THE STUDY OF ONLINE INTERACTION IN TELEGRAM: A TEXT-BASED MULTIPARTY INTERACTION PLATFORM

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Abstract

Computer understanding of human actions and interactions is one of the key research issues in human computing. In this regard, context plays an essential role in semantic-pragmatic understanding of human behavioural and social signals from sensor data. This paper puts forward a text-based dynamic context model to address the problems of context awareness, patterns of interaction and relationship management in the analysis of multiparty scenarios. The paper investigates online interaction through asynchronous written discussion in a computer-mediated forum. In particular, the study investigates pragmatic aspects of the communicative event which the asynchronous online discussions comprise. It examines response patterns to messages by looking at the content of initial messages and responses in order to determine the extent to which characteristics of the messages themselves or other situational factors affect the interaction. The analysis demonstrates how troubles unfold during online asynchronous communication; shows how interactants respond to, and overcome troubles; discusses how technology is a mediating factor in trouble talk; and considers how troubles in online asynchronous communication are similar to, or different from face-to-face interaction and other voice-only communication settings such as the telephone.

Key words: Interaction, Online Interaction, Multiparty Interactional Troubles, Computer Mediated Communication.

Introduction

Current technological development has promoted constant interaction among communities that need to share a common language to communicate in today's global village (Canclini, 2003). English has

emerged as one of the most used languages for communication since it has become "the language of business, technology, Science, the internet, popular entertainment, and even sports" (Nunan, 2001, p. 605).

The aim of this study is to identify the different types of interactional troubles that occur as a result of communicating in a computer-mediated written interaction (CMWI) environment and when applicable, to make connections with the existing literature on written-based troubles in other communicative contexts. The troubles investigated here occur during, and/or as a result of, participants' first contribution to a chat room, next participant selection, overlapping participation, and participant identification. The analysis (1) demonstrates how troubles unfold during online spoken communication; (2) show how interactants respond to, and overcome troubles; (3) discuss how technology is a mediating factor in trouble talk; and (4) explore how CMWI troubles are similar to, or different from, those of face-to-face interaction and other voice-only communicative media such as the telephone.

Interaction involves people communicating and reacting to each other (Skogs, 2015). This process is basic to the study of discourse, but it is not easy to study systematically how interaction takes place in a specific communicative event, or how it is typically performed over a series of repeated communicative events. However, with a written record of the interaction, it becomes possible to study the process in some detail.

According to one definition, interaction can refer to both "the activity of being with and talking to other people as well as the way that people react to each other." It can also refer to "the process by which things affect or change each other" ("interaction," 2009-2012). Being interactive involves "people communicating and reacting to each other" but in a computer context, a program is interactive if it "reacts to the information and instructions that you give it" ("interactive," 2009–2012). Although these definitions may seem relatively straightforward, researchers in computer-mediated communication (CMC) are still

attempting to define what interaction is and how it can be measured in CMC. One of the reasons for the difficulty in defining interaction may be that researchers from different disciplines have different focus. How interactive something is in technology-enhanced communication may refer to user-computer interaction and not necessarily user-to-user interaction. When studies look at how users perceive interactivity, there is also a problem because users perceive different ways of communicating differently. For example, telephone conversations, which are naturally interactive in that they involve people talking and reacting to each other, may not always be perceived as being interactive by the users (Leiner & Quiring, 2008: 142). Sometimes students may feel that communicating with one another asynchronously online is not "real interaction" and they expect immediate feedback, which is only possible in synchronous communication (Teles, Gillies, & Ashton, 2002: 241). For the purpose of the present study, interaction refers primarily to written/text-based exchanges produced when most English Teachers communicate with and react to each other's contributions in online discussion forums.

Theoretical Considerations

The use of ICTs and the significance of online interaction in EFL pedagogical contexts have been explored and presented in different studies around the globe. Researchers such as Balaji and Chakrabarti (2010), Haythornthwaite (2006), and Warschauer (1995), to name a few, have reflected upon the uses and potential benefits of technology in EFL pedagogical contexts.

Additionally, educators and researchers including Rojas (2011) and Espitia and Clavijo (2011) have described significant experiences when using online tools in an EFL context. In this part, we present the theoretical foundations that guided this case study.

Online learning has gained relevance within educational environments and has become an emerging trend, especially in higher education (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Educators and institutions have tried to identify and implement successful ways of incorporating

technology in their teaching process without leaving FtF interaction behind. Thus, combining FtF with online learning environments is an approach that has become popular, especially and for the purposes of this paper, when learning a foreign language.

The aforementioned approach, referred to as Blended Learning (BL henceforth), has been defined by different authors as the combination of onsite and online learning environments where the learner is expected to achieve same goal by integrating synchronous and asynchronous participation. Neumeier (2005) defines this approach as "a combination of face-to-face and computer assisted learning in a single teaching and learning environment" (p. 164). In addition, the author states that this integration takes place when both environments are combined effectively to achieve the same goal and when a possible isolation of both contexts is avoided. For this researcher, the most important aim of a Blended Learning design is to find the most effective and efficient combination of the two modes of learning for the individual learning subjects, contexts and objectives. BL is also defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) as "the concept of integrating the strengths of synchronous (face-to-face) and asynchronous (text-based Internet) learning activities" (p. 96). In general terms, this integration is expected to be evident and connected so that it is meaningful to the learner. However, BL goes beyond the mere combination of FtF and online environments and requires different parameters to achieve the goals of this educational approach. Neumeier (2005) proposes a focus on mode and distribution of modes. The former refers to the selection of the predominant setting (FtF or text-based Internet) considering its relevance in the teaching process. According to Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) theory, determining the lead mode is essential in securing a clear layout and a transparent structure of the course design (Kerres, as cited in Neumeier, 2001, p. 276). The latter refers to an adequate distribution of the modes taking into consideration the whole learning process. Thus, the program implemented at the DFLC took into account the previous considerations and decided to devote more

time to FtF sessions, while bearing in mind that online encounters deserve the same importance in the language learning process.

The theory behind BL and FtF encounters is at the core of the development or design of a course. However, for the purposes of this paper, it is mainly the virtual setting and more specifically the aspects that promote online interaction that are considered. Three main factors serve as the theoretical support on this aspect: online interaction, online collaboration and peer feedback, and online discussion forums.

Online Interaction

The importance of using an online setting is highly related to the opportunity given to learners to use language in a context that goes beyond the classroom; allowing them to apply their acquired knowledge in a different academic setting where the main purpose is communication. Balaji and Chakrabarti (2010 p.37) justify the importance of online resources by asserting that their use "expands the opportunities for students to reflect upon their thinking and experience the discourse with other students and instructor". It individualizes their learning experience, facilitating development of deep level learning and 'new knowledge structures' " (2010:p. 37). Thus, online interaction gives students the possibility to share and build knowledge with other students where individual work is created with a specific purpose and for a specific audience. Online interaction can be seen from asynchronous and synchronous perspectives. The former is an opportunity given to students to participate at a time most convenient to them, whereas the latter follows similar parameters to a FtF class in which all participants get together at the same time; usually with their tutor as a moderator and guide. In this study, more relevance was given to asynchronous encounters which, as previously mentioned, afford flexibility in time and pace. Balaji and Chakrabarti (2010), for example, assert that "using asynchronous communications facilitate personalization by allowing the students to learn at their own pace and according to their interest, previous knowledge and style" (p. 3).

The use of asynchronous encounters can also be supported with the teaching-learning experiences at Universidad de La Sabana where it has been observed that once students get used to interacting with their peers online managing their own time and duties, they participate with more regularity. Arnold, Ducate, Lomicka and Lord (2009) state that asynchronous technologies such as e-mail and discussion boards provide opportunities for distance as well as blended learning environments to overcome the limitations of the physical classroom. The authors also assert that asynchronous exchanges have great potential for encouraging cognitive as well as social interaction between learners.

Online versus classroom-based levels of interaction

There is little doubt that the exponential growth in the use of the Internet and Web based instruction continues to present educators with considerable opportunities and challenges (Boettcher, 1999; Downing, 2001; McNaught & Lam, 2005). Among the most frequently cited challenges is concern over a perceived lack of interaction in online educational environments (Hron & Friedrich, 2003), fuelled by the belief that our 'traditional' classrooms are somehow filled with the vital interactivity that online environments lack. For example, Robertson and Klotz (2002) suggest that literature provides evidence that online courses are often configured and delivered in a style more often associated with independent study and that, while this format might work in some instances, it leaves what they term a 'missing link' in student learning. They assert that students in an online learning environment lack the opportunity to experience the benefits of both structured dialogue and a sense of community that can be created in a traditional on-site classroom environment. Others (Cook, 2000; Seabolt & Arends, 2000; Muirhead, 2001) support this view that the interactivity of the traditional classroom is a vital, yet missing, part of Web-based instruction, suggesting that online interaction is somehow flawed because it does not allow for the social and emotional interaction allegedly taking place in traditional classrooms. Some researchers (Downing & Chim, 2004b) have taken a slightly different

viewpoint and investigated the relationship between personality type and different learning environments, suggesting that classroom-based 'introverts' behave more like 'extraverts' when involved in online discussion forums and are more active in online discussions than when based in the classroom.

Online Discussion Forums

Online Discussion Forums (ODF) have become effective tools to support collaboration, reflection, and professional development as well as to overcome the barriers of time and place and provide learners with some extra time to reflect on the previous postings to the discussion thread (Anderson and Kanuka, 1997, p. 2). To Balaji and Chakrabarti (2010), ODF consists of "an e-learning platform that allows students to post messages to the discussion threads, interact and receive feedback from other students and instructor, and foster deeper understanding towards the subject under study" (p. 1). ODF can also be seen as a virtual learning environment where students have the opportunity to learn from each other as well as from course materials (Thomas, 2002). In regards to the ODF's benefits, authors such as Balaji and Chakrabarti (2010) explain that "in an ODF there is no loss of data as the students' written messages are stored in the virtual space, and can be retrieved and reviewed anytime" (p.1). As the authors noted, this is an outstanding tool for e-tutors who need to keep track of the postings as an activity or project is taking place. A second benefit is the opportunity provided to learners to actively engage in their learning process through active participation where they can play a more dynamic role (Thomas, 2002). Finally, using ODF can remove some of the communication impediments associated with the FtF sessions since the mentioned forums may address issues through argumentative and collaborative discourse (Karacapilidis and Papadias, 2001).

Methodology and Data

The data analysed for this research were collected from chat rooms that were hosted by Telegram. The methodology used to carry

out this investigation is conversation analysis (CA), which can be considered both a method for the analysis of spoken interaction and a theory of interaction itself. The object of analysis for CA researchers is the sequential organization of written-in-interaction, investigated through detailed examination of screenshots of naturally-occurring social interaction, supported by finely-detailed transcripts where names listed are pseudonyms of the participants' user IDs provided by the authors. Since participants logged into the Telegram, their Telegram usernames were available for others to see. Occasionally, participants self-identified with their "real" names; we also replaced those names with pseudonyms.

Telegram is a cross-platform cloud that uses instant messaging, video calling and voice-over-Internet protocol (VoIP) technology to allow users to call each other via using internet data, as well as to call landline or mobile telephones for a charge when the contact is already there. At various times since its creation in 2013 in Russia (Telegram, 2013), Telegram has offered other services in addition to the "conventional" one-to-one and multi-party instant messaging, video/voice calls. One such service, no longer available for unspecified reasons (Telegram, 2013) is online multiparty instant messaging based chat rooms. This service is the focus of the present study. The instant messaging service is available in other such chat rooms and multi-party text-based communication tools exist, for example as offered by WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger etc. However, the thinking here is that the present findings are relevant to other chat rooms and multi-party text-based communications of this type, although the extent to which this is the case is an empirical question that deserves further investigations. Telegram Instant Messaging (referred to in this article henceforth as "chat rooms") could be made by any telegram user, who upon downloading the application, all contacts who are already on Telegram can be added to the platform before partaking in a certain discourse. Many of the chat rooms are themed around particular discussion topics, such as sport, religion, politics, professionalism etc. Users who are logged into telegram are able to search through the

listings to see upcoming chats. Telegram chat rooms afford three levels of participation: the "readers," the "who post," and the "who respond." Upon joining the chat room, members are only able to write to the chat room for discussion at this level of participation. Those wishing to contribute to the discussion are required to tap on the message and swipe to the left to reply a certain message. However, participants in any of the three levels of participation are able to send private written instant messages to any other individual in the chat room. All telegram participants are also able to see live online chat room members.

Figure 1 shows a screenshot of the telegram user interface during participation in an instant messaging chat. As can be seen in the figure, the user who set up the chat is highlighted in bold and indicated as the sender. Although the sender plays an important role in how participation in a chat is organized, in that s/he determines who is interested on the topic/subject matter, on an interactional level the sender has no greater or lesser role than any of the other participants. For example, in dealing with any forms of interactional trouble, senders are never oriented to, either by themselves or by interlocutors, as authorities in trouble resolution especially in a group chat.

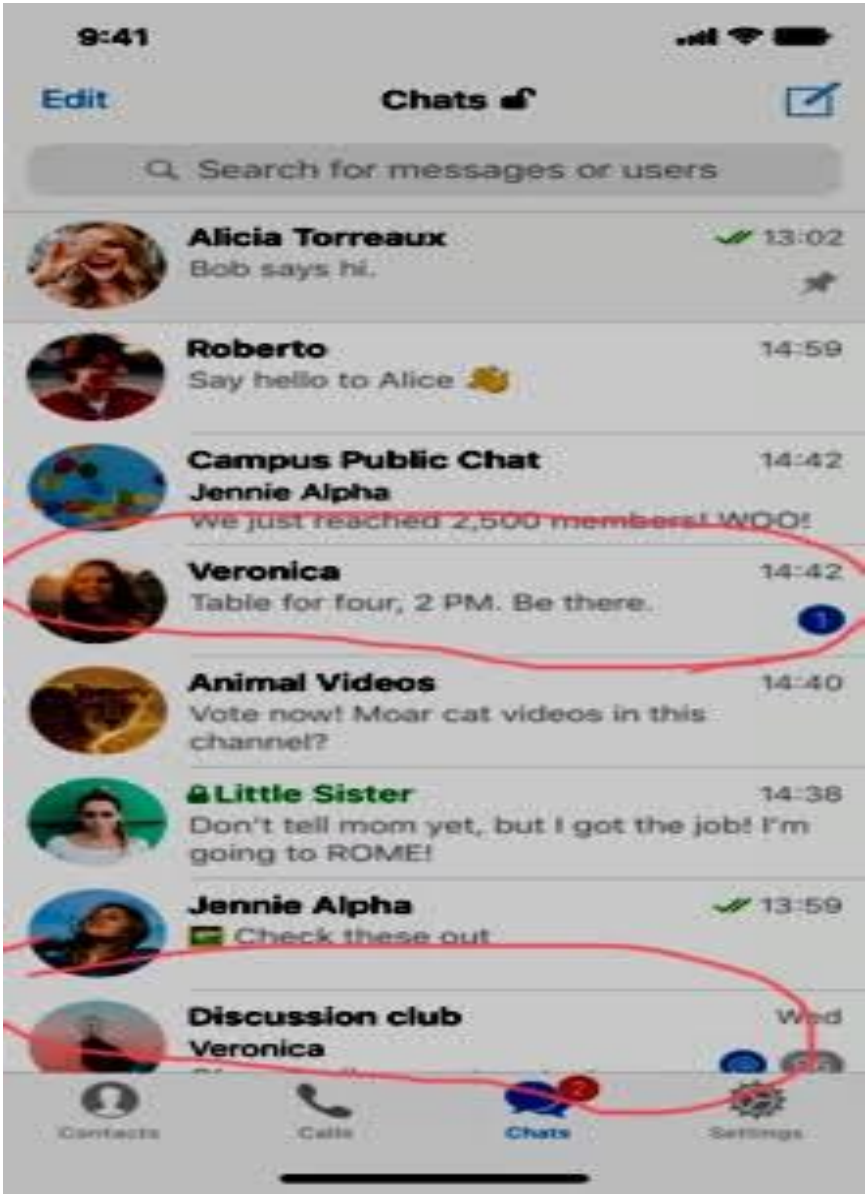

Figure 1: Screenshot of telegram user interface during a live online instant messaging/chatting,

Telegram Instant messenger chat rooms have no facility for video, and so participants are not able to see one another. Similarly, although chat room members were listed on the telegram user interface, the interface is able to indicate which specific participant is online and typing at any particular time. This study includes two corpora sets of data. The first was screenshot with the help of some colleagues between 30 April and 21 May 2021. The second set was screenshot by the first author between 28 May and 22 June 2021. A total of 32 screenshots from 20 different chat rooms were made. Individual telegram screenshots were made ranging from 15 to 20 individuals as well. Telegram listings were searched, relevant chat rooms were located, and the start dates and times noted. Chat rooms were selected for screenshots from telegram listings if the titles or descriptions made reference to the practice or improvement of English as a second language (this was a research interest prior to data collection, but it was later set aside to examine the interactional character of the setting more broadly).

It is difficult to know the demographic details of the participants in the screenshots. However, based on the pattern of text composition and personal information offered in the settings of the telegram application, participant ages appeared to range from the late (20) to retirement ages (early 60s and older). Participants' ethnic and national origins varied widely, with chat room members stating that they were from countries across the African continent; especially on the **Africa TESOL** chat room. Although proficiency in English varied quite broadly, the vast majority of interaction was conducted in English. Unlike in some chat rooms, there was no set discussion topic in the rooms' screenshots; the only ostensible purpose for entering these rooms was to participate in conversations related to the English Language class which was done in English.

Recorded data were transcribed using the conventions of CA (see Appendix), as pioneered by Gail Jefferson (e.g., 1983a, 1985, 1996, 2004). These transcriptions are deemed necessary support to the primary data, the audio recordings (e.g., ten Have, 2007; Hutchby &

Wooffitt, 2005; Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell, 2010). In line with the principles and traditions of CA, the analysts followed a process of "unmotivated looking," whereby they looked through the data with no a priori intentions (other than looking at interactional features of the setting) and observed what appeared interesting. Many of the phenomena discussed in the present study were initially observed and noted at that stage. After the initial general observations, an agreement was reached on which elements of interactional trouble to focus upon, and collections of examples of each interactional phenomenon were assembled. Following conversation analytic traditions, each individual case was analysed in its own right before general trends were noted. In the analysis presented below, prototypical examples from each of the analytic foci are presented.

Analysis

In this section, analyses of three distinct, albeit related, forms of trouble that participants in multi-party text-based chat rooms are faced with is presented. These forms of potential troubles are: (1) being unable to join in the ongoing talk; (2) knowing if, and if so when, one is expected to be the next speaker; and (3) identifying who one's interlocutor is. These three aspects form sub-sections in this analysis section. In each of the three instances, a number of exemplifying cases for the form of trouble in question and a detailed line-by-line sequential analysis for each case is provided, utilizing the principles and prior findings of CA. It should be noted that these forms of trouble are not exclusive; there are many other forms of trouble in such chat rooms (such as technical difficulties), but these have been chosen because we believe them to be the most important given the tools afforded by a CA approach, through which the fine details of social interaction can be examined and analysed from a participant-relevant perspective.

Trouble Type 1: New Participants Joining in the Talk

In many forms of spoken communication that lack physical co-presence (e.g., telephone and mobile phone communication), there is typically a fixed number of interactants (usually two or more) who are

participating from the onset of the interaction until its completion. However, one of the features of Telegram is that participants are able to join a chat room at any time, provided the internet network connection is fully activated and realised by the user and when the network provider(s) has provided the internet connection to the end users.

Despite this situation, participants who have been connected to the internet by their service provider are automatically entitled/able to join in the ongoing talk/conversation. In fact, on many occasions, a new participant can respond/reply to almost all chats/conversations in the chat room when s/he is interested, as in excerpt 1 below. This may be understood as one form of potential "trouble" which participants new to a chat room face; how to construct and time their first turns at talk, such that they are able to join in the ongoing talk, and initiate a new participation framework (Goffman, 1963; Goodwin, 2000) of which they are a part.

As excerpt 1 begins, Cecilgee, Jan, and others are getting acquainted and negotiating an appropriate topic of discussion for the chat room.

EXCERPT 1

01	*Cecilgee:*	*let's talk about our classroom experience*
02		*(5 minutes)*
03	*Jess:*	*about [what]*
04	*Sammy:*	*[↑okay]*
05		*(8 minutes) à*
06	*Newbie:*	*(hello [everyone)]*
07	*Jan:*	*[about ↑what]*
08		*(6 minutes)*
09	*Cecilgee:*	*↓hobbies you know*
10		*(7 minutes)*
11	*Jan:*	*↑hobbies=*
12	*Jeff:*	*=↑(karate)*
13		*(3 minutes)*
14	*Cecilgee:*	*yeah right.*

In the above excerpt, Newbie makes his first chat contribution to the chat room at line 06. Although this is not completely intelligible on the recording, it appears to takes the form of an open greeting to the other members of the chat room ("hello everyone"). Despite this turn being designed such that any other participant could provide a return greeting, no one does. This may be due, at least in part, to the sequential location of Newbie's turn, as discussed below. At line 01, Cecilgee proposes a new topic of discussion for the chat room, namely "classroom experience." After a relatively lengthy silence (5 minutes, line 02), Jessica indicates that she has either not understood the proposal by initiating repair (line 03). In overlap with this, Sammy indicates that he is willing to go along with the topic suggestion, with an agreement token "okay" (line 04). The overlap of Jessica and Sammy's turns is followed by a silence of 8 minutes. Jenks (2009a) has demonstrated how overlapping talk in this interactional setting can often be followed by silence. However, Jessica's need for a repetition or clarification of the source of her trouble remains unresolved. It is at this point that Newbie comes in with his open greeting. This greeting is produced partly in overlap with Jan's turn at line 07, in which she appears to pursue repair of Cecilgee's still-to-be-repaired turn at line 01. What follows in lines 09-14 is a repair and confirmation sequence between Cecilgee and Jan. As a result of the sequential placement of this repair sequence, Newbie's greeting is not responded to, and so the participation framework is not altered in order to accommodate him.

Trouble Type 2: Speaking One-at-a-Time and knowing who is expected to speak next

Once a participant has joined the chat room and has become a ratified part of the chat interaction, other forms of potential trouble still exist. One form of potential trouble for all participants is writing and sending simultaneously. One of the most basic principles in the organization of social interaction is that there is a strong preference for "one-participant-at-a-time" (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). In face-to-face multiparty talk, participants are normally able to draw upon

physical resources, such as gaze and embodied conduct, to determine who is speaking, who is about to speak, and also to project when the current speaker is about to stop.

However, such resources are not available in the Telegram chat rooms. Jenks (2009a) has shown in some detail how participants in social chat rooms use silence as a resource to manage overlapping, simultaneous talk in multiparty contexts. Excerpt 2 below also shows how overlapping talk can be managed in this setting, albeit on an occasion in which there are only two participants in the chat room. The example is included for illustrative purposes and because it would appear to be connected to the next form of trouble discussed further below.

EXCERPT 2

01 Jan: nice to $meet yo:u=hh$
02 (9 minutes)
03 Sayaka: nice to meet you too:
04 (2 minutes)
05 Jan: .hhh i'm [kor-]
06 Sayaka: [(* * *)]*
07 (4 minutes)
08 Jan: yeah i'm sor[ry↑](conflicting information)
09 Sayaka: [can't get you]
10 (4 minutes)
11 Sayaka: (you.)
12 (3 minutes)
13 Sayaka: (please.)
14 (6 minutes)
15 Jan: yeah go=ahead↑
16 (8 minutes)
17 Jan: what were you going to [say]
18 Sayaka: [ah.]
19 (3 minutes)
20 Sayaka: mm (.) do: you↑ know↓ Japanese (0.2 seconds)

Having just introduced themselves to each other, and after exchanging pleasantries at lines 01-03, Jan and Sayaka are about to launch their first topic. At line 05, Jan is apparently about to announce her nationality, which is a typical resource used in the initiation of a topic. However, the end of her turn is produced in overlap with something inaudible uttered by Sayaka (line 06).

This overlap results in a short silence (line 10) before Jan invites Sayaka to repeat her turn through the use of an open case repair initiator (Drew, 1997) at line 08. This turn, too, is produced in overlap with something said by Sayaka (line 09). Again, a short silence follows (line 10), before Sayaka quietly and quickly appears to make a meta-comment on who should speak next ("you" at line 11). Despite this, neither participant writes in the next 3 minutes. There is an apparent reluctance on the part of both participants to be the next to chat up, which extends for another 7 lines until Sayaka finally initiates a new topic at line 20.

As this example shows, participants are cognizant of the risk of chatting up simultaneously and the potential trouble that this can cause. For this reason, they can at times appear to be reluctant to participate, unless they are certain that they have the right (or obligation) to do so. This has implications for participants in responding to a previous turn that may not be clearly directed at them.

Trouble Type 3: Identifying Interlocutors

The final form of participants' trouble that was analysed for the present study is that of identifying who is chatting up. Participants in the chat rooms regularly orient to a writer's identification as important and often will put on hold the ongoing talk in order to establish the identity of their interlocutor, as will be shown.

As discussed in the first analytic section, new chat room participants may have trouble joining in the ongoing talk. When participants are successfully responded to, there is a strong preference for self-identification before talk can proceed with their participation. This is shown in excerpt 3 below.

EXCERPT 3

01 Diablo: hello guys
02 (6 minutes)
03 Amira: [hello]
04 Amira: [the great Africa TESOL colleagues]
05 (4 minutes)
06 Sara: hell[o:::]
07 Amira: [Sara]
08 Sara: yes wo! [diablo]
09 Diablo: yeah this is diablo
10 Diablo: how are [you doing]
11 Amira: [where are] you from:
12 (5 minutes)
13 Sara: welcome [diablo] =
14 Diablo: [Fine] =
15 Amira: =just good just good (.) what about
16 you

At line 01, Diablo makes his first contribution to the chat room. After a short pause, three of the existing chat room members respond (lines 03, 04, and 06). Amira seeks identification of the speaker by asking "Sara" at line 07. Note that even though this question is produced in overlap with Sara's turn at line 06, and even though both Amira and Sara have chat up more recently than Diablo, Amira's question is seen to be pertaining to the writer at line 01. Sara immediately responds to Amira's question with "Diablo" (line 08), which the participant himself aligns with immediately after: "yeah this is diablo speaking" (line 09).

These participants orient to the norm of identification upon joining the chat room. Note also that once he has self-introduced, Diablo is welcomed by the host, Sara, at line 13. It is also noteworthy that prior to this (at line 11) Amira asks Diablo to state where he is from. This is not responded to and the lack of response is not treated as problematic by any of the participants. In other words, this excerpt

would suggest that identification is a legitimate reason to put other businesses on hold, but other biographical queries may not be. In this excerpt, we can see a greetings sequence (lines 01-06) followed by a request for identification (line 07) and a subsequent identification (lines 08-09). As such, the sequence is interactionally similar to those found in, for example, WhatsApp interactions, Facebook messenger and other related social media platforms which are text-based.

Conclusion and Discussion

Through the analyses, some of the troubles that participants encounter during their interactions in chat-based multi-party platforms have been demonstrated. The troubles examined are those that occur when (1) a new interactant tries to join in the ongoing talk; (2) participants write simultaneously or do not know who ought to be the next writer; and (3) participants do not know who they are chatting to.

When new interactants open a chat-based chat room, it is apparent that the timing of their first contribution is vital if they are to join in the ongoing talk successfully. The analysis shows how first contributions may not be responded to if they are produced in overlap or if they are produced at a time when another participant(s) has been projected to talk (such as by being asked a question). In such cases, the newly-joining interactant's presence may go unacknowledged. In fact, another analysis suggests that newly-joining participants' best means of joining in the chat room is to read the previous chats of the ongoing subject before they contribute.

This trouble in becoming part of the "participation framework" (Goodwin, 2000) is in no small part due to the participants' lack of physical co-presence. When groups of participants who share some physical environments are approached by another participant, eye gaze and bodily orientation(s) can adjust to afford the participant entry into the participation (Goffman, 1963) before a verbal contribution is even made. In this situation, even when participants have the visual resources to note a new participant (i.e., the user interface with its list

of existing chat room members), there is no guarantee that these resources will be utilized (or even noticed).

Further, even when chat rooms members are listed as present in the room, they are not necessarily expected to participate in the current conversation. In this sense, the lack of a physical presence makes it somewhat more troublesome for a new chat room member to engage in discussion.

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