

A Conversation Analytic Approach to Instant Messaging Service Encounters of a Nairobiian Tattoo-Artist [1]

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Abstract

This paper presents a case-study of Instant Messaging (IM) service inquiry and price negotiation encounters of a Nairobiian tattoo artist. By concluding politeness strategies and particular turn-organisation practices within these encounters, this study provides new insights to the sociolinguistic field of politeness as to conversation analysis computer-mediated communication (CMC). How do both artist and customers guarantee politeness? The most influential, but also widely criticized model of Brown & Levinson (1987) will likewise function as basis for the analysis as the new-wave politeness approach (summarized and enhanced by Kádár & Haugh 2013). Pictures as stimuli of sequences and the occurrences and consequences of overlap indicate turn-organisation. Finally, alternatives to the expression of multimodality (i.e. nonverbal behaviour and emotions) as a means of negotiation are illustrated.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz präsentiert eine Instant Messaging (IM) Studie zu Dienstleistungsanfragen und Preisverhandlungen eines in Nairobi ansässigen Tattoo-Künstlers. Mit Blick auf Höflichkeitsstrategien und spezifischen Abfolgen von Sprecherwechseln (turn-taking) in diesen Begegnungen bietet diese Studie neue Einblicke in das soziolinguistische Feld von Höflichkeit im Kontext einer Konversationsanalyse in computervermittelter Kommunikation (CMC). Auf welche Weise wahren Künstler und Kunden Höflichkeit? Das einflussreichste, wenn auch weithin kritisierte Modell von Brown & Levinson (1987), dient hierbei als Basis der Analyse einer "new-wave politeness" (zusammengefasst und weiterentwickelt von Kádár & Haugh 2013). Sprecherwechsel werden durch Fotos als Auslöser für eine Sequenz und auch Auftreten und Konsequenzen von Überlappungen angezeigt. Letztendlich werden alternative Ausdrucksformen von Multimodalität (d.h. nonverbales Verhalten und Emotionen) als Verhandlungsformen dargestellt.

1. Introduction

<1> The tattoo as a medium of expressing art and personal preferences has become an "accessory" that many East Africans seek for these days. A Kenyan tattoo artist, who offers tattoos to clients in several East-African countries, receives most of his inquiries via Whatsapp and Facebook. [2] Most of the inquiries include pictures of the tattoo design wanted, so that the artist can easily project the price, duration and modification of the tattoo, if necessary. Due to the areal width of services in four East African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda) the medium of communication is mainly English, in some cases customers approach the artist in Swahili, the East African lingua franca, or Sheng, the Nairobiian/Kenyan youth language, based on Swahili.

Throughout these computer-mediated price discussions, the customers as well as the artist follow particular strategies to maintain politeness, using ways which are also common in face-to-face conversations, but also patterns which are adapted to the relatively new medium of interaction are applied, yet, the frequent use of these patterns by interactants suggests they are already conventionalised. This paper aims to present these strategies, and it will elucidate how the notion of politeness is not only changing, but also developing throughout conversations. In addition to that, it will be discussed how price negotiations can change the common turn-structure by the reduction of overlaps compared to other discussions about topics such as the tattoo design or appointments.

2. Politeness

<2> Whilst many studies have focused on politeness in ordinary speech, much less have dealt with politeness in CMC so far. Existing studies typically relate to Brown & Levinson's (1987/1978) framework of face-strategies (Locher 2010). Among them, Jansen & Janssen (2010) examine how the use of positive politeness strategies influences Dutch letters denying claims to policy holders and Morand & Ocker (2002) exemplify how the analysis of face strategies can give an indication of emotion-work and relational ties in CMC. Hampel (2015) studies the use of politeness in CMC with reference to gender in the Ghanaian context and Park (2008) describes how students do face-work in a real-time online discussion forum. This paper likewise addresses the use of positive and negative face-strategies in order to constitute politeness during communication of the artist and his customers. More recently, Félix-Brasdefer (2015) studied service encounters as social actions, in various settings, among them cross-cultural and intercultural contexts, using a pragmatic-discursive approach. Similar to his study, applicable sketches of theoretical politeness concepts of the new-wave politeness studies emerging since the year 2000 will be indicated and constantly seized upon in the course of the paper. In order to do so, Kádár and Haugh's (2013) *Understanding Politeness* serves as a basis.

3. Face-strategies

<3> On the basis of Brown & Levinson's (1987) *Politeness. Some universals in language usage*, various face-strategies applied can be found within the 236 screenshots taken from Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger conversations of the tattoo artist. The artist himself as well as his customers use these strategies to maintain politeness within price negotiations and tattoo-design discussions. A list of distinct strategies used by both parties are presented in Table 1. The artist as well as the customers use mainly positive politeness strategies of the categories "common ground", "cooperation" and "fulfill wants". Referring to negative politeness strategies, the only practice both parties apply in their conversation is "be direct".

Table 1. Table 1: Most common face-strategy examples in the analysed IM-screenshots

Strategy	Artist	Customer
Claim common ground	Attend to H's interests, use in-group identity markers, seek agreement, joke, ...	Use in-group identity markers, exaggerate interest, ...
Convey that S and H are cooperators	Give reasons, be optimistic, assert knowledge of H's wants, suggestions, advices, offers...	Give reasons, ask for reasons, be optimistic...
Fulfill H's wants	Give understanding to H	
Do FTA (on record)	Be direct, state FTA as general rule	Be direct

The artist is the one who also sometimes uses the "no impinge on the other's wants" strategy, especially when he apologizes or presents his reason for his decision as a general rule. As a task-oriented service provider, it does not surprise that he makes use of these strategies more often than the customers. Nevertheless, compared to other (i.e. positive) politeness strategies, those are utilized infrequently and therefore not represented in Table 1.

Among the strategy of claiming a "common ground" the addressing of the other ones as *bro*, done by artist and customers equally, as well as the reference to family and friend relation by customers are the most frequent strategies used. In example (1) [3], artist and customer call each other *bro* and *bruh* 'brother' respectively, indicating social contiguousness.

(1) (...)

C 1 [PICTUREMAORI-TRIBBLE] 14.31

A That's possible 14.37

That's possible.

C 1 That's from upper forearm to lower biceps...,how much will that cost me? 14.42

That's from upper forearm to lower biceps. How much will that cost me?'

A That will be 375 USD 14.46

That will be 375 USD'

C 1 Wow bruh that's a bit on the higher side.. 14.49

Wow, brother, that's a bit expensive.

(...)

	C ₁	<i>So what would be the cheapest price I would get it for?</i>	16.44
		'So what would be the cheapest price I could get it for?'	
	A	<i>375usd bro that's too big</i>	20.21
		'375 USD, brother, this one is too big.'	
		(...)	
(2)		(...)	
	C ₂	[PICTURE _{LION}]	13.53
	C ₂	<i>How much this lion</i>	14.02
		'How much does this lion go for?'	
	A	<i>That was..230usd</i>	14.30
		'That one was 230 USD.'	
	C ₂	<i>Its too much</i>	15.57
		'That is too much!'	
	C ₂	<i>Bro</i>	15.57
		'Brother.'	
	A	<i>I pay tax brother..in all countries..am a registered company and that was in Kigali,Rwanda</i>	16.20
		'I pay tax, brother, in all countries... I have a registered company and that was in Kigali, Rwanda.'	
		(...)	
	C ₂	<i>Can u make it 50\$</i>	16.39
		'Can you make it 50 USD?'	
		(...)	
	A	<i>sorry 50usd???</i>	18.14
		'Sorry, (are you suggesting) 50 USD??'	
	C ₂	<i>Ya</i>	18.17
		'Yes!'	

C 2 50 usd pls

18.17

'50 USD, please.'

A Really boss...nope i cant im sorry...

18.21

'Really boss? No, I can't, I am sorry...'

(...)

- <4> In example (2), the customer refers to the artist as *Bro*, to indicate familiarity and social equality. The artist, on the other hand, who cannot agree to the customer's price expectations, first also calls him *brother* and later *boss*, a term that is wide-spread in East-Africa to address mainly foreigners – seldom acquaintances –, occurring frequently in contexts of complaint or (negative) surprise to preserve respect. By using the term *boss*, the artist is creating a greater social distance between them than there actually is. [4] This way, the artist upgrades his customer in social hierarchy when rejecting his request in order to mitigate the face-threat caused by a reject. In addition, he adjusts the expression of politeness due to the development of the conversation and the fact that he starts to lose patience by changing the addressing.

4. New-wave politeness

- <5> As a result of various criticisms about politeness theories since the Brown & Levinson model that emerged in the late 1970s, from the year 2000 new approaches to the study of politeness have been made, which can be labelled as "new-wave" of politeness theory (Eelen 2001, Kádár & Haugh 2013). Among the main criticisms of the most influential first-wave framework of Brown & Levinson are the universality that the authors ascribe to their politeness rules, the rational choice assigned to speakers to predict face-wants, and indirectness designated as universal indicator for politeness, a claim that doesn't hold for many languages, also the mother tongue of the Nairobiian tattoo artist: Kenyan Swahili (ibid.). In addition to that, the data collection method of eliciting data rather than natural speech documentation is criticized as well.

According to these and more criticisms, new-politeness approaches focus on aspects of examination that can be applied universally, but still allow for individual results, depending on culture, society, language, etc. Among the aspects considered are first-order and second-order politeness, the importance of time as a parameter for politeness development, the manifestation of politeness as social practice, and the continuous possibility to evaluate an utterance or action as being polite or impolite as it is reflected in a consecutive conversation (Kádár & Haugh 2013).

- <6> First, the differentiation of a first-order and second-order politeness analysis as one of the first criticisms deals with the ignorance of a more emic perspective on politeness research. As its resolution, scholars presented the suggestion for a "first-order", i.e. a common-sense notion of politeness, and a "second-order politeness", denoting the theoretical construct of analysis (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992). Later this suggestion was enhanced by a call for a further acknowledgement of "politeness in practice", i.e. what speakers really do, compared to what the common sense is (Eelen 2001), and even a "third order of politeness", embracing moral as a feature of analysis (Kádár & Haugh 2013).

Secondly, time as an important variable is taken into account for the analysis of politeness (ibid.). Therefore, Kádár & Haugh state, "incrementality" and "sequentiality" need to be taken into account for the analysis of how politeness is understood by both parties, the speaker as well as the listener:

Incrementality refers to the way in which speakers adjust or modify their talk in the light of how the progressive uttering of units of talk is received by other participants. In other words, the fact that social actions and meanings are produced incrementally in interaction means they are inevitably subject to ongoing evaluation as they are produced, and so can be adjusted accordingly in real time. *Sequentiality*, on the other hand, refers to the way in which current turns or utterances are always understood relative to prior and subsequent talk, particularly talk that is contiguous (i.e. immediately prior to or subsequent to the current utterance). This means that next turns are a critical resource for participants in reaching understandings of the evaluations of others, including understandings of other's understandings of one's own evaluations (ibid. 112, original emphasis).

- <7> Generally, the adjustability of current turns and the adduction of prior turns are inevitable due to not only understanding politeness as it is evaluated by speakers, but also to back-trace its emergence.

Third, politeness is established as a social practice, based on "evaluations which are occasioned by social actions and meanings" as well as "implicit appeals to the moral order" (ibid. 73). This inter-relation is illustrated by Figure 1 below:

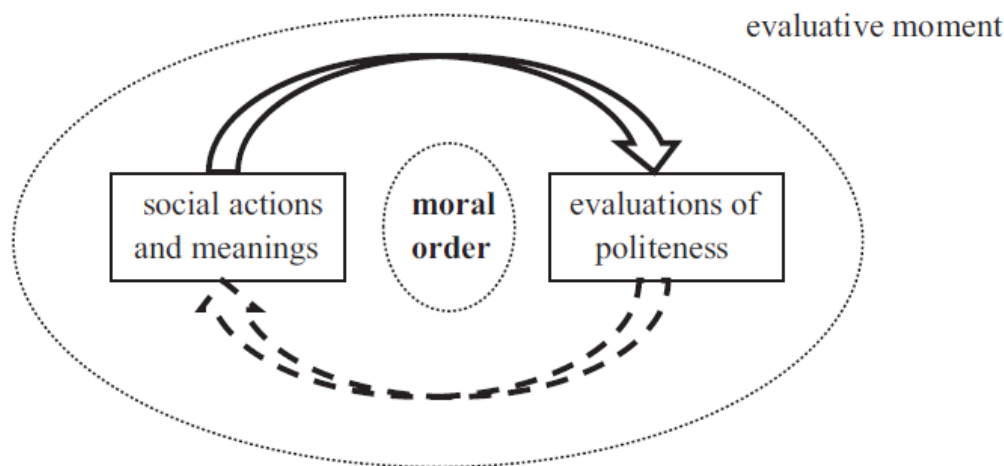


Figure 1: Politeness as social practice (taken from Kádár & Haugh 2013:73)

<8> As a social practice, an utterance is very likely to evolve as “conventionally polite” (ibid. 141) if it is commonly accepted as such. This will be a major point in the course of this paper: It is a trait relevant to the messages of the tattoo artist in Nairobi, which reveal behaviours that may not be acceptable in face-to-face interaction, but are conventionally recognized as acceptable within CMC and hence not evaluated as impolite. Among them are overlaps and the substitution of written requests with pictures, as described in the next chapter. [5]

5. Turn-structure

<9> The turn-structure of CMC clearly depends on the type of mediated communication, as well as the number of speakers and speed in which messages are intermediated. In this aspect, CMC does not vary tremendously from ordinary speech. To understand the turn-structure of a particular mediated communication, one has to understand the underlying structure of the medium. In general, CMC is divided into and characterised by three main categories: synchronicity and asynchronicity of interaction, number of speakers, and way of message transmission. Synchronicity describes if the talk in CMC is simultaneous or not. Conversations are either constructed one-to-one, i.e. one interactant writes to another one, or many-to-many, i.e. more speakers than two talking via a media-device at the same time. Finally, the messages are either created first and then sent (one-way messaging) or created and transmitted simultaneously (Anderson et al. 2010). Baron (2010:2), on the other hand, who refers to IM as “synchronous” communication, considers another basic set-up of parameters to describe CMC, which she displays in a table (Table 2):

Table 2. Table 2: Types of computer-mediated communication (taken from Baron 2010:2)

	Synchronous	Asynchronous
one-to-one	instant messaging (IM)	email, texting on mobile phones
many-to-many	chat, computer conferencing	bulletin boards, listservs, blogs, social networking sites

<10> This study follows Baron’s categorization of IM as synchronous one-to-one communication. Most authors seem to follow Garcia & Jacobs’ (1999:339) “quasi-synchronous”-term (Anderson et al. 2010 [6], Schönfeldt & Golato 2003). However, the argumentation of this paper is that IM is synchronous as it allows for overlaps, which arise if more than one speaker *speaks* at the same time (Levinson 1983, Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1974, Schegloff 2002). Mapped on CMC, more specifically IM, in this paper it is considered that overlaps emerge as soon as two speakers *write* a message at the same time. These overlapping messages are especially motivated and substantiated by “utterance breaks” (Baron 2010), where the whole message is divided into several parts.

6. Timing: Overlaps

<11> As short overlaps in face-to-face interaction are a common phenomenon, they don’t pose a problem for the flow of a conversation as long as they are not too long. However, if overlaps are incisive and understanding is constrained, the situation demands for a resolution (Schegloff 2000, Hayashi 2013). In general, very long overlaps provide an exception but rule, since face-to-face communication tends to function on the basis of a “key design feature for turn-taking [which] is an orientation to one party speaking at a time” (Schegloff 2002:290) and through which conversation is able to flow in an unimpaired way (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). Whereas in asynchronous communication overlaps are hardly occurring (e.g. emails), they are very commonly happening in what Garcia & Jacobs (1999:339) call “quasi-synchronous” mediated communication, like in chats or IM (Anderson et al. 2010, Herring 1999, Schönfeldt & Golato 2003).

Baron (2010:3) calls attention to the attempt of authors to draw generalized conclusions “across different genres of CMC (e.g., email, chat,

web pages), while usage patterns across genres may show considerable disparity". In the context of the current study, overlaps are analysed, although various authors claim that overlaps are "impossible" (Garcia & Jacobs 1999:346), or "problematic" (Herring 1999:2) in IM, or that "chats do not – in fact, cannot – exhibit overlaps" (Schönfeld & Golato 2003:248). Besides it is claimed that they are more of a sign of impatience, or "overlaps of exchange" in multi-participants chats (Herring 1999:2-3). Yet, considering the turn-structure of messages sent in IM, messages that overlap, i.e. the ones that are written and sent at the same time and therefore change the orderly turn structure, do occur very often. They are not always a matter of impatience of the sender who does not receive a reply to a message that was sent, they occur unconsciously as well, by incidence, as they do in face-to-face interaction. In addition to that, overlaps themselves are also means to regain the turn order that they confound, as will be shown below (example 3, Figure 2).

<12> Compared to ordinary conversations, in which "no gap, no overlap" is the best method sought by interlocutors, in two-way messaging participants tend to cause a lot of overlaps, the results of which they try to decode by using long pauses afterwards (Anderson et al.2010). The findings in this study on IM discussions in the Whatsapp and Facebook messengers, however, are twofold: While there are frequently occurring overlaps during introduction sequences, including greetings and friendly catch-ups of news, as well as in discussions about the tattoo-design and the planning of the appointment for the customer (3), there are no overlaps in any of the price negotiations (examples 4 and 5).

(3)	C 3	Hi																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																		
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C 3	<i>mkono</i>	13.29
	Cl.3.hand	
	‘On the hand.’	
A	<i>Names only</i>	13.29
	‘Only names?’	
C 3	<i>Today at 4</i>	13.29
	‘Today at 4 p.m.’	
C 3	<i>hehehe yes. I don’t want more pain</i>	13.29
	‘Hehehe, yes. I don’t want more pain.’	
C 3	<i>with a Lil colouring on it</i>	13.30
	‘With a little bit of colour in it.’	
A	<i>Gai 4.. Come 3:15 coz 4:30 am packing</i>	
	uff	
	<i>to go to oasis mlimani for analready booked session..</i>	13.30
	name	
	‘Uff, at 4 p.m... Come at 3.15 p.m. because at 4.30 p.m. I will pack to go to Oasis Milimani for another session that is already booked.’	
A	<i>Hmmmm little color.,</i>	13.31
	‘Hmm, a little colour...’	
C 3	<i>At baby daddy’s place? pia in milimani</i>	13.31
	also NAME	
	‘How about my boyfriend’s/husband’s place then?’ (lit. ‘At baby daddy’s place?’) It is also in Milimani.	
C 3	<i>Grace Ogot.</i>	13.31
	NAME	
	‘Grace Ogot.’	

'Yes, colour.'

(...)

- <13> As a matter of principle for this study and its synchronous means of communication – Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger – results differ from what has been found for talk-in-interaction and two-way messaging. On the one hand, in ordinary speech, a common expectation of “no gap, no overlap” is prevalent, in the course of two-way messaging, on the other hand, overlaps occur abundantly and afterwards lead to long gaps in order to comprehend the discontinuity. In the data of this study, overlaps and, as a result, violation of orderly turn alternation, exist, yet they are not resolved by any gaps of decoding. This may be due to the fact that the conversations are dyadic and the interlocutors are able to simultaneously read, order and comprehend the messages when they have been sent, while they are already projecting to compose a reply: Thus, the overlap in dyadic, synchronous chats is mostly non-problematic for the speakers. Its resolution is following the structure of the overlap, wherein more overlaps possibly occur. Yet, this particular structure is not seen as an interruption-problem in the sense of Schegloff (2002), i.e. the evaluation of the overlaps is not negative, therefore not leading to complaints, but rather neutral according to the conventions this turn-organization follows. Subsequently, “Extended overlap competition”, as it is already substandard in face-to-face interaction, is a less significant characteristic of IM. The extended overlap occurring is rather a conventional, structural way to avoid misunderstandings caused by the same than a competitive struggle to gain the floor.

Also in face-to-face interactions, there are various types of possible overlaps, of which most are non-problematic to speakers in conversation: terminal overlaps, continuers, a “conditional access to the turn”, as word search or the collaborative construction of an utterance by speakers, respectively, and so-called “chordal talk”, like laughter, congratulations, collective greetings, etc. (Schegloff 2000). According to that, the resolution of overlap in CMC is distinctive. Whilst in face-to-face communication overlap is in most cases resolved within the passing of one or two beats or through competitive action like louder voice (Schegloff 2000) in CMC, if necessary, strategies assimilated to the technical context need to be applied.

- <14> Sometimes overlaps affect the whole conversation, as in example (3) above. Even so, they do not provide a problem of understanding and don't lead to a negative evaluation which, in turn, would influence the perception of politeness among speakers. The overlaps are resolved with a practice of sticking to the time-order of how the messages that overlap were sent. That leads to a construction of talk which seems to be unordered in terms of the organization of adjacency pairs. Nevertheless, this resolution follows the time-alignment of the single messages, but also, on the other hand, ignores the time-bond that the messages were supposed to follow initially. This way, it concedes spontaneity and flexibility for the two interactants' reactions, and moreover, it creates the possibility for them to comprehend the initial order and respond adequately. Figure 2 unveils the structure of the overlapped messages:

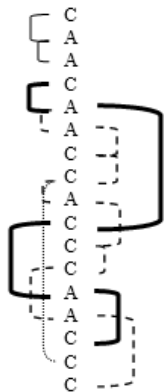


Figure 2: Overlap and 'Topic-Schisming'

- <15> As Figure 2 shows that the speakers' overlaps are resolved in a time-aligned manner. The left side depicts the reaction of the artist to the customer's comment (A to C), whereas the right side of the graph shows in which order the customer reacts to the artist's turns (C to A). Moreover, Figure 2 reveals a structure that is barely recognizable from the conversation itself: The overlaps are caused by two main topic-streams alongside the conversation: Appointment (bold line) and tattoo design (dotted line). After the greeting, the conversation splits up in two topics that are discussed by the participants at the same time. One can refer to this as “topic-schisming”: two topics split up and both are followed throughout the conversation, until the conversation is over or the two speakers merge their talk to one topic again. In face-to-face interaction, the term “schisming” (Sacks et al. 1974) usually refers to an incident in groups of speakers with more than three interactants, in which at least two speakers' talk splits up from the common conversation, so that basically two conversations are taking part at the same time until they merge to one again. Egbert (1997) examines the schisming phenomenon and give a structural explanation about the initiation of schisming in ordinary conversations:

...all SITs [i.e. Schisming-Inducing Turns] open a new sequence; they are first pair parts of adjacency pairs. The second feature is that SITs are positioned where the ongoing sequence has not come to sequential completion. In terms of turn-taking, the SIT is regularly launched at a place that does not technically interrupt the prior talk. The launching of the SIT is systematic in terms of the current speaker's actions and the actions of the schisming inducer. The speaker of the turn preceding the SIT does not seem to hear the SIT as rivaling for the floor because the launching of the SIT does not engender competitive overlap (Egbert 1997:23).

<16> Generally, the explanation above applies to the CMC-messages studied in this paper, too. The SIT is a FPP of an adjacency pair, and it does not interrupt the sequence priorly started in that is does not disturb the flow of the second conversation-line. Since the SIT is initiated by the same speaker that also initiated the “main” conversation line (bold), the artist, one cannot speak of “competitive overlap” either. In fact, the overlap that splits up the conversation into to topics is resolved by the strategic following of the overlaps on the time-line.

Therefore, the overlap is caused by the „topic-schisming“ and at the same time resolved by it, as it offers two distinct conversation-lines which are based on two inherently different semantic structures that allow the speakers to coordinate their talk without problems while overlapping and keeping the schisming existent. Hence, the overlap resolves itself.

In comparison to the examples of design inquiries and tattoo discussions above, overlaps do not exist in any of the examples of price discussions below (examples 4 and 5).

(4)	(...)	
C ₄	<i>Behind my ear</i>	19.15
	'Behind my ear.'	
C ₄	<i>Not big</i>	19.15
	'Not big,...'	
A	<i>Awesome</i>	19.16
	'Awesome!'	
C ₄	<i>Around 7cm</i>	19.17
	'...around 7cm...'	
C ₄	<i>For the first tattoo idea</i>	19.17
	'...for the first tattoo idea.'	
C ₄	<i>And for my one small like 3cm</i>	19.17
	'And for my one small like 3cm.'	
A	<i>That will be 80,000/= ans yours 55,000/=</i>	19.20
	'That will be 80.000 Ugandan Shillings and yours 55.000.'	
	(...)	

In this example, during the description of the tattoo-wish, the artist expresses his happiness about the tattoo design and placing by writing *awesome* within the conversation. When he is telling the price, he takes three minutes time before he presents his offer. A similar structure can be found in the next example:

(5)	(...)		
C 5	<i>I wanted to know when you will be in Dar and how much you charge for eyebrow tattoo</i>		09.30
	'I wanted to know when you will be in Dar es Salaam and how much you charge for an eyebrow tattoo?'		
A	<i>Eyebrow tattoos is 60usd</i>		09.35
	'Eyebrow tattoos are 60 USD'		
C 5	<i>And when do you plan to be in Dar?</i>		09.36
	'And when do you plan to be in Dar es Salaam?'		
A	<i>On 25th</i>		09.36
	'On 25 th .'		
	(...)		

<17> Whilst the single turns reveal a close temporal proximity of a minute or less when the topic is another one than the price of the tattoo (like the description of the tattoo and its placing in example 4, and the inquiry of the artist's arrival in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in example 5), the margin in between the message inquiring the price and the reply of the artist stating the price exhibits a detachment of several minutes in both cases. The same applies to the direct reaction of the customer to a price, especially when it turns out to be higher than expected, as can be seen in example (6) and when the customer tries to negotiate (7): Both parties take their time to respond.

(6)	(...)		
C 1	[PICTURE _{MAORI-TRIBLE}]		14.31
A	<i>That's possible</i>		14.37
	'That's possible.'		
C 1	<i>That's from upper forearm to lower biceps...,how much will that cost me?</i>		14.42
	'That's from upper forearm to lower biceps. How much will that cost me?'		

A	<i>That will be 375 USD</i>	14.46
	'That will be 375 USD'	
C ₁	<i>Wow bruh that's a bit on the higher side..</i>	14.49
	'Wow, brother, that's a bit expensive.'	
	(...)	
C ₁	<i>So what would be the cheapest price I would get it for?</i>	16.44
	'So what would be the cheapest price I could get it for?'	
A	<i>375usd bro that's too big</i>	20.21
	'375 USD, brother, this one is too big.'	
	(...)	
(7)	(...)	
C ₂	[PICTURE _{LION}]	13.53
C ₂	<i>How much this lion</i>	14.02
	'How much does this lion go for?'	
A	<i>That was..230usd</i>	14.30
	'That one was 230 USD.'	
C ₂	<i>Its too much</i>	15.57
	'That is too much!'	
C ₂	<i>Bro</i>	15.57

'Brother.'

A *I pay tax brother..in all countries..am a registered company and that was in Kigali,Rwanda* 16.20

'I pay tax, brother, in all countries... I have a registered company and that was in Kigali, Rwanda.'

(...)

C 2 *Can u make it 50\$* 16.39

'Can you make it 50 USD?'

(...)

A *sorry 50usd???* 18.14

'Sorry, (are you suggesting) 50 USD??'

C 2 *Ya* 18.17

'Yes!'

C 2 *50 usd pls* 18.17

'50 USD, please.'

A *Really boss..nope i cant im sorry...* 18.21

'Really boss? No, I can't, I am sorry...'

(...)

<18> One can argue that there is only one topic to be conversed, and that both participants are thinking about what to say next as well as that the artist is first considering size, detail and colour of the tattoo desired before stating a price. Both argumentations are sure part of the turn-construction in price negotiations. However, the artist knows his price very well and in face-to-face interaction a reaction of the customer to the price is also revealed fast. The control of emotions may be better under control when using CMC, though, creating a gap without reaction that hardly exists in face-to-face price negotiations. In addition to this, another answer for this phenomenon could possibly be found in another contextual area often negotiated in CMC described by Tannen (2013): romantic interest. As commonly assumed and paradigmatically indicated by Tannen (2013:111), "a speedy reply indicates enthusiasm, and [...] when it comes to the delicate negotiations of romantic interest, too much enthusiasm equates with desperation." Expectedly, if price discussions are also interpreted as "delicate negotiations", the exhibition of similar practices of gapping in turn-taking are reasonable. One can therefore summarize that the more "trivial" the topic discussed is (appointment, design), the more overlaps occur, and the more "delicate" the topic is, the more gaps emerge in turn-structure. Yet, none of both is evaluated in a negative way by any of the interactants and is, as a result, not referred to as impoliteness throughout the conversation.

7. Initiating sequences: The role of pictures

<19> In face-to-face interaction, conversations are organized by an inherent ability of speakers to unconsciously perceive and follow the turn- and sequence-structure exhibited by the interlocutors' talk. A sequence is a closed set of turns through which actions are accomplished. The most common and at the same time the most basic type of sequence is the adjacency pair, which is deployed by two parts, first pair part and second pair part, where the second pair part is uttered by another person than the first pair part, and, therefore, functions as a reaction to the latter. Particular examples for adjacency pairs are greetings, complaints, invitations, farewells and requests. The latter are a frequent characteristic of the Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger inquiries that the artist receives. Customers request for appointments, for a certain tattoo-style, for the modification of an individual tattoo by the artist. Like other types of sequences, requests can either be minimal, i.e. consisting of one FPP and one SPP which follow each other immediately, or they can be extended by pre-, post- or insert expansion, respectively. Schegloff (2007:28, original emphasis) defines pre-sequences as follows:

They are themselves *sequences*, and they come *before* sequences – they are recognizably “*pre-*,” that is, preliminary to something else. Often the “something else” they are preliminary to is quite specific: it is a first pair part of a particular pair type – an invitation, an offer, a request, an announcement.

<20> In the messages of the tattoo artist, a particular type of pre-request formation happens frequently: the use of pictures. Through a picture of the tattoo they want, or a photo of the tattoo they want covered with another one, customers can most easily and most efficiently tell the artist what they imagine their future tattoo to look like, even before they tell him what they want and inquire the cost, and hence the artist can simply project a price offer according to the picture and the up-following request.

(8)

C ₆ *Hi* 11.11

'Hi!'

A *Hello* 12.18

'Hello!'

C ₆ *Bro* 12.31

'Brother!'

C ₆ *How you* 12.31

'How are you?'

C ₆ 12.38



C ₆ *I want to cover it* 12.48

'I would like to cover this one.'

(...)

<21> In example (8), the customer first starts a greeting, which is replied to by the artist with a preferred SPP. After asking for the state of health of the artist, to which the latter does not immediately respond, the customer discontinues the second adjacency pair seven minutes later to send a picture of the current tattoo on his arm. He leaves it uncommented for another 10 minutes until he states "I want to cover it". In this case the picture is used as a type of FPP of a pre-request. When the artist does not react straight away, the customer adds his request, without the SPP to the pre-request being given.

In Schegloff's (2007:29) definition, it is relevant that the pre-sequence functions as FPP of an adjacency pair, however:

The initial turn of a pre-sequence (like a pre-invitation) does two things: it projects the contingent possibility that a base FPP (e.g., an invitation) will be produced; and it makes relevant next the production of a second pair part, namely a response to the pre-invitation. And it is on this response that the projected occurrence of the base first pair part (e.g., the invitation) is made contingent. Some responses to the presequence FPP (e.g., the pre-invitation) lead to the production of a base FPP (e.g., an invitation) and some do not.

Considering Schegloff's definition, the picture as used above does not function as pre-request as such, but rather seems to be explanative support to the request following. Example (9) encourages this assumption: After sending a picture with a sample tattoo, the customer sends an imminent request for the price-offer. This way, there was not even given room to create a SPP, since there was no time for the artist to reply to the picture.

(9)

C 7



19.42

C 7

How much to do this one?

19.42

'How much does it cost to get this one?'

A

3000/=

20.58

'3.000 Kenyan Shillings.'

Further, instead of describing what kind of tattoo a customer would like to get or of writing the words down and mentioning the size, the picture depicts the wish of the customer in combination with the request.

<22> In other instances, though, the customer relinquishes to write any request down and just send the picture itself to make a request. In example (10) customer and artist had talked on the phone about the wish to cover an existing tattoo up, before the customer sent the picture to depict her oral explanations on the phone, whereas in example (11) the conversation starts with a picture. The picture is consciously intended as request, as there is no other written request or inquiry following within the next six minutes until the artist replies.

(10)

C 8

12.03

A *Its possible to modify it to a 3D tatt*

12.11

'It is possible to modify this one to be a 3D-tattoo.'

A *That will cost 3700/=*

12.11

'That will cost 3.700 Kenyan Shillings.'

C 8 *Ok*

12.13

'Okay.'

(...)

(11)

C₁

14.31

A *That's possible*

14.37

'That's possible.'

C₁ *That's from upper forearm to lower biceps...how much will that cost me?*

14.42

'That's from upper forearm to lower biceps. How much will that cost me?'

- <23> Through the lack of explicitness, however, the artist does not react the way the customer expected. Instead of giving a price-offer to the customer, the artist tells him "That's possible", so that the customer again has to specify his wish in a written description of the size and question about the cost. Yet, the long time-gap in between the post of the customer's picture with the design and the first reply of the artist leads to the assumption that the customer indeed intended to use the picture as means to exhibit an inquiry, and hence, a request for the particular tattoo displayed in the picture.

8. Ending sequences: Expressing disagreement through silence

- <24> Additionally to the widespread known acceptance informality in social media and many types of mediated communication, according to Kádár and Haugh (2013) politeness must always be understood as a continuous construct from prior interaction, i.e. it does not occur as an instance created at one point on a timeline, but it develops and evolves within continuation of conversations. This construct allows for an evaluational reference back in time, based on schemata that can be used as a foundation for the understanding of politeness in the current moment of communication:

In many settings, perhaps most typically formal or institutionalised ones, understandings of politeness are arguably less localised in the here-and-now given the interactants are expected to follow certain 'scripted' expectations. In such contexts politeness tends to follow certain underlying **schemata**: pre-existing patterns of thought or behaviour used in recurrent ways that are readily recognisable to members. These schemata reduce uncertainty in the formation and interpretation of linguistic politeness for the simple reason that by relying on them the interactants can follow pre-existing ways of understanding politeness. It can be argued that, if localised understandings of politeness arise in the here-and-now of time, such schemata represent a pre-existing frame for understanding politeness in the here-and-now. (ibid. 137, original emphasis)

Considering a conventionalized frame of politeness-understanding also existing in CMC, the lack of greeting as well as of an explicit description of the customer's wishes and request is not evaluated negatively in the context of the artist's computer-mediated messages. Both parties see it as an accepted and simple way to introduce the topic of the upcoming conversation with a stand-alone picture, either for the clients to show what they would like to get (11), or what they would like to cover up (10).

9. Multimodality

- <25> Although formerly downgraded as minor part of speech, nonverbal parameters of talk are now seen as integrated and indispensable part of talk-in-interaction. As one of the first in the field McNeill (1992:1) stated that "there is no separate 'gesture language' alongside of spoken language", and not only gestures, but gaze and body posture as well, and also metalinguistics such as laughter, coughing, silence, and others are inherent to interaction and must inevitably be studied and analysed in terms to understand how human interaction works.

In face-to-face interaction, the multimodality of talk can easily be examined as it provides an openly displayed, inherent feature of ordinary

conversation, but how are these features deployed in CMC? “It is worth noting that both prosody and non-verbal modes of interaction are not restricted to direct (i.e. face-to-face) interaction” (Kádár & Haugh 2013:133). Emoticons are one way to depict facial expression and mirror it onto CMC, like in IM, to display emotions or other metalinguistic features such as laughter. They are not only described an emotive function, though, but also a humour and discourse function (Darics 2010) and are going to be examined for the tattoo artist’s messages with his customers in this chapter.

10. The use of emoticons

- <26>

The use of emoticons functions to be a means of socio-emotional but also pragmatic supplementation of computer-mediated communication. Although many authors state that emoticons are basically used to “add a paralinguistic component to the message”, which is based on the facial expression that they represent (Dereks et al. 2007:843), they seem to fulfill even much more complex tasks within CMC. As Dresner & Herring (2010) suggest, emoticons constitute three main functions: They serve as emotion indicators (as happiness or sadness, mapped onto facial expressions representing each particular emotion), as indicator of non-emotional meanings, and as illocutionary force, as which they “help to convey the speech act performed through the production of the utterance” (ibid. 255). In doing so, emoticons can indicate a joke or mitigate the face-threat of an utterance, e.g. by downgrading a request through a smiley. In this regard, they resemble the usage of some gestures that “function as illocutionary speech acts, making visible the implications of what is being said” (ibid. 260, cf. Kendon 1995). Our account Kádár and Haugh (2013) state that emoticons can provide an influence on understandings of politeness in CMC, just as prosody as well as nonverbal modes constitute critical elements in the understanding of politeness of ordinary conversations. It is important to note, though, that emoticons can indeed “influence understandings of politeness in mediated interaction” (ibid. 133), however, their functions and effect can rarely be mirrored one-to-one to those of face-to-face interaction. Hence, they do not solely function as a substitute for prosodical and nonverbal parameters, but rather as an alternative to them.
- <27>

Hence, emoticons also play an important role in the exposition and evaluation of politeness in CMC (Kádár & Haugh 2013). Studies discovered that interactants who use emoticons are evaluated as kinder, they create “intimacy” (Dereks et al. 2007) and the conversational atmosphere created by them is rated to be “warmer”, since it gives the particular CMC a more “personal note” which stands in contrast to impersonal information sent by an unknown person (Taesler & Janneck 2010), which still constitutes a big part of communication in mediated contexts, e.g. in e-mails or service encounters through various devices. One of the pillars to politeness in CMC provided by emoticons is therefore a socio-emotional context which they help to create (Tossell et al. 2012). Moreover, Jenson (2005, cited from Tossell et al. 2012:659) describes how “electronic message recipients (...) perceive senders of those messages [without established socio-emotional context] as behaving rudely and offensively”. Further the question remains, if emoticons, which are found to depict emotions of the speaker in CMC in a face-mapping way, are possibly produced as unconsciously and uncontrolled as facial expressions are (Dereks et al. 2007), or if they are rather always a conscious intention, as they are being typed (Dresner & Herring 2010). [7]
- <28>

According to the findings above, one would expect that customer as well as artist try to share a more personal ground to maintain politeness and increase social contiguosness throughout discussions and negotiations on Whatsapp or Facebook. Yet, the use of emoticons does not appear as a frequent means of embedding socio-emotional context to the conversations, like the (sometimes pretended) use of emotions (i.e. surprise, shock, sadness, laughter, etc.) is widespread within face-to-face price negotiations. Therefore, emoticons rarely appear within the price negotiations as such. (1) and (2) are typical examples for a price discussion without emoticons. Considering this fact, are there any circumstances in which emoticons are used more frequently? Indeed there are, namely in cases when the customer missed the artist on his tour or when he or she talks about the tattoo done during the after-treatment conversations. How can such a restricted application be explained?

(12)	(...)	
A	Check on instagram	17.57
	‘Check it (the tattoos that I did on tour) on instagram’	
C ₉	I checked	18.09
	‘I checked them.’	
A	U see wat u missed	18.10
	‘You see what you missed!’	

C ₉  18.10

C ₉ *I didnt know you were here* *mzee* 18.10

old man

'I didn't know that you were here, man!'

C ₉ *Ningekuja* 18.10

1SG.COND.INF .come

'I would have come!'

(...)

(13)

C ₁₀ *Yo* *g* 19.12

ADDR

'Hey, man!' (lit. 'Hey, gangster!')

A *Wassup* 19.24

'What's up?'

C ₁₀ *Nigga you still comin* 19.32

ADDR

'Buddy, are you still coming?'

A *I came on 6th and left yesterday night.* 19.40

'I came on 6th and left yesterday night.'

C ₁₀  19.40

C ₁₀ *Noway man* 19.40

'No way, man!'

C 10 *Foreal?* 19.40

'For real?'

A *For real i did...* 19.40

'For real, I did...'

C 10 *Maane i wanted a tattoo* 22.11

'Man, I wanted a tattoo!'

(...)

As Dereks et al. (2007) state, emoticons are more commonly used in social-emotional contexts than in task-oriented ones, which suggests that emoticons can help to develop a more socio-emotional context by filling the nonverbal gap in CMC, but that they cannot force these context patterns into task-oriented communication. In the case of the artist and his customers, this can likely be the reason for the rare use of emoticons during price negotiations: to agree on a price for the work to be done is rather a task-oriented talk, whereas the fact that a customer missed the possibility to get a tattoo done on the artist's tour is rather an emotional disappointment to him or her, which hence is expressed by many customers through the use of emoticons (12 and 13).

11. Nonverbal implications through silence

<29> Customers and artist negotiate about the price of the planned tattoo in a task-oriented context. Emotional characteristics as shock, laughter or sadness are not, as expected, applied by emoticons in discussions to agree on prices in CMC, although they are prevalent to face-to-face negotiations. Considering the fact that the usage of emotions and other nonverbal behaviour in face-to-face price discussions are a widespread tactic, which practices are implemented as substitute throughout price negotiations in CMC instead?

A common strategy is laughter, expressed by *hahaha*, or hesitation signs or ellipsis, respectively, in apologies and justifications like *nope i cant am sorry...* (2) or *I pay tax brother...* (2, cf. Darics 2010) or *Wow bruh that's a bit on the higher side..* in disagreement and directive intent (1, cf. *ibid.*; Ong 2011), both to mitigate the face-threat of the particular utterance. Another, similar strategy is silence.

<30> In the exemplified study, silence is mainly used to express disagreement alongside with disapproval. Instead of expressing these feelings verbally, though, the interactants try to mitigate the face-threats of their following utterance by a preposed silence, or by silence alone, without uttering their opinion verbally. The latter is especially common when customers cannot agree to negotiate on the price they have been told by the artist at all, like in example (14). In this case, they often use a type of "conventionalized silence" to end the conversation without any further notice. This way, face-threats of the rejections of the price offer are eluded.

(14)

C 7 [PICTURE_{WRITING}] 19.42

C 7 *How much to do ths one?* 19.42

'How much does it cost to get this one?'

A 3000/= 20.58

'3.000 Kenyan Shillings.'

When customers disapprove the artist's price offer, but still want to negotiate, they sometimes make use of silence by creating a gap in the conversation. That gap does not only express disagreement, but also either pretends disinterest in order to make the artist make another step into the customer's direction (2), or it reveals the delicacy of the price negotiation as such (see 4 to 6 above), showing that the customer considered an ongoing discussion thoughtfully and therefore showing the seriousness of the customer's approach to the artist.

<31> However, it should be differentiated between eloquent silence, i.e. the silence that speakers make use of intentionally, and stillness without communicative function: "Eloquent silence alone (not stillness, pauses, or silencing) is an active means chosen by the speaker to communicate his or her message" (Ephratt 2008:1913). [8] Yet the communicative function of a gap in conversation sometimes may not be as overt and direct. The gaps in price negotiations do not only function as pause that has as sequential function, but most likely also as silence to indicate the delicacy of negotiation as task-oriented talk on behalf of both conversational participants. Whereas hesitation signs function as means to mitigate face-threat, silence can function as the opposite: an overt, intended, direct threat of face, off the record.

(15) (...)

C ₂ [PICTURE_{LION}] 13.53

C ₂ *How much this lion* 14.02

'How much does this lion go for?'

A *That was..230usd* 14.30

'That one was 230 USD.'

C ₂ *Its too much* 15.57

'That is too much!'

C ₂ *Bro* 15.57

'Brother.'

A *I pay tax brother..in all countries..am a registered company and that was in Kigali, Rwanda* 16.20

'I pay tax, brother, in all countries... I have a registered company and that was in Kigali, Rwanda.'

(...)

C ₂ *Can u make it 50\$* 16.39

'Can you make it 50 USD?'

(...)

A *sorry 50usd???* 18.14

'Sorry, (are you suggesting) 50 USD?'

C 2 *Ya* 18.17

'Yes!'

C 2 *50 usd pls* 18.17

'50 USD, please.'

A *Really boss..nope i cant im sorry...* 18.21

'Really boss? No, I can't, I am sorry...'

C 2 *80\$ DOLLAR PLS* 08.35

'80 USD, please!'

A *Am sorry boss minimum I can go is 210usd* 09.54

'I am sorry, boss, the mimimum that I can do it for is 210 USD.'

<32> As the last example (15) shows, not only the customer takes his time to try arguing for his price expectations again, but also the artist does not respond straight away. Instead, he takes more than one hour to reply to the request, and his rejection is not accompanied by any more hesitation sign as the apology and justification before, although the customer waited a long time to come forward with his request that he put in capital letters for emphasis. This example elaborately depicts how the understanding of politeness develops within the conversation: While the artist first tries to mitigate the face-threat of his rejection of the customer's price request by not only apologizing and upgrading the customer's hierarchy, but also giving a justification that he can't and by nonverbal means as the hesitation signs at the end of the utterance, in the end of the conversation, he reduces the face-threat-mitigating practices to a minimum of an apology combined with the addressing "boss", knowing that their price conception cannot match throughout the negotiation.

12. Conclusion and future perspectives

<33> The form of communication the present paper discussed is characteristic for tattoo artists and the context of price negotiations on the internet and typical for business purposes conducted in CMC. This has been proven by taking a closer look at one Nairobi tattoo artist and his customers who communicate on the IM Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. Various strategies to maintain politeness throughout the price negotiations and tattoo design discussions have been revealed. It also elucidated how politeness is not only based on conventions (like the use of pictures instead of text) developed for and within the medium of instant messengers itself, but also how the emergence of

politeness throughout a whole conversation can change due to incrementality and sequentiality: politeness is constantly re-negotiated by evaluation of prior utterances and re-defined by the adaption of the evaluation results in the current utterance.

In addition to that, this paper studied a part of the turn-organization significant for price negotiations: overlaps and gaps (or “the gap of the overlap”). While overlaps are prevalent within design discussions or planning of appointments, as which they lead to “topic-schmisming”, they are a minor feature of negotiations, presumably due to thorough consideration of the next step in negotiation as well as the perception of the negotiation as such as delicate. Further, the use of a gap as eloquent silence as persuasive device must be considered.

<34> Eventually, the use of emoticons was explained, and a minor preference for the usage was ascertained, which lead to the examination of other strategies such as hesitation signs and eloquent silence. The paper showed how a reduction of the first and an increase of the latter can express a change (and also a decrease) of politeness strategies throughout the conversation that has been influenced by the constant re-evaluation of the notion of politeness during the talk.

In sum, this study provides new insights to the sociolinguistic field of politeness as also to conversation analysis for CMC. Further research has to be done on the role of language choice in multilingual settings as also on regional peculiarities. Minor attention has been paid to the sub-Saharan African region in terms of computer-mediated communication research (apart from Deumert 2014 among others), as well as new-wave politeness analysis. Hence, this paper marks one of the first steps to approach these fields of study in this geographical area.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd Person
ADDR	Addressing
Cl.	Noun Class (plus number)
COND	Conditional
COMP	Copula
FTA	Face-Threatening-Act
H	Hearer
IND	Indicative
INF	Infinitive
LOC	Locative
OBJ	Object
PL	Plural
PROG	Progressive
PRS	Present Tense
S	Speaker
SG	Singular

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[2] The raising of the corpus took place in Kenya in 2015/2016. Additionally, after a total of 10months spent in Kenya, 236 screenshots of 53 computer-mediated conversations have been reviewed and analyzed. These provided a broad overview of various computer-mediated messages on Facebook, Whatsapp and SMS, as well as of face-to-face-interaction strategies, not only for the artist's and his customers' messages, but also in private context. The screenshots were provided by the artist and anonymized by him to guarantee the customers' privacy. For ethical reasons, further indications of the customers' identity – for instance pictures or excerpts of photos that allow an identification for readers familiar with a particular customer – were removed from the corpus by the author.

[3] Examples are presented exactly as in the screenshots, i.e. no changes have been made concerning spelling, punctuation, capitalization, repetition, or language choice. Morpheme analysis is kept as simple as possible, to keep the semblance with the screenshot intact. Shortening of extracts is indicated by ellipsis: (...). Within the examples, A stands for 'artist', following the artist's turn,

and C_N denotes the 'customer', whereby N indicates if the customer of the particular extract is the same as in an example before, or another one, since names are not displayed for ethical reasons. For the same reason, examples including pictures only present such which are not conveying the customer's identity (e.g. through the face). If that was not the case in the original screenshot, pictures may have been modified to conform ethic conventions. In instances where pictures are not of interest for the analysis of the example, they are substituted by [PICTURE_X]. Arrows indicate the particularly analysed parts of each extract, as a result, examples (1) and (2) are repeated in the course of the paper for convenience. The examples are further equipped with time indications to simplify the exemplification of overlapping turns.

[4] In general, the interlocutors in the presented computer-mediated conversations are considered having low social distance as they are mainly of the same age and often turn out to become friends after the business is completed.

[5] Please note that also missing greeting and farewell belong to this group of acceptable conventionalized behaviour. These also occur in the artist's messages; however, due to the limitations of this paper, they are not further investigated in this study.

[6] Anderson et al. (2010:5) use their own terms "non-simultaneity", "near simultaneity" and "high simultaneity", yet the authors are referring to Garcia & Jacob's term, too.

[7] A new monograph by Danesi (to appear) will deal with the role of emoticons and aspects such as semantics, grammar, pragmatics and the spread of emoticons. It may therefore offer new approaches in the study of emoticons as also further functions and context of use for those interested in the topic.

[8] See Ephratt (2008) for a detailed overview of functions of silence.

Lizenz

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