Connecting EFL Group Discussions to Research

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EFL グループ・ディスカッションと研究の連結

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Abstract

While the small group discussion is widely used in the language classroom, little academic attention is paid to this pedagogical practice. The aim of this paper is to connect research and theory to classroom discussions. A literature review of research on small group work is followed by an examination of research frameworks which can be used to investigate group discussions. Second Language Acquisition research, Language Socialization, Sociocultural Theory and Discourse Analysis are briefly discussed. The author suggests that Conversation Analysis is the most effective research methodology for uncovering the basic underlying rules of action in small group discussions. While this methodology is not usually connected with pedagogy, this paper demonstrates that a useful link can indeed be made. Several examples from the author's CA research are given.

Key words: small group discussion, Conversation Analysis, talk-in-interaction, pedagogy, classroom research

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抄　　録

言語教育における小グループ・ディスカッションという方法は頻繁に活用される方法であるのにもかかわらず、この教授法の実践については、学術的関心は一般に薄いようである。そこで、本論文の目的は、授業におけるディスカッションを、研究と理論に結びつけることとする。小グループ・ディスカッションに関する先行研究については、複数の研究の枠組を検証することで行う。これらの枠組みとは、グループ・ディスカッションを精査することに活用されるものである。また、第二言語習得に関する研究、言語の社会化、社会文化理論、そして、談話分析などについても引用し議論する。小グループ・ディスカッションにおける行為が起こる原因となる基本的規則を顕在化する。そのために、筆者は、会話分析（ＣＡ）が最大に効果がある研究方法論であると提案する。

論であると提案する。そして、筆者によるＣＡについての研究から、いくつかの例が提示される。この方法論は、教授法と関連付けて議論されることが多くはないが、本論文に

おいては、実のところ、これが活用されることで有効性を発揮するということが証明される。

キーワード：小グループ・ディスカッション、言語教育、会話分析、教授法

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1. Introduction

In language classrooms teachers often place students in small groups to discuss various topics or to perform assigned tasks. Students are expected to practice the material presented in the course, and the small groups allow more speaking opportunities than in a teacher-fronted class. Despite the fact that small group discussions are so widespread, there is very little research on them in the field of language learning. Teacher education programs do not focus on group discussions, in terms of practice, and virtually none when it comes to theory. Research and theory never come up when teachers or curriculum specialists work on “discussion.” It is assumed that everyone knows how to discuss and that all teachers know what makes a good discussion.

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate that classroom small group discussions can and should be connected to research and theory. This article begins with a literature review of work on small group work, a general discussion of what research frameworks are conducive to investigating group discussions, and examples of how research findings can be applied to classroom activities.

2. Research on Group Work

Much of the research on group work comes from studies of cooperative learning (CL), (Gunderson and Johnson, 1980; Holt, 1993; Johnson and Johnson, 1994; etc.) an instructional approach used in school systems in the U.S. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994) there have been over 600 experimental studies and over 100 correlational studies, and the general conclusion was that cooperative groups gain greater benefits in terms of achievement, productivity, higher-order thinking, interpersonal relationships, motivation and self-esteem. Cooperative learning entered the L2 arena in the 1980s and became more widely known in the 1990s. (Dörnyei, 1997; Gunderson & Johnson, 1980).

Typical small group work in the L2, however, is not necessarily cooperative learning. Perhaps the only thing they share is the size of the group and the face-to-face interaction. Cooperative learning is a specific teaching method that deliberately structures group work in order to produce positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993).

In the L2 field researchers have investigated the type of talk generated in the small group, categorizing such speech as input and modified input. (Doughty and Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis, 1985; Long & Porter, 1985). Long and Porter (1985) concluded that interaction in small groups leads to increased input and output thereby facilitating L2 development. When learners negotiate meaning, it creates more comprehensible input which supposedly leads to language acquisition. In the process of interaction, modified input is produced making the input more accessible.

These researchers also looked closely at the effect the task had on learner input and output (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis, 1985). Two-way tasks seem to produce a higher incidence of modified input than one-way tasks. In the two-way task all group members have some, but not all, of the information needed to complete a task, while in the one-way task only some of the members have all the information.

The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research on small group work had an impact on the practice of teaching. In an article on small group work, Long and Porter (1985) delineated five reasons why group work should be used in language classrooms: 1) increased language practice; 2) improved quality of student talk; 3) individualized instruction; 4) a positive affective climate; and 5) increased motivation.

3. Research Perspectives for the Study of Group Work

SLA researchers have been heavily influenced by the field of linguistics and psycholinguistics. Long (1997) writes, “Most SLA researchers view the object of inquiry as in large part an internal, mental process” (p. 319). In rather sharp contrast to this view, other researchers and theorists believe that this is too narrow. Firth and Wagner (1997) claim that it is too individualistic and mechanistic, and it overlooks the interactional and sociolinguistic aspects of communication. Learning is not located only inside an individual learner’s brain, but is intricately tied to the interactive process between people.

For many researchers language and the social world are integrally bound together. Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) argue that there is a clear relationship between the acquisition of language and the child’s socialization through language. Children learn by participating in daily routines and thus implicitly gain cultural and linguistic knowledge. This is the process of *socialization through language*. At the same time, as they interact with more expert members of the community, they are being *socialized to use the language*. The concept of language socialization has been applied to the language classroom as can be seen from the work of Hosoda (2004), Ohta (1999), and Poole (1992), among others.

Other researchers who also do not separate the individual from the social arena are the neo-Vygotskians. These researchers have "rediscovered," so to speak, the work of Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist in the early 1900s. After his death others continued his work resulting in the publication of *Thought and Language* in 1962. Then, North American researchers reintroduced Vygotsky's theory to the West, and today it is known as sociocultural theory (SCT).

According to sociocultural theory, consciousness has purely social origins. A child's cognition comes about through participating in collaborative social activity. "Learning is a culturally rooted, socially mediated process that takes place through the interaction between the child (or learner) and more competent others in meaningful activities, and entails the shared construction of meaning and understanding." (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Ushioda, 2002, p. 91). Language creates the mind, and not the other way around, as the mainstream SLA researchers assume. Thought does not create language. Instead language creates the ability to think and to use higher order mental functions. "Language is the primary tool of semiotic mediation; language bridges the internal and external world . . . we do not have direct experience of the world, only a representation of it as it is mediated through symbolic and material tools "(Verity, 2005).

In SCT teachers play an important role in the language learning process, much more so than when the main viewpoint is that internal processes control learner cognition and motivation. Increasingly, there are mainstream researchers who acknowledge the contributions of sociocultural theory. Pintrich (2003), for example, writes: ". . . both perspectives have much to offer, and the important task is to build theory and conduct research that builds on the strengths of both and works toward an integrative and systemic model of how individual and social processes jointly combine to shape student cognition and learning" (p. 681).

Social interaction is foremost for yet another group of researchers: those who use Conversation Analysis (CA). This methodology has its origins in the U.S. in the 1960s. At that time anthropologists, sociologists and linguists were not interested in mundane daily conversations, but Harvey Sacks, a sociologist, had the keen insight to focus exactly on this area. Along with Emanual Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, the three examined in great detail daily conversation, such as people speaking on the phone, conversing at the dinner table, etc. They showed that in the turn-by-turn talk they could uncover some of the basic units of social interaction, and they came up with deceptively simple but cogent rules of turntaking and other interactional practices.

CA was greatly influenced by another new field at the time: Ethnomethodology, which was founded by Garfinkel. Ethnomethodology is a descriptive study of how people interact with each other and with the larger society. Similar to the CA researchers, Garfinkel (1967) did not see ordinary conversation as unimportant. He delved more deeply behind and beyond the words in order to theorize upon what common sense procedures were being followed (Garfinkel, 1967). According to ethnomethodologists, language in itself does not hold meaning, and the words of a language do not constitute communication. Instead it is people's experiences that help create the meaning of language, and their shared experience help with communication. The two new fields naturally influenced each other.

The key focus of Conversation Analysis is on the order and the orderliness of everyday, naturally occurring interactions. CA researchers believe that only by very close examination and analysis of talk can the natural organization of behavior be discovered. They attempt to find "the *machinery*, the *rules*, the *structures* that produce and constitute that orderliness" (Psathas, 1995, p. 2). Note that the focus is not on the organization of language, but on the organization of "behavior," true to CA's sociological roots. CA researchers avoid preformulated theories or concepts, and they must have an open-mindedness and a willingness to be led by the phenomena and not the other way around (Psathas, 1995). The social actions being investigated must be meaningful to the participants themselves (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973)–not to the researchers. Thus, any argument that the CA researcher makes must be clearly supported by the talk itself.

Conversation Analysis is in essence a misnomer because, as stated earlier, it is not simply the analysis of conversation, but the study of the organization of social actions. A more appropriate name is *talk-in-interaction* because it studies the talk as it unfolds, and, in fact, CA and talk-in-interaction are used interchangeably in the literature. CA is empirically based and demands audio- or video-recordings of naturally occurring interaction. There is no place for interviews, field notes, coding or experimental data as these are seen as allowing an undue influence of the researchers' preconceived ideas and their interpretations (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). The recordings, then, are the basic data for CA. Very highly detailed transcriptions must be made, and CA analysts should be completely immersed in the data. By doing so they become aware of the finer details of the interaction which the participants or a lay observer generally would not notice (ten Have, 1990). A clear advantage of this procedure is that readers have access to the transcriptions, and thus can check the analysis and arguments. Through the work of Jefferson, a set of very clear transcription conventions was developed, and these continue to be used by CA researchers. The use of a uniform transcription system is one of the great strengths of talk-in-interaction, making CA work quite accessible to researchers and lay observers alike.

4. 1 Connecting Research Methodology to Classroom Small Group Discussions

The previous section has presented several research perspectives which can potentially be used to connect classroom group discussion to research. The SLA approach tends to rely on statistical analysis of experiments with comparisons of control and treatment groups. For the average teacher this type of research is not possible given the limitations of obtaining a sufficiently large sample population. The author agrees with Firth and Wagner (1997), Markee (1994), Watson-Gegeo (2004) and many others who have made a strong case for significantly widening the SLA research base to include a more emic perspective and to take into account the social and cultural context of interactions.

While language socialization and sociocultural theory place importance on learner interaction with others, studies using these approaches tend to be longitudinal or cross-sectional, following particular learners over time or at particular points in time. Many studies are ethnographic or based on field-based collection of data. However, from all of these studies, there is little research specifically concerning language classroom small group discussions, so at this point it is difficult to make practical research connections.

Conversation Analysis, on the other hand, has a substantive body of research on interaction including both the spoken and unspoken. Although CA studies may be from very different contexts with very different overall goals, specific findings can be relevant and can serve to support a part of another CA researcher's work. This is possible because CA's goal is, in fact, to uncover the *local* organization of particular interactional episodes. An advantage of CA research is that audio- and video-recorded data do not become outdated. In fact, many of the early audio-recordings made by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson are still being used and cited in current CA studies. In order to study classroom group discussions, the author has collected videotapes of students in discussions dating from 1997, all of which can be used for the current study.

4. 2　Research Findings Based on Discourse Analysis

Before attempting to connect CA with small group discussions, it is worth focusing on Discourse Analysis (DA) as another possible methodology. DA is sometimes confused with Conversation Analysis. These are two very distinct types of methodologies. Put very briefly, Discourse Analysis has its origins in linguistics while CA comes from sociology. CA has a highly developed conceptual framework with rigorous analytic procedures. The terminology is distinct and is generally used in the same way for all CA analysts. In contrast, DA covers an array of different procedures, concepts and terminology depending on the researcher. CA has a well-developed transcription system which is used by all CA analysts, while different DA researchers use different transcription conventions, often developing their own set of symbols based on the target study.

DA frequently utilizes coding in order to find patterns in the discourse, while CA focuses on turntaking and sequence and not a coding system. DA uses information other than the discourse itself, such as interview data, historical records, field observation notes, etc., while CA works only on the audio/video-recording and the transcriptions. CA analysts make collections of the phenomena which they are studying, and they are constantly comparing their conclusions with the findings from other CA researchers.

DA can offer important insights when investigating the small group discussion. Watanabe (1993) compared American and Japanese groups at an American university. The groups were given three topics and approximately 15 to 20 minutes to discuss while being videotaped. All the Japanese groups talked first about the order of turns, the order of the topics and the procedure before beginning the discussion of the topic. Having videotaped and observed many group discussions of Japanese university students, I found that this tendency is quite common in the classroom regardless of the student proficiency level.

According to Watanabe's study "the question of who speaks first seems to be very important. No one simply decided to speak first; instead, there were invitations to take the first turn, concessions to others, and suggestions of who should talk first" (p. 185). In all the groups, a female member spoke first, followed by the other female member. Then the younger male spoke and the older male member spoke last. Watanabe (1993) concluded that the "Japanese members were negotiating not only the procedural matters but also a hierarchical order within a group" (p. 185). Hierarchical order is very important in Japanese communication because the vocabulary and politeness register are important. It is usual for Japanese to get a sense of rank within a group allowing them to use the appropriate linguistic forms. The significance of the turntaking reflected the Japanese tendency for inferiors or juniors to take the first turns, while the senior or superiors went later so "they can express their opinions without losing face" (p. 186). In contrast, the American group did not talk about procedural matters and began the discussion promptly. There was no indication of any patterned turntaking, and age, gender or status did not come into play. In my videotaped classroom discussions, all the students were about the same age and the same level at the university. Thus, the importance of hierarchy according to age or gender was not detected. Indeed, some kind of ranking may have been operating, but DA methodology was not rigorous enough to detect this.

In the Watanabe study there was also a clear difference when the discussions ended. In the Japanese group, the elder male assumed the leadership by checking with the others to see if it was okay to end and/or make an official announcement that it was ended. Watanabe (1993) suggests that "the Japanese participants perceived the activity of group discussion as one that they were to carry out as a *group*, in which a superior leads subordinate members. When the group shifts from the discussion frame to the postdiscussion frame, the leader leads the subordinate members so that every member shifts at the same time" (p. 191). This contrasts sharply with the American groups who perceived the activity as one that brought together four *individuals* for the purpose of the discussion and once the task was completed, they were no longer a group. They moved more quickly at the beginning and ending of the discussion than the Japanese groups did. In my classroom videotapes, because the discussions were only

8 to 10 minutes in duration, and since students were given a signal to stop, the ending of the discussions cannot be compared with Watanabe's study.

In Watanabe's research, the argument strategies used were quite different. The North Americans tended to use single-account arguments which were shorter, and this style left openings for confrontations. On the other hand, the Japanese speakers used multiple-accounts where each turn tended to be longer, and the arguments included both supporting and contradictory positions. "From the Japanese perspective, to include a contradictory account is not to weaken one's argument; rather it shows one's holistic perspective . . . the ability to integrate contradictions rather than choosing one point over the other is highly valued" (p. 201). For the American it is expected that one should take an exclusive position, and it is not logical to include contradictory statements in one's argument.

Hayashi (1996) also compared groups of Japanese and Americans where she used floor management to make comparisons. Similar to Watanabe's findings, there was a tendency for Japanese groups to prepare ahead of time and decide procedural matters. Generally an older male took on the leadership responsibility. The Americans shifted the floor much more often than the Japanese, and this floor maintenance was one of "mobility" in contrast to the "stability" of the Japanese group. All four members in the American groups took turns initiating a new floor, and thus the role relationships were perceived to be temporary. Again in keeping with Watanabe's finding, Hayashi concluded that the Japanese had a hierarchical interdependence which contrasted with the American horizontal interdependence.

Researchers who have compared Japanese and North American conversational dyads have noted that Japanese exhibit many more backchannels and *aizuchi* than North Americans (Fujimoto, 2003; Matsuda, 1988; Maynard, 1987). According to Horiguchi (1997), Kubota (1998, 2001), Matsuda (1988), Maynard (1986, 1987), and Mizutani & Mizutani (1987) the Japanese *aizuchi*, in fact, is qualitatively different from backchannels, and far from being peripheral elements, they are essential to effective Japanese conversation. Maynard (1987) also considers nonverbal head movements to be *aizuchi*, which other Japanese researchers do also, but few non-Japanese researchers do. This is probably due to the high frequency of head nods in Japanese conversational discourse. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987) state that the Japanese listener's role is to help the speaker by constantly using *aizuchi*, whether verbal or nonverbal, and the speaker is always conscious of the listener's *aizuchi*.

Duncan and Fiske (1977) agree that backchannels are not frequent in American English speaker conversation. Hayashi (1996) explains that American English speakers use more turns within a floor creating less opportunity for backchannels. While Japanese support the floor with frequent backchannels and head nods, Americans use longer backchannel utterances, and they show attentiveness to the speaker floor by asking questions or making comments (p. 197). While American participants focus attention on the specific topical content, Japanese participants may value the empathetic interactional behavior more while the message itself may become secondary.

The cross cultural studies of Hayashi (1996) and Watanabe (1993) and others provide a rich source of material which raise our awareness that Japanese students may be perceiving interaction and the task of a group discussion differently than the non-Japanese. This is especially important when non-Japanese are the instructors. Since teachers are the ones with the power to evaluate and make judgments about student performance, it is important that instructors become sensitive to these possible differences. When possible they should be able to articulate the expected behaviors for participation in a good group discussion, and not assume that students already know.

As Dörnyei (1997) notes, we may need to teach students social skills; "simply placing students in a learning group and expecting them to cooperate effectively may not be successful" (p. 484). At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, teachers need to be taught. They cannot assume that students share the same perceptions about effective group discussions as they do.

4. 3 Connecting CA Research to Classroom Group Discussion

Conversation Analysis is not commonly linked with language pedagogy. From its beginnings CA focused on episodes from daily conversation and from institutional talk in English. As researchers from other countries learned the methodology, studies involving different languages and a much wider variety of settings began to increase. It is only in the last decade that CA began to be used in the language classroom. Many studies have investigated the interaction of L2 speakers with L1 speakers (Kasper, 2004; Markee, 2004; Mori, 2002, Seedhouse, 2004, etc.). Others involved L2 speakers speaking with each other (Carroll, 2000; Firth, 1996; Hellermann, 2006, 2007; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004 and Olsher, 2004). Despite the increase in such studies, CA is not well known among language teachers and curriculum specialists. One of the main reasons is because the focus of CA studies is confined to highly specific, routine actions, many of them seemingly unrelated to the classroom. In addition, CA is a rigorous methodology that demands a significant investment of time to learn and use, which the average teacher cannot afford. It is the goal of this paper to draw attention to CA work and to try to bridge the gap between CA research and the language classroom. Teachers do not have to use CA themselves, but they should become aware of the CA studies that are related to their students and their classrooms.

It should be pointed out that since CA articles are research-oriented, they rarely address practical applications. Thus, for the average teacher it is not always easy to find what is useful and practical within all the detailed procedures and rather esoteric terminology. The following short collection is meant as an aid to teachers who would be interested in possible applications of CA research to the classroom.

4. 4 Practical Classroom Applications Based on CA Research

After transcribing and analyzing student small group discussions, it became quite clear to me that far from being “deficient” speakers, the L2 learners are able to do exactly what native speakers or highly proficient speakers do when they are communicating. As Firth and Wagner (1997) point out, the prevailing mindset of SLA is to view the L2 learner as a defective communicator, and thus linguistic difficulties and communication problems are foregrounded. When transferred to the classroom, this results in teachers tracking errors and trying to find ways to help learners correct or avoid these errors. For CA, on the other hand, these L1 difficulties are noted, but are not elevated in importance. In fact, difficulties can sometimes serve as a resource (Rampton, 1987, Firth, 1996). What appears to be an error to a lay observer is, for the CA researcher, a strategic means to accomplish social or interactional actions. The following is an example taken from a small group discussion.

In this discussion the topic was international marriage, and there were five students, Bo, Lin, Yumi, Kai and Hiro (all names are pseudonyms). Hiro began the discussion saying he thought that international marriage was difficult. Bo and Lin immediately agreed, and they both gave supporting reasons. Yumi had some hesitations but finally succeeded in entering the discussion. In 54 lines of transcript Kai had not said anything, but it was clear from the videotape that he was preparing to speak. CA research has demonstrated that sometimes before speakers take a turn, they display distinct behaviors which foreshadow the turn. These behaviors include change in facial expression, gaze shift, lip movement, body movements, coughs, inbreaths, etc. (Carroll, 2005; Goodwin, 1986; Schegloff, 1996). This is nothing new to practicing teachers who conduct interactive classes, but having it documented in such detail shows that research can indeed demonstrate clear links to classroom practice.

In the student discussion Kai finally takes a turn.

Excerpt 1. Kai first turn

53	Li:	ah: ((head dips)) .hh ((questioning face towards Bo))
54		[but]
55	Kai:	[sense] of value,
56	(0.4)	
57	Li:	((leans forward, gazes at Kai))
58	Kai:	sense of value sense of value (0.2) is difficult.

Note: Transcription symbols

: (colon)	*lengthening of the vowel or consonant*

.hh	*indicates an inbreath*
[ ]	*brackets indicate overlapping speech*
(0.5)	*5/10 of a second pause or gap*

In lines 55 and 58, Kai says the same phrase, "sense of value" three times. My teacher reaction when I first transcribed this was one of impatience. I did not know why he repeated himself so many times. It was only after using CA that I saw this interaction in an entirely different light.

In line 53 Li is hesitating and directing her gaze to Bo. Just as she continues her turn with "but," Kai begins a turn, and it is in overlap with Li's "but." According to CA research, there is a strong tendency for one speaker to speak at a time and for a minimum of gap between turns. When this is violated and two speakers speak at the same time, the tendency is for one speaker to relinquish the turn and the other speaker continues or recycles his/her turn beginning (Schegloff, 1987). In this case, Li stopped and Kai recycled his turn beginning; this time in the clear. Research has also shown that speakers may wait to begin a turn or recycle a turn beginning after gaining eye contact with the intended recipient (Carroll, 2005; Goodwin, 1986; Kendon, 1990). Li was Kai's intended recipient, however, she was gazing at Bo when Kai began his turn. Once Kai was able to achieve eye contact with Li, he restarted his turn.

This accounts for the second "sense of value." Why did Kai say sense of value for a third time? A very close examination of the nonverbal behavior uncovers the reason. Just when Kai uttered the first "sense of value," Li shifted her gaze from Bo to Kai, and she then leaned closer to Kai. This body movement of leaning forward to a speaker can indicate that there was a hearing problem. Li's shift in body position prompted Kai to say "sense of value" again. This type of repetition is documented in CA research, and it shows that speakers may repeat words and phrases to make sure that they can be heard (Carroll, 2005; French & Local, 1983; Schegloff, 1987).

Thus it can be seen that Kai's repetition was not because he was having trouble expressing himself. The repetition of "sense of value" three times was quite logical and strategic. Other CA research studies have shown that repetition can also be used to forestall another speaker's turn (Carroll, 2005; Schegloff, 1996), to allow time for self-repair or a word search (Carroll, 2005), or to help recipients understand (Carroll, 2005; Toshima, 2005).

The use of the CA term, repair, is quite distinct from how it is used in applied linguistics or SLA. While for the latter it refers to when a speaker makes an error and then subsequently corrects it, for CA it means any trouble in speech, hearing or understanding. According to Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) there is a very systematic organization for repair, and there is a preference for self-correction over other speakers making a correction. In inspecting a few lines of CA transcript, the SLA researcher or the lay observer may not even "see" any signs of repair in operation. Take for example the next few lines.

Excerpt 2. Yumi’s first turn

30 Yumi: they (0.8) the::y (1.4) uh their chil- chil ↑ dren (0.4) children
31 (2.6) which which country's (0.6) nationality?

Note: Transcription symbols

-	*(hyphen)*	*indicates a cutoff*
↑		*indicates shift to a higher pitch*
?		*indicates rising intonation*

The non-CA person would probably simply see hesitations and repetitions–not repairs. However, the CA researcher can identify about a dozen repairs. The 0.8 second pause after the first “they” indicates a problem. Next there is the repetition of “they” but it is not delivered in exactly the same way—the vowel is stretched. The rather long 1.4 second pause would be identified as a *forward repair*, where Yumi is searching for her next word which has not appeared yet. The “uh” is another trouble source marker. When Yumi says “their,” this is an example of a *backward repair* because she went back to correct “they” to “their.” Then “chil-“ is cut off, a sign of another trouble. Next Yumi says the word “children” as if it were two words and the last syllable is said with a rising intonation, an intonation pattern often connected with a questioning stance. The 0.4 second pause is another trouble source marker. The rest of line 31 is filled with more repairs, all of a similar nature.

What becomes clear when reading CA studies is that the researcher does NOT focus on “deficits” of the learner. Instead importance is placed on the “behavior” of the learner and not solely on the language. In the case of repair, the CA researcher examines the placement of repair and how it is delivered. This gives valuable clues as to what the repairs are allowing the speaker to do. If the teacher applies this knowledge to the classroom, it might mean that students are made aware that the use of pauses, fillers, and hesitations are valuable. Rather than trying to eliminate them, they can be used strategically to further communication. Both teachers and students should also be made aware that L2 speakers do exactly what native speakers or highly proficient speakers do. Proficient speakers do not always speak grammatically. Textbooks and class materials almost always strip the “trouble” from the spoken discourse, so learners get the impression that that should be their goal. If they were truly successful, however, they would end up sounding somewhat robotic and hyper-perfect—this is not the goal of a good communicator. As CA researchers, Wong and Waring (2010) advocate, language textbooks should reflect the real world so that students can use what they learn in the classroom in their everyday lives.

In the real world, people often engage in discussions. Interaction frequently begins with casual conversation with social talk about the weather or personal topics, and then there can be a move to a discussion of an issue. The language learner needs to know how to engage in both mundane conversation and serious discussion. With CA analysis it is possible to "see" when there is a shift from conversation to discussion and the other way around. Knowledge of how people actually accomplish these shifts can help the teacher raise student awareness about this. Knowledge of how an interaction can progress smoothly and how it can become derailed is certainly an area that teachers and students should know about.

Using CA to analyze transcripts of both novice language learners compared with highly proficient speakers helps to delineate the trouble sources which get in the way of smooth communication. The following is a brief list of possible trouble sources and pedagogical suggestions.

1) A student asks a question, and the recipient answers "yes" or "no" followed by silence. There is no further explanation. Suggestions: Students should get practice in asking open-ended questions. Recipients should get practice in making additional comments after answering "yes" or "no."

2) A student asks a question. There is a long gap of silence. The first student then asks someone else or asks a different question to the first recipient. Suggestions: Have students do practice drills in answering questions quickly. Let them know that minimal vocalizations, such as, uh, um, well, er, etc. are acceptable responses. Introduce phrases and sentences, such as, "Let me see...," "I'm not sure, but ...," "That's a difficult question ...," etc.

3) A student disagrees with the previous speaker. S/he says very quickly, "I disagree" followed by silence. Suggestion: According to CA researchers (Lerner, 1996; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987), disagreement turns tend to be delayed and are often characterized by the use of pauses, hesitations, cutoffs, and partial agreements. Thus, students should be made aware of strategies of mitigation when pursuing disagreement responses. Classroom materials can introduce phrases such as, "Yes, but ...," "You have a point, but ...," "Yes, that's true, but ...," "I agree, but ..." etc.

4) A student begins a turn, but realizes s/he does not have control over the vocabulary or the argument itself. Through the transcriptions of both novice language learners and proficient speakers, I have found that speakers use a range of actions: a) use a word search mode, shifting one's gaze upward or away from the other students. This signals to others that the speaker is not relinquishing the turn yet. The recipients then refrain from taking a turn. This automatically provides time for the first speaker to think and prepare. b) use a questioning face and gaze at another person. This can signal that the speaker is asking for assistance. c) ask how to say a word or phrase in the target language. When another student provides the answer, the speaker can then continue. If no one provides the answer, the speaker uses L1 and continues the talk. d) The speaker selects a next speaker. e) The speaker says "Oh," which in CA is referred to as a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984), and s/he then tries a different argument.

There are many more general observations based on CA work, but because of space limitation a more complete collection must wait for a future publication. It is hoped that this preliminary collection gives an idea of how CA research can be linked to the classroom.

5. Conclusion

The act of discussing is complex. It involves multiple participants, and the sequence of their turns has a bearing on the overall activity. This article has suggested that because small group discussions are frequently used in language classrooms, it should be more thoroughly understood both in terms of research and pedagogy. Several research approaches were discussed as being possible research methodologies, but the author supports the use of Conversation Analysis because it has rigorous and highly detailed procedures. CA is empirically based, and the focus is on the action of the participants and not solely on the language.

As a result, the CA researcher does not see the language learner as a deficient speaker, but as a competent social being who utilizes a variety of resources in order to communicate. One example in this paper showed how the author changed her view of her students after using CA. In that particular case, a student used repetition, not because he was having problems producing the phrase, but he was using repetition for logical, interactional reasons. Close examination of more videorecordings of students in discussion will no doubt lead to more discoveries of such common sense rules. This kind of common sense is from the students' point of view and not necessarily from the teacher's or the researcher's point of view. In this sense, CA exerts a powerful and positive influence on the researcher to constantly keep the emic perspective foremost. If CA findings are transferred to the classroom, teacher awareness and sensitivity to students will undoubtedly increase. It is hoped that this paper contributes to this effort by providing a general introduction and presenting a preliminary collection of CA-based observations. It is my belief that pedagogy will surely improve if CA research is made more accessible to classroom teachers.

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