



## ‘What Can We Do to Talk More?’: Analysing Language Learners’ Online Interaction

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**ABSTRACT:** Previous studies have pointed out the need to consider carefully how digital tools are presented in schools to ensure their use meets authentic needs for today’s knowledge society. This implies that learning tasks should be planned so students’ practice with technological and digital resources such as videoconferencing and text chats resembles potential communicative situations they may face outside the classroom. Along these lines, this article analyses a 44-minute Skype videoconferencing session involving two small groups of middle school students who are studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The data come from a wider-scale telecollaborative project between two classes, one in Sweden and another in Spain, in which the students had to collaborate on a public awareness raising initiative regarding the Syrian refugee crisis. Applying a multimodal Conversation Analysis (CA) approach, the study aims to ‘unpack’ the complexity of the multiple resources used by the participants during the interaction. In particular, the article focuses on how the learners use multiple resources to creatively mediate their communication and to resolve problems that emerge during their interaction in the foreign language. The findings of the analysis can help identify key foci for task design in similar online foreign language learning settings.

**Keywords:** telecollaboration, technology, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Conversation Analysis (CA), social semiotics

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly recognized by educators that knowing how to communicate effectively in an interconnected world is a key means to access social, political and economic opportunities (Council of EU, 2009, 2016; UNESCO, 2014). Similarly, there is a growing recognition of the impact that technological resources can have on learning environments (Jones & Binhui, 2011; Norman, 2014), ranging from the way in which teachers and students communicate in the classroom to the use of technology to interact with wider and extended audiences worldwide (Dooly, 2010, 2013, 2017). However, merely bringing in computers, Internet or mobile phones into the classroom, without any interrogation of how they are used does not guarantee that needed changes in education will occur (Dooly, 2015).

One of the current educational challenges facing teachers and education authorities is finding ways to go beyond traditional views on classroom instruction (e.g. teacher-fronted classes), in order to provide a creative learning environment where students are required to use their own resources to resolve problems through collaboration –much like the team work required in the workplace. Indeed, this has been identified as a principal educational goal for equipping citizens with the necessary competences for success in the 21st century (Council of EU, 2009; UNESCO, 2014). In short, use of technology should not only be seen as support for educators, but also a competence that needs to be mastered in order to meet society’s current demands and tomorrow's challenges.

One means for educators to begin achieving the abovementioned demands is through the use of telecollaboration –also commonly known as Virtual Exchange (VE). The practice of

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telecollaboration is fast becoming an important element in educational settings. In the context of language learning, which is the focus of the present study, “social interaction, dialogue, intercultural exchange and communication (...) are especially important aspects of telecollaboration in language education” (Dooly, 2017, p. 170). Besides developing language skills and intercultural competence, another important affordance of telecollaboration is providing opportunities for learning and practicing multiple literacies, including media and digital literacy and collaboration skills facilitated through virtual workspaces (Lindner, 2016).

Inevitably, in order for teachers to ensure that their learners fully benefit from a telecollaborative environment it is important to explore the properties of telecollaborative communication for an in-depth understanding of its mechanisms and patterns and to see how these configurations can be used to enhance learning, in particular through the sharing of and co-construction of knowledge. One approach to deeper understanding of this type of interaction in telecollaboration is Conversation Analysis (CA). There is a growing interest of CA researchers in this area, however “the nature of knowledge exchange processes (...) has been explored to a lesser extent in technology-mediated and online interactional environments” (Balaman & Sert, 2017a, p. 115). Similarly, González-Lloret (2015, p. 573) calls for the need to explain “how individuals use language resources to manage interactions within and around digital environments and how technology environments affect, shape, and transform interactions”. Following these lines, this present study aims to look at the way in which young language learners, with partial competence in the target language (English), deploy multimodal resources to maintain the progressivity of their interaction in order to achieve mutual understanding between themselves and their telecollaborative partners.

## 2. METHOD

The principal approach to the data is from a conversational analysis perspective. Developed by sociologists Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff in the early 1960s, Conversation Analysis (CA) emphasizes the use of ‘naturalistic’ data of social interaction and places ‘ordinary conversation’ as the central focus of study (see Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, & Olsher, 2002). Over the decades, CA has been expanded to look at other means of interaction, including body positioning and gestures (cf. Goodwin, 2000a, 2000b); nonetheless, its original aim of tracing the organization and sequencing of shared meaning-making remains central. In short, CA is “the systematic analysis of the talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction: talk-in-interaction” (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 11).

The use of Conversation Analysis (CA) has been well-established in language classroom research (cf. He, 2004; Markee & Kasper, 2004; Mondada & Pekarek, 2004; Kasper, 2006; Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Seedhouse, 2013; 2015) and more recently CA has begun to be applied in online language learning environments (González-Lloret, 2015). González-Lloret points out that this is a growing area of research, an assertion that is supported by the number of studies in online learning environments that depart from a CA perspective (cf. Tudini, 2002, 2010, 2013; Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003; Gibson 2009a, 2009b; González-Lloret, 2009, 2015; Jenks, 2009a, 2009b; Jenks & Firth, 2013; Burch, 2014; Dooly & Tudini, 2016; Balaman & Sert, 2017a, 2017b)

For a more in-depth understanding of the multiple uses of modality in the online interaction, this study adopts Goodwin’s multimodal conversation analysis approach (2000a, 2000b, 2013). Nonetheless, applying CA to online interaction is not without its challenges, in particular because of the need to be sensitive to the ‘digital’ surroundings (Giles, Stommel & Paulus, 2017). As these authors indicate, researchers working with data that comes from

multimodal, multiple-channel sources must struggle with “issues posed by the need to transcribe data from a variety of sources” (p. 38), for instance simultaneous asynchronous and synchronous oral and written texts, gestural activities on and off-screen; multiple screen foci and so forth.

In the study described herein, the focus is on both the ‘physically present’ interaction (between the four Spanish participants) and the online interaction (between the Spanish and Swedish participants, mediated through different communication technology). This presents a number of challenges, given that there are a variety of sources that come into play during the interaction – there is talk between the students located in the same physical space, talk between students channelled through technology (video chat), along with simultaneous interaction through mobile devices (cell phones) and online chat as well as gestures, gaze orientation and body positioning.

Therefore, the study also draws on interdisciplinary approaches to understanding multimodality. According to Jewitt (2012), multimodality can be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective that regards communication as the integration of both verbal and non-verbal forms of meaning-making, thus pushing beyond borders of language as the central form of meaning-making. In particular, a social semiotic approach looks at how semiotic resources are deployed in interaction in order for the participants to co-construct meaning and understanding. The term semiotic resource can be traced to Halliday’s argument that the “grammar of a language” is not a set of rules, but a “resource for making meanings” (1978, p.192). Van Leeuwen (2005) extends on this premise, defining semiotic resources “as the actions and artefacts we use to communicate” (p. 3); however, these resources do not have preordained meanings, they are “observable actions and objects that have been drawn into the domain of social communication” by the participants of the interaction. Moreover, these resources are not limited to speech or written text –even walking may be a semiotic resource, as evidenced by the ‘semiotic walk’ performed by military personnel or fashion models on a catwalk (cf. van Leeuwen, 2005).

The relevance of semiotic resources is reflected in our approach to the transcription. We aim to shift the focus from talk as the primary source of meaning to include perspectives from additional modalities, including actions mediated through technological tools (e.g. displaying a cell phone screen or using an emoji). By bringing into play observations about events that are mediated through different modalities (including synchronous use of different technology channels), the transcription can hopefully provide “insights into the situated construction of social reality” (Bezemer, 2012, p.155). As will be seen in this case, the social reality that emerges from the data and which is constructed by the language learners, veers sharply from the teachers’ implied task organization and draws heavily from their cultural, social and technological resources.

## **2.1. Data Compilation**

### **2.1.1. Context**

The data were collected during an intercultural telecollaborative project between two middle schools in Sweden and in Spain: School 1 (Terrassa, Spain) and School 2 (Hässleholm, Sweden). The project was designed as a series of telecollaborative activities and creative tasks in which the students worked together on the topic of Syrian refugees in Europe, mediated through the use of English as their lingua franca. The students in both groups were performing at lower-intermediate and intermediate level of proficiency of English.

Permission to record in-class interaction and to collect online data pertaining to the project was obtained from the Spanish and Swedish students, their parents and the schools' administration. Additionally, a research ethics and protocol contract was signed between the principal researcher and the heads of the schools. For sake of anonymity, the faces in the images are pixelated and the names of the participants have been changed.

The project was developed under the auspices of a research grant by the Spanish government (KONECT<sup>1</sup>). The project was planned in conjunction with two secondary teachers, a university teacher and a doctoral student, all of whom met face-to-face in October 2015 to plan the project. The project aimed to guide the students through a series of research and discussion activities to help them understand what it means to be a political refugee and to get a better understanding of the current European Union (EU) policies about relocating Syrian refugees. Students also were expected to consider potential social actions that could be promoted locally to raise public awareness of the issues related to refugee relocating, while working on communication skills in the target language (English). The final output was a blog about the situation of political refugees and suggestions about ways EU citizens could positively contribute to resolving some of the challenges faced by refugees and local administration.

The present research focuses on one particular session of the project that took place after one of the regular classes, with a small focus group of seven students from both classes (four from Spain, three from Sweden) taking part in a Skype session. The video-call was recorded with a 'roving' camera held by the researcher and a second camera inserted into glasses worn by a student, which helped capture the participants' perspective of the interaction. This afforded the possibility of capturing more details of the interaction, given that at times some aspects might be missed from one perspective but were recorded from another.



Figure 2.1. Handing out 'spy-glasses' to the participants.

The students were free to choose the topic for their conversation since their only task was to establish connection and exchange email addresses for further collaborative work on the project. The amount of time anticipated to complete the task was 15 minutes, according to the teachers' written plans (submitted to the researchers prior to the session). However, the

<sup>1</sup> Knowledge for Network-based Education, Cognition & Teaching (KONECT; EDU2013-43932-P). Ministry of Science and Innovation: Proyectos I+D del Programa Estatal de Fomento de la Investigación Científica y Técnica de Excelencia (EDU2013-43932-P); 2013-2017, extended till March 2018. Webpage: <https://konectproject.com>

participants communicated in the videoconference for more than 40 minutes, touching on different topics, apart from exchanging the required contact information.

### **2.1.2. Participants**

Out of 43 students, 15 were located in Terrassa, Spain (a region of Barcelona) and 28 in Hässleholm, Sweden. In the Terrassa school the principal school language of instruction is Catalan (Spanish and Catalan are co-official languages in this region), however the project lessons were carried out in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. In the partner school, the school language was Swedish; the project also formed part of their EFL class. The data presented here are from recordings in the Terrassa school.

All the students were aged between 11-13 years. In both classrooms the video-call was held mostly in the presence of the researcher, the teachers did not take part in the communication except for the initial first minutes. After setting up the videoconference the teachers left the students alone with the researcher.

### **2.1.3. Transcribing the data**

The overall recorded sessions of the telecollaborative project amount to approximately 35 hours of recording (with two cameras), however, we have limited the present study to one 44-minute session. To select the fragments for analysis, the authors and invited colleagues viewed the video-recordings from the principal camera several times, taking notes during the process. Cross-comparison of emergent phenomenon highlighted by the different viewers helped identify a key focal point: the different ways in which the students deployed diverse semiotic resources to co-construct meaning. Finally, transcripts from both cameras were created and then merged into one, ensuring a more complete panorama of the complex phenomenon of interaction across multiple modalities.

The transcription conventions employed were based on Jeffersonian (2004) transcription system with some adaptations (transcription key in the Appendix). Adaptations were made to accommodate the different foci of spoken and written text and other physical activities such as demonstrating screenshots of cell phones to a screen camera, all of which often took place synchronously (screen captures and detailed descriptions have been included in the transcripts). At times, the complexity of interaction made it difficult to separate one action from another, therefore in the transcripts some activities have numbers and letters (e.g. 1a) to indicate *simultaneous* speech and physical activities. Actions that are not simultaneous with talk have a separate number and the duration of the action is indicated.

## **3. FINDINGS**

### **3.1. Data Analysis**

#### **3.1.1. 'Leave your mobile phone alone'**

In our analysis, we present the five selected fragments chronologically. The first fragment pertains to the preparatory stage of the session. It took place before the two groups were engaged in the Skype interaction. The researchers and the teacher are arranging the students and the cameras prior to the video-call with their Swedish counterparts.



Figure 3.1. Receiving final instructions from the teacher.

Fragment 1. Participants: Researcher 1, Researcher 2, Teacher, Brandon, Matias, Laia

1 REA 1                   you see them all/  
**1a Notes**               **((to the spanish students, pointing to the laptop screen))**

2 TEA                    you see them all/ (.) yes\  
3 REA 1                 e:m\ (0.2) i'm gonna just give them glasses here as I  
                              can see you're doing (.) there\  
4 TEA                    brandon\ (.) can you leave your mobile phone alone  
                              please/  
**4a Notes**               **((looking steadily at Brandon))**  
**5 Notes**               **((without saying a word Brandon puts the mobile phone in his pocket; immediately following the teacher's remark, 0.5 seconds))**

6 TEA                    thank you\  
**7 Notes**               **((the teacher arranges the sound of the speakers; approximately 2 seconds))**

8 REA 1                 okay\ (.) who can I get to wear them please/  
**8a Notes**               **((holding up the spy-glasses))**

9 MAT                    laia/  
**9a Notes**               **((looking at laia))**

10 REA 1                will you wear them\  
**10a Notes**             **((showing the glasses to laia))**

11 LAI                    pfff\ (( ))  
**11a Notes**             **((takes the glasses from the researcher 1, gives her a pleading look))**

12 REA 1                thank you\  
13 REA 2                laia come on\

In this first fragment, the turn-taking is simultaneously managed between the teacher and the researcher, while the students are principally 'silent' participants in the interaction. The researcher initiates the sequence by confirming that the position of the Spanish students in front of the screen allows them to see their Swedish counterparts. The researcher 1's request for confirmation is repeated by the teacher (line 2) and then immediately answered by her as well (as indicated by the downward intonation of 'yes'). This effectively disallows the possibility of any allocated speaker transition (the students had been asked a question by the researcher)

because the transition boundary is taken by the teacher, rather than the potentially relevant recipients (students who need to see the screen). In line 3, the researcher 1 orients towards the process of data collection through the ‘spy glasses’ (previous experience with them demonstrated that most of the students were reluctant to wear them).

In line 4, the teacher does not align with Researcher 1’s orientation of the topic, instead she focuses on limiting the potential tools of mediation by asking Brandon to put away his mobile phone. Brandon produces an agreement token through what could be called a ‘silent turn’ –he pockets the cell phone quietly in line 5. This action is acknowledged by the teacher in line 6, followed by the teacher’s activity of re-arranging the speakers.

In line 8, the researcher once more orients towards the ‘research’ set up of the interaction –the use of the ‘spyglasses’. In line 10 (and action 10a) the researcher tries to convince Laia to wear them. As with the case of Brandon, Laia silently acquiesces to the researcher instructions. During all of the transition-relevance places in fragment 1, it is usually the teacher or researchers who organize the turn-taking, even at a potential transition-relevant place where the students’ answer would be more natural (lines 2 and 13). The students offer minimal verbal interaction; their participation in the sequence is principally silent consent, embodied through the execution of actions requested by the teacher or researcher.

It is interesting to note the gradual increase of oral participation and organization turn-taking by the Spanish students after the teacher and researcher 1 leave the room (fragments 2 through 5). Additionally, Brandon quickly takes out his cell phone and his, along with other participants’ cell phones soon become key resources in the effective mediation of the video-conference, as will be seen in the following fragments.

### 3.1.2. ‘Do you have instagram?’

The following fragment takes place during the first few minutes of the Skype-call between the Spanish and Swedish students. At the very beginning of the video-call one of the Swedish students, Erasmus, initiates the conversation by asking their peers’ opinions about the telecollaborative project they were taking part in and how they might advance the project as ‘junior researchers’ (line 1). However Erasmus does not nominate anyone specific to take the turn so Brandon self-nominates with a request for clarification. The Spanish students continue having some difficulties in answering the questions (lines 2 – 5) so Erasmus repeats the question and in lines 7 through 9 the Spanish students provide discourse markers and actions that seem to indicate they are thinking about Erasmus’ question: “well”, “mmm”, “uhm”, covering of the mouth, looking into space and then at each other. However, in line 10a the students break into laughter but do not answer the question directly.

Fragment 2. Participants: Erasmus, Brandon, Laia, Alfredo, Matias, Reseacher 2, Johanna

1 ERA	okay\ (. ) what can you do to talk about (xxx) project (xxx) outside/
2 BRA	sorry/
<b>2a Notes</b>	<b>((brandon frowns and slightly shakes his head))</b>
3 LAI	can you repe:eat/
4 BRA	can you [repeat/
5 ERA	[what can we] do:o to talk more on the project in the outside/
6 BRA	well\
7 BRA	mmm\

7a Notes ((brandon covers his mouth with his fingers))  
 8 ALF uhm/  
 8a Notes ((alfredo looks up into space))  
 9 Notes ((alfredo looks at Brandon, 1,5 seconds))  
 10 Notes ((all spanish students laugh, approximately 2 seconds))  
 11 Notes ((alfredo moves his hands slightly to point to the right and to the left to his classmates and lightly shakes his head, 1,5 seconds))



12 ALF thEy say\ (. ) they not understand you\  
 13 BRA ye:es\  
 14 MAT can you repeat the question please/  
 15 BRA becau:se\ (. ) cómo se llama/  
 (trans) what's it called  
 16 REA 2 slowly\  
 17 JOH well (. ) do you have instagram/  
 18 MAT yeah\  
 19 LAI yeah\  
 20 JOH okay\ (. ) so what's your names (xxx)/  
 21 BRA ah\ (. ) do i instagram/ (. ) profile/  
 22 MAT (xxx)  
 23 LAI cómo te llamas en instagram/  
 (trans) What is your name in instagram  
 24 BRA AH my instagram profile is\ (. ) eh\ (0.4) eh\ (0.3)  
 ((turning to his classmates)) cómo se dice deletrear en  
 inglés/ (. ) deletrear/  
 (trans) How do you say spell in English (. ) spell  
 25 Notes ((alfredo covers his eyes with his palm, 0,5 seconds))  
 26 Notes ((laia slaps her hand on alfredo's leg and chuckles in  
 brandon's direction, 0,5 seconds))  
 27 BRA eh\ (. ) my name is\ ((spelling his account name)) b (. )  
 r\  
 28 JOH b(. )r\  
 29 BRA ((continues spelling)) i (. ) i\ (0.3) ((continues  
 spelling)) a(. )a\  
 30 JOH a(. )a\  
 31 BRA n\  
 32 JOH n/  
 33 BRA barra baja/ (xxx) en español/  
 (trans) underscore in spanish  
 34 JOH we::ll\  
 we::ll\



- 35 Alfredo do::wn/ >yo que sé<\  
(trans) what do I know
- 36 BRA eh (.) twenty six\  
37 JOH twenty six\  
38 LAI (xxx) veintiseis/  
(trans) twenty-six
- 38a Notes** ((turning to brandon, smiling and playfully giving a quick up-down 'eyebrow flash'))
- 39 BRA ((answering to Laia)) veintiseis es el día de mi cumple\  
(trans) twenty-six is my birthdate
- 40 LAI mmm\  
41 LAI y tú dieciseis/  
(trans) and you sixteen
- 041a Notes** ((looking at matias))
- 42 BRA no (.) di A:LGO/  
(trans) say SOMETHING
- 43 BRA okay\ (.) one moment\ (.)>one moment one moment<\  
**43a** ((takes his mobile phone and opens instagram app, raises his index finger))
- 44 JOH okay\  
**45 Notes** ((swedish students show the mobile phone screen to the camera in order to check the spelling of a spanish student's account name, 1,5 seconds))



- 46 MAT yes\  
**46a** ((pointing to the laptop screen, 0,5 seconds))
- 47 BRA YES YES (.)\ is this\ (.) is this\  
**47a Notes** ((pointing his index finger at the screen and nodding, 1,5 seconds))

In line 11 Alfredo initiates a reformulation of the situation by stating that they do not understand the question. Brandon and Matias echo this lack of understanding, which appears to be taken as a dispreferred response by the Swedish students because shortly afterwards Johanna offers a new topic orientation in line 17, formulated in a request for information: well do you have instagram? Johanna's request for information solicits confirmation from both Laia and Matias that they have both understood her question and that they are owners of an instagram account. Sustaining the progressivity of the interaction, Johanna acknowledges Laia and Matias' affirmative tokens by soliciting more information concerning their accounts: okay\ (.) so what's your names (line 20).

This sequence is followed by an apparent misunderstanding by Matias so Laia translates Johanna's request to him. Subsequently, this triggers Brandon's comprehension of what Johanna is referring to (line 24): 'AH my instagram profile is ...' but he immediately initiates a bilingual repair sequence by turning to his classmates to ask how you say 'spell' in English (line 24). These are followed by dispreferred 'action' turns by Alfredo and Laia (25 and 26: Alfredo covers his eyes with his palm and Laia slaps her hand on Alfredo's leg and chuckles in Brandon's direction) so Brandon attempts to self-repair by trying to spell his instagram account to Johanna without explaining first that he will spell it. This leads to several adjacency pairs between Brandon and Johanna: Brandon spelling out his account and Johanna providing preferred markers by repeating the letters back to him. However, in line 33, Brandon runs into trouble again because he does not know how to say 'underscore' in English. This prompts him to insert Spanish into his turn, to which Johanna provides a hesitation marker "we::ll". Alfredo attempts a repair by providing a description of where an underscore sign is situated in the text ('down') but quickly dismisses his own insertion with a Spanish phrase in line 35: "yo que sé" (what do I know?).

Despite being unable to name the character that caused trouble, Brandon continues spelling his account name while omitting the word 'underscore' (line 36). This is followed by a lateral discussion between Laia, Brandon and Matias in Spanish in reference to the reason for the number 26 that pertains to Brandon's instagram account (lines 38-41).

At the same time, the Swedish students are looking for Brandon's instagram, even without the complete information and almost simultaneously as Brandon decides to take out his cell phone in line 43 (which had been previously prohibited by the teacher before beginning the exchange), Johanna shows her mobile phone screen to the camera in order to check whether she has found the correct Instagram account belonging to Brandon (line 45a). This action immediately elicits a response from their Spanish counterparts. In lines 46-47, Matias and Brandon point their fingers at the laptop screen and give nods of approval. Their reaction demonstrates that the semiotic resource used to mediate the communication is understood by the interlocutors.

In this fragment the use of the mobile phone and the web-camera as mediating tools helps the language learners to overcome communication barriers caused by lack of specific lexicon, contributes to affiliation between the interactants and at the same time helps to make progress on the loosely-assigned institutional task. As Tan and So (2015) have indicated, "the collaborative meaning-making process inevitably involves trouble and repair", requiring re-alignment "with semiotic resources (...) available to the interactants "in the physical and material world to arrive at shared meanings" (p. 269). In this case, Brandon and Johanna both quickly decided on similar solutions for repair – the use of the mobile phone for arriving at understanding and partially fulfilling the task assigned to them by the teachers.

### **3.1.3. 'This is another ...'**

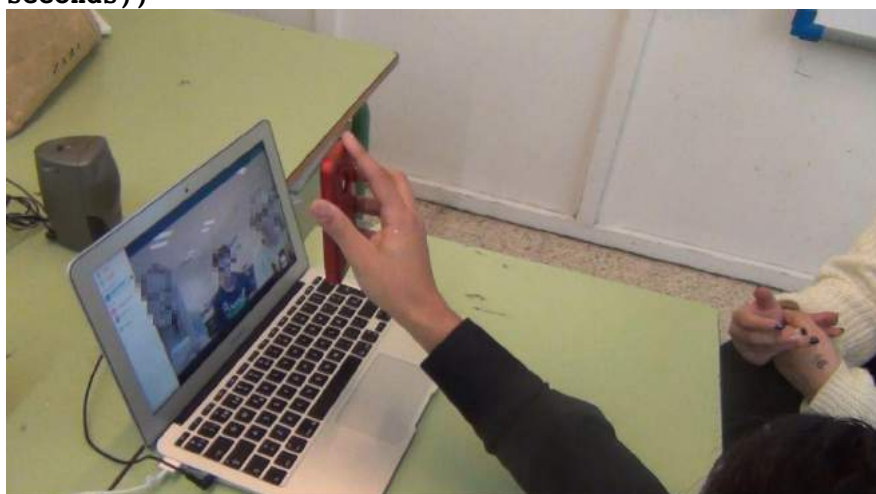
The above fragment is followed by several minutes of exchange in which the Spanish students share their instagram accounts, which is mediated through the double screens of cell phone to laptop camera. However, abandoning the attempt to spell the accounts aloud and one by one, Brandon types in his classmates' accounts into his cell phone then shows them to Johanna (line 1), who then types them into her own cell phone and acknowledges that she has found them. In line 8, Brandon displays a sensitivity to the interaction when he notices that Johanna might be having problems finding the latest account: "you can't find" but Johanna quickly confirms that she has in fact managed to locate the account on her cell phone.

Fragment 3. Participants: Brandon, Johanna, Laia, Matias, Alfredo, Venus

**1 Notes** ((brandon places his mobile phone near the laptop camera to show Laia's Instagram page, 1,5 seconds))



2 JOH okay\  
 3 BRA (xxx)\  
 4 ALF (verdad)/  
 (trans) (right)  
 5 LAI (xxx)\  
 6 MAT sí\  
 (trans) yes  
 7 LAI y tú/ (.) (xxx)  
 (trans) and you  
 8 BRA you can't find/  
 9 JOH eh\ (.) yes\ (..) yeah\ (.) found it\  
 10 VEN yes\  
 11 BRA yes\ (.)((nods to the camera)) yes\ (..)AND ANOTHER\ (.)  
 this is another\  
**12 Notes** ((brandon keeps his mobile phone screen close to the camera in order to show another instagram account, 2 seconds))



(...)

13 REA 2 did you take theirs/ (.) guys/ (.) did you take theirs/  
 14 ALF no (.) i haven't\  
 14a ((Alfredo nods to Brandon))  
 15 BRA your names/ (.) your profile names/  
 15a Notes ((brandon points his index finger at his swedish counterparts))  
 16 JOH okay\ (.) you see/  
 17 Notes ((johanna shows her instagram page to the spanish students; 2 seconds))  
 18 BRA hwoo\ (.) >yeah yeah yeah\  
 19 LAI me lo dices luego\((laughing))  
 (trans) you'll pass it to me later  
 20 Notes ((brandon typing, searching swedish students' instagram accounts, looking at the laptop screen to check the spelling; 3,5 seconds))



In an insert expansion (line 13), the researcher prompts the Spanish students to request the instagram accounts of their Swedish counterparts and Alfredo allocates the turn to Brandon by nodding to him while saying “no (.) i haven't” (line 14). It is not clear if Alfredo’s utterance refers to not having an instagram account or that he has not asked for information from the Swedish students, however, Brandon accepts the proffered turn transition and topic orientation. Initiating the next turn sequence through verbal and gestural signs aimed at the computer screen (lines 15 and 15a), Brandon asks for the information prompted by Researcher 2: “your names/ (.) your profile names/” (while pointing his finger at his Swedish partners).

Johanna quickly utilizes both talk and action to fill the turn (she displays her account on the screen, line 17), which Brandon copies into his own phone. In a side exchange in Spanish, Laia laughingly requests that Brandon share Joanna’s instagram account with her later: “me lo dices luego\” (you’ll pass it to me later; line 19).

Clearly, the deployment of this particular interactional resource of sharing their cell phone screens to avoid verbal spelling has emerged as a locally contingent, mutually achieved action that help the interactants accomplish the assigned task and share information. Arguably, the interactants’ use of mobile phones brings to mind Latour’s concept of the “object as mediator as

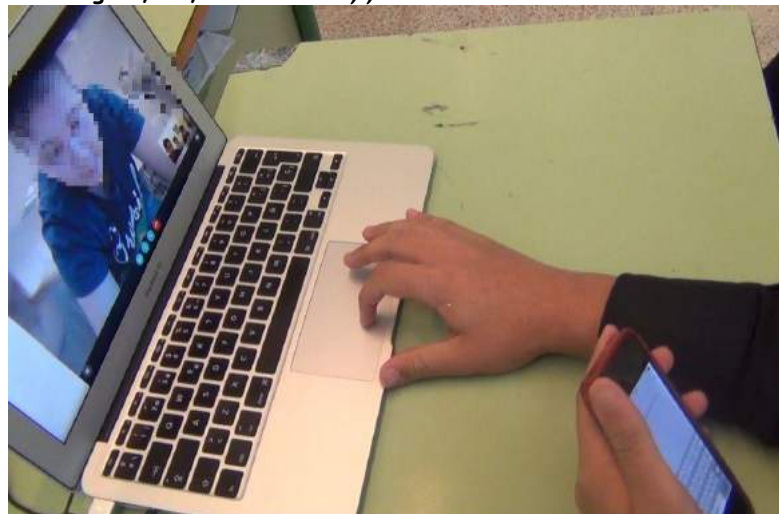
opposed to intermediary” (as cited in Gourlay, 2015, p. 498). The mobile phone has become a transformative agent and is an embodied action in the entire communicative process.

### 3.1.4. ‘oh she’s got snapchat’

The transformative and embodied nature of technological tools in the communicative process becomes even more apparent in the next fragment that integrates several types of communication modalities. Skype is a multimodal communication tool that combines different features such as audio calls (without screen), video calls, sharing of documents and other electronic attachments and instant messaging. The following fragment demonstrates how the students use diverse properties of this platform for interactional purposes, combined with other technologies along with diverse visual and gestural semiotic resources.

Fragment 4. Participants: Brandon, Erasmus, Johanna, Laia

1 BRA your mail address/  
 2 ERA okay (.) I’ll send you mine\  
 3 **Notes** ((**erasmus types his e-mail address into the Skype Messenger; 2,5 seconds**))



4 **Notes** ((**swedish girls talk to each other; 3 seconds**))  
 5 ERA you have sky:pe/(.)  
 6 JOH or snapchats/  
 7 **Notes** ((**erasmus laughs, 1 second**))  
 8 LAI no\  
 9 BRA yeah, I have snapchat\  
 10 **Notes** ((**alfredo opens instant message feature on the laptop to read the messages sent by the Swedish students; 2,5 seconds**))  
 11 BRA ((**to matias**)) one\.(.) (xxx) sesenta y seis esta\  
 (trans) this one’s sixty-six  
 11a **Notes** ((**types and saves swedish students’ e-mail addresses on his phone**))  
 12 VEN so/  
 13 BRA okay\  
 13a **Notes** ((**typing**))  
 14 **Notes** ((**johanna shows her snapchat account to the camera; 2,5 seconds**))



15 LAI oh tiene snapchat\  
 (trans) oh she's got snapchat  
 16 Brandon ONE MOME:NT\  
 17 REA 2 shhhhh\  
 18 JOH can you see that\  
 18a ((drawing her phone closer to the camera))  
 19 BRA no\ (. ) i can't\ ((trying to discern)) (0.2) ((shaking  
 his head)) i can't see\  
 20 MAT pon (xxx)\  
 (trans) put  
 21 JOH i can\ (. ) (xxx) write it down\  
 22 BRA yeah (. ) please\  
 23 Notes ((Johanna types her account in skype Messenger; 3  
 seconds))  
 24 Notes (spanish students talk to each other; 3,5 seconds))  
 25 BRA ((to johanna)) okay\

In line 2, Erasmus responds to Brandon's request for his email address both verbally and through the text message mode of the platform. As the students talk to each other about diverse possible social platforms (lines 5-9), Alfredo reads Erasmus' text message (line 10, notes) and at the same time, Brandon saves the numbers from the Skype text message to his own cell phone while reading the numbers aloud to Matias. In line 12, Venus attempts to take the floor just as Johanna shows her cell phone screen to the Spanish students through the Skype camera. Her screen shows that she does have snapchat as she continues the discussion concerning other social platforms started in line 5. However, when the Spanish students indicate that they cannot visualize the snapchat account through the Skype screen: "no\ (. ) i can't\ ((trying to discern)) (0.2) ((shaking his head)) i can't see" (Brandon, line 19), Johanna offers to type it into the other text chat "i can\ (. ) (xxx) write it down" (line 21) to which Brandon responds affirmatively "yeah (. ) please". Johanna then types her snapchat account into the text message channel of Skype, the Spanish students briefly consult with each other and finally Brandon indicates that they now all have the correct information (line 25).

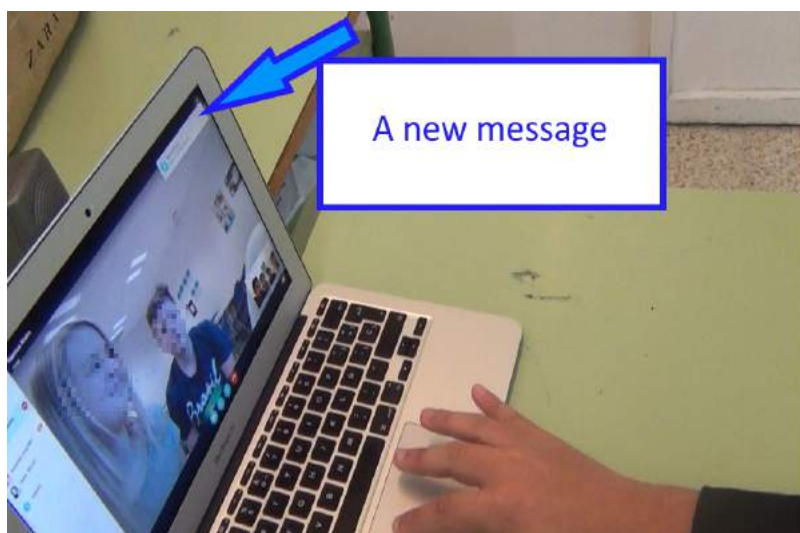


Figure 3.1. The Spanish students receive a new message.

Similar to the previous episodes we can observe that mobile phones are still actively used for mediation (lines 14, 18a). Nevertheless, realizing that it is difficult to discern what is written on the phone screens through the web-camera, the Swedish students combine this resource with another available modality (instant messaging online) and type their e-mail addresses and accounts using Skype messenger (lines 3, 20). There is a visible “synchronization between various relevant multimodal resources” and an “adjustment between the multimodal conduct of the co-participants (in their mutual alignment, and in the organization of their collective action”, along with “coordination within multiactivity” (Mondada, 2011, p. 208) which eventually constitutes a means of co-constructing mutual understanding between them for this group of participants.



Figure 3.2. Synchronization of diverse multimodal resources.

### 3.1.5. 'Who are your favourite singers?'

Towards the end of the Skype-call, as both Spanish and Swedish students feel more relaxed and animated about the interaction, they start discussing themes unrelated to the project-task and school topics. The students switch to the topic of their favourite artist/bands and start to

discover common interests. Although the students have finished exchanging contact information, their mobile phones are still actively engaged in the interaction as mediation tools.

Fragment 5. Participants: Venus, Brandon, Alfredo, Johanna, Laia, Erasmus

- 1 VEN eh (.) who is your favourite artist/ (.) or favourite band/ (.) or something/  
 2 BRA woah\ cual es nuestro (xxx) nuestros hobbies (.) todo eso  
 (trans) which is ours our hobbies and all that  
 3 BRA hwoow\  
 4 ALF i:it's (.) it is very\ (.)very\ (.) very\ (.) como se dice (xxx)/  
 (trans) how do you say  
 5 BRA long\  
 6 ALF it is VE:ERY VE:ERY VE:ERY LONG let's say\  
 7 JOH this is my favourite\  
 7a Notes ((johanna shows the photo of justin bieber used as wallpaper on her mobile phone screen))



- 8 BRA justin\ (.) justin\ (.) e:eww\  
 9 Notes ((all spanish students start to "boo" very loudly and make thumbs down gesture; 1,5 seconds))  
 10 REA 2 justin bieber\  
 11 BRA whoa (.) who are your favourite singers/  
 12 VEN favourite singers/ are (xxx)  
 13 JOH favourite/



**13a Notes** ((johanna shows justin bieber’s photo again and kisses her phone screen))



**14a Notes** ((brandon makes disapproving gestures))

**14b Notes** ((laia shows her tongue, booing very loudly and makes thumbs down gesture))

16 VEN okay I love all kind of music so I don’t have a favourite and he loves electronic music like dubstep (xxx)\

17 BRA OO:H YEAH\ YEAH\ YEAH\ YEAH (.) ((clapping hands)) (.) do you like skrillex/

18 JOH oh that's good (xxx)\

19 ERA I like that\

20 VEN i like that too\

Lines 1-7 display a misunderstanding between the two groups. Johanna initiates a new turn with a request for information about their tastes in music. Rather than taking the allocation of the turn to respond, this is followed by an insertion sequence (lateral discussion in Spanish) between Brandon and Alfredo concerning their hobbies – although, they do not translate their discussion into the target language. Alfredo then self-allocates the second part of the adjacency pair to explain why they cannot answer Johanna’s request however by this time, Johanna has projected the end of the turn and replies with an action and utterance that aligns with her previous request: “this is my favourite [artist] and holds up her cell phone with a photo of Justin Bieber so that it can be visualized by the Spanish partners through their computer screen.

In line 7, Johanna employs a range of verbal and visual actions that solicit and guide her partners’ attention, which the Spanish students align to (topic selection of favourite music artists) although their response, initiated by Brandon, is to ‘tease’ Johanna about her musical preferences, through gestures and emphatic words (8-9: “eww, boo”; thumbs down signals).

In their work on conversational humour and identity display, Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) “attempt to disambiguate that which is ordinarily referred to as ‘joking’ from ‘teasing’” (p. 275). These researchers propose that teasing, in contextually-bound situations, can lead to ‘relational bonding’ and that “relational bonding is frequent among interlocutors of medial social distance, that is friends and acquaintances, as well as among strangers” (p. 287). This is similar to other qualitative studies that find that teasing “is used to create and maintain a high level of intimacy” and can “foster in-group solidarity” (Haapaniemi, 2011, p. 143). And while the study here differs in several aspects (the members of the group are not in stable relationships at this

point, the interaction is not all face-to-face), there are many points of similarity. Johanna's response to the Spanish students' teasing (showing them Justin Bieber's photo again and then kissing her phone screen) indicates that this bonding does appear to be taking place.

Aligning to this "play frame" (Sawyer, 1997) oriented by the Spanish students, Johanna has initiated the "four-phase structure of the joking sequence", which consists of a motive, a joke, a response and a return to the serious frame: Line 13 Johanna shows Justin Bieber's photo on her cell phone (motive) and then kisses it (joke), lines 14a and 14b Brandon and Laia make disapproving gestures of thumbs down, sticking out the tongue and booing (response) and in the next turn Venus returns to a serious frame: "okay I love all kind of music so I don't have a favourite and he loves electronic music like dubstep (xxx)".

All of this is orchestrated through co-constructed actions and deployments of multiple modalities (talk, text, gestures, screenshots, etc.) between the participants as they work towards a mutual group identity (finding similar tastes in music typology, etc.) as seen in the final adjacency pairs of this last fragment. In line 17 Brandon enthusiastically reacts to the mention of electronic music: "OO:H YEAH\ YEAH\ YEAH\ YEAH (.) ((clapping hands)) and then initiates a question-answer adjacency pair: "do you like skrillex?" which is completed by Johanna's second part of the pair "oh that's good (xxx)" (line 18) which is immediately followed by a complementary adjacency pair between Erasmus and Venus: "I like that"; "i like that too".

#### 4. DISCUSSION and RESULTS

A key pedagogical aspect that emerges quickly in the beginning of the session is the subtle shift of turn and topic management that occurs once the teachers have left the room. In the first fragment, the teacher takes the floor immediately, controlling not just what is discussed, but how things are to be discussed (the modality of the interaction should be through the computer camera only). The students are 'silent' participants in the interaction until soon after the teacher and researcher 1 leave the room. However, once the language learners are left alone in the room, they soon demonstrate they are aware of the different affordances of the mediational tools available to them and are able to apply various semiotic resources properly to get relevant responses from their telecollaborative partners. They managed to construct shared meanings, even collaborative humorous exchanges that help them maintain the conversation, principally in the target language, for quite a long period of time (44 minutes). These findings correlate other CA studies regarding increased interactive competence and decentralization of role management in discourse, moving away from teacher-centred interaction (cf. Chun, 1994; Tudini, 2003; Dooly & Tudini, 2016).

Another point of interest for language educators is the key moments when the language learners encounter trouble with the target language. The students resolved these moments of trouble through the deployment of varying mediational resources, resulting in intermittent repair work which was often achieved collaboratively between participants in the interaction. There was also multimodal repair work consisting of self-initiated self-repair, other-initiated other-repair, and self-initiated other-repair (wherein the repair initiated by one of the participants is completed by the other). For instance in fragment 4, Erasmus uses the text chat modality of Skype to send his email address and Johanna holds up her phone to the computer screen to facilitate the spelling of her snapchat account and upon seeing that action is not sufficient, types the account in the text message channel.

These sequences of multimodal actions were co-constructed and built upon gradually over the 44-minute session. In fragment 1, the language learners are warned to only use the 'oral

channel' of Skype chat and in fragment 2, (beginning of their Skype session), the students did not use any other technology to resolve any trouble in communication. However, later in their online exchange, clarification and turn-taking is achieved through the use of technological tools (holding up cell phone screens to computer cameras), adjacency pairs are organized through talk intertwined with text messages and screenshots and sequence expansion also achieved through the simultaneous deployment of multiple interactional resources. Studies into workplace online interaction have focused on how individuals manage the role of technology as a part of their everyday, spoken interaction, including how people 'interact' with a computer screen (Greiffenhagen & Watson, 2009), make technology relevant in spoken interaction (Licoppe, 2010) or create coherence in online technology such as instant messaging chats (cf. Woerner, Yates, & Orlikowski, 2007; Markman, 2008, 2009). This is especially relevant to language educators who heed the growing call for teaching effective digital communication skills that will be needed in the workplace (Council of EU, 2016; Dooly, 2018).

Furthermore, there is evidence that the learners' use of different semiotic resources contributes to affiliation between them and not only serves to accomplish the institutional task (exchange of contact information) but affords them possibilities of displaying and performing 'identities' that also demonstrate affiliation. In their CA study, Benwell and Stokoe (2006) found that online interactants deliberately slow down oral speech to allow other participants time for reading simultaneous text chats, demonstrating that the sequential organization is achieved with several possible modalities taken into consideration. Similarly, the language learners in this study demonstrate the sociopragmatic skills necessary for this type of interaction and yet another skill that is necessary for future digitalized communication in the workplace. The fragments show how the participants are able to use the technology to overcome difficulties in understanding, to utilize these channels of communication to emphasize opinions, or to tease each other and to share opinions.

It is worth mentioning that it was the participants' first telecollaborative experience in English and in this sense, it is remarkable that they were able to sustain the video-call for more than forty minutes despite the Spanish teacher's prior lower expectations (she had indicated to Researcher 1 that she did not think the interaction would last longer than ten minutes). The participants demonstrated considerable competences: digital, communicative, social (as well as institutional - they get the main task of contact details done rather quickly and efficiently) and then move on to their own agenda. They also demonstrate some resistance to the institutional power infrastructure by openly ignoring admonishments for using other modalities apart from the ones that are spoken-interaction only. Moreover, the participants demonstrate sensitivity to a context which correlates with a fairly well advanced communicative competence in the L2. In summary, the language learners in this study have shown themselves to be multi-competent language and technology users with rich communicative and semiotic repertoires far beyond their assumed proficiency in the target language.

Research that includes captured data of online interaction between geographically distanced language learners interacting through digital mediation is still limited (cf. Tudini 2002, 2003, 2011, 2013; Gibson, 2009a, 2009b; Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Balaman & Sert, 2017a, 2017b; Helm & Dooly, 2017; Dooly, 2018). The authors of this study hope that the findings and discussion here will contribute to this small but vibrant field of research. At the same time, it is acknowledged that this analysis is limited in scope –it is a small study of one focal group involved in a telecollaborative project. Still, this article shows that having access to a fine-tuned, detailed description of the learners' use of various interactional resources –including technology resources- can provide important insight for innovating task design in other technology-rich language learning environments.

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## 7. APPENDIX

### Transcription notation key

- |     |           |                           |
|-----|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1.  | [text]    | overlapped speech         |
|     | [text]    |                           |
| 2.  | (0.2)     | pause in tenths of second |
| 3.  | (.)       | very short pause          |
| 4.  | >text<    | faster speech             |
| 5.  | <text>    | slowed down speech        |
| 6.  | ((notes)) | analyst’s comments        |
| 7.  | (xxx)     | unclear fragment          |
| 8.  | TEXT      | loud volume               |
| 9.  | °word°    | lower volume              |
| 10. | ::        | elongated sound           |
| 11. | \         | drop in intonation        |
| 12. | /         | rise in intonation        |
| 13. | =text     | latched speech            |