

Computer Mediated Communication and Discourse:

The Effect on Writing Skill

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Abstract

This paper deals with Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) as an emergent communicative environment. CMC mostly occurs in text – based modes such as web-chat , bulletin board , electronic mail , away messages , etc . By means of CMC , online classroom can be established with a variety of subjects than that of the traditional classroom. Students need to be trained to be persistent and disciplined in order to learn from online courses. Accordingly, this research responds to lack of studies written about computer mediated environment as of interest to discourse analysts and as a tool for teachers of writing as well .

The research aims at :1) identifying CMC through its historical development,2) defining its modes,3) forming a framework of related studies to CMDA ,and some works done about CMC in instructional setting ,and 4)giving suggestions to writing instructors of how they adopt this technology in their carrier .

It is found out that CMC is classified into different modes according to synchronicity and transmission .Its style is different from the standard language.It involves hybrid features of oral and written language.Teachers have to be aware of the influence of computer technology on communicative skills.They can suit it, as a legitimate type of technology , especially in teaching drafting and critical thinking according to pre-determined purposes .

1-Introduction

Development in telecommunication , computer technology and networking has resulted in new forms of discourse communication . Electronic communication in all its forms is best represented by computer-mediated communication( hencforth CMC).CMC is often

technically seen as a means of distributing information, increasing organizational efficiency, creating electronic democracy, or of challenging traditional hierarchies (Baym:1995: online).The term is defined by Metz ( 1994 : 32-48 ) as any communication patterns among human beings mediated through computer,not merely as a tool but as a context through which people communicate .In Wikipedia Encyclopedia(2006 ,online),the term (CMC) is seen as

any form of communication between two or more individuals who interact and/or influence each other via computer-supported media (i.e., instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, etc.). CMC mainly focuses on social effects of different computer-supported communication technologies.

These individuals , in such a virtual community, get to know each other and then choose to meet by common interest not geography , in a list of a coupled entity(Rheingold, 1993:26-27).What is substantial is that the communication takes place "through a computer between human beings, instead of to an already determined computer system"(Ferrara et al, 1991: 31).

Communication by computer technology devastatingly takes place by means of discourse.That is, participants interact by means of verbal language, usually typed on a keyboard and read as text on a computer screen.Therefore,the term Computer-Mediated Discourse (henceforth CMD) is coined to refer to the type of behavior where "people engage in socially meaningful activities online in a way that ... leaves a textual trace" (Herring, 2004:338).

Educationally,global communication networks and internet have properly been considered useful tools in the hands of teachers, and students.The new tools seem to constitute a new environment which the schools can not afford to do without. Information technologies can stimulate and renovate the teaching/learning process (Kay 1991 in Tella,1992:6)

This paper seeks to presented an overview of the emergent CMC characterizing its properties, and situating it with respect to off-line speech and writing communication. The primary goals in so doing is to:

- 1) provide an snapshot of the CMC in its present stage with its discourse modes as record for purposes of comparison with future stages of evolution .
- 2) give an overview of related literature in the field of CMDA as an empirical, linguistic approach. Readers of computer-mediated communication might be given some thought to how they might approach their investigation. This review also aims at analyzing the way English is used in CMD by summarizing briefly a few related studies, and
- 3) supply a theoretical understanding based on project based studies on field of CMC in instructional setting .

The rationale behind this survey is to establish a framework to see how this technological development affects the educational sector and how up it can be used for didactically desirable purposes.

The paper finds out the CMD is classified into different modes according to synchronicity and transmission. It involves features of oral and written language. As a technological innovation CMC contributes to communicativeness in foreign language classrooms, especially important in teaching drafting and critical thinking.

## 2. Modes of Computer Mediated Discourse

Herring (2001, 2004) describes (CMD) according to several dimensions that can frame an analysis of mediated language use. According to her framework, discourse is first classified according to medium and situational variables that may shape language use.

One important factor in the classification is related to *synchronicity* of participation (Kiesler et al., 1984 in Herring 2001:3). In asynchronous CMD systems the users need not to be logged on at the same time in order to send and receive messages. Rather, messages can be written and received at widely separated times. Messages are stored at the addressee's site or mailbox until they can be read. E(electronic)-mail is an example of this type. In *synchronous* CMD, on the other hand, sender and recipient (s) must be present at the same time. A person's typing is transmitted directly to the screen of the other person or group of people. Messaging system does not store messages but it is more transient. That is to say, messages scroll up and off participants' computer screens as new messages replace them. Relay Chat (IRC) -- is a popular form of synchronous CMD.

Transmission, another dimension, has to do with whether or not simultaneous feedback is available; that is, whether the message is *one-way* or *two-way* (Cherny, 1999 in ibid ). *One-way* transmission means that a message is transmitted in its entirety as a single unit. The recipients have no idea that a message is being sent to them until it arrives .Therefore simultaneous feedback is not possible. One-way transmission is the common mode of CMD . On the other hand , *two-way* means that both participants are able to hear the message as it is produced as in (face-to-face interaction and telephone conversations).An example of two-way synchronous CMD on the Internet is the currently popular ICQ ('I seek you') protocol .Table (1) gives some common modes of CMD , classified according to synchronicity and transmission dimensions followed by some explanation .

	ay transmission	ay transmission
onous	RC, Webchat, etc) Muds, and Moos , etc	tc
ronous	, Listserve , Usenet , away messages , etc)	

Table ( 1) Classification of Common CMD modes

2.1 listservs:

They are asynchronous in that messages are posted by e-mail .E- mail can be sent to participate in electronic mailing lists (listserv discussion group). A listserv is an automated mailing system that distributes mails .It has two functions: 1) e-mailing out text documents stored on them to those who request them, and 2) managing interactive mailing lists.

Interactive listserv provides a forum for individuals who have the same interests to exchange their ideas and interests .It is not like e-mail ( one – to one ) communication , but one to many .Information is received in a form of report , article , abstract , recreation , or comment ) and distributed over to the members of the list. How does it work? The mailing list is hosted by an institution, i.e. (college or university) which uses its computer system to manage the mailing lists.Listserv has a number of functions like receiving requests from subscribers , placing subscriber's e-mails on a list ,receiving messages from subscribers and sending messages to all members , and sending information requested by the subscribers ( Leshine, 1996 :65 ).

## 2.2 Usenet Group

This is asynchronous in that messages are posted by e-mail . Usenet groups are similar to cybercafé .People from the same interest meet from around the world to interact and exchange ideas .Usenet is a large distributed bulletin board system which consists of thousands of specialized discussion groups. Newsgroups have different categories organized according to topic areas , for example com = computer related , misc = miscellaneous topics , news = happenings on the internet , etc (ibid :237 ) .

Unlike mailing list, Usenet newsgroups are not managed by one single site , such as a university .Subscribers to a mailing lists are automatically mailed messages that are in turn mailed to the mailing list submission address .When a message is sent to a Usenet site, a copy of this message is sent to other neighboring connected sites .Each of these sites keeps a copy of the message and then forward the message to other connected system .Usenet can handle thousands of subscribers while Listserv can not. Another advantage of Usenet over a Listserv mailing list is that one can quickly read postings to the newsgroups .In

connecting to one group, one can see a listing of articles and select only those interest him. Usenet messages do not accumulate into the mailbox, forcing to read and delete them .They are on local server and can be read at one's convenience(Ibid: 238).Another difference between Listserv and Usenet is that listserv is commonly used by academic professionals. Usenet is used by young (especially male) users. There is a high degree of flaming in Usenet and targeting the addressee with bad (hostile) words .The reason is the low social accountability in Usenet .Usenet history started with male hackers who wanted an alternative to the government funded ARPANET and which has continued to define itself in terms of "frontier" values ( Rheingold, 1993 in Herring, 2001: 4).

### 2.3 Relay Time Chat

"IRC is a multi-user conversation system where people meet "on channels" in a virtual place usually with a topic of conversation to talk in public or privately."<sup>(1)</sup> When one first enters to a channel, he is put inside an environment while other conversations are already going on. For participants to participate in IRC, they need to type and send in their messages to the computer which controls the channel. Messages scroll of and up the screen in conversation- like composed of short sentences posted in relative real time or synchronic. Relative means that a slight delay happens to occur between the moment that a message is typed and posted on the screens of the users. The time depends on the speed of the internet connection. IRC exchanges are textual except for some functions which help participants to sounds or pictures available in the menu .

Some fundamental differences distinguish IRC from e-mail or BBSs interactions. First, the exchanges on IRC exist technically for a short time span. An individual can save and print the exchanges, but this does give a real picture about the unfolding aspect of these exchanges , and one unfortunately sacrifices all of the meaningful cues that temporality (that is the time and rhythm of the postings) provides, such as pauses between responses and computer lag time. Secondly, unlike mail and even face to face interaction , more than two participants can be involved in IRC conversations. In populated channels exchanges

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<sup>1</sup>() <http://www.kei.com/irc.html>

are often broken down into conversations between pairs or groups of three interactants who send private messages to each other. (Bays : 1998, [online](#))

## 2-4 MUD

It refers to Multi-User Dungeon, Multi-User Domain, or Multi-User Dimension. It is an online environment where many users are present at the same time and communicating each other. Some MUDs are similar to a Relay Chat system when users can only communicate with other players that are immediately present. On other MUDs, players can also interact with a game world where they can explore, fight monsters, and collect treasure, either alone or in the company of other players that are logged on. On some MUDs, players can change and modify the environment itself whereas on others, a player must play the game until he advances to a Wizard level at which time he can add new areas to the game. What makes MUDs so unique and interesting is the permission given to players to change and modify the MUDs. ( cf. Utz, S. : 2000:online).

MUDs are text-based virtual realities different from other CMCs which are referred to as virtual reality. Curtis and Nichols (1993:6) mention that

MUDs do not employ fancy graphics or special position-sensing hardware to immerse the user in a sensually vivid virtual environment; rather, they rely entirely on plain, unformatted text to communicate with the users. For this reason, MUDs are frequently referred to as text-based virtual realities.

IRC and MUD are different. But both are synchronous, happen at the same time, one-way CMD and both use some similar commands. Yet, they differ in the nature of conversation and conventions associated with each. MUD needs more technical knowledge. MUDs often involve competitive role-playing games.<sup>(2)</sup>

## 2.5 MOO

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<sup>2</sup> for further information see <http://www.godlike.com/muds/> or <http://www.mudconnect.com/>)

It is an acronym for Object-Oriented. It is a kind of MUD. MOOs have been referred to as “a kind of virtual reality, an electronically represented ‘place’ that users can visit” (Curtis 1992:1). Although young adults, especially college students appear to be the users in social MOOs all MOOs share common conventions of communication, action, and interaction (cf. ibid:6; Rheingold 1993:150; Cherny, 1995a, 1995b:online).

Participants on MOOs may use three commands to “talk” with one another. When they want say something, they can do that by typing a “say” command which is a public statement. To explain, if a participant named Malinowski typed the say command and the message *Welcome to my tent*, Malinowski would see on his screen You say, “*Welcome to my tent*,” and the other participants would see on their screens *Malinowski says*, “*Welcome to my tent*.” But if Malinowski wants to publicly address only one of the participants in the same room and (for example, a character with the name RB), he will type the following (or an equivalent of it) - @to R-B *Only functionalists are welcome* - and all the participants including him and the others in the room would see on their screens *Malinowski [to R-B]: “Only functionalists are welcome.*” This command helps participants to name their intended recipient.

Participants can also emote, or as Rheingold (1993:148) puts it, “pose.” The emote command is used with nonverbal action by typing “emote” or a colon [:], followed by a message. When Malinowski types *:walks across the room*, he and others in the same conceptual space would see on their screens *Malinowski walks across the room*. (cf. Cherny 1995b).

Although MUDs and MOOs are similar, but they differ in their main purpose. MOOs are primarily social, that is, people meet there to communicate, socialize, and build houses. In MUD, participants mainly take part in role-playing, the aim of which is to solve quests and kill monsters in order to get points (cf. Utz, 2000:online).

## 2.6 E-mail :



Tao (1995:4) gives two fundamentally different definitions to e-mail. Computer scientists refer to email as "electronic communications system that is used to send information from one person/site to another (one-to-one communication) or from one person to many people at the same time." Social scientists and educators define email as a medium "which uses computer text processing to provide high-speed information exchange service."(Ibid :5)

Email gives an opportunity for the parties to think over their message carefully, get ready for it, concentrate on it, eliminate unnecessary details, and only then send it. Senders have enough time to grasp their idea in few sentences, find more convincing words and then deliver it to the receiver. The receiver can read the message at his or her pace, sometimes in parts and forward it in exactly the same words to the third party. Therefore, email users can take some high-quality decisions(Ibid :20).

Tao (ibid :17) argues that once a message is sent the sender can not control the response to the message. In addition, "In the email communication, some messages might be lying in the receiver's email box for a long time before being read and then the information contained in the email might be outdated." Editability is another feature of email which is when "cutting out a few paragraphs out of an existing report or letter in your word processing file and pasting them into a letter saves time, and is much easier than typing a new summary" Lucas (1998:19). This factor is important in helping email users in editing information, and deleting unnecessary facts therefore saving a lot of time.

### 2-7 Away Messages .

They are typically short messages posted by participants to tell their partners what they are doing when they are away from their computer. The main purpose of away messages is to tell whether communicators are available for conversation online or not. They are activated when the users log on and become visible to partners who are looking at the instant messaging profile. Away messages can also be used to regulate interaction

coordination by allowing users to dodge conversational partners, for example by putting up an away message that remains even after the person has returned to his or her computer.(Pew Internet and American Life Report,2005:online).According to Herring's (2001, 2004) framework mentioned above,away messages can be classified under synchronous and single channel (texts)medium.The text messages are short and remain for a short time because participants tend to be confined within the reduction of time and effort.

### 2.8 ICQ :

According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2007),ICQ is a [play](#) (an [ocronym](#)) of the phrase "I seek you "(<sup>3</sup>).It is an instant messaging system that notifies users that their friends are online and helps them instantly chat with each other. Users can participate by registering in ICQ server , when they get registered they get a number called UIN.They can provide optionally personal information that allow other users identify them when logging on.Once regisitered users can have a lits of friends and associates .When a known user logs on,other users can connect with him by using ICQ features which include sending text messages with offline support,\_file transfers,e-mail integration,\_voice messaging,Internet telephone calls, multi-user chats,free daily-limited [SMS](#) sending,greeting cards,videoconferences, games and [multiplayer games](#)(<sup>4</sup>).

## 3. Aspects of CMD

### 3.1 Discursive Aspects of CMD

Many researchers argue that CMD is incoherent because of some restrictions enforced by the new computer media(Baron,1984:131).These restrictions are related to :

1 ) disrupted turn adjacency and the existence of multiple threads of conversation as messages composed and received according to the order assigned by the system.Disrupted

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<sup>3</sup>(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ICQ>)

<sup>4</sup>( For more information about ICQ see (<http://www.linktionary.com/index.html>.) , <http://web.icq.com/>

turn adjacency means that turns appear out of their expected serial order as the extract below.

MichaelC: Good evening Ying. How are things?

Ying-Lan: Not so good.

Ying-Lan: I took a test this morning.

MichaelC: What's wrong?

Multiple threads, called *interleaved exchanges* by Herring (1999:online), is the feature in CMC for two or more unrelated threads of conversation to be running together. This tendency, closely associated with the development of the conversational floor, is a feature of multi-party CMC when more than one conversation is happening at a time within the same space on-screen. Multiple threads are discussed by Simpson (2005a), where they are considered as the surface realization of conversational floors. See the example below (Simpson 2005b) turns 1, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 belong to one thread, while turns 2, 3, 5 and 8 are of the second.

1 Maggi: peek-a-boo!

2 MichaelC: In answer to your q Ying - yes I think Vance is visiting family in the US.

3 Maggi: he said so in his last email to the group.

4 MichaelC: Ying - you're avatar looks very tired!

5 Ying-Lan: It is important to be our family in Y2K New Year coming.

6 Maggi: like I feel...

7 MichaelC: I feel quite bonny!

8 Maggi: I was invited to Zurich, but I think I will stay home.

9 Ying-Lan: Yes, I am tired.

10 MichaelC: I guess you got up early to study for your test Ying?

2 )lack of immediate feedback due to absence of social cues and physical and social presence as in face to face interaction (See sproull & Kiesler 1986 in Metz 1994 :41

Gumperz (1982:131; 1992:230-231) defines “cues” as those features by which participants indicate and interpret what is going on. They are linguistic features (e.g., prosodic phenomena, choices of code and lexical forms, formulaic expressions, registers), and nonverbal signs, such as paralinguistic features and distance .

As a result, a lot of misunderstanding occurs by overlapping exchange and the absence of the traditional forms of communication. Meaningful physical signs and prosodic cues must all be condensed into textual form of transmission (Bays: 1998). Therefore, interpretation becomes a feature of human's creativity and imagination based on the current communicative situation (Metz, 1994 : 41).

To compensate for the first restriction , entractants reside on two practices.

- 1) The addressivity practice directs the turn-taking either toward one particular participant or to the group in general as in the conversation below (Lam 2004:44-65) when 'Sure' addresses ' CHoCoLaTe' .

<i>Sure</i>	<i>...&gt;_&lt; can't send mail to u ar (PT: neutral softener or down-toner) <sup>6</sup>.... next time give my (sic: me) your add la (PT: indicates request)... can't send at your web site</i>
<i>CHoCoLaTe</i>	<i>sure&gt; how come ar (PT: indicates question)?</i>

Table (2) The Addressivity Practice

- 2) Linking practice by referring to the content of the previous message, as the following example :

*janed@ABC.bigtel.com (Jane Doe) writes:*

*>I can't believe how horrible Natalie looks. Has she put on a lot of weight?*

*I agree, but she has always had a somewhat round face, so if she did put on*

*weight, I think that would be accentuated. ( Herring :2001 : 7- 8 )*

3) Floor holding conventions, for example appending a special character at what might otherwise appear to be a turn-completion point to indicate that the turn is not yet finished (Herring, 1999a). Alternatively, an empowered participant may assign turns to other participants by calling on them by name, perhaps after they have put in a bid for the next turn by "raising their hand" (e.g., typing "[Character name] raises his hand" Cherny, 1999 in Herring, 2001: 7- 8 ).

To compensate for the lack of the social cues, communicators invent successful ways of sending screams, hugs, and kisses. This invention is represented by (emoticons), an acronym of two words (emotive) and (icons). Using emoticons, the interactants convey meaning and intent to each other without spending much time and effort of detailed explanation (Reid ,1991:online).

There are four types of the emoticons:

1) the common practice of verbalizing physical cues, for example humor is represented by ' *hehehe* ' ,

2) physical actions are described with two asterisks and is primarily utilized in on-line interactive situations , such as Relay and MUDs. "These conversational strategies having recourse to imaginary forms and content fulfill the requirements of co-presence in a pseudo-physical environment (Bays :1998 ). In the following extract , the participant acts as if he has just walked into a room where he finds other members of his community, or his friends. The participants, < MaidMarion > and < Lancelot > enter and imply that they are all in the same physical space together, a constructed environment:

<MaidMarion> *\*Lady Marion arrives in the room with a flair and  
arrogance fitting of her status\**

<Lancelot> *\*Bowling low in respect to Lady Marion's presence\*  
How fair thee, Lady Marion? (Metz 1994:41 )*

3) capital letter for stressing an important difference , see this example from a Relay : ( Metz , ibid : 42 )

<2hot4U> HEY EVERYBODY, WHAT'S UP?!?

<Maurice> 2hot: Why are you yelling?

<Bear> 2hot: Quit yelling! You're giving me a headache!

shortand for the description of physical conditions , such as smileys to represent sentiments(4  
 .( within the message as in the following (Reid 1991

:-) or :) a smiling face, as viewed side-on

;-) or ;) a winking, smiling face

:-( or :( an 'unsmiley': an unhappy face

:-(\*) someone about to throw up

8-) someone whose eyes are opened wide in surprise.

:-P someone sticking out their tongue

>:-O someone screaming in fright, their hair standing on end

:-X someone whose lips are sealed

@}-`-,`-- a rose

Overall,successful participants reside on these actions to covey meanings and doings,as Simpson( 2005a: 4-5)indicates,by appealing to schematic knowledge. This knowledge is the organized background knowledge which participants draw on when making sense of text, that is, in their effort to render it coherent.Two areas of schematic knowledge are important:formal knowledge which includes knowledge of what a participant would expect to find when joining any CMC interaction.And sociocultural knowledge which is the knowledge of how to interact appropriately in a particular community;a knowledge of how to use the sociocultural rules of a community.

### 3.2 Linguistic Structure

Although many linguists have recently come pay attention to the type of language used in CMD , there is lack of literature about its stylistic and linguistic

features."Academic research has not caught up with its task of adequately defining the use of this new medium , and it has so far provided no clear answer to the question of whether a stylistic protocol exists " for CMD(Gains : 1998 : 82 ).

However,many studies have focused on the nature of discourse generated.Baron(1984:131)points to interesting features of CMD as " whole new fractured language---definitely not as elegant as English used to be".The notion of emergent or hybrid CMD,where texts show combination of written and oral features , is surfaced in such studies as ( Murray,1985,1988,1991;Ferrare et al 1991:Davis and Brewer,1997;Mathews,2000).Different terms are used to refer to this dichotomy,such as"spoken"and"written", "interactive" versus "edited texts"(Biber,1986:395)or"spontaneous"versus"selfmonitored"discourse(Halliday,1978: 69).

Murray's(1985,1988,1991)points to the"conversation"discourse to be interactive,displaying both oral and written features.The oral language is evident by the use of "active voice and personal pronouns;emotive and informal diction; hedging and vagueness;paralinguistic cues;and direct quotation"(Murray, 1985:217)ellipsis and abbreviations are also extensively used.The tendency towards written language is evident by the use of more formal pronouns,highly technical language and definiteness(Murray,1991a:36).The use of "nominalization , and attributive adjectives; particles and complement and relative clauses"(Murray,1985:220).Murray(Ibid:224)indicates that computer conversation does not have "a static place on the written/oral continuum but it goes"back and forth between written-style and talker- style as interactants change voice".

By this,the participants are aware of the limitations of the computer media.So , they create devices which are economical in saving time and typing effort avoiding detailed description and elaboration .

#### 4. CMC in Instructional Settings

Most studies on CMC in instructional setting are project-based. These projects indicate that CMC is advantageous as it gives positive learning outcomes:

- 1) students anonymous characters are a "valuable pedagogical resource for initiating the discussion , and in sustaining and promoting the strong assertive remarks "(Bellman et al , 1993 :241),
- 2) it promotes off – campus or open education which assists active learning and collaboration among learners,
- 3) it also supports overall gains and critical thinking (Ibid 241,242 ),
- 4) it raises students' motivation and enthusiasm in writing tasks which helps in developing reading and writing quality by means of peer checking and feedback, and
- 5) students feel they are part of a community of learners rather than learning in isolation ( Shulman , 2001 : par 13:online ; Yu and Yu : 2002:online).

This novel approach of learning develops communication skills and reveals global viewpoints and recourses by authentic collaboration among students (Berge and Collins,1998:10). The cultural aspects of the target language are exposed to learners in a more active process than if the teacher provides the inputs to them .CMC,in educational settings,helps in "extending the boundaries of an environment regardless of actual and physical location "(Tille and Hall, 1998:188 ).

#### 4.1 CMC and Writing

Computer based discourse in all its modes has become part in every day life. Webchat , e-mail , multi – media and others develop their own language style .As professionals in language,instructors need to suite this media to desirable educational purposes .

As noticed above,students are quite comfortable and interested with the new media,in particular,instant messaging and e-mails,hence influence their writing style.Jordan(2005:online) makes a summary of some experts'views on this matter.For example,Melanie Weaver assigned term papers to her students.She was annoyed when receiving a bunch of term papers from her students who "would be trying to make a



point...they put a smiley face in the end.If they were aware presenting an argument and needed to present an opposite view,they would put a frown"(Lee,2002:par.14:online )

Teachers of language profession are divided into two groups representing two contrasting viewpoints.One group regard CMD as a deviation from the norm of standard language use.For example,Tina Deamicis,an English teacher,is dismayed about her students because they " are prone to use bizarre abbreviations and spellings...They do not seem to make a distinction between casual and academic language "(Cobbs,2002: par.4:online)

The second group are more flexible and tolerant.They regard the new change as a kind of development that can be adapted to serve educational goals.Ms. Fogarty,a teacher,accepts from her students to use abbreviations in their first draft."When my children are writing their first drafts,I do not care how they spell anything, as long as,they are writing . If this lingo gets their thoughts and ideas onto paper quicker,the more power to them "( op.cit, par .37) .Leila Christenbury, an English professor,is happy about his students .He confirms that " we should be encouraged to see a generation of youngsters topping away at the keyboard instead of fingering a remote ...My gosh , this is an English teachers ' dream .It is something to celebrate and exploit .Enforcing correct usage is a constant battle , but an ampersand and the numeral 4 in students' writing are surmountable" (op.cit. par.10-11 ).Steven Pinker , a professor , also is glad about the evolution of a new language"...people are writing more than ever ...If they are writing informally well,so what?The use of shorthand forms and abbreviations was enormously common in Latin in the middle ages.The issues are similar today" (Ibid ,par.43 ).

Piirto(1997:119-125) discovers that even the faculties who are against students' errors are more lenient of their own errors while using one of CMD modes.He believes that CMD is developing its own peculiar style and rhetoric,and asks" Do faculty really want old social codes ( i.e. rules of grammar, mechanics and overall rhetorical concerns ) relaxed and

forsaken for a new community? Or, could faculty even stop this community from forming if they wanted to?"

In general, language teachers have under their disposal several ways for adapting CMC into their classrooms.

1) CMC can be used to facilitate collaboration and interaction between students and their teachers by working together through the messaging system of computer network technology. Students can be asked to have an e-mail account or and organize online classroom while teachers set the subjects, deadlines and agendas. Students have the potential of e-mailing their teacher, share their ideas, send questions and receive feedback. Teachers have a look at the works presented online, check and grade them electronically.

2) Electronic modes offer an extensive collaborative experience among students of the same class or other classes in other countries. They can send messages to each other online and exchange ideas openly. They can choose topics, compose together and suggest revisions. This is done freely without any observation from their teachers, therefore shy students who are hesitant in class participation are benefited. Moreover, joining students from different countries, students become aware of cultures of the world around. More effective real response, mentor projects between high and college students leads to extended class discussions.

Incoming e-mails, notices and messages coming up from notice boards and conferences formed a substantial repository of teaching and learning materials. Different reading styles could be used when dealing with this repository of texts. Some were simply skimmed or scanned, while others were read either intensively or extensively. In fact, the repository gathered became so substantial that much of it had to be left for subsequent discussion (or even undiscussed) in classes" (Tella, 1992:56).

3) Students can write essays and publish them on WWW and supply their e-mails for real audiences' feedback and comments.

They know when it comes down to it, the real audience is the teacher? and the teacher is not a very interesting audience. But when I say 'you are going to put this work on the web, offer your e-mail address, and submit it to search engines', students get excited" (Liebowitzpar, 1999: par.29:online).

As a result, students work harder. And when they receive a reply to their writing, they will be more concerned about how they can express their opinions in a good style. By this, CMC offers a real context for teaching communicative skills.

4) Teachers can use CMD modes in teaching revision and thinking especially in the first draft. Precise writing is a good example for teaching critical thinking, defined as "the ability to articulate what you know" (ibid, par 32 -41). Although some consider CMC as constantly changing, yet the basis of good writing in any form, does not change.

However, before conducting online class projects, they have to put in mind the following points :

- 1) set clear curriculum – based projects,
  - 2) respect the needs of member partners,
  - 3) establish a time – line with a definite ending,
  - 4) involve students in the technology,
  - 5) remain flexible , and
  - 6) evaluate the outcomes and involve students in the evaluation process
- (Avots, 1991:122 ).

Students collaboration on CMD is very successful if the students have a goal. If they do not, and their main purpose is to chat and make interpersonal relations with each

other,the communication breaks down as soon as one side has something more important to do(Tillyer,1996:online)

To sum up,teachers need to admit that computer network and internet are already available to students.Teachers need also to acknowledge CMD as a legitimate type of writing can be suited in instructional settings and important in teaching communicative skills.

## 5.Conclusions

CMC is established when computer is used as a context of interaction between people in different places of the world.Different genres can be distinguished.Those which take place synchronically are like Webchats, IRC , MUDs and MOOs,and asynchronously such as e-mail, the Usenet groups or Listserv.Transmission is either one way like all common modes of CMC or two –way as in ICQ.

To overcome restrictions,participants on CMC create certain unconventional devices,such as the addressivity practice,linking practice, floor holding conventions,and invention of emoticons.Due to fast paced media,the linguistic structure is a hybrid of speech and writing.

Language teachers need to recognize the potential of this technological media in teaching communicative language skills.There are several ways teachers can do that.

1)Students in the same class,other classes or overseas classes have considerable opportunity to work together online,compose in pairs or small groups, read and comprehend the feedbacks.By this,they can reflect on their own learning and get advantage from the responses offered in the replies.Unlike in traditional class, online composition gives the desire to students to go back and check after they have been marked,and returned.

2) Reading skill can be developed by reading incoming written materials of which some are simply skimmed or scanned, while others are read either intensively or extensively.

3) Students can be encouraged to publish their writing on free websites for feedback from real readers.

4) Teachers can use it as means to introduce critical thinking especially in the first draft.

## 6. Recommendations and Further Research

1) CMC should pave the way to have new kinds of content and methods of work in teaching of foreign languages. The schools/universities should go beyond the concept of building surrounded by traditional, physical walls. Rather it should be mixed with neighboring society a step towards the construct of a 'virtual community'. This community is formed by having communication between different groups of teachers, local or international networks, encouraging co-operation at school/university level, across teachers of a number of subjects. Teachers can discuss materials, exchange ideas and argue, have intellectual discourse, exchange knowledge, conduct plans, brainstorm and go further than the guidelines of the foreign language specific curriculum. An important step in bringing the outside world into the classroom is distinctively at hand.

2) International communications networks principally through e-mail should be provided to students. It opens up new horizons and raise both teachers' and students' awareness of various possibilities geared towards CMC activities in teaching languages.

Future research can explore how cultural, gender and language factors might affect in-class and CMC discussions at the graduate level, and how these two modalities could be harnessed for optimal learning in light of these social and personal factors.

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