Yahoo Messenger – communication tool on the Internet

Ionela Mihaela GAFENCU BÂNDIUL
“Ştefan cel Mare” University
Suceava, Romania
ionelamihaela@easy.net.ro

Abstract: The development of new communication technologies represented an opportunity, but also a challenge for communication sciences. The widespread use of the Internet led to the opening of new roads for the media consumer. The blog, podcast, Wikipedia, YouTube, Yahoo Messenger or Second Life are phenomena that are felt more significantly also in Romania. The proposed article tries to demonstrate that online communication is made using the new tools and true virtual communities and social networks are created. Texts, sounds, images and graphic forms converted by computer are the object of our study, a risk assumed because the online domain is very dynamic and changes are impressive.

Key words: Chat, Internet, Yahoo Messenger, emoticon, id, new media.

With the advent of the Internet, through the '80s came a new form of written communication, namely chat. Etymologically, the word comes from English and has the meaning of "chatter, gossip, discussion"1. This recognition does not overlap fully with the real connotation and context in which it is used, a more appropriate term being the "humbug". Actually, the chat designates a dialogue or exchange of written lines (text) between two or more persons, through an electronic channel of information transmission. The chat can be achieved using a browser or a special program, such as: Yahoo Messenger, Mirc, Skype, etc.

Initially, the chat was a form of communication characteristic for a small group of computer users, but the early '90s and the amazing effect that the spread of Internet has made have implicitly contributed to the quick development of chat. Thus, the arose the online communities that have developed their own language, based primarily on the use of acronyms and symbols. These communities dialogize in a space created and customized according to everyone's needs, and in which the reality and even the personality can be changed. The chat user allocates a name, generically known as the nickname, which functions as a nickname that is a characteristic of the person or the identity of the person he has chosen. Often, however, users of chat do not want their true identity to be known. This form of anonymity allows people to acquire a new identity and allows the expression without fear of the personality. Therefore, the chat has become very popular among more timid people, for which the face-to-face communication was a burden.

Initially, the chat turned the written communication in an oral one, but which uses the written word. This type of communication is described by linguists as a colloquial language which is done for technical reasons in writing. The chat's language shows many peculiarities. To be mentioned is the dispense of any type of capital letters, because of the time economy and the difficulty of drafting. For this reason the texts often seem unclear, fact observed only by external people, because users do not perceive it as such. The chat language is also a coded one, so is considered by some as a specialized language. To play or to suggest a raised tone the writing of the whole word in capitals is used. Many chat users use acronyms, inflectives, audibles and emoticons2 to better express their state of mind. A drawback of electronic written communication over oral communication is that it does not have any forms of non-verbal communication, gesticulation or mimic. To counteract these shortcomings the above mentioned "emoticons" were used. The word "emoticon" has its origins in English "emotion", which means feeling, and "icon" which means sign. They are meant to send moods and

1 http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chat
feelings to the chat partner. They are short, simple and universally recognizable. These emoticons have not been established under any standards. Acronyms are the best known characteristic of the chat. With their help the chatters reduce whole sentences to their initials. Acronyms first appeared in Morse code used by amateur telegraphers, extended and supplemented with numbers.

IRC Environment (Internet Relay Chat) was invented by Jarkko Oikarin in 1988 in Finland. This program has become extremely popular and currently is used by hundreds of thousands of people in over 60 countries. The user uses a client program to connect to the IRC network server, a process that resembles very much to sending the message by email. All servers are connected to each other and send messages to all users of IRC network. They enjoy a state of relative anonymity. Even if there are "nicknames", however it is possible to identify the real computer after the ID code. Users meet on the IRC channels (rooms, virtual venues, usually with a specific topic of conversation) to discuss in groups or individually. From the socio-linguistic point of view, the channels are, to some extent, equivalent to groups in real life conversation. On the other hand, the formation of natural conversation groups is based on geographic proximity. In IRC, members not only they are not in the same room, but are also dispersed in different countries, even having a distinct horizon of knowledge.

Communication in chat rooms is a mixed type. The scenario consists of five phases:
- connect to the Internet;
- connect to a chat server;
- choice of communication channel;
- communication itself and;
- leaving the channel of communication.

Transmission of information in chat rooms takes place, usually, through the visual channel. With the development of software, it was possible to use the auditory channel (voice chat or video chat). Typically, in communication the auditory channel for information transmission is combined with the visual one. Thus, the information issued by one of the locutors can be perceived only on the visual channel, while the information issued by his interlocutor - only on the auditory channel.

The mimic of the emotions is made with special signs, called emoticons:

Hello, what are you doing? :)

I just woke up :P [shows the tongue]
Would you drink a cup of tea? ;) [blink the eye]
:)-smile
:( -sadness
:[( -total depression
:-x -i will not tell any word etc.

Speaking about the code, the vocabulary used and the signs "grammar", we want to emphasize that semiotic process in chat rooms is characterized by the use of non-formal language.

In written chat, the capitalization is missing, abbreviations abound, sentences are short. It is observed the abbreviation of verbs "a vorbi" and "a trebui" with "vb" and "tr", the replacement of the letter c inside a word with k, and the letters ş and ţ replaced by sh, tz. So, the messenger language is a functional one, with a high schematization degree and with linguistic loans from the English variant.

As known, Yahoo! Messenger is a messaging software provided by the Yahoo company. Through this application the communication is facilitated on the entire globe, individuals can communicate even if they are in opposite corners on the globe, directly from the keyboard or via voice chat. This Messenger service requires some settings to become functional. So, the use of voice chat requires a microphone and speakers or headphones. Through these peripherals, communication is made similar to the phone. We are dealing with a source and a destination of messages, an electronic source and destination.

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3 Emoticons are in fact some symbols of paralinguistic coding methods.
4 Specialized computer program.
5 Phone conversation through Internet.
transmitter (microphone) and a receiver (headset, speakers).

The popularity of this software has grown with the brand image of Yahoo, because it is offered for free and, therefore, has no restrictions in terms of options. The software can be downloaded in full version even from the Yahoo site and there are no limited options, such as other software from the same family.

**Messenger** is upgraded regularly and occasionally, at different time intervals. Upgrades fulfill different functions. An example of positive upgrade from a functional perspective, it is the transmission of files (pictures, music, etc.) via *drag and drop*, from one individual to another by simply pulling the file to the chat box. This type of transmission of information is not new, but it is easy to use and has become very popular due to ease of diffusion. A negative upgrade would be the restriction of the number of characters (40 characters maximum) that can be displayed in status. This element is an allocated space on the right of the personal id in which can be transcribed a representative phrase to be seen by everyone in the list, in the case when the operator, the source, is online. The Messenger's list is practically a personal agenda. This can be grouped in different categories (friends, relatives, acquaintances, etc.), depending on personal preferences.

The main component of **Messenger** is the *chat window*. In this window, it can type a text or source intention. The text can be received instantly, if the recipient is online, or can be found later if the other operator is offline. Communication can take many forms. Can be a conversation by typing a text, or can take the form of sending files (pictures, movies, music in mp3 format etc.) using the command *send file*, from the chat window, where only files not exceeding 700 MB are allowed. The format of these files does not matter. Also, the *voice chat* service, mentioned above, can be accessed by phone call, simply pressing the *call* button will transmit the impulse to call to another user, without the need to form a phone number.

From this service, a function very often used is *conference*. This allows more users participate in a live telephone conversation (*online*).

The last utility, technically, of the Yahoo! Messenger is using the web camera. The *webcam* service allows viewing the interlocutor in real time.

**Yahoo! Messenger** is not the only existing chat program, but is the most popular in Romania. Other chat programs are *Google Talk*, *MSN Messenger*, *Skype*, *AOL Messenger*, etc.

Communication via the Internet does not leave the classical scheme of the first model of communication, proposed by American researchers Waren Claude Shannon and Waren Weaver*. The linear communication model: source-transmitter-message-channel-receiver-destination has as basic element the information that is intended to reduce uncertainty*. To describe the online communication route we should take into account the noise (jitter). This is the sound / sounds to be added to the original transmitted signal, without the source intending that. The noise is a barrier to communication which, together with information, forms what is called the bandwidth of communication. For the Messenger particular case, the bandwidth is determined by the typed intent or verbal communication through voice chat, which is the aggregation of information conveyed and interference in the form of noise that occur in telephonic verbal communication in real time.

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*This model, known as information theory, starts from the premise that solving problems of communication is in direct proportionality with reducing loss of information.

7 The amount of entropy (term taken from thermodynamics) of a system (variable measuring the degree of chaos or disorganization of a system).
the form of jitter, interruption of the online conversation or sudden stop of communication through other factors (computer reset, power drop, etc.).

The accessibility of the texts for the computer mediated conversations is questionable. Often they seem just a chaos of sentences, which, apparently, does not bind to one another. The language used by interlocutors is quite specific. We can not fully compare it with the slang, which certainly is a negative development in any language, but we believe that the unsupervised language of chat rooms conquers new territories in literary language. Some of chat abbreviations are already accepted in communication via email.

Known being the modern world tendency to accelerate life and, therefore, to "economy in speech", that offensive of the language of the computer mediated conversations must be in the linguist sight.

We maintain that we are witnessing the formation of a new functional style in English, but also in Romanian, used to communicate on the Internet. We are witnessing the development of New Media, because we assist the innovative forms of interaction between people and technology, the relationship between people and communication tools used creatively to meet basic needs for information, communication and relationship.

![Figure 1: Communicational circuit](image)

**Fig. 1.** Communicational circuit.

**References**


Ionela Mihaela GAFENCU (BÂNDIUL)
PhD student at "Ștefan cel Mare" University, Faculty of Letters and Sciences of Communication, PhD Domain: Philology, PhD Thesis: *Intertextuality in computerized speech*, PhD supervisor: prof. Vasile DOSPINESCU, PhD.