

Rod Gardner and Johannes Wagner (eds.): Second Language Conversations. London, New York: Continuum, 2004 (Paperback edition 2005), 292 pp. Advances in Applied Linguistics Series.

This volume examines situations from various spheres of public and private life in which a second language is used by one or more speakers (hereafter referred to as SL speakers). This may or may not involve interaction with first-language speakers (hereafter referred to as FL speakers). In producing this volume, its editors and authors offer Conversation Analysis (CA) as an approach to interpreting second-language data, one which provides an alternative to that traditionally taken in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Previous research on SLA, the authors note in their introductory chapter, has viewed the second language from a “deficiency” perspective, presuming an “interlanguage” phase, an incomplete level of competence which can be analyzed solely on the basis of linguistic form, i.e. the errors made by speakers on various linguistic levels. Also, SLA data are often taken from the SL classroom or laboratories as opposed to actual life situations (for a further critique of the dominant cognitive and mentalistic orientation to SLA research and the subsequent debate, see Firth and Wagner 1997, Kasper 1997, and Firth and Wagner 1998, all of which are mentioned by Gardner and Wagner in their introduction).

CA (cf. Sacks 1992, ten Have 1999, Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998), on the other hand, is developed from the concept of intersubjectivity, or the achievement of mutual understanding in and through interaction. In particular, this is based upon the recording and transcription of naturally-occurring conversation, and an analytical focus on the organization of turn-taking (cf. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), sequence and preference organization (cf. Pomerantz 1984) and repair (cf. Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1977), as well as the use of the so-called membership categories to describe persons (cf. Hester and Eglin 1997). The data, both in recorded and transcribed form, remain continually available for and subject to re-analysis.

Linguistic “errors” or trouble situations may occur in second-language talk, but are they necessarily relevant in given communication situations? Are they repaired, and if so, how? And what is more, do repair sequences in second-language talk differ from those in first-language talk? Are there any interactional phenomena which characterize second-language interaction at all? And what can the detailed analysis of sequences, turn-taking, and category use in naturally-occurring conversation add to potential theories of SLA? These are some of the questions this twelve-chapter volume seeks to answer.

The first chapter, Lorenza Mondada’s “Ways of ‘Doing Being Plurilingual’ in International Work Meetings” takes its data from videoconferencing between a European network of surgeons possessing a number of linguistic resources (French, German, and the *lingua franca* English). The question posed is how such resources are utilized, how the individual participants orient toward one another as e.g. French speakers, non-French speakers, German speakers, etc. in order to achieve interactional order by including or excluding selected co-participants. These practices are explored in meeting openings, in transitions between presentations and in side sequences. Mondada

emphasizes that language choice need not be a question of competence, but rather one of practical purpose: who is being addressed in which situations and why.

In “Brokering and Membership in a Multilingual Community of Practice”, Terkel Skårup begins with the idea that competence may determine which participants in a multilingual group may participate in a given conversation and to what degree they may do so. How, then, can talk participants (in this case, FL speakers) engage the competence-limited speakers? Based on data from work meetings in a Danish company where an FL English speaker with limited Danish is present, Skårup shows how the uncomprehending speaker is “brokered” back into the conversation through recipient design which takes into account not only the participant addressed, but also any potential bystander. Brokering techniques include summons-answer sequences, naming the next speaker, and physical orientation toward a given speaker. This is viewed as part of a process through which a more passive participant becomes active through the sharing of group knowledge, thus becoming a member of a “community of practice” (Wenger 1988).

In “Clients or Language Learners: Being a Second Language Speaker in Institutional Interaction”, Salla Kurhila uses data from institutional situations in Finland, mostly from institutions offering educational courses for foreigners. The identities of speakers as FL or SL are relevant in certain situations, as the SL speaker’s institutional competence may vary from situation to situation. FL speakers, in turn, may not be willing to be the “linguistic experts”, i.e. they may not correct SL speakers even though SL speakers may request such assistance. And when FL speakers do correct, they may only do so because the given correction would be the next relevant activity in the conversation anyway. For example, an SL speaker, asked when he would like to study, mispronounces the word for “daytime”, and his interlocutor registers this answer by repeating it, this time with the correct pronunciation.

Catherine E. Brouwer, Gitte Rasmussen and Johannes Wagner, in “Embedded Corrections in Second Language Talk”, examine situations in which an FL speaker corrects an SL speaker’s item from a preceding turn without distorting the ongoing interaction. This is based on examples from a number of different FL-SL situations and languages (English, German, Danish). The authors trace the turn-by-turn construction of embedded corrections, which consist of a trouble-source turn (the turn containing a non-native-like construction) and a repair turn (the turn which corrects the non-native construction). The authors demonstrate that the repair turns in a large part of their data are more complex than standard second pair-parts (e.g. answers following questions), because the speaker must also re-establish the first pair-part. This is a classic CA analysis, analyzing several instances of the same phenomenon, followed by a “deviant case” analysis, in which subsequent speakers do not react in any specific way to non-native-like constructions.

In “Doing Pronunciation: A Specific Type of Repair Sequence”, Catherine Brouwer examines situations in which an FL speaker corrects the pronunciation of an SL speaker after the SL speaker has requested help. She argues that sequences in which these corrections occur are “side sequences”. The given interaction is “put on hold” so that issues of linguistic competence may be resolved. Data is taken from conversation between Danes and Dutch speakers of Danish. Pronunciation correction can be initiated

by pauses and hedges, intonation, and repetition. Brouwer notes that self- (SL-speaker-)initiated repair sequences are constructed of entirely different methods than repair sequences initiated by FL speakers, and should thus be categorized differently.

Jean Wong, in her chapter “Some Preliminary Thoughts on Delay as an Interactional Resource”, poses the question of how “delay”, or longer silences between turns, might be tied to the special circumstances of FL-SL interaction. Delayed responses have been previously analyzed as being used to signalize a dispreferred-type action (e.g. the refusal of an offer) or a topic of delicate nature in FL-interaction. In Wong’s data, taken from English-language conversation between FL speakers and SL speakers with Mandarin Chinese as their first language, delay is shown to have a different function. That is, the delay may relate to unspoken trouble sources, e.g. those pertaining to grammatical difficulties – the SL speaker may need more time to “get it right”.

Harrie Mazeland and Minna Zaman-Zadeh, in “The Logic of Clarification: Some Observations about Word-Clarification Repairs in Finnish-as-a-Lingua-Franca Interactions”, consider one type of repair in adult foreign language learner talk: instances in which it becomes necessary for a speaker to clarify a word which has not been mutually understood. These situations occurred in conversations between adult learners of Finnish of various nationalities. The authors distinguish three different levels on which the words are clarified. These are: the conceptual level (the speaker clarifies a word by describing the concept represented by it, by providing an example of the word, or by linking it to a related word, e.g. doctor-hospital); the interactional level (the speaker clarifies the word over a series of successive turns with the active collaboration of his interlocutor); and the semantic level (the speaker clarifies the word by specifying its position in a system of categorically organized knowledge). It is revealed that speakers primarily utilize the lexical semantic features of the problematic word for clarification purposes.

In “Pursuit of Understanding: Rethinking ‘Negotiation of Meaning’ in View of Projected Action”, Junko Mori examines a short segment of classroom interaction, showing the turn-by-turn resolution of the lexical problem of a student in a Japanese language class, moving from the SL speaker’s statement “everyone always writes form in the research column” to the achieved understanding of its intended meaning “everyone always writes good in the health column”. The pursuit of meaning, Mori observes, may not only concern the actual meaning of lexical items, but their relevance in regard to their context – the topic of conversation and the projected action. The sentence in this case was a pre-sequence necessary to establish common understanding, before the main activity, the asking of a question about health, could be completed.

Maria Egbert, Lilo Niebecker and Sabrina Rezzara, in “Inside First and Second Language Speakers’ Trouble in Understanding”, analyze a two-minute conversation between three FL and three SL German speakers. After a word in Chinese pronunciation, “kalilo”, is uttered by an SL speaker and not initially understood by the FL speakers, the conversation continues on until the whole group understands that the speaker meant “Galileo”. The authors trace the speakers’ activities from the trouble source to the re-establishment of mutual understanding, examining how non-nativeness and cultural membership emerge as relevant in the interaction. They conclude that the notion

of “deficiency” in SL speakers’ speech needs to be reconsidered. It is the members’ differing levels of knowledge which are relevant – some word pronunciations by SL speakers may be more problematic than others – and it is the knowledge context which leads to their understanding by FL speakers.

Donald Carroll, in “Restarts in Novice Turn Beginnings: Disfluencies or Interactional Achievements?”, looks at so-called “false starts”: situations in which a speaker begins a turn, stops, and restarts again. The beginning assumption is that SL speakers may have a more difficult time launching their speech. Data consists of videotaped conversational interaction among Japanese novice speakers of English. In the novice-speaker data, Carroll observes that speakers recycle turn beginnings in two types of situations: a) when the turn beginning partially overlaps with the turn of the previous speaker, and b) when the turn is interrupted in order for the speaker to solicit the gaze of the addressee. He concludes that this recycling should thus not be considered an element of “non-nativeness”. Interactional competence, Carroll concludes, may lie at a deeper level than linguistic competence. He also points to the necessity of video data for studying the use of gaze and gesture in such interactions.

“Talk and Gesture: The Embodied Completion of Sequential Actions in Spoken Interaction” by David Olsher uses data from small-group project work in a classroom where English is taught as a foreign language. “Embodied completion” refers to beginning a turn at talk, ceasing to talk, and then pragmatically completing the action through gesture or embodied display, e.g. a pointing gesture which achieves indexical meaning indirectly, or an embedded display, like a pantomime. These completions are neither unique to SL interaction nor extremely common within it; hence, Olsher notes, it is not possible to understand them solely as compensatory actions for lack of linguistic competence, though they may have this function in given situations. Rather, the use of embodied actions reflects a more general interactional competence.

The final chapter, Rod Gardner’s “On Delaying the Answer: Question Sequences Extended after the Question”, deals with situations in which question sequences are ultimately longer and more complex than in standard adjacency pairs. This involves the expansion of questions into multi-turn units in a conversation involving three FL speakers and three SL speakers of English. Gardner explores what these sequences look like and perform, and also why expanded question sequences are so common when FL-speakers speak to SL-speakers. These extended questions may pursue a missing answer in situations where the interlocutor does not respond immediately. They may involve immediate question expansions, i.e. when the speaker asking the question does not leave silence for an answer. They may serve to provide background after the question, in order to better focus or clarify it. These practices, Gardner concludes, are unrelated to the competence of the second-language speakers. The only possible relevant finding is that two of the FL speakers may have perceived the need for greater explicitness when talking to SL speakers.

In order to evaluate the book’s overall contribution, I shall review what the editors, in their introduction, consider to be the book’s major findings (in italics), and briefly comment on them.

1) *Second-language conversations are normal conversations, and can be described using the same methodology as first-language conversations.* Ultimately, most of the chapters in this volume can only speculate about how the phenomena described are specific to SL interaction. The frequency of certain phenomena, it appears, is more relevant to distinguishing the two types of interaction than the mere occurrence of those phenomena. This finding is a step in the right direction, definitively differentiating the CA approach from earlier deficit-based SLA research.

2) *Speakers can, but do not have to, orient to grammatical form and make it the focus for some of the talk. This orientation is often initiated by the second-language speakers as opposed to the first-language speakers, who are not likely to take on the role of “language experts”. In such situations, it is the SL speakers themselves who have to request help, and they are not always successful in receiving it.* This is demonstrated in the chapters by Kurhila, Brouwer, and Brouwer, Rasmussen and Wagner. This can have significance for pedagogically motivated studies, particularly in terms of comparing teaching methods based on grammar and those more focused on conversation.

3) *Second-language speakers, though perhaps not proficient in a given language, can engage in quite exquisite activities in the interaction.* This is best shown by the chapters which use video transcripts or otherwise record and transcribe the gestures made by the participants and the visual context of the interaction (Carroll, Olsher, Mori), as well as the word-clarifications created by the SL speakers in the data of Mazeland and Zaman-Zadeh.

4) *“Second-language speaker” is one identity a person can adopt in interaction. Non-nativeness can be made relevant at any time by any participant by various means.* This is one of the primary vantage points of the chapters by Mondada, Skårup and Kurhila. There are many more directions in which this point could be taken. Gardner and Wagner state, “The data used in this volume foreground to a high degree the normality of second language conversation, and less the potentially deficient identity of being ‘non-native’” (p. 16). This is very important to note, for none of the chapters in this volume deal with situations in which FL speakers are unaware of SL speakers’ status or make assumptions about the SL speakers’ status based on appearance, e.g. race or clothing (cf. Fan 1994 and Neustupný 2004 for a discussion of the influence of “foreign factors”). Comparative data that could reveal the degree to which different FL speakers are accustomed to interacting with SL speakers might also yield interesting results.

5) *Second-language speakers are able to use a wide range of interactional resources (turn-taking, recycled overlaps, etc.) and do so from the very beginning of their acquisition of the second language,* as in the chapters by Carroll and Wong. Though this is relevant, it is not terribly far removed from findings 1 and 3.

6) *Second-language speakers can be very persistent – they struggle for meaning and keep going until they are successful.* The chapters by Egbert, Niebecker, and Rezzara, Mazeland and Zaman-Zadeh, Wong and Mori are analyses of such persistent moments, but, again, they do not provide evidence that this is a unique characteristic of SL speakers.

Despite the general positive contributions of this book, there are two areas in which it could be even more thorough. Firstly, the phrasing of the overall findings focuses

primarily on the *SL speaker behavior*. Yet the *conversations* examined in this book are also characterized by the behavior of FL speakers. What could be added are some conclusions regarding what *FL speakers* do in conversation with SL speakers, as previously explored by Charles Ferguson (1975) in the concept of “foreigner talk”. The volume does address these issues to some extent, but could go further. Gardner, for example, in observing that FL speakers may feel they need be more explicit in speaking with SL speakers, echoes the concept of “contact norms” developed by Language Management Theory (cf. Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003).

Secondly, there are terminological issues to which more space could have been devoted. Neither the editors nor the individual authors explain why they use “FL speaker” and “SL speaker” with the editors noting only that “most speakers can easily be recognized as second language speakers due to accent and grammatical irregularities” (p. 3), and allowing the individual cases to speak for themselves. A possible interpretation for “SL speaker” could be “a speaker whose SL-ness is made relevant through interaction”, but this is not explicitly stated. In addition, the term “FL speaker” creates a bit of confusion among readers accustomed to the field of applied linguistics, who may subconsciously associate “FL” with “foreign language” (as in EFL or English as a Foreign Language). The terms “native” and “non-native” are also used freely throughout the various chapters without consideration given to the problems surrounding this distinction (cf. Davies 1991). There is also a general, yet unstated tendency in this volume toward the study of “SL speakers” who are highly educated adults living in or traveling to foreign countries, which represents only a part of the second-language-speaking world.

Wagner and Gardner present their volume as timely, given that the globalized world creates ever more “conversations involving speakers whose first language is not the language of the talk” (p. 1). While the occurrence of FL-SL conversations is in no way a new phenomenon, the idea that second-language speakers and their speech need to be more thoroughly researched is one that is constantly growing. Overall, this book poses the question of whether second-language-in-action data should be treated differently than first-language-in-action data. The answer appears to be no. The SL aspect merely highlights certain phenomena.

In explaining their inclination toward CA in SLA research, the authors write, “Understanding the reality of language use has to be the stepping stone to formulate a theory about language acquisition as a tool for achieving intersubjectivity and engaging in social action” (p. 13). *Second Language Conversations* has provided one of many necessary such stepping stones in that it has invited the reader to re-focus upon the question of what actually constitutes acquisition. That is, if the reader is seeking a continuation of the classic SLA paradigm, disappointment will certainly ensue. Rather, what this book actually appears to do effectively is to contribute to the breadth of CA in its own right. In its replacing of the notion of the language *learner* with that of the language *user*, it considers acquisition as another in a series of elements of traditional linguistic study which can be redefined in an interactional, originally Wittgensteinian paradigm of “language is use”.

REFERENCES

- DAVIES, A. (1991): The notion of the native speaker. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 12: 33–45.
- FAN, S.-K. C. (1994): Contact situations and language management. *Multilingua* 13: 237–252.
- FERGUSON, C. (1975): Toward a characterization of English foreigner talk. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 17: 1–14.
- FIRTH, A. and WAGNER, J. (1997): On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA research. *The Modern Language Journal* 81 (3): 285–300.
- FIRTH, A. and WAGNER, J. (1998): SLA property: No trespassing! *The Modern Language Journal* 82 (1): 91–94.
- HAVE, P. ten (1999): *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
- HESTER, S. and EGLIN, P. (eds.) (1997): *Culture in Action: Studies in Membership Categorization Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
- HUTCHBY, I. and WOOFFITT, R. (1998): *Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- KASPER, G. (1997): “A” Stands for Acquisition: A response to Firth and Wagner. *The Modern Language Journal* 81 (3): 307–312.
- NEUSTUPNÝ, J. V. (2004): A theory of contact situations and the study of academic interaction. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 14: 3–31.
- NEUSTUPNÝ, J. V. and NEKVAPIL, J. (2003): Language management in the Czech Republic. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 4 (3–4): 181–366.
- POMERANTZ, A. (1984): Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In: J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57–101.
- SACKS, H. (1992): *Lectures in Conversation*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell.
- SACKS, H., SCHEGLOFF, E. A. and JEFFERSON, G. (1974): A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation. *Language* 50 (4): 696–735.
- SCHEGLOFF, E. A., JEFFERSON, G. and SACKS, H. (1977): The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language* 53: 361–82.
- WENGER, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tamah Sherman

Ústav lingvistiky a ugrofinistiky FF UK
nám. Jana Palacha 2, 116 38 Praha
<tsh@centrum.cz>

Zdeňka Hladká a kol.: Čeština v současné soukromé korespondenci: Dopisy, e-mail, SMS. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2005. 71 s. + 2 CD

Toto dílo Zdeňky Hladké a kolektivu je jako publikace výtvar poněkud osobitý: má dvě složky, jednou z nichž je útlá, ale úhledná (že ale především informačně velmi cenná, o tom budu psát níže) brožurka o jednámdesáti stránkách a druhou kazeta obsahující dva kompaktní disky. Tyto disky obsahují speciální korpus současné české soukromé korespondence, který se letos z větší části stal doplňkem a významným obohacením Českého národního korpusu.