Mobile instant messaging: a bonanza for interlanguage pragmatics

Mensajes móviles instantáneos: una bonanza para la pragmática de interlengua

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ABSTRACT

While mobile communication technologies have been exploited for instructional second and foreign language (L2) research, authentic mobile instant messaging (MIM) interactions remain virtually unexamined. As a result, decidedly little is known about L2 users' interlinguistic behavior in genuine MIM conversation. This type of communication may nevertheless be of interest to interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research, particularly for what it may reveal about the intersection of cultures and electronically-mediated communities. This article traces the current state of related research and contemplates some preliminary conceptual and methodological considerations for future inquiries. It first reviews previous L1 and L2 studies involving mobile and instant messaging mediums. From among these, it notes two underexplored concepts which are relevant to ILP: namely, *interculture* and *cultures-of-use*. Respectively related to co-constructed culture and communities of practice, these aspects may shed light on and be illuminated by interlinguistic MIM interaction. Finally, the article looks to future investigations and, while not specifying analytical procedures, it recommends emic methods such as conversation analysis for examining these phenomena.

Keywords: Conversation analysis; Cultures-of-use; Intercultural communication; Interlanguage pragmatics; Mobile instant messaging.

RESUMEN

Aunque las tecnologías de la comunicación móvil se han empleado para investigar la enseñanza de segundas lenguas y lenguas extranjeras (L2), no se ha estudiado tanto la interacción natural entre hablantes no-nativos mediante mensajes móviles instantáneos (MIM). Por tanto, se dispone de escasa información sobre el comportamiento interlingüístico en conversaciones reales de MIM. Este tipo de comunicación, sin embargo, puede ser de gran interés para estudiar la pragmática de interlengua (ILP), particularmente por lo que puede revelar sobre la intersección de culturas y comunidades mediatizadas por las nuevas tecnologías. Este artículo contempla el estado actual de estas cuestiones y hace algunas consideraciones conceptuales y metodológicas para futuras investigaciones. En primer lugar, repasa algunos estudios sobre la comunicación en una L1 y L2 a través de dispositivos móviles y mensajes instantáneos. De éstos, destaca dos conceptos poco explorados, pero muy relevantes para la ILP: concretamente, la *intercultura* y las *culturas de uso.* Dada su relación con las culturas co-construidas y las comunidades de práctica respectivamente, ambos conceptos pueden ayudar a comprender la interacción interlingüística MIM, a la vez que se pueden analizar en la misma. Finalmente, el artículo señala posibles futuras investigaciones y, aunque no pormenoriza procedimientos analíticos concretos para estudiar la interacción interlingüística MIM, recomienda el uso de métodos émicos, tales como el análisis de conversación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Análisis de conversación; Culturas-de-uso; Comunicación intercultural; Pragmática de interlengua; Mensajes móviles instantáneos.

1 Introduction

Globalization has eventuated parallel flourishing in two fields of linguistic study: intercultural communication and electronically-mediated communication (EMC). The first evolves from sociocultural disciplines: it considers interaction between people across social and languacultural distinctions. As such, it generally subsumes interlanguage and L2 use, at least in communication between interactants of two different L1s using a common L2 (as in lingua franca studies), or between native and non-native speakers of the language of transmission. As intercultural communication may not always involve non-native speakers (such as in inter-dialectal exchanges), intercultural communications involving at least one L2 user are referred to here as interlinguistic intercultural communication.

The second field, EMC, also covers a range of oral and written communication types, but gives attention to their mediation through technological platforms. This area of inquiry includes its better-known precursor, computer-mediated communication (typically PC-to-PC interaction through web-based chat, e-mail, etc.), but extends to portable devices and mobile phones (e.g., SMS messaging and mobile apps). Because electronic mediums facilitate communication across languages and cultures, intercultural communication and EMC research often addresses overlapping issues, and such inquiries are of direct interest to interlanguage pragmatics. However they are only beginning to be tackled concomitantly, as pioneered by Shuter's (2012) Intercultural New Media Studies. A conspicuous deficit in empirical data nevertheless persists.

To consider the intersection of these areas of inquiry, the current article focuses on interlinguistic intercultural communication through one of the most prominent electronic mediums: mobile instant messaging. Mobile instant messaging, or MIM, lays claim to a significant portion of private communications in general: 65% of people worldwide use SMS/text messaging alone, not including third-party messaging applications (SLICKTEXT). The most popular external MIM application, WhatsApp, had 1.5 billion users as of 2017 (approximately 20% of the population), one billion of whom (13% of the population) used the app daily (CONSTINE, 2018). While many MIM texters also use SMS and phone calls, reports show that 33% of mobile phone users prefer written messages to phone calls (WISE, 2018). Averages also indicate that communication via text messaging is ten times faster than through phone calls, and Americans text twice as often as they call (RUFFERTY, 2017). Mobile messaging's extended use renders all the more surprising the paucity of investigation into its role in intercultural communication, and interlanguage use therein.

This article takes a first step towards filling this lacuna by compiling previous findings and addressing some considerations for future investigation. The following section reviews relevant research on mobile-mediated interlanguage use, highlighting thereafter the pressing need for non-instructional investigation. However, this much needed research implicates dynamic intercultural and multimodal aspects, as discussed in the third and fourth sections. The third section looks briefly at the concept of interactionally-constructed *interculture* in interlinguistic intercultural communication. The fourth considers the underexplored notion of *cultures-of-use* (similar to communities of practice) and their negotiation through multimodal EMC resources. As suggested here, interculture and cultures-of-use are integral to MIM interactions involving L2 users. As such, the fifth section calls for modernized analytical methods which give ample attention to these aspects. While the article does not spell out specific steps for analysis, it suggests that future researchers pursue conversation analysis or other data-driven methods to account for interlinguistic, intercultural, and multimodal EMC phenomena. The closing section consolidates these views and calls for further investigation.

2 Literature review

MIM is used here to refer to personal-messaging communication managed from tactile, internet-capable portable devices, typically smartphones. These platforms may include transmission of text, images, icons like emojis and stickers, audio and video recordings, and other multimedia like GIFs. Thus MIM mediums are taken here to include internal applications (a mobile device's pre-installed messaging services, e.g., SMS or iMessage) and external ones (third-party or internet-downloaded services, e.g., WhatsApp or Telegram) used to communicate with personal contacts. As messages are sent instantly, and will

arrive at their destination as soon as it is available, these applications permit both synchronous and asynchronous communication. MIM differs from audio phone or video conferencing (e.g., FaceTime) mediums not only because it is text-based, but because interaction is possible both in (quasi) real-time when both or all interactants are available and active, or when only one user participates at a time.

Before smartphones, perhaps the most similar mediums were SMS or text-messaging (because they took place on mobile devices) and instant messaging (because these web-based chats offered fewer/no message-length or cost restrictions, and because they could be composed on an expanded keyboard nearly as rapidly as face-to-face conversations). These parallel MIM precursors share some basic characteristics with each other and with MIM, such as optionality of greetings and closings, persistent connectivity, reciprocal turns, and informal talk (SPAGNOLLI; GAMBERINI, 2006). Computer-mediated instant messaging, for its part, has been classified as an original and hybrid form of written computer-mediated discourse and oral conversation (CRYSTAL, 2006; YUS, 2011), but it lacks the mobile connectivity afforded by text messaging. As a result, users have been observed to make somewhat differential use of each, leading to widespread discussion of medium effects (HERRING, 2001, p. 614). For instance, Baron (2008) reported a quantitative comparison of instant messaging and SMS messaging, yielding the following findings:

(1) Overall similarities in use
   a) *Emoticons and acronyms* – infrequent in both, with a few more emoticons in instant messaging
   b) *Punctuation* – both favored punctuation in message-internal sentences, while most messages omitted transmission-final punctuation, but maintained question marks regardless

(2) Overall differences in use
   a) *Message length* – slightly less lexical variety, more words and characters used in text messages (presumably because of character limitations and message costs in SMS, as well as increased effort needed for keystrokes)
   b) *Contractions with apostrophes* – more contractions in text messages and with considerably fewer apostrophes.

In electronically-mediated messaging then and now, technological constraints and capabilities leave their mark, as seen above. McSweeney claims in stark terms that "any language that is mediated through a mechanical or computational technology will necessarily homogenize users' language practices" (2018, p. 2). As an illustration of this homogenization, she mentions automatic correction's hampering of codeswitching in texting.

Medium effects are nonetheless limited – even when focusing on mobile channels with similar properties, communication therein is "often highly unpredictable from an 'affordance' perspective because technological (and multimodal) forms and social practices are co-constituted" (LEANDER; VASUDEVAN, 2009, p. 129). Thus mobile interaction is "not univocal, but subject to cultural preferences and habits" (SPAGNOLLI; GAMBERINI, 2006). A number of factors influence use, from external contexts (including culture) and participant characteristics to interface-related aspects (the communications' infrastructure) and functional goals (BAYM, 1995). Essentially, there is no uniform "language of texting" because mobile messaging constitutes "communicative events (i.e., genres)", a function rather than a form of writing (THURLOW; POFF, 2013, p. 178). Idiosyncrasies, cultural norms, and communities of practice (WENGER, 1998) all play into how users view and employ these functions.

Instant messaging, or internet chat written through a computer, is not new to ILP thanks to its renown in instructional pragmatics. Several studies have remarked on this medium's capacity for developing intercultural communication (CHUN, 2011), vocabulary learning (BLAKE, 2000), interpersonal relations (VANDERGRIFF, 2013), pragmatic competence (GONZÁLEZ-LLORET, 2008; SYKES, 2005), and overall language learning (ZENG; TAKATSUKA, 2009). Realized in classroom settings, most of the studies mentioned have involved L2 students interacting with their non-native peers, with the exception of Chun's (2011) exchange between learners of two different target languages (German and English).

Instant messaging is perhaps the most widely-reported computer-mediated tool for language learning and telecollaboration. This is not without cause: written synchronous chat shows advantages over face-to-face conversation (SYKES, 2005; WARSCHAUER, 1996), oral chat (SYKES, 2005), and forum posts (CHUN, 2011) in terms of learners' language production, communicative success, motivation, and extent and distribution of participation. Unsurprisingly, instant messaging often allows for more lexical and syntactic complexity than face-to-face conversation

due, in part, to the extra processing time (WARSCHAUER, 1996). In turn, instant messaging often engenders less syntactic complexity than asynchronous chat (e.g., discussion threads), related to the former's encouragement of multiple short turns versus the latter's more monological tendencies (SOTILLO, 2000). On the other hand, interpersonal work proliferates in synchronous chat (CHUN, 2011).

More recently, L2 learning via mobile devices (under the monikers of mobile learning, m-learning, and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning or MALL) has expanded to include a number of application types on various portable devices (e.g., DUCATE; LOMICKA, 2013; SONG; FOX, 2008). Some of this attention has been dedicated to MIM, and in particular to the application WhatsApp (MORATÓ-PAYÁ, 2014). Ostensibly, WhatsApp can serve as a logistical classroom tool, e.g., for teacher-student contact (BOUHNIK; DESHEN, 2014) and out-of-class group work (AVCI; ADIGUZEL, 2017). Even in functional capacity, it may foster interpersonal relations which enhance the learning environment (AVCI; ADIGUZEL, 2017; BARHOUMI, 2015). Moreover, as seen with pre-smartphone text messaging, vocabulary learning may also be directly targeted through mobile messages (LEVY; KENNEDY, 2005) – but also, student interaction via WhatsApp can lead to untargeted and incidental development in writing (ANDÚJAR, 2016) and reading skill (GUTIÉRREZ-COLÓN; GALLARDO-TORRANO; GROVA, 2013). Even so, Burston (2014) considers that MALL is "still on the fringes" of L2 teaching practice.

Mobile devices can potentiate learning precisely because they are primarily communicative rather than educational to most users, and so they can encourage L2 learning autonomy (GONZÁLEZ-LLORET, 2010). Students with mobile devices have been reported to use them for informal L2 use and learning as much, if not more, than for class-related or assigned activities (CLOUGH *et al.*, 2009; DASHTESTANI, 2016; DUCATE; LOMICKA, 2013). As Thorne points out, networked technologies facilitate access to

> *intercultural communication in the wild* – situated in arenas of social activity that are less controllable than classroom or organized online intercultural exchanges might be, but which present interesting, and perhaps even compelling, opportunities for intercultural exchange, agentive action and meaning making. (2010, p. 144, original emphasis)

In fact, proponents of multiliteracy (see COPE; KALANTZIS, 2015) advocate the inclusion of multimodal internet and mobile genres as an object in foreign language teaching (THORNE; REINHARDT, 2008). What remains in the dark is research analyzing the product of this informal use, especially in terms of L2 MIM communication.

This review reflects that mobile communication does indeed appear in interlanguage literature, but pedagogical accounts make up nearly the whole of it. As a result, little to no research covers genuine MIM data by L2 users (SHUTER, 2012). A partial exception appears in Haggan (2010), which investigates how well native raters could predict whether natural text messages were produced by native or non-native English speakers. While Haggan explicitly states pedagogical aims and implications, the rating component of her study was not instructional and instead utilized authentic, one-line messages. Her findings indicate that overall, raters were unable to distinguish native and non-native messagers. She concludes that these users' native-like achievement is "unusual and valuable" from a pedagogical perspective (HAGGAN, 2010, p. 156). The zoomed-in focus facilitated and controlled this study – participants were able to provide ratings with ease thanks to the limited selection of brief messages. But trimming the data for this purpose actually required the elimination of pertinent intercultural aspects, such as codeswitching (messages with switches were excluded), interlocutor identity, conversational context and situation. While understandably challenging for data collection and analysis, the unabridged and contextualized interactions of these interlanguage users would nevertheless have been of exceptional value to ILP.

Aside from this study, minimal research has taken a cross-cultural approach, for instance contrasting texting practices between users in India and the U.S. (SHUTER; CHATTOPADHYAY, 2010) and Swiss native speakers of five respective languages (UEBERWASSER; STARK, 2017). The findings have suggested that some aspects of mobile communication may be culturally-correlated, while others reflect more globalized practices. However, ILP research has yet to delve into interlinguistic intercultural phenomena or the interplay of medium-adapted cues.

3 Interculture

Traditionally, ILP studies have examined the behavior and development of interlanguage speakers in elicited or informal settings. To do so, they have typically focused on interlanguage phenomena in isolation, contrasting individuals' interlanguage use to their L1 behavior or to the L1 behavior of native speakers of the target language. When viewed in *intercultural interaction*, however, L2 use manifests "both an a priori side and an emergent side that occur and act simultaneously in the communicative process" (KECSKÉS, 2012, p. 69). Authentic interlinguistic intercultural communication can reflect, therefore, how L2 users employ not only prior knowledge, but knowledge co-created *in situ*.

On the one hand, L2 users in natural intercultural communication may suspend learning-related, form-focused concerns in favor of modified conversational principles (KASPER, 1988, p. 137). Particularly in exchanges with other non-native speakers, L2 users behaving cooperatively may prioritize semantically unambiguous language (e.g., direct forms) and avoid language they cannot guarantee their interlocutor will understand (e.g., figurative forms of language and culture-specific sociopragmatic norms) (HOUSE, 2003; KECSKÉS, 2008). This not only facilitates communication, but conveys solidarity and benevolence (MEIERKORD, 2000).

In addition to this conscientious use of (supposed) shared linguistic knowledge, interactants negotiate meanings in the two-way development of an "intercultural discourse" as well as a "discursive interculture" (KOOLE; TEN THIJE, 2001, p. 572). In other words, the interactants' cultural strains blend in the discourse between them and this, in turn, weaves a dynamic, private culture therein. This plays out in conversational meaning transmission, as well – "[t]here is more reliance on language created ad hoc by individuals in the course of interaction than on prefabricated language and pre-existing frames" (KECSKÉS, 2014, p. 2). That is, where interactants assume more limited mutuality, they make extra use of the common ground evidenced or established in the course of their relationship/interaction.

Lingua franca studies, which focus on L2-L2 communication between speakers of dissimilar mother tongues, have given particular attention to this dynamic aspect of interculturality. They reveal that lingua franca users not only negotiate meanings of terms and topics, but also conversational conventions such as admittance of overlap and interruption (MEIERKORD, 2000). Through such negotiation, lingua franca and other intercultural interactions are creative and overwhelmingly successful – particularly when viewed from a discourse standpoint. Despite ILP's traditional focus on negative pragmatic transfer and pragmatic failure, misunderstandings are infrequent in intercultural data (HOUSE, 2003; KECSKÉS, 2008). Viewed across multiple turns at talk, misunderstandings even more rarely hamper communication (FIRTH, 1996; MAURANEN, 2006). Thus intercultural communication research offers the reminder that interlanguage users may in fact make considerably more appropriate contributions than not, and they moreover employ strategies to achieve understanding in spite of possible glitches. How this is achieved is of interest to ILP, but must be viewed across turns. As a dialogic medium, MIM provides an interesting environment for viewing interlinguistic intercultural exchanges held therein. At the same time, the writing-based electronic medium plays a part.

4 Cultures-of-use

Interculture takes on a singular gleam when mediated through written electronic platforms. In MIM, as in intercultural communication, "certain minimum alignments of cultures-of-use are a necessary condition" (THORNE, 2003, p. 57). Intercultures intersect with communities of practice in this environment, because "the cultures-of-use of a communicative medium – its perceived existence and construction as a cultural tool – may differ interculturally just as communicative genres and personal style may differ interculturally" (THORNE, 2003, p. 57). In other words, individuals and groups may hold diverging expectations related to mediated-interaction pragmatics. However cultures-of-use are also constructed in conversation as interactants optimize communication and foster ties therein. Users' own continued practices create perceived marked and unmarked options by which selection is meaningful and socially relevant (MYERS-SCOTTON, 1998). Establishing contact via MIM as opposed to e-mail, for instance, factors into culture-of-use practices because the mediums themselves are not neutral: "individual and collective experience" lend them social significance as "distinctive cultural artifacts" (THORNE, 2003, p. 38).

Inevitably, interactants' experiences in MIM cultures-of-use involve multimodal resources. The verbal and nonverbal cues adopted and adapted to enhance communication are varied and robust in their effects. For instance, Walther, Loh, and Granka (2005) reported that in written instant messaging, users achieved uncompromised interpersonal affiliation by replacing face-to-face nonverbal means with verbal cues. This finding supports prior claims that electronic mediums furnish users with a hyperpersonal channel, equal or superior in emotive expression as compared to face-to-face conversation (WALTHER, 1996). But nonverbal signals nonetheless thrive in written mediums: punctuation and symbols, paralinguistic renderings, and other typographical modifications are just some ways users create "mediated gestures" (SCHANDORF, 2012). Their effects are even more extensive: just emojis and emoticons go far beyond the typically-ascribed function of emotional display to perform an array of pragmatic functions (DRESNER; HERRING, 2010; YUS, 2014).

Hyperpersonality may be all the more evident in current MIM technologies where a plethora of tools permit varied modes of expression. Users' personal, and often informal, connections may be better realized through visually-removed communication (that is, EMC like MIM not including video conferencing features), in part because it permits enhanced self-presentation and other-perception – commodities all the more important in a "phatic culture" (MILLER, 2008). Walther's (1992) Social Information Processing theory contends that users will make up for audio-visual restrictions through primarily linguistic means. At the same time, he supposes that "[b]ecause verbal communication with no nonverbal cues conveys a fraction of the information of multimodal communication, communication functions should require a longer time to take place" (WALTHER, 2011, p. 458). However modern technologies offer vastly wider and more socially-expanded tools than did the sideways-smiley emoticons available at the theory's conception. In addition to increased cue options, mobile interaction may be more frequent than face-to-face contact: touch-screen devices permit relatively rapid message-composition and message receivers are more likely to be connected. As such, *de facto* modern MIM use may considerably diminish this lag, if not overcome it.

In brief, users make MIM communicatively and relationally effective by exploiting a range of its tools, and this evidence suggests that both medium and mode combine to facilitate and enhance users' transactions and relationships.

Moreover, as a social practice, these mediums and their modal resources evolve into cultures-of-use among communities and between individual users. These interactions would be expected, like intercultural communication, to entail *a priori* and emergent characteristics, norms and negotiated styles. Compounded with interlinguistic aspects, MIM communication cannot be extrapolated from elicited classroom data; rather, it merits focused attention in its natural environment. Future research would do well to consider this juncture in authentic L2 use in MIM communication, but it should be informed by and alert to intercultural and multimodal culture-of-use phenomena.

5 Future analysis

As purported in the literature review, there is an unaccountable discrepancy between elicitation-based ILP studies and research which analyzes genuine data in interlinguistic intercultural EMC, and yet the latter is essential to understanding interlanguage in interaction. Bardovi-Harlig (2010, p. 242) has cited EMC's interest to ILP for analyzing written genres, but she cautions that authentic interaction must be the basis. Natural conversation through MIM presents its own methodological challenges, nonetheless. For example, units of analysis are blurry in MIM communication. "Conversation" often appears immeasurable (ALCÁNTARA-PLÁ, 2014) – omission of greetings and closings, intercalated topics, implicit cohesion and retractable coherence give the impression of constant ongoing-ness. These features are moreover unrepresented in other oral and written forms – "perpetual contact" is a unique and defining element of mobile communication (KATZ; AAKHUS, 2002). This inhibits certain traditional approaches, such as the analysis of adjacency sequences, conversational phases, and some amount of turn-taking (SACKS; SCHEGLOFF; JEFFERSON, 1974).

Of course, a methodology for analyzing electronic communication need not come from scratch. With a view to accommodating ethnomethodology to instant messaging analysis, Herring (2007) has recommended that research in EMC more consistently define medium-related aspects and their interplay with social factors. To do so, she elaborated a faceted classification scheme for pragmatic analysis. This scheme offered several categories relating to a medium's temporal

and spatial capacity, the tools offered, and how it connected users. Social factors, on the other hand, included participant characteristics, conversational activity and aims, modes of expression, and norms of participation. Herring's scheme draws attention to aspects which may differ between across mediums and situations. However a certain amount of emic, or data-driven, scrutiny may be required to account for some of these features.

Conversation analysis, in particular, may offer promising groundwork for such an approach: its bottom-up procedure leaves wide contours for analyzing multimodal complexities in digital discourse (e.g., CONNOLLY; PHILLIPS, 2005; GONZÁLEZ-LLORET, 2010). It may also allow for simultaneous micro and macro visions of intercultural and interlinguistic behavior (FIRTH, 1996; GIBSON, 2009). For instance, conversation analysis can view interactional behavior up close from (1) reception/responses which may reflect interpretation of acts and of im/polite behavior and (2) reciprocal moves which may indicate consensus of behavior. As such, it lends itself to meaning reconstruction (KOOLE; TEN THIJE, 2001), or a reconstrual of meaning according to conversational evidence of interlocutors' interpretations. These methods can also illuminate nonverbally-expressed intentions in EMC, such as non-emotional emoticons for which a "nonconventional, explanatory framework is required" (DRESNER; HERRING, 2010, p. 262).

At the same time, conversation analysis can consider norms and meaning negotiated discursively and diachronically beyond initiation-response sequences. This is important in interlinguistic intercultural communication because interactants obtain perlocutionary effects through collaborative, multi-turned efforts. That is, even more so than native speakers, L2 interactants achieve understanding on a discourse level rather than an utterance level (KESCKÉS, 2014). Consequently, interlanguage conversation analysis requires a view to complex actional unfolding. This complexity increases in synchronous MIM, where users themselves tacitly adapt to a "loosened relevance" in the face of spontaneous disadjacencies and other ambiguities (HERRING, 2013). Even more confounding is the multi-dimensionality of user networking – contact may be dispersed between social media and face-to-face exchanges, leaving or removing its traces from MIM interaction. But precisely this polyvalence may contribute to these mediums' social capital and their conduciveness to enhanced interpersonal relations (MILLER, 2008; SHUTER, 2012).

In a sense, EMC, like all communication, "is to some degree intercultural" – people use it to engage between and within groups through multiple discourse systems, creating what might be better described as *interdiscourse* communication (SCOLLON; SCOLLON; JONES, 2012, p. 2). In many aspects, geopolitical definitions of culture may also be eclipsed by user-constructed virtual or glocal domains (LEANDER; VASUDEVAN, 2009). The responsibility, and the risk, of navigating these dimensions and identifying *ad hoc* interactional phenomena falls in the hands of the analyst, who may be tempted to erroneously interpret correlations between participant behavior and medium or culture. Thus MIM conversations involving L2 speakers should first and foremost be "regarded and analyzed as ordinary communication" (KOOLE; TEN THIJE, 2001, p. 571). Defining "ordinary" exceeds the scope of this article – but conceptualizing it may yet be informed and expanded by intercultural and EMC considerations.

6 Closing remarks

It should be noted that terms such as interlanguage, interculture, and L2 have been admittedly coalesced here. This is because they are taken to be inextricable in the communicational realm this article addresses – namely, use of MIM to engage in natural conversation using at least one participant's L2. This setting would imply, at least in very general terms, some distinction in the interactants' languacultural background; but at minimum, the use of an L2 itself may implicate questions of interculturality in a user's contact with the L2, inasmuch as the language embodies cultural associations. At the same time, this article has addressed text-based MIM without commenting on platforms which allow personal chat on PCs as well as mobile devices, such as Facebook and Snapchat. Social networks of this kind offer another illuminating outlet for interlanguage study, but differences in platform capability and usage may justify some discretely focused investigation.

As claimed here, communication through MIM can lend significant insight to a number of L2 fields of study, and ILP is no exception. Indeed, interlanguage speakers' use of MIM may be all the more study-worthy because of the common ground built at the nexus of cultures-of-use and intercultures. When less readily available or salient, common ground is made achievable

through some measure of *ad hoc* negotiations of meaning and conventions for verbal and nonverbal transmission. In mobile messaging exchanges, users may also negotiate the status of stylistic and other conventions, such as punctuation and emojis, playfulness, greetings and closings, etc. In synthesis, MIM interactants take into account interconnected social and technological knowledge including (1) previous languacultural knowledge, (2) co-constructed languacultural meanings, (3) prior medium and genre experience, and (4) immediate medium and genre dynamics. While "culture" in neither sense should be preemptively exaggerated, this particular intersection of electronically-mediated interculturality is a potentially revealing realm which has yet to be examined in ILP. Given the extent of intercultural and culture-of-use-related *ad hoc* work which is likely to occur in interlinguistic intercultural MIM, data-driven methods may be particularly amenable to its investigation.

This article has (1) discussed mobile communication research in ILP, which thus far has fallen primarily under instructional pragmatics, (2) advocated investigation into interlanguage speakers' pragmatic behavior through natural MIM communication, (3) contemplated certain aspects of interlinguistic intercultural MIM which have implications for its analysis, and (4) recommended emic methods such as modernized conversation analysis for future investigations into mediated interlanguage use. Data-based inquiries into these issues are nonetheless lacking, which highlights the second point: future research has the opportunity, and the calling, to investigate ILP in the bonanza of MIM.

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