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A STUDY ON SOCIAL PRESENCE IN THE VOICE-BASED
CHAT ROOM AND THE TEXT-BASED FORUM IN THE
CHINESE ONLINE LEARNING CONTEXT

中国网络教育环境下的语音聊天室和 课程论坛的社会临场感研究

■ 吴立高 著



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吴立高 著

责任编辑: 董 黛

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总 序

对外经济贸易大学出版社最新推出了大型外语学术专著系列——《当代外国语言文学学术文库》，请我为文库写序。借此机会，谈谈我个人对外国语言文学研究的一些认识和感受。

综观 21 世纪的外国语言文学，就其语言学研究而言，形式语言学理论和功能语言学理论继续对抗和对话，认知语言学理论和社会文化理论发展迅速，各种语言学的理论思潮试图从不同的角度解释语言事实；在应用方面，语言学更加广泛地与多学科交叉，运用和借鉴包括数理逻辑、计算机科学、心理学、神经科学、认知科学、生态科学、经济学等各学科在内的研究成果和方法，不断凸显语言学作为人文科学和自然科学交叉学科的地位。就其文学研究而言，英美文学研究受经济全球化浪潮的冲击，文学及文论研究都关注文化全球化与本土性的关系。文化全球化的研究引发了文学现代性、后现代性和后殖民性的思考，文学和语言学研究的相互影响和交融日益明显，文学研究越来越多地引入语言学研究的方法，如话语分析等，反之亦然。我国的外国语言文学研究在全球化和中国入世以后与国际学术界的交流更加密切，发展更加迅速。

同时，我们仍清楚地看到，国内的外国语言文学研究依然存在“三张皮”现象：第一张皮是“汉语与外语”研究的合作与交流不够；第二张皮是“语言与文学”研究的沟通与对话不够；第三张皮是“英语与其他外语”研究的来往和交叉不够。这“三张皮”极大地阻碍着外国语言文学学科的发展。

这套文库的设计体现了兼收并蓄、博采众长、学科融通的思想，是一个开放和创新的学术平台，是各种研究的阵地和各方学者的家园，而进入

文库的研究成果都经过精心挑选，出自学有专长的博士和学者。我衷心地祝愿这朵“原创的小花”在繁花似锦的学术花园里开得绚丽多姿，并愿有更多的学者去关心和呵护它。

对外经济贸易大学英语学院

教授、博士生导师

王立非

2015年2月1日于北京望京花园

Preface

Social presence has long been considered to be a key factor in enhancing learning in online contexts (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Kehrwald, 2010; Ko, 2012; Tu, 2002b). Searching for social presence in new modes of online interaction, however, requires researchers to engage in constant re-evaluation of social presence theory. This study set out to investigate online mediated interaction in the voice-based chat room and the text-based forum in the context of Chinese online education. The main aims were to compare the level of social presence generated using the two technological tools, to explore how learners form an online community and to contribute to theory in this area.

A mixed-method approach was taken to investigate levels of social presence, drawing on data from 124 questionnaires, 96 postings of text messages and 3 hours and 12 minutes of voice messages collected from the text-based forum and the voice-based chat room and eight one-hour interviews with students, either individually or in pairs. The answers to the questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis, the interactional data of both the text and voice messages were analysed using Rourke et al.'s (2001) categories and indicators of social presence while the interviews were transcribed and subjected to a more qualitative analysis for similar categories.

The statistical analysis of the questionnaires showed that students tended to use text to a much greater extent than voice, probably because of technical constraints, and that students' perceptions of social presence in the two media were not significantly different. The analysis of the interactional data revealed that the density of social presence overall was slightly higher in the voice-based chat room than in the text-based forum, but the difference between the two media was not statistically significant. However, the density scores for the interactive category were shown to be significantly higher in the voice-based than in the text-based interaction, while the opposite was the case for the cohesive category. When affective categories were compared, text and voice data were not significantly different.

As the voice-based chat room was synchronous and had the advantage of sound,

students became more involved in the communication and thus a greater sense of community was created. As students developed closer relationships with each other, cohesive features could be dispensed with in the voice-based chat room, and this was why the text-based forum had a higher density of cohesive features. Voice-based interaction clearly enhances social presence and a community of learning. However, for technical reasons, it is currently recommended that students work in small groups for discussion activities and learners should have strong technical support.

From a theoretical perspective, the study underlines the need for the constant renewal of analytical tools and categories in the face of rapidly evolving interactional practice online. The multi-media resources drawn upon by students may include social media as well as university platforms and the use of emoticons, special symbols, multiple punctuation, photos and video-clips – not to mention the use of avatars and virtual worlds, which have not been considered in the context of the current study.

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