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The linguistic function of Cantonese discourse particles in the English medium online chat of Cantonese speakers

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The linguistic function of Cantonese discourse particles in the English medium online chat of Cantonese speakers

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Masters of Arts - Research

From

University of Wollongong

by

Yin-Ting (Stephanie), Wong

Faculty of Arts, school of School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages

2009
CERTIFICATION

I, Yin-Ting (Stephanie), Wong declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts (by research), in the school of English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages of the Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

Yin-Ting (Stephanie), Wong

24 April 2009
Recent technological developments have given rise to a form of communication via the Internet known as online chat. This medium of communication has resulted in a language revolution, at least in Hong Kong where people communicating via the internet have adopted a new variety of language. This new variety is based in English but includes a number of Cantonese and Chinese sentence final particles as well as aspects of the grammar of these languages.

It is believed that the use of this hybridised English and especially the Cantonese sentence final particles has a specific function within the context of computer mediated communication especially in online chat such as MSN and ICQ. Most previous research on the use of Cantonese sentence final particles has focussed on their meanings in spoken language (Kwok, 1984; Matthews & Yip, 1994; Luke, 1990; Li 2006; Law, 1990). However, even within this context, the function of these particles has not been subjected to a rigorous systemic functional interpretation and systemization.

This paper reports on a study which seeks to provide a systemic functional description and systematization of Cantonese final particles as used in English computer mediated communication (CMC), by definition a written medium. Since the Cantonese final particles have tended to be a feature of spoken rather than written language, this study illustrates an example of the evolution of language and of linguistic change in progress.
This thesis would not have been completed without the help of numerous people. I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Carmel Cloran, for being supportive, patient and tolerant in guiding my course study. I am very fortunate to have worked under her supervision. Without her guidance, this thesis would never exist.

I am grateful to my co-supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Thomson. Her comments and advice have been invaluable to me. I would also like to thank all the staff members of the department for their administrative advice and technical assistance.

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<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>Computer-mediated-communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICQ</td>
<td>I Seek You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSN</td>
<td>MSN messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>bulletin board systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Internet Relay Chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFL</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Linguistics</td>
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<td>E-discourse</td>
<td>Electronic discourse</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>selection expression</td>
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