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Evaluative language for rapport building in virtual collaboration: An analysis of Appraisal in computer-mediated interaction

The main objective in this study is to explore how students who participate in virtual intercultural exchanges use evaluative language to build rapport and encourage collaboration. Data were gathered from 211 email messages sent by forty Spanish and American university students who participated in a two-month exchange and were tagged following Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal model. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the lexicogrammatical tokens revealed that the participants used mostly Affect tokens in their interaction unlike participants in other contexts. This suggests that the students preferred expressing their own feelings and emotions rather than judging their partners' behaviour or evaluating phenomena as a strategy to construct a positive and appealing personal identity that facilitated interaction and collaboration.

Keywords: appraisal theory; cmc interaction; intercultural exchanges; virtual collaboration

Introduction

Studies that focus on the implementation of collaborative virtual exchanges as an effective activity to integrate technologies in the foreign language classroom have grown exponentially over the last twenty years. These exchanges entail using online technologies to engage students in international communication with partners of foreign cultures and in distant locations in order to carry out collaborative tasks and projects in small groups (Belz and Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Belz, 2004). The main aim of this initiative is to foster the development of students' linguistic skills and generic competences outside class time as an extension of the foreign language classroom

(Hauck, 2010; Guth, Helm and O'Dowd, 2012; Author, 2016). Elaborating on the benefits of collaborative practices, authors such as Baskin (2001) mention that “groups accomplish tasks that cannot be done by individuals alone; they bring multiple perspectives to bear on a single problem; they capture the dynamic of real world complexity; they provide a vehicle for decision making and taking; and they impose an efficient means of organization control over individual behaviours.” (Baskin, 2001, p. 265).

The principles underpinning virtual collaboration are based on socio-constructivist tenets about learning that emphasize the importance of social interaction for the construction of shared knowledge. This construction process requires active participation, interaction and reflection, and technologies are considered to be mediating tools that aid communication between participants. Collaboration should also be distinguished from cooperation where students (or the teacher) divide the task among group members, work independently, and then put together individual contributions to a final product (Hadjerrouit, 2013). Research on virtual collaboration suggests that, while quality interactions are the basic requirement for collaborative learning (Graham and Misanchuk, 2004), not all groups experience successful collaboration (Cohen, 1994; Author, 2015) due to differences in quality and quantity of work, clash of personalities, power struggles, and poor communication (Johnstone, 2002). Successful collaboration requires active participation during group work (Alavi and Dufner, 2005) and interaction between members should be democratic (Cummings and Cross, 2003), trustworthy and open (Wheelan and Kesselring, 2005). Given the importance that these aspects have for effective collaboration, it is necessary to explore how emotional and interpersonal issues influence virtual interaction since lack of participation,

misunderstandings and communicative incidents can affect the partners' trust in each other thus threatening collaboration (Author, 2015).

Interaction in computer-mediated collaboration

Most research on the analysis of computer-mediated interaction in virtual collaboration is undertaken from a socio-constructivist perspective given that, in this environment, learning is understood to be a social activity that takes place as a result of the interactions between learners. Within this perspective, learning a language is understood as an essentially creative process of individual and social construction which is influenced by many different aspects including previously learned languages, learner motivation, learning effort and communicative involvement (Wenger, 1998). Language learning is an act of creative appropriation (Seidlhofer and Widdowson, 2009) and being the owner of one's foreign language becomes essential for effective communication. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that an emphasis on imitating the production of native speakers may result in frustrated learning and identity conflicts (Byram, 1997:11-12). Thus, although the prominence given to modelling the non-native speaker's production according to the model provided by the native speaker may be linked to socio-economic and pedagogical reasons, it is crucial that non-native speakers appropriate the model to their own communicative needs and requirements of satisfaction (Seidlhofer, 2011). It is the learner "with his or her history, in his or her immediate environment, who has options and makes choices. This is the learner as agent: as an individual who perceives, analyses, rejects or accepts solutions offered, makes decisions, and so on." (Swain, 2006: 100-101). Kramsch (2009: 249), elaborating on this idea suggests that

Our students' ability to 'operate between languages' will not be so much a matter of bringing their message across accurately and appropriately, but of creating

affordances, i.e. 'relationships of possibility' (van Lier, 2004: 105) among and between symbolic systems, whether these are verbal, visual, filmic, electronic or gestural. These relations will be created if they learn to see themselves both through their own embodied history and subjectivity and through the history and subjectivity of others.

Researchers interested in how these 'relationships of possibility' are built in computer-mediated interaction have looked at how learners can take native and non-native speaker roles and how these roles can change through discourse or while in dialogue with partners (Kabata and Edasawa, 2011; Peterson, 2009), whilst others have analysed pair or group dynamics and how they can affect language development and the development of sociolinguistic and interactional competences (Stickler and Emke, 2011). Findings from these studies suggest that learners can co-construct meaning while in collaborative dialogue and that many of the interactional features that are present in their virtual interactions can also be found in face-to-face conversations, suggesting that foreign language learning in virtual environments can provide opportunities to practice communication that can later be transferred to real-life situations (Fischer, 2007; Kenning, 2010). From a pedagogical point of view, this aspect is essential for many practitioners, considering the rather limited linguacultural diversity of most traditional classrooms and the substantial gap that this creates between classroom communication and real communication. Other studies focus on discovering how participants co-construct dialogue, self-regulate and scaffold during discourse or reflect their intersubjectivity and identity in the social interaction with their peers. Some of the issues at the centre of this interest also include finding out whether the specific social context and partnerships' dynamics influence the use of communication strategies for collaborative purposes or how learners use interactional resources in different ways in order to manage a conversation and build a social relationship. In this respect, a study

by Darhower (2002), who analysed the interactional features shown by participants in an online chat, mentions that they resorted to the use of several strategies such as displays of establishing and maintaining intersubjectivity, off-task discussion, social cohesiveness, the use of humour, sarcasm and insults, and an exploration of alternate identities. In a different environment, Peterson (2009) researched learner participation patterns and strategy use in Second Life. He found that the participants' interactions were learner centred and task focused and that they frequently used several strategies, especially politeness, to manage their interactions with an aim to establish and maintain collaborative and personal relationships.

Studies which focus on the dialogue created by participants in intercultural collaboration have elaborated on the importance of fostering interactional (over transactional) speech since its goal is "to communicate friendliness and goodwill, and to make the participants feel comfortable and unthreatened" (Spencer-Oatey 2008:2). In these environments, "cultural and personal identity do not precede the encounter, but rather get constructed in language through the encounter with others" (Kramsch, 2009:235), and knowing languages and their respective cultures does not automatically guarantee successful interaction. For successful interaction to take place, each partner needs to ensure that meaning is shared, which depends on their ability to adapt to multiple contextual perspectives. Thus, "the focus must shift from resolving the problems that arise due to the language divide to honing strategies to successfully operate between languages" (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2012:202) and establishing rapport is essential for this shift to take place. Research into language practices in multicultural teams also indicates that there is much interplay of languages and flexibility in the way they are used, even within settings which have adopted a lingua franca to communicate. As some authors suggest, in these contexts " (...) we all speak

our own kind of English, which means that we need to socialize and spend time together to learn each other's way of speaking" (Lagerstrom and Andersson 2003:94).

The interaction created by participants in intercultural virtual collaborative environments has been investigated by authors such as Belz (2003), who carried out a linguistic analysis of the tokens produced by American and German students in telecollaborative interaction. She discovered that, although exchange partners exhibited culturally-specific linguistic patterns for the performance of a critique (a required task) they imported, to a certain degree, the norms of interaction in the foreign language. Following Kotthoff (1989: 454-458), she suggests that this type of lingua-pragmatic hybridity is a desired outcome of foreign language learning and suggests that an inadequate knowledge (or failure to acknowledge) culture-specific patterns of interaction in their partner's language may hinder communication. Similarly, a recent study by authors (in press), who analysed the data gathered from participants in a Spanish-German virtual collaborative exchange, suggested that the students from both cultures tried to adapt to each other's interactional patterns either by becoming more direct (the German students) or more indirect (the Spanish students) in their use of politeness strategies in requests. This noticing and modelling, to some extent, one's own interaction according to that of the partner seems to be a telling feature of successful telecollaborative partnerships. Another study supporting this finding is Ware's (2013) who, using discourse analysis techniques, looked at the interaction between Spanish and American students. She found instances of many interactional resources, such as emotive words and phrases, personal forms of address, question posing, topic development, personal information, displays of alignment, emoticons and unconventional punctuation that were constantly present in those partnerships that had

been successful regardless of their cultures. Also with a focus on intercultural communication, a recent study by Liaw and English (2017) explored how Taiwanese and French students built their identities and personas in virtual collaboration and how identity construction strategies fostered social presence in this environment. The findings from their study suggest that, although the participants used identity construction strategies in a different manner, both groups tried to project themselves as possessing the desirable characteristics for effective relationship and connectedness building (p. 84).

All these studies suggest that being able to identify and appropriately assign meaning to specific features in each other's discourse is essential for successful intercultural interaction in virtual environments and that linguistic hybridity, rather than compromising the integrity of the linguistic system "may reflect, instead, a natural and emerging state of multicompetence, that is, the state of mind with two (or more) languages, in the learner" (Belz, 2003: 92). In these environments, the electronic medium contributes to the occurrence of acts of hybridity that would not be possible to the same degree in face-to-face interactions (p.92)

The use of evaluative language in virtual collaborative interaction

The dynamics of virtual interaction in intercultural collaborative exchanges have been described mostly in *alinguistic* terms (Belz, 2003), and the methodology used has involved analyst-sensitive content analyses of learner interaction, interviews and attitudinal surveys with the learners. Given the scarcity of studies which include linguistically grounded analyses of computer-mediated interaction, and that no studies of this kind which analyse American-Spanish interaction, have been found, the main objective of this study is to explore how partners in a Spanish-American virtual exchange used evaluative language (Martin, 2000; Martin and White, 2005) to engage

in interaction with their partners and encourage collaboration while carrying out tasks and project work. In order to do so, the Appraisal Model developed by Martin and White (2005) was chosen for the analysis of evaluative language since it emphasizes the social meanings of linguistic patterns and emotions and evaluations are regarded as relation-building resources. Through identifying the linguistic tokens used to evaluate situations, things, or people, appraisal aims to reveal how people position themselves in relation to certain discourses or communities. In this regard, some authors define the language of evaluation as “the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards viewpoints on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about” (Thompson and Hunston, 2000:5). Other authors use the term appraisal to refer to “the semantic resources (used by interlocutors) to negotiate emotions, judgments, and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations” (Martin, 2000: 144). The language of evaluation or appraisal, according to Martin and White (2005: 35), is “regionalized as three interacting domains,” namely attitude, engagement and graduation. With attitude, a speaker/writer can express emotions, judge people’s behaviours and evaluate natural and semiotic phenomena; with engagement, a speaker/writer can position himself “with respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to potential responses to that value position” (Martin and White, 2005: 36). Finally, with graduation, a speaker/writer can adjust the degree of his evaluation by deciding whether to strengthen or weaken his value judgement. Each of these three domains may be coded as either positive or negative. See Figure 1 for full details of this model).

Figure 1. Martin and White’s Appraisal Model

The pragmatic functions of evaluative language are many and varied, and they range from building desirable personal identities to building solidarity or rapport

management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). For the purposes of this study, we will focus only on the Attitude domain since we are interested in investigating how the partners in virtual exchanges express emotions and judge their partner's behaviours in their interaction in order to collaborate. The attitudinal component is divided into three subcomponents namely Affect, Judgment and Appreciation. Affect reflects people's positive or negative emotions or feelings (un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction, dis/inclination) and it may be expressed through verbs of emotion, adverbs, adjectives of emotion and certain nominalizations. Judgement evaluates people's behaviour ethically (morally and legally) whilst Appreciation evaluates aesthetically semiotic and natural phenomena. See Table 1 for further details.

Table 1. Martin and White's (2005) attitudinal component

Effective collaboration to carry out a task or project work together involves joint negotiation and shared responsibility among group members. Moreover, when collaboration takes place in a virtual environment with partners who are in distant locations, further accommodation is required of participants who need to become accomplished intercultural communicators and develop effective working dynamics with their partners.

Research questions

In order to further explore the nature of the interaction that takes place between partners in intercultural collaborative exchanges, the current study seeks to answer to the following research questions:

RQ1. How do participants in virtual collaboration use evaluative language (attitude) in their interaction?

RQ2. Are there any differences (or similarities) in the tokens used by the Spanish students and those used by their American partners?)

In order to answer these questions, an analysis of the lexico-grammatical tokens displayed by forty participants in their bilingual (English-Spanish) email messages will be performed using Martin and White's (2005) Attitude component to categorize and classify the data.

Description of project

During the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016 a subject titled *Information and Communication Technologies* (ICT) was offered and delivered as an optional course as part of the B.A. in English Studies at a Spanish University. The course aimed to foster a critical stance towards the academic literature underlying computer-supported collaborative learning and to involve participants in exploring different ICT tools and their possible applications in EFL teaching and learning contexts to help them move from theory to classroom practice. In order to provide participants with hands-on experience of virtual collaboration we organized an intercultural exchange with students from Columbia University.

Context and participants

The Spanish students were 49 fourth-year undergraduate students aged between 21 and 22, who enrolled on the course. As regards gender, ten were males and thirty-nine were females. Teachers and students met twice a week and tasks were carried out mostly online, working in small groups inside and outside the classroom. The level of experience with the use of the technology was very similar among participants and they had no previous experience of online collaborative learning, although some were familiar with the use of some ICT tools (blogs, skype) and most of them used social networks (facebook, whatsapp, twitter). The American students were undergraduates

also aged between 21 and 22 years old from all concentrations who were taking an *Intermediate I or II Spanish* course (depending on the semester of implementation). This group was composed of fourteen males and thirty-five females.

As regards their competence in the foreign language, the Spanish students' level of English ranged between a B2 and C2 whilst the American students' level was a B2 all according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Activities and tools

Over the course of two and a half months the students worked in pairs and they had to discuss by email a series of topics relating to each other's and their own cultures (see Table 2).

Table 2. List of topics to discuss modified from Author (2007)

Messages had to be written half in English and half in Spanish and participants were also required to carry out a final task jointly. See details in Table 3.

Table 3. Final tasks for the virtual exchange

Method

We gathered the content from the emails sent by twenty dyads of students who were selected randomly and which conformed a corpus of 211 messages and 59,908 words. Then the corpus was tagged manually and a qualitative analysis of instances of explicit attitudinal evaluative language was carried out following Martin and White's (2005) proposal (Table 1). See examples of this analysis in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Tokens of attitude classified following Martin and White (2005)

In order to guarantee consistency in the analysis, only one of the two researchers analysed all tokens. However, to ensure internal reliability, the other researcher

analysed 25% of all tokens. Agreement between raters was high with an inter-rater reliability coefficient of 83.3%. In those cases in which there were discrepancies, the researchers discussed them until consensus was reached. When the same token could belong to two different components (e.g. affect and judgement simultaneously) they were included in both. Once the corpus was tagged (see an example in Appendix 1), quantitative analyses were performed to calculate relative frequencies. Thus, the tokens belonging to the different subcategories of evaluative language were calculated against the total amount of evaluation in the interaction per group. We also calculated the frequencies per 100 words of text to draw comparisons between both groups. Finally, we used the chi-square test to investigate whether the number of attitude, judgement and appreciation tokens used by the participants in each group signalled actual differences between the groups or occurred randomly.

Results and Discussion

In order to find answers to RQ1 (How do participants in virtual collaboration use evaluative language (attitude) in their interaction?) the overall results of the analysis of participants' Appraisal tokens can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Overall evaluative behaviour by participants

These results suggest that participants in the exchange were more eager to express their own feelings and emotions than to judge their partners' behaviour and opinions or evaluate phenomena. Moreover, participants used mostly positive realizations of evaluative behaviour in the three subcomponents. The differences between the raw numbers of positive and negative realizations are especially noticeable in the Affect subcomponent, although they are also obvious in the Judgement and Appreciation subcomponents. This tendency to use positive evaluative language may be motivated by the students' attempt to portray an attractive personal identity that engages

their partners' trust and confidence in order to collaborate together. In this respect, authors such as Spencer-Oatey (2008) suggest that people have a desire for others to evaluate them positively and that they want others to acknowledge their positive qualities and not their negative qualities. This desire is intrinsically connected to a person's sense of identity or face. Given that in virtual environments students who collaborate together do not know each other and social distance is high between them, being evaluated positively by the partner becomes an essential factor when collaborating with others. Other authors (Belz, 2003) suggested that American students tended to use positive appreciation and positive evaluation in virtual collaboration which also seems to be the case in this study for both groups of students. This finding is also consistent with those from previous studies (Morand and Ocker, 2003; Author, 2008) that suggest that participants in virtual environments tend to use mostly positive strategies (politeness) in order to establish friendly, close and supportive working relationships that can facilitate the creation of a relaxed and safe learning environment which in turn fosters collaboration.

Further analyses of instances per group and subcomponent type (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation) offered the results illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Total tokens of attitudinal appraisals by participants in both groups

When comparing the results found in the three types of Attitude, Affect (i.e. registering positive or negative feelings towards an entity, process or state) is the subcomponent participants used most often in our corpus with a total of 2136 tokens and similar results in both groups, 1102 in the Spanish group with a relative frequency of 3.41% and 1034 in the American group with a relative frequency of 3.73%. Further

examination also showed that participants preferred this subcategory over the other two ($X^2=51.84$, $fd=13$, $p=0.000001$ versus $X^2=16.994$, $fd=9$, $p=0.04881$ for Appreciation and $X^2=9.537$, $fd=9$, $p=0.38924$ for Judgement). As can be observed, results from the chi square test are highly significant for the subcomponents of Affect and Appreciation, showing a high degree of association between the variables and less so for the Judgement type.

According to Martin and White (2005: 45), Judgement reworks feelings in the realm of proposals about behaviour (how we should behave or not). The participants produced a total of 876 Judgement appraisals (i.e. an evaluation of people's behaviours, actions, opinions, which we admire or criticize, praise or condemn), which amounts to less than half the number of tokens of Affect found in the corpus. Results from the chi square test ($X^2=9.537$, $fd=9$, $p=0.38924$) showed some differences when compared to the other two subcomponents and these differences also were further supported by an analysis of the results per group. The Spanish participants produced a total of 512 tokens versus 364 produced by the American counterparts and relative frequencies calculated per total number of words produced (1.58% versus 1.31%) prove that it was the Spanish group that really favoured Judgement. It is plausible to think that there might be cultural reasons behind these differences and that, whilst the Spanish students were comfortable making value judgements about specific behaviours, ideas and opinions, their American counterparts may have avoided them in order to minimise the risk of offending their partners. Another explanation could be due to the fact that, in the American students' institutional context, students often enrol in online courses and participate in virtual discussions as part of their coursework. These discussions are often informal and issuing value judgements about what is correct or not remains the role of the course instructor. In this regard, some studies which analyse the way in which

American students offer their intercultural partners feedback online in order to help them improve their foreign language competence also suggest that they tend to be reluctant to correct their peers, since they feel this is the teachers' responsibility (Lee, 2004; Asanin, 2016).

Finally, results for the subcomponent Appreciation (i.e evaluates aesthetically semiotic and natural phenomena, things and processes according to the ways in which they are valued or not in a given field), were similar in both groups with a total of 919 tokens, 493 produced by the Spanish group and 426 by the American group with similar relative frequencies calculated per total number of words (1.52 versus 1.54) and chi square results proving significant ($X^2=16.994$, $fd=9$, $p=0.04881$).

In order to find answers to RQ2 (Are there any differences (or similarities) in the tokens used by the Spanish students and those used by their American partners?) further comparisons were made possible by narrowing the focus further and distinguishing between types of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation values preferred by the participants. Thus, results for the different types of Affect can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Total tokens of affect appraisals by participants in both groups

The evaluative behaviour of Spanish and American students with respect to the expression of Affect seems to be very similar and both groups use mostly tokens of satisfaction-interest (336 versus 376) with relative frequencies (1.04% versus 1.35%) and happiness-affection (274 versus 242) with relative frequencies (0.84% versus 0.88%) in their interaction. As can be seen, there are very few instances of negative Affect, with unhappiness-misery (85 versus 89) and relative frequencies (0.26% versus 0.32%) and insecurity-disquiet (71 versus 46) with relative frequencies (0.22% versus 0.16%) as the subcategories most frequently used. The analysis of the frequency of use of the different types of appraisals shows that both groups of students displayed similar

evaluative behaviour in terms of Affect, showing a high use of satisfaction-interest and happiness-affection, which corroborates the assumption that the creation of a close and friendly atmosphere in these virtual environments is essential for effective collaboration and learning (Morand and Ocker, 2003; Author, 2008). The desire to build a climate of confidence and mutual trust among partners is further supported by findings in the Appreciation component. Here, the subcategories most frequently used, namely reaction and valuation, were used in their positive quality by both groups of students. By expressing the positive emotional impact that their partners' opinions had and stressing their social significance, participants wished to show interest and emphasize their appreciation for their partner's views in order to engage them in further interaction.

As regards the different types of Judgement, results are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7. Total tokens of judgement appraisals by participants in both groups

It is interesting to observe how despite the differences in the total number of Judgement appraisals and relative frequencies found in both groups, the tokens of social esteem outnumbered those of social sanction. Other differences showed that the Spanish participants tended to judge positive propriety (i.e. assessment of ethical or moral standing) (132 tokens, 0.40% relative frequency versus 95 tokens, 0.34% relative frequency), positive normality (i.e. how special/unusual the person's behaviour or state is) (87 tokens, 0.26% relative frequency versus 63 tokens, 0.22% relative frequency) and positive capacity (i.e. assessment of the competence and/or ability of the appraised element), (85 tokens, 0.26% relative frequency versus 41 tokens, 0.14% relative frequency) more than their American partners. Although students in both groups showed a preference for social esteem over social sanction, which suggests that they attempted to appeal to righteousness, common sense or morality rather than to appearances or the opinions of others to encourage their partners to collaborate, the

Spanish participants tended to judge positive propriety, normality and capacity more than their American partners, which would indicate the Spanish students' tendency to be more opinionated than their American counterparts.

Finally, results for the Appreciation subcomponent are illustrated in Table 8:

Table 8. Total tokens of appreciation appraisals by participants in both groups

As can be seen both groups of students used mostly reaction and valuation appraisals (216 versus 169 and 147 versus 148 tokens respectively). Relative frequencies for valuation tokens are also very similar in both groups (0.66% versus 0.61% for reaction appraisals and 0.45% versus 0.53% for valuation appraisals). As regards polarity in appreciation, it is interesting that the two types participants used the most (reaction and valuation) were used in their positive quality in the three subcategories namely impact, quality and valuation, whereas students used mostly negative polarity with composition tokens in both subcategories, balance and complexity. These results seem to be consistent with the fact that students used mostly positive tokens to provide opinions about the cultural topics they were discussing and to evaluate or react to the cultural differences between both countries. Samples of positive valuation were also found when the students were assessing their virtual collaborative experience. On the other hand, the presence of negative tokens in the composition subcategory can be explained by the students' reactions to certain controversial topics or situations (the US presidential elections being particularly noticeable), or when comparing and discussing the differences between both countries (i.e. in the educational and health systems for example) when they wanted to show their partners that they had strong or definite opinions about certain issues.

Conclusions

The analyses of evaluative language of participants in this study suggest that they used mostly Affect tokens in their interaction unlike participants in other contexts (Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Diez Prados, 2014). This finding highlights the students' greater willingness to express their own feelings and emotions rather than to judge their partners' behaviour and opinions or evaluate phenomena. Furthermore, their tendency to use positive rather than negative evaluative language, may be interpreted as a strategy to construct a positive and desirable personal identity that may help build rapport and solidarity with the partner (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), in order to encourage interaction and collaboration. The analysis of the frequency of use of the different types of appraisals showed that both groups of students displayed similar evaluative behaviour in terms of Affect and Appreciation which suggests that the use of positive tokens in both subcategories contributes to the creation of a close and friendly atmosphere that is essential for effective collaboration and learning in virtual environments (Morand and Ocker, 2003; Author, 2008). As regards the presence of tokens of negative balance in the Appreciation subcomponent, these would suggest that, before volunteering their own opinions, the students thought it important to consider the complexities and innuendos of their partners' ideas and opinions rather than accept them at face value. Results for the Judgment subcomponent suggest that students in both groups showed a preference for social esteem over social sanction, which indicates that they attempted to appeal to righteousness, common sense or morality rather than to appearances or the opinions of others in order to encourage their partners to collaborate.

This study presents some limitations that need to be considered. Data collection and analysis was limited to the interaction produced by twenty (Spanish-American) dyads and, therefore, further analyses of larger corpora produced by participants from other languages and cultures are required for these results to be generalised. Despite

these limitations, the finding from this study support Belz's (2003) suggestion that students' interaction in virtual collaboration presents features of linguistic hybridity that are not the result of "a uniform and haphazard juxtaposition of the norms of the two linguistic systems" (p.92) but rather a creation of the participants. Thus, becoming a competent intercultural speaker in these environments goes beyond following the interactional norms of the other in his own language, and requires awareness and modelling of the partner's interactional style and performing "judicious acts of linguistic hybridity" in this discursive space (p.92). The construction of this interaction depends entirely on the relationships established between the partners and the use of positive evaluative language to build rapport becomes essential when establishing these relationships.

Finally, there are some pedagogical implications that could be drawn from these findings. Raising awareness of those patterns of multicultural and multilingual interaction that are effective in virtual collaboration should be formulated as an explicit learning goal in those educational environments in which students are being prepared to work with international colleagues online. In contrast to conventional face-to-face learning, the teacher in virtual learning settings needs to help students to discern, identify, explain and model culturally-contingent patterns of interaction (Belz, 2003:92) given the electronic nature of discourse.

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Appendix 1

a) Sample of tagged text (produced by a Spanish student)

Hi S,

Well now I understand (Judgment: positive capacity). The essay must be individual (Judgment: positive propriety), but I need (Affect: desire) to invite you in my wikispace (Affect: trust) and then you have to upload your individual essay in the page (Judgment: positive propriety). If you want (Affect: trust) (Affect: desire) you can send me your individual essay (Affect: interest) and I can upload both of them in my wikispace (Judgment: positive capacity).

Yo ya tengo mi parte acabada de manera individual (Judgment: positive propriety), así que cuando tu termines (si puede ser antes del día 4 (Judgment: positive propriety)) subo tu trabajo (Affect: interest) (Judgment: positive capacity) para que estén los dos en la misma página.

Un saludo y cuídate (Affect: affection)

b) Sample of tagged text (produced by an American student)

Hola I,

Estoy muy triste que necesitamos decir adiós (Affect: misery). Estaba una experiencia fenomenal de conocerte a través de este intercambio (Appreciation: positive valuation). Tu también tiene una amiga en Nueva York cuando vienes! (Affect: trust) Aprendí mucha sobre la cultura española (Appreciation: positive valuation) y por eso muchas gracias (Affect: affection). Además muchas gracias para compartir tu vida conmigo. (Affect: affection)

Enjoy the rest of your semester! (Affect: affection) And I hope (Affect: confidence) that you, your family, and friends have great holidays (Affect: affection). It was so great getting to know you. (Appreciation: positive valuation)

Sincerely (Affect: affection)

Figures and Tables

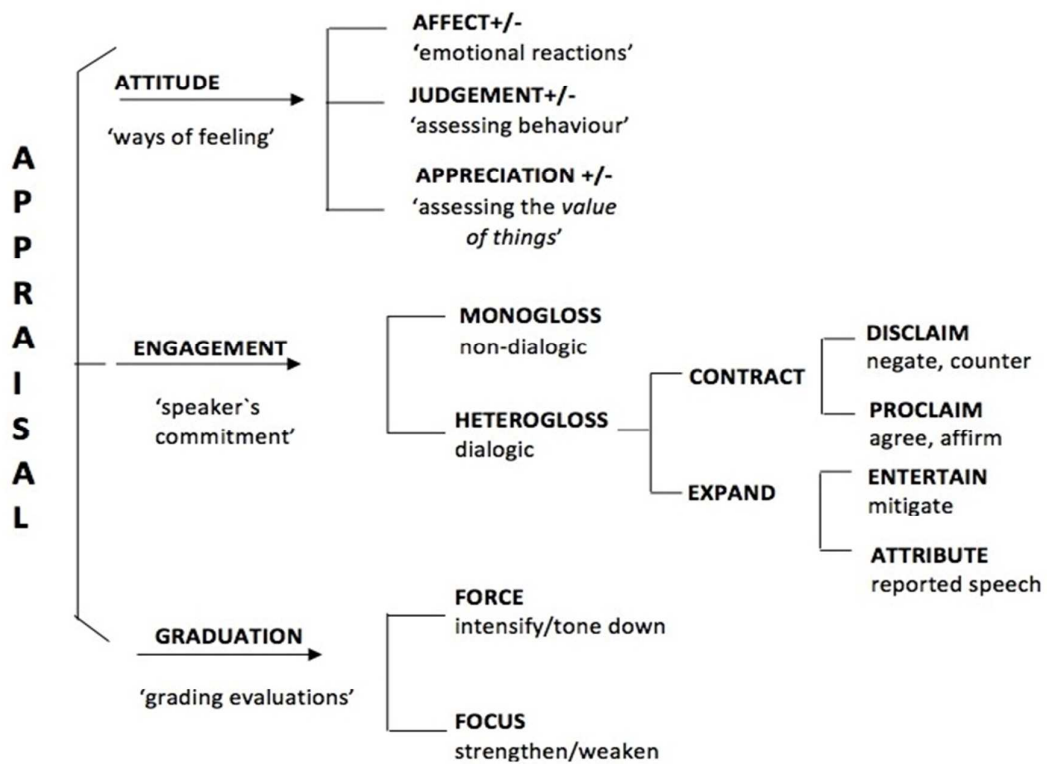


Figure 1. Adapted from Martin and White's Appraisal Model

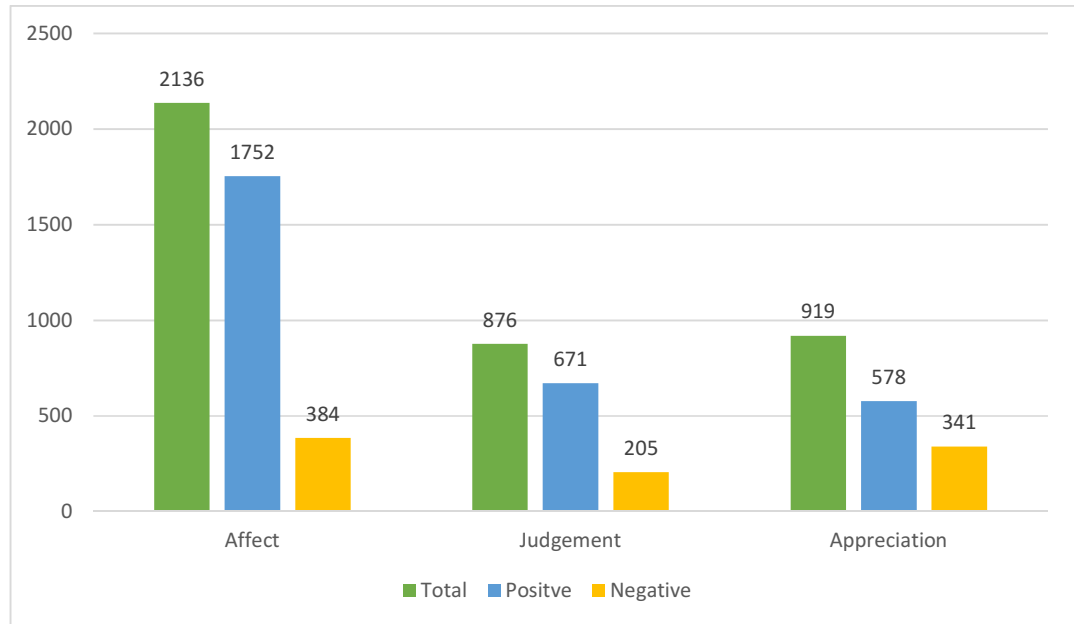


Figure 2: Overall evaluative behaviour by participants

APPRAISAL: ATTITUDE		
AFFECT - Happiness: - cheer - affection - Unhappiness: - misery - antipathy - Security: - confidence - trust - Insecurity: - disquiet - surprise - Satisfaction: - interest - pleasure/admiration - Dissatisfaction: - ennui - displeasure - Inclination: - desire - Disinclination: - fear	JUDGMENT - Social esteem: - positive normality - negative normality - positive capacity - negative capacity - positive tenacity - negative tenacity - Social sanction: - positive veracity - negative veracity - positive propriety - negative propriety	APPRECIATION - Reaction: - positive impact - negative impact - positive quality - negative quality - Composition: - positive balance - negative balance - positive complexity - negative complexity - Valuation: - positive valuation - negative valuation

Table 1. Martin and White's (2005) attitudinal component

Week	Topic
1	Write an introductory message telling your partner about yourself and your interests. You may have common interests you want to discuss or you may want to ask your partner about several aspects of Spain and Spanish culture you would like to know more about.
2	<u>Getting to know each other (at least TWO e-mails per person)</u> : Where does your partner live? In what type of house? With whom? What would be a typical day in your partner's life? What does your partner usually do during the weekends or in his/her spare time?
3 and 4	<u>Discuss stereotypical beliefs about both countries: Spanish and THE USA (i.e. stereotypes)</u> . At least FOUR e-mails per person : to find out what the real situation is in both countries. What do you think they are like? (traditions, way of life, etc.). In your opinion, what are Spanish and American people like? What aspects do you have in common with your partner and in what do you differ, and to what extent is all this because of your different nationalities and cultures?
5	<u>Your country's history</u> . At least TWO e-mails per person to tell your partner some historical facts or events related to your country so that s/he can better understand where you come from.
6	<u>Plans for the future</u> . You are at University now, but do you know what you would like to do when you graduate? Where would you like to live or work? Will you live with your family? At least TWO e-mails per person to talk about future professional or personal plans.
7	<u>Colloquial expressions in English and Spanish</u> . At least TWO e-mails per person to help your partner learn colloquial and useful expressions in English; s/he will do the same to help you with Spanish slang. At least TWO e-mails per person to talk about one or more topics you decide to discuss together (<i>negotiation!</i>).
8	<u>Feast days and celebrations</u> : At least TWO e-mails per person to talk about those feast days that are exclusive to your culture: <i>The Three Wise Men, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Bank Holiday (puente)</i> in December, etc. Why do you celebrate them and why are they important or interesting from a cultural point of view?
9	<u>Free topic</u> : At least TWO e-mails per person to discuss one or more topics of your choice, perhaps something you are interested in, about your partner's culture (<i>negotiation!</i>). Or use this week to catch up on your work or to ask your partner about topics or ideas that may have come up during the exchange and that you would like to know more about. Say goodbye, finish the exchange and decide whether you would like to continue the exchange outside of class.

Table 2. List of topics to discuss modified from Author (2007)

Final Task (1): Final discussion and composition (Cityscapes & Skype)	<p>Take some photographs that show how the English language is used in your city. Upload them onto Cityscapes. Do not forget to tag your photos by providing location and language (http://cityscape.lrc.columbia.edu/).</p> <p>Arrange to meet your American partner via Skype. You need to discuss what you have discovered about both cities and cultures after analysing the photos. You also have to decide on a topic that you are both interested in so that you can write a composition together on your wiki page. Both the discussion and the composition must be half in English and half in Spanish.</p>
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Final Task (2): Final presentation (Moviemaker)	Prepare a five-minute video about the most important cultural and linguistic aspects that you have learned after the exchange with your American partner. Upload it onto your wiki page.
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Table 3. Final tasks for the virtual exchange

Attitude	Examples from our corpus
Affect-happiness/unhappiness	Sorry (Affect: misery) about the delay on that. Siento no haberte respondido antes (Affect: misery).
Affect-security/insecurity	I'm sure (Affect: confidence) it was commissioned. Espero (Affect: confidence) que te haya parecido interesante.
Affect-satisfaction/dissatisfaction	I am excited (Affect: pleasure) to correspond with you. Me ha encantado conocerte (Affect: pleasure).
Affect-inclination/disinclination	I want (Affect: desire) to go over our paper. También me gustaría (Affect: desire) ver las tuyas.
Judgment-normality	(...) Spaniards, who tend to (Judgment: positive normality) spend a lot of time together. No te preocupes si hay fallos, es normal (Judgment: positive normality).
Judgment-capacity	I can't (Judgment: negative capacity) find your photos. (...) he de confesar que me cuesta entenderte (Judgment: negative capacity).
Judgment-tenacity	I'm trying to improve (Judgment: positive tenacity) my writing (...). (...) se aprende mucho más si se intenta (Judgment: positive tenacity).
Judgment-veracity	I promise (Judgment: positive veracity) to start writing back to you quicker. Creo (Judgment: positive veracity) que podría ser fruto de una conversación y un escrito muy interesantes.
Judgment-propriety	(...) I think I can use this week to catch up (Judgment: positive propriety)! Tenemos que hacer una sesión de Skype hablando sobre un tema que nos interese a los dos (Judgment: positive propriety).
Appreciation-reaction	It looked great (Appreciation: positive impact)! [...] me ha parecido muy interesante (Appreciation: positive impact).
Appreciation-composition	If it's not too difficult (Appreciation: negative complexity), do you think? es un tema algo complicado (Appreciation: negative complexity).
Appreciation-valuation	It was so great (Appreciation: positive valuation) getting to know you! me parece que tu teoría es la mejor (Appreciation: positive valuation).

Table 4: Tokens of attitude classified following Martin and White (2005)

APPRAISAL ATTITUDE	SPANISH STUDENTS			AMERICAN STUDENTS		
	TOTAL	Word interval	Rate per 100	TOTAL	Word interval	Rate per 100

		between appraisals (Total 32257 words)	words (Total 32257 words)		between appraisals (Total 27651 words)	words (Total 27651 words)
Affect	1102 (52.30%)	29.27	3.41	1034 (56.68%)	26.74	3.73
- Positive	910 (39.30%)	35.44	2.82	842 (46.15%)	32.83	3.04
- Negative	192 (13%)	168.00	0.59	192 (10.53%)	144.01	0.69
Judgement	512 (24.29%)	63.00	1.58	364 (19.20%)	75.96	1.31
- Positive	377 (17.88%)	85.56	1.16	294 (15.50%)	94.05	1.06
- Negative	135 (6.41%)	238.94	0.41	70 (3.7%)	395.01	0.25
Appreciation	493 (23.41%)	65.43	1.52	426 (23.35%)	64.90	1.54
- Positive	311 (14.76%)	103.72	0.96	267 (14.63%)	103.56	0.96
- Negative	182 (8.65%)	177.23	0.56	159 (8.72%)	173.90	0.57
Total	2107	15.30	6.53	1824	15.32	6.59
-Positive	1598 (75.84%)	20.18	4.95	1403 (76.91%)	19.70	5.07
-Negative	509 (24.16%)	63.37	1.57	421(23.09%)	65.67	1.52

Table 5. Total tokens of attitudinal appraisals by participants in both groups

ATTITUDE	SPANISH STUDENTS			AMERICAN STUDENTS		
	Total tokens	Percentage	Rate per 100 words	Total tokens	Percentage	Rate per 100 words
Affect	1102	52.30%	3.41	1034	56.68%	3.73
- Happiness:	361	17.13%	1.11	274	15.02%	0.99
- cheer	87	4.12%	0.26	32	1.75%	0.11
- affection	274	13.00%	0.84	242	13.26%	0.88
- Unhappiness:	98	4.65%	0.30	107	5.86%	0.38
- misery	85	4.03%	0.26	89	4.87%	0.32
- antipathy	13	0.61%	0.04	18	0.98%	0.06
- Security:	140	6.64%	0.43	112	6.14%	0.40
- confidence	88	4.17%	0.27	74	4.05%	0.26
- trust	52	2.46%	0.16	38	2.08%	0.13
- Insecurity:	74	3.51%	0.22	62	3.39%	0.22
- disquiet	71	3.36%	0.22	46	2.52%	0.16
- surprise	3	0.14%	0.00	16	0.87%	0.05
- Satisfaction:	372	17.65%	1.15	430	23.57%	1.55
- interest	336	15.94%	1.04	376	20.61%	1.35
- pleasure/admiration	36	1.70%	0.11	54	2.96%	0.19
- Dissatisfaction:	20	0.94%	0.06	23	1.26%	0.08
- ennui	5	0.23%	0.01	5	0.27%	0.01
- displeasure	15	0.71%	0.04	18	0.98%	0.06
- Inclination:	37	1.75%	0.11	26	1.42%	0.09
- desire	37	1.75%	0.11	26	1.42%	0.09
- Disinclination:	0	0.00%	0.00	0	0.00%	0.00
- fear	0	0.00%	0.00	0	0.00%	0.00

Table 6. Total tokens of affect appraisals by participants in both groups

ATTITUDE	SPANISH STUDENTS			AMERICAN STUDENTS		
	Total tokens	Percentage	Rate per 100 words	Total tokens	Percentage	Rate per 100 words
Judgement	512	24.29%	1.58	364	19.95%	1.31
- Social esteem:	298	14.14%	0.92	194	10.63%	0.70
- positive normality	87	4.12%	0.26	63	3.45%	0.22
- negative normality	52	2.46%	0.16	38	2.08%	0.13
- positive capacity	85	4.03%	0.26	41	2.24%	0.14
- negative capacity	69	3.27%	0.21	44	2.41%	0.15
- positive tenacity	7	0.33%	0.02	8	0.43%	0.02
- negative tenacity	0	0.00%	0.00	0	0.00%	0.00
- Social sanction:	214	10.15%	0.66	170	9.32%	0.61
- positive veracity	68	3.22%	0.27	67	3.67%	0.24
- negative veracity	3	0.14%	0.00	1	0.05%	0.00
- positive propriety	132	6.26%	0.40	95	5.20%	0.34
- negative propriety	11	0.52%	0.03	7	0.38%	0.02

Table 7. Total tokens of judgement appraisals by participants in both groups

ATTITUDE	SPANISH STUDENTS			AMERICAN STUDENTS		
	Total tokens	Percentage	Rate per 100 words	Total tokens	Percentage	Rate per 100 words
Appreciation	493	23.39%	1.52	426	23.35%	1.54
- Reaction:	216	10.25%	0.66	169	9.26%	0.61
- positive impact	69	3.27%	0.21	63	3.45%	0.22
- negative impact	17	0.80%	0.05	4	0.21%	0.01
- positive quality	91	4.31%	0.28	71	3.89%	0.32
- negative quality	39	1.85%	0.12	31	1.69%	0.11
- Composition:	130	6.16%	0.40	109	5.97%	0.39
- positive balance	46	2.18%	0.14	29	1.58%	0.10
- negative balance	46	2.18%	0.14	40	2.19%	0.14
- positive complexity	13	0.61%	0.04	5	0.27%	0.01
- negative complexity	25	1.18%	0.07	35	1.91%	0.12
- Valuation:	147	6.97%	0.45	148	8.11%	0.53
- positive valuation	92	4.36%	0.28	99	5.42%	0.35
- negative valuation	55	2.61%	0.17	49	2.68%	0.17

Table 8. Total tokens of appreciation appraisals by participants in both groups