Thunderwire: A Field Study of an Audio-Only Media Space

From the very start, Thunderwire explains and shows very primitive yet interesting mean of communication; audio-only. Even though, the conversation carried out from group of people consist of audio, visual cues, and backchannel, people seldom focus on the importance of audio itself when other visible cues are presence. However while reading this paper, I found very interesting effects and side effects of conversation with audio-only.

Due to the nature of audio-only conversation, every cues one can express in face-to-face conversation are merged into audio in some ways. Therefore many visual yet subtle cues such as inattention, availability of participants and back channeling becomes more explicit and expressive. I think these transformation of cues let the participants focus more on the conversation itself then trying to retrieve extra cues while in face-to-face conversation. As the line is open almost all the time and the scope of thunderwire is very wide compared to any group communication device at the testing location, the conversation through thunderwire is more spontaneous and informal whereas explicit expression of cues and back channeling introduce unintended awkwardness in conversation. However the fact that there could be a media space that is both of face-to-face and telephone conversation is very interesting.

Despite its interesting nature of being media space, it sure brings out some issues mostly related to privacy. As mentioned in the paper, there is no private line in thunderwire and participants did point out the usefulness of having private line. Since the scope of thunderwire is too broad, it is working nothing line telephone nor talking to people next to you, but more of telepresent environment with no sort of privacy protection. This might introduce unintended and mutually but silently assumed norms in the communication which might work as a barrier in long run. Nonetheless, having broad scope does help groups of people be more cohesive and socially binding to each other.
In-Situ Speech Visualization in Real-Time Interactive Installation and Performance

In-Situ Visualization in Real-Time interactive Installation and Performance shows very interesting way of visualizing the invisible and how the variation of this visualization can differ from one another while conveying very similar understanding. One of the favorite about this paper is the visualization of the audio itself. Since audio is invisible, when it comes to visualizations many interpretation can be derived with very different meanings. Therefore not all of its interpretation might be understood evenly to other people. However this paper shows how this various visualization can be cohesive in conveying the meaning yet able to have various visualizations.

The most interesting thing about HiddenWorld is the existence of “shadows”. It allows participants to see how the current conversation is being carried out while keeping its unique “shadows” just like keeping one’s unique voice in their conversation with others. However it might have been better to have colored “shadows” for each participants. Even though “shadows” can be uniques due to ones voice, having unique colors will help other participants to distinguish easily than having different shapes of “shadows”. By doing so, participants might even have understandings of the entire visualization of current conversation.

RE:MARK’s visualization is my favorite in this paper. Unlike in HiddenWorld, it shows the audio in a way that unrecognized words as abstract shape and recognized words as it is recognized and i think it gives subtle but very effective change compared to HiddenWorld. By having these visualization, it gives more dynamics on how the audio is actually being carried out and how they actually “look”. Despite its find visualization, if the size were incorporated the way visualization works, it might have been better.
*Seeing More: Visualizing Audio Cues*

*Conversation Clock* is very interesting and well visualized in a way the audio should be visualized. Due to the invisible nature of audio, one cannot easily detect how interruption, turn-taking and back channeling are carried out while in conversation or even when audio visualization is poorly designed. However *Conversation Clock* was able to visualize what people might want to look for when audio visualization is designed. I like the fact that by having outer growing swirly shapes, it was able to visualize the entire conversation as if logging. Other visualization from this week’s critiques did visualize audio in a very interesting and clever way, none of the works were able to visualize the entire conversation but focus on the instant visualization of the conversation. By having this log-like visualization, one can understand how the entire conversation is like at a glance.

Other thing i like about *Conversation Clock* is that besides its visualization of the entire conversation, it was able to capture all the invisible and very subtle characteristics of conversation among many people such as turn-taking, interruption and back-channeling in a very clear and clever way. By having represented the conversation with a bar, interruption and back-channeling are visualized very clearly in a detail yet due to its log-like visualization, it still shows how the conversation in terms of interruption, turn-taking and back-channeling is carried out along the time line. All these features sure help to understand about the current conversation and affect the conversation very effective way which is verified by the graph in the paper.

Despite its excellent visualization, i cannot help but notice the necessary improvements in *Conversation Clock*. It sure shows the entire conversation with very detail information, as the conversation gets longer the old conversation becomes squeezed into the center, it becomes hard to read the visualization. If the visualization can persist with the same size over the time, it might have been better to understand longer conversation.