



Getting Connected with Facebook Messenger: Exploring Meaningful Interactions through Online Chats in the ESL Context

Ebrahim Samani^{1*}, Nooreen Noordin²

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, Higher Education Complex of Bam, Iran, *samani@bam.ac.ir*

²Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia, *nooreen@upm.edu.my*

Abstract

The number of online users has unprecedentedly increased in recent years. The rapid advancement of technology has seen the growth of social media usage and this has made a huge impact on today's educational system. However, to what extent has the social media played an important role in the teaching and learning process particularly in the English Language Teaching (ELT) is still unclear. This is due to the fact that in most cases, social media is used for the purpose of entertainment and personal usage. There was an attempt in current study to examine the nature of communications via social media and how they can be used in improving students' language skills. The participants in this study consisted of fifteen undergraduate students who were into their second year of TESL program. They were involved in completing a grammatical task through the use of Facebook Messenger, an online platform where they engaged in chat activities. The discussion which was moderated by the researchers lasted 45 minutes for each session and five sessions were conducted where sentence combining activities were also done using the Facebook Messenger. Results obtained from the discourse analysis done which examined the participants' accounts of their experiences as well as the pedagogical features of the online platform clearly shows that this platform can be used as a pedagogical tool in improving language skills.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Facebook Messenger, Online Platforms, Social Networks, Task-based Exercise

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1. Introduction

Digital tools have become a permanent feature of students' lives. Due to the rapid evolvement of today's technology, these tools become obsolete too quick and may be replaced by new technologies. However, it cannot be denied that our lives today are surrounded by technology which is no longer a privilege but more of a necessity. Social media has reshaped the way people are connecting and communicating and its affordances are being capitalized by the Net generation. They are at the forefront of this influence and what used to become a trend has now become a global international obsession. Having said that, it is worth noting that their pattern of use has led to the idea that excessive use of technology does not necessarily involve pedagogical purposes (Mahboudi, Farrokhi, & Ansarin, 2017). In other words, the commonly held belief that "digital natives" are digitally literate is disputed due to the often reported cases of students encountering problems in tasks of accessing, evaluating, and integrating from the internet (Greene, Seung, & Copeland, 2014). According to Mahboudi et al. (2017), if the tendency of using online platforms are mainly for fun and social communication, and entertainment purposes, it may easily deprive education system of the pedagogical potential of digital tools.

Therefore, it is indeed important that educators and practitioners understand the expectations and preferences of the Net generation and acknowledge the fact that they require an education which differs from what their parents used to experience. Prensky (2001) describes digital natives as those having the following characteristics: 1) they tend to receive information at a high speed, 2) their preference for receiving information follows the direction of graphics to text and not the opposite, 3) multi-tasking and parallel processing are their interest, 4) they access information randomly, 5) their performance efficiency is at its highest if they have access to the net, 6) the feeling of being recognized and gratified energizes them, and 7) their tendency is for games rather than serious work.

Previous studies have sufficiently examined the potential of educational tools in general and in teaching English language in particular (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011; Ali, Mukundan, Ayub, & Baki, 2011; DeHaan, 2011; Juida & Tan, 2011; Kashani, Mahmud, & Kalajahi, 2013; Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017; Shahriarpour, 2014; Zhang, 2010). In addition, in order to collect further information about what these environments really are, many scholars have embarked on studying them. Analysis of these environments from the perspective of its discourse has focused on social presence, (Akayoglu, 2012; Goertzen & Kristjánsson, 2007; Reysen, Lloyd, Katzarska-Miller, Lemker, & Foss, 2010), turn taking (Fitze, 2006; Kern, 1995), negotiation of meaning (Akayoglu, 2012; Bitchener, 2004; Kibler, 2011).

In recent years, acknowledging the idea of how the learning occurs, and not on how teaching should be has resulted in the introduction of methods and techniques that are in parallel with student's approach towards learning. It appears that knowledge on how students prefer to learn and how they perceive different pedagogical approaches that works to their advantage seem to present a different set of attributes that requires explorations of their implications to the teaching and learning process. Dalton (2011) in his study indicated that instant messaging or "chat," is a form of synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) to which both applied linguists and language teaching practitioners have shown their interest as one of the means of communication mediated through the internet.

With this in mind, this study attempted to gather information on students' experience of using social network platforms (e.g., online chats) in completing a grammatical task. It was also aimed at exploring its potential for learning through close examination of students' posts. This study examined the hypothesis that social media environments- especially which are text-based are suitable pedagogically for students. To address the aims of this study, the study posed the following questions:

1. How does the learning of grammar take place during negotiation of grammatical structures? How do students use different types of negotiation functions in their interactions?
2. How do students view the online negotiating of grammatical structures as an activity that facilitates the learning of grammar?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Review of Previous Studies

Educational use of technology has sparked a series of studies examining the effectiveness of these technologies in education. These studies have examined a diversity of tools such as weblogs (Akçay, 2012; Juida & Tan, 2011; Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011; Noytim, 2010) and games (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011; Hainey et al., 2013; Klimova, 2015; Smith et al., 2013) and there are plenty of studies which have also examined what is happening in these environments (Paulus, Warren, & Lester, 2016; Rekha & Venkatapathy, 2015; Tang & Chung, 2016). In addition, users' points of view have also helped to shed more light on different aspects of these environments (Huang, 2011; Krish, Hussin, & Sivapuniam, 2010; Kuong, 2015).

The pace of developing new technologies have been so fast that studies on the emerging trends in relation to the use of social media have lagged behind. In the current situation, we are dealing with a new generation

of students which is usually referred to as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001b), "millennials"(Howe & Strauss, 2009), "net generation" (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Tapscott, 2008), "homo zappiens" (Veen & Vrakking, 2006), "instant messaging generation" (Lenhart, Rainie, & Lewis, 2001), and "new millennium learners" (Pedró, 2007). Despite the fact that the practice of calling the new generation as digital natives has been seriously disputed, (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010; Helsper & Eynon, 2010), it is generally agreed that they are often referred to as tech savvies and unlike their parents they tend to learn in a different way.

According to Ng (2012), unlike mastering the use of entertainment websites such as social networks which basically happens through the "try and error" technique with the help of peers, digital natives unlikely examine the potential of educational technologies for learning on their own without the help of their teachers. It may be speculated that these environments do not have the affordances for learning. However, the studies conducted on the nature, as mentioned above, of these environments express otherwise. It is generally agreed that discourse is the primary manifestation of this behavior on the online platforms (Herring, 2004).

Analysis of these environments from the perspective of its discourse especially written discourse has attracted the attention of many scholars as one of the ways of collecting further information about what these environments really are. The analysis has focused on social presence (Akayoglu, 2012; Goertzen & Kristjánsson, 2007; Reysen et al., 2010), turn taking (Fitze, 2006; Johnson, 2001; Kern, 1995), and interaction and negotiation of meaning (Akayoglu & Altun, 2009; Bitchener, 2004; Kibler, 2011).

The concept of social presence is defined by Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010) as "the ability of learners to project themselves socially and emotionally as real people into a community of learners" (p. 94). Abdullah (2004) examined how interlocutors maintain a social presence in written online environments regardless of the absence of nonverbal and paralinguistic signals that are usually associated with Face-to-Face (FtF) environments. Analysis of students' interactions in two online distance education courses in terms of the textual elements that conveyed social presence of interlocutors indicated that interactional prompts, self-disclosure cues, and indicators of interest were the most frequently used elements by students to convey social presence of each other. Findings of this study show that interlocutors in a written online environment can use written text in strategic ways to create the impression that the interlocutors are physically present in communication.

In a comparative study of online and FtF discussions in terms of number of turns, Kern (2006) concluded that online platforms provide

students with opportunities to produce large number of turns and various discourse functions. In his study, discussions through online medium yielded astonishingly twice as many turns as FtF discussions. Furthermore, students in the discussion used various discourse functions profusely.

Varonis and Gass (1985) proposed a model that demonstrated the discourse structure during the negotiation of meaning. In their model, smooth flow of conversation was illustrated with a horizontal line, however, there were occasions when interlocutors experienced some difficulties in understanding and they engaged in a series of modifications with the purpose of resolving that particular breakdown in conversation. These instances or "negotiation routines" (p. 84) were also illustrated as vertical lines along the horizontal line. Table 1 indicates the discourse structure outlined by Varonis and Gass accompanied by an example.

Table 1

Negotiation of Meaning Structure (Varonis & Gass, 1985)

Functions	Definitions
1. Trigger	(i.e., the statement that lead to a communication problem)
2. Indicator	(i.e., the statement that clearly shows the occurrence of a communication problem)
3. Response	(i.e., the statement that tries to deal with the identified communication problem in the indicator)
4. Reaction	(i.e., the statement that indicates speaker has completely understood the response) (p.283).

S: my father now is retire.
 T: retire?
 S: yes
 T: oh yeah (p.77)

In this example, line 1 signals the occurrence of a communication problem, where the interlocutor S uses the verb retire in a wrong way (trigger). The following line, line 2, shows that a communication problem has occurred. Consequently, utterance in Line 3 tries to solve the communication problem. Finally, in line 4, the interlocutor T acknowledges the end of the communication problem (reaction to the response). Alternatively, Patterson and Trabeldo (2006) suggested the taxonomy of the functions for analyzing discourse structure (E-mails, para.14) which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Taxonomy of Negotiation of Meaning Functions (Patterson & Trabaldo, 2006)

Negotiation of meaning functions	
Confirmation check	Clarification request
Vocabulary request	Comprehension check
Reply confirmation	Reply clarification/definition
Reply vocabulary	Reply comprehension
Elaboration	Correction/self-correction

According to Patterson and Trabaldo, during interaction, interlocutors may experience mis/non understanding each other and in these circumstances, either side of the communication will signal his/her mis/non understanding by asking for clarification of what the other partner has already said or one side of the communication may request for elaboration and extra information. There are moments when one of the partners tries to ensure the other partner's comprehension by comprehension check utterances or try to maintain their equal social relationships by requesting for confirmation.

All of these functions are used in negotiating mis/non understanding during online interaction and help interlocutors maintain smooth flow of conversation. As there is an increase in online interaction where the medium of communication is through language, there is a need to look into the kind of discourse that transpires (Kolko, 1995). Accordingly, Herring (2004) highlighted the importance of applying the correct methods of analyzing an online discourse, which includes the already established methods in social sciences such as surveys, interviews, or experiments, etc. Herring states that "what defines computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) at its core is the analysis of the logs of verbal interaction (characters, words, utterances, messages, exchanges, threads, archives, etc.)" (p.339). The subject of investigation in CMDA is mainly related to four domains which are: structure, meaning, interaction, and social behavior. The domain of "interaction" which is the subject of the analysis in this research includes areas like turn-taking, topic development, and other means of negotiating interactive changes such as negotiation functions. From the application aspect, CMDA largely takes the form of language-focused content analysis and according to Herring it can either be purely qualitative by which the development of discourse in a sample of text is observed, exemplified, and discussed; or it can also be quantitative- where codes are assigned to phenomena under study and the special reports are produced that show their counts and frequencies.

Focusing on quantitative aspect of CMDA, Akayoglu and Altun (2009) conducted a study to determine the types and frequencies of negotiation of meaning functions that characterize text-based online CMC environments, and furthermore compared native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers' (NNSs) interactions in terms of negotiation of meaning functions. In their study, thirty NNSs were involved in some online chat activities with each other and with eight native speakers. Analysis of students' interactions indicated that these two groups of participants were similar in the least frequently used three categories which were all related to vocabulary. However, they were totally different in terms of the most frequently used three categories; NSs of English used clarification request, elaboration request, and confirmation check the most, while NNSs of English used reply clarification, reply elaboration, and confirmation most frequently. In this study the researchers attempted to look into nature of these environment by focusing on the pedagogical features of the environment, examine students' online discourse as an indirect evidence of learning as well as complement the research with students' own views and experiences as the key players during the process of engaging in these environments.

2.2. Facebook as the Frontrunner of Social Networking Websites

Social networking websites have drawn the attention of many people as tools that connect them together even without leaving the premises of their home or workplace. It is a social practice that involves the cooperation of many people. The people who communicate through these websites can easily react to the post of others by leaving feedback. The desire to connect with people with a list of similar interests for romantic and business purposes is the main reason for the growing popularity of these networks. According to some studies, the relationship created across these platforms may even surpass face-to-face relationships in strength (McKenna, Green, Gleason, 2002 & Warschauer, 1995) because due to the nature of these environments, users tend to have more self-expressions and self-disclosures which consequently results in the creation of a strong bond between users. Facebook has been at the front of social network websites. It belongs to the generation of web 2.0 services which enables users to share and collaborate information with each other. Since March 2011, it has provided the opportunity for more than 500 million active users to socialize online (Facebook Press Room, 2011). In Asia, Indonesia accounts for the highest number of the population of Facebook users with an approximate number of 18.9 million people. Malaysia in which the current study was conducted is in fifth place in terms of the population of Facebook users (Lim, 2010). According to Kabilan et. al. (2010) using FB as a learning environment resulted in a significant improvement in students' attitude, motivation, and confidence. The chat feature of FB allows for the participants to interact with their peers and

receive immediate feedback from them regarding the content that they have posted on the internet. Membership in a group and following a common aim creates a feeling of being attached to a community that is very important for learning. In this context, students have the opportunity to organize, synthesize, and analyze their posts and the posts of their peers and construct knowledge. Learning is more meaningful when the ideas are shared by in the group and further added up or evolved by peers' response and feedback. Furthermore, students feel their duty to respond to the comments that their peers have posted and make an effort not to loaf on the task of posting and commenting.

2.3. Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

Constructivism which is also referred to as social interaction theory postulates how people might acquire knowledge and learn. In education, this theory emphasizes how learning occurs and once the learning process is understood, it is considered that teaching situations, methods, techniques and materials can be designed in accordance with this process. From this point of view, researchers claim that knowledge is constructed. It is not transferred from one person to another but it is the result of the prior experiences, schemas, and beliefs that one uses to construe events and objects. As each individual has different experiences, learning occurs at different levels for different individuals (Doolittle, 1999). This theory is mostly attributed to educational researchers like Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey and Jerome Bruner who are deemed to be pioneers of this theory. Constructivism is studied under two headings: cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism takes learning as a cognitive process and focuses on learners' individuality; however, social constructivism views learning as a result of social interaction and learning is stated to be accomplished as a result of interaction. Piaget emphasized that learning is a constructive process and the association of prior knowledge with the new ones is quite important while constructing new knowledge. The key concept for learning is interaction. According to him, learning is not an accumulation of information which means that information is not stored in the learners' mind waiting to be added to the new information. When the learner actively interacts with the new information, s/he constructs the new information. Thus, not the teacher or the information is in the center of learning, but the learner is the central focus of this theory. According to Ally (2004), principles of constructivism in online learning environments are manifested in different forms including 1) active involvement of students in their own learning, 2) collaboration and cooperation of students in their own learning, 3) students' control of their learning process, and 4) students' interaction with the information and the environment.

3. Method

3.1. Overview

The current study delved into the nature of students' interactions over a sentence combining grammatical task through Facebook Messenger among ESL tertiary students. In other words, this study focused on how negotiation of a grammatical task took place through this online platform. In addition, the results were supported with the views of the students on how interaction on structures facilitates learning grammar. In order to increase control over the study, the mode of communication in online discussion became limited to written posts.

3.2. Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 15 students who were second year students in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). This public university was established in 1931 as the school of agriculture and has gradually developed to be ranked among the leading research universities in Malaysia. This university offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs in various fields of study including but not limited to medicine, engineering, science, business, and social sciences. As Table 3 indicates, students' ages ranged from 21 to 23. The average age was 20.80 years of old. The participants were predominantly of Malays (66.6%), Indians (26.7%), and Chinese (6.7%) ethnicity and spoke English as their second language. Both male (20%) and female students (80%) were involved in this study.

Table 3

Demographic Information of the Students in the Study

Gender	Age	Ethnic background	Computer Experience
Female (80%)	20.80	Malays (66.6%)	Novice (26.7%)*
Male (20%)		Indians (26.7%)	Intermediate (66.7%)
		Chinese (6.7%)	Expert (6.7%)

*The reported values have been rounded to the nearest whole number

3.3. Procedure

As the first step of the study, the researchers created Facebook Messenger groups with the participants of the study as their members. A free web-based research randomizer was used to randomly assign participants into three small groups to facilitate online discussions. The students were involved in sentence combining activities which included interactions on a grammatical task that were adapted from Pack and Henrichsen (1980) aimed

at familiarizing the students with sentence combining strategies. At the beginning of every online session, the researchers posted some simple sentences (kernel sentences) to the group and combined them as a model focusing on grammatical items such as relative clauses, complex nominal, passives, and adverbial participles. Then, the researchers posted another batch of simple sentences and asked the students to combine them. In each session, the participants (N=15) spent 45 minutes completing the task in which they performed rewriting sentences and justified their grammatical and rhetorical choices. Students in this task negotiated rewriting the sentences in different forms while they exerted extreme caution to observe its accuracy, meaningfulness, and appropriateness of sentences. The study lasted for five sessions. The Sessions were arranged according to the students' free time during their weekly classes of their second semester. No sessions were held during public holidays and days in which the participants were not present at the faculty. Even though their curriculum included some subjects focusing on grammar, the activity in this study exclusively discussed combining sentences that were not completely addressed during their normal classes. As a result, an introductory session was conducted in which the participants received detailed information on what they were required to do during the sessions, how to use group discussion using Facebook Messenger groups and the rules and procedures they needed to follow in the group chat. PowerPoint slides were shown to them alongside explanations and they were requested to come to class on time and log on immediately, use only English for the entire session, concentrate on the discussion of the topic, not reveal their given names to each other, and pay attention to both content and accuracy in their posts.

3.4. Interview Protocols

In order to obtain more detailed information on the opinions of the students as the result of their involvement in the online task-based experience, all of the participants were interviewed at the end of the treatment. During the interview, students discussed their likes and dislikes about their experiences using FB messenger and the effect of this online task on their grammatical achievement. The interview sessions were conducted in one of the computer laboratories at faculty. The language of the interview was in English due to the fact that this language is the medium of instruction in Malaysian universities and widely used in society. Each interview session began with a friendly interaction and ensuring the participants of the confidentiality of their responses. The participants' permission was obtained which allowed the interview sessions to be recorded. All interviews were transcribed and sent back to the participants for confirmation of the content. For the content analysis, the researchers sorted and grouped the responses and then coded them. Since interviews were analyzed one by one using the

HyperRESEARCH software, codes found in a single interview became a good starting point as the remainder of the interviews were continuously analyzed by the researchers. However, necessary caution was exercised so as not to allow this progressively accumulated codes influence the analysis of the remaining interviews. In general, the content analysis technique is a repetitive process. First, there is a transcription of recorded interview verbatim which is usually stored in an electronic file. Second, the parts which share the similar content are put in the same category. Finally, the similar categories are further grouped at a more conceptual level. The codes that were found were mostly related to these aspects of involving in online activities: anonymity, comfort, contextualization, durability, feedback, individualized instruction, active involvement, and time. The categories that emerged from this study further strengthened the results obtained.

3.5. Analysis of Chat Logs

This study used qualitative orientation in conducting CMDA. The focus was on the occurrence of these negotiation functions and decision on whether or not to consider for example a thread as an instance of a negotiation function. All of the students' interactions for the instances of negotiation functions were analyzed with the belief that collecting information during the process of different online learning tasks will provide enough information on the future use of these environments. In order to operationalize negotiated interactions according to the behavioral criteria which in the context of this study were manifested primarily through students' discourse in online discussions, Patterson and Trabeldo's suggested taxonomy of functions was used (see Table 4).

Table 4

Taxonomy of Negotiation Functions (Patterson and Trabeldo)

Negotiation of meaning functions	
Confirmation check	Clarification request
Vocabulary request	Comprehension check
Reply confirmation	Reply clarification/definition
Reply vocabulary	Reply comprehension
Elaboration	Correction/self-correction

3.6. Intercoder Reliability

Another independent coder recoded the chat logs and interviews. In order to determine the degree of agreement between coders, Cohen Kappa was computed to determine the degree of agreement between coders. Kappa

has a range from 0-1, with higher values indicating better reliability. By convention, a Kappa > 0.70 is considered an acceptable inter-rater reliability. The Cohen's k value for discourse analysis of the students' interactions and content analysis of the students' interview transcripts were 0.78, 0.89 respectively. The results indicated a high level of agreement.

4. Results and Discussion

The current study was conducted to examine the negotiation patterns of a grammatical task in online chats among tertiary ESL students. The students' interactions were examined in detail with the aim of illustrating the learning of grammar during negotiation of grammatical structures. In addition, negotiation functions were highlighted in the exchanges among the students and were discussed when it was deemed necessary. Furthermore, the researchers mapped the findings with the students' experiences of the task and environment. Some random excerpts of these interactions have been given in the following:

Original kernel sentences: I fell in love with Maria. She was a wild artist. She seldom made sense. Her wildness never bothered me. I married her (Pack, & Henrichsen, p. 60).

Excerpt 1

[29]<Intan> : before the "but", it's the usual rules, right?

[confirmation request]

[30]<Rashid> : can you think of other words to replace but, who, ...

[31]<Sanjoli> : She seldom made sense, yet her wildness never
bothered me, so I married her

[32]<Rashid> : yeah the same meaning and correct [confirmation]

[33]<Aadila> : does the rules of comma applied to yet as well?

but... I think that there is a change in meaning in that
sentence

In his effort to resolve a misunderstanding that was observed in previous posts, Intan in line 29 correctly states that as a rule comma precedes the word "but" and requests for confirmation. After the end of this negotiated sequence, the ongoing interaction resumed its smooth flow and the participants indicated their interest in expanding their discussion to include other related grammatical items as Rashid in line 30 asked about the possibility of replacing "but" with other grammatical items. In the next lines, the discussion moved beyond the grammatical item used in the combined sentence to include items like "so," "yet," and punctuation. This play with

language and risk taking are just two of the benefits of online environments which may trigger more opportunities to experiment. They are particularly used by the students who are shy or introvert and do not participate in FtF discussions. The situation was correctly described by Intan as he said:

“I am not great in grammar so I am so scared if my answer is wrong so you used the conference, I think, hmm, it helped students that, that is, weak, that that are weak in the grammar to help them to have the confidence to write up their answers, even though it’s wrong, I think that’s the benefit (interview A, excerpt, 2648-2936).

As interactions are usually characterized by ongoing sequences of negotiation and smooth flow of interaction, it was not a surprise that Sanjoli triggered another negotiation sequence in line 31, which was noticed by Aadila in line 33 and 34 saying “the change of grammatical items may change the original implied meaning.” Indeed, involvement in a new sequence of negotiation within an ongoing negotiation indicated students’ effort to reach and maintain mutual comprehension (Patterson and Trabeldo, 2006). This on-to-one coaching is the characteristics of individualized instruction which can be realized in such environments. Sequeira (2009) states that frequency of occurrences of individualized instruction can be increased by online contexts; struggling students can get one-to-one feedback and/or practice from their teachers while they are involved in writing and interacting with their online partners. Shahana mentioned “...when the lecturers give it to them; just take but they don’t give time and they, lecturers can’t (gauge) how far they really understand about...” (excerpt 3014, 3225). At the end of the above excerpt, the use of the word “so” triggered a series of negotiations as indicated in the following lines:

[35] <Aadila>: I fell in love with Maria who's a wild artist that seldom makes sense, her wildness never bothered me, so I married her

[37]<Ain> so possible, isn't it? [confirmation request]

[38]<Rashid> is “so” possible [confirmation]

[39]<Aadila>it will not the same meaning in translation

[40]<Aadila>if you use so [elaboration]

[41]<Rashid> why [elaboration request]

Aadila was the first participant who indicated her misunderstanding in line 39; she believes that the use of so will change the meaning implied by the order of original sentences.

[42]<Aadila>: It's not lost [correction/self-correction]

[43]<Aadila>: I fell in love with Maria. She was a wild artist. She

seldom made sense. Her wildness never bothered me.

I married her.

[46]<Ain>: the sentence carries the same meaning, right? if we change "and" to "so"? [confirmation check]

[48]<Mahmud>: I don't think so... [confirmation]

all the features contributed to his marriage with Maria
 so if we choose "so" in the sentence, it implies that
 his marriage with Maria was because she didn't harm
 anybody because of her wildness, isn't it?
 [confirmation check]

However, throughout the interaction, she was not sure about her decision as indicated from her sentence in line 42 through which she corrects her previous argument. By line 43, she seemed to have come to a belief that the use of 'so' will slightly affect the meaning. Accordingly, Mahmud's sentence in line 48 indicated that other students also unanimously agreed on the changes in the meaning that would result from the use of "so" as he explains and asks for the confirmation of the others and the other students agree with him. In asking how she felt after the scenarios like this which usually ended with students' agreement on an issue, Adrika stated, "Teachers, normally in the normal classroom in the school, [teachers] hardly consider about each and every student; for them it's just a group of students and they just need to finish their syllabus but for me I think each and every student is different, they are unique in their own so you have to actually know each and every one well enough because you never know how one will learning [learn] something, we just have to follow them, just give them time, enough time to think and answer any question you ask, don't rush on them; just follow the students' pace (interview D, excerpt 6399-6969)." Mahmud in line 49 and 50 explains how all the characteristics mentioned in the previous sentences made him marry Maria. That being said, the use of "so" as it was used in combining sentences by the participants would imply that "I just got married to Maria because I did not suffer from her wilderness." The durability affordance of using this social environment was quite noticeable and it allowed the participants to address the occurred problem in this very long thread of discussion. Intan referred to this characteristic of computer-mediated discussions by mentioning "environment is more relaxed than the classes; we can take time, read back what people have posted" (Interview A, excerpt, 2153- 2250). Unlike the feedback in FtF interactions which is of transient nature and which may pass unnoticed, text-based SCMC has the special feature of storing students' interactions and providing access at a later

time. The immediacy of feedback also allowed the students to attend their errors, if any, at the earlier stages of committing it and prevent them to repeat those errors in the future. In line with the theory of connectivism, Stephenson (1998) states, "experience has long been considered the best teacher of knowledge. Since we cannot experience everything, other people's experiences, and hence other people, become the surrogate for knowledge (p.1) "I store my knowledge in my friends" is an axiom for collecting knowledge through collecting people" (p.1). Accordingly, Adrika described the situation in chat rooms as "exciting" (interview D, excerpt, 287 - 491). She further pointed out, "in the classroom, lecturers tend to just give notes and give their lectures" (excerpt, 678,877). In addition, she stated, "when we are quick enough to give a response and we get back feedback, learning get faster, we tend to gain more or ask more questions for that particular learning so we get more information from that" (excerpt, 678-877). Swain and Lapkin (1995) stated that whatever is happening in collaborative dialogue is learning and learning does not take place outside of performance but within the context of performance. The analysis of students' posts indicated that they used language not only to communicate but also to learn about the second language. In other words, language is considered as both process and product. According to the theory of constructivism, involvement in the process of negotiating a task transfer the feeling of owning the task and as a result increases both interest and teaching. (Johnson, 2001).

Emphasis on the role of involvement as an important concept in constructivism, can truly be seen in Sanjoli's description of her experience in chat room. She described her experience as:

I just [used to] read whatever stated in my textbook but after this lesson it helped me go and check out; why should I, why can't I use this; I tend to go and think which increased my interest in grammar; the sentences that I see helped me to be more active in grammar; tend to correct this, correct that, you can use this, you can use that and then I tend to go and teach my younger brother and youngest sisters (interview D, excerpt, 5557-6002).

This involvement in their own learning made the students take responsibility for their own learning as can be seen from Yamuna's remarks: "I am active during lectures and also during the conference but during the conference, I think I pay slightly more attention to the conference because we will be discussing" (interview H, excerpt, 6230-6401).

Original sentences: "Tiger Woods is the name of a young American golfer. He set a record in the 1997 Masters' Tournament. He surprised all the veterans. He was 22 at the time." (Pack & Henrichsen, p. 35)

Excerpt 2

[1]<Shahana> : American golfer, Tiger Woods, set a record in 1997
 Master's tournament and surprised all because he was
 22

< Rashid> : but with "because" a little bit unclear you used because
 to show his age as the reason [clarification request]

[5]< Shahana > : okay I can change because with "while" the sentence
 still make sense [confirmation] *with "while"
 [correction/self-correction]

In excerpt 2, the wrong use of subordinator “because” to introduce reason in line 1 triggers a series of negotiated interactions. In other words, it shows how Shahana cannot use the grammatical item “because” properly and still has problems with understanding the meaning implied with the order of original sentences. Rashid, in line 3, indicates the occurrence of this problem by labeling previous sentence as an unclear one and requests for clarifying the previous statement. He asks Shahana to confirm that she used ‘because’ to show reason, Shahana’s positive response in line 5 signifies her uptake of the use of grammatical items ‘because’ and “while.”

Schulz (2001) highlighted the importance of students’ beliefs in accepting what was taught to them: "FL [foreign language] educators need to keep these beliefs or perceptions in mind when planning classroom activities, given that teaching activities need to be perceived in the learners’ minds as conducive to learning" (p. 245). Indeed, teaching practices ought to be presented as pedagogically sound as much as they are effective.

Gauri also pointed out, "I love this kind of discussion because it’s more fun; in face to face, the lecturer will just talking [talk] and its quite bored, but this one we have examples and then we were chatting and then everybody was like, hmm, sharing their own opinions and everything was fun" (interview S, excerpt 2092-2386).

Two features of using online environments that participants pointed out were “time,” and “feeling of comfort.” Removal of spatial and temporal limitations, according to Krashen’s Affective-Filter hypothesis, lower anxiety and increase self-confidence and results in a greater success at learning a foreign language. This form of Internet-mediated discussion extends the boundaries and go beyond the limitations of time and location for language learning and teaching. Sanjoli described how comfortable she had been during conference sessions by saying “so convenient, I feel so relaxed; I free to just read wait for the question; type it; if you are doing FtF discussions it

will be like more tense; very tense in there but this FB, I feel so easy, very convenient for me to reply” (interview D, excerpt 4784-5033).

It seems that this online environment provide students with a non-threatening environment in which they can improve on their developing language skill. In addition, the enjoyment of involving in new technologies ease the cognitive burden inherent in grammar learning and teaching. Furthermore, students are able to repeat a message easily, adjust its syntax, change its vocabulary, or modify its form and meaning.

Social networking platforms in general and especially Facebook Messenger has pedagogical affordances that support student-centered learning environments. In this study, FB Messenger provided students with a place to write and edit their messages using a variety of functions before they decide to post their messages to the group. They were also able to choose from a list of people in the chat group and send or receive a private message. However, in this study, students were instructed to focus on group chat only. This environment has affordances for communication through multimedia messages including speech, video, pictures, GIF, and emoticons. In addition, pedagogical affordances of using online chat groups will make it easy to keep track of students’ learning process by saving and examining history logs. Teachers can monitor students’ progress and take necessary measures to help students in the areas that they are struggling and when it is necessary.

5. Conclusion and Implications

By and large, students were satisfied with this experience and expressed a desire to implement online social platforms as one of their pedagogical strategies in their future learning. In other words, this study helped to increase their awareness of the pedagogical use of the platform that is usually utilized for fun and entertainment. Discourse analysis of students’ interactions also indicated that this approach can be an effective pedagogical tool for improving students’ language performance particularly in grammar acquisition. As an implication, educators are required to not only educate themselves of the affordances technologies can offer, they must also attempt to deliver lessons in a way that resonates with every learner during the lesson. In the context of using FB messenger as a teaching tool, educators need to model activities that can encourage learners to write more and allow for communication as well as the formation of communities of practice. Future researches could examine the challenges that educators and teachers may face if they intend to integrate FB groups in their teaching and improving grammar and furthermore collect teachers’ perception.

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