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Abstracts

Problematizing the Investigation of Corrective Feedback in the Second Language Classroom

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The purpose of this paper is to examine ways in which corrective feedback (CF) has been investigated in second language (L2) classrooms. To this end, I will begin by examining how CF has been defined before moving on to look at three different methods for investigating CF; descriptive taxonomies, discourse analysis and conversational analysis. As my overall goal is to provide a basis for discussion of CF as an important phenomenon in second language acquisition research (SLA) I will focus on identifying what I see as the problems without offering any solutions.

Problems of defining error arise because the identification of instances of CF remains problematic. There is both the problem of determining whether a learner has made an error and there is the problem of perspective (i.e. cases arise when the teacher fails to understand the student and corrects what he/she perceives to be an error). Taxonomies of corrective feedback moves are problematic because they may not be theoretically grounded, they may be insufficiently comprehensive to account for all the instances of CF identified in a data set, and there are difficulties in applying them reliably to the classification of CF moves in the data. The principal problem with a discourse analytic approach is 'it portrays teachers as making one pedagogical action on one level at a time' and therefore fails to capture the complexity of classroom interactional events where 'teachers may be simultaneously orienting to multiple pedagogical concerns' (Seedhouse 2004: 64). Conversational analysis is able to provide highly illuminative accounts of how CF is enacted in classrooms but it provides no obvious way of arriving at generalizations and it is not clear whether it is able to account for 'learning' as opposed to 'language use'. Rampton, Roberts and Leungand (2002) concluded that 'CA alone can't cope'.

The descriptive taxonomies and discourse analysis approaches have been closely linked with a 'cognitive' view of how CF can influence L2 acquisition, whereas conversational analysis has afforded a more social and individual account. SLA is currently engaged in epistemological debate concerning its goals and its methods (see, for example, the articles in *Modern Language Journal* Volume 81 (2)). This debate centres very much on whether SLA should remain true to its origins in cognitive psychology and linguistics or whether it should expand to take into account the social and cultural contexts of L2 learning by incorporating a more sociological or sociocultural perspective. The issues relating to CF that are examined in this paper are to be seen as part of this general debate.

Cognitive and social aspects of focus on form in a French foreign language classroom: looking behind the scenes.

Jenefer Philp

This paper considers how researchers investigating the interaction-learning relationship from a cognitive perspective might begin to explore the many and varied social factors at play during interaction. In this paper, I illustrate this through an exploration of incidental focus on form during teacher fronted and learner-learner classroom interaction.

The data were collected over three weeks of lessons in a university foreign language class for intermediate to advanced learners of French. In addition to transcripts of classroom interaction, the data included prompted interview sessions with seven of the 30 students in the class, and daily individualized tests based on forms targeted by focus on form episodes in class. I begin by briefly reporting on the findings of a cognitively oriented study of the effectiveness of the teacher's incidental focus on form in this class, and explore factors such as prior knowledge and aspects of the delivery of feedback. This included, for example, whether the feedback was incidental or intentional, and whether the teacher or the student initiated it. I then go on to consider social aspects of classroom interaction, including group and pair work, drawing largely from the interview data. This data revealed a kaleidoscope of factors that appeared to shape interactions and learning outcomes. These factors included learners' perceptions about their relationships with the teacher and each other, and learners' shared histories and individual life experiences. This paper hopes to stimulate further discussion on the interrelationships between cognitive and social factors and the need to address these in our research questions and analyses, in order to further develop our understandings and explanations of the interaction-learning relationship.

Pair interactions and mode of communication: Comparing face-to-face and Computer

mediated communication

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Abstract

In today's second language classrooms, students are often asked to work in pairs or small groups. Such collaboration can take place face-to-face, but now more often via computer mediated communication. This paper reports on a study which investigated the effect of the medium of communication on the nature of pair interaction and the learners' use of the second language. The study involved six pairs of beginner learners of Chinese in a university class completing seven different tasks. Each task was completed twice, once face to face (FTF), and once via computer mediated communication (CMC). All pair talk was audio recorded, and on-line communication was logged. Using Storch's (2002) model of patterns of pair interaction, five patterns were identified: collaborative, cooperative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive and expert/novice. The medium of communication was found to affect the pattern of interaction. In CMC some pairs became more collaborative, or cooperative. However, the study found that learners used the L2 and deliberated over the L2 more frequently in FTF communication than in CMC. The implications of these findings for language teaching, particularly for the use of CMC in language classes, are discussed.