

Original Paper

Analyzing L2 Classroom Dynamics: A Conversation Analysis Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction in second language (L2) classrooms, employing Seedhouse's (2004) model and Conversation Analysis (CA) methodology. The analysis covers three contextual dimensions: form-and-accuracy, meaning-and-fluency, and task-oriented contexts. The study reveals the dynamic interplay between pedagogical focus and interactional organization, showcasing how participants negotiate linguistic forms, repair sequences, and engage in turn-taking to accomplish pedagogical goals. Despite critiques emphasizing the emic perspective's limitations, the paper underscores CA's contribution to understanding language use in teaching, offering pedagogical insights for language educators.

Keywords

Conversation Analysis, Second Language Classroom, Communicative Language Teaching

1. Introduction

Since communicative language teaching has gained wide acceptance, interaction in language classrooms has been emphasized by lots of researchers in the past 30 years. Some of the researchers claim that interaction, a two-way process in the L2 classroom can create a positive state, in which students can get the opportunity to practice their second language skills and acquire educational knowledge (Allwright, 1984; Thomas, 1987; Chaudron, 1988; Edwards & Mercer, 1986). From their statements, we can find there is a reflexive relationship between interaction and pedagogy in L2 classroom. More specifically, it is a two-way, interdependent relationship on which the organization of interaction in L2 classroom is based on. In this two-way process, participants in the second language classroom will constantly analyze the evolution of the relationship between the current interlocutors' pedagogy focus and interaction and respond in L2, thus, the talk is also the manifestation of their analysis (Seedhouse, 2009). This paper will base on the model and adapt the Conversation Analysis

(CA) methodology in Seedhouse (2004) to study the organization of the L2 classroom by analyzing the authentic talks between teachers and students in the L2 classroom.

2. The Model and Methodology in Seedhouse (2004)

The first component of the model is the core intuitional goal that teacher is going to teach learners L2 (Seedhouse, 2009). Classroom teaching can be viewed as a complex mechanism of teacher to student (T-S) interaction. According to Allwright (1984), interactions are the fundamental fact of classroom pedagogy, hence, before sketching L2 classroom interaction, the main goal of language teaching must be identified. According to Seedhouse (2004), the core institutional objective in L2 teaching remains the same regardless of where the L2 lesson takes place or what pedagogical framework the teacher is using. The other subjects, for example, law, the core institutional goal may be extremely different from country to country. Nevertheless, in L2 teaching, the institutional goal is always to enable learners to acquire that language, and will not change because of the place of class, the mother tongue or target language that used in class, and the teaching method.

Three interactional properties originate from the core institutional goal, which is the second component of the model. The first property is that “Language is both the vehicle and object of instruction” (ibid, 2004, p. 183). According to Johnson (1995), In L2 classroom, whether English or other languages are used, the purpose of teaching is to enable students to master the target language, and language is also used as a tool for teachers to impart knowledge and students to show what they have learned. Unlike other subjects, such as physics, language is only a medium for imparting knowledge in the classroom, which is different from the core goal of L2 classroom. This property demonstrates that language has a special dual function in L2 classroom. Seedhouse (2004) believes that there is reflexivity between pedagogy and interaction in L2 classroom, which is the second property. The communication between the interlocutors is dynamic. The teacher and students will question or respond to each other when they explore the pedagogical focus. The interactants always display their action of analyzing the evolution of the relationship between pedagogy and interaction in that process. Furthermore, it is inevitable for teachers to analyze students’ utterances in L2 classroom to achieve the core institutional goal. However, in other subjects, teachers will not focus on the linguistic forms and patterns of learners’ utterances. Therefore, Seedhouse (2004) proposes that the third interactional property in L2 classroom is that, to some extent, teachers’ evaluation of students is potentially influenced by the linguistic forms and patterns that they display in the interaction.

The third component is the basic sequence organization of L2 classroom interaction. As the reflexivity between pedagogy and interaction mentioned before, it can be revealed by the basic sequence as followed: firstly, the pedagogical focus is introduced by the teacher in most cases, but sometimes can be nominated by students. Secondly, there should be two more participants analyze based on the pedagogical focus after listening to each other’s turn, then respond to it, and display their analysis in their turn, and so on. This process, which is called by Seedhouse (2004, p. 188) “... normative

orientation to the pedagogical focus”.

The last part of the model is L2 Classroom Contexts. There are four types of contexts: form-and-accuracy contexts, meaning-and-fluency contexts, task-oriented contexts, and procedural contexts are outlined in Seedhouse (2004). With the pedagogical focuses varies, there is no limit to the types of context in L2 classroom, and it is not fixed in one L2 lesson. The organization of turn and sequence will also change because of varied L2 classroom contexts. Moreover, it can be identified that the different L2 classroom contexts are realized by the reflexivity between pedagogical focus and interactional organization.

3. Methodology

This paragraph is based on Seedhouse (2004). As mentioned earlier, interactional participants will present their analysis of the evolutionary relationship between pedagogical focus and interactional organization in the talk. Therefore, what analysts need to do is to focus on how the pedagogical focus is related to the participants' utterances in each turn and using it as evidence to trace the evolution of the relationship between pedagogical focus and interactional organization by following the same procedure as participants. By looking at turns, the analyst analyses whether the linguistic form and patterns produced by the learner are consistent with the intended pedagogical purpose expected and introduced originally by the teacher.

4. CA In L2 Classrooms

This part will adapt Seedhouse's (2004) model and analysis methodology to look at the T-S interaction in L2 classroom concerning the organization of the interaction to the pedagogical focus and also in the light of turn-taking, sequence, repair, and topic.

4.1 CA in Form-and-Accuracy Contexts

This paragraph is based on Seedhouse (2004). In the context of form and accuracy, pedagogical focus in L2 classroom is usually the accuracy of the linguistic form produced by students. The teacher focuses on students' mastery of phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, etc. But this does not mean that the teacher initiates repair only if the students make linguistic errors. In the form-and-accuracy context, if the teacher realizes that the student is not consistent with the pedagogical expectations, he/she will also initiate repair even though there are no linguistic errors in the discourse produced by the student.

Table 1. Extract 1 of L2 Classroom Dialogue between T-S In the Form-and-Accuracy Context

Episode 1	Episode 2
1 T: hh good (.) um [S's name] (.) when's your birthday (.) what do you say my	14 T: okay (.) good (.) and (.) your last birthday what did you get (.) did you
2 birthday's:=-	15 get money. books.
3 S6: =my birthday's: er (.) thirtieth (.)	16 S6: no
4 S: °on°=	17 T: nothing?
5 T: =°okay°=	18 S6: yes (.) just drink
6 S6: =er on the: thirtieth	19 SS: hh hh hh
7 T: okay good=	20 T: just
8 S6: =°May°=	21 S6: just drink a beer
9 S5: [=°May°=]	22 T: just beer
10 T: [on] (.) the thirtieth	23 S6: yeah (.) hh hh [hh]
11 S6: yeah on the thirtieth May	
12 T: of May	
13 S6: of May	

The focus in Extract 1 (Carr, 2006, DVD1, p. 1) is on form and accuracy, in that teacher's requirement for the students is using accurate preposition of time. This is evident in Lines 1-13. In Lines 1-2, T gives the form "my birthday's...", S6 is nominated and required by T to use his/her date of birth to complete the form. In Line 3, S6 is failed to use a preposition with the number of the date. The other-initiated self repair is performed by the S, T and S6 in Line 4-7. Seedhouse (2004) proposes that the other initiation is overwhelmingly initiated by the teacher in form-and-accuracy contexts. However, in Line 5, T just acts as the third party to give positive evaluation with "okay" to confirm the other initiation which is conducted by S in Line 6 targets the pedagogical focus. It can be found that T does not initiate repair immediately when S6 has produced an inappropriate form of the answer, there is no proof that S intends to initiate repair or to give S6 a hint in Line 4, but when T confirms S' production in Line 5, and S6 produces the precise string of linguistic forms in Line 6, thus, it can be regarded as the other-initiated self repair trajectory.

In Lines 8-13, it can also be seen that the aim is to produce a specific string of linguistic forms: T conduct repair to require S6 to use the preposition of time correctly and insist on the form "on the (date) of (month)". And other-initiated self-repair is also performed in this episode. T's response in Line 7 ("okay good") is a positive evaluation of S6's production and conveys that S6 can proceed. S6 adds a new information "May" (Line 8) but does not coincide with the string of linguistic forms targeted by the teacher. In Line 10 T initiates repair by repeating the patterns which the learner has produced, and

S6 understands T's intention and produce a string involving the date and the month but make a linguistic error (Line 11). T, therefore, initiates repair in which the learner locates the error directly and produces the targeted forms.

Episode 1 shows that the focus is on the linguistic form, and no topic is developed in the conversation. This type of interaction is termed by Kasper (1985) language-centered, in other words, normally, there is no topic developed by participants in form-and-accuracy contexts (Seedhouse, 2004). In Episode 1, the interaction follows a rigid lockstep sequence, T initiates repair once S6' production did not target a string of linguistic form. The interaction is organized in a formal approach which is described by Drew and Heritage (1992b) that the organization is restricted in very sharply defined procedures. The evidence of constraints can also be found in Episode 2 (Carr, 2006, DVD1, p. 1). In Lines 18-23, the aim is to answer T's question with nouns. S6 gives the answer in Line 18 and 21 are linguistically correct but are not accepted by the teacher. There is no scope for students to choose to say what and use which linguistic forms, the organization of the interaction is necessarily controlled by the teacher.

4.2 CA in Meaning-and-Fluency Contexts

Unlike the form-and-meaning contexts, the focus in meaning-and-fluency contexts shifts to the content, which is also called content-centered interaction (Karsper, 1985). The purpose of meaning and fluency context is not to evaluate the right or wrong of students' discourse or pronunciation, but to promote the fluency of the interaction. The focus is on the meaning of participants' expressions and their ability to organize the interaction. According to Seedhouse (2004, p. 118), this context contains three situations: a) the absence of the teacher; b) the presence of the teacher, but with the learners managing the turn taking; c) and with the teacher being present and in overall control of the turn taking is maintained in a meaning-and-fluency context. The teacher controls the interaction at various degrees in different situations but maintains the same purpose.

Extract 2

- 1 S1: yes (0.8) um (.) I don't mind er (0.6) um (0.2) no (0.3) I I like all- all sports
- 2 hh hh
- 3 S3: hh hh hh
- 4 S1: I don't have any (0.2) sports I don't I don't like
- 5 S7: it's really good for me and
- 6 S5: you
- 7 S7: and also (.) I love um casual (.) clothes
- 8 S5: clothes
- 9 S8: do you like- do you have ee: er dress smart (.) dress smart (.) wear=
- 10 S7: =yes of cou: rse yes:
- 11 S6: do you?
- 12 S7: yes
- 13 S8: [how about] this (0.2) how about this

- 14 S7: um (.) it's really comfortable hh it's er skirt and with a shirt and skirt (.) and
 15 in it it's a very special and traditional design
 16 S8: mhm
 17 S7: and sha:pes (.) for (.) country
 18 S5: and cover for the head (.) um comes with that dress
 19 S7: what did you s=
 20 S5: =cover for the head
 21 S7: no
 22 S5: no?
 23 S7: no
 24 S5: n- not the traditional?
 25 S7: no because you know ah um m:y country m- my religion at first and that's
 26 Moslem so um traditional comes from (.) a thousand years ago
 27 S5: mmm
 28 S7: so a thousand years ago they don't put anything=
 29 S5: =they wouldn't
 30 S7: yes (.) okay

(Carr, 2006, DVD5, pp. 18-19)

In Extract 2, the teacher conducts a board game activity, the students are divided into groups to talk for several minutes on the specific topic which is chosen by rolling the dice. The pedagogical focus introduced is for the students to practice the expression of “what you like” and “what you dislike” in a specific area. The interaction happens in the absence of the teacher in Extract 2, indeed the nature of the speech exchange system has been specified by the teacher as a monologue because he/she has given an example and asked the students to talk for a minute like that in the instructions. The students can organize the turn taking locally in that S5 explicitly managing the turn-taking system in Line 6 and 8, clarifying that the topic has changed to “clothes” and S7 is the person to talk about it. Besides, S8 interrupts S7's s turn (Line 9 and 13) with utterances that relate to the content of the previous turns. In Line 16 the discourse mark “mhm” allows S7 to proceed with the topic and add more information (Line 17), In Line 18, S5 nominates him/herself to take a turn to make an on-topic contribution, then, S5 and S7 continue to address each other.

As far as the topic is concerned, though the topic has been introduced by the teacher that is, saying what you like and dislike in a specific area, S5, S7, and S8 in Extract 2 are able to develop subtopics of their own choice. In that Line 7-8 shows the area has been chosen by rolling dice is “clothes”, S8 develops the subtopic of dressing style (Line 9), he/she holds this subtopic in Line 13 by requiring the clarification of S7's dressing. S7 elaborates on the subtopic (Line 14-15 and 17) and S5 interrupts S7's turn to add further information (Line 18). S7 and S5 require clarification about the “cover for the head” between each other (Line 19-24). The topic shifts to the sub-subtopic of the traditional dressing of

religion by S5 posing a question in Line 24, which also allocates interactional spaces to S7 to confirm and offer further information and S7 does in Line 25-30.

In contrast to form-and-accuracy contexts, the focus is on personal meaning and fluency instead of on linguistic forms and accuracy. However, this does not mean that correction will never happen in meaning-and-fluency contexts. Since the focus in this context is to achieve mutual understanding, the repair is conducted when the linguistic errors impede the personal meaning, and the teacher usually corrects it implicitly, the way of that is called embedded correction (Seedhouse, 2004), which is initiated similarly to the original conversation. As in this extract, though the role of the teacher is absent, the personal meanings are expressed by the students, and the linguistic errors as in Line 4, 9,24, and 26 are ignored. The exception is Line 29 in which S5 conducts other-initiated other repair.

In Extract 2, the students can take turns nominating themselves and each other, rather than having the teacher assign them. They have enough interactional space to develop the subtopic, offer further information and negotiate topics themselves. It shows that the students are able to control the turn-taking system to a certain extent, thus maintaining a meaning-and-fluency context.

4.3 CA in Task-Oriented Contexts

In task-oriented contexts, the teacher assigns tasks according to the pedagogical focus and gives students the authority to manage the interaction themselves, so in most cases, teachers will not participate in the interaction, but students may encounter problems in the process of accomplishing the task and need to call on the teacher to solve it. The linguistic errors are normally ignored in the interaction since the pedagogical focus in this context is on the accomplishment of the task rather than on the language used (Seedhouse, 2004). According to Seedhouse (2002), there are three characteristics of task-oriented interaction, the first one is that the nature of the task and the turn-taking mechanism have a reflexive relationship; the second one is that the participants usually minimizing the linguistic forms in their own turn, the turns are short, and the transcript is hard to understand for who do not know the background of the class. These two characteristics are demonstrated in an authentic interaction in Extract 4. The last characteristic is that clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and self-repetitions are displayed in the process of the accomplishment of the tasks.

In this activity, there are different words and patterns on some green and red cards, the students are asked to match one green card and one red card appropriately to make a sentence, and they should try their best to finish matching them all in a limited time, the length of the time limit is not informed by the teacher, but it is short. Besides, the teacher has given the key information about these sentences by sharing and telling stories before this task:

Extract 3

- 1 S6: Oxford is famous for
- 2 S7: the university
- 3 S6: the university yes

- 4 S4: for university
 5 S7: its university (0.20 take a card (.....) (3.0)
 6 S: you should take some photo no
 7 S: this is good
 8 S4: [you should] (0.4) definitely
 9 S6: it's a famous (0.4) tourist attraction yes it is put here put here
 10 S7: [tourist] [yes]
 11 S: famous yes
 12 S6: yes tourist attraction yes

(Carr, 2006, DVD12, p. 10)

Extract 3 is an example that is able to demonstrate the Characteristics a and b of task-oriented interaction. The students take turns to initiate repetitions in order to confirm his/her understanding and confirmation and then promote the process. For example, in Line 1, S6 shows the incomplete sentence that he/she gets from one card to other students, and then S7 proceeds with his/her answer in Line 2. In Line 3-5, the students appear to repeat what S7 has said. S6 and S4 repeat to show the agreement on S7's answer (Line, pp. 3-4) and S7 repeats again to confirm that all of them are agree with this answer and begin the next card of information (Line 5). In Line 6-7, S conduct the self-initiated self repair. In fact, there is a linguistic error that occurs in Line 6, but it is not the intention of S to initiate repair, it is because the information is not matched with what the teacher has told before. Similarly, S7, S, and S6 repeat the key information by a single word with yes to show their confirmations which facilitates the progress of the task (Line 8, 10-12).

In terms of the second characteristic. Since the task-oriented interaction is aim at accomplishing the task. According to Duff (1986, p. 167), Turns tend to be relatively short, with simple syntactic constructions in task-oriented contexts. This is evident from this extract that the students just use some isolated words to display their orientation to the task. Moreover, as TBL requires the students to immerse in the task, the interaction is context-bounded and indexical, the transcript of this type of interaction is esoteric and hard to understand for those who have no information about the task.

In Extract 4, the task for the students is to guess and make up the teacher's story by six keywords into groups. The students are trying to define the keyword "balcony":

Extract 4

- 1 T: a:h (0.4) the balcony (.) o:kay
 2 (unintelligible 3.0)
 3 S5: 'balcony' (0.2) outside e::r (.) there is a (.) .hhhhh (.) small place (0.3) you
 4 know?
 5 S7: small place
 6 S5: small place (.) e::r
 7 S6: how to explain balcony

- 8 T: do you know?
9 S6: I know what does it mean
10 T: o:kay °do you know°
11 S7: but I I'm not sure
12 T: o:kay (.) outside a door, or a window (.) maybe on the first floor
13 S7: mm
14 T: there is a space outside the building where you can stand okay
15 S7: [o::h yeah]
16 S5: thank you
17 S7: thanks thanks
18 T: okay

(Carr, 2006, DVD10, p.8-9)

The repair in Extract 4 aims at accomplishing the task. The students need to understand the meaning of “balcony” and reach a consensus then use it to make up the story. In Line 3, S5 is not confident in his understanding of the word, self-initiated other repair initiated by S5 and S7, but it does not reach an agreement in the whole group. S6 asks the teacher for assistance in repairing the trouble (Line 7). However, instead of offering the help directly, T initiates an open repair in Line 8 and 10 to make a confirmation and elicit their understanding of the meaning of “balcony”. In Line 12 and 14, the teacher displays the meaning of “balcony”, S5 and S7 confirm that and finally reach a shared understanding of the word.

Throughout Extract 3 and 4 in task-oriented contexts, it provides empirical evidence that the pedagogical focus in task-oriented contexts is to accomplish the task and on the results of the activity. The turn-taking system is constrained by the nature of the task, see Line 1-4 in Extract 3. Moreover, in order to finish the task, feedback, clarification, and repair are produced in the interaction by the students, indicating that the learners are creatively engaged in developing turn-taking systems (Seedhouse, 2004, p.124). Thus, proving the reflexive relationship between the pedagogical focus and the organization of the interaction.

5. Discussion

The analysis on authentic interaction extracts in the previous section shows that CA in different contexts of L2 classroom is rigorous and empirical. This section will discuss the controversy and advantages of CA based on the emic perspective.

Most of the controversies of CA are based on the perspective of emic analysis. In the context of sociology, the criticism of CA can be roughly divided into two categories. The first point of view is that CA is not able to analyze the conflict, the right, and inequality in social relationships and the negative information of gender, race, or class in conversations. The second point of view is that the focus on turn-taking and organization of sequences cannot reflect the meaning of historical, cultural, and

political context implied in communication (Wooffitt, 2005). Seedhouse(2005a) has noted that CA in relation to social science research methods adapts an emic rather than etic perspective on talk. Moreover, According to Seedhouse (2005), obvious contextual features such as social status, race and gender are not considered in CA, and any potential factors related to the interaction can only be described by emic analysis that analyzing the details of the interaction to describe in which procedures these factors are related to the participants. CA is conducted from the perspectives of participants and the details of interactions also giving the explanation to the queries that whether the data demonstrate the participants' real thoughts and prove the researchers' analysis. There is no doubt that CA has contributed to the creation of a renewed understanding of the nature of language in use as a vehicle for carrying out social acts. The pedagogical implication is that CA can help raise teachers' awareness of the different options available when designing and mentoring tasks and when they need to respond to classroom interactions (Mori, 2021). Besides, According to Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006), the CA extract can be utilized as a helpful resource for teachers and textbook designers to incorporate real target language conversations, allowing learners to practice the language patterns they have acquired in the interaction both inside and outside the classroom. These advantages of CA demonstrate the reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction again.

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