



TELECOLLABORATIVE EXCHANGES AND HIGHER EDUCATION: NEGOTIATION OF MEANING IN INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SPANISH AND JAPANESE STUDENTS

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This article presents an analysis of Negotiation of Meaning (NoM) episodes found in three audiovisual telecollaborative interactions. The study was conducted within the VELCOME project, which carried out a telecollaborative partnership between Japanese (Kwansei Gakuin University) and Spanish (Universitat de València) students. The main objective is to ascertain the presence of NoM episodes in these audiovisual telecollaborative experiences, together with determining the relevance and nature of said episodes.

A mixed methodology is employed in this study, since the quantitative results provide the basis for the subsequent qualitative analysis of the data. The NoM episodes were analysed based on Smith's (2003, 2005) expansion of the model of Negotiation of Meaning formulated by Varonis and Gass (1985). In addition, the triggers found in the corpus were later on classified into two categories: attended and unattended. Then, so as to determine if students avoid attending mistakes or issues of a specific nature, the attended and unattended triggers were classified into different categories (linguistic, content-related, technical problems, material-

related, and overlapping). Finally, the attended triggers were likewise classified as resolved or unresolved as a manner to determine the success of students at solving these breakdowns.

The findings obtained suggest that NoM episodes represent a relevant portion of the interactions, emphasising the significance of these breakdowns in communicative processes. Hence, this may imply that further insights into the presence of these NoM episodes and their pedagogical implications are needed, especially in the context of highly communicative activities such as telecollaboration.

Keywords: Telecollaboration; tertiary education; Negotiation of Meaning; foreign language learning; communication

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, more and more teachers, practitioners, and scholars have been attempting to implement ICTs in the language classroom through a diversity of innovative approaches. As Chapelle expounds, “the march of technology throughout all aspects of the lives of language learners is expanding whether it be through formal education or in their everyday lives” (2007, 108). Accordingly, it is due to its ubiquitous nature that technology has evolved until becoming a crucial aspect in the fields of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

Likewise, communicative competence has gained growing recognition in recent research on foreign language teaching (Bou-Franch 2001, 1). Indeed, communication and its acquisition in the L2 classroom have become the “overarching learning objective”, aside from a determining aspect for the potential success of students (Hoffstaedter and Kohn 2015, 1).

As a result, it has been widely argued in research that communication may be successfully integrated into language teaching through ICTs, given that some configurations have the potential to trigger “unlimited input and repetition”, offer opportunities for “modifying input”, and provide students with

“interaction and negotiation of meaning” episodes (Chun 2016, 101).

Thus, an example of a technology-enhanced configuration with a strong focus on communication is telecollaboration. Apart from being reasonably new (Hrastinski & Keller 2007, 62), this learning tool has gained growing recognition in research and has been examined through various standpoints (Clavel-Arroitia 2019, 99). Nevertheless, and apart from all the positive outcomes previously mentioned in the literature, scholars have determined that telecollaborative exchanges may foster the unleashing of Negotiation of Meaning (NoM) episodes (Bower & Kawaguchi 2011; Clavel-Arroitia & Pennock-Speck 2015a, 2015b; Lee 2001, 2006; O’Dowd 2007a; Smith 2003, 2005), which are found in interactive processes when triggers or “breakdowns in communication” (Bower & Kawaguchi 2011, 44) are addressed and treated. The growing attention that these communicative breakdowns are receiving in the contexts of SLA and TEFL derives precisely from the multiple benefits that they potentially offer for the acquisition of conversational competence (Bou-Franch 2001) and its integration in the foreign language classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse three audiovisual telecollaborative exchanges between students from Kwansei Gakuin University (Japan) and Universitat de València (Spain). Consequently, the analysis will be conducted through the identification and description of NoM episodes (Varonis and Gass, 1985; Smith, 2003, 2005), together with a classification of the triggers found in the corpus so as to further explore the presence and relevance of NoM in these audiovisual telecollaborative experiences.

2. Theoretical framework

Telecollaboration has been defined by Guth and Helm (2012, 42) as an “Internet based intercultural exchange [...] set up in an institutional blended-learning context with the aim of developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence”. This definition alludes to some of the main purposes and

pedagogical implications of these activities and, hence, some aspects mentioned need to be further clarified. First and foremost, one of the core features of telecollaboration is the “institutional” setting in which these activities are developed. As previously mentioned, the integration of activities that motivate the acquisition of communicative and digital competences in curricular language lessons is gradually becoming crucial. Furthermore, making students able to receive L2 input from interactive processes could provide them with wider opportunities for improvement. In the case of those students who normally receive all the input from their teacher-centred lessons or are unable to participate in any other intercultural exchanges, these interactions may provide them with additional occasions to practice (Clavel Arroitia & Pennock-Speck 2015a, 191).

Another element to highlight from Guth and Helm’s description is the applicability of this approach to contexts where “blended-learning” methodologies are employed. As expounded by Graham, blended learning approaches “combine face-to-face instruction with computer mediated instruction” (2006, 5), merging the adaptability and innovation of technology with the social and economic accessibility of on-site lessons (Thorne 2003, Bañados 2006). As previously mentioned, telecollaboration has the potential to provide teachers and practitioners with befitting instruments for the integration of both communication and technology in face-to-face teaching environments. Consequently, the outcomes and pretensions of telecollaboration are analogous to those of blended-learning approaches.

Even though telecollaborative exchanges are generally described under the same definition, it is crucial to bear in mind that every exchange is completely different and is characterised by various unique features. There are different categorisations in which we can classify telecollaborative exchanges. One of them is the distinction between synchronous (real-time exchanges, namely those taking place in videoconference software and online chats) and asynchronous tools (e.g., e-mails and forums) (O’Dowd 2007a, 12). Additionally, these conversations can be carried out both orally and in written contexts.

It is important to bear in mind these differences, since the structure and procedures of the conversation may be modified according to these variables. “In synchronous text chats, for instance, there is a high degree of disrupted adjacency, overlapping exchanges, and topic decay” (Herring 1999; cited by Chun 2011, 394), while these aspects will not be present to the same extent in audiovisual telecollaborative interactions. Another example is presented by Jauregi (2015, 271), whose research conducted within the Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition (TILA) project revealed that “(v)ideo communication seems to stimulate more complex discourse production than chat encounters and might be more useful for stimulating richer intercultural exchanges than chat”. Nevertheless, synchronous audiovisual interaction could submit students to higher levels of stress and anxiety (Jauregui 2015, 271).

Additionally, there are other typologies of telecollaborative exchanges that do not involve the tool utilised, but the languages used in the interactions. Students have the possibility of participating in tandem exchanges, which are those between “students with different mother tongues taking turns to teach and learn each other’s mother tongue” (Clavel-Arroitia and Pennock-Speck 2015b, 75). In consequence, these exchanges present some “expert” figures (native speakers) who guide and counsel non-native speakers (Hoffstaedter and Kohn, n.d.).¹ Conversely, there is another kind of telecollaborative exchange that is known as *lingua franca* which takes place between students whose L1 is different from the one used in the interaction (Clavel-Arroitia and Pennock-Speck 2015b, 75).

Despite the wide variety of telecollaborative exchanges reported in research, telecollaboration has been generally valued as a beneficial tool for language pedagogy. Some of its affordances are autonomous learning (Pérez-Cañado 2010, Vinagre 2007), differentiation (Pennock-Speck & Clavel-Arroitia 2018), the

¹https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jztj_oVcJ9LMxmUWu78eAg41O-VYMHkI/view

acquisition of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (O'Dowd 2003, 2007b), motivation (Canto, Jauregi, and Bergh 2013; Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia 2018; Pérez Cañado 2010, Schenker 2012), and so on. Nonetheless, there is one outcome that becomes crucial for the conducting of this piece of research. Due precisely to the presence of authentic communication in telecollaborative exchanges, telecollaboration has growingly been studied under the purview of the interactionist approach. More specifically, some studies have focused on a component of interaction known as Negotiation of Meaning (NoM). This recognition of NoM episodes in SLA research has flourished due to the fact that previous studies have demonstrated that these are unleashed during telecollaborative exchanges (Bower & Kawaguchi 2011; Clavel-Arroitia & Pennock-Speck 2015a, 2015b; Lee 2001, 2006; O'Dowd 2007a; Smith 2003, 2005). Said episodes take place when there is a trigger in an interaction, or, in the words of Bower and Kawaguchi, when “a breakdown in communication” occurs (2011, 44).

The interest in these NoM episodes in SLA and TEFL contexts is expanding because it is considered “the most helpful way for learners to acquire new words when completing CALL tasks with another learner” (Smith 2005, 54). Hence, NoM episodes could be beneficial for the acquisition of vocabulary in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) contexts. According to Smith (2003, 39), another outcome of NoM episodes in L2 learners is their need to alter their utterances in order to make themselves understood. This way, they pay more attention to the principal issues that they may encounter while interacting with their peers and become more aware of the “gaps in their knowledge” (Wilkinson 2001, cited by Clavel-Arroitia, 2019). In this same line, NoM episodes may imply explicit corrective feedback between interactants, hence stimulating the acquisition of comprehensible input (Long, 1983; Krashen, 1992). Consequently, students would be able to produce “pushed output” (Swain, 1985), i.e. a broader lexical richness could be produced, since participants are being motivated to use those vocabulary items that they do not normally resort to in the first place. As a result, incidental acquisition of knowledge can be facilitated by exposing students to these NoM episodes (Ellis 1999, 4).

Due to the growing recognition of NoM in research, several methodologies to analyse this element of interaction have aroused. A widely used model for the identification of NoM episodes is that of Varonis and Gass (1985). According to this bipartite model, attended NoM episodes can be divided into two parts: a trigger (the utterance that caused the communicative breakdown) and a resolution phase. Likewise, the resolution is also divided into three subparts: an Indicator (I), or the moment in which a speaker indicates the problem; a response (R), which takes place when the other interactants attempt to solve the issue; and a reaction to the response (RR), when the first speaker confirms that the problem has been solved. The latter is an optional move, which means that some NoM episodes may not present it.

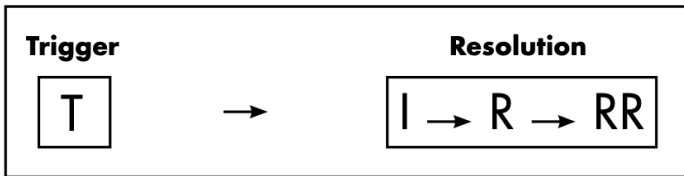


Figure 1: Model of Negotiation of Meaning formulated by Varonis and Gass (1985, 74)

Hence, a conversation is illustrated as a continuous line in this model. When interactants face a trigger, they detour from this straight line until they have solved the non-understanding and can eventually redirect the conversation. Nevertheless, and although this taxonomy has been widely used in research, the main focus of this model is on face-to-face interaction. As Loewen and Sato point out in their review, “the use of technology in communication has expanded the purview of interactionist research” (2018, 312), which implies that this model may need some modifications to apply it to communication in virtual environments. So as to find a way to fittingly study CMC communication, this model was expanded by Smith (2003, 2005). In his research, he explained that CMC differed in some aspects from face-to-face interaction, one of them being the non-adjacent nature of turns in virtual interaction. Since the turn-taking procedures of CMC do not follow such an organised order as in face-to-face conversation, it can be understood that the distance

between the trigger and its subsequent resolution is more notorious in CMC contexts. Moreover, Smith also pointed out that participants facing a NoM episode in virtual environments need an explicit “indication of understanding” (Smith 2003, 48–49), allowing them to explicitly state that the NoM episode has concluded before carrying on with the conversation. In consequence, Smith added two more stages to the resolutions phase: a confirmation (C) and a reconfirmation (RC).

3. Methodology

As already mentioned, the main purpose of this paper is to identify and analyse the presence of NoM episodes in three exchanges carried out in a partnership between university students. The interactions to be scrutinised in the following parts of this paper have been retrieved, as mentioned above, from a partnership carried out in the context of the VELCOME project.² The aim of this project is to “analyse and assess the effects that integrating virtual exchange (VE) as an innovative teaching method can have on the development of key competences for lifelong learning and employability (European Commission, 2018) of students in EMI (English Medium of Instruction) classrooms” (Vinagre, n.d). For this reason, several partnerships were carried out between Spanish and international institutions at all education levels making use of different synchronous and asynchronous tools.

The participants of the exchange studied in this paper were students from Kwansai Gakuin University (Japan) and Universitat de València (Spain). There was a total of 45 participants (23 Japanese and 22 Spanish students), who were divided into groups of four or five to carry out the main task of the partnership, forming a total of 11 groups.

² Virtual Exchange for Learning and Competence Development in EMI Classrooms, 2019-2021. RTI2018-094601-B-100. Project “Retos”, Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades.

A determining aspect of this project is that the conversations were carried out during the COVID-19 outbreak, meaning that each student stayed at their respective residences while completing the activity.

Regarding the organisation of the exchange, it was divided into three parts: a pre-task, a main task, and a post-task. This structure was selected because it follows the structure of activities in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) contexts. In the pre-task, students were asked to introduce themselves via e-mail and speak to their peers so as to agree on a date and time to meet for the main task. In this part, they also carried out a Zoom session with their respective instructors, who explained the activity and allowed them to have some time to gather ideas that they could use for the main task. At this point, students were provided with a PDF document with some questions and images that they could use as a guide during the conversation. The main task was the actual conversation, in which students were asked to talk for an hour about a specific topic via Zoom videoplatform. Students were also encouraged to digress and comment on other ideas if they wanted, together with the fact that they were given no time limits. Nevertheless, most of the conversations were close to an hour, the shortest one being 45 minutes long and the longest an hour and 45 minutes approximately. Finally, in the post-task students were asked to write a short text concerning their views on the experience and to answer a questionnaire. Due to space constraints, this paper will only deal with the data extracted from the main task.

Since this telecollaborative activity was part of both groups' curricula, the main topic to be discussed in the interactions needed to be extracted from their syllabi. Consequently, the topic was "Beliefs and superstitions", not only because it was included in both of their language courses, but also due to the fact that it is a topic that allowed them to compare both cultures. As previously stated, students were also allowed to speak about other open topics during the main task.

For this study, three of the interactions were randomly selected and analysed. These three groups were formed by two Japanese and two Spanish students, excluding one that was formed

by three Japanese students instead of two. Hence, the interactions were carried out by a total of 13 students (7 Japanese and 6 Spanish participants). This analysis has been carried out through the answering of three research questions (RQ):

(RQ1). How relevant are NoM episodes in the three interactions?

(RQ2). How many of the triggers found in the corpus were attended?

(RQ3). How many of the triggers found in the corpus were resolved?

So as to answer these questions, a mixed-methods methodology was carried out combining both quantitative and qualitative data. In this case, all the research questions will be explored through a quantitative study, in which the NoM episodes will be detected in the corpus by making use of Smith's (2003, 2005) adaptation of Varonis and Gass (1985) model. Afterwards, the triggers found will be classified into attended and not attended and, subsequently, the attended triggers will be likewise categorised into resolved and unresolved. Hence, these episodes will be quantified, utilising these data as the basis for a posterior qualitative analysis, which will provide further details about the corpus and the participants. Furthermore, some of the descriptions and evaluations of the results are carried out from the standpoint of a "participant observer" (Freeman and Hall, 2012), since the author of this paper participated in one of the interactions. Nevertheless, the interaction in which the author participated was excluded from the corpus selection to avoid biased results. Consequently, this model of observation will provide further data for the qualitative analysis of the exchanges.

The gathering of data for this paper was carried out through the viewing and subsequent transcription of the recordings. Moreover, the recordings of the interactions were used during the counting process, since the transcriptions alone may not provide enough details or may leave behind relevant aspects to consider. These transcriptions were carried out through the guidelines by Gumperz and Berenz (1993), Atkinson and Heritage (1984), and Langford (1994) and included not only the verbal production of the participants, but also non-verbal cues such as gestures, nodding, or

hand movements. Indeed, most of the non-verbal production observed in the corpus served as a carrier of meaning, consequently becoming necessary for this analysis.

Thus, triangulation is ensured in this study through the incorporation of all these methodologies, and it provides this paper with further details and wider perspectives. As Todd affirms, “the use of multiple measures may [...] uncover some unique variance which otherwise may have been neglected by single methods” (1979, 603).

4. Results and discussion

Before determining the importance and presence of NoM episodes in the corpus, it is relevant to look at the degree of participation of each cultural group, or, in other words, the number of moves. These data are shown below in Table 1, where a count of the total moves of each group together with a comparison between the Spanish and Japanese students can be found:

Group 5		Group 8		Group 9	
734		654		806	
Japanese	Spanish	Japanese	Spanish	Japanese	Spanish
330 (44.96%)	404 (55.04%)	326 (49.85%)	328 (50.15%)	378 (46.90%)	428 (53.10%)

Table 1: Results for number of moves

This count of moves includes both verbal and non-verbal manifestations. Hence, those instances in which students nodded or made use of gestures were counted in this section as a move, since they also behaved as carriers of meaning on different occasions.

Taking these data and quantifying them as a whole, a total of 2,194 moves were obtained. Furthermore, out of this total, 1,034 moves belonged to Japanese students, while 1,160 were prompted by Spanish students. Thus, 52.87% of the moves were made by Spanish participants and the other 47.13% by Japanese students, as shown in Figure 1 below:

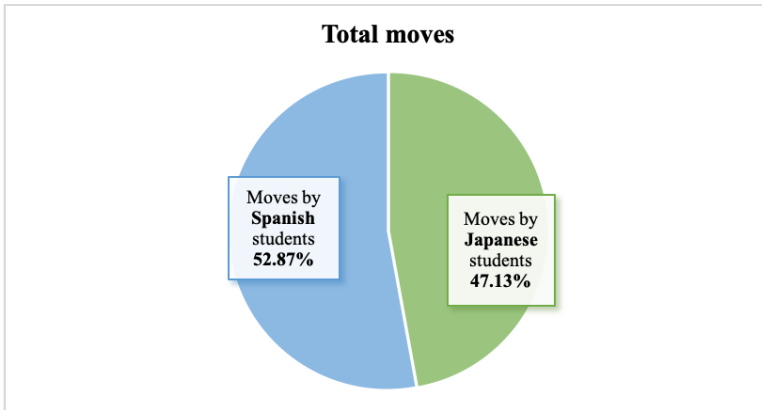


Figure 1: Results for total moves

By focusing on the number of moves prompted by each cultural group, it can be inferred that no relevant differences are perceived from these results, because each group presents a balanced count of moves. Hence, the interactions analysed in this paper may be organised through turn-taking procedures in which one interactant inquires and the rest of participants answer, as illustrated in Example 1 hereunder:

Example 1:

<SPA2> Alright, the unexplained. Ok, so, guys, do you believe in ghosts?

<JAP1> Yes. <smiles>

<SPA1> What about the other ones?

<JAP3> <nods> Ah, yes, yes.

<SPA1> Amy?

<JAP2> Ah? <Clarification request>

<SPA1> Do you believe in ghosts? <Repetition>

<JAP2> <tilts her head> Hm... <nods> Not, not believe.

Nonetheless, if a count of the words uttered by the students in the interactions is carried out, different results are obtained, making it necessary to compare these data. In this second count of moves, any non-verbal cues were excluded in an attempt to determine the levels of production and elaboration of each cultural group's utterances. Thus, Table 2 indicates the word count for each exchange and cultural group.

Group 5		Group 8		Group 9	
4,286		3,686		6,079	
Japanese	Spanish	Japanese	Spanish	Japanese	Spanish
1,101 (25.69%)	3,185 (74.31%)	1,562 (42.38%)	2,124 (57.62%)	1,799 (29.59%)	4,280 (70.41%)

Table 2: Word count of the interventions.

It can be extracted from these results that the utterances produced by Spanish students presented higher degrees of elaboration if we compare them to those by Japanese participants. According to this count, 68.24% of the words uttered correspond to Spanish participants, while 31.76% were uttered by Japanese interactants.

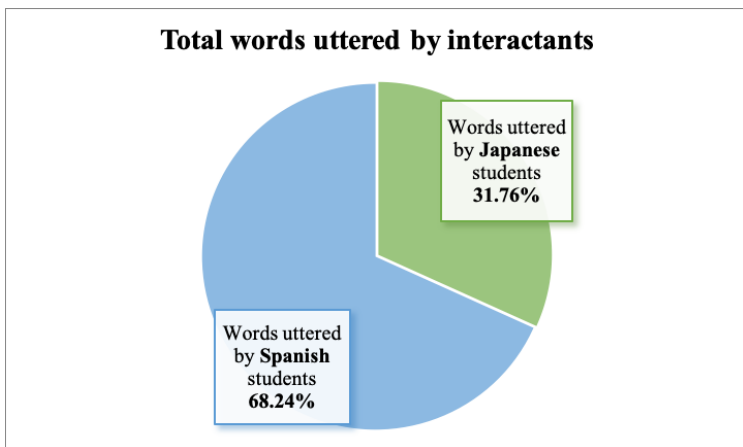


Figure 2: Results for the word count of the interventions

Consequently, these results imply that the oral production of the Spanish students as a whole was superior in quantity to that of Japanese students. There are different ways to explain this phenomenon. Firstly, the Spanish students were older and had studied English for more years, so their proficiency in the language was expected to be slightly higher. In the case of the Japanese students, this may be the reason for the higher amounts of moves carried out through non-verbal communication strategies and the

lack of verbal utterances in some moves, since Spanish students presented “more cognitive resources” (Li, 2014; cited by Loewen and Sato, 2018: 309) due precisely for their higher levels of proficiency. These differences between the linguistic elaboration of Spanish students and the presence of non-verbal communication in the case of the Japanese are illustrated in Example 2:

Example 2:

<SPA2> *I am Carlos' classmate and <takes his mic closer> can you hear me? 'Cause sometimes my microphone does not work.*

<JAP2 nods>

<JAP3 nods>

<SPA1> *Well, that's better.*

<SPA2> *Ok. <Confirmation> [...]*

Among these three groups, there is one that presents a more balanced count of words, which is Group 8. A feature that characterises this specific conversation is that there was a strong presence of the Japanese language, since the Japanese students here tended to solve NoM episodes by translating words or asking each other questions in their native language. Accordingly, Spanish students were not able to take part in these NoM episodes, since they could not speak Japanese, explaining the higher number of words in the case of the utterances prompted by Japanese students in this group. Example 3 below instantiates this phenomenon:

Example 3:

<SPA3> <louder> *What other things bring bad luck or [good] luck in Japan? <chuckles> <Repetition>*

<JAP5> *[Ok.] Ok. Ok, I got it. Ah...*

<SPA3 and SPA4 chuckle>

<JAP5 speaks to JAP4 in Japanese> <Code switching>

<JAP4> *Ah... Ahhh... <looks left>*

<JAP5 speaks to JAP4 in Japanese> <looks down>

Now that deeper insights about our corpus have been provided and having described how these interactions proceeded, it is necessary to move on to the answering of our research questions. The results previously presented are crucial for the answering of research question 1 (*How relevant NoM episodes are in the three interactions?*), since it is necessary to know these aspects in order to calculate the percentage of presence of NoM episodes in the

corpus. Once the NoM episodes were identified by means of Smith's (2003, 2005) adaptation of Varonis and Gass' model (1985), these results were extracted:

	Group 5	Group 8	Group 9
Number of NoM episodes	106	92	147
Word count of NoM episodes	2,211 (53.92%)	1,975 (53.58%)	2,804 (46.13%)

Table 3: Results of NoM episodes on each interaction.

Perceiving all these results as a whole, 50.46% of the corpus (7,090 words) were essentially negotiated turns, hence constituting a heavily important portion of these interactions. These results contrast with those of Smith (2003, 45), who found that NoM episodes constituted 34% of his corpus, which was formed by different online written conversations. Probably these different results are due to the presence of different media in these interactions. As Lee (2001, 234) explains, "it is assumed that during the online negotiation process learners experience input, feedback and output in a way similar to that of face-to-face interaction". Hence, it may be this similarity between face-to-face interaction and audiovisual telecollaborative exchanges what has triggered this high presence of NoM episodes. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that CMC and face-to-face communication are not identical, so the NoM episodes' number may have been magnified in this corpus due to the proper constraints of communication in online environments.

Once the relevance of NoM episodes in the corpus has been determined, the answer to research question 2 (*How many of the triggers found in the corpus were attended?*) must be discussed. Coming up with an answer for this question is essential in order to obtain more details about the presence of resolution stages in these NoM episodes and their development.

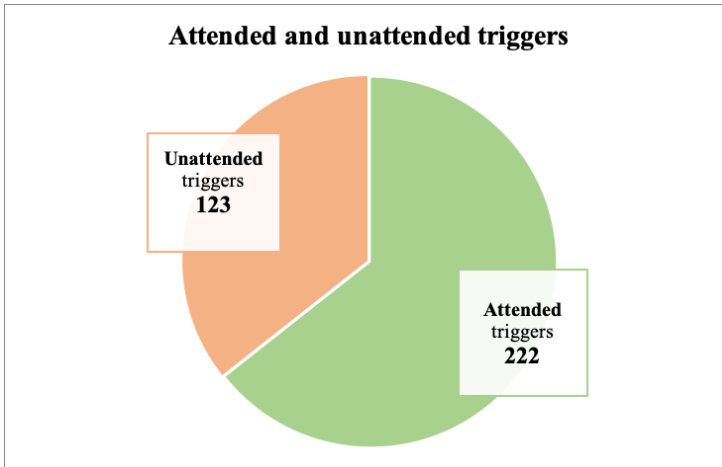


Figure 3: Results for the attended and unattended triggers

In this case, there is a higher number of attended triggers, which implies that the commitment of students when attempting to solve communicative issues was prominent. 222 out of the total of 345 triggers (64.35%) were attended, while 35.65% of them were ignored by students. So as to disclose the reasons behind the unattended triggers found in the corpus, they were categorised into 5 possible groups, namely linguistic triggers, content related difficulties, technical problems, issues regarding the materials of the task, and overlapping episodes.

Classification	Total	Attended	Unattended
Linguistic	167	45	122
Content	153	151	2
Technical problem	13	13	0
Materials	3	3	0
Overlapping	9	9	0

Table 4: Results of the categorization of triggers

It is imperative to indicate at this point that the NoM episodes quantified in this research include not only issues related to the contents of a conversation, linguistic aspects, or misunderstandings, but also those concerning technical issues, interruptions by students, and materials for the completion of the task. The decision to include these episodes in the final count was based on the fact that they all followed a pattern of resolution similar to that of linguistic triggers.

As represented in Table 4, the vast majority of unattended triggers were those of linguistic nature, since only 45 out of the 167 linguistic issues identified in the corpus were addressed (26.95%). As a result, most of the linguistic triggers were unattended by students, as 121 triggers of this nature (73.05%) were ignored. Once more, as illustrated by Table 4, there is a great difference between the results regarding linguistic triggers and those from other categories. Example 4 represents how students continued the conversation without attending these triggers:

Example 4:

<JAP6> Sorry. <smiling> Thank you. I'm Lisa, I live in Japan, in... Hyogo, <unintelligible> ah, in... My house is... in the countryside, very countryside. Ahh... My hobby is... watching movie (Linguistic. Unattended) and... listening music (Linguistic. Unattended). Ahh... Hm.. I want to know Spanish culture and Spanish... Hm... Spanish story (Linguistic. Unattended). Ah, nice to meet you!
<SPA5> Nice to meet you!

The main explanation for these results may be the fact that the presence of linguistic issues could not be perceived by students as relevant enough to be solved as other problems from other categories. According to Clavel-Arroitia (2019, 105), whose results were quite similar to those presented in this paper, interactants in telecollaborative exchanges “seem to be able to understand each other well enough to go on with the interaction and therefore most of the mistakes [...] do not lead to a breakdown in communication or comprehension problems”. Since students in these interactions do not focus on linguistic correction and make use of the language as a functional tool, they may believe that addressing said triggers is not a determining factor for their success in the main task. Additionally, students may leave some linguistic triggers unattended due to politeness or cultural beliefs, since a certain degree of explicit

correction is needed in order to address triggers of this nature (Bower & Kawaguchi 2011, 61). As a result, probably some students overlooked certain linguistic mistakes in order to avoid conflicts or politeness issues.

The count of attended and unattended triggers from each of the three interactions is presented in Table 5, which illustrates how this prevalence of unattended linguistic triggers is a shared feature in each of the three main tasks analysed in this study.

Type of trigger	Group 5		Group 8		Group 9	
	Att.	Unatt.	Att.	Unatt.	Att.	Unatt.
Linguistic	22	24	9	36	15	61
Content	55	2	36	0	60	0
Technical problem	1	0	8	0	4	0
Material	2	0	1	0	0	0
Overlapping	0	0	2	0	7	0

Table 5. Results of the attended and unattended triggers of each interaction

Now that some aspects concerning attended and unattended triggers have been expounded, the last research question (*How many of the triggers found in the corpus were resolved?*) should be addressed. Although most of the triggers were attended, it is important to bear in mind that it does not imply that all of the attended triggers were solved. It could be the case that students are unable to solve a problem, no matter the efforts they make. As illustrated by Figure 4, 6.76% (15 out of 221) of the attended triggers were unresolved. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the triggers (207, 93.24%) were resolved, coinciding with Clavel-Arroitia (2019, 105), whose results presented 93.7% of resolved communication breakdowns.

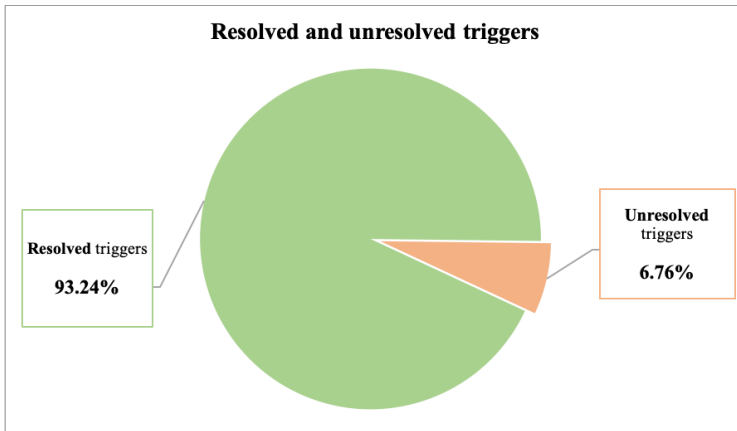


Figure 4: Results for the resolved and unresolved triggers

These results illustrate the effort that participants made not only at making themselves understood and understanding the others, but also at solving the issues that emerged, up to a point where almost the totality of attended triggers was resolved.

The less attended triggers, which were the linguistic ones, were actually resolved in most of the cases. In fact, only 4 out of 122 were not solved by students. One of the unresolved linguistic triggers occurred while a Japanese student was attempting to define the term “reincarnation”. In this case, one of the Spanish students (SPA1) does not paraphrase or attempt to explain the concept in their own words. Instead, they shift to a different topic, in this case asking if they believe in reincarnation, leaving the trigger unresolved.

Example 5:

<JAP3> Uhm... Next... <hands> change, like ah, ah... insect, or maybe animals, so... <hands like a circle> change, change our... like, the cycle. So, uh... [I believe, I believe it.] (Linguistic. Attended. Unresolved)

<SPA1> Hm. [What you...] You believe in re- rein- reincarnation? <chuckles> Do you believe it? <Topic shift>

<JAP2> Yes, <nodding> yes.

<SPA1> Ok. <nods> <Confirmation>

The other three unresolved linguistic triggers took place due to failed attempts of self-correction. In these cases, students made a

mistake and attempted to correct themselves, although their correction was not correct either. This means that, despite their efforts to correct themselves, they were unable to resolve the NoM episode, as illustrated by Example 6:

Example 6:

<JAP6> Ah... <Confirmation> Maybe in Japan black is death mean... (Linguistic. Attended. Unresolved) Black has mean... uhmmm... black has mean... bad means. <Self-correction>

The rest of the unresolved triggers were all related to problems concerning content, having found 11 in the corpus. In most cases, students attempted to solve NoM episodes as fast as they could, which made them leave some triggers unresolved if the negotiation was prolonged for a longer period of time than expected. In these cases, students do attend the triggers, but after some moves, they shift to a different topic.

Example 7:

<SPA2> Ah... <nods> Ok, so... Are you talking about an account on Twitter about future and makes predictions? 'Cause I know there's an account on Twitter and is posting tweets about things that they are <" sign> supposed to happen in the future, and they are all related to famous people. Are you talking about that account? (Content. Attended. Unresolved)

<JAP1 nods>

<JAP2 nod>

<SPA2> Were you talking about Twitter, the social network? <Reformulation>

<JAP1> Ah, <nods> yes, yes, yes.

<JAP3> Yeah, yeah.

<SPA2> Ok, so, are you talking... I know, there's an <finger> account who tweets about things that are supposed to happen in the future. About famous people like actors and singers, are you talking about that one? <Reformulation>

<JAP1> <looks up> Hm...

<SPA1> <unintelligible>

<SPA2> No? Ok. Ok.

Excepting linguistic and content-related issues, the rest of the triggers were resolved successfully. Apart from the limited number of these kinds of triggers in the corpus, there may be other reasons for this to occur, the principal one being that students may

have considered these kinds of issues impeded the successful flow of the conversation in a relevant manner. Considering that some of these issues, such as technical problems and overlapping, are more common in virtual conversation than in face-to-face interaction, probably students were very conscious of the presence of such issues and were prepared to solve them. Regarding technical problems specifically, students addressed these issues by carrying out various sound checks very patiently, which implies, as mentioned by Clavel-Arroitia (2019,109), that students may consider the solving of these triggers necessary for the completion of the task. A technical problem and the procedure that students carried out to solve it is illustrated in Example 8 hereunder:

Example 8:

<SPA4> *I'm very sorry, I cannot hear.*
 <JAP4, JAP5, SPA3, and SPA4 laugh>
 <SPA3> <smiling> *I don't know <looking down to accommodate the wires of her earphones> what else to do! Why? Uhm <looking around>*
 [...]
 <SPA4> *You can mute <like pressing a button> and then [unmute] <makes a circle with the finger> <Use of gesture>*
 <SPA3> *[Yeah yeah,] I'm going to do that.*
 <SPA3> *What about now? <rising eyebrows> Uhm...*
 [...]
 <SPA3> *This is so weird! <laughs>*
 <JAP5> *[Sometimes...]*
 <SPA4> *[Maria you... they...]*
 <JAP5> *Sometimes I can hear, hear <pointing at the screen> María [voice].*
 <SPA3> *[Hm...] Sometimes? <Comprehension check>*
 <JAP5> *Yes.*
 <SPA3 laughs>
 <JAP5 smiles>
 <SPA3> *<looking at her left> Uhm... <chuckles> <speaks louder> I'll try to speak louder.*
 <JAP5> *Ok. <smiling> <Confirmation>*
 <SPA3> *Ok?*
 <JAP5> *Ok. <nods> <Confirmation>*
 <JAP4> *Ok. <Confirmation>*

Lastly, one of the main limitations of audiovisual CMC is related to overlapping, since it is common to find cases in which one of the students' audio is delayed due to connection issues. Even though overlapping episodes were not always an issue in these interactions, some communicative breakdowns took place due to interruptions between students. Nevertheless, it is necessary to bear in mind that interruptions also take place in face-to-face interaction, although to a smaller extent. As it was mentioned in section 2, telecollaboration has the potential to expose students to authentic communication models in institutionalised contexts. Consequently, students may have found it necessary to solve triggers of this nature and did so by apologising and letting the others speak:

Example 9:

<SPA5> [Are you...] (Overlapping. Attended. Resolved)

<JAP6> [I want] to know... uhm? Sorry.

<SPA5> I keep interrupting you, I'm so sorry. Keep going.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyse three synchronous audiovisual telecollaborative interactions so as to assess the importance of NoM episodes, as well as define the main features of said items. Thus, the results obtained evidence that NoM episodes are crucial in these telecollaborative exchanges, since they represent more than half of the corpus totality. The contrast between the results presented in this paper and those obtained by Smith (2003, 45) evidence the relevance of media in said telecollaborative interactions. Indeed, the audiovisual nature of the exchanges analysed in this study had a crucial effect on the number of NoM episodes. Regarding the triggers found in the corpus, and similarly to Clavel-Arroitia (2019, 105), it should be noted that most of the linguistic issues were not attended by students, which emphasises the functional nature of language in telecollaborative interactions. Lastly, students were highly committed to solving their communicative breakdowns, as illustrated by the high presence of resolved triggers.

Nevertheless, some limitations can be found in this study. First of all, further details of interest could not be analysed due to

space constraints, not only in terms of obtained data, but also regarding the size of the corpus. Only 3 out of 11 interactions from the partnership were studied in this paper, since they were randomly chosen to represent the whole corpus, so an analysis of the complete partnership would provide even wider perspectives and a variety of results.

Apart from said limitations, this paper illustrates how NoM episodes represent a relevant aspect of interaction in telecollaborative experiences, since these tools are able to offer students with chances of interaction not very different from that of face-to-face conversation. Hence, the relevance of NoM episodes in both interactive research and pedagogical environments is evident, making it necessary to undertake additional studies within this field.

Besides, even though the majority of triggers were attended and resolved, there was a certain number of linguistic triggers that were not addressed by students. Therefore, it can be concluded that students in audiovisual telecollaborative experiences of these characteristics do not focus on linguistic correction. Consequently, further research is needed in order to find out if this is the same in other types of telecollaborative partnerships. Moreover, reinforcing the correction of such linguistic issues may enhance the already high potential of telecollaborative experiences and, thus, future studies could deal with that aspect.

Finally, and from a more general standpoint, NoM episodes in telecollaboration should continue to be explored due to the multiple affordances and opportunities that students are offered with. Exploring other exchanges could provide researchers and instructors with even more information, apart from a stronger guidance for a consolidated inclusion of these in institutionalised pedagogical contexts.

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