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MAS.632 Conversational Computer Systems
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Problem Set 1

Written language is different from spoken language in many ways, but how these affect communication depends on the medium (voice vs. text) of conversation as well as the presentation genre. Computer programs now offer us the ability to "converse" by rapid exchange of text messages. We can compare voice and text interaction across a wider range of conversational formats.

List differences, in terms of advantages vs. disadvantages, of voice as compared to text, for each of two interaction scenarios below. Specifically, evaluate the different media in terms of how they contribute to our ability to solve the task you would be engaged in.

Your answer should be about a page for each of the two sections.

1. Small lecture. Consider a project description being given to a somewhat informal audience of 20. Contrast listening to the lecture (either in person or on audio tape) to reading a transcript of the lecture. If the presenter were to submit this description as a written document instead of as a talk, how would it be different? In short, contrast:

- attending the lecture
- listening to the lecture on audio tape
- reading transcript of the lecture
- written report instead of a lecture

2. (a) Conversation. Consider a fifteen minute exchange between two people considering where to go for a joint vacation. (Note: assume that the size of the task is such that a 15 minute phone call would suffice to complete it). Assume there is basic agreement on the type of vacation they wish to take; the conversation is about choosing among destinations based on attractions, travel schedules, etc. Compare the following interaction situations:

- face-to-face conversation
- telephone call
- IM
- exchange of email messages

- (b) If IM is replaced with phone-based texting (SMS), how does that change the interaction for part 2 above?