

Identifying Moves in an IMCD Session

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Abstract

This article seeks to identify the various generic moves that may exist in a typical Instant Messenger Cooperative Development session in order to better understand how the IMCD framework may be used by an 'Explorer' to achieve a satisfactory resolution to a research obstacle.

1. Introduction

Instant Messenger Cooperative Development (IMCD) (Boon 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011) is a discourse framework that provides an online, non-judgmental, interactional space for teacher-researchers to talk through their thoughts and feelings regarding their current research in order to discover possible ways forward with their particular projects. Adapted from Edge's (1992, 2002) Cooperative Development approach to professional development, IMCD enables two peers to work online via the Skype IM text-chat function as either 'Explorer' or 'Understander.' The Explorer brings to the IMCD session a topic he or she wishes to work on and is provided the space to externalize, reflect on, and develop his or her research ideas. The Understander's role is to support the Explorer by 'reflecting' back summaries of what the Explorer is communicating. These 'reflections' provide the Explorer the opportunity to see his or her words repeated back through the cognitive filter of a peer who is working hard to understand the ongoing articulations and by doing so to make the Explorer feel listened to, valued, and encouraged to continue his or her particular exploration.

Distinct from the norms of ordinary IM interaction, IMCD discourse displays certain generic conventions that give shape to its overall structure as it evolves on a turn-by-turn basis within a session. The IMCD discourse is brought into existence by the Explorer and Understander who operate under agreed constraints to the normal mechanism for turn-taking and to what are allowable contributions to the ongoing IMCD interaction (Swales, 1990). This article seeks to identify the various moves that may exist in a typical IMCD session in order to better understand

how the IMCD framework may be used by an Explorer to achieve a satisfactory resolution to a research obstacle.

2. IMCD as a genre

Swales (1990) describes a genre as:

a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes...these purposes constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style...exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content, and intended audience (p.58).

The members that constitute the discourse community of IMCD are teacher-researchers who are currently engaged in particular research projects (usually as part of a post-graduate degree). These IMCD participants share a common communicative purpose of wishing to articulate and explore their research ideas to discover or decide upon possible directions forward to facilitate the completion of their particular projects and thus help them move a step closer towards their ultimate goal of graduation. The rationale operating in an IMCD session is that it is the Explorer's own individual journey towards self-discovery that is of paramount importance; that the means of overcoming the particular research obstacle in question resides within the Explorer him or herself (Rogers, 1980); and that through articulating one's thoughts to an Understander who refrains from judgment, suggestion-giving, or imposition of self-agenda but makes the space available for the Explorer's ideas to develop, the Explorer will be able to formulate a satisfactory plan of action of what is to be done next. This rationale shapes the construction of the discourse within the ongoing text-chat and establishes the constraints on allowable contributions for both Explorer and Understander.

To further understand the schematic structure of an IMCD session, it is necessary to identify the various interactional 'moves' that are utilized by the Explorer whilst reflecting on his or her current research and by the Understander whilst providing support for this textual exploration. Moves are the semantic and functional units of text within the IMCD discourse that can be distinguished via the communicative purposes they fulfill and the linguistic boundaries that divide them (Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Ding, 2007; Swales 1990). Through move analysis of an individual IMCD session, it is then possible to construct a model of the interactional flow from which future exemplars of the IMCD genre can be compared.

3. A note on data collection and analysis

The IMCD session was conducted on May 30th 2009 from 19.59pm to 21.04pm via the Skype text-chat function. The Explorer is a course participant undertaking a distance learning master's course in TESOL. The Understander is the author of this article. The Explorer and Understander were introduced to each other via email by a tutor of the distance learning course. The tutor was aware of the Explorer's desire to talk about a dilemma he was facing regarding the ethical requirement of obtaining informed consent from the parents of his junior high school students in order to pursue his research and the reluctance of his institution to allow him to do so. The tutor was also aware of the author's desire to collect IMCD data for his doctoral studies. Thus, arrangements for the online session were made via further email correspondence between the Explorer and Understander resulting in both parties adding themselves as contacts on their respective Skype contact lists, arranging a time to meet online, and partaking in the IMCD session.

After the session, the data was saved as a text file, line numbers were added for ease of reference, and any identifiers were removed to ensure participant anonymity (especially for the Explorer). The text was then subjected to line-to-line coding in order to determine rhetorical purposes and lexical usage. Finally, the text was divided into the various moves that occurred within the session (See Appendix 1). In the next section of the article, each interactional move will be described in relation to its various steps, specific function, and linguistic realization.

4. Move analysis

4.1. Opening the session

The IMCD session begins with an "opening the session" move. The move contains a number of different steps or sub-moves:

4.1.1 *Initiating text chat*

001] U : 19 : 59 : 15

Hi

002] E : 19 : 59 : 31

Hey

In Hopper's (1992) analysis of moves within telephone calls, a summons-answer sequence is identified as occurring at the initial stage of a telephone conversation. The ring of the telephone is the summons to answer the call with the receiver's answer of "hello" completing the adjacency

pair. Similarly, in Skype IM, chat is initiated by a participant clicking on the name of the relevant person within the contact's list to open up a separate chat window and then typing and sending a message to that person within the chat window. The message then appears on the screen of the recipient's computer as a summons to answer and initiate further chat with the sender. In line 1 of the IMCD session, the Understander initiates chat by sending the first message, "Hi". The response of "Hey" in line 2 answers the summons and signals that the Explorer is present in cyberspace and ready to begin the session.

4.1.2 *Self-introductions*

003] U : 19 : 59 : 43

Will do a quick intro

004] U : 20 : 00 : 07

My name is U and I am a Z grad (2000-2004)

005] U : 20 : 00 : 14

I have just recently started the PhD course

006] U : 20 : 00 : 23

I am working at a uni in Tokyo

007] U : 20 : 00 : 33

and also help Z out here in Japan from time to time

008] U : 20 : 00 : 40

how about yourself?

009] E : 20 : 01 : 07

I'm E. I have been in Japan for six years and this is my halfway point in the Z program.

010] E : 20 : 01 : 19

I am teaching at a private Junior High.

011] E : 20 : 01 : 33

Previously, I worked in the public schools and with N before that.

012] E : 20 : 01 : 44

I am from the US, in West Virginia

In an IMCD session, the Explorer needs to feel able to open up and reveal his or her private and personal thoughts to the Understander regarding the research issue in question. Thus, the Explorer must feel a level of trust and confidentiality exists between himself or herself and the Understander (Edge, 1992, 2002). As this is the first time for the Understander and Explorer to

communicate with one another, the Understander initiates a ‘self-introduction’ sub-move with the purpose of beginning to establish a working relationship with the Explorer that is based on mutual openness, sincerity, and respect. In line 3, the Understander signals the start of this sub-move with the message, “*Will do a quick intro*” (line 3). The self-introduction focuses on the Understander’s name (line 4), his relationship with the institution where the Explorer is undertaking his master’s degree (‘Z’ being used to replace the name of the particular institution—lines 4 and 7), his current course of study (line 5), and his current work situation (line 6). The Understander then passes the floor to the Explorer and asks him to reciprocate (line 8). The Explorer provides information about his length of time in Japan (line 9), his current position regarding progress through the master’s program (line 9), his current and previous work situations (lines 10 and 11), and his country of origin (line 12).

4.1.3 *Small talk*

013] U : 20 : 01 : 57

Oh-my friend is from West Virginia

014] E : 20 : 02 : 03

Really?

015] U : 20 : 02 : 03

He is here in Tokyo

016] E : 20 : 02 : 13

Wow. Very small world...

As part of the relationship building process, as a tool for greasing the wheels of social interaction, and to avoid appearing impolite by starting the business at hand too quickly, conversational ‘small talk’ topics may be nominated by the Explorer and Understander as items to be talked about and extended over a number of turns within the ‘opening the session’ move. In this session, a ‘newsworthy’ topic is offered by the Understander in line 13 as he reveals that he has a friend from the same state as the Explorer. The topic of ‘*the friend from West Virginia*’ is then talked about until line 30. This helps both participants to emphasize specific areas they have in common and further aids the building of a positive working relationship between them.

4.1.4 *IMCD Training*

031] U : 20 : 03 : 54

ok

- 032] U : 20 : 03 : 59
to the task at hand
- 033] U : 20 : 04 : 05
Do you know much about IMCD?
- 034] U : 20 : 04 : 10
or CD?
- 035] E : 20 : 04 : 15
Not much at all.

As this is the first IMCD session for the Explorer, the next step within the opening is for the Understander to explain the basic rules of IMCD interaction to the Explorer so that the session can proceed smoothly. In lines 31 and 32, the Understander signals a change of topic from small talk to “*the task at hand*” (line 32). The Understander then seeks to ascertain how much the Explorer knows about IMCD (lines 33 and 34). As the Explorer responds with “*not much at all*” in line 35, the Understander proceeds to take an extended turn at talk (lines 31 to 66) in order to explain the role of Explorer and Understander, the various interactional constraints on the participants regarding not being able to ask for or give advice or opinions, and finally, the turn-change signal—“OK?” that facilitates turn-taking between the Explorer and Understander whilst interacting in cyberspace. The Understander then sets a time limit of one hour stating that:

- 066] U : 20 : 10 : 05
either the understander or explorer can end the session

4.1.5 *Getting down to business*

- 078] E : 20 : 12 : 58
so, I guess we begin by beginning, right?
- 079] U : 20 : 13 : 01
Yes
- 080] U : 20 : 13 : 08
I usually mark the session
- 081] U : 20 : 13 : 18
as it is easy to find the beginning in the saved data
- 082] E : 20 : 13 : 38
Well, that has had me worried all day. Finding a place to begin.

The purpose of the ‘getting down to business’ sub-move is to mark the transition from ordinary IM chat to ‘IMCD’ interaction in which the Explorer is afforded the sole conversational rights to topic nomination, in which turn-taking is regulated by the turn-change signal, and in which the Understander refrains from giving advice or suggestions to maximize the space for the Explorer’s ideas to grow. Although usually initiated by the Understander, in this session, the Explorer indicates his desire to move from ‘small talk’ to ‘getting down to business’ in line 78. The Understander explains in line 80 that “*I usually mark the session*” — a ritualized step of typing the name of the participants and their respective roles to denote the interactional transition from peers to Explorer and Understander. In other words, it is the period for both interlocutors to step into their roles. The Understander then usually offers the interactional floor to the Explorer and initiates the first use of the turn-change signal that essentially marks the beginning of the actual IMCD session. In this session, however, the Explorer begins his exploration (line 82) before the Understander can complete each of the sub-steps. Thus, rather than interrupt the flow of the Explorer to initiate repair, the Understander steps back and provides the interactional space for the Explorer to continue with his turn.

4.2 Setting the scene

082] E : 20 : 13 : 38

Well, that has had me worried all day. Finding a place to begin.

083] E : 20 : 13 : 56

That is a bit of a sticking point in my contexts.

084] E : 20 : 15 : 13

Working in the public schools, N and now in the private school, the mere mention of “research” and “ethics forms” or “signed releases” of any kind stir up a whirlwind of resistance immediately.

085] E : 20 : 16 : 56

I have spoken to others about this situation and they agree that it is a brick wall, generally. Private students are generally recommended at this point, though it is not my general practice to entertain private students at this time...

086] E : 20 : 16 : 57

ok?

The ‘setting the scene’ move occurs at the start of the Explorer’s exploration and is used to provide background information to the Understander regarding the particular issue in question. The move may work to establish:

i) an orientation to time :

This provides information to the Understander regarding where the Explorer is currently positioned regarding the research project. In line 82, the Explorer articulates that he has been thinking “*all day*” about “*finding a place to begin*” indicating that similar to his research project, the IMCD narrative requires a starting point too.

ii) the area :

The area is an initial identification of where the session will likely be located as to its focus and hence its boundaries. Here, the area the Explorer wishes to explore is the research ethical code the he has to work under as stated by the regulations of the institution where he is currently employed and the institution where he is currently undertaking his master’s degree.

iii) the obstacle :

The particular research obstacle that is preventing the Explorer from moving forward and that has encouraged him to seek help via the IMCD session may be articulated in the ‘setting the scene’ move. In line 83, the lexical phrase “*sticking point*” not only indicates that gaining permission to research is problematic for the Explorer but is also an obstacle creating a lack of progression regarding the research he wishes to pursue. The “*whirlwind of resistance*” (line 84) or “*brick wall*” (line 85) that he is likely to meet by asking his institution permission to approach his students to sign informed consent forms for his research suggests the Explorer perceives the obstacle as being external; in the hands of the particular gatekeeper(s) at his place of employment.

iv) the mood of the Explorer:

The Understander can begin to get a sense of the initial mood of the Explorer through the “setting the scene” move. For example, in line 82, the Explorer reveals “*worry*” about his research project, the IMCD session, and finding forward progression. The Understander can also learn that the Explorer has sought the help of others regarding the situation he faces but is reluctant to follow the advice given and to recruit private students in order to utilize as research subjects (line 85).

v) *the players*:

Although the main player in the IMCD session is the Explorer, the ‘setting the scene’ move may introduce other ‘characters’ and explain how they are connected to the story that will unfold. Here, the Explorer introduces the gatekeepers of his institution as potential resisters to him gaining access, other teachers or peers who have given him advice, and private students that may offer him the means of overcoming his research obstacle.

4.3 Reflecting

087] U : 20 : 18 : 33

so, let me check. In your current work contexts, the issue of ethics has been met with some resistance (by the instiution? by the students?) and this has made progress difficult. Although you have had advice to use private students, you don’t want to go down this road at this particular time. Is that right? Ok?

088] E : 20 : 20 : 27

I am not adverse to the idea of finding privates (and may be forced to).

The purpose of the reflection move is to show that understanding is taking place and to allow the Explorer the chance to see his thoughts restated back in a more focused and explicit way by the Understander. The reflection move contains four steps: i) a discourse marker to signal that the Understander is thinking or has thought about what the Explorer has just communicated, for example “*so, let me check*” (line 87), ii) the reflection itself, “*In your current work...*” (line 87), iii) an interrogative sentence that seeks confirmation from the Explorer of the accuracy of the reflection, “*Is that right?*” (line 87), and iv) the turn-change signal that offers the interactional floor back to the Explorer, “*Ok?*” (line 87).

The Explorer will usually begin the next turn-at-talk by providing the second-pair part to the Understander’s interrogative sentence; a response that evaluates the previous reflection. Here, in line 88, the Explorer takes the opportunity to clarify elements of the reflection he feels may have been misunderstood—“*I am not adverse to the idea of finding privates.*” Other examples of Explorer evaluations of reflection moves in the session are “*that is DEAD ON*” (line 93), “*that is good*” (line 107), “*Yes, that is accurate*” (line 113), and “*I think that sounds like a path worth exploring*” (line 117).

4.4 Articulating the research obstacle

088] E : 20 : 20 : 27

I am not adverse to the idea of finding privates (and may be forced to). Unfortunately, this makes anything that I am observing feel quite contrived.

089] E : 20 : 23 : 41

The environment at my school is quite delicate. Private school, parents who are paying for the best possible environment, long-standing relationships with no desire to rock the boat. I am a relative newcomer and am still feeling my way around the political structure of the machine, as it were. I am not in a position to do much more than ask, and even that may be a bit much. Just doing a bit of fishing seemed to send shivers up spines and raise hairs on necks.

090] E : 20 : 23 : 52

No idea what went on before...

091] E : 20 : 23 : 53

ok?

After providing clarification to the Understander regarding the reflection move of line 87, the Explorer moves on to describe the research obstacle in more detail. The discourse marker “*Unfortunately*” (line 88) is used to signal the problem facing the Explorer. On one hand, recruiting private students to utilize for his research project has advantages, but on the other hand, it leads him to feel that the research would be somewhat artificial and “*contrived*” (line 88). He then goes on to describe the “*delicate*” situation at his institution using a negative declarative statement—“*I am not in a position...*” (line 89) and a series of idiomatic expressions that connote potential problems (line 89). He feels that the gatekeepers at his institution will be reluctant to “*rock the boat*” (line 89) by asking parents to sign informed consent forms to allow his research to go ahead. Moreover, the Explorer believes that as a new employee that he is “*not in a position to do much more than ask*” (line 89) and yet fears that the mere action of asking might “*send shivers up spines and raise hairs on necks*” (line 89) of the gatekeepers which could, in turn, create further problems for him.

4.5 Weighing up options

100] E : 20 : 34 : 07

I would absolutely love to figure out a way to get the school to endorse me and make it a part of their contract with the parents that I might share observations about what they are paying me to do (teach and evaluate) with others in the

profession in the interest of improving the way that I teach and evaluate.

101] E : 20 : 34 : 15

ok?

102] U : 20 : 37 : 10

so, one idea would be to find a way of convincing the school of the usefulness of the research, draw up a contact with the parents and explain what research is about, i. e. professional self development for yourself and others in the profession. Right? ok.

103] E : 20 : 41 : 36

That is perhaps the only option. To approach the students is impossible as they are all between the ages of 11 and 15. To talk to parents (or administrators, for that matter) without the consent of the related English Department faculty would equal career suicide. The only route would be via the faculty with a letter of endorsement from Z in hand and then a lengthy battle through the ranks with a high probability of defeat at the last moment.

After describing the obstacle that is blocking his forward progression with the research project, the Explorer begins to weigh up his possible options. The first possibility is to approach his current institution and persuade them to allow him to conduct the research. He begins by identifying the benefits to the various stakeholders in terms of providing a better education for his students, a better return on investment for the parents, and increased transparency between the particular institution and the fee payers; that is the parents themselves (line 100). After the Understander's reflection move in line 102, the Explorer realizes "*there is perhaps only one option*" (line 103) he can take if he chooses to pursue this particular direction. Rather than risking "*career suicide*" (line 103) by contacting the parents or asking the students directly, the option is to approach the faculty with a letter from the university of 'Z' where he is undertaking the master's program explaining the rationale behind his intended research. The Explorer, however, understands that this process will be time-consuming and have little chance of success in the end. Although not explicitly stated in lines 100-103, the option is weighed against the backdrop of the alternative possibility of recruiting and utilizing private students for his research that was first mentioned in line 85.

4.6 Reaching a decision

104] E : 20 : 43 : 03

I think that in the interest of time, I should just go lab-rat hunting with the best of intentions, find some adults who can use a pen without anyone else giving permis-

sion and get my battle with the methodology module finished and leave my work at school unpublished for the time being.

105] E : 20 : 43 : 12

ok!?

...

108] E : 20 : 49 : 13

At any rate, I feel that this session has already solved my major dilemma which is a desire to directly involve my work environment (which could be a double-edged sword) and to simply yield to practicality and find/create a different venue for conducting a sample piece of AR

109] E : 20 : 50 : 39

This may involve working with friends who are students of English rather than directly seeking students when what I am actually looking for are "subjects"

110] E : 20 : 50 : 42

ok?

The ultimate goal of an IMCD session is for the Explorer to discover or decide upon a way over or around a research obstacle so that he or she can move forward. In this session, the Explorer reaches a decision as how best to proceed with his research project. Rather than participate in a "*lengthy battle*" (line 103) with his faculty and "*in the interest of time*" (line 104) of completing the module so that he can progress in the master's course, the Explorer decides to "*yield to practicality*" (line 108) and find adult students who are easily able to provide informed consent for his action research project. Having felt like his "*major dilemma*" (line 108) has been resolved, the Explorer continues to work through his decision and identify possible research subjects that he might utilize for data collection purposes.

4.7 Closing the session

Similar to the "opening the session" move, the "closing the session" move contains several steps that mark the transition from IMCD interaction back to ordinary IM chat and bring the Skype IM interaction politely and effectively to an end:

4.7.1 Ending the session

116] U : 20 : 58 : 21

So there is an advantage to using non-work related subjects in terms of objectivity and detachment. Moreover, through observations and findings in other situations,

contexts, you may discover potential solutions to puzzles you have identified but not overcome in your current context. Right? ok. (p.s. need to come to an end soon)

117] E : 20 : 59 : 00

I think that sounds like a path worth exploring.

118] E : 20 : 59 : 43

We are right at 9 o'clock and I think this is a fine place to break if you are agreed.

119] U : 21 : 00 : 13

sure

120] U : 21 : 00 : 18

STEPPING OUT OF ROLES

IMCD sessions may be ended when the Explorer feels that he or she has nothing more to articulate on the chosen area or when the agreed time limit for the session is close to expiry. In this particular session, the Understander reflects the Explorer's previous turn-at-talk in line 116 and then initiates a pre-closing signal by reminding the Explorer that the session should "*end soon*." The first-part pair functions as an indirect request and is placed in parentheses to show that the Explorer should treat the message as being separate to the reflection move. In line 117, the Explorer provides an evaluation of the reflection, thus completing the second-part pair response to the Understander's question—"Right?" (line 116). The Explorer then responds to the Understander's pre-closing request to end the session by agreeing that, "*it is a fine place to break*" (line 118).

As a parallel to the "getting down to business" move that marks the transition from ordinary IM chat to 'IMCD' interaction and indicates a stepping into the roles of Explorer and Understander for both participants, the "ending the session" sub-move signals a "*stepping out of roles*" (line 120). In other words, as the interaction reverts back to ordinary IM chat, both participants become free to nominate topics of conversation and take turns. The Understander however may still refrain from giving advice or suggestions in case the Explorer wishes to return to the issues explored in a future IMCD session.

4.7.2 *Thanking*

121] U : 21 : 00 : 22

thanks for that!

122] E : 21 : 00 : 24

Thank you for a positive experience. I feel this was very productive for me and I

hope it was for you as well.

Although an optional step in the “closing the session” move, both participants may wish to express their gratitude to one another. Here, the Understander thanks the Explorer for taking part in the session (line 121) and the Explorer feeling that his time has been well spent responds by thanking the Understander for a “*positive*” and “*productive*” experience (line 122).

4.7.3 *Sending a summary*

125] U : 21 : 00 : 51

BTW-I do a running summary in a word doc. next to the skype box

126] U : 21 : 01 : 05

it may be useful for you along with the session notes.

127] U : 21 : 01 : 22

E-May 30th

Public schools—research and ethics—resistance

Using private students

Using privates—contrived as not part of natural work context

Context—private school—newcomer—not rock the boat

Research as intrusive / raising the question sent up warning signs

What happened in the past ?

Possible problems from parents over slight concerns

Understand present work context and overcome problem of ethical research

Find a way to get the school involved, parents contract, share information about teaching and then show them why i.e. prof. dev.

The only option—ask the faculty and see what they can say / a letter of endorsement from Z. This may not work though

Or get privates who can give consent and then get the module done.

Do I need to do AR at work or wait for the opportunity to arise

The dilemma of using work or yield to finding or creating other venues for AR research i.e. private students or friends who study English

128] E : 21 : 01 : 22

I would love it if you would send me a copy.

129] U : 21 : 01 : 30

I just posted it above!

130] E : 21 : 01 : 40

Thanks!

During an IMCD session, it is useful for the Understander to keep short summary notes of the Explorer's ongoing articulations in a separate word document file as this facilitates the construction of reflection moves. During the "closing the session" move, the summary can be provided to the Explorer as an additional resource and record of the session. Here, in line 126, the Understander offers to send the summary to the Explorer (line 126), copies it from the word document, and pastes it into the Skype IM chat window (line 127).

4.7.4 Eliciting feedback

131] U : 21 : 01 : 57

Also, could you consider the following questions, if you don't mind and send me a post-session email

132] U : 21 : 02 : 09

Questions for post-session reflection:

- 1] Did you feel you were being understood?
- 2] If so, did this help in anyway with your movement forward?
- 3] Was there anything new in what you articulated in terms of your current dilemma about ethics?
- 4] Were my reflections useful?
- 5] Anything else you would like to add!!

As the Understander is conducting IMCD research, another step in "closing the session" is to ask the Explorer to provide him with specific feedback via email as to his thoughts and feelings of the IMCD experience (lines 131-132). However, generally, it is useful practice for Explorers to provide constructive feedback regarding the Understander's performance after each IMCD session. This helps the Understander to continue to develop his or her art of understanding for future sessions.

4.7.5 *Sending documents*

140] U : 21 : 04 : 02
ok-before we sign out
141] U : 21 : 04 : 05
hang on a mo
142] E : 21 : 04 : 08
ok
...

The final step before signing out from Skype is to save the text file so that there is a permanent record of the IMCD interaction. The text file can then be printed out or stored electronically by both parties so it can be referred to again at a later date. Unfortunately, at the time the IM chat is saved, any subsequent text chat that occurs is not recorded. In this session, the Understander asks the Explorer to “*hang on a mo*” (line 141) while he saves the session and sends the document to him via the Skype IM chat window (line 141). The ensuing words of thanks and goodbyes are lost in the recording of the session.

5. Conclusion

This article has identified the various interactional moves that occurred in one IMCD session as the Explorer made use of the space afforded to him by the Understander in order to articulate his research obstacle, weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of two possible options, and to reach a decision of how best to proceed with his research project. It has also shown how moves within a session can contribute to a successful outcome for the Explorer and to the IMCD genre itself. However, as only one session has been presented in this article, the analysis has serious limitations. This article can only scratch the surface of the potential ways Explorers may use the IMCD framework and to how the discourse may evolve on a turn-by-turn basis by the two IMCD interlocutors. In email feedback provided by the Explorer featured in this article, he states that as a result of participating in the IMCD session:

“I now feel that I have arrived at a new plateau in my planning stage” (the Explorer, personal communication, June 2nd, 2009).

In a similar respect, this article is but a starting “plateau” towards a greater description of this highly structured and conventionalized online communicative event that may help facilitate the research process for its users.

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Appendix 1 : Interactional moves in the IMCD session:



