



Exploring the Interactional Competence through Conversation Analysis in EFL class among K-12 Students

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Abstract. With the emergence of the epidemic era, having online classes has become an increasing educational trend in the modern times, which relatively reduces the cost of time and space. The present study utilized Conversation analysis to explore the concept of Interactional Competence, as it pertains to conversational interactions. After analyzing four classroom transcripts, the main findings of this paper were: 1) The use of gesture and echo words of teachers is benefit to improve the atmosphere of the class; 2) The patience and encouragement of teachers help to bring out the students' potential; 3) Appropriate use of teacher talking time and wait time is conducive to promoting classroom interaction; 4) Teacher feedback plays a key role in the IRF pattern. Therefore, the teacher's interactive conversational skills are very important. Subsequently, this paper makes a significant contribution to the refinement of the implementation of the educational sector and the professional development of educators.

Keywords: Conversation analysis, Interactional Competence, Online English Courses, IRF.

1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Austin's Speech Act Theory has provided a deeper understanding of language, the medium of human communication [1]. With the progress of society and the development of the times, researchers have found that communicative theories are not only relevant to language learners, but may even involve the influence of social context on language use. The concept of interactional competence has subsequently proposed by Kramsch in 1986 [2]. In recent decades, people often apply his theory to study the field of education, especially for the study of teacher-student interaction in the second language classroom, so as to explore the relationship between teachers and students with better teaching strategies. However, the possible problem of modern research is that most of the research objects have higher education level, and their cultural background may be monotonous and consistent, and most of them are offline education models popular before this year, relatively speaking, lacking the background diversity of the research objects. This study fills in this gap to solve this problem. This project

will explore the Interactional Competence between teachers and students by using Conversational Analysis method from two online English classes for elementary and intermediate learners of English as a second language on YouTube. With the progress of society and the development of the times, researchers have found that communicative theories are not only relevant to language learners, but may even involve the influence of social context on language use. The possible problem is that in recent decades, research interests have expanded from interlanguage to the ability to interact, where interaction refers to the complete ecology of social practice, that is, the full range of language and specific resources used by the speaker in the interaction.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that this study intends to use is Austin's Speech Act Theory, which is from the book of *How To Do Things With Words* [3]. In this theory, when a speaker speaks, there are three spontaneous behavioral meanings. First is "The locutionary act," which is defined as the semantic surface meaning of a sentence. Secondly, the illocutionary act focuses on the speaker's intention, but the speaker does not express it in plain words. The last one is the perlocutionary act, and it is a somewhat deeper extension on the basis of the two mentioned earlier. Even if the intention of the sentence is understood by the listener, focusing on whether the listener will act after this. As time goes by, according to John Searle, *Speech Acts An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* [4], one speech act is the smallest unit of language. Applying this theory to the analysis of classroom teaching can be easy to find out the problems in the classroom process, so that people can save more time to figure it out and make progress.

2.2 Related theories

There might be some characteristics that this study might be related to in previous studies. For example, comprehension check is one of the most significant tools of the teachers' teaching methods [5], which means when teachers ask a comprehension question, they use students' response to determine whether it's time to move on to the next part or topic. If the student's response is not clear, they should stop at the part or topic which they are learning and they teachers should help the students understand much better so that they can move on to the next level. In short, when teachers use this method effectively, the students will study more furtherly. If teacher uses comprehension check, according to the research of Pica and Long [6], it is not difficult to find that the class is still teacher-centered, though teacher would ask students questions to check their comprehension in some extend. Moreover, wait time is one of the characteristics as well, which was pointed by Marry Budd Rowe [7], and she divides them into two categories. The first is the time spent waiting for students after the teacher asks them a question. The second is the teacher's waiting time after students respond [8]. Therefore, the length of time depends on the teacher. Under the premise of not being extreme, if the teacher

has enough patience and gives the students enough time to think and reflect, the learning effect will be better. On the contrary, if the teacher does not give the students enough time and blindly speed up the teaching process, the students' learning effect is not good. Finally, repeat is also one of the characteristics related to the previous studies [9]. The first type is often used in listening and speaking pedagogy when the teacher has read a sentence or word and the student repeats what the teacher has read. The other is that the teacher repeats the student's incorrect answer, perhaps with some questioning tone, so that the student realizes that there is something wrong with his answer, and then thinks again to find the right answer. Therefore, proper repetition can improve the classroom learning effect, but excessive repetition caused by teachers' habits may not be conducive to classroom teaching.

2.3 Using Conversation analysis to analyze Teacher-students Interactions

There are previous studies using CA [1-5], however, some of them might look into translanguaging, while this study only focuses on one language-English. The three people Emanuel Schegloff, Harvey Sacks and Gail Jefferson [10], due to the dissatisfaction with the methodologies and sociology of that time, the field of Conversation Analysis (CA) was born. As time goes by, CA spread rapidly not only limited to sociology, such as applied linguistics, psychology, and communication studies. At the same time, it provides more jobs and stimulate more research directions for scholars in more fields. From the fundamental perspective, having a conversation is the result of much joint motivation [11]. In a short word, CA's related research object need to be the mode of talk-in-interaction. Recently more and more people have explored the possible contributions of 'Conversation Analysis' (CA) to field of 'classroom international competence'. This definition was introduced to describe the function of the tutor in the process of finishing the academic task [12]. On the basis of the original concept, such as the study of Edwards and Mercer who explored the knowledge development in adult learning groups [13]. At the same time, Mercer and Littleton who figured out the relationship between dialogue and children's learning development, it is obvious that CA has gradually evolved and applied to the study of classroom interaction competence whether the learners' age [14].

3 RESULTS

In this section, a total of four teaching cases are listed to analyze the interaction between students and teachers with the method of Conversation Analysis. The former two examples are from the same class, while the latter two examples are from another class. Both use online classes to teach foreign languages to students whose first language is not English.

Example 1

01 T: Alright, good morning, everyone. =

02 T: =I missed Rosa, Margaret, Arifin, Cisco. (0.2)

03 T: =Welcome to personal development class=

04 T: =This is a recorded online class demonstration with participation of Burkina Science Kid 11 student volunteer themselves. =

05 T: Thank you and happy watching. (1.4) +

06 T: waves hands and smiles

+Ss waves their hands and smile

07 T: Koi Kahani. (0.2)

08 T: Alright. =

09 T: =So before we start, I want you to \$I want to see your smile.

+show the picture of “smile” from different people

10 T: ↑Naps, naps, NAPS. =

+ S posts gesture of “yeah” and smiles

11 T: =I'm happy to see you all.

Concentration is the priority. The significance of continuous focus in relation to academic achievement is widely acknowledged [15]. The teacher greeted the students by reading their names in turn before class. The teacher then interacted with the students by waving to make sure they were listening to her. In this transcript, the teacher's behavior concentrated the students' attention and provided the basic guarantee for the classroom effect of this class. At the same time, the teacher's waving movement and smiling expression showed enough affinity to the students. The study of Richmond [16] found a substantial and moderate connection among teacher affinity-seeking behavior and student self-identified motivation, as well as with both subjective academic and behavioral outcomes. The teacher's gestures and expressions not only relax the students' mood, but also ensure the concentration of the students mentioned above. In addition, the teacher then used repeated words to imitate the sound of the camera to interact with the students. One of the most basic forms of teacher feedback is the use of overlapping words, echo or repetition, which describes how teachers repeat back to students what they say nearly exactly and can be used to provide students implied assessment about their knowledge or academic success [17]. What the teacher stimulates students' interest and strengthens the interactive competence between teacher and student.

Example 2 (continued)

01 T: xxx Game zoom whiteboard, so the class will be divided into 3 groups. =

+ T reads the PowerPoint

02 T: =Each group will select one or it is the one who will drop in the white board and the rest of the members will be the guest.

03 T: So, you can uh unmute your microphone uh so that you can talk. =

04 T: =For Group One, it's Indian xxxxx Neeraja, Alessandra, Renzo, Free Kayal.

05 T: 43s It's really easy gerella channel and Max, right?

+T smiles

06 T: So, there is the mechanics you need to guess the object or

(1.4) + T checks the note she wrote maybe

07 T: SORRY guess the person here and guess the person or object be in grown in the quite word within 40 seconds only.

08 T: The right answer is equivalent to one point in the group with.

09 T: The highest point will be the winner.

10 T: So \$let's play the game.

+ change the PowerPoint to the next page

11 T: So, Raja, group number one. =

12 T: You can unmute your microphone and guest for 40 seconds.

13 T: Hi Raja, Are you ready? Time starts NOW.

(40.0) + T & Ss both laugh#1

14 T: What is that?

+ T laughs #2

+ Ss laugh #3

15 S: xxx

16 T: Alright, I think it's fine.

+ T warmly laughs #4

+ Ss laugh happily #5

The act of teaching necessitates the cultivation of patience [18]. In the example class, the teacher gave enough patience and encouragement for students to reflect and think for a long time. Instead of interrupting the students' thinking and criticizing them, the teacher gave the students plenty of time to think about how to express words through drawing. Even if the students did not express it perfectly in the end, the teacher only smiled and encouraged them. This provides a relaxing class atmosphere and the results in students are in a good mood. The impact of emotions on the dynamics of teacher-student relationships is substantial [19]. Only in a relaxed state can students' brains operate more flexibly, so as to better stimulate their various potentials. Moreover, in this example, the teacher divided the students into groups and then carried out class activities. The role of teacher is organizer. According to Harmer [20], the primary responsibilities that teachers must do is the organization of students for different tasks. It is widely acknowledged that the person who teaches possesses the authority to determine the suitability of instructional materials and to ensure that they comply with the students' requirements. At the same time, the teacher needs to determine if the learning experiences provided to students are suitable and conducive to their educational development. For example, different classroom tasks can be assigned according to the different learning levels of students. Teachers can also set tasks for both strong and weak students to work together on. In short, as an organizer, the teacher should try our best to involve every student in the class so as to achieve better classroom results.

Example 3

((The class begins))

01 T: xxx

02 T: Begin lesson one provides the nature and elements of communication you have. =

03 T: =Their definition of communication is provided by Merriam Webster's Dictionary. =

04 T: =That definition gives us the idea that it=

05 T: =xxx and first and foremost and ACT are process.

(1.4) + Ss are doing their own things except listening to T speaking

06 T: When we say that it is a process and app=

07 T: =It is being carried out and it is a process communication has steps to follow or procedures the they. (0.2)

08 T: It may not be as stringent as how it is with other processes=

09 T: =but we cannot deny that before we say something=

10 T: =our minds tried to process that information first.

+ Ss are doing their own things except listening to T speaking

During this example class, the role of the teacher is controller. The teacher used a conventional approach to education, which places the teacher at the center of the learning process, has under criticism due to its perceived ineffectiveness in cultivating higher-order cognitive skills such as inventiveness, flexibility, and ability to think critically. These skills are considered crucial for the academic growth of students [21]. Reviewing this teaching case, although the teacher played a role in controlling the class progress, he did not interact with the students at all. It can even be seen that the pause time between each sentence of the teacher, that is, to give students too few thinking times. In particular, this case happened at the beginning of the class. The teacher only mentioned what he had learned in the last class, but completely neglected to understand how the students had mastered it.

Example 4

01 T: WHEN I did the discussion of the pros (0.2)

+Marc accidentally turned on the mute button

02 T: ↑Do you have a question, Marc? =

03 T: =about the discussion they had so far? (2.0)

04 T: Our ↑discussion? (2.0)

+ Marc do not know what to say, and others students turns off the camera ((maybe they do not want to ask the questions))

05 T: Do you have any model right now?

+The tone was not very good.

06 T: Your mother actually came to xxx. YES.

+ Marc holds up a book and show it to the teacher

07 T: It's not today, it's not. =

08 T: =You can actually look at that=

09 T: = but the discussions are going on.

+ no wait time for Marc's reflection

10 T: =I suggest the discussions are going on=

+ T tends to close off the mute button of Marc

11 T: =You also look at what stage in the major=

12 T: =that's what classes are actually doing. =

13 T: =They are they are browsing up the module=

+ S yawns

14 T: =they are going over the mail while discussions are provided and they might want to take down notes and add it to the modular they have. =

+ few Ss turn off the camera

15 T: =Okay, proceed.

In this section, a student turned on the microphone and interacted with the teacher. In this process, initiation is the teacher's questioning, while response refers to the student's response to the teacher, such as yawning, nodding and shaking, and feedback is the teacher's negative words. After successfully initiating the process of taking apart

the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) framework, a more desirable sequential setting may arise, enabling the generation of additional learner-generated questions [22]. In this case, the other students did not have more questions or a tendency to interact with the teacher as a result of Marc's interaction with the teacher. Instead, almost all the students turned off their cameras. Recent studies have indicated that a considerable number of teachers tend to offer a greater number of negative words in response to students' incorrect behavior, as opposed to positive statements for correct actions, despite occasions when students frequently exhibit appropriate conduct [23]. In the conversation with Marc, the teacher repeatedly responded by using negative words such as no and not. Marc maybe represents those students who are not particularly excellent in their study. From the teacher's point of view, the right thing to do may not be to simply deny their answers or actions, even though the student's understanding of the knowledge may be wrong [24]. Continue to ask them the reason for their idea with positive and encouraging words, and then patiently listen to the correct guide and encourage them to explore the right answer may be the most correct approach. In general, Examples 1 and 2 could show active teaching and have stronger Interactional Competence. On the contrary, Example 3 and Example 4 can be reflected as negative teaching, and the Interactional Competence is weaker.

4 CONCLUSION

To sum up, the aim of this research is to explore the influence of teachers' behavior, especially discourse, on students' learning effect in the language classroom of second foreign language learners. Through conversation analysis, this paper concludes that the teacher's words in class have a great impact on students' learning performance, such as remembering classmates' names, having enough wait time, and students should have enough patience to think, which could give students enough positive responses and encouragement. To elaborate, comparing Example 1 and Example 3, it is not difficult to find that both occur at the beginning of the class. In Example 1, the teacher clearly remembered the names of the students in the class and prompted them to wave to the camera and smile. In contrast, the teacher in example 3 did not greet the students before class, although the teacher orally stated the content of the last class, but did not interact with the students, and could not know the degree of students' mastery of the knowledge learned in the last class. Comparing Example 2 and Example 4, it can be seen that both of them occurred in the classroom, and both were teachers and students interacting. From the point of view of example 2, the teacher wanted her students to learn knowledge by playing games. The teacher first introduced the rules of the game, and divided the class into groups, and then began the game. Although the first group of students did not complete the task, it resulted in the same group of students did not guess the answer. But the teacher's attitude was very gentle, the classroom atmosphere was very good, this atmosphere was very relaxed students. However, in example 4, although it was also an interaction between teachers and students, the teacher spoke for too long and the tone and attitude were not good. As a result, students had no time to answer the teacher's questions and felt nervous. At the same time, many other students

also turned off the cameras, which shows that the teacher's interactive way discounts students' enthusiasm to interact with the teacher. There are still some limitations. The investigation method involved in this paper is qualitative. Researchers utilizing qualitative approaches often prioritize the collection of experiential facts, understandings, and perspectives of individuals, rather than depend just on statistical quantities. In another word, different teaching methods have their own advantages and disadvantages, which need to be determined by combining learner's needs and levels. Perhaps future research can involve more detailed and comprehensive exploration, which is of great help to the cultivation of teachers' professional quality in the future.

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