

## *ICQ English: Sociolinguistic and Pedagogical Perspectives*

Judy Woon Yee HO  
*Lingnan University, Hong Kong*

*ICQ English, like other forms of English used in computer-mediated communication, is emerging as a low variety. It deviates from Standard English in many ways yet it is widely understood, accepted, and adopted by specific social groups for specific communicative purposes. Working within these sociolinguistic realities, English teachers are faced with the challenge to help students achieve a high proficiency level in Standard English. The present research analyzes in detail the English grammatical features of 40 ICQ histories submitted by 21 university students in Hong Kong, with a view to exploring the linguistic processes at work. Issues of strengthening learners' sense of linguistic appropriateness in relation to genre, audience, purpose, and medium are addressed, and the implications for developing effective literacy pedagogies are discussed.*

### **Introduction**

The last few decades have seen tremendous technological advancements and a rapid development of computer-mediated communication (CMC). These new forms of communication have transformed human life in many ways especially in the use of language.

Consequently great interest has been generated in linguistic studies of CMC. Collot and Belmore (1996) regarded electronic language as a new variety of English and analyzed the lexical and grammatical features of a large corpus of computer-mediated messages sent to a bulletin board system. In another study, Al-Sa'di and Hamdan (2005) focused on the sentence structure, i.e., sentence length and sentence complexity, and lexical features, i.e., word truncation, orthography, word formation and taboo words in Yahoo Messenger and Internet Relay Chat (IRC) English chats. The authors pointed out the attributes of both spoken and written