirabilis Ltd's IQC. It has been estimated that as of the end of 2002, there were 1.38 billion instant messages sent daily using AOL's network. While AIM is heavily used in the United States, IQC – which has 120 million registered users – is predominantly used outside of the US. Note

that ICQ, which first appeared in 1996, was purchased by AOL in 1998. Other contemporary players in the IM market include Yahoo (Yahoo! Messenger) and Microsoft (MSN Messenger). Over time, IM systems have added many bells and whistles, intended either for convenience or to attract young users. For example, recent versions of AOL's AIM enable users to create individual profiles (in essence, brief online biographies) and away messages (to indicate that you are temporarily away from your computer and what you might be doing), along with buddies lists (revealing which of your IM "buddies" are presently online). As with many youth-oriented products, these features, along with their actual functions, can be expected to shift rapidly with time. While "instant messaging captivated teenage and young adult audiences in the years immediately surrounding the turn of the century" (Lenhart et al. 2001), the "newest markets for instant messaging are in business applications" (Hellweg 2002).

As in the case of email, as long as instant messages remain in the private domain of sender and recipient, the language used in such exchanges does not become the concern of language processing and/or search programs. However, given the nature of corporate activity (including not only intranet messaging but, for example, major expansion of already existing IM systems on commercial Web sites), it becomes increasingly probable that business enterprises will look to parsing and search programs that will be able to make sense of these rapidly composed (and often cryptic or garbled) forms of electronic messaging.

SMS: The abbreviation "SMS" formally stands for "short messaging system", though it is generally interpreted as meaning "short text messaging". SMS is used on mobile telephones throughout much of the world, though market penetration in the United States still remains small by comparison. Messages are generally created by tapping the numbers of the phone keypad once or many times, corresponding to the letter of the Roman alphabet that is intended. Thus, for example, "U" (a common SMS abbreviation for the word "you") would be generated on the phone's display screen by tapping the number "8" twice rapidly in succession, since the "8" key historically also bears the letters "T", "U", and "V". Letters were originally used on phone sets to represent the telephone exchange (i.e., the word appearing at the beginning of a telephone number).

In many ways, the language of SMS is reminiscent of that seen in instant messaging: short, full of abbreviations, and casual. Technically, SMS is not Computer Mediated Communication, since it was designed to be sent and accessed through mobile telephones (via satellite technology), not through computer networks. However, in recent years, many digital technologies have become interchangeable platforms for transmitting and receiving linguistic messages: email messages can be accessed on mobile phones; SMSs can be sent – and received – on computers. In the coming years, it is likely that as platforms become increasingly interchangeable (and as Americans become heavier users of mobile communication devices), the kind of language appearing in email, IM, and SMS will tend to become more homogeneous: short, informal, and full of space-saving devices such as abbreviations and truncated syntax.

Listservs: Listservs (also sometimes known as mailing lists or distribution lists) are asynchronous, text-based communication sent by a single user to multiple email addresses. In its simplest form, a listserv provides a forum for a single individual to send a message (e.g., announcement of a meeting) to two or more recipients. Frequently, however, postings are made by multiple members of the mailing list, thereby providing an electronic forum for discussion. Today, listservs are commonly used by professional organizations, academic classrooms, or groups sharing common interests, enabling individual members to voice opinions or raise questions. Lists may be unmoderated (postings are automatically distributed without review by anyone) or moderated (someone collects messages received over a short period of time and edits them in some ways such as, summarizing the topics, summarizing the contents of the posts, or censoring objectionable material, etc., before posting.)

Mechanisms for distributing text to multiple recipients are almost as old as the early ARPANET. Early discussion lists appeared by the mid 1970s (e.g., MsgGroup, used by ARPA researchers), and listservs became an important component of BITNET, the networking systems created by Ira Fuchs and Greydon Freeman at the City University of New York in 1981. As the popularity of mailing lists spread in the 1980s, software written by Eric Thomas in 1986 (and named LISTSERV) helped automate the process of actually maintaining such lists (e.g., adding or deleting members, posting and distributing messages).

Because listservs constitute written, archived, and often quasi-public text, the potential for needing language to search them with NLP tools is significant. However, the task may be less daunting than for, say, email or IM, since the language in many listservs (especially in academic or business circles) is more formal and grammatical than in one – to - one CMC.

Newsgroups: Newsgroups are public forums for asynchronous one-to-many dialogue that originally were designed to be accessed through USENET (a non-governmental network developed in 1979 at the University of North Carolina). Unlike listservs, which send messages directly to all users on a distribution list, newsgroups constitute postings to a common public site, which can be accessed whenever users choose to log on. The network of different newsgroups is vast. Tens of thousands of available newsgroups represent seemingly every topic imaginable, from antique cars to medicine. Because newsgroups are written, publicly posted, and archived, they invite textual analysis. However, unlike listservs, newsgroups are neither moderated nor restricted in membership. As a result, the language appearing in posts can vary enormously in terms of style.

Since the days when newsgroups were all accessed through USENET, newsgroups have been hierarchically organized into major categories, each of which is then subdivided. Currently, major divisions include "comp" (computer science subjects), "humanities" (humanities subjects), "misc" (miscellaneous topics), "news" (news topics), "rec" (recreational topics), "sci" (science topics), "soc" (sociological subjects), and "talk"

(controversial topics). Each category is then further subdivided. For example, rec.arts.tv.soaps (also known by its acronym r.a.t.s.) is a newsgroup for discussing television soap operas.

MUDs and MOOs: MUDs (originally meaning Multi-User Dungeons; now commonly interpreted to mean Multi-User Dimensions) are synchronous environments in which multiple players interact with one another in a textually-created imaginary setting. The first such adventure game was created in the late 1970s by Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle at the University of Essex. The early versions of such games drew heavily upon "Dungeons and Dragons", a popular board game from the early 1970s. At the time the early MUDs were created, computers had very limited graphics capability. Players were necessarily restricted to verbal descriptions of both scenes and actions. Unlike newsgroups (which talk about the world that is using asynchronous posts), MUDs allow a comparatively restricted set of users to synchronously act on situations of their own construction. Players assume pseudonyms and interact according to pre-established navigation rules for moving through a defined terrain. For their first decade, MUDs were heavily dominated by male players engaged in fantastical adventure games. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the use of MUDs began expanding to include wider ranges of participants and more social functions. During this same period, object-oriented programming was introduced into MUDs, yielding the concept of MOOs (MUDs, Object Oriented), so named by their creator, Stephen White at the University of Waterloo. In 1990, Pavel Curtis at Xerox PARC added several features to White's program, creating the well-known LambdaMOO, a name Curtis choose because he had used the name

Lambda in some of his earlier MUD experiences. Unlike MUDs built on adventure themes, MOOs commonly define the virtual space of a real-world location (e.g., a university campus, a house), inviting participants to speak and act within particular zones (e.g., a room, a walkway). Contemporary MOOs are "being employed in social and educational contexts" (Bruckman and Resnick 1995: 102). Use of non-textual material (e.g., graphics, sound) is also now appearing in MUDs and MOOs.

Chat: Chat is a synchronous CMC venue for holding conversations with multiple participants. While an early version of chat was possible through the UNIX "talk" program (allowing multiple users to engage in instant messaging – see above), chat as we now know it was not born until 1988. In that year, Jarkko Oikarinen, a student at the University of Oulu (in Finland), wrote a program that came to be known as Internet Relay Chat (ICR), which was intended as an improvement on UNIX "talk". By the early 1990s, ICR became known to the wider public, serving as a template for more generic chat programs available through Internet providers such as America Online and through the Web. As in the case of newsgroups, participants in chat enter into a "channel" (for IRC) or "room" (for AOL), ostensibly dedicated to a particular topic. However, with chat, not only is the medium synchronous but it invites both playful and manipulative behavior. Users log on through nicknames (akin to participation in MUDs), free to camouflage their real-world personal characteristics (age, gender, background, etc.). While conversation takes place in real time, users can (as in the case of newsgroups) scroll back through the archive to respond to earlier conversations.

Like listservs, newsgroups, and MUDs or MOOs, chat generates a quasi-public linguistic record that can subsequently be analyzed. However, given the nature of the chat conversation, it is primarily linguists and Internet researchers who are interested in analyzing such text, not organizations or commercial ventures.

One Way Exchange

Websites: Unlike the forms of CMC we have discussed so far, web sites have historically been a monologic form of communication. That is, they have posted material on the World Wide Web that others might view rather than respond to. Generally, a website is composed of one or more web pages. In recent years, there is an increasing momentum to create web sites that invite interaction (e.g., currency converters, translation programs, and personal feedback, not to mention the enormous category of online commerce).

Webpages: Webpages (individual, institutional, or commercial) form the backbone of the World Wide Web. Such pages became possible in the early 1990s when Tim Berners-Lee introduced the notion of what came to be known as a URL (Uniform Record Locator), whereby every webpage could be located by a unique address. Today, there are billions of web pages, with the number continuing to grow seemingly limitlessly.

Web logs: Web logs are actually web pages that serve a restricted, though loosely defined set of functions. Also known as blogs, web logs were created in 1997 by Jorn Barger. Initially, web logs were designed as lists of web sites that the blogger found to be of interest and wished to share with others (i.e., via the blogger's own web site).

Sometimes web logs of this genre simply provide a set of headlines (complete with web links) that the compiler has put together (with frequent updates). Other topic-oriented web logs offer brief news summaries or discuss contemporary topics of interest to the blogger and/or readers who have responded by email to earlier "issues" of the web log. Use of web logs has expanded from the link-and-commentary mode to include more personal journals or diaries. Such web logs may be devoted to posting one's creative writing (sometimes with requests for commentary from readers) or even quite personal revelations about one's daily life and thoughts, perhaps complete with live video from a web camera. Given the popularization of web logs, it is hardly surprising that a number of software programs have appeared that enable novice users to create and maintain their own web logs.

2.3 Features

CMC has features of written and spoken language and it cannot clearly be attributed to either one or the other. But CMC has also some features of its own. The most well-known is probably the current use of abbreviations. Yates observes that people who are not familiar with chatting on the computer might have problems to understand the many abbreviations the chat language uses there (Yates 1996: 29-46).

For example, lol, meaning laughing out loud or IMHO, meaning In My Humble Opinion. Something that is also typical of Computer Mediated Communication is emoticons, which one uses if one wants to show emotions with the help of a few characters. The most common emoticon is :-) which indicates a smile. (Saskia 2004: 102)

Abbreviations and emoticons are really helpful in writing an informal e-mail, while chatting or lately, in writing text messages on mobile phones. Both features express something one wants to say or an emotion one wants to submit in a minimum of characters. This way, one can save time, space and even money, if one think of the extremely limited characters that can be used in one text message (Saskia 2004: 103).

There are many different studies that try to give an answer as to whether CMC is more like written language or spoken language. Simeon Yates´ study compares CMC, writing and speech to their use of personal pronouns because one of the main differences between speech and writing which many researchers focus on is reference to self and other (Quoted by Saskia 2004: 101).

The results were that in the total use of pronouns CMC was closer to writing and in the proportional use of each type of pronoun there were more similarities to speech. There is no clear answer, besides that CMC has features of both, writing and speech. The simplest way to find similarities of CMC to writing or speech is not to take a look at a study but to have a look at an e-mail or to go to a chat-room as the answers are mostly relatively obvious. As far as similarities to written language are concerned, anybody can see that CMC is text-based, as written language is. Something that CMC and written language also have in common is that one cannot be interrupted as it is the case with spoken language. One can always finish what one wanted to write. Of course there are different types of written language and spoken language, but CMC seems to be more personal, like

speech. There are some features or effects in CMC, especially in chats to support this personal and speech-like atmosphere. For example, hyphens and periods are used to create a pause, capitalization and exclamation marks have the effect of emphasis. Also, there are effects to imitate sounds or laughter, for example ding dong or hahaha. It is also not unusual to use the effect of gesture, for example when chat partners are simulating they would shake each others' hands or hugging each other by adding *shakes hands* or *hugs* to their messages (Herring 1996: 56-60).

2.4 Emails

In the traditional study of computer-mediated communication and groups, Finholt, Hiltz, Rice, and Sproull have studied various electronic groups at work, employee groups in virtual communities, group communication through mediation and new ways of working in the networked organization. Their studies have relied on data from "organizational case studies" (Quoted by Patterson 1996: 32). Similarly, Aher, Eveland, Fuller, and Hiltz conducted "field and laboratory experiments in areas such as effect of Interface on the Structure of Interaction in Computer-Mediated Small-Group Discussion, Group Structures and Computer Support, Human-Computer-Human Interaction, and Experiments in Group Decision Making, Communication Process and Outcome in Face-to-Face versus Computerized Conferences" (Quoted by Patterson 1996:33).

Also, most educational studies focus on effective on-line teaching techniques, descriptions of the collaborative learning environments, and efficacy of such learning environments. Bonham, Hesser, Hiltz, and Hudspeth "used educational settings to study

Constructing Cultures in Distance Education, Online graduate education, Impacts of College-Level Courses via Asynchronous Learning Networks: Focus on Students, Electronic Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) and Student Teacher Education. Nunamaker used computer conferencing systems to study Electronic Meeting Systems to Support Group Work" (Quoted by Patterson1996: 35).

The research in organizational settings considered the influence of CMC on the quality of group decisions, group leadership, participation and time to decision. This early research on CMC, mostly in organizations or laboratory experiments, led to its being characterized as inherently impersonal, lacking in normative reinforcement and with less socio-emotional content than other forms of communication.

Walther, J. and Burgoon in their work *Relational Communication in Computer-Mediated Interaction* argues that because the non-verbal cues are those that carry relational information, the reduced social presence of CMC accounts for communication with less socio-emotional content (1992: 67).

Rice, relying on survey data, elaborated on the use of the "new media" stating that computer conferencing systems were rated more satisfactory for tasks requiring lower amounts of intimacy, conflict, or socio-emotional content. The weaknesses he found in CMC were missing nonverbal feedback, missing direct interpersonal contact, infrequency of participation by some members, intransigent or rigid negotiations and multiple threading in the discussions, which "may develop and create confusion or information overload" [1984: 140, 149].

Further research on Internet interpersonal communication has included work on MUDs by Carlstrom, Chemy, Reid, and Remy which included research on "The Communicative Implications of a Text-Only Virtual Environment, The Modal Complexity of Speech Events in a Social MUD, and Cultural Formations in Text-Based Virtual Realities" (Quoted by Patterson 1996:47).

Work on IRC by Danet, Reid, and Serpentelli included Experiments in Virtual Theater on Internet Relay Chat, Communication and Community on Internet Relay Chat, Conversational Structure and Personality Correlates of Electronic Communication (Quoted by Patterson 1996:56).

Jones in his book *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communication and Community* (1995), and Shields' Cultures *of Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies* (1996), focused their attention on "cyberculture".

Carlstrom and Cherny in their work on MUDs by; and Reid, Vincent, and Serpentelli in their work on IRC argue that "each is a culture with unique shared vocabulary, shared language signifiers, behavioral norms and interpersonal relationships" (Quoted by Patterson 1996: 56).

Elizabeth Reid emphasizes that MUDing interweaves the play with social rules and expectations, that "descriptions, communicative commands and specialized language and

textual forms enable the social understandings which link people together and allow the evolution and transmission of social norms" (Quoted by Patterson 1996: 59).

Herring argues that women and men have recognizably different posting styles, contrary to the claim that CMC neutralizes distinctions of gender, and that women and men have different communicative ethics. For example, they value different kinds of on-line interactions; men value candor, originality and firm beliefs whereas women value expressions of appreciation and helpfulness (1994: 278-294).

Functional and Instrumental aspects were the primary focus of early research in CMC in 1970's through 1990. The researchers were concerned about the influence of this new medium on overall organizational functioning including efficiency of workers and impact on hierarchical relationships. Terms like "teleconferencing" and "conferences" were frequently used in research papers published during that period (Short et al. 1976: 27, Hiltz and Turoff 1982: 84, Kiesler et al. 1984: 33).

The prominence of these terms reflects the fact that the Internet was originally developed for defense purposes in the late 1960's and early 1970's by the United States Department of Defense as described by Hafner and Lyon in *Where wizards stay up late: The origins of the Internet*, and in its early applications beyond defense needs was also primarily used in work settings.

Thus, people expected the general frame of messages exchanged to be "serious". The medium was perceived as cold, anonymous, and lacking in "social presence" because of the absence of non-verbal cues such as facial expression (Short et al. 1976: 46, Kiesler et al. 1984: 25, Walther 1992: 64).

Baron developed a formalized linguistic perspective. She used this to explore how the medium of communication influences both content and its presentation. She studied the use of computers as conduits for natural language (1984: 118-141). Baron's paper discusses the features of CMC (as opposed to face-to-face) communication, as generally accepted by much of the research which had been done up to the time of writing. The CMC features she discusses are of physical, linguistic and social nature. The physical aspects include increased decision-making time. Linguistic aspects include high frequency of "arguments and swearing (flaming)", "reduction of register shifts" etc. The social aspects include the more democratic nature of CMC discourse, "more shifting in position from initial position" and a "focus on message[s] not people". Baron also talks about the potential advantages and disadvantages due to spatial and temporal distancing in CMC. The advantages include "anonymity", "social equalization", "reduced distractions", "increased importance of logical argument", "opportunity to contemplate message [and] response", and "physical convenience". Among the disadvantages are "reduced feedback", "social distancing", and "reduction of language as a means of phatic communication (social bonding)".

Murray, D. claims that

> the introduction of a new medium of communication, the computer, into the workplace clearly demonstrates that medium of communication is itself a linguistic choice, depending on the context of situation (1988: 353).

Murray's paper presents a case study identifying those aspects of the context of situation that affect both choice of mode/medium and mode/medium-switching. Murray begins with contextual factors as the point of departure for her study instead of taking language forms (the traditional writing/speech dichotomy), As a result of her study, Murray establishes a taxonomy of medium/mode choices, which consists of three principal categories--field of discourse, speaker/hearer, and setting.

Burton, P. F. addresses certain important issues related to e-mail as a medium for communication beyond the mere description of systems and what one can do with them. He points out that E-mail is not simply a forum for "short, factual, numerical communications" but can be used for extensive, in-depth discussion (1994: 101). He notes that E-mail, as any other medium, carries with it a certain set of rules concerning its use (although these rules may change over time) such as Informality of language--rendering CMC akin to verbal discussion; E-mail has an equalizing quality--relative anonymity hides the rank of people involved; as well as physical appearance--so ideas are taken on their own merit; All participants can contribute to discussion; no one person can dominate the conversation as in face-to-face communication by talking faster/louder than others (although Burton does make mention of "flaming" without going into it too deeply- he simply states that in his list group, when one person got out of hand the others

told him or her to settle down). Studies demonstrate that people who use CMC for enjoyment manipulate text to enhance their communication, develop relational skills and express individuality and originality.

Maynor, N. discusses e-mail discourse as having its own style. Among the features distinctive to electronic writing are: lack of capital letters, simplified spellings, clippings and icons. These features she writes (with the exception of clippings) are not parts of speech, but they seem to exist to make e-mail similar to speech (1994: 48-54).

For example, since capital letters cannot be seen in speech they are left out of e-mail. On the other hand, sometimes words are written in all capital letters to represent "screaming". Other elements such as varied punctuation (more exclamation points and trailing dots) or the lack of personal pronouns also imitate speech. E-mail does have its own lexicon, and many of the expressions are shorter than standard written expressions ("via, re, btw"). However, other typical e-mail expressions are not shorter ("nope" instead of "no"). The same can be said about punctuation--there is in fact more of it than in standard written English. Maynor hypothesizes that the use of these particular lexical items, in the case where they are shorter is coincidental--they are simply "associated with computer communication". The effort to add punctuation and use longer words taken from spoken English seems to be an effort on the part of e-mail users to imitate the more informal medium of spoken language. She does emphasize however that she has not "collected enough data to make definitive statements about e-style". Her essay is merely

"intended as a suggestion that perhaps the language of e-mail is worthy of our attention as linguists".

Mulac and Lundell examine whether or not women and men write differently. Forty essays (20 by women, 20 by men) were randomly selected from a field of 148. The untrained observers (who, by the way, were unable to accurately guess the sex of the writers) evaluated the essays according to socio-intellectual status, aesthetic quality and dynamism (1994: 299-309).

It was found that women rated higher in the socio-intellectual status and the aesthetic quality categories, while men rated higher in the category of dynamism. Trained observers then evaluated the essays according to language features established by previous studies as being gender-distinguishing. Male "language variables" included: references to quantity, judgmental adjectives, locatives, sentence initial conjunctions/fillers. Female variables included: intensive adverbs, references to emotion, dependent clauses, sentence initial adverbials, uncertainty verbs, hedges, oppositions, and long mean length sentences.

> Results indicated that a combination of nine language features provided substantial differentiation between male and female writers. Male writers tended to make greater use of . . . references to quantity, locatives, elliptical sentences, and judgmental adjectives. Female writers. . . generally made use of. uncertainty verbs, progressive verbs, references to emotions, longer mean length sentences, and sentence initial adverbials (Mulac and Lundell 1994:307) .

Mulac and Lundell conclude that their study "establishes for the first time that the ways in which men and women write in informal discourse have judgmental consequences. These consequences are not only consistent with those of their speech; they are also consistent with society's gender stereotypes. The findings suggest that men's and women's writing helps perpetuate these pervasive stereotypes" (1994:307).

Adkins and Brashers examine powerful and powerless language in computer-mediated group interactions. They indicate that past research has shown a relationship between language style and "attributions of social power". "Powerless" language is that which is typically "operationalized as overuse of polite forms...hedges...hesitations... ..intensifiers...and tag questions" while powerful language is that which lacks these indicators (1995: 292).

Adkins and Brashers point out that powerless language users do not necessarily have low status; they simply create that impression by way of the style they employ. These impressions are important, since they have an impact on group interaction. This impact may be in the form of how much opportunity certain group members are given to talk, as well as how much attention is paid to certain group members' ideas. The results of their own study show that

> "language style has a significant impact on impression formation in computer-mediated groups. The user of a powerful language style in a computer-mediated group is generally perceived as more credible, attractive, and persuasive than the user of a powerless language style"(1995: 321).

In due course of time along with this research tradition came the newer approaches targeting the linguistic, playful and expressive aspects of CMC, and therefore of greater interest to students of semiotics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, folklore and anthropology.

Kern investigated the advantages of a chatting tool, Daedalus Interchange, which was used to discuss various topics in French on the computer before proceeding to oral discussion in the classroom. An extensive analysis of transcripts from the chat sessions indicated that the quantity of learners' discourse was greater, and the quality better, in the computer-based discussions. The analysis did, however, indicate that sentences were usually simpler and shorter in the computer sessions, since such sentences tended to elicit more responses than long, complex ones (1995: 457-476).

An experimental study by Warschauer's compared face-to-face and electronic discussion and appeared to contradict Kern's findings on the lack of complexity in language produced in the electronic forum. Warschauer's study indicated that a group of sixteen students of English as a second language (ESL) used language that was lexically and syntactically more formal and complex in electronic discussions than in face-to-face ones. He also found a higher degree of participation in the electronic discussions (1996: 7-25).

Negretti's analysis of non-native speakers' chat sessions in English addressed differences between chatting and face-to-face interaction by adopting a conversation-analysis

perspective. She described structures and patterns, which were peculiar to interlanguage produced in a CMC context, even though they were based on conversational strategies. Her results showed that sequencing and timing were dealt with very differently in the chat sessions compared with conversational settings. These observations were based on chats carried out in a group setting, with group postings and one-to-one postings intermingling (1999: 75-87).

Kern (1995) documented learners' use of icons to represent smiles, frowns or winks, while Negretti also identified paralinguistic features present in her subjects' chat sessions.

Ko compares one form of synchronous CMC, Daedalus InterChange, with analogous spoken and written corpora. He finds that the InterChange discourse mode is not merely intermediate between speaking and writing; rather the electronic medium uniquely fosters some behaviors and inhibits others, in support of the view that physical mode of communication shapes language use (1996).

Zubaida S. A. Alsree combines a linguistic and a social perspective that incorporates a product as well as process view to the study of language in use. The study revealed that the exchange of email interactions were built around 'getting things done' in the day-to-day business of a multinational corporation. There is also evidence to show that email is a dynamic medium. Email interaction has its own special features and style that enhance interactivity, and verify its ability to relay socio-emotive content. Its dynamism is also seen in its built-in mechanisms (1997).

Crowston and Kammerer experimented and explored how gender interacts with communicative style to affect decisions to participate in Computer Mediated Communication (e.g., Usenet newsgroups). Although some field studies indicate that style has a differential effect on men and women, the data fails to confirm this hypothesis. However, significant differences were found in the interest in topics, as well as effects of style across all subjects, which have implications for the design of future studies on this topic (1998: 185-204).

John Paolillo developed a social network approach to online language variation and change through qualitative and quantitative analysis of logfiles of Internet Relay Chat interaction. The analysis reveals a highly structured relationship between participants' social positions on a channel and the linguistic variants they use (1999).

Scott W. Campbell and Ulla Bunz assessed whether certain discourse fragments in email messages consistently conveyed certain tones when situated in certain contexts. One hundred fifty-five subjects were asked to match message fragments to provided adjectives (affirming, appreciative, assertive, bold, caring, enthusiastic, formal, friendly, happy, personal, polite, respectful, strong, warm) (2002: 2). The message fragments were situated in three contexts: business, friendship, and family interactions. Results showed that certain message fragments were perceived to be significantly formal, friendly, personal, caring, happy, and polite in the context of their use. Results also showed that, in some cases, demographic factors played a role in perceptions of discursive fragments.

Rebecca and Oppenheim reviewed relevant literature to identify some of the features that are said to appear exclusively in e-mails and highlight the main issues in the debate between those who embrace the new style of writing generated by e-mail, and those who feel it is detrimental to communication (2002: 8-22).

Hancock et.al. (2005: 22) investigated changes in both the sender's and the target's linguistic style across truthful and deceptive dyadic communication in a synchronous text-based setting. A computer-based analysis of 242 transcripts revealed that senders produced more words overall, decreased their use of self-oriented pronouns but increased other-oriented pronouns, and used more sense-based descriptions (e.g., seeing, touching) when lying than when telling the truth. In addition, motivated senders avoided causal terms during deception, while unmotivated senders relied more heavily on simple negations. Receivers used more words when being deceived, but they also asked more questions and used shorter sentences when being lied to than when being told the truth, especially when the sender was unmotivated. These findings are discussed in terms of their implications for linguistic style matching and interpersonal deception theory.

Benedikt, in his book *Cyberspace: First Steps,* described that, in the popular media as well as among scholars, the cyberspace, which seemed abstract, difficult-to-grasp, disembodied virtual "place" made possible by live links between millions of mainframe and personal computers around the world, was a buzzing hive of intense social and cultural activity (1991: 32).

In his investigation into the text features of business emails used for internal communication, Gains (1999: 82,90) focused on generic features such as subjects, closings, openings, as well as linguistic features like compression, abbreviations, omissions and register. Gain discovered a high degree of consistency in the way writers in his samples used most of these categories. He found no evidence of features of conversational discourse being incorporated in the texts he analysed, nor of any compressions or word omissions. Gains concluded that the analysis of his data did not support the existence of a new business genre. However, this lack of evidence may have resulted from the kind of data analysed and the type of analysis made. His data were collected from a "closed system for internal electronic mail" which could have a "permanent legal status" for the company he researched.

In a study of emails used for external business communication, Gimenez also analysed the textual features of business emails. However, his data showed examples that reveal a certain relaxation in the style and register of business emails. The language in his data "contains simple, straight forward syntactic structures, showing a preference for co-ordinated rather than subordinated ideas". In his data, Gimenez also found standard as well as personalised uses of abbreviations, contracted forms and capitalisation and spelling mistakes. He concludes that "efficiency, one of the features of e-mail messages frequently mentioned by e-mail users, seems to equate with informal and flexibility of style". Gimenez's data, however, were composed of messages exchanged between the export manager of a UK-based company and some of his long-established international

customers. This may help to explain, for instance, the informal style of the texts analysed and some of the language choices made by the international customers (2000: 241, 250).

More recently, Mallon and Oppenheim reviewed the textual features that seem to be exclusive to email messages in an attempt to come up with a list of 'e-mailisms'. They define emailisms as those features 'associated with e-mail' which may or may not appear in other forms of communication . Mallon and Oppenheim conclude that the most common emailism in their data was contracted forms, "appearing 142 times in 100 emails", followed by spelling mistakes (57 times per 100 emails). The third most common emailism was quoted text which was used by 30% of writers in their sample (2002: 9, 16, 200).

In a recent study, Gimenez demonstrates that business emails have become a more complex genre, embedding a series of internal messages. He defines embedded emails as messages "which are made up of an initial message which starts the communication event, a series of internal, subordinated messages which depend on the first message to make sense, and a final message which brings the communication event to an end" (2005: 235-36). Among other features, Gimenez focuses on the length of the messages, concluding that the first ('chain initiator') and last ('chain terminator') messages tend to be longer than the internal messages as they open and close the communication event respectively. The lexical items of embedded emails tend to follow the same pattern of distribution and complexity. Lexical items in the internal messages tend to be less complex than those in the chain terminator and initiator. Another interesting feature

observed in relation to embedded emails is their embedded topicality. Gimenez suggests that the macro topic stated in the subject line of an email usually embeds other micro topics as the conversation develops.

2.5 Webpages

The World Wide Web (WWW) has provided a new way of communication to human beings and can be compared to a magic vehicle which effortlessly transports one from one country to another, one culture to other speaking different varieties of the same language. As we take a whirlwind tour of the world through the websites across the globe, we might expect to find significant differences in terms of language use, and structural elements, the truth is that we can't ignore the similarities in the same. That is when people from different backgrounds, education, culture, experience, and purpose create these websites. In one of his interviews, David Crystal said:

> The World Wide Web provides a platform to virtually all the styles which have so far developed in the written language: newspapers, scientific reports, bulletins, novels, poems, prayers. Indeed, it's introducing us to new styles of written expressions which none of us have ever seen before – the animated and the abbreviated language specifically. The web is truly a part of a new linguistic medium, more dynamic than traditional writing, and more permanent than traditional speech. It's often been said the Internet is a revolution - yes, indeed, but it's also a linguistic revolution (2001).

In the first place the similarities in the content are visible; corporate logos, slogans etc. Many of the top news items and editorial topics are the same in online editions of The Times of India, Asahi Shimbun, The Washington Post, and Le Monde. Secondly we encounter similarities in design. We can observe a worldwide preference for left-hand

link menus and we can readily recognize an online newspaper, even if we cannot read the language. Another, perhaps less obvious global similarity is a trend towards using characteristics of scientific graphs and tables in commercial design. Sackmary and Scalia identified so many similarities in the design and language used in U.S. and Mexican business websites that they concluded they were seeing "the emergence of a global Internet culture" (2003).

We can wonder, however, whether similarities among websites of different cultures are restricted to surface features, or whether similarities exist at deeper levels as well. Another important element in communication, irrespective of channel, is the tone of the sender of the message. Souther and White in their work *Technical Report Writing* explains that the "writer's attitude towards the subject and the audience is defined as the tone of the text." (1977: 56).

Evans, B Mary, et.al, studied the degree of formality and tone deviations in English Language websites. They found that the tone was significantly more formal in websites from countries where English is a second language compared with countries where English is a First language (2005: 849).

Some authors assert that a personal, informal tone improves the credibility of written messages. For example, Coney and Steehouder maintain that personal tone such as "In the British Library, you will find…" is better than impersonal, third person tone like "The British Library provides…" because personal tone is more inviting (2000: 332).

However, other authors assert that such a tone may not be better in all situations, and warn that readers from different cultures judge tone differently. For example, Ferraro in his book *The Cultural Dimensions of International Business* states that the personal, informal tone preferred by North Americans can offend people from more formal cultures (2000).

Similarly, Hodge in his book *Global Smarts: The Art of Communicating and Deal Making Anywhere in the World* recommends that Americans who visit other countries speak "more formally when they are abroad than when they are in the U.S." (2000: 67). These authors suggest that communicators need to take culturally-based differences in rhetorical expectations into account when crafting their messages.

No doubt, the companies trust Internet to communicate. And English has become the lingua franca of the Internet based communication. Web page is the most common form of CMC. Even before checking emails, engaging in IRC, blogs or an online conference, the user needs to visit the webpage of the service provider. Web pages have come a long way to become the new face of today's organization. So it is important for a company to present itself through static (sometimes dynamic also) content in form of text, images and colors to communicate effectively. Organizations need to assess whether the effectiveness of their business can be enhanced through CMC.. The users of WWW need to address whether the personal communication revolution happening all around them in the form of personal space on the Internet affect language adversely. Similarly, it is

important for the researchers to study the impact of such communication revolutions. They need to analyse whether the language used in WWW follows standard constructions and usage rules or there is a mutation happening to the way language is used in today's Internet age.

At the same time, Personal web pages present a new channel of mass communication. Hosting a personal web page is convenient, affordable, and allows people to present a multi-mediated self, using audiovisual self, using audio-visual components and text to communicate to potential mass audience. Authoring personal webpage has become a popular type of Internet use. Internet Service Providers and online hosting portals like Geocities etc., aid this trend. As both informative and expressive tools, personal web pages allow individuals to transcend from consumers of media content to media producers (Dominick 1999: 651). Authors of personal web pages are not merely sharing information with others; they are also engaged in establishing a sense of self on virtual terrain. The personal home page is a media product very heterogeneous in nature. The volume of personal home pages varies between one document and hundreds of files, the number of external links ranges from zero to more than a thousand, the spectrum of functions and topics, of text types and language styles is large and has been only partially studied (Doring 2002).

Smith, Siltanen and Hosman (1998: 30) have looked at how powerful and powerless language styles affect evaluations of a speaker's authoritativeness, sociability, and similarity to the receiver, while Adkins and Brashers (1995: 292) examined the impact of

such language styles on attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness in CMC. Some studies of perceptions of CMC language variables have focused on politeness/impoliteness or grammar use (Jessmer and Anderson 2001: 10). These studies suggest that variations in language styles influence the audience's perception of the writer.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, we have seen how the studies carried out by scholars in the context of technology-enabled communication have become important. The last few decades have seen more and more people using technology to communicate, Internet being the revolutionary one. As a result of technological innovations, various forms of online communication channels are available for specific and general communication. It has had its effect on language usage. The research by scholars have been divided in two phases – Early research from 1970 to 1995 which saw academic research in various experimental set ups and domain specific corpuses. And then the Email revolution happened, with thousands of users registering online to communicate with each other. More importantly, it became one of the important channels for communication in corporate world. And as liberalization happened all over the world and people came closer and together from various cultures, the impact of this channel on language became a major research area with specific issues.

Similarly, Webpages, initially used by military and university setups, exploded in a big way with companies putting up websites to be more visible and do all kinds of businesses

through it. In the last decade the revolution of web became a phenomenon when individuals started it for professional and personal gratification. The latest addition is blogging, where anybody with an internet connection can give vent to his or her anger, happiness and sorrow.

This chapter has provided an adequate background for the study of language used in various forms of CMC. But as stated earlier, this study focuses on two important forms of CMC, namely Emails and Websites. The next chapter presents the analysis of Emails that were studied with a two pronged approach – perception and practice of the new channel. For this purpose two hundred actual emails and a questionnaire survey has been used to gauge the influence of online communication on language usage in two contexts, namely formal and informal.

CHAPTER 3
LANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF EMAILS

3.1. Introduction

Email is a generic term for messages composed and transmitted from one computer to another on a network. It can be accessed through a personal computer program with an email client or through one of the many online email services. According to Oxford English Dictionary OED online, an email/electronic mail is 'the sending of non-spoken information between individuals over a telecommunication network to a selected location or locations where it is stored for subsequent retrieval in a computer'. Email has changed our lives in countless good ways.

The style of email composition is generally believed to be 'modified' in comparison to traditional ways of conveying written messages. The style varies from situation to situation, according to the relationship and the subject matter. Therefore it becomes important to understand the 'new channel of communication' to get the tone right from the outset–but this isn't as straightforward as it sounds. As Kummings (2007) reminds us of Whitman's philosophy:

> 'Human personality contains multitudes'. We are bosses and employees, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, scolders and comforters, encouragers and discouragers–and we constantly blend and change roles, even when we're talking to the same person (23).

All forms of written communication suffer with one or the other drawback such as the delay in feedback, lack of spontaneity, absence of nonverbal cues, etc. In other instances

of interaction that take place in person, or even over the telephone, this limitation can be overcome in varying degrees. But email is one of the most difficult written mediums of all. This is because sometimes the distinction between the informal communication (making plans with friends, asking for information to peers or colleagues) and formal communication (applying for a job, pitching a prospective client) gets blurred, many times to a dangerous effect. Also, time is an important factor when email is used as a communication medium.

Shipley and Schwalbe, in their book *Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home,* talk about the vital matters like the "politics of using Cc (nobody likes to be left out); when to just reply and when to Reply All; the danger of the URGENT subject (too many and you cry wolf); fine-tuning your greetings to fit the relationship (if you use the wrong one, you can lose the reader at hello); how best to apologize online (put the word 'sorry' in the subject or else the email may never be read)" (2007: 73). Email messages are commonly viewed as vehicles of informality, to be as short as possible and full of omitted words. Readers are mistakenly perceived as good friends of the writer and assumed to understand completely the writer's intended meaning. As a result, messages can be unclear, over-familiar and they may often lead to misunderstandings. The meaning should be transparent at all times, and sentences full and complete. Busy readers cannot be relied on to remember the background of the correspondence immediately. A brief outline of the situation is always helpful to jog the reader's memory.

Like a letter, an e-mail benefits from an opening greeting and a 'sincerely' type sign off. When first making contact, formality is the best option. But in between, the message

should be concise. With the daunting number of messages most business people have to digest each day, no one appreciates a lengthy, rambling message. Of course, clarity is always more important than conciseness but without a descent into sloppy grammar. After all, we are judged on how we express ourselves.

Businesses today cannot afford to waste time and money for writers' inability to express themselves in an appropriate way using electronic mail. Baron, for example, has discussed stylistic features such as the length of messages, abbreviated and verbose forms, and informality (2002: 410). These features, Baron suggests, have made the style of email 'reminiscent of telegraphic language' (2002: 412).

Similarly, Crystal has produced an extensive study of internet language and has asserted that the electronic revolution has brought about a linguistic revolution, resulting in 'Netspeak', 'a genuine new medium' (2001: 238).

In addition, Collot and Belmore have indicated that the nature of the language used in emails is closer to the spontaneous genres like speeches and interviews than it is to the informational genres such as official documents (1996: 13-28).

It is also understood that users think of email as an **alternative to letters**. Traditionally, two main categories of letters have been recognized, typically called the business letter and the social or personal letter. The stylistics and format of these two types have been highly documented. People always carry a virtual pattern of each type and replicate it as required. In the 21st century, the most obvious distinction within the world of official communication was that between the inter-organizational letter and the intra-

organizational one—the memorandum, popularly known as memo. The initial email format with its header can be said as being inherited from the intra-organizational memorandum.

As Joanne Yates has pointed out, this template was originally invented for intra-organizational communication in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

> Internal correspondence across distance had long been an accepted part of business, but in the late 19th- and early 20th centuries, considerable correspondence...emerged within facilities as a response to plant growth and systematization. The form and content of this style began to diverge from that of external letters, reflecting the preoccupation with efficiency and system that shaped downward and upward communication. While custom and courtesy restricted the form and style of external letters, internal correspondence evolved in ways intended to make it more functional to read and to handle (1989: 489).

In many ways the memo format of email is upsetting. Firstly, it is awkward to use it for communication between organizations. If it was right to dispense with "custom and courtesy" in the name of efficiency in a paper letter within an organization, is it also appropriate to dispense with it in email to a person in another organization.

Using the memo format for purely personal written communication certainly looks odd. It invites a playful tone in personal emails. There is something inappropriate about a memo whose subject line reads, for example, "recipe for apple cake." Of course, many people have become accustomed to this incongruity. At the same time, though novel, it is useful to tell the reader, even in a personal message, what its subject will be, especially if they

have to cope with many messages per day. Users who are growing up with email do not experience this incongruity.

Depending on the technology used, different forms of online communication are located at different points along a continuum from situations which elicit or facilitate the most writing-like use of language at one end, to those which elicit or facilitate the most speech-like use at the other. Email composed offline is likely to be relatively more writing-like in its linguistic features than email composed on the fly when logged on. Offline, there is always time to edit; one can use a word processor and import the letter into the email interface or enclose the edited text as an attachment. However, it is believed that few people actually compose most of their emails this way today. The creators of the film "You've Got Mail" put the fictitious email letters exchanged by the leading characters on the film's Website. Examined closely, these letters do not greatly resemble how people actually communicate in email. Thus, a letter from "Shopgirl" to "Ny152" is too carefully composed; its sentences are all grammatically well formed; there are no typos and all words are spelled correctly.

> Subject: Starbucks
> Date: 10/20/98 10:11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time
> From: NY152
> To: Shopgirl
>
> The whole purpose of places like Starbuck's is for people with no decision making ability whatsoever to make six decisions just to buy one cup of coffee. Short, tall, light, dark, caf, decaf, low-fat, non-fat, etc. So people who don't know what the hell they're doing or who on earth they are, can, for only $2.95, get not just a cup of coffee but an absolutely defining sense of self: Tall! Decaf! Cappuccino!

Multiple punctuation and eccentric spelling are common in online writing, not only of children but also of adults. The use of all capital letters, as in "I REALLY LIKE THAT!" is familiar from the comics and street graffiti, especially when the word is a graphic representation of a sound. In practice, writing in all caps has generally been discouraged because it is understood as the visual equivalent of shouting. Smiley icons and descriptions of action like *grins* (surrounded by asterisks) supply missing information about non-verbal aspects of communication. Detested by some and enjoyed by others, smiley icons are more formally called "emoticons"--a conflation of "emotion" and "icon". They are composed of clusters of ordinary typographic symbols such as commas, periods and parentheses. When viewed with the head tilted toward the left shoulder they form "faces". Synchronous typed conversations and even private emails are often sprinkled with abbreviations, some of which were already in use before the advent of computers, others, like "LOL" for "laughing out loud" are new.

Recent studies have established that email messages are characterized by a distinctive combination of not only "oral" and "written" but also uniquely digital features. Among the speech-like features are contractions and slang, as in "I'm gonna read the book", and colloquial expressions such as "How about?" or "OK." Messages also contain many first and second person pronouns, reflecting high personal involvement. Often, email messages also have many writing-specific characteristics beyond those mentioned earlier. Syntactically, sentences may be complex rather than simple or compound, showing evidence of editing and planning. Other writing-linked features are the use of lists, a high incidence of nominalizations (nouns instead of verbs, "make a payment" instead of "pay") paragraphing--organizing material into chunks separated by white space, and so

on. One of the most notable features which is particularly unique to email writing is the practice of citing even fairly large portions of the email to which one is replying. Another digital innovation is signature files, which often only partially resemble traditional business cards.

Conventionally personal letters have always been more conversational and informal than business or official ones. Thus, the transition to a medium that fosters a partially speech-like mode should be less problematic in the case of personal letters than in that of business or official ones, in which the informal style facilitated by the new medium conflicts with traditional norms. The main features of the business letter template are probably familiar to most readers. The standard paper business letter is supposed be cast in a formal style--to use language appropriate to formal situations. It should contain a formal opening--a formal salutation such as "Dear" + Title + Last Name as in "Dear Dr. Jones"--and formal closing such as "Sincerely," "Sincerely yours," or "Yours truly", followed by a signature, First Name + Last Name, on a separate line. Formal letters also often include a pre-closing, such as "Thank you very much" or "I look forward to hearing from you."

The various **parameters used in the study** focus on the grammar, syntax, vocabulary, structural aspects of language and some unique features of the channel itself. These include Use of Verbs, Conjunctions and Prepositions, Spellings and Fragmented Sentences, Use of Lengthy Sentences, Use of Self absorbed or Reader Oriented Content, Use of Conversational Tone, Use of Punctuation, Use of Short and Long Paragraphs and

Spacing, Use of Compressed words and Abbreviations, Use of Capitalization, Use of Typographic Extremes, Use of Emoticons and Use of Transliteration.

All these parameters have been studied in the 'context' described in chapter 2. The relationship that we share in a general/personal or professional environment is the key factor considered to categorize an email as Informal, and Formal. The data was compiled using questionnaires administered on two hundred subjects and personal observation of two hundred emails and is presented in form of descriptive statistics to reflect the patterns and degree of use of parameters in 'Perception' and in 'Practice'.

3.2 Type of Content

Irrespective of the reason and message to be covered, it is important to remember that the aim is to communicate to the reader. It is also necessary to write with the reader in mind. Though this is not a new concept, it is difficult to achieve. It becomes more important in case of online communication tools such as an email where the medium can inflict its own flavor on the writing. Assuming certain things about the reader may render the communication useless, the first challenge being the use of the medium itself. It is not necessary that the kind of online skills the author has, the reader would also have the same skills. Online medium extends its own variety which must be used judiciously, if at all used. The author of the following sentence has conveniently assumed that all receivers are comfortable with the compressed vocabulary and syntax of the new medium.

> The is to inform all the members of association 2 **kndly** note **tht** the response to workshop held last week is **gr8**. **Bcoz** of this we plan to organize one next week also.:)

Similarly, use of incomplete sentences/run-ons and inappropriate vocabulary renders a self absorbed approach to writing. Words must be used to perfection in such a medium else we may be required to provide clarifications again and again. The coherence of the message must be maintained. The author must use cohesive devices to put up a smoothly flowing message in the email.

Though it is difficult to define the reader- oriented language, generally speaking, it can be said that it is one which conveys the message, keeping in mind the readers' ability, in most simple terms abiding by the rules of language. In language research, reader-oriented language is referred to as 'plain language'. Stienberg defines plain language as:

> Language that reflects the interests and needs of the reader and consumer
> rather than the legal, bureaucratic, or technological interests of the writer
> or of the organization that the writer represents (1991:54).

Martin Cutts, research director of the Plain Language Commission in the United Kingdom, defines plain language as-

> The writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a
> cooperative, motivated person a good chance of understanding the
> document at the first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant
> it to be understood (1998:40).

From the two definitions provided above, it is clear that all the factors mentioned earlier (avoiding medium specific nuances, fragmented sentences, domain specific terminology, appropriate vocabulary and coherent composition) must be taken care of to furnish a reader -oriented message.

The sentence in the following example violates the requirements of reader oriented language.

"I tlkd about it… the cmptr pundit tld m… he vl b abl to explore…
the hd partition will b done"

In this example, there are incomplete sentences:

- the cmptr pundit tld m (the computer pundit told me)
- he vl b abl to explore (he will be able to explore)

Short form and Compressions

- tlkd (talked)
- cmptr (computer)
- tld (told)
- vl (will)
- b (be)
- abl (able)

(un)Suitable words:

- pundit (expert)
- explore (find)

Connectivity

- Discussed what? (the problem)
- Explored what? (details)
- What was tld? (information)

In general purpose oral and written communication people tend to use the language aspects which they feel comfortable with but in more formal situations the listener's /reader's interest also comes into picture. In the former case, people use self-absorbed language (incomplete sentences, compressed words, jargons, domain specific terminology) whereas in the later case it is required to adjust the language and content (most suitable word, details and connectivity) to the subject, the situation, or the person addressed.

The use of self-absorbed and reader-oriented language in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.2. (a) and 3.2 (b). Figures 3.2.(a) shows the actual use of self-absorbed and reader oriented language in Emails and Figures 3.2.(b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use self-absorbed and reader oriented language while writing email in the two contexts.
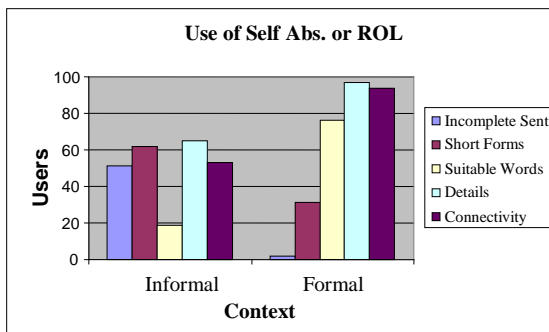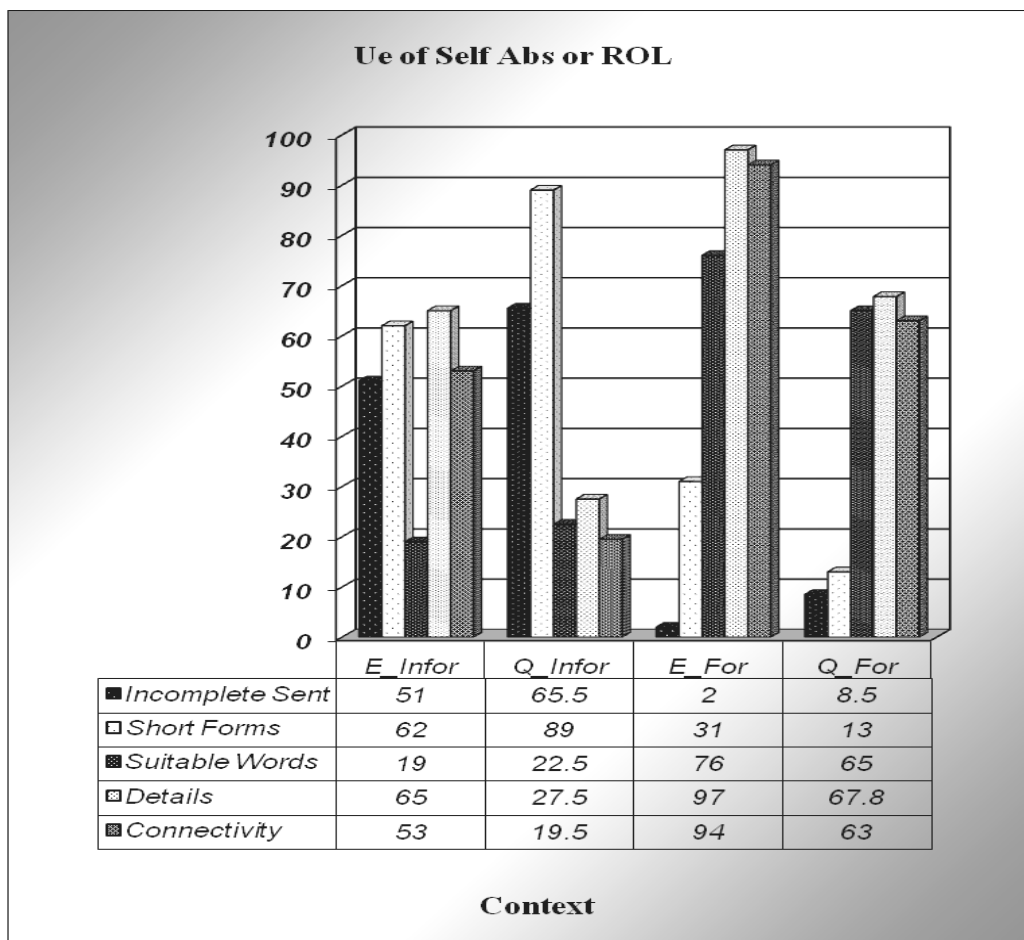

Figure 3.2 (a) Use of Self absorbed or Reader Oriented Content in Emails
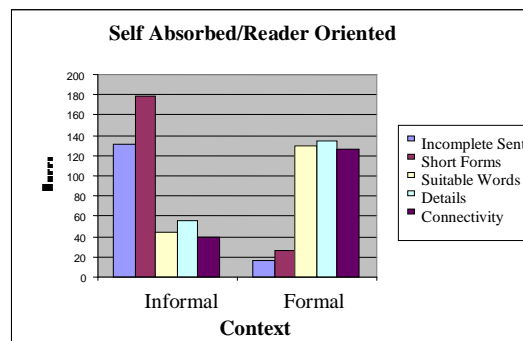
Figure 3.2 (b) Use of Self absorbed or Reader Oriented Content in Questionnaire Response

The number of subjects using self-absorbed language decreases while the number of subjects using reader-oriented language increases as we move from informal context to a formal context as seen in both actual email and questionnaire responses.

Figure 3.2. (c) Subject volume using SA or Reader Oriented

In terms of volume, 51%, 62% subjects used self-absorbed language (Incomplete sentences, compressed words) and 19%, 65% and 53 % used reader-oriented language (most suitable word, details and connectivity) in case of informal written emails whereas 2% and 31% subjects used self absorbed and 76%, 97% and 94% used reader-oriented language in formal emails. However, in the questionnaire responses, the percentages were 65.50, 89, 22.50, 27.50, and 19.50 for self-absorbed and reader-oriented language respectively in case of Informal emails while the figures are 8.50%, 13%, 65%, 67.8% and 63 % in case of formal emails.

```
Hello
aaargh!!!!
aaarghhhh!!!!!! >:O hav been trying so long 2 get my photo scanned &
sent it 2 ya ppl(short forms) but IT DOESNT EVER SEEM 2 WORK... can sm
computer whiz(suitable words) tell me how do i send photos thru(short
forms) emails??? plzz(short forms).. i amm really helpless here...
thx(short forms) 2 the kind soul who actually listens 2 my plea... thx
a lot dear.lotza smilez
akshata
```

hi.........

hi, its gopal here, **m(short forms)** in 1105.........thanx a lot for **ur(short forms)** notes. u know **jus cuz of ur** notes i cracked **2dy's(short forms)** sup t........ **gave few questions to answer in an hr (incomplete sentence/reference)** ....anyway thanx again..........now m waiting here to give **u(short forms)** back ur notes........n sorry to trouble u.......... ok bye Gopal **(Details missing/ connectivity in the message chunks)**

Hello Shyama

How are you?
How is your new job??

Shyama, can you do me a favor, since You are working in Daksh, I need a person who is around 6-7 yrs. of exp. in production, well versed in all quality processes and can be a team lead or manage around 20 people.

He would be the person who would be working in our delivery and quality for our IT enabled non voice division.

For more details, since you are working in night shift, call me at home at any time till 11 PM on 044-652-6424 for sure.
 Bye and regards,

Rekha
Corporate Manager HR & Operations

Figure 3.2.(d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

It is a wise strategy to make use of a linguistic style, in written or oral mode, which is directed towards the receiver of the message. When reader-oriented language is used in any mode, care is taken to use complete sentences, to avoid using short/compressed forms (in written case), to use the most suitable vocabulary and to provide enough detail

for message comprehension. But in case of informal setting, compromise in terms of linguistic and semantic correctness can be observed in abundance. In emails mode, similar observation can be made. Users tend to ignore correct sentence formation **(as in - .... gave few questions to answer in an hr ...),** use of short forms **(m, ur, u, ya ppl, plzz, thru),** suitable vocabulary **(... can sm computer whiz(suitable words) tell me),** and connectivity between different message chunks (entire email). The sample email written in Formal context, given in the illustration, shows that the focus is on the message clarity, completeness and avoiding any kind of ambiguity. As a result, the writer uses reader-oriented linguistic style including appropriate vocabulary, details, connectivity and complete sentences devoid of any kind of typographic display.

Many users have adapted to what is called a **conversational tone**. We write the same way we talk, as if we are explaining the subject in question to a person on the next chair. This can be quite effective, but unfortunately, it can't be taken too far. When people converse (in Informal context), they pay less attention to grammar. However, when they write, it becomes very important to adhere to grammatical rules in order to be understood.

Recent communication studies suggest that it is no more a taboo to use conversational tone in formal context. At the same time it also warns that we need not over do it. People pay more attention when they are in conversation than, say in a lecture session. The retention is more in conversation. A conversational tone reflects that the sender is more concerned about the message being conveyed properly to the reader. Tone describes the attitude of a piece of writing: whether the writing is formal or informal, playful or serious, ironic or sincere. We can convey the tone in a number of ways. One way to

gauge the tone is to observe the use of pronouns. The pronouns we use in our writing actually indicate the relationship we have with our audience. For example, if we consider the relationship between self and the reader to be friendly, we would likely use the first person ("I" or "we") to refer to ourselves and the second person ("you") to address the reader. But traditionally it is believed that we should avoid using pronouns in formal writing. For many readers, the word '*you'* carries a tremendous sense of informality, and in a sentence that gives advice or demands action, it may sound little aggressive. Generally formal writing avoids pronouns that refer to the writer and readers because the emphasis is on the message, not on the sender or receiver and thus gives the writing an objective and a formal tone.

For example:

You should recycle more orange peels to save the environment.

Since this type of sentence appears to single out the reader, it feels overly personal. This is the reason people in formal context prefer to use a neutral tone rather than a personalized reference. The most common substitute for 'you' in general statements is the third-person pronoun 'one'. Undoubtedly, constant references to 'one' can become cripplingly awkward, especially if many appear in a row. For example:

One should recycle **one's** orange peels to save the environment for **one's** children.

In a case like this, it would be best to rewrite the sentence. 'We' is certainly a better choice, even if it is less formal. If a choice has to be made between informality and

awkward writing, the writers can choose to be informal, but need to ensure that they are understood.

Flynn says:

> The most effective tone for business correspondence is a professional, yet conversational, tone." She advocates that it is hard to connect if we depersonalize our writing by eliminating all the pronouns. AT the same time she also warns not to use inappropriate humor, clichés, compound constructions, redundant pairs etc.(2001).
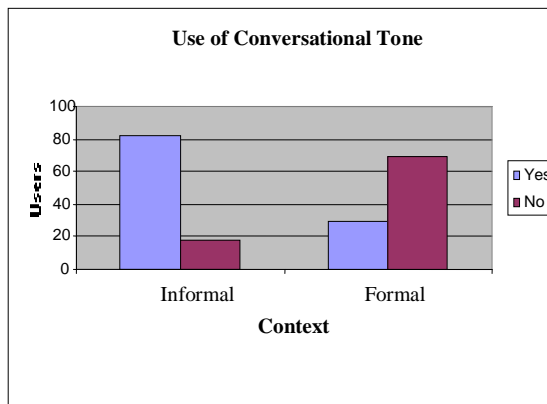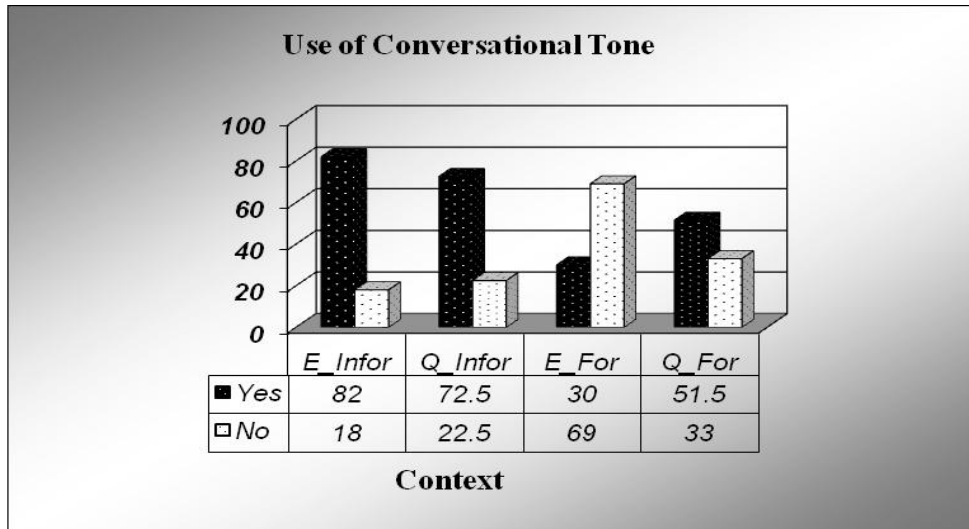

Figure 3.2 (e) Use of Conversational Tone in Emails
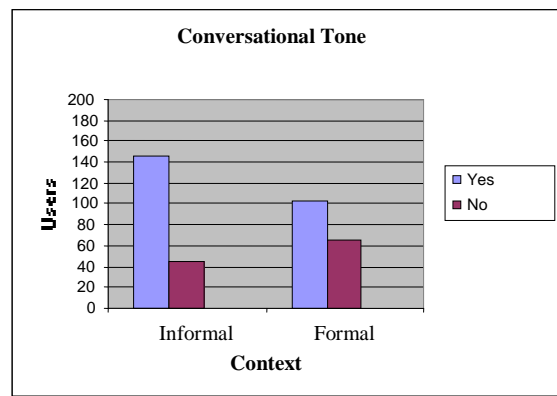
Figure 3.2 (f) Use of Conversational Tone in Questionnaire Response

The use of conversational tone in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.2 (e) and 3.2 (f). Figures 3.2.(e) shows the actual use of conversational tone in Emails and Figures 3.2.(f) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use conversational tone while writing email in different contexts.

The number of subjects using conversational tone decreases as we move from informal to formal context in both actual email and questionnaire responses.

Figure 3.2. (g) Subject Volume using conversation tone

In terms of volume, 82% subjects used conversational tone in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 30%. As reflected in the questionnaire responses, 72.50 % used conversational tone in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 51.50%.

hi **Ranjith**,

how r **u??? got to know** that **u** have got a very good job.. CONGRATULATIONS!! this means that **ur** wife is lucky for u... **i** wish **u both** a very happy married life.. **and how is life... liking ur job or not**... **i** was thinking of mailing **u** for last so many **days but u know in office u don't get time**.. **now i** am on leave for 10 days as my MBA exams are there... pls give **me ur** new mobile no.. and say **my hi** to ur wife.. once again wishing **u both** a very happy married life... and may almighty shower **his** choicest blessings on u..

take care

Hello Sailja,

Hope you are enjoying your holidays.
I am sorry for delaying the Specification Document.
But you have to wait for some more time may be a week.

I will do so by next coming Monday.
Cheers for now.
Ramesh

Figure 3.2 (h). Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

Figure 3.2.(h) shows the use of conversational tone by using many instances of personal pronouns / references (**I, you, both, we, my, your, his, me**) and grammatical incorrectness (**??? got to know, how is life... liking ur job or n, days but u know in office u don't get time etc.**).On the other hand, formal communication through emails is more neutral in nature and straightforward as shown in the illustration.

3.3 Verbs, Conjunctions and Prepositions

Action description, connectivity of content and relationship between different entities in the text are essential features of effective writing. To achieve this, it is important to understand and use the three parts of speech namely verbs, conjunctions and prepositions. Informal context, as in communication with a friend or a relative, provides flexibility to mutate the use of the Parts of Speech (PoS). The reasons can be many, for example, we are not conscious of language correctness; we have less concern for receivers' skills; we have no fear of unwanted criticism over use of linguistic details; our casual approach and of course the change in lifestyle (mobile revolution). All these reasons are taken care of in formal contexts such as communications with a colleague or superior, business partner and stakeholders.

Intensity of use of PoS in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.3.(a) and 3.3 (b). Figures 3.3.(a) shows the actual use of the PoS in Emails and Figures 3.3.(b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they make use of these PoS while writing email in different contexts.
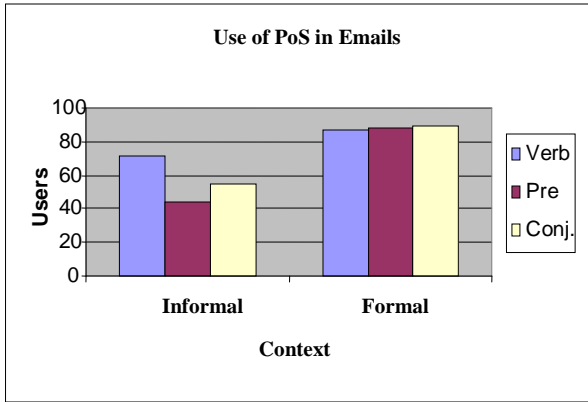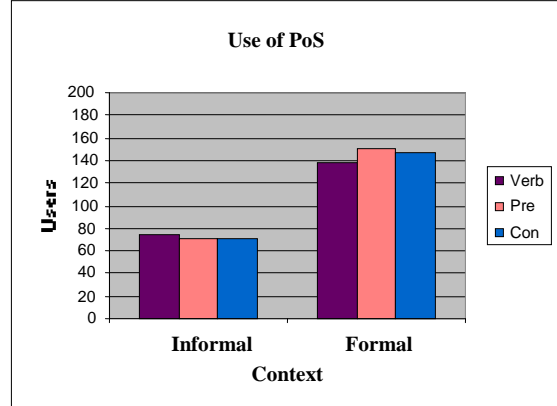
Figure 3.3 (a) Use of PoS in Emails

Figure 3.3 (b) Use of PoS in Questionnaire Response

The number of subjects making appropriate use of PoS increases as we move from informal context to a formal context in both actual email and questionnaire responses.
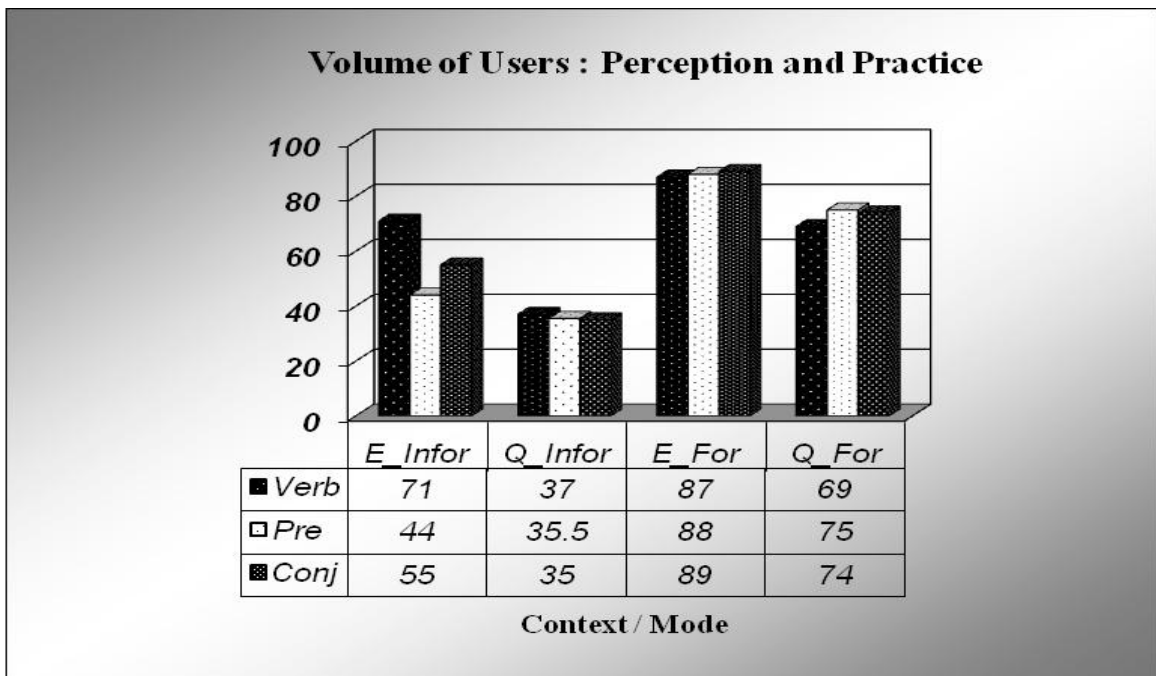

Figure 3.3 (c) Subject Volume using PoS

In terms of volume, 71 %, 44 % and 55 % users took care of verbs, prepositions and conjunctions in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 87

79

%, 88 %, and 89 % respectively as the fig. 3.3 (c) shows. Also, In case of questionnaire response 37 %, 35.50 % and 35 % used these PoS appropriately in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 69 %, 75 % and 74 % respectively.

<table>
<tr><td>

Hi swathy

We had started(verb form) around 9:30 from our present home.ie we came to maddy n poori and started at 9:45, **we reach(verbform)** wonderla around 11:00 am. It took 1hr 15 mins from our present house. Reg the cab I **thought we payed 800 (verbform**)and all of us shared it! We took GeoCabs, the booking office is **at near (preposition)** our house. **(preposition missing)** Evening we started around 7:00 and reached by 8:15 or so I think(don't remember abt this exactly)

Regards,

Shahira

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

Hi Pradeep,

Well we would like to call those students in this round who would complete their course in May 2006. For people passing out in December and are short listed by us would be asked to come somewhere in the end of July.

Could you please let me know the count of candidates passing out in December.

Thanks

Bharti

</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 3.3 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

As can be seen from the first illustration in figure 3.3 (d), (an email written in informal context to a friend), the user has ignored correct usage of various parts of the speech. Most obvious of these are the references to past events and the use of tense **(as in - Reg the cab I thought we payed(sp) 800 (verb form)and …).** The ignorance of correct usage is also reflected in the incorrect use of preposition **(the booking office is at near (incorrect preposition) our house)** and the missing preposition **(as in - Evening we started around 7:00 …).** The second email in the illustration is the one written in Formal context to a professional. The use of various parts of speech is correct which renders clarity to the message.

3.4 Punctuation and Capitalization

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *"Letter from Birmingham Jail"* demonstrates that even the smallest punctuation mark signals a stylistic decision, distinguishing one writer from another and enabling an author to move an audience (Quoted by Gardner, Undated).

Zhou, L. and Dongsong Zhang report that punctuation plays an important role in representing the rhythm of the communication content and facilitating sentence processing during communication (2005: 394).

John Olsson says:

> The role of punctuation in not merely rhythmic but also syntactic. It is not simply ornamental. Comma, for example, performs so many syntactic functions: it divides clauses - whether main clauses or dependent clauses - it separates noun phrases, it signals a break before a conjunction or after a conjunction, and so on (2006: 1).

Punctuation marks are signals to the readers. In speaking, the speaker can pause, stop, or change the tone of voice. In writing, it can be achieved by using the punctuation marks to emphasize and clarify the meaning. Using punctuation appropriately may help the message to flow much more smoothly, generally creating a more "intelligent" appearance. Punctuation serves to indicate the structure and organization of writing, as well as intonation and pauses to be observed when reading it aloud. In English, punctuation is vital to disambiguate the meaning of sentences.

A wrong punctuation creates a poor impression and also may lead to ambiguity. Consider the examples (a) and (b) given below. They present diametrically opposite meanings. Both have the same words in the same order, but the punctuation marks are different.

(a) I would like to tell you that I love you. I can't stop thinking that you are one of the prettiest women on earth.
(b) I would like to tell you that I love you. I can't. Stop thinking that you are one of the prettiest women on earth.

A clear understanding of the uses of the important marks of punctuation is essential for effective written communication. If we desire to be understood with clarity, punctuation marks have to be correctly used. Punctuation aids the readers' understanding. It ensures proper flow.

One may think that a sentence ends only with the full stop (period). But there are two other punctuation marks as well to end a sentence — the question mark and the exclamation mark. The period has one more function — indicating an abbreviation. But often the periods are omitted as in PM for Prime Minister.

The main functions of punctuation marks are given below:

Comma*:*

- This is the shortest pause. Marked between words in a list of three or more.
  Example: Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrughna are the sons of Dasaratha.
- Before conjunctions as when you use but or for.
- For providing additional information.
- For appositive, as in "John, the best athlete, could not win the race (today)."
- For separating clauses as in "Though the peak is high, he climbed it with ease."

Semi-colon:

- To link two closely related sentences and to separate words in a list that already has commas.

Colon:

- Before a list or a quote.
- To complete a statement as in - "There are seven colours in a rainbow: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red." What comes after the colon is an instance of elaboration.

Hyphen:

- To avoid confusion while adding prefixes, as in ex-wife, U-turn, shell-like, no-smoking sign, and sit-in.
- For ensuring clarity in combinations such as pro-Chinese, anti-American, and un-ionised distinct from unionised.
- In a chain of adjectives as in devil-may-care attitude.
- In numbers such as twenty-five and one-third.

Dash:

- The dash is different from the hyphen; it can be used for stress as in "The play is fine — can be presented in the competition".
- Two dashes — with matter in between — can be used for parenthesis just as two brackets or two commas.
- The dash can represent a blank; it can stand for a missing word.

Quotation marks:

- For direct speech.
- To highlight a word, single quotation marks can be used.
- When there is a quotation within a quotation, you may use single quotation marks. The professor said: "The expression 'last but not the least' is a cliché."

Question mark:

- This can be used to end an interrogative sentence.
- Also, it will help to indicate uncertainty, as in the statement, "The book was published in 1898 (?)"

Apostrophe:

- This is used to indicate possession, as in John's house.
- If a plural word ends in 's,' its possessive case may be made by adding an apostrophe at the end of the word, as in teachers' benefit scheme.
- With a singular noun ending in an s, you may add either an apostrophe and an 's,' or an apostrophe alone. For example, both princess's and princess' are acceptable.
- In casual writing or in recording conversation, it can be used to show a contraction, as in can't for cannot, or in I'm for I am.
- Avoid the use of apostrophe for showing a contraction in formal writing.
- It is not necessary to add an apostrophe to show plurals like MP's or 1980's. It is enough if you write MPs or 1980s.
- Also remember that who's will not mean whose; it may stand for "who is" as in "Who's Who."

Brackets:

- They can be used for parenthesis. For example, I had told her (she had expected my views) that her marriage is on the rocks.
- It can indicate the expansion of an abbreviation. For example, NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) was discussed in the conference.

In the analysis of emails for punctuation use, three scales were used: *Always* (when the user always used punctuation marks as desired), *Sometimes* (when the user applied punctuation marks occasionally), and *Never* (when the user never used punctuation marks).
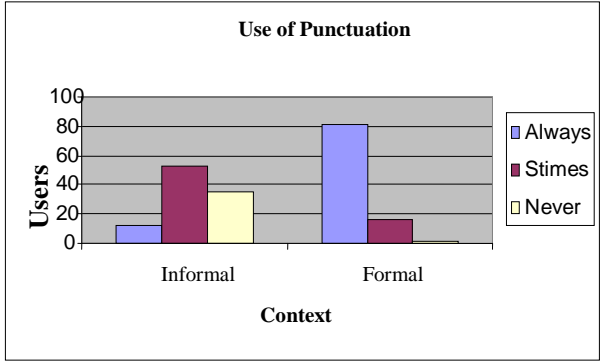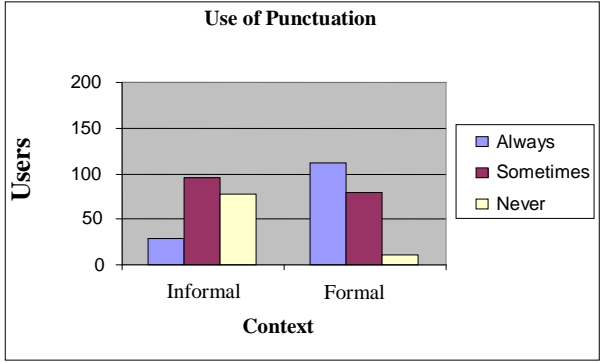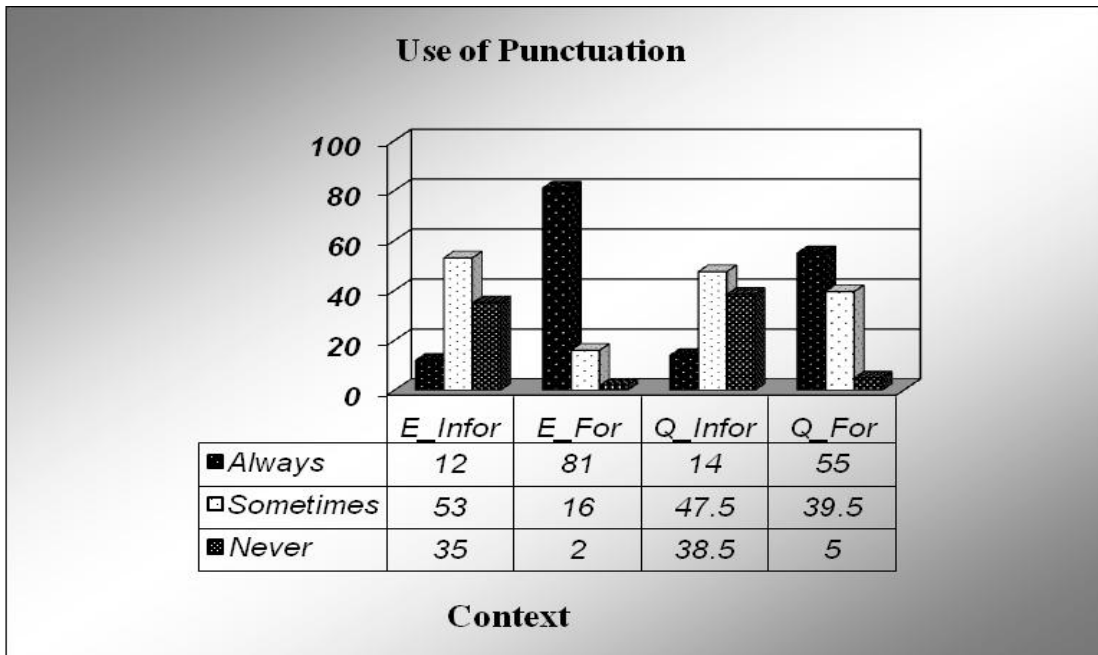
Figure 3.4 (a) Use of Punctuation in Emails

Figure 3.4 (b) Use of Punctuation in Questionnaire Response

The use of punctuation (Always, Sometimes, Never) in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.4. (a) and 3.4 (b). Figures 3.4 (a) shows the actual use of punctuation in Emails and Figures 3.4 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use punctuation while writing email in different contexts.

The number of subjects using punctuation, *always,* increases while the number of subjects using punctuation *sometimes* and *never* decreases as we move from informal to formal context in both actual emails studied and questionnaire responses analysed.

Figure 3.4 (c) Subject Volume using Punctuation

In terms of volume, 12 %, 53 % and 35 % subjects used punctuation in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 81%, 16% and 2% for Always, Sometimes and Never respectively. In case of questionnaire response 14%, 47.50, 38.50% used punctuation in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 55%, 39.50%, and 5%.

As can be seen from the illustration in figure 3.4 (d), Emails provide enough flexibility to ignore the appropriate usage of punctuation marks. Most common errors include fullstop **(keep writing, that surabhi has made into Satyam...)**, capitalization **(ya iam fine..., how many it recruited),** line breaks **(Hello Lokesh, how are u?),** question marks **(wht about the Globeop…).** The email sample in the second part of the illustration shows an

email written by journalism professional. The email is to the mark with all the required breaks and pauses in the content which helps in making it meaningful and unambiguous.

Hello Lokesh,**(line break)** how are u? **(caps)**ya iam fine... **(fullstop)**ya i came to know that surabhi has made into Satyam... **(fullstop)(caps)** its really good to know...wht about the Globeop…**(question mark)(caps)** how many it recruited? actually **i** checked my mail today only so couldn't reply u on **time...anyways...iam(sentence break)** coming pilani on 2nd feb, as on 4th feb its my engagement.... how is everything going?? keep writing **(fullstop)**

(caps)take care

Mr **Palaparthi,** hi.

As per our brief **discussion,** I am sending you this message. I also have the following questions:
  1) How many villages and populations have been covered by this **project?** (reports say three villages, two of which are close to the campus)
  2) I am curious what exactly is water harve**sting;** does it mean (in rural areas) digging a well to store water and recharge the soi**l?**
  3) What have been the results of the **project?**
  Will appreciate if you could spare a few moments to answer these.

 Many **thanks.**
 Monika Joshi
 Special correspondent
 India Abroad

Figure 3.4. (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

Capitalization is an important aspect of language usage. According to Poser:

> Capitalization is part of the social convention for writing English. Like the alphabet, it isn't something that the writing system makes available for manipulation by individual users … and the way a language is written is governed by socially accepted conventions. Just as a name must conform to the phonological system of the language, so the way it is written must conform to the orthographic conventions of the language.(2005)

Callos opines that how we are perceived depends on whether our message, request or point of view will be taken seriously. A primary example is making just a little effort by pressing shift key to capitalize the start of the sentences. Doing so can make all the difference in the world as to whether we will be perceived as someone who is a true professional (2008).

When writers do not capitalize their names or the beginning of sentences, they are relaying several possible things about themselves:

- they don't care if we are perceived as uneducated,
- they are uneducated,
- they are so lazy that they can't press the shift key when required.

Of course, none of the above is complimentary.

The violation of capitalization can occur in many ways. All letters can be capitalized.

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE, SO IS THIS.

All letters can be in lowercase.

this is an example.

In BumpyCase or MixedCase, a part of the word is capitalized and words run together. The first letter may or may not be capitalized.

ThisIsAnExample, soIsThis.

MixedCase with embedded underscore is also used, for instance-

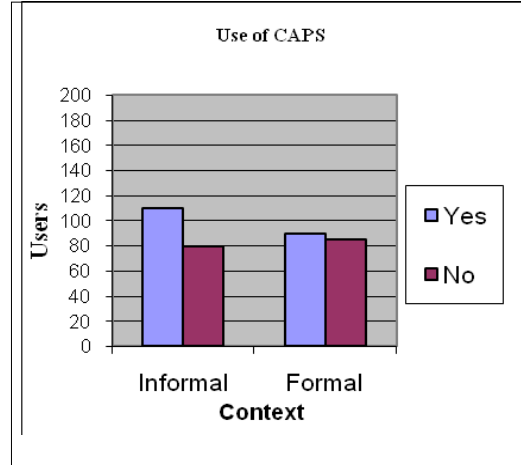**THIS_IS_AN_EXAMPLE or this_is_an_example.**

Turow, in his book *The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age,* about how people use online technology and how that affects their lives, has begun a small crusade to de-capitalize Internet. He says:

> The capitalization of the things seems to place an inordinate, almost private emphasis on something. The Internet, at least philosophically, should not be owned by anyone as it is a part of the neural universe of life (2008: 51).

Capitalization is used to start a new sentence, name specific objects and ideas, direct quotes etc. and the orthography of each language has its own rules of using capitalization. Irrelevant capitalization renders the message poorly. In addition, *all caps message* and *all caps words* within the email is a characteristic of email mode of CMC. One of the biggest mistakes people make is to type with their caps lock on. All-caps might look good visually, but experienced users will write off the author as amateur. All-caps can be used for headings and/or titles in the messages, or even to EMPHASIZE certain words, but anything beyond that is equivalent to screaming at someone. Regardless of their intention, people will react as if the writers meant to be aggressive. Emails normally do not give importance to capitalization. Capitalization can communicate excitement, emphasis and special interest for a place, object or person. It is difficult to convey emotions or irony or sarcasm in most electronic communications and hence many mailers use all capitals to express anger or other strong emotions.
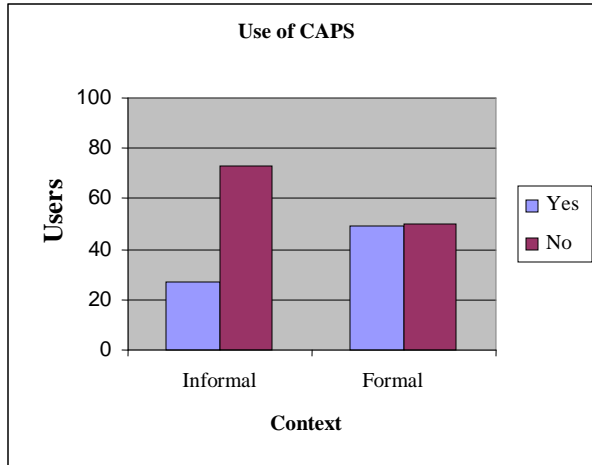
Figure 3.4 (e) Use of Capitalization in Emails   **Figure 3.4 (f) Use of Capitalization in Questionnaire Response**

The use of capitalization in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.4 (e) and 3.4 (f). Figures 3.4 (e) show the actual use of capitalization in Emails and Figures 3.4 (f) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use capitalization while writing email in different contexts.

In case of actual emails the number of subjects using capitalization increases as we move from informal to formal context. In case of questionnaire response the number of subjects using capitalization decreases as we move from informal to formal context. This observation can be explained in terms of appropriateness and need of the use of this parameter.
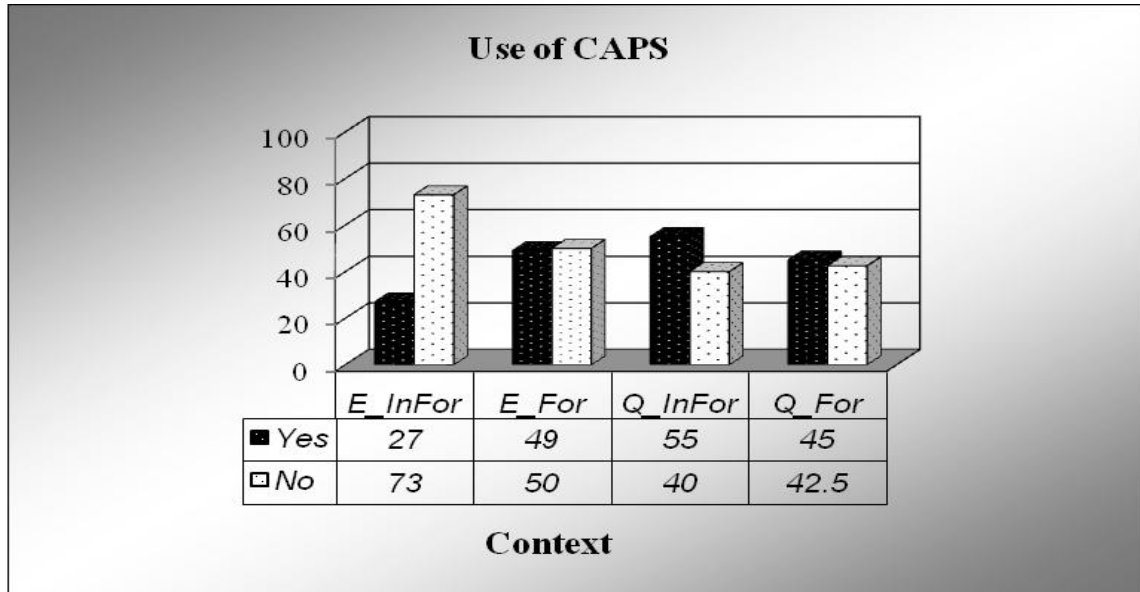
Figure 3.4 (g) Subject Volume Using Capitalization

Figure 3.4 (g) shows the volume of subjects using capitalization. In terms of volume 27 % subjects used capitalization in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 49%. In case of questionnaire response 55 % used capitalization in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 45%.

hi shoi Hey shoi **C**an u **PLZ** answer to some of my questions? How much time did it take for u guys to go to wonderla(**APPROX**)?? when did U ppl leave the house in the morning? how much u had to pay for the cab? N when did u leave wonderla n when did u reach home? Answer wenever u find time. Bye swathy	
Re: hi rma hi.. i am **GOOD**..enjoying life in **BANGALORE**.. tum batao kaise ho? yahan net nahi hai office mein..isliye kabhi chgance nahi milta baat karne ka... if possible add up in gmail ... aur batao ab to sem khatam...iske baad abhi ek aur sem hai naa....?? chalo take care.. keep in **TOUCH**... bbyeee Rma	
HI CHANDU DEAR.... FIRST OF ALL WISH U A VERY HAPPY B'DAY.......MANY MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF D DAY....... MERE KO 30 OCT KA DHAYAN THA.....OTHERWISE I CALL U AT 12MIDNITE......WAISE BHI EK FREND KA THA TOH JAGA HUA THA USSKO KIYA THA TOH TERE KO BHI KARTA........ AAJKAL WAISE BHI RAAT KE 2 TOH BAJ HI JATE HAI CHATTING KARTE KARTE.........TOH PHIR BAAD MEIN KOI CLASS ATTEND KARNE KA BHI	

MAAN NAHI KARTA......ISSILIYE LAGI PADI HAI.........TU BATA TERA KAISE CHAL RAHA HAI.....   K BBYE SWEET HEART BABY   NIKHIL
Hello Nishant   Thanks for guiding my REXEL team members and delivering the scheduled modules – EPR2 and EPR1_A.   Warm regards   Bharat Jain   Project Lead

Figure 3.4 (h) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

In the illustration shown in figure 3.4 (h), the use of **PLZ** is to reinforce the request while **TOUCH** is being used to convey belongingness and mutual respect. But excessive use of capitalization in email is senseless and conveys negative impressions of the sender. As a result, the readability suffers as shown in the third illustration. Lengthy passages written in all capitals can be very difficult to read. EVEN A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF WHY USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS IS NOT ADVISABLE CAN QUICKLY TURN INTO A BLUR OF LETTERS OVER TIME.(Use sentence cases, not all caps) Capitals do have their place in electronic communications, especially as headers and titles, but most readers prefer to see electronic text as a form of typewritten material, with familiar upper and lower case fonts. The use of all capitals can negatively affect a reader's reading speed or an editor's proofreading ability. Capitalization is minimal in Formal context and is used for referential purpose and only when the two parties communicating are aware of the specific meanings of the capitalized words as is shown using an illustration in figure 3.9 (h). The word REXEL refers to a Project while EPR-2 and EPR1_A are codes for project modules and both the parties are aware of the

meanings and references. This explains the increased use of capitalization in formal contexts.

3.5 Sentences

When we write, we write in sentences. We start the sentence with capital letter; construct phrases and clauses through words to express a meaningful complete thought. We mark the endpoint with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark. Similarly, the reader will follow the sentence structure – word by word from beginning to end trying to decipher the single complete thought that the writer has expressed. In order for readers to do that, our writing needs to flow smoothly from word to word, phrase to phrase, and sentence to sentence. The term "sentence fluency" refers to the way individual words and phrases sound together within a sentence, and how groups of sentences sound when they are read one after the other.

The analysis exhibits that **long sentences** have a tendency to turn into flabby sentences. The longer the sentence is the more difficult it becomes to be understood. Long sentences are sentences just waiting to slither far away and completely out of control. Even when they are grammatically correct, long sentences are more difficult for readers than short sentences. This may sound obvious, but many writers do try to cram several complex, technical ideas into one sentence.

The main problem with long sentences is that they are tiring to read. By the time readers reach the end of a long sentence, they have most likely forgotten the subject/verb/point of

the sentence. And they are probably too tired, lazy, or busy to go back to the beginning of the sentence and sort the whole message to understand it. Another problem is long sentences lack punctuation or contain too much of it.

For example, in the following sentence there are too many details, too many clauses and partitions which render it difficult not only to read but also to understand.

> In India, the Khan family of Pakistan, who wanted to replace their old automobile with a new fuel-efficient vehicle that could travel greater distances at the same cost, sought advice from another Pakistan native, Lamal Isaad, who assisted engineers in designing what became the Ali-Hyder automobile, which the Khans used for all of their family vacations to travel as far as Burma and Maongolia.

With the use of too many short sentences the effect is like a long sentence where the message gets lost or the listener feels battered by the repeated impact. Consider the following example from an email:

> This is the mail as you requested to me. I think your wait end here. Thoda busy hoon yaar. The project is near completion. Havent been in touch with people lately. Anyway tomm is week-end. I will be back on Monday. we will chat then, okay?

This email message contains eight sentences. Some of them sound appropriate but pausing after each of them becomes monotonous after sometime and it breaks the rhythm as well. The entire message could have been written more effectively using connective devices.

The length of a sentence depends on the amount of information, the coherence of its grammatical elements, and the capacity of the reader's attention and memory span. And as to coherence, the structure of the language provides many elements of coherence the writer may not be aware of and thus are out of his control. Yet, the writer knows the various places where he can put a period, where his thought seems complete.

Constant sentence length is an important reason of monotonous writing. One short sentence after another makes our prose sound choppy, childish. Conversely, all "long" sentences can make our writing hard to read. However, using all "medium"-length sentences doesn't work, either. Sentences that are all about the same length (and often follow the same grammatical pattern) create monotony. A longer sentence serves to offer more details and probes an idea more thoroughly and at the same time presents a powerful description. Use of lengthy sentences may convey the impression that the author is not really writing to the senses of the reader. We need short sentences, longer sentences (but not too long) medium length sentences and very short sentences to be effective.
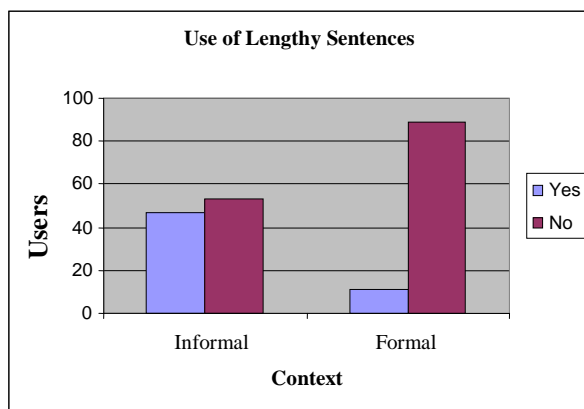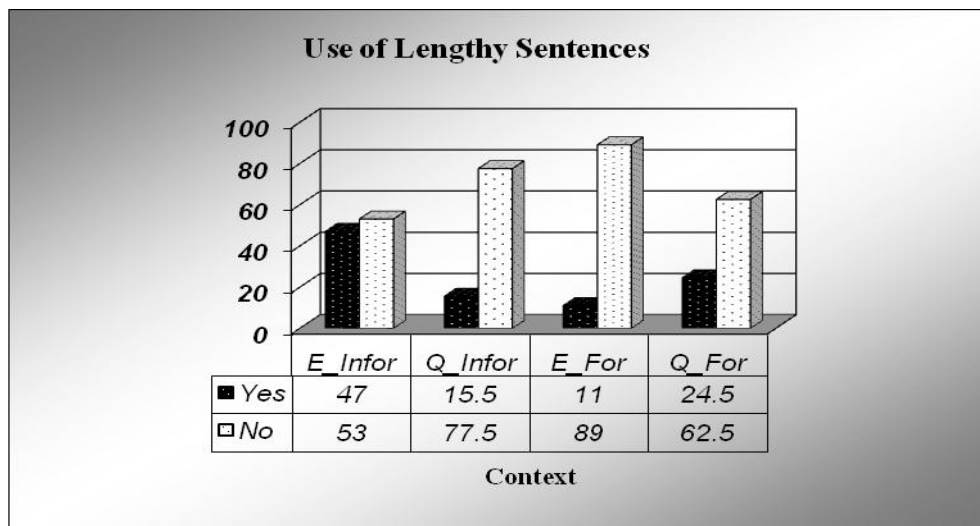
Figure 3.5 (a) Use of Lengthy Sentences in Emails
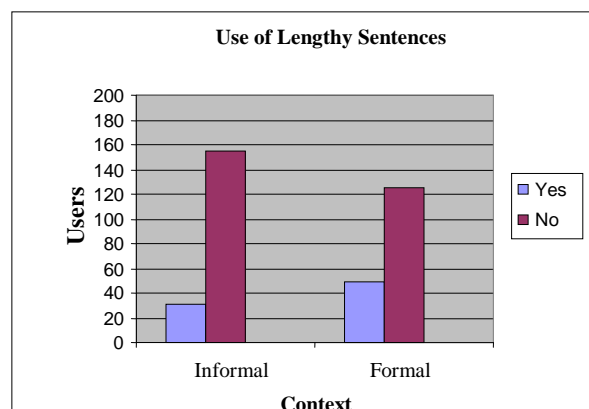
Figure 3.5 (b) Use of Lengthy Sentences in Questionnaire Response

The pattern of usage of sentence structure in terms of length in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.5 (a) and 3.5 (b). Figures 3.5 (a) shows the actual use of lengthy sentences in Emails and Figures 3.5 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use lengthy sentences while writing email in different contexts.

The number of subjects using lengthy sentence decreases as we move from informal context to a formal context in case of emails. As far as the questionnaire response is concerned, the number of users agreeing to use lengthy sentences increases when we move from Informal to Formal context.

	E_Infor	Q_Infor	E_For	Q_For
Yes	47	15.5	11	24.5
No	53	77.5	89	62.5

Figure 3.5 (c) Subject Volume using Lengthy Sentences

In terms of volume, 47% subjects used lengthy sentences in case of informal written emails while 11% subjects used it in case of formal context. In case of questionnaire

response 15.50 % used lengthy sentences in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 24.50 %.

hey bhaiya no need to say any thanx
u want to have the general language which people use in mails and chatting na, then bhaiya why dont u go for orkut u can find thousands of scraps which u can easily copy and paste and people write them the same way as they write in their mails.
bcoz i feel collecting mails is a seriously a dificult task...
chalo tk care
Prashant Giri

Dear Amit
I have created the ftp account as per our discussion earlier. Following
are the details for the same. Folder has been named as contentManager as per your suggestion. It is
directly under the web root. Url to access the webpage in that folder should be …
sincerely,
Naresh

3.5 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

Analysis shows that in Informal context, the users were more concerned about sending /exchanging information and tended least to consider the flow and amount of information. As a result of this, as shown in illustration 3.5 (d), users have a propensity to write lengthy sentences ignoring the basic writing skill of using apt sentences; rather they pack as much information as possible in one sentence in the form of sentence fragments separated by comma sometimes. This is very akin to monologue without a pause. The second part of the illustration, showing email written in Formal context, reflects that the author has divided the entire message into smaller chunks and is trying to convey these chunks in smaller and effective sentences.

A **sentence fragment** is any group of words that is punctuated as a sentence, but does not have a subject or a complete verb. In other words, any sentence which is broken, comma

97

spliced, incomplete or unfinished is a fragmented sentence. The author of the message may think he knows what he means to say in the writing, but it may come out as a sentence fragment or incomplete thought, and the reader may not be able to make sense of it. Again the fragmented sentence conveys that the author is not clear in his thoughts and is not sure what he wants to convey; and this can have further consequences.

Spellings are one of most ignored aspects of Computer Mediated Communication. It may appear a very trivial issue to discuss the significance of spellings but is also one of the first things that the reader will notice in the message. Even if the writing is good but with a lot of spelling errors, the impression made is negative. On the contrary, if the writing is not very good but with fewer spelling errors, that's a good first step. Spelling errors will convey the wrong notion that the writer is dumb, careless or just ignorant, which may have further consequences. The reader may feel, "If he (or she) doesn't care, why should I?" Eliminating spelling and grammatical errors becomes very important if we are writing for an academic or professional qualification, or if we are sending a report, presentation, or e-mail to a receiver who is a professional.

It is tempting in a world of e-mail, instant messaging, and text messaging to believe that grammar and spelling are unimportant. In professional correspondence (such as that between student and professor) it is important not only to be clear and concise about what we are saying, but also to be grammatically correct in how we say it. It is important to work hard to minimize these errors because failing to do so says something about us and our attitude. As we practice more and more of email communication, our dependence on

technology increases. 'Spell check' is one utility to minimize spelling errors but this itself is error prone. Here's a partial list of the errors that spell check will not catch:

to, two, too   *their, there*   *you're, your*   *weight, wait*
advise, advice   *principle, principal*   *effect, affect*   *lose, loose*

In each of these cases the writers might be using the wrong word. Unfortunately, because they are real words, spell check will not tell this to the writers and in most cases grammar check won't either. It can't be said that the audience does not care. This is simply untrue in most cases. Also, it is dangerous to assume that readers doesn't care in cases where the writers don't know them at all. It is also incorrect to say that grammar and spelling don't matter because everyone will understand the writers anyway. There might have been examples like the following:

cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclty uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy,

it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm.

Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh? yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt!

It is inappropriate to conclude from this that it doesn't matter how the messages are written as long as they are understandable. It is necessary to think whether the messages written like this will be understood by the readers.

The use of correct spellings and avoiding fragmented sentences in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.5 (e) and 3.5 (f). Figures 3.5 (e) shows the actual use of the correct spellings in Emails and Figures 3.5 (f) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they take care of spellings and fragmented sentences while writing email in different contexts.
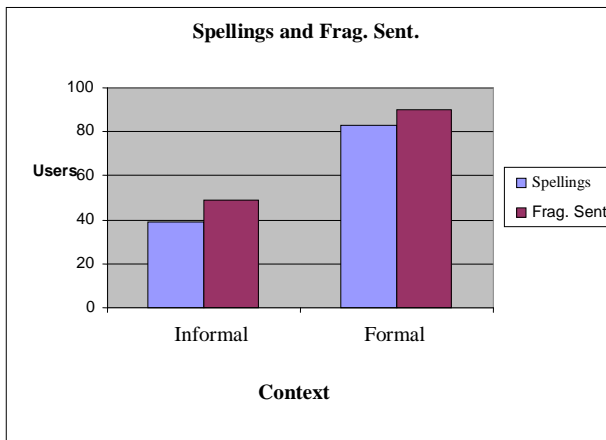
Figure 3.5 (e) Use of Spellings and Fragmented Sentences in Emails
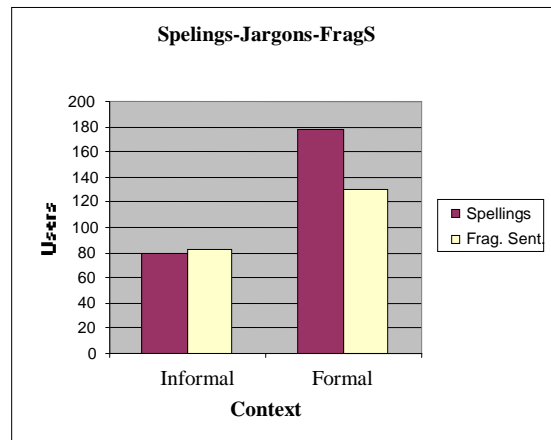
Figure 3.5 (f) Use of Spellings and Fragmented Sentences in Questionnaire Response

The number of subjects taking care of spellings and fragmented sentences increases as we move from informal to a formal context in both actual email and questionnaire responses.
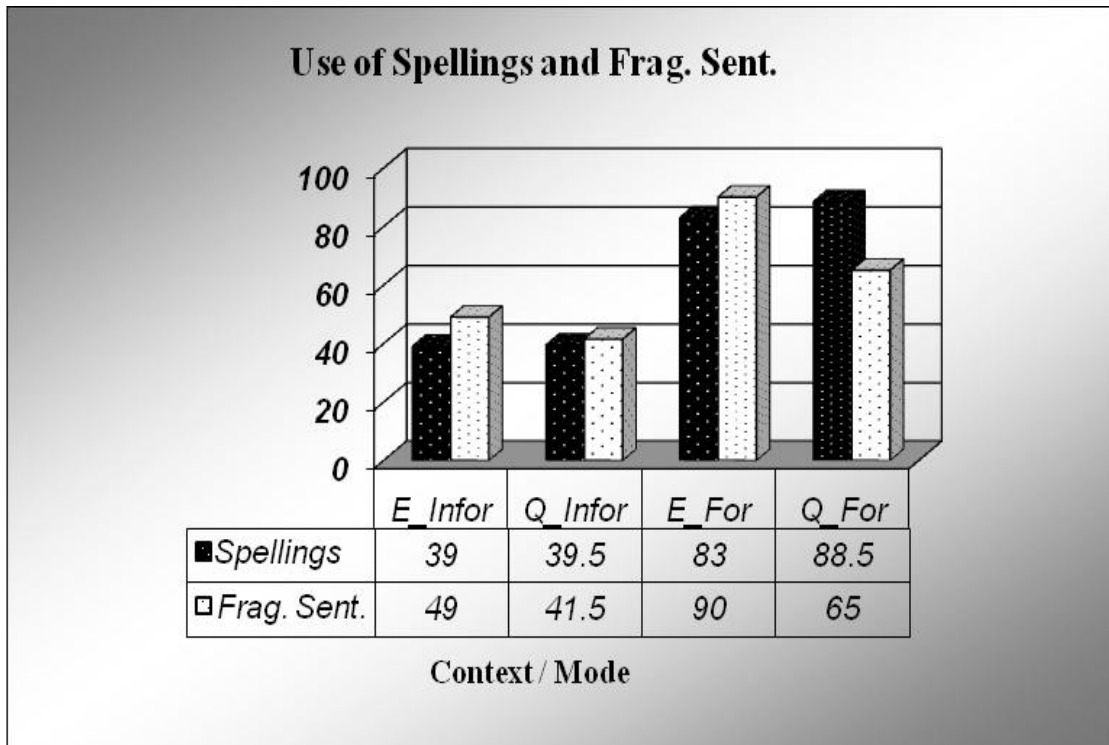
Figure 3.5 (g) Subject Volume using correct Spelling and Sentences

In terms of volume, 39 % and 49 % users took care of spellings and fragmented sentences in case of informal written emails while for formal mails 83 % and 90 % respectively took care of the same elements. In case of questionnaire response 39.50 % and 41.50 % appropriately used spellings and fragmented sentences in case of Informal context while the figure in formal context is 88.50 % and 65 % respectively.

hi
nice mail yaaa n nice font ... **(subject/verb missing)**
n nice photo bhe..... **(subject/verb missing)**
so **njoyin(spelling)** a lot antaav....not only vth **frenz(spelling)** but vth educational trips n those all stuff.....
how r ur studies????
kulu-manali is nice place to c yaar ....
but if u c it vth somebody else u vll feel more comfortable....
last year all of us went to manali....
nice **torist(spelling)**   place.... **(subject/verb missing)**
nyway(spelling) njoy da tour to **ta(spelling)**   fullest possible....
Ooty!!!! so goin to ooty.....ur so enthued ranjitha!!
ur VITsian life is filled vth most thrill n enthu.. rite....
takecare...
bye...
Shravani

Dear Mr. Prakash
I am getting Information Systems at Goa.
Could you please elucidate the scope of Infosys in higher studies?
Would there be problems with this branch since this is not an engg degree and yet not approved by AICTE?
 Thanks a lot sir for kindly considering my query.
Thanking You

Kushagra

Figure 3.5 (h) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

As can be seen from illustration 3.5 (h) even simple spellings are ignored **(as in – torist, nyway, ta, njoyin, frenz etc).** Similarly in casual email exchange importance in not given to the actor/subject of action or the action that took place **(nice mail yaaa n nice font ..., nice place...).** Making mistakes in spellings while communicating to seniors, professional colleagues, strangers and dominant groups/individuals may be perceived as ignorance, carelessness or simply incompetence. As a result of this the writers of email are more conscious of spellings and fragmented sentences while writing in formal context as illustrated by the sample email given in figure 3.5 (h).
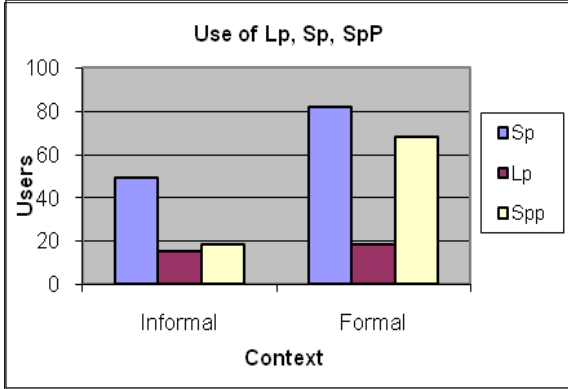
3.6 Paragraphs

Online reading is different from reading printed matter. The medium of computer screen presents a different kind of challenge. Generally speaking, paragraphing is a device used primarily to ensure the comfort of the reader, and secondarily as a structural guide for the writer. Content that is read from the computer screen is preferred to have shorter paragraphs than do articles read from a printed page. It is very difficult and uncomfortable to read long blocks of text on the computer, and it may not even be possible to keep track of where you are for more than a few lines.   In addition to writing shorter paragraphs for the computer, we should also use double-space between paragraphs, because it is much easier to read a paragraph on a computer screen when it is framed by white space.

Mark Twain appropriately points out when it comes to the issue of paragraph length. He says –

> At times a writer may indulge himself with a long sentence, but he will make sure there are no folds in it, no vagueness, no parenthetical interruptions of its view as a whole; when he has done with it, it won't be a sea serpent with half of its arches under the water; it will be a torch-light procession(Quoted by Critchley, 1973:12).

Paragraphs are units of thought, not units of length. In Informal context the users are more concerned about sending the message across and are less bothered about the readability and completeness of the idea. In a more formal situation the writer becomes more conscious to split the message into small chunks of ideas to be more emphatic and clear.

Figure 3.6 (a) Use of Short and Long Paragraphs and Spacing in Emails
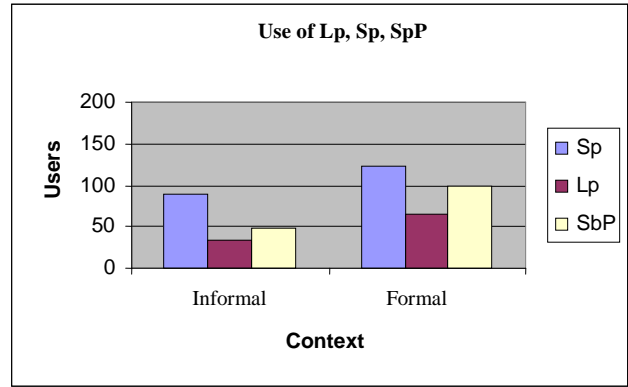
Figure 3.6 (b) Use of Short and Long Paragraphs and Spacing in Questionnaire Response

The use of short and long paragraphs in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.6 (a) and 3.6 (b). Figures 3.6 (a) shows the actual use of short and long paragraphs in Emails and Figures 3.6 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use short and long paragraphs while writing email in different contexts.

The number of subjects using short paragraphs, long paragraphs and spacing between paragraphs increases in both actual email and questionnaire responses as we move from informal to formal context
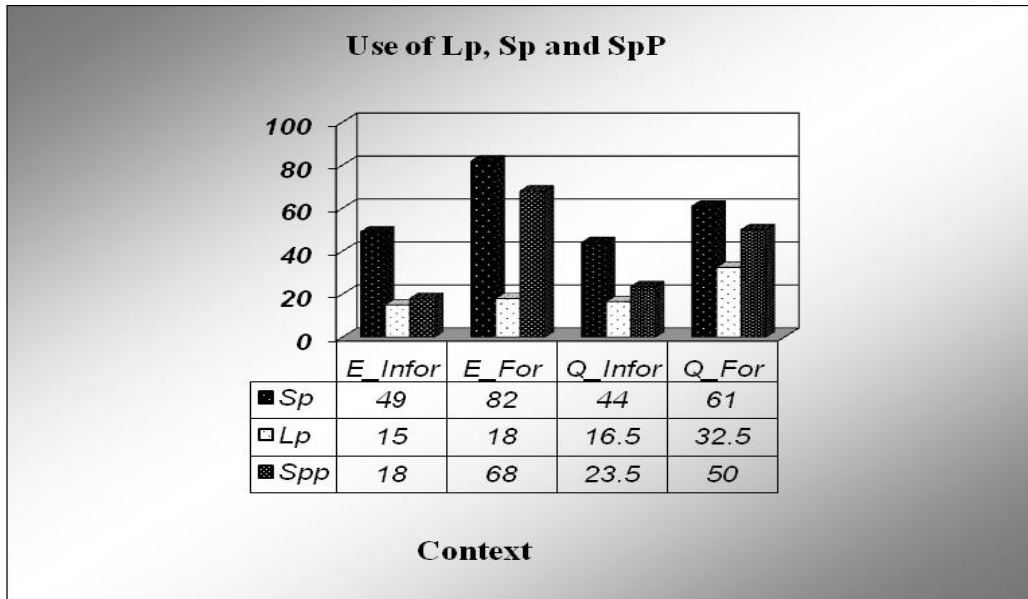
Figure 3.6 (c). Subject Volume using Appropriate paragraph Length

In terms of volume, 49%, 15% and 18% subjects used short paragraphs, long paragraphs and spacing between paragraphs in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 82%, 18% and 68% respectively. However, questionnaire responses reflect that 44%, 16.50% and 23.50 % used short paragraphs, long paragraphs and spacing between paragraphs respectively in case of Informal context while the figure in formal context is 61%, 32.50% and 50%.

hi jags...kaisa hai yaar....are yaar tereko kaha to tha ki mein apni mails nahin check kar pata aur orkut ki to baat hi dur ki hai....chalo koi baat nahin ,.....waise maine kisi se keh kar apne scrap mail ke through mangva liye.....aur tab pata chala ki aapka bhi scrap aaya hua hai....well kaam to theek hi chal raha hai....chal yaar tera bhi accha hai accha project mil gaya tujhe bhi....acchi tarah se kaam karna....n try to grasp as many things as u can....kyonki yeh training badi kaam ki hoti hai yaar......baad mein aisa mauka nahin milega....waise mujhe is mail id par hi mail karna ....warna mein reply nahin kar paoonga.....aur mera no. bhi likh le +91 9325564191 aur bata kya chal raha hai..... chal abhi kuch kaam karta hoon ....baad mein mail karta hoon./.. reply karna chal aur masti kar ....ash karne ke bhi yahi din hai waise...hahhahaha bbye n tc Praveen	One Long Paragraph

105

Hello Shyama How are you? How is your new job?? Shyama, can you do me a favor, since You are working in Daksh, I need a person who is around 6-7 yrs. of exp. in production, well versed in all quality processes and can be a team lead or manage around 20 people. He would be the person who would be working in our delivery and quality for our IT enabled non voice division. For more details, since you are working in night shift, call me at home at any time till 11 PM on 044-652-6424 for sure. Bye and regards, Rekha Corporate Manager HR & Operations	Short Paragraphs and Paragraph spacing

Figure 3.6 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

One long paragraph often means it was written and never edited. It is poor writing, since good writing is almost about editing and rewriting. Appropriate paragraph length also means smooth and elegant flow of information / message, and appropriate transitions from one issue to another. The online communication using emails in Informal context encourages lengthy sentences as seen in the illustration of figure 3.6 (d). As a result of this, all chunks of the message in entirety are randomly jumbled in one long sentence, without taking care of connectives or punctuation. The email written in formal context, as given the Figure 3.6 (d) part two, breaks the message into several parts and then devotes a small paragraph for each of these parts. It also takes care of paragraph spacing and sequencing of the message.

3.7 Other Features

Linguistic compression is one of the unique features of online communication, particularly emails and instant messaging. Language compression may occur in many forms. But it was observed that there are certain categories where they appear more frequently. Some of the categories are discussed below.

Users may delete the vowel in a word to compress it without significantly impeding the intelligibility of the word as in –

- square becomes sqre
- circle becomes crcle
- keyboard becomes kybrd
- tolerance becomes tlrnce
- school becomes schl
- forgotten becomes frgtn
- becomes becomes bcms
- honesty becomes hnsty
- pardon becomes prdn

Since word recognition relies heavily on the first and last letters in a word, the opening vowel in words that have leading vowel/vowel groups needs retaining. Examples:

- aware becomes awre
- equality becomes eqlty
- employed becomes emplyd
- intelligent becomes intlgnt
- observant becomes obsrvnt
- the observer is the observed becomes t obsrvr i t obsrvd
- understanding becomes undrstndg
- aural awareness is important becomes aurl awrnss i imprtnt

Omission of opening vowels in words result in obscure forms:

Examples: 'pnn' (for opinion), 'sy' (for easy), 'ngle' (for angle) and 'phld' (for uphold).

When we use English (or any other language), part of the definition of the overall form that permits comprehension arises from the use of elements such as articles, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions that provide significant contextual clues as to what's going on. Examples:

- b - be (abbreviation/phonetic)
- c - see (phonetic)
- g - go/get/good/ (abbreviation; context determines meaning)
- i - i/is/it/its/it's//if/in (abbreviation/consonant cut off; context determines meaning)
- m - me (abbreviation)
- n - and (phonetic as in 'Rock 'n Roll') also abbreviation of 'no'; context determines meaning
- o - on/of/off (abbreviation/consonant cut off; context determines meaning)
- r - are (phonetic as in: 'Toys r Us')
- t - the (abbreviation/as in NW England t' abbreviation)
- u - you (phonetic)
- v - very (abbreviation)
- y - why (phonetic) also abbreviation of 'yes'; context determines meaning

Many of the true 'dictionary' forms of English words contain archaic letter groupings which can be significantly compressed by means of their phonetic equivalents. Often, if the other rules of compression given here are applied, the use of phonetic forms may be unnecessary, but sometimes they are useful. For example:

- replace the letter group 'ght' by 't' or 'te' (tonight = tonite OR 2nte/2nt)
- replace 'ph' by 'f' (phone = fone OR fne)
- replace 'cs' by 'x' (phonetics =fonetix OR fntx)
- replace 'ck' by 'k' (clock = clk)

The numerical forms 1, (won) 2, (to/too) 4, (for), 6 (six/sex) and 8 (eight) can also be useful provided they are easier/faster to access at the keypad/keyboard. For example:

- 1drfl (wonderful)
- 2mrrw (tomorrow)
- 2sdy (Tuesday)
- 4tne (fortune)
- e6 grl (Essex girl)
- w8 lftr (weight lifter)
- w8 4 m (wait for me)
- 1 2 1 dscssn

Use of standard abbreviations is in vogue in modern email communication. And it is not considered offensive. But we need to take care that it shouldn't be over used. Writers can use legitimate abbreviations to shorten e-mail messages only if the readers -- intended and hidden -- will recognise and understand them. For example:

> I received your message an hr ago and intend to act on it **ASAP**. I am curious, however. Did you cc the manager of the office as well?

An uncommon abbreviation needs to be clarified on the first reference by writing it out and citing the same in parentheses. Then the abbreviation can be used throughout the rest of the document.

> Example: The findings of the **Electronic Messaging Association (EMA)** indicate phenomenal growth for e-mail.

Generally, a period is omitted within abbreviations. It can be placed after abbreviations with all lowercase letters (for example, ave.). A period is not required after abbreviations

with all uppercase letters (RSPCA; PS). Electronic acronyms and other abbreviations have found their way into e-mail messages. If the writers have any doubt as to whether their intended readers will understand an acronym, they may avoid using it. Table 3.1 shows some examples of popular electronic acronyms and abbreviations:

Table 3.1 Some Examples of popular electronic acronyms and abbreviations:

• BRB -- be right back • BTW -- by the way • CUL -- see you later • F2F -- face to face • FAQ -- frequently asked question • FOAF -- friend of a friend	• FYA -- for your amusement • FYEO -- for your eyes only • GMTA -- great minds think alike • HHOK -- ha-ha, only kidding • IMHO -- in my humble opinion • LOL -- laughing out

Originally intended to facilitate the shorthand transcription of conversations onto paper, abbreviations are now used as a way to save time and money (on typing) while communicating through emails in Informal context. Some of the abbreviations are natural and agreed upon while others are forced and sender-oriented. Use of Abbreviated language may have practical use in rapid text messaging but this is restricted only to informal written conversations. As we move into the formal context, only agreed upon abbreviations are used and that only when required. Compression of words to gain text economy is a new thing that email communication has offered to its users. For all communication instances except professional, users tend to forcibly compress words and mutate their structure.
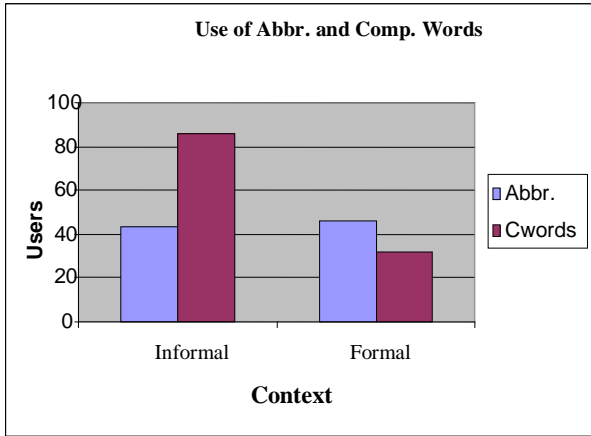
Figure 3.7 (a) Use of Compressed words and Abbreviations in Emails
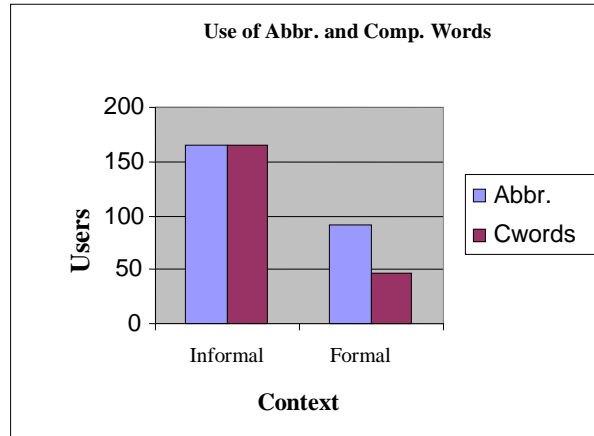
Figure 3.7 (b) Use of Compressed words and Abbreviations in Questionnaire Response

The use of compressed words and abbreviations in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.7 (a) and 3.7 (b). Figures 3.7 (a) shows the actual use of compressed words and abbreviations in Emails and Figures 3.7 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use compressed words and abbreviations while writing email in different contexts.

In case of actual emails the number of subjects using abbreviations increases marginally whereas the number of subjects using compressed words decreases significantly when we move from informal to formal context. In case of questionnaire response, the number of subjects using abbreviations and compressed words decreases significantly as we move from informal to formal context.

111
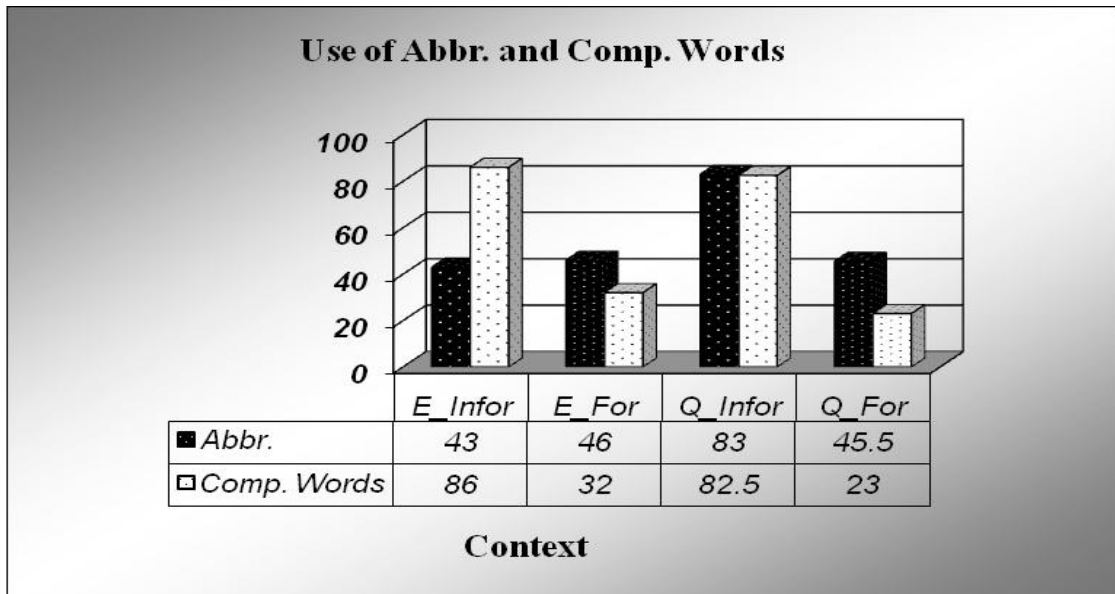
Figure 3.7 (c) Subject Volume using compressed words and Abbreviations

In terms of volume, 43% and 86 % subjects used abbreviations and compressed words in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 46% and 32% respectively. In case of questionnaire response 83% and 82.50 % used abbreviations and compressed words in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 45.50% and 23%.

As shown in illustration of figure 3.7 (d), writers make heavy use of compressed words (**wassup, ur, goin', btw, b'bye**) and moderate use of abbreviations (**bw,cp, D**). The instances of compressed words and use of abbreviations is controlled and limited in Formal context. If at all used, abbreviations will be standard and compression will be minimal or unintentional as seen in the sample formal email of the illustration.

hey **wassup(compressed)**'....?
so....how was **ur(compressed)** test.....???
and how's prep. **goin'(compressed)** on for cp.......?
arey haan **btw(Abbr)**....today there'll be an extra class for **cp(Abbr.)**..at 5pm...
okay nothin' more to write...
so **b'bye(compressed)**....
take care..
ALL **D(Abbr.)** BEST FOR **UR(compressed) XAMS(compressed)**!!!!!!
Dear Ahmed Bhai

I hope everything is fine there.

Kindly update me through this mail what is going on there.

I tried to contact you on phone but **cud** not get in touch with you.

regards
Jai Singh

Figure 3.7 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

Brenda Danet in her research observed that there is a new playfulness in digital writing. While it blossoms particularly in synchronous chat modes, it is also present in ordinary email. When users want to convey emotions or reactions to others, they use two kinds of expressions: typographic extremes and emoticons (1995).

Typographic extremes are mutated verbal expressions like 'toooo' and 'whaaat'. In informal situations, people tend to vent out their reactions without inhibitions via stretching, pausing etc., while in formal setting they tend to exercise restrain. Typographic mutations include Multiple punctuation **(Type back soon!!!!!!)**, Eccentric Spelling **(Type back sooooooon)**, Capital letters **(I'M REALLY ANGRY AT YOU!)**, Asterisks for emphasis **(I'm really *angry* at you.)**, Written out laughter **(hehehe, hahahaha)**, Smiley icons **(:-),;-),:-( )** and Verbal/visual puns **(A t D h V a   A n N k   C s   E, for advance thanks)**. In this section, only eccentric spellings and multiple

113

punctuations are considered. These are the most commonly occurring typographic mutations if the trailing dots can be ignored for a while.
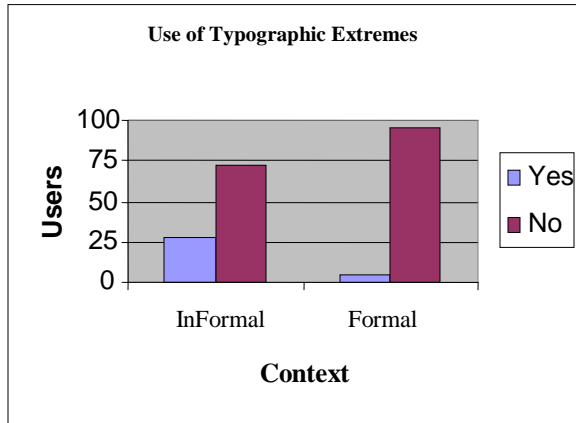
Figure 3.8 (a) Use of Typographic Extremes in Emails
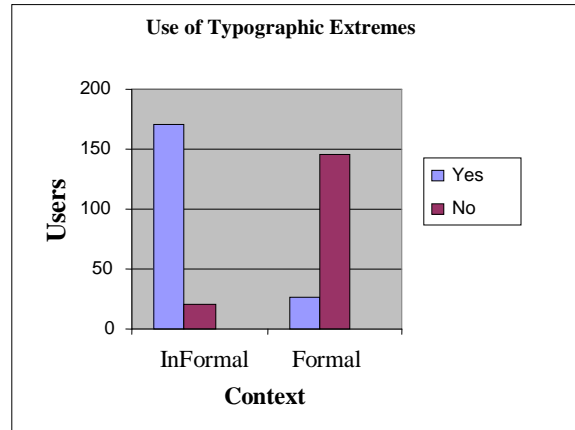
Figure 3.8 (b) Use of Typographic Extremes in Questionnaire Response

The use of typographic extremes in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.8 (a) and 3.8 (b). Figures 3.8 (a) shows the actual use of typographic extremes in Emails and Figures 3.8 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use typographic extremes while writing email in different contexts.

In case of actual emails the number of subjects using typographic extremes decreases as we move from informal to formal context while the number of those not using increases significantly. In case of questionnaire response a similar observation has been made.
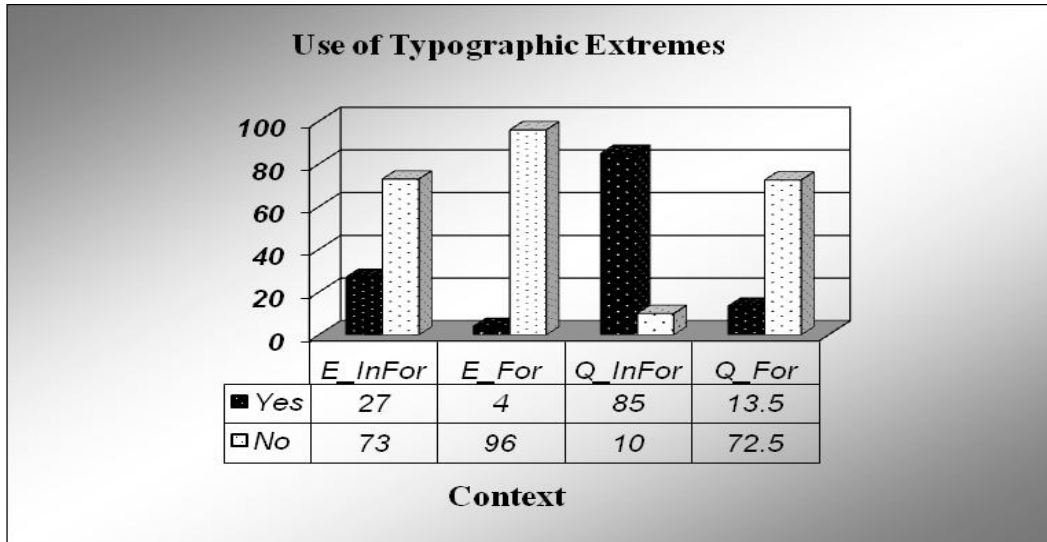
Figure 3.8 (c) Subject Volume using Typography

In terms of volume, 27 % subjects used typographic extremes in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 4%. In case of questionnaire response 85 % used typographic extremes in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 13.50%.

aaargh!!!!
aaarghhhh!!!!!! >:O i hav been trying so long 2 get my photo scanned & sent it 2 ya ppl but IT DOESNT EVER SEEM 2 WORK... can sm computer whiz tell me how do i send photos thru emails??? **plzz..** i amm really helpless here... thx 2 the kind soul who actually listens 2 my plea... thx a lot dear.**lotza smilez** akshata
plzzzzzz soch samajh ke change karna.... it decides our future.. language nd humanities names may land us in trouble to get a gud job in sftware profession.. regards. purnima
oh thanxxx....kal dekhta hoon main classs aata hoon ya nahee Dinesh Pujari

Figure 3.8 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

As can be seen from the illustration in figure 3.8 (d) users tend to make use of such typography in Informal context (`aaarghhhh!!!!!!, plzz…, oh thanxxx`) while the use of same in formal context is minimal. Several aspects of computers and communication mediated by them foster this playfulness. One factor can be the frequency and the speed with which messages are dispatched. Another factor can be the desire to achieve some degree of interactivity, the ease with which the computer responds to the users' bidding in "ping pong" fashion--in other words, the remarkable flexibility of the medium.

All of the nonverbal communication cues are missing when a person communicate to someone using email. The information encoded in the tone, mimics and gestures is lost. In contrast to a phone call or talking in person, e-mail can be emotionally impoverished when it comes to nonverbal messages that add nuance and value to the spoken words. The typed words are denuded of the rich emotional context people convey in person or over the phone. Users of the email exploit **emoticons** to convey subtle non-verbal messages.

One of the most important and unique characteristics of the Computer Mediated Communication is emoticons. Emoticons are emotional graphics--visual ways created out of symbols of typography to express the way readers feel when the senders think words alone just aren't enough. Without the emoticon, readers may also not otherwise know how to decipher the meaning of the e-mail from the words contained in the message at times. Various emotions such as anger, love, frustration, anxiety, etc., are conveyed through animated facial expressions in informal oral communication. Sometimes in Informal written communication this effect can be achieved by using harsh words and

typographic extremes. But in case of formal contexts, people tend to take more care with choice of words and are careful in conveying the anger, dissatisfaction and anxiety.
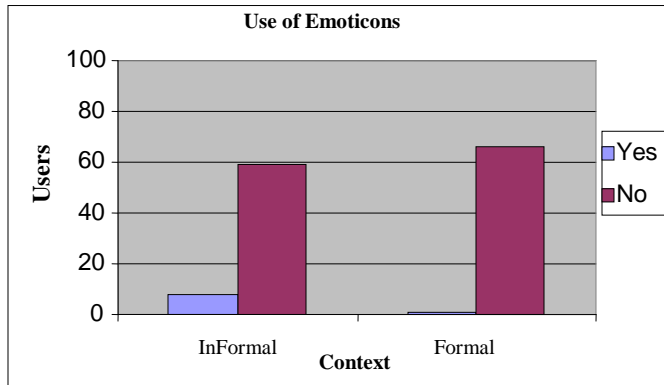
Figure 3.9 (a) Use of Emoticons in Emails
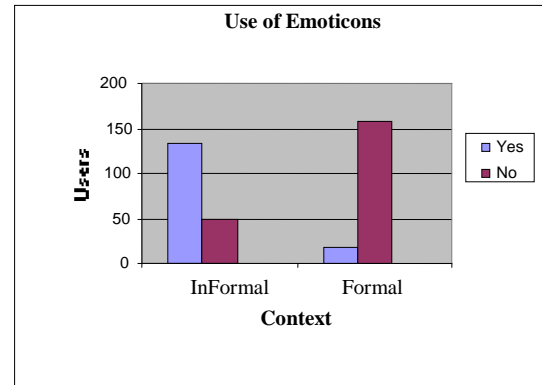
Figure 3.9 (b) Use of Emoticons in Questionnaire Response

The use of emoticons in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.9 (a) and 3.9 (b). Figures 3.9 (a) shows the actual use of emoticons in Emails and Figures 3.9 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use emoticons while writing emails in different contexts.

In case of actual emails the number of subjects using emoticons decreases as we move from informal to formal context while the number of those not using increases significantly. In case of questionnaire response a similar observation can be made.
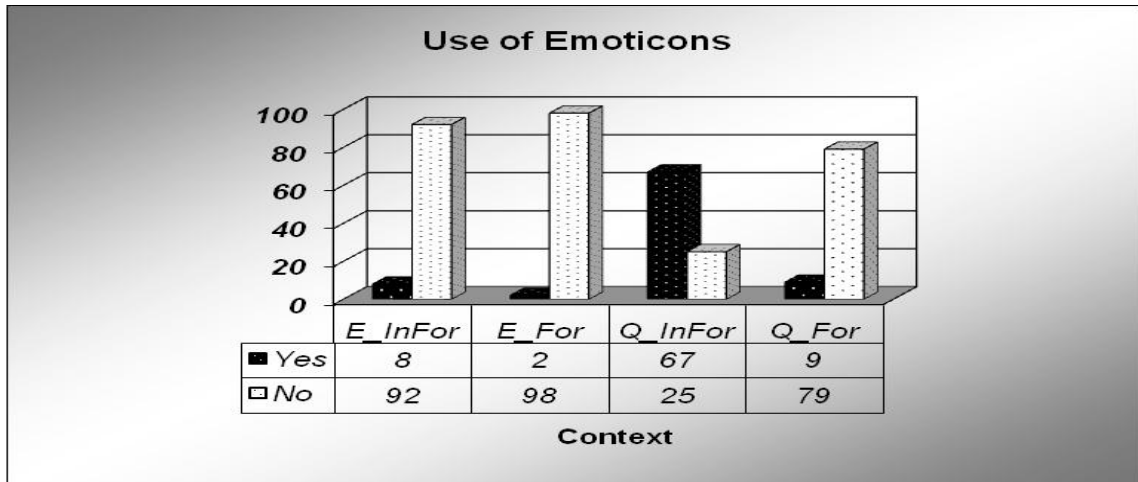
Figure 3.9 (c) Subject Volume using Emoticans

In terms of volume, 8 % subjects used emoticons in case of informal written emails while

the number in case of formal is 2%. In case of questionnaire response 67 % used

emoticons in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 9%.

---

aaargh!!!!...
```
aaarghhhh!!!!!! >:O i hav been trying so long 2 get my photo scanned &
sent it 2 ya ppl but IT DOESNT EVER SEEM 2 WORK... can sm computer whiz
tell me how do i send photos thru emails??? plzz.. i amm really
helpless here... thx 2 the kind soul who actually listens 2 my plea...
thx a lot dear.lotza smilez
akshata
```

---

hi shweta how are u .how was ur test**… :-)......**cracked it na.....???
actually...yaar mera to bahut ganda hua **=(.....**sab kuch aate hue bhi kuch nahin kar
paaii.....time hi nahin mila......
teri class kitne baje se hain.....????
ok reply me as soon as possible.....
m waiting for ur reply.......
bye n take cr dear

---

hello bhaiyya,

obv aapko pehchana..**gr8** ur finally bak in pilani..how ws ur ps 2? sem is goin **gr8**..itz
quite lite..last sem got screwed though...how r ur placements cmng abt?

my no. is 09351408895 and yeah no pungas till now though..**thankfully :)** thx
all the best 4 the placements..and hope 2 meet up whn u r free.

Figure 3.9 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

118

As can be observed in the illustration of 3.9 (d) while writing to our friends, relatives, colleagues in informal context, users tend to give a shape to their emotions (!!!!!! >:O, :-)..., =(... , thankfully :) thx) . Also the email messages in Formal professional context are devoid of such usage as the users tend to underplay their emotions and are more neutral.

Transliteration is the practice of transcribing a word or text written in one writing system into another writing system. Users find it easy to switch to another language and use the writing system of the tool language to convey messages. Some mailers use transliterated words and phrases while others write complete paragraphs. One reason can be that of getting away with vocabulary requirement. They need not scout for appropriate word all the time and can easily get away by using a familiar word in the first language. Another reason can be confidentiality. If the user wants the message to be read and understood by an intended reader who is well versed with the first language, he/she can use transliteration to maintain some level of confidentiality. And of course time, speed and frequency of communication also has a role to play.

Sometimes transliteration is natural while at other times people don't find the correct word to use, so they switch to other language to continue transmitting the message. Transliteration is more prominent in synchronous mode of communication but is also creeping in asynchronous form such as emails where both parties are comfortable with the languages used.

The use of transliteration in the two contexts, namely Informal and Formal is shown in figures 3.10 (a) and 3.10 (b). Figures 3.10 (a) shows the actual use of transliteration in Emails and Figures 3.10 (b) shows the responses of subjects when they were asked whether they use transliteration while writing email in different contexts.
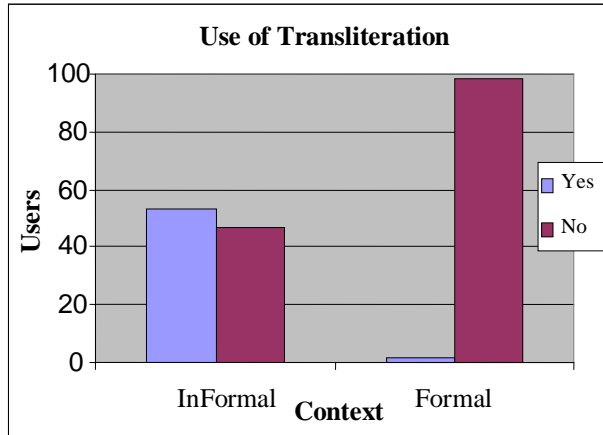
Figure 3.10 (a) Use of Transliteration in Emails
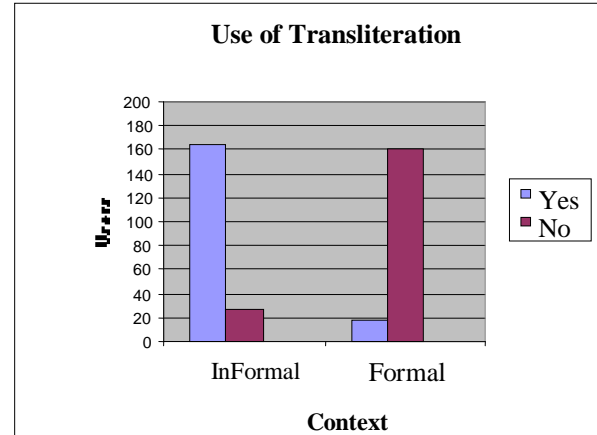
Figure 3.10 (b) Use of Transliteration in Questionnaire Response

In case of actual emails the number of subjects using transliteration decreases as we move from informal to formal context while the number of those not using increases significantly. In case of questionnaire response a similar observation can be made.

	E_InFor	E_For	Q_InFor	Q_For
Yes	53	2	82	8.5
No	47	98	13.5	80
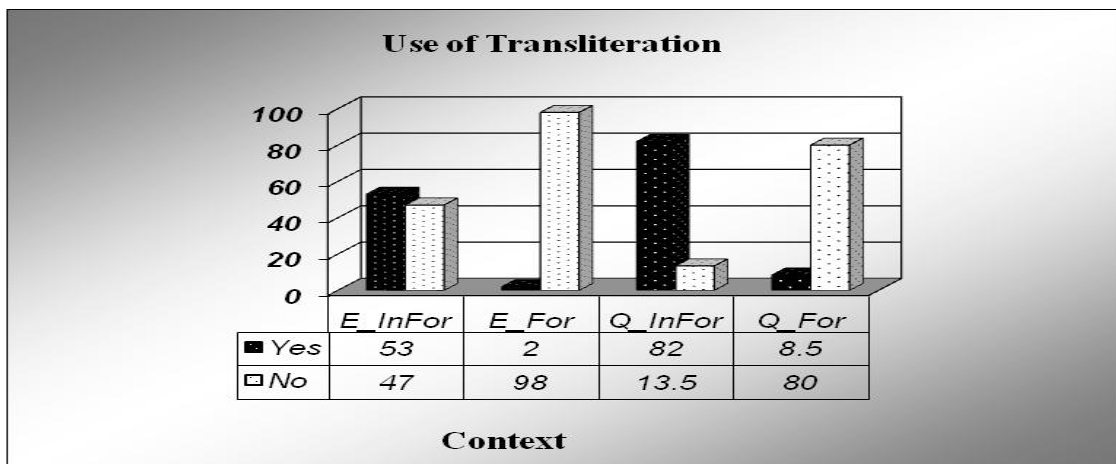
Figure 3.10 (c) Subject Volume using Transliteration

In terms of volume, 53 % subjects used transliteration in case of informal written emails while the number in case of formal is 2%. In case of questionnaire response 82 % used transliteration in case of Informal while the figure in formal context is 8.50%.

hello sir, **kaise ho aap** **pehchana ke nahi !!** give me a quick reply , just as a confermation that u hav recieved my messg. **bye** regards, Mukesh
Hi... How R U? How was UR Holi..... **Enjoy Kia Na.....?** **Tc** Bye Raj

Figure 3.10 (d) Emails written in Informal and Formal Context

The illustration in figure 3.10 (d) indicates that authors make heavy use of transliteration in informal context(**Enjoy Kia Na.....?, kaise ho aap, pehchana ke nahi !!**) as they are aware that they are not concerned about making an impression or being linguistically correct. On the other hand, in case of Formal context, users are more careful and the chances of using transliteration in professional environment is extremely remote as represented by the data volume in figure (3.10 (c)) and shown in illustration 3.10 (d).

3.8 Results

Figure 3.11 clearly demarcates the various elements/parameters which dominate a particular context for written emails. In case of Formal email context following elements dominated the language composition:

- Proper use of Parts of Speech (Verbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions) (PoS)
- Proper Spellings and Complete sentences (Sp-Frag)
- Receiver oriented Language (RoL)
- Proper Punctuation (Punc)
- Short Paragraphs (Sp)
- Spacing between the paragraphs (Spp)
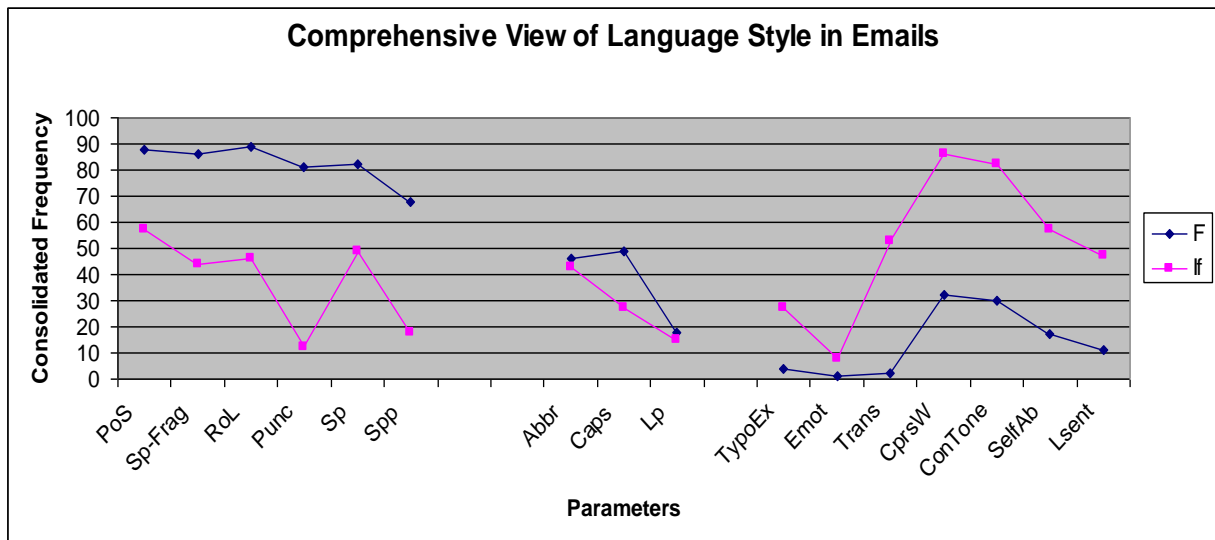
Figure 3.11 Comprehensive View of the Findings in Written Emails

In case of Informal email Context following elements dominated the language composition:

- Typographic Extremes (TypoEx)
- Emoticons (Emot)
- Transliteration (Trans)
- Compressed words (CprsW)
- Conversational Tone (Con Tone)
- Self Absorbed Language (SelfAb)
- Long Sentences (Lsent)

The following parameters were found to be used in both contexts in equal measure except Capitalization. The fact that more people are using capitalization in formal context can be attributed to the fact that over a period of time employees of the same organization, professional of the same domain tend to get used to using certain terms/phrases in a particular way (such as project names, project variables, key people involved, tasks and processes.)

- Capitalization (Caps)
- Abbreviations (Abbr)
- Long Paragraphs (Lp)

It is also important to note that the factors like professional seriousness of matter, professional credibility, relationship shared by two parties, etc., also contribute to the style of composition of email. In the above grouping of parameters, it can be observed that Typographic Extremes, Emoticons (written form of nonverbal cues), Transliteration, Abbreviations, Compresses words, Long Paragraphs, Conversational Tone, Self Absorbed Language and Long Sentences contribute to oral and therefore informal tone to the composition. Abbreviations and Compresses words are devices to help convey the message as fast as possible while other devices enhance readers' and writers' ability to experience the words as if they were spoken. On the other hand Proper use of Parts of Speech (Verbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions), Proper Spellings and Complete sentences, Receiver oriented Language, Proper Punctuation, Short Paragraphs, Spacing between the paragraphs, Capitalization render a professional and hence a formal tone to the composition.

A similar pattern of usage was also found in case of questionnaire responses also. In Formal email context following elements dominated the language composition:

- Proper use of Parts of Speech (Verbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions)
- Proper Spellings and Complete sentences
- Receiver oriented Language
- Proper Punctuation
- Short Paragraphs
- Spacing between the paragraphs
- Use of Long Paragraphs

In case of Informal email context following elements dominated the language composition:

- Typographic Extremes
- Emoticons
- Transliteration
- Abbreviations
- Compresses words
- Capitalization
- Conversational Tone
- Self Absorbed Language
- Long Sentences

Figure 3.12 clearly demarcates the various elements/parameters which dominate a particular context used for questionnaire survey.
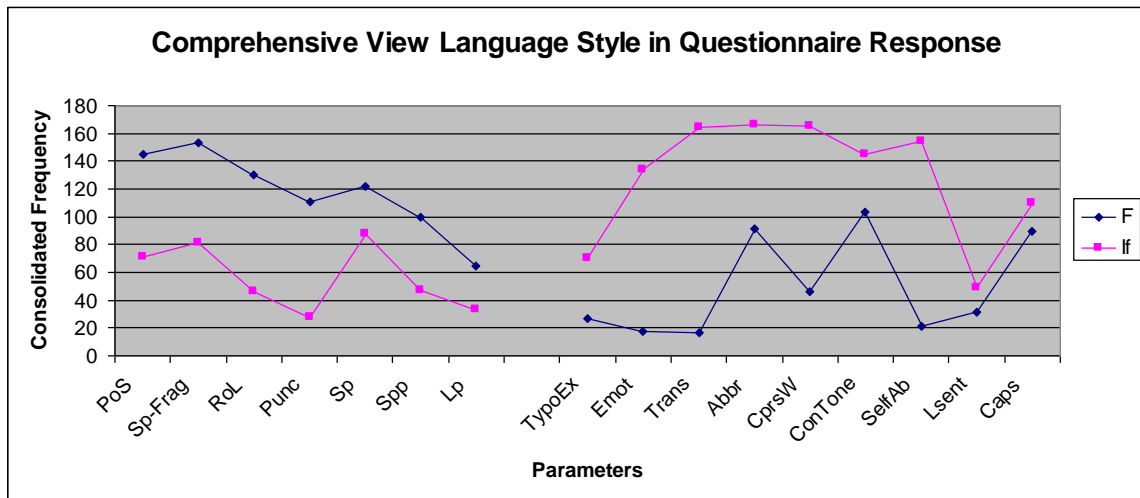
Figure 3.12 Comprehensive View of the Findings in Questionnaire

To see the difference between perception and practice of language while using emails for communication in the two contexts mentioned, attributes have been marked for low (1) or high (2) occurrence in questionnaire response and in written emails.

Figure 3.13 shows the comparative picture of the 'perception' and 'practice' of the new medium of email in Formal context.
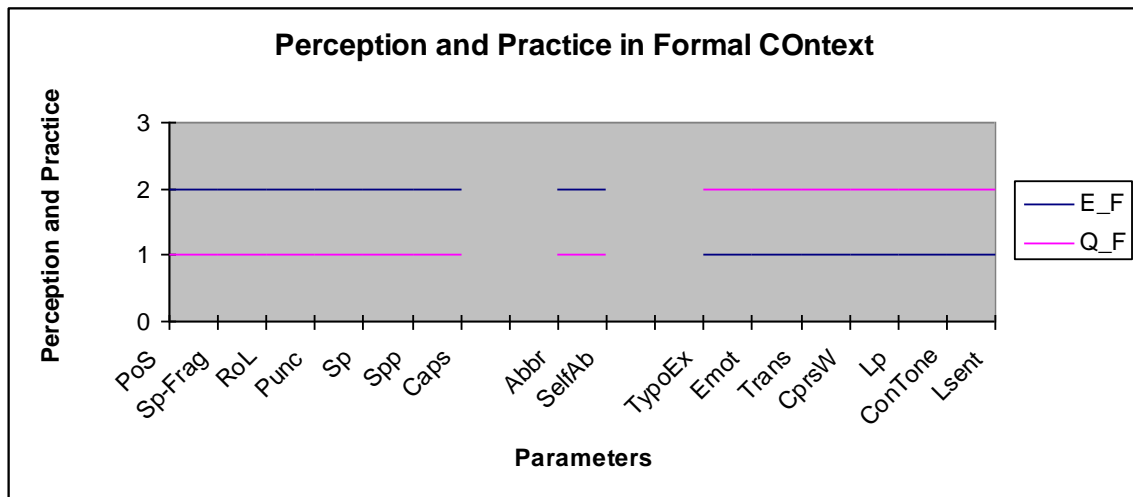
Figure 3.13 Comparative View of Perception and Practice in Formal Context

From figure 3.13 we can deduce that while less number of people think that they follow the formal language rules, in practice, more people are actually following the language dictum. At the same time more number of users thinks that they tend to indulge in relaxing language rules but in practice less number of users are doing it. The deviation is in use of abbreviations and incomplete sentences where less number of people think that they use these but actually more number of people are practicing it.

Figure 3.14 shows the comparative picture of the 'perception' and 'practice' of the new medium of email in Informal context. A diagonally opposite observation can be made in the Informal context. While less number of people think that they violate language rules, in practice more number of users are doing it. More number of users think that they indulge in using the mutated form of language but in practice, less number is using it.
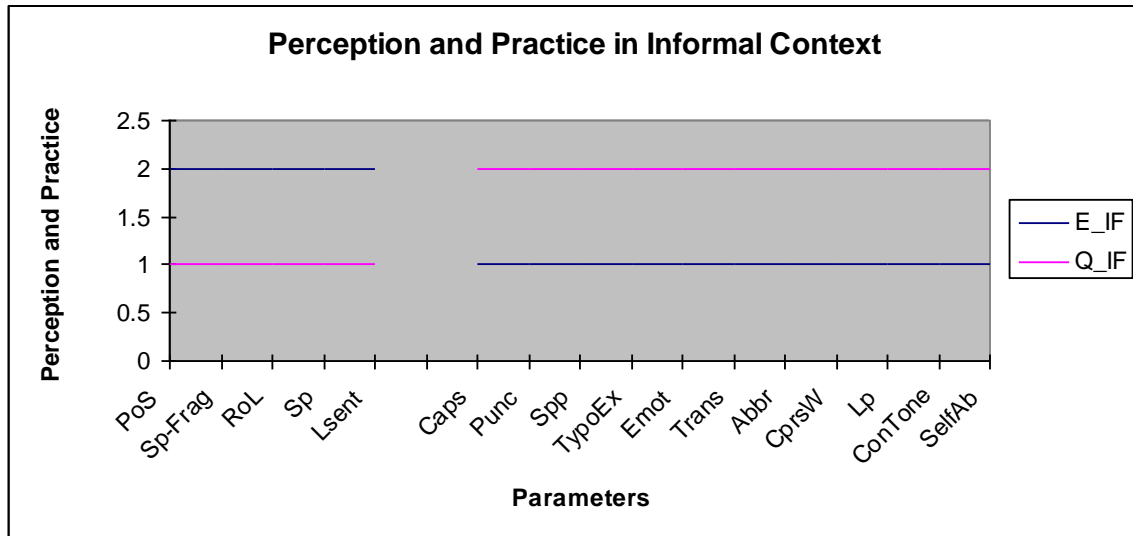
Figure 3.14 Comparative View of Perception and Practice in InFormal Context

The main observations from the analysis are:

- In 'Perception' the new medium is seen as a flexible medium to communicate and as having negative impact but in 'Practice' users follow the language dictum and the influence is minimal.

- The formal context emails are characterized by features resembling to Business letter style to a great extent

- The Informal context emails are characterized by features or an emergent style similar to conversation style.

It would be a mistake to ignore the flexibility of the new medium which has enabled the observation of the deviation of the style of CMC from traditional formal and informal linguistic style.

Although the new medium invites informality even in business or formal context, it would be a misnomer to attribute too much to the effect of technology as such.

Rather, it can be said that the new technology is strengthening, or converging with, a general cultural trend, which is already in place. Biber and Finegan in their work *Historial Drift in Three English Genres* documented "historical drift" in a number of genres of English, including personal and professional letters. Analyzing samples of texts on six dimensions of linguistic variation, they found that over the last three centuries these genres have been moving in an "oral" direction (1989).

Another development was the Plain Language movement, which flourished in the United States and Britain in the late 1970s. This movement called for the reform of legal and bureaucratic language to make it more comprehensible to laypersons. Although language reformers did not expressly set out to make documents more like speech, this was, in fact, the effect of the changes they introduced. In revisions of bureaucratic and legal forms, they preferred active to passive verbs, and verbs with first and second person pronouns instead of nominalizations. The electronic media are also having an impact. Long years of exposure to films and television have partially re-instated the prominence of speech that characterized oral cultures.

The younger people, especially students, having grown up in a relatively informal cultural climate in which informal speech patterns had been influencing uses of writing even before computers, and who have had relatively little experience with writing generally, may therefore use a speech-like style. Older generation, on the other hand, with much experience with the business letter template and style, no doubt brings this experience to their letters. For them, previous experience with the template may take precedence over exposure to an increasingly informal cultural climate.

3.9 Summary

The new channel of communication, Emails, has been used in Formal and Informal context differently. It is interesting to see that the impact is more in Informal context than in Formal Context. Also, there is a marked difference in perception of the new channel and its practice. The difference possibly emanates from the fact that users tend to have an impression that email is largely a medium of communication for personal use and equate it with day to day personal communication – mostly conversational communication. But in fact, when they use it in Formal context, they abide by the academic style of communication.

The next chapter deals with another online form of communication, Webpages. Unlike Emails, which facilitates two way communication and which is more dynamic, Web pages leads to one way communication and is mostly static. Nonetheless it has come a long way from its crude infancy to assume the face of a modern organization. Moreover this form of online communication has seen phenomenal growth in personal communication as well.

CHAPTER 4
LANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF WEBPAGES

4.1 Introduction

The Internet and the World Wide Web are two of the greatest innovations by humans after telephone in the field of telecommunications. The vast spectrum of services, referred to as CMC such as email, Internet Relay Chat, Blogs, Bulletin Boards, Websites, Audio Video Conference and Instant Messaging provide a seamless facility in real and unreal time to communicate, virtually from and to any part of the world. And the growth in use of this innovation is phenomenal given the young age of the discipline of Computer Science.

The Internet technology was primarily used for communication between military establishments to disseminate confidential information. The use was restricted and it wasn't worldwide in the real sense. It was a very complex system then. The early Internet was used by experts, professionals, engineers, and librarians as compared to general members of the public in today's scenario. During 1970s Email, Telnet and File Transfer Protocol were gradually added to the internet and with the introduction of Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol, the CMC expanded further.

Early 1980s saw the expansion of use of CMC by academic fraternity. Universities started linking each other through the small local area networks which when put together had created the wide-area networks. As standards for various uses/services became formalized, it became easier for common man to learn and use the Internetworking

technology to communicate across space and time. But the biggest breakthrough came in 1991 with the creation of WWW protocol, a combination of text embedded with links to other content. The big boost to the Internet was given by creation of the Graphical User Interface based browsers to look for content. Private internetworks started developing and it became possible to route traffic from one country to another without bothering governmental regulations.

Since mid-nineties to this date, the web page form of CMC has seen rapid growth particularly by commercial establishments and it gradually became a major form of communication.

As a novel form of communication, websites have opened up new vistas for personal and organizational communication. When individuals or organizations put up a website, they have certain goals. It can be to promote a product, to reach wider base of consumers, to provide general information, to provide company progress, to provide instant news and/or to provide education and learning. Users of the website have their own reasons. They may use websites to access information about products and services or they may look for online purchasing and even selling, etc.

Businesses started providing everything online - services, support, sales, consulting, designing – so far so that even the back office processing of a company in one continent is done by a company in another continent and that the call from a customer of one

telecom service provider in United States of America is answered by an executive in India.

Irrespective of its type, the content on the website should be presented in such a way that it serves the purpose of both the provider and the user. Since an individual or group is trying to communicate to others via internet, it becomes important that they use appropriate language keeping in mind the context and purpose of hosting a website.

There are many similarities in the websites across the world in terms of content and its presentation. Hence it is generally considered that language and structure of websites is rigid and follows the same pattern across the globe with minor differences pertaining to culture and other factors.

Information is the building block of all businesses. Complete, clear, and timely information provides a crucial competitive advantage. Business managers need fresh information from time to time to make better and timely decisions. Given the rise of commercial undertaking models such as Business to Business, Business to Customer and People to People and also considering the synchronous and asynchronous nature of CMC, it becomes important to present the information more effectively to hold on to the competitive edge. Individuals too find a place on the internet to create their own identities and space which are always accessible to anybody through World Wide Web. New relationships, collaborations, knowledge exchange, innovations, opinion sharing and consensus building take place through person-to-person communication on the net.

Faster access to customers and resources, quick response, global reach and cost are some of the primary reasons why organizations need web pages today. For the customer, in today's information age, to be informed is to be armed with knowledge. In this regard, the best way for the customers to be informed is the Internet. And the best way for the businesses to inform the customers is the website. It not only helps to disseminate information to large number of people but also helps to build collaborations between businesses, individuals etc., to establish the first impressions of the companies and to convey its contribution to society, to attract new and employable talent, etc. Internet has played the role of a catalyst in disseminating and accessing huge amount of information. One mouse click will bring us information about the most current happenings across the globe. Research and development has been benefited immensely through knowledge sharing on the web by research-oriented organizations and academic institutions. A properly planned and managed web page can go a long way to establish a credible image of the company. On the other hand, a poorly managed web page, in terms of content, language and presentation, may inflict substantial damage to the organization's image. In short, in this globalized society, the information contained in the website of a business, exercises a profound influence on its professional image.

Yellow pages are almost a history now. Among the search engines, Google is the favorite. Corporations spend millions on public relations, and yet the press sections of their websites often fail to meet journalists' most basic information needs. In a recent usability study, journalists found answers to only 68% of their questions across a range of corporate sites.

According to Nielsen:

> It is particularly gratifying that most web sites now follow the guideline to make it easy for users to locate the contact information for a PR representative. This is one of the most important tasks for journalists (2001: 35).

Further del Galdo and Nielson found that only 16% of web users actually read word by word (1996: 27).

Given this scenario, the language of web based business communication needs to be reliable and effective because of the absence of physical presence and non verbal communication. In other words, the language becomes the most important factor for this channel in creating the necessary impact on its users.

The World Wide Web virtually provides a platform to all the styles which have been developed so far in the written language. For instance the web pages may use the style of newspapers, scientific reports, bulletins, novels, poems, prayers, etc. Indeed, WWW has been introducing us to new form of written expressions which is the animated and an emerging style of abbreviated language. The web is truly a part of the new linguistic medium, more dynamic than traditional writing, and more permanent than traditional speech. As David Crystal says

> … the Internet is a revolution - yes, indeed in many aspects, but it's also a linguistic revolution (2001: viii).

Written communication is a difficult task in business context, but it becomes more difficult when it comes to writing for the web. The author has to cater uniformly to varied audience with different perspectives, knowledge level, attitudes and also belonging to diverse cultures. Over a period of time, experts in business communication have observed specific characteristics which define effective communication. Generally business communication in written mode is done by using Plain English which can be characterized as having neutral tone, varying sentence length, smooth navigation, connectivity within the text, and clear relationships between message chunks. On the other hand, personal written communication is more casual and doesn't follow the rules of plain English.

The WWW is so well developed as a mainstream mass communication medium that if an organization doesn't have a website presence, it is considered as 'traditional'. Of course, organizations have always published flyers, leaflets and magazines to guide the public on the ins and outs of the work they do and the services they offer; and partly from this had come the commonly held idea that web pages are just fancy versions of printed text. However, print media have supposedly come of age technologically.

In the webpage form of CMC, the viewer can be anybody. Different people have different perceptions and they may interpret messages in different ways. The challenge is to be semantically uniform to diverse audience in a simple language. The content on the website has a varied influence on the readers. Apart from overcoming the time and space barrier, the web pages help in the growth of an organization in a number of ways. In one

way, it can be seen as a single window transaction system. Because of absence of physical proximity, the web pages tend to provide all that is required to convert a potential customer into an actual customer. The web page provides information about the background which helps the user know more about the organization, the achievements of organization which creates credibility, the future plans which helps users to get to know the company's predicted growth plans, the community involvement which helps imbibing the feeling of being socially responsible, the enquiry to reach to company representatives immediately, the details of products and services which help users to look specifically into the interest areas.

Stephen Johnson in his book, *Interface Culture,* aptly states that the Internet is

> … the first major technology of the 20th Century to actually bring people together rather than push them apart.(1999: 7)

Wikipedia defines web pages as:

> Personal web pages are WWW pages created by an individual to contain content of a personal nature. The content can be about the creator / owner or about something he or she is interested in (Wikipedi).

Personal web pages can be the entire content of a domain name belonging to the person or an organization (which would then be a personal website), or can be a page or pages that are part of a larger domain on which other pages are located. An example of one such larger site is GeoCities. Personal web pages are often used solely for informative or entertainment purposes. Defining personal web page is difficult, because many domains

or combinations of web pages that are under the control of a single individual can be used by the individual for commercial purposes, ranging from just the presentation of advertising, to electronic commerce with a purpose of selling goods, services or information.

A personal web page may be a single page or may be as elaborate as an online database with gigabytes of data. Many Internet service providers offer a few megabytes of space for customers to host their own personal web pages like GeoCities. The content of personal web pages varies and depending on the hosting server, can contain anything that any other websites do. However, typical personal web pages contain images, text and a collection of hyperlinks. Most of the personal web pages contain biographical information, resumes, and blogs. Others include information regarding the author's hobbies and pastimes, and information that is of some interest to friends and family of the author.

A Majority of users maintain personal web pages because it offers them the most effective medium to express their opinions or creative endeavors. These types of sites may contain short fiction such as short stories or samples of artwork. Other netizens view the concept of a personal web page with a more metaphysical bent, placing value in the concept of owning space in and 'residing' in cyberspace and on the World Wide Web. This can also extend to the ownership of personal domain names and the associated personal web pages and e-mail addresses connected to these domains although with the advent of affordable web hosting, fewer people own or manage their own personal

servers. Currently, the vast majority of casual internet users tend to utilize personal web page space provided as free services by social networking sites such as MySpace and Blogger.

Personal website is one of the few new forms of personal expression to arise out of the computer science discipline. No longer a curiosity, the growth in personal web pages pointed to some inherent need people have for self-expression. However, there is a wide gulf between those who find this medium an exciting opportunity and those who see it as yet another form of self-absorption.

Nathan aptly says:

> For many the websites are a tool for manifestation of self promotion. There are already a number of issues surrounding this new application, but if anything, personal websites are probably the quintessential turn of the century product as they reflect the natural evolution of Andy Warhol's ideas of fame, blended with Tom Peter's realization that the most important brand is "you" (Quoted by Killoran 2003: 67).

A personal website may be the best tool with which to build one's own brand since it is available 24X7 and accessible to everyone in the world who can touch the Internet.

Though much of related statistics is not available, a poll by NFO Interactive published in WIRED magazine in October 1997 reveals:

- 62% of those with personal sites simply host it to provide information about themselves and their families, presumably to friends and other family members.
- 48% are using their personal sites to find others on the Internet (in other words, in the world) with similar interests.
- 28% just want to be "cool"

- 28% want to conduct personal business
- 28% want to share their ideas, philosophies, and beliefs
- 6% want to show their children's' accomplishments
- and, lastly, 4% want to search for a new relationship

While quoting these figures Nathan says:

> … commenting on these figures, in an uncharacteristically non-supportive but characteristically snotty view of technology, WIRED wrote: 'Sadly, most pages are simply self-aggrandizing autobiographies or digital photo albums.'(2008)

A number of different kinds of personal websites can be seen on the internet. And the line between the "professional" and a "personal" website is getting blurred in many instances. In modern lifestyle, the professional and personal self is so intermingled that it is difficult to separate one from the other. This is very much visible in many cases in the design of websites also. The distinction between the two may get sharper in future or may become altogether irrelevant. It is so common now for celebrities and professionals to have websites that those without are considered as lagging in public relations effectiveness. Moreover, celebrities without their own websites are in danger of being viewed as unaware of the hip and current.

Broadly, there are two types of personal web pages: professional (doctors, engineers, lawyers, technology professionals) and personal (family, individual, diaries). Both types of web pages have been considered for the study.

4.2 Vocabulary and Grammar

In this section of the chapter, two important aspects, namely, Vocabulary and Grammar of the language have been discussed. In vocabulary, an attempt is made to identify and analyze the occurrence of the characteristic lexical entities of organizational and personal communication. These include collocations in professional context, multiword chunks in personal context, cohesive linkers and message accuracy in both contexts. The analysis of grammar includes the use of tense forms, voice, relative and conditional clauses, modal verbs and pronouns.

According to David Wilkins:

> Without grammar little can be conveyed and without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. (Quoted by Lewis 2000: 110)

Vocabulary is one of the major features which define the style of content from a particular domain. Studies have suggested that words in isolation may render different meanings but appearing in groups and within certain context they lend clarity and completeness to the message. Grouping of vocabulary enables reader to grasp the meaning conveyed by the chunk as a whole rather than an individual word. For example, *racing circuit*. Individual words here mean different things but taken together they form a meaning which is different altogether.

Collocations

The grouping of elements helps in putting together a larger and meaningful content. Rebecca Oxford points out that the grouping of vocabulary elements helps the reader overcome the problem of remembering individual items (1990: 24).

Michael Lewis says:

> The single most important task facing language learners is acquiring a sufficiently large vocabulary. We now recognize that much of our vocabulary consists of prefabricated chunks of different kinds. The single most important chunk is collocation (2000: 25).

It is a natural process to store information in chunks in our memory. When we try to retrieve these chunks, we retrieve them in chunks. There we need language constructs such as collocations and other multiword chunks which help us to do the same. When we produce language, we recall groups of words, not single words. So when we don't have a collocation to express a particular idea, we depend more on grammar to express it which is more difficult. In this section we will identify and analyze the grouping techniques (feature of professional writing) used in the web pages.

There are various types of collocations: Adjective-Noun (an adjective followed by a noun), Noun-Noun (noun serving as an adjective to another noun), and Verb-Noun Collocations.

Nation, in the book *Learning Vocabulary in another Language,* opines that the term collocation refers to a group of words that belong together, either because they commonly occur together or because the meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of its parts (2001).

Collocations describe specific lexical items and the frequency in which these items occur. They are concise sequences that provide exact meanings. For example, if we consider the collocational phrase 'black market', we recognize that the meaning of the whole phrase is not clear in its parts. Though it is easy to know the meaning of these two words, black and market, separately, it is difficult to relate the meaning of these two words when they appear in collocational phrase. This means that the meaning of this phrase hides under its collocational construction. 'black market' refers to the illegal practice of selling/procuring items violating the norms of the standard market practices. So it can be noted that this phrase should be read and interpreted as a whole to get the conveyed meaning, it is frequently used and is a concise expression and the semantics too is compact.

The use of collocations is important because as a frequently used tool in professional world, collocations express meaning quicker and in compact way to the prospective reader.

According to MacCarthy and O'Dell, using collocations "is a good idea because they provide a natural and alternative way to convey something, and improves style." (2006: 6)

Nattinger and DeCarrico point out that a collocational unit consists of a 'node' that co-occurs with a 'span' of words on either side (1992: 34). The 'node' or the 'node word' is the constant part of the lexical combination that forms the collocations. Span is the variable part of the collocation which may occur on either side- left or right to of the node.

For example if we consider the node 'market' and its span, we will find that 'market' occurs with 'spans' on both sides.

- Open market
- Black market
- Stock market
- Retail market
- Market value
- Market price
- Market share

The examples cited in this chapter (for professional context) are taken from the following websites:

Aditya Birla Group (ABG) http://app.cypress.com
QA Infotech Private Limited (QA) http://www.qainfotech.com
Hindalco Pvt Ltd (HD) http://www.hindalco.com
Satyam Technologies Pvt Ltd (ST) http://www.satyam.com
Mphasis Pvt Ltd (MP) http://www.mphasis.com
Tata Group of Companies (TG) http://www.texmaco.in
UltraTech Cement Limited. (UCT) http://www.ultratechcement.com
Mrecord Pvt Ltd (MR) http://www.mrecord.com
Frost and Sullivan Ltd (FS) http://www.frost.com
PSI data Systems (PSI) http://www.psidata.com
Aditya Birla Chemicals Ltd (ABC) http://www.adityabirlachemicals.com
Cypress Inc. (CI) http://www.cypress.com
Amazon Inc (AI) http://amazon.com
Central Institute of Road Transport (CIRT) http://www.cirtindia.com
CMC Pvt Ltd. (CMC) http://www.cmcltd.com
Convergys Pvt Ltd. (CV) http://www.convergys.com

Datamatics Pvt Ltd (DM) http://www.datamatics.com
Dr. Reddy's Lab (DR) http://www.drreddys.com
Emids (EM) http://www.emids.com
Sankara Nethralaya (SN) http://www.sakaranethralaya.org
FullertonIndia Ltd (FI) http://www.fullertonindia.com
EPeople Pvt Ltd (EP) http://www.epeople.com
IBM Daksh (IBM) http://www.daksh.com
Insead (IN) http://www.insead.fr
Indian School of Business (ISB) http://www.isb.edu

An analysis of these websites reveals the use of various categories of collocations as detailed below:

- **Adjective-Noun**

    1. Add to that the problems of stagnant growth, dipping share prices and static or increasing expenses as a percentage of **total revenues**. (IBM)

    2. Design for Costing is a streamlined engineering approach that begins and ends with a **fixed price**. (ST)

    3. MphasiS believes that education is the key to the social and **economic development** of a nation.(MP)

    4. … Fullerton India We provide a complete range of **financial products** and solutions, customized to the requirements of mass market and low income population segments.(FI)

    5. Tata Motors is amongst the top five **commercial vehicle** manufacturers in the world and has recently completed the acquisition of Jaguar and Land Rover.(TG)

The above examples are from adjective-noun category where the adjective node is followed by a noun span. In example 1 the cumulative meaning of **total revenues** is different from the node and span taken separately. The separate meanings would render

an absurd semantics to the sentence. The message is about the whole income. Similarly, in other examples the compact meaning of the collocation such as **<u>fixed price</u>**, **<u>economic development, financial products,</u>** and **<u>commercial vehicle</u>** not only makes the sentence meaningful, but also conveys more information.

- **Noun-Noun (a noun acting as an adjective to another noun)**

    1. Our parent company, Temasek Holdings, incorporated in 1974, is one of Asia's biggest **<u>investment firms</u>**, with a diversified US $80 Billion portfolio, spanning various industries. (FI)

    2. The ISB has partnerships with 26 leading schools from the USA, France, South Africa, Israel, Germany, China, Pakistan and the UK for **<u>exchange programmes</u>**. (ISB)

    3. We are a diverse set of professionals with a single passion-Bringing excellence in human **<u>capital management</u>** solutions. (EP)

    4. … distribution channels, forecasting **<u>market trends</u>**, and performing strategic analysis and market research of competitors. (FS)

    5. … generates comprehensive, differentiating, solution-based, specialized value propositions, which arise from deep and unique **<u>market segment</u>**-level insights. (PSI)

In the above examples a noun acts as an adjective to another noun and together they form a frequently occurring/used collocation. In example 1, **<u>investment</u>** is used to characterize the other noun, the **<u>firm</u>**. Put together they define an entity, which if done otherwise would require more number of words. Similarly in other examples, nouns acting as adjectives such as **<u>exchange programmes, capital management, market trends</u>** and

market segment are used to characterize other nouns. This renders economy of expression which is again very important in business context.

- **Verb-Noun Collocation**

1. And importantly, we can **meet the challenge** of staffing unique and highly specialized and multilingual skill sets.(CV)

2. At QAIT, we **recognize the importance** of quality employee programs for recruitment, development, motivation and retention. (QA)

3. We **take great pride** in contributing to our community by making resources available to those in need of food, shelter and support services and seek opportunities that enable people to become self-sufficient. (CP)

4. Let us **provide superior service** to strengthen your customer relationships. (CV)

The use of specific verbs can be observed with certain nouns in the example 1 through 4 given above. The desired meaning of 'meet the challenges' in example 1, is conveyed using the combination of both the verb and the noun. Using any other verb or using the verb and noun separately may not convey the desired meaning. Such use of verb-noun collocation not only renders brevity but also clarity in writing. Similarly in other examples also the verb-noun combination is used to achieve compact but clear meanings.

Figure 4.1 shows the collocations and their frequency in the organizational web pages studied. The frequency reflects the number of spans occurring with the node word.
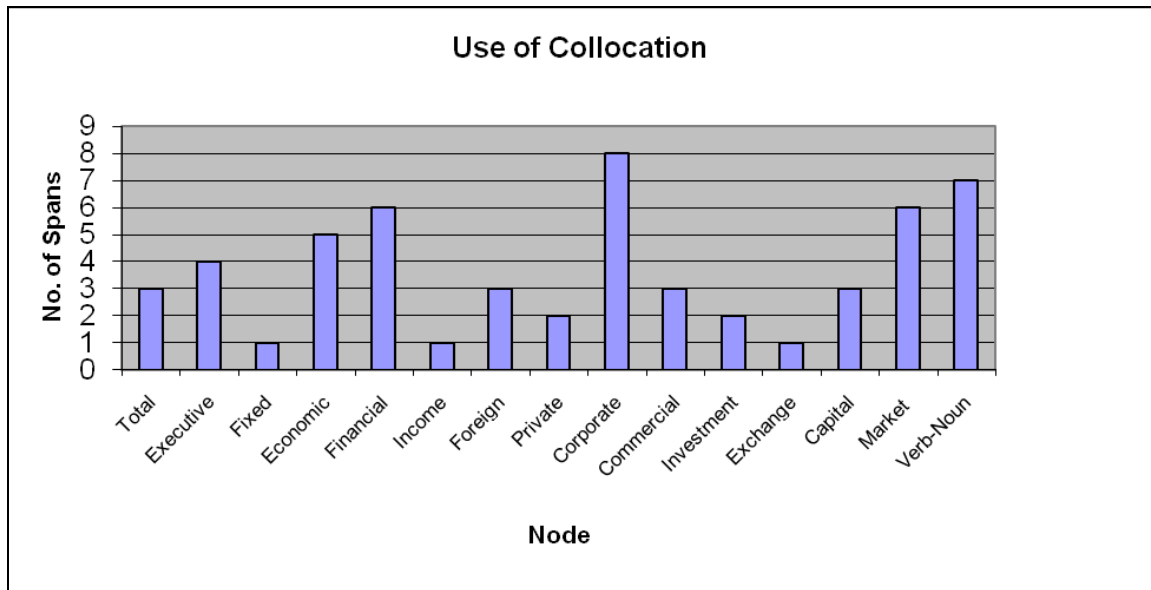
Figure 4.1 Collocations used and their frequency in Organizational Web Pages

Multiword chunks

The term "**multiword chunks**" is used broadly to refer to vocabulary items consisting of a sequence of two or more words which "semantically and/or syntactically form a meaningful and inseparable unit". They include collocations (e.g. "alcoholic drink"), polywords (e.g. "by the way"), idioms (e.g. "take action"), phrasal verbs (e.g. "put off") (Moon 1997: 43).

Pawley & Syder, in *Language and communication*, Nattinger & DeCarrico in *Lexical phrases and language teaching*, and Lewis in *The lexical approach* suggest that the native speakers use a lot of multiword chunks in their spoken discourse, emphasizing the important role in facilitating native like fluency and communicative competence. It was established that competent English users acquired and used multi word chunks more frequently. As more internet users are writing in English, it becomes important to study this element of language.

146

Analysis of Personal web pages revealed abundant use of multiword chunks. Some of the instances are discussed below. The examples cited in Personal webpages context are taken from the following websites:

Homepage of Belle De Jour http://belledejour-uk.blogspot.com/ (PP_1)
Homepage of NG YUN HAU http://www.geocities.com/yunhau220/aboutme.html (PP_2)
Homepage of Dinesh N. http://www.geocities.com/nelundeniya2002/home.html (PP_3)
Homepage of Frances http://www.geocities.com/francesmmerz/index.html (PP_4)
Homepage of Yama Noor Sai http://www.yamanoorsai.blogspot.com/ (PP_5)
Homepage of Marlena Rose http://www.geocities.com/francesmmerz/index.html (PP_6)
Personal Diary http://badger.diaryland.com/080625_44.html (PP_7)
Homepage of Laa-Laa's http://www.geocities.com/laalaa777s/main01.html (PP_8)
Homepage of Ahhbran Garza www.geocities.com/palare/who.html (PP_9)
Homepage of http://www.geocities.com/sablespring/blog.html (PP_10)
Homepage of Sirish Prabhu http://www.geocities.com/shirish_prabhu/about.htm (PP_11)
Homepage of Kevin
http://www.geocities.com/kmdonaldson15/Kevins_Rollercoaster_Page.html (PP_12)
Homepage of http://belledejour-uk.blogspot.com/2008_07_01_archive.html (PP_13)
Homepage of L. Tamblay http://www.geocities.com/laurentremblay/statement.htm (PP_14)
Homepage of Marry Bonner http://blogs.setonhill.edu/MaryBonner/008988.html (PP_15)
Homepage of Ashish Gupta http://www.geocities.com/ashish_iitm/index.html (PP_16)
Homepage of Kristy Mischelle http://www.geocities.com/kricket129/index (PP_17)
Homepage of Riben http://www.pamie.com/archives/2008/06/my-hands-are-thaid.html (PP_18)
BV Babu BV Babu http://discovery.bits-pilani.ac.in/discipline/chemical/BVb/ (PP_19)
Homepage of Jamie http://jamiesweb.net/aboutus.aspx (PP_20)
Homepage of Karthik S. http://www.geocities.com/kartik_swami/index.html (PP_21)
Homepage of http://journalspace.com/wp-signup.php?new=queenofsky (PP_22)
Homepage of Sreekumar http://www.geocities.com/sreekumardotcom/index.html (PP_23)
Homepage of Sudhir Ravindramohan http://www.geocities.com/sudhirbits/index.html (PP_24)
Homepage of Victoria Zecret http://www.geocities.com/victoria_zecret/index.html (PP_25)

1. When students are able to make their own choices, they "**take ownership** of the learning process, and…are more willing to take the risks that are always involved in learning new things"(PP_14)

2. By myself, my timid real self can **come out** and express himself. (PP_1)

3. In spite of being a meritorious student, my father was not allowed to **go for** higher studies by my grandfather as he wanted him to be in the business(PP_19)

147

4. From there, you swoop through another drop and into the loop. Before you can **catch your breath**, you are upside down again in the monstrous cobra roll. (PP_12)

5. While we're out geocaching we **come across** a decent beach along the river.(PP_7)

In example 1, the author uses **take ownership,** which is a **verb-noun collocation** to describe an attitude. Each of these words, considered separately, will not add meaning to the context of the message. Similarly, the chunk used in other example such as **come out** Phrasal Verb), **go for** (phrasal verb), **catch your breath** (poly words) and **come across** (phrasal verb) expresses a cumulative meaning in a context.

Figure 4.2 shows the multiword chunks and their frequency used in the personal web pages.
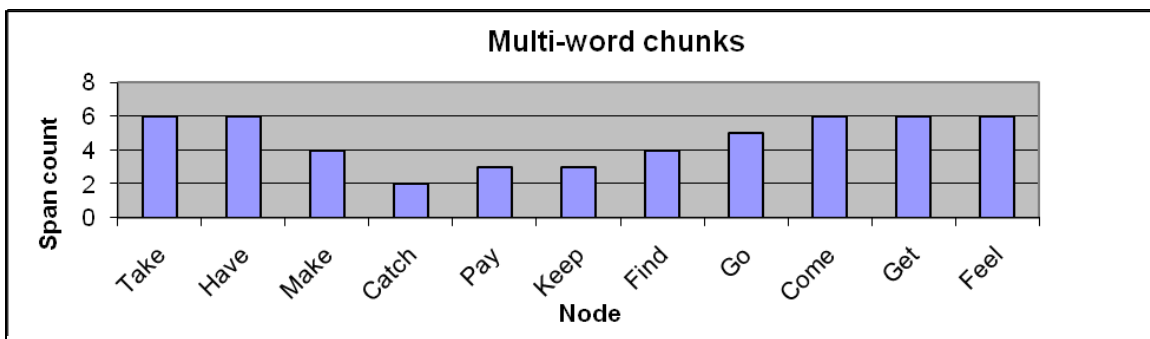
Figure 4.2 Multiword chunk used in personal web pages

Cohesive Markers

Cohesive markers are the devices used to connect clauses and sentences to indicate a range of possibilities that exist in a text to link its part through meaning relations. Halliday and Hassan in their work *Cohesion in English* have identified the following five

categories of cohesive devices: references, lexical cohesions, conjunctions, ellipses and substitution (1976: 22). Of these, the most commonly used devices are referring expressions and conjunctions. The message must be rendered completely to the reader. As the message in a single web page is distributed in sentences and paragraphs, it becomes significant that all these chunks of the message be clearly connected so the referencing and understating becomes easier.

For the purpose of this study, the two cohesive markers namely, references and conjunctions, have been considered.

Reference

'**Reference'** is a cohesive device which indicates a relation between an element in the text and another expression in the same text. It is the use of words whose meaning can only be discovered by referring to other words or to other elements of the context which are clear to both sender and the receiver. Referring expressions include (she / her / hers / herself; he / him / his / himself; it / its / itself;   they / them / their / theirs / themselves). If we consider the example, 'Mr. Wright was coordinating it', we may know the meaning of *it* from somewhere earlier in the conversation and we build up the meaning from going back in the context. Referring expressions also include demonstratives (this, that, these, those). 'Demonstrative' pronouns (this, that, these, those) can enhance coherence in a paragraph. However, when they are used more often than is necessary, the reader may fail to identify their referents. 'Following' is one 'cataphoric' reference used to look forward to find the referent.

Demonstrative pronouns connect ideas because they mostly refer the reader to something earlier in the text. For instance, in the statement 'This is true because the company has never incurred loss so far.', 'this' can't be used without causing the reader to consider what 'this' could mean. Thus, the demonstratives help the reader to sum up, quickly and subconsciously, what was said earlier before going on to the later part of the sentence. So it becomes important that before using a reference, the referent should be made clear. Also, proper and judicious use of these reference devices would render a smoother flow of information.

It is possible that the web pages of a large organization may run into more than few screen pages. Most of the information is interrelated. While presenting these elements of information, the author needs to use reference devices carefully. Too many or too less of these references may render the writing poor and create a bad impression.

Our study has identified certain aforesaid referencing expressions in order to understand the use of cohesive markers in web pages.

Examples from the organizational web page corpus:

1. As founder, president of Cypress, **T.J. Rodgers** has written and spoken extensively on issues of importance … A proponent of free markets, **he** twice advocated the elimination of corporate subsidies … In a similar vein, in 1990, **he** argued against antitrust exemption … **He** also lists numerous examples of organizations **that** have succeeded with this approach. Design for Costing is a streamlined …(CI)

2. However, **this** is something that we are passionate about.(AI)

3. Second Harvest is one of these strategic sponsors. Every year, Cypress participates in a food sculpture contest, which benefits the Second Harvest Food Bank Corporate Challenge--an event **that** supports underprivileged citizens in our communities.(CI)

4. … challenged individuals, especially **those** belonging to economically and socially under-privileged sections …(CMC)

5. Our donors don't simply share **this** vision of "the business school for the world". **They** also believe we have a genuine impact in these areas.(IN)

Analysis of the above excerpts from the web page contents reflects that the reference devices have been utilized to keep the flow of text smooth and avoid any kind of redundancy and dangling references. Such reference devices which point to a referent which has already been identified is called anaphoric reference device. Sometimes the references are used to link text across sentences and at other times they can be used to refer to referents in the same sentence. In example 1, the main actor has been introduced by mentioning his name and then in subsequent sentences in the paragraph he is being referred by using pronouns. The repetition of the main actor's identity has been avoided. In example 2, *__this__* points to an already mentioned point of interest and it reinforces the author's likeness to the subject. In example 3, *__that__* refers to the event mentioned in the previous sentence. Similarly, *__those and they__* in next three examples refer to people and objectives identified in previous paragraph or sentence.

Examples from the personal web page corpus are given below.

1. **They** should make important decisions and develop the classroom rules. I want **them** to be involved in arranging the physical elements of the room and, most importantly, in guiding **their** own learning.(PP_14)

2. I'm sure he'll get a huge roar from the crowds in **those** cities. (PP_12)

151

3. Anyway, let me harp on my new favorite book, A New Earth, some more now. I'm normally not into trends, but in **this** case the trend is Enlightenment... (PP_22)

4. My friends are very important to me and I am always concerned and possessive about **them**. I consider **them** as my wealth and so am always making new friends. (PP_11)

5. The song basically goes through all the questions of, "Have you ever?" However, the way **these** questions are posed lets you know that Kid Rock is always on your side.

Ample use of reference devices was observed in the content of personal web pages. In the example 1, the author is discussing her opinion on the pedagogy of modern primary education. Her focus is on children whom she has already identified in the preceding sentence. To maintain the focus she uses various devices for reference such as ***they, them and their***. In example 2, the author is talking about his music interests and a visit of his favorite band in various cities. ***Those*** is used to refer to those cities. Similarly, in examples 3 and 4, the authors have used the reference devices to connect to an entity in the previous sentences, rather than repeating them, to maintain connectivity. In example 5, the author has used ***these*** to refer to kinds of questions he has mentioned in the previous sentence.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the various reference devices used and their frequency in the organizational and personal web pages respectively.
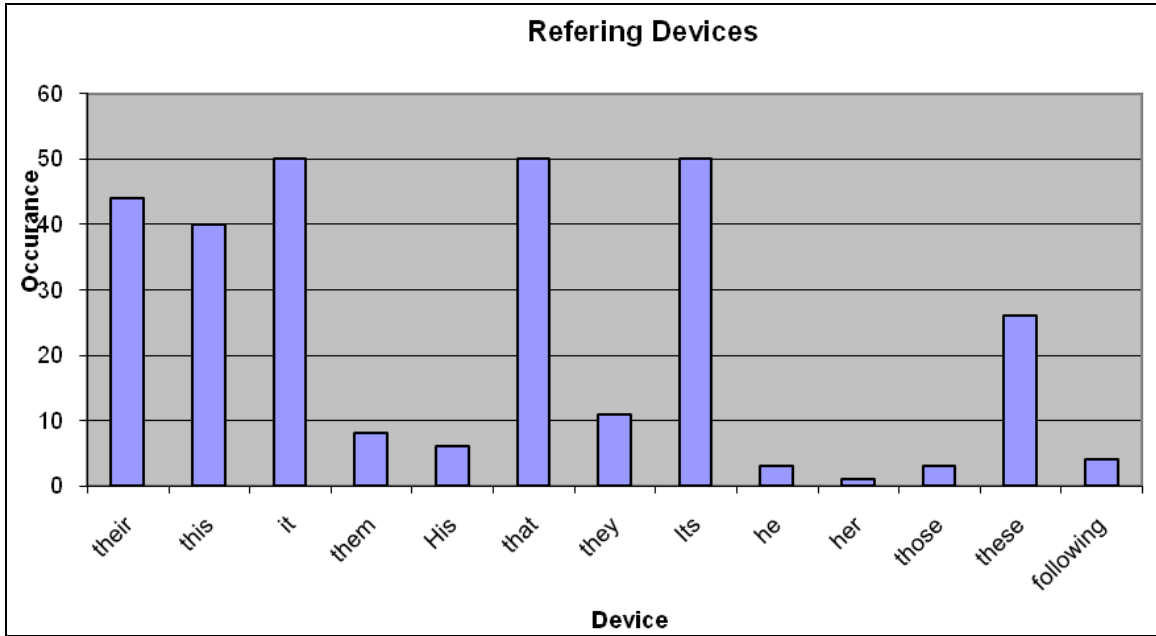
Figure 4.3 Reference devices used and their frequency in Organizational Web Pages
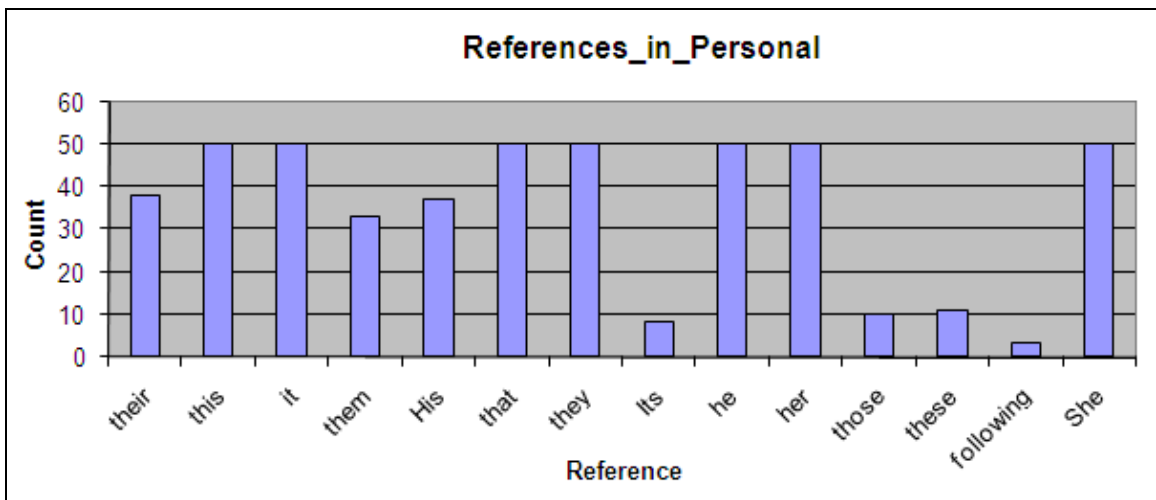
Figure 4.4 Reference devices used and their frequency in Personal Web Pages

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the content. In this sense, conjunctions do not act as devices for

reaching out into the preceding or following text but they show a textual sequence. They specify the way through which the reader can know the systematic connection between what has gone before and what is supposed to follow in the text.

Without the use of conjunctions the various ideas in a piece of writing appear to be disjointed and lack coherence. Given below are 2 versions of a paragraph. In the first version, the sentences lack connectivity due to the absence of suitable conjunctions. But the second version achieves clarity and effectiveness because of the use of conjunctions in appropriate places. Version 2 is more coherent than version 1. The organization of the information and the links between the sentences help the readers move easily from one sentence to the next.

> Version1: The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. The skin, hair, teeth, fingernails and toenails, and facial features of the mummies were evident. It is possible to diagnose the disease they suffered in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies. The process was remarkably effective. Sometimes apparent were the fatal afflictions of the dead people: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head, and polio killed a child king. Mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages. (Capital Community College Foundation)

> Version 2: The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. **In short**, mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages. **And** the process was remarkably effective. **Indeed**, mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. Their skin, hair, teeth, fingernails and toenails, and facial features are **still** evident. Their diseases in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies, are **still** diagnosable. **Even** their fatal afflictions are **still** apparent: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head; a child king died from polio. (Capital Community College Foundation)

The organization of the information and the links between sentences help the readers move easily from one sentence to the next. The writer uses a variety of cohesive devices, sometimes in combination, to achieve overall paragraph coherence.

The analysis of the examples from the organizational websites and personal websites show that the conjunctions were used to bind various information chunks of information, to put the textual sequence properly and to avoid too many small sentences. Examples from professional websites are given below.

1. This product **and** its service package saves the end-users' processing time…(ABC)

2. Clients are **also** supported with customised storage to suit the customer process.(ABC)

3. Convergys is uniquely **and** exclusively focused on helping our clients make smarter decisions about enhancing their relationships with customers and employees to improve business performance.(CV)

4. That is **because** our capabilities span the entire IT spectrum …(CMC)

5. **Therefore**, the work environment is open, non-hierarchical and achievement oriented.(MP)

In examples 1 and 3, **and** is used to connect a product and its service and to enumerate salient markers of a company (that make it stand different from others) respectively. In example 2, **also** is used to add information. In example 4 and 5, **because** and **therefore** act as a tool to connect a consequence to its reason or to indicate a cause – effect relationship.

Examples from personal websites are given below.

1. I take time to get closer **and** get familiar with new friend. **Therefore,** don`t be surprised while I have much to talk with you one day, …(PP_2)

2. We decided that Washington D.C. would be the best destination. **However**, I suggested that Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, VA, would be a prime addition to this trip . (PP_12)

3. I create my own kingdom **because** I cannot find an ideal place in my real life.(PP_1)

4. You'll always find something from Lilith Fair on my playlist, **as well as** some hiphop or techno mix.(PP_4)

5. I also like to journal a lot, **though** it hasn't happened much lately.(PP_4)

In personal web pages, users make use of conjunction to add information, reflect a cause effect relationship, join two smaller sentences to put in a contrast of some sort. In example 1, the author is indicating that he takes his own time to get familiar with the reader and to associate himself with the reader more closely. So, to join these two sentences (intentions), the author has used *and*. In the next sentence, to achieve his stated goal in previous sentence, the author uses *therefore* to indicate the consequences. In example 2, the author uses *however* to show contrast between two opinions. *Because* is used in example 3, to show the cause effect relationship. In example 4, **as well as,** is used to indicate addition of information. **Though** is used in example 5 to join the two separate clauses and indicate the relation the relation between the two.

156

The figures 4.5 and 4.6 present the various conjunctions and transitional devices observed in the study of organizational web pages and personal web pages respectively.
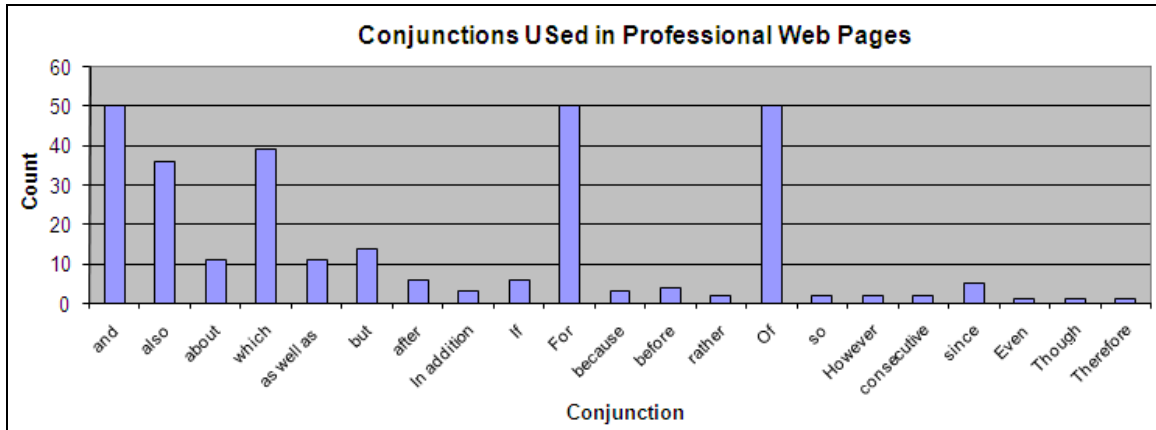
Figure 4.5 Conjunctions used and their frequency in Organizational Web Pages
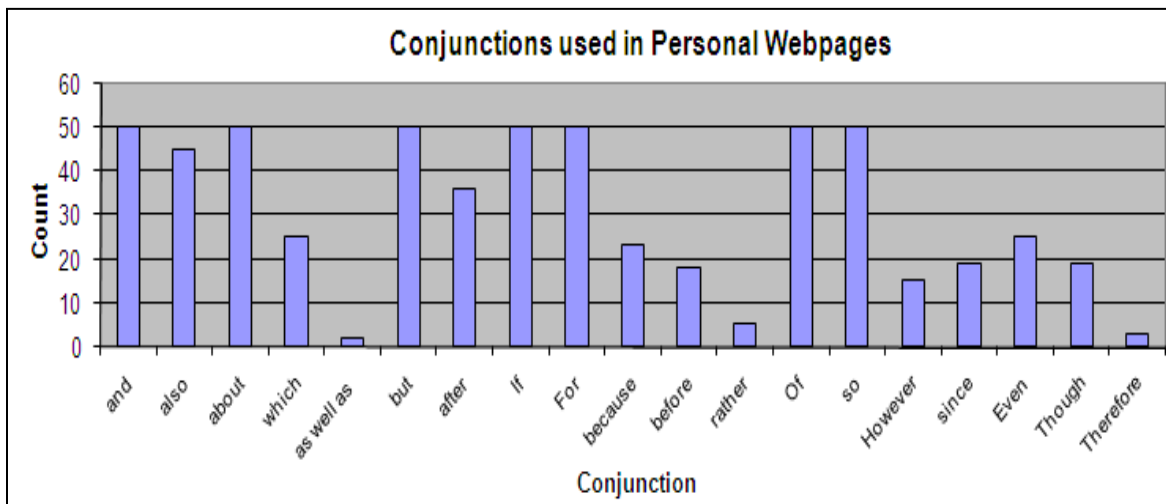
Figure 4.6 Conjunctions used and their frequency in Personal Web Pages

<u>**Message Accuracy**</u>

In their study Caroline and Holcomb observed that words **representing concrete concepts** are processed more quickly and efficiently than words representing abstract concepts (2000: 1031).

Also, according to Courtland and Thill:

> ...the line between abstract and concrete words is hard to define, since all words have something of the abstract in them. In general, abstract words have a greater number of meanings, most of them somewhat vague, so your reader has to try to interpret which meanings apply. Concrete words are those that give your reader a specific mental picture (2007: 57).

Apart from being complete, concise and neutral, organizational communication must also be accurate. Conventionally it is advocated to use concrete language and avoid the use of abstract words for effective business communication.

The analysis of text from the web page content reflects some instances where the overuse of abstract words results in lack of clarity in meaning. Examples from professional websites are given below:

1. To ensure quality, we earnestly follow systems and procedures and are the first ISO 9002 certified Eye Hospital in Asia. We have introduced TQM policies and have been **recently** audited by BVQI who have recommended re-certification to us.(SN)

2. Through its **several** years of experience in serving its customers, eMids has achieved … industry standards in software engineering and **several** of our customers have gained significantly…(EM)

3. MphasiS is a multi-cultural global company with people of **several** nationalities represented in its family.(MP)

In example 1, the author claims to have a particular standards certification in past (time span is not mentioned). The author also claims to have undergone another audit for quality but fails to mention the time span, simply telling the reader that it has been done

in **recent** past. Also, he fails to tell what kind of certification they are expecting. In example 2 and 3, the author uses *several* but fails to provide a specific number in terms of customers, countries and years of experience which should otherwise be a very simple data to tell. This may lead to unclear perception of the company in the mind of the reader.

A widespread use of abstract words in personal web pages can be observed as shown in following examples.

1. He also dabbles with guitaring and keyboarding, if we may call it that. He has **recently** taken up star-gazing and is in the process of becoming an amateur astronomer. (PP_21)

2. I've had a couple of deep tissue massages before, but I stopped after **someone** told me the only reason they feel good is because when **someone** hurts you, it feels good when they stop. Endorphins kick in, and you're so grateful not to have **someone** digging into your fleshy parts that you feel sweet relief.(PP_18)

In the first example the author describes his brother and mentioned his interest as playing guitar. He tells us that he had *recently* taken up star gazing. From the narration it is not clear for how long he has taken up star gazing. At the same time it is also not clear whether the author's brother has joined any formal training, course, institute or he is doing all this on his own. In the second example the author has used the word *someone* in two sentences continuously. The referent is not clear. Whether the author is talking about a friend, colleague, expert or novice is not clear.

Figure 4.7 and 4.8 present the comparative pictures of the use of abstract words and their frequency in organizational and personal context.
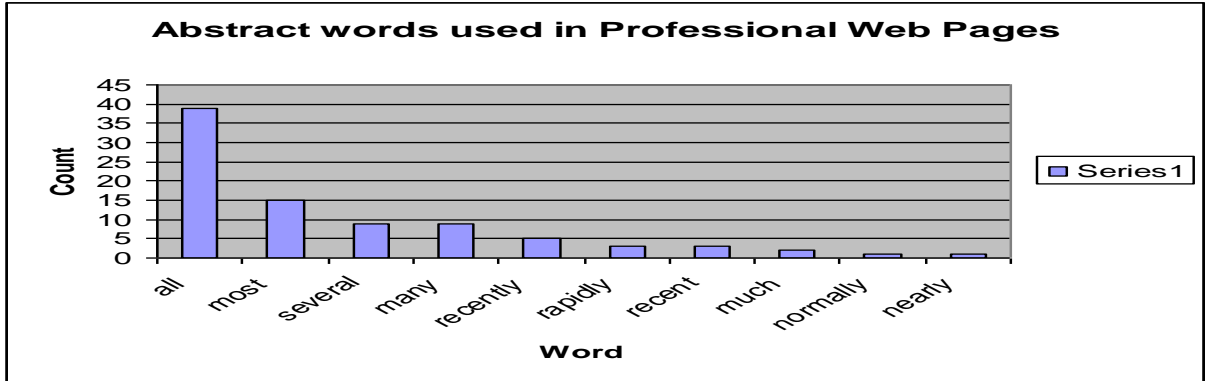
Figure 4.7 Abstract words used and their Frequency in Organizational Web Pages
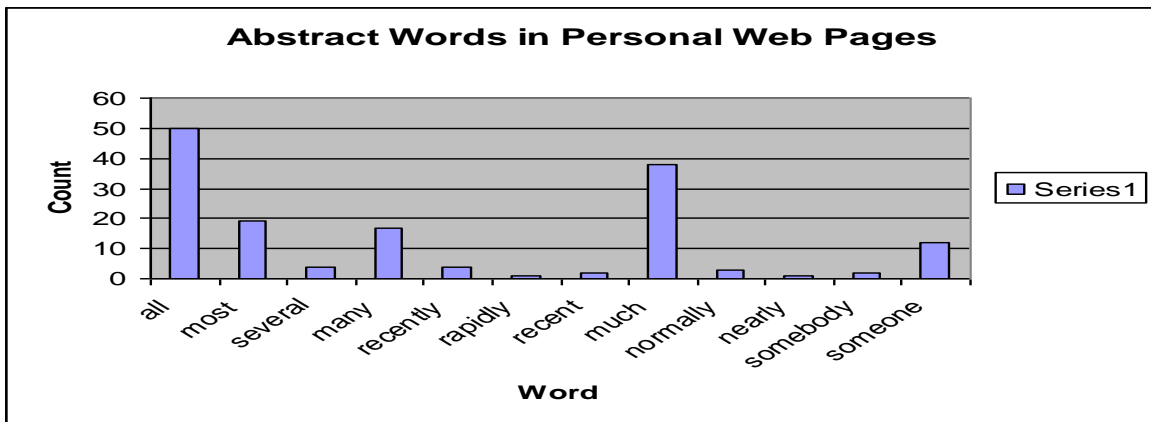
Figure 4.8 Abstract words used and their Frequency in Personal Web Pages

Grammar

The standard of a language is known by the appropriate **use of its rules of grammar, usage, and style.** Though all these aspects are equally important, slips in grammar renders the language worthless. The sudden influx of Internet has enabled newer publishing technologies with a large number of users generating huge amount of content every day. Such technological advancements have the potential to undermine the elegance, importance, and the style of writing. This section deals with the important aspects of grammar as used in the web page writing.

160

<u>Tense</u>

English marks both tense, the location of an event in time; and grammatical aspect, ways of viewing the make-up of a situation (Comrie and Thompson 1985: 349-407).The presentation of time reference in the professional communication is highly important as it conveys the achievements (sales and production), undertakings (procedures used at the workplace) and planning (expansion plans, targets for the next quarter) of an organization concerned. Use of proper tense is significant to achieve the correctness and timeliness of the message being conveyed. It becomes more important for content on web pages as they are continuously under the eyes of reader and demand regular updates. Any carelessness in this regard on the part of webmaster may lead to defame the credibility and spontaneity of the organization. Simple present tense is the tense which is used for major part of communication in professional context. Simple past and present perfect are the other forms which occupy substantial space in business context and hence deserve attention. The simple tense is used because in professional context messages relate mainly to the present and the future with occasional reference to the past.

Kovalyov says:

> We use the present perfect tense to talk about experiences. It is important if we have done it in our lives or not. It is not important when we did it. And this is what authors do on their personal web pages. They are interested in telling what they did minus all other details (2004).

Discussed below are the examples to show the use of present perfect / simple past Tense forms as used in the Professional web pages.

1. His treatises and opinion pieces **have appeared** in a wide variety of publications, …(CI)

2. PSI exerts clear **thought** leadership for each of its focus markets …(PSI)

3. In India, a core team of four people **thought** about the implications of that report, and **acted** quickly.

From the analysis of the text from the two contexts, it can be observed that in case of professional web pages present perfect and simple past were more dominant while in case of personal web pages past perfect was more dominant. This observation can be attributed to the fact that while organizations focus more on what is currently going on in the organization (expansion, recruitment, projects), and milestones crossed (following standard procedures, targets achieved) in their web content (and hence wants to project a continuous and sustained growth).

Examples from the Personal web pages showing the use of Present perfect and past perfect Tense forms are discussed below.

1. It all **has started** from the times we all were in school and every summer vacation we used to spend at our native place in Kothagiri.(PP_24)

2. … as of right now she **has pulled** most of my knickers and other unmentionables out of the drawer, emptied her diaper bag, dumped the bag full of nail polish bottles onto the bathroom/kitchen floor,(PP_10)

3. Then you start to realize how much things **have changed**, and you realize the hardest part of university is blancing the two completely different worlds you now live in. (PP_15)

4. Only a few months after I was married, my wife **had discovered** that I liked to dress, but was willing to try and work things out. (PP_20)

5. I **had graduated** high school, and I was attending Red Rocks Community College with a major in Criminal Justice. (PP_6)

As can be observed from the above examples, authors of the personal web pages make use of present perfect and past perfect more frequently than other forms. This can be attributed to the fact that individuals concentrate more on personal experiences, as shown in the following examples:

- I had graduated high school
- I had dropped out of 8th grade
- I had sustained an incomplete Spinal Cord Injury
- My wife had discovered that I liked to dress

Active and Passive Voice

As business communication is mostly about people doing things, building trust, and being efficient, **active voice is usually the better choice**, and should dominate. Passive voice can be used to add variety, and is sometimes more appropriate to the communication task as opined by Neilson when he says:

> Active voice is best for most Web content, but using passive voice can let you front-load important keywords in headings, blurbs, and lead sentences (2007).

The difficulty with endless passive sentences is that the reader tends to lose sight of any agent, and the writing becomes dominated by things and concepts instead of people. But it's easy to be misled about which voice to use. For example, of the following two choices, the passive version seems to be the best.

> You should put tab A in slot B. (active)
> Tab A should be put in slot B. (passive)

There is yet a better choice, and once again it is active:

> Tab A fits into slot B.

The passive voice is an excellent way to hide critical information:

- This sentence was written yesterday. (But I have no idea who wrote it.)

The message can be even more abbreviated and obtuse:

- This sentence was written. (But by whom and when)

Therefore, even if we include the missing information, the emphasis is deflected from the issue of who wrote the sentence because the *subject* of the sentence (the focus of attention) is *not* "who the author is". The author (the doer) is almost parenthetical information.

- This sentence was written yesterday by one of my technical people.
- This sentence was written yesterday (by one of my technical people).

No wonder that people like to use the passive voice when writing generally. They can completely avoid identifying who is responsible for an action. Compare the original sentence, now written in the active voice:

- One of my technical people wrote this sentence yesterday.

with its passive voice version:

- This sentence was written yesterday.

Using the active voice usually produces a sense that the message is direct (to-the-point), people are an important part of the "equation", the action is more dynamic, there is more immediacy (happening now), and in general, that the message is more sincere. The active

voice also tends to produce a more forceful tone. Also, by using the active voice a more concise sentence can be written, because it eliminates some use of the verb "be" and often a preposition.

- The message should *be* listened to *by* everyone. (passive - 8 words)
- Everyone should listen to the message. (active - 6 words)

A similar trend was observed in the two contexts that were analyzed. Active voice dominated the professional pages while passive voice dominated the personal web pages.

Examples of active voice use in Professional web page are given below.

1. **We are building** a learning community that reaches across the entire world. (IN)
2. **Our faculty, ourstaff, our campuses … will bring** together new constituents.(IN)
3. **Our people and the company give** freely their time and money to support a range of good causes. (IBM)
4. **Employees contribute** to various Prayas welfare projects. (IBM)
5. **IBM Daksh donated** cash, clothes, stationery and other materials. (IBM)

Examples of passive voice used in Personal web pages are given below.

1. My energy is all burnt **by my worries.** (PP_1**)**
2. He is fascinated **by genetic algorithms, networking technologies and wireless networking.** (PP_21)
3. I am overwhelmed **by others.** (PP_1**)**
4. I was inspired **by corrinne and terry's LJ.**(PP_10)
5. I got irritated **by this delay.** (PP_5)

Relative Clauses

Raman and Sharma note that a **relative clause** is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun or attaches itself to a noun (2008: 238). For example, the noun phrase 'the metal that was not pure' contain the noun *metal*, which is modified by the relative clause 'that was not pure'. Relative clauses are introduced by a special class of pronouns called relative pronouns. These include who, whom, whose, which, and that.

Rutherford mentions that relativization in all languages is uniform and is mainly noun phrase modification (1987: 47). Rutherford's observation can be used to enable the reader to understand its use in professional writing. The use of relative clauses helps in combining two or more ideas and eliminates the repetition of the head noun. Consider the following example:

> The department is thankful to you for the technical service <u>which your personnel extended to us.</u>

The relative clause <u>which your personnel extended to us</u> conveys the sense of 'Your people helped us.' The head noun of this sentence appears in the noun phrase 'the technical service'. In the above example the relative clause is formed by replacing 'which' in the place of the noun phrase 'the technical service'. Consider some more examples:

> This is to present before you the pDesk which has been designed and developed by our company.

Kress, analyses the message in the clause in terms of given information and new information (1976). Applying this to the example above, lets divide it in two parts.

> This is to present before you the pDesk.
> The pDesk has been designed and developed by our company.

In this the name of the product has been mentioned in the frist sentence as ne information. In the second sentence, pDesk is assumed to be already defined as given information. The given information is replaced by 'which' to avoid repetition of the name. The constituent **which has been designed and developed by our company** will constitute the relative clause.

An analysis of the professional and personal web pages has revealed the extensive use of relative pronouns as discussed in the examples given below. Examples from the Professional web pages are:

1. The rigorous discipline of the framework generates comprehensive, differentiating, solution-based, specialized value propositions, **which** arise from deep and unique market segment-level insights. (PSI)
2. … helping us create a differentiated products portfolio, **which** together address unmet and poorly met medical needs. (DR)
3. ePeople's services are backed by the latest enterprise level technology platforms **which** help employees and managers access information …(EP
4. Founded in 1975, the Company has grown at a dramatic pace under the able guidance of its Founder and Chairman, Dr. Lalit Kanodia, **who** is widely acknowledged as the founder of the Indian IT industry.(DM)
5. Funded entirely by private corporations, foundations and individuals from around the world, **who** believe in its vision, the ISB was conceived as a not for profit organisation.(ISB)

167

In professional web pages the relative clause was used to acknowledge, provide information, reinforce an idea, delegate responsibility etc. In example 1, *__which__* is used to reinforce the level of expertise that the company possess to provide better solutions. In example 2, *__which__* is used to indicate the consequences of the innovative products aimed at a particular segment. In examples 4 and 5, *__who__* is used to provide information and acknowledge contribution respectively.

Examples from the Personal web page corpus are:

1. So this is Thai massage, **which** I wasn't expecting, **which** I've never had before.(Page_18)

2. I can't forget about Amanda, **who** made it through Lyco and went to Italy the day after graduation. (Page_4)

In personal web pages also the relative clause can be seen as fulfilling the same functions. In example 1, the author has used *__which__* twice to reinforce something that he was not expecting and had never experienced. In example 2, the author has used *__who__* to provide information to the reader.

Conditional Clauses

Conditional clauses are used to convey certain functions in the business field such as defining problems, setting conditions or requesting. The conditional clause may serve four functions:

Probable action/result in the future according to a real condition

Example: You'll catch the train if you leave before ten.

Possible action/result according to a less probable condition in the future

Example: We'd have enough money for a new car if you found a good job.

Fantasized result or action according to an unreal (untrue) condition in the present

Example: We'd buy a Rolls Royce if we were rich.

The condition can't be fulfilled any longer, because it should have happened in the past, but didn't (unreal condition) and the consequence can't take place any more, because the condition couldn't be fulfilled (main clause).

Example: If I had learnt more (but I didn't learn=unreal condition), I would have got a better mark. (So I didn't get a better mark= impossible consequence)

The study of the web pages in professional and personal contexts shows that the authors use the conditional clauses for different reasons. Given below is the analysis of few examples from professional web pages:

Examples

1. For more information on how eMids can help you or **if** you have additional inquiries about eMids quality standard, please email us (EM)
2. **If** you have interest in learning more how the eMids family can help your organization, please contact us (EM)
3. **If** you do not have a global perspective of your market, you are putting your company at risk. (FS)
4. But **if** you only listen to your customers you will also fail. (AI)

The analysis of the above examples show that the occurrence of conditional statements in professional web pages is limited and is used selectively, either to make a request or to

provide an alternate action (for contact, purchase, payment etc). The observation can be attributed to the behavior of the organizations where they want to be as straightforward to the reader as possible and do not want to indulge in any communication which makes the reader think. They like to avoid confusion and explicit conditional interactions. They realize that it is more important to get potential customer into reading the content in the static web page communication rather than putting conditions before him.

Examples from the Personal web pages are given below.

1. … this will help business, **if** i can come up with some of my own designs to craft and peddle. (PP_10)
2. I bet you only do **if** you are a Red Wings fan.(PP_12)
3. Therefore, **if** you are interested, keep updating with me in the Topics. (PP_2)
4. At this point because of the military commitment, very few people know, not because of my feelings, but rather, **if** the military finds out, that will be the end of my career. (PP_20)

The use of conditional clause as shown in figure 4.9 is more frequent in personal web pages. As is evident from the examples, authors use conditional to provide a solution, to entice, to attract, etc. In personal context the concern for harm to one's own identity and image is less because the content is opinion based and is of personal nature. Authors of personal web pages may not bother if the readers don't agree to their conditions and opinions.
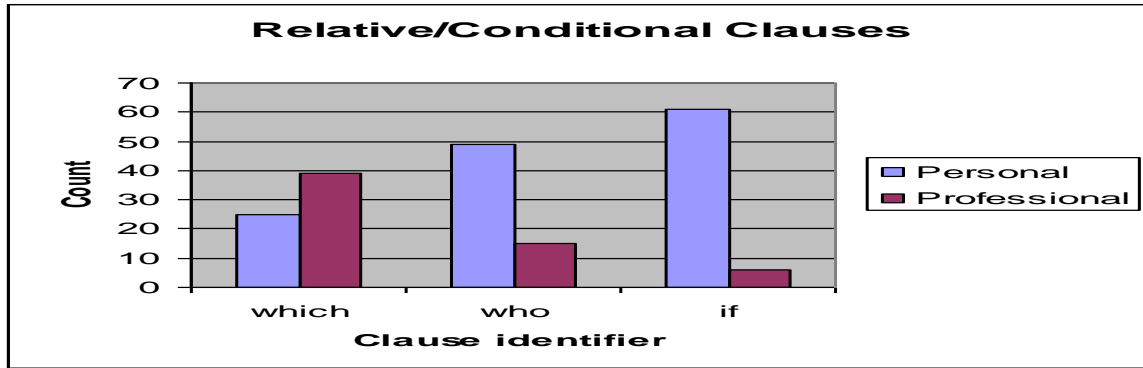
Figure 4.9 Comparative view of Relative and Conditional Clauses in Professional and Personal Web Pages

<u>**Modals**</u>

It is important to note that organizations and individuals need to convey that something is necessary, advisable, permissible, possible or probable. **Modals serve as a means of expressing these intentions.** Goossens divide the modals of English (can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, and ought) into three categories – future modals, hypothetical modals and modals in sub-classes (1982: 78).

The division can be observed in the following examples:

> The Director of the company <u>will meet</u> all the stakeholders next month. (Future modal)
>
> If the participation is as expected, we <u>would sponsor</u> the event. (Hypothetical modal)
>
> The company makes it mandatory that the candidates <u>should have</u> at least three years experience in interested field.(in sub-clause)

Modals may serve one of the following functions:

Futurity - Unlike many other languages, English has no future tense. Instead, there are various ways of expressing futurity. One of these is the use of the modal verbs "will" and

171

"shall". The modals "should" and "would" are similarly used in English where many other European languages use what are called conditional forms, as in the sentence "He would pass if he worked harder".

Probability - Consider the question "Why haven't they arrived?" Here are some possible answers:

> "They must have got lost."
> "They might have got lost."
> "They can't have got lost."

Each of these expresses a different degree of probability, from certainty, through possibility to impossibility. Modal auxiliaries are widely used like this, to express how likely an event is. They therefore, feature widely in weather forecasts, horoscopes and other varieties of English concerned with prediction.

Obligation and politeness – The use of modal auxiliaries is common for being polite and for exercising power. Making a request, asking or granting permission, making, accepting or refusing an invitation or offer - all of these are accomplished through the use of modal auxiliaries. The same is true of making demands and compelling people to do things. Consider the function of the modal auxiliary in these examples:

> May I leave the room?
> I won't tidy my room.
> Could you help me?
> Shall we dance?
> You must do this.

Analysis of the professional web pages highlights the use of modals to convey various intentions and their strengths. Some examples are discussed below.

Use of 'will'

1. These Centres **will** develop into think tanks on these subjects in order to produce appropriate reports to enable policy making and its implementation. (CIRT)

2. Our faculty, our staff, our campuses, our technology and our unique alumni network **will** bring together new constituents - such as entrepreneurs in developing markets …(IN)

In examples 1 and 2, the modal verb _**'will'**_ has been used to indicate future plans, targets and goals relating to work in the organization. Apart from that the use of 'will' conveys a sense of definiteness and assurance.

Use of 'would'

1. One that **would** bring world-class eye care to the people of India. One that **would** adopt a single standard of care for all, rich or poor. One that **would** share the fruits of its knowledge and spread its concept …(SN)

2. But perhaps the best description of Sankara Nethralaya **would** be the "physical perception of a divine will".(SN)

3. They recognised that the rapidly changing business landscape **would** require young leaders with an understanding of evolving economies, but also with a global perspective. (ISB)

The modal verb _**'would'**_ has been used in the professional web pages to indicate a future action, assumption, perception or prediction. In example 1 and 2, _**would**_ has been used to inform how the company sees itself in future, In example 3, _**would**_ has been used to indicate a prediction or make a projection of requirements in future.

Use of 'shall'

1. … the Nethralaya philosophy; the place of our work is an Alaya and Work will be our worship, which we **shall** do with sincerity, dedication and utmost love …(SN)

2. Patients safety and well-being **shall** always be our top priority.(SN)

3. We **shall** strive for continuous quality improvement and complying with the international standards to implement quality systems. We **shall** strive for maintaining high level of staff satisfaction and motivation always. (SN)

'Shall' is considered as an uncommon item in the list of modals. It is used to convey the function of an injunction / delegating responsibility or expressing willingness. In all the examples of the illustration above, the modal '*shall'* is being used to convey a sense of willingness and taking responsibility of the mentioned tasks.

Use of 'can'

The modal '*can'* is used to fulfill one of the following functions: to show ability, suggest a possibility or to give an option, ask for or to give permission and show impossibility. In professional context *'can'* is also used to declare ability to do something in the organization. At the same time the use of *'not'* with *'can'* negates the ability.

1. Amazon India is the place for you. We offer opportunities where you **can** dive right in, make an impact and work with smart people on challenging problems that affect millions of people. (AI)

2. And importantly, we **can** meet the challenge of staffing unique and highly specialized and multilingual skill sets. (CV)

3. … seeking a hosted solution, we **can** help improve your customer experience, as well as strengthen your bottom-line results. (CV)

4. We understand that markets, regulatory and competitive environments are dynamic and organizations change, so our engagements **can** change accordingly. (MP)

In example 1, **_can_** has been used to inform the reader about what he can do/achieve by joining the company. In example 2, **_can_** has been used to convey the ability of the organization. In example 3, can **_has_** been used to persuade the reader by telling him about the changes that they can bring to their company. In example 4, **_can_** has been used to inform the reader about the options / flexibility of the host organization.

Use of 'may'

The modal **_'may'_** is used to ask for or to give permission (formal) and show possibility. It may also be used to indicate what is permissible under conditions that warrant the relaxation of certain rules at the discretion of the concerned authority.

1. … and To engage in any other activity as **may** be conducive or incidental to the attainment of the above objectives.(CIRT)

Some modals such as sought, ought, could, might have been rarely used in professional web pages.

Examples from the personal web pages are discussed below.

1. Hopefully I **will** be able to check it out myself. Until then, I'll have to keep looking for the next big ride myself. (PP_12)

2. Inside it, you **can** see my world deep in my heart. (PP_1)

3. I feel responsible for everyone. I feel I **should** please everyone. (PP_1)

4. Until this stage, you **may** think of that I am kind of `book-worm`, doing nothing but studying and reading for all my time. (PP_2)

5. They **should** make important decisions and develop the classroom rules. (PP_14)

In the examples from the personal web pages corpus as shown in the above illustration, we can observe modals performing similar functions. *__'Will'__* has been used to convey determination, *__'can'__* has been used to convey acceptability/permission, *__'may'__* has also been used to convey permission, and *__'should'__* has been used to convey obligation, likelihood or tentative suggestion.

From the figures 4.10 and 4.11 we can see the variety and frequency of modals used in the two contexts. It can be seen that in case of professional communication, the strong modals which convey determination, willingness, politeness, capability and delegation / acceptance / accountability are used more frequently than the weaker modals like should, might etc. which conveys tentativeness of any kind. On the other hand in case of personal web pages, all modals except ought and shall are used with substantial frequency. It can be attributed to the fact that in personal communication, personal pronouns are used more frequently and modals like *__'will'__* and *__'can'__*, can be used in relation to all of them. In addition it has also been observed that modal *__'will'__* was also frequently used to convey some kind of promise to the readers.

Figure 4.10 Modals used and their Frequency in Organizational Web Pages

176

Figure 4.11 Modals used and their Frequency in Personal Web Pages

Pronouns

Pronouns make communication easier by avoiding the repetition of names of things or people when one talks or writes about them as subjects. Redish in his book *Letting Go of The Words: Writing Web Content that Works* advocates the use of pronouns to make the web writing more readable and that using pronouns we can increase the 'liveliness' and 'readability'. What we are doing here is to make it easier for readers to relate to the subject (2007: 34).

For example, consider the following two sentences:

> (1) The use of personal pronouns makes written communication more personalized.
> (2) When we use personal pronouns, we personalize our writing.

Looking at the two sentences, it may be observed that the second one with several personal pronouns, is more lively and more likely to be understood. It allows readers and listeners to relate to the words; in other words, there's a personal connection. On the other hand, the first sentence is a collection of abstract concepts. In using personal

177

pronouns, we also make our writing more like our spoken communication. In addition we're more likely to use active verbs and less likely to use passive verbs.

The figures 4.12 and 4.13 highlight that the organizational web pages use particular pronouns more frequently than others. These include pronouns which reflect a shared concern, achievement or undertaking. By using pronouns like **'us', 'our', 'we' and 'you'** more frequently the organizations intend to convey to the readers that they are an integral part of the company's growth. By this the author wants to convey the fact that the readers are significant to them. Organizations avoid using first person singular and second person singular pronouns. In case of personal web pages the most frequently used pronoun is **'I'**, and others like **'mine, 'he', 'she', 'his' and 'her'** appear more often in comparison to professional web pages.
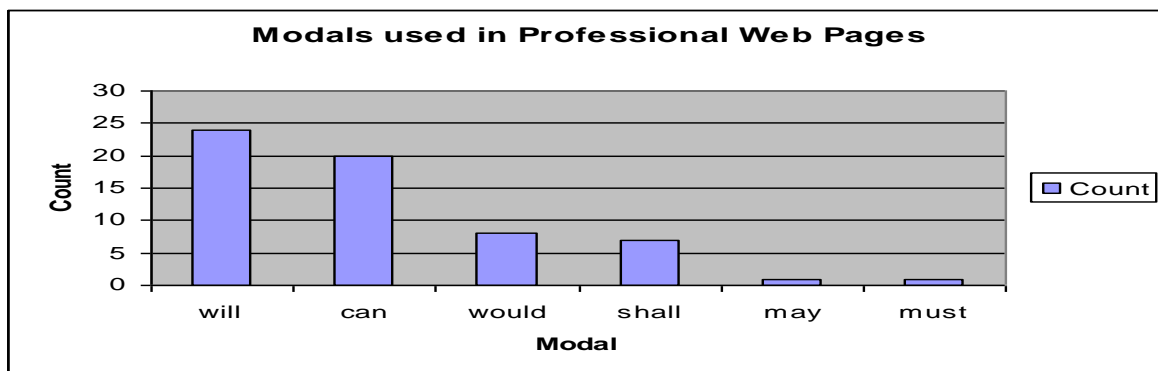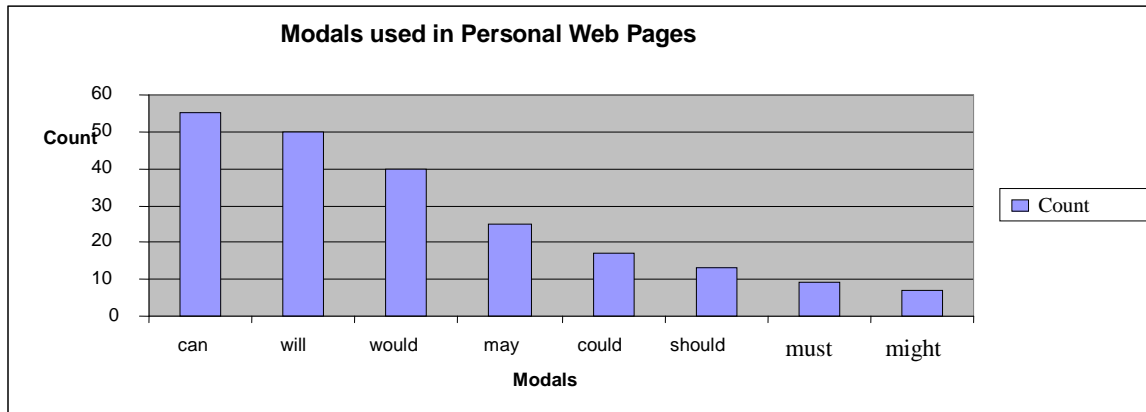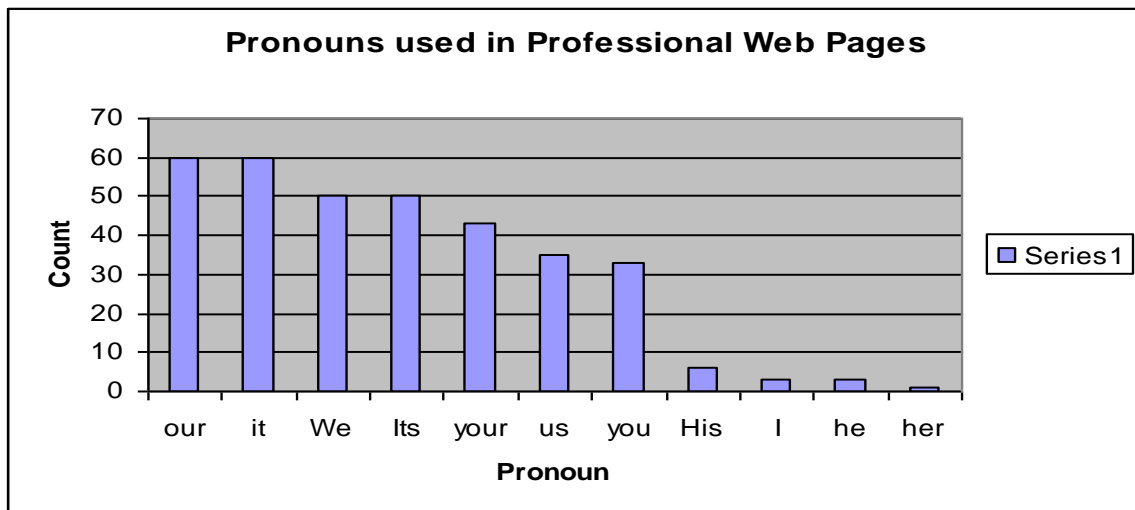

Figure 4.12 Pronouns used and their Frequency in Organizational Web Pages
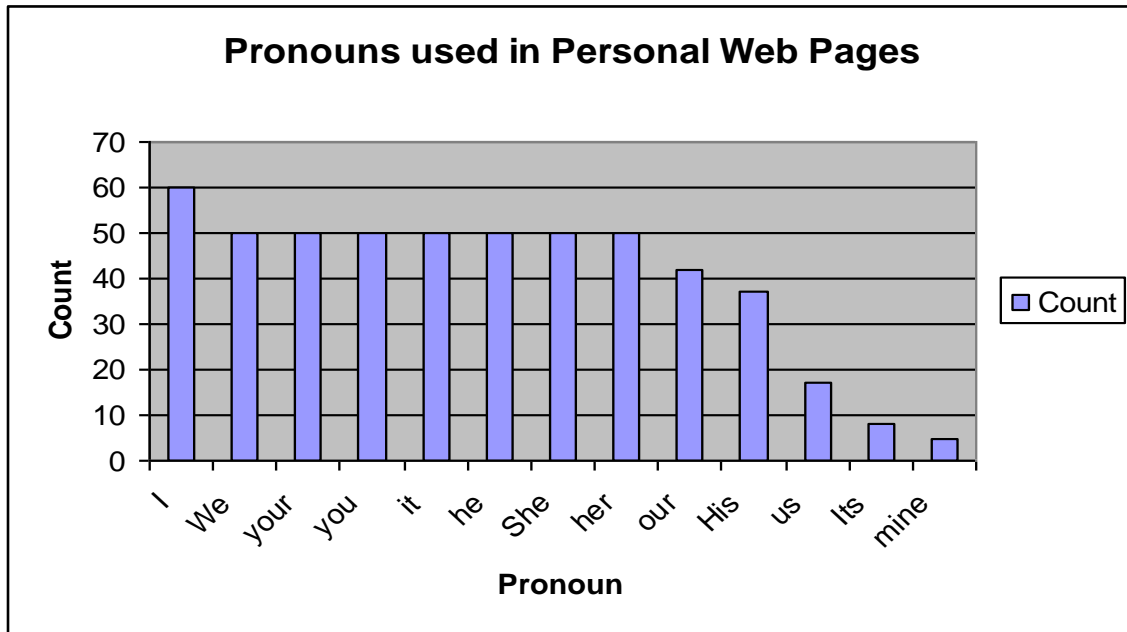
Figure 4.13 Pronouns used and their Frequency in Personal Web Pages

4.3. Sentences and Paragraphs

Expressing our ideas in skillfully written sentences contribute greatly to the success of our writing as a whole. Our ability to construct effective sentences adds value to our written content. On the other hand, if our sentences are ineffective – choppy, loose, all small, all long, ambiguous and awkward – we may not be able to create the impact we intend to make on our readers.

To achieve the business goal of making the reader /visitor go through the entire content of the web page and drive home the complete message, it is important that the framing of the sentences must be concise, reduce monotony and difficult reading, and fragmented reading. The writer must use short and varying sentence length.

179

The following excerpt from Dr. Kristi Siegel's instructions to her students drives home the point.

> "A subtle, but very effective way, to make your writing deadly and monotonous is by never varying sentence length. One short sentence after another makes your prose sound choppy, childish, or like a bad imitation of Hemingway. Conversely, all "long" sentences can make your writing hard to read. However, using all "medium"-length sentences doesn't work, either. Sentences that are all about the same length (and often follow the same grammatical pattern) create monotony. A longer sentence, such as the one I'm creating here, serves to offer more details, to focus in, to probe an idea more thoroughly, or--perhaps--to present a powerful description. A short sentence gets to the point. In general--and this type of analysis is very tenuous--an average sentence length below 14 words per sentence may indicate that you use too many short sentences and you need to learn how to combine and/or subordinate ideas. If your average sentence length is well above 22 words a sentence, you may be piling too much freight on your sentences and have a prose style that is dense and tangled. If your average word length falls between 14 and 22, you need to look at your sentences to see if there is some variety or if they are all about the same length." (2007)

Figures 4.14 and 4.15 shown below present a comparative picture of the sentence length in organizational and personal web pages.
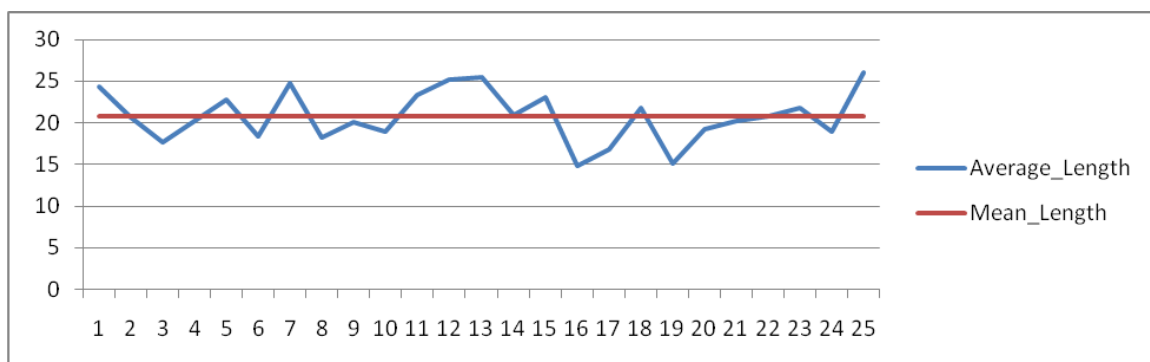
Figure 4.14 Average sentence length in professional webpages
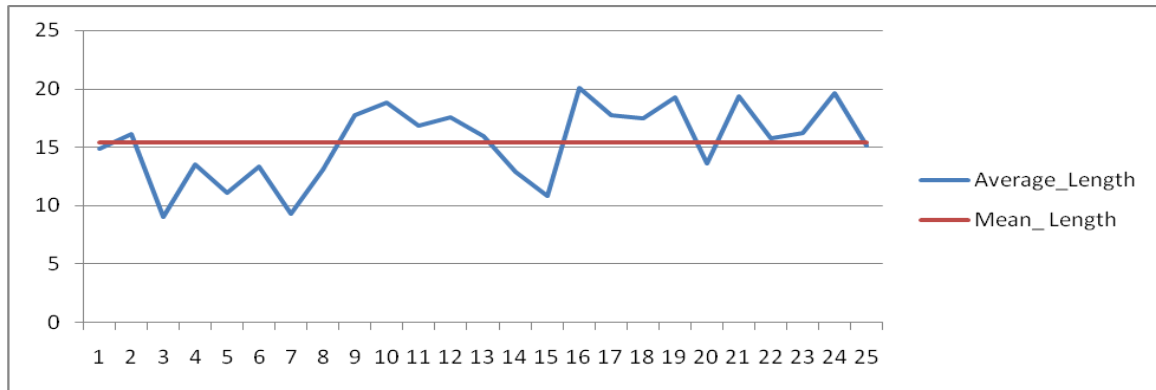
Figure 4.15 Average sentence length in personal webpages

The graphs indicate an interesting observation from the analysis of personal web pages. The average number of sentences in professional web pages is lower than that of the personal web pages though the average sentence length is more. At the same time, the deviation of sentence length from the mean is more in case of professional web pages than in personal web pages. This implies that there is more variety in professional web pages than in personal web pages. The lower average sentence length of personal web pages can be attributed to the fact that the personal communication is informal and authors tend to write messages in bits and pieces. This leads to violation of grammar, syntax and traditional writing style. There are exceptions in case of professional web pages also where the author has written a long paragraph comprising only one sentence.

In many languages, the fundamental unit of composition is the **paragraph**. A paragraph consists of several sentences that are grouped together. This group of sentences together discusses one main topic which is stated through the topic sentence. This sentence usually comes either in the beginning or at the end of a paragraph and provides the central idea. The remaining sentences contain the supporting details for this idea. A paragraph has

181

three principal parts. These three parts are the topic sentence, body sentences, and the concluding sentence.

Given below is a sample paragraph followed by discussion.

> *In order to minimize conflicts and increase efficiency, work must be divided equitably among team members.* Overburdening one individual will quickly lead to resentment and conflict. In addition, when assigning tasks to various team members, the team must consider not only the quantity of work to be undertaken by an individual but also the nature of the work. For example, editing a document is rarely as interesting as drafting it. If someone is consistently assigned the task of editing, they are liable to become bored (and thus ineffective). Where feasible, team members should rotate through both the less challenging and more interesting tasks.

In this paragraph, the first sentence clearly reflects the theme of the paragraph i.e. equal division of work. The remaining sentences of the paragraph support the main idea and provide details of how it can be done. And, the last sentence comprises the concluding remarks. In the analysis of organizational web pages, it was observed that the rule of one idea/ one paragraph was violated and the concluding sentence was almost absent in all instances. Here is an example:

> CIRT is located on a **spacious, verdant campus of 90 acres with modern library, residential and recreational facilities, providing a backdrop for serious study and intellectual pursui**t. The Government of India is deputing senior IPS officers for programmes on Traffic and Transportation Management and Improving Managerial Effectiveness Through Inter-personal Skills. The Ministry of Industry, Government of India, has given a grant of Rs. 9.17 crore to set up a world class state-of-the-art tyre testing laboratory and to update and augment its test laboratories as part of its strategy for exporting quality automobile components to Europe and the rest of the developed world. In this regard, the Institute has tied-up for training and technical assistance with internationally renowned automobile laboratories such as TUV in Munich and UTAC in France. (CIRT)

In the above example, the topic sentence contains many details such as:

- Spacious
- verdant campus of 90 acres
- modern library
- residential facilities
- recreational facilities
- providing a backdrop for serious study and intellectual pursuit.

As per the conventions of on effective paragraph the topic sentence must be general. Hence the following sentence may be a better alternative reflecting the core idea.

- CIRT is located in a vast area housing many facilities.

‘many facilities’ can now be explained in support of the topic sentence.

Also, apart from discussing the facilities on campus, the paragraph also mentions several other things such as deputing senior IPS officers, grant of funds from the government, and collaboration with external agencies. These details could have been a subject of another paragraph. Also, the concluding paragraph is missing.

Similar flaws were observed in personal web page corpus as well. In addition, there were instances of some unorthodox writing style. For example, one of the authors has built his entire web site in the question answer form. The illustrations cited below, reflect the unorthodox style (From PP_6):

What is your full name?
Marlena Rose Chacon

When is your birthday?
September 14, 1979

Where were you born?
Colorado

Where do you live now?
Colorado

What did you always want to be when you "grew up"?
A successful rich lawyer.

What do you do for a living?
I am a licensed Insurance Agent.

Similarly in another instance, it was also observed that the author had designed his web

page in form of images and a caption as shown below:
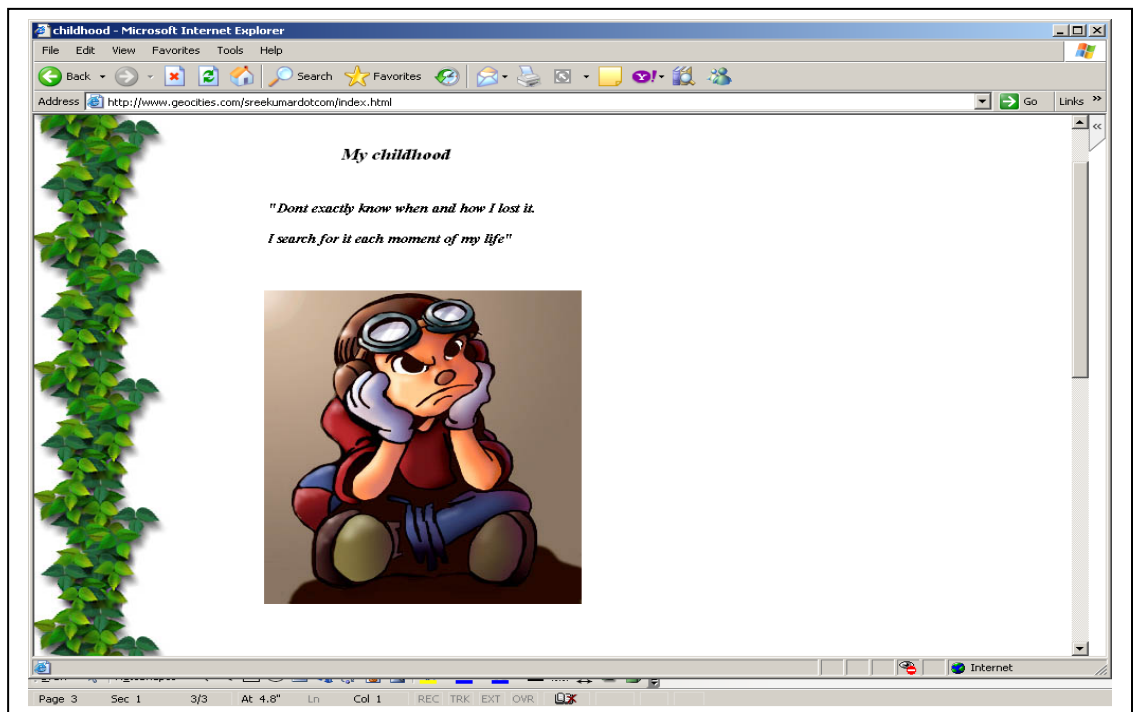
In yet another case, defying all norms of paragraph writing principles, the author has

included the entire content in one paragraph.

There are no prescribed rules about the size of paragraphs. However, it must be remembered that the purpose of a paragraph is to develop a point or specific theme. Raman and Sharma explain that it is not the number of sentences that go to make up a paragraph, but it is the unity and coherence of ideas among those sentences that makes a paragraph a paragraph (2008: 217).

Bond and Hayes in their study reveal that length is a formal characteristic of a paragraph. On the basis of the study, they have suggested that readers make paragraphing decisions on the basis of two factors: the paragraphing cues in the text (namely major topic shifts and major and minor transitions such as "in conclusion" and "however") and the paragraph length. They further argue that readers resist making short paragraphs (approximately two sentences or 40 words), even if the paragraphing cues call for them; in addition, readers resist making long paragraphs (approximately six sentences or 120 words), searching for incomplete paragraphing cues, if necessary, to justify dividing the paragraphs (1984: 147-167).

Figure 4.16 and Figure 4.17 show the average paragraph length as observed in the two contexts. The mean paragraph length in case of professional web pages is 4.28 whereas the same for personal web pages, it is 5.23. It can be observed from the graphs that the deviation from mean length is more in case of organizational web pages and is less in case of personal web pages. This implies that in case of organizational websites, effort is made to follow academic rules i.e. vary the paragraph length. So, small, medium and long paragraphs were found in the organizational web pages.
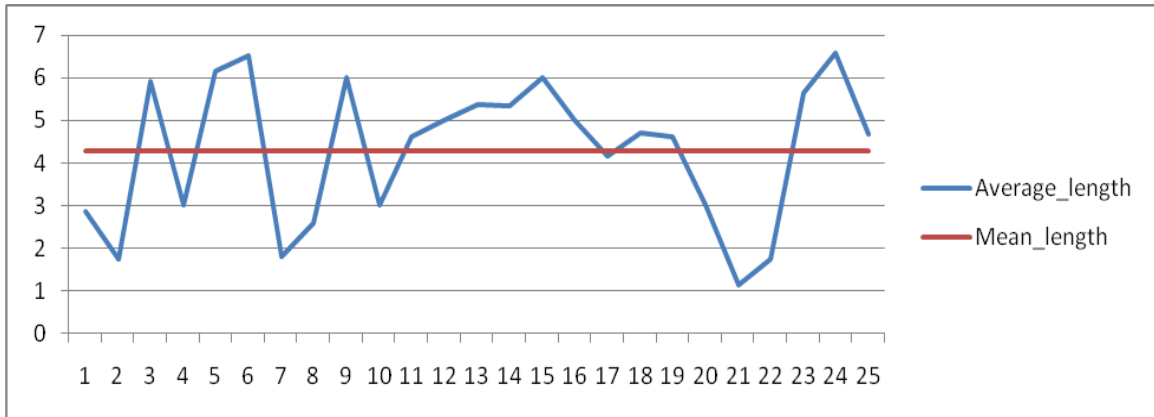
Figure 4.16 Average paragraph length in professional webpages

The Figure 4.17 shows the deviation from the mean paragraph length in personal pages. The pattern can be attributed to the fact that in this context authors don't follow academic principles of writing and tend to follow a free writing style which can be anything – creative, unorthodox, weird, monotonous or simply junk. So we find paragraphs which are extremely large or very small (single sentences in continuation) or many paragraphs with same length at a stretch were found.
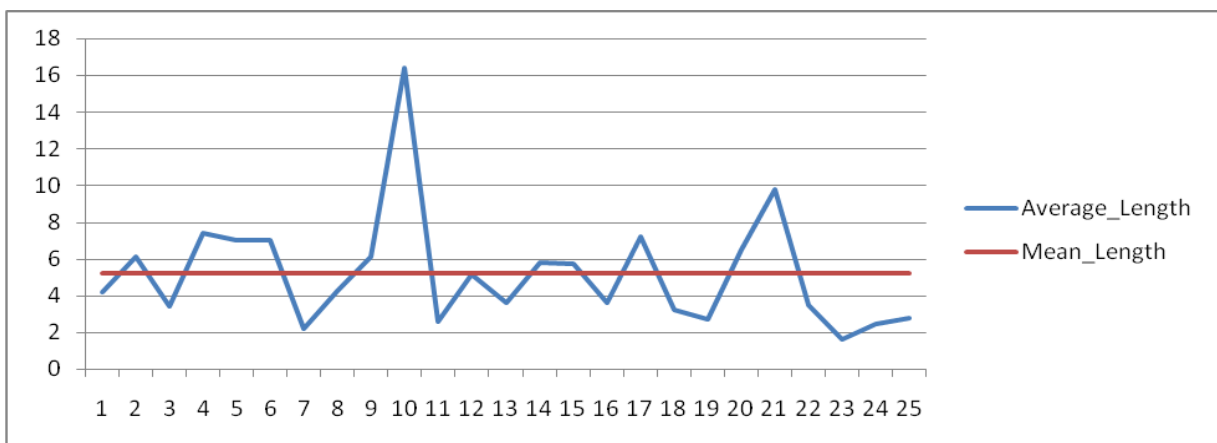
4.17 Average paragraph length in Personal Webpages

4.4 Functional Goals of Webpages

The pervasive impact of technology and the cut throat competition have made it essential for any organization to create and maintain its website. Through this modern tool, it has to reach unseen, unrelated and diversified potential stakeholders, clients, partners, regulatory agencies, general readers and visitors. In addition, as described by Petelin and Durham, traditionally, communication in an organization follows the hierarchical pattern i.e. horizontally, vertically, diagonally (1992: 57). However, the hierarchical pattern is absent in web based communication and it is more of a transaction between the webmaster and the web surfer. In this context, it becomes mandatory to take care of the communicative functions of an organization in its web pages and for each function there are linguistic indicators. This section looks at the various communication functions and occurrence of linguistic indicators within the same.

Organizations make a lot of effort to inform all concerned about the latest happenings, achievements and future planning. **Informing** is one of the most common functions that the web pages serve. The function of **announcing** is used in professional contexts for officially proclaiming a decision formed by an authorized person in the company - as shown in the following examples and the discussion that follows:

1. **All programmes are** residential and their duration ranges from one week to four weeks. In addition, the Institute undertakes consultancy and research assignments on transport policy, transportation planning, …(CIRT)
2. **These will supplement** the traditional 'salamander' awards that have traditionally only been available to alumni for gifts of up to €150,000. In addition to recognition, giving to the Campaign also offers a chance for involvement.(IN)

187

3. **We are focused on** some of the biggest game-changing initiatives where innovation is the key to success …(AI)

4 … **we provide** a wide spectrum of unique Information Technology solutions and services to a clientele of premier organizations …(CMC)

5. **We provide** the appropriate environment for our experts to work with passion and commitment in attaining our goals.(QA)

It has been observed that these statements have included the dissemination of information. In example 1, '***All programmes are***' is used to inform the reader that there is no distance learning facility with the concerned institution and that all programs are residential. Similarly in example 2, '***These will supplement***' indicates the reader being informed about the significance of referent being referred by ***'these'*** . In examples 3, 4 and 5, '***We are focused on***' and '***We provide***' are indicators of information being given to the reader.

To build a strong public relation image and credibility, the organizations tend to appreciate any kind of support / cooperation / collaboration etc. from individuals and organizational entities. And because web pages provide high level of message distribution, organizations can reach a large number of readers to convey their **acknowledgement**. Given below are two examples to supplement this fact.

1. At Cypress, **we acknowledge** that our employee volunteer efforts contribute to the achievement of our business goals.(CI)

2. Since volunteerism is an integral component of our philanthropic program, **we welcome** partnerships with organizations committed to improving our community through volunteerism.(CI)

It can be seen that the phrases '*we acknowledge*' and '*we welcome*' are used to convey acknowledgement for participation, contribution and involvement of employees or external entities in all sorts of developmental efforts by the organization.

The function of **persuasion** plays a major role in professional communication. It is a challenging task that depends on the ability of the content creator (webmaster) to convince the reader. It gains more significance in virtual world where the sender doesn't have much control over who the reader is. The function of offering services is usually a communicative function involving persuasion and smooth operation between the two parties.

An analysis of the corpus showcased the use of certain clauses using which the organizations want to either persuade the reader or offer him the services. The persuasion is explicit in some cases while in others it is implicit in the meaning of strong words and chunks. In the first example of the below given illustration for instance, the author has used the words 'Excellence' and 'Commitment', which implies high standards of workplace environment and hence trying to convince the reader that he will get the best quality standards here. Similarly in the third example, by using the phrase 'A strong presence' and 'dominant share' the author wants to convey that 'our company is among the leaders in the domain'. In example 4, the author uses the phrase '*we earnestly follow*' to tell the reader of the high work ethic involvement and '*the first ISO 9002 certified*' to inform him of a particular achievement. The use of '*We believe'* is more direct to persuade the reader as in example 1 and 2. To offer services (and other things like

support, excellent, environment, challenging job etc) phrases like '***We offer***

opportunities' and '***we offer comprehensive*** ' are used.

1. **Excellence, Partnership and Commitment** are the three hallmarks of the way we approach our clients, **we believe** you will see this in our service and our expert team. (QA)

2. **We believe** in intellectual freedom and are autonomous in our financial, institutional and academic planning and decision-making process. (IN)

3. **A strong presence** across the value chain and synergies in operations have given Hindalco a **dominant share** of … (HD)

4. To ensure quality, **we earnestly follow** systems and procedures and are **the first ISO 9002 certified** Eye Hospital in Asia. (SN)

5. **We offer opportunities** where you can dive right in, make an impact and work with smart people on challenging problems that affect millions of people. (AI)

6. Based in Bangalore, India, **we offer comprehensive** end-to-end solutions/services that empower people and people processes in any organization.(EP)

In the context of personal communication, we are more interested in letting the other person know of 'what we want to tell', and the language correctness takes the backseat. This is more evident in spoken communication. As earlier mentioned, personal web page communication is more about expression of personal self (without inhibition) and internet provides such an opportunity by enabling privacy and wider audience. Bearing this in mind, many authors of personal web pages have adopted what is called a conversational tone. They write in the same way as they would talk. This can be quite effective, but unfortunately, it can't be taken too far.

Redish notes that

> People come to Web sites to find the answer to a question or to complete a task. He suggests to think of the web site as author's side of a conversation with a very busy person. What are the questions they are asking? What are the tasks they want to do? (2007:141)

Every act in the process of conversation can be identified using an interactional identifier. The interactional identifiers help in establishing a rapport between the participants and facilitate smooth flow of ideas, information etc. They also help in providing a direction to the conversation and clarify doubts. Enumerated below are some of the identifiers observed in the Personal Web Pages.

The function of a **greeting or an introduction** to a conversation is realized by a class of items like 'hello', 'hi', 'good morning'. On the other hand, the function of identification is realized by using proper names or merely by the expression of greetings.

> **<u>Good Morning!</u>**
> **<u>Welcome!</u>**
> Thank you for visiting my website. (PP_16)
>
> **<u>Hi</u>**, I am usually a shy person, but I am starting to break out of my shell. (PP_17)
>
> **<u>Hi</u>**, thanks for visiting. I'm Sudhir Ravindramohan. (PP_24)
>
> **<u>Hello!</u>** I am Dinesh Nelundeniya, a disabled from Sri Lanka. (PP_3)
>
> If you are visiting for the first time**, <u>welcome</u>**. My name is Abrahï (PP_9)

The function of **acknowledging** is realized by 'yes', 'okay', 'all right'. It is used to show that the idea has been understood, and the speaker intends to react.

And **yes**, I even listen to Pditti or Puffy.. (PP_4)

Yes. The theory of everything probably exists. (PP_21)

I was educated in the school (Bharatiya Vidya Mandir) in which my mother was the vice principal...:) **No** guys, no extra effects for that one. (PP_24)

The function of **questioning** is realized by asking for more information, keeping focus on a particular issue.

How come I have such personality traits!? (Page_1)

What do you do for a living? (Page_6)

How long before you actually start missing people barging in without calling or knocking? (Page_15)

But when it is**, would** it have been worth the effort? (Page_21)

How long until you adjust to sleeping alone in a room again? (Page_15)

The function of **requesting** is to get a response and it is realized by a question asking for something or by using words like *please*.

I love to hear from my readers, so have a look around and if you like what you see **please** send me an email. (PP_25)

She'll be graduating in Dec 2002, so **please** help her find a marketing job! (PP_4)

Would you like to jam?(PP_9)

The function of **encouraging** is realized by asking for specific responses so that the communication thread can move further/ continue meaningfully.

> … **if you want to know more**, or if you'd just like to chat sometime email me HERE! (PP_15)

> **Tell me** if I bored you.(PP_9)

> So **please drop me a line** and tell me what you think. (PP_25)

The function of **thanking** is realized by a class of items like: 'thanks', 'thank you', 'thank you very much'. Their function is to express appreciation for an action.

> **Thanks for your many comments** and messages about the title "Diary of a Nobody". (PP_22)

> … so long and **thanks for all the comments**, if you had something to say.(PP_21)

4.5 Results

The analysis indicates that the language used in professional webpages follow a plain style. Collocations are used as an important lexical item for achieving economy of expression; appropriate cohesive markers are used for connectivity of message chunks; present perfect and simple past tense are used to convey a continuous and sustained growth; specific pronouns were used to convey a sense of belonging and involvement with the user; authors of professional webpages used sentence variety and paragraph cohesion to achieve effective style of composition. On the other hand, in case of personal webpages, multiword chunks, personal pronouns, interactional act identifiers, past perfect

tense, conditional clauses, high and inappropriate use of conjunctions, etc., were observed to mark the style as conversational and informal.

The analysis of the webpages from professional and personal contexts highlighted use of language according to the context to a large extent. However, there are elements of style which were ignored or violated while writing for the web. This section discusses these deviations from the traditions style of writing.

Web masters of the organizational webpages are very careful in terms of the **spellings** of words. Not a single spelling mistake could be observed in the sample webpages. Apart from the content draft going through several hands, this could also be attributed to the software utilities like spell check which is run on the text to check the mistakes. On the other hand, personal webpages were replete with spelling mistakes. This factor can be attributed to carelessness, deficiency in English language, or typographic inabilities of the authors. But the fact that Personal webpages are contributing to bad spelling skills can't be ignored. The illustrations below show several examples of spelling mistakes.

> … natural talent to **aquire** and absorb … (PP_11)
> … donation bin on **cemetary** road … (PP_10)
> … I also want to teach at a college or **unversity**. (PP_17)
> ... I like many types of music but my **favurite** singer/writer is
> Morrissey. (PP_9)

Starting a sentence with lower case is another frequent occurrence that was observed in the analysis. This indicates a lack of attention toward punctuation in running text. The illustration below exemplifies the same.

i was inspired by corrinne and terry's LJ. (PP_10)

as i grew my oratary skills were promptly recognised in local competitions and school level as well.. (PP_23)

it was a 1 bedroom. (PP_6)

Grammatical constructions that generally appear in pairs were also incorrectly used as shown in following illustrations:

… become a forum for exchange of ideas **not only** on road transport **but** in general management and overall transport policies as well. (CIRT)

People **are needing** my help on a lot of things. (PP_7)

On & on & on. (PP_9)

The hard part is we learn from our mistakes, not **everyone elses.** (PP_17)

Mutations of all kinds were observed in abundance in the content of web pages. These include compression, abbreviation, typographical extremes and transliteration. Emoticons are symbols of expressions such as smile, laugh, cry, love and shout created using special characters. Almost in all cases they appear in Personal space and almost zero occurrence in Professional context. Compression of words happens when the spelling of the word is mutated to make it small (most of the time). Authors indulge in typographic extremes when they want to express happiness, sadness, frustration etc. The same effect can be achieved through emoticons also. Informal inclusions (from general purpose conversation) also appeared frequently in personal web pages. Table 4.1 presents examples from the personal web page corpus.

Table 4.1 Examples of various mutations

Compressions	Typographic Extremes	Informal Inclusions
Tv Wot Ol Kinda Gonna Goin	Soooooo too!!!!(mmmmmm	...yeppy!), hehe. Ya, roomie HURRAY!!!, hallelujah!! Wow, MAMAMA yay!, Ahhhh um-hmm, "A-HA"

4.6 Summary

Organizational web pages display the use of plain English style (in asynchronous environment) wherein they maintain a neutral tone, varying but a good sentence length, taking care of message logic and clarity by using appropriate language aspects such as connectives and conjunctions. On the other hand, personal web pages use a conversational (Informal) tone with less concentration on English appropriateness, unvarying and a lower average sentence length, minimal appropriate connectives and less message clarity by using of unorthodox language constructions. These observations though simple and direct, establish the widely believed notion that organizational communication is more formal than personal communication.

The results indicate that the new media of web pages do have some negative influence particularly in personal context. At the same time the new mode add its own flavor to communication like all other modes do, and provides us a more dynamic way of reaching people across space and time. Chapter 5 discusses in detail the observations and findings of the entire study and offer answers to the research questions along with the scope of future work.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The last two decades have seen major technology interference in the field of human communication. Started from its infancy of university based interdepartmental textual interaction tool, the CMC has moved on to become an important personal and professional accessory skill for communicating with people. In its journey, CMC has given rise to a linguistic revolution which has the potential to alter the course of language evolution and the language use. Realizing this power of CMC, this study has analysed two major forms of CMC, namely, emails and web pages. A corpus of 200 emails was created and classified into Formal and Informal context. Another corpus of web pages was created with 50 web pages from Professional and Personal contexts. Coding and counting methodology of Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis was used for the study. A separate questionnaire was used to study the perception of users about CMC as a communication channel. TextStat software tool was used for frequency and concordance generation.

Emails

All emails that were studied under Formal context were found to follow a *pattern* in terms of composition of the message. It was observed that irrespective of the subject of the correspondence, the pattern remained the same. There was appropriate greeting or introduction, containing either purpose of the message or general pleasantries, followed by the actual message. In cases where the email was a reply to an earlier email, greeting

was followed by acknowledgement and then by the actual reply. On the other hand, all emails studied under Informal contexts were observed to follow no set pattern and it was up to the sender to decide what shape was to be given to the composition. Observations such as missing of greeting, informal greeting, formal greeting, or actual message in the beginning and in the end, acknowledging or no acknowledging, absence and presence of proper closing were made in the study. No recurring pattern of message composition could be found in these emails.

Formal context emails were written in simple language, occupied only one screen space, mostly used short paragraphs and *appealed to the senses of the reader*. It was observed that the information in these messages was complete and message chunks were properly linked through connectives and conjunctions. On the other hand, emails written in Informal context were found to be *author driven*. Whether it is asking for information from a friend or a colleague, inviting relatives to a party, or discussing about the picnic next week, the content was more concentrated on what one thinks, assumes or prefers. This was not only in terms of message but also in terms of language and presentation. The style was found to be individualistic – creating one's own compressions and abbreviations, cutting short the typography at will, using mode-specific features assuming that the receiver will also know it, disrespecting linguistic rules and engaging in all kinds of mutations. Long paragraphs, lengthy monologues, and a heap of fragmented loose sentences were observed frequently.

As far as the 'content' is concerned, it was observed that the emails studied in the Formal context contained *tangible content.* In other words, the messages were about tasks, responsibilities, accomplishments, resource and task delegation, etc. They were about something which could be measured in some way, or at least about somebody who could use that information in a meaningful manner. It could also be construed that the transactions in formal email communication met a personal or professional need. The tangibility of the content in emails was also found to attach importance to the message. The information in most cases was new to the reader and repetition was least.

Webpages

All the webpages that were studied under the Professional context were found to follow a *strict pattern of content presentation*. The content was clearly divided into sections like introduction followed by vision/mission statement, achievements, future plans, societal engagements, etc. The sequence of this content and the use of font and typography were also similar in most cases. Regarding the webpages that were studied in the Personal context, they reflected *innovative and unorthodox presentation style* to convey the content. In some cases, the flow was more acceptable than that of others and in cases of personal diaries, there was no flow at all. For example, writing about the day's event should ideally start from morning; but it was observed that authors would put event write ups in random order. Instead of following text-heavy presentation, some authors decided to put up their online content in a style laden with graphics.

The webpages analysed under Professional context highlighted a more *rigid language pattern.* The content was found to include all elements such as collocations, a marker for business discourse, abundant use of cohesive linkers to facilitate smooth flow, functional marker for the purpose of informing, announcing, offering, persuading, etc. Moreover the webpages in this category were properly classified into various sections for the purpose of readability. In case of personal webpages, it was the author who determined the content of the page. Though this fact appeared to be logical because that web space belonged to the individual, the style again suffered. The authors of personal webpages engaged in creative and innovative writing in all forms. All styles including intimate, obscure, ambiguous, and laden with font variations, typographic extremes, graphics-heavy contents and transliteration could be found in the personal webpages.

The webpages studied under the Professional category showed ample evidence of carrying *tangible content* which included the organization's short and long term goals, targets, achievements, customer satisfaction, concrete plans, market share and public opinion. Other things such as customer support and feedback were also present in a simple and actionable fashion. In terms of language, use of concrete words, active voice, appropriate functional markers and domain specific vocabulary were observed to have helped in achieving this goal. On the other hand, in case of Personal webpages it was mostly story telling. Whether it was about individual, family, or profession, etc., the author invariably engaged himself in writing about his own experience – good and bad - which turned out to be more abstract.

One of the most disturbing and frequently recurring observations was the _use of fragments_ in Informal emails and Personal webpages. It was one of the stark differences between language construct in Formal emails / Professional webpages and that of Informal emails / Personal webpages. In the former case, the sentences were properly constructed with all structural elements, such as verb, subject, preposition, conjunction, punctuation etc., intact, while in the latter, users took enough liberty to play with the linguistic structure of the sentences and engaged in language abuse. As a consequence, the clarity of content suffered in Informal emails and Personal webpages imprinting a poor impression.

The absence of nonverbal cues and asynchronicity of emails and webpages gave rise to mutations and invention of typographical extremes and emoticons. While typographic extremes are created by mutating the spellings and adding extra special characters, the emoticons are constructed entirely of special characters. They help in conveying feelings and emotions such as anger, frustration, love, smile, sadness, happiness etc. However, it is a matter of concern that a growing number of users are using these mutations, especially emoticons in their online communication even in formal context.

The study has gauged the users' perception of how they would use emails in terms of language usage. It was observed that while less number of people think that they follow the formal language rules, in practice, more people are actually following the language dictum. At the same time more number of users thinks that they tend to indulge in relaxing language rules but in practice less number of users are doing it. A diagonally

opposite observation can be made in the Informal context. While less number of people think that they violate language rules, in practice more number of users are doing it. More number of users think that they indulge in using the mutated form of language but in practice, less number is using it. This can be attributed to the fact that because of the technology interface the new medium of CMC provides enough privacy, secrecy and impersonal traits (not face to face) for the users to get away with immediate feedback or rebuke from receiver and help them take liberty on the part of reader's sensibilities. Also, the difference possibly emanates from the fact that users tend to have an impression that email is largely a medium of communication for personal use and equate it with day to day personal communication – mostly conversational communication. But in fact, when they use it in Formal context, they abide by the academic style of communication.

In short, it can be concluded that the style of language usage in emails in Formal context and webpages in Professional context was *linear, reader-oriented, tangible, academic and free from any channel specific influence.* Contrary to this, the style of language usage in emails in Informal context and webpages in Personal context was *non-linear, author driven, abstract, conversational and influenced by technology interference.*

Some of the significant statistical findings are listed as follows. In Formal context -

- 90% authors used reader oriented language
- 90% authors paid attention to the use of parts of speech
- 85% authors paid attention to correct spellings and proper sentences
- 80% authors used proper punctuation while writing emails
- 50% authors used capitalization
- 2% authors used emoticons in their emails
- Collocations are widely used as an important lexical item in organizational webpages.
- Active voice dominates organizational webpages.

In Informal context-

- 83% authors used word compressions
- 54% authors used transliteration.
- 30 % authors used typographic extremes
- 50% authors used lengthy sentences in their emails
- 12% authors used correct punctuation.
- Personal webpages use lengthy sentences, long paragraphs (or too short and too many paragraphs).
- Majority of personal webpages have occurrences of spelling mistakes and emoticons.
- High and inappropriate use of conjunctions has been observed in personal webpages.

The study has suggested that the users follow the prescribed form of usage, barring minor mistakes in Formal context and that there is scope for improvement in language usage in Informal context. It can be said that users of CMC are influenced by the technological features available for communication and wish to experiment with these features mostly in informal context. However, as no concrete evidence suggesting adverse change in language usage was observed in the study, it can be said that the language of Emails and Webpages has not deteriorated the language. On the language of Internet, David Crystal says:

> I do not see the Internet being the death of languages, but the reverse. I view each of the Netspeak situations as an area of huge potential enrichment for languages. The CMC evolution of English language is diverse and creative (2001: 241).

It can also be said that the writing style adapted in emails and webpages is a function of formality, particularly in emails and webpages just as we follow certain rules of courtesy,

politeness, respect and correctness in formal writing, and relax these restrictions when we engage in drafting personal messages.

In today's technology-driven world, it is difficult to ignore the influence of the CMC on language. The pervasive impact of the use of computers and the mobile phones has changed the way we use language to communicate. As we encounter more and more of our acquaintances using the new abbreviated language, we tend to follow a pattern. This phenomenon has now overwhelmingly crossed the barrier and intruded in our day to day life. The more we use the CMC, the more we get used to it and as a result we tend to violate the language dictum irrespective of context. Consequently, we have started thinking that minor mistakes like spelling variations here and there do not make much difference. However, we need to keep in mind that in future, the number of users on Internet is going to increase many folds and majority of these users may be under-qualified to set language on a chosen track. It is up to the learned group of users to accept or reject it in day to day life. Ultimately how we nurture ourselves in personal life determines a lot how we are going to fare in professional life.

The study has provided a base for undertaking further research on issues related to language analysis of various other forms of CMC. As language is an integral part of a culture, studies can be undertaken for investigating cultural influence on language of CMC. It would be particularly interesting to study the oral forms of CMC such as video conferencing and voice chat. Also, gender based studies can be undertaken to analyse specific styles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adkins, M., and D.E. Brashers. "The power of language in computer- mediated groups." <u>Management Communication Quarterly</u> 8 (1995): 289-322.

Baron, N. S. "Computer-mediated communication as a force in language change." <u>Visible Language</u> 18 (1984): 118-141.

Baron, N. S. "Who sets e-mail style? Prescriptivism, coping strategies, and democratizing communication access." <u>The Information Society</u>. 18 (2002): 403–413.

Benedikt, M. <u>Cyberspace: First Steps.</u> Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Biber, Douglas and Edward Finegan. "Historial Drift in Three English Genres." <u>Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Linguistic Variation: Georgetown University Roundtable</u>. Ed. T. J. Walsh. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1989.

Bordia, P. "Studying verbal interaction on the Internet: The case of rumor transmission research." <u>Behavior research methods, instruments and computers,</u> 28.2 (1996): 149- 151.

Bruckman, Amy and Mitchel Resnick. "The MediaMoo Project: Constructionism And Professional Community." <u>Convergence</u> 1.1 (1995): 94-109.

Burkhalter, B. "Reading race online: Discovering racial identity in usenet discussions." <u>Communities in cyberspace</u>. Ed. M. A. Smith and P. Kollock. London: Routledge, 1999. 60-75.

Burton, P. F. "Electronic mail as an academic discussion forum." <u>Journal of Documentation.</u> 50 (1994): 99-110.

Burton, Wendy. "SEEDS: Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in Education." <u>SEEDS Education.</u> 31 October 1996. Site for Exploring Emerging Delivery Systems. 21 May 2005 <http://web.viu.ca/seeds/cmc/#Definition>.

Butt, D., Rhondda fahey, Sue Spinks and Collin Yallop. <u>Using Functional Grammar – An Explorer's Guide.</u> Sydney: NCELTR, Macquarie University. 1995.

Callos, Judith. "Capitalization Is So Very Important" www.businessemailetiquette.com 19 February 2008. Business Email Etiquette. 3 August 2008 <http://www.businessemailetiquette.com/?p=7>.

Cherny, L. <u>Conversation and Community: Chat in a Virtual World.</u> Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information. (1999).

Collot, M. and N. Belmore. "Electronic language: A new variety of English." <u>Computer-mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-cultural perspectives</u>. Ed. S. Herring. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996. 13-28.

Comrie, B and Thompson, S.A. "Lexical nominalization. Language typology and syntactic Description." <u>Grammatical categories and the lexicon</u>. 3 (1985): 349 – 407.

Coney, M. and M. Steehouder. "Role playing on the Web: guidelines for designing and evaluating personas online." <u>Technical Communication.</u> 47 (2000): 327–340.

Courtland L. Bovee and J.V. Thill. <u>Business Communication Today.</u> New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2007.

Critchley, MacDonald. "Some Problems of the Ex-Dyslexic." A paper presented at the <u>23rd Annual Conference of the Orton Society</u>, Seattle, Washington, 1972. Springer: New York, 23.1 (1973), 7-14.

Crowston, Kevin and Erika Krammerer. "Communicative style and gender differences in computer-mediated communications." <u>Cyberghetto or Cybertopia: Race, Class and Gender on the Internet.</u> Ed. B. Ebo. Praeger: Greenwood Press, 1998, 185-204.

Crystal, David. <u>Language and the Internet</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Crystal, David. "English or Babel? Monolingual or multilingual." <u>www.abc.net.au.</u> 24 March 2001. Radio National: Lingua Franca. 14 August 2006 <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/ling/stories/s264971.htm>

Cumming, J. D. "The internet and the English language." <u>English Today.</u> 11 (1995): 3-8.

Cutts, M. "Unspeakable acts revisited." <u>Information design journal.</u> 9.1 (1998): 39-43.

Danet, Brenda. (ed.). "Introduction to Play and Performance in Computer-Mediated Communication." <u>Special issue, Journal of Computer-mediated Communication.</u> 1.2 (1995): Unpaged

December, John. "What is CMC? An Overview of Scholarly Definitions." <u>Computer Mediated Communication Magazine.</u> 1997, January Issue. 12 July 2006 < http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/jan/deccom.html >

Dominick, J. "Who do you think you are? Personal home pages and self-presentation on the World Wide Web." Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 76 (1999), 646-658.

Doring, Nicola. "Personal Home Pages on the Web: A Review of Research." Journal of Computer Mediated Communication. 7.3 (2002).

EduTechWiki: http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/Computer-mediated_communication

Evans, B Mary, Alive A. AcBride and Matt Queen. "Tone Formality in English-Language University Websites Around the World." <u>IEEE International Professional Communication Conference Proceeding.</u> <u>Limerick, Ireland, July 10-13, 2005</u>. Piscataway, N.J.: IEEE, 2005.. 846-850. check for editors.

Fernback, Jan and Brad Thompson. "Computer-Mediated Communication and the American Collectivity: The Dimensions of Community Within Cyberspace." <u>Paper presented at the annual convention of the International Communication Association,</u> Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 1995. <u>The Well.</u> 12 July 2007. http://www.well.com/~hlr/texts/VCcivil.html

Ferraro, G. P. <u>The Cultural Dimensions of International Business</u>. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Ferris, Pixy. "What is CMC? An Overview of Scholarly Definitions." <u>Computer Mediated Communication Magazine.</u> 1997, January Issue. 12 July 2006 < http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/jan/ferris.html >

Flynn, Nancy. "Effective e-mailing." <u>Business Line, The Hindu Group of Publications.</u> 08 January 2001, Internet Edition.

Gains, Jonathan. "Electronic mail–A new style of communication or just a new medium?: An investigation into the text features of e-mail." <u>English for Specific Purposes.</u> 18.1 (1999): 81–101.

Galdo, E. and J. Nielsen. (Eds.). <u>International User Interfaces</u>. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996.

Gardner, Traci. "Every Punctuation Mark Matters: A Mini-Lesson on Semicolons." International Reading Association. Read. Write. Think. 12 January 2006 <http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=260>

Garg, Anu. (Moderator). "A Chat With David Crystal". Wordsmith.org. 26 February 2001. English as a Global Language. 12 May 2006 <http://wordsmith.org/chat/dc.html>

Gimenez, J. C. "Business e-mail communication: some emerging tendencies in register." English for Specific Purposes. 19.3 (2000): 237-251.

Gimenez, J. C. "Unpacking business emails: Message embeddedness in international business Email communication." Genre Variation in Business Letters. Linguistic Insights: Studies in Language and Communication. Ed. M. Gotti and P. Gillaerts. Bern: Peter Lang, 2005, 235-255.

Goodman, S. and D. Graddol. Eds. Redesigning English - new texts, new identities. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Goossens, L. "On the development of Modals and the Epistemic Functions in English". In A. Ahlquist (ed.). Papers from the 5th International Conference on Historical Linguistics. Benjamins: Amsterdam, 1982, 74-97.

Hafner, K., and Lyon, M. Where wizards stay up late: The origins of the internet. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Halliday, M.A.K., and R. Hasan. Cohesion in English. London: Longman, 1976.

Hancock , Jeffrey T., Lauren Curry, Saurabh Goorha and Michael Woodworth. "Automated Linguistic Analysis of Deceptive and Truthful Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication." Proceedings of the 38th Hawaii International Conference on

System Sciences,   3-6 January 2005. Washington, NY: IEEE Computer Society, 2005, Track 1 - Volume 01

Hellweg, Eric. "Instant Messaging Goes Corporate." <u>CNN Money.</u> 8 November 2002. Cable News Network Money. 17 Oct. 2005 <http://money.cnn.com/2002/11/08/technology/techinvestor/hellweg>

Herring, S. C. "Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis: An Approach to Researching Online Behavior." <u>Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning.</u> Ed. S. A. Barab, R. Kling, and J. H. Gray. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 338-376.

Herring, S. C. "Computer-mediated discourse." <u>Handbook of Discourse Analysis.</u> Ed. D. Tannen, D. Schiffrin, and H. Hamilton. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, 612-634.

Herring, S. C. (1998). (1998). Variability and Change in E-mail Style. <u>Terminogramme,</u> 84-85, 9-16. 12 April 2007. < http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/%7Eherring/term.html >

Herring, S. C. "Interactional coherence in CMC." <u>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.</u> 4.4 (1999). http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue4/] Also available in the Proceedings of the 32nd Hawaii International Conference on System Science, 1999, 1-13.

Herring, S. C. "Gender and democracy in computer-mediated communication." <u>Electronic Journal of Communication</u>. 3.2 (1993), 1-17. CIOS. 31 March 2007. <http://www.cios.org/www/ejc/v3n293.htm>

Herring, S. C. "Posting in a different voice: Gender and ethics in computer-Mediated communication." <u>Philosophical perspectives on computer-mediated communication.</u> Ed. C. Ess. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996, 115-145.

Herring, S. C. "The rhetorical dynamics of gender harassment on-line." The Information Society. 15.3 (1999), 151-167.

Herring, S. C. Computer-Mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-Cultural Perspectives. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996.

Herring, S. C. "Politeness in computer culture: Why women thank and men flame." In: Cultural Performances: Proceedings of the Third Berkeley Women and Language Conference. (pp. 278-294). 1994. Berkeley Women and Language Group.12 March 2006 <http://www.ella.slis.indiana.edu/~herring/politeness.1994.pdf>

Hodge, S. Global Smarts: The Art of Communicating and Deal Making Anywhere in the World. New York: Wiley, 2000.

Jessmer, S. L., & Anderson, D. "The effect of politeness and grammar on user perceptions of electronic mail." North American Journal of Psychology. 3.2 (2001), 1-15.

Johnson, Stephen. Interface Culture. NewYork: Basic Books, 1999.

Jones, S. G. "Introduction: From Where to Who Knows?" Cybersociety Computer-Mediated Communication and Community. Ed. S. G. Jones. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995, 1-9.

Jones, S. G. Ed. CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communication and Community. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995.

Jonsson, Ewa. "Essay for English D-Course." Luleå Academic Computer Society. February 1998. Electronic Discourse on Speech and Writing on Internet. 23 March 2005. <http://www.ludd.luth.se/~jonsson/D-essay/>

Kern, R. G. "Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity and characteristics of language production." <u>Modern Language Journal</u> 79 (1995): 457-476.

Killoran, John B. "The Gnome in the Front Yard and other Public Figurations: Genres of self-presentation on Personal Home Pages." <u>Project Muse.</u> 26.1 (2003): 66-83.

Ko, K. K. "Structural characteristics of computer-mediated language: A comparative analysis of InterChange discourse." <u>Electronic Journal of Communication</u> 6.3 (1996). 23 September 2007. <http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/006/3/006315.HTML>

Kovalyov, Nikita. "The Present Perfect Tense - When to use?" <u>Eclectic English</u> December 2004. Present Perfect. 26 August 08 <http://www.eclecticenglish.com/grammar/PresentPerfect1A.html>

Kress, G.R. (Ed). <u>Halliday: System and Function in Language.</u> London: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Kummings, Donald D. Ed. <u>A Companion to Walt Whitman</u>. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007.

Lenhart, Amanda, Lee Rainie, and Oliver Lewis. "Teenage Life Online: The Rise of the Instant-Message Generation and the Internet's Impact on Friendships and Family Relations." <u>Pew Internet and American Life Project</u>. 2001. PEW / INTERNET. 24 September 2005. <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Report.pdf >

Lewis, M. <u>The lexical approach</u>. Hove: Language Teaching Publications, 1993.

Lewis, M. <u>Teaching Collocations: Further developments in the Lexical Approach.</u> Stamford: Thomson Heinle Language Teaching Publications, 2000.

Longacre, R. E. "The discourse strategy of an appeals letter." <u>Discourse Description: Diverse Linguistic Analyses of a Fund-Raising Text</u>. Ed. W. Mann and S. A. Thompson. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992, 109-130.

Mallon, R. and C. Oppenheim. "Style used in electronic Mail." <u>Aslib Proceedings.</u> 54.1 (2002): 8-22.

Maynor, N. "The Language of electronic mail: written speech?" <u>Centennial Usage Studies.</u> Ed. G.D. Little and M. Montgomery. Tuscaloosa : Alabama UP, 1994, 48-54.

McCarthy, M and Felicity O'Dell. <u>English Collocations in Use.</u> India : Gopsons Papers Ltd., 2006.

McMurdo, G. "Changing contexts of communication."<u>Journal of Information Science,</u> 21:2 (1995), 140-146.

Metz , J. Michel. "Computer Mediated Communication: Literature Review of the New Context." <u>Interpersonal Computing and Technology: An Electronic Journal for 21st Century</u>. 2.2 (1994): 31-49.

Moon, R. "Vocabulary connections: multiword items in English". <u>Vocabulary description, acquisition and pedagogy</u>. Ed. N. Schmitt, and M. McCarthy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Mulac, A., and T.L. Lundell. "Effects of gender-linked language differences in adults' written discourse: multivariate tests of language effects." <u>Language and Communication.</u> 14 (1994): 299-309.

Murray, D. "The context of oral and written language: a framework for mode and medium switching." <u>Language in Society.</u> 17 (1988): 351-73.

Nation I.S.P. <u>Learning Vocabulary in another Language</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Nattinger, J.R and J.S. DeCarrico. <u>Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Negretti, R. "Web-based activities and SLA: A conversation analysis research approach." <u>Language Learning and Technology</u> 3.1 (1999): 75-87.

Neilson J. "Passive Voice Is Redeemed For Web Headings." <u>USEIT</u>. 2007. Alertbox. 23 July 2008 <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/passive-voice.html>

Nielsen, J. and M. Tahir. <u>Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed</u>. Indianapolis: New Riders Publishing, 2001.

NY152. "Starbucks." Email to Shopgirl from NY152. 20 October 1998. Access date: 24 January 2006. <http://youvegotmail.warnerbros.com/cmp/4frameset.html>

Olsson, John. "Using groups of common textual features for authorship attribution." FLI Publications; Wales, 2006.

Oxford, R.L. <u>Language Learning Strategy</u>. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers, 1990.

Paolillo, John. "The Virtual Speech Community: Social Network and Language Variation on IRC." J<u>ournal of Computer Mediated Communication</u>. 4.4 (1999) June Message Board

Patterson, Holly. "Computer-Mediated Groups A Study of a Culture in Usenet." 1996. Pn.D. Dissertation Office of Graduate Studies of <u>Texas A&M University</u>.13 April 2006 <http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/~hollyp/pubs/dis/dissert.html>

Pawley, A., and Syder, F. "Two puzzles for linguistic theory: native like selection and native like fluency". <u>Language and communication</u>. Ed. J. Richards, and R. Schmidt. London: Longman, 1983. Page Numbers

Petelin R. and M. Durham. <u>The professional Writing Guide:Writing Well and Knowing why</u>. Australia: Business and Professional Publishing, 1992

Poser, Bill. "Capitalization and Mr Cummings." <u>itre.cis.upenn.edu</u> 15 January 2005. Language Log, 3 August 2008
< http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/001809.html>

Raman, M. and Sangeeta Sharma. <u>Technical Communication.</u> New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Rebecca, Mallon and Charles Oppenheim. "Style used in electronic mail." <u>Aslib Proceedings</u>. 54.1 (2002): 8-22.

Redish, Janice. <u>Letting Go of The Words: Writing Web Content that Works</u>. San Fransisco: Morgan Kaufmann, 2007.

Rheingold, H. <u>The Virtual Community.</u> Cambridge, USA: MIT Press, 2000.

Rice, R. E. "Mediated Group Communication." <u>The New Media: Communication, Research and Technology.</u> Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984, 129-154.

Rutherford, W.E. <u>Second Language Grammar: Learning and Teaching</u>. London: Longman, 1987.

Sackmary, B. and Scalia, L. M. "Cultural patterns of World Wide Web business sites: a comparison of Mexican and U.S. companies." <u>Marketing byu Education.</u> 14 March 2003.

Cross-Cultural Consumer and Business Studies Research Conference. 27 April 2005 <http://marketing.byu.edu/htmlpages/ccrs/proceedings99/sackmary.htm>

Sandra J. Bond and John R. Hayes. "Cues People Use to Paragraph Text." Research in the Teaching of English. 18.2 (1984):147-167.

Santoro, G. M. "What is computer-mediated communication?" Computer mediated communication and the online classroom Vol 1: Overview and perspectives. Ed. Z. L. Berge and M. P. Collins. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 1995, 11 check page numbers

Saskia, B. "eHistLing – From Manuscripts to the Internet : How Did Media Influence the English Language?" eHistLing. 1 (2004): 90-105. English history Linguistics. 25 January 2005. <www.ehistling.meotod.de/data/papers/group_h_pub.pdf>

Scott W. Campbell and Ulla Bunz. "Analysis of Discursive Fragments, Or: Answers to the Old "What's In a Word?" Question." 88th Annual Convention of the National Communication Association, New Orleans, 20-24 LA, November 2002.

Shedletsky, L. " Teaching with computer-mediated communication." The Speech Communication Teacher. 10 (1995-1996), 8 -21.

Shedroff, Nathan. "Personal Websites". Nathan.Com. December 1997. Living Surfaces Conference, American Center for Design, Chicago. 12 July 2008. <http://www.nathan.com/thoughts/personalsites/2.html>

Shields, R. Ed. Cultures of Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies. London :Sage, 1996.

Shipley, David and Will Schwalbe. Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home. New York: Knopf Publishers, 2007.

Short, J., E. Williams and B. Christie. <u>The Social Psychology of Telecommunications</u>. New York: Wiley, 1976.

Siegel, Kristi. "Varying Sentence Length." <u>Kristisiegel.com.</u> Sentence Variety. 23 June 2007. <http://www.kristisiegel.com/variety.html>

Smith, V., Siltanen, S. A., & Hosman, L. A. "The effects of powerful and powerless speech styles and speaker expertise on impression formation and attitude change." <u>Communication Research Reports</u>. 15.1 (1998), 27-35.

Souther, J. W. and M. L. White. <u>Technical Report Writing</u>. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977.

Sproull, L.S., S. Kiesler and D. Zubrow. "Encountering an alien culture." <u>Journal of Social Issues.</u> 40.3 (1984): 31-48.

Steinberg, E. Ed. <u>Plain language: Principles and practice.</u> Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press. 1991.

Strangelove, Michael. <u>Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine</u>. 1.8 (1994), 7. 12 July 2006. < http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1994/dec/shift.html >

Thurlow, C., L. Lengel & A. Tomic. <u>Computer mediated communication: Social interaction and the internet</u>. London: Sage, 2004.

Turoff, M. and S. Hiltz. "Computer support for group versus individual decisions." <u>IEEE Transactions on Communications.</u> 30 (1982): 82-90.

Turow, Joseph and Lokman Tsui. (Eds). <u>The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age.</u> Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

UnAuthored. "Personal Web Pages." <u>Wikipedi, The Free Encyclopedi</u>; 10 July 2008.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_web_page>

Unauthored. "Coherence: Transitions between Ideas" <u>Capital Community College
Foundation</u>. Undated. Transitions. 22 November 2007
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/transitions.htm>

Walther, J. B. "Language and Communication Technology." <u>Journal of Language and
Social Psychology.</u> 23.4 (2004): 384-396.

Walther, J. B. "Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and
hyperpersonal interaction." <u>Communication Research.</u> 23 (1996), 3-43.

Walther, J. B. "Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational
perspective." <u>Communication Research.</u> 19 (1992): 52-90.

Walther, J. B. and J. Burgoon. "Relational Communication in Computer-Mediated
Interaction." <u>Human Communication Research.</u> 19.1 (1992), 50-88.

Warschauer, M. "Comparing face-to-face and electronic discussion in the second
language classroom." <u>CALICO Journal.</u> 13.2-3 (1996): 7-25.

West, W. Caroline and Phillip J. Holcomb. "Imaginal, Semantic, and Surface-Level
Processing of Concrete and Abstract Words: An Electrophysiological Investigation."
<u>Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience.</u> Cambridge, USA: MIT Press, 12.6 (2000): 1024 –
1037.

Yates, JoAnne. "The Emergence of the Memo as a Managerial Genre." <u>Management
Communication Quarterly</u>. 2 (1989): 485-510.

Yates, Simeon J. "Oral and written linguistic aspects of computer conferencing." <u>Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social, and cross-cultural perspectives.</u> Ed. Susan C. Herring. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996, 29-46.

Zhou, L. and Dongsong Zhang. "A heuristic approach to establishing punctuation convention in instant messaging." <u>IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication.</u> 48.4 (2005): 391 – 400.

Zubaida S. A. Alsree. "Language and Power: a Critical Analysis of Email Text in Professional Communication." Bamboo (1997): unpaged. Abstract. 4 February 2006 < http://www.cityu.edu.hk/lib/bamboo/abstract/doc124.htm >

Webster's Dictionary: http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/Computer%20Mediated%20Communication

Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer-mediated_communication

Appendix A: Questionnaire

COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION (EMAILS) USAGE SURVEY

Identify Yourself (Put a Tick Mark)

First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year	Higher Degree	Faculty	M F

Read the questions carefully and answer it for the given situation (writing or reading

emails) and audience. Put a Tick Mark under the chosen option.

1.Language
1.1 Grammar and vocabulary:

Q.1. Do you pay attention to various parts of speech (such as the verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition and conjunction)? (Put a tick Mark where you want to say YES)
A

While writing mails to	Verbs	Nouns	Pronouns	Adjectives	Adverbs	Preposition	Conjunction
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives							
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization							

B

While reading mails from	Verbs	Nouns	Pronouns	Adjectives	Adverbs	Preposition	Conjunction
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives							
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization							

Q.2. Do you pay attention to the following elements (Put a Tick mark wherever you want to say YES)?

A

While writing mails to	Spellings	Jargons / Difficult/ Long words	Fragmented sentences
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

B

While reading mails from	Spellings	Jargons / Difficult/ Long words	Fragmented sentences
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.3. Do you pay attention to Semantic ambiguity (word having more than one meaning), Lexical ambiguity (unclear reference to individual or group.) and Structural ambiguity (more than one interpretations)? (Put a Tick mark wherever you want to say YES)

Examples: Semantic Ambiguity : *Iraqi head seeks arms. (*The word "head" can be interpreted as a noun meaning either chief or the anatomical head of a body. Likewise, the word "arms" can be interpreted as a plural noun meaning either weapons or body parts*.)*

Examples: Lexical Ambiguity: *Teacher strikes idle kids. ("*strikes" can occur as either a verb meaning to hit or a noun meaning a refusal to work. Meantime, "idle" can occur as either a verb or an adjective*..)*

Examples: Structural Ambiguity: *Stolen painting found by tree. (*The headline's two alternative syntactic representations make it structurally ambiguous: (1) A tree found a stolen painting. (2) A person found a stolen painting near a tree.*.)*

A

While writing mails to	Semantic ambiguity (word having more than one meaning)	Lexical ambiguity (unclear reference to individual or group.)	Structural ambiguity (more than one interpretations)
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors,			

Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

B

While reading mails from	Semantic ambiguity (word having more than one meaning)	Lexical ambiguity (unclear reference to individual or group.)	Structural ambiguity (more than one interpretations)
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

1.2 Composition

Q.4. Do you write overly complex sentences?

While writing mails to	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.5. Do you find it difficult to understand overly complex and lengthy sentences?

While reading mails from	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.6. Do you make use of the following in your emails?

While writing mails to	Self-absorbed Language		Receiver oriented		
	Complete sentences	Short forms like: bet'n, guss, coz, etc	Most suitable word	All points required for the message to be complete	Connectivity between the points
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives					

Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization				

Q.7. Do you try to personalize email messages with appropriate use of a conversational tone, for example, ' I, my, you, your, we, our'?

While writing mails to	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

1.3 Syntax

Q.8. Do you pay attention to punctuation (full stops, commas, semicolons, apostrophes)?

While writing mails to	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.9. Do you find it difficult to understand email messages without the use of punctuation (full stops, commas, semicolons, apostrophes)?

While reading mails from	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.10. Do you pay attention to the following?

While writing mails to	Short paragraphs	Long Paragraphs	Space between Paragraphs
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.11. Do you make use of the following in your messages

While writing mails to	Abbreviations	Compressed words
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives		
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization		

Q.12. Do you feel comfortable to make sense of abbreviations and compressed words and sentences?

While reading mails from	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.13. Do you make heavy use of CAPITALIZATION for emphasis or otherwise (by mistake, ignorance or for fun)?

While writing mails to	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

2. Structure

2.1 Layout and visual appeal

Q.14. Do you make use of the following in your email messages?

While writing mails to	Meaning ful Subject Line	Receiv er's address	Salutati on	Dat es	Comp lemen tary close	Referen ce to previou s commu nicatio n
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives						
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization						

Q.15. Do you make use of the following in your messages?

While writing mails to	Mixed Font type	Mixed font colors	Mixed Highlighting (Italics, Bold Underlined)	Special formatting	Imagery and Graphics
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives					
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization					

Q.16. Do you find the use of font types, color schemes, graphics and formatting in your received messages distracting and unnecessary?

While reading mails from	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.17. Do you make heavy use of typographic extremes, eg, 'what!!!!' and lexical variations, such as 'It is toooo late'?

While writing mails to	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.18. Do you find the use of typographic extremes, eg, 'what!!!!' and lexical variations, such as 'It is toooo late' in received messages as meaningless and verbose?

While reading mails from	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.19. Do you use a lot of Expressive Symbols such as emoticons?

While writing mails to	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.20. Do you make use of transliteration (use of other within English text)?

While writing mails from	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Friends, Colleagues, Juniors, Relatives			
Seniors, Supervisors, Professionals, Strangers, Organization			

Q.21. Do you feel at ease with the technological and functional aspects of the email software application (i.e. editing the text of emails, spell check, syntax checks, attachments, cut paste, etc)?

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

Q.22. How would you react (your opinion) to the following statement: " The new channels of communication (emails, bulletin boards, WebPages, blogs etc) are deteriorating the English language rather than enhancing it."

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q. 23. What difficulties do you face with respect to language and structure of emails that you receive and send to the three categories of audience mentioned in above questions?

1. _____
      _____

2. _____
   _____

3. _____
   _____

The information you have provided will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for sparing your precious time to fill up the questionnaire.

Papers Published

1. **Nirban V.S**. and M Raman. "Impact of E-business and Personal Communication on the Language of Email: A Critical Analysis", Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on E-Business, Rangsit University, Bangkok, Thailand, 06 - 07 November, 2008, 27-34.

2**. Nirban V.S.** and M. Raman. "Identity Chaos in Computer Mediated Communication", International Journal of communication. Vol. 16 (2006), 55-65.

3. Sharma S. and **V.S. Nirban.** "New Role of Women in Advertising", International Journal of communication. Vol. 16 (2006), 77 - 85.

Papers Presented in Conferences and Seminars

1. **Nirban V.S**. and M Raman (2008), "Impact of E-business and Personal Communication on the Language of Email: A Critical Analysis", at the '7th International Conference on E-Business', Rangsit University, Bangkok, Thailand, 06 - 07 November, 2008.

2. **Nirban V.S**. and M Raman (2008), "An Investigation into Lingua Franca of Virtual Community: Study of Emails and WebPages ", at the 'International Seminar on Margins and Nation Spaces: The Aesthetics of Cultural Expressions', University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 08 - 09 February, 2008.

3. **Nirban V.S**. and M Raman (2007), "Computer Mediated Communication: A Language Perspective of Organizational and Personal Communication Through WebPages", National Conference on Innovative Approaches and Techniques of Teaching English, PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore, 13 - 14 July, 2007.

4. **Nirban V.S**. and M Raman (2007), "Style of Email Writing: A Pragmatic Approach", 2nd International and 38 Annual ELTAI Conference, Crescent Engineering College, Chennai- 9-10 February, 2007.

Brief Biography of the Candidate

Virendra Singh Nirban is presently working as a lecturer in the Languages Group at BITS, Pilani for the last six years. He did M.A.(Hons.) English and M.E. (Software Systems) from BITS, Pilani. He has worked for over 3 year in software industry with national and international customer groups. He has published several research papers in International and National journals. His areas of interest are Computer-mediated communication, linguistic analysis of online content, mass media content design, business communication and effective public speaking. He has also presented a paper in International conference abroad.

Brief Biography of the Supervisor

Dr. Meenakshi Raman is an Associate Professor of English and is the Chief, Publications and Media Relations Unit at BITS, Pilani. She has authored six books and edited three volumes on English and Communication published by the leading publishers of India. Under her supervision, two faculty members have completed their Ph.D. degrees and currently two more faculty members are pursuing their Ph.D. She has served as an examiner for Ph.D. theses and M.Phil. dissertations and she is on the editorial board of national and international journals.

Besides teaching several courses in communication to the students of First Degree and Higher Degree Programs of BITS, Pilani, Dr. Raman also teaches these courses to professionals such as hospital administrators, corporate executives, etc., who are registered in the off-campus programs of the Institute. She coordinates professional

training programs involving managerial and communication skills conducted at BITS and also the GRE and TOEFL preparation courses.

Dr. Raman has delivered lectures on communication, conducted workshops on Interviewing Skills, Presentation Skills, GD Skills and English Proficiency at various forums and published several papers in this area. She has published popular articles in newspapers as well in the area of communication. Member of many professional organizations including, IATEFL (U.K.), TESOL Inc., Virginia, USA., and AIMS (Association of Indian Management Scholars), Dr.Raman has participated and presented papers at various national and international conferences including the ones in Texas, USA; Dubai, UAE; Aberdeen, UK; and Durban, South Africa.