Positive (Im)politeness: Banter as a Form of Social Cohesion in Internet Relay Chat

Otto Lehikoinen
MA Thesis
University of Turku
School of Languages and
Translation Studies
English Philology
January 2012

TURUN YLIOPISTO
Kieli- ja käännöstieteiden laitos
Humanistinen tiedekunta

LEHIKOINEN, OTTO: Positive (Im)politeness: Banter as a Form of Social Cohesion in Internet Relay Chat

Pro gradu -tutkielma, 112 s., 23 liitesivua
Englantilainen filologia
Tammikuu 2012

Tutkielma keskittyy piikittelyn käyttöön yhteisöllisyyden luomisessa Internet Relay Chatissa. Kohteena ollut kanava, #chatzone, toimii Undernet-verkostossa, johon käyttäjä ottaa yhteyden tietokoneeltaan Internetin välityksellä. Tutkielman metodologiana on käytetty tietokonevälitteistä diskurssianalyysiä, joka on Susan Herringin käyttämä termi. Aineistona on käytetty lokitiedostoja, jotka on saatu kanavalla keskustelleelta henkilöltä, jonka tietokoneen kovalevylle tiedostot ovat tallentuneet. Tutkielman hypoteesina oli, että ruumiinkielen puuttumisesta huolimatta kanavalla keskustelevat henkilöt käyttävät piikittelyä ja näennäisesti epäkohteliasta huumoria osana yhteisöllisyyden tunteen luomista sekä ylläpitoa. Käyttäjät tiedostavat huumorin olevan leikkimielistä eikä sillä pyritä loukkaamaan ketään. Tulokset osoittivat leikkimielisen huumorin ja piikittelyn perustuvan ensisijaisesti sanaleikkeihin sekä ideoilla leikkimiseen. Yllätyksellisintä tuloksissa oli näennäisen sanallisen väkivallan käytön sekä karkean kielenkäytön yleisyys. Tämän lisäksi sukupuolen merkitys ei ollut huomattava, vaikka oli oletettavaa, että miespuoliset käyttäjien kielenkäyttö olisi karkeampaa. Osa karkeimman huumorin käyttäjistä oli naispuolisia henkilöitä. Jatkotutkimuksia tarvitaan IRC:in käyttäjien kasvotusten sekä tietokonevälitteisen kommunikaation erojen löytämiseen. Pitkän aikavälin tutkimusten, kyselylomakkeiden sekä haastattelujen avulla tutkija voi saada arvokasta tietoa palvelun käyttäjien kielenkäytön motiiveista, joita tässä kyseisessä tutkielmassa ei ole päästy käsittelemään.

Asiasanat: piikittely, epäkohteliaisuus, tietokonevälitteinen kommunikaatio, Internet Relay Chat, yhteisöllisyys, sosiaalinen koheesio, diskurssianalyysi

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to the works of Neal R. Norrick (1993), Jonathan Culpeper (2011), Crispin Thurlow (2004), Brenda Danet et al. (1997) for providing the theoretical background for this thesis. This thesis is also dedicated to Dr Ruth Carroll and Dr Alyson Pitts for their help and supervision during the writing process. In addition, I am grateful to my thesis seminar opponent, Heli Ervasti, for her constant words of encouragement and aid in making sure the thesis followed the form(s) of academic writing. Without these people this thesis would still be labelled "to be completed". I also wish to thank Professor Risto Hiltunen and the thesis seminar group for peer support, constructive criticism and ideas which helped me to improve the quality of the present thesis. Needless to say, this thesis is also dedicated to my lovely spouse, Aino Liira, for her love and providing the food and shelter. This thesis would not be the same without friends and family, especially my mother who kept pestering me with the question no student wants to hear: "Have you graduated yet?"

Well, mom, here it is and I can finally say: It is done.

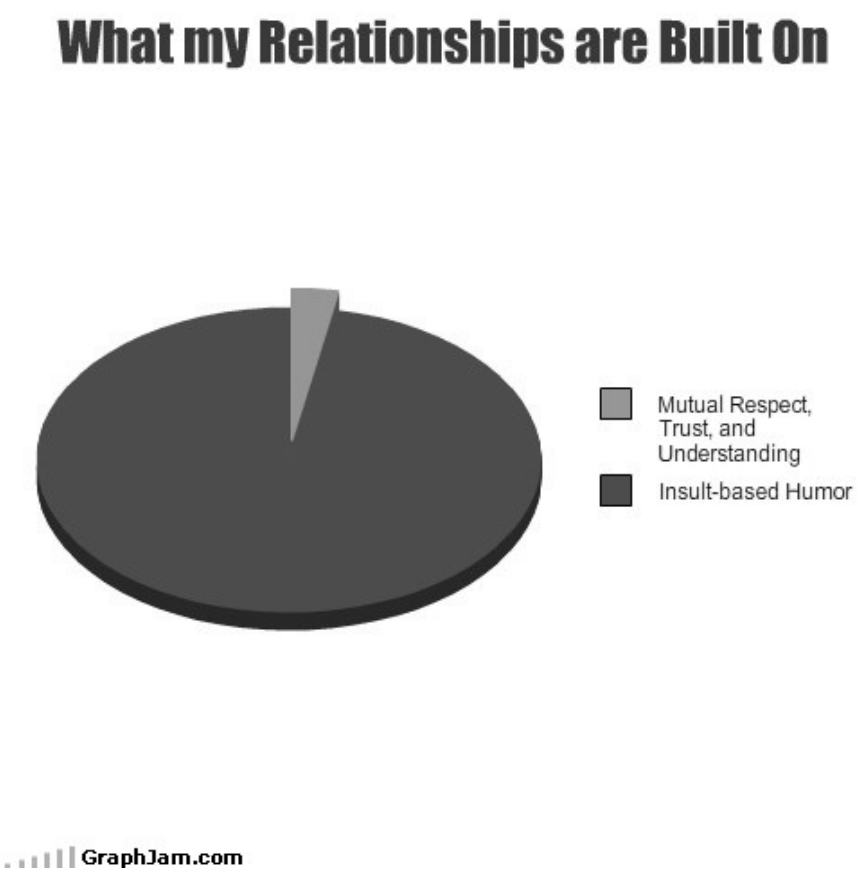


Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 3

List of Figures 5

1. Introduction 6

2. Social Cohesion 8

    2.1. Politeness and Social Cohesion 8

    2.2. From Individuals to a Group 16

    2.3. Analysing the Group Dynamics 22

3. Banter 25

    3.1. Definition of Banter and Putdown Humour 25

4. Computer-Mediated Communication 30

    4.1. From Face-to-Face to Computer-Mediated Communication 33

    4.2. Internet Relay Chat within Computer-Mediated Communication 36

    4.3. Internet Relay Chat: Synchronous and Real-Time Chat 38

    4.4. Summary of the Theoretical Background 39

5. Data 41

6. Methodology 47

    6.1. CMDA on playfulness 49

    6.2. Making Sense of Banter: Rules for Putdown Humour 51

    6.3. Applying the Rules for Putdown Humour in the IRC Surroundings 54

    6.4. Methodological toolbox: Criteria for identifying online banter 59

    6.5. Breakdown of Conversational Humour 61

7. Analysis and Discussion 62

    7.1. Overview of the Interaction on the Channel #Chatzone 62

    7.2. Wordplay Interaction 63

    7.3. Sarcasm, Hostility and Mocking 87

    7.4. Conversational Styles on the Channel 101

8. Conclusion 104

References 109

Appendices 114

List of Figures

1. What My Relationships Are Built On 2
2. The Network of Internet Relay Chat 35
3. The Channel #Chatzone on IceChat 9 40
4. Log File on OpenOffice Writer 41
5. Five Frames of Internet Relay Chat 53

List of Abbreviations

1. IRC: Internet Relay Chat
2. CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication
3. FTF: Face-to-Face
4. IM: Instant Messaging
5. CMDA: Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis

Glossary of the Most Common IRC Actions

1. /join #channel: joining a channel or several channels to take part in their discussions
2. /part #channel: leaving a channel
3. /quit disconnecting to the server(s) one is using; it is possible to write a personal message after /quit, add a favourite quote to be displayed upon disconnecting, i.e. a quit message
4. /kick <nick>: for being temporarily excluded from the channel; a penalty not following the netiquette or specific channel rules
5. /ban <nick>: being excluded from the channel for a longer period of time; a penalty for repeated offences
6. /me <nick>: an action which shows the <nick> performing something in third person singular; used to highlight the action in the flow of the text
7. /whois <nick>: shows information on the IRC user
8. /whowas <nick>: shows some information on when the IRC user was last online and when they closed the connection

1. Introduction

This thesis follows the general themes of previous theses concerning Internet Relay Chat (IRC) written by Law (2007) and Valanne (2001) for the Department of English Philology in the University of Turku. The present study offers new insight into how language which seems to be impolite on the surface is used to create a feeling of belonging together (as positive politeness would). The purpose of this thesis is to study and classify the ways in which the Internet Relay Chat members use banter in building and maintaining social cohesion. The data of this thesis focuses on the channel #chatzone which operates within the network of Undernet.

The theoretical background of this thesis is divided into three major themes: social cohesion, banter and computer-mediated communication. Of these, the first is covered in chapter 2 where the notion of *social cohesion* is examined in greater detail. I have chosen to adopt the term **positive impoliteness** from Culpeper et al. (2003) but the definition to this term has undergone a change in this thesis. As the general purpose of banter and the type of derogatory humour used in the forming of social cohesion tends to be *positive* even though the surface level may be filled with *impoliteness*, it is the goal of this thesis to introduce the positive nature of impoliteness, i.e. positive (im)politeness[1], in the interaction of chat members who have spent and continue to spend hours talking together on an online channel, #chatzone, within the realm of Internet Relay Chat. This thesis does not answer the question of cause and effect: whether the (im)politeness goes on to create the closely-knit groups or if these groups offer the forum for the impolite interaction to emerge[2].

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of *customary joking relationship* introduced by Norrick (1993) and applies that idea on online data. The issue of conventionalised forms of mock-impoliteness (Culpeper 2011) is also an integral part of the way in which humour plays a role in forming closely-knit groups. This is what links the concept of social cohesion (chapter 2) to banter (chapter 3). In chapter 3, *banter* and *taking the piss* are introduced and explained as the forms in which the humour is acted out. I follow previous research in taking the notion of give-and-take,

[1] See chapter 2 for *positive politeness*, "claim common ground" by Brown and Levinson (1987)

[2] I suspect the latter to be the case due to the *inherent playfulness* (Danet et al. 1997) of the language of Internet Relay Chat.

i.e. **reciprocity**, as of great importance as it is the feature which distinguished it from crossing the line and going too far which can be labelled bullying or teasing in the negative sense.

The study of banter has been neglected by linguists, who have only briefly mentioned the phenomenon. In this field the work of Leech (1983) can be seen as the first one to touch upon the issue. His idea of the Banter Principle (1983:144) is referenced in chapter 3 we will see that he offers only a brief description of the issue. Following Leech were Brown and Levinson (1987), who focused their attention to politeness and the idea of *face wants*, but did not mention banter. The article which has acted as the basis of the section on *banter* or *taking the piss* in this thesis (Plester and Sayers 2007) focused on cases of face-to-face interaction. These instances rely heavily on non-verbal cues and the close proximity of the interlocutors which the present data lacks. Members of the channel have to know how to read between the lines and their knowledge of the styles in which the different members type their messages.

The third and final part (see chapter 4) of the theoretical background focuses on the online interaction of which the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is an example. The language of IRC is an interesting amalgamation of written text and spoken discourse carried out via the keyboard of the computer. For a better understanding of the special linguistic features of Internet Relay Chat and their relation to the playfulness of the medium, see Valanne (2001). Much of our modern interaction (e.g. e-mail and text messages) relies on computers and them acting as mediators between the interlocutors. This thesis shows one example of a service which brings people from all over the world to a specific forum where casual and person discussions are held on a daily basis.

The theoretical background is followed by chapters focusing on the data (chapter 5) and the methodological framework (chapter 6) used to analyse the log files which acted as the data of this thesis. As there seems to be no online corpus of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) data, the researchers have to acquire the data themselves. The personal nature of the discussions held online in IRC leads to the question of research ethics and where to draw the line of privacy in an online public forum of a chat room. Results are offered in chapter 7 under which the subsection 7.3. focuses

on the cases where sarcasm, hostility and mocking were most prominent. These cases act as perfect examples of the idea of **positive (im)politeness** which is explained in the following chapter which begins the theoretical background section of this thesis.

2. Social Cohesion

The theoretical background of this thesis is divided into three major themes: social cohesion, banter and computer-mediated communication. Chapter 2 focuses on social cohesion and looks at what makes a group of individuals become a group. The group dynamics of electronic communities have been researched by Elizabeth M. Reid (1991, 1994) and Joseph Walther among others. Chapter 3 will focus on banter and how humour is used in everyday life in creating a feeling of belonging together. The third and final part (see chapter 4) of the theoretical section will look at how computer-mediated communication is similar to or different from face-to-face interaction. As a part of chapter 4 I have added a brief summary of the theoretical background used in this thesis. It is my intention to show how humour in Internet Relay Chat is an integral part of the language used on the channel #chatzone. In chapter 7 I offer my analysis of the humorous exchanges and discuss whether they fall under my understanding of banter.

However, let us begin by focusing our attention on politeness and social cohesion.

2.1. Politeness and Social Cohesion

I begin the theoretical background of this thesis by briefly examining how the idea of **positive politeness** (Brown and Levinson 1987) functions in respect to solidarity and social cohesion. Brown and Levinson's (1987) seminal work *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use* was published in 1978 and it has been the grounding point for much of the research conducted on politeness. Chapter 3 will discuss the work of Leech (1983) who refers to this book (1978) as he devises his own Politeness Principle (PP) and Irony Principle (IP) of which the latter will be expanded on later. In addition, the following section will be based on Culpeper

(2011)[3] who addresses the problems of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of *positive politeness*. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 103) positive politeness concerns the use of on record face-threatening acts with redress in order to "claim common ground".

Culpeper (2011: 209) states that one of the flaws in Brown and Levinson (1987) is that they do not treat banter at all. He goes on to explain how the Brown and Levinson (1987) model briefly mentions that both joking as a positive politeness strategy and a subset of jokes involve mock-impoliteness (see chapter 3: Leech's (1983) Banter Principle). The authors (1987:124) suggest that "since jokes are based on mutual shared background knowledge and values, jokes may be used to stress the shared background or those values". In chapter 3 we see how Leech's (1983) Banter Principle links the use of mock-impoliteness to showing solidarity. I suggest that banter is used to show solidarity through positive *impoliteness* which is understood by Leech's (1983) Banter Principle of "saying something which is (i) obviously untrue and (ii) obviously impolite to the hearer" (Leech 1983:144). Leech (1983) goes on to explain the intended meaning of being polite and truthful.

I agree with Culpeper (2011:209) that social intimacy and banter are clearly linked. However, I disagree with his unequivocal statement "[t]he more people like each other, the more concern they are likely to have for each other's face" which is further explained by understanding the insults (i.e. mock-impoliteness) as banter. As the later chapters will show, Danet et al. (1997) suggest that one of the features of the language in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is its *inherent playfulness*. This playfulness of can be seen as banter. The authors (1997) stress the importance of the *play frame*[4] which underlines the playfulness of the interactions and makes it possible to use language which may on the surface level seem hurtful and impolite. It is this *play frame* which acts as a counter argument to "the concern for each other's face" (Culpeper 2011:209) even though I do agree with Culpeper's (ibid.) general idea. It should be pointed out that the use of the *play frame* needs to be clearly shown (e.g. great incongruity in the message and its context or through the use of emoticons).

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the ways in which people use banter in

[3] See Culpeper (2011: 207-215) chapter 6.5 for a more precise picture on genuine versus mock impoliteness.

[4] See Coates (2007) for further information on talk in a play frame

online interaction, in this case real-time Internet Relay Chat, in building and maintaining an in-group feeling relying on social cohesion. This means that what I am interested in is the use of derogatory (i.e. impolite) humour which we should not use if we are to follow Brown and Levinson's (1987) idea of **positive politeness**. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), in order to "claim common ground" we are supposed to indicate that our wants and needs are the same as our hearer's (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103). Following Brown and Levinson's (1987: 101-129) model of positive politeness suggests we are to seek agreement, avoid disagreement and possibly use in-group identity markers (e.g. *brother, sister*, *mate*, *dear* and so on). Impoliteness is then seen as not following (i.e. breaking) the rules of positive politeness.

I suggest that in the case of banter we are dealing with **positive (im)politeness**. The term, positive impoliteness, has been introduced by Culpeper et al. (2003: 1555) as one of the impoliteness strategies. The authors further describe (2003: 1554): "[i]mpoliteness superstrategies for Culpeper are 'opposite' in terms of orientation to face (i.e. instead of maintaining or enhancing face, they are designed to attack face)" but this is "not necessarily true in other pragmatic ways" (ibid.) as the opposite for bald on record would be bald off record. As mentioned above, I disagree with Culpeper (2011: 209) in the matter of "concern for other's face" as the shared history between interlocutors may lead to a feeling of knowing that no offence is meant by the seemingly harsh words. The harshness of the shared humour is actually one of the ways in which the in-group may signal their closeness.

Culpeper et al. (2003: 1555) suggest that one of the *impoliteness superstrategies* is called **positive impoliteness**. The authors provide the following description for the phenomenon:

> *Positive impoliteness*. The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants ('ignore, snub the other', 'exclude the other from the activity', 'disassociate from the other', 'be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic', 'use inappropriate identity markers', 'use obscure or secretive language', 'seek disagreement', 'make the other feel uncomfortable (e.g. do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk)', 'use taboo words', 'call the other names', etc.).
>
> Culpeper et al. (2003: 1555)

It is worth noting that the above description is the opposite of Brown and Levinson's

(1987: 101-129) idea of positive politeness strategies. The forms have been changed into the negative, e.g. ”avoid disagreement” → ”seek disagreement”. Elsewhere, in Culpeper (2011) describes the ideas of ritualised or conventionalised use of mock-impoliteness in relation to banter. The Labovian sense of ”ritual insults” can be attached to banter in some ways. As the analysis (see chapter 7) will show the use of *bastard* as an in-group marker is one example of this. For example, Culpeper (2011: 207) mentions the use of *bitch* as a similar “term of endearment”.

The use of humour which seems impolite on the surface level presupposes that the hearer understands that we consider them to be close to us. The shared background knowledge and values are implied in the use of banter and potentially hurtful humour. Because we feel close to the hearer, we are able to use this kind of language in a manner which is not “meant to cause offence” (Culpeper (2011)). This closeness of the interlocutors and the implication of not offending will come up later in this thesis. It could be suggested that the use of *you're such a slut!* in cases, where a group of women are talking together and the said *slut* is a person who is known for her prudish behaviour, the great incongruity of the utterance goes on to ameliorate the seemingly harsh insult. If the woman in question replies by smiling and admitting her own surprise to the turn of events, the humour is in some sense doubled and the group praises the new-found inappropriate nature of their friend.

My idea of **positive (im)politeness** is based on the notion of the impoliteness used in a positive sense. The use of impolite in-group markers (*bitch*, *slut*, *bastard* and so on) may seem rude to people not belonging to the group but it acts as one way of showing the closeness of the interlocutors. The persons know that the other(s) will not be offended. Thus, impoliteness can be actual or *genuine* (Culpeper 2011: 207) or positive (Culpeper 2011: 207 *mock-impoliteness*).

Next we will focus our attention on conversational joking and how humour is used to build social cohesion. This section will be mainly based on Norrick (1993), Thurlow et al. (2004) and Tannen (1984). These authors have shown the importance of humour in our everyday interaction. I intend to show how we use impolite forms of humour to keep our friends close. Continuing on the idea of **positive (im)politeness**, it needs to be pointed out that the good intentions of the seemingly impolite utterances need to be underlined in some sense. These intentions are better

known if the speaker is familiar with the hearer. This is normally guaranteed by previous interactions with the interlocutors.

One of the central terms that Norrick (1993) uses is *customary joking relationship*, by which he means a bond between two or more persons who enjoy a good rapport which is built upon shared knowledge and experiences. These manifest in a trusting relationship where the participants feel free to use humour that may seem disparaging to the outsiders but which is meant in good humour ("having a laugh"). Thus, we may witness a group of friends or co-workers verbally picking on each other but no offence is meant. This same feature of "not hurting the others" is apparent in Terrion and Ashforth (2002) when we discuss banter within the police force (see chapter 3). Norrick (1993) refers to works written by Tannen (1984) and the idea of "ritual combat" from Labov's work (1972) within the African American community (i.e. ritual insults evident in the one-upmanship of "yo momma jokes", also known as sounding).

In chapter 4, I mention Thurlow et al. (2004) as a source for Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) research. The book has two units (Thurlow 2004: 45-68) focusing on interpersonal and group dynamics in CMC. The first describes the early studies and what Thurlow et al. (2004) call *Deficit Approaches* because the approaches explain what CMC fails to achieve: **Social Presence**, **Cuelessness** and **Media Richness** (2004: 48-50).

Social Presence ranks the communication in terms of four dichotomies: 1) Unsociable / sociable 2) insensitive / sensitive, 3) cold / warm and 4) impersonal / personal. In practice, this model means that visual cues lead to a sense of immediacy which is inherently related to face-to-face (FTF) communication and an idea that all FTF interaction is warmer and more intimate than its CMC counterparts. Simply by sharing the same physical space we are thought to feel closer to the speaker.

Cuelessness model focuses on the lack of visual and paralinguistic cues which is said to lead to more impersonal communication. However, not having to speak face-to-face has the advantage of reducing the importance of social status and physical appearance. Thurlow et al. (2004) mention Spears and Lea (1992) who criticised this model for generalisations, and begged the question of intimacy of telephone hotlines and love notes passed in a classroom. Their point is that the

purpose of the communication is surely what matters the most.

The third deficit model describes the **Media Richness** of a communication technology which is determined by 1) its bandwidth or *ability to transmit multiple cues* (e.g. using a text-based chat such as Internet Relay Chat versus using Skype and a webcam to talk to someone), 2) its *ability to give immediate feedback*, 3) its *ability to support the use of natural or conversational language*, and 4) its *personal focus* (Thurlow 2004: 49). This model proposes that the richest mode of communication is usually preferred as it goes on to ensure that the message is understood best this way. Once again, the face-to-face spoken interaction is considered to be the best option. There are, however, cases where we might choose to use poorer media, for example, asking the supervisor to postpone a deadline of a term paper via email or breaking up with someone via text message (SMS) or instant messaging (IM).

Thurlow et al. (2004: 59-68) explain how group dynamics work in computer-mediated communication. What seems to be important is the interdependence and interrelatedness which goes on to form a feeling of salience in the group. This means that the scholars normally talk of *phenomenological* (or subjective) and *observational* (or objective) accounts when describing whether a person belongs to the group or not. In the first case, the participants are asked if they *feel* like they are in a group. The latter accounts have someone who is an outsider to the group to figure which persons are a part of the group. For the purpose of this thesis, it is safe to say that the log files give us the opportunity to act as an observer but it also has the potential of having examples of the participants speaking of the group as *us* or *we*. As the channel is not based on any particular theme, the interaction tends to be more casual and unrestricted. Channels focusing on a theme have the tendency to become too fixed on the topic (e.g. hobbies, software, nationalities and so on) that the data in itself restricts the research to particular issues. It is however true that the users of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) are as a group a somewhat homogeneous as they all need to have access to a computer which has an Internet connection. Thus, certain populations fall outside the possible IRC users. Looking at the history of the Internet, we could also see how certain groups (i.e. military personnel, university researchers and so on) were the ones who had the opportunity to use the Internet at their workplace and possible at home as well.

Thurlow et al. (2004) explain the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects in CMC or SIDE model, for short, follows the lines of Joseph Walther and his critique on deficit approaches mentioned above. This model is based on Social Identity Theory which has been around in social psychology since the 1980s. Thurlow et al. (2004: 67) explain how the decision to switch from personal to social identity[5] is based on what has been called the **minimal group phenomenon**. They go on to describe how it is the *perception* of group membership that goes on to activate our social identity. It is not only a question of behaving in a group but a feeling of belonging to group. What is needed is only minimal information, normally some points of comparison, to help form an idea of being a member of a distinct group: using these differences we are able to say if we are part of "us" (in-group) or "them" (all the others, out-group). With fewer social context and non-verbal cues, the **message** becomes more important than the **messenger**. The Reduced Social Cues (RSC) model, which looks at the negative effects of CMC, is in a way replaced by a more positive notion of group interaction leading to a greater sense of community. It is indeed the interactivity which seems to bring the participants together day after day. Here the study conducted by Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) needs to be mentioned as an example on how *interactivity* plays out in CMC (see page 24).

Social identity is achieved through a sort of hyperpersonal communication which Thurlow et al. (2004: 53) mention as one feature of Walther's Social Information Processing (SIP) model. Joseph Walther is one of the researchers who have contributed a lot to the study of CMC. Walther and others have emphasised the positive effects of computer-mediated communication. It is this cohesion through interactivity which I believe to be the key reason why the members of the channel #chatzone spend their time together online. The importance of *cues filtered out* (Walther and Parks 2002) is great if we consider the interaction as the main focus. Looking at the log files, we see only the text (i.e. the output of the ideas) and from the nicknames we can perhaps deduce something about the interlocutors; but very quickly it is possible to form some kind of a voice for the participants based on their word choices and style of writing. These different styles of communication are quite evident in Tannen (1984) where the persons' utterances were recorded and their

[5] See also Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997: 282) for their use of 'identity display' and 'relational identity display/development'

speech was later transcribed. Deborah Tannen and one of the participants called Steve were reported to use more irony[6] and sarcasm[7] in their style of speaking. Their style is what Norrick (1993) describes as *jocular abuse*. This type of *customary joking relationship* becomes quite clear in the log files. Danet et al. (1997) and Valanne (2001) point out the inherent playfulness of the communication in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and how it is part of the IRC frame they mention.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is vital to find some way of applying the methods used in studies on face-to-face interaction to computer-mediated communication. The idea of *cues filtered out* needs to be kept in mind as the users of IRC are aware of them unconsciously. There exists a general idea of a netiquette, a set of rules or proper decorum in online environments and in addition some channels and services may provide an explicit list of what is allowed and what is prohibited. The IRC channel, which is the focus of this thesis, #chatzone, has an Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) listed on their website. It describes behaviour which will lead to the user being *kicked* off (i.e. excluded from) the channel and possibly even banned from using it. However, one soon notices that these rules are not followed religiously. Use of profanities is one of the items listed on the AUP but this does not stop them being used on the channel. Sexually explicit or abusive language is also mentioned on the list. The website has a message intended for the parents of young children under 13 years of age:

> **Parents:** Conversation on #chatzone may contain material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 13 years of age. Conversation on #chatzone may include moderate violence, some sexual situations, infrequent coarse language, or some suggestive dialogue.
>
> From Chatzone: Usage

The disclaimer mentioned above this message explains how the administrators and operators of the channel are not to be held ultimately responsible for the discussion had on #chatzone. It is also made clear that by joining the channel one is expected to follow the AUP. Inability to live by the group's code will lead to

[6] See Gibbs (2000), Leggitt and Gibbs (2000), Pexman and Zvaigzne (2004) and Kotthoff (2003) for further information on the use of irony in talk among friends

[7] See Pexman and Olineck (2002) for the use of ironic insults and ironic compliments among friends

possible *kick* and even permanent *ban* from the channel. It should be pointed out that banter does not require use of profanity or sexual innuendo but in some cases they may be used (e.g. in groups where males are majority racial and sexist slurs may be quite frequent).

Furthermore, even though banter can be considered to be offensive according to outsiders, the participants usually know that the communication is not meant to cause any offence (as described in Terrion and Ashforth 2002, Boxer[8] and Cortés-Conde 1997). The question then arises: how do we know if something is offensive or not? There is no right answer to this question and as the participants are not in the same physical room talking face-to-face they cannot rely on visual cues. Therefore, they need to read between the lines and learn to adapt their way of speaking according to the place where they interact. Danet et al. (1997) suggest that the IRC frame reduces the social accountability for one's actions within Internet Relay Chat. This does not lead to constant verbal abuse (e.g. flaming) as people tend to want to make a good impression.

Conversationalists on the channels are normally skilled in using the language. They quickly notice the way in which people carry out their communication on a particular channel. Having the ability to adapt according to the interlocutors is very useful in online interaction. What needs to be kept in mind, is the fact that using humour correctly can be difficult even when the speaker and the hearer(s) are in the same room, i.e. able to see and/or hear each other. In some cases emoticons and graphical conventions (underlining a word for stress or emphasis, e.g. *that's _not_ what I meant*) can be used to give the others some clues as to what was meant.

Next we look at how a group of individuals gradually become a more closely-knit group.

2.2. From Individuals to a Group

The Internet is by definition a network of computers connected to each other via phone lines. However, the idea of a social network analysis has become somewhat different with the more popular use of the Internet. Watts (2003: 37-42) *Six Degrees:*

[8] See Boxer (2002) chapter 3 for a more in-depth look at face-to-face interaction in the social domain

The Science of a Connected Age addresses the "small world problem" which is behind the idea of "six degrees of separation". This idea dates back to 1967, when social psychologist Stanley Milgram was teaching at Harvard. He wanted to see how many steps it would take for a letter from Omaha, Nebraska to reach Boston, Massachusetts if the letter was handed to people who were on a first-name basis. The object was to get the letter delivered as fast as possible and the people were randomly selected. Milgram was expecting the degrees of separation to somewhere around one hundred but it turned out that the number was closer to six.

Later the same idea of a small world was adapted to the film industry in Hollywood in a popular game called *Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon* (in Watts 2003: 93-95) which uses the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) to link any person to Kevin Bacon with a maximum of six steps. The problem with the game is that is relies on films and names existing on IMDB. If a person has not appeared in any films listed on the database, the person cannot be linked to Kevin Bacon. The idea of this "small world" effect is important if we want to make a good impression on people. Key persons, who are usually on more channels than one, may act as links to other people and being polite to others is normally a good way to make a desired first impression. Thus, it would make sense not to use impolite humour in a medium which does not allow us to use intonational cues to underline the playfulness of our utterances.

This kind of "everyone knows someone who knows someone" idea should work very well on computer networks where people meet chatters from all across the globe. In this sense Internet Relay Chat is a good example of the idea of the *global village* which the modern world is increasingly becoming. Given enough time participants on any channel will be likely to form lasting relationships which will not rely simply on chatting online. People will use email and the telephone to keep in touch when they are not using IRC. In addition, it is quite common that channels organise meetings ("meets") where the persons will see each other in real life (or "irl", for short). Sometimes the online encounters can even lead to real-life marriages.

Real life comes into play in various ways in IRC and the most evident sign of this is when something in the persons' real life forces them to leave the chat for a while. Picking up the children from day care, buying groceries from the shop, having

to go to work and so on are typed onto the screen to let the online friends know of the errands one needs to run. Danet et al. (1997) mention this in their five-part frame (see page 38) description as "real life frame" which is not entirely abandoned when logging onto IRC. Here is one example of the frame:

> Session Start: Sun Sep 27 22:23:00 2009
> Session Ident: #chatzone
> ...
> [22:45] <BadInfluence> hi everyone :)
> [22:45] <BadInfluence> oh bamboo` was here!?
> …
> [23:21] <BadInfluence> reboot required, brb (brb = be right back)
> …
> [23:21] * BadInfluence (~pffft@115.186.121.16) Quit (Quit#)
> (for some reason when <BadInfluence> joins the channel again is not shown on the log file but the next contribution is as follows:)
>
> [23:34] <BadInfluence> Jondlar: did ya get to see some goodies? ;)
> ...
> [23:43] <BadInfluence> gotta play the chauffeur for a little bit, bbiaf. (bbiaf = be back in a flash)
> …
> [23:47] <BadInfluence> false alarm, still a few minutes before we leave
> …
> [00:01] * BadInfluence is now known as BadInf_afk (afk = away from keyboard)
> …
> [00:26] * BadInf_afk is now known as BadInfluence
> …
> Session Close: Mon Sep 28 00:46:01 2009

In the example above we see that apart from the reboot of the computer and the 25 minutes <BadInfluence> spends "playing the chauffeur", they are on the channel for the duration of the log file (22:45-00:46) and possibly after the recording ends due to the fact that <Dying_Beauty>, the informant for this thesis, has to be well-rested at her job interview at 10am (the time stamps are in her timezone) mentioned earlier in the same log file. Real life is there in the background but it is easy to get immersed into the interaction on the channel and lose your sense of time and place.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to note that online relationships have been considered to be tertiary or peripheral in nature (Kim et al. 2007): the people one meets online are not as important as the people one knows in real life (the so-called *strong ties*). However, it is possible and quite common that we divulge more personal information to people we might not meet face-to-face. In this sense,

the casual conversation is replaced by very intimate details of one's life which the person has not shared with their family. One example of this is <Dying_Beauty> who has not told her parents that she is now married to a man the family does not approve. The online friends congratulate her but also ask when she plans to tell her family about the marriage. We might then wonder if this kind of sharing is what separates the more casual acquaintances from the closer online friendships. Being able to confess or share things with people one trusts is what differentiates close friends from persons one greets on the street, or at least this is what the conversational conventions and the "normal behaviour" is considered to be. It needs to be pointed out that <Dying_Beauty> has probably known these chatters for some time, at least this appears to be the case based on the log files.

Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1998) address the issue of group dynamics by focusing on what they call *interactivity* in CMC. Their study was on asynchronous communication but the idea of **social cohesion through interactivity** is worth exploring. On discussion boards[9] it is common to quote an earlier message by giving the previous message verbatim, i.e. copying and pasting it in the beginning of one's own post. This happens also in IRC but usually the operators will *kick* the copy-paster off the channel because of flooding the feed. Referring to earlier messages is done and as the pace of the discussion is quite fast one needs to learn how to pick out the important bits and pieces or scroll the feed to for the important pieces of information.

I believe that the *interactivity* Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1998) talk about is carried out through humour, and the *inherent playfulness* which Danet et al. (1997) mention is connected to this same feature. It is this mutual feeling of having a laugh which acts as **a social glue** that Rafaeli and Sudweeks were hoping to find. If we consider banter, or to use the more colloquial term "taking the piss" (from Plester and Sayers 2008), to be the way in which the humour manifests itself, we should be able to find cases of it in the log files. Eventually the **social cohesion** would be based on the notion of logging onto this particular channel and enjoying a discussion filled with friendly banter. This is something that happens in situations where the people know each other well enough not to be offended by harsh words uttered by the

[9] Haverinen (2012) offers an interesting insight into the use of jargon as a form of in-group language on LiveJournal-based discussion boards. Her findings will be discussed later in this thesis.

person(s) they spend time with. In fact, in some cases there might even be an unwritten rule which would expect them to turn the verbal abuse into a game of outsmarting the person who started the jocular abuse (Norrick 1993).

Norrick's (1993) term *customary joking relationship* is useful if we draw our attention to the fact that some relationships start off as being casual and part of the extended circle of friends (Kim et al. 2007) but may eventually become more important and closer. Thus, the persons we might meet on a less than regular basis and with whom we do not share our intimate thoughts, may one day become our confidants. With regard to the channel itself, the group is normally built around some core members who have been frequenting the channel for a long time and they may have known each other for years. The relationship tends to become closer and more intimate (i.e. resembling real-life friendships) as the participants get to know more of the personal lives that the others lead. Divulging intimate secrets is one of the features which seem to be related to the closeness perceived by the persons (Chenault 1998). It is this feeling of *community* or *friendships* which we need to discuss in more detail.

The article "Netsurfers don't ride alone: virtual communities as communities" by Wellman[10] and Gulia (1997) is also a useful review of the literature and research done on relationships and the idea of communities. The authors discuss the difficulties of defining what we mean by a 'community' and how rarely the ideal meets the reality. We might think of a community as an ideal image of a closely-knit group of people living physically and mentally close to each other (i.e. a rural village). It can be thought that *stronger ties* are not possible online due to the narrower bandwidth of the communication (i.e. lack of visual and *social context cues*, interaction carried out in a text-based or text-only form et cetera). Here the face-to-face interaction is again seen as the best alternative. Greater bandwidth is achieved through sharing the physical space with a person that may also be from the similar cultural surroundings. Having the ability to rely on visual and kinesic cues (e.g. gestures, body posture, facial expressions and so on) and more importantly the tone of voice, stress patterns and intonation, seem to be vital in understanding and using humour correctly without hurting the hearer.

[10] For more studies on electronic communities see Barry Wellman's other works

Wellman and Gulia list the following characteristics which are said to define a strong tie:

> - a sense of the relationship being intimate and special
> - with a voluntary investment in the ties, and
> - a desire for companionship with the tie partner;
> - an interest in being together as frequently as possible
> - in multiple social contexts
> - over a long period
> - a sense of mutuality in the relationship
> - with the partner's needs known and supported
> - intimacy often bolstered by shared social characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status; stage in the life-cycle, and life-style
>
> Wellman and Gulia 1997: 10.

It is worth pointing out that the relationships, which we normally might call *strong ties* such as family, friends and possibly people we work with, may not always meet these requirements. In addition, physical distance does not mean that most people spend a lot of time with their neighbours or that they would divulge personal secrets to their co-workers, even though the persons might live in close proximity or spend many hours together on a daily basis. From the characteristics and this section we can pick out the key words which seem to be of greater importance: **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness**. Of these the *mutuality* is evident in the feeling of belonging to the core group (i.e. being a member of #chatzone), *interactivity* is created through the *inherent playfulness* which Danet et al. (1997) talk about.

Logging onto the Internet Relay Chat does indeed mean entering a realm different from real life, but what needs to be understood is the fact that the *real life frame* is constantly there in the background for all the participants. Virtual reality can provide a safe haven after a long day at work. Further research is needed in how different the online personality is from the real-life person. This means that whether the conversational style is the same, slightly different (and in what way?) or totally different when the person is talking online compared with when they interact in the real world. The “reduced accountability” mentioned in Danet et al. (1997) makes it easier for persons to forget that they are talking to real people typing words on their keyboards. Real people have real feelings and so using coarse language and

profanities will cause the person using them to be viewed as a potentially hostile person who are generally not liked online or offline.

Next the focus turns to the study of group dynamics which displays how people function within a group and an example of how individuals eventually form a group.

2.3. Analysing the Group Dynamics

It is important for us to look at how humour, especially derogatory styles of it, is used in normal daily communication. The article by Terrion and Ashforth (2002) is a study on how putdown humour is used in a six-week training course (Executive Development Course, later EDC) for the Canadian Police College (CPC). The participants seem to use putdowns in a *play frame* (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997) which underlines the non-literal meaning of the playful insults. Terrion and Ashforth (2002) suggest that the mutual understanding of the *play frame* goes on to have an *inclusionary* effect. The idea is paradoxical because in order to be part of the group one needs to be made fun of and not to take it personally.

Terrion and Ashforth (2002) and Boxer & Cortés-Conde (1997) both focus on *bonding* and *biting* but the latter seems to put the two on the opposite ends of the scale. In my opinion both Terrion and Ashforth (2002) and Plester & Sayers (2007) are useful articles for analysing derogatory humour in face-to-face communication, especially in the workplace surroundings. Both articles stress the levelling effect of banter and putdown humour. The articles also point out that despite the cruel-looking surface, the intention is **not** to harm anyone. The target of the joke needs to be present and they need to be able to take the insult. This feature comes up in Plester and Sayers (2007) when one of the senior workers wonders when they can start to make fun of the recently hired workers.

There seems to a move from 'I' to 'we' in the use of humour and this is the topic of Terrion and Ashforth (2002). In the first stage the putdown *jokes are about the speaker* and usually about something that is negative about them (appearance, speech and so on): the examples mentioned in Terrion and Ashforth (2002) include a stereotypical Newfoundlander (a ”goofy Newfie”), a guy who has ”all zeros on his

bank account" and a Francophone who has problems with English. The Francophone's remark is commented upon by a person speaking with a broad Scottish accent:

> PS: I'm a goofy Newfie [slang for a native of Newfoundland], so you have your token.
> SP: I've got all zeros in my bank account.
> PD: [a Francophone]: I'm trying to learn English, so if you'll help me out. . .
> HE: [a Scotsman]: Like my friend over there, I'm trying to learn English,too.
>
> Terrion and Ashforth (2002: 63)

The second stage has *putdown humour concerning shared identities* which in this case means members of the police force. The examples mentioned here concerned the way in which police officers seem to die shortly after retirement and the other is about the stereotypical view on the lack of intelligence within the police force:

> Resource person: So, if you're a poor speller, don't worry. I suspect a lot of police officers were more interested in recess than in spelling.
> Candidate: Still are. [Laughter]
>
> Terrion and Ashforth (2002: 64)

It is during the second week of the six-week training course when the first cases of *putdown humour on external groups* were witnessed. The utterances included a joke ("What is the definition of chaos in Jamaica? - Father's Day"), a dig on a police officer in Hull Police was caught on videotape while shooting a Great Dane 14 times and this exchange during a discussion on family values:

> Resource person: What do they teach in military schools?
> HE: [in his thick Scottish accent]: How to kill people.
> Resource person: No, I meant in military primary schools.
> HE: How to kill wee people.
>
> Terrion and Ashforth (2002: 64)

First cases of *putdowns of each other* occurred on the first day and one of them was made by the Course Director who went around shaking hands. Eventually he came to the table with the one woman in the group and said this:

> It's nice to see a fresh face around here; not that these guys [two candidates
> sitting with her] aren't fresh . . . but you won't have to sit with
> these ugly guys for the whole time.
>
> Terrion and Ashforth (2002: 65)

This was met with laughter by the two "ugly guys" and the woman. The Course Director used putdown humour as an icebreaker and the friendly nature of the banter was understood. If the utterance had been taken for face value, it would have been hurtful and moreover a failure to follow the norms of treating the candidates in a way that a good leader treats his employees.

Eventually the putdowns move from 'I' (i.e. I let you know that I can laugh at my faults) to 'we' (i.e. because we all belong to this same group, we are equal and enjoy a "good laugh" even if it happens to be at our own expense). The playfulness then goes on to build social cohesion. It is with this idea of playfully poking fun at each other that the attention turns to the phenomenon of banter.

The next chapter focuses on how banter is defined and how people tend to perceive banter. In the analysis (see chapter 7) the problems of pointing out clear cases of is covered in more detail.

3. Banter

Next we examine the previous research done on *banter* and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) which is discussed in chapter 4. The theoretical background of this thesis is divided into three phenomena. Chapter 2 focused on social cohesion and how politeness is one part of building a feeling of belonging together. In this chapter, I hope to show that banter is connected to the use of irony and sarcasm in everyday speech. The fourth chapter will provide an outline of the study of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and the way in which the use of computers shape our use and understanding of language. Studies carried out by Susan Herring, Crispin Thurlow, Brenda Danet and others will be the basis of chapter 4. I have chosen to provide brief summary (see section 4.4. on page 36) of the theoretical background used for this thesis.

3.1. Definition of Banter and Putdown Humour

Recent studies on humour tend to focus on the linguistic features of humour in language (e.g. Attardo 1994, 2001) but the research has shed some light on how humour helps to create a feeling of belonging to a group. Attardo is the editor-in-chief of *Humor* which is the journal for the International Society of Humor Studies (ISHS). His *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (1994) can be seen as one of the seminal works in humour research.

Studies on humour can be conducted on humorous texts (Attardo 2001) or they may focus more on face-to-face (FTF) interaction. The studies, which I have used, were carried out on workplaces (e.g. Plester and Sayers 2007) and some looked at more specific situations where humour was used in group dynamics (e.g. Terrion and Ashforth 2002) when the people may not previously know each other. The problem with the study of *banter* is that most of it has been written by non-linguists. For example, Blake Ashforth (2002) is a professor of Management at Arizona State University and Florencia Cortés-Conde (1997) is working with the department of Spanish. Barbara Plester (2007) is with the faculty of Business and Economics, whereas Janet Sayers (2007) is a faculty member for the School of Management at

Massey University in New Zealand.

Even though the majority of the earlier work focused on banter, seems to have been conducted by non-linguists, I must mention the Banter Principle by Geoffrey Leech (1983) and on the social use of sarcasm and banter Slugoski and Turnbull (1988). In Poland, Ewa Nowik (2005, 2007) has done research on banter in connection with Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986). I agree with her in the difficulties of defining what *banter* is. Using the Banter Principle by Leech (1983) we get the following description for the principle:

> In order to show solidarity with *h,* say something which is (i) obviously untrue, and (ii) obviously impolite to *h* ... What *s* says is impolite to *h* and it is clearly untrue. Therefore what *s* really means is polite to *h* and true.
>
> Leech (1983:144)

What Leech (1983:145) means by this is that the interpretation for the utterance undergoes a double reversal of values. This is described by the understanding of the mock-irony in saying, *a fine friend **you** are!* (emphasis is his, bold face mine) where the Banter Principle works as follows:

> 1. You are a fine friend. (face-value)
> 2. By which I mean that you are NOT a fine friend. (Irony Principle)
> 3. But actually, you ARE my friend, and to show it, I am being impolite to you. (Banter Principle)
>
> Leech (1983:145)

Ewa Nowik (2005, 2007) has focused on Leech (1983) and the Banter Principle's relation to Relevance Theory mentioned above. Nowik (2005:164) proposes that the Principle's first part ”say something which (i) is obviously untrue” should be changed into ”say something which is obviously not serious”. This would accommodate all the cases where banter and irony seem to have a clear connection. Leech's Banter Principle (1983) relies on the common understanding of irony where the intended meaning is the opposite of the literal meaning. Nowik (2005, 2007) is a doctoral student in the Institute of English Studies at Warsaw University. Although her research is tentative at the time of her publications and even though her focus is different from mine, I agree with her thoughts on revising Leech's (1983) Banter

Principle. I do not attempt to propose my own version of Banter Principle and have not chosen to put weight on Leech's (1983) ideas. His principle is only a short section (pp. 142-145) within his Irony Principle (p. 82).

This section, however, is based on studies carried out by Plester and Sayers (2007), Terrion and Ashforth (2002) and Norrick (1993) (chapter 2) who provide us with a working definition of banter. Plester and Sayers (2007) wrote in their article how the workers in three IT firms use derogatory forms of humour in everyday workplace situations and how this type of humour functions in building an in-group feeling. The authors observed the workers at the three IT firms and later interviewed them concerning their thoughts on the type of speaking the participants described as *taking the piss* which is a colloquial term used about humour which is sarcastic and derogatory in nature. One other description which was mentioned was an idea of *give-and-take* or *getting as much as you give*. There seemed to be a mutual feeling of being allowed to use language which in most cases would be considered inappropriate and even cause for law suits on work-related bullying. In some cases, *banter* and *teasing* can be seen as synonymous. Teasing here is referring to the manner of speaking and not what is meant by *bullying* in especially school environments. In both cases the words are used to *put down* (Terrion and Ashforth 2002) the hearer. However, in banter and using language in a teasing manner, the intention is not to hurt the other, whereas bullies do tend to mean what they say.

Plester and Sayers (2007) describe how using this type of humour seems to be the social glue which keeps the group together. No harm is meant to be caused by the harsh words (or 'barbs' as the authors say) and the sense of give-and-take is what keeps the insults rolling. If one is known not to handle this type of humour, they will become outsiders to the group and eventually they will learn to follow the group's norms or even move to a different workplace. As harsh as it may seem, the group cohesion tended to rely on this shared sense of humour. Derogatory remarks on physical appearance, clothing and anything out of the ordinary were common. Tall people made fun of shorter people and vice versa. Obesity was not a taboo at the workplaces the authors studied.

From Plester and Sayers (2007) and Terrion and Ashforth (2002) we can identify a certain “testing the waters” period where the limits of newcomers were

probed. One senior worker mentioned in the article (2007) her desire to move on to the next level: “when can we start making fun of her”. I suggest that this sort of *probation* period does occur online as well but given that the medium is considered to be *inherently playful* (Danet et al. 1997) entering the realm of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) signifies that the person is aware that they may be offended by the words of other chatters. It is my intention to show in this thesis that this same sort of derogatory humour occurs in IRC and that it is used to build social cohesion. If we consider the channel to form a closely-knit group, a 'family' of some sort, then we might expect to find language which is common to groups of close friends or co-workers (Plester and Sayers 2007). This is what Norrick (1993) means by *customary joking relationships*, i.e. situations where the participants know that jocular abuse is likely to happen.

For the purpose of my thesis, the article written by Terrion and Ashforth (2002) is more relevant in its focus on the use of putdown humour in group dynamics during a training period for police officers in Canada. The article focuses on how the use of putdowns starts from pointing out something wrong about the speaker and moves on eventually to describe something which is common to the whole group. At this point, it needs to be emphasised that neither of these two articles is on **online** interaction and that the speakers in most cases are **face-to-face**. All participants have something in common, in the first article by Plester and Sayers (2007) they worked together and in the Terrion and Ashforth (2002) article the people spent six weeks on a training course and they had the advantage of the shared occupation. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) has the levelling effect of stripping away the importance of occupation, gender, race, education, wealth and so on but at the same time it has the disadvantage of not displaying the non-verbal interaction which accounts for the majority of face-to-face communication. Furthermore, in IRC one can assume that it is possible that they will not talk to the same person again.

Terrion and Ashforth (2002) have formed a five-point list for the rules of putdown humour on the basis of the participants' answers and the follow-up interviews. I suggest that these rules can be applied to the online data as well and I hope that the description given in chapter 6 will make the use of this type of jocular abuse (Norrick 1993) easier to grasp. The situation in the Terrion and Ashforth

(2002) article is ideal for this type of humour to evolve. Shared occupation means that the people may have similar experiences and this goes on to build a sense of social cohesion. Having the opportunity to spend six weeks with a group, which to some extent belongs together from the start, is an interesting scenario. As it will become clear, the situations in Plester and Sayers (2007) and Terrion and Ashforth (2002) have some similarities with Internet Relay Chat but the context is different in each case. Although my definition of *banter* is based on Terrion and Ashforth (2002) and Plester and Sayers (2007), it is possible that other definitions can be used for further research. My understanding of banter is based on observations in everyday life and instances found on #chatzone, where **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness** lead to humour being understood by the parties in question.

In the next chapter of the theoretical background section, the emergence of computer-mediated communication is explained briefly.

4. Computer-Mediated Communication

The previous research on computer-mediated communication has been conducted on several different issues varying from early electronic mail to group dynamics in virtual communities. For our interests, the works of Susan Herring, Brenda Danet (1997), Elizabeth Reid (1991, 1994), Jeff Hancock (2004) and Joseph Walther will be the ones that the thesis is going to be based on. Thurlow et al. (2004) is a textbook on computer-mediated communication and I have used it as a starting point for my research. Out of online publications the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* and *Language@Internet*, the editor-in-chief of which is Susan Herring, are worth mentioning at this point.

In this final part of the theoretical background we turn our attention to computer-mediated communication and what we mean by it. Thurlow et al. (2004) divide the term into three parts: computer, mediated and communication. To our average modern person, the word *computer* means an electronic device that consists of hardware and software used to run several different programs. Offices use computers to file data, write reports and so on. With the invention of personal computers (PCs), people were soon given the opportunity to use the computer to

send electronic mail (e-mail), participate in multi-user domains (MUDs) and engage in virtual discussion forums (bulletin boards, newsgroups) with other computer owners.

The rise in portable computers (i.e. laptops) and mobile phones with wireless Internet (or the Net) access mean that we are able to use the same services on our way to work and we are no longer tied to the desktop computer at home or at work. The default applications of modern mobile phones usually include Facebook and YouTube. In a sense, the line between telephones and computers is becoming more blurred. One of the features mainly linked to computers, i.e. video conferencing, is now possible via mobile phones. For example, iPhone 4 has the feature called FaceTime which does the same as Windows Messenger or other programs would do on a computer.

The second part of computer-mediated communication (later CMC), 'mediated', focuses on the media in which the communication is carried out (Thurlow et al. 2004). In face-to-face interaction (later FTF) we occupy the same time and space with our interlocutor. Most of our everyday interaction relies on the non-verbal cues we receive from the speaker: it is not simply what they say but how they say it. Changes in the tone of voice, stressing of words and facial cues go on to give us the meaning behind the words. Certain types of humour, e.g. verbal irony, rely heavily on the way in which the message is delivered. If there is a great incongruity between the utterance and the context, there is a greater possibility that the utterance was intended to be ironic. For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to stress the lack of visual and other cues within the world of CMC. Thus, it would make sense that people would avoid using verbal irony online but as Hancock (2004) found out, this is not the case. His study showed that not only did people use more verbal irony online than in face-to-face interaction, but the participants were fully capable to detect those ironic utterances.

The media in this case include everything where the message is delivered via computers. In our modern society, computers are used to store data (e.g. personal information considering the inhabitants of a country or city) on hard drives as well as the paper copies of the same data. The information is translated into ones and zeros, i.e. binary code, which is then sent via telephone cables (made of optical fibre) from

one computer to another. Satellites help in carrying the message across continents. Every time you send a text message to your friend or family member, you are participating in computer-mediated communication. The focus of this thesis is on Internet Relay Chat which would not work without the Internet. David Crystal (2001: 3, 13) describes the Internet (also known as the World Wide Web) as a series of computers linked together (via cables and satellites). Some workplaces, institutions (e.g. universities) might have intranet which connects the computers within that organisation. The protocol used is the same as on the Internet but the network is not open for outsiders. What is important in this point is to realise the differences within different types of CMC. Whether the communication is asynchronous (e.g. e-mail, discussion boards and so on) or synchronous (e.g. real-time chat rooms such as Internet Relay Chat), plays a major role in how the message is formulated (Crystal 2001: 11-12).

With asynchronous forms of CMC we have generally more time to figure out what we want to say and how we will say it. Electronic mail, for example, can be said to follow the same rules as letter writing does. We start by addressing the receiver of the mail (Dear..), possibly thank them for their previous message, explain our message in the body of the text and end the message by signing the mail ("Yours truly/sincerely.." or simply "Best wishes" plus our name). There are differences in e-mails according to who is sending the message and to whom they are sending it. The degree of intimacy or deference must be visible in the e-mail and thus the honorifics or possible titles must be included accordingly. In this sense, electronic mail is a computerised form of a normal letter. Things get more complicated when we try to decide whether text messages are asynchronous written notes (i.e. we do not expect an immediate reaction to them) or synchronous versions of our spoken utterances (i.e. we intend our message to be answered as soon as possible).

Synchronous computer-mediated communication means discussion carried out within some chat room where the interaction included people sitting in front of their keyboards and monitors. The discussion takes place in real-time and is usually organised in the order in which the server has received the utterances. If there are plenty of participants on the same channel, there might be a lot of utterances and they will probably not stay on the screen very long which means that one needs to scroll

the page to find the earlier messages. Synchronous forms of CMC retain the ephemeral quality of spoken interaction in that if the service does not provide the option to save a copy of the discussion, there will be no trace left of it afterwards. Electronic mail and text messages give us a written record of the interaction, which the synchronous chat rooms normally do not. However, Internet Relay Chat gives the user the opportunity to record log files of the conversations. Using these log files it is possible to go back and forth in the flow of the text and make observations. We will return to the log files more closely in the data section (see chapter 5).

In conclusion to this introductory section on computer-mediated communication, we still need to address the issue of what we mean by 'communication'. As it will become evident, the users of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) use the keyboard in order to get their message through. Danet et al. (1997) discuss the *inherent playfulness* of the language on IRC. The program is used to interact with people with whom we might not be familiar. In that case we normally want to make a good impression and may reveal only things that people want to hear. It has been also argued that the lack of physically shared space makes it easier for people to speak their minds. Danet et al. (1997) call this lack of inhibitions *reduced social accountability*. They suggest that by entering the IRC frame, one is allowed to speak more freely as long as the playfulness is made clear somehow. Before we move to the next section, it might be prudent to summarise some of the key features of computer-mediated communication. Unlike in face-to-face interaction, in CMC situations we lack the visual and physical cues. This leads to the fact that we need to read between the lines to know what the person is trying to say.

We will next focus on the similarities and differences in face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. This will lead us to discuss the language in Internet Relay Chat.

4.1. From Face-to-Face to Computer-Mediated Communication

It can be said that the technology surrounding us shapes the world we live in. New inventions such as the automobile, the railroads and the telegraph have changed the distances which prior to these were greater than after the invention of them. Fast-

forward into the twentieth century when telephones, airplanes, television and eventually the Internet made it possible for us to gain knowledge about nations we did not know existed. Whereas the people that the average person knew some decades ago consisted of the immediate family and possibly the village they lived in, nowadays it may be so that the higher mobility of people makes it possible to link any two persons within six degrees of separation (cf. Watts 2003). This only goes to show that the world we live in now, is somehow smaller and more closely knit than what it was three decades ago. At the same time, societies might not be as tight as they were. Urbanisation and globalisation have led to new problems and definitions for 'family' and 'friends' (e.g. single-parent households, Facebook friends versus core families and groups of friends).

Within the last three decades the society we live in has seen a rise in the use of technological inventions to aid our everyday life. Whether it be robotics used in the industry or gadgets used for entertainment purposes, it can be said that the modern Western person relies now more on technology than probably before the Internet became an integral part of our lives. Research on Computer-Mediated Communication does not always agree on whether or not the Internet is good for us. Prior to Danet et al (1997) and Reid (1991) research has focused on the dissociative function of the cyberspace in which the Internet is making people more distant towards each other. Instead of meeting friends in real life, we comment on their Facebook status and to some extent text messages and electronic mail have replaced letters and postcards. Newspapers and magazines are published online and in some cases now only online (e.g. Taloussanomat from 2007 onwards).

For the purpose of this thesis, the question we need to answer is: has the interaction changed once the new media has been chosen instead of face-to-face communication? Do people use these different forms of interaction in talking to each other or is one complemented by the other? Using the article by Kim et al. (2007) we can see that Koreans seem to use the different media according to the purpose and people they are interacting with. Thus, the core family and closest friends are contacted via SMS, calling them on the mobile phone and talking to them face-to-face. For studying and work purposes they may use e-mail as well. Kim et al. (2007) look at how the configurations vary across five media: face-to-face, e-mail, mobile

phone, text messages (SMS) and instant messaging (IM). Of these, four are what we can define as computer-mediated communication and face-to-face interaction is used to contrast the human-computer-human scenario.

Quite surprisingly, in spite of the huge amount of technological innovations in their lives, Koreans tend to use computer-mediated communication to schedule face-to-face meetings (Kim et al. 2007: 1202-1204). The article does not mention Facebook as the social networking sites are not included in the five media. This is something which would probably be different if we compared the situation in South Korea and in Finland. In Korea university students did use IM (e.g. Windows Messenger) and mobile phones to arrange meetings. The situation in Finland is similar but I would suggest that we use Facebook more and more for scheduling lunch meetings and such. E-mail and IM are used to expand the social network, whereas the other three media are used to maintain closer relationships.

If we were to apply Kim et al. (2007) five-part media list and the different configurations, we would then expect to find people using Internet Relay Chat to expand their social network. Kim et al. (2007) use the division into 'weak' and 'strong' ties from Granovetter (1973, 1983). Weak ties mean friends of friends and acquaintances with whom we do not spend that much time. Strong ties are then ones that include our family and closest friends, i.e. the persons we spend most of our time with. How strong then are our weak ties or vice versa? Considering the amount of time we nowadays spend time using computers at work and home doing work-related things, it would make sense that we would not want to spend our free time glued to the screen. However, given the opportunity to use social media at work, people tend to procrastinate and multi-task (e.g. keeping a web browser open while analysing data for work-related issues).

Granovetter's paper (1973,1983) has been influential in the study of social network theory. For our purposes it is important to look at how *strong* these weak ties are. For some people the online friends they have can be closer than their real-life friends and some may not be that close to their family. Even though we spend a lot of time with our co-workers, we usually do not spend our free time or share our intimate secrets with them. Depending on the format of the online fora, the level of intimacy in the interaction will be different: we might disclose personal issues in a

private discussion online with a person we feel close to but we would not probably post the same things on a public discussion board. Blog writing, however, might be a forum for venting frustration depending of course if the blog is on a particular theme[11] or an online diary type of writing project.

As we move from face-to-face interaction to computer-mediated communication the language does retain some features of spoken and written varieties. In some cases, such as Skype, we can use the webcam and a microphone to have a face-to-face (FTF) conversation with a person whom we might not get to meet in real life due to great distances and so on. The difference then is only in the fact that the person is not physically in the same room with us. There may be a short lag in the conversation if the connection is not good but other than that the line between a phone call, a normal conversation and a case of computer-mediated communication is hard to draw.

It would be interesting to find a case where the same people interacted both face-to-face and via computers. Then we could see if the language they use stays the same or changes according to the media used. One hypothetical example could be a work group which used Internet Relay Chat (IRC) or something similar to keep in touch after work. This would mean that the log files from IRC were available for researchers. However, what we will look at next is where Internet Relay Chat belongs within computer-mediated communication.

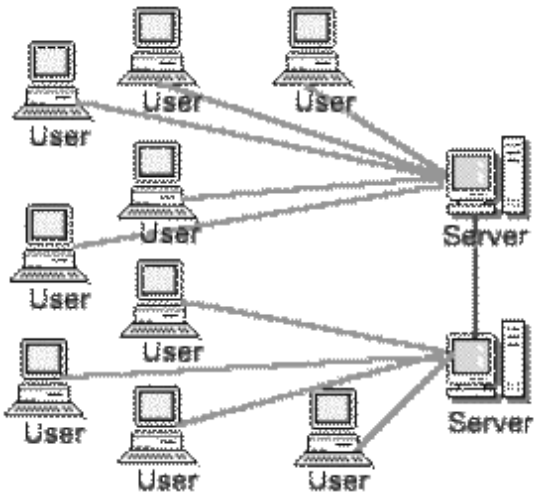
4.2. Internet Relay Chat within Computer-Mediated Communication

What we can learn from the history of the Internet is that the intended use for the inventions does not always meet the outcome of them. From Reid (1994) we learn that electronic mail which was meant for distributing data and results from research, was used to keep in touch with other researchers and exchange of non-pertinent information. The Internet itself was intended for linking computers from safe locations to important military computers in the event of a nuclear war. The army and academia were the primary users of computers well until the rise of personal computers (PCs). This invention led to the game industry being born and computer

[11] See Haverinen (2012) on fandom-based blog writing

researchers moving to the corporate world (1994: 14-15). The importance of universities can be seen in the birth of Internet Relay Chat[12] (IRC), the code for which was written by a Finnish student, Jarkko Oikarinen (mIRC: Founding IRC), in 1988. Intended for the local university students it quickly spread to other countries as well.

Using IRC does not require a lot of fancy hardware and the software can be downloaded for free online. The platform or operating system (e.g. Windows, Linux or Mac) of the computer does not play a particular role as there are different IRC clients based on the operating system. When the person has the client on their computer, they can use their Internet connection to contact one of the IRC servers or networks (e.g. IRCnet, Undernet, DALnet or Quakenet) and then join some channels that operate under those networks. In the options the user is asked to fill in some information about him, i.e. nickname, real name (some channels require this and others do not) and e-mail address. This means that when I join the channel #chatzone I first use the client (mIRC or IceChat 9) to contact to the Undernet network via the Helsinki server (helsinki.fi.eu.Undernet.org) and from there I choose #chatzone on the list of channels. On the next page there is a picture of the IRC network system which shows how the computers are connected:



[12] David Crystal (2001: 156-177) offers a linguistic point of view on IRC.

Figure 2. The Network of Internet Relay Chat. Reproduced from Simandan V.M. 2010. Synchronous Communication: Internet Relay Chat (IRC).

Here the servers would include the Internet provider one is using (in my case the university's network) and the IRC network to which one is connected (Undernet). It is possible to be connected to several networks at the same time which means that one can be on some channel within IRCnet and some other in Undernet. One can also be on many channels under one network and engage in dyadic discussions in private windows. This could mean that at some point the user has a lot of different windows open.

4.3. Internet Relay Chat: Synchronous and Real-Time Chat

As it has been mentioned earlier, computer-mediated communication (CMC) can be divided into asynchronous and synchronous communication depending on the immediacy of the interaction. Using asynchronous forms of CMC means that the person does not expect an immediate answer. Hence, contacting someone via e-mail might lead to not getting a reply right away. The same is true in posting something on a discussion board. It is possible that the person happens to be online as they receive your message and then have the time to reply to it right away but usually this is not expected of the receiver. In synchronous forms of CMC, such as Internet Relay Chat, the discussion takes place in real-time and to some extent it resembles face-to-face interaction. Reading the flow of the text requires some skill because some people forget to signal to whom they are talking. Thus, every now and then the question “who are you talking to?” or “did you mean me?” come up.

The case of context and knowing how to link the messages in a coherent manner becomes important. Participants on a real-time chat need to develop a skill to make sense of the text-based communication. Even though one does not have this kind of talent, it can be learned quite easily simply by spending some time in some chat room. However, the media can be chosen according to how many persons one wishes to talk to: for people who like to engage in private discussions with their

online friends some form of instant messaging might be good, and for those who wish to talk with many people some chat room could be chosen. Internet Relay Chat has both of these options which are two of the features that distinguish it from other text-based real-time chats. The service then functions as both a collection of chat rooms and a means of instant messaging. One of the points of interest in the research of Internet Relay Chat has been the language people use on it. We have previously discussed the article by Danet et al. (1997) and their study on the inherent playfulness of IRC. Using their findings and earlier work on the topic the analysis section (see chapter 7) will focus on the language which the chatters use on the channels to create sense of social cohesion.

The next section is intended as a brief summary of the theoretical background used in this thesis.

4.4. Summary of the Theoretical Background

Before we focus on the data and methodology used in this thesis, it is perhaps useful to point the key ideas raised in the theoretical section. In the first chapter we explored *social cohesion* and how to define it. The idea of **positive impoliteness** was introduced as a term for the type of derogatory humour which seems to act as the social glue which creates a specific bond between the interlocutors. The third chapter focused on the phenomenon of *banter* and how it can be defined. I have chosen to focus on **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness** of this type humour. My ideas are based on the articles by Boxer and Cortés-Conde[13](1997), Plester and Sayers (2007), Terrion and Ashforth (2002) and Danet et al. (1997). All these articles mention the *play frame* in some point of their article. This means that the interlocutors are aware that the utterances are not meant to offend the hearer. In addition to the articles mentioned above, I have used Norrick's (1993) idea of *customary joking relationship* as a grounding point for what Wellman and Gulia (1997: 10) list as *an interest in being together as frequently as possible* which I take to be the key factors in the members spending much their free time online in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and on the channel #chatzone. IRC is one of the synchronous media which were discussed

[13] Instead of their idea of ”from bonding to biting” I suggested it is ”bonding **through** biting” we are dealing with

in chapter 4. The fast pace of the interaction of real-time chat services leads to greater spontaneity as opposed to asynchronous media (e.g. e-mail) where there is more time to think about the message before sending it. The lack of non-verbal cues is a feature which would logically lead us to assume that online interaction has less cases of verbal irony than in face-to-face (FTF) situations (cf. Hancock 2004). Hancock (2004) was surprised to find irony used so frequently in computer-mediated communication (CMC) and that the instances were understood without any particular difficulties.

Studies by Reid (1991, 1994), Wellman and Gulia (1997) and to some extent Danet et al. (1997) show how electronic communities as formed and maintained. In these studies CMC (see chapter 4) and social cohesion (see chapter 2) are focused on simultaneously. These online cases were complemented by real-life situations explored by Terrion and Ashforth (2002), Plester and Sayers (2007), Norrick (1993), Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) and Tannen (1984). What needs to be kept in mind is that the studies above were conducted on FTF interaction. In such cases the interlocutors are able to rely on non-verbal cues which are crucial in our everyday understanding of language use. However, based on the idea of *inherent playfulness* by Danet et al. (1997) users of Internet Relay Chat can expect others to use humour to liven up the conversation. Thus, what may appear to be hurtful on the surface is, indeed, intended as playfully poking fun at someone. The *playfulness* is meant to create a bond where the members are able to laugh *with* each other instead of laughing *at* someone and intentionally hurting someone's feelings.

Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) have chosen to put *bonding* and *biting* at two opposite ends of the scale. One of the main points of this thesis is to look at *bonding* ***through*** *biting*. This is what Plester and Sayers (2007) call "taking the piss" which can be seen as a colloquial term for *banter*. In their study derogatory humour is used in creating a feeling of belonging to a group (i.e. working in an IT firm). It is this same phenomenon that Terrion and Ashforth (2002) focused on in their research on a training course for police officers in Canada. On this six-week course putdown humour was seen as the social glue which brings the group together. In order to be a member of the group, one needs to be able to laugh at oneself and not take offence, if someone says something negative concerning them. The usual butt of the joke is a

well-liked member of the group who has shown that they are able to enjoy a good laugh even if it is at their own expense. Being made fun of means that one is a member of the group and outsiders are normally left alone.

It is with these ideas in mind that the present study sets out to find out if and how banter is used in Internet Relay Chat (IRC). My intention is to focus on the use of potentially hurtful humour in building and maintaining an in-group mentality in computer-mediated communication. Following the findings of previous research on IRC and virtual communities, I expect to discover that the language on the channel #chatzone is full of playfulness. As pointing out cases of banter is not straightforward, I try to explain my opinion after each example. It needs to be pointed out that the sense of humour can be seen as both personal and universal. This means that I may find something to be funny which you may not.

We will next turn our attention to the data and methods used in this research. The following chapter focuses on the log files which were used as the data for this thesis.

5. Data

I have chosen to use log files of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) as data for this thesis. These log files were recorded on the hard drive of my informant's computer. All of the log files are from the channel #chatzone which operates within the network called Undernet. This channel was also used in Valanne (2001). The first of these log files covers discussions from September 2009 up until February 2010 (around 1,000 pages in 10 point font with single spacing!), the second covers March 2010 and the following four have discussions from April, May, June and July 2010. I have tried to use all of the log files equally even though the longer timespan of the first one would in itself provide enough material for this thesis. I have added a list of examples in the appendices.

I have chosen to edit the examples in Appendix I so that the irrelevant material was omitted in order to make the cases more reader-friendly and easier to understand. Appendix II shows the two first examples of Appendix I in more detail. The log files have the beginning and end of the sessions are mentioned on them and this makes it easier for the reader to see how much time has passed during each session. Timestamps on the files show which messages were sent to the server on the same time and it is worth repeating that the messages are placed in chronological order. One needs to keep in mind that to the participants on the channel the feed is constantly moving and it is possible that one needs to scroll the feed up and down if one steps away from the computer screen for a moment.

The time stamps on the log files display the time zone based on the user's location. My informant is living in Indonesia which means that the time stamps on the log files may seem odd to us. It needs to be pointed out that the interaction in the log files is not the entire day's discussion, it only covers the time which the informant was on that particular channel. For the entire days' log files one would need to contact one of the operators, if they happen to leave the program running even when they are away from the keyboard.

One of the main differences between the log files and the real-time chat can be shown by the following two pictures. The first illustration is a screenshot of the client program IceChat which displays the list of channel (i.e. #chatzone) members

on the right. The topic is situated the middle.

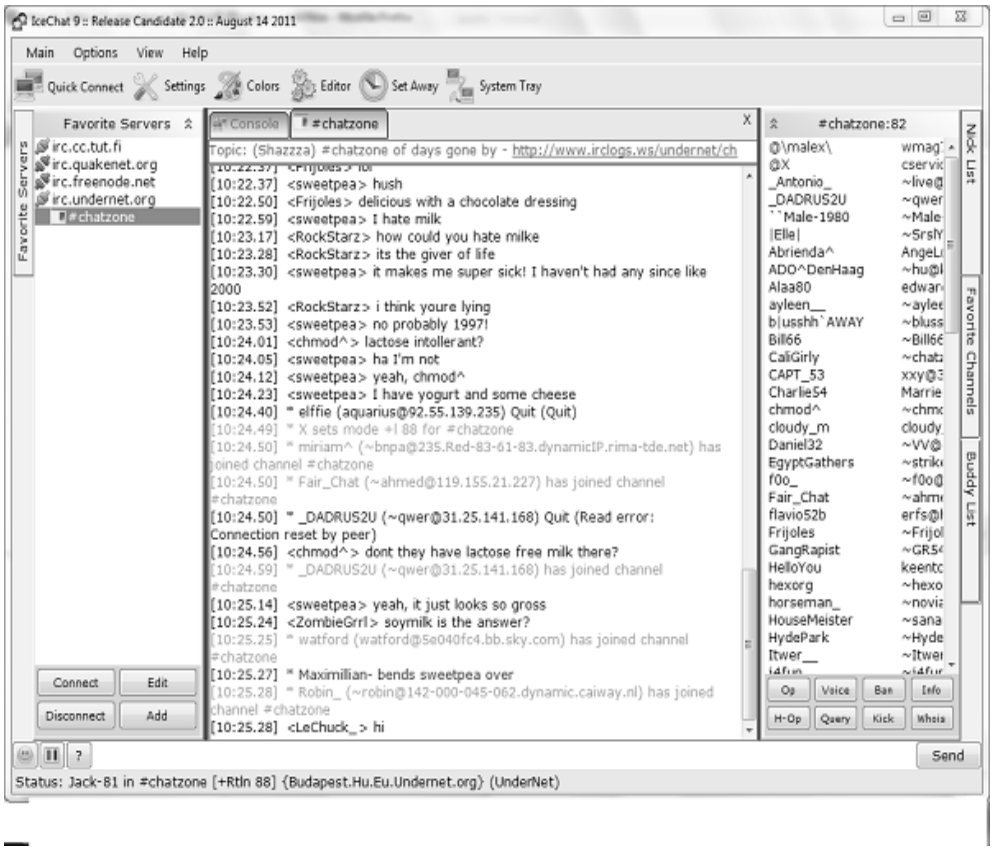


Figure 3.The Channel #Chatzone on IceChat 9

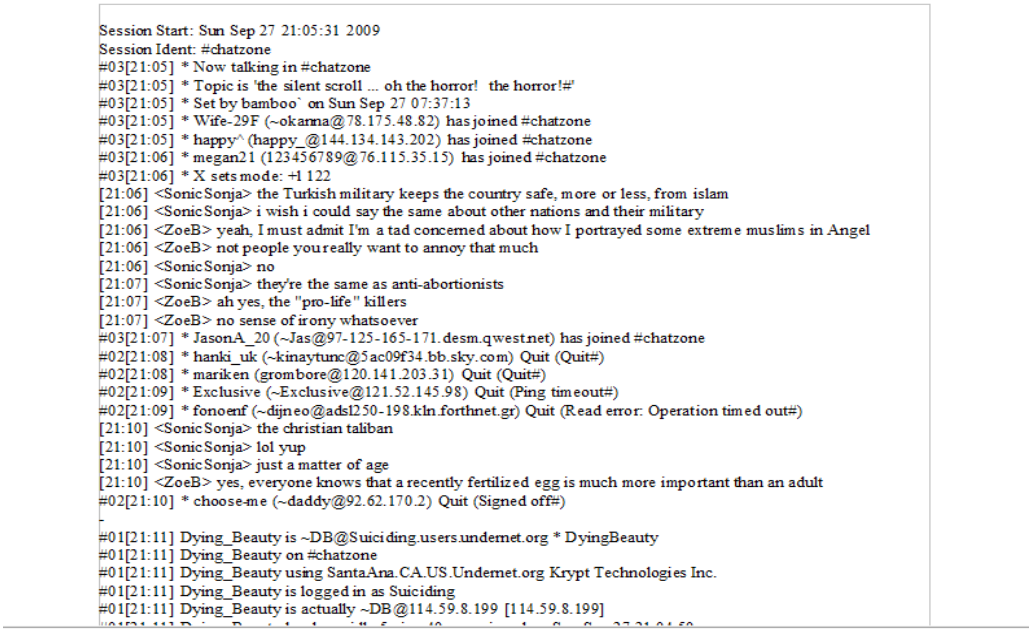
In the example above we see the flow of the text in the middle below the topic ”Topic: (Shazza) #chatzone of days gone by...” The discussion is marked by the timestamps in 12-hour mode which means that when this screenshot was taken the time was around 22:22 in the evening. This screenshot was taken yesterday, 22nd of November 2011, and it shows a capture of the client program IceChat 9 as it was running on my laptop.

Sometimes there may be restrictions to the interaction on the channel. These include *invite only*, *no external messages*, *only operators can change the topic* and so on. In the first case, this means that in order to enter the channel one needs to receive an invitation from a current channel member. For the second example one needs to be on the channel to send messages and in the third, one must have the operator's

rights to change the topic on the channel. Some channels restrict the number of persons allowed on the channel. This makes sure that the channel does not become too crowded. On the right of the picture we can see that there were 87 members on the channel at this time (i.e. #chatzone: 87).

Each client program may look a bit different but the main actions are always the same. One connects to a server or multiple servers, joins a channel and maybe engages in private chats (i.e. /query <nick>) with the members one becomes interested in. The operators have the right to exclude members by *kicking* them off the channel and if they do not change their unwanted behaviour to *ban* them from joining again. The length of the ban can be set to fit the crime from a couple of hours to days or possibly indefinitely.

Regarding the log files our main attention focuses on the interaction happening in the middle of the illustration. The second picture (see below) displays a screenshot of a log file for the channel #chatzone. This picture shows how the log files look on OpenOffice Writer but this should indicate how there is no list of members in the right-hand side of the file. The figure concerns the first of the log files which extends from September 2009 to February 2010. The default beginning ”session start” is followed by the date and time. *Session ident* means the channel (Session ident: #chatzone) from where the log file was recorded.



```
Session Start: Sun Sep 27 21:05:31 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
#03[21:05] * Now talking in #chatzone
#03[21:05] * Topic is 'the silent scroll ... oh the horror!  the horror!#'
#03[21:05] * Set by bamboo` on Sun Sep 27 07:37:13
#03[21:05] * Wife-29F (~okanna@78.175.48.82) has joined #chatzone
#03[21:05] * happy^ (happy_@144.134.143.202) has joined #chatzone
#03[21:06] * megan21 (123456789@76.115.35.15) has joined #chatzone
#03[21:06] * X sets mode: +l 122
[21:06] <SonicSonja> the Turkish military keeps the country safe, more or less, from islam
[21:06] <SonicSonja> i wish i could say the same about other nations and their military
[21:06] <ZoeB> yeah, I must admit I'm a tad concerned about how I portrayed some extreme muslims in Angel
[21:06] <ZoeB> not people you really want to annoy that much
[21:06] <SonicSonja> no
[21:07] <SonicSonja> they're the same as anti-abortionists
[21:07] <ZoeB> ah yes, the "pro-life" killers
[21:07] <ZoeB> no sense of irony whatsoever
#03[21:07] * JasonA_20 (~Jas@97-125-165-171.desm.qwest.net) has joined #chatzone
#02[21:08] * hanki_uk (~kinaytunc@5ac09f34.bb.sky.com) Quit (Quit#)
#02[21:08] * mariken (grombore@120.141.203.31) Quit (Quit#)
#02[21:09] * Exclusive (~Exclusive@121.52.145.98) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[21:09] * fonoenf (~dijneo@adsl250-198.kln.forthnet.gr) Quit (Read error: Operation timed out#)
[21:10] <SonicSonja> the christian taliban
[21:10] <SonicSonja> lol yup
[21:10] <SonicSonja> just a matter of age
[21:10] <ZoeB> yes, everyone knows that a recently fertilized egg is much more important than an adult
#02[21:10] * choose-me (~daddy@92.62.170.2) Quit (Signed off#)
-
#01[21:11] Dying_Beauty is ~DB@Suiciding.users.undernet.org * DyingBeauty
#01[21:11] Dying_Beauty on #chatzone
#01[21:11] Dying_Beauty using SantaAna.CA.US.Undernet.org Krypt Technologies Inc.
#01[21:11] Dying_Beauty is logged in as Suiciding
#01[21:11] Dying_Beauty is actually ~DB@114.59.8.199 [114.59.8.199]
```

Figure 4. Log File on OpenOffice Writer

In the picture above, we can see how the time stamps are displayed on the left inside square brackets followed by the nickname inside inequality signs. Following the asterisks (*) are cases of people joining or leaving the channel and members using the /me action. This action displays the member's nickname followed by their utterance usually in different colour, usually magenta. Normally the action is used in order to indicate something the person is doing or pretending to be doing.

I have chosen to give the starting times and ending times for the chat sessions in order to give the reader a clearer timeline of the discussion on the channel. The inequality signs are not a part of the nickname but I have chosen to write them to indicate the names of the interlocutors. Thus, the nickname SonicSonja is written <SonicSonja> as it appears on the files. The files indicate when certain members have joined ([21:06] * megan21 (123456789@76.115.35.15) has joined #chatzone) and left the channel ([21:08] * hanki_uk (~kinaytunc@5ac09f34.bb.sky.com) Quit (Quit#). These examples are displayed in the log file given on the previous page. It is possible to write a personal *quit message* which may be a quote or a simple explanation why the person has chosen to leave channel and possibly close the client program altogether.

Before moving onto the methodology section it may be pertinent to give a

short example of the log file in the form it shows on the word processor program. The following extract is the beginning of the first log file (see previous page) dating from September 2009 to February 2010:

Session Start: Sun Sep 27 21:05:31 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
#03[21:05] * Now talking in #chatzone
#03[21:05] * Topic is 'the silent scroll ... oh the horror! the horror!#'
#03[21:05] * Set by bamboo` on Sun Sep 27 07:37:13
#03[21:05] * Wife-29F (~okanna@78.175.48.82) has joined #chatzone
#03[21:05] * happy^ (happy_@144.134.143.202) has joined #chatzone
#03[21:06] * megan21 (123456789@76.115.35.15) has joined #chatzone
#03[21:06] * X sets mode: +l 122
[21:06] <SonicSonja> the Turkish military keeps the country safe, more or less, from islam
[21:06] <SonicSonja> i wish i could say the same about other nations and their military
[21:06] <ZoeB> yeah, I must admit I'm a tad concerned about how I portrayed some extreme muslims in Angel
[21:06] <ZoeB> not people you really want to annoy that much
[21:06] <SonicSonja> no
[21:07] <SonicSonja> they're the same as anti-abortionists
[21:07] <ZoeB> ah yes, the "pro-life" killers
[21:07] <ZoeB> no sense of irony whatsoever
#03[21:07] * JasonA_20 (~Jas@97-125-165-171.desm.qwest.net) has joined #chatzone
#02[21:08] * hanki_uk (~kinaytunc@5ac09f34.bb.sky.com) Quit (Quit#)
#02[21:08] * mariken (grombore@120.141.203.31) Quit (Quit#)
#02[21:09] * Exclusive (~Exclusive@121.52.145.98) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[21:09] * fonoenf (~dijneo@adsl250-198.kln.forthnet.gr) Quit (Read error: Operation timed out#)
[21:10] <SonicSonja> the christian taliban

Session Close: Sun Sep 27 22:18:00 2009

The example above gives some sense of the data which was used for this thesis. In some cases there are longer lists of ”quits” as the servers have crashed or the lines between the servers have timed out (i.e. the connection has been poor or something similar). As I mentioned above, I have chosen to add a list of examples in the appendices (see Appendix I) and as the examples had an extensive amount of non-pertinent information, I chose to omit it in order to make the extracts more reader-friendly.

The examples do not normally show the colours in which they would have appeared on the channel's feed but in some cases I have chosen to add the colours to

highlight the actions the chat members were using. The extracts have been edited so that the **bold face** and underlined parts were the ones which seemed to be linked to the use of banter on the channel. I have tried to be consistent in my use of **bold face** as the primary means of highlighting wordplay interaction and possible uses of sarcasm and mocking.

Due to the lack of Internet Relay Chat corpus data, the log files used for this thesis are available on demand from the present author for any further research. The files were received via e-mail as a WinRAR package (.rar file). The raw data will need to be edited or the files can be read by using a log viewer which I have not used.

The next chapter focuses on the methodological framework which was used to find the examples of banter and derogatory humour. The chapter introduces the recent study of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) which has provided the methodological basis for this thesis. In addition, the thesis can be said to follow the lines of sociolinguistics which the theoretical background has in some ways referred to.

6. Methodology

I have chosen to use a qualitative research method (Berg 2007), mainly Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (later CMDA, from Herring 2004) for this thesis. The reason for this was the focus of the project which was intended to look at *how* people use banter in building a group mentality on the Internet Relay Chat channel #chatzone. In essence this meant looking at the nature of the language used online and particularly what the intended outcomes are rather than counting the frequencies of the acronym *lol* (=laughing out loud) as an indicator of humorous utterances and understanding of the humour in them.

For a rather good and clear comparison on the differences between *quantitative* and *qualitative* research methods, Berg (2007: 2-5) uses an example from Jackson (1968) describing the odours in a classroom of an elementary school. The description captures the essence of that smell: a mixture of wood pencil shavings, chalk dust, perspiration and possibly orange peels and/or peanut butter sandwiches brought for lunch. In this situation there are factors which are the same in all elementary schools and those similarities could be used for forming graphs on the number of students on each class, the most frequent choice for packed lunches and so on. Such as Berg (2007) notes, in reality most science is fact a blend of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The numbers themselves need to be analysed by the researcher and then explained to the reader, even if some shared background knowledge can be expected. The same needs to be done on a list of qualitative research displaying the results of, for example, the adjectives used to describe the smell found the elementary schools classrooms. Merely giving the results is not enough, they need to be explained.

I have sought to combine the ideas of Danet et al. (1997), i.e. *inherent playfulness* of the language in IRC, and the research methodology (CMDA) of Herring (2004) to form a set of criteria which I can use to detect occurrences of banter in the log files from #chatzone. At this point, I wish to stress the difficulties of acquiring data for this sort of research. As the discussions online are considered to be both public and private, depending on the mode of interaction (cf. private chat in a separate window versus public discussion on a channel), it should make sense that

people would allow their contribution on any particular channel to be used for research purposes. However, it was difficult to find any corpora dedicated to Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and the websites collecting the log files under certain channels, servers (IRCnet, Undernet, Quakenet and so on) tended to be too sporadic for an academic project. For further research, a corpus on IRC for academic research would aid the study of CMDA.

What needs to be kept in mind is that words uttered online can be used as evidence in criminal court if needed. In addition, the idea of linking the nickname to a real-life person raises questions of ethical use in the research. I have chosen to keep the nicknames as they are and try to find examples which will not display issues that might incriminate the persons. It is possible to find the information on the chatters in IRC by typing /whois <nick> on the server window and it will give some general information on the person. For example, on my informant the following details are given:

> Dying^Beauty is ~DB@Suiciding.users.undernet.org * DyingBeauty
> Dying^Beauty on #chatzone
> Dying^Beauty using Vancouver.BC.CA.Undernet.org Vancouver, BC, Canada
> Dying^Beauty is logged in as Suiciding
> Dying^Beauty is actually ~DB@114.59.182.132 [114.59.182.132]
> Dying^Beauty has been idle 47secs, signed on Wed Sep 30 21:58:53
> Dying^Beauty End of /WHOIS list.

Here the real name, if one chooses to give it (some channels may require it to be given for access to the channel), would come after the asterisk (*). Then the channels (indicated by the hash mark #) on which the person is chatting are listed on the next line, followed by the server (e.g. Undernet's Vancouver, BC, Canada server) they are using and how long they have been idle (i.e. not participating on any discussion) and if they are possibly set as being away (e.g. running some errands or at work). The sequence of numbers after @ mark is the IP (=Internet Protocol) address the person is using and this can be used to pinpoint the physical address. My informant has given me the permission to use the nickname and mention from where the log files were given to me. I would still hope that the persons mentioned on the log files could remain free from critique as the utterances may not represent their true thoughts and feelings on any given issue. As the *inherent playfulness* (Danet et

al. 1997) is central to the thesis, we will next focus our attention on looking at how CMDA (Herring 2004) would look at this feature of language use in IRC.

6.1. CMDA on Playfulness

Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) has been conducted before the actual term was coined by Herring in 1995. The research was then carried out under different faculties and departments in universities that were mostly situated in the United States. Following the emergence of Multi-User Domains (MUD) and MUDs that were object-oriented (MOO), the research came to focus on how virtual groups were formed and maintained. Herring (2004) describes in detail how an article or research on CMDA could be carried out. She points out that the researcher has noticed something happen online and based on this a hypothesis is formed. This hypothesis is then tested on data gathered from online sources, especially ones that leave a textual trace of the actions (e.g. log files in the Internet Relay Chat or threads on discussion fora). Herring (2004: 7) suggests the following step in the analysis is to formulate a good research question which according to her article means:

> A good CMDA research question has four characteristics:
> 1) It is empirically answerable from the available data;
> 2) it is non-trivial;
> 3) it is motivated by a hypothesis; and
> 4) it is open-ended.
>
> Herring (2004: 7)

Herring (2004) goes on to explain the four characteristics in some detail but as they do not seem to be too complex, it suffices to say that to core idea follows the lines of qualitative research where the results and their interpretation is open for discussion (cf. open-ended). What the author also points out is that :

> [I]t is useful to think of CMDA as applying to four domains or levels of language, ranging prototypically from smallest to largest linguistic unit of analysis: 1) structure, 2) meaning, 3) interaction, and 4) social behavior.
>
> Herring (2004: 3)

Herring (2004: 7) adds *participation patterns* measured by the frequency and length of messages posted and responses received as a fifth domain of CMDA analysis. The article focuses more on the fourth domain of language and especially within two virtual communities (or "learning environments" as she puts it): the Linguist List and the Inquiry Learning Forum (ILF). In this sense Danet et al. (1997) is then different, as it can be said to give an insight into all four levels of language.

Danet et al. (1997) describe a virtual party that takes place in IRC. The structure of the party starts where a real-life party would, i.e. the partyers arrive at the scene which in this case is a channel created by a user on a different channel. Some members then follow, join this new channel and proceed to have a party. Everything that one could associate to such an event takes place by using the keyboard to create the atmosphere and all that goes with it. One needs to demonstrate some skill in using the medium in order to play along and participate in the virtual party. Eventually, the mood becomes elevated and people on the channel loosen up. The pretend-play frame and performance frame are entered by showing off one's skills on the keyboard: using the typographic symbols the participants on the channel simulate different stages of marijuana use. According to Danet et al. (1997) all of this is acted out in a playful mode which goes on to indicate that the meaning behind the action is different than it would possibly be in real life. We have no way of knowing what the attitudes toward marijuana use of the channel members are in real life, but we can make educated guesses using the Danet et al. (1997) article and the information given in its data. What seems to be more important is the *inherent playfulness* of the action taking place. The exchanges are meant to be taken in good humour and the *play frame* is emphasised in different ways.

Using the good characteristics of a research question on CMDA (see page 48), the findings of Danet et al. (1997) and the ideas of banter (or "taking the piss") used in Plester and Sayers (2007), Terrion and Ashforth (2002) and the idea of from bonding to biting in Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) I have devised a set of criteria which I used to detect occurrences of banter in the log files.

Next I will show my criteria for online playfulness and a *toolbox* for finding cases of banter occurring in the log files.

6.2. Making Sense of Banter: Rules for Putdown Humour

As I mentioned above, Terrion and Ashforth (2002) devised a list of the five rules for putdown humour that occurred during the six-week training course. The following is my summary[14] of the rules (2002: 72-76) and how they could be applied on the online data of this thesis. It needs to be pointed out that the data in Terrion and Ashforth (2002) is based on face-to-face interaction. I hope to show how the three core elements (**mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness**) in my definition of banter (see the methodological toolbox in chapter 6.4.) appear in the data explained in chapter 5.

> **1. Do not put down a member who is not present**
>
> If the person one puts down is not present, the humour effect is replaced by a feeling of backstabbing and betrayal. Mock-impoliteness is then replaced by hostile remarks of the absent persons. The person needs to be there so that the utterance can be seen as an instance of humour. Terrion and Ashforth (2002:73) also point out the importance of the *inclusive* (us) feeling rather than *exclusive* (us versus the target) one, which is made possible by the presence of the target.
>
> **2. A group member who is the target of a putdown has to be able and willing to laugh at himself/herself**
>
> The target of the joke must be able and willing to laugh at oneself. If they are not, then the possibility of actually offending the hearer becomes greater. What has become evident in the previous studies is the idea of a good member of a group having the ability to not take things too seriously when it comes to group dynamics. People who are able to

[14] See Terrion and Ashforth (2002: 72-76) for the full description of the five rules for putdown humour. Some of these five rules are more useful than others but the general idea of not offending is the key feature.

laugh at themselves are seen as more humorous and better company. The **mutuality** of banter requires the participants to be able and willing to take part in exchanges (i.e. **interactivity**) which may be hurtful, if the person takes the utterances literally. The previous research on putdown humour in the police force (Holdaway 1988, in Terrion and Ashforth 2002:73) has proved the importance of this, as reported here:

> If you can't take humor in policing you will not survive. Guys are just merciless with each other, and it's part of the team building.
>
> Terrion and Ashforth (2002:73)

Taking humour in the example above means the specific type of humour, mainly putdown humour, which seems to be an integral part of the discourse culture in the police force.

3. Do not offend the group member who is a target of the putdown

The intention is not to offend the target, which requires that the *play frame* (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997) (i.e. **playfulness**) is made clear. *Going too far* means not following the rules, violating the ritual and working against the bonding process (using biting remarks to create social cohesion, i.e. *positive politeness* by Brown and Levinson (1987) which was examined in chapter 2): not affirming the social cohesion which the right kind of banter would do. The skill needed in using putdowns correctly results in them being used by a smaller subset of the group or not using this sort of humour at all. This rule then serves to maintain a certain predictability and trust between the participants. These two features can be seen as prerequisites for the give-and-take nature of banter mentioned in Plester and Sayers (2007). **Mutuality** means "getting as much as you give" (i.e.

interactivity) and vice versa.

4. Certain people should not be the target

In the interviews the candidates were asked what kind of people would **not** be the target of putdowns and they mentioned these: 1) persons with potentially stigmatizing features (e.g. physically unattractive); 2) a person who is not liked; 3) a loner or an outsider (i.e. using inclusive putdowns instead of exclusive ones); and 4) someone who is related to someone else in the group. The fourth category is probably mentioned here as it has the potential of offending and especially offending someone who is not the target of the putdown (see the previous rule). What is interesting is the way in which the use of putdowns goes on to create a sort of **in-group** and **outsiders**. The persons who are not liked and/or are outsiders, will not be made fun of, which needs to be done in order for them to acquire the membership of the in-group. Terrion and Ashforth (2002:74) mention Gruner (1997: 78), according to whom the "most successful disparaging jokes 'are told by and for the "in-group"'.

5. Violators of group norms are fair game

If a person chooses to violate the norms of the group, this means that the previous rules (1, 3 and 4) can be disregarded. This means that a person who uses putdown humour in a way which the group deems to be against the group's norms will lead to the person being subjected to ridicule or the members ignoring the person.

After briefly explaining the rules for putdowns humour in face-to-face (FTF) interaction, the question then rises whether these rules would work in computer-mediated communication as well. In the next section we will see how the

abovementioned rules can be applied to the Internet Relay Chat and the conversations carried on the channel #chatzone.

6.3. Applying the Rules for Putdown Humour in the IRC Surroundings

My preliminary hypothesis of how the abovementioned rules will be applicable for the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was that, to some extent the same rules would indeed be useful. What needs to be kept in mind is that even though the participants of the workplace scenarios (Plester and Sayers 2007, Terrion and Ashforth 2002) and IRC ones have some similarities (i.e. they are likely to spend time talking to each other on a somewhat regular basis), the frame of interaction (Danet et al. 1997) is different in the two situations. In real-life interaction we tend to rely on the physical proximity of the interlocutors: we are usually face-to-face and thus we rely on non-verbal clues such as intonation, word stress and facial expressions. In addition, the fact that we are likely to come to contact with the same people in the future sets some expectations on our behaviour. Internet Relay Chat (IRC), on the contrary, can be used to discuss matters with persons we may not meet again. As Danet et al. (1997) shows us, there is no pressure to please the other channel members or to stress about what we look or sound like.

According to Danet et al. (1997), one of the key features of the Internet Relay Chat is its *inherent playfulness*. People use IRC for fun, in order to wind down after a hard day's work or to simply escape the harsh realities of life. To some extent the same rules apply online and offline which is made clearer by Danet et al. (1997) in their article's section “Five Frames and the Relations among Them” and their figure 1:

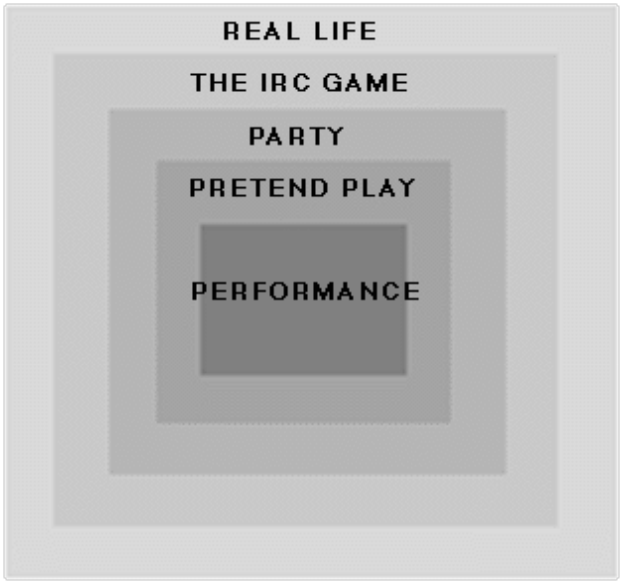


Figure 5. Five Frames of Internet Relay Chat. Reproduced from Danet et al. (1997) "HMMM...Where's that Smoke Coming From?"

The figure describes how the user of IRC is operating on five different frames while they are chatting online. These frames are nested within each other so that the "real life" is present at the background in all action. Within the frame of the Internet Relay Chat ("the IRC game" in the above figure), which one enters by logging onto the client (e.g. mIRC) and connecting to a server (e.g. one of the Turku University servers irc.cc.tut.fi) or possibly several. After this one joins one or more channels where the actual performance takes place (i.e. chatting with other channel members). Logging onto IRC in a way means that one enjoys "reduced accountability if they choose to communicate in a playful mode" as Danet et al. (1997) explain under Frame #2 Let's Play IRC. According to Danet et al. (1997), there seems to be an idea of "anything can be said in this frame" and the lack of physical presence can make it easier for shy people to appear more outgoing and well-spoken.

Whereas previous research has sometimes listed the impersonal nature of virtual interaction as a negative feature, Danet et al. (1997) and Herring (2004) have focused on the ways in which people tend to form online communities (Reid 1991) and long-lasting friendships despite the apparent detached world of online interaction (cf. the dichotomy of virtual world versus real life). The three inner frames then

discuss the way in which the participants on a particular channel pretended to have a party with music, alcohol and even simulated smoking of marijuana. This was done by showing awareness in acting out the different parts of marijuana use. Out of the three inner frames only the "performance frame" is important for this project. In later sections we will see how the participants use their skills to engage in some forms of banter. The difficulty then is how we understand *banter*.

One possible adaptation to the figure would be to replace the "party" and "pretend play" frames with frames on ended towards "irony" and "banter". This would then mean that "irony" could be seen as "banter" carried out through the performance frame and one's skills on the keyboard. However, attempting to distinguish the relationship which banter and irony have is difficult (Nowik 2005). Both seem to be connected but to put them in a hierarchical order can be potentially misleading in trying to understand which of the two is more important.

In this thesis irony and banter are both present in the analysis part (see chapter 7) where I try to explain why I have understood something as a case of banter. If we consider *banter* and *putdown humour* to be synonymous to a certain degree, then we can assume that the rules described in Terrion and Ashforth (2002: 72-76) could apply for computer-mediated communication (CMC) as well. I propose the following interpretation for the five rules for putdown humour in IRC:

1. Do not put down a person who is not present

If the person is not on the channel, the putdowns will appear to be cases of backstabbing as they would do so in real life. In addition, having a laugh is no longer done *with* someone but more *at someone's expense* which can go on to cause a rift between the channel members, instead of forming a sense of belonging together (i.e. social cohesion).

2. A group member who is the target of a putdown has to be able and willing to laugh at himself/herself

The target needs to be able and willing to take a joke and handle possibly negative comments on their person. This

means that one needs to be able to laugh at any faults they might have (e.g. typographical errors, slips of the tongue, misreading of previous comments, misunderstandings and so on).

3. Do not offend the group member who is a target of the putdown

Make sure that your putdown is directed to the person you intended and that the *play frame* is marked clearly enough (e.g. using emoticons, stressing certain words or parts of them, displaying incongruity between the message and the context and so on). One of the main reasons why it would make sense **not** to use putdown humour online, is the lack of non-verbal cues. This was why Hancock (2004) was surprised to find verbal irony being used more in the computer-mediated communication (CMC) than in the face-to-face (FTF) cases. It is important to distinguish one's use of putdown humour from being hurtful and much like in Terrion and Ashforth (2002) one needs to possess a certain amount of skill in being funny and not insulting towards the others.

4. Certain people should not be the target

The Chatzone has listed their Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) on their website and this is what we would normally call *netiquette* or rules one is expected to follow when one joins the channel. In most cases the users are instructed not to use language that may be hurtful (e.g. sexist or racist remarks) and refrain from using profanity. In chapter 7 we will see in the results how the AUP is not followed and how the use of profanities can be quite frequent.

Much like in real life, one needs to be part of the in-group to be subjected to ritual insults. It is usually taken for granted

that talking about religion, politics and people with disabilities will lead to arguments which go against the grain of bonding (with the exception of bonding through a shared enemy or dislikes).

5. Violators of group norms are fair game

Not following the rules means that one becomes fair game for putdown humour. In this case it is assumed that the person has violated the rules intentionally. Unintentional violations will be dealt with sarcasm or possibly pointing out the fallacies in the person's utterances. One possible way of educating the new channel members is to include the phrase "we don't usually..." in the critique. What needs to be kept in mind that even though some rules remain the same, the rules can be modified according to group and its dynamics. Trolling (i.e. posting inflammatory or off-topic comments in order to provoke an emotional response) is normally handled by ignoring it or ridiculing the troll and their lack of intelligence which is the kind of emotional response the trolls are looking for. Flaming or posting inflammatory comments in an online forum may lead to exchanges of flames, otherwise known as flame wars.

To summarise, the five rules are applicable for both face-to-face ("real life") and computer-mediated communication ("online") but in my opinion there are cases when the person is not present and the putdowns are still playful. Such cases include ones where the target is part of the in-group and they have a tendency of doing something hilarious. Hence, the group's jokers are probably mentioned in casual interaction even though they are not present. The intention is to include the absent friend into the present group and express a wish that they were there too. This is not saying that the five rules mentioned above would need to be scaled down to four rules. I have chosen to mention this issue as a possible exception to the first rule. In

the examples there were not multiple occurrences of these type of “breaking the rules”.

Within the online surroundings the real life taboos are acting in the background and so bodily functions and other issues that could be seen as “bad taste” are normally omitted from the discourse. The underlying point is to use language which leads to the group having a feeling of bonding through the mutual biting.

My initial idea of using the five rules for putdown humour (Terrion and Ashforth 2002) proved to be impractical. This may be due to the data being on online interaction and the differences in language use between face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. Further research is needed to see whether the five rules for putdown humour (Terrion and Ashforth 2002) are indeed applicable in cases which do not rely on face-to-face interaction. I would suggest that the butt of the jokes needs to be present and able to laugh at themselves which is one of the features which distinguishes banter from bullying. Usually the putdown humour was directed at the well-liked members of the channels who are known for the ability to take insults without getting offended (see <^Timm> in the results).

However, these rules have been used as a basis in forming my own definition of banter and its use in Internet Relay Chat. Thus, I have chosen to keep the chapters 6.2. and 6.3. as they are. The following chapter offers a brief summary of the main points (**mutuality, interactivity** and **playfulness**) which have led to choosing the examples seen in chapter 7 and the appendices. I acknowledge the fact that this one way of identifying cases of banter. This is one of the problems of conducting an open-ended qualitative research.

6.4. Methodological toolbox: Criteria for identifying online banter

- **reciprocity**
    1. banter needs to be **mutual** (back and forth, give-and-take) in order to distinguish it from other forms of one-sided putdowns (i.e. sarcastic remarks)
    2. NB! in the online surroundings (in this case, Internet

Relay Chat, i.e. IRC) the turns maybe further apart due to the technology (the text is sent forward by pressing enter and each turn is arranged chronologically depending on the order server receives the utterances), however, this does not become an issue for the more frequent users of these chats

- **playfulness**
    1. the "play frame" mentioned in Danet et al. (1997) needs to be made clear somehow (through a discrepancy in 'what is said' and in what context → irony; by the use of emoticons or typographical features such as underlining or capitals)
    2. the humour used needs to be recognised as well-intentioned at the deeper level even if it seems to be hurtful on the surface level (Tannen 1984: 130-143, Plester and Sayers 2007, Terrion and Ashforth 2002: 72-76)
    3. playing with words and ideas (puns, wordplay etc.)
    4. nicknames of nicknames (e.g. female chatters adding *wifey* to a female chatter's nickname in order to show intimacy)
- **the channel as a form of "shared space"** (cf. face-to-face interaction)
    1. applying the "play frame" from Danet et al. (1997) concerning the IRC frame
    2. understanding the mind-set of the others and their humour, i.e. being on the same level with others → enjoying a good laugh
    3. having a sense of intimacy despite the physical distances → feeling you belong to a group
- **displays of shared history**

    having a sense of the people one is talking to ("well, you know

what <nick> is like..") and playing with online identities (nicknames) from Danet et al. (1997) and Bechar-Israeli (1995)

By using these criteria I hope to find cases where the **mutuality** is evident through using shared experiences and history as a feature of social cohesion. I suggest that the channel works via *interactivity leading to social cohesion*. This cohesion becomes the social glue, which creates a sense of bonding and assures that the persons join this particular channel in the future as well. The idea of *customary joking relationship* is in my mind applicable for online cases and the conversational joking which Norrick (1993) also talks about can be found on the data I have used. In addition, the different styles of speaking come into play in the log files as well. As it will become clear later on, the participants may use language in their own ways and as in all groups, also on this channel, there seem to be the *jokers* on #chatzone as well.

6.5. Breakdown of Conversational Humour

I have chosen to use the term *conversational humour* as a synonym for banter. In reality, banter could be seen as one type of conversational humour or an umbrella term for a specific use of humour. The following categorisation is adapted from Norrick's (1993: 43-81) chapter called The Interpersonal Dimension of Conversational Joking.

1. Personal Anecdotes
2. Jointly Produced Narratives
3. Wordplay
4. Punning
5. Wordplay Interaction
6. Sarcasm and Mocking

If we consider banter as a mixture of wordplay interaction, punning, sarcasm and mocking, then personal anecdotes and jointly produced narratives will be left outside the present analysis. It needs to be pointed out that mocking here means

cases of **positive (im)politeness** and not the actual impolite utterances. Conversational humour may consist of witty exchanges with a sense of give-and-take (Plester and Sayers 2007) while the *play frame* is somehow indicated or implied.

With the theoretical background and knowledge of the data and methodological framework in mind it is time to move to the analysis section of this thesis. The following chapter is divided into different subsections which are given as an indication of the various conversational styles which were used in the log files.

7. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter we apply the methodological toolbox for identifying cases of banter used on #chatzone. If we consider the toolbox of chapter 6.4. and the categorisation of chapter 6.5. (see above), the focus of this thesis is less on personal anecdotes or jointly produced narratives. However, categories concerning wordplay (punning or longer extracts with witty remarks following each other), sarcasm and mocking will provide useful grounding points for the results.

The following chapter is divided into subsections of which the first one (chapter 7.1.) provides a brief overview of the discussion on the channel #chatzone based on the log files which have been the data (see chapter 5) of this thesis. The other subsections will look at different categories for conversational humour, mainly wordplay/wordplay interaction (chapter 7.2.), sarcasm and mocking (chapter 7.3.). In this case wordplay is thought to include punning and playing with ideas as the examples below will show. In addition, the chapter will provide a tentative description of different discourse styles (chapter 7.4.) which some of the interlocutors seem to exemplify. These styles vary from flirtatious to verbally abusive. This chapter is intended to apply the previously introduced theoretical background (chapters 2-4) and methodological framework (chapter 6) to the data.

7.1. Overview of the Interaction on the Channel #Chatzone

A brief overview of the interaction on the channel is analogous to the findings of Danet et al. (1997). The discussion is inherently playful and this made it difficult to discern the humour from the flow of the text. As the humour was so intrinsic to the interaction on the channel, pinning down and choosing examples of banter was made according to the open-ended nature of qualitative research methodology. Hence, the reader may disagree with the present author and this is due to the lack of definite answers of this type of research.

As the channel is intended for casual discussion, the chat members normally talk about general aspects of their lives: family, friends and possibly their children. Blatantly disregarding the channel's Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) or the netiquette of the channel by asking other members to engage in sexual activity (i.e. cybersex) or private chats is met with ridicule or ignoring these individuals. Occasionally, there were instances when these same persons would turn out to be trolls, i.e. persons who seek to start online fights by acting against the netiquette, for example, by flooding the channel with their incoherent rants which are not in any way linked to the previous discussion. The conventional wisdom of ”don't feed the troll” is not always followed in online interaction. If the person types something which is incredibly idiotic, the other participants are likely to bring up the troll's stupidity and ridicule their feeble attempts to start a flame war, i.e. multiple hostile utterances between the two parties in question.

The playfulness of the language in Internet Relay Chat has been studied by Tiina Valanne (2001). Her thesis (2001) focused on the special linguistic features which seem to contribute to the playfulness. In addition, Riina Law (2007) wrote her thesis on the conversational repair on Internet Relay Chat. This thesis provides a new viewpoint on the online interaction had on Internet Relay Chat. Future research is needed in this field, i.e. computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA), if we are to fully understand the ways in which language is used in online media.

The following subsections will focus on different categories of conversational humour which in this case is treated as one way of identifying examples of banter. In the first category thesis focuses on some cases of wordplay interaction (see chapter

7.2.) used in the log files. The other categories focus on sarcasm and mocking (see chapter 7.3.). These terms include terminology which is closely linked to the concepts of sarcasm, mocking and wordplay such as irony, punning and the idea of "taking the piss" (Plester and Sayers 2007).

7.2. Wordplay Interaction

This section focuses on the use of *wordplay* and *playing with ideas* in the interaction on the channel #chatzone. One of the main features of the **playfulness** (cf. my definition of banter in chapter 2 and the methodological toolbox in chapter 6.4.) on the channel seemed to centre around the actual or mock-misunderstanding of words typed by another member. In addition, there were multiple cases where one word or general idea triggered a line of association which lasted for several turns. The examples below should provide ample evidence for this. These examples have been edited for the benefit of the reader. The examples within the extracts are marked in **bold face**. As the humour seems to be intrinsic in the language use on the channel #chatzone, there may be many cases of **bold face** used in the edited version of the log files.

All non-essential action, i.e. people joining or leaving the channel, has been omitted if it has no real significance to the matter at hand. The sessions have been added in the appendices for a better insight into the context in which the utterances were made. However, due to the large quantity of unessential information in the discussions the appendices are made more concise and relevant to the extract which was taken from the log files.

Let us start with a short extract which shows how Internet Relay Chat can be used to play with words and ideas. In this case <BaLRoG> and <Dariana`> (the inequality marks were left to distinguish the nicknames) are discussing one other chatter and their sudden disappearance:

Session Start: Fri Jun 11 20:40:11 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
02[20:40] * Disconnected
02[20:40] * Attempting to rejoin channel #chatzone
03[20:41] * Rejoined channel #chatzone
03[20:41] * Topic is 'http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AAa0gd7ClM'

03[20:41] * Set by BiGDZ on Fri Jun 11 06:54:33
[20:41] <**shywife**> hi
[20:42] <Dariana`> hi shywife
[20:42] <Dariana`> hmmm **I must have scared her off**
[20:42] <]BaLRoG[> looks that way
[20:43] <]BaLRoG[> **well she is shy**
[20:43] <Dariana`> **so she says**
[20:43] <]BaLRoG[> was **probably a man anyway**
[20:43] <Dariana`> **shywife on +#femsubmissionsex**
[20:43] <]BaLRoG[> **hehe**
[20:43] <Dariana`> **you're probably right**
[20:45] <]BaLRoG[> walrus!!
[20:45] <]BaLRoG[> oh well, bed time for me\
[20:46] <Dariana`> ni ni
[20:46] <]BaLRoG[> nitey nites folks
03[20:46] *]BaLRoG[is now known as RogZzzZzzZzz

Session Close: Fri Jun 11 21:41:09 2010

The idea of a shy wife being into S&M and possibly bondage displays a certain sense of mismatch between the shyness and the kinky nature of S&M. In addition, there is no certainty of the chatters' gender in Internet Relay Chat. Thus, it is possible that <shywife> is a man. This example displays *playing with the ideas* of shyness, abnormal sexual behaviour and the possible mixture of these. The shy nature of <shywife> is commented in the two chatters noting how <Dariana`> must have scared her to the extent that <shywife> left the channel. The way in which <Dariana`> and <]BalRoG[> talk about <shywife> after she has apparently left the channel can be seen as a violation of the first rule of not talking about an absent member (see page 56).

In the next example we see how the interaction is started by <amethyst> who asks if anyone they know is on the channel. The way in which this is done is quite interesting. Normally calling our friends ”bastards” would be frowned upon but in this case the opening sets in motion the following interaction between <amethyst`> and <^Timm> (the inequality signs are not a part of the nickname but I have chosen to write them before and after the nickname in this thesis):

Session Start: Fri Jun 18 19:12:54 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[20:20] <amethyst`> 'lo
[20:25] <amethyst`> **is no bastard alive in here?**
[20:25] <Daren> hi

[20:25] <amethyst`> hello
[20:31] <^Timm> **ames you cock lover**
[20:31] <Cornet> blablabla
[20:31] <amethyst`> **hahaha**
[20:31] <^Timm> ltns (=long time no see)
[20:32] <amethyst`> **Timm, you son of a mother f*cker!**
[20:32] <amethyst`> yeah been a long time
[20:32] <Cornet> hi ^Timm, amethyst`
[20:32] <^Timm> what you been up to ?
[20:32] <amethyst`> **f'k all..you?**
[20:32] <amethyst`> **putting up with a load of shit** seems to be my calling.
[20:33] <amethyst`> and to be perfectly honest I am about over it.
[20:33] <^Timm> **cock rubbed you wrong** ?
[20:34] <amethyst`> **sometimes, there are just too many cocks**
[20:34] <^Timm> and **some cant even get one**
[20:34] <^Timm> **you hoarder**
[20:35] <amethyst`> don't even want one.
[20:35] <^Timm> so **yer a lemon starting from today** ?
[20:35] <amethyst`> thinking about it
[20:35] <^Timm> **giggity**
[20:36] <^Timm> you plopped out a few ickle ones ?
[20:36] <amethyst`> **speak english for f'ks sake**
[20:37] <amethyst`> **I am sure you used to make sense**
[20:37] <^Timm> you push out a small child yet ?
[20:38] <amethyst`> no
[20:38] <Cornet> yo
[20:38] <amethyst`> **been there, done that...didn't like it.**

Session Close: Fri Jun 18 21:06:44 2010

In the example above we see how two members of the channel meet again after a long time of not talking to each other. This does not seem to cause any problems and it sounds as if they continue from where they left last time. In the brief meeting the interlocutors exchange information about their lives at the moment and what they have experienced in the time passed since their last talk. We can see that <amethyst`> is having problems with men and she is swearing off men for the time being. She even mentions she is thinking about becoming a lesbian. We also learn that she has not had children even though the last utterance ”been there, done that... didn't like it” suggests otherwise.

It is worth pointing out that the use of derogatory term *bastard* for online friends may have made it possible for <^Timm>'s opening line ”ames you cock lover”. Notice how the channel's Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) is not following regarding the use of profanities. This is done by omitting the middle letters from the word ”fuck” as in *f'k all* and *f'ks sake* and replacing the letter u with an asterisk as in

*mother f*cker*. It is also interesting how it is the female chatter who uses more profanities[15]. This is probably due to venting the frustration her real-life problems have caused. It is possible that this feature is a part of her style of talking. The example above led me to search turns by <^Timm> and <amethyst`> along with words[16] which would normally be bleeped in television shows as they are considered too dirty to be aired. The frequent use of *cock* and the idea of <amethyst`> hoarding penises causes the utterance to become blatantly disregarding the norms of netiquette for it to be funny.

A quick search on the log file covering June of 2010 reveals that the word *fuck* had not been flagged and it is used as an expletive more than once. The same can be said about the word *shit* which is used by the member <jellybeanie> who goes off on an extensive rambling rant which loses all coherence from time to time. As this type of language is not the focus of this thesis I have chosen not to add an example here. Regarding the flagging of certain items the following examples show how the word *fuck* was singled out in an attempt to clean the language usage on the channel. Contrary to the normal indication of context by giving the start and end times of the sessions, the following lists the examples without the placing within the context of time. The examples show chatters losing their patience and eliciting sexual interaction during the discussion on various themes:

> [22:56] <acilzzz> fucker all!!!!!!!!!!!
> #03[22:57] * dyan was kicked by X ((Omfg) fun fact: profanity is inversely proportionate to intelligence#)
> #03[22:57] * acilzzz was kicked by X ((Omfg) fun fact: profanity is inversely proportionate to intelligence#)
>
> ---
>
> [21:20] <qie2> FuCk You aLlLlL
> #03[21:20] * qie2 was kicked by X ((Omfg) fun fact: profanity is inversely proportionate to intelligence#)
>
> ---
>
> [15:23] <horny-f> u wanna fuck a girl
> #03[15:23] * horny-f was kicked by X ((Omfg) fun fact: profanity is inversely proportionate to intelligence#)

The above three examples show how typing the word *fuck* lead to exclusion from the channel #chatzone. <Omfg> is one of the operators on the channel and it appears that they have written a script which reacts to any person typing profanities on the channel. Doing so leads to being *kicked* off the channel with the explanation ”fun

[15] See Stapleton (2003) for an interesting study on swearing on MySpace

[16] See George Carlin's (1972) monologue *Seven Words You Can Never Say on TV* on YouTube describing words *shit*, *piss*, *fuck*, *cunt*, *cocksucker*, *motherfucker*, and *tits*

fact: profanity is inversely proportionate to intelligence". During the discussion one of the members, <Quiet_Loner>, points out that one new chatter, <fanyfuck>, ought to change their nickname as it against the AUP:

Session Start: Mon Oct 12 20:03:57 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
#03[20:03] * Now talking in #chatzone

[21:16] <fany**fuck**> hay
[21:17] <Quiet_Loner> Enjoy your ban.
[21:19] * fany**fuck** (fanyfuck@114.120.85.180) Quit (Quit#)
[21:19] <Quiet_Loner> **You might want to change that nick.**
[21:19] <Intrama> why
[21:20] <Intrama> i didnt see anything wrong with it
[21:20] <Quiet_Loner> **The F-word is against channel rules.**
[21:20] <Intrama> **yawn.... 'channel' rules'**
[21:20] <Intrama> **somehow does that endorse irc as a safe medium or something?**
[21:20] <Quiet_Loner> Yeah. You know, those things that operators can ban people for violating.
[21:20] <Quiet_Loner> **This channel has rules**.
[21:21] <Quiet_Loner> **Has nothing to do with IRC as a whole, just this channel.**
[21:21] <Intrama> yet..... **i get so much filthy ims from people in this channel**
[21:21] <Quiet_Loner> Yeah... same
[21:21] <Intrama> i mean.... **so much for a 'clean channel'**

Session Close: Mon Oct 12 22:19:01 2009

The example shows <Quiet_Loner>'s awareness of the channel rules and how violating these rules may lead to a *ban*. The other chatter, <Intrama>, has seen many instant messages (IM) from people on the channel #chatzone which indicates some sort of double standard in the actual following of the Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP). It needs to be pointed out that the theory of keeping the language clean on the channel is not always put into practice. Using profanities can be done omitting certain letters and replacing them with an asterisk (*) or apostrophes ('). In addition, it is possible to type the words in a manner which is closer to the phonology of the word in question. Thus, the word *fuck* can be written as *f**k*, *f'ck*, *phark* not to mention the use of euphemisms. The previous has been added as an example how the Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) is more of a set of guidelines and not a strict rule of conduct.

The third example shows the chatters playing with the idea of having fun.

They go on listing things which are considered to be fun and at the same time poke fun at the new member on the channel. This would suggest that there is no real ”testing the waters” period before one is subject to playful ridicule. It is possible that the Acceptable Usage Policy's (AUP) mentioning of refraining from explicitly seeking company has led to this behaviour. It is worth pointing out that the conversation is carried out by <`Rick> and <Shane`> who take turns in listing fun things (i.e. telling jokes, doing tricks and juggling, owning an elephant, singing karaoke, burping the alphabet and clowns) one after the other before <^Jenn^> joins in. It is worth noting that the majority of fun things listed by <`Rick> are related to the idea of circus whereas <Shane`> mentions things which are more closely linked to spending time with friends:

Session Start: Sat May 01 09:43:06 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
[09:43] * Now talking in #chatzone
[09:43] * Topic is '(ZeBoxx) http://gigapica.geenstijl.nl/2010/04/gigapica_deepwater_horizon.html'
[09:43] * Set by X on Thu Apr 29 23:13:55

[11:07] <ForeignFrien> any one like to chat and **have fun** msg me plz:)))
[11:08] <`Rick> hmm **foreign fun**
[11:08] <Shane`> do you **tell jokes,** ForeignFrien?
[11:08] <`Rick> **do tricks and juggle ?**
[11:08] <`Rick> **do you own an elephant ?**
[11:09] <Shane`> **karaoke?**
[11:09] <`Rick> **trapeez**
[11:09] <Shane`> **burp the alphabet?**
[11:09] <`Rick> **clowns?**
[11:09] <+^Jenn^> yep
[11:09] <Shane`> no clowns..
[11:09] <Shane`> they are creepy
[11:09] <+^Jenn^> **can't sleep**
[11:09] <+^Jenn^> **clowns'll eat me**
[11:09] <Shane`> read, ^Jenn^
[11:09] <`Rick> in living color too
[11:09] <+^Jenn^> I've read "IT"
[11:10] <+^Jenn^> crrrrrrrrrrreepeh!
[11:10] <Shane`> **"fear of the dark"**
[11:10] <Shane`> **"FEAR OF THE DARK"**
[11:10] <`Rick> **enter sandman metallica**
[11:10] <Shane`> **"I have a constant fear that someone's always near"**
[11:10] <Marta``> metallica <3

In this extract the line of association leads from ”having fun” or ”fun things” to

phobias, e.g. fear of clowns or fear of the dark, which links the interaction to music and going to sleep in <^Jenn^>'s first turn ”can't sleep.. clowns'll eat me”. Being afraid of the dark, i.e. having a ”fear of the dark” which is a common phobia for young children triggers in <Shane`>'s mind the song by Iron Maiden which has the same name *Fear of the Dark.* The theme of small children, phobias and music is carried on by <`Rick> who introduces a new song and a new band, *Enter Sandman* by Metallica. Later, on page 71, the discussion is continued by the chatters when <Shane`> tells that he had the possibility to see Metallica perform live. Before continuing on this same line of association it is a good idea to look at the first steps of the “irc wedding” in the making.

Prior to this, there has been an exchange where <Shane`> has been flirting with <Marta``> and there has even been a feeling that these two are getting along quite nicely. <`Rick> noticed that <Shane`> is flirting and commented on this. Again, the bold face was not in the original and the colours were added to indicate separate actions happening in the flow of the text. These actions would be in this same colour within the flow of the text. As this is part of the same session the following excerpt, the start and ending were not repeated:

[10:33] <Shane`> hey Marta`` :)
[10:33] <Marta``> hey Shane =)
[10:34] <Shane`> **I trust I see you well, beautiful one? ;)**
[10:34] <Marta``> who're you talking to?
[10:34] <`Rick> **sings: Shane` and Marta`` sitting in a tree** ...
[10:35] <`Rick> kiSs^ing
[10:35] * Marta`` hands Rick a microphone
[10:35] <`Rick> **cupid strikes in CZ yet again**
[10:35] <kiSs^> 23 f philippines here
[10:35] <Shane`> I am talking to you, Marta``
[10:35] <Shane`> haha
[10:35] <`Rick> **so romantic**
[10:35] <Marta``> oh ok
[10:35] <`Rick> **yet another irc wedding in the making**
[10:35] * Shane` taps the microphone "uh.. is this thing on?"
[10:35] <Marta``> **lol**
[10:36] <Marta``> **lol Shane**
[10:36] * `Rick sits next to kiSs^ ...
[10:36] <`Rick> nice music! kiSs^ :)
[10:36] * Shane` looks at Marta`` and sings "you're just too good to be true.. Can't take my eyes off of you" out of key
[10:36] <`Rick> **aawww**
[10:37] <Marta``> **wow Shane, do you want me to fall for you?**
[10:37] <Shane`> WAY out of key
[10:37] <Shane`> *feedback*

[10:37] * `Rick fixes the sound system for Shane` ...
[10:37] <Shane`> **"I LOVE YOU BABY! AND IF IT'S QUITE AWRIGHT!"**
[10:37] <Shane`> **thanks, `Rick**
[10:37] <Shane`> lol
[10:37] <`Rick> :)
[10:37] <kiSs^> ur asl rick
[10:37] <Shane`> **it was either that or "she's lost that loving feeling" Marta``**
[10:37] <`Rick> gee thanks kiSs^, i like you too

It is particularly interesting to note the way in which <`Rick> introduces the idea of an "yet another irc wedding in the making". His previous comments indicate some sort of sarcastic remarks aimed at <Shane`>'s attempts to woo <Marta``>. This sarcasm could be analysed in the next subsection but I have chosen to explain it in this immediate context. Looking at the stylistic variation of <`Rick>'s interaction, compare the aforesaid "yet another irc wedding in the making" with <`Rick>'s mock-singing of "Shane` and Marta`` sitting in a tree ..." followed by "kiSs^ing" (<kiSs^> is another chat member) instead of the traditional "k-i-s-s-i-n-g" in the children's mocking song of two persons who seem to like each other very much. <`Rick> underlines his mock-amazement of this new-found IRC love by stating "cupid strikes in CZ (#ChatZone) yet again". If it can be assumed that these three know each other by proxy, i.e. the two men know each other and <`Rick> knows <Marta``>, then if <`Rick> knows <Shane`>'s way of flirting with female chatters, the mocking utterances by <`Rick> can be seen as a general sarcastic remark on <Shane`>'s flirtatious behaviour. The shared history of the two male chatters could enable this.

The honeymoon does not last very long as <Shane`> tells he had tickets to Metallica's concert ─ one of <Marta``> 's favourite bands as we see on page 69 [11:10] <Marta``> metallica <3 ─ but he chose to go on a hunting course. It turns out <Marta``> hates hunters because they kill animals and she thinks these hunters lack respect for nature, even though following the discourse tells the reader that <Shane`> hunts to keep the number of animals in proportion to the habitat they live in. The following extract is rather long but it gives a better insight into the exchange:

[11:11] <Marta``> **and traded it for hunting????????????**
[11:11] <Shane`> all I could think of all night was that my buddies were drunk and having fun at the concert
[11:12] <Marta``> **get away from me, criminal!**
[11:12] <Shane`> haha

[11:12] <Marta``> **Im not laughing**
[11:12] <Marta``> **I hate hunters**
[11:12] <Shane`> yeah `Rick.. and general hunting really
[11:12] <`Rick> she likes bad boys
[11:12] <Shane`> Mostly to get my gun license
[11:12] <Marta``> **I like people that respect nature**
[11:12] <Shane`> **you'll love them when oil runs out and they bring you food, Marta``**
[11:12] <Marta``> **and have no respect for 'people' that dont**
[11:13] <Marta``> no at all
[11:13] <Shane`> **Hunters probably respect nature more than most people**
[11:13] <Marta``> **and I dont respect them**
[11:13] <`Rick> yep, **no roadkill in the hunters vocabulary**
[11:13] * +FaireBella just blinks
[11:13] <Shane`> **not respecting nature for a hunter would be like taking a shit in your kitchen**
[11:13] <+FaireBella> **wow. Come back from fighting about what makes an egg split to seeing my family history being bashed**.
[11:13] <Marta``> animals are part of nature
[11:13] <Marta``> deers are part of animals
[11:13] <+FaireBella> **Oh god. A Peta wannabe.**
[11:14] <Marta``> had to explain it like for a 3 years old
[11:14] <Shane`> **what would happen if nobody killed deer in 2010, Marta``?**
[11:14] <Marta``> **oh god. a moron**
[11:14] <+FaireBella> **Oh please. If there was an overabundant amount of any animal in the world, it would disrupt their ecosystems as well as ecosystems for humans.**
[11:14] <Shane`> **They have no natural enemies around norway anymore.. too few anyway**
[11:14] <+FaireBella> **Hence why we have to hunt. Not only does it provide nourishment, it also provides a balance.**
[11:14] <Marta``> Shane, **they would be living, of course**
[11:15] <Shane`> **true FaireBella**
[11:15] <Shane`> **without exception, pests break out in groups of animals that grow too large**
[11:15] <+FaireBella> **Now poaching and things of that nature, I totally agree are horrid and are worth fighting against.**
[11:15] <+FaireBella> **But to say that hunting in and of itself is horrible is just...naive.**
[11:15] <Shane`> **respectful harvesting of nature's surplus is what real hunting is all about**
[11:16] <+FaireBella> Yes. And **I was raised to respect the animals I was hunting.**
[11:16] <Shane`> **like you should**
[11:16] <+FaireBella> Both of my parents made sure of that
[11:16] <+FaireBella> **Yay for that native american background.**
[11:16] <Shane`> **I would absolutely not shoot at an animal I was not 100% sure to kill instantly**
[11:16] <Marta``> Shane, **you have your own point of view and I have mine**

Session Close: Sat May 01 11:18:14 2010

The example was added to show how the “IRC wedding” meets its end in a mock-divorce displayed in <Marta``>'s loss of respect for <Shane`>. In the example above, the chatters discuss hunting and what it means for the animal rights activists and the hunters. Of the members <FaireBella> and <Shane`> know what hunting actually means for the hunter and how this type of action is in the best interest of the natural habitats around the world. The outsider reading this log file learns that <Shane`> is from Norway and <FaireBella> is part Native American. They have an inside knowledge into how hunters feel about animals and nature in general. The opposition in this case relies solely on <Marta``>'s shoulders as she considers hunters to kill animals just for fun. As the example shows <Shane`> agrees that poaching and things of that nature are worth fighting against. <FaireBella> adds that she was brought up to respect the animals she was hunting and <Shane`> agrees with this idea.

Thus, within 10:33 and 11:16 we see a couple meet for the first time, flirt, supposedly fall in love, get married and eventually break up over a difference of opinions. We can also deduce from the log files that <`Rick> knows both <Shane`> and <Marta``> because he has talked about her problems with the wiring in her house (rodent infestation?) and we see <Shane`> offering to help:

[10:51] <`Rick> **Marta``s electricity broke last night**
[10:51] <Marta``> and **its still broken**
[10:51] <`Rick> **monsters chewin on the wires**
[10:51] <Marta``> well, only in the kitchen now
[10:52] <Shane`> **it's the chupacabra!**
[10:52] <`Rick> **oh my, who could fix this for Marta ?**
[10:52] <Shane`> **the cable sucker**
[10:52] <`Rick> **hmm, lemme think**
[10:52] <Shane`> hmmmm
[10:52] <Marta``> lol
[10:52] <`Rick> **a kitchen monster?** hmmm
[10:52] <Shane`> **"I'm a handy kinda guy," shane offers**
[10:52] <Marta``> awesome, thanks Shane!
[10:53] <`Rick> **see? Shane` will fix it for you :)**
[10:53] <`Rick> **very nice** of him to do that

Note how <`Rick> chooses his words, *very nice of him to do that*, so that we can take his intention to be either 'he is very nice' or 'look at him trying to seduce her' (i.e. acting nice to get her to fall for him). <`Rick> uses humour which is a bit different from <Shane`> 's: the first uses a drier version with things that could be thought be delivered with a sort of 'deadpan' face, while the latter is more

effervescent and outgoing with more wordplay and playing with ideas (playing with a microphone, singing loudly and off-key, a mythical beast chewing cables and so on). <Shane`>'s style is closer to the *inherent playfulness* in Danet et al. (1997).

These examples should show the way in which humour is used online in Internet Relay Chat. Before moving on to the next extracts, I wish to return to the idea of an IRC wedding as it appeared in another session where <Zafo> explained what he would get for his ”trailer park bride” <^ph^> (**bold face** in Appendix I) as <Malevolence->, <ZeBoxx> and <]BalRoG[> (<u>underlined</u> in Appendix I) discussed other matters before the two different groups suddenly merged and briefly joined into the discussion. The following example shows <Zafo> describing all the amenities their new home would include. This description pokes fun at people who are called “white trash”, i.e. poor uneducated white Southerners living in trailer parks, and their “ideal” living quarters. (i.e. *hole in the floor in the back* which acts as the bedroom/bathroom, *hole in the roof* which acts as the central air conditioning and so on). The observer can deduce from the log files that <^ph^> is flattered by <Zafo>'s attempts to seduce her. However, the way in which she chose type *ohhh darrrrrrlinnnnnnnnnn u shouldnt have!* and *d'awwwwww Zafo* it can be said that she is making fun of his mock-display of being a trailer park Casanova who likes gambling.

As the session dealt with the same issue for almost the entire duration and this would have led to a rather long example, I have chosen to add the session in its entire[17] (edited) form in the appendices (see example 1 in appendix I). Not knowing what the chatters were discussing before this and having no knowledge of where <^ph^> lives, it can be only assumed that <^ph^> would like to live in a trailer somewhere in Florida. The following displays <Zafo> and <^ph^> with the occasional turns taken by the other chatters:

Session Start: Fri Apr 02 18:19:56 2010

Session Ident: #chatzone
#03[18:19] * Now talking in #chatzone
#03[18:19] * Topic is 'I QUIT!!!#'
#03[18:19] * Set by SabrYna` on Fri Apr 02 10:16:13
–

[17] The raw material version of this session is in Appendix II.

[18:20] <]BaLRoG[> lego is not really "ring orientated"
(lego probably refers to <^ph^>)
[18:20] **<Zafo> I'm not cheap I'll get her the best**
[18:20] <Zafo> **ring tab pull wedding ring beer can buy**
[18:20] <+^ph^> **the best of what your change after gambling can buy?**
[18:20] * ZeBoxx squeezes phooey
[18:20] <+^ph^> **ohhh darrrrrrlinnnnnnnnnn u shouldnt have!**
[18:21] <Zafo> **Only the best for my trailer park bride**
[18:21] <+^ph^> **d'awwwwww Zafo**
[18:22] <Zafo> **look I got you all the conforts of home**
[18:22] <Zafo> **a hole in the floor inthe back**
[18:22] <+^ph^> **for what do i owe ... being blessed with such ... affection**
[18:22] <Zafo> **that is the bedroom/bathroom**
[18:22] <Zafo> **see that hole in the roof**
[18:22] <Zafo> **that is your centralization air condition**
[18:23] <Zafo> **and baby out here on the porch**
[18:23] <Zafo> **is your cookin utensils**
[18:23] <Zafo> **some people call it a bbq but I call it kitchen**
[18:23] <+^ph^> **hey dont knock bbqing**
[18:24] <+^ph^> **i love it**
[18:24] <+^ph^> weather permitting and schedule permitting id do it for all my meals
[18:24] <Zafo> **good go bbq me some eggs and toast**
[18:24] <+^ph^> well come on over
[18:24] <Zafo> **love you ph just tugging your chain**
[18:25] <Zafo> **lil bit**
[18:25] <ZeBoxx> she prefers silk scarves
[18:25] <+^ph^> lol
[18:25] <+^ph^> **tug away, im use to it :D**

It is worth noting that <^ph^> recognises <Zafo>'s utterances as cases of playfulness before he admits to be “tugging her chain”, i.e. joking. In addition, there was a different discussion going on at the same time between <ZeBoxx> and <Malevolence-> who were talking about how the first thought that the latter should go to bed. This discussion took place somewhere around Easter, probably on Easter Friday, which explains <ZeBoxx>'s ironic comment on how <Malevolence-> should have *nailed* his ex-girlfriend on Easter Friday, on the same day when Jesus was crucified, i.e. *nailed* on the cross. The interaction then moves from what happened between <Malevolence-> and his ex-girlfriend to the general discussion going on between <Zafo>, <^ph^> and <]BalRoG[>. The first example displays the two men talking about the night with the ex-girlfriend and how <Malevolence-> should go to bed:

[18:21] <+Malevolence-> SEXBOXXXXXXXXXXX#14X#15X

[18:21] * Malevolence- was kicked by X ((ZeBoxx) go to bed?#)
[18:21] <+Malevolence-> I can't yet!
[18:22] <ZeBoxx> can't yet? just kick those **dirty manskanks** out of **your bed** and sleep, dammit
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> **Hahaha**
[18:23] <+^ph^> nicely put zeebee lol
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> I **nailed** my ex gf a few days ago **in it**
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> it was terrible
[18:24] <ZeBoxx> you should have **nailed her today**.. **the symbolism would've been more awesome**
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> **I'm saving myself for ph**, ZB

The way in which <ZeBoxx> describes the bed of <Malevolence-> being full of sexually promiscuous men who are not letting <Malevolence-> sleep is a way of ironically describing what <Malevolence-> likes to do. It could be that <ZeBoxx> is a woman[18] and <Malevolence-> is a man which would lead to two acting very much like <^Timm> and <^Jenn^> in chapter 7.3. Based on the *nailing* of his ex-girlfriend <Malevolence-> is indeed a man which means that his sexual preferences are made fun of by <ZeBoxx> who suggests that the bed of <Malevolence-> is full of *dirty manskanks*.

This is reacted to by <^ph^> and <Malevolence-> with positive feedback ([18:23] <+Malevolence-> Hahaha , [18:23] <+^ph^> nicely put zeebee lol). This then leads to both <Zafo> and <^ph^> reacting to the last utterance made by <Malevolence-> who goes on to explain sarcastically his interest in <^ph^>. <Malevolence-> says that he has decided to *lower* his *standards* to *six feet below sea level* indicating that <^ph^> is as attractive as a corpse buried six feet below ground. She responds by saying that <Malevolence-> loves her anyway and he should simply admit this. The following shows how the two different lines of discussion merge and for a moment the focus of the interaction turns to more clearly on <^ph^>:

[18:26] <Zafo> **Hey dat's my bride**
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> I've decided **to lower my standards**
[18:26] <+^ph^> **pffft**
[18:26] <+^ph^> **you love my ass shaddap**
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> **like, six feet below sea level**
[18:26] <Zafo> **I will fight you wif a rake if yew tru to taker away**
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> **at least**
[18:26] <+^ph^> **haha Zafo**
[18:27] <Zafo> **We are starting up our mansion this week**
[18:27] <+^ph^> **mansion huh**
[18:27] <+^ph^> **i dont need a mansion**

[18] See Hay (2000) for the functions of humour in conversations of men and women

[18:27] <]BaLRoG[> **ph, you just need a trailer**
[18:28] <Zafo> **Just goofing off**
[18:28] <+^ph^> **i like lots of windows**
[18:28] <Zafo> **I am trying to romance ph with my love hut in the Florida Swamps**
[18:28] <+^ph^> like those triangular shaped cabin styles
[18:28] <]BaLRoG[> ph, **you don't need windows for a bbq**
[18:29] <+^ph^> **no i'll have the bbq out on my patio**
[18:29] <]BaLRoG[> exactly..
[18:29] <Zafo> **no sweetie the gators might eatcha**
[18:29] <Zafo> **lost a good woman that way**
[18:29] <]BaLRoG[> all you need is a nice outdoor setting and a good view :P
[18:29] <+^ph^> **but i like lots of windows ... natural light**
[18:29] <+^ph^> **im a morning person :)**
[18:29] <Zafo> **need more shotgun shells**
[18:30] <]BaLRoG[> ph, windows and polished wooden floors.. you can't go wrong
[18:30] <Zafo> **blam there's a window**
—

[18:30] <+^ph^> **i own a house**
[18:31] <Zafo> **give up your house and live with me in squalor**
[18:31] <+^ph^> **haha Zafo`**
—

[18:32] <Karot> **actually i am pissed by money so i spend money**
[18:32] <Karot> **on someone**
[18:32] <Zafo> **come on baby the sex will be crap and the conditions will be third world**
[18:32] <Zafo> **marry me**
[18:32] <Karot> ok
[18:32] <+^ph^> **hahaha**
[18:32] <Karot> marry me and get more money than Zafo because i hate money nowadays
—

The utterances of <Zafo> depicting how <^ph^> should not go out on the patio as *the gators might eatcha* (i.e. the alligators might eat her) and how <Zafo> *lost a good woman that way* keep the playing on idea of a trailer park in Florida going on. <Zafo> notices how <^ph^> tells <]BaLRoG[> that she prefers natural light and having a lot of windows as she is a morning person. He reacts by pretending to shoot more holes which will act as windows in the trailer. Later <^ph^> tells that she owns a house and she is familiar with the periodical cleaning which comes with owning a house. <Zafo>, the trailer park Casanova, urges <^ph^> to *give up* her *house* and that she should *come live with* him *in squalor.*

In the example above <Karot> joins in to court <^ph^> with his extensive bank account and his will to spend money on someone which ought to be more

tempting than living in squalor. <Zafo> notices this better offer and underlines his defeat in playfully telling that if she would marry him *the sex will be crap and the conditions will be third world* (i.e. closer to living in a developing nation). The session nears its end with some server error which leads to there being two different versions <^ph^> which she gleefully notes *yay theres two of me!* Of the two men courting, <Zafo>, expresses his interest in marrying the previous, now silent, clone. This triggers a response by <^ph^> in which she asks what is wrong with the original:

[18:34] <+^^ph^^> bleh
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> damn servers
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> **yay theres two of me!**
[18:34] <Zafo> **can I marry the clone?**
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> **lol**
[18:34] <Zafo> **she don't need to say much**
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> **and whats wrong with the original?**
[18:35] <+^^ph^^> **lmfao**
Session Close: Fri Apr 02 18:35:59 2010

During this session the chatters created a situation where the man described to the woman what their life would be like if they lived together. As <^ph^> is probably from somewhere in the southern states of the United States, <Zafo> types in a manner which can be read to resemble the local accent/dialect. This is most apparently done in his utterance *I will fight you wif a rake if yew tru to taker away*, i.e. *I will fight you with a rake, if you try to take her away.* The *squalor* is described in great detail: *the hole in the floor* which is *the bedroom/bathroom*, *the hole in the roof* which acts as *the centralization air condition* instead of the correct term ”central air conditioning” or simply ”central air”. The latter acts as a hypercorrection which sounds similar to ones that the original local citizens of the Southern States could make as they would try to act smarter than they actually are. It could be said that <Zafo> succeeds in creating the atmosphere of a male person from these states trying to court a female individual. All of this acts as a perfect example of what Danet et al. (1997) mean by the *inherent playfulness* of the language in Internet Relay Chat. These linguistic features were further discussed by Valanne (2001) in her MA thesis.

The idea of an IRC wedding is then taken beyond the physical confines of the

channel and the life after a wedding is portrayed in a humorous fashion which playfully pokes fun at stereotypes about people living in trailer parks. No actual offence is meant by depicting these individuals as poor persons who live in small trailers with holes on the floor and roof. The linguistic choices made by <Zafo> contribute to a real-life like description with people mispronouncing words ”conforts” instead of ”comforts” and so on. Language usage is again closer to the spoken variety than the written one.

Continuing on the idea of newlyweds the following excerpt shows chatters playing with the idea of what happens on the honeymoon and what <NewBride> should be doing instead of being online and chatting in Internet Relay Chat. It is worth pointing out that this new member acts in a very hostile manner which is against the general idea of trying to make a good first impression:

Session Start: Mon Sep 28 08:27:49 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[08:47] <Lynnie``> omg nobride should be getting on chat
[08:47] <Lynnie``> heh
[08:47] <Lynnie``> no **newbride** that is
[08:47] <**NewBride**> i can't chat?
[08:47] <Lynnie``> sure you can
[08:48] <NewBride> then **what's your point?**
[08:48] <Lynnie``> nevermind
#06[08:48] * CdnBadGrl smiles
[08:48] <^Timm> **point is you should be off humping like jack rabbits on a beach somewhere**
#06[08:48] * CdnBadGrl looks around
[08:48] <CdnBadGrl> there ya go!
[08:48] <NewBride> **just because you're a cyberslut doesn't mean everyone else is**
[08:48] <CdnBadGrl> **WOW**
[08:48] <CdnBadGrl> **Lynnie`` isn't a cyberslut. ^Timm is.**
[08:48] <Lynnie``> **yep, that's me**
[08:49] <Lynnie``> **heh**
–
Session Close: Mon Sep 28 08:53:28 2009

The idea of newlyweds going somewhere warm and having sex all the time during this romantic vacation is rooted deep within the idea of the honeymoon. In this sense, the fact that a new bride, <NewBride>, should spend her honeymoon chatting online with total strangers is contrary to the generally thought idea of a perfect honeymoon. Notice how <NewBride> acts very defensively[19] and goes on to call <Lynnie``> a

[19] Her defensive action can be seen as a reaction to the violation of *negative politeness* by the other chat members who are telling <NewBride> what she should be doing. This goes against the idea of

cyberslut which refers to her loose morals in online conduct. Another long-time chatter, <CdnBadGirl>, is appalled by <NewBride>'s derogatory comment and she playfully points out that <NewBride> is calling the wrong person a slut. She should call <^Timm> a slut. However, <Lynnie``> admits to being a cyberslut even though the context could indicate that this response to the accusation is made quite ironically which would mean that she actually denies being a slut. The lack of voice and intonation makes it difficult to analyse the utterance *yep, that's me* but normally a female person would not admit to being something which is frowned upon in the societies around the world (contra Paris Hilton and her followers).

Next we turn our attention to playing with ideas and particularly the idea of the normal chatter in Internet Relay Chat. In addition, the next extracts will show clearer cases of playing with words. The idea of IRC wedding was discussed due to its cropping up more than once in the data used for this thesis.

According to the findings of Danet et al. (1997) and Valanne (2001) the language in Internet Relay Chat is full of wordplay and playful interaction. The cases range from misunderstanding or misreading words to intentionally twisting the words of others to create humour. Of the following examples the first is a short excerpt of people giving a stupid answer to a stupid question:

> Session Start: Fri Jun 18 19:12:54 2010
> Session Ident: #chatzone
> –
> [20:04] <Cornet> **is anyone awake?**
> [20:05] <Chris19> **im not**
> [20:10] <Cornet> ok
> [20:13] <redfin> **me neither**
> –
> Session Close: Fri Jun 18 21:06:44 2010

One of the easiest ways of trying to be funny is to answer ”I'm not” to the question ”Is anyone awake?” Here it can be assumed that <Cornet> is genuine in their question and thus the above answers do not correspond in the correct manner to the query. The chatters <Chris19> and <redfin> ought to have simply said ”hello” or ”hi” to <Cornet> if they wished to talk with the person or simply ignore the question altogether. Now the answers are cases of failed attempts in being funny.

independence and personal freedom of negative politeness. (I thank Dr. Carroll for pointing this out to me).

The next excerpt shows how <`Rick> plays with the linking of the song *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean* and the famous criminal couple Bonnie and Clyde. When <^Jenn^> sings ”bring back my bonnie to me” <`Rick> does the following:

Session Start: Wed Jun 23 21:54:49 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> bring back, bring back, oh bring back my **bonnie** to me, to me!
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> bring back, bring back, oh bring back my **bonnie** to me!
[23:17] * +^Jenn^ giggles
[23:18] * `Rick waits for the **clyde** verse
–
Session Close: Thu Jun 24 00:16:56 2010

This shows how <`Rick> connects ”bonnie” with Bonnie and Clyde, the infamous criminal couple, and he offers his dry humour by acting to wait for the Clyde verse. The previous two examples stood out as having nothing to do with the discussion before or after the utterances. Furthermore, both of these attempts to humour were met with negative or no feedback. A genuine interest in whether anyone was awake or an indication of being in a cheerful mood was met with misfired humour.

There seems to be some general idea of what the chatters in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) are like. Instead of the stereotype of introverted nerds the extracts I found implications of the users of IRC being in some way slightly insane and/or not too intelligent. These ideas are clearly shown the next two examples. Prior to the first extract <Fausto> and <Yog-Sothoth> have discussed literature in great length and the two have bonded in some sense due to this mutual interest in same books:

Session Start: Fri Jun 11 13:20:50 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[13:41] <Yog-Sothoth> **how is it you know so much about this kind of stuff?**
[13:41] <Fausto> **i read?**
[13:41] <Yog-Sothoth> **then what are you doing on IRC?**
[13:41] <Fausto> **reading**
[13:41] <Fausto> duh
[13:41] <Fausto> :D
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> **IRC is supposued to be filled with socially inept fucktards,though**
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> **u c?** (= you see?)
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> **asl?** (= age/sex/location)
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> lol
06[13:42] * Fausto gags

[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> *supposed
[13:42] <jellybeanie> **so you claim to be superman?**
[13:42] <Fausto> **i never made any such claim**

Session Close: Fri Jun 11 15:18:35 2010

Contrary to the common (mis)conception <Fausto> has shown that he is intelligent and articulate unlike the majority on the channel. This goes against what <Yog-Sothoth> thinks of the other members who are more in line with what Internet Relay Chat (IRC) supposedly is. The stereotypical notion of IRC being filled with *socially inept fucktards* is not met with <Fausto>'s knowledge of sci-fi literature and other areas. The common line of ”a/s/l” meaning ”age/sex/location” only appears after <Yog-Sothoth> ironically types it to underline the stupidity of the normal chatters. Using abbreviations such as *u c* instead of *you see* is also one of the common features of online interaction. Throughout their utterances <Fausto> has written entire sentences with good grammar and intelligent word choices.

In some sense the users of IRC are not like the mainstream population or at least this is what the extract below seems to imply. This otherness can be equated with a certain eccentricity which is seen in the next excerpt:

Session Start: Wed May 05 18:11:53 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[19:29] <andy-uk> English guy 39 looking to chat with a funny flirty **semi sane female ...anywhere!**
[19:30] <Lavender> **all insane here** andy-uk no one semi lollllllllllll
[19:30] <`G4> **this is IRC**
[19:31] <andy-uk> **LOL damn my quest continues**
[19:31] <Lavender> **didnt know there were the semi ones**
[19:31] <Lavender> thought **u were sane or not**
[19:31] <Lavender> **is it a speciality in the Uk** amd?
[19:32] <andy-uk> **no i think most people tilt at insanity at some point in their lives**
[19:32] <Lavender> and r u **at that point** in ur life now?
[19:32] <andy-uk> it would just be nice to chat with **somebody with a least one hand gripping reality for a while**
–
Session Close: Wed May 05 21:06:07 2010

The sanity of IRC users is treated as something which is questionable. This is done in a humorous manner which indicates that the insanity is of a benign nature. In some sense the playfulness mentioned in Danet et al. (1997) underlines the (in)sanity or

mere eccentricity of the chatters. <Lavender> and <`G4> respond to <andy-uk> that he will not find any *semi-sane females* in Internet Relay Chat or on #chatzone as they are all insane there. This is met with positive feedback as <andy-uk> laughs and replies *damn my quest continues*. The idea of being ”semi-sane” is discussed by <andy-uk> and <Lavender> who questions if anyone can actually be in such a state of sanity and not either sane or insane as the conventional wisdom would say. It is worth pointing out how <Lavender> playfully pokes fun at the idea of being ”semi-sane” as something uniquely related to the UK. <Lavender> continues in this manner and questions sanity of <andy-uk> after he has said that he thinks that *most people tilt at insanity at some point in their lives*. This is met with <Lavender>'s question *are you in that point of your life now?* After this <andy-uk> goes on to say that he has *done* his *therapy* indicating that he is fine now.

Sometimes chat members go through periods when the real life comes in the way of spending time online. The extract below displays one of these instances where <Dustyfogg> has had other things to do and they have not been on the channel for some time. The absence of this member is explained by aliens having abducting them, repeatedly:

Session Start: Sat Oct 10 09:58:36 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:23] <Dustyfogg> ltns (=long time no see)
[10:24] <Lee99> hi Dusty...same here...where ya been? lol
[10:24] <Dustyfogg> **i was kidnapped by aliens**
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **again?**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> yeah
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **That's the 6th time this week!**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> **they are making it a habit**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> **no no u lost count**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> **its only the 5th**
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **That's it, I'm going to call them up and tell them off**.
#06[10:25] * Dustyfogg slips u a note under the desk
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **You can't keep getting probes on school nights!**
[10:25] <Lee99> **you mean you kidnapped the aliens, right Dusty?**
[10:26] <Dustyfogg> **nooo lee the aliens asked for u and when they didnt find u they took me**
[10:26] <Dustyfogg> its all ur fault
[10:26] <+^Timm> **i bet it hurt**
[10:26] <+^Timm> **they got good food actually ?**
[10:26] <+^Timm> i hope space food isnt **in tablet form**
[10:26] <Lee99> I will take the fault for that Dusty since they got the right person :)
[10:26] <+^Timm> **that would deter anyone from hitting space**

[10:27] <EtherKnot> **"What's that?**
[10:27] <EtherKnot> " **"It's a steak..." "mmm steak...**
[10:27] <EtherKnot> " **"... in space age suppository form!"**
[10:27] <+^Timm> **erm....**
[10:27] <+^Timm> **ok moving along**
[10:28] <Dustyfogg> heh

Session Close: Sat Oct 10 10:55:45 2009

The idea of alien abduction leads the discussion to space travel and food in the space age which may be in tablet form. Channel members wonder if aliens serve good food for the abductees who have to suffer anal probing, at least according to the popular myth. <Lee99> plays with the misunderstanding of <Dustyfogg> having kidnapped the aliens which <Dustyfogg> denies and explains that the aliens were looking for <Lee99> but as they could not find him they took <Dustyfogg> instead. <^Timm> starts the food discussion by wondering if the aliens serve food and this leads to the of space-age food being in tablet form which triggers <EtherKnot>'s idea of food being *in space age suppository form*. This does something which does not normally happen: <^Timm> has no clever comeback, he simply says *erm.. ok moving along*.

Instead of ignoring the ridiculous idea of having been kidnapped by aliens <EtherKnot> continues on that similar vein[20] and adds to the humorous remark. This in return leads to <Dustyfogg> embellishing the story with the several kidnappings and the aliens looking for <Lee99> and the whole chain of events being his fault. Not only did the aliens kidnap <Dustyfogg> once but they did so five times in one week. See how <EtherKnot> tries to have the aliens kidnap <Dustyfogg> six times but the line is drawn at five. <EtherKnot> takes on the role of a worried parent or adult and says *That's it, I'm going to call them up and tell them off. You can't keep getting probes on school nights!* In this the form *probes* is probably a typographical error and it should be *probed*. The example shows how a random off-the-cuff remark can lead to an embellished story of why a person has not been online for a long time.

Occasionally, the nickname of a person visiting #chatzone may act as an ice-breaker (Bechar-Israeli 1995) as the next excerpt will show. One of the more frequent members, <Raven`>, asks a new member, <^quietgirl^>, why she is quiet. The following explains what <Raven`> thinks of quiet persons:

Session Start: Wed May 19 10:23:10 2010

[20] In some sense this can be seen as an example of jointly produced narratives, see page 62

Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:49] <^quietgirl^> hola
[10:50] <Raven`> hey **quietgirl**
[10:50] <Raven`> **why are you so quiet?**
[10:51] <^quietgirl^> because i can
[10:52] <Raven`> **the quiet ones are scary**
[10:53] <^quietgirl^> **lol**
[10:53] <^quietgirl^> why
[10:53] <Raven`> **they can be explosive**
[10:53] <Raven`> **and blow up on you**
[10:53] <Raven`> **and you'll never know it**
[10:53] <Raven`> **quietgirl must be a freak too**
–
Session Close: Wed May 19 15:14:19 2010

The scariness of the quiet ones is met by positive feedback on <^quietgirl^>'s side even though she asks why they are frightening. There was no further comments by <^quietgirl^> after <Raven`>'s lines. This means that it remains unclear what she thought of the other person calling her a freak. The unorthodox manner in which <Raven`> links being quiet to someone being a freak would in some cases constitute as an insult. However, as in the previous examples it was shown that the users of Internet Relay Chat are ”all insane” and especially on #chatzone. Thus, the freaky nature of <^quietgirl^> would indicate that she would fit right in.

Before concluding this section it may be pertinent to address the issue of sleep. As the service is open 24 hours per day, it is only natural that when some people are waking up then others are getting ready to go to bed. This leads to quiet times on the channel of which the following acts as an example. The idea of being able to chat in one's sleep arises as <Dustyfogg> and <ella-sofia> are discussing the reasons why the channel is so quiet:

Session Start: Sat May 08 21:24:36 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[22:46] <ella-sofia> **quiet in here**
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> yeah
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> ppl are asleep i guess
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **im not**
[22:47] <ella-sofia> 6.46pm over here
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> yeah u are not
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> **unless u talk in ur sleep**
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **i do**
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **but not online**
[22:47] <Jozeph31> the ones whom were makin noise left
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **chatting in my sleep would be cool**

[22:48] <Dustyfogg> **hehe**
[22:48] <Dustyfogg> **true**
[22:48] <Dustyfogg> **good use of time**
[22:48] <ella-sofia> yeah
[22:49] <ella-sofia> **damn im so bored**
Session Close: Sat May 08 22:49:20 2010

The ability to chat in one's sleep would enable being online all the time not including preparing food and other necessities. Note how <Jozeph31> suggests that *the ones whom were makin noise left*, i.e. the most vocal chatters have left the channel. This might be true as many of the members seem to be from the US and Australia. The example above is an indication of the negative side of many channel members being asleep. The next extract shows another case of the playfulness of language in Internet Relay Chat.

One of the members, <CdnBadGirl>, is feeling sleepy and of the men, <Jondlar>, is making her feel comfortable. He offers to sing a lullaby but she refuses saying that <^Timm> will help her sleep which <^Timm> playfully understands as her saying that he is boring. This leads to the following exchange of words:

Session Start: Sun Sep 27 22:23:00 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[23:32] * CdnBadGrl **is sleepy**
[23:32] * Jondlar **tosses some soft pillows**
[23:33] <Jondlar> **I can sing lullaby too**
[23:33] <CdnBadGrl> no no. **^Timm will help me sleep :D**
[23:33] <^Timm> **can you make breakfast ?**
[23:33] <Jondlar> ok :)
[23:33] <^Timm> **AM I THAT BORING !**
[23:33] <CdnBadGrl> **NO!**
[23:33] * Jondlar **walks outside from CdnBadGrl's room**
[23:34] <Jondlar> **rofl**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> **oh great. he was watching me sleep, lol**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> **freakin' stalker**
[23:34] <Jondlar> **lol**
[23:34] <^Timm> **whip out the black light**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> bow chicka bow bow
[23:34] <BadInfluence> **Jondlar: did ya get to see some goodies? ;)**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> **for the love of god, lol**
[23:35] <BadInfluence> hehe
[23:35] <BadInfluence> **whut? if it's available, why not? :p**
[23:35] <Jondlar> **lol BadInfluence not so lucky**
–
Session Close: Mon Sep 28 00:46:01 2009

The actual humour arises from <Jondlar> pretending to walk outside <CdnBadGirl>'s room and watching her sleep. She reacts to this by calling him a *freakin' stalker* which he responds to by laughter. <^Timm> suggests that <Jondlar> should *whip out the black light*, a device used by forensic technicians to search for signs of sexual interaction. Another of the men, <BadInfluence>, asks if <Jondlar> saw *some goodies*, i.e. ”did you get to see her naked?” which he replies that he was not that lucky. It is unclear whether <CdnBadGirl>'s *for the love of god* is a reaction to the ”black light” or the ”goodies” part. It is also not apparent what *bow chicka bow bow* is referring to but it may refer to the link between black lights and sex.

Sexual innuendo is one of the main points of interest in the more debased forms of banter which ”taking the piss” can be thought revolve around. In addition, I have chosen to apply one of the categories used in Haverinen (2012) where she studied the use of memes as a form of fandom jargon in two different discussion boards, LiveJournal and Journalfen. One of her categories was titled “sarcasm or hostility”. Her findings proved that sarcasm was and can be used in an inclusionary and an exclusionary manner regarding the point which the speaker wishes to make. It is the hypothesis of this thesis that sarcasm and other forms of derogatory humour are used by the in-group for the in-group as it functions as the social glue which binds the channel members together. It needs to be pointed out that my idea of banter and **positive (im)politeness** include three elements, namely: **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness**. With these three it is possible to distinguish banter from cases of bullying or other one-sided and actually impolite incidents.

7.3. Sarcasm, Mocking and Hostility

The focus of this section is on the darker side of banter: sarcasm, mocking and hostility. The section starts from the borderline cases of more gentle wordplay and playing with ideas which were discussed in the previous section. After this the attention turns to the direct attacks to persons' face which have not been thoroughly studied in their sense of being used for positive purposes, i.e. acting as the social glue which binds groups together. The following is an attempt to fill the gap left by the impoliteness research carried out by Culpeper (1996, 2003, and 2011) and

Bousfield (2003, 2008). I suggest that these cases could be seen as evidence of what I have chosen to call **positive (im)politeness**.

Beginning with the more subtle cases of sarcasm and mocking, the first example deals with <PorkKnob`> asking the other chat members what they did during the weekend. Of the more frequent chatters <chmodwork>, <TwinTurbo> and <]BalRoG[> answer by describing their weekend's activities. Of these, the latter has worked whereas <TwinTurbo> has slept and <chmodwork> tells that he *procrastinated... twice!* which triggers a playful response by <]BalRoG[> who inquires how this differs from <chmod>'s weekdays. The discussion then turns to working on weekends and the question of what type of work <]BalRoG[> does. As the persons know each other reasonably well, the playful poke at <]BalRoG[> getting to handle explosives in the mine where he works makes more sense to anyone who has witnessed him acting erratically as he has been out drinking or done so at home.

Session Start: Mon Apr 26 17:46:54 2010
--
[18:30] <PorkKnob`> **anyone do anything good this weekend?**
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> I worked..
[18:31] <TwinTurbo> **I slept...**
[18:31] <chmodwork> **i procrastinated**
[18:31] <PorkKnob`> **weekend work is something I don't miss, so that sucks balrog!**
[18:31] <chmodwork> **twice!**
[18:31] <PorkKnob`> **chmod, and how does that differ from the weekdays? :P**
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> I work 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off so I have to work weekends
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> :P
[18:31] <chmodwork> **heh**
[18:32] <PorkKnob`> balrog, ahhh hmmm.. **that's pretty cool then, I could handle that**
[18:32] <PorkKnob`> **well.. depends.. what do you do? =)**
[18:32] <]BaLRoG[> **I work on a mine.. if work is the right word**
[18:33] <PorkKnob`> ahh neat, strip or underground or some other strange mining tech I dunnno about =)
[18:33] <]BaLRoG[> well it's an open pit now, transitions to undergroud
[18:34] <chmodwork> **what do you mine?**
[18:34] <PorkKnob`> **and most importantly.. do you get to handle exposives? :D**
[18:35] <]BaLRoG[> **umm... no, they ain;t that stupid**
[18:35] <]BaLRoG[> diamonds moddy
[18:35] <PorkKnob`> **haha. boom.**
[18:37] * PorkKnob` gets a jar of peanut butter and looks @ chocolategal
[18:37] <]BaLRoG[> akkk brb
[18:38] * **PorkKnob` tosses balrog his pickax on the way out**
–

Session Close (missing but the next session starts at 18:48)

The example above shows the chatters taking turns to poke fun at each other and the idea of <]BalRoG[> getting to handle explosives at his work. In addition, <chmodwork> indicated that <chmod> is using Internet Relay Chat at his work which means he procrastinates there on weekdays as well. He offers positive feedback to <]BalRoG[> who points this out after <chmod> has said that he procrastinated (twice!) during the weekend. It is worth pointing out how <PorkKnob`> plays with the idea of <]BaLRoG[> handling explosives *haha. boom.* and how he tosses <]BaLRoG[>'s pickaxe to him as he needs to go away from the keyboard for a while.

In the next example the other side of <]BalRoG[> is revealed. Prior to this exchange <]BalRoG[> has told that he has been drinking at the pub but that he got bored and chose to come home. He has been pestering <^ph^> before this and continues to do so afterwards. Notice how he has changed his nickname, <]BalRoG[> → <]BaRLoG[>, to indicate his mood:

Session Start: Fri Jul 09 16:30:01 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[18:04] ***]BaRLoG[bites ^ph^s ass**
[18:04] *** +^ph^ gets the disinfectant**
[18:05] <ZeBoxx> o_o
[18:05] <+^ph^> zebux
[18:05] <chmod^> rog: did you qualify?
[18:05] ***]BaRLoG[drinks the disinfectant... good idea wouldn't want to get a moutn infection**
[18:05] <ZeBoxx> phooey
[18:05] **<+^ph^> rofl**
[18:05] <chmod^> heya ZeBoxx
[18:05] <]BaRLoG[> I havemnt played for ages moddy
[18:05] **<+^ph^> roggy thats just rude!**
[18:05] <ZeBoxx> heya modders
[18:06] **<]BaRLoG[> rude?**
[18:06] **<]BaRLoG[> me?**
[18:07] **<chmod^> say it aint so**

Session Close: Fri Jul 09 18:10:27 2010

The idea of this rude drunk, <]BaRLoG[>, having access to explosives is not a comforting idea. In addition to the change of nickname, the idea of drinking the disinfectant underlines the image of a habitual drunkard. The drunken behaviour can

be said to be evident in the typographical error of *moutn* not “mouth” infection. When <^ph^> claims that <]BaRLoG[> is just being rude, he replies by acting mock-innocence *rude? me?* which is further emphasised by <chmod^>'s ironic *say it aint so*. The rudeness can be then translated into ”I would never dream of being rude” in his innocent sounding *rude? me?*

Sometimes there are male chatters who harass channel members with female nicknames. In the next excerpt <big_marco> has sent private messages to <AnnaS__> describing the size of his sexual organ which has led to the first verbal outburst made by her. She goes on to make fun of this general tendency of random male chatters trying to have cybersex with female chatters:

Session Start: Sun Apr 11 20:01:02 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[20:48] <AnnaS__> big_marco: **I don't care about your dick size!**
[20:48] <chmod^> heh
[20:49] <AnnaS__> **do I message everybody and say hi I got big boobs?**
[20:50] <AnnaS__> who cares
[20:50] <kb0rpj-wx> **AnnaS__: a lot more people would talk to you if you did that**
[20:50] <kb0rpj-wx> hehe
[20:50] <AnnaS__> :O
[20:50] <AnnaS__> **kb0rpj-wx: I got big boobs, wanna chat?**
[20:51] <kb0rpj-wx> sure
[20:51] <AnnaS__> **let's cyber :)** (=let's have cyber sex)
[20:51] <AnnaS__> lol
[20:51] <kb0rpj-wx> **yippie**
[20:51] <AnnaS__> lol
[20:51] <chmod^> **dont forget to use protection**
[20:51] <chmod^> **ie a virus scanner**
Session Close: Sun Apr 11 21:39:08 2010

If female chatters said that they had big breasts, the majority of horny male chatters would want to talk to them as <kb0rpj-wx> suggests. This notion is carried on by <AnnaS__> who invites him to engage in cybersex with her which makes him respond by saying *yippie* resembling to the joy of men getting to have sex. The humorous interaction is taken forward by <chmod^> who acts as the responsible adult and reminds the two chatters *to use protection* which means *a virus scanner.* This type of sexual innuendo and explicit sexual acts were surprisingly common in the log files considering the channel's strive for being a ”clean channel”.

The next case the idea of being ”pussy-whipped”, i.e. men acting nicer than they normally would in order to increase the chances of having sex with a woman, is brought up by <^Timm> who does the mistake of crossing the line of bad taste in his first comment to <SassyVixen> by saying *thats a good bitch*. She has asked <Jondlar> what he would like to chat about and his mind this ruins the fun of starting a conversation with someone. She then agrees to keep quiet which <^Timm> applauds in an inappropriate manner:

Session Start: Sat Oct 10 09:58:36 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:09] <Jondlar> **nobody chats :/**
[10:09] <Jondlar> **i think irc is dying**
[10:09] <Dying_Beauty#> aw
[10:10] <SassyVixen> **what would you like to chat about?**
[10:10] <Dying_Beauty#> like me?
[10:10] <Jondlar> SassyVixen **if ppl ask before chatting then it wont be fun**
[10:11] <SassyVixen> my bad
[10:11] *** SassyVixen shuts up**
[10:11] <Tofer> sure lets talk about you
[10:11] <+^Timm> **thats a good bitch !**
[10:11] <SassyVixen> **excuse me?**
[10:11] <+^Timm> **i love you**
[10:12] <SassyVixen> **that's right**
[10:12] * EtherKnot **checks Timm's programing for a General Fault**.
[10:12] <+^Jenn^> GPF!
[10:12] <+^Timm> **pussy whipped isnt exactly a fault**
--
Session Close: Sat Oct 10 10:55:45 2009

Notice how <^Timm> quickly changes tactics and goes from *thats a good bitch!* to *i love you* indicating the way in which he becomes like a dog with his tail between its hind legs showing the lower status in hierarchy. <EtherKnot> playfully checks <^Timm>'s programming for a general fault which he replies by explaining that being ”pussy-whipped” is not exactly a fault but more of a general feature of the male gender.

After a week has gone from the previous example the two chatters, <SassyVixen> and <^Timm>, have already developed have closer rapport which is seen in the next brief excerpt:

Session Start: Sat Oct 17 09:03:04 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone

--
[09:12] <SassyVixen> I'm singing
[09:12] <+^Timm> well **sing with yer tits out**
[09:12] <SassyVixen> **timmeh, you're a pig**
[09:12] <+^Timm> **i love you too**
[09:13] <SassyVixen> **I know pumpkin butt, I love you too :P**
–
Session Close: Sat Oct 17 09:30:29 2009

The sarcastic exchanges of *you're a pig*, *I love you too* and *I know pumpkin butt, I love you too* are clear examples of how close friends may act around each other. This seems to follow the idea of *conversational joking relationship* (Norrick 1993) and *conventionalized* use of impoliteness (cf. Culpeper 2011) of which the unusual and possibly inappropriate nicknames are one indication. As we move on to the darker side of banter these nicknames or calling someone names becomes more frequent.

Previously one of the chatters, <amethyst`>, asked if *any bastard* was awake and now when she joins the channel <]BaLRoG[> greets her in the similar manner, *amethyst` you sexy bitch*, after <chmod^> and <]BaLRoG[> have ridiculed <darine> for asking if there are any Lebanese chatters on the channel:

Session Start: Fri Jun 25 18:47:22 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[18:58] <darine> any **lebanese** here?
03[18:58] * Joins: amethyst` (~BlondeOz@114.142.165.125)
[18:58] <]BaLRoG[> is that like **a lesbian**?
[18:58] <chmod^> **i come from babylon**
[18:58] <]BaLRoG[> **amethyst` you sexy bitch**
[18:59] * chmod^ releases the stay puft marshmello man on amethyst`
[19:00] <chmod^> 587 in the round 1
[19:00] <amethyst`> **baLRoG! balls dropped off from the cold yet?**
–
[19:03] <]BaLRoG[> better than being **down there living in a freezer**
[19:03] <]BaLRoG[> though I suppose you would **go through less ice to keep your drinks cold**
[19:04] <amethyst`> **that's true, just need to put the beer out on the back patio.**
[19:04] <]BaLRoG[> **no abos to steel it?** (abos= aboriginal people)
[19:04] <amethyst`> haha
[19:05] <amethyst`> **I have a lot of rifles :)**
[19:05] <amethyst`> brb
[19:06] <]BaLRoG[> **you have guns??**
Session Close: Fri Jun 25 19:06:13 2010

In the session <amethyst`> describes how the weather has been so cold that starting the car has been problematic. <]BaLRoG[> introduces the positive aspect of the

coldness, no need to put the drinks on ice to keep them cold, which <amethyst`> says to be what she has been doing. The possible thieves will get to stare at the barrel end of her rifles. This, the drinking of beer and her conversational style create a somewhat masculine image of her[21]. The use of descriptive imagery of the weather being so cold that it makes one's testicles fall off adds to the masculinity. In the omitted part <]BaLRoG[> explained that the temperature was 24 degrees Celsius where he lives, i.e. Australia. <amethyst`> asks <]BaLRoG[> if his testicles have frozen and dropped off due to the freezing temperature. It is unclear where <amethyst`> lives but the freezing temperature in late June does narrow the list down.

The previous examples have given some idea of the conversational style in which <^Timm> types and he seems to be one of the common targets for ridicule as the next case shows. ”Martyn” refers to <^Timm> and then the line of association leads to <tampaJesse> and <^Jenn^> talking sarcastically about Martin Lawrence and one of the characters, Shanaynay, he acts in his own television show. This again gives some idea of how one word or utterance triggers associations which may end up being quite remote from the original topic of discussion:

> Session Start: Tue Mar 16 00:11:28 2010
> Session Ident: #chatzone
> --
> [23:17] <+^Jenn^> **Martyn likes to suck balls.**
> [23:17] <+^Jenn^> **chocolate salty balls.**
> [23:17] <AnnaS_> :O
> [23:17] <tampaJesse> **wonder what Shanaynay has to say about that**
> [23:17] <+^Jenn^> **don't know, should we ask Martin Lawrence about that?**
> [23:17] <tampaJesse> sure
> [23:17] <+^Jenn^> good luck with that... let me know how it goes.
> [23:17] <tampaJesse> **something tells me he's waist deep in a pile of coke though**
> [23:19] <+^Jenn^> lol
> –
> Session Close: Mon Mar 15 23:50:41 2010

It is worth pointing out how <^Jenn^> attacks the face of <^Timm> who does not reply in this example but later on the two are seen in bouts of verbal attacks. Here we see a way in which a female chatter undermines the sexuality of a male chat member by calling him a homosexual. The image of ”sucking balls”, i.e. testicles, is carried

[21] It is unclear whether <amethyst`> is a man or a woman, but I assume that she is a woman

on by the association of an episode of *South Park* (see Alhola, forthcoming, for an in-depth analysis of impoliteness in South Park) where the character Chef is selling his famous ”chocolate salty balls”. He sings “suck on my chocolate salty balls / put 'em in your mouth and suck 'em” which acts as sexual innuendo to the female characters wandering around the county fair where Chef is selling his confectionery.

The example above showed sarcastic remarks directed towards a person, Martin Lawrence, who cannot defend himself as they are not on the channel. This goes against the grain of not offending a person who is not present and who is not able to show that they are can take the joke. The drug problem of Martin Lawrence is ridiculed (i.e. him being waist-deep in cocaine) and this type of putdown humour relies on the shared knowledge of the current events in Hollywood where the actors and actresses, stereotypically speaking, tend to think of themselves as better persons than the normal citizens of the Earth. Hollywood celebrities are normally held as prime candidates for ridicule and this was one of the features in Hancock (2004) where the verbal irony focused on the fashion mistakes of celebrities.

Two months prior to this the two chatters, <^Timm> and <^Jenn^>, were engaged in the following discussion where <^Timm> is asking the score of a Dallas Cowboys game. The conversation is some ways similar to sibling rivalry or very close friends talking very harshly to each other. This same couple provided the best examples of **positive (im)politeness** which was **mutual**, **interactive** and **playful**. What is interesting is how the interaction begins in a normal manner and ends up being a mud-slinging contest between the two chatters:

Session Start: Sun Jan 10 08:35:01 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:54] <+^Timm> did the cowboys lose ?
[10:54] <+^Timm> FOOK
[10:54] <crouton> what?
[10:54] <+^Timm> theyre winnin
[10:55] <^Jenn^> yeah
[10:55] <crouton> hahah why is WALL-E on the top romance movies list on imdb
[10:55] <^Jenn^> they're def winnin'
[10:55] <^Jenn^> heh
[10:55] <^Jenn^> because WALL-E loves EVE!
[10:55] <+^Timm> **shut yer face jenn**
[10:55] <^Jenn^> **suck yer dick, martyn**
[10:56] <+^Timm> shouldnt you be **out there gettin yer arse trained**
[10:56] <^Jenn^> nah

[10:56] <^Jenn^> too cold.
[10:56] <crouton> **ah yes, ass training**
[10:56] <+^Timm> **you giant vage curtain**
Session Close: Sun Jan 10 10:57:11 2010

It is unclear whether <^Timm> wants the Cowboys to win or lose but his reaction to <^Jenn^>'s ”they are definitely winning” would indicate that he wants them to lose. In addition, the expletive *FOOK* (i.e. *fuck!*) followed by *theyre winnin* suggests that <^Timm> wants them to lose and that he may have waged a bet against the Cowboys. From <^Jenn^>'s gleeful *they're def winnin'* it is possible to surmise that she is rooting for the Cowboys. This rivalry between two persons not supporting the same team leads to the impolite exchange of *shut yer face jenn* and *suck yer dick, martyn* which is not only against the common idea of netiquette but also against the rules of face-to-face interaction in which we are said to respect the face others. Thus, the last utterance by <^Timm> *you giant vage curtain* is something which should not occur in any type of conversation. Calling someone a ”giant vaginal curtain” is against all rules of conduct online or in real life. This does not stop people such as <^Timm> and <^Jenn^> in engaging in online interaction which seems to go against the grain of the accepted norms of talking to our near and dear ones.

At this point of the thesis the examples move from playful wordplay to seemingly hostile remarks which are followed by similar ones. In the following extract the session starts by the chatters discussing their favourite seasons, why they love a particular season and how they perceive them as a part of the cycle of seasons. <Dariana`> tells that she likes autumn because of the foliage which turns to lovely colours. This is something which <Micky^> cannot understand as in his mind the autumn foliage is made of dead leaves. <^Timm> reacts to this by ironically saying that *maybe she likes death* which would mean that she loved winter, i.e. *complete death*. This is against the common idea of people disliking death. These remarks trigger the following exchange of insults between <^Jenn^> and <^Timm> whom we already saw in the previous examples:

Session Start: Fri Apr 02 21:44:25 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
[21:44] * Now talking in #chatzone

[22:43] <+Dariana`> **I love autumn ... all the lovely colors**
[22:43] <Micky^> **lovely colours ??? autumn leaves ... I'd call them**

dead leaves
[22:44] <Micky^> rains ...
[22:44] <+Dariana`> yellows. orange... red.. lovely
[22:44] <+^Timm> **maybe she likes death**
[22:44] <Micky^> jackets ...
[22:44] <+Dariana`> some greens as well
[22:44] <Micky^> spring and summer ... those are the perfect seasons
[22:44] <+Dariana`> it's more like cleaning out and clearing the way for fresh new season
[22:45] <+^Jenn^> I like oak & maple leaves, they're pretty to look at :p
[22:45] <+^Timm> **and then complete death.... winter**
[22:45] <Micky^> the autumn just gets me down
[22:45] <+Dariana`> summer is too hot.. and then you have the bright ball of pain.. no thanks
[22:45] <Fifth_ID> autumn = when chicks are ready to hook up, nothing to be down about there
[22:45] *** +^Jenn^ stabs Martyn repeatedly with a rusty spork.. why won't you DIE already :P**
[22:45] <+Dariana`> winter is just a cocoon for rebirth
[22:45] <+^Timm> because i live to pester you
[22:45] <+^Jenn^> obviously.
[22:46] <+^Timm> and shouldnt you be sucking on a cock or something
[22:46] <+Dariana`> shouldn't you?
[22:46] <+^Jenn^> Martyn: well, if you'd come in from the living room, I would.
[22:46] * +^Jenn^ smirks
[22:46] <+^Timm> but im in the bedroom
[22:47] <+^Jenn^> Martyn: of course you are... make sure you clean those anal beads & the fleshlight when you're done.
[22:47] <+^Timm> flashlight ?
[22:47] <+^Timm> you cant find yer own hole ?
[22:48] <+Dariana`> he needs a flashlight and a magnifying glass to see the fleshlight.. lol
[22:48] <+^Timm> i thought yours by now woulda been huge
[22:48] * +Dariana` ducks
[22:48] <+^Timm> i dunno can you even see yer vage without a mirror Dariana`
[22:49] <+^Jenn^> Martyn's just pissed off cos he has to whack off all the time cos the local whores won't touch him anymore.
[22:49] <+^Timm> indeed
[22:49] <+^Jenn^> if you wouldn't have given them a list of STDs that you have, maybe you'd be getting laid right now instead of pestering us.
[22:50] <+^Timm> its just herpies
[22:50] <+^Timm> and maybe anal bead warts
[22:51] * +Dariana` (~ASLsux@204.110.227.11) Quit (Ping timeout#)
[22:51] <+^Timm> but im sure youre vage will get cut out way before me wiener falls off ^Jenn^
[22:51] <+^Jenn^> nah
[22:51] <+^Jenn^> my vajayjay will go on.
[22:52] <+`Fyoosh> you guys are hilarious... arguing like brother and sister
---
Session Close: Fri Apr 02 23:00:36 2010

The extract has a lot of **positive (im)politeness** which is recognised by <`Fyoosh>

who understands the humour of the exchange of insults. <`Fyoosh> says *you guys are hilarious... arguing like brother and sister* which explains the normal frame of interaction where this type of language might be found. The sibling rivalry or conventionalised ritual insults (cf. Labov 1972, Culpeper 2011) and its effect on language use is food for thought for future research. This type of apparently impolite humour of sexual innuendo of explicit nature seems to be very germane to the darker side of banter online. It is again worth pointing out how the discussion begins by being normal and casual and then turns into a mud-slinging contest between <^Timm> and <^Jenn^> of which the latter is a mother of a small child. The everyday conception of a mother using this type of language would be appalling.

These two chatters, <^Timm> and <^Jenn^>, seem to revel in this type of mud-slinging. The tone of <^Jenn^>'s utterances changes from *I like oak & maple leaves, they're pretty to look at* to her action *^Jenn^ stabs Martyn repeatedly with a rusty spork.. why won't you DIE already* which <^Timm> replies with a mirthless *because i live to pester you*. He then returns to their normal, yet extremely impolite to the common chatters, style of exchanging insults by asking *shouldnt you be sucking on a cock or something* which <Dariana`> replies on in behalf of <^Jenn^> by asking <^Timm> *shouldn't you* [be sucking on a cock]*?* <^Jenn^> suggests that if he would come in from the living room she would do so. He goes on to explain that he is in the bedroom which leads to <^Jenn^> saying *of course you are... make sure you clean those anal beads & the fleshlight when you're done* which describes the activities she thinks he is engaged in at that time. He acts like he does not know what a ”fleshlight[22]” is. He intentionally misunderstands the word and pokes fun at <^Jenn^> have problems in finding her own hole, i.e. vagina, which according to him should be huge due to the amount of sex she has had and possibly due to the childbirth as well.

<Dariana`> comes to help <^Jenn^> again even though she manages well without her help. <Dariana`> goes on to suggest that <^Timm> *needs a flashlight and a magnifying glass to see the fleshlight* which probably means that <^Timm> has a small penis and he is so fat that he needs help in using the fleshlight. This is met by <^Timm>'s sarcastic comment of <Dariana`> being so overweight that she

[22] Fleshlight is a sex toy the inside of which resembles a vagina but from the outside it is similar to a large flashlight

needs a mirror to see her vagina. After this <Dariana`> quits Internet Relay Chat due to a ping timeout, i.e. it has taken too long for the connection to function properly, which would indicate some problem in the Internet connection.

The verbal rivalry continues when <^Jenn^> says that <^Timm> is angry because he has to masturbate constantly since the local prostitutes refuse to touch him anymore. She suggests that, if <^Timm> would not have given the whores a list of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) he has, he would be having sex with the prostitutes and he would not be on the channel pestering the others. Coming up with this imaginary explanation seems to give <^Jenn^> the upper hand and <^Timm> is forced to salvage the situation by admitting to only having herpes and *anal bead warts* due to extensive self-sodomising with anal beads. He then turns the attention to <^Jenn^>'s vagina which he says *will get cut out* a long time before his penis falls off. She seems to come out of the verbal battle as the winner as she says that her vagina will endure. It is worth noting that even though the language used seems to be quite coarse the two chatters use *wiener* and *vajayjay* instead of *penis* or *cock* and *vagina* in the final comments.

This case does in my mind offer a perfect example of my idea of **positive (im)politeness** which relies on **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness.** The myriad exchanges of verbal abuse go against the idea of making a good impression and acting politely which the Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) tries to achieve. The next cases are focused on the more hostile interactions between the chat members of #chatzone. Using <^Timm> as the link connecting the examples it is possible to search the log files for his utterances and see if they are useful. It is apparent that certain members use more ”impoliteness” than others. As the previous extracts have shown <^Jenn^>, <^Timm> and possibly <Dariana`> can be used for the searches. In addition, searching for profanities and words related to sex seem to provide enough data for the researcher.

In the following cases the humour becomes more hostile and the action typed on the screen resembles violence which in real life would be frowned upon and most likely it would lead to criminal charges. This thesis has not focused on online bullying or teasing in the negative sense and future research in this field is needed in order for the parents to fully understand what their children are daily faced with. It

ought to be clear that this type of impoliteness has the positive nature at its core. Persons are known to handle face-attacks and the relationship relies on the give-and-take of impolite exchanges. It is the conventionalised idea of ritual insults (Labov 1972, Culpeper 2011) which is at the core of the previous example and the following two extracts showing hostility.

The first hostile excerpt displays <^Timm> who tries to steal something from <SabrYna`>'s handbag as she responds by playfully hitting him with the handbag. This leads to <^Timm> calling <SabrYna`> a *filthy beast* which <Lynnie``> reflects back to him by saying that it is he, in fact, who is the *filthy beast*. It might be that <Lynnie``> knows <^Timm>'s conversational style (see page 79) and offers to help <SabrYna`> who, as French Canadian, may not be able to verbally defend for herself. As the example shows she does not need any help and she displays her quick wit in saying that <^Timm> cannot sue a Canadian person. He, however, says he can do so in the Hague and the issue has become international. It appears that <^Timm> loses coherence in his utterances and the two women question his medication which brings up the notion of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) users being insane (see the example with <andy-uk> and <Lavender> on page 82):

Session Start: Sun Oct 25 09:42:07 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[09:56] <+^Timm> i think ima steal some of **saabs handbag**
[09:56] *** Sab**rYna` **slams timm with said handbag**
[09:57] <+^Timm> **you filthy beast**
[09:57] <+Lynnie``> you go girl!
[09:57] <+^Timm> **DONT TOUCH ME**
[09:57] <+^Timm> ima sue (=I'm going to sue you)
[09:57] <+Lynnie``> **I thought you were Tim**
[09:57] * +Lynnie`` grins
[09:57] <SabrYna`> **You cannot sue a Canadian!**
[09:57] <+^Timm> **i can in the hague**
[09:58] <+^Timm> **THATS RIGHT ITS INTERNATIONAL**
[09:58] <SabrYna`> **Ole yeller stfu!** (=shut the fuck up!)
[09:58] <+^Timm> **suck me hairy nip !**
[09:58] <SabrYna`> **>.<**
[09:58] <+^Timm> **thats rought its ok you can cough them hairballs up**
[09:58] <+^Timm> I LIKE YOUR PANTS AROUND YOUR FEET
[09:59] <+^Timm> YOURE LIKE MY FAVOURITE DAMN DISEASE
[09:59] <+Lynnie``> huh?
[09:59] <SabrYna`> **What's wrong with him , Lynnie``?**
[09:59] <+Lynnie``> **I wish I knew**
[09:59] <SabrYna`> **He needs to UP the dose**.
[09:59] <SabrYna`> timm - **new meds this week ? :S**

[09:59] <+^Timm> yeah **little weaker**
[09:59] <+^Timm> **they is weening me off**
[10:00] <SabrYna`> **lol**
–
Session Close: Sun Oct 25 12:12:44 2009

The use of *hairballs* refers to his hairy balls, i.e. his scrotum, which he offers to <SabrYna`>. He tells her to suck his hairy nipples, *suck me hairy nip!*, which is used in a slightly hostile manner as a response to her demand that he should be quiet, *stfu*, i.e. "shut the fuck up!" <SabrYna`> asks <Lynnie``> if she knows what is wrong with <^Timm> but she does not know. <SabrYna`> playfully brings up the question of medication as she inquires if he is on new medication. He responds by admitting that his medication has been changed into a slightly weaker one as the medical staff is weaning him off. This concludes the discussion in an almost normal manner. The discussion could have been listed under jointly produced narratives, if I had chosen to add that category as well.

In the second example the themes of sexual organs, violence, sex toys and feline mammals are introduced in a discussion by <cat|woman>, <Malevolence> and <`Rick> who take turns in trying to verbally outwit the other. There is no clear reason for <`Rick> joining the conversation only after <cat|woman> has said that she would return shortly. Thus, the logical explanation would be that he does not wish to offend her face even though his utterances do fan the flames set ablaze by <Malevolence>. <`Rick> wonders whether <cat|woman> is a tigress or a cougar, i.e. an older woman with a sexual interest in younger men. Here the use of *tigress* probably refers to the age of <cat|woman>. This is responded to by <Malevolence> who suggests that she is *a withered old housecat with hairball problems* which depicts her as someone has not left the house for some time and possibly someone who likes to perform oral sex on her husband. It is difficult to fully understand what <Malevolence> means by the latter utterance but it does not seem to be anything positive which is underlined by <`Rick>'s description of a *putrid litterbox*:

Session Start: Thu Apr 29 16:33:12 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[16:40] * +**Malevolence punches cat|woman in the cooter**
[16:40] <+Malevolence> **HELP! MY HAND IS STUCK**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **what's a cooter?**

[16:42] <+Malevolence> Oh.
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **Vagina.**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **it is???**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **i thought for a moment it was the a** lol**
[16:42] *** cat|woman thwaps Malevolence with a mallet**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **You'd like that, wouldn't you**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **You sick bitch**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **oh i'm sure you love it even more than i do hahahahaha**
[16:42] *** +Malevolence turns away in disgust**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **Put your strap-on away**
[16:43] *** cat|woman whacks Malevolence with a mop**
[16:43] <cat|woman> **you want to use yours instead?**
[16:43] <cat|woman> lol brb
[16:44] <`Rick> **wonder if she is a tigress or a cougar** ?
[16:46] <+Malevolence> she's **a withered old housecat.**
[16:46] <`Rick> **eew**
[16:46] <+Malevolence> **with hairball problems.**
[16:46] <`Rick> **gotta be one putrid litterbox**
Session Close: Thu Apr 29 16:47:40 2010

In the extract above the violence performed by <Malevolence> is done by the act of pretending to hit <cat|woman> in her vagina which leads to his hand getting stuck in there. The excerpt shows that <cat|woman> is able to defend for herself. Even though she does not know what *cooter* means she understands the general direction of it. She mistook the word to mean her rear end but she does not flinch as <Malevolence> suggests that she loves anal sex which causes him to display mock-disgust as he tells her to put her *strap-on away*. Her ability to take insults and give them back in similar fashion is further seen in the utterance where she asks if <Malevolence> wants her to use his strap-on[23]. Dominating the discussion is underlined by her laughing and leaving the channel which means that <Malevolence> cannot retort her witty comeback. This leaves the two men discussing the unattractive features of <cat|woman> who may actually be more attractive than the two male chatters. The lack of a physical presence or photographs added to the nicknames leaves this question unanswered.

The examples given above have shown particular skill in creating situations where the chatters have devised scenes ranging from flirting to sexual behaviour described in detail. It is worth pointing out that the women of Internet Relay Chat are

[23] *Strap-on* is a sex toy in which a dildo is attached to a harness. Using this type of toy on a man would in some sense emasculate him and set him in an submissive role which would make him as the passive participant and take the woman's role.

in no means the weaker sex. Caring mothers may engage in brutal depictions of male channel members being pitiful excuses for men. The case of <Lynnie``> and <SabrYna`> joining their powers in verbally beating <^Timm> provides an example of female camaraderie, a feature which is more commonly understood as a male form of group dynamics. The examples given above (<Dariana`> helping <^Jenn^>, <Lynnie``> being helped by <CdnBadGirl> and <Lynnie``> helping <SabrYna`>) indicates a will to defend their fellow chat-sisters against verbal attacks.

With this idea of joining forces to help a fellow chat member the focus turns to the different conversational styles (cf. Tannen 1984) the chatters seemed to use. The following is a brief introduction into variation in language use on the channel. As the first subsection of this chapter explained, the majority of the discussion seemed to confirm the findings of Danet et al. (1997) and Valanne (2001) in their notion of the language in Internet Relay Chat being *inherently playful*.

7.4. Conversational Styles on the Channel

As one would predict, the majority of the discussion in Internet Relay Chat is carried out in a manner which underlined the *inherent playfulness* introduced by Danet et al. (1997) and further described by Valanne (2001). However, it is possible to set the chatters on some sort of scalar distribution according to the use of impoliteness in their normal interaction on the channel #chatzone.

The majority of the chat members tend to keep the discussions light and casual but they have no problems in divulging personal information on the public flow of the text. If the normal and preferred way to deal personal issues is to discuss them in private with close friends, then this type of public description of real-life issues may be considered a brave action or simply annoying and not suited for the channel. Part of the core members of the channel #chatzone can be said to include <Dariana`>, <]BalRoG[>, <Malevolence>, <chmod>, <^Jenn^>, <^Timm>, <Dustyfogg>, <`Rick>, <Shane`> and others mentioned earlier in relation to the examples given above. Of these the normal, i.e. more casual, style was used mainly by the female members of the channel who have children, e.g. <Dariana`>.

The slightly more flirtatious style was used by <^Jenn^> when she talked to <chmod> and <Shane`> when he talked to female chat members. Usually <Shane`>'s flirtatious behaviour was sarcastically commented by <`Rick> if he happened to be on the channel and noticed this behaviour. Sometimes the two would engage in playful verbal jousting as in the case with <ForeignFrien>. <Dustyfogg> seemed to use both casual and more playful styles depending on the persons with whom they were interacting. It was interesting to notice how <^Jenn^>'s style became more hostile and filled with **positive (im)politeness** when she talked to or about <^Timm>. Their styles shifted from the casual spectrum to the more in-your-face type of derogatory humour and the whole interaction seemed to be a long list of insults which were met with responding insults as the previous subsection showed.

In the more aggressive side of the conversational styles there were <]BalRoG[> and <Malevolence> who did not seem to have any problems in acting in a manner which in real-life and online surroundings as well is generally considered to be unacceptable and rude. It can be said that in their cases the nickname[24] seem to suit their conversational style. Their explanation for this sort of behaviour was “this is how I type” which in their mind absolves them from all sins committed on the channel. One case which is among the examples given in this thesis displayed <^ph^> and <]BaRLoG[> also known as <]BaLRoG[> who was temporarily “disowned” by <^ph^> when a chat member asked if the apparently drunk <]BaLRoG[> was their friend. In the omitted discussion this guy was handled in a way which reminds a family reunion taking care of the drunk uncle or some other relative: downplaying the close connection to the said individual. To the best of my knowledge, this situation was not later held against <]BaLRoG[> or maybe the others are just used to his behaviour while under the influence of alcohol.

If we consider this one man being the drunk uncle of the family, then the question of mother and father figures of the online family becomes evident. It is no surprise that the older female persons with children of their own tend to be the ones who care for the well-being of others online as well. There did not seem to be any clear father figures on the channel. This may be due to the fact that there is no real need for an authority on #chatzone. The discussion is kept light and casual which

[24] Malevolence, i.e. 'wishing evil to others' and Balrog, the huge fiery demon(s) of Tolkien

means avoiding topics which normally cause debates such as religion and politics. There are the occasional trolls who try to start fights on the channel but these persons are normally ignored.

As the chat members become closer to each other, they start using nicknames about the nicknames which may follow the line of <^Jenn^> becoming “jennypoo” or adding *wifey* to the female chatter's name, e.g. *Suzey* becoming *suzey wifey*. This type of behaviour was more common in female-female dyadic pairs. Terms of endearment can be quite common if the persons know each offline as well, i.e. they have talked on the phone or even met face-to-face. What is important for this thesis is the way in which the persons talk online and in this sense the idea behind <Fyoosh`>'s comment about the sibling rivalry is one which is useful. More research is needed on the long-term effects of frequenting a channel. In addition, a longitudinal study on this channel might provide more insight into the developments in the discourse styles of the channel members.

With this and other questions in mind it is time to turn to the conclusion of this thesis. The two previous pages have only touched upon the issue of conversational styles in Internet Relay Chat and this too will be left as a topic for future research.

8. Conclusion

To the best of my knowledge this thesis is the first in its kind: an attempt to focus on the ways in which derogatory humour is used to build and maintain social cohesion in an online setting. In some ways the first steps of this MA thesis were taken while I was writing my BA thesis which was completed in 2007. In the process of going through the data of BA thesis and prior to writing it, I had noticed how the characters on *Frasier* were using irony and sarcasm in a way which is similar to the idea of banter in this thesis. The use of sarcasm in particular was noticeable in the conversational styles of some of the characters. Such as in the present thesis, the derogatory humour acted out in forms of sarcasm and verbal irony tended to enforce

the close connection between the (extended) family members.

The present thesis continues on the path I chose some five years ago. Instead of focusing on the linguistic aspects of irony and sarcasm, this thesis has focused on the use of banter and derogatory humour as a form of social cohesion. The previous linguistic research conducted on *banter* has been sporadic and further research is still needed for a better understanding of the phenomenon. In order to cover the main ideas behind the online use of banter, I have chosen to base the theoretical background of this thesis on three major themes: *social cohesion*, *banter* and *computer-mediated communication*. It is possible to replace some of these themes with relevant sections on (im)politeness, sociolinguistics, networking and others but this thesis has also briefly touched upon these issues.

The theoretical background is begun with a chapter on *social cohesion* and what I have chosen to call **positive (im)politeness**. In this chapter (see chapter 2) I set out to describe the importance of the feeling of belonging to the group and how the use of derogatory humour seems to act as the social glue which binds the group together. This type of humour was further explained in the next chapter which focused on the phenomenon of *banter* (see chapter 3) and the difficulties of defining it. In analysing the results it became clear that the use of humour was so intrinsic to the conversational style used on the channel #chatzone that it was difficult to discern or choose clear examples of banter. This has led to the results having long exchanges of highlighted (in **bold face)** examples following each other.

The final chapter (see chapter 4) of the theoretical section dealt with computer-mediated communication and its various genres (i.e. electronic mail, discussion boards, text messages sent on mobile phones and real-time chats such as Internet Relay Chat). What is worth pointing out in the linguistic study of Internet Relay Chat is the mixture of written and spoken language which the chatters use. This was seen in the results when a person tried to imitate the local dialect of Florida as he was pretending to seduce a female chatter from somewhere around that area.

Furthermore, the results confirmed the findings of Danet et al. (1997) and Valanne (2001) in the playful nature of the language in Internet Relay Chat (IRC). This *inherent playfulness* (Danet et al. 1997) made it more difficult to discern clear cases of banter in forming a sense of belonging together. It proved to be more

pertinent to focus on certain individuals who seemed to rely more on derogatory humour in their conversational style especially when they talked with their close friends. It can be assumed that these persons have developed this style of interacting in the course of time as they have learned to adapt to their styles of their online friends. Although this thesis has focused on one particular channel, I assume the findings can be generalised across Internet Relay Chat. Future research is needed on the differences between the discourse styles of the individuals online and offline. The lack of physical proximity and the anonymity of the online surroundings may lead to the persons being more open in their way of typing matters on the public forum of an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channel.

One of the shortcomings of this thesis is the lack of follow-up interviews with the core members of the channel #chatzone. A brief discussion or a questionnaire would have provided more information on the differences in online and offline conversational styles. However, focusing only on the written data, i.e. log files, does help the researcher to keep the necessary distance to the persons and issues the study is intended to analyse. As the data of this thesis is from a relatively short timespan, namely from the end of September 2009 to the end of July 2010, it is not possible to give any clear account of development in the conversational styles of the channel members. For this reason one of the future studies should be a longitudinal one focusing on the new members who start to frequent the channel. This type of study would indicate all the important phases in becoming a core member on a channel and part of a group.

In addition, it has become abundantly clear that further research is needed on what I have called **positive (im)politeness**. Much of the research tends to rely on the dichotomy of either politeness or impoliteness which has led to the neglect of cases where both seem to be present. This means that the derogatory nature of some *customary joking relationships* (cf. Norrick 1993) and conventionalised forms of mock-impoliteness (Culpeper 2011) continue to elude the fields of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics. The problem of acquiring relevant data for the studies then becomes apparent. For this type of natural language use to occur the informants would need to feel relaxed and in order to get the facial cues the persons should be videotaped without them knowing or paying attention to the camera(s).

One could assume that television shows which are not scripted to a larger degree might prove to be useful. Thus, the use of reality television or cable broadcasts with lesser restrictions might provide examples of real-life cases of **positive (im)politeness**.

This thesis started with the three-part theoretical background which was then followed by a description of the data and the methodology used for the thesis. As the material was recorded from computer-mediated communication the methodology was chosen to suit the data. The edited data in the appendices can be used for further research. As there is no corpus focused on Internet Relay Chat, the researcher has to personally acquire the data or rely on the willingness of chatters recording log files on their computers. Computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) is a relevantly recent field of study and the works of Herring (1997, 2004) proved to be integral for the methodological section of the present thesis. Given the ever-changing nature of computer-mediated communication and the Internet, it is paramount that the study of these phenomena follows the progress in them. The peer-reviewed online *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (JCMC) is an essential source for any future researcher. Furthermore, in cases where the interaction seems to follow the norms of written and spoken discourse, other peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Pragmatics* may provide the theoretical background needed for the studies.

The theoretical background worked out as I had previously planned. I only had to make some alterations. The methodological section, however, proved to be more problematic as my initial idea of using the five rules for putdown humour (Terrion and Ashforth 2002) did not work in practice as it had in theory. This led to formulating a methodological toolbox which relied on three core features: **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness**. The data used in the analysis section seemed to rely on these three core ideas. I have based my definition of banter on these ideas as they are, in my mind, the ones which draw the line between banter and other more negative forms of derogatory language use. These negative forms would include online bullying and virtual sexual harassment among others. Further research is needed on these negative forms as well.

Another problem one faces in the study of banter is the lack of examples in the articles or book chapters. Sometimes, even in the articles I have used, it would

have been useful to include more examples of the putdown humour (Terrion and Ashforth 2002) or cases of "taking the piss" (Plester and Sayers 2007). As a counter-reaction to this, I have chosen to give examples which may in some cases seem a bit too long. The intrinsic nature of banter in the inherently playful language use in Internet Relay Chat made it difficult to discern or cut out and highlight clear examples of banter. Thus, the extracts are merely touched upon and the deeper analysis is left out. I wanted to point out more the way in which the three core ideas of **mutuality**, **interactivity** and **playfulness** are present in the examples within the extracts.

This thesis shows one example of a service which brings people from all over the world to a specific forum where casual and person discussions are held on a daily basis. In the analysis section I have relied on my idea of banter and how it is used in forming closely-knit relationships of online friends who might spend time together offline as well. The results proved that derogatory humour has some instrumental meaning in the language use in Internet Relay Chat. This may be due to the inherent playfulness mentioned by Danet et al. (1997) and Valanne (2001). The surprising aspect in the results was the way in which female chatters used harsh language which follows the findings of Stapleton (2003).

The study of **positive (im)politeness** has only begun and it is the personal wish of this author that the issue will receive the attention it deserves. The importance of humour in the group dynamics and conversational processes ought to interest anyone who has a slight interest in how people use humour in everyday interaction. Personally, I can only thank my friends, those loveable bastards, for sparking this interest in me.

References

Primary Sources

Undernet #Chatzone. 2009, 2010. Log files dated from September 2009 through June 2010 (available on demand from the present author) [informant wishes to remain anonymous]

Secondary Sources

Alhola J. (forthcoming) *Impoliteness in South Park*. (working title, subject to change). Turku: Turku University.

Bechar-Israeli H. 1995. From <Bonehead> to <cLoNehEAd>: nicknames, play and identity on Internet Relay Chat. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.* 1(2) Available [online] http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue2/bechar.html (accessed 24 December 2012)

Berg B. L. 2007. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bousfield D. 2008 (2010). *Impoliteness in Interaction*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Boxer D. and Cortés-Conde F. 1997. From bonding to biting: conversational joking and identity display. *Journal of Pragmatics* 27: 275-294.

Boxer D. 2002. *Applying Sociolinguistics: Domains and Face-to-Face Interaction*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Brown P. and Levinson S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chenault, B.G. 1998. Developing personal and emotional relationships via computer-mediated communication. *Computer-Mediated Communication* 5 (5) Available [online] http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1998/may/chenault.html (accessed 24 January 2012)

Coates J. 2007. Talk in a play frame: more laughter and intimacy. *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 29-49.

Crystal D. 2001 (2006). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper J., Bousfield D. and Wichmann A. 2003. Impoliteness revisited: with

special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics* 35: 1545-1579.

Culpeper J. 2011. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Danet B., Ruedenberg L. and Rosenbaum-Tamari Y. 1997. "Hmmm... Where's All That Smoke Coming From?" Writing, Play and Performance on Internet Relay Chat. In *Network and Netplay: Virtual Groups on the Internet* (eds.) Rafaeli S., Sudweeks F. and McLaughlin M. Cambridge, MA: AAAI/MIT Press. Available [online] http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol2/issue4/danet.html (accessed 24 January 2012)

Gibbs R.W. Jr. 2000. Irony in talk among friends. *Metaphor and Symbol* 15 (1&2): 5-27.

Granovetter M. S. 1983. The strength of weak ties: a network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory* 1: 201-233.

GraphJam. 2011. What My Relationships Are Built On. [online] http://graphjam.memebase.com/ (25 January 2011, no longer available)

Gruner C.R. 1997. *The Game of Humor: A Comprehensive Theory of Why We Laugh.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Hancock J. 2004. Verbal irony use in face-to-face and computer-mediated conversations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 23(4): 447-463.

Haverinen A-K. 2012. *"His 'Wife' ? A Horse": Using Jargon to Establish and Maintain Community Boundaries on the Internet*. Turku: Turku University.

Hay J. 2000. Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 709-742.

Herring S. C. (ed.) 1997. Computer-mediated discourse analysis. Special issue of the Electronic Journal of Communication, 6 (3). Available [online] http://www.cios.org/www/ejc/v6n396.htm (accessed 24 January 2012)

Herring S. C. 2004. Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online behavior. In: S. A. Barab, R. Kling, and J. H. Gray (Eds.), Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning (pp. 338-376). New York: Cambridge University Press. Available [online] http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~herring/cmda.pdf (accessed 24 February 2012)

Kim H., Kim G. J., Park H. W. and Rice R. E. 2007. Configurations of relationships in different media: Ftf, email, instant messenger, mobile phone, and SMS. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (4): 1183-1207. Available [online] http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/kim.html (accessed 24 January 2012)

Kotthoff H. 2003. Responding to irony in different contexts: on cognition in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 35: 1387-1411.

Law R. 2007. *Conversational Repair on Internet Relay Chat*. Turku: Turku University.

Leech G. N. 1983 (1990). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Harlow, Essex, England: Longman.

Leggitt J.S. and Gibbs R.W. Jr. 2000. Emotional reactions to verbal irony. *Discourse Processes* 29 (1): 1-24.

Lehikoinen O. 2007. *Irony and Sarcasm in Frasier.* [unpublished BA thesis] Turku: Turku University.

Ling R. 2008. *New Tech, New Ties: How Mobile Communication Is Reshaping Social Cohesion*. Boston: MIT Press.

mIRC 2011. mIRC: Founding IRC [online]. Available [online] http://www.mirc.com/jarkko.html (24 October 2012)

Norrick N. R. 1993. *Conversational Joking: Humor in Everyday Talk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Nowik E. K. 2007. The oppositions within politeness theories and the phenomenon of banter. In *PASE Studies in* Linguistics. 2007. Stalmaszczyk P. and Witczak-Plisiecka I. (eds.) Lodz, Poland: Lodz University Press.

Nowik E. K. 2005. Politeness of the impolite: Relevance theory, politeness and banter. In *Relevance Studies in Poland* (volume 2) 2005. Korzeniowska A. and Grzegorzewska M. (eds.) Warsaw: Warsaw University.

Pexman P.M. and Olineck K.M. 2002. Does sarcasm always sting?: Investigating the impact of ironic insults and ironic compliments. *Discourse Processes* 33(3): 199-217.

Pexman P.M. and Zvaigzne M.T. 2004. Does irony go better with friends. *Metaphor and Symbol* 19(2): 143-163.

Plester B. A. and Sayers J. 2007. ‘‘Taking the piss’’: Functions of banter in the IT industry. *Humor* 20 (2): 157-187.

Rafaeli S. and Sudweeks F. 1998. Interactivity on the Net. In *Network and Netplay: Virtual Groups on the Internet*. (eds.) Sudweeks F., McLaughlin M. and Rafaeli S. Menlo Park, California: AAAI Press.

Reid, E. 1991. *Electropolis: Communication and Community on Internet Relay Chat*. Available [online] (on CiteSeerX) http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.42.5341 (accessed 24 January 2012)

Reid, E. M. 1994. *Cultural Formations in Text-Based Virtual Realities*. Master's thesis. Melbourne: University of Melbourne. Available [online] http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.52.6072 (accessed 24 January 2012)

Simandan V. M. 2010. Synchronous Communication: Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Available [online] http://www.simandan.com/?p=761 (accessed January 2012) the picture on page 17 reproduced from [online]. Available [online] http://www.simandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/internet-relay-chat.gif (accessed 24 January 2012)

Slugoski B. and Turnbull W. 1988. Cruel to be kind and kind to be cruel: Sarcasm, banter and social relations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 7: 101-121.

Stapleton, Karen. 2003. Gender and swearing: A community practice. *Women and Language* 26 (2):22-33.

Sudweeks F., McLaughlin M. and Rafaeli S. 1998. *Network and Netplay: Virtual Groups on the Internet*. Cambridge, MA: AAAI/MIT Press.

Tannen D. 1984 (1986). *Conversational Styles: Analyzing Talk Among Friends*. Westport, Connecticut: Ablex Publishing.

Tanskanen S-K. 2006. *Collaborating towards Coherence: Lexical Cohesion in English Discourse*. Pragmatics and Beyond New Series, 146. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Terrion J. L. and Ashforth B. E. 2002. From 'I' to 'we': The role of putdown humor and identity in the development of a temporary group. Human Relations 55

(1): 55-88.

Thurlow C., Lengel L. and Tomic, A. 2004. *Computer-Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet*. London: Sage Publications.

Valanne T. 2001. *Internet Relay Chat. Special Linguistic Features and Their Contribution to Playfulness*. Turku: Turku University.

Watts D. J. 2003. *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*. London: Vintage.

Wellman B. and Gulia M. 1997. Netsurfers don't ride alone: virtual communities as communities. [online] (available through CiteSeerX and at http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications] also in *Communities in Cyberspace* (eds.) Kollock P. and Smith M. (1999). New York: Routledge.

Wellman B. 1996. An electronic group is virtually a social network. In *Culture of the Internet* by Kiesler S. (ed.) 1997. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Appendices

Appendix I

Example 1

Session Start: Fri Apr 02 18:19:56 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
#03[18:19] * Now talking in #chatzone
#03[18:19] * Topic is 'I QUIT!!!#'
#03[18:19] * Set by SabrYna` on Fri Apr 02 10:16:13
[18:19] <klimk^^> hey 22f here ctc?
[18:20] <]BaLRoG[> lego is not really "ring orientated"
[18:20] **<Zafo> I'm not cheap I'll get her the best**
[18:20] <]BaLRoG[> klimk^^, are you really a fat bauld 65 y/o american?
[18:20] <lux40> lol
[18:20] <Zafo> **ring tab pull wedding ring beer can buy**
[18:20] <+^ph^> **the best of what your change after gambling can buy?**
#06[18:20] * ZeBoxx squeezes phooey
[18:20] <+^ph^> **ohhh darrrrrrlinnnnnnnnnn u shouldnt have!**
[18:20] <jovetic> key office student
[**18:21] <Zafo> Only the best for my trailer park bride**
[18:21] <+Malevolence-> SEXBOXXXXXXXXXXX#14X#15X
[18:21] <+^ph^> **d'awwwwww Zafo**
[18:21] * Malevolence- was kicked by X ((ZeBoxx) go to bed?#)
[18:21] <+Malevolence-> I can't yet!
[18:22] <Zafo> **look I got you all the conforts of home**
[18:22] <Zafo> **a hole in the floor inthe back**
[18:22] <+^ph^> **for what do i owe ... being blessed with such ... affection**
[18:22] <Zafo> **that is the bedroom/bathroom**
[18:22] <ZeBoxx> can't yet? just kick those dirty manskanks out of your bed and sleep, dammit
[18:22] <Zafo> **see that hole in the roof**
[18:22] <Zafo> **that is your centralization air condition**
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> **Hahaha**
[18:23] <Zafo> **and baby out here on the porch**
[18:23] <+^ph^> nicely put zeebee lol
[18:23] <Zafo> **is your cookin utensils**
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> I nailed my ex gf a few days ago in it
[18:23] <Zafo> **some people call it a bbq but I call it kitchen**
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> it was terrible
[18:23] <+^ph^> **hey dont knock bbqing**
[18:24] <+^ph^> **i love it**
[18:24] <+^ph^> weather permitting and schedule permitting id do it for all my meals
[18:24] <Zafo> **good go bbq me some eggs and toast**
[18:24] <+^ph^> well come on over
[18:24] <ZeBoxx> you should have nailed her today.. the symbolism would've been more awesome
[18:24] <Zafo> **love you ph just tugging your chain**
[18:25] <Zafo> l**il bit**
[18:25] <ZeBoxx> she prefers silk scarves
[18:25] <+^ph^> lol
[18:25] <+^ph^> **tug away, im use to it :D**
[18:25] <]BaLRoG[> ph, you love bbq's?
[18:25] <+^ph^> yes i do
[18:25] <]BaLRoG[> why didn't you tell me this earlier
[18:25] <]BaLRoG[> LOL

[18:25] <+^ph^> oh gawd
[18:26] <+^ph^> cuz im smart like that?
[18:26] <]BaLRoG[> hardly
[18:26] <]BaLRoG[> :D
[18:26] <+^ph^> haha
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> I'm saving myself for ph, ZB
[18:26] <Zafo> **Hey dat's my bride**
[18:26] <+^ph^> oh roggy :)
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> **I've decided to lower my standards**
[18:26] <+^ph^> **pffft**
[18:26] <+^ph^> **you love my ass shaddap**
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> **like, six feet below sea level**
[18:26] <Zafo> **I will fight you wif a rake if yew tru to taker away**
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> **at least**
[18:26] <+^ph^> **haha Zafo**
[18:26] <]BaLRoG[> I think my record is about 9 months of bbq's every night LOL
#06[18:26] *** +^ph^ laughs**
[18:27] <Karot> hello
[18:27] <Zafo> **We are starting up our mansion this week**
[18:27] <+^ph^> morning Karot :)
[18:27] <Karot> hi Zafo
[18:27] <Karot> hi ^ph^
[18:27] <+^ph^> **mansion huh**
[18:27] <Zafo> Hey Karot
[18:27] <Karot> ^ph^ has Sabryna really quit ?
[18:27] <+^ph^> **i dont need a mansion**
[18:27] <Zafo> Yeah our little **love nest**
[18:27] <+^ph^> Karot i wouldnt know
[18:27] <Karot> whats the topic about
#06[18:27] * +^ph^ shrugs
[18:27] <]BaLRoG[> **ph, you just need a trailer**
[18:28] <Zafo> **Just goofing off**
[18:28] <+^ph^> im not here enough to tell you
[18:28] <]BaLRoG[> hehe
[18:28] <Karot> ok
[18:28] <Karot> so you people wnet to church today ?
[18:28] <Karot> Jesus doed for you
[18:28] <klimk^^> i did!
[18:28] <+^ph^> **i like lots of windows**
[18:28] <Karot> i mean died
[18:28] <Zafo> **I am trying to romance ph with my love hut in the Florida Swamps**
[18:28] <Karot> hi klimk^^
[18:28] <klimk^^> hi karot!
[18:28] <+^ph^> like those triangular shaped cabin styles
[18:28] <]BaLRoG[> ph, **you don't need windows for a bbq**
[18:28] <Karot> hi DigiTurk
[18:29] <+^ph^> **no i'll have the bbq out on my patio**
[18:29] <]BaLRoG[> exactly..
[18:29] <Zafo> **no sweetie the gators might eatcha**
[18:29] <Zafo> **lost a good woman that way**
[18:29] <]BaLRoG[> all you need is a nice outdoor setting and a good view :P
[18:29] <Karot> so why people need to build mansion ???
[18:29] <+^ph^> **but i like lots of windows ... natural light**
[18:29] <+^ph^> **im a morning person :)**
[18:29] <Karot> when they can leave in a hut
[18:29] <Zafo> **need more shotgun shells**
[18:30] <]BaLRoG[> ph, windows and polished wooden floors.. you can't go wrong
[18:30] <Zafo> **blam there's a window**

[18:30] <Karot> yup
[18:30] <+^ph^> well
[18:30] <+^ph^> you can
[18:30] <+^ph^> they would get full of dust
[18:30] <Karot> you need windows and doors in right place
[18:30] <+^ph^> allll the time
[18:30] <klimk^^> 22f here ctc anyone?
[18:30] <Karot> or else you need to have more Lights
[18:30] <]BaLRoG[> wtf has dust for to do wiff it?
[18:30] <+^ph^> nice tiles
[18:30] <O|av> why live in a hut when you can have a mansion?
[18:30] <Zafo> 12f here anyone ctc
[18:30] <+^ph^> listen
[18:30] <+^ph^> **i own a house**
[18:30] <+^ph^> i know allllllll about cleaning lol
[18:30] <Karot> i mean why waste money
[18:31] <Karot> spend money on beer girls and gambling instead
[18:31] <O|av> why don't waste money if you have money?
[18:31] <Zafo> **give up your house and live with me in squalor**
[18:31] <+^ph^> wow Karot how male of you
[18:31] <Karot> ya people spend here on properties 4 or 5 properies
[18:31] <Karot> no its my mottoe
[18:31] <+^ph^> uh huh
[18:31] <+^ph^> **haha Zafo`**
[18:31] <O|av> Karot, go clean your hut :D
[18:31] <Karot> atleast girls and companies will be happy
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> brb.. need a top-up
[18:31] <Karot> ya
[18:31] <+^ph^> tyt roggy
[18:32] <Karot> **actually i am pissed by money so i spend money**
[18:32] <Karot> **on someone**
[18:32] <Zafo> **come on baby the sex will be crap and the conditions will be third world**
[18:32] <Zafo> **marry me**
[18:32] <Karot> ok
[18:32] <+^ph^> hahaha
[18:32] <Karot> marry me and get more money than Zafo because i hate money nowadays
[18:32] <Karot> i work in place full of money and that disgusts me
[18:32] <O|av> Karot, you have many huts?
[18:32] <Zafo> if you rub two pennies together
[18:32] <Karot> ya
[18:33] <Zafo> damn you make more than I do
[18:33] <Karot> work for someone elses money
[18:33] <Karot> its like doing laundry for others
[18:33] <Zafo> you got two pennies
[18:33] <Zafo> all I got is a penny and some sandpaper
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> bleh
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> damn servers
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> **yay theres two of me!**
[18:34] <Zafo> **can I marry the clone?**
[18:34] <SwedishChef> woho
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> **lol**
[18:34] <Zafo> **she don't need to say much**
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> **and whats wrong with the original?**
[18:35] <+Malevolence-> msg x@channels.undernet.org ban #chatzone *!
*@prettyhot.users.undernet.org 99d 499 Later, train wreck
[18:35] <+^^ph^^> **lmfao**
[18:35] <Karot> Malevolence- why
[18:35] <+Malevolence-> Shut up or you're next

Session Close: Fri Apr 02 18:35:59 2010

example 2

Session Start: Fri Apr 02 21:44:25 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
[21:44] * Now talking in #chatzone

[22:43] <+Dariana`> **I love autumn ... all the lovely colors**
[22:43] <Micky^> **lovely colours ??? autumn leaves ... I'd call them dead leaves**
[22:44] <Micky^> rains ...
[22:44] <+Dariana`> yellows. orange... red.. lovely
[22:44] <+^Timm> **maybe she likes death**
[22:44] <Micky^> jackets ...
[22:44] <+Dariana`> some greens as well
[22:44] <Micky^> spring and summer ... those are the perfect seasons
[22:44] <+Dariana`> it's more like cleaning out and clearing the way for fresh new season
[22:45] <+^Jenn^> I like oak & maple leaves, they're pretty to look at :p
[22:45] <+^Timm> **and then complete death.... winter**
[22:45] <Micky^> the autumn just gets me down
[22:45] <+Dariana`> summer is too hot.. and then you have the bright ball of pain.. no thanks
[22:45] <Fifth_ID> autumn = when chicks are ready to hook up, nothing to be down about there
[22:45] *** +^Jenn^ stabs Martyn repeatedly with a rusty spork.. why won't you DIE already :P**
[22:45] <+Dariana`> winter is just a cocoon for rebirth
[22:45] <+^Timm> because i live to pester you
[22:45] <+^Jenn^> obviously.
[22:46] <+^Timm> and shouldnt you be sucking on a cock or something
[22:46] <+Dariana`> shouldn't you?
[22:46] <+^Jenn^> Martyn: well, if you'd come in from the living room, I would.
[22:46] * +^Jenn^ smirks
[22:46] <+^Timm> but im in the bedroom
[22:47] <+^Jenn^> Martyn: of course you are... make sure you clean those anal beads & the fleshlight when you're done.
[22:47] <+^Timm> flashlight ?
[22:47] <+^Timm> you cant find yer own hole ?
[22:48] <+Dariana`> he needs a flashlight and a magnifying glass to see the fleshlight.. lol
[22:48] <+^Timm> i thought yours by now woulda been huge
[22:48] * +Dariana` ducks
[22:48] <+^Timm> i dunno can you even see yer vage without a mirror Dariana`
[22:49] <+^Jenn^> Martyn's just pissed off cos he has to whack off all the time cos the local whores won't touch him anymore.
[22:49] <+^Timm> indeed
[22:49] <+^Jenn^> if you wouldn't have given them a list of STDs that you have, maybe you'd be getting laid right now instead of pestering us.
[22:50] <+^Timm> its just herpies
[22:50] <+^Timm> and maybe anal bead warts
[22:51] * +Dariana` (~ASLsux@204.110.227.11) Quit (Ping timeout#)
[22:51] <+^Timm> but im sure youre vage will get cut out way before me wiener falls off ^Jenn^
[22:51] <+^Jenn^> nah
[22:51] <+^Jenn^> my vajayjay will go on.
[22:52] <+`Fyoosh> you guys are hilarious... arguing like brother and sister
---
Session Close: Fri Apr 02 23:00:36 2010

Session Start: Sat Apr 03 10:29:11 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[10:37] <Chick^> anyone want a husband i got one for sale?

[10:38] <Chick^> **dirt cheap!**
[10:38] <SwedishPerv> ikea?
[10:38] <Anunaki> **i got some dirt!**
[10:38] <EtherKnot> Meatyballen ja!
[10:38] * SwedishPerv **tkaes Anunakis dirt**
[10:38] <Anunaki> **i got no dirt.. :(**
[10:38] <Chick^> my dogs all tuckered out now LOL
[10:38] <Chick^> little thing just went crazy running around the little yard
[10:38] * SwedishPerv gives Anunaki some **dirty talking**
[10:39] <EtherKnot> **sand!**
[10:39] <EtherKnot> **topsoil!**
[10:39] <Chick^> **dirty talking!** that's my cue to leave!

Session Close: Sat Apr 03 10:43:35 2010

Session Start: Sun Apr 11 20:01:02 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[20:48] <AnnaS__> big_marco: **I don't care about your dick size!**
[20:48] <chmod^> heh
[20:49] <AnnaS__> **do I message everybody and say hi I got big boobs?**
[20:50] <AnnaS__> who cares
[20:50] <kb0rpj-wx> **AnnaS__: a lot more people would talk to you if you did that**
[20:50] <kb0rpj-wx> hehe
[20:50] <AnnaS__> :O
[20:50] <AnnaS__> **kb0rpj-wx: I got big boobs, wanna chat?**
[20:51] <kb0rpj-wx> sure
[20:51] <AnnaS__> **let's cyber :)** (=let's have cyber sex)
[20:51] <AnnaS__> lol
[20:51] <kb0rpj-wx> **yippie**
[20:51] <AnnaS__> lol
[20:51] <chmod^> **dont forget to use protection**
[20:51] <chmod^> **ie a virus scanner**

Session Close: Sun Apr 11 21:39:08 2010

Session Start: Fri Jul 09 16:30:01 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[18:04] * **]BaRLoG[bites ^ph^s ass**
[18:04] * **+^ph^ gets the disinfectant**
[18:05] <ZeBoxx> o_o
[18:05] <+^ph^> zebux
[18:05] <chmod^> rog: did you qualify?
[18:05] * **]BaRLoG[drinks the disinfectant... good idea wouldn't want to get a moutn infection**
[18:05] <ZeBoxx> phooey
[18:05] <+^ph^> rofl
[18:05] <chmod^> heya ZeBoxx
[18:05] <]BaRLoG[> I havemnt played for ages moddy
[18:05] **<+^ph^> roggy thats just rude!**
[18:05] <ZeBoxx> heya modders
[18:06] **<]BaRLoG[> rude?**
[18:06] **<]BaRLoG[> me?**
[18:07] **<chmod^> say it aint so**

Session Close: Fri Jul 09 18:10:27 2010

Session Start: Wed Mar 03 20:20:30 2010

Session Ident: #chatzone

[20:44] <Gcreator> wassup ?
[20:44] <JennAngel> the sky :>
[20:44] <Dariana```> I've been to Lebanon.. TN, OH, KY, MO, IL, OK ... and the list goes on.. **with the exception of ME.. haven't been there yet.. lol**
[20:45] <Gcreator> lol
[20:45] <Gcreator> what of the sky ?
[20:45] <Bob1984> Where I am, the sky is gray and cloudy and generally pretty bad looking.
[20:46] <Gcreator> i like it all ways
[20:46] <JennAngel> **you haven't been to yourself, new wifey? :> lol**
[20:47] <Bob1984> I was just thinking that
[20:47] <Bob1984> but I bit my tongue
[20:47] <JennAngel> I think you're ... somewhere, Bob
[20:47] <Dariana```> you want the evil nasty bright thing in the sky Bob.. cuz I got plenty of it here and it's hurtin my eyes
[20:47] <Dariana```> I haven't been to what?
[20:47] <Bob1984> lol
[20:47] <JennAngel> I want some sun!
[20:47] <JennAngel> **you said you haven't been to"ME" ;)**
[20:47] <Dariana```> maine.. I think that's the abreviation for it
[20:47] <Bob1984> **The list of people who have been to "ME" is pretty short. :P ;)**
[20:48] <Bob1984> Yeah, it's Maine hehe
[20:48] <JennAngel> yes, I know you meant Maine
[20:48] <Bob1984> **we're just being smartasses**
[20:48] <JennAngel> lol
[20:48] <Dariana```> don't remind me of that 70's song.. I've be to blah blah.. but I've never been to me.. lol
[20:48] <chmod^OUT> **whenever i look in the mirror i see ME** :P
[20:48] <Bob1984> Whenever I look in the mirror, I see something scary
[20:48] <JennAngel> lol Suzie
[20:49] <JennAngel> **Bob: your brother? ;)**
[20:49] <Bob1984> eww, no
[20:49] <Bob1984> He's annoying,not scary
[20:49] <Dariana```> shit new wifey I hated that song when it first came out
[20:49] <JennAngel> **chmod: I like seeing YOU, but not ME**
[20:49] <JennAngel> I don't remember that song.
[20:49] <Bob1984> **So keep the lights on next time ?**
[20:49] <Bob1984> **;)**
–
Session Close: Wed Mar 03 21:12:52 2010

Session Start: Sat Oct 10 09:58:36 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:23] <Dustyfogg> ltns (=long time no see)
[10:24] <Lee99> hi Dusty...same here...where ya been? lol
[10:24] <Dustyfogg> **i was kidnapped by aliens**
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **again?**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> yeah
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **That's the 6th time this week!**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> **they are making it a habit**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> **no no u lost count**
[10:25] <Dustyfogg> **its only the 5th**
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **That's it, I'm going to call them up and tell them off**.
#06[10:25] * Dustyfogg slips u a note under the desk
[10:25] <EtherKnot> **You can't keep getting probes on school nights!**
[10:25] <Lee99> **you mean you kidnapped the aliens, right Dusty?**

[10:26] <Dustyfogg> **nooo lee the aliens asked for u and when they didnt find u they took me**
[10:26] <Dustyfogg> its all ur fault
[10:26] <+^Timm> **i bet it hurt**
[10:26] <+^Timm> **they got good food actually ?**
[10:26] <+^Timm> i hope space food isnt **in tablet form**
[10:26] <Lee99> I will take the fault for that Dusty since they got the right person :)
[10:26] <+^Timm> **that would deter anyone from hitting space**
[10:27] <EtherKnot> **"What's that?**
[10:27] <EtherKnot> " **"It's a steak..." "mmm steak...**
[10:27] <EtherKnot> " **"... in space age suppository form!"**
[10:27] <+^Timm> **erm....**
[10:27] <+^Timm> **ok moving along**
[10:28] <Dustyfogg> heh

Session Close: Sat Oct 10 10:55:45 2009

Session Start: Sun Jan 10 08:35:01 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:54] <+^Timm> did the cowboys lose ?
[10:54] <+^Timm> FOOK
[10:54] <crouton> what?
[10:54] <+^Timm> theyre winnin
[10:55] <^Jenn^> yeah
[10:55] <crouton> hahah why is WALL-E on the top romance movies list on imdb
[10:55] <^Jenn^> they're def winnin'
[10:55] <^Jenn^> heh
[10:55] <^Jenn^> because WALL-E loves EVE!
[10:55] <+^Timm> **shut yer face jenn**
[10:55] <^Jenn^> **suck yer dick, martyn**
[10:56] <+^Timm> shouldnt you be **out there gettin yer arse trained**
[10:56] <^Jenn^> nah
[10:56] <^Jenn^> too cold.
[10:56] <crouton> **ah yes, ass training**
[10:56] <+^Timm> **you giant vage curtain**
Session Close: Sun Jan 10 10:57:11 2010

Session Start: Mon Apr 26 17:46:54 2010
--
[18:30] <PorkKnob`> **anyone do anything good this weekend?**
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> I worked..
[18:31] <TwinTurbo> **I slept...**
[18:31] <chmodwork> **i procrastinated**
[18:31] <PorkKnob`> **weekend work is something I don't miss, so that sucks balrog!**
[18:31] <chmodwork> **twice!**
[18:31] <PorkKnob`> **chmod, and how does that differ from the weekdays? :P**
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> I work 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off so I have to work weekends
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> :P
[18:31] <chmodwork> **heh**
[18:32] <PorkKnob`> balrog, ahhh hmmm.. **that's pretty cool then, I could handle that**
[18:32] <PorkKnob`> **well.. depends.. what do you do? =)**
[18:32] <]BaLRoG[> **I work on a mine.. if work is the right word**
[18:33] <PorkKnob`> ahh neat, strip or underground or some other strange mining tech I dunnno about =)
[18:33] <]BaLRoG[> well it's an open pit now, transitions to undergroud
[18:34] <chmodwork> **what do you mine?**
[18:34] <PorkKnob`> **and most importantly.. do you get to handle exposives? :D**
[18:35] <]BaLRoG[> **umm... no, they ain;t that stupid**

[18:35] <]BaLRoG[> diamonds moddy
[18:35] <PorkKnob`> **haha. boom.**
[18:37] * PorkKnob` gets a jar of peanut butter and looks @ chocolategal
[18:37] <]BaLRoG[> akkk brb
[18:38] *** PorkKnob` tosses balrog his pickax on the way out**
–
Session Close: Mon Apr 26 (??) 2010

Session Start: Thu Apr 29 16:33:12 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[16:40] * +**Malevolence punches cat|woman in the cooter**
[16:40] <+Malevolence> **HELP! MY HAND IS STUCK**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **what's a cooter?**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> Oh.
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **Vagina.**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **it is???**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **i thought for a moment it was the a** lol**
[16:42] *** cat|woman thwaps Malevolence with a mallet**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **You'd like that, wouldn't you**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **You sick bitch**
[16:42] <cat|woman> **oh i'm sure you love it even more than i do hahahahaha**
[16:42] * +**Malevolence turns away in disgust**
[16:42] <+Malevolence> **Put your strap-on away**
[16:43] *** cat|woman whacks Malevolence with a mop**
[16:43] <cat|woman> **you want to use yours instead?**
[16:43] <cat|woman> lol brb
[16:44] <`Rick> **wonder if she is a tigress or a cougar** ?
[16:46] <+Malevolence> she's **a withered old housecat.**
[16:46] <`Rick> **eew**
[16:46] <+Malevolence> **with hairball problems.**
[16:46] <`Rick> **gotta be one putrid litterbox**
Session Close: Thu Apr 29 16:47:40 2010

Session Start: Tue Mar 16 00:11:28 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> **Martyn likes to suck balls.**
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> **chocolate salty balls.**
[23:17] <AnnaS_> :O
[23:17] <tampaJesse> **wonder what Shanaynay has to say about that**
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> **don't know, should we ask Martin Lawrence about that?**
[23:17] <tampaJesse> sure
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> good luck with that... let me know how it goes.
[23:17] <tampaJesse> **something tells me he's waist deep in a pile of coke though**
[23:19] <+^Jenn^> lol
–
Session Close: Mon Mar 15 23:50:41 2010

Session Start: Fri Jun 11 13:20:50 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone

[13:41] <Yog-Sothoth> **how is it you know so much about this kind of stuff?**
[13:41] <Fausto> **i read?**
[13:41] <Yog-Sothoth> **then what are you doing on IRC?**
[13:41] <Fausto> **reading**
[13:41] <Fausto> duh
[13:41] <Fausto> :D

[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> **IRC is supposued to be filled with socially inept fucktards,though**
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> **u c?**
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> **asl?** (=age/sex/location)
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> lol
06[13:42] * Fausto gags
[13:42] <Yog-Sothoth> *supposed
[13:42] <jellybeanie> **so you claim to be superman?**
[13:42] <Fausto> **i never made any such claim**

Session Close: Fri Jun 11 15:18:35 2010

Session Start: Fri Jun 18 19:12:54 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
–
[20:04] <Cornet> **is anyone awake?**
[20:05] <Chris19> **im not**
[20:10] <Cornet> ok
[20:13] <redfin> **me neither**
–
Session Close: Fri Jun 18 21:06:44 2010

Session Start: Wed Jun 23 21:54:49 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> bring back, bring back, oh bring back my **bonnie** to me, to me!
[23:17] <+^Jenn^> bring back, bring back, oh bring back my **bonnie** to me!
[23:17] * +^Jenn^ giggles
[23:18] * `Rick waits for the **clyde** verse
–
Session Close: Thu Jun 24 00:16:56 2010

Session Start: Fri Jun 25 18:47:22 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[18:58] <darine> any **lebanese** here?
03[18:58] * Joins: amethyst` (~BlondeOz@114.142.165.125)
[18:58] <]BaLRoG[> is that like **a lesbian**?
[18:58] <chmod^> **i come from babylon**
[18:58] <]BaLRoG[> **amethyst` you sexy bitch**
[18:59] * chmod^ releases the stay puft marshmello man on amethyst`
[19:00] <chmod^> 587 in the round 1
[19:00] <amethyst`> **baLRoG! balls dropped off from the cold yet?**
—-
[19:03] <]BaLRoG[> better than being **down there living in a freezer**
[19:03] <]BaLRoG[> though I suppose you would **go through less ice to keep your drinks cold**
[19:04] <amethyst`> **that's true, just need to put the beer out on the back patio.**
[19:04] <]BaLRoG[> **no abos to steel it?** (abos= aboriginal people)
[19:04] <amethyst`> haha
[19:05] <amethyst`> **I have a lot of rifles :)**
[19:05] <amethyst`> brb
[19:06] <]BaLRoG[> **you have guns??**
Session Close: Fri Jun 25 19:06:13 2010

Session Start: Wed May 05 18:11:53 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[19:29] <andy-uk> English guy 39 looking to chat with a funny flirty **semi sane female ...anywhere!**
[19:30] <Lavender> **all insane here** andy-uk no one semi lollllllllllll

[19:30] <`G4> **this is IRC**
[19:31] <andy-uk> **LOL damn my quest continues**
[19:31] <Lavender> **didnt know there were the semi ones**
[19:31] <Lavender> thought **u were sane or not**
[19:31] <Lavender> **is it a speciality in the Uk** amd?
[19:32] <andy-uk> **no i think most people tilt at insanity at some point in their lives**
[19:32] <Lavender> and r u **at that point** in ur life now?
[19:32] <andy-uk> it would just be nice to chat with **somebody with a least one hand gripping reality for a while**
–
Session Close: Wed May 05 21:06:07 2010

Session Start: Sat May 08 21:24:36 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[22:46] <ella-sofia> **quiet in here**
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> yeah
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> ppl are asleep i guess
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **im not**
[22:47] <ella-sofia> 6.46pm over here
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> yeah u are not
[22:47] <Dustyfogg> **unless u talk in ur sleep**
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **i do**
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **but not online**
[22:47] <Jozeph31> the ones whom were makin noise left
[22:47] <ella-sofia> **chatting in my sleep would be cool**
[22:48] <Dustyfogg> **hehe**
[22:48] <Dustyfogg> **true**
[22:48] <Dustyfogg> **good use of time**
[22:48] <ella-sofia> yeah
[22:49] <ella-sofia> **damn im so bored**
Session Close: Sat May 08 22:49:20 2010

Session Start: Wed May 19 10:23:10 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:49] <^quietgirl^> hola
[10:50] <Raven`> hey **quietgirl**
[10:50] <Raven`> **why are you so quiet?**
[10:51] <^quietgirl^> because i can
[10:52] <Raven`> **the quiet ones are scary**
[10:53] <^quietgirl^> **lol**
[10:53] <^quietgirl^> why
[10:53] <Raven`> **they can be explosive**
[10:53] <Raven`> **and blow up on you**
[10:53] <Raven`> **and you'll never know it**
[10:53] <Raven`> **quietgirl must be a freak too**
–
Session Close: Wed May 19 15:14:19 2010

Session Start: Sun Sep 27 22:23:00 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[23:32] * CdnBadGrl **is sleepy**
[23:32] * Jondlar **tosses some soft pillows**
[23:33] <Jondlar> **I can sing lullaby too**
[23:33] <CdnBadGrl> no no. **^Timm will help me sleep :D**
[23:33] <^Timm> **can you make breakfast ?**

[23:33] <Jondlar> ok :)
[23:33] <^Timm> **AM I THAT BORING !**
[23:33] <CdnBadGrl> **NO!**
[23:33] * Jondlar **walks outside from CdnBadGrl's room**
[23:34] <Jondlar> **rofl**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> **oh great. he was watching me sleep, lol**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> **freakin' stalker**
[23:34] <Jondlar> **lol**
[23:34] <^Timm> **whip out the black light**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> bow chicka bow bow
[23:34] <BadInfluence> **Jondlar: did ya get to see some goodies? ;)**
[23:34] <CdnBadGrl> **for the love of god, lol**
[23:35] <BadInfluence> hehe
[23:35] <BadInfluence> **whut? if it's available, why not? :p**
[23:35] <Jondlar> **lol BadInfluence not so lucky**
–
Session Close: Mon Sep 28 00:46:01 2009

Session Start: Mon Sep 28 08:27:49 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[08:47] <Lynnie``> omg nobride should be getting on chat
[08:47] <Lynnie``> heh
[08:47] <Lynnie``> no **newbride** that is
[08:47] <**NewBride**> i can't chat?
[08:47] <Lynnie``> sure you can
[08:48] <NewBride> then **what's your point?**
[08:48] <Lynnie``> nevermind
#06[08:48] * CdnBadGrl smiles
[08:48] <^Timm> **point is you should be off humping like jack rabbits on a beach somewhere**
#06[08:48] * CdnBadGrl looks around
[08:48] <CdnBadGrl> there ya go!
[08:48] <NewBride> **just because you're a cyberslut doesn't mean everyone else is**
[08:48] <CdnBadGrl> **WOW**
[08:48] <CdnBadGrl> **Lynnie`` isn't a cyberslut. ^Timm is.**
[08:48] <Lynnie``> **yep, that's me**
[08:49] <Lynnie``> **heh**
–
Session Close: Mon Sep 28 08:53:28 2009

Session Start: Sat Oct 10 09:58:36 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[10:09] <Jondlar> **nobody chats :/**
[10:09] <Jondlar> **i think irc is dying**
[10:09] <Dying_Beauty#> aw
[10:10] <SassyVixen> **what would you like to chat about?**
[10:10] <Dying_Beauty#> like me?
[10:10] <Jondlar> SassyVixen **if ppl ask before chatting then it wont be fun**
[10:11] <SassyVixen> my bad
[10:11] * **SassyVixen shuts up**
[10:11] <Tofer> sure lets talk about you
[10:11] <+^Timm> **thats a good bitch !**
[10:11] <SassyVixen> **excuse me?**
[10:11] <+^Timm> **i love you**
[10:12] <SassyVixen> **that's right**
[10:12] * EtherKnot **checks Timm's programing for a General Fault**.
[10:12] <+^Jenn^> GPF!

[10:12] <+^Timm> **pussy whipped isnt exactly a fault**
--
Session Close: Sat Oct 10 10:55:45 2009

Session Start: Sat Oct 17 09:03:04 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[09:12] <SassyVixen> I'm singing
[09:12] <+^Timm> well **sing with yer tits out**
[09:12] <SassyVixen> **timmeh, you're a pig**
[09:12] <+^Timm> **i love you too**
[09:13] <SassyVixen> **I know pumpkin butt, I love you too :P**
–
Session Close: Sat Oct 17 09:30:29 2009

Session Start: Sun Oct 25 09:42:07 2009
Session Ident: #chatzone
--
[09:56] <+^Timm> i think ima steal some of **saabs handbag**
[09:56] *** Sab**rYna` **slams timm with said handbag**
[09:57] <+^Timm> **you filthy beast**
[09:57] <+Lynnie``> you go girl!
[09:57] <+^Timm> **DONT TOUCH ME**
[09:57] <+^Timm> ima sue (=I'm going to sue you)
[09:57] <+Lynnie``> **I thought you were Tim**
[09:57] ***** +Lynnie`` grins
[09:57] <SabrYna`> **You cannot sue a Canadian!**
[09:57] <+^Timm> **i can in the hague**
[09:58] <+^Timm> **THATS RIGHT ITS INTERNATIONAL**
[09:58] <SabrYna`> **Ole yeller stfu!** (=shut the fuck up!)
[09:58] <+^Timm> **suck me hairy nip !**
[09:58] <SabrYna`> **>.<**
[09:58] <+^Timm> **thats rought its ok you can cough them hairballs up**
[09:58] <+^Timm> I LIKE YOUR PANTS AROUND YOUR FEET
[09:59] <+^Timm> YOURE LIKE MY FAVOURITE DAMN DISEASE
[09:59] <+Lynnie``> huh?
[09:59] <SabrYna`> **What's wrong with him , Lynnie``?**
[09:59] <+Lynnie``> **I wish I knew**
[09:59] <SabrYna`> **He needs to UP the dose**.
[09:59] <SabrYna`> timm - **new meds this week ? :S**
[09:59] <+^Timm> yeah **little weaker**
[09:59] <+^Timm> **they is weening me off**
[10:00] <SabrYna`> **lol**
–
Session Close: Sun Oct 25 12:12:44 2009

Appendix II

Example 1 in its entire form

Session Start: Fri Apr 02 18:19:56 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
#03[18:19] * Now talking in #chatzone
#03[18:19] * Topic is 'I QUIT!!!#'
#03[18:19] * Set by SabrYna` on Fri Apr 02 10:16:13
[18:19] <klimk^^> hey 22f here ctc?
[18:20] <]BaLRoG[> lego is not really "ring orientated"
[18:20] <Zafo> I'm not cheap I'll get her the best
[18:20] <]BaLRoG[> klimk^^, are you really a fat bauld 65 y/o american?
[18:20] <lux40> lol
[18:20] <Zafo> ring tab pull wedding ring beer can buy
[18:20] <+^ph^> the best of what your change after gambling can buy?
#06[18:20] * ZeBoxx squeezes phooey
[18:20] <+^ph^> ohhh darrrrrrlinnnnnnnnnn u shouldnt have!
[18:20] <jovetic> key office student
[18:21] <Zafo> Only the best for my trailer park bride
[18:21] <+Malevolence-> SEXBOXXXXXXXXXXX#14X#15X
[18:21] <+^ph^> d'awwwwww Zafo
#03[18:21] * Malevolence- was kicked by X ((ZeBoxx) go to bed?#)
[18:21] <+Malevolence-> I can't yet!
[18:22] <Zafo> look I got you all the conforts of home
[18:22] <Zafo> a hole in the floor inthe back
[18:22] <+^ph^> for what do i owe ... being blessed with such ... affection
[18:22] <Zafo> that is the bedroom/bathroom
[18:22] <ZeBoxx> can't yet? just kick those dirty manskanks out of your bed and sleep, dammit
[18:22] <Zafo> see that hole in the roof
[18:22] <Zafo> that is your centralization air condition
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> Hahaha
[18:23] <Zafo> and baby out here on the porch
[18:23] <+^ph^> nicely put zeebee lol
[18:23] <Zafo> is your cookin utensils
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> I nailed my ex gf a few days ago in it
[18:23] <Zafo> some people call it a bbq but I call it kitchen
[18:23] <+Malevolence-> it was terrible
[18:23] <+^ph^> hey dont knock bbqing
[18:24] <+^ph^> i love it
[18:24] <+^ph^> weather permitting and schedule permitting id do it for all my meals
[18:24] <Zafo> good go bbq me some eggs and toast
[18:24] <+^ph^> well come on over
[18:24] <ZeBoxx> you should have nailed her today.. the symbolism would've been more awesome
[18:24] <Zafo> love you ph just tugging your chain
[18:25] <Zafo> lil bit
[18:25] <ZeBoxx> she prefers silk scarves
[18:25] <+^ph^> lol
[18:25] <+^ph^> tug away, im use to it :D
[18:25] <]BaLRoG[> ph, you love bbq's?
[18:25] <+^ph^> yes i do
[18:25] <]BaLRoG[> why didn't you tell me this earlier
[18:25] <]BaLRoG[> LOL
[18:25] <+^ph^> oh gawd
[18:26] <+^ph^> cuz im smart like that?
[18:26] <]BaLRoG[> hardly
-

#01[18:26] Lolitta is ~lithium@114.56.128.25 * lithium
#01[18:26] Lolitta on #chatzone
#01[18:26] Lolitta using newyork.ny.us.undernet.org JustEdge Networks - DON'T PANIC!
#01[18:26] Lolitta has been idle 6mins 34secs, signed on Fri Apr 02 18:17:21
#01[18:26] Lolitta End of /WHOIS list.
-
[18:26] <]BaLRoG[> :D
[18:26] <+^ph^> haha
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> I'm saving myself for ph, ZB
[18:26] <Zafo> Hey dat's my bride
[18:26] <+^ph^> oh roggy :)
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> I've decided to lower my standards
[18:26] <+^ph^> pffft
[18:26] <+^ph^> you love my ass shaddap
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> like, six feet below sea level
[18:26] <Zafo> I will fight you wif a rake if yew tru to taker away
[18:26] <+Malevolence-> at least
[18:26] <+^ph^> haha Zafo
[18:26] <]BaLRoG[> I think my record is about 9 months of bbq's every night LOL
#06[18:26] * +^ph^ laughs
[18:27] <Karot> hello
[18:27] <Zafo> We are starting up our mansion this week
[18:27] <+^ph^> morning Karot :)
[18:27] <Karot> hi Zafo
[18:27] <Karot> hi ^ph^
[18:27] <+^ph^> mansion huh
[18:27] <Zafo> Hey Karot
[18:27] <Karot> ^ph^ has Sabryna really quit ?
[18:27] <+^ph^> i dont need a mansion
[18:27] <Zafo> Yeah our little love nest
[18:27] <+^ph^> Karot i wouldnt know
[18:27] <Karot> whats the topic about
#06[18:27] * +^ph^ shrugs
[18:27] <]BaLRoG[> ph, you just need a trailer
[18:28] <Zafo> Just goofing off
[18:28] <+^ph^> im not here enough to tell you
[18:28] <]BaLRoG[> hehe
[18:28] <Karot> ok
[18:28] <Karot> so you people wnet to church today ?
[18:28] <Karot> Jesus doed for you
[18:28] <klimk^^> i did!
[18:28] <+^ph^> i like lots of windows
[18:28] <Karot> i mean died
[18:28] <Zafo> I am trying to romance ph with my love hut in the Florida Swamps
[18:28] <Karot> hi klimk^^
#02[18:28] * Omfg (~Omfg@Omfg.users.undernet.org) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#03[18:28] * Omfg- is now known as Omfg
[18:28] <klimk^^> hi karot!
#02[18:28] * becky95a (~becky95a@76.73.16.26) Quit (Quit: CGI:IRC (Ping timeout)#)
[18:28] <+^ph^> like those triangular shaped cabin styles
[18:28] <]BaLRoG[> ph, you don't need windows for a bbq
[18:28] <Karot> hi DigiTurk
[18:29] <+^ph^> no i'll have the bbq out on my patio
[18:29] <]BaLRoG[> exactly..
[18:29] <Zafo> no sweetie the gators might eatcha
[18:29] <Zafo> lost a good woman that way
[18:29] <]BaLRoG[> all you need is a nice outdoor setting and a good view :P
[18:29] <Karot> so why people need to build mansion ???

[18:29] <+^ph^> but i like lots of windows ... natural light
[18:29] <+^ph^> im a morning person :)
[18:29] <Karot> when they can leave in a hut
[18:29] <Zafo> need more shotgun shells
#02[18:30] * TURKEY_26M (~TURKEY_26@78.164.151.18) Quit (Ping timeout#)
[18:30] <]BaLRoG[> ph, windows and polished wooden floors.. you can't go wrong
[18:30] <Zafo> blam there's a window
[18:30] <Karot> yup
[18:30] <+^ph^> well
[18:30] <+^ph^> you can
[18:30] <+^ph^> they would get full of dust
[18:30] <Karot> you need windows and doors in right place
[18:30] <+^ph^> allll the time
[18:30] <klimk^^> 22f here ctc anyone?
[18:30] <Karot> or else you need to have more Lights
[18:30] <]BaLRoG[> wtf has dust for to do wiff it?
[18:30] <+^ph^> nice tiles
[18:30] <O|av> why live in a hut when you can have a mansion?
[18:30] <Zafo> 12f here anyone ctc
[18:30] <+^ph^> listen
[18:30] <+^ph^> i own a house
[18:30] <+^ph^> i know allllllll about cleaning lol
[18:30] <Karot> i mean why waste money
[18:31] <Karot> spend money on beer girls and gambling instead
[18:31] <O|av> why don't waste money if you have money?
[18:31] <Zafo> give up your house and live with me in squalor
[18:31] <+^ph^> wow Karot how male of you
[18:31] <Karot> ya people spend here on properties 4 or 5 properies
[18:31] <Karot> no its my mottoe
[18:31] <+^ph^> uh huh
[18:31] <+^ph^> haha Zafo`
[18:31] <O|av> Karot, go clean your hut :D
[18:31] <Karot> atleast girls and companies will be happy
[18:31] <]BaLRoG[> brb.. need a top-up
[18:31] <Karot> ya
#02[18:31] * gelai (~gelai@112.206.135.148) Quit (Quit#)
#02[18:31] * Thunderrr (~aqwer@cpc1-walt3-0-0-cust350.popl.cable.ntl.com) Quit (Read error: Connection timed out#)
[18:31] <+^ph^> tyt roggy
[18:32] <Karot> actually i am pissed by money so i spend money
[18:32] <Karot> on someone
[18:32] <Zafo> come on baby the sex will be crap and the conditions will be third world
[18:32] <Zafo> marry me
[18:32] <Karot> ok
[18:32] <+^ph^> hahaha
[18:32] <Karot> marry me and get more money than Zafo because i hate money nowadays
[18:32] <Karot> i work in place full of money and that disgusts me
[18:32] <O|av> Karot, you have many huts?
[18:32] <Zafo> if you rub two pennies together
[18:32] <Karot> ya
[18:33] <Zafo> damn you make more than I do
[18:33] <Karot> work for someone elses money
[18:33] <Karot> its like doing laundry for others
[18:33] <Zafo> you got two pennies
[18:33] <Zafo> all I got is a penny and some sandpaper
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> bleh
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> damn servers
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> yay theres two of me!

[18:34] <Zafo> can I marry the clone?
[18:34] <SwedishChef> woho
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> lol
[18:34] <Zafo> she don't need to say much
[18:34] <+^^ph^^> and whats wrong with the original?
[18:35] <+Malevolence-> msg x@channels.undernet.org ban #chatzone *!
*@prettyhot.users.undernet.org 99d 499 Later, train wreck
[18:35] <+^^ph^^> lmfao
[18:35] <Karot> Malevolence- why
[18:35] <+Malevolence-> Shut up or you're next
Session Close: Fri Apr 02 18:35:59 2010

Example 2 (the relevant part) in its unedited form

Session Start: Fri Apr 02 21:44:25 2010
Session Ident: #chatzone
[21:44] * Now talking in #chatzone
–
[22:42] <Micky^> Dariana
[22:42] <Micky^> lil Dariana !!! how've u been?
[22:42] <+Dariana`> cold.. you/
[22:42] <Micky^> not cold here .. though 'tis autumn already =((
[22:42] <Micky^> awful season !!!
[22:43] <+Dariana`> it's spring here.. but someone forgot to tell the state
[22:43] <Fifth_ID> bleh good friday, half the peeps have not eaten and are in mourning for someone who died over 2 millenia ago :S
[22:43] <+Dariana`> I love autumn ... all the lovely colors
[22:43] <Micky^> lovely colours ??? autumn leaves ... I'd call them dead leaves
[22:44] <Micky^> rains ...
[22:44] <+Dariana`> yellows. orange... red.. lovely
[22:44] <+^Timm> maybe she likes death
[22:44] <Micky^> jackets ...
[22:44] <+Dariana`> some greens as well
#02[22:44] * truewoman (~Angelistz@110.138.43.188) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:44] * dhidat_lhain (~dhidat@112.198.241.2) Quit (Ping timeout#)
[22:44] <Micky^> spring and summer ... those are the perfect seasons
[22:44] <+Dariana`> it's more like cleaning out and clearing the way for fresh new season
[22:45] <+^Jenn^> I like oak & maple leaves, they're pretty to look at :p
[22:45] <+^Timm> and then complete death.... winter
[22:45] <Micky^> the autumn just gets me down
[22:45] <+Dariana`> summer is too hot.. and then you have the bright ball of pain.. no thanks
#02[22:45] * MysticIndian (~aar@122.174.80.174) Quit (Quit: This computer has gone to sleep#)
#02[22:45] * SINGLEMAN_42 (~SALE.TRAV@87-225-77.netrun.cytanet.com.cy) Quit (Ping timeout#)
[22:45] <Fifth_ID> autumn = when chicks are ready to hook up, nothing to be down about there
#06[22:45] * +^Jenn^ stabs Martyn repeatedly with a rusty spork.. why won't you DIE already :P
[22:45] <+Dariana`> winter is just a cocoon for rebirth
[22:45] <+^Timm> because i live to pester you
[22:45] <+^Jenn^> obviously.
[22:46] <+^Timm> and shouldnt you be sucking on a cock or something
[22:46] <+Dariana`> shouldn't you?
[22:46] <+^Jenn^> Martyn: well, if you'd come in from the living room, I would.
#06[22:46] * +^Jenn^ smirks
[22:46] <Micky^> what I lvoe the most is the hamburger on my table, which is looking forward to being gobbled down
[22:46] <Micky^> so brb
[22:46] <+^Timm> but im in the bedroom
#02[22:46] * Greenpark (~Julio@116.197.67.53) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:46] * imlib (foobar@cpc1-sgyl21-0-0-cust106.sgyl.cable.virginmedia.com) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:47] * honestmale38 (~honestman@78.173.210.69) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:47] * arinelHMWRK (snuggle@host-static-92-115-129-178.moldtelecom.md) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:47] * m52 (~m52@ppp-94-66-184-39.home.otenet.gr) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:47] * _Antonio (~live@85.102.185.44) Quit (Ping timeout#)
[22:47] <+^Jenn^> Martyn: of course you are... make sure you clean those anal beads & the fleshlight when you're done.
#02[22:47] * Nickel- (~Rock@79.125.185.208) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:47] * Omfg (~Omfg@Omfg.users.undernet.org) Quit (Ping timeout#)

#03[22:47] * Omfg- is now known as Omfg
[22:47] <+^Timm> flashlight ?
[22:47] <+^Timm> you cant find yer own hole ?
[22:47] <Micky^> ^Jenn^, why are you angry at me? why did ya suddenly stop telling me "zakkalicious"? It was so wholesome and invigorating to read that from you =(
[22:48] <+Dariana`> he needs a flashlight and a magnifying glass to see the fleshlight.. lol
[22:48] <+^Timm> i thought yours by now woulda been huge
#06[22:48] * +Dariana` ducks
#06[22:48] * Micky^ will be back in a jiffy
[22:48] <+^Timm> i dunno can you even see yer vage without a mirror Dariana`
[22:49] <+^Jenn^> Martyn's just pissed off cos he has to whack off all the time cos the local whores won't touch him anymore.
[22:49] <+^Timm> indeed
#02[22:49] * Le^^man (~we@77.30.216.17) Quit (Read error: Connection reset by peer#)
[22:49] <+^Jenn^> if you wouldn't have given them a list of STDs that you have, maybe you'd be getting laid right now instead of pestering us.
[22:50] <+^Timm> its just herpies
#02[22:50] * ariadni (~cool@cpe-167506.ip.primehome.com) Quit (Quit#)
[22:50] <+^Timm> and maybe anal bead warts
#02[22:50] * ^human (~^human@pD9E23252.dip.t-dialin.net) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#03[22:50] * ^human_ is now known as ^human
#02[22:51] * Fifth_ID (Fifth_ID@123.237.132.237) Quit (Quit#)
#02[22:51] * +Dariana` (~ASLsux@204.110.227.11) Quit (Ping timeout#)
#02[22:51] * male^effect (~one_mate@77.31.10.204) Quit (Read error: Operation timed out#)
[22:51] <+^Timm> but im sure youre vage will get cut out way before me wiener falls off ^Jenn^
[22:51] <+^Jenn^> nah
[22:51] <+^Jenn^> my vajayjay will go on.
[22:52] <+`Fyoosh> you guys are hilarious... arguing like brother and sister
#06[22:52] * +`Fyoosh mainlines more coffee
_
Session Close: Fri Apr 02 23:00:36 2010

Appendix III

Finnish Summary

Otsikko: *Positive Impoliteness: Banter as a Form of Social Cohesion in Internet Relay Chat* (suom. *Myönteinen epäkohteliaisuus: Piikittely yhteenkuuluvuudeen tunteen luomisessa Internet Relay Chatissa*)

Tämä tutkielma tutkii epäkohteliaan huumorin käyttöä yhteisöllisyyden luomisessa Internet Relay Chat -nimisen reaaliaikaisen keskusteluohjelman kanavalla #chatzone, joka toimii Undernet -verkoston alaisuudessa. Tutkielman aineistona toimivat lokitiedostot, jotka ajoittuvat välille syyskuu 2009 – heinäkuu 2010. Nämä tiedostot on saatu informantilta, joka haluaa pysyä nimettömänä. Lokitiedostot ovat saatavissa tutkielman kirjoittajalta esimerkiksi sähköpostitse. Tiedostoja on kuusi kappaletta ja niistä ensimmäinen, joka käsittää jakson syyskuun 2009 loppupuolelta helmikuun loppuun vuonna 2010. Tässä tiedostossa pelkästään on sivuja yli 1000 rivivälillä 1 ja fonttikoolla 10. Tästä syystä aineistoa ei ole lisätty liitteisiin kokonaisuudessaan ainoastaan siistittyinä pätkinä sekä toisessa liitteessä on annettu vain kaksi ensimmäistä esimerkkiä editoimattomassa muodossaan.

Tutkielma on ensimmäinen luokassaan, sillä se pyrkii esittelemään epäkohteliaan huumorin käyttöä yhteisöllisyyden luomisessa internetin keskusteluohjelmaa aineistona käyttäen. Tästä syystä teoriaosuus on jaettu kolmeen eri osioon: yhteisöllisyyttä, piikittelyä sekä tietokonevälitteistä kommunikaatiota käsittelevien alaotsakkeiden alle. Teorian ensimmäinen kappale (kts. kappale 2) käsittelee yhteisöllisyyttä ja sosiaalista koheesiota (engl. *social cohesion*), joka pyrkii antamaan esimerkkejä siitä, miten yksilöistä tulee ryhmä ajan kuluessa. Osana tuota ryhmäytymistä on huumorintajun osoittaminen ja itselle nauramisen kyvyn esille tuominen. Näyttämällä muille ryhmän jäsenille, että henkilö osaa nauraa itselleen ja virheilleen, hän osoittaa huumorintajua sekä kykyä leikkimielisyyteen, joka aiempien tutkimusten (Danet et al. 1997, Valanne 2001) perusteella Internet Relay Chat -keskusteluohjelmistojen (esimerkiksi mIRC, IceChat tai irssi -pääteohjelmat) käyttäjien kielenkäytön tärkeimpiä ominaisuuksia.

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella tuon huumorin ”pimeää puolta”, joka pohjautuu epäkohteliaan huumorin värittämään piikittelyyn. Eräänä uutena piirteenä tässä tutkielmassa esitellään uusi selitys vanhalle termille

myönteinen epäkohteliaisuus (engl. *positive impoliteness*), joka on osa Culpeperin (2003, 2011) epäkohteliaisuuden tutkimusta. Culpeper on esittänyt tutkimuksissaan (1996, 2003 ja 2011) Brownin ja Levinsonin (1987) kohteliaisuuden tutkimuksen rinnalle epäkohteliaisuuden paradigmaa. Tässä tutkielmassa on käytetty Culpeperin termiä *myönteinen epäkohteliaisuus* (engl. *positive impoliteness*), mutta termin selitys on tutkielman kirjoittajan toimesta keskittynyt epäkohteliaisuuksien positiivisiin eli myönteisiin puoliin ystävien keskinäisissä keskusteluissa. Piikittelyn yhdistävä voima on tutkielman kantavia teemoja.

Aiemmat tutkimukset ryhmien muodostumisesta ja sosiaalisesta yhteenkuuluvuuden tunteesta ovat keskittyneet tavalla tai toisella verkostoitumiseen ja muutokseen yksilöistä ryhmäksi. Tähän tutkielman teoriaosuuteen valitut artikkelit keskittyvät myös noihin piirteisiin. Artikkeleiden aineisto perustuu kasvotusten käytyihin keskustelutilanteisiin. Tässä ne eroavat tämän tutkielman aineistosta, joka käsittää tietokonevälitteistä kommunikaatiota, jossa ihmiset eivät jaa samaa fyysistä tilaa. Virtuaalisen verkostoutumisen ja ryhmäytymisen tutkimuksista esimerkkeinä toimivat Reid (1991, 1994) sekä Walther ja Gulia (1995). Yhtymäkohtana huumorin sekä yhteisöllisyyden tutkimuksessa teoriaosuudessa on käytetty artikkeleita Plester ja Sayers (2007), Terrion ja Ashforth (2002) sekä Boxer ja Cortes-Condé (1997). Tärkeimpänä kirjamuotoisena lähdeteoksena voidaan pitää Norrickin (1993) käytännönläheistä huumorintutkimusta.

Teoriaosuuden toinen kappale (kts. kappale 3) käsittelee piikittelyä osana huumorin tutkimuskenttää. Päällisin puolin epäkohteliaalta vaikuttava huumori toimii osana yhteisöllisyyden luomista ja ylläpitoa. Aiemmat tutkimukset (Plester ja Sayers 2007, Terrion ja Ashforth 2002 sekä Boxer ja Cortes-Condé 1997) ovat keskittyneet kasvotusten tapahtuvaan työ- tai kurssitovereiden keskinäisiin sekä ystävien välisiin keskustelutuokiohin. Tämän tutkielman aineisto perustuu yhden keskustelukanavan lokitiedostoihin, jotka ovat tallentuneet informanttini tietokoneen kiintolevylle.Tiedostot osoittavat kuinka ihmiset, jotka ovat useimmissa tapauksissa tunteneet jonkin aikaa, keskustelevat reaaliaikaisesti Internet Relay Chatin #chatzone -kanavalla. Yhteinen historia on johtanut leikkimielisyyden muotoutumiseen kohti pilkallisen huumorin käytön ääripäitä. Näin ollen, näennäisesti epäkohtelias huumori, joka tuntuu rikkovan jokapäiväisen keskustelunormistojen pääkohtia niin internetissä

kuin kasvotusten käytävässä keskustelussakin, näyttää tulosten perusteella olevan osa arkipäivää eräille pitkäaikaisille kanavan jäsenille. Lisätutkimuksia tarvitaan tiettyjen muutoskohtien löytämiseksi kanavan jäsenten huumorin käytössä: missä kohdin henkilö tuntee olonsa turvalliseksi käyttääkseen epäkohteliaisuuksia muita kanavan jäseniä kohtaan?

Aiemman tutkimuksen (Plester ja Sayers 2007) perusteella voidaan olettaa, että uuden jäsenen tullessa kanavalle on tietty koeaika, jonka jälkeen hänestä voidaan tehdä pilkkaa huolehtimatta liikaa siitä, että hän pahoittaisi mielensä piikittelyistä. On tärkeää painottaa piikittelyn hyvää tarkoittavaa luonnetta virtuaalisen kiusaamisen negatiivisen sävyn sijaan. Tässä tutkielmassa tutkimuksen kohteena on siis lähinnä *kiusoittelu* eikä varsinainen kiusaaminen. Aineistossa on tosin myös esimerkkejä ei-toivottujen henkilöiden kohtelusta, jonka yhtenä osana sarkastiset kommentit heitä kohtaan olivat yleisiä. Huono käyttäytyminen johti normaalisti henkilön poistamiseen kanavalta ja toistuneiden rikkomusten seurauksena hänen pääsynsä kanavalle evättiin määrätyksi ajaksi. Ensisijaisesti kyseiset henkilöt kuitenkin asetettiin naurunalaiseksi tai heidän läsnäoloaan ei huomioitu ollenkaan. Ohjenuorana voidaan pitää, ettei 'trollien' toimintaa tueta lähtemällä mukaan heidän riidankylvämiseensä.

Osana piikittelyä voidaan tulosten perusteella pitää ironiaa, sarkasmia sekä pilkantekoa, jossa piikittelyn kohteena olevan joitain piirteitä kritisoidaan toisinaan hyvinkin karkeaan sävyyn. Yksi pääpiirre kanavan jäsenten piikittelyssä oli seksuaalisten aktien sekä seksuaalisen tematiikan esiintyminen esimerkeissä. Sukupuolisesti mitään merkittävää eroa miesten ja naisten välillä ei näyttänyt olevan. Sekä miehet että naiset osasivat tarpeen tullen käyttää epäkohteliaisuuksia väliensä selvittelyssä sekä yhteisöllisyyden luomisessa. Yhtenä yllättävänä piirteenä voidaan pitää naisten valmiutta ja halukkuutta käydä sanallisia taisteluja miespuolisten keskustelijoiden kanssa. Tätä voidaan pitää Internet Relay Chatin sukupuolet tasapäistävänä puolena.

Tutkimuksen aineistona käytettiin Undernet -verkoston #chatzone -kanavan lokitiedostoja. Internet Relay Chat (myöhemmin IRC) toimii siten, että henkilö valitsee jonkin pääteohjelman, jonka avulla hän internet-yhteyttään käyttäen ottaa yhteyden jonkin verkoston (esimerkiksi IRCnet, Undernet sekä Quakenet)

palvelimeen (Turun yliopiston IRC-palvelimia ovat muun muassa linux.utu.fi sekä Tampereen yliopiston kautta toimiva irc.cc.tut.fi). Verkoston palvelimelle yhdistettyään henkilö valitsee verkoston alaisuudessa toimivista kanavista yhden tai useamman, joiden keskusteluihin hän haluaa ottaa osaa.

Teoriaosuuden kolmas ja viimeinen kappale (kts. kappale 4) käsittelee tietokonevälitteistä kommunikaatiota (engl. c*omputer-mediated communication*), jonka tärkeys nykypäivän keskusteluissa on usein saanut vähemmän huomiota esimerkiksi diskurssianalyysin piirissä. Tietokonevälitteisen kommunikaation osana on tutkielmassa käytetty aineistona Internet Relay Chatin lokitiedostoja, joita on mahdollista tallentaa palvelun käyttäjän tietokoneen kiintolevylle. Esimerkkeinä tietokonevälitteisestä kommunikaatiosta on kyseisessä teoriaosuuden kappaleessa mainittu myös matkapuhelinten tekstiviestit sekä sähköpostit. Näiden lisäksi erilaisten keskusteluohjelmien nouseminen osaksi arkipäiväistä kommunikaatiota on pyritty esittelemään tutkielmassa. Internet Relay Chatin keskustelun muoto on sekoitus kirjoitettua sekä puhuttua kieltä, jonka yhtenä pääpiirteenä on aiempien tutkimusten mukaan sen oleellisen leikkimielisyys (engl. *inherent playfulness*).

Tämän kyseisen tutkielman aineistona (kts. kappale 5) on käytetty yhden tietyn käyttäjän tietokoneen kiintolevylle tallentuneita lokitiedostoja. Nämä lokitiedostot eivät ole kyseisten päivien kanavan koko keskustelujen kirjallisia tallenteita. Tiedostot käsittävät vaan sen ajan, jolloin informanttini on ollut tuolla kyseisellä kanavalla. Aineistoa etsiessä tuli esille, ettei ollut olemassa akateemista tutkimusta varten kehitettyä Internet Relay Chat -korpusta, josta tutkijat löytäisivät materiaalia esimerkiksi kyseisen keskusteluohjelman lingvistisistä piirteistä kiinnostuneille tutkijoille. Palvelun ja kanavien keskusteluiden jakaminen esimerkiksi internetissä tutkijoiden kesken tuo esille tutkimuksen eettisten piirteiden hankaluudet, sillä kanavilla käytäviin keskusteluihin on jossain määrin oikeus jokaisella kanavan jäsenellä, vaikkakin kyseisiä tiedostoja voitaisiin käyttää todistusaineistona oikeudessa. Toisaalta voidaan sanoa, että sananvapauden ja julkisen puolen ei tulisi koskaan mennä käyttäjien henkilökohtaisen koskemattomuuden yläpuolelle.

Tutkielman metodologinen osuus (kts. kappale 6) pohjautuu Susan Herringin (2004) kehittelemään tietokonevälitteisen diskurssianalyysin (engl. *computer-*

mediated discourse analysis) piiriin. Kyseisen paradigman nuoruudesta johtuen tutkielman metodologisen puolen voidaan katsoa pohjautuvan myös sosiolingvistiikan sekä perinteisen diskurssianalyysin menetelmiin. Tutkielman teoreettisen pohjaan tukeutuen on metodologisen kehyksen yhtenä osana kolmeen pääpiirteeseen pohjautuva mahdollisten piikittely-esimerkkien löytämiseen tähtäävä apukeino. Nuo kyseiset kolme pääpiirrettä ovat tässä tutkielmassa olleet **molemminpuolisuus**, **interaktiivisuus** sekä **leikkimielisyys**. Metodologisen apukeinon (engl. *methodological toolbox*) muina osina on käytetty yhteistä jaettua menneisyyttä sekä kanavan merkitystä yhteisenä jaettuna tilana. Tuon yhteisen menneisyyden ja jaetun tilan merkitys tulee esille käyttäjien sitoutumisena juuri tuohon tiettyyn "paikkaan" eli Undernet -verkoston #chatzone -kanavaan.

Metodologian yhtenä osana on käytetty Terrionin ja Ashforthin (2002) tutkimusta, jossa he tutkivat kuuden viikon pituista kanadalaisille poliiseille järjestettyä kurssia, jonka aikana huumorin havaittiin siirtyvän itseä koskevista omien vikojen kuvauksista tuon kurssin ihmisryhmää käsittelevään pilailuun. Huumorintajun tärkeyttä poliisin jokapäiväisessä toiminnassa sekä osana poliisivoimia tuotiin esille tutkimuksen haastatteluosioissa. Eräs kurssin jäsen kuvaili näennäisen karkeaa huumoria kertoen, että tietynlainen kovanahkaisuuden kehittäminen on osa poliisina olemista. Mikäli poliisi ottaa kaiken piikittelyn henkilökohtaisesti, tulee hänen työstään hyvin nopeasti uuvuttavaa. Poliisivoimien sisäinen piikittely vahvistaa näin jollain tapaa henkilön itsetuntemusta sekä julkisivua, jotta hän selviää jokapäiväisessä toiminnassa ihmisjoukkojen keskellä.

Suurimpana erona aiempien tutkimusten sekä tämän kyseisen tutkielman aineistoissa voidaan pitää fyysisesti jaetun tilan puuttumista ja näin ollen keskustelukumppaneiden olemista kasvotusten. Jos oletamme kommunikaation perustuvan lähinnä tuon saman tilan jakamiseen sekä fyysiseen läheisyyteen, on tämän tutkielman aineistossa tuo korvattu eräänlaisena "rivienvälistä lukemisen" kykynä. Internet Relay Chatin sekä keskusteluryhmissä vierailevien ihmisten voidaan sanoa kehittävän hyvin pian jonkinlaisen kuvan kanavan jäsenten keskustelutyyleistä. Tuohon intuitiiviseen tuntumaan perustuen henkilö kykenee tulkitsemaan ruudulle ilmestyvien viestien todelliset merkitykset. Yhtenä tutkielman oletuksina oli, ettei piikittelyä löytyisi paljon mikäli nonverbaalisen kommunikaation puuttumisen

voitaisiin olettaa johtavan keskustelun pysymiseen asiallisena.

Tutkielman tuloksien (kts. kappale 7) voidaan pääosittain sanoa seuraavan aiempien tutkimusten (Valanne 2001 sekä Danet ja muut 1997) osoittamaan Internet Relay Chatin leikkimielisyyteen. Pilailu sekä kiusoittelu (engl. *banter*) esiintyi aineistossa lähinnä sanaleikkeinä sekä ideoilla leikkimisenä ynnä muuna leikkimielisyytenä. Tämän lisäksi tutkielman varsinaisesta kohteesta eli piikittelystä (kts. alaotsake 7.3.) löytyi esimerkkejä, jotka ovat vastoin kaikkia hyväksytyn kommunikaation normistoja. Nämä myönteisiä epäkohteliaisuuksia täynnä olleet tapaukset osoittivat todeksi hypoteesini siitä, että epäkohteliasta huumoria käytetään sosiaalisen koheesion keinona. Epäkohteliaisuuksien vaihtaminen ja toisen päihittäminen sanallisesti osoittautui erääksi piirteeksi, jota käytettiin niin ryhmän ulkopuolisten henkilöiden pilkkaamiseksi, mutta myös ryhmän sisäisen tiiviyden ylläpitämisessä.

Näin ollen, vaikka suuri osa kommunikaatiosta perustuikin leikkimielisyyteen sekä kepeään keskusteluun kanavalla, oli havaittavissa myös perheensisäistä tai tiiviiden kaveriporukoiden piikittelyä vastaavaa sanailua, jossa alapäähuumori sekä seksuaaliset vihjailut olivat osa arkipäiväistä toimintaa. Piikittely ei kuitenkaan tähdännyt tai johtanut henkilöiden loukkaamiseen sanallisesti, vaikka huumori olikin ajoittain hyvin hyökkäävää ja toisinaan jopa sanallista väkivaltaa muistuttavaa. Yhtenä tärkeimpänä löytönä voidaan pitää, jo yllämainittua, tulosten osoittamaa sukupuolten tasa-arvoisuutta: naiset IRC:issä eivät ole millään muotoa heikompi sukupuoli, osittain voidaan sanoa heidän olevan jopa sanallisesti miespuolisia keskustelijoita vahvempia ainakin kyseisellä #chatzone -kanavalla. Äitien kielenkäytön ei aineiston pohjalta voida sanoa olevan aina täysin asiallista (kts. käyttäjien <^Jenn^> ja <^Timm> käymät keskustelut kohdassa 7.3.).

Lisätutkimuksia tarvitaan tällä kyseisellä tutkimusalalla ainakin siinä, miten paljon käyttäjien kielenkäytön voidaan sanoa eroavan kasvotusten sekä tietokonevälitteisen kommunikaation keinoin käytävissä keskusteluissa. Olettaen, että anonyymiys takaa tietynlaisen turvan karkeampaan kielenkäyttöön, olisi tarpeellista saada tietoa myös käyttäjien arkipäiväisestä kielenkäytöstä. Oheisen aineiston lyhyt aikaväli herättää kysymyksiä siitä, miten käyttäjien keskustelutyyli kehittyy ajan myötä. Pidemmän aikavälin seuranta kanavalla sekä jonkinlaisen

kyselylomakkeen tai keskeisten jäsenten haastattelut voisivat antaa lisätietoa heidän Internet Relay Chatin ulkopuolisesta kielenkäytöstään.