"I HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT A CURTAIN AT A GIRLFRIEND'S HOME FROM YOUR ASSORTMENT" MEDIALECTIC FEATURES OF CHAT INTERACTION AT WORK

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This article examines the medialectic features of external chat interaction in the workplace. The chat interactions are from IKEA and Krifa, and both datasets represent e-service encounters with customers/members. Focusing on economising and compensation, differences and similarities between the two datasets are examined, followed by a short discussion of whether the interactions are alike or differ from other types of chat interactions with regard to content. A common feature of the interactions as regards economising is that rebus language and netcronyms are seldom or never used, whereas clipping and hesitation dots occur frequently. As to compensation, both datasets often use emphasis, in contrast to the rare use of phonetic spelling. The biggest difference in the chat interactions is observed in the respective occurrence of iconic signs.

1. Introduction

Chat interactions are now being used internally and externally in many different work-related contexts. Highly diverse sectors within both the private and public work sphere as well as highly diversified branches of industry (for instance furniture makers) and organizations (like trade unions) offer a highly diversified palette of products (both of the tangible and intangible kind). Such products are now offered to their target groups (customers, members, etc.) with the option of chat service to supplement or replace in-person service encounters, e-mails, and telephone calls (Grønning 2012).

Interestingly, this kind of chat interaction is characterised by an un-

derlying asymmetric relationship between company/union representative and customer/union member, respectively, one in which the representative assumes the role of expert and the customer/member assumes the role of non-expert (the lay person; Drew & Heritage 1992). In other words, the interactions demonstrate private persons wanting to obtain something (advice, goods, a refund) and professional staff wanting to conduct the interactions as service-oriented and quickly as possible. The umbrella term *service encounters* refers to "…the encounters taking place in formal and non-formal institutional settings" (Félix-Brasdefer 2015:50). Service encounters share the communicative function of offering some kind of service. As to chat interactions, they fall into the subcategory 'e-service encounters' (Félix-Brasdefer 2015:37). This kind of chat-at-work differs from more established forms of chat, such as used for informal talk and socialising (Lenhart, Rainie & Lewis 2001; Baron 2008); by contrast, e-service encounters of the kind studied here have a clear professional purpose: to solve a problem.

The first analyses of Danish chat interaction in a work-related context comprise, for example, Grønning's 2010 computer-mediated discourse-analytic (CMDA) case study of the chat service offered by the IKEA Furniture Group and the *Studievalg Fyn* ('Study Choice Fyn', a local advisory unit); in addition, Grønning (2012) contains a conversational analytic (CA) study of 'parallel' chat interaction, i.e. of representatives simultaneously interacting with several customers/members. The present article focuses on another aspect, by analysing the medialectic features of external chat interactions occurring in two different workplaces. Here, the main research question is: Which medialectic features occur (and how often) in chat interactions between representatives and customers/members? The interactions in question stem from two earlier collected datasets, both representing e-service encounters: the one set is from IKEA Furniture Group (IKEA), the other from Krifa (short for 'Kristelig Fagbevægelse' (a Danish trade union with a Christian orientation)). Moreover, the chat interactions represent two different kinds of societal organizations (a furniture

company and a trade union) offering two different kinds of products (tangible and intangible). The differences and similarities between the two datasets are examined, focusing on economising and compensating; this is followed by a brief discussion of whether the interactions are alike or differ with regard to content, when compared to other types of chat interactions (Hougaard 2014).

Following a short introduction (in Section 2), where the concept of chat interaction is defined, Section 3 provides information about the context of the data and the two datasets. The analytical findings in Section 4 focus on economising and compensating as typical features of media interaction ('medialects'); the two datasets are extensively compared in Section 5. The article provides a brief discussion in Section 6; Section 7 contains my conclusions.

2. Definition of chat interaction

Chat is a form of digital interaction that inhabits a certain space of digital possibilities. First and foremost, chat is characterised by the fact that the participants *read* the others' turns at interaction rather than listening to them, as in normal conversation. Moreover, the participants are typing in their turns instead of using speech (Grønning 2012). Among linguists, there is an ongoing debate about whether typed in, computer-mediated communication can count as conversation (see for instance Jensen 2014, Baron 2008), just as the concept of *chatting* or *instant messaging* is variously defined in the research literature. The present study uses, as its starting point, Grinter & Palen's (2002:21) definition of: "Internet-based synchronous text chat, with point-to-point communication between users on the same system". Typically in chat, "a window is dedicated to the conversation with messages scrolling upward and eventually out of view as the conversation ensues" (Grinter & Palen, ibid.)

3. The context

The empirical data come from Krifa and from the Danish department of IKEA customer services. Krifa is Denmark's fourth-largest trade union, with more than 200,000 members. On its website, Krifa states: "Today, we stand out as one of the most important independent [Danish] trade unions and we deal with many key issues. 97 percent of our customers are willing to recommend us to others. (...) Our main activities are providing information and advice about job market openings, assisting members looking for employment, and so on." (Krifa 2016; my translation, AG). As to IKEA, the group has 328 stores in 28 countries. Based on its successful experience in Sweden (where the IKEA headquarters are located), a Danish version of the Swedish IKEA chat customer service was launched in April 2007. The chat guidance was readily adopted by the company's customers (Grønning 2007).

All chat interactions with IKEA and Krifa are initiated by their customers/members through the respective websites. The participants do not know each other when the interactions begin. The empirical material has been placed at my disposal by IKEA and Krifa[1] (Grønning 2012, 2010) during a random week among randomly selected employees. The Krifa dataset comprises a total of 448 chat interactions, all recorded during November of 2010; that from IKEA comprises a total of 434 chat interactions, all recorded during May of 2007. All examples are reproduced as closely as possible to the original Danish, including possible typos and misspellings. All personal names are replaced by pseudonyms; other sensitive material has been rendered illegible (by inserting 'x'es). In case of need, short explanations (in square brackets) have been added to improve comprehension.

4. Medialects

Medialects, or 'media-specific language forms' (Hjarvard 2004: 94), arise due to the steadily more intense communicative contact between people, both as individuals and in a broader societal perspective.

The increased opportunities for network-based societal organization, combined with the media's possibilities and restrictions, give rise to specific conditions for our use of the language (Hougaard 2014). In this context, both Hjarvard and Hougaard emphasise James J. Gibson's notion of 'affordances', implying "…that people do not just passively perceive the world, but respond to the world and its objects based on an action oriented and pragmatic approach" (Hjarvard 2007: 40, with reference to Gibson 1979: my translation, AG). Communication between medium and user, like that between the individual users, is structured by the media's various (im)possibilities with regard to the various kinds of content, expression and interaction (Hougaard 2014: 44; Hjarvard 2004: 92-93). According to Hutchby (2001), the notion of affordance helps us recognize the possibilities as well as the limitations of the 'media materiality'.[2]

Inspired by Hougaard (2014), I chose to work with the concept of *medialect* because the concept focuses on a language usage that is closely identical to, or at least on a par with, usages regularly called dialects and sociolects. Furthermore, in line with Hougaard, I wanted to distance myself from regarding mediatisation as a "determining condition for language change" (Hougaard 2014:44; my translation, AG). While it is often claimed that online language (or 'medialect') is no different from offline language (or language outside the so-called new media[3]), here, the intention was to investigate the individual chat categories qualitatively because of their importance for the understanding of chat interaction. The initial focus will be on the phenomena of economising and compensating; following that, I intend to register the frequency of selected[4] medialectic features in order to determine if we are dealing with a transitory phenomenon or with more stable tendencies.

4.1. Economising and compensating

The twin processes of economising and compensating seem to be present in all newer digital communication forms, including chat interaction;

as such, they have interested many media and communication scholars (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2011; Hougaard 2014). Economising, a central linguistic strategy in chat interaction, is about writing as succinctly as possible without leading to misunderstanding in a specific context (Hougaard 2004). Among the phenomena singled out by Hougaard are 'rebus language', clippings, netcronyms, ellipsis, interjections and hesitation dots. Others (e.g. Bieswanger 2007; Herring & Zelenkauskaite 2009) establish further (sometimes overlapping) subcategories of economising, such as initialisms, clipping, letter/number homophones, phonetic spelling, omission of punctuation, and absence of spaces. As to compensating, it is a familiar linguistic strategy of engaging the whole body in the interaction; here, it is defined as a "verbalising of the bodily and phonetic components in the interaction" (Hougaard 2014: 48; my translation, AG); it includes emphasis, phonetic spelling, iconic signs, phonetic words, stage remarks and 'hashtags'[5].

Hougaard presents the following figure showing the medialectic features at the morpho-orthographic and lexico-syntactic levels (See Fig. 1):

	Morpho-orthographic	Lexico-syntactic
Economising	Rebus language Clipping Netcronyms Hesitation dots	Ellipses Interjections
Compensating	EMPHASIS !!! ??? Phonetic spelling Ikonic signs :-) <3	Phonetic words Stage remarks Hashtags

Figure 1: Medialectic features (after Hougaard 2014: 49; my translation, AG)

In the sequel, (1) the two datasets will be investigated with respect to economising and compensating; and (2) the datasets representing the

two different e-service encounter contexts will be compared; and finally, (3) the question will be raised whether the interactions are similar to, or different from, other types of chat interactions with regard to content.

5. The analysis

In this section, the most important analytical findings will be presented: first, the ones from the IKEA-material, and then those from the Krifa-material.

5.1. IKEA

With regard to economising at the morpho-orthographic level, there is only one example of rebus language. It appears at the end of a 6 minutes long chat interaction, in which an employee writes "Don't mention it, have a nice day", after which the customer answers "u2"[6] ('you too') and ends the interaction without further remarks. As to clipping, there are far more examples, showing a relatively large variation, for instance subject ellipsis (Rathje 2013), as in "received call", "receive call"; omission of sentence verb in "it hard for me"; formal and especially informal abbreviations such as *adr*, short for 'adresse' ('address'); *stk*, short for 'styk' ('piece'); *flg*, short for 'følgende' ('following'), *lign*, short for 'lignende' ('similar'); *mgl*, short for 'manglende' ('missing'); *leveringsomk*, short for 'leveringsomkostninger' ('shipping & handling'); here, the distinct tendency is to leave out the final full stop in otherwise formal abbreviations.

Likewise, we find single letters being omitted in the middle of words, a tendency by some called 'middle-clipping' (White 2014, 2015; in Danish *midterklipning*, Rathje 2015); examples are *dn*, short for 'den' ('it'); *dm*, short for 'dem' ('them'); and *dt*, short for 'det' ('that'), *vejledne*, short for 'vejledende' ('suggested'), *køkkenkonsulter*, short for 'køkkenkonsulenter' ('kitchen advisors')[7].

Different types of clipping occur with pronouns, e.g. *hva*, short for

'hvad' ('what'); with adjectives, e.g. *selv go da*g, short for 'selv god dag' ('have a nice day you too'); or with verbs, as in *sku*, short for 'skulle' ('should') or the frequent use of *ha*, short for 'have' ('have'), as in *tak ska du ha* ('thank you'), *skal ha det med* ('am including that, too'), *ha en god dag* ('have a nice day'), or in *ka*, short for 'kan' ('can', 'may'): *ka det passe* ('can it be the case'). Single occurrences were found for *skr*, short for 'skrive' ('write'), as in *men du kan evt. skr til* ('but you may alternatively write to'), and *mgl*, short for 'mangler' ('is/are missing'): *de skruer du mgl* ('the screws you are missing'). As for nouns, we find *prob*, short for 'problem' ('problem'), *klok*, short for 'klokken' ('time o'clock'), and *dg*, short for 'dag' ('day'), as in *har et prob, hvad klok lukker ikea i dag* ('have a problem, what time does Ikea close today'); compare *7-10 dg* ('7-10 days'). As to adverbs, there is a single occurrence of *slf.*, short for 'selvfølgelig' ('of course') in *det beklager jeg slf.* ('I am sorry for that, of course'); by contrast. there is a frequent use of the adverbial clipping *ikk*, short for 'ikke' ('not'); see the customer's replies as in the exchange below (Extract 1):

> (Extract 1)
> [Sales representative] det eksisterer ikke
> – den findes kun med sort betræk
> (it does not exist – it can only be had with black cover)
> [Customer] eksisterer ikk eller ikk på lager for på jeres
> hjemmeside er den der, findes det betræk ikk i rødt?
> (does not exist or is not in stock since it is on your
> home page, does this cover not come in red?)
> [Sales representative] den findes ikke i rød
> – fixhulten findes kun med sort betræk
> (it does not come in red – fixhulten [name of the couch]
> only comes with black cover)
> [Customer] men det er ikk sofaen jeg vil købe
> kun det røde sofabetræk
> (but it is not the couch I want to buy only the red cover

As to netcronyms, there are two occurrences of *ilm*, short for 'i lige måde' ('same to you'; compare the netcronym *yt* for 'you too', found

elsewhere). The examples appear in different interactions with two different customers: the one is where a customer writes *ok det bar bare det jeg skulle vide...tak for hjælpen* ('OK that [was] al- all I needed to know...thanks for your help'), whereupon the employee writes *selv tak, hav en god dag* ('you are welcome, have a nice day') and the customer ends the interaction with *ilm*. In the other exchange, it is the employee who writes *selv tak, hav en god dag*, and the customer answers by typing in *ilm*.

Hesitation dots are used in 55 of the IKEA chat interactions, which corresponds to 13 percent of the entire dataset. The examples vary from relatively neutral statements followed by a few (3-4) hesitation dots: *ikk...*' ('not...') to more forceful statements, followed by up to no less than 9 dots, as in: *men ak...ved ikke præcist hvornår...* ('but sorry ...don't know exactly when...').

Phonetic spelling, though widely used in chat interaction (Hougaard 2004:193), is seldom encountered in the current dataset. There are three occurrences of *oki*, plus one each of *okey* and *halloooo*. As for emphasis, repeated question marks, as in *hvad gør jeg så her???* ('so what am I doing here ???') are more frequent than repetitions of the exclamation mark (*Tak igen!!* – 'Thanks again!!'); both punctuation marks occur together in combinations like: *Lars???!!!*, or in: *får man at vide, at den er udgået??!* ('are you telling me it has been discontinued??!'), or: *nej, det er jo det!?* ('no, that's how it is!?').

In 31 (corresponding to 7 percent) of the IKEA-interactions, emoticons (iconic signs) are being used. Of these, only smileys come in different types, whereas hearts or other types of iconic signs are not used. Smileys that are used in a particular interaction tend to be used more often in the same interaction. In the IKEA-material, the most frequently used types of smileys are :-) and :) (See Fig. 2)

Often used smileys (10 or more occurrences)	Rarely used smileys (5 or fewer occurrences)
:-)	:o)
:)	;-)
	;0)
	(:
	;)
	:-(

Figure 2: Occurrence of smileys in the IKEA-chat

Summing up the IKEA material along the morpho-orthographic dimension gives the following results:

Economising

- Rare use of rebus language and netcronyms (respectively 0.2 percent and 0.5 percent of the interactions; N=434[8])
- Frequent use of clipping and hesitation dots (the latter accounting for 13 percent of the interactions; N=434)

Compensating

- Rare use of phonetic spelling and iconic signs (the latter stand for 7 percent of the interactions; N=434)
- Frequent use of emphasis[9]

As far as economising at the syntactic lexical level is concerned, the dataset holds a number of examples of ellipsis where omission of the

sentence verb is particularly predominant, as in the above example: *ok, det bar bare det, jeg skulle vide* ('ok, that [was] al all I needed to know'). As for interjections, there are a few examples. like *av* ('ouch'), *Øv* ('Aw'), *Hmm, hm...* ('erh'), *ha ha* ('ha ha'), ups ('oops', with or without hesitation dots, also spelled *ops*, as in *ops, caps lock* :-); sometimes they border on purely phonetic or sound-imitative words such as *wau* ('wow') or *Ring Ring, Ring Ring*. The latter type easily combines with the quite frequently occurring so-called 'stage remarks' (for this term, see Hougaard 2004: 195; Bojsen 1996:17); compare *Er der no'en??* ('Is anyone there??') and *Er der nogen???? Ring Ring, Ring Ring* ('Anybody there???? Ring Ring, Ring Ring'). Many such stage remarks turn up along with variants of the 'intensifier' super: *super tak for det* ('super thank you'), *super, tak* :-)' ('super, thanks :-)'), *hav en super dag!* ('have a super day!'), or just *'super...'* Also, many customers use their stage remarks to directly address the interactant(s), often using English: *And thanks by the way! Great way to service your customers* :-), *We too think that chat is a great idea,* :-), or *thanks for responding quickly – good chat-solution and good day.* By contrast, others are more indirect in other ways, using some kind of circumlocution: *thank you for the help and lovely smile you have – know very well that it isn't you but have a vivid imagination* :-) – here, the reference is to IKEA's prototypical picture of the chatting customer service assistant. One customer notices technical problems: *Sorry, my internet crashed*, another underlines his thanking with a swear word: *Thanks – it is bloody good service!.* More varied stage remarks may go like this: *Thanks, in spite of the rather harsh tone,* or: *are you sure smiling.*

A number of medialectic features have their origin in telephone conversations. Example are: *one moment, 2 secs?, hello? – ah there you are?, is anybody there? Hello, I'll just check it out and get back to you, Just a moment I'll check it out, two secs I'll be back* and the ubiquitous *hi, my name is [customer's first name].*

The following exchanges (Extracts (2)-(4)) between an IKEA representative and a customer illustrate how these interactions may proceed.

(2)
[Representative] Nej, du skal bruge 2 lamelbunde på 90 x 200 cm.
Der er to forskellige højde man kan monteres liste og midtersprosse,
der så vil afgører [sic] hvor højt, eller lavt, madrassen vil ligge.
Jeg kender ikke højden på madrassen, og heller ikke de præcise mål på
hvor de førnævnte dele skal monteres, men jeg kan ikke garantere
at madrassen vil være over sengekanten, så kunne man evt købe
en topmadras.
(No, you need 2 slatted bed bases of 90 x 200 cm. There are two
different heights for mounting the side lists and the middle part of the
frame; this will determine how high, or low, the mattress will come up.
I don't know the height of the mattress and don't have the exact measure-
ments for where the parts in question are to be mounted, but I cannot
guarantee that the mattress will rise up above the sideframe, so perhaps
you could buy a top mattress)

(3)
[Representative] Sengen er på vej den sku være her i starten
af næste uge – undersengen er ikke bekræftet fra leverendøren
[sic] endnu så der kan jeg ikke sige noget præcis om den endnu.
(The bed is on its way it should be here early next week
– the box mattress has not yet been confirmed by the supplier
so there I cannot say anything specific about it yet)

(4)
[Customer] undskyld men den sofa jeg har er en 2 pers og den
ligner jeres model Fixhult, så jeg håber jeg ka bruge jeres sofabetræk.
(Excuse me but the couch I have is for two persons and it is similar to
your Fixhult model, so I hope I can use your couch cover)

Given the informal character of these interactions, they could just as
well have occurred in a telephone or Skype conversation. It is, however,
difficult to imagine that in a more traditional communicative medium
(such as a business letter to or from IKEA), one would choose to express
oneself in the way that in particular the customer of example (3) does.

In addition, one finds communications where capital letters are
being used ¬– not just for product names (IKEA has many of these,
for which it uses capital letters), but occasionally by mistake or due to

a typo, as in the example of somebody writing *ops, caps lock* :-). Caps may also be employed to underline the importance of a message, as in *WHAT IS GOING ON??, ...if we MUST have those chairs..., We are TIRED of waiting, I can NOT update the profile*, and so on.

5.2. Krifa

As for economising at the morpho-orthographic level, there are no examples of rebus language in the dataset. Clipping occurs in the form of subject ellipsis, as in *har været fritstillet indtil d. 1 dennes, men har* (...), *sender den inden for 10 min.* or *Jamen vidste ingenting* ('have been put on garden [i.e. paid] leave until the 1st instant, but have (...)', 'will send it within 10 min.', or 'But knew nothing'). Omission of the sentence verb, with subsequent introduction of the subject, is illustrated by *dejligt elevtiden tæller også, så er jeg mere rolig – er lige nu i gang med noget gruppe-terapi* (...) ('nice that the period of training also counts, now I'm more at ease – am doing some group therapy at the moment (...)'). There are various formal and informal abbreviations such as *min.*, short for 'minutter' ('minutes'), *pt.*, short for 'pro tempore' ('for the time being'), *p.f.tak*, short for 'på forhånd tak' ('thanks in advance'), *mdr.*, short for 'måneder' ('months'), *evt.*, short for 'eventuelt' ('possibly'), *mdn*, short for 'måneden' ('the month'), *add.*, short for 'adresse' ('address'), *pgr*, short for 'på grund af' ('because of'), *ang*, short for 'angående' ('regarding'), *sygesedl*, short for 'sygeseddel' ('sick ticket'), and *spg*, short for 'spørgsmål' ('question').

Leaving out the full stop at the end of otherwise formal abbreviations is not common, neither are single letters dropped in the middle of words. A few other types of clipping occur with verbs, e.g. *ha en god dag* ('hav a nice day'); for adverbs, there is a single occurrence of *slf.*, short for 'selvfølgelig' ('of course'). The adverb *ik*, short for 'ikke' ('not') is more frequent, as in *ka ik lige huske* ('can't remember right now') and *kender ik lige* ('don't know on the spot').

Six examples of netcronyms show up in the Krifa dataset, all in the

form of the netcronym *ilm*, short for 'i lige måde' ('the same to you') or its English version *yt*, (for 'you too'). The first example occurs when a member ends the interaction by writing *tak for det, hejhej* ('thanks, bye bye'), and the union representative gives the standard answer *Det var så lidt, hav en god dag* ('Don't mention it. Have a nice day'); whereupon the member ends the interaction by writing *ilm* ('yt'). Another member writes *Fint. Tak for hjælpen og god weekend* :) ('Fine. Thanks for your help and have a nice weekend :)'); to which the union representative replies: *ilm tak* ('yt thanks'). A third example shows a union representative writing *Det var så lidt og ha' en go' weekend* ('Don't mention it and have a nice weekend'), with the customer answering *Ilm.* ('Yt'). The next example is of a member writing *jep gør jeg med det samme. Tak for hjælpen og god weekend* ('yep will do it right away. Thanks for your help and have a good weekend'), to which the employee answers *ilm tak og held og lykke* ('yt thanks and good luck'). In the fifth example, a member writes *God dag til dig* :-) ('Good day to you :-)'), and the employee answers *ilm tak* ('yt thanks'). The final example occurs when a member writes *Mange tak og god weekend* ('Thanks a lot and have a good weekend'), and the union representative answers *ilm tak*:) ('yt thanks :)').

Hesitation dots are used in 95 of the Krifa interactions, corresponding to 21 percent of the entire dataset. Most examples show 2-4 dots, as in: *Ok...Det er bare iorden.* ('OK.. That's all right.)' or *håber du forstår...* ('hope you understand...'); more serious content does not necessarily lead to an increase in hesitation dots, as in the following example: *men håber ikke at jeg skal til at skrive klage...på klage* ('hope that I won't have to write complaint...after complaint'). In some of the interactions, hesitation dots stand for the (almost) entire punctuation, as in Extracts (5)–(6), with the exception of a single question mark in (5).

(5)
[Member] hej...jeg har idag fået dagpenge for ialt 2 mdr. pgr en manglende lønseddel...da jeg så får mine penge kan jeg se at der er kommet 18.200 ind på min konto...måske et underligt spørgsmål men vil

det så sige at jeg får 9100 efter skat om mdn? eller
er jeg kommet til at betale mere i skat fordi at jeg fik 30400
før skat denne gang...ved du evt det?
(Hi...I received unemployment benefit today for a total of 2 mths.
because of a missing payslip...when I get my money I can see
that 18,200 has been transferred to my account...perhaps an
odd question, but does it mean that I receive 9,100 per mth after tax?
or do I pay more tax because I received 30,400 before tax this time…
perhaps you know?)

(6)
[Member] det er der ikke noget at gøre ved...
ja oki du sender bare...mange tak for hjælpen...
(that is all right...yes okay you just send...
thanks a lot for your help...)

There are some examples of phonetic spelling, where expressions like *Oki, Okeeey* and *Hmmm* occur. As far as emphasis goes, repeated questions marks as in *hvad gør jeg??* ('what do I do??'), *når vi begge er butiks assistenter???* ('when we are both shop assistants???') and *har lige fået dagpenge????* ('have just received unemployment benefit????') are more frequent than repeated exclamation marks as in *i dag!!!* ('today!!!') and *Dårlig info!!!!* ('Poor info!!!!'); but there are also combinations such as: *på jeres hjemmeside?!* ('on your website?!') and *Men det passer ikke!!!???* ('But that is not true!!!???').

Overall, 157 interactions (corresponding to 35 percent) use emoticons. Different types of smileys are found, whereas hearts or other types of iconic signs are not used.

Often used smileys (10 or more occurrences)	Rarely used smileys (less than 5 occurrences)		
:-)	:(	:0)	:_)
:)	;-)	=o)	:-S
:D	;o)	:-()	:-/
:o)	;O)	:-(	:o(
;)			

Figure 3: Occurrence of smileys in the Krifa dataset

In addition, a tendency was found to link emphasis and iconic signs, as in Extracts (7)-(9):

(7)
[Member] når jeg er godt i gang på kompetencecenteret
i [bynavn]????? :-(
(when I am well underway at the competence
center in [name of city]????? :-()

(8)
[Member] hånden…..:0)
(the hand……:0))

(9)
[Member] ok.. Jeg ser hvad jeg kan gøre.. :-) Takker.. :-)
(ok.. I will see what I can do.. :-) Thanks.. :-))

A morpho-orthographic resume of the Krifa material looks like this:

Economising

- No use of rebus language

- Rare use of netcronyms
  (1 percent of the interactions, N= 448)

- Frequent use of clipping and hesitation dots
  (the latter accounting for 21 percent of
  the interactions, N=448)

Compensating

- Rare use of phonetic spelling[10]

- Frequent use of emphasis and iconic signs (the latter account
  for 35 percent of the interactions, N=448)

As for economising at the lexico-syntactic level, the Krifa dataset exhibits a number of cases of especially subject ellipsis, as in: *have no further questions* and *Talk later?* (omission of 'we'). There are some examples of interjections such as *umm, hmm, Ehmmm...*, *Aha, huh, haha* and *hehe*; the latter come close to being purely phonetic words such as *AW*, or *Aaah*. As to *hello*, this frequently combines with a stage remark like *Are you there?*.

The Krifa material shows also certain signs of 'hypersocialisation' (Grønning 2006), here understood as intensive use of positive features; examples are *Super thanks* or *Super good idea with the chat*.

6. Discussion

With regard to economising, the datasets from both IKEA and Krifa show none or rare use of rebus language and netcronyms; by contrast, clipping and hesitation dots figure fairly prominently. As to compensating, both datasets exhibit frequent use of emphasis, but rare uses of phonetic spelling. The biggest difference between the two sets of interactions is in the occurrence of iconic signs. Emoticons are being used as hedges, i.e. to either soften or strengthen the impact of utterances (Skovholt, Grønning, & Kankaanranta 2014). Whereas only 7 percent

of the IKEA interactions contain iconic signs, these are more frequent in the Krifa material, where 35 percent of the interactions contain one or more emoticons. Common to both datasets is their use of various smileys, to the exclusion of hearts and other iconic signs; while the two most frequent smileys in the two datasets are the same::-) and :), the greatest variation in smiley types is seen in the Krifa interactions (a total of 17 variants), the IKEA chats trailing with all in all 8 smiley variants.

The two datasets being three years apart (2007 to 2010), the rapid development in the use of smileys may come into play here. Even so, when context is taken into consideration, it seems surprising that serious subjects such as unemployment benefits, fear of layoffs, and sick tickets elicit far more smileys than do interactions about less important matters, such as assembling a cot or purchasing trendy fixtures for one's kitchen. One could perhaps argue that chat about serious subjects in particular needs to be mitigated in order to ensure a pleasant interaction; this might explain the increased use of smileys in the Krifa dataset.

Common to both sets of interactions are the frequent 'stage remarks' that accompany the chat. Whereas the customers/members show their appreciation of the chat service, the employees in particular choose either not to comment on the chat form at all, or only offer a comment when the chat service seems inadequate; as one Krifa employee remarks: *I think it is difficult to have a close dialogue about this through chat.*

Certain familiar features from the era of telephone conversations or paper letter writing (like adding on a PS to one's message) re-emerge in chat, combined with the latter's own medialectic features (compare: *2 secs, I'll just check it out*). One could argue that these features are transitional, typically 'chatlectic', features that arise when new communication forms are introduced (as is the case here, in the professional e-service encounters taking place between customers/members and representatives of companies/unions). To help the individual customer/member service representative, both IKEA and Krifa have formulated a number of standard chat sentences which the representatives can

easily incorporate in their messages as content, by using a simple click. Standard sentences are, for instance: *I'll check it out, just a moment, Thanks for contacting us. Have a nice day,* or *A long time having passed without any chat activity on your part, I will now close the chat. You are welcome to contact us again if you did not get the answers to your questions.* However, this kind of pre-formulated, stiff and hypercorrect sentences frequently create a potential breach in the interaction by changing its tone. As instances, consider the following exchanges, where a customer is interacting very informally but a representative replies using a pre-formulated, hypercorrect sentence, as in Extracts (10)-(11).

> (10)
> [Customer] hvad kan jeg ellers gøre..?? vil gerne bestille nogen varer
> (what else can I do..?? would like to order some stuff)
> [Representative] Jeg må bede dig ringe til Homeshopping på tlf. [nummer], således at vi bedre kan hjælpe dig med dit ærinde.
> (I kindly ask you to call Homeshopping on phone [number] so we can offer you a better help concerning your purchase).

> (11)
> [Customer] måske spørger jeg forkert, når der står 200 cm
> på en sovesofa, hvor er målet så taget?
> (maybe I'm asking the wrong question, if it says 200 cm on a sleeper, then where has this measure been taken?)
>
> [Representative] Jeg må bede dig ringe på tlf. [nummer], således at vi bedre kan hjælpe dig med dit ærinde.
> (I kindly ask you to call telephone [number] in order for us to better help you with your purchase.)

7. Conclusion

The chat interactions from IKEA and Krifa analysed in this paper differ substantially from other types of chat interactions, mainly in the private sphere; in particular, they differ from chat interactions in group rooms (Hougaard 2004). Firstly (as in other kinds of service

encounters), the participants do not have much time. Secondly, the interactions have a clearer purpose (solving a problem) than do private interactions in general; in fact, practically all chat interactions end as soon as the actual problem has been solved. Whereas other service encounters (face to face, telephone, e-mail) are distinguished by multiple occurrences of unspecific politeness markers (Grønning 2006), the e-service encounters in this study are more liable to show specific politeness and thankfulness, embodied in a humoristic tone of voice and a virtual 'wink'; naturally occurring expressions such as *hehe, taks* (Danish slang for 'thanks') in combination with iconic signs, as in *super, thanks* :-), along with the many stage remarks, confirm this impression. Moreover, a remarkable difference occurs, compared to chat interactions in a private context (Hougaard 2014, 2004), in the form of potential breaches in the tone of interaction, due to the aforementioned use of preformulated, hypercorrect sentences.

Similar to what happens in private chat interactions, professional chat between customers/members and company/union representatives frequently uses emphasis, clipping and hesitation dots. The use of iconic signs in the trade union context (the Krifa dataset) is remarkable in light of the public debate about the tone of voice and use of smileys in related sectors, such as banking and finance (see e.g. Seidenfaden 2013); here, the focus is, whether, among other things, customers in particular would perceive a frequent use of smileys as constituting transgressive behavior, as such use is seen as belonging to intimacy and actual social presence.

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Notes

[1]The Krifa-project had to be approved by the Danish Data Protection Agency, as union affiliation is regarded as personal information.

[2]The concept of 'affordance' was originally introduced by Gibson (1979) and later applied by Norman (1990) to the psychological mechanisms steering our dealing with everyday things.

[3]See for instance Crystal (2001) and Baron (2008) for a discussion of net language versus language outside the new media.

[4]Exact figures are given for rebus language, netcronyms, hesitation dots and iconic signs.

[5]There are no hashtags in the material, which is natural, since the use of hashtag became ordinary after 2007-2010. (This is why I do not pursue this category further).

[6]Spillover from English. The material has not been examined for further international forms.

[7]It can however be difficult to distinguish between typos and economising.

[8]The total number of interactions (N) = 434

[9]See footnote 4.

[10]See footnote 4.