

Student-Initiated Actions in a Multilingual English Classroom-Discourse

Auto-initiations d'apprenants en classe d'anglais multilingue

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Abstract

The project focuses on English in classrooms in multilingual contexts. In this paper, we first present the *interE* corpus of the project and then focus on teacher - student interactions within the methodological framework of Conversation Analysis. We analyse two types of student-initiated actions (*IRF-shift* and *turning out*). We conclude that *multilingual repertoires* are exploitable resources in the co-construction of actions in the English language classroom. This study contributes to the understanding of language development with regard to the discussion of the divide of English as Second/Additional Language (ESL/EAL) and English as Lingua Franca (ELF), and also sheds light on the student constructed identity as language learner and language user.

Keywords (5): English Lingua Franca (ELF), multilingualism, conversation analysis, language classroom, interaction.

Résumé

Le projet porte sur l'apprentissage de l'anglais en classes de langue en contexte multilingue. Cet article introduit le corpus du projet, *interE* et porte essentiellement sur les aspects de l'interaction enseignant-apprenant dans une perspective d'analyse conversationnelle en salle de classe. L'analyse concerne deux types de séquences initiées par les apprenants: *IRF-shift* et *turning out* et touche les *repertoires plurilingues* comme ressources dans la construction des actions en classe de langue anglaise. Ainsi, cette étude contribue à la compréhension du développement du langage dans le cadre de l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue seconde/additionnelle (ESL/EAL) ayant trait à l'anglais comme lingua franca (ELF).

Mots-clés: ELF (Anglais comme lingua franca), multilinguisme, analyse conversationnelle, classe de langue, interaction.

1. Focus on English in international learning contexts

The Fundamental English project (FUNDENG, 2010-2012) aims at documenting and analysing English as a second (additional) language (ESL/EAL) and as a lingua franca (ELF) in secondary school classrooms in multilingual Luxembourg. The goal of this paper is to introduce the Fundamental English project and present a brief summary of preliminary findings.

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Luxembourg provides a particularly attractive situation for studying the learning of English (Ziegler, 2012) for two main reasons. First, the country has three official languages (Luxembourgish, German and French), all of which are spoken at an early age by children raised in Luxemburg and more importantly, part of the official curricula in public schools in Luxembourg. In this context, English comes in as the first additional language. Second, the high affluence of foreign nationals immigrated to Luxemburg has given rise to English as one of the *linguae francae* amongst a larger array of languages (e.g., Portuguese).

Our video and audio database, named *interE*, consists of two corpora collected at two different schools in Luxembourg (i.e. one public school and one European School). An additional audio-recorded corpus was also collected at an international school in Germany. All the children that were recorded are plurilingual learners of English. English is the language of instruction and one of the additional languages in the international schooling context.

The recordings are first transcribed using conversational analysis tools (Selting et al., 1998), then coded for relevant interactional phenomena with regard to learning as accomplished by the learners. Two issues have emerged as important in the analysis of the *interE* corpus:

- first, student initiated actions such as *IRF-shift*, a shift in a sequence which has been described as I(nitiation) by the teacher, R(espone) by the student and F(eedback) by the teacher again (cf. Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) and *turning out*, an insert sequence (Ziegler et al., forthcoming)

- second, students' and teachers' orientation to the *multilingual repertoires* (Sert et al., in press) as resources.

In this paper, we focus on the analysis of two student-initiated actions and discuss *multilingual repertoires* as they relate to these actions. The perspectives developed by this study highlight the dynamics of language learning in multilingual contexts. Specifically, the study has explored integrated analytical approaches in order to deal with this complex context allowing for the innovation of new methods of analysis aimed at the particularities of multilingual corpora. In this paper, we focus solely on the interactional findings.

2. The Data: Classroom organisations

The classroom settings represented in our data vary along three axes: group-oriented teaching vs. teacher-fronted instruction (see figure 1); classrooms where all students follow the same classes throughout the day vs. split classrooms where students follow different tracks; small group classrooms (4-5 students) vs. regular classrooms (20-25 students).



Figure 1: Group oriented teaching (from data set 1) versus teacher-fronted (from data set 2)

2.1 Multilingual settings: data set 1 - European school context

The European School of Luxembourg is one of fourteen European Schools located in seven European countries. The European Schools are “official educational establishments controlled jointly by the governments of the Member States of the European Union” with the mission to “to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils” (cf. Schola Europaea website).

The data from the European School of Luxembourg span 11 hours of video recording. The TESOL trained teacher has English as his first language. He teaches English through reading and group activities to 24 plurilingual students. Each student is registered in one of several different language sections of the European School (e.g. Finnish, Greek, German, French) and therefore not necessarily sharing the same multilingual repertoire as his/her classmates or his teacher who has English and French as part of his repertoire. They don't attend the same classes following a split class mode, and convene in the English classroom for this specific course. The children are between 13 and 14 years old and often come from families with multinational parents.

2.2 Multilingual settings: data set 2 - Luxembourgish public school

16 hours of video recording were collected from two ESL/EAL (English as Second/Additional Language) classrooms in a public high school in Luxembourg. The teacher, a Luxemburgish national, holds a Masters degree in TESOL. The classes are mostly teacher-fronted. The 13 (10th grade) and respectively 19 (11th grade) students are between 16 and 18 years old and unlike the above corpus, these students and their teacher share at least some multilingual repertoires with the teacher (i.e. Luxemburgish, German, French and English). They might also speak other languages at home, but students and teacher refer to the multilingual situation of Luxembourg as per socio-political realities (e.g., language law, establishing German, French and Luxemburgish as administrative languages).

2.3 Multilingual settings: data set 3 - International school

The third data set is comprised of 2 hours of audio recordings from 12-13 year old students in an international school in Germany, with English as the medium of instruction across the school. The TESOL trained teacher has English as a first language and uses English as means of instruction in a social science support class. Similar to the situation of the English teacher at the European School in Data Set 1, this teacher also does not share the same multilingual repertoire with her 4 students (i.e. Japanese, French, and German).

3. Methods of analysis

In analysing the classroom interactions in English from the three corpora, we use tools from Conversation Analysis (CA) that were originally developed for naturalistic settings from speakers of English as a first language (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). These were then employed as a methodology to study English as a lingua franca (cf. Firth, 2009) inside and outside the English language as well as for studying classroom interaction. We focus on sequential organization, with special attention to turn taking mechanisms and repair organization (Sacks et al., 1974). The teachers' and students' actions are analysed focusing on turn initials and turn finals, counter-questions, stretching of sounds, lexical recycling, elaborations, question-turns, prosody, multilingual lexicon, two-class categories (“has &

don't have", Sacks, 1992, p. 47-48), supporting practices of initiation and implementation of actions, and floor and topic management.

4. Phenomena in focus

When the teacher initiates actions in line with the classroom agenda, the student can respond to these projections in two possible ways both typical of an ESL context and of an ELF context (according to McHoul, 1978, p. 189): continuing with the projected action or initiating another action.

Teacher-initiated actions are abundant in the *interE* corpus (e.g., repair as corrections, Kurhila, 2006, p. 20). But we also find a rich array of student-initiated actions. Here we discuss two specific actions: *IRF-shift* (data set 2) and *turning out* (data set 3), providing one example for IRF-shift (extract 1).

4.1 *IRF-shift*

Extract 1² provides an example of student-initiated action as a possible rearrangement of an IRF sequence in the co-construction of the classroom.

Extract 1 wi soll ech soen 04_06_11_37-59

01 Tea: so (1.0) what do you THink,
02 how would you feel about that
03 if your father DID that,
04 and <<acc>he would do>
05 Oh wh=what=what are her pupils like ~today
06 does she have RED eyes or something-
07 +what would you THINK?
+Tea positions his arm towards Mar
08 (0.6)
09 Mar: äh:: <<laughing voice>hi=hi::> +.hhhhh
+Mar moves
her body backwards
10 Tea: strange MAN.
11 Mar: yeah <<laughing voice>hi=hi=ha=[ha:]>
12 Tea: [YE]S: (.)
13 WHY? +
+Dor orients her head towards Mar
14 (0.8)
15 Mar: becaus:e ehm::
16 (0.7)
17 → <<luxembourgish>+wi soll ech soen>
+orients her head towards Dor
how should I say
18 (0.7)
19 Dor: it-(.)it +isn=t a ^habit.
+Dor establishes mutual gaze with Tea
20 it=s NEW something he didn=t done BEFORE,

² The original recording of extract 1 can be found at www.dica-lab.org

In this excerpt, the student Mar uses her multilingual and multimodal (e.g. body posture, gaze, laughter) repertoire as a resource to select another student, Dor, as the next speaker (l. 17). This shifts the student-targeted IRF structure from the teacher-led classroom discourse.

Sert et al. (forthcoming) discuss similar examples of how multilingual repertoires are made relevant and are locally enacted in classroom interaction, initiated by students and their next-turn management by the teacher. Practices have been found to pertain to students' actions, to the complex management of turn-taking between students and teacher, and to the teacher and his interaction management.

4.2 Turning out

In a second study, we have isolated an action called *turning out*. In this action, the students initiate an insert sequence that challenges the previous teacher action (Ziegler et al., forthcoming). Two prime features emerge: the positioning of the action as an insert sequence (Schegloff, 2007, p. 99) at an interactional level and its role as one way of doing topic change at a discourse level.

In *turning out* sequences, the students challenge the organization of the classroom teacher-student adjacency pair and defer the base second pair part. At a discourse level, *turning out* is one way of doing topic change, by offering the opposite class of a two-set class category ("haves & don't haves" candidate, Sacks, 1992, p. 47-48).

5. Conclusions: Multilingual Resources for Learning and Teaching

In this paper we have introduced the Fundamental English project by highlighting student-initiated actions like *IRF-shift* and *turning out*. In the student initiation of action in the classroom we observe both the use of multilingual repertoires (*IRF-shift*) and of interactional resources (*IRF-shift*, *turning out*).

These findings have three implications for classroom management: (1) the issue of "appropriateness" (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 143), the teacher accepting or not the implementations of such actions and shared ownership, (2) the student constructed identity as language learners and language users (Ziegler, 2008) and (3) the construction of the classroom as an ELF setting.

The study of the *IRF-shift* and *turning out* supports the argument of many elements of talk being those of a natural occurring conversation beyond the classroom format and thus being showcases for language development in interaction in a multilingual context.

Contrasting our findings with the normative vision of English taught provides perspectives for future research for the language classroom. Being aware of multilingual repertoires in the classroom allows for a broader perspective in understanding student actions. The multilingual classroom provides a particular ground for analysing ways in which repertoires are used and referred to by learners as action initiators (ESL/EAL) in the light of findings on interactional contexts of English as lingua franca.

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