

Chapter 3

A Microanalysis of Text's Interactional Functions in Text-and-Voice SCMC Chat for Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the functions of the text mode in an SCMC English tutoring session. Conversation analysis of the sequential and holistic unfolding of both text and voice turns reveals that the bimodal text-and-voice mode was employed in repair, Initiation-Response-Feedback, assessment, and topical talk sequences. Within these sequences, text turns often reinforced voice turns to focus on language forms but also sometimes contributed to rapport-building. In addition to supporting voice turns, text turns also performed distinct actions in conjunction with the actions in the voice turns such as initiating repair, presenting language examples as objects for consideration, achieving humor, and signaling discourse structure. The findings shed light on the interactional processes in bimodal SCMC for second language teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been demonstrated to have positive effects on the acquisition of language (Lin, 2015), especially through negotiation of meaning (Hung & Higgins, 2016; Lin, Huang, & Liou, 2013; Smith, 2004, Tsai & Kinginger, 2015; Wang, 2013). The endorsement of CMC in

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language teaching enables authentic interactions, which can emulate face-to-face communication while facilitating the development of L2 pronunciation, lexicon, syntax, and interactional practices (Balaman & Sert, 2017; Lin, 2014; Plonsky & Ziegler, 2016).

With the increasing availability of multimodal synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) such as Skype™, Google Hangouts™, and Facebook's™ Chat, text-and-voice chat has gained more popularity in education. Bimodal SCMC provides unique positive and negative affordances (van Lier, 2000, cf. Gibson, 1979) for participants. Most people can produce spoken text more quickly than they can type text (Nguyen, 2017), but text provides a more or less permanent visual record in the flow of interaction, which has been found to facilitate noticing in second language learning (Cerezo, Baralt, Suh, & Leow, 2014; Hung & Higgins, 2016; Lai & Zhao, 2006; Nguyen, 2017; Payne & Whitney, 2002), recall of exchanges (Lin, 2014; Lin, W.C., Huang, H.T., & Liou, H.C., 2013; Tsai & Kinginger, 2015), and academic literacy development (Li, 2013). Importantly, in a bimodal environment, participants have a choice regarding which mode to use at a given moment. A question that arises is: When do participants choose which mode and why? This chapter aims to address this question by examining the interactional factors that motivated a tutor's utilization of text along with voice in a language tutoring session using bimodal SCMC, in which the tutor and tutee completed language learning activities and built mutual rapport.

SOCIAL INTERACTION IN BIMODAL SCMC

Even though SCMC can emulate face-to-face communication, the two are not the same. The text mode contains elements of oral communication, but lacks the embodied actions typically associated with face-to-face conversations. In order to signal non-verbal cues, participants utilize emoticons, acronyms, and even orthographic symbols (González-Lloret, 2015). Importantly, in bimodal SCMC involving both voice and text modes, the ongoing process of oral turn construction is available to the recipient whereas the real-time composing process of text is not. Although many chat technologies alert the recipient as soon as text is being typed and these alerts have a foreshadow effect on the upcoming text (Gibson, 2014), only the final textual package is seen by the recipient when it is posted. Further, the oral mode has linear sequentiality, that is, "each utterance can be placed immediately after its intended referent" (Garcia & Jacob, 1999, p. 361). In contrast, text-based communication can have multidimensional sequentiality, which includes overlapping and numerous simultaneous threads (Tsai & Kinginger, 2015) since there are "multiple, concurrent 'speaker' selection options" at a time, and *participants can not control where their message is placed relative to its intended referent* (Garcia & Jacob, 1999, p. 361). These features become different affordances for participants in bimodal SCMC.

Research on bimodal SCMC research so far has mainly been on how participants shift between voice and text to organize interaction.² For example, students in peer-group discussions may shift from one mode to the other in a question–response sequence, but they do not generally shift modes in the same utterance (Scheffel-Dunand, 2006). When shifting modes, participants may utilize certain strategies to maintain coherence, such as mentioning the addressee in their turn, quoting a part of the previous turn in their turn (Scheffel-Dunand, 2006), latching their oral turns to the end of their completed text turns, and using oral turns to repair misplaced text turns (Gibson, 2014). Further, text and voice have a dynamic relationship in the sequential unfolding of interaction in SCMC. In web-based seminar discussions, students may use text turns to respond in overlap to the tutor's ongoing oral questions, which can trigger

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