

Tele-analysis: the use of media technology in psychotherapy and its impact on the therapeutic relationship

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Abstract: A growing number of approaches in psychotherapy make use of Internet- and other media-based interactions. This paper discusses the impact on the therapist-client relationship of using media technology and gives an overview of the current state of the debate. It is suggested that the technical conditions of Internet-based interactions produce new forms of social relationships that differ significantly from face-to-face-interactions and that unconscious, nonverbal cues get lost. Research on the therapeutic interaction making use of ‘discourse linguistic’ methods is presented.

The loss of nonverbal cues has implications for psychotherapy in general and especially for the treatment of patients who have difficulties relying on a secure therapeutic relationship. Emotional security in interactional relationships is transmitted to a much greater extent by nonverbal cues than by verbal content; psychoanalytic methods are specialized to refer to this level of interaction. Two alternative scenarios are discussed based on the psychoanalytic theories of Winnicott and Lacan: the risk of an illusionary, idealized image of the other and the possibility that cyberspace can be used for psychological development as a transitional space.

Keywords: Lacan, Lacanian psychoanalysis, media-based psychotherapy, transitional space, virtual reality, virtual relationships, Winnicott

For some years now there has been a growing tendency to use technological media and Internet-based communication in psychotherapy, namely email and Skype. Even though this might be seen as reducing the diversity of opinions too much, I would like to draw a distinction between two diverging positions regarding technologically mediated psychotherapy (tele-therapy): the first takes a positive stance towards these developments and even sees them as an opportunity to offer psychotherapy to clients who have difficulties seeing a psychotherapist in a face-to-face-setting; the second position is more critical and sees the risk of loss of quality and especially of a rupture in the interpersonal relationship of therapist and client and its healing power. I will first describe these two diverging positions in more detail, followed by a detailed analysis of the structural conditions of Internet-based communication

and its impact on human interaction and the interactional relationship in general. I will then try to support the second, more critical position by reporting on research on the therapeutic relationship mainly conducted in the German-speaking countries. This research tradition applies ‘discourse linguistic’ methods to the investigation of micro-processes in analytical (and other) psychotherapies and shows that the transformative qualities of the therapeutic (transference-countertransference) relationship are mediated mainly by non-verbal elements of the interaction. These elements are in danger of getting lost or being distorted – at least partly – in technologically mediated interactions, resulting in the undermining of the holding quality of the relationship.

Pro e-mental-health

In contemporary psychotherapies with an emphasis on cognitive-behavioural therapy approaches we find a thoroughly uncritical application of media technologies (Bauer 2008, Eichenberg 2011). A variety of Internet- and [Q2](#) mobile-based interventions are welcomed as an opportunity for solving problems in mental health care (Ebert and Baumeister 2016). This is seen as an opportunity to offer psychotherapy to clients unable to see a therapist face-to-face, be it because of problems of mobility or because of the special nature of the psychological problem, e.g. shame issues or traumatization (Gorrindo Brendel 2010; Knaevelsrud et al. 2014). There is some evidence that with certain problems and disorders (e.g. trauma, sexual problems or obsessive-compulsive disorder), it might be the only possibility for the users to even be able to begin psychotherapy, because in these cases the face-to-face presence of the therapist would be overwhelming (Knaevelsrud et al. 2015, Herbst 2012). For psychoanalysis, [Q3](#) Scharff has argued similarly: ‘Tele-analysis ... may be even easier for those analysands with a history of trauma related dissociation, where shame and embarrassment about traumatic early experiences could be easily provoked by being seen by the analyst’ (2013, p. 58). Research from media psychology points to the fact that the ‘distance medium’ reduces inhibitions and lowers the threshold for communicating private and potentially shameful material (Barak & Gluck-Ofri 2007), which would enable clients with special disorders, such as trauma and sexual disorders, to begin psychotherapy.

Other points which speak for the introduction of technological media in psychotherapy include:

- Asynchronous therapy contacts enable both therapist and client to reflect on their contributions more thoroughly.
- Temporary interruptions in the therapy (e.g. therapist’s holidays) can be bridged more easily (Scharff 2013).

- Some in-patient therapy programmes have attempted to create booster effects with short messages sent from the therapist to the patient after termination of the treatment (Okon et al. 2005).

These points make quite clear that technologically based approaches are often more suitable for cognitive-behavioural treatments where psychotherapy is largely based on conveying helpful information. In the debate some potential risks are mentioned, but they generally refer to the lack of a detailed diagnosis, unrealistic expectations on the side of the client and the danger that potential suicidality or other crises will not be identified by the therapist. Also there is a discussion about the legal frame of applying such technologies to the field of psychotherapy. What is often not seen is the risk that in the future agencies responsible for financing psychotherapy will support only mediated tele-psychotherapy, because it is generally cheaper and more easily accessible for the user.

The critical position

In a paper entitled 'Psychoanalysis in the age of bewilderment', Bollas (2015) reflects a more critical and pessimistic view of the impact of Internet technology on culture and society:

- Information technology leads to a general loss of depth, quality and essence in thinking and feeling of individuals; digital media in general produce superficiality.
- Everybody can participate in societal communication, so everything becomes equally important. For example, Bollas points to the massive decline in the quality of language in Internet-based communication.
- Heavy users of technological media are characterized as mainly narcissistic, only interested in how they appear and whether they receive gratification in the form of 'likes' on Facebook.
- In general this will lead to the disappearance of the differentiated individual with independent identity and a depth of emotion and fantasy.

There is actually some evidence from research in media psychology that especially heavy users have difficulties staying mindful, taking in information and reproducing memory content (Greenfield 2014, Minear et al. 2013). On the other hand, media psychologists have found that especially heavy users of digital media are usually socially more competent, more intelligent, socially better adapted and more differentiated personalities than average (Doering 2003, Bauer & Kordy 2008).

Interestingly, this kind of critique has been found throughout history when new media technologies were introduced into society. When in the 18th century the technology of printing books made them affordable (at least for

the bourgeoisie) and the format of the novel became popular, we find more or less the same arguments: reading novels will corrupt youth, keep them from working, produce a loss of the sense of reality etc. The same debate can be found in the 1920s with the introduction of radio, and later with television, computer technology and currently with the Internet (see Doering 2003, for an overview).

Presence and absence

From a very general point of view, the changes in interpersonal interaction brought by technological media are strongly connected with the extent and quality of presence of both partners in the interaction. In the classical form of face-to-face interaction there is the physical presence of both persons in communication in a shared space in real life, i.e. physical proximity, with all information channels accessible. In the different forms of telecommunication there is the general condition of physical distance ('tele-') between both communication partners and usually a certain restriction of communication channels (e.g. telephone). In the new forms of telecommunication (Skype, for example) this differentiation of presence and distance becomes more complicated: even though the partners are physically distant they have entered a shared interactional space which gives at least the impression of presence and proximity of the other. Of course this mixture was not totally alien to classical forms of telecommunication, but it is easy to construct examples which demonstrate the new quality of virtual interaction spaces: for instance in a Skype communication one can usually see the room behind the communication partner, which provides more information and certainly has an influence on the relationship.

In the history of psychoanalysis there is a famous example of the relationship of presence and absence of the other in Freud's (1916/1991) observation of his grandson playing with a spool. The child kept the spool with a thread in one hand and threw it over the rim of his bed, saying 'gone' when the spool disappeared, then pulled it back into view and welcomed it with 'there'. Freud saw this as a form of compensation by the child for being subjected to repeated separations from his mother. In psychoanalysis, but also in philosophy, this episode and Freud's reflections were subsequently taken up by Lacan.

Based on the differentiation of presence and absence as well as of physical distance and proximity, I would like to discuss two alternative interpretations of the phenomena of virtual interaction. The first is an optimistic interpretation which tries to point out the opportunities virtual interaction opens up for psychotherapy and psychological development in general. The second is a pessimistic one, drawing on Lacan's philosophy, and points out the risk that imagination and idealization get out of control and substitute real life relationships and experiences.

Virtual interaction as a transitional space

‘Why do we ignore the fact that in face-to-face-encounters in what is commonly called reality, imagination, fantasies and wishes also play an important part and that our everyday life is certainly not determined only by the factual?’ (Musfeld 2002, p.88; translation by the author). Psychoanalysts know that even in a face-to-face interaction the image that we construct of the other has only partly to do with factual information that we receive and is to greater or lesser extent influenced by our inner world and its constructions. Jung, of course, was well aware of this:

All that I experience is psychic ... my sense impressions – for all that they force upon me a world of impenetrable objects occupying space – are psychic images, and these alone constitute my immediate experience, for they alone are the immediate objects of my consciousness.... We are in truth so wrapped about by psychic images that we cannot penetrate at all to the essence of things external to ourselves.

(Jung 1935, para. 680)

We perceive nothing but images, transmitted to us indirectly by a complicated nervous apparatus.

(Jung 1935, para. 745)

Instead of focusing on the risks of virtual interaction we could also see these interactional spaces as opportunities for psychological development. Virtual interaction seems to create for the individual a space of freedom from responsibility while at the same time giving more control over the interaction process, e.g. anonymity and the so-called exit option. Virtual interaction represents a complex mixture of proximity and distance, of presence and absence, of reality and fantasy.

This strikingly parallels Winnicott’s (1958) concept of transitional space, which is not just an element of the inner world or of outer reality but something in between and of both worlds. This transitional space also represents a sphere of play in which individuals can become creative and can experiment with their identities and with new forms of interacting with others. Numerous authors have pointed out these parallels between virtual interaction and Winnicott’s concept of the transitional space (Aronson 2000, Musfeld 2002, Bayles 2012, Scharff 2013, Lemma & Caparrotta 2014). Virtual interaction in psychotherapy represents the technological possibility of entering what I have called ‘interactive imagination’ (Roesler 2008) with a significant other without the risk of responsibility for each action. This throws new light on the uncertainty which can be created in virtual encounters: the fact that here it is often not clear what one is and what one is not – that defined identities are not so much a prerequisite of interaction as they are in real life – may open up possibilities for the development and

testing of identity. The possibilities of virtual interaction can then be seen as a field of experimentation in which tentative conceptions of identity can be tested within the virtual field of interactive imagination (Bessiere et al. 2007, Allison et al. 2006) – and this is exactly what psychotherapy is supposed to be. This parallels Jung's idea that the process of individuation gathers momentum when the client begins to experiment with his/her life and his/her personality: the aim of therapy is a 'state of fluency, of changing and becoming' (Jung 1935, p. 218). Even though it may produce uncertainty, the simultaneous absence and presence of the therapist as the significant other may also create a protected space for the client, thereby lowering barriers and enabling development. There is some evidence that this is especially helpful for clients suffering from traumatization by man-made disasters, in which case the presence of the other might be frightening or painful (Kuester et al. 2016). The above-mentioned idealization of the virtual other and the intensification of the interaction brought about by the protection of the virtual space may be helpful for an even larger group of clients.

Lacan: the proliferation of imagination and the final victory of the imaginative

It was already mentioned that even in face-to-face encounters the image which is formed of the other person is influenced by unconscious fantasies, wishes, projections etc. and is never an objective impression. Nevertheless, face-to-face encounter presents numerous opportunities to correct distorted images of the other, and one of the major therapeutic forces of psychoanalysis is that it enables the client to experience a new emotional relationship with a significant other. A major point in the debate around tele-analysis is the question of whether virtual interaction offers enough possibilities to correct distorted images or whether technologically mediated interaction might be too restricted to provide enough information for correction. Using the theories of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, I next discuss whether in technologically mediated forms of psychotherapy imaginative processes and the idealization of the other can get out of control.

Lacan (1977), who combines psychoanalytic theory with philosophy and structural linguistics, generally assumes that human beings suffer from a basic deficiency, the existential absence of fulfilment. Here he draws a link to the above-mentioned spool game of Freud's grandson, where he sees a form of overcoming this basic deficiency, i.e. the absence of the (m)other. As a consequence he assumes that all human beings strive to overcome the existential situation of absence (of the other, of the good, etc.). He differentiates between three levels of how human beings try to achieve this:

- 'The Real' is a way of denying the absence, the need, the suffering by hallucinating the fulfilment. This is equivalent to a very undifferentiated way of being and is strongly connected with trauma and psychosis.

- On the level of ‘the Imaginary’ the absolute denying of the lack is overcome by constituting oneself via a reflection; therefore this stage is called the mirror stage. In Lacan’s view the child sees its own reflection in the mirror and creates a fantasy of being complete, without deficiency, which is also a grandiose and narcissistic fantasy. Instead of totally denying one’s own deficiency, here the subject puts pressure on the other to accept and reflect this grandiose fantasy of being complete.
- For Lacan the solution is only found on the level of ‘the Symbolic’, where the loss of the full presence of the other and one’s own deficiency is fully accepted and the claim of omnipotent power over the other is given up. The Symbolic is equivalent to the acceptance of difference and separation which are overcome by symbolization.

In this view psychoanalysis in general would attempt to create a bridge from the suffering in the Real and the narcissistic, unstable fantasies of the Imaginary to the acceptance of reality in the Symbolic. The technological possibilities of postmodernity have explosively enlarged the sphere of the Imaginary, where individuals can take up virtual identities (avatars etc.), where they can get rid of seemingly fixed attributes like body shape or even sexual identity and get totally lost in virtual worlds. People then do not even have to accept the absence of the other anymore because the other is potentially always present via mobile telecommunication (thus ‘stay connected’ – the advertising slogan of an Internet service provider). The technologically mediated worlds of virtual reality in our time could be called the total manifestation of the Imaginary.

The problem is that psychological maturity can never be accomplished in the sphere of the Imaginary. The idealized visions of self and other in the mirroring of the Imaginary ultimately remain empty and solipsistic. The Symbolic is constituted by symbolizing the presence of the absent other in one’s inner world. What if it is not necessary anymore to take the step to accepting the absence of the other if we can always have them technologically present? Winnicott (1958) and later Kohut (1977) always pointed out that transformation in psychotherapy comes about by confronting the client with acceptable doses of therapeutic absence, because this enables the client to create a symbolization of the good object in his/her inner world. In this sense the technological possibilities of virtual interaction would externalize the transitional space and rip it from its transformative value. How can ego structure evolve if the client never has to wait for the therapist but can always write a message? How do relationships evolve if, on the long line of the mobile phone, we are never really absent from each other? How does culture evolve if everything is actually available any time with just one mouse click? Probably even Lacan never dreamt of a culture where the technologies of virtuality have made the Imaginary so perfect that the Symbolic has become obsolete.

More practically this means that at least for some clients the possibilities of virtual therapeutic contact can become an obstacle to taking the risk of authentic interpersonal relationships, which leads to further isolation and finally to a stagnation of psychological maturation. Also therapists might be confronted with idealizations which they never can come up to and with a situation where the possibility for slowly correcting these images is just not given. Is not the main point in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis to get out from behind our masks and become fully present with our suffering and our anxieties about being accepted in the face of the real other? How can this come about if we can so perfectly mask our deficiencies technologically?

Following these fundamental and more philosophical reflections, it seems important to analyze the structural conditions of telecommunication and technological media in more detail and with reference to empirical investigations. There is no denying that Internet-based communication is somehow different from face-to-face interaction and that the technological media have an impact on the structural conditions of human interaction. I will therefore reflect in more detail on the changes in structural conditions of interaction which are brought about by technological media and their consequences for human relationships – what I will call virtual interaction and virtual relationships.

Virtual interaction

Interactivity

The revolutionary technological changes brought about by the so-called Internet 2.0, which made the user not only a recipient but also a creator of media content, had the consequence that media communication is no longer a one-way process. The interactivity and reciprocity that we are used to in face-to-face interactions can also take place in digital communication, be it in the form of written communication as in email or short messages or, at the other end of the spectrum, Skype, which allows for an exchange of visual and audio information.

Independence from time and space

As a result of digital advances, it has become possible for interaction between two persons to be independent from space and time (e.g. exchange of videoclips), almost as if the other person were present in the room. As already mentioned, this enables persons seeking psychotherapy to receive treatment even if they are not able to visit the therapist in his or her practice space. Accordingly, a general finding in the communication sciences is that Internet-based communication platforms can enable a much more heterogeneous mix

of personalities and social groups. While this may be seen as an accomplishment because it lowers the threshold for seeking psychotherapy, without doubt it also changes the basic conditions of psychotherapy.

Anonymity

Technological means of interaction make it possible for users to stay anonymous in the contact, be it openly or by making use of a virtual identity, a so-called avatar. As already mentioned above, this may lower the threshold for some clients to actually seek professional help (Gorrindo & Brendel 2010). On the other hand, for the interactional relationship this has a number of consequences, some of which are problematic.

Control

The possibility of staying anonymous combined with the possibility of terminating the interaction with few consequences for the relationship (because it is possible to never meet the other person again) is called 'the exit option' (on online dating platforms, for example). This is very different from typical social contexts where partners in an interaction will probably meet again even if they have broken off contact. This gives a person greater control of the interaction – of how much the person shares about his or her identity for example (Lemma & Caparrotta, 2013). For psychotherapeutic interactions the question arises of how the partners deal with conflicts that arise in the therapeutic relationship and have to be confronted. It can well be questioned whether in Internet-based communication what is called the therapeutic frame will be stable enough to allow for the working through of such topics. At the very least, this is a very important difference between classical face-to-face interaction in psychotherapy and technologically mediated communication.

Loss of inhibition

Another well-known effect found in media psychology research (McKenna & Green 2002) is that users in virtual communication feel much less inhibited about showing behaviour or affects which are not usually socially sanctioned. This can be observed in social media where some users openly show hatred and xenophobic attitudes which they would never openly express in face-to-face contacts (Minear et al. 2013). For psychotherapy this may also be an advantage: Freud asked his patients to not censor but associate freely about whatever came to mind. Nevertheless we again have to note that loss of inhibition changes the quality of the relationship that develops out of this kind of interaction.

Channel reduction

One of the most important structural changes coming from technological communication is what is known in communication science as ‘channel reduction’ (Heng & de Moor 2003), which refers to the fact that information channels are lost or at least reduced – e.g. visual information in telephone interaction or physical presence and smells in video-assisted interaction. From my point of view Skype should also be included here. Even though in Skype many aspects of the usual information channels are maintained, I would very strongly stress the position that subtle elements of face-to-face interaction such as slight movements in facial expression, smell, body tension, and so on, get lost. This can have an enormous effect on the interactional relationship (Lamerichs & te Molder 2003), which I will go into in more detail below.

Intensification

Paradoxically, another consequence of the above-mentioned structural elements can also be an intensification of the interactional relationship. This point is discussed extensively in the literature on online dating (Droegge & Voirol 2011; see also Gabbard 2001). It seems that because there is uncertainty about the identity of the other and because the person is well aware of the so-called exit function, the participants tend to open up much more quickly as compared to face-to-face interaction (Barak & Gluck-Ofri 2007). It is as if the participants try to fill the information gaps created by channel reduction with intensified self-disclosure (see also Turkle 2011). For psychotherapy this might be one of the great advantages of virtual interaction. Practically every school of psychotherapy tries to foster self-disclosure by the client; for psychoanalysis in the days of Freud this was even regarded as the basic rule. An interesting point in this context is that at least for some clients the feeling of having total control over the interaction seems to encourage involvement in psychotherapy, the possibility of talking about shameful experiences etc. This effect has been called the ‘intensification loop’ (Eichenberg 2011).

Boundaries

All these structural elements and their consequences have an effect on boundaries. This may even take place before psychotherapy begins. In professional organizations of psychotherapists and psychiatrists in the USA there has been lively discussion about ethical rules about whether professionals should be allowed to use search engines to find information about their potential clients (Clinton et al. 2010). Clients apparently make extensive use of this option themselves. In my own practice it has become quite common for new clients to know a lot about me, my professional background and interests even before I have introduced myself – another

experience of loss of control. Another professional experience I have had is that some clients write e-mails between sessions about their ongoing process, questions they have or their emotions, and apparently expect that I will read these and answer immediately. Schachtner (2008) p. 38) calls this 'the terror of now'. On the one hand most psychotherapists would appreciate that clients are involved in their own process not only in sessions; on the other hand this raises the question of the value of having to wait. This is a good example of the new forms of interpersonal relationship that are a product of technological media; it seems that at least for some clients the therapeutic relationship is not only restricted to the face-to-face meeting in sessions but extends into a space of virtual interaction. There is, however, some empirical evidence that when the therapist systematically sends short messages to the client after the completion of therapy the therapeutic effect is boosted (Okon et al. 2005). As strange as it seems, this effect is also reached with automatically generated messages. The authors stress the point here that this only works if there has been a face-to-face relationship before.

Another striking finding regarding boundaries is from research on online counselling: a considerable number of clients are involved in counselling processes with two or more counsellors at the same time – and usually the counsellors involved do not know of each other (Eichenberg 2011).

For all of the dimensions described above there is empirical research which demonstrates that virtual interaction actually leads to fundamental changes in psychological qualities of the person as well as of the interaction (for an overview, see Turkle 2011, Katzer 2016): frequent use of technological media negatively impacts the capacity to recognize interpersonal signals, interpret them correctly, organize mental content in cognitive networks, retrieve memory content (Greenfield 2014), and it even reduces the capacity to tolerate frustration and to be empathic (Katzer 2016). On the other hand, there is research demonstrating that making use of an avatar under experimental conditions changes the way persons perceive themselves and others and changes their perspective (Allison et al. 2006); this could be interpreted as a proof for the assumption that virtual identities can change the perspective of a person and support the development of mentalization. It can also be demonstrated that persons develop an interpersonal relationship and even the feeling of intimacy with a computer-generated voice or identity (Turkle 2005).

Virtual relationships

I would like to summarize this in the following hypothesis: introducing technological means to psychotherapeutic interaction as well as to other forms of human interaction fundamentally changes the form of the interpersonal encounter and produces new forms of social relationships which

can be called virtual relationships. These have their own rules and consequences which have not yet been understood well enough to be able to apply them uncritically to such a complex interpersonal relationship as the psychotherapeutic relationship, especially not the psychoanalytic encounter with its focus on subtle qualities of the interaction.

In the communication sciences there has been much debate about phenomena called hybridization: in virtual interaction we often find a combination of spoken and written communication, of synchronous and asynchronous forms, of individual and group formats, and exchange not only over words but also of audio and video formats, which produces completely new forms of communication (Schachtner 2012). Even if we do not yet totally understand these new communication formats, we have to acknowledge that they are in many aspects different from face-to-face interactions.

My own research on online dating provides an example of these differences (Roesler & Kuenzig 2012). For years millions of people have made use of virtual communication formats to look for potential relationship partners. What we tried to find out was whether the couple relationships that develop out of these contacts were in themselves different from 'classical' off-line forms of relationships. One unexpected finding was that these initially virtual relationships seem to be more stable in the long run than relationships initiated in face-to-face contact. The main finding was that the process in which the initial online contact between two potential partners develops into a couple relationship is thoroughly different from the usual form of development of a romantic relationship. It seems that what potential partners first learn to know about the other is their inner life, not their outer appearance. Sharing the outer appearance (e.g. by exchanging photos) is a step which partners dare to take only towards the end of the process of learning to know each other. Before that there is a gradual process of first just sharing emails, in which partners write about their experiences, opinions, hobbies, expectations etc., then switching to short messages, and only after having become closer do they make a first telephone call in which they hear the voice of the other person for the first time, then exchange photographs and lastly meet in life. This speaks to my hypothesis that making use of Internet-based interaction leads to structural changes in the interaction process and in the forms of the social relationship that develop out of it.

What is interaction?

A crucial point in this debate is how we conceptualize the term 'communication'. The term is often used in a very reduced sense, especially by authors with a cognitive-behavioural background, who simply mean the transfer of information from one individual to the other. Investigators from

this background have even claimed that there are no significant differences in the working alliance between online therapy and face-to-face therapy (Cook & Doyle 2002). This neglects the insight from sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1999) that human communication or, better put, interaction, is a highly complex reciprocal process involving a large number of subtle and mostly nonverbal signals. The philosophy of language (Grice, Searle, Austin, Wittgenstein; see Levinson 1983, for an overview) had already made it very clear that reciprocal understanding between humans involves much more than just transferring verbal or digital information.

Gumperz's (1999) 'discourse analytic' point of view allows discussion of the topic in a more differentiated way. The term 'discourse analysis' summarizes empirical approaches which investigate interpersonal interaction, e.g. conversations, with the tools of applied linguistics, i.e. pragmatics (Levinson 1983) – the viewpoints of the above-mentioned philosophers of language were integrated into this approach. It originated in conversation analysis (Sacks et al. 1978), which investigated interpersonal mechanisms which organize communication, for example the mechanism of turn-taking in conversation. One major insight from this research is that members of a language community have tacit knowledge of how to behave in conversation so that it becomes an organized exchange: they can read implicit signals, form complex reciprocal patterns etc. From a psychoanalytic point of view this is equivalent to a mostly unconscious level of interaction. Also important for our topic is the insight that nonverbal cues – for example face expression, gestures, tone of voice – in conversation are essential for reciprocal understanding. The research on the role of these nonverbal signals was extended in the further development of conversation analysis, called 'contextualization' (Gumperz 1999), which could demonstrate that the pure exchange of words is just a very small part of human interaction.

These discourse-analytic approaches were applied to psychotherapy in research that was conducted mainly in German-speaking countries over the last two decades (Benecke 2014). More recently there has been intensified research on the effects of nonverbal elements on the therapeutic relationship and on outcome in psychotherapy (Streeck 2009, 2013). One general insight from discourse-analytic approaches is that in psychotherapy discourse the participants give a number of signals on different interaction levels, called contextualization cues, by which they inform each other on how their contributions have to be understood. Members of a language community are competent at reading these cues without in general ever becoming conscious about that (embodied knowledge). If some of the dimensions on which contextualization cues are exchanged are missing, it becomes more and more difficult for the participants to grasp what is happening, and misunderstandings and insecurities, even ruptures in the communication, become more frequent. One study on nonverbal attunement

between therapist and client found that the higher the synchronization on the level of contextualizing cues between the two persons in the process of therapy the better the outcome (Geerts & Bouhuys, 1998). This synchronization on the level of contextualization could be seen as the linguistic equivalent of what psychoanalysis calls 'affective attunement' (Benecke & Krause 2007).

Krause's important investigations over more than two decades focused especially on transference/countertransference processes in psychodynamic psychotherapies. Using videotaped therapy sessions and the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) developed by Ekman (2005), he was able to analyse the facial expressions which transmit the affects patients were experiencing and which operate almost completely on a nonverbal level. In an extensive body of findings (Benecke & Krause 2007) it was found, for example, that synchronization processes on the affective level, transmitted via facial expression, during first sessions correlate with the outcome of psychotherapy. On the other hand, in later phases of therapy it is important that therapists not synchronize too much with their patients, i.e. that therapists not understand too quickly, instead pausing, and keeping an indifferent facial expression that permits deeper reflection in their clients. Psychoanalytic psychotherapists seem to be well trained in doing this.

Another research tradition investigated 'prototypical affective micro-sequences' (PAMs) by applying intensive microanalysis of videotaped psychotherapy sessions (Peham et al. 2005). PAMs are a kind of standard procedure in everyday interaction in which participants exchange a number of nonverbal cues in a typical reciprocal sequence by which they influence the course of the interaction. These micro-sequences consist only to a very small extent of verbal communication and to a much greater extent on nonverbal signals, e.g. lifting of the eyebrows, modulation of the tone of voice etc. It was found that the flexibility of therapists in applying such prototypical sequences correlates with the outcome of psychotherapy.

These research findings show that in psychotherapy interaction complex information is exchanged totally outside of the verbal dimension. Contextualization cues can be very subtle, sometimes consisting of nothing more than a small movement of the head or an eyebrow. Therefore we cannot be certain that all of this information is conveyed reliably even with a sophisticated technological medium such as Skype. But if some of this nonverbal information gets lost, be it because of channel reduction or temporary failures of the technological medium, the result is a different interpersonal relationship and an increase of uncertainty about the affect of the other person and the meaning of what is conveyed in the interaction. This necessarily has a large impact on the psychotherapeutic encounter, at least from a psychoanalytic point of view, since here the therapeutic potential of the relationship is based on the capacity to perceive subtleties in verbal as well as nonverbal exchanges.

The example of Skype

Skype is currently the most sophisticated technological medium allowing for audio and visual telecommunication. Eye contact between two participants in an interaction is of course difficult with Skype, since usually the focus of the camera and the main visual focus of the participants, which is usually on the face of the other person, are not synchronized. As a consequence in Skype interaction the participants usually never have direct eye contact – this aspect alone produces a totally different situation compared to face-to-face interaction.

This is not to say that virtual interaction is better or worse than face-to-face interaction, but the point here is that it is different. This means that we cannot transfer the means and techniques of psychotherapy we usually apply in face-to-face interaction to technologically mediated forms of interaction, because here we have a different form of interactional frame and interpersonal relationship. I am not saying that it is not possible to conduct psychotherapy or psychoanalysis via technological media, but as soon as we do that we should be aware of the difference between this new format and the one we are used to. As a consequence therapists should receive a specialized training before applying these technologies – as is the case in Germany where counsellors have to be trained in virtual counselling before being allowed to work in this field.

In the published literature on the use of Skype in psychoanalysis there are viewpoints contrary to this (see Bayles, 2012, Carlino 2011, and Fishkin et al. 2011). Lemma and Caparrotta (2013) as well as Scharff (2013, 2015) argue that a full analytic process is possible with Skype, as well as with other telecommunication media, but should be handled with care, keeping the above-mentioned structural changes in the interaction in mind. Nevertheless these authors only report on their personal experiences.

Merchant (2016) has published an extensive investigation in the use of Skype in analysis and training. While aware of the subtle cues in interaction, he takes a somewhat different stance:

Apparently the instinct for communication utilizes particular cues, called ostensive cues, which operate from infancy and 'include addressing the individual directly with eye contact, repeating their name, using special intonation, and responding appropriately and sensitively to their actions and expressions' (Fonagy 2014, p. 17). Q4
Given that such cues can operate through Skype – we can allow that Skype would indeed be suitable for supervision.

(Merchant 2016, p. 316)

The study is also based on research findings from the International Association for Analytical Psychology's International Router Training Program (Merchant, forthcoming), which by necessity makes use of telephone and Skype. Merchant's survey of candidates came to the following conclusions:

Individual comments to do with the positive aspects of doing supervision by Skype included the frequency, access and continuity it enabled; how it was both time- and cost-effective and the way it gave access to a diversity of supervisors. Negative aspects mentioned Skype as not enabling a deep enough experience and that things can be hindered (as in presenting drawings); there can be connection failures.

(Merchant, forthcoming)

An important point seems to be that there should be a face-to-face relationship before using Skype for sessions. Candidates also seem to have fewer problems with the use of Skype than their analysts, and as Scharff (2013, p. 58) has pointed out: 'Tele-analysis is not a good idea if the analyst is made anxious by lack of in person sessions, cannot rely on visualizing the physically absent analysand, and feels disconnected'. Candidates who have experienced the use of Skype in their own training tend to use Skype in their own practice much more often than the training analysts would. Merchant concludes:

Overall comments across all groups indicated there was a preference to start with in-person sessions but that a genuine analytic process can unfold using Skype... Participants seem to be getting used to it and to working with it. In terms of triangulation, the issue also appears but minimally in the published literature and noticeably, it is not spoken of negatively.

(Merchant, forthcoming)

What are the consequences for the psychoanalytic encounter?

Scharff (2013) has pointed out that technology has been used in psychoanalysis for six decades now. There is a long tradition in psychoanalysis of practicing analysis over distance: Freud conducted his so-called self-analysis in an exchange of letters with Fliess; working on inner processes via writing (e.g. keeping a diary), was always praised in psychoanalysis as a means of fostering working-through and reflection. Scharff (2013) even mentions a manual for the practice of analysis via telephone by Saul from as early as 1951. So Scharff (2013, p. 8) concludes: 'Psychoanalysis is the encounter with an understanding mind in whatever setting that may occur'. However, I would take a different perspective on this for the following reasons.

Uncertainty

A direct consequence of virtual interaction, especially in the sense of channel reduction and the other aforementioned structural element, is uncertainty about the other in the interaction. Because important interactional levels are missing, true understanding may become difficult. Affective attunement

becomes more difficult, and repairs may be even impossible. Eichenberg's (2015) empirical study in Germany found that only a minority of clients could profit, especially if they experienced a technologically caused lack of empathy. Many clients engaged in a number of simultaneous counselling processes with several counsellors who did not always know about the others. For transference processes in psychoanalysis this would of course be devastating.

The possibility of technical breakdowns in a virtual medium is different from that in face-to-face interaction of course. Even if psychotherapists take care to prevent technological breakdowns on their side, they cannot care for the client's side. Several authors have reported breakdowns and the deleterious effects this can have on the therapeutic relationship (Scharff 2013; Merchant 2016).

In summary: in virtual interaction a much more insecure relationship will develop, which is undesirable in psychotherapy. The therapeutic relationship is based on creating a sense of security where subtle signals of the client are reliably acknowledged.

Transference

Merchant concludes:

There seems substantial evidence that a full analytic process involving transference (including negative transferences and resistance), unconscious communication and countertransference are all possible with Skype even without in-person sessions as an ongoing reference point.... If in-person sessions via shuttle analysis are then no longer required, the critical issues become the professional development for practitioners in the use of Skype.

(Merchant 2016, pp. 321-22)

However, the point is not whether transference occurs or not in virtual interaction – it certainly does (Gabbard 2001). The point is whether the whole therapeutic setting maximizes the conditions to make this transference conscious and to work it through.

As noted above, what is frequently found in virtual interaction is the so-called intensification effect. This intensification can be explained by well-known imaginative processes: if a person receives only restricted information about another person he or she tries to complete the picture through fantasy, including the processes of projection and transference. Interestingly, non-therapist authors from the communication sciences also criticize the idealization that takes place in such virtual interactions. This is a real problem in the field of online dating, where it is often connected with experiences of disappointment and frustration when meeting the other in real life (Geser & Buehler 2006). For psychoanalysis, this can create real obstacles since the

transformative value of processes of imagination and idealization here is controlled by the interplay of fantasy and reality in the therapeutic encounter. While on the one hand psychodynamic psychotherapists are open to being idealized, they would also strive to become transparent for the client and confront them with reality – at least in the long run. But if the input from reality is restricted, the question arises whether this transformative interplay between fantasy and reality can even take place (for an extended discussion, see Roesler 2008).

Another transformative aspect of psychoanalytic therapy is the necessity of having to wait: a goal of psychoanalysis has always been to provide and to strengthen the capacity for containment. Now, it seems that the new media technologies have enlarged the therapeutic container, as clients can send messages to a therapist at practically any time. This begs the question of how to deal with such messages in between sessions. Many authors have discussed the transformative power of the fact that clients have to integrate their emotional processes and impulses while waiting for the next session. What is the effect on the client if he or she never practically feels disconnected but is ‘therapeutically online’ all the time?

I am not saying that one cannot or should not do psychoanalysis via technological media; there are many situations where technology might be a very helpful tool. But the conditions that we know in ‘classical’ face-to-face psychoanalysis and the techniques and methods that we apply there cannot be directly transferred to virtual interactions, which have fundamentally different conditions.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

De plus en plus d'approches en psychothérapie utilisent l'Internet – ainsi que d'autres interactions basées sur des médias. Cet article discute l'impact de la technologie des médias sur la relation thérapeute-client et donne une vue d'ensemble sur le débat actuel. Il suggère que les conditions techniques d'interactions basées sur Internet produisent de nouvelles formes de relations sociales, qui diffèrent de manière importante des interactions en face à face et que les signaux inconscients et non-verbaux sont perdus. Une étude concernant l'interaction thérapeutique qui s'appuie sur les méthodes de « discours linguistique » est présentée.

La perte de signaux non-verbaux a des implications pour la psychothérapie en général mais particulièrement dans le traitement de patients qui ont des difficultés à vivre la relation thérapeutique comme fiable et sécurisante. La sécurité émotionnelle dans les relations interactionnelles est transmise de manière bien plus importante par les éléments non-verbaux que par les contenus verbaux; les méthodes psychanalytiques sont spécialisées pour se rapporter à ce niveau d'interaction. Deux scénarios alternatifs sont discutés, fondés sur les théories psychanalytiques de Winnicott et de Lacan: le risque d'une image illusoire et idéalisée de l'autre et la possibilité que le cyberspace puisse être utilisé comme un espace transitionnel.

Mots clés: réalité virtuelle, relations virtuelles, psychothérapie basée sur les médias, espace transitionnel, Winnicott, Lacan, psychanalyse lacanienne

Eine wachsende Anzahl von psychotherapeutischen Richtungen macht Gebrauch von Internet- und anderen medienbasierten Kommunikationswegen. In diesem Beitrag wird untersucht, welchen Einfluß Medientechnologie auf die Therapeut-Klient-Beziehung hat und vermittelt einen Überblick über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Debatte. Es wird unterstellt, daß die technischen Bedingungen internetbasierter Interaktionen neue Formen der sozialen Beziehungen hervorbringen, die sich signifikant von Face-to-face-Interaktionen unterscheiden, wobei unbewußte, nonverbale Signale verloren gehen. Forschung zur therapeutischen Interaktion wird vorgestellt, die Gebrauch von 'discourse linguistic'-Methoden macht.

Der Verlust von nonverbalen Signalen hat Implikationen für die Psychotherapie im Allgemeinen und besonders für die Behandlung von Patienten die Schwierigkeiten haben, sich auf die Sicherheit einer therapeutischen Beziehung zu verlassen. In interaktionalen Beziehungen wird emotionale Sicherheit weit mehr durch nonverbale

Signale vermittelt als durch verbalen Inhalt; psychoanalytische Methoden sind darauf spezialisiert, sich auf diese Interaktionsebene zu beziehen. Auf der Grundlage der psychoanalytischen Theorien von Winnicott und Lacan werden zwei alternative Szenarien diskutiert: das Risiko eines illusionären, idealisierten Bildes des anderen und die Möglichkeit, daß der Cyberspace als Übergangsraum für die psychologische Entwicklung genutzt werden kann.

Schlüsselwörter: virtuelle Realität, virtuelle Beziehungen, medienbasierte Psychotherapie, Übergangsraum, Winnicott, Lacan, Lacanianische Psychoanalyse

Un crescente numero di approcci in psicoterapia fa uso di internet e di altre interazioni basate sui "media". Questo articolo discute l'impatto della tecnologia dei media sulla relazione terapeuta-paziente ed offre una panoramica dell'attuale stato del dibattito. Si suggerisce che le condizioni tecniche delle interazioni basate su internet producano nuove forme di relazioni sociali che differiscono significativamente dalle interazioni faccia a faccia e che l'inconscio e le informazioni non verbali vadano perse. Viene presentata una ricerca sull'utilizzo dei metodi dell'analisi linguistica nelle interazioni terapeutiche.

La perdita delle informazioni non verbali ha implicazioni per la psicoterapia in generale e specialmente per i pazienti che hanno difficoltà ad avere fiducia in una relazione terapeutica sicura. La sicurezza affettiva nelle interazioni è trasmessa per una grande parte dalle informazioni non verbali piuttosto che dal contenuto verbale; i metodi della psicoanalisi sono specializzati per fare riferimento a questo livello di interazione. Due scenari alternativi, basati sulle teorie di Winnicott e Lacan, vengono discussi: il rischio dell'illusione, dell'immagine idealizzata dell'altro e la possibilità che il cyberspazio possa essere usato per lo sviluppo psicologico di uno spazio transizionale.

Parole chiave: realtà virtuale, relazioni virtuali, psicoterapia basata sui media, spazio transizionale, Winnicott, Lacan, psicoanalisi lacaniana

Растущее число психотерапевтических подходов используют Интернет и другие медийные способы взаимодействия. В этой статье обсуждается воздействие медийной технологии на отношения клиента и терапевта и дается обзор нынешнего состояния дебатов по этому поводу. Выносятся предположение, что технические условия взаимодействия, основанного на Интернете, порождают новые формы социальных отношений и разительно отличаются от очных взаимодействий, и что в этом случае бессознательные, невербальные сигналы теряются. Вниманию читателей представлены исследования терапевтических взаимодействий, сделанные с помощью методик «дискурсивной лингвистики».

Утрата невербальных знаков несет в себе следствия для терапии в целом и особенно – для лечения тех пациентов, которым сложно доверять надежным терапевтическим отношениям. Эмоциональная безопасность в интерактивных отношениях передается в гораздо большей степени невербальными знаками и сигналами, нежели словесным содержанием; психоаналитические методы специализируются таким образом, чтобы отсылать к этому уровню взаимодействия. В статье предлагаются два альтернативных

сценария, основанные на методах Винникотта и Лакана: риск иллюзорного, идеализированного образа другого и возможность того, что киберпространство может быть использовано для психологического развития как переходное пространство.

Ключевые слова: виртуальная реальность, виртуальные отношения, медийная психотерапия, переходное пространство, Винникотт, Лакан, лакановский психоанализ

Un creciente número de abordajes en psicoterapia hacen uso de internet, y de otros medios de comunicación virtual. El presente ensayo discute el impacto que los medios tecnológicos tienen en la relación terapeuta-cliente y ofrece una perspectiva general del estado de cosas actual respecto de dicho debate. Se sugiere que las condiciones técnicas de las interacciones basadas en internet producen nuevas formas de relaciones sociales que difieren significativamente de las interacciones cara-a-cara, y que se pierden aquellas señales inconscientes, no-verbales. Se presenta una investigación en la interacción terapéutica que hace uso de métodos de ‘discurso lingüístico’. La pérdida de las señales no verbales tiene implicancias para la psicoterapia en general y especialmente para el tratamiento de pacientes que tienen dificultades para apoyarse en una relación terapéutica segura. La seguridad emocional en la relación y sus interacciones es transmitida con más amplitud y profundidad a través de las señales no verbales que a través del contenido verbal; los métodos psicoanalíticos suelen dar cuenta de este nivel de interacción. Se discuten dos escenarios alternativos basados en las teorías psicoanalíticas de Winnicott y Lacan: el riesgo de una imagen idealizada e ilusoria del otro, y la posibilidad de que el ciberespacio pueda ser usado para el desarrollo psicológico como espacio transicional.

Palabras clave: realidad virtual, relaciones virtuales, psicoterapia virtual, espacio transicional, Winnicott, Lacan, psicoanálisis lacaniano

电讯化的分析——心理治疗中媒介技术的使用以及其治疗关系的影响
越来越多取向的心理治疗开始使用互联网, 以及其它基于媒介的互动形式。这篇文章讨论了媒介技术对治疗师-来访者关系的影响, 并对当前的争论进行综述。这些讨论显示, 在互联网技术支持条件下的互动, 所产生的是一种新形式的社会关系, 它与面对面互动的模式有很大的差异, 在其中, 无意识和非言语的线索会失去。文中还呈现了一个基于“话语分析”方法对治疗互动所做的分析研究。

非言语信息的丧失对于心理治疗具有广泛的影响, 对于那些难以对安全的治疗性关系产生依赖的病人来说, 影响更加大。互动关系中, 情感安全的传递更大程度上依赖非言语的线索, 而不是言语的线索; 心理分析的方法尤其依赖这一层面的互动。本文讨论了两个不同的场景, 分别基于维尼科特和拉康的心理分析理论: 对他人幻想的、和理想化的意象所带来的危险, 以及电子空间做为心理发展的过渡空间的可能性。

关键词: 虚拟现实, 虚拟关系, 基于媒介的心理治疗, 过渡空间, 维尼科特, 拉康, 拉康派心理分析

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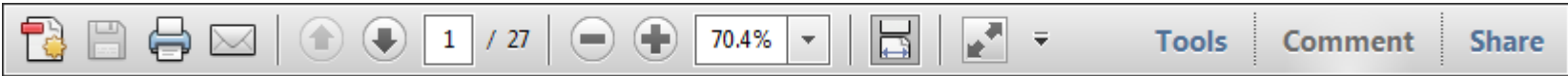
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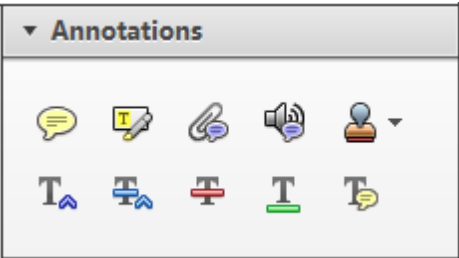
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Once you have Acrobat Reader open on your computer, click on the [Comment](#) tab at the right of the toolbar:



This will open up a panel down the right side of the document. The majority of tools you will use for annotating your proof will be in the [Annotations](#) section, pictured opposite. We've picked out some of these tools below:



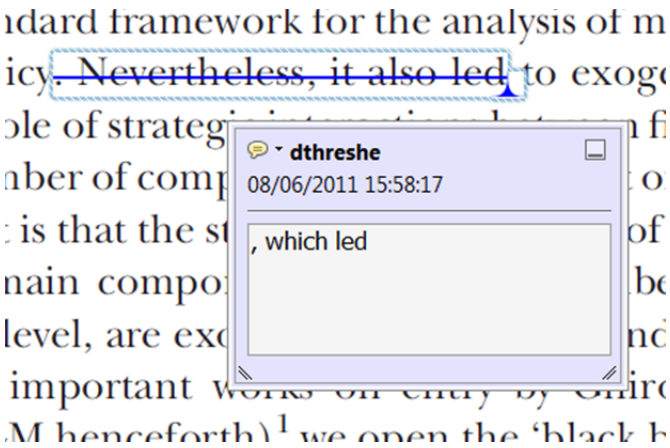
1. [Replace \(Ins\)](#) Tool – for replacing text.



Strikes a line through text and opens up a text box where replacement text can be entered.

How to use it

- Highlight a word or sentence.
- Click on the [Replace \(Ins\)](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Type the replacement text into the blue box that appears.



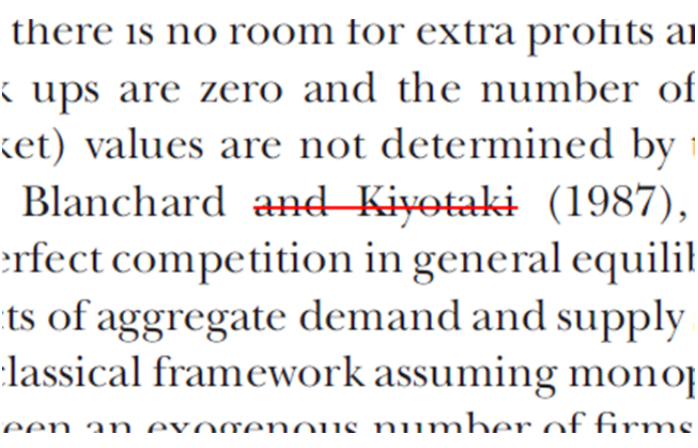
2. [Strikethrough \(Del\)](#) Tool – for deleting text.



Strikes a red line through text that is to be deleted.

How to use it

- Highlight a word or sentence.
- Click on the [Strikethrough \(Del\)](#) icon in the Annotations section.



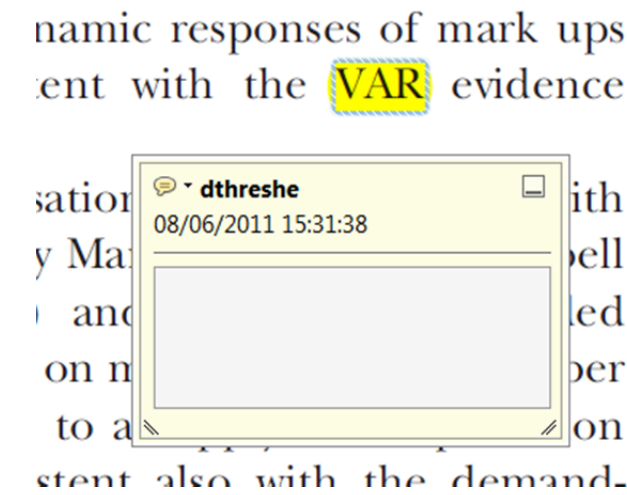
3. [Add note to text](#) Tool – for highlighting a section to be changed to bold or italic.



Highlights text in yellow and opens up a text box where comments can be entered.

How to use it

- Highlight the relevant section of text.
- Click on the [Add note to text](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Type instruction on what should be changed regarding the text into the yellow box that appears.



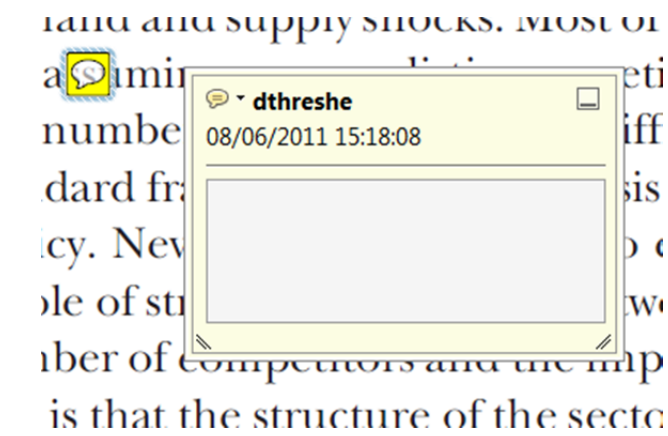
4. [Add sticky note](#) Tool – for making notes at specific points in the text.




Marks a point in the proof where a comment needs to be highlighted.

How to use it

- Click on the [Add sticky note](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Click at the point in the proof where the comment should be inserted.
- Type the comment into the yellow box that appears.

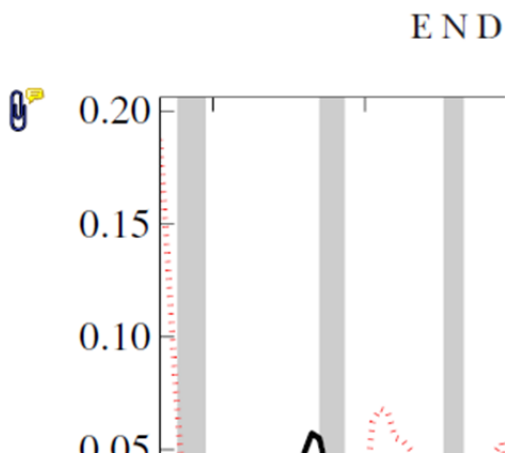


5. **Attach File** Tool – for inserting large amounts of text or replacement figures.


 Inserts an icon linking to the attached file in the appropriate place in the text.

How to use it

- Click on the **Attach File** icon in the Annotations section.
- Click on the proof to where you'd like the attached file to be linked.
- Select the file to be attached from your computer or network.
- Select the colour and type of icon that will appear in the proof. Click OK.



6. **Add stamp** Tool – for approving a proof if no corrections are required.

 Inserts a selected stamp onto an appropriate place in the proof.

How to use it

- Click on the **Add stamp** icon in the Annotations section.
- Select the stamp you want to use. (The **Approved** stamp is usually available directly in the menu that appears).
- Click on the proof where you'd like the stamp to appear. (Where a proof is to be approved as it is, this would normally be on the first page).

of the business cycle, starting with the
on perfect competition, constant returns
production. In this environment goods
extra profits and the structure of market
he number of firms in the individual firm
etermined by the model. The New-Key
otaki (1987), has introduced product
general equilibrium models with nominal
ed and supply shocks. Most of this literat

APPROVED

▼ Drawing Markups

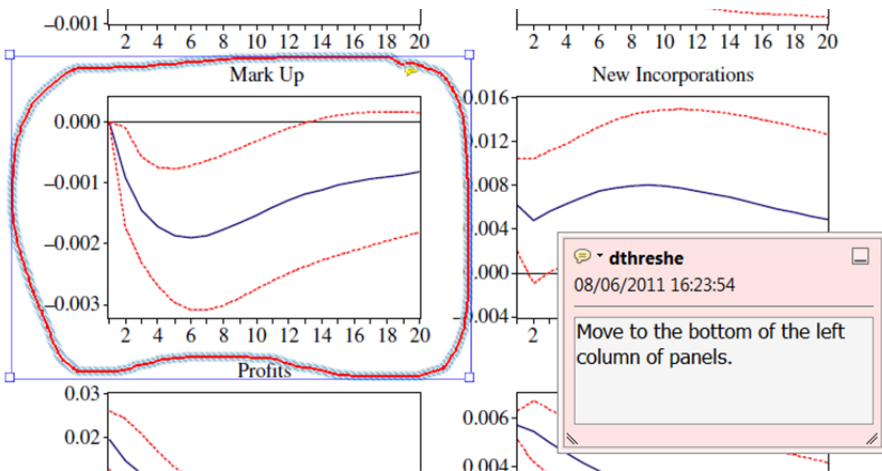


How to use it

- Click on one of the shapes in the **Drawing Markups** section.
- Click on the proof at the relevant point and draw the selected shape with the cursor.
- To add a comment to the drawn shape, move the cursor over the shape until an arrowhead appears.
- Double click on the shape and type any text in the red box that appears.

7. **Drawing Markups** Tools – for drawing shapes, lines and freeform annotations on proofs and commenting on these marks.

Allows shapes, lines and freeform annotations to be drawn on proofs and for comment to be made on these marks..



For further information on how to annotate proofs, click on the **Help** menu to reveal a list of further options:

