

**Report on the International Symposium
"From Interaction Research to the Language Classroom:
Integrating Academic Research and Teacher Education" (ARTE 2017)**

Hie-Jung You / Maxi Kupetz / Karen Glaser

The International Symposium *From Interaction Research to the Language Classroom: Integrating Academic Research and Teacher Education* (ARTE 2017) funded by Volkswagen Foundation took place from September 13 to 15 in Hanover, Germany. The overall goal of the symposium was to enable an intense exchange between researchers working predominantly in the field of Conversation Analysis and classroom interaction, and teacher education practitioners who are interested in exploring language use in (language) classrooms, and in improving teacher education based on empirical findings on classroom interaction.

In Language Teaching Research, a current trend is to conceptualize learning processes as social accomplishments (Firth/Wagner 2007). Thus, there is a strong interest in the interaction that takes place in the (language) classroom between teacher and student(s) as well as among the learners. Among other things, teacher educators are interested in equipping (future) language teachers with Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC), i.e., the skills to produce classroom interaction that is conducive to learning (Walsh 2006:130), as well as with the skills to enhance the language learners' Interactional Competence (IC) outside the classroom. Interaction-oriented research offers the empirical tools for the investigation of classroom phenomena such as instruction-giving, the provision and uptake of feedback, the negotiation of understanding, and the students' communicative competence. Such investigations provide information on the interactional processes involved in L1 and L2 language teaching and learning, informing teacher training and contributing to its increased professionalization (e.g., Heller/Morek 2015; Prediger et al. 2015).

The symposium took into account two educational policies that are gaining in importance not only in the German, but also in the European and global context, namely Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL, i.e., the teaching of a non-language subject in a foreign language), and the Teaching of Young Language Learners (TYLL, i.e., language teaching at the elementary and primary levels). Accordingly, the symposium featured three thematic sessions devoted to, respectively, Classroom Interaction Research (CIR), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Teaching of Young Language Learners (TYLL). While the first focused on communicative practices in the classroom and targeted methodological issues of interaction research applied to the language classroom, the remaining two addressed interaction phenomena as they unfold in and apply to these two specific types of language teaching settings.

In what follows, we will provide a short summary of each paper presented. The contributors were free to choose between two formats: *full papers* presenting completed research, and *work-in-progress reports* presenting ongoing projects. The papers are summarized in their order of appearance.

Theme I: Classroom Interaction Research

The first thematic session was opened by Friederike Kern (University of Bielefeld, Germany) with her full paper *Learning as a publicly observable phenomenon*. The presentation explored synchronized clapping and vocalizing as a way of teaching 'what a syllable is' in the German classroom. The study provided an empirical account of learning as observable bodily behavior: Systematic changes in interactive and multimodal practices may indicate learning, as it is embedded in and emerging from publicly conducted action (Kern 2018).

The subsequent full paper by Silvia Kunitz (University of Stockholm, Sweden) was entitled *The design and implementation of instruction targeting interactional competence*. It was concerned with how CA-informed teaching materials were created and used in the teaching and assessment of L2 Spanish learners at tertiary level, including students' completion of the tasks, recordings of their oral performance, and teacher evaluation rubrics. The findings of this study revealed how CA-based IC instruction benefits language teaching by fostering interactional skills of L2 learners. At the same time, the talk addressed the question of how much a language teacher needs to know about CA.

The following work-in-progress report *Mutual gaze, embodied go-aheads, and their interactional consequences in L2 classrooms* was presented by Olcay Sert (Mälardalen University Västerås, Sweden). Investigating participants' gaze, the talk focused on students' attempts to establish mutual gaze with the teacher in turn-final position, and on the teacher's orientations to the student's gazing behavior. Preliminary findings suggested that L2 learners achieved different actions through mutual gazing with the teacher such as soliciting help, asking for confirmation, and seeking approval from the teacher.

Evelyne Berger (University of Geneva, Switzerland) then gave a full paper presentation on *Understanding the task instructions in the French L2 classroom*. The paper explored how L2 learners of French negotiate their understanding of task instructions with their peers in a group work setting. Exploring both L2 learners' verbal and bodily behavior, the paper revealed that the learners' efforts to achieve a shared understanding of the task instructions were not only promoting language learning, but provided for meaningful language use in interaction.

This was followed by a work-in-progress report by Miriam Morek (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany) entitled *Teachers' and students' talk about text-production in classrooms. An exploratory case study of German lessons in a German secondary school*. Morek presented her current project on writing conferences, which analyzed how students discuss their writing plans for an argumentative letter. The study sought to yield insights into the processes involved in planning, formulating and reviewing texts, and to show how students orient to the contextualization and marking of specific text types. In the future, the study will derive insights for the teaching of text production and writing skills.

Tom Koole (University of Groningen, Netherlands) then presented his full paper entitled *Teaching and learning grammar in interaction*, in which he and his colleagues Janneke van de Pol and Anouk de Roo examined grammar lessons taught in a first grade Dutch secondary school class. The authors looked at sets of grammatical formulas as employed by teachers in order to facilitate L1 learners' acqui-

sition of grammatical constituents. The analysis of the classroom interaction revealed that these formulas were not always helpful to the learners and illuminated how the participants developed and used alternative explanation strategies to promote the learning of grammatical structures.

The CIR thematic session was concluded by Christine Kampen Robinson's (University of Manitoba, Canada) and Grit Liebscher's (University of Waterloo, Canada) full paper presentation *Transculturality in telecollaboration: Examining language learner closings in online chats*. In their paper, the authors explored closing sequences of computer-mediated chat interactions between German learners of English and Canadian learners of German. The task of the students was to discuss in pairs a German and a Canadian TV series and to identify cross-cultural differences and similarities. The paper analyzed the ways in which the learners jointly accomplished closing sequences, thereby maintaining interpersonal relationships across culture- and language-specific farewell routines. From these observations, the authors derived implications for the teaching of pragmatics in the language classroom.

Theme II: Classroom Interaction Research with a Focus on CLIL

The CLIL session was opened by Leila Kääntä (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) with a full paper entitled *Multimodal perspective into teachers' definitional practices: Comparing subject-specific language in physics and history lessons*. The study addressed teachers' uses of definitional practices in history and physics CLIL classrooms (L1 Finnish, L2 English). The study investigated how the use of subject-specific language (e.g., everyday vs. technical vocabulary) and the multimodal resources employed differed between the subjects and in the way defining was accomplished by teachers.

The subsequent work-in-progress report entitled *When Students signal trouble: Negotiating understanding in the CLIL classroom* was delivered by Marit Aldrup (University of Potsdam, Germany). The paper examined how intersubjectivity was collaboratively established by the teacher and the students during a CLIL geography lesson (L1 German, L2 English). The talk first focused on the learners' displays of non-understanding, with a view to both verbal resources (e.g., initiation of repair or negative responses to teachers' understanding checks) and embodied resources (e.g., pauses or facial expressions). This was followed by an analysis of how the teacher's repair initiations addressed the students' trouble displays in order to achieve mutual understanding.

The CLIL thematic session was rounded off by Carmen Becker's (TU Braunschweig, Germany) full paper entitled *Interaction in the CLIL Classroom – A Model for CLIL Teacher Education*. Exploring interaction in an 11th grade biology CLIL class (L1 German, L2 English) from a pedagogical point of view with a focus on the quality of teacher-student interaction, the talk presented findings on the distribution of teacher and student talk, on the types and frequency of teacher impulses and questions, and on the student output that each question type generated. Based on these findings, the paper introduced a model for Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) as a basis for CLIL teacher education which featured a) the study of the theory of interaction, b) lesson observation and analysis, and c) the application of the interactional knowledge in the classroom.

Applications I

The talks were followed by the symposium's first application session in the form of a workshop entitled *Understanding everyday interaction and learning how to teach it: A language teacher training workshop* and organized by Carmen Taleghani-Nikazm (University of Ohio, USA), Emma Betz (University of Waterloo, Canada) and Thorsten Huth (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA). In the first half of the workshop, the symposium participants were asked to take the perspective of German-as-a-Foreign-Language learners and to work in groups on German data excerpts to discover and discuss the communicative functions of single utterances/turns from the perspective of non-CA experts. In the second half of the workshop, the symposium participants were given CA-informed language tasks to be completed based on the previous functional analysis. The materials demonstrated the steps that are involved in creating a CA-based instructional unit, including the selection of data excerpts and sequences and the provision of empirical evidence to help learners understand and develop interactional skills. The workshop thus provided hands-on suggestions for L2 teaching and curriculum development, and made implications for teacher professionalization. A collection of relevant materials can be found in Betz/Huth 2014-2016.

Theme III: Classroom Interaction Research with a Focus on TYLL

The TYLL session was opened by Barbara Geist's (University of Leipzig, Germany) work-in-progress report *"weil sonst hört mans ja nicht" (because otherwise you cannot hear it) – Encouraging children to exchange thoughts on orthography*. The study examined young L1 German learners' spelling discussions and showed how the students displayed and negotiated their awareness of linguistic structures in the course of the interaction. The paper identified discourse practices which the learners employed to provide evidence for their grasp and interpretation of the German spelling rules under discussion.

Vivian Heller (University of Wuppertal, Germany) then presented a full paper entitled *Constructing knowledge in classroom discourse: Young learners' resources for marking and recognizing epistemic stances*. The paper identified verbal and embodied resources the young learners used to recognize and mark epistemic stances in problem-solving activities in peer settings. The findings suggested that gaze plays an important role in the young learners' taking of epistemic stance in that there seems to be a distinction between framing an activity as 'informing co-participants about one's decision' and 'putting up one's decision for negotiation'. The findings thus provided insights into the fine-tuning of young learners' argumentative skills.

The following full paper presentation *Learner-learner interaction and language development in the EFL classroom* was presented by Jana Roos (University of Potsdam, Germany). Situated within the Task-Based Language Teaching approach, the study examined communicative tasks which were conducted in an L2 English lower secondary classroom and which targeted the mastery of the 3rd person singular -s. Employing a pre-posttest format, the study showed that the communicative tasks were an effective means to create learner-learner interaction in the L2 and to prompt the learners to produce more target-like utterances.

The next presentation was a work-in-progress report by Vanessa Wildenauer (University of Leipzig, Germany), entitled *Negotiating perspectives: TYLL student teachers' interactions during intercultural competence training*. The talk presented video data recorded during a semester-long intercultural training taken by TYLL teacher trainees, more specifically during one of their culture simulations. The latter consisted of a role-playing round that was followed by a group reflection, which in turn was followed by a second role-play round. The talk presented the data and first attempts at classifying interactional and pedagogical phenomena within the simulation.

The TYLL session was concluded by Jan Berenst's (NHL University of Applied Sciences Leeuwarden, The Netherlands) full paper on *Peer interaction in the classroom: About discourse development and knowledge construction*. Based on data from preschool children, the talk employed a longitudinal perspective on the development of interaction patterns in L1 Dutch children from kindergarten through primary school. The findings demonstrated that in contrast to kindergarten settings, traditional school classrooms tend to offer poor interaction patterns due to the predominance of display questions. It was suggested that a 'pedagogy of inquiry learning,' which features dialogic teaching and more cooperative work between students, can, however, counteract such interactional impoverishment and contribute to the learners' discourse and cognitive development.

Applications II

Following the TYLL section, the symposium featured the second application session entitled *VEO EUROPA PROJECT: An innovative iPad App for teacher education and classroom interaction research*. Held by Paul Seedhouse (Newcastle University, United Kingdom), this session introduced the VEO (Video Enhanced Observation) app (www.veo-group.com), which was developed by teacher trainers for teachers-in-training as well as for classroom interaction researchers. It enables teachers and researchers to video-record classroom interaction and to tag the data both on- and offline. Individualized tagging systems thus allow for the annotation of interactional phenomena observed during and after the lesson, and for sharing them with others afterwards. Accordingly, VEO offers a handy tool to make video data easily accessible for reflection of professional practice.

Conclusions and outlook

The international and interdisciplinary make-up of the symposium brought to light that language teacher training programs across different countries face similar challenges with regard to enhancing interactional and language skills in the classroom. This was a common theme throughout the symposium's papers, discussions, workshop and group work phases, and showed that these are shared concerns regardless of the delegates' countries of origin, target languages dealt with, or academic disciplines. This common ground also allowed for a deeper discussion of research phenomena and methods used to investigate social interaction as well as for a deeper exchange about approaches to incorporating authentic interaction into the language classroom. During the symposium, the following areas of application

of CA findings in teacher training were identified and concretized as desiderata to be tackled in future: i) materials analysis and development, esp. with regard to textbooks, ii) instruction giving, iii) awareness of interactional behavior such as monitoring of gaze; iv) identification of potential causes of success and failure of didactical procedures; v) the intersection of communicative teaching and form-focused instruction.

In addition to these shared research interests and concerns, the symposium revealed one currently existing 'dividing line', which not only needs to be acknowledged by future work but whose dissipation has to be actively accepted as a challenge: The seemingly basic notion of 'interaction' and its role in the language classroom tend to be conceptualized differently by CA researchers and interactional linguists on the one hand, compared to language teaching educators on the other. During the symposium, it transpired that the former group considers as interaction – and thus as potential foci of their analyses – *any* spoken interaction arising in the classroom, be it between teacher and student(s) or between students, used for whatever communicative function, be it classroom management, providing explanations, defining concepts, discussing the applicability of rules, and displays of (non)understanding or (dis)agreement (e.g., shifting gaze, marking stance, signaling non-understanding). In fact, a classroom is constituted as such *through* interaction. Language teacher educators, on the other hand, tend to conceptualize interaction in the sense of pre-planned pedagogical formats, to be carried out by the learners to develop their language skills, quite in the sense of Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis and his call for more true two-way tasks between learners to complement the one-way tasks between teacher and individual students so dominant in most language classrooms.

Accordingly, the symposium has shown that the task ahead is to concentrate more on the overlaps between the two fields, and to simultaneously widen the perspectives in both directions, by i) expanding the teacher educators' view of the concept of interaction in the classroom to include not only the pre-planned pedagogical formats that are supposed to bring about interaction as a learning format but also all forms of naturally occurring instances of interaction in the classroom, and by ii) expanding the interaction researchers' view to perceive the teacher educators' position as a hinge between the 'how' of research results, and the 'how to' of teaching practice. This includes acknowledging the fact that teacher educators more often than not require rather hands-on information and best-practice examples for their task of equipping teacher trainees – besides analytical and self-reflective skills – with lesson planning skills and communicative strategies for their future job. As our symposium has shown, merging both perspectives appears to be a step into the right direction.

During the symposium's closing and feedback round, many participants commented on the fact that the symposium had brought together researchers that would in all likelihood not have met at regular conferences, due to the fact that academic approaches and findings are usually discussed within the boundaries of disciplines, thereby perpetuating these boundaries. Despite the challenges involved in interdisciplinary work, most participants found it refreshing and inspiring to see that colleagues in other disciplines are working on the same phenomena and are approaching similar issues from different directions and perspectives. As a follow-up to the symposium, some of the delivered papers and research results will be

published in an open-access special issue entitled "Embracing social interaction in the L2 classroom: Perspectives for language teacher education".

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Hie-Jung You, Ph.D.
Universität Potsdam
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Am Neuen Palais 10, 14469 Potsdam
hieyou@uni-potsdam.de

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Maxi Kupetz
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Germanistisches Institut
Luisenstraße 2, 06108 Halle (Saale)
maxi.kupetz@germanistik.uni-halle.de

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Karen Glaser
Universität Leipzig
Erziehungswissenschaftliche Fakultät
Marschnerstraße 31, 04109 Leipzig
karen.glaser@uni-leipzig.de

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