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FROM CONVERSATION TO INTERACTION: A PEDAGOGICAL EXPLORATION OF APPLYING CONVERSATION ANALYSIS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

ANNOTATION

The study engaged eight adult learners in a structured program, encompassing a pre-test, a 4-week explicit CA-informed instruction, and a post-test. After four weeks, learners demonstrated progress in their knowledge and skills of interaction, different aspects of English speaking, interactional competence, and confidence in speaking English. Additionally, the CA-informed instruction positively influenced learners' attitudes toward English language learning and their appreciation of interactional features. The results strongly suggest that language teachers should consider incorporating CA insights into their teaching practices to enhance both linguistic and attitudinal outcomes.

Keywords: conversation analysis, CA-informed instruction, interactional competence, L2 interaction.

CA studies social interaction, challenging the prevailing theoretical assumptions of structural-functionalism developed in the late 1960s. Developed by Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson, and their colleagues within the broader field of sociology in the United States, CA drew inspiration from Goffman's interactional approach and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology theory (Heritage, 2005, pp. 103-105). In contrast to structural-functionalists' emphasis on the stability of cultural patterns, CA scholars highlighted the incidental and emergent nature of interaction (Drew, 2005).

Seedhouse (2004, p. 45) describes CA as "a dynamic, empirical, emic, bottom-up approach" that primarily focuses on the organization of social life as observed in daily interactions. By closely examining the intricate details of naturally occurring social interactions in everyday life, CA unveils the orderliness that social members systematically co-construct through their interactions. This orderliness is not imposed by external structures but rather emerges from the participants' own interactional practices and methods.

CA encompasses both a form of literature and a method of inquiry. From a methodological perspective, CA is grounded in the detailed analysis of naturally occurring interactions, with the primary aim of identifying patterns and regularities in the organization of talk-in-interaction. As established in foundational works by Sacks et al. (1974), as well as methodological guidelines by Seedhouse (2004), CA relies on the meticulous examination of recorded data, transcription, and qualitative analysis of interactional sequences. CA regards language and collateral actions as resources for carrying out social interactions, not merely transmitting information (Schegloff et al., 2002).

Furthermore, CA analyzes participants' utterances from a sequential perspective, considering their position within the interaction rather than isolating them as independent linguistic units.

CA is a grounded research methodology conducted solely based on what participants display during their talk and how they react to interlocutors' talk (Seedhouse, 2004). It focuses on patterns of utterances, not thoughts or beliefs. Consequently, CA researchers repeatedly examine audio or video recordings and transcripts of naturally occurring interactions to reveal participants' orientations embodied in the details of their talk and actions.

In the current study, the author adopted both quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test measurement and conversation analysis to examine student participants' oral performance regarding interactional competence. According to Dörnyei (2007), combining these two well-established methods of analysis has the potential to collectively provide a more triangulated account of instructional practices than that given by adopting either one on its own. From this combined analysis, the researcher is able to gain more useful insights into the ways in which, on one hand, CA strategies play a role in students' utterance and, on the other hand, CA-informed instruction affects their overall oral performance.

Two pairs of students conversed at the same time, which extended the duration of observation. By having two conversations going simultaneously, the students can feel that they are not the sole focus of the test, thus lessening performance tension. Figure 1 demonstrates the testing format used in both pre-test and post-test. The student participants were divided into two groups of four (letters A to H in Figure 1 refer to the eight student participants).

The content analysis results underscored a positive shift in learners' attitudes towards the CA-informed approach, particularly regarding its impact on their pronunciation. Learners expressed that engaging in conversation analysis helped them comprehend and apply phonetic features during their conversations. However, the results also indicated that in the aspect of pronunciation, further improvement could be achieved if learners were not only engaged in analyzing conversations based on CA principles but also made aware of a wider range of phonetic features necessary to accomplish specific interactional goals through their turns at talk.

It is worthy to note that some participants reported a more positive attitude toward English learning. One said, "English seems more interesting to me because I learned how to 'really' use it in daily life. It's not just boring letters." Overall, participants' attitudes toward CA and toward their second language became more positive as a result of the CA-informed approach adopted in this study.

This study investigated the feasibility of applying CA to language teaching; specifically, using CA as a pedagogical tool in an EFL classroom to enhance L2 learners' interactional competence. The results show that participants responded positively to explicit CA-informed instruction. CA helped learners both to overcome certain psychological barriers to language learning and to notice a number of aspects of L2 interaction that otherwise may have escaped them (e.g., hesitation in responding, lack of confidence in interactions, and difficulty in maintaining conversational. Despite the positive results, certain limitations need to be addressed in further studies. The assessment format and procedures should be improved to encourage more natural and authentic conversations. The rating rubric should also be revised to accommodate the assessment of more interactional features elucidated in the close analysis. Another limitation of this study was the absence of video recordings, which restricted our ability to analyze non-verbal communication and embodied actions that play a crucial role in interaction.

Therefore, CA can serve not just as a teaching and diagnostic tool but also as a useful tool for exploring the interactional architecture of their language classroom and identifying learners' language learning problems. Nonetheless, the findings reported here underscore the value of equipping language teachers with CA knowledge and practice to enhance their understanding of the intricate dynamics of naturally-occurring talk, ultimately fostering learners' development of interactional competence. This study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for a more conversation-analytic approach to second language pedagogy.

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