This volume brings together contributions by some of the crucial people involved in developing the social interactional and socio-cultural approaches to language teaching and learning. They provide not only an introduction to this important growth point, but also an overview of cutting-edge research. A wide range of language learning and teaching contexts are covered, including TESOL, European and non-European languages, and bilingual and multilingual practices. The contributors aim to demonstrate the importance for second language learning and teaching of the social interactional and socio-cultural perspective, describe the implications of these perspectives for the practice of language teaching, including teacher education, and to outline interdisciplinary links between these approaches to language learning and others, such as the social constructivist approach.

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4

Invitation Talk

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Introduction

In Markee (2005), I investigated how off-task invitation talk that occurred during an English as a Second Language (ESL) class that was supposed to be discussing German reunification was achieved in the interactional context of what I have called elsewhere a zone of interactional transition, or ZIT (Markee 2004). ZITs may be understood as ‘talk that occurs at the boundaries of different classroom speech exchange systems. ZITs are loci of potential interactional trouble, whose structural explication is of interest to both CA and SLA researchers, and also to teachers and teacher trainers’ (Markee 2004: 584).

In addition, I showed in the 2005 chapter how difficult it was for the two learners who engaged in this invitation talk to maintain off-task talk in the face of ongoing, on-task talk by the rest of the class. Finally, I concluded with some general implications for socially contextualized approaches to SLA such as conversation analysis-for-second language acquisition (CA-for-SLA).

In the present chapter, I have re-transcribed this off-task invitation talk to show how the same data may be re-analysed post hoc as a source of information that can be used for the purpose of qualitative, performance-based assessment of naturally occurring second language conversation. The use of CA techniques for performance-based assessment is currently an under-researched area in CA-for-SLA (though see Jacoby and MacNamara 1999; Lazaraton 2002; Young and He 1998), as is an analytic focus on ordinary conversation rather than on institutional talk (Firth and Wagner 1997; Wagner 2004. But see Brouwer and Wagner 2004, and Gardner and Wagner 2004, for the beginnings of research on second language conversation). These are both issues that need to be incorporated more fully into the emerging research agenda of socially contextualized approaches to SLA (see, among others, Hall 2004; Kasper 2004, 2005, 2006; Markee 2000, in press; Markee and Kasper 2004; Wagner 2004; Young 2002; Young and Miller 2004).

More specifically, in the present chapter, I show how R attempts to invite M to a party (actually, two parties), and how M initially resists this invitation. This analysis shows, on the one hand, how persistent R is in his attempts to get M to produce a preferred response to this invitation (i.e., an acceptance of R’s invitation by M). And on the other, it shows how M skillfully resists acceding to this invitation until the very end of this off-task talk. As I argue in the Conclusions and Implications section of this chapter, this analysis therefore provides an empirical demonstration of how CA-for-SLA methodological procedures may be used for the purpose of assessing a particular aspect of R and M’s co-constructed interactional competence (i.e., doing invitation/declination talk). In addition, following Crookes and Schmidt’s (1991) definition of motivation in terms of ‘choice, engagement and persistence, as determined by interest, relevance, expectancy, and outcomes’, this analysis suggests that these behavioural techniques may also be used to investigate how motivational factors such as persistence are manifested as behaviour in and through talk (see also Markee 2001 for a preliminary conversation analytic treatment of motivation, and the interest evinced by Dörnyei 2005 in such an application of CA techniques to motivation research). Finally, I briefly consider the pedagogical implications of the analyses offered in this chapter.

Interactional competence

Following up on Hymes’s (1972) original work on communicative competence, writers such as Hall (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 1999, 2004), He and Young (1998), Young (2002), Young and Nguyen (2002), and Young and Miller (2004) have been leaders in developing our theoretical understanding of the collaborative, intersubjective nature of interactional competence. Broadly speaking, these writers approach interactional competence from various sociocultural and/or functional-systemic perspectives. In my own work (Markee 2000, 2007), I treat interactional competence as an up-dated reformulation of Hatch’s (1978b) Discourse Hypothesis. More specifically, in Markee in press), I suggest that:

Developing interactional competence in a second language includes but goes far beyond learning language as a formal system, however this concept may be specified... More specifically, developing this kind of competence in a second language involves learners orienting to different semiotic systems – specifically, the turn-taking, repair and sequence organizations that underlie all talk-in-interaction, combined with the co-occurrence organization of eye gaze and embodied actions – and deploying these intersubjective resources to co-construct with their interlocutors locally enacted, and progressively more accurate, fluent, and complex interactional repertoires in the L2. These interactional repertoires – a concept which is derived from Hundede’s (1985: 306) notion of ‘repertoires of typical episodes’ – consist of the kinds of extended sequences of actions
discussed by Schegloff [1989] and illustrated by the work of Golato (2002, 2003, 2005) and Taleghani-Nikazm (2002a, 2002b) on compliment responses in German and English, and telephone greeting sequences in Persian and German, respectively.

As I also note in this paper, this formulation of interactional competence: (1) is native to CA-for-SLA; and (2) subscribes to a view of learners as highly knowledgeable social actors/learners, and not to what Gardner and Wagner (2004) have called a deficit model of language learning.

Research setting and participants

The talk analyzed here consists of an off-task invitation to a party that was issued by R to M during a class whose official topic was the reunification of East and West Germany. The site of this audio/video-recorded interaction was an intermediate undergraduate ESL class of 12 learners, which was taught at a university in the United States during Spring Semester 1992. The class lasted for 50 minutes and was taught by T, who had also written the content-based unit that she was teaching. The methodology was task-based, and utilized small group work. T is a native speaker of English; R is a native speaker of Austrian German; and M is a native speaker of Sesotho, the official African language of Lesotho.

The data

The data for this chapter consists of 141 lines of audio/video-recorded talk which lasts for a total of 3 minutes and 32 seconds. For ease of exposition, the data are presented in eight consecutive fragments labelled Fragments 1a–1f. The interaction is transcribed according to standard CA transcription conventions (Jefferson 1984a), and also includes information about eye gaze and gesture using video framegrabs. An additional symbol unique to this chapter is: | | = talk from another conversation to the one that is being analysed.

Analysis

In Fragment 1a, we can see that the task of achieving off-task invitation talk is collaboratively achieved by R and M in the sequential context of a ZIT (Markee 2004); specifically, in the interactional space created by T as she checks whether students have finished a prior phase of small group work. T does not immediately move on to another activity. At the same time, R asserts that he and M have indeed finished their work (see lines 001–13). It is in this interactional space that R initiates the off-task invitation talk analysed in this chapter.

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Fragment 1a

001 T: OK ARE YOU ALMOST FINISHED.
002 (2.3)
003 R: are we finished, you are
004 finished,
005 (1.0)
006 R: <1 think so. >@ hhh
007 (0.3)
008 R: huh =
009 M: =h=
010 R: =<huh huh huh <1 think so> >@
011 M: huh huh huh huh 'hhh
012 R: =h'hhh oh no:|@)
013 (2.0)
014 M: this writer has a
015 [rather-com-pli-]
016 R: [i slept five ho-]
017 M: this is [co-] writer has a
018 R: [huh]
019 M: complicated uh,
020 R: yea;h[(h)]
021 M: [h] heh heh .hhh
022 R: (what'd I say.) ,
023 (1.0)
024 R: I'm so tired I slept five hours
025 that night

(Spring 1992: German Reunification Data)

More specifically, in lines 014–15, 017 and 019, M attempts to continue with their previous on-task discussion of the text that he and R have been reading, but R initiates some 'mock troubles talk' at lines 016, 022 and 024–25. I refer to this talk as mock troubles talk because the trouble that is reported is not talk that deals with real troubles, as previously reported in the literature (see Jefferson 1984b). Rather, it involves the pseudo-trouble of R apparently having had too much fun for his own good recently. In effect, R is really talking about unspecified exploits in his social life outside class. By designing the telling of exploits in this way, R is simultaneously able to 'not do overt boasting', while also seeking to obtain collaborative expressions of sympathy from M and thus subsequently draw M into doing off-task talk.

In Fragment 1b, after an initial trouble-relevant pause of 0.6 seconds in line 026, M produces preferred responses to this initiation of off-task talk by R when he aligns with R in lines 027 and 031–32. More specifically, M first expresses what may be analysed as mock sympathy through the use of a very
exaggerated tone of voice in line 027. In lines 031–32, M then draws some of the logical consequences to be expected from R having slept only five hours on the night in question. Furthermore, M also claims in lines 035 and 037 to be perennially tired, presumably from the same general kinds of causes that afflict R. Finally, note also how M and R align to this mock troubles talk through the collaborative laughter tokens produced by both participants in lines 029, 032 and, in particular, lines 033–4.

**Fragment 1b**

025  (0.6)  
027  M: a:ch. ((M uses a noticeably  
028  exaggerated tone of voice))  
029  R: "huh h hhh"  
030  (1.0)  
031  M: you're going to collapse I think  
032  hhh  
033  R: huh ehh huh huh  
034  M: heh heh huhh hhh (0.3)  
035  (1.0) always [t]:red-.  
036  R: [yeah ]  
037  M: [t]:red- -no(h)-.  

(Spring 1992: German Reunification Data)

As Jefferson (1984b) has shown, a feature of troubles talk is that it is closure-implicative. Such talk is therefore frequently followed up by a so-called pivot, which introduces a change to a new topic. Note, however, that there is usually also a loose topical unity between the subject of the troubles talk and what immediately follows. This organization is clearly observable in **Fragment 1c**.

**Fragment 1c**

035  (1.0) always [t]:red- .  
036  R: [yeah ]  
037  M: [t]:red- -no(h)-.  
038  (1.0) > there are so many things. < "hh  
040  d'you want to join a party-?  
041  tonight? We have a party in  
042  sherman hall.  
043  (0.3) in our do:rm.  

(Spring 1992: German Reunification Data)

More specifically, in lines 038–43, R begins a turn made up of several turn constructional units that are heavily repaired. R introduces the turn in line 038 with an in-breath. As shown in **Figure 4.1 (Framegrab 1)**, M and R are looking down at their desks as R does the in-breath in line 038 in overlap with M saying 'no(h)-.' in line 037. R then says 'I mean-' in line 038. This phrase is not only cut off but is immediately followed by an intra-turn pause of 1.0 second.

As shown in **Figure 4.2 (Framegrab 2)**, as R says 'I mean-', M shifts his eye-gaze to look at R. But by the end of the 1.0 second pause, R is still looking down at his desk.

As shown in **Figure 4.3 (Framegrab 3)**, as R says '>' there are so' in line 039 (notice the increased speed of delivery), he also makes a slight sideways gesture with his left arm and also cocks his head to the left. The participants' talk, eye gaze and gestures so far all strongly suggest that something new is about to be introduced into the talk by R. Finally, after another preliminary in-breath in line 039, R produces the first version of his invitation in lines 040–3.

As shown in **Figure 4.4 (Framegrab 4)**, the verbal delivery of this invitation is visually accompanied by R looking up to direct his eye-gaze at M and by R briefly touching M on the arm with his left hand. Thus, the talk in lines 038–9 is the pivot talk to the next topic; that is, the invitation to a party. The topical unity between the preceding troubles talk and the new current invitation talk may loosely be described as 'having a good time'.

The invitation talk that ensues lasts from lines 040–3. However, as we can see in **Fragment 1d**, R's invitation does not go well in at least two respects. First, the talk in lines 038–40 is not done as a recognizable pre-sequence that
inquires into the potential availability of M to attend a party the same evening. And second, the lack of such a pre-sequence sets up the relevance of both participants having to deal with a potentially dispreferred declination of the invitation by M (Davidson 1984; Pomerantz 1984). And this is precisely what M eventually does in the arrowed turns of lines 093–105.

**Fragment 1d**

038 R:  'hhh I mean-
039  (1.0) > there are so many things,- <
040  'hh d'you want to join a party-?
041  tonight? We have a party in
042  sherman hall.
043  (0.3) in our dorum.

093 M: → = 'yeah.=it's bad.' <
094  (0.3)
095 M: → I might (0.2) go there but uh (1.0)
096 → [I have a busy ]
097 R: ["yeah there is"]
098 M: → week (0.3) big project for next
More specifically, the way in which M declines R's invitation is initially quite abrupt (see line 093), and therefore requires a considerable amount of subsequent repair work to salvage his social relationship with R. This repair work is done as an account of the circumstances that prevent M from coming to the party. Note that this account recapitulates what members normally do instead of bluntly declining an invitation, thus downgrading the dispreferred nature of the response (Drew 1984). Nonetheless, M's response does function as a declination.

As shown in Fragment 1e, R is very persistent in trying to get M to respond to his invitation with a preferred acceptance response. That is, R uses the strategy of issuing several instances of what Davidson (1984) calls subsequent versions (SVs) of his invitation after he produces the initial first version (V1) of his invitation:

by virtue of the fact that the relevance of [of the turn that follows an invitation] is acceptance/rejection, an inviter or offerer when faced with a silence may examine the initial formulation that may be adversely affecting its acceptability. Given such an analysis on the part of an inviter or offerer, he or she may then subsequently display an attempt to deal with the inadequacies of the initial formulation or offer and thereby to deal with the possibility of rejection. In the instances [provided by Davidson], the inviter or offerer, following a silence, produces what I shall call a subsequent version.

(Davidson 1984: 104)

More specifically, in lines 040–2, R issues V1 of his invitation. In light of M's repeated silences, non-committal passing turns or insertion sequences which request more information but which also function as delaying tactics (see the arrowed turns in Fragment 1e), R issues no less than nine SVs of his invitation. These SVs occur in lines 043, 048, 052, 057, 066, 070–1, 080 and 083.
085 → (1.3)
086 T: [...]
087 M: → where is it held, (0.3) what part 
088 → of (0.2) the hall.
089 (0.3)
090 R: it’s in the lobby.
091 M: → in the lobby.
092 R: yeah =
093 M: = '>yeah = it’s bad.' <
094 (0.3)
095 M: i might (0.2) go there but uh (1.0)
096 [I have a busy ]
097 R: ['yeah there is']
098 M: week (0.3) big project for next
099 week =
100 R: = acoh. (0.3)] 'hhh =

(Spring 1992: German Reunification Data)

Figure 4.5 Framegrab 5

Fragment 1f

095 M: i might (0.2) go there but uh (1.0)
096 [I have a busy ]
097 R: ['yeah there is']
098 M: week (0.3) big project for next
099 week =
100 R: = acoh. (0.3)] 'hhh =
101 M: = monday 'til.
102 (0.3)
103 R: yeah > i have a
104 party tomorrow <
105 M: ['(wednesday)'] hhhhhh
106 [HUHhh] [HUHhh
107 R: [if you want!]

(Spring 1992: German Reunification Data)

Although this second invitation also lacks a pre-invitation sequence, it goes much more smoothly than the first. As we can see in Fragment 1g, M responds to V1 of this second invitation (see lines 103–4 and 107) with loud (subsequently diminishing) laughter tokens in lines 106 and 108. R aligns with M by producing equally loud laughter tokens in line 108 which also slowly diminish in volume (see the arrowed turns). And in lines 110 and 112,
M and R further align with each other through the use of smiley voice, respectively (see the double arrowed turns). In lines 115–20, R proceeds to tell M who invited him, and concludes with SV1–SV2 in lines 122 and 124.

As shown in Fragment 1h, the only reason why M does not formally accept this second invitation in next turn is that M and R’s off-task talk gets interrupted by T’s question in line 125, which is directed at the whole class. Fifty four lines of whole class work then follow, which have been omitted from the transcript used here because they are not relevant to the present analysis (see Markee 2005 for the full transcript). In lines 126–31, another ZIT allows M and R to transition back to their off-task invitation talk. And in lines 132–40, just as the class is winding down, M and R agree (following M’s initiative in lines 132–3 and 135) to get in touch by telephone after class so that M can get the details of where the second party is.

Conclusions and implications

I have shown in this chapter how R and M achieve off-task invitation talk on a turn-by-turn basis. Perhaps because R is trying to transition to an illicit (i.e., off-task) topic during an ESL class, he fails to engage M in a pre-invitation sequence that would establish whether M was available to attend the first party. The lack of a pre-invitation sequence, perhaps combined with the fact that M seems initially intent on continuing with the assigned topic, leads to considerable difficulties in the ensuing talk that is concerned with R’s first invitation.

Despite the troubles that occur throughout this talk, the data show that R is remarkably persistent in trying to get M to accede to his first invitation. He skillfully uses increasingly insistent multiple subsequent versions of his first invitation as resources to get M to accept his invitation. M equally skillfully avoids being pinned down by R, until R issues an invitation to the second
party. Although R again fails to preface this second invitation with any pre-invitation talk, so that we might foresee that more trouble might occur during this second invitation sequence, R changes the recipient design of the second invitation in mid-turn. More specifically, he recasts this second invitation as a solution to the problem of M not being available for a party on Monday night – thus effectively undercutting the ostensible reasons for M’s initial declination of R’s invitation to attend the first party. The second invitation sequence is more successful, in that M and R agree to get in touch after the class so that M can find out where the second party is. But note that, while M has successfully preserved his social relationship with R, he has not actually committed to attending the second party during the course of this off-task talk.

In conclusion, I would like to argue that this conversation analysis of R and M’s off-task invitation talk in fact constitutes a qualitative, performance-based assessment of R and M’s interactional competence in ordinary second language conversation. More specifically, I have shown how R and M deploy highly sophisticated communication skills in real time to achieve the pragmatic actions of issuing and declining invitations, respectively. These actions not only contextually pre-suppose each other, they are collaboratively co-constructed by the two participants on a moment-by-moment basis.

Although R fails to produce any pre-invitation sequences, both participants are notably skilful in their ability to deploy turn-taking and repair practices with split-second timing to achieve their seemingly divergent conversational agendas. The same is true of their ability to coordinate eye-gaze, gesture and other embodied actions effectively with the unfolding talk.

Furthermore, this chapter also suggests that the behavioural techniques of CA-for-SLA may be used to carry out empirically based analyses of individual psychological factors such as persistence. This suggestion is obviously quite controversial, in that psychological and social accounts of cognition are often perceived to be divergent, even irreconcilable. Nonetheless, I believe that the analyses developed in this chapter have demonstrated that there may in fact be more common ground between psycholinguistic and conversation analytic accounts of individual differences, and that further research in this area is likely to prove quite fruitful.

Finally, the analyses of this naturally occurring, though pedagogically off-task, invitation talk raise some interesting questions about the quality of on-task classroom talk. As already noted, the talk reproduced in Fragments 1a–1h is highly sophisticated. In contrast, the kind of talk that is modelled in pedagogical treatments of invitations is not only typically quite stilted but also much less complex in terms of its grammar of interaction. How, then, might materials writers and teachers develop tasks that engage learners in activities that force students to produce natural, well-formed invitation sequences (or other similar extended pragmatic actions) as on-task talk in ESL or EFL classrooms?

In principle, the use of simulations and information gap tasks of various kinds is likely to generate classroom talk that may display at least some of these qualitative characteristics. But we are still very far from knowing how to ensure that simulations, information gaps and other tasks generate the kind of natural, well-formed talk exhibited by R and M. Speaking to these issues, I believe that the research methodology used in this chapter can not only provide assessment benchmarks of learners’ interactional competence that are based on what second language speakers of English are actually able to do, as opposed to what we as ESL professionals think they can do. But in addition, this methodology could also potentially be used as a tool for iterative materials development/teaching implementation of on-task activities. Such an approach would entail adopting curricular practices that stress the importance of ongoing revision of tasks, based on empirical feedback that shows how participants co-construct language learning and teaching activities as social interaction. And this would represent a major, and much needed, shift in ESL curriculum theory (particularly in the area of English for Specific Purposes), much of which has traditionally been more interested in the development of materials rather than in their implementation.

**Notes**

1. In Markee (2005), I identified these participants as L11 and L9, respectively. However, in this chapter, I use abbreviations for their first names because I wish to emphasize that these participants’ invitation talk is done as ordinary conversation (albeit as conversation that is overshadowed by pedagogical talk), not as learning talk. However, I continue to identify the teacher as T, because her talk (which is entirely peripheral to this analysis) is pedagogical in nature.

2. An empirical possibility worth exploring is that pre-invitations are not done in (Austrian) German. At my request, my colleague Andrea Golato kindly looked through her German conversation data to look for invitation sequences, as did Carmen Taleghani-Nikazam, but neither researcher was able to locate any empirical instances of invitation sequences in their data. However, their intuitions (if such an ‘unCA’ concept may be invoked in this chapter) are that German speakers do produce pre-invitation sequences in naturally occurring ordinary conversation.

3. Data from another part of the same lesson involving the same two speakers show that R is equally persistent during on-task interactions.

4. See, for example, the dialogues in the unit on invitations in *Speaking Naturally*, by Tillet and Bruder (1985).

5. By ‘natural, well-formed’ invitation talk, I mean talk which includes all three elements of invitations: specifically, pre-invitation, invitation and acceptance or declination sequences. Furthermore, such talk should exhibit the same kind of interactional complexity that we have observed in the empirical data presented in this chapter.
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