

Social Interaction and L2 Classroom Discourse

Olcay Sert. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2015. Pp. x + 197.

Second language (L2) classroom discourse (CD) refers to the interactional practices employed in teaching language in instructed learning contexts. Since language is both the medium and the content, the teacher plays a central role in the L2 classroom context (Walsh, 2006). Specifically, the teacher uses language to provide comprehensible input, model appropriate pragmatic competence, and effectively facilitate student participation. In his book, Olcay Sert claims it is possible to understand the pedagogical and epistemic phenomena of L2 classroom interaction by applying micro-analytic research methods; therefore, he sets out to familiarize readers with Conversation Analysis (CA) and show its usefulness in studying L2 classroom discourse. This is done by first providing an overview of the framework, followed by utilizing it to analyze his data set of 16 hours of video-recordings from two English language classrooms in Luxembourg.

The book is organized on the macro level as an empirical study with the following identifiable sections: rationale (Chapter 1), literature review/description of analytical concepts (Chapters 2, 3), analysis (Chapters 4, 5, 6), implications of findings (Chapters 7, 8), and discussion and conclusion (Chapter 9). On the micro level, each chapter contains an introduction, review of literature and/or presentation of data, and a conclusion. Given the complexity of parsing out interactional strategies in the L2 classroom, this structure allows Sert to orient the reader by previewing the focus of each chapter and summarizing the main findings. This is especially important given his goal of familiarizing readers with CA and its application in the L2 classroom.

In Chapter 2, “Social Interaction and L2 Classroom Discourse,” Sert reviews literature on social interaction within the context of L2 teaching and learning, providing a basis for his claim that L2 classrooms should be studied from an emic perspective. Then, after providing a description of CA procedures, he uses the framework to analyze extracts that illustrate four different contexts in the L2 classroom: (1) form and accuracy, (2) meaning and fluency, (3) task-based, and (4) procedural (Seedhouse, 2004). In Chapter 3, Sert focuses on L2 classroom interactional competence (CIC), or the linguistic and interactional resources participants employ within context (Young, 2008). He lists the following interactional resources that demonstrates a teacher’s CIC: (1) maximizing interactional space through increased wait time and promoting extended learner turns, (2) shaping learner contributions through scaffolding and repairing student input, and (3) effective use of eliciting student participation (Walsh, 2011). Next, Sert introduces the recently emerging field, CA-for-SLA (second language acquisition), and develops his original claim, indicating that by using CA to study CIC development over time, teaching and learning in the L2 classroom can be better understood.

Chapter 4, “From Troubles to Resolution: Management of Displays and Claims of Insufficient Knowledge in L2 Classrooms,” begins with a brief literature review followed by the presentation of three extracts and subsequent analyses that illustrate the unfolding of a Claim of Insufficient Knowledge (CIK) (e.g., “I don’t know”). In these instances, after a student produces a CIK, the teacher usually allocates the turn to someone else, valuing interactional progressivity. Normally, the CIK is produced when mutual reciprocity between teacher and student is established through gaze. Sert then presents four examples that show teachers’ use of epistemic

status checks (ESCs) (e.g., “No idea?) that are sparked by nonverbal cues (e.g., gaze aversion, smiling, and long pauses) produced by students. ESCs may indicate a lack of knowledge or unwillingness to participate (UTP). Next, Sert presents two examples that show how a teacher can successfully manage a CIK by using an embodied vocabulary explanation or designedly incomplete utterance (DIU). He concludes with the claim that the successful management of students’ interactional troubles (e.g., CIKs, ESCs) is an indicator of a teacher’s CIC.

Chapter 5, “Use of Multimodal Resources in L2 Classroom Interaction,” begins by revealing a gap in SLA research pertaining to the role that gestures play in acquiring language. Next, Sert presents two extracts that reveal the teacher’s use of the ‘hand-to-ear’ gesture to indicate a problem with hearing or understanding. The gesture also serves to initiate repair on behalf of the student. Then, he presents three examples which show some of the multimodal resources used in doing verbal correction such as metaphoric and beat gestures. Additionally, he shows multimodal resources used in elicitation sequences including the following: DIUs that use gesture to indicate the fill-in-the-blank portion to be completed by the student, embodied vocabulary explanations that provide imagery for student uptake of new words, and orientations to learning such as deictic gestures to classroom artifacts that foster learning connections (e.g., pointing to a vocabulary word written on the board while the concept is discussed). He concludes the chapter by iterating the importance of gestures in the L2 classroom to facilitate meaning-making in interaction.

Chapter 6 examines the use of multilingual resources in L2 classroom interaction. Sert begins the chapter with a brief literature review on the benefits of multilingualism in the classroom. He then presents three examples from the data that show teacher-initiated code-switching, or the teacher’s use of the students’ L1 to spark understanding. His findings indicate that teacher-initiated code-switching often occurs in form and accuracy contexts during the discussion of a difficult vocabulary word, or following a CIK. Next, Sert presents four examples of what he deems teacher-induced code-switching. Here, the teacher *invites* students to code-switch by requesting a vocabulary word or explanation in the L1. Lastly, he gives three examples of teacher management of student-initiated code-switching in the meaning and fluency context. A specific example is when a student makes a request in the L1 and the teacher complies with the request in the L2, showing her preference to continue the conversation in the L2. The student takes up the teacher’s language preference and produces the next utterance in the L2. Sert concludes the chapter by claiming that teachers and students should practice awareness of the concept of *translanguaging*, or how multiple languages can work together to successfully make meaning in L2 interaction (Li, 2014).

Chapter 7 discusses implications for teaching in L2 classrooms and begins by referring back to Walsh’s (2011) list of features of CIC. Sert suggests four additional features of CIC based on his findings: (1) Successful management of claims/displays of insufficient knowledge, (2) Increased awareness of UTP, (3) Effective use of gestures, and (4) Successful management of code-switching. This chapter presents the same extracts as in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 but the analyses are now focused on how successful management of interactional troubles, along with multimodal and multilingual resources are manifestations of CIC. A list of practical applications for teachers is provided at the end of each extract. For example, in managing CIKs, Sert suggests that instead of allowing a long pause, the teacher might employ a follow up strategy such as a

vocabulary explanation. Sert advises that for building multimodal CIC, the teacher might make use of deictic gestures to connect knowledge to classroom artifacts. Additionally, to build multilingual CIC, a teacher might acknowledge students' L1 use, repeat or write the L1 use on the board, or accept L1 words offered by students while providing the L2 translation.

Chapter 8 describes implications for language teacher education. Sert reviews his four main findings to be added to the list of interactional resources for CIC, and establishes the importance of tracking teachers' development of these competencies longitudinally. He asserts that it is possible to track teacher development over time and presents a new set of data from an undergraduate language teaching program in Turkey. The data include transcriptions of video recordings of the pre-service teacher's teaching experiences as well as ethnographic data in the form of written self-reflections, written observations of experienced teachers, faculty members' written feedback, and her lesson plans. Through the microscopic analysis of the transcribed teaching data, Sert shows how over time, the pre-service teacher begins to develop CIC. To illustrate this, in a transcribed extract taken from a video recording from her first instructional encounter, the pre-service teacher provides a positive evaluation to an incorrect student contribution, failing to ask any elaboration questions or employ embedded repair strategies. Contrastingly, in an extract that was taken from a video recording of an instructional encounter that occurred thirteen months after the first data collection, the pre-service teacher's development of CIC is apparent in her use of embodied vocabulary demonstrations as well as other resources to manage interactional troubles. Based on these findings, Sert suggests an integrated model for L2 teacher education involving an introduction to CIC, followed by cycles of teaching, self-observation, other-observation, and dialogic reflection.

To conclude, Sert discusses research ethics pertaining to CA, focusing on the importance of obtaining written consent from participants. He also identifies online software such as Google Hangout as important emerging tools to collect multi-user data that can be analyzed using CA in order to understand how L2 users carry out collaborative activities (Balaman, 2014). Lastly, he criticizes the macro-level top-down foreign language policies of many countries, claiming they impose materials, technologies, and curricula on language teachers without the basis of research that uncovers the reality of L2 classroom experience. He explains how CA findings can inform policymakers on what teachers and learners need in order to create CIC.

Sert's book contributes to the literature on L2 classroom discourse, specifically on developing the concept of CIC by using CA to uncover interactional resources used by teachers. It also has the potential to aid teachers-in-practice by giving tips to develop CIC and open interactional spaces in the classroom. Lastly, the book can inform pre-service teacher-education programs, offering the basis for a teacher-training program centered around the concept of CIC. A critique of the book is that despite mentioning the L2 classroom context of task-based language teaching (TBLT), in which the teacher takes on a more passive, facilitative role, the data come from contexts that are heavily teacher-centered. Although this is a fact that Sert is transparent about, it would be nonetheless fascinating to compare how CIC manifests in both teacher-centered and student-centered contexts. In the same vein, Sert claims the importance of longitudinal data in order to understand how CIC develops, but he does not provide analysis related to the learner's development of CIC. The longitudinal case study presented is focused on the learning of a pre-service language teacher, rather than that of a language learner. Since the

book is so comprehensive and informative, it may be of value for Sert to issue a second volume that uses CA to study how CIC is developed by language learners over time as a result of strategies taken up through interactions in the language classroom.

Despite these minor criticisms, this book is useful for someone who is new to Conversation Analysis and would like to obtain a deeper understanding of how the framework can be employed in studying L2 classroom discourse. Sert successfully shows how CA findings can provide a deeper understanding of classroom interaction, show evidence of the development of CIC in practice, inform teacher-training programs, and potentially influence educational policy.

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