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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Pragmatic Study of Turn Taking and Adjacency Pairs in Online Conversations

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| ABSTRACT
This study tries to investigate one type of synchronous online communication, which is Internet Relay Chat, in terms of conversational analysis, particularly turn-taking and adjacency pairs. Synchronous online communication can be viewed as a novel medium that combines spoken, written and electronic properties. There may be a direct causal link between the lack of coherence in synchronous online communication and its propensity for language play that leads to the conversational analysis of synchronous online communication, which is associated with a reduction of coherence, disruption of turn adjacency and phantom turn adjacency. In synchronous online communication, there is a difficulty in interpreting messages in their sequential context that arises from the fact that turn sequencing is partly user-controlled and partly system-controlled. This leads to disrupted turn-taking and adjacency pairs as other stands of conversation get inserted between their parts.

| KEYWORDS
Conversational Analysis, Turn Taking, Adjacency Pairs, Online Communication, Internet Relay Chat (IRC).

| ARTICLE INFORMATION
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1. Introduction

Nowadays, a large part of everyday interactions takes place online by using the internet. This means that a lot of social interactions take place on the internet; thus, the current study focuses on these interactions by applying the ideas of Conversation Analysis (CA) to describe the sequence organization of turn-taking and adjacency pairs in the interactions that occur among synchronous online users on the Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Herring 1999, cited in (Vandergiff, 2010: 241), says that violations of sequential coherence are the rule rather than the exception in synchronous online communication. Hence, there may be a direct causal link between the lack of coherence in synchronous online communication and its propensity for language play. In addition, Herring argues that online discussion violates conversational maxims. On the one hand, in synchronous online communication, there is difficulty in interpreting messages in their sequential context. This difficulty arises from the fact that turn sequencing is partly user-controlled and partly system-controlled. This leads to disrupted turn adjacency pairs as other stands of conversation get inserted between adjacency pair parts (ibid). On the other hand, Davis and Brewer (1997: 3) argue that electronic discourse or online communication differs from face-to-face communication in turn taking and adjacency pairs. Turn taking, and adjacency pairs are constrained for online communication, both by time and by the computer software or electronic systems, which also delineates boundaries between utterances and archives each written utterance as received. Electronic discourse can alter or rearrange the sequential ordering of conversation's adjacency pairs, which speakers and analysts use to track the sequence of conversational interactions or discern topical or thematic shifts. Crystal (2006) will be adopted as a model in this study. Furthermore, This study focuses on CA to describe the *sequence organization of turn-taking and adjacency pairs* in one type of synchronous online communication, "Internet Relay Chat". The size of the data is limited (10) screenshots, and this paper addresses the following research questions:

● Are turn-taking and adjacency pairs structures organized in an identifiable way or not in online synchronous discussions?

● Is the sequence organization in synchronous online communication discussions violated in terms of turn-taking and adjacency pairs? and are they different from face-to-face conversations?

2. Conversational Analysis

Conversational analytic studies have shown that in turns at talk do not casually follow one after the other, but they are organized in a structure. Liddicoat (2011) states that turns at talk are "clustered together," ordered in a meaningful way in what is called "sequence organization". The idea of sequence organization depends on a fundamental principle of spoken conversation, which is that when a speaker utters a sentence, he/she performs an action which generates another action, which in turn makes another action relevant, and so on. This means that by analyzing the actions performed by speakers in a conversation, it is possible to understand how an interaction is organized; for example, a request is generally followed by an acceptance or a decline, a question by an answer, a greeting by another greeting, and so on. This means that turns at talk are commonly organized in pairs, where the action performed by the first part of the pair makes the action accomplished in the second part of the pair the relevant next. Thus, the concept of *sequence organization* has been introduced by Sacks et al. (1974) to describe what normally happens in spoken conversation, in that turns at talk are organized in sequences because of the actions they perform (Farina, 2018: 1-2).

Hutchby (2001:55) defines conversational analysis as the study of talk in interaction or the systematic analysis of the types of talk produced in everyday situations of social interaction. So, many theoretical studies have examined conversation as an interaction between individuals, with conversation occurring as spoken communication. Hutchby (2001:59) argues that CA seeks to focus on the behavioural as opposed to cognitive or internal elements of talk in interaction. Nunamaker et al. (1993:24) declare that there is one primary feature of conversation which is fully interactive; at least two individuals must participate in it, and those individuals exchange messages in real time. So, individuals take turns in exchanging these messages so that conversation is a sequential activity.

Sacks et al. (1974), as cited in Hutchby (2001:60), argue that there are three basic facts about conversation: turn taking occurs, one participant tends to talk at a time, and turns are taken with as little gap or overlap between them as possible. So, CA research aims to investigate how the technical aspects of turn taking are structured, socially organized resources by which individuals perform and arrange activities through talk-in-interaction. The conversation is treated as a vehicle for social action and as the vital implies by which social organization in individual interactions is developed and sustained(ibid: 65). CA has strong links with pragmatics and social psychology, and it adopts a different view on the nature and relevance of goals and strategies in everyday communication(ibid: 70). CA is embedded with the theory of "turn-taking" and other aspects like "adjacency pairs" that provide a framework on which conversational analysts may rely (Sacks et al., 1978: 735).

Tudini (2010: 5) mentions that online chat interaction is considered as a textual form of socially oriented, naturally occurring talk that tends itself to the same kinds of analyses that have been applied to face-to-face talk. Though it is a written form of communication, chat shares many features with spoken interaction, such as synchronous communication. So, in analyzing chat, no transcription of conversations is required as individuals collaborate and control their own written production of conversations.

Thus, Crystal (2006:32-3) proposes some differences between online communication and face-to-face conversation. First is a function of the technology_ the lack of simultaneous feedback and messages sent via a computer is complete and unidirectional. There is no way that a recipient can react to the messages while it is being typed and there is no way for a participant to get a sense of how successful a message is, and there is no technical way of allowing the receiver to send the electronic equivalent or any other audio-visual reactions which play a role in face-to-face interaction. So, messages cannot overlap. Second, it also results from the technology, which is the rhythm of the internet interaction is very slower than in speech situations and disallows some of the conversation's most salient properties.

3. Turn Taking

The conversation is characterized by turn-taking in that one participant, A, talks and stops; another participant, B, starts, tops, and so on. (Levinson, 1983: 296). Sacks et al. (1974, 1978), cited in (Levinson, 1983: 297), claim that the mechanism that governs turn-taking is a set of rules with ordered options that operate on a turn-by-turn basis and can be called "a local management system". One way of looking at these rules is a sharing device operating over a scarce resource and an economy. This way is called "control of the floor". The allocational system requires minimal units, which are the units that construct turns in conversation. These units are determined by different features of linguistic surface structure; they are syntactic units such as "sentences, clauses, phrases" (ibid). A speaker will initiate in one of these turn-construction units. The end of such a unit constitutes a point at which speakers may change; it is a transition relevance place "TRP". At a TRP, the rules that govern the transition of speakers then come into play, which does not mean that speakers will change at that point, but they may do so.(ibid).

Crystal (2006: 20) argues that online communication is characterized by unique features; one of these features is *turn-taking*. Jones et al. (2011: 28) define utterance as an individual message sent with a stroke of the return key. They also define turn as a series of uninterrupted utterances by one speaker. Jenks (2014:52) mentions that turn-taking studies possess two analytic objectives: to understand the communicative features of online platforms and to compare these features with face-to-face communication. Crystal (2006:151) says that short responses are one of the features of online communication which differ from a face-to-face conversation.

Baron (2008:48) sees that in conversational analysis, a 'turn' is the language used by a speaker while he/she holds the floor before ceding it or being interrupted. That turn may consist of one sentence, many sentences or just a sentence fragment such as 'Hmm'.

Vandergiff (2010: 241) mentions that the turn-taking system is different from face-to-face interaction; for example, in FTF interaction, an utterance produced after a request will be interpreted as a response to the request, i.e. a denial or a grant. In synchronous CMC, this interpretation may be wrong because participants don't have as much control over the sequencing of utterances as in FTF.

Crystal (2006:37), on the one hand, declares that many issues, such as turn-taking, make netspeak interaction differs from conversational speech, and netspeak is unlike speech with respect to the formal properties of the medium that becomes difficult for participants to live up to the recommendation that they can write as they talk. On the other hand, Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 257-9) mention that turn-taking in netspeak is different from f2f conversations. The notion of turn-taking is compromised by the absence of non-textual features associated with face-to-face, such as falling intonation signally at the end of a turn. Conversational coherence is thought to be lacking in CMC, and it is compensated by a variety of creative means. In certain forms of CMC, responses to a turn may be multiple and simultaneous and making a topic difficult to follow. While in real time conversational turn-taking, multiple responses get neglected to leave one participant speaking in the clear. So, netspeak is conventionally incoherent in terms of turn-taking (overlapping, exchanges, disrupted adjacency and topic decay), and users either adapt to or exploit these deficiencies.

4. Adjancy Pairs

Adjacency pairs are the type of paired utterances which are prototypical such as greeting-greeting, question-answer, offer-acceptance, apology-minimization, etc. Adjacency pairs are inter-related with turn-taking system as techniques for selecting the next speaker (Levinson, 1983: 303). Couthard (1985: 69) describes adjacency pairs as the basic structural units in conversation because they are used for opening and closing conversation and because they operate turn-taking systems in that a speaker produces the first part of the utterance, and the second part is expected.

Clift (2016: 70), Schegloff (2007: 13) and Levinson (1983: 303) assert that adjacency pairs can be characterized by certain features:

1- composed of two turns. 2- by different speakers 3- adjacently ordered one after the other. 4- these two ordered pairs are differentiated into first pair parts, which are utterance kinds such as a question, request, invitation, offer, announcement, etc. These types initiate some exchange, and Second pair parts which are utterance kinds which are responsive to the action of a prior turn, such as answer, accept, grant, reject, agree, disagree, decline, acknowledge, etc.
5- pair-type related, in that adjacency pairs compose pair types which are types of exchange such as question-answer, greeting-greeting, offer-accept/decline and so on.

The basic rule of operation of adjacency pair: the first pair is produced given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion, its speaker should stop, a next speaker should start and produce a second pair part of the same pair type. This rule can be represented in the diagram below:

A first pair part
B second pair part (Schegloff, 2007: 14) and (Levinson, 1983: 304)

Levinson (1983: 305-8) mentions some problems with the rule of adjacency pairs depending on Schegloff's "insertion sequences". The first problem is that there are embedded sequences with adjacency pairs, such as "a question-answer pair", that can be embedded within another. So, Levinson substitutes the notion of adjacency with the notion of "conditional relevance" in that given a first pair, a second pair is relevant and expectable. The second problem is related to the possible seconds of the first part. So, Levinson uses the term " preference organization" in that some choices of second pair parts are preferred, and others are dispreferred to solve this problem.

5. Online Communication

Online or electronic communication is the process of sharing information, ideas and messages with others at a particular time and place by using electronic devices(Olubode-Sawe, 2010: 564). In terms of synchronicity, electronic communication may be divided into two dimensions synchronous, which happens in real time or asynchronous, which takes place in postponed time Crystal (2006:11) and Carr (2021: 90). Electronic communication without social contact is being digital without human or going online without leaving the safety of the electronic bunker(Holmes, 2005:94).

Online communication that is written on keyboards and read on screens has many characteristics of both speech and writing, such as telephone conversations. Electronic discourse is supported by a delivery system that replaces face-to-face communication with writing that stands in place of voices, such as messages(Davis and Brewer, 1997:2).

Electronic communication involves strategies and skills which are different from the ones employed to face to face exchange. Computer-mediated communication cannot take advantage of certain social aspects of oral interaction, such as nonverbal cues 'facial expressions' and prosodic features 'intonation'(Lee, 2009: 129). Electronic communication can be useful in circumstances where there is little or no opportunity for real life contact with native speakers. Therefore, it may be used to learn more about the culture in chat sites or chat groups(Todd & Walker, 2000:64).

6. Internet Relay Chat (IRC)

Internet Relay Chat is a multi-user real time communication system that is used by many people all over the world (Reddy, 2004:303). IRC is a common protocol for real time (synchronous) internet text-messaging and one of the early genres of social networks (Deumert, 2014: 28). According to Crystal (2006: 12), IRC is one of the synchronous situations and one of the main systems available to participants consisting of many rooms dealing with different topics. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) allows several users to be simultaneously in touch with each other. They connect to one of the IRC servers on a particular network and join one of the channels (or chat rooms) held there, each one devoted to a particular topic and prefixed by a hash symbol. Some are identified by country name, some by common interests (e.g. sport, poetry), some by age group (e.g. 41plus) or the use of technology (e.g. mac, www). A large network such as IRCnet has thousands of channels and regularly connects tens of thousands of people, each of whom is identified by a session nickname (ibid. :157).

Hutchby (2001: 173) argues that in IRC, conversations are carried on through the means of written text rather than speech, and IRC channels involve a multiplicity of users attempting to interact at any time. Beatty (2010: 71) mentions that IRC is also known as chatlines and appears on screen as a window that presents what the participant is writing in one pane while public discussion among other participants continues in another.

In addition, Werry (1996: 47) conducts a study to examine 'Internet Relay Chat' in terms of addressivity, abbreviation, prosody and gesture by analyzing IRC conversations. He finds that individuals employ a number of innovative linguistic strategies which function to compensate for spatial, contextual, temporal and social constraints. This medium considers the core of the current study.

7. Data Collection and Description

The data used in this study are a type of synchronous online conversations, which are a type of screenshots that are collected randomly from “Internet Relay Chat”. In this type of online communication, participants connect to one of the IRC servers on a particular network and join one of the channels, "chatrooms". Each room is devoted to a particular topic, and any participant can create a new room and become its operator. Furthermore, this type allows either private communication between participants or public communication in that everyone can see what you type. So, in the synchronous situation, the sender and receiver must be logged on simultaneously in real time. The source of the data is an online public English chatroom which is open access. The reason for selecting this kind of data is that "chatrooms" include many participants from different ages, cultures, education, backgrounds and regions who exchange online messages in real time. Another reason is that these chatrooms have a large number of participants who share others with different topics. This indicates that the data will be a variety of formal and informal language. Participants in these chatrooms are looking to communicate with those who share the same interest and those who can collaborate in creating an online dialogue and communicating information. The number of participants in each room varies according to the topics of discussion. Each participant has to choose a nickname before he/she enters the room so that the researcher selects a random nick to enter the rooms and keep silent while collecting the data from the following addresses:
https://chat.ukchat.com/room/Lobby
http://www.chatting.chatkaro.in/online-chat/

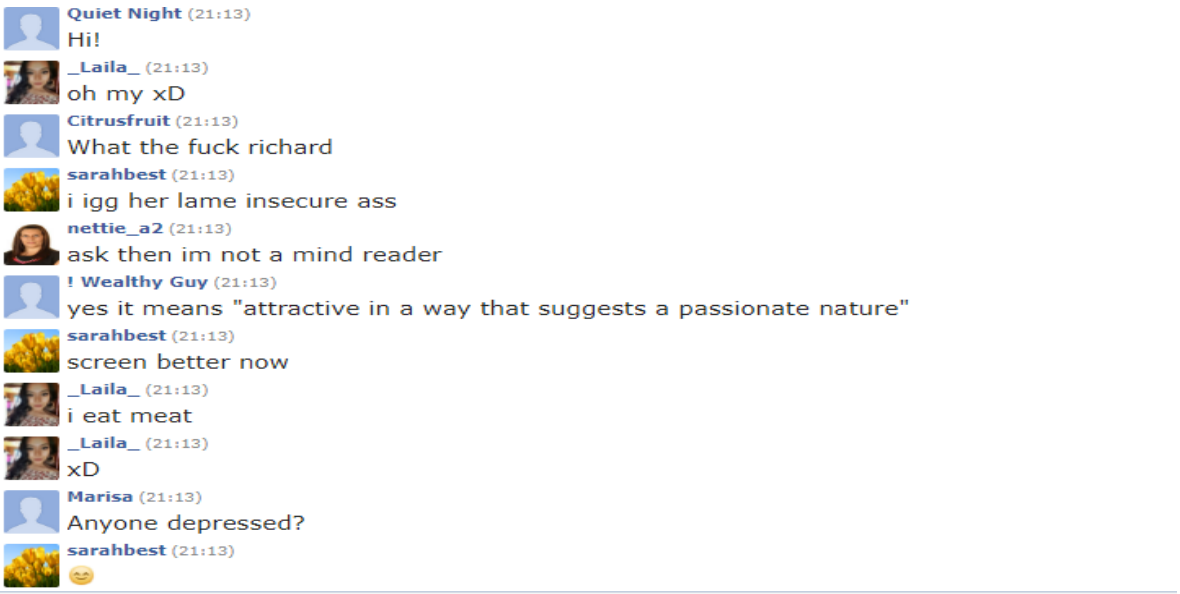
8. Analysis and Results

In conversational exchange, turn-taking is so fundamental to the conversation that most people are not aware of its importance as a means of enabling interactions to be successful. In face-to-face conversations, people follow the routine of taking turns when

they talk and avoid talking at once or interrupting each other randomly. Moreover, they expect certain adjacency pairs to take place; for example, questions should be followed by answers and not the other way round; similarly, a piece of information should be followed by an acknowledgement or apology. According to Crystal (2006: 35-6), these are elementary strategies adopted by participants provided a normal conversation with its skeleton.

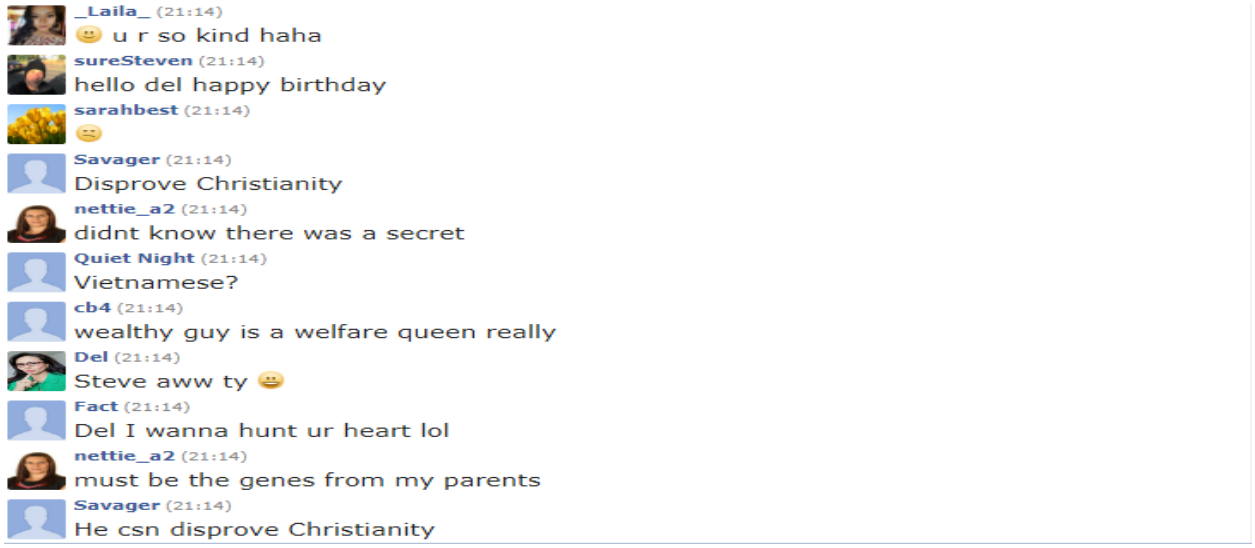
However, in synchronous online communication, things are different; the larger number of participants involved in the interaction, the worse situation becomes. When online communication involves several participants, as in Chatgroups and Internet Relay Chat, lag produces a very different situation because the conversations will become disrupted, ambiguous and complex. When there are long lags, the conversational situation becomes so unusual that its ability to cope with a topic can be destroyed. This is because turn-taking and adjacency pairs, as seen on screen, are dictated by the software, not by the participants themselves. In Internet Relay Chat, messages are posted to a receiver's screen linearly in the order in which they are received by the system and with different lags. Because of the way, packets of information are sent electronically through different global routes between participants. Thus, it is possible for turn-taking and adjacency pairs reversal to take place and all kinds of unpredictable overlaps.

1-



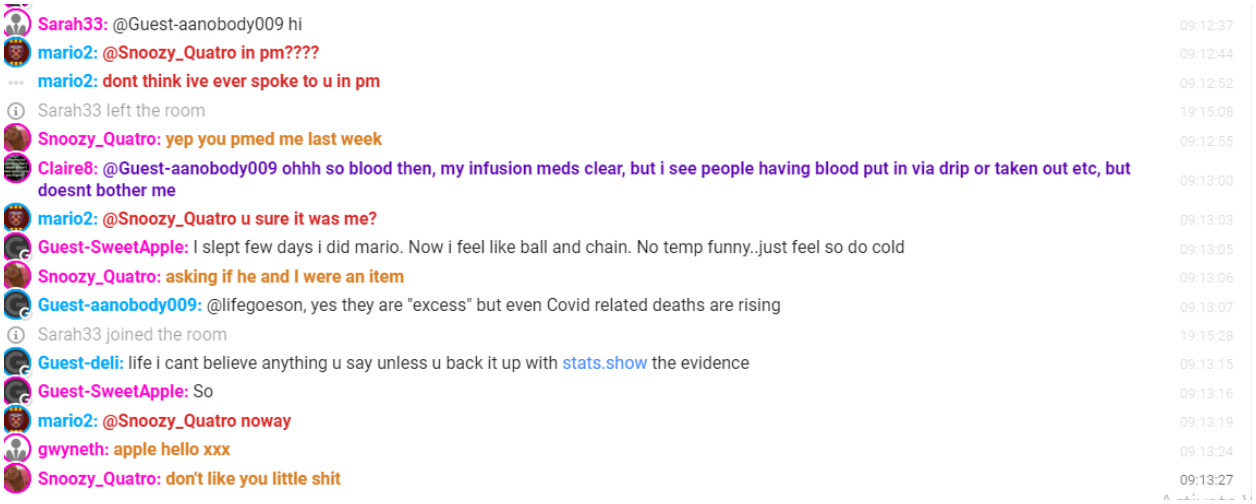
In this screenshot (1), there is no fixed topic in the exchange, and the first participant, "Quiet Night", starts with the first pair of greetings by saying "Hi!" and he gets no response from other participants. In addition, the sequence organization is dispersed and unrelated.

2-



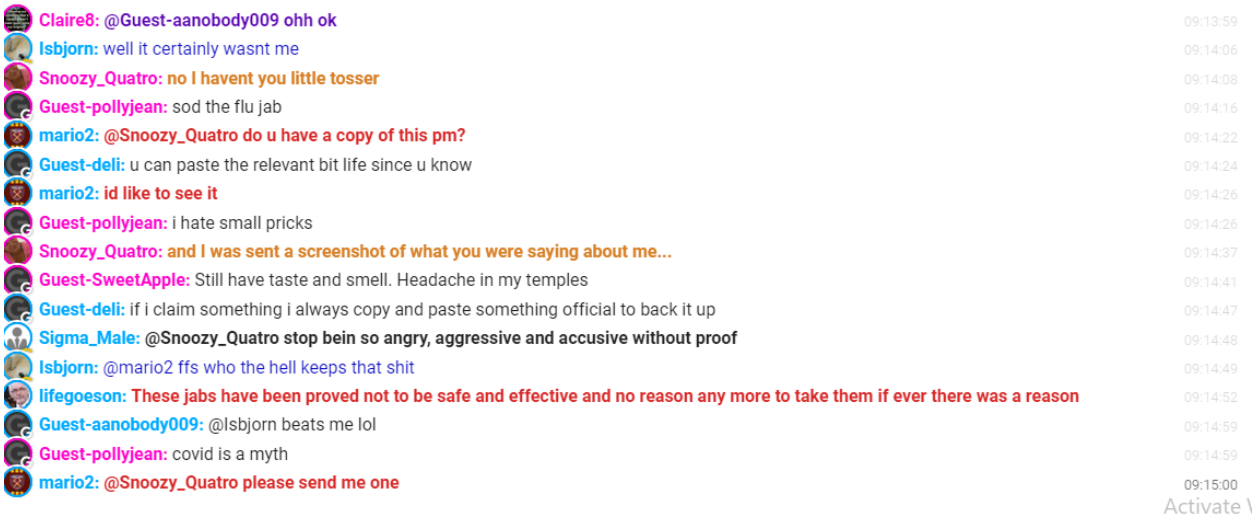
The second screenshot shows that some participants call others by their nicks to avoid misunderstanding; for example, "Steven" greets the other participant, who is named "Del", by saying, "Hello, Del, happy birthday". The second pair comes after five conversations. Sometimes, the disrupted turns occur because all participants are writing at the same time as well as they all have the desire to write even without a certain topic.

3-



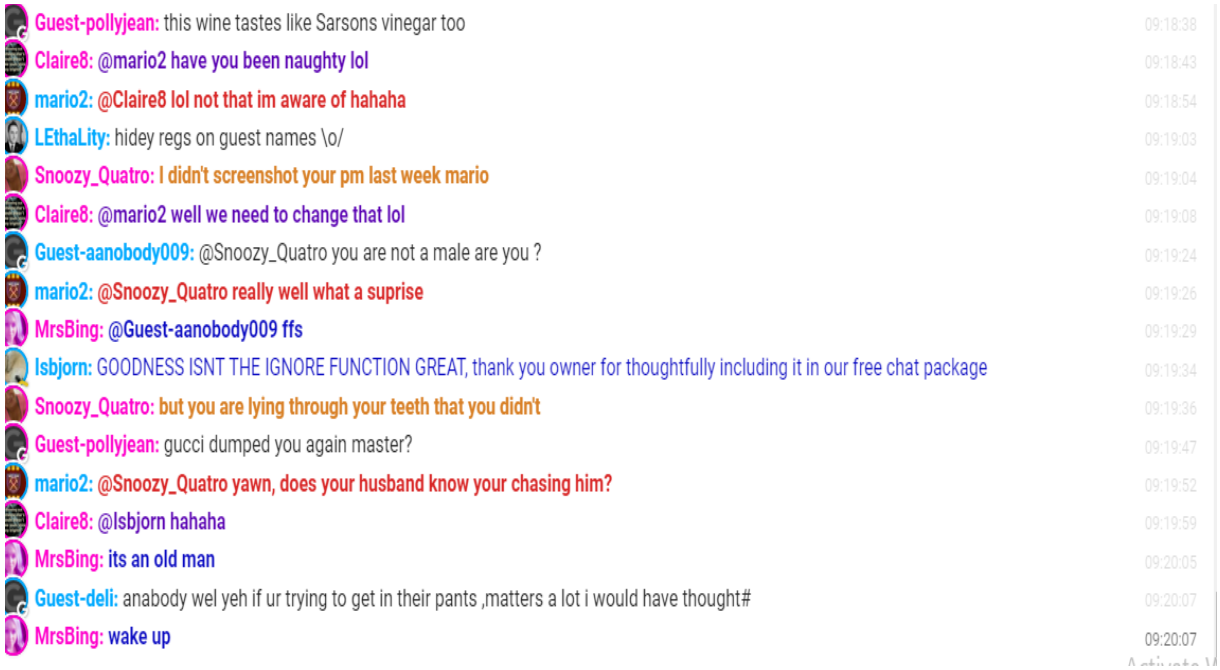
In the current screenshot (3), Sarah33 greets another participant by calling him using his name, "Gest-aanobody009", and she gets no reply, although he is still chatting with others. Crystal (2006) argues that in some conditions of synchronous communication, there can be no turn-taking and no adjacency pairs because the time-frames of participants do not coincide; for example, when someone asks a question, the receiver receives it and sends an answer, but on the screen, the answer sometimes is received before the question and vice versa. So, there is confusion about whether turn-taking and adjacency pairs are disruptable or interruptible. In addition, there is ignorance toward the first pair part either because of the pressure of the number of participants or because the speaker of the first part is newer for the current conversation or he/she left the chat for a period of time. Thus, adjacency pairs are violated a lot in synchronous online communication.

4-



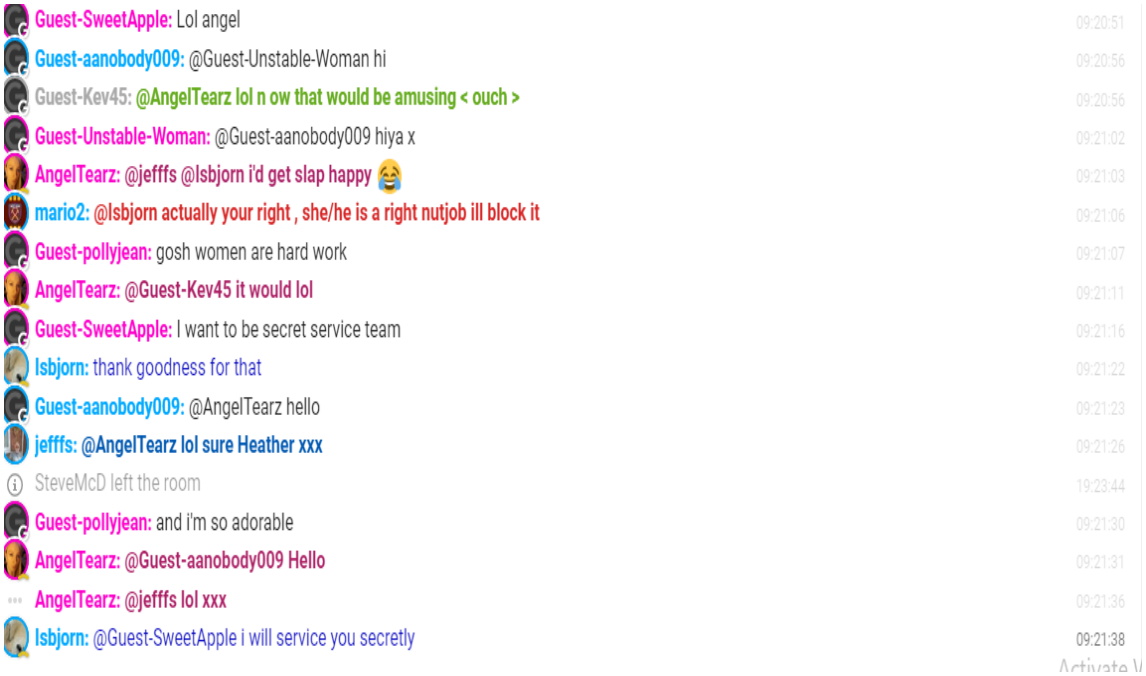
In screenshot number (4), there are no related found in the discussion, and this is a common feature in the rooms of Internet Relay Chat or in online synchronous communication in general. All participants are writing at the same time, and what happens is either no second part of an adjacency pair an in "mario2" when he/she asks "Snoozy" a question and gets no reply or in other violated turns even with calling other participants with their nicknames.

5-



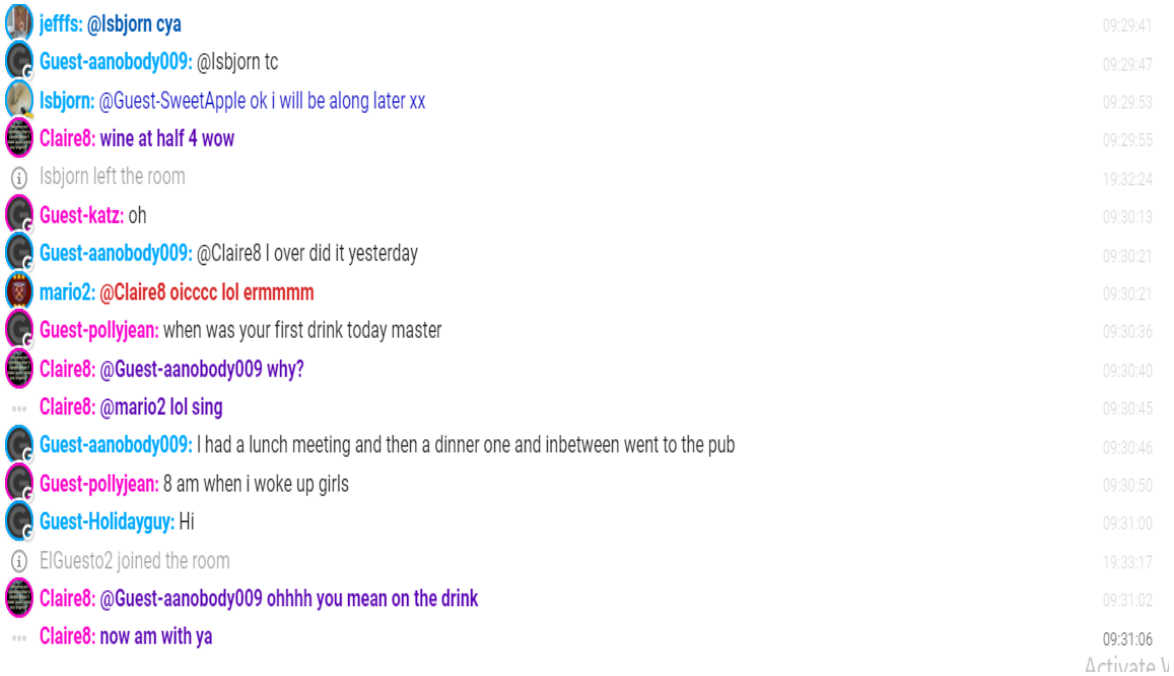
In this capture, there is one related adjacency pair turn which is between "Claire8" when he/she asks "mario2" a question and "mario2" answers him, whereas other chats have no related turns or adjacency parts even with calling other participants by their name to avoid misunderstanding.

6-



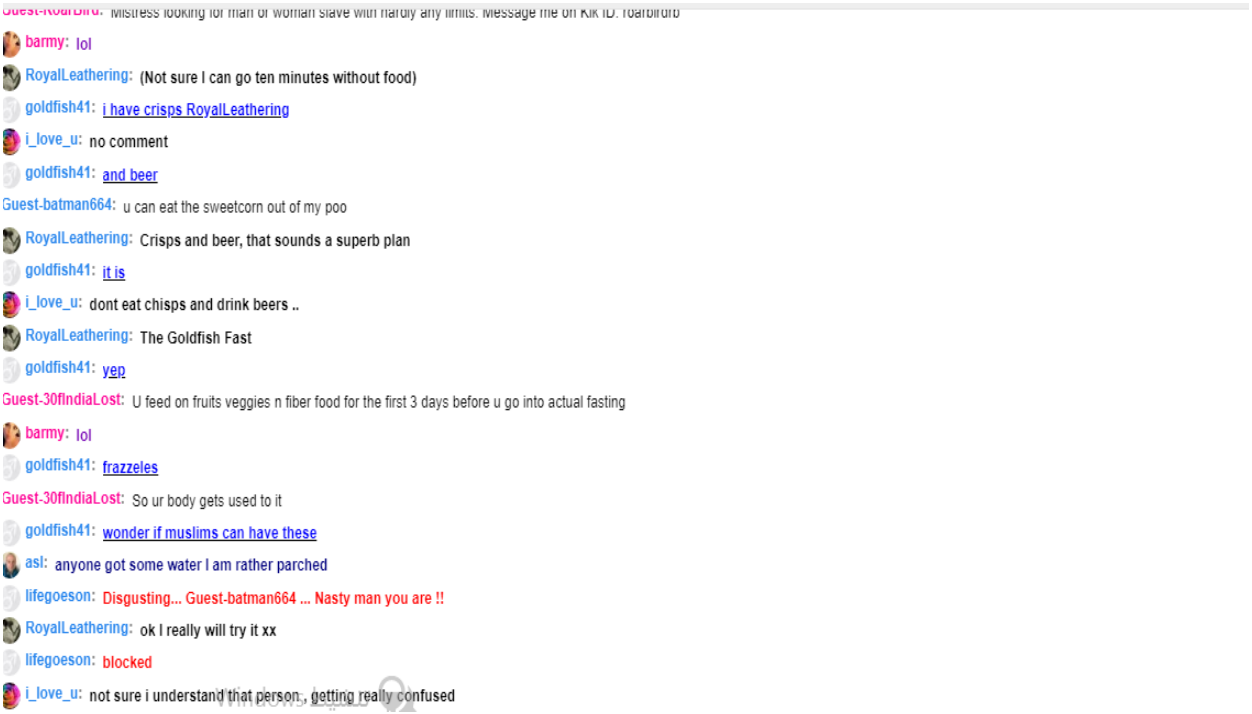
What is noticed in this capture (6) is that the first and second part of adjacency pairs are separated by other turns, and this occurs a lot in Internet Relay Chat because of the high number of participants who are writing at once or because of those who enter and left the chatroom several times.

7-



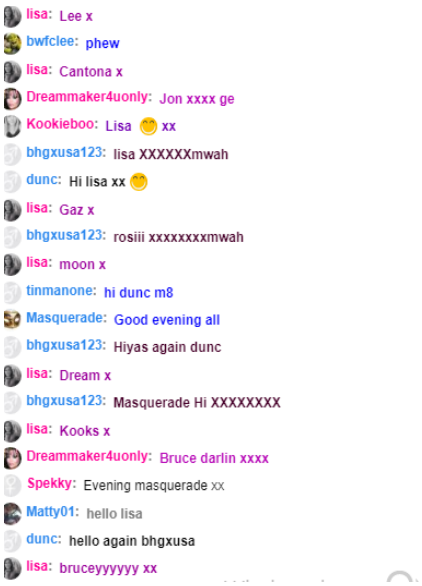
It is clear in this capture that some of the electronic systems show who leaves and enters the room, and this is one of the major reasons for turn violation which causes unrelated or separated turns in synchronous communication.

8-



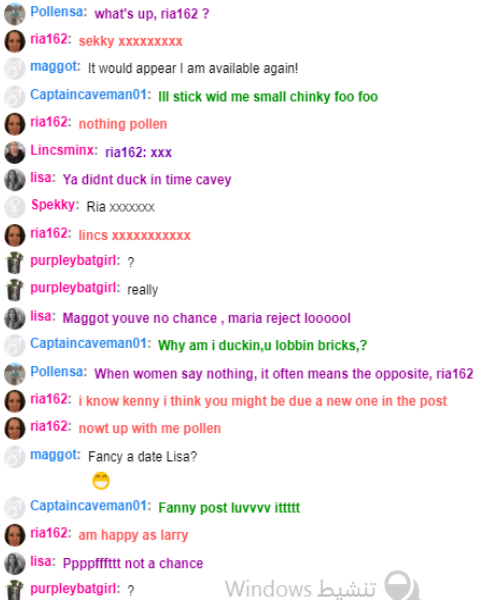
This screenshot (8) shows the use of short messages or abbreviations to save time and effort, and this is also one of the main features in synchronous chatting that may lead to a violation in the sequence organization of turns. This strategy is adopted in chatting to flow the conversational exchange.

9-



This capture (9) shows the lack of certain topics of discussion, which is one of the popular features of chatrooms. This lack causes violations and disrupted turns in the conversational process.

10-



In this screenshot, (10) participants call others by their nicks in giving turns or reply to their greetings and questions or take their turns in the discussion to avoid misleading. In addition, because speech is faster than writing and the absence of paralinguistic cues found in face-to-face conversations, online participants try to use short responses.

9. Conclusions

It is revealed that in synchronous online communication, especially "Internet Relay Chat", conversational situations and the organization sequence of turn-taking and adjacency pairs are different from face-to-face conversations, and they are sometimes unusual, ambiguous and complex. In addition, most online synchronous turns are violated and disrupted, and this is due to several reasons, such as:

1-Electronic systems produce different or very long lags to the sent messages.
2- Most chatrooms discussions lack certain topics of discussion; there is a shift from one topic to another.

3- Some participants leave the room, whereas others enter.

4-The high number of participants who are writing at the same time.

5-Some other participants used to write short messages or abbreviations to save time and effort through the flow of the exchange, and this strategy affects the organization sequence of turns.

6-Because speech is faster than writing and the absence of paralinguistic cues found in face-to-face conversations, online users try to write short responses

7-One strategy adopted by some online synchronous users to avoid misunderstanding, violation and the lack of organization sequence of some turns are calling other users by their nicks throughout greeting, questions and other responses of turns.

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