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Chapter 6

Upper primary school learners' interaction in face-to-face and instant messaging modalities: A focus on metatask and metalanguage episodes

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1. Introduction

Technology-mediated tasks can provide learners with a distinct learning environment, which Doughty and Long (2003) as well as Ortega (1997) perceived as facilitative for language learning and L2 practice. Among the often-cited affordances provided by such tasks are the extra time available for processing input and producing output, the possibility of scrolling back and forth in conversations, low anxiety levels and positive attitudes (for a review see Ziegler, 2016). Nevertheless, very little is known about how young learners interact with each other when performing tasks online, as research has been traditionally conducted with older learners. Young learners' low level of proficiency in English, their limited experience interacting with each other online for instructional purposes as well as their developing typing and writing skills may affect how they go about performing language learning tasks. These characteristics are likely to affect how often they move out of the task to manage it or to what extent they pay

attention to the language. Hence, the present study with upper primary school learners compares technology-supported task-based interaction (more specifically, Instant Messaging, IM) and Face-to-Face (FTF) interaction and focuses on two types of off-record episodes: metatask and metalanguage.

2. Literature review

2.1 Metalanguage, tasks, and young learners

When language learners engage in a task collaboratively, opportunities tend to arise to talk about language (from here on referred to as metalanguage). According to the interactionist hypothesis (Long, 1996), these opportunities lend themselves well to language development and, therefore, should be promoted by language instructors.

Metalanguage in the context of collaborative tasks has been operationalized as Language Related Episodes (LREs). In 1998, Swain defined LREs as ‘any part of the dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct’ (p. 70). LREs have been researched mainly with young adults and teenagers and less often with children. However, from the little research that there is with young learners, García Mayo (2018) drew the tentative conclusion that, the same as with adults, young children are also capable of spontaneously attending to form in the process of jointly performing tasks. Nevertheless, recent research by Pladevall-Ballester (2021) indicated that LREs in the context of a spot-the-difference task were not very frequent (an average of 5.03 episodes per transcript), that they were mostly lexical rather than grammatical in nature and that there was a similar percentage of resolved as unresolved LREs, that is, episodes that were resolved in a target-like or non-target-like manner. She also found that the frequency of LREs and the percentage of self-solved episodes increased with older, more proficient learners (11/12 as compared to 9/10-year-olds). The association between LREs and interactional patterns (Storch, 2002) was also

explored by García Mayo and Imaz Agirre (2016), who found that young learners of English who had adopted a more collaborative pattern of interaction in performing a task produced more LREs.

In addition to age, level of proficiency, and interactional pattern, LREs may also be affected by task modality in young learners. García Mayo and Imaz Agirre (2019) as well as Martínez-Adrián and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2021) compared a decision-making task that required both speaking and writing with a storytelling task involving only speaking. Results from the two studies indicated that the oral + written task elicited more LREs and a higher number of correct resolutions than the oral-only task. Their findings with young learners were in line with results on task modality with adults (see Niu, 2009), with written tasks eliciting more focus on form. Similar results were obtained in a later comparative study by Gallardo-del-Puerto and Martínez-Adrián (2022) where, in contrast to previous studies, children were encouraged to focus on form in an oral task. They found that children produced fewer resolved and less elaborate LREs (both in written and oral modalities) than adults, which they attributed to the age of the learners and their developing metalinguistic awareness.

Task modality research involving metalanguage in technology-mediated tasks is another no less interesting line of research. IM or text chat is of particular interest because learners may have additional time for processing, planning production and noticing. In studies comparing FTF with computer-mediated interaction, there seems to be evidence from adult learners that more LREs are produced in the FTF modality (when the amount of speech is not controlled for). For example, in Hamano-Bunce (2011) the difference ranged from four to nine times, whereas in Loewen and Wolff (2016) the number of LREs in the FTF modality tripled that of the computer-mediated modality. Differences between the two modalities are less marked in studies where the amount of speech is controlled for (as more speech tends to be produced in the FTF modality) where results from research are mixed. For example, Zeng (2017) found a

higher ratio of LREs in the computer-mediated modality. These inconclusive results, together with the fact that the bulk of this comparative research has been conducted with older learners motivated the present study on young learners' talk about the language in two different modalities: Face-to-Face (FTF) and Instant Messaging (IM).

2.2 Peer interaction and L1 use

The L1 is an important tool for language learning when it is a shared language in the classroom. It provides cognitive support and fulfils social and linguistic functions in peer interaction (for a review see Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Hall & Cook, 2012). This has been found to be the case in bilingual education, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (e.g., Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Lasagabaster & García, 2014). L1 use plays an even more important role in the case of low proficiency students and young learners, who may not be able to conduct some tasks without relying on their L1 (García Mayo & Hidalgo, 2017; Martínez-Adrián, 2020). The L1 also seems to play a crucial role in the performance of complex tasks (Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

Despite the above affordances, L1 use may be viewed as problematic by some EFL teachers because of the reduced time for the use of the target language. This may be especially the case in the context of task-based language teaching, where most of the tasks are meant to be performed in pairs or groups of students. For example, in a university context, the percentage of L2 use among dyads of an elementary level of proficiency in English ranged from almost 50% to more than 75%, depending on the task (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009). The school context may also favour extensive L1 use because not all students may be equally motivated to use English as a means of communication in class. In addition, in classes of over 25 students, a common situation in many schools in different countries, the limited amount of monitoring teachers can provide during pair and groupwork may also favour L1 use.

The amount of L1 use may be affected by task modality even though this is an almost non-existent area of research regarding young learners (see review in Martínez-Adrián *et al.*, 2021). It is possible that L1 use may vary depending on whether children perform tasks involving speaking or involving both speaking and writing, as Azkarai and García Mayo (2015) proved with university students. Whether young learners interact FTF or with the support of technology during task performance may also affect L1 use. Van de Guchte's (2019) study showed a lower percentage of L1 use when a problem-solving task was performed via IM than when secondary school students interacted FTF. This difference in L1 use was very marked when students prepared the task, and it was also evident during the subsequent stage when students presented the outcome of the task individually. To explain these differences in L2 use in the two modalities, the author argues that IM may have been perceived by students as a less stressful context of L2 communication. To explore whether a similar pattern of L1/L2 use is found with younger learners, the present study explored L1 use in the FTF and the IM modalities with primary school students.

Research on L1 use in peer interaction has identified numerous functions. For example, Pavón and Ramos (2019) came up with 14 in their analysis of eight Grade 5 Social Sciences and Art lessons in a CLIL programme. Nevertheless, various studies have found (i.e., Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Brooks *et al.*, 1997; Martínez-Adrián, 2020) that two of the most common contexts for L1 use are: talk about how to conduct the task (metatask) and talk about the language (metalanguage). Metatask and metalanguage are the focus of analysis in the present study and can be qualified as off-record discourse (see Hancock, 1997).

3. The study

The aims of the present study were to explore the number and types of instances of metatask and metalanguage used by young primary EFL learners while carrying out the same task

through two different modalities: FTF and IM. The study also explored the functions these instances served, and the language (L1 or L2) used by the participants in the exchange episodes.

3.1 School context and participants

The study took place towards the end of the academic year in 2022 in a semi-private co-educational school located in a medium-sized town in Catalonia. The school offers tuition from early years up to and including compulsory secondary education. Following the guidelines of the Catalan Educational Curriculum, the participants in this study were instructed in Catalan in all the curricular areas except for two subjects, Spanish and English. Spanish was taught in three hours per week and the number of hours of English as a foreign language varied in the primary stages: in first and second grades, the students were doing two hours of EFL per week and from third to sixth grade, three hours per week plus one hour of CLIL introduced as a part of a project. All the classes were taught by primary teachers specialised in English.

Twenty-four students from Grade 6 (11/12 years old) participated in the study (17 girls and seven boys). To carry out the tasks used in the research project, they were paired in twelve dyads of similar language proficiency level according to the results they obtained in the Oxford Placement Test for Young Learners. The level of the participants ranged from A2+ to B1 according to the CERF levels. All students had been schooled in Catalonia and were therefore competent users of both Catalan and Spanish. Four students spoke other languages with their parents at home, sometimes in combination with Spanish.

3.2 The task

The task used in this study was based on four graded readers by Cadwallader (see eligradedreaders.com), that students had read (4 one-hour reading sessions) in their EFL class before data collection took place. These graded readers were A1.1 level and contained 300 headwords. They involved the same main characters (Uncle Jack and his nephew and

nieces plus a dog) and depicted adventure stories involving travelling to distant countries and environmental issues that had the same main narrative structure.

The task was carried out in pairs of students who were asked to create an imaginary story in English like Uncle Jack's adventure stories that they had recently read in class. The task consisted of answering a set of eight questions written in English that covered the main elements of a story, such as where the problem was, what it was about, who the enemy was or how the problem was solved (see Appendix A). When the students completed the task as part of this study, they were already familiar with these questions, as they had used them to work on their comprehension of the four graded readers they had previously read in their EFL class. Students were not told anything about being or not being allowed to use Catalan or Spanish along with English to carry out the task.

3.3 Procedure and analysis

Students were asked to perform the task twice in two different modalities: FTF while completing a paper and pencil worksheet and IM using tablets. Following a counterbalanced design, each pair of students created two stories. Half the student pairs performed the task FTF on Day 1 and carried out the task via IM the day after (Day 2). The other half of the students followed the reverse order.

To facilitate the creation of the stories, students were given three photos depicting different settings (i.e., a desert, an island, a forest, a big city, etc.) where the story could take place, and were told to choose one. Students were shown a different set of photos on Days 1 and 2. When the task was performed FTF, they were video recorded and were asked to write the answers to the questions on a worksheet. When the task was performed via IM, the students were placed in two different rooms and were told to communicate with each other via writing the answers to the questions on a tablet. In both cases the researcher was waiting outside the rooms for the

children to finish and they were given no time limit. The FTF condition involved speaking and writing on paper, whereas the IM one involved only writing on a tablet.

After students had finished the task, they were asked to retell the story they had just created individually in front of a video camera, but the oral data has not been analysed in the present study.

The FTF data collected through video recordings was coded and transcribed and screenshots of the data collected through IM were exported. According to Hancock (1997), two layers of discourse, on-record and off-record discourse (also see Goffman, 1981), can be identified during groupwork. On-record refers to learners' literal discourse (that is, acting for an absent audience, like the teacher) and off-record refers to the talk students produce to create this product (that is, talk that is not intended as part of the performance and students behave as their normal selves). Off-record discourse includes episodes of metatask (talk about the task) and metalanguage (talk about the language). This study focuses on the episodes of metatask and metalanguage found in the participants' off-record discourse. Following Hancocks' classification, data in both modalities was analysed and segmented into different episodes which were first sorted out as metatask or metalanguage. Each episode was then classified according to the function it served in the task and the language used: L1 (Catalan or Spanish) or L2 (English).

Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from the families of the children involved in the project as well as from the school. The students were told that they were participating in a research project.

4. Results

The number of words and the time used by the participants varied in the two tasks that they performed under the two conditions, FTF and IM (see Table 1). The total number of words

used by the students in the IM condition was 3,376. The average number of words per pair was 306 words but the range varied between 124 and 444 words. When the students performed their FTF task, the total number of words used was 14,379, more than four times the number of words used in the IM modality. The average number of words per pair was 1,198, higher than in the instant messaging modality, but there was greater variability, as the word range was between 518 and 2,460. This variability was also encountered in the total amount of time employed by the students (see Table 1). In the IM modality, they used a total of 272 minutes to perform the task: an average of 22.6 minutes per pair, but the range showed great variability: from 8 to 33 minutes. However, in the FTF condition, the total amount of time was 123.99 minutes: an average of 10.33 minutes per pair, half the time used by dyads in the IM condition. The time range went from 7.7 to 31.7 minutes, very similar to the time range in the other condition.

Table 1: Number of words and time employed

| | Total No of words | Words per pair | Word range | Time | Average time per pair | Time range |
|-----|-------------------|----------------|-------------|----------|-----------------------|--------------|
| FTF | 14,379 | 1,198 | 518 - 2,460 | 123.96 m | 10.33 m | 7.7 - 31.7 m |
| IM | 3,676 | 306 | 124 - 444 | 272 m | 22.6 m | 8 - 33 m |

4.1 Results of metatask episodes

The frequency of metatask episodes showed no major differences across modalities: 31 in the case of FTF interaction and 27 in the case of IM. However, even though the average number of episodes per pair did not notably differ, the range in both conditions was different: the lowest range boundary was 1 in both, but the highest range in the FTF modality (6) doubled the one

in IM (3) (see Table 2). As for the use of the L1, the analysis of each condition showed that more than two thirds of the FTF episodes, 71%, were carried out in the L1, and the rest in the L2. No L1 metatask episodes were found in the IM modality, as they were all done in English (see Table 2).

Table 2. FTF and IM modalities: episodes of metatask

| | No. of episodes | Range | Episodes per pair | L1 (Cat/Sp) | L2 (Eng) |
|-----|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|----------|
| FTF | 31 | 1 - 6 | 2.5 | 22 | 9 |
| IM | 27 | 1 - 3 | 2.25 | 0 | 27 |

The 27 episodes of metatask in IM served various purposes (see Table 3): giving instructions to partners, mainly to distribute turns (“Now I write”; “I do the problem and you do the two first”; “Now you ‘continuiuos’”); opening boundary exchanges which were used in this modality at the very beginning to set off the task (“Let’s start” / “Can we start?”) (see Excerpt 1 below and see Appendix B for transcription conventions) and closing boundary episodes (see Excerpt 2 below) which included the word “finish” written in several forms (“We are finich”; “We finished”; “Finish”; “That’s it finish”). This was the most frequently used episode of metatask, as it appeared in 10 of the 12 dyads’ conversations. As in the case of opening boundary exchanges, closing boundary exchanges were only found in this modality to close the task off. Giving instructions to a partner (see Excerpt 3) was the third most frequent type of episode. Planning the performance and appeal for help: asking for ideas about the story only appeared once in the students’ conversations.

Table 3: Number and type of metatask episodes in the IM modality

| Episodes of Metatask | No. of episodes | L1 | L2 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----|----|
| Opening boundary exchanges | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Closing boundary exchanges | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| Giving instructions | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| Appeal for help | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Planning performance | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 27 | 0 | 27 |

Excerpt 1 (IM): Opening boundary exchanges

SA: what do we do?
SB: We have to do the history, we can start from the first question
SA: Ok

Excerpt 2 (IM): Closing boundary exchanges

SC: I think we are finished
SC: what we do?
SD: We are finished

Excerpt 3 (IM): Giving instructions

SE: you start
SF: Ok
SE: I do the problem
SE: and you do the 2 first

Table 4 shows that the 31 metatask episodes in the FTF modality were subdivided into opening and closing boundary exchanges, giving instructions to partners (mainly turn distribution) and appealing for help about the task. The appeal for help included episodes in which the students

discussed formal aspects of the task, such as where to place the title of the story. Nineteen episodes were carried out in the L1 and 12 in their L2.

Table 4: Number and type of metatask episodes in the FTF modality

| | No. of episodes | L1 | L2 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----|----|
| Opening boundary exchanges | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Closing boundary exchanges | 9 | 6 | 3 |
| Giving instructions | 11 | 5 | 6 |
| Appeal for help | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 31 | 19 | 12 |

Opening boundary exchanges were found at the beginning to signal the start of the task and all of them were carried out in the L1 (see Excerpt 4 below).

Excerpt 4 (FTF): opening boundary exchange

| |
|--|
| Student A: “Who called Uncle Jack about the problem?” |
| Student B: <i>No, primer inventem the his-història</i> (No, first, let’s invent the story) |
| Student A: <i>d’acord.</i> (ok) |

Closing boundary exchanges were used by the participants to either close the task off at the end of it using expressions such as “We are finished” / ”Done” / ”Finish” or to close off an episode in the middle of their negotiation of the content of the task (see Excerpt 5):

Excerpt 5 (FTF) Closing boundary exchange in negotiation of meaning during task

| |
|--|
| SE: with the kids or the children? With the.... |
| SF: with the kids.... <i>Jo què sé. Deixa-ho així. Ja està.</i> (I don’t know, leave it like this, that’s it.) |

In the episodes where partners gave instructions to each other or appealed for help, L1 and L2 were used similarly often (see Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6 (FTF): Giving instructions

| |
|---|
| <p>SG: “Who called Jack about the problem?” <i>Fem una tu i una jo, vale?</i> (I’ll do one and you do one, ok?)</p> <p>SH: <i>Vale, vale</i> (ok, ok)</p> |
|---|

4.2 Results of metalanguage episodes

The FTF modality generated the greatest number of metalanguage exchanges. Out of the 94 total metalanguage episodes identified and analysed in both modalities, 90 corresponded to episodes in the FTF condition and only four were found in the analysis of IM. Seventy-five of the FTF metalanguage episodes were written in the students’ L1 and only 15 were in English; however, none of the episodes in the IM condition was carried out in their L1 (see Table 5).

Table 5. FTF and IM modalities: episodes of metalanguage

| | No. of episodes | Range | Episodes per pair | L1 (Cat/Sp) | L2 (Eng) |
|-----|--------------------|--------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| FTF | 90 | 2 - 22 | 7.5 | 75 | 15 |
| IM | 4 | 0 - 4 | 0.3 | 0 | 4 |

The qualitative analysis of the metalanguage episodes in the FTF talk revealed that students mainly used the language to directly ask their partners for help on different aspects of the language: most of them (41) referred to vocabulary where the students tried to find out how to say the words in English (see Excerpt 7); 24 were related to the spelling of words when they wanted to write down their answers on the worksheet (see Excerpt 8), 17 referred to grammar points, mainly arguments about verb tenses (present or past), possessive adjectives (his/her/;

them/they) and comparative forms of adjectives (see Excerpt 9). Instances of immediate translation of words, that is episodes in which one student used the word in the L1 and immediately translated it into the L2, appeared on five occasions (for example: “The *mecanisme*, mechanism of the statue of liberty”). Appeals for help on pronunciation (see Excerpt 10) and punctuation issues were also part of the metalinguistic episodes, but much less frequently present in the exchanges (see Table 6).

Table 6: Number and type of metalanguage episodes in the Face-to Face modality

| Episodes of metalanguage | No. of episodes | L1 (Cat/Sp) | L2 (Eng) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|
| Appeal for help: spelling | 24 | 22 | 2 |
| Appeal for help: vocabulary | 41 | 31 | 10 |
| Appeal for help: pronunciation | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Appeal for help: grammar | 17 | 15 | 2 |
| Appeal for help: punctuation | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Immediate translation | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Total | 90 | 75 | 15 |

Examples of the functions of the different coding categories in the FTF condition can be found below:

Excerpt 7 (FTF): Appeal for help: vocabulary

| |
|--|
| <p>SJ: Grumpy is family with lions and say: please don't -<i>com es diu seguir?</i> (how do you say follow?) SK: <i>Seguir?</i> SJ: Sí (yes)</p> |
|--|

SK: Follow
SJ: *Don't follow the war*
SK: *The war?* Què és això? (What is that?)
SJ: És guerra. (It's war)

Excerpt 8 (FTF): Appeal for help: spelling

SL: and throw, *com s'escrivia això?* (how do you write that?)
SM: *T-T, H*
SL: *No*
SM: *T-H, no?*
SL: *Ah, no, sí, sí*, *sí* (Ah, no, yes, yes, yes)
SM: *sí, THRO* (yes THRO)
SL: *T-H-R-O...Sí, sí, sí, i amb W, ara. Throw...* (yes, yes, yes and now with a W, that's it)

Excerpt 9 (FTF): Appeal for help: prepositions and verb tenses

SO: yes, to do an experiment
SP: *Com s'escriu for?* (How do you write for?)
SO: to, to, to, to
SP: *Ah! Do és did. To did, to did, perquè és en passat* (because it is in the past)
SO: To did. *No* to, do, to do. To do an experiment

Excerpt 10 (FTF): Appeal for help: pronunciation

SR: The problem was...
ST: In a lost island /'aɪslənd/. Island (/ 'aɪlənd/). Island (/ 'aɪslənd/) island (/ 'ɪslənd/). Island (/ 'ɪslənd/). Island (/ 'ɪslənd/). Is island (/ 'ɪslənd/)? Is island (/ 'ɪslənd/)? The problem was in a isl- island_ (/ 'ɪslənd/). Island (/ 'ɪslənd/).
SR: In an island / 'ɪslənd/. Ok
ST: Ok

5. Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that children in FTF collaborative tasks combining oral negotiation and written performance produced more output than when they were performing the same task in the IM modality. Even though there was great variability among the dyads, the number of words produced in the FTF modality by far exceeded that in the IM modality (the ratio was almost 4 to 1 words), even though on average the FTF task was performed in half the time compared to the time employed to perform the task in the IM modality. These

differences are very salient in our data but mixed in research with older learners (Ziegler *et al.*, 2022), and they could be partially attributed to the fact that our young learners were not used to working on tablets to negotiate the meaning of a task, and their typing skills were still developing.

In relation to the presence of metatask and metalanguage across the two modalities, our analyses showed some commonalities and salient differences. The commonalities were found in the number of metatask episodes and their functions. The amount of metatask was very similar in both conditions (an average of 31 words in FTF vs. 27 words in IM), and the metatask episodes were mainly used for the same purposes to open and close the task off and to establish turns.

Differences across modalities were evident both in the amount of metalanguage generated and L1 use in both metatask and metalanguage. The students in the FTF condition generated many more instances of metalanguage than in the IM condition, in which few examples of metalanguage were found. This is consistent with studies carried out with adult learners by Hamano-Bunce (2011) and Loewen and Wolff (2016) who found that, when the amount of time was not controlled for, as was the case in the present study, many more instances of metalanguage were produced in the FTF modality. Perhaps students used the time between messages in the computer-mediated modality to think about or mentally rehearse how they were going to write their ideas instead of engaging in talk about the language with their partner.

The few metalanguage episodes in the IM modality, as well as the lack of L1 in both metalanguage and metatask episodes may also be explained in terms of the two layers of discourse that come into play during groupwork, as exposed by Hancock (1997) (see Section 2.2 above). It is possible that this distinction between on-record / off-record discourse was only enacted in the FTF modality because the interaction was oral and therefore perceived as not

permanent (thus the more frequent use of L1 and more negotiation of form). In contrast, it is possible that only the on-record discourse was at play in the IM modality because interaction was conducted in writing, a more permanent record, and thus not an environment for in-group talk about language use.

Differences across modalities may have also been driven by tasks demands; the fact that that students were asked to produce a worksheet with their answers (a written product) as a result of their interaction in the FTF modality, but not in the IM modality, may have impacted the results. Previous research comparing speaking vs. speaking + writing modalities has proved that the use of L1 as well as attention to form are affected by task modality (Alegria de la Colina & Garcia Mayo, 2009; García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2019; Martínez-Adrián & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2021). In our case, the need to come up with a final product only in the FTF modality may have triggered more of a concern for accuracy, thus the higher number of metalanguage episodes and the use of L1 to solve these episodes effectively.

6. Conclusions

This chapter has sought to contribute to the shedding of light on the use of metatask and metalanguage episodes among young EFL learners when performing collaborative creative tasks in two different modalities: FTF and IM. Through the analysis of the data, distinctive episodes were discerned, and they were associated with different functions and with different languages, L1 and L2. The results made evident the differences across the modalities. The number of episodes of metatask was similar in both modalities, and they were used for the same purposes, mainly to open and close the task and to distribute turns. However, the FTF interaction, which in this study involved speaking and writing, generated more metalanguage episodes among young learners than the IM modality, which was carried out through online writing. We should add that task modality seemed to have influenced language choice, as FTF

exchanges triggered the use of both languages (even though the L1 was used more frequently than L2), while L1 was not used at all in the IM modality.

7. The way forward

We would recommend conducting a replication study where the FTF and IM modalities would be more comparable than in the present study, where students in the FTF condition completed a worksheet in writing and those in the IM condition did not. We would thus have individual students in the IM modality complete the worksheet as they chat. In this way, conditions in the FTF and IM modalities would be closer (students in both groups would be interacting in two different modalities and completing the worksheet on a piece of paper using a pencil). In this replication study, it would also be advisable to provide students with time to practise and to get used to using IM to complete language learning tasks before this modality is used as part of the study. We would also recommend collecting retrospective data from learners to know more about their feelings and thoughts as they perform the tasks.

Another interesting idea for future research with young learners would involve the comparison of the FTF modality with other oral modes of technology-mediated interaction such as voice and video computer-mediated environments instead of or in addition to text chat. While comparative research on task modality has traditionally compared the FTF modality with text chat, oral-based modalities are more comparable with FTF. This proposal is in line with Smith and González-Lloret's research agenda (2021) in their review article on technology-mediated task-based language teaching, as well as some of the growing body of research with older learners that expands beyond text-based computer-mediated communication (Ziegler *et al.*, 2022). If these new comparisons were included in the study of L1 use in off-record discourse and learners' focus on form, the way interaction varies as a function of various modalities could be explored.

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Appendix A: Students' worksheet

.....



Who called Uncle Jack about a problem?

And how (a call, a letter...)?

Where was the problem?



What was the problem?

Who did Uncle Jack travel with?

Who was the enemy?

Who helped Uncle Jack?

How did Uncle Jack and the children solve the problem?



Appendix B: Transcription conventions

Identify Language:

L1: italics

L2: regular font

Identify students:

SA: Student A

Other transcription symbols

() Researcher's translation

// phonetic transcription

“XXX” quotation marks when ss read questions from worksheet