

LAUGH BREAKOUTS AND ANALYSIS

Displays of Humor Confirmation

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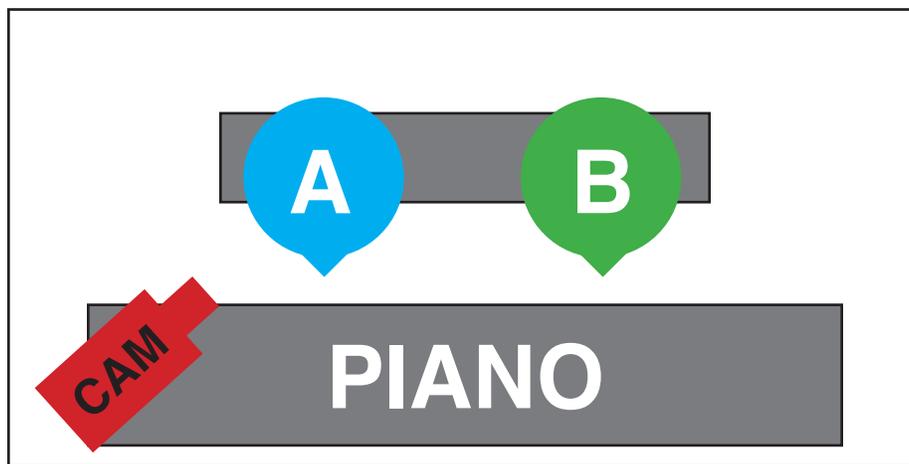
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Berklee College of Music
(Boston, MA)

The Data

The three video clips featured in this paper were collected at a small practice room at Berklee College of Music. It features a music student “A” which is seated on the left of the video (right of the piano) and a core music (general music) tutor “B” on the right of the video. Both are sitting on a piano bench facing a music notation book on the piano. The student, with the help of the tutor is practicing ear training which involves reading a simple melody and singing it for the sake of learning the ability to hear music from reading music notation.

During the video clips the subjects talk about solfège syllables which are like the commonly known musical notes “do, re, mi, fa..” Though with a few variations in order to encompass the black notes on the keyboard known as accidentals. These note names instead of referring to the pitch of each note refers to the scale degree they represent. The available syllables are “do, di, ra, re, ri, me, mi, fa, fi, se, sol, si, le, la, li, te, ti”



Clip one (05:29)

1 B yea
2 A okay?.
3 B ha[^]mm: (.) o. this is do. (.) not le
4 A [o[^]mm.]
5 B [yea] uhum?
6 (2)
7 A ok, h. I think for me Ive just been practicing it wrong so much [that
8 B [h[^]mm::]
9 A it's like stuck in my hea[^]d, even though like you are >saying like<
10 [hey jordan, this is wr[^][ong,
11 B [aaaaaaa[^]a:: [this is wrong]
12 A >and I'm like< I know but I (.) [can't- sstop ithhh Hhh
13 B [Agh haha haha
14 [will I sing leheh[h ha [^]u- [^]u- (2.) h okey.
15 A [yea.]
16 (7.0)
17 B les try it le last time.

Clip Two (07:25)

1 A they are ^no:t very good. (.) umm this ^one and then we have=
2 °there's ^two on seventy twoo:..° (.) that are equally: as% ba::%d.
3 (1.0)
4 B ^umm[mm.::
5 A [>but my professor told me< I can't play on the keyboard,
6 so then i'm like< Howma suppose to:: (.) get the Pitche:[s but
7 B [uhum
8 (2.0)
9 A ^i don't kn^ow.
10 B ahhuhuha ^hi (.) this one?
11 A yeaaaa%%[%
12 B [oo:u.
13 A cause this amm also changes from a minor melody to a [mm^^major?
14 B [A^aaaa,aaaa.
15 YE Right °it [might° (.) be minor to °f major°
16 A [yeaaa%%%]
17 A ûhm.
18 B uhmm: (2.0) uhhuhm.
19 A yea AN THEN SHE ^MADE US (.) change this no^otesss
20 B yea. because it's pick[u
21 A [>CAUSE IT'LL< pick you up into the-
22 B ^uhuuuu, [right?]
23 A the [right-] key. g.hh=
24 B =hahh- h.h. (.) ok^ay ugh (0.8) ^how about this one?

Clip Three (08:10)

1 B is it too hard?
2 A h^um:: (0.9) it's ^not ^too hhhh>ard
3 I just get< (0.5) cunffu:sed about the[unm
4 B [the leisure?
5 A h th >just like the< sillable:s? <^tu [s%ay?>
6 B [huu:
7 A EVEN THOUGH LI[KE I COULD GO AND SAY LIKE this is, (.)
8 B [a^AAaa:.
9 A this is what it >is but when i'm< singin i like forget? it?
10 B uhun?
11 A plUS THIS goes pretty: llow so I'm- °kin-° i know thiss i[s so:l,
12 B [aa^ah yea.]
13 A >SO LIKE< if you ask me >i can tell you what all of these are< but when
14 i'm singi^ng it's kind of like ughn%
15 (3.0)
16 A °you know what i meann?° [if that makes any sense?
17 B [yea%] uhum.
18 A okhay [hu^HUhu], °h.h.°
19 B [u HAha^hi] °okay?° lets ^try- more slowly.
20 A ou[káy
21 B [(yeh

The three clips transcribed on this paper were selected because they contain moments in which the tutor “B” laughs, regardless of whether the student joins her.

The complete video can be found at the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bz5mOoccmpl6Q1ZaSnI5NI92UFE/view?usp=sharing>

Clip One

The first clip starts after the student is finished singing one of the homework melodies. The tutor interrupts the giggling on line 1 and the student stops singing. The tutor then corrects one of the students previously sung pitches on line 3. The tutor then writes the correct solfège syllable on the score. On line 4 the student makes a sound that either signifies her confusion about the correction the tutor based on the confirmation the tutor gives on line 5 and the students further explanation of her trouble on lines 7 and 9 where “A” explains that she has been practicing that melody while singing the wrong note and now has it memorized incorrectly.

As the student explains her reasons for the mistake the tutor interrupts her first with a hum. Then the student goes on explaining she knew the note was wrong even after the tutor points it out for her because the student is aware her mistake happened due to muscle memory. As the student makes her explanation on line 10, she raises her cheeks and curves her mouth on an indication of humor. This indication is mirrored by the tutor on line 11 as “B” overlaps the student by repeating her last sentence “this is wrong” while raising her cheeks and curving her mouth. The tutor then starts laughing on line 13 and enplanes she found humorous that “A” was conscious of her mistake even while singing by saying “will I sing le” as if she was in the student’s situation. The student then verbally confirms the tutor’s understanding of the humor on line 15 and breaks into silence for 7 seconds. The tutor then breaks the silence on line 17 by suggesting the student to start another melody line.

Clip Two

This clip starts after the student points out two melodies she is required to sing for class. The selected clip starts with the student informing the tutor that her performance of the melodies are bad on lines 1 and 2. After a breve pause the tutor hums but is interrupted by the student who moves on explaining her professor asked her not to practice the melody on the piano (a common practice when studying ear training because it forces the trainee to find the notes without the aid of an instrument). On line 6 the student says “and then I’m like” verbalizes the thought she had when she was told not to play the keyboard. She performs her thought humorously by altering her voice by making it more nasal, the tutor doesn’t start laughing and the student pauses for two seconds before saying “I don’t know” on line 9. The evidence the student’s comment was made humorously comes on line 10 as the tutor starts laughing, the student doesn’t laughs with the tutor. The tutor then interrupts her laugh and points at the music inquiring which melody the student is referring to, (end of line 10) and the student verbally confirms on line 11.

The student then enplanes her teaches also asked her to modulate her solfège notes as the melody moves from a minor tonality into a major one (which makes it significantly harder to sing). The tutor confirms her understanding of the switch by overlapping the student’s explanation with a long “Aaaah” on line 14 and by verbally detailing the tonal modulation on line 15 with scale names. The student verbally affirms the tutor’s understanding on line 16 and after a 2 second pause the tutor laughs with her mouth closed. On line 16 the student then further enplanes the measure in which her teacher recommended her to modulate back into the original key in order to return to the A section. This explanation is interrupted by the

tutor on lines 20 and 22 until the student finishes her sentence on line 23. The student then gives a brief giggle contained by her closed mouth and a smile. The tutor reacts to the giggle with a short but loud laugh. The tutor quickly stops laughing, stops smiling, pauses for 0.8 seconds and suggests another melody for the student to sing.

Clip Three

The third clip starts right after the clip two. The tutor asks if the mentioned melody was too hard on line 1. The student hums monotonically indicating she is about to give an answer, after a 0.9 seconds pause “A” answers that the problem isn’t the melody’s difficulty but that she gets confused. Before the student is able to finish her thought the tutor overlaps by asking if the issue was reading leisure lines (an extension of the musical staff which students often have a harder time reading). On line 7 the student answers that the issue is actually the solfège syllables (note names), the tutor overlaps the explanation with a hum. The student further explains she is able to look at the score and decipher the solfège syllable, however when she sings she forgets the notes. The tutor once more overlaps the explanation with an elongated “aaahh” on line 8, later nodding her head up and down on line 9. The student then adds that singing the syllables is especially hard when the notes are low (requiring leisure lines to be read). The tutor once more overlaps the student at the end of line 9 with another “Aahh.” The student summarizes her explanation on lines 13 and 14 but cuts her explanation short and verbally tells the tutor her feelings as she is singing by prompting her with the lines “it’s kind of like ughh.” The student then pauses for three seconds on line 15 and asks if her explanation makes any sense (line 16). The tutor interrupts by confirming her understanding of the student’s feelings by saying “yes” on line 16 and later confirms the student’s question of rather her explanation made sense by saying “uhumm” while maintaining eye contact with the student. The two maintain eye contact, the student says “okay” and both start laughing simultaneously. Once they are both done laughing the tutor strikes a note on the piano and suggests the student to try the melody at a slower tempo. The student then verbally agrees to do so on line 20.

Summarized Events

In all video clips the student explains a reason she is unable to correctly sightread the melody. During the explanation the tutor overlaps the explanation with confirmation hums and open vowels sounds.

On the first example the student makes a humorous comment prompting the tutor’s laugh. The laugh is followed by a pause which is broken by the tutor’s suggestion to move on practicing.

On the second video the student makes a humorous comment which is followed by silence. The student then starts laughing bringing the tutor into laughter. The tutor then suggests to move on practicing.

On the third clip the student finishes her explanation then pauses for three seconds. The tutor then makes eye contact with the student and they simultaneously start laughing. The tutor then suggests to move on practicing.

Ideas and Conclusion

This video contains multiple instances in which one of the subjects repeatedly overlaps the other with confirmation sounds and hums. The often occurrence of the overlaps may be attributed to the fact both subjects are facing the same direction rather than each other.

The lack of eye contact possibly diminishes the participants ability to detect turn taking by limiting the communication to only auditory medium. Since both students are present in the same room it is possible that the conversation isn't adapted to work on exclusively auditory information, unlike on a phone conversation which already has an expectation of the lack of visual cues. Another explanation to for the frequent overlaps is the tutoring method that subject "B" uses. In order to comfort the student the tutor constantly reminds "A" that she is being understood.

The three instances of laughing occur after on humorous comments about the student's difficulty to perform the given exercises. It is possible that by making these comments in a lightly fashion the student is able to maintain enjoyable the tutoring session which would other wise be unpleasant. The tutor's pronounced laughs may be part of the previously mentioned tutoring technique of maintaining the session comfortable in order to maximize the student's ability to learn.