Aspects of Language Learning in Voice-Based Chat Rooms

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Abstract

In the past, learning a language was formally conducted in a classroom. At present, voice-based chat rooms can be an alternative option to practice language skills, including English. This study places an emphasis on studying aspects of language learning via talk in voice-based chat rooms. Participants are both native and non-native speakers of English from around the world chatting to each other about numerous topics. Applying Conversation Analysis (CA) to investigate aspects of language learning via talk-in-interaction in voice-based chat rooms are useful for language learners and language teachers interested in learning aspects of language used in a natural context outside the classroom. Since the participants have various backgrounds and identities, aspects of language learning are revealed in terms of a real context of language used in voice-based chat rooms which mostly relate to non-formal language, English accents, code-switching, communication strategies, interpreting pauses in a conversation, language etiquette and manners, politeness, and some forms of compliments.

Keywords: aspects of language learning, voice-based chat rooms, conversation analysis

บทคัดย่อ

ในอดีตการเรียนรู้ภาษาจะถูกจัดขึ้นในห้องเรียนอย่างเป็นทางการ ปัจจุบันห้องสนทนาเสียงสามารถเป็นทางเลือกใหม่ในการเรียนรู้ภาษาต่างๆรวมถึงภาษาอังกฤษ การศึกษานี้เน้นศึกษาลักษณะการเรียนรู้ทางภาษาผ่านบทสนทนาที่เกิดขึ้นในห้องสนทนาเสียง ผู้เข้าร่วมสนทนามีทั้งเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษและไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษสนทนากันในหลากหลายหัวข้อ การประยุกต์ใช้เทคนิค “การวิเคราะห์บทสนทนา” (Conversation Analysis หรือ CA) เพื่อหาลักษณะการเรียนรู้ทางภาษาในห้องสนทนาเสียงเอื้อประโยชน์ให้กับทั้งผู้เรียนภาษาและอาจารย์สอนภาษาที่สนใจเรียนรู้ลักษณะภาษาที่ใช้กันจริงนอกเหนือบริบทของห้องเรียน เนื่องจากผู้เข้าร่วมสนทนามีพื้นเพและเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะตัวแตกต่างกันไป ลักษณะการเรียนรู้ทางภาษาจึงถ่ายทอดออกมาให้ได้เรียนรู้ในแง่ของภาษาที่ใช้จริงในห้องสนทนาเสียง ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่จะสัมพันธ์กับรูปแบบภาษาที่ไม่เป็นทางการ สำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เข้าร่วมสนทนา การสลับใช้ภาษา การใช้กลยุทธ์

ต่างๆในการสื่อสาร การตีความการหยุดพูดในบทสนทนา มารยาทในการใช้ภาษา ความสุภาพในการใช้ภาษา และ รูปแบบการใช้คำชมในบทสนทนาบางประการ

คำสำคัญ: ลักษณะการเรียนรู้ทางภาษา ห้องสนทนาเสียง การวิเคราะห์บทสนทนา

Introduction

Chat rooms provide an excellent opportunity for people from around the world to connect with each other at a distance and they facilitate communication among people from a range of professions and ages. They also function as a meeting place where people can contact each other and exchange talk, opinions or information in an economical way. In consideration of these numerous advantages provided by chat rooms, several studies (e.g., Jepson, 2005; Patrick, 2006; Mubarak, Rohde, & Pakulski, 2009) have been conducted on this medium for the purpose of deriving increased benefits from it, especially by researchers in the field of language teaching and learning. However, until recently, when people thought of chat rooms, they thought of text-based chat rooms, possibly because numerous studies have been published on text-based communication. At the present time, however, we have not only text-based chat rooms but also voice-based chat rooms, and researchers have recently begun to investigate this medium (e.g., Sauro, 2004; Jepson, 2005; Jenks, 2009a; Jenks; 2009b; Jenks 2012, Brandt & Jenks, 2013). While these studies have made a significant contribution to the literature, further research could be conducted to explore aspects/types of language learning which can be gleaned from the interaction in voice-based chat rooms. With regard to the methodology, since the data obtained from chat rooms is naturally occurring data, and taking into account the aim of the study to explore aspects/types of language learning noticed from the interactional organization of talk from the participants, Conversation Analysis (CA) was adopted as the methodological tool. The use of CA means that this study may fill a number of gaps in the research. Much of the previous CA research has concentrated on language learning in classrooms, leaving these aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms unexamined in various dimensions. Thus, this study contributes to both computer-mediated communication (CMC) and CA literature and the research question of this study, therefore, is “What aspects of language learning can be gleaned from the interaction in voice-based chat rooms.

Literature Review

When people thought of synchronous CMC media, they thought of Internet chat rooms, especially text-based chat rooms. Thus, when researchers refer to "SCMC," "Synchronous CMC" or "Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication" (e.g., Simpson, 2005a; Simpson, 2005b; Sanders, 2006), they are invariably referring to synchronous *text-based* CMC. This may be because numerous studies have been published on text-based communication. According to Sauro (2004), many of the synchronous text-based chat studies conducted since the mid-1990s have focused on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to investigate the possibility of new modes of classroom discourse, which include details of turn taking, interactional styles and attitudes of classroom language learners (see, e.g., Blake, 2000; Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Pellietieri, 2000; Sotillo, 2000; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996).

However, currently, we have not only text-based chat rooms but also voice-based chat rooms as previously mentioned. The existence of these two different types of chat room (text-based and voice-based) has resulted in the creation of additional or alternative terms to differentiate more clearly between them. Thus, the terms synchronous text-based computer-mediated communication (StCMC) and synchronous voice-based computer-mediated communication (SvCMC) have been developed for this purpose (Jenks, 2009a; Jenks, 2009b). Other types of synchronous CMC media have also been studied, such as video conferencing (e.g., Heath & Luff, 1992; O'Conaill, Whittaker, & Wilbur, 1993), audio-conferencing (Kenning, 2010), virtual meetings (e.g., Anderson, McEwan, Bal, & Carletta, 2007; Markman, 2009) and even multi-user domains, object-oriented (MOOs), which are virtual environments in which people can play games and learn languages, etc. (for further detail see Levy & Stockwell, 2006).

Synchronous Voice-Based Chat Rooms

Currently, many synchronous voice-based chat rooms are available free of charge to anyone in the world with access to the Internet, from providers such as Yahoo Messenger, MSN Messenger, Pal Talk, Skype, and LINE. Most of these provide both text-chat and voice-chat channels for communication. Most chat rooms can also be either "open" or "closed." They are described as open chat rooms when they can be accessed by anyone and as closed chat rooms when they operate with only a few participants who have arranged to talk to each other and to no one else (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). MSN and Yahoo messengers, for example, are closed chat rooms as they are not open to everyone; one needs permission or an invitation from another party before being able to join the chat.

Previous Studies on Synchronous CMC Voice-Based Chat Rooms

Research into synchronous CMC voice-based chat rooms which studied the interactions from the Skypecasts corpus, as the current study has, was conducted by Jenks (2009a & 2009b). In Jenks' first study, the social-interactional practice of becoming acquainted among Skypecast participants was examined; this is an important aspect of the opening stage in a voice-based chat room, which enables a participant to become socialized in this medium. Jenks (2009a) referred to this social-interactional practice as a "getting-to-know-you exchange." This exchange not only builds rapport between participants but also functions as a springboard for further discussion. Jenks' found that participants in voice-based chat rooms need to make interactional and linguistic adjustments according to the norms and expectations of other participants, which are constantly changing on a moment-by-moment basis. Jenks' emphasis in his second study was on examining how overlapping talk is managed in multi-participant voice-based chat rooms in the absence of non-verbal cues. He showed that pauses can be used to avoid overlapping talk.

Apart from Jenks' (2009a, 2009b) studies, Jepson (2005) explored the patterns of repair moves used by non-native speakers in both synchronous text chat rooms and voice chat rooms. His revealed that in voice-based chat rooms, participants took more time to repair and correct pronunciation problems. In addition, Sauro (2004) showed how students establish and take control of the ongoing conversation by the use of text and voice CMC media.

As indicated in above, no synchronous CMC voice-based chat room studies have yet investigated types or aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms. Therefore, this study fills this research gap by revealing aspects of language learning via social interaction in this medium.

Similarities and Differences between Synchronous CMC Text-Based and

Voice-Based Chat Rooms

According to Paramskas (1999), synchronous CMC has a highly interactive nature and closely approaches face-to-face interaction, since interlocutors using the synchronous CMC medium can "perceive each others' presence in real-time, and modify some aspects of their communication behavior, such as speed of response…" (Yamada & Akahori, 2007, p. 38). However, it is necessary to understand which types of synchronous CMC (text or voice) possess this highly interactive characteristic. According to Jepson (2005), synchronous text-based CMC is close to face-to-face interaction. However, synchronous voice-based CMC is even closer, since it involves live speech. In the following paragraphs, the similarities and differences between synchronous text-based and synchronous voice-based CMC will be examined.

One similarity between synchronous text-based and voice-based CMC in terms of language learning is they both are considered to be a good place to practice

conversation, especially for those learners who do not have the opportunity to live in a country where the target language is spoken (Blake, 2000; Doughty & Long, 2003; Jepson, 2005). Another similarity between text-based and voice-based chat rooms is both possess the characteristic of anonymity. Smith, Alvarez-Torres, and Zhao (2003) pointed out that it is quite usual for chat room users to use pseudonyms or log-on names for their online identities. This anonymity is useful in giving participants the courage to express themselves, although it can also sometimes lead to swear words (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986), insults (Weisband, 1992), and impolite statements (Kiesler, Zubrow, Moses, & Geller, 1985).

With regard to differences, one obvious difference between synchronous text-based CMC and synchronous voice-based CMC can be seen in the turn-taking system employed in each context. Compared with text chats, negotiation routines in voice chats are closer to those which take place in face-to-face interactions, since in voice chats participants verbally interact in real time; in text chats, on the other hand, it is impossible for participants to conform to the turn-adjacency convention which governs face-to-face interaction (Jepson, 2005). Specifically, turns in text-based chat take the form of "disrupted turn adjacency" turns. Herring (1999) proposed that this type of turn occurs because of the system only receives messages which are posted in the order they are sent without concern for what they are responding to. Negretti (1999) also indicated that there is no smooth sequential order in text-based chat rooms, thus, ways to manage turn-taking and turn-giving are different from oral talk.

A difference also exists between text-based and voice-based CMC with regard to topics. Kitade (2000) noted that in text chat multiple topics overlap and are interwoven into the thread of the discussion, with the result that adjacent pairs may not related to each other. However, in voice-based chat rooms, topics rarely overlap since speakers can negotiate the topic they want to talk about immediately. Kitade (2000) noted another difference between text-based and voice-based CMC, which is that in text-based interaction interlocutors can scroll back and re-think what has been talked about and recreate their own utterances before sending them. Participants in voice-based chat rooms, on the other hand, have less time to think and no opportunity to delete utterances they have already made, as participants using the text-chat medium have. Furthermore, Kitade (2000) pointed out that in text-based interaction, non-verbal cues such as prosodic features or facial expressions are absent. Facial expressions are also absent in voice-based interaction in some chat rooms; however, certain prosodic features are available, and these are considered to be an important aspect of the analysis of talk in the voice-based chat medium. Consequently, in text chat participants tend to use emoticons to express their emotions to compensate for the absence of facial expression (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). They might also use capital letters to indicate loudness of speech and onomatopoeia to convey feelings: for instance, "Oh!" for interjections, "Hiiiiiii" for long vowels, and "zzz…zzz…" to represent the sound of snoring (Negretti, 1999).

Language Learning and Technology

Language learning improvement by using technology has a long history (Salaberry, 2001). We can study the histories of CALL from many publications (e.g., Chapelle, 2001; Levy, 1997; Salaberry, 2001). According to Zhao (2003), there are some interesting points regarding existing research in the language learning and technology area. For example, He noted that the studies on technological applications in language learning were limited to college-level language learners. In addition, most studies were about short-term applications instead of long-term integration of technology. He also noted that there have been various types of technology used (e.g., video, audio, multimedia, communication, network, and speech technologies) and these technologies have been used to support the teaching of various aspects of language learning including vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and culture. However, the study of aspects of language learning in voiced-based chat rooms was not limited to college-level language learners as everyone can join and participate in voice-based chat rooms. Thus, aspects of language learning can be studied via the conversation of participants with different ethnic backgrounds, ages, and language skills.

Differences between CA and Other Discourse Analytic Approaches

According to Ten Have (2007), there are four major differences between CA and other discourse analytic approaches. First, CA's concentration on interactional details, recordings and detailed transcripts offers more opportunity to look closely at the phenomena than other approaches. Second, CA prefers to use less artificial data, that is to say, naturally occurring data, which are not experimental data, researcher-motivated data or a product of personal intentions as found in interviews, or of external forces that can be handled in a laboratory. Third, CA views human interaction as an organizational act or emergent collectively organized event rather than as a series of individual acts; it also views human interaction as a procedural act in order to explain *how* people do something rather than *why* they do it. Forth, CA can be viewed as a study of language-as-used, focusing on verbal language that is normally used in natural situations. In addition, while CA avoids applying pre-theoretical notions or preconceptions to data analysis, other discourse analytic approaches, such as Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), are contaminated by certain external concepts and existing theories. For example, DA is "mainly concerned to develop a theory of spoken discourse as a structured phenomenon, often using the model of grammar as its basis" (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998, p. 6). According to Wooffitt, CDA "is concerned to analyze how social and political inequalities are manifest in and reproduced through discourse" (Wooffitt, 2005). Having this characteristic, CDA is "in danger of imposing an interpretation of interaction which reflects the analyst's theoretical or political orientation, and which in turn systematically obscures analysis of what is actually relevant to the participants themselves" (Schegloff, 1997, as cited in Wooffitt 2005, p. 158).

Methodology

This study uses CA as a methodological framework to investigate aspects of language learning via talk-in-interaction in voice-based chat rooms. CA is the study of recorded, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction which describes mundane social action (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Psathas, 1995; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). These characteristics of the object of CA research are also found in voice-based chat rooms. That is, the data found in voice-based chat rooms can also be described as occurring naturally and as reflecting mundane social action; thus CA can be used in this context to investigate types or aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms.

CA research aims to explore sequential patterns of interaction and to explain the normative expectations and assumptions which form those sequences (Wooffitt, 2005). In addition, Heritage (2006, p.1) claims that conversation analysis is "primarily concerned with the ways in which utterances accomplish particular actions by virtue of their placement and participation within sequences of actions." Thus, in order to investigate aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms, sequences of actions and normative interactional organization (conversational mechanisms) were also observed.

Some examples of the conversational mechanisms used to explore aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms in this study are:

- *Adjacency pairs*: these pairs play an important role in a conversation as numerous types of utterance come in pairs: e.g., questions and answers; greetings; invitations and acceptances/declinations (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).
- *Turn taking*: this is a basic form of organization for conversation consisting of two components: the turn-constructional component and the turn-allocation component (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). The turn-constructional component comprises units known as *turn constructional units* (TCUs). TCUs can be words, phrases, clauses or sentences, and these units are highly context-sensitive. That is, a TCU can only be constructed in context (Liddicoat, 2007). The turn-allocation component allocates turns among participants in a conversation. Sacks et al. (1974, p. 703) divided turn-allocational techniques into two groups: (1) those in which the next turn is allocated by the current speaker selecting the next speaker; and (2) those in which a next turn is allocated by self-selection. In addition, in taking turns, what is known as the *next-turn proof procedure*, or the way participants "display in their sequentially 'next' turns an understanding of what their 'prior' turn was about".
- *The organization of preference/dispreference*: the alignment or non-alignment which a second pair part forms with a first pair part. That is, if the second pair

part is aligned with the first pair part through the use of positive responses (acceptances, agreements etc.), it is a "preference" or "preferred action." If the second pair part is non-aligned with the first pair part by the use of negative responses (rejection, declinations, disagreements), it is a "dispreference" or "dispreferred action" (Schegloff, 2007). For instance, in greeting, if the first speaker says "Hi" and the second speaker says "Hi" back, this can be taken to indicate that he/she understood what the first speaker said and that he/she is willing to go along with that conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). This type of interaction can bring about *preference organization* or *preferred action*, which is the opposite of *dispreference* or *dispreferred action* (Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). This organization of preference/dispreference is also considered important in analyzing talk as it can cause various types of actions of talk in subsequent turns. For instance, the organization of preference/preferred action/preferred response can help to maintain the ongoing talk or the topic which participants are talking about.

CA focuses on the minute details of talk-in-interaction. These small details are considered very important because CA is orientated toward microanalysis rather than macroanalysis of talk. Importantly, "CA refuses to use available 'theories' of human conduct to ground or organize its arguments, or even construct 'theory' of its own", (Ten Have 2007, p. 26). In other words, the aim of CA is to explain the inherent theories-in-use of members' practices rather than to employ externally existing concepts (Ten Have, 2007). Thus, no theoretical preconceptions should exist in the mind of the researcher before analyzing a real, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction in detail. CA only uses a member's perspective in each talk-in-interaction rather than taking into account external factors or other available theories.

In this study, the results of aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms are either derived from an examination of single cases or collections of talk-in-interactions. Thus it would not be accurate to say that all findings derived from the use of CA methodology can be generalized. Nevertheless, in CA, the analysis of a single case may be called a finding, as Markee (2000, p. 26) confirms: "a case is only convincing to the extent that it is directly motivated by the conversational data presented for analysis." Furthermore, Schegloff (1993) stated that CA does not reject quantitative analysis but is simply reminding us of the risks of premature quantification, since CA is the study of a complex phenomenon (talk-in-interaction), in which the identification of clear, neatly defined categories which quantify demands can be problematic. To solve this problem, Pallotti (2007) summarized Schegloff's (1993) suggestion that CA researchers should typically use less precise terms by using frequency adverbs such as "massively" or "overwhelmingly" instead of using the exact terms. This method of presenting generalizations while avoiding presenting the findings in quantitative terms is similar to the method used by ethnographers to present their findings (Pallotti, 2007).

Data collection and Analysis

The data in the corpus (Skypecast chat rooms) were collected. Before analyzing the data, all the audio files were listened to, selected and then transcribed. Transcribing is a very time-consuming process. However, having the details of the natural talk in the form of transcripts is beneficial to CA researchers as they help them to represent the phenomena of interest in written form (Ten Have 2007). This does not mean that the transcripts constitute the data. They are considered to be a representation of the data, while the recording itself reproduces what is said in the social event (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). The system of transcription in a CA study aims to maintain some of the key features of talk such as intonation, pauses, sound stretches, and emphasis (Psathas, 1995). For this study, the CA transcription convention developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) was used. All selected transcripts were used along with the audio files when analyzing in order to check the correctness of sounds and CA symbols in the transcripts. Doing this makes it easier to analyze the data than when using only audio files or only transcripts. All the selected transcripts were analyzed to explore aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms. CA mechanisms/CA sequence organization in the interactions, such as adjacency pairs, sequence types, preferences and turn taking, were taken note of where appropriate.

Participants

Skypecast chat rooms are considered lively places where many speakers of English (both native and non-native) from around the world gather and chat to each other about numerous topics. This study therefore includes many participants from around the world. The number of participants in each chat room varied from 2 to over 20. However, participants in voice-based chat rooms log in and log out all the time. Thus, although the number of participants is indicated in the bottom line of the screenshot, it is impossible to determine the exact number of participants in each chat room at any one time.

In this study the participants in the chat rooms were informed that their voices would be recorded. Using the Pamela program, which is supported by the Skype/Skypecast program for recording the audio interaction, all participants in each chat room received both text and voice messages to remind them that their voices would be recorded, so if they did not want to be recorded, they just had to say so or log out. However, Skypecasts are voice-only chat rooms, therefore no video support is available. This means that participants can hear but cannot see each other.

Limitations

In some chat rooms that have a large number of participants (more than 10), it is sometimes difficult to analyze talk-in-interaction if most participants do not know how to give the floor to others, because numerous overlaps occur and make the voices of the participants unclear. This leads to a difficulty in taking turns and in maintaining an orderly manner, which means that the turn-taking pattern may differ from the traditional interaction pattern in which only a few speakers are involved.

Long pauses that appear in the audio files or in the later transcripts do not always indicate that a participant did not want or was unable to reply to another participant. This is because some participants just log out for no reason or for reasons they do not divulge to the rest of the room: for instance, logging off in order to have a shower or to have dinner. This type of communication in voice-based chat rooms is therefore different from face-to-face interactions in which we can ask the interlocutor directly if we want to know why he or she is not answering or simply infer the reason from non-verbal gestures.

Skypecast chat rooms are voice-only chat rooms with no video support, so participants cannot see any gestures made by their interlocutors. Therefore, sometimes the interpretation might not be 100% correct, compared with data which are both voice and video equipped.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the data analysis are presented below. The data were collected and then processed in response to CA principles. Some extracts were selected and analyzed as follows.

Extract 1

1	S3	is my is my question clear (.) first (.)
2	S2	ok (.) ok (0.1) yeah I get it (0.8) I get it
3		(0.8)
4	S3	yah (0.6)
5	S2	yah oh (0.1) all the most of Japanese (0.3) ah::[: Buddhist (0.6)

6		Buddhist
7		(0.7)
8	S3	[yes
9	S4	perfect
10	S2	uh ha (0.5) uh [but but but
11	S3	[budhi- budhi-
12		(0.2)
13	S2	Buddhist yeah (1.9) but u::h we↑ are↓ not (0.1) to (.) eagar to religong
14		(1.6)
15	S3	sorry ↑
16		(0.7)
17	S2	we [are not (.) to eagar (0.2) not to eagar to religong
18	S1	[most Japanese most Japanese right now are secular I think (0.6)
19		right↑
20		(0.9)
21	S2	huh-↑
22		(0.2)
23	S3	and now a religion ok↑
24		(1.4)
25	S1	most Japanese nowadays are secular isn't it↑
26		(2.9)
27	S5	I think so
28		(2.2)
29	S2	o↑ kay

Extract 1 above contains an example of English with a Japanese accent as can be seen in lines 13 and 17 (the word "eagar" instead of the word "eager" and the word "religong" instead of the word "religion"). This extract is a representative of language identity in voice-based chat rooms. Everyone comes with his/her own English accent and this might sometimes be problematic, as seen for example in line 15 in which S3 says "sorry ↑" because he does not understand S2's accent. However, this is not a large problem as long as participants in the chat room help each other to understand the speaker's words. We can see that S1 helps S2 clarify his meaning for the sentence "we [are not (.) to eagar (0.2) not to eagar to religong" in line 17 by using sentences in lines 18-19, and 25 instead "[most Japanese most Japanese right now are secular I think (0.6) right↑," and "most Japanese nowadays are secular isn't it↑". With S1's help, the rest of the room understands what S2 wants to express.

Apart from learning language identity through an English accent, we also learn how participants in voice-based chat rooms use communication strategies with each other. For example, S3 uses a direct question to check the interlocutor's understanding by saying "is my is my question clear (.) first (.))" in line 1. Also, using synonyms/paraphrasing to elicit the interlocutor's intended meaning is seen in this extract in lines 18-19, and 25. We see how S1 paraphrases S2's sentence from "Buddhist yeah (1.9) but u::h we↑ are↓ not (0.1) to (.) eagar to religong" (line 17) to "[most Japanese most Japanese right now are secular I think (0.6) right↑" (lines 18 and 19) and "most Japanese nowadays are secular isn't it↑" (line 25).

In Extract 1, grammar correction does not occur as long as participants in the chat room understand each other. S1 says an ungrammatical sentence by saying "most Japanese nowadays are secular isn't it↑" instead of "most Japanese nowadays are secular, aren't they↑". However, no one in this chat room corrects S1's grammar as they can still understand each other as can be seen from lines 25-29.

The outstanding aspect of language learning that we can learn from the talk-in- interaction in the Extract 1 is English accents. We can acknowledge that there are different English accents in a voice-based chat room as participants are from around the world. However, this would not create a problem if participants still understand each other. Also, this can be a good opportunity for language learners to learn and experience other English accents because nowadays people around the world have a range of non-native English accents, not only British or American English accents. Non-native English accents seem to predominate as non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers (Graddol, 1997). By experiencing real situations in voice-based chat rooms, language learners can gain more confidence to speak with various types of English accents.

Another aspect of language learning which can be noticed from Extract 1 is the use of communication strategies such as using a direct question to check the interlocutor's understanding and using synonyms/paraphrasing to elicit the

interlocutor's intended meaning. This shows that talking in voice-based chat rooms needs some techniques of using language to clarify meanings.

Extract 3

1	S1:	ok uh:: uh we can ask I'm not here (0.8)
2	S2:	so if you are not here↑ so where are you first of all you have to tell
3		me↓
4		(3.8)
5	S1	I'm not here↑ are you listening to me↑
6		(1.4)
7	S3:	yeah yeah
8	S4:	he's not the:re↑
9	S1:	[ok
10	S3:	Yeah [yeah
11	S1:	oh ok he's here (0.2) ok he is here so you have to write I am here (.)
12	S3:	°huhhh↑°
13	S1:	so if you will not change your name[and then I will I will .hhh huh=
14	S3:	[°I will°
15	S1:	=I'm not allow you to speak hah hah hah hah hah
16	S3:	ok I will change my name=
17	S1:	=no no no no I'm just joking I'm just joking man↑ (0.7)°huh .hh°
18		(0.6) ok so you just tell me eh >have you had any fight> with anyone↑
19		(1.1)
20	S3:	uh whats↑

21 (0.7)

22 S1: >have you had any fight> with anyone↑

23 (1.6)

24 S3: I didn't understand the sentence or thats word hh

25 S1: okay do you like fighting↑ MAN↑

26 (1.0)

27 S4: Fighting↑ (1.0) it shoom- it shoom-

In Extract 3, we can see how identity is used in an online chat room. In this extract, "I'm not here" is the pseudonym used by a participant as seen in lines 1 and 5. This is only one example of creative use of language in presenting one's self to the public. Some participants in other chat rooms use a famous identity to present themselves such as the name "Harry Potter." Another interesting point in this extract is the use of onomatopoeia to imitate the sound of the object or action it refers to. In lines 18-25, S1 asks S3 directly about his experience of fighting but S3 did not understand what S1 asked as seen in line 24 "I didn't understand the sentence or thats word hh". Also, we can notice a long (1.0) pause with no response in line 26 which means S3 does not understand S3's utterances and then does not know how to answer S3. Another participant (S4) helps S3 to understand the word "fighting" by using onomatopoeia "it shoom- it shoom-". Thus, onomatopoeia is a useful communication strategy which can be used to clarify meaning of unknown words in voice-based chat rooms.

The aspects of language learning that we can learn from the Extract 3 are identity in an online chat room and the use of onomatopoeia. Using pseudonyms in voice-based chat rooms are common. Pseudonyms in voice-based chat rooms often represent the identity of the owners of those pseudonyms. They often express the characteristics or things concerning the users. However, the main purpose of using pseudonyms that all of us know is to reflect a desire for secrecy. Also, using pseudonyms encourage participants to have creativity in using their names in the chat rooms. The use of onomatopoeia is another language learning aspect in this extract. We can learn that onomatopoeia can be used as a communication strategy to clarify the meaning for other participants in the voice-based chat room. It is used to imitate the sound of the object or action it refers to. This is in accordance with what Tamori and Schourup (1999) stated, that onomatopoeia is used to imitate sound in the world or manner of action or even the physical/mental state.

Extract 4

1	S1	I'm going to↑have dinner↑ (0.9) >shall I talk> to you guys later↑
2		(1.4)
3	S2	[O::K↑] OK
4	S3	[OK] enjoy your dinner=
5	S2	=see you la°[ter]°
6	S1	[OK]
7		(1.0)
8	S3	see you later °[Kevin]°
9	S2	[enjoy] your dinner
10		(1.0)
11	S1	see you
12		(0.4)
13	S2	bye

In Extract 4, the appropriateness of utterances before departing from the chat is used. In line 1, S1 tells the rest of the room that he is going to leave the room for dinner. Then, the rest of the room allows him to leave the chat room by saying "OK" and tells S1 to enjoy his dinner. This can show good manners and politeness of both the speaker (S1) and the rest of the room. Thus, the aspect of language learning that we can notice from this extract is that the chat room is a place where manners or appropriate etiquette is also applied. In this extract, a participant who will leave the chat room asks permission from the rest of the room to leave the room for dinner. Finally, the rest of the room allows and blesses him. Taking turns between the rest of the room and a participant who is going to leave the room in this way can create a good atmosphere and show good manners. Without taking turns from the rest of the room, the participant, who says that he/she is going to leave the room, may feel uncomfortable or feel neglected. Therefore, participants who want to help create a good atmosphere in voice-based chat rooms should pay some attention and respond to the one who says that he/she is going to leave the room.

Extract 5

1	S1	Which city are you [from?
2	S2	[I see (1.3) I'm from Beijing
3		(1.5)
4	S1	°Beijing° (0.6) and uh are you work↑
5		(1.4)
6	S2	Yeah yeah yeah yes: (0.5) I'm a work (1.5) I'm not a student anymore
7		(.).hhh hh
8		(0.9)
9	S1	Work as what?
10		(2.4)
11	S2	As an enginee:r
12		(2.1)
13	S1	Wow (0.7) huh hh you are great
14		(1.1)
15	S2	huh .hh no .hhh

In Extract 5, ungrammatical sentences can be seen in lines 4 and 6. However, this does not create a problem because S1 and S2 can continue their talk although a long 1.4 pause occurs in line 5. In line 4, S1 produces ungrammatical utterances "°Beijing° (0.6) and uh are you work↑". However, S2 can answer S1 and also produces ungrammatical utterances by saying "Yeah yeah yeah yes: (0.5) I'm a work (1.5) I'm not a student anymore…" in line 6. This shows that it is normal for participants to use wrong grammatical sentences because not all participants are native speakers of English.

Also, Extract 5 is an example of topic failure as shown by long pauses, minimal responses and brief Turn Constructional Unit (TCU). In this extract, S1 is proffering the biographical information topic by asking S2 about which country he is from (line 1). For the first adjacency pair, S2 (line 2) gives a preferred response after

a gap 1.3 which is caused by the overlapping talk. However, after he finishes the second pair part of the first adjacency pair, it seems that he does not want to go further on about this topic as we can see a long 1.5 pause in line 3. So, the dispreferred response seems to start from line 3. In line 4, S1 makes a second try by asking more about what S1 does in Beijing but again it is followed by a 1.4 pause (line 5). In lines 6-7, S1 decides to produce minimal responses by saying "Yeah yeah yeah yes:" with the expansion of brief TCUs "I'm a work" and "I'm not a student anymore (.).hhh hh" (a TCU is the specific term of "utterances"," Schegloff, 2007 p. 169). This seems to be a good sign for S1 that he might be successful in proffering his topic after the second try. Yet, after S2 finishes his TCUs in lines 6-7, there is a long pause again in line 8. Then, S1 asks S2 about his job in more detail in line 9. Again, a long pause (2.4 seconds) appears in line 10 before S2 replies S1 that he is an engineer in line 11 with no more elaboration on this topic and followed by a long pause again in line 12. S1 tries again in line 13 by giving S2 a compliment about what he is doing by using a topicalizer "wow" with a TCU "huh hh you are great" in line 13. This topicalizer conveys the speaker's positive attitude, the speaker's surprise and the speaker's interest toward the reported matter which can be used to invite more self-presentation from the recipient (Svennevig, 1999). After this topicalizer, S2 still leaves a 1.1 gap in line 14 followed by minimal responses mixed with inhalations in line 15, "huh .hh no .hhh".

Again, in Extract 5, the aspect of language that we can learn about is that ungrammatical sentences are normally found in conversation in the voice-based chat room. However, they can communicate to each other without a serious problem. They use a number of communication strategies to help each other understand their meaning. This can create collaborative learning and creativities in speaking the English language. Also, this type of English language used between non-native speakers of English can be called "English as a lingua franca" (ELF) because, as Seidlhofer (2005) stated, English as a lingua franca or ELF "has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages" (p. 339).

Furthermore, another aspect of language that we can learn about from this extract is that long pauses, minimal responses and brief TCUs produced by participants can cause the proffered topic to fail to continue. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid making long pauses, minimal responses and brief TCUs by prolonging sequences and taking turns more often. In addition, this problem can be solved by creating an interesting topic for everyone in the chat room.

Extract 7

26	S4	Sydney uh your English is ok
27	S1	yeah
28	S4	is ok just speak it easy and slowly and we are going t-
29	S1	easy easy easy mai
30	S4	easy easy yeah [that's ok
31	S1	[my English is so bad
32	S1	s[o
33	S4	[no no
34	S1	I I [I like to listen listeni listeninger English
35	S4	[ok ok
36	S3	listen huh huh
37	S4	yeah that's ok [huh huh
38	S3	[huh huh huh huh huh
39	S4	listen listen
40	S3	oh [sorry
41	S1	[ninger
42	S4	no no sorry it's no no
43	S3	yes
44	S1	Japanese English is say listeninger let's introduce
45	S2	huh huh huh huh huh
46	S1	yes listeninger is Japanese English
47	S2	huh huh huh
48	S3	o:k (hhh)

49	S2	ha ha hah hh.↑
50	S3	ok it's it's good it's very good
51	S3	so-
52	S2	yeah [that's right
53	S3	[so how about try Japanese English
54	S2	hu huh hu huh
55	S1	oh oh Japanese is say my name isu:: sitonee: nice to meet you::
56	S2	[huh huh
57	S4	[ha ha ha ha [ha]
58	S1	[right]
59	S3	oh it's very funny and nice it's nice it's very [nice]
60	S2	[hi]
61	S5	it's ok
62	S2	hi Sydney
63	S1	[yes]
64	S2	[can you hear me] can you teach me some Japanese↑
65	S1	um
66	S2	[ok teacher↑]
67	S5	[connichiwa]
68	S2	[connichiwa]
69	S5	[connichiwa] I know it
70	S1	okenkideska↑
71	S2	huh huh huh pardon↑
72	S5	kenki

73	S3	how are you how are you
74	S2	um
75	S5	kenki kenki
76	S4	kenki
77	S2	kenki
78	S3	kenki
79	S1	o::::h oh su:
80	S2	(Japanese word)
81	S1	Japanese room s- oh
82	S2	ha ha ha ha
83	S1	yeah ha ha ha hah

Extract 7 is an example of how participants compliment and support each other in speaking English. S1 is from Japan and his English is not good but the rest of the room helps him feel better about his English. There are many points showing that the rest of the room supports him in speaking English such as in lines 26 and 30. However, S1 knows himself that his English is not good as shown in line 31. His English reveals the uniqueness of the Japanese-English accent with the word "listeninger" instead of "listen" as seen in lines 34, 44, and 46, for example. From the interaction, we can see that S2 and S3 like S1's accent and ask S1 to speak in a Japanese-English accent (lines 50-54). Then, S1 starts speaking Japanese English in line 55 "oh oh Japanese is say my name isu:: sitonee: nice to meet you::"

These compliments and supports between participants during the use of the English language in the chat room are important because they can help a speaker become more confident and keep talking more. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1991, p. 145), compliments are defined as "one of the speech acts to express solidarity between speaker and hearer and to maintain social harmony". Thus, to create social harmony in voice-based chat rooms, compliments should be applied sometimes.

Also, in Extract 7, we can see the use of code-switching. Myers-Scotton and Ury (1977) defined code-switching as the "use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction" (p. 5). Code-switching in this extract is used

when a participant in the room asks the speaker who speaks Japanese English to teach him Japanese. That is, in line 64, S2 asks S1 to teach him Japanese and then S1 accepts his request as seen in line 65. In line 67, a new participant (S5) speaks Japanese "[connichiwa]" to greet S1. Then, S1 asks S5 back "okenkideska↑" and S5 answer "kenki" in line 72. While the Japanese conversation is occuring, S2 does not understand so he says "huh huh huh pardon↑". Then, S3 helps S2 to understand the sentence by translating it into English "how are you how are you" in line 73.

Thus, aspects of language learning we can see from Extract 7 are applying the compliments and code-switching. Compliments in voice-based chat rooms can help a speaker become more confidence and keep talking more while code-switching takes an important role to make conversation go on between participants and sometimes it helps make a conversation more interesting.

Indeed, the occurrence of code-switching depends on many factors. Wei (1998, p. 156) said that code-switching occurs depending on "extra-linguistic factors such as topic, setting, relationships between participants, community norms and values, and societal, political and ideological developments influencing speakers' choice of language in conversation" (p. 156). Thus, code-switching is a normal phenomenon which can occur frequently in voice-based chat rooms.

Extract 12

1	S1	You are from Taiwan
2	S2	That's right I'm from Taipei Taiwan who is from Japan here
3	S3	Shong I'm from Japan
4	S2	Shong hey you from Japan what's the city
5	S3	uh nearby Tokyo
6	S2	ok I know Tokyo
7	S3	oh I see oh me too I know Taipei
8	S2	great shake hands are you sure you know Taipei city shake hands
9	S3	huh huh huh huh
10	S1	Um hm uh Vivian uh how old are you
11	S2	one hundred years old

12 S3 huh huh huh hm hm

13 S1 hah hah

14 S2 you know but ok guys let me tell you something interesting tonight

15 every [children I talk

16 S1 [yu- you are

17 S2 and every[one ask me about my age

18 S1 [you're you're

19 S2 I really don't know why tonight so what's wrong tonight every

20 body'd like to know my age I really don't know why so my

21 standard answer to this question is I'm a one hundred years old and
22 you can call me grandma

23 S3 grandma

24 S2 yes I'm onisano onisa o:: o-pa oto o::opa sa pasa

25 S3 yes yes opasa yes yes

26 S2 o- o- o opasa grandma opasa watashiwa opasa huh huh huh h[uh huh

27 S1 [huh huh

28 huh huh

29 S3 can I say [that huh huh huh hh. in Japanese↑ watashiwa opasa desu

30 S1 [huh

31 S2 yes yes ah

32 S3 huh huh huh huh huh

Extract 12 is an example of the inappropriateness of asking about age. We can see from the conversation that people do not want to talk about their age even in a voice-based chat room. In this voice-based chat room, people cannot see the faces of their interlocutors and do not know each other but they are still concerned when people ask them about age. As seen in line 11, S2 answers S1 that she is 100 years

old as she does not want to tell S1 her real age. She also complains about everybody wanting to know her age so she answers everybody with a standard reply, saying that she is 100 years old, as seen in lines 19-21.

The use of code-switching between Japanese and English also appears in this extract as seen in lines 24-29. Code-switching in this extract occurs for a while when S2 starts saying "yes I'm onisano onisa o:: o-pa oto o::opa sa pasa". After this sentence, S3 continues saying some Japanese words and asks S2 about Japanese as seen in lines 23 and 29. Thus, it is possible for code-switching to occur in conversation if a speaker and his/her interlocutor share some background knowledge about a language.

Therefore, the aspect of language learning about which we can learn from Extract 12 is that we should avoid asking about age of those we have just meet or do not know even in a voice-based chat room. Also, the use of code-switching can be found in a voice-based chat room when two or more people share knowledge of a language.

Extract 19

102	S1	this kind of thing you know↑ (0.4) so↑ it's actually you the
103		national language of uh:: (1.3) different people you know↑ (0.4) it
104		different voice come together and (0.3) then
105		(0.9)
106	S3	°uh huh°
107	S1	it comes and (.) you know↑ it (.) it comes (1.3) so Urdu Urdu means
108		uh (0.2) language of different people
109		(0.6)
110	S3	uh huh

We can see that S1 extends the sound "uh" in line 103 as he is thinking how to explain to S3 the definition of Urdu. We know that S1 and S3 are talking about "Urdu and its meaning" by a next-turn proof procedure (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998, p. 15) that finally displays this clue in lines 107-108. Again, "uh"+ a 0.2 pause in line 108 also functions as a device to show that S1 is thinking of what he said in a prior

turn about how he terms Urdu in line 103 which is "…language of uh:: (1.3) different people".

Furthermore, the word "uh" can signal that the story is not yet over (Silverman, 1998; Sacks, 1992b, p. 9) as we can see in line 103 and line 108 that after the word "uh" there are still some other utterances. Furthermore, the use of "uh" is considered as a kind of technique for seizing the floor especially "if it occurs close to – if not precisely on – the end of a prior utterance and is followed by a silence", (Sacks, 1992a, p. 497). In this extract, this "uh" can also function as a floor seizure technique as we can see that when S1 in line 103 uses the word "uh" plus a 1.3 pause, he can seize the floor and continue his utterances without interrupting or floor seizing from the rest of the room. This type of "uh" which can be used to seize the floor happens again in line 108. However, this does not mean that "uh" followed by a silence can successfully be used to seize the floor every time particularly when that silence after "uh" is too long. This is because it seems as though that person can produce no more utterances. Thus, "if one says nothing yet, then someone else may take the floor", (Sacks 1992b, p. 497).

Therefore, the aspect of language learning which can be noticed from this extract is that the functions of the word "uh" in voice-based chat rooms are various. For example, the speaker can use the word "uh" to prolong the time to think. In addition, the word "uh" can signal that the story is not finished. Furthermore, the word "uh" can be used as a floor seizure technique.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To sum up, there are many aspects of language learning in voice-based chat rooms, examples of which follow. (1) In voice-based chat rooms grammar correction is not focused upon as long as the interlocutors can understand each other. (2) Various communication strategies need to be used in voice-based chat rooms to clarify or convey meanings such as the use of onomatopoeia to imitate the sound of the object or action it refers to, the use of synonyms/paraphrasing to elicit the interlocutor's intended meaning, the use of a direct question to check the interlocutor's understanding, the use of code-switching, the use of a filled pause to express refusal, and the use of some words such as "uh" to seize the floor, to prolong thinking time or to signal that the story is not finished. (3) Language etiquette and manners including politeness are applied in voice-based chat rooms. (4) Some forms of compliments are used among interlocutors in order to support each other. (5) Topic failure in voice-based chat rooms are caused by long pauses, minimal responses and brief TCUs. (6) In voice-based chat rooms, English accents are various depending on the speaker's background.

Obviously, some aspects of language in voice-based chat rooms are similar to aspects of language used in daily life or in face-to-face situations; however, some aspects of language are only found in voice-based chat rooms. Therefore, knowing some aspects of the real English interaction in a voice-based chat room context from this study can help keep both language teachers and students up to date with the various forms of interaction taking place via the new technology, instead of relying solely on textbooks. It is noticeable from the interactions examined in this study that not all participants are native speakers of English; therefore, their English perhaps includes grammatical errors. However, their communication is kept going, with no attention being drawn to incorrect grammatical form as long as the participants can understand each other. Thus, students who want to practice their English in voice-based chat rooms will have no concerns regarding their English grammar as they are not the only non-native speakers of English. By practicing speaking English via this online setting they can gain more confidence in speaking English. In terms of English accents, it is very normal to hear various accents in voice-based chat rooms as people are from around the world. Knowing this aspect can help language learners realize that in real-life situations there are various accents apart from American English or British English accents. As a result, the concerns about accents can be ameliorated when non-native speakers are cognizant of this fact. In addition, to make an understanding in a conversation accomplished between the interlocutors, some aspects of language learning should be learned such as when and how to use communication strategies. Furthermore, we can learn that etiquette and manners should also be applied in the voice-based chat rooms as they are applied in other contexts. Thus, in this regard, this study may also contribute to the field of language teaching and learning apart from contributing to the field of CA and CMC.

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