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Interlanguage Pragmatic Development in Native Speaker/Nonnative Speaker Participatory Online Environments

Adrienne Gonzales

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**INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENT IN NATIVE
SPEAKER/NONNATIVE SPEAKER PARTICIPATORY
ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS**

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Spanish and Portuguese**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to discover the ways in which participation in an online social networking site affects interlanguage pragmatic development. *Livemocha* is an online social network centered around language learning that emphasizes the collaboration required in constructing language. This social networking site encourages learners to establish an identity through their user profiles and to reach out to other members through email, text-based chat, video chat, or peer-reviewed lessons. This study examines interaction in text-based chat between native speakers (NSs) and language learners of Spanish in this environment. Conversations were collected from seven participants over the course of one academic year to compile the corpus of data for this study. Through an analysis of user perception interviews and an interactional analysis of conversation closings, this project addresses themes discovered in conversation closing strategies, influence of native speaker language use, and user perception.

Results show a variety of patterns in conversation closings between learners and NSs in *Livemocha*, including referencing institutional orientation, thanking, apologizing, and making future plans. The occurrences of these patterns did not change over time, though some participants saw a shift in rapport management with their interlocutors. In terms of NS influence, the conversation closings provide evidence of explicit and implicit influence by NSs on learners' language use. Finally, participants who expressed high levels of enthusiasm and appreciation for *Livemocha* and its potential as a tool in their personal language learning showed higher levels of participation and potential for future self-motivated participation outside of the study. However, data indicated that negative perception of *Livemocha* and its classroom applications for language learning did not negate the potential positive impact that participation can have on learners. Overall, the results suggest that while each individual learner has a unique experience participating in *Livemocha*, it is a successful affinity space for language learning.

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Chapter 1

Background

This dissertation will discuss interlanguage pragmatic development through synchronous computer-mediated communication in an online social networking site, *Livemocha*. By examining conversation closings and user-perception data, this study will address language socialization and the effects of participation within this online space on both language and behavior.

1.1 Background Information

The social constructivist paradigm (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978) centers second language learning around social interaction. From this perspective, Meaning is constructed through social interaction, and learning occurs as part of this meaning making process. Communities of practice (CoPs), in which "networks of people engage in similar activities and learn from each other in the process" (Warschauer, 2003, p. 120, see Lave and Wenger, 1991), are a foundational component of this interaction. In the case of foreign language (FL) learning,¹ these networks generally consist of members who share the same target language (TL).² However, the ideal scenario is a network of learners and native speakers acting as "agents engaged in co-constructing their own learning by observing, imitating, experimenting, modeling, and providing and receiving feedback from one another" (Lee, 2006, p.97). Such environments permit novices and experts alike to cooperatively communicate. Computer-mediated communication (CMC), has made this a practical reality for those studying in a foreign language (FL) environment, a context in which native

¹ While often included under the term second language, foreign language will be used to distinguish languages taught outside their dominant context (i.e. Spanish language learners in the U.S.), while second language will refer to those taught within their dominant context (i.e. Spanish language learners in Mexico).

² The TL refers to the language that the learner seeks to acquire.

speakers and communities of experts can be minimal. This study specifically examines one such community and its potential role for pragmatic development.

There are numerous potential benefits of investigating the applications of CMC and language learning. One benefit is the great potential that FL and second language (L2) study have to act as a mediator of intercultural competence and self discovery (Byram, 1997). Telecollaboration via CMC can be a cost-effective means for intercultural communication and interaction among language learners and can provide a potential forum in which learners can develop personal relationships with one another while using the languages under study (Belz, 2008). The social networking site (SNS) being examined in this study, *Livemocha*, was created to accomplish just that. Currently, in the area of CMC, there are a number of studies involving the linguistic and affective benefits of intercultural CMC for L2 learning, such as improved attitudes towards the target language (TL) (e.g., Beauvois, 1995; Sullivan and Pratt, 1996; Meunier; 1998), increased learner-to-learner contact in the L2 (e.g., Chun, 1994; Beauvois, 1995; Kern, 1995; Darhower, 2002), greater student output, which can lead to increased fluency (e.g., Abrams, 2003; Warschauer, 1996), and increased opportunity for negotiation of meaning (e.g., Pelletieri, 2000; Smith, 2003).³ Although there have been some studies addressing the role of CMC specifically in pragmatic development (for a review see Belz, 2008), this area of research is generally lacking. Nevertheless, these few studies, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, have made important contributions in beginning to understand the potential of using CMC to study and teach L2 pragmatics.

³ Ortega (2009) calls for further studies to determine whether contextual variables, such as whether conversation occurs in dyads or small groups or whether interlocutors are classmates or strangers, can account for the variability between these studies and those that show low amounts of negotiation of meaning in SCMC (eg., Blake, 2000; Lai and Zhao, 2006).

Previous studies in the area of L2 pragmatics, in general, have yielded six main conclusions:

1. Most aspects of pragmatics are teachable (e.g., Bouton, 1994; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Lyster, 1994; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Wildner-Bassett, 1994).
2. Intervention is the most beneficial means of teaching these aspects (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Rose, 2005; Rose and Kasper, 2001).
3. Explicit instruction is more beneficial than simple exposure (e.g., Bouton, 1994; Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Lyster, 1994; Wishnoff, 2000; Yoshimi, 2001).
4. There is insufficient control of processing which limits the effects of instruction (e.g., Bialystok, 1993).
5. There is a need to improve methodology of pragmatics instruction (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Rose 2005; Rose & Kasper 2001).
6. There is a difference between NS and NNS pragmatic systems (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Cohen, 1996; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Niki & Tajika, 1994).

Furthermore, while cross-sectional studies on L2 pragmatic development have been conducted (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2007), this is one of the first longitudinal case studies including a variety of learners and will provide valuable insight into learning processes.

Some work has also been done to discuss pragmatic development in CMC. From a speech act perspective, Sykes (2005) analyzed L2 pragmatic development in SCMC, finding that after receiving face-to-face instruction and seeing computer-based model dialogues,

students' sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic performance improved in refusals of invitations in face-to-face communication, written chat, and oral chat. González-Lloret has taken a conversation analytical (CA) approach (2005, 2007). In miscommunications between native speakers (NSs)⁴ and nonnative speakers (NNSs) in SCMC, both groups initiated repair sequences. The most successful repairs were those constructed collaboratively by both NSs and NNSs, who employed a wide variety of repair methods to successfully restore communication. The most common strategies for re-establishing the flow of communication after a successful repair were to continue the normal pattern of a service interaction or to revert back to information ignored when communication broke down. González-Lloret (2005) suggests that since co-construction of communication proves to be the most effective way of achieving mutual understanding, this process should be incorporated into NNS language training and should focus on both linguistics and sociopragmatics. In her 2007 study, conversations between NNSs showed that students engaged in meaningful, organized interaction, using new resources to cope with restrictions of chat. They also collaboratively constructed interactions, managed sequential organization, and self-corrected, showing that while using SCMC, language learners engage in valuable practice for both language and communication skills.

The present study will contribute to the current body of knowledge by examining longitudinal pragmatic development (namely strategies in conversation closings) in NS/NNS telecollaboration in *Livemocha*, an online social network centered around language learning.

⁴ While the term “native speaker” is controversial since it can connote a desire to impose one ideal standard of language, that is not the intention in this dissertation. Rather this will be a descriptive study, which focuses on language in use within the *Livemocha* space. The term “native speaker” will be used since on their *Livemocha* user profiles, participants are asked to indicate whether their level of a given language is “beginner”, “intermediate”, “advanced”, “fluent”, or “native speaker”.

This social networking site emphasizes the collaboration required in constructing language by encouraging learners to establish an identity through their user profiles and to reach out to other members through email, text-based chat, video chat, or peer-reviewed lessons. By examining the development of pragmatic components used in conversation closings in NS/NNS SCMC conversations in *Livemocha* and learners' socialization into this space, this study aims to address some of the current gaps in the existing research. It is one of the first longitudinal studies on L2 pragmatics from a conversation analytical perspective and the first to address conversation closings. Furthermore, it is drawn from naturalistic data. This study will also contribute to a longitudinal learner corpus, which will provide the opportunity for future investigation in numerous areas of second language acquisition (SLA).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In traditional classroom contexts, pragmatics instruction often takes a backseat to more teachable aspects of language because of the complexities and complications that arise in second language (L2) teaching and learning (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003), including the infinite variation found in both interactional context and individual perception, the challenges of providing feedback for and assessing these innumerable variations, and the absence of resources and time to address pragmatics in traditional classroom settings. While it is widely accepted that effective language learning requires meaningful communicative experiences and includes actual experience with intercultural communication (e.g., Belz and Thorne, 2006; Canale and Swain, 1980; Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet, 1992), language learners often suffer an omission of context-rich, high-stakes interactions that are particularly important to foreign and second language pragmatic development.

Participatory online environments like *Livemocha* offer a potential remedy to the many challenges concerning the teaching and learning of L2 pragmatics by allowing students to build relationships with native speakers from all over the world, fulfill roles of both novice and expert, and take ownership of their own learning experience. In order to explore the effects of participation in *Livemocha* on Spanish language learners' pragmatic development, this study will analyze conversation closings in SCMC with NSs of Spanish. Using data from a conversation analysis, the following general questions are addressed:

1. What conversation closing patterns appear in conversations between Spanish language learners and NSs in the *Livemocha* space?
2. To what extent do these patterns differ over the course of ongoing participation?
3. Does NS language use influence that of learners? How?
4. What are learner perceptions of participating in *Livemocha*?
5. To what extent is there a connection between learners' perception and their interaction?

Through answering these questions, this study seeks to contribute to a body of research that supports language teachers and learners in understanding how telecollaboration and SNSs can assist in the teaching and learning of languages.

1.3 Overview

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature in the significant areas of interest to this study, which will aid in understanding the many elements to consider upon analyzing intercultural conversation closings in an online space. It begins with a discussion of language socialization, including communities of practice, social networks, and L2 pragmatic development. The chapter continues to review the rapport management framework, followed

by a presentation of research on conversation closings in a number of contexts. The chapter ends with a discussion of CMC and language learning, highlighting telecollaboration and L2 pragmatic development in online environments. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of this study, including a description of the seven participants, data and data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents results of this study, highlighting each of the patterns found in the conversation analysis. This chapter discusses conversation closing patterns, NS influence, and user perception and provides supporting examples from the data. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the results, research and pedagogical implications, limitations, and broad conclusions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The following review of previous literature will address a number of topics relevant to this study. Beginning with the concept of language socialization, including communities of practice, social networks, and pragmatic development, this review will discuss rapport management, conversation closings, and CMC as related to language learning. This discussion will lead up to the posed research questions regarding the development of pragmatic components used by Spanish language learners in their conversation closings with NSs in an online social network.

2.1 Language Socialization

Gaining an aptitude for understanding the contextual complexities of language use is crucial in the process of language learning. As Belz and Kinginger (2002) state, "learning to use the forms and to understand their meaning is as much a function of language socialization as of rule-based language acquisition" (p. 208). Language socialization is a notion that "draws on sociological, anthropological, and psychological approaches to the study of social and linguistic competence within a social group" (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986, p. 163). This focus on linguistic competence within the social context is crucially integrated with second language acquisition. The process of acquiring language cannot be separated from the process of becoming a competent member of society, which is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984). Schieffelin and Ochs explain that "language is a medium or tool in the socialization process," while simultaneously "acquisition of the appropriate uses of language [is] part of acquiring

social competence" (1986, p. 167). As such, language development is intricately interwoven with the development of social competence. Just as children in first language acquisition, learners gain competence in social contexts through both exposure and participation in "verbally marked events and activities" (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986, p. 167). This interconnectedness permits the examination of language in socializing contexts from two perspectives: how language is a medium or tool in the socialization process and the acquisition of the appropriate uses of language as part of acquiring social competence (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986).

Complementary to language socialization is the development of a speaker's social identity. Social identity is a psychological construct that refers to "a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 6). Identity is a process, not a state; furthermore, it is directly connected to socialization, since it is a process driven by community formation, as identities are firmly rooted in the relationships between community members. Wenger takes this idea one step further, stating that "the formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities" (1998, p. 149). In his view, there are many parallels between practice and identity, and identity can be characterized as negotiated experience, community membership, learning trajectory, nexus of multimembership, and relation between the local and the global (p. 149). In addition, identity has been studied as a motivation for behavior, including interests (Jenkins, 2008). Regarding language use, Pierce (1995) found that language learning is dependent on factors driven by the social context, and the individual's self-image within that context. Therefore, a

learner's identity as a member of a TL group influences how the learner approaches and acquires the language.

Also central to the development of the learner's identity is the ability to develop social capital. Social capital can be defined generally as "the resources accumulated through the relationships among people" (Coleman, 1988, in Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe, 2007) and more specifically, as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 14, in Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe, 2007). In developing social capital, a learner enhances both opportunities for language socialization and for identity formation within a community. In addition, social capital has been shown to be influential in promoting social investment, whereby learners' desire to speak the TL is mutually formative with their desire to develop social capital (Pierce, 1995). Foreign Language Learners (FLLs), unlike first language learners or second language learners, often lack opportunities for exposure and participation in socially defined contexts with TL speakers. There are, however, *communities of practice* in which learners can develop their social competence and form identities in contextually relevant TL venues.

2.1.1 Communities of practice and affinity spaces. A community of practice (CoP) is a group in which practices emerge as the result of some mutual endeavor. Such practices include ways of doing things, beliefs, values, and power-relations. These communities are defined both by their membership and their practices (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) explains that the primary characteristics for communities of practice are *mutual engagement* in a *joint enterprise* from which some

shared repertoire for engaging in practice emerges, including ways of thinking and speaking, discourses, tools, and memories. Such communities of practice can be ideal environments for language learners. In working to achieve a mutual endeavor, the act of social learning promotes communicative acts that generate input directly relevant for negotiation. In addition, through participation in such communities, learners build social capital and establish an identity within TL communities.

This situated learning style approach, which considers informal networks and groups as well as distributed and non-face-to-face contact, “is a significant rethink of learning theory of value to anyone wanting to take learning beyond the individual” (Barton and Tusting, 2005, p. 3). It is not, however, without its shortcomings.

A critical element in the understanding of the role of language is how it is intertwined into the larger picture of social processes as a whole. Such consideration of critical social linguistics, including semiotics, systemic functional linguistics, and critical discourse analysis, offer a more complete understanding of the complicated relationships between language and broader social structures (Tusting, 2005). According to Tusting (2005), what Wenger’s model of communities of practice lacks is precisely that: the absence of attention to social structures, such as how power structures and hierarchy arrangements are constructed and internalized by language use in the workplace.

Gee also agrees that “people learn best when their learning is part of a highly motivated engagement with social practices which they value” (2004, p. 77). However, while believing the notion of a community of practice is important, he argues that the word “community” carries connotations of belonging and closeness that may not be applicable in contexts such as classrooms or workplaces and that the idea that “membership” does not

account for degrees of involvement. Such attempts to label groups in terms of their participation, membership, and boundaries are inherently problematic (Gee, 2004). Instead, Gee suggests that *spaces*, rather than membership, for the social configuration in which people participate and learn.

Gee (2004) describes spaces in terms of their content (what the space is about), generators (what provides the space’s content), and portals (what gives people access to the space). *Affinity spaces* are those in which “what people have affinity with (or for)...is not first and foremost the other people using the space, but the endeavor or interest around which the space is organized” (p. 84). In the current study, *Livemocha* is an affinity space in which people join together under the common endeavor of language learning. These types of spaces share any number of the features. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of affinity spaces and how these relate to *Livemocha* (Gee, 2004, p. 85-86).

Table 1

Livemocha as an affinity space

Feature	Applicability to <i>Livemocha</i>	Explanation
Common endeavor, not race, class, gender, or disability, is primary	Yes	Members come from diverse backgrounds under the common endeavor of language learning.
Newbies and masters and everyone else share common space	Yes	In <i>Livemocha</i> this can refer to both newbies and masters of the space and also to the languages being used.

Table 1 Continued

Feature	Applicability to <i>Livemocha</i>	Explanation
Some portals are strong generators	Yes	The portal for <i>Livemocha</i> is the website itself or any other venue where <i>Livemocha</i> members might discuss it (such as <i>Facebook</i>). While members cannot change or add content to the primary site, they do have freedom to edit their personal profiles, add or delete connections to other members, comment on activities completed by others, and share information through chat and email functions.
Content organization is transformed by interactional organization	Yes	The desire and use of additional languages by members gives rise to new communities of speakers.
Both intensive and extensive knowledge are encouraged	Yes	While people are valued for their expert or native speaker contributions, they are encouraged to pursue the study of new languages.
Both individual and distributed knowledge are encouraged	Yes	Members apply their personal knowledge of languages and take advantage of knowledge from other members and resources on the site.
Dispersed knowledge is encouraged	Yes	While the site has a number of features built in, members use and recommend other venues for information, including online resources, film, etc.
Tacit knowledge is encouraged	Yes	Even those members who do not possess the meta-linguistic ability to describe their language will pass on their knowledge implicitly through the interactions they have with other learners.
There are many different forms and routes to participation	Yes	Members can participate through lessons, activities, peer-review, and both synchronous and asynchronous conversation.
There are lots of different routes to status	Yes	Members earn points indicating status. These can be earned through conversation, completing activities or lessons, reviewing peer activities, etc.
Leadership is porous and leaders are resources	Yes	Leaders are other members with greater participation/experience with the site or with greater knowledge of another's TL. As such, everyone carries a leadership role.

Table 1 illustrates how *Livemocha* is a paradigmatic example of an affinity space, a new form of learning that can guide learners in a “unique trajectory through a complex space of opportunities and a social journey as one share aspects of that trajectory with others...” (Gee, 2004, p. 89). Since all eleven characteristics of affinity spaces are applicable in some way to *Livemocha*, this space has potential for language learners as a venue in which they might learn through involvement.

Social networking sites such as *Livemocha*, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3 (Methodology), allow learners to participate in a community and work with fellow members in achieving a mutual goal. The formation and evolution of community culture occurs through the practices that arise in pursuit of these common goals. Language learners in particular can benefit by participating in such networks to engage in and form communities of practice.

2.1.2 Social networks. One emerging venue in which communities of practice can develop are social networking sites (SNSs), or "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (boyd & Ellison, 2007). User profiles are a glimpse into the life of a SNS member. They are a space in which members can introduce themselves to their SNS by offering information about their likes, dislikes, personality, and personal and professional life. Acting as a sort of autobiographical character sketch, user profiles are the fundamental components to SNSs where identity formation and self-representation occurs. Depending on the specific features or purposes of a given SNS, user profiles can represent common individuals, celebrities, groups, events, or products and

contain personal demographic information, interests photos, and other media. Users can also link to each other through smaller communities of practice based on interests, location, or other shared characteristics, but the most important type of link is made through adding friends. While adding someone as a friend signifies a declared connection, the connection alone does not imply any certain degree of intimacy between two people (Vie, 2007).

Oftentimes, these connections are not initially made through the SNS itself. *Facebook* and *Myspace*, for example, are more frequently used to enhance already existing networks and relationships rather than establish new ones (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007). In such cases, the act of online socializing may be “less about exchanging information and more about making symbolic gestures” (McBride, 2009, p. 40). These symbolic gestures are a significant element in socialization, highly important for relationship maintenance (boyd & Ellison, 2007) and group identification (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007). Other SNSs, like *Livemocha*, are designed to find and create new connections through the network itself, which can have great implications for language learning and socialization since identity is a process driven by community formation, as previously discussed.

Users' activity in SNSs, such as adding friends, becoming a fan of someone or something, and taking surveys and quizzes, can be displayed on their profiles. Particularly in the contexts in which an SNS is the venue for new connections, the public display of these types of actions factors greatly into the elements of language socialization, including the formation of social identity (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Vie, 2007). As learners acquire an L2, they transform their existing identities or experiment with and develop new ones. In this process, they leave behind certain contexts and the identities that corresponded to those

contexts (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). McBride (2009) discusses the WEB 2.0 phenomenon of experimentation with multiple identities, explaining that “the additive as opposed to subtractive nature of this experimentation, are prime examples of the shifts in communication and literacy” (p. 39). In virtual spaces such as synthetic immersive environments (SIEs), experimentation is more comfortable for learners because they permit the creation and application of multiple identities and participant roles in multiple places other than the real world (Sykes et al., 2008). Such freedom of identity experimentation is also possible in SNSs, which are showing great prominence in the daily lives of younger generations.

Eighty-six percent of 18-29 year-olds and 72% of 30-49 year-olds have profiles on SNSs (Brenner, 2012) and as such are considered an "obvious possibility to consider" in terms of finding computer-mediated activities with which students are familiar (McBride, 2009, p. 38). Still, this generation's experience growing up communicating and receiving information in new ways, however integral to their lives and learning styles, does not necessarily imply that students will successfully adapt to CALL activities, particularly those requiring intercultural communication, since “the cultures-of-use of Internet communication tools are rapidly evolving, in geographically non-uniform direction, and play a critical role in the manner in which intercultural communications plays out in formal educational contexts” (Thorne, 2003, p. 39). This point is made clear in a study of intra- and interclass CMC and SCMC conversations between French and American students (Kramsch and Thorne, 2002). The misalignment of emphases and purposes in communication between the learners (information exchange for the French and personal engagement for the Americans) obstructed successful interaction, causing tension and confusion in their interactions.

Successful, substantive intercultural communication requires at least minimally aligned cultures-of-use and shared orientation to the activity (Thorne, 2003).

In addition, students of this generation often require a lengthy training period to become adept users of the specific programs employed (Jones & Bissoonauth-Bedford, 2008; Kolaitis et al., 2006) and show diminished enthusiasm when engaging in language and culture activities through CMC, since these specialized uses of the tools often fall outside of the realm of learners' already-established cultures of use (McBride & Wildner-Bassett, 2008; Thorne, 2003). Unlike many CALL activities, however, SNSs provide learners with the opportunity to communicate and connect with other learners or NSs of the L2, and through these interactions "they will be well poised to establish relationships with other speakers of the L2 via SNSs in the future and to become autonomous, lifelong learners" (McBride, 2009, p. 35). Interaction with other learners and NSs of the L2 in venues such as these give language learners the opportunity to develop pragmatic skills, otherwise difficult to put to practice in traditional classroom environments. This study will consider the habits of language learners in *Livemocha* – their orientations to themselves (identity) and each other (community) – as they affect pragmatics in this space.

2.1.3 L2 Pragmatic development. Pragmatics refers to “communicative action in its sociocultural context” and can involve speech acts, participation in conversation, engagement in different types of discourse, and sustainment of interaction in complex speech events (Crystal, 1985, p. 240). Because of the potential for misunderstanding among speakers who do not share the same cultural conventions, developing pragmatic competence is highly important for the socialization of language learners. A language learners' interlanguage refers to the “systematic knowledge underlying learners' production” (Gass

and Selinker, 2008, p. 519). One element of interlanguage is interlanguage pragmatics, or the knowledge specifically related to “the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by nonnative speakers” (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996, p. 150). Areas of research in L2 interlanguage pragmatics often include investigations on: learners' interlingual pragmatic knowledge and use of various speech acts (e.g., Cohen and Olshtain, 1993; Koike, 1989), their sense of politeness in the second language (e.g., Lo Castro, 1997; Shively, 2008), application of such techniques to teach pragmatics as metapragmatic discussions (e.g., Pearson, 2006), videotaped interactions (e.g., Kasper, 2001), and role-play practice (e.g., House, 1986, 1996; House and Kasper, 1981; Ohta, 1995, 1997) (Koike, Pearson, and Witten, 2003, p.160). Researchers have also analyzed cross-culturally the ways that learners understand and produce L2 speech acts (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989; Boxer, 2002; Nelson et. al., 2002; Wierzbicka, 2003). Cross-cultural understanding shares equal importance with general knowledge of an L2, as it can greatly impact communication through one's L2 pragmatic use. Grammar also can affect L2 pragmatics.

As Koike (1989) determined, L2 grammatical competence does not develop as quickly as the pragmatic concepts require, and thus the expression of speech acts conforms to the grammatical level of the learner; that is to say, a learner is only as pragmatically adept as his or her grammatical ability can support. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) confirm this idea, showing that in both elicited and natural situations, grammatical development does not imply corresponding pragmatic development. In other words, learners opt for meaning over form in TL utterances. And while these same limitations in grammatical competence may hinder the value of learners' input (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999), the relationship between

grammatical competence and pragmatic development is still unclear (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; House, 1996).

In addition to differences in form, upon employing speech acts in interaction, novice and expert speakers differ in their choice of speech act, semantic formulas, and content (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Furthermore, “learners’ utterances may exhibit more than one nonnative feature at a time [because] nontarget-like semantic formulas may encode nontarget-like content in nontarget-like form” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, p. 20). Depending on their experience with the TL, learners’ judgments and perceptions of speech acts can also differ from those of NSs. Different orientations to the idea of politeness (more discussion on this below), for example, can vary cross-culturally and thus impact the manner in which the language is used (as in the case of this study, how conversation closings unfold between learners and expert speakers). Availability of input, influence of instruction, proficiency, length of exposure, and transfer are all factors that will affect the understanding of pragmatic conventions in the TL (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Félix-Brasdefer (2006) notes that language learners begin their study of an L2 with a pre-programmed knowledge of pragmatics from their L1. This includes ability for production and comprehension of speech acts, knowledge of routines and formulae, turn-taking, repair, sequential organization, and rules of politeness, and awareness of the level of formality in a given communicative event. The problem, according to Kasper and Rose (2001), is that even though some pragmatic knowledge is universal, the L1 knowledge is not always transferred to the L2, or in some cases, different cultural norms may alter the rules of pragmatics, making them different from the L1.

In addition to the positive or negative L1 transfer and grammatical proficiency mentioned above, numerous other factors have a role in determining L2 pragmatic competence. These include whether the language is being studied as a foreign or second language, length of stay immersed in the TL (if any), input, and type of instruction. Despite the complications learners face in acquiring the pragmatic system of their L2, research does show that most aspects of pragmatics are in fact teachable (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002). These studies have shown that intervention is the most effective means of teaching pragmatics and that explicit instruction of L2 pragmatic systems is most beneficial to language learners.

While there are many elements to be considered in the pragmatic development of language learners, one way this study examines L2 pragmatic development over time is through rapport management.

2.2 Rapport Management

Adapting ideas from Brown and Levinson (1987), Fraser and Nolan (1981), and Leech (1983), Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2005) adopts an expanded perspective of politeness, focusing on people's language use and its influence on interpersonal relationships, people's management of relationships, and different cultural and contextual conventions. Fraser and Nolan (1981) center their explanation of politeness around the concept of conversational contract, which is a negotiable understanding of the rights and obligations of participants in a given interaction. They propose that there are no intrinsically polite or impolite linguistic forms, rather the interpretation of politeness falls entirely within the hands of the hearer. What may seem like a polite or impolite utterance may in fact be the opposite, depending on

the infinite number of contextual variables surrounding the interaction. An example is the use of an utterance that may appear to be a commissive, but is intended to be an impositive.

(1) Would you like to type these letters? (Example [58], Leech, 1983, p. 127)

Also focusing on the interaction between participants, Leech (1983) presents six interpersonal maxims derived from his politeness principle. They include tacit, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy maxims. Each of these maxims also functions along scales of cost-benefit (to the speaker/hearer), optionality (amount of choice the speaker allows the hearer), indirectness (distance from illocutionary act to goal from the speaker's perspective), authority (degree of power distance between the speaker/hearer), and social distance (solidarity between the speaker/hearer).

Drawing from these two models, Spencer-Oatey views politeness from a perspective of rapport management, or "the management of social relations" (2000, p. 12), which involves two central notions: face and sociality rights. Face, in this model, refers to two different aspects: quality face (concerned with personal self-esteem) and identity face (concerned with our sense of social and group roles). Sociality rights, on the other hand, are concerned with personal expectancies, which involve equity rights and association rights. Equity rights pertain to the "fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly" (p. 14). This includes a cost-benefit component ("the extent to which we are exploited or disadvantaged") as well as an autonomy-imposition component ("the extent to which people control us or impose upon us") (p. 14). In the following extracts from participant observations, an example of equity rights can be found in the different perceptions held by Chinese and British businessmen. Tim, a British

businessman was due back from a trip on Thursday. When by Friday his Chinese colleagues had heard no word from him, the following comments were made:

- (2) Xu: Tim hasn't shown up yet, right? He should have already come back yesterday....
- Shen: He should have been back yesterday, yesterday. Today he didn't show up. This morning he should have taken us out. We mentioned to him [the Interpreter]. ...
- Lin: Does Tim live in London?
- Researcher: I don't know where he lives.
- Chen: In London. London is very close to here, isn't it? ... Thirty-odd miles, in fact very close. Your old friends from China are here and as a matter of fact your major market, right? So on this occasion can't you come and meet them?
- Shen: And he knew that Mr. Xu, senior engineer, was coming.
- (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p. 112)

In this scenario, Tim's Chinese colleagues were upset that he did not come to meet them, citing that he did have time to and lived close by. Tim's point of view of the situation, however, was different:

- (3) Researcher: But you were not thinking of meeting them directly after you came back, I mean before this meeting [held on the Monday]?
- Tim: I was aware they were going to be here, and it was important for me to meet them when I returned, yeah, but I think I got back Thursday night or the Friday morning. Um, and it was too difficult for me to meet them during the weekend, um, of course my wife had expected to see me, my son, I was tired, so I wanted to wait until Monday.
- (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 112)

In this situation, the autonomy-imposition component of equity rights is at play. The Chinese expected Tim to sacrifice whatever personal needs he may have had in order to meet with them immediately following his return. Tim, however, was focused on his personal needs, and not on the involvement with the larger social group.

Association rights relate to the "fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with

them” (p. 14). These rights include interactional association-dissociation (“the type and extent of our involvement with others”) and affective association-dissociation (“the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests”) (p. 15). In the following invitation (translated to English) between two Chinese interlocutors, both the host and guest display conformity in their adherence to this traditional pattern of exchange. This represents a strong sense of identity face and establishes association with one another.

- (4) A (Host): Come and have dinner with us tomorrow evening.
B (Guest): Oh, that’s too much trouble for you, I’d better not come.
A: It’s no trouble at all. I will just be a simple meal.
B: No, really, I know you’re extremely busy.
A: Well, we have to eat anyway, so it won’t cause any extra bother. Do come.
B: How about if I just come for a chat but not for dinner?
A: That’s nonsense. You must come. We haven’t seen you for ages.
B: Well, OK then.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 111)

Expanding on previous models, Spencer-Oatey (2000) also examines politeness in several interrelated domains important to rapport management: illocutionary domain (the rapport threatening or enhancing implications of a speech act), discourse domain (the discourse content and structure of an interchange), participation domain (the procedural aspects of an interchange), stylistic domain (aspects of an interchange pertaining to style, such as lexis, syntax, and honorifics), and the nonverbal domain (gestures and gaze). While the illocutionary domain is intrinsically threatening to rapport (Brown and Levinson, 1987), all other domains play important roles in communication and must be appropriately managed.

Rapport management strategies include speech acts (e.g., requests, expressions of gratitude, apologies, and refusals), and these strategies fall within rapport management

domains (as mentioned above). A number of factors can influence strategy choice. They are rapport orientation (rapport-enhancement, rapport-maintenance, rapport-neglect, or rapport-challenge), contextual variables (such as power, distance, and number of participants), and pragmatic conventions (both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic). Spencer-Oatey (2005) also addresses interactional wants as another motivation for rapport management strategy choice. Returning to the scenario with the Chinese and British businessmen, another interaction regarding monetary compensation for the Chinese's travel shows how interactional wants are balanced with claims to face. At the end of their business trip, the Chinese received envelopes containing the money left over after expense deductions were made from the total contract allocated funds for the visit. They considered this sum to be insufficient, engaging in a heated, 2 hour and 26 minute discussion that expressed confusion and dissatisfaction.⁵

- (5) Phil: I'd just like to say it's a great pleasure to have you come here. Thank you very much for coming. I'd just like to make a presentation to each of you for [company name].
Int: [interprets into Chinese]
Phil: [Phil stands up and presents an envelope to Sun. Sun stands up, takes it, and shakes hands with him. Phil hands one to Ma, who also stands up. They shake hands.]
Chen: Take them all together.
Phil: [Phil gives an envelope to each of the others: Chen, Lin, Shen and Xu.]
[Visitors open their envelopes and count the money inside. Sun takes a pen and sheet of paper from Sajid, and prepares to sign the receipt.]
Sun: How much?
Xu: [Counts the money carefully and openly.]
Xu: 570, 570, this doesn't seem enough.
[Heated discussion in Chinese among the visitors. They agree to ask for a list of the costs.]
Xu: We must definitely have a list of the costs.
Int: How much money did you give them altogether?
Xu: US\$ 4000. US\$ 4000 per person. [Answering a question that was not asked of him.]

⁵ In the following extract, "(???)" refers to unintelligible speech.

Int: [interprets to English]
 Sajid: The contract, the contract doesn't say we have to give them money.
 Int: [interprets to English]
 Shen: It does, it does.
 Int: [interprets to English]
 ...
 Xu: How much is the airfare? Ask them to show us the list of costs
 Int: [no interpretation]
 Sajid: To get a rough idea (???) we (???) that we have to pay you (???)
 Sun: All we want is a list.
 Int: [no interpretation]

(Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 114)

Some of the Chinese visitors felt that this relentless pursuit of their transactional goal to receive more money could be damaging to their face by giving an appearance of greed, but were still unwilling to surrender their cause. As Chen later remarked, "One thing is that we do not leave people saying that we are stingy, send, don't give the impressions of being too weak, and we should negotiate in a friendly way" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 115). The above interaction illustrates the Chinese's careful balance of interactional wants and claims to face in order to maintain face while accomplishing their goal.

As made apparent in the above examples, cross-cultural rapport-management strategies must consider additional elements, including contextual assessment norms, sociopragmatic conventions, pragmalinguistic conventions, fundamental cultural values, and inventory of rapport-management strategies. Example 6 illustrates the importance of understanding cultural context in managing rapport:

- (6) A Puerto Rican woman, who had been living for many years in the United States, was visited by her father. During his stay, he helped take care of her son (his grandson). When she thanked him for his help, he became angry and felt hurt. Her mother called her and said: 'How could you have been so thoughtless? You thanked your father. He was happy to take care of Johnnie. Have you forgotten how to behave? He's your father and he loves you. How could you be so cold - to thank him?'"
 (Eisenstein and Bodman, 1993, p. 74).

Even between family members, conventional awareness of rapport management strategies is essential in holding successful interactions. The Puerto Rican woman above thanked her father because the sociopragmatic conventions in the U.S., where she had been living for a number of years, required it. Her father and mother, having no experience with these conventions, were offended, believing that no explicit thanks were necessary in this situation among family. Particularly for members of more than one community of practice, example (8) demonstrates the importance of moving fluidly between different cultural conventions in maintaining successful communicative interactions.

As Placencia and García (2007) suggest, “Spencer-Oatey’s notion of rapport management seems to be the most adequate to account for the phenomena analyzed under the rubric of (im)politeness to date...” (p. 16). However, they continue to explain that this framework is not without its problems. Because some distinctions of face and sociality rights are quite subtle and may not be easily identifiable in spoken corpora, the rapport management framework may pose a problem for analysis of this type of data. Additionally, this model may not be applicable for single-language studies, since the secondary sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs) such as a modesty-approration SIP and a clarity-vagueness SIP, suggested by Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003), may not be relevant in single-language and culture studies. As such, Spencer-Oatey (2005) suggests that further research is needed to prove whether this framework is indeed effective for analysis across cultures, contexts, and individuals.

For the purposes of this study, Placencia and García’s proposed potential problems do not apply, since it will use a corpus of text-based SCMC and will examine cross-cultural communication. As such, the current study presents the ideal circumstances to employ this

model because of the need to take into consideration the differing contextual variables of each individual interaction, as well as the learners' progression with their use of pragmatic conventions of Spanish throughout the course of their involvement in a SNS. This model provides the opportunity to analyze how the learners build relationships with NSs and what they do to maintain them.

Evidence of rapport management strategies are found throughout interactions, but can be particularly salient in conversation closings, where interlocutors establish and communicate the status of their relationship.

2.3 Conversation Closings

Conversation closings are particularly sensitive to interlocutors' orientations to continuation or closure of their interactions. Closings are used to organize termination, but perhaps more importantly, they can provide insight into the relational states speakers have achieved in talk, since they are used to "determine how speakers will 'leave' one another for continuation or closure" (Button, 1987, p. 50). Previous work on conversation closings shows that they are intended to terminate conversation, reinforce relationships, and support future interactions (Button, 1987; Goffman, 1971; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Omar, 1992; Sacks and Schegloff, 1973). The following sections will discuss previous work on the study of conversation closings from a conversation analytic perspective, conversation closings in Spanish (selected Colombian, Mexican-American, Chilean, and Ecuadorian varieties), non-face-to-face spoken conversation closings, and conversation closings in online environments.

2.3.1 Conversation closings from a CA perspective. Schegloff and Sacks (1973) acknowledge that a conversation "does not simply end, but is brought to a close" (p. 289).

By examining audiotapes and transcripts of naturally occurring conversation, they explain the way in which interlocutors collaboratively bring conversations to a close. They describe the two necessary components for the "achievement of proper closing:" initiation of the closing and the terminal exchange (p. 318).⁶ While there are components that serve a variety of other purposes, the two steps listed above are the only ones crucial to the actual closing itself.

Initiation of a conversation closing often takes the form of a pre-closing. Goldberg (2004) found that close initiators often returned to or reformulated the reason for calling or made reference to prior arrangement. Oftentimes, however, they are context independent lexical units such as 'well', 'okay', or 'so' ('Alright dear' is the pre-closing in example 7).⁷ These utterances serve as a way for a speaker to take a turn in the conversation, without contributing to the current topic or initiating a new topic, essentially providing the opportunity to pass. More accurately, pre-closings should be called 'possible pre-closings', since their status as such relies on the interlocutor's response (Schegloff and Sack, 1973). There are a number of ways in which the conversation can proceed. The interlocutor might choose this opportunity to begin a new topic of conversation, or as is the case in example 8, offer a "proverbial or aphoristic formulation of conventional wisdom which can be heard of the 'moral' or 'lesson' of the topic..." (p. 306). The interlocutor may also choose to return the pass, thus advancing the terminal exchange, or the actual takings of leave from the conversation as in example 7. Goldberg (2004) describes the process of amplitude shift to examine the inter-turn relationship between a speaker's utterances by noting their affiliation

⁶ Button (1987) refers to these as the first and second close components and the first and second terminal components.

⁷ Since examples 9-21 come from several sources using different transcriptions conventions, they have been stripped of their original notations to only show content-relevant information. As the data for this study is comprised of text-based SCMC transcripts, elements of language such as inbreaths, overlap, and volume will not apply to this analysis.

or disaffiliation with previous utterances. The affiliation of an utterance to the prior utterance constitutes a downward shift (example 7), while the disaffiliation of an utterance with the prior utterance to create a new sequence, constitutes an upward shift (example 8).

- (7) Bea: And thanks for callin
 Dianna: **Alright dear,** *pre-closing*
 Bea: **Alrighty** *pre-closing response (returning the pass)*
 Dianna: **Bye** *terminal exchange*
 Bea: **Bye** *terminal exchange*
- (Button, 1987, p. 102)

- (8) Johnson: ... and uh, uh we're gonna see if we can't uh tie in our plans a little better.
 Baldwin: **Okay fine.** *potential pre-closing*
 Johnson: ALRIGHT?
 Baldwin: RIGHT.
 Johnson: **Okay boy,** *pre-closing*
 Baldwin: Okay
 Johnson: Bye bye
 Baldwin: G'night.
- (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, p. 307)

The above two examples show close initiating exchanges and terminal exchanges in adjacent position, though this is not necessarily always the case (Goldberg, 2004). In fact, a closing section can unfold in numerous ways.

Conversations do not always end with these “archetype closings,” as Button (1987) calls them. He describes foreshortened closings, which have more than one closing component built into a single turn. These types of closings can prevent moving out of a closing by placing the first closing component and first terminal component in the first turn and the second closing component and terminal in the second turn.

- (9) Ronald: **Okay guhbye DuVal** *first closing/terminal component*
 Marge: **Alright honey bye** *second closing/terminal component*
- (Button, 1987, p. 135)

In these situations speakers can both seek completion of terminal and ensure that the closing is mutually produced. The risk associated with this type of closing is the brusqueness of its initiation, which can be alleviated if the reciprocation reestablishes mutuality of the closing or if the initiator adds an additional terminal before the complete termination of the conversation.

Extended closings are another non-archetypal manifestation of conversation closings. In such situations, the closing can be extended through the addition of a third closing component where the first terminal component would usually appear (example 10).

- (10) Laura: Alrighty,
Marge: Okay honey,
Laura: **Alrighty honey** *additional third closing component*
Marge: Okay Bye
- (Button, 1987, p. 140)

The presence of an additional close component creates another opportunity to move out of the closing.

That a speaker has a good reason for ending a conversation is also of critical importance to closings. Warrants for closing a telephone conversation can be specific to the caller or the called, or they can be common to both. One warrant common to both the caller and called is a reference to the other's interest (example 11).

- (11) A: Well I'll letchu go. I don't wanna tie up your phone.
(Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, p. 310)

Specific information referenced in such warrants can be collected throughout the conversation (very commonly at the beginning of conversations in questions such as 'What are you doing?') and stored for use upon closing the conversation. These devices "reinforce our understanding of the orientation of the interlocutors to 'a single conversation' as a unit,

and to 'THIS single conversation' as an instance, in which ITS development to some point may be employed as a resource in accomplishing its further development as a specific, particularized occurrence" (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, p. 311, caps original).

Placement of initiations of closings and terminal exchanges and the warrants for their placement are highly important for the successful collaboration of conversation closing. If warrants have not been mutually established, the closing may be extended for the purpose of legitimizing the closing (Button, 1987). In example 12, Ronald inserts a question in order to extend the closing, since it was abruptly presented by Maggie and not mutually established.

- (12) Ronald: 'hhhhhh What-waddiyou want fer dinner
Maggie: I won'-I, jist I'll take care of myself you do the same. Goodbye
Ronald: **Whaddiyou mean**
- (Button, 1987, p. 149)

Button (1987) introduces seven common "sequence types" used to introduce new information and/or move out of closings for the purpose of extending the conversation.

The first way in which a speaker might move out of a closing is through an arrangement. These typically display two features. First, arrangements imply that the conversation is part of a series and may be "used to provide an orderly relationship between 'this' encounter and a 'future' encounter" (Button, 1987, p. 105). Arrangements also help justify the conclusion of the current conversation by reserving or postponing additional topics until the future conversation (example 13).

- (13) Heather: **Lemme know w't the Doctor hastih say.**
Maggie: **Yeah okay well h'll call yuh later then.**
Heather: Okay y
Maggie: Okay sweetie.
Heather: Okay
Maggie: ye bhhye
Heather: Bye
- (Button, 1987, p. 104-105)

Back-references might also be used to move out of a closing. These make reference to a previous topic of conversation. Unlike arrangements, whose movement out of closings was minimal, back-references very often prompt a next turn in response, rather than another closing component.

- (14) Bea: Well I'll see you at-at
Tess: Tomorrow night,
Bea: At six-At six o'clock
Tess: Tomorrow ni-tomorrow night at six
Bea: Yeah, okay
Tess: **Uh huh, And I'm sorry I didn't get Margaret, I really ve been wanting to**
(Button, 1987, p. 109)

Topic initial elicitors are designed to generate a new topic of conversation and are another way that a speaker might to move out of a closing. Topic initial elicitors can appear in closing sections and aim to bring forth a new topic from the next speaker.

- (15) Pete: Yeah I'll be there
Marvin: It's alright huh?
Pete: Ok Marvin.
Marvin: **How are things goin?**
(Button, 1987, p. 113)

In-conversation objects do not themselves produce new material, as topic initial elicitors, but they display availability for conversation continuation and can therefore allow the following turn to introduce new material and move out of a closing.

- (16) Geri: Okay
Shirley: Alright?
Geri: Mm-h m?
Shirley: **D'yih talk tih Dana this week?**
Geri: hh Yeh
(Button, 1987, p. 117)

Solicitudes are similar to arrangements in closings in that they do not elicit a terminal component. Depending on the goals of the speaker, solicititudes can be extended to

potentially introduce new topics. The turn following the solicitude is generally a response to that solicitude, and the next following turn can then continue to the closing.

- (17) Pam: Thanks a lot. 'N I'll see you soon
Marge: Okay honey
Pam: Okay
Marge: **Drive careful**
Pam: I will h

(Button, 1987, p. 118)

Referencing or stating the original reason for the call can help speakers justify conversation closings (Schegloff and Sack, 1973). Their presence can indicate that there is no further material to be introduced in the conversation.

- (18) Mark: **Uh .. mhh I didn't feel rebuffed,**
Bob: Wul good.
Mark: **hhh But uh**
Bob: Good
Mark: **having talk' t' JoAnn I did wanna git thee f full skinny**
Bob: hh-hhhh hh Okay

(Button, 1987, p. 121)

A statement of appreciation can also move out of a closing. The object of these appreciations can be either the call itself or some sort of 'appreciable' that was discussed previously in the conversation, as in example 19.

- (19) Avon Lady: Uh that is a very good value.
Meg: Uh uuh,
Avon Lady: So
Meg: Okay now.
Avon Lady: **Thank you dear,**

(Button, 1987, p. 123)

These above sequences can be inserted following the first possible close component, following the second possible close component, or following the first terminal, though the latter is rather uncommon (Button, 1987). Certain types of these within-closing sub-components in closing sequences, namely appreciations and arrangements, are less likely to

promote continuation of the closing sequence, advancing the terminal exchange (Goldberg, 2004). As the above examples illustrate, these sequence types can serve a number of functions, assisting the interlocutors to fulfill whatever goals they may have for a given context.

Cross-culturally, manifestations of conversation closings vary in order to fulfill certain cultural conventions. Different politeness systems, for example, can have an effect on the way in which leave is taken in conversation. Nevertheless, even though groups' rituals for leave-taking differ, according to Sacks and Schegloff (1984), all conversation closings share some universals. First, they propose that all conversation closings involve a ritual, familiar to the members of a particular community. Second, they suggest that utterances in closings occur in rapid succession, often with few pauses but considerable overlap and latching. Ameka (1999) also highlights the universalities of conversation closings, stating that they are made up of three stages: a pre-closing statement, a leave-taking, and a final departure, and that all farewell expressions share four common semantic types: blessings, reciprocal good wishes, plans for future contact, and remembrances to people at the parting person's destination. Still, it is important to note that however universal conversation closing practices may be, not all cultures require a formal signaling of closure in interactions, and those that do have varying degrees of elaborateness and do not necessarily accord the same value to this element of interaction (Ameka, 1999).⁸ The following section will discuss conversation closings in Spanish.

⁸ The Wasco people of the Pacific Northwest enter and take leave from interaction with no formal signal (Hymes, 1970) and while the Eskimo do take leave, the exchange is nothing more than 'I am going./You are going' (Jennes, 1964).

2.3.2 Conversation closings in Spanish. The little research done on conversation closings in Spanish has shown that different formulae can be used in order to take leave. One example is to reference health:

(20) *¡Que te mejores!* (Ferrer and Sánchez Lanza, 2002, p. 31).
'Get better!'

The variation seen in leave-taking formulae can be attributed to factors such as social distance and power. In a study of thirty seller/client interactions which took place in shops that specialized in products targeted to women (clothing and accessory boutiques, ladies' shoe stores, and perfume stores), Ferrer and Sánchez Lanza (2002) found that younger speakers, tended to use more simple forms, such as:

(21) *chau*
'bye'

Older speakers in this same study, however, tended to use forms containing temporal components, such as:

(22) *hasta mañana*
until tomorrow

In social situations, however, these conversation closings involve a series of steps in order to arrive at the final leave-taking.

The ritual for taking leave from social gatherings in Colombian Spanish, described and termed the "salsipuede" by Fitch (1990/1991), involves a strict pattern of exchange:

1. Guest(s) announce intentions to leave, sometimes thanking host(s) for the invitation.
2. Host asks why the guest is proposing to leave and protests timing of departure.

3. Guest repeats intention to leave and/or offers account for needing to leave.
4. Host rejects account and/or suggests alternative.

Slight variations of this pattern may occur, such as repetition and recycling of certain steps. Another possibility is the insertion of a new topic between the first and second steps of the ritual, in which case the initial announcement of departure acts as a pre-closing (Fitch, 1990/1991). In her eleven recorded examples of Colombian speakers, there were two abbreviations or departures from this leave-taking ritual. One speaker left after only the first round of goodbyes, and another left without saying goodbye at all. The participants in this study considered both of these instances “rude or incompetent, i.e., deficient performances of the act of leavetaking” (1990/1991, p. 216). While the observations were only of Colombians, Fitch proposes that, because of their cultural similarities, other Latin Americans engage in the same leave-taking ritual outlined above, and she attributes the extended leave-taking formula for Colombians and other Latin Americans to the heightened importance they place on social events in comparison to North Americans (1990/1991). Such a broad generalization might be problematic for comparing more specific linguistic characteristics and contexts, such as warrants and offers in service encounter closings in Montevidean and Quiteño Spanish (discussed below). However, Latin American speakers of Spanish likely share overarching trends in conversation closings, even to extend to varieties of Spanish in the U.S.

This kind of importance placed on social events can also be seen in García’s (1981) analysis of conversation closings among Mexican-American family members at a social gathering and identified four main steps in the conversation closings among Mexican-Americans (somewhat similar to Fitch’s *salsipuede*):

1. Announcement of intention of leaving,
2. Preparation to leave,
3. Solidarity building,
4. Final leave-taking.

In this context, several cultural themes arose, including family closeness, male authority (males decided when to take leave and rally support when this time came), and free emotional expression (which García considers an interactional norm for this social group).

These conversation closings also employed the use of both Spanish and English. García acknowledges that these contextual elements may greatly impact the way in which conversation closings are used and suggests that cultural and social norms “[alter] the nature of the speech situation and the rules for the communicative interaction” (p. 214). One of these cultural and social norms at play is the preference of politeness strategies.

In a number of Spanish speaking cultures, it has been shown that solidarity politeness strategies are favored to deference politeness strategies (García, 2007). Table 2 summarizes a number of the specific strategies types used in Spanish-speaking cultures described by García (2007).

Table 2

Politeness strategies used in Spanish-speaking cultures

Politeness strategy	Strategy type	Example
Solidarity	Directive	Mood derivable strategies, explicit performatives, obligation statements, concealed commands, locution derivable strategies, want statements
	Non-directive	Accepting excuse, expressing understanding, dismissing excuse, defying/accusing/complaining, requesting information, compliment, promising reward, making/accepting future plans, accepting refusal
Deference	Conventionally indirect	Suggestory formulae, query preparatory utterances
	Non-conventionally indirect	Strong hints
	Non-directive	Not indebteding the interlocutor, expressing sorrow

Based on this limited research, the preference for solidarity politeness strategies can explain the similarities between Colombian and Mexican American conversation closing tendencies in social contexts and as Fitch (1990/1991) suggests, Latin American conversation closing tendencies in general.

Although supportive interchanges such as conversation closings are more important for relations between people who know each other than those who do not (Goffman, 1971, p. 65), service encounters also involve strict conversation closing conventions. In a study on conversation closings in Montevidean and Quiteño Spanish, Marquez Reiter and Placencia (2004) show that speakers employ utterances that normally occur at the beginning of

conversations as pre-closings. Warrants (utterances like *well* and *okay*) and offers (questions like *are you busy?*) can determine whether the conversation develops further or closes. These types of utterances were prevalent in Montevidean and Quiteño Spanish along with other closing devices, such as promises to come back and shop, expressions of gratitude, apologies, and leave-taking utterances were also used. Warrants in Montevidean service encounters included intensified expressions such as *muy bien* (very well) and *ta bárbaro* (that's great), while Quiteño service encounters saw only unemotional forms. Clark and French (1981) state that the occurrence of leave-taking utterances is related to the degree of involvement between participants, since such utterances are intended for reaffirmation of acquaintance rather than contact termination, and while this signals greater involvement/investment by Montevidean speakers, the differences between closings in these varieties of Spanish (relative verbosity in the Montevidean variety and restraint in the Quiteño variety) were only observed in business interactions and service encounters.

The above descriptions of conversation closings in Spanish pertain to face-to-face interactions. As it is important to consider conversation closing practices in various cultures and communities of practice, they must also be considered within different forms of communication. The onset of synchronous communication technologies, such as the telephone and CMC, has had an impact on the way interlocutors take leave from conversations. The following sections will discuss leavetakings in Spanish and English on answering machines and closings in online environments.

2.3.3 Non-face-to-face spoken conversation closings. According to Valeiras Viso (2002), new forms of communication tend to borrow practices from already existing forms of interaction. In his comparative study of 70 answering machine messages from Madrid and

70 from London, he likens telephone conversations to face-to-face interactions and emails to written letters, stating the more recent employ characteristics from the previously existing. Under this premise, one might liken telephone conversations with other non-face-to-face, synchronous forms of communication, such as SCMC.⁹ Previous work has shown that phone calls contain three components in their closing sections: the closing of the topic, which can involve a pre-closing statement, often characterized by a particle such as *well*, *so*, and *ok*; the leave-taking, which can include a summary of the conversation, future plans for contact, expressions of thanks or pleasure for having had the conversation, justification for ending the conversation, expression of well-wishing, and the leave-taking itself; and the hang-up (Sacks and Schegloff, 1973; Clark and French, 1981).

In a study of 140 Spanish and English language leave-takings (from Madrid and London, respectively) left on answering machine messages, Valeiras Viso (2002) found that the most apparent difference in the leave-taking process in Spanish and English is the leave-taking itself. He attributes this distinction to the importance of physical contact in maintaining social relations in Spanish culture. From a young age Spanish children are taught to say goodbye with hugs and kisses, a practice that carries over to other types of discourse (Valeiras Viso, 2002). In answering machine messages, this was manifested through amplified lexical and morphological (through frequent use of the diminutive or augmentative form) variation. British English language messages used six variations of leave-taking (*bye*, *bye-bye*, *bye now*, *cheers*), while Peninsular Spanish employed 21 (*adiós*, *hasta luego*, *hasta luegoito*, *un beso*, *un besito*). It is possible that, in computer-mediated environments, these lexical and morphological alterations to the leave-taking itself will also

⁹ While SCMC may be compared to other forms of written and spoken interaction, it is important to remember that it is a separate medium of communication, involving its own unique conventions (e.g. Herring, 2001).

be present. The following section reviews the research that has been done on conversation closings in SCMC.

2.3.4 Conversation closings in online environments. Little work has been done on conversation closings in online environments. In an analysis of the openings and closings of four SCMC-based¹⁰ meetings between six participants, Markman (2009) found that closings consisted of a two-step process. The first step involved either a conversation summary formulation or an explicit closing, and the second step was a turn projecting future action. Markman also found that the strategies of conversation closings explained by Schegloff & Sacks (1974) held true in this multiperson, text-based SCMC; participants were sensitive to certain spots in the conversation that were appropriate for initiating a closing (such as after possible pre-closings like 'well,' 'okay,' or 'so'). Still, closings in this multi-person context were difficult, as “the inability to hold the floor with a turn in-progress and the inability to monitor the ongoing talk of others means that there is no guarantee that an opportunity to close the conversation will remain open for the time it takes to type and send a preclose turn” (Markman, 2009, p. 164). One-on-one conversations in text-based SCMC, however, do not seem to share this issue. Many one-on-one chat interfaces (*Livemocha* included) indicate when an interlocuter is in the process of entering text through some sort of visual cue. Such features can greatly impact turn-taking and closing in a conversation by allowing interlocutors to more easily hold the floor and monitor turns in progress. Knowing

¹⁰ Markman describes text-based SCMC as “quasisynchronous” rather than synchronous, since participants cannot actually see or hear each other’s turns in progress. He places this type of interaction on a continuum between asynchronous mediums of communication, such as emails, and simultaneous mediums of communication, such as telephone conversations or face-to-face interaction. For the sake of consistency, I will continue to refer to communication via text-based chat as synchronous CMC.

that a turn is presently being produced might encourage an interlocutor to wait before beginning to compose a response.

Results from a pilot of the current study showed a general trend of NNSs of Spanish, whose L1 is English, not having the last word in leave-taking acts with NSs. In twelve conversation closings between Spanish language learners and NSs of Spanish, five learners had the last word in their conversation, while the NSs had the last word in seven of the conversation closings. The slightly larger number of NS last words can be explained by Fitch's (1990/1991) discussion of elongated conversation closings in Spanish and further supports the idea of solidarity politeness systems at work in Spanish language conversation closings. It is possible that the NNSs were unaware of this custom and accepted their interlocutors' responses as final without completing the prolonged ritual and engaging in solidarity politeness strategies.

Kurisack and Luke's (2009) study of interactions in *Second Life*¹¹ examined the text-based SCMC elements of conversation closings. Results report on two groups (107 learners total) of fourth-semester Spanish learners using *Second Life* to chat for 1 to 1.5 hours, ten times over the course of the semester. As in the present study, these chats were open-ended, and while students were free to chat with other students in the course, they were encouraged to seek out NSs of Spanish.¹² In these conversations, Kurisack and Luke found that both NSs and NNSs initiated closings. These closings showed variety in length, content, and directness, but it was the NSs who produced more elaborate pre-closing statements. NS pre-

¹¹ *Second Life* is a 3D virtual world, with millions of active users (represented inworld by avatars) residing in more than 150 countries globally. *Second Life* serves as a forum for business, commerce, education, and diversion (www.secondlife.com).

¹² Because of the learners' freedom to independently seek out NSs of Spanish, Kurisack and Luke (2009) do not control for or present the NSs' demographic information. Similarly, the current study forgoes control over the NS characteristics for autonomy of learner interlocutor selection.

closings expressed more detailed reasons for ending the conversation and employed more indirect discourse strategies. Kurisack and Luke do not comment on the potential reasons for the differences in NS and NNS conversation closings, but these results are not surprising given the stages of pragmatic development of requests, as outlined by Félix-Brasdefer (2007). In his study of 45 beginning, intermediate, and advanced Spanish language learners, he found four main stages of pragmatic development: a pre-basic stage, during which learners gather information through observation, a basic stage, during which learners memorize formulae and chunks, an unpacking and formulaic use stage, during which learners begin to approximate NSs, and a pragmatic expansion stage, during which learners begin to adopt mitigators and speech act sequences. He found that learners generally do not begin to develop an understanding of the preference for conventional indirectness until the unpacking stage of pragmatic development.

Online environments are a growing venue for communication, be it social, professional, educational, or otherwise. As online environments become an increasingly unavoidable element of socialization into communities, forms of computer-mediated communication must be considered for their value in second language learning. The data and subsequent analysis in the current study are expected to provide one of the first looks at conversation closings in a text-based SCMC environment and will contribute valuable insight as to how speakers adapt to and communicate in new mediums of communication.

2.4 CMC

CMC and other technologies have brought forth a whole new venue in which communication can occur. For language learners, it has opened many doors for potential communication with NSs and other learners of the TL and provides an opportunity to

experience and use the language in ways not possible in traditional classroom instruction. Due to its unique discursive characteristics, CMC was initially considered to be an "ill-suited" platform for social uses of language (Baron, 1984, p. 136). More recent studies, however, have shown that CMC can in fact encourage social interaction, particularly when used for educational or supportive purposes (Arnold et al., 2008). Perhaps the greatest advantage of this technology is its ability to take language students beyond the confines of the traditional classroom. This has two major advantages for language learners. The first is that CMC is more than a proxy environment. Instead, CMC provides language learners the opportunity to use language in high stakes interactions (Thorne and Payne, 2005). This gives learners the chance to use language in real, meaningful contexts, as opposed to simply role-playing and acting in the TL. The second advantage of CMC for language learners is the ability to engage in genuine intercultural interactions by connecting with people outside the boundaries of the classroom. This includes the opportunity to connect and communicate with members of the target culture.

As research has shown, effective language learning requires meaningful communicative experiences and can benefit greatly from experience with intercultural communication (Belz and Thorne, 2006; Canale and Swain, 1980; Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Engaging in intercultural CMC can also lead to an increased capacity to attend to linguistic form. This is the result of heightened awareness of NS discourse strategies (Belz and Thorne, 2006). Furthermore, synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) between NSs and NNSs can reshape the way in which students in traditional foreign language classes use and acquire language by allowing them to build relationships with NSs

from all over the world and, in doing so, develop their own sense of meaning and purpose for communication.

Previous studies have shown the benefits of SCMC for improving the oral and pragmatic skills of language learners (e.g. Abrams, 2001; Belz, 2007; Belz and Thorne, 2006; González-Lloret, 2007; Lee, 2006; Sykes, 2005). González-Lloret (2007) used a conversation analytical approach to examine interactions in multi-speaker chat rooms between second-year Spanish students over the course of one semester. The results of these conversations, which included discussions about class readings, task-like activities, information gap activities, and decision-making activities, showed how students engaged in meaningful, organized interaction, using new and creative resources to cope with the paralinguistic and typographical restrictions of text-based chat. Within the SCMC environment, students collaboratively constructed interactions, managed sequential organization, and self-corrected.

Students also adopt diverse roles when engaging in SCMC. Abrams (2001) sought to investigate participant roles used by students in various mediums of communication. 46 German students participated in two CMC and two group journal assignments throughout the course of fifteen weeks. The data were coded to identify the types of participant roles adopted by the students in each context. It was found that, in CMC, students fulfilled all participant roles used in written group journal assignments (speakers, respondents, scolders, and creators of in-group identity), but in addition, they also took roles as attacker, challenger supporter, and joker. In the CMC environment, students were able to more actively negotiate these participant roles, and as a result, adopted a greater variety of participant roles and a greater use of roles requiring social collaboration.

SCMC can also be a useful tool in assisting pragmatic development, particularly in speech acts. In Sykes (2005), 27 third-semester Spanish students were divided into three groups (written chat, oral chat, and face-to-face conversation) in order to examine the effect of synchronous discussion on the production of head acts and supporting moves in refusals and the effect on the quality of speech act sequences produced. The students were given a pre-test, taught a lesson on refusals, and were then given a post-test on formal and informal contexts. The posttest results showed that in the formal situation, all three groups performed more like NSs. The oral chat group used a greater variety of strategies, including more complex grounders and head acts, and the face-to-face group used primarily supporting moves to soften their refusals in the posttest. Overall, it was the written chat group that saw the greatest improvement in terms of both complexity and variety. This can be attributed to SCMC's inability to express intonation and body language, creating a need for students to communicate more explicitly (Sykes, 2005).

Yet another benefit of SCMC, as Lee (2006) discussed in his analysis of Korean-American heritage language learners blogging in *Cyworld*, is how this type of Networked Collaborative Interaction (NCI) empowered learners to become active and effective users of the TL. Features of *Cyworld* include chatting, commentaries, pictures, and links, which promoted networking among friends, family and colleagues. In this community, heritage language learners were encouraged to use language in such a way that supported a variety of interaction types and promoted negotiation of meaning. Involvement in this social network also resulted in a greater sociopsychological attachment to the heritage language.

As the above examples illustrate, SCMC can be a valuable tool for language learners. When used in NS/NNS contexts, SCMC can encourage use of intercultural, communicative

skills and provide language learners with the opportunity to use the TL while collaborating and building relationships with NSs. In NNS/NNS situations, learners collaboratively construct interactions, manage sequential organization, and self-correct. They also employ a wider variety of participant roles than in regular written language and develop more native-like use of speech acts than in oral chat or face-to-face conversation. Finally, SCMC, when used by heritage language learners¹³, supports variety in interaction type and negotiation of meaning. This wide range of linguistic and pragmatic skills, when transferred to authentic oral communication, equips language learners with the framework they need to be more adept communicators, ready to negotiate any context in their TL. SNSs are a TL context of ever-growing prominence. The communication that arises between members of SNSs is a form of telecollaboration.

2.4.1 Telecollaboration. Online environments and the internet have long been considered potentially beneficial tools for L2 development, particularly through telecollaboration. Telecollaboration is a means of communication which allows participation through observation and action (Belz and Kinginger, 2002). As with any medium of communication or potential tool for learning, previous studies reveal both benefits and drawbacks of employing telecollaboration for the purpose of foreign language learning (See Belz, 2008 for a review of work on telecollaboration). Tables 3 and 4 summarize some of the affordances and difficulties of using telecollaboration for language learning.

¹³ Whether heritage and second language learners function differently in SCMC environments will not be addressed in the present study.

Table 3

Affordances and Potential Benefits of Telecollaboration

Affordances	Potential Benefits	Authors
Increase student motivation and promote greater TL output	Greater communicative competence	Beauvois (1998), Kelm (1996), Kern (1995, 1996), Meagher & Castaños (1996), Toyoda & Harrison (2002), Warschauer (1996a, 1996b, 1998)
Opportunity for international encounters	Greater cultural awareness	Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet (2001), Kramsch & Thorne (2002), Warschauer (1999)
Opportunity for international encounters	Greater intercultural competence	Belz (2003), Brammerts (1995), Müller-Hartmann (2000), O'Dowd (2003)
Opportunities of international encounters	Greater pragmatic competence	Belz & Kinginger (2002), González-Lloret (2011)

Table 4

Potential Difficulties of Telecollaboration

Potential Difficulty	Author	Implication
Different social and institutional dimensions	Belz (2001, 2003)	Greater likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstanding
Online mediums avoidance strategies unavailable in face-to-face communication	Ware (2003)	Potential for decreased engagement
Students and teachers must negotiate different, culturally contingent understandings of the purpose of online discussions	Belz & Müller-Hartmann (2003), Kramsch & Thorne (2002)	Discussion between students regarding their goals and the significance of the activity may be necessary
Telecollaboration does not automatically promote language learning	Belz and Kinginger (2002), Dusias (2005), Kramsch & Thorne (2002)	Telecollaborative activities must be pedagogically relevant and designed with specific outcomes in mind

Telecollaborative communication can incite certain tensions among language learners. Ware (2005) describes the types of tensions that arose from “different socially and culturally situated attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that informed students' communicative choices in the online discourse” (p. 64). Three main tensions came about during the telecollaborative project between twelve advanced students of English in Germany and nine advanced students of German (Ware, 2005):

- Different expectations and norms for telecollaboration: Interview data indicated that both groups did not share expectations of the purposes of telecollaboration. The American students had significant experience using technology in the classroom. They wanted to use computer technologies to fulfill specific learning goals, while the

instructional technology was somewhat of a novelty for the German students, who were pleased to take advantage of these tools simply for the purpose of NS contact.¹⁴ Finally, because of the internet medium, there was inconsistency in spelling, punctuation, and attention to grammatical form. Both the German and American students agreed that their linguistic accuracy had not improved due to this activity, and some cited inattention to grammatical conventions to be the cause. Still, while this particular activity may not have benefitted literacy or linguistic skills, it was certainly a medium for communicative practice and exposure to the L2.

- Social and institutional factors that shape tensions: While German students were motivated by their view that learning English is a necessity for future career opportunities and success, the Americans' primary motivation for participation in the telecollaboration was their grades. This finding, however, may not be generalizable across contexts. For instance, American students learning Spanish may find it necessary for future job opportunities.
- Individual differences in motivation and use of time: Since the American students did not share the societal pressure to learn German as the Germans felt to learn English, their reasons for studying German were generally personal rather than out of a sense of obligation or necessity. The decreased sense of obligation in the American students also resulted in a lower priority for the activity. The American students often cited that they did not have time for the telecollaboration.

¹⁴ It is difficult to know whether these differing expectations are the result of cultural norms or whether they can be attributed to unequal exposure to technology. As learning technologies become more widespread globally and incorporated more often into classrooms, attitudes between German and American student may change.

In a series of tasks based on common readings through email, chat, and web-based information exchange Belz (2002) found similar tensions between German and American students regarding technological know-how, computer access, academic calendars, and accreditation systems. She found, however, that learner agency was able to override such institutional pressures. Of the five groups examined in Ware (2005), two proved more successful at overcoming these tensions and arriving at mutually compatible relationships. These groups accomplished this “by responding and elaborating upon questions, using personal forms of address, following up on other-initiated topics, and converging on a conversational tone” (Ware, 2005, p. 77). Schneider and von der Emde (2005) also discuss conflict in NS/NNS online exchanges, asserting that online interactions are, in fact, “most successful when they include a coherent, intercultural content focus with potential to raise issues of cultural difference” (2005, p. 178). Such impassioned exchanges can enable learners to develop communicative competence.

Telecollaborative interactions that successfully enabled learners to develop aspects of their intercultural communicative competence share certain characteristics (O’Dowd, 2003). In a study on email exchanges between Spanish and English students, conversations that provided students with opportunities to express their feelings and views about their own culture to a receptive audience, successfully resulted in a greater awareness of cultural differences, helping to improve cultural competence. Such conversations encouraged students to reflect critically on their own culture through questions posed by their partners and engaged students in dialogic interaction with their partners about the home and target cultures. Those students involved in this study who were particularly successful at fostering an intercultural relationship with their telecollaborative partners exchanged emails that

considered socio-pragmatic rules of the other's language, provided analysis and personal options about the discussion topic, asked questions that provoked feedback and reflection, attempted to establish a friendly rapport, and considered the needs and interests of the partners. These characteristics, and those mentioned above, were elements that showed to be of great importance in creating and maintaining successful intercultural interactions in this study.

In addition to broader cultural and communicative issues, telecollaboration can provide a venue for addressing grammatical aspects of language. Lee (2005) explored the issue of feedback in NS/NNS telecollaborative dyads. The participant pairs in this study consisted of NSs, who were graduate instructors of Spanish, and NNS, who were undergraduate students of Spanish. Not surprisingly, the NSs took on the role of teachers in their goal oriented activities with NNSs through SCMC in these interactions. They provided the NNSs with implicit feedback primarily through the use of clarification checks and recasts. When offering feedback for lexical items, L2 elaboration proved most effective, but for syntactic problems, explanation in the L1 had a more positive effect on learner comprehension. In these interactions with NS instructors of the TL, NNSs showed a high level of uptake, and Lee concluded that “a reactive approach to form-focused instruction may induce learners to pay attention to linguistic form, which in turn may restructure their interlanguage and increase language accuracy” (2005, p. 171). Lee explains, though, that the high level of response to feedback could be due, in part, to the nature of the written interaction. Emails, chats, and other written methods of telecollaborative communication do not share the ephemeral quality of spoken language that allows learners to easily access and consult with previous talk in the interaction.

Belz's (2006) study on one learner determined that telecollaborative pedagogy and learner corpus analysis can positively influence L2 general competence development and L2 pragmatic development. The learner studied showed improved L2 pragmatic abilities after seeing NS trends of use and her own trends of use over two semesters. Belz and Vyatkina (2005) conducted a similar study involving a developmental learner corpus to track learners' development of L2 pragmatic competence and a pedagogical intervention designed from learners' own interactions. Using their own data, learners could more easily situate themselves within the context of the language being used. Although, it would be unrealistic to apply these methods to all students, these results do show how telecollaborative activities and the language collected from them can be adapted for language learning. The next question, then, is can telecollaborative activities promote language learning *without* pedagogical intervention? This study will explore user-driven, naturalistic participation in telecollaborative exchanges in *Livemocha*, one example of a Web 2.0 technology used for language learning.

2.4.2 Telecollaboration and the social web. The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, often called the 'social web', has changed the character of telecollaboration and language teaching and learning as we know it by enabling more user involvement on the web. This new ability of the web to serve as a participatory space in which collaboration occurs has important implications for telecollaboration and language learning, since, unlike closed learning management systems, these technologies provide easy access to multiple modes of communication (Guth & Thomas, 2010). Such web 2.0 tools with telecollaborative potential include those for media sharing, managing digital contents (social bookmarking and feed aggregators), wikis, and the focus of this study, SNSs. As previously discussed,

participants in SNSs (and the other Web 2.0 tools mentioned) must become socialized into the community in order to build fruitful relationships and engage in successful interactions. Traditionally, telecollaboration was defined by a formal partnership (Belz, 2003), but Hauck (2010) makes the argument for a more complex mix of participants, as can be found in a SNS, by stating that they can “provide a more dynamic, comparative basis for an intercultural encounter” (Hauck, 2010, p. 229). This deviation from the standard tandem exchange helps alleviate what Hauck and Lewis (2007) consider a risk of “becoming a kind of confrontation between two groups of participants, with a consequent hardening of stereotypes” (Hauck & Lewis, 2007, p. 252).

Taking into consideration the new realities of technology in the 21st century, Helm and Guth (2010) discuss how many of the new media literacies proposed by Jenkins et al., such as multitasking and negotiation, are crucial skills for Telecollaboration 2.0. And while Web 2.0 technologies are gaining popularity among teachers as potential collaborative learning environments (Hauck, 2010), working outside controlled instructionally-purposed technologies can give rise to ‘herd’ behavior (Salganik et al., 2006) or heightened awareness of power relationships (Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). As such, Helm and Guth call for the development of “critical awareness so that these technologies be effectively used to promote language development, intercultural competence and deep, reflective and indeed transformative learning” (2010, p. 85). Part of this critical awareness should involve pragmatics awareness, which is fundamentally important element of the language socialization that occurs in Web 2.0 environments.

2.4.3 Pragmatic development in online environments. In a review of the role of computer mediation holds in L2 pragmatic competence and instruction, Belz (2007)

highlights the three basic applications of computer mediation (CM) and CMC in L2 pragmatics research and instruction (p. 63):

1. “CM serves as a means of either delivery or connection whereby learners have increased access to genuine materials and increased opportunities for participation in meaningful interactions, which have been shown to facilitate L2 pragmatic development...”;
2. “CM can afford the construction of systemized corpora of NS and learner productions, which can again serve as sources for instructional materials or which can be used to track changes in learners' L2 pragmatic competence over time...”;
3. “CM can afford the design and execution of developmental pedagogical interventions on aspects of learners' emerging L2 pragmatic competence by directing their attention to their own and NSs' uses of focal pragmatic features in a context of authenticity”.

While there are a number of fruitful advantages to incorporating online resources in the instruction of L2 pragmatics, these can only be achieved with careful pedagogical considerations.

Sykes and Cohen (2008) stress the importance of considering design, task creation and administration, and feedback and assessment when developing and implementing online materials for acquisition of L2 pragmatics in Internet-mediated spaces. They present six principles for this practice:

- Objectives are cooperative, dynamic, and socially-constructed to allow for authentic and realistic pragmatic practice.

- Educational outcomes of the activities are explicitly defined and supported with accurate content.
- Tasks reflect the determined objectives and outcomes through multiple involvement opportunities, realistic contexts, and varied participant roles.
- The online platform is user-friendly and supported by initial training and ongoing support.
- Instructors play a passive, yet invested, role during tasks; Feedback should be reserved for follow-up and processing.
- Ancillary support is given for each lesson.

Sykes and Cohen (2008) present examples in websites, CMC, and synthetic immersive environments. Other potential internet-mediated forums for pragmatic instruction and development are blogs, wikis, and social networking sites.

Functional uses of language such as SCMC encourage communicative fluency, and “most existing research confirms that SCMC can have a positive influence on L2 oral speaking development” (Sotillo, 2000; Sykes, 2005, p. 401). Payne and Whitney (2002) summarize four conclusions regarding SCMC: SCMC can be important for interlanguage pragmatic development because of the act of negotiation of meaning, language produced in SCMC is generally more complex than in face-to-face interaction, student participation levels improve in shyer students, and TL attitudes improve. Still, SCMC’s most valuable and practical contribution to L2 pragmatic development is arguably its ability for language learners to engage in interactions with NSs of their TL, experience genuine language use in context, and analyze their own genuine interactions with NSs and members of the target culture.

The slower pace at which SCMC occurs has positive implications for L2 learners. Payne and Whitney's (2002) study of working memory and cognitive processing shows that because SCMC occurs at a slightly slower pace, it can be a beneficial tool for those learners with lower working memory capacity. Pragmatic development can also benefit from this slower pace of communication because of its need for cognitive processing abilities. In SCMC, learners have more time to plan language and analyze the context of use, an act that is important to pragmatic evaluation (Sykes, 2005). After this phase is completed, learners then have more time to formulate language.

Sykes and Cohen (2008) outline the numerous ways in which SCMC can be used to facilitate L2 pragmatic development. Activity types, such as in-class practice activities, cultural analysis and literary discussion, project-based learning tasks, and free conversation are paired with example classroom applications to illustrate the wide range of possibilities for incorporating SCMC tools in the process of pragmatic development. This list is a useful tool for language teachers, and provides insight into the numerous opportunities CMC provides for L2 pragmatic development in the classroom.

The above information is essential in addressing questions of L2 pragmatic development, particularly politeness and rapport management strategies employed by learners in conversation closings. Over time, and in a specialized community of practice, a number of questions can be raised concerning language learners' experiences and interactions within this environment.

This study draws from previous work and research on a number of relevant topics, including language socialization, L2 pragmatics, politeness, conversations closings, and telecollaboration and other forms of CMC to offer a more holistic view of the process of

language learning. By examining conversation closings of their interactions in the language-focused SNS, *Livemocha*, this study will comment on the experiences of Spanish language learners throughout the course of one academic year and seek to discuss the research questions being addressed.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the methods by which this study was conducted. It begins with a detailed description of the seven study participants. It then proceeds to discuss the data source, *Livemocha*, the procedures for data collection, and the resulting data set. This chapter will conclude with a description of the procedures for data analysis.

3.1 Participants

This study includes students enrolled at a large university in the Southwest. Recruited participants were registered for a Spanish 275 (accelerated beginning Spanish) during the fall semester of 2009 and 276 (accelerated intermediate Spanish) during the spring semester of 2010. While there were 16 students enrolled in Spanish 275 and 22 in Spanish 276, eight students enrolled in both the fall and spring semesters. One student was excluded due to excessive absences from data collection sessions. The remaining seven participants represent diverse ages, backgrounds, and reasons for studying Spanish. All are native speakers of American English. Table 5 provides a summary of self-reported participant information. Note that pseudonyms are used for all participants.

Table 5

Fall 2009 Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Age	University status/ Area of study	Job	Previous Spanish
Cammy	F	33	Graduate student (2 nd BA)/ Biology	Radio programming assistant	2 years (medical Spanish course and in high school)
Carol	F	36	Graduate student/ Biology	Research assistant	2 years in high school
Brandon	M	24	Senior/ Foreign Languages and Chemistry	ER tech	None
Vincent	M	21	Junior/ Foreign Languages	None	None
Brittany	F	18	Freshman/ Foreign Languages	Student	2 months in high school
Bill	M	33	Junior/Sociology	Academic records analyst	4 years in elementary, middle, and high school
Shane	M	44	Graduate student/ Law	Student	3 months at a college, two years ago

As can be seen in Table 5, the participant group was widely diverse in age, gender, phase of education, and experience with the Spanish language. To capture a more complete understanding of each participant and his or her unique characteristics, a more in depth description follows. These descriptions are based on observations of the students during data collection sessions, introductory surveys, and user-perception interviews.

3.1.1 Cammy. Cammy was a 33-year-old returning to school to work on a second bachelor's degree in biology. While attending classes, she worked as a programming

assistant at the local public radio station. Prior to this study, she had lived in a number of cities in the Southwest and Western coast of the United States as well as in India. She had also travelled recreationally for one week in Mexico.

Cammy was an outgoing, eager, and confident Spanish language learner. She showed no hesitation in initiating and holding conversations with strangers in order to practice using Spanish. She had experience with *Livemocha* prior to this study, and throughout the course of this investigation, Cammy continued to occasionally log in on her own time. Her previous formal study of Spanish included a college-level course in medical Spanish one year prior to this study and a course in high school fifteen years prior to this study. She had, however, maintained some consistent exposure to the language, using it in her job at the radio station and at her former job as a medical assistant.

Cammy had previous experience using online social networks and online text chatting programs, chatting in both English and Spanish. As mentioned, before this study she already had used *Livemocha* to connect and speak with native speakers of Spanish in order to improve her abilities with the language. She also expressed interest in using the program to learn other languages. Cammy used *Facebook* weekly for both chatting and social networking purposes and *Myspace* occasionally to explore music. She expressed eagerness to use these tools as part of the Spanish curriculum, because of their spontaneous and real nature.

3.1.2 Carol. Carol was a 36-year-old studying and working as a graduate research assistant in Biology. She grew up in Pittsburgh, PA, but had lived in eight states around the United States as well as in Brazil.

As a Spanish language learner, Carol was very driven and focused. Her mission was to acquire an oral proficiency that would allow her to work more effectively and efficiently as she conducted field work in Spanish-speaking countries. Carol was a good sport in the Spanish course, but she had little patience for activities she did not feel were beneficial to her speaking abilities. Twenty years prior to this study, Carol previously studied Spanish for two years as a high school student. Since that time, she had no contact with the language.

Carol was a unique case among the participants of this study because she had had no prior experience with online chat or social networking sites. However, she appeared to approach the idea of using these mediums for the Spanish course in an open-minded fashion, adopting a “Why not?” attitude.

3.1.3 Brandon. Brandon was a 24-year-old senior, going to school and working as an emergency room technician. He grew up in the same city as the university but had lived in France for a year. Brandon was a cooperative and motivated language learner. He was very oriented to his conversations during the chat sessions and stayed on task, usually only interrupting the chats to consult with Bill, another learner in this study, on some aspect of language or culture. Although he had never studied Spanish formally, he had a very high proficiency in French. His exposure to Spanish outside of school was limited to a very small percentage of contact in his workplace.

While Brandon had not previously use a program to chat online, he had used *Facebook* two to three times a week for networking purposes. He appeared to approach the *Livemocha* activity with an eager and open mind.

3.1.4 Vincent. Vincent was a 21-year-old junior. He grew up in Houston, Texas but had also lived in Belgium and France. He had travelled recreationally to both Mexico and Spain for one-week periods, but his exposure to Spanish comes strictly from school.

Vincent was a serious and focused Spanish language learner. During chat sessions he put on headphones with music and often maintained several chat conversations for the duration of the class period. This solitary approach was unique to Vincent, since many of the other students in the group would collaborate and communicate with each other in order to understand their chat partners, form utterances, or navigate the web site. He did not log into *Livemocha* outside of class, but he did attend department-organized extra credit sessions which involved chatting in *Livemocha*. Although he had never studied Spanish formally, Vincent's mother was from Belgium and so he grew up in a French-speaking environment.

Vincent was an experienced user of both social networking sites and online chatting programs. Before the study, he had used *Facebook* and *Skype* to chat daily with friends and family and had used *Facebook* daily for networking. He was very open to the idea of using these tools in the classroom and thought that chatting in Spanish would be a good use of his internet time.

3.1.5 Brittany. Brittany was an 18-year-old freshman studying to major in Foreign Languages. She was from the Virgin Islands and had also lived in Florida and the Marshall Islands. Brittany was a very outgoing and distracted language learner. She would often deviate from her conversations, talking with classmates in the room or surfing the internet. During chat sessions, she would often verbalize her hesitation and insecurity in chatting with strangers on the internet. She studied Spanish for two months in high school, but had no other contact with the language.

Despite her expressed hesitation with the practice of chatting online, Brittany was very accustomed to using both chatting and social networking programs. She used *AOL Instant Messenger* and *Facebook* to chat with friends and family on a daily basis and used *Facebook* for social networking on a daily basis. Her initial perceptions for using these types of technologies in the language class were positive, as she thought they could help her learn, yet this attitude was not often reflected in her chat sessions.

3.1.6 Bill. Bill was a 33-year-old junior also working full-time as an academic records specialist at the university. A native of the university city, he also lived for a time in a neighboring city. As a teenager, Bill spent one month travelling in Spain and another month in Mexico.

As a language learner, Bill was motivated and attentive. He followed directions and participated thoroughly in the *Livemocha* chat sessions even though he disliked doing it. He and Brandon almost always sat next to each other in the computer lab, but would only interrupt their conversations to discuss issues related to their conversations. Bill, like Carol, desired more face-to-face time for oral communication and did not like that class time was used for computer-based activities. He had previously studied Spanish for a total of four years in elementary, middle and high school, but has had no contact with the language since.

Bill used chat and social network programs daily. For work, he used *GWIM* to communicate with colleagues. To chat with friends and family, he used *Yahoo Messenger* and *Facebook*. Bill also logged into *Facebook* daily to network with old friends. In spite of his frequent use of these tools, Bill was adamantly opposed about their application in the language class, since he finds them to be “boring and not useful.”

3.1.7 Shane. Shane was a 44-year-old, taking courses while applying to law school. He grew up in Marshfield, Massachusetts and has also lived on the Western Coast of the United States. He had travelled to Puerto Rico recreationally for a week.

As a language learner, Shane was very outgoing and social. While he did not log into *Livemocha* outside of class time, he actively participated during the chat sessions and was genuinely interested in meeting native speakers and learning about them. Shane's previous experience with Spanish was a three-month college level course, which he took two years prior to this study. He had no contact with the language after the completion of that course.

Shane very frequently used *Facebook* both to network and chat with friends. He was open to and enthusiastic about the idea of using chat and social networking tools in Spanish class.

3.2 Data source and data collection procedures

3.2.1 Livemocha. In this study, data was collected in *Livemocha*, an emerging online community of intercultural SCMC users. This internationally-used, online social network connects NSs and language learners, emphasizing the collaboration required in constructing language. *Livemocha* has designed a place in which people from all over the world meet under a common goal: communication. *Livemocha* users share a conscious awareness of the importance of connections to other language learners, particularly with those who are NSs of another's TL. This unique, user-driven collaboration provides language learners with a new platform to acquire both linguistic and cultural competencies. Because of the reciprocal, collaborative nature of *Livemocha*, participants were encouraged, but not required, to seek out chat partners who were NSs of Spanish, learning English, rather than learners of a language other than English who may have less to gain from the collaboration.

The text chat function in *Livemocha* offers a number of tools and resources for learners to enhance their conversational experience. Each chat window has a translator, a keyboard to enter special characters and diacritics, suggested conversation topics and scenarios, and a bank of emoticons. The chat window (see Figure 1) also provides information relevant to the status of the conversation. Notifications appear in the text of the conversation itself when a potential chat partner is connecting, has opened the chat window, and closed the chat window. An icon also appears when an interlocutor is currently entering text, and an audio notification sounds when new text has been entered.

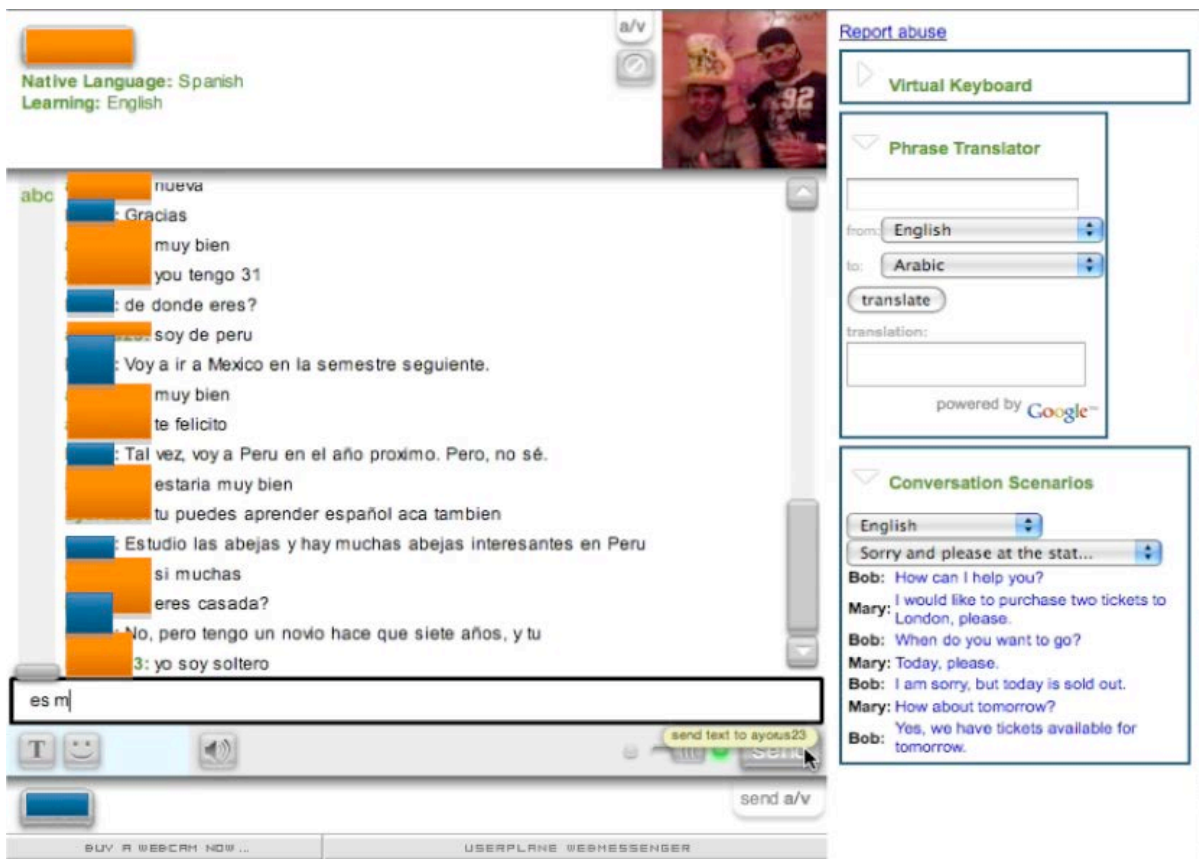


Figure 1. *Livemocha* chat window.

Although they were not directly analyzed in the current study, other important elements of the *Livemocha* learning community include learner profiles containing personal

information and photos, language lessons, activities for peer submission, and video chat.

These additional features and venues for communication serve critical roles in the formation of the social network as a whole by motivating and supporting the relationships built on the site.

3.2.2 Procedures for data collection. Each participant involved in this study took a short introductory survey to assess his or her experiences with the Spanish language and with social networks and online chat (see Appendix A). In order to gather data that can shed light on learner development, data was collected from the same group of learners as they progressed through four semester equivalents of Spanish in one academic year.¹⁵ As a part of their in-class participation grade, the learners went to the on-campus language lab, where they were instructed to log into Livemocha, seek out chat partners, and engage in conversation. When students were finished with their conversations, they left their chat windows open and the researcher copied the text and pasted it into *Microsoft Word* files for storage. Screen recordings were also taken of the students' time logged in to *Livemocha* (using *Snapz Pro* during the first semester of data collection and *QuickTime Player* for the second semester of data collection). However, the screen recording technology was unreliable with a high rate of data loss. As a result, the resulting corpus is compiled from the copied typed transcripts.¹⁶

¹⁵ These accelerated beginning and accelerated intermediate courses were worth double credit and covered twice the content of regular Spanish language courses.

¹⁶ At the time of data collection, time-stamping technology was unavailable for the *Livemocha* chat conversations. While this information is valuable for analysis, manual timing is not a reliable or feasible option for this particular set of data. For the sake of natural and spontaneous conversational data, very few limitations were imposed upon the learners during their chat time. Oftentimes, while waiting for responses from their interlocutors, the learners would minimize or hide the chat window in order to open internet browsers, using this time to use online dictionaries, explore the *Livemocha* website and other potential conversation partners, or hold additional conversations. An audio cue would inform them when the interlocutor had entered a reply and they could return to the conversation at their convenience. With other windows in the foreground of the screen

The data from the first semester was gathered from six bi-weekly chat sessions of approximately thirty to forty minutes each. After the first semester, learner perception interviews helped determine that thirty minutes was an insufficient amount of time for the learners to both find chatting partners and carry out natural conversations. The data collection procedures were modified for the second semester to consist of five tri-weekly chat sessions of approximately one hour. Supplemental conversational data was collected from two venues: extra-credit sessions, during which learners were invited to engage in conversations, and unsupervised conversations held outside of regular data collection periods, which learners volunteered to share with the researcher. In addition, learners who opted to participate had one additional thirty minute, audio-recorded interview per semester. The purpose of these interviews was to assess learner perceptions of participating in SCMC in the *Livemocha* community (see Appendix B).

3.2.3 Description of the data. As previously mentioned, to achieve maximally natural and spontaneous data, the learners were given the freedom to initiate and participate in as many or as few conversations as they desired and encouraged to pursue only those conversations that felt comfortable. As a result, the data varies greatly from learner to learner in terms of content, length of conversations, and number of conversations. Furthermore, since this study will focus on conversation closings, in each of the conversations analyzed an attempt to close the conversation must have been made by one of the interlocutors. Conversations abandoned without any discernable attempt to close or end the interaction were excluded from the analysis. The resulting data used for analysis is summarized in Table 6.

recording, it is unreliable to manually time-stamp conversations with any accuracy or precision.

Table 6

Data Sample

Learner	Number of conversations analyzed	Number turns analyzed
Cammy	9	105
Carol	7	62
Brandon	15	84
Vincent	24	204
Brittany	13	90
Bill	11	89
Shane	6	76

Although there are common concerns about longitudinal studies, such as time consumption, heightened mortality of the initial sample, and complex data, the collection of longitudinal data can yield important insights. Through the use of this “underpracticed” but “necessary” methodological approach in SLA (Markee & Kasper, 2004, p. 495), studies can chart growth and development, analyze change at the individual/micro level, and show how changing properties of individuals fit into systematic change (Kasper & Rose, 2002). The data in this study consist of these learners’ natural, authentic discourse with NSs of Spanish in a textual SCMC environment. Additionally, the data set includes interviews between the learners and the researcher addressing the learners' perceptions and experiences using this technology and participating in this online community. Natural data has been shown to best depict realistic language use, whereas elicited data, such as discourse completion tasks, does

not inform actual language use. Rather, this type of elicited data can only provide insight into speakers' own intuitions about the language (Bou Franch & Lorenzo Dus, 2008).

Most NNS authentic discourse has been collected in institutional settings, such as academic advisement or writing tutoring sessions (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1996) or oral proficiency interviews (Young & He, 1998). In addition to being rich sources of conversational data, interactions in these particular contexts are comparable, interactive, and consequential, while displaying “authentic language use by speakers who are speaking as themselves, in genuine situations, with socioaffective consequences,” (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1996, p. 13). Some have argued that data collection in these institutional environments solves the numerous methodological issues that can arise when examining natural discourse, including unpredictability, lack of control variables, or potential scarcity of the feature in question in a given sample (Beebe, 1994; Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Wolfson, 1986). However, the fact remains that much of communication occurs in spontaneous, natural contexts, and as such, analysis of language use in uncontrolled, spontaneous contexts is key in understanding communicative practices and L2 development in the real world.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

A conversation analytical (CA) method was used to interpret the conversation closings in the NS/NNS conversations. This method was chosen because it “has accrued the largest and most coherent cumulative body of research, lending high credibility to its theoretical foundations and methodology” (Kasper, 2006, p. 283), and this approach to data analysis is particularly well suited for analysis of interaction within SCMC, given its highly contextual nature (González- Lloret, 2007, 2011). In addition, as was discussed in Chapter 2, section 3.1, CA has been widely used for the study of conversation closings in spoken

language by Button (1987), Goldberg (2004), and Schegloff and Sacks (1973), among others, which provides a ground for comparison in other mediums of communication. This analysis aims to discover recurrent patterns in the data and describe how participants orient to these patterns, the goal being to “describe how participants create social order by understanding the ways and structures in which social practices are configured and what they can achieve” (Pallotti & Wagner, 2011, p. 3). This microanalytic, case-study approach facilitates close examination of the data of one learner in terms of the sequential organization, conversational inference, and nonverbal components of his interactions with the NSs. Kasper and Rose (2002) explain that “the combination of microanalysis with an ethnographic perspective makes interactional sociolinguistics and ethnographic microanalysis particularly powerful approaches for the analysis of intercultural interaction” (pp. 67-68).

Doing a conversation analysis relies on “unmotivated looking”, since it requires being open for discovery rather than searching for hypotheses and according to Seedhouse (2004) involves the following steps:

1. Locate an action sequence or sequences.
2. Characterize the actions in the sequence or sequences. In the case of this study, the primary action being analyzed is the conversation closing, including the smaller actions that constitute these closings. Seedhouse explains that a major advantage of CA is that it can “portray the multiplicity of actions performed” by a single utterance (p. 40).
3. Examine the action sequence(s) in terms of the organization of turn taking.
4. Examine the action sequence(s) in terms of sequence organization.
5. Examine the action sequence(s) in terms of the organization of repair.

6. Examine how the speakers package their actions in terms of the actual linguistic forms which they select from the alternatives available and consider the significance of these. This is essentially a form-function analysis, focusing on the forms which are used to manifest the functions. This is particularly interesting when analyzing the conversations of language learners, as they may not yet have acquired the desired functions and are working with a limited repertoire.
7. Uncover any roles, identities, or relationships that emerge in the details of the interaction.
8. Attempt to locate this particular sequence within a bigger picture.

In addition to the conversation analysis as described above, perception data from participant interviews and researcher observation supplement the discussion of each participant's experiences.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this study is to explore the longitudinal effects of involvement in a participatory online environment on language learning. Over the course of two accelerated Spanish courses in one academic year (equivalent to four semesters of regular study), seven Spanish language learners engaged in self-directed, text-based SCMC. These learners' involvement in *Livemocha* consisted not only of conversations with NSs of Spanish and other learners of Spanish, but also of their participation in this social network of language learners – searching profiles for conversation partners, adding friends, and making plans, for example. This chapter uses the information from case study analyses of each learner's individual experience, examining data from participant interviews, chat conversations in *Livemocha*, and observations of behavior in the computer lab during data collection sessions, to address common findings utilizing details from each of the learners' experiences and conversations throughout the course of the academic year. It addresses each of the research questions posed:

1. What conversation closing patterns appear in conversations between Spanish language learners and NSs in the *Livemocha* space?
2. To what extent do these patterns differ over the course of ongoing participation?
3. Does NS language use influence that of learners? How?
4. What are learner perceptions of participating in *Livemocha*?
5. To what extent is there a connection between learners' perception and their interaction?

4.2 Conversation Patterns

This section will describe patterns found in conversation closings between learners of Spanish and Spanish NSs in conversations via textual SCMC in *Livemocha*. Of the many patterns that arose, the acts of orienting to the conversation as institutionally driven and thanking and are the two most salient in this data set. These patterns arose in the conversations of nearly all of this study's participants (see Table 7). This section will also discuss apologies and arrangements for future interactions.

4.2.1 Institutional orientation. The microanalysis of the data revealed that as students were engaging in written conversation, they were orienting to the institutional nature of the activity. In this particular institutional context, the students rely on the cooperation of other *Livemocha* participants to complete their task to have a conversation. In this sense, this specialized activity functions as a type of transaction of goods. Six of the seven participants showed a clear orientation to the institutional nature of the conversation. In the closings of the conversations, the participants invoked the end of the activity as a reason for initiating the closing, since the institutional constraints on the activity required participants to take leave from their conversations. These institutional oriented closings can be categorized into two types: those that reference general class mechanics and those that make specific mention of the teacher. Table 7 shows different patterns of orientation to the activity as institutionally bounded.

Table 7

Instances of institutional orientation in conversation closings

Participant	Number of conversations	Instances of Institutional Orientation	Type	
			Class Mechanics	Teacher Reference
Cammy	9	7 (78%)	4	3
Carol	7	6 (86%)	6	0
Brandon	15	8 (53%)	7	0
Vincent	24	0 (0%)	0	0
Britt	13	2 (15%)	2	0
Bill	11	4 (36%)	4	0
Shane	6	3 (50%)	1	2

Example 1 illustrates a case in which a participant, Brandon, orients to the institutional nature of the activity in his closing sequence. He initiates the closing sequence with a pre-closing component in line 15 (*entonces*). In the same turn he provides a reason for closing (*soy en clase y es hora...*). Here, Brandon makes direct reference to the fact that he is in class and his time is up.

- (1) 15 **Brandon:** **entonces, soy en clase y es hora...debo me ir..hasta luego**
 well, I'm in class and it's time...i should go...see you later
 16 Brandon: add me as a friend
 17 Interlocutor: ok
 18 Interlocutor: chau
 Bye

(ex. 41, 11/11/09#4, 15-18)

This instance of institutional orientation (line 15) falls under the category of general class mechanics, as Brandon references the class schedule as a reason for closing.

Another instance in which a participant references the class schedule as a reason for closing is in example 2. Here, Carol initiates the closing sequence with an overt announcement of leavetaking in line 55. In this same turn, she follows with an institutionally oriented excuse or reason why she must close the conversation. As in example 1, in this instance Carol references classroom mechanics, citing her time limitation.

- (2) 55 **Carol: Necesito hablar adios. Tengo clase de espanol en diez minutos.**
56 Muchos gracias, Carol
I need to say goodbye. I have Spanish class in ten minutes. Thanks a lot, Carol
57 Interlocutor: asi es pero un hijo seria hermoso
that's how it is but a son would be beautiful
58 Interlocutor: tienes messnger?
do you have messenger?
59 Interlocutor: or skype
60 Carol: no, pero pongo tu un amigo por esto
no, but I'll put you as a friend on this
61 Interlocutor: no, pero te agregare como mi amigo
no, but I'll add you as a friend
62 Carol: should I add you as a friend, I will see if you are online next time.
63 Interlocutor: ok
64 Interlocutor: ok
65 Interlocutor: gracias amiga
thanks friend
66 Carol: Adios, ciao, hasta luego
Goodbye, bye, see you later
67 Interlocutor: hasta pronto
see you later
68 Interlocutor: suerte
good luck
69 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 79, 9/30/09 #1, 55-69)

After providing her institutionally oriented reason for closing, in the same turn Carol initiates a thanking sequence. The co-occurrence of institutional orientation and thanking will be discussed further in section 4.2.3.

Similarly, example 3 shows how Cammy orients to the activity as institutional, only in this case she makes specific mention of her teacher, rather than classroom mechanics.

Cammy initiates the closing sequence with her institutionally oriented excuse for not being able to chat (line 8).

- (3) 8 **Cammy:** **sí, quiero practicar... pero ahora la maestra esta hablando**
yes, i want to practice... but now the teacher is talking
- 9 Cammy: (estoy en clase)
(I'm in class)
- 10 Interlocutor: ok
- 11 Cammy: :)
- 12 Interlocutor: adios
goodbye
- 13 Cammy: adios!
goodbye!

(ex. 70, 11/23/09 #1, 8-13)

This example also slightly differs from Brandon's and Carol's (examples 1 and 2), because while she orients to the conversation as institutionally-motivated, Cammy also mitigates her closing by first stating that she actually does want to practice with her interlocutor. This might suggest that even in these institutionally required conversations, Cammy is also driven by personal motivations.

The data also show two instances in which a participant's interlocutor orients to the activity as institutional. Both of these instances occurred in conversations that Vincent had with other Spanish language learners from the same institution. In example 4, Vincent's interlocutor initiates the closing sequence in line 51 with a pre-closing component (*bueno*).

In the same turn she gives an overt announcement of closing (*necesito ir*), an institutionally driven excuse for closing (*mi clase es dejando*), and a terminal component (*adios*). She closes the window before receiving a reply.

- (4) 51 **Interlocutor: bueno necesito ir porque mi clase es dejando adios**
well I need to go because my class is leaving bye
52 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
(ex. 93, 10/2/09#1, 51-52)

In example 5, Vincent's interlocutor also initiates the closing, this time with an overt announcement of closing, which also serves as an institutionally marked excuse for closing in line 46.

- (5) 46 **Interlocutor: tengo salir para clase de matematicas**
I have to leave for math class
47 Interlocutor: adios
goodbye
48 Vincent: ok. encantado!
ok. nice to meet you!
49 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
(ex. 94, 10/2/09#2, 46-49)

The conversations from examples 4 and 5 were recorded during an extra credit session offered to all students in the Spanish as a Second Language and Spanish as a Heritage Language program at the university. Since these are the only other instances of institutional orientation as a conversation closing strategy by an interlocutor in this data set, it seems that this is not a common strategy for individually motivated participants in *Livemocha*.

As the examples in this section show, orienting to the activity as institutional by referencing classroom mechanics and making direct reference to the teacher was part of some students' closing patterns. The majority of participants oriented to the institutional nature of the activity in their closings, and this may have been a way for participants to mitigate their initiation of conversation closings by placing the fault on the institutional limitations.

4.2.2 Thanking. The inclusion of thanking sequences is another common pattern reflected in the data. Thanking refers to any expression of gratitude towards the interlocutor for having taken the time to converse. This act manifests in three forms in these data: 1) as a thanking sequence that serves as either a pre-closing component, 2) as a thanking sequence that serves as a move out of the closing, and 3) as a closing or terminal component, used as one of the conversation's final utterances. Table 8 shows the instances of thanking in participants' conversation closings.

Table 8

Instances of thanking in conversation closings

Participant	Number of conversations	Instances of thanking (initiated by participant)	Type		
			Pre-closing component	Move out of closing	Closing component
Cammy	12	7 (58%)	2	5	0
Carol	7	5 (71%)	2	3	0
Brandon	15	8 (53%)	1	3	4
Vincent	24	0 (0%)	-	-	-
Britt	13	0 (0%)	-	-	-
Bill	11	6 (55%)	0	2	4
Shane	6	4 (67%)	1	3	0

Used as a pre-closing component, thanking was a tool that four of the participants used to segue into initiating a conversation closing. In example 6, Cammy initiates the

conversation closing with a thanking sequence in line 21. In the subsequent turn, she provides an institutionally oriented excuse or reason for closing (line 22).

- (6) 21 **Cammy: Gracias para hablando conmigo.**
22 Cammy: Ahora la maestra que necesitamos terminar.
23 Cammy: Adios!
24 Interlocutor: bye bye
25 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
- (ex. 68, 10/28/09 #2, 21-25)

In example 7, Shane introduces a thanking sequence after initiating the closing. In the instance, the Shane's act of thanking serves as a move out of the closing.

- (7) 163 Shane: Disculpe, la maestra dice tiempo to stop...
Excuse me, the teacher says time to stop...
164 Interlocutor: jajajajajajaj
hahahahahahah
165 Shane: en clase
in class
166 Interlocutor: ok, ya te vas
ok, you go
167 **Shane: Gracias por hablando con mi**
Thanks for talking with me
168 Interlocutor: gracias, por hablar conmigo
thanks, for talking with me
169 Interlocutor: gracias ti, cualquier cosa, si me ves, me hablas
thank you, anything at all, if you see me, talk to me
170 Shane: gracias por hablar conmigo. :]
thanks for talking with me. :]
171 Interlocutor: thank you to you, anything, if you see me, talk to me
172 Interlocutor: have a good night, que tengas buenas noche,s y saludos a tu
173 esposa
have a good night, and greetings to your wife
174 Shane: We're here every other miercoles. I'll look for you.
We're here every other Wednesday. I'll look for you.
175 Interlocutor: ok, see you next miercoles
ok, see you next Wednesday
176 Shane: I will. It was very nice talking with you. Good night!
177 Interlocutor: nos vemos el miercoles
see you wednesday
178 Interlocutor: bye
179 Interlocutor: chau
bye

180 Shane: chau
bye

181 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 89, 1/27/10 #1, 163-181)

Shane initiates the closing sequence with a pre-closing component (line 163), followed by an excuse for closing, which he continues in line 165, and to which his interlocutor orients with an acknowledgement. In line 167, Shane moves out of the closing by initiating a thanking exchange. In this case, the interlocutor orients to this thanking exchange by initiating a repair. She then completes the thanking sequence in line 169, and in the same turn, moves out of the closing with an offer/arrangement. Shane completes the repair sequence by restating his original utterance using the corrected form, followed by a smiley emoticon.

In addition to moving out of the closing, another function that thanking serves is as a closing component, as described in Chapter 2, Section 3.1 (Button, 1987). These data provide examples of both learners and NSs using thanking in this way, indicating that this may be an acceptable practice in Spanish within this space. Example 8 shows a situation in which Brandon uses thanking coupled with a more traditional closing component to initiate a terminal exchange in his conversation. In this example, the interlocutor initiates the closing sequence in line 64 with a pre-closing component (*bueno amigo*) and an excuse for closing the conversation (*continuar con mis clases*). In the same turn the interlocutor moves out of the closing by making an offer or arrangement, as a sort of open invitation to Brandon for future communication. The interlocutor then, still in the same turn, initiates the closing exchange (*Hablaremos luego!*). In the following turn (line 66), Brandon orients to this offer/arrangement with an expression of gratitude, which is paired with a closing component.

Together, this act of thanking with the closing component functions as a terminal component.

The interlocutor orients to this as a closing component and completes the terminal exchange.

- (8) 64 Interlocutor: bueno amigo continuare con mis clases.. cualquier cosa me
65 preguntas. cuidate! Hablaremos luego!
*Okay friend I will continue with my classes... ask
me anything at all. Take care! Talk to you later!*
66 **Brandon:** **gracias..ciao!**
thanks..bye!
67 Interlocutor: ciao! ;)
bye! ;)
68 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 49, 3/31/10#1, 64-68)

Example 9 is one in which a participant's interlocutor used thanking as a closing component in a conversation. The interlocutor introduces a thanking sequence, which serves as a closing component (line 169). Cammy completes the thanking sequence and provides a terminal component (line 170). The interlocutor's final utterance serves as kind of post-conversation repair (as indicated by the asterisks), since a terminal exchange has already been completed.

- (9) 163 Interlocutor: bueno ya no te interrumpo mas, cundo gustes podemos
164 hablar de el tema de nutriccion, me gusta mucho ami
*okay i won't interrupt you anymore, whenever you want we
can talk about nutrition, i like it a lot*
165 Cammy: cool.
166 Cammy: anytime.
167 Cammy: Ahora, voy a trabajar en el jardín. Hablamos luego.
Now, I'm going to work in the garden. Talk to you later.
168 Interlocutor: si, cuidate
yes, take care
169 **Interlocutor:** **gracias**
thanks
170 Cammy: a ti tambien. chao!
you too. bye!
171 Cammy: :)
172 Interlocutor: tu tambien *****
*you too******

(ex. 74, 12/29/09 #1, 163-172)

For those speakers who employed thanking, patterns in the data suggest that this may be a way in which speakers mitigate closings that they initiate. In many cases, the closing initiator also initiates the thanking, in instances of thanking as a pre-closing, in moves out of the closing, and as closing components, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Co-occurrences of thanking with closing initiation

Participant	Instances of thanking (initiated by the participant)	Co-occurrences of closing initiation and thanking
Cammy	7	6 (86%)
Carol	5	4 (80%)
Brandon	8	5 (63%)
Vincent	0	-
Britt	0	-
Bill	6	2 (33%)
Shane	4	3 (75%)

This can be seen in the aforementioned example 9, where the interlocutor initiates the closing and employs thanking as a closing component, and also in example 7, where Shane initiates the closing and then moves out of the closing by opening a thanking sequence. Another possible explanation for the occurrences of thanking is its connection to the act of institutional orientation. The following section will discuss the co-occurrences of institutional orientation and thanking in the conversation closings in these data and the possible motivations behind the use of these strategies.

4.2.3 Interrelationship between institutional orientation and thanking. While more data is needed to draw reliable conclusions on the relation of these two patterns, there is some evidence of a connection between the practice of thanking in the conversation closings and whether or not the participants involved are orienting to that conversation as institutionally motivated. This is logical considering the specialized give-and-take nature of the relationship between participants in this space. Thanking may occur because of the ‘transaction of goods’ that is taking place – the goods being the interlocutor’s knowledge of the target language (as discussed in section 4.2.1). Since Marquez Reiter and Placencia (2004) also found that in service encounters in Montevidean and Quiteño Spanish, expressions of gratitude were common utterances, it is possible that the Spanish NSs using thanking in their conversation closings may have also viewed their interactions as transactions of goods.

Vincent, who did not orient to any of his conversations as institutionally motivated, did not employ thanking as a closing strategy in any of his conversations. Similarly, Britt only oriented to her conversations as institutionally driven in two of her thirteen conversations and did not employ thanking as a strategy for closing in any. Conversely, those participants who used thanking as a closing strategy (Cammy, Carol, Brandon, Britt, and Shane) also saw high instances of institutional orientation. Cammy, Carol, Brandon, and Shane all used institutional orientation as a closing strategy in at least 50% of their conversations. We see this co-occurrence of institutional orientation and thanking in Carol’s example 2. While it is possible that those participants who orient to their conversations as institutionally driven more frequently employ thanking as a conversation closing strategy, more data is required to determine whether these patterns are mere coincidence.

4.2.4 Apologies. The data presented several apology sequences as part of the closing sequence. Table 10 shows the instances of apologizing in participants' conversation closings.

Table 10

Instances of apologizing in conversation closings

Participant	Number of conversations	Instances of apologizing
Cammy	9	0
Carol	7	0
Brandon	15	0
Vincent	24	9 (38%)
Britt	13	0
Bill	11	0
Shane	6	3 (50%)

Of the participants, only Shane and Vincent used apologies in their conversation closings. These two participants used apologies to serve different purposes.

Two of Shane's apologies in the closings were not related to the act of closing itself. His apologies were back-references (Button, 1987), functioning as moves out of the closings. This is not surprising given that back-references are one of the seven most common sequence types used to move out of closing in English (Button, 1987). As discussed in section 2.2.1, back-references can be used to move out of a closing by making reference to a previous topic of conversation. Unlike other moves out of closings, such as arrangements whose movement out of closings was minimal, back-references very often prompt a next turn in response,

rather than another closing component. We see an apology in the form of a back-reference in example 10. Shane initiates the closing sequence (line 111). The interlocutor moves out of the closing with a topic initial elicitor (about learning Italian) in line 120). Shane orients to this move by introducing an apology (line 121).

- (10) 111 Shane: I'm here in class now and the teacher say we have to go soon.
 112 Interlocutor: ok..
 113 Interlocutor: i am in class too!
 114 Shane: But it's really nice talking to you - you sound super bright for a 21
 115 year old
 116 Interlocutor: i have to study! lol
 117 Shane: really, how are the schools there?
 118 Interlocutor: hahaha thanks you!
 119 Shane: ok I'll let you go - but, it was really nice chatting with you
 120 Interlocutor: i am studing italian by internet.. in the page!
 121 **Shane:sorry to not speak italian with you**
 122 Interlocutor: thanks you!.. equals to you ;)
 123 Interlocutor: jaja not problem
 haha not problem
 124 Interlocutor: ok. friend see you later!.. hope yoy have a great week..
 125 Interlocutor: bye bye ;)
 126 Shane: you to
 127 Shane: too
 128 Shane: bye bye
 129 Interlocutor: bye
 130 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 91, 3/31/10 #1, 111-130)

By introducing this apology sequence, Shane moves out of the closing again with a back-reference to the interlocutor's comment about learning Italian. The interlocutor excuses Shane's apology (line 123). This is to be expected, given that in most cases, back-references elicit a next turn response, rather than a closing component. In line 124, the interlocutor uses a pre-closing component (*ok*) to re-introduce the closing sequence.

Rather than using apologies as moves out of the closing, Vincent's apologies function as pre-closing components. His apologies occur just before he is about initiate a

conversation closing, as seen in example 11. Here, Vincent initiates the closing sequence with an apology, which serves as a pre-closing component. This apology serves to soften the coming overt announcement of closing in line 39.

- (11) 39 Vincent: **lo siento [name of interlocutor], pero tengo que salir a hora**
i'm sorry [name of interlocutor], but I have to leave now
40 Vincent: *ajoute moi comme ami sur livemocha!*
add me as a friend on livemocha!
41 Vincent: *a bientôt*
see you soon
42 Interlocutor: *As-tu msn??*
Do you have msn??
43 Interlocutor: ?
44 Interlocutor: ?
45 Interlocutor: ?
46 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
- (ex. 95, 10/14/09#1, 39-46)

In these cases, Vincent's apologies mitigate the coming closing by expressing regret for having to end the conversation.

Expressing regret for having to end a conversation in *Livemocha* ties in greatly with the idea of solidarity building among interlocutors. Vincent's frequent act of mitigating his closing with apologies might explain his success with relationship building in the *Livemocha* space. Vincent was the only one of the participants to engage in conversation with the same interlocutor more than once and actually made plans to meet one of his conversation partners in person on a trip to Mexico, a point to be discussed further in section 4.2.5. While Shane's and Vincent's apologies were used for different purposes within their conversation closings, in both instances the act of apologizing helped to build or maintain rapport with their interlocutors by expressing emotional involvement in the conversation.

4.2.5 Arrangements of future plans. The suggesting and arranging of plans for future interaction was another frequent pattern in the conversation closings that greatly influenced the rapport established in *Livemocha* conversations. The participants of this study took part in the arrangement of future communication both by initiating and orienting to the making of plans, which occurred as moves out of the conversation closings. While all of the participants oriented to a move out of the closing in the form of an arrangement at some point during the data collection period, Brandon, Cammy, and Vincent were initiators of future arrangements. Since arrangements are included in Button's (1987) seven common sequences types for moves out of closings in English, the act of making or orienting to arrangements should be familiar to the participants of this study. Table 11 shows the instances of making future plans as a closing strategy in participants' conversation closings.

Table 11

Instances of arrangements in conversation closings

Participant	Number of conversations	Instances of participant making future plans	Instances of orienting to interlocutors' attempt to make future plans
Cammy	9	1	5
Carol	7	0	1
Brandon	15	4	2
Vincent	24	2	3
Britt	13	0	2
Bill	11	0	1
Shane	6	0	1

Example 12 shows a conversation in which Cammy initiates the conversation closing in line 147. The interlocutor orients to the closing (line 149) and moves out of the closing with an arrangement (lines 149-150). Cammy moves out of the closing with another arrangement (line 151), which was likely being composed during the interlocutor's arrangement. The interlocutor's next three turns (lines 154-156) may be making up one single utterance, which functions as a response to Cammy's arrangement move out of the closing. Cammy then orients to all of the arrangements that have been made with a vague and over-arching response (*k. cierto*) and initiates a terminal exchange (*ciao!*) in line 157. Her interlocutor completes the terminal exchange in two turns.

- (12) 147 Cammy: hey, i have to go cook dinner now.
 148 Cammy: making a stir fry
 149 Interlocutor: ok i send you a friend
 150 Interlocutor: invitate
 151 **Cammy: let's talk again sometime**
 152 Cammy: definately!
 153 Interlocutor: ok
 154 Interlocutor: accept
 155 Interlocutor: my friend
 156 Interlocutor: invitate
 157 Cammy: *k. cierto. chao! ;)*
 k. of course. bye! ;)
 158 Interlocutor: *chau*
 bye
 159 Interlocutor: see ya

(ex. 74, 12/28/09 #1, 147-159)

In this interaction, Cammy's suggestion for future interaction is vague but still accepted by her interlocutor. As previously discussed, one of the functions of arrangements is to justify the conclusion of the current conversation by reserving or postponing additional topics until the future conversation (Button, 1987). While in this example there is no reference to a

specific topic of future conversation, the act of making an arrangement facilitates a cooperative closing between Cammy and her interlocutor.

Example 13 shows a conversation closing in which Brandon and his interlocutor establish more specific plans. Brandon initiates the closing sequence by providing a reason for closing the conversation (line 29). In the same turn, he moves out of the closing with an arrangement (*puedamos hablar en íngels la proxima vez*).

- (13) 29 Brandon: **la clase han terminando...puedamos hablar en íngels la proxima vez?**
30 *class has finished...can we speak in english next time?*
31 Interlocutor: SI CLARO
yes of course
32 Interlocutor: OYE PERO NO TE VAYAS A BURLAR DE MI EH
hey but don't make fun of me okay
33 Interlocutor: QUE TE PARECE Y NOS CONECTAMOS MAÑANA
what do you think and we'll connect tomorrow
34 Interlocutor: YA ME TENGO QUE IR
I have to go
35 Interlocutor: ME DIO GUSTO CONOCERTE
it was nice to meet you
36 Interlocutor: TE CUIDAS MUCHO
tkae care
37 Interlocutor: Y ME DICES LA HORA VA
and tell me what time okay
38 Interlocutor: BYE
39 Brandon: claro, ciao
okay, bye
40 Interlocutor: BYE
41 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 45, 1/27/10#2, 29-41)

The interlocutor orients to this arrangement first with confirmation (*si claro*) in line 31, then with some joking (*oye pero no te vas a burlar de mi eh*) in line 32, and then with an attempt to make specific plans (*que te parece y nos conectamos mañana*) in line 33. The interlocutor's attempt to establish this conversation with Brandon as one part of a series also aligns with Button's (1987) description of arrangements as moves out of closings. The desire

to establish an orderly relationship between conversations may also explain why, in this example, the attempt for future plans is more specific than in Cammy's example. In line 34, she reinitiates the closing sequence (*ya me tengo que ir*) and in line 35 initiates a "nice to meet you" type of exchange (*me dio gusto conocerte*). The interlocutor then moves out of the closing with a solicitude (*te cuidas mucho*). She then re-orientes to the original arrangement offered by Brandon (*y me dices la hora va*), and in the proceeding turn initiates a terminal exchange (line 38). The interlocutor's eight consecutive turns are thought provoking, but due to the restrictions of the medium and the inability to determine how much time has lapsed between each turn (she may be responding to silence or uttered all of these sentences together), we cannot say with any certainty what the significance of these turns is. Brandon's next turn in line 39 orients to one of the interlocutor's previous turns (*claro*), likely the return to the arrangement and request for more detailed plans, though this orientation is vague and not convincing. In the same turn, he completes the terminal exchange, after which the interlocutor restates another terminal component and closes her window. The interlocutor's use of all caps is unique among Brandon's conversations during the course of this study. However, since there is no variation among the use of caps by this particular interlocutor, no assumptions can be made about their significance in this conversation.

It is not known whether or not any of the participants followed through with these arrangements for future interaction. However, the act of discussing the possibility for future plans seems to be an important element for building or maintaining rapport with interlocutors in *Livemocha*.

4.3 Longitudinal View

The participants' use of conversation closing strategies discussed did not change noticeably throughout the course of the data collection period. However, some participants did display a change in behavior in their conversation closings; Bill and Carol, for example, engaged in acts of solidarity building with their interlocutors towards the end of the data collection period. Since all but one of the participants in this study conversed with different interlocutors in every conversation, it is impossible to track whether solidarity building actually occurred. However, the manner in which Bill and Carol's behaviors changed could facilitate rapport building in their conversation closings. Bill accomplished this through the extension of his conversation closings, while Carol did so by explicitly stating her satisfaction with her interaction.

A number of Bill's interactions in *Livemocha* show how the type of closing used can serve as a rapport management strategy. As discussed in Chapter 2, foreshortened closings (Button, 1987) contain more than one closing component in a single turn, in effect preventing any moves out of the closing. It appears from Bill's conversations that closing type can provide insight into the rapport orientation of the interlocutors in an interaction. Because of their conciseness, foreshortened closings do not encourage rapport enhancement. Rather, these situations result in cases of rapport maintenance or neglect. Example 14 illustrates how a foreshortened closing can lead to rapport neglect.

- (14) 84 Bill: es la hora de salir, gracias [interlocutor's name]!!
 it's time to go, thanks [interlocutor's name]!!
 85 *** You have been switched to away
 86 Interlocutor: hey.. do u have msn??
 87 *** Interlocutor's IC window is closed

(ex. 26, 10-14-09#1, 84-87)

In one single turn, Bill overtly announces his intention to end the conversation and thanks the interlocutor. Because of his immediate action of switching away after this utterance, this act of thanking serves as a closing component, and not as the introduction of a thanking sequence. Since his interlocutor then replies with a move out of the closing, a topic initial elicitor intended to establish an arrangement for future contact, it is clear that Bill and the interlocutor have not established rapport in this interaction.

Example 15 below also shows a foreshortened closing. In this case, however, the outcome is more neutral. As in example 14, Bill includes several elements in one turn and then switches to away, prohibiting any extension of the closing. The difference in this situation is the response from his interlocutor, who instead of attempting to move out of the closing, simply acknowledges the attempt to close the conversation by cooperatively terminating the conversation with the contribution of a terminal component.

- (15) 79 Bill: [Interlocutor's name], muchas gracias por hablarme. tengo que ir a
80 mi clase. hasta pronto
[Interlocutor's name], thanks a lot for talking to me. I have to go to my class. see you soon.
81 *** You have been switched to away
82 Interlocutor: bye
83 *** Interlocutor's IC window is closed

(ex. 27, 10-28-09#1, 79-83)

While neither Bill nor his interlocutor make any effort to advance their relationship, they cooperatively close their current interaction, maintaining the current level of rapport held between them.

Extended closings provide additional opportunity for moving out of closings, and as such, permit the addition of a third closing component (Button, 1987). These types of

closings can either encourage rapport maintenance or rapport enhancement. In Example 16, the interlocutor moves out of the closing three times: first with a solicitude, then with an arrangement or offer for future communication, then finally with a topic initial elicitor. Bill orients and responds to the former two moves out of the closing sequence. The third move out of the closing is entered after Bill has switched to away.

- (16) 41 Bill: que lastima, tengo que ir a mi clase. GRACIAS por hablarme ,
 42 [Interlocutor's name]!
what a shame, I have to go to my class. THANK YOU for talking to me , [Interlocutor's name]!
 43 Bill: hasta luego
see you later
 44 Interlocutor: ok cuidate
ok take care
 45 Bill: tu tambien
you too
 46 Interlocutor: cuando quieras hablamos
whenever you want we'll talk
 47 Interlocutor: gracias a ti tambien
thanks to you too
 48 *** You have been switched to away
 49 Interlocutor: oye una preguntica
hey one little question
 50 *** Interlocutor's IC window is closed
 51 *** Interlocutor's IC window is open

(ex. 29, 11-11-09#1, 41-51)

There is cooperation in the closing of this conversation. Although it seems that from the perspective of the interlocutor Bill prematurely switched to away, he may have interpreted the completion of the thanking sequence as a closing or terminal component. The extension of this closing through two completed move out sequences shows an evolution towards the target norm of not finishing the conversations immediately after the first move (e.g., Fitch, 1990/1991; García, 1981) and could reflect rapport maintenance.

In some circumstances, Bill shows great initiative in reaching out to the interlocutor in the conversation closing. In example 17, he moves out of the closing with a solicitude. This particular utterance is very encouraging to the interlocutor in nature and exemplifies solidarity building and peer-support in the *Livemocha* community.

- (17) 121 Bill: [Name of interlocutor], era un gran placer hablando contigo!
 122 Horita tengo que irme, pero te digo un consejo:
[Name of interlocutor], it was a great pleasure talking with you! Now I have to go, but I'll give you some advice:
 123 Interlocutor: ok
 124 Bill: Practica tu ingles lo mas posible! Puedes tener lo que quieras si
 125 trabajas duro. Buena suerte! Good Luck!
Practice you English as much as possible! You can have whatever you want if you work hard. Good luck! Good luck!
 126 Bill: Ciao!
Bye!
 127 *** You have been switched to away
 128 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
 129 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is open
 130 Interlocutor: sorry
 131 Interlocutor: creo que serre la ventana sin culpa
I think I accidentally closed the window
 132 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 35, 3-10-10#1, 121-132)

Although the interlocutor experiences some complication with the chat window, it is clear that Bill has oriented positively to this interaction and works to enhance the rapport between himself and his interlocutor.

As shown in the above examples, Bill uses a variety of strategies to close his conversations in *Livemocha*. His diversion from standard English archetype closings (Button, 1987) in examples 14 through 17 show that he is evolving to more closely approximate Spanish language norms for conversation closings. In doing such, Bill's rapport management strategies move from neglect, to maintenance, and then to enhancement with his interlocutors. Additionally, Bill's example of rapport enhancement (example 17) took place

towards the end of the data collection period, possibly indicating a change in conversation closing strategies and behavior over time.

Carol also showed some change over time in her participation in *Livemocha*. Of the participants in this study, Carol has the least experience with text-based SCMC. Her lower level of comfort using this medium, as indicated in her interviews and entrance survey, may have an impact on her willingness and openness to establish rapport with her interlocutors. This inexperience may also prevent her from identifying this medium of communication as anything but for institutional purposes. Since she has never engaged in any kind of text-based SCMC for personally motivated reasons, Carol may have a limited view of what is possible and what is normal in communication via internet chat, and she does allow the institutional orientation of her conversations to limit opportunities for rapport building. As seen in example 18, Carol uses her class as an excuse to not have to further engage with her interlocutor.

- (18) 28 Interlocutor: *ademas ahora tengo que salir*
besides now I have to leave
29 Interlocutor: *te apetece charlar en skype mejor?*
do you feel like chatting on Skype better?
30 Carol: *Gracias por tu tiempo. Eso es solo para una clase. Necesito usar*
31 *livemocha. Adios*
Thanks for your time. This is only for a class. I have to use
Livemocha. Goodbye
32 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 84, 1/27/10 #2, 28-32)

By telling her interlocutor that this conversation is only for class, she is placing limitations on the potential for rapport building. This attitude may come to a shock to some *Livemocha* users since the space is established under a user-driven, collaborative mindset. After sharing this information, her interlocutor signs off with no further utterance. This might indicate the

interlocutor's unwillingness to further engage with someone who does not share the philosophy of the space. This raises the question of whether forcing people to engage in *Livemocha* can be counterproductive to the purpose of the space. It is not until her last conversation of the data collection period (example 19) that Carol shows evidence of rapport building with her interlocutor.

- (19) 114 Interlocutor: o.k. I need to review some activities from my students
 115 Carol: A veces, estoy demasiada seria
Sometimes, I am too serious
 116 Interlocutor: Noooooooooooooo!!!!!! , SMILE all the time, it produces in
 117 your face youth
 118 Interlocutor: if you look my face i look like 28
 119 Carol: Pasé un tiempo bueno contigo;)
I had a good time with you ;)
 120 Interlocutor: ok, have a nice time
 121 Carol: Tengo arrugals por el sol en el desierto . Trabajo exterior
I have wrinkles from the sun in the desert. I work outside
 122 Interlocutor: I'll send you secrets for your wrinkles
 123 Carol: gracias
thanks
 124 Interlocutor: de nad
you're welcome
 125 Interlocutor: bye, enjoy your time
 126 Interlocutor: :D
 127 Carol: hasta luego
see you later
 128 Interlocutor: hasta pronto
see you soon
 129 Interlocutor: my new friend
 130 *** Interlocutor's IC window is closed

(ex. 85, 2/17/10 #1, 114-130)

Here, Carol states that she has enjoyed this conversation and uses a winky emoticon. This is the first example in which she uses an emoticon; this may also be evidence that she is becoming socialized to the norms of this medium of communication. And as it happens, this is the only of Carol's closings that shows no orientation to the institutionally motivated nature of this conversation.

While these examples from Bill and Carol do suggest some change in participants' behavior in these conversations, the acts of orienting to the conversations as institutionally motivated, thanking, apologizing, and making arrangements, remained relatively static. The use of these strategies and did not increase, decrease, or suggest any other pattern of use over time. The use of different conversation closing strategies and other behaviors is tied in closely with user perceptions of *Livemocha*, which are addressed in sections 4.4 and 4.5.

4.4 Native Speaker Influence

In their conversations in *Livemocha*, there is evidence that interaction with NS partners influences learners' language use. Examples from this data set indicate that this happens both explicitly, through correction and feedback made by their interlocutors, and implicitly, through repeated exposure to the language.

4.4.1 Influence through explicit feedback. Since this online space is comprised of language learners seeking to practice and learn from other participants in the space, the giving and receiving of feedback is one of the foundational elements of relationships in this space (learners submit written exercises and voice recordings for the purpose of receiving NS feedback). I use the term *feedback* as it is used on the *Livemocha* website, that is to refer to any instance in which a native or expert speaker of a language provides explicit assistance or corrections to a learner of that language. Feedback is not an explicit component of the chat sessions as it is in other functionalities of *Livemocha*, but it does contribute to an overall culture that values feedback and repair. This section will discuss the instances of explicit feedback given to interlocutors in the conversation closings analyzed. Table 12 shows the instances of participants receiving explicit feedback in conversation closings.

Table 12

Instances of participants receiving explicit feedback in conversation closings

Participant	Number of conversations	Instances receiving explicit feedback
Cammy	9	2 (22%)
Carol	7	1 (14%)
Brandon	15	0 (0%)
Vincent	24	1 (4%)
Britt	13	0 (0%)
Bill	11	0 (0%)
Shane	6	1 (17%)

As Table 12 shows, the giving of explicit feedback within a conversation closing is not a very common practice, occurring only five times in the entire data set. This is surprising, given that fact that *Livemocha* is designed as a space to help learners use and improve their TLs. There are a number of reasons that might explain the scarcity of feedback in conversation closings: *Livemocha* participants might see this as a dispreferred act, participants might not have built enough rapport to feel comfortable giving feedback, since feedback isn't very common in first conversations, or perhaps meaning is emphasized over form in the *Livemocha* space. The reason is likely that feedback is dispreferred, not in *Livemocha*, but in conversation closings where other conversational acts such as rapport building take priority.

Example 20 illustrates how Cammy receives feedback in a conversation closing. Cammy actively requests help through the explicit uttering of a question about a grammatical

point in Spanish. The interlocutor completes the question-answer pair providing Cammy with explicit language information, a common form of feedback.

- (20) 44 Cammy: Sorry... Cierto ahora la maestra que necesitamos terminar.
Sorry...right now the teachers [says] we need to finish.
- 45 Cammy: Adios! y gracias para hablando conmigo. :)
Goodbye! and thanks for talking with me. :)
- 46 Cammy: (por?)
(for?)
- 47 Cammy: (Por vs. para... es una pregunta siempre...)
(for vs. for... is always a question...)
- 48 Cammy: adios
goodbye
- 49 Interlocutor: **por**
for
- 50 Interlocutor: hablar conmigo
talking with me
- 51 Interlocutor: :)
- 52 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 69, 10/28/09 #3, 44-52)

In this example she makes an utterance (line 45) and then explicitly states her concern with a specific aspect of that utterance (lines 46-47). Her interlocutor orients to this question, clarifies which preposition is grammatically correct (line 49), and then answers her question about how to grammatically complete this construction (line 50). Through this interaction, Cammy receives explicit feedback on her explicitly addressed issue; she asks for a NS answer regarding the use of *por* versus *para*, explaining to her interlocutor that she has difficulty with this particular grammar point, and her interlocutor provides her with the correct answer for this context.

In the next occurrence of this same grammatical concern (example 21), Cammy has not yet internalized the *gracias + por + infinitive* construction. Cammy initiates the conversation closing in line 56 with this thanking sequence using the same preposition she used before receiving feedback in example 20. It is at this point (line 58) that the interlocutor

starts an other-repair sequence, which provides Cammy with explicit feedback on her ungrammatical utterance. This repair refers to an utterance occurring previous to the initiation of the conversations closing. Cammy orients to the unsolicited feedback favorably in line 59 by thanking her interlocutor.

- (21) 56 Cammy: **Gracias para conversar [Name of interlocutor]!**
Thanks for conversing [Name of interlocutor]!
 57 Cammy: Ahora necesito ir a clase.
Now I have to go to class.
 58 Interlocutor: Sería mejor decir: ahora, siento un poco de envidia
It would be better to say: now, I feel a little bit of envy
 59 Cammy: (gracias!)
(thanks!)
 60 Interlocutor: de nada, cuando quieras podemos hablar
you're welcome, whenever you want we can talk
 61 Cammy: bien. chao!
good. bye!
 62 Cammy: :)
 63 Interlocutor: fue un placer conversar contigo. Chao.
it was a pleasure conversing with you. Bye.
 64 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
- (ex. 71, 12/3/09 #2, 56-64)

On the very same day is the first instance in which Cammy begins to correctly apply the *gracias + por + infinitive* construction to a conversation (example 22).

- (22) 57 Cammy: estoy en un clase de español ahora.
I'm in Spanish class now.
 58 Interlocutor: si
yes
 59 Cammy: **Gracias por conversar.**
Thanks for conversing.
 60 Cammy: Necesito ir ahora.
 61 Interlocutor: bueno...claro....si quieres puedes agregarme como amigo en LM
okay...of course...if you want you can add me as a friend on LM
 62 Interlocutor: cuidate
take care
 63 Cammy: bien, chao!
okay, bye!
 64 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
- (ex. 73, 12/3/09 #4, 57-64)

Several weeks later, Cammy again correctly constructs this same utterance, building on it slightly by adding *conmigo* (example 23).

- (23) 104 Cammy: Necesito decir adios!
I have to say goodbye!
105 Interlocutor: ok
106 Cammy: Clase esta terminado
Class is finishing
107 Cammy: **Gracias por conversar conmigo.**
Thanks for conversing with me.
108 Interlocutor: a ti
thank you
109 Interlocutor: bye+
110 Cammy: Buenos noches. :]
Good night :]
111 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
- (ex. 77, 1/27/10 #1, 104-111)

This sequence of conversations shows how, in her interaction with NSs of Spanish, Cammy engages in discussion of her grammatical questions, receives explicit feedback, and then successfully applies this knowledge to her future conversations. Cammy was not the only participant to receive explicit feedback in a conversation closing, but she was the only one to orient to that feedback. Example 24 below shows Britt receiving explicit feedback from her interlocutor in line 71.

- (24) 70 Britt: Me tengo que voy
I have to go
71 Interlocutor: me tengo que IR ... bueno see you
I have to GO ... okay see you
72 Britt: bye
73 *** Interlocutor's IC window is closed
- (ex. 60, 1/27/10#2, 70-73)

Britt does not acknowledge this feedback, and because she does not repeat this construction in any of her later conversation closings, it is impossible to determine whether this feedback helped her.

4.4.2 Influence through implicit feedback. Learners' language use can also be affected implicitly, through exposure in conversation with NSs. As previously discussed, closings are not a common venue for feedback. Just as with explicit feedback, there are more examples of implicit influence on learners language use in the body of the conversations. Within the limited scope of conversation closings, there was only one noticeable example of implicit influence on learner language use.

Throughout the course of his participation in *Livemocha*, Vincent commonly employed the construction *fue un placer (+ infinitive + te)*. Between his first exposure to this construction in the first conversation of the data collection period (example 25) and the end of the data collection period, Vincent experiments with and is exposed to several variations of this construction. Ultimately, there is evidence that through simple exposure to this construction in his interaction with NSs and his own experimentation with the construction, Vincent implicitly learns to grammatically apply several variations of the *fue un placer (+ infinitive + te)* construction in his conversation closings.

In example 25, the first conversation of the data collection period, Vincent is introduced to this construction when his interlocutor says “*fue un placer conocerte*” (line 58).

- (25) 53 Vincent: encantado [Name of interlocutor], pero a hora voy a mi
54 clase de espagnol
*nice to meet you [Name of interlocutor], but i have to go to
my spanish class now*
55 Vincent: adios!
goodbye!
56 Interlocutor: ok
57 Interlocutor: adios
goodbye!
58 Interlocutor: **fue un placer conocerte**
it was a pleasure to meet you
59 Vincent: igualmente. ciao!
likewise. bye!

He sees this exact same construction used again by another interlocutor one month later on October 28 (example 26).

- (26) 161 Interlocutor: bueno amigo
well friend
- 162 Interlocutor: tengo que salir
I have to leave
- 163 Vincent: yo tambien. voy a mi clase de espangol
me too. I'm going to my Spanish class
- 164 Interlocutor: **fue un placer hablar contigo**
it was a pleasure talking with you
- 165 Vincent: mucho gusto, [name of interlocutor]!
nice to meet you, [name of interlocutor]!
- 166 Interlocutor: el gusto es mio
the pleasure is mine
- 167 Interlocutor: te cuidas
take care
- 168 Interlocutor: hablamos otro dia
we'll talk another day
- 169 Vincent: si! hasta pronto
yes! see you soon
- 170 Vincent: hasta la vista (es mejor)
hasta la vista (is better)
- 171 Interlocutor: claro
of course
- 172 Interlocutor: jajaja
hahaha
- 173 Interlocutor: hasta la vista baby !!
- 174 Vincent: lol
- 175 Interlocutor: lol
- 176 Vincent: ciao
bye
- 177 Interlocutor: ill be back
- 178 Interlocutor: ciao
bye
- 179 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

During the next data collection session (November 11), Vincent repeats this construction verbatim in three of his four conversation closings. Example 27 shows how he uses this construction in one of these conversation closings.

- (27) 83 Vincent: lo siento [name of interlocutor], pero necesito salir para mi
 84 clase a hora
i'm sorry [name of interlocutor], but i have to leave for my class now
- 85 Interlocutor: ok
- 86 **Vincent:** **pero fue un placer conocerte!**
but it was a pleasure meeting you!
- 87 Interlocutor: cuidate muchos
take care
- 88 Interlocutor: un placer hablar con tigo
pleasure talking with you
- 89 Interlocutor: igualmete
likewise
- 90 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 98, 11/11/09#1, 83-90)

Two weeks after that (November 23), Vincent begins to experiment with variations of this same construction by trying a different verb. He uses the utterance “*fue un placer de te hablar*” in example 28.

- (28) 68 Vincent: mucho gusto, [name of interlocutor]
nice to meet you, [name of interlocutor]
- 69 Vincent: pero necesito salir!
but I have to leave!
- 70 **Vincent:** **fue un placir de te hablar**
it was a pleasure talking to you
- 71 Interlocutor: ok
- 72 Interlocutor: cuidate mucho
take good care
- 73 Interlocutor: un placer
a pleasure
- 74 Interlocutor: si quieres me agragas para poder hablar otro dia
add me as a friend if you want so we can talk another day
- 75 Vincent: ok! gracias
ok! thanks
- 76 Vincent: te agrago.
I'll add you.

77 Vincent: au revoir! ;)
goodbye! ;)
 78 Interlocutor: bye
 79 Interlocutor: cuidate
take care
 80 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 102, 11/23/09#1, 68-80)

He continues to use this same form of the construction in all three of his conversations during the next data collection session (December 3), and again in two of his three conversations on January 27. By February 17, Vincent uses the construction grammatically, “*fue un placer hablarte*” as shown in example 29.

(29) 83 Vincent: pero ahora necesito salir!
but i have to leave!
 84 Interlocutor: ok
 85 Vincent: **fue un placer hablarte**
it was a please talking to you
 86 Interlocutor: igualmente
likewise
 87 Interlocutor: que estes bien
take care
 88 Interlocutor: bye
 89 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed

(ex. 112, 2/17/10#4, 83-89)

He experiments with a shortened variation of this construction on March 10: “*fue un placer*” (example 30).

(30) 84 Interlocutor: heydude
 85 Interlocutor: i gotta go!!!
 86 Vincent: **ok ok, fue un placer**
ok ok, it was a pleasure
 87 Interlocutor: igualmentee
likewise
 88 Vincent: espero que poderemos hablas mas sobre guadalajara luego
I hope we can talk more about guadalajara later
 89 Interlocutor: for sure!! :)
 90 Vincent: cool cool. mucho gusto, chao!
cool cool. nice to meet you, bye!

- 91 Interlocutor: si.. agregame en livemocha!! y seguimos platicando depsues
yes.. add me on livemocha!! and we'll continue chatting later
- 92 Interlocutor: tchau
bye
- 93 *** Interlocutor 's IC window is closed
- (ex. 113, 3/10/10#1, 84-93)

During his next conversation on March 31, Vincent repeats this shortened version of the construction exactly.

The evolution or Vincent's use of this construction may be evidence to the effect of his interlocutor's language use on his own. It appears that over time he has learned to grammatically use several versions of a common construction used in Spanish language leavetakings without ever receiving explicit feedback from his interlocutors.

These examples in this section help to illustrate how learners' language use evolves through interaction with NSs in *Livemocha*. While conversation closings may not be the most likely venue for this to occur, there is evidence to suggest that this can happen in conversation closings – explicitly through feedback, as Cammy's examples show, or implicitly through exposure, as Vincent's conversations show. A detailed analysis of the conversations in their entirety would provide more detailed information about how NS language use affects learners' language use.

4.5 Perception

Among the seven participants of this study, there was a wide array of user-perceptions and opinions about participation in *Livemocha*, ranging from genuine enthusiasm to declared hatred. The following sections will discuss the positive and negative experiences and opinions, respectively, gathered from user perception interviews.

4.5.1 Positive perceptions of *Livemocha*. The small majority of participants in this study (four of seven) had favorable perceptions towards this space and its applications for language learning and classroom use. Popular reasons for positive perception of *Livemocha* were the contact with native and fluent speakers, the international perspective it can provide, and the potential to engage in a community of speakers. The participants with the most positive perceptions were Brandon, Cammy, Vincent, and Shane.

During his first participant interview, Brandon expressed his enthusiasm for *Livemocha*. An already experienced language learner and traveler, he describes how his interaction in *Livemocha* mimics his previous study abroad experience and a French language learner in France. Brandon orients to the institutionally-driven nature of this activity, acknowledging that he is participating in the space as part of a course requirement, but he thinks that this positively affects his interactions, since being in class obligates him to make many attempts to connect and converse with many different people.

Through his participation in *Livemocha*, Brandon feels that he has learned about how to connect with people and interact within this environment. He explains how he believes having a profile picture facilitates finding conversation partners. He also describes his process for seeking out potential conversation partners: he looks for people who have many Mochapoints,¹⁷ since this reflects high levels of participation. Brandon believes that these people “are more receptive and more helpful, and they respond faster” (11/17/09). After the first half of the data collection period, Brandon states, “I’m pretty happy with the progress” (11/17/09). While he feels that has not yet acquired certain subtleties, such ability to be

¹⁷ Mochapoints are awarded to members who participate in *Livemocha* by making progress with their own language learning goals and by helping others in the community. Points are earned through learner actions, such as completing lessons and submitting exercises, and teacher actions, such as reviewing others’ submissions and creating flashcards (Livemocha.com).

polite, he can feel himself having better and longer conversations with people at his place of work and partially attributes this to his involvement in *Livemocha*.

At the end of the data collection period, Brandon still maintains his positive opinion of *Livemocha* and his participation within it. He finds that having conversations is easier and explains, “you learn more because you know more” (4/29/10). In the second half of the data collection period, Brandon became more involved and added a profile photo. He describes the importance of building up one’s profile and giving back to the *Livemocha* community in order to have a successful and enjoyable experience. Because he found this to be a “really good tool to communicate” and get in contact with a fluent community of speakers, Brandon plans to continue his involvement in *Livemocha* on his own in order to practice his Spanish and French and reinforce what he has learned (4/29/10). All of this suggests that in addition to gaining exposure to and interaction in his TL, Brandon is also becoming socialized into the *Livemocha* space, learning how to use it to best suit his needs.

Cammy is perhaps the most invested *Livemocha* user of all the participants and also shows signs of socialization while describing her user experience. She takes notes during conversations and prints them to study later. In her interview after the first half of the data collection period, she discusses her active involvement. As part of her participation, she regularly adds people as friends if she has had an enjoyable conversation with them or if she has viewed their profile thinks they look really interesting. She believes that this is a way to build more in depth relationships and avoid having repetitive conversations.

Cammy’s active and enthusiastic involvement is the result of her belief that this activity provides her with “the opportunity to speak off the cuff,” giving her a real-time communicative experience but with less stress and pressure that face-to-face interaction

(12/3/09). This, she feels, is a great environment to learn the subtleties of language. She explains, “a lot of what we’re learning I think is not what people are saying directly, but how they’re saying it. And it’s not just how [our instructor] says it or how the book says it or, you know, how a teacher who speaks slowly says it...[*Livemocha* is] feeding us to understand intuitively how to use things” (12/3/09). She thinks that this has led to her increased fluency in Spanish.

At the end of the data collection period, Cammy’s experience only improved. She feels that she has more people seeking out conversations with her, and while she is participating in fewer conversations, they are “fuller body” interactions with more content (4/6/10). She mentions one standout conversation in which she was able to discuss a very difficult personal topic in Spanish with a complete stranger. “It felt good to be able to communicate something a little more complicated, emotions and stuff” (4/6/10). She also discusses how she is able to pick up on social cues while chatting, specifically mentioning the way in which people say goodbye. “Sometimes I’ve felt that maybe I’m being too abrupt, or, you know, I’m trying not to be too abrupt because I’ve gotten that from people: Americans can be very abrupt. So trying not to say, ‘OK bye.’ I let it go on for a few lines... [Our instructor] mentioned that people have that impression of Americans, so I try to warn them, I explain to them that I’m in a class or I mention that so they know I have to go” (4/6/10). Like Brandon, Cammy acknowledges that her participation with *Livemocha* is institutionally driven, but also like Brandon, this is not a hindrance. Rather, it is simply information that she shares with her interlocutors to explain herself and her situation. Cammy is a participant who also truly takes advantage of the “global community aspect of

[*Livemocha*]" (12/3/09). She has future plans to continue using *Livemocha* on her own and has begun to explore other languages (such as Hindi) as well.

Vincent, like Brandon and Cammy, settled into the *Livemocha* routine quickly and easily. He was surprised that he had never heard about it and was glad to learn of it. During the first half of the data collection period, he considered the activity "a good supplement and ... something to look forward to" (12/3/09). Vincent liked the website's aesthetic and found the navigation easy and user-friendly. He took advantage of most of tools made available through the site, such as the translator, and also consulted outside resources, such as *Google*, for information to aid his conversations. Vincent was very comfortable engaging in multiple conversations at once and used headphones to facilitate this practice; he received audio indications when someone had entered text in another chat window. He enjoyed that by doing this there was "never a dull moment" (12/3/09).

While Vincent shared the complaint of many of his classmates that his conversations were repetitive since he was always stating the same info about himself to get conversations started, he felt that four out of five times, his conversations did make it past introductions to reach a more profound level, explaining that "it can be a good tool if you get solid friends that you can speak to repeatedly" (12/3/09). He indicated that he would not use this program on his own if it weren't related to class work, since he is well connected to Spanish-speaking international students and doesn't need *Livemocha* to get into contact them. He did, however express his appreciation for this medium of communication, stating, "email is outdated, chatting is the way to go" (12/3/09).

By the end of the data collection period, Vincent's involvement remained dedicated in data collection sessions and began to extend into other areas of his life. Through

Livemocha, he built one relationship that he hoped to bridge to face-to-face. Vincent had future plans to study in Guadalajara and had met a local through *Livemocha*. The two conversed through this venue more than once and extended their relationship to *Facebook* as well. While Vincent was a well-connected student with ample opportunities to practice Spanish in and out of the classroom, he confessed that he might be inclined to consider using *Livemocha* when he leaves the university and doesn't have time but still wants to practice. He also thinks it will be a good resource if he begins learning languages that have fewer speakers available to practice. "I'm glad it's an option" (5/12/10).

Shane was less confident with the medium of communication and the language than Brandon, Cammy, and Vincent. During the first half of the data collection period, Shane explains that he feels behind the rest of the group in terms of conversational ability and comprehension. He describes the difficulty he came across finding conversation partners in *Livemocha*, expressing his frustration with the *Livemocha* interface and its search function. However, his issues with *Livemocha* were resolved by the end of the data collection period. He found the activity more enjoyable since his familiarity with the website made it easier for him to find more conversation partners and have more conversations. Shane began to have more engaging conversations in which he saw his international interlocutors' personal perspectives on art and politics. For him, this is when *Livemocha* "started to get fun" (4/6/10). While he felt somewhat out of place in a community that he thought was primarily made up of a younger demographic, Shane was surprised by everyone's commitment and motivation, since this for him is the greatest struggle in learning a language. He was particularly impressed that others give him so much of their time without him giving much in return.

What Brandon, Cammy, Vincent and Shane have in common is their ability to acknowledge their institutional obligation to this activity but focus on the personal fulfillment that could be found in the act of interacting with NSs through *Livemocha*. Their ability to view their participation as an opportunity rather than an obligation helped them to not only enjoy their conversations, but to become active participants in the space.

4.5.2 Negative Perceptions of *Livemocha*. While the aforementioned participants held strong positive opinions towards *Livemocha*, there were participants of this study who did not agree. Bill and Carol both shared negative perceptions for the use of *Livemocha* as a tool for language learning in the classroom. Both participants asserted that they would prefer to use their class time practicing Spanish in spoken, face-to-face situations. Still, both participants acknowledge that *Livemocha* is a good venue for exposure to different variations of the Spanish language. For Bill this was a benefit, and Carol, who had very specific interests and motivations for learning Spanish, considered the exposure to many variations a disadvantage.

During his first participant interview, Bill discusses how his feelings towards *Livemocha* and this activity changed from the start of the data collection period. He says that he began with an open mind and describes how at some point, he got bored with the activity. While he cannot articulate exactly what turned him off to *Livemocha*, he cites one particular data collection session during which he made five or six attempts to start conversations without receiving a reply. Another obstacle in this activity for Bill was his aversion to chatting with strangers. While he does chat on *Facebook* and *Yahoo* with his pre-loaded list of friends, he expresses dislike for chatting on *Livemocha*. “I didn’t enjoy it. I didn’t like having to look for someone to chat with. I didn’t like having to try and figure out how to

start a conversation with somebody and then wait around for them to respond or not. I just thought we could have probably used our class time for, you know, more constructive purposes” (11/17/09). Bill also does not care for the *Livemocha* interface, and while he considers himself tech savvy, he does not think that *Livemocha* was designed for someone of his age (33 years-old).

In terms of a class activity, Bill does not hesitate to express his feelings about this exercise as compared to others. He states, “I hate it. Honestly I just can’t stand it...I think I would be better served sitting in little groups and spending the half hour talking to people over...” (11/17/09). He does not feel that he was meeting people, since there was pressure and obligation to converse. Unlike some of his classmates, the institutionally oriented nature of this activity interfered with his ability and desire to participate. When asked if he felt he has learned anything through his involvement in *Livemocha*, his response is, “Nothing that would cause me to say, ‘Wow, I really learned something from that’” (11/17/09). Bill feels that the repetition was a hindrance in his ability to learn through *Livemocha*, since he thinks that he has very similar conversations with every interlocutor.

While he does not consider his overall experience to be a positive one, Bill found some good aspects to *Livemocha*. He likes that *Livemocha* offers courses for specific purposes, such as travel courses, though he did not take advantage of these course offerings. He also valued the translator tool in the chat windows and found it helpful, stating that it was the only tool he used to assist his conversations. Finally, the ability to interact with Spanish speakers from all over the world and see the difference in their language styles was advantageous for Bill and his interest in learning different variations of Spanish.

Carol was the least technologically experienced of the participants in this study. She did not consider herself a tech-savvy person and had no prior experience with internet chat. In addition to becoming accustomed to using her second language in a new environment, Carol struggled with the medium of communication itself. She was less exploratory than other participants, only using the chat function and only adding two friends in the first half of the data collection period. Carol's frustration with activity was mostly the result of her desire for verbal practice. "We don't need more practice typing in things that we want to say, we need more practice speaking and talking with each other or maybe other native speakers, but verbally speaking instead of typing...My honest opinion is that I would like more class time" (11/20/09). She adds, however, that if she were using the video chat function, this would be a more appealing activity.

While she disliked the activity overall, she did find value in the fact that you never know who you are going to talk to on *Livemocha*. While this is nerve-wracking for her, it was also positive, since it provides the opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people, learn what they do for a living, and discover what they're lives are like. This in and of itself was a learning experience for Carol. She describes one specific instance: "Another woman I was talking to I insulted and she hung up on me, but I didn't mean it as an insult. I asked her if she worked on a farm, and I think she took that as an insult, but for me, I study pollination, and so I was really excited that I might have found somebody, and she had a picture of her standing in this banana orchard... and so I was kind of excited, but I think she really took it as an insult" (11/20/09). After this experience, Carol explains, "You gotta watch what you say when you're a United States person visiting down there and to be aware of how you

might be perceived. Maybe that's a good lesson to learn" (11/20/09). She also feels that this kind of exposure to the language is good for learning "more common speech" (11/20/09).

During the second half of the data collection period, Carol's experience improved simply by becoming more familiar with the technology and the practice of chatting and by learning how to make the most of her experience. She describes that she learned how to select conversation partners and how to have better connections with more appropriate people. She prefers to only converse with one person at a time so that she can have more in-depth conversations, though she has a feeling her interlocutors are participating in several conversations at a time. Her opinions about the activity in general, however, did not change. She continues to feel that the stress should be on speaking and views this as a writing activity. Carol has very specific reasons for learning; she wants to learn Mexican Spanish and is uninterested in other variations of the language. Her involvement throughout the data collection period remains superficial. She does not add friends and when her interlocutors ask her to she confesses, "I tell them that I will and then I don't" (4/20/10).

While no interview was conducted with Britt, observations of her behavior while engaging in this class activity and evidence from within her *Livemocha* conversations suggest that she was not particularly enthusiastic, engaged, or interested in her participation within this space. Bill and Carol, while sharing their dislike for this activity were both able to find positive aspects to their participation and interaction. And regardless of their satisfaction, their opinions did not seem prevent them from becoming socialized to the space, learning how to use it and the tools it offers to achieve their goals.

4.6 Perception and Interaction

Those participants who expressed high levels of enthusiasm and appreciation for *Livemocha* and its potential as a tool in their personal language learning showed higher levels of participation and potential for future self-motivated participation outside of the study. Cammy, one of the most outspoken advocates for *Livemocha*, contributed three personally motivated conversations to this data set. Her desire to learn Spanish and optimism towards *Livemocha* as a potential tool for her learning motivated her to log in over a winter break with the hopes of practicing her Spanish during her course's four-week intermission. While these self-motivated conversations saw heightened use of English use by Cammy, they are important in establishing her place as an active participant (one who both contributes and receives) in the *Livemocha* space.

The positive opinions towards and experience with *Livemocha* during the data collection period, in the case of Cammy, did lead to continued participation within the *Livemocha* space.¹⁸ Figure 2 is a screen shot taken of Cammy *Facebook* page on October 7, 2010 (five months after data collection period and obligation to use *Livemocha* as part of her Spanish course) had ended.

¹⁸ Figures 2 and 3 were collected after the termination of the data collection period. While continued observation of participants' SNS habits were not a planned component of this study, this additional data is included in this study with the participant's permission.



Figure 2. Evidence of Cammy's continued participation in *Livemocha*.

Cammy's declaration of love for *Livemocha* in her more prominent online space for social interaction (*Facebook*) is indication not only that she is becoming socialized, but also that her web identity is expanding to include *Livemocha*.

On January 4, 2011 (approximately eight months after data collection ended), Cammy again posts about her participation in *Livemocha* on her *Facebook* page. On this post, the first "like" and the second-to-last comment are from a classmate from Cammy's Spanish class (one who is not discussed in this study). Cammy's public display of enthusiasm for this space possibly encourages the renewed participation of her classmate and opens the doors for their relationship as a venue for continued practice of Spanish.



Figure 3. Evidence of Cammy’s continued participation in *Livemocha* and incorporation of both social networking spaces.

The arrow in Figure 3 highlights the mode of posting. Cammy made this post to her *Facebook* page via the *Livemocha* site, indicating that there is an interconnection of the two SNSs developing in her personal online life. While these two figures indicate that Cammy’s involvement in *Livemocha* is no longer limited to the English and Spanish languages, the extension of her engagement in *Livemocha* to include other languages of interest is further

evidence of her socialization into this space. Cammy's case is the only concrete example of positive perception leading to continued participation. However, Brandon and Vincent, who both had positive perception of *Livemocha* and its applications for language learning, both expressed the potential for continued participation within this space.

While the evidence suggests that a positive perception is ideal for potential future participation in *Livemocha*, it is not clear a negative perception of *Livemocha* and its classroom applications for language learning negates the positive impact that participation can have on learners. Conversations from Bill and Carol, who both shared negative perceptions for using *Livemocha* as a component of classroom language learning, do provide evidence that, regardless of the learners' perceptions, there is evidence that participation in *Livemocha* has a positive effect on the participants' interactions with their interlocutors. Bill's shift from foreshortened closings to extended closings over the course of the data collection period suggests a change in rapport orientation and, thus, illustrates evidence of language socialization within *Livemocha*. In Carol's last conversation of the data collection period (example 31), is the first and only instance in which she does not orient to the conversation as institutionally driven.

- (31) 114 Interlocutor: o.k. I need to review some activities from my students
 115 Carol: A veces, estoy demasiado seria
Sometimes, I am too serious
 116 Interlocutor: Nooooooooooooo!!!!!! , SMILE all the time, it produces in
 117 your face youth
 118 Interlocutor: if you look my face i look like 28
 119 Carol: Pasé un tiempo bueno contigo;)
I had a good time with you ;)
 120 Interlocutor: ok, have a nice time
 121 Carol: Tengo arrugals por el sol en el desierto . Trabajo exterior
I have wrinkles from the sun in the desert. I work outside
 122 Interlocutor: I'll send you secrets for your wrinkles

123 Carol: gracias
thanks
124 Interlocutor: de nad
you're welcome
125 Interlocutor: bye, enjoy your time
126 Interlocutor: :D
127 Carol: hasta luego
see you later
128 Interlocutor: hasta pronto
see you soon
129 Interlocutor: my new friend
130 *** Interlocutor's IC window is closed

(2/17/10 #1, 114-130)

As previously discussed, Carol states that she has enjoyed this conversation and uses a winky emoticon (line 119). This is a strong indication that she is becoming socialized to the use of this medium of communication and a positive implication for rapport building with this particular interlocutor. Additionally, this closing sequence is more elaborate and therefore more in line with patterns in Spanish closings (Fitch, 1990/1991; García, 1981).

This chapter has discussed what strategies and patterns learners use to close their conversations in *Livemocha*, how these interactions with their interlocutors affect participants' language use, and what opinions the participants had regarding their experience. The data presented suggest that, while each participant's experience in *Livemocha* is unique, engagement within this space is a potentially beneficial practice for any language learner, since through participation in *Livemocha*, they become socialized to the space and how to best take advantage of it for their language learning needs.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Over the course of one academic year, the seven participants in this study engaged in self-directed conversation in *Livemocha*. A conversation analysis of these conversations' closings provided the opportunity to comment on the research questions posed:

1. What conversation closing patterns appear in conversations between Spanish language learners and NSs in the *Livemocha* space?
2. To what extent do these patterns differ over the course of ongoing participation?
3. Does NS language use influence that of learners? How?
4. What are learner perceptions of participating in *Livemocha*?
5. To what extent is there a connection between learners' perception and their interaction?

Chapter 4 discussed these questions citing examples from the data.

5.1 Closing Patterns

The data showed a number of patterns in Spanish language learners' SCMC conversation closings in *Livemocha*. Referencing the institutionally driven nature of their conversation was one very common pattern of use in this study. Institutional orientation was present in the form of referencing class mechanics and the teacher. The act of thanking was another common pattern of use by participants of this study. In conversation closings, thanking was used as a move out of the closing, which is a common move sequence type for moves out of closings in English (Button, 1987), and as a closing or terminal component. The participants' conversations suggest that there may be a connection between institutional orientation and thanking, since the two strategies often occurred jointly, and participants who

tended to orient to the institutional nature of their conversations in their closings also tended to use thanking. This could be the result of the transaction-like nature of these conversations. Given that this was in fact an institutionally required activity for the participants of this study, and that there were enforced time constraints based on institutional limitations, the act of referencing this upon conversation closing is not surprising. These behaviors may be unique due to the self-driven nature of the relationship between participants in *Livemocha*, since by conversing interlocutors are providing one another with the service of their NS expertise.

Another conversation closings pattern found in Spanish language learners' conversation closings was apologizing. Apologizing appeared in conversation closings as pre-closing components and as moves out of closing. In English, pre-closings are commonly used to initiate a conversation closing (Goldberg, 2004). Speakers recognize these particles as an attempt to take a turn, without contributing to the current topic of conversation even in multiperson text based-SCMC, where participants recognize pre-closings as an appropriate way to initiate closing (Markman, 2009). In this study, Vincent's use of apologies as a pre-closing was typically part of a larger pre-closing statement that initiated the closing through expressing a reason for needing to take leave. This does not necessarily contradict Kurisack and Luke's (2009) finding that NSs produce more elaborate pre-closing statements, but it calls to question whether learners who initiate closings in this particular context employ more complex closing strategies. As a move out of closings, apologizing in and of itself is not recognized as one of Button's seven common "sequencing types" found in English, and rightly so, being that only one participant employed apologies this way. Nevertheless, as they appear in these data, the apologies under this classification are make reference to a

previous topic of conversation and extend closings in the same manner as the more common moves out of closings, such as making arrangements, which was a strategy used both by NS interlocutors and the Spanish language learners. While the practice of extending closings is common in Spanish (Fitch, 1990/1991; García, 1981), doing so through the use of apologies is not documented as a common strategy, and since it is not used by NSs in these data, moving out of closings via apologies should not be considered a common practice.

As discussed in Chapter 2, making an arrangement is one common way to move out of a closing. Arrangements imply that the conversation is part of a series, and they help in justifying the closing of the conversation by reserving or postponing topics of conversation for future interactions (Button, 1987). In this data set, arrangements for future interaction ranged from vague to specific, and while there is insufficient data to know if any of the participants followed through with any of their arrangements, data indicate that the act of making the arrangements assisted in the building or maintaining of rapport in these conversation closings. Because arrangements were made both by learners and their NS interlocutors, we have reason to believe that the practice of moving out of closings via arrangements is accepted and understood cross-culturally, within Spanish and English NSs in the *Livemocha* space. Given this SNS's foundation of building and maintaining relationships with other participants for personal gain, this practice would likely extend to NSs speakers of other languages as well.

The participants' choice of conversation closing strategies is not surprising. Given that these conversations were, in fact, institutionally required, it is logical that they would reference this in their closing. Used as a pre-closing component, apologizing is also logical given the institutional constraints, since time limitations often caused participants to cut their

conversations short. Though other *Livemocha* participants would not likely employ institutional orientation as a closing strategy, since it is typically a self-motivated environment, it is possible that users might use apologizing as pre-closings to mitigate the leavetaking. Thanking and making arrangements for future plans, however, are logical strategies for a space in which learners share a joint venture and assist each other in accomplishing their goals. There would likely be seen in use by the wider *Livemocha* population.

5.2 Longitudinal Change

The primary conversation closing strategies employed by the participants of this study did not change significantly over the course of the academic year. The occurrences of institutional orientation, thanking, apologizing, and making arrangements remained static in each of the participants. The data did show some examples, however, of change in behavior over time. Bill's shift from foreshortened to extended closings suggest a shift in rapport management with his interlocutors. The instances of rapport building and enhancement seen in his conversations towards the end of the data collection period are evidence to suggest that he is more actively participating in relationship building *Livemocha*.

Carol also engaged in acts of rapport building towards the end of the data collection period. However, her most significant change was becoming socialized to SCMC and SNSs in general. Through her participation *Livemocha*, Carol learned how to communicate via internet chat and participate in a SNS, something that she had never done previous to this study. This is significant since it shows that *Livemocha* is accessible for potential participants with less technological experience, opening the doors to a broader pool of people with more diverse experiences.

There could be a number of reasons why there was no noticeable change over time in institutional orientation, thanking, apologizing, and making arrangements as conversation closing strategies. It could be that the context motivating the conversations and departure from the conversations remained the same, and as a result learners developed routines or habits for closing. As discussed, Cammy orients to the institutional nature of the activity in 78% of her institutionally required conversations. In this case of this particular participant, there are three examples of non-institutionally required conversations as a point of comparison. In these conversations, Cammy does not use institutional orientation as a conversation closing strategy. Future research examining only self-motivated conversations may show an inclination to different closing strategies.

Another possibility for the absence of change in conversation closing strategies over time is perhaps because the learners found these strategies to be effective. The participants of this study did not receive any classroom instruction on how they should close their conversations, and none received any explicit feedback from their interlocutors on how they should close their conversations. As such, if the learners did not perceive conflict or some other reason to alter their conversation closings behaviors, it simply may not have occurred to them to do it differently. Regardless, the lack of significant change does not imply that *Livemocha* is unsuited for language learning, since closings are only one small component of the interactions that take place, and more obvious evidence of change might be found in other parts of the conversations. Still, even within this small component of interaction, learners showed changes in other important elements to language learning, such as rapport management. The fact that some participants showed a shift in rapport management

strategies to favor rapport building and enhancement suggests that *Livemocha* could be space in which language learning and socialization occurs.

5.3 NS Influence

The conversations analyzed suggest that in conversation closings, NSs do influence the language use of learners. We saw this happen explicitly, through the giving of feedback. Cammy's examples illustrated how a learner can solicit and receive feedback from an interlocutor and apply that feedback in later conversation. Though not a common occurrence, the giving of feedback in a conversation closing sequence acts as a move out of the closing. The specific language learner/expert nature of these interactions is obviously unique to institutional contexts or specialty spaces like *Livemocha*. As such, this again does not appear on Button's list of common sequencing types, though it is used to introduce new information within the closing. This could be because other-initiated repair is considered a dispreferred response in conversation closings, which likely place more emphasis on other elements of conversation, such as rapport management.

As with feedback sequences, evidence of NSs implicit influence on learner language use is scarce. However, the data did show one example; Vincent's use of one grammatical construction (*fue un placer + infinitive + te*) evolved over time as he saw instances of the construction used by his interlocutors. For both explicit and implicit influence, it is clear from these data that the conversation closing itself is not a common venue.

Though it is not common in conversation closings, the giving of feedback is one practice that has emerged among participants of the *Livemocha* community, since "both intensive and extensive knowledge are encouraged" in affinity spaces (Gee, 2004, p. 85). In fact, giving feedback is a defining practice in the *Livemocha* space. Furthermore, even when

not providing explicit feedback, the simple act of conversing is a resource, as it serves as TL input for other users. Vincent benefitted from the simple participation of other users, without their having made explicit feedback regarding his language use. This is further evidence that people can both contribute and learn through engagement in *Livemocha*. This supports the ideas of communities of practice and affinity spaces, since it shows how learning is something that occurs outside of the individual. Analysis of the conversations in their entirety would provide insight as to the extent that expert and novice speakers in *Livemocha* teach and learn from each other through their engagement with social practices that they value, such as the giving and receiving of feedback. As Gee (2004) argues, this is when people learn best.

5.4 Perceptions

The participants in this study had a wide range of opinions about *Livemocha* and their participation in this space. As discussed, Brandon, Cammy, Shane, and Vincent all had positive perceptions and experiences participating in SCMC in *Livemocha*. This favorable opinion towards their interaction in *Livemocha* led these participants to consider continuing to use this space on their own volition in the future. While the majority of participants had favorable opinions about participating in this space, Bill and Carol did not share these opinions. However, both Carol and Bill were able to see the value in this type of activity for language learning, even if they themselves did not find it valuable and enjoyable.

5.5 Perception and Interaction

The examples in this study indicate that positive perception led to extended opportunities for interaction. Cammy was an excellent example to illustrate not just the potential for continued interaction within the space, but also the extension of her engagement

in *Livemocha* from institutional to personal through her *Facebook* page. In her continued involvement and broadening of scope for her *Livemocha* experience (branching out to new languages), Cammy became an invested participant in the space and began to claim an online social identity that included her participation in *Livemocha*. Gee (2004) would argue that as Cammy became more engaged in the social practices of *Livemocha* outside of her required SCMC conversations, the better she learned.

Perception has an impact on learners' involvement in this affinity space because of its direct link to motivation. Those learners who dislike *Livemocha* will likely discontinue participation once it is no longer an institutional requirement. However, during their time of mandatory participation, all was not lost for those participants who did not share favorable perceptions. Bill and Carol did not even consider participation beyond what was institutionally required, but regardless showed some change in rapport orientation, suggesting that socialization in this space can occur even with the most ambivalent or negative participants. This is again in line with Gee's view that "community" implies closeness, and not all participation is equal (as in the case of these Bill, Carol, and Britt). However, their lesser degree of involvement does not diminish *Livemocha's* significance or their place within it, and therefore 'space' is a more accurate social configuration.

5.6 Research Implications

The contribution of a longitudinal learner corpus provides the opportunity for future investigation in numerous areas of SLA, including some of the current gaps in the existing research, such as the lack of longitudinal studies on L2 pragmatics from a conversation analytical perspective and the lack of studies of interlanguage pragmatics using longitudinal, naturalistic data. Given sufficient data, we can begin to answer numerous questions

regarding SLA and telecollaboration, particularly SCMC occurring within the context of a SNS created for language learning. Knowing how learners benefit (or not) in various telecollaborative contexts helps language teachers, from a very practical perspective, to more effectively design and facilitate collaborative language learning into curricula. From a research perspective, the detailed CA approach provides a solid base of information about language learning in SCMC and SNSs, serving as a starting point for continued research on various populations of students and on a variety of conversational elements that can address language learning, both linguistic and social. For example, the CA done in this study provided a commentary on the acquisition of grammatical forms and socialization into a learning space.

Another area for future research is the use of telecollaboration with other learner populations. For example, much could be learned from heritage learners' participation in *Livemocha*. While heritage language learners were not addressed in the current study, an investigation of interlanguage pragmatic development and socialization of Spanish as a heritage language learners' interactions with NSs of Spanish and a comparison of these results with second language learners would provide valuable insight into the advantages and disadvantages of participation in SNSs for heritage language learners. Another potential area of investigation is the use of code-switching by learners and their interlocutors in this environment. Questions of interest include: (1) What defines learner code-switching? (2) Does second language learners' use of code-switching factor into rapport orientation and maintenance in their text-based synchronous computer mediated communication interactions? and (3) Does code-switching in *Livemocha* follow code-switching patterns and conventions in face-to-face interaction? The answers to these questions would provide

valuable insight into how learners interact with and learn from NSs and other learners in SCMC and in the context of a SNS centered around collaborative language learning.

5.7 Pedagogical Implications

The emergence of this online space and its growing popularity illustrate the direction in which language learning is headed. With increasing access to the internet and a growing web 2.0 mentality, language learners can easily connect with NSs in a forum that emphasizes the collaboration required in constructing language. These data support the idea that in sharing a joint venture of communication, participants of *Livemocha* build intercultural relationships and use language in meaningful contexts. Vincent, through his participation in *Livemocha*, met, befriended, and made plans to visit another *Livemocha* user in Guadalajara, Mexico. Language practitioners have the ability to leverage these tools and adapt their curricula to effectively incorporate them into language courses. One obstacle that this study's participants faced was the limitation in frequency and length of their chat sessions. In order to best promote engagement within the *Livemocha* space, therefore increasing the likelihood of having repeat conversation partners and building relationships, students should have more flexibility with their participation. A solution is to use *Livemocha* as an out-of-class supplement that can be tied in with class activities or assignments. Some specific ideas include:

- Using *Livemocha* as a data source. Students can use their conversations as an opportunity to gather information about various topics from NSs for various countries and then use this information for class discussions or compositions.

- Using *Livemocha* as a venue for practicing specific tasks and forms. Students can engage in conversation and attempt to follow prompts for conversation that direct them to practice specific forms within the context of real meaningful conversation.

González-Lloret (2011) argues that the use of SCMC outside of class could promote autonomous learning and encourage students to engage in more interactions with more interlocutors, allowing them to build relationships and experience a wide range of pragmatic rules. This study did not actively seek self-motivated participation in *Livemocha*. However, Cammy's three volunteered conversations do provide some insight into how institutionally required involvement can branch out to personally motivated involvement. In accordance with Sanders (2006) study that showed that the main difference between in-class and at-home chat productivity was the quantity of production, Cammy's at-home conversations were longer than her in-class conversations (at-home conversations averaged 176 lines in length, and in-class chats averaged 65 lines in length). In this case, this is likely the result of a lack of any institutional limitations in place, such as no time limit on conversations. Still, this information is important for considering how SNSs might facilitate self-motivated engagement and encourage greater participation in a space where students can meaningfully use their target language. With the help of SNSs like *Livemocha*, which is intended for self-motivated language learning, students have the opportunity become socialized into an international community, providing them with the experience to compete in a globalized world.

5.8 Limitations

One limitation of this study is the absence of time stamps associated with utterances. At the time of data collection, time-stamping technology was unavailable for the *Livemocha*

chat conversations. This information is valuable for conversation analysis, since it can provide information about length of pauses between turns, pace of the conversation, etc. Manual timing was not a reliable or feasible option for this particular set of data. For the sake of natural and spontaneous conversational data, very few limitations were imposed upon the learners during their chat time. Often, while waiting for responses from their interlocutors, the learners would minimize or hide the chat window in order to open internet browsers. Learners would take this time to use online dictionaries, explore the *Livemocha* website and other potential conversation partners, or hold additional conversations. If the learner chose to use speakers or headphones, an audio cue would inform them when the interlocutor had entered a reply and they could return to the conversation at their convenience. With other windows in the foreground of the screen recording, it is impossible to manually time stamp conversations with any accuracy or precision. The absence of this information, however, does not detract from the larger themes discussed.

Another limitation of the study is the small number of participants considered. While a greater sample of participants would assist in drawing more concrete overarching conclusions about learners' experiences with *Livemocha*, for the purpose of this study, the detailed conversation analysis was the preferred method of analysis. The microanalysis allows for a close investigation of each individual participant's conversations, with regard to their specific contexts, which in turn provides the opportunity to comment on longitudinal behavior patterns and learning, both linguistic and social. And while more longitudinal change may have been discovered in a longer-spanning data collection period, these learners did complete four semesters of study (the beginning and intermediate series) during the

collection period. Additional research on intermediate and advanced levels would shed light onto how participation in *Livemocha* would affect learners in this stage of language study.

5.9 Conclusions

The goal of this dissertation has been to discuss the effects of participation in a SNS on learners' language socialization and pragmatic development. By examining the participants' SCMC interactions throughout the course of an academic year, this study provides a long-term perspective of learners' experience participating in the *Livemocha* space. The conversation analysis methodology allowed the detailed examination of conversations, taking into close consideration each conversation's unique context. Participant interviews provide the opportunity to consider user perception, another important dimension to engagement within a SNS. Together, the CA and user perception interview provide a comprehensive view of the learners' experience participating in this space.

The results of this study showed a variety of patterns in the participants' conversation closing in *Livemocha*, including orientating to the institutional nature of the activity, thanking, apologizing, and making future plans. The use of these strategies did not change over time; however, the data suggest that some participants, who had negative perceptions of their participation in *Livemocha*, saw a shift in rapport management, towards more instances of rapport maintenance and enhancement. This might suggest that mandatory participation in this space does not counteract the benefits of involvement, since it is possible for even those participants with unfavorable opinions about this activity to become socialized and begin to build relationships with NSs in this space.

While not a common practice in conversation closings in this data set, we also saw some examples of NS influence on learner language use, through explicit feedback. Implicit

influence on learners' language use was also an uncommon occurrence, though the data did yield one noticeable case of a learner's use of a grammatical construction evolving with exposure to NSs' use of the same construction.

The data also showed that those participants who expressed high levels of enthusiasm and appreciation for *Livemocha* and its potential as a tool in their personal language learning showed higher levels of participation and potential for future self-motivated participation outside of the study. However, data indicated that negative perception of *Livemocha* and its classroom applications for language learning did not negate the potential positive impact that participation can have on learners. In sum, this study has shown that while each individual learner has a unique experience participating in *Livemocha*, this space is fulfilling its goal to address the "international demand for an engaging and collaborative approach to learning" (livemocha.com, 2012).

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Appendix A

Participant Introductory Questionnaire

Name: _____ (to be removed after data coding)

1. Please indicate with which gender you identify yourself:

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. What is your age? _____ years

3. Please indicate your highest level of formal education: Freshman

- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student
- Non-degree

4. What is your current job? _____

5. Where did you grow up (Country, State, City)? _____

6. Have you lived anywhere else for over two months?

- no
- yes If yes, where? _____

7. Please describe any travel experiences you have had in Spanish-speaking countries (place, length, purpose, living arrangement).

8. Have you formally studied Spanish previously?

- no
- yes If yes, where? _____
Where? _____
For how long? _____ Years _____ Months

9. Do you speak Spanish in your academic/work life?

- no
- yes If yes, what percentage of the time? _____ %

10. Do you speak Spanish at home?

- no
 yes If yes, what percentage of the time? _____ %

11. Do you speak Spanish with relatives, friends, or other non-work associates outside of your home?

- no
 yes If yes, what percentage of the time? _____ %

12. Do you chat online or instant message?

- no
 yes If yes, in what language? _____
Which programs do you use? _____
How often do you chat? _____
Please describe with whom you chat and for what purpose?

13. What do you think of chatting online to learn Spanish?

- Great idea! Sign me up! Why? _____
 Okay. Interesting idea. Why? _____
 No way! Why? _____

14. Do you participate in any social networking sites? (e.g., Facebook, Myspace, etc.)

- no
 yes If yes, which ones? _____
How often do you log-in? _____
Please describe your participation on these sites.

Appendix B

Participant Exit Interview Prompt (for participants in Group 2)

1. Had you ever used Livemocha before this semester? If yes, describe your previous experience with it.
2. Do you use anything similar to communicate with NSs? If so, what? Had you ever thought of doing something like this before?
3. Describe your level of involvement in Livemocha. (How often did you log in? How many friends have you added? Do you submit and review activities? etc.)
4. What did you like most about this activity?
5. What did you like least about this activity?
6. What sorts of things do you think you have learned through Livemocha?
7. In comparison with other activities in class, how did this activity make you feel? Why?
8. Have your feelings changes throughout the course of the semester?
9. Would you like to do something like this in class again? Why or why not?
10. Will you use this program on your own? Why or why not?
11. Is there anything you would like to share about your experience taking part in this online community?

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