Chatting with Glue: Cognitive Tools for Augmented Conversation

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ABSTRACT

Conversation is a creative process. When we converse, we engage rich networks of meaning, forming conceptual connections within and among ourselves. To prevent these connections from fading, we take notes or work together through other external media. Sufficiently rich conversation is a multimedia activity.

The recording media we use for conversations (audio, video, text) are immutable, linear, and one-dimensional. As conversation has become computationally-mediated, it has inherited the limitations of these recording media. Both recording and chat media coerce conversation into a structure that contradicts how its content came about in the first place.

I propose tools for a more principled chat that embraces the capabilities of our minds and the computational medium. These tools augment conversation, remote or in-person, into a creative activity for knowledge-making.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **Collaborative and social computing systems and tools.**

KEYWORDS

conversation, chat, collaboration, media, cognitive, communication, nonlinear, comic, messaging

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1 THE COMIC

This work was presented as a living, evolving comic. In it, I argue that present chat interfaces have compressed, linearized, and made immutable our conversational thinking. I then propose several affordances and principles for future chat interfaces that may resolve these contentions and ultimately augment our thinking in online conversations. These affordances, I argue, form a *glue* that binds thoughts together in conversation, allowing thinking to flow in a multimedia, non-linear, infinitely evolving process. Finally, I surface several future directions of inquiry for this medium.

The comic is presented in five chapters:

- (1) The Paradox of Chat
- (2) The Shape of Wandering
- (3) Conversation Over Time
- (4) The Power of Paste
- (5) The Future

A snapshot of the comic, including citations and further reading, is available at

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It was created in the design application *Figma*.

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