Chapter 12

"Can you repeat please?"

Young learners' emergent awareness and use of interactional repertoires in a telecollaborative exchange

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Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that technology can play a key role in language education through the amplification of opportunities to use the target language with other learners or speakers outside of the classroom. However, research into the use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) with young, beginner learners is far less frequent as it is often assumed that some level of language proficiency is required for effective telecollaboration. There is a need for inquiry into whether and how the technology can support the language learning process and, if affirmative, what effective teaching strategies are deployed to optimise 'learnable moments' during its use. As seen in this study, teachers can use CMC to elicit engagement, ensure repetition of formulaic language or to focus language use during technological glitches. CMC also affords ample opportunities to learn and practice mediation strategies during interactional troubles, even in young learners such as those in the study. This chapter places a detailed lens on these and similar practices, providing support for the introduction of CMC in early language education.

This chapter looks at the moment-to-moment verbal and embodied sequences of interaction between young language learners engaged in a CMC session. The session involved Virtual Exchange (also known as telecollaboration) between very young learners (ages 7–8) of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study considers how the teacher used opportunities that emerged during an information-gap activity carried out between the geographically distanced partners to promote spontaneous moments of learning. During the online interaction, the teacher guides the learners' attention to and promotes the use of contextualised, brief and polite, exchanges in the target language. The analysis reflects how the teacher focuses the learners' attention on Turn Construction Units (TCUs; Schegloff, 2007) that constitute social basics of interactional competence in English and their production as an indicator of potential learner uptake.

Methodological framework: Approach and context

This study applies an emic, CA approach (Masats, 2017) to data compiled during a telecollaborative project between two primary education schools. One school in Catalonia had two group-classes of 26 students (we look at a half-group of one of the classes) and the other was located in Austria, with a single class of 24 students. We look at four excerpts from a 12 minute, 16 second telecollaborative exchange, mediated through the digital platform Skype.

The cross-disciplinary project was carried out over the course of four months and involved learning about healthy and unhealthy habits through English. The ethnographic study was designed and carried out collaboratively (including design of teaching materials) between GREIP researchers and teachers (Nussbaum, 2017). Parental permission to record was mediated through the school administration. The young learners were first 'recruited' by 'avatar social scientists' to help them observe three cases of 'avatar tweens', all of whom had some good habits but also some rather deleterious ones as well. In groups of four, the young 'scientist helpers' watched assigned case studies of the subjects named Smelly Susan (with obvious hygiene problems), Hungry Helga (with dietary challenges) and Gameboy Gary (with a videogame addiction). The cases had slight variations in all the versions to allow for eventual comparison and completion of information gap activities that led to the exchange.

Figure 12.1 Class arrangement of participants

The excerpts analysed herein stem from one of the first telecollaborative sessions in which the young learners are involved in a comparative information exchange regarding their observations. Figure 12.1 above shows the position of the participants in relation to the computer screen where they can see their telecollaborative partners.

The focus of the analysis is on the different ways in which the young learners notice, practice and display emergent interactional competence in both the face-to-face and online interaction. We follow Hall's (2018) proposal of the use of 'interactional repertoires' (IR) in reference to the actions and semiotic resources used to display context-situated accountability in the interaction and epistemic stance of IR in the target language.

Analysis and discussion

Excerpt 1 begins at the point in which the teacher is explaining to the class the activity they will be carrying out with their telecollaborative partners. They have part of the information needed for the 'scientist helpers' and their distanced partners have complementary information regarding the case studies. The videoconference has not yet begun at the beginning of this excerpt.

Excerpt 1. 'Answer answer'. Participants in Barcelona: Teacher (TEA), researcher (RES), students in choral response (SS), other students, namely Marta (MAR), Sergio (SER), Hakim (HAK), Toni, Victor, Pol, Clara (see class configuration in Figure 12.1 above), unidentified student (??). Onscreen: Teacher in Vienna (VTEA), students in Vienna (VSS), unidentified student in Vienna (Vst).

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1    TEA:  but <different days>\ (.) YOU observed susan on mon:day\ (.)
2          they observed it on <wednes:day> (.) >different days< (.) ok/
3          ((Marta is watching the teacher, Hakim is gazing directly at the camera,
4          Victor is writing on his worksheet, the others look distracted))
5    MAR:  uhm les mateix-
           uhm the same ones-
6    TEA:  =let's go then i need one volunteer\ (.)
7          ((Marta raises her hand half way first,
8          then Hakim and immediately afterwards Pol raises both hands))
9    TEA:  hakim come here ((Hakim stands up, smiling)) and click videocall
10         [we are going to call the boys in vienna uh]
11         [((skype ring starts, Hassim hesitates, starts to sit down again))]
12   RES:  [>answer answer< ((gestures with hand to go to the computer))]
13         ((Hakim runs to the front of the room, Toni laughs and covers his mouth,
14         Victor smiles while Marta, Clara and Pol stare))
15   TEA:  [answer with video click]
16   SER:  [xxx] ((calls out something to Hakim))
17         ((the students in the backrow giggle nervously and look excited;
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18          Toni starts beating drums ((see Fig 2 below))
19          and dancing to the rhythm of the Skype ring; turns to Clara and smiles))
20   SER:   home xxx
            man xxx
21          Skype ringing stops
            (…)
27   VSt:   HOLA
            HELLO
28          ((Hakim sits down;students look excited and engaged at the computer))
29   VTEA:  =(hello)
30   TEA:   say hello::
31   SS:    HELLO:: ((some wave))
32   SS:    HOW ARE YOU::/
33   VSS:   HELLO:::
34   SER:   hell-
35   HAK:   =HOW ARE YOU/ ((puts hand to mouth like a megaphone Fig 3;
36          looks at researcher then teacher)) (2)
37   MAR:   HOW ARE YOU/
38   V St:  =i'm fine
39   SER:   [eh/] ((he and several students have confused looks))
40   ??:    [°eh/°]
41   TEA:   °i'm fine° ((to class with a gesture to repeat))
42   V S1:  thank you\ ((slightly distorted voice due to connection))
43   REA:   [what's that say/ ((points to screen where message saying
44          'unstable connection' has appeared))
45   MAR:   [i'm-
46   V St:  xxxx(1)
47   TEA:   ok\ (.) do you have any information about (.) <smelly susan>/(2)
48          ((students look fixedly at the screen))
49   V St:  yes:\
50   TEA:   ok\
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In line 1 the teacher checks comprehension with a token "ok?", which receives a partial verbal response from Marta, delivered in Catalan. However, there is an overlap between Marta and the teacher; oriented to by Marta as an interruption (she abruptly stops speaking). Switching to English in line 6, the teacher then asks for and selects a volunteer to start the videoconference; however, the distanced partners call first (line 11), which provokes an embodied hesitation from Hakim. The musical ringing noise (recognisable Skype sound) invokes a generalised excitement among the young learners, visible through their exclamations in Catalan (line 20) and embodied social interactions (drumming to the music, which can be seen as a response to the prosody of the technological modality, smiling at each other, information-seeking utterances in lines 17–19). These embodied actions are also indicative of their engagement in the activity. This continues to be displayed throughout the excerpt (e.g. line 48) as seen in Figures 12.2 and 12.3 below.
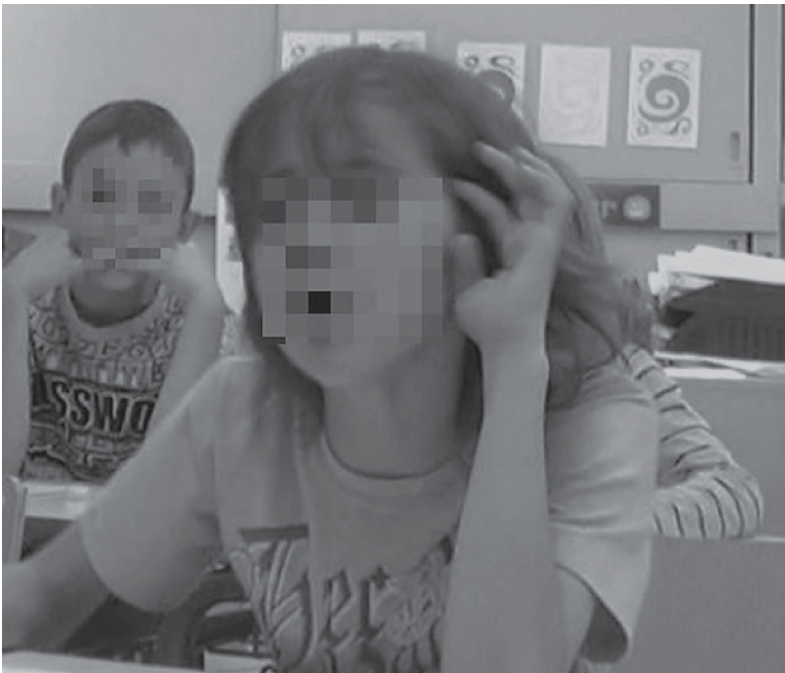
Figure 12.2 Drumming to the ring

Figure 12.3 Hand megaphone: How are you?

Interestingly, the distanced partner (V St) initiates the first turn of the video-conference in the L1 of her partners (Catalan or Spanish – the greeting is the same in both languages) in line 27; however, the videoconference teacher immediately follows up her greeting with another one in English. The teacher in the classroom elicits a choral response from the class in line 30, positioning the young learners in an epistemic stance of 'knowing' (K+). That is, the teacher elicits a display of their knowledge regarding the appropriate deployment of IR for initial greetings in English. In line 31, the students not only verbally respond correctly, their embodied social interactions (e.g. waving) indicate that they are aware of the meaning of the exchange.

The students themselves self-initiate the first part of the next adjacency pair in the TCU in line 32 with "how are you?" providing further evidence of their K+ status of the IR required for an international videoconferencing context. In line 34, Sergio initiates a repetition of the first adjacency pair, in response to the videoconference partners greeting; however, there is an overlap with Hakim, in line 35, who loudly (and with exaggerated embodiment) repeats the previous salutation of the TCU.

After a two-second pause, perhaps due to the lag in the videoconference communication or prompted by Hakim's behaviour, Marta repeats the second part of the greeting (repetition of "how are you?" in line 37). This prompts the completion of the TCU from the telecollaborative partners ("I'm fine", line 38), which subsequently leads to a downgrading of epistemic status to K– of several of the students (Sert, 2015), displayed through parallel utterances of "eh" in lines 39 and 40 and embodied responses of confusion.

The downgrading to K– evokes an embedded and embodied repair by the teacher in line 41 in which she models and then elicits a choral response for the correct utterance ("I'm fine"); however, before the students have time to repeat the utterance, their telecollaborative partners provide a post-expansion to the adjacency pair, saying "thank you" in line 42.

In line 45, Marta self-allocates the turn to reply to her partners with "I'm" (perhaps due to a misunderstanding of the previous part of the turn in line 42, which was quite distorted) but there is an overlap by the researcher (line 43), which is oriented to as an interruption by Marta so she does not complete her utterance. Further interactional trouble – caused by technology glitches in line 46 – leads to a transition relevant place which the teacher appropriates for a new topic bid, leading the class into the task of information exchange, "ok, do you have any information about Smelly Susan?"

In excerpt 2 the two partner classes are exchanging information regarding the information they have gathered while watching their small group case studies. The distanced partners go first, listing the healthy habits they have noted while observing the interviews with Smelly Susan.

Excerpt 2. Can you repeat please? Participants in Barcelona: Teacher (TEA), researcher (RES), students in choral response (SS), other students, namely Clara (CLA) Marta (MAR), Sergio (SER), Hakim (HAK), Victor, Pol, Clara (see class configuration in figure 1). Onscreen: Teacher in Vienna (VTEA), students in Vienna (VSS), student in Vienna (VS1)

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1    VTEA:  Irine/(.)can you tell us xxx/((voice is distorted;students look confused))
2    CLA:   qué:::/ ((looks at Toni))
            what:::/
3    RES:   [a healthy habit/]
4    CLA:   [°qué ha dicho°/] ((looks at the teacher))
            [°what did she say°]
5    TEA:   a HEALTHY habit of smelly susan\ (.) listen\
6    VS1:   x=xxxx ((distorted))
7    MAR:   healthy habit (.) qué/ ((looks at her worksheet))
                             what/
8           ((Clara, Sergio, Hakim and Pol all look at their worksheets))
9    TEA:   °did she say something/ (.) can you repeat please/°
10          ((makes gestures with hands to get them to repeat))
11   MAR:   CAN YOU
12   SS:    =CAN YOU REPEAT PLEASE/
13          ((several look expectantly at screen; Hakim looks at his worksheet))
14   RES:   it's not very good\
15   SER:   =CAN YOU RE- repeat please::/
16          ((looks embarrassed and puts his pencil in his mouth))
17          ((Clara smiles and turns to Toni))
18          ((researcher whispers to the teacher))
19   VS1:   eating fruit ((not very clear))
20   RES:   the connection's not good\
21          ((students look at each other confused))
22   VS1:   eating fruit\
23   CLA:   °qué ha dicho/°
24          ((looks to the front of the class; seems to be speaking to the teacher))
            °what did she say/°
25   TEA:   did you understand
26   CLA:   què ha dit:/ ((looks at the teacher))
            what did she say:/
27   TEA:   one more time\ (.) what do you say/
28   SS:    CAN YOU REPEAT PLEASE:::/
29          ((very loud and with dramatic body gestures by several Figure 12.4))(3.5)
30   VTEA:  xxx
31   VS1:   EATING FRUIT\
32          ((Sergio looks at his worksheet, the others look at the teacher))
33   TEA:   eating/
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34   CLA:   fruit:
35   TEA:   eating fruit\ (.) did you say/ ((talking to the screen))
36          [>look at the photo\<] yes\ eating fruit:\ so everybody circles:
37          >with a pencil<((makes a circle gesture with her hand)) eating:: fruit::\
38   CLA:   xxx
39   TEA:   healthy habit\
40          ((students all mark something in their worksheets))
41   VTEA:  xxx
42   TEA:   THANK YOU:\ ((to the screen))
43   TEA:   say thank you::\
44   SS:    THANK YOU:::\
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The excerpt begins with several incidences of "classroom interactional trouble" (Sert, 2015: 58). In the sequence of events, the communication technology impedes the students' comprehension (time lags, distorted voices) and the young learners express their confusion through both embodied and verbal actions (lines 1–7). In line 9, the teacher converts this interactional trouble into a 'spontaneous learnable' (Majlesi and Broth, 2012), by modelling the appropriate utterance to initiate an other-repair clarification request "can you repeat please?". This is accompanied by an embodied elicitation (gesturing) to repeat the phrase. In line 11, Marta begins an unsuccessful self-allocated turn, which she abruptly stops when she realises she is alone; however, the other students immediately chime in with the choral repetition in latched speech in line 12. The lack of response from the videoconference partners elicits a repetition of the utterance from Sergio. This utterance includes a self-repair, "CAN YOU RE- repeat please" (line 15).

The unrelenting interactional trouble contributes to Clara's increasing frustration, evident in her continued requests for clarification, first in a short token utterance ("what?" to her classmate, Toni, line 2), followed by ("what did she say?" repeated twice in Spanish in lines 4 and 23 and finally in Catalan in line 25), the last requests directed at the teacher. Once more, in line 26, the unfolding sequence affords the teacher a second opportunity to elicit a demonstration of the learners' K+ regarding the interactional moment by asking "what do you say?". This elicits a correct choral response from the students, "can you repeat please?" very loudly, allowing the learners to display both verbally and through embodiment their 'knowing'; exemplified through the volume of their utterance and the dramatic gestures employed.

The students' exaggerated response is mirrored by their telecollaborative partners, who repeat their answer, also very loudly. The teacher then deploys a 'designedly incomplete utterance' (Margutti, 2010) to check comprehension of the telecollaborative partner's response (line 33, "eating .."') which is completed by Clara in the next line ("fruit"). Interestingly, it has been Clara who has demanded the most clarifications and repair work during the entire excerpt. Finally, at the end of the excerpt, the teacher provides another spontaneous

Figure 12.4 'Repeat PLEASE!'

learnable by first demonstrating and then asking for repetition of the inter-
actional resource of a sequence-closing third part of the information-exchange
TCU: the finalisation of the turn with 'thank you' (lines 42–44).

As the exchange continues, we begin to see several incidences of uptake
by the learners of the teachers' prior repairs, embedded modelling and use of
known-information hints in their deployment of interactional resources for
'polite' repair work and expanded TCUs in the target language of English.

Excerpt 3. Bup bup. Participants in Barcelona: Teacher (TEA), students in
choral response (SS), unidentified student (??), other students, namely Clara
(CLA), Hakim (HAK), Pol (POL), Sergio (SER). Onscreen: Teacher in Vienna
(V TEA), student in Vienna (V S1)

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1    VTEA:  ok\ (.) the next one\
2    TEA:   °the next one\°
3           ((distorted voices can be heard from the screen))
4    CLA:   bup bup ((seems to be imitating the noises;
5           turns her ear towards the screen in an exaggerated way))
6    ??:    bup
7    CLA:   CAN-
8    SS:    CAN YOU REPEAT PLEASE::/
9    HAK:   ((Hakim rises halfway in his seat and leans across his desk towards the
            screen))
10   TEA:   °sit down properly°\
11   HAK:   ((Hakim sits down, looks at the teacher))
12          ((continued silence from the computer; the students stare at the screen))
13   POL:   pfff ((Pol slumps further down in his seat and wiggles his fingers
14          at the side of his head))
     (…)
15   TEA:   eating::/
16   SS:    [fruit]
17   SER:   [VEGETABLES]((pronounced vege tables)) ((sits upright again.
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18          Looks at the teacher))
19   TEA:   vegetables\ (.) that's right::
20          ((students all mark something in their worksheets))
21   V S1:  eating vegetables\
22   TEA:   YES:\ (.) THANK YOU\ (.) say thank you::\
23   SS:    THANK YOU:::\
24   TEA:   everybody circles/ (.) [in your observation sheet/] pol finished/
25   ??:                          [°eating vegetables°]
26   POL:   ((Pol nods his head vigorously))
27   V S1:  you're welcome\
28          ((students look at screen again))
(…)
32   V S1:  [xxx]
33   TEA:   (oopsie)
34   SS:    CAN YOU REPEAT PLEASE::/
(…)
60   TEA:   a ver (.) it's already circled\ so don't circle it\
            let's see
61   POL:   ja està
            it's already done
62   TEA:   yes\ fantastic\ (.) say thank you::
63   SS:    thank you:::
```

At the beginning of the excerpt, the technological glitches of the communication channel have once more created interactional trouble (lines 1–6). In line 7, Clara self-allocates a turn in which she elicits an other-initiated repair and begins the utterance 'can'. This prompts the rest of the class to join in with the recently presented repair work utterance, "can you repeat please?" In this excerpt, different from the previous ones, the repair work is not elicited by the teacher; the students self-allocate the turn and correctly select the IR needed to solicit repetition of the answer from their telecollaborative partners. A similar TCU takes place a few lines further on (lines 32–34), providing further evidence of uptake on behalf of the students. However, the second embedded spontaneous learnable (the use of a third position post-expansion action of 'thank you') does not seem to be successfully assimilated at this point as they must be reminded twice to use the resource (lines 22 and 62) nor do they initiate the third position post-expansion on their own.

Line 60 presents an interesting case of plurilingual use, initiated by the teacher, who had, till now, predominantly started all her turns in English. In this instance, however, she initiates the instructional turn in Spanish but self-repairs, switching to English in the middle of the turn, signalling to the students the preferred language choice for the class. Pol replies to the second part of her utterance, oriented to the instructions delivered and clearly indicating his comprehension of the directives given in English. However, his answer, in alignment with the first part of line 60, is delivered in Spanish. This TCU is closed by the

teacher in yet another language switch (back to English in line 62: "yes, fantastic") before opening another TCU in English "say thank you".

In excerpt 4, captured at a later point in which the young learners are conveying their observations about Smelly Susan to their telecollaborative partners, there now appears to be uptake of the previous spontaneous learnable regarding the post-expansion 'thank you'.

Excerpt 4. Drinking lots of water. Participants: Teacher, videocall teacher, Marta, Videocall student, Hakim, Pol, Carla, Toni

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1    TEA:   now we do the healthy habits we know about susan\ ok/ one volunteer/
     (…)
5    TEA:   healthy habit number one\ ((raises one finger and speaks to screen.
6           Then points to an item on her worksheet to guide Marta))
7    VTEA:  ok\
8    MAR:   <drinking (.) lots of wa- gua- quater/> ((looks at teacher))
9    TEA:   °say sorry\ (.) sorry repetition\° ((circular gesture for her to repeat))
10   MAR:   >sorry\< drinking-
11   VS1:   =drinking lots of water\
12   TEA:   ah yes\ (.) she understood\ ((smiles and looks at Marta.
13          Marta looks up at screen)) yes\ (.) say yes\
14   MAR:   yes\
15          ((both look at the screen))
16   VS1:   thank you\
17   VTEA:  [what else/]
18   TEA:   °say you're welcome°
19   MAR:   you're welcome\ ((Hakim begins to stand up))
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In line 8, Marta has difficulties with the pronunciation of a target word (water) and attempts to self-repair several times. The complicit looks between Marta and the teacher indicate awareness that this is causing delays in the progressivity of the interaction. The teacher again seizes the opportunity for a spontaneous learnable by offering an alternative repair sequence: "say sorry". Marta successfully begins to self-repair in line 10 but this is overlapped by the student on the conference call who has understood Marta's previous turn without need for further clarification. To complete the TCU, the telecollaborative partner provides the post-expansion third position "thank you" so the teacher proposes yet another adjacency pairing: "say you're welcome", which Marta repeats in line 19.

Conclusion

This study corroborates other studies that demonstrate how learners can develop competence in the target language through mobilisation of plurilingual and plurimodal resources (Llompart et al, 2020). Through a close look at the

moment by moment unfolding of the sequential events during an international online exchange between two primary education foreign language classes, we have identified moments of both K+ and K- stance regarding awareness and ability to deploy plurimodal, plurilingual interactional resources appropriate for the situated practices of beginning learners of the target language. The teacher carefully guides the learners through opportunities that emerge as the participants engage in 'authentic' moments of social interaction, mediated through communication technology. The IR deployed range from token repair responses such as "sorry" to post-expansion turn adjacencies of successful information exchange ("thank you"), displaying the young learners' emergent accountability for the context-sensitive employment of appropriate linguistic and embodied interactional resources.

Acknowledgements

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