

## *Chapter 1*

# ***L2 Interactional Competence and Development***

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### **Introduction**

Socially grounded investigations of L2 interactions have been a growing focus of research over the last 15 years or so. These studies have documented the variety of interactional resources L2 speakers draw on for sense-making in their social worlds. This expanding body of research has made evident the effectiveness of conversation analysis (CA) as both a theory and method for describing the myriad resources comprising L2 users' interactional competence (IC). However, still lingering is the question of its effectiveness for understanding how L2 users develop such competence. Contributors to this volume explore answers to this question. Drawing on data from a range of interactional contexts, including classrooms, pharmacy consultations, tutoring sessions and video-game playing, and a range of languages including English, German, French, Danish and Icelandic, the studies use conversation analytic methods to investigate the use and development of the many resources comprising L2 users' IC.

### **Interactional Competence**

The studies in this volume take as axiomatic that interaction is fundamental to social life. In our interactions with others, we set goals and negotiate the procedures used to reach them. At the same time, we constitute and manage our individual identities, our social role relationships, and memberships in our social groups and communities. Central to competent engagement in our interactions is our ability to accomplish meaningful social actions, to respond to c-participants' previous actions and to make recognizable for others what our actions are and how these relate to their own actions. IC, that is the context-specific constellations of expectations and dispositions about our social worlds that we draw on to navigate our

way through our interactions with others, implies the ability to mutually coordinate our actions. It includes knowledge of social-context-specific communicative events or activity types, their typical goals and trajectories of actions by which the goals are realized and the conventional behaviors by which participant roles and role relationships are accomplished. Also included is the ability to deploy and to recognize context-specific patterns by which turns are taken, actions are organized and practices are ordered. And it includes the prosodic, linguistic, sequential and nonverbal resources conventionally used for producing and interpreting turns and actions, to construct them so that they are recognizable for others, and to repair problems in maintaining shared understanding of the interactional work we and our interlocutors are accomplishing together (Heritage, 2004; Hymes, 1964, 1972; Sacks *et al.*, 1974; Schegloff, 2007; Schegloff *et al.*, 1977).

We approach our interactional activities – from everyday practices of talk such as greetings, leave-takings and joking, to more institutional situations, such as doctor–patient interactions, business meetings and instructional lectures – with these context-specific collections of knowledge, expectations, dispositions, orientations and resources, and we draw on them as we monitor ours and each other's moment-to-moment involvement in the interactions. At each interactional moment we attend to each other's actions, build interpretations as to what these actions are about and where they are heading, and formulate our own contributions based on our interpretations that move the interaction along, either toward or away from the anticipated outcomes of each preceding move. When we approach a service encounter for example, we have certain expectations about goals and purposes of the encounter, and anticipate the various roles and role relationships we are likely to find. We also have expectations about the sequence of interactional actions that are likely to unfold, and the linguistic and other means for accomplishing them. The utterance 'Who's next?,' for example, calls to mind a set of goals and purposes and of roles and role relationships, which, in this case would be sales clerks and customers. It also calls to mind a certain way of taking turns, and expectations about the actions that likely preceded and will follow this utterance, and how these actions are preferably, expectably organized. At these moments, we use our understandings of and experience in a range of interactional activities to make sense of what is occurring. As the interaction unfolds, we continually reflect upon and revise our understandings of preceding contributions, assess the likely consequences engendered by such moves, and make decisions about how to signal our understandings to the others and to construct appropriate contributions (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Sanders, 1987, 1995).

In sum, when we participate in interactions, we draw on an 'immense stock of sedimented social knowledge' (Hanks, 1996: 238) and on a set of routinized yet context-sensitive procedures with which we reason our way

through the moment-to-moment unfoldings of our interactions. This competence is socially grounded in that its components are constructed in interaction and shared with social group members in specific communicative contexts. It is cognitive in that it is part of people's context-specific structures of expectations. Yet, these structures are not static, mental representations: Rather, their shapes and meanings are dynamic and malleable, tied to their locally situated uses in culturally framed communicative activities.

## Disciplinary Foundations

Current conceptualizations of IC owe much to two fields for theoretical and empirical inspiration. A first source is American linguistic anthropology, and in particular, the work of Dell Hymes (1962, 1964, 1972). Hymes considered social function to be the source of linguistic form and so conceptualized language as context-embedded social action. He coined the concept communicative competence to refer to the capacity to acquire and use language appropriately. It is this knowledge, Hymes argued, that shapes and gives meaning to linguistic forms. Hymes proposed the concept in response to generativists' accounts of linguistic competence, which was defined as a historical, universally inscribed, invariant sets of internal principles and conditions for generating the structural components of language systems (Chomsky, 1965, 1966). Hymes considered this view of competence to be inadequate in that it could not account for the other kinds of knowledge individuals use to produce and interpret utterances appropriate to the particular contexts in which they occur. He noted, '... it is not enough for the child to be able to produce any grammatical utterance. It would have to remain speechless if it could not decide which grammatical utterance here and now, if it could not connect utterances to their contexts of use' (Hymes, 1964: 110). Such socially constituted knowledge, Hymes argued, is what gives meaning and shape to language forms. Hymes further proposed the *ethnography of speaking* as both a conceptual framework and method for capturing such knowledge, and specifically, the patterns of language used by sociocultural group members to participate in the communicative events of their communities.

Canale and Swain (1980; Canale, 1983) were among the first in applied linguistics to draw on Hymes's concept of communicative competence for the purposes of curriculum design and evaluation. Their framework contained four components: *grammatical*, which included knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology; *sociolinguistic*, which included knowledge of the rules of language use; *strategic*, which included knowledge of strategies to overcome communicative problems; and, *discourse competence*, which dealt with the knowledge needed to participate in literacy activities. Canale and Swain argued that

choices for what to include in a curriculum for language classrooms should be based on an analysis of the linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic components comprising those communicative activities in which L2 learners were interested in becoming competent.

The first systematic studies (for a most notable early exception see Hatch, 1978) that shed light on some aspects of communicative competence were undertaken within the framework of Interlanguage Pragmatics. Studies under this rubric focused mainly on describing speech acts such as requests, apologies and complaints, and comparing their uses across various cultural contexts (e.g. Blum-Kulka *et al.*, 1989; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Trosburg, 1994). These and other attempts to operationalize and investigate communicative competence (e.g. Bachmann, 1990, 1996; Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1995; Nunan, 1989) enhanced applied linguists' understandings of various facets of communicative competence. However, as Young (2000) and others (He & Young, 1998; Lüdi, 2006; McNamara & Roever, 2006) have noted, they are limited in two respects. First, the various components of communicative competence have, by and large, been treated as static, cognitive properties of individuals, thereby rendering invisible their social foundations. Second, the focus of research has been on competence for speaking and not on competence for interaction. An early exception to this limited view is the 1986 essay by Claire Kramsch, in which she argued that, despite claiming to promote communicative abilities of language learners, the proficiency guidelines of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a US-based organization dedicated to language teaching and learning, were marred in that they emphasized grammatical accuracy over discourse appropriacy and thus took an 'oversimplified view on human interactions' (Kramsch, 1986: 367). The focus, she argued, should be shifted to IC, that is the skills and knowledge individuals employ to bring about successful interaction.

By the 1990s, calls for more socially grounded, dynamic understandings of and investigations into IC were on the rise (Hall, 1993, 1995, 1999). For example, in her proposal for a more dynamic, sociocultural understanding of interaction, Hall drew on Hymes' (1972) ethnography of speaking framework to propose a model for the study of interactive practices in language classrooms. Interactive practices, according to Hall, are 'socioculturally conventionalized configurations of face-to-face interaction by which and within which group members communicate' (Hall, 1993: 146). Her model consisted of seven components, which, she argued, were to be used as an analytic framework for uncovering the set of conventions by which such practices are constructed by social group members and thus are constitutive of members' IC. This model was further elaborated upon by Young (2000, 2003). His framework consists of six components: (1) rhetorical script (i.e. knowledge of sequences of speech acts that are conventionally linked to a given type); (2) register (e.g. technical/expert

vocabulary); (3) strategies for taking turns; (4) topic management (e.g. the rights to introduce/change topics and their placement); (5) roles and patterns of participation related to a given practice (i.e. novice–expert role–relations; speaker–hearer); and (6) boundary signaling devices (i.e. opening-, transition- and closing-procedures). While (1) and (2) are general resources valid for any interactive practice, and (5) is part of what has more classically been defined as socio-linguistic knowledge, points (3) turn taking, (4) topic management and (6) boundary signaling devices identify concrete interactional dimensions that can be empirically observed as indicators of interactional micro-skills.

A second source of inspiration for current conceptualizations of IC is found in CA. CA began in the field of sociology over 40 years ago as an offshoot of ethnomethodology, an approach to the study of social life that considers the nature and source of social order to be fundamentally locally accomplished, and grounded in members' real-world social practices (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984). Emerging from ethnomethodology's interests in the empirical study of social order, but asserting a fundamental role for conversation as 'the primordial site of human sociality' (Schegloff, 2006: 70), CA narrowed its focus to the study of the organization of social interaction and took as its primary concern 'the analysis of competence which underlies ordinary social activities' (Heritage, 2004: 241).

The first generation of CA scholars gave its analytic attention to describing the structural character of the 'methods' used by social group members to bring about and maintain social order in native speaker conversations. Methods, in the ethnomethodological sense of the term (Garfinkel, 1967), are systematic procedures (of, e.g. turn-taking, repairing, opening or closing conversation) by which members organize their behavior in a mutually understandable way, by which they accomplish intersubjectivity and establish and maintain social order. This body of CA work has made a substantial contribution to our understanding of the fine-grained mechanisms that pervade communicative activities in a range of settings: it has described the mechanisms of turn-taking (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), of conversational openings and closings (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), of manifestations of disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984), of topic management (Button & Casey, 1985), of the organization of conversational repair (Schegloff *et al.*, 1977) and many more.

Researchers with interests in talk in institutional settings have used CA's analytic apparatus to explore the methods participants use to bring about and maintain social order in institutional talk-in-interaction. Institutional contexts of interest have included, for example, medical settings (e.g. Heritage & Maynard, 2006; Heritage & Stivers, 1999), court proceedings (e.g. Drew, 1992; Galatolo & Drew, 2006) and educational settings (e.g. Heath 1992; Marbeth 1994, 2000, 2004; Moberg 1979). While

early studies focused primarily on methods instantiated in talk, currently the scope of CA's analytic focus encompasses other forms of conduct in addition to talk, such as body posture, gesture, eye gaze and other modes of communication used in the accomplishment of communicative activities (e.g. Goodwin, 2000, 2007).

Throughout the past 40 years, CA has brought about a detailed understanding of how social interaction is organized on a moment-to-moment basis, identifying the manifold resources participants use to accomplish this organization and, thereby, uncovering the multiple facets of people's competence for social interaction.

### **IC and L2 Interaction**

While some applied the analytic precision of CA to studies of L2 interaction in the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. see Bange, 1992; Dausendschön-Gay & Krafft, 1994; De Pietro *et al.*, 1989; Lüdi, 1991) it has been in the last 15 years or so that interest in using CA to study L2 interaction has taken firm hold of the field (e.g. Carroll, 2000; Gardner & Wagner, 2004; Lazaraton, 1997; Markee, 2000; Wong, 2000a, 2000b). This body of work has helped to increase understandings of the detailed workings of second language interactions by illustrating the wide range of interactional resources L2 speakers draw on in their interactions with other L2 speakers. Narrowing interests to L2 *learner* interactions, researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have given their attention to describing the kinds of interactional activities L2 learners engage in inside and outside of the classroom and the resources they draw on to do so. Drawn together under the term CA-SLA (or CA-for-SLA), these studies have detailed the resources L2 users employ in various learning activities. For example, Mori (2002) examined the accomplishment of a classroom-based pair activity among learners of Japanese, demonstrating how the instructional design of the task affected the interactional resources learners drew on to complete the task. Markee (2004) analyzed the structural properties of the talk occurring at the boundaries of different L2 classroom interactional activities. Kasper (2004) examined the participant frameworks constructed by a learner of German and a native-speaking peer in an instructional activity held outside of the classroom. Additional studies have investigated the resources used by teachers to create different types of opportunities for student participation in classroom activities (e.g. Hellermann, 2003, 2005; Koshik, 2002; Lee, 2007).

### **The Development of IC**

Studies using CA to investigate L2 talk-in-interaction have contributed greatly to understandings of the indispensable presence of L2 users' IC

in second language interactions. However, with a few exceptions (e.g. Hellermann, 2008; Cekaite, 2007 for L2, and see Forrester, 2008 and Wootton, 1997 for L1), little is known about the process by which learners develop their L2 IC, nor about the stages this development goes through. Recently, it has been suggested that the development of L2 IC can be understood and studied in terms of a change in participants' methods for accomplishing L2 talk-in-interaction (Hellermann, 2008; Mondada *et al.*, 2004; Pekarek Doehler, 2010), and that it involves increased local efficacy of speakers' conduct (Brouwer & Wagner, 2004).

Still, the question as to whether CA, given its analytical and conceptual apparatus, is capable of addressing how one becomes interactionally competent in the L2 remains a central concern (cf. Hall, 2004; Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2008; Wagner, 2004). Major challenges for a conversation-analytic approach to development over time include the following (see Pekarek Doehler & Wagner, 2010): (a) How can an emic (participant-relevant) perspective be brought to the data when we analyze not learning processes, but the products of learning, that is more advanced competencies at a given moment in time? Speakers do not necessarily and demonstrably orient to these as object of learning; (b) What are the relevant units of analysis (actions, practices, methods, linguistic items, etc.) that allow documenting change in IC across time, and warrant comparability between interactional conduct at two different moments? (c) How can we differentiate, in the observable change between two moments in time, what is due to development over time, and what is due to a change in local context? These questions outline the extent of the challenge currently encountered by CA-SLA studies that set out to investigate the development of IC.

## Contributions to the Volume

The chapters presented in this volume are the first collection of studies to tackle directly these concerns. The first section of this volume, *The Nature of L2 Interactional Competence*, contains five studies documenting specific dimensions of L2 IC (Piirainen-Marsh, Sahlström, Steinbach Kohler & Thorne, Theodórsdóttir, van Compernelle). The studies presented in the second section, *Development of L2 Interactional Competence*, trace changes in L2 IC over time (Hellermann, Nguyen, Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, Rine & Hall).

The first section opens with *Arja Piirainen-Marsh's* study on adolescents' playing a console-operated video-game. Piirainen-Marsh investigates how the players, whose L1 is Finnish, attend to and display their understanding of the talk produced by the game characters in English. Focusing on the players' co-producing utterances with the characters, either by means of choral production or anticipatory completion, the study shows how.

through such co-productions, the players sustain joint attention to the game, build and display alignments with actions and events in the game-world, express their appreciation of the narrative as it unfolds and manage shifts in attention focus and participation framework. The findings shed light on some dimensions of the participants' L2 IC: co-productions are effective resources for getting a range of locally relevant interactional work done; because they are based on the precise fitting of utterances into the unfolding dialog, they require the participants to monitor multiple semiotic resources, including language, voice, rhythm, subtitles, as well as to closely orient to the unfolding story sequences. By identifying these dimensions of the IC that is required for participating in joint gaming activities, the study also contributes to current investigations into the dynamics of technology-mediated interaction.

*Fritjof Sahlström* presents a study on a multilingual seven-year-old girl (Sara) who, in a series of interactions with her classmate (Hanna), is learning how to count from one to 10 in English. Although based on longitudinal data (the girls were recorded over a period of five school days), the study does not aim at investigating the outcome of their interactions, but sets out to document how the children's orientation toward learning is inscribed in and observable throughout the moment-to-moment unfolding of their interaction. Through a series of data excerpts, Sahlström shows how Sara and Hanna orient to knowledge asymmetries, to the need to change something in how they count from one to 10, and to their mutual epistemic stances as having changed or being in need of changing. The study documents the children's interactional competencies in how they manage their orientation to one another's epistemic stance, which is necessary for their interacting as well as for Sara's getting to use and practice English number counting. The study also provides evidence for learning as a participant-oriented and participant-relevant activity: it is something that is observably negotiated and treated as such by co-participants in interaction.

*Fee Steinbach Kohler and Steve Thorne's* chapter reconceptualizes a phenomenon in talk usually considered in the realm of psycholinguistics – 'private speech'. Investigating Swiss-German L1 learners of French in a secondary school, the authors show how seemingly self-directed talk maintains characteristics of 'private speech' (quieter, with no clear addressee). However, such talk is the result of and fits into an ongoing sequence of talk. Moreover, though seemingly self-directed, such talk may be disattended (especially when it comes out of sequential misalignment) or may be taken up by interlocutors who orient to such talk as an opportunity for collaborative problems solving. The authors show that self-directed talk is an important resource showing the participants' IC to manage small-group task interaction in the language-learning classroom.

*Guðrún Theodórsdóttir's* analysis shows how a low-level L2 speaker, with the help of her co-participant, exploits a business interaction as a resource for L2 use and learning. The data stem from an encounter in a bakery between Anna, who is learning Icelandic, and a clerk who has Icelandic as his first language. Results show that, in the interaction, the co-habitation of foci on language and an orientation to business is made possible by a distinct division of labor between the participants, the clerk being the prime motor for attending to the business side while Anna enhances the focus on linguistic features of the L2. The data provide evidence for a change, across the few minutes of the encounter, in how the focus on language is managed: at first, Anna's attending to linguistic features is embedded in other interactional business and only implicitly calls for the participation of the L1 speaker, while toward the end of the interaction Anna becomes 'bolder' in her attention to language matters. Anna's capacity to exploit, in collaboration with the L1 speaker, the interaction as an occasion for learning, while maintaining simultaneous orientation to getting some other interactional business done, can be interpreted as one dimension of her IC in her L2, despite her minimal mastery of the linguistic features of that L2.

*Rémi A. van Compernelle's* study examines student responses to teacher questions in language proficiency interviews. The data consist of a set of language proficiency interviews between a teacher and intermediate-level US university learners of French L2. The author argues that features such as precision timing or conditional relevance of a response can be indicative of a learner's IC even if the response is inappropriate in relation to the content of the question asked by the teacher. In a first step, the author shows that by providing responses to questions (i.e. second-pair parts that fit first-pair parts) and doing so at sequentially appropriate moments, students display their IC as interviewees – and they do this independently of whether the content of the response is appropriate to the question or not. The author also suggests that even if they have trouble in understanding, students demonstrate a tendency to respond rather than to initiate repair. In a second step, the study documents how such troubles of understanding a question can trigger potential learning opportunities for the learners, for instance by leading up to word repetitions or clarifications. The chapter concludes by discussing pedagogical implications of these findings and provides suggestions as to how CA can be fruitfully used in language teaching.

Chapters in the second section explicitly deal with the development of IC over time.

*John Hellermann* presents a longitudinal investigation of other-initiated repair in a classroom dyad. Following interactions between two adult learners of English across five terms of study (10 weeks), the author identifies both consistency and change in the practices of other-initiated repair.

While the trouble sources (repairables) remain largely consistent over time (mostly lexical items, pronunciation and grammar, only action-related repair emerges later), the learners deploy different methods of other-repair at different moments in time. Over time, they show an increasingly wider range of repair initiation techniques. In particular, open-class repair initiators emerge at more advanced levels of proficiency, and so do accounts following 'no'-initiated repair. These findings, Hellermann argues, provide evidence for interactional development in terms of the learners' changing ability to participate in social interaction, but they also reflect changes in context in more advanced language classrooms. In this sense, the changing practices, according to Hellermann, provide 'evidence for greater interactional competence of the learners in a (...) reflexive way; these practices are part of what makes them more advanced learners but also part of the repertoire of practices necessitated by the communicative context of more advanced language-learning classrooms' (Hellermann, 2011: 159).

*Hanh thi Nguyen's* longitudinal case study of a pharmacy intern's consultations with patients during a two-month internship focuses on advice-giving sequences. Although not concerned with L2 learning in the classic sense, the study deals with the development of a new (here: profession-related) communicative repertoire. The study documents how the intern adapts his counseling over time in order to meet the needs and expectations of the laypersons. The intern's talk is shown to become less technical (e.g. involving less medical vocabulary), but also more specific in providing more detailed explanations of body-internal phenomena such as allergic reactions. This evidence is interpreted as testifying to the intern's increased capacity for recipient-designed conduct, as part of his becoming a more proficient professional. A possible explanation of this development is invoked: the author illustrates with excerpts where the intern adapts his explanations on a moment-to-moment basis to the patients' displayed perspectives and needs. The study provides evidence for interactional development understood in terms of increasingly recipient-designed conduct, and suggests that such development may grow out of the details of mutually oriented interactional activities.

*Simona Pekarek Doehler and Evelynne Pochon-Berger* present a cross-sectional study of disagreement sequences in French L2 classroom interaction. Two groups of students are compared: lower intermediate learners at a lower secondary school, and advanced learners at an upper secondary school. The development of IC is evidenced as implying a diversification of the methods for doing disagreement, allowing for an increased local efficacy of talk. This is reflected both in the turn-construction techniques and the linguistic resources deployed by the students. While the less-proficient learners massively use turn-initial polarity markers for accomplishing disagreements, the more advanced learners develop a range of sequential

(e.g. yes – but type of turn architecture) and linguistic (e.g. hedges, formativ-ing techniques) means for modulating disagreements as well as post-disagreement accounts for scaffolding these. The results are backed up by a selective comparison with L1 students from the same institutional context. The authors conclude with a discussion of implications of their findings for enhancing understandings of the development of L2 IC as involving the increased ability for context-sensitive conduct. They suggest that diversification of resources and methods, giving place to an increased ability to deal with the preference organization of talk and with projections, are core elements of interactional development over time.

*Emily Rine and Joan Kelly Hall* present a longitudinal case study of one pre-service international teaching assistant's (ITA) development of 'teacher-like' behaviors through his participation in a semester-long ITA training course. Drawing on the concept of *participant frameworks* (Goffman, 1974, 1981; Goodwin, 2007), the authors argue that the invocation of appropriate participant roles in a given practice is extremely important for participating both competently and recognizably in that practice. Additionally, they argue that becoming interactionally competent, and embodying the social roles to do so, include more than the incorporation of linguistic items into one's interactional repertoire. It also includes the appropriation of nonverbal actions such as gesture, gaze and body positioning. Findings reveal how the ITA learns to build on and use the interactional resources (both verbal and nonverbal) at his disposal to become more recognizable in the role of teacher over time, thereby indexing his increasing IC in performing the role of an ITA. This is evidenced in his increasing use of teacher-specific actions and spatial and nonverbal orientation to the 'teacher' space. Drawing on these findings, the authors conclude with implications for research on using CA to track the development of IC and for ITA pedagogy.

## Summary

Taken together, the chapters presented in this volume illustrate how CA methods can be fruitfully applied in investigations on L2 IC and its development over time in a variety of contexts. Rather than treating participants in L2 interactions as deficient speakers, they begin with the assumption that those who interact using a second language possess interactional competencies. The studies set out to identify what these competencies are and how they change across time. By doing so, they address some of the difficult and yet unresolved issues that come up when it comes to comparing actions or practices across different moments in time. While contributing to our understanding of the nature of IC in a L2, they also open promising paths as to how its development can be empirically evidenced.

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