

Researching nonverbal dimensions in synchronous videoconferenced-based interactions

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100 word summary

With the growing number of language courses offered online, teacher trainers are incited to reflect on the competences required by future online teachers (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). Among these, understanding the attention to the semiotic resources at their disposal and their orchestration by teachers is crucial (McCafferty & Stam, 2008), so as to adjust teacher training to these environments and help teachers develop critical semiotic awareness. Three French undergraduate students with a B2 level in English were asked to describe four photographs in English to the same teacher via Skype. We use a qualitative approach focusing on gestures and gazes to examine nonverbal behaviours in synchronous videoconferenced-based interactions and to explore the rhythm of the interactions.

Full abstract

A growing number of language courses are offered online, inciting teacher trainers to reflect upon the different competences that future online teachers will have to develop (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). Among these, it is crucial to understand the attention to the semiotic resources at their disposal and their orchestration by teachers (McCafferty & Stam, 2008), so as to adjust teacher training to these new pedagogical environments and help future online teachers to develop critical semiotic awareness (Guichon, 2013).

To study nonverbal behaviours in synchronous videoconferenced-based interactions, we use a qualitative approach focusing on gestures and gazes. Three French undergraduate students with a B2 level in English were asked to describe four previously unseen photographs in English to the same native speaking teacher of English as a Foreign Language via Skype, a free web-based videoconferencing tool. The interactions were recorded using dynamic screen capture software and analysed with ELAN, a sound and video annotation tool.

Conversation Analysis tools (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999) were used to study these mediated interactions by examining phenomena pertaining to the production and reception of cues through the webcam image and to the behaviours of the interlocutors in relation to the potential and the constraints of this teaching situation when it is mediated by videoconferencing tools (Wang, 2007).

In our presentation, we will focus on learner and teacher nonverbal cues (Satar, 2012) that are accessible through the webcam. We will then explore the rhythm of the interactions, examining pauses, overlaps, silences and turn-taking management. A very detailed description and analysis of these interactions should enable us to gain a better understanding of how the image provided by the webcam contributes for each individual to the construction his/her online persona (1) as a non-native speaker and (2) as an expert leading the interaction.