Getting Beyond Conversation Analysis: Critical and Pedagogical Implications for TESOL/Bilingual Curriculum for Diverse Learners in the Age of Globalization

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Abstract
TESOL/bilingual curriculum is becoming a broader and more open field, implementing different areas and fields of study to meet and satisfy the needs of diverse ESL/bilingual learners in this age of globalization. One area of study which can be implemented and has pedagogical and critical implications is conversation analysis. The analysis of conversation can be used to educate diverse ESL learners, for example, about the sensitivity of English conversation structures and the fact that the well-organised structure of conversation does not mean that social and human interaction takes place spontaneously without the influence of participants’ feelings, thoughts and attitudes (micro-level) and socio-cultural and economic contextual factors (macro-level). Such critical pedagogical perspectives would empower learners, raise their cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, and improve their social and cultural awareness. This paper attempts to link the field of conversation analysis and the field of TESOL/bilingual education for diverse learners.

Keywords: TESOL, curriculum, critical pedagogy, globalization, bilingualism, language learning

Introduction
TESOL/bilingual curriculum is becoming more open and broadly influenced by different fields and areas of study. One area of study which can be implemented in TESOL/bilingual curriculum is the area of conversation study. Even though conversation as a social and human interaction event does not take place randomly and is usually well-organised and ordered, it is obviously characterised by recognisable structures which can make its analysis not an end in itself, but a valuable source of pedagogical and critical implications in TESOL/bilingual curriculum. The analysis of conversation can be used, for example, to educate diverse ESL/bilingual learners about the sensitivity of English conversation and the fact that the well-organised structure of conversation does not mean that social and human interaction takes place spontaneously without the influence of the participants’ feelings, thoughts and attitudes (micro-level) and socio-cultural and economic contextual factors (macro-level). This paper attempts...
to establish a link between the study of conversation analysis and bilingual/TESOL curriculum. To do so, the first part of the paper will review and investigate English conversation regarding one recognisable structure, namely an adjacency pair. The second part of the paper will move to discuss and suggest some possible critical and pedagogical implications for TESOL/bilingual curriculum.

**Conversation Analysis: Adjacency Pair Structures**

One particular type of conversational sequence which makes the analysis of English conversation seem a linear and systematic process is the adjacency pair structure. It is a sequence that is: (i) adjacent; (ii) produced by different speakers; (iii) ordered as a first part and a second part; and (iv) typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second or range of second part (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Levinson, 1983). It refers to that property of interaction by virtue of which what is said at any one time sets up expectations about what is to follow, either immediately afterwards or later on in the interaction (Drew & Heritage, 1992). The parts of an adjacency pair may be either linguistic or non-linguistic, and the second part is monitored by the first speaker which seems to be related to the first as an expected follow-up (Miller & Eimas, 1995). It is also apparent that the first part requires a particular second part or a particular range of seconds, i.e. summons should be followed by responses; questions should not be followed by greetings but answers and so on. Further, there may be a large number of different types of adjacency pairs in a conversation and some of them might give more freedom for response as there are several options available as the second part.

It is possible that some types of second-pair parts like the preferred second pair parts are typically performed without features of markedness, immediately, and without delay. They often come before the end of the utterances in the first-pair part. On the other hand, some types of second-pair parts like the dispreferred second-pair parts are presented as a series of optional elements, delayed, and accompanied by the characteristics of markedness: Pause; er; ah (delay/hesitate), Well; oh (preface), I’m not sure; I don’t know (express doubt), that’s great; I’d love to (token yes) etc. (Yule, 1996). However, the adjacency pair structure generally seems to be a normative framework for actions which is accountably implemented (Heritage, 1984). This means that the second part remains relevant and should be produced on completion of the first. A piece of evidence for the normative character of adjacency pairs can be provided under the heading of conditional relevance (Schegloff, 1968; Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998). What this means is that the first parts do not always receive their second parts immediately. Consequently, any absence of such a second part is a “noticeable absence” and the speaker of the first part may infer a reason for that absence (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).

Another piece of evidence for the normative character of adjacency pairs comes from the fact that we all make different inferences when second-pair parts are not forthcoming. These are usually based on our motives, intentions, beliefs etc. (e.g. the
other intended to be insulting, or the other would not answer the question, or could not do so without self-incrimination) (Heritage, 1984). The absence of the second part does affect the meaning in the conversation. For example, when speaker A asks speaker B a question he expects that speaker B will give either a preferred or dispreferred answer. Consequently, when speaker B does not reply immediately in return, speaker A considers that the absence of a reply is accountable and infers that speaker B’s answer would be dispreferred. This absence would give rise to another normative character of adjacency pairs, namely insertion sequence.

An insertion sequence can also be evidence of the normative character of adjacency pairs. It refers to the existence of one adjacency pair within another. It is an insertion because the first part does not always receive its second part immediately. This delay is employed to defer the answer until further relevant information is obtained. For instance, a question-answer pair can be produced as an insertion sequence. This is because Q2 does not mean that Q1 will not be answered, it is employed to defer A1 until further relevant information is received. After answering Q2, B shows that he is still oriented to the relevance of the original adjacency pair by answering Q1 and providing the relevant second part (Yule, 1996).

There is sometimes a large hierarchical sequence of adjacency pairs forming, for example, the structure of \((Q_1(Q_2(Q_3(Q_4-A_4)A_3)A_2)A_1)\). In this large hierarchical sequence of adjacency pairs, it is clear that the first question \((Q_1)\) does not receive its second part immediately. In spite of the absence of an answer \((A_1)\) for the question \((Q_1)\), there is an orientation to the expected appropriate second part even though the answer never occurs. So the sequences in this conversation lead to a long story in which its sequences are sequentially organised. However, in some conversations it is obvious that adjacency pairs give rise to a turn-taking structure in the conversation where one person speaks at a time and that transition takes place smoothly from one turn to the next: one participant, A, talks, stops; another, B, starts, talks, stops; and so the A-B-A-B-A-B distribution of talk across two participants is apparent in the conversation (Levinson, 1983; Sacks et al., 1974; Psathas, 1995). What occurs in the next turn is closely monitored for its relation to the first, the size of a turn may be one word or a sound, transitions take place from one turn to the next with very little gap and no minimal overlap (Sacks et al., 1974; Psathas, 1995).

Conversation does not simply begin and end. It must be opened and commonly this is done through the use of an adjacency pair such as greeting-greeting, request-grant, question-answer, or statement-response (Richards & Schmidt, 1983). Openings can allow for the possibility of further talk. The word “Hello” can be produced as an answer/response to a caller’s summons like the ringing of the telephone, and it is the responsibility of the caller to provide at least one topic of conversation to justify having made the summons (Schegloff, 1968; Richards & Schmidt, 1983; Pomerantz, 1984; Drew & Heritage, 1992). Conversation can be opened by the “pre-sequence” which is regarded as a remarkable device for achieving large joint projects. There are several
types of pre-sequences such as the pre-announcement, pre-invitation, pre-request, pre-closing statement and pre-narrative (Miler & Eimas, 1995). Closings, like openings, do not just take place, but must be made to occur through co-ordinated activities. The simplest solution is also to use adjacency pairs. Closings are usually preceded by preclosings, such as well, okay, so-oo, alright (with a downward intonation) (Richards & Schmidt, 1983; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Tsui, 1994). Further, there are many sequence types for closings such as arrangements, back-references, topic initial elicitors, in-conversation objects, solicitudes, reasons-for-calls and appreciations.

In my reading classes, adult ESL students are usually introduced to different interesting social and cultural fables and stories. In one of the classes, I recorded the students while they were being introduced to a story. The story was about a man from New York City. He was called The Man with the Gloves because he used to give gloves to poor people in New York in winter. The following is one excerpt of a conversation between me as the course teacher and one of the students with whom I had a conversation about the story:

T: Is it an interesting story?
S: [silent]
T: Is it an interesting a story? Do you think so?
S: Yah.
T: Do you like the story?
S: Yah.
T: What is the title of the story?
S: The Man with the Gloves
T: Is it an appropriate title for the story?
S: ah . . .
T: Is it a good title for the story?
S: Yah.
T: Is the man with the gloves a good man?
S: Yah.
T: Why?
S: He helps poor people.
T: Would you do the same if you were the man?
S: um . . .

The above excerpt shows that the conversation is guided by the teacher who expected the student to answer his questions in a particular way. In the excerpt, the parts of the adjacency pairs are either linguistic (words) or non-linguistic (pause or sounds like ah), and any absence of a second part is a “noticeable absence” where the speaker of the first part may infer a reason for that absence. For example, when the teacher noticed an absence of an answer for his question, namely “Is it an interesting story?”,
he repeated the question. This shows that the second parts of adjacency pairs are monitored by the first speaker and related to the first parts as expected follow-ups. They are performed without features of markedness, immediately, and without delay, but they are sometimes accompanied by the characteristics of markedness (e.g., ah).

**Beyond Adjacency Pairs for Bilingual/TESOL Education**

The nature of conversation analysis (CA) focusing on talk-in-interaction in various contexts has recently made more research investigations possible for researchers in different social and educational fields of research, focusing on the notion of the learners’ interactional competence (Markee, 2000; Young & Miller, 2004), which “has the advantage of emphasising the domain and socially distributed nature of the capacities in question” (Kasper, 2006, p. 86). This is different from what has been proposed as learners’ sociolinguistic competencies, for example (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, p. 14), which reduce “competenc(i)es to a ‘single competence’ [that] is perhaps less apposite, as it takes away the sense of non-finiteness and diversity in type and organisation of the capacities that participants bring to bear on social interaction” (Kasper, 2006, p. 86).

In the field of second language learning and bilingualism, CA has recently been implemented, focusing on “the development of interactional skills and resources and conceptualizing language learning as a social process” (Seedhouse, 2005, p. 175). Thus, core CA concepts (e.g., adjacency pairs) have been adopted as a method to investigate the discourse of second-language learning and bilingualism, considering learning a second language a phenomenon which is socially and culturally constructed by learners in an active and interactional manner (Gardner & Wagner, 2004; Lazaraton, 2003; Markee, 2000, 2004; Richards & Seedhouse, 2005; Seedhouse, 2004). Hence, “knowledge is located in communities of practice” and “learning not only takes place in the social world, it also constitutes that world” (Brouwer & Wagner, 2004, p. 33).

Studies conducted within a socio-cultural and interactional language perspective in the field of second language acquisition and bilingualism have demonstrated that CA constitutes an important framework for pedagogical practices inside the bilingual/ESL classroom. Cromadal (2001), for example, studied a group of bilingual children aged 6–8 years as they attempted to access peer activities. He reported that participating in peer play is a “shared activity” in which children negotiate rules and dispersed knowledge to achieve a “joint accomplishment”. During interactions, children manipulated CA concepts (e.g., adjacency pairs), called upon interactional competence rather than social competencies, and became members in a community of practice, apprenticing themselves to a group of people who share a certain set of practices through joint action (Gee, 2004).

Another study which showed learners’ alignment in interactions, moving from peripheral to fuller participation is Young and Miller’s (2004) longitudinal study of an ESL learner engaging in a specific activity (revision talks of writing conferences)
with his tutor once a week over a period of four weeks. In the first meeting with the tutor, the student showed peripheral participation, producing minimal utterances, with almost all being limited to yeah. However, the student’s participation increased through the series of the four conferences. This participation framework change over-time was co-constructed by the tutor in an interactional way. Although “it appears that the student is the one whose participation is most dramatically transformed ... the instructor is a co-learner, and her participation develops in a way that complements the student’s learning” (Young and Miller, 2004, p. 533).

While I was making a conversation with the ESL students about the story above (The Man with the Gloves), the students’ participation was peripheral, consisting of minimal utterances, almost all limited to short sentences in response to particular questions I had asked. I found myself an active speaker who was in power to produce turns to direct the students, comparing to the students who were passive and hesitant to extend turns without direction. It was thus necessary for me to help the students not only increase the quantity of their talk, but also perform acts without directions except those that uniquely construct my role as a facilitator. However, in a reading class I asked the students to listen to the conversation I had with them in the previous class and answer questions in groups. I considered myself a facilitator, encouraging students to talk more and produce more turns. I asked the questions below:

- Do you think the speakers understand each other? Why do you think so?
- Do you think speaker B is telling the truth to speaker A? Why do you think so?
- Which speaker do you think is in power? Why do you think so?
- How do you relate the rules and relations of turn-takings in the conversation to power?
- How do you see the role and the characteristics of markedness in achieving mutual understanding?
- Why does speaker A open the conversation? What does this mean to you?
- What is the next speaker going to say? Why do you think so?
- Why does speaker B pause for more than five seconds? What does this pause mean to you?
- How does speaker B respond to speaker A? If you were speaker B, what would you say?
- What do you think of the role of the insertion sequence in the conversation in achieving mutual understanding?
- What happens if speaker B does not answer the question? How do you socially and culturally interpret this?
• How do you see the way of closing the conversation? How do you interpret this in your culture?
• Do you think the socio-cultural background of speaker A affects his way of interacting with speaker B? Why do you think so? etc.

In groups, the ESL learners negotiated rules and dispersed knowledge to answer the questions, achieving joint accomplishments. During interactions, the ESL learners manipulated CA concepts (e.g., adjacency pairs), called upon interactional competence rather than social competencies, and became members in a community of practice, apprenticing themselves to a group of people who share a certain set of practices through joint action (Gee, 2004). In other words, the participation of the students started to change; they started to talk more, perform more turns, and achieve many of the actions that were initially performed by me, like producing more questions about the story. Not only did the quantity of the students’ talk increase, but they also showed they had experienced cognitive, meta-cognitive, and critical practices and had become more independent of my directions.

As can be seen, although English conversation is well-structured and organised and can be achieved in a systematic process, its systematic nature does not mean that it is an end in itself, away from critical and pedagogical implications for TESOL/bilingual curriculum for diverse learners. Instead, it can be a valuable source for diverse ESL/bilingual learners to reflect and think critically to understand the sensitivity of English conversation and perceive it as a significant and fundamental connection between them and other English speakers to achieve mutual understanding. However, learners can be exposed and introduced not only to the conversations produced inside their classroom, but also to different types of English conversation produced in different situations and contexts by different English people and other speakers of English as a second language for more critical and pedagogical purposes related to empowering learners, improving their cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, enhancing their critical thinking skills and raising their social and cultural awareness. In this way, learners with their teachers can undertake a critical and pedagogical journey by discussing stimulating and reflective questions related to the different types of English conversation presented by different tools and symbols from different contexts and sources.

As a facilitator, I had a very important impact in the process. I tried to make “foreign language classrooms as ideal places to learn about social differences in ways that challenge students’ lack of knowledge and/or mis-knowledge of people who are different from them” (Kumashiro, 2004). I tried to create an environment which can help learners understand the sensitivity of the context of English language conversation with respect to achieving mutual understanding, leading learners to “a crisis” which can trouble their knowledge and commonsense, raise their social and cultural awareness, and empower them. My students and I went through a critical and pedagogical journey by discussing stimulating and reflective questions related to
the different excerpts of English conversations produced by the students themselves with their teacher.

When the students reflected on their answers, they started to realize that an English conversation is an active, social process in which they construct new ideas or concepts based on a critical and dialogical socio-cultural way. They started to share their “internally persuasive discourses” and explore “the authoritative discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981), and subsequently learn to compare discourses and develop meta-knowledge about them (Landy, 2004). In other words, the learners came to realize that an English language conversation has certain historical principles and rules, making a dance that defines what is “normal and deviant, what is the proper way of constructing reality and what is not” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 123). “It exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places” (Gee, 2000, p. 19).

When learners come to understand that an English conversation is not a linear and static process in which fixed facts and experiences are said for memorizing and repetition, but it is “a constellation of hidden historical rules that govern what can be and cannot be said and who can speak and who must listen” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 122), they would not accept what they hear without questioning and without taking into consideration the socio-cultural experiences of the speaker which have been historically constructed at home and in a community culture. In addition, being aware of the influence of the experiences would prevent learners from social unjust behaviours and doctrines inside the ESL/bilingual classroom such as considering learners’ mistakes, contradictions, and misconceptions as signs of deficient thinking (Valencia, 1997). They would work hard to create a dialogic environment inside the ESL classroom to discover more about language and how it plays a role in life in general and the educational setting in particular.

**Concluding remarks**

In the age of globalization involving a growing number and diversity of ESL/bilingual classroom learners, TESOL/bilingual education has become a challenge for both teachers and learners. It is a challenge for teachers to take advantage of every opportunity to create a facilitating learning environment in which diverse learners are encouraged to become empowered and more independent. However, it can be an opportunity for ESL/bilingual teachers to take advantage of English conversation analysis in the curriculum. Conversation analysis cannot just be a matter of understanding how to accomplish a restricted set of actions, but it can be a fundamental significance for one of the most basic issues in TESOL/bilingual education: the question of how ESL/bilingual learners understand the role of English conversation in obtaining and accomplishing mutual understanding with native speakers as well as with other speakers of English as a second language. ESL/bilingual learners can be educated, for example, about how to reflect on and think critically about the mutual relations of
utterances in different types of English conversation produced by native speakers or other speakers of English as a second language in different situations and contexts. This pedagogical practice would help learners to trouble common sense concepts and knowledge, improve their cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, enhance their critical thinking, and raise their social and cultural awareness.

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