L2 Interactional Competence and Development

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Edited by
Joan Kelly Hall, John Hellermann and
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Preface

The genesis of this volume dates back to the 13th International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) World Congress held in Singapore in December, 2002, and specifically, to a meeting of the organizers of two colloquia presented at the Congress. One of the colloquia drew on social theories, such as Vygotskian sociocultural theory, situated learning and language socialization to investigate language learning. The other drew heavily on ethnomethodological conversation analysis to examine language use. Although the theoretical frameworks of the colloquia differed, the studies presented across the colloquia focused on the fundamental role of social interaction and joint activity in second language use and learning. Recognizing their converging perspectives and interests in continuing the discussion with other like-minded scholars, the organizers of the colloquia, Joan Kelly Hall, Simona Pekarek Doelher and Johannes Wagner, met during the Congress and formulated initial plans for a three-day research meeting that Johnannes Wagner agreed to host at the University of Odense in Fall 2004.

Twenty scholars were invited to the inaugural meeting of the Conversation Analysis/Sociocultural Theory (CA/SCT) research group. Over the three days, the participants examined empirical data and addressed some crucial theoretical questions such as how to define competence, and what methodological procedures could be used to provide evidence for the socio-interactional basis of second language acquisition. The discussions led to the planning of two colloquia for AILA 2005 and additional meetings. One was held at Portland State University in April 2006 and another was held on Long Beach Island, New Jersey in June 2008. The more recent meetings have focused on group data analysis sessions where problems involved in the analysis of language in use and language acquisition are undertaken collaboratively.

The most recent gathering of the group came at the annual meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) 2009 in Denver, Colorado, where several members participated in a colloquium which addressed the 'A' facet of 'SLA' (the learning of language and other professional and cultural practices), conceptualizing this as the development of language practices for interactional competence. Several papers from that colloquium are presented in this volume along with those by researchers not in attendance (Sahlström, Theodórsdóttir and van Compernolle).

Many of the ideas presented in this volume have been cultivated through the extended discussions with our peers afforded by these research meetings and through the work they have published. The list of individual research papers and monographs that have been published over the last decade and have influenced the ideas contained in these chapters is too large to mention here, but we note that many of these works are cited in the chapters of this volume. We extend special thanks to the contributors to this volume for their collegiality and inspiration in continuing with what we see as a valuable research program for applied linguistics.

Chapter 1

L2 Interactional Competence and Development

J.K. HALL and S. PEKAREK DOEHLER

Introduction

Socially grounded investigations of L2 interactions have been a growing focus of research over the last 15 years or so. These studies have documented the variety of interactional resources L2 speakers draw on for sense-making in their social worlds. This expanding body of research has made evident the effectiveness of conversation analysis (CA) as both a theory and method for describing the myriad resources comprising L2 users' interactional competence (IC). However, still lingering is the question of its effectiveness for understanding how L2 users develop such competence. Contributors to this volume explore answers to this question. Drawing on data from a range of interactional contexts, including classrooms, pharmacy consultations, tutoring sessions and video-game playing, and a range of languages including English, German, French, Danish and Icelandic, the studies use conversation analytic methods to investigate the use and development of the many resources comprising L2 users' IC.

Interactional Competence

The studies in this volume take as axiomatic that interaction is fundamental to social life. In our interactions with others, we set goals and negotiate the procedures used to reach them. At the same time, we constitute and manage our individual identities, our social role relationships, and memberships in our social groups and communities. Central to competent engagement in our interactions is our ability to accomplish meaningful social actions, to respond to c-participants' previous actions and to make recognizable for others what our actions are and how these relate to their own actions. IC, that is the context-specific constellations of expectations and dispositions about our social worlds that we draw on to navigate our

way through our interactions with others, implies the ability to mutually coordinate our actions. It includes knowledge of social-context-specific communicative events or activity types, their typical goals and trajectories of actions by which the goals are realized and the conventional behaviors by which participant roles and role relationships are accomplished. Also included is the ability to deploy and to recognize context-specific patterns by which turns are taken, actions are organized and practices are ordered. And it includes the prosodic, linguistic, sequential and nonverbal resources conventionally used for producing and interpreting turns and actions, to construct them so that they are recognizable for others, and to repair problems in maintaining shared understanding of the interactional work we and our interlocutors are accomplishing together (Heritage, 2004; Hymes, 1964, 1972; Sacks *et al*., 1974; Schegloff, 2007; Schegloff *et al*., 1977).

We approach our interactional activities – from everyday practices of talk such as greetings, leave-takings and joking, to more institutional situations, such as doctor–patient interactions, business meetings and instructional lectures – with these context-specific collections of knowledge, expectations, dispositions, orientations and resources, and we draw on them as we monitor ours and each other's moment-to-moment involvement in the interactions. At each interactional moment we attend to each other's actions, build interpretations as to what these actions are about and where they are heading, and formulate our own contributions based on our interpretations that move the interaction along, either toward or away from the anticipated outcomes of each preceding move. When we approach a service encounter for example, we have certain expectations about goals and purposes of the encounter, and anticipate the various roles and role relationships we are likely to find. We also have expectations about the sequence of interactional actions that are likely to unfold, and the linguistic and other means for accomplishing them. The utterance 'Who's next?,' for example, calls to mind a set of goals and purposes and of roles and role relationships, which, in this case would be sales clerks and customers. It also calls to mind a certain way of taking turns, and expectations about the actions that likely preceded and will follow this utterance, and how these actions are preferably, expectably organized. At these moments, we use our understandings of and experience in a range of interactional activities to make sense of what is occurring. As the interaction unfolds, we continually reflect upon and revise our understandings of preceding contributions, assess the likely consequences engendered by such moves, and make decisions about how to signal our understandings to the others and to construct appropriate contributions (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Sanders, 1987, 1995).

In sum, when we participate in interactions, we draw on an 'immense stock of sedimented social knowledge' (Hanks, 1996: 238) and on a set of routinized yet context-sensitive procedures with which we reason our way

through the moment-to-moment unfoldings of our interactions. This competence is socially grounded in that its components are constructed in interaction and shared with social group members in specific communicative contexts. It is cognitive in that it is part of people's context-specific structures of expectations. Yet, these structures are not static, mental representations. Rather, their shapes and meanings are dynamic and malleable, tied to their locally situated uses in culturally framed communicative activities.

Disciplinary Foundations

Current conceptualizations of IC owe much to two fields for theoretical and empirical inspiration. A first source is American linguistic anthropology, and in particular, the work of Dell Hymes (1962, 1964, 1972). Hymes considered social function to be the source of linguistic form and so conceptualized language as context-embedded social action. He coined the concept communicative competence to refer to the capacity to acquire and use language appropriately. It is this knowledge, Hymes argued, that shapes and gives meaning to linguistic forms. Hymes proposed the concept in response to generativists' accounts of linguistic competence, which was defined as a historical, universally inscribed, invariant sets of internal principles and conditions for generating the structural components of language systems (Chomsky, 1965, 1966). Hymes considered this view of competence to be inadequate in that it could not account for the other kinds of knowledge individuals use to produce and interpret utterances appropriate to the particular contexts in which they occur. He noted, '... it is not enough for the child to be able to produce any grammatical utterance. It would have to remain speechless if it could not decide which grammatical utterance here and now, if it could not connect utterances to their contexts of use' (Hymes, 1964: 110). Such socially constituted knowledge, Hymes argued, is what gives meaning and shape to language forms. Hymes further proposed the *ethnography of speaking* as both a conceptual framework and method for capturing such knowledge, and specifically, the patterns of language used by sociocultural group members to participate in the communicative events of their communities.

Canale and Swain (1980; Canale, 1983) were among the first in applied linguistics to draw on Hymes's concept of communicative competence for the purposes of curriculum design and evaluation. Their framework contained four components: *grammatical*, which included knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology; *sociolinguistic*, which included knowledge of the rules of language use; *strategic*, which included knowledge of strategies to overcome communicative problems; and, *discourse competence*, which dealt with the knowledge needed to participate in literacy activities. Canale and Swain argued that

choices for what to include in a curriculum for language classrooms should be based on an analysis of the linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic components comprising those communicative activities in which L2 learners were interested in becoming competent.

The first systematic studies (for a most notable early exception see Hatch, 1978) that shed light on some aspects of communicative competence were undertaken within the framework of Interlanguage Pragmatics. Studies under this rubric focused mainly on describing speech acts such as requests, apologies and complaints, and comparing their uses across various cultural contexts (e.g. Blum-Kulka *et al.*, 1989; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Trosburg, 1994). These and other attempts to operationalize and investigate communicative competence (e.g. Bachmann, 1990, 1996; Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1995; Nunan, 1989) enhanced applied linguists' understandings of various facets of communicative competence. However, as Young (2000) and others (He & Young, 1998; Lüdi, 2006; McNamara & Roever, 2006) have noted, they are limited in two respects. First, the various components of communicative competence have, by and large, been treated as static, cognitive properties of individuals, thereby rendering invisible their social foundations. Second, the focus of research has been on competence for speaking and not on competence for interaction. An early exception to this limited view is the 1986 essay by Claire Kramsch, in which she argued that, despite claiming to promote communicative abilities of language learners, the proficiency guidelines of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a US-based organization dedicated to language teaching and learning, were marred in that they emphasized grammatical accuracy over discourse appropriacy and thus took an 'oversimplified view on human interactions' (Kramsch, 1986: 367). The focus, she argued, should be shifted to IC, that is the skills and knowledge individuals employ to bring about successful interaction.

By the 1990s, calls for more socially grounded, dynamic understandings of and investigations into IC were on the rise (Hall, 1993, 1995, 1999). For example, in her proposal for a more dynamic, sociocultural understanding of interaction, Hall drew on Hymes' (1972) ethnography of speaking framework to propose a model for the study of interactive practices in language classrooms. Interactive practices, according to Hall, are 'socioculturally conventionalized configurations of face-to-face interaction by which and within which group members communicate' (Hall, 1993: 146). Her model consisted of seven components, which, she argued, were to be used as an analytic framework for uncovering the set of conventions by which such practices are constructed by social group members and thus are constitutive of members' IC. This model was further elaborated upon by Young (2000, 2003). His framework consists of six components: (1) rhetorical script (i.e. knowledge of sequences of speech acts that are conventionally linked to a given type); (2) register (e.g. technical/expert