

Social Networking Among UWC Students: Instant Messaging Genres and Registers

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KEYWORDS

Social Networking

Instant Messaging

Social Support

Genre

Register

WhatsApp

MXit

BlackBerry Messenger

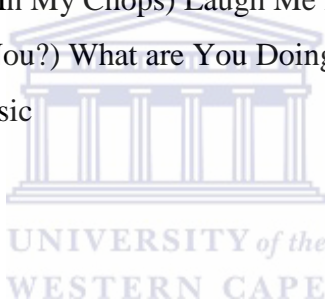
Youth

Discourse Analysis



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LCS	Language and Communications Studies
EMS	Economic Management Sciences
SNS	Social Networking Sites
WHO	World Health Organisation
BIS	BlackBerry Internet Service
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
IM	Instant Messaging
BBM	BlackBerry Messenger
LOL	Laugh Out Loud
LMK	Laugh Me Finish
LMJ	(Lag My Jas) Laugh Me Crazy
LMBIMC	(Lag My Binne In My Chops) Laugh Me In My Chops
WMJN	(Wat Maak Jy Nou?) What are You Doing?
L2M	Listening to Music
GTG/ G2G	Got To Go
H2G	Have To Go
BRB	Be Right Back
WUU2	What are You Up To?
LMIMM	Laugh Me In My Moer



ABSTRACT

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Contemporary research has pointed to the importance of social media in the lives of young people today. This project aims to explore the emerging discourse conventions and generic structures of chat conversations on social networking media applications such as MXit, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) and WhatsApp. The data for this project was acquired from undergraduate students between first- and third-year of study at the University of the Western Cape across four years (2010-2012 and 2014). The data is of three types: instant messaging chats which were collected from 2010 to 2012, and questionnaires and a focus group interview which were conducted in 2014. The main theoretical frameworks used for this project are genre and register theory by Martin and Rose (2003), Eggins and Slade (1997), Chandler (1997), Eggins (2004), Halliday and Hasan (1985). Bock (2013) and Spilioti (2011) were also used for the chat analyses. In this project I argue that although generic structures in instant messaging (IM) are conventionalised they still show a great amount of hybridity and fluidity. One of the main findings illustrates how different participants choose to begin and end their chats, whether it is with or without a greeting, and although they may be flouting the conventions of IM chatting they are not necessarily considered to be impolite. Furthermore, the findings of this project explores how the evolution and advancement of technology has contributed to the style of chatting as well as the norms of instant messaging as a genre.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Social Networking Among UWC Students: Instant Messaging Genres and Registers*, is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: Nausheena Begum Dalwai

Signed: _____ Date: _____



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In the name of the Almighty, the Endlessly Gracious and Oft Merciful.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

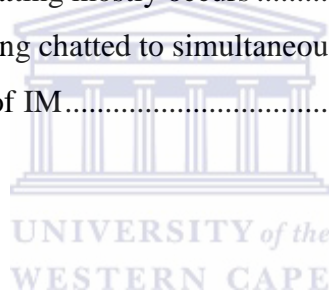
KEYWORDS.....	II
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
DECLARATION.....	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VIII
LIST OF FIGURES	XI
LIST OF TABLES	XII
CHAPTER ONE	1
1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background and Context.....	3
1.2.1 Social Networking	3
1.2.2 Social Support.....	5
1.3 Main Research Aim and Objectives.....	9
1.3.1 Main Aim	9
1.3.2 Specific Research Objectives.....	9
1.4 Overview of Thesis	10
CHAPTER TWO	11
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Social Networking Media.....	11
2.2.1 Changing Cell Phone Technologies	14
2.2.2 Instant Messaging Applications	15
2.2.3 Features of Textese	20

2.3	Social Media and Relationships	22
2.4	Local Research on Youth and Social Media Chatting	26
2.5	Systemic Functional Linguistics	30
2.5.1	Genre.....	31
2.5.2	Register	34
2.6	Conclusion.....	36
CHAPTER THREE.....		37
3	METHODOLOGY.....	37
3.1	Introduction	37
3.2	Research Approach	37
3.2.1	Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis	37
3.2.2	Discourse Analysis as a Research Approach	38
3.3	Research Population.....	39
3.4	Description of Data Sets.....	41
3.4.1	Chats	41
3.4.2	Questionnaires.....	43
3.4.3	Focus Group.....	44
3.5	Limitations to the Study	45
3.6	Ethics.....	46
3.7	Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTER FOUR.....		47
4	CHAT ANALYSES: TOPIC, GENRE AND REGISTER.....	47
4.1	Introduction	47
4.2	Topic Analysis.....	47
4.3	Generic and Register Analysis of Complete Chats	49
4.4	Openings and Closings Analysis.....	63
4.5	Interview Data	77

4.6	Conclusion.....	80
CHAPTER FIVE		83
5 FOCUS GROUP AND QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSES.....		83
5.1	Introduction	83
5.2	Questionnaire Data Analysis	83
5.3	Focus Group Interview	90
5.3.1	Interview Context.....	90
5.4	Interview Data Analysis	91
5.4.1	First Cellular Phone	91
5.4.2	MXit Enabled Phones	95
5.4.3	Texting Features and Formulaic Expressions	96
5.4.4	Shift to Smartphones.....	99
5.4.5	Affordances of Smartphones.....	101
5.4.6	Negotiated Norms of Chatting	102
5.4.7	Chatting Nicely or Chatting Crap	103
5.5	Conclusion.....	105
CHAPTER SIX		107
6 CONCLUSION		107
6.1	Introduction	107
6.2	Discussion of the Objectives	108
6.3	Conclusion.....	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY		113
APPENDICES		122
Appendix A- Sample chats from the corpus		122
Appendix B- Consent form for chats		156
Appendix C- Instant Messaging Questionnaire		157
Appendix D- Focus group consent form		160

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: Social Network Illustration	12
Figure 2-2: Icons for some Instant Messaging sites.....	16
Figure 2-3: MXit logo.....	17
Figure 2-4: Image of BBM logo	18
Figure 2-5: Image of WhatsApp logo	20
Figure 4-1: Generic Structure of an IM Chat.....	50
Figure 5-1: Frequency of messaging applications	84
Figure 5-2: Daily time spent chatting	85
Figure 5-3: Most frequent chatting partner.....	86
Figure 5-4: Most frequent location when chatting.....	87
Figure 5-5: Time of day when chatting mostly occurs	87
Figure 5-6: Amount of people being chatted to simultaneously.....	88
Figure 5-7: Most useful features of IM.....	89



LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1: Language Statistics.....39
Table 4-1: Topic Analysis.....48
Table 4-2: Linguistic Features54
Table 4-3: Greetings Table65
Table 4-4: Closings Table.....72



CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The growth of social networking media is a recent phenomenon, which is popular not just among the youth but adult users as well. Social networking sites are used by the youth as a means of socialising and communicating with their friends anywhere, anytime and at a minimal cost, thereby affirming friendship networks with peers both locally and across the globe.

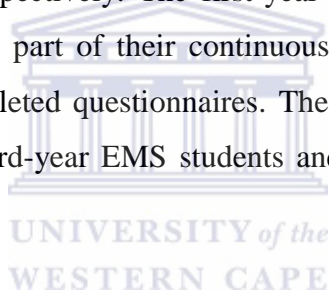
Communication is an ever evolving aspect of human existence and has evolved significantly since the beginning of human communication. As a result of recent technological developments, new forms of communication have emerged, such as instant messaging via chat applications, WhatsApp, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), Facebook, Twitter, email or even Skype; which is a virtual face-to-face mode of communication (boyd and Ellison, 2007). As a result of the migration to these forms of communication, new unconventional forms of language have been adapted as the norm for this type of communication. These new and emerging forms are of interest to this project.

The aim of this research is to explore the emerging discourse conventions of instant messaging (IM) chatting on social networking media applications such as MXit, BBM and WhatsApp among the students of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). In particular, this research project aims to describe the *registers* and the associated *genres* that are used by students when communicating with peers on a daily basis through social networking media such as MXit or IM. This project also explores the typical openings and closings used in these instant messaging conversations and how the norms of chatting have evolved with the progression of technology. The highly affective personal language of IM chatting is also discussed as well as the ways in which interpersonal relationships are strengthened through instant messaging chats.

This project is part of a bigger project and it also builds on my Honours research titled, “The use of Intimate Language by UWC Students in Social Networking Media” (2010), which I

completed under the supervision of Zannie Bock. Furthermore, another paper that this project draws on in terms of the theoretical framework is that of Bock (2013) titled, “Cyber socialising: emerging genres and registers of intimacy among young South African students”. My role on this project was that of a research participant and assistant. The data for this project was that used for my honours project and thus I am familiar with the data. The final paper that this project draws on is a forthcoming chapter in a collected edition, of which I am a co-author, together with Bock and Stroud titled “Cool mobilities: youth style and mobile telephony in late-modern South Africa”.

The data for this research paper were gathered mostly from the first-year Language and Communication Studies (LCS) students on the LCS 111 course at UWC. Some data was also gathered from second-year Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) students and the interview data includes Economic and Management Sciences and Arts students who were in their second- and third-years respectively. The first-year students were required to collect their own data and analyse it as part of their continuous assessment for the module. The second-year EMS students completed questionnaires. The final data set was a focus group interview conducted with the third-year EMS students and the second- and third-year Arts students.



The data was analysed as follows: The chat data was analysed qualitatively, with some quantitative counting of features, etc. using Discourse Analysis in the form of genre and register analysis. Of interest is also the ways in which social media can offer social support to individuals through the registers they use as well as how they strengthen their interpersonal relationships. I have also looked at how individuals are able to maintain their social relationships via these social networks. The second set of data was gathered in the form of questionnaires and qualitatively analysed. This data was collected from second-year Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) students. The third source of data was collected through conducting a focus group discussion which I analysed qualitatively in terms of what the participants said about the evolution of technology, their norms and habits of chatting. The interview data was also used to triangulate the data sets and the analyses cross reference one another to show similarities and differences.

The following references informed the analysis of genre: Eggins (2004); Chandler (1997); Fairclough (1995); Kress (1988) and Bock (2013) and register: Eggins (2004); Halliday and

Hasan (1985) and Trosborg (1997). For the analysis of the ‘openings and closings’ the theories of Tereza Spilioti (2011), Arthur Frank (1982), Emanuel Schegloff and Harvey Sacks (1974) were used. The interview data is informed by, amongst others, Ling and Baron (2013).

1.2 Background and Context

1.2.1 Social Networking

Social networking sites have grown rapidly since their debut in the late 1990’s. According to boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites (SNS) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyberworld and Bebo have attracted millions of users, some of which have integrated these sites into their everyday lives. Boyd and Ellison (2007: 2) define social networking sites as:

web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and (3) traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Thus, the users of these social networking sites are able to choose who they would like to connect with. This is similar to instant messaging (IM) chats, for example MXit or BBM, where one has to accept an invitation from someone to be able to chat to that particular person. IM is thus simply the exchange of private messages with selected people. Mobile IM chat applications like MXit and BBM allow users to have multiple private conversations as well as group chats.

According to Marquez (2003), instant messaging is a relatively new means of online communication. Instant messaging allows two individuals to communicate in real time through text chats. Marquez also argues that the biggest group of IM users in the United States are college students. Furthermore, boyd and Ellison (2007) state that what makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to expose their social networks, where people are able to choose who they communicate with and get an idea of what their social circles look like.

Through these networking sites we are able to communicate with people far and wide. Communication is a key aspect of every human beings' existence. Kress (2010: 19) states that:

Communication always has been and will remain subject to social, cultural and political givens. The environments, conditions, and choices are mediated by the interest of members of social groups so that practices, resources and technologies of communication respond at different times, to social, economic and technological development.

Thus communication is something which is socially constituted and the rise of IM communication is part of the technological developments of the late modern globalised world.

According to Marquez (2003) communicating via instant messaging enables the individual to get through their daily activities such as, work, chores, cooking and so on, while still remaining sociable. As there are only so many hours in a day, one is not always able to do everything one intends to do as well as meeting people and socialising. Instant messaging chats are often used as a means of finding out how friends, family or other individuals are, as well as a means of support to these people.

However, Tyler (2002) suggests that real-time forms of interaction which are face-to-face or via phone are of a higher quality than online interaction because, as studies have shown, people who talk with others in real space and time tend to have a better overall emotional well-being. Wellman (2002) further supports this by stating that face-to-face interaction provides nuances that cannot be reproduced by online communication. Notwithstanding, from personal experience I have discovered that many people are more comfortable communicating via IM chatting than face-to-face communication. Moody (2002) supports this by stating that studies by Parks and Floyd (1996) have found that shy people seem to derive as much social support from online communication as they do from face to face communication. It can thus be argued that instant messaging for some people is a preferred means of communicating and can play an emotionally supportive role in their lives.

Mobile phones have thus become an integral part of the lives of most individuals. Mobile phones are physically portable and hence physically mobile as they are hand-held devices of various kinds. Mobile phones also lend communicational mobility through the fast increasing range of features as the technology advances. In other words, as technology advances, mobile phones are improved and upgraded and thus communications via these devices are becoming more advanced, more multimodal and efficient as well.

1.2.2 Social Support

One of the research foci for this project includes the extent to which people use instant messaging to establish and strengthen social relationships as well as offer social support to one another. This section will be looking at the concept of social support and how it intersects with social media. People tend to associate with those with whom they share similarities. Thus, it is evident that relationships occur between people who find a likeness in each other. As social networks are used as a means of maintaining social relationships they are also used as a mode for offering support to friends or chat buddies if one is unable to offer the support in person. According to Cobb (1976: 301-302):

Social support begins in utero, is best recognized at the maternal breast, and is communicated in a variety of ways, but especially in the way the baby is held (supported). As life progresses, support is derived increasingly from other members of the family, then from peers at work and in the community, and perhaps, in case of special need, from a member of the helping professions.

Social support happens and starts at home as if the seed is planted with the mother and other experiences nurtures the growth of the support. However, with age, and over time, it is derived from a number of sources.

As noted above, social media can play a vital role in enabling social connections and support. Ross and Deverell (2010) believe that being integrated into social networks and peer groups is a critical part of the maintenance of psychosocial health. According to Ross and Deverell (2010: 15), the World Health Organisation (WHO) formulated a definition for health in 1948 which states, "Health is a positive state of physical, mental and social well-being not merely

the absence of disease or injury that varies over time along a continuum”. In addition, the author looks at how Taylor (2006: 4) defines health psychology as being “devoted to understanding psychological influences on how people stay healthy, why they become ill, and how they respond when they do get ill”. Being integrated into social networks is an important part of eco-social well-being and the use of social networking media is one of the ways in which the youth maintain relationships and social connections. Thus, social networking media have a role to play in the maintenance of the general well-being of a population. (See also: Hupcey (1998), Cobb (1976), Shumaker and Brownell (1984), Antonucci (1985), Lin *et al.* (1979), Vaux (1988), and Hui-Jung (2009) for similar arguments).

It can therefore be argued that support comes in different forms and from different origins and could be said to be diverse. According to Hupcey (1998), many theorists have disagreed with regards to the theoretical definitions of social support and argued that they are too restrictive and inadequate because the concept is multifaceted. Vaux (1988: 28) states that “no single and simple definition of social support will prove adequate because social support is a metaconstruct”. Vaux (1988) also argues that social support includes three constructs, which are “support networks, supportive behaviours and a subjective appraisal of support”.

There are five major theoretical definitions and categories for social support that Judith Hupcey (1998) discusses in her paper, which I will present below.

The first category is *the type of support that is provided to people*. According to Cohen *et al* (1985: 75), in Hupcey (1998: 1232), social support is defined as “the resources that are provided by other persons”. Cobb (1976) had a more specific definition for social support which states that “social support is information leading a person to believe that he/she is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and/or that he/she belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation” (in Hupcey, 1998: 1232). This means that for people to feel socially supported, they need to feel acknowledged, loved and integrated. According to Cobb (1976: 300), “information that one is cared for and loved is transmitted in intimate situations involving mutual trust”. In this type of relationship where there is mutual trust, one participant has a need to seek out affectionate care and social support, the other participant has a need to offer warmth, physical affection and emotional support, and for both participants the need for affiliation, is fulfilled and met. This is referred to as *emotional*

support by Cobb (1976). Clearly in terms of this project, the very fact that people are connected on social media networks enables them to feel integrated.

The second category revolves around the *recipients' perceptions*. Procidano and Heller (1983: 2), in Hupcey (1998), define social support as “the extent to which an individual believes that his/her needs for support, information, and feedback are fulfilled”. This type of support revolves around what the recipient believes he or she is receiving, whether they believe that their needs are being met as well as whether they feel that they are being supported in all the ways that they need to be supported.

The third category is the *intentions or behaviours of the provider of support*. Shumaker and Brownell (1984: 13) define this as “social support is an exchange of resources between two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient”. Shumaker and Brownell (1984) believe that, in order for support to be successful, there needs to be two people who exchange or share equally in all relevant ways as well as have the intention to offer support and behave as such. Shumaker and Brownell (1984: 15) state that “social support is the essence of being ‘social’”, which in simple terms is mutual caring and nurturing. Kaplan (1977) cited in Shumaker and Brownell (1984), further supports this idea by arguing that social support is the degree to which an individual’s basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others. Therefore, communicating with peers and friends through social media and IM chatting aids in achieving this gratification.

The fourth category is *related reciprocity* which is the exchange of resources between the recipient and the provider. Antonucci (1985) argues that the process of giving, receiving and exchanging of support is referred to as the function of social support. Here Antonucci (1985) believes that the amount of support that is given to an individual should be reciprocated by the individual receiving support. In other words, there should be an equal amount of give and take of support. In IM terms, for the relationship to develop and for the chatting to be supportive, the recipient needs to respond, and interaction needs to occur.

The fifth and final category looks at social support with regards to *social connections*. According to Lin *et al.* (1979: 109), “social support may be defined as support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the larger community”. It is believed that the more support an individual receives from the people around them and who

love them, the less likely they are to experience illness. IM chatting clearly helps many participants achieve social connections. Thus, IM chatting has the potential to meet a number of criteria which underpin social support and ecosocial well-being. Social connectedness in terms of social support in this project is achieved through IM chatting.

Other scholars also support the positive impact of social support on health, such as Hui-Jung (2009), and Veiel (1992). Support has been noted to aid people with regards to health, “Social support is crucial to individuals’ health status” (Hui-Jung, 2009: 31). Further Hui-Jung (2009) argues that according to research, well-established associations have been discovered between individuals’ physical and mental well-being, and the social support they receive. Individuals are said to constantly look for or take part in support-seeking activities to help them through daily problems or to help them face critical moments in their lives. Social support has been discovered to help individuals in many different aspects of their lives in terms of their physical and mental well-being. Veiel (1992: 156) states that social support has been described as a factor that lowers the rate of general mortality, is a possible protection against depression and psychological distress, is able to reduce complications during pregnancy, as well as prevent or alleviate a range of other ailments and disorders.

According to Hui-Jung (2009: 33), “Individuals with problems engage in a series of conversations with their prospective helpers to seek support. This type of conversation is termed ‘troubles talk’, in which the social support process is initiated”. This term, “trouble talks”, was coined and defined by Jefferson (1980: 153), in Hui- Jung (2009) as “a conversation in which troubles are reported”.

From the above, it is evident that social support is a necessary component for a person’s general well-being. One important way in which the participants in this study elicit and give social support is through social media to ‘chat’, ‘make plans’, engage in ‘troubles talk’ and generally stay connected. In my analysis, I shall be exploring the ways in which this support is manifested in IM chats.

1.3 Main Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Main Aim

The main aim of this research is to explore the emerging discourse conventions and the generic structures in chat conversations on social networking applications such as MXit, BBM and WhatsApp, among UWC students. What I find particularly interesting is the generic structures and registers that characterise these chats, the openings and closings which appear in these chats as well as how the norms of chatting have evolved with the progression of technology. Another interest was the use of affective personal language of instant messaging chatting used to strengthen interpersonal relationships as well as offer social support. One of the main reasons for the initiation of most of the chats is to establish some sort of contact with their peers and to indulge in phatic communication. Some of the chats do offer support and many of the participants chat to one another without realising that they are offering support to each other. Another focus of this project is that of the medium, which these students use to communicate, the shift to newer technology and how this shift has affected their style of chatting or communicating.

1.3.2 Specific Research Objectives

The specific research objectives of this research will be:

1. To identify the typical topics which recur throughout the data and the extent to which they relate to issues of health broadly defined as psychosocial and emotional well-being.
2. To analyse the generic structure of these conversations and to explore the extent to which these conversations are conventionalised and dynamic.
3. To analyse the personal intimate register used to strengthen interpersonal relationships: What are the linguistic features which characterise this register?
4. To explore the extent to which these discourse features pattern across conversations between different gender and relationship configurations.
5. To explore the ways in which participants use these chats to elicit and give social support.

6. To investigate the ways in which the shift in technology impacts on the norms of chatting. How has the evolution of technology contributed to the change in the style of chatting, as well as the norms of IM chatting as a genre?

1.4 Overview of Thesis

Chapter One gives an introduction and overview to the project. It discusses the main objectives as well as indicating the questions this research aims to answer.

Chapter Two discusses and reviews the relevant theories which aid in structuring and focussing this research as well as the theoretical framework which is used to analyse the data.

Chapter Three is the methodology which discusses the research participants, research approach, data collection methods as well as the data, limitations and ethics of the data collection.

Chapter Four is the first data analysis chapter. It focuses on the chat analysis, which is the genre and register analysis of complete instant messaging chat conversations as well as the analysis of the openings and closings of the chats.

Chapter Five is the second analysis chapter which discusses the findings of the questionnaires as well as the focus group interview.

Chapter Six concludes the project and reflects on the overall findings.

CHAPTER TWO

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of theories relevant to this research project namely: social networking media, changing cellphone technologies, instant messaging applications, features of textese, social media and relationships, systemic functional linguistics and a section on local research on youth and social media chatting. In terms of social networking media, this chapter reviews the work of theorists such as boyd (2007), Thomas (2006), Thurlow (2003) and Thurlow and Poff (2013) amongst others, as well as the reasons that these sites and applications are being used to communicate. This chapter also looks at the different types of social networking media and the characteristics of these applications, such as: texting, changing cellphone technologies, instant messaging applications such as: MXit, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), and WhatsApp, and features of textese.

The next section focuses on social media and relationships and discusses theories on phatic communication, friendships as well as intimacy. For the genre and register section, I will refer to the SFL theorists: Eggins and Slade (1997), and Martin and Rose (2003/2007). I will also discuss research that is similar to my project by other theorists such as: Dalwai (2010), Bock (2013), Deumert (2014), Dyers and Davids (2015) and finally Bock, Dalwai and Stroud (forthcoming). I shall argue that these theories, more specifically Bock (2013), offer a framework that is particularly useful for the analysis of my data.

2.2 Social Networking Media

Social networking media remain highly popular amongst the youth as well as older generations across the globe. Boyd (2007) states that even though the novelty has worn off, social networking sites still remain important in teenagers' social lives. Social networks, since their launch in 1997 (which was a site called 'SixDegrees.com'), are a way of instantly communicating with people who you do not see every day or who may be half way across the world. It is also used as a means of gaining social status (boyd, 2007). In boyd (2007: 1) a participant stated that "if you're not on MySpace, you don't exist". This could be the same

for all social networking media; you cease to be socially visible if you are not online. These social networking sites are environments where people are able to gather ‘publicity’ by being sociable through mediating technology. Social network sites are a form of public space as they have many purposes in social life. They allow people to make sense of social phenomena through participation in discussion forums. These offer spaces for establishing norms as well as allowing people to express themselves freely. Thus, boyd (2007) argues that even though particular social networking sites may come and go, the manner in which youth choose to communicate through these social networking sites helps with identity formation, status negotiations as well as peer to peer sociality. Hence, there is a positive aspect to these types of social media in terms of them helping youth to assert themselves as individuals and integrate into a broader peer group. This feature of interconnectedness is reflected in the icon for social networks, represented in Figure 2-1 below.



Figure 2-1: Social Network Illustration

A number of research studies of youth interactions through social media have been conducted (boyd 2007, Deumert and Masinyana 2008, Thurlow 2003, Thurlow and Poff 2013). These studies generally focus on the role of these media in the social lives of the youth as well as some of the well-known orthographic modifications in the language of texting or textese. Deumert and Masinyana (2008) explore the language choices in use in South African texting among bilingual users. However, none of these studies have focussed on the generic structure of these chats nor the typical linguistic features of the register used for chatting (besides some of the obvious modifications such as the use of emoticons and unconventional spellings). More recently, however, Bock (2013) as well as Bock, Dalwai and Stroud (forthcoming)

explore these generic structures as well as the registers which contribute to the formation and developing of these generic structures in IM chatting.

One of the most popular forms of social media is texting. *Texting* as a primary form of social media first made its appearance in the early to mid 1990's and has since become very popular around the world following the rapid spread of mobile phones in general. According to Thurlow and Poff (2013: 1), the terms 'text messaging' or just 'texting' refers to the brief typed messages sent using the Short Message Service (SMS) technology through mobile phones, Personal Digital Assistants (PDA), smartphones or web browsers.

According to Umberto Eco (2002) in Thurlow (2003: 2), we currently live in an age "where the diminutive, the brief and the simple are prized in communication". The initial purpose of text messaging used to be mainly transactional, but has since evolved into much more. As Thurlow (2003: 2) argues, "text messaging is in fact yet another example of how the human need for social intercourse, a kind of 'communication imperative', bends and ultimately co-opts technology to suit its own ends, regardless of any commercial or military ambition for the technology". Thurlow (2003) further argues that both 'teen talk' and 'net lingo' or 'web speak' are often blamed for supposedly negative impacts on standard or 'traditional' ways of communicating. As a result of the above mentioned 'ways of communicating', the unconventional language which is being used by youth today has emerged.

Texting has also been the focus of much criticism and 'moral panic'. Sutherland (2002) in Thurlow (2003) believes that text or 'textese' as a dialect is "thin" and "unimaginative". It is said to be "bleak, bald, sad shorthand". Thus, Sutherland (2002, in Thurlow 2003) feels that "linguistically it's all pig's ear" and that "texting is penmanship for illiterates". This could be interpreted as Sutherland not appreciating the standard language being 'damaged' by shorthand, because it is being robbed of its standard form (or 'purity'). However, Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002), in Thurlow (2003), argue that this 'unique' style of writing provides opportunities for creativity (see also Deumert (2014) in section 2.4 for a sustained argument about the inherent creativity of mobile communication). The language of the internet, which is referred to as 'net speak', is said to rely on characteristics of both speech and writing. Winzker, Southwood and Huddleston (2009) suggest that within net speak, the creative adaptation of spelling, punctuation and capitalisation are in the place of the things that cannot be seen through net speak, which are hand gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice.

Thus, many of the rules of grammar and style are ignored through this substitution. The creative use of symbols and spacing serves to convey meaning and emphasis, which is visible in the repetition of letters, punctuation marks as well as in the use of capitalisation (Winzker *et al.* 2009). Thus, the emerging norms of textese allow for some of the affective communication associated with spoken face-to-face interaction.

Before we look at the different types of social media we need to look at the types of mobile devices that allow for these social networks. Smartphones have become very important in most people's lives; they have become what the Samsung 'Galaxy S4' series advertisements refer to as a 'Life Companion'. Nevertheless, these smartphones have been developed out of the older less sophisticated 'black and white' phones, a short history of which is presented in the following section.

2.2.1 Changing Cell Phone Technologies

According to Lacohee, Wakeford and Pearson, (2003), the first cellular telephone system came into operation in 1979 in Tokyo and in the late 1980's a second generation cellular phone was released. These phones were referred to as 'mobile bricks' as they were very big with extending aerials. In 1995, the hype for cellular phones started increasing and although the size of the mobile phones had dramatically decreased they were still significantly big with long antennas (hongkiat.com). These mobile phones are now referred to as the 'black and white' screen mobile phones. As the years progressed so the design of the mobile phone improved. They became smaller, slimmer, and the long antennas became shorter and shorter until it was replaced with an internal antenna. With these developments the visual graphics of the mobile phones improved as well. Mobile phones were developed with colour screens and soon these phones were able to use music as a ringtone and not just the standard tones that were pre-programmed onto the mobiles. In the year 2000, the world's first black and white 'touch screen' mobile was released (hongkiat.com). Although this touch screen was not very advanced, it was soon improved and today we have the most advanced and hi-tech version of the touch screen that is currently on the market. In 2002 the first colour screen cell phone was released with an integrated camera.

Mobile phones went through constant evolution and developments for improvements. Mobile phones became more stylish, techno-savvy, and attractive. In 2008 the QWERTY key-pad

was introduced, followed by the introduction of the 'BlackBerry era'. This was when smartphones took the world by storm and Google's Android OS was also introduced. Most smartphones allow for the applications to be modified as per the user's preference. All smartphones have 'QWERTY' key-pads, whether physical or digital for mobile phones with touch screens. Thus, the development of mobile phones has never stagnated and is constantly being improved.

Some possible aspects that could have an impact on popularity of social networks and instant messaging in particular is cost, reliability, that it could be asynchronous or synchronous depending on the need of the conversation at the time, and convenience. Negative impacts include the fact that social networking and instant messaging can become time consuming, lacks physical contact and face-to-face communication, could be easily misinterpreted, and could cause problems between two people in a relationship because of communication barriers as well as the inability to read body language. This then brings us to the discussion of instant messaging applications.

2.2.2 Instant Messaging Applications

According to boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites (SNS) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyberworld, and Bebo attracted millions of users, some of whom have integrated these sites into their everyday lives. Boyd and Ellison define social networking sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and these made by others within the system" (2007: 2). Thus the users of these social networking sites are able to choose who it is that they would like to connect with. Instant messaging (IM) applications, for example MXit works on this principle: one has to accept an invitation from someone to be able to chat to that particular person.

Most social networking sites also provide an application for users to leave messages on their friend's profiles, leave inbox messages or even to IM chat via the social networking sites. IM is thus simply private messages with selected people. However, if one looks at mobile IM chat applications like MXit, WhatsApp and BlackBerry Messenger, they allow the users to

have multiple private conversations as well as group chats. Figure 2-2 illustrates some of the icons associated with instant messaging: IM chat, Yahoo talk, Skype, and Google Talk.



Figure 2-2: Icons for some Instant Messaging sites.

A number of different IM applications have evolved over the years. The following sections give an overview of the most important ones in terms of this project.

2.2.2.1 MXit

One of the earliest most popular and well-known instant messaging applications in South Africa is MXit. MXit was developed by a company based in Stellenbosch called MXit Lifestyle (Pty) Ltd. According to MXit.com, MXit was launched in 2004. Thomas (2006) states that knowledge of this application quickly spread by word of mouth. I personally found out about MXit in my final year of high school in 2005 from a friend. The reason that it was spread through word of mouth was because of the ‘coolness factor’: it enabled users to construct a personal identity that they felt they wanted to project to society. According to Winzker *et al.* (2009), high school learners used MXit mainly for social purposes, for example, staying in touch with friends or simply just chatting, and to a lesser extent for other purposes such as making arrangements with their parents, obtaining essential information or entering competitions.

MXit allows users to send and receive one-on-one text messages and multimedia messages. It also gives access to chat rooms, which is an open service that enables users to chat to strangers. Some of the MXit features are contact lists, file transfers and photo sharing. MXit is constantly being improved and updated and is now able to support the function of profile

pictures, tabbed conversations, as well as message formatting. As a MXit user, you are able to change your presence, which are of three kinds: online, away and busy, as well as being able to change your mood to express how you are feeling. Other features include themes, to enable you to personalize your MXit, emoticons, which are symbol emotions, as well as group chat - known as 'MultiMX', which is much like a conference call only it is in the form of text. MXit is a social application which enables young people to communicate with their friends at an affordable cost. As MXit is a social and informal application, it is not necessary nor the norm to use a standard language when communicating. Figure 2-3 illustrates the logo of MXit, which states "JOIN THE EVOLUTION". This was seen as an encouragement for people to join MXit and not to be left behind as the rest of the world was evolving.



Figure 2-3: MXit logo

The application has, since its initial release in 2004, become internationally distributed and was used in over 120 countries. According to Vodacom (2011), MXit had reached a total of 35.1 million users in 2011. However, Wilson (2013) via Techcentral.co.za states that a study conducted by World Wide Worx and Fuseware found that MXit had dropped to 9.5 million users by August 2012, and that this declined by approximately 2 million users the following year. In other words, its popularity has been on a steep decline since 2012.

According to Thomas (2006), MXit had a range of users, the majority of whom were aged 12-17 years old, followed by the group aged 18-25 years. According to Chigona and Chigona (2008), one of the factors that attributed to the rapid growth of MXit was the cost. The cost of MXit was based on the amount of data which was sent and was only two South African cents per message, unlike SMS which was between 70 and 80 South African cents at the time.

This, however, may vary depending on your service provider. However, since the smartphone evolution, MXit currently runs on the same data tariffs as other IM applications.

However, since the arrival of BlackBerry, people have been shifting over to BlackBerry's own signature instant messaging application called BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), which is only accessible through a BlackBerry mobile phone. The reason for this may be the convenience of the BlackBerry mobile, which gives its users unlimited Internet access for a low monthly cost for the BlackBerry Internet Service (BIS).

2.2.2.2 BlackBerry Messenger

BlackBerry mobile solution was introduced to the world in 1999 by Research in Motion (RIM), now known as BlackBerry Limited, which is a global leader in wireless innovation. Since its debut in 1999, BlackBerry phones have been used by millions of people (www.us.blackberry.com). One of the main reasons for its popularity in South Africa was its relatively cheaper functioning cost. BlackBerry Internet Service (BIS) runs on a month to month basis, where in South Africa we pay an amount of approximately R60 (since around the year 2010) for this unlimited internet service. BlackBerry has its own instant messaging application called BlackBerry Messenger (BBM). This application allows BlackBerry users to communicate with other BlackBerry users over a data connection. With this application (BBM), one is able to send messages, files, pictures and music, amongst other things. One is also able to change their avatar or profile picture, as well as their status messages. Like MXit this application allows one to have a group chat, where you communicate with more than one contact at a time. As a result of this convenience, many students have shifted to using BlackBerry mobile phones. Figure 2-4 illustrates the BlackBerry Messenger logo.



Figure 2-4: Image of BBM logo

I had a BlackBerry for a time as well because of the convenience it afforded with regards to the internet at no extra cost other than the cost of your BIS. As a student, you constantly need to check emails and other important information sites and having a BlackBerry with an active BIS is all you need to get to these things anywhere and anytime. As my data was collected over a period of three years, from 2010 until 2012 I discovered a slight shift from MXit to other IM sites such as BBM. Although most of the students were still using MXit at the time, in 2012 the shift had started and has increased since then. Bock *et al.* (forthcoming) shows how students have shifted to smartphones and therefore to different IM applications, notably BBM, and increasingly WhatsApp.

2.2.2.3 WhatsApp

WhatsApp Inc is an instant messaging company that was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum who are both former Yahoo employees. WhatsApp has become one of the most popular instant messaging applications amongst smartphone users across all major platforms. According to Schrittwieser, Frühwirt, Kieseberg, Leithner, Mulazzani, Huber and Weippl (2012), WhatsApp is the most popular tested instant messaging application, in terms of people trying out the application. Wilson (2013), via Techcentral.co.za, supports this statement by stating that “WhatsApp is currently the most popular app in the Android, Apple and Windows Phone stores”. The WhatsApp application, unlike BBM which uses a specific ‘pin’ to establish a chatting platform between two BBM users, uses an active cell phone number to enable the successful downloading and usage of the application. As a result of using one’s cell phone number, once you have downloaded the application onto your smartphone, the application automatically generates a contact list in your application from your contact list on your cell phone. This list consists of all your contacts that already have the WhatsApp application on their smartphone. Like most instant messaging applications, WhatsApp allows for individual chats, multiple individual chats, group chats as well as multiple group chats to occur simultaneously. Although it is simple to have an individual chat conversation with a fellow WhatsApp user, if one desires to have a group chat with multiple people the group has to be established and the members have to be added by the ‘Administrator’ of the group. They will then receive an invitation which they could accept or decline.

Applications such as WhatsApp allow for real time text messages to be sent between individuals or groups at no cost (Church and de Oliveira, 2013) aside from the cost of the data that will be incurred due to your service provider. WhatsApp allows the exchange of images, video, audio and, of course, text messages. WhatsApp has a delivery indicator which allows you to see when a contact has last used the application. However, with obvious developments and software upgrades the option to deactivate the ‘last seen’ has been incorporated into the software.

WhatsApp is a private chat platform because to be able to see what someone has been chatting about and with whom, one needs to have one of the cell phones that the conversation had taken place on. The conversations will also stay visible on the application unless the chat is deleted. The application gives the users the option to save the conversations permanently by e-mailing them to themselves or others. Below is an image of the WhatsApp logo (Figure 2-5). One of the research aims of this project is an analysis of linguistic features and registers. For this reason, in the following section I review the features of textese.



Figure 2-5: Image of WhatsApp logo

2.2.3 Features of Textese

Features of textese are well documented in the literature (see, for example, Bieswanger 2007, Thurlow and Poff 2013 and Bloom 2000). There are many forms of textese which are used in my data. The following are a list of linguistic features which are used to analyse the data: initialisms, acronyms, letter/number homophones, phonetic spellings, and clippings.

According to Bieswanger (2007), “Initialisms are shortenings which consist of the first letter or letters of a combination of more than one word”. *Initialisms* are used to express laughter during a chat, as well as in the form of acronyms such as, “BRB” – ‘Be Right Back’, “G2G” – ‘Got To Go’, “WUU2” – ‘What are You Up To’, and so on. Some of the initialisms which are being used in my data are those for expressing laughter, for example: ‘Laugh Out Loud’ – “LOL”, ‘Laugh My Ass Off’ – “LMAO” and ‘Laugh Me In My Moer’ – “LMIMM”. Bloom argues that “abbreviated terminology contributes to the sense of jargon held by a layman or other outsider who lacks the appropriate Rosetta stone to decipher the language” (Bloom, 2000: 1). The same applies to textese or IM language - if one does not understand the ‘language’ of chatting, it will be almost impossible to decipher the intended message.

One kind of initialism is the *acronym*. *Acronyms* are widely used in written text as well as spoken discourse in today’s language. Many phrases are simply identified or recognized by the acronym for which it stands for. “The condensation of a word or phrase into a pronounceable initialism (acronym) seems to be a fairly recent invention, identified as being American. An acronym is a nuance of word-group abbreviation, wherein the word group is pronounceable” (Bloom, 2000: 3). For instance, the title or name of a company is abbreviated to make it easier to remember, for example: ‘KFC’ stands for ‘Kentucky Fried Chicken’. In my data they appear in the forms illustrated in the above paragraph.

Letter/number homophones are used as a shortening in the sense of using one letter or number which sounds like the word intended for use. According to Bieswanger (2007), letters and numbers whose pronunciation is identical with words or parts of words are used to replace words or letter sequences. For example, from my data: “2” is used for “to” or “too”, “b” in place of “be”, “y” is used instead of “why” and the combination “W8” is used instead of “wait”.

According to Bieswanger (2007), *phonetic spellings* are all forms that are shorter than the original word they represent and ultimately go back to the pronunciation of the respective word. These shortenings of the words contain at least one letter or character of the original word or standard spelling of the word. For example: “nyt” for “night” and “fone” for “phone”.

The use of *clippings* occur frequently in my data. According to Bieswanger (2007), clippings refer to all forms of shortenings by which parts of a word are deleted. The clippings can appear at the beginning or the end of the word. For example: “gettin” for ‘getting’ and “xcuse” for ‘excuse’.

These features of textese are always evolving and ever changing. There is no set spelling for a certain word; many variations emerge as there are different accents and languages that have to be accommodated.

Thus, as indicated by the above overview, it can be said that social networking sites and applications play a very important role in the life of modern teenagers. These social networking sites are one of the major sites for identity performance and exploration of social norms and conventions, including a creative space for the development of new styles of writing. They are also, as argued above, one of the ways in which teenagers maintain relationships with friends, romantic partners, and family.

2.3 Social Media and Relationships

We do not often realise that we sit and talk for hours and hours when we are conversing with someone with whom we are comfortable. In 1936, Malinowski (in Jaworski and Coupland, 1999) described how this happened when a number of people sat together at a village fire after work when all the daily tasks were done, or when they chatted while resting from work, gossip about unrelated to what they are doing. These types of conversations are not about set topics and are not governed by a specific topic or genre. These conversations flow freely and unhindered. This easy means of communication is referred to as *‘phatic communication’* which is a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words (Malinowski, 1936 cited in Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

Phatic communication refers to the importance of the interpersonal (not transactional) dimension to communication. According to Žegarac and Clark (1999: 328) Malinowski (1936) argued that:

The social function of phatic communication may be to “overcome the strange, unpleasant tension caused by silence and/or to establish an atmosphere of sociability and personal communion between people”

Thus, it can be said that all of us take part in phatic communication at some point during our daily lives.

An important aspect of our social support networks are *friendships*. According to Hartup and Stevens (1997), most individuals build their lives around friends and family. A friendship, according to them, consists mainly of two individuals who are equally attracted to one another with equality governing the exchanges between the individuals who are involved. They also state that friendships carry expectations that ‘best’ friends will spend more time with one another than with other people because these friendships often include offering emotional support, which entails loyalty, trust, intimacy as well as fun. According to Hartup and Stevens (1997), friends are generally similar to one another in age, gender and ethnicity as well as abilities and behaviour. In this way they have similar ideas and likes which would allow for a friendship which is supportive in many ways.

Ellison (1990: 301) states that with regards to friendships, there are three items which are used to measure social networks: number of friends, frequency of contact with friends and availability of best friends. These three things are common to everyone who establishes interpersonal relationships with others with whom they want to build a bond.

We all generally tend to be attracted to people whom we feel complement our own personalities and with whom we are able to connect on more than just a physical level, not only in terms of age but psychologically, mentally, intellectually as well as emotionally. The natures of these more intimate relationships are reflected in the way we communicate with each other.

The next section reviews research which explores the use of language in the maintenance of intimate relationships. Most of this research focuses on romantic relationships. Although some of the data in this research project is likely to reflect this kind of intimacy, much of it will in all likelihood reflect the intimacy between close friends. However, the research

reviewed below is helpful in identifying linguistic features which establish and maintain intimacy.

According to Bock (2013: 83), to be considered a “proficient cyber socialiser” requires more than simply knowing the generic structure of chatting but that one is also required to know the “highly affective style of chatting”. One of the obvious forms of *intimacy* is that which exists between couples who are dating or in a relationship. Harvey and Shalom (1997: 1) state that “love demands expression”. Thus, human beings have to express their desires for one another in the form of language:

Lucanian psychoanalysis suggests that the compulsion to put our desires into speech stems from the insurmountable obstacle to our ever being able to fulfil them; we are thrown back onto language as a substitute for the blissful *jouissance*. (Harvey and Shalom, 1997: 1)

Thus, the need to be satisfied and the search for happiness or contentment are temporarily fulfilled through the use of intimate language and expression especially when the two people concerned are physically separated by distance or some other barrier. According to Harvey and Shalom (1997: 2), “key aspects of intimacy are worked out and established through verbal signs”.

Harvey and Shalom (1997: 11) propose different features of normal talk which many couples either exploit or re-create in their own intimate talk. Couples often make use of “lexical creativity” during intimate talk. They also tend to violate and exploit morphological rules by creating their own version of vocabulary. One such example they cite is that of “darlingest”, a created superlative form for the word ‘darling’. The *coinage of lexis* is also a common occurrence as well as the establishment of *untypical collocations*. The exploitation of grammatical *word order* is made possible by the familiarity between the two parties who feel comfortable enough to ignore the grammatical rules of Standard English, argue Harvey and Shalom (1997). *Grammatical simplification* is another feature which is typically utilized. Lovers also use a high level of *pet names* to refer to each other. Harvey and Shalom (1997: 11) argue that at the level of discourse “a particularly high frequency of conventional and unusual vocative use within speech turns is also characteristic”.

When couples are together, the way in which they establish and maintain intimacy and desire is through ‘touch and gaze’. This is not possible for lovers who are separated or in different domains and therefore they are forced to make do with telephonic or other electronic media. Channell (1997) examines how a couple uses language to create this intimacy in the place of physical contact.

Channell (1997) analyses an intimate conversation between lovers and their language use in a telephone conversation between lovers. According to Channell (1997), there are many themes that may be reflected within conversations between separated lovers. Some of the most common and important ones are desire, planning how to be together, when they would speak to each other again, the expression of love and longing or care for each other, and the goodbye. Channell suggests that expressions of feelings for one another are an important part of closings. With regards to acquaintances, these closings will usually be limited to, for example, ‘thanks for your help’, whereas between lovers stronger feelings are usually expressed. Thus, this is another way of expressing the kind of intimacy that exists between two parties in a relationship. This kind of talk is also effortlessly interpreted as showing how much a particular couple love each other.

According to Channell (1997: 152), there are strategies for talking sex and showing desire. Metaphor is a common strategy for expressing intimacy. Gibbs and Gerrig (1989) in Channell (1997: 153) argue that “metaphorical talk presupposes and reinforces an intimacy between speaker and listener, and the cultivation of intimacy is, perhaps, a primary function of such language”. Metaphors are also said to transgress taboos which operate in public and non-intimate discourse. For example, reference to underwear in public discourses is a taboo which is neutralized by turning it into a joke. However, Channell (1997) feels that a feature of the discourse of lovers is that they feel permitted to break taboos and that doing this mark their relationship as different and special. This could be as a result of them feeling that they are comfortable with each other and are at ease with speaking about these taboos in their private talk.

However, intimate talk is not only reserved for conversations between lovers. Sometimes talk between parents and children as well as platonic friends features declarations of love. However, these are not the same as declarations as the kind between lovers. Supportive talk is a regular characteristic between friends. In my data there are many instances where the

intimacy is overtly expressed. This happens between couples who are in romantic relationships. However, there are also instances where intimacy occurs between platonic friends and has no sexual connotation attached to it.

In the following section, I will be exploring the theories which will form part of my theoretical framework which I will be using for my analysis of the genre and register of chats. I will now review the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach to genre and register.

2.4 Local Research on Youth and Social Media Chatting

The following section of this chapter explores the work done by other scholars working on similar data to my own. The authors I will be discussing are: Dalwai (2010), Bock (2013), Deumert (2014), Dyers and Davids (2015) and Bock, Dalwai and Stroud (forthcoming).

This project builds partly on my Honours research titled: *The use of intimate language by UWC students in social networking media*. Dalwai (2010) investigated how students use language to create or strengthen intimacy between themselves and the people they are chatting to. Dalwai (2010) found that intimacy is not something or a factor which only exists between people who are in romantic relationships. Intimacy is also found between family members, friends, colleagues and so on, as argued by Teisho (2009). Dalwai (2010) further argues that according to Teisho (2009,) the very first meaning of the word intimacy that we come across in the dictionary is that it is “belonging to or characterizing one’s deepest nature”. Therefore, intimacy does not have to occur only in relationships of a sexual nature but is in fact part of every individual’s nature.

Bock (2013) explored generic structures and registers in her paper: *Cyber socialising: emerging genres and registers of intimacy among young South African students* for which I was a research assistant. From this paper, I will be using the theoretical framework which she had developed to analyse my data. Bock (2013: 68) explores the “conventionalised genres and styles from a discourse analytical perspective”. Bock (2013: 68) argues through her analysis that:

Despite the seemingly unrestrained and non-standard nature of MXit chatting, it is highly conventionalised and structured and requires a

particular ‘register of intimacy’ which she claims is excessively reliant on ‘evaluative language and affective markers’.

She further argues that these emerging genres and registers are “fluid and innovative” which allow the users of these cyber socialising applications to shape their identities.

Bock (2013) states that the conventionalised norms for ‘doing’ things in any society are shaped and aided by the creation of the cultural and structural contexts against which these norms are evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate. Just like Johnstone (2008), Hyland (2008), Fairclough (2003) and others, Bock (2013) shows that genres are not fixed or rigid, but are dynamic. Bock (2013) uses theorists such as Christie and Martin (1997), Hyland (2008), Martin and Plum (1997) and Eggins and Slade (2005) to explore genre and to develop a framework in order to analyse the chats in her corpus. Bock (2013: 73) states that “genre and register are constructs that work together to explain how meanings are realised in context”. According to Eggins (2004), genre operates at a level with ‘context of culture’, whereas register looks at the analysis of language patterns at a level of ‘context of situation’.

Bock (2013) found that, despite the differences in register use, the generic structures of chats between different gendered groups are still very similar. She illustrates how the participants use a range of predictable stages to initiate and establish contact as a preparation for the ‘exchange of news’. She also looks at how features of textspeak and its different characteristics create a highly personalised and predictable register of intimacy.

Thus based on the framework that Bock proposed in her paper, I will endeavour to utilize her framework and further develop this framework through my analysis. As mentioned before Bock’s framework draws on quite a few SFL theories of ‘interpersonal semantics’ and explores the typical exchange structure and the role played by vocatives and terms of address. I will also be looking at the typical openings and closings of the chat conversations as well as how the advancement of technology has aided in the development and progression of chatting norms and style shifting.

Dyers and Davids’ (2015) research on *Post- Modern ‘languages’: the effects of texting by university students on three South African languages*, looks at the ways in which three “South African languages- Afrikaans, isiXhosa and Setswana- are used, transformed and modified

through this medium of communication”. The key issues that Dyers and Davids explore in their paper are how the three languages are being used, transformed, modified and ‘played with’ within texting practices amongst undergraduate students, as well as whether one can argue that texting offers a space for the resemiotisation and even revitalisation of the above-mentioned language.

Dyers and Davids’ (2015) paper is based at the University of the Western Cape with 315 undergraduate students as the sample for their data collection. The theoretical framework engages concepts which illustrate the nature of late modern communication where people are able to adjust their communication in accordance with the spatial location of the communication – “local, translocal, transnational or virtual” (2015: 22). According to their findings, in the context of South Africa, young people choose which identities they want to signal through their language practices. Dyers and Davids (2015) also found that diversity and hybridity is present in their data as a result of standard and non- standard language codes being used in the messages. Furthermore, they found that the presence of expressions, unconventional spellings and contractions contribute to the hybridity and diversity of these conversations or messages. Thus, they argue that their data suggest that ‘texting is a means for young people to capture the informal oral code orthographically’.

Ana Deumert (2014) also looks at different aspects of mobile communication and sociolinguistics. Deumert (2014: 101) states that “social networking is weakly regulated”. Baron (2008) in Deumert (2014: 101) also argues that, because we chat so frequently, we have become less concerned about how we write and that a sense of “linguistic whateverism” has been adapted. Very little attention is paid to grammar, choice of words and punctuation. In her chapter titled, *Bakhtin goes Mobile*, Deumert speaks about style and evolution of speech or language as a result of the development of the speakers and social networking.

Tyler Schnoebelen (2012), in Deumert (2014) looked at whether a writer’s manner of writing emoticons reflected on other aspects and styles of their texting or writing habits. He found that those who omit ‘the nose’ when typing out a smiley (emoticon) tend to be younger and use more taboo words, more expressive lengthening, and more non-standard spellings. This is in agreement with my findings, where I found that as my students advance with age, their style of writing and chatting advances as well.

In her chapter titled, *Textpl@y as poetic language*, Deumert (2014) argues that those who still use or construct non-standard spellings consider them to be ‘markers of cool’. She states that “acronyms are common in high digital writing cross-linguistically, and a particular enjoyment appears to be their lack of transparency. Unless one is an insider and knowledgeable, the letter sequence itself remains obscure” (2014: 131). Thus, unless you have a schema of the styles or understand chat norms, you will be lost with regards to the understanding of acronyms.

Deumert (2014: 170) states that “Online creativity-like everyday creativity more generally-is closely related to sociability, playful and artful interactions that affirm people’s social connections and bring about enjoyment”. According to Gauntlett (2011: 76) in Deumert (2014: 170), “not only do we connect pre-existing signs or materials in novel ways, but as we do so we also share them with others, establish and reaffirm social connections, and in doing so experience feelings of joy”.

Creativity, according to Deumert (2014) is not only an enjoyable social practice, but also fundamentally illimitable, boundless and ultimately uncontrollable. Thus, we note that as Deumert looks at all forms of creativity and stylization of writing and chatting, this project illustrates these aspects as well.

In Bock, Dalwai and Stroud’s (forthcoming) paper titled *Cool mobilities: youth style and mobile telephony in late-modern South Africa*, they explore the styles and creativity of mobile practices. The data for this research was collected at the University of the Western Cape. According to Bock *et al.* (forthcoming), “an analysis of style entails drawing attention to the social conventions which structure the data, while simultaneously being cognisant of the ways in which these conventions are reused, reshaped, and transformed”. Furthermore, Coupland (2007: 16), in Bock *et al.* (forthcoming) states that “styling is part of the process of genre-making, but also part of the process of genre-breaking. Styling can reshape conventional speech genres and how we expect to participate in them”. Bock *et al.* (forthcoming) also looks at the how the choice of application and texting styles aids in the formation and development of the participants’ style and identities. In their paper, Bock *et al.* (forthcoming) argues that texting style is more a matter of stylistic choice than purely driven by changes in the technology.

They further argue that the styles of chatting and generic structures of the chats not only reflect the changing identities and ideologies of the participants, although the physical mobile device and the chatting application also plays a role in shaping the style of chatting. They argue that “genre is flexible and dynamic, open to innovation in response to contextual changes and shifts in style... The choice of phone, application and texting style form part of the repertoire on which these participants draw when crafting their own unique styles and identities”. In my project, therefore, I look at the register, generic structures, mobile devices as well as the applications which my participants use and how these all reflect and contribute to the differences and similarities in the style of their chatting.

2.5 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) according to Martin (2010) is an approach which not only looks at the description of language in social contexts but also investigates the application of language theory to language teaching contexts. There are a few main theoretical principles and concepts of Systemic Functional Linguistics:

- Language is viewed as a large network or system of interrelated options from which speakers unconsciously select when speaking/writing.
- Language utterances can only be made sense of in relation to the context of situation and the context of culture.
- Register accounts for the systematic relationship between language and context of situation.
- Meaning can be categorised into three broad areas-ideational, interpersonal and textual, each of which relate to a cluster of language systems.
- Genres are seen as having distinctive goal-oriented staging structures.

(Martin, 2010: 9)

Martin (2010) states that SFL is one of the main functional theories of language developed in the 20th century and is continuously evolving. SFL differs from other types of linguistics as it places significant emphasis on the idea of choice, SFL theorists view language as a large network of interrelated options, from which speakers unconsciously select when speaking.

SFL is thus a descriptive and interpretive framework which allows the researcher to conduct a systematic study of linguistic patterns in texts as well as how these texts relate to context. My theoretical framework draws on SFL work on genre and register, as well as the framework proposed in Bock (2013). It also refers to the work of the other scholars in the field (e.g. Chandler 1997, Fairclough 1995).

2.5.1 Genre

The word *genre* was derived from the French word for ‘kind’ or ‘class’. This term is used to refer to a distinctive or specific type of text. Different theorists define genre in different ways. The SFL approach builds on Martin and Rose’s (2003: 55) definition of genre as:

A staged, goal-oriented social process. Social because we participate in genres with other people; goal-oriented because we use genres to get things done; staged because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals.

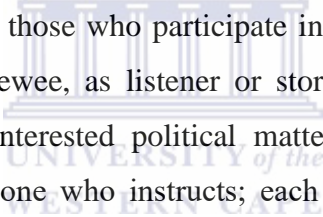
In other words, when people interact, they use a particular genre which is appropriate for that context and communicative purpose. The stages are the ways in which texts are typically structured in that context. According to Eggins (2004: 9), a generic analysis describes the impact of the context of culture on language, by looking at the staged, step-by-step structure cultures institutionalized as ways of achieving goals.

According to Chandler (1997: 2), there are no set or rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion when it comes to genre. Furthermore, “genres are not discrete systems, consisting of a fixed number of listable items” (Gledhill, 1985 in Chandler 1997). It is difficult to make a clear distinction between one genre and another as genres may overlap or there is a mixture of genres. According to Neale (1980) in Chandler (1997) particular features which are characteristics of a genre are not normally unique to it, rather it is the relative prominence of the characteristics, combination and functions which are distinctive. For instance, one would easily be able to tell the difference between a recipe and a poem because a recipe generally has a list of ingredients which is followed by the method, whereas, a poem may take on any number of variable forms. Neale (1980) argues that genres are instances of repetition and difference. He further states that difference is important to the economy of genre and simply

having repetition would not attract nor hold the attention of the audience, thus genres emerge and change over time.

Fairclough (1995: 14) defines genre as “a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity”. Norman Fairclough (1995) suggests that mixed-genre texts are very common in mass media. This results in genre sometimes interlinking with each other and cause confusion to the person reading. According to Chandler (1997), “genres can therefore be seen as fuzzy categories which cannot be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions”. Thus, genres are not always easy to decipher if they are mixed-genres. Abercrombie suggests that “the boundaries between genres are shifting and becoming more permeable” (in Chandler, 1997: 3).

According to Fowler (1989), in Chandler (1997), communication is impossible without the agreed codes of genre. Gunther Kress further states that,



Every genre positions those who participate in a text of that kind: as interviewer or interviewee, as listener or storyteller, as reader or a writer, as a person interested political matters, as someone to be instructed or as someone who instructs; each of these positioning's implies different possibilities for response and for action. Each written text provides a 'reading position' for readers, a position constructed by the writer for the 'ideal reader' of the text (Kress, 1988: 107).

Thus, the text is written in such a manner that the reader assumes a type of identity which is significant to the genre. Kress (1988: 183) defines genre as “a kind of text that revives its form from the structure of a frequently repeated social occasion, with its' characteristic participants and their purposes”. One can actually argue that genre is context specific. Eggins (2004: 56) argues that there are many different genres as there are social activity types in our culture, for example:

- Literary genres: short stories, autobiographies, ballads, sonnets, fables, tragedies
- Popular fiction genres: romantic novels, whodunits, sitcoms

- Popular non-fiction genres: instructional manuals, news stories, profiles, reviews, recipes, how-to features seminars, examinations, text-book writing

“Genres can be seen as a kind of short serving to increase the efficiency of communication. They may even function as a means of preventing a text from dissolving into ‘individualism and incomprehensibility’” (Chandler, 1997: 6). Genre can therefore be looked at as something that brings coherence to different texts in terms of categorising it in the relevant categories thus making it easier for readers to make the distinction between different texts and what type of texts they are. One of the distinctive attributes of working with or writing different genres is that every genre has a different style or convention which is exclusive to each specific genre. However, these conventions may evolve and they may acquire new elements.

Genre, according to Chandler (1997), helps the reader to identify, select and interpret texts. Chandler further states that generic frameworks may function to make the conventions of the genre more transparent to those familiar with the genre, which then foregrounds the distinct content of individual texts. Thus, it is argued that generic knowledge is one of the competencies required for any text or communication (Allen, 1989: 52). Like most things we encounter every day, knowledge of something is required to fully understand or comprehend that specific something that we encounter. Hence, Chandler states that one needs to encounter sufficient examples of genre in order to recognize shared features as being characteristics of it. Fowler (1989) suggests that readers learn genres gradually: this is not always done consciously but through unconscious familiarization (Fowler, 1989: 215).

Eggins (2004) states that a systemic analysis of genre has three immediate applications. It helps the researcher explicitly express why some texts are successful and appropriate while others are not. It enables the researcher to contrast types of genre and their realizations in different contexts. Systemic analysis of genre also allows the researcher to understand similarities and differences between different genres and enables the researcher to carry out critical text analysis (Eggins, 2004).

According to Guo-Wei (2010), it is useful to distinguish the goals that the genres aim to realize as being of two types, namely pragmatic and interpersonal. He further states that a

goal is pragmatic if the genre is employed to achieve something “tangible” and “material”; it is interpersonal if the genre is “designed to establish and maintain social relations or create mutual good feelings between participants in that genre”.

My analysis in Chapter Four explores the extent to which instant messaging conversations conform to the idea of Martin’s definition of genre, with regards to how instant messaging conversations could be social because the conversations involve interactions among people for communication purposes; they may be goal-oriented because they are used for specific purposes, whether transactional (pragmatic) (for example, making arrangements) or simply to maintain interpersonal bonds. IM conversations may be staged because they follow relatively predictable patterns with regards to their structure. They do, however, maintain a sense of variability. I will be using these ideas to analyse my data, because of the aims and objectives of this project.

2.5.2 Register

Register and genre are closely related in SFL theory. Trosborg (1997) states that as a result of discovering that language varies with its specific function, these varieties of a language were later referred to as registers. Register looks at the relation between language and the context of situation. Eggins (2004: 9) states that “register theory describes the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of a language event on the way language is used”. According to Trosborg (1997: 4-5), “the concept of a ‘whole language’ is so vast and heterogeneous that it is not operationally useful for many linguistic purposes, and the description of communicative situations and events is now fairly widely recognized as a proper goal of linguistic analysis”. Gregory and Carroll (1978:4) say that “register as a functional language variation, is a contextual category correlating groupings of linguistic features with recurrent situational features”. This simply means that every register has clusters of features which make them identifiable and distinguishable. Trosborg states that the analysis of registers reveals very little about the nature of the genre when they are analysed on their own, registers are therefore divided into genres reflecting the way social purposes are accomplished in and through them in the settings wherein they are used. Systemic Functional Linguistics uses three different concepts of analysis for register. Halliday and Hasan (1985) looks at register analysis in terms of *field*, *mode* and *tenor*. *Mode* looks at the amount of

feedback and role of language, *tenor* looks at role relations of power and solidarity and *field* looks at the topic or focus of the activity.

Halliday and Hasan (1985) state that *field* refers to what is going on, where what is going on is interpreted institutionally in terms of some culturally recognised activity. This is basically what the text is about and what it is referring to. Martin (2010) agrees with Halliday and Hasan (1985), by stating that “fields are about people interacting with their world, so they tend to be characterisable along these two dimensions: what people are doing and what they are doing it to”.

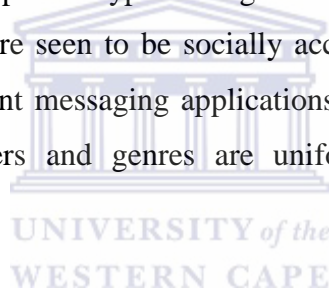
Tenor, according to Halliday and Hasan (1985) refers to the way you relate to other people when doing what you do as well as the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles. One aspect is that of status, or power, which comes in various kinds. This can be explained in terms of, for example, older people having more power or status than younger people, through which they command respect; bosses who have power over employees; or teachers who have power over students. From these few examples, one can see that many interactions involve a “power struggle” in terms of showing who “the boss” is. Tenor is realised through interpersonal relationships. Martin (2010) states that one of the clearest indexical realisations of tenor is found in the choice of vocatives or address terms, where equal use of first names signals solidarity, while unequal use of first names is a sign of power. Again, tenor indicates how we use language and words to indicate power differences. Thus, the social role that one plays in an interaction will determine the kind of language that you will use (Eggins, 2004).

Mode is the channel through which we choose to communicate. Halliday and Hasan (1985:12) argue “the mode of discourse refers to what part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation”. According to Martin (2010) this is often between two different modes, speech or writing. However, this has changed over the years as technology has evolved. Nowadays, people choose to communicate via other forms of communication such as Facebook, blogs, YouTube, SMS messages, e-mail, telephone, radio, television, video, film and so on. We can see that these modes of communication are still via speech and writing, but they are not face-to-face communication and writing is not done on paper as it is done virtually. Martin believes that since these different modes of communication have come into existence, the relationship between the speaker and listener has been affected as a result of a barrier that has been erected between

them. For instance, if one was face-to-face it would be easier to see the relation between language and what it is the speaker is trying to say as the receiver could 'read' the physical behaviour of the sender. Simon-Vandenberg, Taverniers and Ravelli (2003) argues that perhaps the most exciting recent developments of mode has been the emergence of multimodal discourse analysis, which looks at the texts that have images, sound and other modalities of communication integrated into the exchange alongside language.

2.6 Conclusion

Instant messaging (IM) applications are chat services which allow users to communicate in a way that they are most comfortable with and which enables them to build and maintain intimate relationships. It also allows users to chat about multiple topics at once and each conversation is structured according to conventionalised genres of chatting. These conventionalised genres require specific types of registers that are usually used for chatting. These norms and requirements are seen to be socially accepted on these social networking sites and more specifically, instant messaging applications. Thus, in this research, I will be exploring whether these registers and genres are uniform or not across the different conversations in my data sample.



CHAPTER THREE

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter outlines the methodological procedures that have been followed for this study. Descriptions are given on the research population, the approach that has been chosen, the methods of data collection, the methods of analysis, the specific limitations encountered, as well as the ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Approach

3.2.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

The research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, qualitative being the primary one. According to Thomas (2003), the easiest way to make a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is to say that qualitative research methods involve a researcher describing types of characteristics of people as well as events without the comparison of events in terms of measurements or amounts. Quantitative methods, however focus on more of a numerical strategy to analyse data in terms of “measurements and amounts of the characteristics” displayed by the participants and events which the researcher is interested in. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), in Thomas (2003:1-2), also define qualitative and quantitative research methods as:

The main focus of a qualitative research is that of a multi-method, it is carried out by an interpretive, naturalistic approach. Things are studied in their natural settings, in this way, it attempts to “make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people lives. (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2)

My approach in this project used both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative approach, the chat data was catalogued and organized into categories and then the codes were entered onto a Microsoft Excel spread sheet. The results were then collated and discussed in terms of the number of times a feature occurred in the chats and the effects of these occurrences. The questionnaire data was coded and categorised according to the frequency of answers as well as responses to the open ended questions.

Furthermore, in terms of the qualitative approach, a discourse analysis focusing on genre and register was done. The discourse analysis was conducted by looking at the linguistic choices as well as the patterns which occurred in the data. In terms of the genre analysis, the chats were analysed to determine whether all chats follow similar generic structures across different gendered groups. The generic structure also gives us an idea of the purpose of the chat. With regards to the register analysis, the different linguistic choices were looked at in terms of how these contributed to the generic structures, as well as which linguistic choices the participants used to strengthen the interpersonal relationships between themselves. The final piece of data that was analysed was the interview data. This data was qualitatively analysed for insights into what the participants discussed with regards to their first cellular phone, MXit, their first smartphone, their shift to smartphones as well as the applications that these smartphones afforded them. Furthermore, the negotiated norms of chatting were also discussed as well as how the interview data concurred with the other data sets and analyses.

3.2.2 Discourse Analysis as a Research Approach

Thornbury (2010: 270) states that the term “discourse is both slippery and baggy: slippery because it eludes neat definition and baggy because it embraces a wide range of linguistic and social phenomena”. Thornbury (2010) further argues that there are three basic senses to the term discourse. The first sense is called the formal sense, which is discourse as connected text. The second sense is referred to as the functional sense which is discourse as a language in use. The final sense is referred to as discourse as a social practice. This simply means that discourse can be looked at as the language that people generally use and how discourse is used socially in terms of business environments, schools, etc. Schiffrin (1994: 419) in Thornbury (2010) states that “to understand the language of discourse... we need to understand the world in which it resides”. When we talk about context of a conversation it does not only include the immediate context of the situation but also the larger social and

cultural context. When conducting an analysis of discourse, text is required. This can be whole single words, written texts or reasonably long stretches of talk which has been transcribed (Thornbury, 2010). The texts that I will be using for my research are chat conversations, questionnaires responses and an interview which has been transcribed. This project is a discourse analysis of texts with a focus on the generic structure and register of the chats which is informed by SFL genre and register theory.

3.3 Research Population

The study was conducted at the University of the Western Cape, using Linguistics students on the first year Language and Communication Studies (LCS111) course (chats), one second-year and one third-year linguistics student as well as second- and third-year Economic and Management Sciences students (interview and questionnaires). The Table 3-1 below indicates the linguistic spread at the University of the Western Cape. It looks at the number of registered students at the university for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012 as well as the home languages of these students as indicated on their application forms. This is significant to the project, as it indicates the possible language choices these students may use when texting.

Table 3-1: Language Statistics

Language statistics for 2010, 2011 & 2012						
Year	2010	%	2011	%	2012	%
Number of registered students at UWC	18049	100	18912	100	19217	100
Afrikaans	2768	15	2773	15	2540	13
English	7787	43	8112	43	8303	43
English and Afrikaans	931	5	1037	5	1077	6
African languages	6563	36	6990	37	7297	38

These students have mixed language backgrounds: the statistics for **2010** at The University of the Western Cape, as shown in the above table, state that there were 18049 students registered at the university for that year. Of those 18049 students, 15% were Afrikaans speaking, 43% were English, 5% were bilingual in English and Afrikaans, and finally 36% were speakers of different African languages. The statistics for **2011** show that there were

18912 registered students, of which 43% were English speaking students, 15% were Afrikaans speaking students, 5% of those students were bilingual in English and Afrikaans and 37% were speakers of different African languages. Lastly, the statistics for **2012** show that there were 19217 registered students at the University of the Western Cape. Of those 19217 students 43% were English speaking, 13% were Afrikaans speaking, 6% were bilingual in English and Afrikaans, and 38% spoke different African languages (Vincent Morta, Personal Communication). The selected language variety amongst these students may differ from conversation to conversation and from person to person. These students differ in age and socio-economic status, ranging from 18 to approximately 50 years in age. Students come from different areas, some more affluent and some poverty stricken areas.

The figures above hardly change over the years and are thus a good indication of the linguistic profile of UWC students at the time of research. It is worth bearing in mind, that most students would probably describe themselves as bi- or multilingual, even if they have only selected one language as a home language. Thus, this table does not reflect the multilingual nature of the student body. The multilingual nature of the students is reflected in the chats in this project which draw on their full linguistic repertoires.

The data collected in **2014** was of two types: the first were *questionnaires* that were conducted with second-year Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) students. I was the tutor to these students for an Academic Development Module called Intensive Reading and Writing. As their tutor I was in constant contact with them and therefore decided to expand my research population by requesting their participation in my study. The reason I decided to use them was because they were old enough to have experienced Mxit and have progressed with the evolution of technology, each having been exposed to smartphones and newer instant messaging applications such as BBM and WhatsApp. The second was the *focus group data* which was collected using three third-year EMS students, one second-year Arts student, one third-year Arts student both of whom are studying Linguistics. The facilitator and researcher was a Linguistics postgraduate student.

3.4 Description of Data Sets

3.4.1 Chats

The first-year class for Language and Communication Studies (LCS 111) usually has approximately 1000 students per year. My complete chat data set consists of 248 essays from the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 which is approximately 8% of the total students for the three years (of approximately 3000 students).

From the essays collected in the year 2010, I selected 141 essays. For the year 2011, I selected 60 essays, and in 2012, I selected 47 essays. However, my corpus for detailed analysis consists of 94 chats of which 20 (21%) were taken from the year 2010, 30 (32%) from 2011 and 44 (47%) from the year 2012.

The data collection was done through the first-year LCS 111 course, where students were given an assignment on instant messaging for which they needed to collect chat data from their IM applications. The data was collected in order to answer the essay question, “What does your data show about how languages are used in new ways in contemporary communication in South Africa?” They were required to transcribe and translate the data if it was not communicated in Standard English. The analysis of that data for the assignment consisted of describing the context in which the chats had taken place, the physical context, the relationship of the participants, the estimated time, as well as the application in which the conversations had occurred. The students were also then required to investigate the language use and linguistic features of these IM chats. Within the analysis of the data, the students had to introduce and define concepts which they would be using in the analysis. They then had to show through their analysis how language was being used in new ways in contemporary communication in South Africa. All the uncollected essays, as well as some of the essays that the tutors were able to photocopy before they returned them, were used. All of these essays had consent forms attached to them. These essays were then all collated and filed alphabetically for analysis.

As a tutor on the first-year programme, I had direct exposure to these essays and found the generic structures of these IM conversations very interesting. The registers used in these conversations, linguistic choices, as well as the topics which were being discussed all

contributed to the formation of the generic structure of each individual essay. What was particularly interesting was the fact that the conversations occurred between different genders even though they often had similar structures, which included the manner in which they started or opened the conversations as well as the ways they ended the conversations. Furthermore, the level of intimacy between the participants in the data samples was also particularly interesting as well as the manner in which they offered each other support through these instant messaging communications. Thus, I decided to investigate these generic structures and registers to explore where and why there are similarities and differences as well as how the registers that are used when chatting are indicators for social support.

For the quantitative approach, the data was catalogued and organized into categories and then entered into a Microsoft Excel spread sheet. The chats were analysed and coded into columns in the following way: first, the essays were alphabetised and separated by surname and then the essays were coded with the letter of the alphabet and its position in that category, for example; A1, A2, and A3 etc. After the essay code, the essays were scrutinised to identify whether they were MXit, BBM, or WhatsApp. Then the relationships between the participants in the conversations were identified, i.e: “girlfriend to boyfriend” (G-B), “female friend to female friend” (F-F), “male friend to male friend” (M-M) and finally “female friend to male friend” (F-M). The totals for each category were as follows: (1) “female friend to female friend” (40 chats), (2) “girlfriend to boyfriend” (5 chats), (3) “female friend to male friend” (32 chats) and, (4) “male friend to male friend” (17 chats). In terms of the language used in the chats, the essays have been divided into five categories, these are (1) English (47 chats), (2) Afrikaans (5 chats), (3) English-Afrikaans – with English being the dominant language (16 chats), (5) Afrikaans-English where Afrikaans is the dominant language (17 chats), Xhosa-English where Xhosa is the dominant language (3 chats) and finally English-Xhosa where English is the dominant language (6 chats). The languages used during the chat were also identified in terms of whether standard language or textese was predominantly used.

The chats were also coded for the application used. There are 76 MXit chats, 12 BBM chats and 6 chats from WhatsApp. The final category of the cataloguing process was whether (1) the interaction was interpersonal, that is, whether the purpose of the chat was for enjoyment; or (2) transactional, which is mainly to convey a message. As was mentioned in the above paragraph the data was quantitatively analysed and listed according to different categories as well as topics and chatting norms. This quantitative analysis was done to determine the

frequency in the use of the linguistic features, for example: ‘mwah’, smileys, initialisms, affective phrases i.e. ‘I love you’, as well as to collate which topics of conversations were discussed in these different gendered groups and how frequently. This was done to enable a comparative analysis across the different gendered categories to be conducted.

Furthermore, in terms of the qualitative approach, discourse analysis as well as content analysis, including a genre and register analysis, was done. With regards to the content analysis, the topics of the conversations were looked at. The discourse analysis was conducted through means of looking at the linguistic choices as well as the patterns which occurred in the data. In addition, the genre and register analyses were conducted through exploring the different stages of communication (generic structure) as well as linguistic features that were utilised and how frequently they were used during the chat conversations.

Qualitative analysis was conducted by looking at the content of the chats, such as the topics being discussed, the linguistic features that were frequently used as well as the generic structure of the chats. The generic structures – stages, greetings, establishing contact, news items/probes, evaluations and closings and so on – were also analysed. A comparative analysis was done to see whether the conversations follow the same generic structure and whether they have similar patterns.

Questions around the reliability of the data may be raised as the data was collected and transcribed by students for a course-work essay. For example, the essay task may have shaped the data a bit as students might not have been willing to expose themselves and thus may have edited the data a little. A percentage of the data could have been fabricated. However, given that I have such a large pool of data, I would argue that the patterns that I identify across the corpus are verifiable.

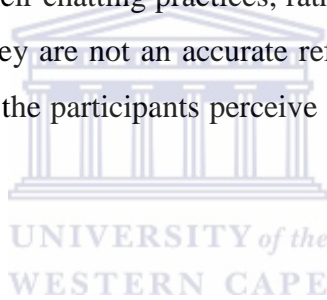
3.4.2 Questionnaires

As part of the data collection participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to discover what the norms are for chatting with regards to instant messaging whether these have changed over the years and what the most common applications used by students are. The questions that were posed endeavoured to find out things such as which applications students used, the duration of their chats, who they

normally chatted to, the physical location of their chats, whether they would chat to more than one person simultaneously or whether they preferred to chat in groups, as well as the importance of chatting to maintain their interpersonal relationships.

The participants were second-year Economic and Management Sciences students. There were a total of 50 students. Thus, the questionnaires were given to them in their respective tutorials. I explained to them what I was doing and they agreed to participate in my study.

I conducted a quantitative analysis of the questionnaires. The purpose of the questionnaires was to determine what the typical practices of texting are as well as to determine the time spent on chatting, who the participants frequently chatted to and finally where they would usually chat. It is important to bear in mind that these responses are based on self-report and not observations or any other kind of verifiable record. These responses therefore indicate what the participants *say* about their chatting practices, rather than it being a reflection of the reality. However, even though they are not an accurate reflection of the practices in reality, they still give us a sense of what the participants perceive is the role that cell phones play in their lives.



3.4.3 Focus Group

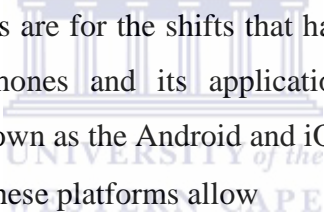
The focus group was conducted at the University of the Western Cape on 11 June 2014. The interview progressed for a period of one hour and seventeen minutes. I gave the participants the consent forms and a brief introduction before the interview so that they were aware of what I was doing and why they were there. They were not given the questions before the time as I wanted the interview to be semi-structured and open-ended.

The focus group consisted of six people. Three participants were friends studying in the Economic and Management Sciences Faculty and two were selected at random, both happened to be studying Linguistics. Mahmood, male, 23 years old and I, female, 26 years old, have been friends for a while thus our relationship goes beyond university. Mahmood and I see one another at least four times a week. Brandon, male, 21 years old and Tasneem, female, who is 23 years old and Mahmood, met on campus during the past three years that they have been studying at UWC towards a Bachelor in Commerce degree. Tasneem, Brandon and Mahmood see one another most days on campus for various reasons including

socialising as well as academics. Kiara and Billie, both females, had no prior relationship with any of the other members or with each other and are also both 20 years of age. Both Kiara and Billie are studying in the Arts Faculty towards a Bachelors of Arts degree. All of the participants are first language English speakers.

The participants were not selected in any specific order or with any specific reason. However, I did select them with regards to being young enough to have a complete understanding of the evolving technology as well as old enough to have also been exposed to the previous versions of mobile phones and associated technologies/applications.

The purpose of conducting the focus group interview was to acquire information directly from people who have been utilising these different forms of technology over the years and throughout the time of these application and technological evolutions. The answers that I was seeking from this focus group were:

- 
- What the main reasons are for the shifts that have occurred from first generation mobile phones and its applications, to what we are currently utilizing, known as the Android and iOS phones
 - The affordances that these platforms allow
 - Whether chatting habits have changed from previous modes to current modes and what those new habits may be.

3.5 Limitations to the Study

This research paper is a case study of undergraduate students at the University of the Western Cape. From the essays that were collected, I have selected the essays with complete conversations. There were many other limitations that needed to be considered such as, whether the conversations were authentic or whether the students have fabricated these chats, as well as how the essay question may have shaped the data. With respect to the authenticity of the chats, we (myself and the tutors) discarded the few chats which seemed fabricated. We relied on our personal knowledge of the norms of chatting to evaluate their probably degree of authenticity. The students also may not have given me accurate responses to some of the questions in the questionnaire, for instance they may not have indicated all the places they

chat in or all the times they chat during the day. But their answers do give a sense of the general portrait of a UWC user of chat applications. Another limitation is that I was not able to use participants from all the faculties at the university. The study is limited to a random group of first-year linguistics students, a second- and a third-year linguistics student as well as second- and third-year EMS students at the University of the Western Cape and the data was gathered over four years.

3.6 Ethics

One of the major ethical concerns around the collection of the data is that permission for the use of the data be given. The students were asked to attach a consent form to their assignments if they were willing to have their data used in this research project. Consent was attained from all the participants who were part of the participant population. In terms of the interview data, the participants gave signed consent and completely understood what the project is about as well as their role in the project after it was explained to them. The other ethical concern is that the identity of the participants be protected and therefore I have changed all the names that have been used in the data. All the participants will have access to the completed paper if they so wish. Participants were also given the option to withdraw from the interview at any time, if they so wished.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the theoretical assumptions underlying the research methodology of triangulation in terms of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research were outlined. The research population and participants were also discussed in terms of their roles and their contributions to the project.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 CHAT ANALYSES: TOPIC, GENRE AND REGISTER

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter analyses the chat conversations of the data. It is based on chats that were gathered over a period of three years (2010-2012). The analysis is divided into three different sections. The first section is the topic analysis. The second section is the generic and register analysis of the complete chats, and the third section is the analysis of only the openings and closings of certain conversations. In the analysis below, it is evident that even though many chat conversations seem to have similar generic structures, the linguistic choices that the participants make within each of their conversations may differ, depending on their personal preferences as well as the relationship that they share with the person they are chatting to. It is also evident that the genres are fairly stable across the three years with very few differences. However, generally the conversations start with a greeting and end with a closing but the number of topic changes or news exchanges may differ from conversation to conversation. The form that these greetings and closings take is also something I found very interesting.

As a theoretical framework, I used the theories of Eggins (2004), Chandler (1997), Fairclough (1995), Kress (1988) and Bock (2013) for genre theory and Eggins (2004), Halliday and Hasan (1985) and Trosborg (1997) for the discussion of register. Thus, in this section of the chapter I argue that even though the chat conversations that I have analysed and looked at are from many different individuals from different spheres of life, the generic structures of these chat conversations are very similar in certain ways and they generally follow the same pattern and flow. I will also look at what the social opinion is about greeting or not greeting by referring to the focus interview data.

4.2 Topic Analysis

There are many different reasons for initiating a chat and all of these reasons depend on the participants involved. In my data, there were a total of nine different topics or types of conversations that were initiated in the chats. They were: *establishing contact, breaking off*

contact, social plans, flirting, quarrelling, offering emotional support and advice, exchanging news, discussing academics, and discussing relationships. The total for the *establishing contact* for the three years was 44 of the 94 chats in the corpus. In 2010 there were 12 occurrences, which had *establishing contact*, 12 chats in 2011 and 20 chats in 2012. This topic of chat is generally initiated as a topic to make contact and strengthen interpersonal relationships. The topic which had the second largest occurrence was *social plans*. This topic of chat occurred 40 times in the 94 chats in the corpus, with 6 chats in 2010, 17 chats in 2011 and 17 chats in 2012. The chats which involved *exchanging news* occurred a total of 35 times in the corpus. In these types of chats, different types of news were exchanged, depending on what the participants felt they wanted to chat about. In 2010 this topic occurred 7 times, 10 times in 2011 and 18 times in 2012. There was a *discussion of academics* as well as chats of *emotional support and advice* which occurred in 17 and 5 chats respectively. As can be seen from the nature of the topics, all the above contribute towards the participants strengthening their psychosocial and emotional well-being. According to Lin *et al.* (1979: 109), “social support may be defined as support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the larger community”. Thus, in support to this, it is evident that ‘social connectedness’ or being ‘socially connected’ often help individuals through issues in their lives. The other topics which occurred are reflected in the table below.

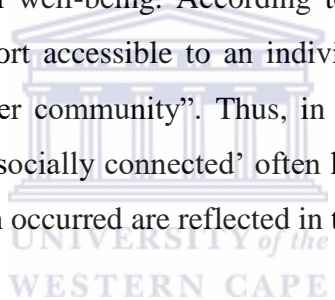


Table 4-1: Topic Analysis

Topic Analysis								
Topics/Reasons for chatting	Total in each category (94)	%	2010 (20)	%	2011 (30)	%	2012 (44)	%
Establishing Contact	44	47	12	60	12	40	20	45
Social Plans	40	43	6	30	17	57	17	39
Exchanging News	35	37	7	35	10	33	18	41
Discussing Academic Work	17	18	1	5	10	33	6	14
Discussing Relationships	8	9	2	10	2	7	4	9
Offering Emotional Support & Advice	6	6	1	5	1	3	4	9
Flirting	4	4	2	10	1	3	1	2
Breaking off Contact	2	2	0	-	1	3	1	2
Quarrelling	2	2	0	-	1	3	1	2

4.3 Generic and Register Analysis of Complete Chats

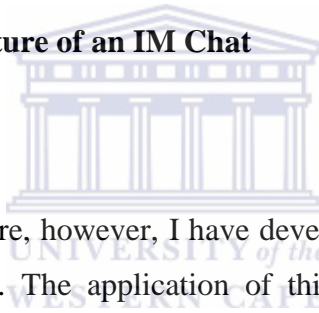
Casual conversations generally have similar generic structures (Eggins and Slade, 1997). Generic structures are where there are different stages within a conversation that makes the conversation flow coherently in terms of structure. However, genres are flexible and will differ from conversation to conversation. This is supported by Chandler (1997) who states that there are no rigid rules when it comes to inclusion and exclusion of categories in genre. Most conversations are initiated to establish interpersonal contact, which is basically to connect with someone. The purposes for chats differ from chat to chat and thus the generic structure differs according to the type of conversation that occurs between participants of the chat.

According to Neale (1980), in Chandler (1997), particular features which are characteristics of a genre, are not normally unique to it, it is their relative prominence, combination and functions which are distinctive. This applies to IM conversations as well. Thus, all the different aspects have a direct impact on the chat, which are genre, register as well as the participants. Both the purpose, as well as the generic structure of the chat, determines what type of register is used to communicate the message within the chat. Another aspect that contributes to the type of register that is used is the participants that are participating in the conversations. For this, the framework of Bock (2013) is used to compare the different chat conversation. The framework that she uses draws on SFL theories of genre and register. Bock (2013) uses theorists such as Christie and Martin (1997), Hyland (2008), Martin and Plum (1997) and Eggins and Slade (2005) to develop a framework in order to analyse the chats in her corpus. She states that “genre and register are constructs that work together to explain how meanings are realised in context”. According to Eggins (2004), in Bock (2013), genre is said to operate at a level with ‘context of culture’ whereas register looks at the analysis of language patterns at a level of ‘context of situation’. Below is the typical generic structure as illustrated by Bock (2013):

- Greetings
 - *Hello* + terms of endearment + *hwru*
 - > phatic function
- Establishing contact
 - probes (*wud, wmj, wuu2, sup, wuw, etc.*)
 - > phatic but also ‘fishing for news’
- Exchanging news items (recursive)
 - Q & A, Intro of new topic + response
 - exchanging info, news, gossip
 - making plans
 - offering help or support
- Evaluation = can be a separate stage, but also embedded throughout.
- Closings
 - Wrap up (*g2g, brb, cht lata*) + final salutation (*bye, sharp, kwl, k*) +
kiss (*mwah, mwaz, etc.*)

Figure 4-1: Generic Structure of an IM Chat

(From Bock 2013: 83)



Most of my chats follow this genre, however, I have developed a slightly different approach for analyzing the closings stage. The application of this framework to selected chats is illustrated below.

The following analysis will illustrate a typical chat conversation between two female friends which took place on BBM. The different generic stage boundaries of each chat has been marked and labelled in bold, with the relevant section following beneath. The transcriptions are in square brackets and the evaluation to a previous message is in bold as well. (Turns 5 and 9 have been broken up into two lines to indicate and separate the stage boundaries) (See Appendix A, chat 1)

Chat 1: Female to Female Chat

IM application: BBM

Year: 2012

Greetings and Establishing contact

1. X: Hey Budz! Hw did ur 1st day of wrk go 2day?

[Hey Buddy! How did your first day of work go today?]

2. Y: Heya, it went k thanx.... nt 2 bad!

[Hey, it went okay thank you...not too bad!]

Exchanging news item 1

3. X: **This gr8 2 ear!** Wt al did u hv2do?

[**That is great to hear!** What did you have to do?]

4. Y: Ag, I hd 2 mke lasagnes, pl8 fud 4 service, prep wrk 4 2m, mke staf lunch, suma alota stuf...

[Ag, I had to make lasagnes, plate food for service, prepare work for tomorrow, make staff lunch, just a lot of stuff...]

5. X: **Lekker man! Klink soos baie me werk as di ana plek...**bt u guna kill it!

[**Nice man! Sounds like a lot more work than the other place...** but you going to kill it!

Exchanging news item 2

X: So uda wise wubu2?

So otherwise, what you been up to?]

6. Y: Ya meisa dit is, its nogals hectic hier! I jst gta learn da ropes, dan isit aan lol!!

Ag ya and nw we jst lamin in da chef office, nt lus for anyting, jst wna go home!!

Nogal moeg!! Bt wuu2?? Wcutm??

[Yes girl it is, it is quite hectic here! I just have to learn the ropes, then it is on, laugh out loud!! Yes and now we just relaxing in the chef's office, not in the mood for anything, just want to go home!! Quite tired!! But what you up to?? What can you tell me??]

7. X: **Shoe klink nogals intense!** Sterkte...Im studying 4a test 2mrw, den stl gt prep wrk 2 do... Uni life is tough!

[**Wow sounds quite intense!** Good luck... I am studying for a test tomorrow, then still got preparation work to do... University life is tough!]

8. Y: **I'm so gld** I'm dun wit al da nonsense:p Lmao

[**I am so glad** I am done with all that nonsense (tongue out smiley face) laugh my ass off]

9. X: 4yearz den I'll be wer u r...bt tym flies wen u aving fun, lol

[Four years then I will be where you are...but time flies when you having fun, laugh out loud.

Closings

- X: Bt I g2g da rents r calling 4 sups, Tanx 4 da chat...njoy da rest of ur shift!
 Mwa
 But I got to go the parents are calling for supper, thank you for the chat...
 enjoy the rest of your shift! "Kiss"]
10. Y: **Lol tru dat skat**, bt nah I'm dun 4 da nite, chat agen mwah
 [Laugh out loud, true that, darling, but no, I am done for the night, chat again
 "Kiss"]

The exchange above is a chat between two female friends. Firstly, I will look at the purpose of the chat. At first glance it is evident that the conversation begins with a type of enquiry, thus, the purpose of the conversation is to exchange news as well as establish contact. The conversation takes on a very casual mood as the participants are familiar with each other and they have reached a point in their friendship where they are completely comfortable and need not be aware of the manner in which they are chatting.

The chat begins with a typical greeting “Hey Budz!”. “Hey” is typically used in chat conversations as it is casual and considered an acceptable form of greeting with the younger generation. However, if this form of greeting was used to address or greet an elderly person, the individual greeting would be considered disrespectful. So the manner that we speak to people would differ depending on who it is and the relation of the individual we are speaking to. Along with the greeting of participant X is the enquiry of how participant Y’s first day of work had been (turn 1). Participant Y responds to participant X with a greeting and the relevant information in answer to the question (turn 2). In turn 3, participant X first evaluates the response of Y in turn 2, and then initiates the first topic of conversation. The conversation continues about what participant Y was required to make and prepare, as she is a chef by profession. In turn 5, participant X enquires about what participant Y has been up to other than work, thus probing for further news. Participant Y responds and redirects similar questions, thereby also probing for a news exchange with participant X (turn 6). The conversation shifts to academics and a discussion of a test that X is studying for in turn 7. The conversation then leads to a closing as X needs to go have supper with her parents (turn 9). The closing is a typical closing found in many instant messaging chats. The closing, “chat agen mwah”, can be seen as a sort of promise that they will chat sometime in the future but not promising when exactly. Other typical closings include “chat later”, “be back later”, “be right back”; these can all be considered closings in that they indicate that the participants will

chat in the near future. The analysis of openings and closings will be discussed later with reference to theory of Spilioti (2011).

With regards to the register, it is evident that the relationship between the two participants is that of a casual nature. They use a type of register that is familiar to both of them and that is considered fit for chatting. As Eggins (2004: 9) states, “register theory describes the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of a language event on the way language is used”. Thus, they both share a schema for chatting in the cyber domain and therefore they are able to chat to each other using this type of register. Elements of this register include abbreviations such as initialisms, acronyms, the use of unconventional words such as ‘mwah’ and so on. They use abbreviations such as *wubu2* which stands for ‘what you been up to?’, *wcutm* which is short for ‘what can you tell me’. These types of abbreviations are not conventional abbreviations in the standard form of a language and therefore would only be understood if you already have previous knowledge or exposure to this type of register. The participants are bilingual and thus they are comfortable switching between English and Afrikaans throughout their chat. This type of language mixing could be used to either include or exclude people within a conversation. However, as this conversation is between two people via a social networking application it is used as a manner of inclusion. The participants also make use of laughing acronyms, known as initialisms, as well as smileys.

These two features, smileys and initialisms, often go hand in hand to emphasise each other. The initialisms that have been used are *lol* and *lmao* which are ‘laugh out loud’ and ‘laugh my ass off’. These initialisms are used to emphasise how much the participant is laughing or how funny something may be. Along with the initialism *lmao* is a smiley which is the ‘tongue out’ smiley. In this context, it is used to express how happy participant Y is that she has finished her studies and that participant X still needs to complete. The ending of the conversation is a typical ending which is “chat agen mwah”, where “mwah” is a virtual kiss. Below is a table with all the linguistic features which occurred in the chats as well as the frequency thereof.

Table 4-2: Linguistic Features

Linguistic Features (Totals and % per year)								
Category Title	Total in each category (94)	%	2010 (20)	%	2011 (30)	%	2012 (44)	%
Endearments	47	50	9	45	12	40	26	59
Mwah	37	39	7	35	12	40	18	41
I Love You	10	11	0	-	4	13	6	14
Initialisms	68	72	12	60	23	77	33	75
Smileys	50	53	7	35	16	53	27	61
Miss You	20	21	3	15	7	23	10	23
Expletives/Taboo Words	20	21	2	10	7	23	11	25

The above table is a summary of the linguistic features that occurred in the data. The features with the most significant increase in use over the three years were initialisms, smileys, and endearments. The use of initialisms increased from 60% in 2010 to 77% in 2011, with a slight decrease in 2012. Smileys, on the other hand, steadily increased over the three years, from 35% in the year 2010 to 61% in 2012. This feature increased 26% over the three years. The final feature with the third highest total, endearments, also increased by 14% from 2010 to the year 2012. The other features which were used in the chats also increased over the three years; these are illustrated in the table above.

The next chat is analysed to illustrate the differences and similarities in chatting habits between two male friends as well as the similarities in the overall generic structure of IM chats.

The following chat that will be analysed is a chat between two male friends that took place on MXit. What will be interesting to see here is the extent to which textese was used within this chat as well as the use or lack of certain features. Furthermore, the registers that are used to chat and the tone of the conversation clearly illustrates that the participant Y is offering emotional support to participant X. (Turn 9 has been broken up into two lines to indicate and separate the stage boundaries.) (See Appendix A, chat 2)

Chat 2: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

Greetings

1. X: awe bra
[Hello friend.]
2. Y: awe!
[Hello!]
3. X: hw u
[How are you?]
4. Y: im gud n u
[I'm good (thank you) and you?]
5. X: nah im ok just a lil down
[I guess I am okay, but I'm just feeling a little down.]

Exchanging news item 1

6. Y: y, wats wrng?
[Why? What is wrong?]
7. X: my parentiles r being stupid.dey on my case al da tym for sh!t
[My parents are being stupid. They are on my case all the time for shit!]
8. Y: bra. I knw hw u fl.my parents r da same at tyms
[Friend, I know how you feel. My parents are the same sometimes.]
9. X: I need 2 get owta this damn hse.
[I need to get out of this damn house.]

Exchanging news item 2

- X: we R goin owt dis wknd ryt?
[We are going out this weekend, right?]
10. Y: ja bra. We mst 4 many reasons
[Yes friend. We must, for many reasons.]
11. X: **ok mooi**.wat nd wher we gna go
[**Okay cool**. What and where are we going to go?]
12. Y: mont
[Claremont.]
13. X: clubn?we did dat lst wknd

- [Clubbing? We did that last weekend.]
14. Y: ok ok.wat u wna do den
[Okay okay. What do you want to do then?]
15. X: I dnt actly cre.ag wat da hel lets go to mont
[I don't actually care. Oh what the hell, let's go to Claremont.]
16. Y: wat we gna do b4 cos mont nly strts pumpn at lyk 10
[What are we going to do before because Claremont only starts pumping at like 10 o'clock?]
17. X: we can hv pre drnks sumwher nd den hit mont.hws dat sound?
[We can have pre drinks somewhere and then go to Claremont. How does that sound?]
18. Y: **mooi.i** wna go to babbos.i wna get a fish bowl.2 bad u driving I wuldv askd u
2 share 1 wit me
[**Cool.** I want to go to Babbo's. I want to get a fish bowl. Too bad you driving, I would've asked you to share one with me.]
19. X: **ag its kwl bra**
[**Oh, it's cool, friend.**]
20. Y: so is dat da plan 4 dis wknd nw
[So is that the plan for this weekend now?]
21. X: ja
[Yes.]

Closings

22. Y: **ok mooi.i** g2g tho bra.parentiles r up my ass agen
[**Ok cool.** I got to go though, friend. My parents are up my ass again (My parents are shouting at me again).]
23. X: shame bra. C ya lata
[Shame, friend. See you later.]

The generic structure analysis shows the similarities between chat one and two. The chat begins with the first stage which is the greeting. The greeting is articulated in a way that is typically heard when two male friends greet one another on campus. Participant X greets participant Y in turn 1 using the phrase “awe bra” and participant Y responds in kind with “awe!” The easy comfortableness of the greeting suggests that there is an existing relationship between these males and that they seem to communicate regularly. They then go

on to the pleasantries of finding out how each of them has been. In turn 5, participant X expresses how he feels by saying “nah im ok just a lil down” and participant Y then goes on to enquire why participant X feels this way. This is where the first exchange of news occurs when participant X shares his problems with his parents with participant Y. This is unusual, as this is the only chat in the corpus which has an explicit support discussion. It is very seldom that you find males talking to each other about problems that they may be having.

However, as Lin, Simeone, Ensel, Kuo (1979: 109) states, “social support may be defined as support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the larger community”. Thus, this is what is occurring in this chat. The conversation then progresses on to the second news item. Here the participants continue to make plans for the weekend, generally discussing what will be happening, where they will be going and so forth (see turn 9). The guys start planning the weekend as a distraction and as a way of getting out of their homes to let off some steam. The last stage in this chat is the closing where participant Y closes the conversation as his parents are “up his ass again” as he puts it.

Another aspect of the chat habits between these males that was interesting to me was the language choices that they made when chatting. Males tend to have a special vocabulary that they use for themselves and their male friends. For example, from the above chat the words “awe”, “bra”, “mooi” are frequently used. “Awe” is a greeting, “bra” refers to ‘friend’, and “mooi” is used to express something they either agree with or they think is cool. This type of mixed language use is considered to be part of the Cape youth slang as well as a local variety of Afrikaans known as Kaaps. Females would generally not use “awe” or “bra” when addressing their female friends but they may use it to address their male friends depending on the relationship between them. The word “mooi” would generally be used to express when something is pretty in the Afrikaans language. Below are extracts from the male-male chats which illustrate these patterns. The bolded words are the features of the data I have made reference to. (See Appendix A, chats 3 and 4)

Extract 4.1: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2012

Greetings

X: **awe cuz** howsit going man

[Hey cousin, how is it going, man?]

Y: **Awe bra** im doing great jst busy wit my studies bra

[Hey friend, I'm doing great, just busy with my studies, brother]

Extract 4.2: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2011

X: **awe bra** howzit goin?

[Hey buddy, how is it going?]

Y: **ny duideluk** and u **homey**?

[Good, and you my friend?]

The males in this chat use an excessive amount of textese and abbreviations. This chat comes from the time of MXit and was collected in 2010 where the use of textese was very popular and socially expected when using this application. There is also very little punctuation throughout the conversation. They also do not make use of initialisms or emoticons in these messages. This could be because it was not as popular then as it is now, because their phones possibly did not support the function or it could be because of the initial nature of the conversation.

According to Baron (2013: 149), gender also plays a significant role in instant messaging with regards to “content, word choices for initiating or closing instant messaging conversations as well as tone”. Lee (2003), in Baron (2013), found that male students spoke more about technological things in their conversations whereas females communicated on a more emotional level and more emotional subjects; males generally tended to avoid openings and closings of the conversation while females used both the features; males addressed one another in a more harsh and derogatory manner, whereas females displayed a more sympathetic tone and used a lot more emoticons in their conversations. For example:

Extract 4.3: Female to Female Chat

IM Application: BBM

Year: 2012

X: Such a **cute** profile pic gal 😊 being in love is awesome hey!

[Such a cute profile picture girl 😊 being in love is awesome hey!]

Y: Fo sho it is! Thnk u gal! **{excited face emoticon}**

[For sure it is! Thank you, girl! {excited face emoticon}]

Extract 4.4: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

Y: ok moo.i g2g tho bra.parentiles **r up my ass agen**

[Ok cool. I got to go though, friend. My parents are up my ass again (My parents are shouting at me again).]

From the above extracts, (See Appendix A, chats 2 and 18), it is evident to see the differences in the manner in which the participants expressed themselves. The female participants in extract 4.3 used words such as "cute" as well as emoticons, but the male in extract 4.4 did not use emoticons and he used the phrase "... r up my ass agen" instead of perhaps saying 'my parents are nagging on my head again'. Be this as it may, this rule is not set in stone as there are females who may speak in the manner that males generally do, just as there may be males who speak in a softer, more polite tone.

Another aspect that is very noticeable is the fact that they do not use any form of endearments or any form of "mwah", which is another illustration of the lack of overt emotion that is portrayed in the conversations between these participants. The following chat that will be analysed is that of a male and female who are friends. This chat was chosen for analysis to illustrate the types of registers and the manner in which friends of different genders chat.

The next chat which will be analysed is a conversation between a male and a female. This chat conversation took place on the social networking application WhatsApp. The relationship between these two participants, which was stated in the context of the assignment, is platonic albeit very close. However, I will argue that due to the obvious flirting occurring in this chat, this chat is more typical of the chats between lovers as the 'body' of the chat (the exchanging news stages) are replaced with ones called 'Expressions of longing'.

Chat 3: Female to Male Chat

IM Application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

Greetings

1. X: Yeba
[Hello]
2. Y: Ey
[Hi]

Establishing contact

3. X: Wmj?
[What are you doing?]
4. Y: Eka stan ma hie byte mut ga wek nu skat
[I'm standing outside, I have to go to work now darling.]
5. X: **oh**
[Oh]
6. Y: En eka voel no net kak dis al
[And I don't feel so well, that's all]
7. X: huso?
[Why?]
8. Y: Ekti enkies vidi werkie en eka werk nog tot 4h
[I don't have cigarettes and I have to work until 4 o' clock.]
9. X: oh jar en dis nog bitter lank
[Oh shame and that still very long.]
10. Y: J dink sieka eka stress oor nonsense ne my skat eks jammer man
[You probably think that I stress over nothing my darling, but I'm sorry man.]
11. X: lol nee ek dinky diti bt ek wiet hu ganit met rokers as hule ni entjies heti
[Laugh out loud, no I don't think that, but I know how it goes with smokers when they don't have cigarettes.]
12. Y: Ja wuh rook no darem n enkie fok disie eeste keer wat di kak gebeur in ses maansde ai.
[Yes, listen I'm finally smoking a cigarette fuck, this is the first time in six months that this shit is happening. sigh.]
13. X: Ai jinne j mut sieke ma di rook los

[Shame, you should probably try to stop smoking.]

14. Y: lol egan my skatjie eka ht dt al oorweeg

[Laugh out loud. I am going to my darling, I considered it.]

15. X: Lolz mwa ek grap ma

[Laugh out loud (kiss), I'm just kidding.]

Expressions of longing

16. Y: mis ngal jou gsigie

[I'm quite missing your face]

17. X: mwa x mis vijo, giste sit da n outjie vo my wt nes j geruik it j damn to Dink ek so an jo.

[Kiss. I miss you, yesterday there was a guy sitting in front of me that smelled the way you do, damn and I thought about you the whole time.]

18. Y: muni jok ni rerag... lol j mut hom vra of dai DKNY is dan isit so skatjie.

[Don't lie? Really? Laugh out loud, you had to ask him if it's DKNY, that's what I use darling.]

19. X: Nah eke keni ng vi hmi lolz

[Nope, I don't really know him, laugh out loud.]

Closings

20. Y: Ok my skt eka gan no op mxit

[OK, my darling I'm going on mxit now.]

21. X: Ok oz prt wee

[OK we'll speak soon]

22. Y: mwaaah gajo mis

[Kiss, I'm going to miss you]

23. X: ek vijo oek mwa op dai bek

[Me too, kiss on the lips]

24. Y: bye

[Goodbye]

There is a significant difference with regards to the features and language that has been used as well as the manner in which this chat occurred. Although the relationship between these two participants may be 'platonic', there seems to be some form of sexual interest between them. They do not chat in a manner that would usually be considered as 'typical' between two friends. They chat in a manner that is more like talk between two lovers, as there is a

distinctive re-occurrence of expressing feelings and explicit reference to physical intimacy (personal scents, kiss on lips, and so on). This conversation begins with a greeting that is not common amongst other chats in the data, the word “yeba” is translated here as ‘hello’ and then participant Y responds to the greeting with “ey” which is short for ‘Hey’. The word “yeba”, according to UrbanDictionary.com, is “a term used by Southern Americans to give affirmation or consent”. However, in this context the word “yeba” is used in the form of a slang greeting. Most of the conversation occurs in Afrikaans which tells us that the participants are Afrikaans speaking. They are chatting in a more informal variety of the language and are comfortable chatting to each other in Kaaps. The next stage that occurs in this conversation is where the participants *establish contact* with one another (turn 3) where there is an enquiry as to what each party was busy with at the time. This enquiry leads to a discussion of feelings (turn 7), where participant Y states why he feels the way he expressed in turn six.

In turn seven, participant Y expresses that he is not feeling so great because he has no cigarettes and he has to work until 4pm. The discussion continues on the topic of smoking and participant X teases participant Y with regards to giving up his habit of smoking. The chat thus takes on a highly affective tone, where participant X sympathises with participant Y. As a result of this affect, the participants establish a ‘register of intimacy’ between themselves during this chat. The next section, which is the *expressions of longing* (turn 16), begins with participant Y expressing how he misses participant X. Participant X then goes on to tell him how there was a guy sitting in front of her that smelled like participant Y, which made her think of him the entire time. Thereafter, the closing of the chat conversation is initiated in turn 20, where participant Y says that he will be logging in to MXit. They then say their goodbyes and tell each other that they will miss each other. Here, like with the females’ chat, the participants greet each other with a “mwah” or a variety of this word to end the conversation.

What was interesting to me in this chat is the manner in which the participants were chatting to one another as well as the variety of the language that they had used. The language is Afrikaans but the variety is one that they are both familiar with. For example, “muni jok ni rerag” - ‘do not lie, really?’ (turn 18), the standard Afrikaans for this phrase would be, ‘Moet nie jok nie, regtig?’ Another example would be turn 14, “lol egan my skatjie eka ht dt al oorweeg” - ‘laugh out loud, I am going to my darling, I have considered it already’ will be

‘lol, ek sal my skatjie, ek het dit al oorweeg’ in standard Afrikaans. Thus, the use of the variety (Kaaps) that they have chosen to chat in shows that they are young and from Cape Town, as well as part of the in-group of their social circle.

Thus, it is evident in the data that there are similarities and variations in the generic structures of the conversations, and the register choices that these participants make to conduct these conversations may differ from conversation to conversation and participant to participant, depending on who the participants are, as well as their relationship. Therefore, the factors which account for the differences may differ from conversation to conversation. For example, the relationship between the participants, the reason for chatting, and sometimes even the gender may impact the chat. Thus, as was mentioned previously by Neale (1980), in Chandler (1997), particular features which are characteristics of a genre are not normally unique to it, it is their relative prominence, combination and functions which are distinctive. Neale (1980) further argues that genres are instances of repetition and difference. He states that difference is important to the economy of genre and simply having repetition would not attract nor hold the attention of the audience. These characteristics are evident in the data. However, the data also shows how ‘dynamic’ genre is through the differences in certain conversations. This is reiterated by Fairclough (1995: 14) who states that genre is “a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity”. This therefore indicates that the characteristics and habits that have been adopted in instant messaging are ever changing and always being adapted and modified.

The openings and closings in particular are features of this genre that I was most interested in analysing as not all the conversations opened with a greeting and not all of the conversations closed with a greeting. Thus the following section will elaborate on the occurrences of these features in the chat conversations.

4.4 Openings and Closings Analysis

The following section will look at the variability of the data set in terms of the manner in which the participants in the data open or begin their conversation, as well as the way in which they close or end them. To execute this analysis, I discuss the theories of Tereza Spilioti (2011), Arthur Frank (1982), Emanuel Schegloff and Harvey Sacks (1974).

There were many fascinating things that I was able to observe in the data. However, one of the things that stood out the most for me was the greeting and closing habits of my participants' IM conversations. There are different ideas and theories as to why people either greet or fail to greet as well as the manner in which they choose to express a greeting. Thus, in this section, I argue that despite the many different conversations that I have examined, the greetings that are being offered are very similar across the different gendered groups, and if they differ, I look at the possible reason for the difference. I also argue that even though some participants do not greet, it is not necessarily assumed to be impolite but that the nature of the relationship between these participants, as well as the context, seem to play a vital role in the manner in which they choose to communicate with each other. I aim to illustrate this by discussing the chat data which I have acquired from students over a period of three years and I will substantiate these arguments with the findings that I have gathered through a focus group that was conducted with a group of undergraduate students from UWC. I looked at the manner in which they greeted and closed, if they had they greeted or closed their conversation with an ending and how many of them actually just jump straight into the conversation or leave the conversation hanging. Through the data analysis I show these differences as well as discuss whether there is a correlation between these habits and the different gender groups as well as the years from which the data was collected.

Sacks (1992) says one does not need to greet using the typical words of greeting and that the second stage of conversation, "how are you?" can easily be seen as a substitute for greeting. However, Schegloff (1986) argues that these "how are you?" stages typically appear after the initial greeting and are usually not used as conversation starters. The data has both of these types of beginnings and one can determine from the conversation why it is that these participants have chosen to initiate the conversation in their respective manners. Below is a table with the summary of greetings used in the corpus, separated into categories according to the gender of the participants and their relationship type.

Table 4-3: Greetings Table

Greetings Table												
Year	M-M			F-M			F-F			G-B		
	Total	Greetings	%	Total	Greetings	%	Total	Greetings	%	Total	Greetings	%
2010	5	5	100	7	5	71	6	5	83	2	2	100
2011	7	7	100	6	5	83	14	13	93	3	3	100
2012	5	3	60	19	16	84	20	17	85			

As per Schegloff's (1986) argument that conversations usually begin with a typical greeting, my data indicates that this is generally what occurs in chats. I will argue that although many chats do start with a greeting, those who do not are not considered impolite. More often than not people in a comfortable relationship tend to bypass the greeting stage of their chat, however, they may use other features or linguistic markers to indicate their greeting. This will be illustrated in the analysis below. In the male category in the year 2010, there are a total of five chats. Of those five, all of the conversations were opened with greetings in different forms: *hlo*, *awe*, *ey*, *EO* and *hey*. These were all used once each in the set of data for 2010. In 2011, of the seven conversations in this category, all of them started the conversations with a greeting. The greetings used in this year were: *hey* which was used twice, *dumelang dame*, *awe* which was used four times and *hello*. In 2012, there were also five conversations and of the five, only three (60%) opened with a greeting. In this group of chats, the greetings used were: *hos*, *hey* and *awe* which was used twice. Of all the greetings used, 'awe' is the most popular, used in eight of the 17 (47%) chats, either by both participants or just one. As the data indicates, only one out of the 17 chats neglected to greet. Examples of these follow. (See Appendix A, chats 2 and 6)

Extract 4.5: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

X: **awe** bra
 [Hello friend.]
 Y: **awe!**
 [Hello!]

Extract 4.6: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2011

X: **Hey** Sam hw u doin?

[Hi Sam, how are you doing?]

Y: I'm doin gr8t man wena?

[I am doing great man, and you?]

Below is an example of the chat which opened without a greeting (See Appendix A, chat 7):

Extract 4.7: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: BBM

Year: 2012

X: Jy slaap leka daa agter (smiley face)☺

[You sleeping at the back (smiley face)]

Y: lol i was readin dude

[Laugh out loud. I was reading dude!]



Above are three forms of openings which illustrate the range of greetings in the chats occurring in the conversations between males in the data set. Extract 4.5 illustrates one of the common greetings that occur between males. The use of the term “awe” indicates that the guys have a sort of solidarity between them and that they are comfortable with each other. Extract 4.6 illustrates a greeting with the *‘how are you?’* stage which Sacks (1992) refers to as a “substitute for the greeting”, however he also uses the common greeting of “hey”. These are the types of greetings that Schegloff (1986) mentions in his article for the initial starting of communication. The last extract (extract 4.7) is an example taken from a conversation between two males who were in a lecture. Participant X abandoned the greeting stage and immediately started teasing participant Y about sleeping in the back of the class. Looking at the rest of the text of this chat, it is evident that the participants are very comfortable with each other and thus it is seen as ‘okay’ to completely bypass the greeting stage.

Next, I look at and discuss the females' greetings. In the conversations between females there were similar situations with regards to the greetings. In the year 2010, all of the six conversations (100%) opened with a greeting. The different forms of greetings that were used were: *awe*, *hey*, *helo/ hello*, *ola* and *mwah*. In 2011, there were 14 conversations in this category of which 12 (86%) started the conversation with a greeting and two of the conversations had a greeting in the turn two. Some of the types of greetings used here are similar to the previous year's greetings, for example: of *hey*, *mwah*, *hi*, and *hello*. However, in 2012 there was a slight drop with regards to this habit with 15 (75%) of the 20 chats beginning with greetings, such as, *hey*, *hi*, *awe*, and *elo*. Below are examples of these sorts of openings as well as the linguistic choices they make to execute these greetings. (See Appendix A, chats 8, 19 and 9).

Extract 4.8: Female to Female Chat

IM Application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

X: **Hey** there

Y: **Hey**, hw ya doin?

[Hey, how you doing?]



Extract 4.9: Female to Female Chat

IM Application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

X: **bbe.. u okay**, and hows your mom doing?

[Babe... you okay? And how's your mom doing?]

Y: she hd a strke 2day bcz of stress (crying face)

[She had a stroke today because of stress (crying face)]

Extract 4.10: Female to Female Chat

IM Application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

X: lol... ahhh... the sweet sound of no voice note

[Laugh out loud. Ah... the sweet sound of no audio note]

Y: Are you jas the signal here sucks... Ima try again... My word

[Are you mad the signal here is bad. I'm going to try again. My word.]

Above are three different beginnings that have occurred between the females' conversations in the data set. Extract 4.8 has the very common greeting that could occur between any two people. It is simple, straightforward and still friendly. Extract 4.9 does not begin with the common types of openings but rather with the greeting substitute as Sacks (1992) refers to it. Here, participant X begins with a pet name and immediately goes into asking about the wellbeing of the other participant. The use of the pet name 'Babe' could be seen as a greeting in this case as participant X knows that participant Y needs comfort and that is exactly what she attempts to provide throughout the conversation. This too is a form of social support through IM as participant X is not able to physically be there for participant Y. The last extract (extract 4.10) in this section does not begin with a greeting or a substitute greeting. The conversation immediately addresses what participant X endeavoured to achieve from this conversation. Given that it starts with a laughing initialism and the use of taboo language within the conversations, it is obvious that the participants are very comfortable with each other and that they may have been chatting before as participant X was waiting for a voice note which she had not received earlier.

Within the female to male group in selection for 2010, there were seven conversations. Of those seven, five had opened with a greeting (71%). In 2011, there was an increase in openings with 83%. In 2012, there were 19 conversations, of which 16 (84%) opened with a greeting. The openings are very similar across the previously mentioned groups. Below are examples to illustrate this similarity. (See Appendix A, chats 10, 11 and 12)

Extract 4.11: Female to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2012

X: **Hey**

[Hey]

Y: **Hey**, wmjn?

[Hey, what are you doing?]

Extract 4.12: Female to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

- X: **Hey!** How u?
[Hello! How are you?]
- Y: **Hi,** im gud n u?
[Hello, I'm good and you?]

Extract 4.13: Female to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

- X: **Mwah**
[Kiss]
- Y: **Hey mwah**
[Hello kiss]



In extracts 4.11 and 4.12 above the conversations start in a very similar way to the other gender groups. However, in extract 4.13 the conversation begins with a virtual kiss. This serves as a form of greeting much like we would do when we see someone we are very familiar with, we would hug and/or kiss them. This form of greeting is not uncommon in my data between males and females in platonic relationships.

In the category between females and males in a romantic relationship known as ‘Girlfriend-Boyfriend’, there were two conversations in the group for 2010 and neither of the participants greeted one another in the beginning. This is perhaps because their conversation does not really end but is a continuation of an on-going conversation. This finding is supported by that of Spilioti (2011) who states that the use of closings is considered appropriate during interactions which occur between participants who would like to acknowledge some form of distance within their ‘in-group’ relations. She also says that “the use of closings may be linked with the participants’ (in)frequency of contact and indicates an asynchronous use of the medium” (Spilioti, 2011: 76- 77). She uses the term ‘asynchronous’ to describe chatting because one is not obliged to respond immediately once receiving the message. Thus, she

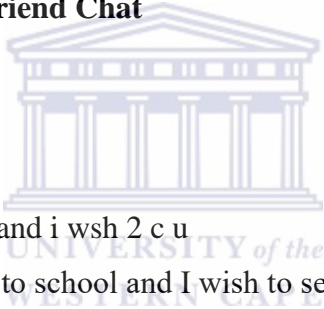
argues that greetings are generally used by people who are not completely ‘familiar’ with one another.

Although participants in a romantic relationship may not always or explicitly greet one another they use phrases which indicate a form of greeting, such as “mwah”. In the group for 2011, two of the conversations were opened with greetings. Below are examples of how conversations in my data began between girlfriends and boyfriends. Extract 4.14 illustrates a typical example of a greeting between a girlfriend and a boyfriend with the use of “hey love”. Extract 4.15 uses the substitute greeting where participant X asks participant Y how she is doing. This indicates that the use of different forms of greeting is common among most chat conversations as well as the many similarities that occur across the different conversations. (See Appendix A, chats 13 and 14)

Extract 4.14: Girlfriend to Boyfriend Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2011

- 
- X: **Hy lv** im on my way 2 skul and i wsh 2 c u
[Hello love, I’m on my way to school and I wish to see you.]
- Y: **Hy 2 u 2** im also going 2 skul bt not nw lyter
[Hello to you too, I’m also going to school, but not now later.]

Extract 4.15: Girlfriend to Boyfriend Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

- X: **Hwz u doin 2day** angel? ☺
[How you doing today, angel? ☺]
- Y: **Ag me ok hun jst abt moeg dno y lol nd u?**
[Oh I’m okay honey, just a bit tired, don’t know why laugh out loud, and you?]

The patterns and general habits with regards to greetings are similar across all the gender combination (F-F, M-M, F-M and G-B). However, the manner in which they greet one another may differ. The majority of the participants greet one another when they initially start

chatting whether they use an explicit greeting or something which they have become accustomed to using as a greeting between themselves. Many of the participants use different forms of *hey*, *hello*, *hi*, *awe* etc. and the use of *mwah* as a greeting is used in all the groups except between males. This is one of the only differences and not surprising as the use of *mwah* which is defined as a virtual kiss, would not be considered socially ‘normal’ between two males unless they are in a relationship. The people who use the above-mentioned forms of greetings (*hey*, *hello*, *hi*, *awe*, *mwah* etc.) could be assumed to be part of the ‘in-group’, which Spilioti (2011) talks about, that allows for participants to bypass the initial greeting of the conversation.

Just like there are common openings to conversations, most conversations usually end with a closing as well. According to Frank (1982), Goffman’s early work on closings shows how speakers attempt to limit any form of embarrassment through the use of ‘pre-closings’ which serve to initiate the actual closing stage. A pre-closing can come in the form of “well”, “anyways” and so on, words which indicate that the end of the conversation is approaching. In these cases, according to Frank (1982), if the other party fills the next turn with another pre-closing then the pre-closing is considered heard and accepted and thus becomes a closing. For example, “Well I have so many things to do before tonight”, ‘Ok, no problem” (Frank, 1982). This example shows how the second speaker acknowledges that the first speaker needs to end the conversation. According to Svennevig and Johansen, in Andersen and Aijmer (2011: 15), “closing sequences in chat interaction are generally initiated by one of the parties announcing some reason for ending the conversation”. They state that closings generally take on four different forms, namely, ‘goodbye tokens’, ‘reassurance of future contact’, ‘hugs and kisses’, and ‘declarations of affection’.

Spilioti (2011) states that three different forms of closings are common in her chat data such as *sign-offs*, *call-offs* and *closing greetings*. Sign-offs are when the conversation ends with ‘kisses’, in my data this would be “Mwah”. This can be seen as affective expressions in chats. Call-offs include the allusion of future interaction, such as “see you”, this in the data is also generally recognisable in the form of “chat later”, “brb” and so on. Finally, closing greeting is identifiable as “good night”, “sweet dreams”, “good bye” and so on. This type of greeting indicates that there is a clear ending to the conversation.

According to Spilioti (2011: 73), the study of participants’ perceptions of what is appropriate presupposes that participants jointly accomplish and achieve closings in a manner that is manifested in their sequences of SMSs. Spilioti (2011: 77) argues that “the use of a closing may be linked to the participants’ infrequency of contact and indicates an asynchronous use of the medium, manifested in the realization of a text message schema that includes opening and closings”. This means that the participants may use closings simply because they do not know when they will be communicating with that person again which gives the communication an asynchronous feel as the conversation stops and starts at different times. Furthermore, she states that the use of closings is considered suitable in interactions between participants who understand and know that they have a distance between themselves and/or their in-group relations. Thus, closings as well as openings are considered to be politeness markers. Below is a table with the summary of the closings used by the participants.

Table 4-4: Closings Table

Closings Table												
Year	M-M			F-M			F-F			G-B		
	Total	Closings	%	Total	Closings	%	Total	Closings	%	Total	Closings	%
2010	5	4	80	7	3	43	6	4	67	2	2	100
2011	7	5	71,4	6	6	100	14	11	79	3	1	33
2012	5	3	60	19	15	79	20	16	80			

In the male-male category in 2010, there is a total of five chats. Of those five chats, four of them were closed-off when the conversation came to an end. In 2011, of the seven conversations in this category, only five (71%) of the conversations ended with a closing. In 2012, there were also five conversations and of these, three ended with a closing. However, the three that opened with a greeting were not necessarily the same three that ended with a closing. Below, I illustrate some of the different closings that have occurred in the data. (See Appendix A, chats 3 and 15)

Extract 4.16: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2012

Y: but g2g cheerz.

[But got to go cheers.]

X: **cu** bra hav a good 1 an tanx man gna need it.

[See you brother, have a good one and thank you man I'm going to need it.]

Extract 4.17: Male to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2012

X: ok kwai, **see u** friday

[Okay good. See you on Friday.]

Y: kwai.

[Good]

Both extracts 4.16 and 4.17 are from the chats between males. In the first extract, the conversation is clearly being ended by participant Y with a *closing greeting* in the form of “g2g cheerz” with “cheerz” also considered to be a *closing greeting*, however participant X uses the *call-off*, “cu” to close. The second extract makes use of the *pre-closing*, “Ok” and then a *call-off* which in this case is “see u Friday”.

In the conversations between females there were similar situations with regards to the closings. In the year 2010, of the six conversations, four of them ended with a closing. In 2011 there were 14 conversations in this category of which 11 (79%) ended with a closing. In 2012, 16 of the 20 chats (80%) ended with a closing. The conversations below illustrate the closings that were used. These extracts have the different forms of closings as proposed by Spilioti (2011). Below are examples of the type closings that the females frequently use. (See Appendix A, chats 8 and 16)

Extract 4.18: Female to Female Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2011

X: **bt g2g chat lata**

[But got to go, chat later.]

Extract 4.19: Female to Female Chat

IM Application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

- Y: **Anyway, I have to go...** nyc chatting to ya... **Luv ya.**
[Anyway, I have to go... nice chatting to you... Love you.]
- X: All the best... Take care!

The above extracts indicate similar endings to that of the previous group. Extract 4.18 ends with a *closing greeting* in the form of “g2g” as well as a *call-off*, “chat lata”, which indicates that participant X needs to leave the conversation at that time, however, she will be able to chat a bit later during that day. Extract 4.19 begins the closing with a ‘pre-closing’ in the form of “anyway”, followed by a *closing greeting* “I have to go” as well as a possible *sign-off*, “Luv ya”. Thus, it is evident that females ensure that their closings are explicit and that they are affectionate about it. Participant X however, simply only uses *sign-offs* to express her closing, “All the best... Take care”. Despite the fact that there is no explicit closing here, she still signs off in an affectionate manner.

Within the female to male group selection for 2010, there were seven conversations. Of those seven, three had ended with a closing which is only 43% of the total in that year. In 2011 there was an increase in closings 100% of the total of six. In 2012 there were 19 conversations of which 15 (79%) closed with an ending to the conversation. The closings are very similar across the previously mentioned groups. Below are examples to illustrate this similarity. (See Appendix A, chats 11 and 17)

Extract 4.20: Female to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

- Y: **I h2g nw, chat agen.**
[But I have to go now, chat again.]
- X: ok Babe, ima miss u... **bye.**
[Okay babe, I am going to miss you.]

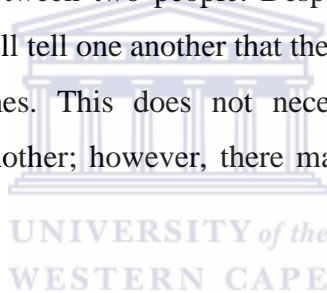
Extract 4.21: Female to Male Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

- Y: LOL ja man... **see u**
[Laugh out loud yes.... See you]
- X: **Bye**
[Good bye]

Extract 4.20 is very similar to extract 4.18 above whereby the ending begins with a *closing greeting*, “I h2g nw” and then a *call-off* in the form of “chat agen” with participant X using the ‘closing greeting’, “bye”. However, extract 4.21 simply has a *call-off* as the initiation of the ending, which in this case is “see u”. The above shows how different conversations can be depending on the relationship between two people. Despite a male and female being in a platonic relationship, they may still tell one another that they miss them or will miss them and call each other ‘cute’ pet names. This does not necessarily mean that they may be romantically interested in one another; however, there may be the possibility that they are signalling interest in each other.



In the category between females and males in a romantic relationship known as ‘Girlfriend-Boyfriend’, there were two conversations in the group for 2010 but only one conversation has a closing in the end. This type of habit suggests to me that their conversation does not really end but is a constant continuation of the on-going conversation. Despite the absence of an obvious closing, there are words that they use to illustrate that they are sort of ‘closing’ such as “Mwah”, which Spilioti (2011) calls a *sign-off* and is considered an affective expression. In the group for 2011, there are three chats but only one of them ended with a closing. In this category, there are no chats for the year 2012. Below are examples of how conversations end between girlfriends and boyfriends in the data set. (See Appendix A, chats 13 and 14)

Extract 4.22: Girlfriend to Boyfriend Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2010

- Y: **chat l8r 2nyt bye bye**

[Chat later tonight, bye bye]

Extract 4.23: Girlfriend to Boyfriend Chat

IM Application: MXit

Year: 2011

X: ok al **c u** aftr skul

[Okay, I will see you after school]

Both of the above extracts do not give the indication of an ending that we would expect between two people in a romantic relationship. We would expect conversations between these participants to have ended with “I love you, chat later” or something to this effect. Be this as it may, both of the conversations end with call-offs, which indicates a promise of contact later.

With regards to the norms and features which are utilised in the closings, it is evident from my data that very few of my participants enter the closing stage with a *pre-closing*. Most of the conversations are ended with a closing greeting, which is a distinct closing. Some closing greetings are accompanied by a *call-off*, a *sign-off*, or both. The most common sign-offs used are, *mwah*, *mwahtjies*, *kissy ba*, *mwahugies* and *hugs*. The call-off's most commonly used are *see you*, *brb*, *chat l8r*, and *chat agen*. Call-off's can also be thought of as reassurances to make contact later. Finally, the closing greeting's that were used were *g2g*, *bye*, *h2g* and finally; *safe or safety*, which were most commonly used between guys. Males generally close their chats with one another in a less overtly affectionate manner. This manner of closing is the complete opposite of the way that females as well as females-males may end chats with one another. The closings which occur between these participants make excessive use of *mwah*, pet names and possessive pronouns. This signals a more comfortable platform or relationship between these participants.

From the above analysis, it is evident that the participants in the data sample do not always find it necessary to begin a chat conversation with a greeting and/or to end it with an ending. However, the chats that do start with greetings have similar greetings, while those that end, end in similar manners. However, I have argued that the presence or absence of greetings and closings may be the result of the relationship between the two participants taking part in the

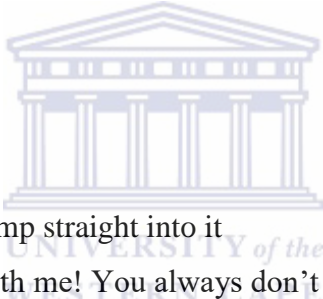
conversation. It is also conventional to skip the greeting stage in the beginning of the conversation or the closing at the end the conversation if there is a mutual understanding or a particular type of relationship between two people who are familiar with each other's chatting habits. For example, if you have a friend that you chat to all the time, the tendency to greet wears off because your conversation is on-going. This will be reiterated in the following section which is a discussion of one section of the interview data. In this interview, the participants discussed when and why they do or do not greet the person they are chatting to.

4.5 Interview Data

The interview that I conducted with six students at the University of the Western Cape looks at a range of different aspects with regards to chatting. As noted in Chapter Three, three of these participants, Mahmood, Tasneem and Brandon, are second-year Economic and Management Sciences students as well as friends. Two of the participants are Arts students, Billie is a third-year student and Kiara is a second-year student. Finally, the sixth participant is a Linguistics Postgraduate student, who was also the facilitator of the interview. One of the topics discussed by the group was what they felt was necessary with regards to the norms of chatting. In this data there are many different ideas concerning the necessity of greeting and the way in which a conversation should be ended. Conversations (chats) are typically shaped by the relationship of the participants.

Within this focus group, there were a range of opinions with regards to greeting at the start of the conversation and the ending of the chat with a closing. Brandon and Billie strongly believe that it is necessary to greet when one starts a conversation regardless of how many times you chat to the person or people within the same day. Brandon stated that one should consider each opportunity that you have been given to chat to someone as an honour and thus should treat it as such because you do not know whether you will receive that honour again. Tasneem also argued that you should greet when you chat, however, this may differ when it comes to certain individuals. For instance, if you have the type of relationship with someone where you always just jump straight into your reason for chatting as if the conversation is everlasting, as is the case with very close friends, then it is permissible to omit the greetings. This would possibly also apply to someone that you have seen earlier in the day or have already spoken to. Below is an extract in which the participants discuss who greets and who doesn't (turns 1012- 1028).

Extract 4.24

1012. Bi: I greet first
1013. N: Always, no matter who it is?
1014. Bi: Always
1015. T: No, not all the time
1016. B: Naai I always greet because= =
1017. Bi: = =Not all the time but most of the time
1018. T: Mmm
1019. N: And if you like...
1020. M: Naai I won't greet
1021. T: I'll start with like 'hey, how you doing'?
1022. K: Why not? [@M]
1023. M: Huh
1024. T: And then – I dunno
1025. B: Naai I won't do that
1026. M: I won't greet
1027. B: I will just greet and jump straight into it
1028. T: You always do that with me! You always don't greet [@M]
- 

From the above, it is evident there are a variety of positions with regards to greetings and closings, however there is some uncertainty with Tasneem but she does feel that it isn't necessary to greet all the time.

In the above extract, Mahmood claims that he does not always greet the people he knows. Mahmood believes that having the conventional "hey, how you doing?" types of conversations are tedious and thus feels that if you pose a question it is more likely to escalate into an interesting conversation (See extract 4.25 below). He also states that less effort would have to be put into the conversation to keep it going. Mahmood also argues that by doing this, you actually have a greater impact on the person that you are chatting to, because the person will be thinking of the conversation that you had long after the conversation has ended, and thus think of you. Whereas, if you had simply had the conventionalised conversation, you would be conforming with what is considered the norm and would have in no way stood out. Tasneem, however, disagreed with Mahmood in this

regard as she felt that you should not waste her time with trivial nonsense and should get to the point of why you are chatting. Below is an extract in which Mahmood explains how he starts conversations (turn 1033 - 1045):

Extract 4.25

1033. M: Look here, this is what typically happens and this is what I discovered about chatting – you like ‘hey’ then you will reply ‘hey’= =
1034. T: = =‘hey’ [laughs]
1035. B: Naai, naai, naai
1036. M: Or and then the person will ask, ‘how you doing?’ that will form and then it will ‘I’m okay and you?’
1037. T: Mmm and then after
1038. M: And then after that you need to generate something in order for the conversation to go on, it won’t just flow
1039. T: But= =
1040. M: = =However, if you ask the person ‘hey gotta quick question for you’. Person will be like= =
1041. T: = =Quick, just what’s going on
1042. M: Okay this guy’s – what? You’d want to know what the question is
1043. B: Awe it’s intrigue
1044. T: Mmm
1045. M: It’s intriguing right?

Mahmood shows awareness of the generic norms of chatting which was described in the first half of this chapter. However, Mahmood deviates from the conventional manner of chatting when he feels that it has become too boring and will not ‘flow’. However, Tasneem completely disagrees because she says if you want something or you want to chat then just ask or chat but do not ask random trivial things and waste her time (turns 1100-1107) (See extract 4.26 below):

Extract 4.26

- 1100.T: No when you need something, say for example you need something from me then you come with that 'Hey, how you doing?'. Okay this is a bit weird hey but when you come with that like 'what you doing?' and then like you know that this person is only chatting to you coz they want something from you right and then like and then= =
- 1101.M: Oh, oh
- 1102.T: You be like, like just leave this like, like, the one day that happened to me actually last week. So I just told the guy 'What do you want from me' like why are you even being nice to me
- 1103.B: Yor you give it to him straight
- 1104.M: No, but look here Tasneem= =
- 1105.T: = =Coz it's annoying when you, when you, waste my time, you can just tell me
- 1106.M: I waste your time, yor (laughs)
- 1107.T: I'm not saying you, I'm not saying you, in general. I'm just saying like the person is like wasting my time. They can just be like 'Look here I want this from you', why must you still be nice to me and like 'Oh my word, I miss you' just get to the point

With regards to the endings again, Brandon always greets at the end of his chats. Most of the participants greet at the end of the chats however, the forms of these greetings differ from conversation to conversation as well as participant to participant just as in the case with greetings in the beginning, as shown in section 4.3. Depending on who they are chatting to, Mahmood and Nabeelah do not always greet at the end of their conversations. The participants use terms such as: *mwah*, *got to go (g2g)*, *bye*, *chat later* and so on. Thus, openings and closings are an element of style and may be affected by a range of variables including personal style and identity.

4.6 Conclusion

In the above analysis, I looked at the typical topics that occurred and are discussed in the chats, what the typical genre and registers are of chat conversations on different instant messaging applications, as well as the occurrences of openings and closings in the chat and the

manner in which these openings and closings are affected. The questions that were answered in this analysis are:

- What are the typical topics which recur in these chats, as well as the frequency thereof?
- How do these topics relate to the psychosocial and emotional well-being of the participants?
- Do the chats have similar generic structures or how they may differ?
- Which linguistic and discursive registers, are used and how do these features shape the chats?
- What the focus group users state with regards to greetings and closings during chatting and how it is perceived, as well as how many actually make use of this feature? and finally
- Whether ‘pre-closings’ are utilized and why?

The analysis shows that different topics of discussions can occur in chats and the reasons for the the initiation of these topics are mostly as a result of the participants involved. The topics which recurred most frequently were, *establishing contact*, *social plans*, *exchanging news*, *discussing academic work* and *discussing relationships*. Thus, the analysis argues that as a result of the nature of these topics, the participants are able to draw on each other for support and are then able to strengthen their psychosocial and emotional well-being as well as establish and strengthen interpersonal relationships between themselves.

Despite the variability of these chat topics, many of these chats still follow the same generic structure. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the typical UWC student’s chat conversations are generally to establish some sort of contact. Most of the chats typically follow similar generic structures which start with a greeting, usually followed with by ‘the how are you stage?’ or establishing contact stage. This then brings the participants to the exchanging news stage of the chat. Here, the exchanging news stage generally discusses things that may have happened or focus on planning social outings. This is either followed by another exchanging news stage or by the closing of the chat. The greeting and closing of the chats are usually very short, for example single turns, however, the stages which carry the content of the conversation generally are not of a particular length and may differ depending on the topic as

well as the participants in the conversation. Thus, conforming to the argument of Bock (2013: 89), “despite the conventionality and predictability of this genre and register, they are also fluid and hybrid”.

The greetings and closings which occurred in the chats were not exclusive to the chats in which they occurred. Depending on the participants and the relationship between them, greetings may occur or not and if they do occur, they may occur in different and sometimes unusual forms. There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way of greeting when chatting with one’s peers or friends but rather there is a norm or expected style for peers. Many of the chats that I analysed did in fact begin with a greeting and end with a closing. This aspect of the generic structure of chats is supported by the participants of the interview of whom the majority agree that it is important to greet, whoever, it is you may be planning to chat with, before launching into the conversation. However, where the greetings or closings were omitted, this may reflect the more intimate nature of the participants where their chats do not end but are part of a ‘never-ending conversation’ (Spilioti, 2011)

The analysis further argues that the registers that have been adapted for the chats are one of the aspects that shape the chats, in conjunction with the relationships of the participants. The range of features used in the chats by my participants is typical of the global textese register. However, this global register has been adapted to local varieties and norms by my participants in order to conform with the ‘rules’ or norms of their speech community and personal style. Thus, chat conversations are shaped by many aspects including the topic, participants, generic structure, register as well as the mode of the chatting.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 FOCUS GROUP AND QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the chatting habits and norms of UWC students. The first section focuses on the analysis of the survey which I conducted at the University of the Western Cape. The data was collected in the form of questionnaires conducted with undergraduate students at the University of the Western Cape. This data was collected to complement and better understand the instant messaging data that I have also collected. The analysis will be a discussion of the habits and norms that students at UWC have developed when or for chatting on instant messaging applications. The second part of this chapter will be an analysis of the interview which was conducted with a group of undergraduate students and one postgraduate. In the analysis, I will illustrate what it is that the participants considered be a norm and what they considered to be acceptable whilst chatting, i.e. chatting habits, and how their style may have changed with the shift to smartphones. I will also show how these findings concur with the findings of my previous data analysis chapter.

5.2 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The questionnaire data was collected to get a ‘typical portrait’ of a UWC student with respect to their instant messaging habits. Fifty surveys were conducted with second-year undergraduate Economic and Management Sciences students on the University of the Western Cape main campus. (See Questionnaire in Appendix C)

The first question that was asked on the questionnaire was, ‘Do you make use of instant messaging?’ All 50 of the participants of the survey indicated that they do use instant messaging applications. This response for me was not at all a surprise as most of the undergraduates on university come from the era of the internet and social networks. Most students this age, as well as some older ones, communicate with their friends and family via different forms of social networks and therefore have been and are exposed to instant messaging applications. Things such as email – which we use on a day to day basis to send and receive information whether it is for academia, work, or even socially – all have instant

messaging applications. However, there are always certain individuals who do not want to participate in the evolution of technology and choose to exclude themselves from this development and therefore do not use social applications. This then brings us to the types of instant messaging applications that these participants use.

There are various types of instant messaging applications that are being used today and the number and types of applications are constantly increasing and changing. However, the most common among them are *Whatsapp*, *BlackBerry Messenger (BBM)*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *MXit* and *Gmail*. All of these applications have become more accessible after the advent of smartphones and Android mobile phones. The second question that was then posed was, ‘Which instant messaging applications do you use most frequently? Why?’ Collectively, 40 of the participants use *Whatsapp*, 31 of these participants use *BBM*, 12 of them use *Facebook*, three of the participants indicated that they use *Twitter*, two of them use *MXit*, one uses *Gmail* and one uses *Viber*. A summary of these findings can be seen in Figure 5-1.

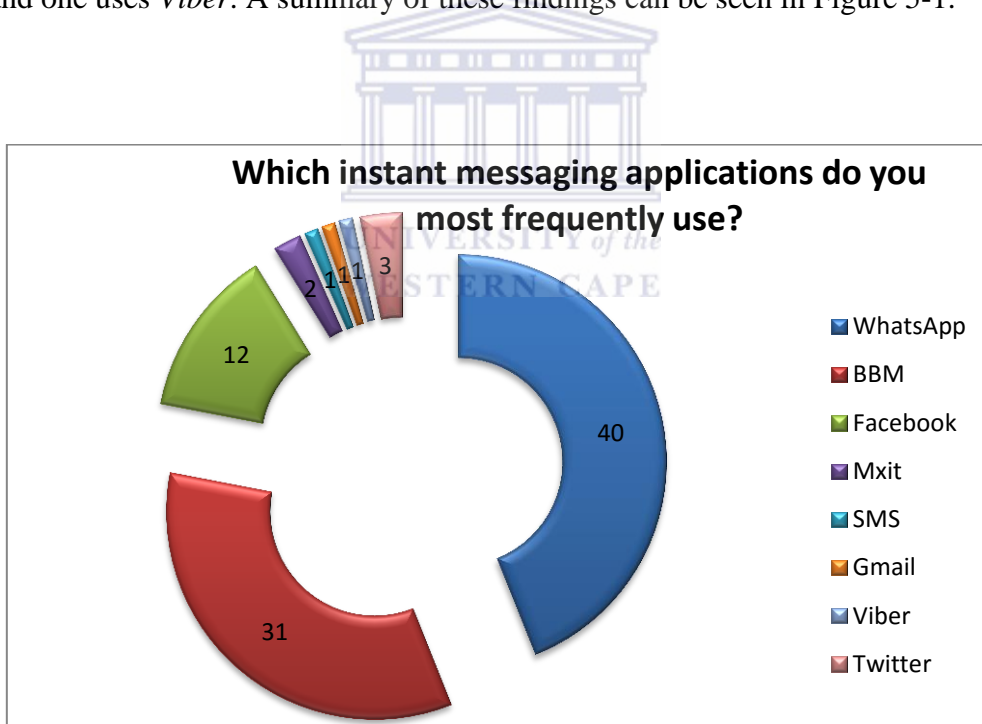


Figure 5-1: Frequency of messaging applications

From the data that I have collected I am able to generalise that at this time, due to the introduction and ever-growing market of Android mobile phones, *Whatsapp* is the most commonly used instant messaging application. Be this as it may, many instant messaging users do use more than one instant messaging application. Some participants may perhaps

utilise *Whatsapp*, *BBM* and *MXit* simultaneously to accommodate friends who may not have one or the other of the applications previously mentioned. Thus, many of the participants use more than one application. This brings us to the approximated time that these participants spend on these applications.

The total amount of time that each participant spends on these applications cannot always be calculated easily as we often use these applications sporadically. However, many of them have indicated the estimated time that they spend on these applications based on the time of day that they usually chat. The question which probed this was, ‘How many hours per day do you spend on chatting? Choose ONE’. On the questionnaire they were given four options: *0-1 hour*, *2-3 hours*, *4-6 hours*, and *Other* which was more than six hours. The option that was most frequently chosen was option *4-6 hours* with a total of 23 out of the 50 participants, which is almost half of the sample. The options that were chosen as the second most frequent chatting time was *2-3 hours* and *Other* with a total of 12 for each option. Lastly, the option of *0-1 hour* was the least chosen option with a total of only three.

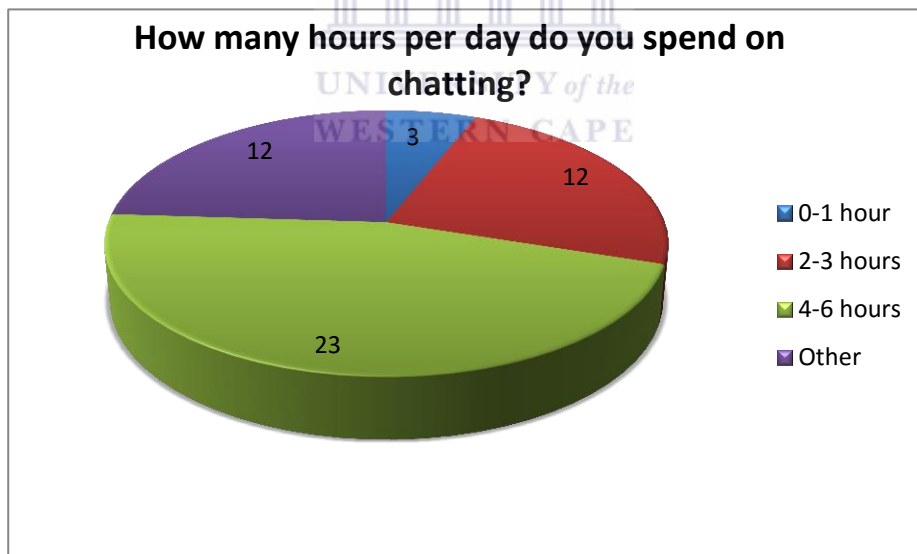


Figure 5-2: Daily time spent chatting

Thus, it is evident that students generally spend quite a bit of time on IM applications which amounts to approximately a quarter of the day. Therefore, it is clear that instant messaging plays a vital role in lives of university students and their friends.

The fourth question that was asked in the questionnaire was, ‘Who do you chat with most frequently? Choose ONE’. The options that were given for this question were *Friends*, *Siblings*, *Parents*, *Strangers*, *Girlfriend/ Boyfriend* and *Other (with whom?)*. In response to this question, 32 out of the 50 participants chose *friends* as the option for who it is that they chat to the most. The second most chosen option was the *Girlfriend/Boyfriend* option with a total of 14 of the 50 participants. Furthermore, two of the participants chat to their *siblings* most frequently and two participants chat to *other* which is a fiancé and fellow students. It is evident that most students use instant messaging to keep in touch with their friends and to communicate with their romantic partners. See Figure 5-3 below.

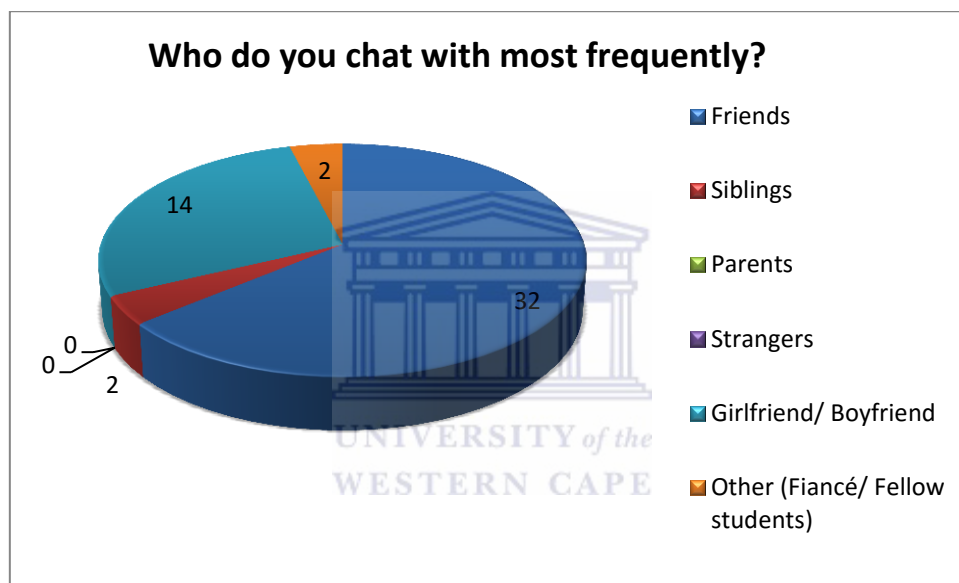


Figure 5-3: Most frequent chatting partner

The next aspect that I found interesting is where these instant messaging conversations take place. Thus, the fifth question that I then posed was open-ended: ‘Where are you usually/most of the time when you are chatting?’ Thirty-two of the participants said that they chat *at home* most of the time. Twelve of the participants said *at campus*. However, some of them said that they chat *at campus* and *at home*. Twelve said that they do in fact chat *everywhere*, no matter where they are or what they are doing. One participant said that they chat *everywhere but in lectures* and one indicated that they chat in *lectures* most of the time. Thus students generally chat throughout the day in all locations, although they choose or prefer to chat most at home.

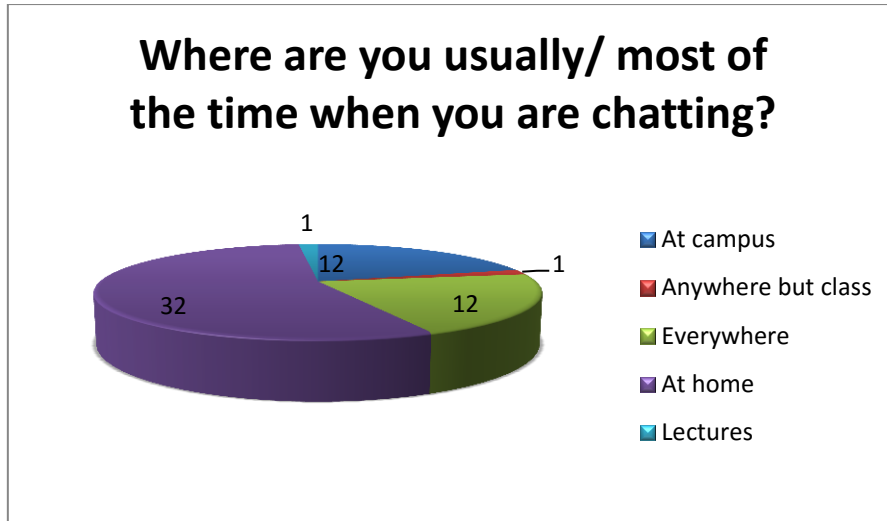


Figure 5-4: Most frequent location when chatting

Question six was, ‘At which time during the day do you usually chat? Choose one or two of the following’. The options for this question were: *first thing in the morning, while travelling (public or personal), during lectures, while in the student centre, at night before going to sleep, all times of the day, at some other time, when?* The most frequently chosen option was *all times of the day* with a total of 26 participants choosing it. The second most chosen option was *at night before going to sleep* with a total of 21. Nine participants said that they chat *first thing in the morning*, seven indicated that they chat *whilst travelling*, two indicated that they chat while in *the student centre* and two indicated that they chat at other times which were *after the school day has ended and during free time on campus* respectively.

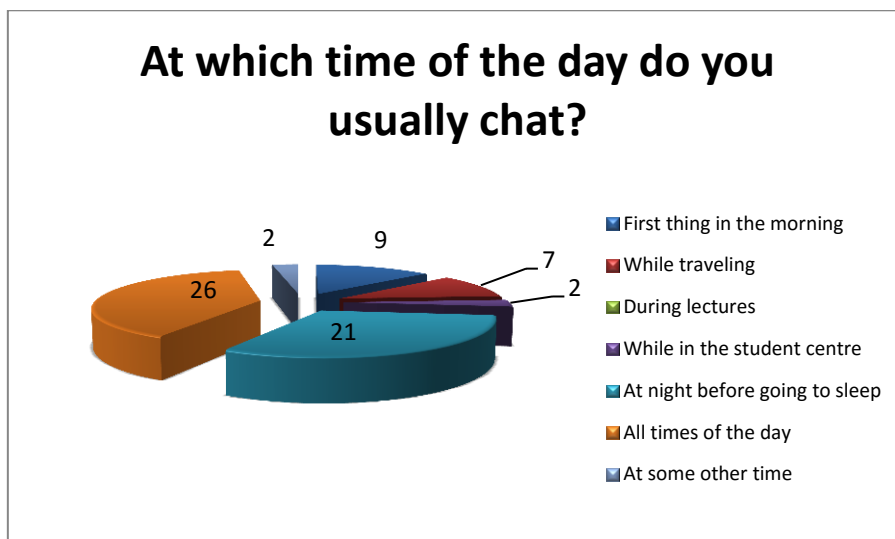


Figure 5-5: Time of day when chatting mostly occurs

Thus, from this information it is evident that most people chat all times of the day and at night before going to sleep. Just as some people read a book to relax before going to bed, other people chat to ease their thoughts before turning out the lights for the night.

The question above was followed up by, ‘How many people do you usually chat with at the same time?’ This question had the following options to choose from: *mostly with one person*, *multiple individual conversations with different people*, *mostly with a group chat* or *with both individual conversations as well as group chats*. The results of the 50 questionnaires show that *multiple individual chats* are the most common amongst the participants with a total of 32 participants preferring to chat in this manner. Ten participants said that they *chat mostly with one person*, seven indicated that they chat with *both individuals and group chats* and only one indicated that they *mostly chat with group chats* only. Thus, a typical UWC student has multiple individual chats rather than chatting in group chats. See Figure 5-6.

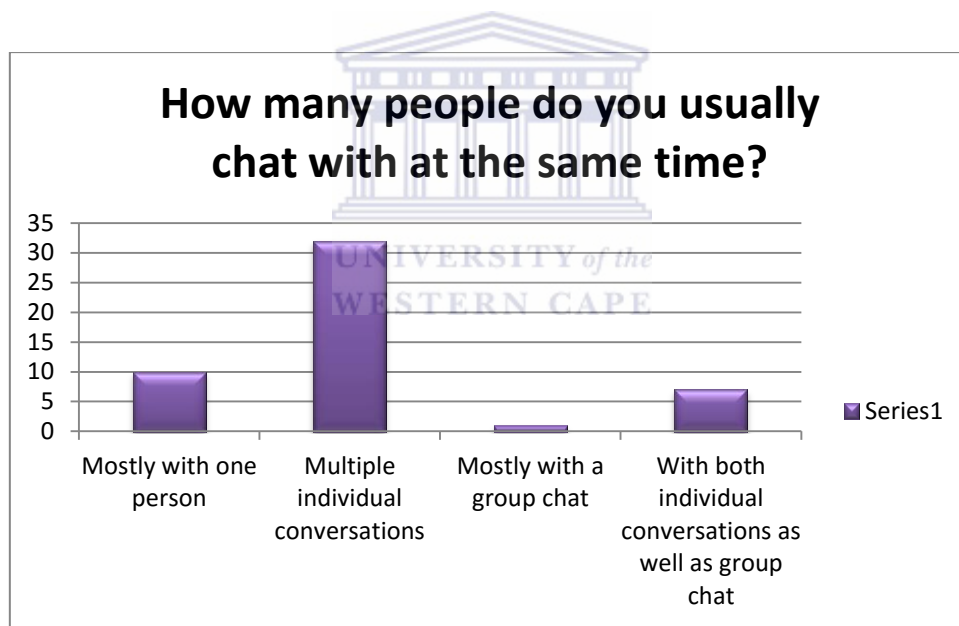


Figure 5-6: Amount of people being chatted to simultaneously

The next question which was the eighth question asked: ‘What is found most useful or is liked the most about instant messaging’. Most said that it is *cheap and cost effective* and that is what is most attractive to them about instant messaging. The second most frequent answer was that it makes *communication easy and it is instant*. The fact that it is easy to use, *accessible and effective* was mentioned nine times. Other reasons were that you are able to

chat with people you know as well as using it to gain information. One participant felt that it was *not useful* but they do use it to chat to class mates about work. See Figure 5-7.

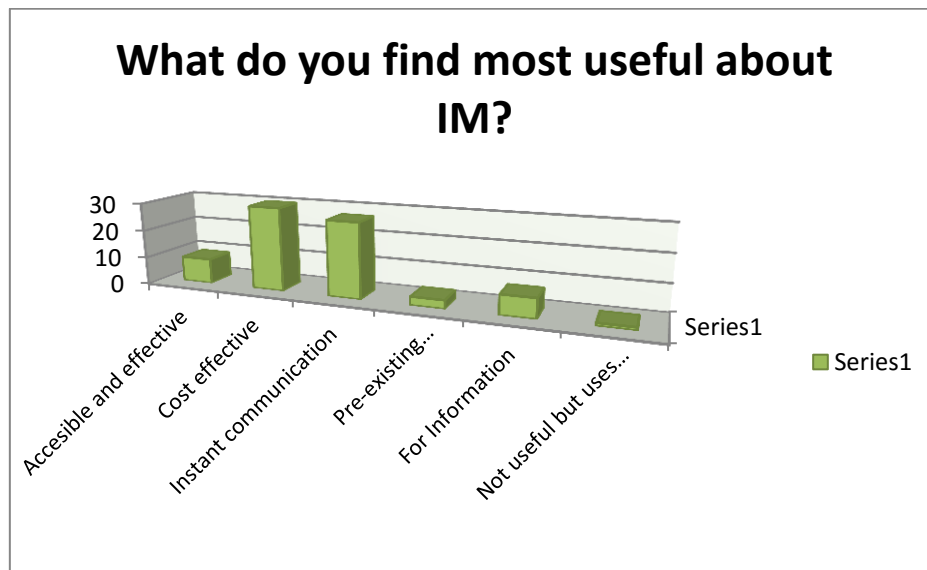


Figure 5-7: Most useful features of IM

The following two questions were asked with regards to improving interpersonal relationships as well as whether instant messaging affords a comfort that allows for better expression when chatting. The first question that was asked was, 'Has chatting improved your interpersonal relationships with people? If yes, in what ways? If no, explain'. Thirty of the participants indicated that it has indeed improved their interpersonal relationships. Sixteen of the participants said that it had not improved their interpersonal relationships and four indicated that it does and does not, depending on the situation or who they are chatting to.

The last question which was, 'Does instant messaging allow you the comfort to express yourself easier than when speaking to someone face to face? If yes, why? If no, why not?' Twenty-eight of the participants agreed that it does allow them the comfort to express themselves better. Twenty of the participants said they prefer to communicate about important things face-to-face. One participant said that it does allow them the comfort sometimes and one said that it does and does not afford them the comfort. Thus, it can be said that most people do find comfort in instant messaging chatting and at least 30 out of 50 (60%) feel that it helps strengthen and improve interpersonal relationships. Thus, the argument that Lin *et al.* (1979) makes with regards to social connections is reiterated here.

They state that, social support may be the type of support that is generally accessible to an individual through the social ties that they have with other individuals, groups or the larger community. This type of support is thus attainable through social ties created via social networking and IM chatting.

The interview participants completed a questionnaire as well with regards to their chatting in the 24 hours before the interview and they all had different reasons for chatting or using social networks. Mahmood used his purely for academics, Brandon used his to communicate about academics as well as help a friend with techniques for studying. The females used it for various reasons, some academic as well as social.

5.3 Focus Group Interview

5.3.1 Interview Context

This section of my analysis focuses on the interview that I conducted with a group of six people. The group consisted of five undergraduate students, three of whom are Economic and Management Sciences students and the other two are Arts students, as previously mentioned, and the final participant is a postgraduate student in Linguistics who is also the interviewee. The main focus of the interview is to discover when the shift in mobile phones occurred, from the 'black and white' to smartphones and how the shift has impacted and affected the habits of the participants and their choice of social chat applications. Another aim of this interview is to ascertain which type of mobile phone was their first and how the progression of technology has shaped them linguistically in terms of chatting on social network applications, as well as to look at what affordances these new technologies and instant messaging applications allow for.

The three EMS students are friends and that is why they are so comfortable with one another during the interview and as a result they had no problem communicating with each other. The other Arts students did not know each other and did not know any of the other participants before the focus group. Although Billie and Kiara weren't entirely comfortable in the beginning, they were soon made to feel comfortable by the other participants. The male participants, however, dominated the focus group discussion at certain times, but Tasneem

pointed it out and they joked about how they just are two guys against four girls yet they are dominating the conversation.

The interview was approximately 1 hour 17 minutes long. Some of the questions that were asked as probes were:

- What was your first cell phone?
- When did you shift to smartphones?
- How are the different IM applications you have used different from each other? Why did you shift to new applications?
- How has this shift impacted your style of chatting?
- Has chatting improved your interpersonal relationships?

There were many topics covered in the interview that were related to either the instant messaging applications or the mobile phones that the participants had. These topics were: first mobile phone; first colour screen mobile; first smartphones and the shift that came with the adjustment of using these smartphones; MXit; WhatsApp; using abbreviations and acronyms; face-to-face communication versus chat; who they chat to the most; group chats; greeting in the beginning of chats and at the end; style of chatting, grammar usage in chats; ending of chats as well as predictive texting. This chapter argues that, as a result of the shift and advancement of technology the chatting styles and habits of my participants have shifted as well. Furthermore, this analysis explores the affordances that these smartphones allow in comparison to older mobile phones, such as, creating a synchronous as well as an asynchronous platform for chatting.

5.4 Interview Data Analysis

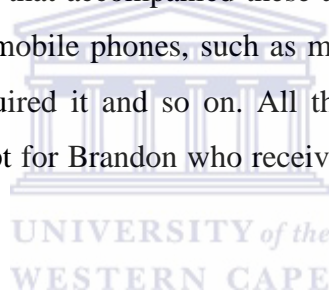
5.4.1 First Cellular Phone

Many of the participants started off with what was then called the ‘black and white’ phone. Here, I describe the participants’ first phones, how they have progressed since then and how this progression has affected their mobile use. Tasneem and Brandon both had Nokia 3310s and Nabeelah had a Siemens A30; these are often referred to as ‘black and white’ mobile

phones. Mahmood had a Sagem C2 and both Kiara and Billie had different models of a Samsung that were colour screen phones. Everyone was happy with their first mobile phone and everything about their phones excited them. Kiara, however, was happy but not obsessed with her mobile phone at the time she acquired it.

This section of the interview shows how the participants started in the mobile world and what technological features were associated with these mobiles and how the shift to the next generation of mobiles evolved, affording user's different experiences technologically and socially.

Going back and talking about the time when they all acquired their first mobile phones, incurred memories that brought smiles to their faces and excitement to their speech. There was an animation about the conversation that could only come from remembering the happiness and feelings of elation that accompanied these acquisitions. They remembered all the little things about their first mobile phones, such as make, model, colour, features, who gave it to them, when they acquired it and so on. All the participants received their first mobiles from their parents, except for Brandon who received his first mobile phone from his sister as a gift.



Extract 5.1

13. B: Anyway, my first phone I can still remember it clear, was a 3310 and uhm I actually got it as a present from my sister which made me extremely happy. Uhm it had a dolphin face coz I didn't like the original face. [Everyone laughs]. That time it was fashion not to have the original face.

The participants received their mobile phones at different times and ages, some even as early as grade four. For example, Billie acquired her first mobile in grade six for her birthday:

Extract 5.2

65. Bi: I got my first phone I think in grade 6. It was that small Samsung, when you flip it over it was a colour screen.

During the interview there were talks of the ‘first generation’ mobiles from the past having a battery life that could last for days, the games that were only available on certain mobile phones and how exciting it was to be able to download ringtones from different websites despite the cost being so high. Tasneem and Nabeelah made reference to this during the interview:

Extract 5.3

37. T: Oh uhm I got my first phone in grade 4. I remember it was a Nokia 3310 and like the coolest thing about it was that you could play like that snakey game for the whole day.

[LAUGHTER AND AGREEMENT]

And also like the battery lasted for like= =

38. N: = =Forever and a day

One of the main reasons why the battery life on these mobile phones lasted so long was because during the black and white phone era, people used their mobiles for simple transactional communications and there were not so many applications on the mobiles to drain the battery life. The hardware was also a lot less powerful than modern phones, and thus were less power hungry. These phones were used for functional and transactional communication purposes and to get important messages across. It cost quite a bit of money to make phone calls based on your service provider, as well as the tariff you were on. Now that social networking has become so popular, people use their mobiles as a means of socialising and the cost is next to nothing in comparison to making voice phone calls. As a result of the cost reduction, many people started utilizing this means of communication. Mobile phones are now constantly being used to stay connected in the form of social media applications and instant messaging applications.

During the discussion, many words of positive and endearing depictions were used to describe their mobile phones, the first as well as their latest smartphones, as a fashion statement and a way of fitting in socially. At the time when the participants received their first mobile phones, their phones were very important to them and as a result when they described their first phones as *awesome*, *cool*, *kwaai* and so forth. (See Extract 5.4 below)

Even though the mobile phones were not as ‘awesome’ as the ones they have now, at the time it was the best thing they could possibly have received. The fact that they had their own mobile phone and could play games was what was most important. Just having a mobile phone then was considered enough to fit in socially, but if you had one of the ‘popular’ or most sought after mobile phones that caused the ‘band wagon’ effect, then you were considered to be part of the in crowd, which at the time was the Nokia 3310. Although this mobile was not GPRS enabled, these were the phones that my participants started their ‘mobile communication era’ with. Many of the participants expressed emotional attachments to one or more of their mobile phones. Mahmood was one of the participants who expressed this attachment (See turns 17-30):

Extract 5.4

17. M: Naai, I remember my phone was like er I dunno if you guys know it’s like a Sagem. No one knows about that phone.
18. N: Yor that was that, that came from overseas. [Everyone laughs]
19. B: I know that phone.
20. M: Ya one of those giants. But it was actually **a really cool phone**. It was just so small (illustrates with hands) but you can like flip it open.
21. B: But you had the block one also neh= =
22. M: = =Naai naai just a small one= =
23. B: = =Yes there was a block one also.
24. M: It was a Sagem C2. It was just so small (illustrates with his hands), it was like as small as this (points to the voice recorder) and you can like flip it open= =
25. B: = =Ya I know about that.
26. M: and it had er- it had everything, it had camera, it could go on Internet. For my first phone it was like really= =
27. N: = =He didn’t start at the bottom.
[EVERYONE LAUGHS]
28. M: Yes I had Internet.
29. B: Yor
[EVERYONE LAUGHS]

30. M: and internet and stuff. The only problem there was at first was I couldn't like download MXit because that was like the in thing but- and afterwards I got it right. But it was **actually a cool phone. I still miss it though.**

Thus, from the above it is evident that the participants developed emotional attachments to their first mobile/cellular phone.

5.4.2 MXit Enabled Phones

After the era of the 'black and white' mobile phones, the 'colour screen phones' were introduced. According to mobilephonehistory.co.uk, the first colour screen phone was introduced by Siemens (S10) in 1997. However, this mobile only offered coloured text in four different shades. In the year 2001, the first full colour graphics mobile devices were introduced. With this era came Internet, music ringtones, better games, higher status and MXit. Many of them acquired their first colour screen mobile phone from their parents or siblings. During the time of the colour screen phone era, MXit was introduced to the world and quickly became one of the most popular social networking applications. Initially it was just a means of chatting to your friends and keeping in touch at a much cheaper rate. Then as it was modified and different versions were released, it became more and more like a social network where profile pictures were displayed and status messages were posted and so forth. However, the make and model of your mobile phone determined whether you were able to download the latest update or version of MXit, with its latest features. There were a few things that were disliked about the application though, such as one had to log on to MXit to be able to chat and to see if any messages had been left for you. Once you were done chatting, you had to log out of the application or your battery would run down. However, the biggest irritation for most MXit users was the fact that you would get disconnected and sometimes it would take long to reconnect. This didn't necessarily happen to those who had phones that could not update to the latest version; it would happen to anyone at any given time and with no prior warning. Below is an extract from the interview transcription supporting the above-mentioned pains of MXit.

Extract 5.5

308. M: MXit was... I, I could, I remember I could MXit on my Sagem C2 and I never ever got DC'd. People used to complain about it= =
= =[EVERYONE MAKES SOUNDS OF AFFIRMATION]
309. M: 'No I got DC'd and I was like, 'what's that?' No disconnected. It was an acronym for disconnected

Along with the growing popularity and availability of phones developed styles of writing associated with instant messaging and textese. The focus group participants discuss their experiences and attitudes to texting.

5.4.3 Texting Features and Formulaic Expressions

Some of the texting features and formulaic expressions that had started with MXit have carried on through the different social applications that have been introduced and others have died out. One of the main things that the participants in this focus group discuss is chatting in textese. This was chatting using letters that sound like the word they wish to use instead of the full word, such as 'U' for 'YOU'. In this interview, they claim that this manner of typing and chatting has had a negative impact on their language proficiency and academic writing. They all stated that as a result of their habit of using short-hand, they would accidentally write in that manner in their assignments without even realising it, which had a negative effect on their grammar and language use. Below is the extract from the data (See turns 547- 571).

Extract 5.6

547. M: We won't like use that [2] that like what can we say like 'U' instead of the whole letter "you"
548. N: Ya, word
549. M: And that also basically that messed up our... [2]
(B, M and T speak simultaneously)
550. B: [[English
551. M: [[English
552. T: [[Vocabulary, and you remember-

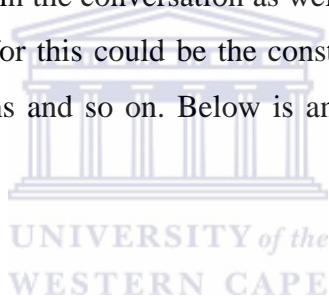
553. M: Especially like in essay writing
554. T: Mmm yor that's the worse
555. B: Phoo Phoo
[EVERYONE AGREES AND LAUGHS]
556. M: You so, you so like you want, you want to make sure that you write everything neh and then you writing so fast neh then automatically due to you- you so used to chatting
557. N: Er
558. M: Like 'R U THERE' or whatever the case may be, that you actually write there "U" in your [2] thing
559. N: [[Essay
560. T: [[Essay
561. M: In your essay and then blah, blah, blah, [2] and that really messed it up
562. T: That's crazy
563. M: And then- I dunno there was an article or something about the education and stuff= =
564. B: = =There was a lot of stuff
565. M: Ya, there were a lot of issues that arised from that and
566. B: Mmm MXit
567. T: Messes up your brain
568. M: Ya the student's brain
569. B: Student's could be seen using MXit are – it's not, it's not conducive to their whatse name
570. M: To their advantage
571. B: To their writing skills and stuff

Because of these negative perceptions of the impact of textese, the participants in this focus group now claim they no longer use many abbreviations. This could be a result of growing older. I personally stopped using textese because I did not find it appealing anymore and it was affecting my grammar. Ling and Baron (2013) support this idea in their article on 'Mobile Phone Communication' when they state: "While lexical shortenings appear to be more common among younger teenagers (especially females), college students often report that they have 'outgrown' such contrivances, focusing more on the conversational substance of their messages than on using special texting language as a form of social bonding" (Ling

and Baron, 2013: 206). Another reason for it phasing out could be because of the development of mobile phones and technology, which I will discuss a little later.

The popularity of certain features may shift over the years for example: initialisms, smileys (emoticons), endearments, mwah and the newer affordances have become *en vogue*. While many of the features of textese have become less, such as, shorthand and abbreviations (shortening words), other features have also been increasing in use such as, initialisms; smileys; the use of ‘mwah’ (a virtual kiss); sending pictures; status updates and the new popular feature and IM norm of voice notes. All of these features were being used by the participants in my study. (See table 4.2 in Chapter Four, for the summary of the linguistic features).

However, the frequency of use of these features is determined by the nature of the relationship between participants in the conversation as well as the nature of the conversation taking place. A possible reason for this could be the constant development of new smileys, different initialisms and acronyms and so on. Below is an extract from the data (See turns 1427- 1431):



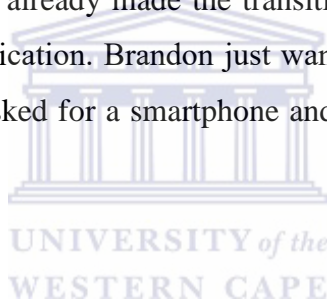
Extract 5.7

1427. N: What about emoticons and uhm like laughing acronyms and that stuff, has it increased or decreased?
1428. M: Definitely increased coz I like that uhm – I like that guy that shows his muscles like this (illustrates)
[EVERYONE LAUGHS]
1429. T: WhatsApp pictures are very nice. Like sometimes I will just type out ‘hahaha’ like instead of like ‘LOL’ whatever coz it like just shows on the auto thing
1430. N: Auto correct ya
1431. T: And then also like the pictures, like I like sending pictures and stuff but then you know if you go from BBM to WhatsApp and then BBM actually has better pictures

Many feel that the quality of emoticons has improved a lot since they were introduced to MXit. WhatsApp and BBM develop and improve their emoticons with every version they release and thus they entice the users to utilize these emoticons to express themselves.

5.4.4 Shift to Smartphones

At the time that the participants received or acquired their first smartphones, they were older and more conscious of what it is to have a mobile phone. This then resulted in them using it for more than just playing games. The majority of the participants received their smartphones during high school from their parents. Mahmood and Nabeelah had already completed high school by the time they obtained their smartphones, thus they wanted to purchase their own phones as a symbol of their independence. Four of the participants were eager to get smartphones in order to be part of the social media hype. Mahmood and Kiara wanted to have BBM because everyone else had already made the transition to BlackBerry and were using BBM's signature messenger application. Brandon just wanted to be part of the social media era despite not actually having asked for a smartphone and Nabeelah wanted to see what all the fuss was about WhatsApp.



Extract 5.8

B: [...] Okay my – my what, smartphone right?

My smartphone first smartphone, I was in grade [2] I think it was in grade 10 or 11 can't remember. Anyway I didn't actually buy the phone; I got it from my father second hand. It was an E65, uhm it was awesome, the reason why – well I didn't even have a choice to shift.

M: Laughs

B: But I wanted to shift actually but uhm, the reason why I wanted to shift is because [1.5] basically like you said was on social media, that kinda thing and it was awesome to have social media, I dunno why. It's like a bandwagon effect.

Many different topics and issues around social media and chatting came up during the focus group discussion. Bear in mind that these views do not actually represent the views of the entire social media population but that of the participants and their practices, which could possibly be reflected back on the general population. One of the many changes that had taken

place with regards to the social media and chatting habits amongst my participants is the shift towards more standard varieties and styles of chatting. This shift came at the same time as the shift to smartphones, as well as the shift from MXit to BBM and WhatsApp, whether this was because of the shift or because of the fact that they were all university students will be explored. (See turn 1345-1355).

Extract 5.9

1345. T: But do you know like I only use shorthand and that like shorthand thingy if I'm really lazy to type something. Like I dunno but I also – like if someone chats wrong hey – like know this person that says 'even' but they spell it 'e v a n' and that's wrong
1346. N: Er
1347. T: And then like I'll go on with this person the whole time and I'll be like 'look here it's 'even' with an 'e' not an 'a'. Like I'm not, I'm not big on grammar, like all your grammar must be right but sometimes it just annoys you like.
1348. N: That's an error
1349. T: Yes, that's an error (M, T and B speaks simultaneously)
1350. M: [[Because you know why?
1351. T: [[And the person, the person...
1352. B: [[Okay you know what irritates me, is when people like you said neh 'even' they – they using the same energy neh to write a four letter word. It is still a four letter word but there's one letter...
1353. N: Ya
1354. T: Letter gone
1355. B: You understand? Why didn't you just correct – write it correctly in the first place

The above extract illustrates the shifting ideologies with respect to language norms and the notions of what is acceptable or not with the use of smartphones. Although the participants do use textese and shorthand, they share sentiments on the manner in which shorthand and textese should be used. They use it in a way that is still grammatically 'acceptable', it may not be correct but it is not as far off from the correct spelling.

5.4.5 Affordances of Smartphones

All of the participants adjusted to the features of their smartphones when they started using them. In the texting application of the mobile, there is a feature called predictive text. In the past, most mobile users would deactivate this feature because it would bring up words that you weren't even thinking of and throw you completely off course of your conversation or you would end up sending text messages that made no sense at all. The previous application for predictive texting also did not entirely allow for abbreviated or code-mixed text if you did not programme your predictive texting application to recognise those words. However, with the advancement of technology the predictive text feature has been modified to fit the needs of the user. So now not only does your mobile remember the words that you use often but it also gives you the word that you intended to use as if it thinks for you. Thus, most smartphone users opt to leave the predictive text feature activated on their phone simply because it makes texting easier. This may be one of the reasons more and more people are moving away from textese. Bearing this in mind and adding the fact that my participants are university students whose language ideologies have shifted towards more standard norms, they made the conscious decision to stop using textese as frequently or even completely, which was not difficult as the smartphones, and Android phones more specifically, have the predictive text option available by default.

The smartphones has other affordances which may have resulted in the shift to more standard norms reflected by the focus group; for example, the QWERTY keypad. Previously mobile phones had the multi-tap key-pad which required you to tap on the key between one and four times depending on the letter you wished to use. Now the QWERTY key-pad makes it much easier to type because each letter has its own key.

Another advantage of smartphones is that you do not need to log on/off from applications. Smartphones, in conjunction with the social media and chat applications that one is able to download on these phones, are intelligent in the sense that they do not require you to log on and off of the application but keeps you logged on. However, they do not show your 'online' presence if you are not actually in the application. This makes it so simple to use these applications as one does not need to constantly sign in and out of the application. Once you receive a message, you get a notification and you are able to read the message by simply tapping on the notification. This is one of the things that my participants found more

convenient compared to MXit, before smartphones, which required you to log on to the application and only then would you see if you had received a message. In the following extract is an indication of why the participants were happy with the shift to Smartphones (See turns 1474- 1479).

Extract 5.10

1474. T: But I think like now hey, everything is just more accessible for you. So like you know when you used uhm MXit and stuff you had to login and now you can just like – you can just look at your phone and then you’ll be like okay I got like seven messages then you just go to your messages and you answer it. And also like the cool thing is uhm like, like now you can also – say you have Instagram and like Facebook and all that stuff. You can just put that on your phone and then you also got your updates from there and you can just use it from your phone and it’s like just – everything is just there for you
1475. M: Ya, what’s this, with the smartphone?
1476. N: Ya
1477. T: It’s easy, yes
1478. M: Ya, it’s actually quite nice
1479. N: It’s very convenient

Thus, convenience can be seen as one of the major reasons that they are so comfortable with the shift.

5.4.6 Negotiated Norms of Chatting

There are many norms that come with social media and chatting applications. These norms are negotiated and variable and may change depending on the individual as well as the environments they are exposed to. For example, norms relating to greetings and closings were discussed in Chapter Four. Another one of the norms that became quite a discussion was whether it is the male or female’s responsibility to initiate contact, be it phone calls or chat conversations. Aside from the language norms and linguistic habits of chatting, there are other norms that also play a role in this social world. For instance, when it comes to a guy asking a girl to swap ‘contact details’ with him – the females felt that they would not initiate

a conversation with him until he has messaged them. They felt that it was his duty to make the first move, whereas the guys did not think that it was important whether they or the female begin the chat. They felt that it is just as much the females' responsibility to initiate conversations as the males. Below is an extract from the data.

Extract 5.11

753. M: = =Now say for example you meet a guy today neh and, and he seems like a really cool – don't look at me I'm not a nice guy – anyway and then he ask for your number right and stuff and then tonight you chat to him?
754. K: I wouldn't chat to him like
755. T: Mmm, he must chat to you first
756. K: Ya, mmm
757. B: Why is that, can I ask?
758. T: It's just the rule
759. Bi: I'm also like that
760. M: Huh?
761. Bi: He must chat to me first




The above illustrates that the females from the interview have co-constructed views and believe that males should chat to them first and that they will not make the first move because it is a norm within this social network of users, “It’s just the rule”, Tasneem asserts during the interview.

5.4.7 Chatting Nicely or Chatting Crap

Yet another ‘norm’ that the participants discuss is the difference between *chatting nicely* and *chatting crap*. There are different ideas amongst my participants as to what can be considered as chatting crap and chatting nicely. Chatting crap is a notion used by the participants which is associated with a person who does not keep a conversation interesting and flowing, it is when you receive one word responses from the person you are chatting to. Chatting nicely is where the participants chat in such a manner that they are able to keep the conversation flowing and the responsibility for the conversation’s continuation is not left to one of the participants alone. Different individuals have different perceptions of what norms of chatting

are considered correct and what are not. From the data I found that most of the participants do not like the trivial conversations where there are no significant conversations occurring. For instance, Mahmood dislikes the “what can you tell me”, “WUU2” (what you up to), “what’s new” conversations. He feels that those types of conversations are awkward and as if you have nothing that you really want to talk about and that it takes more effort to keep the conversation going. People from the same group of friends can chat differently with each person. For example, Mahmood, Tasneem and Brandon are all friends, however Tasneem feels that Mahmood “chats crap” and he feels she “chats crap” but she is able to hold a conversation with Brandon. Mahmood and Brandon are able to have intellectual conversations with each other. Be this as it may, Tasneem admitted to the fact that she “chats crap” because she usually replies with a “LOL” or “OK”. However, they do agree that the type of conversations that one has does depend on who it is you are chatting to. This is the same for how one chats as well. Below is the extract from the text (turns 649 - 720).

Extract 5. 12

- 
649. M: I like chatting though [3] seriously
650. N: Really?
651. M: Yes
652. N: One would never say
653. T: Er he chat crap hey [T and N laugh]
654. N: [laughs] One would never say. You send Mahmood a mes sage and then he replies like-
655. T: He never replies
- ...
706. T: I chat like crap
707. M: You chat like crap
708. T: But like I just think she’s very shy and she couldn’t
709. B: Naai, Tasneem - naai, Tasneem chat lekker to me
710. M: Naai, she chat crap – seriously. If I must chat to her then she will be like – ‘LOL’, ‘OK’ two dots

From the above, the participants illustrate what they feel the terms *chatting crap* and *chatting nicely* mean. However, this manner does depend on the relationship between the participants,

the conversation, the personality of the person one is chatting to as well as whether the participants are actually occupied with something else.

The above analysis illustrates the many norms which shape texting practices of a typical UWC student. The focus group gave insight into one user group's practices and views. The analysis shows how the shift in texting norms came about with the shift to smartphones as well as the range of features which is used for IM chatting. The analysis also illustrated the norms which are considered appropriate or necessary within the instant messaging sphere.

5.5 Conclusion

The above analysis shows how deeply embedded social media are in the social and everyday lives of UWC students. Social media are used for a variety of reasons, including sharing academic information as well as planning and confirming social activities. As was previously mentioned, there are many norms and conventions which shape texting practices. These norms and conventions have evolved as a result of the evolution of technology as well as the changing identities and language ideologies of the participants.

The analysis of the questionnaire shows how the participants prefer to chat on newer instant messaging applications rather than stick to the older applications. The analyses both (questionnaire and interview) illustrate the norms and conventions which these students (participants) have developed and begun utilizing as a result of the advancement of technology and the vast range of features that have become available through newer IM applications. Thus, in the data, the participants indicated many different habits including the shift to recent IM applications, where they usually are when chatting as well as the manner in which they prefer chatting, which is mostly to have multiple individual chats rather than group chats.

Furthermore, the interview analysis illustrated some of the conventions which shape texting practices, such as predictive texting. It explored the norms relating to genre and register in terms of greeting and closing, what their opinions are with regards to the use of abbreviated textese style or chatting in a grammatical manner, who should initiate the conversations as well as what it means to 'chat nicely' or 'chat crap'. The analysis showed that with regards to greetings and closing, some feel that the relationship between the people chatting impacts

whether they would greet and close or not. However, Brandon feels that one should greet despite the relationship that may exist between the participants or whether you have already seen or spoken to the person before.

The participants have indicated through their responses that, as a result of the change in technologies and the range of features that the newer IM applications allow, they have shifted away from many of the previous norms of chatting and have adapted to the new affordances of these smartphones. These affordances are: more advanced predictive texting which results in more grammatically appropriate chatting, different key-pads such as the 'QWERTY' key-pads as opposed to the 'multi-tap' key-pad as well as the different instant messaging applications and the affordances provided by these applications. Furthermore, the attitudes and ideologies of these students have also changed in terms of them outgrowing their abbreviated style of chatting.



CHAPTER SIX

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis was to explore the emerging discourse conventions and the generic structures in chat conversations on social networking applications such as MXit, BBM and WhatsApp, among UWC students. Another focus of this project was that of the medium, which these students use to communicate, the shift to newer technology and how this shift has affected their style of chatting or communicating. Lastly, the use of affective personal language of instant messaging chatting used to strengthen interpersonal relationships as well as offer social support was also explored.

Through qualitative and quantitative research methods (discourse analysis, genre and register analysis, quantitative analysis) the objectives of this project were accomplished. The objectives were as follows:

- (1) To identify the typical topics which recur throughout the data and the extent to which they relate to issues of health, broadly defined as psychosocial and emotional well-being;
- (2) To analyse the generic structure of these conversations and to explore the extent to which these conversations are conventionalised and dynamic
- (3) To analyse the personal intimate register used to strengthen interpersonal relationships: What are the linguistic features which characterise this register?
- (4) To explore the extent to which these discourse features pattern across conversations between different gender and relationship configurations
- (5) To explore the ways in which participants use these chats to elicit and give social support; and
- (6) To investigate the ways in which the shift in technology impacts the norms of chatting. How has the evolution of technology contributed to the change in the style of chatting, as well as the norms of IM chatting as a genre?

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will discuss the objectives of this study in relation to the findings and the second section will conclude by referring back to the main aim.

6.2 Discussion of the Objectives

To identify the typical topics which recur throughout the data and the extent to which they relate to issues of health, broadly defined as psychosocial and emotional well-being.

As Chapter Four revealed, there are many different topics which could be broached in an IM chat. Many of these topics aid in the strengthening of psychosocial and emotional well-being of the participants, such as ‘establishing contact’, discussing ‘social plans’, and discussing ‘academics’ as well as emotional support and advice. These were the topics with the most recurrences. Although the participants do not explicitly state that they are offering support to each other, they are able to socially and emotionally support one another through the chats they are participating in. All of this this brings us to the term ‘social connectedness’ – a state of social presence that is craved by people who are socially active.

To analyse the generic structure of these conversations and to explore the extent to which these conversations are conventionalised and dynamic.

Genre theory has allowed me to explore the generic structures of IM chats (Eggins 2004, Fairclough 1995, Bock 2013). The analysis shows how there are similarities between the different chats despite the fact that all of the chats involve different participants as well as different reasons for chatting. Many of these conversations flow in a similar manner in terms of how the generic stages follow one another. Chapter Four illustrated the stages of the chats, such as greetings, establishing contact, exchanging news, evaluation, and closing. Some of the chats skipped the greetings stage, some of them combined the greeting and establishing contact stage, some of them had more than one exchanging news stage and some might have skipped the closing stage. However, despite these minor differences, most of the chats followed similar generic structures. These generic structures are highly conventionalised and dynamic as it is unique to this specific type of communication. At the same time, they are continuously evolving in new and creative ways.

**To analyse the personal intimate register used to strengthen interpersonal relationships:
What are the linguistic features which characterise this register?**

The register that is utilized in this genre is a type of register that is typical of chatting on IM. If you are not familiar with the linguistic features used in IM chats, you may not understand the message or conversation. Features such as initialisms, emoticons, acronyms and the use of unconventional words such as ‘mwah’ are particularly common in IM chatting amongst my participants. All of these features in addition to textese are prominent in the chat data. As a result of the solidarity between participants with regards to the shared knowledge of IM and the register which they use to chat, there is a constant strengthening of interpersonal relationships between them. In order to analyse these linguistic registers and features, I have utilized the theory by Halliday and Hasan (1985) and Eggins (2004). My analysis also showed how participants have combined features of global textese with local norms, such as using Kaaps.

To explore the extent to which these discourse features pattern across conversations between different gender and relationship configurations.

Through my findings and discussion, I have found that there generally is no difference in the generic structure of the IM chats between the different gendered groups. However, what I did find is that the registers in which they choose to chat may differ from conversation to conversation. Males have a tendency to chat to one another in a more vulgar and friendly-aggressive manner, with regards to their terms of address as well as the manner in which they chat to one another. Be this as it may, this is not exclusive to males, but may also occur between females or chats between females and males depending on their relationship. The chatting habits and registers used by the females are more polite than that used by the males in my data. Males are never emotional or ‘cute’ with one another, for example, they will never use ‘mwah’, say that they ‘love one another’ and very rarely say that they miss each other. Females express emotions freely, they call one another and their male friends by cute nicknames, they express love, and they often tell the person that they miss them if they feel they need to. However, chats between girlfriends and boyfriends showed some differences in that the manner in which they would greet and refer to one another clearly indicated that they were in a relationship. However, they did not always explicitly express love for each other, as

would be expected of two people in a relationship. Thus, the discourse features that have been illustrated through the data and findings do in fact show a difference across the different gender configurations.

To explore the ways in which participants use these chats to elicit and give social support.

As has been discussed, the state of ‘social connectedness’ (Lin *et al.* 1979) and receiving ‘emotional support’ (Cobb 1976) is something that is often unconsciously craved and needed by people. Often just chatting to someone can be a form of emotional support and establishing well-being. Thus, through my findings, I have discovered that social and emotional support mostly occurs between females, as they generally talk about things which has had an impact on their lives or that may be affecting them. Females also find it significantly easier to chat to each other about emotional things. Males, on the other hand, are not as emotionally inclined as females are, as I found that there are occurrences where males offered their male friends support in allowing them to speak about the matters that were bothering them or issues that may be currently occurring. However, they weren’t excessively emotional about it. They also do not use as many emoticons to express feelings to one another as females do. Thus, it can be deduced that no matter what your gender orientation may be, social support is an important factor for emotional and psychosocial well-being.

To investigate the ways in which the shift in technology is impacting on the norms of chatting. How has the evolution of technology contributed to the change in the style of chatting, as well as the norms of IM chatting as a genre?

Technology is constantly evolving and changing. There is always something better, more modern, and more advanced being designed and sold, no matter what the product. Thus, there has been a tremendous evolution in technology and advancements with regards to cell phones. Since its debut to the world, there has been a constant and steady growth in respect to the advancements of these devices, such as the addition of colour screens, cameras, and most recently, capacitive touch screens and ‘force touch’ technology.

As a result of the advancement and evolution of technology, there has been a distinct change in the style of IM chatting. This, as discussed in Chapter Five, is evident as a result of the

improvement of the predictive texting feature on smartphones. Previously the predictive texting feature was difficult to navigate but with the advancement in technology over the years, my participants feel that it has become increasingly easier and convenient to use this feature. As a result of this feature now being used more often, my interview participants felt their language and grammar has improved, as well as it having a positive effect on their academic writing. This is because they no longer make excessive use of textese whilst chatting. Thus, from my findings and discussion it is evident that the evolution of technology has in fact had an effect on the style as well as the norms of chatting genre.

6.3 Conclusion

This thesis has thus explored the highly conventionalised and dynamic generic structures of IM chats among students at the University of the Western Cape as well as the registers and linguistic features which characterise this genre. This thesis has also built on the argument by Bock (2013) “that despite the conventionality and predictability of this genre and register, they are also fluid and hybrid”. Thus, despite IM chatting having a known genre it may differ from time to time. I have also explored the personal intimate register which is used in IM chatting to strengthen interpersonal relationships among the participants of these IM chats as well as how these participants elicit and give social support to one another. Furthermore, I investigated whether the advancements and evolution of technology have had an effect on the style of chatting as well as the norms of chatting using instant messaging applications. Thus, I have found that all of the features and norms of IM chatting contribute to the highly conventionalised and dynamic genre of chatting and despite the evolution of technology and the fact that many people no longer use textese excessively, the use of some features has increased or become the norm, such as initialisms, emoticons/smiley, voice-notes, etc.

The openings and closings analysis argued that not all chats may start with a greeting and/or end with a closing. The analysis argued that the presence or absence of a greeting or closing may depend on who the participants are, the relationships between these participants, how the relationship impacts the chat, as well as the personal style of the participants. Thus, the analysis explored the openings and closings of the chats and found that when participants have an intimate relationship, they may not always begin the chat with a greeting or end with a closing. This gives us the impression that the chat is ‘never-ending’ and may be an on-going chat (conversation). Be this as it may, many of the chats that I have analysed did in fact

begin with a greeting and end with a closing. Furthermore, the interview data confirmed that the participants in this focus group generally agree that it is important to greet and end with a proper closing when chatting, but that these may be omitted depending on the personal style of the participants and the relationship between them.

Therefore, this thesis argues that with the constant evolution of technologies, such as smartphones, IM applications, and social media, and as other contextual factors change, so IM chatting genres and styles are constantly evolving and are thus, ‘hybrid and fluid’.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Sample chats from the corpus

Chat 1: Female to Female Chat Conversation

IM application: BBM

Year: 2012

Greetings

X: Hey Budz! Hw did ur 1st day of wrk go 2day?

[Hey Buddy! How did your first day of work go today?]

Y: Heya, it went k thanx.... nt 2 bad!

[Hey, it went okay thank you...not too bad!]

Exchanging news item 1

X: **This gr8 2 ear!** Wt al did u hv2do?

[**That is great to hear!** What did you have to do?]

Y: Ag, I hd 2 mke lasagnes, pl8 fud 4 service, prep wrk 4 2m, mke staf lunch, suma alota stuf...

[Ag, I had to make lasagnes, plate food for service, prepare work for tomorrow, make staff lunch, just a lot of stuff...]

X: **Lekker man!** Klink soos baie me werk as di ana plek...bt u guna kill it!

[**Nice man!** Sounds like a lot more work than the other place... but you going to kill it!]

Establishing contact

X: So uda wise wubu2?

[So otherwise what you been up to?]

Y: Ya meisa dit is, its nogals hectic hier! I jst gta learn da ropes, dan isit aan lol!! Ag ya and nw we jst lamin in da chef office, nt lus for anyting, jst wna go home!! Nogal moeg!! Bt wuu2?? Wcutm??

[Yes girl it is, it is quite hectic here! I just have to learn the ropes, then it is on laugh out loud!! Yes and now we just relaxing in the chef office, not in the mood for anything, just want to go home!! Quite tired!! But what you up to?? What can you tell me??]

X: **Shoe klink nogals intense!** Sterkte...Im studying 4a test 2mrw, den stl gt prep wrk 2 do... Uni life is tough!

[**Wow sounds quite intense!** Good luck... I am studying for a test tomorrow, then still got preparation work to do... University life is tough!]

Y: I'm so gld I'm dun wit al da nonsense:p Lmao

[I am so glad I am done with all that nonsense (tongue out smiley face)]

X: 4yearz den I'll be wer u r...bt tym flies wen u aving fun, lol! Bt I g2g da rents r calling 4 sups, Tanx 4 da chat...njoy da rest of ur shift! Mwa

[Four years then I will be where you are...but time flies when you having fun, laugh out loud.' But I got to go the parents are calling for supper, thank you for the chat... enjoy the rest of your shift! "Kiss"]

Y: Lol tru dat skat, bt nah I'm dun 4 da nite,

[Laugh out loud true that darling, but no I am done for the night,

Closings

Y: chat agen mwah
chat again "kiss"]



Chat 2: Male to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2010

Greetings

X: awe bra

[Hello friend.]

Y: awe!

[Hello!]

X: hw u

[How are you?]

Y: im gud n u

[I'm good thank you and you?]

X: nah im ok just a lil down

[I guess I am okay, but I'm just feeling a little down.]

Exchanging news item 1

Y: y, wats wrng?

[Why? What is wrong?]

X: my parentiles r being stupid.dey on my case al da tym for sh!t

[My parents are being stupid. They on my case all the time for shit!]

Y: bra. I knw hw u fl.my parents r da same at tyms

[Friend, I know how you feel. My parents are the same sometimes.]

X: I need 2 get owta this damn hse.

[I need to get out of this damn house.]

Exchanging news item 2

X: we R goin owt dis wknd ryt?

[We are going out this weekend, right?]

Y: ja bra. We mst 4 many reasons

[Yes friend. We must, for many reasons.]

X: **ok mooi**.wat nd wher we gna go

[**Okay cool**. What and where are we going to go?]

Y: mont

[Claremont.]

X: clubn?we did dat lst wknd

[Clubbing? We did that last weekend.]

Y: ok ok.wat u wna do den

[Okay okay. What do you want to do then?]

X: I dnt actly cre.ag wat da hel lets go to mont

[I don't actually care. Oh what the hell, let's go to Claremont.]

Y: wat we gna do b4 cos mont nly strts pumpn at lyk 10

[What are we going to do before because Claremont only starts pumping at like 10 o'clock?]

X: we can hv pre drnks sumwher nd den hit mont.hws dat sound?

[We can have pre drinks somewhere and then go to Claremont. How does that sound?]

Y: **mooi.i** wna go to babbos.i wna get a fish bowl.2 bad u driving I wuldv askd u 2 share 1 wit me

[**Cool.** I want to go to Babbo's. I want to get a fish bowl. Too bad you driving, I would've asked you to share with me.]

X: **ag its kwl bra**

[**Oh it's cool friend.**]

Y: so is dat da plan 4 dis wknd nw

[So is that the plan for this weekend now?]

X: ja

[Yes.]

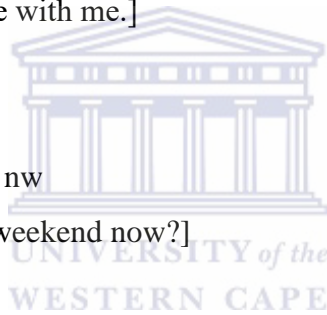
Closings

Y: **ok mooi.i** g2g tho bra.parentiles r up my ass agen

[**Ok cool.** I got to go though friend. My parents are up my ass again (My parents are shouting at me again).]

X: shame bra. C ya lata

[Shame friend. See you later.]



Chat 3: Male to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2012

Greetings

X: awe cuz howsit going man

[Hey cousin how is it going man?]

Y: Awe bra im doing great jst busy wit my studies bra

[Hey friend I'm doing great just busy with my studies brother]

Exchanging news item 1

X: kyki bra I wanted to knw if you don't have a pair of old rugby togs for me man.

[Look here brother I wanted to know if you don't have an old pair of rugby togs for me?]

Y: Nai man sori cuz I gave all my togs away an I only hav one pair of togs left.

[No man sorry cousin I gave all my togs away and I only have one pair of togs left.]

X: do u knw if stef has a xtra pair for me?

[Do know if Stef has an extra pair for me?]

Y: Do u hav his numba?

[Do you have his number?]

X: no man

Y: 0824247536, thr u go

[There you go]

Exchanging news item 2

Y: r u playin satday

[Are you playing on Saturday?]

X: Ja im playin agens maties on Satday at belhar.

[Yes I'm playing against Maties on Saturday in Belhar]

Y: ohk bra gooies man gudluck bra myb gna watch

[Oh okay brother good stuff, good luck brother, I'm maybe going to watch

Closings

Y: but g2g cheerz.

but got to go cheers.]

X: cu bra hav a good 1 an tanx man gna need it.

[See you brother have a good one and thank you man I'm going to need it.]

Chat 4: Male to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2011

Greetings

X: awe bra howzit goin?

[Hey buddy how is it going?]

Y: ny duideluk and u homey?

[Good and you my friend?]

X: nah awesome as always dude.

[I am awesome as always friend.]

Exchanging news item 1

X: Kykie are the plans stil on 4 2nyt?

[Look here is the plans still on for tonight?]

Y: awe sure buddy but just I hear now ther is a prob wit da lift

[Yes sure friend but I just heard now that there is a problem with the lift.]

X: ny jor bra dats a crap 1. I check alles is finalized and wat wat. Wat kyn then?

[Sigh. That is a crap one. I thought everything is finalized and all. What is wrong then?]

Y: lol ny dnt wori mybru ima sort it out gou gou or if not den ima hear by ny kin if she cant see.

[Laugh out loud. Do not worry my brother I am going to sort it out quickly, if not then I am going to ask my girlfriend if she can't organise.]

X: oh ok kul dude. Im jst hoping shes gonna pull thru 4 us, I mean ma, its then the last wknd b4 the holiday end...we gotta finish it off on a hi note lmk

[Oh ok cool friend. I am just hoping she is going to pull through for us, just think about it, it is the last weekend before the holiday ends... we got to end it off on a high note. Laughing]

Y: lmk awe we must coz y wen we go back to uni then we gonna be in our cone.

[Laugh me finished. Indeed, we mut for when we go back to university then we going to be flabbergasted]

X: lmk awe I must still do my lcs assignment... im just hopin the marker is gonna be in a gud mood when he/ she marks my assignment hehe

[Laugh me finished. I agree, I must still do my language and communication assignment... I am just hoping the marker is in good mood when he/ she marks my assignment.]

Y: lmk awe I must then also do assignments jong. But ny dat can w8 ek se, first we paaaaarty lmk..

[Laugh me finished. I agree I must also do my assignments, but no that can wait I say, first we party. Laughing]

Exchanging news item 2

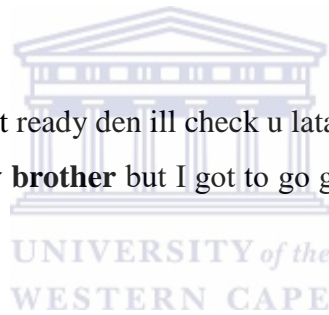
X: **lmj awe ne.** Kykie now is ur kin still gonna organise me a kin 4 da nyt? Hehe
Laugh me crazy. Yeah. Look here now is your girlfriend still going to organise me a girl for the night?]

Y: lmbimc!Awe she got a reg cuzin der dat u can chais hehe u den mos knw
[(Lag my binne in my chops) Laugh me in my chops, yes she has a pretty cousin that you can pursue]

Closings

X: **lmj sure mybru** but g2g get ready den ill check u lata. Safety
[**Laugh me crazy, sure my brother** but I got to go going to get ready then I'll see you later. Bye.]

Y: safe mybru
[Bye my brother]



Chat 5: Female to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

Greetings

X: Yeba

[Hello]

Y: Ey

[Hi]

Establishing contact

X: Wmj?

[What are you doing?]

Y: Eka stan ma hie byte mut ga wek nu skat

[I'm standing outside, I have to go to work now.]

X: oh

[Oh]

Y: En eka voel no net kak dis al

[And I don't feel so well, that's all]

Exchanging news item 1

X: huso?

[Why?]

Y: Ekti enkies vidi werkie en eka werk nog tot 4h

[I don't have cigarettes and I have to work until 4 o' clock.]

X: oh jar en dis nog bitter lank

[Oh shame and that still very long.]

Y: J dink sieka eka stress oor nonsense ne my skat eks jammer man

[You probably think that I stress over nothing my darling, but I'm sorry man.]

X: lol nee ek dinky diti bt ek wiet hu ganit met rokers as hule ni entjies heti

[Laugh out loud, no I don't think that but, I know how it goes with smokers when they don't have cigarettes.]

Y: Ja wuh rook no darem n enkie fok disie eeste keer wat di kak gebeur in ses maansde ai.

[Yes, listen I'm finally smoking a cigarette fuck, this is the first time in six months that this shit is happening. sigh.]

X: Ai jinne j mut sieke ma di rook los
[Shame, you should probably try to stop smoking.]

Y: lol egan my skatjie eka ht dt al oorweeg
[Laugh out loud. I am going to my darling, I have considered it already.]

X: Lolz mwa ek grap ma
[Laugh out loud, I'm just kidding.]

Exchanging news item 2

Y: mis ngal jou gsigie
[I'm missing your face]

X: mwa x mis vijo, giste sit da n outjie vo my wt nes j geruik it j damn to Dink ek so an jo.
[Kiss. I miss you, yesterday there was a guy sitting in front of me that smelled the way you do, damn and I thought about you the whole time.]

Y: muni jok ni rerag... lol j mut hom vra of dai DKNY is dan isit so skatjie.
[Don't lie? really? Laugh out loud, you had to ask him if it's DKNY, that's what I use darling.]

X: Nah eke keni ng vi hmi lolz
[Nope, I don't really know him, laugh out loud.]

Closings

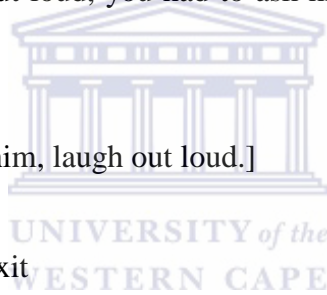
Y: Ok my skt eka gan no op mxit
[OK, my darling I'm going on mxit now.]

X: Ok oz prt wee
[OK we'll speak soon]

Y: mwaaah gajo mis
[Kiss I'm going to miss you]

X: ek vijo oek mwa op dai bek
[Me too, kiss on the lips]

Y: bye
[Goodbye]



Chat 6: Male to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2011

Greetings

X: Hey Sam hw u doin?

[Hi Sam how are you doing?]

Y: I'm doin gr8t man wena?

[I am doing great man and you?]

Establishing contact

X: **K cool mfe2** wuup2?

[**Okay cool man** what are you up to?]

Y: Nha jst wtv an u?

[Nothing I'm just watching television and you?]

X: Studng man Ndiyabhala mare.

[Studying man I am writing tomorrow.]

Y: K gud luk 4 de test.

[Okay good luck for the test.]

X: Tnks man I wil nid it.

[Thank you man I will need it.]

Exchanging news item 1

Y: Akonto uzoyenza kule wikend?

[Anything special that you will be doing this weekend?]

X: Nha mfe2 ndzawbona

[No my brother I will see.]

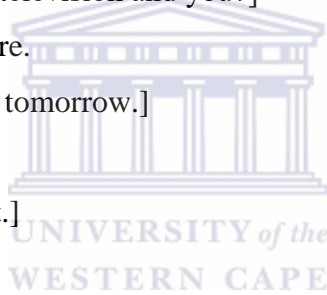
Y: K den ndzawjikela apko kuwe emzini.

[Okay then I will come around this weekend at your place.]

Closings

X: K c u then.

[Okay see you then.]



Chat 7: Male to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: BBM

Year: 2012

Exchanging news item 1

X: Jy slaap leka daa agter (smiley face)☺

[You sleeping at the back (smiley face)]

Y: lol i was readin dude

[Laugh out loud. I was reading dude!]

X: **ok kwl (smiley face)☺**

[Okay, cool (smiley face)]

Y: lol i wish i was slping thou..(sleepy face)

[Laugh out loud. I wish I was sleeping though (sleepy face)]

X: you got me der...

[You got me there,

Exchanging news item 2

X: u like lecræ ne!!

so you like Lecrae?]

Y: yo yes n u?

[Yes I do, and you?]

X: dnt hav much of his music

[I do not have much of his music.]

Y: so wat u got

[So what do you have?]

X: wat artist

[What artist you referring to?]

Y: lecræ dun

[Lecrae!]

X: nah i dnt hav his music

[No, I do not have any of his music]

Y: ok do u want?

[Okay, do you want of his music?]

X: how will u send?

[How will you send it?]



Y: u must give a flash if u hav n il copy it over

[You should give a flash drive then I'll copy it over]

X: ok ill give u then ill put it on my laptop ne

[Okay, I'll give you a flash drive, so I can put it on my laptop]

Y: **lol ok cool**

[**Laugh out loud. Okay cool**]



Chat 8: Female to Female Chat Conversation

IM application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

Greetings

X: Hey there

Y: Hey, hw ya doin?

[Hey, how are you doing?]

X: This is my new number, I only use this number

I'm great thanx and u dear?

[I am great thanks and you dear?]

Y: oh. ok. cool.

Im good...just takn a break frm studyn...i hav to write phys on wed.

[I am good... just taking a break from studying... I have to write physics on Wednesday.]

Exchanging news item 1

Y: wer u been...u jst disappeared.

Where have you been? You just disappeared?]

X: I'm studying psych at unisa. Gna be 3rd year nw:)

[I am studying Psychology at UNISA. I'm third year now.]

Y: O.ok. Thats cool and quick. U gna b a psychologist?

[Oh. Ok. That's cool and quick. Are you going to be a Psychologist?]

X: Maybe God willing.

Y: Thats Awesome... i wana b a clinical psychologist:)

[That is awesome... I want to be a Clinical Psychologist]

X: See after my 3years, u gta study another 6years to b dat, thatz what I'm aiming for. Go for it babes!!

[See after my three years, you have to study another six years to be that, that's what I'm aiming for.]

Y: **Cool beans** :) all these courses r so long. I set my goal and im working towards it.

[**Cool beans** :) all these courses are so long. I set my goal and I am working towards it.]

X: U can do it!! Yes man but it will b worth it in the end.

[You can do it! Yes man but it will be worth it in the end.]

Y: Definitely:) even my doctor said that it's a good career path. And that's coming from a doctor.

- X: Yes, coz a clinical psych is a doc too, thats y u study as long as a med doc.
[Yes, because a clinical psychologist is a doctor too, that's why you study as long as a medical doctor.]
- Y: Yep :) im determined to get Dr. In front of my name... lol
[Yes ☺ I am determined to get Dr. infront of my name... laugh out loud]
- X: **U go girl**
[You go girl]
- Y: :) yep yep... I feel so stable u knw... like I found the so called purpose... lol... crazy I knw.
[Yes yes... I feel so stable you know... like I found the so called purpose... laugh out loud... crazy I know.]
- X: I know what you mean love :)
- Y: Thank goodness... my brother is already looking at me like I'm crazy.

Closings

- Y: Anyway, I have to go... nyc chatting to ya... Luv ya.
[Anyway, I have to go... nice chatting to you... Love you.]
- X: All the best... Take care!



Chat 9: Female to Female Chat Conversation

IM application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

Exchanging news item 1

X: lol... ahhh... the sweet sound of no voice note

[Laugh out loud. Ah... the sweet sound of no audio note]

Y: Are you jas the signal here sucks... Ima try again... My word

Are you mad the signal here is bad. I'm going to try again. My word.]

X: lol... Ok yoh buy a new room...get a an10er... Get it

[Laugh out loud. Wow, buy a new room. Get an antenna. Get it?]

Y: Lmao I got it I got it lol

[Laugh my ass off. I got it, I got it.]

X: lol.haha...

[Laugh out loud. HAHA(laughing)]

Exchanging news item 1

Y: bra when I miss you I watch the vid of us Imao shit funny....

[Friend, when I miss you I watch the video of us. Laugh my ass off. Shit funny.]

X: lol... bra im so jealous... I hav nothing., but pics...

[Laugh out loud. Friend I am so jealous. I have nothing but pictures.]

Exchanging news item 2

Y: **kak funny my word!!** You say I must frame chanel so I start "crying" then you like no no guys jesse is crying... so I'm like haha I'm not., and you say omw that was such a convincing cry., the best cry goes too.. Bella from twilight Imimp!!!

[**Very funny. My word!** You say I must frame Chanel so I start "crying" then you like no, no guys Bubbly babe is crying. So I'm like ha-ha I'm not and you say oh my word that was such a convincing cry. The best cry goes to Bella from twilight, laugh me in my poes]

X: lol... dont lie... wat kak am i talking! lol... m(emoticon of an eye) L (emoticon of an egg)s (emoticon of faeces) (emoticon of a fire)... figure it out

[Laugh out loud. Don't lie. What nonsense am I talking! Laugh out loud. M (emoticon of an eye) L (emoticon of an egg) S (emoticon of faeces) (emoticon of a fire). Figure it out.]

Y: my eyes L cows shit fire?

[My eyes L cows shit fire?]

X: lol!!! no dude... silly.... that makes no sense retard...

[Laugh out loud! No friend. Silly, that makes no sense retard.

Y: i don't know wat it means

[I don't know what it means]

X: lol... ima help you.... mmmmmm y Lllleggs ahhh burning

[Laugh out loud. I'm going to help you. My legs are burning.]



Chat 10: Female to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2012

Greetings/ Establishing contact

X: Hey

[Hey]

Y: Hey, wmjn?

[Hey, what are you doing?]

X: ek 12m en j?

[I am listening to music, and you?]

Y: opad join 2,

[I am on my way home,

Exchanging news item 1

Y: wte soot mu?

[what type of music?]

X: Bietjie van alles, bt lyster nu na i luvsong

[A bit of everything, but I'm listening a love song now.]

Y: Anwiedinkj?

[Who are you thinking of?]

X: An my skt

[Thinking of my darling.]

Y: wiesdit?

[Who is that?]

X: Deoward

[Deoward]

Y: okay gdink dis ek

[Okay, thought it was me]

X: wil j he ek mun anju dink?

[Do you want me to think of you?]

Y: hukm sal j nu dit wil dun?

[Why would you want to do that?]

X: ekvraju i vraag?

[I am asking you a question.]



Y: as j wil. Antw j mynu

[If you want to. Now you answer me.]

X: ekhti i antw vi dai vraagi

[I do not have an answer to that question.]

Y: dis verpligtend

[It is compulsory.]

X: wt gan gbeu as ekit ni antw ni?

[What will happen if I do not answer it?]

Y: dan mun j it ntonhu

[Then you should just remember it.]

X: okay salit onthu, ma ht msta nu rerig ni i antw ni, mayb salit op pop

[Okay, but I really do not have an answer for that question, maybe it will come to mind.]

Y: wane?

[When?]

X: dai wiet ek ms oeki

[That I also do not know.]

Exchanging news item 2

Y: I knw, wmj mense?

[I know, what are your family doing?]

X: nu help ta vimy oek yt, my ma ini kamer my pa ky tw

[You can help. My mother in the room, father is watching television]

Exchanging news item 3

Y: wa ju sieza?

[Where is your sister?]

X: sy is hie mxit jle ani?

[She is here, are you on mxit with her?]

Y: Google it, vra ha self

[Google it or ask her yourself]

X: ekti nodig om it the google ni, hoekm vra j vimy wt sy mk .j kan ha ms self vra,

[I do not have to google it, why do you ask me what she is doing, you can ask her yourself]

Closings

X: btw gtg

by the way got to go.]



Chat 11: Female to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2010

Greetings

X: hey! How u?

[Hello! How are you?]

Y: hi, im gud n u?

[Hello, I'm good and you?]

X: im fantastic thnx.

[I am fantastic thank you.]

Establishing contact

X: Wot u bn up 2 l8ly?

[What have you been up to lately?]

Y: Ag u knw, im jst @ hme, relaxn, gng out wf friends, & u?

[Oh you know, I am just at home, relaxing, going out with friends and you?]

X: im workn & ive bn partyn a lot thz days, & spending lotsa money, lol

[I'm working and I have been partying a lot these days and spending lots of money, laugh out loud.]

Y: ya n u knw iv got lotsa bf prblmz 2.

[Yes and you know I have lots of boyfriend problems too.]

Exchanging news item 1

X: so u nt njoyn da whole r.ship ting? Did he cheat on u or sumthn?

[So you not enjoying the whole relationship thing? Did he cheat on you or something?]

Y: I don't knw hw 2 fl man, & no he nva cheatd on me. I'll kill him if he shud evn try.

[I don't know how to feel, and I know he has never cheated on me. I will kill him if he should even try.]

X: nw overall, hw wud u say ur r.ship is wf him?

[Now overall, how would you say your relationship is with him?]

Y: I'd say its kak! Bt it wud hav 2 gt beta soon...

[I would say it's horrible! But it would have to get better soon...]

X: udawise suicide

[Otherwise suicide.]

- Y: lmao! Ya I guess tht wud b the nly way, bt u hva fab day Kyle!
[Laugh my ass off! Yes I guess that would be the only way, but you have a fabulous day Kyle!]
- X: u gna go offline
[Are you going offline?]
- Y: ya I thnk
[Yes I think.]
- X: u lyk da only persn I'm chatn 2. Dnt leave me gal...
[You are like the only person I am chatting to. Don't leave me girl.]
- Y: Ok I'll stay...
[Okay I will stay...]

Exchanging news item 2

- Y: lol u knw I thnk abt u a lot nogals.
[Laugh out loud, you know I think about you a lot.]
- X: n I nva thnk abt u, wela. Lol
[And I never think about you. Laugh out loud.]
- Y: wow r u serious?
[Wow! Are you serious?]
- X: I'm jokn, jst tryn 2 avoid da whole "I thnk abt u 2". Lol.
[I am joking, just trying to avoid the whole "I think about you too". Laugh out loud.]
- Y: OMGosh, u had me thr 4 a moment.
[Oh my goodness, you had me there for a moment.]
- X: I do miss u & I alwys ask Jason abt u.
[I do miss you and I always ask Jason about you.]
- Y: I really do regret leavn u 4 my bf... biggest mistake eva
[I really do regret leaving you for my boyfriend... Biggest mistake ever.]
- X: maybe 1 day thngs will go our way. Coz u hava bf & I hava gf.
[Maybe one day things will go our way, because you have a boyfriend and I have a girlfriend.]
- Y: I hope that day comes soon. Im unhappy n I knw u r 2.
[I hope that day comes soon. I am unhappy and I know you are too.]

Closings

- Y: I h2g nw, chat agen.
[But I have to go now, chat again.]

X: ok Babe, ima miss u... bye.

[Okay babe, I am going to miss you.]



Chat 12: Female to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2010

Greetings

X: mwah

[Kiss]

Y: hey mwah

[Hello kiss]

Exchanging news item 1

X: im cuming to udubs nxt j-r

[I am coming to the University of the Western Cape next year]

Evaluation of Exchanging news item 1

Y: oh reali thts gud 2 hr

[Oh really that is good to hear.]

X: but wie se j ga my kn

[But who says that you are going to know me?]

Y: hu ken j my

[How do you know me?]

X: lol vimy is j I my liga wnt hukom os al2 is crazzzy colords

[Laugh out loud, for me you are in my league because we are both crazy coloreds.]

Y: nu prt j my taal

[Now you are speaking my language.]

X: lisa ht my gsta gse js wee gaga

[Lisa told me that you are alright,

Exchanging news item 2

X: nu ws jul da by pearl hlle?

and were you at Pearls house?]

Y: jep I ws

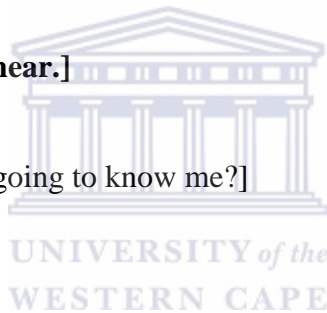
[Yes I was.]

Exchanging news item 3

X: sexy I realy lyk u

[Sexy, I really like you.]

Y: oh is tht so tll me f2f thn



[Oh is that so, tell me face to face then.]

X: bt ek wll nt he j mt I plekki in jo mnd ho nt di ft dt k jo lyks

[But I just want you to keep in mind the fact that I like you.]

Y: lol k sl remebr ja

[Laugh out loud, ok yes I will remember.]

X: bt j sl my sieke 4eva vote neh

[But you will never give me a chance right?]

Y: I really do not know

[I really do not know.]

X: ja sexy sal j

[Yes sexy will you?]

Y: dnt knw swe3 things hppn

[Do not know sweetie things happen.]

X: and ya u r ngl 1of a kin

[And yes you are one of a kind.]

Y: Am I?

[Am I?]

X: yah in many wys ngl

[Yes in many ways.]



Closings

Y: bt k ga v jo check x latr wee gaga my ou

[But I have to go now, chat later.]

X: ohk mwah

[Okay kiss.]

Y: cu chting wit u ws dig

[See you, it was nice chatting to you.]

Chat 13: Girlfriend to Boyfriend Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2011

Greetings

X: hy lv im on my way 2 skul and i wsh 2 c u
[Hello love, I'm on my way to school and I wish to see you.]

Y: hy 2 u 2 im also going 2 skul bt not nw lyter
[Hello to you too, I'm also going to school, but not now later.]

Exchanging news item 1

X: i mss u lyk hel and i cnt liv without cng u
[I miss you like hell and I can't live without seeing you.]

Exchanging news item 2

Y: we nid 2 tlk about sumthng
[We need to tlak about something]

X: wth is de problem nw?
[What is the problem now?]

Y: my parnts wnt me 2 sty wth umalume.
[My parents want me to stay with my uncle.]

X: is dat bad?
[Is that bad?]

Y: u dnt wanna knw coz it is very bad kakbi
[You don't want to know because it is very bad kakubi (very badly)]

X: u know ystrdy I gt HIV whch mins I hv AIDS & dis mrrng I found out dat I hv TB
[You know yesterday I got heavy in to vodka, which means I have alcohol in the system. Now I have terrible hang over.]

Y: ok let me tel u why i dnt wanna go
[Okay let me tell you why I don't want to go.]

X: ok im wytng
[Okay I am waiting.]

Y: he scks & I hyt hm
[He sucks and I hate him.]

X: ok al c u afr skul
[Okay I will see you after school]

Chat 14: Girlfriend to Boyfriend Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2010

Establishing contact

X: hwz u doin 2day angel? ☺

[How you doing today angel? ☺]

Y: Ag me ok hun jst abit moeg dno y lol nd u?

[Oh I'm okay honey just a bit tired, don't know why laugh out loud and you?]

X: U knw me alwyz gr8 hun cnt complain jst had a reli long day nd my bk is jst reli killin me ☹

[You know me, always great honey can't complain, just had a really long day and my back is just really killing me.]

Y: Shame bbz I tke it u wrkd hard 2day thn? Im on holiday lol so wotcha doin nw bbe?

[Shame babes I take it you worked hard today then? I'm on holiday laugh out loud so what you doing now babe?]

X: y im moeg hey, bt me leka off 2moro so ima slp my aching bk away lol bk thn u gna b agn scarce onlyn once agn.

[Yeah I'm tired hey, but I'm nicely off tomorrow so I'm going to sleep my aching back away laugh out loud, oh yes, next week you back then you going to be scarce online again.]

Y: lyk an old man my word, bt u knw if ask me 2 gt u onlyn I wil!

[Like an old man my word, but you know if you ask me to get you online I will!]

X: I wrk nt u! So wat if im old, im yr old man lol dats y I luv u so much baby cht L&r

[I work not you! So what if I'm old, I'm your old man laugh out loud thats why I love you so much baby, chat later.]

Y: u thn knw I gt luv 4 u to baby

[You then know I got love for you too baby,

Closings

Y: chat l8r 2nyt bye bye

chat later tonight bye bye]

Chat 15: Male to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2012

Greetings/ Exchanging news item 1

X: Ye man, I want you to help me make a click track for H.I.E songs. Wen r u free?

[Hey man, I want you to help me make a click track for H.I.E songs. When are you free?]

Y: awe bra, yeah I can do that but im a lil busy man.but I can let u know wen im free.

[Hey brother, yes I can do that but I am a little busy man, but I can let you know when I am free though.]

X: ya pls do cos ek willit gou klaamaak. I need it like gou.

[Yes please do because I really want to finish it soon. I need it really soon.]

Y: ok ok ek gat jou lat wiet man.

[Okay okay, I will let you know.]

Exchanging news item 2

X: hey what u doing friday eve?

[Hey, what you are you on Friday?]

Y: I have rehearsal but unles u wana do it aftawards?

[I have a rehearsak but unless you want to do it afterwards?]

X: ja dat sounds like a plan but do u think u wil be home 18?

[Yes, that's sounds like a plan but do you think that you will be home late?]

Y: nah,maybe round 10 or 10:30..

[No, but maybe around 10pm or 10:30pm.]

X: ok cool dats orait ja so then we do it friday ne.

[Okay good. That is fine yes so then we will do it Friday then.]

Y: yes deal.

[Yes. It's a deal.]

Closings

X: ok kwai, see u friday

[Okay good. See you on Friday then.]

Y: kwai.

[Good]

Chat 16: Female to Female Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2011

Greetings

X: Elo Rubby

[Hello Rubby]

Y: Elo cuz hws u?

[Hello cousin. How are you?]

X: Im good. U?

[I'm good. You?]

Y: Ai tussen die boom en die bas ne

[(sigh) between the trees and the well being]

X: bas?

[Well being?]

Y: ja ai

[Yes (sigh)]

X: Wat does that mean

[What does that mean?]

Y: Ek voel nie lekker nie i feel sick.

[I am not feeling well, I feel sick.]

Establishing contact

Y: Hws things ur syd?

How are things your side?]

Exchanging news item 1

X: Wat dd u mean by wat u said lst night?

[What did you mean by what you said last night]

Y: Naai jys mos die 1 wat sal weet jus waned 2no if she ohk wit me

[No! You are the one that knows, just wanted to know if she is okay with me.]

X: well kyk, ther's a lot of things that's not making sense 4 her

[Well look, there are a lot of things that are not making sense to her.]

Y: Speak to me

[Speak to me.]

X: Don't now go tell her bt the fact tht she nva went home wit u yet



[Don't now go and tell her, but the fact that she never went home with you yet...]

Y: I hear u wat did she tell wat she's feelin coz it seems as if she wants 2leave me
[I hear you! What did she tell you? What she is feeling? Because it seems as if she wants to leave me.]

X: She also felt junk on Sunday cz she tld u that u cnt cum
[She also felt bad on Sunday because she told you that you can't come.]

Y: I just hate being around and feeling lyk im in da way ugly feelin
[I just hate being around and feeling like I am in the way. It's an ugly feeling.]

X: Dats da reason. She wanted to see u so badly bt ja
[That's the reason. She wanted to see you so badly. But yes.]

Y: Ai its relay hard for me ryt nw i think i gave her my whole heart
[Sigh it is really hard for me right now, I think I gave her my whole heart.]

X: I think she dd the same
[I think she did the same.]

Y: im crazy ova her
[I am crazy over her.]

Closings

X: bt g2g chat lata
[But got to go, chat later.]



Chat 17: Female to Male Chat Conversation

IM application: MXit

Year: 2012

Greetings/ Exchanging news item 1

X: Yo Melz! Y u so scarce?

[Hi Melanie! Why are you so scarce?]

Y: Hey, Nah I'm nly on ma way hme nw 4rm varsity jus dropped ma buddy.Cum holiday tym I aint be scarce.

[Hey, no I am only on my way home from university now. I just dropped a friend. When the holidays are here I will not be scarce.]

Exchanging news item 2

X: Now wen we goin out?

[When are we going to go out?]

Y: Wu's we?

[Who are we?]

X: Me an my buddy an u mus hook up wid a couple of leka kinnes... (big grin)

[You, me and a friend of mine, we must get together with a couple of nice girls... (big grin)]

Y: LOL yah permy.

[Laugh out Loud, yes permanently.]

X: Ja u know mos. Miss u man.

[Yes you know. I miss you.]

Y: Miss u 2.. .we mus maka plan ja, da term ova soon.

[I miss you too... We should make a plan please, the term is almost over.]

Evaluation of Exchanging news item 2

X: **Awe (smiley face)**

[**Yes please. Smiley Face**]

Y: So plz cum up wid sumthn 4 dat wk ne.

[So, please come up with something for that week.]

X: Ja sure. U jus dnt 4get da leka kinnes.

[Yes, you must not forget the nice girls]

Closings

Y: **LOL ja man...** see u

[Laugh out loud yes.... See you]

X: Bye

[Good bye]



Chat 18: Female to Female Chat Conversation

IM application: BBM

Year: 2012

Exchanging news item 1

X: Such a cute profile pic gal 😊 being in love is awesome hey!

[Such a cute profile picture girl 😊 being in love is awesome hey!]

Y: Fo sho it is! Thnk u gal! {excited face emoticon}

[For sure it is! Thank you girl! {excited face emoticon}]

X: {hug emoticon} Kul potatoes!

{hug emoticon} Cool potatoes!]

Y: U guys r almost 2 yrs, thats great!

[You guys are almost 2 years, that's great!]

X: Yeeeeess sweets! So xcited! And u and your Andy? Nt far bhnd? Time sure duz fly when you having happi times!!!

[Yes sweets! So excited! And you and your Andy? Not far behind? Time sure does fly when you're having happy times!]

Y: Well we started rite afr camp, so we going on 1yr nex mnth, yes tym flew nd feels totally awesome!!! I'm hapi for u 😊

[Well we started right after camp, so we going on 1 year next month, yes time flew and feels totally awesome! I'm happy for you 😊]

X: Shweeeeet!!! So special hittin da milestones... Happi 4 u two toooo! May God cntinu 2 allow us 2 have these blessings! So gr8ful!

[Sweet! So special hitting the milestones... Happy for you two too! May God continue to allow us to have these blessings! So grateful!]

Y: Thanx. Oh yes! We lucky its nt evryday u find gud guys, so we indeed blessd

[Thanks. Oh yes! We lucky it's not every day you find good guys, so we indeed are blessed]

Closings

Y: mwah u njoy ur day {winking smiley} i need 2 tidyup!

mwah you enjoy your day {winking smiley} I need to tidy up!]

X: Rite u are! You have a lekker day 2 xoxox study tym 4 me! Good luck 2 us both {hug emoticon}

[Right you are! You have a lekker day too xoxox study time for me! Good luck to us both {hug emoticon}]



Chat 19: Female to Female Chat Conversation

IM application: WhatsApp

Year: 2012

Establishing contact

X: bbe.. u okay, and hows your mom doing?

[Babe... you okay? And how's your mom doing?]

Y: she hd a strke 2day bcz of stress (crying face)

[She had a stroke today because of stress (crying face)]

X: im soooooooo sryy(hug) wsh I was thre 2 comfort u

[I'm so sorry (hug) wish I was there to comfort you]

Y: yeah hey (sad face) bt we hve 2gt ha stp stress yazi& she reali is... Shes so scared yazi & hides it so well behnd stress& we h8 c'ng ha lykat

[Yes hey (sad face) but we have to get her to stop stressing, you know and she really is... she is scared, you know and hides it so well behind stress and we hate seeing her like that.]

Exchanging news item 1

X: wat du u thnk is stresn ha so much?. Yeah thrs nothing as painful as sn your Mom in pain, its trrfyin. Am kpn hr in ma prayers

[What do you think is stressing her so much? Yes there's nothing as painful as seeing your mom in pain, it's terrifying. I'm keeping her in my prayers.]

Y: she stresss abt evrthn l8ly... nt mkn it is 1 of em(sad face) bt wel pul thru ths. Thnx buddy.

[She stresses about everything lately, not making it is one them (sad face) but we will pull through this, thanks buddy.]

X: makin it????(shocked face) meaning?????

[Making it? (shocked face) meaning?]

Y: sh flz lyk sh'l die thre n nt mke it

[She feels like she will die there and not make it.]

X: no man... shl mke it, r u @ de hossie? Ah dnt wnt 2b chtn whle u de ok

[No man... she will make it, are you at the hospital? I don't want to be chatting while you there okay.]

Y: thnx buddy reali mnz alt

[Thanks buddy, it really means a lot.]

X: tz ah plej luv
[It's a pleasure love.]

Y: so hws yu anyhu?
[So how are you anyway?]

X: m fyn bddy...
[I'm fine buddy]

Establishing contact

Y: so wuup2?
[So what are you up to?]

X: m wtchn fresh prince... n yu?
[I'm watching Fresh Prince... And you?]

Y: daes of our miserable lyvz
[Days of Our Miserable Lives.]

X: hng in thr swtty
[Hang in there sweetie.]

Y: lol. Nah man dat was supoz 2b a joke... gas nt
[Laugh out loud, no man that was supposed to be a joke... guess not.]

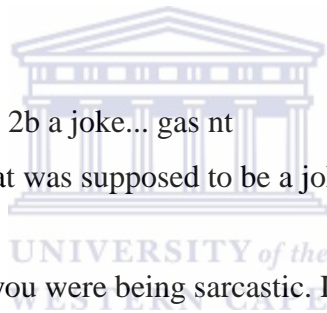
X: lol, thot yu bng sarcstk. Lol
[Laugh out loud; I thought you were being sarcastic. Laugh out loud.]

Y: lol, nooooooooo man, hvn 1st mah huma friend
[Laugh out loud, no man, haven't lost my humour friend.]

Closings

X: phew! Luk cht 18a neh, (kiss)
[Phew! Look chat later okay, (kiss)]

Y: (thumbs up) kul,
[(Thumbs up) cool.]



Appendix B- Consent form for chats

Letter of Consent

LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

RESEARCH PROJECT: Cyber socializing among University of the Western Cape students: Genres and Registers

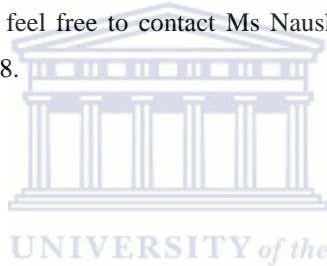
Dear student

We would like to invite you to participate in an important research project on digital communication which seeks answers explore the emerging genres (text types) and registers (styles) of MXit chatting among UWC students and their friends and family. Your part in this project is to permit the researchers to use the MXit data from your LCS essay entitled: **What does your Instant Messaging data show about how languages are used in new ways in contemporary communication in South Africa?** Your identity will of course not be revealed, and you have the right to withdraw your data at any time.

If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact Ms Nausheena Dalwai or Dr Zannie Bock in the Linguistics Department, Tel 021 9592978.

Yours sincerely

Dr Zannie Bock (supervisor)



LETTER OF CONSENT TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT RESPONDENTS

I(FULL NAME OF STUDENT), student no.:....., hereby give the Linguistics Department of the University of the Western Cape permission to analyze and use my IM data for the above research project.

The project was fully explained to me and I was also awarded coursework marks for an essay analyzing the data.

I am aware that I have the right to withdraw my data from the project at any time. I am also aware that all my data will be used strictly anonymously, using a system of coding instead of real names for identification. I am also aware that I can have access to any reports using my data once the research project has been concluded.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Appendix C- Instant Messaging Questionnaire

Instant Messaging (IM) Research Questionnaire

The information that will be gathered in this questionnaire will be used by me as a MA student in Department of Linguistics for research purposes. I am investigating the way in which UWC students communicate with one another through IM, how they are able to strengthen their interpersonal relationships as well as how they are able to offer or seek social support through these IM applications.

If you are willing to aid me in acquiring this information and for it to be used for my research project, please complete this concise questionnaire and return it to your tutor.

I am grateful for your contribution and I thank you,
Nausheena Dalwai (MA student)

1. Do you make use of instant messaging?

Yes	No
-----	----

If **YES**, please answer the questions that follow. If **NO**, please elaborate as to why you do not use instant messaging?

2. Which instant messaging applications do you use **most** frequently? Why?

3. How many hours per day do you spend on chatting? Choose ONE

- a. 0-1 hour c. 4-6 hours
b. 2-3 hours d. Other

4. Who do you chat with most frequently? Choose ONE

- a. Friends
- b. Siblings
- c. Parents
- d. Strangers
- e. Girlfriend/ Boyfriend
- f. Other? With Whom? _____

5. Where are you usually/ most of the time when you are chatting?

6. At which time during the day do you **usually** chat? Choose one or two of the following:

- a. First thing in the morning
- b. While travelling (public or personal transport)
- c. During lectures
- d. While in the student centre
- e. At night before going to sleep
- f. All times of the day
- g. At some other time? When? _____



7. How many people do you usually chat with at the same time?

- a. Mostly with one person
- b. Multiple individual conversations with different people?
- c. Mostly with a group chat?
- d. With both individual conversations as well as group chats?

8. What do you find useful/ like the most about instant messaging?

9. Has chatting improved your interpersonal relationships with people? If yes, in what ways? If no, explain.

10. Does instant messaging allow you the comfort to express yourself easier than when speaking to someone face to face? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Thank you for your participation😊



Appendix D- Focus group consent form

Participant Consent Form

I consent to participate in the research project on Cybersocialising amongst UWC students and what types of genres and registers reflect within these chats as well as their habits around Instant Messaging. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without prejudice, should I so wish. I know that my identity will remain anonymous and that I may request to read the transcripts and the final research project if I so wish.

Name

Student no.

Cell no.

Signature



Personal details (to remain strictly confidential):

Gender

Age

Home language(s)?

Where are you from?

If not CT, when did you come to CT?

Where do you stay now?

When did you start at UWC?

Modules this year

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date of interview

Signature of Researcher



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WESTERN CAPE