

A PARTICIPANT'S PERSPECTIVE ON TASKS: FROM TASK INSTRUCTION, THROUGH PRE-TASK PLANNING, TO TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT

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Abstract: Recent studies applying Conversation Analysis to classroom interaction have described language learning tasks as a local and collective accomplishment (e.g. Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Mori, 2002). They highlight the gap that may exist between the intended purpose as materialized in task instruction and the actual performance of the task. Following this line of research, this paper investigates the relationship between task instruction, pre-task planning and task completion. Based on a corpus of French as a Foreign Language classroom interactions, we observe how six different groups that have received identical instructions organize and carry out the task. In a first analytical step, we show how the students engage in interactionally organized interpretative work regarding the task, and in organizing the distribution of roles and responsibilities for the task accomplishment. In a second step, we identify how participants orient to this initial distribution within the very course of accomplishing the task. Based on a sequential micro-analysis of participants' conduct while planning and accomplishing the task, we show how Conversation Analysis contributes to a better understanding of language learning tasks from a participant-relevant perspective.

Keywords: language learning tasks, Conversation Analysis, classroom interaction, French as a Foreign Language

Özet: Konuşma Çözümlemesini sınıf içi etkileşimi anlamak için kullanan son dönemlerdeki çalışmalar dil öğreniminde kullanılan aktiviteleri yerel ve müşterek bir başarı olarak tanımlamışlardır (Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Mori, 2002). Bu çalışmalar aktivitelerin yönergelerinde belirlenen amaçlarla aktivitelerin gerçekte meydana geliş şekli arasında farklılıklar olabileceğini vurgulamıştır. Bu araştırmaları takiben bu makale aktivite yönergesi, aktivite öncesi planlama ve aktivite tamamlama arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. 'Yabancı dil olarak Fransızca öğrenimi' sınıf etkileşimi bütüncesinden yola çıkarak, aktiviteleri organize etmek ve tamamlamak için benzer yönergeler almış altı farklı grup gözlemlenmiştir. İlk çözümsel adımda, öğrencilerin aktiviteyle ilgili etkileşimsel biçimde organize edilen yorumlayıcı çalışmayı nasıl yürüttüklerini ve aktivitenin tamamlanması için görev ve sorumlulukların dağılımını nasıl organize ettiklerini göstermekteyiz. İkinci adımda, katılımcıların bir aktiviteyi tamamlarken bu ön dağılıma ne şekilde yöneldiklerini belirlemekteyiz. Aktivitenin planlanması ve tamamlanması sürecinde katılımcıların davranışının ardışık mikro-çözümlemesini baz alarak, Konuşma Çözümlemesinin, katılımcıya ilişkin bir perspektiften dil öğrenimi aktivitelerinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına nasıl katkıda bulunacağını göstermiş olacağız.

Anahtar sözcükler: dil öğrenim aktiviteleri, Konuşma Çözümlemesi, sınıf içi etkileşim, Yabancı Dil olarak Fransızca

Introduction

The present contribution investigates the relationship between task design and task completion. Within the fields of second language acquisition and second language pedagogy, a number of studies have tackled this issue by evaluating how pedagogical tasks foster – or not – quality use of the target-language, by testing different variables of the task design. For example, pre-task conditions have been shown to have an impact on the quality of the speakers' verbal productions during the task (see e.g., Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Foster and Skehan's (1996) study on adult learners of English as a Foreign Language from various linguistic backgrounds has shown that different types of

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planning during pre-task have an effect on the task performances. The study was carried out in a classroom setting and the tasks, accomplished in dyads, were of three types: personal information exchange, narration of a picture story and a decision-making task. The groups were given 10 minutes planning time; however they did not receive the same instructions as to how to plan the upcoming tasks and therefore how to use the pre-task time. They were divided into different groups being given different instructions: one group received explicit guidance as regards several practical aspects of the task to think of while the other group was only told to prepare the task, without specific indications. The comparison of the performances during the tasks shows increased complexity in the verbal productions of the group who received detailed instructions, but increased accuracy for the group who received undetailed instructions. Yuan and Ellis' (2003) study presented a similar research design, but was carried out in a laboratory. The experiment involved Chinese university learners of English. The task consisted of a narration of a picture story. Participants were divided into different groups, one having pre-task planning time, one having more time during the task (on-line planning) insofar as they were not given a time-limitation for the narration, and a third group having no planning time at all before nor during the task. The results also show an effect of the task planning conditions on the actual oral performance. The two groups who were allocated planning time produced more complex talk than the group without planning time. The group with on-line planning produced more accurate talk than the two others and also increased fluency (in absence of time-limitations, students would slow down their production).

These studies and many others essentially rely on (semi-)experimental research designs and quantitative measures of linguistic performance (e.g., number of words/syllables, types of syntactic constructions, etc.); they do not pay detailed attention to the interactional practices involved when several participants accomplish a task together (see Mori, 2002), nor do they account for the participants' perspective on the task at hand (see Seedhouse, 2005). As a consequence, while the quoted studies inform us about the impact of specific pre-task conditions on some aspects of the performances during the task, they do not document what exactly happens during pre-task planning, i.e., how pre-task planning is actually accomplished by the participants.

These concerns have been addressed recently by a number of empirical studies drawing from Conversation Analysis (see e.g., Mori, 2002; Hellermann, 2008; Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010). Following this line of research, the present contribution investigates how participants involved in a communicative task collectively interpret and implement the task instructions first in the pre-task time and then in the task proper. Based on a corpus of French FL classroom interactions at compulsory school, the present paper focuses on six small groups carrying out an identical direction-giving task. The analyses describe how these groups, while working out the instructions in the pre-task, organize the distribution of different roles and responsibilities for the task accomplishment and how their conduct in the task proper displays an orientation to this initial negotiation. With this, we aim at contributing to a better understanding of the students' perspectives on pedagogical tasks: (1) how an understanding of the task (the instructions, their mutual roles, etc.) is progressively constructed and (2) how they define the conditions and resources for its accomplishment – and hence organize learning activities.

A conversation analytic perspective on language learning in the classroom

The present study draws on Conversation Analysis as applied to the field of Second Language Acquisition (*CA-SLA*, see Pekarek Doehler, 2010). Based on detailed descriptions of the temporal unfolding of audio/videotaped talk, studies carried out within the conversation

analytical framework (see e.g., Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; ten Have, 1999; for an introduction) have empirically described the situated accomplishment of social interactions¹. While scholars in this field have been initially concerned with ordinary conversations between native speakers of a language, a growing number of studies have applied CA to issues of second language talk and learning (see e.g., Carroll, 2000; Firth & Wagner, 2007; Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2000; Seedhouse, 2004; Wong, 2000; 2004; and collective volumes such as Gardner & Wagner, 2004, special issues in the *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 47/2009 and the *Modern Language Journal*, vol. 88/2004). These studies have led us to reconsider the second language speaker's competence and have questioned his or her identity as a 'non-native speaker' or a 'learner'. Carroll (2000) for instance demonstrated how beginning learners of Japanese are able to manage turn-taking (by precisely timing their turn initiation and securing reciprocity) when linguistic resources are limited. Consequently, the learner is (re)conceived as a competent participant in social interaction rather than a deficient communicator – hence a reluctance in CA works to use the classical label of 'non-native speaker' (see Firth & Wagner, 1997; Kasper, 2006). Moreover, second language talk does not exclusively occur in the classroom, but also – and widely – outside of the school, for example in professional or commercial settings (see e.g., Firth and Wagner, 2007). In those communicative contexts, participants come to use a second language for dealing with the business at hand. Linguistic issues might eventually emerge in the communicative process, while achieving a transaction for example; however, most of the time participants do not orient to language learning as the purpose of their talk. This leads us to critically assess the traditional labelling of these second language speakers as 'learners' (Mondada & Py, 1994).

Regarding the classroom, this line of research has shown how interactions are shaped by the participants' understanding of the local pedagogical goals (see e.g., Seedhouse, 2004) and the task design (see e.g., Mori, 2002), thus resituating classroom practices and activities in a participant-relevant perspective. Highlighting the relevance of Breen's (1987) distinction between *task-as-workplan* (i.e., the task design and intended outcomes) and *task-as-process* (i.e., the actual 'performance' when doing the task) as well as Coughlan and Duff's (1994) opposition between *task* and *activity*, these studies have shown how fine-grained analyses of the sequential organization of classroom practices can inform us about how participants construct, on a moment-by-moment basis, their understanding of the task and carry out its accomplishment. What is foregrounded in this line of research is not the nature of task design but the very process by which participants organize and accomplish the task. Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler's (2010) study of direction-giving tasks in different L2 classroom settings (intermediate level learners of French at the compulsory school and beginner learners of English in a community college) demonstrated how the transition from task instruction to performance is subtly coordinated through verbal and non-verbal behaviours by participants. They show that this moving into the task performance may embody different orientations to the task by different participants as well as different degrees of engagement with the task. Their study provides evidence for an ongoing reconfiguration of tasks in the very course of their accomplishment, based on participants' moment-by-moment adaptation to each other's conduct. Similarly, Pochon-Berger's (2009) study on intermediate French L2 classroom group work compares two triads simultaneously doing the same decision-making task (a 'discussion' about how to organize a party). The instruction they received from the teacher – as well as on the instruction sheet – was 'to talk in French' about the given topic. They were

¹ For instance, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) seminal work on speakers' turn-taking practices demonstrated finely-tuned coordination of speaker change through participants' ongoing adjustments to each other's conduct.

told that they would have to present the results of their discussion to the class at the end. The two groups' interactional practices observed during the task accomplishment result very differently: one group enacts an interview while the other engages in a collective writing activity. These differences are embedded in a different understanding of the task which is observable in the negotiations undertaken at the beginning of the task regarding the task instructions and the conditions of its accomplishment (e.g., the possibility to write down what they are discussing in order to read it later on to the class). These divergences are further constructed through each group's unique way of organizing the task and carrying it out. Therefore, the task accomplishment, as a joint undertaking, is (re)negotiated and interactively configured, allowing not only for the coordination of participants' actions but also for a mutually shared understanding of the actions to be carried out in order to take the task to completion.

In the CA-SLA approach, learning (and cognition, more generally speaking) is thus conceived as embedded in the social activities the participants engage in (Kasper, 2009; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004), and for which they deploy and develop contingent competences (Pekarek Doehler, 2010). The present paper will be concerned with investigating one dimension of language learning as a social practice: participants' joint and situated accomplishment of an activity that is intended to be conducive to learning the target-language. In that perspective, the 'learning' potential is not so much determined by the task design but is embedded in participants' situated conduct and in their unique ways of interpreting learning activities.

Data

The present study is based on a corpus of 90 min videotaped group work interactions in a French FL classroom in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. These recordings have been transcribed (see Appendix I for Transcription symbols). The participants are 13-year-old students, eighth graders at compulsory school. At the time of the recording, they were having their fourth year of French FL classes.² Six groups of two to three students were recorded one after another carrying out a direction-giving task for which they received the same instruction sheet (see the original version in French in the Appendix II):

Figure 1

Instruction sheet translated in English from the original in French

| |
|---|
| <p>Three person dialogue</p> <p>You are in Basel at the Market Square (Marktplatz). A nice lady asks you how to go to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Marktplatz – Münster b) Münster – Messeplatz c) Messeplatz – St. Jakob <p>Everyone explains how to get to one of these places and describes what interesting things one can see there.</p> <p>Time : 15 minutes to prepare and play the dialogue</p> |
| <p>Three person dialogue</p> <p>You are in Basel at the Market Square (Marktplatz). A nice lady asks you how to go to:</p> |

² The audio and video recordings are drawn from a larger database of 30 hours of French FL classroom interactions (teacher-fronted and peer-group activities) in a Swiss public school, collected between 2005-2006 by the Institut des Etudes françaises et francophones, University of Basel, within the research project "Le rôle des émotions dans l'enseignement des L2 à l'exemple de la WBS Bâle-Ville" (dir. G. Lüdi), and the associated research project "Discourse-organizational competence in L1 and L2: learning, teaching, evaluation" (dir. S. Pekarek Doehler) funded by the Swiss National Funds (subsidy no. 405640-108663/1).

- d) Marktplatz – Münster
- e) Münster – Messeplatz
- f) Messeplatz – St. Jakob

Everyone explains how to get to one of these places and describes what interesting things one can see there.

Time : 15 minutes to prepare and play the dialogue

Three person dialogue

You are in Basel at the Market Square (Marktplatz). A nice lady asks you how to go to:

- g) Marktplatz – Münster
- h) Münster– Messeplatz
- i) Messeplatz – St. Jakob

Everyone explains how to get to one of these places and describes what interesting things one can see there.

Time : 15 minutes to prepare and play the dialogue

Each group received one such instruction sheet that indicated the different routes to describe: from *Marktplatz* (Market Square) to *Münster* (Cathedral), then from there to *Messeplatz* (Exhibition Square) and then to *Sankt Jakob* (St. Jacob's Hall). The instruction sheet was cut into three smaller pieces (see the dotted lines) that were then given to each member of the group. [Note that the routes – identical on all three pieces – are not designated by the same letters.] They also received a city map.

After giving out the instruction sheet, the teaching assistant told each group to prepare the different routes that were indicated on the instruction sheet, that is to identify the different points on a map and think about how to go from one place to the other. She then left the groups to work on their own. After this pre-task planning time (that would last 2-5 minutes), the teaching assistant came back to the groups and engaged with them in a role-play. She played a tourist who lost her way and to whom the students needed to explain the different routes and describe the different places.

The following analyses will describe how a specific point in the instruction is first collectively interpreted and organized by the participants in the pre-task, and later on oriented to in the course of the task.

Pre-task planning: distributing roles and responsibilities

The groups were allocated a planning time before the actual role-play. They did not receive specific guidance on what exactly to do in the pre-task; they were simply told to get prepared for the role-play. What they essentially do is identify the key points on the map, elaborate (individually or collectively) the routes and rehearse (if time is left) the route descriptions.

Interestingly, all six groups also undertake at some point in the pre-task a distribution of the different routes. By doing this, they orient to a specific directive of the instruction sheet: "Everyone explains how to get to one of these places and describes what interesting things one can see there." While this directive establishes a constraint on the role-play accomplishment, which is that everyone has to speak at least once, it does not specifically address the need for an organized distribution of responsibilities as regards the routes to be described.

This allocation of routes is however oriented to by participants as something to be organized already in the pre-task planning time, while working out the task instructions. The way they organize this point may be done very differently from one group to another. The excerpt below illustrates how a group of three girls (Berfin, Olivia and Sandra) collaboratively

what a crap
 09 PET: [(welle willsch du?)
 which one do you want
 10 THO: [ich will dem MARKtplatz zum me:sseplatz
 I.....want.....the Marktplatz.....to.....Messeplatz
 11 isch viil eifacher
 it's.....much.....easier
 12 PET: [okay
 okay.
 13 UGO: [ich nimm +f ((letter))+
 I.....take.....f
 14 THO: ja=jo. (.) denn nimm I:CH=
 yes..yes.....then.....I take
 15 UGO: +=e ((letter))+=
 e
 16 THO: +=d ((letter))+
 d

Contrary to excerpt (1), the excerpt here presents a negotiation process where participants work towards a collective agreement. The distribution process is characterized by disagreements on the part of Thomas as regards Peter. The first disagreement occurs in line 2, as a response to Peter's request for ratification of his choice ('I take Münster to Messeplatz is that okay', l.1). Thomas' turn is formatted as a counter-statement to Peter's choice by means of a *format tying* (i.e., recycling of a prior wording with a contrastive effect, see Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987) and hence embodies a straightforward disagreement. Peter therefore revises his initial choice and suggests taking another route, which is again rejected by Thomas with a double disagreement token ('no no', l.5). The problem is finally solved with both opponents orienting simultaneously towards Thomas' wish (Peter's question, l.9 and Thomas' statement of what he wants, l.10).

The third participant, Ugo, who stayed out of the disagreement between Peter and Thomas, finally re-engages in the route allocation process by choosing a route too (l.13). With Ugo's turn, the routes are then referred to by means of the letters that designate these routes on the instruction sheet, instead of the geographic names themselves (cf. beginning of the excerpt). This change in labelling displays participants' rationalization of the direction-giving activity they are currently engaged in as a pedagogical task, insofar as reference to the geographical places is mediated by reference to the instruction sheet (see Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010 for a detailed analysis of this aspect). Moreover, the alphabetical order by which these routes are inscribed on the instruction sheet ('d', 'e', 'f') prefigures a chronological organization of participants' interventions in the role-play scenario.

At last, participants in this excerpt orient to the distribution of responsibilities as regards the routes to describe as an important matter for the upcoming task accomplishment. This is observable particularly when Thomas exclaims (as the negotiation gets more and more difficult) 'what a crap' (l.8), insinuating that the need to decide on mutual responsibilities is something difficult. Further on, Thomas justifies his preference for the route *Marktplatz-Messeplatz* by assessing this one as easier (l.11).

To sum up, excerpts (1) and (2) show two different ways of organizing the distribution of responsibilities in the task, which also embody different decision-making procedures. In excerpt (1), the girls seem to choose randomly the routes and each one aligns implicitly with the choice made by the preceding girl(s) by not choosing the same route, i.e., by choosing among the so far not chosen routes. This decision-making procedure allows for a quick

resolution of the distribution of responsibilities. In excerpt (2), Thomas chooses a route and makes the rationale behind his choice explicit (here, the ‘easiness’ of the route). By doing so, he displays that he treats the allocation of responsibilities for the routes as an important issue for the upcoming role-play. His non-alignment with Peter’s initial choice hence triggers an explicit negotiation. Finally, these two excerpts show how a specific point of the task instruction is collectively and progressively worked out by the participants. While the pre-task planning time *per se* is established by the task design, what exactly happens during that time is the result of the participants’ own understanding of the task. The group’s distribution of responsibilities for the routes hence embodies a process of ‘transforming’ the *task-as-workplan* into the *task-as-process* (see Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010).

This distribution of responsibilities for the different routes has an important impact on the distribution of turns during the role-play. As a matter of fact, these routes implicitly establish participant roles in the subsequent role-play (i.e., who will have to talk to the teaching assistant at what moment) and outline an ‘agenda’ of speakership for the further part of the task. Ways of participating in the role-play are thus predefined in this preliminary distribution of responsibilities. The two next sections will describe (1) how participants orient to and exploit this initial distribution of participant roles in the moment-by-moment turn-taking practices and (2) how this distribution further shapes the dynamics of interaction.

Implementing the previously distributed roles and responsibilities

The allocation of a route to each participant legitimizes the occupation of the floor for a specific participant at specific moments in time. The one who is ‘in charge’ of the route being currently talked about – as it has been decided in the pre-task negotiation – is the one who is the legitimate speaker at that moment, while the other participants are not expected to take the lead (they can however ‘help out’, as it has been specified several times by the teaching assistant). That means, when orienting to this initial distribution of responsibilities, participants also orient to a distribution of rights and duties to speak at different points in the talk-in-interaction. This orientation to a range of speaking rights and duties materializes in different ways:

- (i) Orientation to the supposed next speaker – according to who is responsible for the route (section 5.1);
- (ii) Disengaging momentarily from the task when it is not one’s ‘turn’ (section 5.2).

Orienting to the supposed next speaker

The students’ orientation to a preliminary organization of participant roles becomes relevant at each transitional moment between direction-giving episodes (i.e., large sequence dealing with a specific route), which are systematically initiated by the teaching assistant. The initiation of a new episode is a sequential place where the next legitimate speaker is established, and, as we will see, the participants follow closely what has been negotiated during the pre-task as regards the distributed responsibilities.

In the example below, participants display an orientation to the expected next speaker at the precise moment where he should be taking the turn, according to the pre-established agenda. The excerpt is taken from the beginning of the role-play with the teaching assistant asking for her location (l.1-3). The answer should be *Marktplatz*, which is the starting point for the first route (*Marktplatz – Münster*).

know where I am', 1.4) and looks at a map she has in her hands. However, this embodied allocation of the next turn fails, since Thomas does not provide any answer and the teaching assistant could not notice the pointing either. Finally, Peter repairs this failed turn allocation by providing the expected second pair part himself (1.7 and 9). This will lead to a new negotiation between Peter and Thomas about who starts to give directions (not on the excerpt).

This excerpt shows the impact of the preliminary distribution of responsibilities on the organization of turn-taking in the role-play. Those who are not in charge of the first route remain silent at the turn transition relevance places, waiting for – and obviously orienting to – the supposed next speaker to answer. However, a problem arises when the supposed next speaker does not take the floor. The teaching assistant provides several occasions for speaker transition to occur through reformulations and expansions (l. 4,5, and 6) until someone takes the floor, as she does not know about the details of this preliminary distribution, and therefore does not know to whom to address her question.

Orientation to the supposed next speaker is also observable in participants' precision timing when taking the floor. In the following excerpt, Michelle, who is supposed to give directions as regards the route being about to be discussed, self-selects before an actual transition relevance place is reached. The excerpt is taken from the beginning of the role-play. The teaching assistant has just asked their location in the city, to which Serife provided the answer: *Marktplatz*. The teaching assistant then mentions her wish to go to *Münster*, which is the route Michelle has earlier been designated to provide. Michelle takes the floor as soon as the teaching assistant's request gets closer to completion:

Excerpt 4 (Group 1)

((Michelle is looking at the map, the teaching assistant is looking at Serife.))

01 ASS: je suis à ma- à la marktplatz?
I am at Ma- at the Marktplatz
*(.)
ser *nods

02 ASS: okay. parce que moi j'aimerais bien aller au münster.
okay because I would like to go to the Münster

03 on m'a dit que c'est très joli.*
I heard it's really lovely
mic *raises her eyes

04 (..)*
mic *looks at ASS
ass *looks at MIC

05 ASS: comment est-ce que je peux faire *pour aller
how can I do to go
mic *looks at the map

06 [au *münster °de la marktplatz°
to the Münster from the Marktplatz
ser *quick pointing towards MIC

07 > MIC: [EH:::m
erhm

08 MIC: vous allez
you go

09 ASS: *j'ai le plan ici
I have the map here
ass *puts the map on top of the other map on the table

Interestingly, Michelle shifts her gaze to the teaching assistant (she was focusing on the map until then) at a specific sequential point: in the transition from the pre-sequence (i.e., mentioning of the next destination and the reason for it, 1.2-3) to the actual request ('how can I do to go to the Münster from the Marktplatz', 1.5-6). By looking at the teaching assistant after the pre-sequence has been completed, Michelle displays her availability for the request that is about to be uttered. She then shifts her gaze again towards the map, displaying readiness for the next relevant action (i.e., explain a route on the map). The timing of these gaze shifts materialize Michelle's close monitoring of the upcoming – and expected – moment for her to take the turn in the role-play, i.e., after the teaching assistant's first request for a route-description (according to the order in which the routes are mentioned on the instruction sheet). Michelle then takes the turn at the first opportunity (1.7), that is as soon as the request becomes syntactically recognizable ('how can I do to go', 1.6). Note also Serife's pointing towards Michelle as an indication for the teaching assistant that Michelle is the one supposed to explain the route, similarly to excerpt (3). Michelle and Serife's conduct therefore embody an orientation towards a pre-established agenda for speakership.

To sum up, excerpts (3) and (4) show participants' orientation to the supposed next speaker (oneself or someone else) as regards the initial distribution of responsibilities for the routes that took place in the pre-task. On one hand, this orientation may be openly displayed by pointing gestures towards someone or subtly embodied in the timing of gazing at the relevant co-participant (the direction-asker) or to the relevant material objects for the upcoming action (e.g., the map). On the other hand, the previously established agenda for speakership is enacted in participants' taking the floor when it is their turn and remaining silent during someone else's turn.

Disengaging from the role-play when it is not one's turn

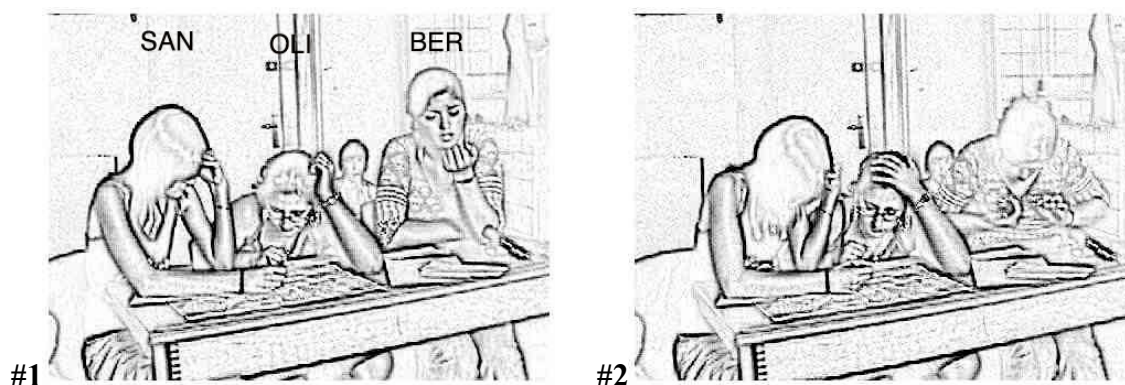
While the initial allocation of a route to each participant during the pre-task establishes the relevance of their engagement with the task when their allocated route is concerned, it also means their non-responsibility for all other routes. This aspect is specifically oriented to by some participants who visibly disengage from the task and the interaction when it is not legitimately their turn to give directions.

The next excerpt is taken from the pre-task planning time. Two girls, Sandra and Olivia, are jointly elaborating the route that goes from *Marktplatz* to *Münster* (which is Sandra's responsibility), while the third girl, Berfin, does not take part in it:

Excerpt 5 (Group 4)

((Olivia and Sandra are looking for a place on the map.))

- | | | |
|----|--|----|
| 01 | OLI: ah: dōrt hindere ufe <u>oh....over there.....upwards</u> | #1 |
| 02 | SAN: nach freistross oder was? <u>to.....Freiestrasse.....or what</u> | |
| 03 | (0.9) | |
| 04 | OLI: nei freistross isch. nei das isch die anderi. (...) <u>no.....Freiestrasse is.....no.....this is.....the other one</u> | |
| 05 | lug jetzt grad schnäll. <u>look..now.....quickly.</u> | |
| 06 | SAN: do: do: do. <u>there...there...there</u> | #2 |
| 07 | OLI: ja. <u>yes</u> | |

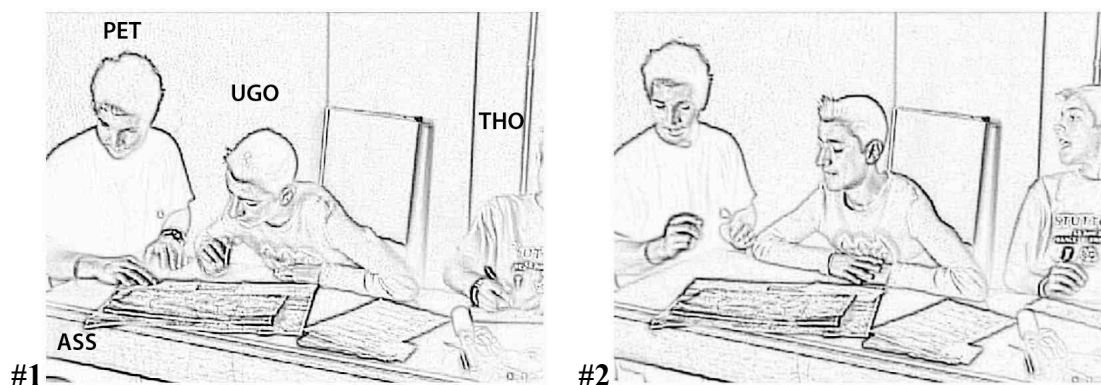


In fact, not only does Berfin not participate verbally in the negotiation of the route, but she also displays a lack of engagement through bodily activities (#1 and 2). Whereas her peers are oriented towards each other and the map, Berfin is sitting at the edge of the table. She is physically facing the table rather than being turned towards the interaction currently unfolding at the opposite end of the table. Berfin thus appears to be out of the current participation framework. Moreover, she is busy scrutinizing her finger nails during the whole sequence, displaying unavailability for the collective activity. By doing so, Berfin seems to be managing her engagement in the task in an ‘economic’ way by not engaging when not necessary.

This type of disengagement also occurs during the role-play proper. In the next excerpt, Peter is explaining to the teaching assistant when to get off the tramway that will take her to *Messeplatz*. While one of the other students, Ugo, seems to pay attention (though silently) to the interaction between Peter and the teaching assistant, the third student, Thomas, is drawing:

Excerpt 6 (Group 2)

- ((Peter is facing the teaching assistant, Thomas is drawing)) #1
- 01 PET: et eh c'est: /ʃ/ tation il y a un schild? dans le schild
and eh it's stop there is a sign in the sign
- 02 il y a: d- une messeplatz? (.) /ʃ/- des /ʃ/ tation/s/.
there is d- a Messeplatz s- some stations
- 03 ASS: ah: (x) dans le tram je peux [compter.
oh (x) in the tramway I can count
- 04 PET: [ouais (.) genau
yes exactly
- 05 ASS: [okay
okay
- 06 PET: [(xxx)]
- 07 > THO: [*ET- ET UNE DAME PARLE] (.) messeplatz. #2
and and a lady speaks Messeplatz
*tho *turns body towards ASS and PET*
- 08 ASS: ah il y a quelqu'un qui dit==
oh there is someone saying
- 09 PET: =ouais [ouais.
yeah yeah
- 10 THO: [oui
yes
- 11 ASS: ah: okay >comme ça c'est [pas de problème- <
oh okay so it's not a problème



Similarly to Berfin in excerpt (5), Thomas ostensibly displays disengagement with the role-play at this moment in time: he seems involved in an individual activity (drawing) and places himself physically outside of the current participation framework. Interestingly, he produces in line 7 an expansion of Peter's description of a sign in the tramway that indicates the arrival at *Messeplatz*. This expansion is produced after the description sequence has been closed (see the teaching assistant's summarizing statement, l.3 and then mutual ratifications between her and Peter, l.4-5). This indicates that despite Thomas' apparent disengagement with the role-play, displayed by his drawing activity, he is in fact closely monitoring the talk-in-interaction that unfolds between his co-participants. He is therefore able to intervene in sequentially appropriate places, here a sequential transition, and on topic.

To sum up, excerpts (5) and (6) show momentarily disengagements from the task by some participants. These disengagements are here embodied in participants' physical placement outside of the main participation framework as well as a visible occupation with some different, individual, and non-task relevant activity (e.g., scrutinizing the nails, drawing). One might think that such visible disengagements suggest the students' lack of motivation or interest with the task or reluctance to participate to its completion. However, the timing of these disengagements within the overall task accomplishment as well as the participants' close monitoring of how the task completion progresses, rather relates to the participants' orientation to a pre-established role-play scenario as defined by the pre-distributed responsibilities for the routes. This initial distribution is relevant not only because it defines one's responsibility for a route X, but also because it consequently establishes one's non-responsibility for all other routes – and hence legitimizes one's non-engagement with the task at those moments. This is oriented to here by Berfin and Thomas as an opportunity to momentarily participate minimally.

Subverting the work plan

As mentioned earlier, the initial distribution of responsibilities for the routes sketches out an agenda of speaker rights and duties within the role-play scenario. As we could see in the different excerpts, this agenda is closely followed in the very course of the task accomplishment. However, this agenda is also at times challenged by a peer trying to get the floor when it is not his or her legitimate 'turn'. In this case, the pre-established agenda is subverted and competition for the floor occurs.

In the following excerpt, Natascha is about to start the description of the route going from the *Münster* to *Messeplatz*. While looking for a specific tramway station (*Bankverein*) on the map, another student, Anila, interrupts her several times and tries to take the floor in order to suggest another route. Anila's subversive action results in making Natascha lose her status as a legitimate speaker. Indeed, later on, the route will be jointly described by all three students.

Excerpt 7 (Group 3)

01 NAT: äscheplatz?
Aschenplatz

02 (2.9)

03 ANI: dörf ich schnäll *°luege°=
may...I...quickly...have a look
ani *mvt to grasp the pen

04 NAT: *=nei *ich will °bankverein.°
no...I...want...Bankverein
nat *readjusts the hold of the pen
ani *grasps the pen #1
ani *withdraws her hand

05 (..)

06 NAT: do >°bankverein°.<
there...Bankverein

07 ASS: AH alors [.hh e-
oh so e-

08 NAT: [eh::[vous tou::rnez
ehm you turn

09 ASS: [okay?
okay

10 (..)

11 ANI: [°°ts (xx)°°

12 LOR: [°prenez le train°
take the train

13 (..)

14 NAT: na:i si muess jo do zersch do
no...she has to...well there at first there

15 a:[be (si muess ja wüsse wi si do abe goht)
down there she has...to know how she goes down there

16 ANI: [* (weisch du- *(.) *°wart schnäll,
you know...wait a minute
ani *quickly grasps the pen in the middle and keeps holding it
ani *shifts her hold to the end of the pen
ani *turns the pen upwards

17 *wart schnäll<] natascha *do isch *münstr [he?
wait a minute...Natascha...here is...Münster...huh
ani *readjusts her hold of the pen #2
ani *withdraws the pen from NAT's hand
ani *points on the map with the pen

18 ASS: [o::okay?=
okay

19 NAT: =*sie muess denn <bankver[ein> näh
she...has to take...Bankverein then
nat *points with index on the map

20 ANI: [nei sie muess [eifach-
no...she has to take...simply

21 NAT: [nei sie
no...she

22 muess bankverein und [denne zweier*]
has to take Bankverein and...then line two
nat *withdraws finger

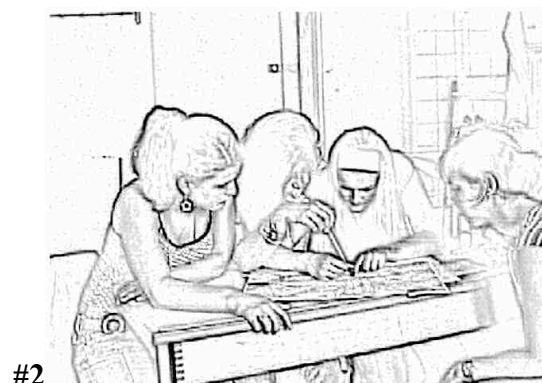
23 ANI: [dur d rittrgass abe.]
go down through Rittergasse

24 sie muess eifach rittrgass abe
she...has to...simply...go down Rittergasse

25 und dört isch dr fufz-fuf eh: zweier. dr zweier
and there...is...line fift...fift...ehm...line two...line two

26 fahrt dört abe* *>dörf=ich schnäll.< (.)&
 goes down there.....may...I.....quickly
 ani *passes her left arm over NAT's arm #3

27 *>dörf=ich schnäll< do isch jo münstr natascha.
 may...I.....quickly.....here is.....Münster.....Natascha
 nat *leans back



When it is Natascha's turn to give directions, Anila attempts two times to impose her own route as she disagrees with Natascha's projected route (through *Bankverein*). She explicitly requests the right to read the map, the current activity in which Natascha is engaged ('may I quickly look at it', 1.3), and asks her to suspend her description ('wait a minute', 1.16 and 17). These requests show Anila's orientation to differential rights between the participants at that specific moment: one (Natascha) has currently the right to describe the route and therefore to read the map, the others do not have such a right. Anila's use of the word 'quickly' ('schnäll', 1.3, 16, 17) mitigates her request for a change in the participants' rights by suggesting that her reading of the map is only a temporary activity. With these requests, Anila breaks the group's earlier agreement on a certain organization of speakership and distribution of responsibilities in the task. Note also that the interaction between Anila and Natascha is done in L1 Swiss-German (contrary to the interaction between the students and the teaching assistant that is in French, 1.7-9 and 12). That is, participants do not orient to the current talk as being part of the task, which would request the use of the target-language. The switch to the L1 embodies a side sequence that deals with task management (see Unamuno, 2009) where Natascha and Anila negotiate 'in private' (in the sense that their talk is not addressed to the teaching assistant) the contents to be delivered in the role-play proper as well as mutual responsibilities.

Anila's two attempts to take over the route-description are associated with attempts to get hold of the map and the pen (1.3-4 and #1; 1.16-17 and # 2). These are rejected by Natascha verbally, by means of a strong disagreement token (1.4, 14) and gesturally, by firmly holding the pen as long as possible (readjusting the hold of the pen, 1.4 and 17). When Anila finally gets hold of the pen (1.17), she uses it to point on the map (#2), that is, she immediately goes on with the relevant activity in the task accomplishment (describing the route directly on the map). Competition continues on both verbal and gestural levels: long verbal overlaps (1.15-17; 19-23) and simultaneous pointing on the map (1.17-19) including 'overlapping' pointing in the sense that Anila's pen is on top of Natascha's finger. Later on, Anila occupies a large surface of the map with her arms and chest (1.26 and #3), which is again accompanied with a request for permission to do it, preventing that way anyone else from reading the map and hence obstructing any possibility for her peer to carry out the task. This fight for the map and the pen embodies participants' orientation to these tools as attributes of the legitimate speaker. As a matter of fact, being relevant tools for the task accomplishment, the one who 'owns' them is the one having currently the responsibility of the task accomplishment, according to the pre-established role-play scenario. Once done with the direction-giving episode, he or she generally passes over the tools to the participant being responsible for the next route.

To sum up, excerpt (7) shows a conflict about a route-description taking place between two students. Beyond concurrent contents (the route proper) and competition for the floor, the conflict invokes previously established responsibilities in carrying out this specific route-description which are put into question. As a matter of fact, Anila's attempts to take over the route-description *are treated as* illegitimate, deviating from the pre-established scenario, by herself (as suggested in her requests for reading the map and her moves to get hold of the pen and the map), as well as by Natascha who displays reluctance to give her access to these objects. From the moment when Natascha lets Anila get hold of the tools and specifically restrain the access to the map, she (Natascha) loses her status as the legitimate speaker and the leader of this route-description.

Conclusion

This paper presented a sequential micro-analysis of classroom small group interactions. The analyses described the distribution of roles and responsibilities for the task accomplishment during the pre-task time and its implementation in the role-play proper. This distribution of roles and responsibilities as regards the routes to be described in the role-play resulted from the participants' own interpretation of the task instruction, insofar as such distribution was not explicitly requested. This initial distribution of responsibilities within the task outlined a role-play scenario where participants' contributions are expected according to the route they were allocated to. Furthermore, the analysis of participants' conduct during the role-play highlighted their orientation towards these previously established roles and responsibilities (e.g., pointing towards the supposed next speaker, disengaging from the task when not being one's turn or deviating from the scenario). What we can conclude from these analyses is three-fold:

First, 'doing' a communicative task in the classroom does not mean simply putting into operation some given instructions. It supposes for the participants to jointly build a shared understanding of the task to carry out together (e.g., clarifying the instructions, interpreting its goals, etc.) and organize its collective accomplishment (e.g., distribution of work and roles). This process, which takes place here in what is defined by the task design as a pre-task planning time, is interactionally accomplished. Implementing task instructions into the task

proper hence means ‘transforming’ the *task-as-workplan* into the *task-as-process* (Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010).

Second, this understanding and organization of the task, in this case the distribution of roles and responsibilities, observed in the pre-task is not set once and for all but is (re)configured in the dynamics of interaction throughout the task accomplishment. In other words, whereas the allocation of routes to describe outlines an agenda for speakership or a scenario for the role-play, the organization of turn-taking is still the result of a local accomplishment. Does this mean that the distribution of roles in the pre-task is not relevant for the task proper? No, rather the data show that participants orient strongly to these initial negotiations. Therefore, interactional practices are not so much determined by the decisions themselves that have been taken in the pre-task but display participants’ treatment of these decisions as being relevant to the ongoing task accomplishment.

Third, participants’ conduct displays the way they define the activity they are engaged with and their interpretation of the context. Whereas the direction-giving task was intended as a ‘real world’-like interaction through the role-play design, the students rather seem to orient to it as a pedagogical task *per se*. This is namely visible in their orientation to pre-task negotiations in the course of the role-play. Does that mean the intended purpose of the task failed? The answer is no if we consider ‘authenticity’ of communication in an ecological perspective. Orienting to the pedagogical nature of a task does not mean that the communication occurring in the classroom context is less ‘authentic’ than communication occurring in ordinary conversation. On the contrary, the interactional practices observed embody participants’ permanent adaptation to local constraints and management of specific issues of the context of task-based-interaction (e.g., implementing the task instruction, coordinating a collective work, etc.).

These considerations therefore provide evidence of the subtle interplay between task instructions, pre-task planning and the task accomplishment. While mainstream research on tasks focused on the task design in its own right (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996) on one hand, CA-driven studies focused on the task accomplishment (e.g., Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010) on the other hand; the results presented here however invite us to rethink the articulation between task instruction and task accomplishment as being much more complex. Rather than a binary opposition between *task-as-workplan* and *task-as-process*, the interplay between both is locally enacted in the participants’ ways of organizing their conduct.

In sum, using Conversation Analysis for the study of classroom interactions and task-based interactions in particular makes it possible to observe how participants jointly build talk on a moment-by-moment basis. Sure, classroom talk may be more or less oriented to pre-defined pedagogical goals or tasks. However, it also inevitably embodies local adaptations and thereby an interactional organization of the task in real time. Participants’ analysis of the local circumstances are embedded in the very details of their conduct (verbal talk, but also gaze, gestures, bodily arrangements, handling of material objects, etc.). In these local adaptations can be observed participants’ step-by-step understanding of a task and coordinated work towards its completion. The resources they draw on to carry it out successfully are locally defined by the participants (e.g., use of L1 Swiss-German, use of tools, distribution of roles, etc.), rather than given beforehand by the task design. The meaning of the task itself is determined by the participants (sometimes, the meaning they seem to attribute to it being very different from the intended purpose), being embodied in their step-by-step conduct. In other words, the students make the task their own. This process constitutes a central part of the

pedagogical value of the task and therefore needs to be documented in its sequential details. Adopting a participant's perspective on classroom tasks allows for an understanding of task-based interaction as a communicative context in its own right that is interactionally accomplished, and where learning activities are being shaped by the learners themselves.

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Appendix I: Transcription symbols

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|--|
| [| onset of overlap | ((comment)) | transcriber's comment |
| = | latching | (guessing) | uncertain transcription |
| & | turn continuation | °softer° | softer |
| (.)(.)(...) | >1 sec. pauses | LOUDER | louder |
| (1.0) | <1 sec. pause | <u>underline</u> | emphasis |
| - | cut-off | <u>underline</u> | in L1 (Swiss-German/German) |
| >faster< | faster | trans | translation gloss |
| <slower> | slower | +gaze at X | comment on non-verbal actions simultaneous to the stretch of talk indicated by + |
| . | falling intonation | | |
| ? | raising intonation | | |
| , | continuing intonation | | |
| : | lengthening of sound | | |

Appendix II: Original instruction sheet (in French)

Dialogue à trois

Vous êtes à Bâle à la place du marché (Marktplatz). Une charmante dame vous demande le chemin pour aller à:

- a) Marktplatz – Münster
- b) Münster – Messeplatz
- c) Messeplatz – St. Jakob

Chacun, chacune donne l'explication pour arriver à un de ces lieux et raconte ce qui a d'intéressant à voir.

Temps : 15 minutes pour préparer et jouer le dialogue

Dialogue à trois

Vous êtes à Bâle à la place du marché (Marktplatz). Une charmante dame vous demande le chemin pour aller à:

- d) Marktplatz – Münster
- e) Münster – Messeplatz
- f) Messeplatz – St. Jakob

Chacun, chacune donne l'explication pour arriver à un de ces lieux et raconte ce qui a d'intéressant à voir.

Temps : 15 minutes pour préparer et jouer le dialogue

Dialogue à trois

Vous êtes à Bâle à la place du marché (Marktplatz). Une charmante dame vous demande le chemin pour aller à:

- g) Marktplatz – Münster
- h) Münster – Messeplatz
- i) Messeplatz – St. Jakob

Chacun, chacune donne l'explication pour arriver à un de ces lieux et raconte ce qui a d'intéressant à voir.

Temps : 15 minutes pour préparer et jouer le dialogue