

**EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL EDITORS GUILD
MEMBERS ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION'S
ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION: E-MAIL**

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DECLARATION

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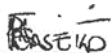
EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL EDITORS GUILD MEMBERS ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION'S ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION: E-MAIL

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SIGNATURE

20 February 2022
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my late father, Mr Ambrose, Nimrod, Njobo Maseko. Thank you for instilling the love for books and education in all your children. The bookshelves that were filled with Encyclopaedias were my first true love for education. Thank you for sacrificing so much and sending us to the best schools in Swaziland. Maseko Ngcamane, Khubonye waNdlovu, Sdvwaba siluthuli, Nkhomo tidla ekhaya ngekweswela belusi.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Asynchronous Communication
ACMC	Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AUM	Anxiety and Uncertainty Management
CALL	Computer-assisted language learning
CCA	Constant Comparative Analysis
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
DTP	Desktop publishing
EXCO	Executive Committee
FAQs	Frequently Answered Questions
GT	Grounded Theory
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IRT	Information Richness Theory
LAMP	Language and Media Professionals
LSSA	Law Society of South Africa
MIM	Mobile instant messaging
PEG	Professional Editors Guild
POPI	Protection of Personal Information
UK	United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

The Professional Editors Guild is an online-based association for language practitioners in South Africa and designed the e-mail forum intending to reach out to members that could need professional editing support. Since its inception, there has not been a study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the e-mail forum at this association. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the members' perceptions of their participation in this e-mail forum. This study was underpinned by the Symbolic Interaction Theory and Dual Capacity Model. Issues of Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication in international organisations and in South Africa were deliberated upon. The literature revealed that organisations still have a myriad of issues to tackle if they are to realise successful communication utilising Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication.

The population consisted of all language practitioners in South Africa. The sample was conveniently and purposeful selected and included all members who had their 2020/1 membership paid-up and were willing to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted online with 11 participants because of the Covid-19 pandemic, utilising platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, as per the participants' preferences.

After data collection, they were analysed using frame document analysis and the constant comparative methods. The findings were based on the three research sub-questions. Firstly, Association was hailed as a professional association that serves as a professional pillar for its members. Secondly, the members level of participation on the e-mail forum varied. The more experienced members seemed to be more comfortable to participate yet the new members still lack confidence in their ability to be visible on the e-mail forum. An interesting dynamic that emerged was that some previously active members had stopped being active because they were disgruntled and had resorted to forming breakaway groups on WhatsApp. Lastly, the study found that more training needs to be provided to members who may still lack some basic technology skills, this may increase their enthusiasm to participate in the e-mail forum. Theoretically, this study adds to the current discourse on optimal e-mail usage in general.

KEYWORDS: Computer Mediated Communication, asynchronous communication, e-mail, e-mail forum, perceptions, association, Dual Capacity Model, Symbolic Interaction Theory

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In organisational communication, there are various definitions of the word communication. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) present a contested definition of communication that communication is a transactional and symbolic process wherein messages are disseminated and interpreted to form a mutual understanding between the sender and receiver. The contestation in this definition comes to the fore because communication is said to be one human activity that everyone may recognise but may not define satisfactorily (Fiske 1990). Further, communication is an acquired activity provided by the media that forms a bridge between the sender and the receiver (Dimbley & Burton 1992). Asynchronous Communication (AC) consists of communication activities that take place outside of real-time. This type of communication, by nature, requires delayed responses as it does not happen synchronously. For example, sending electronic mail is classified under AC because there is a delay in responses sent to the sender by the receiver. On the one hand, some authors define synchronous communication as involving instantaneous communication in a learning environment, most commonly in the form of text chats (Johnson 2006 in Oztok, Zingaro & Brett 2011). It is communication that takes place online like a conversation (Benbunah-Fich & Hiltz 1999). For example, this could be a chat session via Skype or Teams where the recipient is online in real-time as has become popular with most organisations in the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the focus of this study was on Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) which is referred to as CMC in this study.

Below is a brief background of Asynchronous CMC and PEG. Thereafter, this chapter briefly presents all the steps followed during the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO ASYNCHRONOUS COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION (CMC)

Asynchronous CMC, with specific reference to electronic mail (e-mail), remains a popular form of organisational communication tool in some organisations that are looking at investing in a new organisational communication paradigm shift (Lee Cheng Ean. 2011; Guo, Zixiu; Tan, Felix B. & Cheung, Kenneth 2010; Tolmie & Boyle 2000). E-mail is the ‘entry, storage,

distribution and reception, from one account to one or more other accounts of digitised text using a central computer and remote terminals connected by a telecommunications network' (Garton & Welman 2016). The asynchronous e-mail exchange is still seen as important as it facilitates discussions and problem resolution among different groups, especially within an organisational communication context (Tolmie, Howe, McKenzie & Greer 1993). Carlson and George (2004) contend that one of the features of e-mail is that it has a loss of verbal cues and attention, and a loss of participants' status, especially if they are not familiar with one another. In the context of this study, unless otherwise stated, when reference is made to Asynchronous CMC it will be referring to the e-mail forum.

1.3 THE PROFESSIONAL EDITORS' GUILD BACKGROUND

PEG is an online association of private, independent and company-affiliated professional language editors, proofreaders, translators, transcribers and other language practitioners. As stated on the association's website, "PEG members include both freelancers and full-timers who work professionally in any of South Africa's 11 official languages" (www.editors.org.za). The editors and proofreaders work on documents written in various South African and international languages such as English, Afrikaans, Portuguese, French, Zulu, SiSwati and many others that clients require. As an online-based association of professionals, PEG has two main organisational communication flows. One is from the association's executive to members and the other one is between members, utilising electronic mail.

"The association was launched in Johannesburg in 1993 as a national body with two principal branches in Gauteng and Cape Town, each run by a committee of volunteers" (www.editors.org.za). PEG represents practitioners who operate in the South African publishing industry, corporate communications and media. PEG is a founding member of LAMP (an umbrella Alliance of Language and Media Professionals). The LAMP mission is to promote the interests of all those professionals who serve this vital sector of the South African economy.

PEG members pay an annual membership fee to be included in the daily electronic mail communication group. This e-mail is supported by Google groups. This e-mail communication is passed down from the executive to the web administrator or association's secretary who in turn sends it to members. This form of communication is always labelled as 'OFFICIAL' on the 'About/Re' pane, just under the 'To/Cc' panes. This communication ranges from clients seeking the services of a copy editor, translator, ghost-writer, content developer, web designer,

over writer, indexer, book designer, book writer, sub-editor, writer, proofreader, and book and Desktop Publishing (DTP) specialists. Members are then responsible for responding to these job postings where the client makes a choice on which member to answer or give the business to. PEG has a recommended charge rate that guides the members. Responses to clients by members are not standard. Each member chooses how and when to respond, or not to respond, to a job posting or a potential customer. Furthermore, there are also conferences and training opportunities that are forwarded to members via the web administrator and secretary. The association also has a website www.editors.org.za where its past and future events are posted. Here, the members can view training workshops, meetings, conference dates, and make the necessary bookings should they wish to attend.

There is also vertical communication among members wherein a myriad of issues is attended to including seeking clarity from other members on various professional issues. This is a form of a support instrument that is the main communication channel among the association's members. It is an e-mail forum where only subscribed members receive daily communication through their various e-mail addresses, as supported by Google groups. This form of communication is identified as 'PEG CHAT'. The 'PEG CHAT' forum was designed as a support tool among members wherein a myriad of editing and language issues are deliberated. For example, it could be a member seeking assistance on how to draft a grammatically correct sentence or seeking advice on how to manage their professional editing businesses. However, it ought to be noted that the word 'chat' is perhaps a misnomer because the founding members did not fully comprehend the meaning of the word 'chat' conventionally. A chat is a synchronous communication activity that occurs in real-time. Simply put, this platform is an e-mail forum. Thus, it is an AC tool. Consequently, the word that will be used in this study, to avoid confusion, is e-mail forum.

In addition, PEG's other function is the experienced language practitioners to mentor new editors, to uphold language standards in South Africa. Further, the PEG membership objectives are that the members strive to: elevate and uphold standards of work in the profession; improve the public perception of copy-editing and proofreading as a craft and raise the awareness of a much-needed service (www.editors.org.za).

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Broadley (2011) advocates that the use of the Internet and technology to engage and support professionals in learning opportunities is not new, however, many are still not utilising such

approaches to their full potential. This tallies with the researcher's assumption that new members and some old members seem not to be fully utilising the e-mail chat forum.

The purpose of this study was to explore PEG members' perceptions of their AC participation in an online association, via electronic mail. The researcher took an interest in investigating this phenomenon because, PEG had 390 subscribed memberships for the 2016/17 financial year and 30 new members as of March 2021, yet there are a few members who actively participate in the e-mail chat daily. The researcher noted with interest that it is the same members who communicate using the group chat via electronic mail.

Below is a representation that depicts the communication flow at PEG. The association follows a formal internal communication pattern whereby messages are formally relayed from the executive to the administrator and website coordinator who in turn, relay messages to members. Formal internal communication is also known as vertical organisational communication where a message can be from the managers to subordinates or subordinates to managers; downward and upward flow respectively (Cornelissen, 2014: 30). PEG's vertical communication is evident in this welcome message that every member receives from the web administrator: 'Welcome to PEG and to the PEG e-groups. This is the official mailing list, where you will receive event invitations, PEG news, job listings and official announcements. Only EXCO members have permission to post to this list' (www.editors.org.za). In addition, there is a horizontal communication flow between members. The horizontal flow is still coordinated and monitored by the web coordinator. When communication occurs among peers in an organisation, it is called horizontal communication (ibid). The horizontal e-mail communication flow at PEG is the main focus and it occurs under a tool called the PEG e-mail chat forum. This is the welcome message for new members: The peg-sa@googlegroups.com mailing list is an informal chat group that any member can post to. That is a friendly forum where you can ask for editing advice from your fellow PEG members and share editing experiences.

Internal organisation communication organogram at PEG:

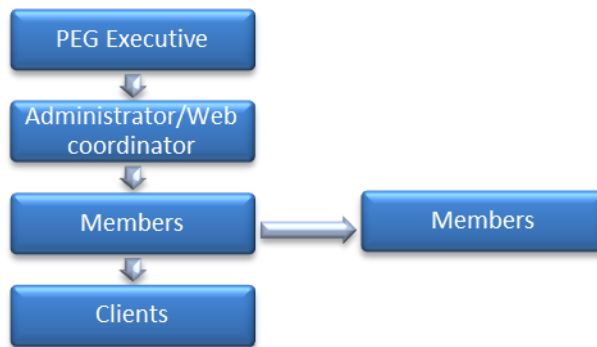


Figure 1: Researcher's interpretation of communication flow at PEG

1.5 THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Emerging information and communication technologies are spawning new business paradigms and introducing fundamental changes in business processes and workgroup communication (Pereira & Romero 2017). These are some of the underlying reasons the researcher decided to investigate this topic on Asynchronous CMC.

This study was feasible as it sought to focus on one online-based association. The members resided across South Africa, and the researcher did not have a problem finding members to participate and agree to be interviewed for the study. There was confirmed support by the PEG administrator to identify information-rich and willing participants for the study.

This study was cross-sectional and had to be conducted online because of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown regulations, so the costs involved were minimal, save for data and transcribing stationery costs.

Investigating and exploring PEG members' perceptions on their participation in the association's AC may further assist in creating a reference document with guidelines for members to improve their communication within the group, thus upholding PEG's aim of upholding professional editing standards in South Africa.

1.6 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The goal of organisational communication is to solicit responses to messages sent by the sender

to the receiver and for there to be communication and understanding a message the way the sender intends. In organisations, communication is vital because it serves as the organisation's blood through promoting motivation among members; providing information to members; improving members' attitudes and helping members to socialise (Zink 2020). Organisational communication can either be face-to-face via meetings or online via emails. E-mail was developed in the early 1970s and remains more cost-effective than telephonic conversations because it can send and receive messages everywhere at a fraction of the price (Angelopulo & Barker 2013).

PEG designed the e-mail forum to reach out to members that need professional editing support. This is a forum where members who face editing-related challenges can openly share such challenges online while those with possible solutions can equally share possible solutions. Having briefly presented the benefits of emails in organisations, it is a cause for concern that there are seemingly fewer PEG members who participate in the e-mail forum, as compared to its membership numbers. For instance, the association recorded 30 new members in March 2021 only.

Since the e-mail chat forum was developed to provide professional support especially for new and inexperienced editors, there is a risk that the standards that are upheld by PEG may not be reached if potential developmental areas are not identifiable as it is evident the new editors earnestly require editorial support. Considering the significant new PEG membership numbers that join the guild monthly, standing at 30 new members in March 2021, there is cause for concern since it is evident that new members need editorial support. Broadley (2011) further argues that the use of the Internet and technology to engage and support professionals in entities is not new, however, many are still not utilising such approaches to their full potential. This means the use of technology in enhancing professionals' work is still not utilised as much as it should be.

After having conducted a literature search on Asynchronous CMC, the researcher noted that there is a dearth of research on e-mail participation of online professional associations. Some of the articles on Asynchronous CMC look at the issue of online learning; which ICT tools students prefer and how they deal with the issue of learning in a non-physical environment. For instance, Yen and Tu (2008) look at social presence in Asynchronous CMC. Benbunah-Fich and Hiltz (1999) investigate the impact of asynchronous learning networks. AIAfnan (2015) looks at the structure of emails and Hrastinski (2008) conducted another case study of two e-learning courses. Further, some empirical research on Asynchronous CMC utilises mixed

methods or quantitative experiments involving college students. The findings of these studies are unpacked in the literature review chapter.

Some of these studies have been experimental laboratory studies of two to five persons, comparing how face-to-face and computer conferencing groups solve specified problems in fixed time limits (Garton & Welman 2016; Benbunah-Fich & Hiltz 1999). Furthermore, the researcher discovered that most research on CMC focuses on the social effects of CMC (Bates 1995; Henri 1995; Jones 1998), media choice (Carlson & Davis 1998; Markus 1994; Webster 1998), and CMC technologies' performance (Canessa & Riolo, 2006; Mennecke *et al.*, 2000; Olaniran, 1994; Simon, 2006; Suh, 1999; Taylor, 2006). CMC is also a research stream that focuses on communication via computer technology for human-to-human interaction (Monberg 2005). Thus, an endeavour to engage in this study as there is a dearth of information on perceptions of members' e-mail usage in South African organisations.

1.7 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to attain the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's AC to formulate guidelines that could assist members to optimally utilise the association's e-mail forum.

Objectives:

Responses to these questions may assist in meeting the objectives which were:

- to understand PEG members' perceptions on the significance of AC via e-mail.
- to describe PEG members perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum and
- to draw up strategies to improve PEG members' participation on the e-mail forum.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

Online interviews were conducted with purposively selected PEG member participants. The main research question was:

What are the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication/e-mail?

Semi-structured sub-questions were the following:

- What is PEG members' understanding of the significance of Asynchronous Communication such as emails within organisations such as PEG?
- What are the perceptions of the level of members' participation in AC within the PEG e-mail forum?
- How can e-mail participation be improved at PEG?

1.9 LITERATURE PREVIEW

Literature reveals that for organisations to survive and prosper, they must resist entropy by continually adapting, improving and enhancing the effectiveness of organisational processes (Krepps 1990a; Mitroff & Kilmann 1975). Additionally, Krepps (1985;1990a); Axley (1980) and Pace (1983) profess that communication researchers are well situated to help promote organisational adaptation and change because the success of activities depends on how well the members can communicate and use valuable information. This is parallel to the Symbolic Interaction Theory that underpins this study.

Face-to-face communication in organisations can be cost-prohibitive, particularly in times of fiscal austerity, according to Skopp, Workman, Adler and Gahm (2015).

On the one hand, emails are not seen as the 'god' of organisational communication. For instance, Levine and Collins (2007) lament that the potential disadvantage of multiple recipient emails is the possibility of diffusion of responsibility. This view partly answers the main research question even though it is not related to this specific study. These authors attest that a large distribution list may foster the impression that a request or issue will be addressed by others on the list, potentially leading some individual recipients to direct less effort towards the task (ibid). Another disadvantage in e-mail use is that misunderstandings due to lack of visual cues may be particularly salient when geographically dispersed individuals are unfamiliar with each other according to Skopp *et al.*, (2015). These authors further add that cultural differences may contribute to this misunderstanding that is hard to alleviate without any visual cues (ibid), thus rendering some members inactive in an e-mail communication setting.

On the other hand, Ashraf, Mohammed and Affisco (1999) support the use of electronic networks and CMC as they state it is fast growing in today's organisations. Despite the

increasing use and importance of electronic communication in diverse organisations, there are still questions about its effectiveness and efficiency. Although significant research has been conducted by the same authors (ibid) into the use of computer support for collaborative work, most of it has focused on electronic meeting systems and group support systems”. There is little research conducted on what prompts the use of electronic e-mail amongst members of a particular group, especially an online-based association.

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section discusses the theoretical framework utilised in this study. This framework assisted in answering the research problem. In qualitative research, theories are utilised to explain, predict and comprehend a study’s research phenomenon. In some instances, theories may question existing knowledge or add to existing knowledge. Therefore, a theoretical framework is a boundary that supports a theory in research. The framework explains why the research problem is a problem and why it exists. This study utilised the Dual Capacity Model and the Symbolic Interaction Theory as are discussed below:

1.10. 1 Symbolic Interaction Theory

This study’s underpinning and meta-theory is the Symbolic Interaction Theory. The Symbolic Interaction Theory was developed by Herbert Blumer in 1937 and is fully unpacked in Chapter 2. This theory studies meanings that emerge from the mutual interaction amongst humans in any given social environment. This theory is based on social behaviour and interaction. The Symbolic Interaction Theory purports that facts are based on symbols and the theory’s foundation is based on meanings. This theory studies emerging meanings from human-to-human interaction in any given social environment. Its focus is on “which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people” (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Dermibuken 2009).

The contribution of the Symbolic Interaction Theory in this study is that meaning is attributed to human interaction, as espoused by Putman (1983). This study is based on the human interaction between members of the PEG utilising the e-mail forum. The e-mail forum is a symbol and its meaning is based on how the members utilise it and what they utilise it for. This study’s phenomenon is on the perceptions of the PEG members on their utilisation of the e-

mail forum. The meaning they attach to their participation on the e-mail forum is based on how they utilise it.

Consequently, the Symbolic Interaction Theory contributes to Asynchronous CMC in that it advises how symbols are used by humans to create meaning when they communicate. However, this theory is criticised by authors such as Berg (2000), Nelson (1998), Slattery (2007) and Udehn (2001). It is criticised as a theory that uplifts the “freedom of the individual and not society as a whole” (Udehn 2001). It focuses considerably on the meaning created by the individual in communication more than the meaning formed by a collective of individuals. Further, Aksan, Kisac, Aydin and Demiburken (2009) criticise this theory for ignoring human emotions and only focusing on the social structure. Detailed discussions are in Chapter 2, Section 2.8.1.3.

Dual Capacity Model

The Dual Capacity Model was developed after it was realised that the media can play a dual role in conveying data and conveying and manifesting meaning (Sitkin, Sutcliffe & Barrios-Choplin 1992). As this study interviewed PEG members on their perceptions about their participation in the association’s e-mail forum, this model was deemed appropriate.

the dual role of the media, Sitkin, Sutcliffe and Barrios-Choplin (1992) discuss that a medium conveys both data and meaning and the media’s capacity to carry meaning-laden symbols. Further, these authors present that meaning can guide and govern communication activity. This is in line with this study’s objective of determining what perceptions, meanings and symbols the PEG members may have when participating, or not, in the e-mail forum.

1.11 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research methods are explained as types of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, designs or models that provide a specific direction for procedures in research design, by Creswell (2009). This study employed a qualitative case study design. According to Creswell (ibid), qualitative research aims to describe and analyse people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, values, thoughts and perceptions. “The interest of qualitative researchers is to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and

what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam 2009: 5). The researcher, using the qualitative methodology, interpreted to understand the concept of Asynchronous CMC in an online association, based in South Africa.

1.11.1 Research Paradigm

Mertens (2015:7) posits that there are four basic belief systems in qualitative research. These belief systems are called paradigms and are comprised of philosophical assumptions that create a pathway for thinking and actions. These belief systems are listed as Axiology - the nature of ethics; Ontology - the nature of reality; Epistemology - the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and that which would be known; and Methodology - the appropriate approach to systematic inquiry (Denzin, Lincoln & Guba, 2005).

In centuries past, before reading and writing were common and known in the world, individuals created knowledge in three ways (Macmillan & Schumacher 2014:13). These were personal experience and observation of others; logical positivism; and interpretivism or constructivism. Under the interpretivism paradigm, researchers use systematic procedures, yet they emphasise the idea of multiple constructed realities in the world we live in. In this research, the interpretivist paradigm was used to obtain PEG members perceptions on their participation in the e-mail forum. This is where the subjective world of the PEG members is understood (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011:17). According to Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2014), interpretive researchers aim to explore participants perspectives to develop an understanding and insight into their social world, through collecting and analysing qualitative data.

1.11.2 Research Approach

This study’s approach was exploratory, and it followed a qualitative case study design because it sought to explore PEG members’ perceptions of their participation in the association’s Asynchronous CMC; e-mail. This was a cross-sectional study, therefore it did not take too much time as it is at the Master’s level and because of budgetary constraints. In qualitative research, researchers explore a phenomenon using qualitative data-gathering tools such as open-ended interviews. These produce data based on the participants’ perspectives, experiences and verbatim words (Johnson & Christensen 2012: 18). These data were correctly interpreted, thus there was no subjectivity, and not adapted to suit the researcher’s perspectives, as advised by Blumer in Taylor, Bodgan and Devault (2015: 8).

1.11.3 Research Methodology

This study utilised the phenomenological design because phenomenological designs investigate what participants experience and how they experience it (Macmillan & Schumacher 2014). Thus, the main aim of this study was to explore PEG members perceptions on their e-mail forum participation, getting their views and feelings of their experiences in this regard. The researcher was able to obtain the participants' holistic views through their experiences in the e-mail forum, as Yuksel and Yildirim (2015) posit that phenomenological studies encompass participants' perceptions and feelings about the phenomenon under study.

1.12 SAMPLING SELECTION

1.12.1 Site Selection

McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 377) advise researchers that site selection is a myriad of obtaining the freedom of access, obtaining a site that is suitable to answer the research problem and a site that is feasible for the researcher's time, mobility and skills. The site for this research was the PEG because of its feasibility to the researcher's time and skills and that it was best to help answer the research phenomenon.

1.12.2 Participant Selection

In qualitative research, the sample need not be large (McNeill 1990). It can range from anything from one participant to about 40 (ibid). What is most important in qualitative research is the information generated through data collection. In addition, what is most crucial in qualitative research is the information richness and the analytical skills of the researcher and not the sample size (McMillan & Schumacher 2014: 352). Therefore, the researcher decided who to include in this study and the setting (Betram & Christianse 2014). This decision was based on the researcher's knowledge of the study site, population, its elements and purpose of the study (Babbie 2014) because the researcher is an associate member of the PEG.

In this study, a purposive sample was utilised for participants who were information-rich and who could best help answer the research questions, thus fulfilling the aim and objectives of the study (Maree 2011). Purposive sampling was the most suitable form that was used because the researcher was able to target information-rich participants for enhanced trustworthiness and conformability of data. As supported by Liamputtong (2013:390), purposive sampling selects cases to provide a representative sample.

The representative sample consisted of 12 copy editors who were subscribed to PEG and had their 2020/21 membership paid-up. However, due to reasons beyond the researcher, one participant pulled out of the study a few days before the interviews could commence.

Purposive sampling did not provide a statistically representative sample in this case because the sample consisted of individuals who were selected from a larger group known as the research population, as espoused by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2009:272). According to Check, Russell and Schutt (2012:394), “a research population is the entire set of individuals or entities to which the study findings are to be generalised”.

1.12.3 The Population

Salkind (2012) states that a population is “the total of all individuals who have certain characteristics the researcher is interested in for the study”. A population consists of both target and accessible participants. The two concepts are discussed below.

1.12.4 Target Population

This target population was every member that was affiliated to PEG. PEG members vary in function, responsibilities, interests, experiences and activities. Some of the association’s members are professionals fully employed by different organisations as proofreaders, copy editors, typesetters, sub-editors and translators. Some are self-employed as copy editors, proofreaders and translators. The study was interested in the members who had their 2020/21 membership paid-up because they had access to the daily communication on the e-mail forum. In other words, they were more active on the e-mail platform and had more information on the AC patterns.

Selecting the target population did not pose a challenge as the participants were information-rich, were a daily part of the topic under investigation and had daily experiences of how Asynchronous CMC via e-mail is conducted within PEG members. The participants who participated in this study were information-rich in respect to the purpose of this study (McMillan & Schumacher 2006).

1.12.5 Accessible Population

As briefly stated under the target population, this accessible population were PEG members whose 2020/21 membership was up to date, had access to the e-mail forum and were willing to participate in the study. The accessible population was purposively selected because they

were information-rich key informants (Schumacher & McMillan 2006: 319). The researcher identified 12 participants, however, 11 were interviewed online, due to the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.12.6 The Unit(s) of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the major entity being analysed in a study. It is the ‘what’ or ‘who’ that is being studied. In social science research, typical units of analysis include individuals, groups, social organisations and social artefacts according to William & Trochim 2006. In this study, the units of analysis were PEG members who were subscribed for the 2020/21 financial year, were willing to be a part of this study and had daily access to the e-mail forum. The researcher chose this group as the units of analysis because they have more time to interact with colleagues on the association's e-mail group and they would be information-rich as far as the phenomenon under study was concerned.

1.13 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Burns and Grove (2011) describe data collection as a systematic way of gathering information that is relevant to the research purpose or question. In this study, data were collected using online interviews via Microsoft Teams and Zoom. The online interviews balanced this study as Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) state that interviews are a more natural way of interacting with people than filling out a questionnaire. One of the advantages of using online interviews in qualitative research is that the participants can express themselves freely without fear, while clearly describing the phenomenon under study. The other advantage is that the researcher can probe in case a point presented by a participant is not clear and further ask the participants to provide clarification. Observation during the interviews was an ongoing process since this study was a qualitative case study design. Qualitative researchers try as much as possible to collect data in a natural setting in which the phenomenon could have occurred to gain as much accurate information as possible (Babbie & Mouton 2001).

Initially and during the proposal application stage, this study had adopted the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. However, in the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the looming third wave in South Africa, the researcher saw fit and safe to conduct online interviews utilising tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. The participants were requested to choose the one they were most familiar with.

Apart from the advent of the Covi-19 pandemic, the structured online interviews were an intriguing data collection instrument as the researcher was able to study the phenomenon in an environment in which it occurs, online (Salmons 2015). Further, Salmons (ibid) advises that it is best to use ICTs to conduct interviews if one seeks to unearth patterns of computer mediated use, collecting visual data, participation in online communities and human-computer interaction. Therefore, the online interviews were best suited in this study that sought to explore PEG members' participation in the association's e-mail forum. Besides the aforementioned reasons for conducting online interviews, this method was the safest and most convenient to meet participants (ibid). Online interviews further provided an option of using the web camera, to mimic face-to-face interviews wherein non-verbal and social cues may be picked by the researcher (Stewart & Williams, 2005; Sullivan, 2012). The limiting factor was that the participants' whole-body language could not be observed as the camera only provides a headshot of the participant (Cater 2011).

Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, the world is changing, and online interviews are becoming the norm. Janghorban, Roudsari and Taghipour (2014) specifically study online qualitative interviews via Skype. The authors underscore that online interviewing overcomes time, geographical and financial constraints. As was one of the online interviewing tools in this study, Zoom allowed the researcher to conduct individual interviews online (ibid). Notwithstanding this, ethical protocols were still followed during the online interviews as supported by Cater (2011) and Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, (2007).

An interview schedule was used for the structured interview questions utilised in this study. There were ten in total and every participant was asked the same questions.

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis included reducing, organising, synthesising the data, searching for patterns and unearthing what was significant to this study (Ary, Razavieh & Sorensen 2006: 490). Data assembling, analysis and interpretation, were guided by the same research questions as already stated, utilising a structured interview guide. The analysis process followed this manner so as to prove or disprove the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model.

One of the most common methods of analysing data, is the Constant Comparative Analysis which was employed in this study together with the frame analysis for the association's

newsletter. These methods assisted the researcher in identifying themes and patterns that arose during the research process (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Coding followed a progressive process of sorting and defining pieces of data applicable to the research topic, purpose and questions as cited by Given (2008). Related codes, categories and themes that emerged were organised accordingly (Creswell 2007). The online interviews were recorded using the Microsoft Teams and Zoom software as they have a recording and transcription function, with permission from the participants. Even though these were online interviews, the recording was such that the researcher could record cues that she could have missed when conducting the online interviews. The researcher ensured that enough time was allocated for interview transcriptions and analysis. The transcriptions were conducted immediately after the online interviews so that the researcher could have the opportunity to record and consider non-verbal codes that were still fresh in her mind (ibid).

This study employed document analysis as part of the two-pronged data collection process that led to the constant comparative method as a data analysis technique. This research objectives required extensive literature and document analysis as part of a two-pronged data analysis process including online interviews and document analysis. These play a crucial part in understanding the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study. Bowen (2009) describes document analysis as a methodical technique for evaluating electronic and printed documents. Further, Bowen (2009) and Merriam (1998) present that document analysis improves the understanding of a research phenomenon in particular case studies. The document utilised in this case study was the association's newsletter containing the objectives and a guide on how members ought to utilise the e-mail forum and the association's newsletter. A detailed discussion is in Chapter 2 and argued against findings in Chapter 4.

1.15 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, Jones, Torres and Arminiol (2013:35) believe that a study ought to be trustworthy and of high quality. Biggam (2011) refers to valid research as to how one gathers and analyses their empirical data as well as the strategies and techniques they have used in their research. "Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration" (Mouton 2011: 122). Schumacher and McMillan (2006: 324) describe validity as "the degree to which interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher". According to Mouton (2011: 119),

reliability refers to “whether a particular technique can yield similar results if applied to the same participants by a different researcher/s”. Schumacher and McMillian (1993) state that reliability means that the measurement is consistent every time it is conducted and that the results remain the same. The question to be posed in this study regarding reliability is how similar the results of the instruments would be if used on other occasions. Gibbs (2007) as cited by Creswell (2014) indicates that qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of findings by employing certain procedures.

Gibbs (2007) as cited by Creswell (2014) suggests several qualitative reliability procedures as follows: Check transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcriptions; Cross-check codes developed by different researchers by comparing results that are independently derived and ensure that there is not a drift in the definition of the codes during the process of coding.

The above steps are how the researcher ensured the study’s reliability. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that details of where this research was conducted were listed in this study. This promotes reliability as is recommended by Biggam (2011). Below are the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as espoused in qualitative research. De Vos (2005: 346) states that there are four constructs to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research. These reflect the assumptions in qualitative research more accurately.

1.15.1 Credibility

Credibility is the truth in the data and its interpretation. Credibility is defined as the certainty that can be placed in the truth of the research findings, according to Macnee and McCabe (2008). From the perspective of the participants in the study, the results obtained ought to be credible or believable (Sing 2013). Polit and Beck (2012: 584) suggest that a qualitative researcher must have confidence in the truth of the study findings and “show the state of believability in the findings”. Informing the participants about the study’s aim and objectives before conducting the online interviews builds trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants.

In this study, credibility was further ensured via trustworthiness, member checking and feedback (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). The researcher discussed the research process and findings with her supervisor. To ensure member checks, the researcher shared data interpretations with the participants, summarising and clarifying the data with the participants during the interviews and giving feedback so that their information was not taken out of context. They needed to be shown that what they articulated was depicted exactly as they intended (Marshall & Rossman 2011). Therefore, participants were allowed to reflect on and confirm their interview responses (Polit & Beck 2012: 594).

1.15.2 Transferability

“Transferability is the extent to which findings can be transferred to or have applicability in their settings of groups” (Polit & Beck 2012: 585). However, the results of this study are not transferable to another setting because only one online association was investigated thus the findings cannot be generalised to other online associations. The findings only apply PEG, although other online associations may use the findings as a reference document.

1.15.3 Dependability

“Dependability refers to the consistency of the results when the study is repeated with the very same participants” (Polit & Beck 2012: 585). This was ensured by recording the interviews and the transcripts recorded verbatim without changing any responses and verbal cues from the participants.

1.15.4 Confirmability

“Confirmability is the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings are shaped by the participants and not the researcher’s bias, motivation and interests” (Polit & Beck 2012: 585). In this study, confirmability was ensured by making sure that this study could present exactly what the participants said. Additionally, the findings were derived from the collected data and not the researcher’s feelings, assumptions, motivations and bias. The findings precisely represent the participants’ voices, views and perceptions.

1.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting research, ethical considerations concern beliefs about what is wrong and what is right from a moral perspective (McMillan & Schumacher 2001). Research ethics refer to the

application of a moral code of conduct, where participants are the focus of empirical studies (Biggam 2011). This research was performed, keeping qualitative research ethical issues in mind. Before carrying out this study, the researcher sought permission from the University of South Africa's College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee and the PEG Executive Committee, wherein permission was granted through an ethics clearance certificate (Certificate number: (#Rec-240816-052) and permission letter respectively. In addition, the selected participants signed informed consent forms. The participants signed the consent forms as a way of showing that they willingly agreed to be part of the study before the interviews were conducted. They were informed in advance about the purposes, objectives and aims of the study as they had every right to full knowledge about the study (Flick 2009: 37). They were informed how and when the study would be conducted and about their role in participation. The selected participants were informed of their rights in the study; how they would participate voluntarily and how they had a right to withdraw from participation as they deemed fit without any penalty meted against them (Creswell 2007; Trochim 2000; Avry *et al.*, 2006).

1.16.1 Confidentiality

The researcher always upheld the participants' privacy and anonymity. Names, ages, residential places and gender were not revealed in this study. Instead, pseudonyms were used to represent each participant (Flick 2009: 37). For instance, there is Language Editor 1 (LE1), Language Editor 2 (LE2) and so on. The information obtained in this study will not be presented to any individual save for the researcher's supervisor and the university's ethics committee.

1.16.2 Informed Consent

The researcher first informed the participants what the study was about, its aim, objectives and the role they were to play in the research. Informed consent forms were emailed to the participants to sign before the commencement of the online interviews. They were informed of their rights to participation and that they were free to withdraw from the research as they deemed fit.

1.17 KEYWORDS

Below are brief explanations of keywords as they are used in this study.

1.17.1 Communication

Communication is a symbolic approach where transactional messages are exchanged between

the sender of the message and the receiver of the message. These messages are aimed at establishing mutual understanding between the two parties (Angelopulo & Barker 2013). Before this definition was coined, Dimbley and Burton (1992) had termed communication as an acquired activity that is provided by the media that forms a bridge between the sender and receiver. In this study, communication means the online interaction amongst PEG members.

1.17.2 Internal Communication

Internal communication is a form of communication among members of an organisation (Cornelissen, 2014). It incorporates oral or written communication and can flow vertically or horizontally. When it flows vertically, it means communication is from managers to subordinates and it is considered horizontal when the communication is among peers in an organisation (ibid).

1.17.3 Computer Mediated Communication

CMC is communication and interaction between two or more people using an electronic device. This device may be a computer, tablet or cellular phone (Lee Cheng Ean. 2011; Guo, Zixiu; Tan, Felix B. & Cheung, Kenneth 2010; Simpson 2002; Tolmie & Boyle 2000). CMC is supported by various tools such as chat rooms, electronic mail, video conferencing and e-mail chat groups. Synchronous communication is interactive and makes up for the distance and time for all the participants. This study focused on AC in an online-based association called PEG. For this study, the focus was on electronic mail. Under the CMC umbrella is synchronous and AC. AC is that which has time delays and where a recipient can respond at any time they wish, which is this study's focus. Below is a brief description of Asynchronous CMC as this study's focus.

1.17.4 Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication (ACMC)

Asynchronous CMC is the exchange of messages, such as among the hosts on a network or devices in a computer, by reading and responding as schedules permit rather than according to some clock that is synchronised for both the sender and receiver or in real-time; it is where CMC does not occur simultaneously (Jenks 2014; Simpson 2002). Lee Cheng Ean (2011); Guo, Zixiu; Tan, Felix B. & Cheung, Kenneth (2010) and Tolmie & Boyle (2000) purport that it is usually used to describe communications in which data can be transmitted intermittently rather than in a steady stream. Simpson (2002) concurs that this type of Asynchronous CMC includes emails, discussion forums and mailing lists In this study. Asynchronous CMC means communication via e-mail amongst PEG members.

1.17.5 Perceptions

Perception is how something is understood or regarded, the ability to see or hear. It is a conscious recognition and how something is understood and interpreted, through unconscious associations that serve as a basis for understanding, learning and knowing (Jama 2018:14).

In communication, one's perceptions determine how they react to a message, how they interpret the message and if they respond to the message or not. Therefore, communicators need to be aware of what is said, context and how it is perceived by the message receiver (Wood 2016). In this study, perceptions mean the preconceived ideas of PEG members that influence how they communicate via e-mail and if they communicate via e-mail or not, among each other. Wood (2016) posits that perception in communication is a process of creating meaning by selecting, aligning and interpreting messages, environments, people, events and occurrences.

1.17.6 Symbolic Interaction Theory

The Symbolic Interaction Theory studies meanings that emerge from the mutual interaction amongst humans in any given social environment. It focuses on "which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people" (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Dermibuken 2009). In this study, this theory was the most appropriate in putting the research problem into perspective and contextualising it.

1.17.7 Dual Capacity Model

The Dual Capacity Model was developed after it was realised that the media can play a dual role in conveying data and conveying and manifesting meaning (Sitkin, Sutcliffe & Barrios-Choplin 1992). As in this study PEG members were interviewed on their perceptions about their participation in the association's e-mail forum, this model was deemed appropriate.

1.17.8 Association

Mokwele (2019) underlines the difference between a professional body and a professional association. Professional associations do not provide professional qualifications to their members and members can still practice without being members of an association, which is the opposite of professional bodies. This study uses the terms association and PEG interchangeably because language practitioners are not offered language qualifications by PEG. They join the association with qualifications obtained from other bodies and universities. PEG only organises training workshops and Webinars. In addition, language practitioners in South Africa can still operate outside of being PEG members. In this study, the association means PEG, a South

African online-based association of language practitioners such as language editors, translators and proofreaders.

1.17.9 E-mail

E-mail, also referred to as electronic mail, is a tool wherein members signed up to different e-mail avenues can send and receive emails via an electronic device such as a computer, laptop and cell phone. Thus, Bälter (1998) terms the e-mail as the most widespread computer application of the 20th century. Further, Angelopulo and Barker (2013:332) posit that e-mail is a means of transmitting messages and files through an Internet network. In this study, e-mail refers to the interaction between PEG members via electronic devices of their choice.

1.17.10 E-mail Forum

E-mail forums are applications that are a form of network for interested groups with a common purpose (Dhanvandan & Tamizhcelvan 2012). In this study, the e-mail forum refers to the PEG emailing group forum.

1.18 DISSEMINATION OF THE FINDINGS

When the study is completed, Willig (2013) suggests that the findings ought to be disseminated. Therefore, the researcher will send the findings to the PEG executive, as per the agreement when the approval to conduct this study was granted. Finally, the findings will be disseminated via accredited communications journals through research articles that the researcher intends to write with her supervisor.

1.19 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1

This chapter introduces the reader to the background of the study. The research problem, main research question, sub-questions, aim and objectives of the study, literature preview, methodology and relevance of this study are presented. Furthermore, there is a discussion on the study's assumptions, theoretical framework, limitations, ethical considerations, keywords in this study and the demarcation of chapters.

Chapter 2

This chapter reviews available literature on the concept of Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication, the advantages and disadvantages of Asynchronous CMC and issues that still need to be addressed in Asynchronous CMC, among others.

Chapter 3

This chapter justifies the use of the interpretivist-qualitative (case study) methodology utilised in this study. The following methodological issues were discussed: research paradigm, research approach, research design, population and sampling procedures, data generation, data analysis, population and sampling procedures, data generation, trustworthiness and ethical issues.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the study's findings and analysis. These findings are presented in the context of the relevant literature and theoretical framework utilised in this study.

Chapter 5

This final chapter presents a summary of the study's findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. This chapter also presented the limitations of this study.

1.20 SUMMARY

This chapter highlighted the aim, objectives, the rationale of the research problem, issues of reliability and validity, literature preview, the theories underpinning this study. Lastly keywords that are pertinent to this research were explained. The following chapter is a literature review on the phenomenon of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focal point of this research was to explore the perceptions of the Professional Editors' Guild (PEG) members on their participation in the association's e-mail forum. This literature review is important because it looks at what preceding authors on the topic have dealt with and gaps that remain on the topic under investigation. This study followed the University of Queensland's generic mind-map of focus questions for a literature review (Rowland 2019). This mind-map guided the researcher to identify and discuss the issue of importance for their study first; why the issue was important, what caused the issue to be a problem; what theories were there to help the reader understand the issue; where can better solutions to the issue be found; if barriers are impeding these solutions; ideas to overcome the impediments; what gaps in knowledge are holding up progress; what new technologies may be ventured into to address the issue; and what issues still need to be addressed when it comes to the phenomenon.

The official name of this e-mail forum is called 'THE CHAT FORUM'. However, it ought to be noted that the word 'chat' is perhaps a misnomer because the founding members did not fully comprehend the meaning of the word 'chat' in the conventional manner. A chat is a synchronous communication activity that occurs in real-time. Simply put, this platform is an e-mail forum. Therefore, it is an AC tool. Consequently, the word that is used in this study, to avoid confusion, is e-mail forum.

The first section below underscores the importance of a literature review in qualitative research. Thereafter, a roadmap is followed to tie the review with the main research question, sub-questions, aim and objectives of this study. The roadmap addresses issues such as: why the topic under investigation is important, is the topic being addressed and how is it being addressed, what are the causes of the research problem, what theories are in place that help to understand the investigated topic, and where can answers to this problem be sought. Moreover, the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) is a blueprint to this study, as a body with similar characteristics as the PEG. Therefore, the LSSA is not used as a comparison to PEG but as a roadmap and it is segmented into the different sections in this literature review.

This chapter looks at issues deliberated upon by scholars in communication on Asynchronous CMC, especially e-mail. Literature on the use of e-mail in global associations and South Africa

is presented. The objectives of this study were: To understand PEG members' perceptions on the significance of AC via e-mail; To describe PEG members' perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum, and to draw up strategies to improve PEG members' participation in the e-mail forum.

This study is underpinned by the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Action Model. The reason for this choice in theories is presented as opposed to the Uses and Gratifications and Information Richness theories. A motivation of why these theories are the most suitable in this study is presented in the later sections. This chapter is concluded by pondering whether the use of emails in organisations will prevail for very long.

2.2 COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION (CMC)

CMC is any human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices. Traditionally, this term refers to communications that occur utilising computer mediated layouts such as e-mail, online forums, WhatsApp and Facebook. Tolmie and Boyle (2000) reveal that this concept was first defined in the context of ecological psychology and specifically applied to electronic media by Gava (1992). However, lately, the term also encompasses other forms of text-based interactions such as text messaging. It was discovered that most research on CMC focuses on the social effects of CMC (Bates 1995; Henri 1995; Jones 1998), media choice (Carlson & Davis 1998; Markus 1994; Webster 1998), and CMC technologies' performance (Canessa & Riolo, 2006; Mennecke *et al.*, 2000; Olaniran, 1994; Simon, 2006; Suh, 1999; Taylor, 2006). CMC is also a research stream that focuses on communication via computer technology for human-to-human interaction (Monberg 2005). This study adopted this working definition of CMC because it is specific that the type of communication occurring on computer technologies is human-to-human communication.

Recently, some studies have been investigating Internet-based social networking and the software that supports this interaction format (Walther 2011). Studies relating to CMC in organisations are on the rise, as previous studies focused on the assumption that CMC has non-verbal cues (Shang-Kang Lo, 2008). The world is steadily and rapidly advancing in information communication technologies and its components such as CMC. The growth in the utilisation of CMC reflects on the effort by CMC to narrow the challenges of distance and increase online communication (*ibid*).

Georgakopoulou (n.d) opines that the interest in human-to-human communication especially through computers and mobile networks is parallel to the fact that this type of communication has gained popularity the world over. Communication via the Internet has become just as popular as mediated communication via television, and cellular phones. This can be one of the reasons why CMC has brought transformation within the world of communication (Guo, Zixiu; Tan, Felix B, Cheung, Kenneth 2010; Tolmie & Boyle 2000). This revolution is not only amongst individuals communicating in a personal space but it is also experienced in organisations. However, it should be noted that this may not be the case in all communities of the world. This would be more applicable in third world societies where connectivity and communication are still a challenge (Mbatha 2012). This is more so in most African states where communication is still not a priority and part of the Millennium Development Goals, now called the Sustainable Development Goals. What makes this study unique on this score is that it deals with an organisation that does not, like other traditional organisations provide Internet access to its members. PEG members use their data to access the e-mail forum. Consequently, this forum has to operate optimally so that members fully benefit from it and see that it is worth the data they used to be part of the forum.

Having discussed the concept of CMC. This type of CMC encompasses emails, as is the focus of this study.

2.3 ASYNCHRONOUS COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

Asynchronous computer mediated communication also known as Asynchronous CMC is the kind of communication that does not occur in unison or in real-time. It is an interaction wherein the sender does not receive an immediate response from the receiver. For instance, the e-mail sender does not receive a response from the receiver right away (Hardarker 2010: 215). This may take minutes, hours or even days. Further, Herring (2004) states that Asynchronous CMC has become cheaper, faster and more democratic. New types of Asynchronous CMC are introduced more rapidly (ibid). For instance, PEG members access their emails not only from the laptop and desktop, but they can also do so from their mobile devices. Meaning they can access the e-mail forum anywhere and at any time. The section below utilises a deductive reasoning pattern to look at Asynchronous CMC globally and then in the South African context specifically.

Asynchronous CMC, with specific reference to electronic mail (e-mail), remains a popular form of organisational communication tool in some organisations that are looking at investing

in a new organisational communication paradigm shift (Lee Cheng Ean. 2011; Guo, Zixiu; Tan, Felix B. & Cheung, Kenneth 2010; Tolmie & Boyle 2000). E-mail is the entry, storage, distribution and reception, from one account to one or more other accounts, of digitised text using a central computer and remote terminals connected by a telecommunications network as accentuated by Garton & Welman (2016). The asynchronous e-mail exchange is still seen as important as it facilitates discussions and problem resolution among different groups, especially within an organisational communication context (Tolmie, Howe, McKenzie & Greer 1993).

It is reported that there were 8.9 million corporate e-mail users in Fortune 2000 companies in 1991 (Electronic Mail Assoc. 1992). This figure grew to 15.6 million users in 1993 and 25 million users in 1995, as estimated by the Electronic Mail Association (ibid). In 2017, it is reported that there were 3.7 billion e-mail users worldwide (Consumer Survey Results 2017) and this number is predicted to rise to 4.3 billion users in 2022 (ibid). In South Africa, below 31 million people have access to the Internet (Digital Statistics in South Africa 2017) in a population of over 57 million. This is remarkable considering that there are problems with bandwidth capacity in Africa, as espoused by Mbatha (2012:64).

Most of these studies that have been conducted prior have been experimental laboratory studies of two to five persons, comparing how face-to-face and computer conferencing groups solve specified problems in fixed time limits (Garton & Welman 2016; Benbunah-Fich & Hiltz 1999). For instance, Yen and Tu (2008) look at social presence in Asynchronous CMC. Benbunah-Fich and Hiltz (1999) investigate the impact of asynchronous learning networks while AIAfnan (2015) looks at the structure of emails and Hrastinski (2008) conducted a case study of two e-learning courses. Concisely, some empirical research on Asynchronous CMC utilises mixed methods or quantitative experiments involving college students. It is seldom to find research with organisational members in their natural settings.

Organisational communication analysts describe a task group as one where members have regular interactions, an established identity, common goals and structured interactions (Herring 2004). To note is that these criteria are usually used for groups that interact face-to-face. Thus, the organisational analysts often wonder if these characteristics parallel a group whose main interaction is based on e-mail and whose physical presence is varied and not in the same place. "It may be more difficult to maintain group focus and identity when people cannot tell what other e-mail users are doing when they are not signed on or what else they are doing when they

are signed on” (Garton & Welman 2016). This may be exacerbated by the lack of verbal cues. The following section discusses concepts in organisational communication and more specifically Asynchronous CMC that parallel this study.

2.3.1 Organisational Communication

Organisational communication and more especially Asynchronous CMC as a field of study has common concepts that it associates with. In organisations, managers are advised to know how people behave to create a favourable working environment. When a group working together is directed to interact and perform a common goal, that is called organisational communication (Zink & Zink n.d). Zink and Zink (ibid) further highlight the benefits of communication in an organisation as follows: promoting motivation among employees; as a source of information; improving employees’ attitudes as an informed employee gains better self-esteem, and it assists employees in complying with policies and communicating their challenges more efficiently.

These are cyber organisational societies, integrated online communication, Intercultural Communication and intragroup communication.

In further detailing Asynchronous CMC, below is a brief outline of Asynchronous CMC concepts that are relevant to this study.

Cyber Organisational Societies

Kee, Sparks, Trupa and Manucci (2013:36) coined a definition of cyber organisational societies that is closely linked to cyber identity. These authors define cyber organisational societies as the association of people and interpersonally fortified clusters of people, a community of people and socially particular subgroups, or a collection of human hubs and distinctive-joined-together social substances that co-exist inside a system. Cyber organisational societies can make humans create new cyber identities (Barker 2014). The downside to this is that these new identities and realities that are presented online may not be real (ibid). Cyberspace is now not seen as a vacuum but a space where ‘cyber alien beings’ (Barker 2014) create organisations where they can live, affiliate and become part of a common goal. Engaging in this concept has led some researchers to research cyber identities (Barker 2014; 2013; Burke 2003; Mobley 2010; Bergen & Braithwaite 2009). These pieces of research have unearthed that organisations could understand cyber identities better if they were to provide a multi-dimensional approach to multiple cyber identities. Furthermore, individuals in a cyber organisational society embrace

their individuality and identities in communicating with each other, as the most basic attribute of being a human being (Litt 2012).

Internal Organisational Communication

The literature presents varied definitions of the term internal organisational communication. Therefore, this study adopts Niemann's (2005:30) definition that internal organisational communication is an integrated process of sending and interpreting messages by fostering purpose-driven dialogue for creating long-term and beneficial working relationships. Internal organisational communication is characterised by upward, downward and lateral communication networks (Angelopulo & Barker 2013). The advantages of internal communication are that it provides information to members of the organisation to function effectively, it controls organisational members so that there is order in the workplace and persuades them to agree on certain aspects in the organisation (ibid). On the negative side, internal organisational communication can be seen as a tool for dictatorship, save for the communication network that is adopted in the organisation. In addition, internal organisational communication can have competitors who also seek the attention of employees and organisational members. That is why internal communication needs to be relevant, interesting, engaging and internalised (Anreder 2007). The latest empirical research shows that internal organisation communication is pivotal in motivating, improving productivity and creating satisfied employees (Du Preez & Bendixen 2015; Karanges 2014; Chitrao 2014; McKinsey Global Institute 2019).

E-mail As a Means of Communication

E-mail, also referred to as electronic mail, is a tool wherein members signed up to different e-mail avenues can send and receive emails via an electronic device such as a computer, laptop and cell phone. Thus, Bälter (1998) terms the e-mail as the most widespread computer application of the 20th century. Further, Angelopulo and Barker (2013:332) posit that e-mail is a means of transmitting messages and files through an Internet network. These authors posit that the Internet is one of the most inexpensive ways to transmit messages. However, some authors warn of the disadvantages in the security of emails, such as emails encroaching on one's private life and being misused by some users (Dash, J., Haller, D.M., Sommer, J. *et al.* 2016; www.lssa.org.za), and e-mail hackers get more advanced by the day, as well as increased messages that overwhelm the receiver; technology that may be too complex for technologically challenged e-mail users and technology that does not support the needs of

experienced users (Bälter 1998). The latest research professes that although e-mail has its disadvantages, it is still effective and efficient (Men 2014; Smith, Patmos & Pitts 2015). Furthermore, organisations still prefer e-mail because it is convenient and not 'desk-bound' (Men 2014).

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural Communication is the awareness and appreciation of the different cultures and their forms of communication in an organisation (Kim 1995; 1988; Greeff, Barker *et al.* n.d). The reason why recognising Intercultural Communication in an organisational setting is important is to assist organisational members to recognise the different cultures they interact with and accept the communication and cultural differences (Vasquez & Taylor 1994). South Africa is termed the rainbow nation with 11 official languages. This then denotes that PEG members come from different cultures and backgrounds. Therefore, the association's members need to observe and be cognizant of Intercultural Communication to make adjustments and accommodate the others' cultures. This may render cross-cultural experience less stressful and bring about better communication (Brislin, Worthley & Macnab 2006). Nieuliep (2012); Oommen (2014) speak of ethnocentrism which is the belief that what is understood about communication in one country applies to all countries. This is one of the cons of Intercultural Communication as it leads to some individuals thinking that their cultural values are superior to others' (Neulip 2012). This perception may lead to organisational conflicts (ibid). When Intercultural Communication first came to the fore, there was still a dearth of research into the theory part of it. However, over the years, researchers have been able to marry culture into communication to come up with Intercultural Communication theories (Kim 1995; 1988; Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida & Ogawa 2005; Wiseman 1995; Kim & Gudykunst 1988). Over the years of research in Taiwan, North America and Korea, Scollon, Wong Scollon and Jones (2012), discovered that miscommunication between cultures had nothing to do with the mispronunciation of words or the difference in intonation. What was unveiled was that the misunderstanding emanates from when one group fails to understand the intentions of the other, leading to possible hostility. Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2014) speak of globalisation and how Intercultural Communication is more prevalent than before and plays a pertinent role in daily communication necessities and global business. Below is a brief discussion on intragroup communication as a concept related to the PEG and this study.

Intragroup Communication

The Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication defines intragroup communication as communication that occurs within a group (Chandler & Munday 2011). Further, Greeff, Barker *et al.* (n.d) define intragroup communication as an instance wherein members of a group in an organisation uphold the group's interests. At PEG, the members' interests include upholding the English language's professional standards in South Africa. The members support each other in this endeavour through communicating using the association's group e-mail forum. Groups in intragroup communication are created for specific tasks. The downside of these groups is that they can accomplish the purpose for which they were created, or adversely downplay the purpose for which they were created, all depending on the groups' dynamics (Newton & Levinson 1973). Therefore, recent studies have focused on conflict management as a way of addressing intragroup communication, as this impacts on the organisational goals' outcomes (Jehn & Bedersky 2003; Jehn & Manniz 2001).

When considering deindividuation, it may be asserted that identifiability and group identity impact on the behaviour, or none of the members of an online-based group. Deindividuation is the psychological concept of the loss of self-awareness in groups. The causes of self-consciousness in groups can have varying effects. In an experiment conducted by Diener, Lusk, DeFour and Flax (1980) on deindividuation, three effects were discovered. The first effect was that the bigger the group, the less self-conscious members became. Second, an increase in group observers increased members' self-consciousness and third, gender similarity within a group decreased the sense of self-consciousness.

The organisational communication concepts highlighted above are those that closely parallel this study.

The Role of Internal Communication Tools

Internal communication tools are clustered into print such as magazines and newsletters; digital such as e-mail and intranet; telecommunications such as telephone calls and face-to-face interaction such as physical meetings (Lumadi 2020). Communication in associations maintains, sustains relationships and is a major determinant of satisfaction in an organisation (Jacubiec 2019; Richmond *et al.*, 2005; FitzPatrick & Valskov 2015). Furthermore, Lumadi (2020) highlights that internal communication tools play a critical role in employee

engagement; are reliable; can be easily accessible; promote engagement and can reduce employer turnover.

Newsletters are part of internal communication tools used in organisations to reinforce a certain message and are utilised as a learning tool. The PEG newsletter is a tool that can build the members' professional careers as it is specifically targeted at members, as espoused by Roach (2018). The disadvantage of newsletters is that they are published at specific times; be it weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly so they cannot be used to disseminate urgent information.

Electronic Mail

Electronic mail remains the most utilised tool in Asynchronous CMC (Herring 2004). It is reported that in 2000, there were about 891.1 million electronic mailboxes, compared to 2 million in 1985. It is estimated that just over 31 billion e-mail messages were sent throughout the world in 2002 and it was estimated to be at 60 billion in 2006, according to Foley (2004).

In South Africa, the labour guide highlights the legal use of e-mail in organisations. It details e-mail use policies and the rights of the employer to intercept its employees' e-mail usage, just as is stated by the Law Society. PEG is an association operating in South Africa and thus ought to subscribe to the e-mail usage guidelines provided by the SA Labour guide, as a mother body to all organisations in South Africa, and the SA Language Practitioners Act (2014). In Du Toit's article on the SA Labour guide website (www.labourguide.co.za), he details a study in an organisation employing 600 employees. It was discovered that the employees spent about 79% of their working time on the Internet, spelling the importance of the e-mail in organisations as also pointed out by Tolmie and Boyle (2000). Du Toit (www.labourguide.co.za) further mentions another study where it was discovered that the organisation's employees received and sent over 80% of emails from their fellow employees that were private. Thus, this may affect the organisation's productivity levels. Therefore, the labour guide provides recommendations on how South African organisations can monitor and control their employees' e-mail usage.

The Law Society's management of e-mail guidelines makes recommendations for law firms to formulate their electronic communications policies. These are policies that will be vivid in managing communications among employees, especially when it comes to emails. The Law Society details ways in which attorneys can be assisted in developing communication policies, taking into consideration the risks and issues involved and steps on how to develop the policy.

Lastly, the Law Society's e-mail guidelines advise attorneys on how to formulate workable e-mail disclaimers. The online dictionary (2018) states that a disclaimer is a statement that denies something, especially a response. Further, a disclaimer is a formal statement saying that you are not legally responsible for something, such as the information given in a book or on the Internet, or that you have no direct involvement in it, as presented by the Cambridge Online Dictionary (2018).

The e-mail is delivered by the Internet using a device such as a computer. Internet usage became popular in South Africa in the 1990s, after being introduced in 1969 under Arpanet (Lesame 2012: 37).

In South Africa, it is reported that over 75% of all website traffic comes from mobile users (The Digital Landscape in South Africa 2017). Social media users have increased by 15% and it is predicted that there will be 40million new users soon (ibid). More specifically, Lesame (2012:37) reports that Cisco, a communications company, predicted that Internet users would have been four times bigger than it was in 2009. Most of these users use mobile phones because they have a big penetration rate in Africa and South Africa. Mobile accounts for 78% of mobile traffic in South Africa then laptops and desktop users are at 17% (www.qwertydigital.co.za). Checking emails daily comes in at about 33% of the weekly online activities which is the second-highest activity from visiting social media platforms, according to The Digital Landscape in South Africa Report (2017).

South Africa has communication guidelines and recommendations that may be used by organisations in monitoring and controlling its members' e-mail and social networks usage, thus improving productivity. Below, the South African Law Society's e-mail usage is discussed and how it parallels the e-mail usage at PEG.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

One of the delimitations in this literature review was that there was a dearth of information on e-mail perceptions from South African associations that closely parallel the PEG. One association that has drawn e-mail usage guidelines for its members is the Law Society of South Africa. This association is chosen because it operates similarly to PEG. It has members who are affiliated with it, some of whom are employed, self-employed or freelancing, and their main form of communication is via e-mail, similar to PEG.

Burger and Reinsleigh (2007) advise that South African organisations can engage in three guidelines to manage e-mail usage. This can be done using policies, monitoring and surveillance and archiving. Companies are advised to adopt policies that the employees will be conversant with on how the e-mail ought to be used, to avoid issues such as litigation. The introduction of surveillance tools to combat legal liability may also form part of the guidelines on e-mail usage. Lastly, the use of an efficient archiving system is beneficial to conducting an easier search for archived material, retrieving emails and reducing the size of the e-mail database (ibid).

Currently, in SA, organisations are guided on intercepting emails as regulated by the Regulation of Interception of Communication and Provision of Communication Related Information Act 70 of 2002 (Act 70 of 2002). Section 2 of this Act prohibits interception because no person may intentionally intercept or attempt to intercept, or authorise or procure any other person to intercept or attempt to intercept, at any place in the Republic, any communication in the course of its occurrence or transmission (Act 70 of 2002). However, Section 4 of this Act permits the interception of communication by individuals who are part of the conversation and law enforcement officers. In South Africa, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) is responsible for executing and enforcing regulations in the communications industry, broadcasting and the telecommunications sector (Fourie, Granville & Theron 2018). Although interception is applicable in some organisations, it is not applicable and cannot work at PEG because of the nature of the operation. This is because PEG operates differently from physical, brick and mortar organisations as was discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

The PEG website states that:

The e-mail group offers you the opportunity to interact with like-minded people without leaving your office. The interaction is public, though, and for that reason, we ask that you bear the rules for using the PEG e-mail group in mind. Typical topics for general distribution include editorial, terminological and grammatical queries, or tips on using the Internet and social networking facilities (www.editors.org.za).

The usage of the word public on the association's website means among members. It is unclear why the choice of the word 'public' is utilised as it may be a bit confusing.

As per the labour guide recommendations, the Law Society also advises lawyers to form policies in their law firms as to how e-mail usage ought to be managed. In formulating these policies, the society recommends that the firms pose the following questions (ibid):

- How essential is e-mail communication to the practice?
- How important is e-mail to internal information management processes?
- What are the information security risks in using e-mail communication?
- To what extent do information security risks threaten to compromise the professional duties of attorneys within the practice?
- What technological protections have been established?
- Do current processes limit or eliminate unacceptable risk?
- Are the attorneys and employees of the practice properly trained to use the e-mail?

Even after the above questions are posed and answered, e-mail still poses risks in almost every organisation.

At PEG, these questions are addressed on the association's website wherein the importance of communication is stated and the main objectives of why the association was formed as a support system to uphold the standard of language in South Africa. In addition, these are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Gallo (2012) Chingel (2018) and Seely (2017) suggest practical ways on how emails can be managed so they do not overwhelm the receiver. These are steps such as organising one's incoming emails so that they go into different designated folders. This may assist in opening the folders for specific reasons and at specific/designated times. These authors further suggest emails be diverted into 'today', 'this week' and 'this month' folders so that it is easier to respond to emails as per their urgency or need. The other suggested folder is 'FYI'. These are for items that contain information that may be referred to in future.

In addition, the authors above suggest that outgoing messages ought to be straight to the point, clear and concise so it is easier for the receiver to read through them quickly without wasting much time on long emails with unnecessary information.

On the contrary, some authors warn of the risks of using emails in organisations. Davison, Ou and Martinsons (2013) speak of the security risks in sharing information via emails. At PEG,

part of the core business is that members edit important documentation such as theses, dissertations, articles and books that must not be shared save for when these are published and part of public knowledge. The onus then lies on individual members to ensure that these documents are kept safely and not leaked.

Further, Ruhnka and Loopesko (2013) advise that some of the risks of using emails in organisations may include virus transmission, lawsuits and defamation. Emails serve as part of the proof in some defamation and discrimination lawsuits. This discrimination may be because of age or gender.

In their analysis of e-mail-based institutional networks, Christidis and Losada (2019) warn that measuring the time individuals take to respond to emails does not necessarily constitute successful e-mail engagement. If members are aware that their response time is measured, they make an effort to respond quicker, which does not necessarily reflect the true reflection of successful e-mail communication in organisations. Furthermore, these authors caution that analysing internal communication in organisations utilising e-mail only is limiting as communication has become multi-channelled (ibid).

Haesevoets, De Cremer, De Schutter, McGuire, Yang, Jian and Van Hiel (2020) studied the use of carbon copy (cc) in emails and how it represents transparency thus promoting trust in e-mail communication. The downside to this function, they discovered, is that it may be seen as a control mechanism, that may adversely affect trust (ibid).

E-mail guidelines (2012) highlights the importance of the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (No 25 of 2002) as the governing document to South Africa's electronic communications, including emails, among others. The issues of security remain because of the nature of emails. If one recipient deletes an e-mail, this does not mean the e-mail is also deleted with the other recipients. It remains extant for possible future use and reference. This then led to the recommendation by the society for law firms to formulate guiding policies in e-mail usage.

In November 2009, the PEG Board of the time drew up ten rules of using the PEG e-mail group (www.editors.org.za). These guides, among others, inform members on how to go about posting messages on the group's e-mail forum and the rules therein. Members are cautioned to keep their conversations formal, use appropriate subject lines, be considerate of other members, avoid attachments and be courteous towards clients and colleagues, among others. Given how

these organisations caution their members on e-mail usage, the following sections discuss the importance of Asynchronous CMC in South African organisations, focusing on how this is currently addressed in various organisations.

2.4.1 Use of E-Mail in South Africa

The e-mail is used to process and deliver text or graphic messages utilising a telecommunications terminal such as a computer or cell phone (www.eric.ed.gov). The e-mail continues to be used widely in South African organisations (DeKay 2010), as well as in the education sector (Nnadozie, Anyanwu, Ngwenya, & Khanare 2020).

In a study conducted by Deventer and Snyman (2014), it was revealed that, in the South African context, employees are often reluctant to share knowledge because knowledge represents power. This point is minimally explored under Status Equalisation below. In essence, if an individual responds to a query via e-mail and shares their knowledge, they regard themselves as yielding some form of power over the individuals who have not responded (ibid).

Furthermore, another reason for the importance of Asynchronous CMC, in the South African context, is that if one shares information with another, then that person sees themselves as having done the other's job (Deventer & Snyman 2014). Therefore, some are insecure in their positions and feel that sharing what they know will make them redundant, according to Deventer and Snyman (ibid). This is evidence of why employees in an organisation still feel uncomfortable sharing information or interacting with others, especially via e-mail (Hinds & Weisband 2013).

The e-mail operates similarly and is viewed similarly in South African organisations as it is internationally (Mbatha 2012). In South Africa, individuals are still not fully comfortable with e-mail because of its characteristics that have been discussed in the previous sections. The issues of security and how an e-mail may be kept by various recipients for future use make some employees uneasy in its utilisation. Most CMC researchers (Peterson, Beymer, & Putnam 2018; Herring 2003b) juxtapose e-mail usage with face-to-face communication as in meetings. Additionally, it is engaging to note some of the preferences of Asynchronous CMC such as e-mail as compared to face-to-face communication. Individuals feel that emails are not as secure compared to face-to-face communication. However, this may be contested in that face-to-face communication may be recorded and also kept as a record for future references, whether these references are meant for good or bad.

On a positive note, some individuals prefer face-to-face communication because it furnishes them with a sense of control of what they say and how they say it (Lumadi 2020). After all, they have an immediate platform to clarify their communication, and the feedback they are likely to receive, and it also assists in creating rapport (Nandi & Platt 2017). Compoundingly, a person who is communicating electronically does not have control over the message, it is controlled by the organisation that controls the network on which the message is sent (Men 2014; Deventer & Snyman 2014). In the previous sections, it was explained how the e-mail forum is managed at PEG.

With some of the e-mail positives and negatives highlighted above, the section below discusses e-mail advantages and disadvantages in organisations. The advantages constitute language play, hyperpersonal interaction and conversational persistence, as these parallel this study by Herring (1999); Tolmie & Boyle (2000); Garton and Wellman (2016) and Broadley (2011).

Language Play

Initially, online surveys revealed that humorous messages are the most highly appreciated types of messages in computer mediated environments, even in those not necessarily characterised as recreational, for example, academic discussion groups, according to Peterson, Beymer and Putnam (2018) and Herring (1999; 2003b). Nonetheless, this is better welcomed in less professional Asynchronous CMC interactions, and it has proven to be a popular mode of communication. Cook (2000) presents that language play is not only prevalent in children but persists into adulthood as, the patterning of grammar to manipulate meaning and relationships. The downside to language play is miscommunications as is stated by Hancock (2004). In his study, Hancock (ibid) discovered that humans use more humour in CMC than they would in face-to-face interaction. Further, Herring, Stein and Virtanen (2013) posit that language play is fostered when communicators are engaged in multiple threads of interaction.

Hyperpersonal Interaction

Hyperpersonal interaction is communication that can become more personal because of the absence of non-verbal cues that are evident in face-to-face communication (Walther, Van Der Heide, Ramirez Jr., Burgoon & Peña 2015). Hyperpersonal interaction further allows users to present themselves as different characters, wherein they can manage impressions to create desired relationships (Walther 2007). One's formal response on the group may not be the same

as a social response on Facebook messenger, yet these are disseminated by the same individual. Members can take up different personas as per the circumstances and mandate of the Asynchronous CMC forum. Like the phenomenon of ‘multi-tasking’ or working on different projects simultaneously in different windows on one's computer screen, participation in multiple exchanges maximises stimulation and minimises opportunities for boredom; that is, it reduces receiver cost (Clark & Brenman n.d). Although hyperpersonal interaction allows users time to edit a message thus formulating deliberate and careful messages. On the adverse side, hyperpersonal interaction, the absence of non-verbal cues may dehumanise the communicators (Walther, Van Der Heide, Ramirez Jr., Burgoon & Peña 2015). The hyperpersonal model has been reviewed and depicts that the communication receiver's impression of the communication sender is influenced by stereotype perceptions of the sender (Walther 2006). Further, it is noted that message senders capitalise on the ability to be able to edit and delete some information before sending a message (Walther *et al.* 2015).

Conversational Persistence

Conversational persistence is a quality of Asynchronous CMC wherein a message exists until it is deleted by the addresser (Liou 2012; Kjeldskov & Stage 2006; Erickson & Herring 2004). Messages in emails can also be archived by the addressees. Thus, one of the advantages of Asynchronous CMC is that its records may be eternal. This assists if there is a need to refer to a specific e-mail either for legal or professional purposes. It also assists both the addresser and addressee in archived messages as proof that such a conversation did indeed occur. Unlike spoken language that disappears immediately after it has been uttered, Asynchronous CMC lingers and has a presence until such a time that the sender decides to delete it or when new messages are coming in forcing the older messages to be shifted down, thereby facilitating a heightened meta-linguistic awareness (Cazden n.d). Users can still be a part of the interaction even a day or two later as they can scroll down to see how the discussion commenced. Thus, making an informed decision on how to partake in the discussion, how to communicate effectively and how to coordinate their communication efforts (Tolmie & Boyle 2000; Deutsch 2012).

Despite the above-listed disadvantages of Asynchronous CMC, it is still popular as users prefer it to other conventional communication methods such as snail mail and telephones. There are two main reasons why Asynchronous CMC remains popular among its users. The first could be that users feel they can manage their interaction effectively and that these disadvantages

may be in a way an advantage, as posited by Herring (1999). The issue of topics going stale quickly and the lag in responses may well be some of the disadvantages that users prefer. This gives them some form of authority and control over their sent e-mail messages.

Garton and Wellman (2016) cite some of the disadvantages of e-mail. One of them is that e-mail can be stored for future use and can thus be manipulated to serve some negative purposes. These authors state that people can store and edit an e-mail to change its meaning and it can also be used for surveillance. On a positive note, storing an e-mail maybe for future retrieval purposes may serve as a review of past decisions and why those decisions were taken. Moreover, the fact that e-mail is text-based may confuse the receiver as it does not convey non-verbal cues. Therefore, there is increased uncertainty on the receiver as to how to respond to a message, especially if it is from an individual one does not know or one from a different culture. In their study on the visualisation of members in cyberspace, Viegas and Smith (2004) found that individuals may miss pertinent information because they tend to focus on the e-mail thread.

2.4.1.1 Addressing disadvantages of Asynchronous CMC

Some CMC researchers state that computer networks were created for data transmission and not for human communication (December 1996; Morris & Ogan 1996). It is with time that the computer networks started being utilised for human interaction, an aim they were not originally designed for. Consequently, there are several challenges in Asynchronous CMC.

Herring (2004; 1999) specifically cites two main challenges to Asynchronous CMC. These are a) lack of simultaneous feedback as a result of less audio-visual cues and b) disrupted turn adjacency because of messages being delivered to a recipient according to when the system delivers them and not according to a sequential manner. For instance, a message is delivered according to issues such as the recipient's connectivity. If there are delays in connectivity or issues of computer infrastructure, a message can only be delivered when the system can transmit it. An e-mail message is not necessarily delivered as soon as the sender presses the send button. It may take some minutes and at times, depending on the infrastructural issues at hand, hours to reach the intended recipient. Additionally, Frick (2017) shares similar sentiments in his study on student perceptions of Asynchronous CMC in Face-to-Face Courses.

More specifically, an e-mail does not supply non-verbal interactional cues between members such as eye contact, gestures, nodding or frowning, according to Garton and Wellman (2016). Therefore, it can be unsettling for e-mail group users to interact on this platform as there are

no contextual cues. The members have fewer means of identifying coalitions and cues that define an interaction's importance. Additionally, e-mail users are identified by name and it may be difficult for the members to distinguish between one's age, gender, culture, expertise and organisational position. Unless the members use e-mail signatures for identity purposes, it may be almost impossible for other PEG members to know each other's expertise and professional positions. Therefore, some CMC cues may be utilised to augment the verbal aspect of the e-mail message (Kalman & Gergle 2014). These can be the use of uppercase letters, italics, highlighting and asterisks to emphasise a certain point. However, it ought to be noted that some individuals find these CMC cues unsettling and rude.

The disadvantages in not having non-verbal cues in an e-mail group are that there may likely be language difficulties, feedback barriers and challenges in consensus and polarisation. Contrastingly, some e-mail users do engage some form of non-verbal cues in the form of using bold text, uppercase text and highlighting the important information in their emails. However, some e-mail users find it difficult to accept this form of communication as some authors refer to it as shouting. Shouting is said to be the use of the uppercase in typing emails to get attention, Netlingo.com presents that shouting is not constituted as proper netiquette (www.netlingo.com). The argument is that there is no need to use shouting in a setting where almost all members are at a particular professional level because they are capable of denoting important information without being coerced to do so via bold text and highlights. In datum, shouting has been a cause of disagreement in many organisations as some feel it is rude (Yi-Hui Lee, Panteli, Bülow & Hsu 2018; DeKay 2010).

There are several innovations that Asynchronous CMC users utilise to address the above challenges. In this review, turn change signals, cross turn reference, topical organisation, status equalisation and group polarisation are highlighted because they parallel this study:

Turn Change Signals

Turn change signals are symbols that some Asynchronous CMC groups use to signal to the other group members that the sent communication is an incomplete thought and more interaction is still to be sent. Clark and Brenman (1996; 1991) term this the reduced speaker change cost. In their study, they term this symbol as % that is a signal that the e-mail recipient must not yet respond as there is more communication still to be sent. In short-wave radio, the term 'over' is used to signal to the message receiver on the other end that they may respond. In emails, some users may use the signal 'enter' to indicate that a response may be sent (Taboada

2016). This practice is a possible solution to the disadvantages of Asynchronous CMC as it reduces the incidences of overlapping exchanges. This is similar to face-to-face meetings where participants signal by raising hands that they still need to contribute more to the meeting. In her experiment on turn change signals, Jokinen (2010) discovered that eye-gaze can be used to signal to the next person that they may respond to interaction in face-to-face scenarios. In her research on turn-taking among Spanish speakers, Taboada (2016) found that this may promote one-way communication if turn-taking is done mechanically.

Cross Turn Reference

Werry (1996) coined the term addressivity, also known as cross turn reference. This is a standard practice in Asynchronous CMC where a message sender uses the name of the intended addressee in the e-mail subject line. This is in group settings to show whom the message is specifically directed to. In the instance of PEG, addressivity is utilised in the form of a specific subject matter. It is not a forum where a message is specifically directed to a certain individual. It is specific topics of discussion directed to all members who are encouraged to abide by sticking to the subject under discussion. This is addressed in the form of the e-mail subject line, where the sender writes what the e-mail is about. In responding to the addresser, the addressees simply press the reply to all button and address the matter at hand. Without the practice of addressivity, it would be difficult to know whom a message is directed to, according to Werry (ibid). This practice is also termed linking. Linking may also be utilised by quoting sections of the message that is being responded to before one presents their response. This is also another useful way of addressing the disadvantages of Asynchronous CMC. In a study on cross-cultural business emails, Zummo (2018) discovered that addressivity is vital ensuring that there is no misunderstanding and that one is addressing the appropriate interlocutor. Further, Kogut (2021) posits that addressivity is different from the audience because it targets a much broader range of listeners and possible 'listeners'. In addition, addressivity is not bound by time and space because a written message can be read at any time and place, in this case, emails can be read at any time and place.

Topical Organisation

This is the process of sorting messages chronologically since they all share a common subject line. Herring (1999) clarifies that in discussion groups, there are often moderators whose sole responsibility is to ensure that the discussion remains 'under the topic'. Zhang (2015)

conducted a study where it was unearthed that sorting emails assists in managing, preserving and providing information for future references.

Status Equalisation

According to Garton and Welman (2016), one of the other possible solutions to addressing ineffective Asynchronous CMC is status equalisation. In most organisations, it is common that face-to-face meetings are characterised by the managers speaking more than the subordinates, men speaking more than women and the more qualified speaking more than the less qualified. Another advantage of e-mail is that it reduces status cues and thus reduces status imbalances. Members are free to equally participate on this forum without anyone feeling intimidated by the other., as briefly discussed above under 2.5.1.1. Garton and Welman (ibid) make an interesting observation that they have not, as yet, found research about whether high-status people are reluctant to use e-mail because it may diminish their influence. In their study on social status equalisation conducted among students, Bell, Trumble and Morrissette (2020) found out that group members can perceive themselves as equals if they can verbalise ideas and be listened to, where they also reported positive experiences.

Group Polarisation

Group polarisation is a polarised system defining a group in contrast to another, within a specific social context, and as the self-categorisation theory depicts (Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The e-mail suppresses group members' identities and thus may promote group polarisation. Contrastingly, some authors argue that people have a social and individual identity, it is an advantage when an individual's identity is submerged over the group's identity. This promotes unity in a group and is a constant reminder that the group membership and its goals are more important than the individuals in that particular setting. This is said to encourage group polarisation. This proposes that it is social network pressures and not de-individualising alienation that is important for group polarisation in an e-mail (Garton & Welam 2016).

This section presented some of the ways that the disadvantages of Asynchronous CMC can be addressed about the rationale as stated in Chapter 1. This, according to Broadley (2011) may hinder communication opportunities and learning via technology in organisations. Chen (2013) explores group polarisation in virtual communities. The findings of this study are that group size has a bearing on group polarisation and that the social comparison theory and persuasive

arguments theory drive group polarisation. Smrithi and Muccini (2018) conducted a study on group decision-making in software architecture and found that there is no structured way of decision-making, wherein the final decision is made by whoever is in authority.

This section outlines some of the issues that still need to be addressed under Asynchronous CMC. These are the issues that parallel the research phenomenon and what the current scenario is, in terms of the full utilisation of asynchronous computer mediated platforms such as the PEG's e-mail forum. This study utilised three: societal inequalities, cultural diversity and connectivity for this study. These are some of the issues that still need to be addressed in South African organisations when dealing with optimal utilisation of emails. These are the weaknesses of e-mail utilisation in South African organisations and briefly discussing them may create an awareness to the reader on how societal inequalities, cultural diversity and connectivity impact the emails' optimum utilisation, for enhancing communication in organisations.

Societal Inequalities

The dynamics of inequality in South Africa are evident, even 20 odd years after democracy. The inequalities in income impact communication and what tools the citizenry can access. The economically challenged, for instance, do not view buying data as a necessity. On the contrary, the economically privileged may view having access to data as a necessity because these groups have greater access to the Internet because of greater access to education, income and other resources (DeMaggio & Hargittai 2001). This study assumes that the PEG members fall under the South African middle class as computers and data are tools that they need to carry out their work. Even so, there are inequalities in the association as members do not have similar economic power. How much income they earn per month depends on their contracts and the number of clients they acquire per month. The researcher brought this point to the fore to make the reader understands some of the association's dynamics. To note is that there is nothing the association can do about inequality. However, it can encourage equal participation even from those members who are economically challenged and feel deprived thus not participate in the e-mail forum, as per Tolmie and Boyle (2000) in their study on factors influencing the success of CMC.

In their study on social distancing, Internet access and social inequalities during the Covid-19 pandemic, Chiou and Tucker (2020) show that income is related to connectivity and human's ability to be able to stay and work from home. In addition, these researchers show that high-

Internet speed and high income are the greatest drivers in people staying and working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, this digital divide seems to explain societies' inequality (ibid). Hargittai, Piper and Morris (2018) had similar findings with the above in their study conducted with older adults in the USA. This study suggests that adults' Internet use is related to their socioeconomic status, background and access.

Cultural Diversity

Vasquez and Taylor (1994) address the issues of cultural diversity and communication in organisations. Constantino, Magady and Primavera (2009) underscore its importance in organisations and the business world. The issue of culture is one variable that still needs to be addressed significantly in Asynchronous CMC in the South African context. Not all organisations advocate for ethnocentrism, which is the belief that how communication is interpreted in one culture will be the same in another culture (Neulip 2012). Ethnocentrism is said to be one of the major contributing factors to conflicts in organisations (ibid). In a bid to find solutions to organisational conflicts because of cultural clashes in communication, a report conducted by Fasset (2013) presents ten recommendations for cross-cultural communication. What is of interest to this researcher and this study are four recommendations namely; checking meanings, avoiding slang, watching humour and maintaining etiquette.

Fasset (2013) advises that in a cross-cultural setting, members ought to cross-check the meaning of their words and not assume that one word has the same meaning across various cultures. The other recommendation is avoiding slang in a cross-cultural setting. Humour is not understood in a similar way across cultures in South Africa, thus being cautious of humour when communicating in a cross-cultural setting is vital (ibid). In contrast, online surveys reveal that humorous messages are the most highly appreciated types of messages in computer mediated environments, even in those not necessarily characterised as recreational, for example, academic discussion groups, according to Herring (1999; 2018). South Africa is a unique society in that it has a myriad of cultures with 11 official languages. Thus, a Sepedi member may misinterpret an English joke for instance. Under maintaining netiquette, it is articulated that many cultures have certain etiquette when communicating. It is always a good idea to undertake some cross-cultural awareness training or at least do some research on the target culture (ibid). This may be one of the issues to address a more effective Asynchronous CMC participation among PEG members. As a solution to cultural diversity in communication, Azuma and Ebner (2008) predict that graphics may be the solution in future. Graphics are

also known as graphical icons (Konrad, Herring & Choi 2020), which are icons that are used to express one's emotions and attitude. They are referred to as emoticons among Facebook and WhatsApp users.

Connectivity

E-mail links people from across the world, in different time zones and boundaries. The absence of non-verbal cues may make it easier to communicate using e-mail. However, some authors dispute this as has been briefly outlined in this chapter. Contrastingly, e-mail groups may not feel a sense of strong ties and thus this is said to promote more free participation in this e-mail forum. The weak ties connect people from all walks of life, empower members through acquiring new information and integrating the association. Therefore, e-mail users in large corporations are said to have a sense of better connectedness and greater access to high-quality information (Garton & Welman 2016; Tolmie & Boyle 2000). On an adverse note, this connectedness and access to high-quality information may be a catalyst to information overload which is a challenge. E-mail group members may at times feel overwhelmed by the number of emails and information that they receive daily (Tumanyan & Ali 2020; Turveille 2019). A solution to this information overload may be archiving messages that the receiver deems as important and may be useful for future references (Burger & Reinsleigh 2007).

2.5 CAUSES OF INEFFICIENT ASYNCHRONOUS CMC

It was discovered that the inefficiency in Asynchronous CMC mostly lies in social rather than technical factors (Tolmie & Boyle 2000). Hobaugh (1997) stresses that problems with social dynamics amongst group members are often the major cause of ineffective group actions in a distance learning environment. Thus, there is a need to take a closer look at the social aspects of online associations to support optimum participation. Explaining the interest in this searcher conducting this study.

Kreijns, Kirschner and Jochems (2003) talk about two major pitfalls in effective communication in Asynchronous CMC. These are a) thinking that because an environment provides communication technology then social interaction will automatically occur, and b) restricting social interaction to educational interventions aimed at cognitive processes, while social interventions aimed at socio-emotional processes are forgotten or ignored. The nature of Asynchronous CMC affects the type of messages that are disseminated and their effects on the recipient. This may then affect interpersonal relationships in online groups. In addition, CMC

is mostly used for formal tasks-oriented communication in groups and less for social interaction.

2.6 THEORIES IN ASYNCHRONOUS CMC

Bachman and Schutt (2014; 2007) define a theory as a logically interrelated set of propositions about empirical reality. Further, Cole and Kelly (2011:6) describe a theory as a well-substantiated explanation, accepted knowledge, a collection of concepts, an expectation of what needs to happen or needs to be. It is also an acceptable general principle or body of principles explaining phenomena, a particular conception or view of something to be done or of the method of doing it and a system of rules or principles (ibid).

There are several theories in Asynchronous CMC. For this study, the researcher chose to briefly outline the Information Richness Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model. The Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model were preferred to underpin this study as they closely parallel the phenomenon under investigation. Below is a presentation of why the Information Richness and Uses and Gratifications theories were not selected to underpin this study.

Information Richness Theory (IRT):

The Information Richness Theory is when the medium used to communicate a message determines the level of communication (Daft & Lengel 1986). These scholars suggest that this theory describes how various communication technologies contribute to information richness. For instance, one may send an e-mail and follow this up with a telephone call to clarify issues that may have been unclear in the e-mail. In this instance, both e-mail and telephone are utilised to foster rich information in CMC. This theory focuses on four main themes: the number of cues it holds, the type of language it allows, how personal the medium is and its feedback rate. This then is one of the reasons why the researcher did not select this theory to underpin this study. This investigation investigated how PEG members perceive their e-mail participation and not how much information they glean from participating in the e-mail forum.

Uses and Gratifications Theory:

Uses and Gratifications Theory determines why individuals choose a specific medium to satisfy their needs (Ruggeiro 2000). This theory would be interested in why PEG members choose to use e-mail to satisfy their needs. This theory would be inappropriate in answering the research

questions. The scope of this study was not why e-mail is used because this is the only medium of communication at PEG. Therefore, members do not choose to use e-mail because there is no other communication tool.

Having briefly discussed the IRT and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the researcher chose to apply the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model as they closely parallel this study, as compared to the two. These theories are thus articulated in the following section and the reasons for their preference compared to IRT and Uses and Gratifications Theories.

2.6.1 The Symbolic Interaction Theory

This study's underpinning and meta-theory is the Symbolic Interaction Theory. This theory is based on social behaviour and interaction. The Symbolic Interaction Theory purports that facts are based on symbols and the theory's foundation is based on meanings. This theory studies emerging meanings from human-to-human interaction in any given social environment. Its focus is on which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Dermibuken 2009).

George Herbert Mead and his student Herbert Blumer remain the most influential theorists in symbolic interaction. George Herbert Mead was an American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist. He was also known as one of the distinguished pragmatists of the University of Chicago in the 1890s. Initially, Mead posited that symbols develop the mind and they form a means of thinking and communication as supported by Asworth (2000). A considerable amount of Mead's work focused on the advancement of the self and the impartiality of the world within the social realm: he insisted that "the individual mind can exist only about other minds with shared meanings" (Mead 1982: 5). His focus was on people's day to day lives and how they use symbolic interaction. Further, the focus was on how order and meaning are created in their minds, through their environment and interaction (Korgen & White 2008). Mead's student and protégé Blumer is reported to have been the first to coin the words, symbolic interaction. That is why he is recorded as a co-founding father of the theory in some literature (Aksen *et al.*, 2009).

Herbert George Blumer lived from 1900 to 1987 and he is also an avid American philosopher. He is known for being Mead's follower and interpreting most of his work. Like Mead, Blumer also believed that individuals create social reality employing collective and individual actions.

Blumer interpreted and developed the Symbolic Interaction Theory in several articles. Further, Blumer asserts that human beings form meaning in believing that:

- Meaning is something attributed to objects, events and phenomena; and
- Meaning is a physical attachment imposed on events and objects by humans.

The reason why this was the theory of choice is that it was parallel to this study together with its aim and objectives. The objectives were to determine the participants' understanding of the significance of AC and how it was expected to be used within organisations such as PEG; the participants' perceptions and level of participation in the PEG e-mail forum; and the participants' recommendations on the effective utilisation of the AC to benefit those it is intended for. The meanings that PEG members formulate from symbols used in the emails may be what determines their participation in the e-mail forum or non-participation. It is the most appropriate theory because it looks at human-to-human interaction and the meaning individuals form from this interaction. This study explored the PEG members' perceptions of their participation in the association's AC platform. The researcher concurs with Blumer and Mead that there are meanings formed by the PEG members as they choose to interact, or not to, in the association's e-mail forum. These are the meanings that the researcher sought to discover, which also served as catalysts to addressing the main and sub-research questions.

Blumer (1969) lists the core principles of the Symbolic Interaction Theory. These are parallel to this study, thus the choice to utilise this theory:

- Meaning
- Language
- Thinking

The choice of language used in PEG members' interaction via e-mail forms meaning amongst fellow members. Georgakopoulou (n.d) asserts that colloquial, mainly spoken elements coupled with an elliptical style and erratic use of punctuation, suggest informality and reduced planning and editing that are more prototypical of spoken rather than written genres.

The thoughts and meanings derived from the e-mail interaction are catalysts of uncovering ways in which the forum can be utilised optimally, to improve its core purpose. However, the aim was not to uncover ways for encouraging every member to be part of the forum as this is

not a reachable goal. Human beings naturally participate in human-to-human interaction if it will personally benefit them or if there are penalties incurred if they do not take part. For instance, individuals fully participate in communication sessions when they are aware that part of their group's membership policy is that they are involved or face a penalty. PEG is a free association where the rights of members are such that they are not forced to take part in the e-mail forum. Thus, the researcher's interest in the members' perceptions on their participation in the association's Asynchronous CMC. This is best articulated by Blumer (1969) that:

- Humans develop their attitudes towards things according to the meanings that things propose to them;
- These meanings are inferred from the 'interaction of one of them from its addressees'; and
- These meanings change within an interpretive process.

Individuals form meanings in varied ways because of a myriad of reasons. These could be based on an individual's background, culture, social standing and class. One disseminated message may not mean the same thing to different people, thus meaning triggers reaction or lack thereof. Meaning thus directs action. The meaning some PEG members make out of some emails varies and this directs their reaction or lack of to the e-mail forum (Blumer 1969).

This study explored the PEG members' perceptions of their participation in the association's Asynchronous CMC. For the researcher to understand the members' perceptions and interactions, it was vital to understand the meanings that they create from the e-mail interaction. These meanings are formed by elements such as social roles, age, traditional structures, purposes, laws and rules. Therefore, the Symbolic Interaction Theory emphasises social interaction, taking a definite role among people and the arguments of definitions and meanings.

This theory's origins are already detailed in the previous section. This theory has evolved and it has made a paradigm shift since its founding fathers, Mead and Blumer, as detailed above. Other theorists such as Berg (2000) have interrogated this theory further and concluded that fact is based on personal perceptions and changes over time. Consequently, meaning is created from the communication between people (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demiburken 2009).

2.6.1.2 The Symbolic Interaction Theory's relevance to Asynchronous CMC in relation to PEG

The Symbolic Interaction Theory's relevance to this study's research phenomenon is that it focuses on the symbols and meanings that emerge between the interaction of individuals (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demiburken 2009). The correlation within this study's objectives is that it seeks to enquire the participants' understanding of the importance of Asynchronous CMC at PEG, their perceptions on the level of participation and their recommendations on the effective utilisation of the e-mail forum. In seeking to answer the research question, the study discusses the meanings that emerge from the e-mail forum and how these are interpreted by the participants in their participation in the association's online communication.

2.6.1.3 Contributions of the Symbolic Interaction Theory to this study and Asynchronous CMC

The contribution of the Symbolic Interaction Theory in this study is that meaning is attributed to human interaction, as espoused by Putman (1983). Consequently, the Symbolic Interaction Theory contributes to Asynchronous CMC in that it advises how symbols are used by humans to create meaning when they communicate. However, this theory is criticised by authors such as Berg (2000), Nelson (1998), Slattery (2007) and Udehn (2001). It is criticised as a theory that uplifts the freedom of the individual and not society as a whole (Udehn 2001). It focuses considerably on the meaning created by the individual in communication more than the meaning formed by a collective of individuals. Further, Aksan, Kisac, Aydin and Demiburken (2009) criticise this theory for ignoring human emotions and only focusing on the social structure. In exploring this theory, Aksana, *et al.* (2009) discovered that to understand human behaviour it is pertinent to understand the meanings formed by humans. Therefore, the symbolic interaction puts forth the importance of social interaction, definition and empathy between human beings (*ibid*).

2.6.1.4 Contributions of the Symbolic Interaction Theory to PEG's e-mail utilisation

As the Symbolic Interaction Theory is based on symbols and meanings generated from these symbols, it is worthy to note that humans create symbols or interpretations based on their personal experiences. This study enquired what the PEG members' perceptions of their participation in the e-mail forum are. As per this theory, the meanings that these members make from the e-mail forum are based on their personal experiences. This theory may assist in

tapping into the participants' perceptions so that it is easier to make recommendations on how the e-mail forum can better be utilised by the PEG members.

As explained above, the Symbolic Interaction Theory speaks of symbols that are created in human communication that direct the way humans interact and if they choose to communicate with each other or not. To further present the importance of this theory for this study, it was supported by the Dual Capacity Model. This model fitted in this study's context because communication at PEG may have a dual model of producing symbols that affect the process of communication and also be a useful tool through which members interact. The Dual Capacity Model is briefly presented below.

2.7 DUAL CAPACITY MODEL

The Dual Capacity Model was developed after it was realised that the media can play a dual role in conveying data and also conveying and manifesting meaning (Sitkin, Sutcliffe & Barrios-Choplin 1992). As PEG members were interviewed on their perceptions about their participation in the association's e-mail forum, this model was appropriate. After the interviews, it would be revealed what meaning and symbols were conveyed through the e-mail participation. This then could help provide recommendations for the full utilisation of the e-mail forum to benefit the PEG members and be a reference point in organisational communication studies.

The dual role of the media, Sitkin, *et al.* (1992) discusses that a medium conveys both data and meaning and the media's capacity to carry meaning-laden symbols. Further, these authors present that meaning can guide and govern communication activity. This is in line with this study's objective of determining what perceptions, meanings, and symbols the PEG members may have when participating in the e-mail forum. Other authors with a close interest in the Dual Capacity Model discovered that ICTs can also carry symbolic meaning (Trevino, Daft *et al.* 1990). For instance, an e-mail may have an entrenched meaning in a particular organisation, wherein Zmud (1990) articulates that e-mail is a symbol of power and competence in some organisations. On the adverse side, Aksan, Kisac, Aydin and Demiburken (2009) present that this theory purports that humans are not free to choose a certain media. They are limited by competency in that media's use, availability of the media comfort in using the media and its flexibility. A survey conducted by Trevino (2000) on low and technical management discovered that these managers know the symbolic meaning of their ICTs use. Trevino *et al.* (ibid) also discovered that these meanings were not the same in all organisations, they depended

on that organisation's culture. For instance, a meeting may be interpreted as part of recognising teamwork in one organisation yet seen as a waste of time in another. The difference in this perception of meetings is because symbolic meanings embody the organisational codes and values, as articulated by O'Sullivan (2000).

2.8 SOLUTIONS FOR EFFICIENT ASYNCHRONOUS CMC

In CMC and e-mail usage, in particular, some properties lie at the core of its positive effects. Some have been outlined in the previous sections and these are; it may promote growth in that members may be able to clarify an unclear point; it allows users to reflect before responding thus maximising the positive effects of conflict and it allows users to review text for the recombination of ideas.

Some authors suggest some solutions to the efficient use of Asynchronous CMC or emails.

2.8.1 Addressing the Solutions for Efficient Asynchronous CMC

Communication researchers submit that the smaller the group, the more likely it is to communicate more frequently and better in CMC. Light, Colbourn and Light (1997) conducted a study wherein they discovered that six students interacted better and more frequently than 80 students in a self-directed area. Furthermore, Mason and Bacsich (1998) concur with this finding that smaller groups have a better opportunity to communicate more effectively. Light et al (1997) and Mason and Bascish's (1998) explanations tie in with Walther and Bazarova's (2008:624) meaning of electronic propinquity. These authors define electronic propinquity as the feeling of nearness experienced by one communicator to another in CMC (ibid).

The second solution to the more successful use of the e-mail is that it is better if people physically know each other, then they are more likely to participate because of the reference in linking the e-mail address to a face (Walther & Bazarova 2008). PEG organises workshops and meetings throughout the year. Although it is an online-based association, this is where members get to meet face-to-face. McAteer, Tolmie, Duffy and Corbett (1997) who conducted a case study and discovered that participation in CMC was greater in members who were familiar with each other than where they were not, support this assertion.

Some internal communication speaks of the importance of social media in today's organisations. Cooper (2018) advises that social media has changed the way individuals consume information, thus it ought to be valued. Therefore, this should be tailored to be

accessible to members' mobile devices. Further, Sievert and Scholz (2017) concur that social media may play a pivotal role when it comes to the internal communication engagement in organisations so that they realise their full potential (Melcrum 2013).

Lastly, communication researchers present experience as one of the solutions to effective CMC participation (Light et al. 1997; Trentin 1997). These authors assert that the more experienced individual is in their field, the more comfortable they are with their craft and the more likely they are to participate better in CMC (Walther & Bazavora 2008).

2.8.2 Gaps in Knowledge That Are Holding Up Progress in Asynchronous CMC

There is an assertion that there are may be gaps in knowledge that impede the progress in groups' CMC. There is some information that virtual groups may not be aware of, that may assist in their optimal utilisation of Asynchronous CMC in general and emails in particular. The researcher borrows from some of the rules of virtual groups as espoused by Walther and Bunz (2005). These authors advise, among others, that CMC group members ought to communicate frequently, acknowledging that one has read an e-mail message and being explicit about one's message. This research focuses on these three as they closely parallel this study, the main and sub-questions, aim and objectives. Furthermore, Lie (2005) adds that virtual groups' increase in participation is a democratic development.

The effect of frequent communication is one of the gaps in knowledge that could encourage more members to participate in PEG's e-mail forum. Communicating frequently also allows the dispersion of activity over time, avoiding the pile-up of activity. The limited nature of AC may otherwise impede satisfactory rates of information that is disseminated per message, according to Walther and Bunz (2005). Perhaps the association may take initiatives to inform its members of the importance of frequent communication. Furthermore, Walther and Bunz (2005) suggest that CMC group members ought to acknowledge when they have read an e-mail message. Not only is this a form of consideration and respect towards the sender, but it also is a form of humanness as we are beings that strive to communicate.

As CMC is juxtaposed with face-to-face meetings in some Communication Research, it would be awkward and disrespectful to be in a meeting where one is not interacted with when presenting a point or posing a question. Similarly, CMC is a form of communication wherein the participants expect to be communicated with to show that they are communicating with human beings and not just the computer. However, Walther and Bunz (2005) further warn that

it is difficult to ascertain why one's e-mail message is not responded to as there is a myriad of reasons that could explain this. It could be system errors where the receivers have not received the sent message and the sender's error of sending to an individual and not the group. A suggestion of senders ensuring that their message has been sent and delivered would be to request sent and read receipt. Then will the sender be sure that their message has been sent to the intended receiver/s.

Because CMC group members do not have the luxury of non-verbal cues, it is advisable to send out a message that is clear, unambiguous and explicit; one that will stand zero or a less chance of being misinterpreted. PEG members may be workshopped on netiquette, specifically how to write concise and clear e-mail messages that will not be misunderstood. With this said, Walther and Bunz (2005) warn that being explicit may trigger conflict in the group yet it may also allow the group to cohere on discussions and decisions more effectively

2.8.3 New Technologies to Be Applied in Addressing Efficient Asynchronous CMC

In Asynchronous CMC it is said the e-mail, chat rooms and discussion boards form the first-generation web tools that foster online communication. Nevertheless, the second-generation web tools such as blogs and podcasts or vlogs are implemented alone to foster online communication or they may be collaborated with applications such as Imeem and Writeboard, according to Beldarrian (2007). However, in the case of PEG, blogs and podcasts may not be applicable as these are usually a form of a personal account where the account holder writes about a topic of interest. Blogs are not necessarily a viable tool for interaction among members of an association. Consequently, they cannot form a part of new technologies to be adopted by an association such as PEG for improved communication.

Beldarrain (2007), further states that the proactive implementation of emerging technologies is dependent on the comfort level, resources, and leadership of the organisation. Further, it is postulated that organisations ought to reflect on how their technology is currently utilised, and how cutting-edge CMC may enhance organisations' communication experience (ibid). The integration of synchronous and AC tools for optimum organisational communication experience is supported. According to the researcher, this is a practice that some PEG members may be currently undertaking. Although most of the association's activities are online-based, some members know each other face-to-face after meeting in workshops and exchanging contacts. Thus, their interaction may be in the form of the e-mail forum and calling each other

should there be an issue that needs further clarity, as has been discussed in the previous sections.

On the contrary, some communication researchers such as Deventer and Snyman (2014) are of the opinion that investing in CMC tools would not be beneficial for societies and organisations, especially in the South African context. Africa in general and South Africa in particular, are still faced with several CMC challenges that make this platform not to be as fully utilised as it could be. The issues of e-mail security, connectivity and e-mail access, among others, remain a challenge in South African associations. Apart from the e-mail, some Asynchronous CMC tools include listservs, discussion boards and blogs. Discussion boards, listservs and blogs are not this study's focus. However, the researcher deemed it fit to highlight their advantages and disadvantages as a premise of exploring if other Asynchronous CMC tools could better address more efficient Asynchronous CMC participation.

Repman, Zinskie and Carlson (2008) define a listserv as an early e-mail-based application that has been used extensively for collaboration and interaction. In simple terms, a listserv is an application that distributes messages to subscribers on an electronic mailing list, according to The Online Dictionary (2018).

A Discussion board is an online bulletin board where members leave messages that are responded to by other group members. Discussion boards are also known as discussion forums or message boards. In this forum, users have the choice to become anonymous. The issue of anonymity may be unsettling for PEG as there is no need for this. These are professional members who discuss editing issues. Therefore, an anonymous member may make the others uncomfortable in taking part in the discussion board. A blog is a personal website wherein the owner uses it to discuss whatever topic they wish. It has been presented previously that this technology is not suitable for the PEG.

In summary, Deventer and Snyman (2014) are hasty on the integration of CMC tools as they posit that these would be a waste of the organisation's resources in that the integration would not enhance knowledge sharing. They see the exercise of updating and upgrading communication resources in organisations as an unnecessary endeavour. However, these authors in their article support face-to-face communication over Asynchronous CMC tools such as emails. Thus, they recommend that organisations would rather fund human resource initiatives that promote face-to-face communication because a majority of their participants preferred face-to-face communication in the studied organisation. The researcher cannot fully

support this stance as this study's focus was not on comparing face-to-face communication with Asynchronous CMC. Therefore, the endeavour to engage in this study to discover perceptions in the Asynchronous CMC participation in an online association based in South Africa.

Some communication authors predict that AC tools such as instant messaging, SMS and blogs are all new discussion forums that all command a social presence (Tang & Fung Hew 2017; Herring, Stein & Virtanen 2013). The question remains if these may serve to address some of the advantages in Asynchronous CMC or if they may, in future, replace the e-mail. Nonetheless, forums such as SMS have more disadvantages as compared to e-mail. Some researchers like who? say that SMS is a form of an e-mail sent via a mobile phone, yet it is limited to about 160 characters. Thus, this disadvantages it as it cannot be used in organisations to communicate extensive information because of its limits. "Rather, the robust popularity of the e-mail over the last 30 years satisfies some important communication needs" (Herring 2004). Perhaps the e-mail remains popular because of familiarity, its low costs and inertia.

2.9 SUMMARY

This chapter explored e-mail usage globally and in South African associations. It looked at issues deliberated upon by scholars in communication on Asynchronous CMC, especially e-mail. The study's research questions were on PEG members' understanding of the significance of AC such as emails within organisations such as PEG. The perceptions of the level of members' participation in AC within the PEG e-mail forum; and guidelines on how e-mail participation could be improved at PEG. The literature review covered umbrella topics based on all three research questions. The first question was answered by presenting a discussion on CMC, Asynchronous CMC, variables in Asynchronous CMC (ACMC). The second question was addressed by presenting the use of emails in South African organisations, the advantages and disadvantages of emails, and the causes of inefficient ACMC in organisations. The last research question was addressed by unpacking solutions to efficient ACMC such as electronic propinquity, group size, the use of social media in organisations' formal communication platforms, and that the more experienced members of a group are more likely to be free to communicate.

This study was underpinned by the Symbolic Interaction Theory and this researcher presented why this theory was chosen for this study as opposed to the Uses and Gratifications and

Information Richness theories. This chapter is concluded by pondering if the use of emails in organisations will last very long.

The following chapter is on the methodology followed in this study. The researcher presents the choice of qualitative methodology in this study and the data-gathering tools utilised.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the study's literature review was presented. In addition, the previous chapter served the purpose of informing the reader how other authors and researchers have undertaken research that was similar to the phenomenon studied in this project. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that was utilised in this study on PEG members' perceptions on their participation in the association's e-mail forum called the PEG E-MAIL CHAT GROUP.

This chapter begins with defining the study's research paradigm, methodology and issues that are covered under methodology. Furthermore, it discusses the research design, approach, population and how online interviews were conducted. Lastly, the chapter ends with ethical issues considered in this research. This chapter begins with the research paradigm below.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Bryman (2001:75) describes a research paradigm as a "basis for comprehension for interpreting social reality and a broad framework of perception and understanding under which theories and practices operate". In simple terms, a paradigm is how one sees things and is a model of one's thoughts. Furthermore, Rossman and Rallis (2012) state that a paradigm is the shared understanding of social reality. This is the complex way of seeing complete assumptions about the world and the meaning of actions. This study sought to explore and understand the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's e-mail forum, thus revealing the assumptions they may have of their world and unearthing the meaning of their actions. Their actions are how and if they choose to participate in the e-mail forum which constitutes their social reality.

The research utilised the interpretivist paradigm because the phenomenon based on that reality was relative according to how individuals experience it at any given time and place (Moon & Blackman 2017). Thus, understanding the participants' perceptions on their participation in the PEG e-mail forum. The interpretivist paradigm is an assumption that underlies Social Research (Bryman 2001). This paradigm is often chosen in Social Research over the positivist paradigm usually utilised in the natural sciences or quantitative research (ibid). The interpretivist

paradigm purports that investigating humans as subjects ought to be different than when investigating the material world because human beings have feelings and interpret issues as they experience them in their world (ibid). The researcher followed the interpretivist paradigm because it focuses on the experiences of the world based on the culture and previous experiences of each individual, with an emphasis on mutual understanding, as enunciated by Bhengu (2005). This ties in well with this study's research questions because what was explored are the PEG members' perceptions that were later analysed and interpreted for the reader in Chapter 4, utilising the Constant Comparative Analysis Method and the Frame Analysis. During this study, the knowledge generated was interpretive because it sought to generate the participants' clear and interpreted messages and experiences and not necessarily what they know (Rossman & Rallis 2012; Thompson 1990; Solomon 1987).

In qualitative research, it is vital to understand certain types of beliefs or assumptions that underlie the research. These are philosophical assumptions that fall under worldviews needed to create knowledge (Mertens, 2005:8; Neuman, 2014:36). In this study, the philosophical beliefs ontology, epistemology and axiology are underscored as they are aligned to the type of research that was carried out:

3.2.1 Ontology: In qualitative research, an ontological position is a reality of what exists and how and why it exists (Scotland 2012; Kgwete 2015). In addition, ontology is what exists in the human world that a researcher can acquire knowledge about (Moon & Blackman 2017). The ontological belief in this study was the data from participants and how certain the data can be recognised as fully existing as well as their nature (Mertens 2005:9; Moon & Blackman 2017). For instance, the ontological belief is what is true and real in this study, who decided on the legitimacy of that which was considered real and how the different realities of what is real were handled (ibid).

Therefore, this assumption purports that it is the participants who drive the true meaning of the data. Since the participants were interviewed online, the data emerged from their natural settings, in their real world (Leedy & Ormrod 2013). Therefore, the nature of the data collected was determined by the participants' realities and lived experiences. During the interviewing process, the participants and the researcher developed multiple realities. Through this process, the researcher collected qualitative data in the form of notes, written words, symbols, recorded voices that describe and represent the participants and their actions and responses (Neuman,

2014: 101; Neuman, 2006:457; Mertens, 2005). In so doing, the researcher extracted meaning from the data that could result in the addition of existing knowledge (ibid).

3.2.2 Epistemology: concerning the epistemological positions, Kgwete (2015) purports that these are the beliefs that ascertain how knowledge is generated, acquired and shared with others. Further, epistemology entails what the essence of the knowledge-knower and knowledge-knower-to-be's relationship is and what is to be known (Guba & Lincoln 1994). In addition, according to Moon and Blackman (2017), epistemology is how human beings create knowledge based on the knowledge they have acquired in their world. Therefore, the researcher's feelings determined the construction of knowledge as it is based on ontology, as postulated by Leedy and Ormrod (2013). These authors further advise that qualitative researchers ought not to let their biases, feelings and experiences jeopardise their objectivity (ibid). Therefore, the researcher ensured a strong linkage with participants so that accurate inferences were made. Consequently, the researcher observed, interrogated and made notes during the interviews to make sense of the participants' responses and views on their participation in the e-mail forum (Leedy & Ormrod 2013; Mertens 2005). In the process of the researcher and participants co-creating realities, new knowledge emerged. Therefore, the epistemology in this research created new strategies that could be adopted by PEG members in optimally utilising the e-mail forum for their benefit.

3.2.3 Axiology: According to Killam (2013), axiology addresses the nature of ethical behaviour in qualitative research, such as the value, type and criteria of ethics. These values are socially constructed, determined by the researcher's belief systems, experiences, biases and background. Therefore, the e-mail usage perceptions, as seen by the researcher, ought not to dominate the findings from the participants. Consequently, the axiological stance in this study was about the PEG members' perceptions on their e-mail usage and not based on the researcher's biases.

Following this study's discussion on the research paradigm utilised, is the research design for a more inductive reasoning pattern.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is an appropriate procedure for doing something under specific circumstances, according to Lanshear and Knobel (2004). More precisely, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) define a research design as a plan on how the researcher will collect,

analyse and interpret the data; the core being to help answer the research question/s. Creswell (2013:5) presents that a research design is “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research question and ultimately, to its conclusion”.

A research design is developed after the formulation of the research problem and the literature review have been conducted (Wiersman & Jurs 2005:13). In defining a research design, Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:34) state that it is the development of “a plan that specifies how the research is going to be executed in such a way that it answers the research question”. In essence, it is the process of how the study will be conducted, incorporating the research’s approach, methods of data collection and ethical considerations, time and the place where the data will be collected, and how they will be analysed (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:28; Parahoo 2006). These steps are all explained in detail below and how they panned out in this study.

The following section describes the research design utilised concerning the objectives as laid out in Chapter1. The description of the research design incorporates the (i) research approach (ii) research type, and (iii) study approach.

3.3.1 Research Approach

The research approach adopted in this study was qualitative. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an investigation with an understanding based on methodological conventions that investigate a social or human issue. Herein, the investigator builds a complex, all-encompassing picture, examines words, reports the participants’ words, and conducts the investigation in the participants’ natural setting. Further, Mouton (1996) differentiates qualitative research as a focus to understand social phenomena, holistically and in the setting, they are studied. This is a person-centred, communal, contextual, holistic and humanistic approach that allows for the understanding of human lived experiences (Field & Morse 1996:8). This research was qualitative because it allowed the researcher to explore the participants’ perceptions of their participation in the association’s e-mail forum thus opening a world of different dimensions and perspectives to the researcher (McLeod 2001: 2).

In addition, Dreyer (2004:6) articulates the qualitative research characteristics as follows: It emphasises on the interpretation of participants; it is descriptive; it takes cognisance of the context in which research is undertaken; it pays attention to the dynamic nature of life; individual cases are not generalised, it is open and flexible. On the contrary, quantitative research characteristics involve dealing with numbers versus human perceptions in qualitative

research. Further, quantitative research differs from qualitative in that it is not malleable, and it is challenging to unearth its promising ideas (Mathipa & Gumbo, 2015). Precisely, most quantitative research is conducted to test theories than develop them and they generally use the deductive and not inductive approach in testing existing theories (ibid).

Qualitative research was more suitable for this study because the main focus was to obtain natural information from the PEG members who were purposively selected. The qualitative approach was the most appropriate in capturing the participants' perceptions and views on the research problem. This is because the qualitative approach focuses on understanding and being cognizant of the processes, social and cultural contexts that may shape people's behavioural patterns and reactions to certain things (Wagner *et al.*, 2012: 126). In addition, the events were narrated as they unfolded in the interviewing online sites in the form of recorded data and field notes. Therefore, the perspectives of the participants were narrated based on their experiences and not the researcher's bias. These were achieved through qualitative research because this type of design afforded the researcher to utilise triangulation techniques in the form of multiple participants, multiple contexts and multiple methods. The triangulation in qualitative research yields rich informative data to address the research objectives and questions. Therefore, the researcher becomes the most important instrument in the data-gathering process.

The qualitative study was grounded on structured interviews constructed on the main research question and sub-questions. Structured interviews are utilised in qualitative research and they benefited this study in that they allowed the researcher to have a close encounter with the participants, thus gaining in-depth knowledge on the research phenomenon. During these structured online interviews, the researcher was also allowed to observe and record the participants' filler words and attitudes that were vital during the process of data analysis. One of the most definite advantages of qualitative research as compared to quantitative is its ability to allow the researcher to explore the research phenomenon in-depth and yield rich descriptive data on the PEG member's perceptions on their e-mail forum participation.

On a negative note, the findings from qualitative research cannot be generalised to the whole population in which the researcher has an interest. This is because small samples are often used that take into account those possible participants who may be willing to be a part of the study (Creswell 2014). In addition, qualitative researchers seldom show any interest in replicating their studies because of its limited scope, and the researcher being the central research instrument, thus affecting the generalisability of the study (Bryman 2008: 392; Daymon &

Holloway 2011: 11). Considering all the discussed advantages and disadvantages, the researcher chose the qualitative approach because its advantages outweigh the disadvantages in answering this study's research phenomenon optimally.

3.3.2 Research type and Study Approach

The type of qualitative research that this study followed was the case study design. A case study design is part of the four major qualitative research designs: phenomenology, ethnography, Grounded Theory and case study. This study followed the case study method because it sought to look specifically at in-depth information obtained from one online-based association. Schumacher and McMillan (2010) describe a case study as data analysis focused on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in-depth knowledge regardless of the number of sites or study participants. In addition, case studies assist the researcher in obtaining a thick description of the participants' lived experiences, how they feel and think of a certain situation as stated by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007). Consequently, this study was about obtaining PEG members' perceptions and thoughts on their e-mail forum participation and what could be done to optimally utilise this service.

PEG was selected based on purposive sampling to obtain more information and formulate guidelines to assist its members and members of similar associations to utilise the e-mail forum optimally, to their benefit. It was a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants (Dolores & Tongco, 2007). According to David and Sutton (2004) cases are selected to be researched based on the researcher's understanding and opinion on their appropriateness as research sites. The choice in selecting PEG as an association of choice and one that parallels the aim of this study was three-fold. First, PEG is the main body in South Africa whose core objective is to promote the interests of professionals from the communications, media and publishing sectors. These professionals are critical to this sector of the South African economy (editors.org.za). In addition, PEG is the founding member of LAMP (Alliance of Language and Media Professionals). LAMP is pivotal in uplifting and upholding the standards of language in South Africa.

This is relevant because this study looked at the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's e-mail forum, to formulate guidelines to assist in their optimal e-mail participation, thus upholding the standard of language and editing in South Africa.

Second, PEG seeks to promote editors and their work to make potential clients understand this important sector in the communication circles. Communication in the 21st century is not only within South Africa and among South Africans. The third reason for the selection of PEG is that it aims to promote communication with other professionals from across the globe (www.editors.org.za), as the world has been labelled a melting pot of diverse nationalities and individuals.

Therefore, the researcher chose the case study design because it could extract detailed data and produce clarifications that would have been difficult to obtain had another design been chosen. This design was preferred to glean a better understating of PEG members' participation in the e-mail forum. Further, a case study was most suitable in this situation because it afforded the researcher an opportunity to explore, in-depth, the research phenomenon and the researcher was able to gather extensive data utilising various data collection methods such as online interviews and a literature review (Stake 1995).

Neuman (2014:43) postulates that a researcher can tell a big story through the lens of a small case utilising case studies. On the contrary, the phenomenological design could not be utilised in this study because it mainly assists in raising awareness and increasing insight about a phenomenon instead of describing it in-depth. This study sought to unearth definitive answers to the research phenomenon and the phenomenological design was not best suited for this function (Astalin, 2013; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The other major design in qualitative research is Grounded Theory. The researcher did not utilise this design because, Glaser and Strauss, believe that theory could emerge through qualitative data analysis (Kolb, 2012:83), and thus developed the Grounded Theory (GT). The main aim was not to generate theory. In addition, the GT over assumes that new concepts and theories emerge from participants in the study from the interviews (ibid) and this was not the study's focus but to acquire the PEG members' perceptions to formulate operational guidelines on their optimum use of the e-mail forum.

For a case study to be considered as a qualitative study, the researcher "must be interested in the meaning of experiences of the subjects, rather than in generalising results to other groups of people" (Daly 2005: 178). Therefore, this study unearthed the participants' experiences in the e-mail forum and thus elicited their perceptions. Additionally, a case study approach presents a multifaceted understanding of the participants and stakeholders who are affected by the research phenomenon (Creswell *et al.* 2007).

Online interviews, field notes as well as document reviews were used in this study. Therefore, the main source of data in this study was online interviews and the case study accommodates most sources of data collection in qualitative research. Baxter and Jack (2008) discuss some of the advantages of case study methodology as exploring a phenomenon using a variety of sources, it allows the researcher to explore individuals and organisations using complex interventions or programmes, and that it is flexible and rigorous and thus suitable for the human and health sciences. Furthermore, utilising the case study approach is advantageous because it employs existing information to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation according to Cohen *et al.* (2000); Yin (2003). Accordingly, Yin (2003:5) states that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena... [It] allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events...”. Furthermore, Yin (*ibid*) distinguishes between single and multiple case studies. A single case study tackles one case and a multiple case study includes more than one case. Some case studies rely on multiple types of data collection techniques such as surveys, Content Analysis, interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) list different types of case studies as descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Therefore, this study was a single and exploratory case study. This case study was exploratory because the researcher did not know the outcomes that could be yielded from the findings (Yin 2003).

One of the shortfalls for many researchers utilising the case study design is they try to answer a broad question or a topic that has too many objectives (*ibid*). Thus, some authors caution researchers to place boundaries for the research to avoid this pitfall (Stake 1995; Yin 2003). That is why for this case study, the researcher generated one precise main question and only three objectives that parallel the research sub-questions and interview questions.

For the research phenomenon to be answered adequately, the researcher constructed the main research question, three sub-questions, aim and three objectives that were the guides in obtaining in-depth and rich data from the participants. These are listed below.

3.4 RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES, MAIN QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

As this study followed the case study design, it is important to consider the units of analysis that were instrumental in formulating the study’s main and sub-questions, as per Baxter and Jack (2008). Units of analysis are the case that the researcher intends to study (Miles &

Huberman 1994). Baxter and Jack (2008), further advise novice researchers to ask themselves these questions to determine the case and researcher questions. The questions are a) Do I want to analyse the individual; b) Do I want to analyse the process; c) Do I want to analyse the programme; d) Do I want to analyse the difference between organisations?

Therefore, the researcher asked herself these guiding questions and determined that this case was about analysing the process of e-mail utilisation and thus solicit the PEG members' perceptions on their e-mail participation.

Furthermore, Du Plooy (2009) advises communication researchers to consider these variables when formulating the research problem and questions. These are relevance, researchability, feasibility and ethical acceptability. Therefore, the researcher determined that what she sought to research was a communication problem relevant to Communication Science. In addition, this problem was researchable in that it exhibited signs of scientific research and the problem could be resolved through the recommendations emanating from the findings. The study was also feasible in that the researcher had been granted a bursary, part of which she used to purchase a laptop and subscribe for uncapped data for the online interviewing and analysis processes. Lastly, Du Plooy (ibid) speaks of ethical issues when a researcher considers the research questions. These were followed as is discussed in the relevant section below.

When formulating the sub-questions, the researcher considered the variables relevant to the main research problem and the main aim of the study (Du Plooy 2009). In essence, this researcher undertook to obtain answers to this study's main and sub-questions.

The main research question was:

What are the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication/e-mail?

The research sub-questions were a guide for the interview questions, as espoused by Greeff (2007:296) and they are listed below:

The sub-questions were:

- What is PEG members' understanding of the significance of the e-mail forum within organisations such as PEG?
- What are the perceptions of the level of members' participation in AC within the PEG e-mail forum?

- How can e-mail participation be improved at PEG?

Research Aim:

The aim was to explore the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's AC to formulate guidelines that will assist members to optimally utilise the association's e-mail forum.

Research Objectives:

- To understand PEG members' perceptions of the significance of asynchronous communication via e-mail.
- To describe PG members' perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum.
- To draw up guidelines on how best participation on the e-mail forum can be enhanced to the benefit of most PEG members.

Interview Questions Were:

- What is your understanding of the significance of Asynchronous communication such as emails within organisations such as PEG?
- How have your perceptions as a PEG member influenced your participation in the e-mail forum?
- What do you suggest can be done to enhance PEG members' e-mail participation to their benefit?

As the study's main question, sub-questions and objectives are listed above, it is pertinent for the reader to know what data collection techniques were utilised to best answer these questions and address the study's objectives optimally.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Sampling is a process used to select a subset of the population in a study. McNeill (1990:117) posits "qualitative research involves a small sample size, and sampling is based on the need to produce accurate findings without collecting data from every member of the population".

A study's population is all individuals or objects that have similar characteristics that the research intends to study (Bannet 2005:76). The population in qualitative studies can be small and focus on information-rich participants, unlike in quantitative studies where a large population can be utilised (Creswell 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Chaudhury (2010) defines a study's general population as a group that shares a specific characteristic from whom information of interest may be obtained. A target population is a group of individuals with relevance and attributes to a study (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins 2001; Creswell 2003). Lastly, a study's accessible population is a group of individuals classified under the target population who are willing to participate in the study (Creswell 2003). Therefore, this study's general population were all language practitioners and editors in South Africa. The target population were all editors who were affiliated with the Professional Editors Guild and the accessible population were all PEG members who had their 2019/2020 membership paid-up and were willing to participate in the study. These were accessible because they had access to the e-mail forum. The ones without paid-up membership for the 2019/2020 financial year, did not have access to the e-mail forum. However, it was not all paid-up members who were willing to participate in the study, thus the issue of willingness to participate is crucial in determining the accessible population (ibid). Consequently, below are the inclusion criteria utilised to guide the accessible population.

In this study, the population consisted of:

- all PEG members who had paid-up membership for the years 2019/20
- all PEG members who had their 2019/20 membership up to date and were willing to participate in the study
- all PEG members who were self-employed, were willing to participate in the study and were willing to use their data for the online interviews

The above has been a discussion of the study's sampling and population, including a clarification of the general, target and accessible population. To further inform the reader on how the accessible population was selected, is the following section on purposive sampling was utilised in this study.

3.5.1 Purposive Sampling

Creswell (1998:34) describes a sample as a subgroup of the population that the researcher endeavours to engage in his/her research and later generalise the study's results to that

particular sample. Further, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006:49) refer to a sample as the researcher's choice of participants and events to study. In this study, purposive sampling was used because the researcher had an idea on which possible participants were information-rich and key in answering the research questions (Patton 2002). This was because the researcher was part of PEG and was familiar with the phenomenon under investigation. Sarantakos (2005) advises that the study's participants ought to be the ones who can provide rich, appropriate and sufficient information that will present a vivid picture of the study phenomenon to the reader.

First, the researcher sought permission to recruit participants from the EXCO. The web administrator was tasked with forwarding an e-mail from the researcher detailing the study and seeking possible participants. A few members showed interest. Therefore, the next step was for the researcher to seek assistance from the PEG administrator and the EXCO to help individually identify suitable participants for this study using the purposive approach. They emailed these individuals privately and then requested them to send an e-mail to the researcher showing their willingness to be a part of the study. The members of the EXCO were better placed to know participants who were information-rich and willing to participate, as per the study's inclusion criteria.

3.5.2 Description of the Sample

Babbie (2014) states that a researcher can use the advantage of knowing the population's elements and the purpose of the study, to make the sample selection. Thus, the selection of participants was purposive because the researcher was also a PEG member and so familiar with the general population. Regarding the sample size, there are no fixed numbers and percentages, as long as the study's phenomenon determined what percentage of the population would be sampled (Nwana 1992), as well as data saturation. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is reached when there is sufficient information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible. Consequently, the researcher ensured that the interviews were conducted until the researcher was satisfied that all the research questions had been adequately answered.

In agreement with the above statement, McMillan and Schumacher (1997) and De Vos (1998) state that purposive sampling is based on the researcher's knowledge of the population. The researcher's judgement is based on purposively selecting information-rich participants who are critical in answering the research question and sub-questions and are available for the interviews until data saturation is reached.

As supported by Liamputtong (2013:390), purposive sampling selects cases to provide a representative sample. In this study, the representative sample was 11 copy editors who were subscribed to PEG and had their 2019/20 membership up to date and were willing to participate in the study.

Purposive sampling did not provide a statistically representative sample in this case because the sample consisted of individuals who were selected from a larger group known as the research population, as espoused by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2009:272). According to Check, Russell and Schutt (2012:394), “a research population is the entire set of individuals or entities to which the study findings are to be generalised”.

Selecting the target sample did not pose a challenge as the intended participants were information-rich, were a daily part of the topic under investigation and had daily experiences of how Asynchronous CMC via e-mail was conducted within PEG members. Thus, they were able to provide their perceptions about this study’s phenomenon.

3.5.3 Access to the Interview Sites

The interviews were online and access to the participants is explained in Section 3.7.1. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher had proposed that the participants would all be self-employed. The reason why self-employed members could have been chosen would have been for easy access reasons, as this was not an association with physical office space wherein participants may be interviewed. It is an association of members who interact via e-mail either from their homes or from their offices for the ones who are employed in certain companies or universities. The ones who are full-time employed could have had the challenge to get the time and a room to be interviewed at their workplaces because the managers value the cost of time and could have been unwilling to allow these participants to take some time off for the interviews (Johl & Ranganathan 2010). Additionally, organisations are usually sceptical about the role of outsiders and may not value academic studies (Laurila 1997). However, this all fell out because all interviews were conducted online to allay possible Covid-19 infections for both the researcher and participants.

Gaining access to the participants began with the researcher establishing a relationship with the gatekeeper (Johl & Ranganathan 2010), the EXCO in this instance. The relationship was established when this study was still at the proposal stage and the researcher was granted permission to go ahead with the study. As per Johl and Ranganathan (2010), there are strategies

to be used, especially by novice researchers, to make their access to the interview sites a bit easier. This researcher followed the formal access strategy, such as seeking formal permission (Appendix D) from the PEG executive. Therefore, the researcher sent out emails with the assistance of the PEG administrator and some EXCO members to request possible participants. When permitted by the association was granted, the researcher set online appointments, feeling obligated because of infringing on the participants' time, emphasising the benefits of the research to the PEG and reassuring the participants of their anonymity and confidentiality (ibid).

In qualitative research, researchers use inclusion and exclusion criteria when considering possible participants for their studies. Below is a list of the participants' inclusion and exclusion criteria utilised in this research.

3.5.4 Inclusion Criteria

This study's inclusion criteria were:

- PEG members who had paid-up membership for the years 2019/20
- all PEG members who had their 2019/20 membership up to date and were willing to participate in the study
- PEG members who were willing to participate and utilise their data for the online interviews

3.5.5 Exclusion Criteria

- PEG members who had not paid-up their 2019/20 membership
- All PEG members who had their 2019/20 membership up to date and were not willing to participate in the study
- PEG members who were not willing to participate and not willing to utilise their data for the online interviews

3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

In qualitative research, there are several data collection methods that the researcher may utilise. This choice depends on the research problem, what will work best in the research phenomenon being investigated, the researcher's skills and resources, and what the purpose of conducting the research is (Kumar 2014). In this study, the main data collection technique was online interviews with purposively selected PEG members. Initially, 12 participants were

purposefully selected. However, one participant pulled out before the interviewing process could begin. Consequently, only 11 participants were interviewed online through Microsoft Teams and Zoom. In addition, the sample was based on the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria as discussed above.

The inclusion criteria were that all the participants had to be full-time language editors and affiliated to PEG at the time of the interviews. Access to full-time editors was much easier than getting access to editors employed by a company (Johl & Ranganathan 2010). Carrying out good in-depth fieldwork requires planning, both about the overall shape of the data collection and about the fieldwork materials that will be needed even though qualitative research is often described as unstructured as cited by Ritchie *et al.*, (2014). According to Creswell (2013), what is crucial in qualitative data collection is to articulate the meaning that the participants place on the phenomenon of interest. In this study, the participants' meanings were articulated using online interviews that are presented in verbatim sections, tied onto their interpretations in Chapter 4. Additionally, some examples of the verbatim quotes are presented as an addendum at the end of the research report.

Below is a compilation of the data collection techniques utilised in this study. These are triangulation techniques that included the interview guide, literature study and structured online interviews.

3.6.1 Document Analysis

This study employed document analysis as part of the two-pronged data collection process that lead to the Constant Comparative Analysis Method as a data analysis technique. The research objectives required extensive literature and document analysis as part of a two-pronged data analysis process including online interviews and document analysis. These play a crucial part in understanding the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study. Bowen (2009) describes document analysis as a methodical technique for evaluating electronic and printed documents. Further, Bowen (2009) and Merriam (1998) present that document analysis improves the understating of a research phenomenon in certain case studies. The documents utilised in this case study were the association's website containing the objectives and a guide on how members ought to utilise the e-mail forum and the association's newsletter.

The association's newsletter was first published in 2003 and has three issues per annum. The newsletters that formed part of the units of analysis were three issues from 2019 and 2021

because the researcher had these readily saved in her research folder. These newsletters are sent to members and serve as part of the association's internal communication with other members as the articles are written by and for PEG members. The website was designed in 2013 and is updated as and when necessary. At that time, it showed that the last update had been in 2021. The website serves as both an external and internal communication tool. This study focuses on the internal communication aspect of the website. That is, the objectives of PEG and the member code of conduct when participating in the e-mail forum. The other document that was analysed on the website was the handy reminder on how members ought to use the PEG e-Groups. This is the Google Groups App that supports the technical running of the e-mail forum.

In presenting an article on the news frame analysis, Linström and Marais (2012), present a qualitative methodology on the basic steps to conducting document analysis utilising the frame analysis technique in mass media. Therefore, this study employed a text-based interpretive qualitative approach, to describe communication content (Wimmer & Dominick 2006) on the PEG website and newsletter. Researchers who have conducted work on framing describe it in different ways. For this study, the working definition adopted was that of Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber and Fan (1998) who describe framing as a means of describing the power of communication in influencing personal perceptions that emanate from an influence of how a situation or object must be interpreted.

Du Plooy (2009) presents a seven-step process as identifying and analysing frames in qualitative mass media documents. These steps were followed in this research and are listed below:

3.6.1.1. Choose a medium: As informed by the research problem, the media used in this frame analysis was the PEG website and newsletter.

3.6.1.2. Determine a time frame: The time-frames of these media were from 2013 to 2021. The year 2013 was when the first issue of the newsletter was published and when the website was designed. The website did not necessarily have a time frame as information was updated as and when necessary. For instance, the PEG website was up to date as it had been last updated in 2021.

3.6.1.3. Draw a sample: A sample was drawn from articles in newsletter issues from 2013 to 2021 including the website PEG objectives and the code of conduct. This was a cross-sectional study and these issues yielded the latest information on the study's phenomenon.

3.6.1.4. Identify the unit of analysis: According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006: 158), the unit of analysis is crucial. In written content, according to these authors, "the unit of analysis might be a single word or symbol, a theme, or an entire article or story". The unit of analysis in frame analysis is often individual news articles that appeared in the selected newspaper during the selected study period. In this study, six newsletter articles from 2019 and 2021 and website PEG objectives and code of conduct, formed the unit of analysis. The newsletter publishes three articles per annum and information on the website is updated as and when necessary such as the posting of current events and Webinars during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the newsletter, the researcher picked two articles per issue, these were the Chairman's note and the main article of the issue contributed by members that deals with grammar issues. Meaning, the review consisted of six articles in total in over three issues from 2019 and 2021.

3.6.1.5. Selection of a frame typology: The selection of frames was done inductively. The researcher carefully read each article in the newsletter and determined the main and secondary frames that emerged from the newsletter articles.

3.6.1.6. Operational definitions: The researcher provided operational definitions of the frames as identified by other researchers.

3.6.1.7. Identifying news frames: In finally identifying the frames, the researcher employed Alozie's (2005), three-phase process as listed below:

- Phase 1: The first reading of the articles took place and the researcher took descriptive notes on the selected articles during this phase.
- Phase 2: The researcher re-read the selected articles, identifying recurring themes, frames and categories.
- Phase 3: The researcher then conducted an in-depth interpretation of the selected articles, based on the identified themes, frames and categories in Phase 2.

When identifying frames in this type of analysis, Gamson and Lasch (1983) advise researchers to use rhetoric devices such as metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases and depictions; as well as structures such as syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical Pan and Kosicki (1993).

The document analysis in this study followed the Constant Comparative Analysis Method. According to Merriam (1998), the constant comparative method is a data analysis process that assigns codes that reflect conceptual connections in the collected data. A detailed account of this method is under the Content Analysis section below. Additionally, this study employed structured online interviews as is discussed below.

3.6.2 Structured Online Interviews

Structured online interviews were conducted with all participants. They lasted between 20 to 40 minutes each. The online interviews were guided by an interview guide. The participants' perspectives on the research phenomenon were obtained utilising an interview guide, with ten structured questions. This was a set of predetermined and structured questions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999; Taylor & Bodgan 1998).

The questions on the interview guide emanated from the research sub-questions. As Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) assert, an interview guide is a schedule with the basic structure of how the interviews will be conducted and it also assists the researcher to obtain the participants' responses through a set of predetermined questions written down on a sheet. This guide was prepared before the interviews so that the researcher was cognizant of what to achieve during the actual interview sessions (ibid). In addition, Liamputhong (2011) proposes that an interview guide assists the researcher to ensure that the interview sessions are logical and that the sessions are navigated more easily.

The online interviews were recorded utilising the recording functions on both Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Kumar (2014: 193) supports that "recording the details of the researcher's discussions with the participants is extremely important and the researchers need to plan on how to record the discussions". Audio recording interviews and taking field notes allows the researcher to fully listen and be responsive to the participants, thus presenting an accurate account of the participants' experiences. In support, Ritchie *et al.*, (2014) posit that audio recording becomes a more neutral and less intrusive way of recording data. The study aimed to determine the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's e-mail forum. Therefore, the online interviews assisted the researcher to glean the participants' perceptions.

3.6.3 Procedure in Conducting the Structured Interviews

The steps to gaining insight into the research site were followed. Before the online interviews, the researcher emailed the participant information sheet to all participants. On the interviewing day, the researcher introduced herself on camera, the topic of the research, the purpose and benefits of conducting the research, then the cameras were turned off for the duration of the actual interviews.

Apart from the advent of the Covi-19 pandemic, the online interviews were an intriguing data collection instrument as the researcher was able to study the phenomenon in an environment in which it occurs, online (Salmons 2015). Further, Salmons (ibid) advises that it is best to use ICTs to conduct interviews if one seeks to unearth patterns of computer mediated use, collecting visual data, participation in online communities and human-computer interaction. Therefore, the online interviews were best suited in this study that sought to explore PEG members' participation in the association's e-mail forum. Besides the aforementioned reasons for conducting online interviews, this method was the safest and most convenient manner to meet participants (ibid). Online interviews further provided an option of using the web camera, to mimic face-to-face interviews wherein non-verbal and social cues may be picked by the researcher (Stewart & Williams, 2005; Sullivan, 2012). The limiting factor was that the participants' whole-body language could not be observed as the camera only provides a headshot of the participant (Cater 2011).

Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, the world is changing, and online interviews are becoming the norm. Janghorban, Roudsari and Taghipour (2014) specifically study online qualitative interviews via Skype. The authors underscore that online interviewing is overcoming time, geographical and financial constraints. As were the online interviewing tools in this study, Microsoft Teams and Zoom allowed the researcher to conduct individual interviews online (ibid). Notwithstanding this, ethical protocols were followed during the online interviews (Cater, 2011; Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, 2007).

Below are some of the amenities that were considered during the interviewing process.

3.6.4 Online Teams and Zoom Recorder

In advising interviewers on collecting data during interviews, Berg (2005) recommends that digital recordings may be carried out during the interviews. However, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that this does not cause any disruptions or discomfort during the

interview process. Furthermore, Berg (*ibid*) highlights the benefits of using a tape recorder as that the researcher has the time to focus on the actual interviews and that the discussion flows when there are no disruptions. Therefore, even though these were online interviews, the researcher was at ease because of the recording functions on both Microsoft Teams and Zoom and was able to give the interviewing process her full attention. Additionally, this method was less intrusive during the interviewing process and permission was sought from participants to record the interviews.

3. 7 FIELD NOTES

In this study, field notes were used to augment the researcher's collection of data during the online interviews. Polit and Beck (2017; 2012:548) present that field notes are much broader, more analytic and interpretive than a simple listing of occurrences. Field notes were the researcher's way of articulating the occurrences during the interviews as best he or she could. Some field notes are not always recorded on the field but after the interviews are complete (*ibid*). In this study, the researcher recorded the participants' behaviours during the interviews. These also included verbal cues, filler words and the overall mood of the participants.

The researcher wrote down all that she saw, heard, experienced and thought about during the interviewing processes like (De Vos 2011) asserts. Immediately after the interviews, the researcher also wrote down notes of what exactly went on while her memory was still fresh. As per De Vos' (*ibid*) suggestion, the researcher first took down the field notes as sketches that included words and phrases, followed by more detailed notes. This statement is also corroborated by Richie *et al.* (2014: 171) that "field notes might simply involve rough jottings and a more planned approach of field notes is important".

Furthermore, Richie *et al.* (2014: 171) posit that "field notes in qualitative studies provide an opportunity for the researcher to note what they saw and heard outside of the interviewing site". During the interviews, the researcher's opinions about the interview encounter assisted even during the data analysis stage. These also assisted the researcher to start thinking about the themes, topics and concluding ideas (Creswell 2013).

A qualitative study cannot be complete with only collected data. The data ought to be analysed to infer the participants' perceptions, feelings and responses to the posed questions. This analysis further assists in meeting the study's objectives. In this study, the interpretivist

paradigm supported by the Constant Comparative Analysis Method (CCAM) technique was utilised, as discussed below.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:152) describe data analysis as “the procedure of systematically analysing and arranging the interview transcripts and other collected materials to maximise the researcher’s understanding of collected data. Thus, the researcher organised the data according to the themes that emanated from the sub-questions to respond to the research objectives, utilising the CCA. Therefore, the researcher familiarised herself with the collected data immediately after the interviews were completed because they were still fresh in her mind and was still in a position to recall the interviews’ ambience and atmosphere that was recorded in the field notes. These were crucial in the data interpretation stage (Neuman 2014; 1997). To note is that data analysis does not commence when the interviews are completed, the researcher starts this process while collecting data through online interviews (Rubin & Rubin 1995: 226). Below is a discussion of the data analysis steps as discussed by Kumar (2014), that were utilised in this study. Thereafter, a detailed data analysis table as per Williamson *et al.*, (2018: 458) is presented as it was juxtaposed with Kuma’s steps:

3.8.1 Step 1: Data Transcription

Before data transcription, the field notes were written, including filler words and the atmosphere from the interview sessions and verbatim responses from the participants. Thereafter, the researcher transcribed the data immediately after each interview. All information was written down.

3.8.2 Step 2: Organising the Data

The researcher went through all the transcribed verbatim data. This was to identify all similar phrases, themes and sequences. The aim was to understand the meanings constituted by the participants.

3.8.3 Step 3: Coding the Data

The third step was for the researcher to assign codes to the data. She did this by assigning codes to the data notes from the participants. She utilised alphabets and numbers such as LE1 for Language Editor 1 and LE2 for Language Editor 2 et cetera, to uphold anonymity.

3.8.4 Step 4: Generating Categories and Themes

The researcher went through all the transcribed data to classify them under similar codes and categories. The themes and categories were guided by the research sub-questions.

3.8.5 Step5: Narrative Structure and Representation

Duran and Chantler (2014) warn novice researchers that data analysis is one of the challenging steps in qualitative research. That is why the data processing and analysis were conducted as soon as the data analysis process began. After the interviews, the researcher commenced with a more detailed analysis of what the participants said. Every online interview was recorded, with permission from the participants, and the data were transcribed verbatim.

3.8.6 Step 6: Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process that the researcher follows to simplify collected data for the reader thus letting it emerge as a story that can be interpreted (LeCompte & Schensul 1999). Therefore, in this study data were organised, reduced and summarised, categorised where patterns and themes emerged (Patton 1987). This study followed thematic analysis, supported by the online structured interviews:

Table 1.3: Data Analysis

<p>Step 1 Reading the transcribed interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I carefully listened to each tape-recorded interview and personally transcribed each participant's interview.• I organised the transcribed interviews into folders for each participant.• Data were collected through structured interviews and document analysis (these are PEG emails, and the association's newsletter called The PEG Board).• I thoroughly read each transcribed interview to gain an understanding of
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	the data. Thereafter, I made descriptive notes on each.
Step 2 Re-reading the transcripts and coding the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I re-read all transcripts and during this process, began to develop themes using highlighters to colour code each theme that emerged from the data. • I then listed these themes.
Step 3 Identifying the main categories and sub-categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I collapsed the smaller themes into broader more inclusive themes (Williamson <i>et al.</i> 2018). • During this process, sub-themes were developed.
Step 4 Re-listing the categories and sub-categories wherein main themes are made clear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the coding process, I was able to identify categories in the data and then find the main and sub-themes to assist in answering the research question, namely, what are the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication/e-mail? • I identified three main themes and nine sub-themes.
Step 5 Coding each transcript according to the finalised list of codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I printed out a clean set of transcript copies and coded each transcript according to the finalised list of codes and themes.
Step 6 Developing 'voice sheets' for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I developed 'voice sheets', which consisted of verbatim quotes taken from the data. • These quotes serve as the voices of the participants and provide evidence

	in the discussion of themes in Chapter 4 (Williamson <i>et al.</i> 2018).
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Source: Williamson *et al.* (2018: 458)

In distinguishing between the different types of data analysis, Merriam (1998) purports that the constant comparative method assigns different codes to the collected data as a way of reflecting the conceptual relationships. These categories ought to be exhaustive, reflect the purpose of the research, be mutually exclusive, be sensitive to category content and be conceptually congruent (*ibid.*). In this study, the number of categories was determined by the frequency of responses from the participants (Guba & Lincoln 1981). Because the codes in this research were developed from the collected data, inductive code development was utilised. Furthermore, open coding was utilised wherein similar concepts were explored and compared so that similar ones would be grouped to form categories (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

When coding the data, the researcher looked for themes and patterns. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) share some strategies for researchers to consider when analysing qualitative data. These were considered in this study, and they are:

- analysing the conceptual framework
- reviewing the research questions
- describing how the participants interact
- organising the verbatim data according to similar topics
- writing down the researcher's thoughts about the results
- writing critical events during the interviewing process in chronological order
- drawing a list of important facts and
- drawing a visual representation of the data.

To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher selected an appropriate population and the most appropriate sampling process. For this study, the purposive sampling technique was utilised because the researcher already knew who could have been co-opted to best answer this study's phenomenon.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, Rossman and Rallis (2014) confer that the trustworthiness of the research is based on three criteria. These are: First, was the study conducted according to norms for acceptable and competent research practice? Second, was the study conducted in ways that

honour participants; was it conducted ethically? Third, was the researcher sensitive to the politics of the topic and setting? To maintain trustworthiness in this study, the researcher followed all three criteria listed above, indicating that this study met the ethical considerations of trustworthiness and was reliable and valid. Thus, the researcher upheld the ethics of trustworthiness throughout the research process.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined as the certainty that can be placed in the truth of the research findings, according to Macnee and McCabe (2008). From the perspective of the participants in the study, the results obtained ought to be credible or believable (Sing 2013). To address credibility in this study, the researcher allowed member checks, which are a crucial process in qualitative research, according to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007). To ensure member checks, the researcher shared data interpretations with the participants, summarised and clarified the data with the participants during the interviews and gave feedback so that their information would not be taken out of context. They were shown that what they articulated was depicted exactly as they intended (Marshall & Rossman 2011).

Furthermore, member checks were conducted to eliminate bias when analysing and interpreting the results. The analysed data were sent to the participants so that they could evaluate the researcher's interpretations of the findings and state if they agreed with them. This also strengthened the level of trust between the researcher and participants. This exercise assisted in exploring salient features from this research.

3.9.2 Transferability

Merriam in Shenton (2004:69) explain that external validity "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations". In qualitative research, it is almost impossible for a researcher to demonstrate the findings applied to other situations and populations. This is because of the small number of participants and limited environments. According to Kennedy-Clark (2012), transferability is the extent to which the findings from one research can be applied to another conducted in similar circumstances and reap similar results. Therefore, the findings in this study may help in formulating recommendations for the optimal use of the e-mail forum at PEG. The e-mail forum is a support system where members share and advise each other on a myriad of language etiquette, grammar and editing issues. Consequently, these recommendations may be used as communication guidelines by

organisations operating similarly to PEG, in improving their participation in AC via e-mail to meet their communication objectives.

3.9.3 Dependability

Lincoln and Guba in Shenton (2004) state that dependability is an assessment of the quality of triangulated processes of data collection. This simply means that different research that is conducted using similar methods and participants with similar characteristics ought to yield similar results. A dependable study ought to be accurate and consistent. In this study, dependability was ensured by requesting the study's supervisor to approve each step of the research process. In addition, this study could be deemed dependable if another researcher can replicate the findings with similar participants and under similar circumstances.

3.9.4 Conformability

Shenton (2004) articulates that confirmability is the qualitative researcher's responsibility to objectivity. Its main aim is to ensure that the study's findings are a direct reflection of the participants' experiences rather than those of the researcher or study. In this study, the researcher requested the participants to confirm if the data were a true reflection of what they revealed during the interviews. The supervisor was also engaged to 'put a stamp' on the quality of the work and corroborate it. The researcher embarked on this research with an open mind to collect concrete empirical evidence (Neuman 2014). However, an open mind did not mean a blank mind, as espoused by Glaser and Strauss (1967) because the researcher was familiar with the research phenomenon. In saying this, the researcher did not allow the knowledge that she has on PEG members' participation on the e-mail forum to interfere with her objectivity. In addition, the researcher upheld objectivity by detailing how the conclusions and interpretations were established and being transparent that the findings were derived directly from the data as accorded to by Diane (2014) as well as providing rich verbatim quotes from the participants to support the themes that emerged (ibid).

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This researcher had the ethical responsibility not only to Unisa (Wagner *et al.* 2012) but also to the research participants. Consequently, she ensured that this study did not cause any physical or emotional harm to the study's participants. Consequently, Tom Beauchamp and Jim Childress' (1983) four principles guided this research:

- Respecting the rights of the individual;

- Doing good;
- Not harming the participants; and
- Ensuring participants' equity and justice.

3.10.1 Letter for Permission

Permission to undertake this study with the PEG was sought at the proposal stage. One of the requirements for the researcher was to be allowed to conduct this research with the PEG members. Also that she would have to share the study's conclusion and recommendations with the PEG Executive Committee upon its completion. This permission letter is included in Appendix D.

3.10.2 Avoidance of Harm

The fundamental principle of collecting data is that participants ought not to be harmed as a result of participating in the research, according to Oppenheim (1992). Consequently, Mouton (2005) advises that the process of research must not harm the participants in any way. So, the researcher explained to the participants that this process was not intended to cause any harm to them. Babbie (2014) agrees that research should not injure the people being studied. This study did not produce any physical harm, nonetheless, Flick (2009) advises that harm may be emotional stress, irritation, anger, invasion of privacy and damage to one's self-esteem. There is also a danger of participants' self-esteem being damaged if they feel that the researcher is comparing them to other people (ibid). That is the reason interpretations are grounded on data and are not an assessment of the participants' personalities.

Additionally, little or no harm was foreseen in this research because the topic was not on any form of emotional or bodily harm but on perceptions that PEG members had on their participation in the association's e-mail forum. Therefore, the participants were requested to provide recommendations on how best this forum could be utilised to the benefit of all members; by providing their words and meanings on the study's phenomenon.

Therefore, in this research, the researcher ensured that the participants were not harmed in any way.

3.10.3 Informed Consent

The researcher ensured that participants signed a consent letter as a way of acknowledging that they willingly took part in the research without being coerced. The signed consent forms were emailed to the researcher before each online interview commenced. A copy of the consent letter forms part of the study in Appendix F. The researcher ensured that participants embraced the purpose, content and process of the study before consenting to participate (Burns & Grove 1997). The participants were informed beforehand, in a vivid manner utilising a participant information sheet, what the research aim was and what their role in this research would be. Furthermore, they were informed that this research was towards the completion of a Master of Communication Science Degree at the University of South Africa.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the purpose and objective of the study were laid out to the participants. The signed consent forms also formed a stamp to participate before data collection commenced. Permission to record the online interviews on Teams and Zoom was sought from the participants, together with permission for note-taking. The interviews took from 15 to 40 minutes each. Data collection was three-fold: online interviews using a structured interview guide, field notes, information from journal articles and the association's newsletter and website. Thereafter, the interview data were transcribed verbatim and used to generate themes and sub-themes correlating with this study's sub-questions.

3.10.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

De Vos *et al.* (2011: 119) define confidentiality as “a continuation of privacy which refers to agreements between persons that limits others' access to private information”. The researcher did not force the participants to take part in the study and participants were free to withdraw at any stage. Rather, their information was treated with the strictest of confidentiality, because the researcher cannot discuss information generated from the interviews (*ibid*). In addition, the researcher informed the participants that their information would not be shared with anyone. The researcher also explained the purpose of the interviews was towards obtaining a Master's Degree in Communication Science and to contribute knowledge to the Professional Editors' Guild. This would contribute to the existing knowledge on the use of emails at the PEG and other organisations operating similarly to PEG.

However, it ought to be noted that it is hard to assume complete confidentiality in qualitative research because the research report contains verbatim responses from the participants. Nonetheless, everything within the researcher's power was done to disguise the participants'

responses so that it would not be easy to ascertain who was part of the study and to whom each remark belonged. Part of this was done by assigning the participants pseudonyms and not their real names. According to Richie *et al.* (2014:96), confidentiality is “not disclosing who has taken part in the research and not what they say in a manner that it will be easy to identify them”. That is the reason they all assumed pseudonyms so that they would not be identifiable. In addition, the researcher had limited as to who had access and listened to the interview recordings (Bailey *et al.* 2011:72). This was restricted to the researcher and her supervisor. To further ensure confidentiality, the recorded interviews are kept in the researcher’s password-protected laptop in the cloud and are only accessible to the researcher and her supervisor.

When considering anonymity, the researcher ensured that the participants’ names were not used as they were, instead, pseudonyms were utilised. As mentioned earlier, the participants were informed that their real names would not be used but pseudonyms would be utilised. This made the participants feel comfortable to open up during the interviews.

Anonymity does not only encapsulate the participants’ names but also how the researcher discusses the information gathered during the interviews (Bailey *et al.* 2011). In addition, De Vos *et al.* (2011) explicate that the participants have to remain anonymous for the duration of the research and that the data generated ought not to be linked to them.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the most suitable research design and methodology for conducting this study. These entail the study’s research paradigm, methodologies such as the population, selection criteria, research design including the research approach, research type and study approach. Further, the aim, objectives and research questions of the study were presented. The data collections techniques were explained and the newsletter’s analysis was presented elaborately. The data in this study were analysed utilising in full first CCA and this was extensively discussed. In addition, the sampling procedure and the population were presented, together with issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

The following chapter presents data, findings, interpretation and analysis from the online interviews with the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the methodology utilised in this study to collect data on PEG members' perceptions of their participation in the association's e-mail forum was presented. This chapter presents the analysis of data, findings and interpretation after online interviews were held with PEG members. As previously indicated, online individual interviews were used to collect data and this was via both Microsoft Teams and Zoom online tools because of the current Covid-19 epidemic. The participants were informed of their choice to choose the online platform they were most comfortable and familiar with. Six participants were interviewed utilising Microsoft Teams and five were interviewed via Zoom. They were informed that to avoid minimal technical glitches, the video had to be turned off on both sides during the actual interviews. When the interviews were completed, the researcher requested the participants to switch their videos back on so that she could formally close off the interviews and explain the next steps in the transcriptions process such as member checks. This was also a way of incorporating the human aspect in communication where at least the participant and researcher had an idea of what each looked like, and so that the human-to-human communication element was supported. Additionally, this system assisted in saving participants' data as videos take up a lot of data and are prone to several technical glitches.

The participants' responses were based on the main research question and three sub-questions, utilising a structured interview guide. The main and sub-questions were linked to the objectives which were:

- To understand PEG members' perceptions of the significance of asynchronous communication via e-mail.
- To describe PEG members' perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum.
- To draw up guidelines on how best participation on the e-mail forum can be enhanced to the benefit of most PEG members.

Qualitative data were collected utilising both the recorded online interviews and document analysis. Field notes were recorded by the researcher as soon as each interview ended where

she still remembered the online ambience of the interviews and the participants' moods. After the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, they were each sent to the participants as a form of member check to ensure correctness and validity. All 11 participants informed the researcher that the transcripts were a true reflection of their exact responses, as they had intended. Additionally, the interviews took between 20 to 40 minutes each.

When the member checks process had been completed, the analysis process began. The interview transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly to produce themes. First, the data were organised to identify the emerging themes and categories. All data were classified under similar themes and categories as guided by the objectives of the study. The method utilised for analysing the data was the CCA method (Merriam, 1998), as discussed in Section 3.7. Data coding was conducted in three phases. First, the researcher interpreted what the participants said during the online interviews, juxtaposing it with what was contained in the literature review chapter. Because the online interviews were recorded with the camera off for better voice quality, the researcher could only utilise the overall participants' temperament, filter words/interjections, field notes and interpretations to summarise, analyse and paraphrase the participants' responses. The researcher always kept the research questions in mind when the data were interrogated.

This chapter presents the contextual data from the online interviews, the theoretical perspective in this study, transcription of data, stages of data analysis, presentation of data, presentation and discussion of results, the PEG newsletter analysis utilising the frame analysis method and concluded with the summary of the chapter.

4.2 CONTEXTUAL DATA

Mertens (2010) and Taylor *et al.* (2016) advise that it is important for qualitative researchers to provide the context under which a research phenomenon is investigated to provide the background and complexity of the research problem, setting and participants.

4.2.1 Characteristics of the Sample

Twelve PEG members were purposively selected as the study sample. However, due to reasons beyond the last participant and researcher, she requested to withdraw from the study at the last minute. Therefore, 11 PEG members formed part of the final study sample. These members were all language editors from across South Africa. Some resided in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria and one had emigrated to the United Kingdom (UK) and was still a member of PEG.

4.2.2 Language Editors

Language editors were purposively selected as this was the main PEG activity. As indicated in Section 3.3.3 of the methodology chapter, cases are chosen to be researched based on the researcher's understanding and opinion on their appropriateness as research sites (David & Sutton 2004). Some members may double as editors and translators, but most of the members were language editors. Therefore, the common career for all participants was language editing.

4.2.3 Study Site

The main site was the PEG's e-mail forum where the research phenomenon emanated. All participants were recipients of daily communication via the e-mail forum. The researcher was able to collect concrete and empirical evidence (Neuman 2014) because she entered the field with an open mind, even though she was also a member of PEG, the researcher ensured that the participants' responses were presented verbatim. Even though the researcher was familiar with the phenomenon, she considered this research as a voyage of discovery (Denscombe 2007). This ensured that the researcher's knowledge of the e-mail forum did not interfere with her objectivity and presenting findings that were trustworthy and valid. Going into the interviewing field with an open mind and avoiding bias at all costs, saw the researcher being surprised with some of the findings from this study.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

The CCAM and the frame analysis techniques were used as data analysis tools. The CCAM guided the researcher in comparing the codes, themes, categories wherein the researcher was always cognizant of what was happening on the ground in as far as the PEG members' perceptions on their participation in the e-mail forum were concerned. Consequently, the involvement of PEG members was vital to understanding what happens in their real world.

4.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The two theories utilised were the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model to underpin this study as they closely parallel the phenomenon under investigation. The two theories underpinning this study were thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2. The findings do confirm theory in that the participants understood the phenomenon linked to the Symbolic Interaction Theory that addresses the kinds of messages which produce meanings to elicit a response from PEG members. The way members communicate and how this communication is perceived are the key components in one's response and lack thereof.

Blumer (1969) came up with three core principles of the Symbolic Interaction Theory. These are meaning, language and thinking. These principles came out strongly from the study's participants as variables that determine how and if they take part in the e-mail forum. Some participants mentioned the rudeness of other members, which had left them with no choice but to form a breakaway WhatsApp group, wherein the language would be a common one of understanding and supporting each other.

The Dual Capacity Model came to the fore during the online interviews with participants. This model purports that media can play a dual role in conveying data and manifesting meaning (Sitkin, Sutcliffe & Barrios-Choplin 1992). Participants articulated this point clearly in that the e-mail forum serves as a communication tool among members and a support tool for members. Therefore, the e-mail forum has a dual role as a communication tool and a learning/support tool. This dual capacity applied to the PEG newsletter as well, as it also served as means to communicate and means to educate PEG members on a myriad of language issues.

4.5 TRANSCRIPTION OF DATA

As mentioned in Chapters 1 (Section 1.15) and 3 (Section 3.6.1), data in this study were transcribed verbatim so that their true meanings were not lost, and the participants' responses were not reported inaccurately and taken out of context. The researcher used the inbuilt recording function on the Microsoft Teams and Zoom Apps. These interviews were downloaded immediately after each interview because these Apps cannot store them for more than 20 days. If they stay longer than that, they are automatically deleted. The researcher knew that the transcribing and member checks process was going to possibly take more than 20 days, she immediately saved each interview into her password-protected personal laptop in the cloud and created a folder for the recorded interviews and transcripts. This way, the interviews were kept safe for the duration of the transcriptions, member checking, analysis and report writing stages. Before the interviews could commence, the participants were requested to sign the informed consent forms. The consent forms were emailed to the participants, and they returned them as an indication that they, indeed, had consented to take part in the study. The participants' real names were not used, instead, codes were used. The codes were Language Editor 1 (LE1), Language Editor 2 (LE2) and so on, until LE11 as already explained.

The interviewing stage and transcription stages can be fraught with some challenges such as disruptions and background noises (Denscombe 2007). This study was no exception as the data collection tool could be unpredictable and beyond the researcher's and participants' control.

For instance, LE5 was interviewed in her car using her Microsoft Teams App on her phone. There were numerous transmission interruptions because of the poor network where she had parked her car until she found a better spot where the network signal was stronger. When she found a better place to park where the network signal was stronger, the interview flowed seamlessly until the end. Additionally, LE11 had laptop battery challenges where her laptop was alerting her of her failing battery life until she discovered that it was not plugged onto the electricity socket on the wall and plugged it back.

All participants expressed themselves clearly and articulated their responses clearly. Coupled with the fact that they were comfortable with the English language as their daily means of communication in their editing work, they seemed extremely at ease in being interviewed in the English language. Therefore, the researcher did not have challenges in how the participants expressed themselves, save for some instances where there were technical glitches, background noises and the ringing of their cellular phones during the interviews.

An example of a transcribed interview is attached as Appendix F, to provide an insight into what transpired in the interviewing field.

4.6 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The individual online interviews utilised a structured interview guide and responses from the participants are presented in Sections 4.7.1, 4.7.2 and 4.7.3 below. Structured interviews are wherein a list of set and predetermined questions were posed to the participants. The responses are presented in *italics* symbolising that they are verbatim as was confirmed by each participant using the member checks. The interview guide was based on the main research question and three sub-questions. The guide contained ten questions altogether and all participants were asked the same questions to increase the findings' trustworthiness and transferability.

Below is the presentation of all themes that emerged, their categories, verbatim quotes to support these themes and discussion utilising the CCAM. In distinguishing between the different types of data analysis, Merriam (1998) purports that the constant comparative method assigns different codes to the collected data as a way of reflecting the conceptual relationships. These categories ought to be exhaustive, reflect the purpose of the research, be mutually exclusive, be sensitive to category content and be conceptually congruent (*ibid*).

Therefore, the researcher organised the data according to the themes that emanated from the sub-questions and research objectives to answer the research problem. In addition, the

researcher familiarised herself with the collected data immediately after the interviews were completed because they were still fresh in her mind, therefore she was in a position to recall some of the online interview ambiances recorded in the field notes. These were crucial for the data interpretation stage (Neuman 2014; 1997).

Three main themes emerged from the data and they were perceptions of PEG members, PEG members' level of participation and measures for optimal participation. Theme 1 is linked to research objective 1, theme 2 is linked to research objective 2 and theme 3 is linked to research objective 3. This study's objectives were:

- To understand PEG members' perceptions of the significance of asynchronous communication via e-mail.
- To describe PEG members' perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum.
- To draw up guidelines on how best the e-mail forum can be utilised to the benefit of most PEG members.

Table 4.1 presents the themes and categories as they emerged during the data analysis process:

Table 4.1 Themes and categories

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	EMERGING THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. To understand PEG members' perceptions of the significance of asynchronous communication via e-mail.	Theme 1: Perceptions of PEG members	Category 1.1: Significance of PEG Category 1.2: PEG mandate fulfilled Category 1.3: E-mail forums attributes
2. To describe PEG members' perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum.	Theme 2: PEG members' level of participation	Category 2.1: Individual level of participation Category 2.2: Other members' participation Category 2.3: E-mail vs face-to-face interaction

3. To draw up guidelines on how best the e-mail forum can be utilised to the benefit of most PEG members.	Theme 3: Measures for optimal participation	Category 3.1: Trust among PEG members Category 3.2: Participation benefits Category 3.3: Measures to improve participation
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Source: Author's fieldwork (2021)

4.6.1 Objective One/Theme 1: Perceptions of PEG Members

The first three questions posed were linked to sub-question 1 and, consequently, objective 1. These questions were fairly clear to all participants, and they answered them with ease, albeit much thought about their perceptions on the questions posed. The first research sub-question was: What is PEG members' understanding of the significance of the e-mail forum within organisations such as PEG? The first category that emerged from this theme was the significance of PEG, followed by PEG mandate fulfilled and e-mail forum attributes. All responses were recorded verbatim and are typed in *italics* in this report.

4.6.1.1 Category 1.1: Significance of PEG

The first category that emerged from perceptions of PEG members was the significance of PEG. All members relayed in detail what they perceived the significance of PEG as a professional association was. All participants noted that PEG was a professional association that also served as a support mechanism for professionals in the publishing and language fields. This support mechanism is manifest via communication tools such as the e-mail forum.

One of PEG's core values was to promote and maintain high standards of editing and language in South Africa. This value came to the fore during the interviews as LE1 relayed:

.....So its primary aim would be to promote that professions for its members so that we maintain high standards for the editing profession.

Another additional core objective of PEG is to be a support tool to members, more especially experienced members being anchors to newer and inexperienced members via the e-mail forum. This again stood out during the interview where LE2 responded:

We need contact because we can learn from more knowledgeable people when we're not sure about facts.

The editing profession is generally an isolated profession, more especially for self-employed members. Therefore, PEG provides a form of interaction platform wherein members may not feel as isolated.

LE11 said:

... they create a communique between people who're doing the same kind of work, which is very useful in terms of communication.

The sentiment was also shared by LE2:

And it also helps because it is a solitary profession. So, it does help to feel that you are in contact with other people.

LE7 pointed out:

...Otherwise, you gonna work in a lot of isolation, you not gonna feel like a part of a profession.

Another aspect of the importance of PEG was the issue of tapping into more knowledgeable members' language skills. In support of this, LE2 said the importance of the PEG was that one rubs shoulders with more knowledgeable and more experienced members. In this way, the less experienced members could be mentored and learn more about the business of editing and language in South Africa. This she said was important as she added: *We need contact because we can learn from more knowledgeable people when we're not sure about facts.*

Other participants underscored and recognised the authority in PEG as an association. This authority assists in providing a sense of belonging to members and acts as a badge of honour for whom members are a part.

LE5 supported this analysis by stating:

Uhm from a professional point of view and in terms of resources as well. I understand also being an authority or as a body of authority if that makes sense.

4.6.1.2 Category 1.2: PEG mandate fulfilled

The second question parallels the second category in theme 1 and it reflects on the PEG members' perceptions of the association's mandate being fulfilled. PEG's primary mandate is

to provide support, training and uphold the language standards in South Africa. Five participants mentioned that the SA government is working on regulating the language, editing and publishing industry just as the lawyers and doctors are regulated through their associations. Therefore, PEG would be at the forefront in assisting members to acquire their accreditation status through an accreditation examination that is yet to be introduced.

The South African Language Practitioner's industry is guided by the South African Language Practitioners Council Act No. 8 of 2014, which stipulates the code of conduct for language practitioners in SA. This is an Act that is used by the government to control the industry, thus the PEG also created a code of conduct that was in line with the Act.

This is how LE7 juxtaposed the Act to the PEG:

...Which is the government's way to control us as professionals just as the auditors and the accountants and the doctors and the lawyers are controlled. ...part of fulfilling our mandate is to try to align our members and the sort of level of expertise they've proven, I think...uhh with the requirements of the South African Language Practitioners Council Act.

The SA Language Practitioners Council Act No.8 of 2014 includes the issue of accreditation. In SA, language practitioners will have to be accredited to be recognised as professionals. Therefore, PEG was fulfilling its mandate because it was in the process of arranging the accreditation exam for members.

LE9 underscored the importance of accreditation:

...if one attends a Webinar you are fully prepared and you're in no doubt as to why we need the accreditation. It's not just something that's made up as PEG goes along, it's to be in line with the Act that's coming ahead, you know in parliament by the government. So I think, yes they fulfil their mandate as a professional organisation.

In addition, PEG was mandated to provide skills and in-service training for members. The association did this through training that members are encouraged to attend.

LE 8 presented:

since last year it started the accreditation exam which also provides a benchmark for how to identify the most qualified people I suppose or reach the sort of desirable high standards of editing in South Africa.

Another mandate fulfilled by the PEG was that of upholding professional conduct utilising the association's code of conduct. All participants interviewed identified with the system and were aware of its core mandate. The system in this instance was the PEG, its mandate, code of conduct, vision and mission. The system had certain guidelines to be followed by members, such as the code of conduct, that could assist in the system being efficiently managed. One participant pointed out and had this to say:

I am happy with the code of conduct as it gives me a sense of identity and it is like a badge that I wear with pride.

LE9 gave an elaborate response on the code of conduct. She articulated that the code of conduct ought not only to have been something that was left on paper but had to be practised by every member. This code of conduct was a tool that would assist members on how to communicate with each other on the e-mail forum. She articulated that a code of conduct was also the member's badge of honour that they should be proud of:

... So similarly, to me, I'm proud of my guild membership and my code of conduct that guides me.

4.6.1.3 Category 1.3: E-mail forum attributes

The third category of the first theme brought about the e-mail forum's attributes that supported PEG's mandate. The freedom to participate in communication is underscored by the e-mail forum's attributes.

LE1 responded that the e-mail forum was in two parts. One avenue was where members were sent formal messages via the web administrator and the second avenue was the CHAT forum where members could interact on a myriad of language issues. Therefore, LE1 articulated that this was an option where members who did not want to be a part of the exchange in communication on the e-mail forum, could only focus on the formal vertical communication.

Those that don't want to engage in that can opt out, and then all the official communication goes on the other group chat. So I would say the official Google group is effective because communications go out about job opportunities, about changes in the industry, about training...you know those things that support editing. The chat group has a dynamic of its own...

In his response, LE7 also reiterated the freedom in communication that was mentioned by LE1. The participant mentioned that members could ignore the e-mail chat if they wished. However, this was never communicated to members and they still received emails daily:

Yah, okay. First of all, I think uhh first of all it's voluntary.

In addition, what stood out for the researcher was that both LE1 and LE7 were part of the association's EXCO. They were the only ones who spoke of the options members had not to be part of the e-mail forum. To support this, LE6 was not part of the EXCO and she seemed to have been unaware of the option not to receive emails if one wished. Instead, she underscored the importance of the e-mail forum as a professional support tool for less experienced editors:

Umm, the chat group is a separate one. Ummm, where members can post and uhh I think it does help to give a sense of the standards, I almost wanna say. Just a way of gauging your own uhh knowledge, your own uhh skill, that sort of thing, by reading what others say. So it does a bit of a normative function I think.

Another highlighted attribute was that of responses being provided timely, supporting the notion of the e-mail forum being a useful support tool. LE5 had these sentiments to share:

Uhm, I think in terms of the quick response time usually that the people who participate have....Uh, a few times that I've hit a dead-end with certain things in my projects and I don't have to wait long....like about 10 minutes, you know at most so then I can carry on with my work, having already at least an opinion or two.

LE10 presented her sentiments in this way:

Uhm, first of all, I think that it should be interactive. Where members feel free to ask for advice. Because it's the only real way that they can interact with other members and get answers to questions. I think also it's very important as a communication tool. In other words, uhm for professional development.

LE6 responded:

....it also fulfils the mandate of connecting professional people, you know. People who are sitting alone in offices far away from other people. I think for me the most important functions in that sense would be the normative one and also the support one. Yah, that I haven't mentioned yet. It gives support to uhm someone who sits alone and doesn't have the right materials to, you know, research what they're looking for or....yah, or just needs a bit of a

hand. And also then lastly, the sense of being connected...the sense of not being completely on your own.

4.6.1.4 DISCUSSION

PEG is a form of a cyber organisation because its members mainly interacted online utilising the e-mail forum. This was an environment where members could be predisposed to create new cyber identities (Barker 2014). These were organisations where they could live, affiliate and become part of a common goal wherein, the common goal of PEG members was to uphold the standard of language in South Africa and provide a support resource via the e-mail forum.

The first theme that emerged in this study was the significance of PEG as a professional association. All participants were forthcoming with responses to this effect. The main tool under investigation in this study was the e-mail forum. The e-mail forum was created as a support tool for editors, more especially the ones who were new in the field. The responses, in this regard, varied because some members acknowledged the main purpose of the e-mail forum, yet some displayed some frustration in how new PEG members utilised this support tool. A forum is a support tool for new members, yet some members find the queries irritating and frustrating. Consequently, some members are not free to participate in the e-mail forum, linking this perception to the study's research phenomenon, which may be the reason why there is a lack of optimal participation on the e-mail forum. In literature, these findings are supported in that communication tools such as emails are beneficial in sustaining work relationships and member organisational satisfaction by Jacubiec (2019); Richmond *et al.*, (2005); FitzPatrick & Valskov (2015). Furthermore, Lumadi (2020) highlights that internal communication tools play a critical role in employee engagement; are reliable; can be easily accessible; promote engagement and could reduce employer turnover.

Having acknowledged PEG's code of conduct as a means to ensuring that the e-mail forum operated under its intended purpose, the participants stated that the e-mail ought to be interactive and helpful to members. Another participant acknowledged that responses to emails were provided timely, yet Christidis and Losada (2019) caution that a quick response time does not necessarily constitute successful e-mail engagement as earlier argued. These authors (*ibid*) present that if members are aware that their response time is measured, they make efforts to respond quicker, which does not necessarily reflect a true reflection of successful e-mail communication in organisations. One of the e-mail forum's attributes that

assist in fulfilling its mandate was the option of choosing to participate or not, thus upholding the value of freedom in communication (Bell, Trumble & Morrisette, 2020).

4.6.2 Objective Two/Theme 2: PEG Members' Level of Participation

The second objective was about the PEG members' level of participation in the e-mail forum. This study's originally targeted population was supposed to be 12. However, only 11 members formed part of the final sample because one member withdrew from the study for personal reasons.

4.6.2.1 Category 2.1: Individual level of participation

The PEG members were forthcoming in detailing their level of participation. The general trend in participation was varied as some members articulated that they were either active, inactive or neutral. For instance, LE 9 clarified that for her, participation did not mean answering queries or sending queries on the e-mail forum. The fact that a member reads the emails and gleans valuable information from the interaction was a form of participation.

There was one interesting dynamic when LE7 was interviewed, that pointed to the nature of online communication where an individual could have been communicating in an environment they shared with their families. It was not necessarily a space that had been 'cordoned off' such as the office in a company. LE7 shared working space with his partner who also happened to be a PEG member and he could hear the interview as it was going along. There was one instance where he became interested in the interview, from his desk in the same study as LE7. The Defacto participant, LE7's partner, shared similar sentiments:

Some of us like reading the chat, we find it useful, but we don't participate or contribute

Contrastingly, LE7 was active on the e-mail forum and was outright in sharing his active participation. LE7's response juxtaposed what LE9 said when she spoke of the *White Boys Club* and had been less active after she had been chastised on the e-mail forum. In addition, the PEG e-mail forum was created as a support tool mainly for editing issues, more especially challenges that new members could possibly face. LE7's response paralleled the e-mail forum's core attributes, as that of being a support tool for members:

I've been an editor for 40 plus years... Uhh, to try to help members who have these questions...umm, to answer them and educate them and that sort of thing. So that's how I see my role in the chat group. More uhh, providing help, providing resources than asking questions.

LE8 articulated that she was also a fairly active member:

Umm, I answer questions from time to time when I feel I can contribute something useful. I've occasionally asked something,

LE10 was another active member who acknowledged that even though she was not a new member on the forum and fairly active, there were challenges that she had come across in her line of work that was resolved via the e-mail forum, as she articulated:

If I'm stuck with something, it is my go-to place as well. So if I find...uhhh I know this but I've just can't think of another word it's so easy just to go straight into the forum and say, please somebody out there, what would be a synonym for this or uhm, I'm battling a little bit with a concord in this sentence because, I'm just...I'm not....you know sometimes you have a brain fog and just using the e-mail forum as a sounding board, can be extremely helpful.

This brought to the fore that the e-mail forum was not only beneficial to new members, but as a support tool that established members also found to be useful.

While three established members expressed that they were active and free to express themselves on the e-mail forum, some established members said they were once free but this freedom to participate had been short-lived for them:

LE9 said:

I'm not free at all, not at all. This is why my friends and I made a WhatsApp group where we are free and we help each other and we joke and laugh. And if we have problems that we all share, we quickly do a Zoom link. I...I just....I'm not the only one who feels like this.

This meant that LE9 had been once free to communicate on the e-mail forum space, but had decided to create another environment for herself and her friends where they could be free not only to communicate about PEG issues but also their issues. This emphasises the point that it is difficult for one to communicate in a space where one does not feel free to do so.

LE3 responded and spoke of inadequacy and feeling of unworthiness of communicating on the e-mail forum:

...but, what I also find uh a bit ehh cumbersome is that some of us....uh, like myself in particular, I'm this person who doesn't like to ask....if I get stuck in a public forum because I feel ...sometimes, I know it's a bad thing but I become like in a way embarrassed, like maybe

Im not uhh I feel inadequate. So I wish there was a...I don't know how this uhh would happen. If there was a particular e-mail where you can send ehh, whenever you have deadlocked...a question asking for help.

LE1 acknowledged the different levels of participation, especially for members who may have been unsure of their linguistic skills. PEG is an association of language practitioners some of whom have been practising for over 30 years. Therefore, some members may have been intimidated by this experience and decided to let the veterans attend to every query:

Okay, so mine was always very low and the reason for the [and I..I think I speak for a number of our members] is that we have a few very very highly qualified skilled competent members who can answer anything that is referenced and complete and I think it is intimidating to those of us who think we might know what the answer is but don't want to look foolish.

Two members spoke of their low participation, and not necessarily because of intimidation. Perhaps they may have been more comfortable in interacting in private other than on the 'public' e-mail forum.

LE2 said:

Well, I don't have a high participation that is visible, but I often respond to people offline. In other words, to their e-mail address, not on the e-mail forum. Because I might have the wrong information... but I just tell them look, this is what I would suggest. I seldom respond officially, but I read everything that comes in. So, I don't think that lack of participation is necessarily a symptom of low interest.

LE4 supported an interesting point that came up, that was some members preferred to respond or ask questions privately. This was something that had never been discussed at PEG where members were informed that they could feel free to communicate privately and not on the public forum:

...I don't participate. I take note of what is err being said on the e-mail forums. But I will not write my own opinion. I will maybe if it's a relevant question and I feel I have something to say...I will respond to the person who emailed directly. And give him or her my opinion. But I will not really err put it on the forum.

LE5 expressed that she was still new to the organisation and forum, thus she preferred to learn from the most experienced members by only reading queries and responses on the e-mail forum, as a learning resource.

LE5 articulated this point in this manner:

My level of participation is very limited because I'm a fairly new member, fairly new in the field in general as well. So I always kinda feel like...I'm not necessarily the one to give advice in that regard. But I would gladly ask questions, read through and see what other people...and I learn a lot from the other people. So, I guess for the most part more passive...in that sense, but I do ask questions...uh, pertaining to work [technical interruption for about 2 seconds]and like in language yah.

On the opposite side to the newcomers learning and improving their language skills via the e-mail forum, were fairly experienced members who became frustrated by the seemingly basic queries that new members would put across. However, it ought to be remembered that the e-mail forum was created for several uses. One of which was being a support tool for new members. It was a space that was created with the understanding that any member would be free to ask a question about any issues they may have been unsure of. Equally, experienced members ought to be free to respond to these queries. However, it came to the fore that some experienced members found some queries too basic and frustrating, wherein they expected that members ought to have known the answers to what they termed basic grammar rules. This then was possibly one of the reasons why participation on the e-mail forum was low. In the opinion of the researcher, some members may feel intimidated by the way their queries are attended and may shy away from ever emailing any grammar queries. This came out strongly from LE6 who was emotional and frustrated by the lack of basic English language skills of some members:

.....I don't have to ask whether practice, the noun, is with a c or an s. And that is the kind of thing that drives me MAD.

LE6 articulated this point in this manner:

....yes, I think there was a lot of newcomers, and they would ask the same question over and over and over again. And I was getting a bit....yah, it was a bit uhh irritating, although understandable.

In this category, the participants highlighted that some were active participants on the e-mail forum while some were more neutral and some inactive. Out of the ones who did not actively participate on the e-mail forum, were those who had been once active but had decided to take the back benchers' seats on the forum because of having been chastised in the past. Four participants pointed out that they were very active on the e-mail forum and answered queries at every opportunity they got. To be noted is that all four were experienced and not new members. One participant, LE6, stood out on the participation because she mentioned that she was active, but on responding to language and grammar queries and technical issues. These technical issues could be queries on how to attach a PDF document to a Word document and how to disable track changes on a Word document.

4.6.2.2 Category 2.2: Other members' participation

There were varied responses to what participants thought of other PEG members' participation in the e-mail forum. What stood out was that breakaway groups had been formed by disgruntled members who were not entirely satisfied with the e-mail forum. These disgruntled members found a communication platform that they could still use as the e-mail forum, albeit with more tailor-made benefits for them such as being free to communicate about personal issues. These breakaway groups also served as communication spaces where their members felt protected from rude members on the e-mail forum.

This was LE10's understanding:

... a WhatsApp group was established which was a breakaway group. Those were the regulars and they disappeared because they no longer felt comfortable in interacting, uhm, or becoming personally involved. It's almost as though they were a bit afraid to expose their opinion because there were some people on the forum that were unprofessional and didn't allow them to have their say.

LE9 confirmed the existence of breakaway groups and articulated that she was one of the members who had formed a WhatsApp group. This came as an interesting finding to the researcher because previous participants had spoken about breakaway groups in 'harsh tones' as if they were illegal. This showed that the issue of breakaway groups ought to have been addressed because the people in the breakaway groups did not hide it:

I'm not free at all, not at all. This is why my friends and I made a WhatsApp group where we are free and we help each other and we joke and laugh. And if we have problems that we all

share, we quickly do a Zoom link. And I'm only telling you this because it's research that you're doing and it's confidential and it's anonymous because honestly, I...I just....I'm not the only one who feels like this. That we uhm, e-mail....look it's improved a lot. I haven't been chastised for a while. I have been, a few times this year, but not as badly because I'm very careful. It's not a nice space.

Perhaps LE9 and colleagues were on the right path to venturing into a social media platform. Although some members saw this as breaking away, there could have been a positive side to the private WhatsApp groups. Some communication researchers submitted that the smaller the group, the more likely it was to communicate more frequently and better in CMC.

In addition, participants spoke of members who had stopped participating in the e-mail forum because of varied personal reasons.

LE9 revealed that:

Uhm, I've personally have had about 11/12 emails from people over the last two years who told me that they are never going to interact on e-mail. And I'm not talking about my friends on the WhatsApp group...there are others that they will never interact with on the e-mail. They send me queries personally or I reply to them privately. And I've tried to encourage them.

LE1 said:

.....it's a quality and level of response that comes from our competent members. So, it is a shame, ehmmm we should be encouraging people to offer their input.

LE6 presented that sometimes non-participation could have been because of a member's shy personality, and not at all because of intimidation:

But my feeling is that the majority of people are more careful and they are more intimidated or more easily intimidated by various things. Sometimes nothing to do with the group but you know their own shyness or their own something.

Some participants mentioned that it was the same people who were active on the e-mail forum when it came to responding to emails and sending out emails to other members.

LE11 said:

But it's usually the same bunch of people who uhm, interact and I would also question the fact that when somebody has asked a question and another member has answered the question correctly, there's no need for further responses to come through.

LE3 responded:

... in my observation, the people who tend to participate more, are the veterans you know. Those who are confident enough...

Furthermore, on the other members' level of participation, LE5 acknowledged that some members were active, while some were inactive. This, she articulated, was very normal of human beings as some would have been more active than others and this was behaviour that was not out of the ordinary. She based her responses on the members who were more active on *people who are more comfortable to answer on the whole strain.*

LE 8 shared similar sentiments:

...umm...it does seem to be quite a small fraction of the rather large membership that actually regularly participates in the chat group. So, umm...I mean I haven't talked to other people about it but I can only assume there are a lot of people...either they don't need to participate or they don't feel comfortable participating.

LE4 said:

...you will always find that there are people who are vocal in sharing their knowledge and in sharing their opinions...but many others who are just passive.

The issue of members being free to participate yet needing a lot of confidence to do so was brought up.

LE2 submitted this point in this manner:

Yes, I think everyone is free (to participate) but you need confidence to make a point because someone might pop up and say no you're wrong. So, it's the more experienced members who respond I think, which is fine. But as I say, I think just about everybody is a member of the forum and everybody is reading those messages, so I think the forum is extremely successful, even if it's not visible.

Besides participation being juxtaposed with confidence, some participants mentioned that participation may have been something to do with the kind and quality of educational level one might have reached. Further, it was revealed that the issues of race and social class played a role in the participation or lack thereof on the e-mail forum. One participant highlighted that she felt intimidated as some more experienced PEG members treated the guild as an *Old White Boys Club*. This was reiterated by LE5 who articulated that her participation was somewhat thwarted because of the type of Bantu Education she received, which made her feel inadequate to converse freely on English grammar and language issues. Moreover, the years of experience were brought to the fore in that more experienced members had more confidence in participation.

LE3 elaborated on this point:

...it's like I know that most of the racial composition in publishing and editors per se..it's mainly the like White people and then also mainly women of course. But now, as a young Black professional...like when I started...I was also intimidated by that as well.

LE6 had similar views to LE3:

. I think there is an element of being intimidated by the English mother-tongue speakers. Umm, even though some of us have pretty good training and things like that.

Another point that came through was that the high participation of other members may have been linked to their years of experience.

LE3 responded in this manner:

...the number of experiences that others have like those veterans who have been in the field for 40 years or so. ...I'm a specialist but I'm not at the level of those veterans who are like now obviously in their 60s and they've been in the field for like 40years or so.

One submission that stood out, was that some members may have been participating more on the e-mail forum because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown. The lockdown may have caused some individuals to feel isolated and thus left with no choice but to be active on the e-mail forum because humans are social beings. However, communication on a formal organisational forum still had to be respectful and uphold the member's code of conduct.

These were LE7's views:

...one of the things we found is that you know with the whole Covid situation, and lockdown and we're not attending meetings and seeing each other face-to-face, it does attenuate relationships somewhat. And so, some people tend to take liberties and say things that they wouldn't say face-to-face over a cup of tea or something. Uhm and one has to sort of restrain that kind of behaviour quite a bit.

The sense of camaraderie, which becomes terribly attenuated under Covid and so I think under Covid perhaps the chat group has been perhaps even more valuable for people than if they could attend their monthly meeting in their branches and rub shoulders with their colleagues over a cup of tea or coffee.

In this category, the participants shared varied responses on how they viewed other PEG members' participation on the e-mail forum. Issues of race, years of experience and English as a second language came to the fore. There was a general assertion that more experienced members, who were English First Language speakers were more at ease to participate on the e-mail forum.

4.6.2.3 Category 2.3: E-mail vs face-to-face interaction

All 11 participants acknowledged the difference in the way humans communicated in a face-to-face scenario and the way they communicate virtually.

LE7 acknowledged the difference in the way humans communicate online and in face-to-face situations. He mentioned that people were a bit more reserved on the e-mail forum and yet could have communicated a bit more over a cup of coffee.

But with the chat group, as useful a tool as it is, people stick to professional topics. Uhm, so it's editing problems, it's client problems, it's you know rates for doing work, those sorts of issues come up most regularly without the sort of informal chatter that goes on face-to-face. So I think it is much more limited and much more, should I say, professional, professionally focused than face-to-face. Uhm, and it does make a big difference.

LE5 had different views from LE7 in that some people communicated more online where their face had not been seen than they would have been in a face-to-face situation:

Absolutely. Uhm, I've found people are, in general, more likely to speak up when it's not their face....when they person, you know they're behind the e-mail, it's much easier to voice their

opinions or their thoughts. Umm, or to participate versus you know in-person or even as you said on Webinars or even on the video.

LE4 underscored the importance of verbal cues in face-to-face interaction and how an individual could use verbal cues to denote what a speaker was saying, which was not as easy to do in e-mail communication because of the lack of verbal cues:

So, ehh, as I said many of them don't respond the way they should because they are afraid of being misinterpreted. But in face-to-face communication, you will find people looking at faces, they will be looking at circumstances, they will be looking at the context, they will be able to interrupt immediately and say whoah..this is what I meant.

It may have been challenging for e-mail group users to interact on this platform as there were no contextual cues. Further, LE3 mentioned some of the dynamics in face-to-face versus online communication as extracted below:

...I find err face-to-face interactions are very reassuring because then you can even note a person's verbal cues or rather facial cues, you know the facial expression...maybe the person is smiling at you. But emails can be very impersonal. Much as I find also the Zoom thing or Teams and meetings and whatever a bit impersonal...it looks like I'm talking to a computer or a laptop, yah.

LE11 mentioned the constraints and boundaries involved in face-to-face communication as well. One may think that online communication is an environment where people can do so without following set communication guidelines and rules, and face-to-face is where people follow guidelines and are more respectful because they are in real-time and physically seeing each other. However, LE11 mentioned that both online and face-to-face communication were similar as they all had set control measures and communication boundaries that were followed, such as giving each person an opportunity to speak before a response was given:

I think it's completely different because the Seminars are controlled in a sense...we're in a room for two, three and a half hours and there's a certain amount of uhm, I don't wanna say restrictions...but, you know what I mean, the boundaries because we are focusing on a particular topic, while it's kind of a free for all on the e-mail.

LE1 mentioned that there were still boundaries and communication etiquette to be observed even in an online communication scenario.

Well, uhm, until our whole disciplinary hoo-ha I think people forgot their professional boundaries on the e-mail platform and probably behaved more professionally in person. Now that we've come down with, you know, a very strong message, to maintain professionalism people are now unsure of what that means. So for me, that means people.... [and this might sound judgemental] but I think there is a lack of understanding about professional behaviour and where those boundaries are and what it means. And I think that has stopped people from engaging. [silence]. Errr, it's better not to have the derogatory stuff that was going on, I'm very grateful for that, but I, I feel very saddened that there's....it's quite minimal chat that goes on the chat group.

The issue about the lack of differences in both face-to-face communication and e-mail communication emerged. LE6 mentioned that communication had more to do with a person's personality other than the medium and environment they used to communicate. For instance, a shy person may have found online communication to be just as equally intimidating as face-to-face communication:

LE6 said:

I find in the face-to-face situations, people are equally intimidated. They're very careful to maintain a good face you know. And to save face. Umm, and in a personal situation, they would also talk to their, you know, best friends if I could call it that, not necessarily best friends but just people they already know or some they already have a connection with.

LE9 underscored the issue of external influences that could determine how someone communicated. In essence, the way an individual communicates in a given instance is largely influenced by external circumstances that they may be going through. So, a rude response from the group may not necessarily depict that the member has a rude personality. It could be what they are going through at that particular instance:

So, I think most people are nice and polite. And we have bad days, and that's why we have a code of conduct, and we all get out of bed on the wrong side and we're rude to our family and we're sorry and all the rest of it. So, I think it's easy to generalise and say people are more rude on e-mail because they hide behind the screen or whatever.

LE10 said:

I think that if you remain professional, uhm, it doesn't matter what forum you use. Face-to-face or e-mail, unfortunately, a lot of people hide behind the anonymity that an e-mail gives you. And they are inclined to drop their professionalism.

LE8 presented that it was much easier for humans to remember a face than it was to remember written communication:

...Im just thinking of like an analogous...an analogous situation to the chat group might be when you know there's a whole bunch of editors in one room and somebody wants to put up a hand and ask a question. And umm, it might feel....it might feel equally exposing to do that. Umm, especially when everyone can see you and you know they're gonna recognise you and remember your face. They might not remember you so well if you're just an e-mail.

4.6.2.4 DISCUSSION

When asked about their level of participation and other members' level of participation, each member was able to give a concise account of how they viewed this topic. Some members stated that they were not at all comfortable participating in the e-mail forum. They made mention of the differences in culture, race and age as variables that could be at play in fostering intimidation and their lack of participation. Communication researchers like Light *et al.* 1997 and Trentin (1997), present experience as one of the solutions to effective CMC participation. These authors (*ibid*) assert that the more experienced an individual was in their field the more comfortable they were with their craft and the more likely they were to participate better in CMC (Walther & Bazavora 2008).

What became evident were the dynamics that were at play in Intercultural Communication. Intercultural Communication is the awareness and appreciation of the different cultures and their forms of communication in an organisation according to Greeff, Barker *et al.* (n.d). The issue of the *Old White Boys Club* brought to the fore in this study is one of the cons of Intercultural Communication as it led some individuals to think that their cultural values were superior to others as pondered by Neulip (2012) and could thus create an intimidating environment where some members were not free to fully participate of the e-mail forum. Kreijns, Kirschner and Jochems (2003) caution that at times Asynchronous CMC can restrict social interaction to educational interventions aimed at cognitive processes, while social interventions aimed at socio-emotional processes are forgotten or ignored.

However, it was brought to the fore that the working definition of participation on the e-mail forum ought to be redefined. Reading the emails is still a form of participation. Meaning participation does not necessarily have to be the actual writing and responding to emails.

There was a contradiction in instances when one participant mentioned that other members participated freely on the e-mail forum, the only characteristic they needed was the freedom to participate. This was interesting to note because the freedom to communicate ought not to be tied to confidence. In the view of the researcher and based on preceding support by some authors mentioned, PEG members ought to have the prerogative to freely participate on the e-mail forum without having to psyche themselves up with confidence before participation.

These findings are also that there is nothing with low participation of members because editing is a pedantic environment. After all, the profession is pedantic in itself. Further, language practitioners are perceived to be hard on themselves, do not give themselves praise for work well done because that is the nature of the job. It is a profession that is perceived as serious and stoic.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013) present some of the advantages of internal communication, which e-mail is a part of. One of the advantages is that it provides information to members of the organisation to function effectively, it controls organisational members so that there is order in the workplace and persuades them to agree on certain aspects in the organisation (ibid). Adversely, internal organisational communication can be seen as a tool for a dictatorship. This dictatorship came to the fore during the online interviews in this study where it was revealed that there were some breakaway groups from the PEG e-mail forum. These are groups were formed by disgruntled former PEG members, as well as disgruntled current PEG members.

In this study, it was found that language editors who felt intimidated in the e-mail forum start smaller breakaway groups. This confirms Kreijns, Kirschner and Jochems' (2003) findings that smaller breakaway groups are considered safe for novice editors.

However, this contrasts with Diener, Lusk, DeFour and Flax (1980) who experimented on deindividuation. During this experiment, three effects were discovered. The first effect was that the bigger the group, the less self-conscious members became. Second, an increase in group observers increased members' self-consciousness and third, gender similarity within a group decreased the sense of self-consciousness (ibid).

In addition, times are changing as espoused by Cooper (2018) that social media has changed the way individuals consume information, thus it ought to be valued. Therefore, organisational communication should be tailored to be accessible on members' mobile devices. Further, Sievert and Scholz (2017) concur that social media may play a pivotal role when it comes to the internal communication engagement in organisations so that they realise their full potential (Melcrum 2013).

Some CMC researchers like Peterson, Beymer, & Putnam (2018) and Herring (2003b) juxtapose e-mail usage with face-to-face communication. This is one category that emerged from Theme 2. In some instances, there was a vast difference perceived between online and face-to-face communication. In this study, it was unearthed that there is a difference in the way humans communicate in an online scenario vs a face-to-face situation. Face-to-face communication takes into consideration verbal cues that may assist an individual to understand communication better. However, in some instances, this difference was said to be non-existent. The issue of lack of security in emails was also discovered. Emails are a form of a record and may be used for future references, whether for good or bad.

On a positive note, some participants prefer face-to-face communication because it furnishes them with a sense of control of what they say and how they say it (Lumadi 2020). After all, they have an immediate platform to clarify their communication, and the feedback they are likely to receive, and it also assists in creating rapport (Nandi & Platt 2017). Some mentioned the lack of verbal cues in e-mail communication, wherein one participant lamented, *it feels like I'm talking to a computer*.

In literature, Kreijns, Kirschner and Jochems (2003) present one of the major pitfalls in effective communication in Asynchronous CMC; and this is thinking that because an environment provides communication technology then social interaction will automatically occur.

4.6.3 Objective Three/Theme 3: Guidelines for Optimal Participation

One of the main objectives of the study was to draw guidelines on how PEG members could optimally participate in the e-mail forum to uphold the main reason why the e-mail forum was created. That is, to act as a support tool and resource for professionals in the language industry. The three categories below emerged under this theme and objective.

4.6.3.1 Category 3.1: Trust among PEG members

LE10 decried that there is a lack of privacy and trust in the e-mail forum, which impacts adversely on the level of participation. LE5 brought in an interesting perspective on the notion of free communication, where she mentioned that free communication also has some level of control and boundaries:

LE6 said:

No, I don't think they trust each other very well. Some trust because they know each other and also they know they have the same objectives, the same views.

I think like pretty much any forum, I think freely has a limited view in terms of professionalism because there is a fine line. You know freely can mean anything versus you still want to be considerate towards the professional level of the interaction....even though the e-mail forum the chat forum is more casual than the formal communication, it should still be considered.

LE4 mentioned that people must be aware that trust parallels social relations. That is one trusts where he/she is familiar with the people they are communicating with because the ones she is familiar with, she can trust thus freely expressing herself. Further, she underscored the importance of privacy even in communication and not offending other people *as she expressed herself in this manner*

Coming over as supercilious know-it-all or just plain ignorant.

4.6.3.2 Category 3.2: Participation benefits

The e-mail forum was created as a professional support tool to provide editing and language resources to PEG members. Most participants were aware of the benefits they get from being a part of and participating in the e-mail forum.

One of the benefits mentioned by LE11 was skills development via workshops and Webinars. Additionally, one benefit is an easier way for one's editing queries to be answered instead of them searching for the answers themselves.

Oh, one of the great benefits I think is being alerted about Webinars and courses that are available. That is fantastic. And, I mean there've been very interesting courses posted in the emails. I know that I would like to attend all of them but sometimes it's not possible. And I think they're a great benefit.

This is how LE1 articulated it:

I think they get someone else to answer their questions rather than using hard copy resources. Ehhmmm, I've had this chat with a colleague before because she feels that people should know how to use New Hart's Rules or Butcher's Copy-editing or a dictionary. Because she feels that sometimes the questions posted on the e-mail group....we should know where to find those answers and not...it's almost like we use the expertise of our competent members as a scapegoat for learning how to use resources effectively.

LE2 articulated that one of the benefits of being active on the e-mail forum is that it is similar to training where new skills are acquired. In addition, the participation assists in that

it has confirmed what I think, most of the time I haven't been too far off the mark. But then that also gives you the confidence to carry on with your work. To think I'm not too bad, I'm sort of like on the right level. So, I think it's very effective.

These were LE8's perceptions:

Umm, but the chat group I think also provides support in...and I can...people provide feedback about Webinars and encourage other people to participate

The quote by LE3 below emphasises the fact that chats in the e-mail forum can be revisited by members if and when they experienced similar editing challenges in future. That is, because they are stored, they could be reused instead of repeating what was addressed in the past, underscoring skills development and the e-mail forum as a learning resource:

... I'm saying even when you do not, eh ask questions yourself, you find that someone has asked a question about something that you are struggling with.

LE7:

Uhm, but just by being passive on the chat group, and being party to it, we learn an awful lot. We do, and that's another important value of it. We mustn't lose sight of the fact that for some people, it's probably their only learning resource.

Another participation benefit identified was that members who participated in the e-mail forum can share tools to make their work easier such as proofreading and referencing software.

LE7 said:

And this one is free and that one you pay for and that sort of thing. And someone was asking the other day about using Grammarly, and another one about PerfectIt and so on. So there are all these software issues that come up as well, and it's amazing the responses we get from members.

It was participation in the e-mail forum also presents a sense of community and belonging among members:

LE5 said:

And some of the issues that I found client-related and common errors related...uhhh there is the sense of community, there is the sense of okay it's not just me, this actually happens to other people who've been doing this for much longer.

LE6 articulated:

It helps me to, uhh, back up what I did...you know to have at least someone who agrees with me. So it's not just my own madness.

It emerged that the benefit in participation was two-sided. It was not only for the ones who asked questions but also for the ones who answered the questions, as they got an opportunity to hone their linguistic skills.

LE6 had an interesting view:

Umm, yah, and for those who do answer, umm they hone their or they sharpen their sword every time they do answer. Because their answer gets better and better and it becomes clearer and clearer to themselves, you know what the right answer is or what their answer is. It's not always a right or wrong but you know, but because we're working with some prescriptive rules there is a right and a wrong sometimes. Yah!

Participation in the e-mail forum was viewed as beneficial because it was a support resource where members could tap into the vast knowledge of more experienced members.

4.6.3.3 Category 3.3: Measures to improve participation

These are some suggestions for improvement, as articulated by some participants.

Some participants felt regular messages of encouragement could be beneficial. LE11 felt there was nothing more that could be done as this was a forum where voluntary participation had to be accepted and not to people to take part.

LE8 said:

The EXCO maybe could send out messages...umm, just encouraging people to participate. You know, everybody...new people...I think umm already EXCO has started implementing like a welcome to new members kind of thing...where they would, you know extend a friendly welcome to new members and send them information...

This is how LE11 articulated:

I can't imagine what the executive can do because if it imposes, uhm, rules of that nature....I mean, the body is supposed to be a professional body that allows free communication. And if you indicate what kind of communication there can be, beyond the ethics...if you follow what I mean, then it would be imposing rules. And I don't think that one can impose rules beyond the ethical considerations.

LE1 mentioned the comfortability in the use of technology. If members were to be encouraged and trained on the technological aspect of their work and not just editing, perhaps they could feel more at ease with engaging on the e-mail forum. Hargittai, Piper and Morris (2018) had similar findings in their study conducted with older adults in the USA, that adults' Internet use was related to their socioeconomic status, background and access.

LE1 suggested that members ought to be free to respond to emails anonymously, to avoid being intimidated. In addition to responding anonymously, it was suggested that members should be encouraged to send anonymous tips for improving participation on the e-mail forum, for those who may have not been comfortable with sending advice on the e-mail forum:

And so I think if we become more used to using technology, that might facilitate communication...a lot of our members are not tech-savvy. But I think if they become more comfortable. Uhhh, we were looking at Google surveys for instance. There is a way to invite participation if..let members give us their ideas in anonymous, easy to fill out Google forms. Uhhmm, we're gonna try that. As a way of yah, building interaction. I don't know if it would change anything on the chat group but what it would do is to encourage more technological involvement and engagement which could transfer to...to the chat group. I don't know, I'm just thinking of that now.

The issue of every PEG member being a gatekeeper to professionalism, which could encourage more participation, was brought up. The onus was on every PEG member to ensure that the e-mail forum serves its optimal purpose, and not just the EXCO and web administrator.

LE10 had this to say:

So all of us as members should just keep an eye open and maybe just...if there's something that breaks the sort of the boundaries of decency to maybe just alert the EXCO or alert Kim.

LE2 suggested that perhaps the association could hire an individual whose only responsibility would be to monitor the e-mail forum because the web administrator had other responsibilities as well such as sending out communication to members from the EXCO and sorting external emails from possible clients:

It would be nice if they had someone monitoring it, minute-by-minute every day...

LE2 further submitted:

But they had a problem a while back when there was a lot of personal infighting. And they've stopped that by changing the constitution so that they can block people on the forum who are problem cases.

The personal infighting and some members not agreeing on some issues, then leaving the e-mail forum may have been a positive more than a negative. LE4 mentioned that there seems to be more peace and less abrasiveness on the e-mail forum:

Unfortunately, ehh, in the recent months, we've had a number of people who have become very offensive and they've become very angry, and they've left the chat group and so on and since they've left the chat group quite frankly, ehh, the chat group has become much quieter and much calmer.

LE7 had similar sentiments:

One of the reasons I say this is that you know that whole fracas that occurred, that I referred to earlier, uhm raised a lot of anger, a lot of...people just deciding they weren't gonna stay with the chat group anymore because it's unruly and it's unprofessional and so on. So we need also to find out how to keep it professional.

So, I think we need to ask about people's level of comfort with a professional chat group and how to keep it professional. So that people do feel comfortable at that level to stay part of the chat group because you know, I'd be far happier with 50% of our members participating in the chat group frankly.

Another possible solution to optimal participation was an annual survey, whereby members would be requested to state their reason for participation or lack thereof and suggestions for improvement. This was an inclusive idea to participation:

LE7 submitted as follows:

We need to do some surveying to find out about levels of participation, reasons for participation and so on or lack of, of course which is probably even more interesting. My sense is that, of the almost, I think at the moment it is just about 500 members or it might just be over 500 members, perhaps there might be as little as 10% who actively participate in the chat group.

This possible solution is supported in the literature by Bell, Trumble and Morrissette (2020) who conducted a study and found that group members could perceive themselves as equals if they could verbalise ideas and be listened to, where they also reported positive experiences.

4.6.3.4 DISCUSSION

The last theme that emerged from this study had categories that were aligned to trust among PEG members, benefits of participating on the e-mail forum and measures to be put in place to increase member participation.

The participants acknowledged the link between trust and free communication. It is difficult for any human to participate in communication where they feel there is a lack of trust. Emails are a form of communication that can be sensitive in that the sender can feel it is part of imparting their being, as there is no privacy in emails. Once the e-mail is sent, it can be stored by the receiver as evidence, whether for good or bad. This is supported by Peterson, Beymer and Putnam (2018); Herring (2003b) who state that emails remain a record that can be used for good or bad. Some authors warn of the security risks of sharing emails in organisations (Davison, Ou & Martinsons 2013; Ruhnka & Loopesko 2013), in that emails can be used against the sender in defamation and lawsuit cases. This parallels what some participants mentioned during the interviews of an instance where some members were suspended from the

association because of an online squabble that occurred, where some members felt attacked and insulted.

The second category under this theme presented the benefits that members who participate in the e-mail forum obtained. In addition, both the query sender and query responder benefit from participating in the e-mail forum. This suggests that the e-mail forum was mainly created as a support tool for new and inexperienced language practitioners; even the veteran PEG members benefit from the e-mail forum.

The participants were in two minds on if anything more still needed to be done to increase participation on the e-mail forum. felt the association was on the right track and nothing more could be done as this was a voluntary association and not an organisation wherein employees were forced to respond to work-related emails.

Some were of the opinion something could still be done such as recognising cultural differences. Neulip (2012) presents an argument on ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the belief that how communication is interpreted in one culture is the same in another culture. This author argues that some organisations 'pretend' as if ethnocentrism does not exist, yet this is one of the major contributing factors to conflicts in organisations. The issue with the difference in communication was unearthed in that one's response may seem rude to a recipient, when that may not be what the sender intended. Fasset (2013) engaged in a pursuit to find solutions to organisational conflicts brought about by cultural clashes. Fasset's report presents recommendations for cross-cultural communication namely, checking meanings, avoiding slang, watching humour and maintaining etiquette.

Further, strategies to manage emails may assist PEG members to cope with the number of emails they receive daily. Zhang (2015) conducted a study where it was discovered that sorting emails assisted in managing, preserving and providing information for future references.

In literature, Gallo (2012) Chingel (2018) and Seely (2017) suggest practical ways on how emails can be managed so they do not overwhelm the receiver, as LE3 suggests above. These are steps such as organising one's incoming emails so that they go into different designated folders.

Honouring the code of conduct is another way that may assist members to communicate respectfully with one another, thus making other members feel free to participate in the e-mail

forum. The May 2021 issue of the PEG newsletter presents a section where members are reminded of the Guild's code of conduct. Section 19 of the code conduct reads thus:

In particular, I will use PEG's social media (including but not limited to the online chat groups, Facebook and LinkedIn) responsibly and with due regard for accepted social media etiquette and with the necessary respect for others, especially where the platform is intended for professional discussion (www.editors.org.za).

Further, another possible solution to optimal participation is blocking members who intimidate others, thus rendering them afraid to participate on the e-mail forum. This parallels the Regulation of Interception of Communication and Provision of Communication Related Information Act 70 of 2002 (Act 70 of 2002). Currently, in South Africa, certain organisations such as the police service are guided on intercepting emails as regulated by the Act. However, Section 2 of this Act prohibits interception because 'no person may intentionally intercept or attempt to intercept, or authorise or procure any other person to intercept, or attempt to intercept, at any place in the Republic, any communication in the course of its occurrence or transmission' (Act 70 of 2002). Therefore, it would be illegal for PEG to authorise the e-mail administrator to intercept emails with offensive content. These emails may only be dealt with when they are already in the e-mail forum's public space.

4.7 PEG NEWSLETTER FRAME ANALYSIS

PEG has a newsletter called PEG Board that was first published in 2003. PEG members contribute articles to the newsletter. The frame analysis utilised in this study looked at six articles selected from 2019 and 2021 publications. These issues are January 2019, May 2021 and August 2021 editions. The PEG Board is emailed to members and contains an article from the chairperson, language and grammar support tools, a contributory article from any member, forthcoming events, an article where members are picked randomly and featured on 'who's your colleague anyway' and other pertinent issues that members of the guild may be dealing with at that particular time.

The frame analysis was utilised in this study as a document analysis tool. Framing is used to describe the power of communication (Entman 1993). In this study, six articles from January 2019, May 2021 and August 2021 issues of the newsletter were selected, to describe the message disseminated by these articles, in support of PEG members' perceptions of the association's Asynchronous CMC. From the January 2019 issue, 'the thought from our Chair

article' was selected together with an article on Modal Verbs. For the May 2021 issues, an article entitled 'Code of conduct vs freedom of speech: In search of equilibrium' and 'Words commonly confused, misused and abused: Part 1 and 2' were selected. Lastly, for the August 2021 issue, an article entitled 'Chirp from the Chair' and 'Words commonly confused, misused and abused: Parts 2 and 3 were chosen.

The researcher followed Du Plooy's (2009) seven-step process in identifying and analysing frames in qualitative media documents and Alozie's (2005) three-step process in identifying frames. These steps were detailed in Chapter 3 and they are:

- Phase 1: The first reading of the articles took place and the researcher jotted descriptive notes on the chosen articles during this phase.
- Phase 2: The researcher re-read the selected articles, identifying recurring themes, frames and categories.
- Phase 3: The researcher then conducted an in-depth interpretation of the selected articles and website content, based on the identified themes, frames and categories in Phase 2.

The newsletter is another editing support tool that contains lessons on grammar. Therefore, this employed a text-based interpretive qualitative approach, to describe communication content (Wimmer & Dominick 2006: 152-153) on the association's newsletter called the PEG Board.

4.7.1 Newsletter Articles' Analysis

Phase 1

For this analysis, the researcher chose six articles from the 2019 to 2020 publications. Two articles were chosen per issue. The January 2019 issue commences with the 'thought from our chairman's article. In this article, the PEG chairman writes about his tenure as chairman and his shortcomings. He articulates and uses an example of a mythical character called Prometheus. Prometheus had a brother called Epimetheus, meaning afterthought. The chairman acknowledges that he relates better with Epimetheus because he has many shortcomings. The dominant theme in this article was books and learning. It read as a seriously thought of and written article underpinning one participant's response that editing is a pedantic profession. It is paralleled by another participant's response that editors can be too hard on themselves and their work, as it is the nature of the job. The main theme in the article further parallels participants' responses that the PEG e-mail forum is a learning and support resource.

The second article in this issue is on the correct usage of Modal Verbs. These are verbs such as can, may, might, must. The article explains how and when these verbs can be used, as they are often used incorrectly. This article supports what some participants said that PEG provides a myriad of learning resources and support tools to its members, of which the e-mail forum is a part.

The May 2021 newsletter commences with a note from the new chairman who had just taken over in 2021. This article is about the association's code of conduct. The article discusses what a code of conduct is and the need for a code of conduct in associations. The article delves deep into the issue of freedom of expression. It is explained with support from the Bill of Rights enshrined in the country's constitution. Section 16 (1) of the Bill of Rights states that everyone has a right to freedom of expression, albeit the limitations when considering human dignity, privacy and equality. This Bill of Rights gives everyone the right to express themselves freely, however, this right ought to be adhered to with respect for others, not promoting hatred, and not infringing on any individual's rights to dignity and privacy of communication (Linnegar & Grewan 2021). It is apparent that this article aimed at further addressing the fracas that occurred at the beginning of 2021, wherein some members left to start their breakaway groups. Some participants mentioned the importance of a code of conduct, as is listed above in the verbatim excerpts.

Phase 2 and 3

This article is quite lengthy compared to the January 2019 article. This underscores the need the association felt to address the online squabbles that were ongoing at the time. Further, the article takes excerpts from the association's website on how members ought to conduct themselves on the e-mail forum. The guidelines in using the PEG chat group list these variables as important cornerstones to effective online communication via the e-mail forum: keep it professional, be courteous to and about both colleagues and clients, do not use defamatory remarks, be considerate, use appropriate subject lines or tags, avoid sending attachments (www.editors.org.za). Some of these cautions in managing emails are as Gallo (2012) Chingel (2018) and Seely (2017) suggest, as discussed in Chapter 2.

The learning resource in this issue is an article on words that are commonly misused. These are words such as a vs the, affect vs effect, advocate vs advocate, around vs about, assist vs help and more. These words are thoroughly explained and examples of how they can be used are presented.

The last issue that was analysed was the August 2021 one. The chairman's article was analysed together with the learning resource on commonly misused words. The article from the chairman seems lighter and not as intense as the May 2021 issue. This was a half-page article informing members of developments since the May 2021 issue, including reconstructing the website, news on the AGM and the introduction of the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act and how PEG was ensuring that the association is POPIA compliant.

The theme of the learning resource and support tool reverberates throughout all the newsletter issues, as evidenced in this excerpt from the chairman: 'PEG Board is one of our platforms that contributes to building editing knowledge and skills, updating members on current developments and inviting participation from a broad range of members' (Grewan 2021).

The words commonly confused feature further tackles more words such as latter vs last, leaders vs leadership, likely vs probably and more. This further underscores the importance of the learning resources for professionals in their field of work.

4.7.2 Discussion

The articles clearly show the type of association PEG is and the message that it sends out to its members. All articles are presented professionally with no grammatical and spelling errors.

The recurring themes in the analysed articles were professionalism, code of conduct and support tools. The theme of professionalism replays itself in the manner the main article is written and presented. Professionalism at PEG is in line with one of the characteristics of cyber organisational societies. These are societies are associations of people who co-exist inside a system and follow a set of principles as part of their existence in the system (Kee, Sparks, Trupa & Manucci 2013) This underscores the type of association PEG portrays to its members, more especially new members.

The code of conduct is a salient recurring theme in some articles. For instance, the May 2021 main article is long and discusses the association's code of conduct in detail. This, to the researcher, was interpreted as not only a friendly reminder but also a stern warning to those members who have been guilty of inappropriate responses on the e-mail forum. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) present internal communication as a code of conduct that provides information to members of the organisation to function effectively, it controls organisational members so that there is order in the workplace and persuades them to agree on certain aspects

in the organisation. However, the same authors (ibid) agree that this may also be viewed as a tool for dictatorship.

Lastly, the theme of the newsletter being a support tool came to the fore. This theme is substantiated in literature by Zink and Zink (n.d) who state that communication's core objective in an organisation is to promote motivation among employees; be a source of information; improve employees' attitudes as an informed employee gains better self-esteem, and it assists employees in complying with policies and communicating their challenges more efficiently.

Each issue has an article where a myriad of editing and grammar issues are taught, to resolve problems through organisational communication as espoused by Tolmie, Howe, McKenzie and Greer (1993). Resources that the members can utilise to further improve their language skills are also presented, such as the New Hart's Rules and Butcher's Copy-Editing that serve as PEG members' professional bibles. The latest empirical research shows that internal organisational communication is pivotal in motivating, improving productivity and creating satisfied employees (Du Preez & Bendixen 2015; Karanges 2014; Chitrao 2014; McKinsey Global Institute 2019).

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter presented data, analysis and interpretation. It began with presenting contextual data, then the theoretical perspective was detailed. The theories underpinning this study were the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model. These theories are located in the verbatim responses from the participants and the CCAM was used in analysing data, supported by literature from Chapter 2. Thereafter, data transcription, presentation using verbatim quotes from the participants were presented. The participants' verbatim quotes have been presented in italics to symbolise that the researcher did not tamper with them, and they are a true reflection of the participant's actual words. This chapter was concluded with document analysis utilising the frame analysis as is commonly used in analysing communication and media texts. The next and final chapter will conclude the study. It contains the limitations, recommendations, delimitations, areas for future research and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored PEG members' perceptions of their participation in the association's Asynchronous CMC, e-mail. Chapter 4 presented the analysis and discussion of the findings. This chapter presents the summary of the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The recommendations and conclusions emerged from the findings. The limitations of the study are also submitted.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

It is vital to re-state the main question and sub-questions as stated in Chapter 1:

What are the perceptions of PEG members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication/e-mail?

The sub-questions were:

- What is PEG members' understanding of the significance of the e-mail forum within organisations such as PEG?
- What are the perceptions of the level of members' participation in AC within the PEG e-mail forum?
- How can e-mail participation be improved at PEG?

Chapter 1 presented the background and introduction to the study. The rationale for conducting the study was underscored (Section 1.4). Exploring the PEG members' perceptions on their participation in the e-mail forum serves as an important factor in improving communication on this e-mail forum, which is why this study was conducted (Section 1.4). Furthermore, this chapter presented the problem statement, research aim and objectives, main research question and sub-questions. In addition, the literature preview of what was contained in the literature review in Chapter 2 was covered, a summary of the methodology was utilised, delineation and limitations, the definition of terms used and the demarcation of chapters.

Chapter 2 presented the literature review. Extensive definitions of CMC and Asynchronous CMC were highlighted (Sections 2.2 and 2.3). Further detailing of Asynchronous CMC concepts that parallel this study were presented. A presentation of Asynchronous CMC in South African organisations was made (Section 2.6) and the importance of Asynchronous CMC was tabled. After the importance of Asynchronous CMC, its disadvantages were presented. The theories underpinning this study were the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model, and these were delved deeper into in this chapter. In addition, the solutions for efficient Asynchronous CMC in organisations were discussed.

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology followed in this study to address the main and sub-questions. This study adopted the interpretive qualitative research methodology, with emphasis on the case study design. The chapter further presented methodological issues covered in this study such as the population, selection criteria, sampling, research site and the selection of participants. Structured interviews were held with the participants utilising an interview guide with ten questions. All participants were asked the same questions. These interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams and Zoom because of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions. The procedures for analysing data were the CCAM for the online interviews and the frame analysis for the newsletter. The procedures to analyse and interpret the data were presented in Chapter 4. Plans for enhancing the trustworthiness of this study were also presented. Lastly, it was concluded with ethical issues adhered to in this study.

Chapter 4 presented the data analysis and findings that emerged from the interviews and document analysis. This chapter commenced by presenting the contextual data (Section 4.2). Thereafter, the themes and categories that emerged from the interviews were presented (Table 4.1). The perceptions of all the participants on each theme and category were discussed in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2. The frame analysis for the newsletter presented its themes and these were also highlighted. Findings showed that participation in the e-mail forum was affected by a myriad of issues including language and cultural differences, personalities and backgrounds. It was further found that some members chose not to respond on the e-mail forum, yet they still saw themselves as participating by so doing. Further, the issue of the extinction of emails as the main communication tool in organisations was lurking in the background. The question to ponder on was supported by a few disgruntled members who had left the association's e-mail forum and yet still seemed to be communicating effectively on WhatsApp. The participants further provided guidelines on how participation in the e-mail forum could be improved for its optimal intended purpose (Section 4.7.3.3).

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section presents the summary of this study's findings based on the themes and sub-categories that emerged in Chapter 4.

5.3.1 Perceptions of PEG Members

The participants articulated their perceptions on the significance of PEG if PEG fulfils its mandate and the attributes of the e-mail forum that assists the association to fulfil its mandate.

5.3.1.1 Significance of PEG

The significance of PEG was articulated in that is it a professional association that brings a sense of belonging and pride to members. Language practitioners are largely self-employed, and this can be a lonely and isolated profession. Therefore, being a part of PEG gave members a sense of comradery. PEG is an association that provides support resources for editors in their line of work. This support was articulated as part of the association's significance. Members can obtain in-service skills training via workshops and lately, Webinars because of the Covid-19 related restrictions.

The most important aspect of the significance of PEG was that it could assist members to retain their jobs and professions through the accreditation exams that would soon be mandatory. In the not-so-distant future, any Language Editor who wanted to practice would not be allowed to do so if they had not undergone the accreditation examinations. PEG is in the process of workshopping its members on what this accreditation will entail and its benefits. Therefore, members who operate solely will face challenges should they not be part of an association that will approve their accreditation.

5.3.1.2 PEG mandate fulfilled

The PEG mandate tied in with the significance of the association in that the reason why participants saw it as significant was that it fulfilled its mandate. Its mandate was that of providing support tools to members and being an anchor towards their professions. It is this study's finding that one of the reasons participants perceived PEG as fulfilling its mandate was because of its code of conduct.

5.3.1.3 E-mail forums attributes

The e-mail forum was at the core of this research. The participants were able to articulate the forum's attributes that help the association to fulfil its mandate. One attribute that emerged was that this was a platform where members were free to communicate or not. However, this was a surprising finding because it was not mentioned to the PEG members. There had always been an unspoken expectation that every member ought to participate in the e-mail forum, either in the form of asking or answering questions.

5.3.2 PEG Members' level of participation

The participants were asked about their level of participation on the e-mail forum, other members' level of participation and if there was trust amongst members to foster open and free communication on the e-mail forum. The summaries of the categories under this theme are presented below.

5.3.2.1: Individual level of participation

Participants were indifferent when it came to their level of participation, as per what constituted the sample: The participants who said they were active were forthcoming in that they were active because they saw their roles more as mentors. What stood out was that these participants had been in the profession for 15 years and more. This was the reason the e-mail forum was a tool formulated largely for new members to learn from more experienced and senior members.

The lack of participation was attributed to being irritated by some of the basic questions asked by new members. This finding was intriguing because the e-mail forum's core existence was to be a support tool.

The definition of the word 'participation' was put under the spotlight when one participant suggested PEG needs to coin its definition of the word. The reason was, she perceived the reading of emails and not responding as participation, the reading of emails and responding in private as participation, and the reading of emails and saving them as a future resource as participation.

5.3.2.2: Other members' level of participation

The participants acknowledged that the level of participation of other PEG members was varied. Besides the non-participation of other members being attributed to the breakaway groups, another issue was shy personalities.

The quality of one's education and confidence were also tied to one's high level of interaction on the e-mail forum.

One finding that stood out from this category was that some members may have been participating more on the e-mail forum because of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions. This may have left members feeling lonely with not being able to see some family members and friends, and so their online activities may have received more attention during this pandemic.

5.3.2.3: E-mail vs face-to-face interaction

The finding under this category was that most participants acknowledged the difference in the way humans communicated in a face-to-face scenario and the way they communicated virtually. In addition, this study discovered that both online and face-to-face communication had a set of guidelines for effective communication. Even with a set of communication guidelines in place, communication was also influenced by one's personality. Although it cannot be stated in uncertain terms that face-to-face communication was preferred more than online, the dynamics in these two were equally presented.

5.3.3: Measures for optimal participation

The last objective looked at ways in which participation on the e-mail forum may be enhanced to improve communication on the e-mail forum. The categories that emerged were trust among PEG members; benefits that members who participated on the e-mail forum get in as far as their editing work was concerned and measures that may be put in place to improve participation on the e-mail forum.

5.3.3.1: Trust among PEG members

One aspect that stood out under this category was free communication still occurred under some guidelines and forms of control. Communication in associations still had to be buttressed

by respect, trust, openness and collegiality. It was apparent that some members lacked trust, which may have impacted their participation or lack thereof on the e-mail forum. The members who trust each other seemed to be those who may be socially familiar with one another. Further, trust was lost in instances where some members were chastised on the e-mail forum or felt that their queries were handled in an unprofessional manner.

5.3.3.2: Participation benefits

Participants mentioned some benefits of participating in the e-mail forum. One of the recurring benefits was that the e-mail forum was a support resource that assisted in upskilling editors in their line of work.

Another benefit that came to the fore was on the technical aspect of editors' work as not all queries were language and grammar-related. Participants mentioned that they, at times, learned how to attach a PDF document onto a Word document, save emails into designated folders and flag important emails for future references.

The other benefit was that of resource information sharing. Participants mentioned that they learned about software that made their editing work a bit easier such as PerfectIt, Grammarly, Mendeley and QuillBot.

5.3.3.3: Measures to improve participation

The core objective of this study was to present guidelines on how best participation could be improved on the e-mail forum. One measure to be put in place are timeous messages of participation encouragement from the EXCO. These reminders may serve as an encouragement where members see that the EXCO cares about their participation on the e-mail forum.

The other measure is workshops and Webinars which need to be conducted to teach members about technology, as this could be one of the reasons some members do not participate.

The association may hire an individual whose sole responsibility would be to manage the e-mail forum. At the time of the data-gathering stage, the e-mail forum was managed by the web administrator who has other responsibilities such as editing work, managing the website, managing external communication, managing communication from the EXCO and communication from members, managing membership payments etc. The suggestion is that

the web administrator is inundated with a lot of responsibilities, and having another individual delegated to managing the e-mail forum may assist.

Another suggestion is that members who have been proven in the past to have intimidated others and became rude, ought to be blocked from the forum.

PEG is an online association that may be evolving, albeit this new development may still be viewed in a negative light. There are some breakaway groups formed on WhatsApp that serve the purpose that the PEG is mandated to serve, with extra compassion to its members. These breakaways were formed by some disgruntled PEG members who sought to create a relaxed and non-stoic professional environment. The intriguing part is these members are still a part of PEG, yet they have chosen to have another platform where they are free to communicate on a personal level about personal issues, and not just editing-related issues. Perhaps, the ‘elephant in the room’ ought to be discussed and not swept under the carpet. Perhaps, part of the e-mail forum’s future is also on WhatsApp groups.

Lastly, an annual survey was suggested whereby members would be free to advise the EXCO on where the e-mail forum may improve and how better participation may be enhanced.

5.4 THEORETICAL LINK WITH FINDINGS

The two theories underpinning the study were the Symbolic Interaction Theory and the Dual Capacity Model because they closely paralleled the phenomenon under investigation. These theories link with the study’s findings. For the Symbolic Interaction Theory, it became apparent that participants understood that some messages may solicit a type of response or no response at all. The way PEG members communicate with each other on the e-mail forum and the way these messages are perceived determines the kinds of responses or lack thereof.

The Symbolic Interaction Theory has three core principles, and these are meaning, language and thinking (Blumer 1969). These principles came out strongly from the participants as variables that determine how and if they take part in the e-mail forum. Some participants mentioned the rudeness of other members, which forced them to form a breakaway WhatsApp group. One participant mentioned that this WhatsApp group was friendlier, and they were free to discuss not only professional but also personal matters. Therefore, the language in the breakaway group was a common one of understanding and supporting each other.

The Dual Capacity Model came to the fore during the online interviews with participants. This model purports that media can play a dual role in conveying data and manifesting meaning (Sitkin, Sutcliffe & Barrios-Choplin 1992). This was clearly articulated by the participants in that the e-mail forum serves as a communication tool among members and a support tool for members. Therefore, the e-mail forum has a dual role as a communication tool and a learning/support tool. This dual capacity applies to the PEG newsletter as well, as it also serves as means to communicate and to educate PEG members on a myriad of language issues.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's findings bring forth recommendations and guidelines for enhancing the participation of PEG members on the e-mail forum. The recommendations are based on the three objectives of the study and emanate from the participants' responses.

Research Objective 1

To understand PEG members' perceptions of the significance of asynchronous communication via e-mail:

- This study recommends that the association holds bi-annual Webinars where e-mail communication netiquette can be presented and discussed. This may assist members who may not be aware that their responses offend other members.
- It is recommended that the name of the e-mail forum be changed to reflect its true characteristic. The word e-mail chat is incorrect; thus, it may be causing some confusion on what the forum is. A chat is a synchronous communication activity that occurs in real-time. Therefore, the e-mail forum is not a chat forum. The researcher suggests the name be changed to either PEGInteract, PEGShare or PEGforum.

Research Objective 2

To describe PEG members' perceptions of their level of participation within the PEG e-mail forum.

- It came out clearly that members feel threatened by some members' responses on the e-mail forum. It is recommended that PEG members must be informed of the option to respond in private on the e-mail forum. It must not be an option that is not openly shared, because it seems it is not to be done. Members must know that they are free to respond to an e-mail privately and not only on the forum.

- PEG ought to coin its working definition of the word participation. It was evident during the interviews that reading emails and learning from others' queries is still a form of participation. Therefore, PEG members must be informed that all forms of participation are acknowledged, to possibly have more member visibility on the e-mail forum.
- It is still participation if one chooses to read emails and not respond; also that it is still participation if one decides to respond privately to a query; that it is still participation if one chooses to send a query privately to any member; that it is still participation if one chooses to send an e-mail to the web administrator and be kept anonymous; that it is still participation if one reads responses to queries and chooses to save them on their folders for future reference.
- The association ought to have regular communication where the different members' level of expertise is acknowledged including the appreciation to those members who avail themselves to answer members' queries.
- The association ought to address the 'elephant in the room', that is the different cultures and the different ways the cultures, ages and backgrounds may be at play in how members communicate on the e-mail forum. This is, of course, not to encourage intolerance and disrespect of members who may be from different cultures or a different age group. It is simply to allay members' cultural diversity fears and embrace the beauty in diversity. The open discussion of this topic may assist members to better understand each other and tolerate others' differences. To address the different cultures that may have a bearing on how members communicate, this study suggests that the PEG website has a section where members' cultures and mother tongues are listed, without listing which member comes from which culture as some members may not be comfortable with this. This way, members would appreciate the diversity in the association, and perhaps communicate much better or understand each other much better.
- The issue of the breakaway groups ought to be addressed and discussed. The association's EXCO can have a survey where they engage members on their perceptions of the breakaway groups. This way, members may communicate more courteously if they are aware that some disgruntled members choose to leave the association. This may reduce the number of members who choose not to be a part of PEG and end up losing out on support resources and being under an association that will support their professions through the accreditation process that will soon be mandatory for every Language Editor in South Africa.

- Members ought to be informed that they have the choice to still be part of PEG but not receive emails via the e-mail forum if they so wish. This option has never been communicated to members; it is assumed that people know.

Research Objective 3

To draw up guidelines on how best the e-mail forum can be utilised to the benefit of most PEG members.

- It is recommended that the PEG User's Manual includes more practical tutorials on how to manage emails, divert PEG emails into a specific folder so that members are not overwhelmed by the daily PEG emails, how to start emails and create different folders to save different grammar responses for future references.
- The idea of a PEG WhatsApp group ought to be discussed. Communication in organisations is fast-changing and an official WhatsApp group may be more accessible and easier to engage in than the e-mail forum. The possibility of WhatsApp being part of an association's formal communication channel needs to be addressed. It is recommended that PEG holds an annual survey where members will be able to answer why they do not engage on the e-mail forum, suggestions for better communication on the e-mail forum, and suggestions for improvement on the e-mail forum.
- It is recommended that PEG ought to have a transformation forum or feature that can be published on the PEGBoard. It was evident from the findings that there still needs to be work done on race transformation, to ensure that communication at PEG achieves its optimal purpose.
- Members ought to be timeously reminded about FAQs on the website so that queries that may seem too basic for a language professional can be minimised. Members can use the FAQ section as a support tool instead of sending emails for minor queries that may be viewed as overly discussed previously and too basic.
- The survey that was mentioned earlier can include a section where members can answer about their level of connectivity. Participation in the e-mail forum may be affected by the connectivity of some members. That is why the avenue of a WhatsApp group ought to be discussed as this may be a more accessible forum, compared to emails.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings raised several issues on e-mail optimal participation in associations. The following areas emerged during this research as areas that still need further research:

- The future and relevance of e-mail forum as the main communication tool in associations ought to be further researched
- Research can be conducted on an international association similar to PEG, to find out if there are any similarities to the activities on the PEG's e-mail forum
- Research needs to be conducted on Intercultural Communication, specifically in the South African context. This research ought to focus on the South African context with specific reference to e-mail Intercultural Communication and not verbal Intercultural Communication
- A longitudinal study on the future of emails, as the core communication tool, in organisations, may be conducted.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to one online professional association, whose members are mainly based in South Africa, due to the scarcity of associations operating like PEG. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised or transferred to other associations in South Africa and internationally. These findings, however, are significant as they highlight how e-mail participation can be improved in e-mail forums, for effective communication.

In addition, on the 23rd of March 2020, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the country would be going on a strict lockdown to contain the number of Covid-19 infections. The country was placed on Alert Level 5, meaning people could only leave their homes to buy essentials such as food and toiletries and medical supplies. No form of social gathering or visiting one's friends, colleagues or family were allowed. These restrictions forced field researchers to find alternative ways to conduct interviews, so their research would not stall, as no one knows when the virus will subside and how many variants we are still to face in future. Consequently, this research had to be conducted online via Microsoft Teams and Zoom. This was to ensure the safety of both participants and researchers. Even though there was a sense of relief and safety that no possible infections could emanate as a result of this research, there was a myriad of issues that the researcher had to navigate. These included technical glitches, background noises such as dogs barking, ringing of cellphones, ringing of

the doorbell and a laptop battery being on low and almost switching off in the middle of an interview.

Furthermore, these were online interviews and data costs had to be taken into consideration by not prolonging the interviews longer than was necessary. However, all participants answered questions until they had nothing more to say. These lasted between 20 but not more than 40 minutes. Another initiative that the researcher and participants agreed on was to have the camera on during the introduction, have it off during the actual interviews and switch it back on after the interviews where the researcher was explaining the next steps after the interviews. This also assisted in minimising technical glitches.

Lastly, these online interviews may have lacked the human-to-human communication element. However, the researcher ensured this was as minimal as possible by introducing herself on the video camera and closing the interviews off on video camera so that the participants could not feel like they *were talking to a computer*, as lamented by one participant.

5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The PEG e-mail forum was created to be a support tool for members and help them to have a sense of comradery because language editing can be a largely isolated and lonely profession. The study concludes that the e-mail forum is still a useful support tool that needs to be enhanced for better member participation and benefits. Communication is fast-changing and the issue of incorporating a WhatsApp group into the association can no longer be ignored. The WhatsApp breakaway groups are not a negative avenue, after all, this may be the PEG's future in fostering a bespoke and quicker communication avenue.

Having completed this research study, the researcher ponders if the future of CMC will consist of only synchronous tools. The researcher wonders if there will be a time in the near or distant future when the e-mail will be extinct and be replaced by real-time interaction. The researcher notes that some communication tools such as snail mail and telephones are not as popular as they used to be. This form of communication is now replaced by synchronous interaction. This remains a question that may be addressed by other authors and is of interest in this study, as a future focus for the utilisation of Asynchronous CMC in South African associations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

27 July 2021

Dear Mrs Pholile Faith Zengele (nee Maseko)

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 27 July 2021
to 27 July 2024

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
48304034_CREC_CHS_2021

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs Pholile Faith Zengele (nee Maseko)
Contact details: 48304034@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Dr MJ Hadji
Contact details: [012 429 2881](tel:0124292881)

Title: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: Email.

Degree Purpose: PhD

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The low risk application was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the



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confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2006 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (27 July 2024). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 48304034_CREG_CHS_2021 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature :



Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature : PP



Prof K. Masemola
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APPENDIX B: PROOF OR REGISTRATION



1729 NINBT

ZENGELE P P MRS
P O BOX 102128
MORRIETA PLAZA
0167

STUDENT NUMBER : 4830-403-4

ENQUIRIES NAME : SMITH LD, MRS
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0124415702

DATE : 2021-04-12

Dear student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. kindly activate your unisa mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources.

DEGREE : MA: COMMUNICATION (98512)

TITLE : exploring the perceptions of professional editors guild members on their participation in asynchronous communication.

SUPERVISOR : DR M J HADJI (hadjin@unisa.ac.za)

ACADEMIC YEAR : 2021

TYPE: DISSERTATION

SUBJECTS REGISTERED: DPCOM95 dissertation: communication

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

you must re-register online and pay every academic year until such time that you can submit your dissertation/thesis for examination.

if you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination you have to submit an intention to submit form (available on the website www.unisa.ac.za) at least two months before the date of submission. if submission takes place after 15 november, but before the end of january of the following year, you do need not to re-register and pay registration fees for the next academic year. should you submit after the end of january, you must formally reregister online and pay the full fees.

please access the information with regard to your personal librarian on the following link:
<https://bit.ly/3huxqvr>

yours faithfully,

prof m s mothata
registrar



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APPENDIX C: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

PERMISSION LETTER



Request for permission to conduct research at The Professional Editors' Guild

Title: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: Email

April 2021

Mr Cornelius Janse van Rensburg
PEG Chairperson: National Executive Committee
Email: cm.jansevanrensburg@gmail.com
Ms Kim R
PEG E-group/website coordinator
Email: tzar42@gmail.com

Dear PEG Executive,

I, Pholile Zengele, student number 48304034 am doing research with Dr Hadji Mutambuli, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication Science towards a MA Communication Science at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa's Department of Student Funding (DSF) for the completion of this research project. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: Email.

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication, to formulate guidelines that will assist members to optimally utilise the association's email forum.

The Professional Editors' Guild (PEG) was selected based on purposive sampling to obtain more information and formulate guidelines to assist its members and members of similar associations to utilise the email forum optimally, to their benefit. According to David and Sutton (2004), cases are chosen to be researched based on the researcher's understanding and opinion on their appropriateness as research sites. The choice in selecting PEG as an association of choice and one that parallels the aim of this study is threefold. First, PEG is the main body in South Africa whose core objective is to promote the interests of professionals from



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the communications, media and publishing sectors. These professionals are critical to this sector of the South African economy (editors.org.za). In addition, PEG is the founding member of LAMP (Alliance of Language and Media Professionals). LAMP is pivotal in uplifting and upholding the standards of language in South Africa.

This is relevant because this study will look at the perceptions of PEG members on their participation on the association's email forum to formulate recommendations to assist in their optimal email participation, thus upholding the standard of language and editing in South Africa.

Second, PEG seeks to promote editors and their work to make potential clients understand this important sector in the communication circles.

Communication in the 21st century is not only within South Africa and among South Africans. The third reason for the selection of PEG is that it aims to promote communication with other professionals from across the globe (editors.org.za), as the world has been labelled a melting pot of diverse nationalities and individuals.

The study will entail: 1) In-depth interviewing of the PEG members who have their 2020/21 membership up to date. Each interview is expected to last 45 minutes; and 2) The in-depth interviews shall be recorded using a cell-phone or tablet with no sim card, or via the Microsoft Teams recording function. This is so the participants can feel comfortable because they are familiar with these gadgets. 3) Initially, this study was to be conducted utilizing face-to-face interviews. However, in the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the looming third wave, online interviews are the safest and best option under the circumstances. The researcher sees it fit and safe to conduct online interviews utilising tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Skype. The choice in these three tools is for the participants to choose one that they are most familiar with, prefer the most and have access to. Apart from the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the online interviews will be an intriguing data collection instrument as I will be able to study the phenomenon in an environment in which it occurs, online (Salmons 2015). The online interviews will be conducted for a period of 30-45 minutes. However, this may be prolonged should there be a need for the interviews to continue for a few minutes beyond the 45-minute mark. There will be permission sought from the participants for the interviews to be recorded so that data is not lost for the data analysis period. The researcher will refer to the recordings for accurate reporting of data and not to take the participants' words out of context.

4) The participants will be informed of their rights in the interviewing process as well as the right to withdraw from the study should they wish to do so.

The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that it can generate important information for the improvement of asynchronous communication via email at PEG and other association's operating similar to the PEG.

There are no anticipated inconveniences and risks of participating in the study. The participants will not be exposed to any risks during the course or as an outcome of this research study. Interview sessions shall be conducted at the participants' convenient time.

However, it ought to be noted that even though this study will not produce any physical harm, nonetheless, Flick (2009:41) advises that harm may be emotional stress, irritation, anger, invasion of privacy and damage to one's self esteem. There may be a danger of participants feeling that their self-esteem is challenged if they feel that I will be comparing them to other members. I am making an undertaking that this will be avoided because I will ensure that the interview interpretations will be grounded on their exact words and will not be an assessment of their personality. That is why it is important for these interviews to be recorded so the



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Interpretations are based on the participants' exact words. In addition, the participants' words will not be traced back to them because their names will not be used anywhere on the research report. Instead, I will use pseudonyms to protect their privacy and identity.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings of the study, you can contact me for a hard or soft copy. I am prepared to share the findings of the study if you so wish.

Yours sincerely


Signature:

Name: Pholie Zengele

Associate member: PEG

Unisa student number: 48304034



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APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY



21 April 2021

Dr Hadji Mutambuli
Senior Lecturer
Department of Communications
University of South Africa

Dear Dr Mutambuli

SURVEY OF MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSIONAL EDITORS' GUILD

Your MA Communications student, Pholile Zengele, has approached the Executive Committee of the Professional Editors' Guild, of which she is a member, for permission to conduct a survey among its members as part of her research towards a Master's degree.

The Executive Committee has received Ms Zengele's request favourably and, accordingly, permission is hereby granted for her to conduct the following survey among PEG members: 'Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: Email.'

In fact, as it happens, this is an area of the Guild's communications media that has tended to be problematic of late, and so we would be particularly interested in receiving the findings of the survey: they could possibly provide the Executive Committee with some guidance on how to manage its asynchronous communications media (especially email exchanges) more effectively. For this reason, we will encourage our members to participate in the study as best they can under COVID-19 conditions and we would also welcome having the findings shared with us.

We wish Ms Zengele success with this study and also in attaining her Master's degree.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Linnegar", written over a light grey rectangular background.

John Linnegar

Interim National Chairman

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear participant,

My name is Pholile Zengele and I am researching with Dr Hadji Mutambuli, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication Science towards a Master of Arts degree, at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa for the completion of this research project. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: E-mail.

I am conducting this research to explore the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication, to formulate guidelines that will assist members to optimally utilise the association's e-mail forum.

This is a study whose participants are requested to take part voluntarily. You will not be coerced to participate and there will be no penalty if you choose not to be part of the study. Therefore, participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate.

The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that it can generate important information for the improvement of asynchronous communication via e-mail at PEG and other associations operating similar to the PEG. The online interview will be between 30 to 45 minutes.

There are no anticipated inconveniences and risks of participating in the study. You are not going to be exposed to any risks during the course or as an outcome of the research study.

The main objective of this study is to obtain your perceptions on your e-mail forum participation to contribute guidelines in improving participation on the e-mail forum.

1. Can you tell me your understanding of the significance of PEG as a professional association?
2. In your opinion, how is PEG fulfilling its mandate as a professional association?
3. In your opinion, what are the PEG e-mail forum's necessary attributes/characteristics that may assist it to achieve its objectives?
4. What is your level of participation in PEG's e-mail forum? (awareness, connectedness & reacted)
5. What do you think of other members' level of participation in the e-mail forum? (social interaction; working together; comfortable interacting; personally involved; point of view acknowledged; care about each other's opinion)?
6. In what ways do participants behave differently on e-mail forums as opposed to face-to-face interaction? (virtual behaviours; social context)
7. In your opinion, to what extent do you think members in the PEG e-mail forum trust each other to a point that they can express themselves freely? (privacy; social relations)
8. What kind of benefits do you think members participating in the e-mail forum gain regarding their editing work?
9. What measures do you think the PEG can put in place to ensure that the e-mail forum serves its optimal intended purpose, that is of being a support tool for all members?
10. Is there any other comment you would like to add or emphasise which might not have been covered above?

Thank you

APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, [REDACTED] (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

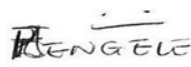
I agree to the recording of the face-to-face/online interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname...Alexis Grewan..... (please print)

Participant Signature.. Date...10 August 2021

Researcher's Name & Surname: Pholile Zengele (please print)

Researcher's signature..... Date...20/08/2021.....

APPENDIX G: COPIES OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

PARTICIPANT 1/LE1

Dear participant,

My name is Pholile Zengele and I am researching with Dr Hadji Mutambuli, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication Science towards a Master of Arts degree, at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa for the completion of this research project. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: E-mail.

I am conducting this research to explore the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication, to formulate guidelines that will assist members to optimally utilise the association's e-mail forum.

This is a study whose participants are requested to take part voluntarily. You will not be coerced to participate and there will be no penalty if you choose not to be part of the study. Therefore, participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate.

The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that it can generate important information for the improvement of asynchronous communication via e-mail at PEG and other associations operating similar to the PEG. The online interview will be between 30 to 45 minutes.

There are no anticipated inconveniences and risks of participating in the study. You are not going to be exposed to any risks during the course or as an outcome of the research study.

The main objective of this study is to obtain your perceptions on your e-mail forum participation to contribute guidelines in improving participation on the e-mail forum.

1. Can you tell me your understanding of the significance of PEG as a professional association?

For me, PEG is an organisation that represents the profession of editing and similar tasks like proofreading, indexing, or even autobiography to some extent. So its primary aim would be to promote that professions for its members so that we maintain high standards for the editing profession. I think the challenge is that we're not regulated so we can decide how good or how bad we are, and so a professional organisation seeks to ensure that people understand the skill we have and the value that must be placed on what we offer.

2. In your opinion, how is PEG fulfilling its mandate as a professional association?

Very much so, we had a Teams session last month and that was one of my questions to the team....and for the most part.....[Oh, but you know what, Pholile, do we need to contextualise this a bit because you know there was a significant change in the organisation in March. So everything I'm referring to is since March and not historically...ehmmm]. So, so I mean in the last six months of so there's been great moves to ensure that we are looking at each of our objectives. But, yes, certainly we feel very positive about what the organisation offers its members.

3. In your opinion, what are the PEG e-mail forum's necessary attributes/characteristics that may assist it to achieve its objectives?

Okay, so we have two Google groups, one is for official communication to members and the other is a...it's supposed be more of a conversational but professional ehmmm group platform. They were each formed specifically so that those that didn't want to engage in chit...Err I call it chit chat but we don't mean chit chat we mean professional engagement. Those that don't want to engage in that can opt out, and then all the official communication goes on the other group

chat. So I would say the official Google group is effective because communications go out about job opportunities, about changes in the industry, about training...you know those things that support editing. The chat group has a dynamic of its own and unfortunately...ehmm at the start of this year, things went quite sour. And we had to implement a number of changes..and my feeling is that it reduced the level of participation in the chat group but it improved the quality....if that makes sense. Yah.

Would you mind just briefly telling me what went on: *Errr before the Covid lockdown, there were a couple of incidences on the chat group where people behaved inappropriately. It wasn't considered professional etiquette. There was some sort of naming...ehmm, rude stuff on racial lines and also on derogatory lines. And we had a member that was given a warning...ehmmm and she persisted. And what happened at the beginning of 2020 was her warning then lapsed and we took action and actually suspended her membership for three years. So [sigh] I don't know, I think what happens is that people forget that they are on a professional platform and start engaging as though they are in a social context without their profession backing them [silence for a few seconds]...it's a boundary thing.*

4. What is your level of participation in PEG's e-mail forum? (awareness, connectedness & reacted)

Okay, so mine was always very low and the reason for the [and I..I think I speak for a number of our members] is that we have a few very very highly qualifies skilled competent members who can answer anything that is referenced and complete and I think it is intimidating to those of us who think we might know what the answer is but don't want to look foolish. [I've since becoming the Chairperson of PEG, I'm not sure if you're aware of that....yah, since the end of May]. Yah, so now my communication is in an official capacity, but on the chat group, I still don't engage there too much. I think we've got enough expertise to

respond to editing questions that I don't need to hog that platform, and it all honesty errr my skill is not at their level so I don't feel the need.

5. What do you think of other members' level of participation in the e-mail forum? (social interaction; working together; comfortable interacting; personally involved; point of view acknowledged; care about each other's opinion)?

I think other members feel the same that's why [...some technical glitch...Hello hello.. (researcher)] ...a part of many people who feel very shy to offer a response in case...[can you hear me, can you hear me] [I got you back now, could you just start that sentence again for me please (researcher)]. So I think, I believe I speak on behalf of many members...ehmmm I know for a fact, I've had conversations with many members where they do say that they feel intimidated by the.....it's a quality and level of response that comes from our competent members. So, it is a shame, ehmmm we should be encouraging people to offer their input. That said, Pholile, the reality is if the question is has been answered, there is no point 40 people all answer the same question. Sooo, that could be part of the reason but you know let the experts respond and that nobody else needs to. And err, since we, we had to put in a disciplinary code and come down quite strongly on the boundaries for using the chat group and I think since then, people are reluctant to communicate anything that might be seen as not professional or conversational...ehmmm, I think there are still trying to work out [silence for a few seconds] you know where those limits are on that platform.

6. In what ways do participants behave differently on e-mail forums as opposed to face-to-face interaction? (virtual behaviours; social context)

Well, uhm, until our whole disciplinary hoo-ha I think people forgot their professional boundaries on the e-mail platform and probably behaved more professionally in-person. Now that we've come down with, you know, a very strong message, to maintain professionalism people are now unsure of what that

means. So for me, that means people.... [and this might sound judgemental] but I think there is a lack of understanding about professional behaviour and where those boundaries are and what it means. And I think that has stopped people from engaging. [silence]. Errr, it's better not to have the derogatory stuff that was going on, I'm very grateful for that, but I, I feel very saddened that there's....it's quite minimal chat that goes on the chat group.

7. In your opinion, to what extent do you think members in the PEG e-mail forum trust each other to a point that they can express themselves freely? (privacy; social relations).

No [giggle]. No, I think [giggle] Can I tell you, no Ill tell you a dynamic that arose out of that e-mail upset is that one of our members last year, left the e-mail chat group and created her own WhatsApp group, as an alternative. And she did that in order to give herself a safe space with others whom she knew and they've continued that WhatsApp group. And that is a very strong indication that people don't feel safe enough [on the e-mail forum]. So yes, one could ask about a comma or non-defining clause...but you might not say ehmm....do I put headings in a annual report because I don't know...because you might...you know someone might come down on you..errr. I think a lot of that has been put to rest with the code of conduct..that I could remember being afraid that I would be...like mocked is the wrong word I don't know what the right word is. But you know when you're called out for your ignorance. I can remember feeling that. There was one member in particular who did that. But he is not that active on the chat either.

8. What kind of benefits do you think members participating in the e-mail forum gain regarding their editing work?

I think they get someone else to answer their questions rather than using hard copy resources. Ehhmmm, I've had this chat with a colleague before because she

feels that people should know how to use New Hart's Rules or Butcher's Copy-editing or a dictionary. Because she feels that sometimes the questions posted on the e-mail group....we should know where to find those answers and not...it's almost like we use the expertise of our competent members as a scapegoat for learning how to use resources effectively. Uhhh, so it's a win for them but it's not really ideal for the profession. I think people have a sense of connectivity by being to..to chat in a group forum.....Uhhmm, there is always a benefit to getting multiple views to a situation...and I think that's an advantage.

9. What measures do you think the PEG can put in place to ensure that the e-mail forum serves its optimal intended purpose, that is of being a support tool for all members?

You know what my concern would be, it's that the code of conduct restricted participation somewhere, it made people a little bit, uhmm more reserved. So if we had to turn that around and ask what can we do to have the platform used more. I think it's just ongoing engagement, we have to....err we have to just respond positively to people who do participate in the platform, and find ways to engage members. Uhhmmm, and that would come through activities of the Guild. So for instance we put out a call for editors that don't only edit in English but edit in our other official languages. In the hope of encouraging a broader base, so that we're not sitting with that same handful of people chatting on the, on the e-mail group. Eh, but we have measures in place that govern behaviour on the chat group. But, yah I think there is a gap for how to encourage more participation

10. Is there any other comment you would like to add or emphasise which might not have been covered above?

[Participant 1 requested the researcher to relay the study's main question before adding into the interview]. That would be fantastic. To sort of like give us an idea

of how to encourage more participation. That would be very valuable and we would welcome that. We're a very active committee at the moment and uhmmm open to, in fact what I think I might add because we've actually got time don't we. Uhmm [giggles]..in our EXCO meeting yesterday, we were also looking at the...we need to become more tech-savvy as an organisation. PEG is still quite backward. Uhmmm, a lot of processes are still managed manually. And so I think if we become more used to using technology, that might facilitate communication...a lot of our members are not tech-savvy. But I think if they become more comfortable. Uhmm, we were looking at Google surveys for instance. There is a way to invite participation if..let members give us their ideas in anonymous, easy to fill out Google forms. Uhmmm, we're gonna try that. As a way of yah, building interaction. I don't know if it would change anything on the chat group but what it would do is to encourage more technological involvement and engagement which could transfer to...to the chat group. I don't know, I'm just thinking of that now. But I can tell you now that I have a perception that many of our members in PEG are not that technologically equipped.....myself included. I've learnt a lot since Covid...uhmm it is unfamiliar...we know how to open a Word document and track changes, that's it [Giggles]. We tried to do err Dropbox documents, and half of the group didn't understand how to use it. And that's actually very simple. You just go in and fill it in and close it again. You don't have to do anything else. And that was actually quite difficult for people to understand. So, I think all of these things are so...relatively speaking quite new...err, it's a new way of interaction. Even, err even emails is a new way of interacting. In some ways, err, because now that has to now replace the in-person workshops of the networking events that we used to have. Uhmm, and it isn't an equal replacement. But ideally we would want people to at least engage it because it's better than nothing.

Thank you

PARTICIPANT 7/LE7

Dear participant,

My name is Pholile Zengele and I am doing research with Dr Hadji Mutambuli, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication Science towards a Master of Arts degree, at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa for the completion of this research project. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: E-mail.

I am conducting this research to explore the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication, to formulate guidelines that will assist members to optimally utilise the association's e-mail forum.

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The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that it can generate important information for the improvement of asynchronous communication via e-mail at PEG and other associations operating similar to the PEG. The online interview will be between 30 to 45 minutes.

There are no anticipated inconveniences and risks of participating in the study. You are not going to be exposed to any risks during the course or as an outcome of the research study.

The main objective of this study is to obtain your perceptions on your e-mail forum participation to contribute guidelines in improving participation on the e-mail forum.

1. Can you tell me your understanding of the significance of PEG as a professional association?

It's enormously significant on two fronts Pholile...umm one is of course nationally in South Africa, there is isn't another body that represents exclusively the interests and the needs of editors and proofreaders. And then internationally, there are associations in, for example, America and Canada, United Kingdom, Europe...several in Europe and Australia. Uhh, and we need to be on a level with them; so we need this kind of body to represent uhh, us uhh in our liaison with the other organisations around the world. And we've been doing this sort of liaison for a number of years now. But, it's been accelerated with the new...the incoming uhh PEG Executive Committee. So we're actively uhh fostering relationships with other organisations to share ideas about best practice. Uhh to give our members opportunities to attend functions held by other organisations and so on. Uhh, so it's enormously important. One of the very, very uhh taxing areas is editing academic texts. Uhh particularly examinable texts. And PEG is now looking for guidance on how to draw up a set of guidelines that will satisfy the South African requirements. Umm, and so we're consulting with Editors Canada, uhh the editors in the UK, the Australians and then SENSE in the Netherlands. So, were there not a PEG, uhh we wouldn't be able to do these things. Individuals would have to find their own way. Umm, so it's important. The other thing we've done is...umm about ten years ago I think it is now...uhh we were instrumental with SAFREA and one or two of the other organisations; SATI.....and so on, in forming an umbrella alliance, LAMP, which is the association of language and media professionals. That gave us the required membership numbers to get a seat on the South African Book Development Council. So it's given us another voice nationally. Uhh which we otherwise wouldn't have had, had we not been in this association. So it's very important for our members. I always say to new people who come on my training courses for

example, uhh please join PEG because it's a home to all of us practitioners. Otherwise you gonna work in a lot of isolation, you not gonna feel a part of a profession. Uhh and you're not gonna have a forum for having your questions answered, uhh you know when you have those kinds of questions that the reference books perhaps don't have the answers to. And so, we encourage as many individuals to join PEG as possible. As a kind of force, uhh a kind of networking body but also a way of getting answers to all those questions that otherwise you can't find.

2. In your opinion, how is PEG fulfilling its mandate as a professional association?

Yah, I think it is uhh in the sense that we have introduced these different levels of membership as you're aware. Umm, and we currently have, as you know, associate and full member and last year we ran the accreditation test for the first time. To create this new level of accredited member and we've been wanting to do this for more than ten years. I think the process started when I was Chair in 2009. It's faltered along the way, but in the meantime of course we've had the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act passed and regulations introduced. Which is the government's way to control us as professionals just as the auditors and the accountants and the doctors and the lawyers are controlled. And err so this is an important step in that direction I think and part of fulfilling our mandate is to try to align our members and the sort of level of expertise they've proven, I think...uhh with the requirements of the South African Language Practitioners Council Act. And uhh, so this is an important step in that direction; fulfilling that mandate so...uhh that's an important point to make I think.

3. In your opinion, what are the PEG e-mail forum's necessary attributes/characteristics that may assist it to achieve its objectives?

Yah, okay. First of all, I think uhh first of all it's voluntary. So uhh you know when you sign up, you will automatically be on the official group for the notices, job adverts and job posts and things...but you'll also be given a choice of joining the informal chat group. Uhh so it's voluntary number 1. Number 2, it is an open platform, so anyone can post any editing-related or professional-related e-mail to the group in the hope of getting some sort of answer, some sort of guidance and so on. Uhh, and that I think is a very important thing. Uhh, comparing that with other organisations which do not have these chat groups, shows me just how important it is. For example, in the Netherlands SENSE has what they call a forum. But one of the big complaints of the forum is that it is not entirely accessible, uhh it is not widely advertised so of course a lot of members don't even know there is a forum where you can post all these sorts of things that we post on the chat group. Uhh, and the other thing is, especially for new members you know we stress to new members that there is the chat group where we encourage them to join it. For the simple reason that it's the newbies who are likely to have questions. And uhh so we encourage them to ask those questions and uhh, and then to hopefully get answers from members who, you know, are able to give reasoned answers. So, I think that's important...uhh, it's also important for people to know that while it is an open forum, it's not a question of anything goes. Uhh, for example, if you want to advertise a job, uhh then of course you have to go via the official group. You can't really post jobs you know for anybody or yourself on the chat group. Uhh, then of course there is a whole netiquette that people are required to uhh conform to. Uhh, most....generally people do, you know, they're well behaved you know, they ask the right sort of questions, they don't get personal about things... and so on. Every now and then we do have a little blow-up that we have to sort out. Which is why in March this year, we updated our chat group netiquette guidelines and rules and so on. And uhh because we need to make sure that people behave themselves and participate in the chat group for all the good reasons, and uhh you know and so on. So

because we don't want to inhibit members-using the chat group. It's a very important source of information. And uhh, what happened when there was this blow-up between, I think it was October, January or February this year, uhh, a lot of people, a lot of the members actually emailed us and said look, we're not gonna participate anymore. This is inhibiting us, you know. We need to know that people can behave themselves, you know, and use the chat group for all the right reasons. Umm, so I think that is in essence, for me what it is. Uhh for more seasoned members like myself, it's an important way of sharing information so that's another side to it. Uhh, and we encourage people to use it to ask questions and not be embarrassed about asking questions even though they may seem stupid. Uhh, and then for people like myself to not only give answers but also try to encourage people to use authorities. So we'll always uhh, those of us who give answers, will always cite you know Oxford Dictionary or Hart's Rules or something like that. Uhh, so we open people's eyes to the fact that there are valuable sources out there that they could be consulting and not just asking on the chat group. So it's a bit of an educational tool as well I guess.

4. What is your level of participation in PEG's e-mail forum? (awareness, connectedness & reacted)

Mine is mostly, uhh, answering questions. So I've very rarely have to ask a question but I see it as my role as a more experienced editor. I've been an editor for 40 plus years. Uhh, and also as a member of the executive. Uhh, to try to help members who have these questions...umm, to answer them and educate them and that sort of thing. So that's how I see my role on the chat group. More uhh, providing help, providing resources than asking questions.

5. What do you think of other members' level of participation in the e-mail forum? (social interaction; working together; comfortable interacting; personally involved; point of view acknowledged; care about each other's opinion)?

I think largely they are. Uhm, you know it's quite interesting we're sort of taking it for granted that everyone is. But what opened our eyes last year when there was this blow-up and things got really personal and nasty...uhm, on the chat group. Uhm, that there are boundaries to people's levels of comfort with using a reference like this. You know there has to be some sort of code or procedure. You know if I'm going to ask a so-called stupid question, I don't expect to be treated like an idiot. Uhm, we are all professionals and so professional conduct is what is required on the chat group. Uhm, as if we were face-to-face in the same room...asking each other these kinds of questions. Uhm, and...one of the things we found is that, you know with the whole Covid situation, and lockdown and we're not attending meetings and seeing each other face-to-face, it does attenuate relationships somewhat. And so, some people tend to take liberties and say things that they wouldn't say face-to-face over a cup of tea or something. Uhm, and one has to sort of restrain that kind of behaviour quite a bit. Uhm, and so....yah, I think that's more or less it for me.

6. In what ways do participants behave differently on e-mail forums as opposed to face-to-face interaction? (virtual behaviours; social context)

Uhm, you know I think there is a difference. Uhm, people generally don't bare their souls on the chat group. Whereas perhaps at a PEG event, face-to-face over a cup of coffee, they may ask some questions but at the same time they'll catch up with each other's personal lives. So, how are your children, you know, how many projects do you have going on at the moment and so on. So, there's perhaps a greater degree of informality when we are face-to-face because there is more trust. But with the chat group, as useful a tool as it is, people stick to professional topics. Uhm, so it's editing problems, it's client problems, it's you know rates for doing work, those sorts of issues come up most regularly without the sort of informal chatter that goes on face-to-face. So I think it is much more limited and

much more, should I say, professional, professionally focused than face-to-face. Uhm, and it does make a big difference.

7. In your opinion, to what extent do you think members in the PEG e-mail forum trust each other to a point that they can express themselves freely? (privacy; social relations).

I think a lot do. Uhm, I would say that if I were a newbie and you know I'd just been on a training course and you know, I hadn't been on a training course, and I know I want to be an editor and I'm working towards my retirement projects, I might be hesitant to ask what seems to me as stupid questions when I haven't met anybody and I don't know anybody. Uhm, but I'll tell you where it is really useful and this has emerged with Covid, there's no doubt about it. Uhm, a lot of our members are.....living out in the extremities. So we have the three branches Durban, Cape Town and Joburg, but there are people all over the country. In North West, Limpopo Province, Eastern Cape, Southern Cape and so on who cannot actually get to meetings other than taking a lot of hours out of their lives or at a huge expense. So what they find extremely useful and sort of breaking down this isolation that I spoke of earlier, is participating in the chat group. For them, it makes a huge difference to their lives and so we must never lose sight of that fact. But, yah it's a lifeline for many people, I think, who would otherwise not be able to either meet or exchange ideas with colleagues, so that's an important tool.

8. What kind of benefits do you think members participating in the e-mail forum gain regarding their editing work?

Yah, alright, you see uhm....benefits, even though you and I might not ask a question or respond to a question, by being members of the chat group, there are an enormous number of learning opportunities for us. So if someone asks, do you spell it this way or do you spell it that way, or where do I put the quotes in this

particular passage of text, you know. Is it singles, is it doubles and so on. Uhm, but just by being passive on the chat group, and being party to it, we learn an awful lot. We do, and that's another important value of it. We mustn't lose sight of the fact that for some people, it's probably their only learning resource. Uhm, new people for example, new members will not really know about the reference materials that they should really have on their bookshelf or the e-version that they have on their computers. Uhm, and so the responses we get to these kinds of questions are things that we all learn from. So that's an important benefit. Another is learning about resources. So, recently someone asked about certain software and I think about 4 or 5 people came back with all sorts of different suggestions...this is the way to do it, this is how I do it. And this one if free and that one you pay for and that sort of thing. And someone was asking the other day about using Grammarly, and another one about PerfectIt and so on. So there are all these software issues that come up as well, and it's amazing the responses we get from members. And then you also learn that members have explored other options, especially new technology, and found that it works well for them and it opens our eyes to that. So uhm, you know if you're not a member of the chat group just picture this, you know, you would not be party to all these conversations that go on. And as a result, you'd be left to your own resources and again feel terribly isolated. So another very, very important benefit is to break down the isolation that we all feel. It doesn't matter whether we work in-house or whether we are freelance, we're gonna feel isolated if we're not communing as it were, with a group of kindred spirits. People who understand our craft and all the problems we experience in our craft and so on. So that's, you know, tremendously important.

9. What measures do you think the PEG can put in place to ensure that the e-mail forum serves its optimal intended purpose, that is of being a support tool for all members?

Yah [sigh], uhm, you know one of the imponderables we deal with is knowing exactly how many users, how many members use the chat group. Uhm, as we alluded to, right at the beginning of this interview. Uhm, there are a lot of members who are dormant. Uhm, they are members but they don't want to be part of the chat group for whatever reason. Some of them find that it's a nuisance, you know they don't want all these emails backwards and forwards with all these things they don't really need to know about.

Submission in the background from the participant's colleague whom they share working space with and was working and obviously was hearing what the interview is about: Some of us like reading the chat, we find it useful but we don't participate or contribute... [inaudible]

So, this is my colleague saying that...[giggles] yes, that is a valid point, we read but we don't want to participate. And there can be all sorts of reasons for that. Uhm, feeling a bit embarrassed about maybe giving an answer at all. Uhm, or giving the wrong answer, and that sort of thing. So we have to understand that it is quite an exposing medium, and one of the things about, I've learnt over the years about us as editors and proofreaders, we are good at what we do, but we're not good at blowing our own trumpets. We're very bad at that in fact, uhm and so exposing ourselves to anybody is one of the last things that a lot of us ever want to do. So my sense would be, we need to survey our members, perhaps once a year. To ask them about their engagement with the chat group, you know the level of engagement. And also, if they are heavily involved, if they are quite open about asking questions I think which many are. Uhm, you know why they feel so comfortable with it and on the other hand those people, like my partner here, who will only read but won't participate, why is that the case? So we need to find out more about, perhaps the demographics, and also about the views of people. Their attitudes towards using or not using the chat group. So, I think that needs to be put in place. We need to do some surveying to find out about levels of

participation, reasons for participation and so on or lack of, of course which is probably even more interesting. My sense is that, of the almost, I think at the moment it is just about 500 members or it might just be over 500 members, perhaps there might be as little as 10% who actively participate in the chat group. Either asking questions or responding to questions. Uhm, which is extremely low, you know in my view. Uhm, bearing in mind you know the levels of benefit that I've outlined. You know, so we so we should really be finding out why members are or are not using the chat group so that we can perhaps refine it. One of the reasons I say this is that you know that whole fracas that occurred, that I referred to earlier, uhm raised a lot of anger, a lot of...people just deciding they weren't gonna stay with the chat group anymore because it's unruly and it's unprofessional and so on. So we need also to find out how to keep it professional. We need to find out from our members even about that. I can tell you that I'm aware of at least one breakaway chat group. Which I think, uhm, I'm reliably told, they broke away simply because they didn't want that exposure to 500 people chatting about this, that and the other. Some of them I'm told are still members of the chat group but others I'm told refuse to be part of the chat group because it's too big and public a space. So that's something else that we need to, you know, survey them about. One of the things they tell me is that the breakaway group, uhm, they can also deal with many more personal issues. Say someone, for example is having therapy for cancer for example or went for their Covid shot and reacted very badly, they can chat about things like that which of course you cannot chat about on the professional chat group. Yah, it's a smaller group, I think maybe 30 or maybe 40 of them. Uhm, and they feel very comfortable in their skins with communicating quite, very openly on that group. But some of them joined that group as a breakaway when this this whole business blew up on the chat group and it looked as though the EXCO was not taking the appropriate disciplinary action. And so they just said, 'okay that's it no more chat group we've got this other group that I've joined and I'm a lot happier there. I'm a lot more

comfortable there.' So, I think we need to ask about people's level of comfort with a professional chat group and how to keep it professional. So that people do feel comfortable at that level to stay part of the chat group because you know, I'd be far happier with 50% of our members participating in the chat group frankly. Uhm, because I think it would mean that a lot more people are benefitting from the chat group, using it as a resource for information. Uhm, you know honing their skills. So 10% is far too low as far as I'm concerned. We need to find out why that is the case.

10. Is there any other comment you would like to add or emphasise which might not have been covered above?

I think I've covered just about everything Pholile and uhm, to me the chat group is part of a bigger bag of benefits that we offer our members. You know there's the Webinar programme that we run throughout the year...uhm, there are, once we get back to face-to-face meetings there'll be those but for the time being it's the Webinar programme. Uhm, and there of course is the members' directory uhm, so there are really tangible benefits to being a member of a society like this, there's no doubt about it. The sense of camaraderie, which becomes terribly attenuated under Covid and so I think under Covid perhaps the chat group has been perhaps even more valuable for people than if they could attend their monthly meeting in their branches and rub shoulders with their colleagues over a cup of tea or coffee. Uhm, and so that is my hope. But at the same time, for newbies, I think it's an important way of kind of socialising their way into the profession by virtually rubbing shoulders with colleagues and being able to ask questions and learn....even if they're still intimidated, to learn from the kind of questions and answers that do get exchanged on the chat group. So, it remains a very important resource I think.

Thank you

PARTICIPANT 4/LE4

Dear participant,

My name is Pholile Zengele and I am doing research with Dr Hadji Mutambuli, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication Science towards a Master of Arts degree, at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa for the completion of this research project. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Exploring the perceptions of Professional Editors Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication: E-mail.

I am conducting this research to explore the perceptions of Professional Editors' Guild members on their participation in the association's asynchronous communication, to formulate guidelines that will assist members to optimally utilise the association's e-mail forum.

This is a study whose participants are requested to take part voluntarily. You will not be coerced to participate and there will be no penalty if you choose not to be part of the study. Therefore, participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate.

The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that it can generate important information for the improvement of asynchronous communication via e-mail at PEG and other associations operating similar to the PEG. The online interview will be between 30 to 45 minutes.

There are no anticipated inconveniences and risks of participating in the study. You are not going to be exposed to any risks during the course or as an outcome of the research study.

The main objective of this study is to obtain your perceptions on your e-mail forum participation to contribute guidelines in improving participation on the e-mail forum.

1. Can you tell me your understanding of the significance of PEG as a professional association?

I think it is very important, because uhmm, such forums become a platform for the interchange of ideas and for the interchange of skills and expertise. Uhmm, when people participate, uhmm, in this e-mail forum, they err exchange ideas and they exchange knowledge. Which is a very important aspect of learning. It's a learning platform for err younger members, or less experienced members...uhmm, and it expands all of us. It makes a body of knowledge, for uhmm, the members of the guild. So yah, to me it is very significant. Yes, that's it.

2. In your opinion, how is PEG fulfilling its mandate as a professional association?

PEG is doing well in my opinion. It focuses on continued professional development by presenting ongoing training via Webinars, the website, PEGboard and expert guidance to members on the chat group.

3. In your opinion, what are the PEG e-mail forum's necessary attributes/characteristics that may assist it to achieve its objectives?

Members should be encouraged to participate actively, responding to questions about language issues so that colleagues can learn from one another and expand their knowledge. Because the e-mail chat group is asynchronous, people tend to overlook previous answers or comments and this causes repetition and overlaps.

4. What is your level of participation in PEG's e-mail forum? (awareness, connectedness & reacted)

My perceptions on the members' level of participation are that it is poor. Uhmm, many members don't want to participate because they don't want to be seen as stupid. Uh...there is a perceived high level of expertise, uhhh, by those who are

responding to questions on the forum. Often I think people are just err accepting those answers and not trying to start a debate. Because we have found, unfortunately, in the past that many of the debates have err deteriorated into an exchange of uhh, how will I put it. It has becomes a heated exchange of opinions. And many of these opinions have been uhh....[I can't think in English this morning]. Uhhmm, people have become heated and they've argued, and they've become uhh abusive and they've become uhh.....I think have taken offence. They've become offensive, so...many of the members are, for instance, uhh..I don't participate. I take note of what is err being said on the e-mail forums. But I will not [inaudible] offer my own opinion. I will maybe if it's a relevant question and I feel I have something to say..I will respond to the person who emailed directly. And give him or her my opinion. But I will not really err put it on the forum.

Is there a reason why you wouldn't put it on the forum? Can we just discuss that a little bit: *Okay, uhh As I said before, it's like this debate we have about vaccination..yes or no. Many of those questions...when they deteriorate into uhh...For instance, uhh racial bias. The debate becomes, so unpleasant. And people think that the first e-mail that they see [inaudible] presents the general opinion...without going into the thread of the debate. So they don't have a background of where all this discussion is coming from. And, if you respond....and you try and respond to the background or the context of the discussion without taking people necessarily with you in the discussion. And I have found, personally, that people don't listen. They don't read and they don't listen. If I feel I have a helpful response to make then, uhh, I try to make it off of the forum. To the person who is asking. Okay.*

5. What do you think of other members' level of participation in the e-mail forum? (social interaction; working together; comfortable interacting; personally involved; point of view acknowledged; care about each other's opinion)?

Because your research is into asynchronous participation....and that is the drawback of an e-mail forum. The people are..uhh, tend to read what is in front of their noses instead of going back to the thread of the discussion. So, you will always find [I've found this in other forums and this forum too]..you will always find that there are people who are vocal in sharing their knowledge and in sharing their opinions ...but many other who are just passive. And it is a drawback of this kind of uhh participation. Also, I think many people are working....they want information on their question, uhh and then they want to move on. For myself, for instance uhh if a question elicits a response which is relevant or touches on a question that I myself have had or information that I might need at a later stage, then I save that response and I put it into a file that I have on my e-mail and on my computer. And I go back to it.....But most of us I think don't have time to spend hours on the e-mail forum. That is one of the drawbacks of an e-mail forum. It goes on and on and on and on without getting or reaching a point. Right.

6. In what ways do participants behave differently on e-mail forums as opposed to face-to-face interaction? (virtual behaviours; social context)

I think many participants....ehh, those who are not sensitive on communication...the way communication works. They tend to respond as if it's a face-to-face communication. When in reality what they've written down..ehh, you can't always see the person's face, you can't see the person's expressions, you cant see the nuances of tone or voice and so on...so ehh, if an e-mail response is poorly formulated then, ehh it can be very offensive. Or it can come across as very offensive. So, ehh, as I said many of them don't respond the way they should because they are afraid of being misinterpreted. But in face-to-face communication, you will find people looking at faces, they will be looking at circumstances, they will be looking at the context, they will be able to interrupt immediately and say whoah..this is what I meant. But the time lapse between

emails, makes it difficult to maintain that..[what is the word that I'm looking for].. emotion as it were. Okay.

7. In your opinion, to what extent do you think members in the PEG e-mail forum trust each other to a point that they can express themselves freely? (privacy; social relations).

I don't think they trust each other. There are people that I know personally. And I know which of them I can trust and which of them I can't trust. Ehh, but most of them are not [inaudible] personally known to me...I don't know their contacts, I don't know their background, I don't know to what extent I can express myself freely. I just don't do it. It's got to do with privacy, it's got to do with social relations, it's got to do with the fear of treading on toes, ehh, and offending other people. Coming over as supercilious know-it-all or just plain ignorant.

8. What kind of benefits do you think members participating in the e-mail forum gain regarding their editing work?

The e-mail forum is extremely valuable as a forum for sharing knowledge. Uhhh and I think that is what it is supposed to be. Also you must understand that there are two e-mail groups, the official group and the chat group....we are talking about the chat forum, the chat group...[inaudible because of a technical interruption]. But the chat group itself is not really a chat group. It should be a chat group but it isn't a chat group because of the drawbacks that I've mentioned already. But the benefits are definitely to share knowledge and to share expertise and to build up a network. What I do, ehh once again if I respond to a person directly, it is also with the intention of building up a relationship with that person, so that we can have a conversation later on, about things that ehh directly depend to our professional interests. Okay.

9. What measures do you think the PEG can put in place to ensure that the e-mail forum serves its optimal intended purpose, that is of being a support tool for all members?

You know I think people being people....PEG has already put in place as many measures as they can without it becoming sort of a super-policed. We don't want management of PEG to police this chat forum. It should not be necessary. Unfortunately, ehh, in the recent months, we've had a number of people who have become very offensive and they've become very angry, and they've left the chat group and so on and since they've left the chat group quite frankly, ehh, the chat group has become much quieter and much calmer. Unfortunately, ehh, I think many of the sharp minds have left too...and that is a loss...but the really professional and knowledgeable people have stayed. There are a number of those...ehh, I usually wait to hear what they, what they respond or I will ask them offlist, I will not embarrass them by...I think, yah, PEG has done what it could to give the chat group a structure. The problem is, unless you keep on telling people about the rules, they will not adhere to it. Because many people join and they have to be told all over again. Okay.

10. Is there any other comment you would like to add or emphasise which might not have been covered above?

Ehh, I think the point with any chat group is we're all being made very aware of...political correctness and things like that, and of privacy and so on. You will find a pack or group of people who don't participate. And, ehh, I can't see that changing. I see it on Facebook, I see it on other forums that I belong to. Ehh, you will always find that there is a lag/a gap between what is written by one person and what is responded to be another person. So, yah.

Thank you

APPENDIX H: TURN IT IN REPORT

Pho dissertation revision2

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%	9%	2%	9%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	5%
2	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	2%
3	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1%
4	www.dgp.utoronto.ca Internet Source	<1%
5	globalbizresearch.org Internet Source	<1%
6	onlinelibrary.wiley.com Internet Source	<1%
7	ujcontent.uj.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
8	journals.ufs.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
9	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	<1%

APPENDIX I: EDITING DECLARATION



11 February 2022

DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT

I declare that I have edited and proofread the Master of Arts manuscript entitled: **EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL EDITORS GUILD MEMBERS ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION'S ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION: E-MAIL** by Pholile Faith Zengele.

My involvement was restricted to language editing: contextual spelling, grammar, punctuation, unclear antecedent, wordiness, vocabulary enhancement, sentence structure and style, proofreading, sentence completeness, sentence rewriting, consistency, referencing style, editing of headings and captions. I did not do structural re-writing of the content. Kindly note that the manuscript was formatted as per agreement with the client.

No responsibility is taken for any occurrences of plagiarism, which may not be obvious to the editor. The client is responsible for ensuring that all sources are listed in the reference list/bibliography. The editor is not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to my edit. The client is responsible for the quality and accuracy of the final submission/publication.

Sincerely

Prof Thulani Zengele (B.A., B.Ed., PGDE, M.Ed., D.Ed., Basic Editing Skills, Advanced Editing Skills)



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