
RECENZE

František Tůma: Interakce ve výuce anglického jazyka na vysoké škole pohledem konverzační analýzy [Classroom Interaction in English Language Teaching in Higher Education: A Conversation Analysis Perspective]. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2017. 206 pp. Cizí jazyky a jejich didaktiky: teorie, empirie, praxe, 7.

The book *Classroom Interaction in English Language Teaching in Higher Education: A Conversation Analysis Perspective* makes a strong case for the relevance of conversation analysis (CA) in examining and interpreting classroom interactional data. It articulates what CA can reveal about how the teaching of English in a Czech university is constituted through the dialogic interaction between the teacher and students. The book is written in Czech.

While affirming independent scholarship as a CA study, Tůma's empirical inquiry contributes to the growing body of research that applies CA to the examination of how talk-in-interaction is used to do work in institutional and workplace environments. Specifically, the book feeds into conversation analysis-for-second language acquisition, CA-for-SLA, a term coined by Markee & Kasper (2004), and more recently also referred to as CA-SLA (Kasper & Wagner 2011; Pekarek Doehler 2013). Classified as a subfield of second language studies/applied linguistics, CA-for-SLA "uses conversation analytic techniques to study language learning" (Markee & Kunitz 2015: 425). That is, CA is employed as a principal research methodology leading to the acquisition of new SLA findings.

In its premise as well as content, the book thus aligns with the agenda of international CA-SLA research which uses conversation analytical methods to investigate classroom contexts and seeks to gain new insights into L2 awareness, teaching, learning, cognition, and acquisition. The rapid growth of this field dates to the late 1990s with the impetus for change often being attributed to Firth and Wagner's (1997) call for the reconceptualization of SLA research. In their paper published in the *Modern Language Journal*, the authors pressed for "a significantly enhanced awareness of the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use, an increased "emic" (i.e. participant-relevant) sensitivity towards fundamental concepts, and the broadening of the traditional SLA data base" (Firth & Wagner 1997: 285). As argued by some retrospectively (e.g. Gass, Lee & Roots 2007), the then somewhat daring CA-inspired agenda of Firth and Wagner's proposal was, however, no more than preaching to the converted; SLA studies had already been progressively developing the scope of their research questions and strived to embrace the importance of participant orientation and context in SLA (Gass, Lee & Roots: 788). Irrespective of the argument, since its inception in the 1960s originated in the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, CA at that time had already established itself as one of the most powerful approaches to the study of the interactional organisation of social action through talk (cf. Silverman 1998).

This book fills a gap as it must be noted that Czech CA-SLA research has been rather lagging behind. In the English-speaking world the perhaps logical and inevitable cross-pollination between the two disciplines resulted right at the start of the new millennium in a number of field-forming publications, which the present book also draws on. To illustrate the reactivity and productivity of CA-SLA research, an intriguing example emanates from the fertile academic grounds of Newcastle University, UK. In 2004, a Newcastle University scholar, Paul Seedhouse published the seminal *The Interactional Architecture of the Language Classroom: A Conversation Analysis Perspective*. In 2007, Newcastle also became a new academic home for Alan Firth, moreover, it attracted Steve Walsh, who had just freshly launched his sociocultural theory-based book *Investigating Classroom Discourse* (2006). Walsh then published *Exploring Classroom Discourse: Language in Action* (2011) and *Classroom Discourse and Teacher Development* (2013). All these texts were considered influential and all drew on CA that was employed in the pursuit of SLA questions. More importantly, in the context of the global expansion of CA-SLA, they marked the transformation of the SLA research focus from that which was predominantly cognitive to one that is interactionally-based and socially-constructed, a perspective also embraced by Tůma (p. 33).

In contrast, in what was formerly known as Czechoslovakia, English became the most widely taught L2 in the 1990s. In the intervening 30 years, it would seem reasonable to expect a certain volume of CA research to be devoted to the empirical uncovering of EFL/ELT classroom interaction and how it relates to learning. Unfortunately, and rather alarmingly, this has not been the case. As revealed by Tůma's (2014: 897) review, Czech research into classroom interaction in English language teaching systematically fails to address "the dynamic view of context and interdependencies among interaction, learning, thinking and pedagogy". Hence, notably for this book, the rationale to investigate the natural unfolding and sequential organisation of EFL/ELT classroom interactions in the Czech context may be considered both logical and timely. A chapter overview follows.

Chapter 1 positions the research in the Czech context and acknowledges the lack of studies investigating L2 classroom discourse in higher educational settings. Secondly, Tůma explains the relational constitution of classroom interaction, which is both situated and situational, i.e. its outcomes change with every next participant's contribution. He then argues for the need to embrace the dynamic character of classroom interaction. This sound baseline argument is further expounded through a scholarly literature review presented in Chapters 2 and 3 that both outline the key orientations adopted and develop the methodological foundation to the research undertaken. Chapter 4 sets out the research data and the analysis design. Followed by the actual report on the empirical research (Chapters 5 to 8), the book concludes with a discussion of the research limitations, its findings, and a final assessment of the level of original contribution made (Chapter 9).

As for the theoretical grounds established in Chapter 2, the author argues for the interdisciplinary nature of the research inquiry and frames the study within the tenets of educational linguistics and field didactics, sometimes also designated as subject (matter) didactics (Janík & Stuchlíková 2010). The analytical perspective adopted is based on a key and widely accepted assumption that classroom interaction and pedagogy stand

in a clear reflexive relationship (e.g. Seedhouse 2004, 2010; Walsh 2006, 2011, 2013; Sahlström 2009; Sert 2015). In other words, English is not only used as a means and target of instruction, but the actual learning evolves from whether and how the interactants form their understanding of the mutually co-constructed talk. The pedagogic pathway for Tüma's CA-anchored research is grounded, quite understandably, within the increasingly favoured perspective of sociocultural theory (pp. 25–26) and in relation to discourse analysis – harkening back to the 1975 iconic *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils* by Sinclair and Coulthard, and also to (interactional) sociolinguistics and sociology (pp. 27–30). Originating primarily in the influential work of the Russian philosopher Lev Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theories of learning essentially maintain that learning “entails dialogue, discussion and debate as learners collectively and actively construct their own understandings through interactions with others who may be more experienced” (Walsh 2011: 25). The dialogic aspect of classroom interaction is thus emphasised right from the start of the book (p. 10), stressing the social nature of learning and the crucial role of talk-in-interaction in underpinning this. Both of these foci directly align with the principles of CA, contributing to the formulation of Tüma's core analytical point (p. 26): to examine how the interactants form their learning orientations and how they arrive at understanding of the ongoing interaction at each moment of the L2 class.

Chapter 3 sets out the methodology of conversation analysis and discusses the key principles relevant to the analysis of talk-in-interaction. Drawing on Speech Act Theory (Austin 1975; Searle 1979), the author explains that in the analysis of talk, be it ordinary/casual conversation or institutional talk, interactional phenomena are implicated neither with respect to topic nor discreet speech acts, but with respect to action, i.e. for what talk-in-interaction is doing rather than for what it is about (Schegloff 2007: 1–2). In that light and importantly for any CA analysis focused on the interpretation of interactional methods – also termed practices – Tüma echoes two core CA criteria: 1) to focus on analysing “sequences of action as the basis for coherence in interaction” (Schegloff 2007: 89) as only a sequence encapsulates the embodiment of “the generic orders of organization in talk-in-interaction” (Schegloff 2007: xiii), and 2) to recognise context as dynamically evolving, generated on a turn-by-turn basis, and encoding how interactants – through their individual utterances – implement actions, for such a recognition of context becomes “both the participants' *and* the analyst's resource” (Schegloff 2007: 94, italics in the original). Having delineated these premises, the book clearly sets out the ambition for the analysis to seek to identify those features of classroom talk that will be conducive to learning or at least will focus on how meaning is constituted through dialogic interaction.

A further notion referred to in Chapter 3 (p. 38–39), one that is highly relevant to any interpretation of workplace and institutional talk, is that classroom interaction is goal-oriented in institutionally relevant ways (Drew & Heritage 1992). As acknowledged, the universal goal of EFL/ELT classes is that “the teacher will teach the learners the L2” (Seedhouse 2010: 1). It is here then (p. 40) where the author subscribes to a research focus in which the CA analyst examines how “the use of particular interactional practices matters for issues that lie “beyond the talk”” (Heritage & Clayman 2010: 18), and thus effectively voices the applied ambition of the research approach adopted.

A strength of the book is its methodical and longitudinal collection of multimodal classroom data outlined in Chapter 4. The final research report draws on 987 minutes of video recordings of EFL B1 CEFR classes delivered to one student group during a single university term in 2015. The research design is in full accord with the approaches of CA. The transcripts encode both verbal features of the recorded interaction as well as other non-verbal, yet salient, features that are involved in the management of talk.

A possible consideration regards the quantitative representation of the data, which is overall very unclear although the book asserts that all the recorded data have been transcribed. The transcripts are used selectively, and it is never stated to what extent the respective types of exchanges are represented in the data.

Chapters 5 to 8 provide data discussion focusing on how the participants took turns in the L2 classes, how they managed repair sequences, how they switched between English and Czech (as Czech was the L1 for all interactants including the teacher), and how they undertook student presentations and handled subsequent discussions. The data provide numerous examples of everyday L2 classroom pedagogy ranging from turn mediation and allocation, to recasts, corrections, scaffolding, development of students' assertions and, of course, evaluation and feedback.

Following the "next-turn proof procedure" (e.g. Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998) and exploring the standard dimensions of institutional talk (Drew & Heritage 1992: 28–29), the analysis aims to explain where and how interaction and pedagogy meet on the classroom conversational "racetrack" (Stokoe 2014). Specifically, Tůma illustrates the fluidity with which the teacher manages and manoeuvres the sometimes intricate transitions between the class phases that focus on controlled practice, i.e. accuracy, and those that are aimed at developing interactional and communication skills in L2. A number of sound observations, most of them firmly established in literature, are drawn. These concern for example the practices associated with the correction of student utterances, clarification requests within post-expansion sequences, and creating space for questions or responding to student ideas and meanings. In the context of the Czech ELT practice, interesting aspects of the analysis include the use of "mhm" serving a number of both pragmatic and pedagogic functions or the description of the occurrence and role of code-switching in what is essentially a monocultural L2 classroom environment.

Chapter 9 postulates three conclusions evaluating the contribution of the CA research undertaken. Firstly, conversation analysis holds a strong position to enrich existing research investigating classroom interaction by tracking and interpreting these teacher-student interactions as a dynamic and situated process. This is possibly the major contribution of CA in general as it generates awareness about activities that would otherwise go unnoticed or be considered part of the intuitive repertoire (Sacks 1995). The second conclusion highlights the contribution of the book to the understanding of the realities of a Czech university EFL classroom. It emphasises that the findings, if they are to be drawn on, must be considered with respect to the subject specificity and institutional character of other educational contexts. Finally, the CA research undertaken is argued to fill the gap in the Czech studies of tertiary education pedagogy, which it certainly does. Frustratingly, although the book draws on extensive research in other countries, it does

not provide any assessment of the results/specificity of the Czech CA-SLA and only hints at potential cultural differences.

While the trajectory of the book logically invites practical application, Tůma takes a more reserved position in this regard defending his grounds by articulating the legitimacy of 'pure' or so called 'primary' research. This is perhaps a bit unfortunate as institutionally-focused CA research has always been anchored in work practice and propelled by issues that require attention or intervention. Moreover, as a research methodology, CA is being increasingly acknowledged for its practical contributions and engagement of wider audiences – a model project of such work being the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM) developed at the University of Loughborough. However, it should be noted that four years have elapsed since the publication of this book and since then Tůma has been engaged in research projects with a clear focus on teacher training where he continues to evolve his ideas on CA-SLA. This progression relegates the above comment to a mere remark in passing.

In sum, this book makes a valuable and much needed contribution to Czech CA research on classroom discourse; one that should not only attract fellow academics but which, if featured as part of university reading portfolios of classroom discourse and interaction, will certainly provide an academically enriching, highly stimulating and awareness raising resource.

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Helena Lohrová

*University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, Faculty of Arts, Institute of English Studies
Branišovská 1645/31a, 370 05 České Budějovice, Czech Republic
<hlohrova@ff.jcu.cz>*

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