

**Topic Shift Markers in asynchronous and synchronous
Computer-mediated Communication (CMC)**

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Abbreviations and citation form

ASY	asynchronous
CA	Conversation Analysis
CC	coherence coefficient
CC _{meta}	coherence coefficient on the metadiscursive level
CMC	computer-mediated communication
DA	Discourse Analysis
DM	Discourse Marker (=Tertiary TOM)
IC	In Character
IM	Instant Message
IRC	Internet Relay Chat
LD	Left Dislocation
MOO	Multi-user Object Oriented
MUD	Multi-user Dimension/Dungeon
MUSH	Multi-user Hallucination
NF	normed frequency (per 10.000 words)
NP	Noun Phrase
OOC	Out Of Character
PP	Prepositional Phrase
RPG	Role Playing Game
SY	synchronous
TOB	topic boundary device to mark the closing of a topic
TOC	topic changing device
TOC + TOB	topic change procedure which overtly marks the closing of the prior topic and the (re-)introduction of the next topic
TOC _{digression}	the current topic is temporally changed and later returned to or at least expected to be returned to afterwards
TOC _{re}	topic renewal = re-introduction of a lapsed topic by another or by the same speaker
TOC _{shift}	topic shift = introduction of a new thematic aspect
TOM	Topic Shift Marker

Citation form

The text samples are enumerated on a chapter-by-chapter basis. For instance, (ex. 5-1) indicates that the text sample is the first one in chapter 5, while (ex. 8-6) is the sixth in chapter 8. Under each quoted text sample the source of the respective occurrence is given. This includes the name of the source (see also Appendix 2.1) and the number of posting and/or number of line. Any sort of "misspellings" within the original texts have been maintained. Reference to individual participants in chats are given in <handles>.

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1. Introduction

One way of approaching the mechanisms and procedures underlying topic organisation in computer-mediated communication (CMC) is to look at metadiscursive elements which call attention to the topic and/or the attached topical actions in a more or less explicit way. As Schütte (2000) emphasises, within CMC communicative norms have not yet been established and are still in the process of being negotiated. This state of affairs is among other things reflected in extra-communicative references, such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) or Nettiquettes where all sorts of communicative uncertainties are outsourced.

More recent case studies on asynchronous (ASY) and synchronous (SY) modes of CMC point to the recurrence of metadiscourse which is mainly attributed to topic organisational purposes. In this context Gruber (1997, 1998) notes that in scholarly mailinglists metadiscourse frequently serves to set the topic, an observation which is confirmed by Gains (1998) with regard to commercial and academic emails and by Rothkegel (2001) with regard to professional emails. Herring (2001) draws attention to a CMC-specific topical coherence establishing strategy in ASY CMC which similarly operates on a metadiscursive level and which she refers to as "linking". For SY chats, Rittgeroth (2002) speaks of level changes to facilitate topic transitions and Hancock (2001) emphasises the role of metacommunicative devices as coordination devices to synchronise the speaker's action with the listener's attention, i.e. to establish what Kallmeyer (1978) calls a "joint focus of attention".

These preliminary findings suggest that in CMC there is a need for an increased range and frequency of metadiscursive cues to make up for the absence of mutually available linguistic and non-linguistic information which conversationalists rely on when handling topics. On this background this book presents and discusses the quantitative and qualitative results of a corpus-based study on metadiscursive Topic Shift Markers (TOMs) across English text-based ASY and SY CMC. This study purports to be a further step towards the study of topic organisation in CMC by drawing on a

sufficiently large and cross-sectional CMC data base, which exhibits a wide range and different frequencies of metadiscursive TOMs across ASY and SY CMC text types.

The study of metadiscursive TOMs does not cover the matter of metadiscourse as such, i.e. the number of metadiscursive TOMs is not related to the total number of all metadiscursive elements. The analysis of the CMC corpus had to be performed manually, since members of the class of TOMs significantly differ from one another in their syntactic-linguistic and semantic characteristics. Furthermore, the different linguistic surface phenomena are functional with different types of topic transitions in different contexts. Furthermore, a lot of TOMs are poly-functional, operating at more than one discourse plane simultaneously. Therefore the analysis required a detailed consideration of metadiscursive TOMs in their larger contexts.

The CMC corpus has provided a substantial database of 825 tokens of metadiscursive TOMs structured and analysed according to their quantitative and qualitative distribution across ASY and SY CMC text types. Since ASY and SY CMC samples differ considerably in length, the raw frequency counts of metadiscursive TOMs have been normed to a basis per 10,000 words. Unless otherwise indicated, the results presented and discussed in the following chapters take the form of normed frequencies (NF).

The study is organised as follows: Chapter 2 gives a description of the CMC corpus which is designed to give a representative cross-section of ASY and SY CMC text types. Problems related to text sampling in a cross-sectional CMC corpus mainly stem from the CMC-specific physical-communicative conditions, which differ significantly from those in spoken and written communication. Due to this state of affairs one cannot simply resort to already existing design standards associated with corpora of traditional written and/or spoken language. Rather, one needs to define new standards which can only be arrived at on the basis of future corpus-based projects in the field of CMC.

The physical-communicative conditions of ASY and SY CMC are detailed in chapter 3. Applying the parameter dimensions that distinguish speaking versus writing proposed by Chafe (1994) to ASY and SY CMC contexts I found that both CMC modes are characterised by a blending of these originally opposing features. The blended quality justifies the position that CMC in its ASY and SY specificities generates a third language medium which I have termed »digigraphic« medium. In order to determine the status of CMC or »digigraphic« language relative to spoken and written language, it will be claimed that the traditional notion of language medium, more narrowly used to refer to the phonic versus graphic realisation, needs to be extended to further carrier medial components and the resulting communicative conditions.

One outstanding characteristic of ASY and SY CMC is that it brings about dialogic structures based on alternating participant roles. Therefore a conversation-analytic approach to CMC in general - and more specifically to topic handling in CMC - seems to be appropriate. Chapter 4 gives the theoretical preliminaries related to topic and topic progression developed in a conversation-analytic framework. It will deal with the intricate interplay between topic change and speaker change and how these relate to higher order communicative principles such as topic continuity and continuous talk and the »principle of mutual consent«. Furthermore, chapter 4 will outline the main features of an ethnomethodological and an action-oriented approach to topic. It will be shown that a unit type-by-unit type analysis to topic progression is applicable to CMC contexts only in a qualified sense.

The aim of the study is to show how participants linguistically mark topic progression, such as topic changes, shifts, refocussings, digressions and closings, I have pursued an integrated approach by looking at how formal structures of topic organisation relate to participants' actions and how this interplay manifests itself linguistically. More specifically, I will look at linguistic phenomena as exemplified in (ex. 1-1a, b, c) taken from three different chats:

(ex. 1-1)

- a.** JHoppis: Rory, **Hate to intro another topic, but I need add. for the Quick Pro Booklet.**
(chat-latest-win, 486)
(Primary TOM)
- b.** WPLC SharZ : (...) Do you feel as I do, that it may be the most
WPLC SharZ : important part of starting a business? /ga
DabrieoCo : Marketing is the most important part of business! **I tell a story of when I first started out.**(...)
(chat-Supposed to be fun, 278)
(Secondary TOM)
- c.** LBSmasher: **Actually, I had a question for all of you.** Are Swags still
the rage everywhere.
(chat-Latest-Designer-Pro, 47)
(Tertiary TOM)

I have termed the bold-faced parts metadiscursive Topic Shift Markers (TOMs) rather than Topic Markers, since they serve to overtly draw attention to what people do with topics, and not to what the conversation is about. Adopting Kallmeyer's (1978) more sociologically-oriented perspective on conversation, one might regard metadiscursive TOMs as manifestations of orientation procedures, which serve to establish, maintain or shift topical foci of attention. With reference to Tiittula's (1993) research into metadiscourse, I regard overt REFERENCE TO DISCOURSE and FUNCTION (cf. Tiittula 1993) as criterial for a linguistic item to qualify as metadiscursive TOM. On this basis metadiscursive TOMs theoretically form a clear-cut and well-defined category. However, in practice, the category of metadiscursive TOMs proves to be fuzzy, since the boundaries to adjacent phenomena at the meta-level, such as metacomments and evaluations, and to the referential level are not clear-cut (see chapter 4.5.2). Another source of difficulty related to the definition of metadiscursive TOMs is rooted in the fact that topic organisation is embedded in the ACTION STRUCTURE and interrelated with the EXCHANGE STRUCTURE (see figure 7.2). Consequently, topics and/or attached topical actions may be linguistically spelled out in more or less explicit ways. Along an explicitness scale TOMs may be classified as Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs, which in this order are exemplified in (ex. 1-1 a, b, c) above. In (ex. 1-1a) the participant overtly draws attention to the upcoming topical action. Topics may also be changed or introduced by means of carrier actions. This is what participant <DabrieoCo> in (ex. 1-1b) does when he refers to the action complex TELLING A

STORY. Least explicitly indicated are topics and topical actions by means of discourse markers (DMs), such as "actually" in (ex.1-1c). In this case, however, the topic change is reinforced by means of "I had a question for all of you." which qualifies as a Secondary TOM.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 deal with Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs in more detail as delimited here. The individual types of TOMs will be discussed with regard to their quantitative and qualitative distribution across ASY and SY CMC. In this respect the present study is corpus-based in part, but it also discusses the occurrences of individual tokens in their individual contexts, in order to be able to relate specific TOMs to aspects of the respective digigraphic conditions.

An overall distributional picture of metadiscursive TOMs in the CMC corpus is given in chapter 8. This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative distribution of Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs in relation to one another and aims at making generalisations about their occurrences in relation to the digigraphic conditions of ASY and SY CMC. The core of the empirical analysis is based on the assumption that ASY and SY CMC types form standard communication contexts or technologies. However, Beißwenger (2003a: in prep.) points out that different chat systems may vary from one another according to the specifications of the respective chat technology and the addition of conversation-strategic rules. In other words, standard chat systems may be modified in such a way that they can be utilised for specialized chat scenarios taken from real life. As a consequence, it can be assumed that different technical and communicative specifications generate different modes of linguistic behaviour.

In view of the fact that SY CMC exhibits nearly twice as many metadiscursive TOMs than ASY CMC, I found it worthwhile to relate the distributional results of metadiscursive TOMs in SY CMC to the respective discourse scenarios utilised. Drawing on the parameter suggested by Beißwenger (2003a: in prep.), the SY CMC text data is broken down into 6 chat scenarios which are characterised by different moderating styles in the sense of *floor*¹ and thread controlling mechanisms (see chapter 2.4.1ff). It will be argued that in SY CMC moderation is not a matter of either-or, but of

nuances along a continuum ranging from more formal to more informal moderating styles. Here, the distribution of metadiscursive TOMs has yielded a clear picture: The higher the degree of formality within a chat, the higher is the frequency of metadiscursive TOMs. This state of affairs accords with the main conclusion arrived at in this study with regard to the distributional differences of metadiscursive TOMs across ASY and SY CMC:

SY CMC contexts evoke a stronger co-presence feel, in the sense that there is mutual awareness of the others being online. This mutual sense of co-presence causes participants to carry over »the principle of mutual consent« in handling topics typical of natural conversations. However, the absence of physical co-presence and the lack of possibilities of permanent monitoring and backchannels in SY CMC requires expenditure of extra managerial and metadiscursive resources, in order to restore reciprocity at different interactional levels. In part, topic organisational issues are tied to the disrupted or even suspended regulation of turn-taking in SY CMC. In this context, different moderation styles in SY CMC are another means to achieve transparency with regard to topic organisation. Here, I suggest that SY CMC cannot do without some sort of moderation, either by an officially-controlling body, or more informally by the participants' own responsibility.

In ASY CMC participants are freed of real time constraints, in the sense that "participants are no longer under pressure to respond while the partner waits" (Condon and Èech: in press), and consequently need to invest less overt linguistic explications. Related to this state of affairs there is another point that can be forestalled at this point: The more asynchronous features a chat scenario reveals, the less expenditure of metadiscursive elements are required. A summary and evaluation of the findings are given in the concluding chapter 9.

2. The CMC corpus

The analysis of metadiscursive Topic Shift Markers (TOMs) is based on a CMC corpus of 228.952 words¹ developed within the framework of the research project "Language and Communication in the Internet" at the University of Düsseldorf.² The CMC corpus has been primarily designed to give a representative cross section of text-based discourse in asynchronous (ASY) and synchronous (SY) CMC. Contrary to other research projects³ which aim at creating a corpus along the vertical axis by focussing on the sampling of one particular genre, the CMC corpus comprises CMC text types along the horizontal axis across ASY and SY CMC. Table 2.1 below gives an overview of the various CMC text types in the CMC corpus:

TABLE 2.1: OVERALL COMPOSITION OF THE CMC CORPUS

CMC modes	CMC text types	number of text samples	number of words
asynchronous (ASY)	mailinglist	4	29.442
	newsgroup	8	40.915
	guestbook	5	23.437
	email	2	22.234
	sum total (ASY)	19	116.028
synchronous (SY)	chat	16	56.277
	MOO	12	56.647
	sum total (SY)	28	112.924
CMC corpus total		47	228.952

ASY CMC includes communication in newsgroups, mailinglists, guestbooks and emails, while SY CMC covers communication in chats and MOOs. In nearly all instances the language data has been drawn from some sort of Internet-based archives with open access. This goes for all ASY CMC text types and for nearly all SY CMC sources. In the few cases where the compilers have been present in an ongoing chat or MOO conversation, they did not actively take part as discursive participants, nor did they inform the others about their research interests.

2.1 Basic characteristics of individual ASY and SY CMC text types

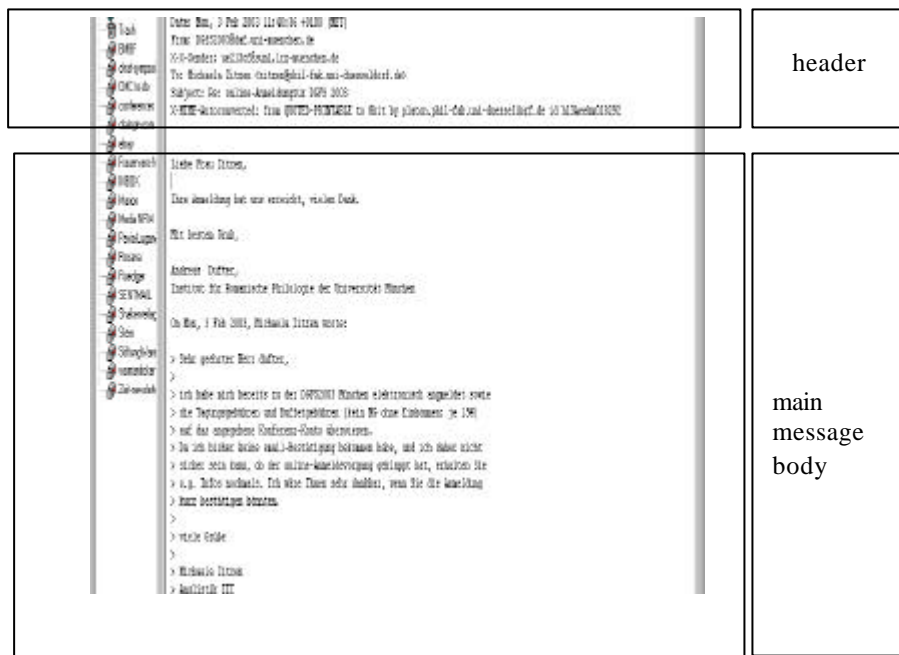
For the purpose of general orientation I will give a condensed description of the individual CMC text types with respect to their socio-technical functions. The emphasis will be on the social aspects, that is, on the communication practices associated with the individual CMC genres.⁴

2.1.1 ASY emails, newsgroups, mailinglists and guestbooks

ASY CMC contexts facilitate communication between spatio-temporally detached people. Types of ASY CMC may be distinguished according to the number of discursive participants which can possibly be involved.

Email is the characteristic medium for communication between 2 people.⁵ This is why it is often compared to traditional letter writing, which is in part due to the fact that it "consists of a series of functional elements (...) all of which are similar in purpose to those found in traditional letters and memos" (Crystal 2001: 95). These include - as figure 2.1 below shows - information displayed in the upper area or header about the sender (From:), the addressee (TO:), the subject heading (Subject) and the date and time at which the message was sent (Date:). The lower area of the email, the main message body, serves as the writing space for the exchanges, which in contrast to traditional mail can be transmitted and received within minutes or even seconds. Replies to a message can be performed via the REPLY function which automatically inserts the original message as a citation marked by angle brackets (<). Email is not only popular with private communication but also with professional communication, ranging from academic to organisational and institutional domains (see for instance Gains 1998, Rothkegel 2001).

Figure 2.1: Structural elements of email



Newsgroups and mailinglists are multi-party discussion groups where people "meet" in order to discuss all sorts of topics. To this end they send messages which are structurally identical to the components of emails illustrated in figure 2.1 and which due to their public nature are also called postings. With regard to newsgroups each new message entry will be stored on a newsserver where it can be obtained by newsgroup users. In contrast, mailing-lists are based on push-technologies, which facilitate one-to-many distributions of messages. Comparable to a serial letter, one and the same posting is forwarded to all mailinglist members. Newsgroups and mailinglists are utilised for recreational as well as academic purposes (see for instance Buck 1999, Gruber 1997a, b, c, 1998, Schütte 2000).

Guestbooks are not designed for interpersonal communication the way emails, newsgroups and mailinglists are. The header (if there is one at all) allows the addresser to identify himself similar to emails, whereas the addressee remains unspecified. The reason for this is that guestbook entries are unidirectional, in that they are not meant to be answered by other readers. Other readers include the owner of the guestbook, but also other "guests", since all entries can be read by anyone interested. Diekmannshenke (2000), who compares German electronic guestbooks to traditional ones points out that

Im Gegensatz zu ihren traditionellen Vorläufern dominieren nicht mehr die Handlungstypen SICH VERABSCHIEDEN und KONTAKTBESTÄTIGEN/KONTAKTÜBERHÖHEN im Vordergrund, vielmehr sind neben das KONTAKTIEREN, das BEGRÜSSEN und SICH PRÄSENTIEREN als Grundhandlungen eine große Zahl weiterer Kommunikationstypen wie INFORMIEREN/MITTEILEN, RATGEBEN u.ä. getreten, welche durchaus auch in traditionellen Gästebüchern zu finden, dort aber spezifisch an den/die Gastgeber/in adressiert sind.
(Diekmanshenke 2000: 152)

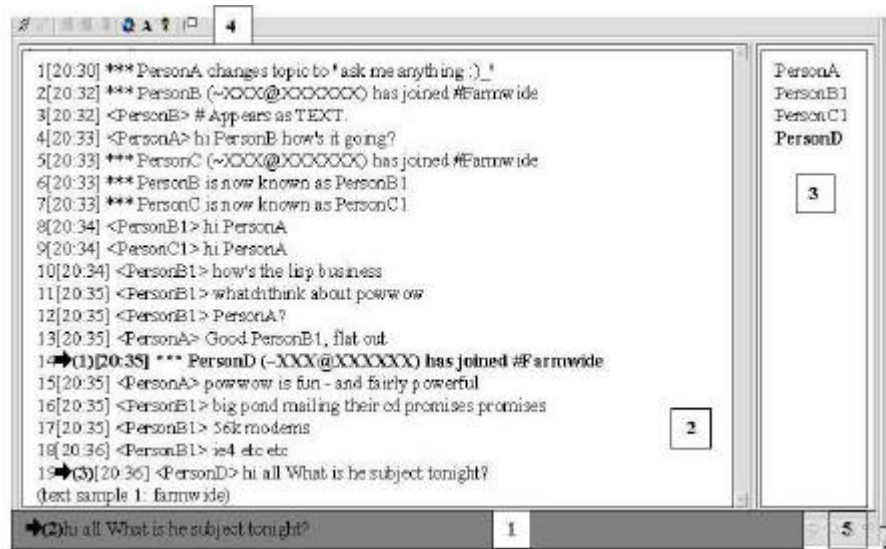
Guestbooks are usually related to some homepage, most commonly to ones by private persons who wish to share experiences and/or information on various topics. There are also homepages set up by the entertainment industry which focus on popular musicians or TV soap operas.

2.1.2 SY chats and MOOs

Chat and MOO programs⁶ are multi-user synchronous computer-mediated communication systems, which allow communication among spatially distal participants. "It is a written - or rather, typed form of communication that is transmitted, received and responded to within a time frame that has formerly been only thought relevant to spoken communication" (Reid 1991). According to Garcia et al. (1999) chats generate "Quasi-Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (QS-CMC)", a characterisation reiterated by Kiesler et al. (1985:75) who state that "there is (...) a definite asynchronous quality even to synchronous computer conferences". For a clearer understanding of where the *quasi* part comes into play, let us briefly look at what the conversational interface of SY CMC contexts typically looks like.

Figure 2.2 outlines the basic features of a web-based chat interface that is composed of three chat screens (1-3) and two control bars (4, 5). Web-based chats usually support the same commands as in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and MOOs.⁷ However, the handling of commands in web-based chats is facilitated by participants merely having to click on buttons provided in the control bars, whereas in IRC participants have to type out a specific command.⁸

Figure 2.2: Split screen architecture of SY CMC contexts



What all chat programs including MOOs have in common, though, is the split screen architecture that exhibits a public and a private sector. The former contains the main chat screen (2), where all current verbal interaction is publicly displayed, and frame (3)⁹, containing a list of everyone who is currently logged into the chat room. Field (1) is the private input box, where each participant types in his/her message, and then posts it to the public dialogue box (2) by using the ENTER-key. Through the use of the ENTER-key the server is instructed to transfer the respective message to the main dialogue window. The server then directs the transmission of a given message to the public window. The whole procedure involves the following steps: 1. Typing the message, 2. Sending the message to the chat-server, 3. Transmission of the message to the public dialogue box by the server.¹⁰

With reference to Nystrand (1987) the private input box reserved for typing and editing individual messages can be assigned the function of CONTEXT OF PRODUCTION, whereas the main dialogue box serves as CONTEXT OF USE. Due to the fact that the act of typing a message is physically secluded from the public and cannot be monitored simultaneously by the co-participants, CONTEXT OF USE is logically and interactionally separated from CONTEXT OF PRODUCTION. Thus, just as in written language, the text typed into the private message box does not function

communicatively at the time of its production. While chats are more heterogeneous, being used for both recreational and professional purposes, MOOs appear to be mainly restricted to professional purposes in the academic and the educational sector.¹¹

2.2 Text samples

As can be gathered from appendix 2.1, the individual CMC text samples across ASY and SY modes vary considerably in their length which can be partly ascribed to the conditions of asynchronicity and synchronicity. Determined by real-time situational constraints chat logs are relatively short compared to ASY CMC texts, which generate spatio-temporally detached communication situations. Defining an optimum length for the individual text samples turned out to be a problem, not only across ASY and SY CMC, but also among the different ASY CMC genres and among the different SY CMC genres.

ASY guestbooks are not designed as interactive multi-party communication in the way newsgroups, mailinglists and emails are, and in this respect form a sub-corpus of ASY CMC. The amount of language produced in guestbooks is relatively small compared to other ASY CMC types. Furthermore, sampling texts of newsgroups, mailinglists and emails by equal number of postings and/or by equal number of words does not necessarily measure up to the threaded nature of messages in ASY CMC contexts as an outstanding means of topic organisation.

The length of SY CMC log files depends among other things on the number of active participants (i.e. participants who contribute to the ongoing conversation by sending messages) and the duration of the individual sessions.

Although it is generally agreed upon that SY CMC exhibit structural parts similar to those in conversations, random sampling appeared to be difficult since phases (especially openings and endings) might easily be overstretched or severely reduced. This is why chat and MOO recordings are sampled as complete logfiles. This sampling

strategy embraces the linearly spelled out multi-threadedness in SY CMC, especially as it relates to the use of metadiscursive Topic Shift Markers (TOMs).

2.3 Topic Fixation

The main criterion on which basis the CMC text samples across ASY and SY modes have been selected is topic. Selection by topic was primarily motivated by the existence of the so called "Big Eight"¹² originally assigned to newsgroups in UseNet, but which can be extended to other ASY and SY CMC text types as well. Apart from 3 text samples (which will be discussed as we proceed), all text samples can be characterised as being on-topic, which means, that the virtual encounters behind the text samples are primarily topic-oriented, and only secondly (if at all) socially-oriented, or motivated by other communicative purposes. I am not aware of any off-topic ASY mailinglists or newsgroups which are designed especially for "chit-chat" or small talk.

Contrary to ASY CMC, SY CMC may exhibit different degrees of thematic boundedness, which amounts to saying that on-topic hood versus off-topic hood is of a transitional rather than of a discrete nature. Similarly Rittgeroth (2002) differentiates between chats with a strong and a weak thematic orientation. In the latter case, the names of chat channels are rather vague or do not suggest a specific topic. In such instances channel names are often related to regional affiliations, such as "#dortmund" which either name the location of the server, or which address people who come from the area mentioned in the channel name. Chats with a strong thematic orientation may be indicated via the channel name, as in "#casebook" which may be further specified at the beginning of the session by means of the TOPIC COMMAND "/topic" which will set or change the topic, such as "***ChanServ changes topic to 'Discussion of Casebook: Jack the Ripper'". Frequently, on-topic chats, i.e. chats with a high degree of topic boundedness, are offered by Internet service providers in addition to topic-oriented sites on music, movies, sports etc., in order to win over consumers.

With regard to the investigation I propose the topic categories listed in table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Breakdown of ASY and SY CMC by superordinate topic categories

topic categories	ASY CMC		SY CMC	
	number of text samples	number of words	number of text samples	number of words
science	3	22.167	3	15.119
arts/ entertainment	4	18.418	3	12.229
health	2	12.133	/	/
computer/media/technology	3	7.433	6	17.165
politics/economics/law	2	18.641	1	2.133
education	1	2.490	3	15.342
labour/ working conditions	/	/	7	25.418
culture	1	8186	3	13.251
interactive fiction writing	1	4326	2	12.267
email-based LAN-on-demand	1	12.102	/	/
private email-conversation	1	10.132	/	/

The last three categories in table 2.2 represent special categories of ASY CMC in that their respective inherent topic-boundedness goes beyond purely interest-driven multi-party discussions. The category "interactive fiction writing" contains text-based role-playing games (RPGs) where a number of participants jointly create fictional worlds and plots. It predominantly takes place in SY MUDs or MUSHs¹⁴, but also in the ASY CMC mode such as in interactive fiction mailinglists¹⁵. In both cases participants play the roles of fictive characters, i.e. they communicate "in character" (IC), which is to be set apart from speaking and acting out of character (OOC).

The category "email-based LAN-on-demand" refers to the use of the email-based project "Local Area Network (LAN) on demand" which has been set up for transnational distributed partner companies¹⁶. Basically, the local intranets of the partner companies have been linked with one another to form a transnational email-based communication network. Via email teams involved discussed issues related to management, marketing and technology. The idea was pursued that those representatives who had already experienced certain problems should support the others with successfully applied solutions. Finally, the category "private email-communication" refers to an email communication between two friends¹⁷.

2.4 SY CMC scenarios and their socio-technological settings

SY CMC can also be viewed from the perspective of what kind of discourse scenarios are adapted in different socio-technological settings. This approach goes back to Beißwenger's (2003a: in prep.) characterisation of the chat¹³ as a communication technology which is utilised for a range of specialised discourse scenarios taken from real life contexts. The adaptation process requires either specific communicational rules or specific chat technicalities or a combination of both. The socio-technological settings which have been identified for SY CMC within the CMC corpus are

group A: Internet service providers' sites (4 text samples),
group B: community platforms (17 text samples), and
group C: IRC channels (5 text samples).

Group A chats in the CMC corpus take the shape of moderated special-guest-interviews. Comparable to radio talk shows, people have the opportunity to talk to experts and/or prominents from all sorts of domains. Group B chats are integral components of virtual community platforms. Community platforms are complex technological environments that consist of a wide range of communication and information tools which offer virtual spaces and opportunities for interaction.¹⁸

Another community concept is generated by MOO-environments which offer textual replications of rooms, institutions or even whole towns in real world. Entering a MOO one usually finds a verbal and/or graphical description of the whole place and/or individual rooms. Appendix 2.2 illustrates the textual description of the Diversity University (DU) campus and Appendix 2.3 illustrates how a single room at LinguaMOO is textually inscribed.

With reference to Galin's (2001) groupings, the MOOs within the CMC corpus under investigation can be grouped into

- General educational MOOs, "whose primary function is to serve groups of students and teachers for course-related work" (Galín 2001: 325), and

- Professional MOOs, which "provide researchers opportunities to hold professional events". (Galin: 2001: 325)

In contrast to group A and group B chats, IRC is not embedded in any sort of socio-technological environment. As Reid (1991) shows, IRCers may eventually share a sense of community. However, these formation processes are not supported by a surrounding socio-technological platform.

Generally speaking, the different socio-technological environments generate different chat scenarios. For instance, chat-events organised by Internet service providers are prototypically resemble radio talk shows, while MOO-environments mainly tend to be used for academic and professional discussions and conferencing. Despite the fact that specific socio-technical architectures tend to be associated with specific chat scenarios, one cannot generalise clear-cut one-to-one correspondences between socio-technological environments and chat scenarios. Academic or scientific discourses, for instance, are not necessarily restricted to MOOs only, they may also take place on IRC channels, as it is the case with "chat-svengali" and "chat-Sokrates" of the CMC corpus. It seems that the individual socio-technological environments generate various chat scenarios with its own *floor* and thread controlling mechanisms or moderating styles. Based on these controlling mechanisms or moderating techniques, which are based on various conversational rules and/or on the manipulation of the standard chat technology. (cf. Beißwenger (2003a: in prep.)), the SY CMC text types are subsumed into six different chat scenarios. In the following chapters it will be argued that in chats moderation - taken broadly as *floor* and thread controlling mechanisms - is not a matter of- either-or, but rather of nuances along a continuum ranging from more formal to more informal moderating styles. Accordingly, type 1, 2 and 3 chat scenarios exhibit a higher degree of formality, while type 4, 5 and 6 chat scenarios are more informal. Anticipatory to the following chapters table 2.3 gives an overview of the individual chat scenario types and their main characteristics.

Table 2.3: Overview of chat scenarios and their main characteristics

chat scenario		main characteristics
type 1	special-guest-interview	editorial pre-selection of Instant Message (IM) and/or ASY message contributions
type 2	round table discussion	fixed <i>turn</i> regulation
type 3	discussion with invited speaker(s)	topic facilitating activities shared among moderator/host and invited speaker(s)
type 4	supplementary chat	integral part in online training and/or online research programs
type 5	panel discussion	moderator/host as expert
type 6	IRC discussion	chanop(s) and technically-based modifier

2.4.1 Type 1 chat scenario: special-guest-interview

Chat events which take place on a singular basis (cf. Döring 2001) are frequently designed as special-guest-interview. This chat scenario is characterised by a high degree of control with regard to turn-allocation and on-topichood. Three of the special-guest-interview chats, listed as cases 1 to 3 in table 2.4, employ editorial moderating styles, which means that the individual chat-contributions are sent to one (or more) online-moderator(s), who decide which of these are topically relevant enough to be displayed in the public dialogue box. The contributions may either be sent to the online-editor via instant messaging tools in the course of the chat-event or via ASY CMC media before the chat-event takes place. This state of affairs is indicated as 'IM' (=Instant Messages) and 'ASY M' (asynchronous messages) respectively in table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Moderating styles in individual chats designed as special-guest-interviews

moderating styles		editorial (no. of moderators)		online (no. of moderators)	display of live audience contributions (no. of different speakers)		
case		ASY M	IM		alias moderator	depersona- lised	persona- lised
1	chat-everJ	X (2)	X (4)	-----	X	-----	-----
2	chat-art-of noise	-----	X? (2)		-----	-----	X (15)
3	chat-money		X?	X (1)	-----	X (20)	
4	chat- supposed to be fun			X (1)			X (6)

In both cases the pre-selection procedures are undertaken "offstage" which adds to the asynchronous quality of synchronous CMC tools described in chapter 2.1.2. However, while pre-selection procedures of IM contributions achieve a compromise solution between editorial pre-selection (offstage) and authentic participation (onstage), editorial work of ASY messages is an offstage solution. In the latter case the authenticity feel is reduced to the special guest's apparently immediate reactions to the pre-selected contributions. One of the moderated special-guest-interviews (indexed as chat-everJ) sets off with pre-selected ASY message contributions and then shifts over to pre-selected IM contributions. As excerpt (ex. 2-1) shows both proceedings are metadiscursively announced by two different moderators.

(ex. 2-1)

```
<WarDragon>   We are going to start with questions fromt eh EQV chat board, then
                ake questions through the relay sytem, which will be explained later
                -----(10 lines snipped)-----
BlkStaff changes topic to "Chats started, EQVault questions first"
<EQV-Qs>       Is the game on schedule?
                -----(564 lines snipped)-----
<WarDragon>   We are going to start our live questions now. /msg relayer 1-4 your
                questions. and don't msg to more than one relayer with the same question
(chat-everJ, 32-46)
```

The chat opens with pre-selected ASY message contributions ("questions from EQV chat board") and at some point moves on to pre-selected instant message contributions ("live questions"). The questions from the chat board get personified by assigning them to a nickname, here <EQV-Qs>, while the pre-selected IMs are distributed to 4 moderators, nicknamed <relayer_ 1>, <relayer_ 2>, <relayer_ 3> and <relayer_ 4>. Since the chat contributions have to pass one of the four moderators before they are

displayed, one it is not possible to speak of "live questions". So, in contrast to conventional TV/radio talk shows, where a specific number of telephone lines are available, where people are placed in hold and then get the opportunity to speak themselves, in chats organised as special guest-interviews, the audiences' contributions are displayed via the moderator's voice or rather via the moderator's <handle>.

All in all, in "chat-everJ" we have six identifiable moderators, whose job it is to organise pre-edited contributions into apparent question-answer sequences. In chat-art-of-noise we can identify 2 moderators, one nicknamed <SonicNetMod1:Gil> and the other one <SonicNetHost:Goldberg>. Both moderators address questions to the special guest <Art of Noise: Anne>. Since the log files do not contain any sort of overt explication or agenda with regard to the organisation of the chat-event, one cannot state for sure which type of editorial moderating style(s) are employed. However, the fact that the moderators' nicknames do not only make reference to their social roles as hosts and moderators, but also to their apparently real names, namely "Gil" and "Goldberg", gives reason to believe that the messages attached to their nicknames are their own wordings and do not come from any pre-edited messages by other people. Contributions by the audience are assigned to different nicknames, which allows us to identify 15 different personified speakers from the audience. It stands to reason that these audiences' contributions are pre-selected IMs, but it is also possible that some sort of technical-based floor passing function was employed.

Another moderating style may be inferred from "chat-money". Here the moderator's social role is not inscribed in the nickname, since it only reveals his real name <Ed McCarthy>. Instead, as cited in text sample (ex. 2-2) , <Ed McCarthy> introduces himself as the moderator of this chat-event as well as the special guest.

(ex. 2-2)

Ed McCarthy: **Welcome. My name is Ed McCarthy and I' ll be moderating tonight's chat. Our guest is Patrick Adams, manager of the Berger 100 fund** Tonight we are talking about the fund and Patrick's techniques for finding suitable investments in today's market. Patrick, could you get us started by telling us about your background?

(chat-money, 1-4)

The utterance "I'll be moderating tonight's chat" suggests the employment of an online moderating style, where the moderator selects the contributions or speakers on the spot. Nevertheless, the individual audiences' contributions are depersonalised in that they are all assigned to the same nickname, namely <audience>. This state of affairs suggests an editorial moderating style rather than online moderating style. It is however possible that the audiences' contributions have been made anonymous after the event.

The last chat-interview, "chat-Supposed to be fun", clearly reveals an online moderating style. To this end the moderator <WPLC SharZ> gives the participants explicit instructions as to how to behave, cited in following excerpt:

(ex. 2-3)

1 WPLC SharZ : Our topic today is: "IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE FUN, ISN'T
2 WPLC SharZ : IT? HOW TO PUT THE JOY BACK INTO YOUR
3 WPLC SharZ : BUSINESS" .. with our guest, Teresita Dabrieo
4 WPLC SharZ : DabrieoCo) - We'll be starting soon and following
5 WPLC SharZ : "Protocol" !! :)
6 WPLC LanJ : **Type to ask a question, and to make a**
7 **comment. :)**
8 WPLC SharZ : DabrieoCo, if you'd like to introduce yourself or say
9 a few
10 WPLC SharZ : words, we'll start taking questions when you're
11 ready. ga
12 WPLC SharZ : PROTOCOL IS IN EFFECT:
13 WPLC SharZ : type: **Only ? to ask each individual question.**
14 WPLC SharZ : type: **Only ! to make a comment.**
15 WPLC SharZ : **WAIT TO BE CALLED ON... THEN ask your question...**
16 WPLC SharZ : type: /ga (go ahead) when finished speaking.
17 Thanks :)
(chat-Supposed to be fun, 5-19)

The participants are asked to pre-announce their wish to speak and to wait to be called (line 15). Furthermore they are asked to indicate what type of action they intend to perform. They are asked to signal a statement or comment by an exclamation mark and a question by means of a question mark (see lines coloured grey). On this basis it can be foreseen, firstly, what type of action will become relevant and secondly, at which point a topic shift or a topic change is likely to occur. An upcoming contribution which is signalled as a comment or statement can be expected to contribute to the present topic while questions are a common means to introduce new topics. In addition the end of a contribution has to be marked meta-communicatively by the "ga" which is short for "go ahead". In contrast to the other chats listed in table 2.4, in "chat-supposed to be fun" the moderator also functions as topic facilitator to keep the conversation going.

Every chat designed as special-guest-interview is organised in alternating question-answer sequences, i.e. someone poses a question, the invited speaker gives an answer, then someone else asks a question to be answered by the guest speaker etc.. This means, however, that any further queries or discussion among the members of the audience is suppressed.

2.4.2 Type 2 chat scenario: round table discussion

Most of the chats in the CMC corpus are organised as round table discussions. Contrary to special-guest-interviews, here, all participants are experts on an equal footing. The organisation of the round table discussions is based on the employment of an online moderating style which regulates *turn taking* by means of fixed turn-allocation techniques. In those chats the interlocutors need to give pre-sequencing cues and wait to be called on. In the chats number 5-7 in table 2.5 the pre-sequencing cues are sent to the moderator via IM. Note, that in contrast to special-guest-interviews, in round table discussions IM is not used to pre-select contributions according to content or to topical relevance but in order to select the next speaker. In each chat-session the moderator opens the conversation by first stating the "stage

directions" and then by giving the first topical contribution. This opening technique is illustrated in example (ex. 2-4) with <Hut KS 911> as moderator:

(ex. 2-4)

Hut KS 911: Before I get into her "stuff", I ask that we all stick to the topic at hand. If it is off
Hut KS 911: topic, please use e-mail or IMs. **Also, if you'd like to speak, please send me an IM, and I'll add you to the list.** I would also like to hear from those that work in the field as to
Hut KS 911: how they keep their sense of humor in adverse conditions too.
Hut KS 911: And yes furf - we dispatch on all calls.
The furf: Thanks Hut, I thought we were the only ones.
Hut KS 911: Gry told of one person that was stopped for going around the barricades. The driver said, "
Hut KS 911: I didn't know the road was REALLY closed." (...)
(chat-Humour, 1-33)

Another way of signalling that one wishes to speak is performed in "MOO-sampleliblog", which is a round table discussion on teaching experience held at Diversity University (DU). Here the participants use the Third Person Emote - Command to textually inscribe nonverbal cues, such as raising one's hand .

(ex. 2-5)

BarryB-lib raises hand
Ringer says, "BarryB.. your question?"
(MOO-sampleliblog, 130)

This type of staging evokes the feeling of proximity. When in (ex. 2-5) the moderator, nicknamed <Ringer>, responds to the textually inscribed hand-raising by directly calling the respective person by name she triggers the illusion of standing right in front the person and seeing the arm raised up in the air.

Table 2.5: Online-moderating styles in individual chats designed as round table discussions with fixed turn regulations

MODERATING STYLE		online (no. of moderators)		display of live audience contributions
case		turn allocation by IM pre-sequencing cues	turn allocation by 3 rd person emotive pre-sequencing cues	number of personalised, i.e. individually nicknamed, contributions
5	chat-employ	X (1)	-----	X (14)
6	chat-Humour	X (1)	-----	X (29)
7	chat-Xmas	X (1)	-----	X (31)
8	MOO-sampleliblog	-----	X (1)	X (15)

With regard to the chats listed in table 2.5 we can conclude that moderators in round table discussions mainly control who will speak next. The current speaker on the podium may speak as long as he wishes without intervening text lines by other participants. Once the floor holder has finished, the moderator gives the others the opportunity to ask questions or to make comments before eventually moving on to the next speaker on hold. Secondary, the moderators also function as topic facilitators in that they initiate new topics in cases where the conversation is thinning out or restore to the main topic in cases of digressions.

2.4.3 Type 3 chat scenario: discussion with invited speaker(s)

In contrast to the two previously discussed chat scenarios, type 3 is less formalised in its procedure. Although the individual chats are chaired by a moderator who introduces himself at the beginning of the session, the moderator's interventions are less regulative and more of a facilitating nature. The moderator's main job is to open and close the chat conversation, to welcome latecomers and to elicit or initiate topics in order to maintain the conversational continuity. Thus, what moderators in chat round table discussions perform secondarily becomes the moderator's primary task in type 3 chat scenarios. Much stronger than in the chat scenarios discussed so far, moderators in hosted discussions actively contribute to the topic(s). In this respect they do not stand apart from the other participants nor are they granted any

extra speaking rights. Similar to special-guest-interviews type, 3 chat scenarios have one or more invited speakers. Contrary to special-guest-interviews, however, the invited speakers are not given extra speaking status nor is the encounter organised in successive question-answer-sequences. Turn-taking is not prefixed at all, which leads to parallel topic streaks of different duration and with different speaker constellations. It seems that moderator and invited speaker(s) jointly bear the responsibility to keep the conversation going, in that they constantly pose new and different ideas on the topic under discussion. Judged by their messaging activities displayed in table 2.6, invited speakers tend to contribute more to the topical floor than moderators.

Table 2.6: Moderators' and invited speakers' message contributions (in percent) in individual discussions organised as type 3 chat scenario

		roles (number of persons in the respective roles)	
case	source	moderator	expert(s)/invited speaker(s)
9	Media-MOO	8 % (1)	64 % (2)
10	MOO-Kairos	12 % (1)	29 % (6)
11	chat-latest-DesignerPro	19 % (1)	18 % (1)

Looking at the moderators' messaging activities compared to the ones of invited speakers in Media-MOO and MOO-Kairos, one can see that the proportion of message contributions of the invited speakers is significantly higher than the moderators' ones. In the former one the invited speakers' contributions are eight times higher than the moderator's ones, in the latter one the invited speakers contribute twice as much messages as the moderator. In "chat-latest-DesignerPro" the moderator's message contributions and the invited speaker's message contribution are of nearly equal number. This might be related to the fact that the invited speaker has not been present right from the start.

2.4.4 Type 4 chat scenario: supplementary chats

Chats may also be utilised for online-classes that complement online training and/or research programs. In these the role of the moderator usually coincides with the role of an online tutor who gives advice and answers subject-related questions. In type 4 chat scenarios speaker change is not formally regulated by an agenda as it is the case in type 2 chat scenarios. As a general pattern, however, it can be observed that the participants ask questions or make statements which are in the first instance addressed to the tutor/moderator. Exchanges among the participants also occur, but all in all we are dealing with a many-to-one conversation pattern where the individual participants address the tutor. From table 2.7 we can gather that the tutor's messaging activities vary from chat to chat, which seems to correlate with the number of active participants.

Table 2.7: Moderator's messaging activities (in percent) in individual chats organised as type 4 chat scenario

case	source	moderator's messaging activities	number of active participants (moderator excluded)
12	chat-latest-win	14 %	22
13	chat-farmwide	29 %	21
14	DMUMOO-part1	40 %	14
15	DMUMOO-part2	49 %	5
16	chat-telework	56 %	11

The more participants are engaged in the chat, the less active the moderator has to be or can be. The reason for this might be that the moderator can sufficiently cope with only a limited number of incoming contributions. Furthermore the more people are logged in, the more parallel threads may establish themselves, which might cause participants to split their attention.

Often enough participants comment on a perceived asymmetry. In (ex. 2-6), for instance, <BetaLogic> complains about the fact that <RoryMcNeil>, who is the moderator-as-tutor, keeps on asking one questions after the other.

(ex.2-6)

1 RoryMcNeil : Comfortex, are the composers taking the stand not to
2 buy HD products if they (HD) are going to refuse
3 HangMan683 : refuse to sell Silhouette?
4 Comfortex : Wait two weeks
5 SteveShade : I can wait forever.
6 ShaneHayes : their all waiting for a knock-off<G>
7 RoryMcNeil : Hang, seems to me not h/r problem but ladder spacing?
8 Comfortex : Sorry,can not reply and use the term HD in the same
9 sentence
10 BLYNMAN : If they don't sell me Silohettes my HD rep can throw
11 away my address & phone
12 SteveShade : I think 3" looks unattractive on windows. Too bulky.
13 BLYNMAN : And I can sell against them easier than getting what
14 the customer asks for
15 BetaLogic : <waits while Rory asks ALL the questions><G>
(chat-latest-win, 112-127)

Apparently the complaint addresses the fact that the moderator's activities leave not enough room for the others to be heard with their questions. More specifically since each question makes an answer conditionally relevant, the participants might feel urged to wait before posing a new question (see <BetaLogic>'s comment in line 15).

2.4.5 Type 5 chat scenario: panel discussion with moderator/host as expert

A fifth chat scenario has been categorised as "panel discussion with moderator/host as expert". In contrast to type 3 chat scenario, here the roles of moderator/host and invited speaker or expert is played by one and the same person. Similar to the moderators in type 3 chat scenarios, the moderator has the role of a topic facilitator rather than as a controlling body. Now and then participants turn to the moderator/host in order to bring the chat back to the main topic, as <Jola> does in excerpt (ex. 2-7) in line 1 and in lines 3 to 4:

(ex. 2-7)

jola says, "Hmm,how about the main topic btw?"
 -----(54 lines snipped)-----
 jola says, **"Hmm excuse me to be boring.. but ehm what about the main discussion wer
 were going to have?"**
 Researcher says, "yes, I agree with jola"
 jola says, "the thing about wether text-based VR is really VR"
 Chris [to jola]: you mean the TBVR debate?
 Chris says, "yes, I think we should be heading back for that"
 (DMUMMO-part4, 991, 1045-1050)

Apparently it is less face-threatening to confront a moderator with complaints about thematic digressions rather than the group or an individual participant.

The messaging activities of moderators-as-experts are similar to the ones of type 3 and type 4 scenarios.

Table 2.8: Moderator's messaging activities (in percent) in individual chats organised as type 5 chat scenario

case	source	moderator's messaging activities	number of active participants (moderator excluded)
17	DMUMOO-part3	52 %	2
18	LinguaMOO-CFEST1	30 %	17
19	LinguaMOO-Birthday	31 %	16
20	DMUMOO-part4	21%	7
21	MOO-distance	17%	15

The data in table 2.8 confirms what has been stated before with regard to type 4 chat scenarios: the less active participants are, the more messages are contributed by the moderator.

2.4.6 Type 6 chat scenario: IRC discussion

In IRC, the first to log into a channel usually has the status of a channel operator and access to a series of so-called "chanop commands" which allow him to modify the channel in various respects. Three modifiers are especially useful for controlling the channel and the course of the chat:

m – moderated channel. Only the chanop can 'speak'.

- t – topic changing command . Topic of the channel can be changed.
- l – limited channel. The number of chatters is limited to the number stated.

Under normal circumstances each command activated by the chanop is spelled out in the public dialogue box marked by three asterisks, as in "chat-irc1124" which starts with "***ChanServ changes topic to "discussion of Casebook: Jack the Ripper..."". However, two of the IRC chats, numerated 22 and 23, are edited chat logs and thus do not allow to trace back all the moves which have actually been carried out during the chat session. In the other three IRC conversations, chats 24 to 26, the operators have only made use of the topic modifying command. In cases 22, 23 and 24 the chanop's messaging activities correspond roughly with the one's of the moderators in type 5 scenario. This gives reason to believe that the chanops have a personal interest in the topic similar to the moderators-as-experts in type 5 chat scenarios.

With the exception of chat 25 listed in table 2.9, where the chanop could not be identified, the operator's message activities exceeds the activities of the others. In chat 26 the chanop's message activities are so low that she can be hardly called an active participant.

Table 2.9: Chanop's messaging activities (in percent) in individual IRC discussions

case	source	operator's/moderator's messaging activities	number of active participants (moderator excluded)
22	chat-Sokrates	51 %	1
23	chat-svengali	54 %	3
24	chat-irc1124	34 %	8
25	chat-cyberchat	??	19
26	chat-love	0,7 %	25

2.4.7 Type 7 chat scenario: others

The category "others" consists of two SY CMC texts, "MOO-calypto" and "PernMush-Ciba", which constitute what was referred to in chapter 2.4 as

interactive-fiction writing. Since these two CMC texts do not contain any metadiscursive Topic Shift Marker (TOM), they are only named here, but will not be further described.

2.5 Summary

The strength of the CMC corpus is the construction of a database that comprises grammatically tagged ASY and SY CMC text types, on which basis comparative and/or individual empirical analyses may be performed on a sufficiently large scale basis. However, defining the criteria for text sampling to provide a representative picture of CMC turned out to be a difficult undertaking. The idea of adopting the standards of sampling in already existing corpora had eventually to be dropped, for it is still an open question which standards are more appropriate for sampling in CMC: Shall we orientate ourselves on the standards for traditional written discourse or at those for spoken discourse? The CMC-specific communicative conditions argue against such an undertaking, since ASY and SY CMC contexts combine communicative conditions of both written and spoken discourse, which will be detailed in the following chapter. Apparently CMC contexts are subject to constantly changing communicative conditions, which have not yet been identified in their entirety. In view of these problems, the empirical investigation of metadiscursive TOMs cannot be claimed to be representative, but rather to show usage tendencies and how they might relate to CMC specific communication determinants.

3. Activities and communicative conditions involved in ASY and SY CMC

This chapter explores the elementary activities that are involved when being engaged in ASY and SY CMC. In contrast to other forms of (tele)communication, in CMC the realisation of communication is more strongly shaped by technological factors, which segment the process of language production and reception into component steps which differ logically and interactionally from the ones we find in speaking and writing. The following discussion will centre around three basic parameter dimensions (1-3) that distinguish speaking versus writing in term of their communicative conditions discussed by Chafe (1994: 41ff)¹:

- i. Substance and Materialisation of CMC-based language
 1. Evanescence versus Permanence and Transportability
 2. Spontaneity versus Deliberate Working Over
 3. Situatedness versus Desituatedness: Co-presence and interactional conditions

The communicative conditions grouped along the three dimensions are the consequence of the language substance and its materialisation. Thus, the act of speaking is associated with »Evanescence«, »Spontaneity« and »Situatedness«, while writing is characterised by the opposing properties: »Permanence and Transportability«, »Deliberate Working Over« and »Desituatedness«. So, from the perspective of the physical-communicative conditions speaking and writing form clear cut dichotomy pairs, which is reflected in opposing linguistic features typical of conceptually spoken versus conceptually written communication. Conceptual orality versus conceptual literacy refers to aspects of language variation which may or may not show close affinities to the mode of materialisation, but normally do.

Der wissenschaftliche Vortrag ist also beispielsweise trotz seiner Realisierung im phonischen Medium konzeptionell 'schriftlich', während der Privatbrief trotz seiner Realisierung im graphischen Medium konzeptioneller 'Mündlichkeit' nähersteht. Die prinzipielle Unabhängigkeit von Medium und Konzeption steht nicht im Widerspruch dazu, daß einerseits zwischen dem phonischen Medium und konzeptionell mündlichen Äußerungsformen, andererseits zwischen dem graphischen Medium und konzeptionell schriftlichen Äußerungsformen eine ausgeprägte Affinität besteht. ... Ein

familiäres Gespräch verbleibt eben normalerweise im phonischen Medium, ein Gesprächstext wird in aller Regel graphisch gespeichert.
(Koch and Oesterreicher 1994: 587)

Applying the three parameter dimensions to ASY and SY CMC, I found that both CMC modes are characterised by a blending of the originally opposing features of speaking and writing. This is why I suggest to substitute *versus* by *and*, in order to underline that the activities involved in CMC do not form dichotomy pairs:

- i. Substance and Materialisation of CMC-based language
- 1.' Evanescence and Permanence and Transportability
- 2.' Spontaneity and Deliberate Working Over
- 3.' Situatedness and Desituatedness: Co-presence and interactional conditions

This blended quality is a result of the technical-physical and communicative conditions in ASY and SY CMC which will be detailed in the following chapters. It will be argued that not only the mode of realisation, i.e. graphic versus phonic, but also the pragmatics of the (tele)-communication medium has an impact on language use and communication patterns (cf. Dürscheid 2003).

3.1 Substance and materialisation of CMC-based language

From a physical point of view language may be overtly produced and received as written, spoken and kinesic substance. Just as the act of speaking is substantially dependent on sound addressing the audio-visual channel, and writing on sight addressing the visual channel, CMC is a written substance whose reception and production is clearly visually oriented. Following Du Bartell (1995) the notion of “substance” has to be separated from “material” for the following reason:

For example, written substance may be conveyed by hand-writing, computer-mediated communication (CMC), print, inscription, graffiti, manuscript etc. Spoken language may be conveyed by face-to-face interaction, telephone, amplification devices, radio and so forth. Finger-spelling and sign language gesture constitute the media for kinesic substance. (Du Bartell 1995: 231)

Consequently, different language substances may be materialised by means of different media. In CMC, the substance is conveyed as semiotic signs typed via a keyboard and displayed in a digital-graphic fashion on a 2-dimensional computer screen. We seem to be dealing with a form of writing which is based on the same semiotic encoding system as traditional graphic writing, but whose digital quality sets it apart from the latter one, in the sense that it is detached from the respective carrier medium.

Digitale Schrift ist eine von einem Trägermedium abgelöste Schrift; sie kann in Sekundenschnelle über weite Entfernungen transportiert und kostengünstig archiviert werden. Deshalb kann sie nun - zusätzlich bzw. parallel zu ihren "traditionellen" Funktionen bei der Verdauerung von Wissen - im räumlichen Distanzbereich Funktionen übernehmen, die bislang dem mündlichen Medium vorbehalten waren.
(Storrer 2001: 463)

Apparently, we are facing a new writing culture, one that on the basis of digital-graphic signs combines semiotic and communicative operations (cf. Holly 2000: 90).

3.2 *Evanescence and Permanence and Transportability*

With respect to the two older language media this parameter dimension is expressed as "either-or": "Evanescence versus Permanence and Transportability". Evanescence is typically associated with the rapid fading of speech, while permanence and transportability is a characteristic of traditional writing. As we proceed we will see that this either-or relation does not hold for digital writing in ASY and SY CMC contexts.

3.2.1 The fluid character of ASY CMC

With the exception of guestbooks² other dyadic or multi-participant forms of ASY CMC are characterised more or less by an instability which can be neither captured by the term "evanescence" implying the rapid fading of language nor by "permanence" raising the idea of preserved and unchangeable texts. Crystal argues similarly when he states that

the permanence of e-writing is only a superficial impression. Although a single piece of text may be preserved throughout a thread of messages, via forwarding or replying to author, each screen incarnation gives it a different status and may present it in a different form - either through electronic interference from the software or editorial interference from the new user.
(Crystal 2001: 121)

Since the instability combines permanent and evanescent qualities it had better be subsumed under a different cover term for which I suggest the term "fluidity". The fluid character of email messages is generated to a large extent by the REPLY and QUOTE options inherent in the software exemplified in the following excerpt from a newsgroup on TV soap operas.

(ex. 3-1)

Subject: Re: Todays episode....

In article <35A7AA87.C392204A@mail.vt.edu>, XXX<xxxxxxx@mail.vt.edu> writes:

>I enjoyed seeing the total lack of
>communication played out in the marriage of Phil and Michelle. Haven't we
>all been that wrapped up in ourselves--too wrapped up to see anybody else?

I thought it was too much like ordinary television drama. Where were the earthquake tremors? Where was the random gunfire and mythical subtext? Connubial squabbling of the sort played out by the Capras can be found all over the dial. (Is that a retro reference, "the dial"? What is the modern equivalent?)

>I didn't think of Maggie as a collection of sighs, and in her eyes and her
>body language, I saw a kind of peace. I think her relationship with
>Fleischman
(N.alt.tv. 21.20-37)

A reply to a prior message or posting is indicated by the insertion of "Re" in the subject line followed by a brief explication of the posting's topic. Using the REPLY option, the original text is transformed into a quote set off by angled brackets. Daly (1996) observes different types of quoting: prior texts may be cited in full length or parts of it or as in (ex. 3-1) in separate blocks, which alternate with in-between-responds. In-between-answers are a common strategy for reacting to different points made in a prior message. For instance, if the participant placed his comment (lines 9-13) underneath or even above the quote, it would be more difficult to make out its exact reference point. For Du Bartell (1995) the various sorts of quoting or text copying represent specific cohesive devices, in her terms *adhesive devices*³. These display semantic relations between quoted texts and responses.

While text-copying is one factor which might contribute to coherence, text-copying as a discourse strategy represents a type of cohesion, or cohesive device or cohesive relationship, which I call 'adhesion'. Adhesion results from the selection of and coadunation of discourse from one or more other message sources into a particular message response.

(Du Bartell 1995: 238)

Furthermore, the technically-induced breaking-up and the interspersing of »in-between-responses« gives ASY CMC a dynamicity associated with dialogic speech situations (cf. Döring 1999, Runkehl, et al. 1998, Schrodts 2002), which is reflected in adjacency patterns for example. Thus, fluidity of ASY CMC texts is generated by "opportunities for freely quoting earlier texts when replying, for editing those quotes, and for inserting replies/responses within the quoted text, also encourag[ing] a conversational, turn-taking style" (McElhearn 1996: online).⁴ Following longer thematic threads in a newsgroup or a mailinglist it is not the case that e-writing fades after a while as is the case with speaking. Rather, the storage facilities of CMC multi-user systems give access to archived histories where

each contributor leaves a linguistic 'footprint', in that what is said has a **permanent pragmatic effect**. In face-to-face communication, pragmatic effects are typically immediate and direct. In asynchronous lists, the effect of a contribution is preserved over an indefinable period of time (...).

(Crystal 2001:135, bold face M. Z.)

Consequently, permanence associated with texts in the traditional sense is replaced by persistence of communication processes with dynamically changing 'linguistic footprints', which depending on the number of contributions interspersed in one message body might be getting more difficult to trace back to the respective contributors. Text sample (ex. 3-2) below is a message taken from the mailinglist "HISTLING". At this point in the course of the discussion there have been at least 3 contributions (including the initiating one) to the subject "rhotacism from Ray Hickey". As a rule, the more angle brackets are inserted in front of quoted passages the older the contribution is within the frame of a particular threaded message history.

(ex. 3-2)

Betreff: Re: rhotacism from Ray Hickey

-----Original message-----

On Wed, 11 Nov 1998, J. M. wrote:

[LT]

>> But some sound changes are quite irreversible. Consider loss. In the
>> ancestor of Greek, prevocalic */s/ was lenited to /h/, and the resulting
>> /h/ was later lost. I predict confidently that the Greeks will never
>> reverse this change by re-introducing those long-gone /s/s,
>
> yes. as a product of analogy, see the -s- futures etc.

Yes, agreed, except that specialists do not seem to be sure whether /s/
was first lost from futures like <luso> (from <luo> `loosen') and then
restored by analogy, or whether it was never lost in the first place
because of paradigmatic pressure to retain it.

(@histling, 10.8.23)

The double angle-bracketed lines 8 to 11 are likely to come from the contributor identified automatically by the server in line 4, and which within this message body displays the oldest contribution. In line 13 we have a single angle-bracketed contribution by another person which temporally proceeded lines 8-11. The most current contribution is given in lines 15 to 18. How much of each quote has been cut out is not known, unless you make the effort to find all prior messages attached to a thread. The identification and demarcation of individual contributions by different interlocutors is even more complicated if the chronology of the 'footprints', from the most oldest to the most current contribution is not remained. The author of the most current contribution in (ex. 3-2) has placed her lines at the bottom of the message, so that it is read as an answer to both prior quoted message texts. The same author could also have interspersed an answer in line 12, in which case her reply addressed only the above quoted contribution. So, editorial work on quotes as well as choice of placement of individual passages can be said to have a pragmatic effect on the next potential reader and/or contributor as far as processing costs and the willingness to actively participate are concerned.⁵ As mentioned before, Crystal (2001) underlines that pragmatic effects in ASY CMC have a permanent quality which results from the fact that any message irrespective of its date of dispatch may gain the status of present topicality. Likewise, Döring observes with regard to the communication process in newsgroups: "Länger zurückliegende Äußerungen sind nicht 'vergessen', sondern haben für diejenigen, die sie gerade lesen, Aktualität" (Döring 1999: 71). In this respect one may speak more appropriately of *extended time pragmatic effects*⁶ rather than of *permanent pragmatic effects* in ASY CMC. Pragmatic effects can only get in force in a present situation where a participant is reading a message, and in doing so, reopens a past thread.

On the background of the fluid quality of ASY e-writing the question of transportability, a feature strongly associated with traditional writing, obtains a different functional status, too. While paper/print writings can be transported to different physical localities, private emails and public postings of newsgroups and mailinglists are not primarily meant to be printed out and to be filed, or to be transmitted as print-outs to another person. Rather, the storage of e-writings is

operationalised via electronic storage and filing systems, which can be sorted and searched for by topical threads. Once you make a print-out of an email or a posting, you unhinge it from the chain of current and potential extended time online communication processes, transforming it into a permanent writing document.⁷

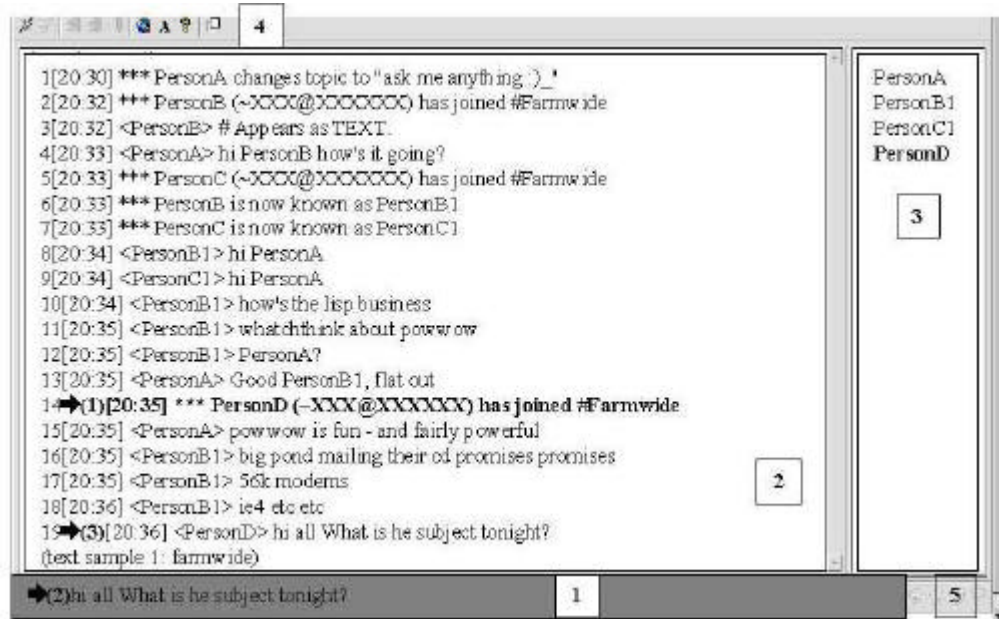
Furthermore, the various copy and paste functions also allow for cross-thread linking or even for inter-medial transportation of e-writings. For instance, you may copy excerpts of e-writings from one newsgroup to another, or you may even use parts of ASY CMC as "canned language" in SY CMC events.

3.2.2 Message permanence in SY CMC

SY CMC is often ascribed an evanescent quality so far only known of sound in face-to-face speaking situations (cf. Dürscheid 1999), although the acts of chatting and MOOing are materialised in the form of graphics.

Recalling the split screen architecture of SY CMC, illustrated for convenience again in figure 3.1 below, imagine you are participant PersonD who joins #Farmwide at 20:35. Your entrance into the chat room will be automatically announced by the chat server displaying the message "PersonD has joined #Farmwide"(see line 14) in the public dialog box. At the same time PersonD's nickname will be automatically added in frame 3. From there it can be gathered that at the time of PersonD's entrance three other people are currently logged in.

Figure 3.1: Split screen architecture of SY CMC contexts



As in conventional communication situations the person who has just entered a conversational frame is supposed to join in the conversation. That is what PersonD is doing by typing the message "hi all What is the subject tonight?" in her private input box which is automatically posted to the public dialog box once PersonD has pressed the ENTER-key. In a matter of seconds the other participants can read the recently posted message in the public chat window. The source of the contribution is automatically assigned to the respective <nickname> at the beginning of each message, so that all participants currently logged in can read line 19. With each newly posted message that is displayed in the public output box the writing space scrolls up, pushing older messages out of sight. PersonD's question "What is the subject tonight?" hints at the fact that the first line "***PersonA changes topic to ask me anything :)" is not visible any more upon her entrance. Thus, the evanescent quality ascribed to SY CMC appears to be related to the specific synchronicity generated by SY CMC tools and the scrolling facility. While the former technical feature causes participants to take *turns* in the behavioural sense (cf. Zitzen, Stein forthc.), the latter one evokes a sort of visual fading of language produced, that is, linearly organised text lines, which gives them "den Charakter der Einmaligkeit einer Sprechsituation" (Dürscheid 1999: 21). But a participant can go back in the text by means of a scrolling bar during an ongoing chat conversation, which is particularly

helpful for latecomers or for those participants who temporarily cannot follow the chat conversation. In the MOO excerpt (ex. 3-4) below, for instance, participant C. fills himself in after a phase of severe lagging on which he metacommunicatively comments on in line 6:

(ex. 3-4)

Researcher lags (the nod was to the comment of the mailing list - does that help coordinate plans?
Robin has connected.

IvorB disappears in a flash of quantum physics.

Robin says, "Sorry about that. I lost my connection. Where were we?"

Chris scrolls back

Chris says, "Is the lag OK? Everyone?"

(DMUMMOO-part4, 888)

Consequently, the type of evanescence in SY CMC contexts has to be redefined as visual evanescence of graphic representations which is restricted to the public dialogue frame on the screen. Contrary to the fading of sound, in SY CMC we do not have absolute fading of text. Rather, a build-in message buffer combined with scrolling facilities gives participants the opportunity to revisualise past conversation, which leads to what Herring (2001: 615) terms "persistence of text".

Comparable to ASY CMC, the availability of past texts in chats makes it possible to copy and paste whole or parts of messages and to repeat them (cf. Beißwenger 2000: 60ff). Sometimes participants reduplicate prior messages in cases where they have been ignored by others or in cases of comprehension difficulties. The temporary storage function of buffers can be extended to permanent archiving of entire sessions by means of extra recording or logging facilities inherent in chats. Recordings in chats are usually initiated by a host or moderator and explicitly announced to the participants. While in ASY CMC contexts the storage and public availability of communication processes seem to be taken for granted, in SY chats they are not. The reason for this might be that recordings in chats are live-recordings which in every day speech situations are very rare. Due to these storage facilities chat conversations may be used in extracommunicative speech events, a phenomenon which Storrer (2001) refers to as "bookkeeping".

Similar to ASY CMC archived log files of SY CMC may furthermore be copied inter- or cross-medially into any other ongoing online chat event. However, quotes in SY CMC contexts differ functionally from quotes in ASY CMC. Copied text material in SY CMC does not function as adhesive devices at the semantic level, but rather as direct quotes which Du Bartell (1995) contrasts with adhesive quotes of ASY CMC.

I would like to point out that adhesion is not the same feature as direct quotes within a text. While direct quotes are also marked (by quotation marks), the discourse field is not the same. Direct quotes are embedded within the paragraph discourse unit, a feature of standard dialect written language. Also, direct quotes do not form a conversational turn-taking organisation between the speaker and the listener within the discourse as do text-copied selections followed by the speaker's response.
(Du Bartell 1995: 238)

The following text sample (ex. 3-5) taken from a MOO conference on online teaching issues exemplifies the use of copied text as "canned speech" in lines 9 - 17.

(ex. 3-5)

1 R. says, "B. T. ALA president wrote the text "
2 R. says, "and we loaded it into this 'lecture'"
3 R. [to E.C-lib]: want to type sit
4 R. says, "so this text was her opennotes"
5 R. says, "oops opening notes"
6 R. says, "Thank you for joining me today."
7 R. says, " this is the 'canned' speech"
8
9 R. says, "Nothing happening today offers more challenge and more opportunity for the people
10 of the U.S. than the emerging national electronic information superhighway (IS). Political
11 leaders from both sides of the aisle agree that all Americans must be connected. But we need
12 more than words to guarantee that we will have the same free and open access to information
13 in the 21st century we have today."
14
15 Ringer says, "The 57,000 member American Library Association (ALA), the oldest and largest
16 library association in the world is championing access for people of all ages and circumstances.
17 ALA held the Summit, "A Nation Connected," where a panel of experts helped 1) define public
18 interest issues in the IS and 2) identified ways to get the public involved; their voices
19 heard."(MOO-sampleliblog 219-230)

Taking the copied text on its own, there is no clue whatsoever for its status as "canned speech". Since each contribution in a MOO, which is typed and sent away via the SAY-command, is marked by quotation marks, these are not useful for setting the copied text apart from not-copied texts. In addition to that, even the source of words may be manipulated, since they may be assigned to another nickname. It is only because <R.> explicitly announces the "canned speech" (lines 1-7) as well as its author that the participants can know that the words in lines 9 to 17 are not <R.>'s. Community-chats, which are part of a larger virtual community platform often make use of cross-medial text copying by inserting pre-edited texts from ASY messaging tools. This is typically done in chats organised as chat scenario type 1 illustrated in (ex. 2-1) above and repeated here as (ex. 3-6):

(ex. 3-6)

```

<WarDragon> We are going to start with questions from eh EQV chat board,
              then ask questions through the relay system, which will be explained later
------(10 lines snipped)-----
BlkStaff changes topic to "Chats started, EQVault questions first"
<EQV-Qs>      Is the game on schedule?
------(564 lines snipped)-----
<WarDragon>  We are going to start our live questions now. /msg relayer 1-4 your
              questions. and don't msg to more than one relayer with the same question
(chat-everJ, 32-46)
    
```

Without any overt explications by the moderator, the question "Is the game on schedule?" in line 6 could be easily mistaken as a live question sent by one of the participants logged in. Also, the actual change from the »copied question - answer phase« to the »live question -answer phase« would pass unnoticed, had the moderator <WarDragon> in line 8 not extracommunicatively pointed to it.

3.3 Spontaneity *and* deliberate working over

Characteristically, in conversations ideas tend to be activated off the top of one's head as a conversation proceeds. There is little time for elaborate preplanning when one is "throwing ideas around" and "new ideas and topics must be activated quickly" (Chafe 1994: 43). Since chatting takes place in real time, "there is a great need for speed – both in reading the messages others send, and in composing and sending one's own messages" (Lapadat 2002). This real-time linearity constraint seems to be stronger at force the more discursive participants are logged in. In this context Naumann makes the following observation: "Je mehr Gesprächspartner teilnehmen, desto kürzer müssen die Beiträge der einzelnen werden, um überhaupt eine Chance zu haben, halbwegs aktuell auf die Bildschirme zu kommen." (Naumann 1997: 167). Thus, there appears to be little space for preplanning which gives SY CMC a spontaneous feel comparable to face-to-face conversation. However, according to Wilde (2002) the degree of spontaneity in SY CMC is much smaller than in face-to-face conversation for the following reasons:

Obwohl die Chat-Kommunikation im Vergleich mit anderen medial schriftlichen Kommunikationsformen eine ausnehmend grosse Spontaneität und Direktheit ermöglicht, kann sie dies im Verhältnis zur Face-to-face-Interaktion nur in beschränktem Masse: Der Umstand, dass zuerst getippt und dann abgeschickt werden muss, bevor die Äußerung bei den anderen Teilnehmern ankommt, Produktions- und Äußerungsakt also getrennt sind, verunmöglicht eine totale Spontaneität.
(Wilde 2002:18)

Furthermore, as we have discussed with regard to the various storage and copy facilities, the degree of spontaneity may be relaxed by means of "canned speeches" or by instructing participants to pre-write messages in advance. Also, the relative message permanence of chats combined with the inherent scrolling trigger new forms of pre-planning activities.

ASY CMC contexts allow for maximum pre-planning activities. Participants in newsgroups and mailinglists may read and/or answer prior messages selectively at their own time. In addition to that, the REPLY and COPY functions facilitate various

forms of intertextual editing which in this specific form does not exist outside of CMC.

3.4 Situatedness *and* Desituatedness: Co-presence conditions and interactivity

ASY and SY CMC media have been described as "interactive media" (Holly 2000, Kleinsteuber/Hagen 1998), whereby the term "interactive" often denotes two types of interactivity. On the one hand it refers to technically-induced forms of interaction, and on the other hand, to interpersonal or social forms of interaction. Holly (2000) terms the former one "Interaktivität" and the latter one "Interaktionalität" which are to be set apart from one another for the following reasons:

Interaktivität darf jedenfalls nicht mit Interaktionalität verwechselt werden, die wechselseitiges Handeln zwischen Menschen mit prinzipiell freiem Willen kennzeichnet und die auch bei Medien zu finden ist, die gleichzeitig dialogische Kommunikation ermöglichen.
(Holly 2000: 87)

Within the framework of my study I exclude technically-based forms of interaction, which according to Schefe (1995) are more appropriately described as interactions with data worlds⁸. Instead I concentrate exclusively on forms of dialogic interaction between two or more people which fall under Holly's notion of "interactionality". Prerequisite for establishing and sustaining interactional structures is co-presence, since "co-presence makes it possible for interlocutors to interact, alternating in their roles as speakers and listeners" (Chafe 1994: 44). In this context Goffman (1959: 15)⁹ speaks of reciprocal "continuous presence" which is present when interlocutors share the same physical and temporal space. As will be shown, ASY and SY CMC contexts generate modified forms of co-presence which cause modified forms of dialogic interaction.

3.4.1 Displaced co-presence scenarios in ASY CMC

Considering the spatio-temporal coordinates ASY CMC modes constitute a spatio-temporally detached form of communication between two or more people. This means above all that contrary to SY CMC participants do not have to be logged in simultaneously. In this respect the act of posting or emailing does not differ from traditional writing, besides the fact that the medial transmission of the individual messages is reduced to seconds. Nevertheless, ASY CMC modes are assigned a dialogic quality, which according to Schrodt (2002), Döring (1999) and Runkehl et al. (1998) are caused by the inherent REPLY and QUOTE options already discussed in chapter 3.2.1, and which may be summarised as follows:

Ein wichtiges Merkmal von Mails ist auch die Dialogizität: Eine empfangene Botschaft kann man sehr einfach mit der Antwortfunktion bearbeitet an den Sender retournieren.
(Schrodt 2002: 8)

In accordance with Döring (1999) it has to be noted that this strategy approximates (but not resembles) dialogic situations, because ASY CMC "sacrifices (...) direct and immediate involvement with another mind" (Chafe 1994: 44). Still, if ASY CMC generates a form of dialogicity, then it must also generate some form of (perceived) interactive co-presence. Related to what I have called extended time pragmatic effect in chapter 3.2.1, I put forward the thesis that each time a participant opens a message and replies to a posting or an email by means of the REPLY and QUOTE-function he creates and updates a displaced dialogic frame in which the current participant may treat one or more temporally detached message(s) by other participants as present ones. As illustrated in (ex. 3-1) and (ex. 3-2) inserted quotes may freely alternate with in-between-responds by the current speaker which "encourages a conversational, turn-taking style" (McElhearn 1996: online), and the production of adjacency structures (cf. Runkehl et al. 1998). Pursuing the idea of displaced dialogic frames which are instantiated each time a participant replies to a message in a poly-directional CMC context one may speak of series of **displaced co-presence scenarios** which lack mutual reciprocity and which are relieved from temporal linearity constraints.

3.4.2 Discontinuous co-presence in terms of screen visibility in SY CMC

The physical apartness of the two components of "speaking", caused by the split screen architecture of SY CMC contexts (see chapter 3.2.2) has as a consequence that in contrast to ASY CMC there is mutual awareness of the other's presence. However, this awareness of others is of a discontinuous nature at all times and stands in stark contrast to physical co-presence in face-to-face or telephone conversations. Logging into a chat channel, the participant automatically enters a conversational frame which is textually notified in the public dialog box by a synchronous server feedback saying: "Michaela has entered #linguist." or "Michaela has connected #linguist". Automated server messages upon arrival and departure of a participant serve above all to textually inscribe his/her presence for the public, which makes it impossible for any participant to get into a chat room "unseen" (cf. Bays 1998).

Nevertheless, depending on the number of chatters involved in an ongoing conversation, the textually inscribed presence of a participant may soon lapse from memory, or from cognitive focus, when (s)he does not actively take part in the conversation, that is, if (s)he remains silent, which may be interpreted as lurking¹⁰. After the automated textual notification in the public dialog box upon one's entrance, a participant's presence - and even a lurker's presence - vanishes since automated text lines such as "Michaela has entered #linguistics" will scroll away and at some point be out of sight; the more dynamic the online conversation the quicker each text line will disappear in the output box. Due to this state of affairs Zitzen and Stein (forthc.) conclude that

(...) a notion of conversational presence as a ratified participant, online monitoring, and being online monitored, and as a candidate **continuously eligible** to being exclusively selected as *next speaker* cannot exist in a chat. Rather, there are two statuses of conversational presence: lurking, and composing and appearing on the screen, which could be dubbed *second* and *first order* presence (...), with second order presence dispreferred, and with a concomitant need to pass from second to first order presence, which may be defined as screen visibility (...)
(Zitzen and Stein forthc., bold-face M.Z.)

Consequently, anchoring one's presence within the conversational chat frame requires verbal activity. In this context Beißwenger points to the tendency of over-messaging:

Die Notwendigkeit, beständig die eigene Kommunikationsbereitschaft durch irgendgeartete Äußerungen neu bestätigen und sich somit stets erneut als unübersehbaren Kommunikationsbeteiligten ins Spiel zu bringen zu müssen führt so nicht selten dazu, daß Chat-Kommunikation in Räumen mit hoher Teilnehmerzahl passagenweise aus nichts anderem mehr besteht als inhaltsarmen Bezugnahmen auf selbige, wobei solcherlei Bezugnahmen selbst wiederum nichts anderes darstellen als erneute Aufmerksamkeitssignale seitens eines anderen Teilnehmers.
(Beißwenger 2000: 49)

This state of affairs shows that participants are unsure as to how much and how regularly they should message, in order to meet the quantitative maxim of the cooperative principle. On the other hand, absence of messaging is tantamount to virtual absence of a participant in the eyes of the co-chatters. In order to minimise this effect each participant should be aware of the fact that "long messages decrease the sense of co-presence and awareness of others in the medium, by decreasing the real-time feel (since composing a long message takes more time)" (Cherny 1999:156).¹¹ Not only the length of messages but also the number of messages are of issue "for participants often feel compelled to constantly post messages so that they will not be forgotten by the others" (Viégas & Donath: online).

Central to chats is that the unfolding of discourse is interactively achieved by alternating message contributions from different participants that appear in a linear order in the public output box. Evidently, chat communication is organised in some way or other by means of *turn-taking* strategies. Note that this does not imply that the turn-taking strategies employed in oral interaction work in the same way for the organisation of chat communication. Rather, due to the technicalities of SY CMC, some concepts central to turn-taking, such as "turn" and "floor" have to be redefined (cf. Schönfeldt 2001).

3.5 Implications for the status of ASY and SY CMC relative to spoken and written language

From a technical point ASY and SY CMC comprise input operations (coding), storage, transport and output (decoding) functions. As a consequence Weingarten (2001) states that

Eine Besonderheit der Speichermedien in der elektronischen Phase kann gerade darin gesehen werden, daß der gespeicherte Inhalt beliebig oft verändert werden kann, also ein flexibles Verhältnis zwischen Trägersubstanz und Inhalt besteht.

(Weingarten 2001: 1144)

A loose relation not only exists between carrier substance and content, but also - as noted in chapter 3.1 - between digital-graphic materialisation (writing) and carrier medium. These kinds of flexibility have an impact on all 3 parameter dimensions proposed by Chafe (1994) to describe the activities involved in speaking versus the activities involved in writing. We have seen that these activities do not form dichotomy pairs in ASY and SY CMC modes. Rather, it appears to be a characteristic of CMC that it blends the opposing activities of writing and speaking in such a way that it generates new communicative conditions.

Although CMC in its ASY and SY specificities are materialised in graphics, it is not to be equated with traditional writing, since it involves activities that go beyond the ones related to writing. To account for the blended quality of CMC as a physically written form of communication Dürscheid (1999) suggests differentiating between electronically ("elektronisch übermittelt") and non-electronically ("nicht-elektronisch übermittelt") writings in the graphic sphere. Her position is illustrated in figure 3.2 below:

Figure 3.2: Restructuring of the medial dimension according to Dürscheid (1999: 27)

	Konzeption (conception)
elektronisch übermittelt (CMC) graphisch (graphic)	Chat
nicht elektronisch übermittelt (traditional forms of writing)	Privatbrief (private letter)
phonisch (phonic)	Telefongespräch (telephone conversation)

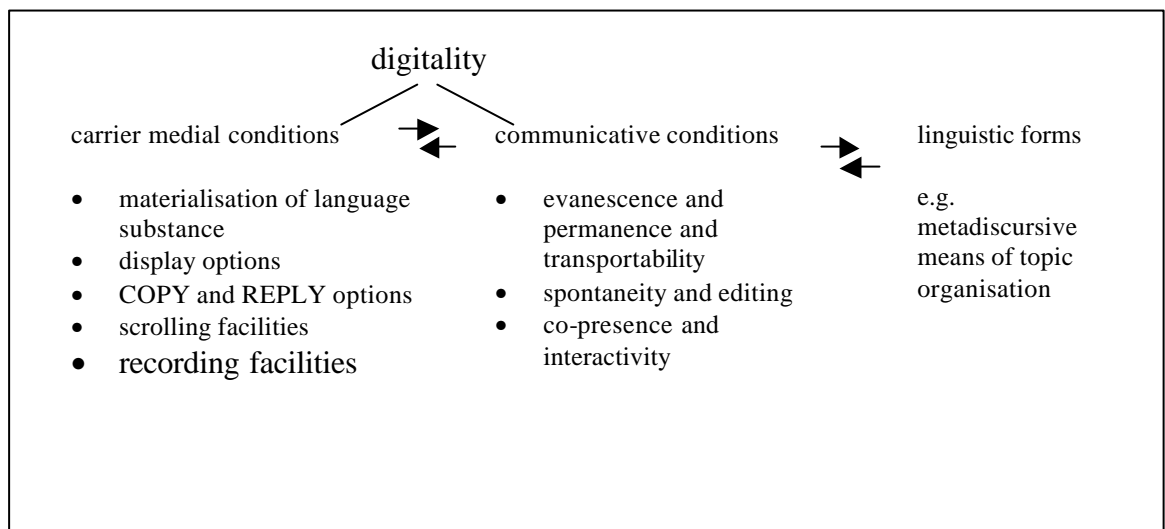
On the one hand, the subdivision of the graphic domain takes account of the fact that CMC in its ASY and SY specificities has its own conditions of production, reception and distribution, which Dürscheid (1999) subsumes under the term "writing conditions" ("Schreibbedingungen"), and which within the framework of the present study are discussed as »activities involved in CMC«. On the other hand, it allows for setting forms of CMC apart from traditional forms of writing and speaking. Asked if and to which extent these CMC specific activities or writing conditions will have an impact on the continuum of conceptual orality and conceptual literacy, Dürscheid (1999: 27) states: "Das elektronische Schreiben wird, dies ist zu vermuten, zu einer Restrukturierung des gesamten Kontinuums von Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit führen."

Basically, I agree with Dürscheid (1999) on the point that CMC constitutes a graphic form of communication in its own right, but I would go a step further and claim that the differences between traditional graphic writing and CMC-based or electronic writing in terms of the technical-physical and the resulting communicative conditions are so large that one may speak of a third kind of communication. This third type might be termed "digigraphic" communication, whereby "digi" stands for "digital" and refers, on the one hand, to the carrier medial conditions (e.g. display options,

COPY and REPLY options, scrolling options, storage facilities) and the resulting communicative conditions which encompass the features of the parameter dimensions discussed by Chafe (1994).

Figure 3.3 below shows that the carrier-medial conditions and the communicational conditions stand in a causal relationship to one another, which in turn have an impact on the choice of linguistic forms.

Figure 3.3: Components of digitality



The direction of the chain can be read both ways, i.e. one may take the linguistic forms as a starting point to infer the digitality conditions, or vice versa, one may take the digitality conditions as starting point and look at how these are manifested in linguistic forms, e.g. in linguistic means of topic organisation.

On this basis we may extend Dürscheid's (1999) model presented in figure 3.2 above as follows:

Figure 3.4: Addition of the medial dimension "digigraphic"

		conceptually
carrier medial conditions	communicative conditions	
digigraphic	blending of feature dimension 1-3	chat private email
graphic	permanence/ transportability, editing, desituated, no turn-taking in the behavioural sense	Privatbrief (private letter)
phonic	evanescence spontaneity temporal copresence turn-taking in the behavioural sense	Telefongespräch (telephone conversation)

Once again, the argument that justifies the position that CMC in its ASY and SY specificities constitutes a third language medium is based on the communicative conditions caused by the carrier medial conditions. In this context one could argue that every tele-communication medium has its specific communicative conditions to which people have adapted their language use. For instance, people had to familiarise themselves with the temporal co-presence condition involved in telephone conversation and adapt to the physical detachment by e.g. producing more hearer signals. So, why – one could ask – should telephone conversation be assigned to phonic communication associated with conceptually orality, and chats to digigraphic communication (instead of graphic communication) associated with a new shade of orality, which might be termed digispokenness? The crucial difference between chat and telephone is that the technicalities of the former one cause a blending of written and spoken communicative properties, while the latter one apart from the physical detachment shares all features of speaking. Telephones do not allow the use of recorded discourse in the course of the conversation, in the sense that one can scroll back or rewind the conversation. Though answering machines facilitate the storage

of messages, these cannot be used during an online telephone conversation. Similarly, traditional letters or fax messages may be edited, or handwritten responses may be interspersed, and in this respect encourage a dialogic style, too. But all these options are not facilitated by the carrier medium as such, but are the result of human creativity. From this we can conclude that the blending of spoken and written communicative conditions as such is not genuinely new. What is new, however, is that CMC contexts provide the technical prerequisites for combining spoken and written properties functionally within one carrier medium. This blended quality caused by the carrier medial conditions justifies the position that CMC in its ASY and SY specificities generates a distinct language medium, which is digigraphically realised, and which will lead to new categories on the continuum of conceptual orality and conceptual literacy. I have called these for lack of more suitable terms "digispokenness" and digiwrittenness" rather than "Oraliteralität" (cf. Döring 1999), to stress the influence of the digitality conditions, as illustrated in figure 3.3. conceptualisation. Although the language produced in CMC may be conceptually close to spokenness or writtenness, it cannot be equated with these two modes of conceptualisation. The placement of the digispokenness and digiwrittenness along the continuum is to be regarded as a tentative one. Depending on how much impact these will have on conventional shades of orality and literacy, these might shift over time. It is also possible that ASY and SY CMC mutually influence one another in their language conceptualisations, which might eventually lead to a dimension within a dimension, indicated in figure 3.4 by the dotted arrow.

Of special concern in the empirical analysis in part 2 of this study is the question whether people engaged in CMC employ conceptually oral, written or genuinely new means for topic handling. On the background of the previous discussion, the carrier-medial and communicative conditions suggest the employment of new strategies, assuming that linguistic forms are to a large extent functions of the physical and communicative conditions.

4. Topic and topic organisation within a conversation-analytic framework

On the background of the previous discussion, ASY and SY CMC can be described as new forms of verbal interaction, which can be assumed to be ordered along the same discourse organisational dimensions as traditional conversational interaction. Therefore a conversation-analytic oriented approach to discourse structures in CMC in general, and to topic organisation in particular, appears to be most appropriate.¹

CA scholars take the view that topic and topic organisation can be described on the basis of structuring elements and procedures which constitute conversation, or, in general terms, talk-in-interaction. In this realm approaches to topic primarily focus on the question what kind of mechanisms constitute topics rather than what the topic is in purely linguistic terms. Related to this shift of focus is the view that topics are not static products, but entities which emerge in the course of continuous negotiation. Attempts to define topic are undertaken "through the backdoor", as it were, by systematically describing basic features and principles involved in handling topics. Nevertheless, within the realm of Conversation Analysis (CA) a unified definition of topic has not yet been provided as THE alternative to the ones offered by linguistic approaches. Providing a genuine alternative would mean that CA were in a position to define topic to the exclusion of semantic/propositional dimension. However, Hoffmann (1995) and Bublitz (1983) have arrived at the conclusion that this is an impossible undertaking, whereby the question if and to which extent the semantic/propositional dimension should be included is still controversially discussed. Here, hermeneutically-influenced content-based interpretation stands in conflict with phenomenologically-oriented content-based analysis.

Eine inhaltliche Analyse ist dann das, was die Conversation Analysis für eine Analyse der Gesprächsorganisation benötigt, während die inhaltliche Interpretation sich schwerpunktmäßig mit den Inhalten von Gesprächen befaßt und daraus ... ihre Schlüsse zieht.

(Hoffmann 1995: 123)

4.1 Topic change and speaker change

Ethnomethodologically-oriented conversation analysts claim that topic and topic development is promoted by organisational and structuring mechanisms involved in turn-taking. For conversation, Sacks et al. (1974) suggest a sequential organisation of discourse operating on principles for turn-construction which themselves are the basis for an ordered set of options for turn-allocation rules. Turns typically form either sentential, clausal, phrasal or one-word units that project an upcoming Transition Relevance Place (TRP), the very point at which speaker change might smoothly take place. Turn-allocation techniques encompass the following:

The current floor holder may implicitly or explicitly select the next speaker, who is then obliged to speak.

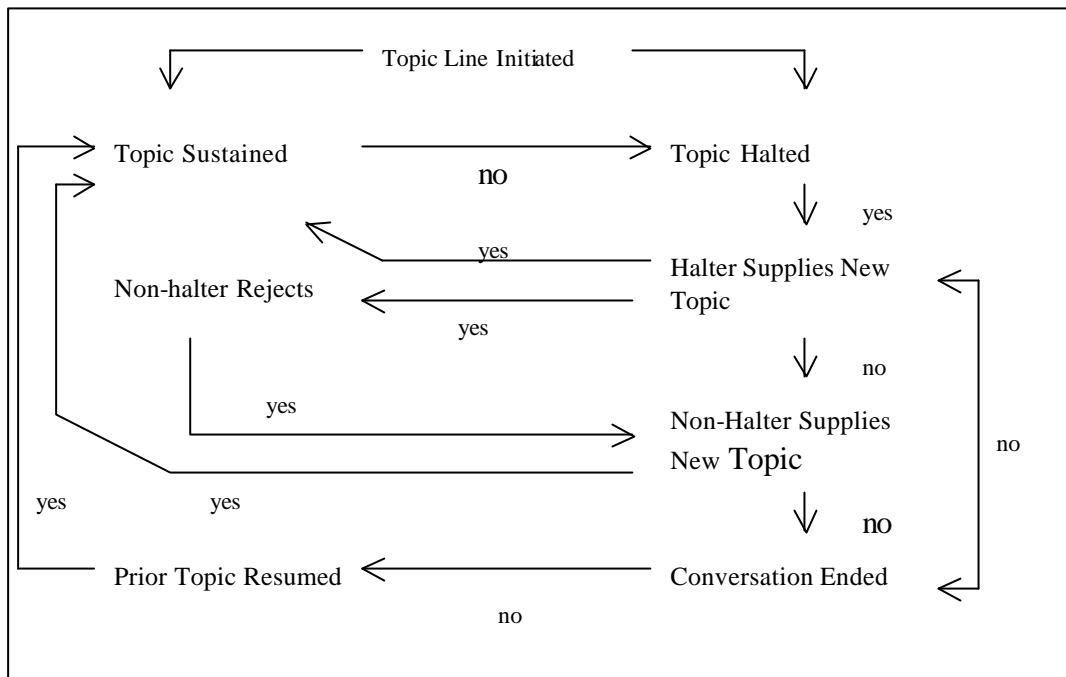
If the current floor holder does not select the next speaker, next speakership may be self-selected. The one who starts to talk first gets the floor.

If the current speaker does not select the next speaker, and no self-selected speakership takes place, the last speaker may continue.

If the last (current) speaker continues the rules 1-3 reapply. If the last (current) speaker does not continue then the options recycle back to 2 until speaker change occurs.

In analogy to the turn-taking system proposed by Sacks et al. (1974), Covelli and Murray (1980) have set up a topic change system illustrated below:

Figure 4.1 Topic change system proposed by Covelli and Murray (1980:384)



Covelli and Murray (1980) attribute the topic change system to a number of characteristics which despite some affinities to the characteristics of the turn-taking system, show a number of essential differences:

1. Topic change occurs and recurs.
2. The number of topics within a speech event varies.
3. There is not one-to-one correspondence between speaking turn and topic (one speaker turn may include more than one topic; one topic may stretch across more than one speaker turn).
4. Length of episode, i.e. the length of time one topic is on the floor, varies.
5. The topics discussed may be specified in advance, but the order is rarely fixed, even in interviews and debates.
6. Verbal and non-verbal signals indicate that one topic is exhausted and/or that at least one party is unwilling to continue the topic on the floor.
7. Individual speaker's topic-halting and topic-switching tactics recur.
8. Repair mechanisms exist (e.g. resumptions after side sequences (...)).
9. Occurrences of more than one topic at a time is uncommon, but not necessarily brief (i.e., people may talk past each other indefinitely).
10. Transitions from one topic to another may or may not be smooth, since putative topics must be understood and accepted by one or more participants in addition to the individual suggesting it.

(Covelli and Murray 1980: 387-388)

Feature item 3 of the list clearly speaks against the assumption that topic change is identical with speaker change. Topics cannot be equated with turns, which upon further thoughts means that the investigation of topic development on a turn-by-turn

basis is a problematic enterprise, since topics are promoted both monologically within a turn as well as dialogically across turns. The latter case is for instance given when topics are introduced at turn boundaries (cf. Abu-Akel 2002).

What falls short is a discrete definition of the term "topic", which similarly to the term "turn" in CA appears to be an elusive concept.

Although 'turn' as a term for the unit of arrangement in conversation is rather widespread in literature on the topic, one could argue that the concept 'turn' is nonetheless not yet satisfactorily and unambiguously defined, nor altogether, in a certain sense, unambiguously definable.
(Bublitz 1988:148)

Apparently, the term "topic" is likewise not unambiguously definable, since it is achieved jointly in the very process of talking. In particular, the issue of discrete categories is more problematic with regard to the concept "topic" than with regard to the concept "turn", since "a topic may be raised, dropped, and then returned to later. Two topics may be intertwined, developing almost simultaneously, and segments of talk may emerge that have no discernable 'topic' at all." (West and Garcia 1988: 552) Furthermore, the topic change system proposed in figure 4.1 does not specify more general principles that underlie topic change, nor does it include all types of topic shift work. For instance, topic aspect shifts and thematic digressions are not considered. What also remains unanswered is the question if topic development relies on any ordered set of options for topic change similar to the ordered set of options for turn-allocation rules mentioned above.

4.2 Topic continuity and continuous talk

One major driving force in natural conversation which is interactionally generated on the basis of the sequential turn-taking model of Sacks et. al. (1974) is avoidance of longer stretches of silence, or, expressed positively, the maintenance of continuous talk. Continuous talk is foremost ascribed to the conversational principle that speaker change occurs and recurs on the premise of successful transferred speakership.

Continuity is endangered as soon as speaker change is brought to a halt and longer stretches of silence follow. Failed transference of speakership is often related to the rejection of a current topic. In such situations people appear to have nothing else to say either because of lack of interest, and/or the current topic has been exploited. In order to reestablish continuous talk, that is, speaker change, interlocutors may perform a topic change which

appears as a procedural solution in which the mechanisms whereby topics are expanded in detail or are shifted and new mentionables occasioned through those artful shifts have been unsuccessful in generating a series of continuous turn transitions. Topical talk, in short, is a collaborative phenomenon. It can break down even though a topical speaker is doing various sorts of developmental work, provided a recipient avoids turn selection at transition relevance places. Topic changes regularly appear in such environments. (Maynard 1980: 274)

Although the maintenance of continuous talk plays an essential role when performing topic changes, Hoffmann (1995) argues that aiming at continuous talk is only one of many reasons for topic changes to be performed. Therefore she suggests:

Es wäre sinnvoll, die Diskussion über thematische Entwicklung in Gesprächen innerhalb der Conversation Analysis dahingehend zu modifizieren bzw. zu erweitern, daß thematische Entwicklung nicht nur aus gesprächsorganisatorischen Gründen stattfindet, sondern auch von den inhaltlichen Interessen der jeweils an einem Gespräch beteiligten Personen geleitet wird. (Hoffmann 1995: 62)

4.3 Striving towards mutual agreement in handling topics

Topics are interactively negotiated, maintained or changed, which means, that it takes at least two to topic. To be successful, the interlocutors need to display reciprocal understanding and mutual agreement on how the topic is going to be handled. In this context Reichman (1990) states that

educated, mainstream, middle-class adults expect a lot of feedback on topics that they introduce into the conversation. They expect their coparticipants to engage in the topic with them. They expect them to develop the topic, discuss alternatives to the proposed content, and provide variations on a same theme with them.

(Reichman 1990: 28)

Such expectations basically stem from the default case of topic continuity in natural conversation which manifests itself in a step-by-step thematic progression.

A general feature for topical organisation in conversation is movement from topic to topic, not by a topic close followed by a topic beginning, but by a stepwise move, which involves linking up whatever is being introduced to what has just been talked about, such that, as far as anybody knows, a new topic has not been started, though we're far from wherever we began.

(Harvey Sacks, lecture 5, Spring 1972, 15-16. In: Jefferson 1984, cited in Tiittula 1993: 226)

At a more general level, conversationalists seek to establish and maintain topical coherence. On the one hand, people may either speak topically, "which is most noticeable in conversations where each participant picks up elements from the contribution of the preceding speaker and incorporates them in his contribution" (Brown and Yule 1983: 84), on the other hand, they may "speak about some topic" (Bublitz 1989b). In the latter case, two adjacent utterances may refer to one and the same topic without the second one necessarily establishing a topical relationship with the first one.

Consequently, we may speak of topical incoherency (see also chapter 8.3), which manifests itself in more abrupt topic changes, when the topic initiating utterance lacks a sequential and/or referential relationship to the preceding discourse (cf. West and Garcia 1988). Disruptions of this type are dispreferred in natural conversation:

Wenn die vom Partner zugeschriebene Aufgabe nicht übernommen wird, d.h. wenn die Äußerung von der sequentiellen Ordnung abweicht, handelt es sich um eine nicht-präferierte Äußerung, die markiert wird; solche Äußerungen sind typischerweise strukturell ausgebaut und verzögert.
(Tiittula 1993: 235)

However, Bublitz (1989b) underlines that even in the case of abrupt topic changes the expectation of topic continuity is maintained, which is reflected in the use of so-called "coherence jokers", such as "well", "apropos", "that reminds me of" etc.. By these linguistic means, the speaker may either want to "suggest a topical coherence which does not exist" (Bublitz 1989b), or indicate that he is aware of the discontinuity (Bublitz 1989a). What these two underlying motivations have in common is the fact that the topic change will be performed one-sided rather than by mutual agreement. As Tiittula (1993) points out, there is a direct relationship between jointly achieved topic changes and the mode of its explication. "Wenn Übergänge zwischen den Aktivitäten gemeinsam vorbereitet werden, bedürfen sie einer weniger expliziten Markierung als bei jenen Übergängen, die von nur einem Sprecher durchgeführt werden." (Tiittula 1993: 276)

4.4 Formal structures of topic development

Hoffmann (1995) argues that conversational topics are constituted, one the one hand, by means of thematic procedures which mark off bounded types of topic movements such as Topic Change and Topic Closure; on the other hand, by on-topic procedures which are produced inbetween topic boundaries. The latter ones include Topic Shift and Topic Refocussing mechanisms. Criterial for the determination of the individual topical procedures is the question in which way a given unit type² does refer - or does not refer - back to a prior unit type and to the previous topical procedure. The mode of relationships between current and prior unit types manifests itself linguistically in display formats which in general terms serve as mutual orientation:

Das gegenseitige Anzeigen dessen, was und wie etwas verstanden wurde und die Art und Weise, wie sich der aktuelle Turn auf den vorhergehenden Turn bezieht (in der CA als *Display* bezeichnet), strukturieren somit den Ablauf der Themenentwicklung.
(Hoffmann 1995: 38)

Topical development is thus described on a unit type-by-unit type basis instead of a turn-by-turn basis. The former one captures what has already been pointed to with reference to Covelli and Murray's (1980) topic shift system, namely topic shift work within one and the same speaking turn and topic shift works across several turns. To sum up, topical procedures can be accurately determined on the basis of two types of display:

Zum einen muß die Referenz auf den unmittelbar vorangegangenen Unit-Type untersucht werden. Zum anderen muß überprüft werden, ob der aktuelle Unit-Type auf einen Unit-Type referiert, der vor oder nach dem letzten Thema-wechselverfahren produziert wurde.
(Hoffmann 1995: 66)

On this basis the following topical procedures can be distinguished from one another:

Table 4.1: Survey of topical procedures defined on a unit type-to-unit type basis

type of topical procedure	display
Topical procedures that mark off boundaried topical procedures	
Topic Change	A unit type, which does not refer back to an immediately prior utterance type nor to any of the unit types which have been produced since the last topic change.
Topic Closure	Topic closing procedures share the same characteristics as topic change procedures. In contrast to topic changes topic closures do not initiate a new topic and in that sense offer merely putative topic changes, which may be initiated in the following unit type.
On-topic procedures	
Topic Shift	A unit type which in contrast to the immediately prior unit type contains a shift in focus and thus introduces a new thematic aspect.
Topic Refocussing	The current unit type refers back to a unit type which is placed before the last topic shift. Contrary to Topic Shifts, Topic Refocussing procedures do not introduce a new aspect but renew a lapsed (aspect of) a topic.

4.4.1 Topical development in conversations with pre-fixed topics

For conversations with pre-fixed superordinate topics, such as in interviews or talk shows, the local unit type-by-unit type analysis of topic and topical development needs to be extended to the question if and in which way the current unit type and the immediately prior unit type relate to the superordinate prefixed topic.

Referiert der vorangegangene Unit-Type auf das Oberthema, so kann ein Themawechsel nur stattfinden, wenn der aktuelle Unit-Type nicht auf das Oberthema referiert. Stellt der vorangegangene Unit-Type keinen Bezug zum Oberthema her, muß sich im Falle eines Themawechsels der aktuelle Unit-Type auf das Oberthema beziehen.

(Hoffmann 1995: 205)

The inclusion of the reference relation between current and preceding unit type and the superordinate topic leads to the following options which can be given in case of topic change procedures:

a) Preceding unit type refers to the superordinate topic

1. Current unit type does neither refer to the superordinate topic nor to the prior unit type.
2. Current unit type does not refer to the superordinate topic but to the prior unit type.

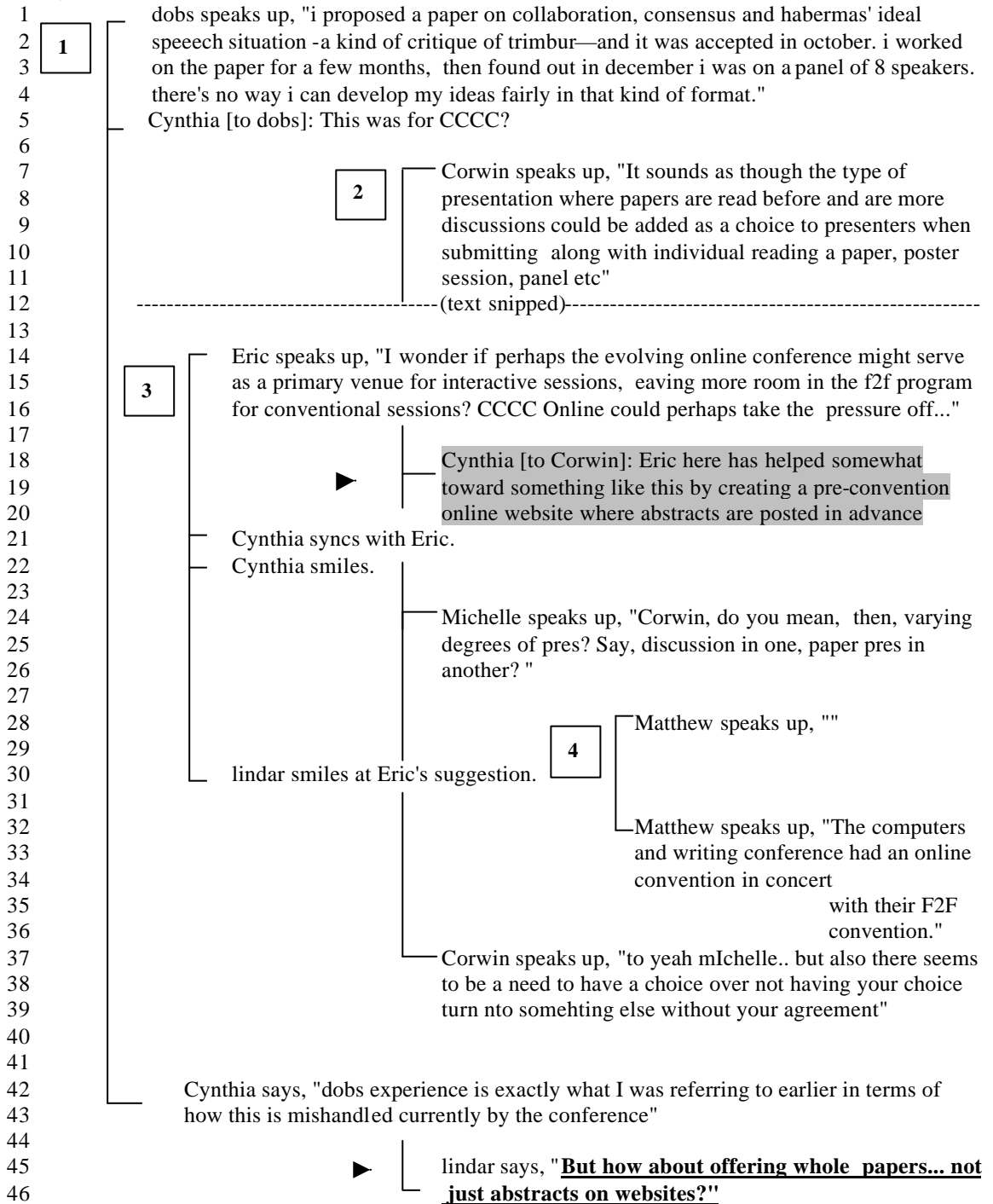
b) Preceding unit type does not refer to the superordinate topic

1. Current unit type refers to the superordiante topic but not to the prior unit type.
2. Current unit type does neither refer to the superordinate topic nor to the prior unit type.

4.4.1.1 On defining topics and topical procedures in SY CMC

In accordance with Covelli and Murray's (1980) feature item 9 cited above, it can be said that natural conversation discourse is most often focussed on one thread. In contrast to that, it is normal for SY CMC to have several co-occurring threads. A thread would in conversation minimally be defined as a set of salient or current entities embedded in conversational moves which are as a rule linearly adjacent to each other. Contrary to that, in SY CMC adjacency in terms of topic continuity is not defined as mono-linearly given as in the face-to-face situations, but rather as disrupted *turn* adjacency, caused by the fact that messages are displayed in the order received by the system (see chapters 2.1.2 and 3.2.5). Thus, the technicalities of the medium define a different notion of adjacency that is primarily defined in terms of topical coherence of threads and where the requirement of linear adjacency is relaxed as to achieve only relative adjacency. This state of affairs is exemplified in the MOO-excerpt (ex. 4-1) below, where 4 parallel topical streaks contribute to the overall topic "presentation formats for online-conferences".

(ex. 4-1)



(MOO-CFEST1, 190-221)

For illustrative purposes the individual threads in (ex. 4-1) have been indented. Note, that the original display mode does not produce any sort of spatially separated threads. As an outflow of the relative adjacency with regard to topic continuity, the unit type-by-unit type description of topic development proposed by Hoffmann (1995) cannot be applied in the same way to SY CMC. The carrier medial conditions make it impossible to speak of »current« unit type and »immediately prior« unit type or cotext in ASY and SY CMC. In chats this is mainly caused by the fact that »Context of Production« (= private dialogue box) and »Context of Use« (= public dialogue box) are logically and interactionally separated from one another (see figure 2.2), which gives chats an asynchronous quality. Due to this state of affairs and to the server-driven display of the individual messages (see chapter 3.2.2), the status of a participant's activity or a unit type being »current« does not exist. As a consequence the quality of being »immediately prior« to something cannot be remained either, since one needs to ask: "Immediately prior exactly to what?". Let us elaborate on this by focussing on streak 2 in (ex. 4-1). In line 45 <lindar> seems to abruptly change the topic by means of the topic eliciting question "How about offering whole papers...not just abstracts?". What speaks in favour of this assumption is that <lindar>'s contribution does neither refer back to the immediately prior message/turn³ by <Cynthia> in line 42, nor to any of the prior messages/turn since the last topic change, initiated by <Matthew> in line 29. Instead <lindar>'s contribution in line 45 refers to the superordinate topic "presentation formats for online-conferences", while <Matthew>'s and <Cynthia>'s contribution refer to different aspects of the superordinate topic. What we seem to find here is the type of reference relation discussed above as case (b): »Preceding unit-type does not refer to the superordinate topic«, option 1. : »Current unit type refers to the superordinate topic but not to the prior unit type«.

However, at second sight <lindar>'s contribution is related to <Cynthia>'s message in line 18, which is actually addressed to <Corwin>. Apparently, <lindar> has entered streak 2 quite spontaneously, after having shifted the attention from <Eric>'s message in thread 3 (see emoticon-contribution in line 30) to <Cynthia>'s contribution in thread 2. In analogy to the spatial indentation of the individual streaks, <lindar> has

first turned to <Eric> and next to <Cynthia>, which reflects the multiple roles participants in SY CMC contexts can play at a time.

A participant can be a waiter and a reader at the same time, both waiting for a response to a previous post and simultaneously reading or scrolling through previous postings. A typing participant who is awaiting a response to an earlier message is both a waiter and a message constructor.
(Garcia, et al. 1999: 348)

We cannot pin down when exactly <lindar> typed in her message which is displayed in line 45, but it is very likely that at some point her activities have temporally overlapped with the typing activities of <Michelle> and <Corwin> who contribute to the same thread, as well as with the activities of <Cynthia> and <Matthew> who are involved in two different threads. Just as the interactional role of the participants in SY CMC do not correspond to those of "current speaker" and "next speaker", but rather "the act of posting gives one the interactional role of "most recent poster"" (Garcia et al. 1999: 350), one cannot simply speak of current unit type or immediately prior unit type, at least not when reading the individual postings in the technically-induced chronology. Even reconstructing the chat according to the individual topical threads, the status of »current« unit type cannot be maintained due to the multiple roles which participants can play. There appears to be a mismatch between what the individual participants presently focus on and regard as »current« topic at a given time and the way their messaging behaviour is displayed by the server. The assignment of a »current« quality to a unit type or to a message will probably vary from screen to screen, i.e. from one participant to another, but cannot be synchronised. In this respect the reconstruction of the whole chat into topical threads or smaller chats the participant's topic handling strategies have to be reinterpreted. Topical actions which within the framework of the overall chat might be interpreted as abrupt topic changes might be (aspectual) shifts within a specific thread. While <lindar>'s message in line 45 can be read as an abrupt topic change in relation to the immediately prior messages displayed, within streak 2, it signals a shift in topic from "abstracts on websites" initiated by <Cynthia> in line 18 to "whole papers". So, what is interpreted as bounded topic shift within the whole chat turns out to be an on-topic procedure within a specific topical thread. Note, that the

additional costs involved in the reconstruction of topical threads are the same or even higher for the communicating participant in the actual online-situation:

The problem of keeping track of topically-related "threads", or sequences of exchanges on a particular topic, is similar to that confronted by the user in tracking single exchanges, only more cognitively challenging. Multiple threads may become entangled, and individual threads are rarely free of disruption by irrelevant messages.
(Herring 1999: online)

Therefore topical threads appear to constitute another reference point in the analysis of thematic developments in SY CMC with or without prefixed topics. Chats without strictly pre-fixed topics are also organised around various individual topical threads; however, these are of relative short duration compared to topical threads in chats with prefixed topics. In the latter case participants cannot freely introduce new topics or freely digress from topics (cf. Tiittuala 1993: 237f.).

4.4.1.2 On defining topics and topical procedures in ASY CMC

Similar to SY CMC, ASY CMC are organised around parallel topical threads (see also chapter 5.4.1.1) But, in the latter contexts the software offers the display of a topical structure consisting of main topics and subtopics. We may say that the mode of spatialisation of streaks in SY CMC within one topical *floor* or topical space is extended in ASY CMC contexts as separate hierarchically organised topical *floors*. As a consequence, "when joining a group, we can call up a recent or distant topic, then begin with the most recent postings or go back to ones made days, months, or even years ago. There is no given chronological beginning-point." (Crystal 2001: 136) Furthermore ASY CMC contexts offer automatically generated meta-information on the temporal chronology of messages. To start with, there is the date of dispatch displayed in the header, as well as meta-information on the source of words in the main message body (see figure 2.1). Using the REPLY-function, the latter one encompass automated notifications such "On MON, 3 Feb 2003, Michael Zitzen wrote" and automatically generated angle brackets ("<") which indicate that a

given passage is a quoted contribution by another participant. The more angle brackets are in front of a quote the older the contribution within the frame of a particular threaded message is. Thus, the most current contribution is the passage which lacks any angle brackets. However, as we have seen in chapter 3.2.1 quoted contributions can be freely edited and broken up, so that one may place one's own responses placed above, within or underneath the quote. So, although the chronological order of the individual contributions is automatically documented by ASY CMC media, the various COPY- and REPLY-options participants have at their disposal allow for a reordering of the contributions. In a way, using the REPLY-option, the responder may treat all quoted contributions within a message body as having the same temporal status, i.e. as being immediately prior or as current or present topicality. This state of affairs which I have referred to as »displaced dialogic frame« in chapter 3.4.1 makes it impossible to speak of »current unit type« in relation to an »immediately prior« cotext in a consistent way.

In (ex. 4-2) there are 3 different participants involved in the thread "rhotacism from Ray Hickey" indicated as participant A, B and C.

(ex. 4-2)

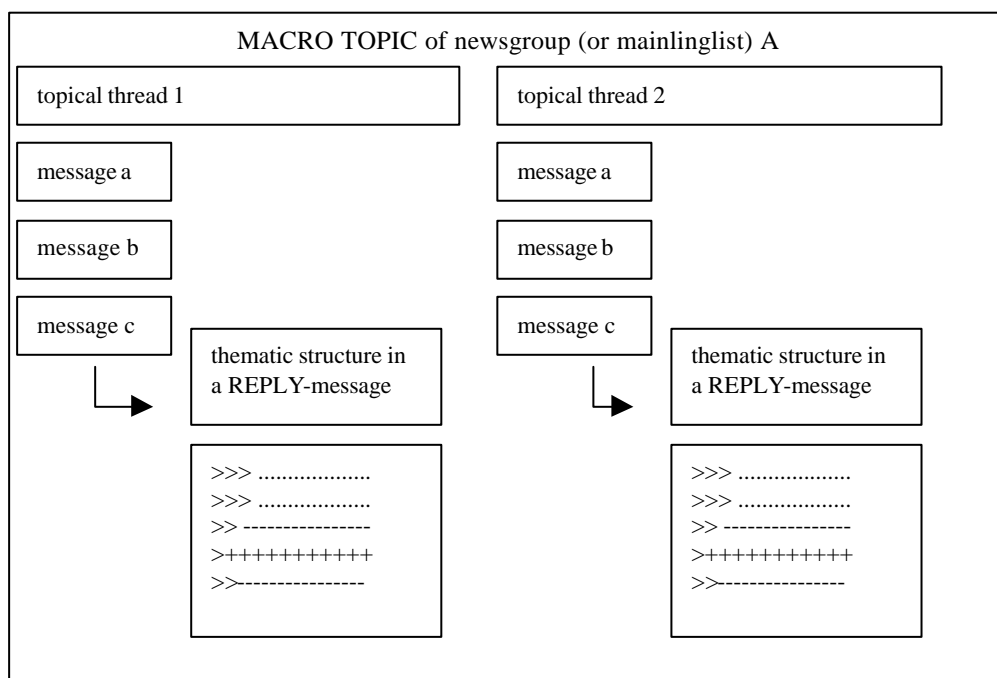
- 1 >> **Yes, just as things other than measles can produce spots on the**
 2 >> **We need to take such things into consideration if we want to**
 3 >> **our competence in historical linguistics (or medical diagnosis)**
 4 >> **this very level.**
- 5 >
 6 > **But that is not**
 7 >
 8 > **Human family members resemble each other. That does not**
 9 >
 10 > **people cannot resemble each other. And despite the fact that we**
 11 > **both**
 12 > **we still consider two people who resemble each other**
 13 > **unless**
 14 > **there's proof to the**
- 15
 16 > **We do?**
 17
 18 > **We arrive at this through experience.**
- 19 > **see**
 20 > **families (which we can confirm) resemble each other and therefore**
 21 > **a general inductive**
 22 >
 23 > **For measles** doctors know very well healthy people look
 (@histling, -56)

Here, participant C is the latest participant, which places his answer in-between participant's B contribution. In doing so, participant C has already changed the Here participant C is the latest participant, which places his answer amid participant's B contribution. In doing so, participant C has already changed the topical flow. What has originally been organised as one topical contribution by participant B, i.e. Here, participant C is the latest participant, who places his text amid the quoted What has originally been organised as one topical contribution by participant B, i.e.as one paragraph, is broken up into two paragraphs, the second one starting in line 18, apparently providing an answer to C's question "we do?".

4.4.1.3 Summary

By way of summary, the dimension involved in the determination of topic development in ASY and SY CMC are schematically illustrated in figure 4.2 and figure 4.3 respectively.

Figure 4.2: Dimensions involved in the determination of topic development in ASY CMC



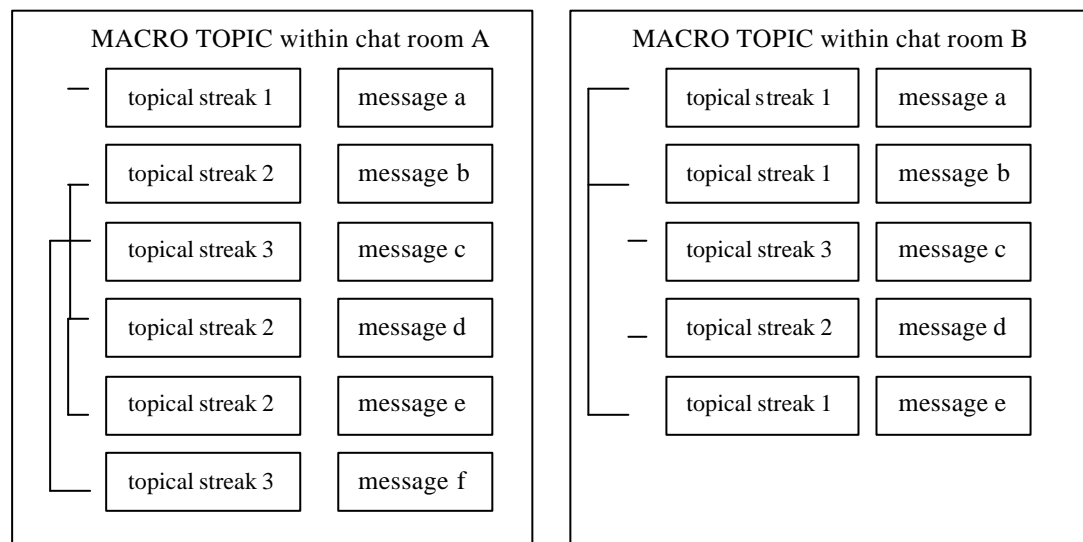
In SY CMC the determination of the topical development requires that one takes account of how a given message relates back to

- a. the immediately prior message
- b. prior (spatially disrupted) topical streaks
- c. the messages within one topical thread, and
- d. superordinate topic (if there is a pre-established topic)

In ASY CMC the following reference relations are of importance:

- e. If a given contribution is not a REPLY-message, i.e. not marked off by "Re:" in the subject line, one needs to consider how this message relates to prior messages within a specific given or new topical streak.
- f. If a given contribution is sent via the REPLY-function, i.e. within one and the same message body, the question arises how this contribution relates to the message

Figure 4.3: Dimensions involved in the determination of topic development in SY CMC



internal topic(s) developed by one or more participants and to the superordinate or macro topic.

4.5 Topics and attached topical actions

Topic organisation can also be approached from an action-oriented perspective which has its roots in speech act theoretical or interactional discourse analysis (DA)⁴. Of special concern in this approach is the question of how formal structures of topic organisation are realised on an actional basis. Contrary to Hoffman (1995) who pursues a strict ethnomethodological approach to topic, action-oriented conversation analysts seek to relate formal structures of topic organisation with participants' actions⁵ and their respective linguistic realisations. This integrative approach is most prominently reflected in the German school of CA, known as "Linguistische Gesprächsanalyse" ("Conversation Linguistics"). Brinker and Sager (1989, 2001) describe turns as communicative actions which may - but not necessarily so - coincide with elementary speech acts defined in speech act theory. This is not to say that communicative actions are to be equated with speech acts with regard to their functional meanings. Similar to elementary speech acts communicative action may signal a specific illocution, and related to that, a specific type of action, for instance a question. This constitutes the elementary function of a turn which is to be set apart from the conversational function ("Gesprächsfunktion"). The latter one describes

die konkrete kontextuelle Bedeutung des vor dem Hintergrund der unmittelbar vorangegangenen Gesprächsbeiträge sowie bestimmter Bedingungen und Gegebenheiten der Gesprächssituation (insbesondere der Beziehungskonstellation).

(Brinker and Sager 1989: 64)

In speech act terms the act of asking a question signals a request for information which depending on the context may also function as an invitation and/or as a means to introduce a new topic. Although Bublitz (1988) does not explicitly refer to "basic functions" versus "communicative functions" he seems to rely on the differentiation between these functions nonetheless in his description of topical actions which

are complex as they can only be performed with the help of other actions... For instance, a speaker INTRODUCING A TOPIC BY ASKING whether... or by REPORTING that....or by SUGGESTING that...etc. Similarly he

CHANGES A TOPIC, CLOSES A TOPIC, DIGRESSES FROM A TOPIC and SHIFTS A TOPIC. The topical action patterns CHANGING A TOPIC and CLOSING A TOPIC can only be realized via performance of speech act patterns like ANNOUNCING or STATING with utterances such as *I would like to change the topic* (or subject) or *I don't want to talk about it anymore*. (Bublitz 1988: 40)

The complexity of topical actions is caused by the fact that topic shift work is performed in a 'piggyback-fashion', that is, by means of other elementary speech act patterns. Another source for the complexity of topical actions is grounded in the fact that the basic or illocutionary function sets up a prospection with regard to future actions, while the conversational function of topic shift work can only be analysed in retrospection (cf. Hazadiah 1993), since

considered only at the moment of its performance, one cannot ascribe to a speech act the pattern INTRODUCING A TOPIC. This is only possible after the event on the basis of an understanding which the participants as well as the analysing observers have reached ... there are, however, a few linguistic means which, at the very moment of an utterance, suggest the interpretation that the speaker is attempting to introduce a topic. (Bublitz 1988: 61)

Similarly, announcing one's intention to close off a topic indicates a putative topic closure and a putative topic change at the moment of its performance. A topic transition can merely be attributed with hindsight. In this respect actions can be regarded as interpretation constructs, "i.e. as products of the understanding participant's or the observer's ascription" (Bublitz 1988: 14). However, ascription of topical actions is not merely to be understood as a hermeneutically-grounded induction, but also as a structurally-based analysis that takes account of its sequential organisation and patterning.

4.5.1 Establishing joint topical foci of attention

At a more abstract level action patterns in conversation contribute to the achievement of joint foci of attention, which Kallmeyer (1978) regards as being constitutive for successful communication.

Zum Kern der Interaktionstheorie gehört die Auffassung, daß Interaktionsvorgänge wechselseitig konstituiert werden, d.h. daß die Beteiligten in gegenseitiger Abstimmung ihren Manifestationen Bedeutungen zuschreiben und Interaktionskomplexe durchführen. Die Anforderungen der wechselseitigen Konstitution bedeuten unter anderem, daß die Interaktionspartner ihre Aufmerksamkeitsausrichtung in hinreichender Weise aneinander angleichen müssen und daß sie jeweils eine Aufmerksamkeitsausrichtung als gemeinsame Orientierung zu akzeptieren und als verbindlich anzusehen haben.
(Kallmeyer 1978: 193)

Crucial to his theory is the assumption that interlocutors are obliged to establish and maintain a joint focus of attention while communicating with one another. The attached actions which contribute to joint foci are referred to as focussing activities ("Fokussierungen"). These occur at the dialogic, actional and thematic plane. The dialogic plane is concerned with turn organisation, the actional plane with action patterns such as TELLING A STORY or ASKING A QUESTION, and finally the thematic plane with topic organisation. These dimensions are intricately related to one another, analytically they are to be differentiated from one another, though (see also figure 7.2). The dialogic plane serves as carrier structure for the actional plane. The latter one, in turn, functions as carrier structure for topic organisation, which corresponds to Bublitz' (1988) claim that discourse topics are ascribed to action patterns.

Focussing actions are especially important for the accomplishment of focus changes. These can be structured either by means of anticipatory behavioural rules or by action complexes which are constituted by the transition from one action to the next. The accomplishment of the transition is complex, in that the interlocutors have to deal with 3 component activities:

- (1) the action need to be detached from the prior discourse
- (2) the action need to be anticipatory explicated

(3) the action need to be accepted by the co-participant

Transferred to the topical dimension this means that (1) a new topic presupposes the closure of an old topic, (2) a new topic is introduced and (3) the topic change has to be performed by mutual agreement. Activity (3) accords with the »principle of mutual consent« which according to Bublitz (1988) runs through all activities related to topic handling, and which is also hinted at in Covelli and Murray's (1980) topic change system and in Tiittula's (1993) preference hierarchy.

Focussing actions and more specifically topical actions, can be of various complexity, and implicitly or explicitly realised. According to Kallmeyer (1978: 198ff) the difference in realisation is dependent on the following three factors:

factor A: the discourse dimension in question: The regulation of turns at the dialogic dimension is much more conventionalised and is based to a much larger extent on nonverbal communication means, such as eye contact, posture etc., compared to the other two discourse dimensions. Topic changes are marked strongest, which Kallmeyer attributes to the asymmetric distribution of speaker roles and hearer roles. Actions, such as ASKING A QUESTION or TELLING A STORY, need not be marked that prominently, since they make a reaction more or less conditionally relevant, once the dialogic dimension has been constituted. That is, certain actions determine the next ones; a question, for instance makes an answer conditionally relevant. Involved in the action complex TELLING A STORY is (i) a change in topic, (ii) the constitution of an action within a larger actional framework and (iii) the constitution of a longer turn. There is a direct connection between anticipatory conditional relevancy and manifestation of orientation structures: The more binding an action determines the following one, the less orientation procedures have to be linguistically inscribed.

factor B: status of the aimed activity as an independent activity complex or as component activity within a superordinate actional framework. Independent activity complexes are not bound to any contextually-based conditional relevancies, therefore they cannot be anticipated. The status of the aimed activity as independent or component action also influences the manifestation of orientation structures: The less

an upcoming action can be foreseen, the more it needs to be overtly prepared. For instance, TELLING A STORY is not normally expected in natural conversation, unless, for instance, one meets to share experience on a certain subject one after the other. In the first case, the intention to tell a story needs to be more overtly introduced, for example by means of "I have a funny story to tell", in the latter case, where it is clear that everyone will contribute to the conversation with a story, one may simply start telling the story without any additional marking.

factor C: conditions underlying the establishment of reciprocity. Reciprocity refers to the sufficient agreement among the participants on the conditions given at the various interactional levels. Any uncertainties with regard to the mutual comprehension of what is going on or what is talked about is bound to increase the manifestation of orientation procedures. Another source of insufficiently established reciprocity might be given when communicative activities cannot be jointly achieved. Therefore, with reference to Tiittula (1993) one might add the relationship between jointly achieved activities and manifestation of orientation procedures (see chapter 4.3)

The digigraphic properties of ASY and SY CMC dealt with in chapter 3 suggest that for successful communication more than just sending a message is involved:

one must have the **attention** of the audience as well ...; that is, the turn must be ratified by other participants. However, whereas in face-to-face conversation, active listenership can be indicated simultaneous with the speaker's turn through a variety of verbal and non-verbal cues ..., non-verbal responses are precluded in text-based CMC, and verbal responses can only be delivered after the fact, in a strictly linear fashion.
(Herring: in press, bold-face M.Z.)

The observations that Herring (in press) makes with regard to ASY CMC, such as that "not every message posted to a computer-mediated discussion group has the floor for all recipients" and that "some messages have a more central status than others", equally goes for SY CMC. These observations suggest that extra costs are involved in establishing and changing topical foci of attention in CMC. In which way

this is linguistically reflected will be revealed by the analysis of metadiscursive TOMs in part 2.

4.5.1.1 Metadiscursive Topic Shift Marker (TOM) as manifestation of orientation procedures

Linguistic means, such as "well", "apropos", "that reminds me of" etc., which Bublitz (1989b) refers to as »coherence jokers« form the subject of my investigation, namely the category of metadiscursive TOMs. Their role in the interactive constitution of topics can be captured best by Kallmeyer's (1978) theory of focussed verbal interaction. On this background metadiscursive TOMs are manifestations of orientation procedures, which contribute to the establishment of a joint topical focus of attention.

Following Tiittula's (1993) definition of metadiscourse, the factors REFERENCE and FUNCTION are criterial for a linguistic item to qualify as metadiscourse. REFERENCE is understood as reference to organisational aspects of the discourse, rather than as reference to extralinguistic matters in the world. Viewing REFERENCE in this sense allows us to include linguistic items of different semantic and syntactic complexity: At one extreme we have metadiscursive elements with a proposition, as in "There is something else I want to tell you", at the other extreme metadiscursive elements without a proposition, such as "By the way".

Metadiskursive Elemente sind nicht auf Äußerungen mit propositionalem Gehalt zu begrenzen, während es sich bei der Metakommunikation nach vielen Auffassungen um Aussagen (und damit um Propositionen) über Gegebenheiten des Diskurses handelt. **Der Bezug auf den Diskurs ist dagegen eine wesentliche Bedingung.** Somit können zu Metadiskurs auch kleinere sprachliche Elemente, einzelne Lexeme, gezählt werden, die die Funktion der Diskurs-Deixis haben, also solche Elemente, die den Zusammenhang zwischen Äußerungen und dem Diskurs indizieren.
(Tiittula 1993: 48, bold-face M.Z.)

On the vertical axis, the determination of metadiscourse on the basis of REFERENCE helps to distinguish between discourse at the meta-level and discourse at the referential level, and at the horizontal axis, to set metadiscourse apart from more fuzzy phenomena operating at the meta-level, such as metacomments or (speech-) evaluations. What in theory looks like a clear-cut category of metadiscursive elements, turns out to be less discrete when looking at the concrete language data. Here I came across a number of linguistic phenomena which have a structuring function with regard to thematic progression, but do not formally qualify as metadiscourse, as defined by Tiittula (1993). For instance, in the newsgroup excerpt (ex. 4-3), the utterance "On the subject of company cars and the CRAZY policy ..." is a border line case, containing both metadiscursive reference ("On the subject of") and referential reference ("company cars and the CRAZY policy"). From a functional perspective, utterances like these are an important means to reintroduce a lapsed topic.

(ex. 4-3)

Fm: Steve Manners [UKFORUM] 70007,4737

posting 64

1. Reduced Road Fund Tax on my company car as it does very low mileage, 2. Reduced Income tax on my car for the same reason, 3. Subsidised Phone costs, (but then I don't agree with Subsidies generally!

posting 65

To: Gerry Duhig 100015,3607 (X)

Gerry,

On the subject of company cars and the CRAZY policy re mileage...my blood boils!
(N-S8-politics, 65.12-13)

In the following MOO-text sample, the utterance "The important thing is..." marks the shift to a new topical aspect, whereby the addition of "important" blurs the distinction between metadiscourse and metacomment.

(ex. 4-4)

mday says,

"That's a question of much more interest to me, studentXero. How re students activated, involved, engaged, in DL. It seems that those of us who do interactive CMC have some advantage"

studentXero [to Theresa]:

how do we know our students are paying attention?

Cynthia [to Theresa]:

exactly. It is also suspect when we gaze into our screens. As if!

Douglas-E [to Barrym]: just Edgar Cayce.
Raven says, "**The important thing is** that not all students have the luxury of being on-site."
mday says, "and that's a good question for our list."
(MOO-distance, 359)

Instances like the ones presented in (ex. 4-4) and (ex. 4-5) are clearly functional with indicating topic organisational structures, and consequently establish a metadiscursive reference in the same manner as TOMs that meet the formal conditions of metadiscourse, such as "I want to come back to a previous topic." or "I would like to mention another thematic aspect related to the issue of....". This state of affairs shows that the distinction between form and function is not a discrete one, a state of affair which already underlies Tiittula's (1993) notion of REFERENCE TO DISCOURSE. Defining metadiscourse on the basis of form amounts to identifying the type of overt reference. At the same time Tiittula (1993) also counts linguistic elements without a proposition in the category of metadiscourse. In doing so, she indirectly acknowledges that the function, namely the establishment of reference to aspects of discourse organisation, may be derived from the linguistic surface, but not necessarily. On further thoughts this means that approaching metadiscursive TOMs by form one runs the risk of neglecting a number of linguistic phenomena that also have a discourse structuring function. Taking function as the basis, one has to resolve the problem how to keep the linguistic data manageable.

In view of these problems and in line with my decision to approach topic and topic handling in CMC within the framework of conversation linguistics, I regard the discourse structuring function of metadiscursive TOMs from a dynamic perspective. More specifically this means that I focus on the interactive role of metadiscursive TOMs in the thematic progression, which amounts to regarding metadiscursive TOMs as manifestation of orientation procedures. This undertaking allows one to add borderline cases as exemplified above in (ex. 4-3), where the meta-level is merged with the referential level, and in (ex. 4-4), where the boundary between metadiscourse and metacomment is not clear cut. Furthermore it allows one to consider linguistic items that do not have a propositional content.

4.5.1.2 Typology of metadiscursive TOMs

The discourse theoretical status of topic organisation as being embedded in the actional structure and as being interrelated with the dialogic dimension or exchange structure have induced me to set up a typology for metadiscursive TOMs according to the type of discourse reference which they overtly establish. More specifically, the grouping into Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs, and Tertiary TOMs results from taking account of how and at which discourse dimension TOMs metadiscursively operate. As will be discussed in the following chapters, Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs differ from one another with regard to the degree of explicitness with which topics and/or attached topical actions are overtly explicated. In the following 3 chapters each type of metadiscursive TOM will be discussed individually with regard to their linguistic-structural and functional characteristics.

categories (annotations)	description
TOC _{re}	topic renewal = re-introduction of a lapsed topic by another or by the same speaker
TOC _{shift}	topic shift = introduction of a new thematic aspect
TOC _{digression}	digression = the current topic is temporally changed and later returned to or at least expected to be returned to afterwards.
TOC _{unanchored}	abrupt topic change, i.e. sequentially and referentially independent topic change
TOB	topic boundary device to mark the closing of a topic
TOC + TOB	topic change procedure which overtly marks the closing of the prior topic and the (re-)introduction of the next topic

The functional analysis is based on the following functional categories mainly based on Hoffmann (1995) and Bublitz (1988). Of these, topic change (TOC_{unanchored}) - in the sense of topic introduction - and topic closure (TOB) are most significant patterns, because these form complementary action pairs, which may be used respectively to open and to close a conversation, but also to intervene in the topical development by introducing and closing any number of topics in the course of the conversation. In their latter usage topic introduction and topic closure function as component actions of topic changes (TOC + TOB), thus reflecting the principle of mutual consent involved in topic establishment and topic handling. "As a rule, we

find that CLOSING THE TOPIC and INTRODUCING THE TOPIC are two separate actions (with one or two actors). Only rarely do both coincide, i.e. can both actions be ascribed to one and the same utterance." (Bublitz 1988: 63) This dual function can also be metadiscursively spelled out as illustrated in <GryEyes911>'s utterance in the chat excerpt (ex. 4-5) below.

(ex. 4-5)

Emtpjn: Are they stricky Medical flights??
GryEyes911: Noop.
GryEyes911: Rescue, law enforcement, patrol, etc, Emtpjn
Emtpjn: IC..... So, only scene calls and no interfacutiiv transferres
GryEyes911: Anyway, I want to draw us back to the topic here..
(chat-employ, 394)

Here, "anyway" marks the closing of a digression and the return to a prior topic, whereas the following utterance "I want to draw us back to the topic here" reinforces the renewal of a lapsed topic.

5. Primary Topic Shift Marker (TOM)

Metadiscursive elements that explicitly indicate topic transitions as their object of reference are very rare in English. The few which do so form a category of more or less grammaticalised simple lexemes or multi-word-expressions, which I have labelled Primary Topic Shift Markers (Primary TOMs). These are further divided into Topicalizers and Topic Shift Formulations, Topic Elicitors and macrostructural TOMs.

Figure 5.1: Distribution of individual types of Primary TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

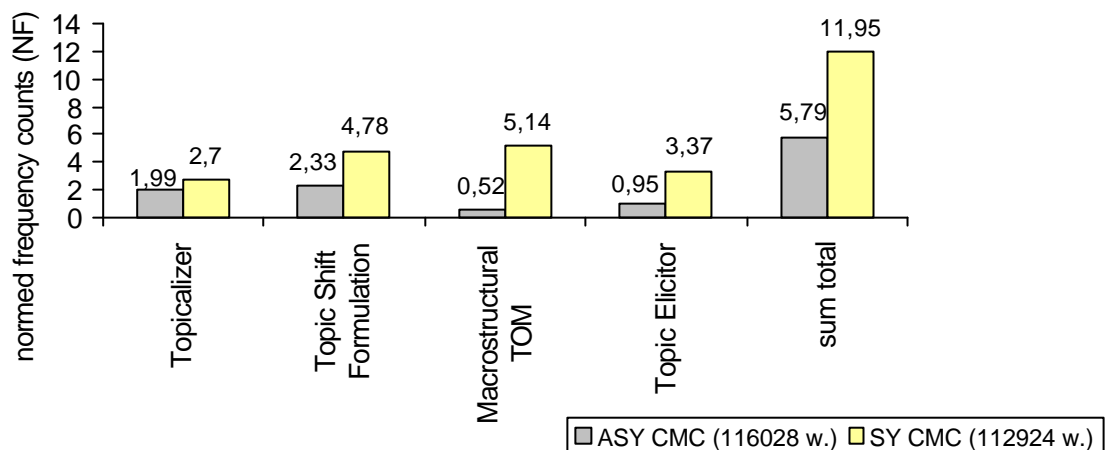


Figure 5.1 above gives an overview of the distributional differences of the individual Primary TOMs across ASY and SY CMC. The sum total of Primary TOMs reveals that SY CMC with a normed frequency $NF=11,95$ exhibits about twice as many Primary TOMs as ASY CMC with a normed frequency of $NF=5,79$. How the individual types of Primary TOMs in the CMC corpus differ quantitatively and qualitatively will be analysed in more detail in the remainder of this chapter.

5.1 Topicalizer

The class of metadiscursive TOMs which I have labelled "Topicalizer" roughly correspond to what Biber et al. (1999) call "Prefaces". Topicalizers constitute a specific type of word order variation, which in analogy to inversions and fronted adverbials (Dorgeloh 1997, 2001) might be called "pragmatic reorderings" for topic organisational purposes, and therefore may be assigned a metadiscursive function.

Biber et al. (1999) use the term "Preface" synonymously to the term "Left Dislocation" (LD) and point out that "it consists of a noun phrase, with a coreferent pronoun ... following in the core of the clause" as exemplified in (ex.5-1) below.

(ex. 5-1)

- > Other than the fact that it would have to be one hell of a solar flare?
- > **AFAIK**, solar flares, even when they're particularly bad, don't do much more than disrupt broadcasted signals, and even then they're not usually *that* problematic. Now, maybe if you'd had a termonuke detonated in the upper atmosphere in so me fortuitous place...
- > **Even then**, I don't think you could actually kill things like electric cars.

AFAIK, yes **it** would likely kill electric cars. In the 1960s a nuclear weapon was detonated somewhere up in the atmosphere over the Pacific, and caused the power to go out in parts of Hawaii, over a thousand kilometers away (IIRC). If it can knock out the power (@shadowrun, 27.24)

Geluykens (1992: 20) points out that the detached referent may be optionally realised as a prepositional phrase (PP) by adding "as for", "as to", "about", "as regards", "with regard to", "as far as (NP) is concerned", "speaking of", "regarding", "about" to which I have added "for", "to", "on", "re". Biber et al. (1999: 138) ascribe this optional variation of LDs or Prefaces (ex. 5-2) to writing., where "the coreference with pronouns may be less clear" or even ellipited as exemplified in (ex. 5-3).

(ex. 5-2)

<EQV-Qs> In many different pages including eq's home page it has been noted how **dark elves** are great for seeing at night.

------(18 lines snipped)-----

<Aradune> **Dark Elves** see the best at night, followed by some of the other races that have infravision. So far in playing the game, having these abilities is very, very handy. **As for dark elves being penalized for being** in the day outside - **they** aren't at this point, but it's something we are keeping in mind if we need to counterbalance them as a race. done
(chat-everJ, 360)

(ex. 5-3)

> > Yes, just as things other than **measles** can produce >>spots on the face.

------(21 lines snipped)-----

> **For measles**, doctors know very well what healthy people look like.
(@histling, 15.56)

It should be pointed out that in both ASY and SY CMC, the more written-like type of Topicalizers in (ex. 5-2) and (ex.5-3) exceed LDs proper given in (ex. 5-1) associated with spoken discourse. This state of affairs points to a more written style of topic organisation.

Another variant of a topicalizing construction is presented in (ex. 5-4) where the left-detached NP is neither followed by a pronominal copy in the main clause nor introduced by an additional linguistic item, such as “as for”. Syntacticians speak of so-called "hanging topic" constructions which Gundel (1988: 224) refers to "as 'double subject' constructions" and which she characterises as "topic-comment structures *par excellence*".

(ex. 5-4)

LBSmasher: Everyone of my friends tells me I underprice myself. I'm a **oneperson outfit**.

------(12 lines snipped)-----

HangMan683: **One person outfit** all the more reason you hafta to get top \$ You hafta to wear too many hat
(chat-Latest-DesignerPro, 103)

Example (ex. 5-1) to (ex. 5-4) show that Topicalizers do not form a clear-cut formal category, ranging from

- a. detached NP + pronominal copy (ex. 5-1) to
- b. detached PP + pronominal copy (ex. 5-2) and
- c. detached PP + ellipted pronominal copy (ex. 5-3) and

- d. detached NP + ellipted pronominal copy (ex. 5-4).

The inclusion of less prototypical types of Topicalizers as in (ex. 5-3) and (ex. 5-4) blurs the distinction between Topicalizers realised as Prefaces or LDs and other peripheral elements, such as fronted adverbials. What these formally heterogeneous class of Topicalizers have in common are the various topic launching functions which will be detailed in the next chapter.

5.1.1 Functional distribution of Topicalizer across ASY and SY CMC

In general terms metadiscursive elements are additional formulation costs taken on by conversationalists (cf. Tiittula 1993). With regard to Topicalizers one may add extra construction costs. Following Ochs and Schiffelin's (1983) characterisation of LDs, which can be extended to the class of Topicalizers in general, these additional construction costs result in "Referent + Proposition constructions" which are characterised by the fact that "formally and functionally the expression of the initial referent and the expressions of the subsequent predications constitute more or less independent communicative acts" (Ochs and Schiffelin 1983: 174). Lambrecht (1994) ascribes "Referent + Proposition constructions" to the "principle of Separation of Reference and Role (PSRR)".

(...) non-canonical configurations thus allow speakers to separate the REFERRING function of a noun phrase from a RELATIONAL role their denotat play as arguments in a proposition. (...)

The communicative motivation of this principle can be captured in the form of a simple pragmatic maxim. "Do not introduce a referent and talk about in the same clause."

(Lambrecht 1994:184/185)

Although Ochs and Schiffelin's (1983) argumentation is more strongly semantic-actional-based, while Lambrecht (1994) argues in terms of cognitive referentiality, both scholars point to the interactional nature of Referent + Proposition constructions. In this context Geluykens (1992) argues similarly when he states that

(...) LD is the result of a (usually) three-stage, interactional process by which new referents are first introduced by the speaker, then acknowledged by the hearer, and finally elaborated upon by the speaker. The grammatical construction LD is thus the result of a conversational strategy which gets 'syntactized'.

(Geluykens 1992: 33)

Table 5.1 below shows that Topicalizers have a strong backward-looking capacity, in that they are functionally used more often for topic reintroducing moves (TOC_{re}) than for topic changes (TOC)¹.

Table 5.1: Topic shift work marked by Topicalizers across ASY and SY CMC

	total	TOCre	TOC
ASY CMC	1.99	1.12	0.87
SY CMC	3.54	2.83	0.70
total Topicalizer	2.70	1.92	0.77

Although the quantitative frequencies of topic reintroducing Topicalizers are very different in ASY and SY CMC, they appear to occur under similar discourse conditions. In both CMC modes Topicalizers tend to be used when the prior message contains more than one subject. In ASY CMC prior messages can be archived and can be additionally inserted as quotes in the REPLY message. In this way the responding participant can navigate prior messages for different subjects and discuss them in any order he wishes. In most cases the usage of Topicalizers has a synchronising effect, by which means the current speaker indicates a topical alignment. This is for instance given in (ex. 42) which will be repeated here in greater length for illustrative purposes:

(ex. 5-5)

- 1 >> Yes, just as things other than measles can produce spots on the face.
 2 >> We need to take such things into consideration if we want to raise
 3 >> our competence in historical linguistics (or medical diagnosis) from
 4 >> this very rudimentary level.
 5 >
 6 > But that is not all.
 7 >
 8 > Human family members resemble each other. That does not mean that
 9 > unrelated
 10 > people cannot resemble each other. And despite the fact that we know
 11 > both
 12 > we still consider two people who resemble each other to be related
 13 > unless
 14 > there's proof to the contrary.
 15
 16 We do?
 17
 18 >We arrive at this through experience. We
 19 > see
 20 > families (which we can confirm) resemble each other and therefore create
 21 > a general inductive rule.
 22 >
 23 > **For measles**, doctors know very well what healthy people look like.
 (@histling, 34-56)

In text sample (ex. 5-5) there are 3 different participants engaged in the discussion of the subject displayed in the header as "Subject: Re: rhotacism from Ray Hickey". The more angle brackets appear on the left hand side of a text, the older the respective message is. The double-angle-bracketed lines 1 to 4 form the beginning of the thread or parts of it, which are proceeded by the single-bracketed contribution by another speaker at a later point in time. A third party can be detected in line 16, who must be the latest speaker since her line of text is zero-bracketed und thus forms the other end of the quotation hierarchy. The issue of "measles" is explicitly mentioned twice by two different parties, the first time in line 1 and again in line 23. In the latter case "measles" is topicalized, and thus marked as reintroduction of a lapsed topic. Having elaborated on various aspects related to the usefulness of family resemblance for historical linguistics (lines 18-22) the participant rounds off his remarks by establishing a short cut to the subject of measles raised in line 1. Strategically the use of the Topicalizer "For measles" has a twofold function. On the one hand, it reasserts a topic introduced by another person, and on the other hand, it indicates the relevance of the current speaker's reply as a whole.

In SY CMC text types Topicalizers tend to be similarly used as topic synchronisers. In the following excerpt from chat everquest <Aradune>, who is the invited specialist in any matters related to everquest, reaffirms the topic introduced by the chatter <Relay 3> in the second question "And will there be an earth or fertility goddess for druids ??".

(ex. 5-6)

```
<Relay3> Will there be weather effects that change the actual landscape (adds snow to a grassy
field for example) and will these changes affect mobility? And will there be an
earth or fertility goddess for druids??
------(13 lines snipped)-----
<Aradune> Weather doesn't change the actual landscape, no, but it does change the
physics in that area, eg. how slippery a slope is. As for dieties for druids, they
have a few that are definitely the type a druid or ranger would prefer to follow. done
(chat-everJ, 986-987)
```

Since this chat-session is organised as a special-guest interview (see chapter 2.4.1), where the audience has the chance to ask via IM or email, and which are then pre-selected by one or more moderators it has a detached quality similar to ASY CMC text types. This means that the individual "chatter"² has more planning and typing time at her disposal which frequently results in longer text lines and the incorporation of two or more subjects in one message. Similar to (ex. 5-5) taken from an asynchronous mailinglist, in (ex. 5-6) <Aradune> has plenty of time to scroll back in the text and to handle the topics raised in the prior message one by one.

Another driving force for using TOMs in general, and more specifically in the form of Topicalizers, might be the public nature of ASY and SY CMC. On the one hand, most communication events are open for a wide public and can be freely joined by anyone interested in the subject. On the other hand, as a rule both ASY and SY CMC events get published in their entirety in retrospect. This means that logfiles can be accessed by all sorts of people at any given time. Therefore one might conclude that CMC demands topic organisational strategies similar to those in moderated TV talk shows, where for instance a marked topic reintroduction does not only serve to establish a topical link with a prior message by another participant, but also to address an anonymous audience.

Für ein Publikum muß vieles explizit gemacht werden, was unter den Beteiligten unterstellt werden und vom Kontext her verständlich sein kann. In einer öffentlichen Diskussion muß das Thema auch für dritte Personen, für Beobachter, Zuhörer/ Zuschauer deutlich sein, was anscheinend zur Explizität des Dialogs beiträgt.
(Tiittula 1993: 236-237)

In non-moderated chats - especially if they are not organised in a question-answer interview format - the question of where, by whom and what type of action will follow as a reaction to a prior utterance is not that predictable. In such cases, the use of Topicalizers serves as attention getter which in most cases substitutes direct addressing by nickname. In (ex. 5-4) above <HangMan683> reacts to LBSmasher's contribution. Instead of addressing LBSmasher by her nickname, <HangMan683> chooses to start her contribution by explicitly repeating the topic introduced by LBSmasher, namely "One person outfit". While calling attention by calling someone else by her nickname can be seen as the electronic version of establishing eye-contact (cf. Zitzen and Stein forthc.) Topicalizers establish »topic-contact«. Frequently, the use of such Topicalizers in SY CMC occur at places of local disruptions, caused by intervening messages by other participants, as it is the case in (ex. 5-4), where <HangMan683>'s message is 12 lines apart from the one it refers to. In such instances the use of Topicalizer might also function to bridge the cognitive-referential distance³ between two expression as an outcome of medially caused sequential discontinuity.

Occurrences of Topicalizers that indicate topic changes are very rare in both ASY and SY CMC. Although few in number, there are two noteworthy types of usage. In ASY emails I have come across a rather lengthy posting where Topicalizers are used as titles in order to indicate topic changes.

(ex. 5-7)

Reg. the Weather:

It's deadly! one day about 70, next pouring rain. When its mellow it's around 65 and blue skies. What will the weather be like in Holland this summer?

Reg. Uniforms

I think you should go to the owner of Zakks and ask them if you can do a fund raiser for the team. I mean he makes tons of money off gay women basketball players.
(e.martins, 15.61-68)

Both instances "Reg. the Weather:" and "Reg. Uniforms" (where "Reg." stands for Regarding) are not only syntactically, but also typographically detached from the new topic to come, which reminds one of the subject line in ASY CMC

In SY CMC, there are a few instances of topic changes where the boundaries are not clear cut. Such topical actions are referred to as "topic shading" or "topic shadowing" respectively (Crow 1983, Löttscher 1987, Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

Unter *theme shadowing* versteht man bekanntlich das Phänomen, daß bei Themenübergängen die Übergänge selbst nicht scharf abgegrenzt sind, sondern Äußerungen vorkommen, von denen nicht eindeutig festzustellen ist, zu welchen von zwei aufeinanderfolgenden thematischen Abschnitten sie gehören. (Löttscher 1987: 156)

Topic shading is generally associated with metalinguistic markers such as "Speaking of", as in the following text sample taken from a MOO:

(ex. 5-8)

bethk [to will]: i agree about the **v. woolf** argument, but I'm really interested these days in how really defining policy is evolving based on particular interpretations of what is actually occurring when people communicate online.

-----(12 lines snipped)-----

Mick [to will]: **speaking of Woolf**, my lovely bride is working on a book chapter [eyes Dene-the-Editor] with a working title "Crying Woolf on the Internet: A MOO of One's Own."

(MOO-Kairos; 1813)

Although <Mick> repeats the subject of "V. Woolf" mentioned by <bethk>, and in that sense reintroduces a lapsed topic similar to (ex. 5-4) discussed above, it is also used strategically to introduce the rather loosely related issue of his bride's working title "Crying Woolf on the Internet: A MOO of One's Own.". Strictly speaking, "it involves no specific attention to ending a topic at all, but rather the fitting of differently focussed but related talk to some last utterance in a topic's development (Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 305)".⁴

5.2 Topic Shift Formulations

Topic Shift Formulations are multi-word expressions drawn "from a stock of ready-made utterance openers" (Biber et. al. 1999: 1075, chapter 14.3.2.1). Their object of reference most commonly includes metadiscursive statements on the status of topics or on the direction it will take. This is reflected in the use of introductory expressions such as "on a downer note"; "as an aside", "back to the topic", "on a related note", "this is kind of off on a tangent, but ...". In some instances Topic Shift Formulations overtly thematise the performance of a future or past topical action, as exemplified in (ex. 5-9a) and (ex. 5-9b) respectively:

(ex. 5-9)

- a.** Emtpjn: Are they stricky Medical flights??
 GryEyes911: Noop.
 GryEyes911: Rescue, law enforcement, patrol, etc, Emtpjn
 Emtpjn: IC..... So, only scene calls and no interfacuti ty transferres
 GryEyes911: Anyway, I want to draw us back to the topic here ..
 Emtpjn: opss... sorry **I changed the subject**
 (chat-employ, 393)
- b.** JHoppis: Rory, **Hate to intro another topic, but I need add for the Quick Pro Booklet.**
 Thimble888 : Nite ,nite and thanks everyone
 Comfortex : Good Night Thim
 Skateink : I need a shutter co. to buy from any good ones?
 RoryMcNeil : JHoppis, drop me an email so i reme mber:-)
 (chat-latest-win, 491)

All other Topic Shift Formulations indicate some type of topic shift work by referring to accompanying activities. What makes them qualify as Primary TOMs is that they have become grammaticalised over time as Topic Shift Markers, while their original meaning has faded. For example utterances, such as "This reminds me of..." do not serve to call attention to the mental process, but rather to an upcoming topic change or digression. Table 5.2 gives an overview of Topic Shift Formulations sorted by their object of reference and their distribution across ASY and SY CMC.

Table 5.2: Topic Shift Formulations in ASY and SY CMC sorted by type of semantic-actional reference

	discourse activity/ situation	cognitive verb	utterance type	text type	topic/topical action	total
ASY CMC	0	1	7	12	7	27
SY CMC	4	13	3	20	14	54
total	4	14	10	8	21	81

5.2.1 Reference to Discourse Activity

Reference to discourse activity and discourse situation include meta-expressions

which signal the current discourse activity relative to some part of the foregoing discourse. These activities refer to types of discourse work such as explaining or summarizing, and not the type of message (i.e., the type of illocutionary act) the speaker conveys through the utterance. (Fraser 1988: 28)

In the following two examples it is the discourse activity INTERRUPTING which is referred to, in order to change the topic:

(ex. 5-10)

- a.** Hut KS 911: Jeff, do you have another incident you'd like to share before I go to the next person?
 Jeff911DJ: **sorry i cut in red, one more**
 Danger1Dvr: i rode along with an officer who pointed out her house and told me a great story about her
 Jeff911DJ: We had a common mental, aliens living in attic, etc..
 (chat-Humour, 372)
- b.** SILLE B: **Sorry to interrupt**, but whoever just sent me an IM please resend as I acidently deleted it
 (chat-Humour, 395)

Two other instances refer to the discourse situation as a whole and usually moot some sort of loss after a technical hindrance. In (ex. 5-11) Vanda expresses her loss after a net-split with "Where were we?".

(ex. 5-11)

VANDA: phonex.dal.net seems to be acting up again.
- [KEVIN] PING
*** Joins: COKE (~xxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.uk)
VANDA: Next time you get net-split try reconnecting on
skypoint.dal.net
- [COKE] PING
- [KEVIN] PING
- [COKE] PING
VANDA: OK, well... this is weird.
COKE: Welcome back Dan !
VANDA: I am now connected through a server in Bristol.
VANDA: Where were we?
(chat-irc1124, 260)

5.2.2 Reference to Cognitive Activity/State

Metadiscursive utterances which contain cognitive verbs are usually of a formulaic nature and include phrases such as "This reminds me of ...", "Before I forget ..." etc.. Syntactically these marker types require an object which is a sentence type. In (ex. 5-12), for instance, "Which reminds me." is followed by an independent main clause.

(ex. 5-12)

Robin [to Researcher]: We are one of the only groups that publishes a directory of current work
Robin says, "and our free proceedings as well :)"
Billy says, "Are there any potential members that Vr-SIG isn't reaching?"
Robin says, "Which reminds me. Division are organising our next conference and will announce it soon"
(DMUMMOO-part4, 1036)

In other instances cognitive verbs are used emphatically, reflected by the use of the progressive form. In the chat-excerpt below Kevin's introductory statement: "I was just thinking about the discussion about triangles." does not only inform us about what is on his mind, but it also functions as a hanger for a new topical direction.

(ex. 5-13)

DANIEL: what was the discussion?
VANDA: We started with the hatchet in Kelly's room and had worked our way to what seemed to be time to chance the

----- (18 lines snipped) -----
KEVIN: I was just thinking about the discussion about triangles

----- (9 lines snipped) -----
KEVIN: Melvin Harris' Suspect, Stephenson, used the alias Tautriadelta for the
articles he wrote.

KEVIN: It means cross-three-triangles
(chat-irc1124, 288)

Interestingly Kevin splits his contribution, reserving the first one for the meta-announcement and the second for verbalising the content of his announcement. Zitzen and Stein (forthc.) refer to this messaging strategy as "split-turn technique" and categorise it as an element of writtenness. They argue that "the linear spelling out and portioning of information is an essentially written technique, thus contributing to the character of the chat, and digicourse at large, as a curious and characteristic medial mixture" (Zitzen and Stein forthc.).

In SY MOOs topic shift work may also be signalled via emote commands, which form communication commands alternative to the SAY-command. Emotes display various types of actions, among others topical actions. This type of emoting fits in with Cherny's (1999) category "Emotes of Background or Exposition" which are characterised as follows:

Background and expository emotes differ from the other types in that they need not be in the simple present tense; they are usually statements about the speaker's attitudes, beliefs, or background relevant to the conversational context. They fit seamless into conversation as if they were uttered as says: they can be responded to as if they were "spoken" as says, and they can occur in response to says. Often they show first person speech-like properties, such as being directed to another speaker (...)

(Cherny 1999: 214)

In the next text sample <Mick> starts off his contribution as third person point of view utterance and then proceeds with a direct question which requires a direct response.

(ex. 5-14)

will says,	"when the hypertext was a conference session it had different issues than being a kairos hypertext..."
will says,	"power, i mean"
nickc [to mday]:	exactly, like _Ceremony_ by Silko--history and memory <u>alway</u> being reinvented

canadian quietly enters.

canadian arrives.

MikeP says, "When we shifted to Kairos, we suddenly had to worry about an enduring product."

mday is teaching Silko now, Nick

Mick recalls there were lots of technical problems at the session at CCCC. Did the editing process give you a sense of power over the text that the live presentation didn't?

(MOO-Kairos, 410)

Similar to metadiscursive frames of the type "This reminds me of." the first utterance "Mick recalls there were lots of technical problems at the session at CCCC." serves to indicate a shift in topic. Although the issue of "technical problems at the session at CCCC" is not really related to the prior topic on the *floor*, it appears to me less disruptive as it would have been, if it had been sent via the SAY-command would do. Rather, my impression is that third person emotes which indicate topic shifts are primarily proposals or invitations for a new topic which the speaker does not really insist on to be picked up. It is also possible that the emote-modality "has something to do with tone, via manipulation of perspective. The omniscient narrator's voice suggested by the third person is more distanced, and perhaps feels more authoritative" (Cherny 1999: 215-216).

5.2.3 Reference to Utterance Type

Topic Shift Formulations may also prefigure a topic and the attached topical actions with reference to the utterance type. In ASY CMC this strategy is frequently displayed in the subject line. Consider the following text samples from a newsgroup based on issues and problems related to computer technology.

(ex. 5-15)

- a. Subject: Newbie question for mailing form contents w/ PERL on IIS4
(N.comp 1.7)
- b. Subject: Re: memory efficiency question
(N.comp 5.9)
- c. Subject: Re:very quick s/// question
(N.comp 22.6)

(ex. 5-17)

Jay says, "so like Ben said, I took a profiler to the MOO server and managed to chop about 5-10% of the time waste from the server in an afternoon"

Ben [to Esq.]: **No, we'll get to those.**

Jay says, "and then I sorta realized that maybe there was gold in them thar hills"

Jay says, "so anyway, enough anecdote"

Jay [to Ben]: paste away

Esq. was jumping the gun

Ben says, "Everyone who has ever profiled
(MediaMOO, 461)

Most often metadiscursive elements with the text types + topic formula are used cataphorically in SY CMC, that is in a forward-looking manner, to announce complex actions such as TELLING A STORY as is shown in (ex. 5-18) below:

(ex. 5-18)

GDMES: we all have stories of passing details to operators that read "cold copy"

GDMES: and sound like fools on the radio, but **i will relay one story that we did to an officer that**

GDMES: was getting on our nervs

GDMES: he was a rookie that **had just been put** on his own in a small town
(chat-Humour, 392)

Alternatively, metadiscourse with the text type + topic formula may also make reference to so-called "abstracts", which Tiittula (1993) describes as follows:

Es handelt sich um Abstracta, die kommende (oft eine längere) Äußerung charakterisieren, aber noch nichts über den Inhalt sagen, so daß Äußerungen, die das Abstraktum enthält, erklärungsbedürftig ist und eine Fortsetzung erfordert. (Tiittula 1993: 98)

Particularly popular are abstract nouns in copular sentences, which Doherty (2001) describes as cleft-like sentences. Most commonly we find extended abstract referents as in (ex. 5-19).

(ex. 5-19)

> The professors who've taught me Japanese, in contrast, though they've given
> their all to helping us students learn, lack this same ability to relate to
> where the students are. All were Japanese born and raised, lived most of
> their lives in Japan, and still affiliate themselves as much if not more
> with Japan than the USA. They never had to learn Japanese as a second
> language -- the virtually inscrutable oddities us Indo-European language
> speakers find in Japanese are second nature to them.

----- (16 lines snipped) -----
good teachers. In fact there is a kind of Japanese thinking which centres around the whole idea of speaking Japanese being related to racial identity.

Another tiresome problem with untrained native speaking teachers is that they basically think that the most important thing is to make you understand every single nuance of polite language
(N-Teachers, 2.101)

In line with Doherty's (2001:627ff) claim, copular-sentences of the type presented in (ex. 5-19) above signal a major shift in the discourse topic and most commonly occur at the beginning of new paragraphs.

5.2.5 Functional distribution of Topic Shift Formulations across ASY and SY CMC

In ASY CMC Topic Shift Formulations prototypically serve to introduce new topics. These are usually placed at the beginning (ex. 5-20a) or at the end of paragraphs (ex. 5-20b) or in between two text passages (ex. 5-20c).

(ex. 5-20)

- a.** IMO, the primary issues will be the 'hidden' costs of heating, lighting, food preparation, local business taxes and providing the 'office' space. What will be the tax situation for the home-worker who is paid for this? Could a tax case be made for businesses paying for removal & extra mortgage costs for a larger house?

On a different tack, cross-border teleworking... Companies could staff switch according to changes in tax laws on a very short time scale.
(N-S8-politics, 69.22)

- b.** The tiger watches and sees the PKJAMES creature turn and leave, but only after clawing a few more survivors one last time. She tries to feel sympathy for it, but sadly can only feel relief that it has gone. She hopes it will come back when it is calm and will discuss its abuse with the others and heal...if it is truly healed why did it come to the forest?

Ok, **enough symbolism**. I don't know if anyone out there enjoys it, but it is fun to write. :)

BTW, I am neither silver or a tiger in real life (well ok, really I am and there are many bears and griffins and aardvarks who are computer literate out there, but that's besides the point:) and I don't think that anyone has any business demanding that anyone else change their anon-name.
(N-alt-abuse, 23.59)

- c.** He's really nice when he's around it's just that he is always leaving to go on the road. He came home Mon. and he just went home to his flat today because we went skiing for part of

the holiday weekend. Another sport I hate but **what** can I do ... I always fall for these athletic types. Ok **enough boy stuff**.
 Hey Jacky's birthday is a week after mine ... no wonder I liked her so much ... we are Aquarians!
 (e.martins, 15.57)

Table 5.3: Functional distribution of Topic Shift Formulations across ASY and SY CMC

	TOCre		TOC		TOB		TOB+TOC		total	
	ASY CMC	SY CMC	ASY CMC	SY CMC	ASY CMC	SY CMC	ASY CMC	SY CMC	ASY CMC	SY CMC
discourse activity	0	0.09	0	0.27	0	0	0	0	0	0.35
cognitive activity	0	0	0.09	1.15	0	0	0	0	0.09	1.15
utterance type	0	0	0.60	0.27	0	0	0	0	0.60	0.27
text type	0.09	0.27	0.86	1.24	0.09	0.18	0	0.09	1.03	1.77
topic/topical action	0	0.53	0.52	0.71	0	0	0.09	0	0.60	1.24
total	0.09	0.39	2.07	3.63	0.09	0.17	0.09	0.09	2.32	4.78

Table 5.3 shows that distributional differences across ASY and SY CMC are primarily a matter of quantitative rather than of qualitative differences. Similar to ASY CMC in chats Topic Shift Formulations foremost function as markers of various types of topic change (TOC)⁵. Occurrences of topic refocussing devices (TOCre) are frequently announced by a moderator, who is eager to keep the chat on-topic. Such announcement are usually spelled out as a friendly and well-meant suggestion as below:

(ex. 5-21)

Ringer says, " if you use the to command, **then** everyone can hear you "
 Ringer says, "or the ! command "
 Ringer says, "those **get transmitted** to the whole room "
 bess speaks up, "please accept my apologies"
 Ringer smiles .. you are logged ..
 JudyM-lib has connected.
 Jay_N says, "KathyL please ask your question - "
 BarryB-lib enters late
 JudyM-lib stands up from pink table. . .
 JudyM-lib goes south.
 JudyM-lib has arrived.
 JudyM-lib sits down at pink table. .
 KathyL-lib speaks up, "How does a person become permanent character?"
 Ringer says, "**you cans** use **th** @request command "
 Ringer says, "**oops the** "
 Ringer says, "**let's go back to the subject here:**) "
 (MOO-Sampleliblog, 116)

Another reason for the employment of refocussing devices in SY CMC seems to be related to the multi-threadedness of chats, meaning, that there is usually more than one topic on the *floor* at a given time. This requires multi-topical tasking by the individual chatter, as it is reflected in the use of the Topicalizer in the following chat excerpt:

(ex. 5-22)

BJTOG: The dispatchers in our center draw names and buy a small
 gift for each other. Wecall it ...
BJTOG: Secret Santa...its great fun!
GryEyes911: sleigh bells on the Comm Center doors will piss folks off..
GryEyes911: yes, we do the same, BJTOG. :)
Hut KS 911: Oooo, Gry. Bells would drive me crazy.Have enough noise makers
 in the comm center.
GryEyes911: <ahem> back to the bells..... they tend to get on the nerves of
 the workers..... ummmhummmmm
(chat-Xmas, 561)

In line 4 <GryEyes911> introduces the issue of "sleigh bells". Note, that the participant finishes off with suspensions dots ("...") which usually signal that more material will follow in one of the following messages by the same speaker. However, what follows next in line 5 is a spontaneous comment directed to another subject put on the *floor* by <BJTOG> in line 1. Apparently, <GryEyes911> upon seeing <BJTOG>'s contribution chooses to self-interrupt his message in line 4 and to react to <BJTOG> first. In this context Linell et al. (1997) point out the fact that the more people are engaged in a multi-party-conversation, the more topical fragmentations are likely to occur. In SY CMC topical fragmentation appears to be much stronger due to the fact that you can hardly ignore intervening and linearly displayed text lines in the public dialogue box⁶. Consequently, a large number of chat participants - and with it an increasing number of topical threads - may make the use of topic refocussing markers especially relevant.

5.3 Topic Elicitors

Topics may also be re-introduced by means of topic eliciting questions of the type "What/How about + topic?". Similar to metadiscursively framed Topicalizers of the type "Speaking of + Topic" the phrase "what/how about " marks an expression referring to a topic. Geluykens (1993) argues similarly when he assigns "What/how about"-questions a topic introducing function:

Although from a formal point of view, these topic-introducing questions qualify as wh-questions, one could argue that they form a separate category, since the phrase *what about* appears to function as a kind of topic introducing discourse marker.

(Geluykens 1993: 203)

In contrast to Topic Initial Elicitors, such as "Anything else?" (see chapter 6.6), "What/How about"-questions do not only display an orientation toward conversational continuity, but also propose a new topic that can be talked on. In this respect the act of topic initiation already takes place in the "What/How about"-question and not - as it is the case with Topic Initial Elicitors - in the answer to the question (cf. Hoffmann 1995: 87f.). What all types of topic eliciting questions have in common though is that they make a reaction conditionally relevant, so that the addressee has to deal with the topic proposed in the question in some way or the other. Usually topic eliciting questions prompt a topical follow-up as in (ex. 5-23), an excerpt from a MOO-conference, where <lindar> shifts the topic from "one-minute papers" to "whole papers", which is then taken up by <Cynthia>.

(ex. 5-23)

Alan speaks up, "You make a good point, Lindar. It would be worthless for 20,000 people to present one-minute papers, but we're not quite to that point yet. :)"

------(18 lines snipped)-----

lindar says, " **But how about offering whole papers... not just abstracts on websites?"**

Cynthia says, "One thing to consider...whole papers would be great for smaller conferences...CCCC has grown to probably around 800-900 presentations, not all formal papers of course..."

Eric speaks up, "yeah. I just suggested to dobs that the idea could be developed fully and complexly, put the text on the web pages, give the audience a tantalizing abstract version & refer them to the web for the rest. make the f2f session a teaser :)"

(LinguaMOO-C-FEST1, 221)

A change in topic combined with a request for a conditionally relevant follow-up action can also be achieved by making a suggestion as in the email text sample (ex. 5-24a), or by means of a self-eliciting question (ex. 5-24b) which functions as attention-securing device similar to the type of Secondary TOMs which will be discussed in chapter 6.3.

(ex. 5-24)

- a.** Hope by now your techno box is up and running. I've become so dependent on my computers it's like a sci-fi film.
Lets talk about:
Gay Games
(e.martins, 15.5)
- b.** VANDA: Bowie knives were made first around the American Revolution.
KADARAB: Oh, I didn't realize they were that old...
KADARAB: I had thought Alamo -era
VANDA: From memory anyway, I could be wrong.
VANDA: I'll look it up and report when I can.
KADARAB: **You know what else could have done those wounds??** A *bayonet*... or are they more stabbing weapons??
(chat-irc1124, 148)

More akin to Topic Shift Formulations are Topic Elicitors which contain one of the object of reference categories listed in the aforementioned table 5.2. For instance, in text sample (ex. 5-25) the topic eliciting question posed by <SDale83293> contains the formula reference to utterance type + topic.

(ex. 5-25)

Almode : Hi Rory : got in both way; thanks
BetaLogic : Shane: Yes, thanks much. Looks like a winner on a 10-ft wide poly!
SteveShade : Most mfgers hide behind a fake name when they lurk.
SDale83293 : **Any comments on the new M&B 2" Headrail?**
GCorbin111 : Probably, no warping
RoryMcNeil : HiMdpets
ShaneHayes : get your order in now, it's taking off like a rocket
BetaLogic : Steve: No pressing off the basketball courts!<G>
RoryMcNeil : SDale, is that the low profile M&B
(chat-latest-win, 27)

5.3.1 Functional distribution of Topic Elicitors across ASY and SY CMC

Topic Elicitors - as they are exemplified in (ex. 5-23) to (ex. 5-25) - occur three times more often in SY CMC than in ASY CMC. These findings reflect the multi-threadedness typical of SY CMC and Rittgeroth's (2002: 67f.) observation that direct questions are a very popular means to introduce and change topics in chats.

Table 5.4: Normed frequency counts of Topic Elicitors across ASY and SY CMC

	TOC
ASY CMC	0,95
SY CMC	3,37

As outlined in chapter 4.4.1.1, in chats adjacency in terms of topic continuity is not defined mono-linearly, but rather as disrupted *turn* adjacency, caused by the fact that messages are posted in the order received by the system regardless of what they are responding. The employment of Topic Elicitors can therefore be regarded as a strategic means to adjust to these adjacency conditions. Similar to metadiscursive pre-requests which will be dealt with in chapter 6.1, the conditional relevance of the second pair part to a topic eliciting questions loosens the notion of strict adjacency, in that its production remains relevant despite disrupted *turn* adjacency.

5.4 Macro-structural Topic Shift Marker (TOM)

So far in chapters 5.1 to 5.3 we have investigated metadiscursive TOMs which establish links between successive utterances, and in that sense promote topic shift work on the micro-structural level. We will now turn to a class of metadiscursive TOMs which operate at the macro-structural level, in that they thematise topics and/or topical moves which have consequences for the discourse as a whole and not for local stretches of the discourse only. The macro-dimension of topic organisation concerns, firstly, the issue of on-topic hood and, secondly, the formulation of what the subject is/was about.

5.4.1 On-Topic hood

With regard to topic organisational norms we have already pointed out that in natural conversation the default case of topic organisation is movement from topic to topic and that sequentially and/or referentially disjunctive topic changes are generally dispreferred and need to be overtly marked (see chapter 4.3). Consequently, metadiscourse on on-topichood is redundant in the default case of natural and informal conversation. In formalised conversations on-topichood is prefixed by a topical agenda. It may prefix a superordinate topic, i.e., what we will be talking about; and/or it may also pre-allocate turns in order to control who will speak next and on what specific topic or topical aspect.

5.4.1.1 On-topic discussions in ASY newsgroups and mailinglists

Newsgroups and mailinglists are usually organised around macro-topics which accord with how these communication spaces are named, such as N-UK-politics or @corpora, the former one dealing with politics and the latter one with language corpora. These macro-topics give a general thematic orientation and at the same time leave enough room for the development of parallel sub-topics which are organised into different hierarchical threads. As a result, "(...) in looking at the topic-list within a particular group, with main headings and sub-headings, there is a distinct resemblance to conventional book divisions" (Crystal 2001: 135).

Having said that topic organisation may concern two aspects, namely how an individual utterance is related to the prior context and/or to a global discourse topic, with regard to ASY CMC we may add a third aspect, namely the organisation of message theme (see chapter 4.4.1.3). More specifically, the organisation of message theme involves the question of how an individual message or posting is structurally embedded into the network of topical threads, and how it is linked to the macro-topic of a given newsgroups or mailinglist. The last issue demands that people stick to the overall topic and do not sent postings randomly to any newsgroup or mailinglist. In

consideration of the fact that in ASY CMC there is only one single occurrence of metadiscourse that overtly addresses the issue of on-topichood, there seems to be the tendency to stay on-topic. Even with regard to the only instance, illustrated as (ex. 5-26) where off-topichood is overtly thematised, the participant's motivation appears to be the retention of on-topichood.

(ex. 5-26)

Subject: **Re:** Guestbook script for FP98

FP98 and all versions before makes a mess of *all* pages created with it. The Perl script isn't the issue here. It's a FP problem, **which is off-topic here.**

Greetings,
(N.comp, 20.8)

The above text sample is taken from a newsgroup which by its full name is "Newsgroups: comp.lang.perl.misc". Clearly, this newsgroup deals with all sorts of computer problems as long as these are linked to the programming language "Perl". However, the problem stated in the inserted quote is not related to Perl, but to a "FP problem". This is reason enough for the current contributor to abruptly close off his answer with the meta-comment "which is off-topic here". There is yet another means to treat a message as off-topic. Off-topic messages can simply be ignored, that is, they can be left unanswered.⁷ In case of moderated groups, the moderator may simply not publish off-topic messages. Interestingly, I have not found an initiating message which failed to cause a reaction and was therefore repeated at a later time.

5.4.1.2 Negotiations of main topics in SY chats

Contrary to ASY CMC, in SY chats digressions from a pre-established topic are overtly and repeatedly complained about. This is the case in (ex. 5-27) where <Jola> tries twice to draw the attention back to the main topic, the first time in line 5, and then again in line 16.

(ex. 5-27)

Robin says, "Who do you want? Princess Di. Fergie!"
 Chris says, "Are we all coming back to life here?"
 Billy says, ""Bad lag still"
 Robin says, "Prince Charles should be a good bet"
jola says, "Hmm,how about the main topic btw?"
 Researcher says, "yes, charles"
 Researcher is back to life, back to reality
 -----(46 lines snipped)-----
 Robin says, " Which reminds me. Division are organising our next conference and will announce it soon"
 Robin [to Billy]: I don't know. They haven't said
 Robin grins
 IvorB flattens out into a largish 29 cent postage stamp and floats away.
 A largish 29 cent postage stamp floats into the room and fattens up into IvorB.
 Robin says, "Anybody out there?"
jola says, "Hmm excuse me to be boring.. but ehm what about the main discussionwer were going to have?"
 Researcher says, "yes, I agree with jola"
 (DMUMOO-part4, 991-1044)

In the above example <Jola>'s second attempt to bring the discussion back to the main topic is finally taken up by moderator nicknamed <Researcher> in line 18. Other instances of metadiscourse which explicitly address on-topichood are less action-demanding, but rather assertive or descriptive in nature. Descriptive statements on on-topichood are given in (ex. 5-28a) and (5-28b) below.

(ex. 5-28)

- a. Joesas3: <this session is going right down the tubes in a BIG way>
 LOL
 (chat-employ, 331)
- b. RoryMcNeil :I think this chat session is getting off track a wee bit:-)
 (chat-latest-win, 282)

In both instances the respective speakers do not single out particular contributions as violating the main topic, rather they speak of topical erring with regard to the

discourse as a whole. Note, that in (ex. 5-28a) <Joestas3> has not the social role of a moderator or a host. Nevertheless he tries to intervene in the course of the conversation in a similar way as a moderator would do. In conversations this privilege is usually reserved for an official moderator similar to <RoryMcNeil> in (ex. 5-28b) above. Additionally, moderators usually explicitly mention the topical agenda right at the beginning of a chat-session. In (ex. 5-29) <Hut KS 911> gives strict instructions as to how people are supposed to behave.

(ex. 5-29)

Hut KS 911: Before I get into her "stuff", I ask that we all stick to the topic at hand. If it is off
Hut KS 911: topic, please use e-mail or IMs.
(chat-Humour, 17-20)

5.4.1.3 Formulating what the topic is/was in ASY mailinglists and newsgroups

If you wish to add a contribution to a topical streak in a mailinglist or newsgroup, you can signal this in the subject line by using the REPLY function. In doing so, the wording of the subject line is automatically reduplicated and marked as reply by the insertion of "RE" at the beginning of the subject line. For instance, if you find 10 messages in the newsgroup sci.lang entitled with "RE: Using Arabic alphabet to write Turkish", it means that there are 10 contributions centred on this very topic. In this way, subject lines serve as orientation and as means for tracing message themes. Unless marked in some way or another, a different wording indicates the opening of thematic section which is independent of already existing ones. In the CMC database I have come across some instances where people have changed the wording in the subject line, but also metadiscursively pointed to the original wording of a prior thread. This state of affairs is illustrated in (ex. 5-30a-c) below:

(ex. 5-30)

- a. Subject: Re: Eurolang & Interlingua (**Was: One language ...**)
(N.sci, 2.10)
- b. Subject: Blackadder (Re: Basic unit of Chinese language (**was music and lang.**))
(N.sci, 24.887)

- c. Subject: Re: Vowel length and music (was Re: tone langs & music)
(N.sci, 4.9)

All three instances indicate at the level of message theme the history of the respective threads, which in the course of the time have apparently shaded off into a different topical focus.

5.4.1.4 Explicit mentioning of what the topic is/was in SY chats

Similar to (ex. 5-30a-c), a participant in a chat may indicate that the topical thread has shaded off into a more or less related ones. To this end a participant has a TOPIC-SET function at his disposal, which similar to emotes is displayed as third person narration rather as direct speech. In the following text sample <BlkStaff> draws attention to the fact that the chat starts with pre-edited and pre-selected questions first, which were sent in advance via email.

(ex. 5-31)

Kazola [syntax@rose65.wuh.wustl.edu] has joined #EverQuest
Redcloud [tomahawk10@pool024-max25.mpop2-ca-us.dialup.earthlink.net] has joined
#EverQuest
BlkStaff changes topic to "Chats started, EOVault questions first"
(chat-everJ, 46)

As pointed out in chapter 5.2.1.2 above emote contributions may serve to manipulate or to indicate a shift in perspective. Setting or changing the topic via the TOPIC-SET function, as it is done in (ex. 5-31), might serve to change the perspective from local to more global discourse organisational dimensions. Another instance I came across comes from a chat-discussion on Epistemology. <Greasy> and <Svengali> have quite different opinions on issues concerning epistemology and consequently disagree a lot with the other's contribution. At some point in the conversation, quoted as (ex. 5-32), <Svengali> changes the topic via the TOPIC SET function, in order to emphasise the main topic "Epistemology".

(ex. 5-32)

Svengali-: Grease, that makes no sense at all.
Svengali-: "This finger is broken" is a proposition. It is meaningful, and therefore can be true or false but not both.

Greasy-: It does to me. If we consider every sense datum unique and assume that our minds assign those data to categories, then it seems as if we can assign one datum to two different (and contradictory) categories depending on the circumstances.

*** **Svengali- changes topic to "Discussions in philosophy. Epistemology."**

(chat-svengali, 77-83)

Since there are only 4 active participants logged in, which have so far not opened any side sequences, there is no need to reassert the topic of the chat. Rather, it seems to me that <Svengali> uses the TOPIC SETTING function to express his annoyance about <Greasy>'s views.

Most of the chat and MOO logfiles in the database are published documents, which can be freely accessed after the chat-session has taken place. This state of affairs is reflected in the fact that the chat or the MOO discussion is usually published under a title as in (ex. 5-33) which is taken from the same chat as (ex. 5-33).

(ex. 5-33)

Edited Logs from ##PhilosophyDebate hosted by Svengali

Discussion on Epistemology

Session Start: Sat Nov 02 14:57:02 1996

*** Now talking in #PhilosophyDebate

(chat-svengali, 5)

In some MOOs such titles take the form of a "prelude" to the following discussion as is exemplified below:

(ex. 5-34)

Log of Elizabeth Siddal's 170th Birthday Party, LinguaMOO Sunday 25th July 1999 trAce members were invited to drop by the trAce meeting room at LinguaMOO to join poet and playwright Kim Morrissey in celebrating the birthday of Elizabeth Siddal, Pre-Raphaelite poet, artist, model and wife of D.G. Rossetti. After cutting the birthday cake, Kim, author of 'Clever As Paint' (a re-examination of the life of Elizabeth Siddal) led a discussion of issues around Women and Poetry. As the guests logged on one by one, they found Kim reading aloud from Siddal's work:

(LinguaMOO-Birthday, 1-14)

The majority of macro-structural TOMs serve to reassert the main topic in the course of a chat or MOO-discussion. This is especially relevant for latecomers, who upon their entrance may have difficulties in sorting out the main topic. As was pointed out in chapter 3.2.3.2 one's entrance and one's leaving will be automatically notified by the server and displayed as "***Michaela has entered #linguist". Depending on the

degree of fluctuation there might be a lot of server messages which can be quite disturbing. This state of affairs is confirmed by Rithgeroth (2002) who states that:

Diese Servermeldungen treten häufig auf und unterbrechen und beeinflussen die Gespräche zugleich, denn in ihnen ist durch die neu hinzukommenden oder fortgegangenen Chatter immer das Potential angelegt, Gesprächskonstellationen und – themen zu ändern.

(Rithgeroth 2002: 5)

In order to avoid or to minimise confusion and distractions by long insertion sequences moderators tend to greet people upon entrance by explicitly naming the topic. In doing so moderators can »kill two birds with one stone«, they acknowledge another person's presence upon entrance, and at the same invite them to take part in the ongoing discussion. Automated messages of this kind look like the ones in (ex. 5-35):

(ex. 5-35)

GryEyes911: **Welcome. PSPRoaddog, to the regular Monday night Dispatch Chat session!**
GryEyes911: **our topicthis evening is Employee Assistance Programs...**
PSPRoaddog: Thank youEvening
GryEyes911: **and we're currently in the Q & A period after Joesas has spoken. :)**
(chat-employ, 146)

The strategy in (ex. 5-35) is in line with the observation that

the practice of "formulating what the topic is/was" is something done within conversation by participants, is not there as an unconstrained option..., and is **regularly used as a vehicle for doing some other, additional activity** (cf., for example, Sack's analysis of the utterance "We were in an automobile discussion" as not only a move to re-invoke or re-start a topic, but as an invitation to a newcomer ...

(Schegloff 1990: 52, bold-face M.Z.)

Automated messages of that kind are usually found in moderated chats, employed by a moderator. However, topic re-invoking messages also occur in non-moderated SY CMC where latecomers or newcomers are welcomed by another participant. In the chat-excerpt (ex. 5-36a) <Vanda> informs <KEVIN> right upon his entry about the main topic.

(ex. 5-36)

- a. KEVIN: Hi
 VANDA: Unsure, Arab.
 KADARAB: hey Kevin
 VANDA: We are still going on about the hatchet in Kelly's room.
 KEVIN: AH
 (chat-irc1124, 32)
- b. MJWalli: Sorry to sound thick, but what's the chat?
 UKHostTele: talking about
 UKHostTele: working atr hoem with computers
 (chat-telework, 198)

By this means <VANDA> avoids insertion sequences of the type we find in (5-35b) which would disrupt the actional coherence of the ongoing discussion. <KEVIN>'s excuse "Sorry to sound thick" indicates a general embarrassment of not being able to comprehend what the chat is about and the awareness of disrupting the ongoing talk.

5.5 Distributional differences of macrostructural TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

With 6 instances of macrostructural TOMs in ASY CMC and 58 instances in SY CMC macrostructural TOMs turn out to be very unevenly distributed across the two CMC modes. Metadiscourse on on-topichood or explicit formulations of what the topic is/was are hardly found in ASY CMC.

Table 5.5: Distribution of macrostructural TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

	On-topichood		Formulation what the topic is/was		total
	type A	type A1	type B	type B1	
ASY CMC	1	0	0	5	6
SY CMC	17	10	17	14	58
total	18	10	17	19	64

Metadiscourse concerning the issue of on-topichood are divided into two subclasses. Type A encompasses those tokens where the issue of on-topichood is overtly thematised as in (ex. 5-26), where the current poster refuses to touch on a topic, or in (ex. 5-27) and (ex. 5-28a, b) where participants complain about thematic deviations. Type A1 instances are related to a topical agenda and usually serve to enforce prefixed regulations by a moderator as in (ex. 5-31).

Macro-structural TOMs that overtly name what the topic is/was are subdivided into type B and type B1 occurrences. The former class includes automated instantiations of the topic. These also serve to welcome newcomers as illustrated in (ex. 5-35). Type B1 instances consists of non-automated messages which overtly name the topic of the ongoing discussion. With regard to ASY CMC we have seen that these are used to change the wording of threads in the subject line (see (ex. 5-30 a, b, c)); in SY CMC these function similar to the automated types as orientation and invitation of newcomers or latecomers (see (ex. 5-31 a, b)).

One may attribute occurrences of the various types of macro-structural TOMs in ASY and SY CMC to the lack of fixed norms which therefore are still in the process of being negotiated. Schütte (2000) arrives at similar conclusion:

Die spezifischen kommunikativen Regeln und Normen sind in dieser Umbruchsphase noch nicht selbstverständlich und teils noch strittig; so lassen sich vielfältige metakommunikative Formen der Kommunikationsregulierung beobachten.
(Schütte 2000: 142)

The fact that macrostructural TOMs are very rare in ASY CMC does not necessarily signify that the norms are less controversial with regard to these CMC contexts. Rather due to the ASY quality of mailinglists and newsgroups participants may use different strategies to handle the violations of the overall topic organisation. As mentioned in the introduction, there is the possibility to ignore postings, and furthermore "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs) or Nettiquettes form extracommunicative means to discuss norms on a metadiscursive level (cf. Schütte 2000).

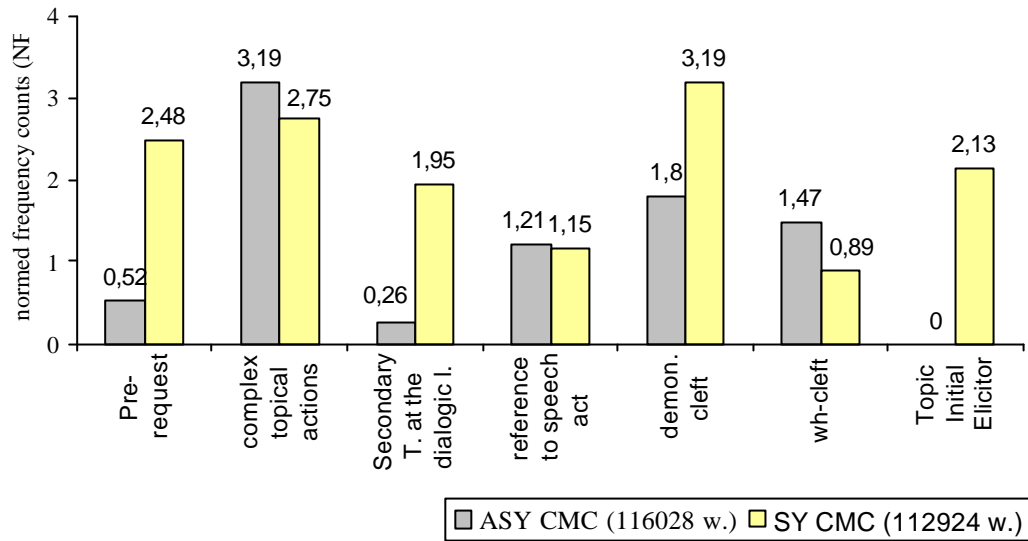
However, there are also numerous FAQs and Nettiquettes for chats and MOOs. The fact that in SY CMC we have a relatively high frequency of macrostructural TOMs shows that extracommunicative means are not sufficient enough to manage topic shifts. The reason for this is quite obvious: In ASY CMC off-topic messages can be ignored. In SY chats off-topic messages can also be ignored, in the sense of not being replied to, but they can also cause topical digressions or asides.

6. Secondary Topic Shift Marker (TOM)

The category of Secondary TOM encompasses forms of metadiscourse which call attention to topical actions by overtly referring to carrier activities. Secondary TOMs can be assigned the same object of reference categories which have already been worked out for Topic Shift Formulations as a subgroup of Primary TOMs. These include foremost reference to discourse activity/state, utterance type, text type, topic/topical action (see table 5.2).

In contrast to Primary Topic Shift Formulations, which by these reference categories exclusively bear implications for topical actions, Secondary TOMs which serve as pre-requests (chapter 6.1), pre-announcements of complex action patterns (chapter 6.2) or Topic Initial Elicitors (chapter 6.6) bear additional actional implications. As Tiittula (2001: 1370) puts it: "Mit metakommunikativen Themeneröffnungen können zugleich sequentielle Handlungsimplicationen etabliert werden; dies bedeutet, daß der Themeninitiator an die Beteiligten gewisse Anforderungen stellt."

Other Secondary TOMs operate at the dialogic level (chapter 6.3), or prefigure topic shift work by referring to prior speech acts (chapter 6.4), and last but not least establish discourse deictic references (chapter 6.5). An overview of the individual types of Secondary TOMs and their distribution across ASY and SY CMC is given in figure 6.1. below:

Figure 6.1: Distribution of individual Secondary TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

6.1 Pre-requests

Secondary TOMs which function as pre-requests reflect metadiscursively on the fact that topical actions may be linked to the action pattern ASKING A QUESTION, which Bublitz (1988) circumscribes as "piggy-back fashion" and which "can be described by employing a *by*-relation (i.e., one may handle the topic *by* doing ... that is to say, *by* performing a certain speech act pattern)." (Bublitz 1988: 40)

Pre-requests check whether an intended request is likely to be successful. More specifically, they check "what is most likely to be the grounds for refusals; and if those grounds are present, then the request is aborted. We also have a *motivation* for this particular format – namely avoiding an action (the request) that would obtain a dispreferred second (a rejection) (...)." (Levinson 1983: 358)

(ex. 6-1)

C: Do you have Malboros?
 S: Uh no. We ran out
 C: Okay. Thanks anyway
 S: Sorry
 (Levinson 1983: 358, example (111))

In (ex. 6-1) speaker C checks beforehand if Malboros are on stock before uttering the actual request, for instance in the form of " A packet of Malboros, please.". Since the prerequisites for the request to buy a packet of Malboros are not given, speaker C avoids the request "A packet of Marlboro, please." altogether.

On a metadiscursive level pre-requests check grounds for refusals with respect to future request for information. Request for information are prototypically obtained by interrogative acts, which are most commonly referred to by the abstract noun "question", or by the speech act verb "to ask".

(ex. 6-2)

a. Hello Jean-Francois,

I have some old and some new questions for you.

. I need the answers to my questions I have send to you on monday (I attached the urgent questions)

1. Support C&W primary and secondary DNS?

You confirmed in the conference call on wednesday!

(e.Lan.Steve.part2, 79.13)

b. Moore4807: **a question for you all if I may**, does anybody else have a in house system for stress relief?
(chat-employ, 182-183)

c. <PersonI> PersonA, **may I have one last tech question please even though we are over time ?** (PRE-REQUEST)

<PersonA> PersonI we are never overtime. Shoot (GO AHEAD)

------(4 lines snipped)-----

<PersonI> Someone tries every now and then to send a wav.sound but it seems to come in as text.Can we send actual sounds on this chat ? (REQUEST)

<PersonA> PersonI what chat program are you using? (RESPONSE)
(chat-farmwide, 839)

In (ex. 6-2a) the current poster reinforces his request for more information on a metadiscursive level right at the beginning of the email by means of "I have some old and some new questions for you.". Projections of upcoming interrogative acts are also found in SY CMC, as exemplified in (ex. 6-2b) and (ex. 6-2c) taken from two different chats. Example (ex. 6-2c) resembles the four-position structure generally associated with pre-requests consisting of Position 1: Pre-request, Position 2: Go Ahead, Position 3: Request and Position 4: Response. It is only in instances as in (ex.

6-2c) that the current participant truly checks that the condition for uttering the request obtains.

Not in all instances are requests for information marked metadiscursively by reference to the utterance type "question". In some cases requests are introduced by stating some good reason to ask a question in the first place. In this context set phrases which express curiosity as in (ex. 6-3a), some sort of evaluation as in (ex. 6-3b) or cognitive processes, as in (ex. 6-3c), are most common.

(ex. 6-3)

- a.** MikeP says, " In this case, the content came first. Then the form. Then new content that reflected the form. In most of my work online, the form follows the idea and the text follows the form."

----- (23 lines snipped) -----

Emily[to MikeP]: **I'm just curious about the form issue.** When you decided to do your presentation, didn't you know it would be in hypertext?

(MOO-Kairos, 739)

- b.** wilma2 says, "It's sad but I think true that if these women were not married to already writers we might not have seen their work at all."

Kim says, "I started from the premise that very few wives - living or dead - would give their husbands the words to a love poem written to his mistress"

Elizabeth [to wilma2]: I though **that was an interesting point:** was Siddal writing before she met Rossetti?

(LinguaMOO-Birthday, 474)

- c.** COKE: Kelly's face was a mess !

COKE: Eddowes had an inverted M

COKE: carved on the face

KADARAB: **I just thought of this...** didn't a few others have thumb wounds as well??

(chat-irc1124, 175-176)

In the first two text samples the metadiscursive utterances contain an aspect of a previously introduced topic by another person. In (ex. 6-3a) <Emily> picks up the "form issue", whereas in (ex. 6-3b) <Elizabeth> marks the link between her and <wilma>'s contribution on a metadiscursive level. Apart from directly addressing <wilma2> via the TO-command it is the demonstrative "that" in "that was an interesting point" which signals a backward-looking reference. In contrast the utterance "I just thought of this..." in (ex. 6-3c) triggers a forward-looking reading

direction, which is reinforced by the use of the demonstrative adverb "this" and the suspension dots (...)¹

6.1.1 Functional distribution of Pre-requests across ASY and SY CMC

Metadiscursive means which prefigure questions can be seen as an effective strategy to change the topic, since questions are initiating speech acts which make an answer conditionally relevant and which in this way commit the co-participant to contribute to a specific topic. As Levinson (1983) underlines, the notion of conditional relevance eases the notion of strict adjacency, meaning, that first and second pair parts do not have to immediately follow each other, but rather that the production of the second pair part becomes and **remains** relevant even if it is not immediately adjacent to the initiating part. In this context Gruber's investigation of topic management in scholarly mailinglists shows that contrary to the view

that formulating explicit questions to introduce a new topic is rather untypical in adult discourse, it turned out that explicit (and implicit) questions were the main device to introduce a new topic in e-mail discussions. This might be due to the specific communicative situation of e-mail discourse where communicators formulate messages (moves) for an audience they do not know, and, additionally, whose attention and interest they cannot take for granted (...).
(Gruber 1998: 30)

Gruber's (1998) conclusion suggests that the CMC specific situation demands a higher investment of explications to establish and maintain what Kallmeyer (1978) defines as joint focus of attention (see chapter 4.5.1).

For SY chats Schönfeldt (2001) observes that the number of occurrences of direct question-answer pairs approximates the usage frequencies in natural conversation. Furthermore, Rittgeroth's case studies (2002) reveal that direct questions are often employed to introduce a new topic, which can be surely ascribed to the same reasons Gruber (1988) states; namely to call other people's attention and to oblige them to react. That in chats questions remain conditionally relevant over a longer period

shows the following chat-excerpt, where <Tinkle> brings up a new topic by addressing an open *floor*-question in line 1, and every single participant is expected to answer.

(ex. 6-4)

1 Tinkle: **Hey Guys,what is the best blind/shade for a skylight?**
 -----(55 lines of text snipped)-----
 2 Tinkle : **Komfort,had no response from you on skylight?**
 3 BLINDMAN: very strong blessing
 4 MegaLogic : Tinkle: Can I help you?
 5 Komfort : Tinkle, please repeat ?
 (chat-latest-win, 137-196)

With the exception of <Komfort>, all participants offer second pairs with regard to <Tinkle>'s question. In line 2 Tinkle reminds <Komfort> that his answer to the question: "Hey Guys, what is the best blind/shade for a skylight" is still due. Note that it is only after 55 intervening text lines that <Tinkle> pins <Komfort> down for an answer. Recalling that *turn*-taking in SY CMC is regulated by a simple first-come first-served (see chapter 3.2.3), speech act patterns which are associated to occur in pairs, such as question-answer patterns, can be seen as an important coherence strategy to overcome the medially caused disruption of adjacency pairs in their chronological order. As mentioned earlier, adjacency understood in terms of conditional relevance is related to the expectation that a second pair part follows at some point, but not necessarily immediately after the first pair part.

If questions are a popular means in CMC to shift the topic, the metadiscursive marking of questions serves to reinforce the attention getting and binding strategy with regard to the topic control. Considering the fact that actions which are conditionally relevant are not usually overtly explicated (see chapter 5.4.1, factor A), the use of Secondary TOMs functioning as a pre-requests can be regarded as a strategic marker type, strategic in the sense it does not only make the follow-up action conditionally relevant, but also the attached topic uptake.

Table 6.1 below reveals that the strategic use of Secondary TOMs functioning as pre-requests is 5 times higher in SY CMC than in ASY CMC.

Table 6.1: Functional distribution of Secondary TOMs functioning as Pre-requests across ASY and SY CMC

	TOC
ASY CMC	0.60
SY CMC	2.48
total CMC corpus	1,53

Metadiscursive pre-requests are used to signal upcoming topic changes (TOC). In view of the fact that different question types play different roles in topic organisation, table 6.2 gives an overview of the type of questions marked by Secondary TOMs. It shows that Yes/No-questions are most often marked, followed by wh-questions and declarative questions.

Table 6.2: Types of questions marked on a metadiscursive level in the CMC corpus

	yes/no q.	wh-q.	declarative q.
ASY CMC	0.17	0.43	0
SY CMC	1.51	0.71	0.27
total CMC corpus	0.83	0.57	0.13

Tiittula (1993) observes that wh-questions (in her terms W-Fragen) prototypically have an eliciting function, which therefore are always an offer for next speakership. Declarative questions (cf. Weber 1993) are functionally similar to wh-questions. Yes/no-questions (in Tiittula's (1993) terms "Entscheidungsfragen") are frequently employed to ask the others' permission to tell a story or to ask a question, as has already been discussed in (ex. 6-2c), repeated here for convenience as (ex. 6-5).

(ex. 6-5)

- <PersonI> PersonA, **may I have one last tech question please even though we are over time ?** (PRE-REQUEST)
 - <PersonA> PersonI we are never overtime. Shoot (GO AHEAD)
 - (4 lines snipped)-----
 - <PersonI> Someone tries every now and then to send a wav.sound but it seems to come in as text.Can we send actual sounds on this chat ? (REQUEST)
 - <PersonA> PersonI what chat program are you using? (RESPONSE)
- (chat-farmwide, 839)

Pre-request sequences of the type exemplified in (ex. 6-5) are with four occurrences rather rare in the CMC corpus. Three of the four metadiscursive pre-requests of the type given in (ex. 6-5) occur in moderated chat-scenarios (see chapter 8.5), where both topic and speaker change is controlled by an agenda.

In all other instances across ASY and SY CMC pre-requests immediately precede the respective questions (see (ex. 6-2b) and (ex. 6-2c). In conversation-analytic terms we may say, that the 4-positional sequence typical of pre-sequences is reduced to 2-positional adjacency pairs, combining positions 1 and 3 in one *turn*, and positions 2 and 4 in one *turn*.

6.2 Topic shifts realised by more complex action patterns

The marking of more complex action patterns is another means to signal upcoming topic transitions. Metadiscourse used for this purpose contains reference either to text type and/or discourse activity/situation.

Complex actions are actions which are composed of several smaller components produced by one or more participants. STORY TELLING, ARGUING or CLOSING OF A CONVERSATION are complex actions which are usually marked beforehand, especially in those cases where they constitute independent activities, and therefore are not or least expected to be an integral part within another larger action unit (see chapter 4.5.1, factor C). This is why such places are marked as illustrated in (ex. 6-6):

(ex. 6-6)

Kadarab: **I'm formulating something**... Colin mentioned the inverted V's on Eddowes -- would look like ^.
Kadarab: Chapman's coins were laid out in a triangle -- ^.
Kadarab: JtR had something with the ^ shape, didn't he??
Vanda: Go on. See where it leads you, Arab.
(chat-irc1124, 208-209)

<Kadarab> begins his contribution with the introductory sentence "I'm formulating something", to signal what the recipients have to expect with regard to the overall contribution length, even though split into several individual messages (or *turns*). Furthermore, the unspecified "something" raises the expectation that a new topic or a new thematic aspect will follow. In (ex. 6-7) below, the metadiscourse " I tell you a story of when I first started out,..." serves to elaborate on a previously established topic, here on marketing.

(ex. 6-7)

WPLC SharZ : who are starting home-bases businesses, and they HATE
 WPLC SharZ : to market. Do you feel as I do, that it may be the most
 WPLC SharZ : important part of starting a business? /ga
 DabrieoCo : Marketing is the most important part of business! **I tell a story of when I
 first started out, about**
 WPLC LanJ : ?
 DabrieoCo : **how my new car was on the brink of repossession because I didn't
 know how to market.**
 (chat-supposed to be fun, 278)

Similar to natural conversation, markers of complex actions may also be employed to either close a topic or to move out of closings (cf. Schegloff and Sacks (1973)) by bringing a new topic to the *floor*. The latter one is what <Cynthia> is doing in (ex. 6-8) when she states "We seem to be winding down..." proceeding in line 5 with a new subject.

(ex. 6-8)

1 Cynthia says, "**We seem to be winding down...**"
 2 Alan stands up from West Table. . .
 3 dobs speaks up, "some of us are coming up for tenure too soon to wait for fora like kairos to
 4 work their way into acceptability."
 5 Cynthia says, " Let me say that after this session, the tape may be mailed to
 6 yourself..."
 (LinguaMOO-C-FEST1, 542)

6.2.1 Functional usage frequencies of Secondary TOMs prefiguring more complex action patterns

The metadiscursive elements in text samples (ex. 6-6) to (ex. 6-8) above operate on three different discourse planes simultaneously: By prefiguring a narrative action in

the form of telling a story or elaborating on a new (aspect of a) topic, a chain of actional implications is generated:

Es wird ein neues Thema eingeführt, ein neuer Handlungskomplex konstituiert, und in bezug auf den Sprecherwechsel handelt es sich um die Sicherung des Rederechts und somit um die Konstituierung eines längeren Turns.
(Tiittula 1993: 248-249)

In a conversation, narrative actions, such as telling a story, have to be announced, permission requested for the imposition on the other participants to cede their right to make contributions. In SY CMC a double effort has to be invested in the face of the much larger threat of interruption by the other participants and the need to maintain interactive co-presence in terms of screen visibility (see chapter 3.2.3.2). In this respect, metadiscursive pre-announcements in SY CMC can be regarded as an attempt to adjust to the medially caused dialogic restrictions. Table 6.3 shows that markers of complex actions are quite evenly distributed across SY and ASY CMC, and that in ASY CMC these are predominantly used to perform upcoming topic changes (TOC), while in SY CMC they are equally used to mark topic changes and topic closures (TOB)

Table 6.3: Functional usage frequencies of pre-announced complex actions

	total	TOC _{re}	TOC	TOB
ASY CMC	3,19	0,26	2,59	0,34
SY CMC	2,75	0	1,77	0,97
total	2,97	0,13	2,18	0,66

Secondary TOMs prefiguring complex actions in ASY CMC are most commonly placed at the beginning of a new paragraph which is preceded either by a quoted passage as in (ex. 6-9) or by the current speaker's own wording as in (ex. 6-10).

(ex. 6-9)

What is truly remarkable, is that a number of very daring actions had been taken, one after another, accomplishing the desired results rather quickly and with very few steps taken back (as in the case of making Turkish the language of prayers)...

- > And changing the writing system virtually overnight
- > affected something like 10% of the population.

I like mentioning this also, when somebody makes an argument claiming that the changing of the alphabet created a nation of illiterates overnight... It may also help to add that a good percentage of those literates were familiar with Western languages using the latin alphabet.
(N.sci, 6.69)

Here, the metadiscursive pre-announcement "I like mentioning this also." serves to mark a new thematic section which appears to be triggered by the immediately prior quoted text. In chapter 3.2.2 we have seen that the inherent REPLY and QUOTE functions in ASY CMC encourage a conversational style of messaging, in that the length and the order of (quoted) text passages can be freely determined. When participants wish to answer to various aspects of one or more prior messages as it is given in (ex. 6-10), they frequently do so by breaking up quotes, in order to place their response adjacent to the utterance they wish to refer to.

More frequently Secondary TOMs realised via complex actions in ASY CMC mark topic shifts as in (ex. 6-10) below. The meta-statement "Another source of difficulty would be the size of the vocabulary." signals that in principle the participant wishes to elaborate on the current topic by adding a new aspect to it. Note, that this meta-statement appears at the beginning of a quoted text, which has been edited by the current speaker. It looks as if the current participant has orientated himself at this metadiscourse as a topic shift marker when he broke up the quoted text.

(ex. 6-10)

By the way, French gender isn't as unpredictable as it seems. This was discussed here a few months ago. Based on sound alone you can guess the gender about 75% of the time -- more, if you can peek at the spelling.

>**Another source of difficulty would be the size of the vocabulary.** English has one of the largest, if not the largest, number of words. While irregularity is usually little more than a nuisance, a larger vocabulary increases the ability to express shades of meaning.

The huge numbers of words in English are due to its long history, its many specialized fields, and its eager lexicographers. The actual number of words known by any English speaker is probably no more than that used for other European languages.
(Nsci, 21.771)

Typical of metadiscursively marked topic transitions is the use of bare abstract nouns, such as "Another source of difficulty" in (ex. 6-10). More strongly than extended partitive abstract nouns in copular clefts, which qualify as Primary Topic Shift Formulations (see (ex. 5-19)), bare abstract nouns as in (ex. 6-10) above indicate a greater shift in topic. In "referring to a higher level of discourse, they serve to indicate progress of discourse on this level, which amounts to a shift from propositional to attitudinal discourse segmentation." (Doherty 2001: 630)

6.3 Secondary TOMs operating at the dialogic dimension: Pre-Starters, Post-Completers and Switchers

Although there is no one-to-one correlation between topic change and speaker change (see chapter 4.1), these two discourse planes interact. More specifically Condon et al. (in press) note that "turn-taking, turn-withholding, and overlap are resources for expression, for topic management, and even conforming to Gricean maxims."

Metadiscourse operating on the dialogic level concerns actions related to turn constructions and turn boundaries. Beside linguistic constructional units, nonverbal and prosodic means, turn boundaries may be additionally marked on a metadiscursive level.

Metadiscursive elements that mark the beginning of a turn function as pre-starters or turn-entries, the ones which mark the end of a turn as post-completers or turn exits (cf. Sacks et al. (1974)). Turn entries characteristically project generic sequences, which in contrast to type specific sequences make some sort of, but not a specific type of reaction conditionally relevant. Markers of generic sequences are most commonly attention-getting devices, realised by directives as illustrated in (ex. 6-11) or by interest-arousing questions such as "you know what?" as in (ex. 6-12).

(ex 6-11)

you all ready got the thank you cards and the HOB / Spice girlcd's? wow! that was fast.

listen be cool about the move. (...) I think I could honestly predict what's coming next "Well you never know what the others say in another time & another place"
(e.martins, 11.6)

(ex 6-12)

Cynthia says, "I think one of the obstacles of distance learning is the perception that the 'quantity' of work is not sufficient, or up to the same standards of traditional learning. Sort of the way telecommuting is only gradually gaining acceptance in the workplace"
mday says, "So **you know what?** The logical conclusion obviates any independence or cost saving in DL, since you have to hire a reliable proctor to be there..."
(MOO-distance, 299)

Example (ex. 6-11) is taken from a private email conversation between two friends. The author of the posting in (ex. 6-11) jumps from one subject to another, apparently orientating himself at one (or more) prior posting(s) of his friend. Since the person who gave us the data cut out most of her own message text, we cannot rely on quotes or prior messages. But the cognitive-referential status of "the move" in "listen be cool about the move.", where the definite article signals a mutually known and activated referent (see Lambrecht 1994), gives every reason to assume that the responding participant refers to something his friend mentioned in a prior message. In addition to that, the directive implication of "listen" evokes the feeling of an immediacy between the two spatio-temporally displaced participants. In other words, the current emailer constructs his contribution as if his co-interlocutor stood in front of him or at least as if he were temporally co-present.

In (ex. 6-12) <mday>'s utterance "you know what?" functions as attention getting device. Similar to pre-requests discussed earlier, and in line with the accomplishment of focussing actions described with reference to Kallmeyer (1978) in chapter 4.5.1, this type of attention getting device elicits some sort of feedback by the co-participants. Questions of the type "You know what? are typically followed by acknowledging statements, such as "No. what?" which does not only confirm the co-participant's attentiveness, but it also permits the offerer to break the news. Similar to pre-requests, we can gather from (ex. 6-12) that the 3 position sequence associated

with attention getting devices are reduced to 2-position sequences, leaving out additional feedback messages out.

Turn exit markers or post-completers overtly signal the closing of a turn's talk in terms of topic and speakership. The next text sample is taken from a moderated chat-scenario of the type introduced in chapter 2.4.2, where the participants are called up one by one by the moderator. While the selected participant has got the *floor*, the others keep quiet (i.e., they do not send messages) and wait for the speaker to finish.

(ex. 6-13)

1 GryEyes911: <----does the Santa BOL each Christmas eve at midnight...
 2 GryEyes911: got it taped, too!) LOL
 3 IMTEN7: LOL...our center is to serious to do fun things like that
 4 IMTEN7: **anyway...thanks for letting me have my say...who's next**
 5 -----(29 lines snipped)-----
 6 GryEyes911: **So, if here are no more questions for IMTEN7, let me drag**
 7 **BJTOGon up to the podium!**
 8 GryEyes911: Come on UP, BJTOG!
 9 GryEyes911: THis is BJTOG's first visit with us....
 10 GryEyes911: and therefore might have some shyness....
 11 Disp8416: i know that feeling.....
 12 IMTEN7: welcome BJ
 13 GryEyes911: but just start telling us what is done at your Comm Center
 14 For theHolidays. :)
 15 BJTOG: Christmas cheer? Yes we do have cheer in our com center.
 (chat-Xmas, 447-476)

The participant <IMTEN7> explicitly signals that he has no more to contribute to the overall topic "Christmas Cheer in the Comm Centers" by thanking the others for their attention. With "who is next" he overtly signals that he wishes to leave the *floor* and to give it to the one who will be selected as next speaker by the moderator. Before <IMTEN7> can actually leave the podium and the next speaker is selected, he has to endure further questions and comments. It is only after 29 lines that the moderator <GryEyes911> calls up the next speaker. Strictly speaking, <GryEyes911>'s utterance in line 6 is neither a pre-starter nor a post-completer. Rather it functions as a switcher primarily, at which point a putative shift in speaker and in topic may follow.

While the first part "if there are no more questions for IMTEN7" makes sure that he has not overlooked anyone who may wish to add to <IMTEN7>'s topic, the second

part "let me drag BJTG on up to the podium!" determines the next speaker and also the next topic. In a way, we can say that this switching strategy displays "the principle of mutual consent", which as we have seen in chapter 4.3 is "a procedure in which participants seek agreement about the closure of the previous topic and the introduction of the new one" (Bublitz 1988: 67). In (ex. 4-13) this principle is metadiscursively instantiated by a moderator via *turn* assignments.

6.3.1 Functional distribution of Secondary TOMs operating on the dialogic dimension across ASY and SY CMC

Metadiscursive means to signal turn-organisational issues are nearly exclusively found in SY CMC, where they have the secondary function to mark topic shifts (TOC) and topic closings (TOB). As table 6.4 reveals, instances of (TOC) and (TOB) in SY CMC are of equal frequencies.

Table 6.4: Functional distribution of markers operating on the dialogic dimension across ASY and SY CMC

	total	TOC	TOB
ASY CMC	0,26	0,26	0
SY CMC	1,95	0,97	0,97
total	1.09	0.61	0,48

These results confirm the fact explicated in chapter 2.1.2 that SY CMC contexts generate a modified type of *floor* based on a simple first-come-first served principle: whoever hits the ENTER key first, to be more precise, whosever message reaches the host server first will have the *floor*. Furthermore it confirms Hancock's (2001) thesis

that a communication setting that disrupts the regulation of turn-taking will both undermine higher level processes... and increase the frequency of meta-communicative signals required to coordinate the speaker's action with the listener's attention.
(Hancock 2001: 91)

Not only the first-come-first-served principle, but also the splitting of messages into smaller bits makes it impossible to rely on traditional turn boundary signals.

As for marked topic closures, which in Kallmeyer's (1978) terminology constitute defocussing procedures, these are rare in spoken conversation and to a lesser extent in written communication. In this context Tiittula (1993) notes that metadiscursive elements are hardly ever used for overt manifestations of defocussing procedures. In oral conversation topic closing is mainly interactively achieved via summarising or evaluative feedback signals which characteristically follow the floor offering principle: if no further elaboration on the given topic follows at this place, a given topic is regarded as finished. The fact that metadiscursive markers of topic closure (TOB) occur in the CMC contexts shows that the constitution of reciprocity is restricted with regard to the topical focus of attention. In other words, a change in focus, i.e. a topic transition, cannot be mutually anticipated at a given point in the conversation. In SY CMC this state of affairs is especially given in moderated chat scenarios where a speaker on the *floor* can speak for as long as she wishes without being interrupted by other participants. Since the co-participants in SY CMC context cannot online-monitor the current-*floor* holder's talk, they cannot anticipate when the current speaker will be finished. We will come back to this issue when discussing chat-scenarios in more detail in chapter 8.5.

Metadiscursively-spelled out topic closures are very rare in ASY CMC, and they seem to play a more significant role in SY CMC. Signalling the end of a *turn*, which may correlate with the closing of a topic, appears to be of equal importance as the cueing of turn entries and the introduction of topics. The importance of closing devices may be related to two things: First, in SY CMC contexts a participant's contribution (*turn*) may be distributed over several technical messages, which are often enough interrupted by intervening messages by other people. Consequently, traditional turn boundary signals stated by Hoffmann (1995) cannot be relied on in the same way:

Ein Turn ist nach konversationsanalytischer Ansicht nicht nur ein Beitrag eines/einer Teilnehmers/Teilnehmerin innerhalb eines Gesprächs, der an

seinem Beginn und seinem Ende durch die Gesprächsbeiträge der anderen an dem Gespräch Beteiligten begrenzt wird. **Er stellt vielmehr auch einen bestimmten Zeitraum dar, in dem eine Sprecherin das Recht und die Pflicht zu sprechen hat.**

(Hoffmann 1995:16, bold face, M.Z.)

The spreading of contributions into smaller message components and their random placement in between other people's messages makes it impossible to orientate oneself at other people's contributions to define the beginning and the end of a *turn*. Also, due to the separation of context of production and context of use caused by the split screen architecture (see figure 3.4), one cannot say for how long a participant wishes to hold the *floor*, especially if participants divide their *turn* into smaller parts. Even in (ex. 6-13) taken from a moderated chat, where participant <IMTEN7> has been given the *floor* and which he has to himself for as long as he wishes, he needs to signal when he wants to leave the *floor* and to close the topic. That is, the exact point in time where speaker and/or topic transitions will take place cannot be foreseen. This type of difficulty is not usually present in conversation, since transitions are gradually and interactively achieved. With regard to topic transitions, these are usually accompanied by feedback signals (ranging from interjections to evaluative statement) and paralinguistic signals (e.g. laughter). In SY CMC interlocutors cannot rely on such signals in the same way. If hearer's signals are expressed they do not appear simultaneously with the speaker's utterance and consequently they cannot be monitored while typing.

6.4 Secondary TOMs referring to prior speech acts

Secondary TOMs referring to prior speech acts exclusively mark the renewal of prior topics. Secondary TOMs of this type serve to tie in with what has been said before on a specific topic. These usually contain some neutral speech act verb, e.g. "to say" or "to mention" as in "As I have said/mentioned..." followed by a paraphrase of the topical material already introduced. Such utterances are highly reminiscent of the way people usually describe discourse topics. As we have seen in chapter 4.5, topics

are usually assigned to speech act patterns and the topic, as in "We are/were talking about...". In some instances participants make additional reference to the underlying technical transmittance, as can be gathered from example (ex. 6-14), where the participant mentions a prior posting.

(ex. 6-14)

> Is it possible that your \windows\send to\ directory has been deleted?
> If not, then check and see if the shrotcuts are sitting in there. If not, then simply create new
>shortcuts to>whatever executables or folders you'd like and place them in the "send to"
directory.

Thanks for replying Paul, but as I said in my first post MAPI/shell shortcuts from the SendTo directory work just fine, it is shortcuts to .exe 's that don't function As I said, re-creating them has no effect - clicking Send To Prog.X doesn't start Prog.X
I'm still looking for a solution, so further suggestions would be much appreciated!
(N-mod-comp, 14.55-57)

Tiittula (1993: 97f.) regards metadiscourse of the type presented in (ex. 6-14) as introductory clauses to reported speech, which nevertheless can be attributed a metadiscursive status since they serve to (re-)introduce a topic. As can be gathered from the following examples people do not really replicate prior speech word-by-word, but rather give a paraphrased version of it. Although they might evoke the feeling that they were reciting wordings by prior speakers, they actually name speech acts connected to topics. This twofold function is most evident in such instances where the current speaker refers to a topical action by another person. Text sample (ex. 6-15) is a REPLY posting from a newsgroup. As explicated in chapter 3.2.2 the responding participant may edit quoted text material and cut it down to those parts that she wishes to refer to. This is what the participant in (ex. 6-15) has been doing. The passage starting with "True" remarks on the prior quote.

(ex. 6-15)

<<But please be clear on one thing. There is no true racial basis to this "ethnic" struggle. It's purely a long-kindled hatred built on a solid base of religious incompatibility and intolerance.>>

True. I'm never sure what "ethnic" means. I assume it's US-speak for "racial" and just as meaningless. One can't point to linguistic differences because the languages that people are now calling Serbian and Croatian are somewhat closer than British and US English. It used to be known by Yugoslavs simply as "Yugoslavian".

As you pointed out, it is fundamentally a religious war.

Peter

(N-S8-politics, 108.22)

Interestingly, the responding participant finishes off with refocussing on what his co-participant has thematised in the quote. In this respect, the statement "As you pointed out, it is fundamentally a religious war." functions as a thematic bracket or focussing bracket (Tiittula cf. 1993), by which means the current participant synchronises topics just before closing the posting. Such bracketing devices also occur in SY CMC, as in (ex. 6-16) taken from a MOO conference.

(ex. 6-16)

1 Donald says, ""the issue is that VE design is so multidisciplinary and maybe this is one
2 reason that it is and "
3 Donald says, ""will be difficult to formulate certain theories for the design of such environments."
4 Albert says, "but I think that most of the hard work in VR system design is done - HMDs are not
5 brilliant but the techniques for connecting them to systems and using are fine - what VR
6 needs now is exactly **as you said** - good design tools and methods "
7 (DMUMOO-part3, 127)

Here <Albert> finishes his contribution in line 7 by refocussing on <Donald>'s immediately prior remarks on designing issues. This bracketing function of Secondary TOMs referring to prior speech acts is similar to the ones of demonstrative clefts (that-clefts) which we will turn to in chapter 6.5.1.

While in the examples (ex. 6-14) to (ex. 6-16) topic refocussing is performed self-referentially ("I"), or by directly addressing another person with "you" in (ex. 6-17a) and (ex. 6-17b) below prior introduced topics are renewed by reference to a third person, who is also engaged in the conversation.

(ex. 6-17)

- a.** BillG-lib says, " a lot of MOO work is self-directed.. that's where the differences occur"
------(37 lines snipped)-----
KathyL-lib speaks up, "**When Bill G said a lot of work is self directed.** does that mean done alone, without other people joining
(MOO-Sampleliblog, 542)

- b.** >>In article <357C15C5.3B7@uclink2.berkeley.edu>,
>> patchew@uclink2.berkeley*edu wrote:
>>
>>Here there are some differences between mainland's Putonghua and Taiwan's Guoyu. In
>>the former, W is pronounced V as a norm except in Wo and Wu.
>>
>> RL
As Patrick pointed out, /v/ is limited to some people in and near Beijing.
(N.sci, 15.483-484)

In (ex. 6-17a) <Kathy-lib> takes up the topic of "self-directed work" introduced by <Bill>. This evokes a feeling of groupness, in that a prior topic introduced by a single person is renewed and presented for group discussion. The same can be gathered from example (ex. 6-17b) taken from a newsgroup, where the current speaker picks up what a third person named Patrick has brought up before. The strategies employed in (ex. 6-17a) and (ex. 6-17b) resemble the ones which Herring (2001) refers to as "linking". These can be described as "a practice of referring explicitly to the content of the previous message in one's response ..., as for example when a message begins, "I would like to respond to Diana's comment about land mines"." (Herring 2001: 619)

Another means to generate the feeling of groupness is achieved by referring to prior speech events rather than prior speech acts within the same speech event, that is, within the same chat or MOO, or within the same thread in a newsgroup or mailinglist. Text samples (ex. 18a-b) are taken from the email based LAN-on-demand project, implemented for discussing technical problem among locally distributed employees (see chapter 2.3).

(ex. 6-18)

a. Further to our telecon, please can you speak to Romain at C&W and establish where and what the problem is and who can resolve it for us.
(e.Lan.Steve.part1, 41.13)

b. Colleagues,
Further to yesterday's mail, unfortunately we cannot start propagating the change to a remaining customers domain names until C&W complete outstanding file set up and configuration.
(e.Lan.Steve.part2, 103.15))

In both (ex. 6-18a) and (ex. 6-18b) the respective current speaker addresses the team by referring to a prior speech event, in the former one to a teleconference meeting, in the latter one to an email correspondence of the previous day.

6.4.1 Distributional differences of Secondary TOMs referring to prior speech acts across ASY and SY CMC

Table 6.5 shows that Secondary TOMs referring to speech acts are quite evenly distributed in ASY and SY CMC to mark topic renewals.

Table 6.5: Distribution of metadiscourse referring to speech acts

		type I: reorientation	type II: refocussing		
	total	"I"	"you"	"third person"	total type II
ASY CMC	1.21	0.69	0.34	0.18	0.52
SY CMC	1.15	0.35	0.45	0.35	0.80

Differences in distributions across ASY and SY CMC modes are more subtle when one compares the frequency counts of self-referential or reorientating types to the ones referring to second person's or third person's topical actions. In SY CMC

metadiscursive refocussing strategies with reference to a second or third person (type II) clearly outnumber self-referential types (type I). The difference among type I and type II is slightly larger in SY CMC where type II instances occur twice as much as type I instances. However, in both ASY and SY CMC people tend to refocus more often on other people's talk and topics than on their own ones.

6.5 Cleft sentences as syntactic TOMs

Cleft sentences in their different varieties have mainly been subject within functional approaches to word order, especially with regard to their textually cohesive functions (cf. Schmid 1999). Below I will concentrate on two types of cleft-constructions: on demonstrative clefts (that-clefts) and fronted wh-clefts. These will be discussed with regard to their macro-discourse functions, rather than with regard to their micro-functions.

6.5.1 Demonstrative cleft sentences

The macro-functions of that-clefts and fronted wh-clefts are to a large extent governed by the respective inherent deictic elements. The demonstrative pronoun "that" in demonstrative clefts has a backward-pointing role, and creates a strong link with the preceding discourse. In its backward-pointing role demonstrative clefts often function as focussing brackets illustrated in (ex. 6-19a) and (ex. 6-19b), or as topic closing device exemplified in (ex.6-20a) and (ex. 6-20b).

(ex. 6-19)

- a.** > Jett, I found something a little strange about what you said. "those
> sneaky runs where you can't go in shooting everyone..."

Jett didn't say that, I did, in reply to one of Jett's messages.

- > **IMHO** every single shadowrun is just that. (assassinations being the obvious
> exception) I mean, the best shadowrun is one no one knows has been done,
> no matter what the objective. If no one knows you're there, they're not
> going to try to kill you! **That's what I think!!**

(1978) terminology it can be said that the demonstrative cleft serves to synchronise a joint topical focus of attention.

(ex. 6-20)

- a. D9112519: we have over 500 paid fire fighters and a couple thousand volunteers
------(5 lines snipped)-----
D9112519: **t hat's about all I have to say**
(chat-Humour, 225)

- b. **Joel's** conference to Juneau **was filmed** at the Edgewater. **That's all I know about...**

GC

(N.alt.tv, 4.21)

In the excerpts (ex. 6-20a) and (ex. 6-20b) taken from a chat and a newsgroup respectively the demonstrative clefts function as topic closing devices and at the same time as *floor* exit devices. This observation is in line with Weinert's (1996) conclusion with regard to the discourse function of demonstrative clefts, which he refers to as "THAT-clefts":

The THAT cleft calls for a halt to an exchange which seems to be getting nowhere and by focusing on resolving the referent of THAT helps to sort things out or to establish a new starting point for further negotiation. In other words THAT RWH clefts (RWH stands for Reversed WH-cleft, M.Z.) signal a need to 'stop and reconsider'.
(Weinert 1996: 192)

6.5.2 Fronted WH-cleft

Contrary to demonstrative clefts fronted WH-clefts have a forward-pointing role in that "the focused part of the wh-cleft is delayed and framed by the initial wh-clause for specific interactional reasons" (Kim 1995: 252). In (ex. 6-21) below the fronted WH-cleft marks a topic change, by stating the motivation for the contribution in the initial WH-clause.

(ex. 6-21)

Hut KS 911: I love getting the calls on 911 from people that think they are getting directory assistance
 -----(16 lines snipped)-----
 MMu911: What I find funny sometimes is 911 hangups... when you call them back
 SILLE B: I was the one that was looking for New Years BOLO's. I got a several responses back.
 MMu911: they say...well you didn't answer so I hung up... what they don't realize is
 (chat-Humour, 507)

In (ex. 6-22a) and (ex. 6-22b) the fronted WH-clefts can be assigned an additional interactional motivation: "the speaker's attempt to make a locally disjunctive interactional move meta-discoursally coherent and oblique by exploiting the functional property of wh-clefts that creates discorsal contrastiveness." (Kim 1996: 265) In (ex. 6-22a) the fronted wh-cleft is used to wrap up previous talk by the same person and at the same time to close the topic and the posting.

(ex. 6-22)

- a. Although I'm not posting much, I still read AS3 almost daily. While my quit has been pretty easy, and I'm very comfortable with it, I don't want to let my guard down. Reading herehelps keep that evil "just one" thought out of my head.

What I'm trying to say in my wordy way, is that it does get better. I've had a easy quit compared to many here, but even at that, it does get better.

Hang tough,
 Lorraine
 (N.alt.smoking, 658-659)

- b. Ringer [to jay]: what did you like .. what kind of differences did you see?
 Jay_N says, "anyway after arranging to have VSPO status for the students"
 BillG-lib says, "VSPO?"
 Ringer says, "a vspo is a virtual student player object"
 Jay_N says, "we meet in the moo. What I liked was it really involved the

student with the technology - with setting themselves into a classroom in cyberspace"
(Moo-Sampleliblog, 90)

Similar to the functions of demonstrative clefts exemplified in (ex. 6-19a) and (ex. 6-19b), in (ex. 6-22b) "what I liked was..." has a topic reasserting function by creating a topical alignment with the topic elicited by <Ringer> in line 1 with the question: "What did you like...".

6.5.3 Functional distribution of demonstrative clefts and fronted WH-clefts across ASY and SY CMC

Table 6.6 below shows that demonstrative clefts occur more often in SY CMC than in ASY CMC, while WH-clefts are more frequent in ASY CMC.

Table 6.6: Functional distribution of demonstrative clefts and fronted WH-clefts across ASY and SY CMC

CMC modes	clefts	TOC _{re}	TOC	TOB	TOB + TOC	total
ASY CMC	demonstrative cleft	0	0	0,51	1,38	1,90
SY CMC	demonstrative cleft	0	0	2,04	1,12	3,19
ASY CMC	fronted WH-cleft	0,26	0,76	0,43	0	1,47
SY CMC	fronted WH-cleft	0,18	0,35	0,35	0	0,89

In accordance with the backward-pointing role explicated above, demonstrative clefts primarily function as topic closing devices (TOB) and 2 act topic changes (TOB + TOC). As already pointed out in chapter 6.3.1 with regard to Secondary TOMs operating on the dialogic dimension, the marking of topic closings in SY CMC is related to the restricted reciprocity and, as we will elaborate on in chapter 8.5, occurs most often in moderated chat-scenarios. The functional usage of demonstrative clefts as 2 act topic change devices underlines the fact that SY CMC trigger a stronger co-presence feel than ASY CMC contexts. Fronted WH-clefts which generate a forward-reading direction tend to be mainly used to mark topic shifts.

6.6 Topic Initial Elicitors

Contrary to Topic Elicitors discussed in chapter 5.3 as a subclass of Primary TOMs, Topic Initial Elicitors do not themselves provide the next speaker with a topic that can be talked on, but rather provide the opportunity for the next speaker to introduce a new topic. Characteristically, this is done by inviting the speaker to introduce a topic by means of asking a question or making a comment, which accords with Bublitz's (1988) notion of complex topic actions (see chapter 4.5). In other words, the initiation of a topic takes place in the answer to an inquiry to newsworthy matters. Consider for instance (ex. 6-23), which is taken from a moderated chat, where one participant after the other is asked to make a contribution to the topic "Christmas Cheer in the Comm Centers". In line 6 <Hut KS 911> does not know what else to say and therefore opens the topical *floor* with the question "Any questions to jar my memory?"

(ex. 6-23)

1 Hut KS 911: A few years ago, we - and our local EMS agency - adopted a family.
 2 We helped with clothing items.
 3 Hut KS 911: The kids were real appreciative of it. We used EMS instead of
 4 officers because of their
 5 Hut KS 911: different view on families in the area.
 6 Hut KS 911: I can't think of anything else right now. **Any questions to jar**
 7 **my memory?**
 8 GryEyes911: <----proposed that but there are some very wealthy...
 9 folks in the "adopt a family for
 10 GryEyes911: Christmas" around here, and most dispatchers felt "their family"
 11 might be "gypped"
 12 GryEyes911: <shrugging>
 13 Hut KS 911: We didn't have that problem. The family really appreciated the
 14 gifts.
 15 GryEyes911: I'm glad you said that, Hut, next year it's ON!!!
 16 GryEyes911: <----will print and take this log in to work!
 17 Hut KS 911: Cheers.
 18 GryEyes911: **Any other questions or comments for Hut before I drag another**
 19 **speaker up her?**
 (chat-Xmas, 150-169)

Instead of abruptly closing his topic and his turn to speak, <Hut KS 911> politely invites the others to stick with him by posing a topic initial eliciting question. In doing so, <Hut KS 911> offers the opportunity to delay a closing - or in Button's

(1987) words - to make "a movement out of a closing" which would be inevitable since he has nothing else to say. More specifically,

in making a provision for a topic initial to be produced in next turn, then, if that is done, neither the topic initial eliciting turn nor the topic initial turn occasion the relevancy of closings, and here a drastic movement out of closings may be organised. However, (...) should a decline to present a topic initial occur, closings are again relevant and a minimal movement takes place (...) 'Unless' a topic initial is produced, closings remain relevant. (Button 1987: 114-115)

The moderator's statement in line 18 could also be formulated as "Unless there are further questions for Hut, Hut's pre-closing remains relevant, and if not, I drag another speaker here." Before assigning the *floor* to someone else <GryEyes911> thus checks on whether Hut's closing remains relevant.

6.6.1 Distribution of Topic Initial Elicitors across ASY and SY CMC

Metadiscursive Topic Initial Elicitors occur only in SY CMC. They amount to a normed frequency value of 2.13 and occur exclusively in chats designed as chat scenario type 2 (see chapter 2.4.2). Their absence in ASY CMC is related to the fact that Topic Initial Elicitors require immediate reactions, which presupposes an interactive immediacy between the participants. The displaced co-presence conditions in ASY outlined in chapter 3.2.3.1 do not generate that type of immediacy, which makes the employment of Topic Initial Elicitors in ASY CMC redundant.

7. Tertiary Topic Shift Marker (TOM)

The category of Tertiary TOM concerns linguistic items in the role of Discourse Marker (DM). These indicate the topical relationship between an utterance and prior discourse on a purely functional basis. Contrary to the other two marker types discussed in chapters 5 and 6, Tertiary TOMs do not contain any overtly spelled out reference to topical action patterns or to carrier actions in which topical actions are embedded. Tiittula (1993: 123ff) and Lenk (1997: 5) argue that they qualify as metadiscourse nonetheless, since they contain reference to textual relationships. Thus, it is difficult to justify why expressions, such as "Enough anecdote. Coming back to ..." should count as metadiscursive TOMs, and lexical items such as "anyway" should be excluded. Both are functional with marking the end of a digression and the return to a prior topic; the latter one being merely a less explicit way of saying: "Without regard to the topicality of the last utterance, returning to the topic talked about before that, I have this to say" (Jefferson 1992: 254). Related to the degree of explicitness is the issue of mono-functionality and poly-functionality:

There are lexical expressions in English which also have clear structuring function but which do not qualify as discourse markers, among them structuring phrases such as "to return to my point", to repeat/in other words, summing up...They are not discourse markers in the sense of this study because they are always used to express this structuring function, they do not have any other function. (Lenk 1998b: 50)

While Primary TOMs are mono-functional, in that they exclusively prefigure topical actions at the metadiscursive level, Secondary TOMs generally have at least two metadiscursive functions, in that these mark topical action patterns and elementary action patterns. Last but not least DMs may not only have more than one metadiscursive function, but also a non-metadiscursive function. Compare for instance the two fictitious utterances in (7-1a) and (7-1b):

(ex. 7-1)

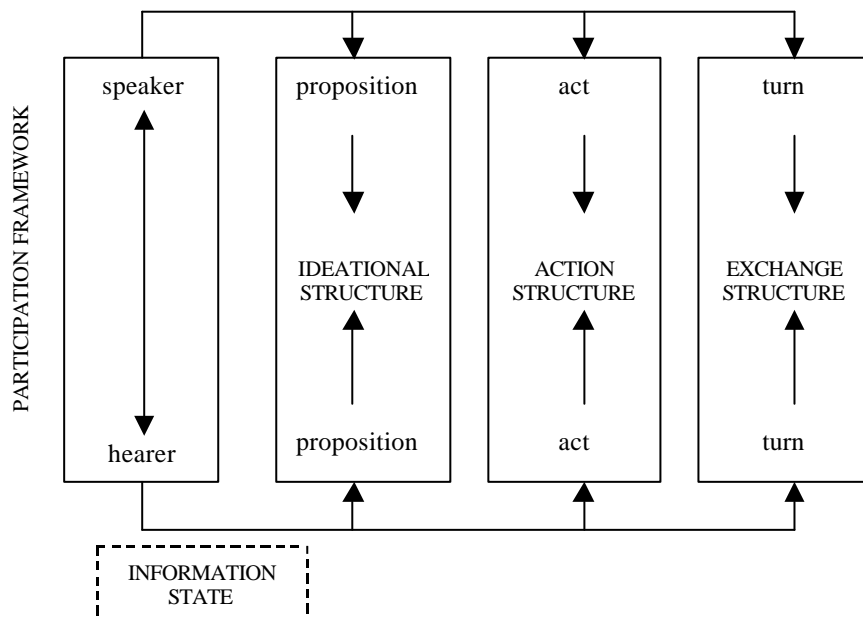
- a. Anyway, he is not coming.
- b. He is not coming anyway.

In (ex. 7-1a) "anyway" functions as DM at the metadiscursive level to indicate the end of a digression, while in (ex. 7-1b) it adds to the propositional meaning. Note, that the functions of lexical items at the metadiscursive level and at the propositional level do not overlap.¹

7.1 Local DM and global DM

DM may have a local or a global scope in which they function. For local DM, Schiffrin's work (1987) can be regarded as THE milestone study which has established the notion of DM in linguistic research. She defines DM as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin 1987: 31) which may be used at one or more of the discourse planes illustrated in figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1: A discourse model (based on Schiffrin 1987)

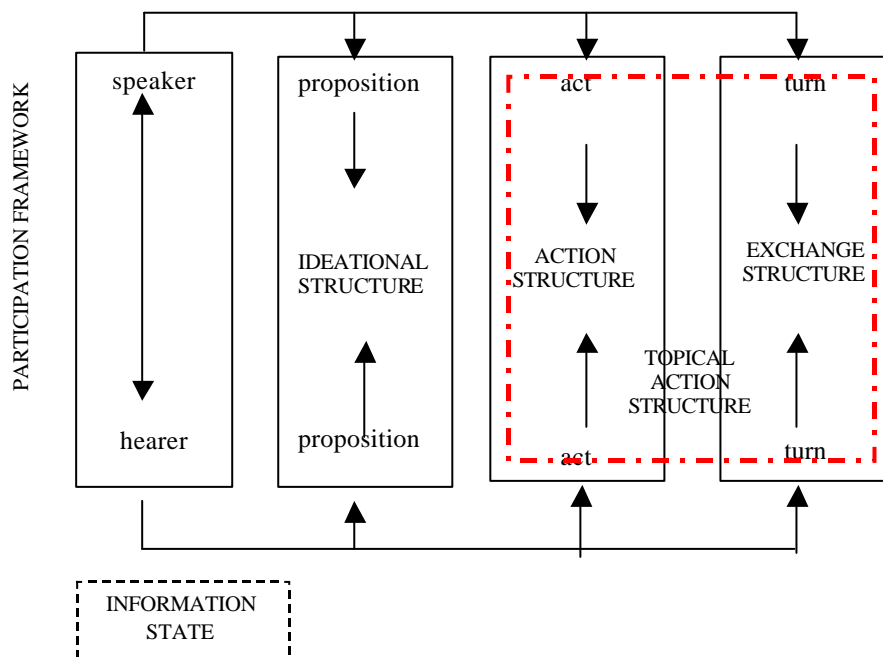


As a whole, figure 7.1 illustrates a model of local coherence, "i.e. coherence that is constructed through relations between adjacent units in discourse, but it can be expanded to take into account more global dimensions of discourse" (Schiffrin 1987: 24). The extensibility of the model to more global dimensions justifies the inclusion of global DM which

establish connections between interrupted, disrupted, related, or even unrelated topics, between various kinds of digressions and their respective contexts, between inserted comments or additionally added information and their contextual environment, and between already mentioned items and items that the speaker still wants to insert and thus signals to the hearer as 'expected to occur'. (Lenk 1997: 9)

To account for the fact that topic handling, though it is realised by means of elementary action patterns, constitutes an analytically independent level of organisation (see chapter 4.5), I suggest that another discourse plane TOPICAL ACTION STRUCTURE should be added as a further layer (indicated by the dash-dotted lines) to the discourse plane ACTION STRUCTURE and EXCHANGE STRUCTURE.

Figure 7.2: Schiffrin's model (1987) extended to **global** coherence level



Since different scholars pursue different linguistic approaches to DM and to discourse in general, there is little consensus about which lexical items qualify as DM and which not. Within the present study I concentrate in particular on global DM², which have already received scholarly attention. The list of global DM also includes some of Schiffrin's (1987) local DMs ("o.k.", "well", "so", "now", "and") and the interjection "hey" which turn out to have an additional scope that goes beyond bracketing immediately adjacent utterances. Members of the functional category of Tertiary TOMs in the role as global DM appear to share the following characteristics sorted by linguistic level of description:

Phonological features	DM form a separate tone group.
Semantic features	DM frequently have a propositional meaning but not necessarily.
Syntactic features	DM are inserts which are loosely attached to syntactic structure. They occur commonly at the beginning of an utterance or a turn. Final position is also possible.
Functional features	DM are metalinguistic items that signal the kinds of relations a speaker perceives between different parts of the discourse DM are multifunctional in that they can operate on different discourse planes.
Relationship to contexts	DM have a certain discourse structural scope (local - global) in which they can function.

7.2 (Global) DM as a characteristic of orality (?)

Despite the wide range of opinions with regard to the criterial features of DM, scholars appear to agree in the point that DMs are foremost a feature of spoken discourse. Erman (2001: 1339) states that DMs "are all restricted to spoken language and some have functions that come close to e.g. those of punctuation or paragraphing in written texts", a view that is also shared by Brinton (1990) and Biber et al. (1999). According to Brinton (1990: 59ff) DM used in written discourse function similar, but not in an identical way to DM used in spoken discourse.

Their transference into written communication often relates to the metacommunicative effect of making written discourse feel like oral discourse. Considering

Stein's position (1985) that DM typically occur at linguistically transitional periods, this raises the question whether occurrences of DM in ASY and SY CMC can be interpreted as linguistic symptoms of the current medially transitional period caused by the Internet Revolution.

It is also possible that DMs in CMC are used to imitate an oral feel as has been observed by Brinton (1990) for OE "hwaet"(which roughly corresponds to ModE "you know") and by Dorgeloh (2002) for the usage of "and" as a DM in EmodE and ModE genres. Contrary to this interpretation, Runkehl et al. (1998: 116) attribute occurrences of DMs and oral features in general in CMC contexts to the degree of interactivity generated by the respective media. They state that the frequency of oral features in CMC tends to increase according to the degree of interactivity and synchronicity of the respective CMC media, with email showing the lowest amount of oral features, followed by Usenet Newsgroups and at the top with chats exhibiting the highest frequencies.

7.3 Functional distribution of Tertiary TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

Table 7.1 shows the functional distribution of Tertiary TOMs broken down into the individual topical action patterns listed in chapter 4.5.2, and grouped as marked coherent topic transitions versus marked incoherent topic transitions in the CMC corpus. To recall incoherent topic transitions lack sequential and/or referential relationship to the preceding context. With regard to ASY and SY CMC the notion of sequential coherency has to be redefined as relative coherency (cf. Herring 1999) or relative adjacency (see chapter 4.4.1.1). Similarly the notion of preceding context is relative to a given contribution and needs to be reconstructed with each new contribution. (see (ex. 4-1)) and (ex. 4-2)).

Table 7.1: Functional distribution of Tertiary TOMs sorted by marked coherent/incoherent topic transitions across ASY and SY CMC

	marked coherent topic transitions					marked incoherent topic transitions		
	TOB	TOC _{re}	TOC _{shift}	TOC+TOB	total	TOC _{unanchored}	TOC _{digression}	total
Tertiary T. ASY CMC	1,90	1,72	4,83	2,67	11,12	0,95	0,34	1,29
Tertiary T. SY CMC	1,42	2,66	5,43	5,08	14,87	0,53	0,71	1,24
all TOM in ASY CMC	3,28	4,65	7,84	4,22	20,00	5,94	0,52	6,46
all TOM in SY CMC	5,84	7,79	7,70	6,46	27,81	12,66	1,86	14,52

From table 7.1 it can be gathered that in both CMC modes more than 50 % of coherent topic transitions are marked by Tertiary TOMs. In contrast to that, the percentage of incoherent topic transitions marked by global DM is relatively low, in ASY CMC it adds up to about 20 %, and in SY CMC to about 9 %. So, in general terms global DMs are mainly functional with coherent topic transitions, rather than with incoherent ones.

Looking more closely at what types of marked coherent topic transitions are marked, we can state the following results:

In ASY CMC marked topic shifts (4,83) rank first, 2 act topic changes (TOC + TOB) second (2,67), and topic closure (TOB) (1,90) and topic renewals (TOCre) (1,72) are of fourth rank each. In SY chats marked topic shifts (5,43) and marked 2 act topical moves (5,08) rank highest, followed by renewals (2,66) and topic closures with the lowest frequency counts (1,42).

With regard to marked 2 act topic changes (TOC + TOB), there are two things which need to be mentioned: First, Tertiary TOMs linguistically mark topic closures and topic introductions not as two separate component actions of a topic change but rather as one. This stands in contrast to the general rule, that implicit means of topic closure and topic introduction when changing a topic linguistically form two separate actions (see chapter 4.5.2). Consider for instance (ex. 7-2a), taken from a chat designed as special-guest-interview (see chapter 2.4.1), where <Patrick Adams> uses "however" to mark the closing of a digression and the return to the topic introduced by a member of the audience.

(ex. 7-2)

- a.** Audience: Will Internet stocks keep going up at the pace they have?
Patrick Adams: They've been amazing. I don't understand fully what the strength in the stocks is. I have a hard time believing they will go up meaningfully from here. **However**, the long term prospects of the Internet are very strong.
(chat-money, 152)
- b.** Donald says, "it seems that because of the lag we answer before we get the reply; **however**, do you actually program the code yourself or you use "
(DMUMMOO-part3, 60)

Similar to the use of demonstrative clefts exemplified in (ex. 6-19b), "however" serves to reassert a topic brought up by another person. In (ex. 7-2a) "however" marks that up to this point the prior question has not quite been answered, and in that sense <Patrick Adams> can be said to have digressed from the prior topic.

In (ex. 7-2b) "however" marks the end of a situational digression caused by technical lags, and the return to the prior topical thread.

In some instances global DMs occur together with Primary TOMs, as in (ex. 7-3a), or with Secondary TOMs, as in (ex.7-3b).

(ex. 7-3)

- a.** Jay says, "and then I sorta realized that maybe there was gold in them thar hills"
Jay says, "so **anyway, enough anecdote**"
(MediaMOO, 461)
- b.** BJTOG: Let me know if you get them
Flames73: Hey everyone
GryEyes911: **Okay, another idea**: got any singers amongst your folks?
(chat-Xmas, 580)

In such instances, the added Primary TOMs or Secondary TOMs tend to reinforce one of the component actions of topic changes, i.e. they either reinforce a topic closure (ex. 7-3a), or a topic change (ex. 7-3b), but not both as separate component actions of a topic change. A survey of the functional distribution of combined metadiscursive TOMs in SY and ASY CMC is given in table 7.2 and table 7.3 respectively:

Table 7.2: Functional distribution of Tertiary TOMs combined with Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs in SY CMC

SY CMC	TOB	TOCre	TOC _{shift}	TOC+TOB	TOC _{unanchored}	TOC _{digression}	total
Tertiary TOM + Primary TOM	0.09	0.27	0	0.44	0.27	0.09	1.15
Tertiary TOM+ Secondary TOM	1.34	0.62	0.18	0.18	0.27	0.09	2.48

Table 7.3: Functional distribution of Tertiary TOMs combined with Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs in ASY CMC

ASY CMC	TOB	TOCre	TOC _{shift}	TOC+TOB	TOC _{unanchored}	TOC _{digression}	total
Tertiary TOM + Primary TOM	0.17	0.09	0	0	0	0	0.26
Tertiary TOM + Secondary TOM	0	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.17	0	0.43

Twofold marking of topical actions mainly occur in SY CMC and there Tertiary TOMs are most often accompanied by Secondary TOMs, in order to mark topic closures (TOB). In their topic closing function DM combined with primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs form overt manifestations of defocussing activities which similar to demonstrative clefts (chapter 6.5.3) and Secondary TOMs operating at the dialogic dimension (chapter 6.3) serve to adjust to the modified reciprocity conditions in SY CMC. In contrast to that, in ASY CMC the functional frequency of twofold marking is extremely low.

Recalling that 2 act topical moves in particular, beside topic renewals, display an interactive orientation toward topic handling, the higher frequencies of these in SY CMC compared to ASY CMC can be seen as indicative for a stronger mutual co-presence awareness among the participants. This state of affairs verifies the above mentioned observation that the use of oral features in CMC correlates with the degree of interactivity and synchronicity. Further evidence is supplied by those global DM which are also functional at the local level. Within the CMC corpus such twofold functions can be assigned to the DMs "ok"^b "so" and "well", which at the local level contribute to the organisation of turns. For "ok" Beach (1993) states that it is characteristically used by next speakers in turn-transitional environments. Similarly, "so" is functional with the interactive achievement of particular

conversational tasks, "e.g. taking a turn at talk, completing the parts of an adjacency pair, organising and maintaining discourse topics" (Schiffrin 1987: 217), while the DM "well" often serves as a turn-initiator (Biber et al. 1999, Schiffrin 1985). Table 7.4 shows that "ok", "so" and "well" are more strongly represented in SY CMC than in ASY CMC.

Table 7.4: Distribution of "ok", "so" and "well" across ASY and SY CMC

DM	ok	so	well
ASY CMC	0,95	0,60	0,86
SY CMC	2,66	3,19	2,13

Thus, in analogy to Secondary TOMs operating on the dialogic dimension (see chapter 6.3.1) the employment of local DMs can be regarded as another *by*-relation or »piggyback« relation by which means topical actions are prefigured. In the specific cases of "ok", "so" and "well" the interrelationship between speaker change and topic change become quite evident. Although topic shift does not stand in a one-to-one correspondence with speaker change,

the offer to change the topic by introducing a new one is at the same time always an offer to transfer the right to speak (on the part of the speaker) or to accept it (on the part of the hearer) but the reverse is not true. This also explains why the conventional linguistic means and structures connected with speaker change also to a large extent accompany topic change.
(Bublitz 1988: 73)

The DM "ok" is characteristically employed "at precise moments of transitions" (Beach 1993: 326), either in preclosing environments, as it is the case in the newsgroup excerpt (ex. 7-4a), or in places where a participant wishes to signal an unexpected topic transition, as in the MOO-log (ex. 7-4b), where <Jay> - after his general introductory remarks on what the audience have to expect - shifts to the specific topic of "MOO language semantics".

(ex. 7-4)

- a.** The tiger watches and sees the PKJAMES creature turn and leave, but only after clawing a few more survivors one last time. She tries to feel sympathy for it, but sadly can only feel

relief that it has gone. She hopes it will come back when it is calm and will discuss its abuse with the others and heal... if it is truly healed why did it come to the forest?

OK, enough symbolism. I don't know if anyone out there enjoys it, but it is fun to write. :)
(N.alt.abuse, 23.59)

- b.** Jay says, " after 1.3 we hadda decompile the bytecode to get the verb code back, which is...expensive"
Jay says, "Ben'll talk about one particular attack of that pain"
< connected: SLewis. Total: 48 >
Jay says, "later"
Jay says, "**OK**, a little background on MOO language semantics"
(MediaMOO, 201)

As a TOM "so" most commonly marks the return to a previous topic after intervening asides or digressions.

(ex. 7-5)

a. Posting 6

(text snipped) What size is Anna? (text snipped)

Posting 7

(text snipped)

Tonight is the House of Blues Christmas party. This will be a ton of work. Total LSD = lie , schmoose, and deceive.

Love to Anna (deadly name) **so** what is the size she takes if the ... what was the sizeI got ... shit I'll call.

(e.martins, 7.41)

- b.** <Relay_1> [Kenickie-) Will the world of norrath be round? Also, on a related note, will **the time of day** be relative to where you are in the world whether it is round or flat?
Talen_ [Talen2@207-172-201-234.s43.as4.xnb.erols.com] has joined #EverQuest
<Aradune> Whether or not the world is flat or round won't be detectable at first, in that we're starting with one hemisphere... **so** also then is time of day constant. done
(chat-everJ, 640)

In (ex. 7-5a), which is taken from a private email conversation between two friends, "so" marks the renewal of the already established topic in posting 6, or, in Ochs and Schieffelin's (1976) terms »the question of immediate concern«: "What is Anna's seize?". In this respect, "so" synchronises a neglected topic introduced by the same speaker. In (ex.7-5b) "so" also has a synchronising effect, similar to the one achieved by the employment of demonstrative clefts discussed in chapter 6.5.1, where a topic introduced by another person, in this case by <Relay_1>, gets reasserted.

(ex. 7-6)

- a.** Sometimes I wish I was married with 5 kids then all this would be over actually no I don't and so this is what I have confusion.
(...)
Well when you get home write and tell me all about the game. Take care my little James Dean friend... and good luck! Play hard but most of all have fun.
(e.martins, 16.32)
- b.** [21:43] <PersonA> PersonM1 are you using the right modem drivers or the standard drivers?
[21:45] <PersonP> **Well** I have just been having a read in the Tribal site and PowWow is just what I am after. Great minds... and all that hey PersonI?
(chat-farmwide, 522-523)

Comparable to the employment of "ok" in (ex. 7-6a) and (ex. 7-6b) "well" indicates a more or less abrupt topic transition, which, however, is treated as a considered one and has the following effect:

by drawing attention to the considered nature of the shift the speaker indirectly provides that the shift is a motivated one and thereby forestalls any possible accusations of non-cooperativeness, peremptoriness, or lack of attention to the developing sequence of talk.
(Schourup 1985: 73)

On this background, one might conclude that "well" in its topic shift marking function is also used for reasons of politeness and to avoid mutual face-threats.

8. Overall distributional results and discussion of TOMs in the CMC corpus

Having focussed on the individual types of metadiscursive TOMs separately in chapters 5-7, this chapter discusses their quantitative and qualitative distributions in relation to one another. Chapters 8.1 to 8.4 contrast the findings of metadiscursive TOMs in ASY CMC to the ones in SY CMC under consideration of the respective medial conditions elaborated on in chapter 3. In chapter 8.5 it will be investigated how the frequency of metadiscursive TOMs correlate with the degree of formality in chats broken down by chat scenarios.

8.1 A comparison of the quantitative distribution of Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs in ASY and SY CMC

With a normed frequency value of 47,19 SY CMC exhibits by far more TOMs than ASY CMC which shows a normed frequency value of 26,46. Consequently, in ASY CMC the need for overtly marking the topic and/or the topical action is insignificant compared to SY CMC. Broken down into Primary TOMs¹, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs, table 8.1 illustrates the following results:

Table 8.1: Distribution of Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

	total	Primary TOM	Secondary TOM	Tertiary TOM
ASY CMC	26,46	5.77	8.27	12.41
SY CMC	47,19	17.36	14.25	16.12

While in ASY CMC topic transitions are marked least by Primary TOMs (NF=5.77), more frequently by Secondary TOMs (NF=8.27) and by far most often by Tertiary TOMs (NF=12.41), in SY CMC Primary TOMs (NF=17.36) occur most often, followed by Tertiary TOMs (NF=16.12) and Secondary TOMs (NF=17.36). It can be seen that in SY CMC the three types of TOMs are relatively even distributed, while in ASY CMC the distributional differences among Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs are more spread out. Note, that in ASY CMC Tertiary TOMs occur twice as often than Primary TOMs. Considering the fact that DMs in general –

and more specifically those functioning as Tertiary TOMs – are singled out as a particular characteristic of orality, ASY CMC appears to be more oral-like in its employment of discourse-organisational strategies than SY CMC. The assumption that SY CMC is less oral-like as far as topic-organisational strategies are concerned is further strengthened by the relatively high use of Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs in this CMC mode. Recurring metadiscursive elements to indicate topic changes are very uncommon for oral communication, at least with regard to spontaneous communication (cf. Geluykens 1993, Reichman 1990). Comparing the distribution of the individual types of metadiscursive TOMs in ASY CMC with the one in SY CMC, the difference in the distribution of Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs is significant. On the other hand, the difference in distribution of Tertiary TOMs across the two CMC modes is relatively small.

8.2 A comparison of the functional distribution of metadiscursive TOMs in ASY and SY CMC

Table 8.2 below displays the normed frequency counts of functional TOMs in ASY and SY CMC. In both ASY CMC and SY CMC topic changing devices (TOC) are most frequent, followed by topic reintroducing devices (TOC_{re}), next by topic closing devices (TOB) which rank third, and finally 2 act topical moves (TOC + TOB) which rank lowest.

Table 8.2: Distribution of functional TOMs across ASY and SY CMC

CMC mode	functional TOMs				
	TOC _{re}	TOC	TOB	TOB + TOC	total
ASY CMC	4,65	13,96	4,22	3,72	26,46
SY CMC	7,44	27,21	6,90	5,41	47,73

Most salient is the difference in distribution of marked topic changes (TOC), which in SY CMC is twice as high than in ASY CMC. The distributional differences of the other three types of marked topic transitions across the two CMC modes is much

smaller. Nevertheless, we may draw conclusions from the occurrence of marked topic renewals (TOC_{re}), topic closures (TOB) and 2 act topic changes (TOC + TOB) as well as from their distributional differences across the two CMC modes. conditions:

To start with, marked topic renewals (TOC_{re}) reflect the mutual awareness of other people's topics and the intention to make the current contribution fit closely to a topic. In this respect marked topic renewals can be assigned a synchronising effect, by which means the current speaker indicates a topical alignment (e.g. (ex. 5-5)). The reason why marked topic renewals are less common in ASY CMC than in SY CMC might be related to the fluid character of ASY messages, explicated in chapter 3.1. The opportunity to freely edit quotes and to insert responses within quotes makes it possible to place responses close to the topic that one wishes to pick up and elaborate on. Metaphorically speaking, you can go to the topic of your choice, an undertaking which is not possible in SY CMC. Although you may scroll back in the chat and look up older topics, you cannot place your contribution adjacent to the contribution that you wish to refer to. Instead you need to linguistically bridge your contribution with the one that you wish to respond to.

As for marked topic closures (TOB), which in Kallmeyer's (1978) terminology constitute defocussing activities, these are rare in spoken conversation and to a lesser extent in written communication. In this context Tiittula (1993) notes that metadiscursive elements are hardly ever used for overt manifestations of defocussing activities. In oral conversation topic closing is mainly interactively achieved via summarising or evaluative feedback signals which characteristically follow the floor offering principle: if no further elaboration on the given topic follows at this place, a given topic is regarded as finished. The fact that marked topic closures (TOB) occur in the CMC contexts, shows that the constitution of reciprocity with regard to the topical foci of attention is restricted. In other words, a change in focus, i.e. a topic transition, cannot be mutually anticipated at a given point in the conversation. In SY CMC this state of affairs is especially given in moderated chat scenarios where a speaker on the *floor* can speak for as long as he wishes without being interrupted by

other participants. Since the co-participants in SY CMC context cannot online-monitor the current *floor*-holder's talk, they cannot anticipate when the current speaker will be finished. Therefore the current speaker needs to overtly mark his exit, as illustrated in (ex. 6-20).

In ASY CMC metadiscursive markers of topic closures (TOB) are also used as exit markers (e.g. (ex. 6-20b)), which is in so far striking as ASY CMC is freed of the temporal adjacency constraint typical of SY CMC. This state of affairs reflects the technically-induced dialogicity of ASY CMC, on the one hand, rooted in the REPLY function which allows a return of an answer within seconds (see also chapter 3.2.3.1), and on the other hand, in the various editing options of quotes which allow the formation of adjacency patterns (see chapter 3.2.1). Alternatively, in ASY CMC marked topic closures are used to mark off various topics dealt with in succession within one and the same posting (e.g. (ex. 7-6a)).

As mentioned before, 2 act topical changes are more interactively oriented and display »the principle of mutual consent« in handling a topic, which assumes a mutual co-presence feel among the participants. As a result of the higher frequency of 2 act topic changes in SY CMC, it might be reasonable to assume that SY CMC contexts trigger a stronger co-presence feel than ASY CMC contexts do. However, as noted in chapter 3.2.3.2, the co-presence feel in SY CMC is of a discontinuous nature, meaning that a notion of conversational presence as a ratified participant, i.e. online-monitoring participant, who is simultaneously being online-monitored, does not exist. This has consequences for topic handling, which is usually consensually achieved. To this end, in natural conversation speakers can rely on the co-participants' verbal and nonverbal feedback signals and adjust their talk according to topic. In SY CMC production and reception of feedback proves to be difficult for two reasons: Firstly, it is medially delayed, and thus can be perceived by the respective addressee with hindsight only, and secondly, the automated sequencing of the messages does not guarantee that feedback signals are placed adjacent to the utterance it refers to. These coherence constraints seem to be compensated for by

marked 2 act topic changes (TOC + TOB), in that they overtly explicate the agreement-seeking procedures underlying topic changes.

But this raises the question why in SY CMC marked 2 act topic changes (TOC + TOB) are relatively low compared to marked 1 act topic changes (TOC). The reason why marked 1 act topic procedures are preferred to marked 2 act topic procedures might be that interlocutors want to avoid a high degree of responsiveness which in SY CMC might easily result in disrupted *turn* adjacency, caused by the fact that messages are posted in the order received by the server and irrespective of what they are responding to (cf. Herring 1999). While in natural conversation feedback signals by different participants are perceived in the course of one's talk, in SY chats feedback signals by different co-participants are delayed and linearly spelled out one-by-one. Assuming 10 participants in a chat produced feedback in the form of back channels, there would appear 10 linearly ordered messages in the public dialogue box. Instances like these might be easily interpreted as 'feedback flooding' which - if anything - enlarge the notion of disrupted *turn* adjacency and with that the cognitive effort that must be made to ensure referential and sequential coherence.

In ASY CMC triggering responsiveness in terms of back channelling would be anything but economical, since it would be too time-consuming to reserve individual postings for signalling feedback, such as "Thanks I have received and understood your message." Rather, in ASY CMC feedback coincides with thematic follow-ups, meaning, that the follow-up postings, i.e. the REPLY postings, are expected to contribute to the topic of the previous posting. In other words, in ASY CMC topics get ratified by taking topical actions. Similarly in SY CMC contexts topics tend to be mainly ratified by directly contributing to a topic, rather than by verbalising some sort of backchannel signals, as we find for instance in line 30 of (ex. 41) where <lindar> uses the EMOTE-command to spell out a non-verbal backchannel behaviour: "Lindar smiles at Eric's suggestion."

In contrast to ASY CMC, the elicitation of follow-ups in SY CMC needs to be more binding, in the sense that participants are made to be more attentive and to feel more

strongly obliged or encouraged to react to a specific topic and/or topical action in real time.

8.3 Marked coherent topic transitions versus marked incoherent topic transitions in SY and SY CMC

Cornelius (2001) points out that topics may be shifted in a coherent or in an incoherent way. The degree of coherency versus incoherency can be determined by means of a coherence coefficient. To this end, the sum total of incoherent topic transitions is subtracted from the sum total of coherent topic transitions, and then divided by the sum total of all topic movements.

Der so berechnete Kohärenzeffizient (KK) kann Werte zwischen 1 (extrem kohärent) und -1 (extrem inkohärent) annehmen. Dahinter steht die Vorstellung, dass Gespräche nicht als kohärent oder inkohärent zu kategorisieren sind, sondern dass Kohärenz ein kontinuierliches Phänomen ist....

(Cornelius 2001: 34)

Transferred to the investigation of marked topic transitions we can determine a coherence coefficient at the metadiscursive level by means of the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{coherence coefficient} \\
 \text{on the metadiscursive} \\
 \text{level (CC}_{\text{meta}})
 \end{array}
 =
 \frac{
 \begin{array}{l}
 \text{marked coherent topic} \\
 \text{transitions:} \\
 \text{topic closure (TOB),} \\
 \text{topic renewal (TOCre)} \\
 \text{2 act topic change (TOB + TOC)} \\
 \text{topic shift (TOC}_{\text{shift}})
 \end{array}
 -
 \begin{array}{l}
 \text{marked incoherent topic} \\
 \text{transitions:} \\
 \text{abrupt topic change} \\
 \text{(TOC}_{\text{unanchored}}) \\
 \text{thematic digression} \\
 \text{(TOC}_{\text{digression}})
 \end{array}
 }{
 \text{all marked topic shifts}
 }$$

Crucial for the determination of metadiscursively-indexed coherent versus incoherent topic transitions is the referential and/or sequential relationship to the prior discourse which is overtly explicated by either Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs or Tertiary TOMs. An utterance which does not overtly explicate any sequential and/or referential relationship to prior discourse qualifies as marked incoherent topic shift,

while an utterance with explicit reference to a sequential and/or referential relationship to prior discourse qualifies as marked coherent topic shift.

For ASY CMC the CC_{meta} amounts to 0.51, while in SY CMC the CC_{meta} adds up to 0.31. Since there are no bench marks for marked coherency versus incoherency – at least to the best of my knowledge - I adopt the ones stated by Cornelius (2001) above, whereby a CC_{meta} value of 1 signals an extremely high degree of coherency and -1 an extremely high degree of incoherency. According to these bench marks both CMC modes show a high degree of marked incoherency, which after all is not that surprising, since – as we have seen in chapter 4.3 - metadiscursive TOMs serve as »coherence jokers« either to hide or alternatively to point to topical incoherency. What is striking, however, is that SY CMC exhibits a higher degree of marked incoherency than ASY CMC. The relatively high marked incoherency in SY CMC may be related to the higher fluctuation of incoming and leave-taking participants, which is - among other things - reflected in the amount of automated textual notifications by the server. These always bear the potential to change topics and the constellation among the participants. As a consequence, chats are usually organised around parallel co-occurring topical streaks, which seem to increase with frequent fluctuation waves, and the number of actively contributing participants (see also chapter 4.4.1.1).

A contrastive survey of marked coherent and incoherent topic transitions broken down by functional Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs is given in table 8.3 below.

Table 8.3: Marked coherent and marked incoherent topic transitions across ASY and SY CMC

types of TOM	marked coherent topic transitions					marked incoherent topic transitions		
	TOB	TOC _{re}	TOC _{shift}	TOC+TOB	total	TOC _{unanchored}	TOC _{digression}	total
Primary T. ASY CMC	0,17	1,21	1,29	0,17	2.84	2,93	0	2,93
Primary T. SY CMC	0,09	3,81	1,15	0,09	5.05	7,97	1,15	6,91
Secondary T. ASY CMC	0,43	1,63	1,72	1,37	5.17	2,07	0,17	2,24
Secondary T. SY CMC	4,34	1,33	1,06	1,15	7.88	6,38	0,17	6,38
Tertiary T. ASY CMC	1,90	1,72	4,83	2,67	11,12	0,95	0,34	1,29
Tertiary T. SY CMC	1,42	2,66	5,43	5,08	14,87	0,53	0,71	1,24
all TOMs in ASY CMC	2,50	4,23	7,84	4,22	20,00	5,94	0,52	6,46
all TOMs in SY CMC	5,84	7,79	7,70	6,46	27,81	12,66	1,86	14,52

Looking first at the overall frequency values of marked coherent versus incoherent topic transitions in the last two lines of table 8.3, we can see that in both CMC modes there is a considerably high frequency of marked coherent topic transitions: In ASY CMC marked coherent topic transitions with a normed frequency value of 20,00 are about three times higher than marked incoherent topic movements which amount to a frequency value of 6,46. In SY CMC the normed frequency value for marked coherent topic transitions (NF=27,81) are nearly twice as high than the one for marked incoherent topic transitions (NF=14,52). On this background TOMs can be said to function as Topic Continuation Markers², rather than Topic Shift Markers.

Comparing the frequencies of marked coherent and incoherent topic transitions across the two CMC modes, it can be gathered that SY CMC exhibits more than twice as many marked incoherent topic transitions than ASY CMC, which accords with the lower CC_{meta} in SY CMC compared to ASY CMC. In contrast to that, the differences of marked coherent topic transitions across ASY and SY SY CMC is insignificant.

8.4 Linguistic realisation of marked coherent and incoherent topic transitions in the CMC corpus

Moving on to the question of how incoherent topic transitions are realised, with reference to table 8.3 we can see that in both CMC modes incoherent topic movements are by far more often marked by Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs than by Tertiary TOMs. Having said in chapter 8.2 that the elicitation of topical follow-ups in SY CMC needs to be more binding to adapt to the medial conditions, the preference of Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs over Tertiary TOMs for marked incoherent topic transitions suggests that this can be achieved by the use of more elaborate and explicit linguistic surface structures. In this context Primary TOMs prefigure upcoming topical actions in a more explicit way by overtly making reference to the topic and/or topical actions. Less explicit are Secondary TOMs, because at the linguistic surface they make reference to carrier actions, such as ASKING A QUESTION or TELLING A STORY. But Secondary TOMs can be said to be more binding. While Primary TOMs disclose referential and actional coherence or a combination of both, Secondary TOMs primarily reveal actional coherence. More specifically, the latter ones bear additional actional implications in addition to topical actions and can therefore be regarded as an effective means to create topical coherence in SY CMC. Cornelius and Boos (1999: online) arrive at a similar conclusion:

Ein idealer Redebeitrag ist lokal mit dem vorangegangenen Beitrag und global mit dem aktuellen Thema relevant verknüpft ... In cvK (=computervermittelte Kommunikation, M.Z.) kann sich diese thematische Kohärenz nur entwickeln, wenn die Nutzer/innen sich dem Medium anpassen, indem sie aktiv eine sequenzielle Struktur schaffen und/oder explizit auf vorangegangene Themen Bezug nehmen.

(Cornelius and Boos: online)

This is most evident in the employment of Secondary TOMs functioning as Pre-requests (chapter 6.1), Topic Initial Elicitors (chapter 6.6), and Topic Elicitors as a subclass of Primary TOMs (chapter 5.3). Going back again to figure 6.1 it can be seen that the normed frequency counts of Pre-requests and Topic Initial Elicitors in SY CMC by far outweigh the ones in ASY CMC. Taken together Pre-request and Topic Initial Elicitors add up to 29 % of all Secondary TOMs. These two types of

Secondary TOMs have a characteristic in common: as questions they bear an inherent dialogicity, caused by the fact that they make some sort of answer conditionally relevant. Taking dialogicity as a parameter, we may further add Secondary TOMs operating at the dialogic level (chapter 6.3) and demonstrative clefts (chapter 6.5) which both serve turn organisational issues. Again, Secondary TOMs operating at the dialogic level and demonstrative clefts are by far more frequent in SY CMC than in ASY CMC. In SY CMC they amount to 40 %. With reference to figure 5.1 above we can state that Topic Elicitors as a subclass of Primary TOMs are more than 3 times more frequent in SY CMC than in ASY CMC. They add up to 29 % of all Primary TOMs.

As an overall result, we may conclude that marked incoherent topic transitions are to a large extent realised by means of those TOMs which bear an inherent dialogicity at the actional and dialogic level. Although speaker change and topic change do not stand in a one-to-one correlation, for all that, Pre-requests, Topic Initial Elicitors and Topic Elicitors reflect on how intricately topic change and speaker change may be related to one another. As questions these TOMs can be seen as "a strategy interlocutors use for creating topical coherence through the turn-taking system"(Geluykens 1999: 52), at a more general level, "the point here is that topic organisation is an aspect of local sequential organisation" (Geluykens 1999: 36). As noted earlier, with regard to CMC the notion of »local sequential organisation« has to be replaced by »relative sequential organisation« (see chapter 4.4.1.1).

What is most conspicuous is that in both CMC modes not only incoherent, but also coherent topic transitions are metadiscursively marked. This state of affairs shows that in ASY and SY CMC contexts it takes a higher expenditure of linguistic resources to establish, maintain and shift topical foci of attention. While abrupt topic changes are expected to be overtly explicated (see chapter 4.3), since they constitute independent activities, coherent ones are expected to be realised implicitly. In both CMC modes – and in ASY CMC to a much larger extent - Tertiary TOMs exceed Secondary TOMs and Primary TOMs. While the realisation of marked coherent topic transitions in SY CMC is quite evenly marked by the three types of TOMs, the

realisation of coherent topical procedures is more unbalanced in ASY CMC. Here, Tertiary TOMs outweigh Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs.

As already stated in chapter 7.3, in ASY CMC global DM primarily serve to index topic shifts (NF=4,83), while in SY CMC global DM mainly serve to mark 2 act topic changes (NF=5,08) and topic shifts (NF=5,43). Similar to the TOMs that bear an inherent dialogicity, in SY CMC we find DMs that operate both on the local and global dimension. This double-fold function can be assigned to the DMs "ok", "so" and "well" which - as table 7.4 above reveals – occur most often in SY CMC. These are mainly functional with 2 act topic changes (TOC + TOB) and add up to 54 % of all Tertiary TOMs used for marking coherent topic transitions.

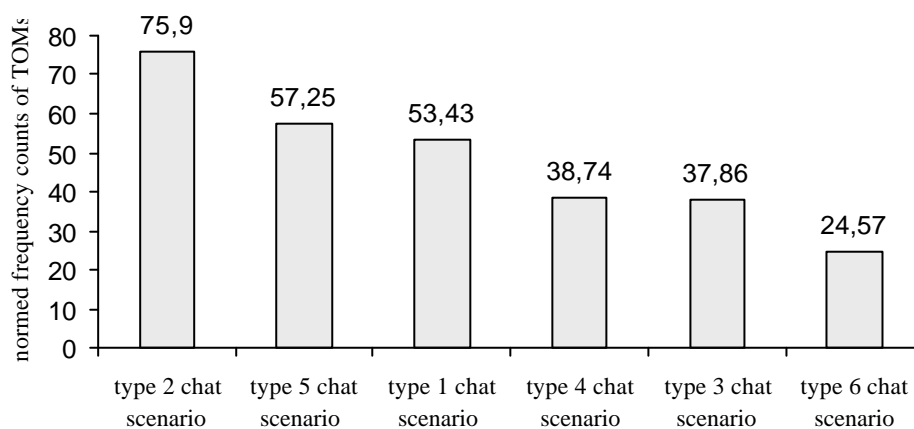
8.5 Metadiscursive TOMs in SY CMC broken down by chat scenarios

Chats may exhibit different degrees of formality depending on the discourse controlling devices employed. We have seen that SY CMC contexts may be utilised for cross-medially adapted discourse scenarios from real life situations. To this end the course of a chat-conversation may be controlled by conversation strategic parameters (e.g. mode of moderation, conversational rules, conversational roles) and chat-systemic parameters (e.g. one or more display modes). On the basis of these parameters the various chats in the CMC corpus have been grouped into 6 chat scenarios which are repeated here in table form:

Table 8.4: Overview of chat scenarios and their main characteristics

chat scenario		main characteristics
type 1	special-guest-interview	editorial pre-selection of Instant Message (IM) and/or ASY message contributions
type 2	round table discussion	fixed <i>turn</i> regulation
type 3	discussion with invited speaker(s)	topic facilitating activities shared among moderator/host and invited speaker(s)
type 4	supplementary chat	integral part in online training and/or online research programs
type 5	panel discussion	moderator/host as expert
type 6	IRC discussion	chanop(s) and technically-based modifiers

The quantitative distribution of TOMs in type 1-6 chat scenarios is illustrated in figure 8.1 in descending order:

Figure 8.1: Distribution of TOMs across type 1-6 chat scenarios

With a normed frequency of 75,90 type 2 chat scenarios exhibit the highest amount of TOMs. At the other end of the scale are type 6 chat-scenarios, whose normed frequency of 24,47 only amounts to a quarter of that in type 2 chat scenarios. This distributional difference between the two chat scenarios can be explained by considering the conversation strategic and chat-systemic parameters of the two chat scenarios. While the course of the conversation in type 2 chat scenarios is organised by means of fixed *turn*-regulations which is controlled by a moderator throughout the chat, type 6 chat scenarios are not characterised by any regulations. Thus, type 2

chat-scenarios exhibit a much higher degree of formality than type 6 chat scenarios. Putting the normed frequency values in relation to the conversational and technical control mechanisms, we may conclude that the frequency values correlate with the degree of formality as an outcome of the respective control devices inherent in the chat scenarios. Similar to oral conversations, we may conclude that

Mit dem Formalitätsgrad scheint auch die gemeinsame Beteiligung der Interaktanten an der Diskursproduktion zu variieren: In spontanen Gesprächen entsteht der Diskurs auf eine andere Weise durch die gemeinsame Leistung als in formellen Interaktionen. Dies gilt für die Konstitution aller Ordnungsebenen. (Tiittula 1993: 275)

Comparable to formal discussions in oral contexts, where the right to speak is allocated by a moderator, the participants' contribution in type 2 chat scenarios constitute small monologues, since they may speak for as long as they wish without being interrupted by the co-participants. In consequence of this topics cannot be developed on an interactive and step-by-step basis. Rather it is up to the respective *floor*-holder to change or to maintain a topical focus of attention. Therefore, unilaterally achieved topics and topical actions require more overt explication than jointly achieved topics and topical actions. As has already been noted in relation with 2 act topical changes in chapter 8.2 above, extra formulation costs are caused by the modified reciprocity conditions in chats anyway. The physical separateness and the medially delayed display of feed back signals do not allow to readjust one's talk according to topic and/or topical actions. Consequently the frequency of metadiscursive explications in chats is influenced by the medial conditions as well as the degree of formality imposed by conversation-strategic and chat-systemic parameters.

The results in table 8.5 suggest that the degree of formality also has an impact on the functional distribution of TOMs in the various chat scenarios.

Table 8.5: Functional distribution of metadiscursive TOMs across type 1-6 chat scenarios

	functional TOMs			
	TOC _{re}	TOC	TOB	TOB + TOC
type 2 chat scenario	7,25	40,18	16,18	12,28
type 5 chat scenario	9,25	34,99	6,36	6,36
type 1 chat scenario	15,80	20,32	9,78	7,52
type 4 chat scenario	8,54	21,00	2,63	6,57
type 3 chat scenario	5,82	21,36	8,74	1,94
type 6 chat scenario	4,32	1,67	1,45	2,18

Most striking is the relatively high frequency of marked topic closures (TOB) (NF=40,18) in type 2 chat scenarios compared to the other chat scenarios. This state of affair is related to the already mentioned conversational and technical features of type 2 chat scenarios. It cannot be anticipated when exactly the current speaker has finished, unless he makes his wish to leave the *floor* explicit. In contrast to that, in type 1 chat scenarios explicit marking of topic closures are only relevant with regard to the expert's contributions, since the audience's contributions are editorial pre-selected contributions sent beforehand via IM or email. Since the audiences' contributions are produced off-stage (see chapter 2.4.1), they are monologic in nature and contain most often more than one questions addressed to the special guest. For this reason the special guest or expert, has to handle more than one topic in his contributions which is reflected in the relatively high frequency of marked topic renewals (TOC_{re}), which frequently have a synchronising effect (e.g. (ex. 5-6)).

The distributional results of TOMs across the various chat scenarios raises the question if and to which extent the high degree of formality of type 2 chat-scenario is reflected in the distribution of TOMs broken down by Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs.

Table 8.6: Distribution of Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs in type 1-6 chat scenarios

	Primary TOM	Secondary TOM	Tertiary TOM
type 2 chat scenario	24,00	36,83	28,46
type 5 chat scenario	18,02	18,02	24,38
type 1 chat scenario	17,31	14,30	23,33
type 4 chat scenario	22,32	5,25	17,07
type 3 chat scenario	18,44	12,62	9,22
type 6 chat scenario	18,17	6,54	6,54

Table 8.6 reveals that type 2 chat scenarios contain a relatively high frequency of Secondary TOMs. These consist of 42 % Pre-requests and Topic Initial Elicitors and of 53 % demonstrative clefts operating at the dialogic level. Similar to what has been stated with regard to the linguistic realisation of marked incoherent topic transitions displayed in table 8.3, a higher degree of formality seems to require TOMs with an inherent dialogicity at the actional and dialogic level.

8.6 Summary: The impact of asynchronicity and synchronicity on topic organisation

In conclusion, chats may differ from one another with regard to the technical specifications of the respective chat-system and the application contexts. Furthermore, one and the same chat-system can be utilised for different scenarios by adding conversational rules and/or moderating styles. Consequently, chats that deviate from standard chat-systems, whose features have been detailed in chapter 3, generate different communicative conditions which participants adjust to in different ways.

Da die kommunikativen Rahmenbedingungen der Chat-Kommunikation, die in verschiedenen Chat-Umgebungen je unterschiedlich ausgeprägt sein können (...) können die Prinzipien und Strategien, welchen das Interaktionsmanagement in einzelnen Episoden chatbasierter Kommunikation folgt, nicht allein auf der Grundlage einer Analyse von Mitschnitten beschrieben werden.

(Beißwenger 2003b: to appear)

In this context the previous discussion has shown that distributional differences of metadiscursive TOMs across the chat scenarios are caused by varying combinations of chat-systemic and discourse-strategic parameters. In their varied combinations the

parameters provide supplementary support for discourse management activities at various interactive levels. It can be claimed that different chat solutions are aimed at overriding the modified reciprocity conditions associated with standard chat-systems, and at reintroducing the concept of »joint activity«. In chapter 4.3 we have seen that joint activity is a common principle of topic organisation in natural conversation.

As measured by the different frequencies of metadiscursive TOMs across the chat scenarios, this can be evidently achieved more or less effectively. A high frequency of metadiscursive TOMs points to a higher expenditure of linguistic resources and a low degree of commonness of activity. In this respect a chat scenario could be regarded as less effective. Vice versa, more effective scenarios exhibit a lower frequency of metadiscursive TOMs which indicates lower costs of metadiscursive resources and a high degree of commonness of activity. On this background type 2 chat scenarios, type 1 chat scenarios and type 6 chat scenarios - which in this order exhibit decreasing frequencies of metadiscursive TOMs (see figure 8.1), can be ranked least effective, moderately effective and most effective. Type 2 chat scenarios are organised by fixed turn regulations whose retention are controlled by an official moderator. This type of chat scenario is aimed at reintroducing turn allocation strategies to determine current and next speakership. By this means the status of »most recent poster« and »future poster« (see chapter 4.4.1.1) are replaced by »current poster« and »next poster«. Although this undertaking suggests a lower expenditure of cognitive resources involved in tracking speakership, at the same time it affords a high expenditure of linguistic resources to overtly mark topic boundaries which frequently go hand in hand with turn boundaries. For one thing, this is reflected in the significant high use of TOMs functioning as topic closing devices (TOB), which simultaneously function as *floor* exit devices. Topic closure is frequently realised by demonstrative clefts (see ex. (6-20b)), but also by the significantly high use of Topic Initial Elicitors, used either by the current participant or most commonly by the moderator to »move out of closings« (see (ex. 6-23)). Also, the relatively high occurrences of Pre-requests seem to be related to the pre-fixed *turn*-regulation. Participants tend to use metadiscursive Pre-requests as a polite means to violate the communicative rules and to introduce a new topic (see (ex. 6-2b)). Considering the fact that both Topic Initial Elicitors and metadiscursive Pre-

requests initiate adjacency pairs, their employment violates sequential coherence, in that these TOMs - as first pair parts - make a second pair part conditionally relevant, which leads to the disruption of linearly ordered sequences. Consequently, relative adjacency cannot be absolutely circumvented in type 2 chat scenarios. A more effective means to suspend relative adjacency is provided by an editorial moderating style, which forms the basis of type 1 chat scenarios. As a matter of fact, special guest and members of the audience do not directly interact with one another. Instead the audience's contributions are sent offstage via IM or email to be pre-selected and eventually (if at all) displayed under depersonalised nicknames in the public dialogue box (see chapter 2.4.1). As a result, we get sequentially organised question-answer-pairs, where extra expenditures of cognitive and linguistic resources are drastically reduced. This decrease can be assigned to the fact that overt explications of *turn* management strategies are redundant. Special-guest-interviews are organised in such a way that the expert has to respond to only one contribution at time. Once he has finished his answer, the next contribution will be displayed and so forth. Another reason for the lower investment of metadiscursive means is rooted in the fact that participants do not have to actively create sequential patterns, since these are generated by the moderating procedure itself. The alternation between pre-selected contribution and the expert's response places first pair part temporally adjacent to the initiating first pair part. This state of affairs explains the extremely low frequency of TOMs that bear implications for follow-up actions. However, this kind of sequential orderliness is only possible because the audience's contributions are sent off-stage via IM or email. This procedure gives type 1 chat scenarios a displaced co-presence quality similar to the one of ASY CMC (see chapter 3.4.1). Qualitatively this is reflected in the relatively high frequency of topic reintroducing devices (TOC_{re}) as exemplified in (ex. 5-6). Similar to ASY CMC contexts, the spatio-temporally detached audience has plenty of time to plan and type a message which often results in longer text lines and in the incorporation of more than one subject in a message. Topic reintroducing devices are exclusively used by the responding expert, in order to synchronise his topical follow-up actions with the respective initiating actions inherent in the previous message by the audience.

The reintroduction of discursive strategies known from oral communication (e.g. communication rules and moderating styles) and the "asynchronisation" of SY CMC contexts can be regarded as two means to re-establish linearly-ordered adjacency-sequences. Further Gruber (2001) points out:

einerseits kann der Kontext die Sequenzstruktur verändern oder Expansions- und Insertionsmöglichkeiten systematisch einschränken, andererseits kann durch den Kontext die Rederechtsverteilung ... systematisch verzerrt werden, d.h. die Realisierung bestimmter Sequenzpositionen kann an bestimmte Sprecherrollen gebunden sein.
(Gruber 2001: 1236)

The interdependence between specific roles and sequential structure seems to play an important role in the other chat scenarios, especially in type 3 chat scenarios and type 4 chat scenarios, where in the first case a tutor, and in the second case, one or more invited speaker are the main speakers. Further research should continue to analyse the interplay between conversational roles and linguistic features.

9. Summary and conclusion

This study has focussed on metadiscursive Topic Shift Markers (TOMs) in ASY and SY CMC contexts with the aim of providing a combinatory analysis of their semantic properties and their interactive role in the constitution of topics and topical actions. The corpus-based analysis has been designed to investigate the distributional differences of metadiscursive TOMs in relation to the CMC specific physical-technical and communicative conditions. On the one hand, this investigation design takes up the specific issue of what is required to introduce, maintain and shift topics in ASY and SY CMC, on the other hand, the more general issue to which extent CMC in its ASY and SY specificities is more oral or written, or of a third type.

The main claim that underlies part 1 and part 2 of this study is that CMC in its ASY and SY specificities forms a third language medium, which I have termed »digigraphic« medium. The theoretical argumentation for this claim has been developed in chapter 3 with reference to the parameter dimensions proposed by Chafe (1994) to distinguish the communicative conditions involved in speaking and writing. It was shown that the basic technical-physical framework of ASY and SY CMC bring about communicative conditions that are characterised by a blending of written and spoken features.

By and large this kind of approach to CMC accords with the currently popular trend to distinguish between physical-technical carrier medium and conceptual medium. However, I use the term "medium" in its physical-technical sense not only to refer to the physicality of language, i.e. graphic versus phonic language, but also to other components of the carrier medium, e.g. display options, COPY and REPLY options etc., and the resulting communicative conditions (see figure 3.3). It is the sum total of all these physical-technical components that generate genuinely new communicative conditions and which sets CMC apart from traditional forms of (tele-)communication. A medially-induced blending of spoken and written properties does not exist outside of CMC contexts. This state of affairs gives reason to believe that the CMC specific conditions cause new modes of language conceptualisation(s). This

means that occurrences of conceptual elements in CMC contexts which are highly reminiscent of conceptually written or conceptually spoken elements cannot automatically be assigned the same conceptual statuses. Instead I claim that conceptual elements in CMC have to be primarily considered as results of adaptations to the digigraphic features in ASY and SY CMC. Condon and Èech (in press) arrive at a similar conclusion with regard to discourse routines in ASY CMC when they state that

many features which have been associated with written discourse might be more appropriately associated with asynchronous discourse. (...) the structure observed in e-mail turns may reflect the most effective response to the systemic and ritual constraints on asynchronous communication, rather than being mail adopted to an electronic medium.
(Condon and Èech: in press)

Wanner's (2003) study into ASY discussion boards hosted by the German weekly "Die Zeit" reveals that specific discussion areas may also exhibit a high degree of conceptually oral elements. According to Wanner (2003) such occurrences reflect the fact that participants "make creative use of the interactive features of a discussion board", rather than that they adopt conceptual orality to ASY CMC.

Another important insight that could be gained from the exploration of the activities involved in ASY and SY CMC is that both CMC modes generate dialogic structures with alternating participant roles which roughly correspond to that of speaker and hearer. This is why in chapter 4 I argue for a conversation-oriented discourse analytic approach to topic organisation in CMC. The core of conversation-analytic approaches, be they strict ethnomethodologically-oriented, action-oriented or conversation linguistically-oriented, is the assumption that topic and topic handling can be described on the basis of structural elements and organisational principles and procedures which constitute conversation. In this context scholars who approach topic and topic development as formal structures either resort to the structural units "turns" or "unit type". However, it was repeatedly pointed out that *turns* in CMC stand in a complicated relationship to the technical units, the messages, and therefore have to be redefined. Furthermore, in chapters 4.4.1.1 and 4.4.1.2 it was shown that

the application of a unit type-by-unit type analysis of topic development in ASY and SY CMC is problematic, too. Due to the digigraphic conditions unit types (as well as next higher units, such as *turns* or messages) are relieved from any temporal linearity, so that one cannot resort to »current« unit type and »immediately prior« unit type, in order to determine the type of topic transition. In SY CMC extra cognitive efforts have to be made to disentangle and to keep track of concurrent and disrupted threads. In ASY CMC the COPY and REPLY options admit the reordering of the temporal chronology of individual contributions by different participants within one and the same message body. At the same time these technical facilities allow a reordering of the contributions according to topical adjacency, so that extra costs involved in keeping track of the topical development are reduced to a minimum or to no costs at all.

Similar to oral verbal interaction, topic and topic progression is to be regarded as an interactive achievement between at least two interlocutors in ASY and SY CMC contexts. Therefore it would be insufficient to approach metadiscursive TOMs from a purely static discourse perspective, where TOMs form a specific and well-defined class of linguistic items. Instead I have suggested that metadiscursive TOMs should also be viewed as interactive phenomena. With reference to Kallmeyer's (1978) theory of focussed verbal interaction, metadiscursive TOMs can be viewed as explicit manifestations of orientation procedures, which contribute to the establishment and maintenance of joint topical foci. Adapting a more dynamic and function-oriented perspective one runs risk of having to cope with an unmanageable quantity of language data. More strongly than in a strict formal approach to metadiscourse, in a function-oriented approach the following conclusion by Tiittula (1993: 85) proves true: "Man kann den Metadiskurs eher als ein Phänomen auf mehreren Kontinua betrachten, das entsprechend dann auch Übergangsfelder und Grenzfälle in verschiedenen Richtungen aufweist."

Within the framework of the empirical analysis I also included borderline cases of TOMs which are either characterised by the fact that they blur the distinction between the meta- and referential level of discourse, or the distinction between

metadiscourse and metacomment. Syntactically, these borderline cases most commonly form word order variations, namely hanging topic constructions (e.g. (ex. 5-4)) and LDs (e.g. (ex. 5-1)), extended and bare copular-clefts (e.g. (ex. 5-19) and (ex. 6-10)), demonstrative clefts (e.g. (ex. 6-19b)) and fronted WH-clefts (e.g. (ex. 6-21)). On the assumption that marked syntax can also be assigned a discourse structuring function I have treated metadiscursive TOMs in combination with marked syntax separately. The addition of marked syntax as a further formal criterion for metadiscourse made it possible to include instances where the proposition is not of a metadiscursive nature, but rather of a referential nature, as in (ex. 5-3b) and (ex. 6-19b) for instance.

Foci of attention are related to focussing activities; which corresponds to Bublitz's (1988) notion of topic and attached topical actions outlined in chapter 4.5. Focussing actions can be of different complexity and implicitly or explicitly realised. The issue of implicit versus explicit realisation points to the distinction between focussing actions realised at the referential discourse level versus focussing actions realised at the metadiscursive level. The issue of complexity is concerned with how elaborate a focussing action is spelled out. In view of the discourse-theoretical status of the topical action structure as being embedded in the action structure and as being interrelated with the exchange structure (see figure 7.2) the issue of complexity can be extended to the question of how explicit a topical action is linguistically spelled out. This aspect is taken account of in the typology of metadiscursive TOMs consisting of Primary TOMs, Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs. Primary TOMs prefigure topic transitions most plainest by naming the topic and/or topical actions. Secondary TOMs refer to carrier actions in which topical actions are embedded, while Tertiary TOMs do not reveal any object of reference.

According to Kallmeyer (1978) the type of realisation depends on the following three factors:

factor A: the respective discourse dimension

factor B: status of the aimed activity as an independent activity complex or as component activity within a superordinate actional framework

factor C: conditions underlying the establishment of reciprocity.

Factors A to C have been deduced from oral communication contexts. Although these factors are also of relevance in CMC contexts, the conclusions about the mode of realisation of orientation procedures are not identical to the ones arrived at in oral communication contexts. The reason for this is rooted in the fact that the digigraphic conditions of CMC generate modified forms of focussed verbal interaction as a result of the carrier medial conditions (see figure 3.3). The emergence of turn structures and action structures mirrors the fact that participants synchronise their communicative activities. In this context Kallmeyer (1978) regards the establishment of the dialogic dimension as prerequisite for the establishment of the actional dimension, which in turn serves as carrier structure for the topical dimension. However, with regard to CMC we have seen that the principles of *turn*-taking which we know from natural conversation need to be redefined, since there are no possibilities for monitoring the temporary suspension of the right to speak. As a consequence participants cannot rely on conventionalised means of *turn*-regulation. Rather, it stands to reason that participants need to resort to explicit linguistic surface markers. With regard to topic organisation, Kallmeyer (1978) states that topic changes are explicated plainest due to the asymmetric distribution of speaker roles and hearer roles. Again, in CMC the application of speaker role and hearer role can only be adopted in a qualified sense. It might be appropriate to speak of interactive participants' roles which roughly correspond to the ones of speaker and hearer, but which seem to be more complex, especially in SY CMC (see chapter 4.4.1.1). Thus, explicit marking of topic transitions in CMC is not so much related to the asymmetric arrangement of *speaker* roles and *hearer* roles, but more generally to the inconceivability of conversational roles as such.

The action structure serves as carrier structure for topical actions. The former one is conditionally relevant, once the dialogic structure has been constituted. Therefore actional schemes can be more strongly anticipated and need less overt explication than thematic schemes. In this context, occurrences of metadiscursive TOMs that overtly prefigure sequential action patterns within the CMC corpus are of significance. Their employment serves to compensate for the disrupted or even

suspended regulations for *turn*-taking, which is elementary for the constitution of the actional and the thematic dimension. Pre-announced questions and action complexes as well as Topic Elicitors and Topic Initial Elicitors can be regarded as strategic means for indicating topic transitions, in that they initiate sequential action patterns. As Beißwenger (2003b: to appear) puts it:

Die Entwicklung des sprachlichen Austauschs wird an Sprachhandlungsmustern orientiert, welche aus alltäglichen Gesprächsformen geläufig sind. Ohne eine solche Orientierung an gesellschaftlich für spezifische Zwecke ausgearbeiteten Formen der Handlungskoordination, die - als Muster - auf einer sequenziellen Verkettung von Sprachhandlungstypen mit systematisch vorgesehenen Punkten des Sprecherwechsels basieren (...) wäre eine Verständigung kaum möglich (...).
(Beißwenger: 2003b: to appear)

As outlined in chapter 8, orientation toward sequential action patterns at the metadiscursive level is stronger in SY CMC contexts which can be attributed to the specific temporal co-presence conditions. In contrast to ASY CMC contexts where participants are relieved from real time constraints, in the sense that "participants are no longer under pressure to respond while the partner waits" (Condon and Èech: in press), in SY CMC there is a mutual awareness of the others being online and participants are under the pressure to establish and maintain a mutual sense of interaction. At the same time it cannot be permanently monitored in what kind of activities others are engaged or whether they are attending. Due to this lack of reciprocity it takes a great deal more explication costs *to topic* in SY CMC contexts than in ASY CMC contexts. As already noted, in SY CMC topic organisation is closely tied to *turn* management. On the one hand, this is reflected in the use of metadiscursive TOMs that overtly explicate sequential action patterns, on the other hand, by Secondary TOMs and Tertiary TOMs that overtly thematise *turn* boundaries (see table 6.4 and table 7.4 respectively).

On contrast to that, in ASY CMC the cognitive and interactive demands are significantly lower. The communication takes place in an extended time frame, which means that any prior message - irrespective of its date of dispatch - can gain the status of present topicality. I have circumscribed this state of affairs as »extended

time pragmatic effect« (see chapter 3.2.1), in order to underline that the pragmatic effect of a contribution can theoretically be preserved over an indefinite period of time. Each time a participant opens a past message, he can treat it as a present one. Furthermore, using the REPLY-function he can edit and intersperse responses in between quoted contributions by other participants, and thus create apparently sequentially-organised *turns* within one and the same message body. In other words, the REPLY-option generates a »displaced co-presence situation« (see 3.4.1.) where the spatio-temporal detachment between two or more participants is suspended, and a responding participant can treat temporally prior contributions as present ones.

In this context the analysis of metadiscursive TOMs in SY CMC broken down into chat scenarios has shown that chat scenarios based on a higher degree of asynchronicity show a lower frequency of metadiscursive TOMs than those chat scenarios based on standard chat-systems. Strictly speaking communication in the former types of chat scenarios partly takes place under displaced co-presence conditions similar to ASY CMC, and partly under temporal co-presence conditions typical of SY CMC. Type 1 chat scenarios, labelled "special-guest-interview", fall in this category. What chats organised as special-guest-interviews have in common with ASY CMC is that reciprocal topic handling and/or turn management is no longer a matter of mutual negotiation.

Konzepte des Interaktionsmanagements werden in solchen Chat-Umgebungen nicht reetabliert. Da die Realisierung von Sprachhandlungsmustern nach einer vorgegebenen Schablone ('Frage - Antwort') erfolgt und die einzelnen Positionen dieser Muster im Verlauf des Events abwechselnd von den Selektoren und dem Befragten realisiert werden, besteht kein Bedarf an Hilfestellungen zur Sprachhandlungskoordination zwischen den Beteiligten. (Beißwenger 2003a: in prep.)

As a further consequence relative adjacency or loosened adjacency (see chapter 4.4.1.1) is replaced by linear adjacency typical of face-to-face verbal interaction. Related to the reintroduction of linear adjacency is the reintroduction of two more straightforward interactive roles of *speaker* and *hearer*. All in all, type 1 chat scenarios override all those factors which reduce or sustain mutual reciprocity at the interactional levels of turn, action and topic management. The other chat scenarios

approach the problem of mutual reciprocity by focussing on one of the interactional dimensions. The expenditure of extra metadiscursive means seems to be significantly high in type 2 chat scenarios which try to establish reciprocity by means of pre-fixed *turn* regulations. Less expenditure of metadiscursive resources seems to be required in those chat scenarios where the interactive roles of *speaker* and *hearer* are relatively straightforward, as it is the case in type 3 chat scenarios and type 4 chat scenarios.

The insight that could be gained from viewing SY CMC as medially adapted discourse scenarios, makes the previous discussion incomplete in many respects. To start with, the issue of representativeness raised in chapter 2 seems to be even more complex, since the communicative conditions of SY CMC cannot be assigned to a single standard technological frame. Rather, the technological specifications as well as the utilisation of one and the same chat system may vary from one instant to another. This means that the communicative conditions of SY CMC outlined in chapter 3 can be modified in various ways in order to reduce extra cognitive and linguistic costs. To give a representative picture of SY CMC one needs to take account of a much wider range of different chat systems and chat scenarios than it has been done in the framework of the previous study. More specifically, one should consider chat-systemic differences from the outset as another competing factor when compiling a CMC corpus. This factor has been neglected in the design of the CMC corpus (see chapter 2), the consequence of which is that standard and specified chats are not well balanced. Moreover, the question arises whether and in which way the notion of (standard) communication technology and medially adapted discourse scenarios is also applicable to ASY CMC. Especially web-based multi-party ASY CMC contexts seem to differ from one another with regard to technological specifications. For instance Wanner's (2003) study shows that web-based discussion boards are characterised by a technically-induced display mode that is highly reminiscent of the display mode of standard chat systems. In these web-based discussion boards individual messages by different participants are displayed in linear sequence in one large public dialogue box (see Appendix 9.1). In these participants have to cope with relative adjacency and 'overlaps' caused by time lags

comparable to chats. From this it can be assumed that the display mode has an impact on the conceptually oral elements detected by Wanner (1993). Moreover, just as different chat scenarios exhibit different frequencies of metadiscursive TOMs, it can be assumed that different specified discussion boards show differences in the contribution of metadiscursive TOMs. Therefore further corpus-based research into CMC should continue, regarding CMC not only as stored protocols, but also as discursive reality with its own technologically-induced communicative conditions.

I would like to close this study by raising one last question, namely to which extent occurrences of metadiscursive TOMs can be regarded as giving evidence for the evolvment of a third conceptual language medium, alongside conceptual orality and conceptual literacy. Metadiscursive elements in general, and metadiscursive TOMs in particular, cannot be regarded in the same way as diagnostics for conceptual language modes, as for instance the use of passive which is more closely associated with written discourse, or contractions which are typical of spoken discourse. As a matter of fact, metadiscourse is rare in spoken and to a lesser extent in written discourse, and its occurrence can be seen as indicator for disruptions at one or more discourse levels. Metadiscursive elements in general spell out or overtly problematise mechanisms or procedures which are usually managed in an implicit way. That these implicit means are explicated hints at the fact that the discourse participants have reasons to believe that the employment of implicit means would not be sufficient enough to make themselves understood, or worst case scenario, to keep the conversation going. On this background the occurrences of metadiscursive TOMs points to communicative difficulties or insecurities with regard to topic organisational issues, and can be regarded as extra expenditure of linguistic resources both for incoherent and coherent topic transitions (see table 8.3).

Tertiary TOMs or global DMs (see chapter 7) have been singled out as a particularly oral phenomenon. The moot point here is whether the relatively high frequency of global DMs in ASY and SY CMC is triggered by the respective medial conditions, or whether participants use global DMs independently of the medial conditions to achieve the metacommunicative effect of making ASY CMC feel like oral discourse.

From a diachronic perspective another possibility suggests itself: Global DMs may be interpreted as linguistic symptoms of the medially transitional period caused by the Internet Revolution, just as DMs in earlier English language periods signalled linguistic transition points, most evidently during the transition from oral to literal culture (cf. Brinton 1990, Stein 1985). This hypothesis might also go for Primary TOMs and Secondary TOMs, in that these can also be regarded as linguistic items of a transitional status which might eventually be substituted by more implicit means.

Appendices

Appendix 2.1: Corpus texts

A. ASY CMC corpus

(total number of words)	text samples	words	postings	applied in special domains
mailinglists (29.442)	@corpora	9378	28	
	@histling	9881	28	
	@marx	5857	45	
	@shadowrun	4326	33	interactive fiction mailing list
newsgroups (40.915)	N.alt.smoking	3312	25	
	N.alt.tv	2816	23	
	N.comp	3173	27	
	N.sci	2908	26	
	N-alt.abuse	8821	26	
	N-mod-comp	1196	15	
	N-S8-politics	16199	121	
	N-Teachers	2490	8	
guestbooks (23.437)	G.godlike	3064	123	
	G-Ad	2442	85	
	G-Bobs	2508	55	
	G-Phil	8186	200	
	G-VW	7237	93	
emails (2.234)	e.Lan.Steve.part1	5923	55	email-based LAN-on-demand
	e.Lan.Steve.part 2	6179	47	email-based LAN-on-demand
	e.martins	10132	29	private email
ASY CMC total		116028	1092	

Appendix 2.1 (continued)

B. SY CMC corpus

(no. of words)	text samples	words	active participants	socio-technical setting*	chat scenarios**
chats (56.277)	chat-art of noise	1929	17	group A	type 1 chat scenario
	chat-cyberchat	870	20	group C	type 6 chat scenario
	chat-employ	4044	15	group B	type 2 chat scenario
	chat-everJ	6676	37	group B	type 1 chat scenario
	chat-farmwide	5368	22	group B	type 4 chat scenario
	chat-Humour	4545	31	group B	type 2 chat scenario
	chat-irc1124	2624	8	group C	type 6 chat scenario
	chat-Latest-DesignerPro	3781	16	group B	type 3 chat scenario
	chat-latest-win	3430	16	group B	type 4 chat scenario
	chat-love	6715	26	group C	type 6 chat scenario
	chat-money	2133	21	group A	type 1 chat scenario
	chat-Sokrates	2013	3	group C	type 6 chat scenario
	Supposed to be fun	2549	8	group A	type 1 chat scenario
	chat-svengali	1531	4	group C	type 6 chat scenario
	chat-telework	2584	13	group A	type 4 chat scenario
	chat-Xmas	4485	32	group B	type 2 chat scenario
	MOOs (57.647)	DMUMOO-1	2883	15	group B professional MOO
DMUMOO-2		966	6	group B professional MOO	type 4 chat scenario
DMUMOO-3		1145	5	group B professional MOO	type 5 chat scenario
DMUMOO-4		1637	8	group B professional MOO	type 5 chat scenario
LinguaMOO-Birthday		5666	17	group B educational MOO	type 5 chat scenario
LinguaMOO-C-FEST1		5166	18	group B educational MOO	type 5 chat scenario
MediaMOO		5246	26	group B professional MOO	type 3 chat scenario
MOO-distance		5251	16	group B educational MOO	type 5 chat scenario
MOO-Kairos		11575	27	group B educational MOO	type 3 chat scenario
MOO-Sampleliblog		4845	16	group B educational MOO	type 2 chat scenario
MOO-calypso		3854	8	group B	type 7 chat scenario
SY CMC total			112924	451	

*socio-technical settings:

group A: Internet service provider's site

group B: community platform

group C: IRC

** chat scenarios

type 1: special-guest-interview

type 2: round table discussion

type 3: discussion with invited speaker(s)

type 4: supplementary chat

type 5: panel discussion

type 6: IRC discussion

type 7: others

Appendix 2.2: Textual description of Diversity University (DU) campus

UNIVERSITY Main Campus MOO

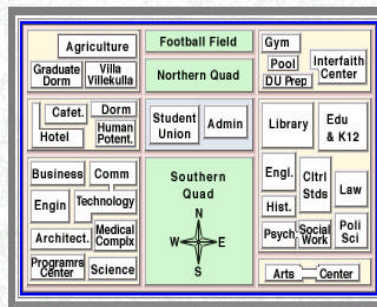
You are a ghostly presence at [Student Union Lounge](#).

This is a busy place, frequented mostly by students who're looking for colleagues to talk to and ways to kill time. There is an old red couch in the corner, usually occupied by sleeping students. Several hallways branch off this center, and large glass doors on the southern wall lead to the foyer. Say "hi jesse" to get help from our friendly robot"

You see  [DU Directory](#),  [Test Survey](#),  [Help Desk Sign \(hd\)](#),  [DU Places of Interest \(POI\)](#),  [MOOList](#),  [*DU AIDS Memorial Quilt Poster*](#),  [DU EdTech Discussion \(ed\)](#), [visit meter](#), and [Jesse the English TA \(say Hi Jesse to talk to me\)](#).

The exits are [east](#) (to Underground corridor (SU <-> Admin)), [north](#) (to Entertainment Hall (1-6)), [northeast](#) (to Student Union Elevator), [northwest](#) (to Universities Room), [west](#) (to Help Desk (Not just for Newbies)), [south](#) (to Student Union Foyer), and [down](#) (to Student Union Utilities Room (Lost+Found)).

[\[Look around\]](#) [\[Home\]](#) [\[Who's in Diversity University Main Campus MOO?\]](#) [\[Web Gateway page\]](#) [\[Diversity University Main Campus MOO home page\]](#) [\[Read mail\]](#) [\[Wizard's Choice!\]](#) [\[VRML view\]](#) [\[Focus\]](#)



Appendix 2.3: Textually inscribed single room at Lingua MOO

A large room with distant light walls and lots of hazy, but too bright, light. There are several large pillows on the floor, and in the front of the room there is a small platform stage with a group of comfortable chairs. Type 'up' to step up on the platform stage.

Appendix 7.1: DMs and studies included in the present analysis of Tertiary TOMs

DM	studies	main functions
<i>actually</i>	Lenk (1998b)	marker of topic shift/change opinion marker
	Aijmer (1986)	marker of topic break
<i>after all</i>	Ariel (1998)	accessibility marker
	Fraser (1996)	inferential marker
<i>again</i>	Fraser (1988)	topic refocussing
	Schiffirin (1987)	topic refocussing plus contrastive function
<i>alright</i>	Fraser (1988)	topic refocussing
	Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992)	reciprocal topic transition
	Biber et al. (1999)	response form
<i>and</i>	Tiittula (1993)	marker of sequential continuity after disruption
	Dorgeloh (2002)	marker of topic shift
<i>anyway, anyhow, in any case</i>	Jefferson (1992)	
	Erman (2001)	
	Fraser (1988)	topic shift, digression
	Takahara (1998)	
	Lenk (1998a, 1998b) Bublitz (1988)	down toner
<i>by the way, btw</i>	Fraser (1988), Bublitz (1988), Linell et al. (1997)	unlinked/contextually unanchored topic change
	Schegloff and Sacks (1973)	misplacement marker
<i>hey</i>	Fraser (1988)	topic refocussing
	Biber et al. (1999)	attention signal
<i>however</i>	Lenk (1998a, 1998b)	closing of digression and resumption of earlier topic
<i>indeed</i>	Fraser (1988)	topic refocussing
<i>in fact</i>	Fraser (1988)	topic refocussing
	Bublitz (1988)	expresses contrast, implies newness

Appendix 7.1 continued

DMs and studies included in the present analysis of Tertiary TOMs

<i>DM</i>	studies	main functions
<i>now</i>	Schiffrin (1987) Stenström (1984) Bublitz (1989a)	speaker's progression of ideas, branching into subtopics attention getting device closes digression and simultaneously re-introduces prior topic
<i>ok</i>	Fraser (1988) Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992) Beach (1992)	topic refocussing reciprocal topic transition action marker of transition, free-standing receipt marker
<i>so</i>	Schiffrin (1987) Biber et al. (1999)	organisation of transitions in participation framework marks return to a prior topic after intervening aside
<i>still</i>	Lenk (1998a, 1998b)	closing of special kind of digression (conversational aside)
<i>well</i>	Schiffrin (1987) Schourup (1985) Button (1987) Jucker and Ziv (1993)	turn-initiator, marks responses on an interactional level evincing covert consultation retopicalisation of previous topic face-threat-mitigator

Appendix 9.1: Display of messages in a web-based ASY discussion board hosted by the German weekly "Die Zeit" (based on Wanner (2003))

everyone - 27. May 2003 9:47 (Tja, #91251)

Gestern war die Nacht der Naechte:
Matrix, 4 Filme.

TheWitch - 27. May 2003 9:47 (Tja, #91252)

oh, ich dachte gerade Du wuerdest das sofort erkennen
Oh. Asche auf mein Haupt ...
Das hatte ich wirklich erkennen mussen.
Ich bin wohl etwas unaufmerksam derzeit!

everyone - 27. May 2003 9:49 (Tja, #91253)

Wir verstehen das.

brigitte - 27. May 2003 9:55 (Tja, #91254)

Matrix, 4 Filme.
wie 4 Filme?
iich verstehe das nicht

TheWitch - 27. May 2003 9:55 (#Tja, 91255)

misstrauisch guck

TheWitch - 27. May 2003 9:55 (#Tja, 91256)

X

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Notes

Chapter 1

¹ Although SY CMC reminds one strongly of the turn-taking system underlying natural conversation, the mechanisms at force in SY CMC are not identical with the ones in natural conversation. It is still a moot point whether concepts like e.g. "floor", "turn", "speaker" and "hearer" can be transferred to CMC or whether one needs new concepts and terminology. In order to account for this deficiency I follow Schönfeldt (2001) and refer to the concepts "turn", "floor", "speaker" and "hearer" in relation to CMC in italicised form.

Chapter 2

¹ The number of words does not involve text material that exhibits communicational meta-information which are automatically generated by the respective software. In the case of newsgroups, mailinglists, guestbooks and emails all text lines in the header with the exception of the subject line as well as meta-information, displayed in the lower area of the main message body, such as " On Monday, the 1.1.03, Michaela wrote in article <111111>:" have been subtracted from the total number of words. Furthermore, severalfold quoted text material was only counted and tagged once. In chats and MOOs all automatically produced and displayed text lines are excluded. These include <nicknames> which in MOOs are additionally accompanied by communication verbs, such as <Michaela says:>, text lines which inscribe one's entrance and leaving. In some Moos we also find automated server messages which have a regulative function with regard to "lurking", such as "Assistants of the local psychology institute arrive to cart Nellie off to their dream-research labs". These have been subtracted from the total number of words as well.

² For more information go to: <http://ang3-11.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/~ang3/>

³ See for instance the database of ProjectH which is oriented toward a complete sampling of ASY mailinglists and newsgroups. More information may be found at <<http://www.arch.usyd.edu.au/~fay/projecth/about.html>>

⁴ See Runkehl et al. (1999) and Crystal (2001) for more information on technical preliminaries involved in the various forms of CMC.

⁵ It is also possible to send one and the same message as a serial letter to a number of people simultaneously.

⁶ Due to the comprehensive similarities between chats and MOOs, in the present study I will refer to these two CMC modes as chats, or in more general terms, as SY CMC. I will differentiate between these two genres only to discuss medial-specific differences and to name the source of the text samples as they are found in the CMC corpus.

MOO stands for Multi-User-Object-Oriented. It is a derivative of text-only MUDs (Multi-User-Dimension), and may be described as an extended chat-environment, allowing different dimensions of textual (inter)activity by means of an object-oriented programming language. In addition to the direct speech command, MOOs/MUDs have pre-programmed a number of so-called emotes, which chat programs do not offer to the same extent. Cherny (1999) and Haynes/Holmevik (2001) deal with central programming features and emote types of MOOs and MUDs.

⁷ For a detailed history of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) see Reid (1991) or Kai Oswald's introductory homepage at <http://irc.fu-berlin.de/einfuehrung.html>, for MOOs and MUDs see Haynes and Holmevik (2001) and Curtis (1993).

⁸ Although web-based chats basically support the same communication commands as IRC-chats they may differ with regard to their functional richness. Most of the web-based chats consist of basic Toolbar Controls for (dis)connecting, entering/ leaving a chat room etc., and basic Chat Message Controls such as TALK, WHISPER and THINK. Other web-based chats, however, offer additional options such as highlighting of contributions by different colours and fonts, thus individualising one's messages. The graphical interface of Chat Circles, developed by MIT Media Lab, uses abstract 2D graphics that change in shape, size and color to reflect dynamics of conversation. For further details on Chat Circles see: <http://www.media.mit.edu/~fviegas/chat_CHI.html>.

⁹ Frame 3 is not found in IRC and in MOOs. In order to find out who is currently present, one needs to type in the WHO-command: /who, for more detailed information about a specific user /whos <nickname>.

¹⁰ See Beißwenger (2001, 2002) for important distinctions in terms of stages in the communicational process as a result of the carrier medial ("trägermedial") conditions, i.e. properties of the signal carrying medium.

¹¹ Galin (2001) gives a survey of active MOOs categorised into General Educational MOOs, University Specific MOOs, OWLs (Online writing centers), Foreign-Language MOOs, K-12 MOOs, Professional MOOs, Eperimental and Programming MOOs and Social MOOs.

¹² The "Big Eights" correspond to the following topic categories: 1) comp (computer), 2) misc (miscellany), 3) news (technical concerns), 4) rec (recreation), 5) soc (social) 6) sci (science), 7) humanities, 8) talk (opinions on different subjects), for more information got to the [news.newusers.questions](http://www.netannounce.org/) Links Page at <<http://www.netannounce.org/>>.

¹⁴ For more information on the history and the mechanisms of role playing in MUDs (= Multi-User Dungeons) I recommend Schaap (2000), for MUSHs (=Multi-User Hallucinations) Bahl (1997).

¹⁵ The CMC corpus contains such an interactive fiction mailing list based on "Shadowtalk" where "Members of the list post as characters in genre, and by responding to each other's posts "in character", stories are developed." (cited from an email as a reply to an inquiry about shadowtalk on my request)

¹⁶ At the company's request and due to legal reasons, the name will be kept anonymous.

¹⁷ At request of the person who provided the material the names of the interlocutors are kept anonymous. It has also be noted that large parts of the text, as well as the header, have been cut by the authors. Apart from the fact that we are dealing with a dyadic email-communication, the compilers of the CMC corpus and the author of the present study cannot state any additional information about the time span or the quality of the friendship.

¹³ Beißwenger refers to chats only and not to MOOs.

¹⁸ The socio-technological architecture of community platforms goes back to Hagel and Armstrong's (1998) commercially-oriented networking idea. Reichelt and Zitzen (2000) show how their community concept can be used to support life-long learning and to create so-called "knowledge communities".

Chapter 3

¹ In particular, see also: Chafe and Tannen (1987), Horowitz (1991), Quasthoff (1995), Ong (1982), Raible (1994), Schiffrin (1982), Tannen (1982a, 1982b), Weigand (1993).

² Guestbooks are uni-directional communication tools which are not designed for verbal interaction. Similar to traditional guestbooks they serve to leave one-way comments, impressions, greetings to the owner or host of a specific site. For more information see Diekmannshenke (1999, 2000).

³ Adhesion as a discourse strategy stands in close relation to the question of cognitive skills which are required in order to manage different textual dimensions in a parallel fashion, which is raised by Dürscheid (1999).

⁴ In this context Cho (in press) points out in her case study on Linguistic Features of Electronic Mail and Memorandum that " e-mail users produce a variety of written communication that is 'conversational' in nature".

⁵ Possible research questions, so far not dealt with in detail, may address the interaction between complex quotation hierarchies resulting from a large number of participants and communicative behaviour, such as spontaneity, or socio-psychological factors such as perceived groupness or closeness/distance among the participants. Also, Dürscheid (1999) draws attention to the question of cognitive skills which are required in order to manage different textual dimensions in a parallel fashion.

⁶ In the same line, Gains (1998) speaks of *extended time conversational sequences* which might be seen as a linguistic consequence of the above mentioned extended time pragmatic effects. Dürscheid (2003: 45) also speaks of "Zerdehnung der Sprechsituation": "In der synchronen Kommunikation ist sie minimal, in der asynchronen ist sie maximal."

⁷ It is surely the case that in some (professional) domains, the status of permanence of e-writing is more urgently required than in others. For professional contexts, Gains (1998) observes that commercial emails "can have a permanent and sometimes legal status", which makes the existence of additional print versions of these messages very likely. Also, a private conversation with an interior decorator revealed that in his office every email correspondence involved in a specific project is printed out and filed.

⁸ Schefe (1995) equates this form of interaction with forms of human-computer-interaction by means of agent software and object-oriented programming. Agents function as personalised service programmes and facilitate "pseudo konversive Interaktivität". Object-oriented programming is a characteristic of MOOs, on which basis textual replications of rooms, institutions or even whole towns can be implemented. Users may act on MOO-environments by means of built-in manipulation commands, which allows you to add and alter objects.

⁹ Cited in Bays (1998).

¹⁰ In beginners' guides to chats "lurking" is paraphrased as the act of watching, but not chatting. Passive behaviour throughout a chat is highly dispreferred and lurkers are more likely to be caught in smaller chat groups or in such chat sessions where an expert is at the group's disposal for answering questions or giving advice.

¹¹ A hostile means of employing verbal contributions to push participants out of view is *flooding*. In this case the participant sends so many messages to a channel that an exchange of messages is rendered impossible. For more details see Hentschel AVL online: <<http://viadrina.eu-v-frankfurt-o.de/~wjournal/irc.htm>>

Chapter 4

¹ The concept "topic" has been treated in a variety of approaches. For an overview and discussion of sentence-based approaches see Schlobinski et al. (1992), for a comprehensive discussion of functionalist models see Gómez-Goncález (2000). Dorgeloh (1997) outlines the most important notions of topic within approaches to word order.

² According to Sacks et al. (1974) unit-types are turn-constructive components, including sentential, clausal, phrasal and lexical constructions.

³ Schönfeldt (2001) points out that the concept "turn" as it has been developed on the basis of spoken verbal interaction in CA cannot be adapted to chats, and here one may add, it needs to be redefined with respect to ASY CMC as well. Due to lack of terminology scholars keep on using the term "turn" often synonymously to "message". In this context Murray (1989) clearly distinguishes between message and turn in CMC: »Message« is used "in its technical sense, that is, it is one line of text which is transmitted electronically". (p. 232) »Turn« refers to a psychological unit. "Thus, turn refers to all that a sender intended to send as a whole unit, but was unable to because he or she was interrupted by received messages." (pp. 324-325)

⁴ In accordance with the ethnomethodologic approach, interactional discourse analysts believe that conversations are made up of sequentially organised action patterns which are structurally related to one another. However, in contrast to CA, DA employs categories originally used in modelling sentences, which build the basis for a strict hierarchically ordered discourse model. This line has been most consequently pursued by representatives of the British School, among others by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and by Labov and Fanshel (1977). They arrive at a hierarchically-organised discourse model of functional units which are assumed to be related to one another. For a discussion of the drawbacks of this approach, especially with regard to multi-functionality of utterances-in-interaction, see Levinson (1983: 286ff) and Bublitz (1988: 151ff).

⁵ »Action« is here understood as social activities or action patterns, ranging from elementary speech acts in their basic and communicative functions, such as ASKING A QUESTION to more complex action patterns, such as TELLING A STORY.

Chapter 5

¹ In order to condense the functional frequency counts of Topicalizers the categories: TOC_{unanchored}, TOC_{shift} and TOC_{digression} have been subsumed in the category TOC.

² Strictly speaking, one cannot speak of chatters anymore, since the audience's contributions are pre-selected and eventually displayed under the moderator's nicknames. In case of editorial pre-selection there is no authentic participation on behalf of the audience.

³ Apparently, there is less continuity in terms of cognitive coherence in SY CMC than in conversation. If and to which extent this is the case is an empirical study in its own right. As it appears to be the case with quite a lot of analytic tools and categories, it is very likely that also in the field of cognitive linguistics re-interpretations of basic concepts and taxonomies are needed. What comes to my mind

for instance is the question whether the Topic Acceptability Scale (see Lambrecht 1994) needs to be revised with regard to its cognitive statuses.

⁴ Despite the "in between status" of topic shadowing as topic shifters and topic re-introductory devices, within the present study I have categorised the few instances of topic shadowing TOMs as topic renewals (TOC_{re}).

⁵ see footnote 1.

⁶ In IRC you may employ the IGNOR command which allows you to suppress specified user's messages. (see also Reid 1991)

⁷ Gruber (1997b) assigns unsuccessful topic initiating in scholarly email discussion lists to lengthy postings which do not "mark any possible points of discussion" or to postings which foreground personal needs and interests to such an extent that it "threatens the negative face of his audience insofar as the might feel forced to answer to his posting". (Gruber 1997: 33-35)

Schütte (2000) points to a different tendency. Rather than ignoring off-topic messages, people thematise discursive violations on a meta-level. At the DGFS conference in Munich (26.-28. February 2003) he pointed out, that people even form metacommunicative threads to elaborate on various metadiscursive matters

Chapter 6

¹ Writers of beginner's guides to chats speak of ellipses rather than suspension dots to refer to the use of this graphical device ("..."). The usage of ellipses is even highly recommended and regarded as a component of chattiquette. On many websites on chats or chattiquette, among other suggestions to make your on-line conversation just that little bit more clear chatters are reminded: If you are writing a long reply, break it up into smaller segments. Indicate that you are mid-sentence by using ellipses (...). See for instance <<http://soliton.wins.uva.nl/~ross/chat/chattiquette.html>>.

Chapter 7

¹ For a discussion on how the lexical meaning of DM - if at all - relates to pragmatic functions see especially Lenk (1998b) and Schiffrin (2001).

² For a discussion on the diagnostic quality of individual features proposed by different scholars see Jucker/Ziv (1998).

³ Considered in this category are different spelling variations: "o.k.", "okay" and "ok" as well as upper and lower case variations.

Chapter 8

¹ Excluded in the calculations presented in this chapter are macro-structural TOMs, since they do not fit in the functional categories (TOC), (TOC_{re}), (TOB) and (TOC + TOB) (see chapter 5.4ff).

² I am very grateful to Prof. Sebastian Löbner for pointing this out.