SPEECH EXCHANGE SYSTEMS IN THE UNIVERSITY ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM

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Introduction

‘Communication’ classes for additional language major students (in the following account, specifically English) in Japanese universities will, in actuality, encompass a wide range of practices on the part of both teachers and students. This is hardly surprising as the specifications and actual outcomes of learning will vary not only from one institution to another, but if we model classes of learners as ‘communities of practice’ and not simply as laboratories and sites of language acquisition/learning, we can also expect cultural differences and varying practices even between classes of similar levels which share the same teacher. Central to any consideration of communication by learners in an additional language class are questions about the predominant (and side) speech exchange systems (Sacks et al., 1974: 729): what role does the teacher play in classroom interaction -- or discourse -- and as a consequence, what role(s) is available to learners? Who has the right to nominate topic and hold the floor, switch topic, nominate next speaker and terminate exchanges? In other words, who is doing the communicating and in what manner? To what end? The key factor is control relations, made explicit through rules of hierarchy and the extent to which talk adheres more or less to, or differs from ‘institutional’ or prescribed patterns.

In the words of van Lier (1988: 99), the paradoxical problem of the additional language classroom is that “…the classroom, by its very nature, may not provide the contextual and interactional ingredients that make language use a skillful and relevant enterprise in natural settings.” The participation structure of a classroom, which in many cases will not be one kind of structure but actually several, may work as much to
constrain communication by learners as it does to afford it. A lecture by a teacher is clearly different from a discussion between learners who are peers and there are occasions when teachers must hold the floor to ‘manage’ a group by indicating assignments and expectations. None of these are necessarily good or bad in themselves but the extent to which different participation patterns predominate is rarely a random matter; specific practices are generally nested within ideologies of education -- even if these are not explicitly understood by teachers themselves -- which are geared towards differing activities and goals. These can vary from practices which stress the reproduction of knowledge through imitation and practice (closed systems) to those which stress creativity and experiential elements (open systems). In many cases, we will not simply find one set of practices or the other but several, co-existing to varying degrees in classroom interaction.

In the following paper I begin from the premise that ‘learning communication’ in classrooms is best conceived of in terms of participation in the speech exchange system(s) that predominate -- as opposed to focusing on observable cognitive development in individual learners-- and it is helpful to approach such classes as educational ethnographers (van Lier, 1988) and evaluate interaction in these terms, focusing on structure and participation patterns of discourse. I then compare and contrast a range of common classroom interaction patterns with an accompanying interpretive account of the differing sociocognitive processes that each engenders, evaluating the usefulness of each for different purposes in the case of English language learning, particularly in the case of Japanese English major university students.

The focal concept of this discussion is discourse, which in this case means speech interaction understood as co-constructed pragmatic activity, rather than language in formal linguistic terms. In this way, the rather vague and unspecified term ‘communication’ comes to mean the development of interactive competence by interactive novices who already possess a fair declarative knowledge of the lexicogrammatical and phonological resources (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999) of English but who lack interactive experience in this language. I do not have anything to say here about ‘communication’ courses for learners of very basic proficiency who
do not yet have the linguistic resources for minimal interaction; that is a very different situation. This paper concerns English classes for general communication purposes and may not have much relevance for more particular ESP (English for Specific Purposes) contexts. The account that I give here is one of English language education but hopefully, may also have relevance for the learning of additional languages other than English.

What is meant by ‘communication’?

When discussing ‘communication’ it is important to be precise in defining the term since the notion is broad and tends to raise a variety of expectations which shape different theories and approaches that supposedly underlie classroom practices. The term ‘communicative competence’ was originally coined by Hymes (1966) as a reaction against the perceived inadequacy of Chomskyan notion of linguistic competence (1965) arising from Chomsky’s distinction between competence and performance. Hymes’ (1966) scheme was later adapted into Canale and Swain’s (1980) influential model of communicative competence which was originally defined in terms of three components: 1) grammatical competence, 2) sociolinguistic competence (largely appropriateness), and 3) strategic competence. This was later refined by Canale (1983) who added a fourth component -- discourse competence -- which was concerned with cohesion and coherence. The particular value of this early (1983) model was that it made explicit for testing purposes a series of criteria that could be addressed in language classrooms. In this way, educational linguists had a framework with which to critically evaluate activities and goals in language courses, against these idealized constructs which modeled communication in a plausible and seemingly rigorous manner.

An important question here is how communication is actually patterned and differentially structured in classroom settings and according to the British educational sociologist Bernstein (1990, 1996, 1999), this is best understood as a function of hierarchical social relations that teachers
and learners experience and enact on a daily basis. Bernstein’s (1996) observations concerning the structural conditions and discursive rules that drive practices of participation and exclusion were mostly developed in secondary schools in England so his ideas may seem relativistic with little explanatory power in different contexts such as Japan. However, Bernstein believed (1990) that there is a remarkable similarity in the operation of educational systems around the world so his ideas may well have some validity in a universal sense.

Bernstein’s (1996) ‘classification’ and ‘framing’ describe the structural relations that position students in the way that they participate in and experience classroom discourse. Classification deals with what may be talked about and strong classification implies clear and explicit rules while weak classification leads to a more flexible and open-ended discursive identity on the part of students. Framing, on the other hand, refers to control over the selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria of knowledge and with strong framing, control lies with the teacher while weak framing implies higher levels of control on the side of students. These ideas are very useful for modeling control relations in educational settings not only at a macro and overarching theoretical level but also at a micro level when interpreting actual instances of interaction.

The way that we experience classification and framing of relations with others in schools and also in other institutions such as the family, which are foundational to our sense of a social self, are very significant when repeated over extended periods of time. From recurring social practices, such as participating in institutional rituals and interactions, we develop a disposition to behave in certain ways in particular situations. This is captured in Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) – a ‘feel for the game’ which is a mediating concept between the structural level of social practices and the agency of the individual. School students come to be socialized or enculturated by their experiences of classroom learning and these influence their future interactions. This point should not be underestimated when we consider the transition for young Japanese students graduating from senior high schools and entering four year universities, especially if they are interactive novices in English.
Institutional language learning in Japan

Japanese university English courses consist mostly (though not exclusively) of learners who have graduated from a high school system which prioritizes skill in solving grammatical problems and passive vocabulary learning over listening and, to a greater extent, speaking -- though the latter often takes place as an elective in student clubs. This situation is a natural result of the washback effect of university entrance examinations which generally employ multiple choice format tests to assign ‘objective’ scores to large numbers of candidates – a key part of Japan’s super-m meritocracy (Yoneyama, 1999) or mass education society (Kariya, 1995). This (admittedly stereotypical) situation is progressively changing in recent years as a result of globalization with increasing numbers of Japanese students who have considerable experience of interaction in English through: overseas work placement of family members, school and college exchange programs outside Japan, homestay trips overseas, interaction with speakers of English (not necessarily native) through electronic media such as Skype, and contact with English speaking communities or sub-cultures within Japan. In addition, there is an increasing trend towards the inclusion of listening and interview (in English) components in entrance examinations, especially in the case of higher ranked universities. However, despite these increasing trends, the majority of young Japanese students graduating from senior high schools to major in university English courses are relative novices in the use of English compared with a more passive knowledge of the rules of its usage.

As discussed earlier, the prior socialization experiences of individuals in educational (or any other significant institutional) settings have consequences that extend into the present. The transition from senior high school classes which are typically characterized by high surveillance from teachers, passive learning and strong competition – though of course there are a range of classroom cultures and practices – is often at odds with expectations that students entering their first year of English communication classes should be willing and enthusiastic about communicating in English with others. A widespread reluctance to speak on the part of students is often ascribed to an essentialized Japanese
cultural trait of ‘shyness’ but this is perhaps simplistic. If people have become accustomed to classes in which public questioning by teachers (usually in students’ first language) is used to evaluate understanding and levels of attentiveness – strong classification and framing -- it is not always simple to re-construe classes in terms of opportunities for relatively uninhibited talk in an additional language, even if invited to do so. What has been clearly proscribed before is now required.

In the following section I set out a range of speech exchange systems that can be found in additional language communication class in not only universities in Japan but in a variety of settings around the world. These are organized according to the principle of control relations which determine structures of participation in classroom discourse. I begin with tight classification and framing of talk (highly ‘institutional’) by teachers; I next examine milder classification and framing and finally, finish with a discussion of low levels of classification and framing which align with more ‘naturalistic’ kinds of interaction that are much less typical of additional language classrooms. I especially focus on this last section and provide a transcript of learner interaction to illustrate several features of this kind of interaction. In each of the three cases, I discuss the costs and benefits of each approach with the caveat that none are categorically ‘better’ than the others – only better suited to different purposes. In many instances, classroom interaction takes place at different times with a combination of some or all of the patterns, depending on shifts in classroom activity.

**Strong classification and framing: teacher – student interaction**

One point which is generally agreed on by students of educational discourse, whether in general education or additional language settings, is the ubiquity of the three part exchange structure called the IRF (Initiate, Respond, Follow-up) by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Often termed the IRE (Initiate, Response, Evaluation) in North America after Mehan (1979), this consists in its fundamental form of three moves: an initiation (usually question from a teacher), a response to this question, generally
from a learner, and a follow-up move where the teacher provides some kind of feedback on the learner's response. In secondary classes in mainstream education in Canada, Wells (1999) estimated that as much as 70 per cent of all classroom talk took place in this form.

The participatory structure of the IRF has strong consequences for the roles of teachers and students. The first and third turns are produced by the teacher and the second by the learner; the exchange in both is started and terminated by the teacher so the learner is restricted to a responsive role. However, the more usual form of the exchange structure is actually more complex than the three part nucleus and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) listed three different kinds of act that can occur in the third move, including: accept/reject, evaluate, and comment. The category of ‘comment’ can include the more delicate subcategories of exemplify, expand and justify, each of which is realized through the initiation of a further, dependent exchange. Apparently then there are several possible permutations around the basic structure and viewing it as a kind of uniform practice is misleading. Van Lier (1998) has outlined a variety of pedagogical practices that are afforded by the IRF format, showing that the precise nature of the IRF being employed is usually revealed in the third turn since it is here that the purpose of the question or sequence of questions is typically revealed. Van Lier (1998: 164) provides examples to show that depending on the third turn, the teacher can ‘frame’ the exchange as a recitation (repeat the sentence), a display question (testing the learners’ understanding or attentiveness), a cognitive problem for learners to solve, or a request for more specific information.

By exploiting the prospectiveness inherent in the third turn, a teacher can encourage a dependent exchange to be added on to the nuclear exchange in the follow-up turn, for example when the teacher appeals for further information. In this way, teachers and learners collaborate in the construction of knowledge and the IRF structure is effective in terms of monitoring learners’ knowledge and understanding. However, while classroom exchanges in this structure may be collaborative and co-constructed, so long as the teacher initiates and terminates exchanges, the direction of the talk is out of the hands of learners and will only be revealed gradually by the teacher (van Lier, 1998: 165), meaning that
the *plan* is certainly not co-constructed. As for discourse, learners’ opportunities to exercise initiative or control are very restricted. In Foucaultian terms the IRF is admirably suited to the surveillance of learners in a group and the rules of the exchange structure, vesting rights to control and direct participation with the teacher, are useful for constructing a compliant and disciplined group of learners.

If used for whole class periods by a teacher, or for extensive periods, the IRF format foregrounds the teacher in classroom talk and students are restricted to responding even though selected students may talk extensively after the third turn. The format does not usually allow students to initiate and terminate exchanges or select next speaker – in pragmatic terms this does not amount to *doing* talk in a naturalistic sense. However, the format may well be useful in additional language classes if used sparingly as one of a number of participation formats, even in cases where much of the time is spent on student-initiated talk. It can be used for managerial purposes to give instructions in the sense of a regulative register (Christie, 2002) and it can also be useful as a managerial ploy to subdue or isolate disruptive or uncooperative individuals. It can also be used by the ‘charismatic teacher’ to call the class as a whole group to attention to establish rapport through constructing joking exchanges. Ideally it should not be over-used if the purpose is to engender activities where students themselves are engaged in more self-initiated interaction. However, in cases of large classes of low-level and/or poorly motivated learners, there can sometimes be little option but to organize the class mostly along teacher-fronted lines, sometimes calling on students in small peer groups to collaboratively arrive at the solution to a problem and then one representative student can be called on to present the group’s answer, in English, to the class. This is far from ideal as this kind of talk with its strong classification (the *what* of talk) and strong framing (selection, sequencing, pacing, criteria) is suitable for the disciplinary surveillance of learners who are expected to ‘acquire’ grammar or lexis or understanding of texts, guided by an expert teacher. In order for students to gain experience of less controlled communication in a procedural sense, different control relations and formats of participation are far more suitable.
An intermediate position: task based learning and peer interaction

Beginning roughly in the 1980s, there occurred a major paradigm shift in British, continental European and North American debates about appropriate approaches to the institutional teaching and learning of foreign languages. The development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which actually covered a range of ideas and methods, advocated the central importance of communication in language teaching and learning. In effect, this meant greater attention to the role of more ‘authentic’ communication in contexts of actual communication. The notion of task developed as a way of describing different activities associated with such communicative practices and the word ‘task’ (as in Task Based Learning – TBL) has tended to supersede the term CLT.

While relatively recent in the fields of additional language pedagogy and second language acquisition, the concept of task has a long history in curriculum theory in general education and is often associated with the work of John Dewey (1933, 1938) in the USA and Stenhouse (1975) in the UK. There are a very large number of definitions of task in the academic literature in additional language pedagogy but most concern some classroom activity in which learners, often collaboratively, comprehend or produce, manipulate or interact in the additional language with a priority on message rather than form. Task completion has priority. Introducing interactive speaking tasks (usually between peers in small groups) into the language classroom will, to a greater or lesser extent, shift learners into more prominent roles in classroom talk compared with the more passive participation format described in the earlier section, so long as learners are ‘on-task’. Skehan’s distinction between strong and weak versions of TBL is useful as he claims that in weaker forms, tasks are embedded in a more ‘complex pedagogic context’ (1996: 39) and are usually preceded and/or followed by focused instruction. According to Skehan, the ‘weak’ version of TBL is close to general practice and this is very compatible with a traditional (in British methodology) presentation, practice, production (PPP) sequence, in which the final stage of the sequence, production, is based on tasks rather than teacher-led and controlled activities (1996: 39).
In contexts of weak versions of TBL using the three-part (PPP) sequence discussed above, we can expect to find the two discursive worlds of pedagogic (teacher led) and more naturalistic (peer interaction in small learner groups, often from two to four individuals) interaction co-existing together. Using Christie’s (2002) distinction, pedagogic discourse usually consists of two distinct components: a regulative discourse which is concerned with management (usually direct imperatives or indirect imperatives, disguised as requests) and an instructional discourse, concerned with explanation. This pedagogic discourse assigns prominence to teachers in classroom talk with, for example, rights to initiation of topic, switch topic, direct questions at students, as discussed earlier. This kind of participation format is suitable for contexts where learners are being instructed in matters like the appropriateness or correctness of grammatical forms, pronunciation or structural aspects of text – and after all, we are talking about classrooms where one might reasonably expect such concerns to be addressed. Once we introduce learner interaction in peer groups, there is a fundamental change in the quality of talk, if only for short periods of time. Now, learners compete together to hold the floor, initiate talk, extend or switch topic, with a commensurate broadening of possible speech functions available to them. This provides some weakening of teacher control of the classification of talk, even if it is not for long periods of time. However, in weaker cases of the TBL model, teachers set and monitor task conditions and are in control of the pacing, so the framing of talk, like classification, has only been weakened slightly. The teacher’s regulative discourse (directions in his or her managerial role) will serve to manage class interaction and in extreme cases, it might seem that communication classes are really grammar classes by another name with not a lot of communication by learners in evidence. Of course, if the goal of learner communication is that teachers should monitor the grammatical form of simple utterances by less proficient learners, there is nothing wrong with this approach.

In order to participate in talk of a more naturalistic kind, of the sort that might exist outside of classrooms or other institutionally-constrained contexts of use, learners must ‘manage’ or exercise more
control themselves over the discursive situation, adopting more proactive and strategic roles in the flow of talk, beyond that of responsive subjects. This implies a different kind of speech exchange system which is the subject of the following section.

**Weaker classification and framing: focus on learner-learner interaction**

A fairly recent construct in alternative language education and second language acquisition (SLA) literature is that of an ‘interactional competence’ or IC (Markee, 2007; Hall et al., 2011). Compared with the cognitive and psycholinguistic underpinnings of research in mainstream SLA, the basis of IC is radically social. Rather than the cognitive performance or competence of the individual, the analysis of face-to-face speech interaction is seen in collaborative terms and the logical unit of analysis becomes the co-constructed *inter*-action as an emergent property between individuals engaged in joint activity with others. There are several disciplines that have fed into this perspective (see Hall et al., 2011 for overview) but the most significant is conversation analysis (CA), which developed from ethnomethodology and has the study of social organization and its systematic interactional procedures as its focus. In this view, conversation has a bedrock status (Schegloff, 1995) in constructing and enacting human sociality from mundane to complex activities. The significant point here is a shift in conceptual terms from the focus on a competence for *speaking*, as outlined earlier in Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), to a competence for *interaction*, understood as goal-orientated activity achieved jointly with others. Markee (2007) identifies the structures of interactional competence specifically in the online turn taking, repair and sequence organization of collaborative talk, together with eye gaze and embodied actions that signal reciprocity as interlocuters enact various interactional repertoires in the L2.

If we wish learners to engage in interaction with these kinds of characteristics, to hopefully ‘acquire’ interactive competence, three conditions at least should be considered when designing activities.
Firstly, the managerial and instructional voice of the teacher (pedagogic discourse) has to be removed from the interaction or at least strongly curtailed so that learner-learner (peer) interaction is more prominent. Secondly, students should collaboratively engage in finding solutions to some kinds of problem or activity with a closed set of solutions – ‘closed’ tasks. Thirdly, the task or problem that the learners have been set should be complex, meaning that interactants need to collaboratively analyze the activity into smaller sub-tasks, involving some level of negotiation and consensus; here, ‘negotiation’ refers to negotiation of activity, not negotiation of meaning, as in mainstream SLA literature. If the functional demands of completing the interactional activity are complex, learners will need to collaboratively break the activity down into component parts and decide which to prioritize--procedural negotiation (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). This has to be discursively managed and so in effect, learners have to organize their activity on a bottom-up basis, rather than being directed by a teacher (in his or her managerial capacity) to accomplish several sub-tasks in a pre-decided order and manner.

Intrinsic to the idea of interaction, as in ‘interactive competence’ is some kind of goal-driven activity or activities with others. After all, people rarely speak to others with no goal or purpose at all, and even phatic/interactional conversation, as in gossip, generally has the goal of building or maintaining social relations with others. Modeling learner interaction in these terms brings certain complications. If we move away from a focus on individual cognition by learners or formal aspects of language produced to a focus on collaborative activity, we actually have two kinds of context to represent. The first is language or text in a semiotic or symbolic sense, as in the systemic functional linguistics of Halliday & Matthiessen (1999), while the second context is material; in a concrete sense participants are enacting some kind of activity through linguistic interaction. A further problem, if we wish to model longer and more complex episodes of speech interaction, is that we tend to be looking at not one activity, but several. So long as we are not looking at strongly institutionalized and scripted forms of speech interaction, where roles of interactants are clearly prescribed, speech tends to have a more unpredictable, fluid and fast-switching nature compared with written
texts. In sum, representing interaction in a way consistent with the terms described in this section, is not simple.

Hasan (1999), working within the textual approach of systemic functional linguistics, has approached the problem of describing longer and more complex (in terms of internal consistency) spoken texts with the analytical framework of contextual/register integration. Essentially, Hasan’s scheme focuses on the idea of register, synonymous with Halliday’s (1985) context of situation, whereby any instance of text can be modeled according to three variables:

*field of discourse* (social activity relevant to speaking – what is being talked about)
*tenor of discourse* (social relationships relevant to speaking)
*mode of discourse* (nature of contact for speaking)

[Summarized from Hasan, 1999]

When there is a change in one or more of the three values of field, tenor and mode (above) as a spoken text develops, this creates a change in the context of situation; we are now talking about something different, the context of talk has shifted, and using this approach, we can analyze longer complex texts into componential primary texts (which concern the main purpose of the talk) and sub-texts (which do not concern the main purpose of the text). Hasan (1999) shows how in functional terms, a sub-text may facilitate or run parallel with a primary text, and a sub-text realizes a dependent context (the contextual configuration does not match with that of the main activity of the talk), and this typically varies from the main context (or main activity) in a minor way. The terminology is not simple but its value is that it relates, in functional terms, the various elements of the shifting structure of a complex text, showing that although the context of talk shifts and changes, different episodes tend to be functionally related in the overall flow of the talk. Table 1 below, after the transcript of interaction, is an example of Hasan’s scheme applied to the transcript of interaction, following. [An explanation of the symbols used in the transcription follows at the end of the paper].
The transcript shows two Japanese university first year English major students engaged in negotiating together the roles of each of their three group members (one actually absent in this recording) in the design of some aspect of project work that they will later present to the whole class. The class has been divided into small groups who are similarly engaged and the learners must negotiate together and arrive at a plan of activities. This is an example of an extended activity showing weak classification and framing as learners collaboratively decide what they are going to do for a form of project work and what the roles of their group members should be.

**Negotiating roles for a ‘weather forecast’ role play**

Two male students, M1 and M2 who are friends as well as classmates, are planning a role play that they will later perform in front of the whole class. They have worksheets in front of them and they have to negotiate and write down a plan of which members of the group will do what, what equipment they will need to use (video camera etc.), and a general description of the activity that they have in mind. They will later show this to the teacher, who is present in the class, but available for advice if summoned by the students. In this way the activity has not been pre-divided into a clear set of tasks for the learners, and they are faced with a broad activity that they must organize and analyze into sub-activities or tasks, themselves. There is a third member, Tomoko (pseudonym), a young woman who was supposed to be present but did not attend this class; she is referred to in the transcript following. The full transcript of interaction ran for about seventy minutes but the episode shown here is much smaller, around ten minutes.

M1 and M2 have just been discussing various ideas for a role-play across 39 turns (not shown here) and raise the possibility of a weather forecast, which M2 finalizes in 001 below. They appear to find the idea of a weather forecast very amusing and are now faced with the minutiae of negotiating exactly what they intend to do and how they will achieve this. The following transcript is rather long and seemingly banal but is
interesting (shown in the textual analysis in the following table) for the contextual complexity of the flow of talk. From 001 to 107 there are five distinct semiotic contexts and the interactional achievement here is one of ‘managing’ the transition and integration of these into the overall activity of negotiating together the details of the role-play. The essence of this ‘management’ is the control of discourse by learners in the sense of Bernstein’s (1996) weak framing, where the selection, pacing and content of talk are co-managed by the learners themselves rather than by a teacher. This aligns with the concept of more ‘naturalistic’ and less ‘pedagogic’ talk.

In 002, M1 re-affirms, that they will do a role-play based on a weather forecast, so the students continue to discuss their central dilemma: deciding on a subject. M1 suggests (012, 014) that in the manner of a spoof, they build the forecast around somewhere (as he sees it) inconsequential. After this, the discussion breaks down with both students mumbling indecisively (015-019).

001 M2 uh huh, ah ha/ weather forecast/ [laughs again]
002 M1 [laughs – this is amusing and they have discussed the idea before]
003 M2 yeah/
004 M1 [bids for floor but fails] =( )=
005 M2 =what= should we report/ japan or asia/
006 M1 or
007 M2 ==America/
008 M1 maybe.. something without.. have nothing
009 M2 ==[laughs]
010 M1 aah/ how can I say/
011 M2 ==[laughs] its alright if we report =(
012 M1 =( )= weather forecast which.. we didnt need to know,
013 M2 uh huh,
014 M1 ==Cambodia, you know/ [laughter from both]
That’s good/
<2 secs>
So maybe this is easy to err..decide..

015 M2 hmmm,
016 M1 this is..
017 M2 huh, [signaling attention]
018 M1 [mumbling] (               )/
019 M2 so err.. we should

In 020 M1 abruptly suspends the negotiation of what they should do for the role-play and re-classifies the context to one of allocating roles for the presentation. By doing this, M1 initiates a second main context before the first (deciding on the subject of the role-play) has been successfully resolved. This is significant, since the original main context must be attended to later, leading to transition between the two. As far as 039 the two learners co-construct a tentative plan. M2 proposes (028, 030, 032, 034, 036) that he (possibly on video, with M1 having a scripted dialogue with a video recording of M2) appear as a correspondent in a ‘foreign country’.

020 M1 ==who is anchor?
021 M2 anchor?
022 M1 hmm/
023 M2 maybe..
024 M1 [confirming] anchor/
025 M2 err..yes.. the weather forecasts reporter is tomoko, maybe
026 M1 tomoko,
027 M2 mm/
   <3 secs>
028 M2 so err..if we report another country,
029 M1 =hmm,=
030 M2 =erm= for example/ you are anchor, anchor/
031 M1 uh huh,
032 M2 and I’m..how can I say/..
033 M1 reporter?
034 M2 yeah/reporter/
035  M1  uh huh,
036  M2  in another country,
       [much mumbling, most inaudible, as they discuss who
should be anchor and who should be reporter. They
become very indecisive and run out of ideas. Both gaze
at the worksheets in front of them]
<4 mins>
037  M1  okay/ I’m anchor/
038  M2  hmm/.. hey/ wai/ wai/ wait// =(     )=
039  M1  =(you)= wanna be anchor?

In 040, M2, seemingly concerned that they have not yet devised a
detailed enough plan for the role-play, steers the talk back to the first (of
two, as discussed above) main context, and he is anticipated by M2 in
041. The episode develops however, as a negotiation of procedural action
(Breen & Littlejohn, 2000) – deciding how to proceed. The learners
have been jumping from the planning of one activity to another and this
is becoming confusing; it has become necessary to explicitly decide how
they should proceed by ordering their priorities (044-048). This section
functions as dependent context which facilitates the ‘main business’
of deciding on the subject of the role-play and the roles of learners in
preparing it,

040  M2  hmm/ ..just we should ..ah..find a..
041  M1  ==topic?
042  M2  topic/ maybe/
043  M1  ==(okay)==
044  M2  then then, we can decide.. the..
045  M1  [consent] == uh huh/okay/
046  M2  ==cast.. or something/
047  M1  so.. progress is..
048  M2  hmm/…
       [they shuffle papers looking at copies of news articles in
English, for ideas for a topic]
<2 min, 25 secs>
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049 M1 when I was in Australia
050 M2 hmm,
051 M1 I had... I had done this one before/
052 M2 mm,
053 M1 this sort of presentation/
054 M2 oh really?
055 M1 yeah/
056 M2 uh huh,
057 M1 in that situation,

M1 elaborates on the procedure that he followed for doing role-plays in an English school when he was in Australia, before (turns 058 – 090 omitted here) and in 091 – 093 proposes that this is how his group should do it. This segment, the personal narrative (049 – 093), functions within the flow of the talk as a sub-text which facilitates the main activity of planning the role play.

091 M1 so if we..if we..do a report,
092 M2 hm,
093 M1 we should do that/
094 M2 hmm,

In 095, M1 shifts the talk back to a discussion of the roles, leading on from the above segment about how things were done at the school in Australia. He is thus re-visiting the issue of role and organization (he calls this ‘cast’ in 046) despite agreeing with M2 in 039 – 048 earlier, that they should iron out of the details of the subject of the role-play, first.

095 M1 hmm/so this is the main/ but maybe the... [slowly and deliberately] interview-EE,
096 M2 [shadowing, showing engagement] interviewee inter-
097 M1 ==viewEE,
098 M2 [signaling comprehension] huh, yeah/ yeah/
099 M1 someone who is/ ..interviewed/
100 M2 [again, signaling comprehension] hmm, interviewed/
The process of co-constructing the activity has led the two learners to manage the integration of several contexts of talk into the ongoing development of the activity of preparing a role-play. This can be represented in the table below as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Status of text</th>
<th>Functional value of text</th>
<th>Context construed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001-019</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Main context 1: subject of presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020-039</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Main context 2: roles and organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>040-048</td>
<td>Sub-text</td>
<td>Facilitation: procedural negotiation</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>049-094</td>
<td>Sub-text</td>
<td>Facilitation: personal narrative</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>095-107</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Main context 2: roles and organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

The table demonstrates that while the quality of the talk is unsophisticated in terms of lexis, syntax and length of utterance, the text
is actually not simple in terms of the integration of different contextual elements into the overall flow of talk. Basically, the learners have analyzed their activity into two main problems that need to be resolved and these are represented as ‘context construed’ in the far right column. The students have indentified and attended to two main issues: the subject of their presentation (main context 1) and roles of each group member in organizing and preparing for the presentation (main context 2). These two main contexts have been functionally facilitated by two sub-texts: an explicit procedural negotiation (discussion about how they should proceed in their planning) and a personal narrative about how one of the learners has done this before. In an ethnomethodological sense, the structure of the talk, built around functional shifts in the changes in contextual configuration, is beginning to align with the fluidity and rapid context switching by peers working together, that is rather atypical of pedagogical talk in classrooms for students at this level. The excerpt analyzed here only shows five segments but in fact the recorded talk lasted for about seventy minutes and consisted of a much longer and more complex transcript that cannot be shown here, for reasons of space. Of particular interest is that the teacher is absent in the extended transcript except for one question initiated by the learners.

On a more micro level, if we return to Markee’s (2007) discussion of interactive competence discussed earlier, the sequential on-line co-construction of the context of talk by the learners without supervision and control by the teacher is much in evidence despite the simple nature of the utterances transcribed. Van Lier discusses the equality and symmetry in learner–learner discourse and relates these to the idea of contingency (1998). This is a cognitive quality that captures the structural significance of a person’s utterance in relation to the flow of discourse. According to van Lier (1998), there are two distinct characteristics of contingency in interaction. The first refers to relations between a current utterance and the previous one and secondly, an initiating utterance raises expectations and provides a basis for sequential contributions. Talk in interaction is contextualized through the mechanisms of such turn-taking (Gumperz, 1992) by responding on-line to prior utterances and initiating new ones in a creative and sometimes unpredictable manner. It is sequences and
sequences within sequences and not isolated sentences or utterances that are the basis of contingent talk in interaction. Although the transcript shows a very high degree of ellipsis, or grammatical and syntactic simplification (as typically also do transcripts of speakers in casual interaction with peers in their first language, though usually to a lesser extent), the high incidence of latching and several cases of overlapping utterances are clear evidence of joint attention and in an affective sense, the frequent laughter between the two is evidence of mutual work at displaying affiliation with each other.

This kind of activity design, a broad collaborative activity that requires negotiation on the part of learners and analysis into smaller sub-tasks which have a closed set of options, seems very suitable for engendering the quality of participation patterning in discourse that aligns with Markee’s (2007) discussion of interactive competence. If done on a one-off basis, this is of doubtful utility but if repeated for interactive novices, there are opportunities to become familiar and practiced in such interactional repertoires. Conceptualizing what it is that is being learned is a contentious point, as the notion of interactional competence does not usually involve measuring improvement in learner performance in individual terms. According to Young (2007), the central goal of developing learners’ participatory skills in collaborative discourse activity like this, is not of learning language in formal terms (though obviously this occurs as no one would deny that language production is a cognitive process) but changing participation in interaction with others, presumably with their current linguistic resources. This kind of learning is appropriate for interactive novices in the target language as a result of insufficient prior exposure to communicative practices but there are also caveats. Whilst affording interaction in pragmatic terms there should ideally also be some attention to producing grammatically well formed and relatively complex utterances for extended periods in real time and presentations are a good way of achieving this, especially as public performance allows for critical feedback on performance for learners.

There are also considerable administrative costs and complications with this approach to language learning. Published course materials are generally inadequate so materials need to be written and special training
of teachers is usually necessary. In the classroom where the transcript of interaction was recorded, students were not all involved, lockstep fashion, in the same activities at the same time; different groups completed their activities at different speeds while some required assistance from the teacher and others did not. The less predictable outcomes put stress on teachers and additional planning, monitoring and evaluation of the course is likely to be necessary. Furthermore, administrators may feel that the complications implicit in this kind of program may simply be too much unless supported as specially resourced educational innovations for research purposes. As with the speech exchange systems discussed earlier, this approach is not a model suitable for universal adoption but rather useful for some purposes and not for others.

Conclusion

As discussed at the start of the paper, ‘communication classes’ in additional language learning classrooms will actually encompass a varied range of practices and expectations on the part of both learners and teachers and investigating participation structures in actual instances is best achieved by looking at the speech exchange system(s) of a particular class: what are the control relations and how do these drive participation formats? In functional terms, what kinds of participation in talk are we looking at? Tight classification and framing of teacher and learner roles are characteristic of authoritarian and hierarchical pedagogies where compliant learners are ‘taught’ about communication and monitored for attentiveness and understanding. With a weakening of classification and framing there is a change in control relations which tends to engender ‘less institutionalized’ and clearly demarcated roles for students in classroom talk and this is generally realized through a shift away from a pedagogic discourse, consisting of dominant instructional and managerial elements in teacher talk, towards formats of learner-learner interaction with teachers in more marginal, advisory capacities. This type of class aligns much more with ‘naturalistic’ and less-institutionalized forms of discourse and is particularly helpful for interactive novices in the target
language, to acquire some degree of interactive competence, understood in terms of collaborative problem solving in extended tasks and activities with peers, beyond those found in weaker versions of task based learning. However, there are costs and benefits to all the kinds of educational practice that I have discussed above and besides, most teachers work within the expectations of particular institutions and the broader cultural expectations in which these are embedded – few are unfettered free agents to innovate or do as they please. Returning to the beginning of this paper, van Lier’s (1988) observation that classroom learning may actually constrain communication as much (or more) than it affords it, is an interesting and amusing observation about institutional practices and the less than productive processes that they can sometimes engender. It is helpful for additional language teachers to sometimes pause, reflect on this point and evaluate their own practices in these terms.

Transcription Scheme

(adapted from Gumperz, 1992)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>Final fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Slight fall indicating “more is to come”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Final rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Slight rise as in listing intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Truncation (e.g. what ti- time is it/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..</td>
<td>Pauses of less than 0.5 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Pauses greater than 0.5 seconds (unless precisely timed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2&gt;</td>
<td>Precise units of time (2 second pause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>indicates overlap and latching of speaker’s utterances, e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: so you understand =the requirements=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: =yeah, I under=Stand them/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: so you understand the requirements?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: ==yeah, I understand them/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: ==and the schedule?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: yeah/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nicholas Marshall

With spacing and single “=” before and after the appropriate portions of the text indicating overlap, and turn-initial double “==” indicating latching of the utterance to the preceding one.

[ ] Nonlexical phenomena, such as laughter, and author’s interpretive comments

( ) Unintelligible speech
di(d) A good guess at an unclear segment
(did) A good guess at an unclear word.

Works Cited


competence and development. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.


