Children's Peer Interaction: Delays in VOCA use as a problem and resource

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“When I go past in the corridor Stanley tries to kick me”
Subject
- 13 children using AAC systems
- language understanding of > 4yrs
- chosen peer

Procedure
- ‘natural’ data

Analysis
- 6 minute sample
- measures of structures, functions & modes in interaction

Clarke & Kirton 2003
Total frequency: communication structures

- **Initiation**: Child using AAC (purple bar) and Classmate (blue bar).
- **Response**: Child using AAC (purple bar) and Classmate (blue bar).
Total frequency: communication functions

- Provision of information
- Request for information
- Confirmation or denial

Frequency

- Child using AAC
- Classmate
Communication modes

- Speech/vocalisation: 45%
- Gesture: 46%
- AAC: 9%
• But......
Interaction between children using voice output communication aids (VOCAs) and their peers

- How does VOCA use come about?
- How are VOCAs used?
- What problems might emerge in the conversational use of VOCAs?
- What is the role of the speaking partner?
Interaction between children using VOCAs and their peers

Communication aid use is characterised by delays
"It is hoped that a more detailed understanding of this problem can help to overcome the hegemony of institutionalised patterns of interaction and can empower people (both augmented speakers and their interlocutors) to find alternative time orders for communication that fit their needs and situation."

(Higginbotham & Wilkins 1999, p. 50)
Time and timing with respect to:

1. the placement of VOCA mediated turns within ongoing interaction

2. the VOCA mediated contribution itself
Methodology

Participants

- Jamal & Colin
- Tina & Lucy
- Martin & David
Javid and Colin

- Jamal 8:01
- Colin 7:05
Tina and Lucy

- Tina aged 14;10
- Lucy aged 14;04
Martin and David

- Martin 10:08
- David 10:06
Methodology

Procedures
- Video recorded conversations

Analysis
- Conversation Analysis
- Evidence for claims is based on an analysis of what the participants themselves treat as relevant
- Sequences of events
- Sequentiality – the way in which turns are designed to display their relationship with the immediately prior turns and implicate what might come next
(1) The placement of VOCA mediated turns within ongoing interaction

As second parts of adjacency pairs
  - E.g. as answers to questions

Following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts
  - E.g. "you ask me a question"
  - E.g. "go on you start + points to VOCA"

‘Initiated’ VOCA mediated turns are evident
As second parts of adjacency pairs
e.g. as answers to questions

- Extract 1

* VOCA bleep

VOCA speech
First pair parts (questions):

- Locate the VOCA user as the immediately next speaker (Heritage 1984)
  - a VOCA turn is coming next

- Set up specific sequential locations for the realisation of particular types of VOCA mediated turn
  - e.g., questions make answers relevant next (Heritage 1984)

- Strongly implicate the content of the VOCA mediated turn
  - e.g., test questions

- Can make relevant VOCA mediated turns of relatively simple and pre-determined syntactic structure
  - e.g., single words
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

- Extract 2
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

• Extract 3
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

- Not on handout
‘meta-interactional’ prompts:

- Project a set of possible actions beyond the next turn
- Locate VOCA users as 'initiators' of conversational events
- Explicitly manage the distribution of turns
Typically in these conversations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural speaker:</th>
<th>VOCA user:</th>
<th>Natural speaker:</th>
<th>VOCA user:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>question</td>
<td>answer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sequence A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sequence B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meta-interactional prompt</td>
<td>prompted turn (e.g. question)</td>
<td>follow-up (e.g. answer)</td>
<td>follow-up (e.g. response)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions and meta-interactional prompts provide:

- Specific locations / time points for VOCA mediated turns

- Frameworks for understanding VOCA mediated turns
Initiated VOCA mediated contributions

- Extract 4

  01  *  T  transcription
  02  *  L  transcription
  03  *  T  transcription
  04  *  L  transcription
  05  *  T  transcription
Initiated VOCA mediated contributions

- Extract 5

Before this extract the girls have been talking about what Tina ate for dinner.

Lucy then asks about whether Tina was bored at the weekend.

Tina then initiates a VOCA mediated turn.
In summary:

Tina generates the word ‘green’

Lucy misunderstands the syntactic property of ‘green’ and its ‘fit’ (Drew, 1997) with the prior talk. She seeks solutions within an inaccurate ‘interpretive framework’ (Goodwin, 1995)

Tina adds the letter ‘s’ changing ‘green’ to ‘greens’, signalling that green is a noun (vegetable)

Lucy does not treat this new ‘s’ as relevant

Tina generates the word ‘dinner’ signalling the sequential relationship between the current and the prior talk

Lucy initially does not understand the relationship between ‘green’ and ‘dinner’ saying, ‘gr↑een ↑din↓ner’

Tina produces ‘greens dinner’

Lucy finally understands
Initiated VOCA mediated contributions

- Not on handout
(1) the placement of VOCA mediated turns within ongoing interaction

Arguably, an interactional motivation exists for locating VOCA mediated turns as second parts of adjacency pairs and following 'meta-interactional' prompts.

The sequential context provided such turns may provide a resource for VOCA users.

VOCA mediated turns developed outside such pre-defined locations can lead to problems in understanding.
Time and timing with respect to:

(2) the VOCA mediated contribution itself
The VOCA mediated turn itself

A: What did you think of England in the world cup?
B: * * * * * I * * don’t want * * * to think * * about * it

Pre-beginning (Schegloff 1996) Delays following the first element of the contribution

Pre-beginnings "...project the onset of talk...but are not yet proper recognised beginnings" (Schegloff 1996:92)
As second parts of adjacency pairs
e.g. as answers to questions

- Extract 1
- Pre-beginnings
- Waiting for VOCA mediated speech to start
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

- Extract 2
- Pre-beginnings
- Waiting for VOCA mediated speech to start
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

• Extract 3

• Pre-beginnings

• Waiting for VOCA mediated speech to start
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

- Not on handout
- Pre-beginnings
- Waiting for VOCA mediated speech to start
As second parts of adjacency pairs
e.g. as answers to questions

- Not on handout
- Pre-beginnings
- NOT waiting for VOCA mediated speech to start
VOCA mediated turns following ‘meta-interactional’ prompts

- Extract 2
- Delays following first element of VOCA mediated speech
- Permeability of VOCA mediated contributions
- Gameplay
First entry - “how many” (line 04-06)
Second entry – “times” (line 08)
Third entry - “has Brazil won” (line 10)
Fourth entry - “qualified” (line 13)
End of sequence
Summary

- The ‘naturally’ speaking participant provides a framework for the VOCA mediated turn
- Physical movement into speakership
- Turn initial pause and pre-beginning elements of the turn
• The contribution is characterised by delays and multiple within-turn pauses

• Word-by-word and letter-by-letter turn production

• Permeability

• VOCA’s role as a ‘social mediator’ in the test question game
• Are these within-turn delays problematic?
• If they are, how are they problematic?
• Playing games?
Delays as a resource

- Returning to Pre-beginnings
Summary:

(3) Time and timing: the placement of VOCA mediated turns
- Relationship between the timing of the VOCA mediated turn and the sequentiality of conversational interaction can act as a problem and resource
(2) Time and timing: issues concerned with the VOCA mediated contribution itself
   - Pre-beginnings are not oriented to as particularly problematic by naturally speaking partners

- Second parts of adjacency pairs and following meta-interactional prompts:
  - Delays after the first element of VOCA speech may not be oriented to as particularly problematic

- Initiated VOCA mediated contributions
  - Where problems in understanding emerge, delays after the first element of VOCA speech may become more problematic
Communication aid use is characterised by delays
Not all delays are the same

“find alternative time orders for communication..”

(Higginbotham & Wilkins 1999, p. 50)
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