

Computer-mediated cooperative development: non-judgemental discourse in online environments

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Continuing professional development as it is pursued through the interacting paradigms of reflective practice and action research can be facilitated through the disciplined use of non-judgemental discourse. A framework for such purposeful interaction, *cooperative development*, has been established for face-to-face use among TESOL professionals for some time. It has now been extended into computer-mediated communication via the use of e-mails and instant-messenger. An example of each is analysed, highlighting the continuing importance of affective considerations in both the personal and pedagogic aspects of a teacher's continuing development.

I Introduction

Since the late 1980s, in continuing cycles of action research, I have been working on a discourse framework designed to facilitate the professional development of people who teach English to speakers of other languages. I have called this approach *cooperative development* (CD) (Edge, 1992; 2002). It draws on the non-judgemental educational philosophy of Rogers (1969; 1980; Rogers and Freiberg, 1994) and on interpretations of this tradition by Curran (e.g. 1972; 1976; Rardin *et al.*, 1988), most particularly as these sources were brought into the TESOL mainstream by Stevick (1980, 1990) and developed by teacher educators such as Oprandy (1999). Egan (1986) also provided important input. In what follows, I have capitalized terms where they have a usage specific to CD.

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II Speakers and Understanders in cooperative development

CD exploits the observation that one can learn through the expression of one's ideas, through the kind of articulation that develops the very concepts that it seeks to bring out of thought and into language (Taylor, 1985: 36). Furthermore, in terms of an individual teacher's professional development, this is a form of learning that forges engagement between knowledge that has been acquired experientially and knowledge that has been learned more formally – that is, between exactly those two types of theory/practice knowledge that teacher education regularly fails to bring together (Clarke, 1994; Kohonen *et al.*, 2001; Korthagen, 2001). What is needed for this to happen is for the Speaker to commit to a non-defensive style of talk where the purpose is to explore a certain issue or area of interest in the belief that a rigorous exploration may well lead to a discovery, and that that discovery will lead to the identification of a basis for action. Such a process can contribute to any stage of a cycle of reflective practice or action research, which is the general context in which cooperative development locates itself.

What can well facilitate such development of thought through language is the collaboration of an Understander – someone who puts aside their own set of knowledge, experience, opinions, etc., in order better to Understand the Speaker. The role of this colleague is to facilitate the Speaker's trajectory of exploration–discovery–action towards the Speaker's own professional purposes along the Speaker's own lines. The essential complement to, and catalyst of, one colleague's non-defensive Speaking, is the other's non-judgemental Understanding.

The attitudinal basis of this Understanding is threefold. First, the Understander offers complete Respect for what the Speaker has to say, accepting it unconditionally, without either agreeing or disagreeing with it. Second, and beyond acceptance, the Understander makes every effort to Empathize with the Speaker, to see things from the Speaker's point of view. Empathy does not suggest agreement but is attempted as a way of ensuring that what is accepted is as close as the Understander can get to what the Speaker intends to articulate. Third, the Understander maintains complete Sincerity with regard to the Respect and Empathy that are offered. Nothing that the Understander does or says is meant to influence the Speaker in any way that might arise from the Understander's own opinions, experience, preferences, and so on. Given this attitudinal basis,

and that this compact is well understood by both participants, the Understander has available a set of agreed moves briefly sketched here, and developed in detail in Edge (2002).

1 Reflect

This is the most basic and central move, taking place when the Understander tells the Speaker what he or she has Understood the Speaker to have said. It will typically be introduced by a phrase such as:

- ‘OK, so if I’ve got this right, what you’re saying is...’
- ‘Just let me see if I’m with you so far, ...’
- ‘Right, so your position at the moment is ...’

The power of this move is that it re-presents the Speaker’s current state of knowledge and purpose, as Understood by a colleague who is committed to Respecting and Empathizing with that position, so that the Speaker has the chance to re-evaluate it before moving on. If the Reflection is accurate and sensitive, the Speaker is usually motivated to explore further. If the Reflection is inaccurate or somehow out of tune, the Speaker is motivated to correct it, and this correction often leads to further clarification for the Speaker. Most powerful, in terms of the facilitation of the Speaker’s exploration, are the occasions when Speakers recognize that the Reflection they have received is accurate, but that they themselves are no longer satisfied with it. This is the key experience in terms of collegial self-development. It is also worth noting here that Reflection applies equally to the emotional side of what the Understander picks up from the Speaker. As we shall see later, the Reflection of affect can be at least as powerful as the Reflection of more cognitively substantive content.

2 Relate

Relating is what happens when the Understander brings to the Speaker’s attention two statements the Speaker has made and asks if there is an interesting or useful relationship between them. Stereotypically, the Understander might say:

- ‘A few minutes ago, you said X, didn’t you? And now you’re saying Y. Are these at all connected for you?’

In the event, the two statements brought together might serve to establish a common theme between what initially appeared to be disparate issues (referred to as Thematising), or they might highlight what appear to be inconsistencies in the Speaker's position (called Challenging). In either case, the Understander makes every effort only to raise such possibilities as possibilities and in order to Understand better. There is no attempt to guide or manipulate the Speaker towards a position amenable to the Understander.

3 Focus

This collaboration is Speaker-driven, and the purpose of the Speaker is to move towards action. As action must be specific, one part of the Understander's role is to help the Speaker Focus down from the general towards the specific. The Understander might say something like:

'You have spoken about X, Y and Z so far, is that right?' (Pause for confirmation)
'Would it be useful at this point to Focus on one of them in more depth?'

The Speaker may wish to do so, or may decline and want to move on to another aspect of the topic.

4 Set a goal

As the Speaker's purpose is to use talk to shape future action, the Understander may find it appropriate to ask at some point:

'Do you see a clear goal for yourself arising from what you have said so far?' or
'Am I right in thinking, then, that the goal you see now is X?'

5 Trial a procedure

Once a goal has been set, the Understander might invite the Speaker to work on just how that goal is to be worked towards. In terms of classroom teaching, this might involve going through a step-by-step procedure to see how it works out. More generally, it might involve laying plans to meet with colleagues, or parents, or to order books from the library.

These then are the key interactive moves available to the Understander. Understanders may also sometimes need to ask questions

in order to clarify what they cannot understand. Even here, however, Reflection is usually the more effective tool for clarification. Although I have presented these moves here necessarily in a sequence, there is no suggestion that they are to be used in this way. Reflection, especially, is involved at all times (Mann, 2002a).

III Contexts and uses

Cooperative development, and variations on it, has been used in a variety of contexts (see e.g. Barfield, 2002; Boon, 2003; Boshell, 2002; McCabe, 2002; Mann, 2002a; 2002b; Oprandy, 2002; Stewart, 2003; de Sonneville, 2005, forthcoming). Cooperative development is also currently the centrepiece of an Australian government-funded action research project run under the auspices of the Adult Migrant English Programme (Butorac *et al.*, 2005).

In this paper, however, I wish to explore two directions that CD has taken in order to facilitate collegial self-development at distance – directions that were first indicated by Bartrick (2002) and Cowie (2002). In order to demonstrate the range of issues addressed by cooperative development, I have chosen one example that foregrounds the more personal side of continuing professional development, and one that foregrounds the more pedagogic.

IV Computer-mediated cooperative development (CMCD)

A great deal has already been written about computer-mediated communication (CMC) in TESOL and in teacher education in the relatively short time that it has been available (e.g. Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Murray, 2000; Stevens, 2003; Wade and Fauske, 2004). In the context of CMCD the usual constraints and conditions apply in terms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) as compared to face-to-face (F2F). The immediacy of human presence is missing, as are the paralinguistic communications systems of face, hands and body, the depth and detail of intonation, stress and tone of voice used to communicate, for example, empathy and professional solidarity. On the other hand, the whole point of CMC is that it makes communication available where it otherwise was not. More specifically for our interests, it makes available a regime of cooperative development to people who would otherwise,

for a variety of reasons, be denied it. Furthermore, CMCD should not be viewed only as a second-class attempt to substitute for F2F work because, as we shall see, it brings advantages of its own.

In the case of CD by e-mail (EMCD), the asynchronous nature of the exchanges means that partners do not have to make fixed arrangements about when they will communicate. Furthermore, there is a particular potential for Speakers in this mode, one of whom has commented:

Having had the chance to do a little bit of reading in between the two Speaker moves has made a great difference to me (for the better in this instance). I feel that in both of my EMCD Speaker sessions so far I benefited more fully as a result of 'having the luxury' to go and find out about things and read up on relevant literature.

An observer, who had been copied in on the exchange concerned, had independently contributed the following: 'The fact that (the Speaker) was also moving forward outside the exchanges I felt gave an extra dimension to that discovery that you don't get F2F.'

In the case of CD by Instant Messenger (IMCD), real-time arrangements have to be made and the immediacy of direct interaction returns. An 'illusion of social presence' (Boon, 2003: 12) functions powerfully as the exchanges move the developmental process forward. Unlike in F2F exchanges, however, the Understanter has the opportunity to review earlier statements made by the Speaker while waiting for the next contribution to come through. The Understanter can also be noting key phrases and part-crafting potential elements of a response while waiting.

This last point highlights a feature of both variants of CMCD, that the act itself creates the data of its own record. Not only does this enable verbatim quotation of the Speaker where this is appropriate, it also makes available a complete record of what was exchanged for subsequent reading and further reflection, and does so in a form much more easily accessible than taped recordings.

CMCD, therefore, takes up the challenge implicit in Murray's (2000: 397) statement: 'CMC should be viewed not in terms of its functionality, but in terms of the ways in which users shape a new medium of communication to fit the needs of their speech community.' We shall return to questions regarding the mutual shaping of user and medium after working with some data.

In the data and analysis of examples presented here, obvious typographical errors have been corrected. Three dots (...) indicate that text

has been edited out as it has been judged to be not obviously relevant to the development of the discourse. At a more macro-level, the data here are altogether edited versions of the actual exchanges.

These last two points raise issues of judgement, as the editing has taken place *post hoc* for the purpose of the presentation of data as evidence. There is also a teleological element to this, as the data have been edited in the light of the outcomes of the exchange. Neither the participants nor the analyst are in a position to make objective claims regarding the actual relevance of what has been edited out to the interactional or neurological processes involved. What is presented here, therefore, are the data that appear most explicitly to have been crucial for Speakers, as viewed from a CD perspective. As analyst, I submitted my original analyses to the participants concerned, whose input has informed the analysis presented here. What is claimed in terms of warrant, therefore, is inter-subjective agreement on the selection of data and on its analysis and interpretation. Our first example is of CMCD carried out via e-mail (EMCD).

1 An EMCD exchange

a Background: In this example of the work, the two participating colleagues are, pseudonymically, Adrian and Layla. Adrian is Speaker and Layla Understanter. They have known each other for some years and have previously been members of a group using CD face-to-face. The underlying attitudes and discourse techniques are, therefore, familiar to them, and they already have a good level of personal rapport. They have decided to use EMCD as a way of continuing their potential for professional development following Adrian's move to a new post in a different institution. The writing convention they employ is for the Speaker to write in lower case and for the Understanter to write in UPPER CASE. Their working arrangement with regard to the timing of these asynchronous exchanges is that the Speaker can take as much time as s/he wishes to send the next message, and that the Understanter will respond within 24 hours of the message being received.

b Data and analysis: One of Adrian's early responsibilities at his new institution has been to produce an annual workplan for his section.

In an earlier message, he has already sketched two strategies for going about this:

- A) Think it all through from fundamental concepts toward action.
- B) Look at whatever they produced last year and see what needs amending in order to pass muster for this year.

Adrian has taken the latter option and, as we join the exchange, he is reporting back on his subsequent meeting with Derek, his director. He begins by indicating that the work-plan task seems to be well in hand (1–3). His subsequent comments, however, take on a more negative tone. First, he downgrades the importance of the task itself (4–6) and denigrates the way he has gone about it (7–8). Then he realizes that, in so doing, he is behaving in a manner typical of himself (9–14), one that he would like to change.

Adrian 1

1 The meeting with the director went very well, in the sense that he explained
 2 some of the points that I didn't have enough background information to make
 3 sense of and I came away with the feeling that this job will soon be done.

4 That was really the point, I guess, to have some documentation on file that
 5 takes up the required space, that is sensible in case anyone ever reads it, and is
 6 not a rod for our own backs if someone checks us against what it says. As you
 7 can doubtless pick up, I'm not experiencing a great feeling of achievement, but
 8 that's the price you pay if you go for Strategy B.

9 Mind you, having said that is a reminder to me how liable I am to undervalue
 10 what has been done, simply because it has been done. (And perhaps because it
 11 is I who has done it.) One only has to imagine the scenario in which Derek had
 12 turned up a host of problems and demands for me to deal with before filing the
 13 planning document. How would I have felt then about the prospect of its
 14 having been finished? I celebrate too little. I must remember that.

It is a recurrent feature of work in cooperative development that information the Speaker gives about his or her feelings regarding what is being said is usually at least as important as what might be seen as the more substantive content. As Understander, therefore, Layla chooses to emphasize the affective aspects of Adrian's statement in her Reflection, which covers the scale of the task that Adrian has just completed (15–21), the emotional residue of the strategy that he has followed (22–25), and his more general attitude towards his own achievements (26–30).

Layla 1

15 IF I UNDERSTOOD YOU PROPERLY, THE MEETING WITH DEREK
 16 HELPED YOU FILL IN SOME OF THE BLANKS. MORE
 17 IMPORTANTLY, THOUGH, IT SEEMS TO HAVE ALSO MADE YOU
 18 REALIZE THAT THE TASK OF WRITING THE REPORT MAY HAVE
 19 BEEN A MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND QUICKER TASK THAN IT
 20 ORIGINALLY APPEARED TO BE, OR THAN YOU WERE LED TO
 21 BELIEVE.

22 I DO GET THE FEELING THAT THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE CHOSEN
 23 STRATEGY B IS STILL NIGGLING YOU A LITTLE. I DID ALSO
 24 WONDER WHETHER YOU SEE STRATEGY B AS BEING A
 25 COMPROMISE ON QUALITY?

26 I ALSO GET THE FEELING THAT YOU HAVE STARTED TO THINK
 27 THAT THE COMPLETION OF THIS WORK OR INDEED ANY OTHERS
 28 SHOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO CELEBRATE MORE, THAT PERHAPS
 29 YOU YOURSELF UNDERRATE SOME OF YOUR OWN COMPLETED
 30 WORK.

In the following extract, we see the usefulness of the Reflection that is not accepted by the Speaker, as well as that of the Reflection that is accepted. In both cases, important elements of the Speaker's own discourse have been kept available in the interaction for further formulation, whether that process be additive, corrective, or developmental. Adrian's initial response is to assert the usefulness – not the correctness – of Layla's Reflections (31–33), and to recast its first part, taking the responsibility for any misapprehension regarding the report (34–36). In so doing, however, he forges connections with the affective aspects of his earlier statement in a way that leads him to focus again on habitual and problematic elements of his professional life (37–44). On this occasion, he seems to indicate some embarrassment at how far he is taking this analysis, as well as dissatisfaction with the use he makes of the insights he has already achieved.

Adrian 2

31 Your first Reflection, about the task being 'A MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD
 32 AND QUICKER TASK THAN IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED TO BE, OR
 33 THAN YOU WERE LED TO BELIEVE' is very helpful to me.

34 I think I would probably say, A MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND
 35 QUICKER TASK THAN I had decided to make of it, or than I had constructed
 36 it to be. I think I perhaps do this a lot. There is a temptation to think that,
 37 having overblown the task in the first place, I then become dissatisfied at how I

38 deal with it, but I am perhaps also over-analysing here. It is an interesting
39 possibility to watch out for, and would fit in with your comment about Strategy
40 B still niggling. I believe it is the case that I construct worlds in which my
41 performance is consistently unsatisfactory, and ‘reality checks’ on this
42 perception, although frequently reassuring in the single event, don’t change the
43 overall attitude ... And while awareness is meant to see us through, it doesn’t
44 always. Well, I have talked myself into your final Reflection again.

Layla acknowledges the correction with regard to the report (45–46), and decides to offer Adrian a chance to Focus further on what appears to be a centrally important point in the discourse thus far – the extent to which Adrian constructs worlds in which his work is judged unsatisfactory (47–50). A part of the agreement between Speaker and Understanter is that the Understanter will be looking to offer such opportunities as a way of helping the Speaker move, through exploration, to a point of discovery on which future action might be based. It is also fully understood by both partners that there is no sense in which the Understanter is suggesting that the Speaker *should* Focus on this area. Furthermore, the Speaker has the complete right to decline this offer without such a move being seen as ‘dis-preferred’ in the sense of conversation analysis.

On this occasion, as the Reflection is highly specific and she is inviting a further exploration of it, Layla exercises the option made available by the medium and reproduces Adrian’s words verbatim.

Layla 2

45 THANKS FOR THE CLARIFICATION WITH REGARD TO WRITING
46 THE REPORT.

47 YOU STATE: ‘I believe it is the case that I construct worlds in which my
48 performance is consistently unsatisfactory, and “reality checks” on this
49 perception, although frequently reassuring in the single event, don’t change the
50 overall attitude.’ DO YOU WANT TO DIG INTO THIS A LITTLE?

Adrian recognizes the importance of the statement that Layla has Reflected, but begins by pleading an inability to Focus on it (51). As he continues, however, it becomes apparent that this issue is indeed an important one for him (52–57), one that he has recognized previously and failed, thus far, to find an effective response to (58–64). His language shifts from the straightforwardly declarative of the first paragraph, to the speculative modalities of the second as he – metaphorically speaking – circles the issue, trying to identify an appropriate response. His final comment (65) indicates a perception that this further exploration has been of some use to him.

Adrian 3

51 Thanks for pulling this out. I don't know that I can dig into it at the moment. It
 52 is a finding that stares at me out of several attempts at awareness-raising,
 53 including my recent attempt (yet again!:-)) to keep a diary. There is a pattern
 54 of a goal turning into a problem turning into a source of anxiety leading to a
 55 crisis point at which it turns out there was no crisis, no need for anxiety, no
 56 problem, and the goal achieved to everyone's satisfaction (sometimes, if rarely,
 57 even including my own).

58 I have a pressing need to change that pattern, to shift that frame of reference.
 59 The key to it, I think, is clearly not cumulative. That is, it doesn't matter how
 60 many times I go through the pattern, that doesn't help me avoid it next time.
 61 The key lies in the first step, in accepting the goal as a goal and working
 62 towards it without re-categorizing it as a problem. I don't know how to do that,
 63 or if there is a 'how to.' It sounds and smells as though something more
 64 transformative than a 'how to' might be required.

65 So, perhaps I did dig into it a little. Thank you.

To an analyst's eye, Adrian's final line, with its past tense usage and expression of thanks might also be seen as indicators of a move to closure – a sign that Adrian has gone as far as he wants to on this topic. Adrian, however, reports that this was not the case, nor did Layla feel that this was a good place to stop. In Layla 3, she first reverts to paraphrase in order to Reflect what he has Understood, thus checking that the picture she is building is an accurate one in the Speaker's terms (66–72). She then (72–73) uses a cut-and-paste verbatim quote to Reflect the core issue. Finally, she pushes both the Speaker and the bounds of the rules of exchange by asking the Speaker a direct question about what he thinks makes him act as he does (73–74). As analyst, again, I say that this stretches the rules in the sense that the Understander is moving the interaction in a certain direction other than one arising in the discourse of the Speaker. This may, however, be an overly superficial analysis, in the sense that if Layla had expressed her final question in a form such as, 'Would you like to say some more about this business of 're-categorising a goal as a problem?’, then the previous objection would not arise.

Layla 3

66 SO YOU FEEL THAT YOU NEED TO CHANGE YOUR PERCEPTION OF
 67 GOAL TO MAKE SURE THAT 'A GOAL' DOES NOT TURN INTO 'A
 68 PROBLEM' IN THE FIRST PLACE.

69 YOU FEEL THAT REFLECTING ON 'THE PATTERN' HAS NOT
 70 NECESSARILY HELPED YOU IN CHANGING IT. NEITHER HAS YOUR

71 RECENT ATTEMPT AT KEEPING A DIARY.

72 YOU BELIEVE THAT THE KEY LIES IN THE FIRST STEP – accepting the
73 goal as a goal and working towards it. WHAT DO YOU FEEL MAKES YOU
74 CATEGORIZE A GOAL AS A PROBLEM AT THE OUTSET?

Whatever we might have thought about an earlier Speaker indication of being ready to stop, or the formulation of Layla's previous question, there is no doubt that her work as an Understanter and her intuitions in this instance are highly effective. Adrian steps in to correct one aspect of Layla's Reflection (75–76), and then goes on to answer the deeper question that this correction brings out (76–80). In so doing, he shifts a level from describing a behavioural pattern to expressing its emotional underpinning in anxiety.

Adrian 4

75 It's not quite 'at the outset,' it's once things get underway and the steady work
76 needs to be done. What kicks in then is quite easy to identify, I think. Fear.

77 Fear of not being 'good enough'. Fear of being 'found out' as not good
78 enough. Fear of not being able to achieve the goal set. And this interacts with
79 a tendency, whatever I am working on at any given moment, to fear that I
80 should be working on something else.

81 I have 'known' all this for some time. The difficulty, as I said before, is
82 finding a way to use that awareness to make a difference.

83 It may be that I am over-indulging in self-analysis here. On the other hand,
84 while I have known this for some time, I don't think that I have written it
85 down before, and that could be interesting to reflect on as I re-read.

86 I think I'd like to leave it there for now. That has been useful for me. What I
87 perceive as new and powerful is the articulation of the 'pattern' and the
88 statement:

89 The key lies in the first step, in accepting the goal as a goal and working
90 towards it without recategorising it as a problem.

91 I'm going to think about that some more. Thank you, Layla.

Like myself as analyst, Adrian as Speaker is careful not to be seen to be claiming any kind of clinical diagnosis here, and warns against the dangers of amateur self-indulgence in this vein (83–85). In terms of professional relevance, however, I can report that the presentation of these data at a series of workshops and conferences has drawn howls of recognition from participants as they read Adrian's commentary on

the pressures of the modern educational workplace on at least some of its inhabitants.

More specifically, Adrian returns (86–90) to his *articulation of the pattern* and describes it as a *new and powerful* discovery, particularly in conjunction with his identification of the first *step* in that pattern as the key to the negative spiral in which he too frequently finds himself. At this stage of discovery, as Adrian struggles to find *a way to use ... awareness to make a difference* (82), we have to leave his process towards action.

Our second example of CMCD features Andy and Joe, where the latter is a pseudonym. The former is the real name of Andrew Boon, who has developed a real-time CMC version of CD using MSN's Instant Messenger (Boon, 2003; 2005). He calls this IMCD.

2 An IMCD exchange

a Background: Andy, the Speaker, and Joe, the Understander, have met briefly once, but have no experience of face-to-face CD together. Joe has more experience of F2F CD and Andy has more experience of IMCD. The agreement that they have made is to meet online for one hour a week. Their approximate plan is to spend about 45 minutes in Speaker and Understander roles, followed by a brief exchange of comments on how the session went. If there is no time for commentary, they follow up with e-mails during the week.

b Data and analysis: Each session begins with a brief exchange of greetings, after which they mark the taking up of their roles as follows:

ANDY AS SPEAKER AND JOE AS UNDERSTANDER

Andy says: (10:09:44)

So some background information

Andy says: (10:10:05)

I have been working for a Chemist's

Andy says: (10:10:11)

for the last 3 years

Andy says: (10:10:18)

teaching the staff English

Andy says: (10:10:28)

We have been using the Interchange series

This style of communication, while strangely syncopated to the unfamiliar eye, keeps Speaker and Understanter in touch without one having to wait too long for the next piece of information from the other. For the purposes of the following analysis, however, I have consolidated each turn into more reader-friendly sentences and paragraphs. Andy and Joe use 'ok' as a signal that they have completed their turn. If there is any confusion as to whose turn it is, the Understanter defers to the Speaker.

We return, then, to Andy's laying out of the teaching situation on which he wants to work, and in which he clearly signals (07) *the problem* on which he wants to Focus:

Andy 1

01 We have been using the Interchange series. It's a once a week class, and so the
 02 students have worked through the Interchange Level 1 book (red) and are
 03 halfway through the Level 2 (blue) book. A couple of months ago a new
 04 member of staff joined and started the English class. However, her level is a lot
 05 lower than the other members. Coupled with that, one pharmacist left the
 06 company, so the group went down to 3, which changed the dynamic for group
 07 work, etc. So, the problem is how to manage a class in which 2 students re a
 08 good intermediate level and the new student is pre-intermediate. ok.

In F2F CD, there is sometimes pressure on the Understanter to select a moment at which to come in with an early Reflection – an important move because it reconfirms through its own action the mode of discourse in use. In CMCD, it is always the Speaker who determines when to cede the floor, although it remains the responsibility of the Understanter to decide exactly what to Reflect and how to do it, or which other move to make. Here, Joe Reflects the bones of the situation (9–14) before picking up the lexical signal, *problem*, and paraphrasing *how to manage a class* with *class management* (14–15):

Joe 1

09 OK, just let me catch up on the situation.
 10 Using Interchange in a once a week class with people who work at a chemists.
 11 Been at it for 3 years. Now a new member of staff has joined the class and one
 12 old one has left. But the new one's English isn't up to the standard of others. So,
 13 you have a class of three, as before, but a considerable gap between the
 14 established two students and the new one. The problem as you see it is one of
 15 class management. Is that about right? Ok

In Andy 2, the Speaker confirms Joe's reflection and restates his problem more fully (16–17) before going on to detail two methodological

responses he has already attempted, one of which (18–23) proved unsuccessful while the other (24–26) brought with it a new problem:

Andy 2

16 Sure is. It's a way of helping the student who is lower and at the same time
 17 making sure the other students don't get bored waiting for their turn.
 18 I was teaching the class yesterday and I used a round turn allocation system. I
 19 tried to make sure the lower student, who we will call Kumi, was last to answer
 20 in the round turn system, thinking that this would give her chance to think and
 21 the other students would provide a model. However, there was still a
 22 considerable amount of waiting time in which one of the other students jumped
 23 in to help.
 24 I have also used pair-work in which I pair myself up with Kumi. This is useful
 25 as it allows the others to get on with the task, but the problem then is that I can't
 26 monitor what they are saying as well. So I try to vary the way I manage the
 27 class to cater for both the higher students and Kumi. ok

Joe's second Reflection sets out to capture the essential dilemma that Andy has presented in terms of *keeping them together* and *splitting them up* (28–33). He also makes a point of trying to capture the positivity that he has heard in Andy's presentation (26–27), Reflecting *vary* with *variety* and inviting him to confirm that he does not feel that either Kumi or her more able colleagues are being neglected (33–35):

Joe 2

28 Yeah, so you've already tried a variety of things. Yeah, I see that. You want to
 29 do right by all of them. . . So, you've tried putting her last in answering, so he
 30 could get a model from the others, but he still needs a lot of time and the others
 31 want to 'help out'. In a sense that's a way of keeping them together. And you've
 32 tried splitting them up, so that you work with Kumi, but then you can't pay the
 33 others the attention they deserve. But on the positive side, you do see this
 34 variety in itself as being a reasonable way of trying to cater for both levels. It's
 35 not as though you see yourself in an either/or situation. Is that right? ok

Once again (in Andy 3), Andy confirms Joe's Understanding (36–37).

Andy 3

36 Spot on. I am aware of the problem throughout the class, and always 'reflecting
 37 in action' as Schon would put it, trying to adapt, or help out. One thing that I
 38 have started to do . . .

In a long (six minute) move not presented here, Andy then goes on to elaborate on five different ways in which he addresses the management dilemma on which he is Focusing. Joe Reflects these back to him and we

see in Andy 4 (39) how he once again accepts the accuracy of Joe's Reflection:

Andy 4

39 Sure – a good summary of the things I have been trying to do, and its all a
40 reaction to the mood of the class, the difficulty of the particular lesson, and
41 ensuing silence.

42 So it's important for me to think about how I can best help Kumi get the most of
43 the class whilst at the same time helping the other students.

In lines 42–43 of Andy 4, however, we also hear a repetition of the goal that we heard in Andy 1, an indication that the Speaker, while exploring this question in some detail, is not yet, at least, making much forward progress. This impression is confirmed as Andy goes on to describe another three forms of response he has tried (not reproduced here) before restating his commitment to moving forward with this issue (44–47):

Andy 5

44 I am hoping that as she becomes more familiar with the class and English her
45 confidence and ability will improve, but the question is NOW – what can I do
46 to help her on this road? So that is maybe something I would like to consider
47 now

As we have seen, one of the working principles of CD in its F2F format is that it is often as useful to Reflect back to the Speaker any emotional overtones that are heard as it is to Reflect back the more obviously substantive content of what is said. Drawing on this background, and also on the specifically CMCD opportunity to scroll back through what has been said, Joe Reflects from Andy's previous discourse a loose set of lexical items that have occurred which seem to refer to the attitudinal and affective aspects of his work (48–49):

Joe 3

48 Some words that have stood out are: comfortable, uncomfortable, mood,
49 supportive, confidence. Are they at all significant? ok

Andy's single-syllable response (50) is immediate (0.8 second) and affirmative. He then goes on to recycle these lexical items once more (54–58) as he searches for an appropriate methodological response that arises from them or is true to them. His first *So* (54) identifies the need to ensure Kumi's sense of confidence as a clear and necessary Goal, but

this is marked as *asking a lot* (55) and *uncomfortable* (58). His second *So* (59) runs into a *but* and his subsequent *if* (61) leads to *lose the ability*. At this point, he appears only to have revisited once more the problems with which he started. This is, however, not the case.

By his third *So* (63), he has made the breakthrough that he has been seeking, and his fourth *So* takes off onto a long Trialling of a possible arrangement of activities based on the classroom management discovery that he has made for himself (65–82):

Andy 6

50 Yes.

51 I like to try and create as comfortable an atmosphere as possible and I can read
52 students' expressions and body language pretty well and can sense the mood of
53 the class.

54 So what I need to do is to make sure that Kumi feels confident enough to give it
55 a go, which is asking a lot, when she knows she is not as good as the others and
56 these are her colleagues (although supportive ones).

57 But when the turn goes to her, the pressure is on, the silence begins, the others
58 are waiting for her to answer, and that MUST be uncomfortable.

59 So, maybe I need to move away from the round turn allocation, but if its 'shout
60 out the answer,' she will remain quiet and maybe or maybe not she is
61 understanding the lesson. And if I pair myself up, with her, I lose the ability to
62 monitor the others.

63 So, maybe I should pair myself up with each student in a kind of turn during the
64 class.

65 So, for one task I pair myself up with one student and then with another and
66 then with Kumi.

67 Rather than start the class with my usual

68 'How are you?'

69 'What's new?'

70 in a round turn allocation, I will pair Kumi up with a different student and me
71 with the other one.

72 We can 'free' chat about what's new for 5 mins and then start the lesson.

73 And then I pair up with Kumi for the next task, which will be a match-up
74 activity, and then input of 'How I have changed over the last x years.'

75 We can then feedback each others answers to the class and then with the next
76 task Kumi pairs up with the student she hasn't worked with yet.

77 This will give her one on one with me and also support from the others in the
78 class who are bound to code-switch to help her, but still she will get 3 very

79 different experiences and may feel less isolated as she will be working in a pair
 80 and not have that feeling of
 81 'Oh my God!' It's my turn next. I have to answer...'
 82 which is probably how she feels in the round turn system. ok.

Joe's reflection of this leads to further elaboration from Andy, after which he declares emphatically:

and that is how I would like to leave it today.
 END OF SESSION!!!

When Joe asks, *How did that go for you as a Speaker? ok*, Andy's response is enthusiastic to a depth that can perhaps be best understood only by an English soccer fan (84–85). He then reconfirms the success of the IMCD session (87) and ties this outcome into his general teaching philosophy of ongoing experimentation (88–90):

Andy 7

83 Great!

84 I had a 'eureka' moment for the first time. It was a little bit like AC Milan 1
 85 Man Utd 0 – that kind of feeling.

86 I taught the class yesterday and was thinking of alternative means to manage the
 87 class and it just came to me as a result of the session.

88 It may or may not work, but the point is that I can try it, see what happens, that
 89 is what teaching is all about, experimenting, playing around with the
 90 dynamic to get the best out of a class. ok.

Joe's reaction (91–95) displays his own pleasure at what he has helped facilitate, as well as the added need for an exchange of meta-commentary over and above F2F CD in order to further mutual recognition of what is being achieved or, potentially, of difficulties:

Joe 4

91 Well, I was wondering about that 'eureka' moment. Down this end, it all felt a
 92 little too easy! You know, with no F2F hints to pick up of how you were
 93 feeling, I was thinking, 'Well this sounds as though it is something that Andy is
 94 formulating now, that he hasn't tried, which is a definite outcome.' We got a
 95 result, in soccer-speak, but it's hard to tell. ok.

Andy reconfirms the breakthrough, using the term *discovery* (97) in its specific CD sense:

Andy 8

96 It is something I have half-tried in terms of pairing up with Kumi, but the
 97 discovery is that I could pair myself up with each of the 3 members throughout

98 the duration of the class, which would be a democratic use of resources and in
 99 that respect I could help Kumi and also monitor the other students as well. Not
 100 at the same time, but each would get an equal chance.

101 Today was a result, all in the space of 50 mins. ok

In a follow-up exchange of e-mails, Andy commented:

Definitely yesterday, the issues of ‘comfort’ and ‘support’ and ‘anxiety’ and ‘uncomfortable’ environments led me to think of changing the dynamic to pair-work in which I alternate with each of the 3 group members.

Although after reading the text, it didn’t look like a ‘eureka moment’ but a smooth flow of ideas. The eureka moment came before I started typing and the act of typing was to commit to the idea that had come to me:

Andy says:

lose the ability to monitor the others

Andy says:

so maybe I should pair myself up

Andy says:

with each student

The idea came before ‘others’ and ‘so’. As I continued to type so the idea became even clearer ... somewhere in the midst of typing the whole sentence. I guess the ‘eureka’ moment came to me mid-sentence and I continued to type what I had started. ‘So’ therefore marks the change from finishing what I had started to type to actually describing the idea that had just come to me (if that makes any sense whatsoever!!)

It seems unlikely that we, as analysts, will get closer than this to being able to identify an actual moment of development. In metaphorical terms, I have previously (Edge, 2002: 284) found it useful to describe these moments as comprising a shift from the energy of thought to the matter of language. The two moments of CMCD discovery featured in the sessions analysed here offer the possibility of an extension of this metaphor. Adrian’s discovery appeared to arise in a linear fashion as he followed a line of thought that brought his tacit knowledge to a more fully articulated form of awareness. Andy’s has more the quality of a psychological quantum leap (Zohar, 1991), as his constant circling of the issue in focus builds a momentum that leads to the emergence of a new possibility featuring the affective elements that have facilitated its realization.

On this occasion, we can follow through from the discovery to the action that was based on it by referring to a follow-up e-mail sent by Andy to Joe, and which begins: ‘Regarding last week’s “eureka moment”, I just got back from teaching the class I talked about in the IMCD session.’

Andy first describes how he uses his different pairings through the class before going on to say:

As the lesson progressed, I elicited other past, present and future time phrases using an open floor technique (if you want to answer, shout out). Kumi was able to volunteer a few time phrases without pressure or me indicating it was her turn to speak. This may indicate that the 'pairing up' did indeed lead to a build-up of confidence for her so much so that she felt confident enough to offer information without being prompted to do so.

So – evaluation:

Changing the dynamic helped Kumi to build the confidence she needed to participate in more open floor style tasks and enabled me to give her the attention she needs whilst also managing the other 2 students. All in all, a very positive classroom environment was created and maintained. During one of the tasks, Kumi was laughing and obviously enjoying herself.

V Interim conclusions

Discussion among the participants reported here has not thus far led to the identification of any medium-specific effects either on the Speaker/Understander dynamic, or on the development of the personal relationships involved. CD always demands a (usually increasing) extension of trust, most particularly from the Speaker to the Understander, and this remains the case here. As in F2F CD, participants report benefit and satisfaction from both Speaker and Understander roles. It is perhaps the professional purpose and formal clarity of these roles that alleviates the potential effects of CMC anxiety (Flaherty and Pearce, 1998) while also preventing what Suler (2005) refers to as the disinhibition effect of CMC becoming too pronounced. Similarly, the roles may be seen as maintaining the exchange at an interpersonal level, functioning effectively for these purposes between the simply task-oriented procedures of the impersonal and the idealized constructs of the hyperpersonal, as discussed by Turner *et al.* (2001) and McQuillen (2003).

Inevitably, the CD cycle of exploration–discovery–action cannot always be so clearly demonstrated, or experienced, to such satisfactory conclusions as demonstrated here. The collegial use of non-judgemental discourse, whether F2F or computer mediated, cannot itself cause development. Its facilitative power, however, in a context of reflective practice and action research, is considerable. As such, it adds an attractive extension to our repertoire of professional development possibilities and the

CMCD variants presented here make those possibilities even more available.

As things stand, therefore, we celebrate the complementary distribution of CD made available by CMC. The future invites more detailed investigation of CMCD, not only in comparison with F2F experience, but also in its own right and as informed by the concepts and methods of CMC more generally.

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