

Prosody of Text Communication: Inducing Synchronization and Coherence in Chat Conversations

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Abstract : In the current study, we examined the consequences of adding prosodic cues to text communication by allowing users to observe the process of message creation while engaged in dyadic conversations. In the first condition, users interacted through a traditional chat that requires pressing 'enter' to make a message visible to an interlocutor. In another, text appeared on the screen simultaneously as the sender was writing it, letter after letter (Synchat condition), so that users could observe the varying rhythm of message production, precise timing of message appearance, typos and their corrections. The results show that the ability to observe the dynamics of message production had a twofold effect on the social interaction process. First, it enhanced the relational aspect of communication - interlocutors synchronized their emotional states during the interaction, their communication included more statements on relationship building, and they evaluated the Synchat medium as more personal and emotionally engaging. Second, it increased the coherence of communication, reflected in greater continuity of the topics raised in Synchat conversations. The results are discussed from the interaction design (IXD) perspective.

Keywords : chat communication, online conversation, prosody, social synchronization, interaction incoherence, relationship building

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