

## **An Investigation of Turn-taking in a Second Language classroom interaction**

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### **Abstract**

This paper studies the organization and management of classroom interaction in second language classroom as an important feature of a teaching and learning process. The collected data is from an A-TR3- Class 3 in an ESL classroom in the ESL center of Kentucky University, Kentucky, USA, 12/04/2013, which is taught by an ESL native speaker teacher called (Harry) and three international students who were studying English as pre-sessional course for their Academic studying courses (1 male and 2 females) in conversation class for intermediate level.

The study deals with a particular aspect of social interaction which is the turn-taking in second language classroom of intermediate ESL classroom level at the University of Kentucky ESL language Centre, Louisville, Kentucky, USA. The study tries to show that the turn-taking in classroom conversation is an important feature of the teaching-learning process.

## Review of literature:

Schegloff (1987: 208) had confirmed that turn-taking allocation techniques prepare to some extent what looks to be “a primordial place of sociality: direct interaction between individuals” (Schegloff: 210). The basic form of organization for conversation is the turn-taking. Among turn-allocation models used by (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) was generally considered the most accurate and complete. According to the model above, turn-taking that could occur at the point outlines as the relevance place which is at the completion of a turn. According to the conversational experts, speakers tend to follow the norm of “no gaps/no overlaps” (Sacks et al; 1974: 61-3). Transitions from one turn to the next one happens mutually in a soft way, through pauses and synchronization between speakers, and also in a non-soft way through overlapping and interruption when the talks simultaneously changing the interactive rhythm. Some turn-taking aspects have particular importance within the classroom context characterized by as symmetrical interactive roles and the distinctive sequence teacher’s origination, student’s response, teacher’s feedback. The classroom represents an

asymmetrical interaction where the teacher is not only attributing speaking turns but also regulating the whole conversational led. The best typical sequence of the three phases of class interaction, allowed of identifying a different teachers and students role. In most instructive sequences, the teacher’s role starts with directing a question to a particular student or to anyone who is enthusiastic to respond; a student responds and the teacher takes the turn again, making an evaluation of the student’s participation and allocating the next turn. This regular sequence could happen in all classroom interaction affects the turn-taking rules and strategies, pause and silence values and conversational pace of this particular context (classroom context. McHoul, 1978: 189,91).

Classroom interaction study (Rapley, How to Analyse Talk in Institutional Setting, 2001) originated, like all social interaction research, when in the 1960s recording technology such as cameras and microphones became accessible for researchers. Recording techniques have ranged from one hand-held camera to several cameras on poles, and from researchers sitting or even participating in the classroom, to those who witnessed the lesson on a monitor in an adjacent room, or only saw the

recordings afterwards. Audio has been recorded following the available technology and research aims with camera-mounted or separate microphones, or wireless individual microphones on the teacher or on individual students. Recent digital technology has allowed these different streams to be fed directly into a computer where they can be synchronized with each other and with subsequent transcripts. Sometimes, classroom recordings have been supplemented by interviews of different kinds, and ethnographic information on factors such as ethnicity or social class. (McHoul; 1978:194-5)

Also, additional data have been assembled on school policy or teacher planning, and additional recordings have been in the school yard, all depending on research aims and researchers' views on methodology and epistemology.

Schegloff (2000; 29) thinks that the typical turn include adjacent pairs, i.e. certain response that one of the speakers would make, such as, greeting-greeting, question-answer, and complimenting-expressing thank. Each adjacent pair has two choices such as invitation-acceptance or refusing, comment-agreement or disagreement, etc. Sacks et, al (1974: 75,6) outline the recursive

rules underlining techniques the participants in a conversation use in structuring turn transition, such as a current speaker select the next techniques nomination. To participate in classroom interaction, students need to be sensitive to the techniques used for distributing turns. The important point in conversation is when the speaker can change, what is called by Sacks et, al (1978), transition relevant points.

### **The basic order of classroom interaction (TBOCI)**

A good place to start the social interaction perspective on classroom interaction is at the basic organizational mechanisms that not only govern classroom interaction, but interaction processes at large. These are the mechanisms by which participants – teacher and students -organize their activities such as teaching, asking, explaining, or assessing. (Mercer, Wegerif, and Dawes; 1999: 98-100)A fundamental prerequisite – or even a defining characteristic – of any form of social interaction is that those participating in it talk in turns to be able to listen and respond to each other. The question of turn organization in classrooms was framed in some of the earlier investigations in terms of the differences between classroom

interaction and everyday conversation. Conversation Analysis had proposed a turn organization for everyday talk that consisted of one set of rules for when we consider a turn to be complete and a second set of rules for who is allowed to speak next when it is complete and it is this latter set of rules that attracted the attention of classroom interaction researchers. The three rules were that at the end of a turn constructional unit: (Ibid)

1. Current speaker has the right to select a next speaker.
2. When current speaker does not select a next speaker, another may self-select.
3. When no one self-selects, the current speaker may continue.

#### 1. A-TR3 (101-1) –the class number according to the time table

1 T: Wh:e:re<sub>ɔ</sub> (0.6) >or< whe:re's  
A:ngela.  
2 (0.2)  
3 T: [Where's Angela.  
4 S1: [ ( )  
5 (1.3)  
6 S1: ↑She's:: ↓in thuh kitchin.  
7 T: >She's in th'kitchen.<  
8 S1: °Yehh.°  
9 T: What's she do:ing?  
10 S1: °°hehh huh HHEH huh-huh-huh°° -  
ö::hh dish  
11 wash:: hih heh he[h  
12 T: [she's dish washing.  
She's  
13 washing.

14 S1: Yeah.=  
15 T: She's w:ashing up.  
16 S2: °Uhn.°  
17 (0.2)  
18 T: ·hhh Oka:y<sub>ɔ</sub>  
19 S1: [ dish:] wa]tʃing.  
20 T: [(she's) wa-)]  
21 (0.5)  
22 T: Very ↑good.  
23 (1.1)

In the first 3 lines the teacher starts a conversation with a question asking where Angela was, with long pause in line 1 for (0.6) second which was intended to make himself clear about the question of a place. And then in line 3 he repaired himself by making a clear question about the place where should Angela be. The S1 self-selected take the turn to answer the teacher's question in line 4 and after a pause of (1.3) seconds in line 5, answered ↑She's:: ↓in thuh kitchin, the teacher takes the turn again and repeats the same answer of the S1 for certainty in line 7. The teacher repeats S1 answer in a notion of question to keep comprising S1 in a long dialogue. The teacher keeps leading the conversation by starting with question and S1 who was self-selected takes his turn to give answers. There was orientation of learning through the use of the present tense to answer teacher's question. In line 16 we have another self-selected when the S2

tries to take a turn in the conversation when he/she answer with (uhn) when the teacher tries to familiarise his students with the present continuous tense.

The orientation of learning was not clear here but probably in lines (6, 10 and 11) when the student tried to use the simple and continues present tense to answer the teacher's question.

### A-TR3:752:1-10'00"

- 24 T: [So you ] intruh- Ri:gh'.  
25 (0.4)  
26 T: H:allo; (0.2) ↓go on, (.) Sul you  
introduce  
27 Yourself.  
28 (0.9)  
29 S3: A::h; my name is H:i:lda:?  
30 (0.3) 1-10'00"  
31 T: Ye:s, (0.3) good-,  
32 (0.7)  
33 S3: I: l:ive ϕaw::hϕ (0.2) °e::wh°  
Dun:↓dess:  
34 ↑Pah:k-u ↓ϕLoa:d-uϕ.  
35 (0.5)  
36 T: Yuh live in Pa:rk Road Dun:das:.=  
Good-.  
37 (0.4)  
38 S3: -eh[hhh  
39 T: [↑Good-; you: introduce yuhself.  
·hhh  
40 You introduce yuhself Ang'↑l[a:  
41 S2: [Q::h.  
42 (3.1)  
43 S2: ·hhh I:'m:- (1.2) Angela::i (0.3)  
[a:n:d  
44 T: [°Mm°

- 45 S2: (1.3) °mm::° (0.5)  
46 S2: -eh hhI: live in Carlingfo:rd:  
47 (0.5)  
48 T: [°mm ↑hm,°  
49 S2: [·hh a:h:, (2.3) I am ↑fordy o:ne.  
50 (0.3)  
51 T: alrigh' i (0.2) >↑good-; (.) [thank  
you.<

Here the teacher started the conversation by selecting the next speaker who is supposed to be, S3 by asking her directly to introduce herself in line 24, and after a pause of (0.4) second the teacher repeated his nomination to the same student S3 to take the turn. The pause was expected because mainly in EFL classes all the students would be afraid from taking part in a conversation because they were not sure about the answers that they would say and of course that would embarrass them, that is why we had a long pause (0.9) second to hear from S3 in line 29. She started with( A: : :h;) which appears that she was hesitated and not sure about what she is going to say and might be scared and she said my names H: i:lda, then the teacher take the turn in line 31 again to inspire her to keep talking about herself , so he said ye:s, and a pause for (0.3) then good because he expected her to continue after the first word but she did not, then he added good to make her confident about her answer to continue her turn.

That was a good orientation of learning because in line 41 encouraged S2 to be select himself to take part in the conversation after a pause for (3.1) seconds which might be used to find the words to start a turn in the conversation, the teacher here gave him a positive hint that he was doing good in line 51.

\*S= *student*

## Teaching and learning in interaction

From the study of the interaction order of classrooms pictured above there raised an interest in a social interaction perspective on learning. After all, teaching and learning are the core business of classrooms and a study of classroom interaction should include an investigation of how this business is brought off. One part of this work is carried out on the basis of the socio-cultural theory of learning originally formulated by Vygotsky (1986 [1934]) who saw learning as a social and cultural process in which the interaction between the learner and other parties – parents, peers, teachers – is the core of the learning process. Vygotsky (1986 [1934]).

Vygotsky showed that with the support of others such as a teacher, learners are capable of performing tasks they would not have been able to do on

their own. The distance between the task level a learner can perform individually and the level he can achieve with tutor support, Vygotsky called the learner's "zone of proximal development", and social interaction researchers have been interested in the organization of this tutor support. A concept that has been a particular stimulus to social interaction research of this zone of proximal development is the notion of "scaffolding" that denotes a set of tutor strategies to support learners in ways that are sensitive to the level of competence displayed by the learner. Examples of scaffolding strategies are the ways in which teachers may break up an assignment for a student into different smaller tasks, or the way in which they point a student to the relevant parts of the assignment text. (Mercer et al, 2004: 379-83)

One particular issue of classroom interaction has been the work of Neil Mercer and collaborators who looked at learning processes in both peer interaction and in interactions between teachers and learners. For peer interaction, Mercer (1996:361) for example discuss the distinction between three types of exchanges, "disputational talk", in which students compete with their solutions to a problem, "cumulative talk", in which students



uncritically build upon each other's planned solutions, and "exploratory talk" where students respond to each other critically and constructively. Mercer called the exchange types "social modes of thinking" (1996: 369). But Vygotsky's influence on social interaction research in classrooms is not restricted to psychologists such as Mercer, as is evidenced in explorations of the interface and overlap between conversation analysis and socio-cultural theory.

A second line of work on interaction and learning has emerged in the field of second language learning, where conversation analysts have criticized main-stream studies of second language acquisition (SLA) for looking at language as a static set of rules, and at acquisition only as an individual cognitive process, and not as a social and interactive one (Firth & Wagner; 1997:292). This enterprise has produced detailed studies of interaction in language classrooms with implications for the design of language teaching materials, language teaching tasks, and language proficiency testing, and has called for a re-evaluation of the role of off-task talk in the language classroom.

Perhaps the most basic element a social interaction perspective has to offer to the study of learning is its focus

on observables, which parallels the focus of the participants themselves. The only access teachers have to students' learning, knowing, and understanding is through what students show them in social interaction.

To put it easily, students and teachers cannot look inside each other's heads. Thus, though knowing and learning is often conceived of as essentially a cognitive phenomenon, for participants in classroom interaction it is primarily a social phenomenon in which growth of knowledge, skills, and understanding, are displayed in a process of social interaction. Teachers and students' practical dealings with learning in their interactions not only show us processes that may or may not facilitate learning, these interactions personify the teaching and learning itself.

Classroom interaction is the means for teachers to internalize knowledge in the classroom, to make that knowledge observable for the students, in the same way as students make their problems, their understandings, and their knowing observable in classroom interaction. Not only from a social interaction researcher perspective, but importantly also for the participating students and teachers, knowing, understanding, and learning are done in interaction.

## Conclusion

The key concept in conversation analysis make possible the level of analysis of turn-taking management, adjacency pairs, and the expectations of turn transfer, as realized by preferred and dis-preferred responses. Classroom activities deriving from conversation analysis highlight the interactional level of talk and teachers are able to sightseen language performance from an analytic perspective, the output of learners shall be evaluated against what we know about natural conversation and classroom activity design, the changes should be effected by the teacher knowledge about the language. Perhaps most important of all is to try to recreate the typical conversation, so to design an activity that will generate output as close as possible to naturally occurring talk.

### Conversational Analysis implication in language teaching Classroom.

Through the conversation analysis illustrated above, we can see that conversation is a collaborative process and what is basic to the management of the collaborative process in conversation is the turn-taking management by the teacher in the classroom. Participants in conversation

are involved in ongoing teacher lead techniques of asking a question and use certain strategies to take up the turn to talk. But for a second language speaker, turn taking and turn assignment in conversation can be difficult. The skill, which is relatively easy and natural to acquire for native speakers, is not automatically transferred to a second language speaker. "A learner who misses the time of his entry into the conversation or who is either unfamiliar with the correct form which can give the impression of being not listening or, is not understanding". (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974:241- 43).

The point that in classroom organization such as pair and group work attempt to break the very rigid and ordered turn-taking pattern which is normally under the control of the teacher in a traditional classroom, they do not always succeed in recreating more natural patterns. The problem lies in activity design. The wider restrictions on what and when people may speak, the more naturally the turn-taking appeared. Therefore, the problem is to make sure that classroom activities generate the natural types of turn taking that arise in the target discourse type and so not prevent typical urn-taking patterns. It also privileges that the teacher who continually interrupts the



students' discourse to correct every grammatical mistake not only breaks usual turn-taking procedures but may also weakened the students' acquisition of them. Further it suggests that features of how turns are given and gained in English should prompt specific awareness training where necessary and that specific strategies and lexical realizations of turn management (how to take a turn, hold a turn and relinquish a turn) could also be taught directly. Besides, significant cultural differences regarding norms in turn taking can at least be pointed out so as to advise learners of the possible consequences of transferring L1 convention to the L2 context. It is also indicated that different roles and settings would produce different structures for adjacency pairs. When using strategies for giving informal invitation, for example, native speakers tend to preface their invitations (e.g. 'I was wondering, uh, we're having party ...') while non-native speaker sometimes too formal or too direct. This sort of observation has direct implications for design a role-play and similar activities and what particular strategies and linguistic elements need to be pre-taught, when learners are set to behave in ways specified by the activity and where the aim is a

reproduction of 'real life discourse speaker. (Drew & Heritag, 2006:343-350).

Finally, with regard to topic management that one of the ways in which topics are developed lies in how speakers take up, repeat and modify the vocabulary selections of others in order to expand, develop or change topics. Therefore, skills in topic development may be improved by giving students tasks that extend understanding of vocabulary patterns such as synonyms, antonyms and other words.

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## استقصائية تبادل الادوار في الكلام داخل

### الصف التوامجادثة في اللغة الثانية

#### الملخص:

تدرس هذه الورقة تنظيم وإدارة التفاعل الصفّي في تعليم اللغة الثانية باعتبارها سمة هامة في عملية التعليم والتعلم. البيانات التي تم جمعها من الصفوف بالمستوى 3 -A-TR3 في الفصول الدراسية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في مدينة لوفيل عاصمه ولاية كنتاكي في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية بتاريخ ١٢/٤/٢٠١٣ والذي يحاضر فيه مدرس للغة الانكليزية يدعى (هاري)، وثلاثة من الطلاب الدوليين الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كمقدمه لدورة تعليم اللغة انكليزيه كلغه ثانيه لما قبل البدء بدراساتهم الاكاديمية العليا. والدورة عباره عن صف متكون من ٣ طلاب (١ من الذكور و ٢ من الإناث) فئة الدرس هو تعلم محادثة عن المستوى المتوسط.

تتعامل هذه الدراسة مع جانب معين من جوانب التفاعل والتواصل الاجتماعي و الذي هو كيفية أخذ الدور في الكلام في تعليم اللغة الانكليزيه كله ثانيه من (المعلم) لغرض تقييم مستوى اللغة الإنجليزية في الفصول الدراسية التي كانت تدار في مركز جامعته كينتاكي الدولي لتعليم اللغة الانكليزيه ، في مدينة لوفيل، كينتاكي، اميركا . سعت الدراسة إلى إظهار أن تعلم كيفية أخذ الدور في محادثة في الفصول الفصول الدراسية هو سمة هامة من سمات عملية التعليم والتعلم بنفس الوقت.