CA and the Analysis of Foreign Language Interaction: A Reply to Wagner[1]

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Abstract

In Journal of Pragmatics 26, Wagner suggests that CA methodology is challenged by foreign language interaction (FLI) and presents a number of reasons why this would appear to be the case. This reply asserts that CA is in fact quite capable of handling FLI data and supports this assertion by analysing three extracts of FLI data. The reply concludes that, whilst FLI does have certain characteristics which raise interesting questions and which make it difficult to analyse, this constitutes primarily a challenge to analysts rather than to the fundamental methodological principles of CA.

Biographical Data

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Introduction

CA has, in the course of its development, used interactional data involving native speakers rather than non-native speakers (Firth, 1996). The special issue Journal of Pragmatics, 26 ('Conversation Analysis of foreign language data') addresses some of the issues raised when applying CA methodology to interaction involving non-native speakers. In his article "Foreign language acquisition through interaction - A critical review of research on conversational adjustments" in Journal of Pragmatics, 26, Johannes Wagner makes a number of very incisive criticisms of the SLA research on conversational adjustments, demonstrating how it has employed decontextualised CA concepts.

At the end of his article (1996: 232-3), however, Wagner makes several claims or challenges concerning the ability of CA methodology to handle certain types of interactional data. The purpose of the present article is to argue (by means of data analysis) that current CA is in fact quite capable of handling such data and that the data do **not** call into question the fundamental methodological principles of CA. I will paraphrase Wagner's points (supporting the paraphrases with quotations) and then discuss each one in turn.

1) *CA is challenged by cross-cultural encounters*

CA "takes linguistic competence on the part of the conversationalists for granted. The prototypical conversationalist is a monolingual speaker in a stable first language setting, preferably the analyst's own. In such cases, the analyst has the necessary membership knowledge to understand ongoing interaction........ in FLI (Foreign Language Interaction) culture and cultural systems are much more fuzzy. In whose cultural frame does FLI operate? .....This is clearly a challenge to current CA." (Wagner, 1996: 232)

Implicit in Wagner's challenge is the supposition that culture and cultural frames are exogenous to the interaction and that interaction occurs 'in' a cultural frame. If, then, the interaction is between two Germans, analysis is relatively straightforward, since we know which cultural frame the interaction is operating 'in'. If, however, the conversation is between a German and a Greek, the analysis becomes problematic, as we don't know whose cultural frame the interaction is operating 'in'.

However, I feel that Wagner's suggestion that interaction operates 'in' a cultural frame is not wholly compatible with the current CA perspective, which is that there is a reflexive relationship between interaction and culture. For the purposes of analysis, culture and other social constructs need to be seen, in the first instance, as endogenous to the talk: they 'inhabit' the talk. In other words, interactants reveal through the details of their talk which social or

cultural constructs they are orienting to: they are actively evoking and creating a context, a social world and a culture in and through their talk (Heritage, in press: 4). Since this may sound rather abstract, I would like to demonstrate how this works in practice by discussing the data which Wagner cites, which involves a female Greek immigrant to Germany (NNS) conversing with a German shop worker (NS) who is delivering soft drinks to her flat:

Extract 1

1 NNS   Heute bißle spät kommen Du.

        Today a little late come you

2 NS   Grißgott

        Hello

3 NNS   Drißgott

        Hello

        (15 lines removed)

4 NNS   A so nächste Woche daene Vaataar, ah?

        And then next week your father, TAG

5 NS   Letzte Woche Vater waar,

        Last week father was

6 NNS   Vater,

        father

7 NS   Ja ja

8 NNS   Warum Du nix kommen?

          why you no come?

9 NS   Doch

          Yes, I did

10 NNS   Ja.

11 NS   Ha hm.

12 NNS   Daene Vater kommen, oda?

          your father come, or what?

13 NS   Achsoo, Vater kommen, ja.

          oh well, father come, yes

14 NNS   Nja.

15 NS   Achsoo, ha ii

          oh yeah, well I

16 NNS   Eeh eh daene Vata kom (..)

          er er your father come

17 NS   Jaa egaal, oder?

          well, who cares, TAG?

18 NNS   (Di). Jaa egal i sagen warum. Du krank?

          well who cares I say why. you ill?

19 NS   Ja, ich haabe dann andre. Ich waar aao dabei. Ich aoch dabei, aber ich

waar bae Schmitt   drüüben, gäl.

          yes, I have others. I was there too. I was there, but I was at Schmitt's

over there, TAG

20 NNS   Hoaah,

21 NS   Vaater halt hierher.

         father happened to (came) here

(Wagner, 1996: 225-6)

According to Wagner, CA is challenged by data such as the above, since we do not

know which cultural frame the extract is operating 'in'. Applying the current CA

perspective, however, we can see in the above data a clear example of

participants in FLI actively evoking their own culture or cultural frame through

the details of their talk. In FLI between NSs and NNSs, the NNS's difficulty with

the L2 is a type of trouble to which both participants orient in the interaction.

It will be argued in the course of this article that different participants in

different contexts find different methods of coping with this trouble, and

thereby evoke different 'cultures'. In the case of the above extract the NS is

orienting to the NNS's trouble with the L2 by producing minimalised, pidginised

interlanguage forms himself. For example, in line 13 NS says "Vater kommen, ja"

"father come, yes" (using an infinitive form of the verb) instead of "mein Vater

ist gekommen, ja" "my father came, yes" (using a perfect form of the verb in

German). The participants are creating an 'interculture' through the use of in-

terlanguage in the details of their talk. The important methodological point here

is that we initially take the 'interculture' to be evoked and created through the

use of the interlanguage i.e. we move in our analysis from the detail of the talk

to the exploration of the culture (or other social contruct), and we take the culture to be endogenous to the talk. To talk of a cross-cultural encounter or 'interculture' is only relevant when it is evident that the participants orient to such a construct in the details of their talk. As Schegloff (1987: 219) puts it:

"In an interaction's moment-to-moment development, the parties, singly and together, select and display in their conduct which of the indefinitely many aspects of context they are making relevant, or are invoking, for the immediate moment."

So for the purposes of CA analysis we do not initially take culture and cultural frames to be lurking somewhere 'out there' in the background, but to be evoked by the participants through the details of their interaction. Of course macro social structures such as 'culture' do exist independently of talk. However, for the methodological reasons which will be outlined in section 3 below, current CA has found it necessary to ground the analysis, in the first instance, in the details of the talk.

2) *CA methodology requires participants to 'refer' to a problem of communication: in FLI this does not happen, rendering CA analysis impracticable.*

Wagner talks of a challenge "aimed directly at the methodological heart of CA", which is that "It is paramount for the analysis that the participants themselves refer to a problem of communication. But at least anecdotal evidence indicates that they very often don't do this (in FLI)." (Wagner, 1996: 232).

I feel that this misrepresents the CA position, and that Wagner's own data contradicts his challenge. I can find nothing in the CA literature which suggests that it is paramount that participants have to 'refer' (in the sense of an explicit or overt statement) to problems of communication. The CA claim is rather that participants invariably **orient** in some way to problems of communication, and that this orientation is evident in the details of the interaction. So for example in extract 1 the participants orient to a problem of communication, namely NNS's lack of proficiency in the L2. This orientation is available in the details of the interaction, in that NS is producing minimalised, pidginised interlanguage forms himself. By using the term 'refer' (which I cannot find in the CA literature) Wagner seems to imply that an explicit performative on the part of the participants is necessary for CA analysis. This simply is **not** necessary for CA analysis. We cannot for example expect NS in the above extract to exclaim: "Since you are a non-native speaker, I am now going to speak pidgin German to you". However, we can expect the participants' orientations to problems of communication to be available to us in the details of the interaction, and this does indeed form a central resource for CA analysis. For example, Levinson (1983: 319) points out that a key source of verification that an interactional

organisation is actually oriented to by the participants, rather than being an artefact of analysis, is what happens when a hitch occurs in the organisation. Or, as Heritage (1995: 399) puts it, deviant cases often serve to demonstrate the normativity of practices. Levinson's and Heritage's points are really rather different to Wagner's, though.

3) *In FLI, participants often don't understand what is going on: CA cannot analyse these cases.*

"(Participants) may walk away from a FLI with the gut feeling that one - or the other, respectively - has not understood what was going on. The German speaker in extract 1 seems to be in that situation when he asks, "who cares?".... CA, being a situated study of interaction ... is unable to analyze cases of formal understanding. For the time being, it is unclear to me how data of this type might be analyzed." (Wagner, 1996: 232)

Non-comprehension between participants is another example of trouble in interaction, and participants orient to the trouble in various different ways. Current CA attempts to portray how participants orient to some varieties of non-comprehension and this may include accounting for how participants attempt to repair the trouble. Wagner appears to imply that non-comprehension is uniquely or primarily a problem in FLI and therefore difficult for CA to handle: this is not

the case. Native speakers experience non-comprehension when interacting with other native speakers as well as with non-native speakers, and there have been several recent CA studies of how (native speaker) participants orient to non-comprehension (Drew, 1995; Drew, in press; Jefferson, 1988).

Wagner claims that CA is "unable to analyze cases of formal understanding" (1996: 232). According to Wagner, "In substantive understanding, the participants create meaning jointly. In formal understanding, the interactants act without understanding but as if they had understood." I believe that such a criticism is inapplicable to CA, since CA does not make any premature appeal to cognitive states, and I hope to show that the distinction between substantive and formal understanding is simply irrelevant to CA analysis. Wagner's own data and analysis provide an example of how premature application of such concepts as substantive and formal understanding actually confuses the analysis and tends to lead to misinterpretation, whereas a CA approach explicates the participants' orientations in the interaction much better.

Wagner writes that participants in FLI "may walk away from a FLI with the gut feeling that one - or the other, respectively - has not understood what was going on. The German speaker in extract 1 seems to be in that situation when he asks, "who cares?"." Now I will argue that Wagner's suggestion (that "who cares" in line 17 means that the speaker doesn't know what's going on) is untenable. I propose that Wagner has misinterpreted this line because of a premature focus on

cognitive states. By contrast, a CA approach, focussing on the participants'

interactional orientations and on sequential environments, can lead us to a more

satisfactory analysis not only of line 17, but also of the whole extract.

The key to the whole exchange is the "egal" in line 17. Thus far in the dialogue

NNS has tried to establish why NS's father came to NNS's home to deliver soft

drinks the previous week instead of NS. "Egal" in German literally means "equal"

or, less literally, "the same". Now the translation which Wagner quotes of

"egal" as "who cares?" does indeed make it seem as if NS does not understand what

is going on in line 17. I am unable to find "who cares?" offered as a translation

of "egal", "es ist egal" or "das ist egal" in any of the four German-English

dictionaries which I consulted[2]. Possible translations included: "that doesn't

matter"; "that doesn't make any difference"; "it's all the same"; "I don't mind

either way"; "it's immaterial"; "it's all one"; "I don't care either way". I do

not intend to imply that "who cares?" is a totally impossible translation of

"egal" or "es/das ist egal". It does seem to convey NS's sense of irritation at

NNS's questioning (which I will comment on later). However, the translation is

clearly an idiosyncratic one, since it does not appear in any of the dictionaries

consulted. Furthermore, I think that there are three major problems with this

translation. Firstly, I feel that it is pragmatically misleading in this context,

since it may give the impression that NS does not understand what is going on;

this is how Wagner (1996: 232) construes this line. I will argue below that NS

does understand what is happening on an interactional level. Secondly, the

translation in Wagner 1996 of "egal, oder?" is "who cares, TAG?". Now it is

simply not possible in Standard English to use a formal tag question with "who

cares", that is, one cannot say "who cares, isn't it?". Thirdly, the translation

is unidimensional in that it does not make available another function of the

utterance which the participants orient to; since NS is speaking a reduced pidgin

German, he is of course using a considerable amount of ellipsis. Line 17 could be

reconstructed from ellipsis as "Ja, es ist egal wer kommt, oder?" "yes, it's all

the same who comes, isn't it?". NS understands that NNS is trying to find out

why his father delivered last week instead of him. NS's move in line 17 is

designed to query NNS's motivation for asking the question. Line 17 is thus

perfectly pertinent to the sequential environment and displays understanding of

what's going on (in terms of the sequential environment), **not** lack of

understanding. A translation of line 17 which might better convey the pragmatic

import of NS's utterance whilst retaining the pidgin element, sense of annoyance

and tag question might be: "Yes, all the same, isn't it?"

It is unclear from Wagner's article whether Wagner himself has made the

translation (of "who cares") or whether the translation was part of the original

data (Jakovidou, 1994) and, in all fairness, the original translation may have

been done freely and without the aim of illustrating a pragmatic discussion. In

any case, I believe that this demonstrates the problems involved in using

translations to illustrate pragmatic discussions. As Levinson (1983: 311) points

out, "a single minimal utterance .... can perform, and can be carefully designed

to perform, a number of quite different functions at once." It can be exceptionally difficult to convey all of the different functions of a single utterance through translation (see also Moerman 1988: 7). On the other hand, if we want to use translations as evidence in pragmatic discussions, we need to be very careful to convey all of the most important functions of that utterance through the translation.

The reader may wonder at this point, however, whether there is any interactional evidence as to whether my analysis (and translation) or Wagner's analysis (and translation) of line 17 is more tenable, and at this point CA methodology may be brought to bear. A basic principle of CA methodology is that interactants display, in their current turn, an understanding of their partner's previous turn. So if we examine the slot subsequent to line 17 we should be able to identify NNS's analysis of NS's line 17. Does NNS think that NS understands what's going on or not? In line 18 NNS says: "(Di). Jaa egal i sagen warum. Du krank?". In Wagner's article this is translated as " well who cares I say why. you ill?", but I would prefer to translate it as "yes, all the same. I say why? you ill?". Now if someone displays non-comprehension of what is going on, a typical next move by a partner is to initiate repair. We do not get this in NNS's turn in line 18. Again there is a lot of ellipsis involved, but I would try to reconstruct NNS's turn from ellipsis as "Ja, es ist egal wer kommt. Ich sage: warum ist dein Vater letzte Woche gekommen? Warst Du krank?". "Yes, it's all the same who comes. I am saying: why did your father come last week? Were you ill?".

So NNS is analysing NS's line 17 as having been perfectly appropriate and comprehensible and as having displayed comprehension of what was going on in that sequential environment. NNS analyses NS's line 17 as querying her motivation for asking why the father made the delivery the previous week. Line 18 "displays understanding" (Sacks et al., 1974: 728) of NS's turn in line 17. NNS makes a move of agreement in line 18 "ja egal" which confirms that it is indeed all the same to her whether the father or the son performs the delivery. She then explains the reason for her enquiry: she wants to know why the father delivered the previous week rather than NS and tries to legitimise her enquiry by characterising her motives as concern for NS's health. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 103), a typical positive politeness strategy is to notice and attend to the hearer in terms of his interests, wants and needs.

So if we take lines 4-21 as a whole sequence, we can characterise the interactional moves broadly as follows:

lines 4-16. NNS is trying to establish why the father came to her door last week instead of NS.

line 17. NS suggests it is all the same who performs the delivery, querying NNS's motivation for her questions.

line 18. NNS agrees that it is all the same and characterises her motivation as concern for NS's health.

lines 19-21. Now that NNS has displayed her motivation for the questioning, NS

explains the delivery   routine. He and his father both carry out deliveries at the same time. Last week he **was** doing the deliveries, but it so happened that his father came to NNS's door "father happened to (came) here"   whereas   he happened to go to Schmitt's door.

Now we are finally in a position to characterise the overall sequence as indeed one involving non-comprehension, but in a completely different way to Wagner's approach. It should be stressed that it is only legitimate (in CA) to discuss cognitive states once a preliminary analysis of the sequential environment has been made. NNS's questions appear to be motivated by non-comprehension of the delivery routines: why does NS appear one week and his father another week? This motivation is made explicit in line 18. Such questions are fairly typical of immigrant non-native speakers, who find themselves in a culture where the simplest daily matters are performed differently. In order to understand the new routines, non-native speakers often pose questions about them to native speakers. In extract 1, NS appears to display non-comprehension of the motivation for NNS's questions. It is all the same to him, his father, (and probably the German customers) whether he or his father performs the delivery. Again, this is fairly typical of native speakers being asked by non-native speakers about daily routines. Because the routines are normal and unproblematic to native speakers, they do not grasp why the non-native speakers are problematising the routines, and are often irritated by it. NS's non-comprehension of NNS's motivation culminates in line 17. Once NNS explains her motivation in terms of positive

politeness in line 18, NS feels immediately able to explain the routine in line 19, and so the 'cultural' non-comprehension is lifted on both sides. We should also note at this point that the 'interculture' which the participants create is not only evident in the linguistic forms which they produce, but also in the choice of topic for their talk. Indeed, culture and interaction are inextricably intertwined in this extract.

This point may also be evident in the first three lines of the interaction. NNS starts the interaction with

"Heute bißle spät kommen Du", "Today a little late come you". This is not a conventional opening move in a conversation in Germany: greeting is a more conventional opening move. So in line 2 we see NS delivering a greeting ("Grißgott" "Hello") and apparently failing to respond to NNS's opening utterance. When someone makes an observation regarding a partner's lateness, an excuse accounting for lateness normally becomes conditionally relevant in the partner's next turn. A basic principle of CA methodology is that interactants display, in their current turn, an understanding of their partner's previous turn: "A turn's talk will be heard as directed to a prior turn's talk, unless special techniques are used to locate some other talk to which it is directed." (Sacks et al., 1974: 728). It is therefore possible to see NS's turn in line 2 as displaying an analysis of NNS's opening in line 1 as being (culturally) inappropriate. And so in line 3 NNS, instead of insisting on a conditionally relevant response to her observation in line 1, orients instead to NS's

conventional opening by responding with a conventional greeting ("Drißgott" "Hello"). Unfortunately, the next 15 lines have been removed from the data, so it is not possible to trace the development of this interesting sequence further. So although the participants' talk is ostensibly 'about' the delivery of soft drinks, it is also, on another level, 'about' cross-cultural trouble, and this is evident again in the details of the interaction, in the **types of interactional move** which the participants make.

What a CA analysis of extract 1 shows us, then, is that this is an interactional sequence in which both linguistic and cultural troubles are oriented to, and in which the participants jointly create an interlanguage and 'interculture' through the details of their talk. There is a **reflexive** relationship between interaction and culture here. It is the use of those particular linguistic forms, topics and types of interactional moves which talk the 'interculture' into being. From another angle, however, the 'interculture' is evident in the linguistic forms produced, in the topic of the talk and in the types of interactional move made.

It must be stressed that the CA claim is **not** that macro social structures such as culture or cultural frames do not exist except in the interaction. Talk is reflexively related to context, culture and macro social structures, and talk is certainly shaped by culture. However, the methodological imperatives detailed by Schegloff (1987; 1991; 1992) dictate that we ground the analysis in the first instance in the details of the interaction. Rather than quote Schegloff, I will

attempt to transpose Schegloff's points to the area of 'culture' in order to make them relevant to the current discussion. The basic problem, when trying to link talk and culture, is that there are an indefinite number of 'external' aspects of cultural, social or personal identity or 'context' which could be potentially relevant to any given instance of talk-in-interaction. So it might or might not be relevant, for example, that the German delivery man in extract 1 is from the former German Democratic Republic (DDR), that he is male, that he is a Lutheran, that he is a former professional footballer, that he has taken a holiday in Greece, that he is 51 years old, that he has just drunk three litres of beer, that he is a socialist, or that he is heterosexual. Any of these characteristics might help us to understand his position in his contemporary culture, society or current context of talk, and might in principle be relevant to our analysis of extract 1. What needs to be shown in an analysis, however, is which of these innumerable, potentially relevant characteristics are **actually** procedurally relevant to those participants at that moment. Current CA suggests that the only feasible way to do this is to start in the details of the interaction, rather than in the external details of the culture. For example, in the above analysis of extract 1 I have tried to show that one particular characteristic of the interactants' identities is procedurally relevant to and consequential for the interaction. This is their national or 'cultural' identities as German and as Greek immigrant. Working from the details of the interaction, this was shown to be procedurally relevant to the linguistic forms used, to the topic of the talk and to the interactional moves made.

However, the national or 'cultural' characteristics of being German and of being Greek immigrant are not **necessarily** relevant to every encounter between two such interactants. The same German delivery man might, for example, encounter a Greek immigrant of long standing who speaks perfect German and who has become so well integrated into the German way of life that the German delivery man assumes that she is a 'German'. In this case the external cultural characteristic 'Greek immigrant', whilst still holding true, would probably not be procedurally relevant to an analysis of the talk. A cultural characteristic is only relevant to a CA analysis if it can be shown to inhabit the details of the talk. I feel that the current CA position, as detailed above, is quite compatible with calls for culturally contexted analysis (Moerman 1988; 1996). There is, in principle, no limit to the amount of background knowledge of culture, or of the number of cultural characteristics which can be brought to bear in CA analysis. For example, I have used my background knowledge of German culture and of cross-cultural encounters in my CA analysis of extract 1. But in order to establish which of the innumerable characteristics of a culture or a context the participants are actually orienting to, CA analysis must always start with and be grounded in the details of the talk. Or, as Moerman (1988: 70), puts it:

"Contexted conversation analysis is directed towards discovering which of the many culturally available distinctions are active and relevant to the situation, how these distinctions are brought to bear, and what they

consist of."

To conclude this section on the analysis of non-comprehension, we can state the following.   CA is able to analyse cases of non-comprehension, which can be regarded as instances of trouble to which participants orient through the detail of their talk. Wagner's claim that CA is unable to handle cases of formal understanding does not apply. If indeed participants in a particular in-teractional sequence did act without understanding but as if they had understood (see also Firth, 1996), then this should be evident in the details of the in-teraction and therefore available to CA analysis. Wagner appears to claim (1996: 232) that extract 1 line 17 is an example of formal understanding. If this is indeed the case, then my reanalysis of the extract from a current CA perspective can be taken as evidence to counter Wagner's claim.

4) *CA has difficulty in handling FLI*

Wagner claims (1996: 232) that "current CA ... is not geared towards the analysis of FLI. It takes linguistic competence on the part of conversationalists for granted. The prototypical conversationalist is a monolingual speaker in a stable first language setting, preferably the analyst's own."

Presumably, the best way to argue against Wagner's claim would be to present

convincing analyses of FLI data using CA methodology. In order, therefore, to demonstrate that CA in fact has no problem in handling FLI, I would like to present a sample CA analysis. The analysis is from my doctoral thesis (Seedhouse, 1996) which is an attempt to apply CA methodology to L2 classroom interaction (i.e. foreign language interaction involving NSs and NNSs). In extract 2 below, we can see how CA is able to portray the enormous complexity and multiplexity of L2 classroom FLI. In extract 1 we saw a NS orienting to the trouble of a NNS lacking in proficiency in the L2 by downgrading his own utterances to pidgin German. In extract 2, however, we see a NS teacher orienting to the trouble of a NNS lacking in proficiency in the L2 by more or less the reverse process, i.e. by upgrading the NNS's utterances.

Extract 2

1   T: Vin, have you ever been to the movies? What's your favorite movie?

2   L: Big.

3   T: Big, OK, that's a good movie, that was about a little boy inside a big man,

               wasn't it?

4   L: Yeah, boy get surprise all the time.

5   T: Yes, he was surprised, wasn't he? Usually little boys don't do the things that

         men do, do they?

6   L: No, little boy no drink.

7   T: That's right, little boys don't drink.

(Johnson, 1995: 23)

If we analyse turn-taking and topic at the same time, we can see that, although the teacher is allocating

turns, the learner is able to develop a sub-topic and is allowed some interactional space. In line 1 T

introduces the carrier topic (films) and constrains L's turn in line 2, which is a minimum response ap-

propriate to the turn. In line 3 T shifts the topic slightly from the carrier topic (films) to the sub-topic of

the specific film "Big" nominated by L. In doing so T validates and approves L's sub-topic by calling

it a good movie. T constrains L's next turn by making a general statement summarising the plot of the

movie ("that was about a little boy inside a big man") together with a tag question. This allocates L a

turn, constrains the topic of L's turn (the plot of the film "Big") and simultaneously provides the other

students in the class (who may presumably not know the film) with sufficient information to be able to follow the evolving dialogue. The tag question effectively requires L to confirm the accuracy of T's summary of the film's plot, but also allows L the interactional space (if L wishes) to develop the sub-topic. L does confirm T's summary of the sub-topic and then chooses to contribute new information which develops the sub-topic (the film's plot), namely in line 4 ("boy get surprise all the time"). This utterance is linguistically incorrect, although the propositional content is clear. Since L is introducing 'new' information, L is effectively developing the sub-topic, to which T could respond in his/her next turn.

At this point T could choose to 1) correct the learner's utterance 2) continue to develop the sub-topic 3) decline to adopt L's sub-topic and change the course of the interaction: T has superior interactional rights and is not obliged to adopt the direction in which L is pushing the interaction. T effectively chooses to combine choices 1) and 2) in the first sentence of line 5: "Yes, he was surprised, wasn't he?" There is positive evaluation of the propositional content of the learner utterance followed by an expansion of the learner utterance into a correct sequence of linguistic forms. The type of repair used is embedded correction, that is, a repair done in the context of an appropriate next conversational move,

which in this case is a move of agreement and confirmation:

"That is, the utterances are not occupied by the doing of correcting, but by whatever talk is

in progress ... What we have, then, is embedded correction as a by-the-way occurence in

some ongoing course of talk." (Jefferson, 1987: 95)

This form of correction and expansion is highly reminiscent of adult-child conversation, (See, for

example, adult-child conversation transcripts in Peccei (1994: 83), Painter (1989: 38), Wells Lindfor

(1987: 114) and the technique being used by the teacher here is often termed 'scaffolding' (Johnson,

1995: 75).

In the second sentence of line 5, T then accepts L's invitation to develop the sub-topic, and T's

statement "usually little boys don't do the things that men do" also simultaneously provides the other

students in the class with an explanation as to why the boy was surprised all the time, thus enabling

them to continue to follow the evolving dialogue. The tag question (line 5) again allocates L a turn and

effectively allots him the interactional space to continue to develop the sub-topic should he wish to do

so. L uses "no" in line 6 to agree with the negative tag-question and chooses to develop the sub-topic by providing an example from the film to illustrate T's previous generalised statement with: "little boy no drink". Again his utterance is linguistically incorrect, although the propositional content is clear. Since L is again introducing 'new' information, L effectively invites T to respond to this elaboration of the sub-topic in T's next turn. T's response in line 7 is similar to line 5 in that T performs a move of agreement, simultaneously corrects L's utterance (using embedded correction) and displays a correct version for the other students.

I would now like to demonstrate that the teacher is balancing multiple and sometimes conflicting demands. As Edmondson (1985: 162) puts it: "... the complexity of the classroom is such that several things may be going on publically through talk at the same time." The teacher is orienting to five separate (though related) concerns simultaneously:

1) the teacher's purpose (Johnson, 1995:23) ".. was to allow the students to share their ideas and possibly generate some new vocabulary words within the context of the discussion." This implies that the teacher needs to control the overall topic whilst allowing the learners some

interactional space to develop their own sub-topics. The teacher has to orient, then, to an overall pedagogical plan.

2) The teacher also has to respond to the ideas and personal meanings which the learner chooses to share, and does so successfully in that he/she develops the sub-topic introduced by the learner. So in lines 5 and 7 the teacher responds to the learner utterance with a conversational move of agreement which validates the propositional content of the utterance as well as the introduction of the sub-topic.

3) The teacher also responds to linguistic incorrectness in the individual learner's utterances and conducts embedded repair on them. The linguistic repair is performed in a mitigated and non-face-threatening way because it is prefaced by a move of agreement and approval and because this type of embedded correction can be treated as a by-the-way matter.

4) The teacher must also orient to the other learners in the class. One problem faced by teachers is that individual learners often produce responses which are inaudible or incomprehensible to the other students in the class. So in lines 5 and 7 the teacher is simultaneously displaying approved versions of learner utterances so that the other learners are able to follow the propositional content of the interaction and are also able to receive correctly formed linguistic input.

5) One of the most difficult feats in L2 teaching is to maintain a simultaneous dual focus on both form and meaning. Examination of classroom transripts often shows that focusing on the correctness of linguistic forms leads to 'meaningless' discourse, whereas focusing on meaning leads to accepting incorrect forms, which may in turn lead to fossilised errors. I explore this issue elsewhere (Seedhouse, in press), but at present I would merely like to argue that the teacher in the above extract is skilfully managing to maintain a simultaneous dual focus on both form and meaning. There is a focus on form in that the teacher upgrades and expands the learner's utterances on a linguistic level, which means that the learners have a linguistically correct utterance which can function as both model and input. The focus is simultaneously also on meaning in that the learner is able to contribute 'new' information concerning his/her personal experiences.

As in extract 1, we see in extract 2 the participants' orientation to the trouble of NNS's lack of proficiency in the L2. In extract 1 an 'interculture' was evoked through NS's 'getting down' to NNS's level by producing pidginised interlanguage forms himself. In extract 2, however, we have the institutional context of the L2 classroom. Again, this context or 'culture' is taken, in the first instance,

to be endogenous to the talk. The institutional aim of the L2 classroom is to improve or upgrade the

linguistic proficiency of the learners, and we see this institutional context or culture manifest in the

details of the interaction, in the teacher's use of embedded correction to upgrade the learner's

utterances.

5. *CA does not handle post-hoc reports*

"CA, being a situated study of interaction, does not handle post-hoc reports and is therefore unable to

analyze cases of formal understanding." (Wagner, 1996: 232).

In order to reply to this point, I would like to examine an extract involving communication breakdown

and non-comprehension. It seems that neither the NS teacher nor the NNS students have grasped what

has gone wrong. The extract involves a trainee teacher with a group of L2 learners. According to

Kumaravadivelu (1993: 16-17) the teacher's stated objective was to help the learners learn and use

superlative forms, and she is trying to elicit samples with superlative forms:

Extract 3

1   T: There are different ways of comparing things, you know. We can compare

2   things ... and one is just as the other. You know what a scale is? A Scale: when

3   you weigh things on it. You know I weigh myself ... (pretends to weigh herself

4   on a scale) I am ... woo, a hundred and fifty pounds. I weigh a hundred and

5   fifty pounds. You know what a scale is? ... Sometimes it is easier for you to

6   understand what it is if it's written, is that correct? (Writes 'scale' on

7   blackboard.) Do you know what a scale is?

8   LL: Yah.

9   T: All right you weigh things ... OK? You weigh things on a scale. OK. And ...

10   s ... when we have a scale ... and we put two things on a scale they are the

11   same. It will not go up or down, right? It will be like this, all right? When one

12   is heavier than the other, what happens? (Gestures) Boop ... goes down, right?

13   And in between the two extremes, there is a variety, right? We can express that

14   in language, right? We can express the idea in language, right? We can say you

15   are as tall as I am, right? You are ... eh ... taller than I am. What happens here?

16   We are the same, right? Everybody ... he is as tall as I am. He is taller than

17   I am, right? You are ... nothing personal, I am just playing right now ... you

18   are smaller than I am, right? And, Mr. X (referring to the colleague operating

19   the camera) is the tallest ... of all, right? Eh ... but then we can also say

20   (writes on blackboard) OK ... Mr. Wallace is the tallest .. of what ... the tallest.

21   Sometimes you don't have to use all of it because we know what we are talking

22   about, right? In a conversation if we don't know sometimes we may just have

23   to say yes or no, you know, and sometimes we have to give more information,

24   OK? (writes on blackboard) is the tallest of the class, right?

(Kumaravadivelu, 1993: 20-21)

By line 24 the focus of the lesson seems to have narrowed down to the expression of comparison, and

there is actually a sentence on the board which is an example of a superlative. Since the teacher's

stated objective is to have the learners produce utterances using the superlative structure, we can now

consider that the focus has been adequately established, and the lesson seems to be on the right track.

However, now comes the problem in communication.

Extract 146 (continued)

25   T: All right? Eh ... let's see ... Let's make a sentence with eh the same, OK? I

26   am ...

27   L5:   ... as tall as you.

28   T: You don't understand what I am what I want.

29   L5:   The same?

30   T: The same, yah ... give me a sentence with the same.

31   L3:   I am as tall as you are.

32   T: OK (writes on blackboard: 'I am as tall as you are'.) OK. Eh .. most of the time

33   ... most of the time ... or, let me put it this way ... there are probably more

34   things that are different, right, than the same. Would you agree with me? Yah?

(Break in interactional sequence)

(Kumaravadivelu, 1993: 20-21)

The procedural instructions which the teacher gives in line 25 are ambiguous: the teacher wants the learners to produce sentences using the same **structure**, but unfortunately the teacher elides the term 'structure'. Ellipsis can be therefore considered dangerous when giving procedural instructions to learners. L5 believes that **"the same"** means that the teacher wants him/her to transform the sentence on the board from a superlative structure to a comparison of equality structure, i.e. an 'as..as' structure. We can see in lines 25-30 that the learner and the teacher understand different things by the term **"the same"** and this is reinforced by the fact that another learner (L3) shows, in line 31, exactly the same interpretation of the instructions as L5. Both L5 and L3 produce sentences using a comparison of equality structure. The teacher does not appear to be aware of the nature of the misunderstanding, accepts the same type of utterance which she rejected in line 28 and writes it up on the board. She then attempts to explain that she is looking for superlative structures rather than comparisons of equality.

Extract 146 (continued)

35   T: Let's see if we can talk about the worst ... the coldest ... you know the most

36   the most negative ... OK. All right, the most negative ... OK. All right, the

37   most negative. What's the worst for you? The worst experience ... or something

38   something that you really ... now we've talked about tornado and earthquakes,

39   right?

40   L9:   We ((unint)) Tuscaloosa is the worst thing ((unint)) tornado ...

41   T: Tornado?

42   L9:   Yes

43   T: The worst thing that they have in ... OK. What about in your country? What

44   is the worst thing in your country? We've talked about some good things ...

45   Let's see the ... we have also to talk about bad ... right? What's the worst you

46   can think about your country? If you have to say one thing really bad, what

47   would you say? ... (long pause) ... you have to think ... all right? That's good.

48   You know . think . ((unint)) one thing about country .. I can tell you one bad

49   thing about the Midwest ... Midwest has very bad weather ... It has perhaps the

50   worst weather of all ... states that I have lived in. It's not true ... but it seems

51   ... It's very cold. It's much colder than here ... much much colder than here ...

52   and the sun does not shine very often ... OK, the sun doesn't shine enough. You

53   understand what I mean ... doesn't shine enough, all right. Now, what about

54   your country?

(Kumaravadivelu, 1993: 20-21)

Now the problem here is that the teacher is actually moving the focus away from the grammatical

structure which has been targeted and written up on the board, seemingly in an attempt to

contextualise the superlative structure. The learners may well believe now that the focus has shifted to

a "classroom as speech community" context (Seedhouse 1994; 1996), in which they are able to freely

express themselves concerning their lives and matters of personal interest. In line 40, L9 uses a

superlative structure incorrectly, but T does not repair the linguistic error. In fact, in the learner

utterances which follow below (lines 55-87) there is no attempt to produce a superlative form; the teacher accepts all of the learner utterances and does not prompt production of the superlative form. The problem in communication has led to the teacher being unable to establish the focus of the lesson as she had intended.

At this point it would be relevant to consider Wagner's criticism that CA is "unable to handle post-hoc reports". CA does not generally use post-hoc reports, but my view is that CA analyses and post-hoc reports would be perfectly compatible within a multiple-perspective approach. For example, in Seedhouse (1995) I elicit post-hoc reports from L2 learners concerning their previous classroom interaction. Their analysis of the interaction proved quite compatible with the CA account of classroom interaction which I give in Seedhouse (1996). The 'purist' CA perspective, however, would be that it is not so much that CA is unable to handle post-hoc reports, but rather that it is not interested in them, since the whole point of CA analysis is that it offers a direct and incisive means of tapping into the interactional orientations of the participants *in situ*, as the interaction unfolds, rather than *post-hoc* and 'ex situ', as it were. In the extract above, we can hypothesise that the participants would not have been able to give an account of what went wrong: the teacher states explicitly (line 28) that

the students didn't understand her. We can assume that she is unable to identify and repair the trouble source (her own use of ellipsis), since she does not in fact repair the trouble which is preventing the accomplishment of her lesson aim. A post-hoc report would almost certainly have been of no use in explicating the problem, whereas a CA analysis is effective in locating and explicating the problem in communication[3].

6. *CA has a sociocultural bias towards native speakers.*

Wagner claims that "current CA ... takes linguistic competence on the part of conversationalists for granted. The prototypical conversationalist is a monolingual speaker in a stable first language setting, preferably the analyst's own" and that CA has a "sociocultural bias". (Wagner, 1996: 232).

I feel that the above claim does not represent accurately the nature and purpose of CA methodology. An overall aim of CA research is to reveal the orientations of interactants and how their interaction is organised. Most CA research has indeed been undertaken with native speakers (mostly of English) in

their own country. However, my CA research has been exclusively into L2 interaction in a number of countries, cultures and continents, as well as with a variety of L2s, and I have found CA methodology adaptable to the varied, complex and sometimes bizarre varieties of communication which I have found. As I will try to show at the end of this section, CA does not take anything for granted, and there is no prototypical conversationalist: one can only build claims concerning the participants' orientations and the organisation of their interaction on the basis of the talk itself, not on any preconceived notions.

CA has overwhelmingly used anglophone monolingual Westerners as data sources (but see Moerman, 1988) and has found that talk in interaction has an overall structural organisation, and that this can generally be described in terms of systems of turn-taking, adjacency pairs, preference and repair. This finding has often been mistakenly viewed as a kind of glorified coding system or a rigid box into which any and every type of data has to be squeezed. The current CA perspective, however, is expressed by Heritage (in press: 10):

"Overall structural organization, in short, is not a procrustean bed to fit data into, rather it is something we're looking for and looking at because the parties orient to it in organizing their talk."

Far from having a sociocultural bias, I have found that CA acts as a kind of 'estrangement' or 'alienation' device which hinders me from projecting my own biases and predispositions onto the interaction and which frees me to approach the interaction from the participants' perspective. If, for example, one approached extract 1 with a sociocultural bias, one might find that the cultural and linguistic context is 'German' and that NNS's utterances could not be analysed because they did not not conform to German native speaker standards of linguistic or sociocultural competence. Current CA, however, is able to approach the interaction from the socioculturally neutral viewpoint of attempting to uncover and portray the participants' orientations and the kind of sociocultural structures they evoke through their talk. CA was able, in the case of extract 1, to reveal the participants' sociocultural orientations, even though one of them was not a 'prototypical conversationalist'.

Conclusions

My experience of CA methodology is that it takes a very long time to learn how to use it effectively, and that each analysis involves long, difficult and painstaking work. At times, during the learning

process, I wondered why someone couldn't write a simple, step-by-step guide to doing CA for me to follow. I now understand that this was based on an inadequate understanding of the nature and purpose of CA methodology. All that one has available is a set of methodological principles. Since every interactional environment is unique, each extract will have to be approached in a way which is uniquely sensitive to that environment, whilst at the same time uncovering the 'organisational machinery' which was able to produce this individual, unique environment. In other words, one needs to analyse on the micro and macro levels at the same time, and clearly this is very difficult to do. Nevertheless, my experience is that the results justify the time and effort involved. What I personally like about CA is precisely what makes it difficult to do: it cuts through the problem of linking the micro-interaction to cultural or social structures on a macro level. One is in effect simultaneously analysing on the micro and macro level, as well as conducting a technical characterisation of a 'context'. I believe that CA currently offers the most tenable methodology for the analysis of naturally occurring verbal interaction, since it aims to reveal the interactional orientations of the participants in situ, together with the structural organisation of their interaction, using as evidence only the details of the talk themselves. Clearly, there are no short cuts involved in such an approach, and results accumulate only slowly.

FLI has certain characteristics which tend to make CA analysis even more difficult and time-consuming than usual. Linguistic forms can themselves become the focus of the interaction rather than the vehicle for the interaction, and this is especially the case in the L2 classroom. Misunderstandings and miscommunication may well be more common than in NS interaction, and the repair system may bear a much heavier load. As in extract 1, we may have the additional problems of recovering pidginised forms from ellipsis and coping with translations. However, I have tried to show in this article that the basic methodological principles of CA can be applied to FLI in the same way as to free conversation and to institutional talk. Heritage (in press: 2) suggests that there are "at least two kinds of conversation analysis going on today and, though they overlap in various ways, they are distinct in focus. The first examines the social institution of interaction as an entity in its own right; the second studies the management of social institutions in interaction". It may well be that CA analysis of foreign language data will also develop its own distinct focus in the future, and that the seeds of this have been sown in the Journal of Pragmatics, 26 special issue.

I agree with Wagner that CA analysis of FLI is 'challenging' only in the sense that it raises new and

interesting questions. However, I differ from Wagner in that I do not believe that FLI presents any kind

of fundamental challenge to CA methodology, in the sense of calling its basic principles into question.

I feel that the 'challenge' is to analysts, who need to undertake the long and arduous task of applying

the methodological principles to this unusual type of data.

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Footnotes

1. I am indebted to Dr Paul Drew (University of York) for his comments on this article.

2. The Collins German Dictionary (1991); Langenscheidt's Concise German Dictionary (1967); Héraucourt's German-English Dictionary (1972); Harrap's German-English Dictionary (1963).

3. This is not to suggest that CA analysis always yields greater analytical dividends than post hoc reports. I am grateful to Dr Graham Low (University of York) for providing me with an example of a situation in which a post-hoc report revealed information which was not available in the details of the interaction.