CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This study intends to conduct an analysis of the hearing impaired’s SMS communication with their interactants to give a better understanding to their of their SMS text messages. This would be done to find out the communicative themes of the message and the features of the language used in the message.

Chapter Two will outline the theoretical framework for this dissertation. Ethnography of speaking (Hymes, 1974) and the functional approach to language (Jakobson, 1967 and Halliday, 1973) will provide the theoretical ground to study the communicative themes and orientations of the SMS text messages (Thurlow, 2003). In addition it will review research and latest literature on SMS text messaging in general and those pertaining to the Deaf specifically.

2.1 Language, Communication and Discourse

Language is a social tool, that is naturally used both for the framing of thoughts and for relaying some purpose in social interaction. Every language has its own symbols and rules for use and languages exist because language users have agreed on the symbols and the rules to be used. This shared knowledge allows language users to exchange information, encoding and decoding based on the shared meanings and linguistic skills of both interlocutors and the context.
Language is always evolving to add new words and new rules and discard others through disuse. Words from the classical English Language, ‘thee and thou’ were discarded for ‘I and you’ and today with the new genre of SMS text messaging, it is now common to use ‘i n u’.

When languages were learnt for the purpose of communication, the emphasis began to shift from defining language in terms of forms (syntax and phonology) and content (semantics) to defining language in terms of its use. Communication is commonly interpreted in the narrow sense to refer to what language users do with their language when engaged in social activity as what Austin, (1962) postulated in his book ‘How To Do Things With Words’. He developed the view that in the production of an ‘utterance’ a speaker performs an action. However there is more to communication than just one person speaking and another one listening. Human communication processes are quite complex and range from verbal and nonverbal, oral and written, formal and informal and intentional and unintentional communication. Communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas. It is a process whereby one creates, negotiates and interprets personal meanings. As Widdowson (1980) says

*Communication is called for when the language user recognizes a situation which requires the conveyance of information to establish a conveyance of knowledge so that this situation can be changed in some way.*
Douglas Brown (2000:250) elucidates,

*Communication maybe regarded as a combination of ‘acts’ with a purpose and intent. Communication is not merely an event, ‘something that happens’; it is functional, purposive and designed to bring about some effect – some change, however subtle or unobservable – on the environment of the hearer and speaker. Communication is a series of communicative acts or speech acts to use John Austin’s (1962) term, which are used systematically to accomplish particular purposes.*

It is the context of communication that determine how and what the speaker chooses to say. As Slembouck (1998:1) states, language has to be seen as a social context and in particular with the interaction or dialogue between speakers. Therefore discourse analysis foregrounds language as a social action or situated performance. Brown and Yule (1983:1) note that

*The analysis of discourse is necessarily the analysis of language in use. As such it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purpose or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs.*

This suggests that an analysis of language cannot be independent of its purpose and context. Thus as Coulthard, R. M., (1985) states, the unit of analysis is not the grammatically defined clause or sentence but the speech act as labelled by Austin, J. L. (1962).

Both Austin and Searle base their speech act theories on the premise that utterances are made for specific social acts, functions or intentions and that a
certain structural arrangement of constituents is necessary to articulate the functions. SMS text messages in this study are considered as ‘social acts that take place within a specific society or community in a specific context.’ (Halliday, 1978, Kress 1988). Mani Le Vasan (1996) in quoting Hymes, describes a speech community is an extended metaphor to include writing as well as speaking, if writing figures as part of the linguistic repertoire of a given community. Thus this metaphor is extended to include texting via SMS text messaging as the mode of communication of the speech community in this study that is the Deaf community selected.

2.2. Ethnography of Speaking

Each activity is a certain type and has one or more purpose or acknowledged goals. These purposes or functions leads to procedures that help define what the activity is all about. Hymes (1974) claims that for some activities instruments and machines like the mobile phone play an important role as it is used as a vehicle to mediate the activity.

Hymes (1974) developed a model to promote the analysis of discourse as a series of speech events within a cultural context. By speech event he meant the specific activities involving speech and in the case of SMS communication, it would mean writing or texting. Hymes’ taxonomy serves as a starting point for investigating the way ‘speech’ (texting) is used in society. He proposed a set of components of speech acts subsumed under the acronym SPEAKING.
Hymes’ (1974) SPEAKING taxonomy comprises the categories Setting/Scene, Participants, Ends, Acts, Keys, Instrumentalities, Norms and Genres. The components do overlap as he had intended and are used to give an overall picture. However some of them are more relevant than the others in the analysis of the SMS text messages.

Setting refers to the time and place in which the speech act takes place. It can take on a cultural definition to denote an occasion. The change from the formal to informal and serious to festive can influence the way interlocutors interact. The component ‘Participant’ is to do with the sender (of the message) and the receiver. People adapt their verbal language use according to who is talking and who is listening. It is plausible that they do likewise in their texting language.

He introduces ‘Key’ to provide the tone or manner or spirit on which an act is done. (Hymes, 1974). These expressive cues may be signalled non-verbally through gestures and other paralingual cues. People engaged in SMS text messaging communication seem to have a need for compensating for the lack of vocabulary and visual cues by utilising emoticons and expressive cues they borrowed from e-mail (Herring, 2001)

Hymes (1974) points out that people are skilful in adapting their repertoire to the social context and situation of the interaction. This idea is taken to be a comprehensive factor in the use and adaptation of written language to the genre of SMS text messaging.

People are governed by the ‘Norms’ or social rules appropriate for different events, participants’ actions and reactions. Norms of interaction also concern rules of turn taking and interruption. This in turn is also dependent on the situation. In
the informal situation, use of non-standard spelling, slang, etc. is acceptable whereas in serious and formal situations, this would be inappropriate. The Norm of interaction would also include an obligation of responsiveness to mean that communicators have to give feedback or indicate to the receiver a willingness to continue or terminate the conversation.

Grice (1975) argues that communication in many ways seems to build on the human ability for rational coordinated interaction. Communicators make certain assumptions that guide their choice of how to express ideas as well as how to interpret what others say or write.

2.3 Communicative Themes and Orientation

Communication serves different purposes at different times and different settings. Firth, J. R. (1957) was the first to take a functional approach to describing language. He viewed it as ‘interactive and interpersonal’. Since then the term function has been variously interpreted. Bühler, Malinowski, Jakobson, Hymes and Halliday have had their turn at describing it.

Austrian psychologist Karl Bühler’s (1934) organon model of communication describes the communicative functions of language as representation (when the focus is on the objects), expression (when the focus is on the sender) and appeal (when the focus is on the receiver). Bühler was applying a conceptual framework inherited from Plato. John Britton (1970) developed this and proposed a framework of transactional, expressive and poetic language functions.
Jakobson extended Bůhler’s system of communication functions to allocate a communicative function for each of the components of the communication process. However he included another component namely context as he was of the opinion that a common code alone is not sufficient for the communication process.

- The emotive function
  which focuses on the addresser and resembles Buhler’s expressive function. Emphasis is on the addresser’s own attitude towards the content of the message. Examples include emphatic speech and interjections.

- The conative function
  is directed towards the addressee. Examples include the vocative.

- The referential function
  refers to the context as or representation in Buhler’s model.

- The phatic function
  helps to establish contact and refers to the channel of communication. Some of the utterances serve only to maintain contact between the two speakers.

- The metalingualistic function
  deals with the code itself. It is predominantly in questions like ‘Sorry what did you say?’ where the code is misunderstood and need clarification.

- The poetic function
  is allocated to the message. Messages convey more than just the content to include a creative ‘touch’.

(Richards, J. 1983)

Halliday (1973) divides functions into ideational (for the expression of content), interpersonal (serves social purpose) and textual (the linguistic features of
the text). The first of these, the ideational function provides the individual with a means of establishing a relationship with his environment. This is language used for thinking, formulating concepts and making propositions. The second function serves a social purpose. An individual in conveying his or her ideas, performs a social activity. Halliday refers to this as the interactional. He also postulated a third function: the textual function. According to Halliday, it provides the means whereby language makes links with itself so that individual sentences are fused together into texts. The textual function is important to convey the intended ideational or interactional content of the message, appropriate to the state of shared knowledge of the interlocutors at the point of interaction. He outlined seven different functions of language.

- The *instrumental* function - which serves to manipulate the environment to cause events to happen. “Don’t touch that stove” has an instrumental function: the communicative act has a specific perlocutionary force.

- The regulatory function - of language is the control of events. “I pronounce you guilty and sentence you to three years in prison” serves an instrumental function but: Upon good behaviour, you will be eligible for parole in ten months”: serves a regulatory function.

- The representational function- statements that convey facts and knowledge, explain or report.

- The interactional function- serves to ensure social maintenance. As Malinowski refers to as ‘phatic communication’, it is to open, establish and keep the channels of communication open.

- The personal function - allows speaker to express feelings, emotions, personality and ‘gut-level’ reactions.
- The heuristic function - used to acquire knowledge, to learn about the environment and are often conveyed in the form of questions.

- The imaginative function – serves to create imagery system of ideas and this includes telling tales, jokes, poetry and other pleasurable use of language.

(Brown: 2000.251)

Although Halliday outlined the seven different functions he acknowledges that they are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive as a single utterance may incorporate many different functions.

The communicative purpose and functions of the utterances and in the case of this study the SMS text messages would determine the communicative themes or orientations of the message. Following closely Halliday’s functional categories, Thurlow (2003) outlined a typology of communicative themes and orientations as seen in table 2.3. In Halliday’s taxanomy his ideational component would refer to the messages where the communication themes are more of a transactional nature. The expression of content is the most important concern of the speaker. The interpersonal component will equate with the interactional nature of the messages. The communicative themes involved in expressing social relations and personal attitudes deal a great deal with everyday human interaction. Table 2.3 lists Thurlow’s Typology of Communicative Themes and Functions.
Table 2.3
Thurlow’s Typology of Communicative Themes and Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informational-RelationalOrientation (IRO)</td>
<td>These messages are exchanges of information of an interpersonal nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical-ArrangementOrientation (PAO)</td>
<td>They are arrangements and coordination of activities of a formal and work related in nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational-PracticalOrientation (IPO)</td>
<td>These are mainly exchanges of a practical nature or direct requests for information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship-MaintenanceOrientation (FMO)</td>
<td>These are messages to establish and maintain friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-ArrangementOrientation (SAO)</td>
<td>These messages were specifically related to arrangement for leisure activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutory Orientation (SO)</td>
<td>These were short greetings amongst friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Orientation (RO)</td>
<td>These messages expressed love and affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain Messages (CM)</td>
<td>These were messages forwarded to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Thurlow. 2003:8)

One constantly interacts with the environment in new ways, hence new communicative needs and new language functions continually arise. Language is used to accomplish certain actions in the world, express emotions, conduct business, exchange information. Thus the language in use is structured in certain ways to ensure the accomplishment of those actions and the fulfillment of those functions (Stalker, J.C., 1989). Competence in language is just not simply the mastery of the forms but the mastery of forms to accomplish the communicative functions of language. While forms are the manifestations of language, functions
are the realization of those forms to enable the transmission and reception of thoughts, ideas and feelings between sender and receiver. However as Widdowson (1978) states, context is the real key to giving meaning to both form and function. As Gumperz (1972) notes people speak differently in different social situations. Grice (1975) also acknowledges the need for background information between the interlocutors.

2.4 Language, Communication and the Deaf

(a) Language Acquisition in the Deaf

There are four modalities through which linguistic messages can be sent or received, namely listening and speaking (auditory or speech comprehension) and reading and writing (reading comprehension). The speech/auditory mode is the primary channel as it through this which we first acquire language often without explicit instruction. Reading and writing are learnt later through formal instruction. The vast majority of persons profoundly Deaf, from the earliest childhood, do not know the native language of their country with any substantial degree of competence (Furth. H. G.,1966). Consequently, the Deaf child is in the unique position of having to grow up and develop intellectually without the benefit of having the conventional system of language which is present to all hearing children. According to Nicholas, J.G. (2000:390) children with profound hearing loss show uneven pattern of development across chronological age than their normal hearing-age-mates (Not to hear the voice is not to hear spoken language.
Not to hear spoken language means that the preverbal child will remain in complete ignorance of the basic verbal tool for human communication (Rodda, M. & Grove, C., 1987). Hence because the Deaf children cannot hear the language spoken around them, they do not learn it spontaneously. The Deaf also do not possess language ability that can be used as a tool to express his or her thoughts, feelings and needs until such time when there are deliberate efforts to expose them to ‘language’ through ‘oralism’, ‘manualism’ or a combination of these methods. For the Deaf, mastery of the language is an extremely difficult and time consuming task. (Tan Tiong Hong, 1983).

In a pioneering study of the Deaf children’s cognitive development, Meadows observed that the basic impoverishment of deafness is not lack of hearing but the lack of language. ‘To illustrate this, we only have to compare the four year old hearing child with a working vocabulary of between two and three thousand words to a child of the same age profoundly deaf since infancy who may have only few words at his command’ (Meadow, K., 1968:29). Without early intervention the deaf child faces major hurdles acquiring language, namely the lexicon, morphology, syntax and semantics of language. The language difficulties caused by postponing exposure to accessible language until late childhood and adolescent are permanent.

Reading depends heavily on vocabulary, knowledge of language structure and exposure to spoken language, reading development may lag in Deaf children and the gap usually remains throughout adulthood.
(b) Deaf Education in Malaysia

Education for the Deaf in Malaysia was initiated in 1954 when the first and pioneer fully residential school – the Federation School for the Deaf was established in Penang, Malaysia. Later in 1963, special integrated classes or units for the Deaf were established to accommodate more Deaf children nationwide (“History of Deaf Education in Malaysia,” 1991). Today in Malaysia special education for the Deaf is implemented in three main settings that is residential schools, special day schools and special day classes in regular schools.

In the early stages, oralism was the sole method of instruction. However this did not proof effective as “most of the Deaf school leavers had not mastered adequate language to express themselves intelligently.” (History of Deaf Education in Malaysia,” 1991). Thus in 1978, Total Communication was introduced and implemented. This methodology in the Malaysian context included oralism, lip reading, manually coded Malay language or ‘Bahasa Malaysia Kod Tangan’ natural signs and cues. ‘However the Deaf are of the opinion that the present method of teaching the Deaf via Kod Tangan Bahasa Malaysia is not only slow and tedious but ineffective. They hope that BIM will be incorporated into the school curriculum as a language subject and be used as the medium of instruction and communication in schools for the Deaf” (Augustine, P 2004).
When one mode is damaged often other compensatory channels are made available. With the Deaf, who have a disorder with the auditory/vocal processing, messages can be sent and received via a visual/gestural mode that is through sign language. Sign Language is often referred to as the fourth medium of human communication after speech, writing and CMC (computer mediated communication). Similar to speech and writing, sign language has a complex hierarchical structure of units (letters), words, phrases, sentences which carry meaning which are both concrete (book) and abstract (kindness).

Sign Language is the first language of the majority of the Deaf children. Sign Language does not exploit the aural/oral modality which plays an important role for spoken language. However it manages to convey all the information in visually perspective ways. Signed languages can communicate several things simultaneously whereas spoken languages would do this sequentially. (Stokoe, W., 1972) English is linear and requires many prepositions to create a mental picture of where things are in the sentence. Sign Language uses the physical space in front of the signer to create the mental picture. The eye sees the ‘whole picture’ so the signer can use more than one sign concurrently. Sign Language has a structure of comparable complexity to spoken and written language and performs similar range of functions. It is often supplemented by some finger spelling when no conventional symbol is available for example proper nouns. Thus contrary to negative misconceptions, the Deaf who are often termed as ‘deaf and dumb’, have a communication disorder but not a language disorder. A language disability exists
only when the person has difficulty conveying his or her thoughts, ideas and feelings, in not being able to use appropriate words and include the words in sentences to express themselves.

2.5 SMS Discourse

Short Messaging Service (SMS), the latest mode of communication, is transforming the way people interact with each other.

There are transforming effects of new technologies. These effects extend to the language and even possibly to the mind. More established technologies are partly responsible for the original divergence and now potential convergence of speaking and writing.

(Halliday:1985)

Herring (2001) refers to SMS as a computer-mediated discourse (CMC) and Crystal (2001) heralds this electronic discourse as ‘written speech’ – or writing that is very often read as if it were being spoken. The characteristics of CMC have important consequences for understanding the nature of CMC. Grinter & Eldridge (2001:219) state that mobile phones are in effect ‘mini-terminals for text-based communication.’ Crystal (2001) and Ferrara (1991) argue that many of the expectations and practices associated with spoken and written language no longer apply.
2.5.1. Features of SMS Discourse

(a) Spoken and Written Discourse

Spoken and written discourses are structurally different and serve different functions. Spoken discourse is more fragmented with simpler simple sentences and coordinated words (and, but, or, so). Written texts exhibit a bewildering variety of sentences of different structural forms. Brown and Yule (1983) describe the functions of spoken and written discourse as follows:

*We can use speech largely for the establishment and maintenance of human relationships (or we use it for interactions) whereas we use written language for working out and transference of information (primarily for the purpose of transaction). However we can have written discourse that is intended to be spoken (a speech) a spoken language that is designed to be read (an informal letter).*

SMS text message can be considered a marginal discourse as it is a hybrid of both the spoken and written discourse, exhibiting features of both. Furthermore SMS text messaging is used for both the interactional and transactional.

(b) Language of SMS

Herring (2001) notes that language will necessarily be affected by technological (or medium) variables such as synchronicity, granularity (length of text) multi modality (for example whether graphic or audio are included) as well as other non-linguistic variables such as participants’ relationships, expectations and
levels of motivation. So the language of SMS may be broadly defined as asynchronous (delayed time) text-based. However text messaging can be asynchronous or synchronous (real time) depending on if the receiver and the sender are both available to use his/her mobile phone to reply and thus resemble mobile chat.

Since most SMS communication is interpersonal communication between people who know each other, messages may be brief and because of shared knowledge. Furthermore, the character limit of the message and the cumbersome text input makes this otherwise rude behaviour acceptable (Grinter & Eldridge, 2001, Döring, N., 2002). On the other hand people are willing to invest time and effort in creating their messages despite the fleeting nature of the communication as they are aware that their messages may be deleted soon after.

The challenge of the small screen size and its limited character space (160 characters) as well as the small key pad has motivated the evolution of an even more abbreviated language than emerged in chatgroups in virtual worlds (Crystal, D., 2001:229). The texters of the SMS messages are experimenting with written language manipulating it to fit the technological limitations of space and style. SMS text messages like the internet, strips written language to the most fundamental properties because of time limitations and lack of paralinguistic signs that exist in face-to-face communication. Millard (1996), a professor of communication at Oxford refers to it as 'metacommunicative minimalism'. ‘Phatic or metacomunicative cues, the linguistic and paralinguistic signs that maintain cognizence of social relation between the sender and the receiver of a message are drastically reduced in this medium.’ The messages are actually an amalgam of
actual words and acronyms, abbreviations and short forms which are features characteristic of the language in SMS text messaging. ‘They are shortened through a process of truncation, omission of letters or substitution of consecutive letters in a word with a shorter chunk of consecutive characters that are phonetically equivalent’ (Shortis, T., 2001). Shortis has listed all possible abbreviations and short forms in his typology which forms the basis for the analysis of the SMS text messages of the Deaf participants in this study.

2.6 SMS and the Deaf

Despite their handicap, Deaf people retain essentially normal cognitive capabilities. A review of ‘experimental studies’ of receptive communication in various modalities suggest that despite their poor English grammatical skills Deaf people perform most efficiently when provided with a written input. (Rodda, M. & Grove, C., 1987). Since SMS text messaging uses the written form of the language it suits them. Previously, the Deaf communicated using sign language which is based on the idea that sight is the most useful tool a Deaf person has to communicate and receive information. Similarly, SMS, though facilitated through the use of a mobile phone is communication using sight that is the communication is read and not heard. Text messaging has reduced the language to its bare minimum and this suits those Deaf who are not very proficient in the language. Their inadequacies and limitations of the language need not inhibit them as everyone else is communicating in the ‘pared down language’ (Crystal, D., 2002).
Writing on behalf of AAD, Harper & Clark (2002) state: "Deaf people began to buy GSM mobile phones despite the high costs and minimal use options because of their ability to use text messaging. SMS use was great for quick messages, sending news, urgent family / friend / work communication and so on". However, they were paying for a service that was mostly created for the voice network - SMS was an extra. This meant that in order to use SMS they had to pay for voice-based services that they couldn't use. For the first time Deaf people can communicate with hearing people using ‘mainstream technology The communication might be with family or friends, for business or at work’ (Harper & Clark, 2002).

AAD reports anecdotal evidence that many Deaf people make an average of ten SMS calls each day, ten times the national average." The charge for SMS calls is very high, having regard to the volume of data which is transferred through the network. A Deaf person sending ten text messages each day could face a monthly bill of more than $60, and only 50 kilobytes of data has been transferred. Most people, with voice communication as their natural communication medium, 'text' each other for messaging, not generally for conversation. However, those people with disabilities, who must rely on text communication, also use text messaging for conversation in the absence of their face-to-face communication.

The ability to communicate via SMS text messaging has transformed the lives of the Deaf people especially the young, by overcoming two barriers that make many Deaf people feel isolated. One is the geographical barriers separating the Deaf people from one another, Another language barrier, that which divides speakers of Sign Language and those who do not. Now the Deaf can communicate
with any other person by just sending SMS text messages. Deaf people have twice the unemployment rate as the hearing people (The Guardian. 2002). However, now SMS communication has revolutionized the employment prospects of the Deaf as now they can take on jobs that require them to be ‘on call’.

2.7 Research on SMS

(a) Areas of research

Research into SMS is currently being conducted in sociology, psychology, communication, media and language studies as well as market research. Initially, research was mainly survey research commissioned by Telecommunication companies to gauge market penetration and mobile phone and texting usage. Only much later was the research in this field more qualitative, studying teenage use of text messaging (for example Thurlow’ 2003, Kasesniemi & Rautiaiene 2002, Ling & Yttri 2002). The methods used also vary: field studies in cafes and restaurants (Plant, S. 2002), interviews or questionnaire studies at schools and universities (Höflich & Rössler, 2002, Schlobinski, 2001) and text analysis of authentic text messages (Androutsopoulos & Schmidt, 2001; Döring, 2002)

Text analyses of SMS communication have investigated their linguistic forms (shortening strategies, colloquial features and creative use of language) as well as the communicative functions of the text messages.
(b) Attitudes towards SMS

It is inevitable that any new innovation is not readily accepted from the onset but rather viewed with some suspicion initially. Thus SMS was not ‘welcomed with open arms’ and pessimism about SMS is echoed in mobile phone communication studies by Williams (1983), Cooper (2001) and Lobert-Moris (2003). They concluded that SMS causes a ‘detached presence’ and a general loss of human connectivity.

Contrary to the above findings of human alienation as a result of mobile phone communication, are studies on youth text messaging practices in Asia such as those conducted in Japan (Ito & Daisuke, 2003), Taiwan (Yeh, 2004) and Hong Kong (Lim, A., 2004), which end on an optimistic note, about the positive uses of SMS by young people, for promoting human connectivity. The young people use SMS text messaging to stay in frequent touch with good friends, classmates and boyfriends/girlfriends. The heavy users feel that SMS plays an important role in strengthening relationships.

(c) Functions of SMS Text Messages

Perhaps the most important function of communication technologies like the mobile phone is to enable people to maintain connections with those from whom they are distanced physically. This function is most obviously achieved through the interpersonal messaging capabilities that this technology supports. One of the prominent themes in the mobile phone communication is that SMS text
communication strengthens social networks ties. Ling & Yttri’s (2002) study found that sending a text message may be more important for building and maintaining social relationships than for coordinating practical arrangements. In Thurlow’s (2003) recent study of undergraduate text messages, only about one third of the messages accomplished functional or practical goals – the remainder fulfilled a combination phatic, friendship maintenance, romantic and social functions associated with highly intimate and relational concerns. Text messaging therefore seems to provide an opportunity for intimate personal contact whilst at the same offering the detachment necessary to manage self presentation and involvement.

Grinter & Eldridge’s (2001) study on teenage mobile users found that they used mobile phone texting to arrange times to chat and to adjust arrangements already made. They also use text messaging to coordinate with both friends and family. The ability to connect with others, anywhere, anytime allows for a state of ‘perpetual contact’ (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). This was also echoed in Reid’s (2004) research, where a text can often be received at any time at any place, and people can reply covertly and discretely, and do so whilst multi-tasking. This function is most obviously achieved through the interpersonal messaging capabilities that this technology supports.

Although his subsequent research focused on social networking as the most prevalent feature of SMS communication as mentioned above, Ling’s earlier research (2001) asserts that micro-coordination seems to be the backbone of mobile phone communication. It allows for interlocutors to confirm, re-confirm and change plans and activities that previously would have been organized before
hand. This is echoed in the studies by Hadden (2002) and Blinkoff & Palen (2001). Both their findings note that SMS text messaging removes strict adherence to schedule as now the texters can communicate to inform friends and colleagues to re-schedule appointments. It has given rise to a new found spontaneity which enables them to change plans at the last minute – changing venues and inviting others to join their group.

(d) Linguistic Forms

The text analyses of SMS communication have investigated both the linguistic forms (shortening strategies, colloquial features and creativity) and communicative functions of the text messages. The linguistic studies conducted by Ylaa Hard af Segerstad (2003), Ling (2003), Döring (2002) and Grinter & Eldridge (2001) investigated the language use namely the grammatical and lexical forms adapted by the SMS text interlocutors. Döring’s (2002) findings concurs with Shortis (2000) where she notes that syntactic reductions are used even though space exists for the full version of the words. This can be interpreted as an ‘indication of familiarity between the communicative partners’ (2002:8). Although the acronyms appear on an ad hoc basis the users can formulate and interpret the messages meaningfully. She also believes that the shortforms like abbreviations and acronyms fulfill a collective identity function.

In her study, Lin (2005) found that the majority of the Hong Kong college students ‘text bilingually using both Chinese and English’ According to her the texters did not find Chinese and English to be mutually exclusive. It appears that in
practice, people draw on a whole range of linguistic resources and include forms of code mixing in their SMS text messages.

Research into the communicative functions of SMS text messages have been studied as single entities (Androutsopolos & Schmidt, 2001; N.Döring, 2002; Hard af Segerstad, 2002; Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002; Ling, 2003; C. Thurlow, 2003; Schlobinski, 2001) and as conversational analysis (Taylor & Harper, 2003; Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002). SMS communication may lead to what is known as SMS chats when single messages are exchanged in a series like a dialogue. However, this would depend on if the receiver and sender are both available to use and reciprocate the message received at the same time. Kasesniemi & Rautiainen (2002) noted that SMS text messaging can become increasingly dialogic with conversational structures like turn taking.

Taylor & Harper (2003) identified an ‘obligation to reciprocate in adolescent SMS usage’. This concurs with Kasesniemi & Rautianen’s findings who state that ‘leaving an SMS unanswered is almost without exception interpreted as rudeness’.

2.8 Research on SMS and the Deaf

The emergence of SMS text messaging in mobile phones has been well received by Deaf people who have become prime users of the service. In June 2002, AAD released a discussion paper ‘Mobile Phones and Deaf People’. Subsequently they carried out a survey research and the feedback showed that 80 percent of the respondents made between 1 – 10 SMS per day. This supported
earlier research conducted by Harper’s survey on SMS usage by Deaf People’ in 2000 which illustrated that Deaf people were making an average of 10 times more SMS calls than hearing people per month (Harpers 2002). A survey carried out by the Birmingham Institute of the Deaf showed that 98 percent of the hearing-impaired people in the United Kingdom use SMS text messaging.

Bakken (2002) in her studies find that deaf teenagers in Norway find texting a real benefit and help people bond. This concurs with the findings of a joint research project between Australia’s Bond and Griffith universities which found the Deaf community a major beneficiary of the mobile text messaging craze. Power (2004) have reported on the rapid rise in the use of SMS by the Deaf people in Australia and around the world. They note that text messaging allows Deaf to text both among themselves and with hearing people. Thus the text based communication medium connects the Deaf to the hearing world. The advantage that text messaging has over instant messaging (via internet) is that the equipment needed (the mobile phone) is compact, easily portable, and already in use by the hearing population. Furthermore, text messaging appears to have given rise to a new genre of writing in English ‘with minimal or no syntax or tense or other morphological markers and a limited lexicon of phrases and messages familiar to senders and receivers’ (Power, 2004:335), thus bypassing many of the ‘difficulties that Deaf individuals typically exhibit with English writing’ (Akamatsu, 2005:122). However there is no research that has addressed the communicative features of the SMS text messages of the Deaf directly.
2.9 Current Research

Katz & Aakhus (2002) comments on the limited academic input ‘to balance everyday popular discourses about mobile phones’. Most research on SMS has taken place among groups of teenagers. Apart from the statistical studies conducted on Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission very little is known about SMS texting practices in Malaysia and none on the Deaf community. It is in this spirit of preliminary exploration that this research is conducted to study the SMS text messages of the Deaf participants selected- a Malaysian context.

The current research is concerned with how the messages sent by the Deaf participants are used and how they fit into the situational and contexts of their everyday life communication. It examines what the participants use SMS text messages for in relation to the communicative themes and orientation and functional orientations of their messages. The second objective of this study is to examine the linguistic features and the non-standard orthographic features of the SMS text messages of the Deaf participants selected. Consistent with Grice’s (1975) maxims of quantity (that is the message should be informative but no more than necessary ) and relevance, such non-standard forms have been assumed to minimize the cost of producing long textual utterances (Herring, S.C. 2001). For example, ‘tq’ saves the interlocutor eight keystrokes. The present study intends to examine the features employed by the Deaf participants in the construction of their text messages.
The findings will be instrumental in enabling society to learn more about how the Deaf use SMS text messaging to augment their communication as well the communicative features of their communication.

The next chapter will outline the methodology of this study. It will identify the sample, the data collection methods as well as the instruments used in the analysis of the data.