

ABSTRACT

Analysis of Synchronicity Discernment in Text Conversations

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One of the fundamental differences between spoken and written conversation is that synchronicity is optional in written conversations. In other words, while spoken conversations must proceed continuously in real time, written conversations may proceed periodically if chosen to be so by the interlocutors. Other crucial differences such as lack of paralinguistic cues (e.g. body language, tone, rate of speech) in textual communication change the construction of expectations in conversations among the interlocutors compared to conventional oral conversation. In conversations where the expectation of synchronicity has not been clearly established, texters implicitly discern whether a conversation is meant to be synchronous or asynchronous. This thesis analyzes sets of text message conversations using the conversation analysis approach to examine the ways in which the texters strategically judge the synchronicity of the conversation. While the success of the discernment was evaluated in terms of Burgoon and Hale's Expectation Violation Theory (1988) and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), the main factors of contribution to the discernment showed to be the urgency, goal, and spontaneity of the conversation.

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ANALYSIS OF SYNCHRONICITY DISCERNMENT IN TEXT CONVERSATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The human connection to technology has been progressing at a rapid rate since the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. As people express themselves through new technologies, humanity has charged into another era of revolution in the past few decades, experiencing an even greater exponential boost in its progression – the Digital Revolution. The shift to digital electronic technology from mechanical and analogue electronic has brought about radical changes, especially in the area of communication.

Texting as a new means of communication

Communication is undoubtedly a fundamental and crucial element in humanity – whether big or small, communicating has been essential for living and progressing. It may be no overstatement to say that technology and humanity could not have progressed at the rate they have, had there not been an effective means of communication – getting the information and ideas delivered accurately, quickly, and effectively. After all, the Tower of Babel was destroyed at the instance when the people were no longer able to communicate. Communication is thus key to a functional community. Naturally, communication technology has progressed over the years of development. Innovations such as computers and smartphones along with various means of digital communication including emails and text messages have introduced most of the world's population to a new convention of communication – text messaging.

In comparison to phone calls and emails, text messages are the most recent non-face to face communication. Yet, it has been established as one of the most frequently used means of communication because of its convenience: while it gives more freedom to each speaker in terms of response time unlike a phone call, it also offers the convenience, accessibility, and casualness which email does not always offer. Convenient and free from time restriction, text message communication over various devices and platforms have become a standardized means of communication, whether in a formal setting or a casual setting.

Although already standardized as a means of communication, text messaging is still relatively new and thus calls for more research in terms of conversation analysis. Firstly, it is significantly different regarding its nature compared to that of a conventional spoken conversation. Spoken conversation has been studied and analyzed for many years since 1960s, but textual discourse requires a different style of approach in methods and analytical perspective, as it differs from a traditional spoken discourse in various aspects, such as the optionality of synchronicity, its lack of orality and paralinguistic cues, and its very textual and one-dimensional disposition. Secondly, text messaging requires continuous research as many new platforms and updates of communication constantly emerge in the quickly moving world today, bringing in new qualities and functions to the existing written digital conversation which may require alterations to analytic perspectives. A few examples of these innovative changes would be emojis, functions that show when the other person is typing, or 'reply' functions that indicate that a message is a response, reply, or an addition to a specific previous message.

Many differences as such between textual and oral conversations, along with the variations of functions within different communication platforms themselves, provide room for individual variety in terms of ‘normality.’ Naturally, texters individually develop and establish personal rules and expectations in a text conversation. They then engage in conversations with others, of which there may be conflicting expectancies. While the differing expectancies may cause a conflict between two interlocutors, participants strive to come to an agreement with each other in terms of the expectancy of the conversation.

Optionality of Synchronicity in Texting

Optionality of synchronicity is one of the most crucial qualities which differentiates text message conversation from a spoken conversation, and even from other forms of written conversation such as emails. Whereas spoken conversations assume synchronicity and require that the conversation between the speakers progress continuously at the actual time of its occurrence, email conversations assume asynchronicity, as it can contain much more information in a single turn. Text message conversations, however, although innately more asynchronous than synchronous, allow for synchronicity depending on the context and the texters. It is therefore possible for texters to have completely different judgements in establishing synchronicity in a written conversation. In other words, each person may respond differently to the same question: “When can/should I answer this text?”

As stated, each person will have different factors when considering synchronicity in a text message conversation, such as life experience and social context. Each factor will impact differently on one’s approach to synchronicity discernment as one attempts to

establish a reasonable expectancy in a conversation. Essentially, the goal of all conversations is to communicate within the correspondingly established normality, tuning and compromising one's individual conversational normality with one another.

The void of synchronicity is one of the central attributes which must be specified or established in textual conversations. This research thus aims to examine and analyze the ways in which interlocutors (texters) judge the synchronicity of the conversation. All three of the data extracts consist of conversations between close friends in order to better observe factors other than close social distance. While all sets of data display close social distance, they vary in numbers of texters involved, immediacy of the content, and the spontaneity for the cause of the conversation. The versatile nature of texting will be examined in the data as it allows extensive gaps (or silences) in a textual conversation to be used and presumed differently, each with rationale and interpretation unique to each interlocutor. Thereby, questions of how, when, and why the speaker texts in the manner that they do along with whether their actions are justified and understood successfully by the other person will be examined through the method of conversation analysis, Burgoon and Hale's Expectancy Violation Theory (1988), and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The central feature of written and digital communication in this study is that conversations can be asynchronous as well as synchronous, as opposed to spoken conversations which are exclusively synchronous by nature. Consequently, synchronicity in a written conversation must be discerned, judged, and determined by the interlocutors themselves in every conversation. To be able to analyze a written conversation in an appropriate manner, it is necessary to first recognize the fundamental differences of its nature and features compared to those of a conventional spoken conversation. In order to successfully analyze written conversations and thereby fully examine the particular ways in which the interlocutors judge synchronicity in a text conversation, one must be equipped with a few essential concepts: some exclusive features of text conversation regarding synchronicity, the idea of politeness in terms of face and face-threatening acts (FTA), and expectation violation theory (EVT). A thorough understanding of these concepts is key, as the theories of politeness and expectation violation function as a measure of scale and a crucial motivation for interlocutors to establish the expectations and the synchronicity of the conversation. Meanwhile, the unique features of a textual conversation function as hints and signals which the interlocutor may give and receive. These key concepts are therefore necessary in order to closely follow and understand the logic of the interlocutors in a textual conversation.

Exploring Synchronicity Optionality in Text Message Conversations

A synchronous conversation (not to be confused with “synchronic” or “asynchronous”) simply refers to a ‘real-time’ conversation in which interlocutors converse in the same time frame. The Oxford English Dictionary defines synchronous as “existing or happening at the same time; coincident in time; belonging to the same period, or occurring at the same moment, of time; contemporary; simultaneous” (“Synchronous,” n.d.). As stated, spoken conversations – even phone calls, which do not require face-to-face interaction – are synchronous by nature, as utterances are spontaneously and continuously exchanged alongside the turns and turn-signals. The following sections will explore the optionality of synchronicity in text message conversations by discussing several factors behind its reasoning.

Physical and Temporal Remoteness

Unlike in spoken conversations, synchronicity is not initially determined, although it could, in conversations over text messages. Interlocutors tend to initially assume asynchronicity in written conversations due to the physical and temporal remoteness separating themselves. Written and digital communication thereby possess the potential for interactivity regardless of the length of delay in one’s response (Tagg, 2015). This then provides flexibility to the interlocutors to control and determine the synchronicity of the conversation themselves. As the conversation progresses, in order to identify the rhythm of the conversation, interlocutors judge their conversation for synchronicity by taking into their subjective account factors such as the goal of the conversation, urgency of the goal, availability of each texter, and so on.

Accessibility of Previous Conversation Data

Aside from the physical and possibly even temporal distance among the interlocutors, the asynchronous nature of text conversation comes partially from the easily accessible and retrievable nature of written and online data (Giles et al., 2015). On the other hand, synchronous and oral utterances are only to be remembered by each receiver. This calls for immediate processing, interpreting, and storing of the information, all of which are processed through each interlocutor's subjective lens.

Furthermore, an immediate response to the received utterance is expected starting at the very instance the speaker has given up their turn due to the universal pattern of turn-taking system (Stivers, et al., 2009). Such spontaneous tasks given in only brief moments require one's activation of working memory. As Robinson (1995) describes it, working memory refers to the type of memory which interacts with long-term memory and is responsible for the short-term storing and processing of the information received. Ellis adds to the explanation of working memory and states that, "working memory is the home of explicit induction, hypothesis formation, analogical reasoning, prioritization, control, and decision-making" (Ellis, 2005, p. 337). Once the conversation ends, the content and the information regarding the conversation is solely dependent on the subjectively filtered memory of each individual, unless recorded with a device or witnessed by a third party.

On the contrary, the accessibility to the information in text conversations is far more lasting and accurate, as concrete evidence of the utterances are often fully stored in most text-conversing platforms. As the entire history of the discourse is saved and accumulated within the platform, the interlocutors are readily provided with the

previously held conversations and information, regardless the duration of time since the moment of the latest utterance. Compared with the information accessibility of spoken conversation, in which an interlocutor must rely fully on their own memory that will gradually fade, the high information accessibility in text conversation mitigates the burden of immediacy and time constraint when responding.

Ambiguity of Turn-Taking Cues

Another central piece of any conversational interaction is the system of turn-taking (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1974). According to Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, all interlocutors must comply with the system of turn-taking in every conversation. In a turn-taking system, every speaker is expected to minimize both the overlap and the gap in the conversation while competing for turns at the same time. Turn-taking may be signaled by many indicators. In a conventional face-to-face conversation between individuals, the starting, taking, ending, and passing of one's turn may be signaled using nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contacts, intonations, slowing or fading of one's speech, gaps (Chafe, 1980), and so on.

Lack of paralinguistic cues. The undoubtedly prominent difference between spoken and written conversation is the lack of paralinguistic cues. While communication method such as casual texting may reflect strategies that are parallel to those of oral conversations as well as those of digital and written conversations (Chafe & Tannen, 1987), written conversations are much more limited in options for linguistic cues. Whereas prosodic and nonverbal features play a vital role in a spoken dialogue system by expressing emotions, tone, and end of gaps (Heldner & Edlund, 2010), they no longer

exist in a written conversation. Instead, those prosodic and nonverbal features such as the tone and expressions are entirely up to the receiver of the text to create.

Consequently, textual conversations are characterized by relatively weak and unclear turn-taking cues. Without most paralinguistic cues such as phrase-final melodic patterns, final lengthening, body gestures, and other nonverbal features (Duncan, 1972; Wells and MacFarlane, 1998; Caspers, 2003; Local and Walker, 2012) which function as clear and conspicuous turn-signals in spoken conversations, participants in textual conversations must rely on the interpretation of the receiver without those signals. Such ambiguity in the turn-taking system often deprives the written conversations of the assumption for synchronicity and causes misunderstanding and miscommunication among interlocutors.

Lesser significance of gaps as turn-signals. While a substantial number of crucial paralinguistic cues are inaccessible in a conversation over text messages, one of the few available cues for turn-taking is gaps. Gaps, or unfilled pauses and intervals of sufficient length, indicate a point at which the previous turn-holder has lost or given up their control, enabling the other interlocutor to leap into the conversation and claim the turn (Maclay & Osgood, 1959). While the general statement of minimizing gap lengths holds to be true universally (Stivers, et al., 2009), the logic with gaps in text communication further differ from that of gaps in spoken conversations.

The difference resides in the fact that an utterance of a text conversation is only delivered to the other person once the writer is completely finished with the utterance, as opposed to the continuous building of a spoken utterance which the other interlocutor can simultaneously hear and process from the moment of formation until completion. In a

spoken conversation, the average gap durations between turns has been reported to range between 0 and 300 milliseconds (De Ruiter et al., 2006; Stivers et al., 2009; Heldner and Edlund, 2010). However, the duration of planning and production of an utterance takes much longer: 600-1200 ms to perceive and process an object or information (Levelt & Meyer., 1999; Indefrey and Levelt, 2004) and 1500 ms to begin producing simple utterances (Griffin and Bock, 2000). This discrepancy between the duration of gaps (300 ms) and the duration of formation and production (2700 ms) can be plausibly explained by Sacks et al. (1974), which claims that responders often predict the content of the incoming turn. As they predict the content, they plan and produce content for their upcoming turn before the end of the current turn arrives (Levinson & Torreia, 2015).

Such simultaneous and predictive turn-taking is impossible in text conversation, because the duration to both comprehend and produce an utterance are significantly longer than that in oral conversation. Although some texting platforms provide the texters with the function of a visual signal indicating the ongoing or active writing of the other texter at the instance, not all platforms do. Even if they do provide such function, the receiver cannot attain any information about the actual content of the utterance until the text message has been completed and sent, unlike in an oral conversation. Consequently, in many situations where the interlocutors communicate synchronously over text, the texters cannot always be certain whether the other person has finished their turn, or whether it would be okay for them to assume their turn, lengthening the duration of the gap even more. While gaps still serve as turn-taking signals in synchronous written conversations, they are inevitably and noticeably longer than gaps in a synchronous spoken conversation.

As much as gaps indeed serve as great turn-taking signals in a text conversation, one should not immediately assume gaps to be a turn-taking cue because those gaps could actually be serving other functions in the conversation. Gaps can serve multiple functions in a conversation other than turn-taking cues as Kalman and Rafaeli (2011) note, such as expressing humor, sense of urgency, politeness, degree of liking, etc. Gaps are by nature very complex and highly context-dependent, hence the variety in the data of the manners in which the interlocutors interpret and utilize gaps.

In short, text conversation lacks several paralinguistic cues that conventional conversation encompasses (Giles et al., 2015), taking away significantly from the linguistic consistency among texters (Crystal, 2008), especially in terms of turn-taking system. An example of the resulting inconsistency can be observed as the asynchronous nature of text conversation blurs the line discerning one's forfeit of turn from a purposeful delay of response. Another contributing factor to inconsistency is the impossibility for a simultaneous and predictive turn-taking. Consequently, each individual will create for themselves a more subjective system of establishing turn-takings or certain expectations from the other interlocutors.

As discussed, features such as the remoteness among interlocutors, the availability of reference, and the ambiguity of turn-taking cues lessen the burden of pressure on the interlocutors forcing immediate production of response. Hence, these features contribute crucially to the asynchronous characteristics of a textual conversation, in which an immediate response is not required or assumed by both parties of texters within some boundaries of context.

The Criteria and Motivation for Synchronicity Judgement

Due to the many fundamental features of written conversation which impede the pace of the conversation and ambiguate the turn-taking system, each individual engages in a written conversation with different expectations than that of an oral conversation. As a consequence, for a successful interaction without offending each other, the texters are tacitly motivated to settle together on a certain expectancy of the conversation.

Criteria of Judgement – Expectation Violation Theory

When one's established expectations are violated, expectancy violation theory (EVT) claims that individuals respond to such unanticipated violations of social norms and expectations by interpreting the violation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). While the theory by Burgoon and Hale originally analyzed the individuals' nonverbal expectations, allowances, and violations of personal distance and levels of likings specifically, the theory later developed into what it is currently when later researchers concentrated on violation of social behavior expectations beyond simply nonverbal communication (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006).

The EVT perceives communication as an exchange of behaviors, where a behavior of a person can violate the expectations of the other. Expectancy, the main component of this theory, refers to the individual's anticipation of what will happen in a given situation. Expectancies are based primarily upon social norms and specific characters of the communicators in addition to the notion that individuals do not perceive the behaviors of others as random (Burgoon, 1978).

There are two types of expectancies in this theory – predictive and prescriptive (Houser, 2005). According to Houser, predictive expectations are established upon the “behaviors we expect to see because they are the most typical,” which vary across cultures. This is what people would expect to happen in a particular context of the relationship and environment. For instance, two friends always walk their dogs together in the evening. If one of the friends were not to show up at the usual meeting place, this may be seen to the other friend as a predictive discrepancy. Prescriptive expectations are established upon the “beliefs about what behaviors should be performed” and “what is needed and desired” (Houser, 2005). For example, if a person were to place their groceries at the store to be scanned and packed, the cashier will have the expectation that the person will pay for the groceries before he leaves the counter.

Along with the expectancies, Burgoon and Jones initially identify three factors of the EVT: interactant variables, environmental variables, and variables related to the nature of interaction. The interactant variables refer to the traits of the communicators, such as age, sex, appearance, status, race, and culture. The environmental variables refer to the traits of the space surrounding the interaction. Lastly, the interaction variables refer to the social norms, purpose of interaction, and formality of the situation (Burgoon & Jones, 1976).

As a communicator confronts behaviors which violate the expectancies they have established, they evaluate the violation positively or negatively and assess the person who committed the violation. In other words, communicators assess the violator’s and their own social images through establishing an expectancy as the standard of judgement, which leads to the idea of face-work, politeness, and FTA.

Motivation of Judgement – Face and Face Threatening Acts

Face and Politeness. The significance in the concepts of politeness and expectations resides in the fact that they are often closely related to each other and to the idea of face. The term face was first introduced by Goffman in 1967, and refers to the public self-image of oneself, or the way in which individuals portray themselves to others in the society. The importance of face is issued from the society, as society by nature requires human communication and interaction. Among many factors, politeness determines a substantial portion of how an individual may be portrayed to others as a part of the society. Politeness is therefore interconnected with EVT, as they both have to do with social behaviors of individuals. While politeness is concerned with public self-image, the EVT is concerned with how well the public expectancies are kept by an individual. Politeness and EVT are therefore a vital motivation behind the manner in which an individual chooses to interact with other individuals in the society.

Although there are varying views and little agreement among researchers regarding what precisely constitutes politeness (Fraser, 1990), the approach to the idea of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) through Face Threatening Acts will be used in the upcoming analyses of data to determine the states and strategies of interlocutors. The reason for particularly choosing Brown and Levinson's theory is that it has remained one of the better articulated theories of politeness in the field of linguistics and pragmatics over the years, along with its relevance to the idea of face. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory is a relatively computable yet flexible system, which allows a rather wide variety of factors to count into the computation. The factor can be anything starting with the social distance between interlocutors and orientation of the

goal in a conversation, to nature of the conversation such as synchronicity or asynchronicity, and so on. The more factors one manages to find in a conversation, the better the politeness strategies of an interlocuter can be explained and supported. Most importantly, however, the flexibility of the FTA theory allows a collaborative computation of face and politeness with the factors of EVT as well.

Face Threatening Acts. Brown and Levinson (1987) further developed the idea of Goffman's face into having two aspects, positive and negative, each representing different social desire of an individual. Positive face represents one's desire for connection and support from others, while negative face represents one's desire for freedom and independence from others. In this approach to politeness, politeness is rather an effort to avoid offense. Typical strategies of positive politeness would be to put a stress on friendliness to mitigate potential offense. For instance, someone hosted a party and invited their friend, who unfortunately does not happen to be available during the planned time. Instead of simply giving an answer "no," which would hurt the host's positive face, the invitee might try to avoid the offense by supporting the positive face of the host with redress. The invitee might express their desire to attend the party along with their disappointment, thereby acknowledging and reciprocating the host's desire to connect with the invitee even though the invitee cannot actually attend the party. Typical strategies of negative politeness attempt to avoid offense with deference, so that one may not come across as demanding and intrusive towards the hearer. Negative politeness strategies are often used when asking someone of something, where a person asking a favor speaks more indirectly so that they may not be perceived imposing and domineering to the hearer.

Such speech acts, or utterances that perform actions regarding intention, purpose, or effect (Austin, 1975), which harm or can potentially harm one's positive or negative face, were then coined as face-threatening acts (FTA) by Brown and Levinson (1987). Many factors comprise discernment of FTA severity, such as the social distance and power difference between the interlocutors, in addition to the rank of severity of the speech act itself. Social distance refers to the distance between groups and individuals in the society, such as social class, race, gender, and ethnicity, which measures the intimacy and level of trust a group or an individual may feel towards another (Boguna et al., 2004). While all speech acts are inherently face-threatening, other important determining factors of FTA come from the settings and characteristics of every conversations, as they can intensify or mitigate an FTA (O'Driscoll, 2007). As the Politeness Theory and the EVT share a few factors in common (speech acts with behaviors, social distance with interactant variables, etc.), they will allow for a more detailed and extensive analysis of the text message conversations as the communicators judge the synchronicity and the use of gaps.

The contrast of various qualities between written and spoken conversations has provided an explanation for the optionality of synchronicity in text message conversations. As saving their own faces motivates the interlocutors to establish and agree upon the expectancies of the conversations, the texters also strive to establish and strategize upon the synchronicity of the conversation. While a few unique features of written conversations make up for the paralinguistic cues absent in textual nature, providing hints and signals, the theories of expectancy violation (EVT) and politeness (FTA) measure the success of and explain the logic behind each turn taken by the

interlocutors. Now with these background ideas essential to text conversation analysis for such reasons, three data extracts with varying contexts will be examined in terms of the strategies and discernment of the synchronicity in a conversation.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Method: Conversation Analysis

The overall approach to the research is conversation analysis (CA), a qualitative method for analysis of the collected data extracts of text message conversations. As the research attempts to investigate the interlocutors in a text conversation in regards to synchronicity discernment, the central question in this analytical research is the following: how, in an initially ‘not in real-time’ conversation, do texters judge or assume whether their conversation is oriented towards synchronicity? CA was selected as the method of this research as opposed to other, quantitative methods, as this method is the most appropriate for describing, interpreting, placing in context, and discerning in depth specific concepts or phenomena in a textual conversation.

To begin with the logic and assumptions basing the methodology, conversation analysis (CA) was judged to be the most suitable approach to answering the central research question, as the question addresses rather theoretical subjects as opposed to practical problems. The objective of this research is to investigate and analyze a phenomenon in conversations specifically in a textual setting, in which the conversation begins with an assumption of asynchronicity, which is a radical difference compared to conventional spoken conversations. CA is therefore the most appropriate method for the purpose as it specializes in analyzing conversations, involving a ‘speaker’ and a ‘hearer,’ along with each of their underlying opinions, motivations, and reasons behind their utterances and synchronicity judgement.

CA is an established method in the field of linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and speech-communication. Developed in the 1960s-70s by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, it emerged initially as a sociological method which then spread to the other fields mentioned above. Through various exemplary studies over time by Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson, and their students, CA strengthened its footing as a micro-analytic and inductive qualitative method for examining language, especially in social interactions.

As the CA approach to interpreting social interaction and language over the last few decades led to a well-developed system, several ‘machineries’ of practice are required in a conversation: turn-taking, sequence organization, turn design, and repair (Hoey & Kendrick, 2017). Turn-taking deals with the issue of coordinating the closing of a turn with the beginning of the next, answering the questions of who will speak next and when will they start speaking (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Sequence organization refers to the coherence of the overall conversation as the conversation is linked by adjacency pairs, in which one action or a turn calls for another specific action of a turn (Schegloff, 2007). For instance, a greeting met with a greeting, question with an answer, and so on. Turn design is the way in which the speakers form or design their turns to carry out an action in a certain position directed to a certain hearer (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). For example, one can invite someone over to their party by forming their turn as a conditional (“It would make me really happy if you came tomorrow,”) a declarative (“You are welcome to my party tomorrow,”) or a question (“Would you come to my party tomorrow?”). Lastly, repair refers to addressing troubles in communication: speaking, hearing, and understanding (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Three

components of repair are trouble source (e.g., technical difficulties, unfamiliar word), repair initiation signal, and repair solution (e.g., repeating utterance, rephrasing).

Furthermore, with its guiding principle which states that interactions exhibit ‘order at all points’ (Sacks, 1992), CA centers around the ‘normativity’ (a similar idea as the expectancy theory discussed in the Literature Review chapter) established by each participant of the conversation – an orderliness set by each individual according to their social orientation and expectations. For instance, one of the conversational norms is that one party speaks at a time (Sacks et al., 1974). As Schegloff points out (1968), “To behave as a ‘speaker’ or a ‘hearer’ when the other is not observably available is to subject oneself to a review of one’s competence and ‘normality.’” Consequently, CA is a synthesis of two themes. The first theme is the methods of individual participants themselves as they each perceive and produce actions, verbal or nonverbal. The second theme is the way in which the participants do so together in actual conversational interaction (Hoey & Kendrick, 2017) – a minimally two-party activity (Ten Have, 2007).

Data Collection and Transcription

The data used in this paper were collected from a class project, in which each of the 10 students in the class selected and extracted a few sets of different text message conversations which they found interesting or relevant to a topic on which they would like to conduct their project. Along with a concise detail of context for each (social relationship between texters, background story of the conversation topic, emotions of the texters, etc.), all extracts were transcribed to a unified format which first provides a column to indicate the line number for a clearer reference to data, two columns for the turns of each speaker (in a group conversation, the left column represents turns of any

other persons in the group than the person of which the turn is represented in the right column), lastly followed by a column to indicate the date and time of when the turn had taken place, indicated by a time stamp each time a shift in turn takes place or the turn takes place at a new time.

The case study materials for the focus of the analysis consisted of text message conversations over various platforms, such as plain text messages through cellphone service and messages through social media applications such as Facebook Messenger. While there were unfortunately no indication on the collected data regarding which exact platform the text conversations had taken place, there are substantial overall similarities among the platforms to provide consistency in the data, such as the availability of emojis, first-person formatting (in which the turns of the texter themselves are always represented on the right side of the screen), and so on. Since any text conversation would meet the data criteria for this specific research topic (synchronicity judgement) as it applies to all text conversations, extracts with closer social distance between the texters were chosen for consistency, but each extract differed slightly in its context and purpose (e.g., aim of the speaker, number of people in the conversation, preexisting expectations between the texters, etc.).

Data of a conventional CA process is usually in the form of a recorded video or audio, which will then be carefully transcribed onto a standard transcribing format with various indicators of speech (e.g., intonation, emphasis, change in tempo, overlap, etc.). However, since the analysis deals with textual conversations, there has been a change made in the transcription process. Instead of having to transcribe audio or video data, one works with raw material from the beginning, assuming linear communication in a strictly

chronological sequence (Giles, et al., 2015), hence the importance of line numbers and time stamps. Although much more easily retrievable and accessible than a spoken conversation data, typed data lack the paralinguistic cues mentioned above (Giles, et al., 2015). Punctuations and emojis will replace a part of those cues, but there is still a need to collect as much context data as necessary – hence the context provided by the original data collectors.

The collected data were analyzed with focus on synchronicity judgement, which has closely to do with turn-taking component of the CA method. Established synchronicity would quickly and obviously call attention to abnormal lengths of gaps in a conversation and thus signal a deviation from the ‘normality’ and from the established conversational principal of Sacks et al. of minimizing gaps between the turn shifts (1974). Written communication, however, lacks the synchronicity – even if it may be established between the texters, there are many factors which may interrupt the synchronicity, such as technical problems with devices or applications or something immediately around the texter which may hinder or distract them from committing to the text conversation. With these factors in consideration, the logic behind the synchronicity judgement of the texters in the selected data will be examined through CA methods based on language (text), image (emoji), and observation, as the concepts and argumentative structure of CA provides indicators and insight during the data analysis process.

Limitations

A few limitations in the approach, however, as discussed briefly above, come from the textual aspect of the data, as text conversations are highly restricted within the linear, chronological sequence and significantly lack in paralinguistic turn-taking cues,

thereby requiring CA process of written data to be a much more iterative analytic procedure (Giles et al., 2015), as the data material is strictly limited to text. In addition, the greater lack of general context, even though a brief context was provided for each extract, limits the degree to which an extract may be analyzed without being excessively presumed. Despite the limitations, conversation analysis was judged to be the appropriate method of data analysis as the foundational concepts and components of CA provide a greater frame of conversation to which the written conversation data are still well-applicable.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

The data analyzed in this paper include three examples of text conversations which deal specifically with the idea of synchronicity alongside the system of turn-taking (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1974) and gaps (Chafe, 1980). Each set of these text exchanges involve noticeable lengths of gaps between responses due to the asynchronous nature of written conversations, but each set varies in its social context (Goffman, 1967), nature of orientation, and the intent of the interlocutor. These various factors, or circumlocutions, play into the establishment of an expectancy (or ‘normality’ according to Schegloff, 1968) unique to each conversation (O’Driscoll, 2007). While each individual may differ in their assumption and discernment of normality and expectancy, the established expectancies are either met or violated by each participant of the conversation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

A central context to these examples is that all of these conversations take place through text messaging, which with its various characteristics affect the establishment of expectancy differently than those of spoken, face-to-face conversations (Crystal, 2008). Analysis will be centered around the aspects unique to written conversations as each texter judges and establishes the expectancy of the conversation, with the eventual goal of examining the ways through which a participant of an asynchronous text conversation discerns the synchronicity of a conversation.

Extract 1: Mutually Accepted Inconsistency of Synchronicity

The first set of data is a conversation between two friends. It illustrates a case in which an interlocutor attempts to achieve humor using minuscule gaps between her texts when the synchronicity has not yet been agreed. She utilizes the relatively inactive turn-taking patterns of text messaging (Tagg, 2015) to express humor. Assuming that synchronicity has not yet been established, she responds to a message sent to her on the previous day and follows her initial face-threatening utterance immediately with consecutive utterances, leaving no time for her friend to process or respond to her initial text. While she likely had assumed that her text message would not be read or answered immediately by her friend, the friend responds almost immediately and successfully receives and processes her potential face threatening act (FTA).

In Extract 1, Carol invites her classmate Sharon to work on homework together the following day. Carol and Sharon are in a class together, which has been cancelled and replaced with an extensive homework assignment. Carol texts Sharon in the evening before the cancelled class and asks her if she would be willing to meet with her the next day, so that they could work on the assignment together. Carol receives no response for the night. On the following morning, Sharon responds negatively to Carol with a terse response. However, she immediately adds messages afterwards, eventually accepting Carol's invitation. Carol almost immediately follows Sharon's response with another text. While Sharon's consecutive texts are intended to be playful, Carol's response is almost too soon after the joke for the humor to take effect. However, Carol expresses that she has successfully processed Sharon's texts as a funny joke, taking no offense.

Extract 1: *Study Tomorrow* (2019Text-06_SH)

	Others	Speaker	Day/Time
1	Carol		Tue
2	Hey you wanna do		9:37 PM
3	homework during the		
4	PhonPhon time slot		
5	tomorrow?		
6		Sharon	Wed
7		don't want to	9:01 AM
8		definitely should	
9		probably will	
10	Carol		9:02 AM
11	haha well I will be		
12	because I low-key		
13	shouldn't have slept		
14	last night. So if you		
15	want a study buddy,		
16	text me		
17		Sharon	9:03 AM
18		what do you mean???	
19		shouldn't have slept?	
20		cause of the essay and	
21		presentation	
22		?	
23	Carol		
24	Because I have so		
25	much to do and idk		
26	how its gonna get done		

Turn 1: Carol's Invitation, 9:37 PM

Request and demand. In Extract 1, Carol initiates the conversation with a request. On a locutionary level (Austin, 1962), Carol's text seems like a simple yes-no question "you wanna do homework" (line 2-3), asking for Sharon's opinion on whether she wants to do homework or not. However, an illocutionary request is implied in Carol's text, which roughly converts to a request such as "Will you do homework with me?" (Grice, 1975). In her request, Carol is not simply concerned with Sharon's desire to work on homework per se, but rather with Sharon's interest in doing so with her, thus hoping or expecting an affirmative response to her question.

In that sense, Carol's request is essentially an indirect, redressed form of a demand; whereas a demand refers to the requiring and insisting of someone to take certain action, a request is simply a mitigated version with an option for the requestee to decline. According to the face theory of Goffman (1967) and Brown & Levinson (1987), a request is therefore a Face-Threatening Act (FTA) on one's negative face, because it requires someone to do something, and thereby harms one's negative face which represents one's desire for freedom and independence from others. At the center of her utterance lies Carol's desire for Sharon to do homework with her. However, Carol redresses her illocutionary act of request ("Will you do homework with me?") with an indirect question in order to lessen the potential FTA on Sharon's negative face. She uses the off-record approach (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and does so by excluding the very aspects she desires from Sharon: the aspect of a request ("Will you-") and the aspect of doing homework with her ("with me?"). Thus, Carol's mitigated request is eventually left with a simple question of whether or not Sharon wants to work on her homework, with a hint of Carol's request.

Carol's risk. In her indirect request, Carol is not only dealing with the risk of hurting Sharon's negative face, but also with positive face of her own. A positive face represents one's desire to be connected and supported by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As previously mentioned, Carol's true intent behind her question to Sharon is for Sharon to do homework with her, which in its pure form would have taken an imperative ("Do homework with me"). Instead, Carol takes a form of interrogative "Hey you wanna do homework" (line 2-3) in order to mitigate her FTA. Carol has thus reached out to Sharon as an attempt to connect and spend time with her. Therefore, Carol is expecting

Sharon to respond to her text because her message calls for a response of whether Sharon will do homework with her. This is the first part of what Schegloff (2007) calls ‘adjacency pairs,’ in which her action (asking the question) taken in her turn calls for another specific action (responding yes or no) to be taken in Sharon’s turn.

Turn 2: Sharon’s Response, 9:01 AM

Now that Carol has sent the first part of the adjacency pair, her turn is assumed to be over and passed on to Sharon to respond with the latter half of the adjacency pair. To the request which places Carol’s positive face at a vulnerable position, Sharon first responds with a terse negation: “don’t want to” (line 7). Sharon’s response (line 7) is on an extremely high level of FTA risk (Brown & Levinson, 1987), solely from the context inferred from Extract 1.

Negation and terseness. Firstly, Sharon’s response is negating and terse. Negation in itself is face-threatening by nature, because it rejects the desire for connection and approval of the positive face while also neglecting the desire to be independent and free from opposition of the negative face. Furthermore, her response is quite terse, composed of three words in total (“don’t want to”) and lacking a subject (‘I’) and complement phrase to the main verb (‘do homework’). Terseness can often be face-threatening, as it can sometimes cause people to deduce carelessness and lack of time and thought given into the utterance. In the case of Extract 1, Sharon has negatively and tersely responded to Carol’s careful proposal to spend time with her, and the discrepancy between Carol’s redressed desire for the support of her positive face and Sharon’s negation as a response may result in a high risk level of FTA.

On-record. Secondly, Sharon's response in line 7 is very direct and on-record (without redress), which is on the opposite side of the scale compared to Carol's off-record, indirect text (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Sharon's response is extremely terse and straight to the point, leaving no room for redress which might have reduced the FTA risk to a degree. As mentioned, terse utterances very often imply the speaker's apathy, indifference, and unwillingness to be involved – just as one spares their resources from those in whom one is not interested, one tends to spare their words in their speech as well. Therefore, Sharon's terse utterance may potentially signal not only her lack of care towards redressing for Carol's sake, but also her lack of desire to be involved in the interaction with Carol, both of which would innately harm Carol's positive face.

Evasion of semantics. Furthermore, Sharon responds to Carol's question ("Hey you wanna do homework...", line 2-3) purely semantically ("don't want to," line 7), not at all attending to Carol's implicature of wanting to connect with her. Regardless of whether Sharon missed Carol's implicature intentionally or unintentionally, her response fails to appropriately reciprocate Carol's request on its own.

Duration of gap. Lastly, a factor which may add to the level of harm done to Carol's face is the response time which seems somewhat late. Although text conversation is often asynchronous unlike traditional spoken conversation, and is even initially assumed to be asynchronous in most cases, Sharon still took a substantial time to answer Carol. Carol initiated the conversation on a Tuesday evening at 9:37 PM (line 2), regarding a matter that would take place sometime during the following day – which is not a very long time taking sleeping hours into account. Despite the urgency to a certain

extent, Sharon's initial response seems a little delayed: 9:01 AM the next morning (line 6-7). Not only does Sharon respond to Carol with a high level FTA, but she also takes a substantial time to respond. In such ways alongside the thoughtless brevity of her negative response, Sharon's initial response (line 7) is quite likely to harm Carol's positive face.

Strategy for humor with asynchronicity assumption. However, as the conversation proceeds, Sharon's true intention behind her terse utterance (line 7) reveals to be a humorous affirmation to Carol's request. In order to successfully get her joke across to Carol, Sharon utilizes the asynchronous nature of written conversation, which causes the points of turn-shifting to appear less conspicuous compared to how they appear in spoken conversations (Maclay & Osgood, 1959). Gaps are highly context-dependent and are utilized for multiple functions including turn-shift indication (Kalman & Rafaeli, 2011). In the current situation, Sharon utilizes the asynchronicity of text conversation to emphasize her joke by leaving almost no gaps between her consecutive utterances (lines 8-9), assuming that Carol will not read her messages immediately, thus also likely unable to interrupt her turn and the joke.

Sharon's strategy is more likely to succeed in text conversations because written communication lacks most of the paralinguistic cues which oral conversation innately possesses, including gaps (Giles et al, 2015). While the spoken words themselves may be successfully transferred into written language, many aspects of the spoken utterances are lost in the process, a few examples being pace, volume, and intonation, all of which contribute greatly in signaling one's forfeit of their turn in the turn-taking system (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1974). The other important factor by which people

assume the flow of the turn-taking is gaps, which are more relevant in the context of spoken conversation, where the exchange of utterances happen synchronously – or in real-time (Chafe, 1980). Gaps in verbal conversation often function as a central signaling mechanism of turn-taking in spoken and thus synchronous conversation (Chafe, 1980), indicating that a speaker has finished the turn and is waiting for the hearer to now assume the turn and speak. Since written communication takes place at a much slower and inconsistent pace due to its asynchronous nature, gaps are no longer as obvious of a turn-forfeiting signal in written context.

Sharon thus takes advantage of this asynchronicity by assuming more time to herself to make a joke, which thus would allow her to say multiple utterances in one turn, in contrary to conventional spoken communication. In a spoken, synchronous conversation, there is no guarantee that clear turn-shifts will take place at all times, because if the expectancies of each participant of the conversation do not align, turns may be unintentionally assumed or interrupted. As seen in the time stamps of the following utterances (line 8-9), Sharon immediately adds more text messages following her terse, initial response: all three texts are written within the same minute, 9:01 AM. Sharon thereby signals to Carol that her initial terse response (line 7) is not her actual answer to Carol's proposal.

Why then does Sharon take the risk of Carol's interruption instead of putting all three lines of response into one text message? Sharon conveys humor through the three consecutive texts she sends. Each line frankly reflects her complete thought processes, which eventually come across as humorous as the reader sees her thought changing and developing so quickly. If they were all crowded together into one text message, Sharon's

message would have seemed rather odd, as all three ideas conflict with one another in their meaning despite being in a single utterance. As mentioned previously, Sharon starts off with answering Carol's question purely semantically; and she continues to respond, assuring Carol that her initial response (line 7) was not directed towards her, but rather directed purely towards doing the homework itself. Sharon then claims she does not want to do the homework (line 7, "don't want to"), and thereafter claims her recognition that she holds responsibility for completing the homework assignment regardless of her will (line 8, "definitely should"), and in fact, eventually gives in and convinces herself to do homework, accepting Carol's invitation to join her in doing assignment (line 9, "probably will"). Through these three separate lines all within less than a minute, Sharon's internal thoughts and inner conflict of not wanting to do homework but eventually compromising and convincing herself are candidly and comically expressed to convey humor to the intended reader, Carol.

Efficiency with time in asynchronous conversation. In this situation, timing and rhythm is extremely important in order for Sharon to successfully perform humor to Carol. The key requirement of this conversation for Sharon is efficiency. Even though asynchronicity is preferentially assumed in written conversations, Sharon must still be very efficient with her utterances and their timing and rhythm in order to successfully convey her intended humor. Had Carol responded even half a minute faster, Sharon's three texts would have been interrupted and her joke would not have been as effective or humorous: while Sharon's three text messages are written within the minute of 9:01 AM, Carol's response to Sharon is delivered almost immediately after Sharon's messages, at 9:02 AM. Seeing that Carol's response is a single and much longer utterance, it is likely

for Carol to even have read Sharon's message as soon as she sent it. If Carol's response were to be just a bit shorter in length and therefore allowing her to take shorter time to write, Carol would have been able to make her message between Sharon's consecutive messages, which would have then affected the effect of humor that Sharon intended.

This would have been a much riskier scenario in a spoken conversation, where utterance production and turn-shift happen at a much faster rate, since people talk faster than they write or text with hands and fingers. While the rate of production itself happens much quicker in a spoken conversation, the moment of perceiving and processing the utterance begins at a much earlier point as well, as responders often process the information and predict the content simultaneously. Sharon would have been much more likely to have her turn taken away or intercepted in a spoken conversation, since a single utterance often stands for one turn. In such case, this conversation would have resulted in an awkward situation in which Sharon's turn is intercepted before her intended humor could be explained. Sharon was indeed attempting to take advantage of the more time-lenient turn-taking system of a text conversation, but in the end, she still had to be quite efficient with her time in order to get the joke through to Carol successfully.

Turn 3: Carol's Response, 9:02 AM

Humor acknowledged. Finally Sharon's joke has communicated successfully to Carol despite its initially high FTA risk, and Carol reciprocates Sharon's joke with laughter "haha" (line 11), signifying that she has indeed gotten Sharon's joke and finds it funny. In doing so, Carol also supports Sharon's positive face of desire for connection and acknowledgement. She then also follows her response to Sharon with what she really

wants to say – her initial goal of studying with Sharon. Since humor and laugh-inducing utterance is often used strategically and socially to politely avoid having to turn down an offer, request, or demand (Glenn, 2003), Carol ends her turn with communicating her real intent once again, but more directly (“...if you want a study buddy, text me” line 14-16), and leaves Sharon to get back to her with a clearer response to her initial question.

FTA and contributing factors. In the end, there seems to have been no FTA actually made on either of the texters, as nothing from Extract 1 indicates serious face harm. Sharon did indeed successfully utilize the asynchronicity with effective gap time and turn-holding, but few other factors have also played into a successful conversation as well by preventing FTA. First of all, the given context of close friendship between the two interlocutors, which signifies smaller social distance between them may have resulted in default face harm mitigation to a potentially face-threatening statements such as Sharon’s initial text (line 7). Conversations between close friends thus sometimes may not require FTA buffers or redress in certain context, because of the preexisting FTA buffer of close social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Another significant factor is the distinct style of discourse between friends. Style, defined by Ervin-Tripp in 1969, refers to “the co-occurrent changes at various levels of linguistic structure within one language.” According to Tannen (2005), conversational style among friends can involve language identified as high-risk FTA, such as sarcasm, irony, and even mockery.

Assuming from the close friendship between Sharon and Carol, Sharon might have judged that it would still be acceptable for her to start her response to Carol’s request with a bold, high-risk FTA statement; and her judgement proved to be correct. Sharon’s response may even have brought the two of them together in sharing their

struggles as busy college students of not wanting to spend time on homework assignment. Sharon has thus successfully assumed and utilized the asynchronous nature of written conversation to avoid FTA and to bring humorous effect by leaving no gap between her consecutive utterances, thereby holding her turn for multiple texts.

Mutually inconsistent synchronicity

Meanwhile, this conversation extract shows a variety in turn-taking patterns. While the gap between the first two turns stretches overnight, a gap barely exists between the rest of the turns exchanged by Carol and Sharon, as seen in the time stamps of the responses. Lines 7 and 10, at 9:01 AM and 9:02 respectively, followed by the next turn in line 17 at 9:03 AM indicate that the gaps between the respective turns were only one minute long. The following turn is even finished within the same minute as seen in line 23. Such minimal gap length is a clear indicator that both texters have established the current conversation to be synchronous.

From such drastic difference in the gap lengths among turns in the same conversation, it can be concluded that the texters may agree on even switching the synchronicity of the conversation as long as the participants may agree on doing so. In other words, a text conversation may vary in terms of synchronicity (as opposed to simply lengths of gaps) if the texters mutually establish an inconsistent synchronicity.

Extract 2: Misalignment of Synchronicity Expectancy

The second set of data, however, illustrates how an interlocutor fails to meet the established expectancy (Burgoon & Hale, 1988) by exceeding the acceptable length of gap in an already initiated conversation. Despite the quite intimate social distance

between the two interlocutors in this example, the conversation results in a face harm due to a violation in expectancy – an excessive gap between the speakers’ utterances. This example thereby shows that misjudgment of synchronicity or failure to respond in a text conversation in terms of synchronicity (within the expected or acceptable amount of time) can result in a face harm, regardless of the close social distance which usually functions as an FTA buffer.

In Extract 2, Connor sends an affectionate text to his girlfriend Kristen after her work shift, just to get in touch with her before getting to see her in person soon. Kristen, however, disappears for about twenty minutes after only a single, brief response. She then reappears after Connor sends another message to initiate the conversation. Kristen responds to Connor saying that she has just gotten off her work, but that does not seem to be enough explanation for Connor to make sense out of the situation, indicating Connor’s face harm.

Extract 2: *Hun?* (2019Text-01_KC)

Line	Others	Speaker	Day/Time
1	Connor		Tue
2	I hope you had an amazing		9:19 PM
3	shift! I’ll see you soon,		
4	love 😊		
5		Kristen	9:21 PM
6		Ooooooof	
7	Bad?		
8	Hun?		9:43 PM
9		Heeey	9:46 PM
10		Is good	
11		I’m just finally off	
12	But you texted 20 minutes		
13	ago?		

Turn 1, Connor’s Greeting, 9:19 PM

Greeting and implicatures. In line 2 of Extract 2, Connor initiates the conversation, assuming Kristen had already gotten out of her work. Inferred from context (“I’ll see you soon,” line 3), Connor and Kristen had arranged to meet after Kristen’s work shift, and Connor likely texted Kristen to check if she has gotten out of work and to confirm details regarding their meeting after her work. Connor’s first text (lines 2-4) seems to have no extraordinary purpose or practicality on a locutionary level other than a simple greeting (Austin, 1962). However, although seemingly very purely socially oriented as opposed to oriented towards a certain goal, Connor’s initial text (lines 2-4) carries mainly two implicatures: first, he wants her to let him know when she gets out of work, by writing him back. The tense of this embedded sentence “I hope you had an amazing shift!” in lines 2-3 of Extract 2 is set in past tense, and essentially, Connor is implicating or assuming that Kristen will respond to his text after she has finished her shift. Connor’s second implicature is contained in line 3 which says “I’ll see you soon.” This line could be serving as his attempt to remind Kristen of their plan to see each other that evening. Connor is thereby indirectly demanding Kristen’s confirmation to their evening plan so that they may also start setting more details. In essence, one of Connor’s motivations behind his initiating text (lines 2-4) may have been to check on Kristen to make sure there are no changes in the general plan of meeting together, and to initiate a practical communication for further planning.

Connor’s intent behind this text could also have been an attempt to show his affection towards Kristen and to encourage her after her probably tiring evening work shift. A few traits which may serve as indicators are his somewhat exaggerated and positive attitude expressed in his choice of words (“amazing,” line 2, “love,” line 4),

punctuation (“shift!” line 3), and the use of an affectionate emoji blowing a kiss (line 4) – emoji referring to a small image in the digital communication media which expresses emotions and objects. It seems that Connor wanted to initiate a friendly interaction with Kristen to show his affection and support as her significant other. His intent and language open up his positive face to a vulnerability, as his desire for connection and support is reflected in his text (lines 2-4). Since a connection cannot be made valid by one side only, his affection needs to be reciprocated, or acknowledged at the very least.

Turn 2: Kristen’s response, 9:21 PM

Misleading response. Kristen soon responds to Connor’s text (lines 5-6), which decisively contributes to the expectancy (Burgoon & Hale, 1988) established by Connor. Kristen manages to respond within two minutes, as seen from the time stamps of Extract 2 – Connor starts the conversation at 9:19 PM (line 2), to which Kristen responds at 9:21 PM (line 5). Two minutes is a fairly short gap in a text message conversation for various reasons, and Connor thereby assumes the initiated conversation to be synchronous and in real-time, in which both interlocutors will be immediately engaged in the conversation, reading and writing back as soon as the text has been sent. Accordingly, gaps between turns and utterances should be kept as minimal as possible, resembling the turn-taking pattern and the speed of conversation progression to those of a verbal conversation. Connor has thus interpreted Kristen’s quick response as an approval for him to assume synchronicity in this conversation.

One of the reasons why asynchronicity is usually assumed in a text conversation as between Connor and Kristen, is firstly because textual conversation has various

limitations in temporal terms such as the time it takes the interlocutors to receive the message, read it, and physically type out the response. In addition, unlike in spoken communication – whether face-to-face or only vocally – interlocutors do not assume synchronicity in a textual communication largely because of the lack of immediacy. In addition, the utterances are recorded in the form of text, to which either interlocutor may revisit and respond at any time. On the other hand, standard verbal communication is very direct and its content information is short-lasting, even in a non- face-to-face situation such as a phone call, for instance. Granted a phone call is technically not a direct communication in that the utterances are delivered through a device (the phone), each interlocutor can immediately hear the other’s utterance as it is being said by the speaker. Both parties are engaged in the conversation as they are holding onto a temporary connection which allows them to converse real-time. In a conversation happening through text messaging, however, an utterance must get through many more steps in between its moment of formation and reception: the texter strategically forms their utterances into written words on their phone, which then is transported to the phone of the receiver; then, depending on how shortly afterwards the receiver manages to check their phone, the receiver then reads the text message and processes it, after which the whole process repeats.

Hindrance to synchronicity judgement. The central hindrance to synchronicity assumption in text communication, especially in the case of Connor and Kristen is that it is rarely guaranteed that the sent message will be read or responded immediately after its delivery. Engaging in an indirect form of communication as texting on the phone is often deferred to a lesser priority, especially if the receiver is in the middle of engaging in

another task or activity at the time of receiving the text. Unless some free time has been secured by both interlocutors, it is difficult to engage in a synchronous conversation through text, and thus the regularity of gap length is harder to assume and establish in a text conversation. Hence, in an urgent situation which requires one to get in contact with another, one prefers to make a phone call over a text message so that once the receiver picks up their phone, the two parties are able to communicate directly without delay.

Most forms of conventional, verbal conversations therefore generally share the quality of spontaneity and thus a higher speed in terms of conversation progression, along with a variety in realms of expression such as tone, volume, and intonation. Each of these properties of a verbal communication play into turn-taking system and signaling (Chafe, 1980; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1974), and allows the interlocutor to assume the synchronicity of the conversation. On the contrary, the textual communication between Connor and Kristen lacks all of these crucial characteristics which have shaped the general patterns and signals of the turn-taking system in conventional conversations. An exchange of turn-taking cues is therefore significantly more ambiguous than in a text conversation, which as a result can create a misunderstanding or a substantial delay in the conversation.

Misaligned synchronicity expectancy. For such reasons innate to text conversation, Connor does not initially assume synchronicity. However, when Kristen responds within two minutes, Connor assumes that the expectancy of this conversation has thus been established as synchronous – on a subconscious level at the least. In his point of view, most if not all of the conditions for such assumption have been established. He knows that Kristen has gotten off work, and now seeing that she has managed to

respond to his text within a short period of time, she is likely free to text continuously. Furthermore, Connor could also be assuming Kristen to catch onto his implicatures of demanding a practical communication of confirming further details for their plan later that night. This conversation has a shortly approaching goal to be communicated – a valid motivation – and is seemingly happening at the right time, in which both Connor and Kristen likely find themselves free. Therefore, Connor assumes Kristen to be able to follow the pace of a synchronous conversation via text messaging.

Facework on Kristen's response. Along with synchronicity, one more expectancy is established as a determining factor of the success of the conversation – support of faces. Supporting and saving each other's faces is central to politeness according to Brown and Levinson's FTA theory (1987). Especially in such an intimate relationship like that of Connor and Kristen's, face-support is very likely a default component of interaction that should be reciprocated, particularly as positive face represents one's desire to be connected. In this conversation, therefore, Connor's initial text full of affection (lines 2-4) should be accepted, appreciated, or reciprocated in order to save Connor's face and to avoid face-harm – possibly with a “thank you” for Connor's wishing her an “amazing shift,” (lines 2-3) or a “see you soon” to his “I'll see you soon” (line 3). Possibilities of ways in which Connor's positive face may be supported are endless, and his face is indeed assumed to be supported between their conversations.

Kristen's initial response, although delivered promptly, does not carry much in meaning: “Ooooooof” (line 6). The word ‘oof’ is a commonly used interjection today among the younger generation to express an unpleasant, mild shock. The Oxford English Dictionary, states that ‘oof’ is an interjection “representing the sound made when

expelling breath loudly through the mouth, and hence expressing various emotions conveyed by this action, such as alarm, annoyance, wonder, relief, resignation, etc.” (“Oof,” n.d.). Although a clearly negative word for certain, ‘oof’ does not carry much meaning beyond that in a semantic sense. Even though the frustration itself can be somewhat inferred from the text, it still leaves Connor in uncertainty: why is Kristen frustrated? At what is she frustrated? Is this really an expression of frustration or could it be something else? None of these questions can be answered solely from Kristen’s initial reply to Connor’s text. Despite the promptness, Kristen’s response is semantically very vague and void. She gives neither overall context information nor a clear reaction to Connor’s implicatures. Most importantly, this response is not sufficient to function as a turn-signal because the textual nature of conversation already limits the standard judgment cues in a traditional, spoken conversation, nor does this text provide enough information or clues as to signaling end of the turn.

Connor had thus not gotten the assurance from Kristen on whether she considered her turn to be taken over, or if she would continue texting. For clarification, Connor texts Kristen again almost immediately – within the same minute, 9:21 PM, and asks “Bad?” (line 7), assuming that Kristen’s seeming frustration is concerned with her work shift. In doing so in response to Kristen’s insufficient utterance, Connor is still making effort to connect with her by asking her about her day and current feelings. His implicatures of wanting to hear from her and to comfort her are further stated by his second text, as he adds on new implicatures by stating a question (Grice, 1975). By asking this question, Connor is not only conveying his concern and care for Kristen, but also his anticipation for her answer and explanation, thereby also implicating that he has not heard enough

from her. Even up to this point, it is likely that Connor had assumed the conversation to be synchronous and that Kristen would soon respond to his text (line 7).

Unannounced nonresponse. However, Kristen does not reappear after her first text (line 6) until Connor texts her again twenty minutes later. Although twenty minutes may not be a long time in an asynchronous conversation, Connor had already assumed this conversation to be synchronous in this situation. Twenty minutes is an extensive gap in a real-time, synchronous context which violates the expectancy of gap-length. At this point, the gap is considered more of an act of complete neglect, just as it would be for one person to suddenly stop talking for twenty minutes in a regular face-to-face conversation. An act of ignoring is a severe face-harm as it hurts one's positive face desiring to be connected and one's negative face desiring to be recognized as a self-standing individual and not denied of their autonomous authority to communicate with the other person.

Turn 3: Connor's Misjudgment, 9:21 PM and 9:43 PM

Although Kristen's unannounced extensive nonresponse is therefore potentially extremely face-harming for Connor, he attempts to re-establish turns and get the conversation going again by initiating the conversation once more (line 8). His text message, "Hun?" (line 8), remains to be in the form of a question, repeating the same implicature as the question before. Not only was Connor's request for Kristen's response not fulfilled in his prior question ("Bad?" line 7), but he received no reply from her at all until he wrote her again. His text is meant to clarify turns between Kristen and himself, and his speech act of addressing her ("Hun?", line 8) further implicates to Kristen that he had been and is still anticipating her response. Alongside is his mild demand for her

attention and engagement in the conversation which he had initiated and assumed to be synchronous. Connor's sense of obligation to stimulate the conversation again (line 8) due to Kristen's nonresponse signifies Kristen's failure to adhere to the set expectancy of the conversation rhythm according to the established synchronicity.

Potential face-harm due to expectancy misalignment. For many reasons, Kristen's failure to respond in time is face-threatening. Firstly, Connor's positive face could have been hurt because his effort to connect with her was evaded. His asking Kristen about her shift was an act of voluntarily putting his face at risk by inducing facework as opposed to passively awaiting Kristen's facework. As a couple in a romantic relationship, the social distance between them is minimal and require a constant supporting of each other's faces for a healthy relationship. Therefore, assuming that his positive face will be supported due also to the expectancy of synchronicity, Connor asserts his indirect demand for the support of his positive face (lines 7, 8). However, his demand for face-support was not met by Kristen as she did not respond at all. Due to her nonresponse, Kristen fails to reciprocate Connor's desire to be connected, thus potentially hurting his positive face.

Secondly, in not having his question met with an answer, Connor's negative face could also have been hurt by Kristen's nonresponse. It could have hurt Connor's self-esteem as an autonomous individual desiring to be acknowledged. An act of nonresponse would not have been as damaging to Connor's negative face, had Kristen informed Connor of a valid reason beforehand. In this extract, Connor is simply left alone in the conversation as opposed to being held on an informed pause. The extensive pause was not justified, and he was thus trying to keep up with his established expectancy of the synchronous conversation.

Although signs of face-harm have not yet been shown by Connor, it would not be surprising to find his face hurt at the end of the conversation. Yet, the grace of the innate asynchronicity of a textual conversation is that if explained properly with inevitable reasons directly affecting the interlocutor during the time of the conversation, an excessive length of gap may be justified. Limitations of reality and the indirect nature of such communication means are (or should be) mutually acknowledged between the interlocutors, and it is up to the individual interlocutors to trust that the excuse, if valid, are true. It is thus up to the participant in each set of conversation to truly believe and accept the valid reason provided by the other party in order to successfully dismiss the possible face-harm of an extensive gap – whether it is the dead battery, a severe distraction, or some kind of an immediate emergency which resulted an interlocutor to be suddenly absent without any prior notice.

Turn 4: Kristen Reappears, 9:46 PM

Insufficient response. After Connor attempts to bring the indefinitely paused conversation back to life (line 8), Kristen finally reappears, three minutes after (9:46 PM, line 9) Connor's text (9:43 PM, line 8) and twenty-five minutes after her last text (9:21 PM, lines 5-6). As seen in line 9, she starts her turn with addressing Connor – for the first time in the conversation: “Heeey,” thereby indicating that she now has started to fully engage in the conversation. Kristen's prolonged utterance could mean a few things: exaggerated gladness to hear from Connor, attempt to mitigate an “awkward” feeling as she finds herself blamable for having left Connor in the conversation, or simply her personal texting habit. Now that she has acknowledged and signaled her engagement in

the conversation, she proceeds to answer Connor's previous texts that she had missed in lines 10 and 11: "Is good / I'm just finally off." She attends to Connor's questions by informing him that she "is good" and that he should not be concerned for her because of her unannounced absence. Kristen also tries to explain the reason for her extensive gap by telling him that she is "finally off" her shift, and that she could not respond to Connor's messages because she was still occupied.

However, judging from Connor's response to Kristen's text, Kristen's explanation still remains insufficient. Connor responds with another question, "But you texted 20 minutes ago?" (lines 12, 13). His repeatedly asking a question signifies his dissatisfaction and thus continued demand of more information, explanation, or maybe even a light apology to make up for violating the established expectancy of the current conversation. His utterance also signals a face-harm done to his face to a degree – a few indicators may be the fact that he is asking Kristen to say more, implying that her expectancy violation is not yet fully explainable with what she has said so far. In addition, his tone seems to slightly reflect a feeling of annoyance or resentment, especially in comparison to his first affectionate and enthusiastic text. He is thereby letting it be known to Kristen that his face indeed has been hurt and that she has to provide further explanation for him to fully understand the situation.

Misalignment of synchronicity and face-harm. The conversation eventually results in Connor's face-harm even though the intimate social distance between Connor and Kristen should have functioned as a substantial FTA mitigator. The main reason is that Kristen was not able to compensate for her prior FTA upon Connor of miscommunicating the synchronicity of the conversation by leaving an extensive, unnotified gap. By not

justifying herself with sufficient effort or explanation, Kristen lets her potential FTAs to become actual face-harm on Connor. Aside from the face-harm out of the conversation itself, Connor's coincidental assumption of synchronicity has caused him to be in a frustrating situation.

Miscommunication of synchronicity could have caused further frustration for Connor. First, because Connor had considered the conversation to be synchronous, he could likely have held onto his phone for a long while, solely waiting for Kristen to respond in case she was writing more to add to her short and vague initial response ("Ooooooof," line 6). Just as one would wait for the other in a standard, spoken discourse to finish their turn with having communicated sufficient ideas, Connor would have anticipated Kristen's response in his waiting. Had this conversation been in a real-time and face-to-face context, Kristen's initial utterance may have come with more indicators indicating that she has finished her turn, eventually letting Connor know that she has already said what she intended to say. In a real-time, spontaneous rhythm of such conversation, it would have taken Connor only a few seconds – which is not too long of a time – at the most to realize that Kristen has no more to say. However, with the conversation taking place in the form of texting that having so many restrictions on turn-taking cues and clues, Connor might have continuously anticipated Kristen to say more. In addition, since the interlocutors' messages cannot be delivered to the other party until the whole textual utterance is finished, there is no way for Connor to know whether Kristen has more to say, nothing to say, or is currently writing more to add on. Having assumed the conversation to be synchronous and thus actively having anticipated Kristen's response which was never met, Connor could have been holding onto his phone

for a long while – likely as long as his patience allowed him to wait without getting distracted. Having to hold onto and stare at one’s phone for an unguaranteed and prolonged time is waste of time, which would be quite a frustrating scenario for most people. The frustration as a result could have led Connor to be more prone to face-harm than he may usually have been with Kristen.

Another possible factor which contributed to Connor’s face-harm is simple disappointment and frustration which Kristen’s delay in their communication may have caused. As mentioned above, Connor and Kristen had planned to see each other after Kristen’s work, and judging from Connor’s enthusiastic tone in his initial text (lines 1-4), Connor was likely very excited to see and spend time with Kristen. Having such a delay in communicating and solidifying on details of their plan may have caused Connor to be disappointed and frustrated, thus more prone to face-harm than in his usual state.

Despite the eventual face-harm, in comparison to a spoken conversation, the innately asynchronous nature of a textual conversation allows more grace to the interlocutors in terms of acceptable gap length, even if the conversation may have been judged as a synchronous one. Text conversation in general allows more time for the interlocutors to take up a turn, due to consideration of real-life limitations such as possible distractions around the texter, certain emergencies which may not be overcome, or the time it takes to actually write out an entire utterance without having it revealed to the other person until the utterance is completely finished. Thus, due to such characteristics and limitations unique to a textual conversation, even if the conversation may be judged as synchronous, there still comes somewhat of a grace in determining an acceptable window of time allowed for response.

Another point of comparison between verbal and written conversation is that it is much easier to abandon a conversation in a written context, because the conversation itself is taking place through an asynchronous, indirect way of communication as opposed to real-time and direct way as a conversation face-to-face or over the phone. Due to the innate characteristics of a written conversation which rarely happens face-to-face or at a physical proximity, it is much easier for an interlocutor to ‘disappear’ during a conversation as it lessens conscientious burden of completely neglecting the other person, thereby causing extreme harm to their face.

Therefore, this scenario is not even appropriate or realistic to translate into a spoken conversation. Unless intentionally trying to harm the other person’s face out of hostility, abandoning a conversation in the middle of it is almost impossible to occur in a real-life situation. If there really were to be an immediate emergency for the interlocutor to attend to during a conversation, it would be obvious enough for the other person to notice it, due to the physical proximity and other clues innate to a spoken conversation (alarmed or surprised voice, specific background noise, outside interference, etc.). Although, chances of misunderstandings caused by vague turn-taking cues such as with Kristen’s void initial response (line 6) would be much smaller in a spoken context, in which there are many clues other than pure lexical aspect of the utterance, such as loudness, tone, and speed of the utterance.

This extract of conversation between Connor and Kristen is thus an instance in which a misjudgment and miscommunication of synchronicity resulted in a face-harm. Kristen’s initial response time mislead Connor in establishing synchronicity, which then functioned as an amplifying effect on Connor’s face-harm from Kristen’s unannounced

silence. The gap length beyond the expected window of time violated the established expectancy, which proved to be an FTA substantial enough to overcome the already existing FTA mitigator of social proximity.

Extract 3: Purposeful Avoidance of Synchronicity

In contrast to the previous extract which was a case of an extensive gap propelling a face-harm despite a preexisting mitigator, the extract presented below is a case in which a texter intentionally takes advantage of asynchronicity by letting an extensive gap to function as a face-saving aspect in a conversation. This set of data illustrates how an interlocutor attempts to save both the face of her friend and of her own by strategically lengthening the response time by an extensive length in order to avoid an obligation to turn down a suggestion. She avoids having to directly refuse a social invitation in a group conversation setting by holding silence for an extended time, until the invitation is no longer valid or applicable. She thereby utilizes the default-asynchronicity of a text conversation to justify her intentionally belated response. At the end of the conversation, the texter has managed to save her face and her friend's face from being harmed from a gesture of rejection.

In Extract 3, Tasha tries to invite her friends on a late afternoon to hang out together later in the evening. She does so through a text message in the group chat with her friends (number of participants in total is unknown). Only Rebecca out of the group responds within appropriate time-window, only to tell Tasha that she would not be able to make it to the hangout. No one else responds to Tasha afterwards. Two hours later, Bianca belatedly responds to Tasha, saying that she had just woken up at that moment. The background information given with the data, however, indicates that Bianca's

extensive gap was in fact intentional because Bianca did not want to go to the hangout, but she also did not want to make any face-harms.

Extract 3: *I Just Woke Up* (2019Text-40_BY)

Line	Others	Speaker	Day/Time
1	Tasha		Fri
2	do u guys wanna hang out		2:45 PM
3	tonight		
4	Rebecca		3:01 PM
5	can we hang out tmr by		
6	any chance		
7	i haven't slept in days		3:02 PM
8	i need to sleep tonight		
9	but i rly miss u guys		
10		Bianca	4:46 PM
11		hi i just woke up friends	
12		i miss u all too	

Turn 1: Tasha's Invitation, 2:45 PM

General assumptions in the conversation. In Extract 3, Tasha initiates the conversation with a question (of which a question mark is omitted, as punctuations commonly are in casual speech). This conversation completely lacks qualities of formal written language, as no use of punctuation and capitalization is observed at all (“i,” lines 7-9, 11, 12), along with a constant use of casual contraction and abbreviation, such as “u” (lines 2, 9) instead of “you,” “wanna” (line 2) instead of “want to,” “tmr” (line 5) instead of “tomorrow,” “haven’t” (line 7) instead of “have not,” “rly” (line 9) instead of “really.” With such drastic contrast to formal writing styles, such as in academic writing and published work with flawless grammar and exclusive usage of unabbreviated words, this conversation is undoubtedly judged as a casual conversation. Such conversation traits often signal social proximity amongst individuals the more they contrast with the formal conversation style. Judging from the unanimity in the degree of casualness of texts in the

conversation, proximity, familiarity, and friendship are mutually perceived by all participants of this group.

Invitation implicatures and risks. As all good friends do, spending time together is an inseparable part of friendship, and Tasha initiates the conversation with a yes-no question “do u guys wanna hang out” as also observed back in Extract 1. Once again, the real implicatures behind Tasha’s ‘question’ is a display of her desire to hang out with her friends and of her request that they spend time together that evening as a group. Tasha’s ultimate goal in her utterance is to plan a hang-out for the evening, which is not a very long time from Tasha’s time of suggestion (2:45 PM, line 2).

Hindrance to synchronicity. Although a quick progression of conversation and turn-taking may thus be much appreciated by Tasha, due to the asynchronous nature of a written conversation, synchronicity may not be assumed in such context. Especially as the conversation involves an entire group as opposed to a single individual, the wider and safer consideration would be to assume that the conversation would not progress so fast – the unknown factors which may directly be affecting the recipient’s promptness of reading and responding to the text message needs to be accounted for each individual in the conversation, which fewfolds the expected duration of communication of this conversation.

Therefore, Tasha likely has not established an expectancy for the conversation, which means that the default state of asynchronicity will continue to be assumed. Each participant in the conversation would respond freely whenever they get the chance to respond. However, as Tasha appeals to her friends in support of her positive face desiring

to connect, a refusal or a total nonresponse to Tasha's message would likely result in face-harm in Tasha's face, despite the social proximity, as was the case observed in Extract 2. Unfortunately, both instances of refusal and nonresponse are given as a response to Tasha, each with different FTA mitigation strategy.

Turn 2: Rebecca's Response, 3:01 PM and 3:02 PM

Refusal, but mitigated. Rebecca responds fairly promptly, at 3:01 PM (line 4), which is only 15 minutes after Tasha's text, but her response to Tasha's invitation to hang-out is essentially a refusal. In effort to mitigate the face-harm which her refusal may cause to Tasha's negative face, Rebecca approaches her refusal with many strategies. Her first text, "can we hang out tmr by any chance" (lines 5, 6) does not semantically align with Tasha's yes-no question. However, it implies that Rebecca has successfully interpreted Tasha's implicatures and is responding to the implicature instead. In her question, Rebecca attends to both aspects of Tasha's invitation: the question of 'if' ("wanna hang out") and the time ("tonight"). Rebecca attends to the question of 'if' by implicating that she does in fact want to hang out, as interpreted in the part of her text "can we hang out... by any chance." She also attends to the temporal aspect of Tasha's text by specifying time, "tmr [tomorrow]." While Rebecca is in approval of Tasha's suggestion of hanging out itself, she is in disagreement with when it should happen. Therefore, Rebecca's response in essence implies that she cannot, or would rather not, accept Tasha's invitation exactly as it is. Rebecca does, however, respond to Tasha sooner than later (compared to Bianca) and indicate her willingness to hang out by offering another specific time to replace that of Tasha's. As opposed to a vague and

unclear time such as “next time” or “sometime else,” Rebecca provides a specific and nearby time to replace that of Tasha’s (“tonight”), thereby strengthening her appeal to support of Tasha’s positive face as she makes clear that she wants to spend time with Tasha as well. Although asynchronous, Rebecca also responds to Tasha somewhat early on, to indicate her enthusiasm regarding hanging out with friends. Had Rebecca taken a couple more hours to respond to Tasha, her enthusiasm may not have come across as well as it has in the extract.

To mitigate the refusal further, Rebecca quickly and immediately moves on to her explanation for why the time proposed by Tasha does not work for Rebecca, thereby appealing to her friends that the reason for her refusal is not due to unwillingness to spend time with them. In a similar turn-taking pattern as have been observed in Extract 1 before, Rebecca texts multiple consecutive text messages within a very short window of time – all four of her text messages are written within one minute, between 3:01 PM (lines 4-6) and 3:02 PM (line 7-9). Rebecca’s strategy to lessen the risk of FTA is represented in her minimal gap lengths between her texts, once again placing stress on her enthusiasm and effort to rearrange a time for another hangout. Rebecca also assumes the asynchronicity of the conversation and attempts to hold onto her turn even after an utterance by allowing no time for others to possibly interrupt, so that she may support her message of refusal with FTA mitigators.

Rebecca follows up her initial text of refusal with appropriate reasons to lessen the FTA risk of refusal on the positive and negative faces of her friends, appealing to the fact that she could not help the situation even though she would like to hang out with them. In line 7, Rebecca provides an introduction to the reason that she cannot (as

opposed to does not want to) hang out: “i haven’t slept in days,” providing context for her direct statement of reason, “i need to sleep tonight.” By putting emphasis on the importance of her reason with line 7, Rebecca implies that she is not turning her friends down for some unknown, insignificant, or unnecessary reason. Rebecca hopes to impress the urgent need for sleep on her friends through providing an appropriate context, informing them that she is not simply choosing sleep over her friends, but rather that she should spend the designated time on getting a much needed sleep since she has not slept “in days.” Rebecca then ends her turn with a closing in line 9, which is an affirmation of her affection and desire to see them and spend time with them: “but i rly miss u guys,” thereby emphasizing once more that had the situation allowed her to, she would have definitely (assumed from “rly” which intensifies her desire to see her friends) responded positively to Tasha’s invitation because she misses them.

Turn 3: Bianca’s belated response, 4:46 PM

Deliberate delay as a refusal strategy. Bianca, on the other hand, takes a very different approach than Rebecca’s to convey a message of refusal. As observed from the time stamp of her first utterance (4:46 PM, line 10), Bianca takes an extensive length of time to respond using the grace of asynchronicity – just about two hours since Tasha’s invitation – which plays a central role in her FTA mitigation strategy. She initiates her delayed response just as she would if she were to start a brand new conversation in line 11: “hi i just woke up friends.” This, like Rebecca’s initial response, is semantically not in alignment with Tasha’s yes-no invitation (lines 2-3) because it is not in a form of an answer to her question in any way. Rather, Bianca’s initial text is a simple declaration of

the fact that she has just woken up from sleep and that she had not been a part of the previous conversation because she was not present at the time. Furthermore, unlike Rebecca, Bianca does not at all attend directly to Tasha's text as she excludes any information regarding hangout and time. Bianca then concludes her turn with a text of reciprocating affirmation in response to Rebecca (line 9): "i miss u all too" (line 12). In such seemingly inadequate statements in response to Tasha's hangout invitation, Bianca implicates an indirect refusal to Tasha through an intended delay and avoiding the mention of the topic of hangout.

As it turns out in the provided context information regarding this text conversation, Bianca had intentionally delayed her response pretending to have been asleep because she did not want to hang out with her friends. She decided to take advantage of the asynchronicity and versatile rhythm of conversation in a written discourse and purposefully delayed her response – until she would go beyond the relevant time-window for a response. She first texts as if she is initiating a new, different conversation in line 11, indicated by the irrelevance of her topic by itself along with her opener "hi" (line 11). In contrast with Rebecca who directly replies to Tasha by omitting a conversation opener and mentioning the very matter straight forwardly, Bianca does the complete opposite. Bianca thereby implies, very indirectly, that she considers the previous topic of discussion to be irrelevant – that it is past its duration of relevancy, since it is now too soon in the future to be planning for. Indicating herself that had she responded sooner, there could have been enough time for the friends to plan for the night, Bianca justifies her own blame of lateness by stating that she had "just woke[n] up."

Utilizing the fact that one cannot read a text message until one attends to their phone regardless of when the message was actually delivered, Bianca claims that she has been asleep during the time of receiving the text through past the time-window of relevancy – how could one possibly check their phone while asleep? Bianca also takes advantage of the spontaneity of Tasha’s invitation. Had the friends already agreed to meet on a certain evening beforehand, Bianca would still have had to be held responsible for being asleep during that time, a comparison similar to the previous instance of Extract 2, in which Kristen was held responsible for her nonresponse in a conversation intended to plan the meeting because the plan had been agreed to beforehand. However, in the current example with Tasha and Bianca, Tasha’s invitation is a spontaneous one which does not require synchronicity or at least somewhat of a pace in conversation progression despite the urgency of the topic. Furthermore, no expectancy specifically regarding synchronicity has been established in this conversation. Therefore, due to the asynchronicity, Bianca judges that she is neither responsible for nor obligated to provide prompt response to Tasha, which allows a reason as simple as a nap to be a sufficient excuse for missing the appropriate time of response.

Bianca recognizes, or even hopes, that her reply is too late and already irrelevant. She establishes her hope, whether intentionally or subconsciously, by totally flouting the topic instead of showing effort to further progress the planning. Her indirect argument reflected in her text is that the matter is no longer worth mentioning again or discussing further, because the appropriate time to discuss the plan has already passed. Bianca proceeds and seals the discussion of the former topic by completely changing the subject. She responds to Rebecca’s utterance only (line 12) and indirectly claims that she has

moved on to another topic. In doing so, Bianca also attempts to support her friends' positive faces and is hoping to make up for the face-harm that her indirect refusal may have caused.

This would have been an impossible strategy in a spoken conversation, as spoken conversation is synchronous and real-time, accepting no excessive gaps as such in Bianca's situation. Changing the subject and flouting the on-going topic of the conversation, which were other FTA mitigation strategy utilized by Bianca, are also not an appropriate method in spoken conversation. The irrelevant new topic would create a drastic contrast with the on-going topic and thus a discrepancy in the normality of a conversation, whereas the change in topic seemed substantially less conspicuous in an asynchronous conversation.

This extract of conversation among Tasha, Rebecca and Bianca is an instance in which establishment of asynchronicity is utilized as a means of justification for nonresponse, which is a very high risk FTA. Ironically, the nonresponse was then utilized as a means to mitigate FTA. Such strategy is only plausible in a written context, in which its asynchronous nature justifies an interlocutor of aspects which spoken, synchronous conversation certainly does not.

In this chapter of data analysis, three instances of data were observed, in which the synchronicity discernment and establishment of the participants in conversations exerted various effects on FTA calculation. In doing so, the gaps were recognized and evaluated in terms of the turn-taking system of Schegloff et al. (1974), Burgoon and Hale's EVT (1988), and Brown and Levinson's FTA theory (1987). Assumed asynchronicity (and optional synchronicity) is a quality unique to text conversation,

which allows the dynamics of the conversation to be extremely different than those in a spoken, synchronous discourse. Through these three sets of data varying in context and nature, this paper observed and analyzed instances in which participants in conversations either discerned, established, or manipulated synchronicity through various factors, such as FTA strategy, lengths of gaps, level of urgency, goal of the conversation, and so on. While a strategic establishment of (a-)synchronicity may mitigate a potential FTA or even yield humor, failure of establishing synchronicity in a conversation to the other party may end in difficulties in communication along with possible face harms.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Summary of Analysis

In this project, three sets of text message conversations were examined for the ways in which each texter judged the synchronicity of the conversation and strategized their timing of response. In doing so, the gaps between turns were analyzed through conversation analysis and evaluated in terms of Burgoon and Hale's Expectation Violation Theory (1988) and Brown and Levinson's Face Threatening Acts Theory (1987). While all three sets displayed conversations among individuals of small social distance, each set was observed with varying nature and context. As a result of difference in such factors, extensive gaps either aligned or misaligned with the synchronicity expectancy of the other party. Some of the judgements made were observed to have been successfully accepted or excused, whereas some were not.

According to the analysis, some factors which heavily influence one's establishment of normality and expectancies in a conversation are one's personal experience as an individual (in terms of conversations which they have had with others) along with the context behind the segment of the conversation between the interlocutors, the importance and urgency of the approaching issue of the discourse, and one's desire to participate and engage in the conversation. In reality, social distance has been observed to play a bigger role in one's 'acceptability' of expectancy violations rather than the expectancy itself. In other words, the closer the social distance between the texters, the more the potential FTA is excused by the hearer.

The overall observation and according analysis are significant in recognizing the presence of synchronicity in textual conversation, as synchronicity is an often overlooked concept in written, non- face to face conversations. Granted although the turn shifts are often more delayed compared to those in real-time, spoken conversations, synchronicity is still a valid feature in text message conversations, which points to the need for the difference between synchronous and asynchronous conversations on textual platforms to be recognized.

Along with the affirmation of synchronicity in textual conversations, the analysis also attempts to sort out factors which may impact the texters in their discernment of synchronicity in discourse through text messaging. Some of the discussed factors were spontaneity, goal, and the urgency of the conversation. All of the rationale behind the texters' synchronicity judgement, however, eventually leads to the matter of 'face.' Each individual's concern with their discernment had to come down in the end to the question of how they wanted themselves to be portrayed socially: a humorous and helpful friend (Carol and Sharon), a caring and responsible partner (Kristen and Connor), or a loyal friend (Tasha, Rebecca, Bianca).

However, because the construction of a desired face looks different for everyone, there was a limit to how far the analysis could have stretched in terms of strategies and psychology of each participant in the extracts. Fortunately, Bianca in Extract 3 had personally provided her personal insight and thought process behind her evasive gap, but there was no extra feedback from the rest of the participants. If the analysis were to be conducted again, for a more complete analysis, a short interview of the participants following the data collection would add greatly to the content of the analysis. With the

personal perspective, insight, and intention of the participants alongside, the analysis would surely be able to provide a much fuller analysis for the conversations.

Hypothesis and Future Directions

As the analysis adheres specifically to text message conversations, it focuses on the issue of optionality of synchronicity, which is an instinctive trait of a textual conversation. While the analysis attempted to investigate the strategies and rationale of the texters behind the synchronicity judgement, an interesting question came up – could it be that the natural and default instinct for the text receivers is to delay their response? The hypothesis derives from the fact that all three sets of data showed a significant length of gap (silence) at one point: the first data set with Carol and Sharon has an overnight-long gap between a text and its response, the second data set with Kristen and Connor includes Kristen’s unannounced 20 minute gap, and the last data set with Bianca and her friends display Bianca’s intentional two hour gap between her response and the very first initiative text from Tanya. If the main goal or concern of the conversation were not urgent, would most texters reply to the text messages as soon as they can, at all times? Or could it be that texters delay their responses for a significant length of time on purpose?

This question could have been better answered, had it been known whether texters respond as soon as they realize that they have received a message or purposefully delay their responses by desired amount of time. That is a very personal and subjective factor and is thus very difficult to be specified for analysis since there is no means of indicating such factor. However, it is still an interesting hypothesis to consider, as it heavily influences the theories behind the synchronicity and the general pace of the textual conversations.

Another interesting aspect of text message communication which was not thoroughly mentioned in the analysis is that synchronicity can also change throughout the conversation and does not have to be consistent – in fact, two out of three data sets display this shift in synchronicity. This is probably another reason for the flexibility of synchronicity in textual conversations. Furthermore, such lack of consistency is perhaps another reason for why synchronicity is often an overlooked concept when considering written communication. The analysis would have, however, been able to offer a more reliable and developed hypothesis regarding this idea, had there been more time and relevant data sets to work with.

In conclusion, this research analysis focused on the optionality of synchronicity in a textual conversation, specifically over text messaging, granted that the platforms may have varied. As the innate lack of paralinguistic cues in a textual communication limits the clarity of turn-taking in the conversation and the innate optionality of synchronicity requires to be established, the analysis aimed to identify patterns or factors in text conversations which contribute to the assumption and judgement of synchronicity or asynchronicity in a conversation by individual texters. The analysis thereby examined each participant in text message conversations as they perceive and interpret the given context to discern synchronicity and turn-shifting pattern of the conversation. While social distance among the texters impacted the acceptability of normality violations, some factors such as immediacy, spontaneity, and goal were observed to impact the actual judgement along with the desires for establishing one's face.

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