Thunderwire: A Field Study of an Audio-Only Media Space
Debby Hindus, Mark S. Ackerman, Scott Mainwaring, and Brian Starr

This paper describes an application used to study an audio-only media space. The application, Thunderwire, essentially acted like a intercom to anyone who wished to participate. The paper describes the study performed at a local company. Employees there had the option to either turn off, listen, or set the mic to live. That is all that they were given. The only interface given was that of a light distinguishing which mode the user was in. The study lasted for 2 months and consisted of analysis of both usage patterns as well as speech patterns.

I think the most significant part about this application was its lack of an actual interface. Users were just dumped into a channel and had no idea if anyone was on. For me, that is a double edged sword. If I were using this in the workplace, I would love the anonymity aspect of the system. I could log into the system and no one would be able to tell that I was there. However, if I was actually looking for someone and had a question for them, I would need to load up Thunderwire and ask who is online. While it may not be that much of a hassle, I would have just publicized my availability.

I have had some experience with a system like this before. When playing online games, it is common to use an Audio-Only Media Space to communicate without having to type everything to each other. For example, Xbox live has in game voice chat. These systems are much more advanced than Thunderwire. They allow you to see who is online, who is talking at a given moment, muting capabilities and so on. While reading this paper, I immediately drew comparisons to these systems. There is absolutely no reason to see another player when you are playing an online game.

Having an Audio-Only Media Space makes communication far easier than it would be otherwise. So, to me, there never was a question of whether or not these media spaces where applicable. If you ask me, the real question would be, is this something you would want to use in a work environment. I for one, would probably use it to goof around more than anything else.
In Situ Speech Visualization in Real-Time

Golan Levin, Zachary Lieberman

This paper describes multiple ways of visualizing speech. The author hoped to bridge the gaps between sight, sound, and body through these visualizations. While I agree they were able to accomplish such a goal, I can't help but feel like the three projects are nothing more than entertainment and have little in terms of applied uses.

The first visualization described in the paper is called Hidden Worlds. It consisted of a table at which people could sit, and their words would be projected onto the table as bubbles. If the speaker wore a special headset, they could see these bubbles floating in front of them. Personally, I find this to be a bit uninteresting. While it would be cool to check out, I would never want to use this for any type of conversation. I would just end up feeling like people would look at the bubbles coming out of my mouth rather than paying attention.

The next visualization was RE:MARK. This visualization would display words that it recognized on a screen in front of you as if they were floating out of your head. Once again, while somewhat cool to see, I don't really see what we as users gain from this visualization. Other than, of course, seeing the words we've already heard.

Lastly, Messa di Voce tries to aim a little bit higher than the previous ones. Messa di Voce is essentially used as concert software. They set it up to be used by performers to create visualizations through sound. While the show would probably be really cool, I can't help but thinking about audio visualizations as a whole. It seems to me, that audio visualizations are primarily applicable to entertainment. While these visualizations were cool, I couldn't help but feel as if I wanted more from them.
Seeing More: Visualizing Audio Cues

Tony Bergstrom, Karrie Karahalios

I was really excited to see that this visualization was on the list of critiques this week. When we saw the visualization in class, I was very impressed. I thought the visualization did a wonderful job conveying information, while remaining practical and applicable to everyday situations. Since we went over it already in class, I will just mention a few things that I found significant about it.

For me, the most significant part about this visualization was its control over the conversation itself. Being a more naturally passive speaker, I know I would be more inclined to speak up if my current participation was constantly being displayed. Additionally, I also think it would provide me more opportunities in which to speak up. This is due to the people that dominate conversations seeing how much they are speaking and holding back.

I also would be really interested to see how it would affect a team of coworkers over an extended period of time. Unlike the visualizations mentioned in the previous papers, I feel like this visualization could be extremely useful in a working environment. One example in particular, would be for managers as a reference tool. I would imagine it would be very beneficial to have something like this, to go back and see the overall trends of who is talking and who isn't. It could allow the manager to find weaknesses in their teams and take the proper approaches to fix them.

Overall, I feel like this visualization provides a very significant amount of information given how little is displayed. I would be very interested to see what else you guys are working on!