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Cyberdiscursive Tug-of-War: Learner Repositioning in a Multimodal CMC Environment

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This study reanalyzes data collected during multimodal (synchronous voice and text-chat) computer-mediated interaction between two English language learners, a Korean woman, Kelly, and a Japanese man, Yama, to see if and how they make use of the multiple modes of computer-mediated communication to renegotiate their respective positions during the discourse (leader, follower, knowledgeable student, etc.). During the course of the 20 minute exchange, Yama employs the voice-chat mode almost exclusively, through which he positions himself initially as leader of the interaction. At a midpoint in the conversation, Kelly begins using the text-chat option to gain a foothold in the conversation when her spoken turns are interrupted, ignored, or missed by Yama. Later, because of his reliance on voice-chat, Yama is positioned as recipient and reader of Kelly's written turns, which she uses strategically to reposition herself as the more dominant and more knowledgeable participant.

Introduction

According to Herring's (1996: 1) definition, "Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers." Proponents of CMC, have viewed it as a tool for enabling more democratic interactions in a virtual environment free of the social and cultural restraints of face-to-face communication. According to the interaction hypothesis, this enabling of increased amounts of interactions is promising for second language acquisition. Long and Robinson (1998: 22) posit that "a crucial site for language development is the interaction between learners and other speakers." This is because such interaction is fertile ground for the negotiation of meaning, which can provide learners with comprehensible input and access to unfamiliar target language features. Negotiation of meaning also provides learners with feedback on their own language production, which can serve to draw attention to mis-

matches between their output and target language forms.

Crucial to negotiated interaction, therefore, is the opportunity for learners to produce language in order to carry out such negotiation work. By extension, studies in foreign language classrooms which compare whole class synchronous CMC interaction with face-to-face interaction point to the reduced role of the teacher (Sullivan & Pratt 1996) and the increased amount of student participation (Kern 1995) as examples of the potential this more democratic environment holds for L2 learners to produce the target language.

However democratic this virtual, predominantly textual and somewhat anonymous environment is assumed to be, research on CMC interaction outside the second language classroom has demonstrated that the virtual environment is not unaffected by gender and social inequality (Hall 1996; Selfe & Meyer 1991; Yates 2001). Indeed, in an overview of research on gender and the use of CMC for education, Yates (2001: 32-33) concludes that "CMC suffers, like all communications media, from the intrusion of existing social relations, including those that are based upon inequalities and access of power." In spite of this, studies of CMC in the second language classroom have emphasized the positive over the negative, virtually ignoring how issues of gender and social inequality (with the exception of the student-teacher dynamic) play out in computer-mediated whole-class and small group discussions.

Also worth considering in CMC interactions is the mediation of these social issues through elements unique to a cyberdiscursive environment, which characterize neither purely spoken nor purely written channels. Such elements, for example, the virtual and non-material aspect of Internet chat which enables one to participate in multiple synchronous conversations, may be tools which traditionally less-powerful and less dominant interlocutors can use to negotiate opportunities for greater interaction.

To recognize the merits and demerits of using CMC for language learning, therefore, what are needed are more detailed analyses of how social inequalities are manifested or minimized as a result of these cyberdiscursive elements, thereby facilitating or hampering opportunities for learner interaction crucial for L2 development. To this end, this paper analyzes the positioning of two language learners engaged in synchronous multimodal CMC (voice and text-chat), demonstrating how these two learners employ voice and text-chat to renegotiatiate interactional asymmetries during a 20 minute exchange.

CMC in the L2 Classroom

As mentioned previously, computer mediated communication has been embraced by some language teachers and researchers as a means of equalizing classroom interaction or as a source of connecting language

learners with other target language speakers and authentic language materials outside the familiar classroom context. Since the mid-1990s in fact, CMC has received a fair amount of attention in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) research, most notably in the form of synchronous text-chat (see, for example, Belz 2002; Blake 2000; Chun 1994; Donaldson & Kötter 1999; Kern 1995; Lee 1998, 2004; Pellietieri 2000; Sotillo 2000; Sullivan & Pratt 1996; Warschauer 1996). Studies which have investigated this new mode of classroom discourse have attempted to describe and document the turn-taking, interaction styles, and attitudes of classroom language learners.

As early classroom-based studies found, CMC discussions facilitated more turns from a greater number of participants than did face to face discussions as a result of increased learner confidence (Warschauer 1996), the overlapping style of exchanges permitted in synchronous CMC which would have been considered rude or interruptive in face-to-face communication (Kern 1995), and the reduced role of the teacher in driving or directing CMC discussion (Sullivan & Pratt 1996).

Much has been made of the apparent benefits of this heightened participation in the L2 class discussions. This has resulted in further research which investigated, for example, whether network-based CMC would facilitate the development of grammatical competence through the negotiation of meaning (Pellettieri 2000) or whether the confidence-building experience of text-chatting transferred to an increase in spoken fluency (Compton 2002). In spite of the apparent beneficial opportunities computer-mediated interaction seems to provide in second language learning environments, analysis of CMC interaction in other settings has pointed to features of the medium and user behavior which calls into question just how equitable CMC environments really are for all users.

The Myth of the Democratic Medium

Hall's (1996) description of women-only discussion boards and listservs, constructed to grant women a safe haven in cyberspace in which to voice their views and participate in discussions, hints that even cyberspace is not a democratic utopia free of the social boundaries and patterns of social dominance found in face-to-face interaction. For some, it is instead a virtual, even exacerbated, extension of real world perceptions of femininity and masculinity, social and linguistic boundaries, and their respective behaviors.

Frustrated by the flaming,[1] harassment, and male-dominated interaction of mixed sex electronic discussions, the women described in Hall's study turned to well-policed women-only listservs and electronic discussions as a means of escaping the dominant discursive style of cyberspace. Hall's overview of research on gender differences in computer-mediated

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[1]The act of sending deliberately confrontational, rude or abusive responses to e-mail messages, listserv posts or chat messages.

communication indicates that the dominant discursive style of cyberspace is one which relies upon and even amplifies techniques identical to those used in face-to-face interaction (Fishman 1983) to silence female participants: ignoring topics introduced by women, disregarding women's responses as irrelevant, contributing far more postings, etc.

The experiences of Hall's (1996) informants lends support to an earlier study by Selfe and Meyer (1991) which investigated gender, status, and patterns of participation in an academic CMC listserv and found that the interactional dominance of men in this asynchronous CMC medium mirrored that of men in face-to-face communication, where men produced longer and more numerous postings than women, initiated three times as many topics and disagreed with other posters twice as often as did women.

However, differences in patterns of CMC interaction and domination of the chat session are not exclusively the domain of gender. Another characteristic of CMC interlocutors which has been shown to influence amount and type of interaction is that of target language proficiency. Such perceived or actual linguistic differences are particularly relevant in cross-cultural or cross-national exchanges used to link language learners of varying proficiency with one another or with native speakers of the target language. Lee's (2004) investigation of chat sessions arranged between intermediate learners of Spanish and native speakers of Spanish at two American universities revealed several ways in which language proficiency can influence the amount and quality of the interaction. Feedback from the Spanish learners indicated that intimidation due to differences in linguistic proficiency, as evidenced by the native Spanish speakers' faster typing and use of unfamiliar vocabulary, led learners to be more careful and deliberate in their typing. These language learners also expressed the opinion that interactions were dominated by their native Spanish speaking interlocutors whose superior language proficiency enabled them to initiate and control the conversation by asking questions, leaving learners the more passive role of answering questions.

Lee's (2004) findings corroborate those of an earlier study by Belz (2002) which looked at network-based telecollaborative exchanges linking American university learners of German with German university learners of English in a semester-long tandem e-mail and chat exchange. Differences in proficiency in the other's native language[2] led to more inhibited and slower interaction on the part of the Americans trying to communicate in German. These asymmetries in proficiency also led to frustration on the part of the German speakers, who were reluctant to offer their less proficient American partners corrective feedback for fear of demoralizing them. In both studies, inhibitions stemming from differ-

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[2]Some Americans alluded to this by contrasting their limited or childish grasp of German with their German partners' more extensive knowledge of English, a language most Germans had begun learning in grade school.

ences in language proficiency potentially reduced the number, length and type of interactional turns taken by language learners when paired with more proficient target language speakers.

At the same time, the greater linguistic proficiency of the target language speakers granted them more control of the discourse as evidenced by topic initiation and their decision to monitor the type of feedback they chose to provide to their less proficient interlocutors. In spite of occurring in a virtual environment, often idealized as more democratic, these examples demonstrate that computer-mediated discourse is not necessarily free of the social boundaries and discourse patterns of face-to-face interaction.

In a survey of CMC literature which considers issues of access, Yates (2001) argues that there is still a great need for research which addresses the difficulties women and others face in garnering the benefits of CMC for education. Concluding that greater opportunities for CMC interaction still go to the most forceful, Yates argues that education researchers must recognize "that the 'democratic' perception of CMC is seriously flawed" (32). As such, if CMC is indeed to be used as a tool to provide language learners more opportunities to use the target language, research on CMC in the L2 classroom should also take a more detailed look at the individual participation patterns and language production of less dominant and less forceful learners to see whether CMC is truly providing ample opportunities for interaction in the target language.

Situating CMC on the Speaking/Writing Continuum

Also of import is the discussion of the potential of text-based CMC for the development of L2 speaking skills, particularly as text-based discussions are often employed in L2 literature on CMC as an alternative to spoken face-to-face conversation. In her discussion of the linguistics of e-mail, Baron (1998) argues that characterizing e-mail as inherently more like writing or more like speech is a complex matter.

This blurred line between speech and writing in CMC is exemplified by research on linguistic and interactional analyses of both asynchronous (e.g., e-mail and discussion boards) and synchronous (e.g., Internet Relay Chat) text-based CMC. Yates (1996) compared a CMC corpus with both spoken (London-Lund Corpus) and written (Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus) corpora according to textual, interpersonal and ideational characteristics: lexical density, pronoun use, and modal auxiliary use. The results showed CMC to possess characteristic elements of both speech and writing. For example, while the lexical density and total use of pronouns of the CMC corpus were closer to those of the written corpus, the distribution of pronouns (far more first and second person pronouns) was similar to the spoken corpus, as was the relative frequency of modal auxiliaries.

In a similar vein, Collot and Belmore (1996) examined the lexical and

grammatical features of two text-based CMC corpora (Electronic Language Corpus) along six dimensions: informativity, narrativity, explicitness, persuasion, abstraction, and elaboration. The results showed that the overall characteristics of this electronic corpus most resembled those of public interviews and personal and professional letters. However, on each of the six dimensions, this corpus sometimes found itself most closely associated with genres as disparate as spontaneous speech (dimension of elaboration[3]) or editorials (dimension of persuasion[4]). Though written and asynchronous, this CMC corpus was a hybrid of characteristics native to different spoken and written genres.

Examining the text of synchronous written CMC (Internet Relay Chat), taken from two 10-minute chat sessions, Werry's (1996) study also lends support to the hybrid nature of CMC. Once again, though written, the messages from these IRC sessions exhibit characteristics similar to the brevity and phonological reduction of speech. The brevity of messages in synchronous CMC, approximately 6 words in length on average, led to shorter gaps between conversational turns, similar to those found in spoken conversation. Further, chatters demonstrated a tendency to employ orthographic reduction (use of abbreviation), ellipses, and omission of pronouns to facilitate faster exchanges.

Though none of the studies presented here attempt to compare the language produced by L2 learners during CMC discussion with the language they produce during face-to-face discussions, the grammatical, linguistic and interactional features CMC shares with both speech and writing are arguments for its use in the L2 classroom as a tool for facilitating opportunities for second language acquisition. As a result, there is a need for research to illuminate the potential impediments or tools this virtual medium provides for different types of language learners to receive comprehensible input, produce comprehensible output and receive feedback on their target language production.

Cyberdiscursivity

Research which addresses learner opportunities for language production and comprehension during CMC also needs to be sensitive to the dynamics of properties unique to cyberdiscourse which may either impede or facilitate interaction. Jacobsen (2002) coins the term cyberdiscursivity to differentiate the discourse of CMC from traditional forms of orality and literacy and identifies four defining elements of cyberdiscourse: virtuality, dynamism, emergence and idiosyncrasy. These elements can be briefly defined as follows: (a) virtuality allows for the simulation of aspects of the real/material world without its limitations,

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[3]As characterized by the use of demonstratives, THAT clauses as verb complements, in object position, and as adjective complements.

[4]As characterized by the use of prediction and necessity modals, suasive verbs, conditional subordination, and infinitives used as adjectives and verb complements.

(b) dynamism is the capacity for texts to be molded and changed which results from easily alterable cyberdiscursive texts which lack fixed, final forms, (c) emergence refers to the fact that in a cyberdiscursive environment, "structure follows rather than precedes textual production" (M. M. Jacobsen, personal communication, July 6, 2003), and (d) idiosyncrasy is the blurred line between reader and text.

Though these four elements are present to varying degrees in all forms of CMC, two, virtuality and emergence, are especially significant for synchronous chat. The virtuality of chat allows multiple parties at remote distances to converse without the limitations of real-world interaction. Through its virtuality, chatting facilitates multiple synchronous conversations such that one chatter can be engaged in multiple conversations with several interlocutors or multiple conversations, using different modes (e.g., text-chat, voice-chat) with the same interlocutors.

Secondly, because of its emergent nature, chat lacks a fixed or pre-planned information structure or sequence. As a result, turns criss-cross and overlap, yet the visual record of the chat session on the screen allows chatters to scroll back through the conversation to recall or pick up dropped threads and to maintain overlapping conversations with multiple partners.

Methodology

Taking into account Jacobsen's (2002) cyberdiscursive elements, this case study examines the interactional asymmetries which occur during a 20 minute multimodal CMC exchange between two English language learners who employ CMC's virtuality and emergence to renegotiate their positions to increase individual opportunities for language production.

Davies and Harré's (1991) concept of positioning is applied to examine this shifting of discursive control. Through positioning "[a]n individual emerges through the process of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate" (Davies & Harré 1991: 46). Unlike the static nature of roles, the fluid nature of discursive positioning means that one's position is both defined by the discourse in which one is situated yet can also be altered through the manipulation of the discourse. Positioning, therefore, allows for the shifting of interactional dominance and encompasses the strategies, both linguistic and cyberdiscursive, which the learners employ to renegotiate opportunities to contribute to and manage their interaction.

Background of the Study

The interaction discussed in this paper was produced by one of four dyads (two NS/NNS and two NNS/NNS) who participated in the origi-

nal study (Sauro 2001), which investigated the amount of interaction and negotiation of meaning produced by these dyads during completion of language learning tasks over the Internet. All four dyads met online twice for 20 minutes to complete web-based jigsaw and decision-making tasks using the voice and text-chat features of *Yahoo!Messenger*.

Due to the technical nature of the procedure, all eight participants in the original study were selected in part because they owned their own computers and were highly computer literate. To homogenize the participant population for the quasi-experimental nature of the study, five of the six non-native English speaking participants were culled from the undergraduate program in computer science at a Midwestern public university[5] while the two native English speaking participants were an undergraduate in electrical engineering and a graduate student in city planning at a Southern technical university.

The data analyzed in this paper was produced by two non-native speakers of English in their mid-twenties, one female Korean native speaker (Kelly) and one male Japanese native speaker (Yama). Both were studying computer science, and both were highly proficient computer users who had often used text chat but had no prior experience with multimodal voice/text-chat. At the time of the study, Kelly had been living in the United States for 14 months and Yama for 18. With respect to English proficiency, both had achieved TOEFL scores of over 500, making them eligible for undergraduate study in the United States, but both still had a great deal of difficulty comprehending native English speakers.

The twenty minute exchange analyzed here was the second of two such CMC meetings during which Kelly and Yama were required to complete a communicative task after a period of pre-task preparation. For this particular session, Kelly and Yama were completing a jigsaw-type task, Problem Gradschool,[6] which required that each participant share five unique pieces of information about application requirements to graduate programs at two universities, MIT and Stanford, to determine which school an imaginary "friend" should apply to.

Although all communication between dyad members was remote, the distance between the partners varied. Members of two dyads were located in two different states (Iowa and Georgia), members of one dyad were located in different buildings within the same city, while members of the dyad discussed in this paper were located on different floors of the same building.

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[5]The sixth, a student who had just been accepted to the program in hotel and restaurant management, had been recruited at the last minute to replace a student in computer science who had to withdraw due to time constraints.

[6]A mutual friend from China named Harry needs help deciding whether he should apply to MIT or Stanford to study for his MS in Computer Science. Both dyad members possess five different bits of information about Harry, such as his TOEFL and GRE scores, his wife's intent to study linguistics, or his financial situation. After using their respective pieces of information to investigate both universities' websites to see which of the two schools fulfils Harry's needs, both partners must meet online, compare information, and select the one school that would suit Harry the best.

Data Collection

To capture both spoken and written interaction, a video camera was positioned in the room of one of the participants of each dyad. Selection of the room to be filmed was determined by proximity to where the video-camera was stored; therefore, the video-camera was set up in the dyad member's room which was closest to the recording equipment. The video-camera was then set up approximately one meter behind the on-site participant and was trained on the computer screen. In this manner, spoken exchanges were captured by the camera's built-in microphone and written turns were recorded by the camera as they appeared on the computer screen. Transcripts made of the video-recording included both the spoken and written turns in the order in which they occurred.

The researcher was also present in the room to operate the video-camera, to take notes on events which occurred off-camera, and to provide assistance with the task directions when needed. In the case of this particular dyad, the camera and the researcher were in Kelly's room. Yama wore headphones while Kelly made use of an external microphone to facilitate *Yahoo!Messenger's* voice-activated hands-free option. This voice-activated facility freed up participants' hands so they could speak and type simultaneously.

Instead of using breath pauses to indicate the boundary between spoken turns, turn boundaries were determined by the activation of the volume level monitors for each speaker. These two rectangles, located to

Figure 1
Screen-Capture of *Yahoo!Messenger* Window
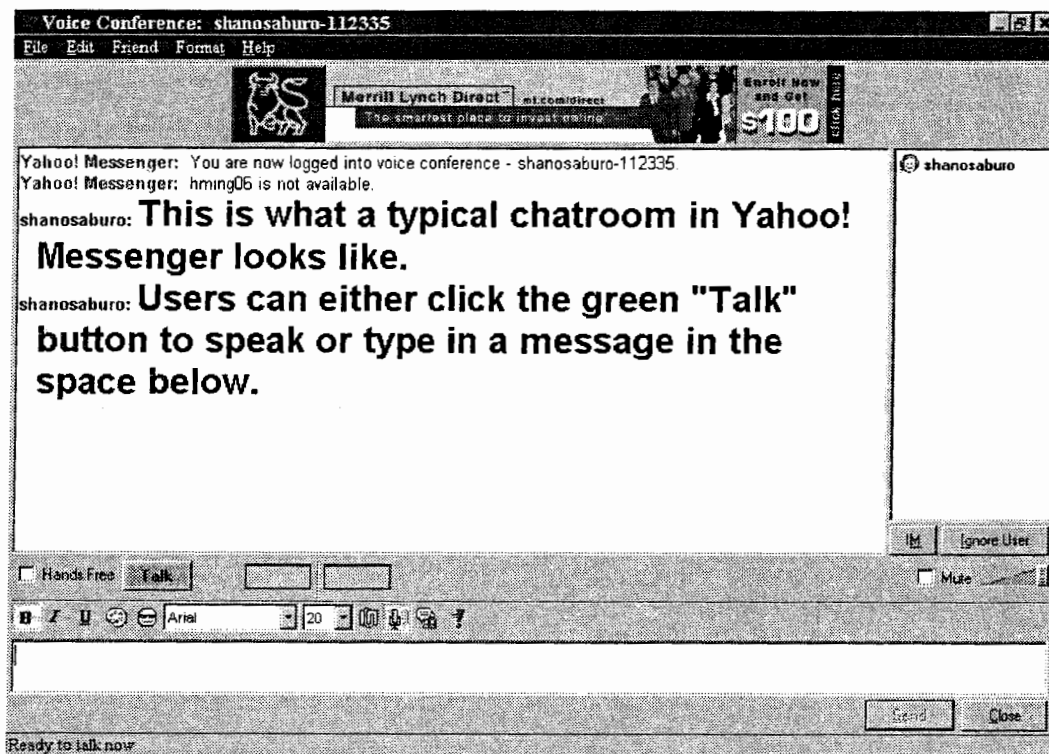
the right of the "Talk" button in Figure 1, lit up whenever one of the participants was talking. The highly visual aspect of the volume indicator served to provide interlocutors with a visual reinforcement of each other's spoken turns. Because of the slower and more deliberate nature of synchronous CMC as compared to face-to-face interaction, and the lack of visual paralinguistic cues, the visual nature of the volume indicator seemed to take on added significance when participants determined when to speak. Written turns were recorded and transcribed as they appeared in full in the shared window on the computer screen and not as they were being typed by the participants. This choice to record only fully completed written turns was influenced in part by the fact that I could not observe Yama's typing since he was in a different room as well as by the fact that participants were only privy to what the other had written once it appeared in full on the screen.

Data Analysis & Discussion

During the course of the interaction, Kelly and Yama produced a combined total of 163 turns, 134 of which were spoken and only 29 of which were written. Table 1 presents a breakdown of total turns produced during this 20 minute episode, including those produced by the researcher. Though Yama outpaced Kelly in the spoken category, Kelly was responsible for more than half of the total turns. This was mainly due to her production of 27 written turns to Yama's two. Further, of the 59 spoken turns Kelly produced, 13 were backchannels, leaving her with only 46 spoken turns that contained other linguistic and informational content.

Table 1
Breakdown of Turns

	Yama	Kelly	Researcher	*Total*
Spoken	75	59 (46)*	12	**146**
Written	2	27		**29**
Total	**77**	**86**	**12**	**175**

*Of the 59 spoken turns Kelly produced, 13 of these were backchannels, leaving her with 46 spoken turns that contained other content.

However, analysis of the actual content of these turns, presented in the following seven chronological excerpts, reveals participation patterns indicating that Kelly struggled initially to contribute to the conversation and that her use of written turns in a predominantly spoken interaction helped her to reposition herself and garner more opportunities to produce the target language.

Excerpt 1, which begins at turn 10, is Kelly's first attempt to inform Yama of the information she gathered to prepare for this online discussion.

Excerpt 1*

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	**Kelly**		**Yama**	**Kelly**
10		Um, first, uh,			
11		the deadline.			
12	I think both of the graduate schools require student to take a GRE				

*Parallel spoken and written columns for each of the participants have been used here in an attempt to convey the differences in the spoken and written turns in a purely written medium such as a printed research article.

Turns prior to this excerpt consist of introductory remarks, comments on the difficulty of the assignment and mutual queries regarding what the other has found for the first question. However, as Kelly attempts to present the answer to her first question regarding the application dead-line for the two universities, she is interrupted by Yama who supplies the information he gathered for his first question regarding whether the two universities require GRE scores for admission. At this point early in the interaction, both participants are using the voice-chat feature of *Yahoo!Messenger* to interact.

Excerpt 2 continues the discussion of Yama's introduction of GRE test scores while Kelly's topic of admission deadlines has been dropped for the moment.

Excerpt 2

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	**Kelly**		**Yama**	**Kelly**
19	Check the both of them, Stanford and MIT for number one question, okay?				
20		Uh-huh.			
21					**toefl, gre required **

*To capture some of the elements of the written turns, which were written in 20 point bold font for the sake of the video recording and were therefore very prominent on the computer screen, the written turns are bolded and written using the same orthographic conventions the chatters uses (e.g., all caps, no punctuation, etc.)

By issuing a direction to Kelly to keep track of the answer to the line of questioning he introduced (whether both MIT and Stanford require graduate students to take the GRE), Yama appears to be positioning himself as the leader of this dyad. Kelly's compliance with his directive could be seen as her acceptance of being positioned as his subordinate, as notetaker to his leader. Although Yama's instructions to Kelly to "Check the both of them" do not make explicit that she is expected to actually type, she does so in line 21. As a result, Kelly's initial use of text-chat is to summarize information produced during the preceding 9 turns.

What transpires in Excerpt 3, however, demonstrates a change in Kelly's position, instigated in part by the intervention of the researcher. In line 35, Kelly is still attempting to address the same piece of information concerning graduate school deadlines she had first attempted to introduce in lines 10 and 11 while trying to point out to Yama that she does not have information on the schools' minimum GRE scores. However, in turn 40, the researcher's comment to Yama serves to strengthen Kelly's position by taking her side and introducing her "different information". Though repositioned by the researcher's intervention as an informant as opposed to a listener or secretary, Kelly chooses text-chat to introduce her information and voice-chat to inform Yama that she is about to send him her information about the deadlines. It is here that Kelly's use of a declarative in turn 43 informing Yama of what she is about to tell him instead of waiting for him to ask her or allowing him to interrupt her could be interpreted as an attempt to build on the work of the researcher and further reposition herself not as a subordinate to Yama but as one who has more control over the flow of information. Also of note is the fact that Kelly has modified the font of her written turns so that they appear in all capital letters instead of all lower case letters as characterized turn 21.

Up to this point in the conversation, Kelly has relied almost exclusively on voice-chat, with the exception of turn 21, yet in subsequent turns, she begins to rely more and more on text-chat initially to convey her information and later to direct and prompt Yama for his. In Excerpt 4 which follows two written turns, 44 and 45, Kelly continues to use text-chat to send her information to Yama even when he is interrupted by a telephone call.

Though interspersed with spoken turns, when Yama returns from answering the phone, Kelly is able to direct Yama to read her information which appears on his computer screen as follows:

DEAD LINE..
STANFORD ☺ECEMBER 15
MIT: JAN 1
FOR FALL SEMESTER

By Excerpt 5, Kelly begins a series of text messages which contain syn-

Excerpt 3

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	Kelly		Yama	Kelly
35		I just find ah, the,			
36		Find, find the deadline.			
37		Not GRE score.			
38	Did you find, did you find minimum score for GRE?				
39		No. I, I, don't, I don't know about those GRE score required.			
40			Just a minute. Yama, Kelly has different questions from you. Okay, she's looking for different information from you.		
41					**DEAD LINE..**
42	Oh, really?				
43		Yeah. I'll tell you, I'll tell you about the deadline.			
44					**STANFORD ☺ECEMBER 15***
45					**MIT: JAN 1**

*This inadvertent emoticon is an example of the technological idiosyncrasies characteristics of cyberdiscursivity. The colon placed before the capital "D" of December without a space was interpreted by the chatting software as a smiley.

opses of her questions and answers and continues to solidify her position as informant. Where Kelly had previously been in the position of receiving and following directives from Yama, she now appears to be emerging as the leader of this group by using text-chat to share her information with Yama and keep a visual record of it at the same time. Interestingly,

Excerpt 4

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	**Kelly**		**Yama**	**Kelly**
			(phone rings)		
46	Oh, just a second.				
47		Yeah.			
48					**FOR FALL SEMESTER**
49		That's okay. I'll type, I'll keep typing.			

Excerpt 5

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	**Kelly**		**Yama**	**Kelly**
93					**TO TURN IN GRE SCORE TO STANFORD HE MUST TOOK THAT EXAM AFTER NOV. 1999**
94	To turn in GRE scores to Stanford he must took that exam after November 1999.				
95					**AND ANOTHER THING..**
96	And another thing.				
97					**IF HE DOESN'T TO GET PH.D. DEGREE, HE CAN WORKING IN ACADEMIA IN STANFORD.**
98	This is very tough.				

as the words appear on the screen, Yama begins reading them aloud so that his own contribution to the discourse at this point appears to be more receptive than productive.

Illustrating the dynamic nature of positioning (Davies & Harré 1991), in Excerpt 6, Yama momentarily appears to reposition himself again as something of a leader by acting upon Kelly's willingness to share her information through text-chat.

Excerpt 6

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	Kelly		Yama	Kelly
103	What is your question, first question you got?				
104	Type that one.				

He begins in turn 103 by asking what her first question and follows this with a directive in turn 104 that she type, not speak, her question.

By the last four minutes of the conversation, Kelly seems to resort to text-chat for yet another function. In Excerpt 7, after having supplied her information to Yama, she now asks him to share his own answers.

Excerpt 7

Turn	Spoken		Other	Written	
	Yama	Kelly		Yama	Kelly
144		What about your information?			
145	My information?				
146		Yeah, I wanna hear about your information.			
147	Hear.				
148					WHAT ABOUT YOUR ANSWER??
149				Stanford andMIT require students to aplly GRE score.*	

*Yama had selected a sans-serif font for his written turns.

She begins with a spoken turn asking for his information, and when he fails to respond quickly, she prods him again with a written turn, 148, punctuated by two question-marks. Just as Yama has directed her previously to supply him with her information, she is now in the same position to direct him to do the same. Interestingly, Yama responds by supplying this information in a written response, his first since the beginning of the exchange and one of only two written turns he produces during the exchange. Unfortunately, the exchange ends a few turns later before it can become clear whether Yama is attempting to renegotiate his position through text-chat much as Kelly was able to.

Summary and Conclusion

What appeared to transpire during the 20 minute exchange was a near reversal of positions wherein Yama, although initially probing Kelly for information, offering his own answers and directing her to make note of what they had discussed, was gradually repositioned less as the leader of the interaction. In contrast, it appeared that by relying on text-chat during multimodal voice/text CMC, Kelly was able to gain a foothold in the conversation to shift from a less dominant position. Using text-chat enabled her to ensure that her information was more permanent and remained in visual memory during the exchange when Yama either interrupted, misunderstood, disregarded or did not hear her spoken attempts to provide information for their solution. In keeping with Davies and Harré's (1991) concept of positioning, Kelly's discursive practice of employing text-chat during multimodal CMC was key in her ability to maintain a foothold in the conversation following the researcher's intervention and to negotiate a new position as the more knowledgeable member of the dyad. In addition, Yama's reliance on voice-chat enabled him to initially position himself as leader at times and reader or follower at others. His decision to opt out of text-chat for most of the exchange also facilitated Kelly's repositioning as it left her with primary control of their textual mode of interaction.

Understandably, the nature of the jigsaw task, which requires one correct solution, meant that the sharing of information was necessary. Such goal-oriented interaction might be partially responsible for Kelly's ability to reposition herself in a more dominant role to get her voice heard.

By analyzing the discursive practices of a pair of L2 learners, this paper set out to investigate how a pair of language learners employed the tools of cyberdiscursivity to renegotiate interactional asymmetries during a multimodal CMC exchange. Over the course of the 20 minute interaction, the initially less dominant learner was able to renegotiate a more productive and less receptive position in the exchange by relying on the text-chat tool. In contrast, the other learner, who established early control over the conversation through voice-chat, relied almost exclusively on

this spoken mode. In doing so, he contributed to the reversal of his initial position with his partner's. Analysis of the excerpts also indicates a shift from speaking to writing, as initially, both students attempted to share their information orally (Excerpt 1), but as they neared the close of the interaction (Excerpt 7), both learners were using text-chat to share information.

This case study may hold relevance for possible interactional asymmetries in the L2 classroom which may hinder less dominant or less proficient interlocutors from achieving opportunities to interact, negotiate for meaning and receive feedback on their target language output. Kelly's use of text-chat is an example of how one learner manipulated technology to reposition herself in a conversation and garner increased opportunities for second language production and development. What remains is for other discourse analytic studies on CMC interaction to uncover additional creative applications other language learners employ to democratize CMC interaction in the L2 classroom.

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